

## **The complex of creole typological features: The case of Mauritian Creole<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents morphosyntactic and sentential information on Mauritian Creole (MC), a French-lexifier creole which has been underrepresented in many studies of Creole morphosyntactic typology. Typological features from Holm and Patrick (2007), Bickerton (1981, 1984), Taylor (1971, 1977), Markey (1982), and Dryer (1992), most of which have previously been assembled as being diagnostic of a language's creole status, are presented here with examples from contemporary MC. MC sentences from sets of comparative creolistic sentences in Hancock (1975, 1987) are presented in Appendix A. The material demonstrates abundantly that MC exhibits the vast majority of features which have been deemed typical of creole languages over the past four decades.

**Keywords:** Ile de France Creole, Indian Ocean Creole, Mauritian Creole, Seselwa, typology.

### **1. Introduction**

In the past few decades, the interest in typological features of Creoles, both as a way towards establishing which structural features are held to be intrinsic to Creoles and as a means of comparing the presence of certain features among Creoles with varying major lexifiers, has increased considerably.

Taylor (1971), a paper originally presented in absentia at the Creole Conference at UWI-Mona in April 1968 and written by one of the pioneers of cross-creole typological comparisons, was an early fruit of the drive to

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demonstrate that many features of Creole languages were not specific to Creoles which shared a common lexifier, but could be found in Creoles which derived their vocabularies from different sources. Taylor's material included data from Krio, Sranan, Saramaccan, Jamaican Creole, Haitian, Louisianais, Antillean Creole French (specifically Dominican), Guyanais, 'Indian Ocean Creole' (under which rubric Taylor combined Mauritian Creole and Réunionnais data), Negerhollands (Virgin Islands Creole Dutch), Papiamentu, Capeverdean, and Gulf of Guinea Creole Portuguese (in practice most of the Gulf of Guinea data reflected Saotomense). This paper had an importance in the field of creolistics out of all proportion to its length of 3.5 pages. For instance Taylor (though not the first person to do so) demonstrated that some structural features, such as the use of the postposed postnominal 3pl pronoun to mark plurality, crossed 'lexical boundaries' and were to be found both in English-lexifier Jamaican Creole and in French-lexifier Haitian Creole. Taylor (1977) surveyed ten structural or typological features, including 7 of the 12 that had been surveyed in Taylor (1971), taking comparative data from West African languages (Ewe, Igbo, Akan-Twi and Yoruba) in addition to data from Atlantic Creoles of varying lexical source (English, French, Spanish, Portuguese). Taylor was not the first author to present a comparative study of creole structures; Addison Van Name, the librarian of Yale University, had done so a century previously (van Name 1869-1870). But Taylor's lists set off a fashion for typological classification of creoles which continues today.

A few years afterwards, two authors separately presented their own lists of what they maintained were diagnostic features of Creole languages, and used them for testing hypotheses. The list in Markey (1982) was originally devised for the purpose of demonstrating how much more 'creole-like' Negerhollands was than Afrikaans, when compared with Dutch. The list of features that was assembled in Bickerton (1981) was meant to be more universal in scope, tied in as the features were with Bickerton's renowned Language Bioprogram

Hypothesis, and attempted to link the study of Creole genesis with the Chomskyan model of Universal Grammar then in vogue, i.e. pre-Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995). Subsequently Baxter (1983; see also Baxter 1988) and Smith (1979) surveyed Bickerton's and Taylor's 1971 features respectively to see how they performed when tested upon two Lusoasian Creoles. Baxter's work looked at Papia Kristang of Malacca, Malaysia (which had already been examined in regard to Taylor's features in Hancock 1975), and Smith's work examined Sri Lanka Creole Portuguese of Batticaloa.

The most recent large-scale comparative study of Creoles is to be found in Holm and Patrick (2007), which embraces 19 creoles, of varied lexical backgrounds (French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Arabic, Assamese) and which come from locations scattered throughout the world. Some Creoles which have been widely discussed in the literature have been omitted from this survey, for instance Saramaccan (although another Maroon Creole, Ndyuka, has been included), Papia Kristang- and French-lexifier MC. Instead, with reference to the last case, data from the closely related Seychellois or Seselwa (collected by Daniel Chapuis), a language which has approximately 10% of the number of speakers of MC and which has received increasing attention in the more theoretical creolistic literature, is used. (Even so, two extensive grammatical descriptions of MC, namely Baker 1972 and Corne 1970, have been available in print for decades.) Large amounts of the data from Holm and Patrick's forthcoming comparative Creole study had previously been made available in the literature or on the World Wide Web by the editors, and this was especially so in Holm (2000), and more recently in Holm (2006).

Taylor (1971) would not have had access to much Seychellois data, and his 'Indian Ocean Creole' data seems mostly to reflect MC structural features. However, Réunionnais, a semi-creole which was already relatively well-documented in the linguistic literature by the late 1960s, is also spoken in the Indian Ocean. It is of French lexical derivation and it may be the source of

some of Taylor's data for 'Indian Ocean Creole', although Baker and Corne (1982) have convincingly demonstrated that Réunionnais has a separate origin from Mauritian and Seychellois creoles and that Réunionnais is not as 'creole-like' as either MC or Seselwa are.

Two subsequent typological surveys of typically creole features can be found in Parkvall (2001) and Baker (2001). Both of these make use of data from MC and their findings are not repeated here. It should be noted that Baker's paper takes an unusual but very effective approach to these questions, by selecting features of these creoles which reflect structural complexities which are more typical of the creoles' European lexifier languages and especially their morphologies (for instance, the presence or absence of gender distinction in 3SG personal pronouns), with the assumption that the lower the score which a language exhibits (MC scores 1 out of a possible 24) the greater the likelihood that the creole in question has been expanded from a prior pidgin.

The following account does not purport to be a grammatical sketch of all the features of MC. For instance it has nothing to say about the morphological, syntactic and semantic roles of reduplication in the language. Rather, it attempts to present information on the MC responses to the features which Taylor, Bickerton, Holm and Patrick and Hancock (and, because they are subsumed within others' lists of features, also the work by Markey) have felt to be interesting for crosslinguistic comparison.<sup>2</sup> Since the list of features assembled by Holm and Patrick is the longest of the various lists, we have taken this as the basis for this typological survey. We have provided sample phrases or sentences in modern MC for those cases where MC scores positively for the presence of a feature mentioned by Holm and Patrick. Furthermore, when examining features mentioned by other authors which are

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<sup>2</sup> In several cases the same structural feature was interrogated by more than one investigator; hence there is a small amount of repetition of data. We have noted this overlapping when it occurs.

used by Holm and Patrick and which are exemplified in MC we have indicated the Holm and Patrick code-number of such features in the tables from the work of these other authors, thus: (= HP12.1) would mean that a particular structural feature corresponded to feature 12.1 in the feature listing by Holm and Patrick.

We have also included the few features from Dryer (1992) which were not otherwise included in this collection, with the addition of a question of our own about the typology of the ordering of elements in Noun and Numeral phrases which was not included in Dryer's purview. We have also incorporated the MC translations of the two sets of sentences elaborated by Ian Hancock for examination of characteristically creole syntactic structures in the 1970s and used quite widely since, especially with English-lexifier creoles but not much (as far as we know) with French-lexifier creoles.

This study has concentrated upon morphology and syntax, though some features which impinge upon the lexicon are also included. It is the result of collaboration between a British creolist with a reading and some spoken knowledge of MC (the first author) and a native speaker of MC who is also fluent in English and French (the second author). Examples have been sourced from print and online materials, including fiction and non-fiction, newspaper articles, magazines and reports. They are listed in the Texts list at the end of this paper. Oral examples obtained during fieldwork have also been included<sup>3</sup>

The orthography adopted for the oral examples provided by the authors is that of Grafi larmoni, 'a harmonized writing system for the Mauritian Creole Language' (Hookoomsing 2004), and those used by *Ledikasyon pu Travayer* in their *Diksyoner Kreol Angle* ('Creole English Dictionary') (2004). There is as yet no formal orthography for MC, despite a number of proposals for phonemically based orthographies, including, Baker and Hookoomsing (1987)

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<sup>3</sup>A. Grant undertook fieldwork in Bradford, UK, in the mid-1990's with Mr Sunyog Soogumbur, a native speaker of MC.

and Hookoomsing (2004).<sup>4</sup> The spelling conventions of modern MC writers vary enormously, as many still adhere to some French spelling conventions. We faithfully reproduced the data sourced from texts and online, except for hyphenating some morphemes so as to provide accurate glosses.<sup>5</sup>

1.1. *McWhorter (2003) and the Creole Prototype, the work of Philip Baker, and the early changes from French to creole*

The Creole Prototype, as discussed by McWhorter (2003), is the name given to a collection of three features which, if present within a single language, serve as a diagnostic for a ‘typical’ creole. These are: the absence or near-absence of productive inflectional morphology, the lack of productive non-compositional derivational morphology, and the lack of distinctive lexical tone. According to McWhorter, these features characterise many creole languages, and only creole languages. He maintains that they are present in creole languages as a result of these having arisen from the expansion of prior pidgins.

McWhorter’s observations are supported by work on matters of prior pidginisation conducted independently by Philip Baker, and both point in the same direction. Baker’s purpose in this work (especially in Baker 2001) is to determine the extent to which features which typify the structure of pidgin languages are also found in at least some stage of the recorded history of creole languages. He identifies 24 features, all of which relate to simplicity, such as zero-marking of features which are overtly marked in the lexifier languages.

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<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the factors involved in choosing a spelling system for MC, see Rajah-Carrim (2008).

<sup>5</sup> The reader may wish to refer to sources to verify authors’ spelling.

If one awards a point for each feature of the language which is deemed derived from prior pidginisation, then two languages, Antillean Creole French and Tok Pisin, score the full 24 points. MC has 23 of these 24 features, as do Haitian, Seselwa, Krio, Sranan, Ndyuka and Papia Kristang, thus confirming their creole status.

Examination of the positive distribution of the Holm and Patrick (2007) features across creoles from the Atlantic and elsewhere, and the way in which MC compares with them, is also revealing. Holm (2000) omits the sections relating to the categories of passivisation and complementation from his roster of features, but includes the other 18 categories in a series of comparative charts containing a total of 88 (from the original 97) features for Angolar Creole Portuguese, Papiamentu, Haitian, Negerhollands, Jamaican Creole, Tok Pisin and Nubi (Creole Arabic of Sudan and Uganda). Holm (2006) provides similar data for all 97 features for Zamboangueño, Sotavento Cape Verdean, Palenquero Creole Spanish, and Korlai Portuguese of western India. In Holm (2007), data on these features are also provided for Guinea-Bissau Creole Portuguese. (Note that the 20 sets of features are numbered differently in Holm's various publications and presentations.) Holm's work typifies features in one of four ways: as being present in a creole (+), absent (0), present but rare (R) or of uncertain status in the creole because of the lack of relevant data which might instantiate this feature (represented as ?).

It should be pointed out from the start that not all features which have been marked with (+) in the material in this paper are to be regarded as being especially typical of creoles (with a (0) score being regarded as typical of a non-creole language structure), though many of them are. A couple of features show the opposite tendency. For instance, in the fuller list, there is a question (11.1) relating to whether the creole in question uses a passive construction. Here a (+) response would indicate that the creole which did so was less typically creole in this regard, given that most creoles lack overt passive constructions. The same is true for case-marking on personal pronouns.

Logic further dictates that those items in the seven categories above, which are counted as zero in Holm and Patrick (2007), should actually be regarded as being assessed positively, because a negative reading for a feature such as the presence of a passive construction actually indicates that the feature in such a creole is expressed more basilectally. Thus such ‘pseudo-negative’ features are marked with (+) signs, and are counted as positive. MC shows 69 positive creole features and 28 negative ones, the same number as Papiamentu. Compare this with Haitian, which has 78 positive features out of 97, Jamaican, Ndyuka, Krio and Tok Pisin, which score more for the possession of positive features than MC), and Seselwa, which shows 67 positive creole features, 29 negative ones, and one rarely-attested feature. By contrast, languages such as Kinubi and Nagamese score in the mid-40s as far as positive features are concerned

## **2. Features surveyed in Holm and Patrick (2007; hereafter HP)**

The following examples include the two categories, ‘dependent clauses’ and ‘passives’ which were surveyed in the original version of the tables but which were dropped from the final pre-publication draft.

The occurrence of each feature will be noted as follows, using the same rubric as Holm and Patrick used:

*Yes* - The feature is present

*No* - The feature is absent

*R* – The feature is present but rare in the creole

? – The presence of the feature is not known from our records of the creole

### *2.1. Unmarked verbs*



A large number of MC verbs have two forms, a long and a short form. Baker (1972) claims that perhaps 70% of them have two forms. These ‘verbs always adopt their short form when immediately followed by a complement and their long form when they occur predicate finally or are immediately followed by a time adverbial’ (Baker 1972: 98). Examples follow:

(1) *Li lav so linz tulezur*  
 3sg wash 3sg.POSS clothes everyday  
 ‘S/he washes her/his clothes everyday’

(2) *Li kontan lave*  
 3sg like wash  
 ‘S/he likes washing’

(3) *Li lave tulezur*  
 3sg wash everyday  
 ‘S/he washes everyday’

In this respect, MC differs from Louisianais, which also has long and short forms of verbs (Neumann-Holzschuh 1989). In Louisianais, the distinction between the two forms relates to issues in tense marking, with longer forms generally indicating anterior action or state. In MC, the selection of variant forms is syntactically rather than morphologically defined

Tense, Mood and Aspect (TMA) are marked by pre-verbal markers, which always occur in a strict TMA order. They include:

- a. Tense: *ti* – Past or Anterior (PST), derived from Fr. *était* (‘was’) 3sg.imperfect tense, or the past participle *été*: *était/été* → *té* → *ti*.
- b. Mood: *pu*- Irrealis, derived from Fr. *pour* (as in *Être pour* et l’infinitif): *être sur le point de* ‘to be on the point of’. Since *pu* indicates a definite future, it will be abbreviated as FUT.

- c. Mood: *ava* → *va* → *a* – Irrealis (IRR), derived from Fr. *va* ‘will’ 3sg. present indicative of *the verb aller* ‘to go’. Indicates an indefinite future.
- d. Aspect: *ape* → *pe* – Progressive (PROG), derived from Fr. *après* (adv.): *en train de* ‘in the process of’.
- e. Aspect: *fin* → *in* → ‘*n* - Completive (CMPL) derived from Fr. *finir* ‘to finish’, 3sg. perfect tense *fini* ‘finished’.

2.1.1. *Statives with non-past reference: Yes*

- (4) *Mo kone/panse/krwar*  
 1sg know/think/believe  
 ‘I know/think, believe’

- (5) *To konn ennbann zistwar*<sup>6</sup>  
 2sg know many story  
 ‘You know many stories’

2.1.2. *Statives with past reference: No*

This is possible in narrative text, but not otherwise. In this respect, MC is no different from English or French.

2.1.3. *Non-statives with past reference: No*

2.1.4. *Non-statives with non-past reference: Yes*

The following derive a generic or ‘habitual’ interpretation:

- (6) *Pol lasas serf*  
 Paul hunt stag  
 ‘Paul hunts stags’ (for a living)

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<sup>6</sup> One morpheme *ennbann* means ‘many’, ‘several’ (see Guillemin 2009). If two morphemes are used in this example, e.g.: *To konn enn bann zistwar*, the meaning would be ‘You know one of the stories’.

- (7) *Sa fam la bat so piti*  
 DEM woman SP beat 3sg.POSS child  
 ‘This woman beats her children’ (usually)

## 2.2. *Past tense marker*

### 2.2.1. *With statives =Past reference: Yes*

- (8) *Mo ti konn li*  
 1sg PST know 3sg  
 ‘I knew him/her’

### 2.2.2. *With non-statives = past reference: Yes*

- (9) *Mo ti aste laviann dan bazar*  
 1sg PST buy meat in market  
 ‘I bought meat in the market’

### 2.2.3. *Past = counterfactual: Yes*

- (10) *Si mo ti kone, mo pa ti a fer sa*  
 if 1sg PST know 1sg NEG PST IRR do that  
 ‘If I knew, I would not have done that’

### 2.2.4. *Past with adjectival verb: Yes*

The term ‘adjectival verb’ is dubious. MC admits predicative constructions without a copula. The following examples show that the past tense marker can occur with verbal, adjectival, prepositional and nominal predicates:

- (11) *Pol ti vini/ **malad**/ deor*

Paul PST come/ ill/ outside

‘Paul came/ was ill/ was outside’

(12) *Pol ti dokter/ profeser/ avoka*

Paul PST doctor/ teacher/ barrister

‘Paul was a doctor/ teacher/ barrister’

Note that only nouns that denote a role of profession can be used predicatively, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (13):

(13) \**Pol ti zom*

Paul PST man

2.2.5. *Past with locative: Yes*

(14) *Pol ti anba/ deor/ isi/ laba*

Paul PST underneath/ outside / here / over.there

‘Paul was underneath / outside / here / over there’

2.3. *Progressive aspect marker*

2.3.1. *Indicating progressive: Yes*

(15) *Mo pe manz mang*

1sg PROG eat mango

‘I am eating mangoes’

2.3.2. *Indicating future: Yes*

(16) *Nu pe al Moris lasemenn prosenn*

1pl PROG go Mauritius week next

‘We are going to Mauritius next week’

2.3.3. *Anterior plus progressive: Yes*

- (17) *Mo ti pe manz mang*  
1sg PST PROG eat mango  
‘I was eating mangoes’

2.3.4. *Progressive with ‘adjectival verb’: Yes*

As previously mentioned, the term ‘adjectival verb’ is dubious. *Kontan* can be both adjective and verb:

- (18) *Pol kontan*  
Paul happy  
‘Paul is happy’

- (19) *Pol kontan Zanette*  
Paul love Jeannette  
‘Paul loves Jeannette’

- (20) *Bann dimoun zis pe kontan,* (Maca n.d.)  
PL people just ASP happy,  
‘They are just being/becoming happy’,

There are other adjectives that can be used with the progressive marker to indicate a change of state:

- (21) *Bann zanfan pe malad ek lagrip*  
PL child PROG sick with flu

‘The children are becoming ill with the flu’

The use of the progressive with a stative verb is marked, as in English, e.g. ‘We are loving it’, but it is attested in modern MC. In the case of *malad*, the form *tom malad* (‘fall ill’) is preferred

#### 2.4. *Habitual aspect*

##### 2.4.1. *Zero marker for habitual: Yes*

(22) *Kan fer so mo dormi*  
When make hot 1sg sleep  
‘When it’s hot I sleep’

(23) *Pol travay Katborn*  
Paul work Quatre Bornes  
‘Paul works in Quatre Bornes’

##### 2.4.2. *Progressive marker for habitual: Yes*

(24) *Aster, li pe al bazar tulezur<sup>7</sup>*  
Now 3sg PROG go market everyday  
‘Now, s/he is going to the market everyday’

##### 2.4.3. *A marker is available for habitual only: No*

There is no grammatical marker for habitual, but *abitye*, from the French *habitué*, which is defined as ‘Used to, accustomed to, familiar with’ (Baker and Hookoomsing 1987: 21) is used with the meaning ‘usually’:

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<sup>7</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for this example.

(25) *Kouma mama abitie fer* (Virahsawmy n.d. d)

Like mother usually do

‘Like mother usually does’

2.4.4. *Past plus habitual co-occur: Yes*

(26) *Kouma li ti abitie abiye.* (Virahsawmy n.d. c)

like 3sg PST usually dress

‘Like he used to dress’

2.5. *Completive aspect*

2.5.1. *Completive only with the verb: Yes*

(27) *kan to finn perdi tous to vinn terrorist*

(Pyneeandy 2010)

when 2sg CMPL lose everything 2sg become terrorist

‘when you have lost everything you become a terrorist’

2.5.2. *Completive + adjectival verb: Yes*

See comment on ‘adjectival verbs’ in Section 2.2.4.

(28) *Eski nou pa finn plein ar sa bann la*

(Paradigm shift 2010)

Q. 1pl NEG CMPL fedup with DEM PL SP

‘Aren’t we fed up with that lot?’

2.5.3. *Anterior (or other) + Completive: Yes*

(29) *Tou sa ki mo ti - nn fer,*<sup>8</sup>

(Papier 2009)

everything DEM.PRO COMP 1sg PST CMPL do

‘everything that I had done’

(30) *si to ti deteste kiksoz, to pa ti pou fin*

if 2sg PST hate something 2sg NEG PST FUT CMPL

*fer- li.* (Lim n.d.)

do 3sg

‘if you hated something, you would not have done it’

## 2.6. *Irrealis mode*

### 2.6.1. *Future: Yes*

There are two forms: a more immediate one with *pu*, expressing certainty (FUT), and a more unconstrained one with *ava* □ *va* □ *a*, expressing possibility (IRR).

(31) *Ensam nu pu aret koription dan pays* (ICAC n.d.)

together 1pl FUT stop corruption in country

‘Together we will put an end to corruption in the country’

(32) *Mo ‘a vini tanto si bizin* (Carpooran 2005: 1)

1sg IRR come afternoon if necessary

‘I will come this afternoon if need be’

### 2.6.2. *Past + Irrealis = conditional: Yes*

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<sup>8</sup> Where *tinn* is a contraction of the past tense marker *ti* and the reduced form of the Aspect marker, *‘inn*. Thus, *ti + ‘inn* → *tinn*.



(33) *Dommage Stalin fine alle faire marguerites pousser,*  
 pity Stalin IRR go make daisy grow,  
*sinon ti ava prend Stalin li-meme* (MX 2010)  
 else PST IRR take Stalin himself  
 ‘Pity Stalin has gone to push up the daisies, else (they) would have  
 taken Stalin himself’

2.6.3. *Past + Irrealis = Future in the past: Yes*

(34) *mo ti pou vende banne billets la pour Rs25000*  
 (Dabee 2006)  
 1sg PST FUT sell PL ticket SP for Rs25000  
 ‘I was going to sell those tickets for Rs25000’

2.6.4. *Past + Irrealis = Future perfect: No*

2.7. *Other combinations of verbal markers*

2.7.1. *Irrealis + Progressive: ? Debatable*

The following sentence is not acceptable to all speakers of MC; some  
 speakers would use *ava* rather than *pu*:

(35) *Mo ava pe dormi kan to pu pe get fim*  
 1sg IRR PROG sleep when 2sg FUT PROG watch film  
 ‘I’ll be sleeping when you’ll be watching the film’

7.1.2. *Past + Irrealis + Progressive: Yes*

(36) *Mo ti pu pe get enn fim*  
 1sg PST FUT PROG watch a film

‘I would have been watching a film’

2.7.2. *Other auxiliary-like elements: Yes*

The other auxiliary elements include:

a. Modals:

- *bizen* (from Fr. *besoin* ‘need’), meaning ‘must’, ‘need’. It is commonly spelt *bizin* in the literature
- *devet* (from Fr. *devrait être* (‘must/should be’) meaning ‘ought to’
- *kapav* (from French *capable* ‘capable’), meaning ‘can’

b. Aspect marker:

- *fek* (from French *fait que* ‘have just’), meaning ‘only just’

Like English ‘need’, *bizen* in MC is both a modal as in (37) and a full verb as in (38):

(37) *Nou bizen konpran kifer kominote AfroKreol ...*

(Virahsawmy 2008b)

1pl must understand why community AfroKreol ...

‘We must understand why the African-Creole community ...’

(38) *Answit nou bizen enn program zeneral antipovrete*

(Virahsawmy 2008b)

then 1pl need a program general anti-poverty

‘Then we need a general anti-poverty program’

*Devet* can mean ‘ought’ as in (39) or ‘perhaps’ as in (40):

(39) *Pol ti devet return travay zordi*

Paul PST ought return work today

‘Paul ought to come back to work today’

(40) *Li pa finn vinn travay zordi, devet li malad*

(Carpooran 2005: 187)

3sg NEG CMPL come work today perhaps 3sg ill  
'S/he hasn't come to work today, perhaps s/he's ill'

*Kapav* is a modal as in (41) and also means 'maybe, perhaps, possibly', as in (42):

(41) *Ou kapav soi ekrire enn let ou ranpli enn Form*

(Republic of Mauritius n.d.)

2pl can either write a letter or fill.out a form  
'You can either write a letter or fill out a form'

(42) *Kapav bann zanfan pa pu 'le vini*<sup>9</sup>

maybe PL child NEG FUT want come  
'Maybe the children won't want to come'

The aspect maker *fek* can also be used on its own:

(43) *ena 300 innocents fek morts dan l'inde* (Aubvalen 2010a)

be 300 innocent ASP die in India

'There are 300 innocent people who have just died in India'

These auxiliary elements can also combine with other TMA markers:

(44) *parski tou loto pu bizin arête* (Vik 2010)

because all car FUT need stop

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<sup>9</sup> *Kitfwa* from Fr. *quelquefois* 'sometimes' is also used instead of *kapav* from Fr. *capable* 'possible', which has come to mean 'maybe'.

‘because all cars will need to stop’

- (45) *Mo finn fek al kit let kot li.* (Virahsawmy  
n.d. b)  
1sg CMPL ASP go leave letter at 3sg  
‘I have just dropped the letter off at his/her place’.

- (46) *nenport ki etranzé ti kapav perdi ladan.* (Maunick  
2004)  
any stranger PST MOD lose in.there  
‘Any stranger could have got lost in there’.

## 2.8. Complementisers

### 2.8.1. Infinitive marker: No

Only Tense, Mood and Aspect are marked by preverbal morphemes as described in Section 2.1. The citation form in the case of verbs that have two forms, long and short, is the long form:

- (47) *Ale/ koze / manze / panse*  
*go/ speak / eat / think*  
‘To go/ to speak/ to eat / to think’

### 2.8.2. ‘FOR’ as infinitive marker: Yes

The preposition *pu*, derived from French *pour* (‘for’) is used to introduce non-finite subordinate clauses:

- (48) *nou finn vini pou anbras later divan li* (Cheung n.d.)  
1pl CMPL come to kiss earth before 3sg  
‘we have come to kiss the earth before him’

### 2.8.3. 'FOR' as a (quasi-) modal: Yes

As mentioned in Section 2.1, MC *pu* is a modal which marks the definite future. It is derived from the French expression *être pour* ('to be about to'):

- (49) *So ler pou vini.* (Virahsawmy n.d. c)  
3sg.POSS time FUT come  
'His time will come'.

### 2.8.4. 'FOR' introducing a tensed clause: Yes

When used to introduce a tensed clause, *pu/pou* means 'in order to', as in (50):

- (50) *met boucoup larzan dans liniversiter pou ki tou*  
put lots.of money in university for COMP all  
*etudiants gagne sanse egale* (Aubvalen 2010b)  
student get opportunity equal  
'put lots of money into universities so that all students get an equal opportunity'

### 2.8.5. Subordinator or complementiser derives from superstrate 'THAT':

Yes

MC *ki* derives from the French complementiser *que*:

- (51) *Nou koné ki missié Glover ...* (Yzea 2009)  
1pl know COMP mister Glover ...  
'We know that Mr Glover ..'.

- (52) *Bann dirizan politik dir nou ki pou konbat*

PL leader political say 1pl COMP for fight

*povrete...* (Virahsawmy 2008b)

poverty

‘Political leaders tell us **that** to fight poverty ...’

2.8.6. *Distinct subordinator after verb of speaking: No*

2.8.7. *Zero subordinator possible: Yes*

Whilst it is not possible in French to omit the complementiser, it is optional in MC, as in English:

(53) *tout dimoun ti koné madam la pou blanchi* (Yzea 2009)

all people PST know woman SP MOD go.white

‘everybody knew that woman would go white (with fear)’

(54) *Mo dir li nou pou res omwen enn mwa.*

(Virahsawmy n.d. b)

1sg tell 3sg 1pl MOD stay at.least one month

‘I tell him/her we will stay at least one month’.

2.9. *Dependent clauses*

2.9.1. *Subordinate clauses (non-embedded): Yes*

(55) *zame li ti panse ki li pou kapav vinn papa*

(Songor n.d.)

never 3sg PST think COMP 3sg FUT MOD become father

‘he never thought that he would be able to be a father’

2.9.2. *Subordinate clauses (embedded): Yes*

- (56) *Pol ti kone bann zannfan ti dir (ki) zot ti*  
 Paul PST know PL child PST say (COMP) 3pl PST  
*pu vini*  
 FUT come  
 ‘Paul knew the children said (that) they would come’

2.9.3. *Relative clauses (where relative pronoun refers to the subject): Yes*

Note that in the following example, *Bann* functions as a plural demonstrative pronoun:

- (57) *Bann ki defann sa lide la* (Virahsawmy 2008b)  
 PL.DEM.PRO REL.PRO defend DEM idea SP  
 ‘Those who defend this idea’

2.9.4. *Relative clauses (where the relative pronoun = direct object): Yes*

In the following example, *ki* is the subject of the relative clause, but it stands for *suval*, which is the direct object of *aste*:

- (58) *Pol pu aste suval ki ti gagn lekurs la*  
 Paul FUT buy horse REL.PRO PST win race SP  
 ‘Paul will buy the horse that won the race’

2.9.5. *Relative clauses (where the relative pronoun = object of preposition):*

*Yes*

- (59) *Sa piti pu ki li ti donn so lavi la*  
 DEM child for REL.PRO 3sg PST give 3sg.POSS life SP  
 ‘This/that child for whom s/he gave her/his life’

2.9.6. *Relative clauses (where there is no relative pronoun): Yes*

Unlike French and English, the relative pronoun, subject of the relative clause, is optional in MC:

- (60) *To konn enn sat (ki) pa tuy lera twa ?*  
2sg know a cat REL.PRO like kill rat 2sg  
'Do you (happen to) know a cat that doesn't kill rats?'

2.10. *Negation*

Negation in modern MC is expressed by *pa* from the French *pas*. While French requires the two particles *ne ... pas*, where *ne* precedes the verb and *pas* follows, e.g. *Elle ne pleure pas* 'She is not crying'. MC *pa* (*napa* in early MC) has always been pre-Inflection, i.e. it precedes the predicate as well as TMA markers.

2.10.1 *Single negation (verbal): Yes*

- (61) *Nikola pa ti pou pentir zot.* (Virahsawmy n.d. f)  
Nikola NEG PST FUT paint 3pl  
'Nikola was not going to paint them'.

2.10.2 *Discontinuous double negation: No*

2.10.3 *Negative concord? Yes*

Negation can occur with other negative polarity items:

- (62) *akot personn pa reste* (Ciardi n.d. a)  
where nobody NEG stay  
'where nobody lives'



- (63) *dimoun res trankil pa dir naryen* (Patient n.d.)  
 people stay quiet NEG say nothing  
 ‘people remain silent, (they) don’t say anything’

## 2.11 *Passive*

### 2.11.1 *Passive construction? Yes (only with a select number of verbs)*

The verb *gayn/e* (Ledikasyon pu Travayer), *gany/e* (Baker & Hookoomsing 1987), derive from the Fr. *gagner* (‘to get’) combines with a small number of verbs in passive constructions, for example *gany bate* ‘be beaten’, *gany krie* ‘be told off’. These combinations are largely restricted to verbs of negative physical affectation by the patient.<sup>10</sup> However, passivization is not a productive process in MC. Examples follow:

- (64) *mo frer pe gaygn bate* (Atchiane 2007)  
 1sg.POSS brother PROG get beat  
 ‘My brother is getting a beating’

- (65) *Mo ti gany grife ek enn sat.*  
 1sg PST get scratch with a cat  
 ‘I was scratched by a cat’.

### 2.11.2 *Passive equivalent: No*

See footnote 6.

## 2.12 *Adjectives and other non-verbal predicates*

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<sup>10</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for making this point and to add: ‘In the large majority of cases passive is morphologically unmarked: only the projection of the semantic on the syntactic roles (patient=subject) allows us to give a passive interpretation of the sentence as in: ‘DEM ash put in sugar cane too’ (see Kriegel 1996: 89).

2.12.1 *Preverbal markers before adjectives: Yes*

- (66) *Mo ti ere dan sa letan la.*  
1sg PST happy in DEM time SP  
'I was happy then'.

See also Section 2.2.4 example (11).

2.12.2 *Preverbal markers with bare nouns: Yes*

The use of preverbal TMA markers with bare nouns is restricted nouns denoting roles or professions. See Section 2.2.4, example (12).

2.12.3 *Preverbal markers with locatives: Yes*

The preverbal markers which can occur with locatives are:

- a. Anterior *ti*
- b. Irrealis *pu*, *ava/va/a* (*pu* expresses certainty, *ava* expresses possibility)
- c. Aspect *fek*

The TMA markers are which are ungrammatical with locatives are:

- a. Completive *finn* → *'inn* → *'n*
- b. Aspect *ape* □ *pe*

- (67) *Si mo ti laba.* (Virahsawmy n.d. c)  
if 1sg PST over there  
'If I was over there'.

- (68) *Tanto bann zanford pu deor*  
afternoon PL child FUT outside  
'This afternoon the children will be outside'

- (69) *Bann zanford ti fek deor*  
PL child PST ASP outside

‘The children were outside just then’

#### 2.12.4 *Predicate clefting: Yes*

- (70) *Galupe ki li galupe extra sa.*<sup>11</sup>  
Run COMP 3sg run amazing DEM  
‘His/her running was amazing’.

A fronted predicate can be used for emphasis, as in (71):

- (71) *Kontan so manze sa tiba la.*  
like 3sg.POSS food DEM baby SP  
‘This baby really likes his/her food’.

A preposed object NP is also used for emphasis, and it yields contrastive focus, as in (72). These are marked constructions:

- (72) *Mang mo kontan, zanana non*  
mango 1sg like pineapple no  
‘It’s mangoes that I like, not pineapple’.

#### 2.12.5 *Comparison with ‘PASS’: No*

#### 2.12.6 *Comparison is formed as in superstrate: Yes*

*Pli* from French *plus* (‘more’) is used in comparisons:

- (73) *Depi dan profonder pli profon ki Lafrik*  
(Virahsawmy 2006)  
from within depth more deep than Africa  
‘From within depths deeper than Africa’

---

<sup>11</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for this example.

## 2.13 The copula

### 2.13.1 Equative copula: Debatable

Zero copula is the norm in MC:

- (74) *Zanett, enn zanfan labé Tanbarin* (Maingard 2002: 25)  
Jeannette a child bay Tamarind  
'Jeannette is a child of Tamarind Bay'

However, the use of *se* from French *c'est* ('that's, it's') is found in 'equative' constructions, albeit only in very modern MC, and only in the acrolect, and only in very modern MC (there is no entry for *se* in Baker & Hookoomsing 1987).

- (75) *enn dimoun vivan sé enn karkass* (Maingard 2002: 113)  
a person alive COP a carcass  
'A living person is a carcass'

- (76) *zot obzektif prinsipal se insit bann oprime ...*  
Gopal 2002: 75)  
3pl.POSS objective main COP incite PL oppressed  
'their main objective is to incite the oppressed ..'

*Ledikasyon pu Travayer* define *se* as *is* (3sg present form of the verb 'be'), and give the example: *Lide se pu uver li pu tu dimunn* 'The idea is to open it to all' (2004: 208).

MC does not have an auxiliary equivalent to English 'be'. As with equative constructions, MC has zero copula in predicative constructions:

(77) *Pol peser/ malad/ deor/ pe dormi*  
 Paul fisherman/ ill/ outside / PROG sleeping  
 ‘Paul is a fisherman / is ill/ is outside /is sleeping’

### 2.13.2 Different locative copula (before place): No

MC has zero copula when the predicate is a prepositional phrase:

(78) *Liv - la dan sa bwat-la* (Carpooran 2005: 149)  
 book SP in DEM box SP  
 ‘The book is in that box’

### 2.13.3 Zero copula before adjectives: Yes

(79) *Sangeeta zoli pareil are so maman* (Asgarally 1977:1)  
 Sangeeta beautiful same with 3sg.POSS mother  
 ‘Sangeeta is as beautiful as her mother’

### 2.13.4 Highlighter copula with question words: Yes

The verb *ete* from the French imperfect *étais/était* (‘was’) or past participle *été*, is optional with question words, but when it is used it seems to necessitate an answer with precise information, exact location or precise time.

(80) *Kot li?*  
 Where 3sg  
 ‘Where is s/he?’

(81) *Kot li ete?*  
 where 3sg is  
 ‘Where (exactly) is s/he (right now)?’

Baker & Hookoomsing define *ete* as: ‘The copula corresponding to the form of ‘be’. (This occurs only sentence-finally and results from ‘wh movement’ e.g. *kot li ete?* ‘where is he’? *ki li ete?* ‘what is he’? etc.) (1987: 97, brackets in original). Ledikasyon pu Travayer’s (2004) definition is: ‘v. is, are, *ti ete* = was, were, *pu ete* = will be’. Carpooran (2005) define *ete* as: ‘v. *Mo ki servi pou etabliir lien ki ena ant size enn fraz ek so bann konpleman dan enn kestion*’ Fr. être; ang. to be’. (‘Word which is used to establish the link between the subject of a sentence and its complements in a question’.)

Note that *ete* is not only used with questions words, but also functions like an intransitive verb with an equivalent meaning to substantive ‘be’, i.e. ‘to exist; have reality; live; take place; occur; remain as before’. Like other lexical verbs in MC, *ete* combines with TMA markers:<sup>12</sup>

- (82) *Parfois mo maginer, Hier ki mo ti ete,*  
 sometimes 1sg wonder yesterday what 1sg PST be  
*Zordi ki mo ete, Demain ki mo pou ete*  
 (Anon n.d.)  
 today what 1sg be, tomorrow what 1sg FUT be  
 ‘Sometimes I wonder, what I **was** yesterday, what I **am** today,  
 what I **will be** tomorrow’.

<sup>12</sup> An anonymous reviewer observes that the highlighter copula *ete* occurs where a post-copula constituent has been *wh*-moved but it does not have to be sentence-finally, as shown in the following:

- (1) *Kot li ete dan sa foto la*  
 where 3sg COP in DEM photo SP  
 ‘Where is s/he in this photo?’

However, the PP *dan sa foto la* is an adjunct, not a complement of the verb *ete*, which is an intransitive verb.

### 2.13.5 Highlighter with other structures: Yes

Highlighter copula *se* is used in predicate cleft constructions (see Section 2.13.1). Another example follows:

- (83) *Se an 1945 ki lang Kreol ...* (Carpooran 2002: 69)  
COP in 1945 COMP language creole  
'It is in 1945 that the creole language ..'.

The use of the highlighter copula is found only in the acrolect, and in relatively recent MC, suggesting that it results from French influence/

### 2.13.6 Existential ('be' = 'there is'): Yes

In MC, *ena* from the French *il (y) en a* → *y en a* → *ena*, is both existential 'be' and lexical 'have'.<sup>13</sup> Sentence initially, *ena* translates into 'There is/are':

- (84) *Ena enn loto devan laport* (Carpooran 2005: 234)  
be a car in.front.of door  
'There's a car at the front (of the house)'

- (85) *Ena bann enstitision kouma PSC ki okip sa.*  
(Virahsawmy 2008c)  
be PL institution like PSC COMP look.after DEM.PRO  
'There are institutions like the PSC that look after that'.

*Ena* can be used without an NP to mean 'there are (people)':

- (86) *ena panse ki zot nasyon ..*  
be think REL.PRO 3pl.POSS nation

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<sup>13</sup> For a historical overview of the development of *ena* in MC, see Fon Sing & Véronique (2007).

‘there are some who think that their nation ...’

*Ena* also functions like lexical *have*, expressing possession:

(87) *Mo ena enn loto me mo pankor ena permi*<sup>14</sup>

(Carpooran 2005 : 234)

1sg have a car but 1sg not.yet have license

‘I have a car but I don’t have a license yet’.

(88) *Zordi zot ena de zanfán* (Virahsawmy n.d. f)

today 3pl have two child

‘Today they have two children’

#### 2.14. Serial verbs

By definition, serial verbs are ‘verbs that share a semantic argument, but there is no conjunction or inflection to mark co-ordination or subordination: for example in the Yoruba sentence: *O ra eran je* (‘3rd-person buy meat eat’) ‘meat is simultaneously the object of both verbs’ (Crystal 2008:434, capitals and italics in original). The question of whether or not MC has serial verbs is a matter of controversy (Corne et al. 1996). Bickerton (1988) asserts their existence, and Adone (1994) claims that children use motion verbs in what appears to be a serial construction from an early age. The following examples have been proposed as examples of serial verb constructions, but in both cases, the NPs *zot* and *salte* are the direct object of only the preceding verb, not both verbs:

(89) *Zot piti pu vinn get zot*

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<sup>14</sup> Where *pankor* is a fusion of negative *pa* and the adverb *ankor* ‘again, once more, still, yet’).



3pl.POSS child FUT come look 3pl

‘Their children will come and visit them’

(90) *Mo pu al zet salte deor*

1pl FUT go throw rubbish outside

‘I will go and throw the rubbish outside’

#### 2.14.1. Directional is intrinsic with ‘go’: Yes

While the French verb *aller* (‘to go’) must be used with the preposition *à* (‘to’), MC *ale* does not require a preposition. In (89), *al* is the short form of the verb *ale* when used with a complement:

(91) *Mo pe al Kirpip*

1sg PROG go Curepipe

‘I am going to Curepipe’

#### 2.14.2. Directional is intrinsic with ‘come’: Yes

MC *vini* is derived from the Fr. *venir* (‘to come’). However, Fr. *venir* must be used either with the preposition *à* (‘to’), e.g. *Je viens à Port-Louis tous les jours* (‘I come to Port-Louis everyday’), or *de* (‘from’) e.g. *Je viens de l’Ile Maurice* (‘I come from Mauritius’). Neither *à* nor *de* transfers into MC. In (92) and (93), *vin(n)* is the short form of the verb *vini*:

(92) *Mo vin Kat-Koko tulezur.*

1sg come Quatre-Cocos everyday

‘I come to Quatre-Cocos everyday’.

The preposition *depi* from the Fr. *depuis* (‘since’) is used with *vin(n)* to mean ‘come from’:

- (93) *Ena, ki finn vinn depi la-Zide* (David n.d. a)  
 be REL.PRO CMPL come from Judea  
 ‘There are some who have come from Judea’

MC *depi* is also a temporal preposition, as in French:

- (94) *Setenn mister ki ‘nn res kasyet depi byen-byen*  
 it is a mystery COMP CMPL stay hidden since very-very  
*lontan* (David n.d. b)  
 long.time  
 ‘It’s a mystery which has remained hidden since/for a very very  
 long time’.

2.14.3. Serial ‘give’ meaning ‘to, for’: No

2.14.4. Serial ‘say’ meaning ‘that’: No

2.14.5 Serial ‘pass’ meaning ‘more than’: No

2.14.6. Three serial verb constructions are possible: Debatable

The following examples have been proposed, however, see definition of ‘serial verb construction’ in Section 2.14:<sup>15</sup>

- (95) *Mama pran larzan donn garson la bwar*  
 mother take money give boy SP drink  
 ‘The mother takes money (to) give that boy (to) drink’.

- (96) *Piti la pran pom plise manze*  
 child SP take apple peel eat  
 ‘The child takes the apple peels (it) eats (it)’

---

<sup>15</sup> We thank an anonymous reviewer for these two examples of serial verb constructions.

2.14.7. *Four + serial verbs are possible: No*

2.15 *Nouns and modifiers*

MC bare nouns can be (in)definite, specific or generic, and, in the case of count nouns, singular or plural as with *lagazet* in (97). The interpretation is simply derived from the context.

- (97) *Li 'n al aste lagazet*  
3sg CMPL go buy newspaper  
'S/he has gone to buy newspapers/a newspaper/ the newspaper'

2.15.1 *Bare nouns = generic: Yes*

- (98) ***Dodo*** *napli existe*  
dodo NEG exist  
'Dodos are extinct'

- (99) ***Diven*** *bon pu lasante*  
wine good for health  
'Wine is good for health'

2.15.2 *Indefinite article: Yes*

The indefinite singular article *enn* is the only MC determiner which has an identical equivalent in French. It was either borrowed from the French *un/une* or is derived from the numeral *enn*. It is equivalent to English 'a/an' or numeral 'one'.

- (100) ***Enn*** *lisien inn mord mwa gramatin* (Carpooran 2005:234)  
a dog CMPL bite 1sg morning  
'A dog bit me this morning'

(101) *Mo 'nn pran zis enn, twa to 'nn pran de*  
 (Carpooran 2005:234)  
 1sg CMPL take only one 2sg 2sg CMPL take two  
 'I took only one, (as for you) you took two'.

### 2.15.3 *Definite article present?* No

Bare nouns in various syntactic positions can have a definite interpretation:

(102) *dimun anvi get soley* (Ah-Vee 2002:73)  
 people want look sun  
 'people want to look at **the sun**'

(103) *Larenn Langleter pu visit Moris*  
 queen England FUT visit Mauritius  
 '**The queen** of England will visit Mauritius'

(104) *kan legliz napa kann gid nou* (Virahsawmy 2009)  
 when church NEG know guide 1pl  
 'When **the church** doesn't know how to guide us'

The process of article incorporation, whereby the French definite article fused with the noun as in *la case* □ *lakaz* resulted in a zero (phonologically null) definite article in MC (Guillemin 2011).

The Specificity maker *la* has been defined as a definite article (Baker and Hookoomsing 1987; Syea 1996; Rochecouste 1997; Baker 2003; Déprez 2003; Virahsawmy 2004). In their Dictionary of Mauritian Creole, Baker and Hookoomsing (1987) also identify the 'specificity' feature of this morpheme, and define *la* as 'semantically very similar to 'the'', which marks the specificity of a noun or noun phrase and occurs as the final element of the

latter, e.g. *lalin-la* ‘the moon’, *lari ki al Moka-la* ‘the road which leads to Moka’ (1987: 170, my italics).

Unique nouns in MC do not require a determiner in argument positions. The Specificity maker *la* deprives them of their uniqueness, and is used only when a specific instance or aspect of the noun is the intended meaning, as in (105) where the author is describing how the sun feels when they are working in the sugar cane fields, and in (106) where the speaker refers to a particularly fierce sun on a particular day:

(105) *Soleil la tapé, li cuit ou la peau.* (Asgarally 1977: 1)  
 sun SP beat 3sg cook 2pl.POSS skin  
 ‘**That sun** beats upon you, it cooks your skin’.

(106) *Kouver to latet, soley la tro for* (Virahsawmy n.d. h)  
 cover 2.sg.POSS head sun SP too strong  
 ‘Cover your head, **that sun** is too fierce’

The Specificity marker *la* serves to mark Topic, and a unique N + *la* translates into a demonstrative. *Ledikasyon pu Travayer* (2004) define *la* as a ‘*sufiks* denoting specificity’ (2004:131). The term suffix being applied because *la* occurs post-nominally, but this morpheme occurs independently of the noun that it modifies. Unlike an affix, it does not attach to a root or stem, e.g. *lari ki al Moka la* (‘that road that goes to Moka’), where *la* modifies *lari* and not the adjoining noun *Moka*.

#### 2.15.4 Plural marker: Yes

The plural marker *bann* is derived from the Fr. *bande* ‘group’, and is defined by Carpooran (2005) and Baker and Hookoomsing (1987) simply as a marker of plurality.

(107) *Bann dimunn ki ti kiontribiye ladan ti ...*

(Federation of Preschool Playgroups 2002:119)

PL person COMP PST contribute in PST  
'**The people** who contributed to this were ...'

*Ledikasyon pu Travayer* (2004) define *bann* as a definite determiner, equivalent to English 'the' in the plural. This, however, fails to account for the occurrence of *bann* in existential contexts, which admit only indefinites (Milsark 1979):

(108) *E lor ti-grap ena bann fler* (Virahsawmy n.d. g)  
and on small-bunch be PL flower  
'And on the small bunch there are some flowers'

Despite the definite reading of *Bann dimunn* in (107), the plural marker is specified only for the feature [+plural], and does not encode definiteness.

#### 2.15.5 Personal nouns plus plural marker: Yes

The plural marker is used with personal names, where English and French use the plural definite determiner, yielding a similar interpretation:

(109) *Bann Devore abit Kirpip*  
PL Devore live Curepipe  
'The Devores [= Devore family] live in Curepipe'

#### 2.15.6 Are there distinct demonstratives: No

There is only one demonstrative *sa* which is generally used with *la*, where *sa* is prenominal, and *la* is post-nominal:

(110) *Sa papye la so bi se...* (Dholah 2002:79)  
DEM paper SP 3sg.POSS aim is  
'**This** paper, its aim is ...'

Note that while *sa ... la* can be used with both new and old discourse referents, the use of *la* on its own can only be used in the case of anaphoric definiteness.

While *la* can be used without *sa*, the use of *sa* without *la* is ungrammatical:

(111) \**Sa papye*  
 DEM paper

However, in very modern MC, and only in the acrolect, we find *sa* used without *la*, but only with nouns that are modified by a prepositional phrase or relative clause:

(112) *Sa kalite piblisite par lapost* (Hookoomsing 2002:29)  
 DEM type advertising by mail  
 ‘That type of advertising by mail’

The use of *sa* without *la* may be motivated by the use of the French demonstratives *ce/ces* which is commonly used on its own.<sup>16</sup> Such use would be an instance of ‘post-creole continuum’, as defined by DeCamp (1971)

#### 2.15.7 *Demonstrative plus specific plus plural: Yes*

(113) *Bann ki travay dan sa bann plas la*  
 PL REL.PRO work in DEM PL job SP  
*bizen bien kalifie* (Virahsawmy 2008d)

<sup>16</sup> The French demonstrative *ce/cet/ces* etc. can be used on their own, or with the deictic particles, proximate *ci* and distal *là*, e.g.:

|        |               |    |              |    |              |
|--------|---------------|----|--------------|----|--------------|
| (1) a. | Cet homme     | b. | Cet homme ci | c. | Cet homme là |
|        | DEM man       |    | DEM man PROX |    | DEM man DIST |
|        | This/that man |    | This man     |    | That man     |

must well qualified

‘Those who work in those jobs must be well qualified’

#### 2.15.8 *Relative clauses plus definite or plural marker: Yes*

See above example, where the plural marker functions as a plural demonstrative pronoun.

#### 2.15.9 *Prenominal adjectives: Yes*

Baker (1972) lists fifteen, but the class is closed. Note that the order of adjectives in MC patterns exactly as in French with respect to what is prenominal and what is post-nominal.

(114) *Trois ti lapin blanc ar zot liyeux rouze*

(Virahsawmy n.d. a)

three small rabbit white with 3pl.POSS eye red

‘Three small white rabbits with their red eyes’

#### 2.15.10 *Post nominal adjectives: Yes*

Colour adjectives follow the noun, as in French. See above example.

#### 2.15.11 *Gender agreement: No*

Gender is not grammaticalized in MC. Some feminine forms of adjectives are copied from French. Adjectives do not inflect for Gender, and these feminine forms are not a result of grammatical agreement, e.g.:

- *fu* (masc.), *fol* (fem.) ‘crazy’
- *entelizan* (masc.), *intelizant* (fem.) ‘intelligent’
- *malen* (masc.), *malin* (fem.) ‘clever’

Nouns in MC do not inflect for Gender. Feminine nouns like *vas* (‘cow’), *tifi* (‘girl’) are lexical, and they do not trigger agreement with modifying adjectives. The feminine form of an adjective (if one exists) can be used, but it is by no means required, as shown:



(115) *Enn gro vas/ Enn gran tifi/ Enn move tifi*  
 a big cow / a tall girl/ a naughty girl  
 ‘A big cow / A tall girl’  
 \**enn gros vas / \*enn grand tifi \*enn movez tifi* (where *gros*,  
*grand* and *movez* would be the forms copied on Fr. Feminine  
 forms *grosse*, *grande* and *mauvaise* respectively).

## 2.16 Possession

### 2.16.1 Nouns: Juxtaposition (possessed + possessor): Yes

(116) *enn Etyopyen ki travay dan lakaz lerwa* (Ciardi n.d. b)  
 an Ethiopian REL.PRO work in house king  
 ‘an Ethiopian who works in the king’s house’

### 2.16.2 Nouns: Preposition (possessed OF possessor): No

The French preposition *de* (‘of’) which is used in genitive constructions, as in *La femme de Paul* (‘Paul’s wife’) did not transfer into MC, where possessed and possessor are string adjacent: *Fam Pol*.

### 2.16.3 Nouns: Possessive pronoun (possessor HIS possessed): Yes

(117) *Fam la so piti*  
 woman SP 3sg.POSS child  
 ‘That woman’s child’

(118) *Bann fam la zot zanfan*  
 PL woman SP 3sg.POSS child  
 ‘Those women’s children’

This type of genitive construction, which was first attested at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is attributed to Bhojpuri and Hindi influence (Baissac 1880; Baker 1972; Corne 1986; Syea 1994, 1995, 2007). Baissac (1880) also attributes it to English influence, and it has been analyzed in the light of the English 's genitive construction by Corne (1986) and Syea (1994, 2007). Despite superficial similarities, MC and English constructions morphologically and syntactically different (Guillemin 2011). For example, with plural subjects, MC has a plural possessive pronoun, while English 's is invariable, as seen in (118).

#### 2.16.4 Possessive pronouns: prenominal: Yes

- (119) *Mo / to / so/ lakaz*  
 1sg.POSS 2sg.POSS/ 3sg.POSS house  
 'My/ your/ his/her/ house'

#### 2.16.5 Possessive pronouns: Different form from subject pronouns: Yes

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> singular and plural possessive pronouns have the same form as the nominative. In the case of the 3sg pronoun, the possessive form is *so*, while the nominative and accusative have the same form, *li* (see Appendix B – Table 1).

#### 2.16.6 Possessive pronouns as emphatic possessive pronouns: No

There are no emphatic possessive pronouns in MC. However, the 3sg possessive pronoun *so* is used as an emphatic determiner with singular or plural referents (see Guillemin 2007):

- (120) *apré so landémain matin,* (Maingard 2002:23)  
 then DET next morning  
 'then that next morning'

(121) *e li obliz zot, ... mem so zanfan, mem*  
 and 3sg force 3pl, even DET *child*, even  
*so vye dimunn*, (Moss 2000: 5)  
 DET old person  
 ‘and he forced them, ... even **the** children, even **the** old people’

## 2.17 Pronouns: Case distinctions?

### 2.17.1 Personal pronouns: Case distinction in the first person singular:

*Yes*

The 1sg pronoun has different forms for the nominative and accusative, namely, *mo*, from French *mon* (‘my’), and *mwa* from French *moi* (‘me’) respectively. Nominative and possessive cases have the same form, *mo*:

(122) **Mo**            *koz*    *ek*    *li*  
 1sg.NOM        speak    with    3sg  
 ‘I speak to him/her’

(123) *Li*        *koz*        *ek*    ***mwa***  
 3sg        speak    with    1sg.ACC  
 ‘S/he speaks to me’

### 2.17.2 Personal pronouns: Case distinction in the second person singular:

*Yes*

The familiar 2sg pronoun has different forms for the nominative and accusative cases, namely *to*, from French *ton* (‘your’) and *twa* from French *toi* (‘you’, accusative case). As with the 1sg pronoun, the nominative and possessive have the same form, *to*, hence the claim that MC *to* derives from French *ton* and not *tu* (‘you’, nominative case). The formal *u*, from the French *vous* (‘you’) is invariant for nominative, accusative and possessive cases.

(124) *To koz ek li*  
 2sg..NOM speak with 3sg  
 ‘You speak to him’

(125) *Li koz ek twa*  
 3sg speak with 2sg.ACC  
 ‘S/he speaks to you’

(126) *U pu bat li*  
 2sg.F FUT hit 3sg  
 ‘You will hit him/her’

(127) *Li pu bat u*  
 3g FUT hit 2sg.F  
 ‘S/he will hit you’

### 2.17.3 Personal pronouns: Case distinction in the third person singular:

*Yes*

Nominative and accusative cases for the 3sg pronoun have the same form *li* - see examples (122) and (123). The 3sg genitive pronoun, however, has the form *so* - see examples (117) and (118).

### 2.17.4 Personal pronouns: Case distinction in the first person plural: No

The 1pl pronoun has the same form *nu*, for nominative, accusative and genitive cases. It is derived from French *nous* (‘we’, ‘us’).

(128) *Nu kontan Pol e Pol kontan nu*  
 1pl like Paul and Paul like 1pl  
 ‘We like Paul and Paul likes us’

(129) *Nu lakaz byen vye*

1pl house very old

‘Our house is very old’

Some speakers of MC make a distinction between inclusive 1pl *nutu*, derived from French *nous tous* (‘all of us’) and exclusive 1pl *nuzot*, derived from French *nous autres* (‘us all’). This distinction is also found in Malagasy. *Nuzot* is defined as ‘the rest of us’ by Baker and Hookoomsing (1987).

(130) *Nu tou humain* (Nit 2009)

1pl all human

‘We are all human’

(131) *banne dimounes qui conne nous zotte* .... (Jumamah 2008)

PL people REL.PRO know us

‘the people who know us ...’

#### 2.17.5 Personal pronouns: Case distinction in the second person plural: No

The 2pl pronoun, and the 3pl pronouns have the same form *zot* for nominative, accusative and genitive cases:

(132) *Zot kontan Pol*

2/3pl like Paul

‘You/they like Paul’

(133) *Pol kontan zot*

Paul like 2/3pl

‘Paul likes you/them’

(134) *Zot lakaz byen vye*

2/3pl house very old

‘Your/their house is very old’

2.17.6 *Personal pronouns: Case distinction in the third person plural: Yes*

The 3pl pronoun has two forms, *zot* and *bannla*. *Zot* is derived from French (*les*) *autres* (‘others’), where the initial *z* results from liaison with the plural definite article. *Bannla* is a fusion of the plural marker *bann* and the specificity marker *la*. Baker and Hookoomsing note that *ban-la* (sic) is ‘employed to refer to a group of people already specified, particularly to avoid an ambiguous use of *zot* (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural)’ (1987: 42, italics not in original). While *zot* can be used for nominative, accusative and genitive case, as in Section 2.17.5, *bannla* can only be used for nominative and accusative cases. It is ungrammatical in the genitive, as shown in (136):

(135) ***Bannla***    *kontan*    *Pol*  
          3pl            like        Paul  
          ‘They like Paul’

(136) *Pol*    *kontan*    ***bannla***  
          Paul like        3pl  
          ‘Paul likes them’

(137) \****Bannla***    *lakaz*    *ble*  
          3pl            house    blue

However, both *bannla* and *zot* can combine in possessive construction when there is a need to make it absolutely clear that *zot* is 3pl and not 2pl:

(138) *Bannla*    *zot*    *lakaz*  
          3pl        3pl    house  
          ‘Them, their house’

### 2.17.7 Reflexive pronoun: Distinct form: Yes

The reflexive forms are *mo-mem* ('myself'), *to-mem* ('yourself'), *li-mem* ('himself/herslef'), *nu-mem* ('ourselves'), *zot-mem* ('yourselves/themselves').

- (139) *To pu fer sa par to-mem*  
2sg FUT do that by 2pl.REFLEX  
'You will do that by yourself'

However, MC also uses *mo/to/so lekor* (derived from French *le corps* 'the body') with a small subset of verbs, e.g.:

- *larg so lekor* meaning 'to give up'. *Larg* is from Fr. *larguer* 'to let go'.
- *tuy so lekor* meaning 'to commit suicide'. *Tuy* is from Fr. *tuer* 'to kill'.
- *pandi so lekor* meaning 'to hang oneself'. *Pandi* is from Fr. *pendre* 'to hang'.
- *pini so lekor* meaning 'to punish oneself'. *Pini* is from Fr. *punir* 'to punish'.

- (140) *Li 'n zet so lekor dan larivyer*  
3sg CMPL throw 3sg.POSS body in river  
'S/he has thrown herself/himself in the river'

### 2.17.8 Interrogative pronouns: Bi-morphemic: Yes

There are both mono-morphemic and bi-morphemic pronouns. The bi-morphemic forms are used when more precise information is required, e.g. the identity of the person in (141), specific instructions in (142), and a specific time in (13). Otherwise, the mono-morphemic forms *ki* ('who/what'), *kuma* ('how) and *kan* ('when') can be used:

(141) **Ki** / **kisenla** *ti vini?*  
 who who PST come  
 ‘Who came?/ Who is it that came?’

(142) **Kuma** / **ki** **manyer** *to fer sa?*  
 how / what manner 2SG do this  
 ‘How do you do this?/ In what way do you do this?’

(143) **Kan** / **ki** **ler** *to pu vini?*  
 when / what hour 2sg FUT come  
 ‘When will you come? At what time will you come?’

#### 2.17.9 *Separate relative pronouns distinct from interrogative pronouns: No*

In this respect MC is like its superstrate, French. However, in MC, the relative pronoun may be omitted:

(144) *Sa bann zanford (ki) pe vini la*  
 DEM PL child (REL.PRO) PROG come SP  
 ‘These children (who are) coming’

(145) *Bann zanford (ki) ti vini la.*  
 PL child REL.PRO PST come SP  
 ‘Those children who came’.

### 2.18 *Coordinating conjunctions*

#### 2.18.1 *‘And’ joining sentences: Yes*

Conjunction *e* from the French *et* (‘and’) is used to join sentences:



(146) *Li chombo so kouraz ar de lame e*  
 3sg grip 3sg.POSS courage with two hand and  
*koumans desann.* (Virahsawmy n.d. a)  
 start go.down  
 ‘He grips his courage with both hands **and** starts to go down’.

2.18.2 ‘And’ joining sentence parts: Distinct from the sentence-joiner: Yes

Conjunction *ek* from the French *avec* (‘with’) is used to join sentence parts:

(147) *Brans ek rasinn donn so lipie mordan, anpes*  
 branch and root give 3SG.POSS foot support stop  
*li glise;* (Virahsawmy n.d. a)  
 3sg slip  
 ‘The branches and roots give his feet support, stop him from slipping;’

While *e* can only mean ‘and’, *ek* like the other conjunction *ar*, can also mean ‘with’:

(148) *Mo’ n manz mang e banana*  
 1sg CMPL eat mango and banana  
 ‘I have eaten mangoes and bananas’

(149) *Mo’ n manz mang ek/ar disel*  
 1sg CMPL eat mango with salt  
 ‘I have eaten mangoes (together) with salt’

Kriegel & Michaelis (2007) note that ‘*Ek* is today the dominant encoding technique for nominal conjunction and the encoding for comitative and related functions’ and ‘*ar* appears to be rarely used in nominal conjunction today. In

most cases *ar* is used in comitative or related functions (2007: 118). Kriegel and Michaelis attribute the use of *ar* to Bhojpuri influence (cf. Hindi *aur* ‘and’).

## 2.19 Prepositions

### 2.19.1 Is there a general locative preposition? Yes

There are a number of locative prepositions, as in French, but no ‘general purpose’ one, although *dan* can mean both ‘in’ and ‘from’:

(150) *Mo pe repoze dan zarden*  
1sg PROG rest in garden  
‘I am resting in the garden’

(151) *Mo sort dan bazar*  
1sg come.out in market  
‘I come from the market’

Other locative prepositions include *anba* (‘under’) from the French *en bas* (‘below’), *lor* meaning ‘above’ from the French *la haut* (‘on top’), etc. Most of the French lexical prepositions transfer into the creole, though, as seen above, some undergo reanalysis, e.g. *depi* from *depuis* (‘since’) acquires both temporal and locative uses in MC.

(152) *Pol pe dormi anba lili*  
Paul PROG sleep under bed  
‘Paul is sleeping under the bed’

(153) *Met diri lor latab*  
put rice on table  
‘Put the rice on the table’

### 2.19.2 Zero preposition after motion verb + place? Yes

The French prepositions *à* ('to'), e.g. *Je vais à Paris* ('I'm going to Paris') and *de* ('from'), e.g. *Je viens de Paris* ('I come from Paris') do not transfer into MC:

(154) *Nu pe al borlamer*  
1pl PROG go seaside  
'We are going to the seaside'

(155) *Nu sort borlamer*  
1pl come.from seaside  
'We come from the seaside'

### 2.20 Miscellaneous

Word order: The same in questions as in statements? Yes

(156) *Mo kapav vini?*  
1sg MOD go  
'May I come?'

(157) *To kontan manz mang?*  
2sg like eat mango  
'Do you like eating mangoes?'

(158) *To pe al Kirpip?*  
2sg PROG go Curepipe  
'Are you going to Curepipe?'

Alternatively, questions in MC are formed using *eski* from the French *Est-ce-que* ('is it'). *Eski* occurs sentence initially, with the order of the following

words exactly as in the affirmative sentence. There is no movement as in the case of *wh* questions in English:

(159) *Eski to pe al Kirpip?*  
 INTERR 2sg PROG go Curepipe  
 ‘Are you going to Curepipe?’

(160) *Eski ou anvi vmem konn mo repons?* (Carpooran 2005: 239)  
 INTERR 2sg.F want really know 1sg.POSS answer  
 ‘Do you really want to know my answer?’

#### 2.20.1 Sentence final *-o*? Yes.

Final *o* is used with nouns, but not with sentences, as in (161), where *Ayo*, possibly derived from the Breton *aiau*, is an exclamation expressing pain, and translates into: ‘Oh! dear!, alsa! ow!, ouch!’ (Baker and Hookoomsing 1987).

(161) *Ayo bondye O?*  
 Alas! God o  
 Alas! Dear God!

### 3 The distinctive features of the Bickertonian creolistic prototype

**Table 1: Bickertonian creolistic prototype features and their presence or absence in Mauritian Creole**

| # | <i>Bickertonian Language Bioprogram</i><br><i>Prototype feature</i> | <i>Realized in Mauritian Creole?</i>              |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Generic or non-specific zero article                                | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.13, 2.15.3         |
| 2 | Fronting of noun phrases for focusing                               | Yes. As in French, this is a marked construction. |

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| <b>3</b>     | Distinction between attributive, locative, existential, and equative 'be'-verbs       | Yes. See HP features, Sections 2.11.1 and 2.15                   |
| <b>4</b>     | Multiple negation   | No. See HP feature, Section 2.10                                 |
| <b>5</b>     | Realized and unrealized complements are kept distinct                                 | No   |
| <b>6</b>     | Relativization and subject copying  | Yes  |
| <b>7</b>     | 'It has' expresses both possession and existence                                      | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.13.5                              |
| <b>8</b>     | Presence of bimorphemic question words  | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.17.8                              |
| <b>9</b>     | There are equivalents of passive constructions  | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.11                                |
| <b>10a</b>   | Zero TMA marks simple past in action verbs and non-past in statives                   | No   |
| <b>10b</b>   | Anterior TMA marks past before past in active verbs and simple past in statives       | No, anterior in all non-copular verbs is marked in the same way. |
| <b>10c</b>   | Irrealis marks unreal time – Future, conditional, subjunctive, etc.                   | Not in this way. See HP feature, Section 2.6                     |
| <b>10d</b>   | Non-punctual marks both durative and habitual   | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.4                                 |
| <b>10e</b>   | The only possible combination of TMA markers is Tense preceding Mood preceding Aspect | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.7                                 |
| <b>Total</b> |   | 9/14 features are positive for Mauritian Creole                  |

Bickerton (1981, 1984) proposed a dozen features which he felt typified creole structures by their co-occurrence. The features presented in Bickerton (1981, 1984) have attracted a great deal of attention, especially among creolists who wished to see a strong connection between the processes of creole formation and generative views of linguistic universals and language development (including first language acquisition). The results for MC are in Table 5; all the features which Bickerton discussed can be found in the Holm and Patrick feature set.

#### 4 Certain features of (largely) Caribbean creoles as manifested in Mauritian Creole

Table 2: Features from Taylor (1971, 1977) and their presence or absence in MC

| # | Feature   | Realized in Mauritian Creole?       |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 3pl pronoun serves as noun plural-marker  | No                                  |
| 2 | A combination of past and future markers marks conditional                            | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.6.2  |
| 3 | The word for 'give' also serves as a preposition meaning 'for' or 'to'                | No                                  |
| 4 | Phrasal 'what thing/person/place/time' serve to indicate 'what?, who?, where?, when?' | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.17.8 |
| 5 | A prepositional phrase is used to express the possessive absolute 'mine, yours' etc.  | Yes. See examples (171) and (243).  |
| 6 | A nominal phrase is employed to express the possessive absolute                       | No                                  |
| 7 | Demonstrative pronouns postposed to referents   | No                                  |

|       |   |  |
|-------|---|--|
| 8     | Definite articles postposed to their referents.   | MC has as zero definite article. The Specificity marker <i>la</i> is postposed See Section 2.15.3. |
| 9     | The pronominal determinant is postposed to its referent as in ‘X my’, ‘X your’, etc.  | No   |
| 10    | ‘(my) body’ also indicates ‘(my) self’  | Yes. See HP feature, Section 2.17.7  |
| 11    | Iterative/habitual merges with completive   | No   |
| 12    | Iterative/habitual merged with progressive  | No   |
| 13    | Iterative/habitual merged with future   | No   |
| 14    | A form such as <i>na</i> is a utility preposition   | No   |
| 15    | A form such as <i>ma</i> indicates ‘but’  | No   |
| 16    | A verb meaning ‘pass, surpass’ is used to mark the comparative  | No   |
| 17    | Verbs meaning ‘come’ and ‘go’ include a feature of directionality when followed by an NP, serving also as ‘come to’ and ‘go to’ | Yes. See HP features, Sections 2.14.1 and 2.14.2.  |
| 18    | Double predication is used  | Yes, see Section 4 Feature 18.   |
| Total |   | 6/18 features positive for MC  |

These features have been taken from Taylor (1971) and renumbered sequentially, with the few additional features which were listed only in Taylor (1977) added at the end of the list as features 16 to 18.

#### 4.16 Sample sentences for some positively-marked features

Examples of features which are not listed in HP include:

- Feature 5: The use of a prepositional phrase to express the possessive absolute ‘mine, yours, etc’ - see example (162).
- (ii) Feature 18: The use of double predication - see example (163).

(162) *Pa manz saki pu mwa*  
 NEG eat what for 1sg.ACC  
 ‘Don’t eat mine’

(163) *Mo kontan mo manze so*  
 1sg like 1sg.POSS food hot  
 ‘I like my food hot’

## 5 Dryer’s list of typological features (Dryer 1992) with examples.

Dryer (1992) developed a list of mostly syntactic typological features which have been examined crosslinguistically among hundreds of languages throughout the world. The Dryer features given here are confined to those which are not also discussed in HP.

**Table 3:** Dryer’s typological features (Dryer 1992)

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Verb-object                                  | Yes: MC is an SVO language                        |
| 2 | Verb-subject                                 | No  |
| 3 | Adposition-NP                                | Yes   |
| 4 | Copula verb-predicate                        | MC has zero copula. See HP features Section 2.11. |
| 5 | <i>want</i> -VP                              | Yes   |
| 6 | Complementizer-S                             | Yes   |
| 7 | Question particle-S                          | Yes   |
| 8 | Adverbial subordinator<br>(e.g. ‘because’)-S | Yes   |



|       |                                  |   |
|-------|----------------------------------|---|
| 9     | Article-noun                     | Indefinite article – noun.<br>MC has zero definite article.<br>MC also has Noun-Specificity marker ( <i>la</i> )<br>See Section 2.15.3. |
| 10    | Plural word-N                    | Yes   |
| 11    | Noun-genitive                    | Yes   |
| 12    | Noun-relative clause             | Yes   |
| 13    | Adjective-standard of comparison | No. Standard of comparison-adjective  |
| 14    | Verb-prepositional phrase        | Yes   |
| 15    | Verb-manner adverb               | Yes   |
| 16    | Adjective-noun                   | Yes and also Noun-adjective. Some adjectives precede and others follow the noun, as in French   |
| 17    | Numeral-noun                     | Yes   |
| 18    | Demonstrative-noun               | Yes   |
| 19    | Intensifier-adjective            | Yes   |
| 20    | Negative particle-verb           | Yes   |
| Total |                                  | 17/20 features positive for MC  |

### 5.16 Examples of Dryer's features in MC

#### 5.16.1 Feature 5 - 'want'-VP

(164) *To 'le danse/ manze/ dormi/ vini*  
 2sg want dance/ eat / sleep/ come  
 'You want to dance/ eat/ sleep/ come'

Where *'le* is a shortened form of *ule*, derived from French *vouloir* ('want').

5.16.2 *Feature 8 - Adverbial subordinator (e.g. 'because')-S:*

- (165) *Enn problem pou reste parski Morisien ek Franse*  
(Virahsawmy 2003)  
a problem FUT remain because Morisien and French  
'There will still be a problem because Morisien and French ...'

5.16.3 *Feature 15 - Verb-manner adverb*

- (166) *Li galoup vit. Li galoup pli vit ki toi.*  
(Virahsawmy n.d. a)  
3sg run fast 3sg run more fast than 2sg.ACC  
'S/he runs fast. S/he runs faster than you'.

5.17 *Feature 16: Adjective-noun*

Adjectives in MC follow the same order as in French with respect to the ones that precede and the ones that follow the noun:

- (167) *Enn zoli rob ruz*  
a beautiful dress red  
'A beautiful red dress'

5.17.1 *Feature 19: Intensifier-adjective*

Some adjectives precede the noun, like *pli* ('more') in the above example, and *mari* ('very'), which is a relatively recent addition to the MC lexicon:

- (168) *Sa manze la mari bon!*  
DEM food SP very good  
'This food is really good!'

*Terib* from the French *terrible* ('terrible') is used as a post-nominal and post clausal intensifier:

- (169) *ti al guet li gramatin bonere terrib*  
 PST go see 3sg morning early INTENS  
 'went to see him very early in the morning'

The adjective is commonly repeated for more 'intensification':

- (170) *Sa rob la zoli zoli terib*  
 DEM dress SP pretty pretty INTENS  
 'This dress is extremely pretty'

## 6 Comments and Conclusions

The material above largely speaks for itself, but a few general observations may be in order. It is very clear that the use of typological tables (with exemplifying phrases and sentences) such as those above tells us a great deal about MC's status as a creole, and also a great deal about its morphosyntactic structure. However, we should not assume that such tables provide us with the totality of MC structure.

Indeed a verbal particle such as *fek VERB* 'have just VERB-ed' could only be accommodated within the confines of these tables with a little bit of sleight of hand, because the existence of particles with such meanings had not been allowed for when these typological tables were constructed. Other features, too, are so language-specific that they would elude most typologists.

A good example of this in MC is the syntactic alternation in many verb sets between 'long' and 'short' forms, which derive from different parts of the French verb (this phenomenon is discussed in Sycia 1992). This feature is common in MC and is found in other Indian Ocean Creoles too, as well as in Louisianais (Neumann-Holzschuh 1989), where alternation between long and

short forms of verbs behaves completely differently from its operation in MC, but it corresponds to nothing similar in French, Malagasy, Makhuwa, Bhojpuri, Tamil, Wolof, Mandinka or any of the other languages which are known to have exerted an influence of some kind (lexical or structural) upon MC, nor is it found in Haitian, Guyanais, or Antillean Creole French (or in creoles with other lexifiers, for that matter). As a result, an extremely interesting feature could have been lost sight of because it is exclusive to a small set of closely-related creoles.

The major conclusion to be drawn from these analyses is that MC's status as a creole language on typological and structural grounds, and a development from a prior pidgin, is impeccable, and that this is borne out also by an examination of the language of earlier MC texts. A brief comparison with another Isle de France Creole is worthwhile. If we compare the MC scores for the Holm and Patrick features (presented here in Section 2) with those for Seselwa given in Chapuis (2007), we see twenty points out of 97 where the two creoles differ. In twelve cases MC as presented in this paper lacks a Holm and Patrick feature which Seselwa uses (given here as 2.1.2, 2.1.3, 2.4.2, 2.8.1, 2.8.6, 2.11.2, 2.14.4, 2.15.3, 2.15.6, 2.16.2, 2.16.6, 2.17.9), while in eight cases MC uses a feature which Seselwa lacks (2.4.4, 2.6.1, 2.8.3, 2.12.4, 2.12.5, 2.15.8, 2.16.1, 2.17.2), although here in some cases (for instance in regard to determiners) there may be more than one interpretation to be put upon the MC data, which may make Seselwa morphosyntax seem more different from MC than it actually is.

There are also considerations as to what the use of tables such as these can tell us about the history and development of individual creoles. We cannot really use these for constructing intellectually viable family trees of creole languages, since the features in these tables are principally typological rather than their being morphemic characters in nature, but it is tempting for us to try to see if we can account for any features shared by two or more creoles with

different lexifiers by reference to anything which we know may possibly hint at some kind of partial common origin.

For example, is there any point in comparing (as some have done) the distinctively creole features of MC versus those of Tok Pisin? After all, both are creoles with Austronesian substrates (Malagasy in the case of MC versus Tolai-Patpatar of New Britain in the case of Tok Pisin). Is this similarity of substrates significant? We think not; the typological range of syntactic and morphological phenomena within Austronesian is so great, and the effects of shaping of so many Austronesian languages (not least Malagasy) by contact-induced change is so immense, that the creoles' fact of a common substrate would only be relevant if both the creoles shared a number of highly marked and non-universal features which were retentions from what we may assume about the structure of Proto-Austronesian (or Proto-Malayo-Polynesian) and which could most fruitfully be attributed to the effects of Austronesian languages upon them, and this they do not appear to do.

As mentioned above, the features which previous investigators have regarded as being symptomatic of a language's creole status are well-demonstrated in MC, but it should not be assumed that these features comprise the totality of MC grammar. Earlier works on this topic, Baker (1972) and Corne (1970), are no less relevant today than in the 1970s.

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## Abbreviations

|         |   |                                     |
|---------|---|-------------------------------------|
| ACC     | - | Accusative Case                     |
| CMPL    | - | Completive aspect                   |
| COMP    | - | Complementiser                      |
| COP     | - | Copula                              |
| DEM     | - | Demonstrative                       |
| DIST    | - | Distal                              |
| F       | - | Formal form of address, as in 2sg.F |
| FUT     | - | Future                              |
| HP      | - | Holm and Patrick                    |
| HP      | - | Holm & Patrick                      |
| INTENS  | - | Intensifier                         |
| INTERR  | - | Interrogative                       |
| IRR     | - | Irrealis                            |
| MC      | - | Mauritian Creole                    |
| MOD     | - | Modal                               |
| NEG     | - | Negation                            |
| NOM     | - | Nominative Case                     |
| p       | - | person (in case of pronouns)        |
| pl/PL   | - | Plural                              |
| POSS    | - | Possessive                          |
| PROG    | - | Progressive aspect                  |
| PROX    | - | Proximate                           |
| PST     | - | Past anterior                       |
| Q       | - | Question                            |
| REFLEX  | - | Reflexive                           |
| REL.PRO | - | Relative Pronoun                    |
| sg      | - | Singular                            |
| SP      | - | Specificity                         |
| SVO     | - | Subject verb Object                 |

## Appendix A

### The Hancock sentences

In two widely-read articles (Hancock 1975, 1987), the leading creolist Ian F. Hancock has presented translations of two sets of sentences and phrases for the purposes of comparison across different groups of creoles. The first sentences (given here as items 51-68) were used to compare the structures of Portuguese, Dutch and Standard Malay on the one hand, and Papia Kristang, Afrikaans and Bazaar Malay on the other, while the fifty sentences presented here first were used in a cross-creole comparison of 33 Anglophone Atlantic creole varieties in Hancock (1987). Some other creolists have obtained translations of these ‘Hancock sentences’ into other creoles of varying backgrounds (including a translation into Guadeloupean Creole made by Mikael Parkvall during a fieldtrip through the francophone Lesser Antilles in 1995), but they have not published their results. Between them the two sets of sentences provide a great deal of structural information about any language into which they are translated. The authors thought that it would be of interest to present translations of these sentences into MC, carried out by the second author. This is the first time to our knowledge that translations of these sentences have been published in a French-lexifier creole.

Mauritian Creole translations of the sample sentences in Hancock (1987)<sup>17</sup>

(180) Three of his friends were there

*Trwa so            bann kamwad ti    la*  
three 3sg.POSS PL friend PST there

(181) My father’s house

*Lakaz mo papa OR Mo papa so lakaz*  
house 1sg.POSS father 1sg.POSS father 1SG.POSS house

(182) He’s my partner

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<sup>17</sup> In order to avoid confusion with the numbering of examples in this paper, Hancock (1987) examples 1 – 50 are numbered as (180) to (229) and Hancock (1975) examples 1 – 18 are numbered (230) to (247).

*Li mo partner*  
3sg 1sg.POSS partner

(183) Where is he?

*Kot li? OR Kot li ete?*  
where 3sg where 3sg be

(184) She's all right

*Li korek*  
3sg all right

(185) Nothing's happening

*Narnyen pa pe arive*  
nothing NEG PROG happen

(186) They're not like that

*Zot pa kumsa*  
3pl NEG like.that

(187) She sees her brother on weekends

*Li zwenn so frer dan wikenn*  
3sg meet 3sg.POSS brother in weekend

(188) She sees her brother by the door

*Li zwenn so frer kot laport*  
3sg meet 3sg.POSS brother near door

(189) His mother is calling him

*So mama pe apel li*  
3sg.POSS mother PROG call 3SG

(190) I will go soon

*Mo pu ale la*<sup>18</sup>  
 1sg FUT go at that moment

(191) Their car

*Zot loto OR Bannla zot loto*  
 3pl car OR 3pl 3pl.POSS car

(192) I walked along there yesterday

*Mo ti mars laba yer*<sup>19</sup>  
 1sg PST walk over-there yesterday

(193) Am I right?

*(Eski) mo ena rezon?*  
 (INTERR) 1sg have reason

(194) She quarrelled with her

*Li ti lager ek li*  
 3sg PST fight with 3sg

(195) Whose child is smaller than mine?

*Piti kisenla ki pli piti ki (seki)*  
 child who REL.PRO more small COMP (which.is)  
*pu mwa?*  
 for 1sg.ACC  
 OR  
*Piti kisenla ki pli piti ki mo piti*  
 child who COMP more small COMP 1sg.POSS child

---

<sup>18</sup>*La* is also used as a clausal determiner, or an adverb, defined by Ledkasyon pu Travayer (2004) as 'at that moment'.

<sup>19</sup> In Mauritian 'along' is *lelon* from Fr. *le long de* (minus the preposition) but it can only be used with an adjoining NP, denoting a specific location, e.g. *lelon larivyer* = 'along the river'.

(196) You (plural) have got to do it

*Zot bizin fer li*  
2/3pl must do 3SG

(197) I have tasted it

*Mo 'n gut li*  
1sg COMP taste 3sg

(198) I like to dance

*Mo kontan danse*  
1sg like dance

(199) I have a song for you (plural) to sing

*Mo ena enn sante pu zot sante*  
1sg havea song for 2/3pl sing

(200) She doesn't sing for us

*Li pa sant pu nu*  
3sg NEG sing for 1pl

(201) She isn't singing

*Li pa pe sante*  
3sg NEG PROG sing

(202) She didn't sing

*Li pa ti sante*  
3sg NEG PST sing

(203) She will sing

*Li pu sante*  
3sg FUT sing

(204) She will not sing

*Li pa pu sante*

3sg NEG FUT sing

(205) She has already sung

*Li 'n fini sante*

3sg CMPL finish sing

(206) She hasn't already sung

*Li pa ankor sante*

3sg NEG yet sing

(207) I will have fixed it on there before tomorrow

*Mo pu finn atas li lor la avan dimen*

1sg FUT CMPL fix 3sg on there before tomorrow

(208) The pockets

*Bann pos<sup>20</sup>*

PL pocket

(209) Albert and his group

*Alber ek so bann*

Albert with 3sg.POSS group

(210) We should have remembered it

*Nu ti 'n bizen rapel li*

1pl PST CMPL need remember it

(211) They asked me if I wanted it

*Zot ti dimann mwa si mo ti (u)le li*

3pl PST ask 1g.ACC if 1sg PST want 3sg

---

<sup>20</sup> Note that *bann pos* can also mean 'some pockets' depending on syntactic position. In subject position, *bann* + N can be (in)definite and in existential sentences *bann* + N is indefinite. See Guillemin (2011).

(212) Tell that man you're sorry

*Dir sa bug la to sori*  
tell DEM bloke SP 2sg sorry

(213) It's your uncle who's talking

*Se to tonton ki pe koze*  
be 2sg.POSS uncle COMP PROG talk

(214) She continually does it

*Tultan li fer sa*  
all.the.time 3sg do that

(215) How do people manage to live?

*Kuma dimunn fer pu viv?*  
how people do for live

(216) Why can't you do it?

*Kifer to pa kapav fer li?*  
why 2sg NEG capable do 3sg

(217) It's as though he's not coming here, isn't it?

*Ondire li pa pe vin isi, non/en?*  
as.though 3sg NEG PROG come here, no/eh?

(218) (Were you asking whether) I want to go with you?

*(Eski to ti pe dimande sipa) mo anvi*  
INTERR 2sg PST PROG ask whether 1sg want  
*al ek twa?*  
go with 2sg

(219) Is there a church in this street?

*(Eski) ena enn legliz dan sa sime la?*

INTERR have one church in DEM road SP

(220) They will soon be tired of fighting

*Byento zot pu fatigue lager*  
soon 3pl FUT tire fight

(221) The dog of the man who lives in that house is named King

*Lisyen sa bug ki rest dan sa lakaz la*  
dog DEM bloke COMP live in DEM house SP  
*(li) apel King*  
(3sg) call King

(222) Here's my book and there's the library

*Ala mo liv e ala bibliotek*  
here's 1sg.POSS book and here's library

(223) Did you walk here or run here?

*(Eski) to ti marse pu vinn isi ubyen to*  
(INTERR) 2sg PST walk for come here or 2sg  
*ti galupe?*  
PST run

(224) She ground the corn with a pestle

*Li ti kraz may ek enn pilon*  
3sg PST crush corn with a pestle

(225) I was so hungry (that) I almost died

*Mo ti telman gayn fem (ki) mo ti manke mor*  
1sg PST so get hunger (that) 1sg PST nearly die

(226) They love each other



*Zot kontan zot*<sup>21</sup>  
3pl love 3pl

(227) He even had another horse

*Li ti mem ena enn lot suval*  
3sg PST even have one other horse

(228) If you were still the leader

*Si to ti ankor sef*  
if 2sg PST still leader

(229) I was merely chatting

*Mo ti nek pe kozkoze*  
3sg PST only PROG chatter

*Mauritian Creole translations of the sample sentences in Hancock (1975)*

(230) Twenty cents' worth of sugar

*Ven su disik*  
twenty cent sugar

(231) When we went to church

*Kan nu ti al legliz*  
when 1pl PST go church

(232) Whenever we go to church

*Sak fwa nu al legliz*  
each time 1pl go church

(233) He is well

*Li byen*

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<sup>21</sup> *Amoure* (*amure*) is also used for 'in love' (Carpooran 2005: 33-34), thus, *zot amure* ('they're in love').

3sg well

(234) He has shoes

*Li ena sulye*

3sg have shoe

(235) That girl's good friend

*Bon kamwad sa tifi la*

good friend DEM girl SP

OR

*Sa tifi la so bon kamwad*

that girl SP 3sg.POSS good friend

(236) Children

*Zanfan*

(237) John's shop

*Labutik Zan OR Zan so labutik*

shop John John 3sg.POSS shop

(238) My gun

*Mo fizi*

1sg.POSS gun

(239) A letter

*Enn let*

a letter

(240) Let's go

*Anu (ale)*

let's go

(241) I give him (a book)

*Mo donn li (enn liv)*

1sg give 3sg (a book)

(242) I see him

*Mo truv li*

1sg see 3sg

(243) This house is mine

*Sa lakaz la pu mwa (sa)<sup>22</sup>*

that house SP for 1sg.ACC (that)

(244) I will go

*Mo pu ale*

1sg FUT go

(245) The children are sitting and playing

*Bann zanford pe asize zwe*

PL child PROG sit play

(246) That tree is very high

*Sa pye la byen ot*

that tree SP very high

(247) That man is running a lot

*Sa zom la pe galup enn pake*

DEM man SP PROG run a l

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<sup>22</sup> The demonstrative *sa* is commonly used at the end of a declarative sentence as *Sa ki bon sa!* ‘This is good indeed!’.

## Appendix B – The pronouns

**Table1: The Possessive pronouns**

|                   |                        | French       | English | MC                       |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|---------|--------------------------|
| 1 <sup>st</sup> p | with masc sg N         | <i>mon</i>   | my      | <i>mo</i>                |
|                   | with fem sg N          | <i>ma</i>    |         |                          |
|                   | with pl N, masc or fem | <i>mes</i>   |         | <i>mo bann</i>           |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> p | with masc sg N         | <i>ton</i>   | your    | <i>to</i>                |
|                   | with fem sg N          | <i>ta</i>    |         |                          |
|                   | with pl N, masc or fem | <i>tes</i>   |         | <i>to bann</i>           |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> p | with masc sg N         | <i>son</i>   | his/her | <i>so</i>                |
|                   | with fem sg N          | <i>sa</i>    |         |                          |
|                   | with pl N, masc or fem | <i>ses</i>   |         | <i>so bann</i>           |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> p | with sg N, mas or fem  | <i>notre</i> | our     | <i>nu</i>                |
|                   | with pl N, masc or fem | <i>nos</i>   |         | <i>nu bannn</i>          |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> p | with sg N, mas or fem  | <i>votre</i> | your    | <i>zot</i>               |
|                   | with pl N, masc or fem | <i>vos</i>   |         | <i>zot bann</i>          |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> p | with sg N, mas or fem  | <i>leur</i>  | their   | <i>(bannla) zot</i>      |
|                   | with pl N, masc or fem | <i>leurs</i> |         | <i>(bannla) zot bann</i> |

**Table 2: Subject pronouns**

|    |                        | French       | English | MC                             |
|----|------------------------|--------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| sg | 1 <sup>st</sup> p      | <i>je</i>    | I       | <i>mo</i>                      |
|    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> p      | <i>tu</i>    | you     | <i>to</i><br><i>u - formal</i> |
|    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> p masc | <i>il</i>    | he      |                                |
|    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> p fem  | <i>elle</i>  | she     | <i>li</i>                      |
| pl | 1 <sup>st</sup> p      | <i>nous</i>  | we      | <i>nu</i>                      |
|    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> p      | <i>vous</i>  | you     | <i>u</i>                       |
|    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> p masc | <i>ils</i>   | they    |                                |
|    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> p fem  | <i>elles</i> |         | <i>zot</i>                     |

**Table 3: Direct Object pronouns**

|           |                              | <b>French</b>   | <b>English</b> | <b>MC</b>                      |
|-----------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>sg</b> | 1 <sup>st</sup> p            | <i>me/m'</i>    | me             | <i>mwa</i>                     |
|           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> p            | <i>te/t'</i>    | you            | <i>twa</i><br><i>u</i> -formal |
|           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> p masc       | <i>le/l'</i>    | him            | <i>li</i>                      |
|           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> p fem        | <i>la/l'</i>    | her            |                                |
|           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> p neuter     | <i>le/la/l'</i> | it             |                                |
| <b>pl</b> | 1 <sup>st</sup> p            | <i>nous</i>     | us             | <i>nu</i>                      |
|           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> p            | <i>vous</i>     | you            | <i>zot</i>                     |
|           | 3 <sup>rd</sup> p masc & fem | <i>les</i>      | them           | <i>zot</i>                     |

**Table 4: The reflexive pronouns**

|                | <b>1sg</b>                 | <b>2sg</b>      | <b>3sg</b>  | <b>1pl</b>                   | <b>2pl</b>                   | <b>3pl</b>   |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| <b>French</b>  | <i>moi-</i><br><i>même</i> | <i>toi-même</i> | masc: <i>lui-</i><br><i>même/</i><br>fem: <i>elle-</i><br><i>même</i> | <i>nous-</i><br><i>mêmes</i> | <i>vous-</i><br><i>mêmes</i> | masc: <i>eux-</i><br><i>mêmes/</i><br>fem: <i>elles-</i><br><i>mêmes</i> |
| <b>MC</b>      | <i>momem</i>               | <i>tomem</i>    | <i>limem</i>  | numem                        | <i>zotmem</i>                | <i>zotmem/</i><br><i>bannla</i><br><i>zotmem</i>                         |
| <b>English</b> | myself                     | yourself        | himself/herself   | ourselves                    | yourselves                   | themselves   |