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# CONVERSATIONS WITH CHRIS

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I knew Chris Corne only through his words. They were enough to make me feel like I knew him personally, and like I had lost a friend when I heard of his death. The words, however, are all still around now, and, as it turns out, still provide me with plenty of food for thought. I'll use these words here to express who he was to me, and what he has left me with: papers, email messages—with subject headers such as 'Miracles'<sup>1</sup> and closing lines I did not always understand such as 'rounout moman sibondjele'—gratitude, and a big debt. I was already once before at a loss for how to thank him for having helped me out, a perfect stranger, with such fervour, wit and kindness:

RS.<sup>2</sup> I'm almost overwhelmed by this helpfulness traveling over the net.

CC. No, that's OK, you're working on things that appear to be directly relevant to stuff I'm interested in. Ergo, if I'm as helpful as I can be now, then there is a possibility that you may remember this when you have written your stuff up, and send me a copy. This cynical honesty ought to fix any feelings of being overwhelmed you may have... But seriously, I would appreciate being kept informed.

Cynical honesty may be better called generosity and graciousness. The problem now is that I can't send him a copy to keep him informed, despite the fact that I do remember him. With this short paper I nevertheless try to make good in a small way on the debt by continuing to think through some of the insights he

provided me with. I hope to reflect who he was by letting him speak for himself.

I met Chris through his online paper *The Melanesian character of Tayo*, hosted at Parkvall's recently defunct Creolist Archives.<sup>3</sup> I was blown away by reading it and wrote to him:

RS. Thank you for your very interesting on-line paper on Tayo.

CC. You seem to be the only person who's read it!

In the unlikely event that this remark bears any truth at all, his paper—a revised extract from Corne (1995)—deals with several areas of Tayo grammar, comparing and contrasting these with Cèmuhî and Drubéa substrate languages, and with the French lexifier. He begins with a description of Tayo pronouns and shows that while forms are derived from French strings and while the basic semantic and syntactic organisation is Kanak, certain features, such as the existence of an 'unmarked dependent & subject index pronoun' *le*, cannot be traced back to other languages, thereby establishing the idea that innovation plays a crucial role in Tayo grammar. In order to assess whether these findings can be generalised, he then moves through relativisation and thematisation, interrogatives, imperatives, existentials and causatives, always pointing out parallels to Melanesian languages and French and always emphasising the clear Tayo innovations, as well as ongoing changes in the language. He concludes that '[t]he areas of grammar studied here have shown that Tayo is in no way a modification of French, nor a relexification of a Kanak language, but that it is a new creation which is essentially Kanak in inspiration' (Corne 1997: 16).

I, on the other side of the globe, in the isolation of the snowy Canadian countryside, was working hard on my MA thesis, trying to account for the morphology of the personal pronouns of Solomon Islands Pijin (SIP). I was similarly faced with the insufficiency of a straightforward calquing or relexification explanation, finding that morphology was a completely innovative piece of language genius. Nowhere was it as clearly phrased or as well put as in Corne's paper, except that it dealt not with Pijin but with Tayo: 'The Tayo pronominal system is thus a new creation whose general inspiration is clearly Kanak but the detail of which is unique to Tayo' (Corne 1997: 5). It could as well have read 'The Pijin pronominal system is thus a new creation whose general inspiration is clearly Eastern Oceanic but the detail of which is unique to Pijin'.

However, I was ignorant of Tayo. I did not know where this creole was spoken, let alone by how many people, and since when. I asked, and Chris answered: by about two thousand people in New Caledonia, half of them in the village of St. Louis, established in 1860, with the first monolingual generation dating back to at least 1920. From the first instance, he was as friendly and egalitarian as he was deadpan:

RS. Is there any good excuse for someone who is supposed to research the Melanesian Pidgin field to know nothing about the existence of Tayo?

CC. None whatsoever. Bibliography attached.

He then quickly asked for and immediately read my manuscript (Selbach 1997), in which I make the point that the Pijin pronominal system (Table 1) is morphologically innovative in that it is, unlike its input languages (English and Eastern Oceanic languages), maximally regular and economical. Person morphemes (*mi*, *iu*, *hem*) that stand alone in the singular combine with a number morpheme (*-fala*) for the plural pronouns, which can be further specified for dual or trial by infixing of morphemes *-tu-* or *-tri-*. This yields a morphologically and lexically efficient and economical fifteen-pronoun paradigm, with only one suppletive form, in the third person plural, *oketa*, which also doubles as the nominal plural marker.

The categories these pronouns describe are identical to those found in the Eastern Oceanic languages of the substrate (Keesing 1988), but the morphology is not based on Austronesian patterns, where singular and plural pronouns typically form a dichotomy of morphologically distinct sets (Wiesemann 1986: 3). That is, while the equivalents for numerals ‘two’ and ‘three’ may form dual and trial pronoun forms as in Pijin, in Austronesian languages, these numerals typically attach to a plural base unrelated to the singular base. In Pijin, English lexemes that were available for labeling the categories of Melanesian—such as *we* or *us*—were rejected, cf. Keesing (1988). Instead, new forms—such as *mifala*—were created with structures which are unique to Pijin. Hence, observations on different parts of the grammar of different languages (primarily of syntax for Tayo, morphology for Pijin) had led us to very similar conclusions. Tayo and Pijin were, it seemed, each unique in comparison to their lexifiers and substrates.

Table 1 juxtaposes strong pronouns of the creoles and their input languages. It compares what Keesing calls ‘focal pronouns’ of Pijin, what Corne terms ‘independent pronouns’ of Tayo, the object and emphatic pronouns of English

and French, and the focal pronouns as reconstructed for Proto-Eastern Oceanic (PEO) by Pawley (72). Cèmuhi and Drubéa, the two substrate languages which Corne (1995, 1997) uses in his comparative study, are classified (in *Ethnologue*, <http://www.ethnologue.com/>) as members of the Remote Oceanic sub-branch of Eastern Oceanic. Keesing (1988) in turn shows that the significant bulk of substrate languages for Solomons Pijin are South East Solomonic languages, the second sub-branch of Eastern Oceanic; he uses reconstructed PEO to demonstrate these languages' commonalities with Solomons Pijin. I here use it as the common ancestor of both groups of substrate languages, Remote Oceanic and South East Solomonic, and thereby as representative of both creoles' substrates. Following entirely Keesing's line of reasoning and argumentation for Solomons Pijin, I suggest that PEO can be useful in such a table of comparison.<sup>4</sup>

|                       | SIP       | TAYO          | ENGLISH | FRENCH         | PEO         |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|----------------|-------------|
| 1sg                   | mi        | mwa           | me      | moi            | *i-nau      |
| 2sg                   | iu        | twa           | you     | toi            | *i-koe      |
| 3sg (an.)             | hem,      | lia, (lya)    | him/her | lui/elle       | *inia (*ia) |
| (inan.)               | (Ø)       | sa            | it      | ça             |             |
| 1excl.dl <sup>5</sup> | mitufala  | (nude tu sel) |         |                | *kamidua    |
| 1incl.dl              | iमितुफाला | nude          |         |                | *kitadua    |
| 2dl                   | iutufala  | ude           |         |                | *kamudua    |
| 3dl                   | tufala    | lede          |         |                | *kidadua    |
| 1excl.pl              | mifala    | nu            | us      | nous           | *kami       |
| 1incl.pl              | iumi      |               |         |                | *kita       |
| 2pl                   | iufala    | uso           | you     | vous           | *kamiu      |
| 3pl                   | oketa     | sola, (lesot) | them    | eux, (ceux-là) | *kida       |

**Table 1: Independent (or Focal) Pronouns<sup>6</sup>**

Table 1 shows that, as far as the categories of personal pronouns go, the three Melanesian languages Solomons Pijin, Tayo and Proto Eastern Oceanic conceptually resemble each other more than they do the European ones,

English and French. Both creoles retain the dual also found in the substrate. They both ignore, or otherwise reject, gender distinctions made in both lexifiers. At best, the tripartite gender distinction in English and French is replaced by an animate-inanimate distinction in Tayo and Pijin. This distinction is made more obviously in Tayo with its separate lexical forms *lia* (also *lya*) and *sa*, and more subtly in SIP by a tendency to omit the pronoun with inanimate referents, meaning a strong preference of third person pronouns (*hem*, *oketa*) to refer to animates.<sup>7</sup> In short, as Corne (1997: 4) says of Tayo: ‘the semantic organisation of the system is essentially Kanak’.<sup>8</sup>

However, while this system transfer is almost perfect, there are exceptions to the substrate rule, and there are differences in what Tayo and SIP chose to transfer or retain. Pijin is more conservative of Eastern Oceanic patterns, as it retains the inclusive-exclusive distinction with pronouns *iumi* and *mifala*. Pijin also, arguably, has lexicalised trial pronouns (*mitrifala*, *iutrifala*, etc.). Tayo has not. Tayo’s substrate languages Cèmuhî and Drubéa also have inclusive and exclusive forms, but Tayo conflates the categories with one general first person plural pronoun *nu*. The periphrastic *nude tu sel* available for expressing the dual exclusive appears to be an optional alternative in Tayo. Hence, despite the obviously strong Melanesian influence of Eastern Oceanic language patterns, both creoles have their own idiosyncracies regarding category transfer. This selectivity again bears on the autonomy of the creoles. What we have here is not ‘a matter of the straightforward relexification of a Kanak language’ (Corne 1997: 4).

In discussing pronominal syntax, Corne points out more such instances of Tayo innovation that set it off slightly from the fundamentally Melanesian base. While the system is divided into dependent and independent elements as in Cèmuhî and Drubéa, the ‘subject index’ *le* is one such innovation that ‘seems not to have any direct, single model’ (Corne 1997: 4) in Cèmuhî or Drubéa. It is an innovation, according to Chris, since the pronominal syntax system of Cèmuhî is more complex, and that of Drubéa less complex.

At the same time, it is once again striking to at least superficially compare the two Melanesian languages in this area of syntax: Corne’s ‘subject index pronouns’ are the terminological counterparts to Keesing’s ‘subject referencing pronouns’ (SRP).<sup>9</sup> These both stand in contrast to a second set of pronouns which Corne terms ‘independent pronouns’, and which Keesing calls ‘focal pronouns’ (FP). Furthermore, the relationship between the phonological shapes of the two sets within each language is comparable, as in both cases the independent/ focal pronouns are either (a) phonologically identical with the

respective index/reference/copy pronoun counterpart, or (b) phonologically expanded with respect to the index form. The following examples illustrate this: (a) Tayo *nu* (1pl. independent) and *nu* (1pl. subject index); Pijin *mi* (1sg. FP) and *mi* (1sg. SRP); (b) Tayo *mwa* (1sg. independent) and *ma* (1sg. subject index); Pijin *hem* (3sg. FP) and *i* (3sg./pl. SRP). Clearly, there is a shared pattern where phonological focussing (in their being literally more pronounced) corresponds to syntactic focussing of independent/focal pronouns.

The third pronominal category which Corne describes for Tayo—that of the unmarked dependent and subject index pronoun *le*—would then appear to remain unmatched in Pijin. Nevertheless, this one-member category bears several at least superficial resemblances to Melanesian Pidgin’s contentious ‘predicate marker’ *i*, known itself under such various names as agreement marker, resumptive pronoun, and *modalité personelle* (see Crowley 2000), and included by Keesing (1988) in the SRP category. This general third person subject referencing pronoun *i* of Pijin is unmarked for number and perhaps underspecified for person features, and is thus the least marked of the SRPs. Similarly, Tayo ‘[*le*] is unmarked for number and person, and is always a subject index’ (Corne 1997: 2). Hence there is some descriptive resemblance and partial terminological overlap between the unmarked subject index *le* and the subject referencing pronoun *i*.<sup>10</sup>

It may also be of interest to compare the two forms themselves:

CC. I agree with you that [...] you have to look at the new system as well as its constituent bits and pieces.

Apart from being among the shortest, phonologically least salient members of the pronoun paradigms, both *i* and *le* are the only two pronouns that must find their origin in their lexifier’s subject pronouns, rather than the object pronouns; *i* is historically derived from English *he* (Keesing 1988), *le* from French *il est* (Corne 1997: 6).

Lastly and perhaps least surprisingly, as far as creoles go, both languages build possessive pronouns periphrastically: compare Tayo *pu mwa* and Pijin *blo mi* to French *mon/ma/mes* and English *my*. Once again, here morpho-syntactically, Tayo and SIP have more in common with each other syntactically than with their lexifiers.

Why, with such doubly strong substrate evidence on hand, did we concentrate on innovation and creativity? Corne (1997: 17) insists ‘[t]his view [relexification] captures a part of the truth. [...] But it is only a *partial view*,

since no account is taken either of innovations or of the French [or English] input in the formation of the new language' (my addition in square brackets; emphasis mine).

RS. ie. to remind that not all is substrate, superstrate or UG.

CC. Hear hear!

These innovations we continued to stress, seeing in them important keys to understanding language contact. Chris called me a natural recruit to Baker's creativist approach, and I was flattered—to be a natural recruit, and then to something so noble-sounding! However, in our exuberance for the uniqueness of Tayo and Pijin, our discussion ignored their sameness. Surely, we neglected this sameness because we were both sufficiently convinced by ample evidence from the Pacific that a basic substrate hypothesis should serve as the point of departure. Corne (1995) makes this very clear by his use of the term 'Melanesian typology' in describing Tayo. And perhaps we continued to stress innovation because we hoped that innovation might provide a key to understanding the mechanisms within the process of language contact and creolisation. While the innovation may appear a small detail, it is a highly significant one that can give a tiny bit more insight into the minds of speakers who have something to communicate, and who sustain mental concepts across the different languages that they speak. I for one believe this still. Nevertheless, I regret not having discussed the similarities, the partial view, with Chris, as it now seems to me to open the door to a host of important questions.

Firstly, it occurs to me that these Pacific languages—New Caledonian French-lexified Tayo and Solomon Islands English-lexified Pijin—provide a case where the term 'creole' ceases to be the 'fundamentally useless' one that it can be made it out to be, as in Corne (1995: 121). Rather, it can become a useful term to discuss languages that have something in common, and which have evolved in comparable environments, circumstance and times, thereby allowing us to meaningfully compare what speakers and language creators do with the tools that the input languages make potentially available. This, of course, brings us to the question of Transfer Constraints (Siegel 1999): When creoles do not do the same thing with those tools available from their speakers' first languages, then shall we find principled reasons, such as relevance or congruence (Siegel 1999) to account for this difference? Why, for instance, did Tayo speakers not salvage the inclusive/exclusive distinction while Pijin

speakers did? Might we be tempted to propose that adequate congruence was easier to come by with English tools than French, or alternatively, can we search for a reason that in the Solomon Islands, inclusion or exclusion has greater (perhaps social) relevance than in New Caledonia? Or, maybe even more interestingly, are there in some cases absolutely no explanations with sufficient predictive strength, and must we leave some things up to chance, and the whim of speakers?

Since the majority of vernacular pronoun features are treated with the same respect for tradition, Tayo and Pijin may provide further evidence for the strength of areal factors, cf. Ross (2001) on ‘metatypy’ in the Pacific. There are marked features in the two creoles’ pronominal systems which are areally strong, and not present in the lexifiers, such as dual number and animacy distinctions. Tayo and Solomons Pijin provide excellent testing grounds which, at the very least, provide a robust example of the instantiation of substrate hypotheses of creole genesis. This is true when each case is taken separately, as Corne and Keesing have done, but is doubly strengthened when they are taken together as Pacific creoles.

An irony that threatens to emerge even from a meaningful and comprehensive linguistic comparison of the two creoles—New Caledonian French-lexified Tayo and Solomon Islands English-lexified Pijin— is that even if such a study revealed significant parallels in the grammars of Pijin and Tayo, we might come no further along, but rather full circle, in any attempt to account for creole genesis with the classical theories. While superstrate and bioprogram hypotheses would continue to have difficulty holding up in the Pacific, we would still be faced with choosing between substrate, diffusion or revised monogenetic theories (among others).

I wish I could have asked Chris about these matters. For one thing, he’d rule out a Pacific monogenetic explanation appealing to the shared history of the two languages and perhaps influenced by an earlier Pacific nautical pidgin (Keesing 1988). Corne (1995) makes clear in the extended version of the paper that Tayo has had an isolated history, and in his emails he expressed his (apparently independently motivated) scepticism for Roger Keesing’s thesis. I asked why:

CC. The basic problem seems to be K’s idea that there was a central-Pacific floating community that generated the forerunner of MPE, whereas it’s pretty clear that the real action was taking place in Oz.



Nevertheless, he did not attempt to sway me from my convictions. Instead, he pointed out something very important: language influence can happen at any point. Regardless of the historical situation, this point is well taken and must indeed be appreciated. The couching in social activity of language is not expendable:

CC. language is a social phenomenon as much as a linguistic one, esp. so when what we are talking about is the creation of a new system to solve an urgent communication problem.

Creoles are best defined in sociohistorical terms, and indeed, there are striking sociolinguistic parallels between Tayo and Pijin as well. Children have a tendency to simplify their parents' language, whether Tayo or Pijin. According to Jourdan (1985, 1989: 27), reduction and streamlining are the major contributions that children make in the continued shaping of Pijin. Corne (1997: 1) describes phonologically reduced forms preferred by younger speakers for several Tayo pronouns, and finds that speakers under forty do not use the dual pronouns at all.

The continued presence of the lexifier, particularly in the urban centers—French in St. Louis, English in Honiara—adds bilingualism as an important influence on the new languages. Young speakers of Tayo gallicise, young speakers of Pijin anglicise. Corne (1997: 5) observes: '[T]he usage of the different age groups at St. Louis today shows a system which is changing, at least partly because of French/Tayo bilingualism.' Compare this to Jourdan (1989: 34) on Pijin as spoken in Honiara: '[T]he influence of English is not linked to creolization (nativization) of Pijin, but rather to the bilingualism of its speakers and their high degree of fluency and contact with English.' Yet '[u]rban Pijin is developing through exploitation of its own grammatical system' (Jourdan 1985).<sup>11</sup> Apparently, it is still too soon to get away from Tayo/Pijin parallels and commonalities. Indeed, postcolonial after-effects are being felt in some of the same ways. Corne will again most aptly conclude, as he does his on-line paper:

It may be noted in passing that the settlement and socio-demographic history of St-Louis and the linguistic data advanced here provide mutual support: the social history prefigures the results of the linguistic analysis, just as these last reflect that history. Corne (1997: 17)

One thing seems clear: the social and linguistic similarities of Tayo and Pijin are deserving of thorough empirical plodding before we can take the above ideas any further. I try to heed the following words of warning Chris threw firmly at me:

CC. That's about the limit of my tiny brain. I'll have to leave all them big questions to fellas like you to play with.

Such sarcasm from the same man who stated simply:

CC. creolisation and decreolisation are the exact same process, in which congruence—a specious surface similarity—seems to play a big role.

and who has thus supplied some of the most insightful and daring answers I've heard: it's in the detail; it's in the speech act; it's in prestige and social factors.

I would have loved to meet him in person. I very much anticipated one such occasion, the symposium *Language Contact and Change: When Languages Meet* at the 1998 Australian Linguistics Institute in Brisbane. Chris Corne was to me the most anticipated person at the Brisbane event. Rebel and trickster, he sent an audiocassette and overheads instead, and thus somehow kept us guessing.

Chris threw me a lifeline when I needed one, as I think he keenly saw my isolation and need for guidance, and a laugh. His taking me seriously, offering a hand to guide me along, telling me what to urgently read and who to immediately contact, his openness to discussion, the thoroughness and humour in his explanations—all this made me imagine him as the representative of a grand, invisible community of scholars. Chris himself never materialised in front of me, but the grand research community certainly has. I have since met many of its members and accepted their hospitality and generosity. They are wonderful people and researchers, and those around me now are a constant reminder of the qualities that make Pacific scholars stand out. The most important lessons from Chris are that humanity and research go together. His interest was content-oriented; he cared about his work and about others interested in it. He also had serious fun with it, and always played down his role. Our conversation ends like this:

CC. Rachel, Sorry, what sarcasm was that? The bit about the 'big questions'? Yeah, it's sarcasm if you like, but I guess I meant to imply that I for one do not feel

competent to deal with such matters, I'm an 'empirical plodder', in Bickerton's immortal words.

Cayenne is the main town in French Guiana, South America. Rounout < un autre, moman < moment, si/bon/dje/le < si bon dieu (vou)ler [veut]. I.e. Au revoir, Deo volente.

Tasol.

Babaille,

Chris

## Notes

- 1 When Chris' 'ol' Babbage engine' had successfully sent or received an attachment, rather than the usual 'unreadable garbage'.
- 2 Emails exchanged with Chris during the spring of 1998 guide this new discussion. They are inserted unchanged, except for the addition of initials RS for myself, and CC for Chris, replacing his ### system.
- 3 Mikael Parkvall assures me that the archive material should soon become available online again, though the location is not yet known. Until then, I would refer the reader to Corne (1995). Without these archives (formerly at [http://creole.ling.su.se/creole/Papers\\_On-line.html#Tayo](http://creole.ling.su.se/creole/Papers_On-line.html#Tayo)) and Mikael's initial help in contacting Chris Corne, none of the following conversation is likely to have happened.
- 4 I nevertheless use it here with some reservation, as I believe Chris would probably dislike this simplistic use of a reconstructed protolanguage. He paid great attention to detail and gave me the distinct impression that he preferred reality to theoretical constructions. He may have also objected to a common Eastern Oceanic ancestor of Tayo and Pijin substrates.
- 5 PEO and arguably SIP also have trial forms for all persons that are not included in this table for reasons of simplicity.
- 6 Data in this table (and the following discussion) for Tayo from Corne (1997), for SIP from Keesing (1988), and for PEO from Pawley (1972) as cited in Keesing (1988: 71). Alternative or optional forms are given in parentheses.
- 7 In SIP all pronouns may be dropped. See Meyerhoff (2000) for an in-depth investigation of what governs the dropping of personal pronouns in Bislama, a sister dialect of Pijin.
- 8 Keesing (1988) has, of course, stressed all these points for Solomons Pijin.
- 9 Corne (1995: 126) specifically considers and rules out: 'pronominal trace', 'resumptive pronouns', 'agreement particles', and 'clitic pronouns' as alternate terms for 'subject index'. He accepts as alternative designation 'predicate marker' and 'copy pronoun'. Keesing (1987) still uses 'copy pronoun' as an acceptable equivalent term for 'SRP', but retracts this in a note following the paper.

- 10 Especially given the debate and multiplicity of analyses in decades of Melanesian Pidgin predicate marking literature (cf. Crowley 2000), it is at least conceivable that some of the disparity between Melanesian Pidgin's two and Tayo's three pronoun categories may lie partly in the analyses and could be theoretically reconciled. I would absolutely not venture to propose anything close to a unified account of personal pronouns and predicate marking for Tayo and Pijin. I merely wish to point out the at least superficial resemblances in the descriptions given by Corne and Keesing of the systems in Tayo and Pijin respectively. I base this suggestion on very limited information, and do not consider the full range of functions of *i* and *le*.
- 11 Jourdan (2000) follows up on the argument of the autonomy of Pijin from a different avenue, that of Pijin kinship terminology.

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# NO CREOLISATION WITHOUT PRIOR PIDGINISATION?

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## 1. Background

Although usually attributed to Hall (1962), the definition of a creole language as a pidgin which has become the native language of a speech community dates back at least as far as Bloomfield (1933) and was the generally accepted view until the 1970s. However, following the publication of Chaudenson (1974) with its emphasis on the importance of the evolutive tendencies within the French language and the contribution of popular and dialectal varieties of French to the formation of creoles, the notion that some, if not all the French Creoles came into being without prior pidginisation met with growing support (Bollée 1977; Valdman 1977). This view soon became the norm within the pages of *Etudes Créoles*, but had little immediate impact on anglophone creolists who continued to assume that creole languages developed out of earlier pidgins. Since the 1980s, however, several creolists who publish wholly or partly in English have rejected this view, but for widely differing reasons.

Bickerton (1981, 1984) was perhaps the first anglophone creolist to reject the view that creoles developed out of earlier pidgins. Although he envisaged a linguistically chaotic initial phase in the earliest years of slave plantation societies, he attributed all the key features of creoles to the innate linguistic capacity of children (the ‘bioprogram’) and denied that any of these features were inherited from a prior pidgin. Indeed, he even denied the existence of ‘a

pidgin' as such, acknowledging only that there was a process of pidginisation. In other words, he claimed that the initial grammar of the creole—the native language of locally-born slaves—derived from the bioprogram with the pidginised speech of their parents merely providing lexical input. He also assumed that creole speakers would thereafter modify their language in the direction of the language of the slave owners (their target language) to the extent that access to the latter enabled them to do so.

Lefebvre's relexification theory (e.g. 1986, 1998) rejects the idea that Haitian Creole derives from an earlier pidgin. In her view, Haitian Creole represents the relexification of Fongbe (and perhaps other African languages) with French vocabulary. She holds that slaves were addressed in varieties of French, rather than in 'foreigner talk' or Pidgin French. In support of this she cites, among other things, the fact that many Haitian nouns have an initial syllable which consists, etymologically, of a French article which is an integral part of the creole word (1998: 64). In her view, this means that slaves were addressed in varieties of French which included normal French articles. However, the great majority of these 'agglutinated' nouns are, in fact, also attested in the Antillais of Guadeloupe and Martinique and it might therefore be argued that all they provide, collectively, is some evidence that a significant proportion of the earliest French settlers and slaves in Haiti were already speakers of Antillais (Baker 1987).

Mufwene (1996) adopts what I have termed (Baker 2000: 43) 'the gradual basilectalisation approach' of Chaudenson (1992) but adapts the latter in ways which make it more acceptable to mainstream American creolist thinking, in particular by attempting to provide an account of how and when African influences could manifest themselves in Atlantic Creoles. The Chaudenson/Mufwene approach assumes that the earliest African arrivals in slave plantation societies acquired the language of slave owners reasonably well but, as the ratio of slaves to slave owners increased rapidly, so later African arrivals progressively acquired their new language from other slaves rather than slave owners with the result that this became increasingly remote from the slave owners' speech (i.e. an approximation of an approximation of an approximation of it). However, neither Chaudenson nor Mufwene has yet published any historical linguistic data to illustrate the developmental process they assume to have taken place, and neither provides any explanation as to why, on adjacent Caribbean islands with similar demographic histories, French and Creole French function as separate languages on some whereas a continuum obtains between English and Creole English on others.



Apart from their rejection of a prior pidginisation stage, what all three approaches above have in common is the assumption that the linguistic consequences of introducing Africans as slave labour in plantation societies were not those which anyone wanted, due to the failure of the Africans either to maintain their languages or to acquire fully the language of their owners. By contrast, since Baker (1990) I have argued that contact languages were precisely what people in contact situations needed and wanted, even if unconsciously, and that is what they collectively succeeded in making.

## 2. Definitions

So far as I am aware, it was Mufwene (1986) who first proclaimed that creole languages cannot be defined in purely linguistic terms. This view has since become very widely accepted among creolists of diverse theoretical tendencies. In fact McWhorter (1998, 2000) is possibly the only person to have argued in print against this in recent years. McWhorter seeks to demonstrate that ‘creole languages can be distinguished [from other, older languages - PB] on a purely synchronic basis’ (2000: 85). To this end, he identifies three features ‘which are known to arise only over time’ (2000: 86) and claims that the lack of all three of these is a combination unique to creoles, reflecting the fact that they are young languages. The three features are lack of: (a) inflectional affixation; (b) tone (tonal contrasts beyond the phonological level); and (c) derivational noncompositionality (2000: 86).<sup>1</sup> Detailed discussion of McWhorter (1998) by DeGraff and several other authors can be found in *Linguistic Typology* 5 (2001).

My purpose in what follows is not to argue for or against the positions of either Mufwene (1986) or McWhorter (1998, 2000) because I am interested primarily in investigating the origin and evolution of the languages generally termed ‘creoles’ rather than in defining the precise meaning of that word in linguistic and/or socio-historical terms. More precisely, the aims in this article are:

- (i) to argue that, even if ‘there are no features that are exclusive to, or universal in, languages generally thought to be creoles’ (Thomason 1997: 73),<sup>2</sup> the identification of features typically found in creoles is a useful exercise;
- (ii) to demonstrate that many features typical of creoles are also typical of pidgins;

- (iii) to claim that this is evidence that they developed, wholly or partially, from an earlier pidgin; and
- (iv) to relate the proportion of ‘typical pidgin’ features in these creoles to socio-historical factors.

With regard to (i), discussions about, for example, whether Reunionnais is a ‘true creole’ or Afrikaans a ‘semi-creole’ have been, and continue to be, largely based on the fact that such languages possess some ‘typical creole features’ and lack others. Such features are widely considered to be indicative of their social history. The provenance of such ‘typical creole features’ thus merits investigation. As pointed out forcibly by Parkvall (CreoList posting of 17 March 1999), most ‘typical creole features’ are also ‘typical pidgin features’ (as will be demonstrated below). Indeed, for some years, I have held the view that there is no clear distinction to be made between pidgins and creoles on linguistic grounds, because the latter are generally elaborations of the former (see Baker 1995).<sup>3</sup>

Given that Chaudenson and a number of other, mainly French, linguists limit the word ‘pidgin’ to highly restricted trade jargons in bi or multilingual contexts, I should make it clear that the considerably wider definition of ‘pidgin’ I use throughout this article is:

a form of language created by members of two or more linguistic groups in contact as a means of inter-communication, the most basic grammatical rules of which are common to all its habitual users regardless of their own primary language, while at least one and perhaps all of the participating groups recognise that this means of inter-communication is not the primary language of any other (Baker 1993: 6).

### **3. Other considerations**

Failure or reluctance to accept that pidgins and creoles have a great deal in common stems in part from the paucity of truly early data which exists on contact languages in the Caribbean area. But, in contrast to most other parts of the world, written pidgin data are available almost from the start of contact in the southwestern Pacific. Early pidgin data from Australia show a high proportion of Aboriginal vocabulary which gradually declines during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the proportion of English words increases. When

Aboriginal people and anglophones first came into contact in the Sydney area, neither party had any reason to aspire to speak the other's language fluently but both needed to communicate with each other in some circumstances, leading to an embryonic pidgin drawing on the languages of both parties. As other British settlements were established at increasing distances from Sydney, anglophones encountered Aboriginal people who understood fewer and fewer of the words from the indigenous languages of the Sydney area. The fact that the diverse Aboriginal languages were largely mutually unintelligible and each spoken within a relatively small area gradually led to diminishing use of Aboriginal words in the pidgin by Europeans and Aboriginal people alike. I strongly suspect that, if abundant early pidgin data were available for other areas, a similar increase in European vocabulary and decrease in non-European vocabulary over the early decades would be found.

In territories where plantations were established using non-indigenous slave labour, I suspect that a pidgin would have developed very quickly even before slaves outnumbered whites, and that this would have had an overwhelmingly European vocabulary from the start. Slave owners may have been less inclined than European traders in West Africa or the Pacific to acquire non-European vocabulary but they nevertheless had to communicate with slaves in order to get any work done and, to achieve that, they would surely have drawn on whatever prior experience they had of communicating with non-anglophones. Ongoing research by Baker and Huber (2001) has already identified a substantial number of features likely to have been known to some of them. As for the slaves, they certainly had no choice but to acquire the European vocabulary of their working environment. And since there were probably several mutually unintelligible languages represented among them, the work vocabulary to which everyone was exposed would present the most promising starting point for communication with someone whose language they did not speak. Furthermore, having travelled so far from their homeland to a totally different world, slaves were not equipped with a vocabulary of their own for naming their new environment. Thus the vocabulary of pidgins which developed in slave plantation societies was likely to be overwhelmingly of European origin from the start.

The fact that slaves acquired the European vocabulary of the workplace does not necessarily mean that they aspired to mastery of that language—nor even that the Europeans would have wanted them to do so. This last point is not widely appreciated. From the European standpoint, having a pidginised variety of one's own language as the means of communication with slaves had

its advantages, providing a linguistic register to match the legal and social divide. In the earliest years it may also have enabled whites to converse with each other in their own language with little risk of being fully understood by slaves. In any case, all the pre-1800 evidence from both anglophone and francophone slave plantation societies of which I am aware suggests that whites chose to address field slaves in the contact language rather than in the European language, thereby reducing opportunities for slaves to acquire the latter had they wanted to do so. All of this seems to be overlooked by the ‘superstratists’—that is, those who emphasise the contribution of the European language to the resulting creole.

While on the subject of superstratism, let me add a few remarks about what Chaudenson has termed the *société d’habitation*, since this name has now become established in the vocabulary of numerous anglophone creolists. The *société d’habitation* refers to the very early period in the settlement of such islands as Guadeloupe, Martinique and Réunion when whites outnumbered blacks, and when whites typically ran small farms. In other words, this is the period which predated the plantation era. During the *société d’habitation* period, it is generally assumed that blacks would have had far greater exposure to the European language than was the case for those who arrived in the plantation era. However, ratios of blacks to whites can only give a very crude indication of the degree of exposure of blacks to the European language. One reason for this is that there were always whites who did not own any slaves, and this was particularly the case in the earliest years. Thus, in a newly established colony (i.e. a *société d’habitation*) with 100 blacks and 100 whites of whom one third owned no slaves, slaves would actually outnumber whites 3:2 in most working environments. Another reason is that if, as I believe, most whites addressed slaves in the emergent contact language (i.e. pidgin) rather than the European language, the ratio would tell us about black exposure to European vocabulary rather than exposure to the European language as such.

A further point is that these *habitations*—small farms—were not situated in isolation but tended to be grouped together, with the consequence that slaves would have frequent communication with a far greater number of other slaves than merely those attached to their particular farm. Overall, slaves would tend to spend far more time conversing with each other than with whites, and would have a wider range of topics to discuss than merely work-related matters. Thus slaves rather than whites would be instrumental in ‘expanding’ the pidgin. This does not mean that no slaves would acquire the European language of their owners. But, importantly, it does mean that even

those slaves—particularly those in domestic service—who did acquire fluency in the European language, would *also* need to be able to speak pidgin and to use this with newly arrived field slaves just as whites did.

#### 4. Pidgin features in Creoles

In Table 1, 24 features I consider to be typical of pidgins are listed under ten headings. The presence of each of these, *at any time during their recorded history*, was checked in the data available to me of 16 languages, most of which are considered creoles by most creolists and all of which are regarded as creoles by at least some creolists. These 16 languages all have a vocabulary drawn overwhelmingly from one of four European languages (English, French, Portuguese, or Spanish). Wherever the data consulted on one of these languages indicates the lack of a particular pidgin feature, its name is listed in the column on the right. The sixteen languages are, in alphabetical order: Antillais (of Guadeloupe and Martinique, collectively), Caribbean English Creoles (collectively), Guyanais, Haitian, Hawai'i Creole English, Indo-Portuguese, Louisianais, Mauritian, Papiamentu, Pitcairnese, Réunionnais, Sãotomense, Sranan, Tayo, Tok Pisin, and Zamboangueno. Note that Tok Pisin differs from all the others in being the first language of only a minority of its speakers—that is, by Hall's (1962) criteria it is simultaneously a pidgin and a creole. The principal sources of data consulted are as follows.

- a) Antillais: All the early Antillais texts mentioned by Hazaël-Massieux (1999), Jourdain (1956a,b), Turiault (1873-76), and Bernabé (1983).
- b) Caribbean English Creoles, Hawaiian Creole English, Pitcairnese, Sranan, and Tok Pisin: All the sources consulted can be found within the list of more than 2000 references prepared for Baker and Huber (2001) which can be consulted at the Creolist Archives, <Creole.ling.su.se/creole>.
- c) Guyanais: St-Quentin (1887) only.<sup>4</sup>
- d) Haitian: All the pre-1900 Haitian sources listed in Baker and Corne (1982: 273-274) plus Sylvain (1936) and Faine (1939).
- e) Indo-Portuguese: All the publications by Schuchardt and Dalgado on Indian varieties of Indo-Portuguese, as listed in Reinecke et al. (1975).<sup>5</sup>
- f) Louisianais: Neumann (1985).
- g) Mauritian: All the sources listed in Baker and Hookoomsing (1987).

- h) Papiamentu: Kouwenberg and Murray (1994) and Grant (1996).  
 i) Réunionnais: All the Réunionnais sources listed in Baker and Corne (1982: 273-274) plus Armand (1987), Chaudenson (1974), and Corne (1999).  
 j) Sãotomense: Ferraz (1979).  
 k) Tayo: Ehrhart (1993) and Corne (1999).  
 l) Zamboangueno: Whinnom (1956), Forman (1972), McKaughan (1954), Grant (1996).

Table 1 is followed by Table 2 in which the 16 languages are listed according to how many of the 24 pidgin features they lack.

**Table 1. Pidgin features**

| PIDGIN FEATURES  | SOME CREOLES IN WHICH THESE ARE NOT (IN EARLY DATA, AT LEAST) |
|--|---|
| <b>1. Gender</b>   |   |
| 1a. Nouns are not subdivided into masculine and feminine (or any other broadly comparable categories).   | Réunionnais <sup>6</sup>                                      |
| 1b. Adjectives do not vary their form according to gender. <sup>7</sup>  |   |
| 1c. Verbs do not vary their form according to gender.  |   |
| 1d. Definite articles which are inherently marked for gender in the source language no longer function as articles.  | Réunionnais <sup>8</sup><br>Zamboangueno <sup>9</sup>         |
| 1e. No gender distinction in pronouns.   | Pitcairnese   |
| <b>2. Number</b>   |   |
| 2a. Major word classes have a single invariable form which is unmarked for number; number can only be determined by context or by a numeral (or another morpheme which is unambiguously singular or plural). <sup>10</sup>             | Indo-Portuguese   |
| 2b. Wherever the lexical source language has a pronoun which is ambiguously singular or plural, this exclusively singular in the pidgin, some other form being adopted or constructed as the corresponding unambiguous plural pronoun. |   |

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**3. Tense, modality or aspect**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 3a. Tense, modality and aspect are expressed by independent morphemes, not by inflections. | Indo-Portuguese (Louisianais) <sup>11</sup><br>(Pitcairnese)<br>(Réunionnais) <sup>12</sup><br>(Sãotomense) |
|--|---|

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**4. Absence of case inflections**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 4a. Major word classes lack inflections for case.  |   |
| 4b. Where pronouns have contrasting nominative oblique forms in the source language, only the forms used by the speaker when pointing to the person(s) represented by the pronoun will be found in the pidgin. <sup>13</sup> | (Hawai'i CE)<br>Pitcairnese<br>Indo-Portuguese<br>Zamboangeño <sup>14</sup> |

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**5. Copula**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 5a. Zero copula in declarative equative sentences. <sup>15</sup> | (Indo-Portuguese)<br>Pitcairnese<br>Réunionnais<br>Sãotomense                                  |
| 5b. Zero copula in declarative locative sentences                | Caribbean ECs<br>Hawai'i CE<br>Indo-Portuguese<br>Pitcairnese<br>Réunionnais<br>Sranan<br>Tayo |

---

**6. Articles**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 6a. The definite article(s) of the lexical source language is replaced by the demonstrative(s) from the latter. <sup>16</sup>                           | (Indo-Portuguese) <sup>17</sup><br>Pitcairnese<br>Réunionnais<br>Zamboangeño |
| 6b. If the lexical source language distinguishes between the indefinite article and the numeral 'one', the latter is adopted as the indefinite article. |  |

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**7. Adjectival intensifier**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| If the usual adjectival intensifier in the lexical source language does not also mean 'a large quantity' it is replaced by a word meaning the latter. <sup>18</sup> | Guyanais<br>Louisianais<br>Pitcairnese<br>Tayo |
|---|--|

**8. Negator**

The negator can only occur predicate initially.<sup>19</sup>  
 Réunionnais

Louisianais,  
 (Sãotomense)<sup>20</sup>  
 Tayo

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**9. Interrogatives**

Monomorphemic interrogatives in the lexical source language are replaced by bimorphemic structures with literal meanings as indicated below:<sup>21</sup>

9a. Who = ‘which/what person/body’

Hawai‘i CE  
 Indo-Portuguese  
 Louisianais  
 Pitcairnese  
 Réunionnais  
 Tayo

9b. What = ‘which/what thing’

Zamboanguéño  
 Guyanais  
 Haitian  
 Hawai‘i CE  
 Louisianais  
 Mauritian  
 Réunionnais  
 Tayo  
 Zamboanguéño

9c. Where = ‘which/what side/place/part’

Hawai‘i CE  
 Indo-Portuguese  
 Louisianais  
 Papiamentu  
 Réunionnais  
 Tayo  
 Zamboanguéño

9d. When = ‘which/what hour/time’

Guyanais  
 Hawai‘i CE  
 Réunionnais  
 Tayo  
 Zamboanguéño

9e. How = ‘which/what manner/way’

Guyanais  
 Hawai‘i CE  
 Papiamentu

Réunionnais



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|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 9f. Why = ‘what make/cause’ | Guyanais<br>Hawai‘i CE<br>Indo-Portuguese<br>Papiamentu<br>Pitcairnese<br>Zamboangueno |
|-----------------------------|--|

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**10. Prepositions**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 10a. Absence of the most basic monosyllabic locative preposition in the lexical source language as an independent morpheme (English <i>to</i> , French <i>à</i> , Portuguese/Spanish <i>a</i> ).     | Pitcairnese   |
| 10b. Absence of the most basic monosyllabic genitive preposition in the lexical source language as an independent morpheme (English <i>of</i> , French/Portuguese/Spanish <i>de</i> ). <sup>22</sup> | Papiamentu<br>Pitcairnese<br>Sãotomense<br>Zamboangueno |

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**Table 2. Number of pidgin features NOT attested in particular Creoles (in early data)**

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|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Réunionnais                         | 12 |
| Pitcairnese                         | 11 |
| Indo-Portuguese                     | 10 |
| Zamboangueno                        | 9  |
| Hawai‘i Creole English              | 8  |
| Tayo                                | 7  |
| Louisianais                         | 6  |
| <i>Average for all 16 languages</i> | 5  |
| Guyanais                            | 4  |
| Papiamentu                          | 4  |
| Sãotomense                          | 4  |
| Caribbean English Creoles           | 1  |
| Haitian                             | 1  |
| Mauritian                           | 1  |
| Sranan                              | 1  |
| Antillais                           | 0  |
| Tok Pisin                           | 0  |

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## 5. Results

As indicated above, 24 Pidgin features in all are listed in Table 1 under ten headings. All 24 are found only in Antillais and Tok Pisin but none of the other languages has fewer than 12 of these. Five of the features are common to all 16 languages (1b, 1c, 2b, 4a, 6b).

The three languages which lack the largest number of Pidgin features are Réunionnais (12), Pitcairnese (11) and Indo-Portuguese (10). A common factor in the socio-historical circumstances in which these originated is that the first European male settlers had non-European consorts. In such circumstances, it seems likely that considerably more effort would be made by both parties to ensure that the non-Europeans acquired the European language than would have been the case if the non-Europeans had been slaves (even if, as Chaudenson (1992) supposes, slaves had been almost members of the family in the early days). In other words, I would not expect these European males to allow anything as far removed as a pidgin from their European language to develop among or be used by their womenfolk. In contrast to what I consider to be the norm for all the languages I have hitherto regarded as creoles, I willingly acknowledge that, in these three cases, the European language was the genuine target language of the women concerned.

It is worth noting that the creole status of Réunionnais has been denied by some creolists, starting with Corne (1982). Conversely, as Mühlhäusler (1998) reminds us, Pitcairnese has not traditionally been considered a creole at all and, if some creolists have recently termed it such, this is not as a consequence of their having done any research on the language. However, no one seems previously to have cast doubt on the ‘true creole’ nature of Indo-Portuguese. Possible contributory reasons for this is that the studies available until comparatively recently were fairly sketchy and not written in English or French, while more modern work has dealt with varieties heavily influenced by indigenous languages.

Zamboanguéño lacks 9 pidgin features—only one less than Indo-Portuguese—yet its ‘true creole’ status has never been questioned. With plural pronouns and a number of other key grammatical items adopted from Philippine languages, it has even attracted the approving attention of substratists. Its early history is not well established but it is certainly possible that Spanish soldiers and their Filipina consorts played a key initial role in the process, a situation somewhat similar to those in which Indo-Portuguese,

Pitcairnese and Réunionnais originated. Note also that three of these four languages developed in places which did not experience slave plantations and that in the exception—Réunion—slavery of any kind postdates the arrival of the Frenchmen with Malagasy consorts by quite a margin while nothing conforming to Chaudenson's (1992) definition of a plantation was to exist there for a further half century.

One feature which only these four languages lack is feature (6a), the replacement of the European definite article by a demonstrative. In initial encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans lacking a common language, it is easy to imagine how, accompanied by pointing gestures, Europeans would have tended to use demonstratives in indicating goods to be traded or work to be performed but such circumstances would not have applied in the case of any of these four languages.

Two other languages which lack rather more than the average number of Pidgin features are Hawai'i Creole English (8) and Tayo (7). Although it was his work on Hawai'i Creole English which led Bickerton to his language bioprogram hypothesis, one important thing he did not tell us about that language is that the Americans established special schools to educate the children born to immigrants working on the plantations in Hawai'i. In other words, they were subjected to English-medium education several hours per day, five days per week. The people involved in the construction of Tayo were similarly exposed to education in a European language, but in this case French. In both cases children appear to have acquired the vocabulary but ignored much of the grammar of the language in which they were educated and this might well reflect a somewhat ambivalent attitude to their medium of instruction. I think it would be fair to suggest that the European language was what their teachers wanted the children's target to be rather than the children's own target.

In Table 2, four languages cluster around the average score—Guyanais, Louisianais, Papiamentu, and Sãotomense. There is no obvious shared socio-historical factor here. Nevertheless they do share one thing in common—there is almost no linguistic data for all of these prior to the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It could well be that, if and when more early data comes to light for these creoles, they will reveal a few more pidgin features.

The last six languages listed in Table 2 include the five which are probably the best known and most studied creole languages: the Caribbean English Creoles, Haitian, Mauritian, Sranan, and Antillais. All these languages lack no more than one of the 24 pidgin features. None of them has any inflections for

gender, number, tense, modality, aspect, or case, nor do they have any reflex of the European copula in declarative sentences. All the latter features are among the most widely recognised characteristics of pidgins. If pidginisation had not taken place, and if these languages had evolved as approximations of approximations of approximations of a European language, as the gradual basilectalisation approach of Chaudenson and Mufwene would have us believe, some traces of these features would surely survive, as they do in Réunionnais, Pitcairnese, Indo-Portuguese and, to a lesser extent, Zamboangueno.

The final language, Tok Pisin, has all 24 pidgin features. This is to be expected because Tok Pisin has a well recorded history as a pidgin and, even now, is the first language of only a small, but steadily increasing, proportion of its speakers. It is thus technically a creole for just a small minority of Papua New Guineans and remains a pidgin, as a second or additional language, for the vast majority of its users.

## 6. Conclusions

The answer to the question of the title of this article depends crucially on the meanings assigned to the terms ‘pidginisation’ and ‘creolisation’, and these in turn depend on how the words ‘pidgin’ and ‘creole’ are defined. If one takes the view that any language termed ‘creole’ by its speakers and/or by at least some linguists can legitimately be considered a creole, then the answer to the question has to be ‘no’ with respect to Réunionnais, Pitcairnese, and Indo-Portuguese. These languages can indeed be accounted for by the approach advocated by Chaudenson and Mufwene (although that would not necessarily imply a complete absence of pidginisation in the areas concerned). That said, few people would consider these to be typical representatives of the languages known as ‘creoles’. I feel that they should be regarded as a special category of contact languages and, given their social history, perhaps termed ‘homestead creoles’. (Historical research is needed on Zamboangueno to determine whether this also belongs to this category.)

Another special category of contact languages is formed by those in which formal education played a major role—Hawai‘i Creole English and Tayo. These might be termed ‘school creoles’. One sign of the effects of early exposure to formal education could be the use of interrogatives from the European language rather than the bimorphemic forms which are found in most pidgins and creoles.

All the other creoles listed in Table 2 have, or formerly had, between at least 75% and up to 100% of the pidgin features listed in Table 1. I consider all of these to be ‘true creoles’ in that they developed out of an earlier pidgin in conformity with the ‘classic’ theory—that is, they were pidgins which subsequently became the first language of a community.

The three categories identified above may be contrasted with regard to the notion of ‘target language’. For the ‘homestead creoles’ (Réunionnais, Pitcairnesse, Indo-Portuguese, and perhaps Zamboangueno), it seems likely that both Europeans and non-Europeans involved in the initial contact situation were agreed that the European language was the target of the non-Europeans. For Hawai’i Creole English and Tayo, Europeans decided that the European language should be the target of the non-Europeans and made arrangements to achieve that, but the non-Europeans appear to have been less enthusiastic about this, and to have strayed from the imposed target, drawing on other features and strategies at their disposal<sup>23</sup> in order to create a new form of speech which was, in some sense, ‘their own thing’. For all the other languages, the ‘true creoles’, it is my view that the initial target for all parties was the construction of a medium for interethnic communication. All parties, including Europeans (see Baker and Huber 2000, 2001), brought whatever prior experience they had of communicating with people who did not speak their own language to this task. Thereafter this co-existed with the European and diverse non-European languages, becoming in most cases the first language of the non-European population only after the abolition of the slave trade as knowledge of non-European languages faded.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the three categories of contact languages I have identified above are not meant to be exhaustive. Afrikaans and Michif—to mention but two other contact languages with rather different social histories—probably do not belong to any of these three categories.

## Notes

- 1 Many of the Pidgin features listed in Table 1 below are examples of (a). However, (b) is ignored in that table because it is absent both from all the creoles considered as well as from the European languages from which they derive most of their vocabulary. Furthermore, (c) is ignored because, although there are some apparent counter-examples, these could well turn out to be calques.
- 2 Five of the 24 pidgin features set out in Table 1 below are in fact shared by all 16 creoles which feature in that table.

- 3 Combinations of two or more preverbal TMA markers appear to occur only in creoles. (The Pidgin Englishes of Nigeria and Cameroon do now have such combinations but this appears to be due to comparatively recent influence from Krio.)
- 4 Since the publication of St-Quentin's book there has been significant immigration by speakers of Antillais, and this has had a major impact on Guyanais.
- 5 Modern publications on Korlai Creole Portuguese and all works on Sri Lankan Indo-Portuguese were excluded from consideration. These varieties are today heavily influenced by indigenous languages but it is unclear how much of this influence is a relatively recent development.
- 6 Nouns in Réunionnais have gender insofar as nouns which are masculine in French co-occur with the masculine singular definite article *lo* (variant: *l'*) while those which are feminine in French co-occur with the feminine singular definite article *la*. However, no other word class has gender so there is no kind of gender agreement in Réunionnais.
- 7 There is marginal evidence of such pairs as *fou/folle*, *blanc/blanche* in some French Creoles but this has been ignored here. (It is my suspicion that the survival of such contrasts is related to the former and/or continuing existence of such contrasting pairs as nouns, e.g. *fou* 'madman', *folle* 'madwoman' in Mauritian Creole.)
- 8 As indicated in footnote 4 (above), Réunionnais has contrasting masculine and feminine singular definite articles. Chaudenson (1974: 355-358) makes no mention of *l* as a singular definite article. It is thus not clear whether the initial *l* in a word such as *lavortman*, which Armand (1987) lists alphabetically under *A*, is a definite article or an integral part of the word. For example, is the Réunionnais for 'an abortion' *ē lavortman* or *ē avortman*?  
 In contrast to French, there is no distinction of gender in the Réunionnais indefinite article which has a single form, *ē*.
- 9 Zamboangueño has the Spanish masculine article *el* as the definite singular article for all count nouns.
- 10 Note that Zamboangueño nouns with a final *-s* which derive from Spanish plural nouns are in fact unmarked for number in this language and may co-occur with the indefinite article.
- 11 In Louisianais, verbs distinguish short and long forms and the choice between these forms reflects tense and aspect. However, whether these distinctions have always formed part of the language or are due to more recent influence from Louisiana French and Cajun remains to be determined.
- 12 Réunionnais verbs have up to four forms: *m i dor* 'I sleep', *mwe la dormi* 'I slept', *alō dormir* 'let's sleep', *m i dora pa* 'I won't sleep'. Where the corresponding French verbs have infinitive in *-er*, the past participle and infinitive forms fall together in Réunionnais: *m i sāt*, *mwe la sāte*, *alō sāte*, *m i sātra pa*. Note that the past participle/infinitive form usually loses its final vowel in non-final position: *m i sāt ē pti sega* 'I sing a little *sega* [song]'

- 13 In English, the oblique pronouns are normally used when pointing to identify the person(s) concerned with the exception that *we* is generally preferred to *us*. Hawai'i Creole English is almost alone among the English-based contact languages in having *us* rather than *we* (see Baker and Huber 2000).
- 14 Zamboangueno preserves (modified but suppletive) case systems in its pronouns of both Spanish and Hiligaynon origin (Anthony Grant, p.c.).
- 15 Although pre-1800 data for Caribbean English Creoles are rare, they suggest that zero copula preceded the use of *da* with nominal predicates, consistent with Arends' (1989) findings for Sranan.  
 Modern Zamboangueno offers the choice between zero copula and an overt copula (of Bisayan origin) in equatives: *byeho el ombre or el ombre amo byeho* 'the man is old' (Anthony Grant, p.c.).
- 16 I am persuaded by Anthony Grant (p.c.) that Papiamentu *e* is an abbreviated form of earlier *es*, from Spanish *este* 'this' (rather than from the Spanish masculine definite article *el*).
- 17 Taken as a whole, Indo-Portuguese shows a tendency towards use of Portuguese demonstratives for the definite article but some varieties use *o* as the latter (regardless of whether the following noun is masculine or feminine in Portuguese). (Absence of any article, definite or indefinite, is also frequent, probably reflecting the influence of local languages.)
- 18 This does not apply to Portuguese *uito* and Spanish *mucho* since both also mean 'a lot of'.
- 19 East Australian Pidgin English originally had an Aboriginal clause initial negator (attested in various spellings: *bael*, *baal*, *bail*, *bel*, etc.) but this was gradually replaced by predicate initial *no*.
- 20 Sãotomense and the other Gulf of Guinea Creoles have a two-part negator, one part of which occurs predicate-initially, the other predicate-finally.
- 21 These features are often associated with creoles (e.g. Bickerton 1981) but they occur in Chinese Pidgin English (which never had native speakers) and Melanesian Pidgin English (before it had native speakers) so they are also pidgin features.
- 22 Corne (1999: 113, 151) mentions marginal use of genitives with forms deriving from French *de* in the creoles of French Guiana and Louisiana. In excluding these here, I am assuming that genitive structures without this preposition are attested earlier in these varieties but this remains to be confirmed.
- 23 Notably the pre-existing local Pidgin English in Hawai'i, and indigenous languages of New Caledonia in the case of Tayo.

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# BWAXAT TO BISHOP:

## AN EARLY MELANESIAN-PIDGIN ENGLISH TEXT

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### 1. Introduction

Documents in the languages of Melanesia from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century are not abundant, and direct evidence about the development of Pidgin English in the area is fragmentary. The text to be presented here not only enlarges both of these corpora, but is of special interest in being bilingual, with one version of the text in the Fwâi language of New Caledonia, and the other in a form of Pidgin English.<sup>1</sup> The former is the earliest recorded text in any language of New Caledonia; and the latter is the longest single text from the sparsely documented Sandalwood English phase of Pacific Pidgin English history.

### 2. Origins and composition

The authorship, date and place of composition of the text are, up to a point, easily established. It is a letter, dated 'Fengen, 18 July, 1852', and signed 'Basan, Dama Iehen' (Basan, Chief of Hienghène<sup>2</sup>). It is addressed to 'Bishop', referring to George Augustus Selwyn, Bishop of New Zealand, who on this date was visiting Hienghène, on the northeast coast of New Caledonia, aboard the mission vessel *Border Maid*.

Selwyn (1809-1878) had arrived in New Zealand in 1842 to become the country's first Anglican Bishop. After several years spent establishing the

Church in New Zealand, he turned his attention to the evangelisation of the islands to the north, and began making annual cruises there, to assess the need for mission work in the region, and where possible to find boys who could be taken to New Zealand and educated in the Church's college, ultimately returning to their own communities as Christian teachers (Hilliard 1970, 1978). The first of these cruises was aboard *HMS Dido* in 1847-8. In 1849 and 1850 Selwyn sailed his own schooner, *Undine*, and in 1851 and 1852 the much larger *Border Maid*, bought with funds given by Anglicans in New South Wales.

Bwaxat<sup>3</sup> (c.1815-1873) was one of the best known Melanesian leaders of his time (Douglas 1978; O'Reilly 1980: 42-43). As chief of a large and powerful tribe, he had early established contacts with sandalwood traders in the area (Shineberg 1967: 74), and like other ambitious Pacific Island leaders in the post-contact, pre-colonial period, he encouraged potentially useful foreigners to settle in his domain (O'Reilly 1980: 42).<sup>4</sup> In 1848 he and his brother had visited Sydney as guests of the trader Robert Towns.

Although annexation of New Caledonia by France was only a year away at the time the letter was written, Bwaxat's foreign contacts and his sympathies still lay mainly with the English. He had asked for an English missionary on Selwyn's first visit in 1849 (Erskine 1853: 356), and continued to do so until the last, in 1857, but Selwyn was never able to comply with his request. In 1858, as a consequence of his anti-French activities, Bwaxat was exiled to Tahiti, and the Hienghène area was closed to foreigners (Douglas 1978: 251, n.47; Hilliard 1978: 46). The Church of England never established a foothold on the mainland of New Caledonia.

If the identity of the nominal writer and recipient of the letter, the date and place of writing, and the general historical background are clear, there are other respects about which we know far less. First, the whereabouts of the original manuscript is unknown; the text as presented here is taken from a typewritten transcript made in the 1930s.<sup>5</sup> Internal evidence suggests that the transcription is quite accurate, but it has not been possible to check the occasional suspected error against the original.

More seriously, we know little about the actual process of construction of the bilingual text. According to the only detailed account of the 1852 voyage (Anon 1853):

Our old friend Basan the chief of the place came on board, and remained with us during our stay. ... Basan dictated to the Bishop an urgent request to the Church in Sydney and New Zealand for an English Missionary to reside at his place.

We have it, then, that Bwaxat ‘dictated’<sup>6</sup> the letter to Selwyn. Presumably this refers at least to the Fwâi version; Selwyn’s knowledge of the language must have been minimal, and composition of a complete text would have been well beyond his capabilities.<sup>7</sup> This version, then, was literally dictated, word by word, by Bwaxat for Selwyn to write down. What about the English version? The typescript is labelled a ‘translation... by Bishop Selwyn’, but this seems like a hasty supposition by Prebble (or some earlier annotator of the manuscript). The second text is neither a translation into standard English, nor a series of strict morpheme by morpheme glosses. A more plausible scenario would be that Bwaxat first dictated the Fwâi version, then offered his own translation in his own English, which Selwyn faithfully transcribed. The two versions correspond quite closely, as will be seen; to what extent this results from good memory on Bwaxat’s part, or to what extent he may have followed the already written Fwâi version in dictating the English, is hard to say. Bwaxat himself was not literate in any language (Douglas 1978: 35), but Selwyn could have read back the Fwâi version, phrase by phrase, and taken down the translation.

While the 1852 letter might seem a paradoxical document—Selwyn writing a letter ‘to’ himself, ‘from’ Bwaxat, who was with him at the time—it makes sense when we bear in mind that the real intended readership was not Selwyn himself, but (as the chronicler notes above) ‘the Church in Sydney and New Zealand’. Bwaxat offered his goodwill and material support for a missionary, and noted the nearby presence of rival French (Catholic) missionaries—all points that Selwyn himself would undoubtedly have emphasised in urging the need for Anglican missionaries in Melanesia to his church associates at home.

### **3. The texts and notes**

Prebble lists the two texts as separate items in his Bibliography, suggesting that they are on separate manuscript pages. The typewritten versions in his Appendix are presented successively as ‘Letter’ (Fwâi) and ‘Translation’ (English), each run on as a single paragraph (Prebble 1931: Appendix: 18-19). Since the two texts are closely parallel, and each helps at some points to clarify the other, I present them below in tandem, with division into numbered lines for purposes of discussion. The top (bold) line is the Melanesian text from Prebble; below this are Fwâi morpheme identifications (using the orthography

of Haudricourt and Ozanne-Rivierre (1982)) and glosses,<sup>8</sup> the bottom (bold) line is the English text from Prebble. Insofar as possible I have aligned corresponding words and phrases vertically. English words in square brackets have no direct counterpart in the Fwâi text. The parallel version is followed by a free English translation, with references to the numbered lines.

**Fengen.9 18. July. 1852.**

1. **Bishop, do ti pei nen Missionary Englin,**  
*do ti- peei na-n*  
 2sg go.down say prl-to  
**Bishop, you go tell Missionary English,**
2. **niamen we tame mo Iehen,**  
*nyame-n we ta-me moo Yheengen*  
 heart-3sg that go.up-here stay Hienghène  
**he like come stop Iengen,**
3. **wo kehea wo, wowen Papali**  
*wo kohea wo wo hwen pupwaale*  
 1sg good 1sg 1sg like European  
**me very good me all the same white man**
4. **niamung nen Papali wele mo onbalong**  
*nyamo-ng na-n pupwaale we-le moo hobalo-ng*  
 heart-1sg prl-to European that-3pl stay near-1sg  
**me like white man stop along with me**
5. **Koi pegatch, koin guna, niape woi nahun sip -**  
*koi pexaac koi guna hya peei wo hina hun-sip*  
 no fight no steal not 1sg know way-lie  
**No fight, no steal, me no tell lies**
6. **Wo kohea wo, we tame pai weranga,**  
*wo kohea wo we ta-me phwâi vera nga*  
 1sg good 1sg that go.up-here make indef house  
**Me very good, [me] make build house**

7. **wole nga na wo hai la kōk**  
*wo le ga na wo hai la kuuk*  
 1sg fut indet give 1sg much indef yam  
**Me give plenty yam,**
8. **y nani nuko, nai konj, hai tep.**  
*hai nani hnook hai khûny hai thep*  
 much goat female much sugar.cane much coconut  
**plenty nani goat, plenty sugar cane, plenty cocoa nut.**
9. **We tame mo ra, hai mben Missionary.**  
*we ta-me moo rha hai bee-n*  
 that go.up-here stay here much friend-of  
**He come stop here, plenty man belong Missionary.**
10. **Hai haok wele tibuk.**  
*hai haok we-le tii buuk*  
 much child that-3pl write book  
**Plenty boys make a write, make a book.**
11. **Missionary Wiwi ile mo Puiehiepo, i le mon Balad.**  
*yele moo yele moo*  
 3pl stay 3pl stay  
**Missionary French stop Puarepe, stop Balad.**
12. **Missionary Englin wele ma mo Fehen.**  
*we-le maa moo*  
 that-3pl invit stay  
**Missionary English come stop Iengen.**
13. **Wele mo ne wan ngong.**  
*we-le moo ne hwa-n ngo-ng*  
 that-3pl stay at door-of house-1sg  
**Stop my house.**
14. **Fendami raichien nga; We paiweranga hūn.**  
*vhe-da-me ra cee-n nga we phwâi vera nga hun*  
 carry-go.up-here indef wood-of house that make indef house big  
**He bring wood, make a house.**



15. **Ve niamen dahōt, ye talin dahōt.**  
*ne nyame-n daahoot ye ta le daahoot*  
 if heart-3sg river he go.up to river  
**He like river, [stop] river.**
16. **Ve niamen tha, ia mo ra.**  
*ne nyame-n tha ye moo rha*  
 if heart-3sg here 3sg stay here  
**He like here (i.e. at sea), stop here**
17. **Vatut ta Paik, tale Pinji, ta Koerne, ta Mebia,**  
*ta ta le ta ta*  
 go.up go.up to go.up go.up  
**Bye bye go Paik, go Pinji, go Kornii, go Uebia,**
18. **hen Truho, hen a Ngona, hen a to Wande, hen Penda#s,**  
*hen hen hen hen*  
 go.along go.along go.along go.along  
**go Truho, go Ngoma, go Wande, go Pendas,**
19. **hel e Wanach, hen Ote,**  
*hen le hen*  
 go.along to go.along  
**go Wanach, go Ote,**
20. **kohea kahuk be Missionary,**  
*kohya kahok bee-n*  
 good man friend-of  
**[tell a man] very good man belong Missionary,**
21. **when kahun Dilvu, when kahun Mare.**  
*hwen hwen*  
 like like  
**all the same man Lifu, all the same man Nengone.**
22. **We Pitami Missionary Englin, tame tha.**  
*we pe-ta-me*  
 that refl-go.up-here go.up-here here  
**[Make haste] Missionary English, come here.**

|               |                      |              |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 23. <b>Ye</b> | <b>petaro</b>        | <b>tame.</b> |
| <i>ye</i>     | <i>pe-taru</i>       | <i>ta-me</i> |
| 3s            | refl-quick           | go.up-here   |
|               | <b>Come quickly.</b> |              |

24. (Sgd.) BASAN

|               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| <b>Dama</b>   | <b>Iehen</b>    |
| <i>daahma</i> | <i>Yheengen</i> |
| chief         | Hienghène       |
| <b>Dama</b>   | <b>Fehen</b>    |

#### *Free Translation*

1. Bishop, go and tell an English missionary 2. who wants to come and live at Hienghène. 3. I am good, I am like Europeans. 4. I want Europeans to live with me. 5. There is no fighting, no stealing, I am not a liar. 6. I am good. Let him come and build a house.<sup>10</sup> 7. I will give many yams, 8. many goats, lots of sugar cane, many coconuts. 9. If he comes to live here, there will be many friends of the missionary. 10. Many boys writing books. 11. The French missionaries are at Pouébo, they are at Balade. 12. Let English missionaries come and live at Hienghène. 13. Let them live at my place. 14. Bring some wood, to build a big house.<sup>11</sup> 15. If he likes the river, he can live on the river. 16. If he likes it here, he can live here.<sup>12</sup> 17. Then<sup>13</sup> he can go to Paik, to Pije, to Kornî, to Wevia, to Touho, 18. to Kongouma, to Tiouandé, to Pindache, 19. to Ouanache, to Ote,<sup>14</sup> 20. to say that<sup>15</sup> it is good to be friends of the missionaries, 21. like the Lifu people,<sup>16</sup> like the Nengone people. 22. Let English missionaries come, come here.<sup>17</sup> 23. Come quickly. 24. Signed: Basan, Chief of Hienghène.

## 4. The language

I will not comment in detail on the vernacular version of the text. Considering Selwyn's extremely limited knowledge of the language, he seems to have been a good scribe. For the most part it is grammatical Fwâi. Apart from a few apparent mistranscriptions between manuscript and typescript, there are a small number of features which agree better with the closely related Pije language (Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre, p.c.). Whether these are the result of recent changes in Fwâi, or of some sort of language mixing by Bwaxat, is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Bwaxat is described by contemporary observers as fairly proficient in English. J. E. Erskine, who met him the year after his visit to Sydney, noted that he spoke English 'sufficiently well to maintain a conversation tolerably without the aid of an interpreter' (Erskine 1853: 354). The French geologist Jules Garnier, in the 1860s, said that he knew both French and English well, but preferred to express himself in the latter (Garnier 1867-8: 194).<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the English of this text shows a number of features which distinguish it from native-speaker English and place it within an identifiable Pacific Pidgin English (PE) tradition. The pidgin of this particular place and time (southern Melanesia from about 1840 to the 1860s) has been referred to as 'Sandalwood English'<sup>19</sup> (Clark 1979-80, 1983; Keesing 1988, Ch.3). The existence of such a language is clearly articulated by Garnier, though he has no name for it:

Il est un langage en Nouvelle-Calédonie qui se parle sur toute la côte et sert de moyen de communication entre les kanaks et les blancs et quelquefois entre les blancs eux-mêmes, quand ils sont de nation différente; ce langage a pour base l'anglais, mais on y rencontre des mots français, chinois, indigènes, tous plus ou moins altérés. (Garnier 1867-8: 171)

[There is a language in New Caledonia which is spoken all around the coast and serves as a means of communication between Kanaks and Whites and sometimes between the Whites themselves when they are of different nationality; this language is based on English, but in it one finds French, Chinese and native words, all more or less corrupted.]

The Sandalwood English period began with the first sustained Melanesian-European contact, with sandalwood and *bêche-de-mer* traders based in Australia operating in southern Melanesia from about 1840. These traders brought with them a form of Pacific PE which had developed, in eastern Australia during the preceding two decades, a number of salient features which were to become characteristic of Melanesian PE (Baker 1993). At the end of the period, in the 1860s, the English-Melanesian contact situation in New Caledonia dissolved as a consequence of resource exhaustion (sandalwood) and the imposition of French rule. Sandalwood English ceased to exist. In the New Hebrides, however (and for a time in the Loyalty Islands), the recruitment of indentured labour for distant plantations in Queensland, Samoa

and Fiji created new situations for a contact language, and Sandalwood English formed a major source for early Melanesian PE—the ancestor of today’s Bislama, Solomons Pijin and Tok Pisin (Clark 1983; Crowley 1990b).

Continuity between these successive types of pidgin can be recognised by a number of diagnostic features of grammar and lexicon. A short list of these was used in Clark (1979-80), while Baker (1993) gives a much larger list with greatly expanded documentation. Crowley (1990b: 187-200) systematically compares grammatical features of Sandalwood English with those of modern Bislama, while Baker and Huber (2001) place the Pacific varieties in a global context.

Overall, Bwaxat’s pidgin is neither precocious nor retrograde—most of the features discussed appear in other sources from New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands during the period 1840-1860, and in the New Hebrides a little later.

Features such as *all the same* ‘(be) like’ (3), *bye bye* ‘after a time’<sup>20</sup> (17), preverbal *no* for sentential negation (5), *me* in subject position (passim), *plenty* ‘much, many’ (7-10), and the location verb *stop* (passim) are found in pidgin and creole languages in both the Atlantic and Pacific hemispheres, generally from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onward. They persist into modern Melanesian Pidgin (MP). Features with a Pacific origin which also come down to the present include possessive *belong* (9, 19)<sup>21</sup> and *nani (goat) ‘goat’*.<sup>22</sup>

Some other aspects of Bwaxat’s pidgin are typical of early Pacific PE but were not destined to survive. The comitative preposition *along with* (4) has world-wide distribution, but disappears from MP. Phrasal *very good* for ‘good’ is common in early Pacific records but is replaced by *good* in MP. The Fwâi text also has *wiwi* ‘French’, an early Pacific pidgin item, rendered as *French* in the PE version.

The most notable innovative feature here is the first recorded appearance of Head + Attribute order in noun phrases, as in *Missionary English* (1) and *man Lifu* (21). This order is distinctive of MP, and clearly based on the substrate Oceanic languages. (A separate source<sup>23</sup> suggests that Bwaxat may have used *pigeon* as generic for ‘bird’, which would be one of the earliest recorded uses of this characteristic MP lexical item.)

Some features well attested from early Pacific PE through to modern MP are conspicuous by their absence in this text. The numerous phrases in the text referring to locations and goals are unmarked, with no appearance of the locative/directional preposition *along* which was to become a common feature of MP (*long*). Conditionals seem to be purely paratactic (15, 16), even though

one might have expected Fwâi *ne* ‘if’ to be rendered by *suppose* (MP *sapos*). None of the transitive verbs show the suffix *-Vm*, but as Crowley (1990b: 287) notes, this remains sporadic until relatively late in the development of MP.

Finally, it must be noted that we have here a very early, spontaneous example of the type of parallel bilingual text elicited from Solomons Pijin speakers by Keesing (1988). Keesing was concerned to demonstrate a fairly detailed calquing of Oceanic structures into PE—a process which, he argued, was repeated over generations and played a major role in the formation of MP structure. In the Bwaxat text, while overall rhetorical or discourse structure of the PE text does follow the Fwâi quite closely, there seems to be little fine calquing of grammatical patterns. We have already noted one clear example in Head + Attribute order. The absence of overt marking of location and goal phrases might reflect the fact that most of these are in fact unmarked in Fwâi. However, the absence of a PE word corresponding to Fwâi *ne* in conditionals has been noted as surprising. In addition, the emphatic duplication of subject pronoun *wo* (3, 6, 7), the suffixed possessive construction translated with *he/me like* (2, 4) (literally ‘his/my heart is to’), and the distinctive Fwâi idioms corresponding to *me no tell lies* in (5) (literally ‘I do not know the way of lies’) and *my house* in (13) (literally ‘at the door of my house’), find no reflection in the PE text.

## Notes

- 1 My attention was first drawn to the text by the citation of the English version (slightly abridged) in Hilliard (1970: 132). This led me to Prebble’s thesis and the accompanying Melanesian version. On the problem of locating the original manuscripts, see below. I am grateful to Terry Crowley and especially to Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre for comments on an early circulated version of the text.
- 2 Except in direct quotes from the 1852 documents, this and other place names will be given their conventional French spellings.
- 3 The spelling used here, and for the rest of this paper, reflects the phonemic shape of the name in Fwâi. The name is commonly represented in French orthography as ‘Bouarate’, but also Boarat, Boirat, etc (Douglas 1978: 45, 50, 52). ‘Basset’ was apparently the name commonly used by English speakers during the sandalwood period. ‘Basan’ appears to be unique to the documents studied here, and I have no explanation of the deviant final consonant.
- 4 The Pidgin English of another such leader is analysed in Crowley (1990a).
- 5 The two versions of the letter in typescript are appended to A. E. Prebble’s MA thesis on Selwyn (Prebble 1931: Appendix A: 18-19). Prebble labels the two

texts as follows: ‘5. MS Letter. Basan, Chief of Yengen (New Caledonia) to the Bishop of New Zealand, containing an appeal to the Churches in Australia and New Zealand to send an English Missionary to his district. Dated, Yengen. 18 July, 1852.’ and ‘6. MS translation of the above letter by Bishop Selwyn.’ (Prebble 1931, Appendix B: 81) He does not indicate the provenance of the manuscripts, but they seem likely to have been among those he found “sadly neglected” and “stored away in careless fashion” in the Provincial Office of the Anglican Church in Auckland (Prebble 1931: ii). Unfortunately these have now been dispersed to a number of locations, and it has not so far been possible to locate the Bwaxat-Selwyn letter. I am grateful to archivists Eddie Sun of St. John’s College, and Janet Foster of the Auckland Diocesan Archives for information and assistance.

- 6 The same word is used by Prebble (1931: 67), whose account is evidently based on Anon. (1853).
- 7 The early voyages had brought home to Selwyn Melanesia’s ‘amazing multiplicity of languages’:

as if the curse upon the builders of Babel had fallen with tenfold weight upon the race of Ham, and had involved them in a ‘confusion worse confounded’ than that which fell upon the rest of the human race. (Selwyn Letters 216, also in Tucker 1879, I: 301)

Having learned some Māori, he was able to make himself understood in places like Tonga and Samoa, as well as Polynesian-speaking enclaves in Melanesia such as Emae in Vanuatu and Ouvéa in the Loyalty Islands (Selwyn Letters 264: 312). Elsewhere, the most he could do, when time and circumstances permitted, was to learn some rudiments, either from locals on the spot or from the boys who accompanied him to Auckland. It was not until the arrival of the linguistically gifted John Coleridge Patteson, first Bishop of Melanesia, in 1855, that some progress began to be made on this front. The ultimate policy adopted was the use of the Banks Islands language Mota as a church lingua franca.

- 8 The following abbreviations are used in the morpheme glosses: 2, 3 - second person, third person; sg, pl - singular, plural; fut - future; indef - indefinite; indet - indeterminate; invit - invitative; prl - pre-locative; refl - reflexive.
- 9 The ‘F’ here and in line 12 is presumably a mistranscription for ‘T’ or ‘Y’.
- 10 The second part of this line does not seem to correspond. The Fwâi seems to mean something like ‘Let him come and build a house’, whereas the English says ‘I will build a house (or have a house built)’.
- 11 ‘Big’ in the Fwâi version does not appear in the English.
- 12 ‘River’ refers to the valley of the Hienghène River, ‘here’ to the coastal area at its mouth. The letter was written on board the ship at anchor in the bay. The words ‘(i.e. at sea)’ are apparently an interpolation by the original manuscript writer.
- 13 *Vatut* apparently corresponds to *Bye bye*, but the Fwâi word cannot be identified.

- 14 The places named in (17) with the verb *ta* ‘go up’ are localities up the Hienghène River valley. Those in (18-19), with the verb *hen* ‘go along’ are southwards along the coast between Hienghène and Touho.
- 15 English *tell a man* has no counterpart in the Fwâi text.
- 16 Fwâi *kahun* cannot be identified with certainty, but cf. *kahuk* ‘man’, *-n* ‘of’.
- 17 English *make haste* has no counterpart in the Fwâi text.
- 18 Bwaxat did not learn French until his exile in Tahiti from 1857 to 1863 (O’Reilly 1980: 42-43).
- 19 Crowley (1990b: 187ff.) refers to the same language as ‘Early Beach-la-Mar’.
- 20 While *bye bye* here is merely a time adverbial, in Melanesian PE it undergoes a process of grammaticalisation into a future tense marker.
- 21 Possessive *belong* is recorded in Australia as early as 1826, and in Fiji in the 1840s. Bwaxat’s use is its earliest occurrence in southern Melanesia.
- 22 The Fwâi text shows *nani* as generic ‘goat’, but the English *nani goat* appears to translate ‘female goat’ (*nani hnook*).
- 23 ‘.. Richards presented Bwaxat with a double-barrelled gun which the chief had requested in order to shoot birds. ... soon becoming a capable marksman, he succeeded in adding ‘pigeon’ to his diet.’ (Shineberg 1967: 74-75)

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# TENSE AND ASPECT IN CAYENNE CREOLE

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## **Abstract**

A detailed diachronic study of the lexically French Cayenne Creole of French Guiana reveals that the preverbal tense-aspect marker system differs significantly from the system that Bickerton (1974, 1981) claims to be typical of creole languages. The study also concludes that the system evolved significantly over more than a century. The roles and evolution of two distinct irrealis markers over 150 years are examined, and found to indicate an evolution of the marker system that began with the ‘nonpunctual’ marker and then added the ‘irrealis’ marker. Analysis of the ‘anterior’ marker shows that this was the last to be added to the system. Despite occurring several generations after the genesis of the creole, the evolutionary trends in the predicate marker system clearly indicate that the system as it is today bears little resemblance to the way the first speakers of Cayenne Creole marked tense and aspect.

## **1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Cayenne Creole developed from contact between French settlers and their African slaves in the South American plantation settlement of French Guiana.<sup>2</sup> It was the native language of the French colonists’ children by 1743, and of the slaves’ children at least a generation earlier. Cayenne Creole probably emerged between 1690 and 1710, or thirty to fifty years after the first slave ship brought Africans to the colony (Jennings 1995). Dialects of the new language arose in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when colonisation expanded beyond

Cayenne into other regions of French Guiana, and when speakers of the lexically French creole of Martinique settled in parts of the colony (see Corne 1971 for a description of the Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni variety). In the last few decades, the influence of standard French, notably in broadcasting, has led to the decreolisation of the language. Fauquenoy-Saint-Jacques (1978:4) has heard this decreolised version described by its speakers as ‘mauvais créole’ [bad creole] or ‘guyanais corrompu’ [broken Guianese], but the language has recently acquired a wider function as a lingua franca between recently-arrived non-francophone immigrant communities (Schlupp 1997:5-6). In this paper the term Cayenne Creole will be used to refer to the Cayenne dialect of French Guianese Creole before the period of decreolisation.

The first recorded phrase of Cayenne Creole comes from 1744, and others from 1797 and 1824. The principal 19<sup>th</sup> century sources are an 1848 abolition proclamation (Sournia 1976:3-8), a grammar accompanied by fables, songs and poems (Saint-Quentin 1872) and a novel written in a conversational and familiar style, *Atipa* (Parépou 1885). Principal 20<sup>th</sup> century sources are the studies of Horth (1948), Saint-Jacques-Fauquenoy (1972), Contout (1973), Peyraud (1983) and Schlupp (1997). Other French Guianese Creole dialects are described by Corne (1971) and Tobler (1983). Modern literary sources used in this paper are Lohier (1980), Bricault (1976) and Francius and Chanol (1987). Note that the authors’ original spelling will be used in all examples in this paper.

Cayenne Creole conforms to all definitions of a creole language. For example,

Creoles are languages born of the European colonisation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in societies, generally insular, where the arrival of large numbers of slaves, made indispensable by agro-industrial development, modified the mode of transmission of the European language. (Chaudenson 1995:93, my translation)

Bickerton (1981: 4) states that a language is a creole if it arose ‘out of a prior pidgin which had existed for not more than a generation’ in a population ‘where at most 20 per cent were speakers of the “dominant” language and where the remaining 80 per cent were linguistically diverse’. Corne (1995: 121) has suggested that the term ‘creole’ is ‘fundamentally useless’ since ‘there are no “Creole languages” in a linguistic and typological sense’. Indeed

most recent definitions of creoles refer to sociohistorical and demographic criteria rather than linguistic ones (e.g. Baker and Corne 1986). Nevertheless, a number of creole languages share apparently similar linguistic features, especially in the way they mark tense and aspect. Such creoles usually arose rapidly in a European slave-based plantation colony, generally in the Americas or the Indian Ocean during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, from language contact between Africans and Europeans, where the former substantially outnumbered the latter. Cayenne Creole fits this historical description, and this paper investigates whether its tense-aspect system conforms to the Bickertonian model.

## **2. The ‘typical’ tense-aspect system**

For this paper, the ‘typical’ tense-aspect system corresponds to a list of similar features cited by Bickerton (1974: 5-6, 1981: 58), based on his comparison of Sranan, (lexically English) Guianese, Haitian and Hawaiian Creole. Bickerton has apparently compared the modern systems of these languages, as if they had not changed since their inception. These features are as follows:

- (a) The zero form marks simple past for action verbs and nonpast for state verbs.
- (b) A marker of anterior aspect indicates past-before-past for action verbs and simple past for state verbs.
- (c) A marker of irrealis aspect indicates ‘unreal time’ (= futures, conditionals, subjunctives, etc) for all verbs.
- (d) A marker of nonpunctual aspect indicates durative or iterative aspect for action verbs, and is indifferent to the nonpast/past distinction. This marker cannot normally co-occur with state verbs.
- (e) All markers are in preverbal position.
- (f) All markers can combine, but in an invariant ordering, which is: anterior + irrealis + nonpunctual.
- (g) The meaning of anterior + irrealis is ‘an unrealised condition in the past’ (Bickerton 1974: 5-6).

- (h) The meaning of anterior + irrealis + nonpunctual is ‘an unrealised condition in the past, of a nonpunctual nature’ (Bickerton 1974: 5-6), something like *if only X would have gone on doing Y ...*
- (i) The meaning of anterior + nonpunctual is ‘a durative action or series of nondurative actions taking place either before some other event under discussion, or during a period of time regarded as definitely closed’ (Bickerton 1974: 5-6).
- (j) The meaning of irrealis + nonpunctual is ‘a nonpunctual action occurring in unreal time’ (Bickerton 1974: 5-6) e.g. a future progressive.

Bickerton (1981: 58) further notes:

The tense particle expresses +anterior (very roughly past-before-past for action verbs and past for stative verbs), the modality particle expresses +irrealis (which includes futures and conditions), while the aspect particle expresses +nonpunctual (progressive-durative plus habitual-iterative). The stem form in isolation expresses the unmarked terms in these oppositions, i.e. present statives and past non-statives.

Modern French Guianese Creole (and its Cayenne dialect) appears to conform to Bickerton’s system with its three preposed markers: *te* for anterior, *ke* for irrealis, and *ka* for nonpunctual. Only six combinations of the possible eight are attested (see Table 1); ‘irrealis + nonpunctual’ and ‘anterior + irrealis + nonpunctual’ are rare or unattested in many creoles. However, 19<sup>th</sup> century Cayenne Creole differs in several ways from the Bickertonian system, as will be discussed below.

The system as outlined in Table 1 ignores many other aspectual markers, such as the completive *fin* or *fini* that are present in a number of lexically French creoles, and may give the impression that the three-particle system is closed. These other markers may encroach on the semantic domain of one of the three principal particles, and in some cases replace it. Thus the additional particles can be responsible for diachronic variations in the creole (see e.g. Baker 1994: 77 for Mauritian Creole).

| ANTERIOR | IRREALIS | NONPUNCTUAL | FORM               |
|----------|----------|-------------|--------------------|
| -        | -        | -           | <i>V</i>           |
| -        | -        | +           | <i>ka V</i>        |
| -        | +        | -           | <i>ke V</i>        |
| -        | +        | +           | <i>*ke ka V</i>    |
| +        | -        | -           | <i>te V</i>        |
| +        | -        | +           | <i>te ka V</i>     |
| +        | +        | -           | <i>te ke V</i>     |
| +        | +        | +           | <i>*te ke ka V</i> |

**Table 1: Bickerton's tense-aspect system applied to Cayenne Creole**

### 3. The zero or unmarked form

The zero form indicates the speaker's unmarked perspective of an action. In Cayenne Creole, this is punctual and thus completive. Should the perspective be modified, a marker, usually but not necessarily *te*, *ka* or *ke*, is added to indicate the change:

1. *Atipa levé, li payé Sazi et pis li soti.*  
 Atipa get up 3sg pay Sazi and then 3sg leave  
 'Atipa got up, paid Sazi and then he left.'  
 (Paré pou 1885:86)
2. *Anglai pran Yapoc, yé mené monopère alé.*  
 English take Oyapock 3pl take priest go  
 'The English have taken Oyapock and have taken the priest away.'  
 (Saint-Quentin 1872:95)

Some verbs in the zero form appear neither nonpunctual nor completive:

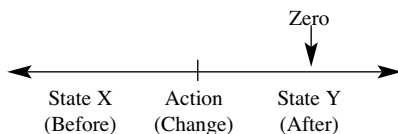
3. *Mo trouvé li temps, pou nous changé li.*  
 1sg find 3sg time for 1pl change 3sg  
 'I think it's time we replaced him.'  
 (Paré pou 1885:76)

4. *Mo oulé palé zòt.*  
 1sg want speak 2pl  
 ‘I want to speak to you.’  
 (Saint-Quentin 1872:67)

Traditionally a distinction is made between these verbs (‘statives’) and other verbs (‘nonstatives’). This distinction may have been created to account for the different tenses used when translating into French or English stative verbs (‘present’) and nonstatives (‘preterite’), but such a distinction is not necessary in Cayenne Creole. A better approach is to assume that verbs can be both stative and nonstative. Every verb has a dual meaning: it describes both an action and the state that results from the action.

In Figure 1, State X has been terminated by a punctual action and a new state Y has come about. The zero form of the verb—the speaker’s normal perception of this situation—lies in State Y. From this perspective, the action is punctual and State Y is progressive. The verb refers both to the action and to State Y (the consequence of the action).

**Figure 1: The zero form**



The zero form of the verb *soti* in (1) means ‘he left’ (nonstative) and ‘he is no longer in the building’ (stative). *Mo trové* in (3) means ‘it is my opinion that’ (stative) and ‘I have formed my opinion’ (nonstative).

#### 4. The marker *ka*

According to Bickerton, the nonpunctual aspect marker indicates progressive and habitual aspect. Cayenne Creole conforms to this system.

#### 4.1 Progressive aspect

Progressivity, ‘the combination of continuous meaning and nonstativity’ according to Comrie (1976:38) is shown in (5) and (6):

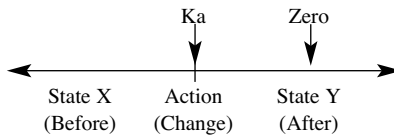
5. *Nous criole, ca changé, qué temps, kou toute langue.*  
 1pl Creole *ka* change with time like all language  
 ‘Our Creole changes over time like all languages.’  
 (Paré pou 1885:12)

6. *A vrai ça zaffai la, doumandé Wacapou?*  
 be true dem business/thing det ask Wacapou

*Coument, to ca doumandé mo, si ça vrai, réponne Atipa.*  
 What 2sg *ka* ask 1sg if dem true reply Atipa  
 ‘‘Is that true?’’, asked Wacapou. ‘‘What, you’re asking me if it’s  
 true?’’ replied Atipa.’  
 (Paré pou 1885:20)

Normally, the change (action) from one state to another (X to Y) is punctual. In (5) and Atipa’s reply in (6), the speaker sees the action as being in progress, with no indication of completion or of the existence of State Y. It is therefore nonpunctual, having internal structure. To indicate this change of perspective, the speaker marks the zero form with *ka*. Figure 2 shows the shift of perspective from State Y to the interior of the action.

Figure 2: Shift of perspective brought about by *ka*



In the Bickertonian system, ‘stative’ verbs cannot normally occur with the nonpunctual marker; phrases such as (7) are claimed to be exceptions.



7. *Mó ka savé* .  
1sg *ka* know (something)  
'I am beginning to understand.'  
(Saint-Jacques-Fauquenoy 1972:81)

The speaker wants to show that the act of understanding is not yet over; the point of reference moves from State Y to within the action. This movement is marked by *ka*, just as it would be for any other verb, 'stative' or 'nonstative'. Like any other verb, *savé* 'to know something', refers to both the state (of knowledge, of having learnt) and to the action (the passage from ignorance to understanding).

*Ka* once had a function that did not conform to the 'typical' tense-aspect system. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it also marked the future negative (Saint-Quentin 1872:139), presumably representing the continuation of a current state, rather than a new action that would change the state. But for more than a century, *ke* has been the marker of the future negative.

#### 4.2 *Habitual aspect*

When the same action is repeated, State X is followed by State X, with no indication of State Y.

8. *Sanmedi (...) mo ca fronmein yé pou mounne pas vòlò yé.*  
Saturday 1sg *ka* close 3pl for people neg steal 3pl  
'On Saturdays (...) I lock them up to stop people stealing them.'  
(Parépou 1885:126)

In (8), for example, we have no indication of the other days of the week when State Y would exist. The action of locking up has begun, but is not yet over. The point of reference is within the action and *ka* is therefore used to indicate this change of perspective.

## 5. The marker *ke*

### 5.1 *Function*

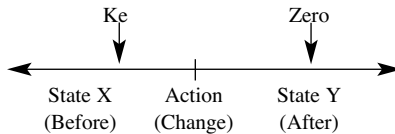
The modern irrealis marker in 20<sup>th</sup> century Cayenne Creole, *ke*, conforms to the Bickertonian system. It marks events that have not happened or may not happen:

9. *Li ké vini sasé so soumaké.*  
 3sg *ke* come look for poss money  
 ‘He will come looking for his money.’  
 (Bricault 1976:136)

10. *Mo pa savé si li ké rété.*  
 1sg neg know (something) if 3sg *ke* stay  
 ‘I don’t know if he will stay.’  
 (Francius and Chanol 1987:15)

The unrealised events are the action and the subsequent State Y. The point of reference is thus situated in Event X. To show this change of perspective from the zero form, the speaker uses the irrealis marker (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Shift of perspective brought about by *ke***



### 5.2 *Wa*: The predecessor of *ke*

While *ke* appears to be a typical irrealis marker, it did not emerge until more than a century after Cayenne Creole developed. Saint-Quentin’s 1872 grammar states that *wa* is the future marker (1872:133). Horth (1948:28) stated that *wa* was the archaic form of *ke*. In 19<sup>th</sup> century texts the two markers coexist, with *wa* dominating, but covering different semantic domains. *Ke* marked close or definite futures, while *wa* indicated distant futures and hypothetical conditions:

11. *To ké prend quichose ké nous; apré, nous wa soti.*  
 2sg *ke* take something with 1pl after 1pl *wa* go out  
 ‘You’ll have something [to eat] with us; then we’ll go out.’  
 (Paréou 1885:158)

12. *Bongué wa aidé to, réponne bonhomme la; mo ké prié pou to.*  
God *wa* help 2sg reply man det 1sg *ke* pray for 2sg  
“‘God will help you’”, replied the man. “I will pray for you.”  
(Paré pou 1885:172)

Other lexically French creoles also differ from the Bickertonian system. In Tayo temporal adverbs, and other strategies, are used to express an unrealised event. There is no fixed irrealis morpheme (Corne 1990: 23–24). Antillean creoles had a wide range of future markers during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hazaël-Massieux 1986:120), presumably because there was no fixed irrealis marker in the aspectual system. Recent studies of Mauritian have shown that the marker of close future *pu* is gradually replacing irrealis marker *va* (Hazaël-Massieux 1992; Touchard and Véronique 1992; Baker 1993).

The French Guianese Creole-based Karipúna—spoken by Amerindian groups now living in Brazil—was acquired between 1830 and 1870 when these groups were refugees in the south of French Guiana (Tobler 1983). During this period, *wa* and *ke* were present in Cayenne Creole, yet the only irrealis marker in Karipúna is *ke*. This suggests the following possibilities:

- (a) There were separate dialects of French Guianese Creole only six generations after its emergence. This is unlikely given that almost all the European and African population was based in and around Cayenne from 1650–1850.
- (b) There were several independent creole geneses (cf. Valdman 1992), one of which resulted in Cayenne Creole, while another served as the model for Karipúna. Again, this is unlikely given the concentration of population in Cayenne.
- (c) Most probably, there was no fixed irrealis marker, and other strategies were used to express unrealised events. Gradually one of these came to predominate and became integrated into the aspectual system. The flux in the marking of unrealised events shows that the ‘typical’ system is certainly not adhered to by many lexically French Creoles in this domain.

## 6. The marker *te*

*Te* is aspectual in nature. It indicates, like the other markers, a change in the reference point of the speaker, and not a change in time. This change is from the normal position (zero form) to a state which has no link with the action and state described by the verb:

13. *Yé beaucoup té viré caba, bò di oune qui mourì la.*  
 3pl many *te* turn already side of one rel die det  
 ‘Many of them had already turned to another [candidate] who later died.’  
 (Paré pou 1885:82)

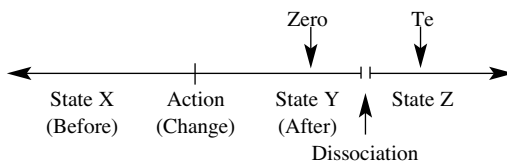
14. a. *Mó malad.*  
 1sg sick  
 ‘I’m sick.’  
 (Saint-Jacques-Fauquenoy 1972:81)

14. b. *So fanm té malad.*  
 poss wife *te* sick  
 ‘His wife was sick.’  
 (Bricault 1976:36)

In (13), the action of changing allegiances (‘turning’) and the state of being a supporter of another candidate (‘having turned’) is not linked to the speaker’s point of reference. The candidate’s death marks the dissociation. The speaker describes the action from a new state (State Z in Figure 4).

(14) shows us the effect of marking a ‘stative’ verb with *te*.

Figure 4: Shift of perspective brought about by *te*



*Te* is not an anterior marker in Cayenne Creole, as we can see from (15), in which Atipa talks of a market-vendor who is now dead or retired:

15. *Li fait ça commèce la, si longtemps,*  
 3sg do dem commerce det such long time

*qui nom Vitoai calou, té rété pou li.*  
 that name Victoire Calou *te* stay for 3sg  
 ‘She did that job for so long that she became known as  
 Victoire Calou.’  
 (Parépou 1885:26)

For Atipa, Victoire’s work is punctual with no internal structure; *fait* is thus in the zero form. We are still in the state where the work has been accomplished, so *te* is not needed. If *te* were a marker of anteriority, it would mark *fait* and not *rété* because the work preceded the name.

The change of state brought about by Victoire’s death or retirement means Atipa’s point of reference is dissociated from the time when Victoire received her nickname of Calou (cf. in English, where the change is also purely aspectual: from ‘she has become known as’ to ‘she became known as’). *Te* in this case is similar to Spears’ (1993:262) ‘anti-perfect’ marker for *te* in Haitian, in the sense that it marks a situation no longer relevant to the present situation (State Z).

## 7. Combinations of preverbal markers

Bickerton’s system allows four combinations of the three preverbal markers, of which two are found in Cayenne Creole: *te ka* and *te ke*. These combine logically. *Te ka* involves a double shift of the normal point of reference. The action is seen as being progressive (*ka*) from the dissociated State Z (*te*). Similarly, *te ke* is the same as *te* followed by *ke*. In older texts, *te wa* is found; the same differences between *ke* and *wa* apply for *te ke* and *te wa*.

## 8. The origins of the markers

### 8.1 The marker *ka*

The origins of the preverbal markers are an important guide to the evolution of Cayenne Creole. Among the numerous possible origins of *ka* (Table 2), Amerindian languages can be ruled out. Early censuses for Cayenne show an extreme minority of Amerindian slaves on large plantations. It would be difficult to see how these slaves, or the local groups of Amerindians who traded with the colonists, could have had such an influence on the structure of the Creole. The influence of their languages would appear to be limited to lexical influences, in particular to the names of some trees and animals.

| LANGUAGE                           | FORM            | FUNCTION                        |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Carib <sup>1</sup>                 | <i>ka</i>       | imperfective aspect             |
| Mende (Senegambia) <sup>2</sup>    | <i>kaka</i>     | habitual marker (postposed)     |
| Mandingo (Senegambia) <sup>2</sup> | <i>ka</i>       | prefix of the perfect           |
| Serer (Senegambia) <sup>2</sup>    | <i>xan</i>      | prefix of the future            |
| Mandinka (Senegambia) <sup>3</sup> | <i>ka</i>       | progressive and habitual marker |
| Wolof (Senegambia) <sup>2</sup>    | <i>nga, nge</i> | present continuous marker       |
| Vai (Senegambia) <sup>4</sup>      | <i>kè</i>       | to do                           |
| Efik (Cameroon) <sup>2</sup>       | <i>ke</i>       | progressive marker              |
| Hausa (Nigeria) <sup>2</sup>       | <i>kan</i>      | habitual marker                 |
| Godié (kru) <sup>5</sup>           | <i>kù</i>       | progressive marker              |
| Portuguese <sup>3</sup>            | <i>ficar</i>    | to stay, to be                  |
| Portuguese <sup>3</sup>            | <i>cá</i>       | adverb 'here'                   |
| São Tomense <sup>2</sup>           | <i>ka</i>       | habitual marker                 |
| French <sup>6</sup>                | <i>qu'à</i>     | e.g. 'tu n'as qu'à obéir'       |
| French <sup>2</sup>                | <i>capable</i>  | adjective 'capable'             |

#### SOURCES:

<sup>1</sup>Taylor, cited in Goodman (1964: 84); <sup>2</sup>Goodman (1964: 84–6); <sup>3</sup>Holm (1988: 154–6);

<sup>4</sup>Westermann and Bryan (1952: 44); <sup>5</sup>Marchese (1986: 63); <sup>6</sup>Germain (1980: 107).

**Table 2: Possible origins of *ka***

Given the large number of languages in West Africa and the complex aspect-based verbal marker systems that feature in most of these languages, it is not difficult to find particles having a similar form and function to *ka*. Before a hasty conclusion that the source of the marker has been found, one must take note of Bickerton's (1981:48) comment: 'To most substratomaniacs, the mere existence of such similarities constitutes self-evident proof of the connection'. The majority of the possible African language sources in Table 2 are from the Senegambian region, but most of the African slaves during the first forty years of slavery in Cayenne (1660–1700) were taken from Gbe-speaking areas (especially the Fon and the very similar Gun languages) in modern-day Benin, and not from the Senegambian region. The African influence on the form of *ka* is not proven. Although there are many similarities of function between the predicative systems of Gbe languages and Cayenne Creole, the form of the preverbal marker *ka* did not come from these African languages.

Since *ka* exists only in French or Portuguese lexically-based creoles and not in English ones which had a similar African input, a European language is therefore a possible origin. Cayenne was settled in 1654 by Portuguese-speakers who began the settlement's slave-based sugar economy. Francophone settlers did not arrive until 1667 (Jennings 1999). In the French islands of the Lesser Antilles, the sugar industry was developed by lusophone refugees in the 1650s. Since *ka* is also found in both Lesser Antillean Creoles and Cayenne Creole, Portuguese is a probable origin for *ka*. If this origin were correct, it would suggest that *ka* was present at the time Cayenne Creole emerged.

Other hypothetical origins include *ka* in the Portuguese lexically-based Sao Tomense and Principense (see Maurer 1997 for the role of *ka*), although it is difficult to see how it could have been transmitted only to the French islands of the Lesser Antilles and to Cayenne. Germain (1980: 107) has proposed the French *qu'à* (loosely translated as 'only have to') followed by a verb. However, this form would probably not have been used often enough for it to have served as a model. French *capable* is another candidate. In Haitian, *kapab* and *ka* are both used in positions between the negative marker and the verb. This is the normal position of a verbal marker and would facilitate incorporation into a verbal system:

16. *Li pa kapab rele.*<sup>3</sup>  
 3sg neg *kapab* call  
 'He couldn't call.'  
 (Spears 1993: 270)

17. *M pa ka remèt ou dis kob ou.*  
 1sg neg *ka* give back 2sg ten cents 2sg  
 'I can't give you back your ten cents.'  
 (Spears 1993: 271)

In modern familiar French, schoolchildren use *cap*:

18. *Je suis cap faire ça.*  
 1sg be *cap* do that  
 'I can do that.'

### 8.2 The marker *ke*

The origin and evolution of the form of *ke* is clearly shown in 19<sup>th</sup> century Cayenne Creole texts. An 1848 proclamation uses *kallé* and *ké* (Sournia 1976) and Saint-Quentin (1872) uses *ké*, *k'é* and *k'alé*. These variations show the marker *ka* preceding *ale* 'to go'. *Ka* must therefore have developed before *ke*.

19. *Mo k'alé proméné.*  
 1sg *ka+ale* walk  
 'I'm going out for a walk.'  
 (Saint-Quentin 1872:31)

Guadeloupean Creole shows the same trend (Hazaël-Massieux 1986), and Carrington (1984: 118) cites *kaj* as the irrealis marker in Saint-Lucian. Given the textual evidence of the evolution of *ke* in both Cayenne and the Antilles, it is surprising to see other origins proposed, such as a Portuguese origin (Hull 1979:207) and a Senegambian origin (cited by Hazaël-Massieux 1986:115).

### 8.3 The marker *wa*

*Wa* is no doubt from French *va* (< *aller* 'to go'). The change of *v* to *w* is not unique to this item, as we also find examples such as *wle* < *vouloir* 'to want' and *we* < *voir* 'to see'. It is more plausible than Horth's (1948:11) suggestion of the English preterite *was*.



#### 8.4 The marker *te*

This form comes from *été* or *était*, past forms of the French verb ‘to be’, and it is found in almost all lexically French creoles. This marker was not incorporated into the preverbal marker system of Cayenne Creole at the same time as *ka* and *ke*. The evidence for this comes from the appearance of the negative marker *pa* (or *pou*) between *te* and the verb in nineteenth century texts:

20. *Tig jou-la té malagòch, é li té pa jamen pouvé trapé viand.*  
Tiger day-det *te* clumsy and 3sg *te* neg never can catch meat  
‘That day Tiger was clumsy and couldn’t catch anything at all.’  
(Saint-Quentin 1872:73)

21. *So femme té pou ca vini, la dégrad, souvent.*  
poss wife *te* poss *ka* come the market often  
‘His wife didn’t often go to the market.’  
(Parépou 1885:36)

22. *Mo pas savé meinme, si to té pas baille coup.*  
1sg neg know even if 2sg *te* neg give hit  
‘I don’t even know if you weren’t involved in the fight.’  
(Parépou 1885:106)

23. *Si Bosobio té la, li té pou ké comprendne oune mot.*  
If Bosobio *te* there 3sg *te* neg *ke* understand one word  
‘If Bosobio were there, he wouldn’t understand a single word.’  
(Parépou 1885:158)

Examples (20–23) show *te* was not initially an integral part of the verbal system, but rather an auxiliary. The position of the negative morpheme also contradicts the assertion that ‘in Creoles, the negative morpheme is inserted directly after the subject, before any verbal or auxiliary element’ (Bickerton 1981:192).

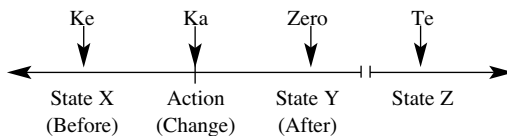
## 9. The evolution of the preverbal marker system of Cayenne Creole

The preverbal marker system of 20<sup>th</sup> century Cayenne Creole differs significantly from that of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and, by extension, of that of 1700. A three-particle preverbal marker system was not present when Cayenne Creole emerged. Bickerton's tense-aspect description does not, therefore, fit the initial Cayenne Creole system. All three markers have undergone some changes since the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

- *Ka* used to mark the future negative.
- *Ke* is a modern replacement of *wa*. *Ke* emerged after *ka* and entered the system as a marker of probable situations (close futures), gradually assuming the functions of *wa*.
- *Te* as an auxiliary was not fully incorporated into the marker system until the twentieth century. It was the last of the three markers to be incorporated, although it existed outside the system before then.

Evidence from other creoles suggests that the gradual evolution of tense and aspect systems may be common (see Baker and Corne 1986: 174–175 and Arends 1993:375), though Hawaiian Creole English is an exception (Roberts 1999). In the evolution of a creole, it may be that many auxiliaries are employed initially to express changes in the normal reference point of a verb. From these auxiliaries, a simplified system evolves. For creoles developed by people of West African origin—such as in the majority Fon-speaking slave community of Cayenne in the late 1600s—the system is simplified along aspectual lines. The most simplified aspectual system has a normal reference point (State Y, zero form), a point in State X (*ke*), a point in State Z (*te*) and a point within the action itself (*ka*) (see Figure 5). It may be for this reason that

Figure 5: The aspectual system of Cayenne Creole



creole languages, as they evolved towards a simplified system from a more complex system involving many auxiliaries, tend to develop a system resembling that proposed by Bickerton.

Although French provided the forms for the preverbal aspectual markers of Cayenne Creole, it is doubtful that it provided the functions. It would be unreasonable to exclude the possible influence of the aspectual systems of Fon and Gun, whose speakers made up 100% of Cayenne's African-born slaves in 1660 and about 50% in 1700 (Jennings 1995). Further research will determine the possible impact of the Gbe linguistic cryptotype or *vision du monde* 'perception of things' (Manessy 1989:89) on the aspectual system of Cayenne Creole.

## Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Terry Crowley and two anonymous reviewers for their help with this paper.
- 2 A comment on the spelling of French Guiana is warranted. While French Guiana is written in English with *i*, British Guyana is written with *y*. The spelling of both in French is invariably with *y*, i.e. Guyane.
- 3 *Te* is often omitted in Haitian once the setting has been established.

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# ON THE ORIGIN AND LINGUISTIC STATUS OF RÉUNIONNAIS

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## 1. Introduction

In this article I will discuss the development of a French lexifier creole, Réunionnais, which has often been dubbed a semi-creole because of its acrolectal features. One should point out that the French input heard by the creators of Réunionnais was not standard French, but 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century colloquial varieties of French. Several researchers on French lexifier creoles (e.g. Alleyne 1996: 35-40) have shown that spoken French at this time was characterised by a heavy reliance on periphrastic verbal constructions, and avoided the standard synthetic forms for the future and the past, for example. This is crucial since most creolists agree that creole TMA markers are in fact derived, at least phonetically, from colloquial French periphrastic constructions (e.g. Lefebvre 1998). As Alleyne (1996: 35) points out,

Il est important de constater que le français possède, et possédait dans le passé, au moins deux modalités syntaxiques – l'une standard, conservatrice, bourgeoise; l'autre innovatrice, dynamique, populaire.

[It is worth noting that French has, and had in the past, at least two syntactic modalities – a standard, upper class conservative one, and an innovative, dynamic and working-class one.]

The ‘popular’ (working-class) French alluded to by Alleyne is characterised mainly by phonological and lexical differences, and by a greater reliance on analytical, periphrastic constructions to encode tense, mood and aspect, as opposed to the standard inflected forms (e.g. colloquial *je vais manger* vs. standard French *je mangerai* ‘I will eat’). This does not mean that colloquial and standard French were typologically different languages. But there were important stylistic differences: the analytical structures of spoken French were more widely used, and because of their analyticity and reduced inflection, they more closely resembled the TMA markers of Kwa languages spoken by West African slaves, who were present (though not a majority) during the formative stages of Réunionnais. Alleyne adds (1996: 35):

la différenciation dialectale, telle qu’elle existe sur le territoire français, a été observée principalement sur le plan phonologique et lexical... il y a beaucoup moins de particularités régionales sur le plan syntaxique.

[dialectal differences in France have been observed mainly in the area of phonology and the lexicon... there are much fewer regional differences in the syntax.]

The following discussion will include colloquial French expressions when they differ from standard French, if they can shed light on the origin of creole structures. Section 2 discusses the demographic evidence surrounding the genesis of Réunionnais. Section 3 highlights some linguistic features specific to Réunionnais, and section 4 discusses Réunionnais TMA markers, in an effort to show that basilectal Réunionnais is a ‘true’ creole, and not simply a dialect of French, in its use and combination of TMA markers. Given the claims (e.g. Chaudenson 1984) that Réunionnais and Mauritian are genetically related, each Réunionnais example is followed by the translation in Mauritian, for comparison.

## **2. The settlement of Réunion: demographic facts**

Réunionnais emerged at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and during the 18<sup>th</sup> century on the *Isle de Bourbon* in the Indian Ocean. The contact situation in Bourbon (now called Réunion) was different from most other French island colonies, and the linguistic result is often considered a partial, rather than total,



creolisation of French. In particular, there is evidence that Réunionnais did not arise out of a preexisting pidgin, but instead is the result of a gradual creolisation process away from French, over several generations, as successive waves of slaves acquired increasingly divergent varieties of L2 French. Thus, henceforth the term 'creolisation' will be used to refer to the process of gradual creolisation, as defined by Chaudenson, and the term 'creolised French' will refer to the linguistic result (acrolectal, mesolectal or basilectal) of the gradual creolisation process. Note that, according to the gradualist model, the acrolect and mesolect predate the basilect. (For a description of the gradual creolisation model, see Chaudenson 1989, 1992, 2000.)

Réunion was first settled in 1663, but for the first fifty years there were more free citizens than slaves. In 1709, there were 387 slaves on the island, representing 43% of the total population of 894, with 507 whites (Chaudenson 1989: 50). The slave population was as follows: 40% locally-born; 25% South Asian; 25% Malagasy; 10% other African. Another Indian Ocean island, Isle de France (now Mauritius) was settled by France some fifty years later. After the abolition of slavery in 1835 (Mauritius) and 1846 (Réunion), massive numbers of Indian workers were brought to Mauritius; many fewer were brought to Réunion. In Mauritius, over two thirds of the total population is of Indian origin, whereas in Réunion ethnic Indians represent 15% of the population. Before 1710, there were fewer slaves than whites in Réunion, so slaves probably had sufficient exposure to French, although there was some shift-induced interference (Baker and Corne 1986). Between 1710 and 1805, slaves increasingly outnumbered whites, so new slaves had less and less direct access to the lexifier language. According to Chaudenson (2000: 113), the initial homestead society lasted until 1735. Subsequently, the shift to a plantation economy required more slaves (or 'bozals'), who had only restricted access to French, and 'whose linguistic targets and models consisted of approximations of French from [the first slaves brought in during the homestead society]' (Chaudenson 2000: 126).

According to Baker and Corne (1986), before 1710 Réunionnais emerged as a non-creole vernacular, which was spoken by both slaves and whites. This vernacular was neither a true creole, nor a dialect of French. The reason for the ambiguous status of the first Réunion vernacular is that the free non-white population was born to French fathers and Malagasy or Indo-Portuguese mothers (not unlike the situation at the Dutch colony of the Cape, which gave rise to Afrikaans). As more slaves arrived on Réunion, a continuum developed between local French and early Réunionnais at one end, and more basilectal

forms at the other end. If slaves had been imported in large numbers for a long time after 1805 (when locally-born slaves began to outnumber the number of whites), there would have been a greater chance for a more basilectal creole to develop. However, in Réunion, the slave trade ended in 1835. In other words, the slaves were never really numerically dominant enough for their creole to break off completely from French and for the continuum to disappear. By contrast, on Mauritius, which was also a French plantation colony, slave imports were more massive and slaves had much less direct exposure to French, so a more radical creole could develop.

There is textual evidence of a true, independent creole on Mauritius from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on, whereas in Réunion it seems that there was never a single, stable variety of Réunionnais, except for the early form of *Bourbonnais* (see below). Baker and Corne (1986) claim that the existence of a continuum always precedes the emergence of a stable creole. Their point is that in Mauritius this stable creole emerged early on (18<sup>th</sup> century), whereas on Réunion it never really emerged and the continuum persisted.

The demographic makeup of Réunion can be explained mainly in terms of the island's economic development. Baker and Corne (1982: 104) distinguish the following stages:

- 1663-1715: small-scale agriculture (*société d'habitation*);
- 1715-1815: coffee production for export (slaves brought in);
- 1815- present: sugar plantations;
- 1947: départementalisation (growing influence of standard French, schooling, influx of Frenchmen from mainland France).

An early form of Réunionnais (*Bourbonnais*) emerged during the *habitation* period, when Frenchmen were numerically dominant. After 1715, more Frenchmen and slaves were brought in huge numbers. The *Petits Blancs* (poor Whites who did not own slaves) emerged as a separate group during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. After 1835, slavery was abolished, creating a need for indentured labourers from India.

The demographic makeup of the island changed over the centuries. In 1663, two Frenchmen and ten Malagasies (including three women) came over from Madagascar. After 1678, 14 'Indo-Portuguese' women arrived, and married French colonists. Around 1690—that is, when Réunionnais began to emerge—the ethnic makeup of the island was as follows (based on Chaudenson 1989: 53), out of a total population of 258:

- 76 Frenchmen, or 29% of the total population;
- 40 slaves from Madagascar, or 16% of the total population (Corne calls them ‘involuntary immigrants’ in Baker and Corne 1982: 105);
- 64 individuals of mixed French-East Indian ancestry, or 25% of the total population (French fathers, East Indian mothers);
- 78 individuals of mixed French-Malagasy ancestry, or 30% of the total population (French fathers, Malagasy mothers).

The main non-French influence during the initial period of emergence of Réunionnais was probably Malagasy, given that this language group was the single most important ethnic group. The French settlers were mainly illiterate artisans, who spoke colloquial varieties of 17<sup>th</sup> century *Langue d’oil*, which was spoken in the northern half of France, even though the official language was standard French. Chaudenson (1974: 1125) believes that the mixture of various Oil dialects reinforced the inherent tendency toward the simplification and levelling of the inflectional system.

The first known sentence recorded in Réunionnais was in a ca. 1722 report by a local intellectual on a decision made by the *Conseil Provincial de Bourbon* (Chaudenson 1981: 3):

La peur des châtimens suggérait parfois aux prévenus de singuliers moyens de défense. Elle est plaisante cette déclaration de Marie, la bonne de M. Ferrere qui a abandonné son travail pour commettre pour la seconde fois ‘le crime de marronnage.’ A elle demandé pourquoi elle s’est enfuie pendant six mois, elle répondit:

[The fear of punishment sometimes led the accused to find unusual means of defence. The following utterance is amusing, by Marie, Mr Ferrere’s servant, who left her job to commit the ‘crime of marronnage’ [escape from slavery] for the second time. When asked why she had fled for six months, she answered:]

*Moin la parti marron parce qu’ Alexis l’homme de jardin*  
 I perfect leave maroon because Alexis the gardener  
*l’était qui fait à moin trop l’amour.*  
 past who make to me too-much love

‘I ran away because Alexis the Gardener was always making love to me’  
 (Chaudenson 1974: 444, 1106, 1147)

Chaudenson (1981) mentions that this is exactly how the sentence would be uttered in present-day Réunionnais. As Corne (Baker and Corne 1982) points out, this sentence, recorded 60 years after the initial settlement of the island, already displays the main features of Réunionnais:

- strong (object) form of the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun used in the subject position (*moin*) instead of the French pronominal clitic;<sup>1</sup>
- perfect tense: auxiliary *la* + past participle *parti* (standard French uses the auxiliary *être*, not *avoir*);
- past tense: *lete ki* (presumably from the embedded construction ‘*l’était qui*’).

The sentence above, which dates back to 1720, represents a mesolectal variety of Réunionnais, rather than a basilectal variety, given the many French features. Presumably at this time, the more basilectal varieties had not yet appeared, as we will see below—although it is possible (and unverifiable) that the person quoting this passage may have moved it toward the mesolect to make it more intelligible to speakers of standard French.

According to Chaudenson (1989), during the 18<sup>th</sup> century the slaves could be divided into the following groups according to their origins: (in order of numerical importance) East Africans, locally-born slaves, Malagasies, and smaller numbers of Indians and West Africans. This contrasts with Haiti where most slaves were West Africans who spoke Kwa languages.

According to Baker and Corne (1982), the target language in most cases was the so-called *lete ki* vernacular of the first colonists. The *Petits Blancs* were in fact often of mixed ancestry, spoke a mesolectal Réunionnais, and settled inland. When slavery was abolished, blacks also moved inland, and the *Petits Blancs* settled yet further up in the *cirques*<sup>2</sup> and high plains. The basilect, *Créole des Bas*, probably only emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the influx of slaves trying to acquire *lete ki* French, since until 1715 there was only small-scale agriculture, where slaves lived in close contact with their masters.

However, ultimately, continuing immigration from France and contact with French may have slowed down the creolisation process and only allowed partial creolisation of French. According to Baker and Corne (1982: 126), this is why Réunionnais is so different from Mauritian:

- French input was partially different (the *lete ki* structure existed in the colloquial French input in Réunion but not on Mauritius);

- There was only gradual creolisation in Réunion between 1663 and 1715; in Mauritius creolisation may have begun almost from the beginning of settlement (though it may have gone on for a long time; see Baker's (1995) article on the rate of development of various creoles);
- Many slaves were brought to Mauritius from the very beginning; in Réunion, substratum languages played a lesser role given the fact that the population was more heterogeneous linguistically (according to the figures provided above on the ethnic make-up of Réunion), although presumably each substrate language may have contributed some structures.

Still, Chaudenson (1981) believes that Réunionnais and Mauritian Creole both have a common origin (*Bourbonnais*), and that current differences are due to the development of a post-creole continuum on Réunion that eroded the most basilectal varieties. In other words, Réunionnais has decreolised in the direction of French.

The controversy surrounding the supposed genetic relationship between Réunionnais and Mauritian Creole will be discussed below. For the time being, suffice it to say that Chaudenson (1981) does provide evidence that, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Réunionnais and Mauritian were much more alike than they are today. (Baker and Corne 1982 say nothing about 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Réunionnais.) In particular, he provides examples of creole constructions that existed in Réunionnais during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but are no longer in use today. Similarly, he shows that Mauritian Creole has undergone some internal changes over the past 200 years. This does not prove that early Réunionnais was in fact the ancestor language of modern Mauritian, but it does indicate that Réunionnais and Mauritian used to be more alike than they are today.

Chaudenson (1981) claims that Réunionnais is a more or less direct descendant of regional 17<sup>th</sup> century French, the only difference being that, in contact with the L2 French of slaves, Réunionnais accelerated changes which were inherent in regional French. On this point Baker and Corne (1982) agree with Chaudenson, since they too consider Réunionnais as a descendant of 17<sup>th</sup> century French. However, a closer look at various Réunionnais TMA markers reveal that basilectal Réunionnais is *not* a dialect of French, as will be argued in section 4 below.

### 3. Linguistic evidence concerning the genesis of Réunionnais

There are at least three varieties of current Réunionnais. *Créole des Blancs* (or *Créole des Hauts*), an acrolectal variety of Réunionnais, is a variety of creolised French spoken by a population of mainly European origin. *Créole des Bas* is the basilect, which emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and is mainly spoken by individuals of African descent. Mesolectal varieties are spoken by individuals of mixed ancestry. *Créole des Blancs* may originally have been transmitted to French children by mixed-race nannies and servants, along the lines of Afrikaans in South Africa. It has features absent from the basilectal creole, including:

- rounded front vowels, palato-alveolar sibilants (replaced by alveolar sibilants in other varieties of Réunionnais, and in Mauritian, possibly because of Malagasy substratum influence);
- a masculine/feminine distinction in possessive determiners (*mon, ma*);
- use of the relative pronoun, and some instances of ‘weak’ personal pronouns (*je, tu, il*, instead of basilectal *moin, toi, li*) (Chaudenson 1981: 167).

In most French-lexifier creoles, the ‘weak’ personal pronouns *je, tu, il*, which in French cliticise onto the auxiliary, have been replaced by the more salient full forms *moi, toi, lui*, which in French are only used for emphasis, or in some non-subject functions (e.g. *me, te* as preposed objects). In the plural, even the strong pronouns *nous, vous, eux* have been reinforced by the postposed *autres*, i.e., *nous-autres, vous-autres*. This replacement of nominative forms of the plural by the strong forms (objective case) is also attested in nonstandard varieties of French in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as well as in Canadian French where such forms are widespread. In Réunionnais (and in Mauritian), the strong pronouns have themselves become phonologically reduced, thus we have *mo, toue* or *t, li, nous, zot*. For non-subject uses, modern Réunionnais has adopted French prepositional pronouns (*à moi, à vous, à lui*)—that is, *amoin, avous, ali*. It is not clear why the French stressed pronouns (*moi, vous, lui*) have been reinforced with the preposition *à*. Chaudenson (1981) mentions two factors which may have ‘conspired’ in establishing this form in Réunionnais: (a) such forms are found in 17<sup>th</sup> century colloquial French, ‘*Un homme est là qui veut parler à vous*’ (quoted from a play by Molière); (b) there are two series of Malagasy pronouns, one of which begins with [a]: *ahy, anao, azy, antsika*.

Given that there was some Malagasy influence in Réunionnais phonology (such as the replacement of /S/ and /Z\_/ by /s/ and /z/), it is possible that the Malagasy substratum facilitated the spread of the dative pronominals *à moi*, *à toi* to object functions, especially once the stressed pronouns (*moi*, *toi*, *lui*) had displaced the French weak subject pronouns (*je*, *tu*, *il*). Recall that, during the first period, Malagasy slaves represented at least 25% of the population.

Chaudenson (1981: 193) points out that in most French-lexifier creoles, the synthetic verbal forms of standard French are replaced by invariant verbal forms with preposed TMA particles. He adds that many, if not all, preverbal particles are derived from periphrastic French constructions. It is true that, in Quebec French for example, such periphrastic forms are much more common than in standard European French—that is, the use of the analytic future *aller* + infinitive (*il va manger* ‘he will eat’) is more common than the synthetic *futur simple* (*il mangera* ‘he will eat’). Similarly the creole aspectual markers *ap(re)* (‘in the process of’), *pou(r)* (future/expectation), and *fin(i)* (perfective) seem to be derived from periphrastic French forms still in use in Quebec French—for example:

1. *Elle est après travailler.* (Quebec French)  
    she is after work.inf  
    ‘She is working.’
2. *Il est pour partir.* (Quebec French)  
    he is for leave.inf  
    ‘He’s about to leave.’
3. *Jean a fini de manger.* (both standard and Quebec French)  
    J has finished of eat.inf  
    ‘Jean has finished eating.’

However, a common etymology does not necessarily entail a common function. This is where Baker and Corne (1982) are correct in disagreeing with Chaudenson. Corne does not deny that creole TMA markers are etymologically derived from French, but his point is that they are used in the framework of a non-French syntax, and as such do not reflect a modified variety of French, but an altogether different language. Note that in the examples above from colloquial French, we are dealing with inflected modals and auxiliaries, not to be confused with the invariant, preposed TMA markers of creoles. According to Chaudenson,

... le français présente nombre de tendances dont la systématisation et la radicalisation, *au contact d'autres langues* et dans des conditions socio-culturelles très différentes, ont pu conduire à la formation de systèmes linguistiques nouveaux.

(Chaudenson 1981: 195; emphasis mine)

[... French is characterised by various tendencies which, when they became more systematic and more radical *in contact with other languages*, under very different socio-cultural conditions, may have led to the creation of new linguistic systems.]

It is possible that some features of Réunionnais may be due to an acceleration of changes that were already under way in colloquial French. But this does not mean that Réunionnais (or any other creole) can be characterised as a dialect of French. While the initial variety of Réunionnais (*Bourbonnais*) may have been a form of L2 French, it is not clear at all that basilectal Réunionnais, which formed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, is a form of French, given its complex use of preverbal TMA markers, as we will see below. Furthermore, basilectal Réunionnais is not mutually intelligible with French (although mutual intelligibility is a subjective criterion and cannot alone be used to establish that one is dealing with two languages, rather than with two dialects of one language).

Corne states that 'Réunionnais must be categorised as a variety of French' (Baker and Corne 1982: 127), a view also shared by Mufwene (2000) who claims all French-lexifier creoles are varieties of French. However, the linguistic status of Réunionnais remains controversial (Holm 2000: 29-31). The examples provided in section 4 will show that, in basilectal Réunionnais at least, verbal constructions are typically creole (with preposed TMA markers), and are difficult to ascribe to normal, internally-motivated changes within French. In Réunionnais, although some verbs (in particular the auxiliaries *etr* and *avuar*) have French inflection for person and number, most verbs have a relatively invariant stem, as in the following examples:

4. a. *Mi manz.*<sup>3</sup> 'I'm eating.'
- b. *Ou manz.* 'You're (sg) eating.'
- c. *Li manz.* 'He's/She's eating.'
- d. *Nou manz.* 'We're eating.'
- e. *Zot manz.* 'You're (pl)/They're eating.'



French, by contrast, has three phonetically different forms in the present tense: *mangeons* (1<sup>st</sup> person plural), *mangez* (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural), and *mange* (all other persons, with various spellings).

In the initial stages of *Bourbonnais*, there coexisted two forms of the present: 1) the acrolectal subject + *i* (predicate marker)<sup>4</sup> + short form of verb (i.e. present *manz*); and 2) the basilectal subject + infinitive (i.e. long form). In Mauritian (according to Chaudenson), only the second form survived, whereas in Réunionnais the first form is used more now because of basilectal erosion. In other words, Chaudenson (1981) claims that Réunionnais has undergone decreolisation under the influence of French, and that as a result the most basilectal forms of Réunionnais have disappeared and the whole continuum has moved upward toward French. Chaudenson does provide examples of basilectal forms which were used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but not attested in modern Réunionnais. For example, the last examples of subject + long form (infinitive) date back to the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

With respect to preverbal *i/li*, Chaudenson claims that this resumptive pronoun had two functions originally in both Réunionnais and Mauritian: (a) resumptive subject pronoun and (b) copula. In modern Réunionnais, only the (a) usage survives (generalised to all persons) and in Mauritian, only (b) survives. For the future, Réunionnais uses the French synthetic form in negative sentences but the periphrastic *va* + infinitive for affirmative sentences:

5. *Li donn-ra pa.*  
    he give-fut not  
    ‘He won’t give.’  
    (Mauritian: *Li pa va donné.*)
6. *Li va don.*  
    he fut give  
    ‘He will give.’  
    (Mauritian: *Li va donné.*)

In other creoles (like Mauritian Creole), the analytic form has spread to the negative as well, e.g. *n’a pas va...* ‘will not...’ (Chaudenson 1981: 209). Of course, there are only isolated examples used to illustrate historic changes and dialectal difference within Réunionnais. The following section provides a more detailed description of modern Réunionnais morphosyntax.

#### 4. Aspects of Réunionnais morphosyntax: TMA markers

The following description is based on Baker and Corne (1982), Cellier (1985) and Chaudenson (1984). The Mauritian examples in parentheses were obtained by me from two Mauritian informants in the summer of 2001. Chaudenson (1984) points out that some of Baker and Corne's descriptions of the facts are not entirely reliable since: (i) They use French grammatical terms (*passé composé*, *conditionnel*, *participe passé*) to characterise Réunionnais; (ii) some of the translations are erroneous; (iii) the data presented is representative of the most acrolectal varieties of Réunionnais, and Baker and Corne (1982) do not provide any examples from basilectal Réunionnais. Nevertheless, Chaudenson (1984) agrees that the vast majority of their examples are attested, so I have included them in the following description. When relevant, I indicate whether the forms are acrolectal or basilectal. Otherwise the reader should assume that the forms are mesolectal and basilectal. Finally, as pointed out above, each Réunionnais example is followed by the Mauritian equivalent in parentheses, for comparison.

All tense, mood and aspect markers are preverbal in modern Réunionnais, whereas negation is postverbal. This suggests that Réunionnais may still have verb raising from V to Infl, as evidenced by the residual inflection on some Réunionnais verbs. This sets Réunionnais apart from other French lexifier creoles, where verbs are invariant and negation is preverbal. Réunionnais has two preverbal past tense markers, which are used either with or without the copula. The copula has three invariant forms: *lé* (present), *lété* (past) and *sra* (future).

##### 4.1 Past perfective marker (*la* + V) and past imperfective marker

(*té* + *i* + V)

Réunionnais has two past markers: the past perfective marker *la* (from French *passé composé* form using auxiliary *avoir*, e.g. *il a vu*, 'he has seen') and the past imperfective marker *té* (from French imperfect *était* 'was', or perhaps past participle *été* 'been') as illustrated in the two following examples:

7. *Muê la vni.*

I            PERF   come

'I have come.' (Baker and Corne 1982: 14)

(Mauritian: *Mo fin vini.*)

8. *Moin té i manz.*  
 I PAST 'i' eat  
 'I was eating.' (Cellier 1985: 42)  
 (Mauritian: *Mo ti pé manzé.*)

Baker and Corne (1982) mention that the verb forms used with the tense markers are either bare stems (in basilectal varieties), or a 'long' form (in acrolectal varieties) which are derived from the French past participle:

9. a. *prâ* (bare stem) vs. *pri* (ACROLECTAL) 'take'  
 b. *met* vs. *mi* 'put'  
 c. *konet* vs. *koni* 'know'

Cellier (1985: 48) points out that out of 400 Réunionnais verbs, 330 have two forms, a long and a short form. The acrolect uses both forms of the verb, whereas the basilect only uses the invariant verb stem:

- 10.a. *Mi manzé.* 'I ate' ACROLECTAL RÉUNIONNAIS  
 b. *Moin té i manz.* 'I ate' BASILECTAL RÉUNIONNAIS

#### 4.2 *Completive aspect marker: fin(i).*

This marker, from French past participle *fini* 'finished' may combine with the imperfect past marker to produce the pluperfect *te fin(i)*, but it may also appear on its own followed by the lexical verb:

11. *Muê te fini vuar.*  
 I PAST COMPLET come  
 'I had seen.' (Baker and Corne 1982: 17)  
 (Mauritian: *Mo ti trov.*)

12. *Mu i fin(i) met.*  
 I 'i' COMPLET put  
 'I had seen.' (Baker and Corne 1982: 17)  
 (Mauritian: *Mofin met.*)

13. *Lé fey te fini gréné.*  
 the leaves PAST COMPLET scatter  
 ‘The leaves were scattered.’  
 (Mauritian: *Bann fey fin fan partou.*)

4.3 Future markers: *po(u) + V*, *(a)va + V*, and *sa(va) + V*

The imminent or indefinite future is expressed by using a preverbal aspectual marker, either *po(u)* (from French preposition *pour*) or *(a)va* (from the French analytic future *va* ‘go’), called ‘prospective’ by Cellier (1985), and ‘indefinite future’ by Lefebvre (1998):

14. *Si moin lété pa po piké...*  
 if I PAST NEG FUT poke  
 ‘If I was not about to poke...’ (Cellier 1982: 70)  
 (Mauritian: *Si mo pa ti prè pou pik...*)

15. *U ava gau é bezmâ.*  
 you FUT get a punishment  
 ‘You will be punished.’  
 (Mauritian: *To pou gagn en pinisyon.*)

16. *Li va pa vole.*  
 he FUT NEG steal  
 ‘He won’t steal.’  
 (Mauritian: *Li pa pou coquin.*)

The prospective future can be expressed in two ways: (i) by using the synthetic verb stem + suffix *-ra* (see examples 17 and 18 below; also Baker and Corne 1982: 1) and (ii) using a preverbal marker *sa(va)* (from colloquial French *s’en va* + infinitive). As noted above, the periphrastic construction is generally used for affirmative constructions.

17. *Mi i sâtra pa.*  
 I ‘i’ sing.PROSFUT NEG  
 ‘I won’t sing.’ (Baker and Corne 1982: 17) ACROLECTAL  
 (Mauritian: *Mo pa pou santé.*)

18. *Mi i dorra pa.*  
 I 'i' sing.PROSFUT NEG  
 'I won't sleep.' ACROLECTAL  
 (Mauritian: *Mo pa pou dormi.*)
19. *Mi sa manzé.*  
 I PROSFUT eat  
 'I will eat.' (Cellier 1985: 45) BASILECTAL  
 (Mauritian: *Mo pou manzé.*)

Baker and Corne (1982) claim that this particle cannot be used in a past + future (i.e. conditional) configuration, unlike Mauritian Creole where one has *ti ava* (past + future). However, Chaudenson (1984) and Cellier (1985) provide examples where past markers and future markers are combined:

20. *Moin té i sava dansé.*  
 I PAST 'i' PROSFUT dance  
 'I was going to dance.' (Chaudenson 1984: 167)  
 (Mauritian: *Mo ti pou dansé.*)
21. *Moin té i sa apré travayé.*  
 I PAST 'i' PROSFUT PROG dance  
 'I was going to be working.'  
 (Mauritian: *Mo ti pou travay.*)
22. *Moin té i sa travayé.*  
 I PAST 'i' PROSFUT work  
 'I was going to work.' (Cellier 1985: 45)  
 (Mauritian: *Mo ti pou travay.*)

As mentioned above, the prospective future *sa(va)* and the indefinite future *(a)va* are derived from the French *s'en va* and *va* respectively, both of which are used to express the future in colloquial French. However, in Réunionnais they are invariable and used in a non-French syntactic framework, since they are uninflected and can be combined with other TMA markers. In this sense they are similar to the Haitian indefinite future marker *va/ava*.

The prospective future example (19) is also attested in a phonetically

reduced shape, which is almost identical to the reduced form for the immediate future in Quebec French:

23. a. *Ma manzé.* (Réunionnais)  
 I.FUT eat  
 ‘I will eat.’
- b. *M’a manger.* (Canadian French) < *j’m’en va manger*  
 I.will eat  
 ‘I will eat.’
- c. *Vous allex manger.* (Canadian French)  
 you(pl) will.2pl eat  
 ‘You (pl) will eat.’

This fact has been used to support the superstratist model of creole genesis mentioned above (e.g. Chaudenson 1992), which claims that most creole structures are inherited from various dialects of their respective lexifier languages, with some regular internal changes and morphological levelling. However, in Quebec French the various forms of the future modal *aller* ‘to go’ cannot be used in conjunction with other modals or auxiliaries, whereas in creoles (including Réunionnais) they can, as we have seen in examples (20–22) above. This shows that, although forms (23a) and (23b) are superficially similar, they are underlyingly different: in Réunionnais, (23a) is a reduced form of example (19), *Mi sa manzé*—that is, the combination of the subject pronoun with a bare, preverbal aspectual marker. In Quebec French, example (23b) represents a phonologically reduced form of the verb ‘to go’, which cannot be used with other persons (as illustrated in (23c)). Thus, in Quebec French we are dealing with a purely phonological process, whereas in Réunionnais there are two historical processes, namely the reanalysis of a French periphrastic structure into an invariant, preverbal TMA marker, with a subsequent phonological simplification.

#### 4.4 *Progressive marker*: (a)pre + V

In Réunionnais, the progressive aspect is expressed using an invariant preverbal marker *apre*, based on the French periphrastic future *être après* + infinitive (‘to be after’).

24. *Li l(e) apre lir ê liv.*  
 he is PROGR read a book  
 ‘He’s reading a book’ (Baker and Corne 1982: 24)  
 (Mauritian: *Li pé lir en liv.*)

25. *Moin té i sa apré travayé.*  
 he PAST ‘i’ PROSFUT PROGR work  
 ‘I was about to go to work.’ (Cellier 1982: 70)  
 (Mauritian: *Mo ti prè pou travay.*)

Note in example (24) that the copula is optional, reflecting a difference between lects. In particular, in acrolectal Réunionnais the copula is used, in basilectal varieties it is not. The zero-copula form is typical of other Frenchlexifier creoles, and again this shows that (basilectal) Réunionnais is not a variety of French, since in no French dialect does one find zero-copula structures in periphrastic constructions. Also, the combination of three preverbal TMA markers in example (25) is typical of creoles and has no equivalent in French (standard or colloquial). Example (28) below illustrates the same point.

#### 4.5 Inchoative markers: *met (a) + V*, *komans + V*, *gay(e) + V*

These markers indicate that an action is beginning, as in the following example:

26. *i komans koupe lé kolé zanim.*  
 ‘i’ incho cut the throat Animals  
 ‘They begin to cut the animals’ throats.’ (Cellier 1985: 46)  
 (Mauritian: *Li komans pou koupé licou bann zanim.*)

Baker and Corne (1982: 83) note the existence of a very particular construction which has no direct equivalent in current French: constructions using *gay(e)* or its acrolectal form *gagn* (both from *gagner*) with the meaning ‘to have’ or ‘to get’.

27. *Muê la gay sa avek Zili.*  
 I past get that with Julie  
 ‘I got that from Julie.’ (Baker and Corne 1982: 83)  
 (Mauritian: *Mo fin gagn sa ek Zili.*)

Apparently, this extension in the use of *gagner* is derived from 17<sup>th</sup> century French. However, Réunionnais developed another meaning for *gay(e)/gagn* + infinitive: ‘to be able to...’. In example (29) below, *gagn* is used as a TMA marker. As we have seen in the previous examples, the tense/mood/aspect markers may be combined to produce various meanings, as in the following two examples from Cellier (1985: 47):

28. *Famm la té fini koman kakayé.*  
 woman det past compl incho laugh  
 ‘This woman had already begun to laugh.’  
 (Mauritian: *Sa famm la fin komans riyé.*)

29. *Koméla noré<sup>5</sup> besoin gagn retourné.*  
 now FUT MOD MOD return  
 ‘Now we should be able to go.’ ACROLECTAL  
 (Mauritian: *Astèr la nou bizin kapav allé.*)

#### 4.6 A note on the historical development of TMA markers

As already mentioned, most of the examples above are taken from mesolectal and basilectal varieties of Réunionnais, while some are attested in acrolectal varieties. There is evidence that the continuum illustrates the various developmental stages of Réunionnais, and that the acrolectal constructions predate the basilectal ones. For instance, Chaudenson (1981: 185-188) shows that over a period of 100 years (1780 to 1880 approximately), personal pronouns in both Mauritian and Réunionnais evolved phonetically toward increasingly basilectal pronunciations: *moi* (1<sup>st</sup> person singular) became *m*’ in Réunionnais and *mo* in Mauritian. Similarly, *vous autres* (2<sup>nd</sup> person plural) became *zot* in both creoles. The three examples below illustrate the basilectalisation of both languages over the same period:

|                          |                             |                        |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 18 <sup>th</sup> century | 19 <sup>th</sup> century    |                        |
| 30. <i>moi va manzé</i>  | <i>mi sa manzé/ma manzé</i> | (Réunionnais)          |
| I FUT eat I              | FUT eat /I.FUT eat          | (Chaudenson 1981: 210) |

|                           |                          |                        |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| 18 <sup>th</sup> century  | 19 <sup>th</sup> century |                        |
| 31. <i>moi donné vous</i> | <i>mo donn ou</i>        | (Mauritian)            |
| I give you (SG)           | I give you (SG)          | (Chaudenson 1981: 196) |



- |                              |                                |                        |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 18 <sup>th</sup> century     | 19 <sup>th</sup> century       |                        |
| 32. <i>moi s'en va manzé</i> | <i>mo a manzé/mo ava manzé</i> | (Mauritian)            |
| I FUT eat                    | I FUT eat / I FUT eat          | (Chaudenson 1981: 210) |

Further examples of the Réunion creole continuum are provided by Alleyne (1996: 41), who argues that:

le réunionnais... reflète, dans ses variétés actuelles (...) tous les niveaux dialectaux et stylistiques du français qui ont fait partie de la structure socio-linguistique de la situation de contact. Cela apparaît clairement dans les différentes formes verbales synonymes qui ont survécu.

[In its modern varieties, Réunionnais reflects all the dialectal and stylistic varieties of French which belonged to the sociolinguistic setting of language contact. This is clear in the different synonymous verbal forms which have survived.]

This is illustrated by the forms listed in (30) to (32). Alleyne (1996: 98) also shows that in 18<sup>th</sup> century Mauritian, there was a copula and subject-verb inversion in question formation, whereas in present-day Mauritian (and in most other creoles) the verb remains *in situ* and the copula is deleted:

18<sup>th</sup> century Mauritian:

33. *Ou li ton manman?*  
 where is your mother  
 'Where is your mother?'  
 (Modern Mauritian: *Kot to maman?*)
34. *Sa blanc la li bokou malen.*  
 this white DEICTIC is very smart  
 'This white man is very smart.' (Alleyne 1996: 98)  
 (Modern Mauritian: *Sa blan la byen malen.*)

Modern Basilectal Réunionnais:

35. *Sa en bon bong.*  
 this a good guy  
 'He's a nice guy.' (Alleyne 1996: 89)  
 (Modern Mauritian: *Li en bon boug.*)

Again, this suggests that 18<sup>th</sup> century Mauritian was typologically closer to French since it had verb-raising and a copula, whereas today Mauritian has no verb-raising and no copula (at least, not in attributive and equational constructions). Other present-day French-lexifier creoles follow the modern Mauritian pattern, as illustrated by the following examples where there is no verb-raising, and a copula only in existential constructions:

36. *Kote li ye* (Haitian)  
 where he is  
 ‘Where is he?’ (Alleyne 1996: 93)
37. *Kouman ou ye* (Dominican, St Lucian)  
 how you are  
 ‘How are you?’ (Alleyne 1996: 93)
38. *Komo to ye* (Louisiana Creole)  
 how you are  
 ‘How are you?’ (Alleyne 1996: 93)
39. *Ou to ye* (Louisiana Creole)  
 where he is  
 ‘Where is he?’ (Alleyne 1996: 93)
40. *Kot li te ye* (Louisiana Creole)  
 where he PAST COP  
 ‘Where was he?’ (Alleyne 1996: 93)
41. *Kouman yo di sa nan kreyol* (Haitian)  
 how you say that in creole  
 ‘How do you say that in creole?’ (Alleyne 1996: 74)
42. *Kouman (ou) di sa an kreyol* (Mauritian)  
 how you say that in creole  
 ‘How do you say that in creole?’ (Alleyne 1996: 74)

Compare (42) with the French translation in (43):

Colloquial French (no inversion)

43. *Comment on dit ça en créole*  
 how one says that in creole

Standard French (with subject-verb inversion)

44. *Comment dit-on ça en créole*  
 how says one that in creole

Standard French (no inversion)

45. *Comment est-ce qu'on dit ça en créole*  
 how is-it that one says that in creole

Although the examples in sections 4.1 to 4.6 demonstrate that basilectal Réunionnais uses invariant TMA markers, like other creoles, the Mauritian translations provided after each example show clearly that homophonous markers are not used to convey the same meanings in both languages, and in particular are combined in very different ways. The informants for the Mauritian examples confirmed that Mauritian was not mutually intelligible with Réunionnais, and that Haitian was in fact much easier for them to understand. In the end, Mauritian may be no closer to Réunionnais than to Haitian.

## 5. Réunion: a post-creole continuum?

As noted in section 3, *Créole des Blancs* represents a variety of partially creolised French which has features absent from the basilectal creole, such as rounded front vowels, masculine/feminine distinctions in possessive pronouns, and the use of weak personal pronouns (*je, tu, il*).

Chaudenson believes (contrary to Baker and Corne) that Mauritius was first settled by Frenchmen and slaves from Réunion, and that therefore Mauritian creole is genetically related to Réunionnais. Essentially, Chaudenson claims that *à date ancienne* (i.e. in the 18<sup>th</sup> century), Mauritian and basilectal Réunionnais shared most morphosyntactic features (agglutination of French articles, pronouns, analytic tense, zero copula, etc.), but that due to basilectal erosion in Réunionnais and internal changes in Mauritian, the two languages are now very different and not mutually intelligible. He also points out that both Réunionnais and Mauritian share exactly the same phonemic

inventory and almost the entire lexicon (Chaudenson 1974: 239-240). The following quote summarises Chaudenson's position (1984: 252):

Si le créole réunionnais présente aujourd'hui des caractères particuliers, ce n'est pas, comme P. Baker a vainement cherché à l'établir, en raison d'une origine différente de celle des autres parlers de la zone, mais parce que la situation sociolinguistique l'a conduit à évoluer de façon à faire disparaître nombre de traits basilectaux communs avec les autres parlers, qui les avaient d'ailleurs, très vraisemblablement nous le verrons, hérités, directement ou indirectement, de lui. (Chaudenson 1984: 252)

[If today Réunionnais creole has some specific characteristics, it is not, as P. Baker tried to show, because of a different origin from other languages of the area, but because the sociolinguistic setting made the language evolve in such a way that several basilectal features common with the other languages have disappeared, even though these languages had probably inherited these features from Réunionnais, directly or indirectly, as we will see.]

However, one major problem with Chaudenson's position is that basilectal Réunionnais emerged during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, *after* Mauritius was first settled. It is possible that early Réunionnais (*Bourbonnais*) influenced the development of Mauritian Creole, but because of the chronology, the basilectal forms of Réunionnais and Mauritian must have developed independently from one another, possibly from a common mesolectal or acrolectal ancestor. In fact, most of the similarities between Réunionnais and Mauritian may be due not to a genetic relationship between the two, but rather to the fact that both languages have the same lexifier language, which was restructured in similar (though not identical) ways, as well as similar substrata, namely Malagasy, Bantu languages, and some West African (mainly Kwa) languages. The difference lies in the fact that Réunionnais has retained some French morphosyntax, whereas Mauritian has none.

Chaudenson (1984: 162) criticises Baker and Corne (1982) for using only acrolectal examples in order to maximise the differences between Réunionnais and Mauritian. This is the main problem in describing Réunionnais: since there is a continuum, the different varieties do not seem to be autonomous

from one another and speakers typically master a range of lects. Therefore, forms elicited from a single speaker may actually belong to different lects.

## 6. Conclusions

Despite conflicting descriptions of Réunionnais syntax, there is strong evidence that *basilectal* Réunionnais is not just a variety of French, as shown in the examples in section 4. Thus, the *Créole des Bas* is just as much a creole as Haitian or Mauritian, though it is not as radical a creole, partly because it has recently undergone decreolisation under the influence of French, the official language. The basilectal erosion of Réunionnais is shown in Chaudenson (1981), who provides several examples of basilectal creole structures from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries which have disappeared from modern Réunionnais. If this basilectal erosion continues, Réunionnais may undergo further decreolisation and eventually be absorbed by French, and persist only as a regional dialect of French.

However, the verbal forms analysed in the previous sections (with the exception of the forms identified as acrolectal) show that Réunionnais is similar to other French-lexifier creoles in its use of combined TMA markers. While it is true that negation is postverbal in Réunionnais, contrary to most other creoles, this feature alone is not enough to claim that Réunionnais is a dialect of French. I have mentioned in passing that many of the TMA markers seem to come from periphrastic verbal constructions found in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-century French, and also in Quebec French, which because of its isolation from France is in many respects more conservative than standard French. However, a common etymology does not imply a common underlying structure. In other words, the data suggests that the French periphrastic constructions have been reanalysed as invariant, preverbal TMA markers in Réunionnais, as happened in other French-lexifier creoles.

Thus, the term semi-creole may apply to the early stages of Réunionnais (*Bourbonnais*), and to some acrolectal varieties spoken by the *Petits Blancs* today (these varieties are probably direct descendants of *Bourbonnais*). However, the basilectal Réunionnais spoken by Blacks, Indians and some mixed-race individuals is a creole, not a semi-creole, even though it is less radical than Mauritian or Haitian since it does have a number of French grammatical features, such as an optional copula and postposed negation. Though it is true that, in the Principles and Parameters syntactic framework,

postposed negation is evidence of verb-raising from V to Infl, this feature alone is not sufficient to classify Réunionnais as a dialect of French. First, French also has verb-raising to Comp in yes-no questions as evidenced in subject-verb inversion (e.g. *As-tu acheté le livre?* ‘Have you bought the book?’), while basilectal Réunionnais has no subject-verb inversion as in other creoles. Furthermore, several other diagnostic features can be used to establish ‘creoleness’, including phonological characteristics (such as the absence of front rounded vowels in French-lexifier creoles, including basilectal Réunionnais), lexical semantics, and especially the existence of bare, preverbal TMA markers, all of which are typical of Réunionnais.

Finally, though early Réunionnais (*Bourbonnais*) probably influenced Mauritian in the early stages, Mauritian cannot be considered an offshoot of Réunionnais since the basilectal features of Réunionnais, including its complex system of TMA markers, emerged after the settlement of Mauritius and the establishment of a creole there. Thus, most features of modern Mauritian appear to be independent developments. In sum, though Chaudenson (1974, 1981) is probably right in claiming that (basilectal) Réunionnais is a ‘true’ creole, Baker and Corne (1982, 1986) make a compelling case that Mauritian developed independently of Réunionnais.

## Notes

- 1 Baker and Corne (1982) transcribe the Réunionnais 1st person singular pronoun as *muê*, with the circumflex indicating that the vowel is nasalised, whereas Chaudenson (1981 and elsewhere) and Cellier (1985) use a transcription based on French pronunciation (i.e. *moin*). In this article, examples are presented with the orthography used in the original source.
- 2 A *cirque* is a steep hollow, often containing a small lake, occurring at the upper end of some mountain valleys.
- 3 *Mi* is an allophone of the 1st person singular pronoun *moin* (*muê*).
- 4 Baker and Corne (1982) point out that /i/ or /ki/ (used with the past tense) are obligatory verbal markers, except before *avuar* (‘to have’), *etr* (‘to be’), *a(va)* (indefinite future marker) and *fin(i)* (completive aspect marker). They also believe that the *ki/i* is probably derived from the periphrastic French construction *C’est moi qui...* Another hypothesis is that /i/ could be a 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular *reprise du sujet* (resumptive subject pronoun) which generalised to other persons. According to Chaudenson (1984), this is the only correct interpretation of the origin of /i/: Chaudenson (1984: 168-169) says that the mysterious /i/ ‘résulte de la généralisation à toutes les personnes du ‘i’ anaphorique’ [‘comes from the generalisation of the 3rd person anaphoric ‘i’ to all other persons’]. In other words, Chaudenson does not believe that /i/ is a contraction of /ki/.

- 5 This future marker is not mentioned elsewhere in Cellier (1985), and it is presumably an acrolectal feature derived from the French future of *avoir* (*aurai*).

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