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PREDICATE MARKER COMBINATIONS IN ISLE DE FRANCE CREOLE

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1.0 In his review of Corne 1970, Baker (1973:506) makes the following statement:

> "Corne notes 29 combinations of verbal particles expressing tense and/or aspect. Only six of these combinations are acceptable in any variety of Creole currently spoken on the island of Mauritius."

The aim of the present paper[1] is

(i) to give a description of the combinations of predicate markers ("verbal particles") that occur in the spontaneous oral or written usage of native speakers of Isle de France Creole,

(ii) to compare these results with work previously done on this subject, and

(iii) to compare them with nineteenth century usage, in order to add historical perspective.

2.0 The corpus used for the work on modern Isle de France Creole is written in Seychelles Creole (SC). SC, Mauritian Creole (MC) and Rodrigues Creole (RoC) are sufficiently alike, despite some dialectal differences (Corne 1977a:231), to be treated as a single language for the purposes of this paper. The name given to this language is Isle de France Creole (IdFC) (Corne 1978:85).

I chose not to deal with informants for two reasons, one theoretical, the other practical: firstly, I expressly wanted to avoid the problems associated with elicited speech, that is I wanted to work with spontaneous, non-elicited material; secondly, and more importantly, I did not have access to native Creole speakers in their natural environment. The reason for choosing to study SC lay in the fact that the largest amount of

TABLE 1

Seychelles Creole Predicate Markers[2]

No marker	No.	%	NEG + no marker	No.	%
Ø	1699	58.1	*pa*	128	4.4
			pa ni	7	0.2
			pa i	6	0.2
Marker			**NEG + marker**		
ti	193	6.6	*pa ti*	22	0.8
			pa i ti	1	-
a	193	6.6	*pa a*	2	0.1
va	27	0.9	*pa va*	2	0.1
ava	9	0.3			
pu	70	2.4	*pa pu*	27	0.9
pe	78	2.7	*pa pe*	1	-
ape	10	0.3			
n	250	8.6	*pa n*	9	0.3
fin	4	0.1	*pa fin*	1	-
fek	1	-			
anu	28	1.0	*anu pa*	1	-
Markers			**NEG + markers**		
ti a	22	0.8	*pa ti a*	2	0.1
ti va	1	-			
ti ava	1	-			
ti pu	1	-			
ti pe	19	0.7	*pa ti pe*	1	-
ti ape	3	0.1			
ti n	47	1.6			
ti fin	2	0.1			
ti fek	1	-			
a n	5	0.2			
ti a n	2	0.1			
n fek	1	-			
Adverb			**NEG + adverb**		
ãkor	12	0.4	*p'ãkor*	4	0.1
apepre	1	-			
apsolimã	1	-			
			pa ase	1	-
bjẽ	12	0.4			
ẽ pe	1	-			
ẽ pti pe	1	-			
nek	2	0.1			
osi	3	0.1			
pli	1	-			
tro	2	0.1			
tu	1	-			
zis	4	0.1			
TOTAL	**2708**	**92.6**		**215**	**7.4**
TOTAL NUMBER OF TOKENS: 2923					

written material was available to me in this dialect. In the event, however, the sample of data I collected from the first eleven stories of an anthology of folk-tales from the Seychelles was large enough to yield significant results. This anthology comprises the third section of Bollée 1977.

3.0 The data drawn from this corpus were collated and arranged according to the predicate marker(s) that occurred in each clause. The results thus obtained are presented in Table 1. The markers under consideration are:

ti	PAST	(PAS)
a/va/ava }	FUTURE	(FUT)
pu }		
n/fin	COMPLETIVE	(COM)
pe/ape	PROGRESSIVE	(PRO)
fek	PAST IMMEDIATE	(PIM)

There is no clear distinction between *a/va/ava* and *pu* in modern SC unlike modern MC (Corne 1977b:103-5). For a discussion of the form [*in*] in SC, see Corne 1977b:113-118. All the examples of [*in*] found in the corpus could be accounted for by rewriting them as *i n*, where *i* is the third person singlular subject pronoun. The form *in* does however occur in MC (Baker 1972:108), which lacks the morpheme *i*.

My results give seven predicate marker combinations:

COMBINATION	FORM(S)	No. of occurrences with or without *pa* negation preceding
PAS + COM	*ti n/ti fin*	49
PAS + FUT	*ti a/ti va/ti ava/ti pu*	27
PAS + PRO	*ti pe/ti ape*	23
FUT + COM	*a n*	5
PAS + FUT + COM	*ti a n*	2
PAS + PIM	*ti fek*	1
COM + PIM	*n fek*	1
TOTAL NUMBER OF TOKENS		108

4.0 In calculating the number of combinations found in each of the following works cited, I have counted *a/va/ava/pu* as a single marker; likewise *n/fin*, and *pe/ape*. For instance, in 4.3, although there is no example of *pu fin*, *va fin*, *a pu fin* or *a fin* in my corpus, *a n* does occur; therefore the group as a whole is marked as occurring in my corpus.

For a discussion of the differences between FUT *a/va/ava* on the one hand, and FUT *pu* on the other, see Baker (1972: 109-110), Bollée (1977:57-58), and Corne (1977b:103).

4.1 Baker (1972:107) gives three combinations, if one considers *ti a* and *ti pu* as one combination:

ti pe *ti fin* *ti a/ti pu*

Baker also notes (1972:117, note 4) *in fek*, but he classes *fek* as a "preverb". All four of these MC combinations occur in my corpus.

4.2 Bollée (1977:56-59) lists 11 combinations for SC in the body of her work:

ti (a)pe	*ti'n*
pu pe/ava pe	*pu'n/a'n/ava'n*
ti pu/ti a/ti ava	*ti pu'n/ti a'n/ti ava'n*
in fek	*a'n fek*
ti a'n fek	*ti fek pe*
ti'n fek	

Six of these combinations (or combination types, in the cases where *a n*, *ti a* and *ti a n* represent their respective groups as a whole) occur in my corpus; they are underlined. Note that the combination *ti fek* is not mentioned in this section of the work.

Bollée (1977:60) then sums up the section on predicate markers by giving a formula of the "possible" combinations, noting however (1977:59), that "il n'est pas aisé de déterminer lesquelles des combinaisons de morphèmes prédicatifs [=my predicate markers] sont acceptables et lesquelles ne le sont pas, étant donné que le locuteur créole moyen évitera des formes très complexes comme *i ti a'n fek pe mãze*" which, roughly translated, would read: '(s)he would have just been finished eating'.

Bollée's formula is given as follows:

$$\left\{\begin{matrix} i/\emptyset \\ ti \end{matrix}\right\} + \left\{\begin{matrix} (a\,[va]) \\ (pu) \end{matrix}\right\} + (in) + \begin{matrix} (fek) \\ (nepli) \\ (deza) \\ (ozi) \\ \text{etc.} \end{matrix} + (pe)$$

By (i) not counting *i*/∅ as a marker, in order to avoid getting such "combinations" as ∅ + *pe*,
(ii) considering *a(va)/pu* as a single marker, and
(iii) considering *fek* as the only predicate marker in the fourth column,
we derive 25 combinations from the formula, seven of which occur in my corpus:

ti + a(va)/pu
ti + fek
a(va)/pu + in
a(va)/pu + pe
in + pe
ti + a(va)/pu + in
ti + a(va)/pu + pe
ti + in + pe
a(va)/pu + in + fek
a(va)/pu + fek + pe
ti + a(va)/pu + in + fek
ti + a(va)/pu + fek + pe
ti + a(va)/pu + in + fek + pe
ti + in
ti + pe
a(va)/pu + fek
in + fek
fek + pe
ti + a(va)/pu + fek
ti + in + fek
ti + fek + pe
a(va)/pu + in + pe
in + fek + pe
ti + a(va)/pu + in + pe
ti + in + fek + pe

4.3 Corne (1970:14-15) gives eight combinations for MC, five of which occur in my corpus:

ti va/ti pu/ti a va/ti a pu/ti a
ti va fin/ti pu fin/ti a va fin/ti a pu fin/ti a fin
ti fin
ti pe
pu pe/va pe/a pu pe/a va pe
ti pu pe/ti va pe/ti a pu pe/ti a va pe
ti pu pe fin/ti va pe fin/ti a pu pe fin/ti a va pe fin
pu fin/va fin/a va fin/a pu fin/a fin

Baker (1973:506) calculates 29 combinations from this list by counting each form separately. I have considered *a/va/a va/pu/a pu* as variants of a single marker. *a pu* is in fact not acceptable in modern MC, but Baissac (1880:34,37n.) records *va pour* for nineteenth century MC.

The combinations with the marker *fek* (*ti fek* and *n fek*) are not found in this list, since Corne (1970:32) includes *fek* as a "sub-class of verb".

4.4 Corne (1973:53,55) gives two tables which yield 18 combinations for MC, if one

(i) considers Pres (Ø) not to be a marker,
(ii) counts Fut, (Fut) + FutDef, and (Fut) + FutInd as a single marker, written below as Fut,
(iii) ignores the combinations marked ? or *, and
(iv) ignores changes in marker order; that is, if one treats, for example, Prog + PasImm and PasImm + Prog as one combination.

Of these 18 combinations seven occur in my corpus:

Pas + Fut	Pas + Prog
Fut + Prog	Pas + Fut + Prog
Pas + Com	Fut + Com
Pas + Fut + Com	Pas + PasImm
Fut + PasImm	Pas + Fut + PasImm
PasImm + Prog	Pas + PasImm + Prog
Fut + PasImm + Prog	Pas + Fut + PasImm + Prog
Com + PasImm	Pas + Com + PasImm
Fut + Com + PasImm	Pas + Fut + Com + PasImm

4.5 Corne (1974-5:55 and 1977b:96) presents twice the same table for SC. By

(i) not counting Pres as a marker,
(ii) treating Fut, *a(va)* and *pu* as one marker, and
(iii) ignoring combinations marked ? or ?*, although Corne (1977:95) states that ? indicates that "the informants disagree for SC, but that the combination occurs in MC",

one gets 18 combinations, identical to those given in 4.4, except that Corne (1974-5 and 1977b) does not have the combination Pas + Fut + PasImm + Prog, but does have Pas + Fut + Com + Prog. Seven of these 18 combinations occur in my corpus.

4.6 Corne & Stein (1979:72-74), with a small amount of data, give four combinations for RoC, all of which are spontaneously uttered combinations:

ti a *ti n* *ti n ape* *ti ape*

Of these, only *ti n ape* does not occur in the corpus.

4.7 Papen (1975:25-26) gives 17 combinations for SC, if one

(i) considers Pres not to be a marker,
(ii) considers *a(va)/pu* as one marker, and
(iii) ignores the combinations marked as doubtful by Papen's notes 8-10 (1975:44).

Seven of these 17 combinations occur in my corpus:
(Papen 1975 labels *n* as Perf[ective].)

Fut + Prog

PastImm + Prog

Perf + PastImm

Fut + PastImm

Past + Prog

Past + Perf

Past + PastImm

Past + PastImm + Prog

Past + Fut + Perf + PastImm

Fut + Perf

Fut + PastImm + Prog

Fut + Perf + PastImm

Past + Fut

Past + Fut + Prog

Past + Fut + Perf

Past + Fut + PastImm

Past + Perf + PastImm

4.8 Papen (1978:349-350) gives 16 combinations for MC, RoC and Chagos Creole, if one

(i) considers Pres not to be a marker,
(ii) considers Future and Future + FutDef as one marker,
(iii) ignores the combinations marked ?, * or ?*, and
(iv) ignores changes in marker order.

Of these 16 combinations, which are the same as those given in 4.7 minus the combination Fut + PastImm + Prog, seven occur in my corpus. Note that Pepen (1978) labels *n* as completive.

Papen (1978:367-368) gives 15 combinations for SC, if one

(i) considers Pres not to be a marker,
(ii) ignores the combinations marked ? or *.

These 15 combinations are the same as those given in 4.7, except that Papen (1978:367-368) does not have Future + PastImm, Future + PastImm + Progressive or Past + Future + Perf + PastImm, but he does have Past + Future + Completive + Progressive. Of these 15 combinations, seven occur in my corpus.

4.9 These comparisons show that all the previous works cited, save Baker 1972, give more combinations than occur in my corpus.

5.0 To compare modern usage with that of the last century, I

TABLE 2

Nineteenth Century MC Predicate Markers[3]

Text	Baissac 1880	Baissac 1888	Anderson 1885	TOTAL	%
No marker	310	357	86	753	66.6
Marker(s)					
napa	15	21	4	40	3.5
te	31	5	-	36	3.2
ti	8	12	88	108	9.6
napa ti	1	1	4	6	0.5
a	11	2	-	13	1.2
va	10	24	14	48	4.2
napa va	1	-	-	1	0.1
pu	3	6	-	9	0.8
apre	8	1	-	9	0.8
fin	20	14	13	47	4.2
fek	2	-	-	2	0.2
anõ	1	-	-	1	0.1
ti pu	1	-	-	1	0.1
ti apre	1	1	1	3	0.3
te fin	1	-	-	1	0.1
ti fin	3	-	19	22	1.9
va fin	-	-	1	1	0.1
Adverbs[4]	6	20	3	29	2.6
TOTAL	433	464	233	1130	100.0

took three late nineteenth century MC texts, and treated them in the same manner as the modern SC text, although I collected a considerably smaller sample, since this section is only intended to give historical background. This nineteenth century corpus consists of:

(i) two folk-tales in Baissac 1880:121-146,
(ii) three folk-tales in Baissac 1888:3-33, and
(iii) three chapters of Anderson 1885:5-10.

The results from this corpus are presented in Table 2.

5.1 Baissac (1880:36-39) gives a paradigm of the MC 'verb', which includes the following combinations:

tê aprês/ti aprês	*tê fine*
va fine	*tê va/te pour* (pp. 25,28,30 & 34)
tê va fine	*te va fêque*

A note on p. 37 also gives:

va pour	*va pour fine*

Elsewhere in his discussion of the 'verb', Baissac (1880:23-35) gives examples of the following combinations:

tê fêque	*va après*
va fêque	

Of these eleven combinations, the first four occur in the nineteenth century corpus, whilst six (underlined) are found in the modern SC corpus, in their corresponding form. For the purposes of calculation we have counted *va/pour* and *tê/ti* as one marker each. Baissac's paradigm can probably be trusted as representing actual Creole usage; firstly because he claims in his introduction to be recording the most basilectal variety of nineteenth century MC: (1880:viii) "c'est de ce parler indigène, et bien véritablement autochthone celui-là, que nous proposons au lecteur une analyse exacte"; and secondly because, as Baker (forthcoming) states, "the set of combinations given in Baissac 1880 are very nearly the same as the combinations actually found in Anderson 1885" (see Table 3).

6.0 From Table 1, one can see that only 108 out of the 2923 clauses counted (3.7%) had any combination of predicate markers at all; only one of these had a three-marker combination, and none had a combination of more than three markers. Table 1 shows that the most common marker combinations are:

TABLE 3

Predicate Markers Attested in MC 1749-1885
(adapted from Baker forthcoming)

Text	Marker(s)
1749	-
1769	-
-1805	*va, fini*
1816	*été, tê fini*
1818a	*tê, va, pour, fini, fait que*
1818b	*été, tê, va, fini*
-1822	*été, eté, tê, va, pour, après, fini, tê fini*
1828	*été, tê, vat, va, après, finie, fini*
1830	*va*
-1831	*été, eté, tê, va, fini*
1832-	*été, tê, va, après, fini*
1835	*été, tê, va, fini*
-1837	*été, va*
1840	*ti, va, fin*
1855	*tê, ti, va, après, fin', fini, féq', tê va, tê fin'*
-1860-	*ti, va, fine, tê va*
1867	*ti, tê, va, pour, fine, fini, fèque, ti va, ti a, ti pour, ti fine*
1870	*ti, tê, fin, ti après*
1880	*tê, ti, va, pour, aprês, fine, fêque, tê va, tê aprês, ti aprês, tê fine, ti fine, va fine, tê va fine, tê va féque, va pour*
1885	*ti, tê, va, pour, aprê, fine, fec, ti va, ti pour, ti aprê, tê aprê, ti fine, tê fine, va fine, ti va fine, va aprê*

Combination	No.	% (of no. of tokens)
ti n	47	43.5
ti a	24	22.2
ti pe	20	18.5

which together account for 84.2% of all the combinations.

My results clearly show that no combination occurs frequently, that two-marker combinations other than *ti n*, *ti a* and *ti pe* are rare, and that combinations of more than two markers are very rare indeed. I am not, of course, claiming that Table 1 lists all the combinations of predicate markers that do occur in IdFC--indeed, (RoC) *ti n ape* (Corne & Stein 1979) is a combination produced by a native speaker without elicitation, which nevertheless does not occur in our corpus--but I am suggesting that the combinations not appearing in the table are very rarely, if ever, used by native speakers of the language.

6.1 When comparing the results of the corpora (modern SC and nineteenth century MC) with the previous work carried out on predicate marker combinations in IdFC, one is immediately struck by the discrepancy between the lists of marker combinations obtained from the texts and those presented in all the works cited, except Baker 1972.

I have already noted in 4.2 that Bollée recognised the difficulty in deciding which combinations could or could not be used; Corne (1978:86), when discussing the acceptability of certain doubtful combinations, states that "c'est en fait le modèle descriptif employé qui, forçant les sujets parlants à examiner leur compétence, conduit à la production de telles combinaisons" (cf. Corne & Stein 1979:71); and Corne & Stein (1979:71) note that "nous avons déjà eu l'occasion de signaler le problème posé par l'opposition qu'il peut y avoir entre les textes (écrits ou oraux) et les informateurs (autrement dit, entre les performances effectivement réalisées et la compétence des sujets parlants natifs)".

6.2 My results lead me to conclude that there is indeed quite a considerable distinction to be drawn between the 'acceptability' of combinations and their actual usage as evidenced by their frequency in Table 1. I am not claiming that the larger combinations do not exist in IdFC; in fact, I do not consider it to be a question of existence vs. non-existence; it is rather a matter of the relative frequency of usage.

That three-marker combinations are, or in the case of the nineteenth century data were, used is shown by the fact that

the modern SC corpus has *ti a n*, Corne & Stein (1979) have *ti n ape* and Baissac (1880) has *tê va fine*, *te va féque* and *va pour fine*. It seems to me that what has happened in the course of previous research is that when combinations of more than three markers are offered to native speakers of IdFC for comment in contextually complex environments, they are recognised as having meaning and are therefore marked as acceptable. But this acceptability is very different from the reality shown by the actual combinations found in non-elicited material.

These complex combinations, such as *ti a n fek pe*, may indeed occur in natural Creole speech when a speaker wants to make some situation particularly explicit in terms of tense and aspect, but they are perhaps used about as often as the English, 'I *would have just been finishing eating*, when the phone rang', which, I am sure, many English speakers would consider 'acceptable', but which most would rarely use themselves.

6.3 In conclusion, I support the criticism by Baker (1973) quoted in 1.0, inasmuch as my research shows that only two-marker combinations occur with significant frequency in non-elicited texts. But I also believe that combinations of more than two markers can be considered acceptable in the sense that they do convey grammatical meaning; that is, they can be included in a grammar and marked as possible, but should not be marked as normal usage.

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NOTES

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[2] Combinations of marker(s) + adverb(s) which have been counted in Table 1 under the marker(s) concerned:

ti ãkor	3	*ti n deza*	1	*n tro*	1
ti ãkor bjẽ	1	*ti ẽ pe*	1	*ti tuzur*	2
ti ãkor tro	1	*va koma*	1	*pa fin zame*	1
ti bjẽ	4	*a osi*	1	*pa pu zame*	1
a bjẽ	3	*ti preski*	1	*n zis*	1
va bjẽ	2	*ti sa-mem*	1	*osi ti*	2
n bjẽ	4	*n telma*	2	*osi pu*	1
ti deza	2	*a tro*	1	*osi pe*	2
n deza	1	*ti telma*	1	*n tuzur*	1

3 **Combinations of marker(s) + adverb which have been counted in Table 2 under the marker(s) concerned:**

te akor	1	*ti bjẽ*	1
va bjẽ	1	*ti fin bjẽ*	1
ti nek	1	*napa pli*	1
ãkor apre	1	*zame te*	1

4 **Adverbs counted together in Table 2:**

	1880	1888	1885
ãkor		2	
bjẽ	1		
bo		1	
mem		1	
napli		2	1
nek	3	5	
osi		1	
pli		4	2
tu		2	
tuzur	1		
sitã		1	
zame	1	1	
TOTAL	6	20	3