

# NOTES ON SEYCHELLES CREOLE PHONOLOGY

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Attempts to tell the world of Creole studies about the phonology of Seychelles Creole (SC) have not had altogether happy results. A first analysis (Corne 1969) was based on a severely limited amount of data from a small number of informants living in New Zealand. Further study of SC with a greater number of informants showed that there were several errors in this early statement, some of them being undoubtedly due to defective observation and analysis, but most being the result of the restricted data then available. In response to a request to provide an article for a special issue of the *Journal of African Languages*, to be edited by Professor Morris Goodman, a revised version was produced, based on a larger, but still limited, sample. In the introduction to this paper,<sup>2</sup> it was stated that "[the paper] is certainly sociolinguistically inadequate in its detail, but in its broad outline should prove descriptively adequate". The paper was based on data collected in New Zealand from expatriate SC speakers, all of European descent and belonging generally to the more privileged strata of Seychelles society. However, it proved possible to postulate what was labelled as a Creole "norm" for phonology, being roughly "broad" Creole; this "norm" was an abstraction having only tentative socio-linguistic (and of course no prescriptive) value. That paper was written in 1973, and with the demise of *JAL* remained in limbo throughout 1974. Meanwhile, a short field-trip was made to Seychelles, and it was gratifying to discover that the description of "broad" Creole was largely accurate. In view of this over-all accuracy, it did not seem worth-while to revise it when its publication in Goodman *et al.* became a possibility. However, the subsequent delay of some three years, as well as the 1977 publication of my *Seychelles Creole Grammar* which uses the orthography set up here, have led me to the conclusion that this revised version is now fully justified.

## 2.0 THE CONSONANT SYSTEM

The SC consonant has seventeen consonants, which may be represented as follows: (Fig. 1)

		labials	apicals	palatals	velars
nonvoiced	fricatives		f	s	
	occlusives	p	t		k
voiced	fricatives		v	z	
	occlusives	b	d		g
nasals		m	n	ŷ	ng
"liquids"			l	y	r

Fig. 1

## 2.1 OCCLUSIVES

The main point of interest here is the greater or lesser palatalisation of *t* and *d* before *i*. The phonetic realisations

are variable; for *t*, both [ts], [c] (= [tʃ]), sometimes [č] (= [tʃ]); for *d*, [dz], [ʃ] (= [dʒ]), rarely [ž] (= [dʒ]). The sequences *ti* + Vowel, *di* + Vowel are dealt with below, 3.2. It is not known if these various realisations define different groups of speakers. Occasionally, a very slight degree of palatalisation of *t*, *d* occurs before *e* in words where there is a (social variation of *i* and *e*, such as *delo* vs. *dilo* 'water'.

## 2.2 FRICATIVES

*v* varies with zero. In items where the sequence (X)*vu* + Vowel occurs, *v* varies with zero; the latter appears to be basilectal. Thus, 'to see' is *uar* or *vuar*; 'voice' is *laua* or *lavua*; 'sail' (noun) is *laua* or *lavua*. Two items noted so far display a clear-cut case of social variation. *dray* 'to drive' (<English) is basilectal, *drayv* is "refined" (all speakers have *drayver* 'driver'). The other item occurs usually as [tʃu:] 'to see, find', occasionally as [tʃuv]. The latter is "refined", insofar as basilectal speakers consider the verb to be *trur* (see below, 2.4, *r*). Since this is the short form of the verb, the long form - with *-e* - needs to be checked over a wide sampling of informants; similarly for *dray*. So far, only *truve* has been observed, but not ?\**drayve*: *sa ê loto ki zame mō n deza dray* 'that is a (type of) car I have never driven'. (Prepausally, the long form of the verb occurs.) We may note in passing that lenition of word-final *v* is not restricted to SC. In Baissac 1888 for Mauritian Creole (MC), the preposition *avek* 'with (etc.)' has a variant *av*; this form, following lenition of the *-v*, occurs as [a:] in Rodrigues Creole, phonemically *ar*; *ar* is also the form in modern MC, phonetically a low back vowel, long: [ɑ:].

*s* has an allophone [h] in *sa* 'this, that', *sō* 'his, her, its', sometimes also in *sen* 'person' (*ki sen-la?*, etc.). This allophone occurs in normal speech, but never in slow speech or citation forms, except with pre-literate children (from monolingual SC-speaking environments) for whom *h* appears to have phonemic status.

## 2.3 NASALS

*ŋ* prevocally is a nasalised palatal glide. Postvocally in word-final position, *iŋ* = [i:], after all other vowels a nasalised rising diphthong occurs: *-eŋ* = [ɛ̃i], *-aŋ* = [ãi], *-oŋ* = [õi].

No word-final *-uŋ* has been noted to date. Intervocally, bilingual SC-French speakers have a palatal [ɲ], although

frequently the nasalised palatal glide [j̃] occurs also in normal speech (rarely if ever in citation forms). For some bilinguals, a basilectal *y* is reconstituted in terms of the French etymon as *ni*; thus, *kōtiŋe* 'to continue' → *kōtinie* [kōtɪn̄j̃ɛ̃].

*ŋ* (digraph, corresponds to *ŋ*) is a velar that occurs only word-finally.

## 2.4 "LIQUIDS"

The term "liquid" is used here simply as a cover term for *l*, *y* and *r*.

*l* is an apico-dental or apico-alveolar lateral; it does not undergo palatalisation.

*y* ("yod") is a palatal glide. As a phoneme, this glide occurs only intervocalically and word- and syllable-finally (but see *i* below, 3.2). Intervocalically, *y* = [j̃]. Word-finally and syllable-finally, *iy* = [i] or [i:], after all other vowels a rising diphthong occurs: *ey* = [ɛ<sup>I</sup>], *ay* = [a<sup>I</sup>], *oy* = [ɔ<sup>I</sup>], *uy* = [u<sup>I</sup>]. The symbol *y* is used here rather than the I.P.A. symbol *j*, as literate informants universally dislike the latter, which they assimilate to French /ʒ/.

*r* has a large number of allophones, ranging from zero to uvular fricative to a pharyngeal fricative. Prevocally, *r* is usually a dorsal or velar continuant, very lightly articulated, sometimes labialised: [ɣ], [ɣ<sup>w</sup>]. Preconsonantly or word-finally, *r* lengthens the preceding vowel, and disappears phonetically except with word-final *-ir*, *-er*, when a lightly articulated lax central unrounded vowel [ə] may accompany the lengthening. Postconsonantly, *r* is frequently reduced to [w]. Thus:

*frer* 'brother' = [fɣɛ:, fɣɛ:ə, fɣ<sup>w</sup>ɛ:, fɣ<sup>w</sup>ɛ:ə, fwɛ:, fwɛ:ə]  
*desire* 'to tear, rip' = [desɪɣɛ, desɪɣ<sup>w</sup>ɛ, desɪwɛ]  
*vir* 'to turn' (short form) = [vi:, vi:ə]  
*large* 'to let go' = [la:gɛ]  
*kruar* 'to believe' = [kɣwa:, kwa:]

## 2.5 THE PROBLEM OF *r*

The phoneme *r* provides an interesting problem of analysis. In certain syntactic environments, a large sub-class of verbs (all, with the exception of *vini* 'to come, become', ending in *-e*) are

truncated by deletion of the final vowel. Truncation occurs only when the verb has the phonetic shape (X)(C)V $C_e$ . This shape includes then those verbs which phonemically have the shape (X)(C)V( $r$ ) $C_e$ . That is, a verb such as *large* is phonetically [la:gɛ], and it may undergo truncation in the same way as, for example, *ale* 'to go' = [a:lɛ]. A statement such as: "verbs with the shape (X)(C)V( $r$ ) $C_e$  may be truncated", is simply equivalent to an exhaustive listing of those verbs which do, or do not, undergo this truncation. It thus overlooks significant generalisations about SC, namely the fact that truncation occurs only when the *phonetic* shape is vowel + consonant + vowel, and that consonant clusters (except  $rC$ ) block truncation. Thus *zue* 'to play', *fie* 'to trust', *kalme* 'to calm', *âtre* 'to enter', *bukte* 'to book, reserve', *promme* 'to walk', etc., are never truncated, whereas *tire* [ci:γɛ] 'to pull' and *large* [la:gɛ] are *tir* and *larg* respectively.

Now in the phonetic detail given above, there is subsumed a rule of  $r$ -deletion, and it is obvious that in the case of *tir*,  $e$ -deletion must apply before  $r$ -deletion. In the case of verbs like *large*, however, there are two possibilities. One is to complicate the rule whereby a consonant cluster blocks deletion of  $-e$  by making  $rC$  an exception. The other is to apply the  $r$ -deletion rule, reducing  $rC$  to  $C$ , thus producing the correct  $V + C + V$  string to which  $e$ -deletion may then apply. This solution produces a rule-ordering paradox, in that in the case of *tire* the rules of  $e$  and  $r$  deletion have to apply in a different order from that necessary in the case of *large*. But it is not in fact necessary to order these two rules with respect to each other, if we simply allow each rule to apply to all possible representations that meet its structural description. Phonetic detail for  $r$  aside, Rule 1 can be represented as:

$$r \rightarrow : / \_\_ \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \# \\ C \end{array} \right\}$$

Rule 2 can be (rather crudely) represented as:

$$e \rightarrow \emptyset \quad / \quad \begin{array}{l} VC \_\_ \# \\ \text{verb} + X \end{array} \quad (\text{where } X \text{ is specified in syntactic terms})$$

Thus	l a r g e		t i r e
	(1) (2)		(1)(2)
	↓ ↓		↓ ↓
	l a : g ∅		t i : ∅

See now Koutsoudas *et al.* 1974 for the application of phonological rules, and Papen 1975 for a detailed discussion of this problem

in IOC generally. Papen's solution is to retain ordered rules, by considering *r* to be an underlying glide which forms a "natural" class with *y* and *w*. These two phonemes occur in such items as (MC) *taype* 'to type', *braybe* 'to bribe'. He gives no examples of *w* in the context V\_\_C, and none have been noted for verbs in SC. In all cases, the items concerned are relatively recent borrowings from English, and Papen notes (1975: n.14) that verbs such as *fayle* 'to file' vary (as to *e*-deletion) from speaker to speaker: some speakers with a knowledge of English consider such verbs to be invariable (*tayp*, *fayl*, *brayb*), while others consider them as being subject to *e*-deletion (*taype*, *tayp*). In this analysis, surface [ɣ] is derived by a rule of *r*-formation. It is hard to see what kind of natural class is made up of "etymological" (French) *rC* on the one hand, and borrowed English *yC* and *wC* on the other, and this solution appears to be a way of retaining rule ordering.

### 3.0 THE VOWEL SYSTEM

The SC vowel system has five oral and three nasal vowels (Fig 2):

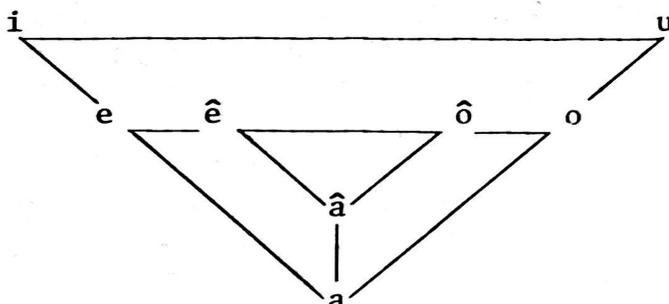


Fig. 2

A fourth nasal vowel *û* is postulated for *sûgula* 'type of monkey, hero/villain of numerous folk-tales', and perhaps for *matulûba* 'name of a card game'.

### 3.1 VOWEL LENGTH

In disyllabic words, when the first syllable is open, the vowel of that syllable is optionally but frequently phonetically long, especially when the second syllable is also open. Less frequently, the vowel of the penultimate syllable of a polysyllabic word is lengthened. A word-final vowel is often short when the vowel of the preceding syllable is phonetically lengthened

(including lengthening due to *r*). Thus:

*ale* 'to go' = [a:lɛ]

*sorti* 'to go/come out' = [sɔ:cɪ]

Phonetically lengthened vowels occasionally attract the primary stress (which normally falls on the final vowel), but length and stress are not usually concomitant. However, a full study of length and stress in SC remains to be done.

### 3.2 THE ORAL VOWELS

*i* contrasts word-finally with *y* : *pei* 'country' vs. *pey* 'to pay'. In all other contexts, this contrast is neutralised, *y* occurring intervocally, *i* elsewhere. This corresponds essentially to the analysis of French adopted by Martinet 1933 (but cf. also the discussion in Spence 1971). In the context (C)*i*V, *i* occurs as a palatal glide [j] : *lizie* 'eye' = [lɪzjɛ]. When C is *t* or *d*, [j] is completely assimilated to the palatalised allophones of these consonants: *tieke* 'to check' (<English 'to check') = [cɛkɛ], *diab* 'devil' = [ɟab]. Elsewhere, *i* occurs as a spread of allophones varying from a high front unrounded [i] to slightly lowered and centralised unrounded [ɪ], this latter being the more usual. In several words, *i* varies with *e*. Generally, *i* appears to be the basilectal form, *e* being "refined" SC : *dilo*, *delo* 'water', *bizuê*, *bezuê* 'to need, have to', *dime*, *deme* 'tomorrow', *divâ*, *devâ* 'in front of, before', *sime*, *seme* 'path',<sup>3</sup> *dibut*, *debut* '(to be) standing'. Other words do not appear to have this variation: only *demâde* 'to ask', *dimun* 'person' (although one or two occurrences of *dumun* were noted also). In the relative pronoun & subordinator *ki*, *i* varies with zero before a following vowel: *repet sa k u n dir!* 'repeat what you said!'.<sup>3</sup>

*u* occurs prevocally as [w]. Elsewhere, *u* has allophones varying between a high back rounded [u], and a slightly lowered and centralised rounded [ʊ], this latter being the more usual. In several words, *u* varies with *o*; the former appears to be basilectal: *kum*, *kom* 'like, as', *dimun*, *dimon* 'person, someone'.

*e* varies between a mid-high front unrounded [e] and a mid-low front unrounded [ɛ].

*o* varies between a mid-high back rounded [o] and a mid-low back rounded [ɔ]. *o* varies with zero in *koma*, *kma* 'like, as, when'.

*a* is usually a low front unrounded [a], but a range of allophones tending towards a low centralised [ʌ] also occurs. Some few speakers have a low back [ɑ] in some words, but the phonemic status of [ɑ] for such speakers remains to be determined.

### 3.3 THE NASAL VOWELS

The nasal vowels *ê â ô* (and *û*) are phonemically distinct from their oral counterparts, except when a vowel occurs contiguous to a nasal consonant (*m, n, ŷ, ng*). The same allophonic variation occurs as for the corresponding oral vowels, with the addition of nasality as a distinctive feature. *ê* has a further allophone, a lowered mid-low front unrounded [æ̃]. Where bilingual SC-French speakers replace Creole *a + m, n, ng* by *â + b, d, g* (on the basis of the French etymon), a low back [ã] occurs. Thus, SC *lavian* 'meat' → *laviâd*, with [ã], while *â pan* 'broken-down, of a machine or vehicle' (a form rejected by monolingual informants as being non-Creole) is never replaced by *\*â pãd*.

A transitional homorganic nasal consonant segment often occurs in the context of nasal vowel + non-final occlusive: *tôbe* 'to fall' = [tõmbɛ], *tâde* 'to hear, listen' = [tãdɛ], *âkor* 'again' = [ãŋkɔ:].

### 3.4 COMBINATORY NASALISATION

Contiguous to a nasal consonant, the contrast oral vowel vs. nasal vowel is neutralised. For SC, the facts are as follows.

(a) All vowels preceding *ŷ* are nasalised: *lapuŷat* 'masturbation' = [lapũʃat], *sâpiŷô* 'mushroom' = [sãpiʃõ].

(b) Before *m, n, ng*, *a* is nasalised, and *i, e, o, u* are nasalised to a greater or lesser degree. In "refined" Creole, *i, e, o, u* have generally non-nasal allophones, while *a* is partially nasalised (except where replacement of SC items by the French etymon has occurred). Thus *amas(e)* 'to pick up' = [ãma:s-], *oken* 'no (adjective)' = [okẽn], *amen* 'to take to/away from' = [ãmẽn].

(c) *a* in a non-final open syllable preceding a syllable with a nasal(ised) vowel is frequently nasalised. Thus, while some speakers have *asom(e)* 'to hit' = [asõm-], others have *âsom(e)* = [ãsõm-]. (In such cases, and until further evidence is to hand, perhaps both forms should be listed in the lexicon.)

(d) Word-finally after a nasal consonant, the contrast nasal vs. oral vowel is unstable. The contrast  $\hat{o} : o$  is generally retained: *mô* 'I, my' vs. *mo* 'word'.<sup>4</sup> The contrasts  $\hat{e} : e$  and  $\hat{a} : a$  are neutralised, only nasal allophones occur. (Both contrasts,  $\hat{e} : e$  and  $\hat{a} : a$  are kept by many bilingual speakers, however.) Thus:

*fane* 'to spread, scatter' = [fã:nẽ]  
*lame* 'hand' = [lã:mẽ]  
*mama* 'mother' = [mã:mã]  
*lestoma* 'chest (anatomy)' = [lɛstomã]  
*ÿaÿa* 'lazy' = [jã:jã]  
*soÿe* 'to look after' = [sõ:jẽ]

(The oral vowel is written in the transcriptions on the grounds that nasality is predictable, and therefore non-distinctive, in basilectal SC at least.)

The string *-ua* is nasalised, again less noticeably and less predictably for bilinguals: *mua* 'me' = [mũã].

*i* and *u* are often nasalised: *anu* 'let's (go)' = [ã:nũ], *kami* 'ashamed' = [kã:mĩ].

Note that final *-r* generally prevents progressive nasalisation as outlined above, but some (?older) SC monolinguals nasalise *i* and *u* before *-r*: *mír* 'ripe' = [mĩ:], *lamur* 'love' = [lãmũ:].

(e) Within a "breath-group" a sequence of word-final  $-\hat{a}$  followed by word-initial nasal consonant, appears to undergo some kind of neutralisation also. For example, in a sentence such as *u kôta mua* 'you love me', the  $-\hat{a}$  frequently occurs only partially nasalised.

The foregoing facts (a) - (e) may be accounted for as follows:

(1) The nasal vs. voiced occlusive contrasts  $m : b$ ,  $n : d$ ,  $ng : g$  are neutralised word-finally after a nasal vowel; only  $m$ ,  $n$ ,  $ng$  occur. That is:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{c} b \\ d \\ g \end{array} \right\} \rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{c} m \\ n \\ ng \end{array} \right\} \quad / \hat{V} \text{ \_\_\_\_\_\_ } \#$$

(2) The nasal vs. oral vowel contrast is neutralised before a nasal consonant (and appropriate phonetic rules then produce

the actual surface forms). That is:

$$(a) \quad \hat{V} \rightarrow V / \text{---} \begin{bmatrix} +\text{cons} \\ +\text{nasal} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$(b) \quad V + \{m, n, \eta, \hat{\eta}\} \rightarrow [\tilde{V} + m, n, \eta, \hat{\eta}]$$

(the actual phonetics being specified for each V that occurs).

(3) Word-finally after a nasal consonant, the contrasts  $\hat{e} : e$  and  $\hat{a} : a$  are neutralised (in basilectal SC, at least),  $\hat{o} : o$  is retained except after  $\hat{\eta}$ , and  $i, u, ua$ , etc., may be nasalised. (Phonetic rules need to be specified.) Some discussion of these rules is however necessary, since in fact they postulate an underlying nasal vowel.<sup>5</sup>

Rules (1) and (2) are not extrinsically ordered; they obligatorily apply simultaneously to any form which meets their structural description. They do not however always apply in the case of the subclass of verbs which undergo truncation (cf. above, 2.5). When  $e$ -deletion has applied to a verb such as *tâde* 'to hear', the result is *tâd*, to which Rules 1, 2a, and 2b must apply:

t	â	d
	(2a)	(1)
	↓	↓
t	a	n
	(2b)	
	↓	
t	ã	n

Obviously, Rule 1 alone would produce *tân*. But Rule 2 is more general, i.e. necessary to account for the contextually conditioned nasalisation of vowels in non-final syllables; both rules are also necessary to account for the fact that informants identify the [-ã] of, say, *fane* → ( $e$ -deletion) *fan* 'to spread, scatter', with the [-ã] of *tâde* → *tan*. (Although in such cases, bilingual SC-French speakers can reconstitute the French etymons, i.e. the French phonology, where underlying V + N may be postulated to account for nasalisation processes - cf. Schane 1968.)

Now when the NP object of *tâde* is *u* 'you', most speakers (although not all) have, for example, *mô tâd u* 'I hear you' (vs.

*mô tan li* 'I hear him'). That is, after *e*-deletion, Rule 1 (and therefore 2a, 2b) has been blocked. However, some verbs (*ran* 'to give back', *repon* 'to reply', *zuen* 'to join, meet (up with)', etc.) do not have "full" forms (*\*râde*, *\*repôde*, *\*zuêde*), but do occur before NP object *u* with the voiced final occlusive: *mô a zuêd u* 'I'll meet you'. That is, it is necessary to transcribe either *tâd*, *zuêd*, etc., and block Rule 1 when *u* occurs, or write *tan*, *zuen* and have a *d*-insertion rule when *u* follows the verb. While this second "solution" is theoretically indefensible, it is in fact what is implied by the transcription adopted here (*mô a zuen li*, *mô a zuêd u*). For verb morphology there is a loss of generality, in that a special sub-class of verbs has to be set up. A similar "liaison" of a final voiced occlusive occurs for some speakers (in a more "refined" Creole) before a following word-initial vowel: *i n tôb a-ter* 'he has fallen to the ground'. Usage in this area is not stable, and while it appears likely that the basilectal usage is to make the liaison only with a following NP object *u*, or not at all, this cannot be stated with certainty. Therefore, we shall make no attempt to normalise the transcriptions here, and the form actually occurring in any given utterance will be noted.

Rule 1 as formulated above in fact requires some adjustment to enable forms such as *lanme* 'the next day' to be accounted for. While both *lâdme* and *lâdeme* have been observed, they are infrequent and occur mainly in the speech of SC-French bilinguals. In MC, Rule 1 also applies in non-final position: *pengle* 'to pin', *trangle* 'to strangle', *angle* 'English(man)'. As a general rule, this is not the case in SC: *âgle* = [âŋglɛ]. However, some cases have been observed where Rule 1 appears to have applied, for example [tʏɑŋglɛ] as well as [tʏãŋglɛ], observed in the speech of the same informant.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.0 TRANSCRIPTION

The alphabet is as described above: *a, â, b, d, e, ê, f, g, i, k, l, m, n, ng, o, ô, p, r, s, t, u, û, v, y, ÿ, z*. Capitals are used as in French, except that the accent *^* is retained. The full stop, the comma, the colon, the question and exclamation marks correspond in general to specific intonation patterns and mark the boundaries of countour groups.

There are two major problem areas as far as transcribing SC texts is concerned.

The first concerns compound words, one or more of whose constituent units often does not occur as a free form. Following broadly Bollée 1977 the following system, which is arbitrary to

some degree, is adopted in Corne 1977. Compound nouns are written with a hyphen: *nuvel-lin* 'new moon',<sup>7</sup> *nuvel-marie* 'bride', *fij-d-oner* 'bridesmaid', *fri-a-pê* 'breadfruit', *zen-tâ* 'youth, younger days'. Most "grammatical" words and adverbs have no hyphen: *apepre* 'nearly', *olie* 'instead (of)', *ditu* '(not) at all', *andâ* 'inside', *ubiê*, *usua* 'or', *kamem*, *kâtmem* 'although', *ladâ* 'in, therein', *keksoz*, *ketsoz* 'something'.<sup>8</sup> Compound verbs such as *fermal* 'to hurt, be painful', *suadizâ* 'to pretend', *vedir* 'to mean' are not written with a hyphen, as it is not clear that they are in fact compound except in an etymological sense. The negative verb *kruar-pa* 'to think not' seems intuitively to require a hyphen (?). Similarly in the case of compound nouns including bound variants of *bô* and *grâ* : *bonaniverser* 'Happy Birthday', *bonom* 'fellow', *bonane* 'New Year', *gramun* 'old people, grandparents'. Reduplicated words: no hyphen with verbs: *blagblage* 'to chatter', *kozkoze* 'to talk at length'; adjectives and adverbs are written as two separate words or as a single unit, according to the intonation contour (cf. Corne 1970 : 54-55). The hyphen is also used after items which show morphological variation inherited from French sandhi phenomena: *kat* 'four' but *katr-â* 'four years', *de* 'two' but *dez-er* 'two o'clock'; also with compound numbers: *suasan-de* 'sixty-two', *vêt-e-ê* 'twenty-one'. It is clear that for the purposes of grammatical description, proto-IOC reconstruction, etc., the question of hyphen placement is not crucial. A spelling system for SC intended for literacy programmes and the like is a very different matter, and a firm decision would have to be taken on each and every case. Since the aim of a literacy programme is to teach people to read and write with a minimum of unnecessary effort, it may perhaps be wiser to do away with the hyphen entirely, and allow items to be written as one or two (or more) words, according to the intuitions of (non French-speaking) native SC speakers.

The second problem area concerns predictable nasalisation. My feeling is that combinatory nasalisation should not be marked. Thus *tang* and not *tâg* 'tandrack, *Ericaneus setosus*', *zâpon* and not *zâpôd* 'base of coconut palm frond', *lame* and not *lamê* 'hand'. Bollée 1977 uses an "etymological" spelling for nasals (*grâmâmâ* for *gramama* 'grandmother', *demê* for *deme* 'tomorrow') on the grounds that this will "faciliter la lecture des textes aux lecteurs francophones" (inconsistently, in this perspective, she distinguishes graphically between *u* and *w* while at the same time recognising their status as combinatory variants of the phoneme *u*). This etymological spelling of nasals is unfortunate, in that the SC orthography being used by D. d'Offay de Rieux and G. Lionnet for their SC dictionary project, and used by Bollée in her edition of Accouche 1976, contains similarly marked non-phonemic nasals (in this orthography, a nasal vowel is marked by

a following *n* : thus *ana* [ãnä] is written "anan". While there is some measure of justification for marking nasality in an item such as *deme* (French "demain") for SC-French bilinguals, there is none as far as monolingual SC speakers are concerned, and such a transcription can only hinder acquisition of literacy in the long term. Even if for "socio-political" purposes it is necessary to mark etymological nasals, there is no reason to mark non-etymological combinatory nasals as in the case of *ana*, *kone* 'to know', etc.

Bollée 1977 uses an apostrophe in a few cases : *pa* + *âkor* 'not yet' (*p'âkor*), *u* + *ule* 'you wish' (*u'le*), *mô* (or other item with final vowel) + (*f*)*in* 'Completive aspect' (*mô'n*). The first two uses are unobjectionable. In Corne 1977, they are written *pâkor* and *u le* or *u ule* depending on which actually occurs. The third use is contentious, and depends on the analysis of the Completive which is adopted. Bollée postulates that the Completive is *in*, whence her transcription *mô'n*. In Corne 1974-5, the Completive is postulated as *n* (whence my transcription *mô n*), and the phonetic form [in] is handled by means of an *i*-insertion rule ("reprise" of a 3rd person subject). This stand has been slightly modified (but not abandoned) in Corne 1977 (q.v. for further discussion, section 4.36).

In the case of those items which have variants, there does not appear to be any real need to choose a standardised spelling; thus, either *koma* or *kma* 'as, like, when', *delo* or *dilo* 'water', *lor* or *lo* 'on'.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, an orthographic distinction may be made for clarity in the case of [pʊ]. As a preverbal marker 'Future' it is noted *pu*, while as a preposition it is *pur* (cf. Corne 1969 : 59 n19).

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## NOTES

- 1 This research was supported in part by grants from the University of Auckland Research Committee. My grateful thanks go to Anna Bollée, Gabrielle Jean (née Hoareau), Flora Mondon and Bob Papen for their help with various aspects of this study. An earlier version of this paper was circulated privately as *Seychelles Creole Workbook 1* (1976).
- 2 "Seychelles Creole French Phonemics", appearing in Goodman *et al.*, in press.
- 3 *seme* 'path' contrasts with *seme* 'to sow' for most speakers, [se:mẽ] and [sẽ:mẽ] respectively. In *seme* 'to sow', the non-final *e* undergoes the usual combinatory nasalisation specified below (3.4). Therefore, *seme* 'path' should be represented as (basilectal) *sime*, with a late vowel-lowering rule (applying after nasalisation) producing the *e*. Such an approach would "work", but seems to involve an ordering of rules that would make what appear to be erroneous claims about SC. For those forms where *e* varies with *i*, the latter appear to be the basilectal forms, while the former are "refined", that is, it may be postulated that *e* is derived directly from French /ə/.
- 4 These facts may turn out to be incomplete. Although there are many items (e.g. *zanimò* 'animal') where final -*o* is not nasalised (cf. *ziromô* 'pumpkin'), no example has been observed to date of a sequence -*yo*, only -*ô*. One item, *lema* 'magnet' is apparently always [le:ma] in SC ([le:mã] occurs also for SC-French bilinguals). Note also *môk(e)* 'to laugh at' (Chaudenson 1974 and the *FEW* do not note any forms of this verb containing a nasalised *o*) and *lamôk*, *lamok* 'tin mug'.
- 5 Thus, for a generative phonology, a series such as *butô* 'button', and *buton(e)* 'to button' would require a rule of *n*-insertion (much as a pair like *sapo* 'hat', *sapote* 'be-hatted' would presumably require *t*-insertion). For SC, *n*-insertion would give us underlying |butône|, and Rules 2a, 2b will provide the correct surface forms *butone* = [butõnẽ].
- 6 For a detailed discussion of the problem of Indian Ocean Creole nasals in a generative phonology, see Papen 1975, 1977.
- 7 *nuvelin* for some speakers.
- 8 The major difficulty occurs with items containing *a-* and *â-*, and the transcriptions used here are arbitrary: thus *â-koler* 'angry', but *âba* 'underneath', and *a-pie* 'on foot', but *asuar* 'tonight'.

<sup>9</sup> In my own work, I choose to standardise this as *lor*, to account for [lo:]. This appears to be as widespread as [lo], and the variation does not appear to be governed by phonological or syntactic environment, nor by socio-linguistic factors. Bollée 1977 uses *lo*, pointing out that her informants consistently reject the form with -r (although it does occur in written texts).