Decreolization in Mauritian Creole:
Sociolinguistic and Linguistic Evidence

by

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A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

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11th November 1981

Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to shed some light on the process of decreolization in Mauritian Creole. Decreolization, which consists of the gradual but continual transfer of features from a Standard Language to its lexically related Creole language, has not received any substantial treatment with regard to French-related Creoles, against the abundant evidence to be found in English-related Creoles. It is therefore the purpose of this thesis to fill this gap. Despite more than a century and a half of British rule and the imposition of English as the official language, French has maintained its position as the prestige language of Mauritius. The coexistence of Mauritian Creole and French, and the subsequent mutual interferences between them, exercise strong decreolizing pressures which are evidenced at most linguistic levels. An attempt will be made to show that decreolization does not merely involve direct interference from the Standard language in the speech of bilinguals; it represents a linguistic change which may occur even among unilingual creole speakers with a minimal contact with the French language.

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Resumé

La décréolisation dans le créole mauricien: Faits sociolinguistiques et linguistiques

Le but de cette thèse est de mettre en relief le procédé de la décréolisation dans le créole mauricien. Ce phénomène consiste dans le transfert graduel mais continuel vers le créole de traits linguistiques de la langue avec laquelle il est en rapport lexical. Quand on compare l'intérêt qui s'est manifesté de la part des créolistes à la décréolisation dans les créoles anglais, on se rend compte tout de suite d'une absence presque totale du même intérêt à l'égard des créoles français. Cette thèse se propose donc de remplir cette lacune. Malgré plus d'un siècle et demi de colonisation anglaise et l'imposition de l'anglais en tant que langue officielle, la langue française jouit du prestige d'être la langue de civilisation et de culture dans la vie des Mauriciens. Par conséquent, la coexistence du créole mauricien avec la langue française, et le recours massif à la francisation qui s'en découle, produisent des effets décréolisants qui touchent plusieurs systèmes linguistiques. On tentera dans cette thèse de faire valoir que la décréolisation ne consiste pas seulement dans un transfert direct de la langue standard; elle représente, en effet, un changement linguistique qui se répand à travers toutes les classes sociales, même chez les unilingues en voie d'alphabétisation.

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Acknowledgments

I extend my most sincere and profound gratitude to my friends P. Nowbuth, A. Caunhye and E. Balancy who were kind enough to help me in obtaining all the data required for this thesis.

Acknowledgment must also be given to all the subjects who had to put up with the invasion of their privacy during the period when their conversations were recorded.

Special thanks must, however, be given to my thesis supervisor, Professor Nicole Domingue, who has been very generous with her time, and whose patience and understanding are deeply appreciated.

Finally, my thanks go to all the graduate students of the McGill Linguistics Department.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Introductory Notes

Recent descriptions of English-related pidgins and creoles have been characterized by dynamic models of language and, conversely, have significantly encouraged theoretical debates in the field of language variation (cf. Bickerton 1975). However, the increasing enthusiasm in evidence today in the field of pidgin and creole studies has not yet spread to the sub-domain of Romance-related creoles. That Romance-related pidgins and creoles should remain neglected is ironic since, not only was the field of pidgin and creole studies launched by a Romanist, Hugo Schuchardt, but French-, Portuguese-, and Spanish-related creoles enjoy the widest geographical distribution and count the largest number of speakers among existing pidgins and creoles. In addition, since Romance-related pidgins and creoles dispose of extensive historical records and documentation on dialect diversification, they are well equipped to address themselves to some of the burning issues in the field of Creolistics.

1.0.1 French-related Creoles as a Ground for Theories of Variation

French-related Creoles are a particularly instructive area of empirical observations and, among other things, a splendid testing ground for

theories of language variation. Studies in the field of sociolinguistics indicate that linguistic variation is universal. It occurs within the same culture, and each of the linguistic codes or each of the varieties of language used corresponds to determined functions and social values. Like any other natural languages, French-related Creoles are far from constituting a homogeneous system, and this lack of homogeneity is particularly instructive since it can be traced to well-defined factors like geographic variation, socio-political situation, social status, and style.

1.0.2 Geographic Variation

Given the striking structural similarities alleged to exist among them, one might be tempted to argue that the French-related Creoles[1] constitute mutually intelligible dialects (DeCamp 1971a:19) of the "same" language. However, to treat the French-related Creoles as a distinct family unit would be tantamount to minimizing the "structural differences between constituent members," and ignoring the "striking structural similarities between members of lexically differently based groups which cannot be attributed to the 'source language'" (Taylor 1971:293). In fact, the uniformity which is said to characterize these Creoles is only relative, once we start comparing them in a rigorous and detailed manner. Not only is there variation within each particular group of dialects, but differences exist within the same geographical zone:[2] Chaudenson (1974) suggests that Mauritian Creole speakers have great difficulty understanding their Reunionese counterparts. The hypotheses about the so-called mutual intelligibility, it seems, have been based

to a large extent on the fragmentary analysis of written documents which, of course, do not give a very perfect picture of linguistic reality.

1.0.3 Socio-political Situation

Variation exists not only within a group of Creoles belonging to the same geographical zone, but it exists also within a particular Creole. The types of variation which one finds in a particular Creole depend on the global linguistic situation of the land in which that Creole is spoken. A fourfold division is needed to differentiate the areas where a French-related Creole is used. First, there are the areas where Creole coexists with a language other than French, say, English: this is the case namely in Saint-Lucia, Dominica, and the leeward ("sous-le-vent") islands of the Antilles, such as Trinity and Grenada, where Creole is said to be on the point of extinction. Second, there is Haiti where Creole is the only language for the majority of the inhabitants, and where one expects to find a number of geographical and social varieties. Third, there are the areas where Creole is in contact with vernacular dialects derived from regional varieties of French. These include particularly Saint-Barthélemy and Reunion. Reunion also falls into the next category of areas where Creole is in direct and close contact with Standard French. These include areas such as Guadeloupe and Martinique[3] in the Antilles. Mauritius can also be placed in this category. Thus the degree of coexistence of Creole and the Standard French may determine considerable variation at the linguistic levels.

1.0.4 Individual Factors of Variation

Furthermore, variation in a Creole, as in other languages, is determined by individual factors such as social status, sex, age, and education as well as by style and other particular features of the speech act. Most speakers, particularly those with some contact with French, may control a number of varieties of Creole and be able to switch from one to another depending on the given situation of the speech event. Thus the mixture of geographic, social, and stylistic factors is very likely to influence the choice of a particular variety of speech among Creole speakers.

1.1 Aim of Study

One corollary of the belief, expressed above, that French-related Creoles show a large degree of linguistic uniformity has been that there exists a well-defined distinction between the Creole and French. This situation has been contrasted to that which exists in English-related Creoles where the boundary between Creole and Standard is often obscured by the presence of more or less decreolized varieties of the Creole (DeCamp 1971a).

In this thesis I would like to show that much of the variation which exists in Mauritian Creole is in fact the result of decreolization. Decreolization, as will be explained in further detail in Chapter 2, involves a process of change which has its origin in the transfer of features to the Creole from its lexically related Standard language, also

called the superstrate. This process is set into motion in a context where there are continual mutual interferences between the two languages as in the French overseas departments. The case of Mauritius is no doubt very close to the latter because French is spoken on this island by a large proportion of the Creole-speaking population, and is at least understood by the vast majority. Moreover, the development of education and communication facilities in the past decade or so has led to a relatively rapid evolution of Creole resulting from contact with Standard Mauritian French.[4] As a result of this evolution, a situation is ultimately created where it becomes difficult to draw any kind of boundary line between the two languages, or to subdivide the Creole language into any number of levels or varieties. Thus the fact that Mauritian Creole is subject to pressures from its superstrate makes it difficult to approach it with any static descriptive models. It should be pointed out, at the very outset, that the aim of this study is not an attempt at solving the bristling problem of how to demarcate the various Mauritian Creole varieties, or to propose an overall description of Mauritian Creole. My main purpose is to present as precisely as possible the amount of data available to me on the fairly recent process of decreolization in Mauritian Creole, without suggesting that the linguistic situation prevailing in this island has evolved to a state comparable, for example, to that of Jamaica, where no dividing line distinguishing English Creole and Jamaican Standard English (DeCamp 1971b) can be drawn.

1.2 General Pattern of Evolution

In order to understand the decreolizing pressures exerted by Standard

French, our study has to be set against the general pattern of evolution which characterizes Creole languages. Among the first linguists to discuss such a pattern, we find Bloomfield (1933:474) who points out that a Creole language in contact with its superstrate may continue basically unchanged or become "leveled-out" and "improved" in the direction of the Standard language. Along the same lines, DeCamp (1971b:349) postulates that there are four alternatives for post-creolization development in the life-cycle of a Creole. According to him, a Creole language may continue indefinitely without substantial change; or, it may disappear; or, it may evolve into a "normal" language; or, still, it may merge with the Standard language. Valdman (1973:508) improves upon this classification by making use of binary distinctions. He suggests that a Creole language may face extinction or continue. He adds that a Creole may continue in or out of contact with the Standard language. Finally, a Creole may continue in contact with the Standard language with or without mutual interferences that may lead to merger. As far as Mauritian Creole is concerned, although a merger is certainly not likely to develop in the immediate future, there can be no doubt that it is subjected to a strong influence from Standard French which has the effect of giving rise to various "levels" of Creole.

1.3 Data

The data on which this study is based were obtained as follows: 1) recorded tapes of texts and sentences obtained in Mauritius; 2) published descriptions of Mauritian Creole which include examples and

texts; 3) my own knowledge and intuitions as a native speaker.

Since sounding the intuitions of an informant is a notoriously unsatisfactory elicitation procedure, efforts were made during taping sessions to create an environment conducive, as far as possible, to spontaneous utterances. Under my instructions, three of my friends with some background in linguistics monitored the speech of a group of about 30 subjects for a period of five months, and managed to record conversations with them which were then sent to me, and transcribed by me. In all, I received 10 texts which comprised the sum total of about 800 sentences and 10,000 words. The group of speakers that were observed represented all ages and social classes. Special consideration was taken of their profession, level of education, income, and social contact. The conversations with these subjects were recorded while they were participating in their usual activities in varied contexts. These included conversations with housewives, members of the working class, and speeches delivered by politicians. As we shall see below, one of the factors of social variation consists of the pressures to avoid the "ordinary" variety of Creole and to acquire the variety closer to Standard French. This is particularly evident among linguistically "insecure" speakers such as the semi-educated ones enjoying a certain degree of social status, for example, because of contact with the capital city. For this reason, our study emphasized the observation of data on the part of such speakers.

1.4 Plan of Study

The plan of this study is as follows: Chapter 2 is divided into

four sections. Section 1 defines the process of decreolization, and states the conditions which have been suggested for such a process to occur. Section 2 deals briefly with the evidence that has been drawn for decreolization from English-related creoles. In comparison with the latter, the literature that has been written on aspects of decreolization in French-related Creole languages is sparse. This will be dealt with in Section 3, which will also explain the reasons for so little evidence on these languages. Since the dialectal variation that occurs in both English- and French-related creoles has been the subject of debate with regard to its description, Section 4 will consider the theoretical framework within which to handle such variation. The concept of "continuum" will particularly be discussed.

In Chapter 3, we shall examine the sociolinguistic aspects of decreolization, and attempt to identify the various factors responsible for exercising such decreolizing influences on the Creole language.

The last three chapters will be devoted to presenting linguistic evidence of decreolization in Mauritian Creole at several levels--phonology (Chapter 4), morphology and syntax (Chapter 5), and lexicon (Chapter 6).

1.5 Orthographic System

A brief note on the orthographic system used in this study is necessary. The system we use in the present study is by and large similar to that used by Corne (1976). The symbols are as follows:

i, e, a, o, u, ə, ẽ, ã, õ, j, ø, y, p, b,
t, d, k, g, f, v, s, z, š, ž, č, ǰ, m, n,
ŋ, r, l, w

When texts and sentences are quoted from other writers, they will reflect their respective spelling systems.

Notes

[1] The French-related Creoles form four major groups: (1) Haiti; (2) Lesser Antilles: Guadeloupe and dependencies, Martinique, and Dominica, Saint-Lucia, marginally in such British-influenced islands as Grenada, Saint-Vincent, and Trinidad; (3) French Guyana and, marginally, Louisiana; and (4) Mauritius, Rodrigues, Seychelles, Chagos, and Reunion.

[2] If mutual intelligibility is possible between, say, Guadeloupan and Martinican in the Lesser Antilles, or Mauritian and Seychellois in the Indian Ocean, it is much more difficult among dialects belonging to different areas within the same geographical zone (say, Martinican and Haitian in the Caribbean region or Mauritian and Reunionese in the Indian Ocean).

[3] The islands of Reunion, Martinique, and Guadeloupe are French overseas departments. This political situation makes the influence of Standard French obvious.

[4] Mauritian French differs from European French in so far as the former is increasingly influenced by English, particularly in the lexicon (e.g., air-letter is used for "aérogramme," tape-recorder for "magnétophone," goalie for "gardien de but," etc.).

Chapter 2

Theoretical Background of Decreolization

2.0 Definition of Decreolization

Decreolization has been defined as a process by which a creole language in contact with its superstrate may progressively lose distinctive creole characteristics and begin to level in the direction of that superstrate. In the course of decreolization, the creole may eventually come to appear as no more than a rather deviant dialect of its lexically related Standard language. Since one of the problems that has persisted in creole language studies is to figure out precisely what "creole" and creolization mean, any attempt at defining the process of "de-creolization" cannot pretend to be truly definitive. The development cycle of pidgin-creole-postcreole characterized by reduction in the pidgin stage followed by continuous expansion into the creole and postcreole stages has not been clearly established. For example, the structure typical of Atlantic creoles can exist in a language which remains sociologically a pidgin, i.e., a language which has no native speakers. Hence, until the precise nature of the processes of reduction and expansion is revealed, in this study we shall use the term decreolization to refer to the expansion which takes place in a creole when that creole is spoken in an area where it is juxtaposed to its lexically

related superstrate.

2.1 Conditions Under Which Decreolization Occurs

Decreolization generally occurs in situations where the social and economic pressures to use the target language in more and more domains become increasingly pronounced, and opportunities to master this language improve. One typical result of this change is what has been called a "post-creole continuum" of speech varieties exhibiting varying approximations to the standard form of the target language.

For such a postcreole speech community to exist, DeCamp (1971b:351) suggests that two conditions must be present. First, "the dominant official language of the community must be the standard language corresponding to the creole." For example, according to DeCamp, Sranan or the French of St Lucia and Grenada have not developed a postcreole continuum because there is no continuing corrective pressure from Standard English in Surinam or from Standard French in St Lucia and Grenada. Second, "the formerly rigid social stratification must have partially (not completely) broken down. That is, there must be sufficient social mobility to motivate large numbers of creole speakers to modify their speech in the direction of the standard, and there must be a sufficient program of education and other acculturative activities (radio, television, etc.) to exert effective pressures from the standard language on the creole." (p. 351)

DeCamp makes it clear that in a postcreole speech community these corrective pressures do not operate uniformly on all the creole speakers.

Otherwise the result would be merely "a uniform narrowing of the gap between creole and standard, not a linguistic continuum." (p. 351) Rather, with the breaking down of social stratification, the creole speakers, depending upon their age, their socio-economic status, and their degree of isolation from urban centers, gain varying degrees of contact with the group who speaks the superstrate language. In the course of this process whereby the creole language incorporates more and more features of the Standard language, there is a range of lects which can be arranged implicationally along the continuum from the creole language toward the target Standard language. Some of these lects are near the creole end of the continuum and some are nearer to the Standard end. The lect closer to the creole has been called the basilect,[1] the one closest to the Standard language is called the acrolect, and those in the middle are referred to as the mesolect.

In Mauritian Creole one finds lects which are non-basilectal, resulting from the process of decreolization as the following speech samples show:

> pu mo lizje-la mo ti pas avek dokter, lin dir mwa li pa grav. tuzur lin avoj mwa pu pas kot dokter spesialist le nor.
>
> "As for my eyes, I went to see a doctor, he told me it's not serious. However, he sent me to see a specialist in the North."

> mo espere to deza o kurã a propo rezilta S.C.
>
> "I hope you are aware of the S.C. results."

> u kone ekspresemã lin dir mwa tut se zistwar parskə li amurœ avek en fij ki travaj a la bãk.
>
> "You know, he told me all these stories on pur-

pose because he is in love with a girl who
works at the bank."

These samples have incorporated in varying degrees certain French features at the lexical, phonological and syntactic levels. Thus we observe the use of French expressions o kurã "conversant with," a propo "about," ekspresemã "on purpose"; the use of front rounded vowels like œ as in amurœ "in love," French "schwa" as in parskə "because," final consonant clusters as in spésialist "specialist"; and also the use of syntactic features like the presence of prepositions as in a la bãk "at the bank." Another instance of what M. Valkhoff (1960:235) has called present-day Mauritian "Semi-Creole"—which does not look like an entirely new language, different from French, nor can it be considered as only slightly "corrupted" French--is found in Petit catéchisme en patois créole (1952). The spelling, it is to be noted, is entirely influenced by Standard French.

Q. Combien éna commandements bon Dieu?

R. Dix commandements bon Dieu.

1. Faudrait adore bon Dieu tout seul, n'a pas occupe gris-gris sorcier, petit Albert, dire la priere bon matin et a soir, n'a pas capave alle dans cérémonie paiens.

2. N'a pas jure nom bon Dieu, n'a pas faire serment bonavini, quand prends nous témoin: faudrait toujours dire la vérité.

Q. "How many commandments of God are there?

R. Ten commandments of God.

1. One must revere God alone, do not concern yourself with sorcerers, little Albert, say your prayers every morning and evening, do

not go to pagan ceremonies.

2. Do not swear by the name of God, or take oaths at random; always tell the truth, when you stand as witness."

This offers indeed a language which is a fair cross between Standard French and "pure" (basilectal) Creole. This type of decreolized variety is acquired over a long period of time by a fairly broad cross-section of a creole speech community. Bickerton (1975) perceptively equates decreolization with postponed second-language acquisition. He suggests that since the starting point on the continuum is native creole, the changes that occur would seem to be similar to those which take place in second language learning, particularly with adults, as they would be free from any interference from the maturation process.

2.2 Decreolization in English-related Creoles

From the point of view of English-related pidgins and creoles, the process of decreolization is most in evidence in the New World varieties, though it is to be found in all areas of the world where such a creole is an important lingua franca and English is a dominant language. As education through English was made compulsory in the West Indies long before such a policy was pursued in, for example, West Africa, it is to be expected that decreolization has proceeded furthest in the former area, and that its creoles have absorbed more and more features of Standard English.

The postcreole continuum situation may be illustrated by reference to Jamaica, where, between the "pure" creole described by Bailey (1966)

and the Standard Jamaican English, there is a wide range of varieties of English, some nearer to the creole end of the spectrum, some nearer to the Standard end. The two end points are mutually unintelligible, but there is no break in the spectrum, and most Jamaicans are skillful at manipulating several adjacent varieties of the continuum (DeCamp 1971b). There is some correlation between age, education, social status, and the section of the spectrum that Jamaicans can command, but rigid correlations cannot be drawn. Todd (1974:64) gives one example of this spectrum:

English	Intermediate Stages	Creole
	iz mai buk	
it's my book	iz mi buk	a fi mi buk dat
	a mi buk dat	

We have here three sentences from postulated midpoints which indicate some, though not all, of the possible intermediate realizations.

Another example of the process of decreolization would be speakers of Guyanese Creole coming into varying degrees of contact with speakers of Standard English (Bickerton 1975). In his study of Guyanese Creole, Bickerton discovered that the pre-infinitival complementizer fi or fu was variably replaced by the Standard complementizer tu. For example, in Guyana one could hear (1) and (2) as well as (3) and (4).

(1) faama na noo wat tu dùu
"The farmers don't know what to do."

(2) mi ga tu ripeer am dis kotin
"I have to repair it during this harvest."

(3) hooptong piipl-dem na noo wa fu duu
"The people from Hopetown didn't know what to do."

(4) mi gat fu go bak go ripeer am
"I have to go back and repair it." (Bickerton 1971:463)

Seeing that the variation between fi or fu and tu was not random, Bickerton argued that fi/fu replacement was determined by three semantic categories of preceding verb:

(a) modals and inceptives [+Incep];
(b) desiderative or psychological verbs [+Des];
(c) all other classes [-Incep, -Des].

These complement types are listed in the order of their increasing inhibition of the replacement of fi by tu. That is, for each individual speaker, regardless of where he stands on the decreolization continuum, tu will appear in a [+Incep] environment before it appears in a [+Des] environment, and it will appear in a [+Des] environment before it appears in a [-Incep, -Des] environment.

One specific result of decreolization studies has been to change radically the prevailing opinion about the origins of Black English. The fact that similarities can be shown to exist between Black English and English-related pidgins and creoles on both sides of the Atlantic may mean that we should think in terms of a New World continuum of English creoles that are now at different stages of decreolization, Black English being probably a creole in an advanced stage of decreolization (see, for instance, Stewart 1969, Rickford 1974).

2.3 Decreolization in French-related Creoles

It will have been noted that virtually all the evidence for decreolization has been drawn from English-related creoles. Apart from two studies which we shall examine below, no work of a similar nature has been done on French-related Creoles.

2.3.1 Evidence From French-related Creoles

One of the approaches to French-related Creoles from this viewpoint is that of Valdman (1973), who found some factual evidence that in Haiti, if not in the Lesser Antilles, the French/Creole distinction is by no means as sharp as previously described (DeCamp 1971a). He states that there is today in Haiti evidence of "Frenchified" varieties of Creole referred to as "Créole de salon" or "Créole francisé." In this country, though the contact between Creole and French is not as intimate as it is in the French overseas departments of Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Reunion, or in Mauritius, he claims that there is considerable decreolization in the variety of Creole that enjoys actual prestige in the eyes of the majority of unilingual speakers, namely, in the speech of Port-au-Prince semi-literates. As a matter of fact, the number of "gallicisms" becomes greater in the variety spoken by urban unilinguals attending adult literacy programs or by speakers who have at least a passive knowledge or a minimal spoken proficiency in French. For example, in a few speech samples that Valdman (1973:523) has gathered, and that show varying degrees of decreolization, the following French features were observed both at the phonological and lexical levels (the notation employed by Valdman is an adaption of the ONAAC spelling): (1) the use of front rounded vowels, e.g., seumen "week," preumyé "first"; (2) the presence of postvocalic r, e.g., lir "read," mizèr "poverty," mézalor "but then"; (3) French expressions, e.g., katre ven di pou san de chans "90% of chances," lavi téres "life on earth," un pti peu orgeuyeu "a little bit conceited." Although the samples from which these examples are borrowed do not reflect directly

the daily informal speech of the rural unilingual masses, Valdman (1973:525) points out:

> . . . With increasing social mobility—and one of the effects of recent social and political developments in Haiti has been precisely to increase the social mobility of some segments of the black masses--decreolization will increase.

One very important sociolinguistic development in Haiti is the extension of the domains of use of Creole among the diglossic elite. This has resulted in "creolization" of French, and thus all the conditions required for the emergence of a continuum between Creole and its superstrate.

If compared to Haiti, Valdman (1973) argues, mutual interferences between French and Creole in the French overseas departments are more widespread. For example, he suggests, the two French communities in Saint-Thomas and their parent communities in Saint-Barts (Saint Barthélemy)--both of which are dependencies of Guadeloupe--constitute an excellent context for the study of decreolization in Creole. As a matter of fact, this opinion is later confirmed by G. Lefebvre (1976) who sees in the linguistic level of Saint-Barts Creole "un phénomene de symbiose et d'inter-influences qui s'étalent sur un gradient, un continuum de variations" (from Valdman 1978:33). In both these dependencies (Saint-Barts and Saint-Thomas), there are two white communities, one of which uses Creole and the other a regional variety of French. In Saint-Barts the division between the two communities is windward (Au Vent) versus leeward (Sous-le-Vent) respectively; in Saint-Thomas Creole speakers reside in an area referred to as Northside and the other group in a section of the capital city called Frenchtown or

Carenage. With respect to the Creole dialect that is spoken by Whites in Northside Saint-Thomas, Valdman (1973) maintains that its definite determiner system is identical to that of French. Contrary to the systems of other French-related Creoles where the etymological articles have been agglutinated to the nouns and have lost their function as determiners, the determiners of Northside Creole show the gender and number differentiation and the sandhi variation characteristic of French:

	Singular	
	Pre-Vowel	Pre-Consonant
Masc.	l otèl "the hotel"	le sab "the sand"
Fem.	l égliz "the church"	la vil "the town"

	Plural	
	Pre-Consonant	Pre-Vowel
Masc.	lé fransé "the French"	léz antouraj "the surrounding area"
Fem.	lé bourik "the donkeys"	léz afè "the matters"

(from Valdman 1973:512)

That the forms preposed to these nouns are not to be considered an integral part of the noun is evident from the following contrasts: a l otèl "at the hotel," léz otel "the hotels"; un plan "a map," le plan "the map." It might be argued that the Saint-Thomas Creole system of preposed definite determiners indicating [Def] together with gender and number is the result of early decreolization:

> All Saint-Thomas and Saint-Barts Creole speakers possess some fluency in French and may have clung to a frenchified variety of Creole that distinguished them from the negro Creole speakers in neighbouring islands. (1973:515)

It would be interesting to see whether such a heavily decreolized determiner system is also found among the other White Creole speaking communities in Guadeloupe, and whether it is emerging in the speech of Creole speakers in the French overseas departments, or in Mauritius, all of whom, due to increased social mobility, are subject to interference from French.

The other study of the process of decreolization of a French-related Creole is that of C. Lefebvre (1974). As will be discussed in further detail below, Lefebvre's research in Martinique, an area which consists of a large proportion of bilinguals and a decreasing minority of unilingual Creole speakers, led her to conclude that Martinican Creole is characterized by extreme variability, and by no means constitutes a homogeneous system. Consider the following utterances:

French (1) Ils ont décidé d'entrer dans le boeuf. Compère lapin a choisi la vessie et compère tigre la panse.

"They decided to get inside the cow. Brother Rabbit chose the bladder and Brother Tiger, the stomach."

(2) Quand Compè tig est arrivé, il a passé par la kilas dø la bèt. Il est entré avec ses outilles.

"When Brother Tiger arrived, he got into the intestines of the animal. He went in with his tools."

(3) Alo, Compè tig entré adans pans boeuf la et Compè lapin adans vessi a.

"Then, Brother Tiger got into the cow's stomach and Brother Rabbit into the bladder."

Creole (4) I rentré dans bèf pu manger trip bèf la an didans i. I rantré adans bloc pissa a bèf la.

"He got into the cow to eat the cow's intestines. He got in, into the cow's intestines.

(from Lefebvre 1974:48)

It is clear here that (2) and (3) are intermediate varieties between (1) and (4). Lefebvre, however, as will be shown below, argues that the Martinicans themselves see every utterance in terms of the French-Creole opposition. Vintila-Radulescu (1976:113) goes even further. Citing Hazael-Massieux (1969) on the linguistic situation of Martinique, she says that the latter creolist has observed in this island "une créolisation du français" and "surtout une francisation du créole." She also says that it is very likely that the linguistic situation in Martinique "s'achemine vers un état comparable à celui atteint à la Jamaique."

As far as the Creole languages of the Indian Ocean are concerned, there does not seem to exist any substantial study on the problem of linguistic variation due to decreolization in this region. Annegret Bollée (1976) and Chris Corne (1976) have both made a descriptive study of Seychelles Creole. In fact, Corne's work constitutes the most comprehensive single work on the syntax of any Creole language. However, there is very little concern expressed over the issue of variation. The sociolinguistic situation in Seychelles, where French is an official language, will certainly reveal French influences on the Creole, but the writers' basic aim seems to have been to describe a homogeneous basilectal variety.

This lack of concern over the issue of variation is hard to understand, especially in view of the bewilderingly variable data on Reunionese Creole. Reunion is another of the French overseas departments, where Standard French is the official language, the medium of instruction, and the language of the press and media, and coexists, according to Chaudenson (1974), not only with Creole, but also with regional French, the language of local bourgeoisie. As early as 1964, Valkhoff distinguishes

> deux variétés de ce créole (sans compter plusieurs nuances intermédiaires) à savoir un "parler urbain" et un "parler populaire" et que le premier est plus francisé que l'autre. (1964:727)

It is no doubt on the basis of this urban variety that Valkhoff concludes that "le réunionnais est plutôt du français créole que du créole français" (1964:727). Whether the large-scale variation evidenced by Reunionese Creole is the result of dialect mixture, and whether certain linguistic variables correspond to geographical, social, or ethnic groups in the island cannot be determined from available studies, including Chaudenson's (1974) Le Lexique. There is, however, no denying that the influences exerted by French, which the White population of Reunion have maintained over the centuries and have never ceased to speak among themselves, are responsible for the extreme variability in Reunionese Creole. For example, referring to a construction in this language, Valkhoff (1964:729) says:

> . . . On a nettement l'impression qu'ici la syntaxe figée est redevenue mobile sous l'influence récente du français et que l'article agglutiné s'est de nouveau détaché.

In the majority of cases, it is the view of Bollée (1977) that the

variables of contemporary Reunion which she interprets as phenomena of early decreolization have existed since the formation of "le bourbonnais" or what is now Reunionese Creole. Given the situation of permanent contact with France and the development of education, Creole in Reunion undergoes the strong influence of Standard French and its use is becoming more and more limited. It is hoped that creolists will be drawn to this linguistic community to study the complex linguistic interactions that take place between Creole and French before these interferences lead to a merger.

2.3.2 Reasons for Little Evidence

It might be interesting to examine the reasons for the sparse literature on aspects of decreolization in the French-related Creoles. English creolists frequently contrast the decreolization gradata that renders difficult the analysis of the object of their study with the clear line that demarcates French-related creoles from their superstrate. For example, the following statement is attributed to DeCamp (1971a:27):

> . . . The French creoles of the Caribbean and of the Indian Ocean are all mutually intelligible. Within each community the French creole is also quite uniform and contrasts sharply with Standard French.

More recently, Johanna Nichols (1975:573) remarked:

> . . . What would appear to be independently-formed creoles of the same European base are strikingly similar in phonology, grammar, and lexicon; this is most sharply pronounced in the case of the French-based creoles, of which

> Caribbean and Indian Ocean varieties are mutually intelligible, despite vastly different locations and circumstances of formation.

Thus, against the extremely variable character of English creoles, it is assumed that a speaker's shift from Creole to the mutually unintelligible Standard French is much like a shift to a totally foreign language.

To some extent, the decision to ignore or at least minimize the amount of variability not only in the French-related Creoles, but in the English-related Creoles as well seems to have been political by nature. This was perhaps rendered inevitable in the pre-1960s by popular accusations that creoles "had no grammar." Thus Hall (1966:107) felt constrained to argue that

> . . . investigations by unprejudiced investigators, using modern techniques of linguistic observation and analysis, have demonstrated conclusively that all pidgins and creoles, even the simplest, are as amenable to description and formulation as are any other languages.

Since those "other" languages were supposed to have regular, invariant grammars, pidgins and creoles must be equally regular if they were to be deemed equally worthy of study.

Other reasons for the alleged greater autonomy of French-related Creoles are historical. We can mention here the monogenetic hypothesis advanced, in the domain of French creolistics, by M. Goodman (1964:130) who sought to explain the uniformity of French-related Creoles in terms of a primitive slaver's jargon whose cradle "can scarcely have been other than West Africa." In addition, a rigid system of caste isolation in the formative years of most creole societies is suggested by DeCamp (1971a) as being more likely to unify rather than to diversify

a pidgin-creole. For example, Haiti, the largest French creole-speaking territory, was isolated from its former colonial power for more than a century, and its low level of economic development has cut off the bulk of the population from effective contact with French. Except for vocabulary, it is claimed that French influences, under these circumstances, tend to be minimal.

Valdman (1977b) points to a linguistic reason offered by Hugo Schuchardt to explain that decreolization has not yet affected the morphosyntactic system of the French-related Creoles. Schuchardt accounted for the widespread diffusion of pidginized and creolized varieties of English by the fact that the latter's structure already showed a certain creolized character. In particular, its rich system of auxiliaries and modals is said to represent an intermediate step between the totally analytic verbal system of English-related pidgins and creoles and the inflectional system of the Romance languages:

> English is morphologically much more similar to creole than are, for example, the Romance languages, and therefore English-based creoles differ from Romance-based creoles in the way both diverge from their model languages, and in the way a continuum is formed with them. (from Meijer and Muysken 1977:31)

2.4 Chaudenson's Case for Distinctiveness in French-related Creoles

Instead of treating the French-related Creoles as different dialects of one single language ("le créole") resistant to pressures of decreolization, Chaudenson (1979c) has suggested that we must consider

them rather as elements of an "interlinguistic" continuum. Although they constitute autonomous systems, the French-related Creoles must be seen not in terms of a set of common structural features but in terms of a common terminus a quo (a popular variety of French and/or a dialectal variety of the seventeenth century) out of which different types of systems have evolved, partly through substratal influences (i.e., different languages spoken by the slave population), but also through decreolization. Thus the differences between the Caribbean Creoles and the Indian Ocean creoles, and, for that matter, between the dialects of a particular zone, may be explained, not only in terms of substrate language contact, e.g., the influence of Malagasy and Indo-Portuguese on Indian Ocean Creoles and of West African languages on Caribbean Creoles, but by divergences in social factors as well. These in turn determined the unequal effects of French varieties on the incipient creole and resulted in differential decreolization at more elaborated stages of the language.

2.5 The Description of Variation

Since variation is the outcome of the decreolization process, some attention will be given to the question of the description of linguistic variation in creoles. Until recently, the amount of variability both within the overall speech community and in the individual speaker's style-switching had often been underestimated. However, the facts of variation[2] had been noticed at least as early as Reinecke's work in the 1930s, and were observed in the Caribbean somewhat later by DeCamp

(1961). With Labov's (1966) work, it became incorporated into our conception of standard languages as well. The principal question, however, is not the existence of such variation but how to describe it: Is a Creole system a continuum, or is it composed of discrete and distinguishable varieties? Or, as C. Lefebvre (1974:48) asks, "Should linguistic variation be described as falling within a single system of variables, as two systems, or as several coexistent systems?" With respect to the Jamaican case, Stewart (1962), Taylor (1963), and Alleyne (1967) feel that Jamaican Creole has vanished and, based on this fact, support the theory that there is one system of English dialects in Jamaica. Bailey (1971:341) suggests that linguistic variation in Jamaica may be described as falling between two poles: that of English and that of Creole. Tsuzaki (1971), in his study of variation in Hawaii, posits a series of three language systems which coexist: an English-based pidgin, an English-based creole, and a dialect of English, which in turn is divisible into a non-standard and a standard variety.. Tsuzaki (1971:336) views these three systems as somehow overlapping:

> Such a scheme of coexistent systems for HE (now viewed as a hyper or super system) as I envisage it at the present time would consist of a set of three basic overlapping, rather than completely independent, structures.

In a description of the Jamaican linguistic situation, DeCamp (1971b) argues in favour of the continuum theory. In his publication on the linguistic continuum in Jamaica, DeCamp (1971b:350) asserts that English and Jamaican Creole are no longer two linguistic codes that are distinct from each other. Rather, he finds a sequence or a continuous range of linguistic varieties, the two extremes of which are

Creole and Jamaican Standard English; intermediate varieties exist between the two extremes of the continuum. Whether or not DeCamp's postcreole speech continuum and Tsuzaki's concept of overlapping co-existent systems are merely different ways of expressing the same thing is debatable (Day 1974:39). In any case, DeCamp's unique approach seems to be in handling the intermediate mesolectal varieties by working out the formalism of implicational scaling, which became the major operational tool for the Creole variation studies of the 1970s. DeCamp's research had indicated that variation was far from the chaos which Bailey (1966:1) had implied when she wrote that "a given speaker is likely to shift back and forth from creole to English . . . within a single utterance," and that "the lines of demarcation are very hard to draw." DeCamp refused to draw lines; to him, the "dialect mixture" in Jamaica was a continuum with no "structural break" between the furthest creole extreme (which came to be known as the basilect) and the form nearest to that of the standard language (known as the acrolect). DeCamp claimed that for any linguistic feature found in the continuum, its presence would predict the presence of one set of features, while its absence would predict the absence of another set.

The status and validity of DeCamp's implicational analysis have been the subject of debate. For example, Bickerton (1973), who studied linguistic variation in Guyana in the framework of a more sophisticated continuum theory, has expressed doubt whether a continuum of the type described by DeCamp exists. One of the questions raised by Bickerton is of particular relevance to this study. It concerns the choice of features which characterize the mesolect. Bickerton (1973:666) takes exception to the arbitrariness in DeCamp's choice of features:

> The inference which might be drawn from DeCamp 1971, that one can build implicational scales with any random selection features, does not seem to be borne out by Guyanese evidence.

Bickerton tried to solve the problem of the description of the mesolect by investigating whether implicational relations that hold within subsystems equally hold between them. He thus found out in his study that the Guyanese mesolectal pronoun system comes into being by the establishment of an across-the-board gender distinction which obliterates a pre-existing case distinction in the basilect:

Subject			Possessive		Object			
he	she	it	his	her	him	her	it	
i	shi	it	iz	or	him	or	it	acrolect
i	shi	it	i	shi	i	she	it	mesolect
i	i	i	i	i	am	am	am	basilect

(from Bickerton 1973:659)

This, Bickerton asserts, shows that decreolization is not a matter of selecting random features, as DeCamp seems to have done, but is conditioned by the mechanisms of restructuring and regularization in the light of semantactic categories. Similarly, Bickerton (1975) gives extensive evidence to show that the underlying Guyanese tense-aspect system goes through several quite complex mutations before it arrives at an approximation to the English system, each mutation representing a slightly different semantic analysis of the nature of states, actions, and events.

Washabaugh (1977) made a replica of Bickerton's analysis to show the environments for the replacement of the complementizer fi or fu by tu in Providencia. However, the general conclusion which he draws from this case is that decreolization is above all a matter of surface forms,

and that it is nowhere conditioned by the semantic level. This goes to show that implicational scales can at times be misleading. Therefore, although they can be used to display the data that needs to be accounted for, any suggestions that they can offer grammatical explanations need to be supplemented by traditional methods of linguistic analysis. One very clear instance of the awareness of this need to provide adequately motivated explanations is presented by Rickford (1974). The latter has demonstrated the interaction of phonological and semantactic considerations in the workings of the decreolization process, in particular tracing the disappearance of the doz habitual aspect marker in mesolectal creoles, which he argues, very convincingly, helped to produce the distributive be of Black English.

C. Lefebvre (1974) attempts to reduce the problem of variation by describing it, like B. Bailey (1971), as the interaction between two systems only. Applying DeCamp's implicational procedure to Creole-French contact in the island of Martinique, she tries to discover a similar type of continuum. She finds out, however, that this continuum reveals only the superficial aspects of the linguistic behaviour of the Martinican speech community, which, she argues, can be analyzed only in terms of two distinct linguistic codes: Creole and French. Any text can be described in terms of either of these systems. A Creole text may, for instance, contain French borrowings. The underlined forms in the following text are examples of such borrowings:

> . . . téni an jou, konpè lapen é konpè tig té adan an savân, té ka joué. Yo ouè beûf misié leroua té ka manjé zèb. Yo désidé antrè an bèf-la pou manjé. Alò, konpè lapen ki té pli malen kité konpè tig antré avan. I antré aprè. Alò konpè tig antré adan pans bèf-la é konpè lapen adan vési-a,

> "One day, Friend Rabbit and Friend Tiger were in a field playing. They saw Mister Leroi's cow eating grass. They decided to enter inside the cow to eat. Then Friend Rabbit who was more tricky let Friend Tiger enter first. He entered second. Then Friend Tiger went inside the cow's stomach and Friend Rabbit inside the bladder."
>
> (Lefebvre 1974:62)

Apart from the pronunciation of one of the occurrences of boeuf with the front rounded vowel, this text deviates from the Creole "des vieux" only through the use of French lexical terms et instead of épi and of panse and vessie instead of blɔ̀k kaka and blɔ̀k pisa, respectively. We also observe the Frenchified form pli instead of pi and the expression Monsieur le Roi.

Similarly, a French text can contain examples of code-switching through the use of Creole constructions or terms or simply forms deviating from the phonological and grammatical norms of Standard French:

> . . . Alɔ̀, Compè Lapin il est toujou pli malin presque dans tous les animaux. La même façon i ka soté . . . alɔ̀, voilà ce qui arrive. Il s'est entendi avec Compè Tig pou aller abat' une animal, une vache pa exemple. Quand il est arrivé, alɔ̀ il a passe par la kilas de la bête. Il est entré avec ses outilles, couteau, ekcétéra. èpi alɔ̀ à ce moment-là, on a désépicé . . .
>
> "Then Friend Rabbit he is always the most tricky of all the animals. The same way he jumps . . . Then, this is what happened. He decided with Friend Tiger to kill an animal, a cow for example. When he arrived, then, he passed through the animal's intestines. He entered with his tools, knife, etc., and then at this point, they butchered . . . " (Lefebvre 1974:63)

One can observe in this text the following phonological transfers: the replacement of front rounded vowels by their unrounded counterparts, e.g., entendi for entendu; the deletion of final or postvocalic r,

e.g., pou instead of pour; the simplification of final consonant clusters, e.g., abat for abattre. In addition, this text contains faulty constructions like the use of the present form for past participle (il a passe, not passé), ill-formed lexical elements (outilles, désépicé), or switching to Creole (i ka soté). On the basis of such analysis, Lefebvre thus comes to the conclusion that her results are better explained in terms of a lack of knowledge of an appropriate rule of French, rather than representing an intermediate variety between French and Creole.

However, Lefebvre's analysis of the Martinican linguistic reality in terms of two distinct codes raises a few questions, especially with regard to her methodological framework. First, her analysis is based, not on spontaneous speech, but on retellings of a specified folk-tale, in which speakers were directly requested to provide two versions, one "Creole" and one "French." One can hardly conceive of a methodological framework more loaded in favour of its conclusion, and it seems possible that any study which based itself on spontaneous speech in relatively natural settings would yield quite different results.

Second, she implies that the two-systems analysis is justified because it has psychological reality. That is, any Creole speaker will tell you unhesitatingly whether a given sentence is Creole or not (trouble only starts when you get two Creole speakers to do this). But one should beware of confusing "psychological reality" with "what the man in the street thinks is going on." If what people do in their daily life contradicts what they say they do, one should regard as "psychologically real" that which underlies their consistent actions, rather than the way those actions may be rationalized.

The problems of the description of variation in Creoles are very real, and it sometimes seems that the solutions chosen depend on the particular purpose of the linguist (B. Bailey 1971). In this thesis, however, my objective is not to describe the variability of Mauritian Creole along the lines of the three frameworks mentioned (coexistent systems, continuum, two-poles analysis), but rather to demonstrate that a process of change is under way in this Creole. I intend to describe this change as the result of decreolization. If the process of decreolization is a process by which a creole in contact with its superstrate progressively loses typically creole characteristics, there is evidence of this phenomenon occurring in Mauritius. In addition to the pressure on speakers to acquire the superstrate, the decreolization process is also motivated by the pressure to avoid the basilect. As Washabaugh (1978) seems to have concluded in his research in Providence Island, the latter pressure is a very significant motive for decreolization. In this thesis, we suggest that the pressure to avoid the basilect is as strong as the pressure to acquire the acrolect. Decreolization should thus be seen here as a complex process which has the effect of moving the Creole language away from the basilect toward the superstrate.

Notes

[1] The term "basilect" was first used by Stewart (1965) to denote the furthest creole extreme, while the term "acrolect" was first used in a paper by Tsuzaki (1966). Bickerton (1973) coined the term "mesolect" to refer to those varieties intermediate between the basilect and the acrolect.

[2] In a penetrating and ahead-of-its-time article by Stewart that appeared in 1969, the connection between synchronic variation and diachronic change was made explicit for the first time.

Chapter 3

Sociolinguistic Aspects of Decreolization

3.0 The problem of decreolization in Mauritian Creole has so far received no treatment at all, and it is the purpose of this thesis to find whatever evidence there is for such a process on this island. The coexistence of Creole and its superstrate (i.e., French), and the still widely held depreciatory attitudes towards the vernacular determine considerable variation and exercise strong decreolizing pressures.

3.1 General Situation

In order to gain a full understanding of the tendencies toward decreolization in the Mauritian Creole speaking community, it has to be seen against the background of the very complex language situation arising from a mixture of ethnic, socio-economic and educational factors, past and present. The current sociolinguistic situation holding for Mauritius has been described recently by Baker (1972, 1976), and a summary of his findings that are relevant to this study will be reported here.

Given the number of languages (at least 12) spoken by different

ethnic groups in an island with a population which now exceeds 850,000 people and an area of 720 square miles, Mauritius presents an extreme case of societal multilingualism. Uninhabited prior to 1721, it was under French occupation until 1810, when it passed into the hands of the British who ruled it until its accession to independence in 1968. Although English has been the official language of the country since 1815, the religions and languages of the slave population were left untouched. It is significant also to note that the number of people from Britain has always been too few for them to form a separate ethnic group on the island. Those members of early British administrations who remained appear to have intermarried, and a few later British settlers have even been assimilated into the Franco-Mauritian society. This situation accounts for the little change in the customs and language of the first settlers and the slave population, who continued to speak French or the Creole language which had been formed in the meantime. The introduction of English into the judicial and administrative fields was very slow. As Richardson (1963:2) points out, in spite of the British occupation, "Mauritius is in essence a French island." According to the estimates of Stein (1977:187), almost half of the actual population are Hindus of different Indian origin (Aryans and Dravidians), about 16% are Muslim Indians, 3% are Chinese and the rest, which comprises about 28% of the inhabitants, falls into the category of what is called the "General Population," which is unofficially subdivided into "white Franco-Mauritians," "Coloureds" (name often applied to those of partial European descent), and "Creoles," the latter being classified according to their physical characteristics into "Black River Creoles" (of African origin), "Malagasy Creoles," "Indian Creoles" and "Chinese

Creoles." The distinctions among all three groups are, to say the least, not clearly defined. Because of metissage, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine who is "white" and who is "coloured." They are further subdivided in a very complex manner according to ancestry, financial position, education, etc. The Franco-Mauritians, who number about 10,000, thus representing less than 2% of the total population, are by far the most influential social force in the island, and they continue to play a dominant role in the sugar and allied industries. This, and the fact that their way of life, and, most important, their form of speech is closest to that exemplified by the media, means that they represent an ideal for the "coloured" population, and this exerts a sociolinguistic influence beyond their numerical importance.

3.2 Our aim in this study is to consider the influences exerted by French, the first language of all Franco-Mauritians, on Creole which is the language of about 52% of the Mauritian population and is actively known by all ethnic groups at all socio-economic levels even though it has no official standing. First, let us examine the major sociolinguistic factors responsible for pressures toward decreolization.

3.2.1 Predominance of French Over English

The predominance of French over English as a medium in most areas of language communication in Mauritius cannot be underestimated. Chaudenson (1974:398)—who, in a later enquiry in 1975, shows otherwise—wrongly considers Reunion to be the only island in the Indian Ocean

to have known phenomena of "refrancisation" because of its exposure to the linguistic model introduced by the school system, cinema, radio and television. He suggests that no such social conditions are present in the other Indian Ocean Creole dialects, including Mauritian Creole:

> en effet, les hasards de l'histoire les ont conduits à être séparés depuis le début du XIX^{e} siècle de l'influence française; les Seychelles, l'Ile de France devenue l'Ile Maurice et Rodrigues, devenues possessions anglaises après la défaite napoléonienne, ont perdu tout contact avec le français.

This statement is not exactly correct because, despite more than a century and a half of British rule and the imposition of English as an official language, French has maintained its position as the prestige language of Mauritius. According to Baker (1972:13), basing on the published census figures of 1962, French is the language most frequently employed in about 8% of Mauritian homes, compared to only 0.3% in the case of English. Moreover, fluency in French is more closely linked to advancement in the social hierarchy, and happens to be indicative of intelligence and good breeding, especially in the eyes of the General Population. Some statements have even gone so far as to minimize the role of other languages. The following quotation from M. Daniel Koenig's speech at a conference held at Nice in 1968 serves as an example:

> Il est indéniable qu'il existe à l'Ile Maurice un phénomène francophone qui ne se discute pas, surtout si j'ajoute que le nombre de familles où l'on se sert d'une autre langue que le créole ou le français est insignifiant. (1968:50)

3.2.2 Different Areas of Communication

A review of the role that French plays in most spheres of Mauritian life will reveal the considerable decreolizing pressures of the superstrate on the Creole language. These pressures are multiple, and involve parents, the school system, the place of employment, and all forms of entertainment.

3.2.2.1 Home

It has been observed that in those homes where French is the traditional language, there is generally some resentment felt by parents at their children's use of Creole in the home. This resistance is due to the amount of social prestige and economic advantages that parents whose traditional language is French have derived from this during their lifetime.

3.2.2.2 School

Secondly, unlike in Haiti, where only 30% of the school-age population of the country is enrolled in the schools, the educational system in Mauritius plays a determining role in future language patterns of Creole speakers. While free primary education became generally available during the 1950s, free secondary education became available during the 1970s. Officially the medium of instruction in public (or state-run) primary schools is French up to standard IV and English from

there on. In practice, however, most education during the first few months is through the medium of Creole. As the first year progresses the medium of instruction gradually moves towards French with only that amount of Creole as the teacher may feel appropriate. From the second year through to the final (sixth) year at primary school the relative extent to which a pupil receives his education through French and English varies considerably, but in general French predominates as the spoken medium of instruction and English as the written medium of instruction. Many teachers feel that their pupils are able to follow spoken French, because of its affinities with Creole, better than spoken English. All secondary education is aimed towards the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate and the (British) General Certificate of Education. This would suggest a far greater use of English in secondary education than is found in primary schools. However, apart from the state-run primary schools where English is the predominant medium, most of the private schools make a very extensive use of French. Baker (1972) cites the case of one teacher at a well-known private school asking his pupils questions on English literature in French but requiring the answers to be in English.

3.2.2.3 Place of Work

French happens to be the main spoken medium also in the two main sources of employment in the island, namely the sugar estates and the Civil Service. The most senior positions on sugar estates are generally occupied by Franco-Mauritians, with coloureds and Creoles holding other important positions in management. These groups will normally converse

in French with each other. Between the managerial staff and the agricultural workers who are mainly Indians and speak Bhojpuri and/or Creole among themselves, there are various intermediate posts. These are mainly occupied by people whose first language is Creole, although some of these may also have a good command of French and have opportunities for using it in their work. Contacts between agricultural workers and other employees of sugar estates are made through the medium of Creole.

As for the Civil Service, although all written work is in English, the relative extent to which French, English and Creole are employed orally varies considerably from ministry to ministry. Much depends on the ethnic, linguistic, and social background, but French is still the main spoken medium. In other places of employment, such as banking and insurance, the use of French is very extensive.

3.2.2.4 Entertainment

French also plays a major role in all the forms of entertainment: radio, television, cinema, and theatre. The proportion of airtime allowed to French surpasses by far that of the other languages, including English. For example, Baker found that in March 1971, out of 112½ hours of broadcasting per week, the number of minutes allotted each of the main languages was as follows:

Language	Minutes
French	3,546
Hindustani	1,575
English	984

(Baker 1972:25)

Almost all families possess a radio and a television set which are capable of receiving French-language programmes from ORTF (the national French television channel) in neighbouring Reunion island. In addition, as far as the cinema programmes are concerned, 63% happen to be French-language films as compared to 4% for English-language films. The remaining 33% are Hindustani-language films. (Baker 1972:26) The role of the theatre is no less significant. In this respect, the French cultural organizations are currently very active in the island. To take one example, the Alliance Française is very active in encouraging islanders to adopt metropolitan French terms and pronunciations, and in fostering French culture generally. It has even brought one Troupe Populaire to perform the works of Molière and other French classics to village halls and sugar estates where, Baker (1972:27) says, they have been well received.

3.2.2.5 Press

As a written language, French is the dominant medium of the press as well. Here again, Baker (1972:28) points out that out of about 12 daily newspapers, nine are mainly in French. The proportion of column-inches in French in the latter, he says, varies from about 65% to about 95% of the total, most of the remaining area being given over to English.

Only one periodical which is mainly English with some French is "The Mauritius Times."

One very clear indication to Mauritians that French, and not English, is regarded as the "langue de prestige et de culture" is that imperfect English does not carry the same kind of social stigma as imperfect French.

3.2.2.6 Results of Enquiry by Chaudenson (1975)

The results of an enquiry led by Chaudenson (1975), primarily intended to compare linguistic choice in Seychelles to that in Mauritius, are further evidence of the role of French in the acculturation process and the symbolic value in promoting social mobility. The results, drawn from Valdman (1978: Table 12.5, p. 329), are given below in a simplified form, omitting the information for Seychelles as being irrelevant to our present purpose. It is to be noted that the numbers for the 64 Mauritian subjects interrogated represent values obtained after weighing their replies by a coefficient indicating the preferred language in this or that situation. The method of inquiry utilized was through a questionnaire--a technique which has the advantage of eliminating one variable, namely the interaction between enquirer and subject. This variable plays a determining role since in an interview or even during direct observation the behaviour of a subject will vary according to the degree of familiarity with the enquirer, the latter's socio-cultural status or ethnic origin.

Figure 1

Context of Situation	Linguistic Choice		
	Creole	French	English
Conversation with a stranger	9	49	1
Conversation with a person of lower rank	52	3	0
Conversation with a person of superior rank	0	56	2
Shopping in a market	61	3	0
Request formulated in a bar or restaurant	25	37	0
Order given in an urban place of employment	3	55	2
Order given to a servant	58	5	0
Order given in a rural place of employment	48	7	5
Language used in upper-income families	6	47	5
Sharing a joke among friends and acquaintances	42	17	5
Tender or loving conversation	17	42	2
Request formulated in a bank	8	48	6
Request formulated in a post office	20	39	5
Language used by teacher to address lower grade (or standard) pupils	16	40	0
Statement made by a politican on radio	12	34	19
Public speech by a politican	35	19	4

The above data indicate, among other things, that whatever be the social class or the nature of communicative function, the use of Creole decreases in public situations and in the presence of children. The most important finding is, of course, that use of French surpasses by far that of English in all situations. These results were confirmed by a preliminary enquiry that Chaudenson had carried out among 26 Mauritian students at the Centre universitaire de la Réunion.

3.2.3 Low Esteem of Creole

The predominance of French over English influence is generally accompanied by a growing tendency on the part of many members of the Mauritian Creole speaking community to look down on the Creole language, which they see as a substandard form of French. To begin with, because of their leftwing connections, movements in favour of granting Creole the status of official national language on the island have not been encouraged by the government. It is fashionable, even among the intellectual elite, to denigrate Creole on the grounds that it is a product of past colonialistic policies. Thus André Masson, an influential chief editor of one of the most prestigious newspapers of Mauritius, made this remark about a dispute between pro-Creole and anti-Creole supporters:

> Or, le créole n'est pas une langue, pas même un dialecte. Il est un dérivé appauvri du français, né des premières décennies du colonialisme. (Le Mauricien, 24 juillet 1971)

This reference to the link between Creole and slavery constitutes a typical example of unfavourable judgments on the language.

Another of the most common arguments of detractors of Creole is that this language could not have an international vocation as a vernacular spoken by an insignificant population on a small territory. Thus, they argue, any attempt to make it official would only serve to isolate the community and cut off all contacts with the outside world. In order to further minimize the status of Creole, its detractors claim that it is the vernacular of a particular section of the population, namely the "Creole" population, arguing that if Creole were made the

official language, all other vernaculars used by other ethnic groups in the island should be granted the same status:

> Nul doute que si nous élevions le patois créole au rang de langue nationale, les autres ethnies en réclameraient autant pour leur dialecte respectif dont aucun n'est compris de la majorité du peuple mauricien! . . . En revanche, . . . la langue française peut être, est déjà, pour la jeune nation mauricienne, encore une langue utilitaire, communautaire, internationale, l'aidant à accéder à la civilisation de l'universel.
> (Denis Julien, Le Mauricien, 17 juillet 1971)

It is significant that, only with regard to population surveys, Creole is considered as a language. For example, in the 1972 census, the following note was observed:

> Pour les besoins du recensement seulement, le "patois créole" doit être considéré comme une langue.
> (Peter Stein 1977:189)

In brief, the value-judgments that Mauritians tend to bring upon Creole are at best negative and depreciatory.

3.2.4 Pressure to Acquire the Acrolect

This "low profile" kept by the Creole language coupled with a fairly high degree of social mobility are conducive to the decreolizing process in Mauritius. Because of corrective pressures exerted by the Standard--the mass media, education, including migration (particularly from rural to urban areas)--as well as the social and economic advantages usually attached to the acquisition of the Standard, there has been and continues to be a constant movement from Creole to Standard.

An aspiration to social betterment creates the ever-present tendency to slip into a more learned or "French-ified" form of the language. Thus phonetic outputs, vocabulary, and grammatical systems fluctuate according to the context of situation, a state of affairs which, Richardson (1963:4) says, is comparable to the constant switching from dialect to sub-standard and Standard English which can be heard in some communities in England. This situation is highly characteristic of the urban and semi-urban areas of Mauritius undergoing an improvement of social conditions. For example, in certain circles, what is generally termed as "gros créole" is associated with vulgarity and coarseness. The words dipẽ "bread" and ame:de "annoy" fall into this category. Instead, the words dypẽ and anuje are preferred. Similarly, tini sa en ku pu mwa "hold this for me" is considered less refined than tenir sa pur mwa. The use of approximations to French pronunciations and grammatical features and heavy borrowing of French vocabulary is thus the surest way of impressing one's friends, neighbours, and associates. The language spoken in Mauritius is no longer clearly indicative of ethnic origin but becomes a means of acquiring prestige. In Mauritius, one must always try to rise above one's social class, originally determined by colour and ancestry. Over the years, education, type of occupation, earnings, and influence in public affairs have converted the class structure into a kind of continuum stretching from the highest to the lowest. This is accompanied generally by a tendency to cultivate a more distinguished linguistic presence. A situation has thus occurred where "the boundary between Mauritian Creole and Mauritian French is often hard to determine." (Richardson 1963:5)

3.2.5 Pressure to Avoid the Basilect

One of the conditions that we have mentioned above for decreolization to take place is that, while social mobility is a major factor, opportunities which facilitate the movement towards the Standard must, however, not be uniform for all speakers, and that this movement itself must not yield the same results for all speakers. Thus rather than being subject to a single sort of social pressure, speakers in a post-creole community are pressured also by the desire to avoid basilectal forms or features of speech. Note that this is not the same motive as the desire to acquire a Standard variety of French. While, as we have so far pointed out, there exists a strong pressure to acquire the acrolect, there are at the same time almost contradictory social pressures working against the imitation of Standard French in Mauritius. As a matter of fact, in certain circles, strong feelings are generated against persons, whether adults or children, who try to use more Standard speech than is customary. Children learning French in school cannot practise that French outside the classroom without being criticized by their peers. In short, in Mauritian society, there are not only pressures to acquire Standard French, but also pressures to avoid too rapid an acquisition of this language. Both the pressure to acquire the acrolect, and the pressure to avoid basilectal forms, according to Washabaugh (1977, 1978) are responsible for linguistic variation in any post-Creole community:

> Social pressure to avoid the Creole (basilect) stimulates variation within a continuum which is unrelated to the acquisition of standard forms, but which still

> permits speakers to avoid the use of basilectal forms. (1978:245)

Thus, on the one hand, decreolization involves what Washabaugh calls "vertical" variation which in Mauritian Creole occurs, for example, during the slow acquisition of the Standard or near-Standard form šemiz "shirt" replacing the stigmatized form simiz. On the other hand, decreolization involves a type of variation which is indicative of the social pressure not so much to acquire the acrolect as to avoid the basilect. The variation between simiz, the topic of derrogatory and invidious remarks on the part of semi-educated speakers, and sømiz, the form occurring in the speech of semi-educated speakers or illiterate ones enjoying a certain degree of social status because of contact, for example, with the capital city, is often such a variation indicative of avoidance of the basilect. Mesolect speakers who have more frequent contact with speakers of the acrolect are not only careful to avoid basilectal speech, but they also struggle to acquire certain features of the acrolect. They are concerned both with the nature of the words or sounds which they exclude and with the nature of the replacements (e.g., šemiz). Most understandably, the avoidance of the basilect is widespread among speakers who are isolated from acrolectal speakers and acrolectal models of speech. The project of recognizing and incorporating Standard French forms of speech is more frequent and more successful among speakers of mesolectal varieties. Such speakers tend to be at higher socioeconomic levels on the island.

Thus it is obvious that the influences being exerted on the Creole language by Standard French are complex, and reflect the ambivalence which characterizes the attitude of Mauritian Creole speakers towards these two languages.

Chapter 4

Phonology

4.0 Evidence for decreolization in Mauritian Creole can be sought at different linguistic levels. First of all, we shall examine the phonological component of Mauritian Creole to see how strongly decreolizing pressures are exercised by the coexistence of Creole and French.

4.1 Previous studies

Leaving aside more or less sparse and accidental notes devoted to Mauritian Creole phonology in general descriptive studies such as Bos (1880), Baissac (1880),[1] the first study of the phonological system of Mauritian Creole attempted in recent times is that of Corne (1969). The latter author, on the basis of data supplied to him by two educated and multilingual Mauritian informants whom he interviewed in New Zealand, establishes the inventory and the oppositions of the Mauritian Creole phonological system, and describes the positions occupied by the phonemes and their principal phonetic realizations. Corne does not give any specific examples of decreolization, although he does observe (p. 49):

> On ne saurait séparer nettement le français régional des Seychelles ou de Maurice, d'un côté, et le dialecte créole seychellois ou

> mauricien, de l'autre: il n'y a en effet qu'une série de nuances menant insensiblement du "vrai créole" au français "parisien."

Koenig (1969:53) refers to decreolization in Mauritius as "refrancisation." However, he views the phenomenon from a purely puristic point of view:

> Il [le Créole] a tendance à retrouver la prononciation correcte.

One of the most recent studies where reference is made to Mauritian Creole is no doubt Papen's (1978) excellent dissertation on the entire Indian Ocean Creoles, where his purpose was "to analyze and compare the linguistic structures of both the regional and social dialects of IOC, particularly . . . in the framework of current generative models" (p. xxiii). Although his analysis does consist of a number of socially-defined dialects, the emphasis, however, is mainly on basilectal Creole.

The only explicit and detailed description of Mauritian Creole that has been published so far is by Baker (1972). His work contains descriptive data that in many respects surpass those amassed by students of New World creoles. It, too, is devoted mainly to the description of one variety of Creole, namely "Ordinary Kreol," the term used by Baker for the basilect. The issue of decreolization is, however, given some attention. Baker attempts to deal with it by positing four distinct varieties of the vernacular (p. 39):

1) "Ordinary Kreol": This is "Kreol as spoken in all egalitarian situations by people from homes in which all the residents speak Kreol amongst themselves";

2) "Bhojpuri-influenced Kreol": This is "Kreol as spoken by

people whose first language is "Bhojpuri," and shows interferences--phonological and grammatical—from the most widely spoken of Indian languages in Mauritius (this variety will not be considered in this thesis because it is unrelated to the process of decreolization as defined in Chapter 2);

3) "French-influenced Kreol": This is "Kreol as spoken by Mauritians whose first language is French." The latter speakers introduce six sounds--s̬, z̬, ə, ø, œ, and y--into their Kreol in words which include them in French and which the speakers believe to be derived from French. These sounds do not form part of the inventory of "Ordinary Kreol";

4) "Refined Kreol": This is used by a particular group of speakers from an "Ordinary Kreol" background who, in imitation of French-influenced Creole, transfer into their speech the same phonological features mentioned above in "French-influenced Kreol." However, "Refined Kreol" is distinguished from "French-influenced Kreol" because a French-like pronunciation, Baker argues, is difficult for a speaker from an "Ordinary Kreol" background to achieve with consistency. This is so especially because "in order to introduce the six French phonemes . . . at the etymologically 'correct' moments the speaker may need to refer to the written form of the French word" (p. 39). For example, in "Refined Kreol," s and s̬ are frequently confused, where in "French-influenced Kreol" these are distinct units and never confused, while "Ordinary Kreol" has only s. In a similar way ø, œ and ə coalesce as approximately œ in "Refined Kreol," while these are separate sounds in "French-influenced Kreol" and all three are normally absent in "Ordinary Kreol."

Given the relative absence in most French-related Creole studies of any emphasis on variability as a function of sociolinguistic factors, Baker's description of phonological variation in Mauritian Creole is indeed useful. However, it appears that such variation could be explained more adequately by the concept of decreolization as defined in Chapter 2. Three arguments can be raised in this respect.

1) First of all, the découpage of the reality into three categories (excluding "Bhojpuri-influenced Kreol" which is irrelevant to our discussion) seems rather arbitrary, particularly as these categories have a social rather than a linguistic justification. "Refined Kreol," especially, is for Baker the attribute of a specific social group, "people whose first language is OK ["Ordinary Kreol"] but who regard FK ["French-influenced Kreol"] pronunciation as socially more desirable and who attempt to imitate this" (p. 39). Thus, for Baker, the influence of French seems to be connected strictly with a specific group of Creole native speakers. This, however, is a simplified view of the reality. In a diglossic situation such as that which obtains between French and Creole in the regions where the two are spoken side by side, decreolization is evidenced in ALL social groups. It can therefore be seen to be operating also among basilectal speakers, although in varying degrees, who are isolated from acrolectal speakers and acrolectal models of speech, as will be shown later.

2) Furthermore, variation in the speech of a Creole speaker does not depend only on his/her competence in French, but his/her status, place of employment, age, and sex are equally relevant factors in determining the process. For example, as soon as he/she finds himself/herself, say, in an urban context or that he/she comes into contact

with an interlocutor of superior social status, the unilingual Creole speaker of the rural or semi-urban regions modifies his/her behaviour in the direction of the urban Creole or what he/she considers as such. Once the desired effect is achieved, that is, as soon as the speaker has demonstrated his/her knowledge of certain variables regarded as prestigious, he/she can resume his/her customary variety of speech. Closely related to such factors are stylistic factors which also determine variation in Mauritian Creole phonology. This is revealed particularly in utterances containing frozen expressions which are borrowed from French in unanalyzed sequences. Consider the following:

pu la trwaziem ane kõsekytiv mo bizẽ sirmã al lekol

"for the third consecutive year I must surely go to school"

In this example, we note that the high front vowel is present in the word kõsekytiv because it is part of a borrowed expression pu la trwaziem ane kõsekytiv. This same vowel, however, does not appear in sirmã where French would have syrmã.

3) My third argument stems from Baker's explicit claim that the sort of variation existing in Mauritian Creole is simply the result of a direct transfer from French to Creole. Here again, decreolization, which does not describe the situation merely in terms of a direct interference from French, accounts for the reality more adequately. In a given situation, the degree of decreolization shown by speakers reflects not so much their competence in the superstrate language as their familiarity with vocabulary items containing linguistic variables. When Baker refers to "Refined Kreol" as being the attribute of a particular social group, he has in mind a category of speakers who are as-

sumed to have an ability to formulate general and proper hypotheses about the linguistic data to which they are exposed. However, decreolization can also involve such Creole speakers who are not able to discern or uncover the proper environment. For example, one of the speakers in my recorded corpus, who, wishing to impress his interlocutor by his knowledge of French despite his ignorance of many of the y variable words, referred to lelytdəlakapital for lelitdəlakapital "the elite of the capital." Other instances of such pronunciations are prožoe for prože "project" and fydel for fidel "faithful." The speakers of such utterances seldom have the same pressing need as a first-language learner for the speedy acquisition of the superstrate. Moreover, unlike the first-language learner, they do not always have the immediate access to a model of the language to be acquired. Baker (1972:41) himself states that certain Mauritian Creole speakers are likely to distribute a few sounds (e.g., s and š or z and ž) haphazardly in unfamiliar words, but he fails to indicate that these "mistakes" involve more than direct transfers. As far as Mauritian Creole is concerned, it seems that such inconsistencies are the result of the dual psychological strategies to avoid the basilect and to acquire the acrolect. Mauritian Creole speakers struggle to acquire certain features of the acrolect, but those who are not very familiar with this variety concentrate on stigmatized features of the basilect and replace them, sometimes erroneously, with what they perceive as acrolectal.

Thus decreolization in Mauritian Creole represents a gradual linguistic change spread differentially across social barriers. Moreover, it depends on the contextual features pertaining to the speech event, and involves more than direct interference from French.

4.2 Affected Areas of Phonology

The effects of decreolization can be observed mainly in the following areas of the phonological component of Mauritian Creole:

(a) the front vowel system where rounding occurs variably;

(b) the French schwa;

(c) the (de-)nasalization of nasal vowels in the context of a nasal consonant;

(d) the variable occurrence of the postvocalic r;

(e) the replacement of the dental fricatives s and z by their palatal counterparts š and ž;

(f) final consonant clusters.

4.2.1 Front Rounded Vowels

Compared to the system of Standard French, creoles that have evolved partly from it lack the front rounded series of vowels. The vowel inventory of Mauritian "Ordinary Kreol" consists of a set of vowels characterized by the oppositions Front vs. Back and Oral vs. Nasal:

	Oral		Nasal	
	Front	Back	Front	Back
High	i	u		
Mid	e	o	ẽ	õ
Low	a		ã	

Among other things, one notes the absence of the front rounded series of vowels which occur in Standard French as shown below:

	Oral			Nasal		
	Front		Back	Front		Back
	Unrounded	Rounded		Unrounded	Rounded	
High	i	y	u			
Mid	e	ø	o			
Low Mid	ɛ	œ		ɛ̃	œ̃[2]	ɔ̃
Low		a			ã	

In the decreolizing varieties of Mauritian Creole, however, one can observe, in addition to the basic vowels, the variable presence of the front rounded vowels. The following speech sample from a female Creole speaker residing in a semi-urban area will serve as an example. Having completed her secondary schooling, she is expected to have a fair mastery of the French language:

> Lœ̃di pase mo ti al get en travaj še arel malak, me maloe rœzmã li dir mwa ki mo bəzwẽ atan žyska novãbr. ãtrətã mo pu kɔ̃poz en egzamẽ tajprajtin kɔmsa mo gaj̃ lətã amelior mo pratik.
>
> "Last Monday I went to look for a job at Harel Mallac, but unfortunately he told me that I have to wait till November. In the meantime, I shall sit for a typewriting examination so that I can have time to improve on my practice."

This speaker's ability to handle decreolizing features is indicated by the consistent and appropriate use of front rounded vowels such as œ̃ and y, as exemplified in lœ̃di and žyska, respectively. In a basilectal context, these terms would have lẽdi and ziska as their respective counterparts. As evidence of this speaker's overall consistency, we can notice, among other things, her mastery of such acrolectal features as the French schwa (e.g., bəzwẽ, ãtrətã, etc.) and the palatal fricatives

(e.g., še, žyska). More will be said on these aspects below.

A second sample of speech exhibits a similar, although less consistent, ability to incorporate Standard French features. It is collected from a semi-literate girl who comes from the countryside, but works in an export processing zone known in Mauritius as the "zone franche." Since her place of employment happens to be located in the capital, Port-Louis, she had opportunities to come into contact with speakers of decreolizing varieties of Creole:

> dã lyzin kot mo travaj enã sis person. nu comãs travaj set cer trãt le matẽ me nu sorti wit cer di swar (sa pli boncer) enã de fwa dizcer di swar
>
> "In the factory where I work, there are six persons. We begin work at seven-thirty in the morning, but we leave at eight in the evening (and that is very early), at times at ten."

One striking fact about this sample is the variability with which the speaker introduces the high-rounded vowel y within one and the same sample. While y is used in the word lyzin as in Standard French, it does not appear in di and pli, as would be the case in Standard or near-Standard French. Similarly, in the word wit, the labiovelar glide w is evidence of a basilectal production. Such intermediate vowel systems as exemplified in the two samples quoted above can be said to belong mainly to the mesolectal speech varieties.

The theory of decreolization that we have expounded so far with regard to Mauritian Creole phonology seems to assume that there exists a basilectal Creole. One aspect of this hypothetical basilectal Creole is the absence of the types of variable features (e.g., i~y) charac-

terizing the mesolectal and even acrolectal varieties of Creole. However, although such distinctions do not, in principle, exist in the basilect, some front rounded vowels are, in fact, found in the speech of unilingual speakers of basilectal Creole. Thus in Mauritius we gathered pronunciations like kyltivatœr "farmer," misjø "sir," lœr "time" in speech samples otherwise characteristic of the basilect and uttered by persons totally ignorant of the French language. This fact reinforces our conviction expressed earlier that decreolization implies a process of change that is spread across social barriers, and is not confined to one particular social group.

4.2.2 The Status of the French Schwa [ə]

In what has been hypothesized to be the basilect, the vowels which are presumably reflexes of the French schwa are i and e which sometimes alternate in the same word:

ə→i			ə→e	
vini	"come"		devã	"in front"
piti	"small"		semen	"week"
misje	"sir"		depi	"since"
dimẽ	"tomorrow"	or	demẽ	"tomorrow"
bizwẽ	"in need of"	or	bezwẽ	"in need of"

Baker (1972:44) states that this sound [ə] is heard sporadically in "Ordinary Kreol" but is not regarded as a phoneme of "Ordinary Kreol." He adds that it appears to be making rapid progress with younger speakers of both "Ordinary Kreol" and "Bhojpuri-influenced Kreol": after stating that older "Ordinary Kreol" speakers pronounce dimẽ

"tomorrow," he says that younger speakers of the same variety tend to pronounce dəmẽ. This latter pronunciation, which corresponds closely to the French one, "probably reflects the influence of the schools." In addition to being an indicator of age, the schwa is also found in the varieties of Creole spoken by a great number of adult bilingual or partially bilingual Creole/French speakers.[3] Consider the following example from an old woman's speech:

> yer mo tï pe asiz dəvã mo laport. mo truv en vje bolom pe vini dã samẽ. mo dəman li akot ï pe ale.
>
> "Yesterday I was sitting on my doorstep. I saw an old man coming along the street. I asked him where he was going."

We note that the speaker uses the schwa in all contexts which would in "Ordinary Kreol" require the front high or mid vowels i or e, i.e., dəvã instead of divã~devã, samẽ instead of simẽ~semẽ, dəman instead of diman~deman. Thus we can assume that ə exists as a systematic phoneme in all decreolized varieties, particularly for those persons who are bilingual in French and Creole.

4.2.3 (De)-nasalization

An analysis of the situation in the areas of nasalization in Mauritian Creole reveals that the degree of nasality of etymologically nasal vowels (e.g., laž̃am vs. laž̌am "leg," novã̌m vs. novam "November," etc.) as well as that of etymologically non-nasal vowels (e.g., sinema

vs. sinemã "cinema," fime vs. fimẽ "smoke," etc.) is variable in the environment of a nasal consonant. This variability seems to be at work in vowels both preceding and following nasal consonants, i.e. both regressive and progressive (de-)nasalization. The fact that such vowels are subject to variation may constitute another decreolization feature, especially when we consider that it is widespread among the younger generation of speakers who are more likely to be influenced by French norms of speech. Consider the following examples of variability in vowels occurring before nasal consonants:

tan	~	tãn	"tender"
zan	~	zãn	"son-in-law"
mam	~	mãm	"member"
zoŋ	~	zõŋ	"fingernail"
maŋ	~	mãŋ	"mango"
desan	~	desãn	"descend"

In these examples, the nasalized forms are closer to Standard French. With regard to this, Papen (1978:151), as a general principle, considers that for any set of forms which show the types of alternation illustrated above, the nasal vowel is the underlying segment.[4] He thus posits the following rule for nasal vowel denasalization:

Rule A

$$\begin{bmatrix} V \\ +\text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow [-\text{nas}] \quad / \quad \underline{\quad} \begin{bmatrix} +\text{cons} \\ +\text{nas} \end{bmatrix}$$

A nasal vowel denasalizes before a nasal consonant.

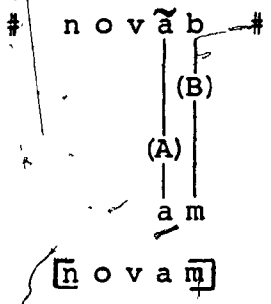
In connection with this rule, we must also consider the following obligatory rule posited by Papen, which has to do with the set of forms showing alternations between a voiced stop and the corresponding nasal consonant (e.g., lazãb~lazãm, novãb~novãm).

Rule B

$$\begin{bmatrix} C \\ -\text{son} \\ -\text{cont} \\ +\text{vcd} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow [+\text{nas}] \quad / \quad \begin{bmatrix} V \\ +\text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \text{——} \#$$

A voiced stop will nasalize after a nasal vowel in word-final position.

The fact that there are forms like tan, zan, desan, etc., where the alternations between a voiced stop and its corresponding nasal consonant do not appear, makes it more economical to consider the surface nasal consonants as being derived from underlying stops. These rules (where Rule B precedes Rule A) will produce the following derivation:



However, since in some socially-defined speech forms we also obtain the nasalized forms, this suggests that the nasal vowel variably denasalizes before nasal consonants. In this respect, Papen (1978:157) makes the following revision to the vowel denasalization rule (Rule A):

Rule A^1

$$\begin{bmatrix} V \\ +\text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow x, y \ \langle [F\ \text{nas}] \rangle \ / \text{——} \begin{bmatrix} +\text{cons} \\ +\text{nas} \end{bmatrix}$$

A nasal vowel variably denasalizes (depending on dialect and level) before a nasal consonant.

This variation also affects vowels AFTER nasal consonants, particularly in word-final position. Indeed, Papen (1978:162) observes that, because of the great degree of variation on this matter, it is somewhat difficult to determine how far such progressive (de-)nasalization is prevalent in Mauritian Creole. It seems evident, from a historical point of view, that progressive nasalization operated in Mauritian Creole. For example, Papen quotes Urruty (1950:195) to this effect:

> La nasalization de certaines lettres comme i, ie, a est connue du mauricien. C'est peu fréquent, il est vrai, mais ça existe --quoique cette tendance ait disparu complètement avec la jeune génération. Ainsi, j'ai entendu des vieux créoles prononcer cinéman, dinin, connain . . . lestoman, pour cinéma, dîner, connaît, . . . l'estomac.

The fact that the younger generation of speakers tend to use the more denasalized vowels in etymologically non-nasal vowels seems to suggest that they have been subjected to the influence of Standard French norms of speech. This is confirmed when it is realized that progressive nasalization is by comparison more common in Rodrigues Creole and Seychelles Creole, which are considered to be conservative dialects vis-à-vis Mauritian Creole.

The radically different situations that seem to exist in forms containing etymologically non-nasal vowels are also present in forms which contain etymologically nasal vowels. While some speakers progressively nasalize in word-final, open syllable positions, others tend to denasalize in exactly the same position. This is especially the case with forms in -me:

lame	~	lamẽ	"hand"
sime	~	simẽ	"road"
dime	~	dimẽ	"tomorrow"
legzame	~	legzamẽ	"examination"

It should be noted that the above denasalized forms are typical of the basilect, while the mesolect shows alternations between the denasalized and nasalized forms. In order to account for forms like lame, etc., Papen (1978:164) has even posited the following rules:

Rule C

$$\begin{bmatrix} V \\ -\text{back} \\ +\text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \longrightarrow [-\text{nas}] \; / \; \begin{bmatrix} C \\ +\text{nas} \end{bmatrix} \text{———} \; \#$$

ẽ denasalizes after a nasal consonant in word-final position.

Thus the influence of Standard French is present in varying degrees in the process of progressive as well as regressive denasalization in Mauritian Creole.

4.2.4 The Post-vocalic r

Word-finally and before a consonant r is deleted in "Ordinary Kreol" and, according to Baker (1972:42), in these positions it has the value of a non-syllabic glide [ə̯] or of lengthening and influencing the quality of the preceding vowel. Baker states that the sequences written phonemically ar and or are realized phonetically as [aə̯] or [a:] and [oə̯] or [o:] respectively. Thus

MC			Fr.		
	fre:/freə̯	~frer		frer	"brother"
	so:ti/soə̯ti	~sorti		sortir	"leave"
	lapo:t/lapoə̯t	~laport		laport	"door"
	ma:s/maə̯s	~mars		mars	"March"
	katbon:n/katboə̯n	~katrborn		katrborn	"Quatre Bornes"

The presence of the postvocalic r in the speech of a Mauritian Creole speaker is evidence of his/her recourse to phonological realizations similar to those of Standard French. Since it constitutes a prestigious characteristic, it is more and more frequently used by literates as well as semi-literates with a minimal proficiency in French. This is illustrated in the following sample:

> tu dernierm̃ nu ti lwe en bis pu al bel mar.
> apre sa ãtie famij fin organize, nu fin al
> lil o serf.
>
> "Lately we hired a bus to go to Belle-Mare.
> After that, the entire family got together,
> and we went to ile aux Cerfs."

In this sample, we can observe the use of the postvocalic r in all the terms which would have required the glide [ə̯] or the lengthening of the preceding vowel in a basilectal context.[5]

4.2.5 The Palatal Fricatives

Since š and ž do not belong to the basilectal phonemic inventory of Mauritian Creole, the introduction of these sounds instead of their dental (alveolar) counterparts s and z, respectively, is considered to be acrolectal. Thus š replaces s in words such as šãm vs. sãm "room," šez vs. sez "chair," kašjet vs. kasjet "to hide." In the same way,

ž replaces z where felt to be appropriate as in laž for basilectal laz "age," ruž for ruz, bõžur for bõzur "good day." The occurrence of these sounds š and ž is, however, sometimes unpredictable and not always etymologically justifiable as in dešwit "immediately" and menižje "cabinet-maker" corresponding to basilectal deswit and menizje, and to Standard French dəsyit and mənyizje.

4.2.6 Final Consonant Clusters

Final consonant clusters are generally absent in basilectal Mauritian Creole. Apart from a very small number of exceptions like midlenz "Midlands," taks "tax," boks "box, car trunk" (which happen to be English borrowings), most Creole terms end with one consonant where Standard French would have a combination of consonants. Given the commonly accepted hypothesis that present-day Indian Ocean Creoles are derived from some regional variety of 17th century French, rather different from today's Standard French,[6] it is reasonable to assume that the absence of final consonant clusters is a characteristic of that variety, and not necessarily a creolized feature. In this respect, then, the use of clusters word-finally in Mauritian Creole is obviously in imitation of contemporary French forms. Examples: spesialist vs. spesialis "specialist," sẽpl vs. sẽp "simple," sold vs. sol "sale (solde)," lartikl vs. lartik "article," šãbr vs. šãb "room."

In the light of all the variable features mentioned above, it seems clear that a description of Mauritian Creole phonology cannot rule out the decreolizing aspects that have resulted from contact be-

tween the two main languages, French and Creole.

4.3 Discussion

As a consequence, such a description should take into consideration the total range of phonetic variation of phonological units. An expanded phonemic inventory, perhaps, alternate underlying forms and new phonological rules may be necessary to represent the native speakers' competence. For instance, a description of Mauritian Creole must recognize the existence of at least a latent opposition between the front rounded vowels and their unrounded counterparts. For a Mauritian Creole speaker, the word corresponding to French père "father, priest" is per, and the word corresponding to French peur "fear" is also per alternating with poer. These two words must, however, be differently represented at the underlying level. Mauritian Creole speakers, when using two homophonous words, are aware of the fact that they differ at some deeper level, no doubt because they know that other speakers realize them with different phonetic representations. The following anecdote exemplifies this assertion. Valdman (1973) cites a case in Haiti where a Port-au-Prince maid attending evening literacy classes decided to quit when the monitor represented the word for "egg" as zé. Although she herself usually pronounced it zé, she knew that her bilingual employers pronounced it zø, and she explained her action by stating that the monitor was teaching the class to read and write bad Creole.

This analysis conforms with the assumption that all dialects or

varieties of the same language must share the same underlying structure and differ only in surface rules. Papen (1978:93) rejects this assumption because he feels that a description must represent the (active) competence of the speaker. He points out that "while it is true that a speaker's passive competence in dialect variation is often enormous, his active competence is usually limited to very few varieties" (p. xxxvii). The positing of uniform underlying forms for all the varieties of Mauritian Creole may produce other difficulties: if, for example, we were to posit, say, the palatal fricatives s̲̆ and z̲̆ as underlying segments together with a neutralization rule, this would imply that a basilectal Mauritian speaker, upon acquiring a decreolized variety of Mauritian Creole which contains systematically s̲̆ and z̲̆, "would actually learn NOT to apply the neutralization rule, rather than actually acquiring a new underlying segment, just as we do whenever we learn a new language" (p. 93). Such an approach, Papen argues, is "counter-intuitive." Instead, he invokes a variable rule that would change s̲ to s̲̆ because this approach is probably more plausible linguistically, socially and psychologically.

Whichever approach is deemed valid, there is no doubt that an adequate description of the effect of decreolization on the phonology is necessary for the elaboration of a suitable autonomous orthography for Mauritian Creole. In Baker's work, only the phonemes of "Ordinary Kreol" are considered, and no provision is made for the representation of Gallicizing features. In view of the fact reported by Baker (1972: 32) that the movement for the use of a standardized, non-etymological, and autonomous notation enjoys limited popular support in Mauritius, it seems imperative to consider the possibility of devising an orthography

which would take into account mesolectal and acrolectal varieties of speech. One would also expect consideration of all the problems connected with devising a phoneme-based, autonomous orthography for Mauritian Creole in light of similar attempts in other diglossic Creole-speaking communities.

Notes

[1] It is regrettable that the work by Baissac (1880) was not available to me during my research.

[2] The vowel œ̃ is found only in some varieties of Standard French, one of them being Mauritian French.

[3] In Mauritian Creole, as in many varieties of Modern French, the schwa is deleted variably according to its position in the word and the general consonantal environment. For instance, we have lo-də-vi or lodvi "brandy." On the other hand, mo fin dman li "I have asked him" is unacceptable. Instead we have mo fin dəman li.

[4] It is to be noted that the rules applied for nasalization in Creole are different from those that have been proposed for Standard French. In the latter, the non-nasalized vowel is posited as the underlying form, and becomes nasalized when followed by a nasal consonant in pre-consonantal or word-final position (e.g., ʒamb > ʒ̃amb "leg"). This rule is rejected by Papen (1978:49) for Creole on the grounds that there are in Creole a great number of words with vowels which do not necessarily nasalize before nasal consonants in pre-consonantal or word-final position (e.g., lalin "moon," madam "lady," lasen "chain," enmi "enemy," etc.). In Standard French, the rule for nasalization depends crucially on the use of the schwa ə which gets deleted at some

point in the derivation. However, the absence of the schwa in basilectal Creole makes this rule invalid in Creole.

[5] Although we would have expected the use of the decreolizing feature r in the term ãtie, it does not occur simply because it is not marked for feminine gender in this particular speech sample. See Chapter 5.

[6] In fact, the absence of final consonant clusters is not unknown in Standard French, but it is variable and not categorical as it is in the Mauritian Creole basilect.

Chapter 5

Morphology and Syntax

5.0 It is often stated that creoles are characterized by a "drastic reduction of morphological complexity and irregularity" (Goodman, 1971: 253). As far back as the nineteenth century, Bos (1881:610), referring to Mauritian Creole, claims that the latter

> A aboli toute flexion; plus de genres, plus de nombres, plus de conjugaison pour ainsi dire, des mots invariables se suivant à la file, telle est la grammaire créole.

The morphology and syntax of present-day Mauritian Creole seem, however, to reflect a certain degree of restructuring in the direction of its superstrate language, and to incorporate some of the latter's "complexity and irregularity." Compared to the phonological component and to the lexicon, the morphological and syntactic components of Mauritian Creole reveal much less interference from French. Indeed, while acknowledging the existence of decreolization in French-related Creoles, Valdman (1973:525) argues that their grammatical structure is not significantly affected:

> . . . although English creolists underestimate the degree of decreolization that all creole dialects in contact with French undergo, they are correct in their assertions that there exists a structural gap between the two languages and that any sample of speech can be assigned to one or the other language.

As far as Mauritian Creole is concerned, however, a close analysis of its data indicates that in the past few years a process of change has gotten under way, which has the effect of establishing some new distinctions in its morphology and syntax. The following areas seem mainly affected:

(a) the noun system, e.g., changes involving agglutination of French determiners;

(b) gender classification;

(c) passive constructions;

(d) reflexive constructions;

(e) complement sentences;

(f) prepositions.

5.1 The Noun System

One of the striking features of a great number of Mauritian Creole substantives is no doubt the fact that they contain the agglutinated trace of the etymological French determiners, or at least parts of them, which may be: the definite article, lekol "school," liver "winter," latet "head," larzã "money," lezel "wing," lesiel "sky"; the partitive determiner, dizef "egg," dipẽ "bread," disab "sand"; the possessive adjective maser "nun," mõper "priest"; a "liaison" consonant, i.e., a remnant of a determiner, nam "spirit," zanimo "animal." The agglutinated element is, indeed, as inseparable from the noun as the mon of modern French "monsieur." Papen (1978:227), however, does not consider the above as determiners plus nominal since there are forms like en lakaz

"a house," mo lakaz "my house." Moreover, the definite determiner in Mauritian Creole is a postposed -la (whose co-occurrence with en is impossible); to express "the house," "the foot," etc., one uses lakaz-la, lipie-la. Papen prefers to call the agglutinated French determiners formatives and identify them in the lexicon by separating them from their [illegible]s (e.g., latab "table" will be listed as la + tab).

It should be noted that the agglutinated element is rarely absent from the Mauritian basilectal noun system. This is not absolutely the case in all Indian Ocean Creole dialects. From Chaudenson's (1974) account of the Reunionese Creole noun system, it seems that in this Indian Ocean Creole dialect, rules involving agglutination of the etymological determiners in nouns exhibit a certain amount of unpredictability. Opposite Reunionese Creole lalwa "law," lapli "rain," or laso "lime," Chaudenson found lev "lip," dã "tooth," and variable items such as lakaz ~ kaz "house." To account for these fluctuations, Chaudenson claims that at the pidginization stage preceding the formation of Bourbonnais the slave population restructured the most frequently used nouns with agglutination of determiners. Later less frequent nouns were borrowed directly from vernacular French by creole-speaking slaves "qui percevaient déjà, avec plus de netteté, les structures fondamentales du français" (p. 655). The examination of pidginized varieties of French (e.g., Franco-Vietnamese Contact French, Abidjan Pidginized French) (See Valdman, 1977a), also discloses that, at early stages of acquisition (or, to put it more accurately, in early approximative systems) the shape of nouns is highly variable.

Whether such variability in the above mentioned varieties of speech is the effect of early or recent decreolization is a matter of discussion.

In any case, as far as present-day Mauritian Creole nouns are concerned, increased proficiency in the Standard language is often accompanied by a weakening of the agglutinating tendency. Thus we have encountered cases where pje, tet, lev, bus, dã, pẽ, ãset, ananá are used instead of lipje "foot," latet "head," lalev "lip," labus "mouth," ledã "tooth," dipẽ "bread," zãset "ancestors," zanana "pineapple." The following speech sample, uttered by a young girl with only a minimal proficiency in French, shows this phenomenon:

> mama ek mwa pu al legliz bel-er, apre sa nu pu al atelie alfõs. mo ena pu maršãd en armuar ek so trwa batã. menuizie-la dir li pu fer li ã bua tek.
>
> "Mother and I will go to the church at Bel-air, and after that we shall go to Alphonse's workshop. I have to bargain the price of a wardrobe with three doors. The cabinet-maker says he can make it with teak wood."

In this sample, the speaker says atelie instead of basilectal latelie, armwar instead of larmwar, bwa instead of dibwa. Upon contact with French, Mauritian Creole nouns thus become vulnerable to reanalysis as sequences determiner + base.

5.2 Gender Classification

Compared to Standard French, another of the most salient grammatical features of the basilect is the absence of any gender distinction in the nominal and adjectival systems. Bos (1880:574), writing on Mauritian

Creole specifically, remarks:

> Le créole tend de plus en plus à simplifier le français. Des deux genres il n'a conservé que le masculin, qui est pour ainsi dire une espèce de neutre que prennent tous les noms: mo fam "ma femme," to lakaz "ta maison."

Jourdain (1956:74) makes a similar observation about Martinican Creole, though in a less refined tone:

> Il nous semble . . . que si le noir a très bien compris la nécessité d'exprimer la notion de sexe et qu'il arrive à le faire sans trop de difficulté, la notion abstraite du genre lui échappe totalement.

As far as Mauritian Creole is concerned, it has to be pointed out that, if it is necessary to distinguish between male and female human nouns, the basilectal speaker may use the term zom or fam, especially with regard to nouns that indicate profession or nationality:

ban aviater zom almã . . . ban aviater fam
"German pilots . . . women pilots"

We also find a few pairs indicating sex, such as garsõ - tifij "boy - girl," papa - mama "father - mother," bonom - bonfam "man - woman," etc. In general, however, nouns and adjectives are not marked for gender in the basilect. On the other hand, in the mesolectal and acrolectal varieties, natural gender may be expressed morphologically: there can be found pairs of morphologically related nouns and adjectives where one of the members refers to the masculine and the other to the feminine. Cases where gender is marked fall under the following categories:

1) There is a group of nouns and adjectives, where the members of each pair are derived from a common stem to which -er for the masculine and -ez for the feminine are affixed:

Masculine	Feminine	
dãser	dãsez	"dancer"
sãter	sãtez	"singer"
vãder	vãdez	"seller"
dezoder	dezodez	"noisy"

2) For some adjectives, the feminine suffix -z is added to an adjectival stem whose form with zero derivation represents the masculine:

Masculine	Feminine	
ãgle	ãglez[1]	"English"
frãse	frãsez[1]	"French"
malere	malerez	"unhappy"
move	movez	"naughty"
nerve	nervez	"nervous"
zalu	zaluz	"jealous"

3) The last group consists of words that cannot readily (at the surface level) be segmented in terms of a stem and a suffix:

Masculine	Feminine	
fẽ	fin	"refined"
mesã	mesãt	"mischievous"
du	dus	"sweet"
nuvo	nuvel	"new"
mu	mol	"soft"
gro	gros	"big"
blã	blãš	"white"
vie	viej	"old"
malbar	malbãres	"Indian"

It is no doubt true that in the basilect there are occurrences of apparently feminine forms such as dus, nuvel, mol, bel which might lead us to assume that some notion of a gender distinction exists. For example, Jourdain (1956:74) declares that "il (le créole Martiniquais) n'hésitera pas à joindre à un nom masculin un adjectif de forme féminine

et vice-versa." This point of view, however, indicates a confusion between the synchronic and diachronic aspects in the description of Creole, as well as a disregard for the fact that similar forms exist in French, where they are not exclusively feminine since they appear in front of masculine nouns with an initial vowel: un bel homme "a handsome man," le nouvel an "the new year." Judging from the results of my analysis of Mauritian Creole, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the basilectal forms such as bel, mol, dus which are used with any nouns have a different representation--one lacking in gender specification--from the same forms occurring in front of feminine nouns in the mesolectal and acrolectal varieties of speech.

5.3 Passive Constructions

As far as the syntactic structure of Mauritian Creole is concerned, Corne (1970:56) is particularly conscious about the influence of French on it:

> . . . les rapports entre le français et le créole sont d'une importance capitale pour l'étude du mauricien. Le créole est souvent senti comme une dégradation du français, lequel, véhicule prestigieux du rayonnement de la culture française, tend à s'imposer comme modèle. Les effets linguistiques de telles attitudes se voient surtout dans le maniement syntaxique du créole (la transformation passive avec par en est un bon exemple).

It is generally admitted that passive constructions are lacking in creoles:

> In their tendency toward simplification and levelling that is characteristic of creole

> languages, the abolition of the passive construction . . . is only too obvious an example. (Hesseling 1905:12, quoted in Mülhäusler 1974:78)

A definition of "passive" must basically be concerned with the relationship of the surface subject to the rest of the sentence. The difference between an active and a passive sentence in any given language is that the agent is the subject in the active sentence, and the NP complement of the active sentence becomes the subject in the passive sentence. Such pairs of sentences do not exist in basilectal Mauritian Creole. Indeed, if passive sentences can be derived from active sentences, a passive transformation along the lines of: NP1 + Aux + V_{active} + NP2 ⟶ NP2 + Aux + $V_{passive}$ + Prep + NP1 fails to produce acceptable sentences. Thus, a passive construction (1)b derived from (1)a is ungrammatical in the basilect:

(1)a zot burzwa pu obliz zot fer sa
"their boss will oblige them to do it"

b zot pu oblize fer sa par zot burzwa
"they will be obliged to do it by their boss"

There are, however, three types of constructions which fill the gap left open by the absence of true passives: 1) the "agentless" constructions; 2) the constructions with indefinite subject deletion; and 3) the "ga͡j--passive" constructions.

1) "Agentless" constructions are constructions which occur without agents and correspond to agentless passives in English or French. Here are some examples cited by Baker (1972:133):

(2)a Stenjo fin kas dizef-la
"Sténio has broken the egg"

b dizef-la fin kase[2]
"the egg has broken"

(3)a mo ti avoy li sa let-la
"I sent him that letter"

b sa let-la ti avoy li
"that letter was sent to him"

(4)a nenen in lav lasiet
"the maid washed the dishes"

b lasiet in lave[2]
"the plates are/have been washed"

These kinds of sentences where the speaker deletes the NP agent and moves the NP following the verb to the position previously held by the NP agent are referred to as "ergative" constructions by Baker (p. 133). Such sentences,[3] however, do not meet the definition of the full passive, where the agent is expressed. Corne (1976:153) remarks:

> . . . the existence of some sentences with actor-subjects and of others with goal-subjects, is not of itself a sufficient reason for deciding that a given language has a passive construction. What is important is that of the goal-subject sentences, some have semantically equivalent sentences with actor-subjects and containing the same lexical items (with morphological and/or syntactic changes).

2) Indefinite subject deletion occurs whenever the subject represents an indefinite or general agent (dimun, u, zot). Two examples from Corne (1970:23) will suffice to illustrate this:

(5) kã ti kwi li [ek] divẽ, li biẽ bõ
"when it was cooked ([someone] cooked it) with wine, it was really good"

(6) me si gardiẽ la les dimun bruj dilo dã basẽ, va kup so liku
"but if the guard lets people soil the water in the pool, his throat will be cut ([someone] will cut his throat)"

In such sentences, the verb has no apparent subject: we can legitimately talk of indefinite subject deletion, however, since the deleted subject is always understood as such by the native speakers. For example, when asked "What does va kup so liku mean?", informants would unhesitatingly supply dimun as the missing subject. These sentences with no subject do not, of course, correspond to passive sentences as defined above, in that the object in the active sentence does not become the subject of the passive sentences. As Papen (1978:592) points out, these sentences only "seem superficially like passives."

3) Gaj̃-passive constructions occur in a few cases in basilectal Mauritian Creole which appear to be identical to what Corne (1976:165) calls gaj̃-passive constructions in Seychelles Creole. For example, the active sentence (7) has what appears to be a passive form (8):

(7) zã̃ fin bez li
"Jean hit him"

(8) li fin gaj̃ beze ar zã̃
"he was beaten up by Jean"

Such gaj̃-passive constructions are approximately equivalent to the "get-passive" in English, "where a certain amount of sympathy for, agency of, intentionality or responsibility on the part of, or some more or less direct involvement on the part of the surface subject is implied." (Papen 1978:438) In this construction, the verb gaj̃ may be translated as "to get, suffer, incur, receive as one's lot." However, this syntactic device is not as productive in Mauritian Creole as it is in Seychelles Creole. In fact, it is restricted to expressions which contain either beze (qualified as "vulgar" by Mauritian informants), or bate which has the same meaning, including "to beat in a competition" (fire-brigade fin

gaj̃ bate ar lekip lapolis "the fire-brigade (team) got beaten by the police team"). This construction can therefore be considered idiomatic and fails to be an instance of a passive syntactic device.

Basilectal Mauritian Creole, thus, cannot be said to have a passive construction. However, among speakers of the mesolectal and acrolectal varieties, the use of the full passive is fairly widespread, and can only be attributable to French influence. In his examination of data from Mauritian Creole, Corne (1977:33) found the occurrence of the following pairs of sentences:

(9)a zot burzwa fin fek pey zot
"Their boss has just paid them"

b zot fin fek peye par zot burzwa
"they have just been paid by their boss"

(10)a guvermmã̃ pu pey zot
"the government will pay them"

b zot pu peye par guvermmã̃
"they will be paid by the government"

(11)a en dokter fin ekrir sa liv la
"a doctor wrote that book"

b sa liv la fin ekrir par en dokter
"that book is/has been written by a doctor"

(12)a sa gard la fin rekonet voler la
"that policeman recognized the thief"

b voler la fin rekonet par sa gard la
"the thief has been recognized by the policeman"

In all the (b) sentences above, the object of the verb of the (a) sentences becomes the subject, and the agent is expressed in a PP introduced by a preposition par. We notice that the passive transformation is accompanied by a morphological difference in the case of variable[3]

verb forms (pey/peye), but not in the invariable verb forms (rekonet, ekrir). All such sentences are considered to be the product of an on-going influence of French norms.

5.4 Reflexive Constructions

The pronominal reflexive construction is likewise identified by Corne as being the result of French influence. This construction is non-existent in the basilect. This fact was realized by Valkhoff (1969:730) with regard to Reunionese Creole:

> Les verbes réfléchis . . . ainsi que la construction passive . . . n'existent pas en créole populaire. Cependant le patois n'est point en peine pour rendre ces fonctions à sa manière. Il paraphrase le réfléchi: mwẽ ma tye mõ kõ(r) "je me tuerai" ou mus tõ ne "mouche-toi"; ou bien il l'omet . . . mwẽ fini lave mõ sez "je me suis levé de ma chaise."

Corne (1970:22) comes to a similar conclusion about Mauritian Creole, when he states that basilectal speakers tend to express the reflexivity of an action by the use of the formula V + mo lekor, u lekor, etc., as in the following examples:

(13) li buzbuz so lekor
"he moves about"

(14) mo beñ mo lekor
"I bathe myself"

At times more specific or appropriate expressions are employed:

(15) li bizẽ seje pur sap so lavi
"he is forced to try to save himself"

(16) li grat so latet
"he scratches his head"

With dir, a frequent translation of "he says to himself" is li dir dã so leker.

In mesolectal and acrolectal Creole, however, one finds a pronominal reflexive construction which is similar to that of French: the non-subject form of personal pronouns, either alone or with the addition of the emphasizer clitic -mem "self" is used. The following are a few of the examples gathered by Corne (1970:22):

(18) zã kõtã li mem
"John loves himself"

(19) get u mem dã laglas
"look at yourself in the mirror"

(20) li koz ar li mem
"he talks to himself"

(21) mo pa kone ki manier pur eksprim mwa
"I do not know how to express myself"

(22) to ran twa kõt ki to fin fer?
"do you realize what you have done?"

It is to be noted that, in all these cases (basilectal and acrolectal), the identity of reference is between the NP subject and the NP constituent of VP.

5.5 Complement Sentences

We shall now briefly discuss the effect of decreolization on the syntax of sentences which are complements, i.e. non-interrogative objects of a verb in a matrix sentence. In the Mauritian basilect, the

absence of a complementizer equivalent to the English "that" is the normal pattern:

(23) li dir mwa ø li pe lapes
"he tells me that he's fishing"

(24) mo kruar ø li pu ale
"I think that he will leave"

One of the effects of decreolization precisely involves rules that deal with this kind of embedding, and hence the use of overt complementizers. The occurrence of ki as the complementizer in the above sentences is no doubt considered as a marker of French-influenced Creole. Thus we have

(25)' li dir mwa ki li pe lapes
"he tells me that he's fishing"

(26)' mo kruar ki li pu ale
"I think that he will leave"

The use of such overt markers contributes greatly to the decreolization of Creole utterances.

5.6 Prepositions

Finally, we shall deal with the effect of decreolization in areas concerning prepositions. The Mauritian basilect has fewer prepositions than Standard French perhaps because, as Mühlhäusler (1974:83) suggests, the distinction between prepositions is a difficult one not only for foreign learners but even for native speakers. In Corne's (1976:141-45) analysis of Seychelles Creole prepositional phrases, which are more or less similar to Mauritian Creole prepositional phrases, he proposes that prepositional phrases have an underlying preposition DE or A which are

generally deleted on the surface. His argument is based partly on the fact that in a number of compounds such as ku-d-puẽ "blow with the fist," and fri-a-pẽ "breadfruit," DE and A are manifested on the surface as d and a respectively. This is challenged by Papen (1978:448) who rightly, I believe, argues that Corne's analysis is "unduly influenced by Standard French considerations." He prefers to analyze the elements d, de, a as particles which are used to form compounds and which have no more semantic content than the formatives l-, z-, di-, etc., discussed in the section on the noun system. Thus Papen (1978:451) argues that "if there is no overt preposition in a surface PP, there is no underlying preposition either."

The mesolectal and acrolectal varieties, on the other hand, contain surface prepositions which replace basilectal prepositions such as kot, akote, lot kote, avek, ek, etc., or enter into constructions where no preposition is needed in the basilect. Here is a list of sentences with prepositions borrowed from French:

(25) kã to pu vin se/še mwa
"when will you come at my place?"

(26) to bizẽ diriz twa ver le nor
"you must aim towards the north"

(27) labãk-la zis ãfas ék lapos
"the bank is just across from the post-office"

(28) mo lakaz vizavi ek lasal sinema
"my house is opposite the cinema hall"

(29) mo pu ale pãdã kõze
"I'll go during the vacation"

(30) repon mwa ãn ãgle
"answer to me in English"

(31) ki fer to pena pitie ãver sa lisiẽ-la
"why don't you have pity towards this dog?"

(32) dapre mwa mo pu fel mo legzamẽ
"according to me, I shall fail in my examination"

It might be noted that in a few sentences such as (28) and (29) the acrolectal prepositions are accompanied by ek which is a basilectal preposition.

Conclusion

Our treatment of the morphological and syntactic interferences in Mauritian Creole indicates beyond doubt that what Valdman (1978:386) calls "une rupture structurale qui fait du créole une langue à part entière et nó pas un dialecte du français" is not after all so profound as to resist decreolizing pressures.

Notes

[1] ãgle and frãse both occur in the nominal and adjectival systems. The basilectal counterparts of the nouns ãglez and frãsez are fam ãgle and fam frãse.

[2] Most Mauritian Creole verbs are variable, i.e., have two forms, a short and a long. The long forms of variable verbs differ from their short forms by the presence of a final -e (e.g., pey-e "pay'" tuy-e "kill," etc.). These verbs always adopt their short form when immediately followed by an NP and their long form when they occur predicate-finally or, with few exceptions, when they are immediately followed by an adverbial or a prepositional phrase (including the "agent" phrases in passive sentences, e.g., par zot burzwa . . .). The remaining verbs which have only one form such as avoj, rekonet, ekrir are termed invariable.

[3] Corne (1976) has called such sentences COP-passive sentences, where the passive is expressed by the Copula + Adjective. The adjectives which enter into the COP-passive construction are derived from transitive verbs (e.g., kase in (2)b, lave in (4)b, etc.). One of the reasons why such items are treated as adjectives is the non-application of -e deletion, since adjectives are not subject to the deletion rule (Papen 1978:419).

Chapter 6

Lexicon

6.0 Although it is very difficult to determine statistically the differential effect that decreolization has on each aspect of Mauritian Creole grammar, it is nevertheless reasonable[1] to assume that the Mauritian Creole lexicon has undergone greater decreolization than its morphology or syntax, or even its phonology. French-related Creole has often been characterized as a mixture of French lexicon and African (or, in the case of Indian Ocean Creoles, Malagasy) grammar. As far as grammar is concerned, a discussion of various grammatical features of Indian Ocean Creoles might indicate that this characterization is subject to debate. However, the accuracy of the first part of the statement is established beyond any doubt by Chaudenson's (1974) admirable study of the lexicon of Reunionese Creole, which, along with Mauritian Creole and Seychelles Creole, is thought by him to be derived from a common proto-creole origin, namely the "Bourbonnais" Creole.[2] The latter developed in Bourbon (now Reunion) between 1665, the start of the colonization of this previously deserted island, and 1972, the start of the colonization of Mauritius, which was inhabited in the beginning by settlers and slaves from Bourbon. Of the 3,500 lexical items[3] analyzed by Chaudenson, only about 8% can be traced to sources other than Northern French (Standard French and Oïl regional speech).

As might be expected, the principal source of non-French lexemes is provided by Malagasy languages, but the Indo-Portuguese stock is equally significant. The following table shows the respective proportion of each main source.

Malagasy	95	2.7%
Indo-Portuguese[4]	72	2.8%
African	5	.1%
"Vocabulaire des Isles"[5]	67	1.9%
Words of dialectal origin[6]	698	19.9%
Neologisms[7]	1,274	36.4%
French cognates	1,289	36.8%
	3,500	100.0%

Chaudenson's analysis thus reveals that the majority of lexical items in Reunionese vocabulary are nearly identical to their French cognates from a phonological and semantic standpoint, and, in the case of neologisms, are at least relatable to French words on the basis of phonological correspondences.

Although no comparative lexical study has, to my knowledge, been done between Reunion Creole and Mauritian Creole, it can be said that many of the correspondences which exist between Reunion Creole lexemes and their French cognates hold for the Mauritian Creole lexicon as well. Moreover, social and economic changes in Mauritius and in Reunion and resultant increased pressure from Standard French have led to its continued and accelerated Gallicization. Indeed, the following remark made about Reunionese Creole by Chaudenson (1974:1099) is valid for Mauritian Creole as well:

> Le mouvement du lexique qui tend à éliminer les éléments anciens favorise aussi l'introduction de termes nouveaux qui sont

> toujours empruntés du français. Les facteurs économiques et culturels entraînent un accroissement constant de la part du lexique d'origine française.

Chaudenson emphasizes that this evolution represents the replacement of vernacular lexical items by those of the Standard language ("devernacularization"), a phenomenon also observable in both Oïl and Oc regions of metropolitan France.

6.1 Threefold Distinction

Lexical decreolization in Mauritian Creole can be seen in terms of the threefold distinction made by Valdman (1974:526) for Haitian Creole. The distinction is between: 1) "need-filling" borrowings for which no Creole substitutes exist apparently; 2) borrowings that are virtual replacements for basilectal Creole items; and 3) a wholesale adoption of frozen phrases or expressions ("expressions figées"). Valdman notes that "since the latter serve as vehicles for the transfer of grammatical features, they are more likely than the other two types of lexical borrowings to reduce markedly the structural distance between Creole and the base language." (p. 526)

6.1.1 Need-filling Borrowings

Creole speakers who live in an urban setting often and freely dip in the lexicon of Standard French to handle topics of discourse beyond their home or field. This does not mean that these new topics of dis-

course could not be expressed by using the material of the core Creole lexicon. The fact is that, with the constant exposure to French and its use in different economic and social institutions, the way is already prepared for the Creole speaker to expand his lexicon and move with ease into new topics by recourse to the Standard language. Hence, throughout the development of Creole, whenever expression is required in contexts foreign to the traditional way of life, the Creole lexicon is increased by the addition of words of a more specialized nature. Here are a few such lexical items:

komite	"committee"
teknik	"technique"
sertifika	"certificate"
devəlopmã̃	"development"
marše potã̃siel	"potential market"
aplikasiõ̃	"application"
ladministrasiõ̃	"administration"
dəviz etrãv̂er	"foreign currency"

As these examples illustrate, a vocabulary derived for the most part from the dominant language is used to facilitate communication between members of an industrial society.

6.1.2 Replacements

As the Standard language often continues to be spoken in close proximity to Creole, it gives rise to another type of lexical borrowings, where basilectal terms are replaced by their acrolectal counterparts. A few such terms are listed below:

Basilectal	Acrolectal	
tãto	lapremidi	"afternoon"
gete	regarde	"look"
reste	abite	"stay"
rode	šerše	"look for"
tete	sẽ	"breast"
vagabõ	vwaju	"rascal"
krie	pløre	"weep"
masin	vwatyr	"car"
mo gate	mo šeri	"my dear"

Very often these borrowings introduce phonological features which are characteristic of the acrolect as they reflect a conscious attempt on the part of the speaker to approximate the pronunciation the borrowed element has in Standard French. For example, the following acrolectal features can be observed in the list of acrolectal terms mentioned above: 1) the use of palatal fricatives in šerše, mo šeri; 2) the use of front rounded vowels ø and y in pløre and vwatyr, respectively; and 3) the use of the post-vocalic r in regarde and šerše. The acquisition of such decreolizing features play an important role in bridging the gap between "Ordinary Kreol" and French.

6.1.3 Frozen Expressions

Heavy borrowings of French vocabulary is seen particularly through massive adoptions of frozen phrases and expressions. One of the major indications that such expressions are borrowed wholesale is the fact that they almost always incorporate Standard phonological and grammatical features which would be normally non-existent in the speaker's

customary variety of speech. As a matter of fact, this phenomenon could be considered as a case of "code-switching," where the speaker moves from "one consistent set of co-occurring rules to another" (Labov, 1970; Sankoff 1972:37). For example, consider the following utterance from a housewife in conversation with an interlocutor of superior status:

mo ti truv ẽn pake en rupi dã̃ zyn butik

"I found one bundle for one rupee in a shop."

While the first part of the utterance is correct basilect, dã̃ zyn butik is an obvious borrowing from Standard French. First, the adverbial phrase is a prepositional phrase introduced by the preposition dã̃ while the equivalent basilectal expression does not have a preposition: labutik would be the basilect equivalent to the acrolect dã̃ zyn butik. Second, the phonology of the phrase indicates the direct transference from French: the use of the front rounded vowel y in zyn (where z is an agglutinated element) while it does not appear in en where yn would be expected for the sake of consistency. Such features are indeed elements that are integrated wholly into the borrowed expressions, and are normally absent from a speaker's usual code. An inspection of the following text--an informal talk addressed to a group of farmers--further illustrates the extent of the adoptions of frozen phrases:

mẽ̃tna, les mo eksplik u, ã̃ plys də sa,
"now, let me explain to you, on top of that,
u bezwẽ̃--se neseser--al minister de
you must--it is necessary--go to the ministry
lagrikyltyr pu gãj̃ ban ẽ̃formasiõ̃
of agriculture to obtain more technical
ply teknikmã̃ e avek ply də presiziõ̃.
and precise information.

me premiermɑ̃, il fo kə žə vu diz, šak
but first, I must tell you, for every
prože ki u fer, u bezwɛ̃ nõ soelmɑ̃
project that you undertake, you must have not only
œ̃ marše lokal mezɔsi œ̃ marše a lexterieer
a local market but also a foreign market.
. . . sertifika developmɑ̃ li en grɑ̃ pa
. . . a certificate of development is a great step
ɑ̃navɑ̃, da lə sɑ̃s ki li pu
forward, in the sense that it will
moderniz nu prodyksiõ agrikol . . .
modernize our agricultural production . . . "

The sample above shows the occurrence of the following expressions which, in terms of their syntax, phonology, and lexicon, are from French: ɑ̃ plys də sa from Fr. "en plus de ça"; se neseser from Fr. "c'est nécessaire"; avek ply də presiziõ from Fr. "avec plus de précision"; il fo kə žə vu diz from Fr. "il faut que je vous dise"; œ̃ marše lokal . . . œ̃ marše a lexterieer from Fr. "un marché local . . . un marché à l'exterieur"; grɑ̃ pa ɑ̃navɑ̃ from Fr. "grand pas en avant"; dɑ̃ lə sɑ̃s from Fr. "dans le sens." The introduction of French vocabulary is accompanied by French phonological and grammatical structures. For example, the following phonological features are introduced with the borrowed lexical items: 1) the front rounded vowel œ̃ as in œ̃ marše lokal; 2) the French schwa as in il fo kə žə vu diz; 3) the palatal fricatives as in œ̃ marše lokal. The non-deletion of the schwa in phrases such as avek ply də presiziõ instead of informal French avek ply d'presiziõ is the result of the influence of written rather than oral French. Syntactically, the expressions are considered French because 1) verbs are inflected for tense and mood as in il fo kə žə vu

diz; 2) the French personal pronoun vu is used instead of u.

6.2 Lexical Change Resulting From Avoidance of Basilect

Besides outright borrowings from Standard French, the lexicon of Mauritian Creole is further affected by decreolization. As indicated in Chapter 2, decreolization does not involve merely direct interference from French, but is also motivated by avoidance of the basilect. Thus a set of mesolectal systems is created when Mauritian Creole speakers who have less frequent contact with speakers of the acrolect, but who nevertheless wish to exclude basilectal words, very often make "mistakes" by overgeneralizing a lexical rule. Hypercorrection in the field of lexicon can be illustrated by the following examples, where the use of the noun- and adverb-forming suffix -mã̃ (-ment) and the noun-forming suffix -siõ̃ (-tion) represent improper usage of the French derivational system.[8]

Basilectal Form	Mesolectal Form	Corresponding French Form	
vit	vitmã̃	vite	"quickly"
suvã̃	suvamã̃	souvent	"often"
ã̃ zeneral	ã̃ zeneralmã̃	en général	"in general"
fini	finismã̃	fin	"end"
deside	desidasiõ̃	décision	"decision"

The above forms are observed among those Creole speakers who wish to avoid the basilectal variety, but fail to recognize the correct Standard French forms of speech.

On the whole, the lexicon of non-basilectal Mauritian Creole re-

flects a considerable influence of the French language. In view of the ever-growing pressures to adapt to the new advances being made in almost all spheres of human activity where the French language is used, it is not difficult to understand the massive lexical transfers that have occurred and are still occurring in Mauritian Creole. The lexical influence of the Standard language tends to operate in varying degrees depending, of course, on the extent of contact accessible in those different areas of communication.

Notes

[1] Indeed, Valdman (1973:531) voices a widespread opinion when he claims that "the lexicon of a language is more subject to widescale restructuring then its grammar."

[2] The claim that Mauritian Creole is an off-shoot of Bourbonnais has been challenged by Baker (1976) and Papen (1978).

[3] For a detailed lexicological analysis of the inventory of lexemes arranged in terms of provenience, see Chaudenson (1974:466-1074).

[4] Mauritian Creole lexemes of Indo-Portuguese origin include such items as kamarõ (camarao) "prawn"; kãkrela (cacalaccas) "cockroach"; laskar (lascar) "Indian Muslim."

[5] Chaudenson labels "Vocabulaire des Isles" a segment of the lexicon of Indian Ocean Creoles which developed in the Antilles as a direct result of economic and social practices and institutions of colonial plantation societies and was carried to the Mascarenes according to the navigational and trade patterns of the period. This lexicon is of diverse origin. It includes such terms as bitasõ (of French origin) "agricultural establishment"; bagas (of Spanish origin) "fibrous residue produced by crushing sugar cane"; mãteg (of Spanish origin) "cooked butter"; and of course Kreol.

[6] Among the widely distributed 17th century French regional survivals are terms like Reunionese Creole lavalas "flooding"; Haitian and Mauritian Creole kite "abandon."

[7] Neologisms are lexemes whose phonological shape does not diverge significantly from that of French cognates, but which show various types of semantic shifts. Among the most interesting cases of semantic transfer are those of blã and nwar whose function in describing the color of human beings has been assumed by kler and brẽ, respectively, and which instead denote relative social status. Blã, a former term of respect, has taken on the meaning "boss," while nwar, used formerly by masters vis-à-vis slaves and servants, is used as a term of address equivalent to "old man," "old boy."

[8] Unlike Creolists such as Baissac (1880), who have held that Creole languages are characterized by an absence of derivational processes, Papen (1978:237-45) points out that Indian Ocean Creoles share a great number of productive suffixes with French.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

The conclusion that we can draw from the data discussed in this study is that undoubtedly a major evolution is taking place in Mauritian Creole. The transfer of features which occurs on almost all linguistic levels—phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical—testifies to the fact that Mauritian Creole speakers are subject to the dual social pressures to acquire the acrolect as well as to avoid basilectal speech. As we have indicated, this change is the result of the social advancement of the Creole-speaking community, including a section of the population of Indian origin. We can assume that the younger generations of Mauritians of Indian extraction tend to integrate, linguistically as well as on other domains, to the way of life exemplified by the Franco-Mauritians and the upper stratum of the Creole population far more rapidly and completely than their parents.

The nature of the relationship existing between French and Creole in Mauritius is such that the interaction that takes place between them in many areas of human activity is bound to bring the Creole closer and closer to French, which is precisely what the term decreolization describes. This is not to say that a merger with the French language is likely to take place in the foreseeable future. No signs of any such merger are apparent for the time being because decreolization presup-

poses, in many instances, the weakening of a creole cultural identity: this weakening has not materialized at the present juncture. We have even suggested that the whole phenomenon of decreolization in Mauritius has its origin precisely in the ambivalence which characterizes the attitude of Mauritians toward these two languages: Creole and French. One of the great ironies in Mauritius is that the detractors of Creole who denounce it as a major obstacle to good mastery of French happen to use Creole constantly in their daily lives, and in all social or affective situations which demand its use. On the other hand, defenders of Creole very often consist of a group of intellectuals who are not themselves reluctant to use French in their conversations. Thus, while a few bilingual speakers of the urban elite tend to idealize the "gros créole," they do not recognize the variable linguistic behaviour of the majority of the population who feel linguistically insecure. This paradoxical situation, we have pointed out, encourages the gradual but continuous movement towards acquiring what the Creole speakers think to be a more desirable linguistic behaviour. The type of linguistic variation existing within Mauritian Creole exists no doubt for other French-related creoles which happen to coexist with French. It is therefore hoped that Creolists interested in French-related creoles will pay more attention to the phenomenon of decreolization in these Creoles.

Appendix

Texts in Creole

I

mo pu kõsej u fer duz kopi e sumet sa minister de lagrikyltyr. dabor nu ena trwa komite ki prã šarž byro aplikasiõ. U pu ena en komite teknik, u pu ena en komite "agricultural development committee," u pu ena osi en komite prezide par lə ministr de lagrikyltyr, bulel. e laba sa ban komite la zot pu proses u aplikasiõ, zot pu pas tu dã ladministrasiõ ki bezwẽ pase. sa pu fasilit u pu gaj̃ u sertifika də devəlopmã. mẽtnã, les mo eksplik u, ã plys də sa, u bezwẽ--se neseser --al minister de lagrikyltyr pur gaj̃ ban ẽformasiõ ply teknikmã e avek ply də presiziõ. me premiermã, il fo kə žə vu diz, šak prože ki u fer, u bezwẽ õe marše potãsiel, nõ sœlmã õe marše lokal, mezosi õe marše a lexterieer. šak kikšoz u ãvi prodwir, swa u ãvi prodwir brẽzel, swa u ãvi prodwir lalo, fodre ki, komã u prodwir sa, u ena en plas, u ena dimun ki ãvi aste li, u ena en marše pur sa. Si u pa pu kapav van li a moris, pa nesesermã a moris, u kapav van li deor. sa en premie kõdisiõ. døziem kõdisiõ, fodre ki u ena sterilite later ki u kapav plãte. sa se dø kõdisiõ ki mažoer. e u realize ki sa pu ed nu pu ekonomiz nu dəviz etrãžer. e ã mem tã, mo krwar, li pu ed nu pu ogmãt nu ban nõbr dãplwa. U kone osi ki sa en fasõ pu revaloriz travaj later.

II

Q. ki travaj u pe fer?

A. õ dire mo ti truv en pake en rupi dã zyn butik. mo fin prã sa pake la, mo fin get dimãsiõ sa korne la, mo fin al dã en magazẽ, mo fin al šerš sa plastik sẽk par set, alor la ki mo fin komãs sa, mo fin gaj̃ so plastik e la kãtite, e fin ašte en pur fer la proev ki kãtite mo kapav mete dã en korne, a sə momã-la mo fin komãse.

Q. me ki ban kliã ki u ena ẽ pe?

A. la butik, boku də butik.

Q. dõk u livre sa zis labutik.

A. žyst dã le butik supermarše osi.

Q. me eskə ban dimun dã kartie kot u prepre la mem vini.

A. a wi boku də mõd dã lə kartie e syrtu lezãfã. də tãzãtã mo van en ti pake pom də ter ek lezãfã osi.

Q. ki manier u kup u ban pom de ter?

A. a pu kupe pa kapav kupe sa parskə si pu kupe mem kiloer nu pu fini.

Q. u rap li mẽs?

A. wi, biẽ mẽs, tu mem dimãsiõ epwi sa lave epwi sa mo met̀ li sek.

Q. komã dir ek sa ban kliã la u ena en espes də kõtra avek oe?

A. awi tu lətã mem butik alor osito ki zot pom də ter fini, zot fer dir ki fin fini. parfwa en dimun si li fer en ti fet še li swa en ti resepsiõ kelkõk mo livre zot.

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