

## Abstract

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### For a grammatical comparison of the French Creole languages of the Indian Ocean

One may wish to compare linguistic systems in order to establish i) identities and divergences of function, and to characterize them in terms of universal and particular traits; (ii) an aerial typology may be desired, especially if the languages are historically and geographically close; (iii) we can finally establish genetic relationships between languages, and in the specific case of creole languages, contribute to the debate around the creole prototype (Mc Whorter 1998). In the case of French Creole languages, as early as the end of the nineteenth century, Lucien Adam in his work on hybridology, compared Maléo-Aryan creoles (Indian Ocean) and Negro-Aryan creoles (Antilles). Since then, the comparison of Creole languages and French Creole languages has continued, thanks in particular to the work of APICS and Holm & Patrick. The comparison of the Creole languages of Mauritius and Reunion, and incidentally Seychelles, has long been overburdened by genetic debates about the possible relatedness of these languages (Chaudenson 1974, 2010, Corne 1977, 1978, Baker & Corne 1982). As I have said before, it is high time that we take up this debate from a new angle - outside ideological considerations, if possible - and to start a synchronic comparative process in which convergences and divergences are identified, before any interpretative debate.

Following the proposition of Baissac-1880, which identifies the verb as the main area of divergence between Mauritian Creole and French, the present typological comparison will focus on certain aspects of the predicative phrase in Indian Ocean Creoles. For Reunionese, I will use the available analysis (Chaudenson 1974, Cellier 1985, Staudacher 2004, Watbled 2015) as well as the corpus collected by Caid-Capron and Folgoat. For Mauritian, I will also rely on the many analysis available and the corpus collected by Caid-Capron. For the Seychellois, I will rely, amongst others, on the work of Bollée, Corne and Michaelis.

At first glance, the verbal systems of Reunion Creole, Mauritian Creole and Seychelles Creole have significant differences (Corne & Moorghen 1978, Staudacher 2004, Watbled 2015). In Reunionese, for the expression of temporality: auxiliaries *lé* and *la*, temporal inflectional morphology and the finite marker *i* are used – these traits are not observed in Mauritian – as well a pre-verbal aspecto-temporal markers, shared with many other French creole languages. Yet, despite these differences, the Creole languages of the I.O present a comparable verb

alternation - long form vs short form,, whose scope and constraints have to be specified. In the three creoles, the verb's arguments are aligned identically and the oblique arguments are marked by equivalent prepositions. I will focus particularly on the use of ek, ar and asam in the I.O. créoles.

The purpose of this grammatical comparison is to show that beyond the traits that the Reunionese, Mauritian and Seychellois share with the French Creoles of the Caribbean, and Guyanese and Louisiana creoles, there are points of convergence and remarkable differences between the languages of the Indian Ocean, within the same linguistic type.

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