

## Mauritian *la* vs. Seychellois *i*: Traces of French vs. Bantu influence?

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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 *La and i*

The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between the Specificity Marker *la* in Mauritian Creole (MC) and the morpheme *i* in Seychellois Creole (SC), an offshoot of early MC. *La* is derived from the French locative particle *là*, while *i* is a cognate of the 3sg resumptive pronoun *li* derived from the French *lui* ('him'), commonly used in Topic Comment constructions in early MC. *La* is lacking in SC, where the demonstrative *sa* can be used on its own both as a definite article and demonstrative. In MC, *sa* must be used with *la*, as shown in (1):

- (1) *Annou travay pour realiz sa vizyon.* (Michel 2011) SC  
 Let.us work to realize DEM vision  
 'Let us work to realize this vision'  
*Anu travay pu realiz sa vizyon la* MC  
 let.us work to realize DEM vision SP

Another notable difference between the two creoles relates to the use of *i* in SC, which occurs between the subject and the predicate, while MC has a zero copula, e.g.:

- (2) *Torti i koma ros.* SC (Example from Papen (1975:27))  
 tortoise *i* like rock  
 'Tortoises are like rocks.'  
*Torti kuma ros.* MC

This paper argues that the paths to the grammaticalization of *la* and *i* are linked. When the two creoles diverged in the mid 1830's these morphemes were performing similar functions, namely that of marking the subject as the Topic. Both morphemes forced a singular referential reading of the subject NP, and seemed interchangeable:

- (3) a. *Mais son nation là trop tourdi.* (Chrestien 1822: 63)  
 but 3.SG.POSS race SP too idiotic  
 'But his race is too idiotic.'  
 b. *Mais son nation li trop tourdi.* (Freycinet 1827: 105)  
 but 3.SG.POSS race 3.SG too idiotic

It is argued that the greater presence of the French in Mauritius favoured the use of the demonstrative reinforcer *là* with referential noun phrases, as in *Cet homme là* ('This man'), while the influx of Bantu speaking slaves in the Seychelles promoted the use of a resumptive pronoun in Topic-Comment constructions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Baker (p.c. 2006) attributes the use of *i* in SC directly to substrate influence. He proposes that the Bantu 'concordial' agreement system, which requires that the same prefix, which identifies the class

Whilst the analysis of *la* as a specificity marker in modern MC is (assumed to be) uncontroversial (Baker and Hookoomsing 1987; Ledikasyon pu Travayer 2004; Guillemain 2009, In press), the precise function of SC *i* is still the subject of debate. It is proposed that *li* grammaticalized into the phonologically reduced Topic marker *i* in SC. Both morphemes head their respective projection - *la* heads the Specificity Phrase (Sp,P) and *i* heads the Topic Phrase (Top,P). Both SpP and TopP occupy the left periphery, which is associated with the discourse (see Rizzi 1997). The analysis provides further evidence of the parallel between DP and CP and also gives support to Mufwene's theory of 'competition and selection' process which arises in a language contact situation (1996, 2000, 2001a).

## 1.2 Organization of this paper

This paper is organized as follows:

- Section 2 presents a brief comparison of MC and SC
- Section 3 – the grammaticalization of *la* as a specificity marker in MC
- Section 4 – The function of *li* in early MC
- Section 5 – Comparing *li* and *la* in early MC, and reanalysis of pronoun *li* → functional category *i*
- Section 6 - The 'mysterious *i* in SC'
- Section 7 – Syntactic framework and analysis
- Section 8 - Conclusions

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membership of the noun, and must also occur on the first element of the predicate, would have favoured the use of a morpheme between the subject and predicate in the new creole.

In Bantu languages, 'Noun class membership is identified by a particular prefix which the noun must take (even a zero prefix) and which governs a number of concord prefixes that must be carried by the (quantifier,) adjectives, connectives and pronouns associated with the head noun as well as by the verb which the noun commands as subject' (Mufwene 1980: 246). Mufwene cites the following examples from Ethnic Kikongo, proposed by Lumwamu (1973):

- |        |  |                |
|--------|--|----------------|
| (1) a. | <i>di-nkondi di- mosí di-nene di-bwidi</i><br>banana one big has fallen down<br>One big banana has fallen down | Ethnic Kikongo |
| b.     | <i>ma-nkondi ma-oléma-nene ma-bwidi</i><br>Two big bananas have fallen down                                    | Ethnic Kikongo |
- (Mufwene 1980: 247)

There is a similar pattern in Swahili, one of the substrate languages of MC:

- |        |  |         |
|--------|--|---------|
| (2) a. | <i>Ki- ti ki-kúbwa ki-mója ki-tatósha</i><br>chair big one will suffice<br>One big chair will do | Swahili |
| b.     | <i>Vi- ti vi-kúbwa vi-tátu vi-tatósha</i><br>Three big chairs will do                            | Swahili |
- (Mufwene 1980: 247)

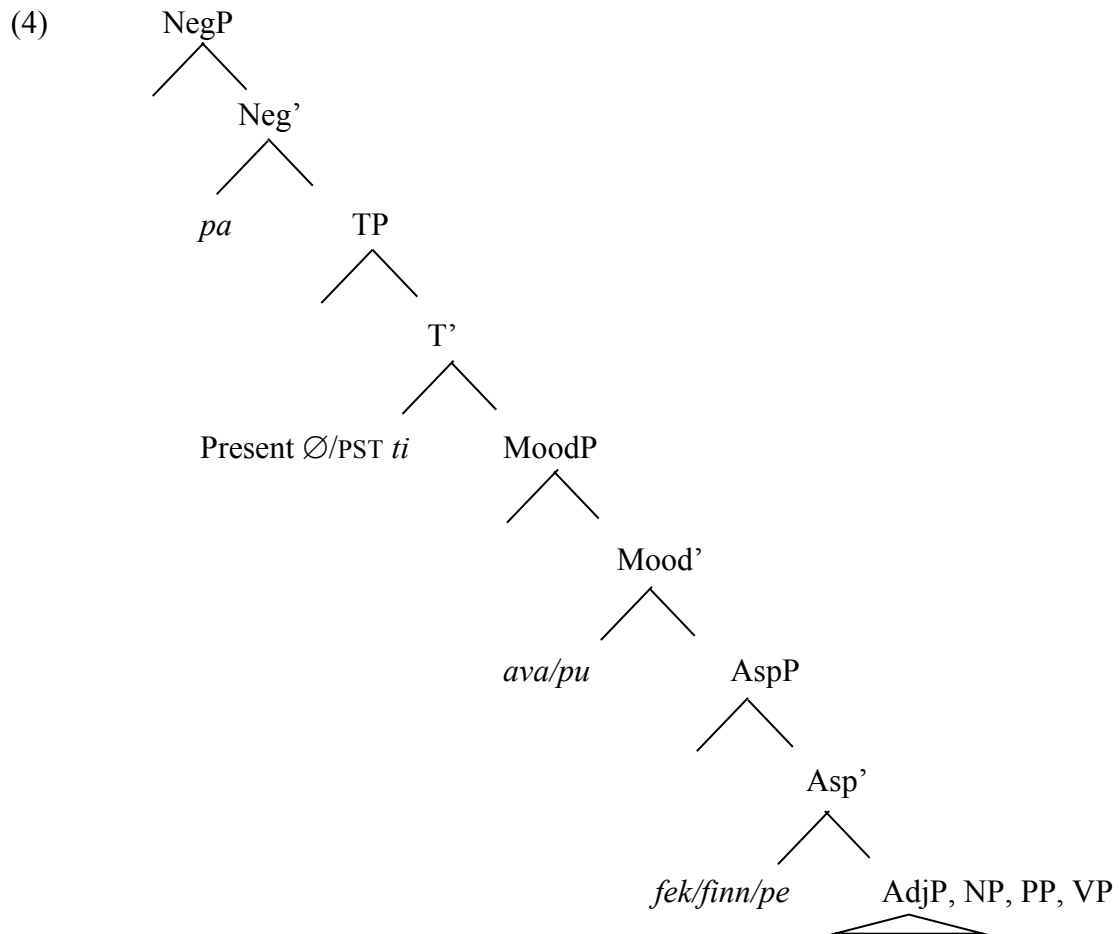
In early MC, the prefix *li* tended to be used with French masculine nouns (e.g. *liker* from Fr. *le coeur* 'heart', *likor* from Fr. *le corps* 'body', *lipye* from Fr. *le pied* 'foot'), and the prefix *la* with French feminine nouns (*la guèl* from Fr. *la gueule* 'the mouth', *la mizique* from Fr. *la musique* 'the music', *la sambe* from Fr. *la chambre* 'the room'). The emerging *li* and post nominal *la* occurred sequentially in the same position as the Bantu verb prefixes, and they initially both served to mark the subject as singular and referential.

## 2. Comparing MC and SC

### 2.1 The clause (CP)

Both MC & Seselwa are characterised by the following:

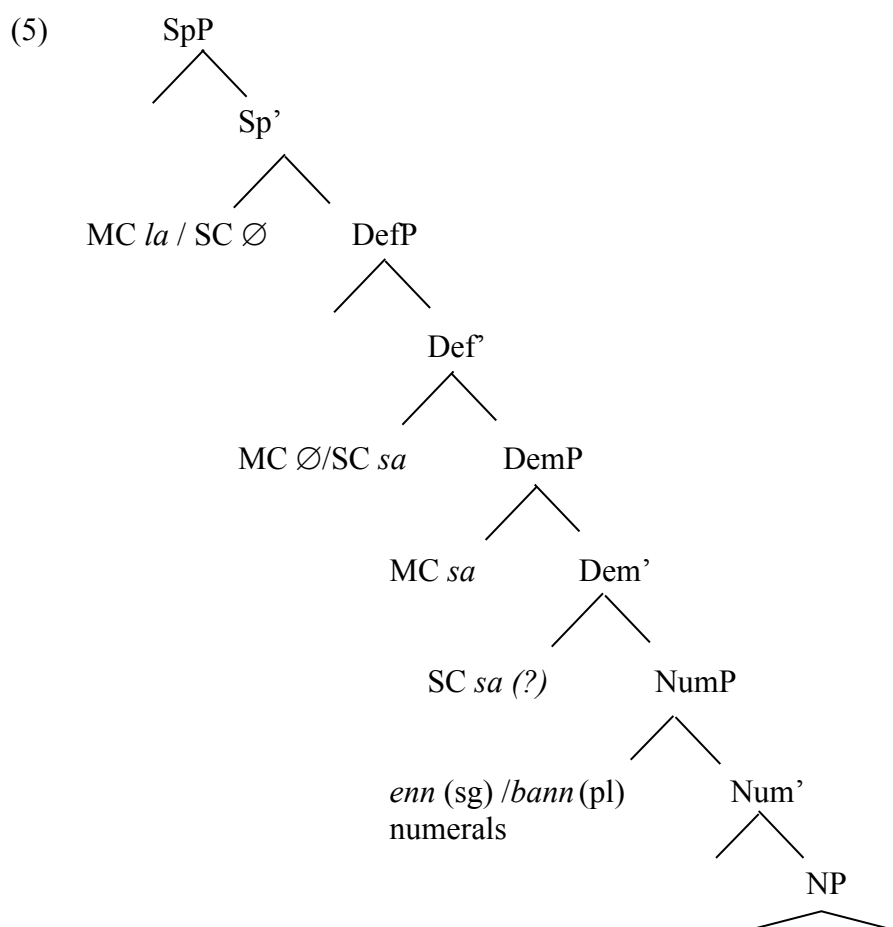
- Occurrence of bare nouns in argument positions
- Zero copula ( $\emptyset$ ) in present tense non verbal predicative constructions
- Lack of inflectional morphology
- Occurrence of Tense, Mood & Aspect (TMA) markers, which are realized as separate functional projections above the predicate
- Negation precedes TMA markers



Where:

- Past tense marker is *ti*.
- Modals include:
  - *a/ava/va* (irrealis)
  - *pu* – definite future
- Aspect markers include:
  - *fek* indicates that the action is only just complete
  - *finn/inn/'n* equivalent to perfect
  - *pe* expresses that the action is ongoing (equivalent to gerund participle).

## 2.2 The noun phrase (DP)



Where:

- The definite determiner in MC is a phonologically null element and *sa* is SC
- The demonstrative *sa* is adjectival in MC (merged in Spec, DemP) and is a head in SC (the question mark indicates that this claim is subject to further research).
- In both MC and SC, the singular indefinite article *enn*, the plural marker *bann*, and numerals are merged in Spec, NumP.

## 3. The grammaticalization of *la*

*La* was first attested as a marker of Specificity in 1818 (example (6) later reproduced in Freycinet (1927), and the grammaticalization of this morpheme was a gradual process that lasted for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Guillemin 2009). In the following examples, it is used with referents that have a discourse antecedent:

- (6) *ça grand pié dibois pian Aughiste conné là* (Freycinet 1827:100)  
 DEM big tree wood smelly Auguste know SP  
 This big foul smelling tree that Auguste knows
- (7) *Et Torti là touzour marcé* (Freycinet 1827: 105)  
 and tortoise SP still walk  
 ‘And **the** tortoise keeps walking’

- (8) *Bonhomm' là répondu:* (Chrestien 1831: 64)  
 old man SP reply  
 'the old man replies:'
- (9) *Coq là répondu li* (Chrestien 1831: 73)  
 rooster SP answer 3.SG  
 'The rooster answers him'
- (10) *Bourriqu' là (...) content comment léRoi* (Chrestien 1831 : )  
 donkey SP happy as king  
 'The donkey (...) is as happy as a king'

In very early MC, the Specificity marker *la* was used only with singular, referential count nouns, suggesting that it may initially have encoded a Number feature, or needed to be licensed by one. The first attestations of *là* with a mass nouns and with plural noun phrases are found in Baissac (1888), and this marks the final stage of grammaticalization of both *la* and the plural marker *bann*:

- (11) *dileau là pour baingné* (Baissac 1888: 25)  
 water SP for bath  
 'that water is for bathing'
- (12) *Namcouticouti qui té faire vous tout ça bande malices là*  
 (Baissac, 1888: 107)  
 Namcouticouti who PST make you all DEM PL mischief SP  
 'It is Namcouticouti who has played all **these** tricks on you'

The specificity marker *la* in modern MC can only be used with a referent that has a discourse antecedent (it marks anaphoric definiteness), and that will be the Topic of ongoing discourse. The use of *la* is not attested in SC, where *li* develops into a Topic marker and where *sa* develops into a definite article. The demonstrative *sa* in MC is purely deictic, and must be used in conjunction with *la*.

#### 4. *Li* in early MC

Corne (1974) argued that the frequent use *li* in early MC was a direct consequence of the loss of the copula, where the notion of copula is strictly understood as the link between the subject and the predicate. In the absence of a copula, *li* serves to indicate that what precedes it is the subject and what follows is the predicate.

- (13) *Madagascar li là* (Grant 1749)  
 Madagascar 3.SG there  
 'Madagascar it's over there'
- (14) *Quequefois, m'sié li donné.* (Pitot 1805: 81)  
 sometimes master li give  
 'Sometimes the master he gave'

- (15) *Maurice bon, mon paye li bon aussi* (Pitot 1805: 81)  
 Mauritius nice 1.SG.POSS country 3.SG nice too  
 ‘Mauritius is nice, my country it is nice too.’
- (16) *ça li nègre blanc* (Milbert 1812: 85)  
 DEM 3.SG negro white  
 ‘That he’s a white negro’
- (17) *Bon Dieû li bien bon* (1828: 110)  
 God 3.SG very kind  
 ‘God He is very kind’
- (18) *mon l’esprit li contant,* (1828: 107)  
 1.SG.POSS soul 3.SG happy  
 ‘my soul it is happy’
- (19) *Jésus-Christ li pitit pour Bon Dieû,* (1828: 110)  
 Jesus Christ 3.SG son for God  
 ‘Jesus Christ He is the son of God’
- (20) *Baptême li un signe qui zaute faire avec dileau,* (1828:112)  
 Baptism 3.SG a sign COMP 3.PL make with water  
 ‘Baptism it is a sign that they make with water,’

There were certain environments where *li* never occurred in early MC, which may shed light on the function of this morpheme.

#### 4.1 No ‘*li*’ with TMA markers

There are no occurrences of *li* when TMA markers are present:

- (21) *votre femme fini mort,* (1784)  
 2.SG.F.POSS wife PST dead  
 ‘Your wife **has** died’
- (22) *Quand mon femm’ pour fair’ badinaze* (Chrestien 1822: 56)  
 when 1.SG.POSS wife MOD make teasing  
 ‘When my wife **will** play up’
- (23) *Ein’ torti avec lièvre été voulué parié* (Freycinet 1827: 104)  
 a tortoise with hare PST want bet  
 ‘A tortoise **wanted** to bet with the hare’
- (24) *enne gran bande apré casse maille* (de la Butte 1850: 123)  
 a big group ASP pick corn  
 ‘A large group (of people) **picking** corn’

#### 4.2 No 'li' with Negation

In early MC, *li* occur in negated sentences:<sup>2</sup>

- (25) *ça n'a pas bon,* (Saint-Pierre 1769)  
 this NEG good  
 'That's no good,'
- (26) *Ça n'a pas difficil' pour croire* (Chrestien 1822: 52)  
 that NEG hard to believe  
 'That's not hard to believe'
- (27) *Son la-voix n'a plus fair' tapaze* (Chrestien 1822: 52)  
 3.SG.POSS voice NEG more make noise  
 'His voice no longer made noise' (he went silent)
- (28) *Satte na pas coute tou sa.* (de la Butte 1850: 122)  
 cat NEG listen all that  
 'Cat doesn't listen to any of that'
- (29) *Loulou na pas conné Comment diab' li va fair* (Lolliot 1855: 135)  
 wolf NEG know how devil 3.SG MOD do  
 'Wolf doesn't have a clue what to do'

#### 4.3 Gradual reanalysis of 'li'

The use of *li* with plural subjects suggests that this morpheme was gradually bleached of the Number feature of its source:

- (30) *Jésus-Christ et Bon Dieû li Père ou papa pour tout dimonde,* (1828: 112)  
 Jesus Christ and God *li* father or dad for everyone  
 'Jesus Christ and God **are** father or dad to everyone,'

If *li* were a resumptive pronoun in example (30), the well established plural form *zaut'*, *zaute*, *zoutes* (*zot* in modern MC) would have been used as shown in (31):

- (31) *Jésus-Christ et Bon Dieû zot Père ou papa ...*  
 Jesus Christ and God, 3.PL father or dad ...  
 Jesus-Christ and God they are father or dad ...

The process of reanalysis of *li* as a Topic marker is likely to have started prior the separation of MC and SC. Whilst French influence in Mauritius favoured the use of *la* to mark the subject as referential (specific), the greater presence of Bantu speaking

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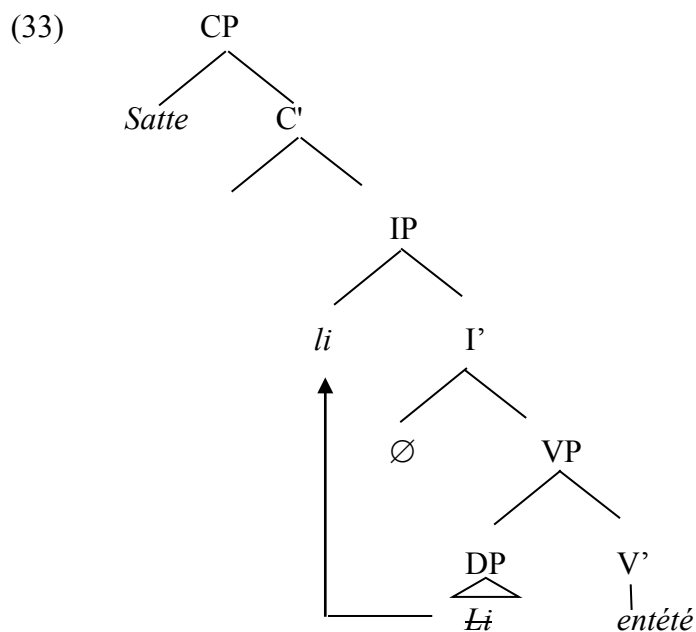
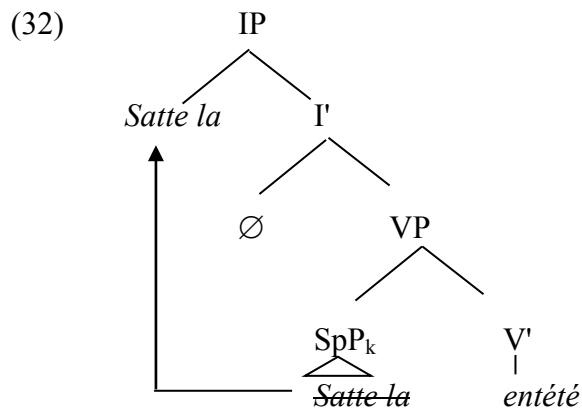
<sup>2</sup> This suggests that *li* and NEG may have occupied the same position in the clause – they were in complementary distribution, and that *li* may have served to assert the truth-value of a proposition. The co-occurrence of modern SC *i* and Negation warrants further investigation.

slaves in the Seychelles encouraged the use of a resumptive pronoun between the subject and the predicate.

### 5. Comparing *la* and *li* in early MC

Whilst both *li* and *là* (*la*) in early MC shared the pragmatic function of marking Topic, and both forced a singular, referential reading of the count noun, note that there was a very different syntactic relation between *là* and the NP that it modifies, and *li* with the Topic, as shown in (32) and (33) respectively. While the former forms a constituent, namely a DP, the latter doesn't:

In (32), the subject *Satte la* is merged in the specifier of the predicate, *entété*, and raises to Spec,IP for Nominative (NOM) Case assignment. Example (33) is a Topic-Comment construction, where the Topic *Satte* is left discolated. The subject of the Comment is the 3sg pronoun *li*, which is co-referential with the Topic, *Satte*. It is merged in specifier of the predicate *entété* and raises to Spec,IP for NOM Case assignment.



### 5.1 De-marking

Givón (1975) proposes that there is a process of ‘de-marking’, which occurs when a marked construction is over-used in a weaker context. Marked construction → Neutral syntax:

- (34) TS (“MARKED”)                      NEUTRAL (RE-ANALYZED)  
 The man, he came ⇒                      The man he-came  
 TOP      PRO                                  SUBJ      AGR  
(Givón 1975:154-5)

The early MC constructions with *li* can be represented as follows, where the subject of the comment is the resumptive pronoun *li* and there is a zero copula:

- |      |                |  |           |           |              |
|------|----------------|--|-----------|-----------|--------------|
|      | TOPIC          |  | COMMENT   |           |              |
| (35) | <i>bibass'</i> |  | <i>li</i> | ∅         | <i>goût!</i> |
|      | loquat         |  | 3.SG      | COP       | tasty        |
|      | TOPIC          |  | SUBJECT   | PREDICATE |              |
- (Chrestien 1822: 50)

If MC *li* were to be overused in an unmarked context, this resumptive pronoun would be an obvious candidate for reanalysis as a functional item that mediates between the subject and the predicate. Such reanalysis results in a simpler structure, as shown:

- (36) *bibass li*      ∅      *goût!*      →      *bibass i*      *goût!*  
 TOPIC SUBJECT COP PREDICATE      →      SUBJECT TM PREDICATE  
 ‘The loquat it is tasty’                      →      ‘The loquat is tasty’

Unstressed status of pronouns → phonological reduction (Givón 1975:155).

## 6. The mysterious ‘i’ in Seychellois Creole<sup>3</sup>

‘There is in SC an element *i* which has been at the centre of an on-going debate ... It has so far resisted all attempts at an adequate explanation, although there is little doubt about the facts of its occurrence.’ (Corne, 1974: 68).

### 6.1 Subject clitic – The ‘i’ insertion rule

In his description of SC, Papen notes that ‘the status of this element ‘i’ is somewhat controversial among those scholars who have attempted a description of Seychellois Creole’ (1975: 27). He defines *i* as a ‘subject clitic’ which must be inserted whenever the subject is nominal (common noun or proper noun) and the verb is in the present tense:

- (37) *Torti i koma ros*      (Papen 1975: 27)                      SC  
 tortoise *i* like rock  
 ‘Tortoises are like rocks’  
*Torti kuma ros*                      MC

<sup>3</sup> Subtitle borrowed from Corne (1974)

- (38) *Ler dimun seselua i bat triang, zot dāse* (Corne, 1974: 68) SC  
 when people Seychellois *i* beat triangle 3.PL dance  
 ‘When Seychellois people play the triangle, they dance’  
*Kan dimun Sesel bat triang, zot danse* MC
- (39) *ki en zanfan i bezwen avan e apre son nesans* (1989) SC  
 COMP a child *i* need before and after 3.SG.POSS birth  
 ‘that a child needs before and after his/her birth’  
*ki enn zanfan bizin avan e apre so nesans* MC
- (40) *Sa pefas i osi reaffirm sa bezwen legal ...* (1989) SC  
 DEF preface *i* also reaffirm DEF need legal...  
 ‘This preface also reaffirms the legal requirement ...’  
*Sa pefas la reafirm bezwen legal osi...* MC
- (41) *Tou bann drwa i aplikab pour tou zanfan ...* (1989) SC  
 all PL law *i* applicalbe for all child  
 ‘All the laws are applicable to all children ...’  
*Tu bann drwa aplikab pu tu zanfan* MC

Corne suggests that this subject clitic ‘has no extra-linguistic reference and its function is deictic, simply marking what follows as the predicate’ (1977: 66).

## 6.2 Resumptive pronoun

Bollée (1977) on the other hand identifies *i* as a resumptive pronoun, claiming that ‘l’emploi du pronom personnel de la troisième personne, *i*, est obligatoire au présent’ (the use of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pronoun *i* is mandatory in the present tense), as shown :

- (42) *ler sō ban servant i al sers delo* (Bollée 1977: 62) SC  
 when 3.SG.POSS PL maid *i* go fetch water  
 ‘when her maids go to fetch water’  
*ler so bann servant al rod dilo* MC

However, if a resumptive pronoun was used in (42), it would agree in number with the subject, and the well established form *zot* would be used with the plural subject, as shown in (43):

- (43) *nenen ek msje zot al dā lakaz Sūgula e Zako* (Bollée 1977: 62) SC  
 maid and master 3.PL go in house Soungoula and Monkey  
 The maid and the master they go into the house of Soungoula and Monkey  
*Nenenn ek missye zot al dan lakaz Sungula et Zako* Modern MC

Bollée argues that ‘*i* est nettement préféré à *zot*; quelques locuteurs semblent éviter *zot* complètement’ (*i* is much preferred to *zot*; some speakers avoid the latter completely). She quotes one of her informers: ‘I prefer *i*, it makes the sentence flow more easily’ (1977: 62). This suggests that there is a pause when a resumptive pronoun is used, but not when *i* is used. Corne (1977) also makes the point that when a resumptive pronoun is used, there is an ‘intonation contour’ in the sentence.

### 6.3 *Non-future tense marker*

The fact that in SC *i* is in complementary distribution with past tense markers has also prompted Papen (1975) to analyze this morpheme as a ‘non-future tense’ marker. The following examples provide evidence that *i* doesn’t co-occur with TMA markers:

- (44) *Msye Nicette ti osi demann bann zabitan zot sipor ...* (2011) SC  
 Mr Nicette PST also ask PL villagers 3.pl support  
 ‘Mr Nicette also asked the villagers for their support ...’  
*Misye Nicette ti osi dimann bann zabitan zot sipor...* MC
- (45) *Sa komite pou reprezant bann Kreolis* (1999) SC  
 DEF committee MOD represent PL creolist  
 ‘This committee will represent creolists’  
*Sa komite la pu reprezant bann kreolis* MC
- (46) *bann kreater pe sorti dan tou kwen lemonn* (1999) SC  
 PL creators ASP come in all corner world  
 ‘the creators are coming from all parts of the world’  
*bann keater pe sort dan tu kwen lemonn* MC

Both Corne (1977) and Papen (1975) suggest that *i* is part of the verbal inflectional system – marking present tense. One problem with this analysis is that while TMA markers follow Negation, *i* precedes Negation.

- (47) *Nou travay pa ti anven.* (Michel 2011) SC  
 1.PL.POSS work NEG PST in.vain  
 ‘Our work was not in vain’ SG  
*Nu travey pa ti anven* MC
- (48) *Sesel, nou pei, i pa en gran pei,* (Michel 2011) SC  
 Seychelles 1.PL.POSS country i NEG a big country  
 ‘Seychelles, our country, is not a big country,’  
*Sesel, nu pei, pa enn gran pei,* MC
- (49) *sa faz natyonalis i nepli for* (1999) SC  
 DEF phase nationalist i no.longer strong  
 ‘this nationalist phase is no longer strong’  
*sa faz nasyonalis la napli for* MC

## 7. Syntactic framework and analysis

### 7.1 *Minimalist assumptions*

- Language is an economical system – characterized by economy of derivation and representation.
- Operations are driven strictly by necessity; they are defined as ‘last resort’, applied if they must, not otherwise.

- Syntax is strictly derivational and linguistic expressions are formed by the recursive application of the operations *Merge*, *Move* and *Agree*
- Only two levels of representation are assumed, namely Phonetic Form (PF) and Logical Form (LF).

## 7.2 Derivation by Phase

In more recent works, Chomsky (2001a, 2001b) proposes that syntactic structures are built up in 'phases' (PH), which are 'propositional' in nature. Derivations are assumed to be strictly cyclic, and, at the end of each phase, the syntactic structure already built is *transferred* to the phonological and semantic components, namely PF and LF. TRANSFER to PF is equivalent to 'Spell-Out' (in Chomsky 1995), when the phase is 'handed over' to the phonological component.

Following the TRANSFER operation, only the *edge* of a phase is accessible to further syntactic operations, while the domain of the phase, i.e. the complement of the head becomes impenetrable. For example, for a typical phase (PH) with H its head, only the edge  $\alpha$  is accessible to further operations:

$$(50) \quad \text{PH} = [\alpha \text{ [H } \beta]]$$

Chomsky terms this condition the *Phase Impenetrability Condition* (PIC), which is defined as follows:

$$(51) \quad \text{The domain of H is not accessible to operations, but only the edge of HP} \\ \text{(Chomsky 2001a: 5)}$$

For example, a definiteness phase for a singular noun phrase in English, French, MC and SC are represented in (52 a-d):

- (52)
- |    |   |         |
|----|---|---------|
| a. | Definiteness PH = [ the [ NP]]          | English |
| b. | Definiteness PH = [ <i>le/la</i> [ NP]] | French  |
| c. | Definiteness PH = [ $\emptyset$ [ NP]   | MC      |
| d. | Definiteness PH = [ <i>sa</i> [NP]]     | SC      |

In the case of English, French and SC, the edge of the phase is an overt element, *the*, *le/la* and *sa* respectively, while the edge of the MC phase is a null element, or an 'empty category' (ec).

## 7.3 Licensing empty categories

Empty categories (ec's) include traces left by moved elements, as well as phonologically null elements. Chomsky (1986), Rizzi (1990, 1997), Longobardi (1994, 2001), Chierchia (1998) and Carlson (1999) have proposed that ec's require licensing through government by an overt lexical head.<sup>4</sup> In a DbP analysis, where

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of Government is dispensed with in the later developments of the MP (2001a, 2001b), and is replaced by that of c-command within a minimal domain. A DbP analysis can reconcile Rizzi's notion of Government with Chomsky's local X-bar theoretic relations to the head of a projection. Both approaches in fact account for the 'last resort' occurrence of lexical items that serve to license empty categories.

derivations proceed in stages, an ec must be licensed by an overt element. In other words, two empty categories cannot enter into a syntactic operation – at least one of the elements must be overt for the derivation to proceed (Guillemin 2009, In press).

### 7.3.1 DP Phases

The Specificity phase projects above the Definiteness Phase, thus the Specificity Phase follows the Definiteness Phase. If the edge of the DefP is an overt element, the derivation can proceed even if the head of SpP is a null element. However, when the edge of the DefP is a null element (as in MC), an overt Specificity head is required for the derivation to proceed. Thus, Specificity phases in English, French, MC and SC are as follows:

- (53) a. Specificity PH = [  $\emptyset$  [ **the** NP ]]      English  
 b. Specificity PH = [  $\emptyset$  [ **le/la** NP ]]      French  
 c. Specificity PH = [ **la** [  $\emptyset$  NP ]]      MC  
 d. Specificity PH = [  $\emptyset$  [ **sa** NP ]]      SC

Thus, the Specificity marker *la* in MC projects as a ‘last resort’ to enable the derivation to proceed. In other words, *la* serves to license the null definite determiner. The whole DefP raises to Spec,SpP – clausal movement equivalent to Wh-movement to Spec,CP.

This analysis implies that movement to Spec,SpP occurs in the syntax in MC (at PF), but is delayed till LF in English, French and SC, since there is no overt marking of the feature Specificity.

### 7.3.2 CP phases

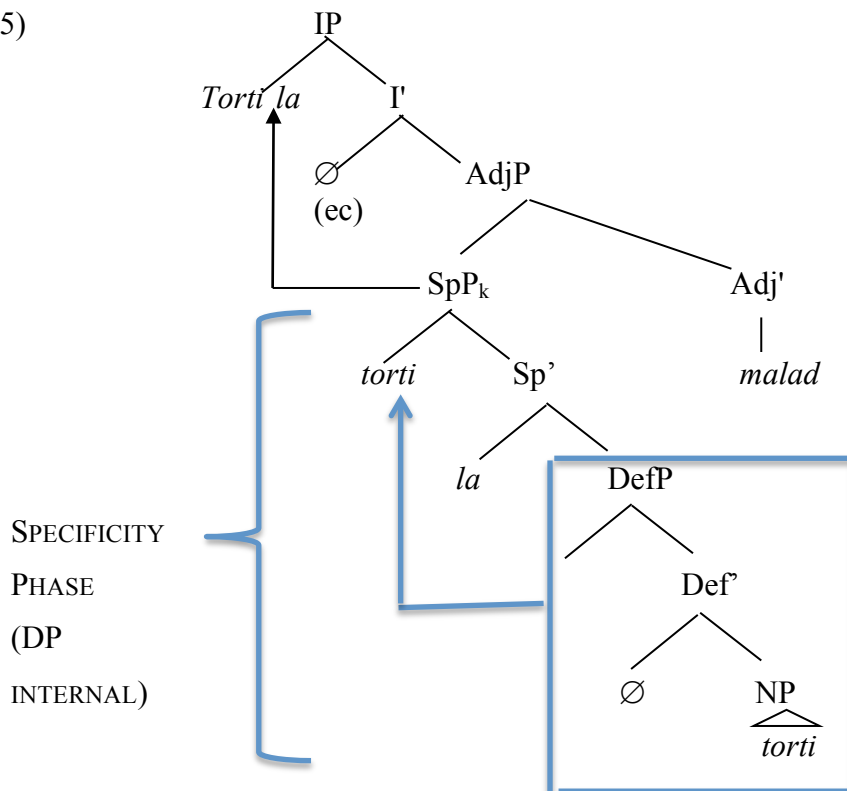
This section looks at movement within the CP and compares derivations for the MC and SC sentences:

- (54) a. *Torti la malad*      (MC)  
       cat SP sick  
       ‘The tortoise is sick’  
 b. *Sa tort i malad*  
       DEF tortoise TM sick  
       ‘The tortoise is sick’

The subject is merged in the specifier of the predicate, here the adjective *malad*, and it must raise to Spec,IP for NOM Case assignment.

**Mauritian Creole**

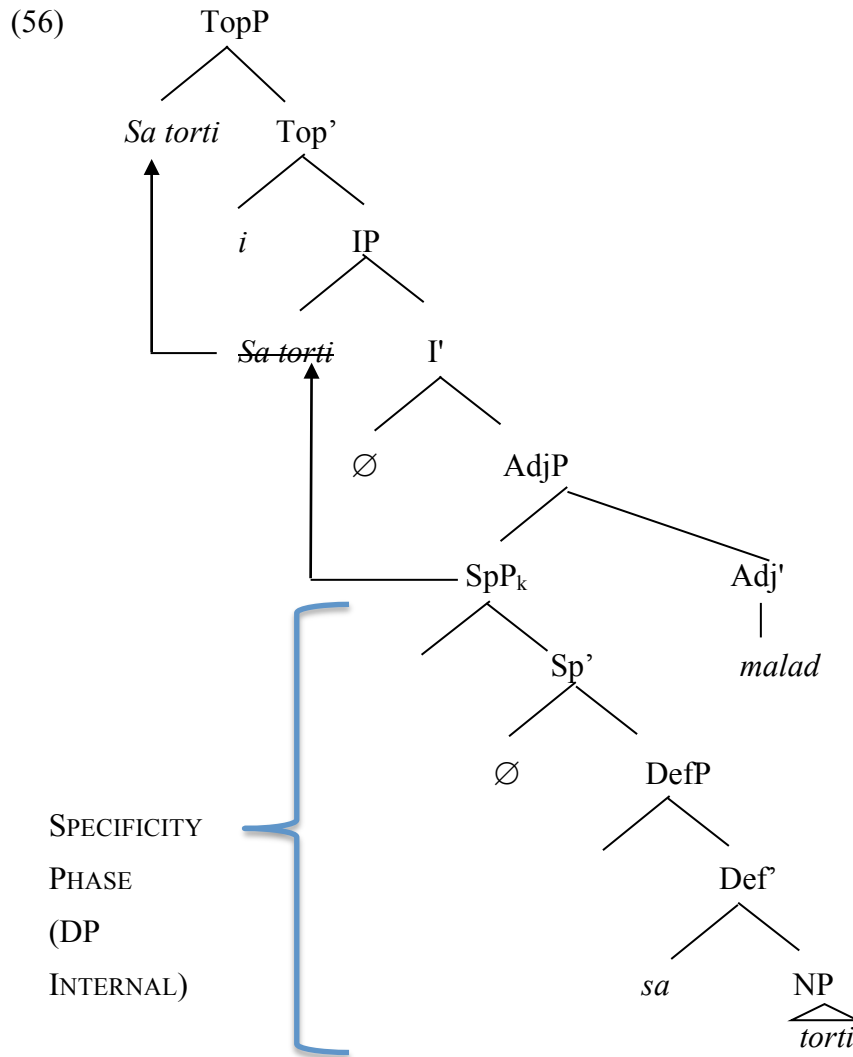
(55)



- MC has zero inflection for present tense – an ec
- The edge of SpP is filled by the DefP which has raised to its specifier
- Despite the lack of an overt inflectional element, the derivation can proceed, and NOM Case is assigned to the subject (the SpP) in Spec,IP.

**Seychellois Creole**

- SC has zero inflection for present tense – an ec
- Head of SpP is also an ec
- Tow ec's cannot enter into a syntactic operation
- Topic marker *i* projects as 'last resort' to license the null element in I
- The SpP (the subject) first raises to Spec,IP, then on to Spec.TopP for NOM Case assignment.



#### 7.4 *La* and *i* are ‘last resort’ licensors

Both MC *la* and SC *i* project as a ‘last resort’ to license ec’s.

- MC *la* serves to license the null definite determiner
- SC *i* projects as a ‘last resort’ to license the null present tense operator.

IP Phases in MC and SC for sentence (56) are illustrated in (57):

- (57) *Sa rankonk i kapab fer an Oktob 1999* (1999) SC  
 DEF meeting TM can do in October 1999  
 ‘This meeting can be held in October 1999’  
*Sa rankont la kapav fer an Oktob 1999* MC  
 DEM meeting SP can do in October 1999

- (58) a. IP PH = [IP Ø [SpP *sa rankont la* [VP *kapav fer ...*]]] MC  
 b. IP PH = [IP Ø [SpP Ø [DefP *sa rankont* [VP *kapav fer ...*]]] SC

Thus the function of *la* in the MC DP is equivalent to the function of *i* in the SC clause. This analysis provides further evidence of the parallel between DP and CP as

proposed by Abney (1987), Szabolcsi (1987, 1989, 1994), Ritter (1992), Valois (1991) and Aboh (2004a, 2004b).

#### 7.4.1 Question raised by this analysis

This analysis raises the following question: Since both English and French (and many other languages) also have a null specificity head, why is there no Topic marker in these languages?

The tentative answer to this question is that both English and French have auxiliary verbs which host tense and agreement features. Thus, although the edge of a Specificity phase is empty in these languages, a derivation can proceed given the overt element in I. This proposal accounts nicely for the fact that the Topic marker in SC need not project when any of the TMA markers is present. These raise to I, allowing the subject can raise to Spec,IP for NOM Case assignment.

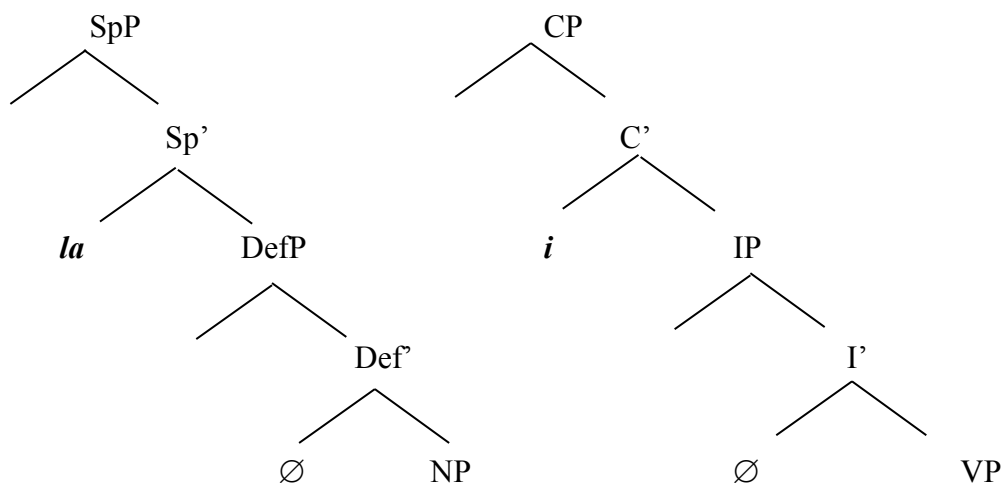
## 8. Conclusions

The analysis provides evidence of parallel between DP and CP as shown in (59), where MC *la* is the DP equivalent of SC *i*:

- The Specificity Phrase (SpP) is equivalent to the Complementizer Phrase (CP). Both are associated with the discourse and mark Topic. MC *la* is the head of the SpP and Seselwa *i* is the head of the TopP.
- The Definiteness Phrase (DefP) is equivalent to the Inflectional Phrase (IP). The head of the DefP in MC is a null operator, and the head of the Seselwa IP is a null operator in the case of present tense.
- The Noun Phrase (NP) is equivalent to the Verb Phrase (VP)

(59) MC DP

SC CP



Typological implications derived from the analysis include:

- Languages that lack an overt definite article require an overt specificity marker in certain syntactic environments
- Some languages that lack an auxiliary are Topic prominent languages – this implies cyclical movement of the subject from the specifier of the predicate

→ Spec,IP → Spec,TopP for NOM Case assignment, assuming that a null element in IP cannot assign NOM Case, and the subject must raise further to TopP. When TMA markers are present, there is no need for the Topic maker to surface, as the TMA markers are overt elements that can enter into a syntactic operation with the SpP.

Other conclusions drawn in this paper relate to the function of *sa*, which is purely deictic in MC, but has grammaticalized into a definite article in Seselwa. This analysis complies with van Gelderen's (2004) claim that processes of grammaticalization invariably involve the reanalysis of specifiers as heads, the 'head preference' principle being evidence of the drive for economy, which is manifested in processes of grammaticalization. This process of simplification complies with Chomsky's Minimalist claim that language is a perfect system that strives for economy of derivation and representation, with no superfluous steps in derivation (1995).

The proposal that the grammaticalization of MC *la* was motivated by the greater presence of the French in Mauritius, and their frequent use of the deictic locative particle *là*, while the reanalysis of the resumptive pronoun *li* into a Topic marker in SC, gives support to both Mufwene's theory of the 'competition and selection' process which arises in a language contact situation (2001), and Aboh's (2006) observation that whether we have 'feature' transmission' or 'pattern' transmission, UG ultimately determines the licensing mechanisms of features. Finally the analysis gives support to Chomsky's (1995) theory of Language as an economical system.

## 9. Texts and References

### 9.1 Texts – Sources of examples

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