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ABSTRACT

A description of the creole language spoken in the Roper River area of Australia's Northern Territory, this paper is intended for the practical use of Europeans working in the area. An introductory section discusses the role and status of pidgins and creoles in modern Australia, the development of creole in the Roper River area, and the distinction between pidgin, creole, and corrupt English. Subsequent chapters describe: (1) the sound system of the creole, based on the contrastive sounds of English and aboriginal languages and the interference and leveling patterns; (2) a proposed practical orthography; (3) nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and the noun phrase; (4) verbs and the verb phrase; (5) prepositions and the prepositional phrase; and (6) simple sentence structure. (MSE)

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Series B Volume 3

AN AUSTRALIAN CREOLE IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY: A DESCRIPTION OF NGUKURR-BAMYILI DIALECTS (PART 1)

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PREFACE

These Work Papers are being produced in two series by the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Australian Aborigines Branch, Inc. in order to make results of SIL research in Australia more widely available. Series A includes technical papers on linguistic or anthropological analysis and description, or on literacy research. Series B contains material suitable for a broader audience, including the lay audience for which it is often designed, such as language learning lessons and dictionaries.

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INTRODUCTION TO SERIES B VOLUME 3

The purpose of this paper is to make available for the layman a description of the creole language spoken in the Roper River area of the Northern Territory. It is written particularly with Europeans working in the area in mind. It has not been written as a technical paper for linguists, but it is hoped that linguists will find it useful in providing information on the language.

It should be noted that this volume (Part 1) does not contain a complete description of Creole. Intonation and rhythm, word formation, adverbs, conjunctions, questions and commands, complex sentences, and discourse structure are not discussed. It is planned that these sections will be described in a second volume (Part 2) in the future. (In addition, a basic dictionary is being published separately as *Work Papers of SIL-AAB*, Series B, Volume 4.) The sections contained in Part 1 are comprehensively, but not exhaustively, covered.

At several places in this paper the reader is referred to a discussion of a particular item at another location. When the reference is stated as being 'elsewhere', it means that the item will be discussed in Part 2. If the discussion is within Part 1, the chapter or section reference is given.

Examples occur frequently throughout the chapters dealing with Creole grammar. These examples are written in the Creole practical orthography as discussed in Chapter 3. In some situations an example of an unacceptable or ungrammatical construction is given. These examples are marked by a preceding asterisk (*).

This paper is based on some 27 months of fieldwork under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics since March 1973. Of this time approximately 60% has been spent at Ngukurr, 30% at Bamyili, and the remaining 10% elsewhere.

Without the help of many people this paper would not have been possible. I would like to thank the many Creole speakers who have shared their language with me, especially those who patiently worked with me in formal situations: Barnabas Roberts, Mordecai Skewthorpe, Andrew Joshua, Isaac Joshua, Charlie Johnson, Wallace Dennis, David Jentian, and Danny Jentian. Thanks are due to the late Lothar Jagst,

Kathy Menning, and Joyce Hudson for their editorial comments on earlier drafts of sections of this paper, and especially to Mary Huttar and Mike Ray for editing the full manuscript. Thanks are also due to Julanne Slater and her typing pool for typing an earlier draft of this paper and to Verna Campbell for typing the final draft. I also appreciate the encouragement received from Phil and Dorothy Meehan, Margaret Sharpe, Velma Leeding, Holt Thompson, Warren Hastings, Neil Chadwick, David Zorc, Gail Forbutt, Debbie Maclean, George Huttar, Reg Houldsworth, and my wife Joy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Only eight years after the settlement of Port Jackson (Sydney), David Collins (1796), writing about the language used by the settlers to communicate with the Aborigines, commented:

> Language indeed, is out of the question for at the time of writing this, nothing but a barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect is spoken by either party; and it must be added that even in this the natives have the advantage, comprehending, with much greater aptness than we can pretend to, every thing they hear us say.

This 'barbarous mixture' was the beginning of a number of pidgins and creoles that exist in Australia today. As settlement of Australia spread out from Sydney to Moreton Bay (Brisbane) and beyond, this pidgin was carried along by

> the stockmen and sawyers [who supposed it] to be the language of the natives, whilst they suppose[d] it to be ours, and which [was] the ordinary medium of communication between the squatters and the tame black-fellow (Hodgkinson 1845).

Favenc (1904) commented:

> the pidgin talk which is considered so essential for carrying on conversation with a blackfellow [and which] is of a very old origin . . . was carried along, mostly by the black boys who accompanied the whites.

Kaberry (1937:90), in describing the language situation in the Halls Creek area of the Kimberleys in 1935, observed that 'the majority of natives in the region are employed on the cattle stations, or else rationed by them, with the result that most of them speak quite idiomatic English'. She (1937:92) went on to say, however, that 'nowadays new tribes are coming into contact with one another, and for these pidgin English as an Esperanto of the north makes communication possible'.

1.1 PIDGINS AND CREOLES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

Today in Australia the pidgin-creole (and Aboriginal English) situation is a very complex one, and one which until recently has received little serious attention. Indeed, without having been studied with any depth, Australian pidgins and creoles have generally been swept aside with negative generalized statements, such as the following by linguists:

Turner (1966:202) - 'not a structured language that could be described as a linguistic system . . . but a collection of disjointed

elements of corrupt English and native words'.

Strehlow (1966:80) - 'English perverted and mangled . . . ridiculous gibberish . . . childish babbling . . .'

Wurm (1963:4) - 'a broken jargon of corrupt English . . .'

Such attitudes are partially excusable in that the study of pidgins and creoles - creology - has only recently become a respectable academic field, even for linguists, in spite of the fact that the 'father' of creology, Hugo Schuchardt, published his *Kreolische Studien* in the 1880's. During the first part of this century, only a few serious studies of pidgins and creoles were undertaken, notably on the part of John Reinecke, Robert Hall, and Douglas Taylor.

But is was not until the first international conference on creole language studies was held in Jamaica in 1959 that creology as a separate discipline was born, and the discipline did not 'come of age' until the second international conference in 1968. As Hymes (1971:3) noted in the preface to *Pidginization and Creolization of Languages*,

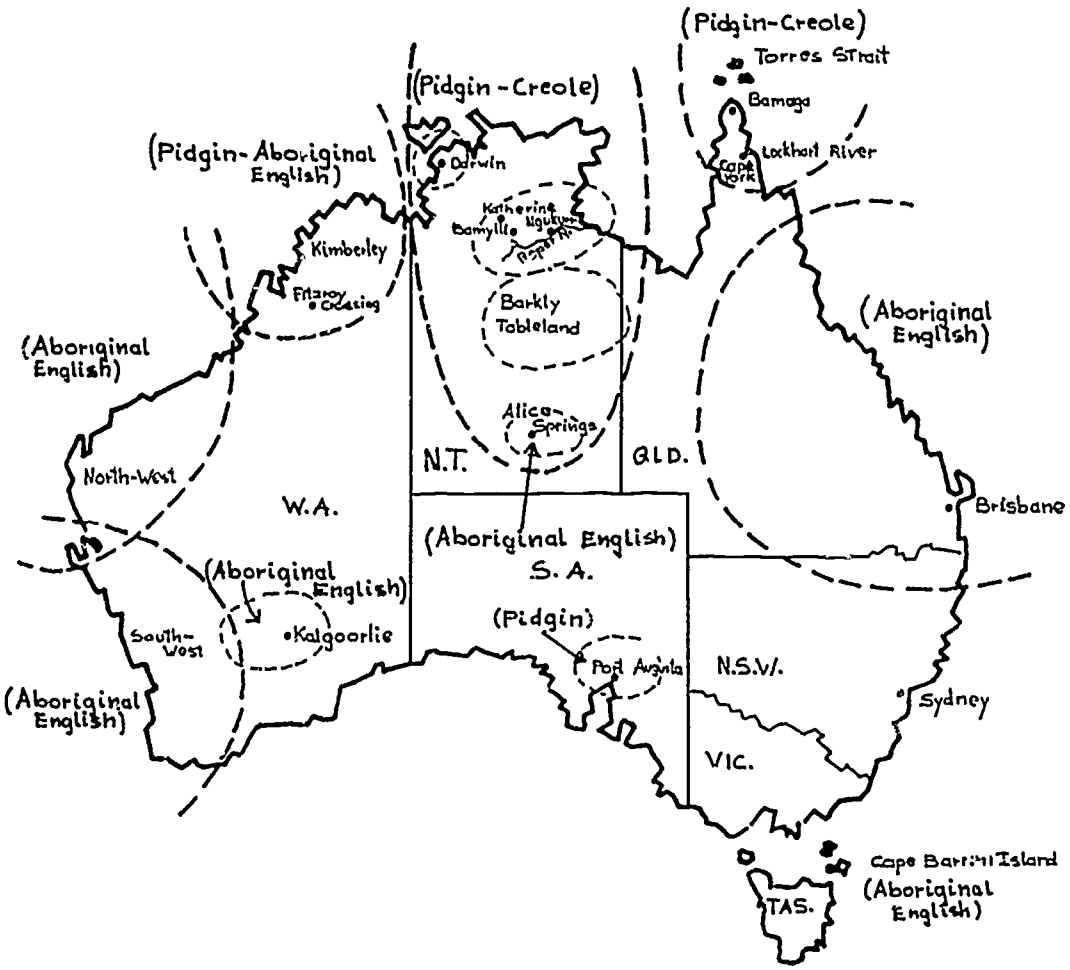
> the languages called pidgins and creoles have long been a stepchild, so far as serious attention, either public or scientific, is concerned. The interest and activity reflected in this book suggest that the stepchild may prove a Cinderella.

What might be considered the 'classic' article on Australian pidgin was published by Hall in 1943. He based his description on pidgin excerpts in Phyllis Kaberry's *Aboriginal Woman: Sacred and Profane* (London 1939), for which most of the field work was done in the Halls Creek area of the Kimberleys. As late as 1971, Kaberry's excerpts (via Hall) were being used in linguistic literature to describe 'the' Australian pidgin.

Fortunately, knowledge about Australian pidgins, creoles, and Aboriginal English dialects is increasing. The present situation, as far as it is known in linguistic literature, is sketched on Map 1.1 and summarized below.

A team from the English Department of the University of Queensland, headed by E. H. Flint, has surveyed the speech situation of Queensland (Flint 1964, 1965, 1972 and Ramson 1969). Generally, pidgin or creole is spoken in the northern part of Cape York Peninsula and Aboriginal English is spoken elsewhere. Some aspects of Aboriginal English have been described with some depth by Alexander (1965, 1968), Dutton (1964, 1965), and Readdy (1961), and briefly by Dutton (1969), Flint (1968, 1970, 1971), Sommer (1974), and Sommer and Marsh (1970).

Map 1.1 Pidgins, Creoles, and Aboriginal English in Australia today as known from linguistic literature



Cape York Creole, which is spoken mainly in the northern and northeastern portions of Cape York Peninsula and in the Torres Strait Islands as described in some depth by Crowley and Rigsby (n.d.). That spoken specifically at Bamaga is briefly described by Rigsby (1973); that spoken in the Torres Strait, by Ray (1907), Dutton (1970), and Laade (1967); and that spoken at Lockhart River, very briefly discussed by Thompson (1976).

In the Northern Territory, an Aboriginal English spoken in Alice Springs is described briefly by Sharpe (1977). Pidgin or creole is spoken throughout most of the Northern Territory, especially in the pastoral districts northwards from the Barkly Tableland. That spoken at Bagot Aboriginal community in Darwin has been briefly discussed by Jernudd (1969). The creole spoken in the Katherine-Bamyili-Roper River area has been briefly described by Sharpe (1975), Sharpe and Sandefur (1976, 1977), Steffenson (1975, 1976), and Thompson (1976).

A team from the University of Western Australia, headed by Susan Kaldor, is currently conducting research into the language problems of Aboriginal children in Western Australia. This involves a description of the dialectal forms of English spoken by Aboriginal primary school children (Gardiner 1977:168).

Douglas (1968:14) makes mention of several Aboriginal contact languages in Western Australia:

> the so-called Pidgin English of the Kimberleys;
>
> the "Wangkayi English" of the detribalized people of the Eastern Goldfields [around Kalgoorlie];
>
> the "*lingua franca* English" of the multi-lingual group of the North-West; and
>
> [Neo-Nyungar] the present everyday speech of the South-West people . . . [which] is a combination of elements from the native dialects and English. [Douglas (1968:8) gives a brief description of Neo-Nyungar.]

Gardiner (1977:168) also mentions these languages, though not by name, as being Aboriginal English. In the south-west area some people speak only Aboriginal English while others speak standard English. Outside the south-west area

> a sizable number of Aborigines are monolingual in Aboriginal English, although many are also bilingual or multilingual in several Aboriginal languages or dialects and Aboriginal English.

Vaszolyi (1976:52-53) claims:

> in the Kimberleys there is a very interesting distribution of Pidgin-speaking Aborigines. Normally, Pidgin would be spoken by Aborigines (and mainly men) who spent some time in coastal ports . . . Inland-bound people who spent most of their time on stations with cattle as stockmen or farmhands would not normally speak much Pidgin . . .

Hudson and Richards (1976:3), commenting on the Fitzroy Crossing area of the Kimberleys, say that 'the English spoken by many older people is rather an Aboriginal English, but the children's speech (except in school and when talking to non-Aborigines) is becoming a well-developed pidgin'. This children's pidgin is briefly described by Fraser (1974, 1977) and Hudson (1977).

Not much is known about the situation in South Australia, though Rowley (1971:31) mentions that in the Port Augusta area

> among the Aborigines of the full descent, [there are] people from eight different tribal groups at all levels of sophistication, including some who [are] able to speak, in addition to their own languages, only the pidgin of the cattle runs.

Elsewhere in Australia, Sutton (1975) has described briefly an Aboriginal English spoken by the part-Aboriginal people of Cape Barren Island, Tasmania.

1.2 DEVELOPMENT OF CREOLE IN THE ROPER RIVER AREA

The specific creole language described in this paper goes by a number of different names. Speakers of the language most commonly refer to it as *pijin* 'pidgin', *pijin ingglij* 'pidgin English', or *Ropa pijin* 'Roper pidgin'. Some speakers also refer to the language as *linggo* or *linggu* 'lingo' or *pijinlinggu* 'pidgin lingo' (used especially by children) and *Kriol* 'creole' (used particularly with speakers associated with the Ngukurr and Bamyili Schools).

The language is sometimes referred to by speakers as *blekbala ingglij* 'blackfellow English' in contrast to *munanga ingglij* 'European English' or *prapa ingglij* 'proper English'. It is often contrasted with *langwis* or *langus* 'language', which usually refers to traditional Aboriginal language.

Europeans most often refer to the language as 'pidgin' or '(blank) English', the (blank) being filled by a variety of mostly derogative words. The language has been referred to in technical literature as 'Pidgin', 'Pidgin English', 'Roper Pidgin', '"Pidgin English" Creole', 'Roper Creole', and 'Bamyili Creole'.

Throughout this paper the language will be referred to as 'Creole', with a capital 'C' to distinguish it from the general word 'creole'. It should be stressed that the language described in this paper is that spoken by Aborigines to Aborigines. It is not a description of the so called 'pidgin' often spoken by Europeans to Aborigines.

In particular, this paper describes the Creole spoken in the Roper River area, particularly at Ngukurr and Bamyili (see Map 1.3). Creole is the primary language of Aboriginal to Aboriginal communication, not only at both these Aboriginal communities, but also among the Aboriginal populations of the dozen or so pastoral properties in the Roper River catchment area from Nutwood Downs to the south, Mataranka to the west, Eva Valley to the north-west, and Bulman to the north. Creole is also spoken by many Aborigines in Katherine.

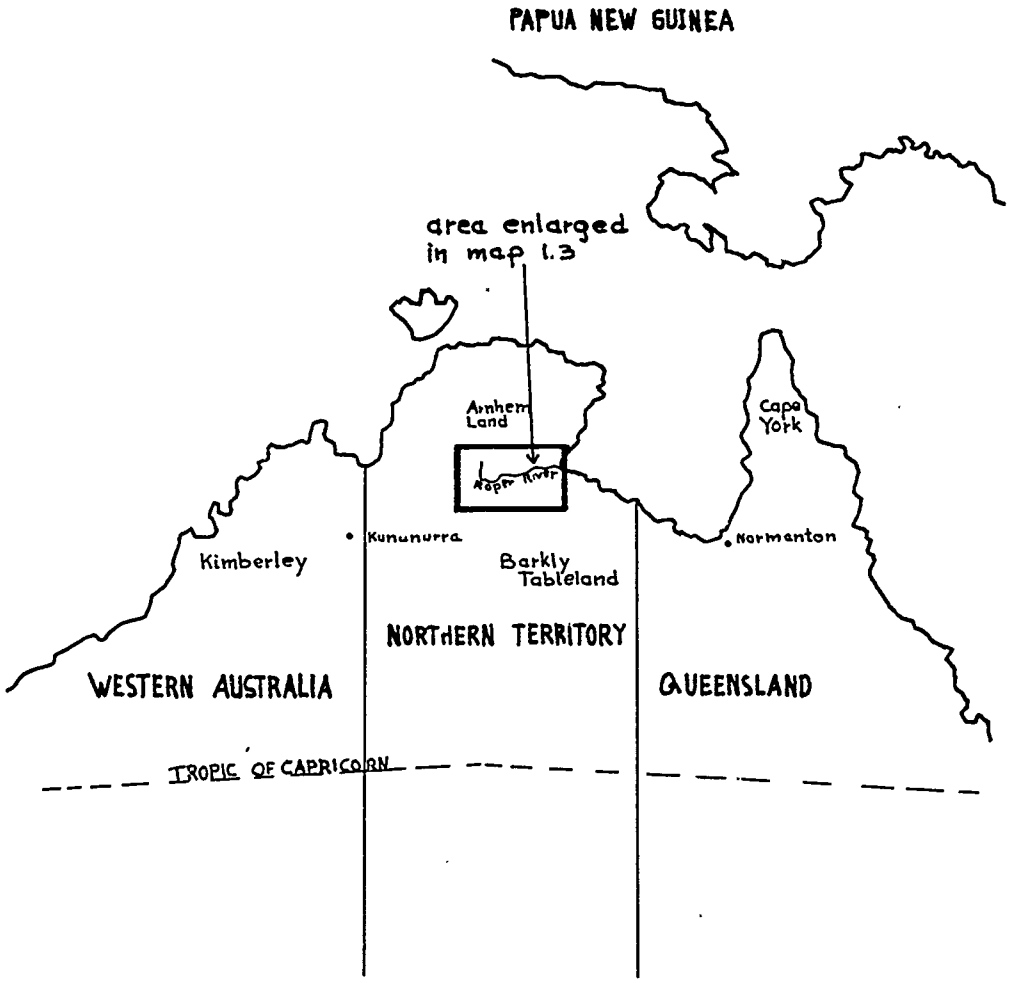
The same language appears to be spoken throughout most of the Northern Territory, though the exact boundaries and dialects and the extent of its use have yet to be studied. Some Aborigines outside the Roper River area speak Creole as their mother tongue, others have full control of it as a second language, while still others have only a partial control of it as a second language. In a sense, the first group speaks Creole as a creole, the second group speaks it as an extended pidgin, and the last group speaks it as a restricted pidgin (see Section 1.3 for definitions). There are many Aborigines in the Territory, however, who do not speak any Creole, particularly in north-east Arnhem Land.

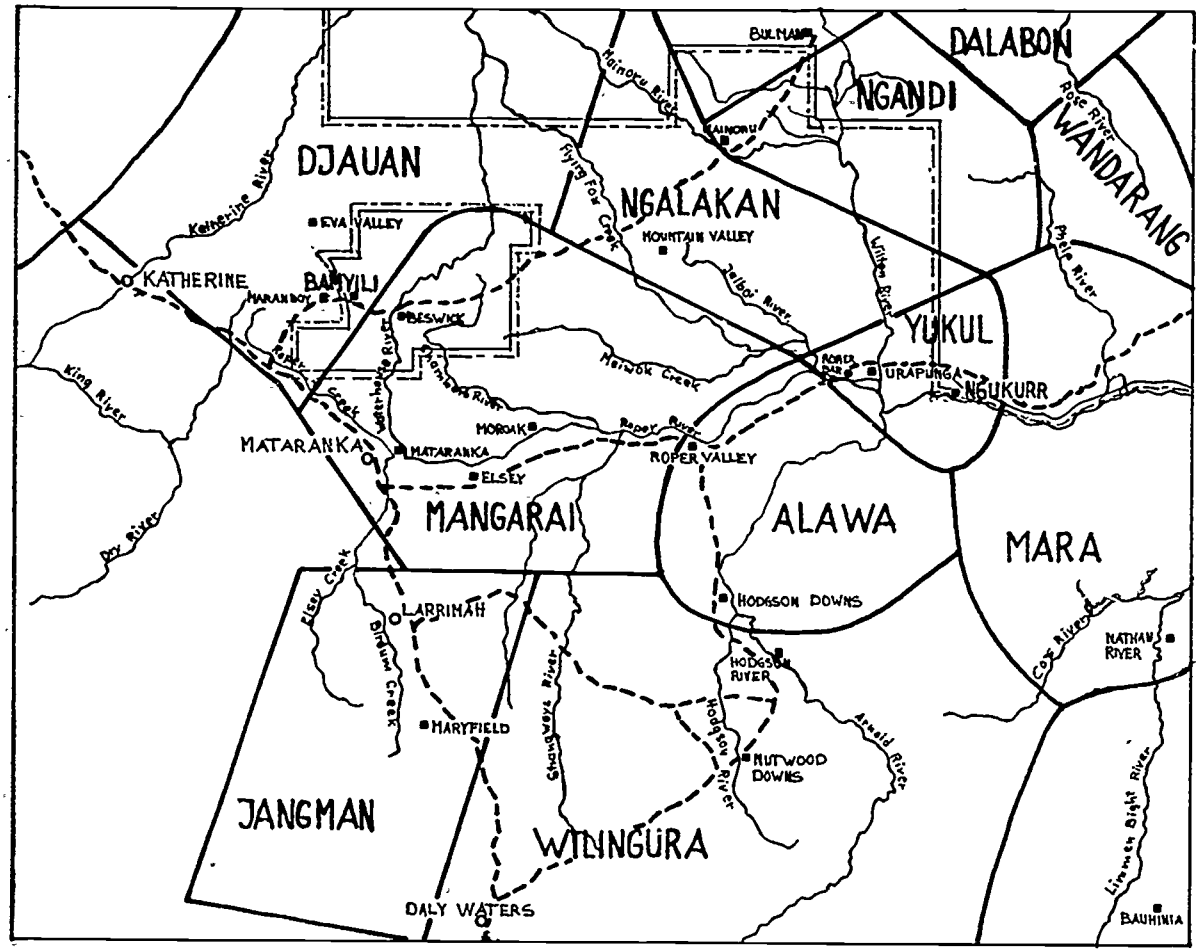
On the basis of the scant information available[1] it appears that Creole is spoken (see Map 1.2) south of the Roper River throughout the Barkly Tableland, possibly extending east into Queensland as far as Normanton. It is spoken to varying degrees by some people north of the Roper River throughout Arnhem Land. North-west and west of the Roper River, Creole appears to be spoken more than in north-east Arnhem Land, though probably less than in the Barkly Tableland area. Westward, it extends across the border to Kununurra.

The Creole spoken in the Northern Territory is distinct from Cape York Creole and New Guinea Pidgin. It also appears to be distinct from Kimberley Children's Pidgin.

Most of the Aborigines in the Roper River area come from some two dozen different traditional Aboriginal language backgrounds. Some of these languages are shown on Map 1.3, which gives the locations or 'countries' of the language groups before European contact shifted the Aboriginal populations (Tindale 1974).

Map 1.2 Northern Australia





Key: MARA — Traditional Aboriginal languages and boundaries

■ ELSEY — Pastoral stations

○ KATHERINE — European towns

Aboriginal reserve boundaries

– – – – Main roads

Roper River — Rivers and creeks

Map 1.3 The Roper River Area

European contact in the Roper River area began in 1845 when Leichhardt's exploration party crossed the Roper River at Roper Bar and followed Flying Fox Creek. In 1856 Gregory's party passed through the area along Elsey Creek, and in 1862 Stuart followed the Strangways and Chambers Rivers. 'The country around the Roper' was examined by Cadell in a paddle-steamer in 1867.

Extensive contact did not begin until 1871-72 when the Overland Telegraph Line was being put through the area. A supply depot was set up at Roper Bar while the line itself followed along Roper Creek with a telegraph station established at Katherine.

In 1872 Uhr drove 400 head of cattle from Queensland to Darwin following Leichhardt's track. He was followed a few years later by Buchanan driving 12,000 head to stock the Northern Territory's first pastoral property on the Adelaide River. While camped on the Limmen River the cook of Buchanan's party was killed by Aborigines and a punitive party was sent to revenge his death. Shortly afterwards Springvale Station (Katherine) and Elsey Station were stocked.

The 1880's saw the peak of early contact. At the end of the 1870's there were less than 500 non-Aboriginals in the Northern Territory, 300 of whom were Chinese. By the end of the 1880's the population had grown to over seven and a half thousand, seventy-five percent of it being Chinese. Some of the Chinese came from the China Coast Pidgin area of China.

The 1880's was the decade of the overlanders with large cattle drives passing through the Roper River area. In 1883 Lindsay surveyed the area north of the Roper River; crossing the Beswick and Waterhouse Creeks and following the Chambers, Roper, and Wilton Rivers. Following his report, the same year auction blocks on the Roper River were offered for sale. During the decade pastoral stations were established at Maranboy and Beswick, on the upper Limmen Bight and Wilton Rivers, on Costello and Flying Fox Creeks, and an attempt was made on the Waterhouse River. Before 1890 most of the Roper River area had been stocked, though all large stations north of the Roper River were abandoned shortly after.

In 1908 the Church Missionary Society of Australia established a mission on the Roper River that has grown into the present-day Aboriginal community of Ngukurr. CMS extended their work in 1921 to Groote Eylandt, in 1925 to Oenpelli, and in 1952 to Rose River.

In the 1910's and 20's agricultural blocks were offered on Waterhouse River and peanut farms started at Katherine. At Maranboy a crushing battery was erected for tin mines in the area and an Australian Inland Mission hospital established. The railway line was

extended from Pine Creek to Mataranka, and pastoral stations were established at Bamyili, Mainoru, Urapunga, Roper Valley, Beswick, and Maranboy.

During the Second World War compounds or camps were set up at Maranboy and Katherine for Aborigines. After the war the Maranboy Camp was closed down and Aborigines re-settled several times until a settlement was permanently located on Beswick Creek in 1951, the name of the community being changed in 1965 from Beswick Creek to Bamyili.

Early contact, as in most of Australia, was violent. In writing about his experiences at Roper, Joynt (1918:7) commented:

> In years gone by the natives have been shot down like game, and hundreds killed in a spirit of revenge. I have met men that boast of shooting the poor, unprotected black "just for fun".

Hart (1970:150), in visiting Ngukurr in 1965, said that 'older people there remembered these [atrocities] and described them very vividly'.

Even though contact was violent, like elsewhere in Australia, some Aborigines became closely associated with Europeans, especially in the pastoral industry. It was most likely in these early associations that Creole had its inception as a pidgin, probably in two ways.

As pastoralists moved into new territory they often brought with them a pidgin they had thought useful in communicating with Aborigines in previous localities; they also usually brought Aboriginal stockmen, who often spoke a pidgin, with them. As contact with new Aborigines took place, this pidgin was introduced as the language of communication.

Not all pastoralists, however, utilized pidgin; many used English. In these situations the 'target language' that Aborigines began to learn was English rather than pidgin. But as in all second language learning, one gradually builds up accurate and full control of the language; the early stages of learning result in a pidgin.

Older people at Ngukurr and Bamyili generally attribute the origin of Creole to Europeans; either 'stockmen brought it from Queensland' or 'we learned English [i.e. Creole] from Europeans at such-and-such a place or school'.[2]

By the turn of the century a marginal pidgin was well established in the Roper River area as exemplified by Gunn (1905, 1908) at Elsey Station. A marginal pidgin, however,

> is inadequate for more than the most rudimentary forms of communication. Since it is largely supplemented by gesture discussion is limited to tangible objects, especially those in the immediate vicinity. Such a mode of communication is of limited value only. If the contact is prolonged and intimate a fuller form of communication must develop . . . The only two options open to a marginal pidgin is to disappear or to become more useful by the expansion of its resources . . . (Todd 1974:53-54).

In the 'life cycle' of a pidgin, if the one language group remains in contact with the second or target language such that the first group's own language will not satisfy the communication need, then they will eventually learn the target language and abandon the pidgin. In 1907 White (1918:148) met an Aborigine who had worked as a river pilot on the Roper River for the supply depot at Roper Bar and wrote that he 'speaks fairly good English'. Kaberry (1937:90), as noted at the beginning of this chapter, observed that cattle station Aborigines in the Kimberleys tended to speak 'idiomatic English'.

Pidgin, however, did not disappear in the Roper River area. Rather, it underwent expansion. This expansion was facilitated by two main factors (Todd 1974:54):

> its developing in a multilingual area and its use not so much in non-native to native contact as in contacts between native inhabitants speaking mutually unintelligible languages.

The mission established at Ngukurr in 1908 provided a haven of safety for Aborigines in the midst of violent times. Barnabas Roberts, an Alawa tribesman who was a young boy when the mission was started, once said,[3] 'If the missionaries hadn't come, my tribe would have been all shot down.' In the early years of the mission up to 200 Aborigines from several different language groups lived there, with 50 to 70 children attending school (Hart 1970:154).

This new environment of a multilingual community resulted in the need for a *lingua franca* between Aborigines of the different language groups. Children from these different language groups found themselves being peers attending an English school in an area where a pidgin was already established. It may also be significant to note that three Aborigines from Yarrabah Mission in North Queensland where a pidgin was spoken came with the missionaries to help establish Roper Mission.

This new environment was fertile for the 'nativization' of the pidgin. The pidgin began being used of necessity by Aborigines in speaking to Aborigines. Over a period of time its vocabulary was

increased and its grammatical structures expanded. As its use was extended, children had fewer opportunities to grow up in the environment of 'their' traditional language. The presence of English in the life of people was mostly restricted to school and a little social intercourse with the few Europeans in the area.

Somewhere along the way a generation of children emerged speaking the pidgin as their mother tongue. The pidgin was beginning to be creolized, resulting in the creole spoken today.

Creolization most likely began at Ngukurr before Bamyili because of its earlier establishment as a multilingual community. This is indicated by the fact that Creole speakers outside the area often refer to the language as 'Roper pidgin', Roper commonly being used as the name of Ngukurr. Creolization at Bamyili would not have taken place to a significant degree until after the establishment of the war compounds.

The population of Bamyili at present is just over 600. The residents represent some ten tribal groups, the majority groups being Djauan, Maiali, Ngalkbun (Dalabon), Rembarrnga, and Mara, with others being Gunwinggu, Wagaman, Dagaman, Jangman, and Mangarai. Most social intercourse is directed north-east to Bulman, north to Oenpelli, west to Katherine, south to Elsey, and some to Ngukurr.

The population of Ngukurr at present is just over 500. The residents represent about a dozen tribal groups including Alawa, Mara, Nunggubuyu, Ritharrngu, Ngandi, Wandarang, Nalagan, Yukul, and Rembarrnga. Most social intercourse is directed north-east to Numbulwar and Groote Eylandt, north to Elcho Island and its outstations, south to Borroloola, south-west to cattle stations as far as Nutwood Downs, west to Elsey and Mataranka, and north-west to Darwin, Katherine, and some to Bamyili.

1.3 PIDGIN,[4] CREOLE,[5] OR CORRUPT ENGLISH

Many have asked the question: Is the so-called pidgin spoken in the Roper River area really a language or is it only a corrupt form of English?

Pidgin, says the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Hall 1973:1058),

> is a term applied to a number of varities of speech which have grown out of English and other languages, and which have been used in various parts of the world since the 17th century. These languages are often termed 'bastard jargons', 'mongrel lingos' or the like; but in fact they are languages like any others, and can be accurately delimited and described . . .

> The use of pidgin has been opposed by some, partly on puristic grounds . . . In answer, it is pointed out that pidgin and creole languages are not 'corruptions', but normal linguistic developments; it has even been suggested that the Germanic languages (and hence English) may have arisen from a creolized variety of Indo-European.

DeCamp (1971:15) states that pidgins and creoles are 'genuine languages in their own right, not just macaronic blends or interlingual corruptions of standard languages'.

A pidgin is a contact language, a language that arises out of contact of two or more languages. It is normally not the native language or mother tongue of any of its speakers.

Todd (1974:5) has subdivided pidgins into restricted and extended pidgins.

> A restricted pidgin is one which arises as a result of marginal contact such as for minimal trading, which serves only this limited purpose and which tends to die out as soon as the contact which gave rise to it is withdrawn.'

Restricted pidgins are characterized by sharply reduced grammatical structures and limited vocabularies. They function only as auxiliary languages and are relatively short lived. DeCamp (1971:16) states:

> If the interlingual contact ends, the pidgin usually also ends; there is no longer a need for it, and there are no sentimental attachments or nationalistic motivations for preserving a dead pidgin. If the interlingual contact is maintained for a long time, usually one group learns the standard language of the other.
>
> An extended pidgin is one which, although it may not become a mother tongue, proves vitally important in a multilingual area, and which, because of its usefulness, is extended and used beyond the original limited function which caused it to come into being (Todd 1971:5).

The only was in which a pidgin may escape extinction is by developing into a creole; that is, its grammatical structure and vocabulary are extended, its uses in the community expanded, and it becomes the native language of a speech community. The language undergoes nativization; it is taken over by a group of speakers who previously used some other language, so that the new language becomes the mother tongue of the group (Hall 1966:xiii). When a pidgin has developed into a creole through nativization or creolization, it is

capable of meeting all the communication needs of its speakers. DeCamp (1971:16) states: 'A creole is inferior to its corresponding standard language only in social status.'

Weinreich (1970:69) states:

> New hybrid languages, such as the creoles and pidgins, have been formed as a result of modifications in languages that have been in contact. Their status as new languages may be said to be due to the fact that they have attained some or all of the following: (1) a form palpably different from either stock language; (2) a certain stability of form after initial fluctuations; (3) functions other than those of a workaday vernacular (e.g. use in the family, in formalized communication, etc.); (4) a rating among the speakers themselves as a separate language.

The linguistic and socio-linguistic criteria, then, for determining whether or not the Aboriginal speech variety of the Roper River area is in fact a language in its own right are fourfold:

1. the Degree of Difference;
2. the Stability of Form;
3. the Breadth of Function; and
4. the Rating by the Speakers.

1. The Degree of Differance

To the English speaker Creole certainly seems to have been derived from English. The form or surface structure, to a large degree, has been; but with the function or deep structure, this is not necessarily the case. Sharpe (1972:9), in making a comparison of tense-aspect-mood between Alawa and Creole, says,

> the contrasts distinguished are found to be in nearly all respects identical. In surface structure the languages are very different; in deep structure and semantically they are almost identical . . .

Throughout this paper contrasts between Creole and English and comparisons with Aboriginal language structures have been made in an attempt to show that Creole is significantly different from the languages it grew out of.

2. The Stability of Form

Sharpe (1974:3) tells of a nursing sister at Ngukurr who, having done a short course in linguistics, attempted to study Creole but

abandoned the attempt because 'it varied so much from speaker to speaker'. This is a common 'complaint' from English speakers, and at first glance Creole would appear to not meet the criterion of stability of form.

All languages have variation or alternate ways of saying things. Linguists, states Flint (1965:1), use the terms language, dialect, idiolect, and style to describe the nature and interrelationship of phenomena of linguistic variation.

In English, for example, variation can be due to a difference in dialect: 'I came immediately after he left.' versus 'I came immediately he left.' Alternate expressions may simply be different choices of vocabulary: one can 'build a house', 'put up a house', or 'construct a house'. Or alternate expressions may be variations along a stylistic continuum with formal expressions at one end and informal ones at the other: one would speak formally of 'my father' but informally of 'my old man'; formally one would say 'I'll see you this afternoon.' while informally it could be 'See ya this arvo.'

Creole likewise has alternate ways of expressing things: *olabat* and *alabat* 'they' are dialect differences; *baba, sista, rabish* 'sister' are alternate vocabulary possibilities; *garnda* and *bambam* 'buttocks' could be used in formal speech but not *guna*. Creole, however, has a much greater range of variation than does English in the particular area of pronunciation. It is most often this feature of Creole that provokes statements such as the one quoted above.

Chapter 2 'The Sound System of Creole' attempts to show that this variation is not ad hoc nor a sign of instability on the part of the language. Rather, the variation is not only regular and desirable but also logical.

Throughout the chapters dealing with the grammar of Creole, an attempt is made to show that there is stability in the grammar of the language. There is variation in grammatical structures, but this variation is well-defined in terms of what is grammatically acceptable and what is ungrammatical. Creole is not just a 'collection of disjointed elements'.

3. The Breadth of Function

Weinreich (1970:106) elaborates this criterion by saying that 'the crucial function which a regularly interfered with type of speech must acquire in order to develop into full-fledged languages is, it seems, use in the family'. Hall (1966:xii) says that 'a creole language arises when a pidgin becomes the native language of a speech-community'. Hymes (1971:79) contends:

what counts is what may be said to be status as a *primary* language (functionally) in a community. Autobiographical priority, as first language learned, is a possible route to primary status, but neither necessary nor sufficient.

Creole is not the mother tongue of everyone in the Roper River area. Many people, though mostly older people, speak their traditional Aboriginal language as their mother tongue. A third generation of Creole mother tongue speakers, however, is currently emerging.

In speaking of the Alawa language, Sharpe (1972:vii) says:

> it is not spoken extensively, the younger people hardly use the language except when speaking with their elders, and even the latter now use a creole which they call Pidgin English for many conversations . . . The Alawa tribe has about a hundred members . . . Most of these understand a little Alawa and use some Alawa words in their creole. The estimated number who know the language well is thirty. The others only know simple expressions.

Similarly, Hughes (1971:46) speaks of the Nunggubuyu tribesmen: 'Most of those at Roper River have lost the ability to use their own mother tongue, especially the younger generation . . .' Likewise, Heath (n.d.:11) says of Ritharngu 'speakers' in the Roper area: 'I have personally had contact with about sixty, some of whom had limited grasp of the language due to "Pidginisation" at Ngukurr . . .'

Chadwick (1975:ix), in speaking of the Aborigines in the Newcastle Waters, Elliott and Beetaloo area, says:

> they call themselves Djingili-Mudbura and are mostly trilingual speaking Mudbura, Djingili and English of varying degrees from Pidgin to standard . . . Older speakers, including all those fluent in Djingili, use a kind of Pidgin which is well known in North Australia.

Though not everyone speaks Creole as their mother tongue, virtually all residents in the Roper River area use Creole in virtually all aspects of life. Creole is used in the home, at work, in recreation, at Town Council meetings, at church in preaching and praying, on the school grounds and (at Ngukurr and Bamyili where there are bilingual programmes) in the classrooms, and at ceremonies. Creole is not, however, necessarily the only language used in these situations.

Until recently, Creole was normally not used with Europeans, but some speakers are now saying that Europeans working in an Aboriginal community should learn Creole. Prior to 1973 (at Ngukurr)

Creole was not used in school because, as one school teacher put it, 'Pidgin in school gets the rod.' Notably lacking is the use of Creole in music, though a few Creole songs are in existence.

4. The Rating by the Speakers

In a report to the Bilingual Education Consultative Committee (Northern Territory Department of Education) in 1974, Sharpe (1974: 21) stated:

> it is clear . . . that Aboriginal pride in the Creole as their language has been increasing over the years, [and] that Aborigines are less ashamed of using the creole to whites (clear to me over the gap of 6-7 years since my last visit - and city Aborigines will [now] use Creole when speaking to whites who know it) . . .

Preliminary analysis of data from a study by Davidson[6] at Bamyili indicates that the majority of older people view Creole as having been created by Europeans and being a European language, while younger adults consider it to have been created by Aborigines and being an Aboriginal language. Some people of both groups, however, consider Creole to be the 'property' of both Aborigines and Europeans.

Expressed attitudes to Creole by speakers have certainly changed in the last few years. In early 1973 at a meeting on bilingual education at Ngukurr, not only was Creole publicly berated by a number of speakers, but some even denied that it was 'really' used in the area. This attitude, however, was to be expected from people who have a long history of having their language (and culture) berated, both officially and unofficially, by Europeans. Some of the early missionaries at Ngukurr did not look favourably upon Creole and disciplined those who used it.[7] The government school at Ngukurr as late as 1972 physically punished children for speaking Creole in school.[8]

Expressed attitudes towards Creole by Creole speakers, however, have changed as official government policy towards the language has changed and been implemented. These attitude changes began shortly after the government announced its bilingual education policy in December 1972. Today, many, though not all, speakers openly recognize Creole as their language without shame. Many are interested in seeing a Creole literature develop. Several speakers have even expressed the idea that Creole should be a 'national Aboriginal language' because of the ease with which Aborigines can communicate with one another when using it.[9]

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

[1]Personal communication from the following linguists: Neil Chadwick on the Barkly Tableland and recording from Kununurra, W.A.; David Glasgow at Maningrida; Lother Jagst at Hooker Creek; Velma Leeding at Groote Eylandt; Margaret Sharpe at Elliot, Borroloola, and Papunya; and Ray Wood at Elcho Island; as well as several non-linguist Europeans and numerous Creole speakers themselves.

[2]Sharpe (1975:1), Davidson (see note 6), and personal communication from several Aborigines.

[3]Personal communication from Barnabas Roberts.

[4]The traditional etymology (which has been challenged) derives 'pidgin' from the Chinese pronunciation of the English word 'business', with pidgin first being applied to Chinese pidgin English.

[5]The term 'creole' (from the Portuguese *crioulo*, via Spanish and French) originally meant a white man of European descent born and raised in a tropical or semi-tropical colony. The meaning was later extended to include indigenous natives and others. The term was then applied to certain languages spoken by creoles, and is now used to refer to certain types of contact languages.

[6]From notes taken from a seminar given by Graham Davidson to Bamyili School teachers in June 1977.

[7]Personal communication from Keith Cole, November 1974.

[8]Personal communication from a Ngukurr School teacher, March 1973.

[9]This idea was expressed by a Bathurst Island Aborigine to Faith Hill; a Bamyili Aborigines to Graham Davidson; and several Aborigines from Bamyili and Ngukurr to John Sandefur.

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CHAPTER 2

THE SOUND SYSTEM OF CREOLE

The sound system of Creole is derived from a complex combination of the sound systems of the Aboriginal languages (hereafter AL) of the Creole area and English. When English initially came into contact with AL, it was so strongly influenced by AL that English words were pronounced by Aboriginal speakers in terms of the sound systems of their own AL. As a result, for example, voiced and voiceless contrasts were neutralized, consonant clusters were avoided, the numerous vowels were reduced to five, and fricatives and affricates became stops.

However, as Creole (at that time a pidgin in its formative stage) remained in contact with English, it in turn was influenced by English. As a result, voiced and voiceless contrasts began to reoccur, consonant clusters were no longer necessarily avoided, the five vowel system was expanded to include more contrasts, and fricatives and affricates began to be differentiated.

This influence of English upon Creole, unlike that of AL upon English in the formative stage of Creole, did not occur *in toto*. Changes in the Creole sound system in the direction of English occurred in such a way as not to replace the former system but to supplement and expand it. This has resulted in a sound system that can be described as a *continuum* of sounds with an Aboriginal type sound sub-system at one end and an English type sound sub-system at the other.

In order to understand this complex Creole sound system, one first needs to know the *contrastive sounds* of both English and AL of the Creole area. These are given comprehensive but not exhaustive coverage with charts outlining the main contrasts rather than every shade of difference.

After the contrastive sounds of the languages are given, the influence or *interference pattern* of AL upon English in the formative stage of Creole is discussed. Sound changes that took place as words were initially derived from English are described and exemplified.

Next, the influence or *levelling pattern* of English on Creole after the formative stage is discussed. The resultant sequence of sound changes that goes to make up the Creole continuum is described and exemplified.

Finally, the *continuum* itself is discussed in terms of technical terminology and speaker performance in relation to the continuum.

2.1 CONTRASTIVE SOUNDS[1]

In the following consonant charts, the horizontal axis gives the part of the mouth involved in making the sounds:

Bilabial - made with both lips.
Labio-dental - made with the top teeth and bottom lip.
Interdental - made with the tongue tip between the teeth.

Alveolar - made with the tongue tip on the alveolar ridge.
Alveo-palatal - made with the tongue tip on the alveo-palatal ridge.
Lamino-palatal - made with the tongue blade on or near the alveo-palatal ridge.
Retroflexed - made with the tongue tip turned back.
Velar - made with the tongue back on or near the velum.

The vertical axis explains what happens to the flow of air:

Stop - the flow of air is stopped.
Affricate - the air is first stopped and then allowed to escape with friction.
Fricative - the air escapes through the mouth and causes friction.
Nasal - the air flows through the nose.
Lateral - the air flows over the sides of the tongue.
Rhotic - the flow of air is slightly impeded by curving the tip of the tongue back.
Semi-consonant - the flow of air is not impeded and comes through the mouth.

Where two sounds are shown together, the difference is usually voiced versus voiceless or aspirated versus unaspirated.

In the vowel charts, the horizontal axis shows the part of the mouth where the sounds are made. The vertical axis indicates whether the tongue is in a high, mid, or low position. Where two sounds are shown together, the difference may be tense versus lax or a slight difference in the height of the tongue.

2.1.1 Contrastive Sounds of English

2.1.1.1 English Consonants

Chart of English consonants is on following page.

The English consonant contrasts are exemplified in the following examples:

Chart 2.1. English Consonants

	Bi-labial	Labio-dental	Inter-dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Retro-flexed	Velar
Stop	p, b			t, d			k, g
Affricate					t͡š, d͡ž		
Fricative		f, v	θ, ð	s, z	š, ž		h
Nasal	m			n	nj		ng
Lateral				l	lj		
Semi-consonant	w				y	r	

Sound	Word Initially	Word Medially	Word Finally
p	pale	copper	cap
b	bale	cobber	cab
t	tale	plotting	cat
d	dale	plodding	cad
k	Kate	locker	lock
g	gate	logger	log
t͡š	chill	Richard	catch
d͡ž	Jill	rigid	cadge
f	file	unfailing	life
v	vile	unvailing	alive
θ	thistle	ether	cloth
ð	this	either	clothe
s	sink	basin	hiss
z	zinc	raisin	his
š	shin	meshing	hush

Sound	Word Initially	Word Medially	Word Finally
l	late	millet	rail
lj	--	million	--
w	wail	away	--
r	rail	array	--
y	yale	--	--
ž	--	measure	--
h	hill	unhappy	--
m	male	simmer	ram
n	nail	cannon	ran
nj	new	canyon	--
ng	--	singer	rang

2.1.1.2 English Vowels and Vowel Glides and Diphthongs

Chart 2.2. English Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i, ɪ		u
Mid	ɛ	ə	o
Low	æ	ʌ, a	ɔ

æ^{ɪ}
ʌ^{ɪ}
ʌ^{u}
o^{u}
ɔ^{ɪ}
i$_{u}$
ə^{u}

The English vowel contrasts are exemplified in the following examples:

Sound	Word Initially	Word Medially	Word Finally
i	eat	peat	bee
ɪ	it	pit	--
ɛ	etch	pet	--

Sound	Word Initially	Word Medially	Word Finally
æ	at	pat	--
ə	early	pert	defer
ʌ	utter	putt	rubber
a	art	part	--
u	--	put	--
o	ought	port	mentor
ɔ	odd	pot	--
$æ^{ɪ}$	ate	bait	bay
$ʌ^{ɪ}$	ice	bite	buy
$ʌ^{u}$	out	bout	bough
o^{u}	oat	boat	beau
$ɔ^{ɪ}$	oil	boil	boy
i_{u}	use	beaut	bew
$ə_{u}$	ooze	boot	boo

2.1.1.3 English Syllable Patterns

V	a
VC	at
VCC	ant
VCCC	ants
CV	bee
CCV	pry
CCCV	spree
CVC	tap
CCVC	trap
CCCVC	strap
CVCC	sand
CVCCC	sands
CCVCC	stand
CCVCCC	stands

CCCVCC	strand
CCCVCCC	strands
CVCCCC	tempts
CCVCCCC	glimpsed

2.1.2 Contrastive Sounds of Aboriginal Languages

2.1.2.1 Aboriginal Language Consonants

Chart 2.3. AL Consonants

	Bilabial	Alveolar	Lamino-palatal	Retro-flexed	Velar
Stop	b	d	dj	ḍ	g
Nasal	m	n	nj	ṇ	ng
Lateral		l	lj	ḷ	
Rhotic		ř		r	
Semi-consonant	w		y		

The stops of AL in the Creole area are 'devoiced'; that is, voicing is not a contrastive feature as it is in English. Stops tend to be voiced in most positions in words, but in certain positions they are voiceless. The alveolar rhotic is a flap or trill.

Some of AL have additional sounds not listed in the above chart. Nunggubuyu and Dalabon have interdental consonants /d̲, l̲, n̲/ and /d̲, n̲/ respectively. Mara and Alawa have prenasalised stops /mb, nd̆, njdj, ṇḍ, ngg/. Rembarnga and Dalabon have a glottal stop /ʔ/. All of these sounds, however, occur only rarely in Creole.

Some of these sounds are exemplified in the following Creole words:

/nj/ and /ř/	/njař/	'good, excellent'
/ng/	/ngaridi/	'power'
/ḷ/	/giḷgiḷ/	'blunt, toothless'

/d/	/mandayang/	'(moiety name)'
/mb/	/walmbal/	'gossip'

2.1.2.2 Aboriginal Language Vowels

Chart 2.4. AL Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

Mara and Wandarang have only three vowels /i, a, u/. Alawa has four vowels / i, e, a, u/. Nunggubuyu has five vowels /i, a, u/, a lengthened /a:/ and a rare /æ/. Rembarnga and Dalabon both have six vowels, the sixth vowel being a mid and high central vowel /ə/ and /ɨ/ respectively. Neither of them, however, are as definite as the other five vowels.

In addition to the vowel phonomes, Rembarnga has vowel dipthongs which pattern in the language as vowel plus semivowel. Dalabon has vowel clusters /ai, au, ei, oi, ui/, though their occurrences are not numerous. Djingili, to the southern extremity of the Creole area, has vowel clusters /ai, au, ia, ua, ui/ that pattern as two syllables.

2.1.2.3 Aboriginal Language Syllable Patterns

The syllable patterns of AL are not nearly as varied and numerous as those of English.

The patterns that occur in all AL of the Creole area and that occur the most frequently are CV and CVC.

Also occurring in most all AL, though only rarely in some, is CVCC. In many AL, however, the second from last consonant in the CVCC pattern is restricted to a lateral or rhotic consonant.

Some AL, Alawa, Mara, and Nunggubuyu among them, also have the syllable pattern V or VC. These, however, only occur infrequently and are restricted to the position at the beginning of the word.

2.2 INTERFERENCE PATTERN

As mentioned earlier, in the formative stage of Creole, when Aborigines were confronted with English words, they heard and reproduced them in terms of the sound systems of their own AL. Their own AL, in effect, interfered with their perception and production of English. Sounds that were common to both English and their AL remained constant and were reproduced the same as in the English word. Sounds that occurred in English but not in AL were perceived and reproduced as the nearest 'equivalent' in those languages.

Since, for example, /m/ and /n/ were common to both English and AL, the English word 'money' /mani/ was reproduced as /mani/. But /f/, which occurred in English but not in AL, was reproduced as the nearest equivalent, which was /b/; thus 'frog' /frog/ was reproduced as /brog/.

The relationship between the sound systems of English and AL with respect to the reproduction of English words is described below.

2.2.1 Interference Pattern of Consonants

The stops /b, d, g/, nasals /m, n, ng/, lateral /l/, and semi-consonants /r, w, y/ were common to both English and AL. They, therefore, remained constant.

		(English)	(remained)	(Creole)
/b/	'baby'	/beibi/	=	/beibi/
/d/	'daddy'	/dadi/	=	/dadi/
/g/	'good'	/gud/	=	/gud/
/m/	'me'	/mi/	=	/mi/
/n/	'no'	/no/	=	/no/
/nj/	'onion'	/anjan/	=	/anjan/
/ng/	'song'	/song/	=	/song/
/l/	'like'	/laik/	=	/laik/
/lj/	'million'	/miljan/	=	/miljan/
/r/	'run'	/ran/	=	/ran/
/w/	'where'	/weya/	=	/weya/
/y/	'you'	/yu/	=	/yu/

When, however, the semi-consonant /r/ or the alveolar stop /d/ occurred in a word between two vowels, it was changed to a flapped rhotic /ř/.

			(became)	
/r/ > /ř/	'spirit'	/spirit/	→	/spiřit/
/d/ > /ř/	'go down'	/godan/	→	/gořan/

Fricatives and affricates did not occur in AL but were reproduced as stops. The labio-dental fricatives /f, v/ became a bilabial stop /b/. The interdental, alveolar, and alveo-palatal fricatives /θ, đ, s, z, š, ž/ became a lamio-palatal stop /dj/ as did also the alveo-palatal affricates /tš, dž/. The velar fricative /h/ was simply deleted. Simultaneously with these changes the contrast between voiced and voiceless was lost or neutralized.

/f/ > /b/	'family'	/femli/	→	/bemli/
/v/ > /b/	'very'	/veri/	→	/beri/
/p/ > /b/	'people'	/pipul/	→	/bibul/
/θ/ > /dj/	'thing'	/θing/	→	/djing/
/đ/ > /dj/	'there'	/đeya/	→	/djeya/
/s/ > /dj/	'song'	/song/	→	/djong/
/z/ > /dj/	'zoo'	/zu/	→	/dju/
/š/ > /dj/	'shop'	/šap/	→	/djap/
/ž/ > /dj/	'measure'	/meža/	→	/medja/
/tš/ > /dj/	'church'	/tšetš/	→	/djedj/
/dž/ > /dj/	'job'	/džab/	→	/djab/
/h/ → /ø/	'here'	/hiya/	→	/iya/
/t/ → /d/	'time'	/taim/	→	/daim/
/k/ → /g/	'cook'	/kuk/	→	/gug/

2.2.2 Interference Pattern of Vowels

The interference pattern of vowels is much more complicated than that of consonants. Not only did English make more distinctions than did AL, but the vowel systems of AL themselves were not as similar to each other as were their consonant systems.

Generally, the vowels of English were 'collapsed' into a five vowel system, especially in the Bamyili area where AL tended towards a five vowel system.

1. No distinction was made between English high front vowels /i, ɪ/.

'beat'	/bit/	=	/bit/
'bit'	/bɪt/	→	/bit/

2. Likewise, the low central vowels /ʌ, a/ were not distinguished from each other.

'part'	/pat/	→	/bat/
'but'	/bʌt/	→	/bat/

3. The low front /æ/ was not perceived and reproduced as a distinctive vowel, but was in some cases reproduced as a mid front /e/ and in other cases as a low central /a/.

'bad'	/bæd/	→	/bed/
'that'	/dæt/	→	/dat/

4. Likewise, the low back /ɔ/ was not a distinctive vowel but was reproduced in different situations as either a mid back /o/ or a low central /a/.

'lot'	/lɔt/	→	/lot/
'all'	/ɔl/	→	/al/

5. The mid central /ə/ was usually reproduced either as a mid front /e/ or as a low central /a/ with the following consonant changed to a retroflexed consonant (VC̣).

/ə/ → V:	'girl'	/gəl/	→	/gel/
	'shirt'	/šət/	→	/šet/
/ə/ → VC̣:	'burn'	/bən/	→	/baṇ/
	'bird'	/bəd/	→	/baḍ/

In the Ngukurr area AL tended towards three vowel systems. The influence of a three vowel system can be seen. The low back /ɔ/ tended to become a low central /a/ while the mid back /o/ tended to go to a high back /u/. Even today Ngukurr people are noted among Creole speakers for saying /gu/ 'go' instead of /go/ (high back instead of mid back), /alabat/ 'they' instead of /ɔlabat/ (low

central instead of low back), and also /namu/ '(negative)' instead of /nomo/. The English low and mid front vowels /æ, ɛ/ tended to become a low central /a/.

'that'	/dædan/	→	/dadan/
'tell'	/tɛlim/	→	/talim/

Most English vowel glides throughout the Creole area became simply a vowel.

/ə^{u}/	'book'	/bə^{u}k/	→	/buk/
/æ^{ɩ}/	'bait'	/bæ^{ɩ}t/	→	/bet/
/ʌ^{u}/	'out'	/ʌ^{u}t/	→	/at/
/ʌ^{ɩ}/	'bite'	/bʌ^{ɩ}t/	→	/bat/
/o^{u}/	'boat'	/bo^{u}t/	→	/bot/

Two vowel glides /^{i}u/ and /o^{ɩ}/, however, tended to occur as a diphthong.

/^{i}u/	'you'	/^{i}u/	→	/yu/
/ɔ^{ɩ}/	'boy'	/bɔ^{ɩ}/	→	/boi/

2.2.3 Interference Pattern of Syllables

Just as consonants and vowels were affected by differences between English and AL, so also were syllables.

The basic change was the avoidance of consonant clusters within the syllable. This was generally done in two ways: by deletion of a consonant or by insertion of a vowel between the consonants.

In clusters involving two consonants at the beginning of a syllable, the first consonant was deleted if the second consonant was a stop.

'stone'	/ston/	→	/ton/
'spear'	/spiya/	→	/piya/

If the second consonant was a nasal, lateral, or semi-consonant, a vowel was inserted between the two consonants.

'snake'	/sneik/	→	/sineik/
'sleep'	/slip/	→	/silip/

When two consonants occurred at the end of a syllable, the final consonant was deleted.

'axe' /eks/ → /ek/

'friend' /frend/ → /fren/

In clusters involving three consonants at the beginning of a syllable, the first consonant was deleted and a vowel inserted between the remaining two consonants.

'straight' /stret/ → /tarˇet/

2.2.4 Simultaneous Operation of Interference Patterns

It should be noted that the individual interference changes did not occur in isolation. The examples given above were restricted to illustrate only one particular sound change at a time. In reality, all interference changes took place simultaneously, not sequentially, in any given word. Grammatical and semantic patterns were also simultaneously in operation with the sound changes.

The complexity of the situation may better be seen in the following examples.

The English word 'from' /frɔm/ became /burˇum/, its meaning and grammatical function remaining the same. The logic of this change can be seen in the following steps.

1. The labio-dental fricative /f/ did not occur in AL and was reproduced as the nearest 'equivalent' /b/.

   /frɔm/ → /brɔm/

2. Consonant clusters were avoided by inserting a vowel between the two consonants.

   /brɔm/ → /burɔm/

3. The semi-consonant /r/, when it occurred between two vowels, became an alveolar rhotic /ř/.

   /burɔm/ → /burˇɔm/

4. The vowel in the unstressed (second) syllable changed to conform to that in the stressed (first) syllable.

   /burˇɔm/ → /burˇum/

An example that shows grammatical and semantic changes in operation would be the English word 'scratching' /skrætšing/ becoming the Creole word /gařadjimbat/ meaning primarily 'digging'. This change can be seen as follows.

1. The English progressive suffix '-ing' was deleted.

   /skrætšing/ → /skrætš/

2. Consonant clusters were avoided, in this case by dropping the initial consonant and inserting a vowel between the remaining two consonants.

   /skrætš/ → /karætš/

3. The semi-consonant /r/, when it occurred between two vowels, became an alveolar rhotic /ř/.

   /karætš/ → /kařætš/

4. The voiceless stop /k/ did not occur but became the devoiced stop /g/.

   /kařætš/ → /gařætš/

5. The low front vowel /æ/ did not occur but became the low central /a/.

   /gařætš/ → /gařatš/

6. The affricate /tš/ did not occur but became a lamino-palatal stop /dj/.

   /gařatš/ → /gařadj/

7. Being a transitive verb, the transitive marker /-im/ was suffixed to the verb root.

   /gařadj/ → /gařadjim/

8. Because it was used in the continuative aspect (see Section 5.2.3), the verb was marked by the suffix /-bat/.

   /gařadjim/ → /gařadjimbat/

9. The primary meaning of the word shifted from 'scratch' to 'dig'.

2.3 LEVELLING PATTERN

As Creole remained in contact with English, it was continually being influenced by English. Aborigines began to perceive and reproduce sounds that occurred in English but not in AL. AL sounds that had replaced the English sounds in the formative stage of Creole began to return to or level toward the original English sounds.

Not all sounds were affected by this levelling influence from English. Only specific sounds in given words initially derived from English show significant levelling.

Sounds in words derived from AL, with few exceptions, remain constant. Stops, however, in words derived from AL, especially those occurring at the beginning of words, often fluctuate between voiced and voiceless. This is not so much a levelling influence from English as it is a normal feature of the sound systems of AL themselves.

Sounds in words derived from English that did not undergo any change in the interference pattern remain constant in the levelling pattern also. For example, as shown earlier, /m/ and /n/ in /mani/ 'money', being common to both AL and English, remained constant in the interference pattern, and they continue to remain constant in the levelling pattern also: /mani/ remains /mani/.

Sounds that did undergo change in the interference patterns are affected by the levelling influence in that they return to the sound they were derived from in the original English word. For example, the /b/ in /brog/ 'frog' returns or is levelled to /f/ as in the original English word: /brog/ levels to /frog/.

The changes caused by levelling, unlike those caused by interference, do not occur *in toto* for all words. Rather, with some sounds, these changes tend to be gradual, forming a series of gradations of change. For example, in the word 'there', which went from /đeya/ to /djeya/ in the interference pattern, the /dj/ returns or levels to /đ/ not directly but by way of /d/. In other words, while the interference pattern was

/đeya/ → /djeya/;

the levelling pattern is

/djeya/ → /deya/ → /đeya/.

The levelling pattern is described below.

2.3.1 Levelling Pattern of Consonants

The most complicated of the consonant changes involves the lamino-palatal stop /dj/. In the interference pattern this stop replaced eight English consonants that did not occur in AL (see Section 2.2.1). In levelling the /dj/ stop returns to those particular consonants. In most cases the levelling is not direct but gradual.

1. /θ/: /dj/ → /d/ → /t/ → /θ/

   /djing/ → /ding/ → /ting/ → /θing/ 'thing'

   When /θ/ occurs in the final position of a word, its change is as follows:

   /dj/ → /s/ → /θ/

   /mawudj/ → /mawus/ → /mawuθ/ 'mouth'

2. /đ/: /dj/ → /d/ → /đ/

   /djeya/ → /deya/ → /đeya/ 'there'

3. /s/: /dj/ → /s/

   /djabi/ → /sabi/ 'know, understand'

4. /z/: /dj/ → /s/ → /z/

   /dju/ → /su/ → /zu/ 'zoo'

5. /š/: /dj/ → /s/ → /š/

   /djap/ → /sap/ → /šap/ 'shop'

6. /ž/: /dj/ → /s/ → /š/ → /ž/

   /medja/ → /mesa/ → /meša/ → /meža/ 'measure'

7. /tš/: /dj/ → /tš/

   /djedj/ → /tšetš/ 'church'

8. /dž/: /dj/ → /dž/

   /djab/ → /džab/ 'job'

Other consonant levelling changes involve the bilabial stop /b/ returning to the labio-dental fricatives /f, v/, the devoiced stops /b, d, g/ differentiating voicing and returning to the voiceless stops /p, t, k/, the flapped rhotic /ɾ̆/ returning to an non-flapped /r/ and stop /d/, and the deleted velar /h/ reappearing.

/b/ → /p/ → /f/

/bemli/ → /pemli/ → /femli/ 'family'

/b/ → /v/

/beri/ → /veri/ 'very'

/b/ → /p/

/bibul/ → /pipul/ 'people'

/d/ → /t/

/daim/ → /taim/ 'time'

/g/ → /k/

/gug/ → /kuk/ 'cook'

/ɾ̆/ → /r/

/spiɾ̆it/ → /spirit/ 'spirit'

/ɾ̆/ → /d/

/goɾ̆an/ → /godan/ 'descend'

/ɸ/ → /h/

/iya/ → /hiya/ 'here'

2.3.2 Levelling Pattern of Vowels

Virtually all vowel levelling, unlike that of consonants, involves only one change. The English vowels that were collapsed into one Creole vowel through interference reoccur directly in levelling.

/i/ → /ɪ/

/bit/ → /bɪt/ 'bit'

/e/ → /æ/

/bed/ → /bæd/ 'bad'

/a/ → /æ/

/dat/ → /dæt/ 'that'

/a/ → /ʌ/

/bat/ → /bʌt/ 'but'

/o/ → /ɔ/

/lot/ → /lɔt/ 'lot'

V → /ə/

/ɡel/ → /gəl/ 'girl'

VC → /ə/

/baḍ/ → /bəd/ 'bird'

The English vowel glides lost through interference also reoccur directly in levelling.

/e/ → /æˡ/

/bet/ → /bæˡt/ 'bait'

/a/ → /ʌᵘ/

/at/ → /ʌᵘt/ 'out'

/a/ → /ʌˡ/

/bat/ → /bʌˡt/ 'bite'

/o/ → /oᵘ/

/bot/ → /boᵘt/ 'boat'

/u/ → /əᵘ/

/buk/ → /bəᵘk/ 'book'

2.3.3 Levelling Pattern of Syllables

In syllables involving clusters of two consonants that were avoided in the formative stage of Creole, the interference pattern is simply reversed.

With clusters that were avoided by deleting one of the consonants, the consonant reappears.

CVC → CCVC

/ton/ → /ston/ 'stone'

VC → VCC

/ek/ → /eks/ 'axe'

With clusters that were avoided by insertion of a vowel, the vowel is deleted in levelling.

CVCVC → CCVC

/silip/ → /slip/ 'sleep'

With clusters involving three consonants, the levelling is gradual.

CVCVC → CCVC → CCCVC

/taret/ → /tret/ → /stret/ 'straight'

2.3.4 Sequential Operation of Levelling Patterns

Individual levelling changes differ from interference changes in that they may occur in isolation and generally operate sequentially rather than simultaneously. In other words, with a given word, the English form of the word was changed by interference directly into its Creole form through a number of simultaneously changes. Levelling, however, returns the word towards the original English form not directly but gradually through a number of sequential changes.

The examples given above were selected and restricted to illustrate individual levelling patterns operating in isolation. That is, only one pattern was exemplified at a time. In reality, a given word usually has several levelling patterns operating on it. For example, the Creole word for 'snake' goes through four sequential changes involving four different levelling patterns.

/djineg/ → /djinek/ → /sinek/ → /sinæ^{l}k/ → /snæ^{l}k/

/g/ → /k/ /dj/ → /s/ /e/ → /æ^{l}/ CVC → CC

In some cases changes from two or more levelling patterns may operate simultaneously on a given word. For example, the Creole word for 'policeman' goes through two sequential changes involving three different levelling patterns.

/balidjiman/ → /blidjiman/ → /plisman/

CVC → CC /b/ → /p/

/dj/ → /s/

The operation of levelling changes sometime in sequence and sometime simultaneously is not ad hoc. These operations are dependent upon what is referred to as the implicational relationship between the various levelling patterns. That is, the operation of a given levelling pattern may implicate or imply the operation of another pattern. More specifically, when a given levelling change takes place, it may imply that another specific levelling change has taken place, has not yet taken place, or simultaneously takes place.

For example, in our examples above with 'snake', the form */djnæ^{l}k/ never occurs. This is because the CVC → CC pattern does not operate unless the /dj/ → /s/ pattern has previously operated. Their implicational relationship is such that the operation of the CVC → CC pattern implies that the /dj/ → /s/ pattern has already operated.

The complexity of implicational relationships will not be gone into detail here. Rather, only a broad generalization is made, listing changes in the implicational sequential order in which they tend to operate.

1. /dj/ → /d/
2. /dj/ → /s/
3. /d/ → /t/

   /b/ → /p/

   /g/ → /k/
4. diversification of vowels

5. /d/ → /ð/

   /s/ → /š/

6. /p/ → /f/

   /b/ → /v/

7. /s/ → /z/

8. vowel glides

9. consonant clusters

10. /t/ → /θ/

    /ɸ/ → /h/

11. /s/ → /θ/

12. /š/ → /ž/

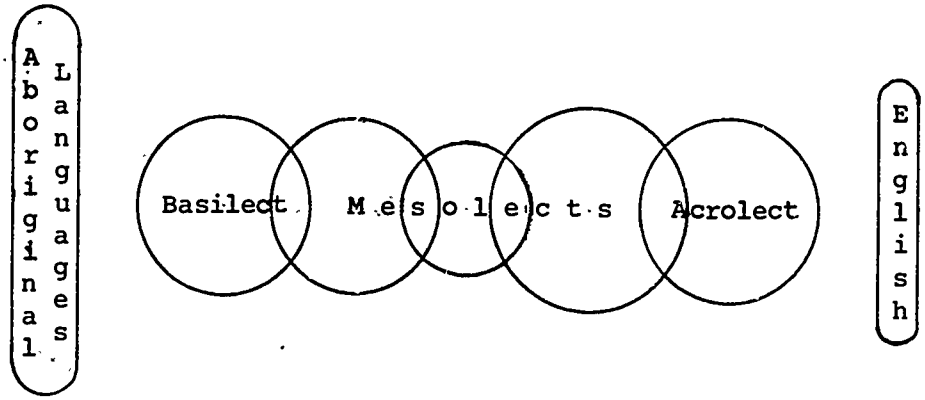
2.4 CONTINUUM

As stated earlier, the sound system of Creole is derived from a complex combination of the sounds of AL of the Creole area and of English. It is not simply the sum total of the sounds that occur in these languages. Rather, it is a system of gradations of levelling built upon the interference between the sound systems of AL and that of English.

This system can be described as a *continuum* of sounds that has an Aboriginal sound sub-system at the 'heavy' end and an English sound sub-system at the 'light' end. 'Heavy' and 'light' are terms used by Creole speakers themselves in describing Creole sounds.

Technically, the heavy end is the *basilect* (from Greek *basis* 'step, foot') and the light end is the *acrolect* (from Greek *akros* 'high point, top most'). The 'space' between the basilect and the acrolect is a series of *mesolects* (from Greek *mesos* 'middle, intermediate').

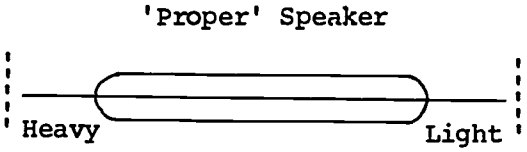
The continuum and its relationship to the Aboriginal languages and English could be diagrammed as follows:



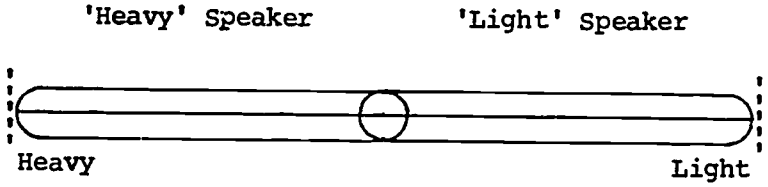
The basilect is that sub-system that came into existence during the formative stage of Creole through the interference patterns. Mesolects are the gradual sequential changes that occur through the levelling patterns. The acrolect is the end result of the complete operation of all levelling patterns. Note that the various 'lects' are not discrete units but a series of overlapping ones.

No one, however, speaks only a specific gradation or lect of the continuum. Rather, the speech of any given Creole speaker contains features from a multiple of gradations along the continuum. In other words, no one speaks at a given point on the continuum; rather, everyone speaks a *range* along the continuum.

The speech of most speakers, while it contains heavy and light features, tends to be centered between the two extremes of the continuum. They refer to their speech as being 'proper' Creole. Their speech range could be diagrammed as follows:



Some Creole speakers, however, are noted by other speakers as being 'heavy' or 'light' speakers. Their speech is characteristically loaded with heavy or light features respectively. Communication between heavy and light speakers is normally not grossly impaired by their differing speech ranges because their hearing ranges are broader than their speech ranges. Their speech ranges could be diagrammed as follows:



P r o p e r

Heavy speakers tend to be Aborigines who have learned Creole as a second language, their first language or mother tongue being their traditional tribal language. Light speakers, likewise, tend to be Aborigines who have learned Creole as a second language; their first language being English.

Creole speakers have a great ability to vary their speech. While some of this variation may be ad hoc, most is conditioned or determined by features of the social situation in which it is used. This is something that most English speakers cannot appreciate because they come from fairly homogeneous speech communities.

In English the choice of 'informal' versus 'formal' styles of conversation is much the same sort of variation. For example, a thirsty workman[2] could call out to his mate on a hot day and say:

> Ya got me water, Dave? She's bloody 'ot!

But a well-dressed stranger asking Dave for the same thing would use a more formal style:

> Excuse me, could I trouble you for a glass of water, please? It's hot today.

The range of choices of speech variety for Creole speakers is far greater than English speakers are used to making.

The important conditioning rule for Europeans to understand is that Creole usually is not used with (especially unknown) Europeans and often not even in their presence. This rule applies more strongly with Euorpeans known to have a negative or degrading attitude toward Creole and Aborigines who speak it. English is the correct language to use in such a social situation.

When Creole speakers and Europeans are in a social situation together, the following usually occurs: Creole speakers who are fluent in English speak to Europeans in English. Most Creole speakers, however, are not fluent in English. When speaking with Europeans, they speak as much English as they can with light Creole

making up for the inadequacies of their English. The result is a mixture of Creole and English.

The Creole normally used among Creole speakers is largely (and in some cases totally) unintelligible to Europeans. While the gist of the conversation may be followed, many if not most details are lost while some are grossly misinterpreted by the European.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

[1]Information on specific languages in this section is taken from the following sources:

Alawa: SHARPE, Margaret C. *Alawa Phonology and Grammar.* (AAS 37.) AIAS, Canberra, 1972.

Dalabon: CAPELL, A. *Some Linguistic Types in Australia.* (*Oceania* Linguistic Monographs, No. 7.) University of Sydney, Sydney, 1962.

Djingili: CHADWICK, N. *A Descriptive Study of the Djingili Language.* (RRS 2.) AIAS, Canberra, 1975.

English: LEEDING, Velma J. Handouts for Lectures in Contrastive Linguistics held at Umbakumba, Groote Eylandt, March 1977.

Mara: SHARPE, Margaret C. Mara and Wandarang. MS., n.d.

Nunggubuyu: HUGHES, Earl J. & LEEDING, Velma J. The Phonemes of Nunggubuyu. *In* 'Papers on the Languages of Australian Aborigines'. (AAS 38.) AIAS, Canberra, 1971.

Rembarnga: MCKAY, Graham. Rembarnga: A Language of Central Arnhem Land. Ph.D. thesis, ANU, 1975.

Wandarang: SHARPE, Margaret C. Mara and Wandarang. MS., n.d.

[2]This example is taken in modified form from

CROWLEY, Terry & RIGSBY, Bruce. Cape York Creole. MS., n.d., p. 14.

CHAPTER 3

A PRACTICAL ORTHOGRAPHY FOR CREOLE

Two main prerequisites for the establishment of a bilingual programme, in which initial literacy is taught in an Aboriginal language, are (1) a practical orthography or alphabet for the language and (2) available written materials from which to teach. The orthography, of necessity, must precede the written materials. O'Grady and Hale (1974:5), however, recommended that a finalized practical orthography should not be an indispensible condition or qualification of a bilingual programme.

For traditional Aboriginal languages, the development of an orthography, for the most part, merely awaits the phonemic analysis of the sound system. The analysis is pretty much straightforward. This does not mean that it may not be difficult nor have problems, but rather that such analysis rests upon a well developed theoretical and heuristic base.

When a phonemic analysis has been completed, a phonemic orthography is developed on a one symbol to one sound basis. Words are then spelled as they sound. Difficulties may arise due to dialect differences, differences between fast and slow speech, or grammatical variations. However, these are not insurmountable.

The development of an orthography for Creole, in many respects, is basically the same as for other Aboriginal languages. It differs, however, in that it is a continuum language.

Though linguists are attempting to do so, they have not yet developed an adequate theory of variation in language that can handle the analysis and description of creole continuui.

3.1 CRITERIA FOR AN ADEQUATE ORTHOGRAPHY

The development of a practical orthography for Creole is more complicated than the development of a traditional Aboriginal language orthography. The basic criteria for an adequate orthography, however, are the same. Five basic criteria (Smalley 1963a:34) listed in order of importance are:

1. Maximum motivation for the learner, and acceptance by his society and controlling groups such as the government. Occasionally maximum motivation for the learner conflicts with government acceptance, but usually the learner wants most what is considered standard in the area.

2. Maximum representation of speech. The fullest, most adequate representation of the actual spoken language is, by and large, the ideal. There are a few points of exception here . . .

3. **Maximum** ease of learning. Many writing systems have failed . . . because they were essentially too complicated for a learner.

4. **Maximum** transfer. Here we refer to the fact that certain of the alphabet or other written symbols will, when learned, be applicable to the more rapid learning of the trade or colonial languages in the area. Thus, if a new learner learns a certain pronunciation of a certain symbol in his own native language, and if he can use that same pronunciation with the same symbol in the trade or national languages, this is a case of transfer. If, however, the same symbol is used with different value in the other writing system, that transfer cannot be made.

5. Maximum ease of reproduction. Typing and printing facilities are a consideration, although they are not of first importance.

3.2 ETYMOLOGICAL VS. PHONEMIC ORTHOGRAPHY

There are two types of orthographic systems that could be developed for Creole. One is an etymological orthography in which words are spelt in Creole as they are spelt in the languages from which they are borrowed. The other is a phonemic orthography designed to fit the sound system of Creole itself. The latter type is being developed for Creole at Ngukurr and Bamyili.

3.2.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of an Etymological Orthography

The advantage of an etymological orthography is that people who are literate in English can, it seems, very easily read and write Creole - especially Europeans.

The disadvantages, however, are:

1. All the problems inherent in learning to read English because of the way English is spelled would not only be carried over into Creole but additional problems would be added as well. In English we do not use the principle of one symbol-one sound relationship: [f] may be life, rough, half, cuff, graph. Then add for Creole such things as: [g] as in /grajim/ 'dig' being scratch-him, as in /gajim/ 'get' being catch-him, as in /gidim/ 'get' being get-him. (See Appendix 3.1 at the end of this chapter for a listing of English sounds and their corresponding symbols.)

2. Not only would the problems of reading English be carried over, but the problems of learning to spell would also be carried over: 'to cling to the etymological principle would naturally offer very little practical advantage. One cannot expect the users of a language only to be able to spell correctly with the use of a dictionary' (Voorhoeve 1963:69).

3. Advocates of an etymological orthography for dialects of English may be on to a good thing. Flint (1968:8) notes that 'variation in intelligibility [of Aboriginal English] is due more to phonological than to lexical and grammatical differences'. Dutton (1969:20) likewise notes that Palm Island 'Aboriginal English has the grammatical and lexical structure (except for minor differences . . .) of standard Australian English. Phonologically, however, it has characteristic features which affect its intelligibility for the non-Aboriginal Australian listener'. Creole, however, is much further removed from English than are Aboriginal English dialects, with greater grammatical and lexical divergency from English than dialects of English have.

4. More important than linguistic considerations are sociolinguistic ones. What are people's attitudes to the written form of the language? Etymological spellings have been used in popular writings such as Gunn's *Little Black Princess* and Lockwood's *I, The Aboriginal*. Such an orthography would support the erroneous view of Europeans that Creole is a debased, broken, or at best, quaint dialect of English. (See Appendix 3.2 at the end of this chapter for an example of an etymological orthography as compared with a phonemic orthography.)

3.2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of a Phonemic Orthography

The advantages of a phonemic orthography are:

1. It is an orthography which is designed specifically to fit the language and therefore avoids the problems involved in trying to make one language 'fit' the system of another, as well as avoiding the inherent problems of the English system.

2. It is in line with the criteria of maximum representation of speech and thus leads to an easier road to literacy.

3. It reduces the negative socio-political implications by not making the Creole appear as if it were a broken English.

4. It should aid in clearly differentiating English and Creole to Creole speakers. This will avoid readers' confusion.

The disadvantages of a phonemic orthography are:

1. Many Europeans do not seem to like it since it makes it more difficult for them to 'understand' it. (Though in actual fact it should reduce the chances of misunderstandings by helping the European not to interpret in terms of English vocabulary meanings.)

2. People have to be taught to read. Even those who are fluent in English literacy cannot fluently read Creole in a phonemic orthography until they have spent some time learning how to do so (i.e. they have to learn the symbol-sound relationship particular to Creole). (But with an etymological orthography there is a lot of, if not more, relearning or transferring to do for one to read Creole with Creole pronunciations and intonations instead of English ones.)

3. There are problems because of the continuum nature of Creole. The Creole word for 'snake' can be pronounced five ways: *jineg, jinek, sinek, sineik,* and *sneik.*

3.2.3 Considerations for a Phonemic Orthography

Several considerations must be kept in mind in developing an orthography. As Leeding and Gudschinsky (1974:27) have pointed out, 'the orthography should be chosen to make learning to read as easy as possible for the beginner and also to allow the experienced reader to skim and to read new material smoothly'.

It would seem that the development of an orthography for a continuum creole is dependent upon answering the questions: What 'point' on the continuum should be selected as the 'norm'? Which heavy to light variety of speech should be the 'standard'?

Because of the diversity of socio-linguistic backgrounds of the speakers of Creole, another question often raised is: What segment of the population should the orthography be slanted towards? Should it be slanted towards children and those adults whose speech has undergone little levelling towards the light end? If so, for bilingual speakers and those whose Creole has been levelled greatly, the orthography will result in confusion from underdifferentiation of phonemes or not distinguishing enough sounds. But if it's slanted towards literate bilinguals whose Creole has undergone a high degree of levelling, speakers with little levelling (particularly non-literates) may have difficulty with reading due to overdifferentiation of phonemes or distinguishing too many sounds.

On the subject of overdifferentiation and underdifferentiation, Smalley (1963b:10-11) notes:

> Overdifferentiation, when consistently applied, does not usually present a serious reading problem, at least if it is not too extensive. The reader can usually be taught more than one symbol for the same pronunciation. The greater difficulty with overdifferentiation for the native speaker comes in spelling.
>
> . . . underdifferentiation of the phonemic structure of the language causes a reading problem if the distinctions which are ignored or confused carry an important functional load. If they do not, or if context helps to carry the load, underdifferentiation may not be at all serious . . . some underdifferentiation may be not only permissible but desirable in practical orthographies.

An alternative to the establishment of an orthography based on a given speech variety is to develop an orthography that is basically capable of handling a full differentiation of sounds used in Creole and allowing writers to write as they speak.

Sharpe (1974:20) has suggested that 'it may be quite workable in any case to allow more freedom of spelling in creole than in English in advanced reading materials - after all it is only comparatively recently (post-Shakespeare) that standardised spelling irrespective of pronunciation has become such a custom in English (and this custom is happily violated by good authors representing dialect differences on paper)'. (For an English example, see Xavier Herbert's *Poor Fellow My Country*.)

A literate, according to Gudschinsky (1973:5), is a person who 'in a language that he speaks, can read and understand anything he would have understood if it had been spoken to him; and who can write, so that it can be read, anything that he can say'. Most speakers vary along a wide range of the continuum, both in speaking and hearing, and should be able to control the same range in reading.

Though Creole involves continuum variation, what Balint (1973:13) says regarding regional dialectal variation of Tok Pisin may be worth noting: 'I have always disagreed with those Pidgin scholars who believe in the strict standardization of Melanesian Pidgin orthography. It seems to me that the most practical and at the same time scientifically feasible method of recording the various spoken forms of the language is through strict adherence to a general phonetic principle. This principle is quite simply the faithful recording in writing of all regional dialect variants of the language.'

3.3 THE CREOLE ORTHOGRAPHY

The development of a Creole orthography began in 1973 shortly after the Prime Minister of Australia announced the Government's new policy of bilingual education. A small amount of work had previously been done by Margaret Sharpe (then a member of SIL and a Research Fellow at the University of Queensland) and Mary Harris (of the Church Missionary Society) at Ngukurr in 1967. Nothing was done in the interviening period.

Work was carried out in 1973 initially by Sandefur, with an increasing amount of involvement by Sharpe. From 1973 until the end of 1975, the orthography was developed by Sandefur and Sharpe with Creole speaker involvement limited to testing.

In 1976, two Creole speakers, David Nangan:golod Jentian (school teacher from Bamyili) and his brother, Danny Marmina Jentian (head of literature production at Bamyili School), became involved in the orthography development. Nangan:golod had had some linguistic training as part of his teacher training, and Marmina was being taught to edit Creole texts for publication.

By mid 1976, several Creole speakers from Ngukurr School had also become involved in the orthography development under the direction of Warren Hastings (school teacher with some linguistic training). Sandefur and Hastings were encouraging Creole speaker involvement in the orthography development and coordination between the Bamyili and Ngukurr dialects.

In September of the same year, David Zorc of the School of Australian Linguistics became involved. During that month, ten Creole speakers from Ngukurr studied linguistics under Zorc and others, four of whom were working specifically on the Creole orthography.

In November 1976, a concerted effort was made to sort out some of the problems with the orthography and coordinate orthography development between Ngukurr and Bamyili. The School of Australian Linguistics and the Summer Institute of Linguistics cooperated with the Bamyili and Ngukurr Schools in holding a four-week Creole Writers Course. The course was held on site at Ngukurr under the direction of Zorc. Six Creole speakers from Bamyili, including Marmina, and six to nineteen from Ngukurr participated.

The majority decision of the Creole Writers Course was a Creole orthography that gives near maximum representation of significant sounds but allows for underdifferentiation in spelling.

There are 38 letters and diagraphs in the orthography: 27 consonants, 7 vowels, and 4 diphthongs.

There are 16 consonant letters: *b, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, w,* and *y;* and 11 consonant diagraphs: *ly, ng, ny, rd, rl, rn, rr, rt, sh, th,* and *tj*. (See Chart 3.1 on page 62.)

There are 7 vowels represented in the orthography, 2 with diacritics.

Chart 3.2. Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e	e:	o
Low	e/a	a	o:

There are 4 diphthongs:

ai low central to high front

oi mid back to high front

ei mid front to high front

au low central to high back

In addition to the letters and diagraphs, five spelling conventions were decided upon:

1. Words are spelt the way one speaks, regardless of dialect, idiolect or range on the continuum: 'we' *mibala* at Bamyili, *melabat* at Ngukurr, and *mela* at Elsey; 'sleep' *jilib, jilip, silip, slip* heavy to light range on the continuum.

2. Proper nouns may be spelt as in the original language or as pronounced in Creole: *Roper River ~ Ropa Riba; Katherine ~ Gajarran; Injai ~ Hodgson River ~ Hadsan Riba.*

3. Words commonly used in forming compound words should be spelt consistently: *taim* 'time', *dinataim* 'lunchtime, noon',

Chart 3.1. Consonants

	Bi-labial	Labio-dental	Inter-dental	Alve-olar	Retro-flexed	Alveo-palatal	Lamino-palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops vcls	p			t	rt		tj	k	
Stops vcd	b			d	rd		j	g	
Affricates vcls						tj			
Affricates vcd						j			
Fricatives vcls		f	th	s		sh			h
Fricatives vcd		b	th	s		s			
Nasals	m			n	rn	ny		ng	
Laterals				l	rl	ly			
Rhotic				rr	r				
Semi-Consonants	w				r	y			

(NB: 'vcls' means the sound is voiceless; 'vcd' means it is voiced.)

longtaim 'a long time ago'; *dei* 'day', *deitaim* 'day time', *tudeina* 'right now'.

4. Reduplication of a word may be indicated either by doubling the word or by placing a *2* at the end of the word: *olmen* 'old man', *olmenolmen ~ olmen2* 'old men'; *shabala* 'sharp', *shabalashabala ~ shabala2* 'very sharp'; *wok* 'to walk', *wokwok ~ wok2* 'walking'.

5. Capitalization and punctuation are basically as practiced in English.

3.4 EVALUATION OF THE ORTHOGRAPHY

The following evaluation of the Creole orthography is made in terms of the five basic criteria given in Section 3.1.

3.4.1 Maximum Motivation

Smalley's discussion of this criterion is limited to the question of whether or not the orthography being developed should be in the script of the national language. The Creole orthography utilizes the Roman script as does English. Though the Creole speakers involved in developing the Creole orthography were exposed to other types of script, none were given serious consideration. There was concern, however, that Creole not look like English, but that it have an identity of its own. Hence the rejection of an etymological orthography.

Maximum motivation should also arise out of the critical involvement of a number of Creole speakers in the development of the orthography. The Creole orthography has become an Aboriginal affair, not another European project.

3.4.2 Maximum Representation of Speech

It is in this area that Creole has its greatest problems. It is desirable for the orthography to symbolize every sound that is psychologically significant to Creole speakers. Creole speakers who are not sophisticated English speakers and readers tend to perceive Creole as having fewer significant sounds than do bilinguals, even though both speak overlapping ranges of the Creole continuum. Any orthography will inevitably overdifferentiate for the one group and underdifferentiate for the other.

Sounds in Creole that are overdifferentiated at the heavy end of the continuum include: /f, th, s, sh, h, e:, o:, ei, au/. For the extreme heavy end /p, t, rt, tj, k/ are also overdifferentiated.

Sounds that are underdifferentiated for the light end of the continuum include: /v, z/. For the extreme light end /ɖ, ž, ɩ, æ, ʌ/ are also underdifferentiated.

3.4.3 Maximum Ease of Learning

This criterion can really only be evaluated by applying the orthography in literacy classes. At the time of writing (August 1977), this had not yet been done on a full scale. There have been, however, several 'pilot' classes: a small group of semi-literate teaching assistants, several children with severe reading problems, and a grade 6 boy with no previous school experience. These projects have shown encouraging results.

Observation of English literates starting to read Creole in both formal and informal situations has also been positive. Fluent English readers have been able to transfer into Creole without assistance. Others, however, have needed some assistance, particularly with vowels.

The unique difference in the Creole orthography from other orthographies is the variability of spelling along the continuum. This certainly provides for a wide range of stylistic possibilities for Creole writers who have a literary feeling. In addition, the variability of spelling - which, it should be stressed, is consistent in sound-symbol relationship - allows for the development of initial reading materials geared to the idiolects of individual students. 'The material given for reading should approximate the reader's oral language as closely as possible' (Genat 1976:44).

The variability of spelling also eliminates the need to spend hours of time teaching spelling. Once a person learns the orthography with its consistent sound to symbol relationships, they spell the way they speak.

3.4.4 Maximum Transfer

Though the primary concern for maximum transfer is between Creole and English, consideration is also given for transfer between Creole and other Aboriginal languages. Where the sounds of Creole are common with other Aboriginal languages, the orthography is in line with the recommendations of Leeding and Gudschinsky (1974) for a uniform orthography for Aboriginal languages.

With regard to vowels, Leeding and Gudschinsky (1974:29) recommend that

the five symbols used in English [be used] . . . Problems in transition into English cannot be avoided because of the two distinctly different vowel systems. Use of the recommended symbols, however, will make reading in the vernacular as easy as possible and should help to keep problems to a minimum when transfer is made to English.

The problems Creole speakers may have in vowel transfer to English should be the same as those experienced by Aborigines elsewhere, and the solutions to the problems should be similar. A benefit for Creole speakers who know a traditional Aboriginal language should be vowel transfer to that language without difficulties.

With consonants, transfer to traditional languages should also be near automatic. The single letter consonants should transfer to English without difficulty except where English is inconsistent while the diagraphs are susceptable to being confused with English consonant clusters.

3.4.5 Maximum Ease of Reproduction

Though several characters which do not come on common typewriters were considered, all except one of them, the 'tail-n' (ŋ), were dismissed. ŋ was liked very much by Creole speakers, but because it is not available on common typewriters, *ng* is used in printing. ŋ, however, is allowed in cursive writing: ŋarnu ~ *ngarni* 'What now?'.

Several 'above the letter' diacritics were considered but not accepted because of the need to back space and hence slow down production. The one diacritic used (:) necessitates carriage shifting and hence is not ideal, but its frequency of occurrence is low.

APPENDIX 3.1

SYMBOLS USED FOR SPELLING AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH SOUNDS

This appendix is taken with slight modifications from Leeding (1977).

It is well known that sounds and spelling do not correlate in English in many words. This list shows the complexity to be faced by a person learning to read and write. The first column gives the English sound contrast, the second gives the alternative spellings with examples of these in the final column.

Stops

p	p	pale, tap, lamp, spin
	pp	copper
b	b	bale, tab, timber
	bb	cobber
t	t	tale, mat, stint, dreamt
	tt	matter, putt
	ed	stepped
	ght	straight
d	d	dale, mad, hinder
	dd	madder, odd
	ed	stabbed, tinned
	ld	could
k	c	call, attic, uncle
	k	kill, tank, skin, wrinkle
	ck	tack, bicker
	q	queue
	ch	toothache, stomach, school, chiton
g	g	gale, tag, finger
	gg	bigger

Affricates

tš	ch	chin, rich
	tch	catch, latching
dž	j	jam
	g	gin, cage, raging
	dg	ridge, cadging

Fricatives

f	f	fail, life, safer
	ff	puff, suffer
	ph	photo, graph
	gh	laugh
	lf	half
v	v	value, savour, live
	lv	halve
θ	th	thin, path, ether
ð	th	this, either, loathe
s	s	sale, us, closer, cats
	ss	fuss, pussy
	se	use (noun)
	sc	discipline
	st	castle, listen
	c	cede, receipt, face
	ps	psalm, psychology
z	z	zip, razor
	zz	fizz, huzzy
	ze	daze
	s	is, phase, dogs, use (verb), eyes, days, cosy
š	sh	shawl, fish, rushing
	ch	machine
	s	sure
	ss	pressure
	si	tension
	ssi	mission
	ci	vicious
	ce	ocean
	ti	nation
	sc	conscious

ž	z	azure
	s	closure
	si	erosion
	g	mirage (some people only)
h	h	hale, how, ahoy
	wh	who, whole

Nasals

m	m	male, sum, camp, humour
	mm	hammer
	mb	com‿
	mp	pumpkin (some speakers)
	lm	calm
n	n	nail, sun, hand, honour
	nn	runner
	kn	knife, kneel
	gn	gnat, gnome
	nd	sandwich (some speakers)
nj	ni	onion
	ny	canyon
	n	new
ng	ng	sing, singer, distinguish
	n	finger, think, distinction

Laterals

l	l	low, halo, only
	ll	call, millet
	sl	aisle, island
	le	bottle
lj	lli	million, stallion
	ly	halyard

Semi-consonants

w	w	wail, away, twin
	wh	whale, when, why (some speakers)
	u	quail, quick, aqua

r	r	rail, arid
	rr	arrow
	wr	write
y	y	yale, lawyer

Vowels

i	ee	feet, bee
	ea	each, peat
	e	cafeteria, area
	ie	piece, siege, believe
	ei	receive, neice
	y	pity, any
ɪ	i	it, pit
ɛ	e	pet, etch, mend
	ea	dead
	ai	said
	ay	says
	a	any, area
	ie	friend
ə	ear	early, earth, heard
	er	pert, defer
	ir	bird, third
	ur	further, scurvy
	urr	furry
ʌ	u	utter, putt
	a	lava, about
	er	rubber, cover
	o	money, love
	oo	blood
	ou	tough
a	a	after, father, last
	ar	art, barter, mark
	ear	heart
u	u	put, pull
	oo	hood, wood, wool
	ou	could
o	or	born, port, organ, mentor
	a	water, fall
	ar	wart
	aw	dawn, prawn, shawl

	au	caught, taught
	ou	sought, fought
	our	court
	oa	board
	ore	bored, encored
ɔ	o	pot, otter, on
	a	what
	ou	cough
æ^{ɩ}	a	ate, cake, wave, dale
	ai	bait, aim
	ei	eight, neighbour
	ay	bay, stray, crayfish
ʌ^{ɩ}	i	ice, bite, child
	ie	tie, cried
	y	my, try
	uy	buy
	igh	sigh, light
	eigh	height
ʌ^{u}	ou	out, pout
	ow	now, flower
	ough	plough, bough
o^{u}	ow	bow, sow
	oa	oat, boat, toast
	o	no, rode, revoke
	oe	toe
	ew	sew
ɔ^{ɩ}	oi	oil, boil
	oy	boy, coy
	uoy	buoy
i$_{u}$	ew	few, chew
	eu	feud
	eau	beauty
	u	utility, student, use
	you	you
	ue	fuel, avenue
ə^{u}	oo	ooze, boot, boo, loop
	ou	soup, recoup
	o	move
	ue	clue
	u	fluke, rude
	ew	crew, stewed
	wo	two

APPENDIX 3.2

EXAMPLE OF ETYMOLOGICAL AND PHONEMIC ORTHOGRAPHIES

The following is an extract from a Creole story by Jentian (1977:64-65). The extract occurs below first in an etymological orthography. A free English translation is then given. Both have been prepared by Sandefur. Finally, the story is given in the phonemic Creole orthography as published.

Etymological Orthography:

Well, long another country, all the bandicoot been sit-down. Him and him wife been no-good-binjey too-much two-fellow no-more been have-him piccaninny.

One-day two-fellow been listen gammon kangaroo been have-him lot-of piccaninny. Two-fellow been have-to go long kangaroo belong ask-him kangaroo belong two-fellow piccaninny. Two-fellow been go and two-fellow been come-out long that kangaroo camp.

When that kangaroo been look two-fellow, him-been ask-him two-fellow and him-been say, 'What-name belong you-and-two-fellow been come here?' that kangaroo been say.

And that bandicoot been say, 'Well, me-and-two-fellow been come belong ask-him you belong two-fellow piccaninny, too-much me-and-two-fellow no-more got-him any piccaninny.'

English Translation:

The Bandicoots lived in another country. Mr. Bandicoot and his wife were sad because they had no children.

One day they heard that a kangaroo had a lot of children. They decided they would have to go to the kangaroo and ask him for two children. So they went to the kangaroo's camp.

When the kangaroo saw them, he asked them, 'Why have you come here?'

And Mr. Bandicoot said, 'Well, we've come to ask you for two children, because we don't have any.'

Creole Phonemic Orthography:

Wel, langa naja kantri, ola Bendigut bin jidan. Im en im waif bin nogudbinji dumaji tubala nomo bin abum biginini.

I ndei tubala bin lisin geman keingurru bin abum loda biginini. Tubala bin labda go langa keingurru bla askim keingurru blanga tubala biginini. Tubala bin go en tubala bin kamat langa jad keingurru kemp.

Wen jad keingurru bin luk tubala, imin askim tubala en imin sei, 'Wanem bla yumdubala bin kam iya?' jad keingurru bin sei.

En jad Bendigut bin sei, 'Wel, mindubala bin kam bla askim yu bla tubala biginini, dumaji mindubala nomo gadem eni biginini.'

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CHAPTER 4

NOUNS, PRONOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND THE NOUN PHRASE

The noun phrase in Creole is composed of three major elements - nouns modified by adjectives and pronouns. All nouns, most pronouns, and most adjectives under certain conditions can occur in a sentence in the place of a noun phrase. Note, for example, the subjects and objects in the following 'story'.

Noun Phrase

Subject			Object
Main waitwan dog	*bin*	*kilim*	*jadan fetwan gowena.*
'My white dog		killed	that fat goanna.'

Nouns

Subject		Object
Olgamen	*bin meigim*	*baya.*
'A woman	made	a fire.'

Pronouns

Subject			Object
Imin	*andi*	*gugum*	*im.*
'She	was going	to cook	it.'

Adjectives

Subject			Object
Drangginbala	*bin*	*dagat*	*rowan.*
'A drunk		ate	the raw (goanna).'

Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and the noun phrase are discussed in order below.

4.1 NOUNS

A noun in English is commonly defined as the name of a person, place, or thing. It can also be described by the fact that it occurs as the subject or object of a verb. Nouns in Creole can be described in much the same way. A few Creole nouns are given below as examples.

Jali	'Charlie'
Wadagujaja	'Goose Lagoon'
bilibong	'billabong'

gabarra 'head'

boniboni 'colt'

daga 'food'

Nouns in English are either definite (*the* colt) or indefinite (*a* colt, *some* colts) and either singular (colt) or plural (colts). Creole nouns are unmarked for all four of these features. In all the examples given above in brackets, Creole would have simply *boniboni*. Thus, the sentence:

Ai bin luk b :iboni.

could be translated, depending on what the speaker actually saw, as:

'I saw the colt.' (definite-singular)

'I saw a colt.' (indefinite-singular)

'I saw the colts.' (definite-plural)

'I saw some colts.' (indefinite-plural)

This parallels the Aboriginal languages, which rarely mark nouns for number. There are some exceptions, but these are usually restricted to nouns referring to animate or human beings as opposed to inanimate things. (Wurm 1972:63). Alawa, for example, marks plurality on human nouns by reduplication, though it is optional (Sharpe 1972:54).

Likewise, Creole has three nouns referring to human beings that are optionally marked for plurality by reduplication. One of them is marked by reduplicating the whole word:

olmen 'man' *olmenolmen* 'men'

while the other two reduplicate only part of the word:

olgamen 'woman' *olgolgamen* 'women'

wangulubala 'orphan' *wangwangulubala* 'orphans'

While it is true to say that Creole nouns are unmarked for definiteness and number, it is wrong to say that Creole cannot indicate definiteness and number. These features may be indicated by the use of demonstrative and indefinite pronouns, as shown in the following examples:

Ai bin luk dadan boniboni. (definite-singular)
'I saw the colt.'

Ai bin luk wanbala boniboni. (indefinite-singular)
'I saw a colt.'

Ai bin luk olabat boniboni. (definite-plural)
'I saw the colts.'

Ai bin luk sambala boniboni. (indefinite-plural)
'I saw some colts.'

Likewise, while it is true to say that Creole nouns are not marked for gender, it is not true to say that gender cannot be indicated. Some words carry an inherent gender. For example, *mami* 'mother' and *olgamen* 'old woman' are inherently feminine, while *dadi* 'father' and *olmen* 'old man' are inherently masculine.

English speakers should beware that the inherent gender of a Creole word may not be the same as that of the English word from which it was derived. The classic example would be *greni*, which is derived from the feminine English word *granny*. The Creole *greni* may, as in English, refer to one's mother's mother, but it may also refer to one's sister's daughter's children whether male or female, to one's daughter's daughter's husband, or to one's wife's mother's mother's husband.

Nouns that do not inherently carry a gender distinction but which apply generally to a person or animal of either sex, may be specified as being male or female by the use of the adjectives *boiwan* 'male' and *gelwan* 'female'. For example, the unspecified gender reference in

Imin kilim lebden wolabi.
'He killed a nail tail wallaby.'

could be specified as

Imin kilim boiwan lebden wolabi.
'He killed a male nail tail wallaby.'

or *Imin kilim gelwan lebden wolabi.*
'He killed a female nail tail wallaby.'

Creole nouns can be divided into three classes (proper, count, and mass) according to the type of modifiers that can precede them. These classes are not absolute as some nouns can occur in more than one class.

1. Proper nouns are names, in the strict English sense, especially of people, pet animals, and places. Some examples are *Wangan*

(a person's name), *Marlu* (a dog's name), and *Burrunju* (a place name). Proper nouns are distinguished from other noun classes in that they occur with very few modifiers.

Aboriginal place names commonly apply to *kantri* 'a defined geographical area' but may also apply to the significant features within that area, such as *ribà* 'rivers', *krik* 'creeks', *bilibong* 'billabongs', and *hil* 'hills'. These latter are sometimes specified by reference to the feature. For example, *Karniyarrang*, while referring to a specific *kantri*, may also refer to a specific *krik* or *hil* within that *kantri*. These may be more specifically referred to by a double noun as *Karniyarrang Krik* and *Karniyarrang Hil*.

2. Count nouns, as the name implies, are those which can be counted. In other words, count nouns may be preceded by the numeral modifiers. They are not restricted, however, to numeral modifiers but may take the full range of modifiers. For example, *jaojao* 'water lily stalk' can be used in the following constructions.

Ai bin dagat jaojao. (no modifiers)
'I ate water lily stalk.'

Ai bin dagat fobala jaojao. (numeral modifier)
'I ate four water lily stalks.'

Ai bin dagat sambala jaojao. (indefinite pronoun)
'I ate some water lily stalks.'

Ai bin dagat bigbala jaojao. (adjective)
'I ate a large water lilly stalk.'

3. Mass nouns are those nouns that cannot be counted. That is, they cannot occur with numerical modifiers.

Ai bin dagat daga.
'I ate food.'

and *Ai bin dagat sambala daga.*
'I ate some food.'

but not **Ai bin dagat fobala daga.*
'I ate four food.'

It is also possible in Creole to talk about simple nouns, reduplicated nouns, compound nouns, and double nouns.

1. The vast majority of the nouns in Creole are simple nouns being composed of one root word.

binji	'stomach'
brolga	'Brolga'
garnda	'private parts'
marlabangu	'freshwater mussel'

2. Reduplicated nouns have a root word that occurs twice. Many of these words are animal names that have been derived from English words.

bigibigi	'pig'
jukjuk	'chook'
gabigabi	'calf'

Some have been derived from Aboriginal words. Many of these words are onomatopoeic; that is, they are formed from sounds that resemble those associated with the object named.

nirrinirri	'fly (insect)'
karrakkarrak	'Comorant'

3. Compound nouns are made up of two closeknit root words.

sengran	'sand' ('sand' + 'ground')
igulok	'hawk' ('eagle' + 'hawk')
sugabeg	'wild honey' ('sugar' + 'bag')
bakjamba	'bucking horse' ('buck' + 'jumper')

4. Double nouns consist of two root words which are not as closeknit as compound word roots.

gras wolabi	'agile wallaby'
waya spiya	'fishing spear'
ded silip	'deep sleep'
bleksol kantri	'black soil country'

The distinction between double nouns and compound nouns is not well defined.

The first root word of some compound and double nouns can stand for the whole noun.

waya ~ *wɾya spiya* 'fishing spear'

baya ~ *bayawud* 'firewood'

but not **suga* for *sugabeg* 'wild honey'

nor **gras* for *gras wolabi* 'agile wallaby'

4.2 PRONOUNS

Most of the pronouns of Creole fall into one of three groups - personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and indefinite pronouns. In addition to these three main groups, there are also possessive pronouns, interrogative pronouns, reflexive pronouns, and one reciprocal pronoun.

4.2.1 Personal Pronouns

Part of the personal pronoun system of Creole is similar to that of English, though the system as a whole is very different. In English, there are two sets of personal pronouns, one is used in the subject position of sentences while the other is used in the object position. These two sets of English pronouns are given in Charts 4.1 and 4.2.

Chart 4.1 English Subject Pronouns

	singular	plural
first person	*I*	*we*
second person	*you*	*you*
third person - masculine	*he*	*they*
feminine	*she*	
neuter	*it*	

Chart 4.2. English Object Pronouns

		singular	plural
first person		*me*	*us*
second person		*you*	*you*
third person -	masculine	*him*	*them*
	feminine	*her*	
	neuter	*it*	

The most noticeable difference between Creole and English personal pronoun systems is the lack of gender distinction in the third person singular. Where English has *he*, *she*, *it*, *him*, and *her*, Creole has only the one form *im* (from the English masculine *him*).

Im bigbala.

could mean, depending on the context,

'He is big.'

'She is big.'

or 'It is big.'

Ai bin luk im.

could mean, depending on the context,

'I saw him.'

'I saw her.'

or 'I saw it.'

English speakers are prone to think that Creole speakers do not know the difference between the subject and object pronouns of English. This is because Creole uses *mi* (from the English object pronoun *me*) as the subject pronoun. In actual fact, both *mi* and *ai* (from the English subject pronoun *I*) occur in Creole but are used differently than in English. *Mi* can be used in all subject positions and object positions, while *ai* can be used only in subject positions, though not as the subject of an equational sentence.

Mi *wangulubala.*
'I am an orphan.'

but not **Ai* *wangulubala.*

Mi bin luk boniboni.
'I saw a colt.'

and *Ai bin luk boniboni.*

Boniboni bin luk mi.
'The colt saw me.'

but not **Boniboni bin luk ai.*

Creole also makes a distinction in the third person plural between the subject and object pronoun. *Dei* (from the English subject pronoun *they*), like English, is used only in subject positions, while *dem* (from the English object pronoun *them*) is used only in object positions. (It should be noted, however, that *dem* also functions as as a demonstrative pronoun in either subject or object noun phrases.)

Dei bin luk boniboni.
'They saw the colt.'

but not **Dem bin luk boniboni.* (subject position)

Ai bin luk dem.
'I saw them.'

but not **Ai bin luk dei.* (object position)

Dem boniboni kaman iya. (demonstrative pronoun)
'Those colts are coming here.'

Similarities between the Creole and English personal pronoun systems virtually stop here. Though the actual Creole pronoun forms are derived from English, their meanings are derived from the Aboriginal languages.

Unlike English, Creole does not have a simple set of plural pronouns. Instead, it has two non-singular sets. The one set is 'dual', which refers to two persons or things. The other set is 'plural', which refers to more than two (as opposed to the English plural being two or more). The Creole non-singular second and third person pronouns are given in Chart 4.3.

Chart 4.3. Non-Singular Pronouns

	dual	plural
second person	*yundubala*	*yubala*
third person	*dubala*	*olabat*

Yundubala kaman iya.
'You (two) come here.'

Yubala kaman iya.
'You all come here.

Dubala kaman iya.
'They (two) are coming here.'

Olabat kaman iya.
'They all are coming here.'

In the first person, not only is a distinction made between dual and plural, but also whether or not the person (or persons) spoken to is included in the 'we'. If the person being spoken to is included, the pronoun is inclusive; if the person is excluded, it is exclusive. The first person non-singular inclusive and exclusive forms are given in Chart 4.4.

Chart 4.4. Inclusive-Exclusive Pronouns

	dual	plural
inclusive	*yunmi*	*wi*
exclusive	*mindubala*	*mibala*

Yunmi bin luk boniboni.
'We (you and I) saw a colt.'

Wi bin luk boniboni.
'We (all of us) saw a colt.'

Mindubala bin *luk boniboni.*
'We (myself and someone else) saw a colt.'

Mibala bin *luk boniboni.*
'We (myself and some others but not you) saw a colt.'

Putting the above together, the personal pronoun system of Creole would look like Chart 4.5.

Chart 4.5. Creole Personal Pronouns

	singular	dual	plural
first person	*mi/ai*		
inclusive		*yumi*	*wi*
exclusive		*mindubala*	*mibala*
second person	*yu*	*yundubala*	*yubala*
third person	*im*	*dubala*	*olabat*

As was mentioned earlier, this parallels the pronoun systems of the Aboriginal languages. Both the distinction of inclusive and exclusive in the first person and the presence of a dual number are widespread, and generally no distinction is made in the gender of the third person (Capell 1937:32, 40; Wurm 1972:62). The third person is also often used as a demonstrative pronoun (Wurm 1972:62).

Chart 4.5 of the Creole personal pronouns is really an over-simplification of the true picture. Continuum variation as discussed in Chapter 2 also affects Creole grammar. This is probably most easily seen in the personal pronoun system. The pronoun Chart 4.5 gives the heavy pronoun sub-system. Chart 4.6 (see following page) gives the light sub-system.

The light sub-system is similar to the English system. Plural object pronouns for the first person (*as*) and third person (*dem*) are used as in English. While *dem* is relatively common, *as* occurs less frequently. When it does occur, it is often in the hortatory construction *Led as* . . . 'Let us . . .'

Though both first person singular pronouns *ai* and *mi* occur, their usage is not identical with that of English. The so called 'object' pronoun *mi* 'me' is used as the subject in equative sentences instead of *ai* 'I' as in English.

Chart 4.6. Light Pronoun Sub-System

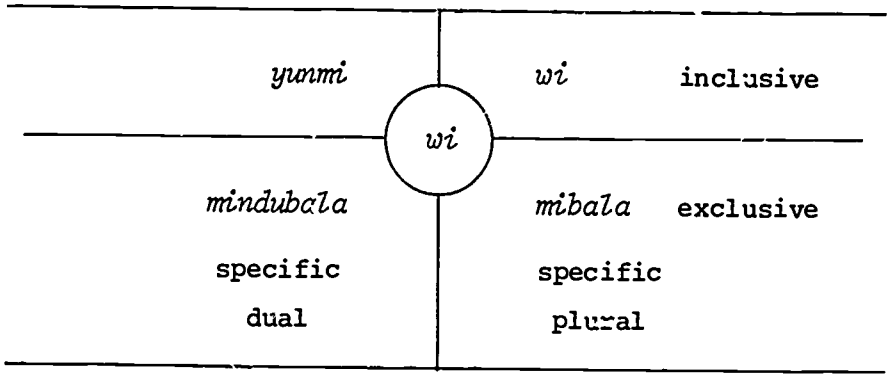
	singular	plural
first person	*ai/mi*	*wi/as*
second person	*yu*	*yu*
third person	*im*	*dei/dem*

Though only one third person singular form (*im*) is listed, other forms sometimes occur. 'It' occasionally occurs, 'he' and 'she' less frequently occur, while 'him' and 'her' rarely occur.

The heavy and light sub-systems do not operate independentl, in actual speaker usage. Most speakers make use of the full range of pronouns given in Charts 4.5 and 4.6. This means that the two charts, in effect, are superimposed on each other. The singular pronouns of both charts are the same so present no difficulty in understanding them.

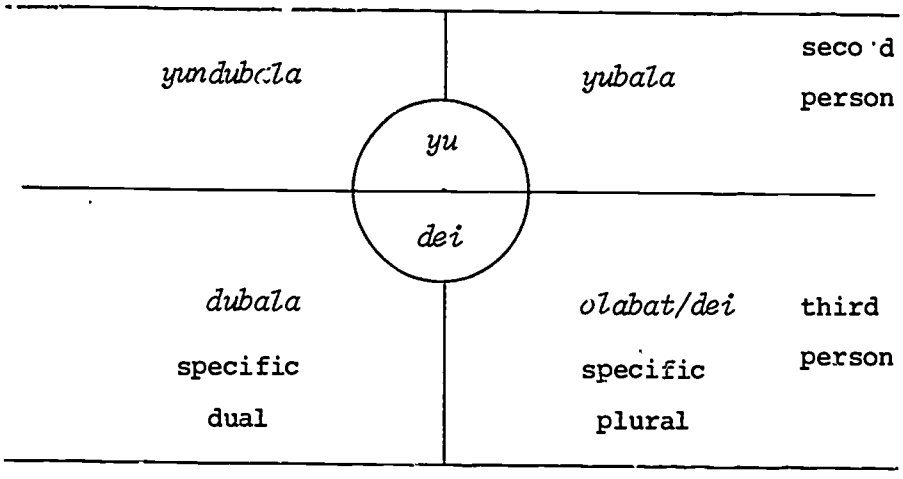
The plural pronouns of the light sub-system may best be thought of as being generic forms, with the dual and plural of the heavy sub-system being specific forms. The first person generic plural is *wi*. There are four first person specific plurals: *yumi* (dual, inclusive), *mindubala* (dual, exclusive), *wi* (plural, inclusive), and *mibala* (plural, exclusive). These generic-specific pronouns could be diagrammed as in Chart 4.7, the inner circle being generic.

Chart 4.7. First Person Generic-Specific Pronouns



The second and third person pronouns are less complicated since they lack inclusive-exclusive distinctions. They could be diagrammed as in Chart 4.8, the inner circle being generic.

Chart 4.8. Second and Third Person
Generic-Specific Pronouns



Most of the preceding discussion has been on the *system* of the personal pronouns of Creole. The following discussion will deal with variations in the *form* of pronouns used. Most of these variations, unlike that of the variation in the system, are not so much due to the continuum nature of Creole as they are to dialect and age group differences.

The plural set of pronouns given in Charts 4.7 and 4.8 above are those used mainly at Bamyili. Ngukurr speakers tend to use a different set. The two sets are given in Chart 4.9 (see following page). In actual usage, the inclusive-exclusive distinction at Ngukurr is generally not made, *minalabat* seldom being used and *melabat* being used in the generic plural sense.

There are a number of variants that are used mainly by older people and cattle station people. These include *melelabat* in place of *melabat*; *yulabat*, *yuwalabat*, or *yunalabat* in place of *yumob*; *imalabat* in place of *alabat*; and *imdubala* or *jeidubala* in place of *dubala*.

There are also a number of variants that are used mainly by younger people. These include *mela* in place of *melabat* (though *mela* is reported to be the usual form used at Elsey Station by everyone),

Chart 4.9. Bamyili-Ngukurr Plural Pronouns

	Bamyili	Ngukurr
first person		
inclusive	*wi*	*minalabat*
exclusive	*mibala*	*melabat*
second person	*yubala*	*yumob*
third person	*olabat*	*alabat*

minbala or *minbla* in place of *mindubala*, and *yunbala* or *yunbla* in place of *yundubala*. School children at Bamyili also tend to use *yunbala* or *yunbla* as the singular vocative pronoun of address instead of *yu*.

Some forms function in ways other than as personal pronouns. It has already been mentioned that the third personal plural *dem* is also used as a demonstrative pronoun. So likewise is *olabat*. In addition, *olabat* is also used as the plural vocative pronoun.

Olabat *kaman na!*
'You all come!'

The third person dual pronoun *dubala* is also used as the numeral two.

4.2.2 Possessive Pronouns

Unlike English, Creole does not have a possessive set of pronouns distinct from the personal pronouns. Instead, basically, the personal pronouns are simply placed before a noun to indicate possession.

yu *gabarra*
'your head'

melabat *daga*
'our food'

Not all personal pronouns can be used in this type of possessive construction. *Ai*, *as*, *dei*, and *dem* do not occur in possessive constructions.

mi *gabarra*
'my head'

can occur, but not

**ai* *gabarra*

or *olabat* *boniboni*
'their colt'

can occur, but not

**dei* *boniboni*

Possession may also be expressed by the use of personal pronouns in a prepositional phase (see Section 6.3.3 on prepositions).

gabarra blanga mi
my head'

While it is true that there is no set of possessive pronouns in Creole as such, there are several possessive pronoun forms. These occur as synonyms with the personal pronouns in possessive constructions as discussed above.

The most commonly used possessive pronouns are the first person singular forms *mai* and *main*. Both may be used in place of *mi* in a possessive construction.

mi *gabarra*
mai *gabarra*
and *main* *gabarra*
'my head'

Main, however, as distinct from the possessive use of *mi* and *mai*, is able to stand alone. That is, *mi* and *mai* must be used in a construction in which that which is possessed is expressed following the pronoun, while *main* may be used without overtly expressing what is possessed. In this particular usage, *main* also sometimes occurs with the suffix *-wan* as *mainwan*. For example, the sentence

'I saw my colt.'

could be expressed as

Ai bin luk main boniboni.
Ai bin luk mai boniboni.
Ai bin luk mi boniboni.
Ai bin luk main.
Ai bin luk mainwan.

but not

**Ai bin luk mai.*

nor **Ai bin luk mi.*

The use of the first person plural form *awa* 'our' is not uncommon. For example, 'our camp' though usually expressed as *melabat kemp* can also be expressed as *awa kemp*.

4.2.3 Reflexive and Reciprocal Pronouns

English combines several of its personal pronouns with *self* to form compound personal pronouns, such as *yourself* and *themselves*. Such pronouns are usually referred to as reflexive pronouns because their main function is to reflect the action of a verb back upon the subject instead of passing it onto some other object.

He hit himself.

They are also sometimes used to emphasize a particular participant.

I saw him myself.

or She herself gave it to him.

Creole likewise has a reflexive pronoun. Unlike English, however, which has different forms for the various person-number combinations, Creole has one main form *mijelb* which is used regardless of person and number references.

The basic function of the Creole reflexive pronoun *mijelb* is similar to that of English. It reflects the action of the verb back upon the subject.

Imin kilim mijelb.
'He hit himself.'

Yu labda wajim mijelb.
'You should wash yourself.'

Dubala bin lujim mijelb.
'They lost themselves (i.e. got lost).'

Olabat bin luk mijelb.
'They saw themselves.'

The Creole reflexive pronoun can also be used to emphasize a particular participant.

Mi bin gibit im mijelb.
'I gave it (to) him myself.'

However, unlike English, the reflexive pronoun in the emphatic usage cannot occur as part of the subject. The following construction is not possible.

**Mi mijelb bin gibit im.*
'I myself gave it (to) him.'

Creole does, however, make use of an emphatic particle *na* in a similar construction.

Mi na bin gibit im
'I gave it (to) him.'

This is discussed elsewhere.

In addition to *mijelb*, several light forms occur. Their occurrence, however, is much less frequent. Forms that are in use include

yuself 'yourself, yourselves'

imself 'himself, herself'

There are also several phonological variants of *mijelb*, including *mijalb*, *mijel*, *misel*, and *miself*.

Mijelb has functions other than its reflexive and emphatic usages. The basic reflexive construction, like many constructions, can mean more than one thing, depending on the context in which it is used.

Yu nomo bogi mijelb.

can mean either

'Do not bathe yourself.'

or 'Do not bathe by yourself.'

Im wokabat mijelb.

could mean

'He is walking himself.
(i.e. He himself is walking.)'

but would most often mean

'He is walking by himself.'

An emphatic form of this meaning would be

Im wokabat mijelb kantri.

or *Im wokabat mijelb, mijelb kantri.*

'He is walking by himself, all alone.

(Literally:

He is walking himself himself country.)'

However, when there is a non-singular subject, as in

Dubala wokabat mijelb.
'They walk themselves.'

it normally means

'They walk by themselves, individually, not together.'

The construction to express 'together, not individually' makes use of the adverb *mijamet*, as in

Dubala wokabat mijamet.
'They walk together.'

An emphatic form of 'individually' is expressed by reduplicating the reflexive pronoun, as in

Dubala wokabat mijelbmijelb.
'They walk each by himself.'

Olabat bin go mijelbmijelb.
'They went their own ways.'

Melabat dagadagat mijelbmijelb.
'We each eat by our ownselves.'

Creole has a reciprocal pronoun *gija* that is used in a variety of constructions to stress a mutual or reciprocal relationship of two or more participants. Consider the following examples.

Olabat bin oldei kilimbat gija.
'They were always killing each other.'

Mindubala jidan bekbon gija.
'We are sitting with our backs to each other.'

Dubala silip but gija.
'They are sleeping head to foot.
(Literally:
They sleep foot to each other.)'

Dubala bada gija.
'They are sisters to each other.'

Dubala banji gija bin go.
'By male and female couples they went.
(Literally:
Two husband/wife to each other went.)'

Banjibanji gija barnbarn.
'All (of the grass) is burning.
(Literally:
Husbands/wives to each other are burning.)'

4.2.4 Demonstrative Pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns of Creole are similar to those of English (*this, that, these, those*) in that there is a singular and plural set, both of which distinguish a 'near' and 'distant' reference. In addition, Creole has long and short forms as well as the 'normal' form for the singular set. The plural set also has two alternate forms. The chart below lists the demonstrative pronouns with the commonly used heavy to light variants.

Chart 4.10. Demonstrative Pronouns

	'near' (heavy → light)		'distant' (heavy → light)		
singular	*dijan*		*jarran*	*darran*	*tharran*
			jadan	*dadan*	*thadan*
long	*dijanwan*		*jarranwan*	*darranwan*	*tharranwan*
			jadanwan	*dadanwan*	*thadanwan*
short	*dij*	*dis*	*jat*	*dat*	*that*
plural	*dijlot*	*dislot*	*jadlot*	*dadlot*	*thatlot*
	dijmob	*dismob*	*jadmob*	*dadmob*	*thatmob*

With the exception of the singular short forms, all Creole demonstrative pronouns are able to stand alone. That is, tha' to which they specifically refer need not be overtly expressed in the same construction.

Dijan jukijuki ai bin luk.
'This is the Suzuki I saw.'

or *Dijan ai bin luk.*
'This is the one I saw.'

Ai bin dagat jadlot garniya.
I ate those water lily roots.'

or *Ai bin dagat jadlot.*
'I ate those.'

The singular short forms (*dij*, *dis*, *jat*, and *dat*) cannot stand alone. They occur only in a noun phrase preceding an overt expression of that to which they refer.

Jat pappap bin dagat bib.
'That puppy ate the meat.'

but not

**Jat bin dagat bib.*

4.2.5 Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are those used in forming questions. There are four such pronouns in Creole, two having only human or personal reference, one having only non-human or non-personal reference, and the fourth having neutral reference.

hu 'who' (personal)

Hu bin dagat?
'Who has eaten?'

blau 'whose' (personal)

Blau jat daga?
'Whose is that food?'

wanim 'what' (non-personal)

Wanim bin dagat main daga?
'What ate my food?

wijan 'which' (neutral)

Wijan bin dagat?
'Which one ate it?'

In addition to neutral versus non-personal references, *wijan* 'which' differs from *wanim* 'what' in that it is specific while *wanim* tends to be more generic. This is illustrated by placing the two examples above in a larger context:

Wanim bin dagat main daga?
'What ate my food?'

Lilbala pappap din dagat.
'A little puppy ate it.'

Wijan bin dagat?
'Which (puppy) ate it?'

Wijan differs from other interrogative pronouns in being able to occur in a construction preceding the generic reference it is related to.

Wijan mikibul bin binij?
'Which young bull died?'

but not

**Wanim mikibul bin binji?*

Likewise,

Wijan gel bin kaman?
'Which girl came?'

but not

**Hu gel bin kaman?*

Blau 'whose' is a contraction of the preposition *blanga* and the interrogative pronoun *hu*. It is sometimes expressed by the longer form of *blanga hu* as well as by the permuted form *hu blanga*.

Blau *jadan* *waya?*
Blanga hu *jadan* *waya?*
Hu blanga *jadan* *waya?*

'Whose is that fishing spear?'

Hu 'who', *wanim* 'what', and *wijan* 'which' may occur as the object of a preposition, thus making an interrogative prepositional phrase.

Imin *gibit* *langa* *wijan?*
'He gave it to which one?'

4.2.6 Indefinite Pronouns

The indefinite pronouns of Creole are divided into two main groups on the basis of the way in which they can be used in a sentence. The pronouns of the first group are always used as independent pronouns; they always stand alone, never in a modifier position in a noun phrase. For example, the indefinite pronoun *enibodi* 'anybody' can occur in the construction

Enibodi *gin* *dagat.*
'Anybody can eat.'

but not in

**Enibodi* *biginini* *gin* *dagat.*
'Anybody child can eat.'

The pronouns of the second group, however, may occur either alone or functioning like an adjective in a noun phrase. The example immediately above could be

Eni *biginini* *gin* *dagat.*
'Any child can eat.'

Within a larger context this second group of indefinite pronouns may occur alone, as in

Eni *gin* *dagat.*
'Any can eat.'

The pronoun in such cases normally has a referent within the larger context. In other words, the example above would be

'Any (child) can eat.'

The pronouns in the independent group of indefinite pronouns may be subdivided into four groups on the basis of their meanings. These groups are:

Universal - the *ebri-* 'every' compounds.

Assertive - the *sam-* 'some' compounds.

Non-Assertive - the *eni-* 'any' compounds.

Negative - the *no-* 'no' compounds.

There are three compound forms in each of these groups carrying a basic personal reference:

Neutral - the *-wan* 'one' compounds.

Personal - the *-bodi* 'body' compounds.

Non-Personal - the *-jing* 'thing' compounds.

Chart 4.11. Independent Indefinite Pronouns

	Neutral	Personal	Non-Personal
Universal	*ebriwan* 'everyone'	*ebribodi* 'everybody'	*ebrijing* 'everything'
Assertive	*samwan* 'someone'	*sambodi* 'somebody'	*samjing* 'something'
Non-Assertive	*eniwan* 'anyone'	*enibodi* 'anybody'	*enijing* 'anything'
Negative	*nowan* 'no one'	*nobodi* 'nobody'	*najing* 'nothing'

The pronouns of the adjectival group of indefinite pronouns do not subdivide into neat categories as do the independent indefinite pronouns. The majority are assertive and are listed here in a somewhat relative order from those indicating paucity to those indicating multitude.

The occurrence of *olagija* as an indefinite pronoun is relatively rare. The non-assertive form *eni* 'any' also occurs as an adjectival indefinite pronoun.

Chart 4.12. Assertive Adjectival Indefinite Pronouns

fyu	'few'
lilbit	'a little'
sam, sambala	'some'
haf	'a portion, "half"'
holot, holbit	'all, whole'
olagija	'(absolutely) all'
blandi, blandibala	'plenty'
naf	'enough'
nomo lilbit	'a lot'
bigmob, karangnyirringba	'lots, many'
tumani, tumaj	'very many, very much'
thadmaj, milyans	'an unbelievable quantity'

There is also a small group of indefinite pronouns that are compounds of *naja-* and all carry the meaning 'other, another'. They are all neutral in their personal reference and occur with singular and plural forms.

Chart 4.13. *Naja-* Indefinite pronouns

singular	plural
najan	*najalot*
najawan	*najamob*
'other, another'	'others'

4.3 ADJECTIVES

Adjectives are not always easily distinguished from nouns. There are several reasons for this. Most adjectives commonly occur with a nominalizing suffix *-bala, -wan,* and occasionally *-baga,*

though they may occur without it. For example, *bigbala, bigwan, bigbaga,* and *big* all mean 'big'. This nominalizing suffix allows the adjective to function as a nominal or noun. For example, *blekbala* 'black' as an adjective would be

Im abum blekbala dog.
'He has a black dog.

Blekbala may also be used as a noun as in

Im blekbala.
'He is an Aborigine.'

This example could also mean

'He is black.'

with *blekbala* being an adjective.

Similarly some nouns may be used as adjectives. For example, *mananga* 'European' is usually a noun, as in

Dadan mananga bin meigim mi bush.
'That European made me confused.'

It may, however, be used as an adjective as is

Imin blandim mananga tri.
'He planted a European (i.e. non-native) tree.'

The distinction between adjectives and adverbs, also, is not clear cut. For example, *kwikbala* may be used as an adjective as in

Im gadim kwikbala brambi.
'He has a fast wild horse.'

or *Bla im brambi kwikbala.*
'His wild horse is quick.'

It may also be used as an adverb as in

Im brambi bin ran kwikbala.
'His wild horse ran quickly.'

Adjectives have two major functions. The first of these is modifying a noun in a noun phrase. This is referred to as the attributive function.

Bigbala aligerra jidanbat jeya.
'A big crocodile lives there.'

Imin spirrim lilwan wolabi.
'He speared a little wallaby.'

The second function of adjectives is as a complement or comment in a non-verbal clause. (See Chapter 7 on simple sentences.) This is referred to as the predicative function.

Aligerra bigbala.
'The crocodile is big.'

Wolabi imin lilwan.
'The wallaby was little.'

Adjectives may be intensified in several ways. Most common is reduplication where the whole of the adjective is reduplicated.

Im shabalashabala wadi.
'It's a very sharp stick.

as compared with

Im shabala wadi.
'It's a sharp stick.'

In some cases, however, the adjective may be only partially reduplicated.

Beibi lillilwan.
'The baby is very small.'

as compared with

Beibi lilwan.
'The baby is small.'

Intensity, with a stronger sense of emphasis, can be indicated by modifying the adjective with an adverb such as *brabli.*

Brabli gudbala daga, tharran.
'Very good food, that.'

A few adjectives carry an inherent sense of intensity.

Imin gijim bigiswan bijibiji.
'He caught a very big fish.'

Though the form of these Creole intensive adjectives is derived from the English '-est', they do not function in a comparative-superlative manner as does the English '-est'. In other words, *bigiswan* means 'very big', not 'biggest'.

4.4 THE NOUN PHRASE

Noun phrases can be classified into two groups. The basic noun phrase consists of a noun modified by preceding adjectives and determiners. The complex noun phrase is a basic noun phrase with post-modifiers, that is modifiers that follow the noun; or with compounding of the phrase; or elements within the phrase.

4.4.1 The Basic Noun Phrase

The noun phrase, in its basic form, consists of a noun modified by a preceding adjective.

Adjective + Noun

lilbala gel
'little girl'

As was discussed in the previous section, an adjective need not occur with the nominalizer suffix.

lil budiblawa
'small flower'

The adjective may also occur in a reduplicated form to indicate intensity.

shabalashabala wadi
'very sharp stick'

The adjective may also occur with an adverbial modifier.

brabli bigbala fish
'very fat fish'

The noun of a noun phrase is not restricted to being modified by only one adjective. Several may occur.

longwan shabalashabala waya
'long very sharp fishing spear'

bigbala budibala redbala bol
'big pretty red ball'

Though noun phrases with more than two adjectives do occur, they occur relatively infrequently.

In addition to being modified by an adjective, the noun head can also be modified by what is called a determiner. Determiners are, for the most part, pronouns. These precede any adjective modifiers that may occur in the noun phrase.

Determiner + Adjective + Noun

yu bigbala wobla (possessive pronoun)
'your big fishing line'

tharran longwan munanga (demonstrative pronoun)
'that tall European'

wijan gubarlwan modiga (interrogative pronoun)
'which rubbish car'

sambala kukwan yarlbun (indefinite pronoun)
'some ripe water lily seeds'

Creole does not have any articles as does English (*a, an, the*). There is one determiner, however, that functions somewhat like an article. *Wanbala*, though most often used as the number 'one', is not infrequently used in the sense of 'a certain'.

Wanbala men bin godan.

in everyday conversation would most likely mean

'One man went.'

while in a story context, it could mean

'A certain man went.'

In addition to determiners and adjectives, there are two small groups of words that occur in restricted positions in the noun phrase. The first of these is called predeterminers because they precede any determiners that may occur in the noun phrase. Predeterminers include words like *ol, ola, olabat* 'all' and *haf* 'half'.

Predeterminer + Determiner + Adjective + Noun

ola jadlot yangbala boi
'all those young boys.'

'haf : *dijan bigbala damba*
'half of this big damper'

The second group of restricted words is called postdeterminers because they follow any determiners that may occur. They also precede any adjectives that may occur. Postdeterminers include the numbers and words such as *laswan* 'last' and *fe:swan* 'first'.

Determiner + Postdeterminer + Adjective + Noun

yundubala fobala lilwan dog
'your four little dogs'

darran laswan nyubala song
'that last new song'

In a given context the noun can be deleted from the noun phrase. In the sentence

Imin kilim bigbala karrakkarrak.
'He killed a big Coromorant.'

the noun *karrakkarrak* in the noun phrase *bigbala karrakkarrak* could be deleted so as to give

Imin kilim bigbala.
'He killed a big (Cormorant).'

This deletion can occur only when the preceding modifier can stand alone. If the preceding modifier is an adjective, in most cases it must occur with a nominalizer suffix (*-bala, -wan, -baga*) in order for the noun to be deleted.

**Imin kilim big.*
'He killed a big (Cormorant).'

cannot occur.

If the preceding modifier is a determiner (or predeterminer or postdeterminer), the noun can be deleted only if the determiner can stand independently.

Imin kilim dijan dakdak.
'He killed this duck.

can be

Imin kilim dijan.

but *Imin dagat yundubala dakdak.*
'He ate your ducks.'

cannot be

**Imin dagat yundubala.*

4.4.2 The Complex Noun Phrase

As stated earlier, the complex noun phrase is a basic noun phrase with postmodifiers. These postmodifiers include the reciprocal pronoun *gija*, emphatic particle *na*, locative adverbs, prepositional phrases, and embedded sentences. These are exemplified below but not given detailed consideration.

Reciprocal Pronoun

Jadan dubala baba gija
'Those two are sisters to each other.'

Emphatic Particle

Dijan olmen na bin dalimbat mi.
'This man told me.'

Locative Adverb

Olabat dakdak jeya bla yu.
'All of the ducks there are for you.'

Wanbala olgamen tharrei bin gibit mi.
'A woman there gave it (to) me.'

Blanga Prepositional Phrase

Dog blanga dadi bin binij.
'A dog of Father's died.'

The possessive prepositional phrase may precede the noun in a permuted construction.

Blanga dadi dog bin binij.

Langa Prepositional Phrase

Wanbala yangboi langa Ropa bin duit.
'A young boy at Roper (i.e. a Roper boy) did it.'

Burrum Prepositional Phrase

Blandibala *burrum* *Bamyili* *bin* *kaman.*
'Lots (of people) from Bamyili (i.e. Bamyilites) came.'

Gadim Prepositional Phrase

Main *andi* *gadim* *modiga* *andi* *kaman.*
'My auntie with a car is coming.'

The negative *gadim* phrase

Main *andi* *nomo gadim* *modiga* *andi* *kaman.*
'My auntie without a car is coming.'

Embedded Sentence

Wanbala *olmen* *weya imin* *we:k* *longa* *Elsi*
'A certain man who worked at Elsey Station

bin *dalim* *mi.*
told me.'

Noun phrases may be made into complex phrases by compounding. Compounding may be external with two or more noun phrases joined by a conjunction.

Melabat *dadi* *bin* *kaman.*
'Our father came.'

and *Yubala* *lambarra* *bin* *kaman.*
'Your father-in-law came.'

could be combined with a compound subject:

Melabat *dadi* *en* *yubala* *lambarra* *bin* *kaman.*
'Our father and your father-in-law came.'

Compounding may also be internal to the phrase with two or more modifiers being joined.

ola *greiwan* *en* *blekwan* *hosis*
'all the grey and black horses'

But note also the construction

wanbala *yelablekwan* *ston*
'one yellow and black stone'

Compounding of pronouns requires special note. With the dual exclusive set of personal pronouns, the person or persons included in the pronoun reference other than the speaker may be specified. This leads to constructions such as

mindubala banji
'my brother-in-law and I'

compared with *mi dubala banji* ;
'my two brothers-in-law'

yundubala olgamen
'you two women'

compared with *yu dubala olgamen* ;
'your two women'

Jali dubala Maikul
'Charlie and Michael'

compared with *Jali en dubala Maikul* ;
'Charlie and two Michaels'

main dadi dubala mami
'my father and mother'

compared with *main dadi en dubala mami* .
'my father and two mothers'

The sentence

Dubala kristin kapul la Injai.

does not mean

'Two Christian couples are at Hodgson River.'

but rather

'Two Christians, a couple, are at Hodgson River.'

The possessive/relationship constructions may be built up.

Im jeya langa mi dadi braja kemp.
'He is there at my father's brother's camp.'

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CHAPTER 5

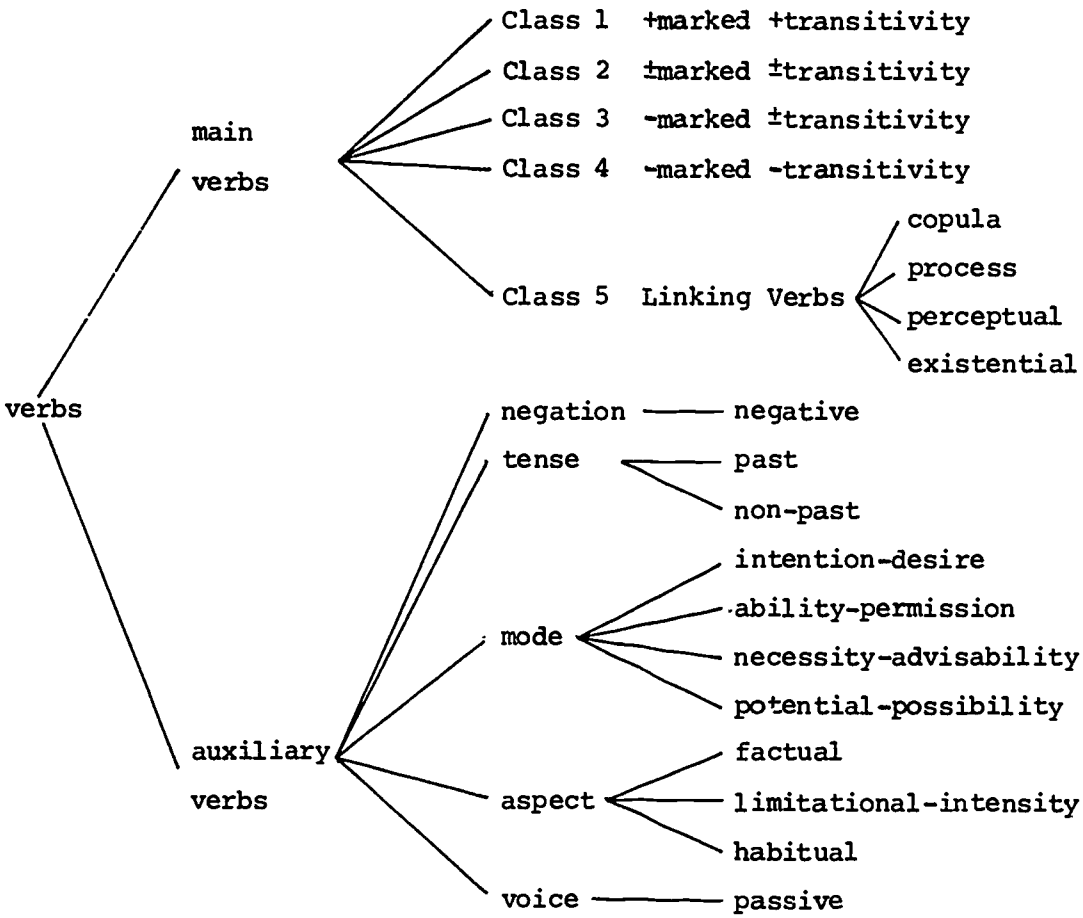
VERBS AND THE VERB PHRASE

The verbs of Creole can be divided into two major groups: main verbs and auxiliary verbs. Main verbs are sometimes referred to as predicating or lexical verbs. The majority of verbs belong to this group, which is open-ended. That is, new verbs may be generated as new experiences or needs arise. Main verbs can stand by themselves in a sentence.

Auxiliary verbs belong to a small closed group. That is, the verbs in this group can be counted and new ones are rarely added. Auxiliary verbs cannot stand by themselves but are used in a verb phrase to modify a main verb.

The following chart summarizes the division of Creole verbs discussed in following sections.

Chart 5.1. Divisions of Creole Verbs



The basic verb phrase consists of a main verb modified by one or more preceding auxiliary verbs.

5.1 MAIN VERBS

It is possible to talk about Creole verbs both in terms of verb classes and in terms of marked and unmarked verbs.

5.1.1 Verb Classes

The main verbs of Creole can be divided into five classes on the basis of the way they function in a sentence and the suffixes which occur. These classes are not absolutely distinctive but represent basic divisions.

Class 1 verbs always occur with a suffix. All verbs in this class occur with the transitive suffix *-im* or one of its alternate forms, in which case they always function transitively. That is, they always take an object.

Olabat bin grajim yem.
'They dug yams.

but not **Olabat bin graj yem.*

Most may also occur, though not simultaneously, with the progressive aspect suffix *-ing* or *-in*, in which case they may function transitively or intransitively, depending on the context they occur in.

Olabat bin grajing yem. (transitive)
'They were digging yams.'

Olabat bin grajing. (intransitive)
'They were digging.'

Class 2 verbs may occur with the transitive suffix, in which case they always function transitively.

Stakmen bin barnim gras.
'The stockmen burnt the grass.'

They may, however, occur without the transitive suffix, in which case they usually function intransitively, though in some contextual constructions some may function transitively.

Gras bin barn.
'The grass burnt.'

Class 3 verbs never occur with the transitive suffix and they usually function intransitively, though in some contexts they may function transitively.

Mela bin dagat. (intransitive)
'We ate.'

Mela bin dagat yalbun. (transitive)
'We ate water-lily seeds.'

Class 4 verbs never occur with the transitive suffix and they always function intransitively.

Biganini jilip.
'The child sleeps.'

Class 5 is a special group of verbs that functions more as linking verbs than as predicating verbs. Virtually all verbs in this class also occur in one of the other classes with a different function or as an auxiliary verb. This class of verbs is discussed below in Section 5.3.

5.1.2 Marked and Unmarked Verbs

Verbs occurring with the transitive suffix *-im* or one of its variant forms are referred to as marked verbs. Marked verbs always function transitively.

Verbs occurring without the transitive suffix are referred to as unmarked verbs. Unmarked verbs from Class 4 verbs always function intransitively; those from the other verb classes function transitively or intransitively, depending on the context they occur in.

5.2 VERB SUFFIXES

Creole verbs may occur with a number of suffixes. Marked verbs occur with the transitive suffix. Many verbs, both marked and unmarked, may also occur with an adverbial suffix. Some types of verb aspect are also indicated by suffixes.

5.2.1 The Transitive Suffix

As noted in Section 5.1.1, the transitive suffix is affixed to many verbs to indicate that they function transitively, though it does not occur with all verbs that function transitively. In usage

it not only indicates that the verb is functioning transitively, but it can also carry the weight of the object of a transitive construction. That is, its presence allows the object to be deleted.

Ai bin binijim mani.
'I finished (i.e. used up) the money.'

Ai bin binijim.
'I finished (the money).'

The basic form of the transitive suffix is the same as the third person singular personal pronoun *im*, from which it is most likely derived. It has several variant forms that are phonologically conditioned.

In general usage the contrast between the non-back vowels is neutralized in the suffix; thus it may be pronounced as *-im*, *-em*, or *-am*, as in *grajim*, *grajem*, or *grajam* 'dig'.

A non-front vowel in the syllable preceding the suffix tends to affect the vowel in the suffix by pulling it back also; thus the variant form *-um*, as in *gugum* 'cook' and *bulorum* 'follow'.

In quick speech, though sometimes in slow speech as well, there is a tendency on some words to shorten the suffix by dropping the final consonant *m* when it follows a non-back vowel; thus the variant form *-i*, as in *baidim ~ baidi* 'bite' and *kilim ~ kili* 'hit'.

Another variant form, which is not phonologically conditioned, is *-it*. This form always occurs on the verb for 'give'. It probably developed as an irregular form in order to distinguish the verb for 'give' from the verb for 'keep', both of which would have been pronounced identically otherwise:

Imin qibit.
'He gave it.'

Imin qibim.
'He kept it.'

This 'irregular' form is now occasionally used on some other verbs alternating with the 'regular' *-im* form:

Imin duim.

Imin duit.
'He did it.

5.2.2 Adverbial Suffixes

Many verbs, both marked and unmarked, occur with adverbial suffixes. These are adverb-like suffixes that indicate a sense of direction, though often of an abstract nature.

These adverbials are considered to be suffixes instead of words standing on their own because:

1. The adverbial and the verb are never separated by other words.

Olabat bin baj-im-ap daga.

but not **Olabat bin baj-im daga ap.*
'They brought the food up.'

2. The continuative aspect suffix occurs after the adverbial.

Imin go-dan-bat.

but not **Imin go-bat-dan.*
'He was going down.'

3. When a verb is reduplicated to indicate continuative aspect, the adverbial is also reduplicated.

Imin baj-im-ap-baj-im-ap.

but not **Imin baj-im-baj-im-ap.*
'He was bringing it.'

4. Some verbs obligatorily take the adverbial. That is, the verb cannot occur without the adverbial.

Ai bin jinig-ap la im.

but not **Ai bin jinig la im.*
'I sneaked up on it.'

There are nine adverbial suffixes in Creole. The chart on the following page gives their basic meaning, though their specific meaning is determined by the particular verb they occur with and its context in the sentence.

The suffixes *-ran* and *-wei* are often *-aran* and *-awei* respectively when they follow a consonant.

Chart 5.2. Creole Adverbial Suffixes

-an	'on'
-ap	'up'
-at	'out'
-bek	'back'
-dan	'down'
-in	'in'
-op	'off'
-ran	'around'
-wei	'away'

With some verb-adverbial suffix combinations, the basic meaning of the verb may be expanded or made more specific by the suffix. In such cases the verb with the suffix and the verb without the suffix may be substituted for each other in accordance with the degree of specification desired; the adverbial suffix is, in a sense, optional.

Imin *barnim*.
'He burnt it.'

Imin *barnimap*.
'He burnt it up.'

With other verb-adverbial suffix combinations, the basic meaning of the verb is significantly changed or differentiated by the suffix. In such cases the verb with the suffix and the verb without the suffix may not be substituted for each other in the same context; the adverbial suffix is obligatory.

Imin *bajimap* *modiga*.
'He brought a car.'

Imin *bajim* *modiga*.
'He passed a car.'

With a few verb-adverbial suffix combinations, the verb never occurs without the adverbial suffix; the adverbial suffix is obligatory.

	Im	*jidan*	*jeya na.*
but not	**Im*	*jid*	*jeya na.*
	'He	lives	there.
(Literally:			
	'He	sits down	there.)'

5.2.3 Aspect Suffixes

Aspect basically refers to the manner in which the verb action is regarded or takes place through time. Some aspect in Creole is expressed by auxiliary verbs. Two types of aspect - continuative and progressive - are expressed by verb suffixes. Continuative aspect can also be expressed by reduplicating the verb. Closely related to continuative aspect is durative aspect. Though it is not indicated by suffixation, it is discussed here along with the continuative and progressive aspects because of affiliation with them.

1. *Continuative aspect* generally denotes an action as being continuous or repetitious. It can be indicated either by suffixation or by reduplication.

When indicated by suffixation, the continuative aspect suffix *-bat* (or in some cases *-abat* or *-labat*) occurs as the final suffix on the verb. That is, the transitive suffix, progressive aspect suffix, and adverbial suffixes occur before the continuative aspect suffix.

Olabat	*bin*	*jidanbat.*
Olabat	*bin*	*jidanabat.*
'They	were	sitting.'

Olabat	*bin*	*leidanabat.*
Olabat	*bin*	*leidanlabat.*
'They	were	lying down.'

Olabat	*bin*	*gugumbat*	*yem.*
'They	were	cooking	yams.'

Olabat	*bin*	*bajimapbat.*
'They	were	bringing it.'

Olabat	*bin*	*wokinabat.*
'They	were	walking.'

When indicated by reduplication, the whole of the verb form is reduplicated. That is, the verb with all of its suffixes is reduplicated.

Olabat bin wokwok.
'They were walking.'

Olabat bin godangodan.
'They were going down.'

Olabat bin grajimgrajim yem.
'They were digging yams.'

Olabat bin bajimapbajimap.
'They were bringing it.'

Marked verbs tend to occur more often with continuative aspect indicated by suffixation rather than by reduplication, though most may occur reduplicated.

Unmarked verbs as a whole tend to occur more often with continuative aspect indicated by reduplication rather than by suffixation, though they may occur with the suffix. There are a few unmarked verbs, however, which seldom follow this tendency.

There are a small number of unmarked verbs whose meanings are extended beyond the simple continuative aspect when they occur with the continuative aspect suffix.

Olabat bin wokwok.
'They were walking.'

Olabat bin wokabat.
'They were going on an outing.'

2. *Durative aspect* denotes an action as being of an extreme duration, whether it be of a continuous or a repetitive nature. In a sonse, durative is the continuous aspect in an extreme degree. It can be indicated in one of two ways:

(1) It can be indicated by multiple reduplication of the verb. This is usually accompanied by a rise in pitch on the verb, the high pitch being sustained throughout the multiple reduplication.

Imin reinreinreinreinreinreinrein binij.[1]
'It rained and rained and rained and rained (but finally) it stopped.'

Olabat bin weidweidweidweidweidweid najing.
'They waited and waited and waited and waited (but) nothing (came).'

(2) It can also be indicated by lengthening a vowel (usually the final vowel) of the verb and simultaneously raising the pitch and sustaining the high pitch on the lengthened vowel.

Imin reeeeeein binij.
'It rained and rained and rained (but finally) stopped.'

Olabat bin weeeeid najing.
'They waited and waited and waited (but) nothing (came).'

3. *Progressive aspect* predominantly denotes an action continuing through some point of time indicated elsewhere in the context. It is not totally discrete from the continuative aspect; these two aspects overlap with the progresive aspect to a large degree being subsumed under the continuative aspect.

Progressive aspect occurs only with unmarked verbs; it never occurs with marked verbs. It is indicated by suffixation of *-ing* or *-in*. The long suffix *-ing* is generally used in slow speech, while the short suffix *-in* is used in quick speech.

Olabat bin grajing sengran.
Olabat bin grajin sengran.
'They were digging sand.'

Olabat bin woking.
Olabat bin wokin.
'They were walking.'

When the progressive aspect suffix co-occurs with an adverbial suffix, it occurs before the adverbial suffix. The short suffix usually occurs in this position.

Olabat bin gaminap.
'They were coming up.'

Olabat bin bajinap brambi.
'They were bringing wild horses.'

It is possible for two aspects to co-occur, though the frequency of co-occurrence is relatively low. When the continuative aspect and the progressive aspect co-occur, it is indicated in one of two ways:

(1) It can be indicated by affixing to the verb the progressive aspect suffix followed by the continuative aspect suffix.

Olabat bin wokinabat.
'They were walking.'

Olabat bin lukinabat.
'They were looking.'

Olabat bin weidingabat.
'They were waiting.'

(2) It can also be indicated by reduplicating the verb and affixing the progressive aspect suffix to the reduplicated verb.

Olabat bin wokwokin.
'They were walking.'

Olabat bin luklukin.
'They were looking.'

Olabat bin weidweiding.
'They were waiting.'

When the progressive aspect and the durative aspect co-occur, it is indicated in one of two ways:

(1) It can be indicated by affixing the progressive aspect suffix to the verb and reduplicating the verb, usually with an accompanying high pitch.

Olabat bin wokinwokinwokinwokin.
'They were walking and walking and walking.'

Olabat bin weidingweidingweidingweiding.
'They were waiting and waiting and waiting.'

(2) It can also be indicated by affixing the progressive aspect suffix to the verb and lengthening the vowel of the suffix, simultaneously raising the pitch on the lengthened vowel.

Olabat bin wokiiiiin.
'They were walking and walking and walking.'

Olabat bin weidiiiiing.
'They were waiting and waiting and waiting.'

5.3 CLASS 5 LINKING VERBS

Linking verbs are main verbs that are used to 'link' a subject or topic with a complement or comment about the topic's state, its attributes or equivalence with something else. Linking verbs are like the other four classes of main or predicating verbs in that they may occur with preceding auxiliary verbs. Unlike other main verbs, however, the only optional suffix they occur with is the progressive aspect suffix *-in* or *-ing*, though not all of them may do so.

Creole linking verbs are divided here into four groups on the basis of their meanings.

5.3.1 Copula Verbs

Usually a topic and complement are linked by juxtaposition; that is, without a linking verb between them. Auxiliary verbs, however, may occur between the topic and comment in modification of the comment.

Olabat bigbala yem. (no auxiliary)
'They are big yams.'

Olabat bin bigbala yem. (past tense auxiliary)
'They were big yams.'

Olabat gudbala. (no auxiliary)
'They are good.'

Olabat nomo gudbala. (negation auxiliary)
'They are not good.'

When the comment is about a future state of the topic, the linking verb *bi* may be used. It is used only of a future state and must be preceded by a future oriented auxiliary verb. It is optional in its occurrence. Generally, it occurs less frequently than linking by juxtaposition. The form is invariant and cannot occur with the progressive aspect.

Olabat andi bi bigbala.
Olabat andi bigbala.
'They will be big.'

Olabat nomo gona bi gudbala.
Olabat nomo gona gudbala.
'They will not be good.

5.3.2 Process Verbs

These verbs generally express the idea that the topic is becoming, changing, or turning into the complement. They may occur with the progressive aspect suffix. Process verbs include:

go (*goin*) 'becoming'

git (*giding*) 'becoming'

Woda bin go blad.
'The water turned into blood.'

Imin giding dakbala.
'It was becoming dark.'

5.3.3 Perceptual Verbs

These verbs generally express the idea that the topic appears, seems, feels, or tastes like or as if it were the complement. In other words, the topic may not be what the complement says, but it is perceived by the observer as being so. Perceptual verbs may occur with the progressive aspect suffix and include:

luk (*lukin*) 'look, appear'

teis (*teistin*) 'taste'

fil (*filin*) 'feel'

Olabat luk gudbala.
'They look/appear to be good.'

Dislot teistin prabli.
'This (food) is tasting delicious.'

5.3.4 Existential Verbs

These verbs express the idea that the topic is, that is exists. They do not occur with the progressive aspect suffix but do obligatorily occur with an adverbial suffix. Existential verbs include:

jidan 'to be' (literally 'sit down')
Used of animate beings and objects perceived as 'being' in some sense in a 'sitting' position.

jandap 'to be' (literally 'stand up')
Used of objects perceived as 'being' characteristically in a vertical position.

leidan 'to be' (literally 'lay down')
Occasionally used of objects on the ground instead of *jidan*.

Sambala pipul jidan jeya.
'Some people are there.'

Blandibala wadi jandap jeya.
'Plenty of trees are there.'

Wayà leidan jeya.
'(A roll of) wire is there.'

5.4 AUXILIARY VERBS

Creole auxiliary verbs are divided into five categories: negation, tense, mode, aspect, and voice. These are summarized in Chart 5.3. on the following page.

Auxiliary verbs generally modify the meaning of the main verb of a verb phrase. They differ from main verbs in not being able to stand alone, except in topic-comment constructions which have no linking verbs. In such cases auxiliary verbs stand without a main verb, modifying the comment or complement instead.

Olabat bin grajimbat yem. (predicating verb)
'They were digging yams.'

Olabat nomo go dakbala. (linking verb)
'They do not become dark.

Olabat andi gudbala. (no main verb)
'They will be good.'

5.4.1 Negation

Negation is expressed by *nomo*, *no*, *nat*, and *neba*.

Nomo and its short form *no* express a simple negative. The short form is used less frequently than *nomo*. The negative auxiliary may be used with most other auxiliary verbs. It usually occurs in the first position of the verb phrase.

Chart 5.3 Summary of Creole Auxiliary Verbs

Negation	simple	*nomo, no*	'not'
	emphatic	*nat*	'not'
		neba	'never'
Tense	past	*bin*	
	non-past	ø	
Mode	intention-desire	*andi, gona, gada*	'will, want to'
	ability-permission	*gin*	'can'
		gan	'cannot'
	necessity-advisability	*gada, ada, judbi, juda*	'should'
		labda, mas	'must'
	potential-possibility	*mat, judbi*	'may, might'
		gulijap, nili	'almost'
		trai	'attempt'
Aspect	factual	*stat*	'start'
		go	'go'
		kip	'keep'
		stil	'still'
		stap	'cease'
	limitational-intensity	*onli*	'only'
		jis	'just'
		lilbit	'slightly'
		rili	'really'
	habitual	*oldei, olweis*	'always'
		yusda	'used to'
		neba, gan	'never'
Voice	active	ø	
	passive	*git*	

Olabat nomo gaman.
Olabat no gaman
'They are not coming.'

Olabat nomo bin andi gaman.
'They did not want to come.'

Nat is sometimes used to express an emphatic negative. Its co-occurrence with other auxiliaries is more restricted than is *nomo*. It occurs relatively infrequently.

Olabat nat gaman.
'They are not coming.'

Olabat nat bin andi gaman.
'They did not want to come.'

Neba is also sometimes used to express an emphatic negative, though its primary usage is an expression of negative habitual. (See Section 5.4.4.3 for discussion of this usage.) Like *nat*, its co-occurrence with other auxiliaries is more restricted than is *nomo*. It too occurs relatively infrequently.

Olabat neba gaman.
'They are not coming.'

Olabat neba bin gaman.
'They did not come.'

5.4.2 Tense

In general, tense expresses the relationship of the main verb to time. It indicates the 'location' in time of an event or state relative to the time the statement about the event or state was made. There are two tenses in Creole: past and non-past.

Past tense is indicated by the auxiliary *bin*, which usually precedes all other auxiliaries except the negative. When used with the third person singular personal pronoun *im*, *bin* usually occurs in the contracted form *imin*.

Imin gaman.
'He came.'

Olabat gaman.
'They come/are coming.'

Olabat bin gaman.
'They came/were coming.'

Im nomo bin andi gaman.
'He did not want to come.'

Non-past tense is indicated by the absence of a tense auxiliary. A main verb occurring without a tense auxiliary can refer to a present or future event or state. This does not mean, however, that a more specific expression of the principal verb's relationship to time cannot be made. Further specification is made, not by means of tense auxiliaries, but by time adverbs outside the verb phrase but still within the context, and auxiliaries that contain a time oriented component in their meaning. The latter are discussed in following sections.

Olabat gaman.
'They come/are coming/will come.'

Olabat gaman mailawik. (adverb)
'They will come the week they don't get paid.'

Olabat gona gaman. (auxiliary)
'They will come.'

Olabat labda gaman ailibala. (auxiliary and adverb)
'They must come early.'

5.4.3 Mode

In general, mode expresses, not statements of fact, but events or states that exist only as conceptions of the mind. When used with the non-past tense, mode expresses events or states that may or may not eventuate in the future. When used with the past tense, it expresses the fact that the conception took place, but generally makes no statement on whether or not the events or states so conceived eventuated.

Olabat andi gaman.
'They want to come.'

Olabat bin andi gaman.
'They wanted to come.'

Olabat labda gaman.
'They must/should come.'

Olabat *bin labda* *gaman.*
'They should have come.'

Olabat *mat* *gaman.*
'They may come.'

Mode auxiliaries are divided into four classes: intention-desire, ability-permission, necessity-advisability, and potential-possibility. They always occur preceding the main verb and usually, though not always, follow the negative and tense auxiliaries.

1. *Intention or desire* is expressed by *andi* (or one of its variant forms), *gona*, and *gada*.

Andi and *gona* are positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. They are future oriented but may be used with the past tense auxiliary. *Andi* has three variant forms generally conditioned by rate of speech: *wandi*, *wani*, and *ani*.

Olabat *andi* *gaman.*
Olabat *wani* *gaman.*
Olabat *gona* *gaman.*
'They will/want to/intend to/plan to come.'

Olabat *nomo gona* *gaman.*
'They are not/do not intend to come.'

Olabat *bin andi* *gaman.*
'They were going to/wanted to come.'

Gada is positive and future oriented. It can be negated by the negative auxiliary, but it cannot be used with the past tense auxiliary. Its usage also includes an expression of a mild degree of necessity.

Olabat *gada* *gaman.*
'They want to/intend to come.'

Olabat *nomo gada* *gaman.*
'They do not intend to come.'

2. *Ability or permission* is expressed by *gin* and *gan*.

Gin is positive and non-past oriented. It cannot be negated nor can it be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat *gin* *gaman.*
'They can/may/are able to come.'

Olabat gin go dakbala.
'They can turn dark.'

Gan expresses inability or denial of permission. It is negative but can be used with the negative auxiliary for added emphasis. It is primarily non-past oriented, but unlike its positive counterpart *gin*, it can be used with the past tense auxiliary to express past inability. *Gan* is also sometimes used to express habitual aspect.

Olabat gan gaman.
'They cannot/may not/are not able to come.'

Olabat nomo gan gaman.
'They cannot come.'

Olabat bin gan gaman.
'They could not come.'

3. *Necessity or advisability* in varying degrees is expressed by *gada, labda, mas, ada, judbi,* and *juda.*

Gada expresses a mild degree of necessity. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is future oriented and cannot be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat gada gaman.
'They should/ought to come.'

Olabat nomo gada gaman.
'They do not need to come.'

Labda and *mas* express a strong degree of necessity or obligation. Though both are positive and future oriented, *labda* can be negated by the negative auxiliary and can also be used with the past tense auxiliary, while *mas* can be neither. *Mas* occurs less frequently than does *labda.*

Olabat labda gaman.
Olabat mas gaman.
'They must/have to come.'

Olabat nomo labda gaman.
'They do not have to come.'

Olabat bin labda gaman.
'They had to come.'

Ada, judbi, and *juda* express a mild degree of necessity or advisability. All are positive but can be negated by the negative

auxiliary. *Ada* is future oriented but can be used with the past tense auxiliary; *judbi* is future oriented and cannot be used with the past tense auxiliary; *juda* is past oriented and usually, though not always, occurs with the past tense auxiliary following. *Judbi* is also used to express likelihood. All three occur relatively infrequently.

Olabat *ada* *gaman.*
'They should/ought to come.'

Olabat *nomo bin ada* *gaman.*
'They should not have come.'

Olabat *judbi* *gaman.*
'They should/ought to come.'

Olabat *nomo judbi* *gaman.*
'They should not come.'

Olabat *juda bin* *gaman.*
Olabat *juda* *gaman.*
'They should/ought to have come.'

Olabat *nomo juda bin* *gaman.*
'They should not have come.'

4. *Potential or possibility*, in a broad sense, is expressed by *mat*, *judbi*, *gulijap*, *nili*, and *trai*.

Mat expresses simple potential or possibility. It is positive and future oriented and cannot be negated nor used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat *mat* *gaman.*
'They may come.'

Olabat *mat* *go* *dakbala.*
'They may turn dark.'

Judbi expresses a strong sense of likelihood. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is present oriented and cannot be used with the past tense auxiliary. It is used relatively infrequently.

Olabat *judbi* *gaman.*
'They should be/are probably coming/on the way.'

Olabat *nomo judbi* *gaman.*
'They probably are not coming/on the way.'

Gulijap and *nili* are generally past oriented and express a sense of potential or possibility that did not eventuate but came very close to doing so. Though generally past oriented, they sometimes occur in constructions with a future orientation. Both are positive but may be negated by the negative auxiliary.

Olabat bin gulijap gaman.
Olabat bin nili gaman.
'They almost/just about came.'

Olabat nomo bin gulijap gaman.
'They did not almost come.'

Olabat nili gaman.
'They are almost/nearly coming.'

Trai expresses attempt or endeavor. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and may be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat trai gaman.
'They are trying/attempting to come.'

Olabat bin trai gaman.
'They tried/attempted to come.'

Olabat nomo bin trai gaman.
'They did not try to come.'

5.4.4 Aspect

In general, aspect, like tense, expresses the relationship of the main verb to time. It differs from tense, however, in that it indicates the manner in which an event or state takes place in relationship to time, rather than its 'location' in time.

Olabat gaman. (non-past tense)
'They come.'

Olabat oldei gaman. (aspect)
'They always/continually come.'

Olabat bin gaman. (past tense)
'They came.'

Olabat yusda gaman. (aspect)
'They used to/always come.'

Olabat *stil* *gaman.* (aspect)
'They still come.'

Though aspect auxiliaries generally modify the main verb, some aspect auxiliaries may also modify other components of the verb phrases. They usually occur immediately preceding the component they modify.

Olabat *oldei* *gaman.*
'They always come.'

Olabat *oldei* *go* *dakbala.*
'They always turn dark.'

Olabat *oldei* *andi* *gaman.*
'They always want to come.'

Olabat *oldei* *gan* *gaman.*
'They always cannot come.'

Olabat *oldei* *nomo* *gaman.*
'They always never come.'

Aspect auxiliaries are divided into three classes: factual, limitation-intensity, and habitual.

1. *Factual* is used as a cover term for aspect auxiliaries that express inception, continuation, and cessation: *stat*, *go*, *kip*, *stil*, and *stap*.

Stat expresses inception. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat *stat* *gaman.*
'They start/begin to come.'

Olabat *nomo bin* *stat* *gaman.*
'They did not start to come.'

Go expresses a sense of action through time from its inception. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary. This usage of *go* is not to be confused with its usage as a main verb.

Olabat *go* *jilip.*
'They go to sleep.'

Olabat nomo bin go jilip.
'They did not go to sleep.'

Kip expresses continuation. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat kip gaman.
'They keep/continue to come.'

Olabat nomo bin kip gaman.
'They did not continue to come.'

Stil expresses continuation, though with a sense of persistence. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat stil gaman.
'They still/continue to come.'

Olabat nomo bin stil gaman.
'They did not continue to come.'

Stap expresses cessation. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat stap gaman.
'They stop/cease to come.'

Olabat nomo bin stap gaman.
'They did not cease to come.'

2. *Limitation or intensity* is expressed by *onli, jis, lilbit,* and *rili.*

Onli expresses limitation in the sense of 'solely'. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat onli gaman.
'They only/simply come.'

Olabat nomo bin onli gaman.
'They did not only come.'

Jis expresses limitation in the same sense as *onli* but also expresses a diminished or low degree of intensity. It is positive

but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat bin jis gaman.
'They just/only came.'

Olabat nomo bin jis gaman.
'They did not just/only come.'

Lilbit expresses a diminished or low degree of intensity. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat nomo lilbit gaman.
'They come wholeheartedly/in droves.'

Olabat lilbit go dakbala.
'They turn slightly dark.'

Olabat bin nomo lilbit go dakbala.
'They turned very dark.'

Rili expresses a high degree of intensity or quality. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat rili gaman.
'They really/very much so come.'

Olabat rili go dakbala.
'They turn very dark.'

Olabat nomo bin rili gaman.
'Very few came.'

3. *Habitual* is expressed by *oldei, olweis, yusda, neba,* and *gan.*

Oldei and *olweis* are positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. They are neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary. *Oldei* is used more frequently than *olweis.*

Olabat oldei gaman.
Olabat alweis gaman.
'They always/habitually come.'

Olabat nomo bin oldei gaman.
Olabat nono bin alweis gaman.
'They did not always come.'

Yusda is past oriented. It generally occurs without the past tense auxiliary but may occur with it. Its meaning is equivalent to *bin oldei*, which is used more frequently than *yusda*. *Yusda* is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary.

Olabat *yusda* *gaman.*
Olabat *bin yusda* *gaman.*
Olabat *yusda bin* *gaman.*
'They used to/always came.'

Olabat *nomo* *yusda* *gaman.*
'They did not used to come.'

Neba expresses a sense of negative habitual. It occurs relatively infrequently and co-occurs with few other auxiliaries. It is neutral oriented. When used with and preceding the past tense auxiliary, it expresses primarily a sense of emphatic negative rather than negative habitual. When used with the non-past tense auxiliary, it sometimes expresses a sense of 'seldom' and is basically equivalent to *nomo oldei*. It is used with *gan* to express an habitual inability. It cannot co-occur with the negative auxiliary.

Olabat *neba* *gaman.*
'They never/seldom come.'

Olabat *bin* *neba* *gaman.*
'They used to never/seldom come.'

Olabat *neba gan* *gaman.*
'They never/seldom are able to come.'

Gan, in addition to its use to express inability or denial of permission, is sometimes used to express a behaviour pattern in which the subject has the ability to act but habitually does not. It is negative but can be used with the negative auxiliary for added emphasis. It is neutral oriented and does not occur with the past tense auxiliary.

Beibi *gan* *kraikrai.*
Beibi *nomo gan* *kraikrai.*
'The baby never/seldom cries.'

5.4.5 Voice

In general, voice expresses the relationship of the subject to the main verb in terms of the 'direction' of the action expressed by the verb. In the active voice the action comes from the subject as

the actor, while in the passive voice the action passes to the subject as the entity acted upon.

Though Creole makes relatively little use of the passive voice, it is expressed in three ways: by the passive auxiliary *git*, by unmarked verbs that are inherently passive in meaning, and by circumlocution.

1. The passive auxiliary *git* expresses a 'true' passive voice. It is used with relatively few predicating verbs though it is very common with those few. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary. Though it only occurs with predicating verbs, it can co-occur with most auxiliary verbs. This usage of *git* is not to be confused with its usage as a linking verb.

Olabat bin git shat.
'They were/got shot.'

Olabat andi git kil.
'They will be/get killed.'

Olabat nomo andi git kil.
'They do not want to be killed.'

2. Passive is also expressed by some unmarked intransitive verbs that are inherently passive in meaning. With such verbs, the active voice is usually expressed by the marked transitive form of the verbs.

Imin obin. (passive)
'It was opened.'

Sambodi bin obinim im. (active)
'Somebody opened it.'

Olabat binij. (passive)
'They are finished.'

Imin binijim olabat. (active)
'He finished them.'

3. Passive, in a sense, is also expressed by circumlocution. The third person plural personal pronoun *olabat* is used as a 'dummy' subject in an active voice construction.

Olabat kolum yalbun.
'It is called water-lily seed.
(Literally: They call it water-lily seed.)'

5.5 CONCORD

Concord basically refers to a relationship between two grammatical elements such that if one has a particular feature then the other in some sense has to have that feature also. For example, in English the most important concord is that of number between a subject and verb. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular; if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural.

The boy runs.
The boys run.

but not

*The boy run.
*The boys runs.

Creole does not have concord that parallels that of English. Concord, however, is not totally absent from Creole, though it carries a low functional load.

There is a degree of concord in Creole that exists between the verb and the object. This operation has not been studied in detail, so only a general reference is made to it here.

When the object is of a plural nature and the action of the verb relates to individuals within the mass, the verb occurs with the continuative or repetitive aspect.

Imin gijimbat gusberi.
'He picked/was picking (individual) gooseberries.'

but not **Imin gijim gusberi.*

When, however, the verb relates to the whole of the object as opposed to individuals within the mass, the verb occurs without the continuative aspect.

Imin gijim gusberi.
'He picked (a batch of) gooseberries.'

The converse situation, likewise, holds true. When the object is of a singular nature, the action of the verb relating to it is expressed without the continuative aspect.

Imin kilim wolabi.
'He killed a wallaby.'

but not **Imin kilimbat wolabi.*

It should be pointed out, however, that

Imin kilimbat wolabi.

is an acceptable construction when the situation it refers to is one in which

'He killed many wallabies.'
'He hit and hit and hit the wallaby.'

or 'Time and again he killed a wallaby.'

NOTE FOR CHAPTER 5

[1]The curved line in these examples indicates the rise and fall of the pitch.

CHAPTER 6

PREPOSITIONS AND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Creole has relatively few prepositions. At first glance it would appear, therefore, that Creole is underdeveloped in this area and can only inadequately handle the degree of specification that English prepositions make. This, however, is not the case. When further specification is needed, Creole makes use of adverbs to modify prepositional phrases instead of having a multitude of specific prepositions. This tends to follow the general pattern of Aboriginal languages, though they generally express the relational meanings with case suffixes and postpositions rather than prepositions (Vaszolyi 1976:38-39).

6.1 THE PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

A prepositional phrase basically consists of a preposition followed by an object or prepositional complement. The complement is normally a noun, pronoun, noun phrase, and in some cases an adverb or clause.

Preposition + Prepositional Complement

langa gabarra (noun)
'on the head'

burrum olabat (pronoun)
'from them'

gadim blandibala bigbaba buligi (noun phrase)
'with many big cattle

burrum jeya (adverb)
'from there/after that'

blanga dalimbat mi laya (clause)
'for telling me lies'

Prepositional phrases need not occur singularly but several may occur sequentially.

Im jidanbat langa tharran longwan bilibong
'He is living at that long billabong

langa gudwan lantri blanga im dadi.
in the good country that belongs to his father.'

In some circumstances, English is able to post-position its prepositions. That is, the preposition can follow its complement or the complement can be deleted.

The house I told you about burnt down.
He's hard to work with.

Creole, however, cannot post-position its prepositions nor delete the prepositional complement. The examples above in Creole would be

Blanga	*awus*	*ai bin*	*dalim*	*yu bin*	*barnbarn.*
'About	the house	I	told	you	burnt down.'

not **Awus ai bin dalim yu blanga bin barnbarn.*

Im	*adbala*	*blanga*	*we:k*	*gadim*	*im.*
'It's	hard	to	work	with	him.'

not **Im adbala blanga we:k gadim.*

6.2 PREPOSITIONS

Prepositions can be divided into two main groups - simple and complex. Simple prepositions consist of only one word. Complex prepositions consist of a sequence of close knit words.

6.2.1 Simple Prepositions

There are four main simple prepositions in Creole:

langa (indicating location or direction to)
burrum (indicating direction from)
blanga (indicating a genitive or benefactive relation)
gadim (indicating instrument or accompaniment)

All four of these prepositions have alternate forms:

langa has the short form *la*. Occasionally this is heard as *na* from older people.
burrum has the light forms *brom* and *from*.
blanga has the short form *bla*. Younger children, especially at Bamyili, often also use the shorter form *ba*. In some constructions, the light form *fo* 'for' is used and occasionally *av* 'of' and also *abat* 'about'.
gadim has several phonological variants - *garrim*, *gada*, *garra*. It sometimes occurs as the light variant form *with*.

The short forms of *langa* and *blanga*, that is *la* and *bla*, and also *gadim* are not used in the Barkly Tableland dialect.[1]

In addition to these main prepositions and their alternate forms, there are several words that behave in many ways like prepositions, though they also function as adverbs or other parts of speech. These include *thru* 'through', *bifo* 'before', *abda/afta* 'after', *raidap* 'until', and *til* 'until'.

Some of the adverbial suffixes discussed in the chapter on verbs (Section 5.2.2) are loosely related to prepositions because of their derivation from English prepositions.

In light Creole some of the more common English prepositions occur. These will not be handled in detail here, but it should be noted that when they do occur their complement is usually a noun phrase with the noun preceded by a regular determiner or the light 'article' determiner *da*.

	Imin	*go*	*langa*		*kemp.*
and	*Imin*	*go*	*tu*	*da*	*kemp.*

both mean

'He went to the camp.'

6.2.2 Complex Prepositions

In addition to the simple prepositions, there are a few complex prepositions in Creole. These consist of a sequence of close knit words that are essentially indivisible both in terms of syntax and in terms of their meaning. These include:

1. *rait langa* 'right to'

Imin	*galimap*	*im*	*rait*	*langa*	*top.*
'He	climbed	it	right	to	the top.'

Imin	*galimap*	*im*	*langa*	*top.*
'He	climbed	it	to	the top.'

is possible, but not

**Imin*	*galimap*	*im*	*rait.*
'He	climbed	it	right.'

Compare this with the permissible construction involving the adverb *raitap*:

Imin	*galimap*	*im*	*raitap.*
'He	climbed	it	right up.'

2. *nomo gadim* 'without'

Im wangulubala nomo gadim dadi dubala mami.
'He's an orphan without a father and a mother.'

Compare this, however, with the use of *nomo gadim* as negative verbal auxiliary plus verb:

Im nomo gadim dadi. dubala mami.
'He does not have a father nor a mother.'

3. *onli fo* 'full of, covered with, surrounded by'

Mela bin labda silip onli fo mad.
'We had to sleep covered with mud.'

Jad pleis im onli fo rok keinggurru.
'That place is full of euros.'

6.2.3 Modification of Prepositional Phrases

Somewhat similar to complex prepositions are prepositional phrases modified by pre-positioned adverbs. The distinction between the two rests basically on the ability of the adverbs to operate independently of the prepositional phrase in a given construction while the complex preposition cannot be split. For example, the adverb *wansaid* 'beside' in the modified prepositional phrase in the sentence

Dubala yanggel bin jidan wansaid langa bilibong.
'Two girls sat down beside the billabong.'

can also follow the prepositional phrase and retain the same meaning:

Dubala yanggel bin jidan langa bilibong wansaid.

This post-positioning of an adverb modifying a prepositional phrase is probably more closely related to Aboriginal language use of postpositions than the English use of prepositions. 'Very often, the English equivalent to an Aboriginal postposition . . . will be a preposition' (Vaszolyi 1976:39).

It is also possible for the prepositional phrase to be deleted when understood in a larger context, leaving the adverb on its own but still carrying the same meaning.

Dubala yanggel bin jidan wansaid.
'Two girls sat down beside (the billabong).'

Complex prepositions, however, cannot undergo such changes.

Olabat bin bunggul nomo gadim bambu.
'They had a corroboree without a didjeridoo.'

cannot be

**Olabat bin bunggul gadim bambu nomo.*

nor **Olabat bin bunggul nomo.*

6.3 PREPOSITIONAL MEANINGS

Prepositions basically express a relation between two entities, one being that represented by the prepositional complement. The relational meanings expressed by Creole prepositions and modified prepositional phrases are not exhaustively handled here. Only the main meanings are discussed below.

6.3.1 Prepositional Meanings of Location

Prepositional constructions dealing with location can be divided into two main types - those dealing with static location or position and those dealing with directional location. With few exceptions, the same Creole prepositional constructions are used for both position and direction. The distinction between the two, in Creole, is usually dependent upon the nature of the verb or predicate with which the prepositional phrase is associated.

Imin bogi langa riba. (position)
'He swam in the river.'

Imin didiwu langa riba. (direction)
'He dove into the river.'

A modified prepositional phrase incorporating the adverb *thru* 'through', however, can only indicate directional location.

Imin go thru langa gali.
'He went through the valley.'

The main preposition used to indicate location is *langa* or one of its alternate forms (*la*, occasionally *na*). By itself *langa* is undifferentiated as to specific location, indicating only the general position or destination. English lacks such a 'generic' preposition. In interpreting this generic use of *langa*, the context or the

characteristics of the prepositional complement itself often indicate whether its meaning is 'in, at, on, to, into'.

Imin bogi langa woda.
'He swam in the water.'

Im langa im kemp.
'He is at his camp.'

Im silip langa grun.
'He is sleeping on the ground.'

Imin gobek langa olabat.
'He returned to them.'

Imin budum im langa boks.
'He put it in the box.'

When needed or desirable more specific location can be expressed by modifying the prepositional phrase with an adverb. The adverb, while most often pre-positioned or occurring before the prepositional phrase, may also follow or be post-positioned.

Imin leidan atsaid la im kemp.
and *Imin leidan la im kemp atsaid.*

can both mean

laid down outside of his camp.'

Another preposition used to indicate location is *burrum* or one of its alternate forms (*brom, from*). Its relational meaning is most often the ablative direction 'from'.

Olabat wandi gaman burrum Dawin.
'They want to come from Darwin.'

Unlike *langa* prepositional phrases, *burrum* phrases are not normally modified by the full range of adverbs. They can, however, take the full range of adverbs as their complements and build up in sequence with *langa* phrases to express more specific ablative location.

Im gaman burrum riba.
'He is coming from the river.'

Im gaman burrum najasaid.
'He is coming from the other side.'

Im gaman burrum najasaid langa riba.
'He is coming from the other side of the river.'

but normally not

**Im gaman najasaid burrum riba.*

Burrum prepositional phrases may be modified by a small group of adverbs that indicate relative distance. These include adverbs such as *longwei* 'a long way, far away', *gulijap* 'near, close', *hafwei* 'about half way', and *lilbit longwei* 'not too far'.

Ai go wokabat lilbit longwei burrum kemp.
Ai go wokabat burrum kemp lilbit longwei.
'I'm going walking not too far from camp.'

Though *burrum* is usually used to indicate direction away from something, in some situations it can be used to indicate a static location or position. In such cases, it normally occurs with a repositioned modifier.

Jat bilibong im nomo longwei burrum stakyad.
'That billabong is not far from the stockyards.'

Chart 6.1 on the following page illustrates most of the basic meanings of the locative prepositions and modified prepositional phrases.

The prepositional meanings illustrated in Chart 6.1 fall into two sets of cause-and-effect relationships.

1. Positive Destination results in Positive Position:

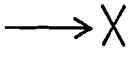
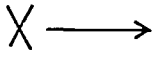
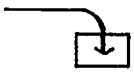
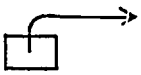
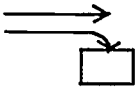
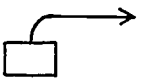
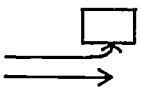
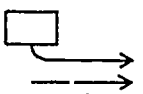
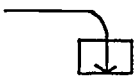
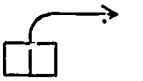
Dumaji imin go langa riba,
'Because he went to the river,

im langa riba.
he is at the river.'

Dumaji imin galimap la top la wadi,
'Because he climbed to the top of the tree,

im la top la wadi.
he is at the top of the tree.'

Chart 6.1. Locative Prepositions and Modified Phrases

Positive		Negative	
Destination	Position	Direction From	Position
 *langa* 'to'	 *langa* 'at'	 *burrum* 'from'	 *(longwei) burrum* '(far) away from'
 *insaid langa* 'in, into, inside'	 *insaid langa* 'in, inside'	 *atsaid burrum* 'out of'	 *atsaid langa* 'out of, outside'
 *ontop langa, la top la* 'on, onto, on top, above'	 *ontop langa, la top la* 'on, on top of, above'	 *burrum ontop la, burrum top la* 'off, from the top of'	 *nomo ontop la, nomo la top la* 'not on top of, not above'
 *andanis langa, la bodum la* 'under, underneath, below'	 *andanis langa, la bodum la* 'under, below, underneath	 *burrum andanis la, burrum bodum la* 'from under, from underneath'	 *nomo andanis la, nomo la bodum la* 'not under, not beneath'
 *la bodum la* 'at/on/to the bottom'	 *la bodum la* 'on the bottom of'	 *burrum bodum la* 'from the bottom of'	 *nomo la bodum la* 'not on the bottom of'

2. Negative Direction results in Negative Position:

Dumaji imin gudan burrum ontop la hil,
'Because he descended from the top of the hill,

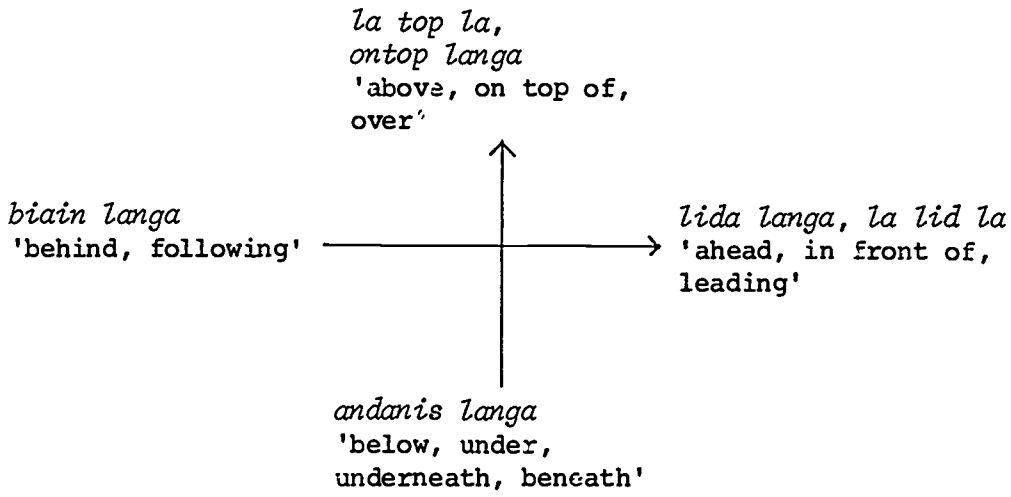
im nomo ontop la hil.
he is not on the top of the hill.'

Dumaji imin gaman atsaid burrum awus,
'Because he came out of the house,

im atsaid langa awus.
he is outside the house.'

Most of the above prepositional meanings express simple location. That is, they simply express the position, destination, or direction of a single entity.

In addition to these, there are several prepositional constructions that express the relative position of two entities. These can be diagrammed in terms of a verticle and horizontal axis:



Unlike simple location, relative position constructions do not have a cause-and-effect relationship. Rather, they have more of an antonym or converse opposite relationship.

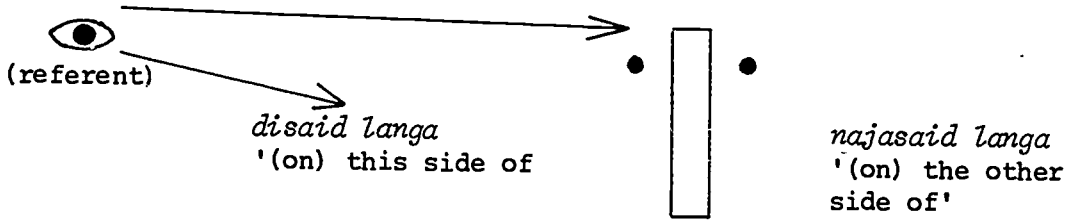
Biganini dagadagat lida langa melabat. =
'The children eat before us.'

Melabat dagadagat biain langa biginini.
'We eat after the children.'

Rod *go* *ontop langa* *krik.* =
'The road goes over the creek.'

Krik *go* *andanis langa* *rod.*
'The creek passes under the road.'

Another relative position construction gives the position of an entity relative to the position of a referent fixed in the context. This could be illustrated thus:



Jat *bilibong* *im* *disaid langa* *jat waitrok,*
'That billabong is on this side of that white rock,

nomo najasaid langa *im.*
not on the other side of it.'

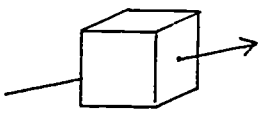
Related to this construction is *wansaid langa* 'on the side of, beside, along'.

Dubala bin *silip* *wansaid langa* *wadi.*
'They slept beside the tree.'

Ai bin *wokabat* *wansaid langa* *riba.*
'I walked along the river.'

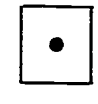
Two other prepositional locative constructions should be noted.

1. *thru langa* 'through'



Bulit *bin* *go* *thru langa* *im* *jolda.*
'The bullet went through his shoulder.'

2. *la midul la* 'in the middle of'



'between'

Wi bin labda silip la midul la krik.
'We had to sleep in the middle of the creek.'

Ai bin buldan la midul la dubala wadi.
'I fell down between two trees.'

Compare the following related construction:

Yumi meigim midul la dog.
'We are on both sides of the dog.
(Literally:
We make middle the dog.)'

6.3.2 Prepositional Meanings of Time

Time in Creole, for the most part, is expressed by time adverbs or nouns rather than by perpositional phrases. For example, in English we say

1. He is coming at noon.
2. They will give it to me on Monday.
3. We always eat porridge in the morning.
4. For a long time I lived there.

These examples would be expressed in Creole without prepositional phrases:

1. *Im gaman dinadaim.*
2. *Olabat gibit la mi Mandei.*
3. *Mibala oldei dagadagat angkultobi ailibala.*
4. *Longtaim ai bin jidan jeya.*

There are, however, several prepositions used in expressing time in Creole. These include *bifo* 'before', *abda/afta* 'after', *burrum/brom/from* 'from', *raidap* 'until', and *til* 'until'.

Bifo 'before' and *afta* 'after' function not only as time prepositions but also as time adverbs and conjunctions. When functioning as prepositions they are followed by complements that normally consist of a noun, whereas when functioning as adverbs they stand independently, and as conjunctions they are connected to a following clause.

Bifo, *ai bin we:k langa . ɔi.* (adverb)
'A long time ago I used to work at i ɔey Station.'

Bifo milnait imin bag^. (preposition)
'Before midnight he vomited.'

Bifo ai gijim yu throt, ai gijim
'Before I record your voice, I'll get

nyubala. (conjunction)
a new (one).'

Bifo as an adverb in some contexts functions as a synonym of the adverb *longtaim.*

Bifo, *mɯnanga bin gaman.*

and *Longtaim,* *mɯnanga bin gaman.*

both mean

'A long time ago, Europeans came.'

Both of these are in contrast with

Bifo mɯnanga bin gaman, . . .
'Before Europeans came, . . .'

and *Longtaim* *mɯnanga bin gaman.*
'For a long time Europeans have been coming.'

In speech these are distinguished by intonation or breath pause and context. It might be mentioned here that stories are often started with *longtaim* - 'A long time ago . . ., Once upon a time . . .'.

Burrum is most often used as a locative preposition but is also used as a time preposition with its complement being a time adverb or noun. Unlike other time prepositions, it cannot function as an adverb nor conjunction.

Burrum as a time preposition is most commonly used with the adverb complement *jeya* meaning 'from there, after that, then'. This construction is used as a discourse marker. It indicates a significant section or 'paragraph' break within a story.

Ai bin wokwo:wokwok, nagap na.
'I walked and walked and walked until I was worn out.

Ai bin silip. Burrum jeya, ai bin gidap.
(So) I slept. After that, I got up.'

Afta can also be used with identically the same prepositional meaning, though its complement is the adverb *that* 'that' - *afta that/abda jat* 'after that, from there, then'.

Raidap 'until' and *til* 'until' are closely related. As time prepositions they have as complements a time noun or clause.

Ai bin weidabat raidap sabadaim.
'I waited until evening tea time.'

Imin toktok raidap yu bin gaman.
'He was talking until you came.'

Imin sikbala til imin go langa hospil.
'He was sick until he went to the hospital.'

Both *raidap* and *til* are used in a situation involving a pair of time constructions expressing a meaning of duration.

Imin weitweit burrum smokodaim raidap dinadaim.
'He was waiting from ten o'clock until noon.'

Olabat bin bogibogi burrum ailibala til
'They were swimming from early in the morning until

ai bin gaman.
I arrived.

The first of a paired time construction need not be a prepositional phrase.

Ai bin silip dinadaim raidap sabadaim.
'I slept from lunch time until tea time.'

6.3.3 Prepositional Meanings of *Blanga*

1. The most common or frequent usage of *blanga* or *bla* is probably that which expresses the genitive meaning 'of'. This includes the expression of possession or ownership.

mani blanga mi
'money of mine'

blanga olgamen *daga*
'the woman's food'

It is also used to express a sense of close relationship.

san *blanga* *olmen*
'the son of the man'

blanga olabat *kantrimen*
'their countrymen'

neim *blanga* *im*
'name of him'

Genitive constructions normally involve the prepositional phrase modifying a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. The prepositional phrase, as illustrated in the previous examples, may either precede the noun or noun phrase or follow it. In light Creole *av* 'of' sometimes occurs in place of *blanga* when the prepositional phrase follows the noun it modifies.

2. The second most common usage of *blanga* is probably the expression of the benefactive relationship 'for'. Benefactive prepositional constructions normally have a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase as the prepositional complement.

Imin *dai* *blanga* *melabat.*
'He died for us.'

Im *gibit* *gud* *toktok* *blanga* *ola* *skulkid.*
'He gives a good talk for all the school children.'

In light Creole *fo* is sometimes used instead of *blanga.*

3. Somewhat similar to the benefactive construction is a purpose construction 'for, because of'. The distinction between the two is not always easy to make. The complement of the purpose construction, unlike the benefactive complement, is often a clause, though in some cases it need not be.

Gabadi *kolbala* *blanga* *dринggim.*
'The cup of tea is cold enough for drinking.'

Im *we:k* *iya* *blanga* *breigimin* *brambi.*
'He works here in order to break in the wild horses.'

Imin *album* *mi* *blanga* *buligi.*
'He helped me with the cattle.'

4. *Blanga* is also used to express the meaning of 'about'. This phrase most often occurs as an object of a double transitive sentence. In very light Creole *abat* is sometimes used.

Yu dalim im blanga dadan na.
'You tell him about that one.'

Yu wandi asgim im blanga baptais.
'You should ask him about baptism.'

Ai bin asgim. abat thadan.
'I asked (him) about chat.'

5. One final important usage of *blanga* is comparable to the English infinitive usage of 'to'. Strictly speaking, *blanga* in such constructions is functioning more as a conjunction than a preposition. It is closely related to the purpose constructions discussed above both in terms of meaning and in terms of the construction of the complement, which is normally a clause.

Imin asgim mi blanga gibit im samding blanga dagat.
'He asked me to give him something to eat.'

Im andi gobek blanga gijim najan.
'He wants to return to get another one.'

6.3.4 Prepositional Meanings of *Gadim*

The prepositional meanings of *gadim* can be divided into three basic categories, though these are not absolutely distinctive.

1. *Gadim* may express means or instrument.

Imin kilim im gadim waya.
'He killed it with a fishing spear.'

Imin meigim gadim naif.
'He made (it) with a knife.'

Imin gaman gadim hos.
'He came by horse.'

2. *Gadim* may also express accompaniment or close association. This category of meanings can also be expressed by other constructions, particularly those making use of *mijamet* 'together'.

Imin gaman gadim im lambarra.
'He came with his father-in-law.'

or *Im en im lambarra bin gaman mijamet.*
'He and his father-in-law came together.'

Olabat bin sing gadim bambu.
'They sang with a didjeridoo.'

or *Olabat bin sing en bulum bambu.*
'They sang and played the didjeridoo.'

3. *Gadim* is also used to express a meaning of ingredient or material with or out of which something is made. This usage is restricted, however, to occurring in constructions using a verb of 'making'.

Yu meigim bred gadim draibom.
'You make bread with yeast.'

Imin meigim bambu gadim dis kain wadi.
'He made a didjeridoo out of this kind of tree.'

All of the above examples in this section were positive. They can all be made negative by modifying the preposition with *nomo*.

Imin kadim nomo gadim domiyok.
'He cut (it) without an axe.'

Ai bin gaman nomo gadim yu baba.
'I came without your brother.'

Yu meigim damba nomo gadim draibom.
'You make damper without yeast.'

Jat munanga nomo gadim bodi.
"That European is without a body (i.e. is skinny).'

6.3.5 Other Prepositional Meanings

1. The somewhat abstract or non-physical sense of source or origin is expressed by *burrum*.

Jadan stori bin kamat burrum jeya na.
'That story came out from there (i.e. that is the account of the incident that was given by those who were there).'

Dijan ai toktok langa yumob burrum baibul.
'What I'm telling you is from the Bible.'

2. There are several ways of expressing the use of language. They all have the same basic meaning. In the following examples, *langwis* means 'traditional Aboriginal language' and a specific language name could occur in the same position. The English translations are literal.

Imin toktok langwis.
'He was speaking language.'

Imin toktok burrum langwis.
'He was speaking from language.'

Imin toktok gadim langwis.
'He was speaking with language.'

Imin toktok la langwis.
'He was speaking in language.'

The Creole speaker's perspective of language is different in many ways from that of Europeans. Europeans speak of a person's language dying when it passes out of existence:

Our language died.

In Creole, however, it is expressed as the person dying in respect to his language, not the language dying:

Melabat bin dai la langwis.
'We died with respect to (our) language.'

Also, one does not speak of translation as putting a text into a language as does English:

We're translating the Bible into language.

Rather, the language is put into the text being translated:

Mibala pudumbat langwis langa baibul.
'We're putting language into the Bible.

3. In double transitive sentences, and sometimes in single transitive sentences as well, the objects of the verb may be expressed as prepositional phrases. The prepositional meanings could be said to be that of recipient, goal, or target. Normally, only the prepositions *langa* and *blanga* and their short forms *la* and *bla* occur.

Imin gibit langa mi bib.
'He gave to me some meat.'

Imin dalimbat la biganini stori.
'He was telling to the children a story.'

Imin meigim blanga im mami dop.
'She made for her mother a blouse.'

NOTE FOR CHAPTER 6

[1]Neil Chadwick, personal communication 1974.

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CHAPTER 7

SIMPLE SENTENCES

Sentences in Creole are either simple or complex. Simple sentences are those which contain only one clause, a clause being basically a subject and verb along with their related objects and complements. Complex sentences are those which contain more than one clause. For example, a simple sentence would be

Ai	*bin luk*	*wanbala men.*
'I	saw	a man.'
Subject	Verb	Object

while a complex sentence would be

Ai	*bin luk*	*jadan men*	*weya*	*imin*	*kilim*	*bogiban.*
'I	saw	the man	who		killed	the echidna.'
Subject	Verb	Object	(Conjunction)			
				Subject	Verb	Object
main clause			dependent clause			

The present chapter deals only with simple sentences. Complex sentences will be dealt with elsewhere. Not only is this chapter restricted to simple sentences, but it deals only with those aspects that are central to simple sentence clauses. Elements, such as adverbs, that apply broadly to all sentences are discussed elsewhere.

The simple sentences in Creole are divided into two main categories: non-verbal and verbal. Non-verbal sentences contain no verb.

Bobala	*olgamen*	*wangulubala.*
'The pitiful	old woman is	a widow.'

Verbal sentences contain a verb.

Imin	*kilim*	*rait*	*la olabat ai.*
'She	hit (them)	square	in the eyes.'

Sentences that make a statement as to whether or not something exists are existential sentences. In Creole these may be expressed as either verbal or non-verbal sentences and are therefore dealt with in a section on their own.

7.1 NON-VERBAL SENTENCES

The simplest sentences in Creole differ from English in that they have no verb. The English equvalents have a form of the verb 'to be' (*is, am, are, was, were*) that is used to link the subject or topic with a complement or comment about it. Some English 'to be' examples are

1. I am big.
2. He is boss.
3. It is raining.
4. They are at the river.
5. They are mine.

Creole, instead of linking the topic and comment together with a verb, link them simply by means of juxtaposition. That is, the topic and comment occur side by side with nothing between. Examples 1 and 2 above in Creole would be

Mi *bigbala.*
'I (am) big.'

and *Im* *bos.*
'He (is) boss.'

The lack of a 'to be' linking verb in Creole is not a sign of a simplistic or underdeveloped language. Many of the world's languages, including Russian, lack such a linking verb.

The non-verbal sentences of Creole can be divided into five main types, for which the English examples above are selected. They are (1) descriptive, (2) equative, (3) impersonal, (4) locative, and (5) genitive. These are discussed in order below.

7.1.1 Descriptive Sentence

A descriptive sentence is a sentence in which the comment describes the topic. A minimal example would be one in which the topic is a pronoun and the comment an adjective.

Im *bigbala.*
'He is big.'

The topic can also be a noun.

Munanga *bigbala.*
'The European is big.'

But the topic need not be simply a noun. It can also be a noun phrase.

Jadan longwan munanga *bigbala.*
'That tall European is big.'

Usually, however, when the topic is a noun phrase (and often when simply a noun), the noun phrase does not occur by itself but in combination with a pronoun in an appositional construction.

Jadan longwan munanga, im bigbala.
'That tall European, he is big.'

and also

Munanga, im bigbala.
'The European, he is big.'

Of course, in English, this is 'bad grammar'. But Creole is not English, and in Creole this appositional construction is 'good grammar'.

The comment can also be expanded from a simple adjective to a phrase.

Im brabli bigbala.
'He is very big.'

7.1.2 Equative Sentence

An equative sentence is one in which the topic and comment are equated. It could be said that the comment identifies the topic. In a real sense the equative sentence is simply a sub-category of the descriptive sentence. The distinction is not so much one of grammar (though equative comments tend to be nouns while descriptive comments adjectives) as one of meaning. All of the grammatical expansions that can occur with descriptive sentences also apply to equative sentences. A minimal form would be

Im bos.
'He is boss.'

An expansion of the comment to a phrase could be

Im brabli bigbala bos.
'He is the head boss.'

An expansion of the topic to an appositional construction could be

Wanbala lilbala olmen, im brabli bigbala bos.
'A little old man, he is the head boss.'

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7.1.3 Impersonal Sentence

In English there are a number of sentences that make use of what is usually called an empty 'it' subject. Some examples are

It is raining.
It is hot.
It is noon.

The 'it' in these sentences does not really refer to anything in particular and are thus meaningless or 'empty'. The use of 'it' is purely conventional. Such constructions are called impersonal sentences.

Creole impersonal sentences, like other non-verbal sentences, consist of a topic linked to a comment by juxtaposition. The topic is invariably the pronoun *im*. The comment may be a noun, adjective, or adverb as given in the following examples respectively.

Im	*rein.*	(noun)
'It is	raining.'	
Im	*hotbala.*	(adjective)
'It is	hot.'	
Im	*dinadaim.*	(adverb)
'It is	noon.'	

In the first example the Creole non-verbal sentence has had to be translated into English as a verbal sentence. That is, where Creole used the noun *rein*, English had to use the verb *raining*.

With many constructions, the specific meaning and usage depends on the context. With the examples above in other contexts, the empty *im* would not be empty nor would the construction be an impersonal sentence. For example, if it is just starting to rain as someone is waking up, they might conceivably ask

Wanim	*jat*	*nois?*
'What is	that	noise?'

The reply could be

Im	*rein.*
'It is	rain.'

In such a context, *im* would refer to *nois* and the construction would be an equative sentence.

Similarly, a child might reach for a freshly cooked damper and be warned

Im *hotbala.*
'It is hot.'

in which case *im* would refer to the damper and the construction would be a descriptive sentence.

7.1.4 Locative Sentence

A locative sentence is one in which a comment is made about the location of the topic.

Olabat *jeya.*
'They are there.'

and *Im* *la* *riba.*
'He is at the river.'

While it is conceivable to say that the comment describes the topic as to its location, locative sentences differ from descriptive sentences in the construction of the comment. While the descriptive comment is a noun or noun phrase, the locative comment is an adverb, prepositional phrase, or a combination of the two. The topic of a locative sentence, however, has the same grammatical construction and expandability as the descriptive topic.

In its minimal form, a locative sentence has the comment as simply a locative adverb.

Im *jeya.*
'He is there.'

Im *gulijap.*
'He is near.'

and *Im* *airrap.*
'He is upstream.'

The comment can also be a locative prepositional phrase.

Im *langa riba.*
'He is at the river.'

and *Im* *la midul.*
'He is in the middle.'

A further expansion or further specification of location is possible by using a combination of adverb and prepositional phrase.

Im *gulijap la riba.*
'He is near the river.'

and *Im* *rait langa midul.*
'He is right in the middle.'

The combination of adverb and prepositional phrase is not restricted to only one occurrence of each. Nor is the prepositional phrase limited to a minimal form.

Im *rait la midul la dubala bigbala wadi.*
'He is right in the middle between two big stress.'

and *Im* *jeya lodan wansaid la riba*
'He is there down stream on the side of the river

gulijap langa jat waitwan rok.
near that white rock.'

While it is possible for this last example to occur, it would usually be expressed not as one unit but as several. It might be broken up as

Im *jeya lodan wansaid la riba.*
'He is there down stream on the side of the river.

Gulijap la jat waitwan rok.
Near that white rock.'

or *Im* *gulijap la jat waitwan rok.* *Wansaid jeya*
'He is near that white rock. On the side there

lodan langa riba.
down stream by the river.'

or even

Im *jeya lodan.* *Wansaid la riba.*
'He is there down stream. On the side of the river.

Gulijap la rok, *jat* *waitwan.*
Near that rock, the one that is white.'

In other words, Creole, like most Aboriginal languages, allows for much (but not total nor ad hoc) flexibility in word order.

7.1.5 Genitive Sentence

A genitive sentence is one in which the comment is a *blanga* prepositional phrase.

Im *blanga mi.*
'It is mine.'

The topic of a genitive sentence has the same grammatical construction and expandability as descriptive and equative topics. It can be simply a pronoun or noun or a noun phrase. Continuing with the example used above, the construction could be

Dog *blanga mi.*
'The dog is mine.'

or *Jadan baibulbala dog, im blanga mi.*
'That black and white spotted dog, is mine.'

The above examples have a possessive meaning. That is, the topic is possessed by the comment ('I own the dog.'). The same construction in a different context would have a different meaning. Consider the following examples:

At a post office:

Jadan leda blanga mi.
'That letter is for me. (I am the intended recipient.)'

At a discussion on 'nationality':

Jadan kantri blanga mi.
'That country is mine. (I do not own it, but that is where I come from.)'

At a dispensary, by a doubtful patient:

Dijan medisin blanga mi.
'This medicine is for me. (It is for my benefit.)'

Upon hearing a story about one's self:

Jadan stori blanga mi.
'That story is about me.'

Actually, this last example, depending on what the context is, could mean

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'That to is about me.'
'That story was told for my benefit.'
or 'I am the owner of that story.'

7.1.6 Modifications to Non-Verbal Sentences

To further complicate these 'simplest' of Creole sentences, three additional factors must be taken into consideration. These are expansion of topics and comments to include an embedded sentence, inversion of the normal order of the topic and comment, and inclusion of verbal modifiers between the topic and comment. These will be discussed in order below.

7.1.6.1 Expansion by Embedding

It has previously been discussed under the various types of sentences above, that in most cases the topics and comments can be expanded. For most sentences the topic can be expanded from a pronoun or noun to a phrase. The notable exception is the impersonal sentence where the topic is always an empty *im*. With descriptive and equative sentences, the comments can be expanded from an adjective or noun to a phrase. Similarly, with locative and genitive comments, the internal structure of the prepositional phrases can be expanded to include phrases.

The topics and comments that can be expanded into phrases can also be expanded by incorporating or embedding other sentences within the topic or comment. The sentence

Ai bin luk olmen.
'I saw a man.'

could be embedded in the topic of the sentence

Jadan olmen, im sikbala.
'That man is sick.'

to produce

Jadan olmen ai bin luk, im sikbala.
'That man that I saw is sick.'

When a simple sentence, however, has another sentence embedded within it, it is no longer a simple sentence but has become a complex sentence. Embedding and complex sentences are discussed in detail elsewhere.

7.1.6.2 Inversion of Order

The normal or usual word order for non-verbal sentences is the topic followed by the comment, as all previous examples have been. It is common in Creole for this order to be inverted or reversed. In most cases the comment can precede the topic.

Jadan munanga longwan.
'That European is tall.'

can be inverted to

Longwon jadan munanga.

Such inversions do not affect the meaning of the sentence, though they may shift the focus or emphasis.

Other examples would be

Dijan leda blanga mi.
'This letter is mine.'

inverted to

Blanga mi dijan leda.

and *Dubala olgamen jeya la riba.*
'Two women are there at the river.'

inverted to

Jeya la riba dubala olgamen.

However, there are restrictions on inversions. Notable among the restrictions is the inability for an inversion to occur if the topic is simply a pronoun.

Im bigbala.
'He is big.'

cannot be inverted to

**Bigbala im.*

Im blanga mi.
'It is mine.'

cannot be inverted to

Blanga mi im.

Im langa riba.
'He is at the river.'

cannot be inverted to

**Langa riba im.*

nor can

Im hotbala.
'It is hot.'

be inverted to

**Hotbala im.*

This restriction, as exemplified in the last example, means that impersonal sentences cannot be inverted since the topic is always the pronoun *im*.

Inversions need not be total. Partial inversion occurs when appositional constructions are split.

Jadan olmen, im sikbala.
'That man is sick.'

can be partially inverted to

Im sikbala, jadan olmen.

and *Dijan daga, im blanga melabat.*
'This food is ours.'

can be partially inverted to

Im blanga melabat, dijan daga.

Partial inversions can only take place when appositional constructions occur. Single phrases cannot be partially inverted.

Jat blekwan dog blanga mi.
'That black dog is mine.'

cannot be partially inverted to

**Jat blekwan blanga mi dog.*

Nor can

Jadan olmen sikbala.
'That man is sick.'

be partially inverted to

**Jadan sikbala olmen.*

It should be pointed out, however, that the constructions

Jat blekwan blanga mi dog.

and *Jadan sikbala olmen.*

are correct and legitimate constructions in Creole. But they are not partial inversions of the above examples because their meanings are different: the first one means 'That black one belongs to my dog.' (not 'That black dog is mine.') and the second one means 'That is a sick man.' (not 'That man is sick.').

7.1.6.3 Inclusion of Verbal Modifiers

The five sentence types discussed above are classed as non-verbal sentences because none of them include a verb within their construction. All of them, however, can occur with verbal modifiers between the topic and comment. Verbal modifiers are discussed in Chapter 5, so only a few selected examples will suffice here.

Olmen bin sikbala.
'The man was sick.'

Olgamen bin gulijap presidint.
'The woman was almost president.'

Im andi hotbala.
'It will be hot.'

Olabat bin andi lodan.
'They should have been down stream.'

Jadan nomo blanga mi.
'That is not mine.'

Verbal modifiers cannot occur in a totally inverted sentence, though they can occur with partial inversion.

Im bin sikbala, jadan olmen.
'That old man was sick.'

but not

**Bin sikbala, jadan olmen.*

nor **Sikbala bin jadan olmen.*

7.2 VERBAL SENTENCES

In addition to the non-verbal simple sentences, there are three main types of verbal simple sentences in Creole. These are sentences, as stated earlier, that contain a verb.

Some English examples selected to illustrate these three main types would be

(1)	We		are eating.				
	Subject	+	Verb				
(2)	He		banks		the money.		
	Subject	+	Verb	+	Direct Object		
(3)	He		gives		us		strength.
	Subject	+	Verb	+	Indirect Object	+	Direct Object

Number (1) is intransitive, (2) is transitive, and (3) is double transitive.

The subject in all of these sentences in Creole, as with most of the non-verbal sentences, may be either a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. For example, number (3) above in Creole with a pronoun as subject would be

Im gibit melabat murnda.
'He gives us strength.'

with a noun as subject it would be

God gibit melabat murnda.
'God gives us strength.'

and with a noun phrase as subject it would be

Melabat dadi la top gibit melabat murnda.
'Our Father in heaven gives us strength.'

7.2.1 Intransitive Sentence

The simplest of the verbal sentences is called an intransitive sentence. Like English, it consists simply of a subject followed by a verb.

Melabat *dagat.*
'We are eating.'

Biganini *bago.*
'The baby is vomiting.'

Blekbala *jabi.*
'Aborigines understand.'

7.2.2 Transitive Sentence

A sentence in which the subject does an activity to another person or object is called a transitive sentence. In a sense, the activity is transferred from the subject to the object. A transitive sentence in Creole, like English, consists of a subject followed by a verb which in turn is followed by an object.

Stakmen *lukluk* *yarraman.*
'The stockmen see the horses.'

Olgamen *blandim* *daga.*
'The woman hides the food.'

Im *boksimap* *mani.*
'He banks the money.'

Most verbs that are used in transitive sentences in Creole occur with the suffix *-im* as in the last two examples above with *blandim* and *boksimap*. Verbs that occur with this *-im* suffix are called marked verbs; those without are unmarked verbs as in the first example above with *lukluk*. While some unmarked verbs may occur in transitive sentences, marked verbs only occur in transitive sentences; they never occur in intransitive sentences. For more detail, see the sections on marked and unmarked verbs and transitive suffix in Chapter 5.

Unlike English, Creole has the ability to delete the object from most transitive sentences. This is normally restricted, however, to sentences that have marked verbs and is possible because the *-im* suffix, in essence, carries the 'weight' of the object much like a pronoun. The specification of the object would be understood from the context in which the sentence was used.

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Im barnimap modiga.
'He is wrecking the car.'

in context, could simply be

Im barnimap.
"He is wrecking (the car).'

The object in transitive sentences is referred to as a direct object. Like the subject, a direct object may be a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. For example, with the object as a noun

Imin blandim daga.
'She hid the food.'

as a pronoun

Imin blandim im.
'She hid it.'

and as a noun phrase

Imin blandim melabat munanga daga.
'She hid our whiteman's food.'

7.2.2.1 Reflexive and Reciprocal Sentences

There are two special cases of transitive sentence in which the direct objects are specific pronouns. The first is a reflexive sentence in which the direct object is the reflexive pronoun *mijelb.* The subject acts upon itself; the activity is reflected back upon the subject.

Yangboi barnim mijelb.
'The young boy is burning himself.'

Jineik bin baidim mijelb.
'The snake bit itself.'

Olabat kilim mijelb.
'They are hitting themselves.'

The second case is a reciprocal sentence in which the direct object is the reciprocal pronoun *gija.* In this case the subjects act upon each other in a reciprocating manner. Note that the subject is plural, involving more than one entity.

Dubala kilim gija.
'They hit each other.'

Munanga en blekbala lukluk gija.
'The Europeans and Aborigines see each other.'

7.2.3 Double Transitive Sentence

Related to the transitive sentence is a type of sentence that occurs with not only a direct object but a second object as well. This type of sentence is referred to as a double transitive sentence since the activity of the subject in some way affects two objects.

Im gibit melabat murnda.
'He gives us strength.'

Im dalim mi laya.
'He is telling me a lie.'

Unlike with transitive and intransitive sentences, relatively few verbs can occur in double transitive sentences. Virtually all verbs which do occur in double transitive sentences can also occur as the verb of a transitive sentence as well. Four of the most common double transitive verbs are discussed below.

7.2.3.1 *Gibit* Sentences

The basic form of the double transitive sentence is

Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object

as exemplified by the sentence

Im gibit melabat murnda.
'He gives us strength.'

The second or indirect object, like the subject and direct object, can be a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. Unique to the double transitive sentence, the indirect object can also be a prepositional phrase. This is usually a *la* prepositional phrase as in

Im gibit la melabat murnda.
'He gives to us strength.'

When the indirect object is simply a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase, it always precedes the direct object. When it is a prepositional phrase, however, it may follow the direct object. The above example could be expressed as

Im gibit murnda la melabat.
'He gives strength to us.'

but not as

**Im gibit murnda melabat.*

Similar to transitive sentences, the direct or indirect object or both can be deleted in a given context. Thus the following constructions are possible.

Im gibit melabat.
'He gives us (strength).'

Im gibit la melabat.
'He gives to us (strength).'

Im gibit murnda.
'He gives strength (to us).'

or simply

Im gibit.
'He gives (us strength).'

Just as the meaning of such reduced forms depends on their context, so also does the type of sentence it represents.

Im gibit daga.

in one context could be a reduced double transitive sentence meaning

'He is giving food (to us).'

but in another context it could be a transitive sentence meaning

'He distributes (is a distributor of) food.'

7.2.3.2 *Dalim* Sentences

Very similar to the constructions using *gibit* 'give' are those using *dalim* 'tell'. All the forms discussed above can occur with *dalim*.

Im dalim mi laya.
'He is telling me a lie.'

could also be expressed as

Im dalim la mi laya.
Im dalim laya la mi.

but not

**Im dalim laya mi.*

Likewise, reduced forms could be used.

Im dalim mi.
Im dalim la mi.
Im dalim laya.
Im dalim.

As with the *gibit* examples, depending on the context,

Im dalim laya.

could either be a double transitive sentence with the indirect object deleted meaning

'He is telling (me) a lie.'

or it could be a transitive sentence meaning

'He tells lies.'

Unlike with *gibit*, the direct object with *dalim* need not be restricted to simply a noun, pronoun, or basic noun phrase. It can be a complete sentence in direct or indirect quote form.

Im dalim mi, "go weidabat bla mi jeya".
'He tells me, "Go wait for me there".'

Im dalim mi go weidabat bla im jeya.

or *Im dalim mi bla go weidabat bla im jeya.*
'He tells me to go wait for him there.'

Such constructions, however, because they involve two sentences or clauses in one, are no longer simple sentences but rather complex sentences.

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7.2.3.3 *Meigim* Sentences

The verb *meigim* 'make' is usually used in simple transitive construction.

Olgamen meigim damba.
'The woman is making a damper.'

Meigim can also be used in a type of double transitive construction.

Olgamen meigim olmen damba.
'The woman is making the old man a damper.'

As with other double transitive sentences, the indirect object can be expressed as a prepositional phrase. In this case it is with a *bla* phrase.

Olgamen meigim bla olmen damba.
'The woman is making for the old man a damper.'

or *Olgamen meigim damba bla olmen.*
'The woman is making a damper for the old man.'

but not

**Olgamen meigim damba olmen.*

Compare, however, the following

Im meigim mi nogud.
'He makes me feel bad.'

Im meigim mi ofsaida.
'He is making me (his) assistant.'

The form of these examples is

Subject + Verb + Direct Object + Object Complement

It should be noted that the object complement, unlike the direct and indirect objects, normally cannot be deleted. For example, it is possible to delete the direct object and have

Im meigim nogud.
'He makes (me) feel bad.'


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but it is not possible to delete the object complement and have

Im meigim mi.
'He makes me (feel bad).'

7.2.3.4 *Budum* Sentences

The verb *budum* 'put' is used in double transitive sentences having the basic form

Subject + Verb + Direct Object + Object Place

as in

Im budum ai la bekbon.
'He puts (his) eyes on (his) back.

(i.e. He is turning away.)'

The object place is always a locative construction, being either an adverb, prepositional phrase, or a combination of both. Locative constructions are discussed in detail elsewhere.

Unlike other double transitive sentences, the word order of those involving an object place are fixed. The object place always follows the direct object.

Im budum mi la pitja.
'He is putting me in the picture.

(i.e. He is paying my way into the movie.)'

but not

**Im budum la pitja mi.*

As with other double transitive sentences, either or both of the objects can be deleted in a given context.

Im budum mi la pitja.
'He is paying my way into the movie.'

could be reduced to

Im budum la pitja.
'He is paying (my way) into the movie.'

Im budum mi.
'He is paying my way (into the movie).'

or simply

Im budum.
'He is paying (my way into the movie).'

7.3 EXISTENTIAL SENTENCES

Sentences that are used to make a statement as to whether or not something exists are referred to as existential sentences. The basic form of existential sentences in English is

'there' + a form of the verb 'to be' + a noun expression

as in

There are swarms of mosquitoes at Roper.

There are several ways of making an existential statement in Creole. The simplest is by use of a non-verbal construction. The English example above would be

Tumaj miskida la Ropa.
'Swarms of mosquitoes are at Roper.'

A stronger, more emphatic construction would be

Ropa onli fo miskida.
'Roper is only for mosquitoes.'

This construction, however, is used relatively rarely.

The same existential statement could, however, also be expressed by using a verbal construction. This could be a transitive sentence using one of the verbs for 'have', either *abum* or *gadim*, as in

Ropa abum tumaj miskida.

or *Ropa gadim tumaj miskida.*
'Roper has swarms of mosquitoes.'

The same idea could also be expressed by an intransitive sentence using the verb *jidan* 'exist, dwell, to be'.

Tumaj miskida jidan la Ropa.
'Swarms of mosquitoes exist at Roper.'

The verb *jandap* is also used in intransitive existential constructions. It is, however, restricted to stating the existence of entities that in some sense have a vertical nature, such as trees.

Tumaj meinggo tri jandap jeya.
'Many mango trees exist there.

(i.e. There are many mango trees there.)'

Another way of expressing existential in Creole is by the use of a *deibin* construction. This is similar to the English 'there + to be' construction. It consists of a contraction of the third person plural pronoun *dei* and the past tense marker *bin* followed by a noun expression. It is restricted to an expression of the past existence of an entity.

Deibin tumaj miskida la Ropa.
'There were swarms of mosquitoes at Roper.'

Deibin tumaj meinggo tri jeya.
'There were many mango trees there.'

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