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A Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis of French Creole Tense, Mood, and Aspect Markers in Trinidad and Tobago, and in other Selected Caribbean Territories

Mackala Lewis
LING 3099: Special Project in Linguistics

ABSTRACT:

Some French Creoles within the Caribbean, like many other Creoles within the region, are relatively under-researched, and as such, can sometimes be viewed as only being one language with little variation or few differences despite being spoken in several territories. In Trinidad and Tobago, the French Creole spoken is considered to be an endangered variety, although there are currently attempts being made to document and ultimately revive the language by individuals like Nnamdi Hodge and Jo-Anne Ferreira (Belle). Despite there being literature available where the focus is a comparative analysis of French Creoles, Trinidadian French Creole (TFC) is hardly ever included in these comparisons, and the Tense, Mood, and Aspect Markers of TFC have hardly ever been investigated with a brief mention in a relatively recent two volume atlas by le Dû and Brun-Trigaud (Hazaël-Massieux). In 1869, John Jacob Thomas published the first ever book on the grammar of TFC, and, by extension, was the first ever grammar where a French Creole was the focus. This book was written when French Creole was the lingua franca of Trinidad, and thus, it is necessary to investigate whether any changes have taken place from then to the present-day. Data were collected from current TFC speakers, where it was determined that the TMA markers have remained largely the same. When looking at Haitian Creole and St Lucian French Creole, Valdman and Carrington's works were used as a point of comparison, respectively. In observing the TMA markers that exist in TFC as compared to Haitian Creole (Kreyòl) and St Lucian French Creole (Kwéyòl), it was discovered that the TMA markers of TFC and St Lucian Kwéyòl share greater similarity, which is part of the basis of their classification as Lesser Antillean French Creoles.

Word Count: 8,199

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1 First Person

2 Second Person

3 Third Person

AUX Auxiliary

COMPL Completive

DEM Demonstrative

DET Determiner

FUT Future

HFC Haitian French Creole

IMP Imperative

INF Infinitive

N- Non-

NEG Negative

POSS Possessive

PL Plural

PRS Present

PROG Progressive

PST Past

SG Singular

SLFC St Lucian French Creole

SUBJ Subjective

TFC Trinidadian French Creole

TMA Tense, Mood, and Aspect

TrinEC Trinidadian English Creole

Chapter 1:

Introduction

There is absolutely no doubt that languages differ from each other. Spanish and Turkish evidently differ in multiple ways, and so do Latin and French. The latter example is extremely interesting since French is one of the most well-known examples of a Romance language, belonging to that group of languages descended from Latin (Dawson and Phelan 534). In addition to this, there are differences that exist within a language that, to the outsider, may seem to be the same language. For example, there are numerous differences that exist between Modern or Present Day English (PDE), and Trinidadian English Creole (TrinEC), one of these morphosyntactic differences being limited morphologically marked subject-verb agreement (SVA) in PDE versus zero morphologically marked SVA in TrinEC (James 14), as seen in the example “She eat three apple” (which is past tense in TrinEC) versus “She eats three apples” (in English). As seen in the example, the eating of the apple may be be assumed to be a habitual action in PDE, as this sentence may be expanded to “She eats three apples every morning” while “She eat three apple” to any TrinEC speaker is understood to have taken place at some point before the utterance was made, and is not a habitual occurrence. This would be indicated by the use of a habitual marker, like “does”, being placed directly before the verb. Therefore, bearing all of this in mind, the differences between the French Creoles that exist within and outside of the Caribbean should come as no surprise.

Creoles do not follow the same structure and rules as their superstrate lexifier(s) or lexifying language(s), which may be defined as a language variety that has influenced a less politically, culturally, and socially dominant language (Crystal 465). There are so many differences that exist among these Creoles that if one were to explore them all, an entire book series could be written, and even then, that study may just barely scratch the surface. For the

purposes of this study, only the tense, mood, and aspect (TMA) markers will be analysed and compared.

As a Linguistics student from the Caribbean region, and a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago, I have a vested interest in the variety of French Creole that was, and continues to be spoken, in Trinidad. As a child, I heard words and phrases from my grandmother in French Creole, not understanding what some of them meant, and even those lexical items that she used, like *zaboca*: “an avocado” (Winer 986) and *kilkitay* which is “to fall in a heavy manner” (Winer 491), I did not fully understand the importance and history behind these words. Therefore, as a final-year student currently in the process of learning mainly the St Lucian variety of French Creole at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, I developed an interest in our own variety of French Creole, and how it can be revitalised. It is, therefore, a long-term goal of mine to continue research along this vein in the hopes of educating the public, and the eventual revitalisation of French Creole in Trinidad.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

Crystal defines markers as “those components of the meaning of a lexical item which are systematic for the language” (296). Tense markers, simply put, are those markers that give information regarding the temporal relationships that exist within a sentence; they demonstrate exactly when an action is being done (Siemund 111). An example of this is found within the English sentence “We walked to the market.” The marker “-ed” lets English speakers know that the action of walking has taken place at some point before the utterance was made, i.e., in the past.

Mood markers are those that refer to the modality of a sentence. Modality is the component of a sentence that reveals if that sentence is coincident with reality (Vilela and Koch 175-177). For context, there is the subjunctive mood morphologically marked in French, Spanish, and several other languages, that is used to refer to situations that are not based in reality, but rather, they are dreams, wishes, or desires. Two of the modalities that will be further discussed, among others, will be Deontic and Epistemic Modalities. The former is concerned with obligation and permission, as seen in Crystal’s example: *The car must be ready*, meaning that it is obligatory that the car be ready (136). On the other hand, Epistemic Modality deals with the logical structure of sentences and whether a proposition is known or believed. Therefore, the above sentence, contrasting with Deontic Modality, can be interpreted as “it is surely the case that the car is ready” (171).

Finally, aspect markers, as defined by Siemund, are those “internal temporal properties of the situation described by a sentence and the grammatical means available for portraying them” (134). At first glance, this may seem to be no different to tense markings, but there is indeed a difference that will only be evident to native speakers that employ these

aspect markers. An example of this, also posited by Siemund, are the sentences “The man drowned” vs “The man was drowning” (136). Although the tense markers present within both sentences indicate that the act of drowning took place in the past, the former sentence indicated that the man drowned with finality, while the latter offers the possibility that the man could have been saved. To demonstrate this, one can extend the sentence in the following way: “The man was drowning but was rescued by a lifeguard.” These sentences can therefore be viewed as being demonstrations of the perfective and imperfective aspects. Comrie defines the Perfective aspect as the view of an action from an outsider’s perspective, with no attempt being made to break up the action into individual phases or distinguishing the internal temporal constituency of the action, as seen in the first example of “The man drowned” (3-4). On the other hand, the imperfective aspect is concerned with the opposite, ergo, the internal temporal constituency of the action, looking towards the beginning and the end of an action, which is necessary when the action has no discernable beginning or end, as seen in the sentence “The man was drowning”(4). In addition to this, under aspect, there is also the marker of habitual activities. Comrie defines the habitual aspect as one that is concerned with an action that takes place over an extended period of time

The attitude of the so-called or self-titled “language purist” may prevent them from believing that these markers exist in Creoles, since these are usually viewed by the layman as so-called “broken” forms of some European language. In fact, Muysken points to a popular and flawed definition offered by Wikipedia as a so-called simplified version of another language, that emerges from the mixture or contact of two or more languages, which became the native tongue or first language or a group of persons, which then developed a full vocabulary and a grammatical system (Muysken, 2). That definition is extremely problematic since the word ‘simplified’ implies that there are possibly important elements that are “missing” from Creoles within the Caribbean, rendering them inferior to the lexifier

languages they are derived from, which is not at all the case. In the world of Creole Linguistics, especially by those linguistics that are based externally to the Caribbean, Creoles have often been thought to have by whom little to no structure, and when being compared to their supposed "lexifiers", they have historically been found lacking by non-Caribbean based linguists, with Crowley stating that "… Creoles are typically contrasted with their lexifier languages in terms of their hallmark morphological simplicity" (74). On the other hand, Holm posited that no theory of Creole genesis is sufficient to account for all of the features that Creoles have been found to share (171). Therefore, it can be said that Creoles are often misrepresented. As such, people who speak a Creole language as their first language are generally seen in wider society as uneducated, even among Creole speakers; having a poor grasp of the official language that exists in that society, due to the supposed simplicity of their means of expression. This is brought about by the emphasis of the importance of standardised varieties in acquiring social mobility, usually enforced by parents and grandparents of the younger generations.

A far more popular among whom definition of Creoles, when referring to the language, is the status a language takes on when a pidgin (which can be defined as a trade or contact jargon) becomes the language of the home, or the native language of children within any given household (Alleyne 2). This definition also has its own issues, as it may still be debated as to exactly when a pidgin becomes a Creole. However, it is still marginally better than the previous definition.

There are several methods of classifying Creoles. Firstly, they can be classified in terms of their lexifiers, meaning the languages from which they derived the majority of their lexicon (Kouwenberg and Singler 4), Secondly, they can be classified according to their location, i.e., where they are spoken. For example, the three main locations, and therefore, types of Creoles under this method of classification are: the Atlantic Creoles, Indian Ocean

Creoles, and Pacific Creoles. They can also be classified according to their socio-historical development or origins, such as Maroon Creoles versus Fort and Plantation Creoles. They can also be classified based on their structural features, and finally, they may be classified to the communicative roles that they fulfil, i.e., their function. For the purposes of this study, reference will be made to their lexifier language, which in this case will be French Creoles, as this is the most widely accepted classification of the language varieties that will be discussed.

There are many varieties of French Creoles that exist within the Caribbean region, namely: Haitian, St Lucian, Martinican, Guadeloupean, and French Guianese French Creoles (Syea 10–11). This study, in the latter part of this analysis, will focus on Haitian and St Lucian French Creoles.

However, one French Creole that is often not mentioned in literature is the Trinidadian variety of French Creole, which is nationally known among its speakers as Patois.[1] A reason for the relative lack of available existing analysis and information is due to the fact that it is considered a dying language, with very few speakers, that are principally found in rural areas and that are of an advanced age (Belle). This set of circumstances was due to Charles Warner's strict Anglicisation Policy, which moved to effectively eradicate French Creole and other languages from the island (Ferreira *Les Vestiges* 3). However, the very first Creole grammar was published in 1869 by John Jacob Thomas, which reflected a time when French Creole was Trinidad's lingua franca, which can be defined as the language spoken by groups of persons within a society whose native languages are not the same (Crystal 282). Therefore, when taking into account language change and the length of time between the publication of J.J. Thomas' book and the time of this study, it is fair to assume that certain elements of the French Creole that still exist in Trinidad have changed. However, due to the isolation of the TFC speech communities, it can also be assumed that conservation

[1] This is not *patois* as defined by Harper.

and maintenance have also taken place. The extent of these changes is to be explored in this study, with an emphasis on the Tense, Mood, and Aspect markers highlighted in J.J. Thomas' work.

For the purposes of this study, we will be exploring the differences that exist between the Trinidadian, St Lucian, and Haitian varieties of French Creole. Based on the data that have already been collected by Muysken, the (past) Tense, Mood, and Aspect (TMA) markers present in Haitian French Creole, are *te, ava,* and *apé* respectively (184). However, he is aware that this data may very well be incomplete and incorrect, but Lefebvre, in addition to these markers, added *a-va* as the marker for the indefinite future, *pou* as the subjunctive markers within Mood Irrealis, and *apr-ale* under Aspect non-complete markers, in order to demonstrate a prospective (10). As posited by Thomas, the Past Tense Marker present in Trinidadian French Creole is *té* (53–55). At this stage, only the Tense and Mood Markers were able to be sourced from native speakers for St Lucian French Creole, which are *té* (past tense) and *té ka* (imperfect). At first glance, we already see that there are several similarities that exist across these three varieties, notably among the past tense markers.

However, we begin seeing differences emerge when looking at the Future tense markers. In Haitian Creole, the (definite) future tense marker is *ap* (Muysken), while in Trinidadian French Creole, Thomas presents the future tense marker to be *caller* and *câër*. On the other hand, Carrington noted that the future tense marker in St Lucian French Creole is *kay* (118). It must also be noted that this may change based on the status of the verb themselves, for instance, whether they are stative verbs or dynamic verbs.

For reference, stative verbs can be defined as verbs which do not have a progressive form and can be used to describe states of affairs or cognitive processes, rather than actions (Crystal 452), such as the infinitive verb "to realise". Contrastingly, non-stative, or dynamic

verbs, are the opposite of this, being defined by Crystal as verbs which have a progressive form, and may be used to describe actions, bodily sensations, and processes (159) like “to eat”, for example.

One clear instance where this affects the marker associated with a particular variety of French Creole is within the French Creole variety, where the marker changes the tense of the verb, depending on the type of verb. As previously mentioned, even though *té* is the past tense marker, this can only be used in relation to stative verbs, to make it an action that took place in the immediate past. However, unmarked dynamic verbs are interpreted as having taken place in the immediate past, and when *té* is added to this, it becomes a part of the pluperfect tense. This, however, is not the case in the older form of the Trinidadian variety, where there exists an entirely new marker to express the pluperfect, which is *sé pé* (Thomas 59).

Chapter 3:

Methodology

In order to acquire data about the selected French Creoles currently spoken within the Caribbean, a number of sources will be explored, which includes both primary and secondary data. In order to collect the relevant data for an accurate comparison and analysis of Trinidadian French Creole, J.J. Thomas' book *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar* will be explored, which is the secondary source of data, and it will be compared to responses received to the primary sources, which entails a purposive sampling eliciting data in Trinidadian English Creole, i.e., interviews with current speakers within Trinidad. The interview questions were both open-ended as well as specific, with the latter requiring them to translate certain sentences from Trinidadian English Creole into Trinidadian French Creole. The reason that Trinidadian French Creole and Trinidadian English Creole instead of Trinidadian English was mostly used was to ensure that interviewees be more at ease with the created environment and to avoid any potential misunderstandings, including the Hawthorne Effect (Zaleznik). These questions and translations were created with the goal in mind to capture any and all TMA markers that exist in TFC. For the purposes of this analysis, it should be noted that the TFC responses given by interviewees in Trinidadian English Creole will be presented using the established writing system set up for all Lesser Antillean French Creole varieties, GEREC-1, with GEREC being the acronym for Groupe d'Études et de Recherches en Espace Créolophone, which was founded by the late Jean Bernabé. An analysis of mainly secondary data will be used for a comparison of the French Creoles of the wider Caribbean, while also including the primary data previously analysed in the previous diachronic analysis. Using these sources of data, it is hoped that a better understanding of several French Creoles within the region will be realised.

Chapter 4:

Diachronic Analysis of Trinidadian French Creole

Not much literature is currently available due to the lack of research that was and is currently being done on the French Creole that is spoken in Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, despite once being the lingua franca of Trinidad, it is currently in an endangered state, mainly spoken by elders within rural communities that have not been able to pass on the language to the younger generation (Belle). It was indirectly introduced to the population by the Spanish when they allowed Catholics to come to the island to settle, an offer which the French, among others, gladly accepted, so much so that Ferreira posited that the French, and by extension, the French Creole-speaking population, greatly outnumbered the Spanish that were, at the time, the rulers of the island (*TTEL*).

It is thought that the French Creole that existed in Trinidad was born out of dialects of French Creole from other parts of the French Caribbean, mainly in the Lesser Antilles, hence the reason that the French Creole spoken in Trinidad is closer to those varieties that exist in the Lesser Antilles, such as Dominica, Guadeloupe, Martinique and St Lucia, rather than in other places like Haiti or Louisiana (USA) and beyond (cf. Wylie).

The language spread rapidly among the population, and by the 19th century, it became the island's lingua franca, crossing boundaries of creed, race, or age; a unifying factor that allowed persons from all walks of life to communicate. The beginning of the end of French Creole in Trinidad came about with then Attorney General Charles Warner's Anglicisation Policy in 1845, who said to the Legislative Council that "English rights and privileges should only be given to those who would take the trouble to learn English and to bring up their children in an English way" (Wood 181). By 1851, English began being introduced to the school system, which many considered to be the beginning of the end of French Creole and other "minority languages" on the island.

4.1 Trinidadian French Creole as it was spoken in the 1800s

In order to have an idea of how Trinidadian French Creole was spoken in the 19th century, when it was the most widely spoken language in the country, we must look at the writings of John Jacob Thomas. His book *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar* was the first book of grammar written on a Caribbean French Creole. It served to outline how French Creole was used in Trinidad at the time of publication in 1869. However, as previously mentioned, this would have been when it was already being officially "phased out" of Trinidadian society. It is evident that the orthography that Thomas used in his publication was of direct French origin, as he himself acknowledged. For example, the pronouns used in his publication are written as follows: *moèn, ous, li ('y), nous, zôtes, yeaux* (Thomas 55), copying French orthography.

Trinidadian French Creole is known as Patois by most of its current, younger speakers, and Creole by some of its older speakers. However, in the 19th century, it was known as both Creole and Patois. Just like any other Creole, and by extension, any other language, Trinidadian French Creole is able to express complex ideas with a reference to time, continuity, and attitudes. As such, Tense, Mood, and Aspect markers are the features of Trinidadian Patois to be examined below. In *The Theory and Practice of Creole Grammar* the markers can be identified as follows:

Marker	**Thomas' data (Using his orthography)**	**Modern Transcription (Using GEREC-1)**
Tense	Present: *ca* Future: *caller* or *câër* or *va* or *a* Past (Perfect): *té*	Present: *ka* Future: *k'alé* or *ké* or *va* or *a* Past (Perfect): *té*
Mood	Subjunctive - *té ca* Potential: *sa* or *pé* or *faut*	Subjunctive: *té ka* Potential: *sa or pé* or *fo*
Aspect	Imperfect: *té ca*	Imperfect: *té ka*

Table 1

Table demonstrating different TMA Markers of Trinidadian French Creole as presented by J.J. Thomas using both his spelling system and the modern standardised GEREC-1 orthography (see Table 2 below)

4.1.1 Tense Markers

It should be noted that with the past tense, as typical with French Creoles, the type of verb matters as it relates to which marker is used as well as what these markers signify, as stative verbs mark the past and present tenses differently than dynamic verbs. It may be a bit disingenuous to purely call them markers of a particular tense, as typically, the bare stative verb signifies the present tense and a pre-verbal marker is required to mark it as the past tense. On the contrary, the bare dynamic verb indicates the past tense, while a "past tense marker" would mark the verb as present perfect. This phenomenon is demonstrated in Thomas' book, where he uses the verbs *manger* meaning 'to eat' which is a dynamic verb

and *aimèn* meaning ‘to love’ which is a stative verb. Both of these verbs mark their present tenses differently,

(1)Trinidadian French Creole (Thomas 1869:54)
Moèn ca manger
[mwen ka manjé]
1SG PRS-PROG eat
‘I am eating’

as compared to

(2) Trinidadian French Creole (Thomas 1869:60)
Moèn aimèn
[mwen émé]
1SG [PRS-PROG] love
‘I love’

This can be compared to their respective past tenses, which are as follows:

(3) Trinidadian French Creole (Thomas 1869:55)
Moèn manger
[Mwen manjé]
1SG [PST-COMPL] eat
“I ate”

and

(4) Trinidadian French Creole (Thomas 1859:60)
Moèn té aimèn
[Mwen té èmen]
1SG PST love
‘I loved’

As previously mentioned, the marker *ca*, which Thomas states is a present-tense marker, only marks the present tense for dynamic verbs. On the other hand, the past perfect tense marker, *té* marks the past tense for stative verbs.

The future tense is marked by using one of four markers: *c’aller. câër, va*, or *a*. Based on what Thomas presents, *caller* seems to be the main future tense marker, while the other three markers are other ways of marking the future tense, and depends on which pronouns precede the marker (55–56). For instance, the marker *caller* is presented on its own, and is unchanging, no matter the pronoun that precedes it (55–56). Under the section of “Other

Forms" within the presentation of the Future Tense, the markers are presented as follows: "*moèn câër manger, ous va manger, 'i câër or li'a manger, nous va manger, zôtes câër manger, and yeaux va manger*," meaning "I am going to eat, you are going to eat, he/she shall eat, we are going to eat, you will eat, and they are going to eat" respectively. It can be assumed that there is some form of conjugation taking place with the other form of future tense marking. However, there is no indication as to what the "infinitive" verb is, or what the rules are. Thomas dedicates a very small section to conjugation, where he states that verbs in Trinidadian French Creole come under two classes, with the largest and most important being *ca* as it relates to all verbs that form the Present and Imperfect Indicative, while the second form, called Irregular, comprises about twenty verbs that dispense with the auxiliary in the formation of those tenses (54), but it is not outright stated that *ca* is also the verb from which the other forms of the future tense is derived. It is also interesting to note that only a dynamic verb is used to demonstrate the present tense. Based on this fact, it can be assumed that the markers for stative and dynamic verbs are the same.

4.1.2 Mood Markers

Thomas only provides clear markers within a table of sorts for the various tenses that existed within Trinidadian French Creole. As it relates to the mood markers that were present, it is a bit less clear and defined. According to him, moods in TFC can be Indicative, Subjunctive, Imperative, or Infinitive. The Indicative mood indicates whether a verb is positive or negative, while the Subjunctive mood expresses doubt. A verb in the Imperative mood is the expression of a command or a request, while the Infinitive mood is one that refers to any action "in a general indeterminate manner without any reference to an agent" (53). Unfortunately, there is not any explicit marker identified in his explanation, with the mood indicator that seems closest to a "marker" being that of the Subjunctive mood *té ca* as seen in the example:

(5) Trinidadian French Creole (Thomas 1869:53)
Si lamer té ca chécher
[si lanmè té ka chéché]
If sea[DET] SBJV dry
'If the sea were to dry up'

As for the other moods, there does not seem to be any other separate markers to indicate that these moods use markers as opposed to some form of affixation, as they seem to simply use the verb, or a particular form of the verb, in order to mark the Indicative, Imperative, or the Infinitive, as can be seen in the following examples: Indicative:

(6) Trinidadian French Creole (Thomas 1869:53)
Macaque connaîte qui bois li ca mouter
[makak konnèt ki bwa li ka mouté]
Monkey[SG] know DEM tree 3SG PRS-PROG climb
'Monkey knows what sort of tree he climbs'

Imperative:

(7) Trinidadian French Creole (Thomas 1869:53)
Bad'nèn bien épî macaque, main pouengâde mañèn lâché li -
[badnen byen épi makak mé pwengad manen laché li]
Joke well with monkey but beware[IMP] handle[INF] tail 3SG
'Joke with a monkey as much as you please, but beware of its tail'

Lastly, the Infinitive Mood seems to simply be the "bare" verb, such as *rianèn* meaning to giggle, or *créoliser* meaning to creolise. However, Thomas does outright say that this Creole, as is the case with many other Creoles, is essentially analytic and non-inflecting (57). Within Thomas' verb tables, there is a section called "Potential Mood" within the present tense, which is defined by Kirkham as the implication of "possibility, liberty, necessity, power, will, or obligation" (136). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the potential mood includes both Epistemic and Deontic Moods as both of these moods fall under the definition of the Potential Mood. The markers for the Potential Mood under the Present Tense, as demonstrated by Thomas are *sa, pé*, and *faut*, with the latter being presented as an alternate form. *Sa* and *pé*, based on the given examples, can be assumed to be the Epistemic Mood,

since they mean “can or may” respectively, which deals with permission and power. On the other hand, *faut* seems to better align with Deontic Mood, which deals with obligation, as its translation is “must” (58).

4.1.3 Aspect Markers

Lastly, Thomas does not explicitly discuss Aspect in his book, as it is a relatively new term in the linguistics field. However, across the verb tables in his book (54–62) he spans a wide range of tenses and possible moods and aspects. Under the Imperfect Tense, he presents the marker *té ca* as the verb “was”, which can be assumed to be used in the same context as the previous example demonstrating Aspect: “The man drowned” as compared to “The man was drowning”, a demonstration of the perfective and the imperfective respectively. The Past Perfect tense seems to be the same as the Preterite or Simple Past, which is when the past tense is presented without any aspectual consideration (Crystal 385). On the other hand, the Imperfect Tense is equivalent to the Past Progressive Aspect within the English language. Therefore, one may assume that the marker for the Past Progressive Aspect, as previously mentioned, is *té ca*.

Even though some of these are placed under the distinct categories of Tense, Mood, and Aspect, there may be some overlap. For instance, the Past Progressive can be considered to be a Tense, as it has taken place at some point before the utterance of the phrase took place, but it may also be classed as an aspect, as it may also speak to the fact that that action took place habitually in the past, or has not been completed at the point at which the utterance was made.

4.2 Trinidadian French Creole as it is spoken today

Language change is something that usually happens naturally with time due to quite a number of factors, principally with usage (Ellis 233), and with Trinidadian French Creole being Trinidad’s lingua franca for quite a number of years, it is evident that it would have

been used a great deal. Therefore, since the 1800s when J.J. Thomas wrote his book, quite a number of changes may be assumed to have taken place. As previously mentioned, there is a lack of publicly accessible documentation and resources on Trindadian French Creole, it was necessary to do interviews in order to accurately capture how the language is currently spoken, and to identify the Tense, Mood, and Aspect markers present.

4.2.1 Tense Markers Today

Firstly, as it relates to Tenses, it seems that the use of markers (or lack thereof) remained largely the same when it comes to stative and dynamic verbs. For the present tense as it relates to stative verbs, the bare verb is still used to signify the present tense. This is demonstrated by the fact that all interviewees, when asked to translate the sentence 'I did not think it would rain today", the response was as follows:

(8) Trinidadian French Creole
Mwen pa té kwè lapli té ké tombé jòdi a
1SG NEG PST believe rain [DET] AUX FUT fall today DET
'I did not think it would rain today'

In this sentence, *pa* is the negative marker, signifying "not", and it can be assumed that the Past Perfect marker *té* kept its functionality. Isolating these two markers leaves *mwen kwè*, which may be translated to "I think or believe." On the other hand, when eliciting data for the present tense marker for dynamic verbs, the following was observed:

(9) Trinidadian French Creole
Ou ka palé épi mwen apwézan
2SG PRS-PROG talk with 1SG now
'You are talking to me right now'

Since the sentence is in the Present Tense, one can observe that the marker *ka* is being used as a present tense marker before the dynamic verb *palé*, and since there is no audio evidence of how the marker *ca* was pronounced at the time, it may also be assumed that it was pronounced in the same way: [ka]. As it relates to the future tense, things have diverged a bit, in that the principal marker *c'aller* or anything resembling it was not used, nor were two out

of the three alternate forms used either. However, the marker *ké* was used to signify the past tense pre-verbally among interviewees, which is identified by Thomas as the marker *câër*, which may give some indication as to its origins. To demonstrate this, when one 65 year-old male interviewee was asked what he planned to do later, the response was as follows:

(10) Trinidadian French Creole
Lè mwen kwité isit
When 1SG leave here
'When I leave here'

(11) Trinidadian French Creole
mwen ké alé pwen yon déjnen,
1SG FUT go take one lunch
'I will have breakfast'

(12) Trinidadian French Creole
mwen ké alé tjwit
1SG FUT go cook
'I will cook'

(13) Trinidadian French Creole
Mwen ké alé bò difé a
1SG FUT go by fire DET
'I will go by the fire'

The past tense of today seems to be expressed in an identical way as it was to how it was presented by Thomas, in that they are represented by bare dynamic verbs and marked stative verbs. The former was demonstrated when interviewees were asked what they did on the day prior to the interview. Even though the responses varied in terms of their activities, almost no past tense marker was used preverbally, as most interviewees used dynamic verbs to describe their days except for one case as seen in the following example:

(14) Trinidadian French Creole
yè mwen té bò jaden
Yesterday 1SG PST by garden[DET]
'I was by the garden'

(15) Trinidadian French Creole
apwé mwen jété dé kann dlo
After 1SG throw[PST] two sugarcane[PL] water
'After, I threw water on two sugar canes'

(16) Trinidadian French Creole
é pwi apwé sa mwen vini lakay
And then after DEM 1SG go[PST] home
'And then after that I came home'

Both instances of dynamic verbs, *jété* and *vini*, have no instances of preverbal markers, yet based on the context, it is clear that these verbs took place in the past. On the other hand, as seen in the previous example: *mwen pa* ***té*** *kwè la pli té ké tombe jòdi-a*, it has been established that *té*, the same marker used to mark stative verbs as occurring in the past, is being used to fulfil the same function.

4.2.2 Mood Markers Today

As it relates to modality markers, there seemed to be significantly more changes that took place since the publication of Thomas' book than what was observed with the Tense markers that are present within TFC. For example, the Subjunctive Mood marker was previously identified to be *si… té ca*. However, when asking questions in order to elicit the Subjunctive mood, this marker was not used, as seen in the following examples: When asked to translate the sentence: "If you didn't lie to me before, I would've believed you now", interviewees responded with:

(17a) Trinidadian French Creole
Si ou pa té manté pou mwen yè
If 2SG NEG PST lie for 1SG yesterday
'If you didn't lie for me yesterday'

(17b) Trinidadian French Creole
Mwen té ké kwè'w jòdi-a
1SG SUBJ believe 2SG today DET
'I would've believed you now'

(19) Trinidadian French Creole
Si mwen té ni zyèl, mwen té byen volé
If 1SG PST have wing[PL] 1SG AUX well fly[PST]
'If I had wings, I would have flown'

(20) Trinidadian French Creole

Si ou kontinyé ka manjé kon sa ou ké vini gwo
If 2SG continue PRS-PROG eat like DEM 2SG FUT come big
'If you continue eating like that, you will get fat'

In none of these instances, was the combination *té ca/ka* used, despite the past, present, and future subjunctive being translated, while *si* and *té* kept their places within the sentences. Deontic modality, which falls under the previously mentioned Potential Modality, whose markers are *sa, pé,* and *faut* was also explored. When asked to translate the sentence: "She's supposed to be finished by now", the response given was by a 97 year-old female respondent:

(21) Trinidadian French Creole
I sipozé fini pou apwézan
3SG suppose[PST] finish for now
'She is supposed to be finished by now'

Another sentence that was provided under deontic modality was:

(22) Trinidadian French Creole
Ou té ni pou pan had-la déhò pou i seché
2SG AUX have put clothes DET outside for DEM dry
'You need to hang out the clothes to dry'

and lastly

(23) Trinidadian French Creole
Mwen bizwen senk boul plis pou achté lètis
1SG need five dollar[PL] more for buy lettuce
'I need 5 dollars to buy lettuce'

None of these markers identified by the current speakers of the language falls under the markers put forth by Thomas. As it relates to Epistemic modality, the two sentences to be translated were:

(24) Trinidadian French Creole
Mwen fini nétwayé; ou sa antwé apwézan
1SG COMPL clean 2SG can enter now
'I'm finished cleaning, so you can enter the room now'

and

(25) Trinidadian French Creole
Ou té ni pou bwè dité jenjanm pas ou ka santi malad
2SG AUX have drink tea ginger because 2SG PRS-PROG feel sick
'You should drink ginger tea if you feel sick'

The only marker that seems to be retained is *sa*, while there are others that seem to have been introduced, such as: *sipozé, (té) ni pou*, and *bizwen*.

4.2.3 Aspect Markers Today

Lastly, aspectual markers, like those marking the perfective and imperfective aspect, were also elicited. When asked to translate "she eat the last of the soup last night", the response given was:

(26) Trinidadian French Creole
I ka bwè dennyé asoup la yè oswè
3SG PRS-PROG drink last soup DET yesterday night
'She eat the last of the soup last night'

This points to the perfective aspect, as the action of finishing/drinking the soup began and ended last night, before the point of the utterance. On the other hand, when asked to translate for the imperfective aspect, the following in (27) was the response given:

(27) Trinidadian French Creole
Mwen pa ké sipwi si yo lévé pwi fawin
1SG NEG FUT surprise if 3PL raise price flour
'I wouldn't be surprised if they raised the price of flour'

Within the habitual aspect, two sentences were translated:

(28) Trinidadian French Creole
Lè lapli ka tombé, mwen ka sèvi pawasòl-mwen
When rain[DET] PRS-PROG fall 1SG [HABITUAL] use umbrella 1SG[POSS]
'When it rains, I use my umbrella'

and

(29) Trinidadian French Creole
Lè mwen té pli jenn apwé lékòl lè apwémidi,
When 1SG PST more young after school when afternoon
'When I was younger, after school, on afternoons'

(30) Trinidadian French Creole
Mwen té ka jwè foutbòl épi kanmawad-mwen
1SG [HABITUAL] play football with friend 1SG[POSS]
'I used to play football with my friends'

In this sentence, the marker *té ka* is the habitual marker, and is the same as was presented in Thomas' book (in terms of pronunciation and not orthography).

4.3 Summary

The TMA markers of the Trinidadian French Creole language can therefore be represented and summarised in the following table:

Marker	**Data Collected**
Tense	Present: *ka* Future: *ké* Past (Perfect): *té*
Mood	Subjunctive: si…*(té)(ké)* Deontic: *sipozé, té ni pou* or *bizwen* Epistemic: *sa* or *té ni pou*
Aspect	Completive: *té* Irrealis: *té ké* Imperfect/Habitual: *té ka*

Table 2

Table demonstrating TMA Markers of Trinidadian Patois as they exist in modern speech samples (see Table 1 above)

Therefore, it is safe to say that there are indeed differences that exist from the 1800s to the present, a very natural process that happens within all languages, and Creoles are no exception to this. There are also remnants that remain, giving current speakers a very important link to past speakers, and by extension, their history.

Chapter 5

Synchronic Analysis of Selected Caribbean French Creoles

Despite usually being generalised as one language, the French Creoles within the Caribbean have various dialects, at all linguistic levels. For the purposes of this analysis, in keeping the overall theme of the paper, only the differences and similarities with respect to the tense, mood, and aspect (TMA) markers will be explored. As mentioned previously, the French Creoles that will be compared are Haitian French Creole, St Lucian French Creole, and Trinidadian French Creole, the latter already having been analysed to an extent.

Valdman explores TMA markers within Haitian French Creole. He identifies several markers within the French Creole of Haiti: *te, va, ta, ap/apral, te ap, av ap*, and *ta av ap*, as well as the bare verb, or zero particle (215), which is where a verb remains unmarked, a feature that he believes to be equally important as playing an integral role in the TMA system, as it carries its own distinct meaning (213). Several markers were comparable to data elicited from native St Lucian Kwéyòl speakers.

Firstly, as it relates to tenses, a shared feature that two out of the three French Creoles have is that the simple past tense is explicitly marked based on stativity, i.e whether or not a verb is marked to express the past tense depends on whether the verb is stative or dynamic, but this is not the outright case for all French Creoles. In Haitian Creole, Valdman describes the bare verb as being neutral (218), generally referring to truths, the present tense where stative verbs are concerned, but also to the past tense where dynamic verbs are concerned. It also suggests a generic or habitual interpretation with dynamic verbs, as seen in the following examples: *Digo ble* - Indigo is blue, *Pòl fimen* - Paul (habitually) smokes or

(31) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:218)
Ebenis la wete grenn bwa yo ak papye sable
Cabinet-maker DET remove rough wood them with paper sand
'The cabinet-maker removed the rough spots on the boards with sandpaper'

The first example demonstrates a general fact, the second demonstrates habituality, while the third example shows the past tense. Therefore, one cannot only look at the bare verb as a "marker" with a fixed usage, as its usage, rather, depends on context and extralinguistic features. For instance, in the latter example above, one may observe that the bare verb marks the past tense. However, if the sentence is tweaked slightly, to become

(32) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:218)
Ebenis la wete grenn bwa ak papye sable
Cabinet-maker DET remove[HABITUAL] rough wood with paper sand
'The cabinet-maker removes the rough spots on the boards with sandpaper'

where the meaning changes to become a statement of the habitual. The inclusion of the determiner *yo* is what causes the sentence to become a demonstration of the past perfect. It should be noted though, that Valdman does acknowledge that the past tense is usually marked by its bareness rather than by any other past tense marker, which will be further discussed. Therefore, the conclusion that can be made about the bare verb marker in Haitian Creole is that it is not explicitly linked with its tense and stativity, but rather, the context in which it is used. St Lucian French Creole, by comparison, seems to be more dependent on stativity. According to Carrington, and corroborated by native Kwéyòl speakers, the bare verb can either be in reference to the Imperative Mood, or to demonstrate the completive aspect, meaning that the action began and ended in the past (117), making it the past perfect tense. What helps make the distinction between the two is the presence of a subject before the marker, as seen in the following sentences:

(33) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:117)
Ban mwen lajan-mwen
Give 1SG money 1SG[POSS]
'Give me my money'

Compare (33) with (34) below:

(34) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:117)
I pwan zafè-i èk i pati
3SG take[PST] thing[PL] [POSS] and 3SG leave[PST]
He took his things and left

He also makes the distinction that a small group of verbs, which are statives, when unmarked, tend to be glossed in English as the present tense, despite their completive aspect (117). Similarly, in Trinidadian French Creole, when a verb is stative and unmarked, it is used to refer to the present tense, while the unmarked dynamic verb makes reference to actions that have taken place in the past, as seen in the examples previously discussed based on data elicited from native Trinidadian Patois speakers.

On the other hand, all French Creoles have identified another marker as being "past tense markers" despite not always being used to mark the past tense, as previously discussed, as in some cases, no preverbal marker may categorise the past tense. In Haitian French Creole, similarly to St Lucian French Creole and Trinidadian French Creole, this marker has been identified as *te*. Unlike the bare verb, the use of *te* is required to place all stative verbs in the past tense, as seen in

(35) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:222)
Poukisa l[i] te bizwen mande konsèy sou sa?
Why 3SG PST need ask advice on DEM
'Why did she have to ask advice about that?'

Compare this to another sentence:

(36) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:222)
Poukisa li ban mwen konsèy sou sa?
Why 3SG give[PST] 1SG advice on that
'Why did she give me the advice she has just given me?'

The latter sentence demonstrates how, in certain contexts, the bare dynamic verb can be used to represent the past tense. However, the former sentence shows that it is necessary to use the marker *te* to show that the act of needing to give advice took place at some time before the utterance was said. Valdman cites other linguists, like Lainy and Spears, who believe that this

marker is used to separate the present from the posterior time, sometimes used to distinguish how a state of affairs is different from the present, as seen in the following excerpt

(37) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:220)
Tout bagay granmounnanou yo te fè lontan an
All thing[PL] elder[2PL-POSS] they PST do[PST] longtime DET
'All the things our elders used to be able to do'

(38) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:220)
Tèren yo pa fè l[i] ankò
Field[PL] 3PL NEG make DEM anymore
'the fields no longer can produce it anymore…'

It may also be used to mark anteriority, placing the mentioned event before another, like in the following example:

(39) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:221)
M[wen] te rive lakay mwen lè l[i] rele m[wen]
1SG PST arrive[PST] home 1SG[POSS] when 3SG call[PST] 1SG
'I had already arrived at my house when he called me'

This sentence, with the use of the marker *te* equates this sentence to the English pluperfect (Valdman 221). Carrington also identifies *té* as the past tense marker, which, when used alongside other markers, which will be further discussed, also extends the categories which may be expressed, all of which are within the past tense. However, the aspect and mood are affected by these combinations. When *té* is used on its own with a stative verb, it expresses the past tense with a completive aspect. Even though the stativity of the verb is not explicitly mentioned by Carrington, the examples he provides that only use *té* to mark the past tense are all stative verbs, as in

(40) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:119)
Mwen té ni mòso tè garan
1SG PST have piece land Garrand
I had a piece of land in Garrand

and

(41) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:119)
Si kay la pa té fèt an bwa, i pa té kay bwilé
If house DET NEG PST make in wood 2SG NEG COND burn[PST]
"If the house were not made of wood, it would not have burned"

The second sentence introduces the second combination that will be demonstrated, which is *te + kay*, which demonstrates the conditional/prospective/irrealis mood. "... *i pa té kay bwilé*" shows the house did burn down. However, if an element had been different i.e, the aforementioned house not being wooden, there would have been a reality in which the house did not burn down. Lastly, the combination of *té + ka* speaks to the non-completive and habitual aspect, as demonstrated by the following:

(42) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:119)
Lè yo twapé volè a
When 3PL catch[PST] thief DET
'When they caught the thief'

(43) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:119)
I té ka dòmi adan yon ti kaz anho mòn nan
2SG N-COMPL sleep in one small hut on hill DET
'He was sleeping in a little hut on the hill'

The above shows non-completive aspect, while (44) demonstrates the habitual aspect.

(44) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:119)
i té ka séwé dèyè pyé bwa sa a
2SG [HABITUAL] hide behind tree DEM DET
'He used to hide behind that tree'

On the other hand, based on information collected from native speakers of Trinidadian Patois, the marker *té* is also used to mark the past tense, and can also be used alongside other markers in order to impact their Aspect and Mood while still being rooted within the Past Tense. Similarly to St Lucian Kwéyòl, té, when used in isolation speaks to the completive aspect, as seen in the sentence *yè, mwen té bò jaden* meaning "yesterday, I was by the garden". *Té,* when combined with the future tense marker *ké* speaks to the irrealis mood, as demonstrated in *mwen pa té kwè la pli té ké tombé jòdi-a.* In addition to this, when *té* is used

alongside *ka*, as previously discussed, it demonstrates that an action took place habitually in the past, for instance, as in *Lè mwen té pli jenn, apwé lékòl, lè apwémidi, mwen* ***té ka*** *jwè futbol epi kanmawad-mwen.*

Yet another marker discussed in Haitian French Creole is the marker *ap*, which may either mark the definite future, or the progressive, with implications that the described action will take place from the point of speech into the future, being equivalent to the English construction of "be …-ing". This latter point is demonstrated in the following example:

(45) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:219)
Sa w ap fè koulye a?
What 2SG PST-PROG do now DET
'What are you doing now?'

(46) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:219)
M[wen] ap pentire baryè a.
1SG PST-PROG paint fence DET
'I'm painting the fence'

As with the other markers previously discussed in Haitian Creole, the use of ap is only used to distinguish the definite future as defined by situational context. Valdman quotes Lainy's examples, which contain the words for tomorrow and soon, to show that the context is what determines that the actions are set in the future:

(47) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:219
M[wen] ap rache l[i] demen
1SG FUT pull DEM tomorrow
'I will pull it out tomorrow'

and

(48) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:219)
"*Y[o] ap voye moun nan talè*"
3PL FUT send person DET soon
'They will send that person soon'

However, *ap*, as described byValdman, may also be used to describe the present tense as well as the past tense for bare stems of resultative verbs, such as *blese*, meaning to wound. This is seen in the following sentence:

(49) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:224)
Y[o] ap defann vil la
3PL PST-PROG defend city DET
'They are defending the city'

In addition to *ap* being used to describe definite future (and the present tense at times), indefinite future and hypotheticals are expressed by the marker(s) *a, va,* and *ava*. While, as the name suggests, the definite marker describes actions that will unquestionably happen, *a, va*, and *ava* are used to refer to actions that are only likely to happen. Carrington states that this distinction can be confirmed based on the fact that a, va, and ava, are never used in negative sentences, as the negative carries an indication of definiteness with it. Examples in which all three markers are present are as follows:

(50) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:223)
M[wen] a genyen sèlman de twa timoun
1SG FUT have only two three child[PL]
'I'll only have two or three children'

(51) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:223)
ou va vini leve m[wen]
2SG FUT come raise 1SG
You'll come to wake me

and

(52) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:223)
Li di denmen ou prale nan mache.'
3SG say[PST] tomorrow 2SG FUT in market[DET]
'He said "tomorrow you will go to the market"'

(53) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:223)
Wi papa m[wen] ava ale
Yes father 1SG FUT go
'Yes father, I will (probably) go'

He said ‘tomorrow you’ll go to the market’ (meaning that the person is expected to go to the market). Yes father, I’ll (probably) go. The final marker which will be discussed is the marker *apral* and its variants within Haitian French Creole. Where processive verbs are concerned, the marker *apral* describes events that are about to take place. It can be seen as a compilation of the marker *ap* and the verb *ale,* which means “to go”, which indicates forward motion. One of the variants of this marker was already mentioned, which is the marker *prale:*

(54) Haitian French Creole (Valdman 2015:217)
Bon m[wen] prale
Good 1SG FUT
‘Okay I’m going’

The other variants are: *pral, apral*, and *aprale* (217) St Lucian Kwéyòl’s future tense marker bears no resemblance to Haiti’s marker, being *kay*. Carrington states that the marker, when being used individually, indicates futurity, intention, as well as potential in relation to the action indicated by the marker, as seen in

(54) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:118)
I di yo i kay viwé
3SG say[PST] 3PL 3SG FUT return
‘He told them he would come back’

Trinidadian Patois’ future marker is more similar to St Lucia’s future marker, and has been identified, based on collected data (9) and (10) above, to be *ké: Lè mwen kwité isit, mwen ké alé pwen yon déjnen* — when I leave from here, I am going to have lunch.

The present tense of Haitian French Creole has been discussed, and there seems to be no dedicated markers that mark an action taking place at the time of the utterance. However, this is not the case in St Lucian Kwéyòl. In order to express the non-completive aspect, which includes the present tense, but also habituality, occasionality, as well as incomplete states, the marker *ka* is used, as seen in the following sentence

(55) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:118)
Sa ou ka fè? Mwen ka [bouwi] gwenn makwisti.
What 2SG PROG do? 1SG PROG boil seed castor oil plant
What are you doing? I am boiling castor oil seeds.

The previous sentence demonstrates the present tense, and it is important to note that this is only a marker of the present tense for dynamic verbs, since, as previously discussed, stative verbs rely on having no preverbal markers to mark their present tense. On the other hand, the following sentence demonstrates habituality:

(56) St Lucian French Creole (Carrington 1984:118)
Pli gwo mango ka anho pyé bwa a
Most big mango [HABITUAL] on tree DET
'The biggest mango is usually at the top of the tree'

The same can be said about Trinidadian French Creole, in that the marker *ka* is also used to demonstrate the present tense as well as habituality. For example, in interviews conducted with native speakers, the sentence (9) "*Ou ka palé épi mwen apwézan*" — "You are talking to me right now," demonstrates the present tense, while *si ou kontinyé ka manjé kon sa, ou* ***ké*** *vini gwo* — "If you continue eating like that, you'll get fat" is a demonstration of the habitual.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

It is safe to conclude that despite there being numerous similarities that exist among the three French Creoles mentioned, there are also quite a number of synchronic and diachronic differences, at least where TMA markers are concerned. Haitian Creole seemed to have far more differences than St Lucian and Trinidadian French Creoles have with each other, both in the grammatical content found within the individual markers, as well as the appearance and phonology of its markers, and this may be due to the classifications of these Creoles. St Lucian and Trinidadian French Creoles are classified as Lesser Antillean French Creoles (Scott 27), which may help to explain their similarities, despite being spoken in two different territories, with minimal differences.

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