

Are They Dying? The Case of Some French-lexifier Creoles

by

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Paper presented at the 4th Annual Islands in Between Conference
Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, Castries, St. Lucia

8–10 November 2001

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1.0 Introduction

This paper is a compilation of three recent, separate surveys of three French-lexifier Creoles from three English-speaking nations. The main goal of these surveys was to determine the current ethnolinguistic vitality of these language varieties (i.e., are these varieties really endangered?). The three French-lexifier Creoles in question are those spoken in Grenada and Carriacou, in Trinidad, and in Louisiana in the USA. David Holbrook conducted the surveys in Grenada and Carriacou, and Louisiana. Jo-Anne Ferreira conducted the survey in Trinidad.

2.0 Background information

Grenada

Grenada has two Creole languages, a French-Lexifier Creole (GFC) and a English-Lexifier Creole (GEC). The existence of a French-Lexifier Creole is the result of the early French colonisation of Grenada. Today this French-Lexifier Creole is reported to be “spoken by only a very limited section of the older population of Carriacou and the northern districts of Grenada” (Holm 1989:376). Others have reported that this French-Lexifier Creole may possibly be in a situation of decline or even near language death. It has also been reported that the vitality of this Creole is stronger in Carriacou. Despite this, Kephart reports that the French-Lexifier Creole is not being learned as a native language in Carriacou today (1985:47). The total population of this group is unknown, but it likely only makes up a small percentage of the total population of 101,000 of Grenada (95,500 live in Grenada itself, 5,000 live in Carriacou, and 500 in Petit Martinique – the remaining 30 islands and islets making up the nation of Grenada are uninhabited).

Louisiana

Louisiana French Creole is one of three main varieties of French spoken mainly in the Acadiana region of Louisiana. This Creole is reported to be part of a continuum of speech that ranges from French Creole to Cajun French, both of which have been influenced to some degree by English (Marshall 1987). The continuum may now extend from the French Creole to a variety of French known as either Standard Louisiana French or International French which is being taught in the public school system. Because of the close ties to the Cajun community, the decision was made to conduct a survey of the ethnolinguistic vitality of LC at the same time as the survey of the vitality of Cajun French. Both languages are tied by this continuum and survey was planned for both, so it was felt that both should be investigated at the same time.

In Southern Louisiana it has been estimated that there are between 60,000 to 80,000 Louisiana French Creole (LC) speakers (Neuman 1985). Valdman and Klingler state that “these figures probably need to be revised downward” (1997:110). Speakers of Louisiana French Creole are concentrated mainly in four areas.

These are, from east to west, (1) the stretches of the lower Mississippi Valley known as the German Coast and the Acadian Coast, which lie in St. James and St. John the Baptist Parishes between Baton Rouge and New Orleans; (2) the area around False River, an oxbow lake on the west bank of the Mississippi in Pointe Coupee Parish; (3) St. Martin Parish, located just east of the Atchafalaya River in Bayou Teche region, and (4) the city of Lake Charles, near the Texas border in Calcasieu Parish. (Klingler 1992:6)

The origin of LC is a debated topic. Because of the influx of French Creole speakers from Haiti at the time of the Haitian revolution, and the similarity of Haitian Creole (HC) and Louisiana French Creole, some scholars have posited that LC emerged from HC (Marshall: 1990:23). Others argue against this, saying that there was already an established French Creole speaking population in Louisiana before the influx of Haitian refugees at the time of the revolution (ibid:29). Marshall admits that there are similarities between the Creole spoken in Louisiana and that of Haiti, but quotes Valdman (1990:7) in stating that the similarities between these two “can be explained by a ‘common shared base antedating the formation *in situ* of these two varieties” (Marshall 1990:33).

Trinidad

Although never officially French, Trinidad has been home to French Creole from 1783 to the present, as the language was taken there by settlers from several francophone Caribbean territories. Despite over 120 years, as a living, community-based language, and a relatively long period as an island-wide lingua franca,¹ Trinidadian French Creole (TFC or Patois) has been fully displaced by both English and Trinidadian English Creole, both as a mother tongue and as a lingua franca. In spite of the ongoing claim by speakers that the language is still very much alive, and that “Patois People are Alive,”² the language has all but disappeared as a living community language, and is now found only in a few difficult-access rural areas.

According to Sealey and Aquing, writing in 1983, French Creole in Trinidad is a “... dying language... spoken frequently and spontaneously only by elderly people...” (1983:1). Sealey and Aquing estimated that the number of native speakers of French Creole and the number of L2 speakers was less than 3% of the total population of Trinidad & Tobago in 1983 (1983:7). The population in 2001 is undoubtedly far below Sealey and Aquing’s 3%, as Ransau noted in 1993:

aujourd’hui, dix ans après³, nous pouvons dire sans avoir de craintes particulières quant à la possibilité d’être contredits, que le chiffre de ‘moins de 3% de la population totale’

¹ The first grammar of any French Creole was written by J.J. Thomas on TFC in 1869.

² This is the name of a cassette compilation of ‘*kwèch*’ (‘*crêche*’) Christmas music from the village of Paramin done in the 1970s. See Mohammed 1975, and Montano 1977.

³ That is, ten years after Sealey and Aquing’s study.

avancé doit être revu à la baisse” (1994:22–23).⁴

Apart from Trinidadians who speak French Creole, there are other speakers – recent immigrants from the francophone and/or creolophone Caribbean – who do not belong to the local TFC speech community, and who do not live in the villages where the language continues to be spoken. These villages are found mainly in rural areas that are former cocoa estates, especially villages in the Northern Range, and some on the east coast, Bande de l’Est.⁵ Ransau goes on to discuss the fact that TEC is increasingly used by even TFC speakers, while TFC is used in fewer and fewer domains, mainly as a “secret code”⁶ in the presence of children and non-TFC speakers:

nous avons parlé d’élargissement du domaine d’utilisation de l’anglais car nous pouvons dire que pour les créolophones, l’usage du créole s’est réduite à des situations précises. Exemple: nos informateurs de Paramin et de Carénage avouent l’employée surtout en tant que code secrète en la présence d’enfants et de non-créolophones.⁷ (1994:23)

This restricted use of the Creole is restricted even in the villages where the language continues to be spoken by the elderly. Generally speaking, not even elderly TFC speakers are monolingual TFC speakers, and can easily substitute English or TEC for TFC.

Factors such as enforced language policies and negative intra- and extra-community language attitudes are the principal causes of the social devaluation of TFC and of its continued erosion in a country where English was aggressively promoted as the language of power, prestige, and possibilities for social advancement beginning in the mid 19th century. However, despite the current, apparent lack of vitality of this Creole, and although a permanent revival or resurrection remains unlikely, a new wave of interest in the language, and culture, may be responsible for its possible resurgence in certain sectors of the national community.

3.0 Motivation for surveys and information sought

The information sought in the Trinidadian French Creole survey and the Grenadian French Creole survey related to the vitality of these languages. The Grenada survey was conducted over a three-month residence (September to November of 1999) in Grenada, with a

⁴ Translation: “today, ten years later, we can say without fear of contradiction, that the figure ‘less than 3% of the total population’ must be revised downwards.”

⁵ Interestingly, many of the TFC-speaking villages are also known for their preservation and promotion of parang, Trinidadian Spanish Christmas songs.

⁶ This claimed phenomenon of parents and elders using the maternal and ancestral language as a secret code is not a new one, and is not restricted to French Creole. The alleged use of the Creole as an adult ‘secret code’ has also been reported for other languages in Trinidad, although this is disputed by some informants who insist that children were seldom present in adult gatherings, and prefer the view that the language was simply not transmitted to the children.

⁷ Translation: “we have spoken about the widening of the domains occupied by English as we can say that, for creolophones, the use of Creole has been reduced to specific contexts. For example, our informants in Paramin and Carenage confess to the use of Creole as a secret code in the presence of children and non-creolophones.”

two-week trip to Carriacou. The Trinidadian survey was conducted from August to October of 2001. These surveys sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What degree of language development has taken place in these French Creole languages?
- 2) Are any children growing up in Trinidad or Grenada and Carriacou with the French Creole as their first language, at least for their early years?
- 3) What was the degree of bilingualism among the speakers of these French Creole languages with English or the English Creole?
- 4) Is there education in these French Creoles?

Over the past 20 years there have been various stages of survey work done by SIL to determine if Louisiana French Creole is a unique form of French Creole (i.e., the degree of mutual intelligibility with other varieties) and the potential for language development activities. The vitality of this language, however, has been in question. The main purpose of this survey was to determine to what extent the speakers of this language variety are undergoing a period of language shift to English, which is the dominant language in the region. Reports indicate that LC may soon become extinct (Valdman and Klingler 1997:110).

The information sought in the Louisiana French Creole survey was only slightly different from the other two surveys because of the existence of the continuum there and the lack of a continuum in the other two situations. It related to the language vitality of LC and was investigated on four trips to Louisiana (from October 1998 to March 1999). Information was sought that related to the generational use of the language, the number and/or existence of monolinguals, the location or concentration of speakers, and the degree of language development in LC. The survey sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What degree of language development has taken place in LC?
- 2) Are any children growing up in Louisiana with the French Creole as their first language, at least for their early years?
- 3) What was the degree of bilingualism among the speakers of Creole with Cajun French and/or with English?
- 4) Is there education in Creole?
- 5) What is the relationship between the continuum of LC to Cajun French and other French “dialects”?

4.0 Research activities

Grenada

For the Grenada survey, library research was conducted, but not much was available. Morris Goodman groups the French Creole in Grenada and Carriacou with the Creoles spoken in

Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, and Trinidad (1964:14). Holm groups it with Dominica, St. Lucia and Trinidad (1989:371). The only fairly in-depth linguistic research into the language was an M.A. thesis which researched the use of the verb in this Creole (Roberts 1971).

In addition to archival research, meetings and interviews were conducted with a number of speakers of this language and with one academic researcher. A small bit of recording of people speaking this French Creole was done on two different occasions. The interviews focused mainly on language vitality issues.

Louisiana

For the Louisiana survey, library research indicated that this language has been well researched, with several dissertations based on the language and a dictionary recently published. In addition to library research, the survey also included visits to several locations to conduct research. One of the organisations visited for the purpose of gathering information was the office of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL). This is a state agency that coordinates the promotion of French in Louisiana and the various French educational activities. Information obtained at this office related to the various projects that CODOFIL is involved with. Although CODOFIL recognised Louisiana French Creole, there were currently no projects sponsored by them that specifically promoted French Creole.

Interviews were conducted with members of the academic community who are researching or have researched LC. Several professors at universities in Louisiana and some in universities in other states were interviewed. These interviews focused mainly on language vitality and concentration of speaker issues. Several prominent LC speakers who are involved in Creole promotion either somewhat independently or in connection with C.R.E.O.L.E. Inc. were also interviewed. C.R.E.O.L.E. Inc. is an organisation which has as part of its mission statement to “Develop and perpetuate the Creole language and culture as it exists in the state of Louisiana through identifying its rich resources and encourage its appreciation” (C.R.E.O.L.E. Inc. tourist brochure).

Trinidad

TFC has been the subject of several inquiries, ranging from the 1869 grammar by J.J. Thomas to several recent undergraduate studies on Creole-speaking villages and individuals.⁸ Most of these studies have concentrated on the village of Paramin, the population of which was 3,957 in 1990, according to the national census for that year. Paramin tends to be the village of choice mostly because it remains the largest stronghold and community of practice of TFC, with dense and multiplex internal social networks, and because of the language abilities and open attitude of most potential individual informants. Of 13 UWI undergraduate, unpublished Caribbean Studies Projects, both linguistic and socio-cultural, 6 focused on Paramin. Research for these projects was carried out mostly between 1975 and 1982.

Paramin is again the focus of field research efforts. From August to October 2001, visits were made to Paramin and several interviews were conducted, mostly focusing on language attitudes. During the first interview with Mr. Modestus Eugene, an elderly informant, the idea of

⁸ See Appendix B for a partial list of these undergraduate Caribbean Studies projects.

teaching Patois to the primary school children was mentioned several times. A meeting was arranged with Mr. Macmillan O'Brian, the acting principal of the Paramin R.C. School and nephew of Mr. Eugene. As a result of the meeting with Mr. O'Brian and his staff (all of whom either live in Paramin or have at least one Paramin-born parent), it was decided by the teachers that 'tan-an wivé', the time had finally come for teaching Patois to the children. It was felt that one way to do this would be in the school, and that the teachers therefore needed to be equipped to use and teach the language effectively. From 8 September to 13 October 2001, a six-week pilot project, a UWI Creole Literacy and Language Course (Klas Kwéyòl Kout), was organised for the teachers of the Paramin R.C. School, as both a literacy course for those who spoke TFC, and as a crash-course in language learning for those who did not. The fact that Patois would probably never become the mother tongue of successive generations of Paramin residents was recognised and articulated, but the teachers felt that it was important for children to be able to communicate with their grandparents and community elders, and to be able to pass on at least some of their heritage language to future generations. (See Section 5.0 for further discussion.)

It was in the context of this six-week course that both informal and formal interviews were conducted.

5.0 Language Development

Grenada

There have been no attempts at language development of the French Creole in Grenada. When the language development work in St. Lucia was mentioned, there was some interest, but more from a point of curiosity in what was done in St. Lucia than desire for it in Grenada.

Louisiana

One goal of the survey in Louisiana was to determine what degree of language development had taken place in the Louisiana French Creole language. The most information related to language development came from the CODOFIL office. They are sponsoring the ABC 2000 project, which is basically literacy classes geared toward Cajun and Creole speaking adults. These classes are not geared to teach them literacy in International or Standard Louisiana French, but rather literacy in Cajun and/or Creole. "ABC2000 is a project that will promote literacy among speakers of Cajun and Creole French. CODOFIL'S objective is to influence Cajuns and Creoles to read to their children and grandchildren in their native languages" (CODOFIL web site). This programme appears to be in its infancy. Recent literature spoke of some 20 individuals who had taken the literacy course in Cajun. At this time there does not appear to be any development or even plans at developing a course aimed at teaching Creole. Upon inquiry at this office it was discovered that there has been no Creole literacy course that had been developed and no Creole speakers had been through any literacy teaching connected with ABC 2000. There has been little to no real efforts at developing an orthography, other than for use in linguistic publications. Recently a Dictionary of Louisiana Creole was published (Valdman et al 1998). The orthography conventions used are a blend of linguistic and current French orthography.

The vast majority of language development that is taking place in any variety of Louisiana French is occurring in what is varyingly termed as International French or Standard Louisiana French. From information gathered from the CODOFIL office and from interviews

with others involved in the project, it is evident that this language development is an effort at reviving the French language in Louisiana. This revival, however, seems to be focused on the Cajun culture and language, not the Creole culture and language.

Trinidad

Until August 2001, there has been no known attempt to introduce a language course in the villages where Patois is alive, and where there are several young people who speak only English and Trinidadian English Creole.

In 1977, a course ‘An Appreciation of Patois’ was offered by the Extra-Mural Unit of the University of the West Indies (now School of Continuing Studies). In 1991, the Department of Liberal Arts (formerly the Department of Language and Linguistics) of the St. Augustine campus of the U.W.I. introduced a Linguistics course in French-Lexicon Creole.⁹ The students are mainly from Trinidad & Tobago and St. Lucia, the former seeking to learn French Creole, the latter seeking to become literate in French Creole, among other reasons. The lecturers, past and present,¹⁰ have been mother-tongue speakers of the language, mainly from Martinique. An important, but perhaps underemphasised, aspect of this effort is the annual involvement of mother-tongue speakers in talks and other activities of the Department’s Creole Day. Student visits to Paramin have also been organised. Most of the native speakers are not only elderly, but some are not literate in English, and none has gained any level of literacy in the Creole. Many of them have said that they had no plans to formally study the language (at the U.W.I., for example) since they already speak it. So far, they have functioned as more of a resource group for the University students than as a potential target group for any language development and language revival efforts.

The six-week UWI Creole Literacy and Language Course mentioned in 4.0 represented the first formal effort to instruct both native speakers and non-native speakers in reading and writing, and learning (as the case may be) French Creole. A very condensed version of the Liberal Arts course was offered to the teachers of Paramin R.C. School, the main components being St. Lucian Creole orthography, grammar and story-writing. It is worth noting that there have been other efforts to promote Patois in Paramin, mostly via the publication of *kwèch* (or *crèche*) Christmas carols, inclusion of Patois proverbs in the parish bulletin, and other writings.

While the St. Lucian Creole orthography was found to be adequate, lexical and phonological differences between TFC and St. Lucian Creole, as well as Martiniquan Creole were noted along the way for comparative study and for inclusion or incorporation into materials to be used in future programmes. Most of the teachers agreed that it was better to launch such a

⁹ This is the only course offered in the Department of Liberal Arts that tries to marry Linguistics and foreign-language learning. It is now an important course in the training of linguists and sociolinguists in the Department. There is also a parallel language-learning course taught by the same lecturer in the Centre for Language Learning (CLL), offered to the members of the University community and the general public not pursuing an undergraduate degree in the Department.

¹⁰ The current lecturer of L280 – French-lexicon Creole is Nathalie Charlery. Ms. Charlery is from Martinique, and is a native speaker of Martiniquan French Creole. L280 is a UWI undergraduate Liberal Arts course based on St. Lucian Creole, and originally designed by Lawrence Carrington of Trinidad & Tobago. Ms. Charlery also taught the Klas Kwéyòl Kout, assisted and accompanied by J. Ferreira.

programme with a small, core group (namely themselves) that could in turn teach others. However, several fluent Patois-speaking residents of the village expressed concern that they were not consulted, and that they were being excluded from the first opportunity to learn to read and write their own language. Two such persons joined the class half way.

Plans are now underway to introduce a 10-week adult literacy course for fluent speakers and semi-speakers, from February to April 2002 (post-Christmas and Carnival, with enough time to better adapt St. Lucian materials to the needs of the villagers, including instructional materials, and lexical lists). The Paramin teachers may assist, but they plan to focus their efforts on developing programmes for the children.¹¹ There is the hope that such programmes for adults will spread to other villages such as Blanchisseuse,¹² Santa Cruz, Valencia and Gran Couva, among others.

It is interesting to note that the area School Supervisor from the Ministry of Education attended the closing session of this venture, and guaranteed his full support for and approval of the programme and future programmes in Paramin and elsewhere.

6.0 Monolingualism and Language Vitality

Grenada

There was no official testing of bilingualism that was done. The interviews that were conducted were designed to try to determine what age groups were still speaking the language. In depth interviews were conducted with eight speakers of Grenadian French Creole who lived in northern Grenada (other speakers were interviewed, but not to the depth of these eight). Some of those interviewed were from the town of Sauteurs in northern Grenada and others were from other parts of northern Grenada. These speakers ranged in age from 67 to 77 years old. None of those interviewed said that they knew of any children who were still learning the language. In fact, they did not know of any person under the age of 60 who still spoke the language. Many of the people interviewed said that they did not learn the language from their parents and all eight of those involved in the in depth interviews said that they had learned it from their grandparents. Some reported that their grandparents were monolingual in French Creole and so they had learned the French Creole in order to communicate with them. No one knew of any monolingual French Creole speakers at that time. Some thought that the highest concentration of French Creole speakers was in the community of River Sallee, a small town north of Grenville and east of Sauteurs. Some of those that were interviewed lived near there. They reported that they did not know of any communities or groups of people who spoke Patois on a regular basis.

All those interviewed said that they seldom use the language. When they did use French Creole, they said that it was usually only in greetings and other set expressions that were used.

¹¹ There are only 140 children in the school, compared to 800 thirty years ago.

¹² Over the last year, TIDCO, the Tourism and Industrial Development Company of T&T, has organised the first two of five Community Culinary Festival, a culinary/cultural showcase for small communities. Residents of Blanchisseuse and other villages presented skits in Patois as their cultural contribution, and residents of Paramin believe that communities such as these would also welcome such a course.

They said that they rarely or never carried on a whole conversation in French Creole. English or English-Lexifier Creole has basically replaced French Creole in all domains of language use.

Two recording sessions were organised in Sauteurs. In the first session, three French Creole speakers were recorded telling each other stories of Hurricane Janet, which hit Grenada in 1955. For two of the three speakers it was difficult for them to say more than one or two sentences without having to stop and ask what the French Creole word was for something they were trying to say. They stumbled over words and had difficulty carrying on a connected narrative making it apparent that they had lost a lot of competence in speaking the language. The second recording session, with two speakers, had similar results. Again, there was much stumbling and difficulty in producing connected speech.

A St. Lucian who was living in Sauteurs, Grenada was interviewed. He attended a local church that had several members who spoke the language. He said that there were some minor differences between St. Lucian Patois (French Creole) and the local Grenadian French Creole, but he could not identify them specifically. He reported that the only speakers he knew of were “older people.”

A trip was made to Carriacou. In Carriacou several speakers of French Creole were interviewed, all of whom were over the age of 50. Some younger than fifty could produce a few phrases or expressions in Patois, but they were not even close to being fluent in the language. All those interviewed reported similar circumstances to what was found in Grenada concerning the French Creole. English or the English-Lexifier Creole has virtually replaced the French Creole. No children are learning to speak it in Carriacou and there are very few competent speakers that still exist. There are no communities or groups who still use French Creole as a regular means of communication.

Ronald Kephart, a linguist who has probably done the most linguistic research on Carriacou and who has researched the French Creole was also interviewed. Kephart said that he only knows of 2 elderly persons whom he would consider competent speakers of French Creole. He lived in Carriacou for over 2 years and has made several inquiries into the use of the French Creole there. His 1985 dissertation is quoted in the introduction as stating that French Creole is not being learned as a mother tongue in Carriacou.

Louisiana

There was no official testing of bilingualism done in this survey. The information researched was related more to monolingualism. In the majority of the interviews conducted with individuals connected with the promotion of Creole and with academics the following question was asked: “Are there any children growing up in Louisiana monolingual in LC, at least for their early years?” No one interviewed personally knew of any children who were growing up monolingual in LC. Only one scholar speculated that there were perhaps some teens that still spoke Creole in one area. These teens, however, would be far from monolingual and would most likely have English as their first language. The person who reported this is a Louisiana Creole speaker and a lecturer at a major university in Louisiana. When questioned further, this person did not specifically know of any children or families whose children are speakers of Louisiana Creole in any of the four areas of concentration of speakers. Most of those involved in academics

that were interviewed reported that the remaining speakers have a limited competency in the language. When it was mentioned that part of the motivation of this survey was to determine the potential for language development activities in Louisiana Creole, one academic professional wrote that this type of language development “in Louisiana Creole would be a formidable enterprise: (a) there are no longer any monolingual speakers left; (b) remaining speakers have relatively limited lexical ranges; and (c) there is no standard orthography, chiefly because the language does not fill any but vernacular functions” (Valdman 1998, personal communication). This information, however, should be tempered with the fact that some of the Creole speakers interviewed in this survey did know of many older individuals whose first language was Creole.

In addition to interviewing to gather information on the degree of bilingualism and monolingualism among children, information related to bilingualism and monolingualism among older generations was also gathered. It was discovered that there was apparently a high degree of bilingualism and, as Valdman pointed out above, very few if any speakers with a high degree of competence in the language. Thomas Klingler failed to find any monolinguals during the extensive research he conducted in the False River area of Pointe Coupee Parish (Valdman and Klingler 1997:110). Klingler consulted forty speakers of Louisiana Creole for his 1992 dissertation, nineteen of which he called “exceptional for the purposes of the study because their speech contains numerous acrolectal features heard less frequently or not at all in the speech of the primary group” (pg. 32). Only three of these forty were under the age of sixty, while five eighths of the total were over the age of seventy, including one centenarian. Klingler’s research, however, did not concentrate in the area where there is reported to be the highest concentration of LC speakers (St. Martin Parish). Thus, although most of the younger generations are apparently shifting to almost total monolingualism in English, there are many older individuals whose first language is Creole.

Trinidad

For this survey, there was also no official testing of bilingualism done in Paramin or anywhere else in Trinidad. It was felt that this could be better done at a later date, with not just a greater number of contacts and potential informants, but with better relationships developed over time. Comparing the Paramin of the undergraduate projects of the 1970s and 1980s to the Paramin of 2001, very little appears to have changed in the sense that only persons over 40–45 can speak Creole, a phenomenon reported three decades ago. However, three decades ago, many of the current TFC-speaking informants were all between 10 and 30 years old, a fact which must have escaped the researchers then. The main difference between then and now is that the numbers of such a group have considerably diminished. In Paramin, the researcher was introduced to possibly the only young person (21 years old) who speaks Patois as a mother tongue, and continues to use it on a daily basis. This young man claims that he is trying to transmit the language to his children.

Altogether twenty people were interviewed in Fatima, lower Paramin. Another informant, originally from Gran Couva, was interviewed as well. The Gran Couva informant is a cocoa estate owner of Corsican French ancestry, and considers himself fluent in French, TFC and English, the latter being his mother tongue.

Of the Paramin informants, only five considered themselves to be mother tongue speakers of TFC, and reported being able to converse with fluent speakers from Trinidad, St. Lucia, Dominica, Martinique or Guadeloupe (French Creole speaking visitors often visit Paramin). These persons ranged in age from 43 to 80 years old. None in their 20s claimed to speak Patois, fluently or at all. All claimed that there are more fluent TFC speakers from Upper Paramin, many of whom are elderly. Of the seven teachers who did the Creole course, only two male teachers had any level of fluency in the language, which was their L2 rather than their L1. One of them claims to be using Patois in his personal life more than ever now, and reports that all of the teachers have started to casually introduce Patois in school assemblies and in the classroom, to varying degrees.

In sum, there are no monolingual speakers of TFC, at least in Paramin, no young people under twenty have learned the language as an L1, and while there is great enthusiasm for the language as a community, heritage and ancestral language, the language is little used in daily life at the community level. English and TEC are the languages of vitality in Paramin and no doubt in other villages where Patois is still spoken.

7.0 Language varieties in Louisiana

One goal of the survey in Louisiana was to research the continuum relationship between LC and Cajun French. In “Report on the Pilot Survey in French-speaking Louisiana: May 2-9, 1980,” Mack Graham reports a Creole continuum which extends from a basilectal French-lexifier Creole to Cajun French. Marshall also reported a continuum, but her scale went from the basilectal French Creole to an acrolect approaching Standard French (1987:91). In an interview with David Marcantel (a Cajun speaking Lawyer who originally made contact with SIL because of his efforts to translate some Scripture into Cajun French), he said that he felt that the continuum should more correctly extend from the French-lexifier Creole to International French with Cajun French falling just below International French. David is familiar with CODOFIL and has even written a grammar of Cajun for use in the public education system. He said that due to the efforts of CODOFIL and due to the exposure to International French in the public media, it appears to him that some Cajun speakers are moving toward International French. He reports that Creole speakers are for the most part limited to the older generation(s). He also believes that there is apparently a high degree of understanding of Cajun French on the part of Creole speakers. Ancelet also reports:

The Creole storytellers I recorded were more interested in getting me to understand their stories, than in making a statement concerning linguistic purity. Though I had studied their language enough to understand it, they knew that my native language was Cajun French. Being all more or less bidialectal (Cajun French and Creole), they all made an unconscious effort to Frenchify their Creole in order to communicate more directly. Moreover, Louisiana Creole is already relatively less creolized than the dialects from the West Indies. The result in the Creole stories of this collection is an essentially French dialect laced with Creole elements. (1994:lvii)

In “Language needs assessment report on Louisiana French” Gillian Story summarises five different reports of the number of French “dialects” spoken in Louisiana. There are reported

to be as many as five different “dialects”. They are: 1) Standard French [what Holbrook is calling International French or Standard Louisiana French; there are some distinctions made between Standard Louisiana French and International French, but they are not important to this study.], 2) French Creole, 3) Cajun French, 4) African-American French, and 5) Houma Indian French. I am not focusing on the Cajun or Standard Louisiana French situation at this time. Houma Indian French is a form of Cajun French, as spoken by the Houma Amerindians and perceived by some of them to be separate from Cajun French (Story 1994). Although researchers who have looked at this situation have not found significant differences other than some minor phonological difference and choice of variants of a few words used by both Houma Amerindians and Cajuns (Rottet 1995:127-30). It is likely that African-American French is a term for the French Creole. From all the information gathered it is apparent that there are essentially three varieties of French indigenous to Louisiana. There is Standard Louisiana French (which is slightly different from International French), Cajun French, and the French Creole. Valdman and Klingler identified the three varieties in the following statement, “The reintroduction of SF [standard French] through the French revival programme of the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) has complexified the linguistic situation. Moreover, English . . . is exercising strong pressures on the only two varieties that show any signs of vitality, Cajun French (CF) and LC [Louisiana Creole]” (1997:109).

8.0 Language attitudes

Grenada

One researcher outlines four types of attitudes that are possible with regard to language: (1) positive, (2) negative, (3) indifferent, and (4) nostalgic (Smolicz 1992:281). While the fourth may appear to be encouraging, it has no maintenance power, and those who are nostalgic are often content to live in the past; they are unable to translate attitudes into tendencies and behaviours. A positive attitude, therefore, is the only possible one that will grant languages (as well as other aspects of culture that are considered core values) the possibility of survival.

No direct interviewing was conducted to get at language attitudes toward the French Creole in Grenada and Carriacou because the vitality of the language was so poor. The general feeling toward the language was neutral by those who were not speakers of this language. Those who did speak this language tended to have fairly positive attitudes and regretted the current poor state of the language vitality. They cited the necessity to speak English for economic and educational reasons as part of the reason for the decline in language use and transmission. There seems to be more value placed on the culture than on the French Creole language itself. In Carriacou some of the traditional cultural practices that were associated with the French Creole have been retained, but in Grenada they have mostly been lost. There are some people in Grenada who have looked at this decline in culture as a detriment and have tried to promote a revival of the culture (not the language) in Grenada, but it has largely been ineffective because of lack of interest.

Louisiana

In Louisiana in the past, the attitude toward any non-standard variety of French was, for the most part, wholly negative. Speaking any variety of French in the educational system in the first half of the 20th century was punished. The current status of language vitality of LC is poor.

Attitudes toward LC that were discovered were not strongly positive or negative. There are a few linguistically minded younger individuals whose grandparents are French Creole speakers who have expressed an interest in learning the French Creole in Louisiana. They have generally been frustrated at the lack of opportunities available to learn it. C.R.E.O.L.E. Inc. and CODOFIL have both come out with statements saying that they wish to promote and preserve the Creole language in Louisiana. Creole speakers interviewed pointed out the need and their desire for language revival for Creole and so expressed a fairly positive view toward the language. Non-LC speaker's views were largely neutral or slightly negative. The vast majority of CODOFIL's efforts have been in the area of Cajun and/or Standard Louisiana French and the majority of C.R.E.O.L.E. Inc.'s efforts have been in the realm of preserving and promoting Creole culture. The promotion of the Louisiana French Creole language, however, has not really taken root. One person that was interviewed was one of the most active in the promotion of the Louisiana Creole language and was also active in C.R.E.O.L.E. Inc. He, however, was very discouraged by his efforts because there was very little if any action taken to preserve or promote LC no matter what he did personally or tried to promote through C.R.E.O.L.E. Inc. He felt that the interest just was not there and told me that he had basically given up on the idea of promoting or preserving the language.

Trinidad

Smolicz's paradigm of four language attitudes were used as a gauge to examine the attitudes of TFC speakers, although any such analysis cannot pretend to be anything but preliminary at this stage. One Paramin informant was of the opinion that while many Paramin residents were indifferent to Patois, most were either nostalgic or positive towards the language. Among those who were most positive were the most formally educated, including lawyers and chartered accountants.

Most of the teachers in the pilot project were interested in learning the language at the beginning of the course, and all were highly enthusiastic about the language by the end of the course. At the end of the course, a questionnaire was distributed to the participants. In response to the question "Please write (in English or in Patois) your comments about the course or about Patois," one participant (a retired teacher) wrote the following:

"Dépi mwen té yon timanmay, mwen ka pale Patois pas tout sé fanmi-mwen té ka palé Patois – Manman-mwen, Papa-mwen, sé gwan-manman-mwen, épi sé gwan-papa-mwen. Mwen té ka toujou katjilé poutji nou an Paramin pa té sa palé èk li Patois. Lè mwen tann kout klas kwéyòl-la, i té ja koumansé, men mwen mandé mèl lékòl-la pou mwen vini. Èspwa mwen té wivé. Klas sa-a té byen enpòtan. I té yon bèl espeweyans, sé pwémyé tan a lavi mwen, mwen ékwi, li, èpwé, épi palé Patois konsa. Mwen apwann anpil. Yon jou sésé-mwen di, "Ou ka pwan sa byen sèwyé. Li mèm koumansé palé patwa pli souvan épi mèyè. I té tèlman antéwésan." ... Tan-a wivé pou vwé. Mèsi Bondyé. Mèsi tout moun."

Translation :

“I have been speaking Patois ever since I was a child. I speak Patois because my whole family used to speak Patois – my mother, my father, all of my grandparents. I have always wanted to write because in Paramin we don’t know how to read and write Patois. When I heard about the Creole class, it had already begun, but I asked the Principal to allow me to come. My dream was coming true. The class has been very important. It has been an excellent experience – it’s the first time in my life that I am reading, writing, and speaking Patois like this. I have learned a lot. One day my sister said to me, “You’re really taking this seriously. You’ve even started to speak Patois more often, and better too. It’s so interesting.” ... The time has really come. Thank you, Lord. Thanks, everyone.”

Among the teachers, the very positive attitude toward the language has been translated into action, as mentioned 4.0 and 5.0, and they have begun using TFC in school assemblies and other school activities. All agreed that there are many people in Paramin who feel strongly about their ancestral and (for some) home language.

9.0 Conclusion

Grenada

It is apparent from the research conducted that the French-Lexifier Creole spoken in Grenada is a dying language and that when the last of the oldest generation of Grenadians and Carriacouans dies out, the language will too. This is evidenced by several factors: first, the lack of anyone in the younger generations learning the language (as a first or second language); second, by a lack of a population of speakers who use the language on a regular basis; third, by the lack of competence in the language on the part of most speakers; and last, by the replacement of Patois by English or the English-Lexifier Creole in all domains of language use.

The following are the answers to the questions posed in section 3.0.

1) *What degree of language development has taken place in the French Creole language of Grenada?* There has been no language development and no real interest in starting a language development programme either.

2) *Are any children growing up in Grenada and Carriacou with the French Creole as their first language, at least for their early years?* There are no children who are growing up with the French Creole as their first language. No one interviewed knew of any children who had learned the language as a first or second language.

3) *What was the degree of bilingualism among the speakers of this French Creole language with English or English Creole?* Everyone who spoke the French Creole also spoke English or the English Creole of Grenada and Carriacou. All of the interviews were conducted in English and during the recorded interviews most of those speaking the French Creole struggled to carry on a connected discourse. In addition, there are currently no communities that use the French Creole exclusively in any domains.

4) *Is there education in this French Creole?* There is no education in the French Creole of Grenada.

Louisiana

There are serious concerns about the ethnolinguistic vitality of Louisiana French Creole. The following are the answers to the questions posed in section 3.0.

1) *What degree of language development has taken place in the LC language?* There is very little language development taking place in LC other than the recent dictionary.

2) *Are any children growing up in Louisiana monolingual in Creole, at least for their early years?* There is no evidence of children growing up today speaking LC as their first language. Those interviewed as well as academic research indicate that it would be extremely rare and most likely non-existent to find children today who are growing up with LC as their mother tongue.

3) *What was the degree of bilingualism among the speakers of Creole with Cajun French and/or with English?* And 4) *Is there education in Creole?* All the efforts at French education today, except the ABC 2000 project of CODOFIL, are geared toward teaching monolingual English speakers to speak some form of French, most likely Standard Louisiana French. It would also be uncommon to find anyone today who did not have adequate facility in English. Only some elderly persons who live in isolated communities or nursing homes would fit such a description. All LC speakers interviewed spoke English as well or better than LC.

And question 5) *What is the relationship between the continuum of LC to Cajun French and other French "dialects"?* Although this was not explored deeply, if one were to express these relationships in terms of a continuum (the researcher is not convinced that this is the best way to express these relationships), it appears that there is a continuum that includes Louisiana French Creole, Cajun French, and Standard Louisiana French. and possibly International French. This continuum may be in a state of flux because of the attempt to revive the French language in Louisiana. Where in the past the continuum would have included LC as the basilect and Cajun French (a non-standard variety of French) as the acrolect, today, with the introduction of Standard Louisiana French in public education there appears to be a shift in progress toward Standard Louisiana French as the acrolect with Cajun being somewhere slightly below that on a continuum. Creole speakers in the past may have been moving more toward Cajun French, but now Cajun French speakers appear to be moving toward Standard Louisiana French.

There is a revival of Cajun ethnicity and there is an increased interest in Cajun French and its preservation, but for the most part, this has not spilled over to the Creole. Academic researchers and others all tend to agree that it is a dying language whose majority of speakers today have already lost some degree of competence in the language.

Although it was not possible to visit each of the Creole communities to carry out the primary research or conduct formal testing, this survey has included the data and opinions of the scholars, library sources, and contacts that were consulted. Those consulted were people who are well acquainted with the Creole communities and who had done reputable research. They were sympathetic toward and/or promoters of the Creole language, and so had no "hidden agenda" that

might cause some distortion of their data away from the conclusion that this is a dying language. And the picture they collectively painted of the Creole linguistic community was fairly consistent.

Trinidad

It can be safely said that TFC in Trinidad has been dying or struggling to survive for a long time, since there are no young native speakers. Mohan is of the view that

living languages do not die when the last trace of memory has vanished. They are actually dead much before this, but may be lent an artificial semblance of life by sympathetic post-users from outside its system. (1979:42)

Many of the undergraduate students who are reading the Liberal Arts course in French-Lexicon Creole, as well as most of the Paramin primary school teachers, may be described as Mohan's "sympathetic post-users." TFC has passed into its final stage of obscurity and disuse in Trinidad. Again, to quote Mohan, an obsolescent language

is actually dead before its forms have totally disappeared, in two different senses. A small part of the non-native speaking generation has preserved dead tokens of the language. Also, the time gap between the age of the youngest native speaker and the latest possible age of language acquisition, in infancy, shows the language dead at its source, but with a now finite community of native speakers continuing, like the earlier light of a dead star, to travel its original course and give an illusion picture of vitality. (313)

In spite of the fact that there are a few from the "native speaking generation" left today, the structures were not put in place to keep the language alive, necessary and desirable among successive generations.

In response to the earlier questions posed, the following answers are suggested:

1) *What degree of language development has taken place in the French Creole language of Trinidad & Tobago?* Little language development has taken place, and while there is very real interest in continuing new language development efforts and in developing programmes, it is too early to tell whether these first efforts will have real impact on the future.

2) *Are any children growing up in Trinidad & Tobago with the French Creole as their first language, at least for their early years?* There are no children whose first language is Creole.

3) *What was the degree of bilingualism among the speakers of this French Creole language with English or English Creole?* Everyone who speaks the French Creole also speaks English (TE) or the English Creole of Trinidad (TEC). Possibly 30% of the population of Paramin is bilingual in TFC and TE/TEC. All of the interviews were conducted in English, due to the researcher's own lack of competence in TFC. However, when Ms. Charlery was present, fluent speakers freely switched to TFC. It was interesting to note that in response to the

researcher's question "ou ka pale patwa?" ("Do you speak Patois?"), many speakers typically responded "timièt" ("a little"), but these same speakers easily understood Ms. Charlery and freely conversed with her in TFC. Like Grenada, there are no communities that use the French Creole exclusively in any domain, and for fluent speakers, the language remains in regular use at the private level among family members and close friends.

4) *Is there education in this French Creole?* In Paramin, some level of instruction has begun in French-lexicon Creole, namely the teaching of it (but not as a medium of instruction in the school since the children do not speak the language). The variety taught is, however, not specifically in the TFC variety.

10.0 Wider significance of these surveys

In the Caribbean region, French Creole is the second most widely spoken language after Spanish, and there are over eight million speakers of French Creole in the islands between the continental states of Louisiana in the USA and Amapá in Brazil.

While the vitality of the language is unquestioned in most of the territories of the modern *francophonie* (including St. Lucia and Dominica), all three varieties of the language discussed in this paper are in various stages of death and fit into the category of endangered languages or language varieties. There has been a fair amount of documentation for the Creole in Louisiana, but little work has been done to document the linguistic structure of the French Creole spoken in Grenada. For Trinidad, there has been a great deal of sociolinguistic enquiry at various levels, with much more room for a detailed modern linguistic description and analysis of the language. While all the varieties may be considered dead, there is still the potential for at least limited reverse language shift (RLS)¹³, or language revival or revitalisation of TFC, not just in Paramin, but across the country, and to a lesser degree for LC, possibly because of the co-existence of both Cajun and Standard French. The Grenadian variety appears to be the least likely candidate for any language regeneration efforts.

This paper points out the urgency to document these dying varieties before all chance of documentation is gone.

¹³ Discussed by Fishman in Kindell and Lewis 2000 and elsewhere.

Appendix A.
COMPARISON OF LC AND SLC

David Frank was consulted with reference to the topic of how close LC was to the Creole spoken in St. Lucia. He also made some comments related to the similarity of LC to HC. David felt that LC was closer to HC than it was to St. Lucian Creole. He wrote up a comparison of Louisiana Creole and St. Lucian Creole that is found in this Appendix.

Comparison of Two French Creoles
By David Frank

This study focuses on selected grammatical features that are particular to one or more of these French Creoles, ignoring lexical differences for the most part. The following abbreviations are used: SLC for St. Lucian Creole and LC for Louisiana Creole. The basilectal form of Louisiana Creole is used because it is closest to the Caribbean French Creoles. The transcription used is a mixture of phonological and orthographic, though the phonetic forms are not what is in focus here.

1. Pronouns

SLC: One set of pronouns is used for subject, object, and possessive pronouns, though there is some phonologically conditioned variation. The word order is SVO, so a pronoun before a verb would be a subject and after a verb would be an object. Possessive pronouns go after the noun they modify.

SUBJECT/OBJECT

mwē	nu
u	zòt
i	yo

example: i bat mwē ‘he hit me’

POSSESSIVE

_____ mwē	_____ nu
_____ u/w	_____ zòt
_____ i/y	_____ yo

example: gasō mwē ‘my son’

LC: The third person singular possessive pronoun in Louisiana Creole is not the same as the subject/object pronoun, but apart from that the set seems to be basically the same. Valdman and Klingler say that “one salient difference between LC and its Caribbean congeners is the use of a set of possessive determiners preposed to the noun that are distinct from the personal pronouns set” (1997:119). However, their examples do not show many differences between the two sets.

There is some variation in the set of pronouns and I am not sure whether it is phonological or perhaps related to the Creole continuum. Of the second person singular pronouns, *to* seem to be basilectal and *twa* seems to be mesolectal. I don’t know enough about the variation in the first person singular and second person plural pronouns.

One significant difference from St. Lucian is that in Louisiana Creole the possessive pronoun goes before the noun it modifies. Another difference is that Valdman and Klingler say that Louisiana Creole has a familiar-formal distinction for second person singular pronouns, like French but unlike St. Lucian Creole.

SUBJECT/OBJECT

mo/mwẽ nu
to/twa zòt/vuzòt
vu
li/i ye

POSSESSIVE

mo _____ nu _____
to _____ zo _____
vu/vo _____
so _____ ye _____

example: nu gete twa ‘We’re looking at you’ example: so wagõ ‘his wagon’

2. Singular, Plural, Definite and Indefinite

In both SLC and LC, the pattern for indefinite articles is basically the same, namely a single nasalised vowel. The pattern for definite articles is somewhat different, though.

SLC: A noun or noun phrase can be definite or indefinite. If a noun is definite, then it is also specified whether it is singular or plural. If it is not definite, then the number may or may not be clear from the context. In any case, the form of the noun itself does not change to show number.

The definite article comes after the noun. Furthermore, it is a clitic and attaches to the noun phrase as a whole rather than the noun itself. The plural marker *se* comes at the beginning of the noun phrase. A further peculiarity that distinguishes St. Lucian from Louisiana Creole is that if a relative clause comes after a noun, modifying it, the definite article is repeated at the end of the definite clause.

lapẽ	‘rabbit(s)’
ã lapẽ	‘a rabbit’
twa lapẽ	‘three rabbits’
lapẽ-a	‘the rabbit’
se lapẽ-a	‘the rabbits’
se twa lapẽ-a	‘the three rabbits’
lapẽ-a gwa-a	‘the fat rabbit’
se lapẽ-a gwa-a	‘the fat rabbits’
lapẽ-a mwẽ mẵje-a	‘the rabbit (that) I ate’
se twa lapẽ-a gwa-a mwẽ mẵje-a	‘the three fat rabbits (that) I ate’

LC: The basilectal form of Louisiana Creole also has a postclitic for a definite article, though the repetition involved with relative clauses in SLC does not seem to occur in LC. If possible, data should be collected or at least more published data should be studied to verify this latter point. The plural is done completely differently, coming at the end of the noun phrase and taking the place of the singular definite article rather than co-occurring with it. That is, according to Klingler, “The singular definite determiner is most typically postposed [la] in all contexts; its plural counter part is [je]. These usually follow the noun directly, but may also appear at the end of the noun phrase” (1992:104).

lape	‘rabbit(s)’
e lape	‘a rabbit’
twa lape	‘three rabbits’
lape-la	‘the rabbit’
lape-ye	‘the rabbits’
twa lape-ye	‘the three rabbits’
lape gwa-a	‘the fat rabbit’
lape gwa-ye	‘the fat rabbits’
_____	‘the rabbit (that) I ate’
_____	‘the three fat rabbits (that) I ate’

3. Tense and Aspect Markers

SLC: For the unmarked forms, there is a basic distinction between stative and nonstative verbs. For the former, the unmarked verb is the equivalent of the present tense in English, for example. For the other verbs, the unmarked verb would be what would be considered simple past, or preterit. The markings that do occur with verbs are not actually declensions or affixes, but rather what we might call ‘particles’ coming before the verb, or perhaps enclitics.

There is no exact equivalent of the past perfect in St. Lucian Creole: to translate “I have been living here for ten years;” one would literally say “I am living here for ten years”.

unmarked	mwē vini	‘I came’
progressive	mwē ka vini	‘I am coming’
anterior	mwē té vini	‘I had come’
anterior prog.	mwē té ka vini	‘I was coming’
past perfect	(same as progressive)	
future	mwē kay vini	‘I will come’
conditional	mwē té kay vini	‘I would come’

LC: The patterns of present, simple past, and anterior past marked with *te* seems to be the same in Louisiana Creole as in St. Lucian. The progressive and the future markers have a different form in LC but seem to function about the same as in SLC.

Valdman and Klingler (1997:126) say there is a conditional marker *se* in LC, which does not have a counterpart in SLC; the same meaning would be expressed by a combination of anterior + future. Klingler (1992:167-8,508) says that LC has a past perfect marker *bin*, which too is not found in SLC.

unmarked	mo vini	‘I came’
progressive	mo ap vini	‘I am coming’
anterior	mo te vini	‘I had come’
anterior prog.	mo t ap vini	‘I was coming’
past perfect	mo bin e vini	‘I have been coming’ (<i>e</i> = a form of prog. marker)
future	mo va vini	‘I will come’
conditional	mo se vini	‘I would come’

Appendix B.
SOME PUBLISHED AND UNPUBLISHED WORKS
ON TRINIDADIAN FRENCH CREOLE

SOME UNPUBLISHED UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES
FOCUSING ON PARAMIN AND TFC

Anthony, Nathalie. "The French Influence in the Language of Trinidad." Caribbean Studies Project, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, 1989.

Dopson-Morris, Angela. "A Sociolinguistic Profile of Paramin Village." Caribbean Studies Project, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, 1982.

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Romany, Rodney. "A Village Called Paramin: A Case of Social Neglect." Caribbean Studies Project, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, 1976.

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