

Morphosyntactic Variation and Change in Martinican Creole in Contact with French: A Congruence (and Production/Processing Ease?) Account

In creolophone Martinique, the introduction of French compulsory schooling in the 1940s, together with increased social mobility, is thought to have paved the way for a shift to French as Martinicans' L1 (Beck 2017) – and, with this, for the diffusion of various cross-linguistic influences between French and Creole (Bellonie 2007; Bellonie & Pustka 2018). On the Creole side of the linguistic spectrum, scholars and language activists have captured these influences through the concept of *decreolisation*. Exactly to what extent Martinican Creole (MC) morphology has converged to French in recent decades is, however, unclear, given the dearth of quantitative research. Tracking instances of language change is particularly problematic in the case of a predominantly spoken language like MC, for which (i) historical sources documenting earlier stages of the language are rare; (ii) variation is (and possibly has always been) rife; (iii) the language described in grammars is an idealised form of the basilect, rather than a snapshot of earlier Creole(s) and (iv) there is no pre-contact variety to use as a yardstick.

In this paper, I will first present a quantitative study of contemporary MC, where I try to identify *which* traditionally French features have made their way into Creole. The following morphosyntactic variables have been extracted and coded as Creole or French: TMA, possessive determiner, demonstrative, definite article, periphrastic genitive (NP of NP), relative object particle and complementiser 'that'. This selection combines a range of variables that are and are *not* thought to have undergone Gallicisation. To avoid the ambiguity between morphological borrowings and code-switching, the variables were extracted from a Creole-language radio station (5 hours in total) – where speakers are likely to be in a Creole 'monolingual mode' (Grosjean 1982) and, therefore, to display their less mixed Creole repertoires.

Findings from this study are analysed in relation both to earlier descriptions of the language, and to accounts of contact-induced change. I will first attempt to explain (i) which instances of supposed Gallicisation can be more likely attributed to (recent) contact-induced change, and (ii) why change might have occurred in some areas of MC grammar more than in others, in light of factors known to shape language contact, such as the degree of congruence between the linguistic systems (e.g. Thomason 2014) and the varying vulnerability/availability of different morphemes to code-switching/borrowing (the 4-M model; see Myers-Scotton & Jake 2017). I will argue that, while both the 4-M model and 'degree of congruence' are partially compatible with my data, cross-linguistic congruence provides by far the closest match. Next, I will move beyond this 'congruence account' and point to production/processing factors which can explain both synchronic variation and change over time, especially in relation to the definite article.

Although this paper hinges on a variationist analysis of contemporary speech, it addresses several of the research questions of this workshop. In particular, it shows that patterns of variation and contact-induced change can stem from broad language non-specific factors (here, cross-linguistic congruence and production/processing ease) but still manifest themselves in language-specific ways – a reminder of the necessary flexibility of any implicational account of contact-induced change.

(I would like to present this paper as a **talk** at the workshop '**The Typology of Contact-Induced Changes in Morphosyntax**'.)