

**LITERACY AND THE VERNACULAR : A CASE STUDY BASED
ON THE POST-COLONIAL HISTORY OF MAURITIUS, WITH
PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MAURITIAN CREOLE**

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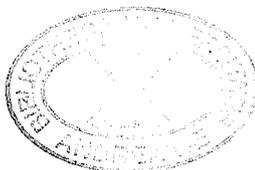
Literacy and the vernacular:
a case study based on the post-colonial history of Mauritius,
with particular reference to Mauritian Creole.

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(i) I, Laura Hills, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately seventy thousand words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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(ii) I was admitted as a research student in September 1995 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD. in September 1997; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 1997 and 2000.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the process of the literization of the vernacular, and seeks to establish the island of Mauritius as a case study of this process. The concept of literization equates standardization of the vernacular with its use as a written language. Four issues are established as central to this process: ideological, educational, sociocultural and technical.

The thesis investigates the particular sociolinguistic situation of Mauritius, and examines each of these issues in relation to Mauritian Creole. It demonstrates the role that Mauritian Creole plays in Mauritian society, and how, since independence, issues relating to ideology, education, and the cultural and technical aspects of standardization, have been involved in the promotion of the language. The interaction between these issues is apparent throughout the thesis, and manifested in the work of Ledikasyon pu Travayer (LPT), the only organization in Mauritius to provide literacy tuition in Mauritian Creole. The thesis seeks to show that their unified approach to literacy, standardization, and the promotion of Mauritian Creole exemplifies the issues involved, and provides the best basis for the establishment of Mauritian Creole as a standard language.

The analysis of the situation in Mauritius within the framework of wider issues of the literization of the vernacular permits a comparison to other former colonies facing problems of language choice, and places these issues within the wider sociolinguistic context of standardization.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Part One

Problématique

Language and identity

Language is seen as a symbol of identity, of the person, of the group, and of the nation. It is a means of identifying others, and of self-identification:

Language use offers the largest range of features and the most easily adoptable ones for identification, whatever such identification processes and complementary identities may mean to their bearer and to those who observe them. (Tabouret-Keller 1997: 318)

The association of language with identity, particularly at the national level, is not the result of historical or political accident. During periods of political upheaval, the role of language has been emphasised as a tool for sustaining a sense of national belonging and loyalty. In revolutionary France, the work of Abbé Grégoire was tied resolutely to his belief that 'l'unité de l'idiome est une partie intégrante de la Révolution.' (Lodge 1993: 198) The role of language in the creation of a sense of national identity is vital. It enables members of the population to participate fully in the creation of that nation and maximizes¹ the possibility of social and political cohesion.

The years after the Second World War witnessed a wave of decolonization. Many newly-independent nations were faced with the need to promote a new sense of identity as a nation state. In his discussion of what constitutes a nation state, Haugen identifies a necessity for social as well as

¹ In accordance with the conventions of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 'ize' spellings have been used throughout this thesis. In certain quotations, 'ise' spellings have been used in the original source, and in these cases this spelling has been retained.

political cohesion:

Like any unit, it minimizes internal differences and maximizes external ones. On the individual's personal and local identity it superimposes a national one by identifying his ego with that of all others within the nation and separating it from that of all others outside the nation. In a society that is essentially familial or tribal or regional it stimulates a loyalty beyond the primary groups, but discourages any conflicting loyalty to other nations. The ideal is: internal cohesion - external distinction. (Haugen 1972: 245)

In many of the new nation states, hewn as they were from often arbitrary colonial boundaries, Haugen's statement is particularly relevant. It was necessary not simply to institute a sense of identity and loyalty amongst peoples within the nation state, but to establish a distinct and unified national identity, which did not necessarily exist before independence.

Language and the nation state

In many newly independent states in the 1960s the question of a national language policy was a particularly difficult one. In the majority of former colonies, one linguistic option was readily available, the continued use of the colonial language. In many multi-ethnic, multilingual countries the language of the former colonial masters had particular advantages (cf. Clayton 1998): its use was already well established within the administrative and often educational domain, and the elites who would see the country into the post-colonial era often had full access to that language. In many cases it was also essentially devoid of particular ethnic or religious affinities within the country itself. However, the use of a former colonial language continues to maintain the linguistic status quo, and tends to keep the political élites established under colonial power in their elevated position.

In the light of this, some saw the necessity to create a new sense of national identity. This in itself presented a number of problems. Where many languages were spoken, or where no particular linguistic group dominated, it was difficult to determine a language that would have the required unifying factor described by Haugen. Andrew González (1992: 300), cites the particular example of the Philippines, where the choice of

Tagalog as the national language in 1936 was initially greeted with disdain by the then majority Bisayan population, and substantially hindered its development as Filipino. However, in countries where one native language was particularly dominant, the option to develop a new language policy was a practical one. This can be seen in the countries of North Africa, where Arabic is now the national language, and is slowly replacing French in the educational and economic domains (cf. Ager 1990).

In states where the main spoken language was not considered a language, in the terms described by Baker below, the question of national language policy was particularly difficult. In many creole-speaking countries, although the issue of maintaining the former colonial language involved similar advantages and disadvantages, it was not the number of speakers which stood in the way of the promotion of creole as the national language, but rather the status of the creole. As Haugen states:

Every self-respecting nation has to have a language. Not just a medium of communication, a "vernacular" or a "dialect," but a fully developed language. Anything less marked it as underdeveloped. (Haugen 1972: 244)

Literacy in the vernacular, or the literization of the vernacular

In the above discussion, the terms 'language', 'dialect' and 'vernacular' have been used without explanation. The definition of these terms is of course a matter of much discussion, often influenced by social rather than purely linguistic factors. As suggested by Haugen, there is a close correspondence between language and nationhood, suggesting a degree of national recognition and status. It is also the case that language, rather than dialect, implies standardization and international recognition. This is a point made by Baker in his discussion on the status of Mauritian Creole²:

It is widely held in Mauritius that a distinction can be drawn between *langues* and *non-langues*. According to this view a *langue* has:

² In this thesis, in accordance with established usage, where 'Creole' denotes a particular language, such as Mauritian Creole, or an ethnic group, it is written in upper case. When the term is used to refer to creole languages generally it is written in lower case.

(i) a single established orthography which is (ii) vested in some authority outside Mauritius, and (iii) has a substantial pre-existing literature. (Baker 1988: 41)

The definition of 'vernacular' is similarly open to discussion. The UNESCO definition is:

A language which is the mother tongue³ of a group which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a different language. We do not consider the language of a minority in one country as a vernacular if it is the official language in another country. (UNESCO 1968: 689)

In the 1997 work by the International Group for the Study of Language Standardization and the Vernacularization of Literacy (IGLSVL), Robert Le Page rejects this definition, stating that the "use of the term 'vernacular' is certainly not for us synonymous with 'minority' or 'dominated' language" (Le Page 1997a: 6). He suggests a more general definition of the term 'vernacular', that it is 'the everyday spoken language or languages of a community, as contrasted with a standard or official language' (*Ibid.* 6)

Le Page's definition of the vernacular includes languages that could be considered as *langues*, as defined by Baker, such as the case of Swedish in Finland (cf. Wardhaugh 1994: 28). However, many 'vernacular' languages are what Baker would term *non-langues*. What Baker's term implies, and the issue that will be discussed at length throughout this thesis, is that the speakers of these languages can suffer a degree of domination, in terms of lack of access to education and jobs, by the speakers of the standard language. This is the case for many languages in Africa, and also the majority of pidgin and creole languages. As a result, Robert Philipson's definition, which carries with it the implication of low status, is perhaps most applicable to the situation that I will seek to describe in this thesis:

'Vernacular' is now generally used, both in its technical sense and in popular speech, to mean a localized nonstandard or substandard language in contrast to a literary, cultured, or foreign language. (Philipson 1992: 40)

In the light of this definition the necessity to promote vernacular languages as full languages, according to Baker's definition, and to conform

³ The term 'mother tongue' is often used interchangeably with the term 'vernacular'. The mother tongue of an individual is not, in terms of the definitions discussed above, necessarily a vernacular. However, in this thesis the use of the term 'mother tongue' also implies, unless otherwise stated, that it is a vernacular.

to Haugen's concept of language and nationhood, has led to the process of what I shall term the 'literation of the vernacular'. The reason for using this term is a simple one. The more traditional concept of vernacular literacy implies a process of literacy, or put more simply the ability to read and write⁴, in the vernacular. It does not make clear the often necessary process of first establishing a written norm for the language, or developing a written oeuvre. Similarly, the often used term of the vernacularization of literacy, which is used by *The International Group for the Study of Language Standardization and the Vernacularization of Literacy* (IGLSVL), implies a separation of the process of standardization of the vernacular from the development of literacy in the vernacular, a point made clear by the name of the group.

As will be established by this thesis, my aim is to look at the processes of standardization and literacy development as a single issue. As a result the term 'literation of the vernacular' suggests both facets of the issue, the establishing of the vernacular as a written language, and the teaching and use of literacy in that language.

The process of the literation of the vernacular: issues involved

Haugen's statement (*op.cit.*) that "every self-respecting nation has to have a language" necessitated those seeking to promote vernacular languages to imbue them with the status befitting a national language. At a time when a vast number of former colonies were becoming independent states, this issue seemed a relatively simple one:

Having therefore described the vernacular in a phonology, grammar and dictionary and provided it with a writing system you then devised teaching materials and used the vernacular in the classroom. (Le Page 1992:122)

The vernacularization of literacy is, however, not simply one of devising a suitable orthography for a given language, and then using it. Instead, a series of factors are involved. Haugen (1972: 252) addresses the issue of turning an "undeveloped" language into a standard language, and

⁴ According to the definition of the Oxford Concise Dictionary.

identifies four features of language development:

	<u>Form</u>	<u>Function</u>
<u>Society</u>	Selection	Acceptance
<u>Language</u>	Codification	Elaboration

Selection and codification refer to the form of the language. The selection of one variety of a language over competing varieties is arguably the first feature of standardization. Without agreement on a linguistic norm it is unlikely that language development will proceed very far. Codification refers to the development of the linguistic structure of a language. Although codification can refer to the oral as well as written forms of the language, it is the written form that is often regarded as 'the reference point in standardisation' (Lodge 1993: 156). Acceptance and elaboration are the functional features of standardization. The norm must be used by a group of speakers if the standard language is to be accepted. The acceptance of the norm depends on its use as an instrument of authority or religious fellowship, which offers its users rewards of position, power or the life hereafter (Haugen 1972: 252). Elaboration relates to the functionality of the language, its ability to answer to the needs of the speakers of the language.

The matrix identifies selection and acceptance as the social features of standardization and codification and elaboration as the linguistic features. Haugen's goal of a standard language as minimal variation in form and maximal variation in function (*ibid.* 249) implies that there is an interaction and possible conflict between the different aspects of standardization. Haugen does, however, suggest an order for the development from vernacular to standard: selection of norm, codification of form, elaboration of function, and acceptance by the community⁵.

How does Haugen's framework for standardization compare with the aims of those who promote creole languages? Peter Mühlhäusler distinguishes the following motives for writing in pidgins and creoles,

⁵ In his application of the Haugen matrix to the development of standard French, Lodge (1993: 27) places elaboration of function before codification of form. The relevance of the Haugen/Lodge matrix to the process of standardization of Mauritian Creole will be analysed in chapter seven.

suggesting that it has often been a planned rather than a spontaneous activity:

- (i) Entertainment
- (ii) Educating and Uplifting
- (iii) Proving the adequacy of the language
- (iv) Social control
- (v) Promotion of social bonds such as national unity
- (vi) Artistic self-expression. (Mühlhäusler 1997: 324)

In their work on writing Ladin and Mauritian Creole, Stein and Kattenbusch similarly identify certain features common to those seeking to provide a standardized orthography for Mauritian Creole:

- 1) Ils veulent démontrer que le créole est une langue à part entière, qui dispose des mêmes moyens et possibilités que le français ou l'anglais; il suffit de les développer.
- 2) Ils luttent pour la reconnaissance d'une culture intellectuelle et littéraire créole, propre à l'île Maurice. Ils cherchent des moyens de s'exprimer dans leur propre langue, à l'écrit aussi bien qu'à l'oral, pour ne plus être forcés de se servir d'une langue seconde, apprise seulement à l'école, dès qu'il s'agit de s'exprimer par écrit.
- 3) Ce faisant, ils veulent persuader la population créolophone de la valeur de sa propre langue; car beaucoup de gens sont restés analphabètes à cause de leur échec scolaire en anglais et en français, qui leur sont restés étrangères.
- 4) Ils poursuivent aussi un but plutôt pratique: la lutte contre l'analphabétisme et l'organisation de campagnes d'alphabétisation à l'aide du créole.
- 5) Ils mènent un combat politique: étant donné que ceux qui se sont engagés pour la propagation du créole écrit et pour sa codification se sont également... engagés dans la politique mauricienne, la question du statut du créole, et ainsi celle de son instrumentalisation et de son emploi dans les domaines écrits est devenue une question politique, défendue par la gauche, écartée ou négligée par les partis traditionnels du centre et de la droite. (Stein and Kattenbusch 1992: 192)

The motives identified above exemplify the importance that is placed on the functional features of language standardization. Mühlhäusler specifically names the desire to prove the adequacy of the language as a motivational factor. Similarly, three of the five features Stein and Kattenbusch identify relate to the degree of elaboration of Mauritian Creole, and the need for it to be used in literary and intellectual domains. What is also implied is the necessity to convince the speakers of the language of its importance and value as a prerequisite to acceptance.

This emphasis on the social as well as linguistic features of standardization demonstrate the complex nature of the task, a point made by Suzanne Romaine:

Standardization is not simply an academic exercise which takes place in a political and cultural void. Standards are imposed on languages by people with particular non-linguistic aims, implicit or explicit; they do not derive from some inherent need in language or in society. (Romaine 1990: 22)

Thus it appears that there are a number of complex issues involved in any decision to write a pidgin or creole, and it is evident that these issues will have an impact on the actual process of standardization. In the light of these comments it is possible to examine the issues raised by the vernacularization of literacy within particular domains, which although overlapping somewhat, nonetheless help to establish the particular trends involved:

ideological;
educational;
and sociocultural.

As Suzanne Romaine's earlier comments suggest, technical aspects of the vernacularization of literacy are in part determined by the ideological, educational, and sociocultural aspects, and I will therefore explore these separately.

Ideological issues

Any attempt to promote the vernacularization of literacy is automatically linked to wider political and ideological issues. Myers-Scotton identifies the particularly close association between language and political action:

The particular genius of language as a vehicle for political mobilization lies in its near infinite elasticity, its ability to both frame and legitimate nationalist issues which themselves vary substantially over time. (Myers-Scotton 1990: 45)

In the Caribbean as well as the Indian Ocean, the creole languages were seen as promoting a sense of national belonging, generally in opposition to the position of the former colonial languages. Le Page identifies this as a particular feature of UNESCO's promotion of vernacular languages:

The claims made by UNESCO in 1953 for mother-tongue literacy were not vague or irrelevant: they were very definite and seemed highly relevant to the development of countries in the throes of decolonisation, becoming new states, trying to establish their identities as 'nations' out

of the frequently arbitrary and multilingual boundaries of colonies held together only by the accidents of colonial administration. (Le Page 1997b: 27)

Hookoomsing identifies the particular nature of the move in favour of Mauritian Creole that took place at the time of independence:

L'indépendance acquise en 1968, dans une conjoncture internationale dominée par le nationalisme et le marxisme socialiste et tiers-mondiste, favorise l'émergence du créole comme langue symbole du nationalisme mauricien. Langue native et populaire, le créole est ressenti comme la seule langue commune à toute la population. (Hookoomsing 1997: 389)

Hookoomsing's comment raises the other feature of the promotion of vernacular languages: that the promotion of vernacular languages is in its very essence upsetting the status quo. Thus those who promoted vernacular languages were often doing so at the expense of the established, colonial languages. This had the effect of promoting creoles as languages in their own right, but also often had the effect of promoting such languages as the medium of expression of the general population. Lawrence Carrington makes this clear in his account of the situation in the Caribbean:

An important function of the written use of Antillean has been a protest function. Both in the French Antilles and in St. Lucia and Dominica, it has found literate expression from political and social groups whose motivation has been the mobilization of the people. The mobilization has been variously in the interest of the mobilizers and in the interest of the mobilized. When in a setting of schism such as the colonial or neo-colonial context of a Caribbean country, a group chooses a vernacular language for formal purposes in preference to an official language, there is a clear intention to exclude someone. The exclusion may be real or symbolic but it is functional as a message. (Carrington 1990: 39)

Efforts to promote vernacular languages of course raise the difficulty that this promotion will be at the expense of former colonial languages, and may only serve to isolate the speakers of the language on an international level. This problem has been considered by those involved in promoting vernacular languages such as Brian Harlech-Jones (1995) in the case of Namibia. His solution seeks to recognize the importance of the vernacular while at the same time acknowledging the necessity of the former colonial languages:

[I]deally all learners should become proficient in at least two languages: their Home Language or Mother Tongue, and English. Thus there can be an appropriate balance between consolidation of the learners' own culture and background, and acquisition of a language offering wider communication and opportunity ... Indeed, we look to the encouragement of a multilingual rather than a monolingual society, but

one in which the use of the official language contributes to unity in diversity. (Harlech-Jones 1995: 194)

In the wider cultural sense, quite apart from issues related to national unity or class struggle, creole languages are often intimately associated with the communities which speak them, and so efforts to promote the vernacular will automatically promote aspects of the local culture:

The fact is that creole vernaculars continue to be deeply rooted in the social life of Caribbean communities as expressions of the social identity of their speakers, as vehicles of their culture, and as reflections of their personal relationships. (Winford 1994: 48)

Winford's observation is also borne out in Mauritius, where there has in recent years been a call for a greater recognition of Mauritian Creole as the language spoken by those of African descent⁶. In 1997, the group, l'Organisation Fraternelle, organized a campaign (Droit à l'Antenne) calling for the evening news, which is currently broadcast simultaneously in French on the two main national channels, to be in Mauritian Creole on one of the channels.

Educational issues

The UNESCO meeting claimed that the primary concern in promoting literacy in the vernacular was educational, stating that 'It is through the mother tongue that every human being first learns to formulate and express his ideas about himself, and about the world in which he lives' (UNESCO 1968: 690). The meeting further stated that:

On educational grounds we recommend that the use of the mother tongue be extended to as late a stage as possible. In particular, pupils should begin their schooling through the medium of the mother tongue, because they understand it best and because to begin their school life in the mother tongue will make the break between home and school as small as possible. (UNESCO 1968: 691)

UNESCO's recommendations were not restricted to the choice of language in schools. The meeting also determined that adult education should be in the mother tongue, on the grounds that learners would not be

⁶ Baker uses the term 'Créole' to refer to those 'members of the General Population (those not of Indian or Asian origin) who are not, locally, considered to be of pure European

able to master a foreign language sufficiently to acquire literacy in that language (*Ibid.* 701).

While it may appear that at least initial literacy in the vernacular language is useful if not essential both for children and adults, there has been a considerable amount of controversy about the role of these languages in education. The first question that arises, and one that is related to wider issues involved in the standardization of vernacular languages, is whether vernacular languages are indeed appropriate to be used as a medium of education. This is related evidently to the whole status of the language, and in particular, what is the purpose of literacy in the vernacular, given the current low status of many vernacular languages. Robillard, in his discussion on the use of Mauritian Creole as a language of literacy, points to the apparent disparity between the ease of acquiring literacy in the vernacular and the uselessness of that literacy:

En effet, alphabétiser en créole n'est efficace que tant que l'on considère les processus d'apprentissage du seul point de vue de la rapidité immédiate d'appropriation de compétences. Les choses se compliquent singulièrement lorsqu'on se projette dans le moyen ou dans le long terme, en essayant d'envisager l'usage potentiel des acquis de l'alphabétisation par les apprenants. (Robillard 1991: 91)

Robillard's comment raises the important question as to why someone would wish to acquire literacy in the vernacular. As will be examined in chapter three, there is evidence that demand for the provision of literacy in the vernacular often comes from speakers of the vernacular (Baker 1991: 109).

However, this opinion is not shared by other commentators on the role of creole languages, who point to issues such as the status of the language, and, by extension, distrust as to why efforts should be made to promote literacy in the vernacular:

The forces against the vernacularization of literacy may then be stated as follows:

- i. literacy is difficult to recognize as a skill independent of knowledge of the official language;
- ii. the formal use of the vernacular language by the literate establishment has been tied to the pursuit of votes;

descent' (p.3). Since this time (1972) the use of the term seems to have changed to refer more or less entirely to those of African descent.

iii. the solidarity function of the vernacular is linked to protest and the socio-political postures of a complex nature but not to everyday bread and butter matters.

Against this background, it is easy to accept the power of an argument in which the motivation of someone offering literacy in the vernacular language is challenged on the grounds that there is a hidden agenda. (Carrington 1990: 40)

The above discussion shows the highly charged nature of the educational debate in creole-speaking countries:

[I]n most creole language situations, an educational policy is seldom chosen by explicit and rational processes: rather, communities tend to drift into policy positions under the force of historical and emotional commitments. (Craig 1980: 246)

Sociocultural issues

The sociocultural factors involved in the vernacularization of literacy have a much greater importance than might at first appear. As Mühlhäusler states, the element of self-expression is important, as is the production of a native literature. Indeed, many attempts to standardize the vernacular have been accompanied by an effort to produce a literary oeuvre in the language. This has the effect of not only producing reading material for the members of the population who might become literate in the language, but also in more general terms helps to promote the status of the language, as stated earlier by Philip Baker.

The creation of a literary oeuvre, and the high status it confers, is only one aspect of the process of the development of a vernacular. Alleyne and Garvin also closely identify the concept of the standard language with the expression of all aspects of modern life:

Le fait d'être codifiée et rendue uniforme est considéré ici comme l'un des attributs d'une langue standard, mais à lui seul il ne représente pas d'une façon juste et suffisante le concept auquel nous adhérons dans ce travail. D'autre part, une langue standard est le véhicule d'un nombre d'aspects importants de la vie nationale moderne, tels que l'administration, l'éducation, la littérature, les sciences et la technologie. (Alleyne and Garvin 1981: 54)

To enable a vernacular language to be effective in these domains it must undergo a process of elaboration of function, as defined by Haugen at the beginning of this chapter. In his study of Filipino, and its development as

the official language of the Philippines, Andrew Gonzalez (1992: 302) refers to "intellectualization". Gonzalez distinguishes intellectualization from the Haugen concept of elaboration by its specificity to equipping the language to deal with "abstract reporting referring to displaced realities."

The development of the language as a vehicle for science and technology as well as for literary expression therefore has important implications for the eventual standardization of the language.

Technical issues

The final area that I will deal with in relation to the vernacularization of literacy is that of technical issues, in particular the creation of a suitable orthography. As I stated above, the ideological, cultural and educational issues raised above, make this a particularly difficult task, as Marlis Hellinger states:

While it has been suggested that an adequate orthographic system must be acceptable on linguistic as well as social grounds, these two perspectives are frequently in conflict and cannot easily be reconciled in a compromise..... Underlying any serious proposal for a creole orthography must be the analysis of the socio-economic, cultural and psychological structure of the respective speech community. (Hellinger 1986: 53)

The extent to which social factors affect the establishment of a standard is demonstrated by Sebba (1997: 236). He identifies four substantial problems which historically have stood in the way of pidgin and creole languages becoming standard languages: status, difference⁷, variability and development. The question of status has been discussed above, both in connection with the use of vernacular languages in education, and the promotion of literacy in such languages. However, the three other difficulties have as yet to be discussed. The question of distance is particularly important for those who are trying to establish the creole as a separate language. In the majority of creole-language situations, where the creole exists alongside the lexifier language, it is often considered that there

⁷ Sebba refers initially to the problem of difference, but in discussing the problem, he switches to 'distance'. It is the term 'distance' that will be used henceforth.

is insufficient difference between the two for the creole to be considered a separate language. This will inevitably have important consequences both for the whole question of whether it is necessary to write the creole at all, and also which orthography should be used. The question of variability is also a difficult issue: which variety of the creole should be used as the basis for standardization? Should it be that variety which is most similar or most dissimilar to the lexifier language, and what will be the consequences of this decision, in terms of social acceptability? Once a particular variety has been selected, it is necessary to promote the development of that language as a standardized language. This involves enlarging the vocabulary of the language to deal with the activities mentioned by Alleyne and Garvin above.

Sebba's discussion raises the general difficulties involved in the standardization of pidgin and creole languages. A more detailed outline⁸ of the criteria involved in language standardization is provided by Lise Winer in her discussion of the standardization of Trinidad Creole (TC):

The principles to be considered in orthographic standardization for TC are not unique. The following principles informed this process; they are not arranged in any order of importance.

1. Practicality.
2. Consistency.
3. Pronunciation-Based Spellings.
4. Historical Precedent.
5. Pedagogical Support.
6. Readability.
7. Linguistic Independence. (Winer 1990: 253)

Assessment of the different criteria will inevitably lead to a certain degree of conflict, particularly where wider socio-political issues have to be taken into account. The proposed use of a vernacular language for educational purposes, for example, will have inevitable consequences for the orthography chosen. Where literacy in the vernacular is seen as a stepping stone to literacy in the former colonial language, an orthography closer to that of the former colonial language might be considered more useful. Similarly, for those who are already literate in the former colonial language, an orthography which closely resembles that language will inevitably be easier to read. However, such decisions will necessarily affect the perceived

⁸ Winer's principles for standardization are reproduced in full in chapter five.

autonomy of the language, and may well have the effect of further reinforcing negative stereotypes held by creole speakers.

Hence the standardization of vernacular languages, in particular pidgins and creoles, will necessarily reflect the wider social, political and educational concerns of the countries in which these languages are spoken.

Map of Mauritius⁹



⁹ From: The Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, map produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency,

Part Two

Mauritius: social and linguistic perspectives

Introduction

In the first part of chapter one I examined the wider issues relating to literacy in the vernacular. In the second part of chapter one I intend to examine the role of Mauritian Creole within the historical and contemporary context of Mauritius¹⁰, and to evaluate the role and status of Mauritian Creole.

The creation of Mauritian Creole

The history of Mauritius might be said to begin at the turn of the sixteenth century, when it was discovered by the Portuguese, although 'there is reason to suppose that its existence may already have been known to the Arabs and, possibly, Malays' (Baker 1972: 5). Although it was the Portuguese who named what are now known as the Mascarenes¹¹, after Captain Pero Mascarenhas, Mauritius in fact owes its name to the Dutch who took possession of the island in 1598, naming it after Prince Mauritz of Nassau (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993: 3).

After several unsuccessful attempts at colonising Mauritius, the Dutch finally abandoned the island in 1710. Perhaps the most well-known consequences of this period of Mauritian history are the deforestation of the island's ebony forests and, as any visit to a tourist boutique will quickly tell you, the extinction of the Dodo.

¹⁰ According to the Constitution of Mauritius Section 111, "Mauritius" includes the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega, Tromelin, Cargados Carajos and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia and any other island comprised in the State of Mauritius'. In the context of this thesis 'Mauritius' implies the island of Mauritius, and state policy that applies to the island.

¹¹ The island group which consists of La Réunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues.

It was not until the arrival of the French in 1715, and the foundation of a colony six years later, that the complex linguistic and demographic situation of Mauritius began to be created. The original colony on the island, now renamed Isle de France, was established from the nearby Isle Bourbon (now La Réunion). This early stage of colonization, and in particular its relevance to the genesis of Mauritian Creole, has become the subject of a heated debate between Philip Baker and Robert Chaudenson. It is therefore impossible to disregard their opposing views when presenting a history of Mauritius and the development of Mauritian Creole.

Robert Chaudenson, a leading authority on Réunionnais Creole, emphasizes the importance of the first settlers who arrived in Mauritius from La Réunion. He claims that they brought with them the creole that had already been established on La Réunion, 'Bourbonnais.' It was this creole that provided the basis for the development of Mauritian Creole, which is what he terms: 'Un parler de deuxième génération':

L'étude du peuplement [de l'île Maurice] conduit en effet à penser que la langue parlée à Bourbon avant 1721, date de l'occupation de l'île de France, a joué un rôle important dans la genèse du parler mauricien en raison du nombre et du rôle social des colons et des esclaves venus de l'île voisine et qui utilisaient ce 'bourbonnais.' (Chaudenson 1979: 46)

Baker, although acknowledging that *colons* did arrive on Mauritius from La Réunion, disputes their importance in the development of a creole on Mauritius. He states that, four months after the Courier de Bourbon left La Réunion for Mauritius with '16 habitants et un gouverneur pour la dite isle' (Baker 1976: 2), two boats from France arrived in April 1722, carrying 160 passengers, with the intention of establishing a colony. Baker states that in October 1722 a decision was made by La Réunion's Provincial Council to 'withdraw all remaining habitants and slaves from Mauritius as soon as other slaves could be sent to replace them' (*Ibid.* 3). Hence, after 1722 the population on Mauritius was primarily made up of French *colons*, speaking a variety of regional dialects, and Malgasy-speaking slaves. On the question of the influence of 'Bourbonnais' on the development of Mauritian Creole (MC) he states:

Since it has been claimed that MC is an offshoot of Réunion Creole the question has to be asked whether anyone living in Mauritius at the end of 1722 could speak Réunion Creole. (*Ibid.* 12)

For Baker it is not in this early stage of colonization that a creole would have developed, but rather some years later, particularly during the governorship of Labourdonnais, when the number of slaves brought to the island increased dramatically and when they would have greatly outnumbered the *colons*. It is certainly the case that even if we accept that Réunionnais Creole was spoken on Mauritius in the early days of French colonization, it is doubtful that, had any slaves remained on the island, any remnant of the creole they spoke would have survived the influx of further slaves.

It is clear that, despite the disagreement as to the genesis of Mauritian Creole, a creole very similar in structure to modern day Mauritian Creole was being spoken as early as 1734. The first known example of Mauritian Creole is to be found in the archive document, *Affaire Pierrot; coups et blessure*¹²:

Il auroit aperçu un noir qui estoit blessé et qui lui auroit dit moy fini mouri, ... et le dit enfant fu sakabar. (cited by Chaudenson 1981: 77)

Another early example of Mauritian Creole appears in the letters of a Baron Grant who lived on the island in the middle of the eighteenth century and whose memoirs were published by his son in 1801. In his letter, Baron Grant cites the example of a Malgasy slave who, in the hope of one day escaping, knew in which direction Madagascar lay:

Ca blanc là li beaucoup malin; li couri beaucoup dans la mer là haut; mais Madagascar li là. (cited in Hookoomsing 1987: 91)

Another early traveller to Mauritius was Bernardin de St Pierre, author of the famous *Paul et Virginie*, who in 1769 cited another example of Mauritian Creole. He is also, incidentally, the first to present an opinion on the language:

Le patron me dit dans son mauvais patois: 'ça n'a pas bon monsié' (.....) 'si nous pas gagné malheur, ça bon.' (cited in Baker 1976: 28)

British rule

The next stage in the history of Mauritius came in 1810 when the British won the Mascarenes from the French. La Réunion, without the benefit of a natural harbour, was restored to France. The Ile de France,

¹² Archives nationales de l'Ile Maurice, JB 1, fol. 1,26-3, 1734.

once again named Mauritius, was retained, primarily as a strategic naval base. The 1814 *Traité de Capitulation* guaranteed 'que les habitants conserveront leurs religions, lois et coutumes' (Hookoomsing 1987: 45), thus enabling the French to maintain their economic and social dominance. On the linguistic front, the British authorities demonstrated a similarly disinterested attitude. As Stein states,

Les Anglais ne témoignèrent guère d'intérêt pour l'île Maurice, et très peu d'Anglais s'y établirent, de sorte que la langue anglaise ne fut jamais d'un emploi fréquent, sauf dans l'administration et dans l'enseignement. (Stein 1982: 79)

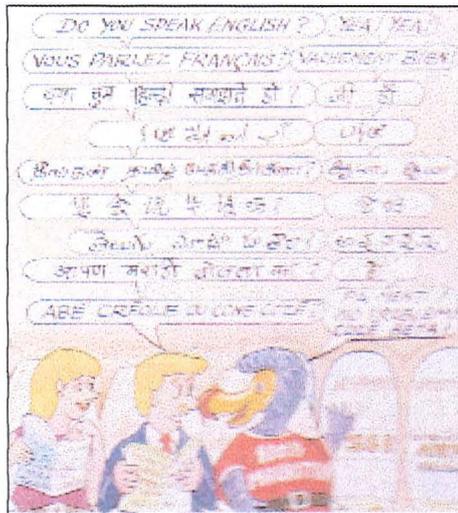
However, certain events were to occur during the early years of British rule that would fundamentally and permanently change the demographic and linguistic character of Mauritius. In February 1835 slavery was abolished. As part of the compensation package agreed between plantation owners and the British government former slaves were required to work for a further four years on the sugar estates as paid labourers. However, as Addison and Hazareesingh point out, at the end of this period 'the ex-slaves, almost to a man, left the sugar estates' (1993: 48). It was therefore apparent that a new source of labour had to be found. At this time colonial changes to property laws in India had resulted in massive social upheaval and widespread rural unemployment. It was therefore to India that the Mauritian planters turned in their search for a new labour force. During the period of Indian immigration, from 1834 to 1912, a total of 452,041¹³ Indian labourers, both men and women, came to Mauritius, of whom 286,471 stayed. They brought with them a multiplicity of languages and cultures, and in modern Mauritian Creole the input of Indian languages can be seen in such words as *halim*, *halal*, *karri*¹⁴, etc. Although fewer in number, another group who came to Mauritius during the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries were Chinese immigrants who, like the Indians, brought their own languages and culture, thus adding once again to the social and linguistic diversity of Mauritius.

¹³ Data from the Museum of Indian Immigration, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius.

¹⁴ A soup or broth; halal; curry.

All translations from Mauritian Creole have, unless otherwise stated, been provided by myself.

The current situation



This cartoon, which features in publicity for Mauritius¹⁵ demonstrates the extent to which the island is considered multilingual, and it is clear the history of Mauritius has contributed to the complex social and linguistic situation on the island. The majority of those groups who have come to Mauritius in the last three hundred years are represented in the languages present on the island. In the most recent census, conducted in 1990, no fewer than fifteen languages are spoken:

¹⁵ *Mauritius Cultures*. Air Mauritius promotional booklet.

Resident population by language usually spoken at home¹⁶:

Language	Number	Percentage
All languages	1,056,660	100%
Creole	652, 193	61.7%
<u>Chinese Languages</u>		
Cantonese	142	0.01%
Chinese ¹⁷	2,620	0.3%
Hakka	765	0.07%
Mandarin	95	0.01%
Other	31	0.002%
English	2,240	0.2%
French	34,455	3.3%
<u>Oriental Languages</u>		
Arabic	280	0.03%
Bhojpuri ¹⁸	201,618	19.0%
Gujarati	290	0.03%
Hindi	128,848	12.0%
Marathi	7,535	0.7%
Tamil	8,002	0.8%
Telegu	6,437	0.6%
Urdu	6,810	0.6%
Other	119	0.01%
Creole + Chinese	2,069	0.2%
Creole + French	21,387	2.0%
Creole + Other European	1,368	0.1%
Creole + Bhojpuri	48,579	4.6%
+ Hindi	3,428	0.3%
+ Marathi	1,779	0.2%
+ Tamil	5,312	0.5%
+ Telegu	1,797	0.2%
+ Urdu	6,479	0.6%
+ Other Oriental	1,701	0.2%
Bhojpuri + Hindi	20,976	2.0%

However, it is clear from the census that some languages are spoken by a tiny percentage of the population, and, indeed, it is often stated that the presence of some languages is as much due to their symbolic value as to the actual number of speakers. A particular example is Arabic which, before the 1980s, did not feature in any census. Its appearance appears to be the

¹⁶ Adapted from the 1990 census results.

¹⁷ Chinese is also listed as a separate language in the census, and presumably indicates use of an unnamed dialect.

¹⁸ A Bihari language, regarded by some as the result of a mixing of various dialects of Bihari immigrants to Mauritius (Baker and Ramnah 1985: 230, cited in Robillard 1989: 86). Reported in the 1990 census as the mother tongue of 19% of the population, Bhojpuri is being replaced by Mauritian Creole, and it is now primarily restricted to the rural areas of Mauritius.

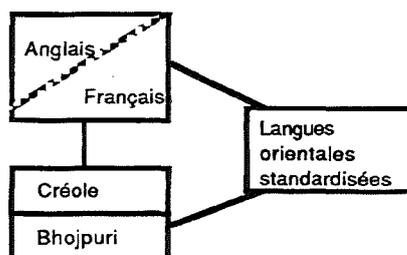
result of the growing identification amongst Muslims in Mauritius with the pan-Islamic movement (Eriksen 1998: 80).

In terms of real language use on the island, a number of linguists have suggested a fairly representative summary of those languages which are spoken, and, also, given the multilingual nature of the country, which languages are used as first, second and even third languages. The following table is suggested by Baggioni and Robillard:

	L1	L2	L3	Total
Créole	60-65%	35-40%	-	100%
Bhojpuri	19-27%	0-5%	-	19-32%
Français	2-5%	55-60%	5%	55-65%
Anglais	-	-	45-50%	45-50%
Hindi	-	-	5-6%	5-6%

(Baggioni and Robillard 1990: 47)

Baggioni and Robillard's findings demonstrate the multilingual nature of the language situation of Mauritius. However, they do not indicate the complex relationship that exists between the different languages spoken in Mauritius. In an effort to explain the dynamics of the language situation, Baggioni and Robillard (*Ibid.*55) present the concept of 'diglossies emboîtées'.



Their diagram attempts to expand on the traditional concept of diglossia and incorporates two languages of high and low status. Oriental languages are seen as external to this diglossic relationship. I will now present an overview of the different actual and symbolic roles of the different languages.

Language dynamics in Mauritius

There is some doubt as to the official position of English in Mauritius. Although tourist literature¹⁹ states that there has been no decision on language policy, English is “considered unofficially as the official language of the country” (Jacques Lee 1999: 112). It is the principal language in schools, and is also used in Parliament and the Supreme Court. It is also the language of official government business and is used in all related written communication. However, as the census findings demonstrate, it spoken as a first language by a tiny minority of the population, and it is generally the third language, usually behind Mauritian Creole and French, of those who learn it at school. Consequently, or indeed one could argue that this is a contributory factor to the relatively small number of speakers of English, its presence outwith official usage is quite limited. There are only two weekly newspapers, *The News on Sunday* and *The Mauritius Times*, which are printed in English, although the other French-language newspapers do publish a certain amount of overseas news in English. Although I have no up-to-date information on the amount of English spoken on the radio, my own mini-survey of the languages used on national television, taken from newspaper listings over a one week period in July 1997, revealed that English broadcasts accounted for roughly 14% of television airtime. English programmes are also available on the fee-paying channel, Sky News, and the BBC World Service, which is transmitted on medium wave, although from my experience of teaching English, it appears that not many Mauritians know that the latter service exists. The presence of English on Mauritius is supported primarily by the British Council.

The position of French is much more dominant. It is the second language of the majority of Mauritians, a position that, as Jangheer Khan (1993: 21) points out, is due to its importance within the financial and economic sectors. French is used in the lower courts and is also allowed as a second language in the Parliament and Supreme Court. It is the principal language of the media. Baker (1988: 39) states that ‘it is allotted about 60%

¹⁹ *Mauritius Cultures*. Air Mauritius promotional booklet.

of radio and 40% of television', although I would argue that in the ten years following his article this figure has risen considerably. In my own estimation, the programmes listed as French, although as will be shown later, these include a certain number of programmes in Mauritian Creole, accounted for around 50% of the total schedule of the three state operated channels. These results demonstrate the dominance of French in the audio-visual media. It should also be noted that an international Francophone channel, TV5, is broadcast after the local station has closed down, and RFO, beamed from La Réunion, and Canal Plus, a fee-paying channel, are also available. The majority of newspapers are in French, as are most books available on the island. French is also heavily supported by different agencies on Mauritius, mainly the Alliance Française. The Centre Culturel Charles Baudelaire is also maintained by the French government.

The place of Oriental and Chinese languages in Mauritius is supported primarily by the different cultural or religious groups that exist. A number of these languages are taught as voluntary subjects at school. Outside school and various cultural events, these languages are not very widely spoken in Mauritius. On television the main Oriental language is Hindustani²⁰, which is, according to Baker 'scarcely anyone's mother tongue' (*Ibid.* 39). Indeed, beyond the usage of the term by academics and the broadcasting authority, Hindustani as a language seems not to be recognized by the majority of Mauritians I have met. Instead, the films and television programmes imported from India, which Baker describes as being in Hindustani, are almost universally referred to as Hindi films. The proportion of television programmes in 'Hindustani' has, like French, risen considerably since Baker's estimation in 1988, from 20% to 30%. Other languages that appeared on television during the week in question were Tamil, Marathi, Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Urdu, which between them accounted for 6% of output. It must be noted that while the speakers of these languages constitute a tiny proportion of the population of Mauritius, the one Oriental language that is more widely spoken, Bhojpuri, has no

²⁰ Hindustani: the spoken form of the literary languages Urdu and Hindi (Baker 1988: 39).

official status and, with the exception of a song competition, organized by the MBC, does not appear on television at all.

The role and status of Mauritian Creole

The census findings confirm Baker's statement that 'Mauritian Creole is the mother tongue of about 2/3rds of the population and the second language of everyone else' (*Ibid.* 39). Despite this, Mauritian Creole has no official status in Mauritius. It is not taught in the schools, although within the primary sector it is used as a medium of instruction. It does feature to a certain degree on television and radio, although as has been noted above, those programmes whose content is entirely in Mauritian Creole are still listed as being in French. Such programmes usually deal with local issues, such as the consumer programme, *Consomag*, and the magazine show, *Mieux Vivre*. The daily evening news has a five-minute summary in Mauritian Creole, and interviews given by Mauritians are often also in Creole. A more recent development is the introduction in 1999 of a ten minute midday news programme entirely in Creole. Mauritian Creole is also very much the language of public information. When cyclone Daniella hit the island in December 1996, cyclone warnings were given out in four languages, including Mauritian Creole. Police road safety broadcasts are also in Mauritian Creole, as was a campaign against domestic violence. Press statements by the Prime Minister and other politicians are usually in Creole, a fact which reflects Lawrence Carrington's findings in the Antilles:

Politicians have traditionally used the vernacular in their campaigns to reinforce their appeal to the popular masses, to foster feelings of solidarity as well as to ensure maximum communication of their message. (Carrington 1990: 39)

Mauritian Creole is also a feature of locally made television adverts. The percentage of total output that programming in Mauritian Creole constitutes is open to question. In my mini-survey I found it to be a tiny percentage of the overall output, perhaps no more than two or three hours a week.

However, in a newspaper report in March 1999²¹, it was reported that, according to the Mauritian Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), 17% of television programmes are in Creole. These figures suggest that there is an increase in the number of programmes in the language, but it is less certain that the type of programming has changed a great deal since Baker's comments in 1976:

Advertisements in Creole have become a regular feature of radio and television but programmes in Creole are rare and tend to be concerned with information which government wishes to communicate to as many people as possible such as family planning, health, road safety etc., rather than light entertainment. (Baker 1976: 84)

Within the written media the situation regarding Mauritian Creole in some respects seems to be healthier²². Thanks largely to the continued work of 'cultural activists' such as Dev Virahsawmy and LPT, who organize a bi-annual literary competition in Creole, there is still a small but relatively regular supply of works published in Creole. In July of 1996 LPT published the first of forty editions of a weekly newspaper, *Dorad*. The presence of Mauritian Creole in what might be termed the popular press is generally restricted to advertisements, and direct quotations in articles. However, occasionally a complete article, often pertaining to the status of Mauritian Creole, will be printed in a newspaper.

Attitudes towards Mauritian Creole

It seems that the majority of Mauritians, while happy to speak Mauritian Creole in the home, do not necessarily wish to see it gain in importance on a national basis. Very little research has been done in recent years on the question of language attitudes. However, on the basis of personal observation, the status of Mauritian Creole is for the majority of people a non-issue. Certainly, for many of those I spoke to, the idea of someone from abroad wanting to learn Mauritian Creole, and particularly

²¹ *L'Express*, 17 mars 1999.

²² The issue of Mauritian Creole as a written language, and the consequences for standardization, are discussed in chapter four.

having an academic interest in it, was simply inconceivable. It was not that people were necessarily against it. Indeed, friends would often remark with approval to people to whom I was introduced, that I understood a bit of Creole. This approval did, however, seem also to apply to my other attempts to adapt to Mauritian society, such as being able to consume chillies or eat with my hands. This apparent indifference seems in some respects to reflect the situation that Stein found during the research he conducted in Mauritius in the mid-1970s:

[La deuxième attitude,] c'est l'indifférence, attitude que l'on trouve chez la majorité des Créolophones, et qui ne commence à changer que chez les jeunes. Les indifférents n'ont pas réussi à l'école, sont par conséquent restés monolingues en créole et appartiennent aux classes défavorisées de la population. (Stein 1982: 138)

However, I would argue that any current attitudes of indifference towards Mauritian Creole are not automatically held by those monolingual in Mauritian Creole. Rather, in the present educational climate, which places an ever increasing pressure on children to perform well in the exams of the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE)²³, some parents are trying to introduce French and English to their children at an early age in the hope that it will help them cope with these languages once they are at school. I have heard of one man who only speaks English with his child but in most cases, parents have opted for French, perhaps because of a lack of competence in oral English. This practice does not normally imply a complete change to the use of French but rather the replacement of certain words in Mauritian Creole by their French counterparts. Thus *gete* becomes 'regarder', *loto* becomes 'voiture', *sulye* becomes 'chaussures', etc. Such usage complies with the findings of Roseline NgCheong-Lum (1997: 80) who states that '[e]ven if Creole is used overall, French words are thrown in to make the speech more 'polite''. Other, more negative, attitudes are perceptible in Mauritius. Speaking Mauritian Creole as a foreigner was considered by some as a waste. I was once told that while my interest was all well and good, I should really concentrate on improving my French. This

²³ Certificate of Primary Education – the exam which children take at the end of their final primary school year. Details of this exam, and of the Mauritian education system, can be found in chapter three.

sort of attitude seems to comply to the Creole as corrupt French notion of thinking, and this was also an opinion that was often expressed to me. It should be noted, however, and somewhat ironically, that the majority of people who made these comments are in fact native Creole speakers.

However, despite the sometimes indifferent, or even negative attitudes that speakers of Mauritian Creole have towards their language, and its very limited exposure in the media, it is undoubtedly true that the use of Mauritian Creole, particularly as the first language in the home, is expanding every year. The census results for Mauritian Creole as the 'language usually spoken in the home' over the last forty years reveal this quite dramatically:

Year	Percentage of population
1962	42.4%
1972	52%
1982	54%
1990	61.7% ²⁴

There is also evidence, particularly since the advances made in the 1960s, that Mauritian Creole has expanded into areas of use from which it was previously barred. For example, Zeiny Jangheer Khan (1993: 39) points to the increased use of Mauritian Creole in meetings and lectures. Of more recent date, and as was stated earlier in this chapter, is the reinstatement after nearly twenty years of a Creole language news bulletin. This suggests a paradox between language use and attitudes, and is one that is recognized by Professor Hookoomsing, who in the 1970s and 1980s was at the centre of the ideological struggle for a greater place for Mauritian Creole within Mauritian society. During an interview I conducted with him in August 1997²⁵ he concluded that nowadays people don't think about the language they use, they simply use it.

²⁴ Information adapted from Khan 1993: 2.

²⁵ Interview conducted at the University of Mauritius, 12th August 1997.

Mauritian Creole as a vernacular

The above description has attempted to demonstrate the current role and status of Mauritian Creole. As the purpose of this thesis is to examine the issues related to the literization of the vernacular, it is necessary, in the light of the previous general discussion on these issues, and the description above, to analyse to what extent Mauritian Creole is a vernacular.

The first part of chapter one presented a variety of different definitions of the term 'vernacular'. The traditional UNESCO definition of the vernacular views it as the language of a dominated minority. While, as will be seen later in the thesis, Mauritian Creole has been associated with particular social and cultural groups, its place as the main spoken language of Mauritius implies that it cannot be considered a vernacular in the sense of the UNESCO definition. However, perceptions of Mauritian Creole as a primarily unwritten language with low status conform to Baker's definition of a *non-langue*. As a result its position in relation to French and English conforms more to Philipson's view of a vernacular as 'a localized nonstandard or substandard language in contrast to a literary, cultured, or foreign language.' (Philipson 1992: 40)

As the above description of the language situation suggests, and as emphasized by Baggioini and Robillard's 'diglossies emboîtées' (1990: 55), Mauritian Creole is not the sole vernacular of Mauritius, and Philip Baker also considers Bhojpuri to be a *non-langue*. However, while many of the issues relating to the literization of the vernacular can be applied to the case of Bhojpuri, it is not the purpose of this thesis to do so. As a result, unless otherwise stated, the use of the term 'vernacular' in Mauritius applies only to Mauritian Creole.

Part Three

Methodology

Introduction

Parts one and two of this chapter sought to investigate the general issues related to the literization of the vernacular, and presented an overview of the role of Mauritian Creole within the historical and contemporary context of Mauritius. In the third part of the chapter I intend to explain the purpose and methodology of this thesis.

Purpose and methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to increase understanding of the processes involved in the literization of the vernacular through an examination of the literization of Mauritian Creole. It is intended as a qualitative study, based on the data gleaned from my experience in Mauritius, of the forces at work which affect the literization of the vernacular, and how these relate to the provision of literacy, and to attempts to raise the status of the written vernacular.

The framework of this thesis is intended to enable an investigation of the role of Mauritian Creole, and its use as a written language, with reference to ideology, education, sociocultural and technical issues. I aim to demonstrate that, while the linguistic, social and political situation in Mauritius is not identical to the situations of other countries where the vernacular is spoken, it does nonetheless give important insights into the issues surrounding the literization of the vernacular.

The analysis of Haugen's matrix established a correlation between the features of standardization and the issues of the literization of the vernacular. The features of selection, codification, acceptance and elaboration can be

used as a basis for the analysis of the literization of Mauritian Creole, and to assess what this reveals of the level of standardization of the language. Haugen's matrix places the process of the literization of the vernacular within a wider sociolinguistic framework. It permits a comparison to the development of other vernacular languages, and links the literization of Mauritian Creole to historical and current processes of standardization.

I will examine to what extent Mauritius can be considered a case study for the literization of the vernacular. In particular, is the situation in Mauritius comparable to other countries where vernacular languages are spoken, and where attempts have been made to promote the status of these languages? A factor that is important is whether the multilingual status of the island, and the functional or symbolic importance of many of the languages spoken, affects efforts to promote Mauritian Creole.

The relationship between the vernacular as nonstandard language and the 'literary, cultured, or foreign language', as defined by Philipson, is further complicated by the existence of both French and English as languages of official or semi-official use. It will be necessary to evaluate whether the issues relating to the literization of the vernacular are affected by the number of languages of high status.

Fieldwork

This thesis is the result of fieldwork I undertook in Mauritius from October 1996 to August 1997. In January 2000 I returned to Mauritius for a period of three weeks, and updated and added to information gleaned during my previous fieldwork trip. During my fieldwork I was involved in the work of Ledikasyon pu Travayer (LPT) and the Federation of Pre-School Playgroups (FPSP). Through my activities as a volunteer teacher of English I was able to gain an insight into the question of Mauritian Creole as a medium of education, both in the pre- and post-compulsory education sector. I observed literacy classes at LPT, and also discussed freely issues relating to the provision of adult education in Mauritian Creole with students and

teachers. I have also made a great many personal observations from conversations with friends and acquaintances.

Edmund Leach, a major scholar of anthropology, stated that '[t]he essential core of social anthropology is fieldwork – the understanding of the way of life of a single particular people' (1971: 1). Influenced by anthropology, fieldwork has also become central to the field of sociolinguistics, and can be seen in the work of researchers such as Lesley Milroy (1987). The emphasis on the role of social networks and participant observation is entirely pertinent to my role as researcher in Mauritius. The multi-faceted nature of the role identified by Ben Rampton (1992: 32), equates to my status in Mauritius as English teacher, student, friend and neighbour.

Summary

This chapter has examined the general issues of the literization of the vernacular, and how they relate to the sociolinguistic framework of standardization. It has located these issues within the multilingual context of Mauritius, and established Mauritian Creole as an example of the role and status of vernacular languages. The chapter presents the thesis as a qualitative study of the literization of the vernacular, and proposes a framework for the analysis of Mauritian Creole as a case study of this process.

The next five chapters of this thesis investigate the literization of Mauritian Creole since independence, and relate the promotion of the language to the wider issues of the literization of the vernacular.

Chapter Two

Ideology and the vernacular

Introduction

It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the role that ideology has played in the literization of the vernacular. As a result it is necessary to examine precisely what is meant by ideology, and how this relates to the language situation in Mauritius, and in particular the promotion of Mauritian Creole as a written language.

A general definition of 'ideology' is given by Mike Baynham:

an ideology is a collection of ideas, beliefs and attitudes which, taken together, make up a world view or political position. An ideology can be explicit or implicit. Ideologies tend to 'naturalize' themselves: to behave as if they were the obvious, natural common-sense perspective. (Baynham 1995: 5)

The relationship between language and ideology has long been a feature of writing in sociolinguistics. René Galindo points to the fundamental association between language and ideology:

The analytic rationale for linking language and ideology is to examine connections between cultural and symbolic form, social history, and issues of power along with the investigation of the processes by which essential meanings about language are socially produced as effective and powerful. (Galindo 1997)

Even within Britain, notably in Wales and Scotland, language has been the focus of both the nationalist and anti-nationalist struggle in these countries. This suggests a close association between ideology and political action, a point confirmed by the philosophical definition of the term²⁶.

Ideology plays a part in all aspects of the language situation in Mauritius. As was demonstrated in chapter one, language is often seen as a symbol of ethnic and religious identity in Mauritius, and so it is not surprising that language has always been and still is a political issue. Thus, whether

²⁶ 'Generally, any system of ideas and norms directing political and social action' (Flew 1984).

the purpose of the individual or group is to suggest an alternative to the current linguistic situation, or to maintain the current status quo, ideology is at the heart of such decisions.

Stein and Kattenbusch, cited in chapter one, are also particularly clear about the political association of groups promoting the literization of the vernacular in Mauritius, stating that 'ceux qui se sont engagés pour la propagation du créole écrit et pour sa codification se sont également... engagés dans la politique mauricienne' (Stein and Kattenbusch 1992: 192).

In this chapter I will examine the ideological issues surrounding the language situation in Mauritius, and in particular the ideologies of those who promote literization of the vernacular. I will examine the different ways in which ideology has played a part in the fight for a wider recognition of the language.

Languages in Mauritius: a situation of status quo

In chapter one I presented an over-view of the current and historical perspectives on the language situation and language dynamics in Mauritius. While the role and status of spoken languages in Mauritius has changed a great deal in the years since independence, the official position on the language issue has changed little in this time. Indeed, while there have been numerous discussions on the role of the different languages, as can be seen in the 1982 *National Seminar on the Language Issue* (Unmole 1984), official language policy essentially remains what it was before independence.

As is the case in other former colonies, Mauritius has maintained the role and status of the languages of the colonizers. Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas cite similar examples of the situation in many African states:

Years after the attainment of political independence, the majority of African independent states have continued to practise linguistic policies inherited at the time of independence, where, on the whole, foreign colonial languages, are more favoured than the languages indigenous to the African continent. (The OAU International Bureau of Languages cited in Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1995: 336)

Why former colonial languages have been retained to the exclusion of local languages has been the subject of much discussion. In the same way

that Thomas Clayton (1998: 146) identifies the use of Languages of Wider Communication (LWCs) in education as central to a policy of national integration²⁷, so the maintenance of the former colonial language in an official capacity is often seen as a symbol of neutrality in the face of often conflicting local languages and attendant ideologies/philosophies. Such an argument is proposed by Pennycook in support of the postcolonial position of English:

English does have one clear advantage, attitudinally and linguistically: it has acquired a neutrality in a linguistic context where native languages, dialects, and styles sometimes have acquired undesirable connotations. (Pennycook 1995: 37)

The consequences of such attitudes towards the use of former colonial languages has had important implications for the indigenous languages of the former colonies. Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas refer to language attitudes that were prevalent at independence, and suggest a direct correlation between the high status of the former colonial languages and the effective denigration of the local languages.

Indigenous languages were marginalized and stigmatized, branded as mere "dialects" "idioms", "vernaculars" or "patois", in the same way as the languages of the "periphery" in Britain and France. French and English on the other hand were glorified, French as the language of reason, logic and human rights, English as the language of modernity, parliamentary democracy, technological progress and national unity. (Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1995: 337)

Ironically, this has resulted in the peculiar situation where the political independence gained by countries in Africa has not been accompanied by a similar degree of linguistic independence:

The most obvious fact is that all African countries use European languages which are those of their former colonial masters, in nearly all their official business, and almost to the exclusion and to the detriment of their national African languages... In this way, African countries obligatorily use foreign colonial languages in almost all the important fields where the national languages should have full vent, or even the exclusive right of use. Thus we are forced to admit that all African countries are today linguistically dependent on Western Europe from which they declare themselves to be politically independent. (Pütz 1995: 1)

²⁷ A further discussion of Clayton's arguments can be found in chapter three.

Linguistic imperialism and the role of French and English

The continued use and promotion of former colonial languages in independent countries is what Philipson terms 'linguistic imperialism', or 'linguicism', which he defines as

ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language. (Philipson 1992: 47)

This statement relates to the situation in Mauritius where the continued presence of the former colonial languages is the result of a policy of promotion of French and English, and which, as is suggested above, could result in a lesser place for Mauritian Creole and community languages on the island.

In the case of English the presence of the language on the island is supported by the British Council. However, it is clear that funding for the language is fairly limited, and Jacques Lee (1999: 111) states that the British Council has in the past been under threat of closure. He identifies the reason for such lack of support as the shortage of native speakers of the language:

The trouble with the English language in Mauritius is that, unlike French, there is really no distinct group fighting its corner. (*Ibid.*111)

However, it is French that has managed not only to continue its presence on the island, but has, in the opinion of many observers, actually increased its speaker base. Unlike English, French does of course have a native speaker population on the island, and is well represented in the press, which traditionally has been the power base of the Franco-Mauritians. However, it is also certain that the importance of French on the island is maintained very much by the presence of outside agencies, in particular the Alliance Française, which Lee claims is the oldest branch of the institution outside France (*Ibid.* 110). He also states that the presence of French on the island, and the support given it by the Alliance Française is seen positively:

Mauritians are rightly appreciative of the efforts France has made to keep French influence alive in Mauritius and the present situation could be seen as just reward for them. The French have spent millions to try to keep Mauritius French (*Ibid.* 110).

It is particularly interesting to point out that the support for French not only promotes the role and status of French on the island, but is an integral part of the wider Francophone movement. The long-standing existence of the Alliance Française, and the hosting in 1993 of the Meeting of Francophone countries, demonstrates the importance of the promotion of French on the island. This is perhaps made all the more vital for the proponents of Francophonie by the status of English on the island. Given Jacob's assertion, below, as to the nature of French policy during the Fifth Republic, it is not surprising that Mauritius should be seen as a particularly important environment for the promotion of French:

So it was that as French collided with English as a growing medium of communication of culture, business, and science, the French government took a number of steps to promote and defend the use of the French language throughout the world. (Jacob 1990: 58)

Thus, in Mauritius, it is clear that the promotion of French and English has undoubtedly had an effect on the role and status of other languages. It is also the case, particularly in relation to the role of French, that wider linguistic and political issues are involved.

Anti-imperialism and the promotion of the vernacular

Despite Jacques Lee's assertion, above, there is considerable evidence that the continued use and promotion of former colonial languages is not always widely accepted by the population of independent countries. Dennis Ager (1990) points to the particular role of French in the world. He points out the often varying attitudes towards French in different parts of the world, and claims that while French in Morocco is associated with "education, sophistication, modernisation and social progress", it is, in other countries, often spoken by, or at least associated with, the élite, sometimes at the expense of other languages that co-exist with French:

Typically therefore French is a language of power and of a minority, causing resentment rather than support, and conflict rather than co-operation; this reaction has also been strengthened by the cultural hegemony of Paris and the stress on 'correctness' of usage by the *Académie Française* and by the movement for the 'defence' of French,

which resists any change to cope with recent developments and any concessions to local circumstances. (Ager 1990: 109)

This negative evaluation of the effect of the promotion of French is strongly associated with Philipson's definition of linguistic imperialism. The result of such a policy, as Philipson and Skutnabb make clear, has been to retard the development of vernacular languages:

As a result of linguistic imperialism, the vast majority of languages in former colonies have not gone through the processes of development (wide use of the written form, expansion of discourse functions and vocabulary, etc.) which many European languages have in recent centuries. Their growth and expansion have been kept in check by the presence and favouring of the former colonial languages, and the vested interests, national and international, associated with these. (Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1995: 340)

As a result of the prominent position of the former colonial languages in Mauritius, it is apparent that any attempt to promote Mauritian Creole and other vernacular languages will automatically endanger the status quo that has existed since pre-independence days. The fact that those who sought to promote vernacular languages were aware of this radical shift and the perception of breaking away from linguistic imperialist strategies is made clear by a study of vernacular language movements in the 1970s and 80s. In Mauritius, the role of French in Mauritius was seen as a rallying cry for those wishing to promote a new role for Mauritian Creole. LPT was particularly vocal in this attack on the role and status of French, and the implications of linguistic imperialism. In the preface to the 1989 booklet, *How to Write Kreol Properly*, LPT state:

the French imperialist strategy of "Francophonie" is working in a most aggressive way in order to prevent Kreol getting its due space. What can only be described as "bribe" money is continually being given in order to advance the French imperialist language strategy. (LPT 1989: preface)

This attitude is not dissimilar to that expressed by Dany Bebel-Gisler, who associates the linguistic imperialism of the French with efforts to denigrate the creole language:

La mise à mort symbolique du créole n'est qu'un cas spécifique et limite de l'impérialisme linguistique et culturel français, de sa paranoïa d'universalité. (Bebel-Gisler 1976: 126)

While Francophonie is seen by Bebel-Gisler and LPT as a particular example of linguistic imperialism, it should be pointed out that English has

also been identified as a source of linguistic imperialism. In her study of the creole movement in the Seychelles, Annegret Bollée directly links linguistic imperialism with political imperialism, stating that the coup d'état of France-Albert René was later redefined as a “‘revolution’ or ‘liberation’ from postcolonial British ‘imperialism.’” (Bollée 1993: 87)

In relation to Jacques Lee's comments, it is uncertain whether people actually consider the role of French and English in Mauritius to be imperialist. Evidence suggests that both French and English have been ‘localized’ in written and oral contexts. This is a situation described as ‘Frenghish’²⁸ by William Miles (1998) in his study of linguistic cohabitation in the Mauritian press, which is exemplified by the inclusion of English words, often technical and legal terms, in French texts. As a result, anti-imperialism has not been seen as an important factor in the use and promotion of Mauritian Creole by the public in general. Indeed, concerns such as linguistic isolation, which will be discussed later, have meant that rejecting the role of languages of wider communication has been seen as almost entirely negative. It is probably as a result of this that in recent years groups such as LPT have tended to down play the anti-imperialist strategy and, as will be seen later in the chapter, have accepted the role of French and English in Mauritius.

Language and nationalism

For newly independent countries in the Caribbean, and indeed in the Indian Ocean, the promotion of Creole was seen by language activists both as a means of breaking away from the linguistic stranglehold of the former colonial masters, and of promoting a new independent sense of nationhood. As was made clear by Haugen, the connection between language and nationhood is a particularly strong one, and it is therefore unsurprising that in the years before independence the movement in favour of nationalism was also linked to the promotion of the creole language. Given the linguistic dominance of the former colonial languages, the promotion of the vernacular

²⁸ ‘Frenghish has evolved as a natural linguistic outcome of diachronic colonialism and postcolonial development in Mauritius’ (Miles 1998: 237).

was seen as a way of breaking away from colonial history and tradition. In his discussion of the nationalist movement in Martinique, Prudent points quite clearly to the association between nationalism and promotion of the creole language:

Making Creole, like the drum, a defining element of the Martinican nation, has often been the first, if not the only, political force to encourage teachers, artists, and intellectuals towards an attitude of radical valorization of the language of the former slaves. (Prudent 1993: 138)

In Guadeloupe, the process of correlating language and nationalism was identified by Ellen Schnepel (1993) in a slightly different way. While Prudent identifies creole as a symbol of nationalistic trends, Schnepel shows that it was the efforts at valorising the language that in turn led to a greater acknowledgement of the separate status of Guadeloupe:

Through the linguistic research that identified Creole as a distinct language from French,, the nationalists were able to lay claim to the separateness of the Guadeloupean people. This sociocultural distinctiveness, in turn, would be the very rationalization for seeking and establishing political independence. Thus the Creole language was regarded as the most salient defining element of nationality... (Schnepel 1993: 123)

While Schnepel suggests that a sense of linguistic separateness preceded a growing awareness of sociocultural, and then finally political difference in Guadeloupe, it is uncertain that this process was mirrored in Mauritius. What seems to be the case is that the growing movement in favour of independence in the 1950s and 1960s led to a greater awareness of the role of Mauritian Creole as a symbol of that independence, and hence of Mauritian nationalism.

National unity

A fundamental issue in the concept of nationalism, and in particular the role of Mauritian Creole in that nationalism, is the issue of national unity. It is clear that in many respects the concepts of nationalism and national unity are essentially the same. However, in terms of the context of Mauritius, there does seem to be a difference between the nationalistic fervour at the time of independence, and in which Mauritian Creole began to play a role,

and the creation of a sense of national unity. While, as is stated above, there was and still is a sense of linguistic nationalism in Mauritius, it is clear that the role of Mauritian Creole has often been linked to creating a greater feeling of unity within Mauritius as an independent state rather than in the fight for actual independence. Of course, the role of Mauritian Creole as a language generally devoid of ethnic affiliation was recognized at the time of independence. This recognition of the role of Mauritian Creole as a symbol of national unity rather than nationalism is perhaps a result of the particular situation in Mauritius. In the years preceding independence, there was a growing recognition of the threat of ethnic tension in Mauritius, a situation that Alladin states was a consequence of the opening up of the political system that took place in 1948:

After 1948, political life in Mauritius took a different direction. The political system became more open allowing more participants to debate the character of Mauritian society. It was evident that the society had become plural. Before 1948, one's ethnic affiliation was not an issue but a communal type of politics was now visible. (Alladin 1993: 42)

In the years preceding independence fears were expressed as to what the future for Mauritius would be, and particularly how ethnic rivalries would threaten the prospects of Mauritius as an independent state. In 1960, Meade et al concluded that there was little hope for further economic development in Mauritius, due in part to what was termed the 'compartmentalization' of Mauritian society. According to the report, 'it is very difficult for citizens of different racial groups to combine together voluntarily for a common purpose' (Meade et al 1960: 173). Five years later, in 1965, Benedict foresaw a similarly pessimistic future for Mauritius, citing in particular the multilingual nature of Mauritius, where each language acts as an emblem for the different ethnic and religious groups:

It is associated with the national heritage and cultural distinctiveness of each ethnic category. Like religion it can become a political symbol organizing one section of the society against another. (Benedict 1965: 39)

In Mauritius, given the ethnic difficulties that had faced the country in the years before independence, and the sense of foreboding that had been portrayed by outside academics, many felt that it was essential to promote the role of Mauritian Creole as a national language. In some respects, the

case for Mauritian Creole was obvious. Unlike all other languages in Mauritius, it was spoken by large numbers of people of all different ethnic and religious origins. It was seen as a language that people already possessed, and which could then be harnessed to promote a new sense of national unity. The year 1959 saw the publication of *Vers une entité mauricienne*, which calls for a recognition of the unifying role of Mauritian Creole:

Reste notre cher patois créole, longtemps méprisé, auquel nous nous raccrochons comme un moyen d'unification. Lien fragile entre nous, mais en ce moment où une nette tendance à l'apartheid semble se dessiner, il est très important de rechercher ce qui peut nous unir et non nous diviser. (cited in Baker 1976:77)

In 1968, just a year before independence, the debate on a widening of the role of Mauritian Creole was opened up to the Mauritian public by the publication of an article by Dev Virahsawmy in the newspaper, *L'Express*. He emphasized the role of the language as a possible unifying factor in the new nation of Mauritius:

We, Mauritians, have something in common. It is a very useful tool for the creation of a nation. It can release the feelings of loyalty, self-respect and complete participation. It is the creole which we speak. (Virahsawmy 1967a: 1)

This unifying role of Mauritian Creole has also been recognized by other academics. Eriksen acknowledges the universal status of Mauritian Creole within Mauritius:

The Kreol language is a potential force of unity. While other languages are used for official and other purposes, Kreol is the only viable language that is used universally. (in Alladin 1993: 84)

While Eriksen indirectly acknowledges the higher status of the 'other languages', notably French and English, Virahsawmy closely identifies this recognition of the potential for Mauritian Creole with the need to break away from linguistic imperialism. In 1983 he is quoted as saying that:

it is necessary that this language liberates itself from Eurocentric domination and develops new lexical fields in order to be able to express the spiritual, moral and cultural values of all the ethnics [sic] in Mauritius. (quoted in Alladin 1993: 84)

From nationalism to national language policy

In Mauritius it is apparent that the role of the vernacular was an important factor in wider issues of political autonomy. However, what is less clear is how this relates to the actual promotion of language policy, both at the time of independence and now. As Hookoomsing states, there appears to have been an awareness on the part of the Mauritian public as to the association of Mauritian Creole with Mauritian nationalism, but did this also extend to calls for Mauritian Creole as an actual national, or indeed even official language?

As is the case in many issues of language planning, precisely what is meant by such terms as “national” and “official” language is open to debate. In his discussion of pidgins and creoles as official languages, Mark Sebba considers three possibilities. He states that a pidgin or creole might be:

1. an official language in ‘word and deed’, i.e. one which both has an official status (e.g. in the constitution) and is actually used for administrative purposes;
2. an official language in practice - for example, with an acknowledged role in administration or education - but without this being specified in law;
3. an official language mainly for *symbolic* purposes, without being used much in practice. (Sebba 1997: 258)

At the present time the role of Mauritian Creole does not correspond to any of the possible definitions of an official language suggested by Mark Sebba. What is interesting is that even at the height of support for the language in the late 1970s and early 1980s very few openly advocated the officialization of Mauritian Creole. Indeed, the only instance of a call for an official place for the language is in the booklet of Noor Ghanty (1977). Such a position is not restricted to Mauritius, and in his study of language policy in sub-Saharan Africa, Bernd Heine points to the relatively small number of African states which have adopted vernacular languages as their “primary media of communication” (Heine 1990: 168). Such countries pursue what Heine calls an endoglossic language policy, which involves the officialization of the vernacular language, with colonial languages sometimes used as the language of external affairs.

The issue that has received more attention in Mauritius, and represents the situation in a majority of African states, is that of Mauritian Creole as a national language. According to Heine, cited below, the vast majority of African states are exoglossic, and maintain the language of the former colonizer as official language, with the indigenous language adopted as national language. He defines the role of the indigenous national language within exoglossic states:

Exoglossic states may be subdivided again into those that dispose of a dominant indigenous national language and those that do not. The term "national language" as used here includes both *de jure* and *de facto* national languages. The former owe their status to the fact that they have been declared as such by a legal act, while the latter are national languages because they either have a national distribution, are spoken by the majority of the national population, or in some way or other symbolize national unity, identity, and/or culture. (Heine 1990: 171)

In Mauritius it is apparent that Mauritian Creole occupies the position of a *de facto* national language, and it is the campaign to seek *de jure* recognition of the role of Mauritian Creole that has been at the heart of efforts to promote the language. Research evidence of support for Mauritian Creole as a national language is presented by Vinesh Hookoomsing. In his doctoral study he investigated attitudes towards the issue of Mauritian Creole as a national language. He found 68.9% of respondents were in favour of its use (Hookoomsing 1987: 238). However, in terms of acceptance of the formal recognition of the role of Mauritian Creole, Hookoomsing's results are less persuasive. On the question of a possible change of name for Mauritian Creole to 'morisyen', which carries with it a more formal acknowledgement of the role of the language, 56.2% were strongly convinced of the need for change (*Ibid.* 241). Although this is still a majority, it is possible that Hookoomsing was right in his reservations, as the succeeding thirteen years have not seen any real attempt to change the name of the language.

Language and the class struggle

While Virahsawmy's motive for the promotion of Mauritian Creole was primarily nationalistic, it is undeniable that part of the reasoning behind such

efforts was also linked to the socialist movement. It is also the case that such efforts would inevitably upset the long-standing linguistic status quo on the island, and would by their very existence seek to promote a particular social group.

LPT initial aims were to promote Mauritian Creole primarily as a symbol of working class identity. They did not necessarily see the language as a unifying factor, able to transcend different cultures and religions, but as a means of uniting the working class population of Mauritius. While it is inevitable that by seeking to promote the language as that of the working classes, this would also help transcend different ethnic groups, this was not seen as the primary aim.

Literacy in Kreol was LPT's conscious choice. It was a political choice to be on the side of the oppressed... We try through our methods themselves to make a contribution to the struggle for the liberation of the working class and to give the working class an additional tool to use in its fight for liberation: the ability to write and to read. (Kistnasamy et al 1984: 257)

A similar degree of ideology is found in other countries where the creole was promoted. Ellen Schnepel (1993) refers to the left-wing movement in Guadeloupe, and in the Seychelles the left-wing government of René did much to promote Seychellois (Bollée 1993). Similarly, Weinstein points to the essentially political nature of the promotion of creoles:

Proponents of Creole in the Caribbean see their struggle in class terms. In Haiti, Guadeloupe, Martinique, and French Guyana French has been the sole official language and has been blamed for the exclusion of the masses from participation. Opponents of government policies and self-proclaimed revolutionaries have claimed that officialization of Creole will contribute to the rise of the oppressed classes. (Weinstein 1990: 16)

In Mauritius, the work of LPT has helped to focus public attention on the political and ideological issues surrounding the promotion of Mauritian Creole. However, ironically, the high profile of LPT, and their association with left-wing activities, has had a derogatory effect on the public acceptance of the work of LPT and in their particular take on the role of Mauritian Creole. Eriksen is particularly pointed in his analysis of what he sees as the unpopularity of LPT and its sister organization, the political party, Lalit:

Most people know something about LPT/Lalit, but few support it. The organisation's lack of popularity is, certainly, in part due to its rhetorical form, invoking a large number of concepts alien to the potential electorate (classic Marxist jargon). But, at the same time, very few of

my informants are willing to agree with Lalit's postulate of the 'ontological' primacy of a class analysis of Mauritian society. (Eriksen 1998: 110)

From my own experience, it is certainly the case that the majority of Mauritians probably do not accept a class analysis of Mauritian society and the role that Mauritian Creole has to play within that analysis. It is also the case that in some circles the work of LPT is treated with some distrust. I was on several occasions warned by friends and acquaintances that my involvement with LPT, even in their educational work, was not a good idea. However, it is fair to say that this opinion stems primarily from a remembrance of the work of LPT in the 1970s and 80s, and has less to do with a recognition of the work that they do nowadays. While LPT are still very much involved in the left-wing political movement, they are now much more associated with the political mainstream, as can be seen in their participation in the All Worker's Conference. As will be shown later in the thesis, people are also generally willing to appreciate the educational work of LPT, even if they are not necessarily supportive of their political work.

Cultural ideology: a new role for Mauritian Creole

The focus on the promotion of Mauritian Creole as a language of national unity or indeed as a language of the working class has either directly or indirectly placed an emphasis on the universal nature of Mauritian Creole. This is particularly explicit in the work of Dev Virahsawmy, but LPT also stress the non-ethnic nature of the language, and its ability to unite workers of all cultural and religious backgrounds. However, in recent years a new role has been proposed for Mauritian Creole, seemingly at odds with its traditional status as a language devoid of ethnic affiliation. This is the work of the movement called Organisation Fraternelle.

I first came across this group in June 1997, when posters appeared in Curepipe proclaiming a campaign 'Droit à l'antenne'. The group promotes Mauritian Creole as the language of the Creole members of the population, descendants of slaves brought to Mauritius. In the particular campaign I saw

advertised, they were demanding a creole language news programme, similar to the one introduced and later abandoned by the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM). Of even more recent date is the Muvman Morisyen Kreol Afrikin, who produce a creole language newspaper, *La voix kreol*, which is mentioned in the 1999 work of Jacques Lee (1999: 116). The association of the creole language with the Creole population is in some respects not new. Eriksen (1998: 17) points to the beginnings of Mauritian Creole as the language of the "slave-master and slave-slave contexts", and Bray and Packer (1993: 54) similarly point to its association with slavery in the Caribbean. However, what is new is that, while the origins of Mauritian Creole are acknowledged to be in the Creole population, such an association has not previously been made a political rallying cry. Indeed, perhaps because of the negative connotations of Mauritian Creole, it is often considered that it is French rather than Mauritian Creole that the Creole population prefer to speak (Lee 1999: 111). As a result, at the moment it is difficult to assess whether the number of groups promoting Mauritian Creole as an African language is symbolic of a general trend in favour of the ethnic identity of the language. However, it is clear that it does represent a new ideological role for Mauritian Creole, and one that is not dependent on a wider recognition of the language.

Linguistic human rights

The question of human rights is an issue that has often been associated with the promotion of vernacular and minority languages. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Robert Philipson address the issue of what is meant by linguistic human rights:

We will provisionally regard linguistic human rights in relation to the mother tongue(s) as consisting of the right to identify with it/them, and to education and public services through the medium of it/them. Mother tongues are here defined as "the language(s) one has learned first and identifies with." (Skutnabb-Kangas and Philipson 1995: 71)

At the International Seminar on Human Rights and Cultural Rights held in Recife, Brazil, it was declared that:

1. Every social group has the right to positively identify with one or more languages and to have such identification accepted and respected by others.
2. Every child has the right to learn the language(s) of his/her group fully.
3. Every person has the right to use the language(s) of his/her group in any official situation.
4. Every person has the right to learn fully at least one of the official languages in the country where s/he is resident, according to his/her own choice. (*Ibid.*98)

In Mauritius, linguistic human rights have not generally formed part of the motivation for the promotion of Mauritian Creole. This is perhaps because, in terms of the definition suggested above, Mauritian Creole is not a language that the majority of Mauritians identify with. Indeed, as this chapter has demonstrated, much of the emphasis on the promotion of the Mauritian Creole has been as a language essentially devoid of ethnic or cultural association. However, in an interview in 1989, LPT directly related the issue of literacy in Mauritian Creole to the question of human rights:

Our demand in favour of the Kreol language (and of Bhojpurī in early education) is part of the fight for the fundamental human right to learn to read and write, and to learn to read and write can only be accomplished in the vernacular. (*Le Dēfi* 1989)

Further interest in the question of linguistic human rights is demonstrated by the recent doctoral thesis of University lecturer Arnaud Carpooran. Entitled *Langue(s) et Droit(s) en milieu plurilingue: le cas de l'île Maurice*²⁹, the thesis is reported to explore the issue of languages within the Mauritian Constitution. Although the focus of the thesis is not restricted to the case of Mauritian Creole, its role as “la seule langue de communication” suggests that linguistic human rights might well be a new domain for the promotion of the language.

The Creole movement

The above descriptions have given an outline of the ways in which ideology is used as a driving force behind the promotion of Mauritian Creole. While the particular motives of the different groups are indeed different, they

²⁹ Reported in *L'Express*, 24 mai 2000.

are united in their ultimate goal: a recognition of the particular place held by Mauritian Creole in Mauritian society. Selma Sonntag describes such an association of different interest groups around a central linguistic goal as a language movement:

A language movement is one in which "individuals and groups ... can generate a momentum around a linguistic cause among the users of the language." It is a movement because it is "not rightly organised to the extent of being the programme of a political party nor is it so unstructured as to be called mob action." Movements are not organizations; there is no one-to-one correspondence between the cause and a particular formal organization. A language movement is political when the goal of movement leaders is redistribution and redefinition of power relations in the polity. (Sonntag 1995: 92)

Whether or not the situation in Mauritius constitutes a language movement is open to debate. It is certainly the case that in the years after independence, and in particular in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a momentum had indeed been generated around the cause of Mauritian Creole. However, while there was a variety of individuals or groups with slightly different views on the issue of the promotion of Mauritian Creole, it is not true to say that these groups were not formally organized. By the beginning of the 1980s there were several political parties and organizations which had at their heart the promotion of Mauritian Creole. In the 1982 National Seminar on the Language Issue LPT were present, and in the same year the MMM became the new government. Their pro-Creole manifesto became apparent in the controversial introduction of a Creole version of the national anthem and in the even more controversial replacement of the French language evening news by a Creole language bulletin. It is clear, therefore, that promotion of Creole was not a marginalized activity, but was, in the early 1980s part of the political mainstream.

Where there does seem to be a correlation between the political reality of Mauritius and Sonntag's definition is in the grouping of these different individuals, organizations and political parties, who although having what might be termed a unity of purpose, had very different ways of achieving this. This view of the different language groups is in some ways confirmed by Robillard's assessment of the political and linguistic reality of the time, and in particular, how the unity that once held the different groups together before 1982 effectively disintegrated once the MMM came to power:

Une fois au pouvoir, et mis en demeure d'agir, les tenants des différentes conceptions du créole mauricien, jusqu'alors unifiés par l'adversaire commun, se sont manifestés avec leurs différences, et il n'était plus possible d'agir sans mécontenter les uns ou les autres et courir le risque de scissions, qui se sont quand même produites en définitive. Dans une certaine mesure, la polarisation sur les aspects statutaires a contribué à l'échec de cette tentative de promotion, car il était facile de démontrer que le créole mauricien n'était pas prêt à remplir les fonctions qu'on voulait lui attribuer. (Robillard 1989: 90)

This schism of the pro-Creole movement, and the increasing antipathy of the Mauritian public towards the policies of the MMM, resulted in an effective end to the national campaign to promote Mauritian Creole. Certainly, as Robillard states, 'le MMM n'a guère reparlé de promotion du créole mauricien' (Robillard 1989: 89).

Since the 1980s the Creole movement in Mauritius has continued to exist, although it now resembles much more the language movement defined by Sonntag. In an interview which appeared in *L'Express* in October 1998, Alain Ah-Vee, spokesperson for LPT identified the work of LPT as part of a movement in favour of the promotion of Mauritian Creole:

Quand je dis mouvement, je ne parle pas seulement de LPT, qui en a formé une composante importante, mais aussi des associations, des syndicats, de certains partis politiques, qui ont eu le courage de revendiquer en faveur de la connaissance de cette langue comme langue officielle, des individus, des chercheurs, des universitaires, des linguistes, des écrivains, poètes, hommes de théâtre, ceux qui font la musique, dont le rap. Tout cela a créé un mouvement qui a permis cette évolution. (Assonne 1998)

While Mauritian Creole is promoted by different individuals and groups, there seems now to be less consensus as to the actual purpose of this promotion. This is particularly the case with the campaign of Organisation Fraternelle and its emphasis on Mauritian Creole as a symbol of Creole identity.

Linguistic pragmatism

Calls for a greater place for the vernacular language were often, as stated above, associated with a nationalistic struggle, and a necessity for national unity. However, such calls promoted a particular fear amongst those aware of wider political issues. What was feared by many was that

any promotion of the vernacular would automatically have an effect on the perceptions of that country. In theory, Haugen's concept of internal cohesion - external distinction (*op. cit.*) supports the promotion of the vernacular at the expense of the former colonial language. However, in many newly independent countries attempts to support the vernacular, considered by many still to be a non-language, were seen to constitute an isolationist approach. In Mauritius, in the months preceding independence, similar attitudes were expressed, with many fearing a degree of linguistic ghettoization if a monolingual policy of creolization was enforced (cf. Rauville 1967). This was a fear rejected by Dev Virahsawmy, who saw such attitudes as "an inability to distinguish between a national language and an official language". He went on to state that:

In countries where the national language is not an "important" one, the official language has to be different from the former. In those cases the official language serves as a linguistic bridge to link the country in question with the rest of the world. (Virahsawmy 1967b)

Similar solutions have been suggested by other promoters of vernacular languages who are aware that in current circumstances the status of the vernacular languages is not sufficient to warrant the total use of the language, particularly on the international level. Bollée's discussion of the language situation in the Seychelles points to a similar degree of pragmatism, and to a recognition of the need for a multilingual language policy in the Seychelles:

Pride in the national language does not impede the realistic insight that Seychellois Creole does not and will never have the political, economic, and cultural weight of the so-called world languages, and therefore, there is general agreement that trilingualism is and will remain a necessity and that Creole cannot, and should not, become the only language in the Seychelles. So the question can only be to attribute to Creole its rightful place in a well-defined and peaceful symbiosis of the three national languages. (Bollée 1993: 96)

Although not everyone in the creole movement has always been happy about the role of French and English, those promoting Creole have now generally accepted the nature of the language situation in Mauritius, and wish, like those in the Seychelles, to promote Mauritian Creole within the current trilingual context. As will be seen in chapter six, this also extends to the provision of literacy. Within the Mauritian public at large it is clear that the continued use of French and English is both widely accepted and indeed

desired, and it is probably fair to say that Jacques Lee expresses the general opinion on the role and status of the three main languages of Mauritius:

With Creole, French and English the Mauritians now have three useful, classless languages that are acceptable to all. The best course is to leave things be, with English as the commercial, administrative and educational language. French as the social as well as an educational tongue while Creole is the preferred everyday *spoken* language of everyone (author's emphasis) (*sic*) (Lee 1999: 117).

Consequences for the future

It is clear that ideology has played an important part in the campaign to promote Mauritian Creole. However, what is interesting is that while the language activists have been inspired by nationalist and left-wing politics, the majority of Mauritians do not really view Mauritian Creole as an ideological issue. What seems to be the case with Mauritian Creole is that the very feature that activists like Virahsawmy and Hookoomsing identified as its strength, its lack of ethnic affiliation, is probably at the root of the general lack of interest in the language. Of more importance to a great number of Mauritians is the position of, and support for, Oriental languages. For the majority of Mauritians, Mauritian Creole is a language to be spoken but not necessarily to be identified with. As a result it demands no more linguistic loyalty than French and English, and, unlike these two languages, is not endowed with any status. It seems, therefore, that ambivalence, or perhaps pragmatism, is a fundamental feature of attitudes towards Mauritian Creole, and consequently of public reaction to efforts to promote the language.

Summary

This might imply that the ideological issues implicated in the promotion of Mauritian Creole have been discussed in a rarefied atmosphere of political activism quite separate from the views and experiences of the majority of Mauritians. Indeed, it might suggest that there is no real support for efforts to promote the language. However, while it is clear that the

majority of Mauritians are fairly ambivalent towards the role and status of Mauritian Creole, it is nonetheless the case that the work of politicized language activists such as Dev Virahsawmy, Vinesh Hookoomsing and LPT has generated a wider awareness of the possibilities for Mauritian Creole, and has doubtless contributed to the greater use of the language within atypical domains of usage. Thus, while ideology may not feature as a factor in the views of many Mauritians, it has doubtless played an important part in modern perceptions of the language. Also, as the appearance in recent years of groups such as Organisation Fraternelle proves, there is a constant evolution of the role of Mauritian Creole, and the way in which it is used as a symbol of an ideological cause such as the role in Mauritian society of those of Creole origin. What previous history may show us is that while the majority of Mauritians are not openly concerned about this particular symbolism, it is highly likely that the work of such groups will in the long term have an effect on the public perception of the language.

Chapter Three

Educational issues

Introduction

In the context of this thesis the concept of literacy has been seen as an expression of different issues. However, it is clear that for the majority, literacy is automatically associated with education, the act of writing, and the process of learning how to write. As a result, educational issues have played an important part in the literization of the vernacular. Where a vernacular language is adopted for official purposes it is often limited to the domain of education (cf. Sebba 1997: 259). Literacy is also the domain where the choice of language is central, and will necessarily determine access to education and development of the community:

[A]s a factor providing or withholding access to education and therefore to human resource development, as a key to knowledge, information and communication, as an indicator of appropriateness of technology, as a major element in elite formation and alienation, as a barrier to or equalizer of social, political and economic opportunities, language plays a central role in the modernization and development of the country. (Robinson 1996: 16)

It is a consequence of the importance of the role of language in education that educational policy has become focused on the use of languages in education, and in particular the role played by former colonial and vernacular languages. It is also clear that any investigation into educational issues involving vernacular languages reveals particular problems and solutions that are fundamental to wider acceptance of vernacular languages. It is in the domain of education that many people experience at first hand the consequences of particular linguistic policies, and so it is at this level that attitudes towards the use of particular languages in education will necessarily affect attempts to promote vernacular languages at the local and national level.

It is the purpose of this chapter, therefore, to examine educational issues in Mauritius, and in particular how Mauritian Creole fits into the wider educational situation in Mauritius. I will begin with a brief overview of the education system in Mauritius, and how such a system has effectively created a situation where languages of wider communication have a monopoly on education and writing in Mauritius. I will then examine the educational difficulties of Mauritius, suggesting that they are at least in part a result of the complex education system and the over-reliance on French and English. It is against this background of educational difficulty that calls have been made for a recognition of the role of Mauritian Creole as the mother tongue of the majority of Mauritians.

In the second part of the chapter I investigate calls for vernacular language education in Mauritius, and examine the perceived advantages of such a policy, referring where necessary to instances of vernacular language education in Africa and the Caribbean. I concentrate particularly on the adult education sector, and how literacy in Mauritian Creole can be proposed as a means of combating illiteracy in French and English. In the third part of the chapter I raise the issue of the difficulties of vernacular language education, both in terms of educational problems, and also, perhaps more importantly in terms of the wider acceptance of vernacular languages, the emotional issues involved in negative attitudes towards vernacular language education. In the final part of the chapter I reflect on where the discussion on attitudes towards creole language education have led, and what the consequences of such a discussion are for further use of vernacular languages in education.

The Mauritian education system

The Mauritian education system consists of primary schooling from the age of five to eleven, and secondary schooling from eleven to sixteen or eighteen. Enrolment at primary level is compulsory, and is reported to vary between 97-99% (cf. Margeot 1991; Brooks 2000). Access to the secondary sector is determined by performance in the highly competitive exams of the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE). With few exceptions, only children

holding the CPE are allowed to enter the secondary sector, and the ranking³⁰ system determines which secondary school the child attends. Government statistics reveal the percentage of 11-18 year olds enrolled in secondary schools to be 52% (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 1998: 3). The examinations in the secondary sector are the School Certificate (SC) and the Higher School Certificate (HSC), which are taken at the age of 16 and 18.

The use of languages within the current education system has changed little since independence. Within the state system, French and English still predominate, and, although there have been calls for a change to the education system, or a least recognition that the current system is very unrepresentative of actual language use and educational needs, there is also considerable pressure to maintain the current system as it is. Before the place of Mauritian Creole is even examined, it is first necessary to explore the roles of French and English within the system.

At the present time, English is the official medium of education at primary and secondary level, and all examinations are conducted in English. According to Baker (1988: 39), French, which is a compulsory subject, is treated as "the local vernacular" within the school system, with English being introduced from the fifth year of primary school. However, Baggioni and Robillard (1990: 33) claim, as revealed in the table below, that there is simultaneous acquisition of French and English in the primary schools. This second opinion certainly seems to conform to my own observation of the experience of children in the first few years of primary education.

The official position on the role and function of languages in the education sector is summarized in a 1986 government report, cited by Abraham Alladin:

- a) English being the official language and the most widely used international language should continue to be promoted and given due importance;
- b) it would be desirable and in the interest of all Mauritians to be encouraged to learn French, which is readily acquired in the Mauritian context;

³⁰ Ranking refers to the listing, in order of achievement, of the names of the 400 top performing boys and girls. In the academic year 2000 ranking will effectively be abolished in Mauritius, and changes will gradually be made to the CPE and the education system in general. Details of these changes can be found later in the chapter.

c) language, being also a vehicle of culture, must be given its importance in order to understand and preserve worthwhile ancestral values; and

d) children who do not take an oriental language would be offered a course in Cultures and Civilisations in Mauritius. (in Alladin 1993: 75)

It is fair to say that Alladin's summary is still representative of the situation in Mauritius, with English and French seen as languages of national and international significance. The importance of ancestral languages is also stressed in part c of the above statement, and such languages receive considerable and vocal support from religious and cultural institutions in Mauritius. However, while the statement obviously gives an insight into educational policy, it does not present a true picture of the dynamics of the language situation in Mauritian schools. This is summarized by Baggioni and Robillard (1990: 33):

SECTEUR	MEDIUM OFFICIEL	LANGUES OBLIGATOIRES	LANGUES FACULTATIVES	MEDIUMS EFFECTIVEMENT UTILISES
Préprimaire	néant	néant	néant	créole français
Primaire	Alphabétisation	français	langues	créole
	simultanée en fr. + angl.	anglais	orientales	français anglais admis
Secondaire	anglais	anglais	français	créole
			langues	français
			orientales	anglais

What this demonstrates is the apparent contrast between official language policy in schools, as shown in the government report, and the actual languages used. What the results reveal most strikingly is the existence, even if it is only on an informal basis, of Mauritian Creole in the schools, a language which is entirely missing from any official governmental policy on language use in the education system.

Out-of-school education

Within the still largely unregulated domain of out-of-school education³¹, the question of language use is particularly fluid. This is particularly the case in the fee-paying pre-primary sector. While French, and to a lesser extent, English is now increasingly used in this sector, reflecting the wish of parents for their children to speak the languages before starting school, Mauritian Creole is still widely used. However, the only organization which openly advocates education in the vernacular is the Federation of Pre-School Playgroups (FPSP), which supports playgroups providing education in Mauritian Creole and Bhojpuri to pre-school children. In 1997 the group was involved in a court action against the Ministry of Education seeking to have Mauritian Creole and Bhojpuri recognized as legitimate languages of instruction in the pre-primary sector.

As in the pre-primary sector, the adult education sector is not subject to government regulation in the way the primary and secondary sectors are, and literacy education is provided by a variety of charitable and workers' organizations. As a result the choice of language is very much subject to the needs and wishes of those who receive such education. In 1993 a study, *Literacy Development in a Changing Society. A Study of Out-of-School Education in the Republic of Mauritius*, was carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science and UNICEF, which investigated the provision of adult literacy classes in Mauritius. The results showed a total of 737 students in the different educational institutions, although it is clear that there are numerous other providers of literacy education at a local level:

³¹ Taken from the title of the 1993 publication, *Literacy Development in a Changing Society. A Study of Out-of-School Education in the Republic of Mauritius*. The study referred to the provision of education for children and adults unable to continue their education in the state secondary sector. In the interests of simplicity I have broadened the definition to include the other area of non-compulsory education in Mauritius, the pre-primary sector.

Name of organization	Number of Centres	Enrolment	Instructors	Language of instruction/ read ³²	Target group
CARITAS	19	150	41	C/F F	A2/B1/B2
CORE Services	5	32	4	C/F F	A1
Ledikasyon pu Travayer MoES	3	100	10	C C	A1
	4	45	4	F F/E	A1
MSJM	3	45	6	C F/E	A1/B1/B2
National Women's Council/ MoWr	10	300	8	C/F F	A1/B2
Terre de Paix	3	65	11	C F	A1/B1
Total	47	737	84	C/F/E	All

These results reveal that French is the primary language of adult education provision in Mauritius, although, interestingly, literacy in French is taught through the medium of Creole. It is clear that the ready availability of written material in French is the main reason for the preponderance of French language literacy classes. English is less well represented. The use of Mauritian Creole as a language of literacy is restricted to the work of LPT, although it is clear from the results that the languages the classes are conducted in is primarily Creole.

The reliance in Mauritius on French and English and the continued importance of ancestral languages, is reflected in the census results for languages read and written, which differ greatly from the results for the spoken languages in Mauritius:

Languages read and written³³

Language	Number	Percentage
Total	785,063	100%
none	144,762	18.4%
Creole only	28,632	3.6%
Bhojpuri only	2,938	0.4%
Creole & Bhojpuri only	4,138	0.5%
Oriental only	24,257	3.1%
European only	409,396	52.1%
European & Oriental only	169,723	21.6%
Other/not stated	2,115	0.2%

³² C= Creole; F= French; E= English.

³³ Adapted from the 1990 census.

As can be seen from the results, there are no individual results for English and French, although it can be assumed that 'European languages' includes literacy in both languages. Thus, the vast majority of Mauritians regard themselves as literate in French and/or English, with a substantial proportion literate in a European and Oriental language. This situation roughly reflects the languages learnt within the education system. It is not surprising, given the emphasis placed on European and Oriental languages within the education system, that the number of those who claim literacy uniquely in Mauritian Creole is very small. However, it is often presumed that the level of literacy in Mauritian Creole exceeds official statistics, primarily because of the fact that many of those literate in Mauritian Creole are also literate in other languages and so do not feature in the census results (Khan 1993: 32).

Literacy in dominant languages

The education system in Mauritius is representative of many independent states where the former colonial language is maintained as the language of education. Citing the example of states in Africa, Ayo Bamgbose refers to the 'colonial legacy' which has maintained the linguistic and educational status quo, and resisted calls for change:

Little has changed in educational policy in independent Africa: "the colonial legacy seems to determine current educational practices as it has proved virtually impossible in all but a few cases to break away from the inherited practices." (in Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas 1995: 339)

For Craig, as examined in chapter one, educational policy in the Caribbean is similarly a result of what might be termed 'policy drift.' However, in his study of the use of languages of wider communication (LWCs) in education in developing countries, Thomas Clayton suggests that there are definite reasons for maintaining the role and status of the former colonial languages in the education system:

A review of comparative education and language policy and planning literature reveals five explanations for the use of languages of wider communication in education in developing countries: (1) national

integration; (2) comparative cost; (3) international communication; (4) elite closure; and (5) the world-system. (Clayton 1998: 145)

In a country such as Mauritius, where educational policy can best be described as a result of 'drift' (Craig 1980: 246), the maintenance of the position of the former colonial languages is not the result of a particular decision on the part of policy makers, but can nonetheless be justified postfactum on the basis of Clayton's arguments. The questions of national integration and international communication are often cited in support of education in languages of wider communication. This is demonstrated by the 1986 government report cited by Alladin, above, which reinforces the position of English not just as 'official' language, but also its status as an international language.

A more proactive approach to language policy and language planning, but which also exemplifies the importance given to the role of the colonial language, can be found in Namibia. Brian Harlech-Jones (1995), refers to the document *Towards a Language Policy for Namibia*, which proposed English as the official language, stating that:

English best accorded with selected criteria, such as promotion of unity, acceptability to Namibians, scientific and technological usefulness, and promotion of international communication. (Harlech-Jones 1995: 185)

Other factors raised by Clayton in support of the maintenance of LWCs can equally be applied to Mauritius. Where education has already been established under colonial rule, it is considered wasteful to provide new educational material in the vernacular language. It should be pointed out that this argument only really applies to a newly independent country, content to continue not only the educational policy of the former colonial power, but also to use its generally Eurocentric and often culturally inappropriate material. In Mauritius, which has now been independent for thirty years, educational material is produced which reflects the particular nature of the country. However, it might be argued that, for a country already producing educational material in two major European languages and several ancestral languages, the cost of providing material in the vernacular is an expense too far. The fourth issue, that of 'elite closure', is much more contentious, and is linked to the notion that education in a language of wider communication retains education as the province of the elites. It alleges that

when those who have been educated within the colonial context take on the trappings of real power, maintaining an education system that emphasizes proficiency in the former colonial language continues this position of dominance (cf. Philipson 1992). This issue, as will be discussed later in the chapter, is also responsible for negative attitudes towards the use of the vernacular in education. Similarly, Clayton's final explanation, the world system, again emphasizes the political and not simply functional nature of decisions to maintain the position of former colonial languages within the education system. He points particularly to the continued role of the former colonial powers in the life of independent countries, and identifies education as a means of maintaining such a privileged position within the political and social life of the country.

Fundamentally, the world-system explanation suggests that LWCs are promoted for use in education in developing countries by groups in countries where the LWCs are native and that these patron groups benefit from the adoption of LWCs in education elsewhere. (Clayton 1998: 149)

This again is particularly relevant to the situation in Mauritius, where French and English, and indeed ancestral languages such as Chinese, are maintained not only within the education system, but also receive considerable financial support from agencies outside Mauritius.

An acknowledgement of difficulties

Mauritius also has one of the world's highest literacy rates, free health care in every village, and its ever-present cheap public transport, all administered by a well-intentioned democratic regime. It is a small island that in many ways puts our own [the UK] to shame. (Gray 1996)

This description of Mauritius, which appeared in a British Sunday newspaper, presents a highly positive picture of the country, and its education system, and one that is a source of pride for Mauritians, as Alladin states:

Mauritius is one of the few developing countries that has met the UNESCO target on the eradication of illiteracy. It has now achieved almost universal primary education. (Alladin 1993: 79)

Census results appear generally to support this level of pride in the educational achievement of Mauritians. In 1990 the literacy rate was given as 81.6³⁴. By October 1999, a report published in L'Express (Jeannot 1999) found the literacy rate to have risen to 87.9%³⁵. As a result it might appear that little is wrong with the current education system, and that the question of illiteracy would appear to be irrelevant. This perception was highlighted by Cardinal Jean Margeot at an international colloquium on functional literacy which took place in Mauritius in 1990:

Beaucoup de personnes à Maurice sont étonnées quand on leur dit que chez nous l'analphabétisme est un réel problème. N'avons-nous pas un fort taux de scolarisation avoisinant 97% au primaire? (Margeot 1991: 17)

These comments show the association that is often made between literacy levels and rates of school attendance, and that has been the focus of studies on literacy (cf. Street 1995: 23). The possible danger of such an association can be seen in Mauritius where, despite this high level of school attendance at primary level, there is considerable concern expressed each year as to the level of failure at the end of the primary cycle, in the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE). In 1993 the Ministry of Education and UNICEF stated that

As measured by the present examination system (the 'Certificate of Primary Education' - CPE), about 40% of the students fail in their first attempts and 25% remain unsuccessful even after a year of repetition. In figures it is considered that every year about 2,000 would leave primary education as 'illiterates' and some 6,000 remain 'functionally illiterate' without access to the various training programmes operated under the formal education system. (Ministry of Education and Science/UNICEF 1993: 8)

According to the then Minister of Education, these findings resulted in primary school being the final stage of education for 30-35% of pupils (Parsuramen 1993: 77). In 1997, a *White Paper* was published which not only questioned the literacy levels of those who failed the CPE, but stated that the functional literacy/ numeracy of the 16,737 who passed the CPE in 1996 was unknown (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development 1997: 10).

These examples suggest that concern at the level of attainment by schoolchildren in Mauritius is restricted to educationalists alone. However,

³⁴ 86.5% of men and 76.7% of women.

³⁵ 96.6% of men and 79.2% of women.

evidence that there is awareness of educational difficulties can be found within the mainstream Mauritius press. An article which appeared in *Week End* (1995) questioned the link between completion of the primary cycle and the attainment of literacy, and suggested that 1,800 children who failed the CPE every year were totally illiterate. In April 1996, as a precursor to the publication of *the White Paper*, the newspaper *L'Express* (1996) reported similar findings, claiming that only 60% of children have an acceptable level of achievement in reading, writing and maths.

For those children who fail the CPE, usually unable to proceed onto secondary school, the alternatives are either entry into the workforce as an unskilled worker, or repetition of the CPE, usually at private institutions established to fulfil this specific purpose. In January 1997, shortly after the publication of the CPE results, a Mauritian newspaper (Seblin 1997) sought to bring the issue of CPE failure to the attention of the Mauritian public. In a deliberate attempt to counter the huge publicity surrounding the highest ranked boy and girl, the report, appositely subtitled 'Les anti-vedettes du CPE', detailed the fate of children who were repeating the CPE for the third and even fourth time.

Since 1997 there have, however, been huge changes in the education system in Mauritius. In March 1998 an *Action Plan* (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 1998) was published which recognized the difficulties of the education system. The *Action Plan* outlines four fundamental points in dealing with the difficulties of the education system. (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 1998: 5). The main change is the introduction of a cycle of 'Nine-year Compulsory and Fundamental Education'. This new system intends to replace the current system of six years of compulsory primary education, followed by five years of secondary school, and two years of sixth form education, with a compulsory nine years schooling. This will involve six years at primary school, followed by three at middle school, 60 of which are to be built for that purpose. At the age of thirteen students will choose to go to college for a further two to four years to complete the SC and HSC, or attend a training institution. In line with the nine year schooling the *Action Plan* envisages the replacement of the CPE by the Primary Achievement Certificate of Education (PACE), intended as a

non-competitive examination based on continuous assessment, and the introduction of the Middle School Achievement Certificate in Education (MACE). The third point is the regionalization of the education system with children transferring from a feeder primary school to a middle school within the region. As a result of this transfer the ranking system is also being abolished.

The objectives of the *Action Plan* are still in the initial stages, although January 2001 will see the abolition of the ranking system, and the introduction of the regionalization of the admissions system. As a result any child doing well in the CPE will have an automatic right to attend a 'high demand' college within his or her region. Perhaps in response to the often hostile reaction of parents living outside the main towns who fear their children being sent to a mediocre college in the regions, the Ministry of Education publication (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2000) intended for the parents of students currently in their final year of primary education makes it clear that children obtaining excellent results in the CPE will be able to compete on a points basis for places at the 12 'very high demand colleges', most of which are located in the centre of the island.

Despite the difficulties that face the current changes, many people I have spoken to see the introduction of certain aspects of the *Action Plan*, such as the Nine-Year Schooling as a positive step in addressing the problems faced by those who would probably fail the CPE. As yet, however, this particular change has not been implemented. What effect such changes will have on the educational achievement of Mauritian children will not be clear for another decade. What happens to those who have failed the CPE in the past is still a question of debate and is particularly pertinent to the discussion on the problem of illiteracy in Mauritius. A graphic reminder of the difficulties that still exist within education in Mauritius is given in the 1998 *Action Plan*:

But many among the CPE failure cohorts of recent years still constitute the street boys and girls - unemployed, deviants, forgotten youth. (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 1998: 31)

An explanation of failure

The cause of this level of failure has partly been put down to the sheer number of languages learnt at the primary level, a point stressed by Alladin:

It is obvious that children in Mauritius spend an enormous amount of time learning languages. It is not unusual for them to be exposed to five languages and expect fluency in four of them. The educational system has been criticized for overburdening children with so many languages, when it may not be so important to be literate in all the languages. The political and cultural realities of Mauritius are such that children will be expected to learn at least three languages. (Alladin 1993: 74)

The complexities of the education system in multilingual states is not restricted to Mauritius. Makhan Tickoo identifies the numerous difficulties faced by Kashmiri speaking children in India, and refers to a situation of what he terms 'semilingualism' where children learn several languages, but not at a level which is of any use:

Average school-leavers thus have no language that they can call their own, none that they can use with confidence even in limited "public" domains. Multilinguals they may be; they definitely have no language that is usable as a critical or creative resource. In most cases they must find their linguistic experience a dead-weight that begets little and equips them for much less. And even in those few cases where such children learn how to use one or another language reasonably well, they have to live the rest of their lives in the unenviable situation where even the least lettered native speaker of each language is, by definition, the final authority on what is acceptable and why (Tickoo 1995: 323).

This comment presents a particularly negative view of education in languages of wider communication, and it might be considered that, given the relative economic importance of Mauritius, and the near-universal coverage of its education system, the situation of semilingualism that Tickoo describes in Kashmir is not relevant to Mauritius. However, an interesting insight into the actual language proficiency of Mauritians is given by Jacques Lee in his Creole phrase book and dictionary:

However there is a disadvantage in speaking so many languages which is that most Mauritians, with the probable exception of the Franco-Mauritians, cannot speak any perfectly, or rather correctly. (Lee 1999: 105)

These observations seem to confirm Tickoo's evaluation of the situation in Kashmir, and indeed, despite the apparent success of the education system in Mauritius, the consequence of the burden of the number of languages at primary level, and in particular the concept of 'semilingualism'

has long been an issue. In the years preceding independence, Meade et al, in *The Economic and Social Structure of Mauritius*, stated that:

Children leave the primary schools in large numbers without having acquired anything approaching worth calling literacy in any one language, though they have spent an intolerable amount of time dabbling in all three. (in Stein 1982: 167).

While in post-independence Mauritius there has been little study of the correspondence between the number of languages taught at primary school and levels of educational attainment, it is clear that the degree of failure at the end of the primary cycle suggests that a substantial minority of schoolchildren are not sufficiently literate in French and English to continue their education. There is some anecdotal evidence that the language issue is known to be a contributory factor to the difficulties facing children at school, such as the comments in this recent guide book to Mauritius:

One must say that the language situation is really unfair on students because school is taught in English and students have to take their exams in something that is not even their second language (third or fourth is more likely). (NgCheong-Lum 1997: 69)

The difficulties facing the education system received more attention with the publication of the *White Paper* in September 1997. While the language issue was not a major feature of the *White Paper*, the report did concede the importance of language:

Language Policy is a very sensitive and very controversial issue; it arouses considerable passion and emotion. This is unfortunate - Language must always foster Unity, not the contrary. We will not do justice to our endeavour if we do not address the issue of a language policy as a matter of urgency in a honest and sincere way. There is need for a national consensus. It is proposed to update existing studies to establish whether we need some flexibility in our medium of instruction at classroom level; and to what extent our present approach to languages needs to be revised to live up to our national aspirations. (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development 1997: 29)

However, this acknowledgement of the importance of language policy, and the requirement to establish a language policy has not met with any real action on the part of the government. Indeed, it was suggested in newspaper reports of the period that initial propositions in favour of the use of Mauritian Creole, and indeed Bhojpuri, within the education system, had to be dropped in order for the *White Paper* to be ratified at Cabinet level (Denapanray and Kamanah 1997). In the *Action Plan*, the question of semi-

lingualism is acknowledged by the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research.

In our multilingual set-up dominated by English, French and Creole, we tend to shift constantly from one language to another. In the process, we have developed a peculiar mix of English-French-Creole, understandable to us, but baffling to outsiders. (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 1998: 57)

It does not address the question of the sheer number of languages studied at both the primary and secondary education, and the new educational structure envisaged in the *Action Plan* continues the use of French, English and Asian languages. Indeed, the *Action Plan* even states that the implications of introducing Spanish into the education system are being investigated. It is certainly the case that, with the exception of the above quotation on the English-French-Creole mix spoken by many Mauritians, there is no mention of Mauritian Creole within the *Action Plan*, and certainly not as a medium of education. Thus, it appears that while the publication of the *White Paper* and the *Action Plan* promoted a debate within the Mauritian media on the problems facing the education system, there is no actual action planned on the part of the government.

Selecting a viable language for literacy

The above discussion on the educational difficulties in Mauritius has focused on the disadvantages of education in French and English. However, while it may be acknowledged that education in LWCs is failing to provide opportunities for a significant minority of the Mauritian population, the question that remains to be answered is whether a viable alternative really exists. This question is particularly important if, as will be discussed later, Mauritian Creole is to be used as a medium of education.

In her study of education in Torres Strait, Anna Shnukal (1992) adapts Fasold's criteria for deciding among competing languages of education. The four criteria are *functional importance*, *native speaker population*, *potential for further development* and *group preference*. The first criterion, functional importance, is the degree to which a language is attractive as a second

language. This measures the proportion of speakers of one language who learn another language relative to the size of the populations of native speakers of the two languages. On this basis, Mauritian Creole is in a peculiar situation. On one level it is the undoubted lingua franca of Mauritius, with Baggioni and Robillard (1990: 47) citing it as the first language of 65% of the population, and the second language of the remaining 35% of the population. However, the proportion of native speakers to those who acquire it as a second language is quite small, as the process of transfer has already taken place. On this basis, it would appear that French has a much greater number of second language speakers in proportion to native speaker population, and therefore a greater degree of functional importance.

In reference to the second criterion, that of native speaker population, the position of Mauritian Creole is indisputable. As the first language of almost two-thirds of the population, it occupies an unrivalled place as the most widely spoken language in Mauritius.

The third criterion that Shnukal cites is the potential for language development. This includes factors such as an existing orthography and the suitability of the language to printing technology; already existing educational materials; a written literary tradition, and trained teachers. On this basis it is apparent that English and French are in a particularly good position as they are already used as languages of education. However, unlike the Torres Strait Creole, which forms the basis of Shnukal's work, Mauritian Creole also fares quite well on this criterion. As is discussed elsewhere in the thesis, Mauritian Creole already has several orthographies and a considerable literary oeuvre. As a result of the educational work conducted primarily by LPT and, in the pre-primary sector, FPSP, there is a wide range of educational material in Mauritian Creole, and a number of trained and experienced teachers. As a result, while Mauritian Creole is inevitably not as well as developed as French and English, it has nonetheless potential for further development as a language of education.

The final criterion is that of group preference. As is discussed in this chapter, there is still considerable support for the continued use of LWCs in the education system in Mauritius. Conversely, the role of Mauritian Creole is not widely accepted in Mauritius.

What are the consequences of these findings? On the basis of Fasold's criteria, it is currently difficult to see education in Mauritian Creole replacing education in French and English, or indeed becoming widely accepted. However, in the context of Mauritius, the concept of choosing one language amongst competing languages of education is not really viable. Also it should be borne in mind that, based purely on these criteria, the position of English as the main language of education in Mauritius would seem untenable. As a result, while Mauritian Creole may not be able to compete with French and English as a language of education, it does nonetheless satisfy three of Fasold's criteria, and on that basis cannot be entirely discounted as one of the languages of education in Mauritius.

It is also apparent that, in the case of Mauritius, this debate on the suitability of Mauritian Creole as a language of education is, at least in part, entirely academic, as education is already carried out in Mauritian Creole. What Anna Shnukal's comments do raise is that debates on the value of vernacular language education often centre on the role of the vernacular in state education. However, in many countries it is clear that vernacular language education takes place on the local or at the most regional level. While this acknowledgement of the essentially local nature of vernacular language education may well free such education from the same criteria levelled at languages of wider communication, it is nonetheless the case that such an acknowledgement will also condemn the status of vernacular language education to a local and often undervalued level. Therefore, while it must be acknowledged that vernacular language education is at the moment a generally marginal activity, carried out on the local level it is necessary, if such education is to be accepted by official providers, that its quality and purpose is comparable to, if not the same as, education in languages of wider communication.

The case for literacy in the vernacular

It has already been suggested that the cause of some of the difficulties facing the education system in Mauritius is the lack of proficiency

on the part of schoolchildren in the languages that are used for educational purposes, and it is clear that those children termed 'illiterate' and 'functionally illiterate' by the UNICEF/ Ministry of Education and Science report are in this position because they lack linguistic ability in French and English. Hubert Devonish states that it is this 'semilingualism' which is at the root of illiteracy:

However, it is not illiteracy which causes inability to understand English or communicate effectively in it. Rather, it is the low competence in English which restricts the ability to exercise literacy skills in that language. (Devonish 1986: 99)

As a result, the solution that presents itself is, that, if literacy is not attainable in a language or languages not normally spoken by the learner, literacy should be provided in a language that he or she does speak. In Mauritius the case for education in Mauritian Creole was made as early as the 1940s when the Ward report criticized the level of education in the country, concluding that "the normal medium of instruction in the lowest classes of the primary school should be Creole" (Stein 1982: 158).

This recommendation in favour of vernacular language education has been mirrored by linguists and educationalists in many developing countries. Since UNESCO made the issue of world-wide importance in its publication, *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education*, the benefits of vernacular language education have been well researched and documented. As was made clear by Robert Le Page (1997b: 27) in chapter one, the promotion of literacy in the vernacular often coincided with the movement towards independence that took place in the years after the Second World War. In Mauritius, independence similarly saw a renewal of interest in the role of Mauritian Creole in the education system. Dev Virahsawmy led the calls for its use in schools, stating that

Etant donné que le créole est la langue maternelle de la grande majorité de la population des écoles primaires et que pour les autres il est une *lingua franca* de grand usage, il devrait devenir le médium de l'enseignement primaire. (Virahsawmy 1967c)

However, it was not until fifteen years later, in 1982, at the height of support for Mauritian Creole, that education policy became the focus of national debate with the National Conference on the Language Issue taking place at the University of Mauritius at Réduit. At the conference, which covered all aspects of language policy, the issue of the language of

education was particularly discussed. While not everyone was in favour of the use of Mauritian Creole in education, there was nonetheless a great deal of support for a rethinking of the education system, and in particular the role of Mauritian Creole:

All education should in fact be in the mother-tongue medium in the early stages of the primary school. After these two years of basic education as an integral part in the process of lifelong education English should then be introduced and the medium of instruction can gradually switch over to English. The introduction of other languages such as French and other oriental languages should be rationalized. (Bissoonauth 1984: 274)

Bissoonauth's assertion makes it clear that there has been support for literacy in Mauritian Creole (cf. also Kistnasamy et al 1984; Philips 1984). However, in the context of the continuing domination and general acceptance of LWCs in the education system, it is necessary to present clear advantages to literacy in the vernacular if it is to be widely accepted.

In their work on the REFLECT programme, Archer and Cottingham point to the particular benefits of using the mother tongue as medium of education:

Generally speaking there is a strong case for teaching in people's mother tongue as they are more likely to be able to learn more quickly. It is a different process teaching in a second language if the participants are not fluent in the language concerned. ... If people learn more easily and quickly in their mother tongue, through this they will gain the confidence and skills to then move on and learn other languages. (Archer and Cottingham 1996: 49)

They also raise the point that the advantages of acquiring literacy in the mother tongue can be seen beyond the basic concept of ease of learning. This argument is also supported by Rachel Yates, who similarly points to the advantages of vernacular language education:

As well as sociocultural reasons given for the promotion of vernacular languages within formal and non-formal educational settings, there have also been various pedagogical arguments put forward for prolonged mother-tongue tuition at primary school level. Case studies have shown the advantages of mother-tongue instruction in the early years of education, leading to higher levels of cognitive development and an advantage in the acquisition of a second language. (Yates 1995: 439)

As can be seen, many of these advantages are related in particular to the teaching of initial literacy in the primary school. However, such arguments could easily be transferred to the domain of adult education. In the 1980s the Inner London Education Authority's adult literacy course book, *Language*

and Power was produced with the intention of encouraging “students to feel proud of their own particular language background, and enable them to contribute to discussions about language with confidence” (ILEA 1990: vii).

For those adults who have already been through the education system, it is evident that literacy in French and English has not worked. Therefore, the consequences of not allowing the provision of literacy in the vernacular are striking:

Le problème se pose donc en ces termes:

- soit faire du créole la langue d’alphabétisation (entre autres des adultes) et en même temps promouvoir le créole, le forger, et faire publier - au moins les textes essentiels - en créole.

- soit laisser les adultes croupir dans l’analphabétisme et l’ignorance.
(Gauvin 1977: 85)

The pedagogical advantages of literacy in the vernacular have long been upheld by linguists and educationalists interested in this domain of education. However, it is clear that these advantages, challenging as they do the long-standing dominance of literacy in LWCs, will not in themselves convince speakers of the vernacular to adopt education in the language. For vernacular language education to be accepted, it must be seen by speakers as providing them with something other than that which is provided by standard education practices in the LWC. Philip Baker makes this point, with reference to the situation in creole-speaking countries:

[T]he demand for literacy in creole has almost always come from creole speakers themselves and not from outsiders. As literacy in a European language is taught to most creolophone children free of charge, the demand for creole literacy implies that such literacy as they acquire in the European language does not satisfy all their needs. (Baker 1991: 109)

This statement reinforces the point made earlier by Robinson that the pedagogical factors involved in language choice in education are matched in importance by psychological factors. As a result, an important feature of literacy in the vernacular, and one that is maintained by Archer and Cottingham (*op.cit.*), above, is that of self-confidence. Where students have hitherto failed to acquire literacy in a former colonial language, it is inevitable that learning will as a result often be associated with failure. In teaching literacy in the vernacular it is hoped that the student will become sufficiently confident in his/her newly acquired literacy skills to then transfer this skill to

other types of learning, including eventual literacy in the former colonial languages.

Vernacular literacy: a false hope?

The above discussion has focused on the benefits of literacy in the vernacular, in particular the ease and speed of learning, and the increased self-confidence that literacy creates in the learner. However, there has been considerable doubt expressed by some linguists and educationalists as to the real benefits of such literacy. The first difficulty faced by those seeking to promote literacy in the vernacular, is the fact that, as has been raised above, literacy is so closely associated with languages of wider communication that any other literacy is considered to be inferior. In her study of functional literacy in Ghana, Rachel Yates (1995) found that, as women learners identified literacy as being synonymous with English, literacy in the vernacular was necessarily of less importance:

As long as English is seen to be the prestige language within the formal education system and society at large, mother-tongue language of instruction within the FLP is inevitably going to be seen as something of a second best. (Yates 1995: 445)

Such views on the lower status of literacy in the vernacular are often based on issues relating to the status of the language. Where a vernacular does not have the relevant features of a language, as defined by Philip Baker, literacy in the vernacular is not considered feasible. Nancy Hornberger found similar attitudes to the use of Quechua in education in South America:

Objections include that the language lacks a grammar and an alphabet, that the child already knows his/her mother tongue, that the use of the mother tongue will prevent acquisition of the second language, and that the use of vernacular languages impedes national unity; while practical limitations cited are those of inadequate vocabulary, shortage of educational materials, multiplicity of languages in a locality or country, need for reading material, shortage of suitably trained teachers, popular opposition to use of the mother tongue, and special problems surrounding the choice of lingua franca or pidgin for mother tongue literacy instruction. (Hornberger 1994: 77)

Even one of the most readily accepted benefits of literacy in the vernacular has been questioned in recent years. Rachel Yates (1995) points

to the lack of agreement on the advantages of vernacular language education, stating that:

Wagner and Spratt found that with Berber monolingual children in Morocco, instruction in their second language did not automatically place them at a disadvantage compared with their Arabic-speaking peers by the fifth year of primary school. (Yates 1995: 439)

These findings relate only to children, and it might be argued that in Mauritius, where literacy provision in Mauritian Creole is generally for adults who have failed to become literate in the dominant languages, a similar situation cannot necessarily be inferred. However, as no study has yet been conducted on the relative speed and effectiveness of literacy acquisition in French and Creole, it is clear that this is an area where further work is needed. An important point that is directly relevant to the situation in Mauritius, and applies both to compulsory and post-sixteen education, is that, irrespective of perceived benefits of vernacular language education, it is widely held that education in the vernacular simply takes away from the time that could be spent acquiring literacy in other, more useful languages. Jacques Lee refers to the problem of 'time-on task'³⁶, pointing to the negative effect that schooling in Mauritian Creole would have on the necessary task of becoming literate in French and English:

After having spent the most vital years of their education becoming literate in a 'manufactured' language, school children will have to switch to English and French in order to continue their schooling. So they will start learning these two important languages much later in their school life, which can only handicap them unnecessarily. (Lee 1999: 116)

It has also been suggested that literacy in the vernacular does not necessarily imply that acquisition of literacy in other languages will be easier. Contrary to the arguments made by Archer and Cottingham above, that the skills acquired in the mother tongue can be transferred to other languages, Brian Street suggests that mother tongue literacy may well have a detrimental effect on the acquisition of literacy in the languages of wider communication:

Until recently it was assumed that people could learn literacy better in their own language and then move on to the national or international language and literacy, having mastered the principles of writing

³⁶ This concept is borrowed from Jeff Siegel's paper 'Pidgins, creoles and minority dialects in education: an overview', presented at the Fourth International Creole Language Workshop, Florida International University, Miami, March 19-21, 1988.

systems. Recent research³⁷ suggests it may be more complex than this. If learning literacy involves not only acquiring technical decoding skills, but also learning the underlying cultural meanings and uses of that particular literacy, then using local literacy as a bridge to English or Spanish may serve as much to interfere with second language literacy as to assist it. (Street 1994b: 12)

Interestingly, Street's concerns about the value of literacy in the mother tongue differ somewhat from the traditional linguistic debate on interference, which centre on the problems that might arise from transferring literacy skills from the creole to the European Lexifier Language. In Mauritius, there has been concern expressed in the media, that literacy in Mauritian Creole will detract from later acquisition of literacy in French and English:

The usage of Creole as medium of instruction will definitely downgrade the performance of the students at language level. English and French will simply take a turn for the worse. I am convinced that Creole as medium of instruction, far from improving our pedagogical methods in class, will do an untold damage to English and French. (Paneken 1998)

Similarly, Mahadeo (1984) and Quirn (1997) focus on the grammatical and orthographic problems that would arise from the use of Creole as a medium of education.

The use of literacy in the vernacular as a bridge to literacy in LWCs has also been criticized by Street not simply for a lack of pedagogical benefit, but also for the implication that it simply reinforces stereotypes about the lower status of the language:

In any case the 'bridge' philosophy seems to many to be demeaning to the local literacy, which is simply made subservient to the dominant literacy rather than treated as worth learning in its own right. (Street 1994b: 12)

If literacy in the vernacular does not necessarily lead to greater ease of acquisition of literacy in the language of wider communication, then the question that has to be asked is what benefits does literacy in the vernacular actually bestow on the learner? Certainly in Mauritius this question is particularly pertinent. In recent years the off-shore financial sector and e-commerce have been increasingly prominent in the economic development of the country. As a result high levels of literacy in French and English are likely to be a basic requirement for those wishing to work in this sector. The question for those promoting literacy in Mauritian Creole is: will such literacy

³⁷ Street refers to Bell, J. (ed.) (1990) *TESL Talk: ESL Literacy 20* (1), Ontario, Canada.

provide the students with sufficient skills to be able to work in these newly developing sectors of the economy? If not, is vernacular literacy really a viable alternative to literacy in the dominant languages?

What this discussion shows is that although there may be positive benefits of instigating an education system in the vernacular language, this policy faces considerable obstacles. In his study of the education system in Mauritius, Ramesh Ramdoyal illustrates the dilemma between the possible pedagogical benefits of vernacular language education and negative attitudes towards such a policy:

From a purely pedagogical point of viewpoint it seems that national literacy can be more easily achieved in Creole, and that ideally the medium of instruction for a child living in its own language should be the mother tongue. However, many other important considerations may rule otherwise. In the multi-lingual situation of Mauritius, political and socio-cultural feelings are highly sensitive about languages and the attitudes of various communities, social groups and different generations toward Creole are somewhat different, and in some cases ambiguous. It would therefore seem unwise, at this stage of our development, to interfere with the present language policy without examining closely the repercussions of the proposed changes. (Ramdoyal 1977: 135)

A misuse of power

The fear that is often expressed about vernacular language education is that, if literacy in the vernacular does not provide students with sufficient literacy skills to have access to all domains of employment and further education, what is the real purpose of such literacy? In his discussion of the situation in Jamaica, Cooper cites the objections held by Creole speakers against education in the language:

[I]t is very problematic for people to accept the value of Creole literacy as something that is useful as a pedagogical device because of this long tradition of resistance to Creole as a language of domination; the kind of current debate that is raging in Jamaica about whether Creole is baby-talk, or a corruption of language with no literary heritage, and that people from the university are trying to keep down poor black people by arguing the value of Creole - in that kind of climate it is very difficult to push for Creole literacy in the schools as a language of instruction. (Cooper 1990: 62)

Cooper's discussion raises a particularly interesting dimension to Creole speakers' perception of the motives behind efforts to promote literacy

in the vernacular, that they are effectively an attempt by the educated elite to suppress the aspirations of the Creole-speaking majority. Ellen Schnepel (1993) identifies a similar degree of mistrust amongst those who would be potential users of literacy in the vernacular in her study of the creole movement in Guadeloupe:

Many feared the loss of their means of social advancement via the French language, the very language of which the Creole promoters - all competent bilinguals - had skilful mastery. (Schnepel 1993: 127)

This is certainly a point that has been made in Mauritius, and one which is accepted by at least one former proponent of literacy in Mauritian Creole, Vinesh Hookoomsing. In an interview with him in July 1997 he admitted that for him personally, the promotion of Mauritian Creole in the 1980s had been something of a 'Do as I say, not as I do' on the part of the creole movement. This seemingly duplicitous behaviour has clearly had a negative effect on the public perception of the motives of those individuals and groups who still seek to promote literacy in Mauritian Creole.

In Mauritius, as in many other creole-speaking countries, the primarily left-wing nature of the creole movement has similarly been the focus of concern. As was stated in chapter one, Didier de Robillard (1991: 91) was scathing of literacy in Mauritian Creole, and questioned its usefulness. He went on to state that those students who have acquired literacy in Mauritian Creole were 'transformés en militants' in a cynical attempt by the providers of such literacy to exploit such students for political gain.

As LPT is the only group which provides adult literacy in Mauritian Creole, it is apparent that this comment is as much directed towards them as it is towards providers of vernacular literacy in other regions. However, whilst it is the case that the vast majority of Mauritians still identify LPT with left-wing politics and the creole movement, I think it is less the case now that people will see an ulterior motive in the provision of literacy. Certainly in one family I knew, with no real political allegiance, the mother had been to literacy classes provided by LPT. She made no mention of their well-known political affiliations, but said she had enjoyed the classes, which she had been forced by circumstances to give up. The length of time that LPT has been involved in literacy provision and the acceptance of such provision by

firms in Mauritius also points to a greater degree of acceptance on the part of most Mauritians. This was demonstrated in a more official way in the *Action Plan*, in which LPT was the only organization of its kind to be mentioned by name:

Some Non-Governmental Organisations like "Ledikasyon Pu Travayer" are already active in providing Adult Education and they are doing a good work. (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 1998: 31)

Summary

This chapter has examined the educational issues related to the literization of the vernacular. It has examined the difficulties faced by the education system in Mauritius, and the possible solutions and problems posed by the provision of literacy in the vernacular. While it may be true that literacy provision in the vernacular is more readily accepted within the domain of adult education, it is nonetheless the case that negative attitudes towards education in the vernacular persist. In the case of Mauritius, and the work of LPT, it is unlikely that such attitudes will put a stop to adult literacy provision in Mauritian Creole.

The next chapter investigates the role that Mauritian Creole plays as a language of cultural expression. It examines the different motives behind the promotion of written culture, and how current practices affect attitudes towards writing the language.

Chapter Four

Sociocultural issues

Introduction

The previous chapters have attempted to demonstrate the role of Mauritian Creole as a language of both ideological and educational importance. It is the purpose of this chapter to exemplify the role of Mauritian Creole as an expression of Mauritian society. As was stated in chapter one, despite the often ambivalent attitudes expressed towards creole languages, they hold a vital place within creole speaking societies.

A reflection of the role that Mauritian Creole plays in Mauritian society is documented in literature on the country. A Mauritian government internet site³⁸ acknowledges it as a language of low status, but states nonetheless that “the Creole language is and will be one of the cements of the different components of the Mauritian society in all its diversity”. As Winford’s (1994: 48) comments in chapter one might suggest, it is also a language of cultural expression. This can be seen most clearly in the example of the sega, a folk dance which was brought to Mauritius by slaves, and which Jacques Lee suggests became intimately associated with the creole language:

Sega became the medium through which news travelled across the island. The lyrics were about their plight, the cruelty of their masters, their longing for home, perhaps about the devastation of the last cyclone or even stories of those who managed to escape. Wherever Creole was spoken, sega went..... Creole was therefore crucial to the success and survival of sega and sega in turn was, to some extent, instrumental in ensuring the popularity and continuity of Creole. (Lee 1999: 114)

As this description makes clear, Mauritian Creole undoubtedly has its place in oral expression as the language of songs and story telling. It is not, however, widely accepted as a written language. It is the issue of Mauritian Creole as a written language that will be the focus of this chapter, and how

³⁸ Cultures and Languages of Mauritius. http://www.mu/iels/culture_mau.htm, dated 9/2/2000.

writing in the language is representative of both popular and literary culture. I will exemplify the motivation behind the production of literature³⁹ in Mauritian Creole, and attempt to demonstrate that contemporary forms of written Creole affect attitudes towards writing, and consequently reading, in the language, and the writing system used.

Literature and sociocultural expression

In Mauritius, literary production has generally been associated with the former colonial languages, most particularly French, a fact supported by Vicram Ramharai:

Au XIXe siècle, le français est le moyen de communication de tous les écrivains mauriciens. A l'exception de ceux qui temporairement ont utilisé le créole, personne ne songe à exploiter cette langue au niveau littéraire. (Ramharai 1990: 42)

In the twentieth century, this situation has changed little, and French still predominates as the language of literary expression in Mauritius. It is also, as chapter one indicated, the prime language of the press. As a result, those who have sought to write literature in Mauritian Creole, particularly since independence, have been doing so against a tide both of tradition and also of expectation on the part of the majority of Mauritian readers.

In his study of literature in Mauritian Creole, Vicram Ramharai (*Ibid.* 33) states that Mauritian literature in Creole has been produced for as long as Mauritian literature in French, while the last thirty years since independence has seen an upturn in literary production in the language. For Ramharai, this new literary production forms part of the wider political and linguistic struggle begun at the time of independence, and which, as previous chapters have demonstrated, still continues today:

La littérature mauricienne d'expression créole parue après l'indépendance de Maurice s'attache à exprimer une quête d'identité nationale que connaissent tous les pays qui ont été colonisés à un moment donné de leur histoire. Cette quête d'une identité s'avère être une idée nouvelle, révolutionnaire même, car elle relève d'abord de la politique. La langue créole étant au centre des débats politiques, elle

³⁹ I use literature here in its most general sense, to mean 'written works'.

devient de ce fait un instrument pour créer cette identité sur le plan littéraire. (*Ibid.* 1990: 5)

Literary production in Mauritian Creole can also be seen as an expression of a particularly Mauritian culture. Vicram Ramharai suggests the motivation for Mauritian authors who make this choice:

Avant l'indépendance, le créole n'a fait l'objet d'aucun système de codifications vraiment sérieux parce qu'il est considéré à l'époque comme impropre à l'expression littéraire. Or, les auteurs créoles pensent

(1) que le créole est la seule langue apte à traduire l'esprit, la mentalité et le 'génie' du peuple mauricien.

(2) qu'il est le seul capable de transcrire la réalité et les cultures mauriciennes.

(3) qu'il n'est pas une langue pauvre dans la mesure où l'on peut y exprimer les sensibilités et les sentiments qu'éprouvent les Mauriciens.

(*Ibid.*: 19)

The quest for status

The role of literature as the expression of Mauritian identity is also linked, in the case of literature in Mauritian Creole, to a quest to raise the status of the language. While the role of Mauritian Creole as a national language, and even the language of the working classes, has done much to raise the profile of the language on a political basis, it has not done much to raise the profile of Mauritian Creole as a language worthy of respect, and therefore suitable to become a full national language. Eriksen identifies the reasons for the low status of Mauritian Creole:

[I]t is rarely written, never used in parliament, and is completely absent from school curricula and textbooks. While Kreol is of paramount importance in most house-holds, in local networks and among colleagues, job advertisements and applications are always written in French or English, French and English are the only languages used in the Legislative Assembly, and Kreol is rarely heard on radio and television. (Eriksen 1998: 85)

What this reveals is that, while, as will be made clear in the later part of the thesis, orthographic standardization plays a vital role in imbuing full status to a vernacular, other issues are also involved. Alleyne and Garvin, cited in chapter one, identify the wider cultural implications of a standard language.

Such a concept of what constitutes a standard language is well known to those who promote Creole languages. Baker's distinction between *langues* and *non-langues* confirms the idea that while there are many uses to which a language can be put which confirms its status as a standard language, literature is one of the primary means by which this can be achieved.

Vicram Ramharai closely identifies the connection between literature in Mauritian Creole and the fight against traditional concepts of Creole as an inferior language not normally associated with literary production:

On ne peut pas parler de la littérature créole sans faire allusion à l'évolution de la langue créole qui était considérée, depuis des années comme un "patois" ou un "dialecte". (Ramharai 1990: 10)

Writing in Mauritian Creole can also be perceived by the authors as a personal campaign against traditional attitudes on literature in creole languages. Sedley Richard Assonne, in an interview with *Le Mauricien* in March 1997, gave his reason for choosing to write in the language:

Du fait que c'est une langue encore ignorée, toute tentative de la valoriser, à travers l'écriture, entre autres, est une forme de revendication. Quand je crée dans cette langue, c'est aussi une façon pour moi de faire un pied de nez à tous ces imbéciles qui pensent que le créole n'est pas une langue (Patel 1997).

Literature and literacy

The above examples have shown that literary production in Mauritian Creole forms part of the promotion of the language as an expression of Mauritian culture, and able to fulfil all the requirements of a standard language. Writing also serves another, much more practical, purpose in the provision of basic reading material for literary classes. It is evident that where literacy in the vernacular is proposed, there is a fundamental requirement for reading material in that language, as LPT have stated:

Par rapport à la littérature, à LPT, nous l'avons fait à travers les cours d'alphabétisation. Quand nous avons débuté, nous nous sommes retrouvés à court de matériel pédagogique en créole et on a dû avoir recours à des contes, des histoires, aux chansons, au théâtre, pour alimenter nos cours (Assonne 1998).

It is also the case that the provision of reading material has effectively to precede the provision of literacy classes if these classes are to be considered valid. Brian Street raises this issue in relation to promoters of Quechua:

Some Quechua speakers, aware of the importance of a literature to sustain the language of identity, have begun to write literary and other texts in Quechua so that it is now not possible for authorities to argue against learning Quechua on the grounds that there is not much written in it. (Street 1994b: 11)

This difficulty, that unless there is sufficient reading material in the vernacular there is little purpose in teaching literacy in the language, is not restricted to South America, but is a problem faced by those promoting vernacular languages generally. In terms of the discussion in the previous chapter on the difficulties facing the education system in Mauritius, for literacy in the vernacular to be seen as valid there has to be a sufficient quantity of reading material in Creole. Writing of the situation in the Seychelles, Annegret Bollée is clear about the difficulties facing those educated in the vernacular if there is not enough material to read:

[I]t is doubtful that the present language use in the press can satisfy the demands of those who have learned to read and write in Creole (and only in Creole!) through adult literacy courses. (Bollée 1993: 92)

This statement also raises the issue of the catch 22 situation facing those promoting literacy in Mauritian Creole. For literacy in Mauritian Creole to be other than a purely political activity it is necessary to provide reading material in the language. However, until there is an audience of such readers it is often not considered viable to go into full literary production. Thus once basic literacy is achieved it is often very difficult for readers to gain access to further reading materials.

A perhaps even more important issue, in relation to the comments by Baker and Alleyne and Garvin, above, is that until a literary oeuvre is established, not only are those literate in the language restricted in the use of their literacy, but the language itself is also restricted. This will once again have important consequences for the development of the language, and thus its very status as a language of social promotion or in the written press.

As a further addition to the debate, Devonish presents a different point of view, and suggests what might be considered a minimum requirement for literacy to be considered in a creole language:

Where Creole is a major medium of public information, and a language used as a medium of written communication in pamphlets, newsheets, magazines, etc., the preconditions have already been created in which there is a need in the society for literacy in Creole (Devonish 1986: 119)

What Devonish doesn't state is whether these preconditions are as a result of what might be termed an organic process of the gradual incorporation of often non-standardized creole writing, or a deliberate attempt at providing reading materials in the language.

Literature and standardization

Alleyne and Garvin emphasized the link between literature and other forms of abstract thought and a standard language. The order in which Philip Baker lists the three factors that constitute a *langue* might suggest that the existence of a 'single established orthography' has to precede the creation of a 'substantial pre-existing literature', that is, in Haugen's terms, that codification of form comes before elaboration of function. However, Lodge (1993: 158) identifies the creation of a French literary heritage long before the first attempts at codification took place in the sixteenth century. Similarly, as will be shown later in the chapter, writing Mauritian Creole as a literary pursuit has long preceded efforts to seriously propose a standardized writing system. This is a point made by Mark Sebba:

Although there is clearly a link between standardisation and writing, it is quite possible for a language to be written down without standardisation having taken place. English was a written language for many centuries before a standard emerged. The arrival of printing tends to act as a catalyst, speeding up standardisation. Nevertheless we can consider separately from standardisation the question of pidgins and creoles as *written* languages. (Sebba 1997: 240)

It is also clear that in many countries a written non-standardized form of the language can exist alongside a proposed standard for many years. Indeed, Lambert-Félix Prudent clearly distinguishes two contrasting occurrences of written creole in Martinique:

Une fois établi le constat d'une véritable émergence de l'écrit créole en Martinique, on se voit vite contraint de distinguer entre deux pratiques. La première, savante et calculée, prônée par les militants culturels et certains universitaires, se déploie dans un univers clos: c'est le créole en circuit fermé. La seconde, irrégulière et spontanée, élaborée par des scénaristes et des dessinateurs humoristiques, des chanteurs populaires et des créatifs publicitaires s'offre au plus grand public et devient modèle courant. (Prudent 1989: 67)

While, as will be seen in this chapter and the next, the situation in Mauritius is not altogether the same as that in Martinique it is similar enough to warrant an investigation into current trends in writing Creole as separate from an examination of proposed orthographies.

Popular written Creole

Prudent's explanation of the situation in Martinique would suggest that the entirety of written Creole available to the public conforms to his appraisal of it as 'irrégulière et spontanée'. In Mauritius this evaluation, as will be demonstrated later, is not altogether true, and much literary production in Mauritian Creole is the result of a sustained effort by activists such as Dev Virahsawmy and LPT. However, it is possible on the whole to distinguish academic literary production of Creole from what might be termed general literary or popular written Creole. The first occurrence of writing that I will investigate is the use of written Creole in personal correspondence.

Although the level of education in Mauritius might suggest that all correspondence will be written in French, and, to a lesser extent, English, there is considerable evidence that Creole does form part of the written repertoire of Mauritians. The census results from 1990 reveal that just over 4% of the population are literate in Creole or Creole and Bhojपुरi only. However, as I stated in chapter three, the census does not give any indication of the number of people who are literate in Creole as well as European or Oriental languages. Evidence for the degree of literacy in Mauritian Creole can be found both anecdotally and in research findings. A particularly interesting example is given by Jacques Lee (1999: 115), who cites the case of Mauritian students living in the Soviet Union during the Cold

War, and whose use of Mauritian Creole in letters home caused considerable difficulties for Soviet censors. Surveys on the level of literacy in Mauritian Creole have been conducted by Peter Stein (1982) and Vinesh Hookoomsing (1987), and reveal interesting changes in the number of people claiming to use the language for literacy purposes. Stein's survey, conducted in 1975, found that of his informants, 9.7% used Mauritian Creole, either solely, usually, or occasionally, for note taking, 12.4% for letter writing and 4% for reading books (1982: 601). The much lower percentage of informants claiming to read in Mauritian Creole was probably due to the small number of books available in the language at the time. This would appear to be supported by Hookoomsing's study, conducted a decade later, which revealed that 55.5% of the informants claimed to read Mauritian Creole, mainly in the form of articles and posters (1987: 228). This dramatic increase in the number of people reading Mauritian Creole is undoubtedly partly due to the form of the reading material, which has always been more readily available to, and accepted by, the Mauritian public.

This would suggest that written Creole forms part of the life of Mauritians of all levels of education. The form that this writing takes varies. As Lee's observation suggests, letter writing is a major part of this production, and my discussion with literacy students suggests that this also forms part of the motivation for literacy. I also found a note left by my landlady, in this case a non-Mauritian, giving cleaning instructions to her maid in Creole.

In the Mauritian press the appearance of written Mauritian Creole tends much more to be a representation of local character than any real attempt at writing the language. It is often not written as an entire text but rather as excerpts or snippets. Within newspapers this is often done in quotations within an otherwise entirely French language text. This is something that Robillard commented on in his analysis of language use in pre-independence newspapers:

Le créole mauricien n'est donc à cette époque jamais utilisé à l'écrit (mis à part quelques textes littéraires ou travaux de vulgarisation), sauf dans la presse, où des citations en créole mauricien, au style direct, parsèment les articles, en français pour la plupart. Les journalistes empruntent dans ce cas au français sa graphie pour transcrire le créole mauricien, choix qui perpétue celui des premiers écrivains à publier en

créole mauricien, et conforte l'idéologie diglossique en annexant en quelque sorte au français le créole mauricien comme s'il s'agissait d'un dialecte. Il s'agit certainement de l'option scripturale à laquelle les Mauriciens sont le plus exposés. (Robillard 1989: 87)

An extract demonstrating this can be found in the report in *L'Express*⁴⁰ of the capture of two escaped prisoners. In the entirely French text, the eye-witness account is written in Creole:

Selon des témoignages recueillis sur place à Rivière-du-Poste, maîtriser Dallon n'a pas été une tâche facile. Ce dernier a tenté jusqu'au bout de résister à sa capture. "Mo ti dans la caze quand mo tanne sirène la police. Mone sorti mone alle guetté. Mone arrive cotte la boutique Jugnauth et mone trouve Dallon dans loto. La police ine bisin mette Tonfa (*sic*) dans so labouche. Li ti très agressif", relate un témoin. "Mone trouve Ramessur enbas lors trottoir. Li fine tombé. Tallat ki ti lors siège arrière loto line sauvé dans piquants loulou, line allé", ajoute-t-il⁴¹.

The use of Mauritian Creole in adverts is in some respects more adventurous, using the language in a similar way to that found on the radio or television as a localising factor. This can be seen in the advert for a mobile phone⁴². Similarly, cartoons are often in Creole as an example of local life. However, the style of language used in these cartoons varies very little from what Robillard found, with the use of diacritics and, for the most part, traditional French spelling conventions.

A more serious use of written Creole, and one which reflects the use of oral Creole as a means of disseminating public information, is the recent campaign promoting Aids awareness⁴³. The campaign appeared in poster form, and also in newspaper adverts throughout Mauritius, and was written in both French and Creole. Other similar examples included a poster asking people to save water⁴⁴, and an Amnesty International poster⁴⁵. Perhaps the most interesting instance was the monument to the International Declaration of Human Rights⁴⁶. The striking factor in the last three cases was that they

⁴⁰ *L'Express*, mercredi 1er septembre 1999. <http://www.lexpress-net.com/1.htm>

⁴¹ Translation of eye-witness account:

I was in my house when I heard the police siren. I went out to have a look. I got to Jugnauth's shop and saw Dallon in the car. The police had to put tape over his mouth. He was really aggressive. I found Ramessur on the ground. He had fallen. Tallat, who was in the back seat of the car, had hidden in a thorn bush and escaped.

⁴² See appendix A.

⁴³ See appendix B.

⁴⁴ See appendix C.

⁴⁵ See appendix D.

⁴⁶ See appendix E.

were all located in the popular tourist area of the Caudan Waterfront in Port Louis. Such examples point to a greater use and acceptance of Mauritian Creole by Governmental and non-Governmental Organizations. However, many examples of written Creole are unofficial, often hand-written posters and signs. These could be notices on buses, asking people not to put their feet on the seats, or even, as seen during my stay in Mauritius, a sign advertising solar heater repairs. A particularly nice example was a hand-painted, although quite professional sign asking people not to dump rubbish, which I found in January 2000⁴⁷.

Although not all the texts follow standard French spelling conventions, it is fair to say that they share certain etymological features. However, what is most striking is that the influence of French conventions on the spelling of certain words and sounds varies greatly across the texts. This can be seen very clearly in the spelling of the sound /k/. While it is most often written as 'k' in final position, thus simplifying the 'que' simplifying found in French, as in 'risque', 'c' is the most usual spelling in initial position. As this is by far the most common occurrence of the sound, it is clear that there has been considerable adherence to French spelling conventions. The use of acute and grave accents is also very interesting, and demonstrates a certain adaptation of French spelling to the realities of Mauritian pronunciation⁴⁸. A particular example can be found in the Aids awareness advert, where the French 'meilleur' is written 'meillèr'. Although this spelling demonstrates a knowledge of French conventions, it also clearly shows the difference in the pronunciation of the Creole word. This can also be seen in the word 'zamai', which again differentiates the phonology of Mauritian Creole from that of French.

⁴⁷ See appendix F.

⁴⁸ A brief description of the phonology of Mauritian Creole, and its differences to French, can be found in chapter five.

The creation of a literary oeuvre

While the use of written Creole in the popular press is the most readily identified example of written Creole, there has always been a consistent production of a literary oeuvre in the language. Historically, the creation of a literary oeuvre in Mauritian Creole dates back to the early days of the language itself. The earliest examples appeared in the form of short sentences, such as those which appear in chapter one. The occurrence of longer examples of written Creole, although rare, was fairly regular until independence, and tends to be in the form of poetry. Other examples are religious texts, such as the 1828 catechism cited by Chaudenson (1981: 107), and the declaration of the end of slavery (*Ibid.* 115).

The majority of literature in Mauritian Creole has been produced since independence. Such an upsurge in writing perhaps reflects a general interest in literary production, but cannot be separated from the wider social, political and linguistic movement in favour of Creole at the time, as identified earlier by Vicram Ramharai. As a result, the writing that appeared in Mauritian Creole at independence, and has continued to be produced since that time, is not as spontaneous as that which appears in newspapers or on adverts. The reason for this is that much of the literary production in Mauritian Creole has been produced either by or in association with particular cultural activists, notably Dev Virahsawmy and LPT. Alongside the steady stream of literary works published by LPT in the last few years, there has also been a project by their sister organization, the Federation of Pre-School Playgroups (FPSP), to produce a series of ten story books for children, eight of which are bilingual Creole-English. Dev Virahsawmy has also published at least two works a year in his own orthography. As will be seen in the next chapter, Virahsawmy radically altered his orthography in 1999 in a collaboration with the Catholic Church. However, the number of works currently available in his old orthography still means a domination of just two orthographies in literary texts in Mauritius⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ The orthographies of Virahsawmy and LPT are discussed in chapter five.

However, not all books written in Mauritian Creole use either the Virahsawmy or the LPT orthographies, and such books present very different trends in spelling to those proposed by Virahsawmy and LPT. Examples of literature in alternative spelling systems are unfortunately quite rare, and in a trawl of bookshops where Creole books are usually sold, I managed to find only three books. The first is a poetry book, *Poezi dan lapo*, by Roland Latour (1995)⁵⁰, and the second is *Sité Blouz*, a translation of French songs into Creole by Bertrand de Robillard and the linguist, Didier de Robillard (1996)⁵¹. The third is an adaptation in French and Creole of the short stories of Charles Baissac by Goswami Sewtohul (Baissac 1995).

Mauritian Creole does appear in other written formats, most notably in dictionaries and phrase books. Such books can be considered as equivalent to literary production as they are not accessible in the same way as the adverts and excerpts mentioned above, and so have to be sought out by the public in the same way as literary texts. Perhaps the oldest example, still widely available in Mauritius, is the phrase book produced by the former education minister, James Burty David (1988)⁵², and designed primarily for tourists. Goswami Sewtohul has written two dictionaries, one Creole-English (1997a), and the other Creole-French (1997b)⁵³. The most recent example is the phrase book and dictionary by Jacques Lee (1999)⁵⁴. This is particularly interesting as it also gives a history of Mauritius and Mauritian Creole, and contains useful insights into language attitudes. Such phrase books and dictionaries, particularly those by Burty David and Lee, designed as they are for a primarily non-Mauritian audience, open up the language to those who are unfamiliar with it. As a result, the writing systems used are more in the style of the adverts and articles mentioned above, and generally recreate French spelling conventions. The exception to this is the English-Creole dictionary of Goswami Sewtohul. It appears intended as a pronunciation guide with English spelling conventions indicating similar sounds in Creole.

⁵⁰ See appendix G.

⁵¹ See appendix H.

⁵² See appendix I.

⁵³ See appendices J and K.

⁵⁴ See appendix L.

The audience for writing in Creole

The above discussion has centred on the production of written Creole. The question that now remains to be asked is what the audience for such writing is in Mauritius, and what is the public perception of writing in Mauritian Creole.

It is doubtless the case that there exists in Mauritius a committed readership of literature in Mauritian Creole. These are people who support the efforts of writers and cultural activists, and attend book launches and other cultural activities in support of the language. How many people this readership constitutes is a more difficult question. At regular book launches I attended there was an average attendance of about fifty to seventy-five people. A second type of reader might be someone who happens to pick up a copy of a book or newspaper, but who doesn't normally read in Creole. Quite a few bookshops in Mauritius stock a small collection of works in Mauritian Creole, and so there is a ready availability of literature in the language. The third type is someone who is literate only in Mauritian Creole. This could be someone who has acquired literacy in French but has lost the ability to read it, and so finds Creole easier to read. Alternatively, and perhaps more likely, it is someone who has undertaken literacy training in Creole, almost certainly at LPT. This is the only readership whose numbers it is possible to independently evaluate, as the census carries details on those claiming literacy only in Creole.

Conversely, it is often stated that literature in Creole has a normal run of two hundred copies. In some respects such a small figure is not particularly surprising, as literature itself is automatically aimed at a fairly small readership. As the vast majority of this readership will probably also read in French, the proportion who will choose to read in Creole will consequently be even smaller. Perhaps in the light of this difficulty, LPT, and more recently l'Alliance Fraternelle, have produced newspapers⁵⁵ either

⁵⁵ I have been unable to obtain an example of the newspaper *La voix afrikin*. Therefore I have been unable to ascertain the amount of Mauritian Creole it contains. Jacques Lee describes it as a Creole language newspaper. However, LPT states that it is mainly written in French.

entirely or partially in Creole. Whether this has affected the number of readers is unknown.

What this reveals is that although literature in all forms is widely available to the Mauritian public, the Creole that appears in newspapers, posters and notices is quantitatively most likely to form the basis of people's perceptions of the language in its written form.

Consequences for orthographic development

These examples of written Creole should at least show that there is a considerable amount of production in Mauritian Creole. However, much of this production is within the domain of literature, read by a tiny percentage of the population. While such literature tends to use established orthographies such as those of Virahsawmy and LPT, which will be examined in the next chapter, the majority of writing that Mauritians come across is of a spontaneous and generally non-standard nature. However, as was stated above, there are certain shared features which could be described as central to written Creole.

What this reveals is that attitudes towards writing in Creole are still fairly entrenched. While written Creole seems to be accepted within popular channels, such as newspapers, cartoons and adverts, the orthography used often conforms to French spelling conventions. For people educated in French and English, and particularly used to considering Mauritian Creole as a derivative of French, the use of a French-derived orthography seems entirely appropriate.

Summary

This chapter has explored current practices of written Mauritian Creole, and examined attitudes towards writing the language. These attitudes present particular problems for those seeking to propose and promote a phonemic orthography for Mauritian Creole.

In the next chapter I will study the phonemic orthographies which have been proposed for Mauritian Creole, and how they influence, and have been influenced by popular attempts at writing the language.

Chapter Five

Technical issues

Introduction

The previous chapters have examined the different issues related to the literization of the vernacular. In this chapter I intend to investigate the actual technical processes of the literization of the vernacular. The connection between literacy and standardization might seem an automatic one, as Suzanne Romaine makes clear:

Standardization and literacy go hand in hand since the acquisition of literacy as it is understood in Western terms presupposes the existence of a codified written standard, and standardization depends on the existence of a written form of a language (Romaine 1994: 22)

However, as the previous chapter has shown, a language can be written without an agreed standard. Romaine's comment raises the issue that although standardization is not a prerequisite to writing, it is nonetheless often associated with it, so much so that in the public domain one cannot be achieved without the other.

As chapter one demonstrated, orthographic standardization is not merely a linguistic issue, but is often influenced by wider social, cultural and political factors. The previous chapters have attempted to show the wide-ranging and often conflicting issues involved in the promotion of Mauritian Creole as a written language, and it is evident that such issues will have an affect both on efforts to standardize and public reaction to these proposed standards.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the process of the standardization of Mauritian Creole. I intend to examine the principles of standardization, and how these relate to existing orthographies for Mauritian Creole. I hope to compare reaction to these orthographies with the patterns of usage and need established in the previous chapters. The contention of this chapter is that, although there may be differences between popular

writing practices and the orthographies proposed for Mauritian Creole, there is nonetheless a degree of consensus between the two, and this may well provide the basis for eventual standardization of the language.

Approaches to standardization: theoretical perspectives

The question of orthographic standardization for previously unwritten vernaculars has been the focus of a considerable amount of research. Perhaps the fundamental point in addressing the question of orthographic standardization is to first examine the wider implications. Stein and Kattenbusch present a set of questions which any person proposing a particular orthography should answer:

Qui écrit?
Qu'écrit-il?
Pour qui écrit-il?
Dans quel but écrit-il?
Et comment écrit-il? (Stein and Kattenbusch 1992: 185)

Stein and Kattenbusch point to a fundamental factor involved in the establishment of orthographies, that orthographies must automatically take into account the people who will write the language, and the purpose to which this literacy will be put.

The discussion, in the previous chapter, of the different groups who read and write Mauritian Creole exemplifies the social framework of efforts to standardize the language. In his work for the United Bible Societies, William Smalley produced an outline of the five criteria required for an adequate writing system, which he listed in order of importance:

1. Maximum motivation for the learner, and acceptance by his society and controlling groups such as the government. Occasionally maximum motivation for the learner conflicts with government acceptance, but usually the learner wants most what is considered standard in the area.
2. Maximum representation of speech. The fullest, most adequate representation of the actual spoken language is, by and large, the ideal.
3. Maximum ease of learning. Many writing systems have failed as a missionary tool because they were essentially too complicated for a learner.
4. Maximum transfer. Here we refer to the fact that certain of the alphabet or other written symbols will, when learned, be applicable to the more rapid learning of the trade or the colonial languages in the area.

5. Maximum ease of reproduction. Typing and printing facilities are a consideration, although they are not of first importance. (Smalley 1964: 35)

Smalley's work, and Lise Winer's principles for the orthographic standardization of Trinidadian Creole, outlined in chapter one, and reproduced in detail below, provide a framework for the creation of a writing system for an unwritten vernacular. They also demonstrate the difficulties inherent in such a task.

The principles to be considered in orthographic standardization for TC are not unique. The following principles informed this process; they are not arranged in any order of importance.

1. Practicality. The English (Roman) alphabet should be used without new characters, without diacritics or accent marks.

2. Consistency. In a phonemic system, each letter or letter combination signals only one distinctive sound. This facilitates ease of decoding and word recognition. This principle will come under considerable pressure from several sources, primarily historical precedent.

3. Pronunciation-Based Spellings. Spellings based on pronunciation rather than on presumed etymologies, especially where the latter are not well established, should be preferred.

4. Historical Precedent. Where well-established spellings are familiar and accepted, they will be maintained for reasons of ease and readability and acceptability, on the one hand, and cultural pride in tradition and emotional attachment, on the other. This is a crucial point in promoting acceptability by the general population.

5. Pedagogical Support. Given the opportunity and requirements for writing in TC in schools, spelling should support literacy in TC as a first language, and also in standard English as a second, aimed for a balance of ease of learning and teaching with fullness and accuracy of representation.

6. Readability. Readability should be maximized, primarily for TC speakers, and secondarily for English speakers, keeping in mind that much of the population is functionally literate in English and that the degree of English in the public environment, including the educational system, is extensive and unlikely to diminish.

7. Linguistic Independence. TC should be perceived as a legitimate language, different from, as well as similar to, English. (Winer 1990: 253)

The consequences that such criteria have for linguists are different, and often conflicting. The criterion of maximum representation of speech has particular consequences for the linguist, suggesting that the use of a phonemic writing system is the ideal. Winer's principle of linguistic independence is in a sense a natural progression from the concept of phonemic orthographies. In a situation such as that in Mauritius, where the vernacular is derived from, and coexists with, European languages, adherence to phonemic principles of standardization will necessarily create a

distance from these languages. This might suggest, therefore, that the phonemic principle is the ideal for orthographic standardization. However, principles such as historical precedent, readability and maximum transfer make clear the concept that standardization does not take place within a linguistic vacuum, and that the existence of European languages will necessarily have an effect on attempts at, and attitudes towards, writing creoles. In Mauritius these factors are themselves in conflict. The proximity of Mauritian Creole to French implies that the concept of maximum transfer is to be adhered to, it should be between the two languages. However, the importance of English, particularly within the school system, might suggest that this should be the transfer language. These two concepts, of phonemic ideals and the relation to European languages, therefore exemplify the conflict facing those who propose particular orthographies.

The consequences of standardization

The above discussion on the theoretical approaches to standardization, and the focus in the previous chapter on the issue of status, suggests that, regardless of the difficulties involved, the process of standardization is viewed as a primarily positive endeavour. This is not always the case, and antipathy to the issue of standardization of vernacular languages comes from a variety of sources, and not necessarily from those who view vernacular languages as dialects, and so unworthy of academic interest.

Perhaps surprisingly, opposition to standardization can sometimes come from those who are generally in favour of a wider role for the vernacular. There is the fear that standardization of the vernacular is tantamount to its stagnation, and eventual death. This is a concern expressed by Peter Mühlhäusler:

The role of literacy in vernacular education, the raising up of vernacular languages, has been ambivalent: in many instances languages were literally reduced (author's emphasis) to writing – the written form contains and confines the form of the language. (Mühlhäusler 1988: 54)

Jean Michel Charpentier (1997) suggests that the process of standardization effectively creates a state of competition and conflict between the vernacular and the Languages of Wider Communication. The vernacular is no longer in a position of diglossia, and so Charpentier argues, "the intimate, familial, and convivial nature of the spoken language" then disappears (1997: 229).

Similar concerns have been voiced in Mauritius, and again by those who are not in principle against the promotion of Mauritian Creole:

There are those who would go so far as to say that any attempt at standardization is bound to relegate the creole language to, for example, the limbo of lingering irrelevance. (Mahadeo 1984: 232)

This raises the difficulty, that along with the social and linguistic problems facing those wishing to devise an orthography for Mauritian Creole, which have been discussed in this and previous chapters, orthographic standardization is not always perceived as a solution to the need to improve the status of the vernacular, and to and widen its use.

A note on the phonology of Mauritian Creole

Before I examine the different orthographies for Mauritian Creole, it is necessary to present a brief outline of the phonology of the language. This is also vital in terms of which variant of the language is to be used for orthographic purposes. Again, the issue of who will make use of the orthography is important here. In her study of the debate over orthographic standardization of Quechua, Nancy Hornberger suggests the alternative audience for the more basilectal three vowels and the acrolectal five vowels:

The arguments raised in favor of and against the decision for three or five vowels suggests these implications. The choice for three vowels implies the rural monolingual Quechua speaker as primary target group and an autonomous, cross-regional, and cross-national community of Quechua readers and writers as goal; whereas the choice for five vowels implies the urban, bilingual Quechua-speaker as primary target group and communities of Quechua readers and writers linked perhaps more directly to the Spanish-speaking Andean world than to each other as goal. (Hornberger 1995: 202)

Where the vernacular is proposed as a medium of education, as is the case in Mauritius, it could be thought that the variant to be used is that spoken by those who will be the immediate recipients of such education, the

illiterate. However, Marie-Christine Hazaël-Massieux claims that such a policy could effectively stultify production of written creole:

Dans le domaine des créoles, il convient de prendre en compte la langue de ceux qui écrivent le créole, et pas seulement la variété parlée par les analphabètes, même si, dans la situation de diglossie qui est à peu près partout la règle dans le monde créole, la référence à la langue haute, le français ou l'anglais, selon le cas, est inévitable à des titres divers: il ne sert à rien de proposer aux scripteurs d'écrire comme parlent les paysans, voire de leur imposer un standard qu'ils récusent en raison de ses connotations sociologiques, si cela doit stériliser tout travail sur l'écriture, en l'absence de lecteurs comme d'auteurs. (Hazaël-Massieux 1993: 30)

Mauritian Creole is not considered to be in a situation of creole continuum (Romaine 1988: 160), and so presents fewer problems than other creole languages in this domain. Philip Baker (1972: 39) identifies four varieties of Mauritian Creole: 'Bhojpuri-influenced Kreol', 'French-influenced Kreol', 'Refined Kreol', and 'Ordinary Kreol'. While the first three varieties represent the particular origins and aspirations of the speakers, 'Ordinary Kreol' is distinguished as the variety "spoken in all egalitarian situations by people from homes in which all the residents always speak Kreol amongst themselves". It is this variety which formed the basis of Baker's study, and which is detailed below. The following tables are adapted from Baker and Hookoomsing (1987: 6).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Certain sounds are considered rare by Baker and Hookoomsing, notably /h/, /ɲ/, and /ɟ/. Consequently, in the table of phonemes that appears in the Baker/ Hookoomsing dictionary, these sounds are placed within brackets, and therefore do not feature in their orthography. As the purpose of this table is to represent the basic sounds of the language, as a precursor to investigating different efforts at orthographic standardization, I have chosen not to bracket these sounds.

Phonemes of Mauritian Creole

Mode of articulation	labial	dental	palatal	velar & glottal
Consonants				
stops	p b	t d		k g
fricatives	f v	s z		h ɣ
affricates			tʃ dʒ ⁵⁷	
nasals	m	n	ɲ	ŋ
approximants		l		
Vowels and glides				
	front		back	
	unrounded	rounded	unrounded	rounded
Glides	j			w
	closed	i		u
Oral	half-closed	e		o
Vowels	half-open			
	open	a		
Nasal vowels	ɛ̃		ã	õ

The consonants of Mauritian Creole are generally similar to those of French, although the French palatal fricatives /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ are replaced by the alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/. Other consonantal features of Mauritian Creole, such as the affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, represent the existence of loanwords from English and Indian languages. Similarly, another sound that derives from such loanwords is /h/. Another feature of Mauritian Creole is the simplification of glides. In his summary of the differences between the French and the Mauritian sound systems, Baker (1972: 64) states that the

⁵⁷ Baker and Hookoomsing (1987: 6) consider these sounds to be the palatal stops /ç/ and /ʒ/.

French front rounded glide /ɥ/ becomes /w/ when immediately followed by /i/, and /j/ when followed by /e/.

In Mauritian Creole there is an unrounding of French front vowels, resulting in the phoneme /e/ replacing the French vowels /œ/, and /ø/, and a reduction in the degree of aperture of the vowels /ɛ/ and /ɔ/. Although I have not included it in the table of vowels, the schwa also seems to be increasingly common in Mauritian Creole. Philip Baker (1972: 44) attests its increased use, particularly amongst those schooled in French.

Proposals for a standard

The question now remains in Mauritius, what is the current situation regarding writing Mauritian Creole, and with particular respect to the issue of establishing literacy in the vernacular, how do current writing systems reflect the needs of Mauritians?

Given the discussion on the supposed audience for the proposed orthographies for Mauritian Creole, it is important to analyse the orthographies that already exist, and in particular which audience they are devised for. What seems fundamental in the question of orthography is that, while there may be a possibility to combine both the needs and wishes of the three types of reader or writer of Mauritian Creole identified in chapter four, this seems to be increasingly difficult. Firstly, the question must be asked: is it really possible to provide a suitable orthography for those who are already literate in other languages, if it is generally shown that the majority of these people have very negative attitudes towards such an orthography? Secondly, if an orthography is devised particularly with the illiterate in mind, what sort of orthography is needed, and also given the negative attitudes towards writing Mauritian Creole, how will such an orthography compare with already established writing systems such as French and English?

There have been several attempts at devising a phonemic orthography for Mauritian Creole, some which have aroused academic interest. In his article on writing in Mauritian Creole, Didier de Robillard

(1989: 99) identified six orthographies that had been proposed since independence. These are the 1967 and 1988 Virahsawmy orthographies, Baker's orthographies from 1972 and 1979, the 1981 LPT orthography, and the lortograf linite, devised by Baker and Hookoomsing in 1987. A further development, which has taken place in the last few years, is the work of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Port Louis, in conjunction with Dev Virahsawmy. This orthography, which has been under consideration since the mid-1980s, and originally involved LPT as well as Dev Virahsawmy, was made public in May 1999 and represents a big move on the part of the Roman Catholic church in accepting the liturgical use of Mauritian Creole. Although it has yet to receive any academic attention, the importance of the Catholic Church as a force behind the orthography suggests that it may well prove to be an important factor in orthographic standardization.

As certain orthographies have evolved over time, I have decided to examine those which are the latest proposals of the linguists involved. The only exception to this is the Virahsawmy orthography, which, although it has now been replaced by the Catholic Church orthography, is still widely available in print, and so is still current. As a result the orthographies which I will be examining are the LPT orthography⁵⁸, devised in 1981, and elaborated in *How to Write Kreol Properly* (LPT circa 1989), Baker and Hookoomsing's (1987) *Lortograf-Linite*⁵⁹, Virahsawmy's 1988 orthography⁶⁰, elaborated in *Testaman enn Metchiss* (Virahsawmy 1999), and the Catholic Church orthography (Patel 1999)⁶¹.

⁵⁸ See appendix M.

⁵⁹ See appendix N.

⁶⁰ See appendix O.

⁶¹ See appendix P.

Orthographic proposals for Mauritian Creole

	LPT	Lortograf-Linite	Virahsawmy	Catholic Church
Consonants				
p	p	p	p	p
b	b	b	b	b
t	t	t	t	t
d	d	d	d	d
tʃ	ch	c	tch	ch
dʒ	j	j	dj	j
k	k	k	k ⁶²	k
g	g	g	g	g
f	f	f	f	f
v	v	v	v	v
s	s	s	s / ss ⁶³	s
z	z	z	z	z
h	h	⁶⁴	no example	h
ʀ	r	r	r	r
m	m	m	m	m
n	n	n	n	n
ɲ	yn	ny	gn	gn
ŋ	ng	ng	ng	ng
l	l	l	l	l
ks	ks / x	ks	x	x
gz	kz / x	gz	kz	no example

⁶² Virahsawmy uses 'k' in most situations. However, the phonemic sequence /kw/ is represented by 'qu' (cf. Virahsawmy 1999: 11).

⁶³ Virahsawmy uses 'ss' word-finally, and 's' in all other positions.

⁶⁴ As stated above, Baker and Hookoomsing consider /h/ to be rare in Mauritian Creole. As a result 'h' appears principally as a grapheme for the Bhojpuri phoneme /h/.

	LPT	Lortograf- Linite	Virahsawmy	Catholic Church
Vowels & glides				
j	y	y	y ⁶⁵ i	y i
w	w	w	w	w ⁶⁶ oi ou
i	i	i	i	i
u	u	u	ou	ou
e	e	e ⁶⁷	e / é ⁶⁸	e
o	o	o	o	o
a	a	a	a	a
ɛ̃	en / in	en/em ⁶⁹	en	in
ã	an	an/am	an	an
õ	on	on/om	on	on

Comment on orthographic proposals

William Smalley and Lise Winer's principles for standardization reinforce the social nature of orthographic standardization. As a result it is inevitable that the above proposals will be judged as much by social conventions as by linguistic conventions. All the orthographies share many features. However, there are certain differences which are worthy of note. One of the most interesting features of the Catholic Church orthography is the representation of /w/, particularly in word-internal positions. The use of 'oi' closely follows French conventions, resulting in *toi*, *noir*, *voir*, etc. A similar

⁶⁵ Virahsawmy and the Catholic Church orthography both have 'y' in syllable/ word initial and final positions, and 'i' in syllable-internal positions.

⁶⁶ In this orthography, 'w' appears in syllable/word-initial and final positions. In other positions it is written oi, as in *toi* (you), and ou, as in *koui* (cook).

⁶⁷ Although acknowledging it as rare, Baker and Hookoomsing suggest 'è' as a representation of the schwa.

⁶⁸ Virahsawmy uses 'é' word-finally, and 'e' in all other positions.

⁶⁹ The use of 'em' etc. reveals the underlying morphology.

adherence to French spelling can be seen in the use of 'ou', creating *boui*⁷⁰. However, this can also produce some peculiarities such as *koui* and *kouiv*.⁷¹ Another difficulty is that this also results in /w/ having the same graphic representation as /u/.

While the LPT orthography and the Church orthography adopt standard English and French spelling conventions of 'ch' and 'j' for the representation of the affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/, Baker and Hookoomsing, reflecting their opinion of these sounds as palatal stops, opt for 'c' and 'j'. As the letter 'c' exists in both English and French there is a possibility that students familiar or even partially familiar with these languages may confuse its use. Virahsawmy's proposal is particularly interesting as it reflects his view on the phonology of Mauritian Creole. Virahsawmy maintains that there is a distinction between /t/ and /d/, and /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ which is wider spread than that accepted by other linguists. While no one would argue with the distinction he makes between *tip* and *tchip*⁷², the distinction between *ti* and *tchi*⁷³ is less widely accepted. Examples of the use of 'd' and 'dj' might appear to be similarly contentious, with an example given of *djinamik*⁷⁴.

The nasal /ɲ/ is perhaps the next area of difference between the orthographies. Virahsawmy and the Church orthographies are most similar to standard French convention. Baker and Hookoomsing (1987: 7) do not consider /ɲ/ to have phonemic status in Mauritian Creole, and so this sound as a sequence of the phonemes /ny/. This has certain advantages in that it mirrors other spellings involving 'y', although when used word finally, it could be considered odd, as in *peny*⁷⁵. The LPT orthography effectively treats /ɲ/ as a separate phoneme and so does not establish any parity of spelling with other words involving 'y'. However, when used word finally it corresponds more with reader expectations.

⁷⁰ Boil/ boiled.

⁷¹ Cook; copper.

⁷² Tip and chip. Example in Virahsawmy 1999: 9)

⁷³ Golf tee and small/ little. Example in Virahsawmy 1999: 9)

⁷⁴ Dynamic. Example in Virahsawmy 1999: 11)

⁷⁵ Comb.

The representation of /ks/ and /gz/ more than any other area raises the conflict between linguistic independence and readability. In early LPT examples, and in the Baker/ Hookoomsing orthography, the spelling was based on pronunciation. It is striking, given LPT's rejection of the 'French imperialist strategy of "Francophonie"' (LPT circa 1989: preface), that since the orthography was first developed in the 1970s the representation of /ks/ and /gz/ has moved gradually away from the autonomist stance originally taken. As was stated above, in *Liv Profeser* the phonemes are written 'ks' and 'gz', in *eksepte* and *egzanp*⁷⁶. In 1985, in the LPT dictionary, a 'k' has replaced the 'g' giving *eksepte* and *ekzanp*, which is the spelling featured in the chart. By 1989 the situation had changed once again and x was adopted as the sole representation of both phonemes, thus the words would in this new orthography be written as *exepte* and *exanp*. However, in the literacy teachers' training course I attended in June 1997, the class was told that the 1985 (ks/ kz) orthography is considered the standard way to write the phonemes, although x is also acceptable. This seems to be particularly the case where the loan word is of English rather than French origin, as in *tax* and *taxi*. The exception to this general rule is where the /ks/ phoneme is followed by /k/, in the word *exklizyon*⁷⁷ for example. Virahsawmy's proposal is particularly interesting. For /ks/ he suggests the use of 'x', but for /gz/ he prefers 'kz'. This has the problem that it suggests two different spelling conventions.

Perhaps the area in which there has been most controversy is that of the representation of nasalized vowels and vowels followed by 'n'. The LPT, Virahsawmy, and Church orthographies use 'n' as the nasalizer of the preceding vowel, producing *endikasyon*, *otantik*⁷⁸, etc. The representation of a vowel followed by 'n' is 'nn', as in *dimunn*, *banann*⁷⁹, etc. This follows the same system proposed by Pressoir for Haitian Creole (Baker 1997: 119). Baker has been deeply critical of this particular solution. He states:

One morphophonemically undesirable feature of this is that wherever a verb stem ends in N in French (such as "donner") there are conflicting

⁷⁶ Except; example.

⁷⁷ (Social) exclusion.

⁷⁸ Indication; authentic.

⁷⁹ People/ person; banana.

short (DONN /don/) and long (DONE /done/) graphic forms. (author's emphasis) (Baker 1990: 68)

Baker's comments raise the issue of the conflict between phonological and morphological approaches to standardization:

According to Valdman earlier failures to normalize the written representation of creole forms is ultimately due to the confusion between a form of transcription referring to surface representation, and an orthography based on underlying form. This is the universal debate between the phonemic principle (one sound, one symbol), and the morphemic principle (a fixed form for each morpheme) (Appel and Verhoeven 1994: 67).

While Baker's objections are doubtless well-founded, this system has been almost universally adopted, and other orthographic solutions, including those devised by Baker, and in conjunction with Hookoomsing, have failed to gain any degree of public acceptance. Indeed, Stein and Kattenbusch point to the actual success of LPT in promoting this aspect of the orthography as a reason for its acceptance:

En effet, la solution qui semble l'emporter, c'est l'utilisation du /n/ aussi bien comme phonème que comme nasalisateur. Dans des positions équivoques, il est redoublé pour distinguer le phonème du signe diacritique.

The use of 'dots' as nasal markers in the Baker-Hookoomsing orthography is much more controversial as they have no precedent in the different spelling systems used in Mauritius. In an interview given in Mauritius to *Week End* (1998), Robert Chaudenson roundly, and inaccurately, denounced this system:

Pouquoi la graphie de Baker/Hookoomsing est mauvaise, c'est parce qu'ils écrivent les sons nasalisés avec un point sur le "e" et le "o" (*sic*). Je ne connais rien de plus étrange comme idée. On ne peut pas dactylographier, on ne peut pas mettre sur ordinateur: c'est vraiment fou de faire un tel système. A priori, je trouve que c'est un système mauvais parce qu'impracticable.

An interesting aside to this is a conversation I had with Vinesh Hookoomsing⁸⁰ in Mauritius about the orthographies. He stated that Philip Baker was the only with whom he communicated in *lortograf linite*, and, because of the difficulties presented by e-mail, the dots were omitted. Certainly, for the illiterate sector of the population it seems uncertain whether such a complex system, while undoubtedly having some linguistic

⁸⁰ Interview conducted at the University of Mauritius, 12th August 1997.

justification, is suitable as a basis for literacy tuition, and indeed the use of diacritics has generally been discouraged by other linguists.

Attitudes towards phonemic orthographies

Much of the above discussion has focused on linguistic attitudes towards the different orthographies. However, as Smalley and Winer make clear, the issue of standardization is as much to do with social acceptability as phonemic representation. Within the Mauritian press there is considerable evidence of antipathy towards phonemic orthographies. A fairly standard opinion is that Creole should not be written, and if it is, it should be written according to established French conventions. This is an opinion expressed by Jacques Lee:

The majority of Mauritians are against formalizing Creole into a written language with rules and see it as a retrograde step. They have no sympathy for the minority who want to turn a language which is 75% French into something as different to it as possible, such as replacing the letter 'c' into 'k', 'l' into 'y' and 'h' into 'e'. (Lee 1999: 116)

What appears to be the difficulty as regards Mauritian Creole is that people expect it to resemble French, a fact which Goswami Sewtohul, a local writer and ex-Chief Inspector of primary schools, made clear in an interview in July 1997:

Depuis la scolarité, les yeux de l'enfant sont habitués à l'orthographe française. Il est à mon avis plus simple d'écrire le créole comme je l'ai écrit [etymological]. Je suis totalement contre la graphie de LPT et de Dev Veerasawmy (*sic*). Pour la lire il faut commencer un apprentissage de leur orthographe (Quirn 1997: 43)

This attitude is not limited to efforts at writing Mauritian Creole. In her book on teaching St. Lucian Kwéyòl in London, Hubisi Nwenmely cites a similar attitude towards the use of a phonemic writing system for the language, and from a very influential source:

I have a thing about Kwéyòl which has to do with the orthography. I do not like the spelling that is used. I think as a writer, actually writing a word out. I do not want to write like a child - phonetic philology infuriates me because there is an elegance in letters, not only in words and creole is an elegant language. I do not think the orthography does justice to the elegance of Kwéyòl. If you want to write the word *de l'eau* which they might write *dlo* to me that's barbarous. So I don't want to write *dlo* and have a poem that looks like graffiti, almost. (in Nwenmely 1996: 79)

Research conducted by Vinesh Hookoomsing (1987: 229) in the 1980s revealed that the majority of informants similarly found standardized orthographies difficult to read. In his survey he asked what level of difficulty informants experienced when reading the orthographies: 'beaucoup', 'un peu', or 'pas de tout'. 33.6% of the informants experienced a lot of difficulty, while a further 45.8% had some difficulty. Only 20.6% experienced no difficulty at all.

The above discussion compares ease of reading in Mauritian Creole to that in French, and consequently its relevance is restricted to those who are already literate. However, it must be borne in mind that not basis of LPT's work in particular is with those who are following courses in literacy. As a result the benefits of the etymological approach are irrelevant for those who are illiterate in European languages. This is a point made by Mark Sebba on the situation regarding Jamaican Creole:

The etymological approach would not have any advantage for a reader who did not already know how to read Standard English. It would, in fact, have substantial drawbacks: the spelling of Standard English notoriously lags centuries behind pronunciation, and besides was designed for English, not Creole. Many Creole words do not have conventional spellings in standard English, because they exist in Creole only. (Sebba 1997: 245)

There are also important psychological consequences of the choice between etymological and phonemic approaches to standardization. Where literacy in the vernacular is perceived as an important factor not just in educating speakers of Mauritian Creole, but in endowing them with a sense of pride in their language, the use of an etymological orthography can reinforce negative attitudes towards the vernacular, and consequently impede acquisition of literacy in the language:

If the aim were to teach literacy in creole as a stepping-stone to French, such spellings would no doubt have the effect of familiarizing pupils early with some of the odder aspects of French orthography...., but in offering them orthographic solutions not demanded by the phonology of their own language, such a policy would risk instilling in them the view of the elite in their society that creole is but a substandard form of French, and this would not encourage literature in creole to flourish. (Baker 1991: 111)

In support of this statement, Katherine Fischer found that the use of a phonemic orthography in Creole language literacy classes in the United

States had a marked and positive effect on student attitudes towards the language.

The use of a standardized orthography not based on English spelling conventions has a marked impact on the students' (and staff's and parents') ability to comprehend that Creole and English are separate languages. Many students have become quite enthusiastic about it, and their sense of respect for Creole visibly grows. (Fischer 1992: 108)

This again comes down to the issue that it is the purpose of the orthography that is important, and that if this purpose is literacy, then other factors may have to take second place. This is a point made by Hubisi Nwenmely, who states that 'when devising orthographies for oral languages, then, as much consideration is given to the purpose and end product as to the form and style'. (Nwenmely 1996: 72) In the light of this comment it is interesting that LPT and the Catholic Church are the only two forces behind orthography proposals who have made explicit the link between orthographic standardization and the educational use to which it will be put.

A comparison with popular and literary forms of written Creole

This discussion suggests a conflict between informal and formal models of written Creole. In order to assess whether this is the case, it is necessary to examine to what extent informal spelling conventions both affect and are affected by the orthographic proposals examined above.

As the previous chapter suggested, many informal attempts at writing Mauritian Creole follow French spelling conventions. The most notable difference between the examples cited in the previous chapter and the orthographic proposals is the use of diacritics, in particular acute and grave accents. Perhaps surprisingly, however, this is not a universal feature, and roughly half the examples do not contain diacritics. Of more interest is the use of 'ou', which is found in many of the informal texts. Although Baker (1997: 120) states that it has never been used in phonemic orthographies for Mauritian Creole, it is a sign of its widespread nature that it is incorporated into the Church orthography.

Other features of written Creole are shared by the informal and academic orthographies. The use of 's' and 'z' as a representation of Mauritian pronunciation is widely accepted, and 'k' is also fairly common. The most obvious shared feature, despite Baker's misgivings, is the use of 'nn', and seems to be the main example of a device used in academic orthographies being transferred to informal writing.

What this suggests is that although there are still certain differences between formal and informal attempts at writing Mauritian Creole, there is some degree of convergence between the two. The widespread use of the 'nn' might suggest that the convergence is entirely in the direction of the formal orthographies. However, there is evidence that linguists and educational groups proposing phonemic orthographies are often aware of the need to reconcile the autonomous principles of standardization with public attitudes towards writing in the vernacular. This is an issue raised by Eugene Nida, who in the symbolically titled 'Practical limitations to a phonemic alphabet', suggests ways in which adjustments to a culturally dominant form of writing, in this case French, can be made:

- 1) the use of symbols with the same values, using French 'u' in French-speaking areas of the world with the same value as French assigns to the symbol.
- 2) the same types of letters, using French accents for various qualities of vowels, rather than using letters such as 'e' and 'o'.
- 3) the spelling of recent borrowings in the manner which follows the dominant language. (Nida 1964: 28)

This modification of a phonemic orthography to prevailing norms of writing is something that those proposing orthographies for Mauritian Creole are very aware of. In an article published after the launch of the Catholic Church orthography, the priests involved described their proposal as "à mi-chemin entre la phonétique et la pratique courante de l'écriture, donc de l'environnement graphique" (Patel 1999). Such an approach can be seen in particular in the representation of vowels and glides in the Church orthography, although this modification does not extend to the inclusion of diacritics. The gradual inclusion of 'x' into the LPT orthography is another demonstration of how a hard-line autonomous approach to orthographic standardization can, and, it might even be argued, must occasionally give way to such considerations as acceptability and ease of transfer.

What this demonstrates is that while there may appear to be some antipathy towards the standardized orthographies, actual usage within popular and literary texts, suggests that Mauritians are willing to accept and use some phonemic models of spelling. This seems to confirm Hookoomsing's belief that the multilingual nature of Mauritius, and the consequent awareness amongst Mauritians of different writing systems, would eventually counter any initial difficulties experienced in reading standardized orthographies:

Il est vrai que par rapport aux habitudes orthographiques acquises, les graphies standardisées demandent des réajustements d'ordre technique et psychologique. Mais il ne faut pas oublier que le contexte mauricien, par son multilinguisme, rend plus aisée la relativisation des rapports graphèmes-phonèmes. L'apprentissage très tôt de deux systèmes différenciés, anglais et français, et...langues orientales,...(nous semble) favoriser une flexibilité de compétence et, pourtant, une 'conscience orthographique plus sophistiquée' (Hookoomsing 1987: 231)

From theory to practice

Despite similarities between formal and informal attempts at writing Mauritian Creole, those proposing phonemic orthographies are aware of the need to present the orthography to the speakers of the vernacular. This is an issue raised by Lise Winer:

Devonish has proposed that the phonemic writing system devised by Cassidy be used for the representation of all English-lexicon Creoles in the Caribbean: "transforming what is basically a linguist's writing system into a set of writing conventions which could be taught to and be used by the Creole speaking populations at large". (Winer 1990: 254)

While in theory this may seem an appropriate way of establishing a usable writing system for the purposes of literacy tuition, in practice the transition from 'linguist's writing system' to a usable orthography has been much more problematic. Ironically, it is Cassidy who points out the very problem of many academic orthographies, that they fail to gain any degree of use within the public domain and therefore remain academic:

However, I know of no movement in the Caribbean to set up for creole speakers' general or popular use a system other than that of standard British English. Accordingly, this Jamaican Creole system, however good, and though it would be quite usable as an "autonomous orthography," remains in only academic use. (Cassidy 1993:135)

Certainly in Mauritius, while in theory there have been at least six orthographies, only three, those of Virahsawmy and that of LPT, have ever appeared in written form beyond the original document in which they were presented⁸¹. Most notable amongst these is the Baker-Hookoomsing orthography, which, although in its inception is devised for both Mauritian Creole and Bhojpuri, and so might in theory be a very good method of promoting literacy in these languages, appears, to my knowledge, in written form only in the introduction to the dictionary in which it is presented. As a result it has remained, in Winer's terminology, a 'linguist's writing system', inaccessible to the Mauritian public in general.

In Mauritius, there certainly appears to be a correlation between the publication of the orthography in different formats and the greater recognition and acceptance of that orthography. What this suggests is that the original establishment of an orthography is just one stage in the process of actually writing the language, and that in order for an orthography to be applicable to the needs of those who will write it, it needs to be publicized. This is also fundamental if the orthography is to be seen as practical for daily use, and that those who are literate in it are not simply taught an unused and unusable writing system. Thus it is necessary for linguists who devise an orthography to consider how it will be promoted beyond its initial inception. If the orthography is to be of use, it is not enough for them simply to think how a language is transcribed, but how it will be written and published.

Of all those who have proposed orthographies for Mauritian Creole, it is undoubtedly LPT who have done most to promote their orthography, both for use in literacy classes, and for literary production. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, the LPT orthography is found in a wide range of publications in Mauritian Creole, and aimed at people of different ages and levels of education.

⁸¹ This figure does not include the Catholic Church orthography as, only a year after its launch, it is perhaps too early to assess how often it will be used in publications. I have, however, been told that Dev Virahsawmy is currently working on material in the new orthography, and, given his previous publication record, it is probable that publications will appear within the next year.

Towards consensus and standardization

What does this examination of the orthographies for Mauritian Creole, and attempts to promote them, reveal of the current state of the standardization of the language? Perhaps what is most apparent about the phonemic orthographies is that, despite the various differences between them, certain features, such as the omission of diacritics and the use of n/nn as nasal markers are now near universal. This suggests that there is now considerable agreement on the codification of Mauritian Creole. An examination of the orthographies used in informal attempts at writing Mauritian Creole similarly suggests that although etymological orthographies still predominate, phonemic spellings are becoming more widely accepted. It is also apparent that those proposing orthographies are in their turn aware of public opinion, and, as was seen earlier in the chapter, have adapted these orthographies to conform to reader expectation.

This implies that the conflict between the phonemic and etymological approaches to written creole, such as that described by Prudent (*op.cit.*) in Martinique, no longer exists to the same extent in Mauritius. In his study of creole writing systems, John Green identifies a middle approach, that of the 'cautious pragmatists' (1988: 440). In Mauritius this 'cautious pragmatism' seems largely to be the result of a gradual convergence between the phonemic and etymological approaches.

Does this suggest that Mauritian Creole is approaching consensus and standardization? An article, which was published in *Le Mauricien* (Toussaint 1998) in March 1998, implied that there was indeed a move towards 'une graphie consensuelle.' Central to this were the discussions between the Catholic Church, Dev Virahsawmy and LPT on a standardized orthography. As more recent events have shown, this collaboration has broken down, and the Church orthography now exists as a possible rival for an eventual standard. Whether this can be considered a retrograde step is unclear. An agreement on a single orthography would no doubt have precipitated standardization. However, the Church orthography still represents a considerable step towards consensus.

Summary

This chapter has sought to examine the issues relating to the standardization of Mauritian Creole. I have attempted to demonstrate that there are conflicting social, linguistic and educational factors which have inevitable implications for the acceptance of orthographic proposals. I have also shown that, despite these difficulties, there is increasing acceptance of Mauritian Creole as a written language, and consensus on orthographic standardization.

In the next chapter I will investigate the work of LPT to demonstrate how they have approached the different issues of the literization of the vernacular. The work of LPT unites the two often separately considered processes of language standardization and literacy teaching. LPT has not simply devised an orthography to be used for a literacy course, and which has then been transferred to other more general uses, but the very way in which their orthography is taught is inseparable from their approach to literacy. It is this linking that will be the focus of chapter seven, and will show at least in part how standardization can be better achieved if the needs of the speakers of the vernacular are taken into account.

Chapter Six

The literization of the vernacular in context: Ledikasyon pu Travayer

Introduction

In the preceding chapters I have portrayed the particular context of Mauritius, and how the promotion of Mauritian Creole has variously reflected ideological, educational and sociocultural issues. The purpose of this chapter is to show the issues raised by the literization of the vernacular within one framework and to examine the role of the main group promoting Mauritian Creole, Ledikasyon pu Travayer.

Drawing on my fieldwork, I intend to show that the work of the group is very much influenced by the political, educational and sociocultural realities of the Mauritian situation. They have developed a global approach towards the concept of the literization of the vernacular, and have in their work attempted to unite the different ideological, educational and sociocultural issues involved in the process. As a result they have managed not just to establish a standardized orthography for the language but a system of writing which takes at its basis the practical need to overcome illiteracy. In this they have attempted to provide an orthography which is above all practical and in its very essence is devised for the people who use it.

Ledikasyon pu Travayer: history and ideology

The history of Ledikasyon pu Travayer can be traced back to the student demonstrations that took place in Mauritius in May 1975 to campaign against the unequal education system on the island, and which led directly to the introduction of free secondary education in Mauritius and saw the age of voting reduced to eighteen. This period in Mauritian history witnessed the

formation of a number of Students' and Trade Union organizations. It is perhaps for this reason that much of the initial emphasis of the work of LPT was not necessarily on Creole as a possible national language, as promoted by Virahsawmy, but rather on Creole, and also Bhojpuri, as the language of the working classes. The motivation for the work of LPT, however, can be traced to the high illiteracy rates that LPT identified in Mauritius (LPT 1981: 7). It was as a result of these illiteracy rates that LPT established basic literacy classes. The association between literacy provision and the general promotion of Mauritian Creole began partly as a result of the lack of material in the language for these literacy classes. The group began hand-producing stories and poems, and in 1979 they established a printing press. By 1981, the group was firmly established in its objectives, as laid out in *Liv Profeser*.

- 1) Pu fer ledikasyon adilt, sirtu alfabetizasyon parmi lamas dans klas travayer.
- 2) Etan done ki pa kapav ena ledikasyon 'inparsyal', LPT dan so metod (konsyantizasyon) e konteni kur pu donn kudme liber lamas travayer, e donn klas travayer zutl pu liber limem.
- 3) Pu promuvwar langaz kreol e Bhojpuri dan Moris e dan lemond partu kot sa bann langaz-la res oprime.
- 4) Pu promuvwar kiltir lamas oprime.
- 5) Pu devlop lyin ant LPT e lezot lorganizasyon dan Moris ek leksteryer ki partaz nu bi ubyin nu vizyon.
- 6) Pu zame kile divan konfrontasyon avek opreser. (LPT 1981: 3)⁸²

At the National Seminar on the Language Issue in Mauritius in 1982, LPT explained further the motivation of the language choice, and related it directly to political issues:

Literacy in Kreol was LPT's conscious choice. It was a political choice to be on the side of the oppressed... We try through our methods themselves to make a contribution to the struggle for the liberation of the working class and to give the working class an additional tool to use in its fight for liberation: the ability to write and to read. (Kistnasamy et al 1984: 257)

⁸² 1) To provide education, particularly literacy skills, to the working classes.
 2) Given that impartial education is not possible, LPT uses its method of 'conscientization' and course content to help liberate the working classes, and to give them the means to liberate themselves.
 3) To promote Creole and Bhojpuri in Mauritius and in the world, wherever they remain oppressed.
 4) To promote the culture of the oppressed masses.
 5) To develop a link between LPT and the other organizations in Mauritius and beyond which share our vision and aims.
 6) Never to bow down from confrontation with the oppressor.

This association of education in the vernacular with wider political motivations is not limited to the situation in Mauritius. Marlis Hellinger describes a similar language policy in the Caribbean:

Characteristically, in a community that offers literacy only in the standard language, attempts at writing a creole are linked to emancipatory political movements involving the socially disadvantaged sections of the community, which most frequently represent the majority of the population (Hellinger 1986: 55)

As was stated earlier in the thesis, *Ledikasyon pu Travayer* is still seen as a primarily left-wing organization. However, it seems that nowadays, although the education of workers is still a priority, the use of Mauritian Creole is so widespread that their work on the promotion of Creole is now as much towards its role as a fully developed *national* language, than as a language of the working classes. Since LPT began publishing in 1979 they have continued to publish their own books, and also those of other authors writing in Creole. Since 1987 they have also organized literary competitions in Creole and 1996 saw the first regional competition of Creole literature. Within the scope of their political work LPT also run courses in political philosophy. They have maintained links with trade unions and workers organizations, and in 1996 participated in the foundation of an umbrella trade union movement, the All Workers' Conference.

Literacy provision in Mauritian Creole

LPT estimates that around 100 students per year follow their literacy courses in Mauritian Creole, which is very much in line with the findings of a 1993 Ministry of Education and Science/UNICEF report. Where and at what time of year the courses take place, and the numbers on each course depends very much on the level of demand. In 1996, for example, Mauritius Telecom asked for a course to be taught to twenty male workers in the Port Louis area; while a course is currently being run, also by request, in St Pierre, on the east coast of Mauritius, for four women. The majority of courses, however, take place at LPT's headquarters in Grand River, near Port Louis.

During my fieldwork year, there were two course sessions run by LPT, the first beginning in October 1996 and extending into May of 1997, and the second which began in July 1997. Of the sixty-nine students who had either just finished or just started courses in that year, the vast majority were women (55 women; 14 men), which is in line with general findings on the gender of literacy students. However, it must also be said that the ratio between men and women varies every year. In the year before my research, in 1996, the majority of literacy students were men (47 men: 8 women), and in the year 2000 I was told that men were again in the majority. This variance in the proportion of male to female students is possibly reflective of the fact that girls now have equal access to education in Mauritius, and so do not necessarily constitute the majority of literacy students (cf. Brooks 2000).

On my return to Mauritius in January 2000, I discovered the situation at LPT to have changed somewhat. The group is now increasing its commitment to teacher training, and in the last year has held three training courses in community centres in Port Louis and Quatre Bornes, and also for a Buddhist group. These courses are held with the intention that teachers should then establish literacy classes in their own communities. As a result the number of students who now come directly to LPT in Port Louis has been reduced to about fifty a year, although LPT still continue to provide literacy classes in St Pierre.

When LPT first began its literacy courses men and women worked together in the same class, but it was discovered that male students would leave before completing the literacy course. When the problem was investigated, it was realized that the men felt uncomfortable taking literacy classes with women, perhaps not wishing to publicly acknowledge their own illiteracy. Once this policy of mixed classes was changed, however, the number of men completing the literacy course increased. In the new classes that were due to start in February 2000, it had been decided once again to introduce mixed classes. This is a reflection of the changing nature of Mauritian society where men and women now mix much more freely, particularly at work.

The age of literacy students varies considerably. Of those students who followed or began courses in 1997, the youngest was seventeen and

the oldest was sixty. There has, however, been a noticeable change in the age of students coming to literacy classes since they began in the late 1970s. At that time the majority of students were older, in their fifties and sixties, and had not benefited from the introduction of universal primary education in the 1940s. Now, fifty years after this measure, and twenty years after the introduction of free secondary education, there are a considerable number of younger people, in their twenties, thirties and forties, who attend literacy classes. As the vast majority of the students at LPT have been through primary education, and failed the CPE at the end of the primary cycle, it is fair to say that they constitute the failing 25% of the school population identified in study of out-of-school education (Ministry of Education and Science/UNICEF 1993). A recent development at LPT confirms this perception of the increasing youth of students taking literacy classes. In 1999 they began for the first time to provide literacy classes for teenage students, a move that it is to be repeated again in 2000.

As LPT is still very much occupied with the Trade Union movement, many of the students on the course find out about LPT through their Union or place of work. In 1997 for example, 25 students, both men and women, were given time off by their company, Food Canners Ltd., to attend literacy classes. LPT has also on two occasions been invited into the work place by the employer, in the case of Mauritius Telecom, and a messenger firm in Port Louis. The majority of workers, however, come to classes during their free time and at their own expense. When LPT holds a course outside the Port Louis area, potential students are contacted through posters, in the hope that a family member or friend will tell them about the course, or occasionally are targeted by radio advertisements.

Adult literacy in the vernacular

The previous chapters have demonstrated that the question of the use of vernacular languages in the education system is highly contentious. Although as will be seen later attitudes towards the work of LPT are often critical, there is some evidence that the issue of vernacular languages in

adult education is less contentious than in mainstream education. This is a point made by Ayo Bamgbose in his study of adult education in West Africa:

The only area in which the use of the mother tongue in education has come to be accepted by many countries is in the realm of adult education. Even those countries with a policy of not allowing the use of the mother tongue in the school system often recognize that eradication of illiteracy is best tackled through a literacy programme based on the mother tongue. (Bamgbose 1976: 20)

Bamgbose's comments are supported by the findings of other studies in West Africa where the provision of literacy in the vernacular was primarily within the field of adult education (cf. Burmeister 1987: 19). Similarly, in Mauritius, despite official and public ambivalence towards the use of Mauritian Creole in schools, LPT's efforts within adult education have been recognized and applauded by the Ministry of Education. Such a contradiction is the result of a lack of official policy in the domain of adult education, which leaves the choice of the medium of education to literacy providers. It also enables the government to tolerate literacy provision in the vernacular while at the same time maintaining a different policy for mainstream education.

It has also been suggested by Makhan Tickoo (1995: 326), in his study of literacy in Kashmir, that "the problems of becoming literate and numerate through a foreign medium get greatly aggravated in the case of adults." In Mauritius where the vast majority of students seeking literacy tuition have had access to, and have essentially been failed by, education in Languages of Wider Communication, this suggests that adult education should be discussed separately to the issue of language use in schools.

Although the chapter on educational issues explored the question of vernacular literacy in general terms, the focus of the work of LPT means that this chapter will centre on the provision of adult education.

The concept of literacy

The history of LPT places it within the particular context of the educational difficulties and social upheavals of the 1970s, and the provision of literacy tuition is still central to their work. However, as has already been

hinted, the concept of literacy carries with it much symbolic value. It is necessary, therefore, to evaluate what is meant and perceived by the term literacy, and to examine the work of LPT within the context of these perceptions.

The definition of the term literacy is fraught with difficulties, and, as was made clear in chapter three, traditional means of evaluating literacy attainment, such as levels of school attendance and census results, have often been criticized as failing to account fully for the level of literacy in a particular country. It is also what is implied by the term literacy that has been the subject of much debate, and automatically affects attitudes towards literacy and education, and consequently efforts to provide that education.

In Western countries literacy is often seen in an almost entirely positive light, a sign of education and social standing, and something which we should all seek to attain. This is what is known as the 'autonomous' model of literacy, which "assumes a single direction in which literacy development can be traced, and associates it with 'progress', 'civilization', individual liberty, and social mobility" Street 1995: 29). Colin Lankshear, confirming this view, states that:

Educationalists and lay persons alike are often inclined to think of literacy as something people either have or lack. Those who lack it are assumed to need it, and ought to acquire it (Lankshear 1989: 39).

The effect that these traditional interpretations of literacy have had on both the conception of the illiterate and the implementation of literacy itself have been striking. James Williams and Grace Capizzi Spinner cite Jonathan Kozol's *Illiterate America* as an example of the propagation of the perception of illiteracy as " a personal tragedy linked with shame and lost social and financial opportunities" (Williams and Capizzi Spinner 1990: 5). Limage also places responsibility for heightening such perceptions at the hands of the media:

[N]ewspapers and television dwell upon the individual testimonial, the individual shame, and convey an image which likens the illiterate adult to someone with an affliction such as alcoholism (Limage 1993: 24)

In Mauritius, the portrayal of the burden of being illiterate, and the consequent enlightenment of literacy, is much in evidence in the national press. *Le Mauricien Pluriel* (Chateau 1994) published a report on literacy

simply entitled 'Lire ou périr', and a particularly interesting example is an article which appeared in *La Vie Catholique* (Lajoie 1990), at Easter 1990. The title itself, 'Alphabétisation: du black-out à la "résurrection"' is a deliberate reflection of the Easter message, and the act of becoming literate therefore becomes associated with religious rebirth.

As a result of the symbolic value placed on literacy it is not surprising that the provision of literacy is seen as a particularly important issue. As was discussed in chapter three, in Mauritius and many other former colonies, the acquisition of basic skills is almost uniquely associated with Languages of Wider Communication. As these languages are considered to provide access to work and education, this only accentuates the association, and therefore devalues attempts to provide literacy in the vernacular. According to Pat Ndukwe, it is this very high regard that people have for the concept of literacy that stands in the way of efforts to provide vernacular language education:

On the whole, the development of literacy in the mother-tongue faces an uphill task due in part, and ironically, to the mystique that still attaches to literacy... (Ndukwe 1988: 152)

The educational approach of LPT

The educational approach of LPT was developed through one-to-one classes with the first students who came to acquire literacy. From these first students, and from experience gained by Lindsay Collen, who had conducted literacy work in London, an educational philosophy was developed. Beyond practical experience gained through teaching, LPT's approach was also informed by the works of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and the French teacher Celestin Freinet. As will be shown later in the chapter, their educational philosophy and its practical application have had an important influence on both the teaching content and style of LPT literacy classes.

In the literacy teachers' course I attended in June 1997 LPT presented two possible approaches to education:

- 1) Ledikasyon li enn fason antrenn dimunn, ubyin abitye dimunn, pu adapte a sosyete aktyel, isi zelev a se pasif

2) Ledikasyon li enn mwayen pu partisip dan kreasyon enn nuvo sosyete; isi zelev aktif (LPT 1981: 77).⁸³

This contrast between the two approaches is demonstrative of the conflict that exists between what the group perceives as traditional concepts of education, notably functional literacy, and the approach taken by LPT. Functional literacy has been a feature of approaches to literacy since the Second World War. It arose as a result of the difficulty, discussed in chapter three, of determining what skill level is required to determine a person as literate. Experience during the war, when the U.S. Government was forced to acknowledge that almost half a million men, otherwise fit for active service, had been deferred because they were "incapable of following the kinds of written instructions that are needed for carrying out basic military functions or tasks" (Levine 1986: 26), indicated that the basic definition offered by UNESCO, that "(a) person who is literate can, with understanding read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life" (Ministry of Education and Science/UNICEF 1993: 2), was no longer apt. This led to the recognition that what was required was "a level of literacy less rudimentary than the capacity to provide a signature and read a simple message, but less than full fluency" (Levine 1986: 26).

Precisely what is meant by functional literacy has varied greatly over the fifty years during which the term has been used. For Williams and Capizzi-Spinner, this concept of literacy denotes functionality in its most basic sense:

Functional literacy is often used to denote the ability to read and write well enough to understand signs, read newspaper headlines, fill out job applications, make shopping lists, and write checks (Williams and Capizzi-Spinner 1990: 4).

This view of functional literacy is also shared at governmental level, as shown by this definition from the U.S. National Reading Center:

A person is functionally literate when he has command of reading skills that permit him to go about his daily activities successfully...., or to move about society normally with comprehension of the usual printed expressions and messages he encounters... (Lankshear and Lawler 1989: 62).

⁸³ 1) Education is a way of training someone to adapt to present day society. In this the student is passive.

2) Education is a means of participating in the creation of a new society. In this the student is active.

It is this definition of literacy, which portrays the functionally literate person as complying with the requirements of society, which is the cause of LPT's criticism. This view of such education is shared by Lankshear and Lawler, who assert that:

To be functionally literate in this sense comprises a minimal, essentially negative, and passive state. The functionally literate person can at best cope with their world (*Ibid.* 1989: 64).

The second definition of education rejects the notion of the passivity of the student, which in Freirean terms is associated with the banking⁸⁴ system of education, and regards the student as an active participant in the education process. It is this definition that LPT accepts. In this LPT owes much to the work of Paulo Freire, who saw education as a way for workers to question their situation. Freire described his literacy programme in the following way:

From the beginning, we rejected the hypothesis of a purely mechanistic literacy program and considered the problem of teaching adults how to read in relation to the awakening of their consciousness. We wished to design a project in which we would attempt to move from naïveté to a critical attitude at the same time we taught reading. We wanted a literacy program which would be an introduction to the democratization of culture, a program with men as its subjects rather than patient recipients, a program which itself would be an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts, one in which students would develop the impatience and vivacity which characterize search and invention. (Freire 1976: 43)

Freire uses the Portuguese word, 'conscientização' to describe this approach. Verhoeven refers to the 'conscientization approach', which is evidently a direct translation, and describes it as follows:

Through a process of questioning the existing socio-political status quo literacy education becomes a means of social reorganization and/or political change. (Verhoeven 1994: 18).

Other authors have, however, opted for different terms for the approach taken by Freire, for example the 'psycho-social method' (cf. Haussman and Haar 1978), and 'critical literacy' (cf. Williams and Capizzi-Spinner 1990: 10).

⁸⁴ 'In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing...' Freire 1972b: 46)

Freire and language

Central to the work of LPT is the association between the language of literacy and the educational approach that they use in their literacy work. Literacy is intimately associated with broader political and linguistic issues, as David Barton makes clear:

It is also necessary to add literacy as a language issue, to emphasise that every literacy programme in the world, every literacy initiative, every government statement, every act by an aid agency has behind it a theory of language and also a theory about literacy. (Barton 1994: 3)

The question of language is fundamental to the Freirean approach, as was stated in the introduction to Freire and Macedo's *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*:

For Freire, language and power are inextricably intertwined and provide a fundamental dimension of human agency and social transformation. Language, as Freire defined it, plays an active role in constructing experience and in organizing and legitimating the social practices available to various groups in society. (Freire and Macedo 1987: 8)

In Mauritius, this connection between language, literacy and the emancipatory purpose of education, has been at the heart of the work of LPT. It is perhaps ironic that this link has not always been upheld by other groups seeking to provide a Freirean-based education. Devonish, referring to the work of the St. Lucian Folk Research Centre in 1975, states:

As a result, the insistence of the personnel of the Folk Research Centre on using English in the literacy classes to the exclusion of Creole, created a serious contradiction within a literacy programme which was committed to the idea of allowing the mass of the population to 'speak their own word'. (Devonish 1986: 75)

Devonish places the responsibility for this contradiction on Freire, who although adamant as to the importance of language in literacy, was less forthcoming as to the actual language used (Devonish 1986: 75). Although in *Pedagogy in process: The letters to Guinea-Bissau*, Freire supports the 'regulation' of Creole as a written language (Freire 1978: 127), Devonish's claim implies that he has not made explicit the value of the use of vernacular languages over former colonial language in Freirean literacy. This would seem to be a fundamental difficulty in the Freirean approach, and one which Freire finally addressed in the 1987 book, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (Freire and Macedo 1987).

Educators must develop radical pedagogical structures that provide students with the opportunity to use their own reality as a basis of literacy. This includes, obviously, the language they bring to the classroom. To do otherwise is to deny students the rights that lie at the core of the notion of an emancipatory literacy. The failure to base a literacy program on the native language means that oppositional forces can neutralize the efforts of educators and political leaders to achieve decolonization of mind.....In this sense, the students' language is the only means by which they can develop their own voice, a prerequisite to the development of a positive sense of self-worth. (Freire and Macedo 1987: 15)

This was also found to be the case in Archer and Costello's study of emancipatory literacy in South America:

By teaching in indigenous languages it was possible for dialogue to take place in classes. This had been impossible in all previous adult-education programmes in Bolivia because all teaching had been in Spanish, making participation difficult for people for whom Spanish was a second language. (Archer and Costello 1990: 161)

Motivations for literacy

It seems that in many academic texts on literacy programmes, one fundamental question is often left out: why someone decides to become literate. This omission appears to be related to the traditional belief in the social and economic benefits that a newly literate person would automatically gain. Alan Rogers, in his study, *Adults Learning for Development*, makes this point clear:

Adult education....is seen by many in the Third World as a bridge between the desires of some to achieve a higher income and social status on the one hand and the developmental goals of the government [on the other]. (Rogers 1992: 72)

In recent years, particularly following the work of Brian Street, there has been a reassessment of the 'autonomous' model of literacy. This 'ideological' approach to literacy rejects the view, portrayed above, of literacy as a one-way process which results in the literate person becoming a fuller human being:

The new ethnographies of literacy tell us that people can lead full lives without the kinds of literacy assumed in educational and other circles. The reconceptualization of literacy suggested there involves moving away from the dominant view of literacy as having distinctive 'autonomous' characteristics associated intrinsically with schooling and

pedagogy. It also entails a shift away from the characterization of the literate person as intrinsically civilized, detached, logical, and so on in contrast with 'illiterates' or those who communicate mainly through oral channels. (Street 1995: 124)

Street's re-evaluation of literacy breaks the assumption that there is an inevitable relation between reading difficulties and a feeling of social inadequacy, as often portrayed in the past:

Research findings on the use of literacy in varying social contexts have also shown that a low level of literacy does not necessarily lead to problems related to the demands of the social environment (Verhoeven 1994: 13).

Williams and Capizzi Spinner also refer to what might be termed 'coping techniques' that an illiterate person adopts in order to deal with the immediate necessity of reading or writing. They state,

Our work with adult illiterates suggests that when they find themselves in situations that require reading and writing, one of three things usually occurs: they remove themselves from the situation; they admit to being illiterate and ask a literate person, say a friend, a clerk, or a secretary, to perform the task for them; or they adopt a strategy that allows them to circumvent the immediate demand [e.g. claiming to have forgotten their glasses] (Williams and Capizzi Spinner 1990: 5).

In Mauritius such coping techniques are much in evidence. It is quite common for a person waiting at a bus-stop to stop a bus and then to ask where it is going. Although I have heard of people being mistreated by bus conductors in these cases, I have no personal evidence of it, and indeed the conductor often pre-empts such requests by declaring the destination of the bus at every stop. Another case occurred in the Post Office where a lady, required to sign her name, was simply pointed in the direction of an ink pad, kept on the counter, so that she could provide her thumb print. A similar system is also adopted in banks where a bank employee will fill out the required form for the customer to sign or put their thumb print. Within the political system in Mauritius, as in many countries, certain procedures are adopted to enable those who are illiterate to vote. Each party is represented by a symbol and at the time of elections, people may vote for the symbol of the party, rather than the person representing it. It is also the case in Mauritius, with its tradition of extended families, that, when an illiterate person is required to read or write, a family member will be available to do it on their behalf. Such evidence of people turning to others for access to

literacy supports the findings of Susan Lytle and Jacqueline Landau, who state that:

illiterate adults see themselves, often, as interdependent, rather than dependent, sharing their skills and knowledge with members of their social networks in return for access to the reading and writing skills of friends, neighbours, and relatives (Lytle and Landau 1987: 209).

Those students at LPT who offered a reason for deciding to attend literacy classes presented very different views on why someone would wish to become literate. One lady spoke of the mistreatment that she received at the hands of her boss resulting from her illiteracy as the reason for wanting to learn to read and write. Several students had been unable to complete their education, in two cases because a parent had died, and as the eldest daughters they had to stay at home. One woman spoke of the wish to help her children in their schoolwork. Of those who offered their opinion, only one mentioned a socio-economic reason, the desire to open a shop. Perhaps the most original reason came from three sisters, all of whom still lived at home, and whose father, who, incidentally, was literate, had told them they had to learn to read and write before they could leave home and get married. Another student said that it was a burden (*enn fardo*) to be illiterate and, in a similar vein, a lady said that people were distant because of her inability to read and write. I was also told of a man, a porter in a local firm, who after 'signing' for keys with a thumb print for fifteen years decided he had had enough and came to LPT to learn to sign his name.

In an interview in February 2000⁸⁵, Alain Ahvee, spokesperson for LPT, gave his own opinion as to why people came to LPT to learn to read and write, and suggested that there are two distinct types of student. The first type of student faces practical problems in not being able to read, and would like to be able to get about by reading signs and bus destinations, and also official letters. The second type of student reflects the political nature of the work of LPT, and is someone who wants to be an office bearer in a club or association, and so needs literacy skills in order to fulfil this position.

What this shows is that literacy students have obviously coped throughout their adult lives in very much the way Williams described above.

⁸⁵ Interview conducted at LPT, 2nd February 2000.

The majority have jobs, and some are actively involved in trade union activities. However, many students at LPT were aware of the difficulties, either practical or social, that they encountered as a result of their illiteracy, and so they did see literacy as a means of helping themselves or their children.

Language and empowerment

The central focus of the LPT approach to education is that the use of Mauritian Creole as the language of literacy is intimately associated with the group's application of Freirean literacy. In line with the Freirean approach, the only language through which a person can be empowered is the mother tongue. However, within the context of a country such as Mauritius, where European non-native languages are dominant, the status of the mother tongue may constitute an equally important barrier to emancipation, as Archer and Costello found in their study of literacy in El Alto, Bolivia:

Literacy is of no use if it does not empower us. Spanish is the language of power and we must adopt it if we are to assert ourselves and seek change. (Archer and Costello 1990: 166)

Thus, once again, a contradiction has arisen between the language issue and the emancipatory goals of Freirean techniques. This is of course an important issue in Mauritius and one that has already been raised within the context of the education system, where education in Mauritian Creole is perceived by some as a wasted effort. This contradiction involves the purpose of literacy, and the opinions of students on the role of the languages they speak. Robillard, in particular, is critical of the use of a seemingly useless language for literacy purposes:

En effet, alphabétiser en créole n'est efficace que tant que l'on considère les processus d'apprentissage du seul point de vue de la rapidité immédiate d'appropriation de compétences. Les choses se compliquent singulièrement lorsqu'on se projette dans le moyen ou dans le long terme, en essayant d'envisager l'usage potentiel des acquis de l'alphabétisation par les apprenants. En effet, dans la mesure où le créole n'est pas véritablement une langue de promotion sociale, ni une langue de l'État, ni une langue de la sphère économique, ni celle de la presse, ni celle de la lecture (peu de publications dans cette langue), on

peut se demander quel usage l'alphabétisé pourrait en faire? (Robillard 1991: 91).

Robillard's comments also raise the issue that until literacy in Mauritian Creole is perceived to be a valid alternative to literacy in French and English, then the work of LPT, and the achievement of students in learning to read and write Mauritian Creole will be undermined. Robillard's assertion is that the consequences of the continuing policy of promoting literacy in Mauritian Creole serve only to advance the cause of the providers of literacy of Mauritian Creole, by inference LPT. In this he portrays the recipients of such literacy as being sacrificed (Robillard 1991: 92) in the wider struggle to establish a language-based political ideology.

Literacy in Mauritian Creole: a case of student choice?

Given the misgivings raised by Robillard and Street, above, and the obvious fact that LPT is the sole provider of literacy courses in Mauritian Creole, it is important to discuss why students would wish to acquire literacy in a language which, at least in comparison with French and English, will ostensibly provide very little material benefit to the student. This is particularly important as it was stated above that, while students had generally coped with their illiteracy, they still saw reading and writing as an opportunity to help their children, and perhaps improve their standard of living. As a result, it might appear that literacy in Mauritian Creole is, as Robillard states, a waste.

What was perhaps most striking when I raised the language question with the literacy students was that it appeared to be something of a non-issue. This does not mean to say that they were unaware of the work of LPT. All students who attend a literacy course are in fact classified as 'simpatisan' with LPT's work, and certainly at the end of course party the link between the literacy course and the general promotion of Mauritian Creole was very much in evidence. However, it is perhaps as a result of this negative current of opinion towards the notion of literacy in Mauritian Creole and the associated idea that students are learning Mauritian Creole (*apran*

kreol), that LPT stress the literacy side of their work during the course itself. In an interview I had with a member of LPT, the choice of language was seen as an educational rather than ideological issue⁸⁶, and reflects a subtle change of attitude from the hardline stance taken by LPT in 1982. In an interview with the newspaper *Le Mauricien* in 1996, Alain Ahvee, the spokesperson of LPT, was keen to stress the educational value of the use of Mauritian Creole, stating that such a choice was 'automatique' (Kamanah 1996). More recently, in October 1999, at a creole language festival in the Seychelles, LPT again emphasized the automatic nature of the choice of language:

Odepar mem li ti enn swa otomatik pu nu servi langaz Kreol pu montre.
Parski li sel langaz ki gran mazorite dimunn Moris servi tuleszur dan zot
lavi⁸⁷ (LPT 1999).

In discussions I had with students, only one student stated that he had deliberately chosen to learn literacy in Mauritian Creole. He was quite rare amongst the literacy students in that he had passed the CPE exam, and although he never wrote in French or English, he was able to read it. Therefore, for him, literacy in Mauritian Creole was an openly ideological act. The other students in the class simply viewed it as a literacy class, and the only mention of language came when they expressed an intention to further their skills by later taking literacy classes in French and English. Indeed, I was on several occasions told the story of a man who came to the literacy class and then went on to CARITAS⁸⁸ to acquire literacy in French so that he would be able to help his children with their children.

The point that this discussion seems to raise is that, as in the findings of the report, *Literacy Development in a Changing Society*, students are very much aware of the language policy of the literacy provider, in this case LPT, and are perfectly happy with that policy. With reference to Robillard's criticism, it is apparent that for the majority of LPT students, literacy in the vernacular appears to be a question of personal and informed choice. Although students see literacy in French or English as a long-term objective, they are

⁸⁶ Interview at LPT, 2nd February 2000.

⁸⁷ From the start it was an automatic choice for us to use Creole to show [reading and writing]. Because it is the only language that the majority of people in Mauritius use everyday.

⁸⁸ A Catholic charitable organization involved in the provision of basic education to adults.

perfectly aware of the language policy of LPT, and are happy with the educational experience provided. As a result literacy in Mauritian Creole cannot really be considered as detrimental to the overall aspirations of the student.

Education in practice

I have already emphasized the practical nature of the approach taken by LPT towards both the provision of literacy and the creation of an orthography. This is an issue which I raised with LPT, and which they answered in a letter:

Li vre ki nu grafi kreol inn developpe apartir enn nesesite praktik, setadir pu servi dan kur montre lir-ekrir. Donk odepar mem li ti enn sistem lortograf pu dimunn ki pa konn lir-ekrir⁸⁹ (Personal correspondence from LPT: 10.12.98).

Thus what differentiates LPT from others who have proposed orthographies for Mauritian Creole is that they see the orthography as something entirely practical, and which should not be seen as device for transcribing the sounds of a language, but rather for writing the language itself. As a result of viewing the process of writing from the standpoint of the *illiterate*, their whole approach both to the orthography and the way of teaching it is fundamentally different from the approach taken by other promoters of Creole in Mauritius.

Fundamental to the practice of LPT is the assumption that students who come to literacy classes already have a great deal of knowledge, and that is essential to harness this knowledge and use it in the process of literacy teaching. As such, literacy is not seen to come from outwith the experience of the student, but rather directly from his or her experience. This attitude was promoted by Freire but also owes much to the work of Freinet, who worked in rural France in the 1920s. Freinet adapted a teaching philosophy that drew directly from the experience of his students and took their needs into account:

⁸⁹ It is true that our kreol orthography developed from a practical necessity, to be used in our literacy classes. So, from the start it was an orthography for people who couldn't read and write.

La nécessité de prendre en considération l'intérêt de l'enfant et d'intégrer cet intérêt dans l'enseignement, pour éviter sans cesse cette désintégration de la pensée enfantine qui est la plaie de l'école traditionnelle (Freinet 1982: 19).

Mo zenerater: orthography in practice

In the introduction to this chapter I stated that the orthography of LPT differentiated itself from other orthographies by its practical nature, and uses the need for literacy as the basis for the LPT writing system. This connection between literacy and the standardization process might appear an automatic one. However, in his influential study on literacy, William Gray views the two processes as essentially separate.

No attempt is made here either to consider the problems of giving a language written form. Because of its technical character, it seemed advisable to leave this problem to specialists. (Gray 1956: 11)

The danger of such a policy is, as was shown in the previous chapter, that while there may be a recognized need for a literacy programme in the vernacular, the orthographies that are proposed for the vernacular bear very little relation to the pedagogical requirements of the learner. This does not mean to suggest that there have been no attempts to directly link the orthographic standardization of a language with literacy. A particular example is the 'linguistic method' of Sarah Gudschinsky (1976), which approaches the question of literacy from a linguistic perspective. This method has been used as the basis for the missionary and educational work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Other examples are the 'Laubach' method, devised by Frank Laubach (Gerbault 1997) and used in literacy campaigns world-wide, and, of more recent date, the Reflect approach (Archer and Cottingham 1996).

The means by which students first encounter and use the orthography devised by LPT is the *mo zenerater*. The term *mo zenerater* derives from the Freirean term 'generative word' which is fundamental to the Freirean educational approach. The basis of the Freirean approach is syllabic, and in this respects it resembles both the Gudschinsky and Laubach methods. The

mo zenerater reflect concepts that are familiar to all literacy students. Freire describes the use of generative words thus:

During the early stages of literacy education, analyses of the themes that grow out of generative words are closely linked to concrete realities in local, regional and national settings ... (Freire 1978: 119)

An important feature of the *mo zenerater* is to demystify the written word. LPT believes that by breaking up the words into syllables, which can then be rearranged by the students, writing and reading come within their grasp. In the first class the word often used is *zanimó*⁹⁰. It is a term familiar to all, and can have different interpretations, depending on either the rural or urban background of the students. Thus *zanimó* in a town might refer to the dog that most people have, or in the village could be the chickens that people keep. Students discuss the word, drawing on their own personal experience. This discussion of the word can take up a substantial part of the class, and so it might not be until the next class that the word would be divided into syllables, as follows:

ZANIMO:
ZA NI MO.

Using the three syllables in *zanimó*, a 'discovery card' (Freire 1976: 53) of phonemic families is created:

ZA	ZE	ZI	ZO	ZU
NA	NE	NI	NO	NU
MA	ME	MI	MO	MU

Students then play with the syllables they now have before them to create new words. These new words do not need to be of the same length as the *mo zenerater* and so possibilities include *zame*, *zuzu* and *naze*⁹¹. Where a student suggests a word that isn't possible everyone is asked to discuss it to see why it cannot be spelt in that way. The purpose of the *mo zenerater* is to present the fullest range of sounds that exist in the language. They should also reflect a wide range of experience. In the teaching pack that LPT have produced for the literacy course the fourteen *mo zenerater* that follow *zanimó* are *lamone*, *bat*, *vote*, *treter*, *kamarad*, *lizinn*, *mulin*,

⁹⁰ Animals/livestock.

⁹¹ Never; toy; swim.

*travay, ledikasyon, sosyete, drwa, transpor, gayn, and egalite*⁹². Although, as will be discussed later, the teaching pack provides the majority of material for the *mo zenerater*, LPT have adapted the *mo zenerater* for use in particular areas in Mauritius, such as on the coast or in a sugar producing area. The *mo zenerater* that have been used for courses run in a village or on a sugar estate are:

ZANIMO, LAMONE, VOTE, LABUTIK, TRETER, MANZE, KANN,
TRAVAY, MULIN, PRI, FROD, DRWA, GAYNE, LEDIKASYON,
GASPIYAZ, SOSYETE, TRANSPOR⁹³

A course was run a few years ago in the Black River area of Mauritius. The list of *mo zenerater* that were chosen for that area vary in certain respects:

LAMONE, VOTE, LABUTIK, LATER, DYAB, MANZE, LASALINN,
TRAVAY, LAMER, FROD, LINZ, MONTAYN, DRWA,
LEDIKASYON, GASPIYAZ, SOSYETE, TRANSPOR⁹⁴

The purpose of the *mo zenerater* is not simply to provide a set of syllables but also to promote discussion amongst the students, hence the inclusion of such terms as *treter* and *dyab*. In line with the Freirean approach, certain terms, *frod, drwa, gayne, gaspiyaz*, are also included that will provoke debate on such issues as social justice. It is interesting that one of the *mo zenerater* that might be expected to evoke debate on social justice, *sosyete*, is in fact usually understood by students to mean an organization or a company, due to the fact that many students work for a *sosyete* such as a sugar estate. The interpretation of *sosyete*, in the sense of 'Mauritian society' for example, is quite rare.

The promotion of writing

The creation of phonemic families provides a basis for the development of word-building skills. However, a criticism that Street makes of the Freirean approach is that those who teach it become over-reliant on

⁹² Money, beat, vote, witch doctor, comrade/friend, factory, (sugar) mill, work, education, society/company, rights, transport, earn, equality.

⁹³ Animals/livestock; money; vote; shop; witch doctor; food; sugar cane; work; (sugar) mill; prices; fraud; rights; earn; education; waste/wastage; society/company; transport.

⁹⁴ Money; vote; shop; land; the Devil; food; salt pans; work; the sea; fraud; washing; mountain; rights; education; waste/wastage; society/ company; transport.

the use of generative words, and so do not actually pay attention to sentence writing.

[L]essons on word building tend to go on indefinitely without learners developing reading and writing habits that are embedded in real-use contexts. (Street 1995: 137)

The importance of associating word-building skills with the promotion and development of wider literacy skills can be seen in the 'linguistic method' of Sarah Gudschinsky (*op.cit.*). Gudschinsky describes a primer using this method as containing:

- (I) a section which is explicitly teaching the decoding of content words and morphemes ("word-attack skills");
 - (II) a section which is explicitly teaching a "chunking" of longer utterances into phrases or minimal clauses with the aid of function morphemes recognized at sight in context;
 - (III) a section which practices these skills in the context of connected reading material which is culturally and linguistic adequate;
 - (IV) a section on penmanship, spelling, and creative writing.
- (Gudschinsky 1976: 46)

In LPT the process of the development of writing is not as systematic as that described by Gudschinsky. However, from the beginning of the literacy course there is an emphasis on writing, and the insertion of word-building skills into the context of real language use. This can be seen at the beginning of the literacy course with the use of *Dir-Ekrir*, which in English is termed the 'Say and Write Method'. LPT describes the process of *Dir-Ekrir* as follows:

A literacy teacher asks a student to say something which he would like to write if he were able....The teacher then writes down faithfully what the student has said, using a big felt-tipped pen on sheets of newsprint. As the teacher writes, he says aloud the words one by one..... Together they read it (the sentence) 2 or 3 times. Then the teacher takes a pair of scissors and cuts the sentence up, making a jigsaw. Then mix the pieces up and ask the students to put them together. Then the individual words start to be recognised by the student (Kistnasamy *et al.* 1984: 251).

This process is not restricted to the work of LPT, and indeed I have encountered similar devices, often used for teaching sentence structure, in literacy classes in Britain. *Dir-Ekrir* also serves the purpose of demonstrating basic writing conventions, such as writing from the top to bottom, from left to right, and recognising that words are written as separate entities. However, where LPT differs from similar practices in Britain is that *Dir-Ekrir* forms a fundamental part of initial literacy, and is closely associated with LPT's

ideology. Thus within the context of the work of LPT, the students have created their own text, taken from their own reality: what Freire terms 'real/concrete context.'⁹⁵ *Dir-Ekrir* also performs other ideological purposes. In *Alfa ennbuk* (LPT 1981: 54), LPT emphasize the importance of *Dir-Ekrir* as an initial means of demystifying the written word, and as will be seen later, stress the active nature of writing as a mode of communication.

It is also through writing that students learn to think about and practise the combination of syllables that they have encountered in the *mo zenerater*. Hence, throughout the later stages of the course students are encouraged to write down their thoughts, often on a topic inspired by the discussion of a *mo zenerater*. Another writing technique is to write a poem using a certain number of words. In the training course I attended the words we had to use were: *kamarad, mo, lesyel, ble, ver, lamer, tusel, zwe, vizyon*⁹⁶. The interpretation of these words is entirely up to the student. Thus, *mo* can mean either 'me', 'my' or even 'word'; *ver* can mean 'green' or 'towards', etc. Words with more obviously ideological connotations can be found in *Alfa ennbuk* (LPT 1981: 110). They are *larm, disan, kule, tultan, dilo, ruz*⁹⁷ and *lasann, travayer, ledo, brile, dife, laswer*⁹⁸.

The emphasis on the writing process also forms part of the belief that the student is an active participant in the educational process. As was stated above, this position is introduced from the start of the literacy programme, in the initial stages of *Dir-Ekrir*.

[L]ir-ekrir li introdri depi komansman kuma kiksoz aktif: zelev-la kapav et sa dimmun ki kominik so lide. Zelev pa selman "lir" seki lezot "gran koko" mazine, me li osi, li kapav kominik seki li panse, kominik so prop realite. (LPT 1981: 54)⁹⁹

This is also a feature of other Freirean-inspired literacy programme, such as the REFLECT approach, described by Archer and Cottingham:

To be consistent with the ideological approach a methodology would have to, for example:

⁹⁵ Freire 1972a: 85

⁹⁶ Friend/colleague; me/my/word; sky; blue/wheat; green/towards; sea; alone; game; vision/sight.

⁹⁷ Tear, blood, to flow, all the time, water, red.

⁹⁸ Ash/ashes, worker, back, to be hot, fire, sweat/toil.

⁹⁹ From the beginning reading and writing is introduced as something active: the student is able to be someone who communicates his ideas. The student does not simply read what "learned people" think, but he is also able to say what he thinks, to communicate his reality. (LPT 1981: 54)

emphasise writing rather than passive reading of fixed texts;
emphasise creative and active involvement of participants..... (Archer
and Cottingham 1996: 15)

Educational material

LPT has developed a teaching pack intended to last the duration of the primary literacy course. The pack comes in five sections, each section bearing one of the colours of the Mauritian flag, red, blue, yellow and green, with orange making up the colour of the final section. Within each section are six doubled-over sheets, again in the same colour but also with brown as the final sheet. As was stated above, each section contains the *mo zenerater* which are to be used as the object of discussion, and the focus of the syllables which are the basis of literacy.

The teaching pack also contains the basis of writing as a technical process. During the initial stages of the literacy course the back of each sheet contains examples of *larg lame*¹⁰⁰. This might be described as a sort of focused scribbling, and seems very similar to the 'tâtonnement' technique that was devised by Freinet in the 'méthode naturelle' (Freinet 1968: 56). Whereas Freinet used the technique to lead eventually to writing, the focus of *larg lame* in the LPT literacy course is primarily to help the students develop a technique for holding a pen, and also hopefully to dispel any fear that they might have. Apparently there is a noticeable difference between men and women when it comes to the ease with which they can hold and manipulate a pen. While men may be used to using a pencil and ruler, particularly if they do wood- or metal-work, women, who have more experience of drawing, perhaps through tracing sewing patterns onto paper, find it much easier to use a pen as one would for writing. Thus, at the beginning of the literacy course, in the last few minutes of each class, students simply 'scribble' on paper, in whatever direction they wish. As the course continues, however, the *larg lame* becomes gradually more stylized. In the second class, for instance, students draw a series of lines. The

¹⁰⁰ See appendix Q.

purpose of this is to help the student understand the form which writing takes in Mauritian Creole, and indeed in many of the writing systems used in Mauritius: from top to bottom and from left to right. In the courses that follow, although the *larg lame* is still very stylized it resembles in its form letters that are used in Creole and becomes, therefore, a way of practising the form of these letters.

One possible disadvantage of the later forms of *larg lame* is that they look like 'joined up' writing, and so seem to present students with two contrasting writing styles. When I questioned this, however, I was told that while the forms may resemble writing and so help the students to form letters they are not in any way presented as being letters.

Word formation skills acquired through the *mo zenerater* are consolidated through the use of exercises and games. An example is the distinction between *bo*, *bon*, and *bonn*¹⁰¹. A letter game¹⁰² was also used in a class I attended to try to promote the student's awareness of word building. In the game a dice was thrown to indicate a particular letter on each row. This resulted in three letters, for example f u l. Students were asked to decide whether these letters constituted a word, in this case *ful*¹⁰³. In the later stages of the literacy course, the additional content of the teaching material moves away from the technical mastery of word formation to become more focused on creative writing and the discussion of issues. This additional material includes poems discussed above, and a cyclone warning map¹⁰⁴, and in the later stages of the literacy course days of the week and months of the year are also examined.

Pictures are also a feature of the teaching material. While some of these pictures are primarily of artistic or general interest value the majority conform to Freire's "codifications", which "represent familiar local situations - which, however, open perspectives for the analysis of regional and national problems" (Freire 1973: 51). In *Liv Profeser* this method is called *Desin ek Konsyantizasyon*¹⁰⁵. Generally the pictures are almost exact replicas of the

¹⁰¹ See appendix R.

¹⁰² See appendix S.

¹⁰³ Full, e.g. mo ful – I'm full

¹⁰⁴ See appendix T.

¹⁰⁵ See appendix U.

“codifications” which Freire describes in his 1973 book, *Education for Critical Consciousness*. For example, early in the literacy course students may be asked to look at three contrasting pictures of hunting: the first is a cat catching a mouse; the second shows two boys making catapults and the third is a man using a gun to hunt. Other pictures contain a much more Mauritian feel. In a class I attended in May 1997 of male students nearing the end of the literacy course the subject of discussion was a representation of the LPT classroom as a contrast to the traditional Mauritian classroom. The traditional classroom reminded the students of the difficulties that they had encountered in school, particularly involving language, and also the reasons for not attending school such as violence in school, poverty, and the necessity of looking after children. The language of the classroom was a feature of the discussion on the picture of the LPT classroom, with one student stating that when he learns to read and write in Creole he does it in a language he already knows, and so is more confident as a result. Another similar use of *Desin ek Konsyantizasyon* as a representation of Mauritian society is the comparison of different means of production. One picture features a traditional cobbler, while the other picture shows a major employer in the area, the *Bata* factory in nearby Coromandel as an example of different means of production.

Within the traditional Freirean approach there is a direct link between the “codifications” and the use of generative words. This is similarly forms part of the Gudschinsky method, and is a process which is also found in the REFLECT approach discussed by Archer and Cottingham:

[The picture] is the link between the oral and the written lifestyle and the first step on the way to written abstraction. The picture is the bridge from a basically imitative to a digital mode of communication.....The picture lifts the mind out of reality. The picture makes the event into an object. The next step is to link the first written concept, the word, to the picture. The picture is the visual environment of the word. (Archer and Cottingham 1996: 15)

However, while *Desin ek Konsyantizasyon* forms an important part of the learning process and is directly linked to the concept of ‘conscientization’, there is no direct relation between the “codification” and individual *mo zenerater*. As a result they are treated as two separate issues, with the *mo zenerater* serving as the main focus of discussion in each literacy class, and

as a basis for the syllables to be used in the writing process, and the *desin ek konsyantizasyon* serves primarily as a focus of discussion and not directly related to the writing process.

While, as has been shown above, English is relatively little used in Mauritius, it is much in evidence on highway signs and official notices. As a result, in the final few weeks of the literacy course, students are introduced to the English that they will encounter in their everyday lives, a process which LPT terms 'social sight'. Words and phrases covered within this part of the course include 'cross here', 'bus stop', 'hospital', 'litter', 'taxi', 'danger', etc. As many of the literacy students travel by bus the names of the local bus companies and also the destinations they serve are also included in the 'social sight' course.

Reading material

Although the focus of the work of LPT is the production of written text by the students themselves, there are nonetheless books that have been produced by LPT to aid in the literacy programme. The first books that the students encounter are written in large type and contain many repeated lines. Before students begin to read the book they first examine the cover, and discuss the picture, title and author to acquaint themselves with the format of the book. As it may be the first time that they have opened a book, the page detailing the year of publication, etc. is also explained. While the teacher reads out the book (s)he points to the word that is being read, and the students follow. At this stage students are also informed when to turn over the page. One of the books used at this stage in the literacy course is *Fri*¹⁰⁶, which features the fruit grown in Mauritius. As can be seen from the example in the appendix, the style of the book is very simple, and contains vocabulary which is familiar to the students. It is also set to music and was sung at the end of term party I attended.

¹⁰⁶ See appendix V.

In the later stages of the course the books the students read are intended to take the literacy process from the basic stages of literacy towards the wider use of the written text. An example is the adaptation of Charles Baissac's (1990) short story, *Mor lao Burik*¹⁰⁷. This book introduces the basics of capitalization and punctuation, and helps establish a written norm for the students to follow.

Post-literacy

In his work Paulo Freire stressed the importance of post-literacy as a means of consolidating the writing and reading skills acquired in the course of the literacy classes. He sees post-literacy as an integral part of the literacy process:

As I understand it, literacy education for adults contains within itself the elements of post-literacy. This continues and becomes deeper and more diversified Literacy and post-literacy are not, therefore, two separate processes, one before and one later, but two moments of the same process of social formation. (Freire 1978: 100)

Although at LPT it is stressed that students should make efforts to continue to consolidate their literacy skills, no official post-literacy course is provided for students. Interestingly, post-literacy, although at an optional level, is featured in *Alfa ennbuk* (LPT 1981: 122). The reason for this change appears to be partly pragmatic. Many students find it difficult to come to literacy classes over a prolonged period, and so it is not always practical to provide an actual course. It is also the case that the size of the organization has altered since the early 1980s, and the facilities do not exist to provide lengthy post-literacy classes. Instead students are recommended to keep in touch with LPT and to seek help with any literacy problems they encounter. An element of post-literacy is also provided by the publications that LPT produce, which, with the exception of the works of Dev Virahsawmy, are all written in LPT orthography. This includes books of a similar level to those the students study in class, but also poems published as a result of literary competitions, plays and full-size novels. LPT also produce a Kreol-English

¹⁰⁷ LPT edition. See appendix W.

dictionary. Such publications, as was stated in the chapter on sociocultural issues, not only provide the materials for post-literacy, but also ensure that students have sufficient reading material to maintain their reading skills and justify their decision to learn to read in Kreol.

An area that LPT have become involved in the past five years, and which has effectively become part of the post-literacy, is the provision of English classes. This has developed from a fairly ad hoc provision of English tuition to post-literacy students, often dependent on willing English speakers like myself, to a much more planned activity. This can be seen in LPT's involvement with a messenger firm in Port Louis. They provided a four month literacy class in Mauritian Creole followed by a three month English course, concentrating on oral skills, and practical job-related reading skills.

Educational performance

In rejecting the notion of functional literacy, LPT has essentially set itself against the concept of literacy as social, in the sense of economic advancement. It is perhaps for that reason that there is no end of course examination. However, there is a continual evaluation of the student's progress during the course, and at the end of the course. Students are also asked for their comments on the course and for suggestions as to how it might be improved. In line with the Freirean approach to education, emphasis is placed on the development of the students in terms of their self-confidence, and in their ability to learn and criticize their world.

While this policy enables the student to assess their own progress, the absence of official tests allows for no external evaluation of student progress, and certainly no comparison with the skills acquired by students following other literacy courses, particularly those in French and English¹⁰⁸. Such testing might appear to be against the concept of Freirean literacy. However,

¹⁰⁸ No external study has as yet been carried out in Mauritius as to the efficacy of the education provided by the different literacy providers. Therefore, as all assessment is internal, this argument could, in theory, be applied to all groups currently providing literacy skills in Mauritius.

in a study of his work in the field of critical literacy in London, Chris Searle makes an important point:

Critical literacy can only be a credible pedagogy if it extends and enlarges the powers of language of the students and gives them the opportunity and ability to be in full control of all the words they need. This means an understanding of basic grammar and sentence analysis, the power to spell correctly and use punctuation effectively, to know the figures of speech and write sequentially and coolly, as well as with creative strength and full imaginative energy. In short, critical literacy can only become the basis of a genuinely critical and interventionist foundation for life and action if it successfully brings the student into the world of the word in all its forms: written, spoken, poeticized, analytical, cognitive, and effective, and has offered a social and personal language strong and confident enough to challenge, contend and struggle with, and seek and find solutions to, the personal and political problems that face the urban young person at the tip of our century. (Searle 1998:11)

Searle's comments are particularly important not only for the value of the literacy programme itself, but also, with direct relevance to Mauritius, for the value of literacy in Mauritian Creole. If the literacy that is offered by LPT is seen as incomplete, then the consequences, both in terms of the literacy achievement of the students and also on the public's view of the feasibility of literacy in the vernacular, will be devastating. Therefore, while LPT might acknowledge the importance of literacy in Mauritian Creole as a means of providing students with sufficient confidence to acquire literacy in other languages, it might seem that part of the role of critical literacy is also that the literacy students acquire a full and useful literacy. It is only when literacy in Mauritian Creole is perceived to be of the same value in terms of educational effectiveness as other literacies that it can start to be seen as worthwhile.

The mechanization of literacy

In his criticism of the work of promoters of literacy in the vernacular, Robillard identifies the language of literacy as the primary factor in the manipulation of students. However, the Freirean approach itself has also been open to criticism by those who similarly see the ideological nature of the education as a 'sacrifice' of students:

The Freirean approach is vulnerable to such culturally blind manipulation by activists imbued with ideological fervour and believing so strongly that they are 'empowering' 'ignorant' peasants that they fail to see their own cultural and political domination. (Street 1995: 138).

Another criticism of Freirean approaches to literacy is that in the actual practice of literacy teaching, some of the ideals of the approach are lost. In their study of literacy campaigns in Latin America, Archer and Costello (1990: 80) identify the danger that critical literacy can itself become as mechanical a process of education than the 'banking' system it replaced. This mechanization of the literacy process can become so entrenched that the surface use of Freirean ideals is simply a device for teaching a rigid 'pseudo-Freirean' literacy:

By adopting Freire's terminology pseudo-Freireans turn his codes of unemployment, hunger and oppression and liberation into developmentalist modules of family planning, nutrition, sanitation. Pseudo-Freirean pedagogy converts dialogue into a form of 'discovery learning' In this conversion dialogue becomes a search for the 'right' answers, pre-determined by the programme planner and provided by the teacher... (Archer and Costello 1990: 105)

Such criticisms point to the danger inherent in the Freirean approach, that the practice of literacy teaching can become focused on the objectives of the literacy provider, and not the student. Ironically, this mechanization of the literacy process is perhaps partly due to the sheer success of Freirean literacy campaigns, that as they have become more accepted and widely-spread, so they have become normalized and closer in practice to the literacy practices they sought to replace.

Within their work, LPT have also been forced to recognize that their approach to literacy had also become institutionalized. The production of the teaching pack, originally designed as a teacher's aid, had effectively created a rigid pattern for the course, and had become the only source of literacy material used in the classes. As a result the whole process of literacy teaching, which was intended to reflect the environment of the student, has effectively become uniform. This realization has forced LPT to rethink their entire pedagogy, and they are seeking to abandon the over-reliance on the teaching pack, and return to a student-based approach.

What these difficulties show is that the Freirean approach is open to manipulation. However, criticisms such of those of Brian Street, while

undoubtedly raising important concerns, have the effect of under-rating the ability of students to determine their own course of action, and consequently reinforce the traditional concept of the illiterate as 'ignorant peasants'. Within the context of Mauritius, where the work of LPT is well known, it is almost impossible to believe that students will have no knowledge of the ideology and approach of LPT. This is particularly the case as many of the students come to LPT through their trade-union.

A re-evaluation of literacy

The above discussion has focused on the idea that in order for a critical and Freirean literacy to be valued, it has to be comparable in efficacy to other literacies. However, it is clear from the examination of the motives of literacy students that they have chosen to learn to read and write in Mauritian Creole, in preference to attending literacy classes in French and English, and despite the perceived uselessness of the literacy they seek to acquire. As a result, it could be suggested that the work of LPT, and the literacy they seek to provide, is not fairly comparable to other literacies, and that the group has created an education that is individual both in essence and practice.

Such a comment raises the issue as to whether the success of all literacy provision can be gauged purely on the basis of social and economic advancement. This is a question that is particularly pertinent to the issue of education in former colonies where literacy in the vernacular inevitably competes with literacy in the dominant European languages. This is a point made by Webb:

The view is sometimes expressed that the ex-colonial languages allow for greater participation in and integration into the modern technologically developed culture. This is, however, only true as long as prestige and upward mobility are related to material possessions, and success is measured in terms of the gross national product. If progress is measured rather by the degree to which people's ability is developed to determine their own fate, to free themselves from oppression, exploitation and poverty or to establish their sociopsychological and cultural independence, then the ex-colonial languages may not be the liberating force they are imagined to be. Besides: the autochthonous languages can, we know, also be developed to allow participation in and integration into the modern technological culture (Webb 1994: 185).

The problems raised by Robillard, and Webb's reply, raise the central problem of all literacy provision: what is the purpose of that provision, and how does this correspond to wider discussions on the role and purpose of literacy? This is not a new issue but one which has important consequences for literacy provision generally, and vernacular literacy in particular.

This raises a fundamental issue as to the purpose of literacy generally, and whether, as was stated in the chapter on education, that the concept of literacy is applicable only to a language of power. However, as Heine (1990: 176) makes clear, this presumes that access to the former colonial language will automatically confer a greater participation in economic development, a fact somewhat put into question when the actual economic development of many African states is actually examined. Although Heine concedes that the role of language in such economic failure has yet to be fully investigated, he claims that "the evidence available suggests that [the] lack of an adequate communication system on the national level has not insignificantly contributed to it". (Heine 1990: 176)

The promotion of self-worth

If the purpose of literacy in Mauritian Creole is not simply to provide students with the tools to gain economic and social advancement, then an alternative advantage to literacy in the vernacular must be suggested. As was stated in chapter three, the acquisition of literacy resulted in a renewed sense of confidence amongst students. This was seen to be not simply the consequence of the ability to read and write, but also an awareness of the value of the student's language.

This view sheds a new light on the purpose of literacy classes. At LPT, it is certainly the case that those students I spoke with appreciated their educational experience, and felt they had gained in self-confidence. As a result several students felt ready to expand their education further, and expressed the intention to learn to read and write in French and English. Literacy therefore appears, for the majority of students, to be a matter of personal achievement, as is exemplified by the lady, who at Christmas told of

her happiness at being able to send Christmas cards for the first time. An interesting viewpoint on the value of literacy as a means of improving confidence is given by Hubisi Nwenmely, writing of St. Lucian Kwéyòl classes:

Interestingly, none of the students saw the classes as a means of boosting their self-confidence. Nonetheless, attendance quite clearly had the effect of increasing personal autonomy for many people. Both language and literacy tutors support their students in, for instance, the development of new perspectives by freely expressing their views and exploring conflicting or opposing ideas in a non-threatening environment. Students are involved in choosing often controversial topics for conversational and writing exercises which stimulate lively debate. (Nwenmely 1996: 65)

It is apparent that self-confidence cannot in itself justify the existence of literacy provision in the vernacular. However, if such literacy has the consequence of enabling people to overcome previous educational failure, and to give them the opportunity to extend that education further, then the question of self-esteem as a motivating factor behind literacy should not be under-valued.

Linguistic pragmatism and the promotion of wider literacy

Promoters of vernacular languages have long had to acknowledge that the status of the vernacular continues to act as an impediment to wider acceptance of vernacular languages. As a result they have often been at pains to promote the language in its own right, but in a state of coexistence with, rather than at the expense of, European languages. This recognition has inevitable consequences for the provision of literacy in the vernacular, and one that calls for a pragmatic approach. Despite his promotion of the value of literacy in Réunionnais Creole, Axel Gauvin is clear in his support for further literacy provision in French:

Il est évident qu'après l'alphabétisation en créole, les responsables de la Réunion autonome devront non seulement permettre à tous les adultes qui désirent apprendre le français de le faire, mais demander cet effort à tous les cadres issus de la masse. (Gauvin 1977: 85)

Similarly, while LPT remain firm in their belief of the advantages of literacy in Mauritian Creole, they are nonetheless aware of the desire of many learners

to acquire literacy in French and English. Consequently, many students go on to attend the classes of other literacy providers in Mauritius.

While such a degree of pragmatism is perhaps inevitable in the light of the continued dominance of French and English in Mauritius, it might be suggested that it is also a recognition of defeat, that literacy in Mauritian Creole will never be able to stand alone. Indeed, it might even be suggested that part of the purpose of literacy in Mauritian Creole, as an alternative to traditional literacy practices in French and English, is negated. However, Paulo Freire does not see any contradiction between the values of critical literacy, and the need to master reading and writing in languages of wider communication. Indeed, he stresses the importance of such literacy as a vital step in creating a fully emancipatory literacy:

Although the concept of voice is fundamental in the development of an emancipatory literacy, the goal should never be to restrict students to their own vernacular. This linguistic constriction inevitably leads to a linguistic ghetto. This means that educators should understand the value of mastering the standard dominant language of the wider society. It is through the full appropriation of the dominant standard language that students find themselves linguistically empowered to engage in dialogue with the various sectors of the wider society. (Freire and Macedo 1987: 152)

What this suggests is that creating a literacy programme in the vernacular as a bridge to wider literacy does not necessarily undermine the purpose of vernacular literacy. As Françoise Dreyfus states, the provision of literacy in the vernacular within a localized context can be a positive and necessary factor in the promotion of wider learning:

Parler de la promotion du créole n'implique pas qu'on plaide en faveur de l'abandon des autres langues en usage dans les aires créolophones, mais qu'on considère que l'intégration des individus dans leur milieu culturel, économique et social est conditionné par leur capacité à accéder à des "savoirs" dont la langue maternelle doit être le véhicule. (Dreyfus 1980: 70)

However, it is clear that where a transfer programme does exist, it is vital for the success of that programme that the literacy skills acquired in the vernacular are recognized and valued. The difficulty in Mauritius is that, at present, while literacy programmes exist in other languages, primarily French, there is no established transfer programme. Thus, as was seen earlier in the chapter, LPT are keen to provide basic tuition in English, any student who wishes to acquire literacy in French has to join other literacy

groups and begin at a basic literacy level. As a result, although the literacy programme run by LPT is recognized by the Ministry of Education, the progress that the students have made in literacy in Creole is in essence disregarded when they go on to other literacy classes. It is therefore essential that, if the achievement of the students is to be acknowledged and promoted, a policy of co-operation should be established between the different literacy groups in Mauritius, and a full transfer programme be established.

The issue of a transfer programme has also raised the issue of whether skills acquired in one language can be easily transferred to another. A general theory of literacy, and one which would seem to be supported by the 'autonomous' approach to literacy is that literacy is a skill that can be transferred from one language to another. On this basis, if literacy is easier to acquire in the vernacular language, then the reading and writing skills acquired in the vernacular first, and later be transferred to the dominant language. However, as Brian Street's (Street 1994b: 12) earlier comments suggest, there has been a criticism of the entire tenet of the transfer concept, in that the literacy skills acquired in one language are particular to that language, and so there is no easy transfer to another language. This raises a particular issue in Mauritius, and relates to the level of literacy acquired by students. Although at the end of the literacy course students are able to read and write letters, it was clear to me in my English classes that the question of transfer was not the case of a fully literate person acquiring skills in English as a foreign language, but rather attempting to reinforce literacy skills while using a foreign language.

Future implications

In some respects the small scale of LPT's literacy provision, and the fairly ambivalent attitude of the Mauritian population towards literacy provision in Mauritian Creole, could be interpreted as a weakness in that it is clear that LPT will never be able to compete with other literacy providers. However, a recognition of this small scale might indeed be a positive feature

of LPT's literacy practice. If LPT is recognized as a provider of a specialized literacy for students who have been failed by the large-scale provision of literacy in French and English, then they should perceive this as an advantage. In some respects this specialization can only be accomplished through a different approach to literacy as well as a different approach to the language of literacy. As a result the continued provision of Freirean literacy in Mauritian Creole can be seen as a matter of choice, and as a valid alternative to other, more mainstream education.

This final point suggests that vernacular literacy need not be in competition with literacy in European languages, but that the two forms of literacy can co-exist, providing different, but equally appropriate models of education for students:

One of the two languages may therefore be seen as the overwhelmingly more suitable language for certain domains. For example, the official language may be considered by agencies to be the best choice for development because it is characterised by institutional usage, written usage, economic advantage and national communication. Because of these perceptions, ways need to be found to integrate the use of languages, so that they are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually supportive. Each language needs to be developed and used at the level at which it is most appropriate - village, region, nation. This includes the written use of each language, with development of the local language to that end where necessary. (Robinson 1996: 253)

The creation of a standard

The original motivation of the work of LPT was the need to provide literacy material for those who had been failed by the education system in Mauritius. However, it is apparent that in the twenty years since its foundation the work of LPT has become more focused on the associated issues of the promotion of Mauritian Creole and the establishment of a written standard for the language.

As previous chapters have demonstrated, while the needs of the illiterate continue to ensure the practical nature both of the writing system that LPT have developed and the methods they use to teach literacy, LPT is also very aware of the necessity to promote the orthography to the Mauritian public. The publication of *How to Write Kreol Properly* (LPT 1989), was

intended to make the LPT orthography accessible to a wider, already literate audience. This publication similarly uses the syllable as a basis for writing the language. As was seen in chapter four the publication of works of literature, and the Creole-English dictionary, also maintain a high profile for the LPT orthography.

By concentrating in the acquisition of literacy in Mauritian Creole, and by focussing on the learning of the LPT orthography through basic skills, LPT have effectively approached the question of orthographic standardization from the bottom up. In seeking to address the needs of the illiterate sector of the population they have devised a practical orthography.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate the literacy provision of LPT within the wider context of the ideological and educational situation in Mauritius. The conclusions of this chapter are twofold. Firstly, I have attempted to demonstrate that literacy provision within a vernacular is a question of personal choice. Although vernacular language education is open to manipulation, both by those promoting such education and those against it, it has its place within literacy provision in Mauritius. It is also the case that the often emotional debate surrounding the issue of vernacular literacy undermines the educational benefit of that literacy, and by extension can overemphasize the value of traditional approaches to literacy.

The second point is that by attempting to address the needs of the illiterate, LPT has managed to provide a workable approach both to literacy and orthographic representation. By further recognising the wider context of Mauritius, and the need to promote Mauritian Creole, LPT has also provided the basis for the eventual standardization of the language.

Chapter seven

Conclusion

Overview

The purpose of this thesis has been to increase understanding of the processes involved in the literization of the vernacular through an examination of the literization of Mauritian Creole. In the conclusion I intend to review what the study of these issues has revealed of the process of the literization of Mauritian Creole, and assess to what extent Mauritius can be considered a case study of this process. I will analyse how these issues relate to the wider sociolinguistic issues of standardization identified by Haugen. I will also seek to investigate what the implications of this study are for the future development of Mauritian Creole, and what further research is needed.

Chapter one outlined the issues that have been involved in efforts to literize the vernacular, and portrayed the linguistic situation in Mauritius with particular reference to the role of Mauritian Creole. This sought to establish Mauritius as a case study of the wider ideological, educational, sociocultural and technical issues involved in the literization of the vernacular, and to equate these issues to the concept of standardization as identified by Haugen.

Chapters two to six of the thesis explored the particular situation of Mauritian Creole, and sought to establish to what extent Mauritius can be considered a case study of the literization of the vernacular. Chapter two explored the intimate association of language and ideology, and examined the role that politics and ideology has played in the promotion of Mauritian Creole. In chapter three, the focus was on literacy and the debate surrounding the difficulties facing the education system in Mauritius. It also investigated the possible role of Mauritian Creole as a language of literacy, and the objections raised to its promotion. Chapter four saw the focus shift

to the issue of the promotion of the vernacular as a written language. This explored the two major trends of writing in Mauritian Creole, and suggested ways in which both popular and literary writing affect attempts to provide a standardized orthography for the language.

In chapter five I examined more closely the academic attempts to standardize the language, and attempted to show that the success of an orthography is as much to do with social as linguistic factors. Chapter six concentrated on the work of LPT and demonstrated that their work within the domain of literacy and the standardization of Mauritian Creole brings together many of the issues raised by the concept of the literization of the vernacular, and which have been exemplified in the four previous chapters.

The quest for status: the changing role of Mauritian Creole

At the centre of this thesis has been the role of Mauritian Creole itself. The status of Mauritian Creole as a spoken language has never been in doubt in Mauritius. As the census results have consistently demonstrated, the number of people claiming it as a first language continues to grow, and this is likely to be replicated in the results for the year 2000. These results do, however, point to the increasing acceptance of the language, and this can be seen in its use in official or semi-official domains.

Although it might appear at first sight that Mauritians are generally apathetic about the promotion of Mauritian Creole, the continued debates surrounding its role within the political, educational and cultural life of Mauritius suggest that there is still considerable interest in any role that it might play in the future.

Mauritius as a case study of the literization of the vernacular

Chapter one portrayed Mauritius as a case study of the literization of the vernacular, and the framework of this thesis has permitted a contrastive study of the issues involved in Mauritius and other countries where

vernacular languages co-exist with languages of wider communication. This study has demonstrated that the motives for the promotion of Mauritian Creole, and the difficulties, and possible solutions that come with that promotion, are common to many countries. It has also shown that the issues that were pertinent at the time of independence are still relevant today. While there may have been an evolution in the terminology and approach, factors such as status, anti-imperialism and social inclusion are still fundamental to those promoting vernacular languages. It is also apparent that such issues can rarely be considered in isolation. The very nature of vernacular languages, and their role within a linguistic hierarchy, presupposes that their implementation within one domain of use will have wider social and linguistic implications.

This thesis has also demonstrated that elements of the situation in Mauritius that might be considered unique, such as the existence of two languages of wider communication, made little difference to efforts to promote Mauritian Creole. Its position within the 'diglossies emboîtées' identified by Baggioni and Robillard is not in essence dissimilar from the traditional concept of diglossia, and so the question of status and the relationship to the lexifier language still remains.

Towards standardization

The Haugen matrix of standardization was suggested in chapter one as a basis for the study of linguistic standardization. It is against this model of standardization that the process of the literization of the vernacular in Mauritius can be studied, and in particular the ideological, educational, sociocultural, and technical issues of the promotion of Mauritian Creole can be compared.

The development of the vernacular to standard suggested by Haugen, as selection of norm, codification of form, elaboration of function and acceptance by the community, can be used as a basis for the analysis of the level of standardization of Mauritian Creole. However, it is also necessary to

assess to what extent the process of standardization follows this linear model.

The selection of a norm is perhaps the area where there has been least problem in Mauritius. Although Bhojpuri is still a widely spoken language on the island, it is continuing to lose its place to Mauritian Creole, and so cannot really be considered as a contender for standardization. The choice of which variety of Mauritian Creole should be used as the norm for codification is similarly without problems. As chapter five stated, while there is some variation in Mauritian Creole, it is widely considered to have a high degree of homogeneity. As a result Ordinary Kreol (Baker 1972: 39) seems to provide the best basis for codification.

Lodge (1993: 156) stated in chapter one, that codification implies the written rather than oral language. As was stated above, there appears to be considerable agreement on the selection of a norm for Mauritian Creole, and so oral codification is already underway. The written codification of Mauritian Creole is, however, not fully determined, although the increasing agreement between the different academic orthographies, and the popular forms of writing the language, suggest that consensus on orthographic codification is within reach. In terms of the standardization of Mauritian Creole, it is apparent that this is still an issue in Mauritius, and that the continued attempts at providing an orthography suggest that while standardization is still not achieved, it seems to be slowly coming closer. The recent work of the Church suggests that orthographic codification is considered important, and that the Church recognizes the role that Mauritian Creole has to play within the social and cultural life of Mauritius. It has also been shown that orthographic proposals are only part of the process of standardization. The informal attempts at writing the language have to be taken into account by those who promote orthographies, if these orthographies are to be accepted by the public in general. It is also important for those who propose orthographies that they publish their orthographies in as wide a variety of publications as possible. It is only if the orthographies are so widely published and open to the public that they will be seen as accessible, and possibly also accepted. In this respect the LPT, and possibly also the

Church, orthographies are in the best position to provide a basis for future standardization.

The elaboration of function of Mauritian Creole has been an on-going process since the 1970s, and there have been concerted efforts amongst activists such as LPT and Dev Virahsawmy to create a literary form of the language. The provision of political philosophy classes similarly demonstrates an awareness on the part of LPT of the need for a more general intellectualization of Mauritian Creole. However, more effort is needed in the domain of scientific and technological vocabulary if Mauritian Creole is to be considered as fully functionally elaborate.

The final concept, that of acceptance, is perhaps the area where there is most need for improvement. There is considerable evidence in this thesis that Mauritian Creole is a more widely accepted language than it once was. Its use within the Church and in the field of education suggest that official acceptance is coming closer, and this may gradually lead to increased acceptance in wider Mauritian society.

This analysis of Haugen's matrix of standardization in relation to the issue of the literization of the vernacular emphasizes the degree to which there is a process of standardization taking place in Mauritius. The agreement on a norm for the language, and the codification and elaboration which is underway suggest that Mauritian Creole is beginning to show the attributes of a standard language. The increased use of the language by the Catholic Church, and its acceptance within adult literacy provision, points to a recognition of its value. Although there is still antipathy towards the use of Mauritian Creole as a written language, this recognition is a prerequisite to full acceptance of the language by the Mauritian public.

This implies that the process of standardization of Mauritian Creole follows the linear model suggested by Haugen. It is certainly the case that selection of the norm has preceded all other aspects of standardization. There is, though, considerable evidence in Mauritius that elaboration of function has come before codification of form. As chapter four demonstrated, popular forms of written Creole have pre-existed attempts at orthographic codification. This suggests that the process of standardization of Mauritian Creole follows that identified by Lodge in the development of

French (Lodge 1993: 27). However, those proposing orthographies for Mauritian Creole, particularly LPT and Dev Virahsawmy, have also been involved in literary production, and proving the adequacy of the language. This has had the effect of uniting the issues of codification and elaboration.

The role of the cultural activist

Central to this thesis has been the role that cultural activists have played in the promotion of Mauritian Creole. In the light of official apathy, activists such as LPT and Dev Virahsawmy have been at the centre of efforts to recognize and promote the language. As a result, although the concept of the promotion of Mauritian Creole is still linked in many people's minds to the independence movement, a study of the different facets of this promotion shows that those in favour of Mauritian Creole have succeeded in widening the debate on the language.

The role of the cultural activist in efforts to promote Mauritian Creole has been fundamental to the promotion of Mauritian Creole. Ironically, this work has benefited from the lack of government involvement. As was demonstrated in the backlash against the policies of the MMM in the early 1980s, official promotion of Mauritian Creole can often be at the whim of current consensus, and political manoeuvring. The involvement of LPT in the promotion of Mauritian Creole may well come in and out of favour in Mauritius, the basis of their work does not actually change. If the work of the likes of LPT is to be implemented on a fully national level, it is necessary for the government to be involved. However, their grassroots involvement does not actually depend on the interest of the government, and in this respect provides the best basis for continued efforts in the provision of literacy and standardization.

Consequences for the future

The question of the literization of the vernacular is evidently highly contentious within a country such as Mauritius where language use has always been associated with cultural status and belonging. My belief is that the role of Mauritian Creole forms an important part of life for all Mauritians, and that, given its near universal use in the country it is inevitable that there will always be calls for it to occupy a more important place within Mauritian society. Although there is evidence that points to an increased usage of French amongst Mauritians, this is still restricted to a tiny minority of homes. There is also evidence that Mauritian Creole is extending into areas of use from which it was hitherto excluded. This implies that, although Mauritian Creole is still considered a primarily oral language by many Mauritians, its use as a written language for a variety of social, cultural, and educational purposes will continue to expand. This use will become an issue of choice for those who wish to read and write in the language, and consequently Mauritian Creole will in a sense free itself from the current debates, particularly in the field of education, that centre on the seemingly forced nature of efforts to promote the language. As a result it is likely that Mauritian Creole will become more widely accepted as a written language, and will in its written form be more widely used, thus accelerating the processes of codification and elaboration. The continued efforts of the promoters of Mauritian Creole are vital in that they seek to improve the status of the language, and create the basis for increased use of the language in its written form.

Further research

This thesis has shown that there is still considerable debate on the role that Mauritian Creole will play in the Mauritius of the future. This implies that the question of the standardization of the language, and its possible implementation as a medium of education, are areas where research is still needed. It is only when the educational difficulties of Mauritius are fully

addressed, and the role that language plays within those difficulties, that Mauritian Creole can begin to be evaluated as a feasible language of education. It is when the language is perceived as an important factor in the development of Mauritius, such as in the field of education, that its creation as a fully standard language can be achieved.

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Appendix A

em CARD
LE CONTRÔLE TOTAL DE VOS DÉPENSES
PAS DE FÉRMILICARRES ENCONTRÉS
PAS DE FACTURES MENSUELLES
PAS D'ACCÈS FEE

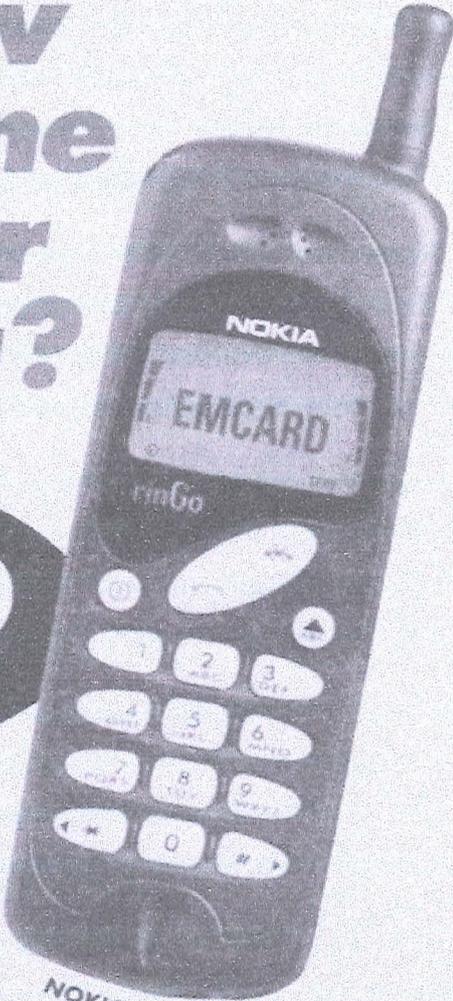
Eritel
CELLULAR TELEPHONE

Kot kapav gagne ene meilleur prix kisa?

Rs 1,999
TOUT INCLUS

10 em
Limited Stock. First come - First served

GRATUIT
1 carte d'appels de
Rs 100



NOKIA rinGo

24hrw HOTLINE 729 2000 CUSTOMER SERVICE 465 2000

HEAD OFFICE: 1 Boundary Road, Rose Hill, Tel: 464 5400 Fax: 464 3010 EMTel CENTRE: NPF Building, Moka Road, Rose Hill, Tel: 465 5400 Fax: 465 1010 SALES OFFICE: NPF Building, Rose Hill, Tel: 465 5400 Fax: 465 1010 SHOWROOMS: John Kennedy Street, Port Louis, Tel: 212 5400 Centre Commercial de Phoenix Tel: 697 1832; Unit 10, La Source Commercial Centre, Flicq, Tel: 453 1400 ET CHEZ TOUS NOS REVENDEURS AGRÉES.

Mo présente moi, Ricardo,
mo éna 17 ans. Moi mom
Sapè mais mo meillèr
camrad malade avec
Sida. Bel souffranss,
mo sagrin zamais noun
rési cause sa risk la
avant.
Zordi mo servi capote.

Ricardo: 17 ans

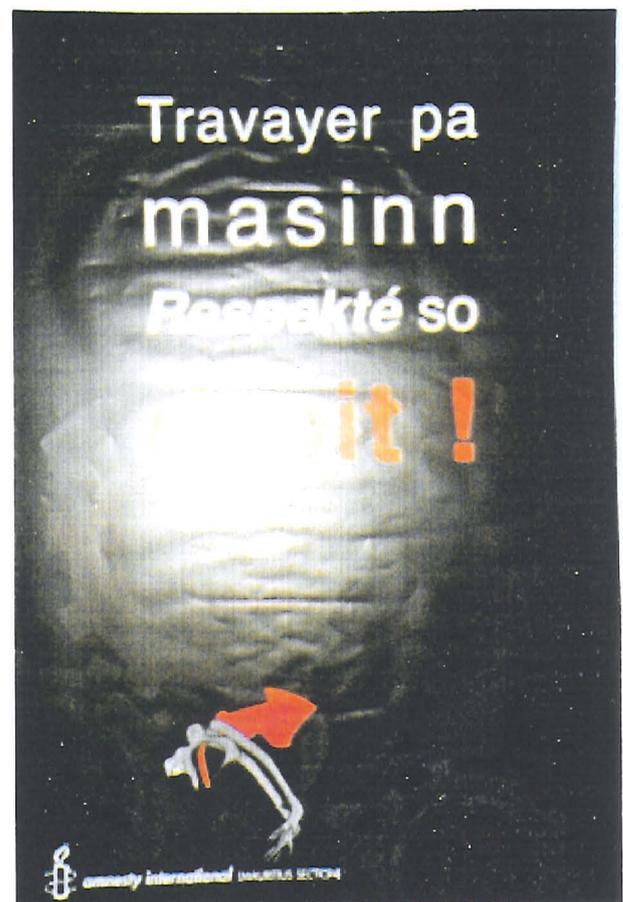
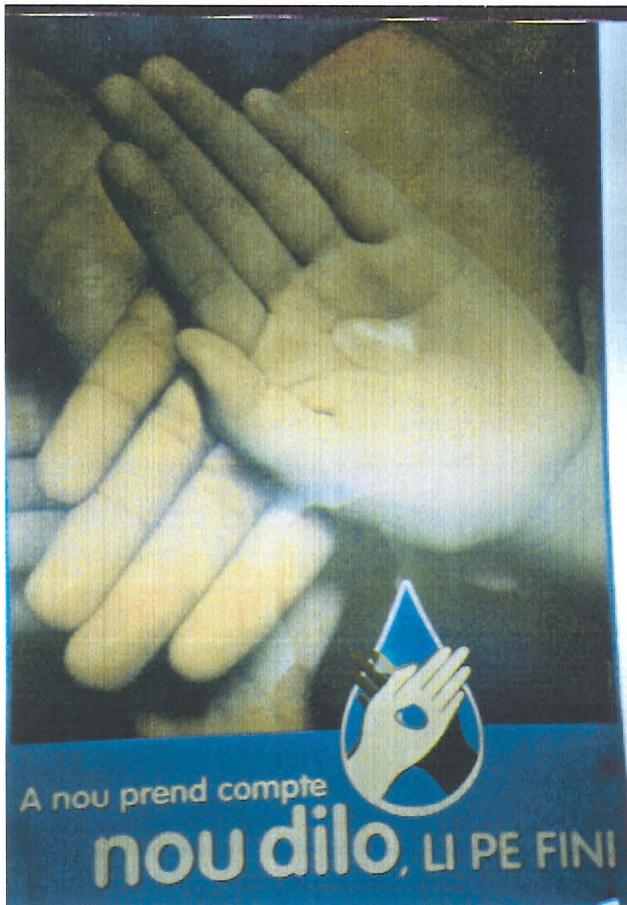


Sida pa get figur

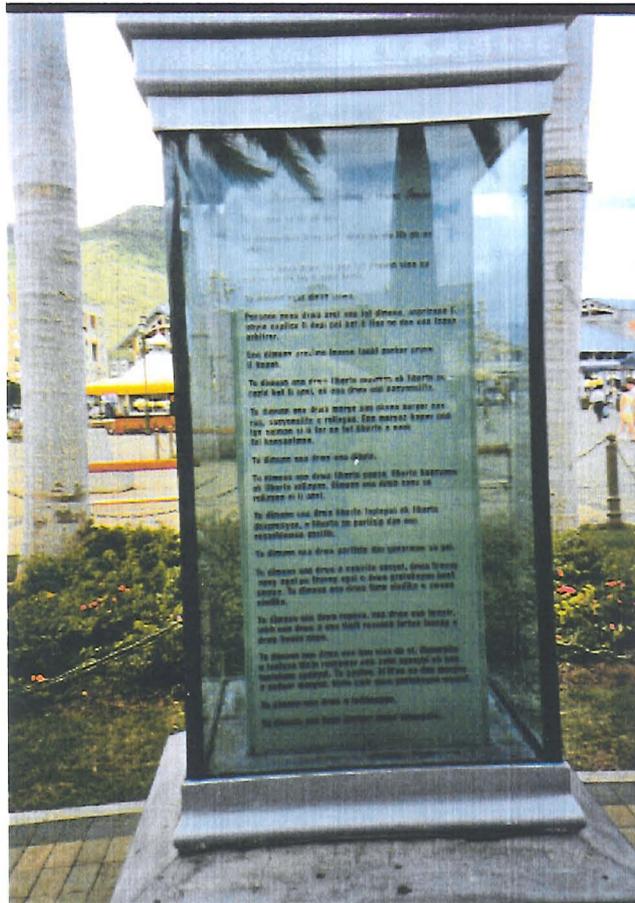


Source: L'Express, 22/3/99

Appendices C and D



Appendices E and F



Appendix G

Later Kouler Set Boudha

Enn dimans gramaten

Mark Antwenn ek mwa
finn koumans marse

lor flan montagn Kouto Raffan

Nous finn travers lor so ledò
pou nou arriv lor latet montagn la

Dans lezanviron midi par la
divan nou lizye
enn espektak preske inik o mond
finn aparet

Enn pake ti montikil later kouler
set kouler koumadir enn larkansiel
in sap depi dan lesiel inn tom lor later

Pou enn moman
nou finn perdi laparol
nou lizye pe kontanple

Mark get mwa, mo get Mark
san dir enn mo nou desann lapant
nou mars lor bann montikil la
finalman nou finn retrouv nou
anba lipye montagn Samarel.

asize dan lombraz enn pye Zamalak
nou finn pran enn ti dezene ansam
apre sa Mark finn koumans rounpiye.

Pandan ki Mark pe dormi
koumadir enn anvoutman finn
pran mwa - asize san konpran -
tou kalite son lanatir finn anvahir
mo servo

letan Mark leve li bouz mwa
li dir mwa eta piti ki to gagnye
to pe reve lizye ouver.

Mo bouz mo latet adrwat
mo bouz mo latet agoss
mo retourn lor later
Mark diman mwa
Ki pe arriv twa piti...
to finn trouv diab lizour...

Non tou korek do Mark
abe less mo dir twa ki
mo finn fer enn rev
to kone piti kan dimoun mor
zot vinn lapousyer

dan mo somey
monn reve ki sa later Samarel la
samem lapousyer Boudha sa
dan mo rev set kalite fler...
sakenn enn kouler diferan finn apare
apre enn timoman...
sa set fler la finn vinn enn sel fler
dan lespas de trwa segonn
fler la finn transforme dan form
enn Boudha kouler Lor...

~~~

## Appendix G translation

### The seven Buddha-coloured earths

On a Sunday morning  
Mark Anthony and I  
started to walk  
up the side of mountain  
We walked up its ridge  
to reach the top of the mountain  
Around midday  
right in front of our eyes  
an almost unique spectacle  
had appeared  
Many little hillocks the colour of earth  
seven colours like a rainbow  
had escaped from the sky to earth  
For a moment  
we were lost for words  
we stared, wide-eyed  
Mark looked at me, I looked at me  
without saying a word we came down the  
slope  
we walked over the hillocks  
finally we found ourselves  
at the foot of Chamarel mountain  
sitting under the shade of a Jamalac tree  
we ate a meal together  
Mark stated to fall asleep  
While Mark was sleeping  
a sort of bewitchment  
came over me – without understanding  
all kinds of natural sounds  
invaded my brain

when Mark woke up he shook me  
he asked me, what's wrong  
you were dreaming with your eyes open  
I moved my head to the right  
I moved my head to the left  
I returned to earth  
Mark asked me  
What's happened to you  
You look like a scare-crow  
We're both fine Mark  
let me tell you  
I've had a dream  
you know when someone dies  
they turn to dust  
in my sleep  
I dreamt that the earths of Chamarel  
Were the same as the dust of Buddha  
in my dream seven types of flower  
each one appeared in a different colour  
after a short time  
the seven flowers became a single  
flower  
in the space of a few seconds  
the flower was transformed  
into a golden coloured Buddha ...

## Appendix H

### L'amnésique (Bertrand de Robillard)

J'ai pris un coup de barre  
au creux d'une rue louche  
je viens de nulle part  
d'une quelconque couche  
j'ai pris un coup de noir  
d'encre dans la mémoire  
j'ai l'âme à la musique  
on m'appelle l'amnésique

je tangué entre deux eaux  
artiste matelot  
martelant dans le flot  
moitié chien moitié loup  
je hurle après minuit  
l'harmonica en joue  
et danse dans le flou  
dans ce brouillard nourri

et je brûle mes nuits  
d'soleil à quatre sous  
au milieu du roulis  
d'alcool de sucre roux  
pour joindre les deux bouts  
de cette mélodie  
mon boulot c'est debout  
du lundi au lundi  
les frangines qui viennent  
se glissent dans ma couche  
sous leurs franges qui traînent  
tellement qu'elles louchent  
puis ferment les paupières  
pour un dernier refrain  
une prière triste  
à quatre mains d'artiste

### San memwar (BdeR, LA, collaboration DdeR)

Mo'ne giny inn gran kout bar  
dan fon inn lari lous  
kot mo'ne né mo pa sir  
kapav mem okinnpar  
mo'ne giny inn gran kout lank  
nwar dan mo souvenir  
mo nam dan lamizik  
zot dir mo san memwar

Mo\_inn gitaris matlo  
ki baloté dan vag  
bat lamézir laroul  
mo irlé ver minui  
ni lisyin ni lélou  
larmonika pé tué  
komandir mo dansé  
dan sa brouyar épé-la

é mo bril mo bane nuit  
ek inn soley dé kas  
dan sa rouliroulo  
feray disik rouz-la  
pou mo zwinn lé dé bout  
sa long mélodi-la  
mo boulo sé dibout  
ant lindi ek lindi  
bane tranesink ki vini  
zot glis anba mo dra  
zot soubiz telman long  
ki zot régar lousé  
apré zot ferm lizyé  
pou inn dernyé réfrin  
dan inn lapriyer tris  
pou kat lamin artis

## Appendix I

| LA STATION-SERVICE                                                                          | THE FILLING-STATION                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Faites le plein, s'il vous plaît.<br><i>Fill it up, please.</i>                             | Rempli teinke s'il vous plaît.<br><i>Ram-plee tank seel-voò-play.</i>                                           |
| Quatre gallons d'essence.<br>(un gallon = 4,5 litres)<br><i>Four gallons of petrol/gas.</i> | Catte gallons l'essence.<br>(un gallon = 4,5 litres)<br><i>Cat gah-lon (one gallon = 4.5 litres) lay-sanss.</i> |
| Deux gallons de ...<br><i>Two gallons of ...</i>                                            | Dé gallons ...<br><i>Day gah-lon ...</i>                                                                        |
| super<br><i>premium</i>                                                                     | sipère<br><i>see-pair</i>                                                                                       |
| gas-oil<br><i>diesel</i>                                                                    | diésel<br><i>diésel</i>                                                                                         |
| C'est combien un gallon d'essence?<br><i>How much is a gallon of petrol/gas?</i>            | Comié aine gallon l'essence?<br><i>Ko-mee-yeah hen gah-lon lay-sanss?</i>                                       |
| Vérifiez ... je vous prie<br><i>Please check ...</i>                                        | Check ... s'il vous plaît<br><i>Check ... seel-voò play</i>                                                     |
| les pneus<br><i>the tyres</i>                                                               | banne la roue<br><i>bann lah roo</i>                                                                            |
| l'huile<br><i>the oil</i>                                                                   | di huile<br><i>dee lwill</i>                                                                                    |
| le radiateur<br><i>the radiator</i>                                                         | radiatère<br><i>rah-dee-ha-tair</i>                                                                             |
| Pouvez-vous ...?<br><i>Could you ...?</i>                                                   | Ou capave ...?<br><i>Hoo kah-pav ...?</i>                                                                       |
| mettre un peu d'eau dans le radiateur<br><i>put some water in the radiator</i>              | mette hein pé dilo dans radiatère<br><i>met hein pay dee-lah dans rah-dee-ha-tair</i>                           |
| mettre un peu de pression dans ...<br><i>put some pressure in ...</i>                       | mette hein pé pression dans ...<br><i>met hein pay pray-see-hon dan ...</i>                                     |
| les pneus<br><i>the tyres</i>                                                               | banne la roue<br><i>bann lah roo</i>                                                                            |
| la roue avant-droite<br><i>the right front-wheel</i>                                        | la roue divan à droite<br><i>lah roo dee-van ha drwatt</i>                                                      |
| la roue arrière-gauche<br><i>the left back-wheel</i>                                        | la roue derrière à gosse<br><i>lah roo day-ree-yeah-air ha goss</i>                                             |
| nettoyer le pare-brise<br><i>clean the windscreen</i>                                       | nettoye pare-brise<br><i>net-toh-haye par-breeze</i>                                                            |
| Pouvez-vous m'aider ...?<br><i>Could you help me ...?</i>                                   | Ou capave aide moi ...?<br><i>Hoo kah-pav head mwa ...?</i>                                                     |
| J'ai une crevaison<br><i>I have a puncture</i>                                              | Mo fine gagne aine fitte<br><i>Moh finn ga-hine enn fitt</i>                                                    |
| Les pneus ne sont pas assez gonflés<br><i>the tyres are slack</i>                           | banne la roue pas assez gonflé<br><i>bann lah roo pah ha-say gon-flay</i>                                       |
| les pneus sont à plat<br><i>the tyres are flat</i>                                          | banne la roue plate<br><i>bann lah roo platt.</i>                                                               |
| Faites-vous des réparations?<br><i>Do you do repairs?</i>                                   | Ou faire réparation?<br><i>Hoo fair ray-pah-rah-see-hon?</i>                                                    |

## Appendix J

# A

- a** enn; a book = enn leev; an apple = enn pomm; she's a doctor = enn doctair/  
 doctriiss sah  
**abandon** bahn-doh-nay  
**abate** cahí-may  
**abdomen** vahntt  
**abide** I can't abide him = Moh pah siportt  
 lee; abide by = respectay  
**ability** capacitay  
**ablaze** it's ablaze = lee pay breeley  
**able** to be able = capav;capah  
**abnormal** anormahl  
**aboard** ah-bore  
**abode** of no fixed abode = pah ay-nah  
 (lah-cahz)  
**abolish** abolee  
**about** (approximately) ah-pay-pray; to  
 run about = gah-loop ee-see, gah-loop lah-  
 bah; to walk about = marss-marssay; what  
 is it about? = kee ay-tay?  
**above** lah-oh; lohr; above all = seer-too  
**abridge** ah-bray-zay  
**abroad** day-ohr  
**abrupt** sayk-sayk  
**abscess** ap-say  
**abscond** soh-vay; (vulgar) boo-ray  
**absence** ap-sahns;absent-minded = jeess-  
 tray  
**absurd** baytt; (fam.) coo-yohn  
**abuse** abeezay  
**abyss** troo;too-roo  
**accelerate** ak-say-lay-ray  
**accept** ak-sayp-tay  
**access** ak-say  
**accident** accidahn  
**accommodation** (lodging) lah-kahzz  
**accompany** accohn-pah-gnay  
**accomplice** cohn-pliss  
**accord** of his own accord= pahr lee-  
 memm; according to = say-lohn  
**accordion** accorday-ohn  
**account** cohntt; on no account = zah-  
 may; on account of = ah-cause; account  
 for = rahnn cohntt; accountable =  
 respohn-sahbb  
**accountant** cohn-tahbb  
**account number** nee-may-roh cohntt  
**accumulate** rah-mah-say  
**accurate** ayk-zahk  
**accuse** ah-kee-zay  
**accustom** ah-bee-tchay; accustomed to  
 = ah-bee-tchay ahr  
**ace** sahn-pee-ohn; foo-aytt  
**ache** (noun) doolair; (vb) fair mahl; my  
 head aches = moh lah-taytt fair mahl  
**acid** (noun) lah-cidd; (adj.) aygg  
**acknowledge** (a fact) ray-connaytt  
**acne** boo-lohn zay-nayss  
**acquaint** to be acquainted (with a per-  
 son) connay; acquaintance = connay-  
 sahnss  
**acquire** gah-gnay  
**acquit** ackeetay  
**acid** ahck  
**acrobat** acrobahtt  
**across** lohtt cotay  
**act** (pretend) (hum.) fair zayss  
**action** to take action = ah-zeer  
**actor** actair  
**actress** actress  
**add** ah-zoo-tay  
**addition** ah-jee-syohn  
**address** (noun) iadrayss  
**adequate** ah-say  
**adhesive** adhesive tape = tape  
**adjust** ah-ziss-tay; ray-glays  
**administer** administray; (give) donnay  
**admiral** ah-mee-rahl  
**admire** add-mee-ray  
**admission** admissiohn  
**admit** add-maytt; admit to = ray-connaytt  
**adolescent** (noun) zay-nayss  
**adopt** adoptay  
**adorn** ormay  
**adult** ah-jilt; grahn  
**advance** (verb) ah-vahn-say; in advance  
 = dah-vahnss; advanced = ah-vahn-say  
**advantage** ah-vahn-tahzz; to take advan-  
 tage of= profitay  
**adventure** ah-vahn-tcheer  
**advert** (noun) ray-clamm  
**advise** cohn-say-yay  
**advocate** (noun) ah-voh-kah  
**aerial** (noun) lahn-tenn  
**aeroplane** ah-vee-ohn  
**affair** zaffair  
**affix** collay  
**afraid** pair; to be afraid of/to = pair  
**afresh** ray

## Appendix K

### A

a de A à Z = dépi/dipi A zisqu'à Z: dépi/dipi ène boute zisqu'à l'auto; dépi/dipi coummencement zisqu'à la-fin.

à il est fidèle à sa parole = li garde so parole; aller à Port Louis = alle Port Louis; ce travail laisse à désirer = ça ène travail bacié/galfaté ça; il vit à Curepipe = li rèsse Kirepipe; ceci est à moi = ça pou moi ça; à qui sont ces livres? = pou qui-çane-là ça, ça bane live-là? aller à pied = alle marçé; acheter à crédit = aceté crédit; deux à deux = dé par dé .

**abaisser** abaisser une vitre = baisse ène vite; abaisser quelqu'un = abaisse ène di-moune; je ne vais pas m'abaisser à ... = mo pas pou abaisse moi pou ...

**abandon** le jardin est à l'abandon = zardin-là ine bandonné

**abandonner** il a abandonné ses enfants = ... li'ne quitte (ou) bandonne so bane zenfant.

**abat-jour** abat-zour.

**abattoir** l'abattoir.

**abattre** abattre un arbre = coupe ène pied/zarbe; abattre un mur = craze ène miraille; abattre une maison = casse ène la-caze; abattre un cheval (blessé) = touille ène çouval/céval; ils l'ont abattu = zaute ine touille li.

**abattu** (le convalescent) est encore très abattu = ... encôre bien faibe

(prononcé: fèb)

**abcès** abcé; apcé; coulou

**abdomen** vente; l'estomac

**abeille** mouce-di-miél; il a été piqué par une abeille =ène mouce-di-miél ine pique li.

**abîme** trou; tourou; précipice.

**abîmer** gaté; cassé; ces photos vont s'abîmer = ça bane photo-là pou gaté; une poupée abîmée =ène poupette (qui'ne) cassé.

**abject(e)** (un procédé) abject = ène travail batiara (mot bhôjpouri/hindi).

**abjurer** bandonné.

**ablation** coupé.

**aboïement** zappé; aboyer = zappé.

**aboïs** il est aux aboïs = so zaffaire pas bon (ou) li dans pince (du bhôjpouri/hindi: paintch = difficulté) .

**abolir** aboli.

**abondance** en abondance = boucoup; il y en a en abondance = éna boucoup.

**abondant** saler abondamment = mette boucoup di-sél.

**abonder** les légumes abondent au marché = éna boucoup léghime dans bazar.

**d'abord** tout d'abord = avant tout.

**aborder** aborder (dans une île) = costé

**abords** les abords (d'un lieu) = l'entouraz.

**aborigène** di-moune là-bas (ou) di-moune dans ça pays-là.

**aboutir** (réussir) réssi.

**aboyer** zappé; le chien aboie = licien-là pé zappé.

**abrégé** l'abrégé (d'un livre) = rézimé (ène live).

**abréger** (un texte) = faire ène rézimé.

**abri** se mettre à l'abri = caciète.

## Appendix L

### AT THE HOTEL

#### USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

|                  |                          |                 |                                              |
|------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| accommodation    | <b>lozemen</b>           | meals           | <b>répa, manzer</b>                          |
| air conditioning | <b>climatizé</b>         | mirror          | <b>miroir, laglace</b>                       |
| bathroom         | <b>lasal dé bain</b>     | nightdress      | <b>robe dénuí</b>                            |
| bathtub          | <b>bainoir</b>           | noise           | <b>tapaze</b>                                |
| bed              | <b>lili</b>              | office          | <b>bureau</b>                                |
| bed, double      | <b>lili bato</b>         | picture         | <b>portré</b>                                |
| bed, single      | <b>lili colézien</b>     | pillow          | <b>lorrier</b>                               |
| bedroom          | <b>lasam dormi</b>       | pillowcase      | <b>tédorier</b> (F. <i>taie d'oreiller</i> ) |
| blanket          | <b>moleton</b>           | power point     | <b>prize/pleg</b>                            |
| bulb             | <b>globe</b>             | pyjamas         | <b>pizama</b>                                |
| chair            | <b>sèze</b>              | reservation     | <b>réservation</b>                           |
| chambermaid      | <b>fem désam</b>         | room            | <b>lasam</b>                                 |
| clothes          | <b>linze</b>             | shirt           | <b>sémise</b>                                |
| cook             | <b>couzinier, sef</b>    | shoes           | <b>soulier</b>                               |
| curtains         | <b>rido</b>              | shorts          | <b>caleson courte</b>                        |
| dining room      | <b>lasal a manzer</b>    | shower          | <b>dous</b>                                  |
| dirty            | <b>sal, malprop</b>      | soap            | <b>savon/savonet</b>                         |
| drawer           | <b>tiroir</b>            | socks           | <b>sosette</b>                               |
| door             | <b>laporte</b>           | staircase       | <b>lescafier</b>                             |
| dress            | <b>robe</b>              | swimming pool   | <b>lapicine</b>                              |
| drinks           | <b>laboisson</b>         | swimming trunks | <b>mayo</b>                                  |
| handkerchief     | <b>mousoir</b>           | switch (light)  | <b>také</b>                                  |
| iron             | <b>ferre a</b>           | suit            | <b>costime</b>                               |
|                  | <b>répasser, caro</b>    | tap             | <b>robinet</b>                               |
| jacket           | <b>palto</b>             | toilet paper    | <b>papier toilet</b>                         |
| jumper           | <b>poulovaire, trico</b> | towel           | <b>serviette</b>                             |
| key              | <b>laclé</b>             | trousers        | <b>long caleson/ caneson</b>                 |
| lift             | <b>lacenserre</b>        | washbasin       | <b>lavabo</b>                                |
| light            | <b>lalimierre</b>        | water           | <b>dilo/délo</b>                             |
| lock             | <b>serrir</b>            | window          | <b>lafénette</b>                             |
| manager          | <b>manager</b>           |                 |                                              |
| mattress         | <b>matla</b>             |                 |                                              |

Take my luggage to . . .  
 Where's the swimming pool?  
 There's too much noise  
 Where's the restaurant?  
 I've lost my key  
 What time is breakfast/lunch/dinner?  
 The water isn't hot enough  
 You may clean the room now  
 Have you made the bed?  
 The bulb's burnt out  
 Close the door/window  
 My shoes have disappeared  
 Can I buy stamps here?  
 Have you got any English newspapers?  
 The television isn't working  
 Room number 15  
 The key to room 21, please  
 I've locked myself out  
 Has any mail arrived for me?  
 The toilet's blocked  
 Have you got another room?  
 We might be late for ...

Amene mo bagaze . . .  
 Cote lapicine été?  
 Enan tro boucou tapaze  
 Cote restauran été?  
 Mo finn perdi mo laclé  
 Qui laire tidézéner/dézéner/dinner?  
 Dilo la pa assez so (F. *chaud*)  
 Ou capave nettoye lasam maintnan  
 Esqui ou finn fini faire lili (F. *le lit*)  
 Globe la finn brilé (F. *bruler*)  
 Ferme laporte la/lafénette la  
 Mo soulier finn disparette  
 Capave asté timbe ici?  
 Ou éna lagazette Anglai?  
 Télévision la pa marcé  
 Lasam niméro quinze  
 Laclé lasam niméro vinté ein, sivouplé  
 Mo finn ferme moi déhor  
 Esqui enan let finn vini pou moi?  
 Toilet la finn bloqué  
 Esqui ou énan ene lot lasam?  
 Quit foi nou pou en rétar pou ...

## Appendix M

Dimunn dir. Zot dir kumkwa esklav ki res laba - lao lor sa montayn la - zot truv solda aprose, zot zete depi lao, zot truv lamor. Sa malgre ki bann-la ti pe vini lor misyon anons zot zot laliberte. Enn zistwar tris. Tro tris mem.

Dimunn dir. Zot dir kumkwa esklav maron ki ti al viv laba - lao lor sa montayn la - truv enn reziman solda Angle pe vinn ver zot, zot zet zot lekor depi falez lao, zot truv lamor anba. Zot pa realize ki bann-la ti lor misyon anons zot abolisyon lesklavaz. Enn zistwar tris. Tro tris mem.

Dimunn dir. Zot dir kumkwa sa bann esklav maron la - seki ti sove al res lao lor sa montayn la - zot ena pu leve enn zur, zot ena pu truv enn reziman solda Angle ek fizi pe vinn ver zot plas kasyet. Lapanik pran zot, zot degaze, zot al kot plas pli ot ki ena lor sa montayn la, zot zet zot kadab depi lor rebor falez, zot truv lamor lor ros anba dan ti-dilo lamer. Enn zistwar tris. Tro tris mem.

Dimunn dir. Zot dir kumkwa bann premye dimunn ki fwir lesklavaz al direk kot sa gran montayn la dan sa dernye ti-but lakot sidwes lil-la dan lespwar truv zot pei lot kote dilo ubyen mem dan lespwar ki enn zur enn navir va koste, va pran zot, return zot dan zot prop pei. Anplas truv enn navir, zot truv plito enn reziman solda Angle avek fizi pe vinn direk lor zot. Zot pa truv okenn sime sove, zot tu, zot lans zot dan levid, depi lao bann pli gran ros lao sa montayn la kot zot ti fer zot bann ti maray pu kasyet lapli soley, e zot tom dan lamer ki akeyir zot lebra uver anba. Zom, fam, zanfan, grandimunn, zot tu, zot zwenn mem mem lamor. An fet, sa bann solda la ti ena lord inform zot ki lesklavaz nepli existe e ki zot lib asterla. Enn zistwar tris. Tro tris mem.

It is said that when the slaves living on the rock saw the soldiers coming, even though it was to tell them of their freedom that they came, they jumped off the rock to their deaths. It is a simply unbearable story.

It is said that when the escaped slaves who had settled on the rock saw a troop of British soldiers making their way towards them, not realising that they had been sent to tell them that slavery was abolished, they threw themselves off the high cliffs to their deaths below. It is a simply unbearable story.

It is said that when the group of escaped slaves who were in hiding on the rock saw a troop of armed British soldiers making their way towards where they lived, in their ignorance of the fact that these soldiers had been sent to tell them that a law abolishing slavery had been introduced, they panicked and flung themselves off the cliff-tops at the highest point of the rock, and met their deaths on the rocky ground and in the shallow seas below. It is a simply unbearable story.

It is said that when the first people to escape slavery made their way to the high rock at the extreme south-west of the island, it was in the hope that from there they might be able to see their homeland or even that one day a ship would come to take them home. When it was instead a detachment of armed British soldiers that they saw coming after them, even though, in fact, the orders these soldiers had were to tell them that slavery no longer existed and that they were now free men, they saw no practical prospect of escape and flung themselves, all of them, from the high tops of the rock that had been their temporary home, and towards the waiting ocean below. Men and women, children and the old, all died in the same way. It is a simply unbearable story.

## Appendix N

### Lentrodiksiyon

Dañ sa diksyoner-la, nu fin sey met tu ban mo ki dimun, ki tuzur koz kreol morisyen (KM) dañ zot lakaz, servi aht zot-mem. Añ plis, nu fin azut ban mo ki nepli servi azordi me ki paret dañ serten vye teks.

Parmi ban mo ki servi azordi, ena en minorite ki swiv en siny spesyal - , § uswa #. Par egzamp  
:kamrad > kamarad

Sa vedir ki nu tret *kamrad* kuma en varyaht *kamarad*. Dañ ka

:pagwa > suval pagwa

li vedir ki pagwa tuzur paret ahsam avek suval. Pu kon plis, fode koñsilte suval dañ so plas alfabetik.

Ena de kalite mo ki nek en minorite dimun servi. Premye dabor, ena ban mo ki nek en grup etnik uswa relizye servi. Nu ekrir sa kalite mo-la apre § e nu endike dañ so definisyon ki grup servi sa. Apart sa, ena ban mo eh pe rar me ki pa asosye ek en grup etnik uswa relizye. Nu fer sa kalite mo-la swiv # pu endike ki li en mo ki pa tu dimun kone.

Ena tuzur en ti pwanyar t diyañ ban mo ki nu fin truve nek dañ ban vye teks. San ban mo-la, nu fin ekrir zot aht brakat kare [ ]. Par egzamp

{tanye} "taniers" 1888:453 > larivyer tanye, latanye

⊞Baissac 1888 fin ekrir "taniers" ki nu sipoze dimun ti pronoñs "tanye". Azordi zur, sa pye-la apel "latanye" me so vye form egziste tuzur dañ nom en larivyer.

Nu fin koñsilte preske tu ban teks ki fin ekrir ziska 1888, 1 ek en seleksyon ban teks pli modern. Pu sa ban teks-la, suvañ referaht ki nu done li nek en dat. Pu kone ki sanla ki ti ekrir zot, bizen koñsilte lalis lor tablo 5.

Pu sak mo kreol, ena definisyon ah angle (ki swiv E) ek ah frañse (ki swiv F). Si en mo li nom en plant, en zanimo, ets e si nu kon so nom syantifik, nu met sa añañ so definisyon frañse aht + +. Kum sa, dañ definisyon "fatak", u pu truv so nom syantifik +Panicum maximum+.

Si en mo morisyen en verb, so definisyon ah angle ek ah frañse li en verb osi. Alor nu pa truv li nesaser endike ki sa mo-la en verb. Selmañ, ena ka kot definisyon-la ambigi. Par egzamp, ah angle "lift" kapav en nom uswa en verb. Dañ ban ka kum sa nu azut [n] pu "nom", [v] pu "verb", [a] pu azektif, ets.

Parfwa, apre en definisyon frañse, ena en dat aht de taliny kase, kuma :1831:. Sa vedir ki sa mo fin paret premye fwa dañ en teks ah KM ki ti ekrir ah 1831. Si manyer ki dimun ti ekrir li dañ sa lepok-la ehnterisañ, nu fin azut sa osi. Par egzamp, "pagné" 1818a: (pu panye, frañse "panier").

Otañ ki posib, nu don leñformasyon lor lorizin sak mo. Sa kalite leñformasyon-la tuzur swiv □. < vedir "sort dañ". Pu ban surs preñsipa, nu servi en sel let: F frañse, B bañtu, H hindi (uswa en lot langaz indo-aryen), M malgas, ets. Ena leñformasyon lor tu ban siny ek abrevyasyon ki nu servi dañ Tablo 4.

## Appendix N translation

### Introduction

In compiling this dictionary we have tried to include as many as possible of the words which are currently employed, amongst themselves, by people who always speak Mauritian Creole (MC) in their own homes. We have also included words which do not meet this criterion but which are found in old texts written in MC.

A minority of the MC words which are current appear in the dictionary following one of three symbols, the colon :, the section symbol § or hash #. Words following the colon are treated as variants of another form of the same word. For example:

:kamrad > kamarad

means that kamrad is considered a variant form of kamarad and that the latter should be looked up for further information. This convention is also used where a particular word occurs only in one or two set phrases. For example:

:pagwa > suval pagwa

means that the adjective pagwa is found in MC only with the noun suval, and that suval pagwa has its own entry under suval.

Words which appear to be employed by only a minority of first-language speakers of MC are of two kinds. First there are those employed almost exclusively by members of a particular ethnic or religious group. Such words follow the symbol § and the particular group which employs the word is identified within the definition. Secondly, there are words which are simply rare and which are not associated with a particular ethnic or religious group. Such words follow the symbol #.

Words known only from old MC texts follow the obsolete symbol † and are contained within square brackets, for example:

†(tanye) "taniers" 1888:453 > larivyer tanye, latanye

This means that tanye is our interpretation of how Baissac's spelling "taniers" was to be pronounced. Today, tanye is current only in larivyer tanye, which has its own entry under larivyer, and that the tree itself is now known exclusively as latanye, which should also be consulted.

The old texts which have been examined word by word include almost everything known and available written by 1888,<sup>1</sup> and a selection of later texts. Texts to 1888 are generally referred to by date only. To identify their authors, the list immediately preceding the bibliography should be consulted.

Certain words which are current in MC today are found in old texts with meanings which are obsolete. In such cases, the obsolete meaning is given within square brackets following the symbol †, as for example in:

selen E †(1. Shilling); 2. 50 cents coin.

In other words, the British shilling, formerly in use in Mauritius, has long since ceased to be legal tender and thus the word is no longer current in that sense. The word continues to be applied to the Mauritian coin, of similar dimensions, which replaced it.

MC words belong to the same word class as their glosses in English and French. Where the word class of the gloss might be ambiguous, as in the case of the English word "side", the word class is overtly indicated by an abbreviation between square brackets, i.e. [n] Side or [v] Side, indicating that the MC term glossed as "side" is either a noun or a verb.

As most MC verbs have both a short and a long form, the sign / is used to mark the division between the two. Thus don/e means that the short form of the verb "to give" is don and its corresponding long form is done. All such verbs are entered in the dictionary alphabetically according to their long forms.

Most MC verbs and adjectives may be reduplicated. Such forms are included in the dictionary only if their meanings do not conform to the normal rules summarized here. Reduplication of the long forms of verbs with both short and long forms, and of the unique forms of other verbs, emphasizes duration and/or quantity, e.g. zot ti marse marse "they walked and walked", ti-baba-la plore plore "the baby cries a lot/keeps on crying". Where the short form of verbs having both short and long forms comes first, the effect is both iterative and more casual, e.g. zot ti mars-marse "they went for a stroll/walked about a bit (without any particular destination in mind)", manz-manze! "have a bite to eat/help yourself to the snacks" (as opposed to manze! "eat your dinner"). For adjectives, the rule is very simple: reduplication of those which precede the noun ([a<sup>2</sup>]) increases their intensity whereas reduplication diminishes the intensity of those which follow the noun ([a]). Compare: en zoli-zoli rob "a very beautiful dress" with en rob ruz-ruz "a reddish dress".

Glosses are given first in English (following E) and then in French (following F). Where the MC word is the name of a species of flora or fauna, its scientific name, if known, is given within the French gloss between plus signs, e.g. +Panicum maximum+.

Dates of first attestation are given between broken lines, e.g. :1831:. The actual spelling employed in the original text is quoted if it is of special interest, e.g. : "motié" 1822:.

Etymological information follows the symbol □. The sign < is to be interpreted as meaning "deriving from". The main sources of MC vocabulary have single letter abbreviations such as F "French", B "Bantu", D "Dravidian", M "Malagasy" etc. Full details of the abbreviations and symbols used in the dictionary are set out in Table L.

## Appendix O

### Mo Darnié Madam

Get lor miray, mo madam so portré,  
Vadjiré li'ankor vivan. Mo pansé  
Tablo la enn sedev: Frèr Pandolf tchi  
Travay bien djir lor la; astèr get li.  
Nou'asizé, nou admir li? Mo'nn mansionn  
Frèr Pandolf expré pou djimounn ki konn.  
Kouma ou, lir profondèr enn regar,  
Ar ki bann sekré figir pa gagn bar,  
Kontan tourn vèr mwa (parski sé ziss mwa  
Ki ouvèr ousa ferm sa rido la)  
Andjiré zot pé rod koné kifèr  
So regar koumsa; pa bizen ou pèr,  
Lezot avan ou tchi djimandé. Non.  
Pa quar prezanss so misié tchi met ton  
Lazva lor lazou Madam la: dwatet  
Frèr Pandolf tchi djir : "Ou manto kasiet,  
Madam, ou pwagné enpé tro;" ou bien  
"Enposib koulèr reprodwir enn ten  
Dan demi-ton enn tchi soupir." Pou li.  
Enn tchi konpliman, mé asé fleri  
Pou fèr lazva tenn so lazou. Toultan  
Madam la — kouma pou djir sa? — kontan  
Fèr lekèr kontan; dan so lizié tou  
Korek é so lizié vwayaz partou.  
Peyna triyaz! Mo lamour konzigal.  
Lalimiér lizour tass dan foupamal,  
Enn branss seriz ki enn pov batchara  
Kass dan verzé donn li, enn gran gopia  
Ki fèr kadadak ansam - mem parey  
Dan so zizman, nou merit mem lakey.  
Mem delikatess. Lor rekonpanss zom  
Li sort premié - mé vadjiré - kolom  
Ek Gran Patron ena mem ran, mem grad.  
Eski mo pa pou tom andeor kad  
Lev lavwa lor bagatel? Si kikenn  
Ki konn kozé — mwa mo pass — pran lapenn  
Pou fèr li konpran: "Sa, li pa korek,  
Ou pé plen mwa; si ou pa aret sek  
Ou pou depass born" — si li ekouté,  
Aprann so leson, mé pa rezenbé,  
Deklar pli mari, envant mil eskiz  
— Bé, mo pou andeor kad. Mo refiz  
Tom andeor kad. Wi, li fèr so zess  
Ar mwa'si, parey kouma ar leress,  
Peyna zess! Li depass born, mo donn lord;  
Zess tegn net. Astèr get li. Pa rikord?  
Vadjiré li vivan! Nou'alé. Bannla  
Pé atann anba. Papa tchifi la,  
Nou konn so lekèr, pa pou rod tchir lay  
Lor sa zafer dot, djiminié total?  
Mo'lé ziss mo drwa dapré mo merit  
Mé sé so tchifi, less mo djir toutswit,  
Ki mo kontan. Non, ansam nou desann  
Ou ek mwa. Get kouma Neptchinn pé fann  
Ar sevaldemèr. Boté anbronz rar  
Claus Innsbruck tchi kré pou amatèr lar.

*Robert Browning*

## Appendix O translation

### MY LAST DUCHESS

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said  
'Frà Pandolf' by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps  
'Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint  
'Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
'Half-flush that dies along her throat:' such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 't was all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked  
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this  
'Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
'Or there exceed the mark'—and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

La version de 1985

## La mes kreol

### Lantre:

O nom Diper, Difis, Di sentespri. Amenn.

Lagras Zézi nu Segner  
Lamur Bondje nu Papa  
Ek la kominjon Lasprisen  
tuzur avek zot

Avek u osi.

### Preparasyon penitansjel

Pu prepar nu leker  
Pu selebre lekaristi  
A nu rekonet tu nu pese

Mo konfes devan Bondje tu pwisan  
mo rekonet devan zot mo bann frer ek mo bann ser  
ki mo finn fer boku pese  
par mo panse, par mo koze  
par se ki mo finn fer  
ek par seki mo pa finn fer.

Wi, vre mem, mo finn fer boku pese  
A koz sa mem, mo sipljer la Vjerz Mari,  
tu bann anz ek tu bann sen  
Ek zot osi, mo bann frer ek mo bann ser  
prje Bondje nu Segner pu mwa.

Bondje tu pwisan montre nu so mizerkord.  
Li pardonn nu bann pese  
Ek li donn nu lavi etemel. Amenn.

### Glorja

Lagwar lao, pli lao dan lesjel pou Bondje,  
Lape lor later pu dimun ki li kontan,  
Nu lue Twa, nu beni Twa,  
Nu ador Twa, nu glorije Twa,  
Nu rann Twa gras pu grander to la gwar.  
Segner Bondje lerwa lesjel  
Bondje, Papa tu pwisan  
Segner Zézi-Kri, sel Garson Bondje  
Segner Bondje, agno de Dje  
Twa ki tir lemond dan so pese, pitje pu nu.  
Twa ki tir lemond dan so pese ekut nu laprjer.  
Twa ki pe asize adrwat to Papa, pitje pu nu.  
To tu sel ki sen, To tu sel Segner.  
To tu sel le tré, Zézi-Kri, avek le sentespri.  
Dan lagwar Bondje nu Papa. Amenn.

La version de 1999

## Lames an kreol

### Lantre:

O non diPère, di Fils ek di Saint Esprit. Amenn.

Lagras Jésus nou Segner  
Lamour Bondie nou Papa  
Ek la kominjon L'Esprit Saint,  
touzour avek zot.

E avek ou osi.

### Preparasyon penitansiel.

Anou prepar nou leker  
Pou selebre lekaristi  
Anou rekonet tou nou pese.

Mo konfes devan Bondie tou pouisan  
mo rekonet devan mo bann frer ek mo bann ser  
ki mo finn fer bokou pese  
par mo panse, par mo koze  
par seki mo finn fer  
ek par seki mo pa finn fer.

Oui, vre mem, mo finn fer bokou pese.  
A koz sa mem, mo sipliye la Vierz Marie,  
tou bann anz ek tou bann sin  
Ek zot osi, mo ban frer ek mo bann ser,  
priye Bondie nou Segner pou moi.

Bondie tou pouisan montre nou so mizerkord.  
Li pardonn nou bann pese,  
Ek li donn nou lavi etemel. Amenn.

### Gloriya

Lagloir lao, pli lao dan lesiel pou Bondie,  
Lape lor later pou dimoun ki li kontan,  
Nou loue Toi, nou beni Toi,  
Nou ador Toi, nou glorifie Toi,  
Nou rann Toi gras pou grander to lagloir.  
Segner Bondie leroi lesiel  
Bondie, Papa tou pouisan  
Segner Jésus Christ, sel Garson Bondie  
Segner Bondie, agno Bondie  
Toi ki tir pese dan lemond, pitie pou nou.  
Toi ki tir pese dan lemond ekout nou lapriyer.  
Toi ki pe asiz adroit to Papa, pitie pou nou.  
To tou sel ki sin, To tou sel Segner.  
To tou sel le Treo, Jésus Christ, avek le Saint Esprit  
Dan lagloir Bondie nou Papa. Amenn.

## **Appendix P translation**

### **The Mass in Creole**

#### **Entrance:**

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus  
The love of God our Father  
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
Be with you

And also with you

#### **Penitential Rite**

We prepare our hearts  
To celebrate the Eucharist  
We acknowledge all our sins.

I confess before all powerful God  
I acknowledge before my brothers and sisters  
that I have greatly sinned  
by my thoughts, by my words  
by what I have done  
and by what I have not done.

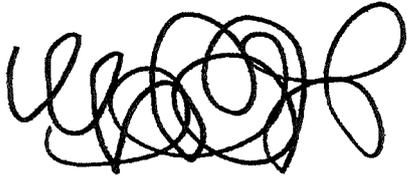
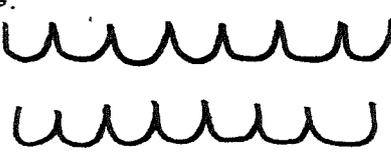
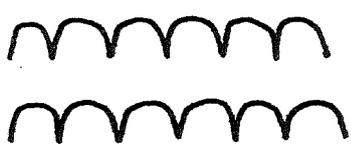
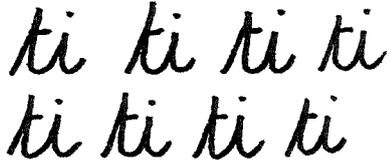
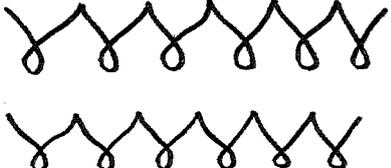
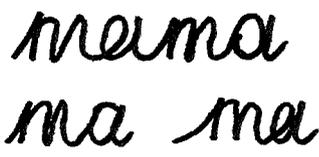
Yes, I have greatly sinned  
For that reason, I beseech the Virgin Mary,  
all the angels and all the saints  
And you, my brothers and sisters,  
To pray to the Lord our God for me

God, all powerful, shows us his mercy  
He forgives all our sins  
And he grants us eternal life. Amen.

#### **Gloria**

Glory in the highest in heaven for God  
Peace on earth for those with whom he is pleased  
We praise You, we bless You,  
We adore You, we glorify You,  
We thank you God for the greatness of your glory  
The Lord God king of heaven  
God, all powerful Father  
The Lord Jesus Christ, only son of God  
Lord God, the lamb of God  
You who saved the world from sin, have pity for us.  
You who saved the world from sin, hear our prayer.  
You who sit on the right side of your Father, have pity for us.  
You are a saint, You are the Lord  
You are the Trinity, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Ghost  
In the glory of God our Father. Amen.

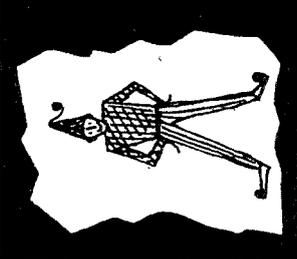
Appendix Q

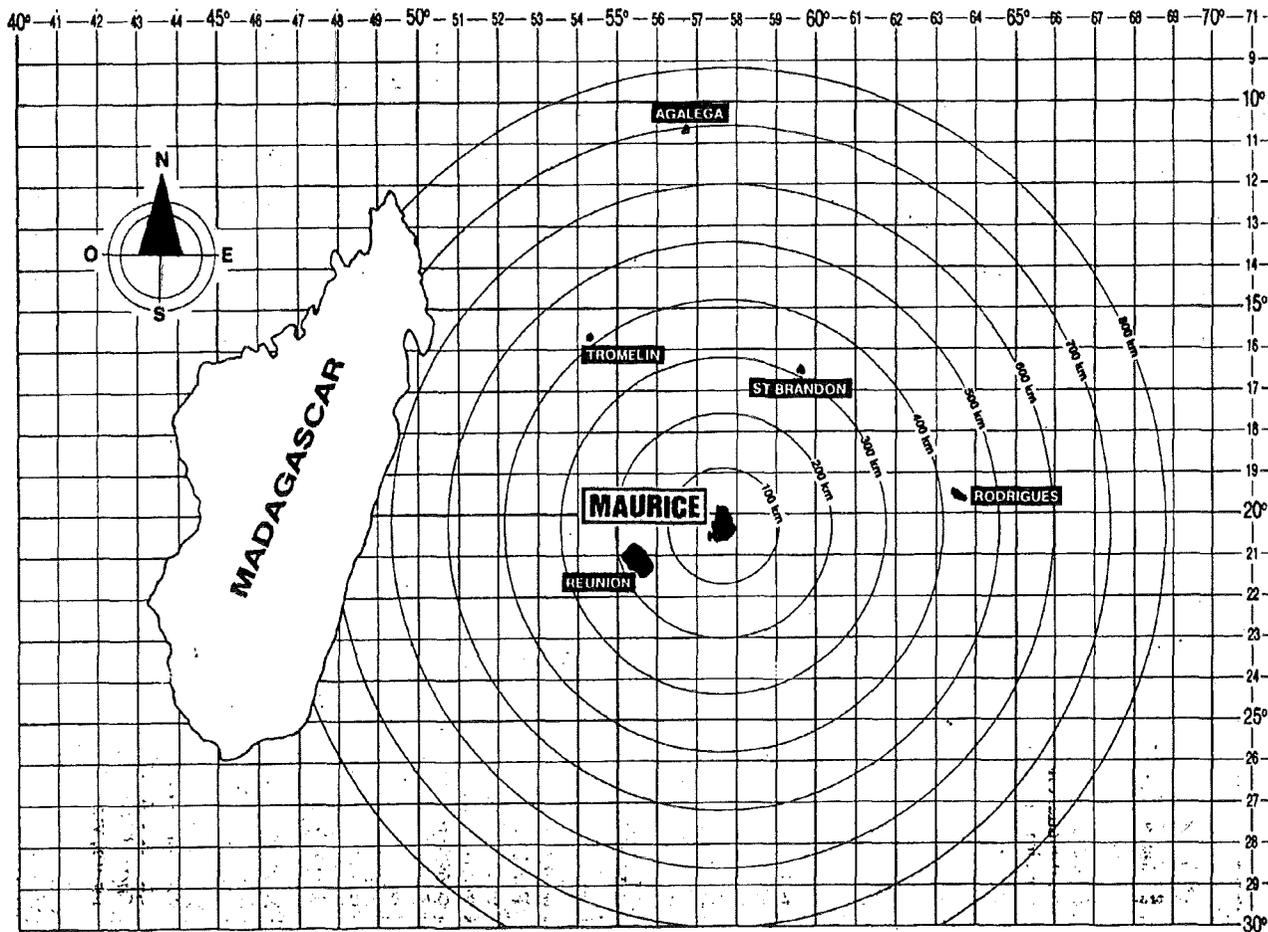
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| 5.    | 6.    |
| 7.   | 8.   |
| 9.   | 10.  |
| 11.  | 12.  |

Appendix R

|           |            |             |
|-----------|------------|-------------|
| <i>bo</i> | <i>bon</i> | <i>bonn</i> |
| <i>do</i> | <i>don</i> | <i>donn</i> |
| <i>fo</i> | <i>fon</i> | <i>fonn</i> |
| <i>po</i> | <i>pon</i> | <i>ponn</i> |
| <i>so</i> | <i>son</i> | <i>sonn</i> |
| <i>to</i> | <i>ton</i> | <i>tonn</i> |

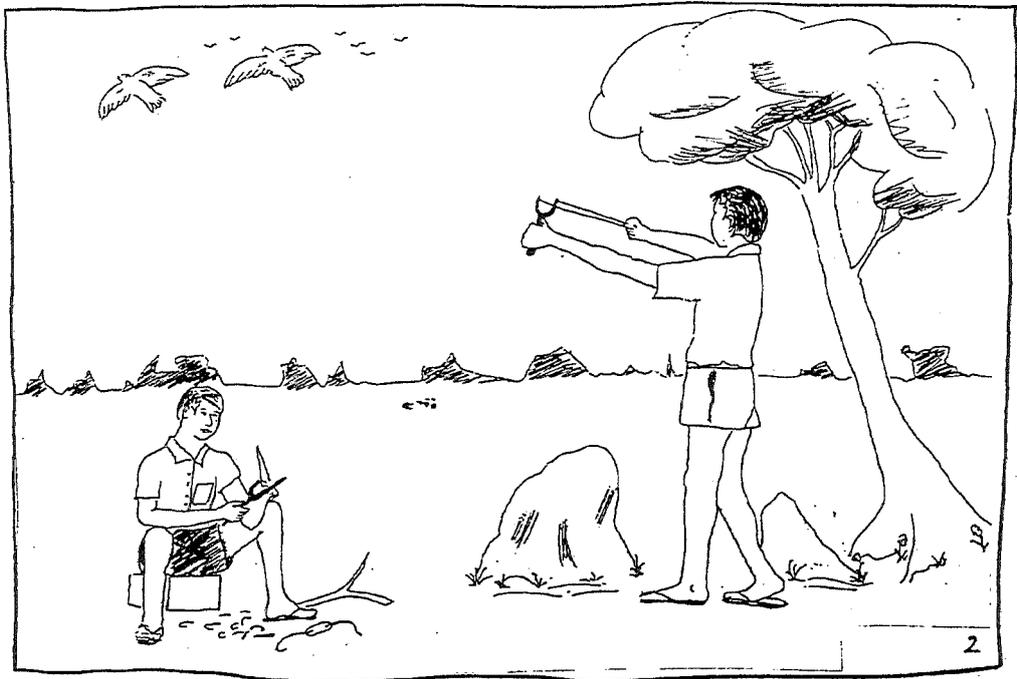
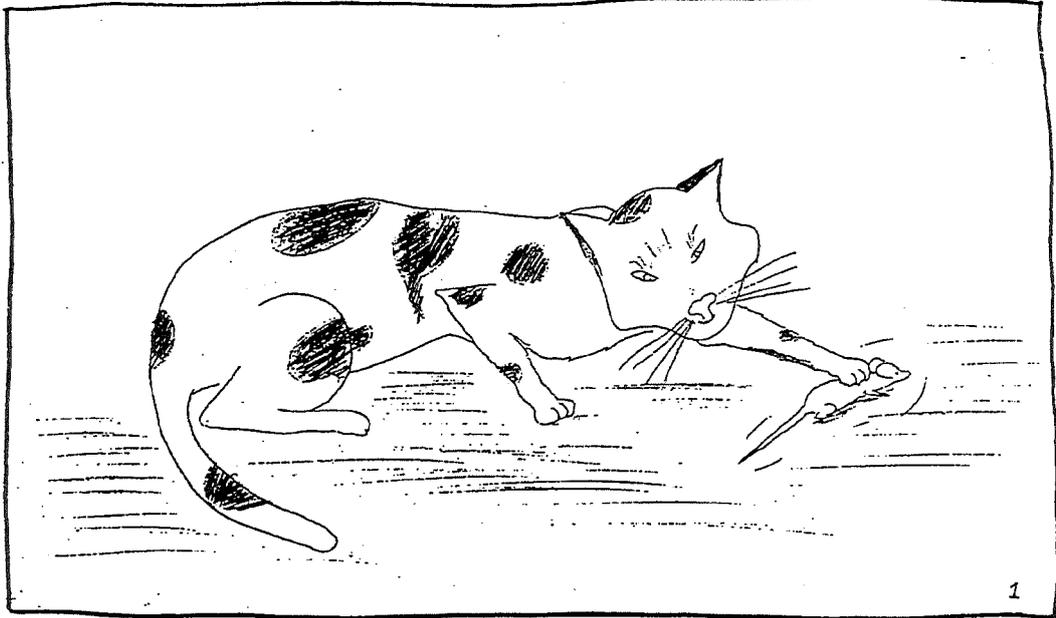
Appendix S

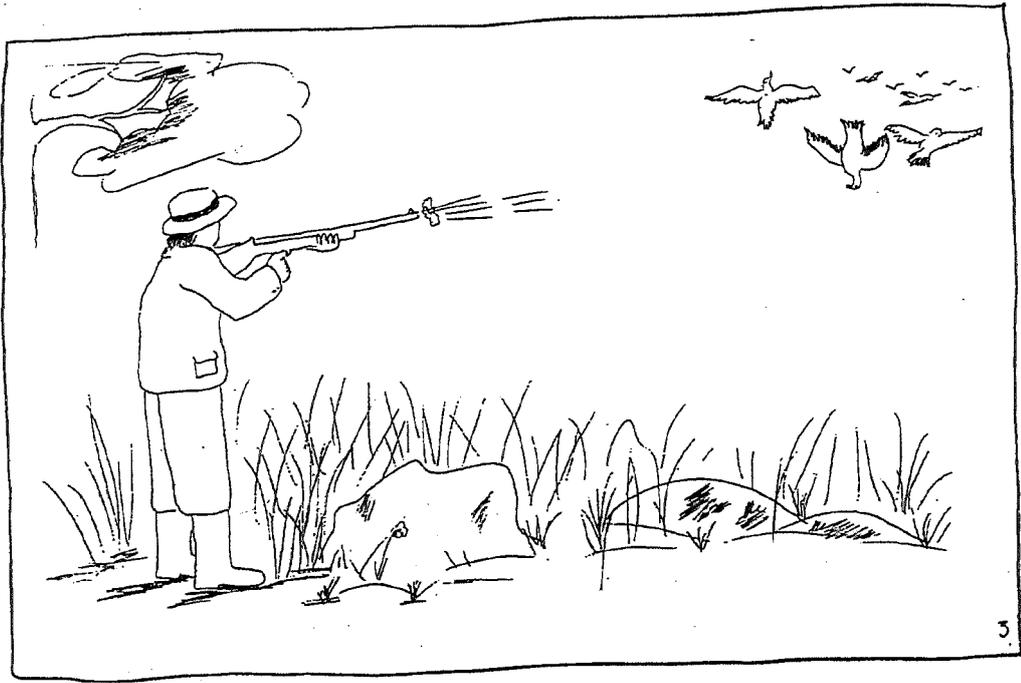
|   |   |   |   |   |                                                                                    |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|
| F | L | S | Z | T | Y                                                                                  |   |
| A | E | I | O | U |  | M |
| B | K | R | D | P |                                                                                    |   |

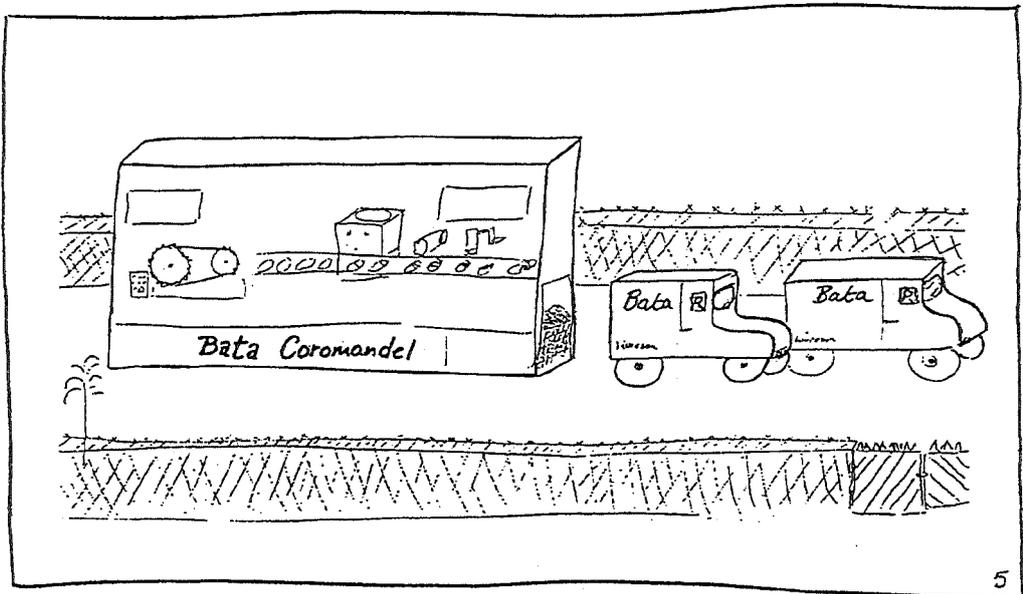


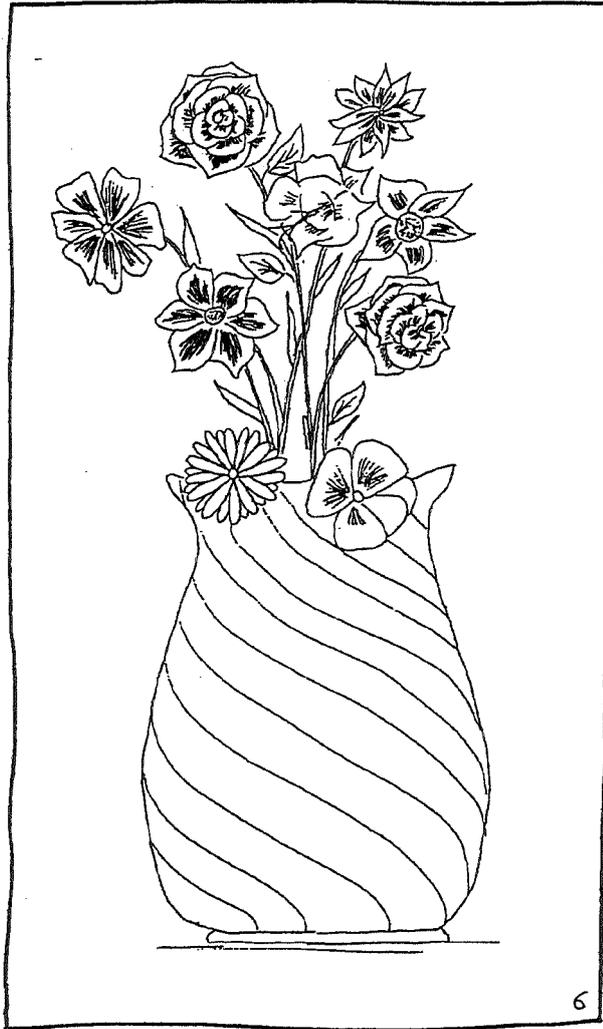
Lor sa map-la, ena bann laliyn an long (londitid), ek bann laliyn an larzer (latitid). Sak laliyn ena so nimeru. Pu kone kot enn siklonn ete, u bizin ekut **WARNING SIKLONN**. Zot pu dir enn nimeru londitid, ek enn nimeru latitid. Si u gete kot sa de laliyn-la krwaze, lerla u met enn pwin laba. Sa vedir siklonn-la laba. Met ler, ek nom siklonn akote pwin-la. Sak **WARNING**, zot pu donn nuvo londitid ek latitid. Sak fwa met enn pwin, lerla zwenn bann pwin-la ansam.

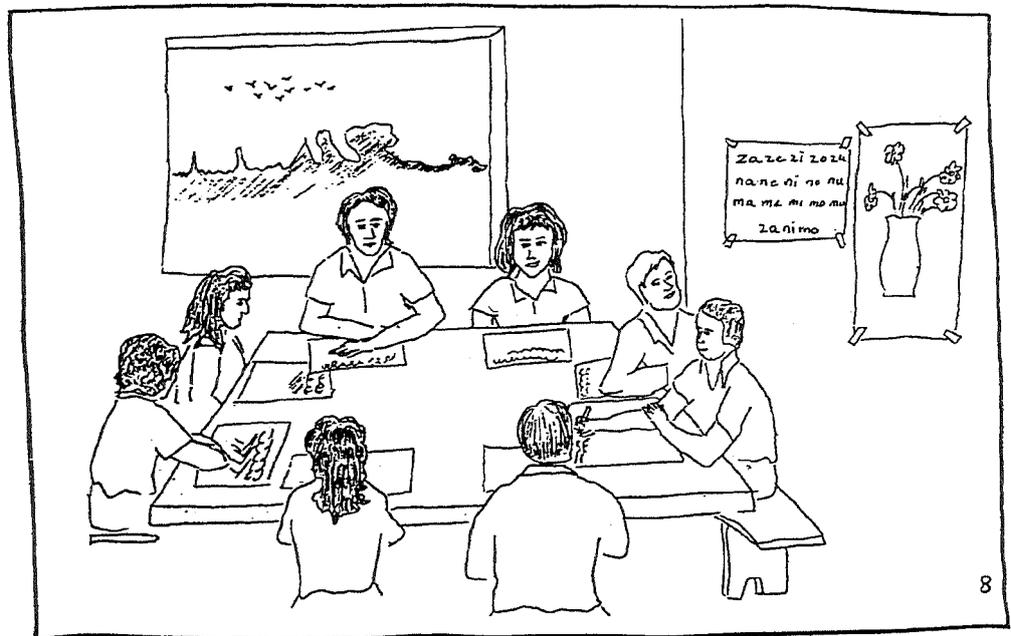
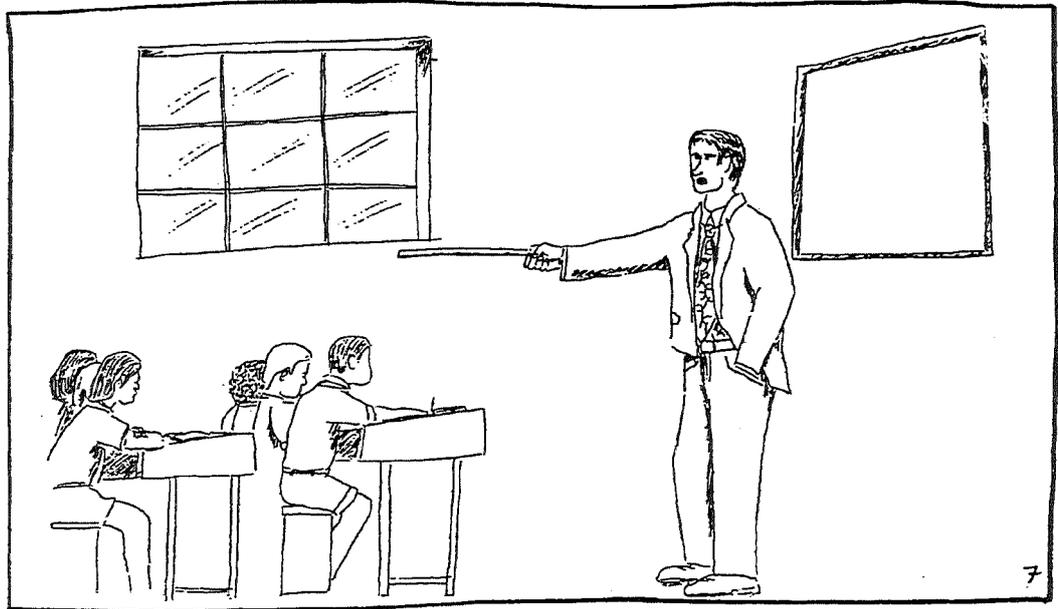
Appendix U











alala fri pran seki ule  
alala fri manz seki ule  
alala fri ki finn mir lor pye  
alala fri bon bon kalite



nu ena goyav nu ena banann  
nu ena zat ek zavoka  
nu ena leksi nu ena longann  
nu ena papay ek zanana



<sup>109</sup> Look at the fruit, take what you want/ Look at the fruit, eat what you want/ Look at the fruit which has fallen at our feet/ Look at the fruit, such good quality  
We have guava, we have bananas/ We have custard apple and avocados/we have lychee,  
we have longan fruit / We have papaya and pineapple

**Enn fam ti dan so lakaz ar so galan. So mari ti finn sorti depi aswar san dir li kan li ti pu rantre. Gran bomatin kok sante komer tann bat laport. Li dimande: - Ki la?**

**So mari reponn: - Mwa.**

**Lerla komer dir ar so galan:**

**- Al vitman kasye dan sa gran lazar ki dan kwinn lakaz.**

**Li al kasye.**

**Ler komer finn uver laport so mari dimann li sipa li finn met dilo dan dife pu fer kafe. So fam dir li: - Ala mo al mete; me kuma u 'turn vitman kumsa?**

---

<sup>110</sup> A woman was in her home with her lover. Her husband had been out since the evening without telling her when he would be back. In the morning, as the cock crowed, a knock was heard at the door. She asked, "Who is it?" Her husband replied: "It's me." She said to her lover: "Quick, go and hide yourself in that big pot in the corner of the house. He went to hide. When she opened the door her husband asked her if she had put the water on the fire to make coffee. His wife asked him: "I'll do it; but why did you return so quickly?"

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