CHAPTER 5

Indo-Aryan influence in Mauritian Creole

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This paper looks at possible Indo-Aryan influence on the grammar of Mauritian Creole. Although several Indo-Aryan languages have been in close contact with Mauritian Creole for almost two hundred years, they appear to have had only minimal impact on its syntax. So far, the *NP so NP genitives* (Corne 1986) and the semantics of certain prepositions (Kriegel et al. 2008) have been identified as having been influenced by the Indo-Aryan languages. This paper revisits the *NP so NP genitives* and looks at three other aspects of Mauritian Creole syntax, viz., null subjects of finite transitive clauses, subject-less finite clauses with topic object, and the obligatory presence of a second subject pronoun in serial verb constructions and argues that these may have been modelled on, or reinforced by, parallel structures in Indo-Aryan languages. This paper then contributes to our understanding of the development of Mauritian Creole syntax as well as supports the thesis that in language contact situations syntax is also susceptible to external influence although not to the same extent as phonology and morphology (Thomason and Kaufman 1988; Heine and Kuteva 2005).

Keywords: Indo-Aryan influence, *NP so NP* genitives, null impersonal subjects, topic sentences, serial verbs

Introduction

In language contact situations, it is generally assumed that external influence on one of the languages in contact is generally more visible in phonology, morphology and the lexicon than in syntax (see for instance Sanchez 2004; Silva-Corvalán 2007, Winford and Migge 2007; Siegel 2008, 2015, Jennings and Pfänder 2018 among others). However, Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 118) and others have argued that syntax may not be completely impervious to external influence or interference (see also Heine and Kuteva 2005, 2008). In fact, Thomason and Kaufman suggest that syntactic interference may be as common as phonological interfer-

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ence. Looking at French-based Mauritian Creole and its syntactic development over the last three hundred years, it seems, at least at first sight, that such a suggestion may not be quite correct given the paucity of evidence of any significant external influence particularly on its grammar (core syntax), which is fundamentally modelled on the grammar of French, and which remains perhaps structurally closer to it than the grammars of any other French Creoles (e.g., Haitian, Guadeloupean, Guyanese, and so on). Nevertheless, there are a few examples, such as the typologically unexpected possessor-possessed type genitive *Zan so papa* 'John's father' (literally *John his father*) (Chaudenson 1981: 244; Corne 1986; Baker and Corne 1986, among others) and the semantics of certain prepositions (Kriegel et al. 2008), that have been directly attributed to contact with the Indo-Aryan languages (e.g., Bhojpuri, Hindi, Urdu, and others) that were brought to Mauritius in the nineteenth century by Indian contract workers. And, as this paper will show, closer examination of the grammar of Mauritian Creole reveals that there may be other constructions where the influence of these languages, particularly Bhojpuri, may be detected, for example subject-less impersonal sentences, topicalized transitive OV constructions, and serial verb constructions. The paper suggests that, although external structural influence (in terms of reinforcement) in Creole languages may not be as common as, for example, phonological interference (see Mühlhaüsler 1980), it does nevertheless exist, and is sometimes relatively more common than is often thought to be, particularly at some abstract structural level. To that end, the paper contributes to existing research that seeks to demonstrate that, in language contact situations, the syntax of one of the languages is just as vulnerable to external influence as is its phonology, morphology, and lexicon.

This paper will therefore focus on these three types of constructions as well as briefly revisiting the possessor-possessed *NP so NP* genitive, first discussed in some detail in Corne (1986). Section 1 provides some background socio-historical information on the speakers of the Indo-Aryan languages in Mauritius. Section 2 discusses the possibility of Indo-Aryan influence on the development of *NP so NP* genitives. It suggests, following Syea (1994, 1995), that this type of genitives derives from a 'mixed' [POSS — possessed — possessor] type or what Heine and Kuteva (2001) call anti-topic genitive (e.g., *so pitit ppa Azor* 'Old Azor's child' — literally 'his child old Azor') via fronting of the possessor. Such displacement could have been internally motivated in order to satisfy local agreement with POSS (see Syea 2013b) or forced under pressure from Hindi and Bhojpuri [possessor-POSS-possessed] genitive. Section 3 examines finite sentences with null impersonal subjects and suggests that these sentences may have been influenced by Indo-Aryan finite clauses with a null impersonal subject. Section 4 looks at pseudo-passive constructions (structurally similar to short passive or topic con-

structions in Indo-Aryan languages and other languages) and argues that these are in fact topic constructions with a null impersonal subject. It suggests that they too may have been influenced by, if not modelled on, structurally similar Indo-Aryan sentences. Section 5 focuses on serial verb constructions in Mauritian Creole, particularly on the obligatory retention of a subject pronoun in front of the second verb and suggests that Indo-Aryan verb-verb (or serial verb) constructions may have played a role in making its presence obligatory, thereby resulting in an interesting but significant difference between Mauritian Creole and Seychelles Creole, in which the second subject pronoun remains optional. Section 6 provides a brief discussion of the changes or innovations discussed in this paper. Section 7 concludes the discussion.[1]

1. Background

There is plenty of empirical evidence from the early texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see the collections in Chaudenson 1981 and Baker and Fon Sing 2007) that by the time contract Indian labourers started arriving in Mauritius in increasingly larger numbers (which was in 1834), there was already a well-developed Creole language in use, both in a structural and functional sense. The following text from Grant (1749:166, cited in Chaudenson 1981:77) for instance, although short, is particularly informative and insightful:

> «*… in their corrupted French:*
> *« ça blanc là li beaucou malin; Li couri beaucoup dans la mer là-haut;*
> DEM White DEF 3SG very clever 3SG run much in sea high
> *mais Madagascar li là. »*
> but Madagascar 3SG here
> 'This Whiteman is very clever; he travels the high sea a lot and yet he can't find Madagascar.'

This example is a coherent sample of the Mauritian Creole that was in use only a few decades after the French settled in Mauritius. It contains three rather complex structures — two of these with left-dislocation and one with conjunction. The two dislocated noun phrases (or hanging topics), namely *ça Blanc là* 'this Whiteman' with pre- and post-nominal determiner and *Madagascar*, a proper noun, display person and number agreement with their respective resumptive pronoun. The text also contains adjective (*beaucoup malin*) and verb (*couri beaucoup*) modifi-

1. The Hindi and Bhojpuri examples, some of which have been adapted for the purpose of this paper, are mostly from Koul (2008), Lohar (2020), Boodhoo (2010a), and Boodhoo (2010b).

cation, and the strict SVO word order is impeccable, suggesting a language with a highly stable structure. The copula in the first and last sentence is phonologically null and, except for the verb *couri*, now obsolete, this text bears a striking similarity to its modern equivalent:

> *Sa blan la li byen malin; li voyaz partu dan lamer; me*
> DEM Whiteman DEF 3SG very clever 3SG travel everywhere in sea but
> *Madagascar li la*
> Madagascar it here
> 'This Whiteman is very clever.; Hhe travels everywhere in the sea, and yet he can't find Madagascar.'

Additionally, as Baker (2007) notes, it can reasonably be inferred from a newspaper advertisement of 1773 that there was at that time a recognition among the local inhabitants that a Creole language was spoken on the island. However, given the robustness of the grammar in Grant's (1749) text, there seems to be little doubt that Mauritian Creole may have emerged much earlier, possibly two decades after the arrival of the French in 1721.

It would thus be reasonable to suppose that when the Indian contract workers started arriving in Mauritius in 1834, they came into contact with an already well-established Creole language that was structurally stable, functional, as well as learnable. Despite Baissac's (1880: 230) lament, some fifty years later, that the Indians had ruined the Creole language (because of the way they spoke it), there seems to be little evidence of any significant Indo-Aryan influence on its grammatical structure even though, demographically, the number of Indians had risen dramatically to over a quarter of a million by 1870 (Corne 1999, Baker 2007: 318). There are, for example, no visible changes to word order, this being a major structural difference between the VO pattern of Mauritian Creole and the OV pattern of the Indo-Aryan languages. Heads remain consistently in initial position across all phrasal categories in the Creole, as they are in French. Verbs, prepositions, adjectives, nouns, and complementizers, for instance, precede their complements. Negation and auxiliaries precede verbs, relative clauses follow head nouns, possessor NP generally follows possessed NP, comparative modifiers precede adjectives, and so on and so forth. The only notable example of word order change is the head-final genitive *NP so NP*. Interestingly, Baissac (1880: 108) makes some astute observations on the speech of Malagasy and Chinese Creole speakers and seems, rather surprisingly, quite complimentary about the Creole pronunciation of the Indians and their ability to acquire the language fast. Baissac's (1880: 230) comments that the Indians had ruined the Creole language appears therefore quite baseless and possibly motivated by factors other than linguistic.

It seems surprising indeed that the Indo-Aryan languages have not had a greater influence on Mauritian Creole even though their speakers had by the middle of the nineteenth century become the dominant group on the island. There are several reasons, which taken together, may explain why that might be. Firstly, as is abundantly plain from the early nineteenth century texts (e.g., Pitot 1805; Chrestien 1820; Freycinet 1827; and others), Mauritian Creole was already a well-developed, structurally stable and robust language. It would therefore have been quite resistant to structural changes forced on it by external interference.

Secondly, the Indians, unlike the Malagasies and Africans before them, may not have felt it necessary to learn it. This is because, unlike the Malagasies and Africans, they had arrived in such large numbers from different parts of India with different native languages (e.g., Hindi, Urdu, Bhojpuri, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, and Gujarati) that they must have felt it more important and urgent for them to learn one of their own languages (Bhojpuri in particular), which most of them did, than the new Creole language they encountered. Many Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Marathi families thus became bilinguals, speaking their native tongues as well as Bhojpuri, the language of the dominant group, a local variety of which subsequently became their *de facto* lingua franca.

Thirdly, the presence of Indian translators, who interfaced between them and the Creole and French speakers, may also have indirectly and unwittingly encouraged what became an ethnic grouping of Indians on the one hand, and African and non-African Creole speakers on the other. With the arrival of so many Indians, the linguistic situation in Mauritius inevitably became more complex as multilingualism, rather than bilingualism (French and Creole), became the norm. Also, importantly, the Creole language was in the mind of the Indians strongly associated with the Africans and their descendants, and it was felt more important for them and subsequent generations of Indians to preserve and maintain their individual native (ancestral) languages by using them at home as well as transmitting them to their offspring than to acquire the new Creole language. It was indeed not unusual until quite recently to come across older second or third generations of Indians (in their late eighties or nineties) whose Creole showed signs of transfer from their ancestral language, particularly Bhojpuri. An example such as *pu* (for) *twa* (you) *ki* (what) *non* (name) *ena* (have), *beta* (son)? 'What's your name, son?', (data collected informally by the author in Mauritius in April 2017 from a lady in her late nineties), is illustrative of such a phenomenon.[2]

2. The Bhojpuri equivalent of this sentence is:

Tohar ka nam ba, beta? or Tohar nam ka ba, beta?
2SG.POSS what name be son 2SG.POSS name what be son
'What's your name, son?' ~~'What's your name =, son?'~~

Taking into consideration the factors mentioned above, it is reasonable to suppose that the Indian contract workers, as an ethnic linguistic group, opted for isolation rather than integration. It is not surprising therefore that the grammar of Mauritian Creole shows very little structural interference from the Indo-Aryan languages.[3] Nonetheless, as this paper will show, there are a few aspects of the grammar of Mauritian Creole that could arguably be said to have been influenced by them, although in a rather subtle manner.

2. *NP so NP* genitives

Although examples of contact influence, particularly Indo-Aryan influence, in Mauritian Creole are few and far between, one type of construction that has frequently been highlighted and discussed as originating from Indo-Aryan languages is the *NP so NP* genitive (see Chaudenson 1981: 244; Corne 1986; Baker and Corne 1982). The following in which the possessor can be either animate or inanimate exemplify this type of genitive:

(1) a. Bann zanfan la zot mama
PL child DEF 3PL.POSS mother
'The children's mother'

b. Zorz so lakaz
George 3SG.POSS house
'George's house'

c. Semiz so kol
shirt 3SG.POSS collar
'The shirt's collar'

Baissac (1880: vii), however, attributes genitives like those in (1) but without the possessive morpheme (e.g., *so papa lacase* 'his father's house', literally his father house) to English influence given its surface similarity to English synthetic possessives such as *Mary's book*.[4] However, although Mauritius had become a British colony in 1810, there is no evidence, as far as one can see, of any significant influence of English on the grammatical development of Mauritian Creole. Therefore, the suggestion that the *NP so NP* genitive may have been modelled on English synthetic genitive does not seem very plausible. Much more credible how-

3. In fact, it seems that Mauritian Bhojpuri, like Sarnami in Suriname (see Yakpo and Muysken 2014), has in the course of a century acquired many Creole features in its grammar and lexicon to the extent that concerns about its survival have been raised (see Stein 1982, Oozeerally 2013).

4. See Alleesaib (2012) for a comparison between English and Mauritian Creole genitives.

ever is the proposal that it stems from an Indo-Aryan source (Chaudenson 1981; Baker and Corne 1982; Corne 1986). There is, as illustrated by (2) from Hindi, (3) from Indian Bhojpuri, and (4) from Mauritian Bhojpuri some structural similarity between them and the Creole genitive constructions in (1). They all display a word order pattern in which the possessor NP precedes the possessed NP, a typical OV structure that can arguably be said to have been transferred from the Indo-Aryan languages to Mauritian Creole, a typically VO language:

(2) a. Aji:t ka: bara: beta:.
Ajit GEN.MASC elder son
'Ajit's elder son.' (Koul 2008: 165)

b. Mohan ki: choti: beti:.
Mohan GEN.FEM younger daughter
'Mohan's younger daughter.' (Koul 2008: 165)

c. Is kami:z ki: ki:mat.
this shirt GEN.FEM price
'This shirt's price.' (Koul 2008: 60)

(3) a. Gão ke mukhia.
village GEN chieftain
'The village chieftain.' (Lohar 2020: 394)

b. Bhojpuri hamar mai ke basa - ha
Bhojpuri 1SG.POSS mother GEN language be-3SG.PRS
'Bhojpuri is my mother tongue.' (Lohar 2020: 258)

c. Ham kisan ke beta bani.
1SG farmer GEN son be-1SG.PRS
'I'm the son of the farmer.' (Lohar 2020: 505)

(4) a. Sohan ke baat.
Sohan GEN words
'Sohan's words.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 28)

b. Ram ke maa.
Ram GEN mother
'Ram's mother.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 29)

As is apparent, the *NP so NP* genitives in Mauritian Creole are structurally parallel to these Indo-Aryan genitives. Additionally, the possessor NP in the Indo-Aryan genitives, like the possessor NP in the Mauritian Creole genitives, can be not only animate but also inanimate, as shown in (2c) and (3a). There is also agreement marking on the genitive (postposition) marker in Hindi, although not in Bhojpuri, and in Mauritian Creole, although the direction of agreement is different. Agreement is with the possessed NP in Hindi, as shown by the difference between *ka:* (masculine singular) and *ki:* (feminine singular) in (2), but with the possessor

NP in Mauritian Creole, as shown by the difference in number marking between *zott* 'their' and *so* 'his' in (1). The parallel between the Indo-Aryan genitive and *NP so NP* genitive in Mauritian Creole is also confirmed by the fact that they both display recursion (see Syea 1994, 1995, 2013b).[5]

Given these similarities, an Indo-Aryan source for the *NP so NP* genitive does not seem at all implausible. Another reason why this suggestion is appealing is because this type of genitives is first attested in the 1850s, almost two decades after large numbers of Indian contract workers had arrived, and continued to arrive, in Mauritius.[6] Examples of the *NP so NP* genitives first appeared in Lolliot (1855) and Descroizilles (1867).[7]

(5) a. Sa dilizence la so portrait.
DEM coach DEF GEN picture
'That coach's picture.' (Lolliot 1855: 14)

b. Grand Misié son cause.
big mister POSS talk
'The plantation owner's talk.' (Descroizilles 1867: 22)

However, as has been noted in previous works (see Holm 1988, Syea 1995, Corne 1999) the *NP so NP* genitives are also known to occur in four other French-based Creoles that had no contact with Indo-Aryan languages. These are Seychelles Creole (6a), Karipuna Creole (6b), Louisiana Creole (6c), and Guyanese Creole (6d). This inevitably presents an interesting problem for the Indo-Aryan hypothesis. However, it has been pointed out that there are fewer occurrences of these genitives in these Creoles, and they are also generally limited in their distribution to subject position (see Corne 1999: 171).[8] In contrast, the *NP so NP* genitive is quite widespread in Mauritian Creole, and there is no restriction on its distribution since it occurs in both subject and non-subject position.[9] These differences

5. Example (i) illustrates recursion in Mauritian Creole while (ii) illustrates recursion in Bhojpuri:

(i) Zan so papa so kamarad so garson.
John POSS father POSS friend POSS son
'John's father's friend's son.'

(ii) Zorz ke cacā ke parosi.
George POSS (paternal) uncle POSS neighbour
George's uncle's neighbour.' (Baker and Corne 1986: 178)

6. According to Chaudenson (1981: 244) 34, 625 Indians arrived in Mauritius in 1843.

7. Surprisingly, genitives like those in (5) do not occur in Baissac (1880). In contrast, 'mixed' or anti-topic genitives abound.

8. Except in Karipuna Creole (Corne 1999: 171).

between the *NP so NP* genitives in Mauritian Creole and those in the other Creoles suggest that an Indo-Aryan source cannot be ruled out:

(6) a. Sũgula sõ vãt ti'n plein.
Sungula 3SG.POSS belly PST-PRF full
'Sungula's belly was full.' (Seychelles Creole; Bollée 1977: 42)

b. Mo pitxit so fwa.
1SG.POSS child 3SG.POSS liver
'My child's liver.' (Karipuna; Tobler 1983: 38)

c. Ti garso so papa.
little boy 3SG.POSS father
'The little boy's father.' (Louisiana Creole; Corne 1999: 113)

d. Mo so so pitit
1SG.POSS sister 3SG.POSS child
'My sister's child' (Guyanese Creole; Peyraud 1983: 232)

Another challenge for the Indo-Aryan hypothesis is the possibility that the *NP so NP* genitives may have been directly modelled on such popular French genitives like those in (7a) and (7b) from Chaudenson (2003) and Zribi-Hertz (2003) respectively.[10]

(7) a. Jean, so papa, il est malade.
John 3SG.GEN father 3SG be ill
'John's father, he's ill.' (Chaudenson 2003: 14)

b. J' ai vu Pierre son livre.
1SG have see Peter 3SG.GEN book
'I have seen Peter's book.' (Zribi-Hertz 2003: 150)

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9. The following are illustrative:

(i) Zan so mama ti vini.
John 3SG.POSS mother PST come
'John's mother came.'

(iia) Mo ti truv Zan so mama.
1SG PST see John 3SG.POSS mother
'I saw John's mother.'

10. According to Chaudenson (1990: 82), examples such as the following in popular/spoken French show a similar type of structural recursion to the one that exists in Mauritian Creole (see footnote 4). This would naturally support the claim that the *NP so NP* structure in French Creoles may have been modelled on French examples like (7a) in which the possessor is a hanging topic, although it faces the same questions we have pointed out above:

Ma soeur, son copain, son anniversaire, c' est en mai.
1SG.POSS sister 3SG.POSS friend 3SG.POSS birthday it be in May
'My sister's friend's birthday is in May.'

However, as argued in Syea (2013b), this account is problematic for the following reasons. Firstly, the *NP so NP* genitives occur in only a handful of the French Creoles. Most of the French Creoles in the Caribbean, for instance, do not have them. Secondly, and more significantly, they first emerged in Mauritian Creole over a century after the French and their slaves had settled in Mauritius. If examples such as those in (7) were available in the input, we would have expected the *NP so NP* genitive to have appeared sooner than 1855. And, thirdly, the [possessed NP — possessor NP] type (e.g., *liv Zan* 'John's book), modelled on such French analytic genitives as *la maison de Marie* 'Mary's house', was already well entrenched in the grammar of Mauritian Creole, as is abundantly clear from the early texts, which suggests that there would have been little or no motivation for an alternative, and a marked one at that.[11] This last objection applies equally well to any suggestion that the *NP so NP* genitive in the other French Creoles stemmed from examples like those in (7) since these Creoles too, we can reasonably assume, used the French based [possessed NP — possessor NP] genitive from the earliest stage in their development, which raises the question of what would have motivated the need for a new genitive expression that violated their dominant word order pattern.

In view of these difficulties, it was suggested in Syea (1994, 1995, 2013b) that the *NP so NP* genitives may have developed independently in the French Creoles. Heine and Kuteva (2001) make a similar suggestion although they invoke a process of topicalization (their Topic Schema) in which the possessor is topicalized and reprised by a possessive pronoun that agrees with it in person and number. However, although this proposal appears plausible particularly in the light of the fact that the *NP so NP* genitive occurs in French Creoles with no contact with Indo-Aryan languages, it does nevertheless face the same problems as the one that traces it back to a French source, particularly when confronted by its development in Mauritian Creole. For example, why did this type of genitives not appear sooner in the development of Mauritian Creole given that topicalized or left-dislocated constructions were already in use, as is clear from Grant's (1749: 166) text (see above) and from other early texts (see Chaudenson 1981: 198–99)? Why is it not attested in many of the other French Creoles? What was the motivation for this innovation when the [possessed NP — possessor NP] was already well established in the grammar of Mauritian Creole? Is it just fortuitous that the first attestation of *NP so NP* genitives followed the arrival of large numbers of Indo-Aryan

11. The following example is from Pitot (1805, cited in Chaudenson 1981: 100)

Noir madam Lisir.
slave madam Lessur
'Madam Lessur's slave.'

speakers in Mauritius? Aside from these questions, a problem is also raised by the fact that the possessor NP can be an indefinite quantifier phrase such as *personn* 'nobody' as in *personn so mama* 'nobody's mother'. Indefinite possessors are generally excluded from topic position (see Kiss 1982; Alleesaib 2012 for discussion).

Given these questions, it would seem reasonable to reconsider Corne's (1986, 1999) hypothesis that this type of genitive in Mauritian Creole may have been modelled on Indo-Aryan genitives.[12] What is suggested here, particularly in the light of a third type of genitives that emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century (see below), is that the Indo-Aryan languages may have played a key role in the development of the *NP so NP* genitives, but it was not wholesale transfer from their native languages. As was first pointed out in Syea (1994, 1995), there were three different types of genitive constructions in use in Mauritian Creole in the 1850s. Beside the French based [possessed NP — possessor NP] and the *NP so NP* type, there was a third type referred to as 'mixed' [POSS — possessed NP — possessor NP] type in Syea (1994) or 'anti-topic' type in Heine and Kuteva (2001). Examples of this third type are given in (8):[13]

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12. An Indo-Aryan source for this type of genitive is also suggested by Chaudenson (1981: 244).

13. Avram (n.d) gives the following from de la Butte (1850, see Chaudenson 1981: 122) as the earliest example of this 'mixed' or anti-topic type. Interestingly, the comma does not appear in this same example in Baissac (1880: 125), suggestive perhaps of a more integrated structure:

(i) Son malice, sa satte la.
3SG.POSS cunning DEM cat DEF
'that cat's cunning.'

(ii) So malice ça çatte là.
3SG.POSS cunning DEM cat DEF
'that cat's cunning.'

Examples similar to those in (8) also occur in Seychelles Creole. However, it is arguable that *pos palto* in (i) and *met lakur* in (ii) are N-N compounds rather than NP — NP genitives while (iii) illustrates anti-topicalization or right dislocation as *ki* (what) *so* (his) *nom* (name) *sa* (this) *solda* (soldier)? 'What is this soldier's name?')

(i) Sõ pos palto.
GEN pocket coat
'the pocket of his coat.' (Corne 1977: 27; 1986: 168)

(ii) Sõ met lakur.
GEN master house
'the master's house.' (Bollée 1977: 42)

(iii) Sõ nõ sa solda.
GEN name DEM soldier
'this soldier's name.' (Bollée 1977: 42)

(8) a. Son lipié Nicolas.
3SG.POSS foot Nicholas
'Nicholas' foot.' (Descroizilles 1867, cited in Chaudenson 1981: 128)

b. So piti ppa Azor.
3SG.POSS child old Azor
'Old Azor's child.' (Baissac 1880: 14)

c. So finition zhistoire.
3SG.POSS end story
'The end of the story.' (Baissac 1880: 140)

As is clear from (8), the possessive pronoun appears in front of possessed NP but is coreferential with the possessor NP on the right. This, as Baissac (1880: 14) notes, was a rather original construction. An obvious question to ask is, how did it come about? One possibility is that it resulted from right dislocation or what Heine and Kuteva (2001) refer to as an anti-topicalization process, particularly when the possessor needed to be emphasised or for emphasis, as initially suggested in Baissac (1880: 14). As appealing as this explanation is, it faces the same questions raised above in connection with the suggestion that the *NP so NP* genitive derived via topicalization. Additionally, one would have also expected this third type to have occurred in other French Creoles, but this does not appear to be the case. It is worth pointing out that similar questions also arise if the examples in (8) are taken to be modelled on such popular French genitives like those in (9):

(9) a. Son ami à Jean.
3SG.POSS friend of John
'John's friend.'

b. Son fils à Paul.
3SG.POSS son of Paul
'Paul's son.'

On this hypothesis, the 'mixed' or 'anti-topic' type would have resulted through a simple process of deletion, a well-known operation in L2 acquisition, which, when it applies, deletes the genitive case marking preposition that links the possessed NP and the possessor NP. What then is the source of the third type of genitives in Mauritian Creole?

The emergence of both the 'mixed' or 'anti-topic' type and the *NP so NP* type just a few decades after the arrival of large numbers of Indian contract workers, it seems, cannot have been fortuitous. It is not inconceivable that their native languages may have played a role in their development. We therefore suggest that the [POSS – possessed NP – possessor NP] (i.e., the 'mixed', 'anti-topic') type may have been modelled on constructed Indo-Aryan genitives like those in (10) in which the possessor NP functions as an emphasizer or dislocated NP. This type

of construction can be used as an alternative to the more commonly used NP GEN NP genitives like (2b) and (4a), particularly in reply to constructed questions like those in (11). Examples (2b) and (4a) are reproduced below as (12a) and (12b) respectively for ease of presentation:

(10) a. Uski choti: beti: (hɛ), Mohan Ki
3SG.POSS.FEM younger daughter be Mohan GEN.SG.FEM
'Mohan's younger daughter.r'
b. Okar maa (ba), Ram ke.
3SG.POSS mother be Ram GEN
'Ram's mother.'

(11) a. Kiski choti: beti hɛ?
whose younger daughter be
'Whose younger daughter is she?'
b. Kekar maa ba?
whose mother be
'Whose mother is she?'

(12) a. Mohan ki: choti: beti:.
Mohan GEN.SG.FEM younger daughter
'Mohan's younger daughter.' (Koul 2008: 165)
b. Ram ke maa.
Ram GEN mother
'Ram's mother.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 29)

Given the surface similarity between the Indo-Aryan examples in (10) and the 'mixed' or 'anti-topic' [POSS — possessed NP — possessor NP] genitives in (8), it is not inconceivable that the latter may have been modelled on examples like (10).[14] Likewise, given the structural correspondence between the Indo-Aryan genitives in (2)–(4) and the *NP so NP* genitive in Mauritian Creole, it could reasonably be suggested that the latter was modelled on the former. However, what is also apparent from the data available to us from the old texts is that the 'mixed' or 'anti-topic' [POSS — possessed NP — possessor NP] type not only emerged before the *NP so NP* genitive, but it was also used more widely than the *NP so NP* genitives, as is abundantly clear from Baissac (1880).[15]

14. It is worth drawing attention here to the similarity between the earliest example of [POSS (possessed) NP — (possessor) NP] in de la Butte (1850, cited in Chaudenson (1981: 122) — see footnote 9 — and the examples in (10). In both a comma puts the possessor NP in a separate intonation group and sets it off from the possessor NP.

Given this sequence of development and the difference in use, it was suggested in Syea (1994, 1995) that the *NP so NP* genitive in fact developed from the [POSS — possessed NP — possessor NP] via a movement rule resulting in the possessor NP being placed in initial position, either to satisfy local agreement between the possessor and the POSS morpheme as suggested in Syea (2013b), or, as seems also very likely, under pressure from Indo-Aryan genitives like those in (2)–(4). It is also not inconceivable that the 'mixed' or 'anti-topic' type simply represents an attempt by the Indians to acquire the new French-based [possessed NP — possessor NP] pattern but ended up incorrectly placing the possessive pronoun in front of the possessed NP instead of the possessor NP, thus resulting in, for example, *so lakaz papa* instead of *lakaz so papa* 'his father's house'. As observed in Baissac (1880: 14), another pattern, more consistent with the head-final pattern of Indo-Aryan genitives, was also in evidence. This had the possessor NP preceding the possessed NP but without any genitive-marker (e.g., *so papa lacase* 'his father's house' — literally his father house).[16] This could also be seen as an attempt at pattern replication (Matras 2009), that is an attempt to replicate the Indo-Aryan pattern of possessive construction.

It seems that, of the two newly developed genitive types, the [possessor NP — possessed NP] type rather than the 'mixed' or 'anti-topic' type was eventually selected, and a genitive marker (pronoun) was inserted between the two NPs again under pressure from the Indo-Aryan genitives like those in (2)–(4), thus changing *so papa lacase* into *so papa so lacase* 'his father's house'. The insertion of the possessive marker between the possessor and possessed NPs was also a welcomed development as it helped avoid the ambiguity present in the string *so papa lacase*, which was analysable either as a phrasal unit 'his father's house' or as a clausal unit with a phonologically null copula 'his father is at home'.

The retention or survival of an Indo-Aryan pattern in Mauritian Creole is rather surprising since word order differences are generally resolved quickly in the early stages of contact (Siegel 2003: 194). It is also intriguing since it appears restricted to the nominal phrase. This is perhaps not surprising since Indo-Aryan languages, although typologically OV languages, do have some flexibility in that constituents of the clause can be reordered (see Koul 2008; Dwivedi 1994; among others). Thus, the object can appear not only before the verb (its canonical position) but also after it (see below for more discussion). Such flexibility is

15. The earliest example appears in de la Butte (1850, cited in Chaudenson 1981: 122):

Son malice sa satte la.
3SG cunning DEM cat DEF
'this cat's cunning.'

16. Baissac (1880: 14) attributes this new structure to the Indians and English.

not however available inside the nominal phrase, which remains strictly head-final. So the head-initial position of the possessed noun inside a noun phrase, as seen in French based possessive structures, would have been difficult to process and acquire.

In summary, it is very likely that the development of *NP so NP* in Mauritian Creole was influenced by the genitives of Indo-Aryan languages. The emergence of the [POSS — possessed NP — possessor NP] and the *NP so NP* genitives in Mauritian Creole in the second half of the nineteenth century following the arrival of large numbers of Indian contract workers was not accidental. It is conceivable that the [POSS-possessed NP — possessor NP] may have been modelled on structurally similar Indo-Aryan structures, and it disappeared after the *NP so NP* type had emerged and established itself as a preferred alternative to the French based [NP (possessed) — NP (possessor)] type. Although not completely imported from the Indo-Aryan languages, as initially suggested by Corne (1986) and Baker and Corne (1986), the development of the *NP so NP* genitives in Mauritian Creole seems nevertheless to have been influenced by their genitives.

3. Null Subject finite sentences

Mauritian Creole, as observed in Syea (1993), allows finite sentences with a phonologically null subject, both argumental, as illustrated in (13) and (14), and non-argumental (or pleonastic/expletive), as shown in (15).[17] These sentences, as we see, may occur with or without a preverbal tense or aspect marker.[18]

(13) a. Pe vann pwason laba.
PROG sell fish there
'Someone is selling fish there.'

17. Argumental null subjects are also said to occur in Haitian Creole (DeGraff 1993), Saramaccan (Muysken and Veenstra 1994: 133), and Papiamento (Kouwenberg and Muysken 1994: 216). Expletive null subjects are also found in other Creoles (e.g., Papiamento, see Kouwenberg and Muysken 1994: 216).

18. These subject-less sentences can occur as out-of-the-blue statements or as replies to questions. The following is illustrative:

Speaker A: Ki finn arive?
what PRF happen
'What happened?'
Speaker B: Finn bat Zan so papa
PRF beat John 3SG.POSS father
'They/Someone has beaten John's father.'

b. Finn bat Zan so papa.
PRF beat John 3SG.POSS father
'Someone has beaten John's father.'
c. Pou ranz enn lotel kot laboutik.
FUT build a hotel by shop
'Someone will build a hotel by the shop.'

(14) a. Vann pwason dan bazar.
sell fish in market
'They/One sell(s) fish in the market.'
b. Fer rom ar disik kann.
make rum with sugar cane
'They/One make(s) rum from sugar cane.'
c. Koz angle, franse, e kreol dan lasanble.
speak English, French, and Creole in assembly
'They/One speak(s) English, French, and Creole in the Legislative Assembly.'

(15) a. Pe fer so/ fre zordi.
PROG make hot/ cold today
'It's hot/cold today.'
b. Pou ena lapli taler.
FUT have rain later
'It will rain later/There will be rain later.'
c. P' ena person pou ed li.
not- have nobody for help 3SG
'There is no one to help him/her.'
d. Posib lapolis finn trap zot.
likely police PRF arrest 3PL
'It's likely that the police have arrested them.'

Such subject-less finite sentences do not occur in French, and it is therefore natural to ask what their origin is.[19] Can they be traced back to any substrate or adstrate language that was spoken in Mauritius? There are two possibilities to consider in view of the fact that both Bantu, the languages of the dominant group in Mauritius in the latter part of the eighteenth century (Baker and Corne 1986, Corne 1999), and Indo-Aryan languages allow finite clauses with a null subject. But first consider some of the properties of the null subject in such examples as (13) and (14).

Firstly, the null subject in examples like (13) is an indefinite, impersonal and non-referential pronoun that has the same interpretation as the English indefinite

19. The expletive pronoun *il* 'there' is often dropped in spoken French.

existential pronoun 'someone'.[20] The null subject in examples like (14) is also an indefinite, impersonal and non-referential pronoun, but, unlike the null subject in (13), it has the interpretation of the quasi-generic impersonal/non-referential pronoun 'they/one' in English or of the third person singular impersonal pronoun *on* 'they' (exclusive) or 'we/one' (inclusive) in French. The difference in the interpretation of the null subject in such examples derives directly from the presence and absence of time restricting markers in the clause. Thus, the null subject in (13) is read as specific and existential (to use Cinque's 1988 term) since it is time restricted (i.e., restricted to a specific time by the tense or aspect markers) while that in (14) is read as non-specific and quasi-universal/generic (again to use Cinque's 1988 term) since, in the absence of a tense or aspect marker, it is not time restricted. Accordingly, (13a) is glossed as 'someone is selling fish there' and (14a) as 'they/people/one (habitually) sell(s) fish in the market'. The null subject therefore has an existential force, with the meaning of 'someone', in (13a), and a quasi-universal or generic force, with the meaning of 'they/one' or 'people', in (14a). The examples in (14) are thus comparable to such French examples as (16) with the impersonal pronoun *on* as subject:

(16) a. *On conjugue ces verbs avec l'auxiliare 'avoir'.*
'One/they conjugate(s) these verbs with the 'avoir' auxiliary.'
b. *On boit ce vin chambré.*
'One/they drink(s) this wine at room temperature.'

And, interestingly, examples like (16a) and (16b) can be expressed in Mauritian Creole with either an impersonal null subject or with the impersonal third person plural pronoun *zott* 'they'.[21]

(17) a. (Zot) konzig sa bann verb la avek oksilir 'avoir'.
3PL conjugate DEM PL verb DEF with auxiliary 'avoir'
'They/One conjugate(s) these verbs with the 'avoir' auxiliary.'

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20. Examples like (13b) occur regularly in the context of a question such as 'what happened?' or 'what's happening there?':

Speaker A: *Ki finn arive?*
what PRF happen
'What happened?'
Speaker B: *Finn bat Zan so papa*
PRF beat John 3SG.POSS father
'They/Someone has beaten John's father.'

21. The inclusive first person plural *nu* 'we' and the second person singular *to* 'you' can also be used as subject in such sentences.

b. (Zot) bwar sa divin la sanbre.
3PL drink DEM wine DEF room temperature
'They/One drink(s) this wine at room temperature.'

The difference noted in the interpretation of the null subject in (13) and (14) is also shown by the fact that it is felicitous to ask a 'who-question' in relation to the specific, existential null subject in (13), as shown by (18), but not in relation to the non-specific, quasi-generic null subject in (14), as shown by (19):

(18) Speaker A: Finn kokin so larzan.
PERF steal 3SG.POSS money
'Someone has stolen his/her money.'
Speaker B: Kisennla?
'Who?'

(19) Speaker A: Fer rom avek disik kann.
make rum with sugar cane
'They/One make rum with cane sugar.'
Speaker B: #Kisennla?
'Who?'

This difference is not surprising since generic sentences like those in (14) are more about the events described in a sentence than the agents involved in them. In other words, they tend to be 'event-centred' rather than 'agent-centred' (Siewierska 2008).

Secondly, the null subject in (13) and (14), being impersonal, refers to an agent/animate (human) being. Hence the oddity/unacceptability of (20b), when compared to (20a), which is due to the fact that its null subject can only be assigned an animate (human) interpretation:

(20) a. Ti ena buku trafik lor larut e enn loto finn touy trwa dimounn.
PST have much traffic on road and a car PRF kill three people
'There was a lot of traffic on the road and a car killed three people.'
b. ?? Ti ena buku trafik lor larut. e finn touy trwa dimounn
PST have much traffic on road and car PRF kill three people
'There was a lot of traffic on the road, and someone killed three people.'

Notice that the null subject in (20b) gets an animate (human) reading, hence the oddity, even though the context strongly discourages it.

Thirdly, the null subject is not only semantically, but also syntactically, present in these examples, as evidenced for instance by Sluicing (Ross 1967, Merchant 2003) in (21):

(21) a. Finn koken Marie so loto, pa kone kisennla ~~finn kokin Marie so loto~~
PRF steal Mary GEN car NEG know who PRF steal Mary GEN car
'Someone has stolen Mary's car, but we don't know who.'

b. Pe vann pwason laba, pa kone kisennla ~~pe~~ ~~vann~~ ~~pwason~~ ~~laba~~.
PROG sell fish there NEG know who PROG sell fish there
'Someone is selling fish there, but we don't know who.'

It is worth pointing out that, beside impersonal non-referential indefinite null subjects, Mauritian Creole also allows personal referential definite null subjects but only when their identity is pragmatically/contextually recoverable. The following exemplifies this type of definite null subjects:

(22) Speaker A: Kot Zan?
where John
'Where is John?'
Speaker B: (Li) pe repar so loto.
3SG PROG repair 3SG.POSS car
'He is repairing his car.'

In isolation, the null subject in speaker B's reply has an impersonal/non-referential existential reading, just like the null subject in (13), and it translates as 'someone is repairing his car'. A personal/referential reading of this null subject is unavailable since its reference/identity cannot be linguistically recovered as it can, for instance, in pro-drop languages such as Spanish and Italian.

Summarising the discussion in this section, we have noted that Mauritian Creole has finite clauses with an impersonal null subject, which can have a specific existential reading or a non-specific, generic (quasi-quantificational) reading. Additionally, the impersonal null subject is necessarily animate (human). It has an agent role and is syntactically projected in the underlying structure. The null subject can also have a personal/referential interpretation but only if its identity is pragmatically/contextually recoverable.

Origin of impersonal null subjects in Mauritian Creole

Given the rarity of finite clauses with a null subject of Creole languages, it is natural to ask how Mauritian Creole came to have subject-less finite clauses like those in (13) and (14).[22] The earliest examples of such clauses in Mauritian Creole are found in Pitot (1805, cited in Chaudenson 1981: 79–83), as shown in (23), but

22. Kouwenberg and Muysken (1994: 216) cite Papiamento as a Creole in which impersonal subjects can be null, as illustrated in the following:

Ta bende flor.
PRS sell flower
'Flowers are sold (here)' or 'They sell flowers (here).'

these are referential and definite since they occur in the context of an interaction and the identity of the addressee is pragmatically recoverable. (The Ø indicates a phonologically null subject)

(23) Q: Où vous gagné l'argent pour asséter? (clothes)
where 2SG get money for buy
'Where do you get money from to buy shirts and trousers?'
A: Hé! Hé! Ø vendé cosson, Ø vendé tabac, dimanse Ø travaille pour dimounde.
hey hey sell pig sell tobacco Sunday work for people
'Hey! Hey! I sell pigs, tobacco, and on Sundays I work for other people.'

However, the same text, which is an imaginary conversation between a Whiteman and a slave (Chaudenson 1981: 79), shows that the reply to the question in (24) displays overt subject pronouns, thus pointing to an interesting variation in the use of contextualised null referential definite subject pronouns:

(24) Q: Vous gagné bien manzé, Papa?
2SG get well food old.man
'Do you have enough to eat, old man?'
A: Mo gagné manioc, mo gagné maye.
1SG get manioc 1SG get corn
'I get manioc and corn.'

Not surprisingly, null definite subjects are also commonly found in narratives, and this is true in both Seychelles Creole and Mauritian Creole, as shown in the following. Example (25a) is from a text by Bollée and Rosalie (1994: 70, cited in Corne 1999: 180), and (25b) is its equivalent in contemporary Mauritian Creole.

(25) a. Si ti esper dokter pa i ti' n mor?
if PST wait doctor NEG PM PST PRF die
'If we had waited for the doctor, would he not have died?'
b. Si ti atann dokter, li pa ti' nn fini mor?
if PST wait doctor 3SG NEG PST PRF finish die
'If we had waited for the doctor, would he not have died?'

As to the origin of such definite null subjects in Mauritian Creole, there are two possibilities to consider. The first is that they may have come about as a result of simplification (Meisel 1983) (i.e., pronoun deletion) in the process of acquiring the Creole. The second is that it may have come about as a result of external influence. Bantu and Indo-Aryan speakers were in the majority in Mauritius at different times, the former in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the latter in the second half of the nineteenth century (see Baker and Corne 1982;

Corne 1999; Baker 2007).[23] And, both languages are pro-drop languages since they allow isolated finite clauses with phonologically null subjects.

Consider Bantu languages first. In addition to being pro-drop, they are also agglutinative and head initial. Examples (26a, b), from van der Val (2015), and (26c), from Carsten et al. (2010), illustrate all three properties — (note: SM = subject marker; SA = subject agreement; FS = final suffix):

(26) a. Tu-ka-ly-a.
1PL.SM-FUT-eat-FS
'We will eat.'
b. N-ka-gul-ira omwana ebitooke.
1SG.SM-PST-buy-APPL 1.child 8.bananas
'I bought the child bananas.'
c. (Wao) wa-me-ondoka.
3PL 3PL.SA-PRF-depart
'They have left.'

The subject pronoun in these examples, as shown in (26c), is optional since its class, person and number reference are signalled by the prefixes attached to the verb. Its identity is therefore recoverable. The agglutinative nature of Bantu languages is evident from the agglutination of the affixes to the verb stem, and their head-initial characteristic is clear from examples such as (26b) where the verb precedes its object(s). In Bantu languages, as in other pro-drop languages, finite clauses with a definite null subject can occur in isolation, as one would expect, since the content of the missing subject is clear from the morphological information on the verb. It might therefore be reasonable to attribute the null subject sentences in Mauritian Creole to speakers of these languages. However, as shown in the following examples, isolated sentences from late eighteenth century texts, when Bantu speakers would have been in the majority (Baker 2007: 310), tend to retain, rather than drop, their subject pronouns:

(27) a. Si nous n'a pas gagné malheur, ça bon.
if 1PL NEG have misfortune that good
'If we do not come across any accident, that will be good.'
(1770; Chaudenson 1981: 78)
b. Moi voulé baiser ça négresse là.
1SG want kiss DEM negress DEF
'I wanted to kiss that black woman.' (1777; Chaudenson 1981: 78)

23. According to Baker (2007: 310), Bantu speakers were brought to Mauritius in increasingly larger numbers from the middle of the eighteenth century.

c. Moy n'apa été batté ça Blanc là.
1SG NEG PST beat DEM whiteman DEF
'I didn't beat that Whiteman.' (1779; Chaudenson 1981: 78)

And this is true not only of definite but also of indefinite impersonal subject pronouns like *zotte* 'they' and *di mounde* 'people', as exemplified by the following from Pitot (1805, cited in Chaudenson 1981: 79–83).

(28) a. Comment zotte faire la guerre dans vous paye?
how 3PL do war in 2SG.POSS country
'How do they fight in your country?'
b. Dimounde faire son zouvrage li gagne coups de fouetté?
people do 3SG.POSS work 3SG get whipped
'How can people who do their work get whipped?'

The same text shows the expletive subject pronoun *li* (< French *il* 'it/there') in two different forms. It is overtly spelled out, as in (29a), if it translates as 'it' but remains phonologically null, as in (29b), if it translates as 'there'.

(29) a. Hé! missié, li tard, oui; laisse mo allé.
Hey! Mister it late yes let 1SG go
'Hey, Mister, it's late, let me go.'
b. Ah! hé! n'a pas l'optal, n'a pas sourzin?
ah hey NEG hospital NEG healer
'Ah! Hey! Are there no hospitals, are there no healers?

Therefore, it seems that much of what is available in these early texts shows no evidence of isolated sentences with either referential null subjects or non-referential (impersonal) null subjects. The few examples with a referential null subject pronoun in these texts seem to suggest that it was only possible where it was pragmatically/contextually recoverable. As for the expletive subject, it was, as we have seen, optionally dropped. Its optionality can be said to reflect its use in the lexifier. The French third person expletive pronoun *il* tends to be silent (unpronounced) in front of the existential verb *avoir* 'have' in non-standard/colloquial French but obligatorily retained in front the copula verb *être* 'to be'.

(30) a. *(Il) y a beaucoup de chats dans le jardin.*
'There are many cats in the garden.'
b. **(Il) est tard.*
'It's late.'

What we can therefore say from the data available in the early texts is that there is no strong evidence that the Bantu speakers influenced the development of isolated null subject sentences like those in (13) and (14) in Mauritian Creole. Could their development have been influenced through contact with the Indo-Aryan languages?

Indo-Aryan influence

Indo-Aryan languages are pro-drop languages, with finite verbs displaying tense and agreement inflection, as shown in the following paradigms from Hindi (31), Indian Bhojpuri (32), and Mauritian Bhojpuri (33)[24]:

(31) a. (Mẽ) par-hu:ga:.
1SG.NOM read-1SG.FUT
'I will read.' (Koul 2008: 185)

b. (Ham) par-hẽge.
1PL.NOM read-1PL.FUT
'We will read.' (Koul 2008: 185)

c. (Yve) par-hẽge.
3PL.NOM read-3PL.FUT
'They will read.' (Koul 2008: 185)

(32) a. (Ham) a-ini.
1SG.NOM come-1SG.PST
'I came.' (Lohar 2020: 231)

b. (Te) a-il-e.
2SG.NOM come-PP-2SG.PST
'You came.' (Lohar 2020: 231)

c. (U) a-il.
3SG.NOM come-3SG.PST
'He came.' (Lohar 2020: 231)

(33) a. (Ham) dekh-ab.
1SG.NOM see-1SG.FUT
'I will see.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 71)

b. (Tu) dekh-ba.
2SG.NOM see- 2SG.FUT
'You will see.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 71)

c. (U) dekh-i.
3SG.NOM see-3S.FUT
'He/She will see.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 71)

The subject pronouns in the above paradigms are optional and their identity, when they are phonologically null, can be recovered from the agreement marking on the verbs. This is also illustrated in the examples below. Example (34a) is from Hindi, (34b) from Indian Bhojpuri, and (34c) from Mauritian Bhojpuri.[25]

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24. As illustrated in Baker and Ramnah (1982: 223), verbs in Mauritian Bhojpuri have a rich agreement system.

(34) a. (Mẽ) apne bha:i: ko patr likh raha: hû:.
1SG self brother DAT letter write PROG be.PRS.1SG
'I'm writing a letter to my brother.' (Koul 2008: 43)

b. Kɔn-a rah-e ja-iba?
which-SPEC way-LOC go-2SG.FUT.MASC
'Which way will you go?' (Lohar 2020: 351)

c. Loonda se bartan manja ta
dish washer with utensils wash 3SG.PRES.PROG
'S/he is washing the dishes with a dish washer.. (Boodhoo 2010b: 41)

Not surprisingly, we also find null subjects in question-answer pairs, as shown in (35) from Hindi, (36) from Indian Bhojpuri, and (37) from Mauritian Bhojpuri.[26]

(35) Q: Vah kab a:gra: ja:- yega:.
3SG.NOM when Agra go-3SG-FUT
'When will he go to Agra?' (Koul 2008: 250)

A: Parsõ ja:yega:.
day.after.tomorrow go-3SG-FUT
'He will go the day after tomorrow.' (Koul 2008: 250)

(36) Q: Okʌra bad mê Nepal mê ʌini?
3SG.GEN later LOC Nepal LOC come.PST
'After that, did you come to Nepal?' (Lohar 2020: 347)

A: Ji (ham) ʌini.
yes 1SG come.PST
'Yes, I came.' (Lohar 2020: 347)

(37) Q: Boutik wa duur ba?
shop EMPH far be
'Is the shop far?' (Boodhoo 2010b: 33)

A: Nai, haije ba.
No nearby be
'No, it's nearby.' (Boodhoo 2010b: 33)

Both Hindi and Bhojpuri also allow null expletive (weather) pronouns as shown in (38a) and (38b) respectively.

(38) a. Ba:har se andar adhik thãada: hɛ.
outside from inside more cold be
'It's colder inside than outside.' (Koul 2008: 131)

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25. The examples in (34a, c) have been adapted. The subject pronouns are omissible.

26. The reply in (36) is from Lohar (2020: 231) but has been adapted. The subject can be left out.

b. Garam kara taa.
hot do be
'It's hot.' (Boodhoo 2010b: 102)

It is apparent from these examples that the Indo-Aryan languages allow different types of null subjects and their finite verbs, like those in Bantu languages, display agreement marking. We can therefore assume that Indo-Aryan speakers, like Bantu speakers, would have been intuitively aware of the correlation between null subjects in finite clauses and subject agreement information on finite verbs, and they too would have concluded that they could not drop the subject pronoun of a finite clause in Mauritian Creole except where its reference was pragmatically/contextually retrievable, or its reference was not pertinent, as in the case of an impersonal or pleonastic subject pronoun. And indeed, as we have seen, the subject of a finite clause is only omissible if it is pragmatically/contextually recoverable, as in (22), or non-referential, as in (14), or semantically empty (pleonastic/expletive), as in (15). If we make the reasonable assumption that the Indo-Aryan speakers, like the Bantu speakers before them, operated in accordance with the pro-drop parameter (subjects of finite clauses are null only when they are licensed by the agreement features on verbs (Rizzi 1986)), the question arises as to how sentences like those in (13)–(14) came to exist in Mauritian Creole.

Indo-Aryan and Bantu languages, as is well known, are typologically different, both in terms of word order and morphology. The former is head-final and synthetic/inflecting, the latter head-initial and agglutinative, as noted above. Importantly, the subject pronoun is a free morpheme in the Indo-Aryan languages, as seen above, but a bound morpheme in the Bantu languages, as shown in (39) from van der Val (2015: 3). A free-standing subject pronoun, as seen in (26c), is however possible in Bantu languages, possibly when emphasis is needed. (Note: the numeral 7 stands for Class 7):

(39) Wa-na-fundish-w-a ki-swahili.
2SM-PRS-teach-PASS-FS 7-swahili
'They are taught Swahili.'

Also, importantly, as shown in (31)–(33), a free-standing subject pronoun is optional in the Indo-Aryan languages. This is true not only of definite subject pronouns, like those in (31)–(33), but also of indefinite impersonal subject pronouns, as shown in (40a) from Hindi and (40b, c) from Mauritian Bhojpuri.

(40) a. (Ye) kehte hai ki barish hogi. (Constructed)
3PL say be that rain be
'They say that it will rain.'

b. Ek darja ke chetawni dele hawan sa.
one class GEN warning give have be
'They have given a cyclone warning Class I.' (Boodhoo 2010b: 103)
c. Ta bolelasa ki Bhojpuri mein dher kiryoli chal aail
so say.PRS that Bhojpuri LOC lot Creole walk come.PRF
'They say that Bhojpuri contains a lot of Creole words.' (Boodhoo 2010b: 9)

Now, looking at impersonal/arbitrary subjects like *zot* 'they' and *dimounde* 'people' in Mauritian Creole, it is clear from examples like (28) from Pitot (1805, cited in Chaudenson 1981: 79–83), that they were retained in the early stages. However, later texts (e.g., Baissac 1880) show that such subjects were omissible, as shown in (41):

(41) a. Divant zamis Ø capable largue quilotte.
in.front.of friend can undo trousers
'Among friends, one can undress oneself.' (Baissac 1880: 27)
b. Lhére Ø féque sourti dans grand malade laviande béf qui Ø bisoin.
when just come in big illness meat ox that need
'When one begins to recover from a serious illness, beef is what is needed.'
(Baissac 1880: 39)

Such examples of finite clauses with a null impersonal/arbitrary subject from Baissac (1880) could tentatively be attributed to Indo-Aryan influence since, as shown in (40), Indo-Aryan languages do allow null impersonal/arbitrary subjects in their finite clauses. But, also importantly, such examples appear to have emerged long after large numbers of Indians had settled in Mauritius. Thus, it is possible that, in attempting to produce Creole quasi-generic sentences with overt impersonal subjects, like those in (28), speakers of Indo-Aryan languages exercised the same option that they had in their native languages of either retaining or dropping impersonal subject pronouns. There is therefore a likelihood that examples such as (41) and (14) may have emerged in Mauritian Creole under the influence of Indo-Aryan languages.

As for the null existential subject pronoun in constructions like (13), notice that it too can be overtly realised by the impersonal third person plural pronoun *zott* 'they' without any change in the meaning of the sentences. Thus, (42a)–(c) are paraphrases of (13a)–(c):

(42) a. Zot pe vann pwason laba.
3PL PROG sell fish there
'Someone/They is/are selling fish there.'
b. Zot finn bat Zan so papa.
3PL PRF beat John 3SG.POSS father
'Someone/They has/have beaten John's father.'

c. Zot pou ranz enn lotel kot laboutik.
3PL FUT build a hotel by shop
'Someone/They will build a hotel by the shop.'

The optionality of the impersonal arbitrary subject pronoun *zot* 'they' in these examples is also analogous to the optionality of the impersonal arbitrary subject in Indo-Aryan examples like (40b, c). Given this parallel, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the existential null subject in (13), just like the quasi-universal null subject in (14), emerged in Mauritian Creole under the influence of these languages, and only these could be productively dropped because, unlike definite referential null subject, their identity need not to be recovered.[27] Thus, it is possible to attribute this rather unusual and common phenomenon of selective (partial) pro-drop in Mauritian Creole to contact with the Indo-Aryan languages. The Indo-Aryan speakers could be said to have extended an option that existed in their native grammars to Mauritian Creole, but always in accordance with the requirements of the pro-drop parameter (Chomsky 1981, Huang 1984, Rizzi 1986).

Summarising, the subject of a finite clause in Mauritian Creole can be phonologically null provided it is an impersonal (non-referential) or pleonastic pronoun. The null impersonal subject can have either an existential or quasi-universal reading. Since examples with a null impersonal subject are not attested in the early texts of Mauritian Creole, it seems highly likely that it was influenced by the Indo-Aryan languages.

4. Passive-like constructions

Another structure where Indo-Aryan influence on the grammar of Mauritian Creole can be detected is one in which the object of a verb appears pre-verbally. Examples such as those in (43) may be said, at the surface at least, to be structurally similar to English passive.

(43) a. Lakaz la pe ranze.
house DEF PROG build
'The house is being built.'
b. Later la finn vande.
land DEF PRF sell
'That plot of land has been sold.'

27. There is a parallel here with the arbitrary reference of PRO. As pointed out in Chomsky (1981), the null subject PRO is possible in non-finite clauses.

Although quite widespread in contemporary Mauritian Creole and a few other Creoles (e.g., Jamaican Creole, see LaCharité and Wellington (1999)), such constructions are generally rare in Creoles, a fact that has often led to the claim that Creoles lack passive (Bickerton 1981, Chaudenson 1981: 194, Bernabé 1983, among others).[28] The absence of a passive morpheme and an agent *by* phrase and the possibility that the fronted object may not be in the structural subject position but in a clause-peripheral position inevitably lend support to such a claim. In this connection, note that although Baissac (1880: 40–41) gives a few examples of passive in Mauritian Creole, he nevertheless agrees that the passive is rare in Creoles. An alternative analysis of the pseudo-passive constructions in (43), which is assumed here, is that they are impersonal constructions with a null subject in which the object has been topicalized. This null subject has the interpretation of an indefinite existential pronoun like 'someone' and has a semantic role similar to that of an implicit agent of a short passive. An example like (43a) can thus be translated as a topic construction *the house, someone is building* rather than a passive construction *the house is being built.*

Such an analysis of constructions like (43) is supported by several observations. Firstly, there is a semantic restriction on what can appear in their clause-initial position. The fronted object, for example, can be neither indefinite nor non-specific, as illustrated by the contrast between (44a) and (44b).

(44) a. Bato la finn sezi.
boat DEF PRF seize
'The boat has been seized.'
b. * Enn bato finn sezi.
a (non-specific) boat PRF seize
'A boat has been seized.'

The grammatical equivalent of (43b) has the indefinite object NP (new information) in its canonical object position, as shown in (45).

(45) Finn sezi enn bato.
PRF seize a boat
'Someone/They has/have seized a boat.' Or 'A boat has been seized.'

Note also that only (45), not (44b), is felicitous in reply to an out-of-the-blue question like 'What happened?'.

28. But see APiCS online (Michaelis et al. 2013) for other Creoles claimed to have passive constructions.

(46) Speaker A: Ki finn arive?
what PRF arrive
'What happened?'
Speaker B: Finn sezi enn bato/ #enn bato finn sezi.
PRF seize a car a car PRF seize
'Someone/They has/have seized a boat.'

Interestingly, as is apparent from (47b), this restriction does not apply to the fronted object in unaccusatives, a type of construction that is structurally and derivationally similar to passive constructions. According to traditional generative transformational grammar (Chomsky 1981, Burzio 1986, and others), the object moves from its canonical object position to an empty subject position in both types of constructions. If so, the contrast between (43b) and (47b) remains surprising if constructions like (43) are passive.[29]

(47) a. Bato la finn koule.
boat DEF PRF sink
'The boat has sunk.'
b. Enn bato finn koule.
a (non-specific) boat PRF sink
'A boat has sunk.'

Under a topic analysis, on the other hand, such a contrast is expected since indefinite NPs are generally barred from a topic position, as noted by Kiss (2003) and others, but not from the structural subject position.

Secondly, there is a syntactic restriction on the distribution of the fronted object. The fronted object must precede, not follow, a fronted wh-phrase. As shown below, an adjunct wh-phrase like *kan* 'when' or *kott* 'where' must appear on the right of the fronted object, not on its left.

(48) a. Bato la kan/ kot ti sezi?
boat DEF when/ where PST seize
'When/Where was the boat seized.'
b. *Kan/ *Kot bato la ti sezi?
when/ where boat DEF PST seize
'When/Where was the boat seized?'

Such a contrast does not show up however in unaccusatives, as shown in (49) or (50):

29. It is also worth noting that (47b) is, unlike *enn bato finn sezi* in (46), a felicitous reply to the question in (46).

(49) a. Bato la kan/ kot ti koule?
boat DEF when/ where PST sink
'When/Where did the boat sink?'
b. Kan/ Kot bato la ti koule?
when/ Where boat DEF PST sink
'When/Where did the boat sink?'

(50) a. Zanfan la kan/ kot ti tonbe?
child DEF when/ where PST fall
'When/Where did the child fall?'
b. Kan/ Kot zanfan la ti tonbe?
when/ where child DEF PST fall
'When/Where did the child fall?'

As is clear from (49b) and (50b), the fronted object can appear to the right of the fronted wh-phrase, and this is what is expected in unaccusatives since the object moves to an empty subject position. Under a passive analysis of examples such as (43), this contrast is unexpected. However, under a topic analysis, the contrast is predicted since a topic phrase must be in a position hierarchically higher than a fronted wh-phrase (see Rizzi 1997).[30]

Thirdly, a topic analysis of constructions like (43) is also justified by coordination facts. The examples in (51) and (52) show that while coordination of two constructions like (43), as shown in (51a), or of two unaccusative constructions, as shown in (51b), is possible, coordination of examples like those in (43) and those in (47) is impossible, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (52a) and (52b).

(51) a. Bis la finn repare e finn met dan garaz.
bus DEF PRF repair and PRF put in garage
'The bus has been repaired and has been put in the garage.'
b. Bis la finn vini midi e finn ale dezer.
bus DEF PRF come noon and PRF go two o'clock
'The bus came at noon and left at two.'

(52) a. *Bis la finn repare e finn ale.
bus DEF PRF repair and PRF go
b. *Bis la pu vini midi e pu lave. dezer
bus DEF FUT come noon and FUT wash two.o'clock

30. In the Cartographic framework (Rizzi 1997), a clause has a structure in which Topic Phrase (TOPP) is hierarchically higher than Focus Phrase (FOCP). A topic phrase moves to the specifier of TOPP and a wh-phrase to the specifier of FOCP. Only the relevant part of the clause structure is illustrated below:

[FORCEP [TOPP [FOCP [...]]]]

If only coordination of 'like constituents' is allowed (Ross 1967), the ungrammaticality of (52a, b) suggests that the two conjuncts must belong to different categories. If constructions with fronted object are treated as passive, the ungrammaticality of (52a, b) would be surprising since passives, like unaccusatives, are Tense Phrases (TPs). However, if they are analysed as topic constructions (i.e., CPs or TOPPs), as is being suggested here, the ungrammaticality of (52a, b) is predicted since they involve the conjunction of a CP/TOPP and a TP, two categorially unlike constituents.

If examples like (43) are indeed topic constructions with a null indefinite/impersonal subject, rather than passive, they may be said to represent a new development in Mauritian Creole. This being so, the obvious question is, what is their origin? In what follows, we suggest that the fronting of object in examples like (43) shows influence of Indo-Aryan OV patterns.

Indo-Aryan influence

Indo-Aryan languages, as was noted earlier, are head-final (SOV) languages. Their object therefore appears to the left of the verb, as illustrated in (53a, b) from Hindi, (54a) from Indian Bhojpuri, and (54b) from Mauritian Bhojpuri:

(53) a. Mene kita:b parhi:.
I-ERG book read
'I read a book.' (Koul 2008: 211)

b. Vah kha:na: kha:ye bina: ka:lej gaya:.
He food eat without college go
'He went to college without eating his food.' (Koul 2008: 218)

(54) a. Hʌm kitab de-ni.
1SG.NOM book give-PST
'I gave a book.' (indirect object) (Lohar 2020: 232)

b. Ham oke chithi likhli hain.
1SG 3SG letter write PRF
'I have written her a letter.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 62)

However, in neither Hindi nor Indian Bhojpuri is word order rigid since topicalization and scrambling are allowed (see Mahajan 1990, Dwivedi 1994, Lohar 2020).[31] All six logical permutations are possible and, pertinently, object can be

31. According to Mahajan (1990: 19) all three constituents in the following basic sentence can be re-ordered although special emphasis and contextual information are required in some cases:

Raam-ne kelaa khaayaa. (SOV)
Raam-ERG banana eat
'Ram ate a banana.'

placed in first position, to the left of the subject, as illustrated by (55b) from Indian Bhojpuri (Lohar 2020: 518) instead of appearing in its canonical position between the subject and the verb, as in (55a).

(55) a. Pʌɲeɦa gach paŋ-ela.
shortener tree trim-3SG.PRS
'The shortener trims trees.' (Lohar 2020: 518)

b. Gach pʌɲeɦa paŋ-ela.
tree shortener trim-3SG.PRS
'Trees the shortener trims.' (Lohar 2020: 518)

Example (55b) seems to involve object fronting (i.e., topicalization/leftward movement). Another process that also results in object fronting is (short and long) passivization, as illustrated below. The examples in (56) are from Hindi (Koul 2008) while (57a) is from Indian Bhojpuri (Lohar 2020) and (52b) Mauritian Bhojpuri (Boodhoo 2010a):

(56) a. Pura:ne akhba:ron ko phenka: gaya:.
old newspapers OBL throw go.PASS
'The old newspapers were thrown away.' (Koul 2008: 122)

b. Yeh ka:m us-se nahi: kiya: gaya.
this work 3SG-by NEG do go.PST.PASS
'This work could not be done by him.' (Koul 2008: 289)

(57) a. Dʌri khʌnail.
grave dig.PASS.3SG.PST
'The grave was dug.' (Lohar 2020: 368)

b. I kaam okre se bani.
this work 3SG by do
'This work can be done by him only.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 74)

Sentences similar to these Indo-Aryan sentences do occur in Mauritian Creole but as topic (pseudo-passive) constructions. Thus, (56a) and (57a) can be expressed as (58a) and (58b) respectively in Mauritian Creole without any word order alteration:

(58) a. Bann vie zournal la finn zete.
PL old newspapers DEF PRF throw
'The old newspapers have been thrown out.'

b. Trou la finn fouye.
hole DEF PRF dig
'The hole has been dug.'

As is apparent, the sentences in (58) display a structural similarity to the Indo-Aryan sentences in (55b), (56), and (57). The object in Indo-Aryan languages is predominantly in preverbal position, be it in a base-generated clause-internal position, as in (55a), or clause-external peripheral position, as in (55b) and (59):

(59) a. Admi un-ka tʌ kefiu mʌn na pʌr-ʌl.
man 3SG-DAT COND anyone mind NEG fall-3SG.PST
'As for man, she didn't like any.' (Lohar 2020: 429)

b. Larke-ko larkii-ne maraa..
boy-ACC girl-ERG hit.PRF
'The boy, the girl hit.' (Dwivedi 1994: 20)

c. Larke-ko ham-e lagtaa hai ki larkii-ne maraa.
boy-ACC 1SG-DAT seem be that girl-ERG hit.PRF
'The boy, it seems to me that the girl hit.' (Dwivedi 1994: 21)

With this in mind, it is not inconceivable that, given the structural similarity between the topic (pseudo-passive) constructions in (58) and the Indo-Aryan sentences in (56) and (57), the former may have been modelled on the latter, in which the object appears in clause-initial position. Some support for this suggestion comes from the fact that the restriction noted above in connection with the distribution of a fronted object relative to a fronted wh-phrase also holds in the Indo-Aryan languages, as illustrated by (60) from Hindi (Koul 2008) and (61) from Mauritian Bhojpuri (Boodhoo 2010a).

(60) a. Kita:b kyon di:?
book why give-PST
'Why did you give (him/her/them) the book?' (Koul 2008: 246)

b. Yeh kita:b kisko deni: he?
this book whom give.PASS be
'To whom is this book to be given?' (Koul 2008: 229)

(61) a. I khabbar kab soonla?
this news when hear.PST
'When did you hear this news?' (Boodhoo 2010a: 82)

b. Roti kahan rakhal ba?
bread where keep be-PRS
'Where is the bread kept?' (Boodhoo 2010a: 82)

c. Dukaan kab gaila?
shop when go-PST
'When did you go to the shop?' (Boodhoo 2010a: 82)

Notwithstanding the word order flexibility that exits in the Indo-Aryan languages, largely due to focusing of selected constituents (Koul 2008), the parallel between the examples in (60)–(61) on the one hand and (48) on the other seems to support the suggestion that the development of constructions like those in (48) in Mauritian Creole may have been influenced by Indo-Aryan topic constructions like those in (59)–(61). It is worth noting here that such constructions could not have been inherited from French since topicalization, although not contrastive focus constructions, is rare.[32]

Summarising, topic (pseudo-passive) constructions such as those in (43) are in common use in contemporary Mauritian Creole. These constructions display a structural similarity to Indo-Aryan sentences with fronted objects and, since they do not appear to be attested in eighteenth and early nineteenth century Mauritian Creole, it is not inconceivable that they were modelled on Indo-Aryan OV constructions in which the object is either in a clause internal position or on the edge of the clause (e.g., topic position). Either way, it is not unlikely that the Indo-Aryan languages may have played a role in their development.[33]

5. Serial verb constructions

Verb serialisation is another aspect of Mauritian Creole that appears to have been influenced by the Indo-Aryan languages. Serial verb constructions generally have two or more verbs co-existing within a single clause and often sharing the same subject and object noun phrase. Together, they express a single semantic event and are inside a single intonation group, and it is partly for this reason that they are analysed as mono-clausal rather than bi-clausal units (see Aikhenvald 2006 among others). The following from Yatye and Gwari exemplify typical serial verb constructions:

(62) a. Iywi awa utsi iku.
child took door shut
'The child shut the door.' (Yatye, Stahlke 1970)

32. Examples such as *Ce livre, j'ai lu* 'that book, I have read' is generally rejected in French as topic constructions. Instead, French resorts to left-dislocation *Ce livre, je l'ai lu* (lit. that book, I it have read).

33. Baissac (1880: 41) gives the following as an example of a passive example:

Zamés woua fére moi croire qui tout ça béf là fine manzé.
Never 2SG make 1SG believe that all DEM beef DET PRF eat
'You will never make me believe that all the beef has been eaten.'

b. Wo la shnaknu baya.
he took pot break
'He broke the pot.' (Gwari, Hyman 1971)

Serial verb constructions have a few distinguishing features, including the following:

a. the verbs share one subject (although not always) and one object,
b. tense or aspect, if present, is marked on the first verb, both verbs, or the second verb,
c. negation, if present, is marked either on the first verb or both verbs;
d. there is no conjunction or subordinator that links the verbs, and
e. there is no intonational pause between the verbs.

It has been argued (see Syea 2013a) that Mauritian Creole has constructions that are structurally similar to those in (62), and they share most of the properties listed above. For instance, they have only one subject for both verbs, although a copy appears in front of the second verb when the subject is a pronominal, as in shown in (63b). They also have one object which is shared by both verbs, as illustrated by (64), one tense or aspect marker but with two realizations, as in (65), one negation marker but with two realizations, as in (66), and no perceptible intonational pause or conjunction between the two verbs, as is clear from a neutral oral production of (63)–(66). Additionally, they express a single semantic event. Example (63a), for example, means 'John cuts the cake with a knife' and not 'John takes a knife and then cuts a cake'.

(63) a. Zan pran kuto kup gato.
John take knife cut cake
'John cuts his cake with a knife.'
b. Li pran kuto li kup gato.
3SG take knife 3SG cut cake
'S/he cuts the cake with a knife.'

(64) a. Marie pran koko donn so vwazin.
Mary take coconut give 3SG.POSS neighbour
'Mary gives coconut to her neighbour.'
b. Marie pran so linz met sek dan soley.
Mary take 3SG.POSS clothes put dry in sun
'Mary hangs her washing to dry in the sun.'

(65) a. Pierre ti amenn mang ti donn so mama.
Peter PST bring mango PST give 3SG.POSS mother
'Peter brought mangoes for his mother.'

b. Pierre finn pran so bisiklet finn met dan garaz.
Peter PRF take 3SG.POSS bicycle PRF put in garage
'Peter has put his bicycle in the garage.'

(66) a. Zozef pa pran liv pa lir.
Joseph NEG take book NEG read
'Joseph does not read (his) book(s) (as he is supposed to).'
b. Zozef pa ti amenn dilo pa ti donn mama.
Joseph NEG PST bring water NEG PST give mother
'Joseph did not fetch water for (his) mother (as he was supposed to).'

Serial verb constructions in Mauritian Creole do look slightly different to typical serial verb constructions since they require copies of the functional markers of tense, aspect, and negation in front of the second verb, as shown in (63)–(66), and of the pronominal subject, as shown in (63b). However, Mauritian Creole is by no means unique in this respect. Other languages are known to copy functional markers in front of, or on, both verbs in their serial verb constructions. For instance, both Akan (see McWhorter 1992) and Baule (see Aikhenvald 2006) have tense copying, as shown in (67a) and (67b), and both Anyi-Sanvi (see Aikhenvald 2006) and Akan (see Ameka 2005) have negation copying, as shown in (68a) and (68b):

(67) a. Ọ-de adáre twà dubá. (Akan)
3SG-take.PST machete cut.PST branch
'He cut this branch with a machete.'
b. Ɔ-à-fà í swa n à-klè mi. (Baule)
3SG.POSS 3SG-ANT-take house DEF ANT-show 1SG
'He has shown me his house.'

(68) a. Cùá ńjî ákɔ ń-^{I}ní. (Anyi-Sanvi)
dog NEG+catch+HAB chicken NEG+eat+HAB
'The dog never eats a chicken.'
b. Ama a-m-ma Kofi dɔkono a-n-di a-n-da (Akan)
Ama PRF-NEG-give Kofi kenkey PRF-NEG-eat PRF-NEG-sleep
'Ama did not give Kofi kenkey (he) did not eat and didn't go to bed.'

It was assumed until recently that verb serialisation was a phenomenon that did not exist in the Creoles of the Indian Ocean (see Jansen et al. 1978, Seuren 1990, Muysken and Veenstra 1994, Corne et al. 1996) and was only available in the Atlantic Creoles as a contribution from their West African substrates. This assumption was first challenged in Bickerton (1989) and then in Syea (2013a). The former showed that serial verb constructions exist in Seychelles Creole and the latter showed that they exist in Mauritian Creole. However, not everyone agrees

that the constructions discussed in Bickerton (1989) are serial verb constructions. Both Seuren (1990) and Corne et al. (1996), for example, rejected Bickerton's analysis and argued instead that they involve (asyndetic) coordination rather than serialisation. Nevertheless, the evidence presented in Bickerton (1989) and Syea (2013a) seems robust enough to suggest that verb serialisation also exists in the Indian Ocean Creoles, and it is interesting to note in this connection that Corne (1999: 187) appears to accept some verb serialisation in Seychelles Creole.

Although both Bickerton (1989) and Syea (2013a) assert that serial verb constructions exist in these Creoles, they differ on the question of how they came to exist in them. The former attributes their presence to creolization (language acquisition), the latter to language internal development. However, as will be suggested below, it is likely that the development of serial verb constructions in Mauritian Creole may also have been influenced by complex verb (or serial verb) constructions in the Indo-Aryan languages. This, as will be shown, is supported by a small, but significant, difference between Seychelles Creole and Mauritian Creole serial verb constructions.

Both these Creoles for instance allow subject copying whenever the higher subject is a pronoun. However, while this process is optional in Seychelles Creole, as noted in Bickerton (1989) and Corne (1999), it is obligatory in Mauritian Creole (see Syea 2013a).[34] This difference is illustrated by (69) and (70) respectively:

(69) a. Zott finn pran baton (zot) finn bat Kazer.
3PL PRF take stick 3PL PRF hit Kaiser
'They hit the Kaiser with a stick.'

b. Li ti amenn dilo (li) ti donn zot.
3SG PST bring water 3SG PST give 3PL
'He brought them water.'

(70) a. Zot finn pran baton *(zott) finn bat Kazer.
3PL PRF take stick 3PL PRF hit Kaiser
'They hit the Kaiser with a stick.'

b. Li ti amenn dilo *(li) ti donn zot.
3SG PST bring water 3SG PST give 3PL
'S/he brought them water.'

34. Other examples without a subject pronoun in front of the second verb can be found in Adone et al., (2018). The following is one such example:

I kas dizef met dan bol. (Adone et al., p. 33)
3SG break egg put in bowl
'S/He breaks the egg and puts it in the bowl.'

The process of subject copying is unknown in the Atlantic French Creoles as is apparent from the following examples from Haitian Creole (HC) and Guyanese Creole (GC):

(71) a. Men pran liv la montre Jan.
1SG take book DET show John
'I showed the book to John.' (HC, Arends et al. 1994; 297)

b. Li pote sa bay mo.
3SG bring DEM give 1SG
'S/he brought that for me.' (GC, Arends et al. 1994; 289)

This striking difference between the Atlantic French Creoles and the Indian Ocean Creoles can be attributed to the presence of African substrate influence (e.g., Kwa and Gbe) in the former and its absence in the latter. Although a large number of West Africans were in Mauritius between 1730 and 1734 (Baker and Corne 1982, Corne et al. 1996, Corne 1999, Baker 2007) and formed the dominant non-White group for a few years (from 1730 to 1734), there is no evidence that they played any significant role in the development of the grammar of Mauritian Creole, including the development of serial verb constructions. These constructions, as suggested in Syea (2013a), may have evolved independently, possibly from consecutive imperatives. Seychelles Creole, as is known, is an offshoot of Mauritian Creole and may have developed serial verb constructions either independently of Mauritian Creole or inherited them from Mauritian Creole before splitting from it in 1770 (Chaudenson 1981: 245). It should be noted that both Creoles were also in contact with East African (Bantu) languages, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century, but since these are mostly non-serialising languages, the existence of verb serialisation in either Seychelles Creole or Mauritian Creole cannot be traced back to the Bantu speakers. However, Mauritian Creole, unlike Seychelles Creole, came into sustained contact with Indo-Aryan languages from the early nineteenth century (from 1834 to be precise), and these, as is shown below, do have complex verb or serial verb constructions. An obvious question is, can the difference that exists between serial verb constructions in Mauritian Creole and Seychelles Creole be the result of Indo-Aryan influence?

Indo-Aryan influence

One feature of Indo-Aryan languages like Hindi, Urdu, Bhojpuri, or Marathi is that they have clauses in which two verbs can be linearly adjacent to each other. This phenomenon has been given different descriptive labels such as complex predicates (Butt 1995), V-V constructions, or serial verbs (Pandaripanda 1993). The examples in (72) are from Hindi, those in (73) from Indian Bhojpuri and those in (74) from Mauritian Bhojpuri:[35]

(72) a. Le a:na!
take (it) come
'Bring it!' (Koul 2008: 104)

b. Amar dɔrta: dɔrta: a:ya:.
Amar run run come
'Amar came running.' (Koul 2008: 200)

c. Yah sa:re pɛse le ga:ya:.
3SG all money take go.PST
'He took all the money.' (Koul 2008: 104)

(73) a. ... ego lʌkai gac^{h} pʌr cʌʈke piʈʈ^{h}i toʈke k^{h}at rʌɦe.
one-CLF boy tree LOC climb cake pluck eat PROG.3SG.PST
'… one boy had been on a tree plucking and eating cakes.' (Lohar 2020: 544)

b. Buʈia kʌɦili lʌbʌkke de cʌbʌkke. dʌ lem
old.woman say-3SG.FEM.PST bow give grab put take
'The old woman said, "bow and stretch your hand, I'll also stretch myself and grab it.' (Lohar 2020: 546)

c. Beʈa ke kal ego kitab kin deni ….
son DAT yesterday one book buy give.PST …
'I bought a book for my son yesterday …' (Lohar 2020: 273)

(74) a. Ham pehile se ego chitthi likh de-le rahli
I before from one letter write give-PST PAST.PRF
'I had already written a letter.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 61)

35. Similar examples occur in Marathi (Pandharipande 1993: 180):

(i) Tuu he kam karuun taak.
2SG this work do drop.2SG.IMP
'Get this work done.'

(ii) Madhuu he boluun gelaa.
Madhu this say go.PAST.3SG.MASC
'Madhu said this (inadvertently).'

b. Ham haija tohar se bheint kare ail rahli.
1SG here 2SG with meeting do come PST.PRF
'I had come here to meet you.' (Boodhoo 2010a: 62)

Such sentences contain two verbs, one following the other, and the object appears in front of the first verb in the series. The first verb is the meaning-bearing verb while the second tends to modify it in terms of whether the action expressed by it is to the actor's benefit, someone else's benefit, performed aggressively or in a sloppy manner (Koul 2008, Bhatia and Ritchie 2016). The second verb can be *lenaa* 'take', *denaa* 'give', *baithanaa* 'sit', or *daalnaa* 'pour/put in' (Bhatia and Ritchie 2016: 3). Thus, *parh* 'read' *lenaa* 'take' means 'read for one's benefit', *parh* 'read' *denaa* 'give' means 'read for someone else's benefit', *parh* 'read' *baithanaa* 'sit' means 'read in a sloppy manner', and *parh* 'read' *daalnaaa* 'pour/put in' means 'read aggressively'. The second verb (i.e., *le* 'take', *ja* 'go', *de* 'give', and so on) has therefore been bleached of its original meaning and it functions as a 'light verb' (Pandharipande 1993). They do however still encode aspectual meaning of different types (e.g., completion, change of state, action directed towards others or self (agent), and so on) and, importantly, they also encode tense and agreement features (see Koul 2008: 103 for a list of aspectual meanings that the second verb or explicator contributes). Creoles, like the Indo-Aryan languages and other languages with serial verbs, also have a short list of verbs that includes *take, give*, and so on, and these too can be said to have a functional 'light verb' function (see Aboh 2009).

Turning now to the role that the Indo-Aryan languages might have played in the development of serial verb constructions in Mauritian Creole, let us first recall the difference between these constructions in Mauritian Creole and their counterparts in Seychelles Creole. As was noted earlier, a copy of the subject of the first verb appears in front of the second verb if it is a pronoun, obligatorily in Mauritian Creole but optionally in Seychelles Creole. However, if we consider earlier examples of such constructions (i.e., *take* – serials) like those in (75) from Baissac (1888), it is apparent that such a copy was not always obligatory in Mauritian Creole. Additionally, examples like those in (76), also from Baissac (1888), show that no copy of the subject pronoun appears in front of the second verb when the subject of the first verb is an NP, not a pronoun:

(75) a. (Li) pèse larzent, amène dans so lacase.
3SG seize money bring in 3SG.POSS house
'He grabbed the money and took it home.' (Baissac 1888: 47)

b. Li prend so frères, li amène zaute doucement
3SG take 3SG.POSS brothers 3SG bring 3PL slowly …
'He slowly brings his brothers …' (Baissac 1888: 205)

(76) a. Forzeron prend papier, allime so difé.
blacksmith take paper light 3SG.POSS fire
'The blacksmith lights his fire with paper.' (Baissac 1888: 41)

b. Zécolier prend plime, taille li, fer so louvraz
schoolboy take quill sharpen 3SG do 3SG.POSS work
'The schoolboy sharpens his quill and does his work.' (Baissac 1888: 39)

In contemporary Mauritian Creole however sentences like (75a) are only grammatical if they have subject pronoun in front of the second verb, as illustrated by (77). Sentences like those in (76) on the other hand continue to occur without a subject pronoun in front of the second verb, as shown in (78):

(77) a. Li bez larzent, *(li) amenn dans so. lakaz
3SG seize money 3SG bring in 3SG.POSS house
'He grabbed the money and took it home.'
b. Li pran enn fam *(li) marye.
3SG take a woman 3SG marry
'He gets married.'

(78) a. Forzeron pran papier (*li) alim so dife.
blacksmith take paper 3SG light 3SG.POSS fire
'The blacksmith lights his fire with paper.'
b. Zelev pran so krayon (*li) tay li (*li). fer so devuar
pupil take 3SG.POSS pencil, 3SG sharpen 3SG 3SG do 3SG.POSS work
'The pupil sharpens his/her pencil and does his/her work.'

Thus, in contemporary Mauritian Creole, a subject pronoun appears obligatorily in front of the second verb if the subject of the first verb is a pronoun, and it is excluded if the subject of the first verb is an NP (e.g., a proper noun). The examples in (77) are therefore ungrammatical without a lower subject pronoun while those like (78) are ungrammatical with a lower subject pronoun (see Syea 2013a for further discussion). In Seychelles Creole, in contrast, examples like those in (77) and (78) are possible with or without a lower subject pronoun. The question then is, how did the subject pronoun in front of the second verb come to be obligatory in later Mauritian Creole when it clearly was not in earlier (nineteenth-century) Mauritian Creole?

It seems likely that the optionality of the subject pronoun in front of the second verb in nineteenth-century Mauritian Creole reflects an intermediate stage in the development of serial verb constructions in Mauritian Creole, with the final stage displaying a relatively more closely integrated clause structure with no coreferential subject pronoun in front of the second verb, as is the case when the higher subject is a proper noun or an NP, as shown in (78).[36] This shift to the final stage could be said to have been halted in those constructions with a subject pronoun

36. A possible path of development of serial verb constructions in the Indian Ocean Creoles that is consistent with Givón (1991) hypothesis is that they began as two loosely juxtaposed clauses that subsequently became more formally integrated into a single clausal unit.

in front of the first verb under pressure from the Indo-Aryan languages. It seems likely that the Indo-Aryan speakers opted to retain the lower subject pronoun in order to compensate for the absence of agreement marking on verbs in the target language. Recall that in Indo-Aryan languages it is the second verb in a serial construction that displays tense, aspect, and agreement marking. A consequence of this choice is that Mauritian Creole has a less formally integrated, although more semantically transparent, structure, in which not only tense but also the subject pronoun was copied, rather than the relatively more formally integrated, but less semantically transparent, structure in which tense, but not subject, was copied. It is possible then that the shift from optional to obligatory copying of a subject pronoun in Mauritian Creole serial verb constructions was driven by the need to compensate for the absence of agreement marking on the Creole verbs. The difference that exists between Mauritian Creole and Seychelles Creole serial verb constructions can thus be attributed to contact with the Indo-Aryan languages in Mauritius.

In summary, since the Indians had serial (or V-V) constructions in their native languages, learning the Creole serial verb structure would not have been much of a challenge. Nevertheless, the optionality of the second subject pronoun in the absence of agreement marking on the second verb may well have puzzled them.[37] The existence of a correlation between agreement and pro-drop in their own grammars may have led them to the conclusion that in the absence of agreement marking in the target language, the second subject pronoun should be obligatory, not optional, a case of resetting the pro-drop parameter as is often the case in second language acquisition (White 1991). The obligatory retention of the subject pronoun in front of the second verb may then be said to have come about as a result of contact with the Indo-Aryan languages.[38] Seychelles Creole, on the other hand, was never in contact with these languages, and has thus continued to maintain an optional second subject pronoun.

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37. We make the assumption here that the absence and optionality of a subject pronoun in front of the second verb in serial constructions reflect degrees of formal clause integration that was well underway in both Mauritian Creole and Seychelles Creole. The Indians were thus exposed to serial constructions in which the second pronoun was either obligatory absent (if the initial subject was an R-expression (name, NP)) or optionally present (if the initial subject was pronominal).

38. This explanation also extends to the obligatory retention of the subject pronoun in imperatives like the following:

To/Zott/u pran bann pom- la *(to/zott/u) manze
2SG/2PL/2SG(polite) take PL apple DEF 2SG/2PL/2SG (polite) eat
'Take the apples and eat them.'

It is instructive to compare this example with the Marathi Example (i) in footnote (23) above.

6. Discussion

The linguistic situation in Mauritius following the arrival of large numbers of Indian contract workers in the middle of the nineteenth century was very complex indeed. Plainly, it had changed from a country in which two languages, namely French and Creole, were commonly used to one in which three or more languages became the norm, and the target for a large number of the new arrivals, as was noted earlier, was not only the new Creole language but also one or more of the Indian languages, particularly Bhojpuri (the *de facto* lingua franca) since it was spoken by the majority of the Indians. In fact, for many of them, particularly the Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, and Telugu speakers, the immediate target would have been Bhojpuri rather than Creole since it had become the dominant Indo-Aryan language for inter-ethnic communication. The presence of Indian middlemen and translators who spoke Creole no doubt made the acquisition of Mauritian Creole an even less urgent task for a large number of Indians.

Nonetheless, the new arrivals and their immediate descendants, particularly the second generation of locally-born Indians, appear to have succeeded not only in learning the Creole, as observed by Baissac (1880:108), but also in making some contribution to the development of the grammar of Mauritian Creole. The cases we have discussed in this paper show a few areas of similarities and differences between the Creole structures the Indians encountered and those found in their native languages, and it is likely that these would have led to structural reinforcement as well as new grammatical developments such as finite sentences with existential null subjects, topic (pseudo-passive) sentences, and the obligatory copying of the subject pronoun in serial verb sentences.

From the perspective of second language acquisition, it would be reasonable to assume that the Indians, in attempting to learn the Creole finite clauses in the input, had to reset their pro-drop parameter from positive to negative, but, importantly, for only a subset of the sentences they encountered, namely those with a definite referential subject pronoun. In other words, they had to learn to retain rather than drop such a subject pronoun, particularly in isolated finite clauses. On the other hand, arbitrary or impersonal indefinite subjects were only optionally retained just like they were (and still are) in their native languages because, unlike definite (referential) subjects, they are non-referential (i.e., impersonal) and do not therefore require that their identity be recovered. Although the grammar of Mauritian Creole would have looked relatively simpler to the Indians in comparison to their own grammars, given, for instance, the difference with respect to the relation between form and function between the two languages (e.g., higher univocity and semantic transparency in the Creole than in the Indo-Aryan languages), some inter-lingual transfer, particularly lexical and phonological, did

nonetheless take place, resulting in a somewhat Indian variety of Mauritian Creole (distinctive enough to be deprecatingly referred to as *Créole Malabar*). As was noted in the introduction, it is not unusual to come across third generation Indians, now in their late nineties (or older), whose speech still betrays traces of transfer (or fossilized items (Selinker 1972)) in their Creole. Additionally, it was not unusual in the 1950s and 1960s to come across whole communities in rural areas of Mauritius whose Creole showed some form of interference from Bhojpuri. The situation is much different now with Bhojpuri having become an almost endangered language (see Stein 1982; Oozeerally 2013). Overall, though, it seems clear that the grammar of Mauritian Creole was already well-established by the time that large numbers of Indians arrived in Mauritius, and it has more or less been unaffected by Indo-Aryan languages. Nevertheless, there are areas where contact with these languages appears to have reinforced some of the Creole structures and has resulted in a more grammatically enriched Mauritian Creole.

7. Conclusion

Although it is the case that the grammar of Mauritian Creole did not change much following the settlement of large numbers of speakers from the Indian subcontinent, there are nevertheless a few aspects of this Creole beside the *NP so NP* genitive that show traces of some influence of their languages. An important conclusion that can be drawn is that even a well-established grammar of a Creole language, like that of nineteenth century Mauritian Creole, is not completely impenetrable, contrary to what is sometimes claimed, since subtle grammatical changes, as we have shown, can come about as a consequence of long and sustained external pressure. Our discussion of *NP so NP* genitives, null impersonal subject in finite clauses, subject-less sentences with topic object and obligatory retention of a second subject pronoun in serial verb constructions suggests that these new grammatical developments in Mauritian Creole may have been influenced by Indo-Aryan languages in the sense that they may have been reinforced by comparable Indo-Aryan structures. Still, examples of such structural or grammatical developments appear to be sparse rather than widespread in Mauritian Creole.

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Abbreviations

1	first
2	second
3	third
ACC	accusative
ANT	anterior
CLF	classifier
COND	conditional
DAT	dative
DEF	definite
DEM	demonstrative
EMPH	emphatic
ERG	ergative
FEM	feminine
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
HAB	habitual
LOC	locative
MASC	masculine
NEG	negative
NOM	nominative
OBL	oblique
PASS	passive
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
PM	predicate marker
PRF	perfect
PROG	progressive
PP	past participle
PST	past
SG	singular

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