

Spell-Out and the Distribution of *ye* in Haitian Creole

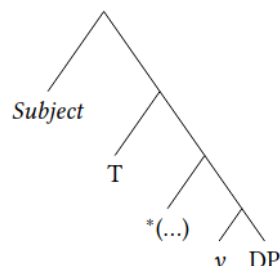
Christopher Legerme
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
SPCL Summer 2025

June 26, 2025

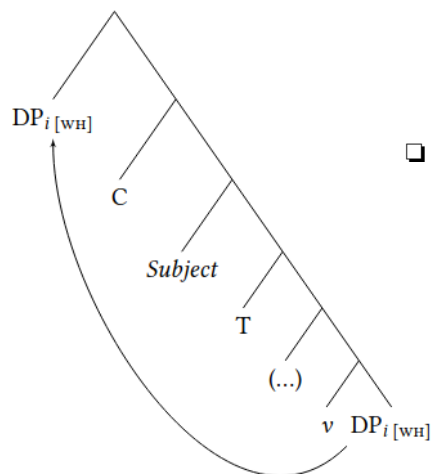
1 Introduction

(1) Puzzle: *ye* in predicate position

a. Spellout \Rightarrow *Subject se* *(...) DP



b. Spellout \Rightarrow DP *Subject* (...) *ye*



b. Saika se yon doktè
Saika _{SE} a doctor

"Saika is a doctor"

c. Yon doktè Saika **ye**
a doctor Saika _{YE}

"Saika is a doctor"

□ The architecture of the clause can be decomposed into thematic and functional domains:

◆ **vP headed by v** ("little vP") is the *thematic domain*, where core argument structure is established: the external argument (subject) and the predicate both originate here.

◆ **TP headed by T** (Tense Phrase) is the *inflectional domain*, where the clause connects to tense, polarity, aspect, and related functional features.

◆ **CP headed by C** (Complementizer Phrase) is the *left periphery* or *discourse domain*, organizing information-structural features such as clause type (declarative, interrogative), topic, and focus. The is where *wh*-bearing elements move to.

□ In Haitian Creole arguments leave a gap in their base-generated position when fronted (2a), the question of the day is whether *ye* in (2c).

(2) a. Yon pòm Bouki te manje
an apple Bouki _{PSR} eat

"Bouki ate an apple"

1.1 Anti-lexicalism and Model Assumptions

Creole morphology: A Preamble

1. Do creoles morphology?

- ❑ Short answer: yes, obviously! (Brousseau, Filipovich, and Lefebvre, 1989; Lefebvre, 1998; DeGraff, 2001)

- ❑ Creoles and “morphology” have a complicated relationship:

- ◆ Historically prevalent views considered creole morphology minimal or absent, and if present, semantically transparent and highly regular.

“...morphology is not particularly uncommon in pidgins and creoles, although no pidgins or creoles have morphological systems as elaborate as those of their most elaborate input languages.” (Thomason, 2001, p. 172)

- ◆ Morphology involves not just grammatical principles, but also language creativity and usage patterns.
 - ◆ Identifying morphemes in creoles requires overcoming biases from tradition, standardization, and orthography:

“If one assumes traditional classifications of morphological systems in which languages are judged on the basis of their inflectional subsystems rather than on the full range of their morphological processes [...], then creole languages tend to be classified as isolating languages. Not only do they have little or no verbal inflection (...) but they also have little or no nominal inflection.” (Becker and Veenstra, 2003)

- ◆ Becker and Veenstra (2003, p. 284) propose an alternative approach to creole morphology:

“[...] a system of oppositions between non-category-changing morphemes with (grammatical) meaning whose presence is mandated by specific sentence structures.”

2. DM and contextual allomorphy

- ❑ Distributed Morphology (DM) is a syntactic theory of morphology in which morphemes merge in syntax, forming complex structures (Halle and Marantz, 1993; Harley and Noyer, 1999).

- ◆ Realizational: syntactic terminals carry feature specifications.
- ◆ Features realized by **Vocabulary Insertion**, guided by the **Subset Principle** and **post-syntactic operations** (Halle, 1997; Embick and Noyer, 2001).

- ◆ No traditional lexicon; instead, at PF lists of **Vocabulary Items** matched to a set of terminals.

- ❑ **Roots** ($\sqrt{}$) are a-categorial terminals that become categorized by merging with syntactic categorizing heads such as verbalizing v , nominalizing n , or adjectivalizing a .

“[...] where there is a morpheme, there is a terminal node of which that morpheme is the realization.” (Harley, 2011, p. 131)

- ❑ The roots-and-contexts model integrates **Phase Theory** to explain patterns of allomorphy (Embick and Marantz, 2008).

- ◆ Local structural relationships between heads and roots condition morphological form and meaning (Marantz, 2013; Embick, 2021).

- ❑ *How does DM help with **ye**?*

- ◆ Characterizing the Haitian Creole (HC) copula **ye** as the spell-out of a syntactic terminal consisting of the verbal head v_{BE} .

- ❑ **Phase Theory.** Syntactic derivations proceed in phases, or cyclic chunks of structure, typically CP and vP (but also DP and PP depending on implementation) (Chomsky, 2000; Chomsky, 2001; Chomsky, 2008).

- ◆ Each phase constitutes a domain for syntactic computation, Spell-Out, and interface interpretation.

- ◆ Once a phase is complete, its complement, that is, its **Spell-Out domain**, is sent to the interfaces (**LF and PF**) and becomes inaccessible to further syntactic operations.

- ❑ **Spell-Out and Interface Mapping.** Syntactic structures are interpreted at two distinct interfaces:

- ◆ **LF (Logical Form):** the interface with semantics—structures are interpreted for meaning.

◆ **PF (Phonological Form):** the interface with morphology/phonology—structures are realized with vocabulary items.

□ **Intermodular Spell-Out.** The output of a phase is split:

◆ Phase complements are spelled out to PF and LF simultaneously, but not necessarily with the same information sent to both interfaces.

◆ This asymmetry allows for derivational mismatches and interface-specific licensing conditions (e.g., **ECP** effects at PF vs. LF).

□ **Consequences for Copulas.** Spell-Out conditions at PF affect whether elements can be silent or overt:

◆ An overt form like *ye* may be inserted into a syntactic terminal to meet phonological well-formedness conditions.

◆ At LF, coindexation and movement chains may still be interpretable without being tied to additional phonetic content.

2 Restrictions on *ye*

□ HC seems to block certain predicate positions from being empty, preferring instead to employ a last-resort resumptive mechanism as a repair strategy.

□ Left-dislocated non-verbal predicates (e.g., nouns, prepositions, *wh*-words) must co-occur with the word *ye* that surfaces in the post-subject position (3) (DeGraff, 1992, p. 168).

(3) a. { kouman | kote | kimoun } Saika **ye**
how where who Saika **YE**

“How | Where | What | Who is Saika?”

b. (Se) (yon) doktè Saika **ye**
it.is a doctor Saika **YE**

“Saika is A DOCTOR”

c. (Se) anba tab la (ke) chat la **ye**
it.is under table the that cat the **YE**

“The cat is UNDER THE TABLE”

□ There is a long-distance dependency between the left-dislocated predicate and *ye* because they display typical constraints on *wh*-movement. For example, extraction out of an adjunct island is generally unacceptable (4) (Piou, 1981).

(4) a. Kisa Jean sonje Saika te **ye**?
what John remember Saika **PST YE**

“What did John remember that Saika was?”

b. Bouki kontan paske Jean sonje Saika te yon doktè
Bouki happy because John remember Saika **PST a doctor**

“Bouki is happy because John remembers that Saika is a doctor”

c. *Kisa Bouki kontan paske Jean sonje Saika te **ye**?
what Bouki happy because John remember Saika **PST YE**

(“What is Bouki happy because John remembered that Saika was?”)

□ *ye* can occur after the past-tense marker *te* (e.g., 4a), so is it a verbal copula?

◆ DeGraff (1992) argues that *ye* is not a verb because it only surfaces when non-verbal predicates move (5), and otherwise *ye* may not occur on its own as a copula like *se* can (6).

(5) a. Saika ede moun yo
Saika help people the.PL

“Saika helped those people”

b. Se ede Saika ede moun yo
it.is help Saika help people the.PL

“Saika HELPED those people”

c. *Se ede Saika **ye** moun yo
it.is help Saika **YE** people the.PL

(“Saika HELPED those people”)

(6) a. Saika se yon doktè
Saika is a doctor

“Saika is a doctor”

b.

*Saika **ye** yon doktè
Saika _{YE} a doctor

("Saika is a doctor")

c. *Chat la **ye** anba tab la
cat the _{YE} under table the

("The cat is under the table")

□ **se and ye in strict complementary distribution.** Parallel to the predicative contrast (6a vs. 6b), the fronting construction never realizes the copula *se* (compare 3 and 7).¹

(7) *Se yon doktè Saika se
it.is a doctor Saika is

("Saika is A DOCTOR")

□ **ye** is not strictly utterance-final and can occur in embedded constructions or be realized before certain adverbs.

(8) a. Se [DP [CP moun sa (ke) li **ye**] a]
SE person this COMP 3.SG _{YE} the
(ke) li **ye**
COMP 3.SG **ye**

("(S)he is who (s)he is")

b. Tout kote paspò mwen **ye**, bous mwen **ye** tou
every place passport my _{YE}, wallet my _{YE} also

"Everywhere my passport is, my wallet is also"

c. Se yon doktè li te **ye** lè sa
it.is a doctor 3.SG PST _{YE} time that

"It was a doctor (that) she/he was at that time"

□ **ye** surfaces under very specific syntactic conditions, though it is not the (sole) form of the copula in HC.

(9) Pwofesè yo te fè Malis (*se/*ye) yon doktè
professor DEF.PL PST make Malis a doctor

"The professors made Malis a doctor."

¹The word *se* is variably glossed as "SE", "FOC", "COP", or "BE" and its distribution introduces its own puzzles that are often debated in the literature (Déprez, 2003; Kihm, 2018).

□ *Puzzle.* What are the conditions of the grammar that tell us when we are allowed to surface **ye**?

◆ Something like "*surface **ye** whenever you front a non-verbal predicate*" is worse than simply restating the facts, because it doesn't even capture the facts in the first place! Compare (3c) and (10), both are fine in HC.

(10) Se anba chat la anba tab la
it.is under cat the under table DET

"The cat is UNDER the table."

□ Adverbs and other structural modifiers can also create environments where **ye** surfaces.

(11) a. Se yè fèt sa te **ye**
it.is yesterday party DEM PST _{YE}

"That party was yesterday"

b. Se pou kont li Bouki te **ye** nan zòn sa a
SE for self 3.SG Bouki PST _{YE} in area that the

"Bouki was by himself in that area."

3 GB-Era Analysis: Licensing and the ECP

□ Formal accounts of **ye** generally analyze its role in licensing displaced predicates, focusing on whether **ye** is:

◆ a verbal copula (Kihm, 2018),

◆ an aspectual or predicative functional head (Déprez and Vinet, 1997; Déprez and Vinet, 1997)

◆ a resumptive pro-form for a moved nonverbal predicate (DeGraft, 1992)

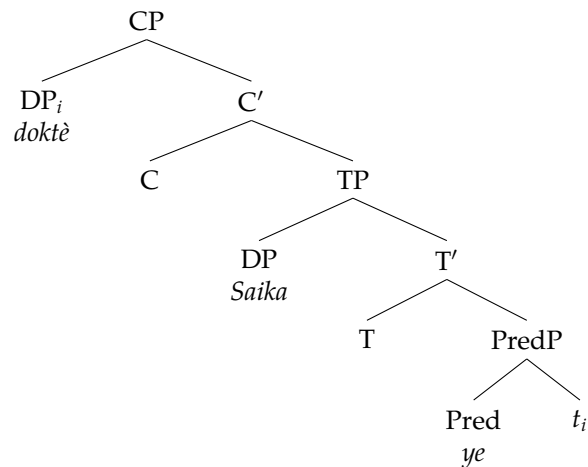
□ Two major generative analyses:

◆ **Copula Analysis** (Déprez and Vinet, 1997, p. 229): **ye** is the strong form of a morpheme that heads a PREDP or ASPP. It surfaces obligatorily when PRED does not have the option to double the predicate. *se*

is its weak allomorph; wherever *ye* is unnecessary, it is ungrammatical.²

- ◆ **Resumption Analysis** DeGraff (1992, p. 183): *ye* as the spell-out of a trace left by the dislocated predicate (i.e., DP, PP, *wh*-phrase).³

(12) The Copula Analysis of *ye*

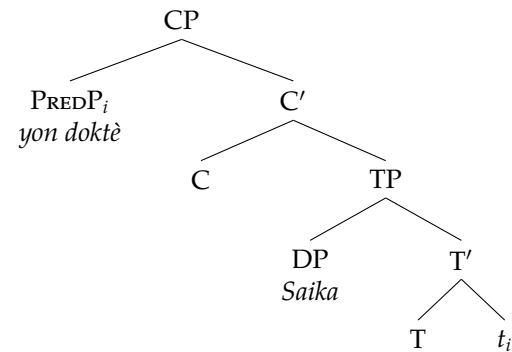


- The copula analysis hinges on the **Empty Category Principle (ECP)**: traces of movement must be properly governed.

(13) The Resumption Analysis of *ye*

²Déprez's (1997, p. 230) analysis assumes that predicate doubling in adjectival and verbal clefts (e.g., *se tris li tris*) involves a copy of the predicate head being adjoined to C, rather than movement. In contrast, nominal clefts involve actual \bar{A} -movement of the predicate DP, leaving a trace that must be licensed and hence the insertion of *ye* in clause-final position.

³DeGraff's (1992, p. 183) version of this view also proposes that *se* is neither a copula nor an allomorph of *ye*, but an A-bound resumptive pro-form left behind by subject movement.



- ***ye* as a pro-verb.** On this analysis, *ye* is a resumptive *pro*-form that phonetically realizes the trace left by A-movement of a nonverbal ([−V]) predicate, typically a prepositional, nominal, or interrogative XP (DeGraff, 1996, pp. 72–76).
- **Parallel insights from Mauritian Creole.** Syea (1997) proposes a similar ECP-driven account for the copula *ete* in Mauritian Creole, but with a crucial twist that the ECP, specifically head government, **applies at PF!**
- ◆ For Syea, the ECP goes from being a disjunctive syntactic condition to a conjunctive one that must hold across PF and LF interfaces.

(14) ECP Conditions on Government (adapted from Syea 1997)

(a) **Head-government (PF):** X head-governs Y iff

- (i) $X \in \{A, N, P, V, Agr, T\}$
- (ii) X m-commands Y
- (iii) no barrier intervenes
- (iv) relativized minimality is respected

(b) **Antecedent-government (LF):** X antecedent-governs Y iff

- (i) X and Y are coindexed
- (ii) X c-commands Y
- (iii) no barrier intervenes
- (iv) relativized minimality is respected

- Given this version of the ECP, the obligatory overt copula forms (*ye* in HC and *ete* in Mauritian Creole) can be understood as satisfying head-government requirements at PF: these forms emerge obligatorily when needed to ensure that the predicate trace left by extraction is properly governed, thereby respecting the ECP conditions.

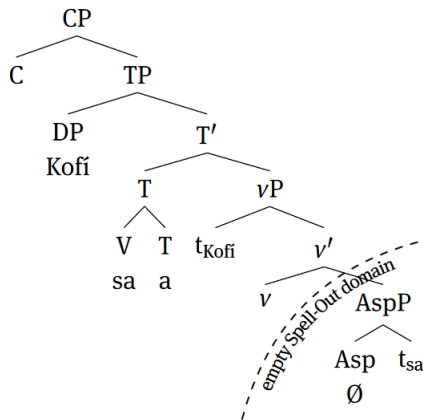
4 Prosodic Vacuity in Asante Twi

4.1 Is Asante Twi $y\epsilon$ Verbal Resumption?

- ❑ In Asante Twi, the form $y\epsilon$ appears as a kind of default verbal element—inserted under specific prosodic conditions.
- ❑ Kandybowicz (2015) proposes that $y\epsilon$ is inserted into an AspP internal head to circumvent the violation of a PF constraint against vacuous Spell-Out domains in the traditional derivation-by-phase framework (Chomsky, 2000; Chomsky, 2001).

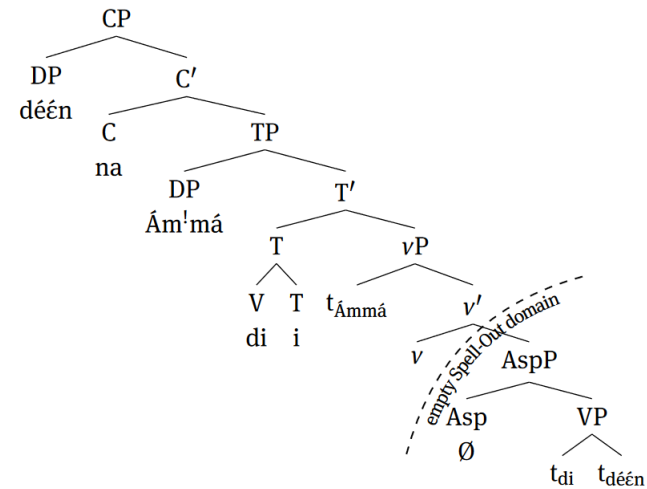
(15) Verb raises to T in simple past intransitives:

- a. Kofí sa-a $*(y\epsilon)$
 Kofi dance-PST
 “Kofi danced.”
- b. Dua nó shii $*(y\epsilon)$
 tree DEF burn-PST
 “The tree burned.”



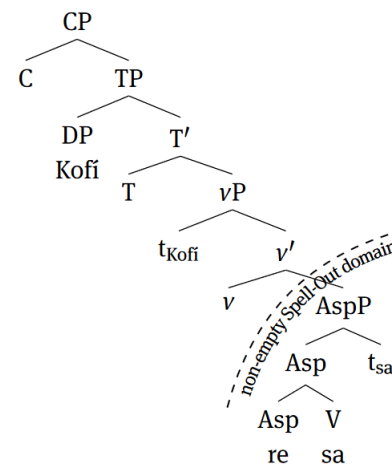
(16) Object fronting in past transitive clauses:

- a. Déén na Ám'má di-i $*(y\epsilon)$
 what FOC Ama eat-PST
 “What did Ama eat?”



(17) Overt aspectual heads obviate $y\epsilon$:

- a. Kofi ré-sa $*(y\epsilon)$
 Kofi PROG-dance
 “Kofi is dancing.”
- b. Kofi á-sa $*(y\epsilon)$
 Kofi PFV-dance
 “Kofi danced.”



4.2 Distribution of $y\epsilon$

□ Twi $y\epsilon$ -insertion occurs with both unergative and unaccusative predicates.

- (18) a. Kofi saa $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi dance.PST
“Kofi danced.”

- b. Dua no shii $*(y\epsilon)$
tree DEF burn.PST
“The tree burned.”

□ $y\epsilon$ can take on various meanings when used as the main verb, such as *do* (19a and 19b), *make* (19c), or *be* (19d).

- (19) a. Kofi re- $y\epsilon$
Kofi PROG-do
“Kofi is doing it.”
- b. Kofi yee $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi do.PST
“Kofi did it.”
- c. e $y\epsilon$ me de se Kofi boo Ama
3SG make 1SG sweet COMP Kofi kick.PST Ama
“It makes me happy that Kofi kicked Ama.”
- d. Aduane no $y\epsilon$ de
food the be sweet
“The food is sweet.”

□ $y\epsilon$ is ungrammatical outside the simple past tense. In all other aspects and periphrastic tense constructions, and $y\epsilon$ may not follow the intransitive.

- (20) a. Kofi a-sa/shi $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi PFV-dance/burn
“Kofi has danced/burned.”
- b. Na Kofi a-sa/shi $*(y\epsilon)$
PST Kofi PFV-dance/burn
“Kofi had danced/burned.”

- c. Kofi re-sa/shi $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi PROG-dance/burn

“Kofi is dancing/burning.”

- d. Na Kofi re-sa/shi $*(y\epsilon)$
PST Kofi PROG-dance/burn

“Kofi was dancing/burning.”

- e. Kofi taa-sa/shi $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi HAB-dance/burn

“Kofi dances/burns (habitually).”

- f. Kofi be sa/shi $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi come dance/burn

“Kofi will dance/burn.” (Lit. “Kofi came to dance/burn.”)

- g. Kofi re-be sa/shi $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi PROG-come dance/burn

“Kofi is about to dance/burn.” (Lit. “Kofi is coming to dance/burn.”)

□ Under the scope of negation in the past, $y\epsilon$ -insertion is blocked and in the affirmative, it is obligatory.

- (21) a. Kofi an-sa/shi $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi NEG.PST-dance/burn

“Kofi did not dance/burn.”

- b. Kofi saa/shii $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi dance.PST/burn.PST

“Kofi danced/burned.”

□ $y\epsilon$ -insertion is systematically unavailable in transitive constructions *with unmoved complements*, regardless of tense or aspect.

- (22) a. Kofi boo $*(y\epsilon)$ Ama $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi kick.PST Ama

“Kofi kicked Ama.”

- b. Kofi re-bo $*(y\epsilon)$ Ama $*(y\epsilon)$
Kofi PROG-kick Ama

“Kofi is kicking Ama.”

- ❑ Certain post-verbal adverbs obviate *ye*-insertion, while some others do not, e.g., low manner adverbs that attach low within AspP (23a).
- ❑ Higher-attaching speaker-oriented adverbs modify propositions and take scope outside AspP and cannot provide phonetic content to AspP instead of *ye* (23b).

- (23) a. Kofi saa (**ye*) ntem (**ye*)
 Kofi dance.PST quickly
 “Kofi danced quickly.”
- b. Kofi saa *(*ye*) ampa
 Kofi dance.PST truly
 “It’s truly the case that Kofi danced.”

❑ *ye* as Multiple Copy Spell-Out

- ◆ *ye* is a late default-form insertion of a lower copy of the verb root)
- ◆ The lexical verb and the *ye*-form coexist in the structure = Multiple Copy Spell-Out

❑ Repair Vacuous Domains

- ◆ *ye*-insertion in Twi as a form of prosodically conditioned verbal resumption.
- ◆ Occurs in contexts with prosodic vacuity, and *ye*-insertion is used to fill the gap.
- ◆ Suggests the existence of a PF constraint that bans phonetically null Spell-Out domains.

5 Spell-Out and *ye*

- ❑ Syea (1997, p. 36) points out similarities in the distribution of overt copulas in other languages, such as Mauritian Creole and English.

- (24) a. Zan dan lakaz
 John in house
 “John is at home.”

- b. Dan lakaz ki Zan *(*ete*)
 in house that John be
 “It’s at home that John is.”

- (25) a. John ’s/is in the house
 b. I know where John *’s/is

- ❑ For the case of English auxiliary contraction, Syea notes that it is a constraint on overt movement, and traces resulting from covert movement at LF do not block contraction.

- (26) a. I wonder who ’s/is what
 b. I know what ’s/is where

- ❑ Syea (1997) proposes a unified analysis of HC and Mauritian Creole, arguing that both languages have overt copula forms (*ye* in HC and *ete* in Mauritian Creole) alternating systematically with a null form.

- ❑ But Syea asks whether the obligatoriness of the overt forms is *really* due to movement and resumption?

- (27) a. Kote Jan (*ye*)?
 where John
 “Where is John?”
- b. Kote li *(*ye*)?
 where 3SG
 “Where is he/she?”

- (28) Saika pi entelijan pase Bouki (?*ye*)
 Saika more intelligent than Bouki

“Saika is more intelligent than Bouki”

- (29) Saika pi entelijan pase Bouki te *(*ye*)
 Saika more intelligent than Bouki PST

“Saika was more intelligent than Bouki was”

6 An Edge Condition on Verbal Apocope

- ❑ The primary focus has been on the distribution of the copular form *ye*. However, similar patterns show up elsewhere in the grammar.

(30) Malis t al(e) lakay
Malis PST go home

“Malis went home.”

(31) Lakay Malis t ale (*al)
home Malis PST go

“Malis went home.”

- ❑ Verbal apocope (also called verb syncope) refers to the omission of a final vowel on the verb stem.

(32) a. Konbyen dan Tonton Bouki genyen (*gen)
how-many tooth Uncle Bouki has

“How many teeth does Uncle Bouki have?”

b. Tonton Bouki gen 32 dan 1 (??genyen)
Uncle Bouki has 32 tooth 3sg

“Uncle Bouki has all of his 32 teeth.” (DeGraff, 2001)

- ❑ Apocope has been reported for various French-Lexified Creoles, such as Haitian Creole (DeGraff, 2001), Louisianese, Mauritian (Henri and Abeillé, 2008), among others.

- ❑ The pattern generally targets a verbal suffix *-e*.

(33) a. Mo fin mâze (*mâz)
1sg finish eat

“I have eaten.”

b. Mo fin mâz diri la (*mâze)
1sg finish eat rice DEF

“I have eaten the rice.” (Seuren, 1990)

(34) a. Le klos ape sone aster (*son)
the bell PROG ring.LF now

“The bell is ringing now.”

b. Yer le klos sone a witer (*son)
yesterday the bell ring.LF at eight

“Yesterday the bell rang at eight.”

c. Zordi le klos son a onzer (*sone)
today the bell ring.sF at eleven

“Today the bell rings at eleven.” (Henri and Abeillé, 2008)

- ❑ These patterns show verb forms are sometimes obligatorily long (e.g. 32a, 33a, 34a–34b), and sometimes short (e.g. 32b, 33b, 34c).

- ❑ The conditioning factors differ by language:

- ◆ In Mauritian Creole, long forms are associated with verum focus (Henri and Abeillé, 2008, pp. 387–389).

- ◆ In Louisianese, tense and aspect play a role; long forms mark past or progressive contexts (Henri and Abeillé, 2008, pp. 393–394).

- ❑ These observations resist a unified treatment across FBCs. Many questions remain open and underdocumented.

6.1 HC Morphology

How do we build words in HC?

1. Derivational Morphology

- ❑ Creolists differ on the inventory of productive morphemes in HC (70–10 items; Brousseau, Filipovich, and Lefebvre 1989, p. 8).

- ❑ DeGraff (2001) outlines key derivational processes:

- ◆ Prefixes: *de-*, *en-*, *ti-*.

- ◆ Suffixes: *-ab*, *-ado*, *-ay/aj*, *-e(n)*, *-èt*, *-man*, *-syon*.

- ◆ Compounding (e.g., *kòk-batay*), reduplication (*mache-mache*, *Ti-Yèyèt*), and **apocope** (*gen* < *genyen*).

- ❑ The suffix *-e(n)* verbalizes nouns/adjectives, triggering phonological changes (e.g. *klete*, *madichonne*).

(35) Verbalizing suffix **-e** in HC (adapted from Lefebvre 1998, p. 305)

Derived V	Gloss	Base √/root	Gloss
betiz-e	'talk nonsense'	betiz	'nonsense'
klet-e	'lock up'	kle	'key'
madichonn-e	'curse'	madichon	'curse'
makak-e	'hit with stick'	makak	'stick'

- Suffix *-e* is also productive with loanwords (e.g., *djòb-e*), and allows verb doubling:

- (36) *djòb-e Bouki t ap djòb-e*
job-VBLZ Bouki PST PROG job-VBLZ
 "Bouki was working."

2. Inflectional Morphology

- HC also marks gender morphologically: *-en/-az* (e.g., *Ayisyèn/Ayisyen*, *Kapwaz*). Gender marking is optional in predication, but obligatory in NPs.

- (37) a. *Manman m se Ayisyèn/Ayisyen*
mother 1SG RES Haitian.FEM/Haitian.MASC
 "My mother is Haitian."

- b. *Yon fanm Ayisyèn/*Ayisyen*
INDF woman Haitian.FEM/Haitian.MASC
 "A Haitian woman." (DeGraff, 2001, p. 73)

- Some predicates show alternations like English active/passive (e.g., *fè/fèt*, *kowòmp/kowòmpe*).

- (38) a. *Mwen te fè kabann lan maten an*
1SG PST make bed DEF morning DEF
 "I made the bed this morning."
 b. *Kabann lan te fèt maten an*
bed DEF PST make morning DEF
 "The bed was made this morning." (DeGraff, 2001, p. 75)

3. Verb classes and apocope

- HC roots normally require a thematic vowel: *-e*, *-i*, or *∅*.

- Roots are classified into Class E (*-e*), Class I (*-i*), and Irregular (*-∅*). Certain roots show apocope patterns:

- (39) a. Class E:

- (39) *Malis t al(e) lakay*
Malis PST go home
 "Malis went home."

- (40) *Lakay Malis t ale (*al)*
home Malis PST go
 "Malis went home."

- b. Class I:

- (41) *Malis te fin(i) devwa li*
Malis PST finish schoolwork 3SG
 "Malis finished his homework."

- (42) *Devwa li Malis te fini (*fin)*
homework Malis PST finish
 "Malis finished his homework."

- c. Irregular:

- (43) *Malis ap bwè ji*
Malis PROG drink juice
 "Malis is drinking juice."

- (44) *Se ji Malis ap bwè*
SE juice Malis PROG drink
 "Malis is drinking juice."

- (45) Verbal Apocope by Class:

Class	Long Form	Short Form
Class E-a (e.g. <i>manje</i>)	✓	✗
Class E-b (e.g. <i>ale</i>)	✓	✓
Class I-a (e.g. <i>mouri</i>)	✓	✗
Class I-b (e.g. <i>vini</i>)	✓	✓
Irregular (e.g. <i>bay</i>)	✓	✗

4. Irregular verbs can only occur in long form due to null thematic positions. A few multi-syllable irregulars may exist (e.g. *vann*, *konprann*, *sispann*).

5. The observed apocope pattern isn't merely about clause-finality: it also resists appearing across phrasal movement edges (e.g., topicalization environments).

- (46) Se devwa li ke Malis t ap fini yè swa (*fin)
 SE work 3SG COMP Malis PST PROG finish yesterday night
 "Malis was finishing his schoolwork last night."

6.2 Apocope with HAVE Sentences

- ❑ The primary focus has been on the distribution of the copular form *ye*. However, similar patterns show up elsewhere in the grammar.
- ❑ The alternation between *gen* and *genyen* in HAVE constructions raises similar questions. It seems to involve constraints on short vs. long forms that correlate with syntactic or prosodic environments.
- ❑ **Key question:** To what extent can the alternation between *gen* and *genyen*, like that of \emptyset /*ye*, be accounted for by the same grammatical processes?

- (47) a. Konbyen dan Tonton Bouki **genyen** (***gen**)
 how-many tooth Uncle Bouki has
 "How many teeth does Uncle Bouki have?"
 b. Tonton Bouki **gen** 32 dan 1 (?**genyen**)
 Uncle Bouki has 32 tooth 3.SG
 "Uncle Bouki has all of his 32 teeth." (Haitian Creole, DeGraff 2001)

- (48) a. Malis se yon doktè
 Malis SE INDF doctor
 "Malis is a doctor."
 b. Se (yon) doktè Malis **ye**
 SE INDF doctor Malis YE
 "Malis is A DOCTOR."

- ❑ The form *gen*, which originates from the verb *win*, is also the short form of the HAVE verb in HC.
- ❑ Unlike WIN, the HAVE verb allows both short (*gen*) and long (*genyen*) forms in various environments.

- (49) a. Jan gen(yen) yon chat
 John have INDF cat
 "John has/owns a cat."
 b. Gen(yen) yon chat anba tab la
 have a cat under table DEF
 "There is a cat under the table."

- (50) a. Jan gen*(yen) loto a
 John win lottery DEF
 "John won the lottery."

- ❑ Realization of the long form *genyen* is not optional or free.
 - ◆ It is required in contexts involving A-bar movement (e.g. relativization) and pronominal objects.

- (51) a. Yon chat (ke) Jan gen*(yen)
 INDF cat COMP John have
 "John has a cat."
 b. Wi, Jan gen*(yen) li
 yes John have 3.SG
 "Yes, John has it."

- ❑ **What governs this alternation?** Several possibilities remain open:
 - ◆ Prosodic licensing or a ban on vacuous phases (Kandybowicz, 2015)?
 - ◆ Inability to stress weak functional forms such as *gen* or \emptyset ?
 - ◆ Blocked deletion of a full form when stress needs to fall on a categorial or thematic position?

6.3 The Prosodic Factors

- ❑ Haitian Creole's stress system is lexical ("word-accent") and quantity-sensitive (Brousseau, 2003).
 - ◆ Phonetic correlates include increased intensity or pitch.
 - ◆ Right-dominant foot structure (Cadely, 1997).
- ❑ Primary stress typically occurs word-finally. Non-final heavy syllables (e.g. closed syllables) must receive secondary stress.

(52) Haitian Creole Stress Pattern (Brousseau, 2003, p. 132)

/zāmí/	‘friend’
/depeʒé/	‘to hurry’
/mayasá/	‘twins’
/baùsté/	‘birth certificate’
/manifèstasy ⁵ /	‘demonstration’
/rèspèkté/	‘to respect’
/malfèktéz/	‘burglar, lawbreaker’
/gouvènmá/	‘government’
/èspliké/	‘to explain’

□ Lexical stress is retained across larger prosodic domains (Brousseau, 2003; Kalkhoff, 2018).

◆ (Kalkhoff, 2018) proposes a layered prosodic structure: Intonational Phrase (IP), Intermediate Phrase (ip), Clitic Group (C), and Phonological Word (ω).

◆ Every phonological word and clitic group⁴ is accentable.

(53) [IP [C ou vin [ω rive]][C nan [ω mwa]][ω desanm]]
2sg come arrive in month December

“You came along in the month of December.”

Haitian Creole Pitch Track (Kalkhoff, 2018)

⁴A clitic group includes a host word and adjoining clitics, forming a single prosodic domain (Nespor and Vogel, 2007, pp. 145–163).

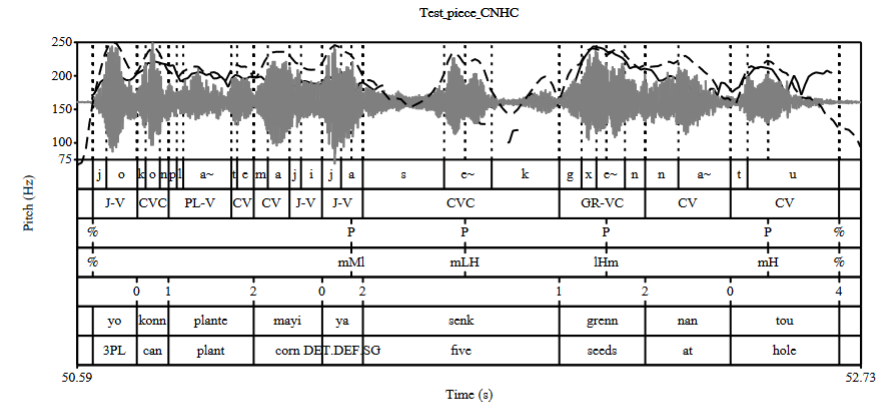


Figure 1: Indication of HC stress accent patterns by displaying the intensity track (dashed line) and the pitch track (solid line) of the IP [yo konn plante mayi ya senk grenn nan tou]IP (‘they used to plant the corn with five seeds in a hole’).

Selected References

- Becker, Angelika and Tonjes Veenstra (2003). “The survival of inflectional morphology in French-related creoles: The role of SLA processes”. In: *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 25.2, pp. 283–306.
- Brousseau, Anne-Marie (2003). “The Accentual System of Haitian Creole: The Role of Transfer and Markedness Values”. In: *Phonology and Morphology of Creole Languages*. Ed. by Ingo Plag. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, pp. 123–146.
- Brousseau, Anne-Marie, Sandra Filipovich, and Claire Lefebvre (1989). “Morphological Processes in Haitian Creole: The Question of Substratum and Simplification”. In: *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 4.1, pp. 1–36.
- Cadely, Jean-Robert (1997). “Prosodie et cliticisation en créole haïtien”. In: *Études Créoles* 20, pp. 77–88.
- Chomsky, Noam (2000). *The Architecture of Language*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- (2001). “Derivation by Phase”. In: *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*. Ed. by Michael Kenstowicz. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 1–52.
- (2008). “On Phases”. In: *Foundational Issues in Linguistic Theory: Essays in Honor of* ... Ed. by Robert Freidin, Carlos P. Otero, and Maria Luisa Zubizarreta. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 133–166.

- DeGraff, Michel (1992). "Creole Grammars and Acquisition of Syntax: The Case of Haitian". PhD thesis. University of Pennsylvania.
- (1996). "Predicate-Movement, Quantification, Events and Properties". In: *Niger-Congo Syntax and Semantics* 6, pp. 69–81.
 - (2001). "Morphology in Creole Genesis: Linguistics and Ideology". In: *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*. Ed. by Michael Kenstowicz. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 53–121.
- Dèprez, Viviane (2003). "Haitian Creole *se*: A copula, a pronoun, both or neither? On the double life of a functional head". In: *Recent Developments in Creole Studies*. Ed. by Dany Adone. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, pp. 135–173.
- Dèprez, Viviane and Marie-Thérèse Vinet (1997). "Predicative constructions and functional categories in Haitian Creole". In: *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 12.2, pp. 203–235.
- Embick, David (2021). "Roots and Their Morphosyntactic Features". In: *Annual Review of Linguistics* 7. Online at [linguistics.annualreviews.org](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-040620061341), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-040620061341>, Copyright © 2021 by Annual Reviews, pp. 1–24.
- Embick, David and Alec Marantz (2008). "Architecture and Blocking". In: *Linguistic Inquiry* 39.1, pp. 1–53.
- Embick, David and Rolf Noyer (Oct. 2001). "[Movement Operations after Syntax](#)". In: *Linguistic Inquiry* 32.4, pp. 555–595.
- Halle, Morris (1997). "Distributed Morphology: Impoverishment and Fission". In: *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 30, pp. 425–449.
- Halle, Morris and Alec Marantz (1993). "Distributed Morphology and the Pieces of Inflection". In: *The View from Building 20*. Ed. by Ken Hale and S. Jay Keyser. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 111–176.
- Harley, Heidi (2011). "Compounding in Distributed Morphology". In: *The Oxford Handbook of Compounding*. Ed. by Rochelle Lieber and Pavol Štekauer. Online edn, Oxford Academic, 18 Sept. 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199695720.013.0007>, accessed 26 June 2025. Oxford University Press, pp. 129–144.
- Harley, Heidi and Rolf Noyer (1999). "Distributed Morphology". In: *Glott International* 4.4, pp. 3–9.
- Henri, Fabiola and Anne Abeillé (2008). "Verb Form Alternations in Mauritian". In: *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar*. Ed. by Stefan Müller. Keihanna: CSLI Publications, pp. 378–398.
- Kalkhoff, Alexander M. Teixeira (2018). *Using Corpus Data for Testing a Working Hypothesis about Haitian Creole Prosody*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Potsdam.
- Kandybowicz, Jason (Apr. 2015). "[On Prosodic Vacuity and Verbal Resumption in Asante Twi](#)". In: *Linguistic Inquiry* 46.2, pp. 243–272.
- Kihm, Alain (2018). "The Haitian Creole copula and types of predication: A Word-and-Pattern account". In: *The lexeme in descriptive and theoretical morphology*. Ed. by Olivier Bonami, Gilles Boyé, Georgette Dal, Hélène Giraou, and Fiametta Namer. MIT Press, pp. 53–88.
- Lefebvre, Claire (1998). *Creole Genesis and the Acquisition of Grammar: The Case of Haitian Creole*. Cambridge Studies in Linguistics. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Marantz, Alec (2013). "Verbal Argument Structure: Events and Participants". In: *Lingua* 130, pp. 152–168.
- Nespor, Marina and Irene Vogel (2007). *Prosodic Phonology*. 2nd. Vol. 28. Studies in Generative Grammar. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Piou, Nanie (1981). "Verbes et redoublement de verbes en haïtien". MA thesis. Université du Québec à Montréal.
- Seuren, Pieter (1990). "Verb Syncopation and Predicate Raising in Mauritian Creole". In: *Theoretical Linguistics* 13.1, pp. 804–844.
- Syea, Anand (1997). "[Copula, Wh-Trace, and the ECP in Mauritian Creole](#)". In: *ling* 35.1, pp. 25–56.
- Thomason, Sarah G. (2001). *Language Contact: An Introduction*. Edinburgh University Press.