

**Kreol in Mauritian Schools:
Mother Tongue Language Education and Public
Opinion**

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Abstract

Since before independence in 1968, Mauritian language planning has favored the colonial languages of English and French over Mauritian Creole, or Kreol, in the education system, despite Kreol's status as the native language of the vast majority of Mauritians. Mauritians have disapproved of the use of Kreol in the education system historically, but in the past 5 years, Kreol has expanded its scope of use in Mauritian classrooms. This study uses survey data from Mauritian citizens in 2015 to assess whether opinions towards Kreol and its use in the Mauritian education system have changed, and if so, why.

In this essay, I first detail the current linguistic situation in Mauritius and the state of the education system and language education policy there, including recent pro-Kreol shifts. I then use survey data received from native Mauritian participants to assess attitudes toward Kreol and its use in the education system, along with reasons for Mauritians' support for Kreol or lack thereof. My essay concludes by analyzing the broader context of this Mauritian case study, explicating the benefits of mother tongue language education beyond the scope of Mauritius and comparing language education policy and its effects in other creole-speaking, post-colonial nations in order to situate Mauritius within the greater, worldwide debate regarding multilingual educational programs. The case of Mauritius provides an example of a country that, with further understanding of the cognitive and academic advantages of mother tongue language education, may be on the brink of promoting its national language in the education system to greater benefit Mauritian students.

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1 Introduction

Effective language planning and policy requires a complicated system of cooperation between local and national governments, the citizens of a nation, and linguistic experts. In situations of diverse multilingualism like those commonly found in African and post-colonial nations, successful language planning becomes even more difficult. In multilingual situations, choices of language functions, prestige, and status are political and too often lack any linguistic basis. Difficult questions of national identity, benefits of the use of native languages, and equality of linguistic representation abound in the act of language planning, and carrying out language policies on the ground can be even more difficult than the planning itself. However, effective language planning and policy can be incredibly beneficial to ease of communication, language acquisition, and native linguistic rights to citizens of multilingual nations.

Language planning often strategizes to achieve its goals through the medium of public education. In this way, the government of a country is able to promote and even require acquisition and formal competence in certain languages as a necessity to succeed within the public education system of a country. This focus on certain languages in the education system is generally coupled with granting official or higher status to some languages, effectively favoring these prestige languages in governmental, professional, and educational spheres.

An intriguing case study of language planning and policy, particularly in regards to the language education system, can be found in the tiny, multilingual, and multiethnic island nation of Mauritius, located 500 miles to the East of Madagascar.



Figure 1: Map of Mauritius and Southern Africa

This creole-speaking, post-colonial nation has avoided much overt language planning in the legislature of the country despite the multitude of languages used on the island; this is perhaps a reflection of the complexity of the sociolinguistic situation in Mauritius, caused by broad multilingualism, triglossia, and ethnic associations of native languages. In addition to the equivocation of the Mauritian government to create effective language policy, Mauritius is also an interesting case study due to its citizens' general lack of support for Mauritian Creole, or Kreol Morisien, as an official language or as a language of instruction in schools in Mauritius (Rajah-Carrim, 2007), despite Kreol's widespread status as a first language of most Mauritians.

Following recent pro-Kreol changes within the education system, this study will assess whether Mauritians' opinions that Kreol is not a suitable language of instruction in primary schools have persisted to 2015, continuing the negative opinions towards Kreol that were expressed in Rajah-Carrim's interviews from 2002. It is also important to recognize Mauritians' reasoning behind their opinions in order to change any unfounded beliefs

regarding language and education in Mauritius, in an attempt to sway general Mauritian support for the most effective and beneficial language education policies for all Mauritians.

2 Mauritius: History, Demography, and Language

2.1 History

Like many African nations, Mauritius is home to a rich multilingual speech community due to its history of colonialism, slave trade, and immigration for the entirety of its history of human presence on the island. Mauritius is unique in that it was uninhabited until colonization in the 17th century and has no indigenous population (EISA, 2009), meaning that there exists no language that is native to the island. This lack of any ethnic indigenous language and the consequent reliance on colonial languages has shaped the Mauritian sociolinguistic situation to this day.

Mauritius was first settled by the Dutch in 1598, though their settlement soon failed and little of their influence or effect on the island still exists, other than the extinction of the Dodo bird. In 1715, Mauritius was claimed by the French, who had more success with their settlement, likely due to the importation of slaves from Africa who grew the agriculture-based economy of the island (EISA, 2009). The influence of the French colonization in Mauritius is still present, with French both serving as one of the most widely-used languages on the island and also as a base for Mauritian Creole, or Kreol Morisien, which is the native language of most Mauritians.

A century later in 1810, the British took over Mauritius as a colony after defeating the French in the Napoleonic Wars. Under Britain, slavery was abolished in the 1830's and an indentured labor system was founded, under which thousands of Indian immigrants arrived in Mauritius to work. Britain's rule in Mauritius continued well into the 20th century

until independence was gained in 1968; this long history with England has created an continuous presence of English in Mauritius, similar to the enduring usage of the French language.

2.2 Demography

The history of colonial powers and immigration in Mauritius has given rise to a diverse make-up of Mauritian citizens, religiously, ethnically, and linguistically. Only a small minority of white French or British descendants still live on the island, and the large majority of Mauritians today are descendants of either African slaves or Indian indentured workers. According to the 2011 census data from Mauritius, 30.5% of the total population of 1.24 million Mauritians is Christian, with the large majority being Roman Catholic. Another 50.7% is Hindu, and 17.9% is Muslim, with the remaining population being Buddhist, Jewish, or not expressing their religion in the census data (Republic of Mauritius, 2011a).

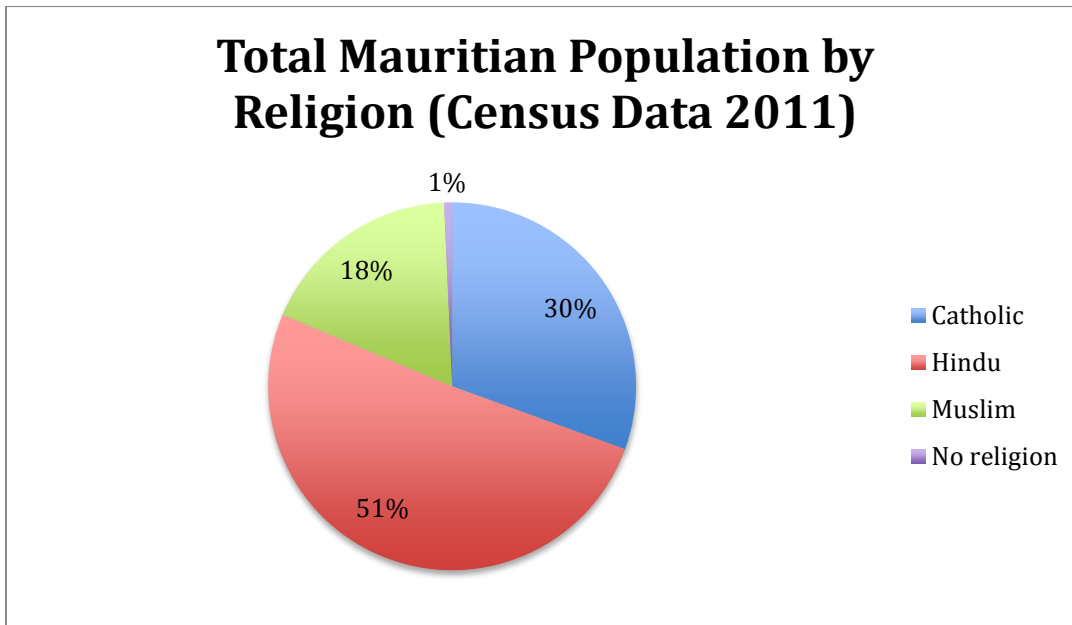


Figure 2: Total Mauritian Population by Religion

In 1982, the former Mauritian census category of “ethnic membership” was eliminated, causing difficulty in the classification of ethnic groups (Eriksen, 1990). However,

ethnicity maps roughly onto the religious groups expressed in the 2011 census, meaning that ethnic group can be extrapolated from religious identity. Catholics in Mauritius, primarily called Creoles, are descendants of slaves from Africa, while Hindu and Muslim Mauritians share ethnic Indian ancestry. The minority categories of Jews and Buddhists can be assumed to be Franco-Mauritians and Chinese immigrants respectively. Based on the 2011 census data regarding the respondents' language of forefathers, nearly 1% of Mauritians stated that the language of their forefathers was Mandarin or another Chinese language, while 1.7% stated that this language was French or English, meaning that roughly 1% of Mauritians are of Chinese ethnicity and 1.7% are of European descent. Based on these percentages and the fact that ethnic groups of Indo-Mauritians and Creoles are composed of the same religious groups of Hindus, Muslims, and Catholics, we can assume that roughly 68% of Mauritians are of Indian descent (both Muslims and Hindus), 30% are Creoles of African descent, and the remaining 2% are White or Chinese. Though it is likely that a small mixed race population exists on the island, inter-marriage between ethnic or religious groups is generally uncommon (Eriksen, 1989), and therefore mixed race populations are not widely discussed or reported on. Therefore, any mixed race Mauritians likely still identify with one of the traditional ethnic groups of Catholic Creoles, Indo-Mauritian Hindus, Indo-Mauritian Muslims, Chinese, or Whites, rather than identifying with a wholly mixed race group.

2.3 Language

Mauritians use a variety of languages in their daily lives, including French, English, Kreol Morisien, and several other ancestral languages. Kreol is the language spoken at home by 86.5% of Mauritians, while only 4.1% of Mauritians speak French at home and 0.5% speak English (Republic of Mauritius, 2011a). Some Indo-Mauritians also speak various ancestral Indian languages at home. These ancestral languages are heritage languages, which

have been passed down through generations, from the original Indian immigrants to the island to Indo-Mauritians present there today. Bhojpuri is the most common ancestral Indian language with 5.3% of Mauritians claiming it as the language they use at home. Additionally, out of over 1.2 million Mauritians, Tamil and Telugu each have over 1,000 native speakers; Bengali is the maternal language of approximately 7,000 Mauritians while Hindi has roughly 8,500 native speakers in Mauritius (Republic of Mauritius, 2011a).

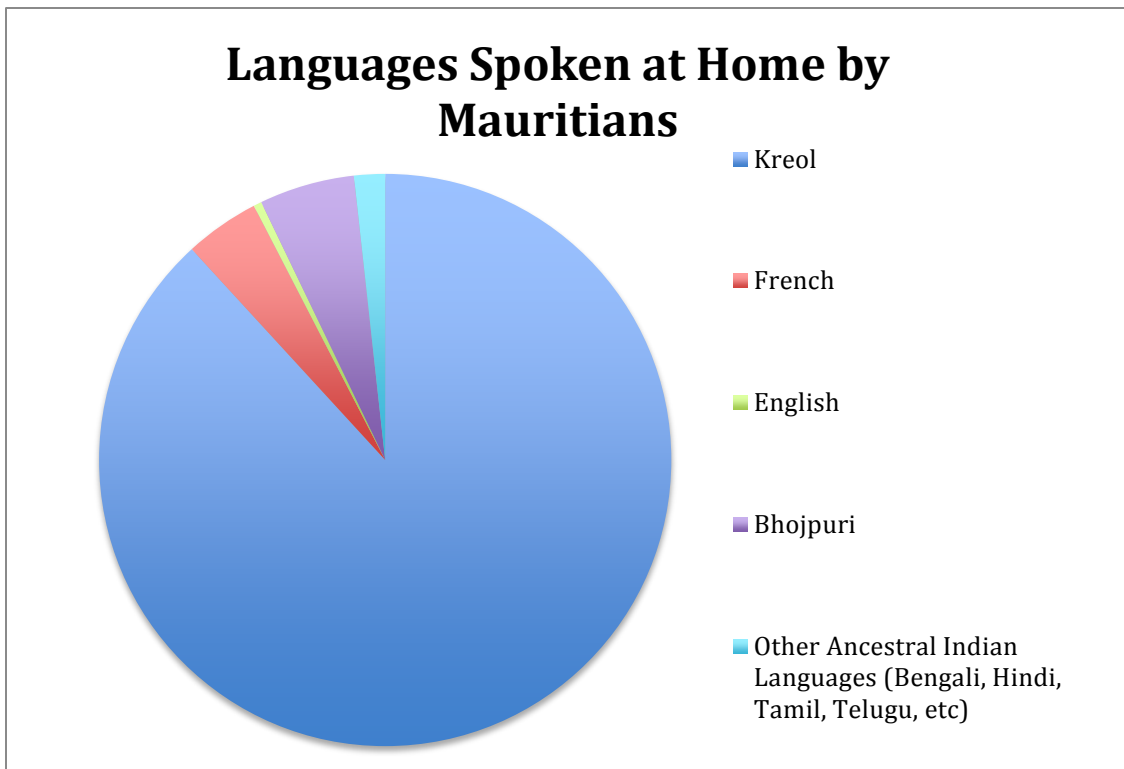


Figure 3: Pie chart of language spoken at home by Mauritians

Language planning and policy in Mauritius is generally fraught with uncertainty. The Republic does not legally recognize any language as either official or national. Despite this equivocation in language policy on the part of the Mauritian government, the Republic does favor the colonial language of English in practice. The Mauritian constitution states that “the official language of the [National] Assembly shall be English but any member may

address the chair in French” (The National Assembly of Mauritius), which reflects the government’s bias towards the two colonial languages over the native language of Kreol.

Language use and attitudes on the island outside of official context mimic this partiality towards French and English. While Kreol is the most widely spoken language, it is generally reserved for private or informal contexts, such as in the home or with friends, while French and English are used in more formal situations, as with a figure of authority such as an employer or professor or in public discourse and media (Eriksen, 1990). Kreol is also generally perceived as a less prestigious language and possesses a lower standing in the hierarchy of language status in Mauritius (Eriksen, 1990: 11).

This use of certain languages or varieties in prestigious domains and others in lower-status domains by multilingual speakers is certainly not unique to Mauritius. This division of language functions according to prestige and status is referred to as diglossia (Ferguson, 1959), in which the H or high language is used in prestigious domains, such as literacy, professional contexts, or public speaking, while the L or low variety is found in more informal or relaxed settings. This theory of diglossia generally involves only two languages, one high and one low; however, in the case of Mauritius, this simplistic delineation of multilingualism is complicated by the use of both French and English as H languages and by the existence of various ancestral Indian languages among the Indian population on the island.

3 The Multilingual Education System

3.1 Language Use and Planning in Mauritian Primary Schools

The lack of clarity in general language planning in Mauritius also extends to the education system. Again, policy regarding languages of instruction is minimal, with the most

recent decree on this topic coming from 1957, eleven years before Mauritius became an independent nation. The Education Ordinance of 1957 states:

In the lower classes of Government and aided primary schools up to and including Standard III, any one language may be employed as the language of instruction, being a language which in the opinion of the Minister is most suitable for the pupils.

In Standards IV, V, and VI of the Government and aided primary schools the medium of instruction shall be English, and conversation between teacher and pupils shall be carried on in English; provided that lessons in any other language taught in the school shall be carried on through the medium of that instruction (Sonck, 2005).

In addition to the fact that this policy was established over 50 years ago, when Mauritius was still under British rule, the policy itself does not provide any exactitude concerning the language of instruction for the first three years of primary schooling.

This vagueness leads to confusion and wide variation in languages of instruction across the country. In most Mauritian classrooms, a combination of Kreol, French, and English are all used, though for different purposes (Sonck, 2005). Both English and French are subjects of study for Mauritian students, while Kreol is not; this results in most textbooks and written sources being English or French based. While English is the goal for the medium of instruction, French, which is much closer to the native Kreol and also much more widely spoken among the Mauritian population (Rajah-Carrim, 2007: 52), is also used in the classroom to facilitate easier comprehension with young students who have little or no exposure to the English language (Sonck, 2005). The use of Kreol in the classroom varies largely; some teachers avoid Kreol completely, while others use it frequently to communicate with students in the only language in which they have some competence upon arrival in primary school (Sonck, 2005).

Although language education policy in Mauritius lacks clarity and specificity, it is obvious that French and English are favored over Kreol. Both of the colonial languages are examined subjects on national exams and are required subjects for all primary students from

Year 1 onward (UNESCO, 2010). Meanwhile Kreol's use in the classroom is unspecified, and it has historically lacked inclusion as a studied subject in Mauritian schools. In this way, both English and French are recognized as official subjects of study, with English stated legislatively as the sole medium of instruction from Grade 4 onwards, while Kreol's status remains undefined and its use varies across classrooms.

3.2 Failure of the System and Language Examinations

This vague language planning model has not achieved great success within the education system. This language education strategy has resulted in inadequate English language skills for Mauritian students, which have harsh consequences for young Mauritians due to the intensive model of examinations in place. Almost a third of Mauritian students are not admitted into secondary education and effectively end their educational journey at the age of 12 due to failure on these standardized exams.

At the end of six years of primary schooling, all Mauritians must take an exam to receive their Certificate of Primary Education, or CPE. Students who do not pass the exam on their first or second attempts are not admitted to secondary education and must continue with pre-vocational training until age 16, when schooling in Mauritius is no longer compulsory. The CPE covers the subjects of French, English, Math, Science, History, and Geography, and there is also an option to include an ancestral language such as Hindi or Tamil if the student has opted to study such a language as a subject (Rajah-Carrim, 2007: 53). In addition to the English portion of the CPE, which includes sections on vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and an essay (Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, 2015), the exam is conducted entirely in English, meaning that success on the test is dependent on English language abilities. The pass rate for the CPE was only 71% in 2014. The 29% of

Mauritian 6th graders who did not pass the exam had one chance to retake the test, with only 23% of re-takers passing on the second round. In 2014, 17,681 students took the CPE, meaning that over 3,900 students in 2014 alone failed the exam on both attempts (Government Information Service, 2014).

Looking specifically at English abilities within this system of strict examinations, English was one of the most difficult subjects for students, requiring the highest number of participants to retake the exam due to failure only on the English section of the test. In 2013, 1,779 students had to re-sit their exams for only one subject; out of those 1,779 students, 56% of them were re-sitting the exam for English, compared to 21% each for Mathematics and French (and only 17 students for Science and 15 for History/Geography) (Curpen, 2013). This confirms Mauritians' lack of proficiency in English as an underlying cause to the failure of so many students on examinations. Therefore, this intensive testing that determines the future education for young Mauritians places even more importance on competence in colonial languages in Mauritius.

3.3 Kreol Instruction as a Solution in Language Planning

In the case of CPE failure, lack of English language proficiency and diminished comprehension of other subjects are to blame, both of which could be remedied through the use of Kreol as a language of instruction. In both neurolinguistic and language pedagogical theories along with various case studies, it has been shown that competency in the native language of students is a necessary building block to attaining L2 competency (Bull, 1990; Burtoff, 1985; Cummins, 1979; Murtagh, 1982; Paulston, 1975; Ravel and Thomas, 1985). In various case studies, students who were instructed in their mother tongue, either simultaneously in a bilingual education model or beforehand in a mother tongue transitional

model, outperformed the control students who were only instructed in an L2 immersion model¹.

It is clear that the L2 immersion model, which ignores the mother tongue and uses only the L2 as a language of instruction, is not the most efficient way to acquire L1 or L2 languages. This may be a defining reason for the lack of English proficiency and consequent CPE failure in Mauritius, seeing that many instructors on the island opt for an English-only instructional model due to the vagueness of language education policy currently in place. Instead of L2 immersion, there are two other major language education models that can be used for multilingual students: the transitional model or the full bilingual model, both of which utilize the mother tongue. The transitional model employs the mother tongue as both a language of instruction and a subject of study in early primary education in order to build comprehension of basic subjects such as math, science, and social studies while also gaining literacy in the mother tongue of students. During this period of early primary education, the L2 or goal language, which is English in the case of Mauritius, is also taught as a rudimentary subject. The mother tongue is then slowly phased out and replaced with the L2, switching the language of instruction for different subjects successively, meaning that one subject is instructed in the L2, followed by another, until all subjects use the L2 as a language of instruction. The full transition to the L2 can happen in second to fourth grade for early-exit transitional models or fourth to sixth grade for late-exit transitions. On the other hand, the full bilingual model utilizes both the mother tongue and the L2 equally throughout all of schooling. In most full bilingual models, the mother tongue is still used heavily in early primary education to facilitate L2 learning, but varies from the transitional model because

¹ Section 9 of this essay will look much more closely at the benefits of using the mother tongue in early education.

the mother tongue is still retained as a language of instruction and of study after L2 acquisition has occurred.

Because Kreol is not generally valued socially or economically in Mauritius, especially in comparison to the other colonial languages of French and English, a transitional model of language education would be most successful there. A transitional model would allow Mauritian primary school students to first acquire literacy and intermediate proficiency in Kreol, thus easing the transition into acquiring a non-native L2 or L3. Similarly, obligatory use of Kreol as the medium of instruction in Mauritian primary classrooms would allow students to first comprehend the basics of subjects such as math, science, or social studies before instructing these subjects in a new, foreign L2. Compared to the full bilingual model, the transitional model also is less of a leap from the current system in Mauritius. The transitional model still places primary importance on English and French but uses Kreol to improve acquisition of these socio-economically valued colonial languages, which is a positive result of the transitional model that most Mauritians would approve of. For these reasons, the multilingual education model in Mauritius that I will discuss in the rest of this paper is the transitional model described above. The term *mother tongue language education*, which I will use throughout this paper, refers to this model of multilingual education that employs the mother tongue as both a language of instruction and a language of study in early primary education only in order to facilitate L2 acquisition

This transitional model is truly not very different from the current language education model in place in Mauritius, which states that English should be the language of instruction from fourth grade onwards, while the language of instruction from first to third grade should be “a language which in the opinion of the Minister is most suitable for the pupils” (Sonck, 2005). The transitional model I have proposed simply specifies the “most

suitable” language for the pupils as Kreol, rather than the vague policy in place now. This raises the question of the effects of this transitional language education model for students for whom Kreol is not the “most suitable” language, or rather, students who do not use Kreol as their first language. This is a justified question, seeing that this transitional model would then favor the majority Kreol-speaking students over the minority counterpart of students who speak an ancestral Indian language, resulting in a language education policy that disfavors a minority linguistic group, similar to the majority-language based education policies in place today in many countries, such as the US, France, China, and many others. However, since Kreol is the general lingua franca of the country, nearly all Mauritians today learn the language in early childhood, even if the language of their home is an ancestral Indian language. Therefore, this transitional education model would not disfavor students who speak an ancestral Indian language at home, since these students still acquire Kreol early in their childhood (Eisenlohr, 2006: 30); these linguistic minority students would therefore still benefit more from using Kreol as a language of instruction in early primary education than they would from being immersed in foreign L2 instruction in English. However, if ancestral Indian language-speaking students were to be disadvantaged due to this transitional educational model, it may be necessary to also use minority-language instruction for these students, similar to bilingual education programs in the US that use a student’s mother tongue in small groups for portions of the school day before fully inserting the child into a L2-based instructional environment. These special, minority-language programs are certainly expensive and organizationally-difficult for Ministries of Education around the globe and may be a second step towards language education improvement in Mauritius after a primary turn towards transitional language education policy.

4 Opposition and Support of Kreol: Public Opinion and Recent Policy

4.1 Public Opposition to Kreol in the Education System

Despite the benefits of using native languages in the education, the use of Kreol in Mauritian schools has faced opposition from many citizens. Aaliya Rajah-Carrim's "Mauritian Creole and Language Attitudes in the Education System of Multiethnic and Multilingual Mauritius" from 2007 investigated opinions toward the use of Kreol in the Mauritian education system. Rajah-Carrim's study was based on interviews from 2002 with 79 Mauritian participants, in which she discussed participants' linguistic backgrounds and opinions toward introducing Kreol into the education system.

In 2002, only 33% of Rajah-Carrim's participants supported the use of Kreol in schools while 56% opposed it (9 participants had no opinion) (Rajah-Carrim, 2007). This data, which indicated that Mauritians do not wholly support the introduction of Kreol into the education system, is representative of the lack of recognition of Kreol in schools in Mauritius currently.

Some reasons that Rajah-Carrim's participants cited for not supporting the introduction of Kreol into schools were that Kreol cannot be used as an international language, that Kreol does not have a standard structure or vocabulary, that Kreol favored the Creole minority ethnic group, and that there is no reason to teach Kreol in schools since children all speak Kreol already. On the other hand, participants who supported the use of Kreol in primary schools gave three reasons for these opinions: better understanding of other school subjects due to explanations in Kreol, ability to regularize Kreol orthography by

teaching one standard version to all students, and use of Kreol as an identifier for the Creole ethnic group and also as a unifier for the entire Mauritian nation.

4.2 Recent Pro-Kreol Changes

Although Kreol is still not recognized as a medium of instruction in Mauritian primary schools, the language has garnered growing legislative support in recent years. Most importantly, in 2012, Kreol was introduced as an optional subject for primary school students (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 2014: 24). With this change, students in primary schools can now choose to study Kreol as a subject, and Kreol will eventually be a subject of examination on the CPE in 2017 (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 2014: 24). As of 2014, over 10,000 students had opted to study Kreol (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 2014: 24). With over 3,000 students in 3 grades studying Kreol and between 16,000 and 19,000 students enrolled in each year of primary schooling, this accounts for roughly 20% of students studying Kreol as a subject in primary schools (Republic of Mauritius, 2011b). This decision to study Kreol is likely made by parents rather than students in most cases since children must opt to study the subject in early primary school. Thus, the choice likely reflects the desire of the parental generation to have their children study their native language at an early age. It is important to note, however, that only 20% of students opted to study Kreol, compared to the 86.5% who speak the language natively at home.

Beyond its inclusion as a subject, the Ministry of Education has also started to encourage instructors to use Kreol in the classroom as a way to facilitate L2 acquisition for young learners who do not yet know French or English. In the Ministry of Education's *Education Reforms in Action* Report for the years 2008-2014, the ministry states in a footnote, "In keeping with the multicultural practices in Mauritius, instructions to the young learners

are given in both English and French, while it is also recommended for teachers to start a number of activities in the mother tongue of the learners as a scaffolding for the learning of the second languages” (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 2014: 32). This is a large step forward towards the recognition of Kreol in the education system, but Kreol’s use is still not regulated by the Mauritian government and therefore varies widely across the island. While Kreol is still currently placed below English and French and not recognized officially by the Ministry of Education as the colonial languages are, its use in the classroom was encouraged by the Ministry of Education in this one small act. However, it is important to note that this support of Kreol use in the classroom was only found at the bottom of a Ministry of Education Reforms document and that Kreol’s use as a language of instruction is certainly still not widely promoted on the island by any governmental force.

5 Basis for Research

5.1 Research Questions

In the wake of recent pro-Kreol changes to the education system, this study aims to examine if there have been similar changes in Mauritians’ opinions toward the introduction of Kreol into the education system. Based on Rajah-Carrim’s 2007 study indicating that the majority of Mauritians did not support the use of Kreol in Mauritian schools, my study will first investigate whether these opinions have changed within the last 13 years, since Rajah-Carrim’s interviews were conducted in 2002. This study will also aim to determine Mauritians’ reasoning for their opinions in order to provide a more thorough look at what factors must be recognized in order to achieve the most effective language education planning.

In such a democratic society as Mauritius, public opinion is important in the future of language education policy there. With the recent pro-Kreol changes, the issue of using

Kreol in the education system has been a topic of conversation and debate in Mauritius for several years, leading to strong opinions among Mauritians regarding the topic. With more discussion and possible future support from the general public for the use of Kreol in schools, it is very possible that Kreol could legislatively become a language of instruction in Mauritius. In that respect, public opinion toward Kreol's use in schools is an important and justified point of study, not only in discovering Mauritians' opinions toward their own language, but also in affecting future language education policy changes in Mauritius.

5.2 Hypotheses

First, I hypothesize that Mauritian opinion has shifted towards a more positive association with the introduction of Kreol into primary schools. Many Mauritians will likely still oppose the introduction of the language, but the recent pro-Kreol changes are likely a reflection of changing Mauritian opinion. It is also possible that within the past decade when use of Kreol in the education system has been more publicly debated, Mauritians will have formed stronger or more polarized opinions of its use in education during that time.

I hypothesize that a major underlying cause of Mauritian opposition to the use of Kreol in the education system is association of the language with the Creole minority ethnic group by the Indian majority group. This association with an ethnic group that is less powerful, less educated, and less wealthy than Indo-Mauritians coupled with general negative perceptions of creole languages is likely a major factor in the opposition of Kreol.

Another reason for negative Mauritian opinion towards use of Kreol in schools could be negative perceptions of Kreol in terms of prestige and linguistic complexity. Many creole languages, especially creoles that are used in the same linguistic communities with their lexifier languages, as Kreol is used in the same community as French, are often viewed as imperfect versions of the standard language. As New Zealand sociolinguist Allan Bell

states, “Overt community opinion often downgrades creole as a broken form of language” (Bell, 2013); Jeff Siegel, a creole specialist agrees, saying “The community does not see the creole or minority dialect as a legitimate language, but rather a deviant form of the standard (Siegel, 1999a). Other examples of creole languages that are regarded as bastard versions of their superstrate languages are Hawaiian Creole and Jamaican Creole in comparison to English or Haitian Creole is comparison to French, among many others (Bell, 2013). It is possible that the idea that Mauritian Creole is only broken French could lead Mauritians to believe that Kreol is not an advanced enough language to be part of the education system.

Another similar reason for Kreol’s lack of acceptance in schools could be its lack of standard orthography. Beliefs that Kreol does not have a standardized grammar and orthography could make Mauritians believe that it is not an appropriate language for schools, where written texts and literacy are hugely important. Finally, Kreol’s non-use as an international language could be another reason for rejection of its use in schools. Its insularity to the small island of Mauritius in a dawning age of globalization presents a strong reasoning for Mauritians to favor English and French instruction over Kreol.

6 This Study: Methodology and Participants

6.1 Survey Methods

I conducted an electronic survey online using Google Forms technology, aimed at assessing Mauritians’ language abilities and their opinions towards Kreol and its use in the education system. The creation and trial run of the survey occurred in January 2015 with three preliminary participants who were personal contacts of mine and were able to provide feedback on the trial survey in order to improve its clarity and effectiveness in answering the research questions. The editing and completion of the final survey took place in early February 2015, preceding the opening of the survey on February 10, 2015. It then remained

open to responses until March 11, 2015. The survey took participants less than ten minutes to complete, and participants were not compensated.

The survey was written in English, though participants were welcome to respond to open-ended questions in French if they were uncomfortable with writing in English. The choice to use English as the only language for the survey was motivated by the desire to avoid any complications caused by differences in translation. As many questions in the survey involved phrasing with possible implications or suggestions that would read differently in French or Kreol, the utilization of only one language in the survey served to avoid any differences in responses that would be inadvertently caused by translation. The use of English on the survey both allowed me to better communicate the survey questions and comprehend the open-ended responses. At the same time, this use of English did not make the survey inaccessible to my participants; because the survey was conducted electronically and often through social media, the participants were generally already skewed towards the younger generation and higher socioeconomic social group, both of which tend towards better English language skills (see more on participant statistics in section 6.3: Participants). Additionally, written English skills are generally much more advanced than spoken English skills in Mauritius, meaning that the written English survey is not as affected by the lack of Mauritians' English competence otherwise discussed in this paper.

Besides written English abilities, participants were required to be native Mauritians; this requirement was assessed through responses to the question of hometown on the survey, which was defined as the town and country where the participant lived for the majority of his or her childhood. If the response was not a location in Mauritius, that participant was excluded from the results of the survey; participants who grew up in Mauritius but do not currently live there were still considered, since many Mauritians leave

the country for tertiary schooling but are still familiar with and opinionated on topics pertaining to language and education in Mauritius.

It is important to note that, due to the electronic method of conducting the survey, its distribution on social media, and the utilization of English as the language of the survey, participants are somewhat skewed from a normal representation of the Mauritian population as a whole. Due to the use of social media, many participants are younger than the mean age of Mauritians. Similarly, participants may belong to a higher socioeconomic class than the average Mauritian because access to Internet, which was a necessity to complete the survey, is still not a basic amenity for many Mauritians, though Internet access is growing widely across the island. Similarly, the subject matter of the survey concerning education and the survey's use in an elite education setting in the United States is likely favored by those involved in higher education themselves, resulting in a participant group that is more highly-educated than the average Mauritian. These differences in participant group compared to the Mauritian population as a whole are important to remember in further discussion of survey results. However, the opinions of this young, highly-educated participant group of higher socioeconomic status still have just as much, if not more, effect on future language education policy in Mauritius, even though they may not be a wholly accurate representation of Mauritians as a whole.

6.2 Survey Content

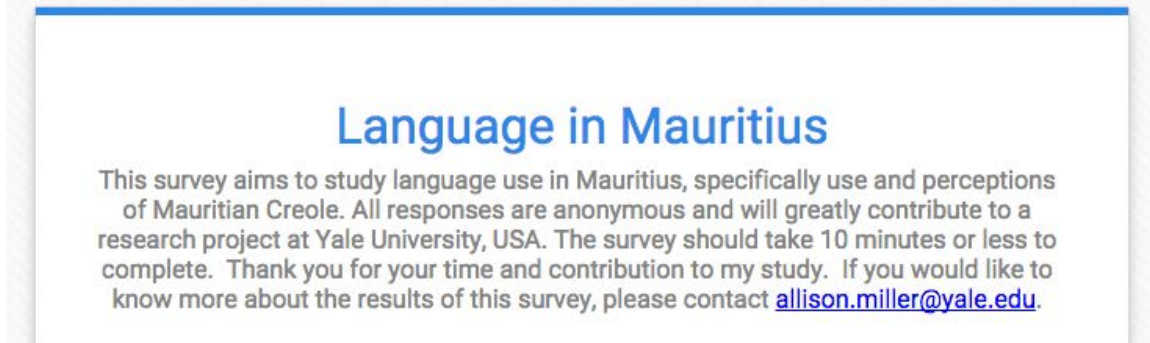


Figure 4: Appearance of survey to online participants

The survey was split into four different sections: Demographics, Language Backgrounds and Abilities, Mauritian Creole: Agree or Disagree, and Mauritian Creole and Education: Open-Ended Responses². The first section, *Demographics*, aimed simply to assess who the participants were by inquiring about their age, gender, hometown, ethnicity, and religion. Questions of age and hometown were open-ended, while gender, ethnicity, and religion were multiple-choice. Responses of ethnicity and religion were based on the traditional groups in Mauritius, providing possible options of Creole, Indian, Chinese, or Mixed Race, and Catholic, Hindu, Muslim, or No religion for questions of ethnicity or religion respectively. Each of these questions also allowed a “Prefer not to answer” and an “other” open-ended option.

The second section, *Language Backgrounds and Abilities*, sought to determine which languages participants spoke and how well they spoke them. Participants were first asked to respond “yes” or “no” to which languages they spoke with the options of Kreol, French, English, Bhojpuri, or another ancestral language. If the participant marked that he or she was able to speak an ancestral language other than Bhojpuri, that participant was also asked to specify which language he or she was referring to. The participants were then asked to

² A section pertaining to language domains and contexts of each Mauritian language was also included as the third section of the survey. However, results were similar to previous works and did not pertain to language education, so were thus omitted from this essay.

select their fluency levels and methods of acquisition for each language; options for fluency level were “None”, “Basic”, “Proficient”, “Advanced”, or “First Language” while options for method of acquisition were “First Language”, “Early Acquisition before the age of 6 but not first language level”, “Primary School”, “Secondary School”, or “Religious Use”.

What is your fluency level in each language?

Select the correct fluency level for your abilities in each language.

	None: I can only say a few words in this language and cannot communicate with other native speakers.	Basic: I can speak about basic concepts such as greetings or telling the time and use many grammatical errors. I can only understand basic and slower speech.	Proficient: I can converse about most topics but still use some grammatical errors and have to search for correct vocabulary. I can understand most conversation in this language at a normal speaking rate.	Advanced: I can speak confidently and grammatically correctly in all contexts and concerning all topics with rare grammatical errors. I can understand all speech thoroughly, but I am not as fluent as a native speaker.	First Language: This is my first language and I am comfortable speaking and understanding it at all times.
Mauritian Creole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bhojpuri	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Ancestral Language (Marathi, Tamil, Hindi, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 5: Appearance of survey question regarding fluency level

How did you learn these languages?

	This is my first language; I learned it from my parents or other family and friends as a young child.	I learned this language from my parents or other family and friends before the age of 6, but it is not my first language.	I learned this language in primary school (ages 6-12).	I learned this language in secondary school (ages 12 and over).	I learned this language in religious classes or in use with my religious practices.	I do not speak this language.
Mauritian Creole	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
French	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
English	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bhojpuri	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other Ancestral Languages (Marathi, Tamil, Hindi, etc)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure 6: Appearance of survey question regarding mode of acquisition of Mauritian languages

A final question assessed participants' abilities to write Kreol, in an attempt to determine whether written Kreol is yet standardized and widely used in Mauritius; the options to the question of "How would you rate your writing ability in Mauritian Creole?" ranged from none to advanced, with the response of "Basic" indicating that the participant could only write some phrases or sentences in Kreol but not full paragraphs, "Proficient" indicating a participant could write full paragraphs but with numerous orthographic errors, and "Advanced" indicating that the participants could write full paragraphs in Kreol with no orthographic errors.

The third section, *Mauritian Creole: Agree or Disagree*, presented a statement that was representative of possible Mauritian opinions towards Kreol and its use in Mauritian primary schools. All questions had the same multiple-choice responses, which were "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Strongly Agree", "Agree", or "No Opinion". At the end of this

section, a free response question allowed participants to further discuss any of their answers to these multiple-choice questions. The statements used in this section are in the following table in the order presented to participants:

1) Mauritian Creole is badly spoken French.
2) Written Mauritian Creole has standard grammar rules like other written languages such as French or English.
3) Mauritian Creole should be used as the language of instruction for young students in primary school, rather than French or English.
4) Mauritians who cannot speak French or English well are unintelligent.
5) Mauritian Creole is a complex and grammatical language.
6) Mauritian Creole is not sophisticated enough to be used in the education system.
7) There is no reason to study Mauritian Creole since it cannot be used to speak to non-Mauritians.

Figure 7: Complete table of questions from section 4 of the survey: Mauritian Creole: Agree or Disagree

Questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 were all aimed at assessing if negative opinions of Kreol were a possible cause for Mauritians' rejection of Kreol in the education system. Questions 2 and 5 looked at Mauritians' perceptions of Kreol linguistically, asking whether it is a complex and grammatical language, specifically in comparison to other languages such as French or English. Question 1 addresses Mauritians' opinions of Kreol in terms of prestige and linguistic legitimacy in comparison to French, while question 4 looks at social perceptions of Kreol speakers. If participants respond with overall negative views of Kreol, it is likely that those views would be a factor in their opposition to its use in the primary school system; however, if participants respond with overall positive views of Kreol, it will then be possible

to rule out negative opinions of Kreol as a factor in causing Mauritians to oppose mother tongue language education in Kreol.

Questions 3, 6, and 7 were included to analyze Mauritians' opinions about the use of Kreol in primary schools and some possible concerns they could have regarding its introduction into the education system. As my primary research question, Question 3 specifically states the proposed method of Kreol language instruction in Mauritius, in which Kreol is used as the language of instruction in primary schools, rather than French or English. This question will be most helpful in empirically analyzing Mauritians' opinions regarding this proposed language education policy; question 3 will be able to provide a numerical, data-driven response to this question, while later open-ended questions will allow participants to expand upon their response. Questions 6 and 7 address two commonly cited reasons to oppose introduction of Kreol into the education system, based on the trial survey I performed. These two questions will assess how many participants oppose the use of Kreol in primary schools due to lack of prestige associated with Kreol or lack of ability to use Kreol internationally, especially in comparison to languages of widespread international use like English or French.

The fourth and final section, *Mauritian Creole and Education: Open-Ended Responses*, asked two open-ended questions, both of which participants were free to respond to in either French or English and could write as much or as little as they chose. The two questions were as follows:

1. Do you believe that Mauritian Creole should be used as the language of instruction in primary schools? Why or why not?
2. Do you think using Mauritian Creole in primary schools would help students to better understand subjects like math, history, or science?

(1) asks the main research question, allowing participants to elaborate on their opinions which were previously described in Agree/Disagree Statement 3. The second question looks more closely at one of the most commonly cited reasons to support Kreol language education, which is the idea that the use of Kreol will improve students' comprehension of other subjects. Some Mauritians still believe that using Kreol in schools will hurt the learning of other subjects that eventually must be understood in English and, furthermore, that instruction in Kreol will cause difficulties in acquiring the L2 of English. This second open-ended question therefore allows closer analysis of Mauritians' beliefs regarding possible benefits or detriments of mother tongue language education.

6.3 Participants

As participants were not compensated, they volunteered their time to take the survey, deciding to participate due to personal connections to me, interest in the subject matter, or interest in sharing their opinions and their country with an American. I distributed the survey online, primarily through Facebook, sending it first to all personal contacts on the island, encouraging them to share the survey with their friends, family, or co-workers, and later also shared the survey on several public and private Facebook pages or groups. This resulted in 61 final participants in comparison to Rajah-Carrim's 79 interview subjects in 2002.

Out of these 61 participants, 46 identified as male and 15 as female.³ Participants were from hometowns scattered across the island, but centered around the major population centers in the Western area of the island. The map below marks each location that participants cited as their hometowns:

³ This gender imbalance is likely caused by a large number of participants I gained from posting in a Facebook group called "CSE (College du Saint Esprit) Old Boys Association", which is a group for male alumni of this particular high school. After posting the survey in this group on March 8, 2015, I then received 20 new responses that day, all from men.



Figure 8: Map of hometown locations of all participants

The unrepresented Eastern and Northern areas of the island are less populated than the West, where all major cities in Mauritius lie, meaning that the concentration of participants in this area is representative of the Mauritian population as a whole. The major cities in Mauritius of Port Louis (8 participants), Quatre Bornes (9), Curepipe (9), Beau Bassin-Rose Hill (5), and Vacoas-Phoenix (10) were all represented, along with a strong representation of 8 participants from Bambous, a relatively small town of roughly 15,000 residents compared to the other cities which range from 77,000 residents in Curepipe to 140,000 in Port Louis based on the 2011 census data.⁴

Ages of participants ranged from 14 to 53, with a mean of 27.6 years; 61% of participants were aged between 21-30, resulting in a relatively young group of participants.

⁴ I lived in Bambous during my time spent in Mauritius during July-August 2012, June-August 2013, and August 2014, which explains the relatively large number of participants from there.

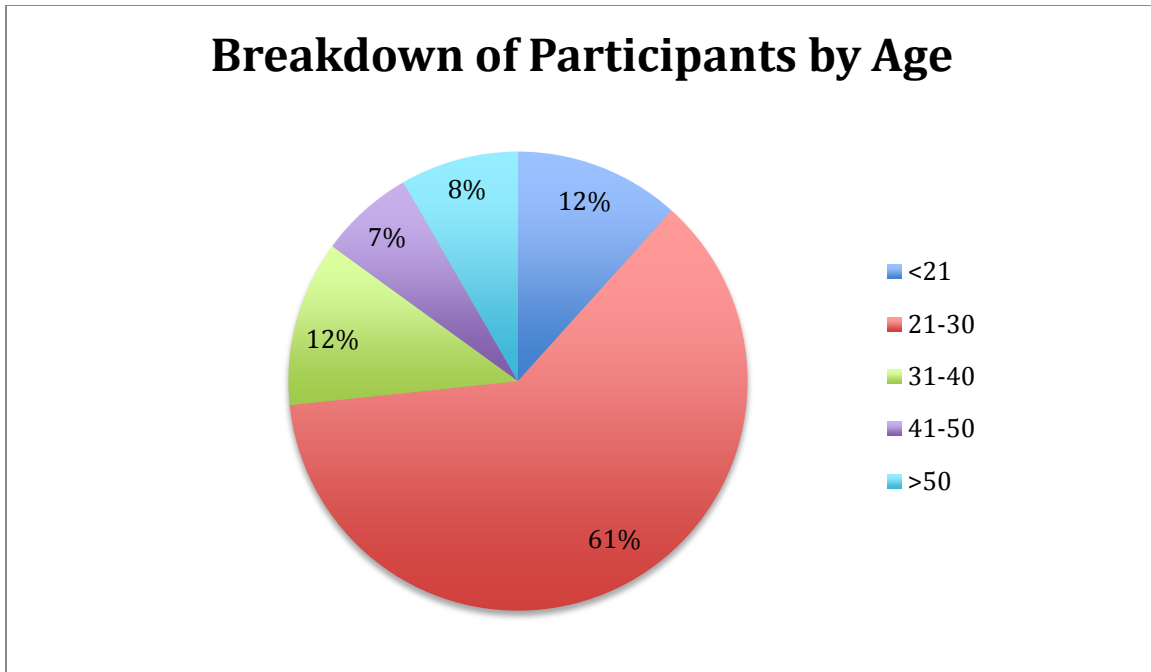


Figure 9: Pie Chart of Breakdown of Participants by Age

This skewing of the data towards a younger generation is likely due to the mode of distribution of the survey. Similar to the US, many older Mauritians are not active on social media, thus resulting in the majority of my participants being in the 21-30 year old age range.

Participants were broken down into six categories by ethnicity: Creole (12 participants), Indian (20), Mixed Race (12), Chinese (9), White (2), and Prefer not to Answer (6)⁵. This breakdown is generally representative of Mauritius as a whole, with a larger group of Indo-Mauritians compared to Creoles.

⁵ Two participants who were counted as Indian stated their ethnicities as “Telegu” [sic] and “Islam”; they were counted as Indian since Telugu is a specific group of Indo-Mauritians and the “Islam” respondent, who also stated her religion as Muslim, is most likely Indian as most Muslim Mauritians are. One respondent stated her ethnicity as “Creole and my grandmother and grandfather Indian” and was therefore recorded as mixed race. All respondents who left this question blank were recorded as “Prefer not to answer.”

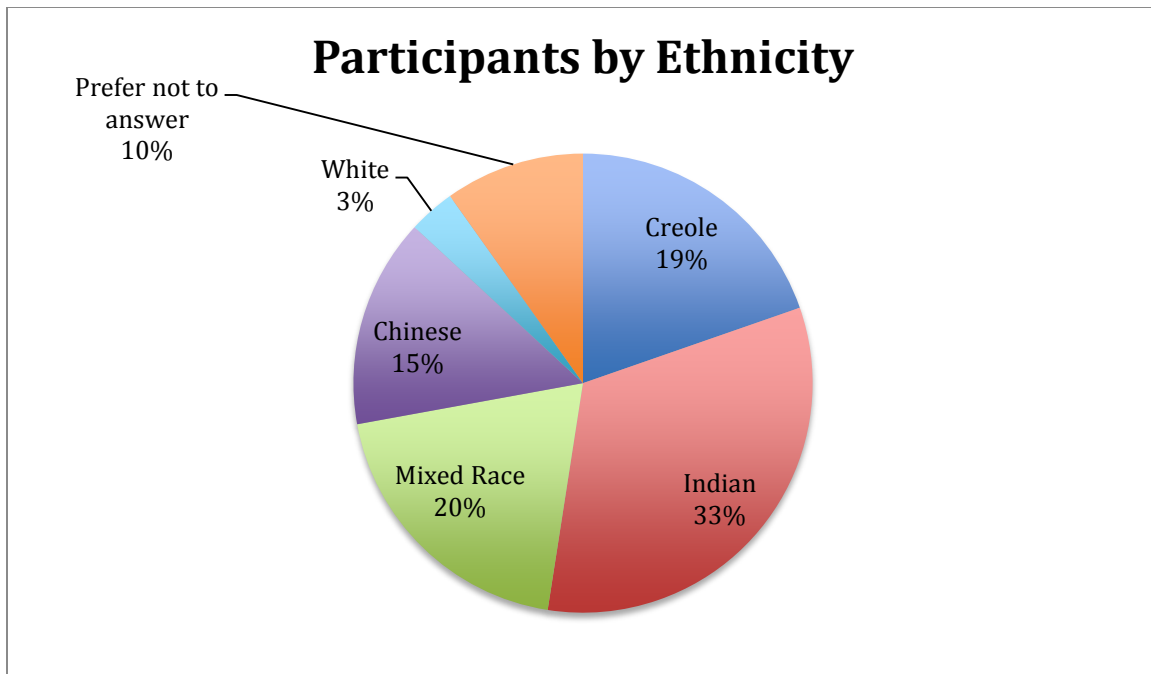


Figure 10: Breakdown of Participants by Ethnicity

The Chinese sub-group from the survey is much larger than the actual Chinese population in Mauritius, which is roughly 1% based on those Mauritians who responded that a Chinese language was their “language of forefathers” on the 2011 census.

As stated previously in section 2.2, the Creole ethnic group is descended from African slaves while the Indian ethnic groups are descendants of Indian immigrants to the island during the period of indentured labor. The large group of participants who responded as mixed race is unexpected, since, as previously discussed, inter-marriage between ethnic groups is generally uncommon and mixed race groups are not widely discussed on the island (Eriksen, 1989). This large representation of mixed race participants could possibly be due to confusion of participants over reporting ethnicity through the ethnic groups I selected as options; since ethnicity is rarely discussed on the island and religion is more widely used as a

marker of ethnic group over race, distinctions of ethnicity can often become blurry.⁶ For this reason, religion is often a better identifier of ethnic group and will therefore be used as an identifier over ethnicity when possible, except in the case of participants who responded as having “no religion”.

Participants were similarly categorized into 5 different religious groups: Catholic (22 participants), Hindu (18), Muslim (6), No religion (12), and Prefer not to answer (3). This sample of religions varies from the actual representation of religion on the island, mainly due to the larger cohort of Chinese participants who identified as either Catholic (6) or “No religion” (3) and to the larger group of participants who identified as “No religion” compared to only 0.7% who identified as “No religion” on the 2011 census (Republic of Mauritius, 2011a, p. 68).

⁶ For example, as a response to my trial survey, one participants responded that, although “Creole” is generally used on the island to represent the Catholic sub-group, Mauritians use the term incorrectly and all Mauritians are actually Creole, meaning that “Creole” actually refers to the “general population” in Mauritius, as described by this respondent. This illustrates the complexity of ethnic identification on the island and its possible misuse in this survey.

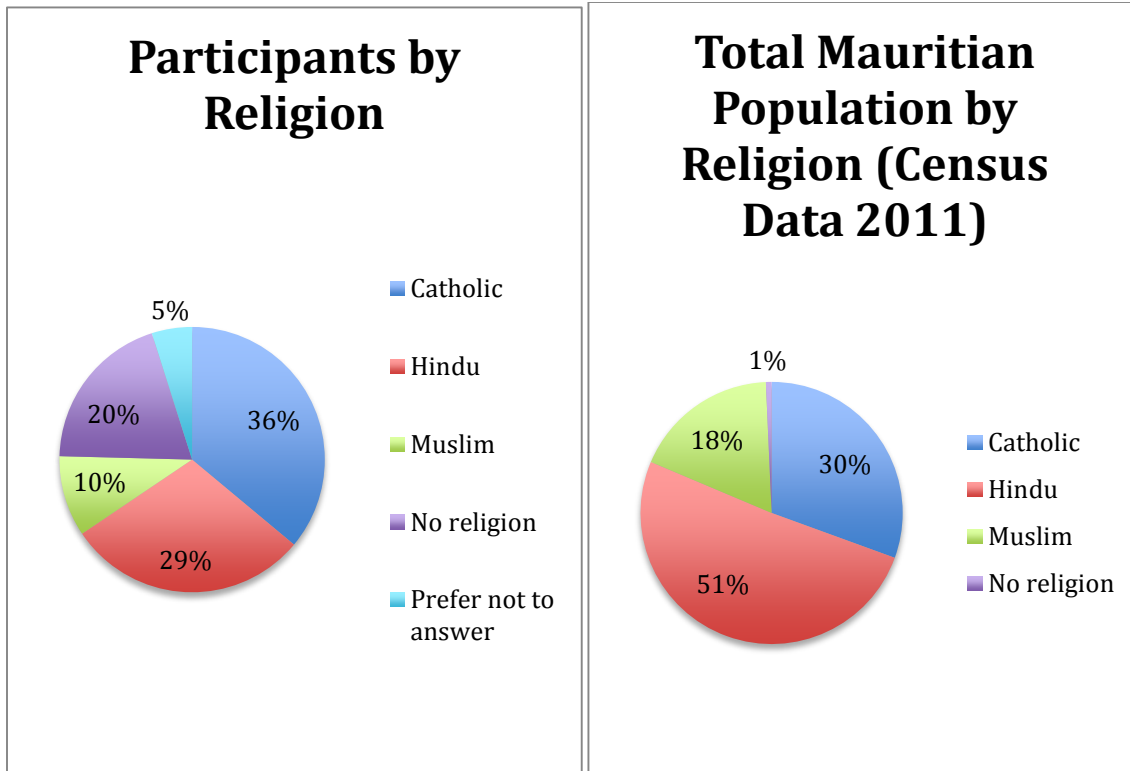


Figure 11: Participants by Religion

Figure 12: Actual Mauritian Population by Religion

As seen in the comparison above between my participants and the total Mauritian population, the Catholic subgroup from my survey is somewhat larger than the actual percentage of Catholics in Mauritius, likely due to the much larger group of Chinese representatives in the survey, two-thirds of whom identified as Catholic. The “No religion” sub-group from the survey is also much larger than the group recognized in the 2011 Census in Mauritius, with 20% of my participants identifying as “No religion” while less than 1% did so in the Census. This is likely due to participants reading the question of religion from the survey as a personal religious belief rather than religious group membership; as Mauritius becomes less religious and more secularized, similar to many developed nations, the younger generation is likely also becoming less personally religious, resulting in the much larger group of participants identifying as “No religion”.

In order to categorize participants into the traditional ethnic or religious sub-groups of Creole Catholics, Hindu Indians, and Muslim Indians, along with the Chinese and White minorities, a cross-analysis of participants' reported religions and ethnicities is necessary. As discussed, religion is generally a stronger marker of ethnic membership, meaning that religion will be used to identify the three sub-groups of Creole Catholics, Hindu Indians, and Muslim Indians when possible. In the case of participants who identified as "No religion", ethnicity will then be used to mark ethnic membership. The 2 participants who identified as both Indian and "No religion" will be excluded from the data when analyzing responses by ethnic group since it is impossible to distinguish these participants as belonging to the Hindu Indian or Muslim Indian groups. Similarly, the 7 participants who responded as both Mixed Race and "No Religion" or "Prefer not the answer" will be excluded from the data when analyzing responses by ethnic group, along with the 1 respondent who preferred not to respond to questions of both ethnicity and religion. Chinese identifiers will be assigned to the Chinese minority group regardless of identifying as Catholic or "No religion" because the Chinese subgroup is from a relatively new group of immigrants who are distinct identifiers from the Creole or Indo-Mauritian groups. Similarly, the two participants who identified as White or Franco-Mauritian will be assigned to a White minority group. With these exclusions of participants who are unable to be assigned to a traditional ethnic group, which are classified as Creole Catholic, Hindu Indian, Muslim Indian, Chinese Minority, or White Minority, 51 participants still remain in the survey. With these exclusions, the groups are broken down as such:

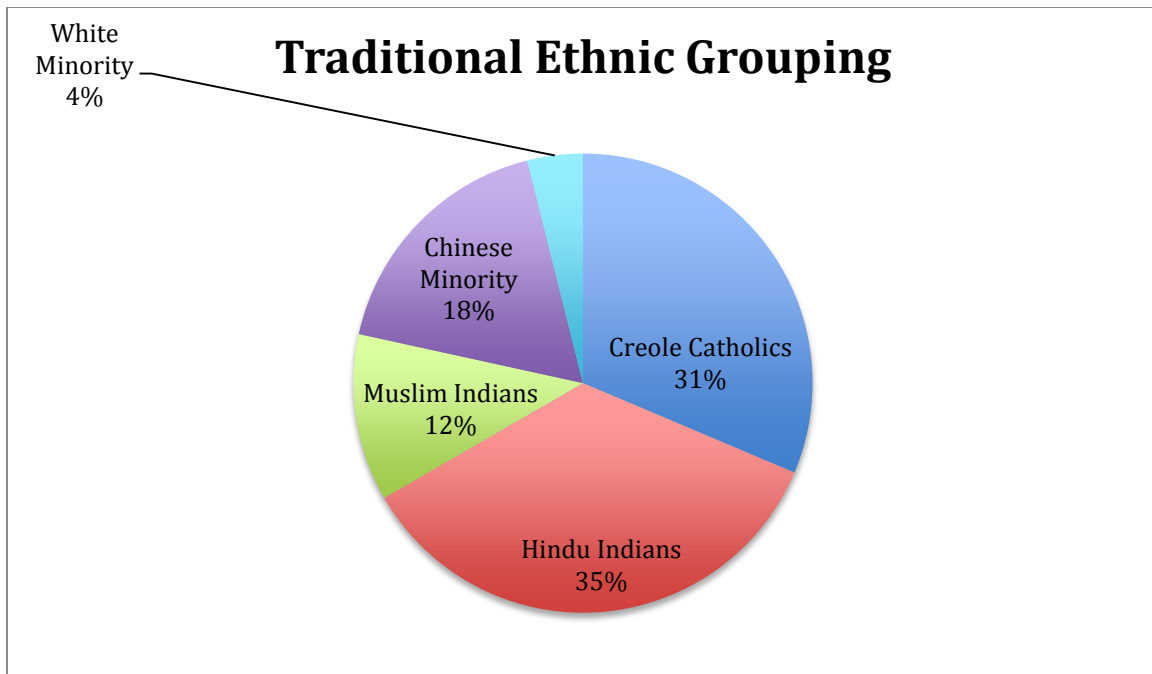


Figure 13: Participants by Traditional Ethnic Grouping

With the exception of the large remaining Chinese Minority ethnic group, this representation of ethnic grouping is closer to the actual population based on the 2011 Census, which showed 30.5% of the population as Creole Catholics, 50.7% as Hindu Indians, and 17.9% as Muslim Indians, with very small Chinese and White minorities. This breakdown of participants by both reported ethnicity and religion will be referred to as “Traditional Ethnic Grouping” from hereon and will be used only when analyzing responses to Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree questions based on Ethnic Membership. Participants’ responses who are excluded from this Traditional Ethnic Grouping will still be included in overall participant results and open-ended questions.

7 Results

7.1 Language Backgrounds and Abilities

All 61 participants stated that they speak Kreol, and 60 participants affirmed that they speak both French and English, with one participant choosing not to answer if she

speaks French or English. Only 6 respondents claimed to speak Bhojpuri, while 24 responded that they did not speak the language and the rest did not respond to the question, likely implying that they also do not speak Bhojpuri. 19 respondents claimed to speak other ancestral languages, which were Hindi (11 participants); Marathi (2); Urdu (1); Aramean (1); Hakka (1); Mandarin (1); and Hindustani (1), which is the vernacular form of both Hindi and Urdu, which are mutually intelligible but vary slightly in speech and largely in orthography.

Concerning fluency levels in each language, participants' responses matched expectations, with most participants claiming Kreol as their first language or as an advanced fluency level, with declining fluency levels towards French and then English. Several participants claimed having more than one first language, citing both Kreol and French or Kreol, French, and English all as first languages. While it is possible that these participants acquired all three languages simultaneously as their first language, it is more likely that they simply acquired all three early in life and have strong fluency in each. Fluency level is generally difficult to classify, and therefore responses regarding fluency levels should not be taken absolutely; more importantly, the general takeaway from these results is that participants have greatest fluency in Kreol, followed by French, followed by English, which is what is expected of the overall Mauritian population. Participants who responded with a fluency level for Bhojpuri or other ancestral languages generally stated having basic or proficient fluency level in the language, implying that these are languages that were acquired through schooling rather than natural language acquisition at home. Participants who left their fluency levels for Bhojpuri and other ancestral languages blank were regarded as not speaking this language and were therefore assigned to the "None" category of fluency.

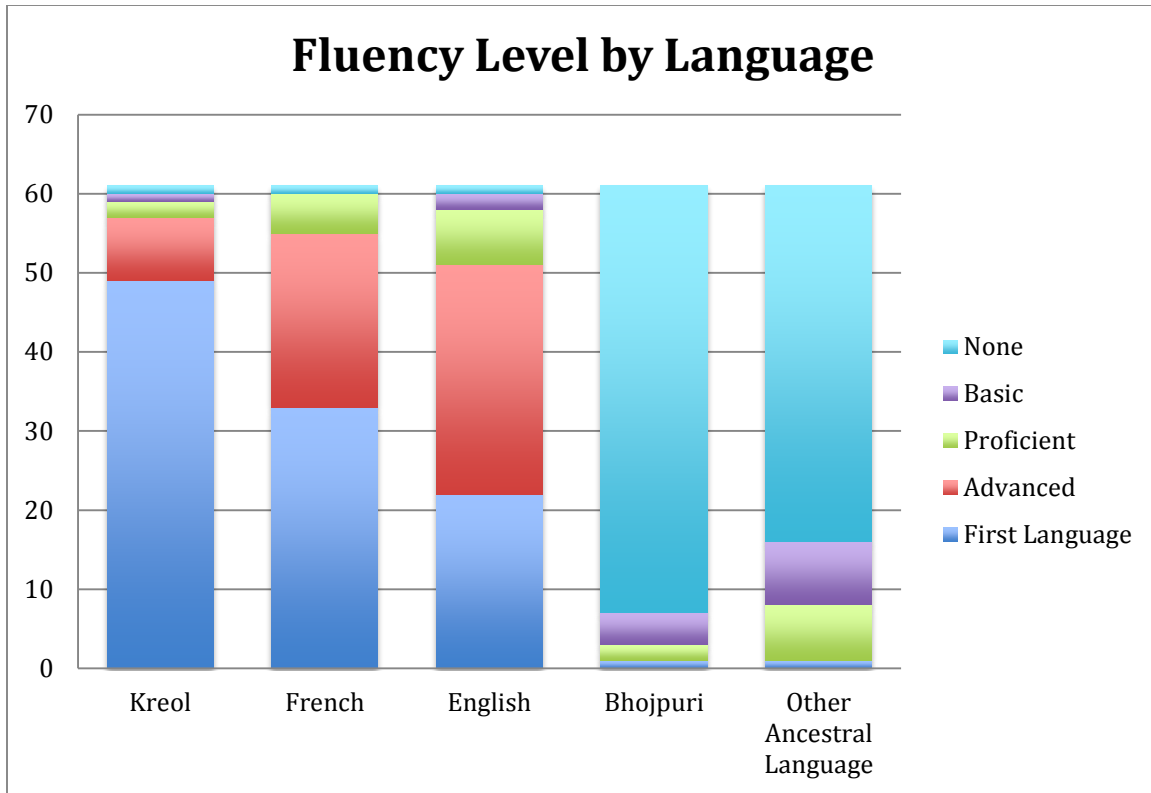


Figure 14: Participants' Fluency Levels in each language

Similarly to the reported fluency levels, participants' mode of acquisition favored more native-level speech for Kreol, with 51/61 participants claiming to learn Kreol through typical first language acquisition methods while less participants claimed first language acquisition for French and even less for English. Most participants stated that they acquired English in primary schooling, which is representative of the use of English as a language of instruction in primary schools in Mauritius currently. Participants who responded with a mode of acquisition for ancestral languages were split across acquisition from schooling, first language or early language acquisition before the age of 6, or acquisition through religious use. Possible responses to the question of method of acquisition are shown in Figure 5 in section 6.2 and will be stated here as First Language Acquisition; Early Language Acquisition; Primary School; Secondary School; Religious Use; or No Acquisition:

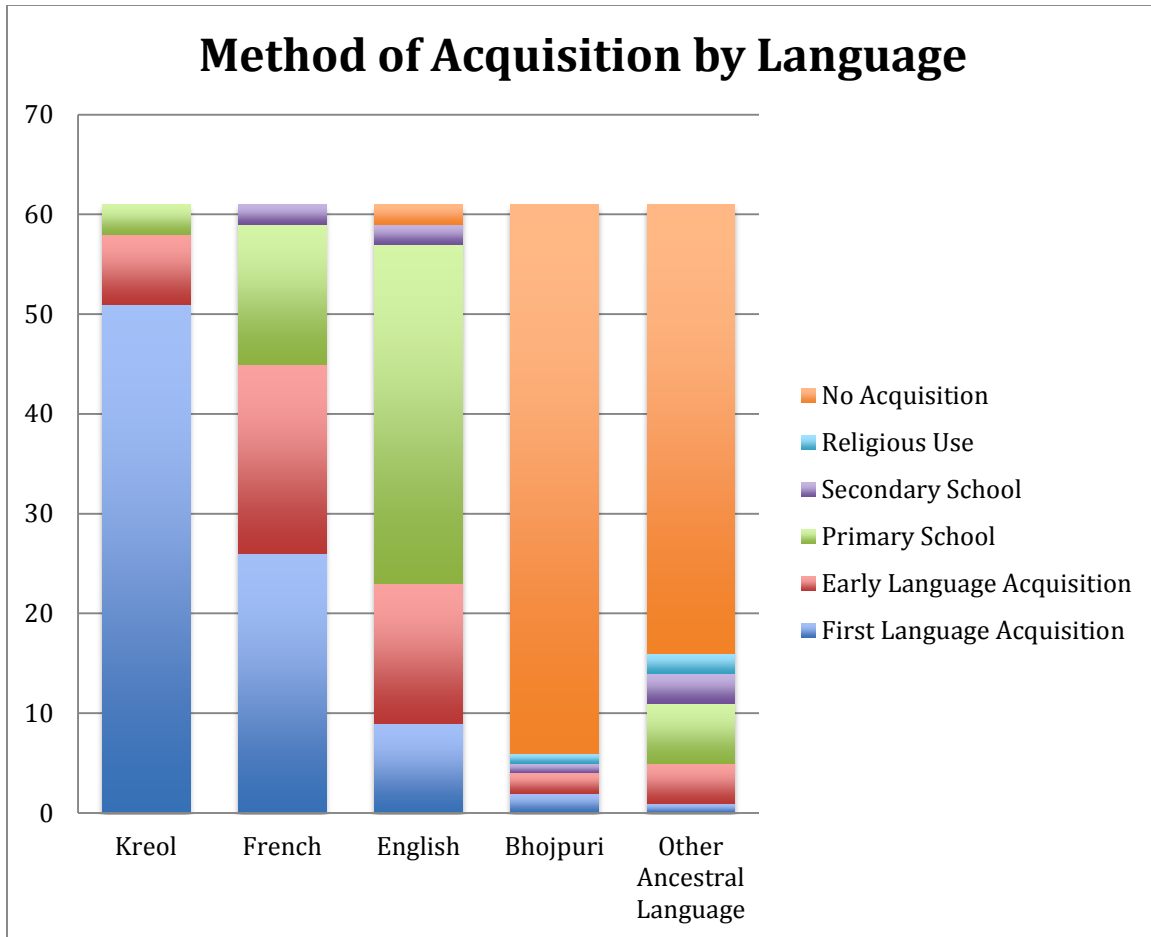


Figure 15: Participants' Method of Acquisition in each language

These results for participants' methods of acquisition and fluency levels in each language are accurately representative of Mauritians' language abilities, favoring Kreol as the language of highest fluency and most natural acquisition, followed by French and then by English, thus showing that this sample of Mauritians' language abilities are representative of the Mauritian population as a whole.

In the Language Abilities section of the survey, participants were also asked to rate their written Kreol abilities from None to Advanced (as described in section 6.2) in order to assess the level at which written Kreol is used across the island, in case inability to write in Kreol could be a factor in Mauritians' lack of support for use of Kreol in schools. While

only 2 participants stated that they could not write in Kreol at all, only 7 claimed to have advanced written Kreol abilities:

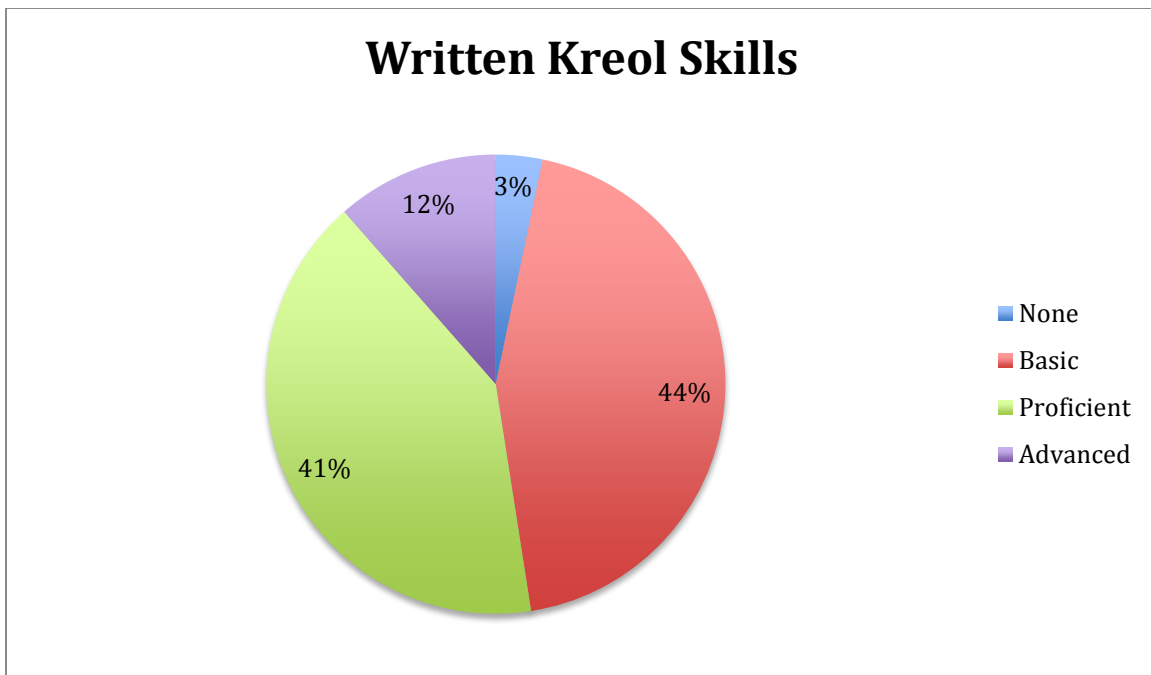


Figure 16: Participants' Written Kreol Abilities

Although every participant claimed the ability to speak Kreol and the majority claimed Kreol as their first language, 47% of participants still stated that they had only basic written Kreol skills or lacked them entirely.

7.2 Kreol: Agree or Disagree

Responses to agree and disagree questions will be broken down into three sections, as specified in section 6.2 *Survey Content*: Linguistic Perceptions of Kreol, Social and Prestige Perceptions of Kreol, and Kreol in the Education System. Linguistic Perceptions of Kreol were assessed through statements 2 and 5; results are shown below:

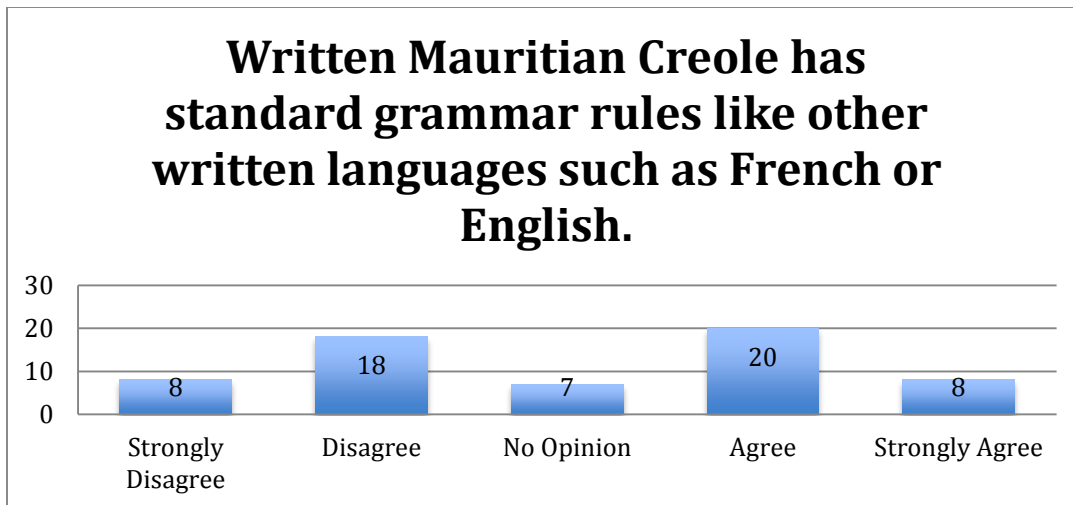


Figure 17: Participant Responses to Agree/Disagree Statement 2: “Written Mauritian Creole has standard grammar rules like other written languages such as French or English.”

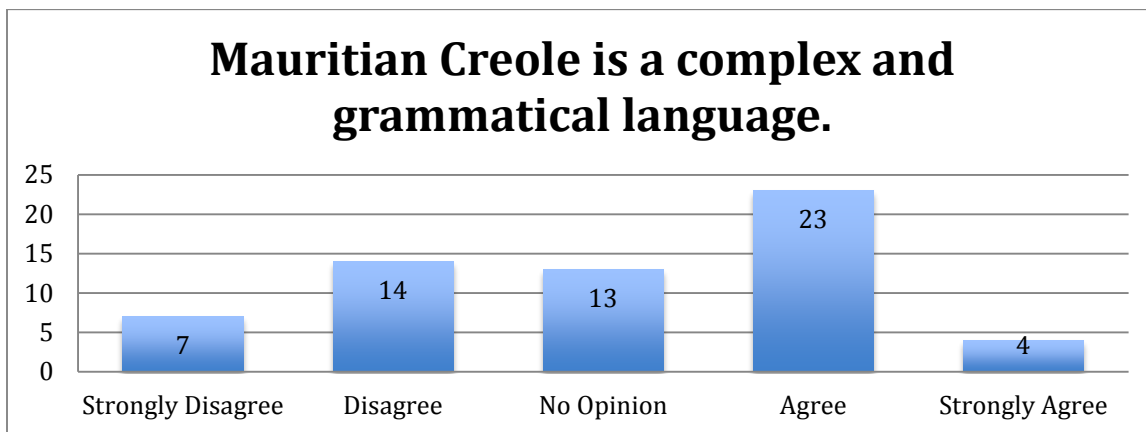


Figure 18: Participant Responses to Agree/Disagree Statement 5: “Mauritian Creole is a complex and grammatical language.”

As shown here, results of questions pertaining to linguistic perceptions of Kreol were nearly evenly split, with a small skew towards opinions that Kreol is a legitimate grammatical language, similar to French or English.

Question 1 assessed perceptions of prestige and linguistic legitimacy of Kreol in comparison to French, while Question 4 looked at social perceptions of speakers of Kreol.

Results are shown below:

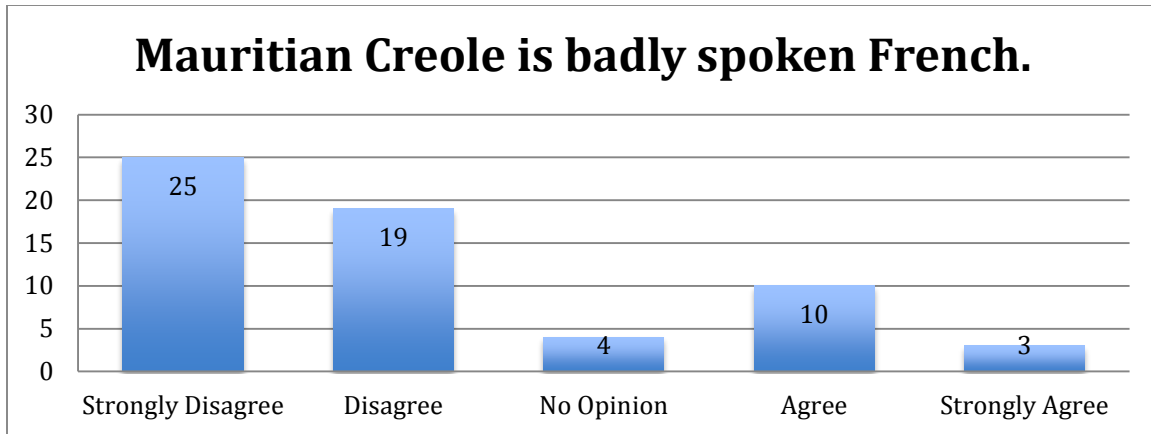


Figure 19: Participant Responses to Agree/Disagree Statement 1: "Mauritian Creole is badly spoken French."

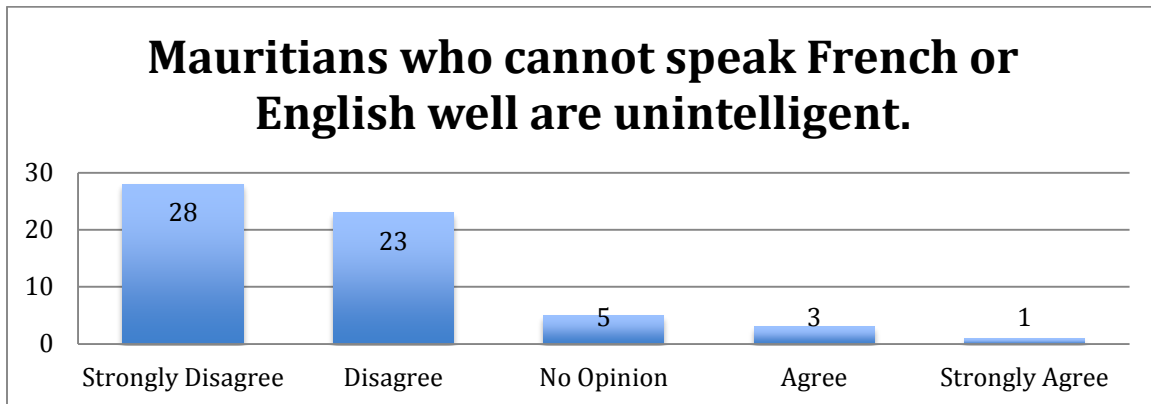


Figure 20: Participant Responses to Agree/Disagree Statement 4: "Mauritians who cannot speak French or English are unintelligent."

As seen here, participants overwhelmingly disagreed with statements that claimed inferiority of Kreol on a scale of prestige or social standing of its speakers. Compared to other creole languages which are often regarded as deviant forms of the lexifier languages and as signifiers of lower social standing for their speakers (Bell, 2013), Kreol is clearly not facing these issues and experiences higher social standing than other creoles.

Questions 3, 6, and 7 all analyzed participants' opinions towards the use of Kreol in the education system. Results are shown below:

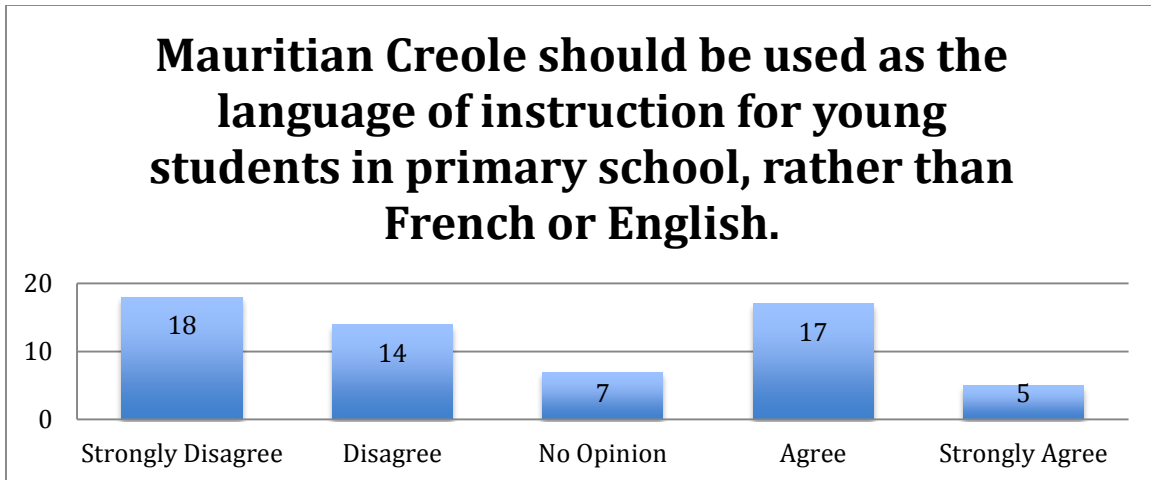


Figure 21: Participant Responses to Agree/Disagree Statement 3: "Mauritian Creole should be used as the language of instruction for young students in primary schools, rather than French or English."

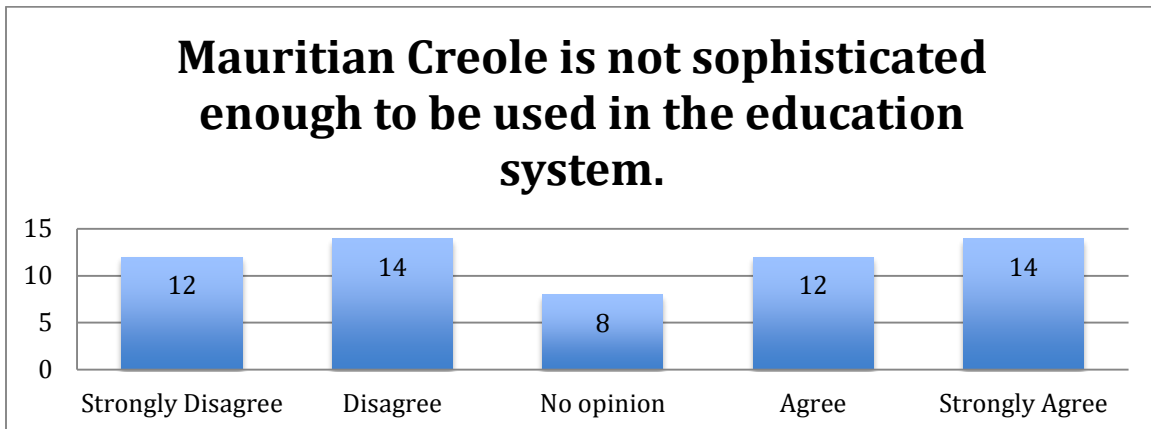


Figure 22: Participant Responses to Agree/Disagree Statement 6: "Mauritian Creole is not sophisticated enough to be used in the education system."

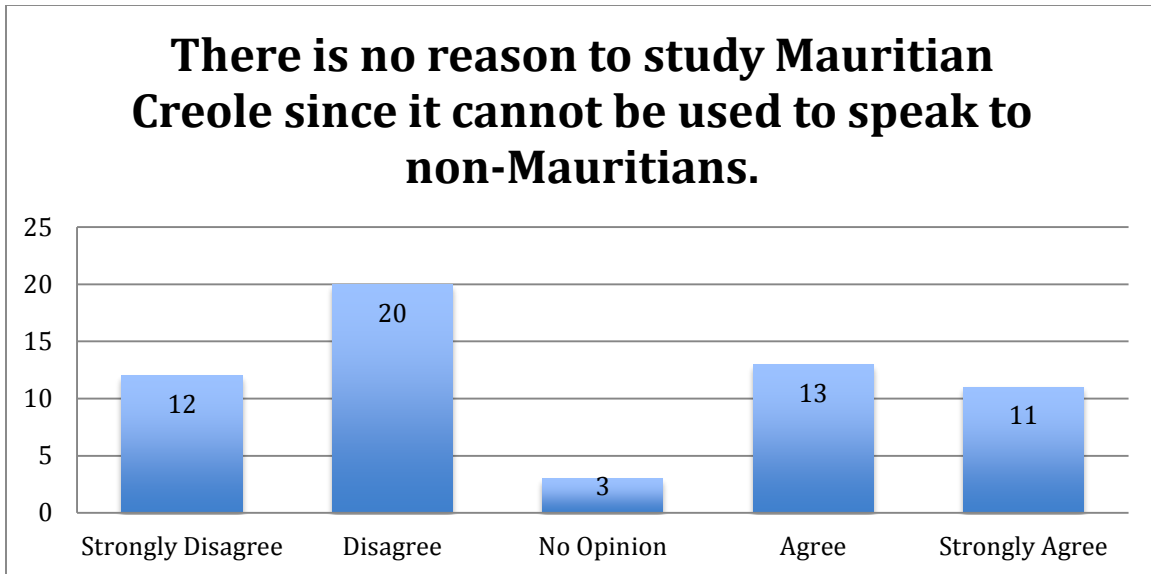


Figure 23: Participant Responses to Agree/Disagree Statement 7: "There is no reason to study Mauritian Creole since it cannot be used to speak to non-Mauritians."

These questions analyzing Mauritians' opinions towards use of Kreol in the education system are nearly evenly split, showing that Mauritian opinion regarding Kreol's use in primary schools is likely still far from unanimous.

Question 3, which analyzes the primary research question of whether Mauritians' opinions towards Kreol's introduction into primary schools have changed, is broken down here by the Traditional Ethnic Groups, as described in section 6.3. This will help in exposing the existence of any type of ethnic association of Kreol that could be causing some Mauritians to be against the use of Kreol in primary schools.

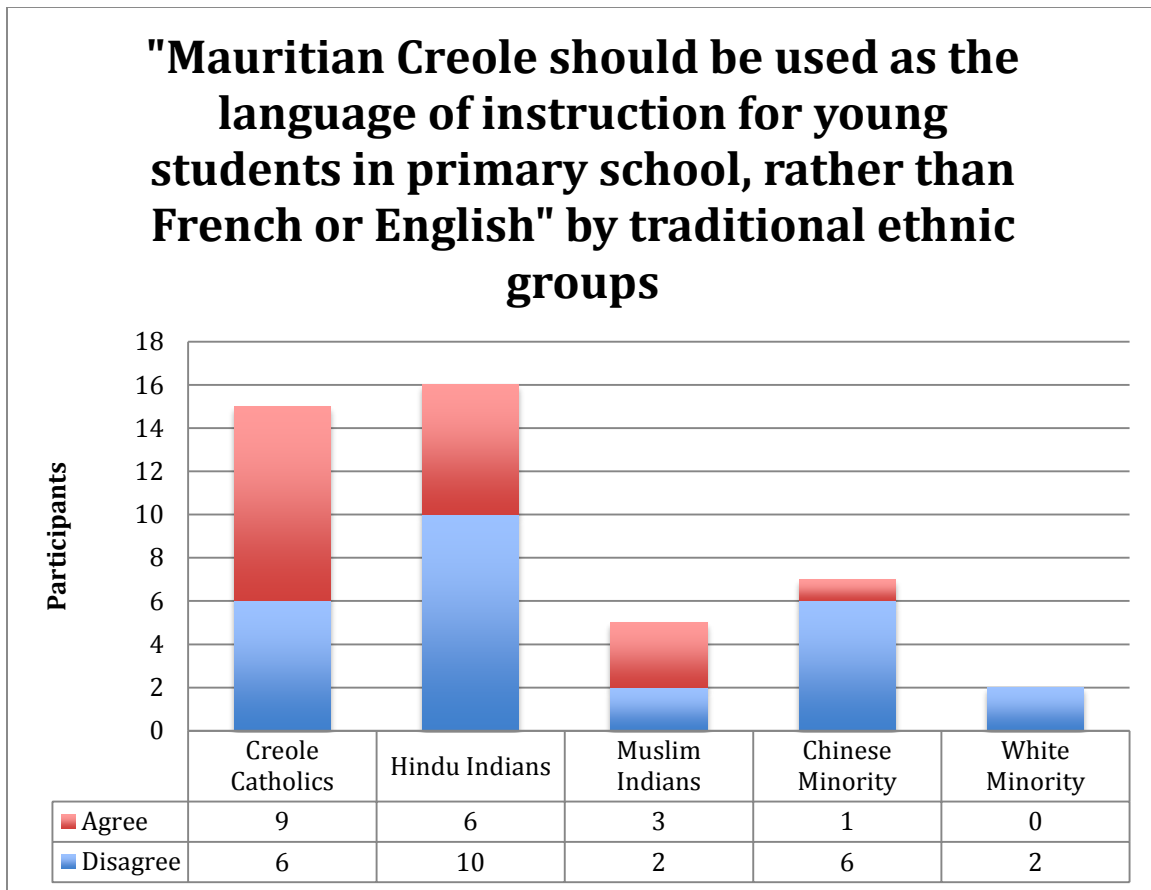


Figure 24: Breakdown of Participant Responses to Agree/Disagree Statement 3 by Traditional Ethnic Grouping

Among the three main ethnic groups of Creole Catholics, Hindu Indians, and Muslim Indians, there is no major difference in opinions based on ethnic group. There is a possible slight contrast between the two major groups of Creole Catholics and Hindu Indians; 60% of Creole Catholics *agree* that Kreol should be used as the mode of instruction in primary schooling while 62.5% of Hindu Indians *disagree*. Unfortunately, only 5 Muslim participants responded with an opinion to Question 3, meaning that the split results likely show too small of a sample size to infer any clear difference of opinion due to their ethnicity. Both the Chinese and White minorities showed a strong tendency to be against the use of Kreol in primary schools; however, it is important to keep in mind that both of these groups

represent a very small minority within the actual Mauritian population, meaning that their opinions truly only represent a small group of Mauritian citizens as a whole.

7.3 Kreol and Education: Open-Ended Responses

As stated in section 6.2, there were two open-ended questions at the end of the survey: one which questioned participants reasons behind their opinions towards the use of Kreol as the language of instruction in primary schools and the other which looked at Mauritians' beliefs towards whether use of Kreol could improve students' comprehension of other subjects like math or science. An optional open-ended section was also included at the end of the Agree/Disagree section, which allowed participants to extrapolate upon any of their multiple choice answers from that section; the responses to this open-ended section are also included in these overall open-ended results. As with the multiple choice questions that assessed Mauritians' opinions towards the introduction of Kreol into primary schooling, responses were nearly evenly split in support or opposition to this use of Kreol, with varying reasons behind these responses.

Participants who were against the use of Kreol in the Mauritian education system cited three major reasons for their opposition. The first reason was lack of confidence in Kreol's ability to be used as a legitimate and standard language, which was expressed by 9 participants. Out of these responses, some stated that Kreol lacked necessary linguistic features to be a true language, similar to the negative perceptions of creole languages around the world; one participant went so far as to say, "Creole does not have any real structure, nor grammar, nor anything." Others found the downfall of Kreol to be in its written system, citing the issues that Kreol does not have a widely standardized orthography and that it lacks more technical vocab that would be needed to discuss school subjects. As shown in the survey previously, few Mauritians have a solid grasp on the Kreol writing system, which

would certainly prove to be an issue if Kreol were to be used as the language in which primary students first gain literacy. Based on the agree/disagree questions, around half of the participants expressed their opinions that Kreol did not have a standard writing system, showing that this is a true hurdle in establishing Kreol as a language of instruction in primary schools.

Another reason to oppose the use of Kreol in the education system was its lack of active use outside of casual conversation in Mauritius. 10 participants stated that Kreol's restriction of use to solely Mauritius is a reason to focus more strongly on the international languages of English and French over Kreol. Similarly, some participants did not grasp the importance of learning Kreol in primary schools, since all teaching materials, exams, and further schooling are in English. English is also needed beyond schooling in Mauritius in order to obtain access to higher-paying and more highly-valued occupations. This idea that English and French hold more social and economic value for Mauritians and thus should be placed ahead of Kreol in schooling is closely tied to participants' third reason for opposition to Kreol: that use of Kreol in schools could detract from proper acquisition of French and English.

16 separate participants stated that they were concerned about instruction in Kreol detracting from proficient acquisition of both French and English, which, as shown above, are commonly viewed as more socially and financially valuable languages. These concerns were voiced in three different ways; the first way focused on student efforts, stating that students would be less interested in learning English or French if they could fall back on Kreol in school settings. The second way in which participants voiced this concern was through support of the immersion method of second language acquisition. These participants cited the fact that learning new languages is easier at a young age as a way to

support the idea that students should be immersed in French and English in primary schooling in order to quickly learn the colonial languages as young children, rather than using Kreol and therefore effectively withholding early acquisition of French and English. The third way that participants expressed their concerns regarding Kreol detracting from proficiency in French and English was through the interference argument, which claims that instruction in Kreol would interfere and cause confusion with learning the colonial languages. This was especially cited as a fear of participants in regards to accurately acquiring French grammar because the use of Kreol in schools could cause confusion between the two very similar languages.

Along with these three major reasons for opposing the introduction of Kreol into schools as a mode of instruction, participants revealed two general reasons to support the use of Kreol as the language of instruction. One major reason was support and maintenance of Kreol as a national language. Some participants felt that Kreol, as the native language of all Mauritians, should be utilized in schools and even as a possible official language in order to support Kreol as a symbol of Mauritian unity. One participant, who generally was against the use of Kreol in schools due to its lack of use abroad and in higher education, still showed his support for Kreol as a national language, saying, “Mauritian creole is a part of Mauritian ‘identity’...it is the language which unites all Mauritians.”

The second major reason for support of Kreol, which was cited by 20 different participants, was that the use of Kreol in the classroom could facilitate greater understanding and higher academic performance across students. Some participants stated that the use of Kreol in classrooms promotes a more open learning environment, in which students are more able to ask questions and express themselves. In addition to a more open classroom atmosphere, most participants who believed that Kreol could improve overall academic

performance stated that the use of Kreol in classrooms would be most helpful in order to explain concepts that are more difficult to understand in English or French; in this way, students would be able to grasp the subject matter of math, science, history, etc. and then work on these concepts' representation in English rather than misunderstanding the subject matter due to lack of proficiency in English.

8 Discussion

8.1 Changing Opinions Since Rajah-Carrim 2007

Since Rajah-Carrim's interviews done in Mauritius in 2002, it seems as if little has changed in terms of Mauritian opinion towards the introduction of Kreol into primary schools. While language education policy has changed slightly, now allowing Kreol as a subject of study, Mauritian public opinion has not changed regarding its use. Rajah-Carrim's study found that 33% of her 79 participants supported Kreol's introduction in schools, while 56% opposed it and 11% had no opinion; these figures were nearly exactly reproduced in my study, which found that 36% of Mauritians agreed with the use of Kreol in primary schools, while 52% disagreed and 11% had no opinion.

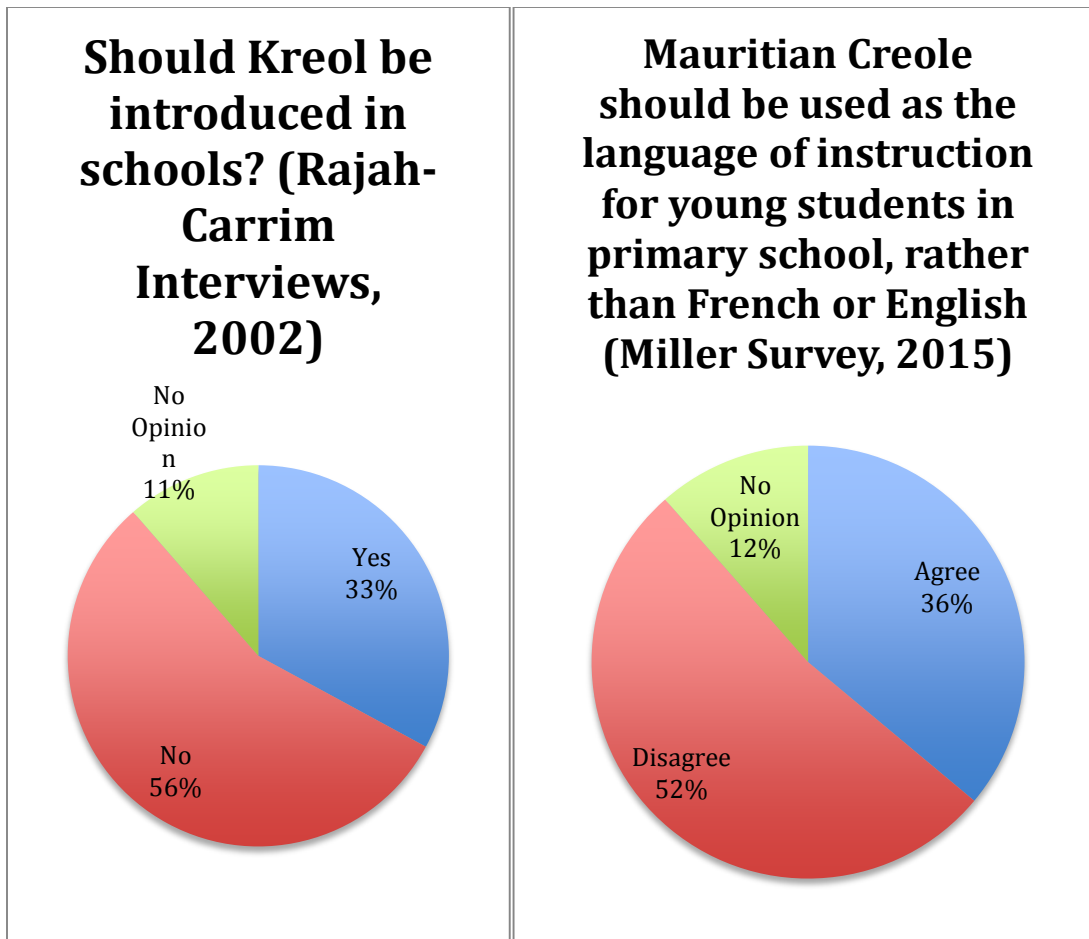


Figure 25: Rajah-Carrim 2007 Responses vs. Miller 2015 Responses

While my survey question includes more detail regarding the method of use of Kreol in the education system, the questions are certainly similar enough to remark that the general opinion of Mauritians towards using Kreol in the education system has hardly changed between Rajah-Carrim’s 2002 interviews and my 2015 survey. It is possible that recent pro-Kreol changes of including Kreol as an optional language of study and encouraging Kreol as a language of instruction in the classroom for “scaffolding” could be too recent (2012 and 2014 respectively) to reflect any change in Mauritian public opinion towards the use of Kreol in primary schools. While no significant changes in these opinions have occurred over the past 13 years, perhaps public opinion will experience larger changes towards pro-Kreol

thought in the coming years as these new policies gain more wide-spread use and acceptance on the island.

While the general Mauritian opinion towards Kreol in primary schools may not differ between Rajah-Carrim's study and mine, reasons for these opinions does. Although reasons for support of Kreol in the education system are roughly equivalent in Rajah-Carrim's and my studies, reasons for opposition to Kreol use in schools vary. Firstly, looking at respondents' reasons to support the use of Kreol in primary schools, both Rajah-Carrim's and my participants cited better understanding of subject material and use of Kreol as a unifying Mauritian language as two major reasons for support of Kreol in schools. One other reason that Rajah-Carrim's participants cited for supporting the use of Kreol in schools was the ability of use of the language in education to standardize it; while this was not a major reason cited by my supporters of Kreol, two participants still did respond that they agreed with using Kreol in primary schools in order to improve Mauritians' written Kreol skills.

Participants of both Rajah-Carrim's and my study who opposed the use of Kreol in schools shared two rationales for this opposition: Kreol's non-use in international contexts and its lack of orthographic standardization. However, Rajah-Carrim's participants did not express concerns over Kreol's possibility to detract from learning French or English, as mine did. This is possibly due to the phrasing of our two research questions; whereas my question directly situates Kreol in a position higher than French or English in primary schools by using the phrase "rather than French or English", Rajah-Carrim's question simply asks if Kreol should be incorporated into schooling alongside French and English. Due to this implied hierarchy in my question, my respondents possibly expressed more concern over lack of proficiency in French and English than Rajah-Carrim's did. Rajah-Carrim's

participants also cited two reasons to oppose the use of Kreol in schools which mine did not; the first is that it is not necessary to teach Kreol in schools since all Mauritians already speak this language. Another reason that Rajah-Carrim's participants stated for opposing Kreol's use in schools was its association with the Creole ethnic group over other groups.

8.2 Lack of Previous Ethnic Associations

My major original hypothesis behind the reasoning for why the majority of Mauritians, who speak Kreol natively themselves, would oppose the language's use in the education system was because of an association between Kreol and the Creole ethnic group. Since Creoles are generally less well-educated and are less represented in government, along with being a smaller minority compared to the Indo-Mauritians as a group or to Hindu Indians individually, this association of Kreol with Creoles would likely only hurt the fight for use of Kreol in schools since it is seen as the language of a less socially prestigious group. In the same way that Creoles are associated with Kreol despite its use as a native language of the majority of Mauritians, Indo-Mauritians' identification with ancestral Indian languages despite their lack of fluency in them also serves to create this imagined linguistic divide across ethnic groups.

In Rajah-Carrim's original study, links between the Kreol language and the Creole ethnic identity were seen through interview responses and through the breakdown of responses to her research question "Should Kreol be introduced in schools?" by ethnicity. One interview respondent from her study discussed the use of Kreol in schools, saying "For the Creole population...this could help them...As for me, I am against" (Rajah-Carrim, 2007: 66), which Rajah-Carrim instantly notes as an association of Kreol helping the Creole ethnic group over others, despite the fact that most Mauritians, regardless of ethnic group, speak Kreol as their first language. Moreover, the breakdown of Rajah-Carrim's research

question by ethnic group shows a huge favoring of the introduction of Kreol in schools by Creoles with much greater opposition from Indo-Mauritians. While over 80% of Creole participants stated that they supported the introduction of Kreol in schools, less than 20% of the Indo-Mauritian Muslim population supported its use and only roughly 5% of Indo-Mauritian Hindus were for the introduction of Kreol.

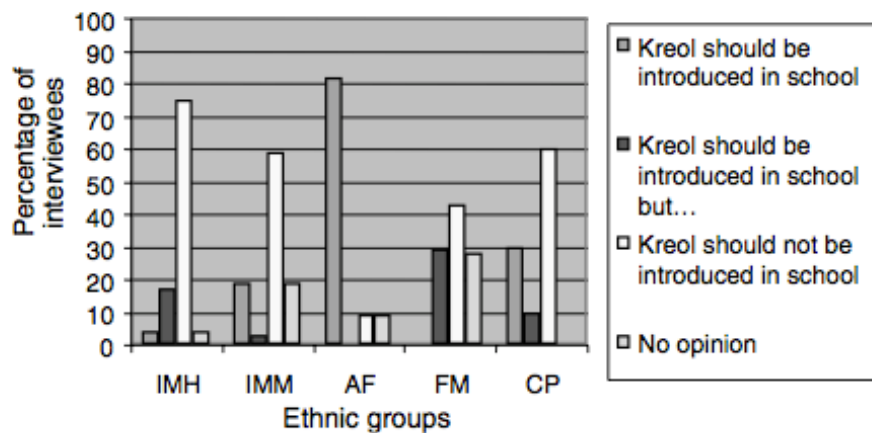
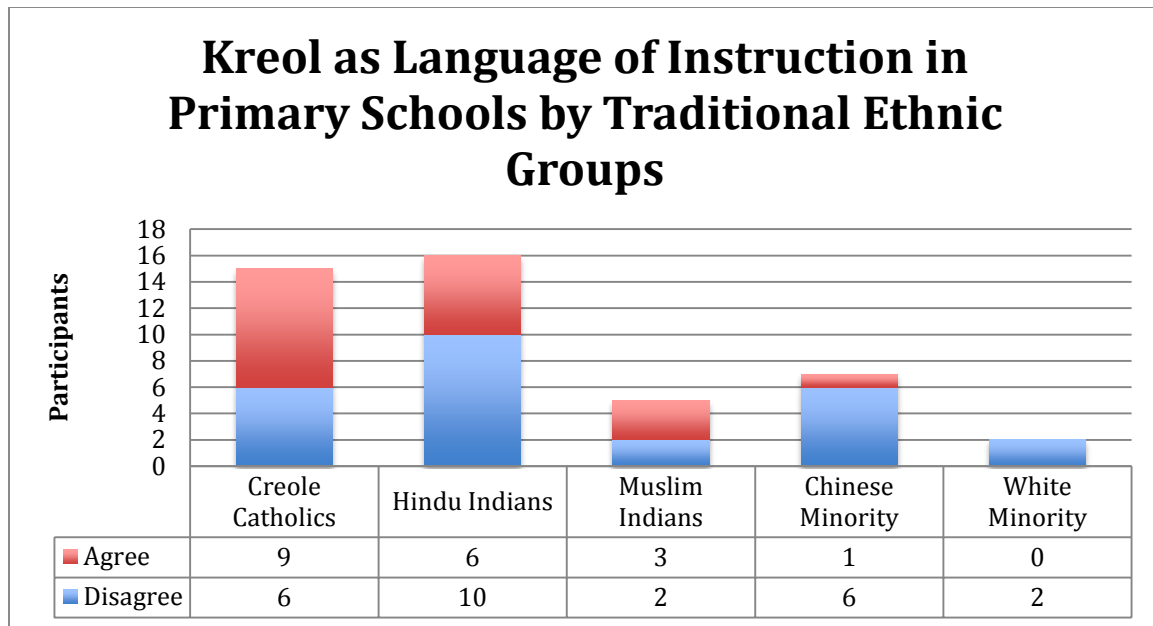


Figure 26: "Should Kreol be introduced in school?" from Rajah-Carrim 2007 sorted by ethnic group

In the chart above, Rajah-Carrim's abbreviations of ethnicity across the X-axis stand for Indo-Mauritian Hindus, Indo-Mauritian Muslims, Afro-Mauritians (Creoles), Franco-Mauritians (White), and Colored People (Mixed Race) respectively. This graph clearly illustrates the favoring of Kreol by Creoles and the opposition of it by Indo-Mauritians.

Differing greatly from these results in Rajah-Carrim's study, results from my survey showed hardly any trend towards favoring of Kreol by Creoles over Indo-Mauritians. Based on Figure 22, which is shown again below, there is a possible slight re-creation of the Creole favoring towards Kreol in my results, but it is a much smaller one, with only 60% of Creoles and 37.5% of Indo-Mauritian Hindus supporting the use of Kreol in schools compared to 80% and 5% respectively in the Rajah-Carrim study.



Additionally, no participants cited Creole association of Kreol as a reason to oppose the introduction of the language in schools in open-ended responses. Based on this comparison, it is clear that ethnic association of Kreol with the Creole group is not as much of a defining factor of opinions towards Kreol use in schools in my study as it was in Rajah-Carrim's. The relative difference of opinion between Creoles and Indo-Mauritians in my study is quite small and therefore is likely not the reason for general lack of support for the use of Kreol as a medium of instruction in schools, as I originally expected.

8.3 Support for Other Previous Hypotheses

Other possible hypotheses for why Mauritians do not support the use of their native language in primary schooling were negative perceptions of Kreol similar to other creole languages, lack of a standard orthography, and Kreol's inability to be used outside of Mauritius. All of these hypotheses were represented by the respondents of my survey and therefore do likely play a part in the rejection of use of Kreol in primary schools.

Similar to other creoles, Kreol certainly does face stigma due to its linguistic composition and lack of social prestige. As shown previously in Agree/Disagree Questions

2 and 5, Mauritian opinions towards the grammaticality, complexity, and sophistication of Kreol are split, with some participants claiming that Kreol is a complex and grammatical language like French or English, while other disagree. Many respondents showed their lack of confidence in Kreol's ability to be used as a language of instruction in primary schools in the open-ended responses as well, with 9 different participants stating that Kreol is not a fully developed language and lacks real structure. While these opinions do cause issues in the promotion of Kreol in Mauritius, they are certainly not insurmountable in order to establish Kreol as the language of instruction in primary schools. Perceptions of native languages as lacking prestige are common when promoting national languages over colonial languages in Africa (Guerini, 2007; Nkosana, 2011), but opinions of citizens are surely malleable and will likely change with the promotion and use of Kreol in schools.

Mauritians' reasoning that Kreol should not be used in schools due to lack of standardization is also a common argument against use of native languages in schooling. In my survey, 3 participants stated in their open-ended responses that Kreol would be unusable in schools due its lack of standardized orthography, and, as shown in Figure 15, nearly half of participants disagreed that Kreol has a standardized writing system. This is a common issue with national languages and creoles that have previously only served as spoken languages, but this challenge has been overcome in many countries due to corpus planning, which is a necessary step of language education planning and promotion of largely unwritten native languages. Corpus planning is a project undertaken by linguists and policy makers to standardize the orthography of a language and make it usable for educational and official purposes; projects of corpus planners involve creating dictionaries and grammars for the language, expanding its previously vernacular vocabulary, regularizing the spelling system, and making other teaching and educational materials, such as children's book and textbooks.

Mauritius has actually already undertaken efforts at corpus planning with the creation of the Akademi Kreol Morisien in 2011, which created the Diksioner Morisien (Mauritian Dictionary), Lortograf Kreol Morisien (Orthography), and Gramer Kreol Morisien (Grammar) in the same year of the Academy's founding (Ministry of Education, 2014: 24). According to the Mauritian Ministry of Education, the Akademi Kreol Morisien was founded in order to “advise on the standardization of the language, validate the writing system of the language, provide necessary technical guidelines for the development of curriculum materials and training to teachers, and advise on the promotion and development of the language” (Ministry of Education, 2014: 24). In this way, a solution to the problem of lack of orthography has already been found in Mauritius, though this solution is not widely used at this point. Since there is currently no method to spread this standard Kreol orthography, such as the use of Kreol in the education system or widespread adult Kreol literacy courses, Mauritians have simply continued to use their non-standardized spellings and orthography. However, if Kreol were to be accepted as the language of instruction in primary schools, the wide-spread standardization of Kreol across Mauritius would likely occur in a generation's time due to education in the Kreol language.

The final original hypothesis of Mauritians' reasons for opposition to Kreol was Kreol's non-use as an international language, which was expressed as a concern by 10 different participants. Since Kreol is only used on the very small island of Mauritius, many Mauritians fear that there is a lack of socioeconomic and international value in speaking Kreol, particularly in the expanding global economy and international community in Mauritius; due to this idea, many participants saw no point in using Kreol in schools since it has no socioeconomic value to Mauritians. This concern represents the underlying fear of Mauritians that Kreol could detract from English and French, which are more valuable

internationally. While this fear would be founded if Kreol were proposed as the sole language of study and instruction in Mauritian schools, in the actual proposed model, Kreol is never meant to replace English or French instruction, but only to precede it in order to facilitate later improved L2 acquisition. This major concern of many Mauritians from my survey illustrates the greater issue at hand: the lack of clarity regarding an exact language education policy in Mauritius and Mauritians' tandem misunderstanding of the benefits of instruction in Kreol.

8.4 One Unexpected but Most Important Reason

Based on the open-ended survey responses, the major reason for lack of support for Mauritian Kreol's use in schools is lack of understanding among Mauritians of both the type of language education model proposed and its benefit for Mauritian education overall, even in acquisition of French and English. One of the major concerns regarding instruction in Kreol that Mauritians cited was that its use as a medium of instruction and a language of study could detract from learning English and French, seeing that more focus would be placed on Kreol in early education over the two colonial languages. This concern is based on the idea that teaching in Kreol will leave less time for French and English instruction, thus reducing student abilities in the two latter languages. Similar concerns that Kreol has no use abroad, in higher education, and in successful occupations in Mauritius are based on the same belief that instruction in Kreol would promote only Kreol and therefore detract from instruction time in and acquisition of the more socially important languages of French and English. 8 participants even boldly claimed the traditional interference argument against multilingual education, believing that learning multiple languages will cause interference between the two languages and confusion for students; one participant stated the argument particularly eloquently, saying, "It is possible that systematic and institutional use of creole

lowers the understanding of French and English thus impacting negatively on the bilingual ability of plenty of Mauritians.”

These interference arguments are based on the idea that learning multiple languages will confuse a student and thus cause difficulty in acquiring proper competency in any language. Many supporters of the interference argument also believe that second languages are best acquired through total immersion, thus resulting in the belief that the L2 English is most successfully acquired by Mauritian students through immersion of English in the education system and absence of the native language of Kreol that could cause confusion to the learning of English. However, these ideas have been proven untrue in many studies, which will be detailed in Section 9. In reality, throwing a monolingual Kreol-speaking student into a learning environment conducted in French and English will cause greater confusion for a child. The Mauritian Ministry of Education has started to understand this, as shown in Section 4, when they stated, “It is also recommended for teachers to start a number of activities in the mother tongue of the learners as a scaffolding for the learning of the second languages” (Ministry of Education, 2014: 32). While many respondents did seem to think that Kreol could help in the explanation of math, science, history, or other subjects, they did not believe that early primary instruction in Kreol could actually improve language abilities in other languages in the future. Unless Mauritians are able to resolve this common lack of understanding concerning the real benefits of language instruction in the native tongue, Kreol will likely continue to face opposition towards its use in the education system.

8.5 A Note on Equality

Before turning to a fuller discussion of the benefits of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, it is important to also note the importance of Kreol language education for the educational equality of students, as cited by several participants. There

exists in Mauritius a divide between poorer students who only speak Kreol at home, compared to their wealthier peers who are spoken to in English or French by their parents and other family members. Several participants cited this divide and the benefits of using Kreol in schools for low-income students; one participant stated, “Some students from the poorer areas are at a clear disadvantage as they do not speak French (unlike middle class students who do) at home and hence understand less if the teacher exclusively speaks French and English at school.” Others also clarified that the use of Kreol in ZEP (Zone Educative Prioritaire) schools, or schools in low-income areas, was useful to these students, despite many of these same participants continuing to hold opinions that general students should not be instructed in Kreol. These issues raise a greater question of educational and socio-economic equality as developed through linguistic proficiency in multiple languages, thus thrusting even more importance onto effective language education in Mauritius.

9 Broader Context: The Role of the Mother Tongue in Education

9.1 Support for and Arguments against Mother Tongue Language Education

The concept of mother tongue language education, which was first endorsed by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in 1953, states that children learn better in their mother tongue, rather than a foreign medium as the language of instruction. As UNESCO stated in their 1953 report concerning languages of education around the world: “It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding...Educationally, he learns more quickly

through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium” (UNESCO, 1953). This idea seems intuitive at first: people obviously learn more easily in a language they already know rather than in a language that is foreign to them, in which they would have to try to learn a new language of instruction and new subject matter at the same time. However, many people, and many Mauritians particularly, have disagreed with this theory that mother tongue language education improves academic performance. A common argument against mother tongue language education is that instructing students in their mother tongue will cause interference to acquisition of the L2, therefore hindering acquisition of a target language (Siegel, 1997), which would be English in the case of Mauritius. Therefore, immersion in the L2 has also been used as a tactic for language instruction in many multilingual countries, such as Ghana (Owu-Ewie, 2006), Canada (Johnson, 1997), or in ESL programs in Spanish-speaking communities in the United States, with the aim of expediting L2 acquisition through total immersion in the education system. However, studies have concluded that, compared to the immersion method of L2 learning, mother tongue language education as a means to facilitate L2 acquisition has resulted in improved L2 competence and greater overall academic performance (Siegel, 1999a).

9.2 Benefits of Mother Tongue Language Education: Case Studies

Case studies that support mother tongue language education over L2 immersion methods have been conducted on a wide variety of languages in countries around the globe. Studies such as Simpkins & Simpkins 1981 and Burtoff 1985 looked at minority languages within the US (AAVE and Haitian Creole respectively) and analyzed these minority language speakers’ English literacy skills when participants were engaged in literacy instruction in their native languages along with L2 English instruction compared to a control group that was engaged in English-only literacy instruction. In both cases, the participants who were taught

to read in their own native language, either simultaneously as in the Haitian Creole study by Burtoff or beforehand in the AAVE study by Simpkins & Simpkins, attained greater L2 English literacy and proficiency than the English-only control groups. Similar studies that support the claim that higher L2 literacy is achieved when the mother tongue is first used to found literacy in students have been conducted around the world, in Scandinavia (Bull, 1990), Australia (Murtagh, 1982), Seychelles (Ravel and Thomas, 1985), and Hawaii (Afaga & Lai, 1994), among others.

An important case study of the use of pidgins or creoles as the language of instruction in mother tongue language education was undertaken by Jeff Siegel in his 1997 longitudinal study “Using a pidgin language in formal education: help or hindrance?”. In this study, Siegel closely analyzes the use of Tok Pisin, the national lingua franca creole of Papua New Guinea, as a language of instruction in pre-primary school and its effects on L2 English proficiency. The study looks at students who participated in a pre-primary school program from ages 5-6, which was designed to teach initial literacy and numeracy in Tok Pisin to prepare students to begin primary school, which is conducted exclusively in English. The students that were enrolled in this program were then compared to students who did not participate in the program, and thus never gained literacy skills in their native language of Tok Pisin and instead jumped directly into literacy instruction in English. It is true that participation in the pre-primary program may have had other positive effects on students’ academic performance, such as better learned social behavior, more confidence in a school setting, or more parental investment, which would likely affect the results of early primary school students who would possess these positive school skills from the pre-primary program compared to their classmates who did not participate in the pre-primary program and thus did not enter primary school with these skills. However, results, which were based

on standardized test scores in English, Math, and General Subjects (health, social science, etc.), were analyzed in both the early years of primary school and the later years; this longitudinal analysis of test results provides data that would be unaffected by students' preliminary positive school social skills that were developed in a year-long pre-school program 6 years ago. With participants from two classrooms and three class years, totaling 69 subjects, students who participated in the pre-primary school Tok Pisin program scored significantly higher across the board, in all subjects and in all grades 1 through 5. As expected, the largest achievement gap between students who participated in the pre-primary program and those who did not occurred in Grade 1, due to advantages of having previous schooling experience; however, even in grade 5, when the gap is generally smaller for all subjects and all class years, significant differences between the pre-primary school participants and the control group were still observed. Therefore, in a case study of a native creole language used as the medium of instruction, students who were engaged in L1 creole literacy instruction prior to L2 immersion performed better on L2 tasks and examinations in other subjects as well, disproving the interference argument that instruction in an L1 will cause problems in L2 acquisition due to confusion of the two languages.

9.3 Benefits of Mother Tongue Language Education: Theory

In addition to research case studies that have exhibited the benefits of mother tongue language education, there are also theoretical approaches to bilingual education that endorse mother tongue language education over L2 immersion practices in order to achieve higher levels of both surface linguistic proficiency and deeper cognitive abilities. Several bilingual education theorists have posited that mother tongue language education in multilingual communities can be used to attain additive bilingualism, which results in high levels of linguistic proficiency in both the L1 and L2 languages (Cummins, 1979; Hansegard,

1968; Paulston, 1975; Toukoma & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1977). These theorists also claim that lack of language instruction in the mother tongue can result in semilingualism, which is exemplified when speakers in a multilingual situation do not acquire any language to a high degree of proficiency.

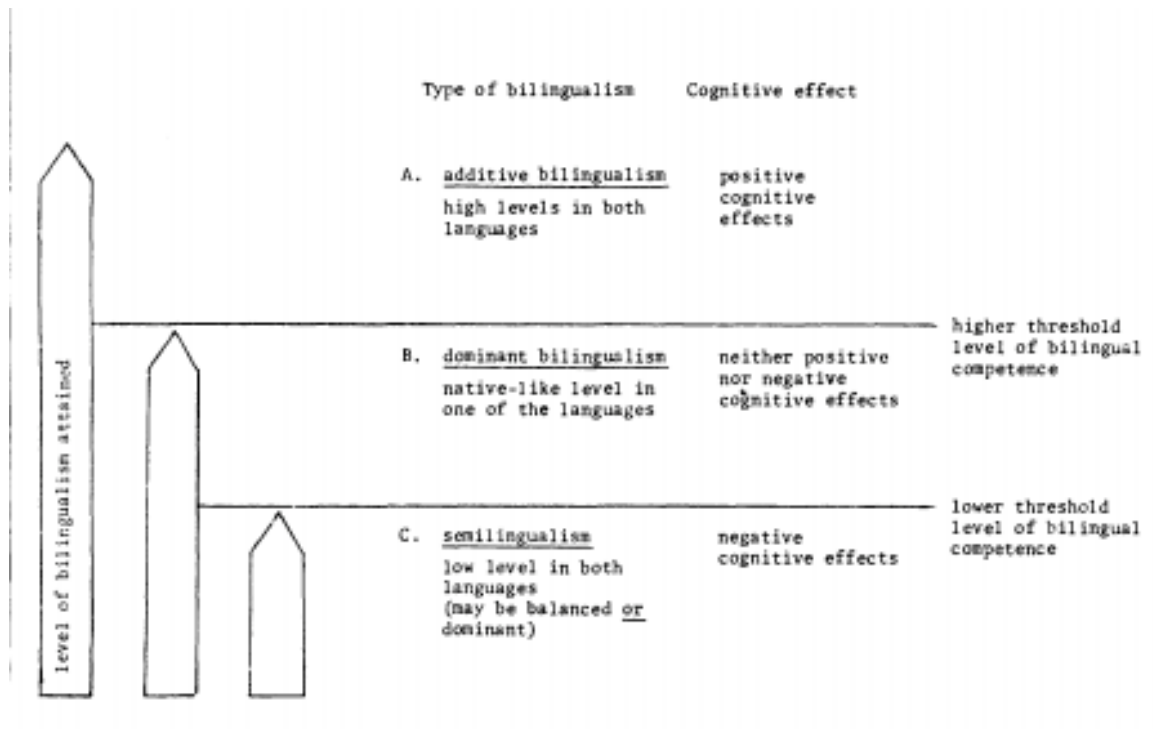


Figure 27: Model of Bilingual Attainment from Cummins 1979

Semilingualism was a theory first brought to public recognition by Hansegard in 1968, in which the author states, “semilingualism has been used as a term for the type of ‘faulty linguistic competence’ which has especially been observed in individuals who have since childhood had contact with two languages without sufficient or adequate training and stimulation in either of the two languages” (Paulston, 1975). In this model of semilingualism, *linguistic competence* refers to native language fluency in a specific language as well as high-level literacy in the same language, meaning that a speaker with “faulty linguistic competence” would lack native-level fluency or highly proficient literate skills in any one language. This theory therefore focuses on the natural acquisition of a first language along

with the educational development of that language that would occur through literacy and basic study in the mother tongue. Semilingualism can often be an effect of L2 immersion methods of multilingual education in which students are never able to literately and educationally develop their L1 native language skills. Because of this definition of semilingualism, supporters of the concept have agreed that language education and instruction in the native language of students is necessary in order to attain full linguistic competence in multiple languages in multilingual situations. This idea is declared in Paulston's 1975 review of semilingualist theories when he states, "Children must become literate in the mother tongue in order to counteract the negative effects of double semilingualism" (Paulston, 1975).

While the original models of semilingualism put forth by Hansegard were in reference to native Finnish speakers living in Sweden, the concept is applicable to many multilingual nations, including Mauritius. Semilingualism is a real possibility for many Mauritians; as we have seen from our survey results, many Mauritians do not rate their Kreol abilities, both spoken and written, as highly as many first language speakers would, and many Mauritians still do not attain high levels of English or French proficiency, as seen from the failing CPE results. This could be an example of the "faulty linguistic competence" Hansegard describes because Mauritians are therefore not acquiring any language to a native-like fluency while also establishing educational and literate skills in that language. However, based on these theoretical and cognitive approaches to bilingual education, mother tongue language education is a possible solution to this issue of semilingualism. Kreol language instruction is necessary in addition to the existing L2 language instruction in Mauritius in order to achieve high levels of bilingual or trilingual competency.

10 Cross-Country Comparisons

10.1 Seychelles: Creole as National Identity

In order to gain further insight into the possible benefits or pitfalls of mother tongue language education in a native creole language, it is useful to analyze the language education policies and consequent successes or failures of other creole-speaking post-colonial nations similar to Mauritius. One of the most easily comparable nations to Mauritius is Seychelles. Seychelles and Mauritius share remarkably similar histories and linguistic situations, but the two countries diverge greatly in regards to their language education planning and policy. Similarly to Mauritius, French forces landed in Seychelles during the 18th century and proclaimed the nation of today as a colony, until 1810 when Britain gained control over both Mauritius and Seychelles under the Treaty of Paris during the Napoleonic Wars. In fact, at that time, the British regarded Mauritius and Seychelles as one territory until the two present-day nations were split into two separate crown colonies in 1903. Because of these similar histories, the two nations also share remarkably similar sociolinguistic situations. Until independence in 1968 for Mauritius and 1976 for Seychelles, both countries employed a status and prestige hierarchy of languages, with English on the top as the official language of the colony, French in the middle as the language of public discourse and media, and Kreol or Seselwa (Seychellois Creole) on the bottom as the language of the home. Kreol and Seselwa are also very structurally similar (Ethnologue, 2015), both being created in the period of French colonialism with French as the superstrate language and African languages like Malagasy of the African slaves serving as the substrate. Despite all of these similarities, Seychelles and Mauritius have assumed very different approaches to language policy in this complex, multilingual system.

In contrast to the lack of overt language policy and language education planning in Mauritius, Seychelles installed an exact and overarching language policy favoring Seselwa

since the beginning of their history as an independent nation. In 1979, only three years after declaring independence, Seychelles first elevated Seselwa to equal standing with French and English. Two years later in 1981, Seselwa took another leap forward when the Seychellois government promoted Seselwa to the first official language, with English as the second and French as the third (Bollée, 1993: 87). With this change, Seselwa also became the primary medium of instruction in Seychellois elementary schools. Today, Seychellois children are taught exclusively in Seselwa until 2nd grade, when English is introduced; French is later introduced in 4th grade. English use in the classroom is based on a subject transitional model, in which English is progressively used as the language of instruction for math, science, and social science. By the secondary level of schooling in Seychelles, English is the medium of instruction for all of these previously stated core subjects, along with English itself as a subject. Seselwa is maintained to teach arts and political education at the secondary level and French is taught solely as a subject (Bollée, 1993: 89).

This model of education has proved to be very successful for Seychellois citizens. Before the 1981 language planning change that established Seselwa as the exclusive mode of instruction in early primary school with a transitional exit towards English, many Seychellois students graduated from the mandatory nine years of schooling illiterate in both French and English. This failure was based on the fact that students entered primary school knowing only Seselwa yet being instructed only in English (Bollée, 1993: 88). However, after the 1981 acquisition planning change, students who were instructed in Seselwa during early primary schooling performed better across all subjects, including English (Ravel & Thomas, 1985; Bickerton, 1988). As Bickerton stated in his 1988 study concerning academic performance of Seselwa-educated students, “The prediction by the enemies of creole, that education in

creole would lower scores in English and French, has failed to be borne out” (Bickerton, 1988: 3).

Due to Seychelles’ language planning success and its historical and linguistic similarities to Mauritius, it seems as if Mauritius would benefit from incorporating Seychelles’ language policies into their own future language planning strategies. Considering that Seychelles adopted this progressive pro-creole language policy over 30 years ago, this raises the question of why Mauritius has not yet adopted a similar policy. The answer may be that many of the complexities of the Mauritian linguistic situation do not exist in Seychelles, specifically the existence of diverse ethnic and religious groups in Mauritius tied with the identification of Indo-Mauritians with Indian languages other than Kreol. Seychelles, under the socialist government that has persisted since its independence, has been able to stand behind Seselwa as an act of unity and equality for all Seychellois citizens; this act has also been viewed in Seychelles as a way to declare nationalistic pride and separation from their previous colonial rulers. As stated in the government newspaper *Nation* following the 1981 Seychellois language policy change, “With the emergence of Creole as our national language, a move forward is being made to concretise our liberty and independence and reassert our full personality as a sovereign nation” (Bollée, 1993: 87). This ability to use Seselwa as a unifying factor is possibly due to the homogenous linguistic and ethnic make-up of Seychelles, where nearly every Seychellois citizen is mixed race and speaks Seselwa at home, without other factors of ancestral languages or negative perceptions of the creole language associated with a minority group that we see in Mauritius.

10.2 Haiti: Simplified Diglossia with Larger Social Challenges

As a country of nearly 10 million citizens in which the large majority of Haitians speak Haitian Creole, Haiti is a common example of a creole-speaking nation. While

Mauritius and Haiti share many similarities in terms of linguistic situation and language education policy, Haiti's education system is plagued by many other issues relating to the high levels of poverty present there. In comparison to Haiti, it is clear that the Mauritian education system is facing many fewer problems than the education systems of other less economically advantaged countries such as Haiti; with this comparison in mind, it is important for Mauritians to recognize their own opportunity to be able to effect language policy change and the further benefits their students could experience due to acceptance of mother tongue language education.

Haiti's colonial history starts in the late 15th century with Christopher Columbus's "discovery" of the island, despite its previous inhabitation by the Taíno Indians. Haiti was first colonized by Spanish and later by the French, still over a century before the French colonization of Mauritius (Spears & Joseph, 2010: 23). Haiti gained independence from the French in a brutal, slave-led revolution in 1804, over 150 years before Mauritius became an independent nation (Spears & Joseph, 2010: 30).

The linguistic situation of Haiti can be viewed as a standard example of diglossia. French is preferred in higher status or higher prestige environments, such as in the government or within the education system. However, many Haitians are still only monolingual in Haitian Creole, especially those living in rural areas who have little opportunity to utilize any possible French skills; this means that those numerous Haitian citizens who only speak Creole are then unable to participate in many functions or domains in Haiti, leading to a small, elite, bilingual class (Hebblethwaite, 2012: 260). The linguistic situation in Haiti is a simplified version of the situation in Mauritius. Both countries have a large majority of citizens who speak Creole as their first language (95% in Haiti and 86.5% in Mauritius (Hebblethwaite, 2012: 254)), though in Haiti, French is the only other language

that is used in formal contexts, creating a normal diglossic situation rather than the more complicated triglossia found in Mauritius. Similarly, Haiti is not home to the same ethnic diversity that Mauritius has, which allows for a larger majority, creole-speaking unified group in Haiti, similar to the situation in Seychelles. However, unlike in Seychelles, Haiti is still plagued by language policy uncertainty and widespread failure in the education system.

In terms of language policy, Haiti and Mauritius also share many similarities, specifically that their respective language policies are both fraught with vagueness and inability to standardize the languages in use in the classroom. In the 1979 Constitution of Haiti, French is classified as the '*langue d'instruction*' (language of instruction) while Creole is only classified as an '*outil d'enseignement*' (tool of learning) (Hebblethwaite, 2012: 263). The current Constitution of 1987, which changed language policy to place both French and Haitian Creole in official language standing, also tended towards the promotion of Creole in schools, stating that Creole is the only language that is able to unite all Haitians and that education should be for the masses, implying that Creole, as the language of the masses and the unifier language, should be used in the education system in an attempt to equalize student experiences (Hebblethwaite, 2012: 263). However, this is the extent of legislation regarding language education policy, creating a similar situation to Mauritius of uncertainty of language policy and variation in languages used in classrooms across the island. Again, similarly to Mauritius, despite this vagueness of policy and the fact that the large majority of Haitians speak Haitian Creole as a first language, teachers still tend to favor French because of its status as an elite and international language that allows higher educational and occupational success (Jean-Pierre, 2011).

Despite these similarities of language education policy and linguistic situation, the two nations still have several differences in their approach to mother tongue language

education, mostly because Haiti is facing much more substantial general education challenges than Mauritius. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, with 77% of the entire nation living in poverty (IFAD, 2010). In addition to issues of malnutrition and hunger faced by many Haitians, the education system in Haiti also faces the challenges of lack of funding, high drop-out rates, poor teacher training, and lack of public schools as only a few of the many difficulties in education there. Faced with all of these challenges, less than a third of the total students who enter primary school in Haiti reach 7th grade; similarly, over a ten-year period from 1996 to 2006, only 30% of students who took standardized Baccalaureat exams in order to graduate from high school achieved a passing score (Jean-Pierre, 2011: 6). Moreover, 61% of Haitians over the age of 10 are illiterate (Hebblethwaite, 2012: 267).

These major education issues have not gone without notice in Haiti; however, language education policy is rarely discussed as a reason for these failures. In 2009, a representative from the Ministry of National Education stated that the failures of students in the education system could be due to “a problem of exam preparation, or because the teachers do not do their job, or because the students do not study” (Jean-Pierre, 2011: 7), not mentioning language in education in any respect. While instruction in Haitian Creole would likely ameliorate some issues of education in Haiti, such as poor test scores or high illiteracy rates, it seems like pro-Creole language policy will not likely happen soon in Haiti; language policy legislature will not be a priority within a government dealing with widespread hunger, poverty, and general lack of education enrollment. Along with these issues of prioritization within the government legislature, more important may be the fact that the funds necessary for effective corpus planning by linguists, creation of materials for instruction in Creole, and promotion of the Creole language are absent in a country in which

only 1.5% of the GDP is invested in education compared to the regional average of 4.5% (Hebblethwaite, 2012: 257).

In comparison to Haiti, it is clear that Mauritius, which has a literacy rate of roughly 90% and nearly 100% of children of primary school age enrolled in school until the age of 16, is in a much better position to address problems in the education system caused by the lack of mother tongue language education. By comparison to countries such as Haiti which are dealing with much larger issues facing developing nations, it seems much more reasonable that Mauritius, as a fairly modernized and economically stable country without challenges of widespread educational failure or poverty, should have the ability to clarify the benefits of mother tongue language education and establish effective language education policy.

11 The Future of Kreol in Mauritius

11.1 Policy Recommendations

Based on the recent pro-Kreol changes in Mauritius and continued discussion of language education policy there, the nation will likely consider further language education policy amendments in coming years. Within the highly democratic society and vastly growing economy of Mauritius, the government and citizens there are currently capable of proceeding in the debate regarding language education policy, resulting in a more effective and regularized method of using language within Mauritian classrooms.

The current vague language education policy in Mauritius is ineffective and results in variation in language use across classrooms. Moreover, the method of language education in place currently produces Mauritians who have both decreased target L2 English language skills and a lack of literacy and basic study in their mother tongue. These issues are especially problematic in Mauritian society, which necessitates advanced language skills in

English and French in order to continue education beyond primary school and to secure a financially stable occupation. As a solution to these issues, the use of the mother tongue Kreol in early primary education could facilitate greater L2 acquisition and increased overall academic performance of students, despite many Mauritians' beliefs to the contrary. By utilizing Kreol as both a language of instruction and a language of study in early primary schooling in order to first develop basic literacy and comprehension of other subjects before beginning to instruct students in a foreign L2, the Mauritian education system would see overall improvement in students' academic performance, particularly in regards to second language competency.

Mauritians' major impediment to accepting and supporting the use of Kreol in primary schooling is their misconception that Kreol's use in schools would detract from second language acquisition, which is justifiably more socioeconomically important in Mauritian society than educational development of the mother tongue. To assuage these misguided concerns of many Mauritian citizens, it is necessary to fully explain to the public the benefits of the proposed mother tongue language education policy in order to gain Mauritian support for it. Likewise, a specific language education policy which details the particular use of each language in each year of schooling must be decided upon and promoted widely by the Mauritian government in order for Mauritian citizens to understand and endorse the method in which language would be used in the education system. With this selection of and promotion of mother tongue language education policy along with explanation of the consequent benefits of the policy by the Mauritian government, Mauritians would likely soon turn to favor this change in policy and support its introduction into the legislative system.

In order to change Mauritians' negative attitudes towards Kreol as a language, promotion of the mother tongue as a national and historical heritage language would be effective. This promotion could occur through cultural and historical displays of Kreol in theater, music, art, story-telling, and other culturally-significant modes of expression. Promotion of the use of spoken Kreol in radio and television along with increased exposure to written Kreol in newspapers, magazines, signage, and literature of Mauritian authors could also help to eradicate unfounded, negative attitudes towards Kreol.

Mauritians also stated their concerns that Kreol does not have enough of a standardized orthography in order to use the language in education. While this concern would partly be eliminated directly through its use in the education system which would require students and instructors alike to learn the standard orthography of Kreol, other measures could also be taken to help standardize the language for the general public. General Mauritian exposure to standardized Kreol orthography could occur by using written Kreol in newspapers, road signs, government documents, and any other sources to which Mauritians are exposed regularly, along with the use of Kreol subtitles in film and television. Additionally, Kreol literacy courses offered by local governments or religious institutions could help to create a widespread standard Kreol writing system among Mauritian citizens.

Through selection, promotion, and explanation of a specific mother tongue language education policy in Mauritius, along with promotion of Kreol as a national language and spread of a standardized Kreol orthography, the Mauritian government would be able to gain support among the Mauritian public for the use of Kreol in primary schooling. With this support, this mother tongue language education model would then be able to become legal educational policy in democratic Mauritius. With this policy change, in a generation, a new Mauritian population could emerge that is literate in their mother tongue, fully

competent in the second languages of French and English, and overall more academically successful, due to this clear and effective language planning for the first time in Mauritian history.

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