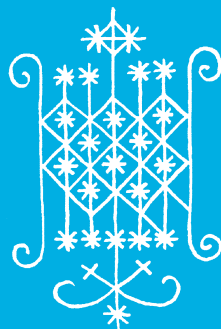


Lawrence D. Carrington

# St. Lucian Creole

A Descriptive Analysis of its Phonology  
and Morpho-Syntax

Buske



## St. Lucian Creole

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HELMUT BUSKE VERLAG HAMBURG

Lawrence D. Carrington

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A Descriptive Analysis of its Phonology  
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info@buske.de

## PREFACE

In 1967, I completed a three year study of St. Lucian Creole for the purpose of a doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of the West Indies. The degree awarded in 1968 is decoratively marked "in French", for linguistics was not then a separately established discipline at U.W.I. At the time of its completion, two publishers expressed interest in the dissertation but their interest did not reduce their fees to the scale of my pocket. I recall quite vividly that one of them quoted as my contribution to the cost of publication a sum that would have been nearly fifteen times my gross monthly income! In retrospect, needless to say, the sum seems modest. I doubt though whether publication at that time would have assured the study any greater fate than bookshelf decoration or passing reference in a few bibliographies.

In the intervening 16 years, the study has been variously ignored and plagiarised, been the source of a touristy speaka-like-da natives manual as well as the basis for a more solid course in St. Lucian for speakers of American English. Its time has now come, I feel. St. Lucia has evolved to the point where there is now an urgent necessity for this study to be made available to a wide audience. The likelihood of a public policy requiring the official use of Creole for adult education is high; the societal forces that have invited re-evaluation of the national heritage are more powerful now than in the days when the man who was "trying to make patois a language" was a cause for mirth.

Linguistic analysis has developed dramatically since the study was written and the style of analysis used is considerably dated. Without embarrassment though, a minimum of change has been made in the text of the original study. The editor and I agreed that retaining the type of analysis was itself important for historical (archival?) reasons. This published version differs from the original study only in the following ways:

1. The correction of a small number of errors in the original;
2. The addition of a few explanatory footnotes;

3. The addition of a new chapter (Ch. 22) discussing the contemporary sociolinguistic situation in Saint Lucia;
4. The updating of the bibliography relevant to the language in its social context.

The description that is presented was not undertaken as an exercise in theoretical linguistics to test theories of grammar. It was an attempt to analyse a variety of Antillean French-lexicon Creole as a first step in understanding language learning problems within the school system of St. Lucia. The form of the analysis was mainly structuralist, for the Chomskyan revolution had not yet taken hold in the Caribbean, (despite Bailey 1966 which, it will be remembered, was written at Columbia University). The matter of dialect variation was not a focus of the analysis and this area remains a challenge for another researcher.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to record my gratitude to the following persons:

Professor Mervyn Alleyne, University of the West Indies, Jamaica, who guided my research at all stages;

Professor Albert Valdman, Indiana University, for his useful comments and for the conversations that led to refinement of the analysis of the definite determiner;

The late Mr. Harold Simmons of St. Lucia who, from our first acquaintance in 1964 to his regrettable decease in 1966, shared selflessly his knowledge of St. Lucia and St. Lucians;

Mrs. Patricia Charles, Executive Director, National Research and Development Foundation, Saint Lucia (in the period 1964-67, Resident Tutor of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies, U.W.I. St. Lucia) who placed the facilities of her department at my disposal;

Mr. Rolph Grant of T. Geddes Grant & Co. Ltd. Kingston, Jamaica who so generously donated the tape recorder used for field recording;

Mrs. Alberta Charles of Castries, St. Lucia who provided me with a home during my long stay in St. Lucia;

and despite her reluctance for public recognition

Cecile, my wife, whose proof reading skills and moral support facilitated both the original and the present version of this study.

Finally, and most important, my thanks to all those persons who acted as my informants and without whom this study would have been impossible.





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# SAINT LUCIA

REFERENCE CHART

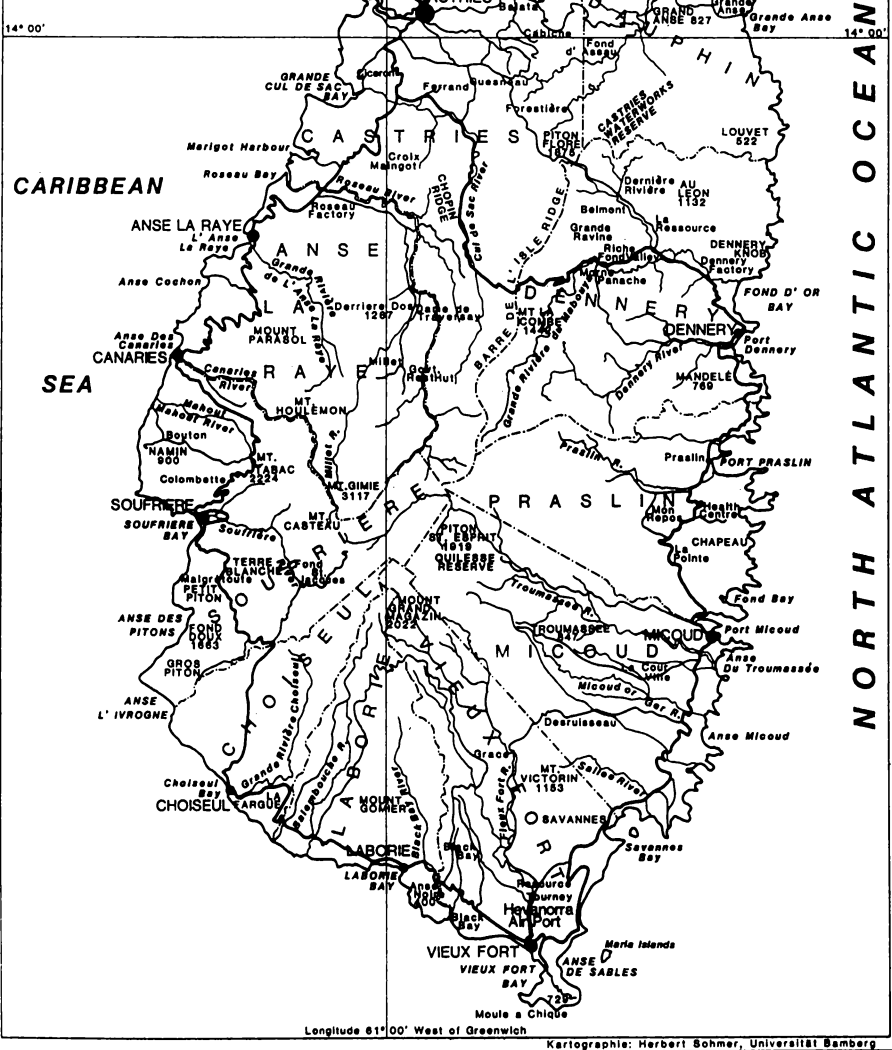
- Principal Roads
- Other Roads
- Coastline
- - - Quarter Boundaries
- Rivers

Population 130 000 in 1979

Area 238 Square Miles

Heights in Feet Given to Ground Level

Scale 1 : 250 000



## INTRODUCTION

### 0.1 Geography

Situated between longitudes 60°53' and 61°05' West and between latitudes 13°43' and 14°07' North, St. Lucia is one of the chain of islands which comprise the Lesser Antilles. The island is separated from St. Vincent on the south by a mere 20 miles and from the French island of Martinique on the north by some 24 miles. Its total land area of 233 square miles is exceedingly mountainous, the highest peak being Morne Gimie (3,145 ft.) with several other peaks ranging between 2,000 ft. and 3,000 ft. According to the 1960 Census, <sup>(1)</sup> the population stood at 86,108 persons of whom 68.8% were of African descent; the most recent estimate put the population on the 1st January 1966 at 101,000 persons. <sup>(2)</sup> The economy of the island is based on agriculture and the majority of cultivated land is devoted to the growing of bananas which replaced sugar-cane during the 1950's. St. Lucia is shortly to become an autonomous state in association with Great Britain.

### 0.2 History of colonization

There is some disagreement over the identity of the European discoverer of St. Lucia but discussion of the point is not relevant to this study. Suffice it to note that the island became known to Europeans not earlier than 1498 and not later than 1503. Mention is made of the island under various spellings in maps, during the first half of the 16th century and according to Jesse <sup>(3)</sup>, the first reference to the island in a document would be in a Cedula of 1511. Between the years of 1593 and 1603 the island was visited briefly by no fewer than three British vessels, but it was not until 1605 that a settlement was recorded. The 67 passengers of the ship 'Oliph Blossom' en route to Guiana, landed in

---

(1) *Eastern Caribbean Population Census 1960*. (Port-of-Spain, 1960).

(2) This figure is taken from a brochure published by the St. Lucia Government on the occasion of the visit of H.M. the Queen. (Castries, 1966).

(3) Jesse, Rev.C. *The Amerindians in St. Lucia*. (Castries, 1960). p. 2.

the island to seek their fortune after having grown weary of their journey. The Carib inhabitants soon assured the majority of them eternal rest and the 19 survivors set out in an open boat for their former destination. A few other abortive attempts preceded the eventual success of the French West India Company which established a colony on the island in 1642, thus beginning St. Lucia's history as an overseas possession of European powers. But French and British spheres of commercial interest clashed and the two powers fought over the island with disconcerting regularity between the years 1664 and 1803. During that time every treaty awarded the island to France - Breda, 1664; Aix-la-Chapelle, 1748; Paris, 1763; Versailles, 1783; Amiens, 1802. However, the capture of the island by the British in 1803 was ratified by the Treaty of Paris in 1814 and ended further dispute.

#### *0.2.1 Predominance of the French*

Although the island changed hands so frequently, the majority of the settlers were French and their influence was ensured by the annexation of the island to its neighbour, Martinique, in 1674 as a colony of the French Crown. A renewal of hostilities by the British in 1723 resulted in the declared 'neutrality' of St. Lucia but this circumstance served only to increase the flow of colonists from Martinique. French predominance was such, that in 1803 when Hood and Grinfield took St. Lucia, they thought it advisable to issue a proclamation assuring the colonists that the laws of the island would remain unchanged until His Majesty had stated otherwise. Indeed, it was only after several false starts that the official language of the island's courts was changed to English.

The *Gazette* of the 28th February, 1838<sup>(4)</sup> published the proclamation of Governor Bunbury declaring that English should be the only language to be used by advocates in the Royal Court, but this was revoked by the Governor-in-Chief two months later and disallowed by Her Majesty in June. The *Gazette* of 22nd January, 1840 gave notice:

---

(4) Alleyne, K. *Memoir on the Constitutional Development of St. Lucia*, (St. Lucia 1950). p. 12.