

On reflexive forms in creoles

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Abstract

The study of reflexive marking in creoles is a wide topic and has received a remarkable input of scholarly work. When reviewing all this work, and the many findings that have been presented in it, one may wonder what justification there may be to add yet another treatment to the many other ones that are available. The main reason for doing so is to propose a perspective that differs somewhat from that of previous authors, one that applies grammaticalization theory to this subject matter. To this end, a number of parameters and distinctions are proposed that appear to be relevant for understanding why reflexive forms are structured the way they are.

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1. Introduction

Creole languages offer a bewildering variety of how the notion of reflexivity is or may be expressed (see in particular Muysken and Smith, 1994). The creole of Mauritius (henceforth: Mauritian CF¹), for example, has at least three different ways of expressing this notion:²

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¹ Concerning this and other abbreviations relating to a rough taxonomy of pidgins and creoles, see ‘Nomenclature.’

² The analysis presented relies on available published materials. In deciding on whether a given expression does or does not express “reflexivity,” we adopt the analysis of the respective authors.

Nomenclature

A	personal pronoun used reflexively
AL	alienable possession
ANT	anterior
ASP	aspect marker
B	personal pronoun used reflexively, except for third person
CA	Arabic-based creole
CD	Dutch-based creole
CE	English-based creole
CF	French-based creole
COMPL	complementizer, completive marker
COP	copula
CPL	completive
CP	Portuguese-based creole
CS	Spanish-based creole
C1, C2	noun class 1, 2
DAT	dative marker
DEF	definite marker
DEM	demonstrative
DU	dual marker
E	ending
EMPH	emphatic
I	intensifier
IRR	irrealis
M	possessive marker
N	noun used reflexively
OBJ	object marker
P	personal possessive attribute
PA	Arabic-based pidgin
PAST	past tense marker
PE	(a) English-based pidgin, (b) possessee
PL	plural
POSS	possessive attribute
PREP	preposition
PRON	personal pronoun
PR	possessor
PS	Swahili-based pidgin
PTC	particle
R	(pure) reflexive marker
REAL	realis marker
SG	singular
SI	subject index
SM	subject marker

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