The long and short of verb alternations in Mauritian Creole and Bantu languages.[1]

Abstract

Mauritian Creole displays an alternation between a short and a long form of the verb, which is reminiscent of the conjoint-disjoint alternation found in some eastern Bantu languages (Veenstra 2007). Based on comparison with other French-based creoles and socio-historical evidence, we conclude that the Bantu substrate of Mauritian Creole must have had some influence. We compare the synchronic properties of the alternations in Mauritian Creole and the most likely substrate Bantu languages of northern Mozambique and examine two possible scenarios for the influence of Bantu on the Mauritian verbal alternation, concluding that probably only the (syntactic) basics of the Bantu alternation motivated the persistence of the alternation in Mauritian Creole.

1. Introduction

Mauritian Creole is a French-related creole spoken on the island of Mauritius, which developed out of the contact between French, the superstrate language, and several typologically diverse substrate languages of Austronesian, Eastern Bantu, Niger-Congo, Dravidian, and Indo-Aryan origin. As in some other French-related creoles a distinction is made between long and short forms of verbs, as illustrated in (1) for *ferme* vs. *ferm*:

Mauritian Creole (Henri 2010: 1)

(1) a. *Kifer to lizie gayar pe **ferme**?*
why 2SG eye lively ASP close
'Why are your lively eyes closing?'
(Dev Virasawmy, Montagn Morn)

b. *Ki **ferm** mo nam dan enn prizon.*
that close 1SG soul LOC DET prison
'That closes my soul in a prison.'
(Dev Virasawmy, Balad San Patri)

Note that not all French-related creoles exhibit this alternation. Corne (1999: 132) observes that verb forms in the Lesser Antillean Creoles, i.e. the different varieties as spoken in Guadeloupe, Martinique, St. Lucia, and Dominica, are invariable, and what little variation there is has no semantic or syntactic correlates. In Mauritian Creole, on the other hand, the long/short opposition did survive. Becker & Veenstra (2003) have argued that the alternation can best be analyzed as the reflex of French inflectional morphology that survived the

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creolization process. One of the questions, therefore, is why the long/short alternation was kept in Mauritian Creole (and not in other creoles).

In those creoles where the alternation is present, it correlates with syntactic properties. Interestingly, the syntactic correlate differs in (almost) each French creole. Veenstra (2003) shows that the alternation basically comes in two guises. It either marks a Tense distinction (present/past), leading to concomitant movement of the verb into the INFL-domain, as is the case in Louisiana Creole (Rottet 1992), or there is a context-sensitive rule that deletes the *–e*, depending on the element that follows the verb (Syea 1992). The latter pattern is found in Mauritian Creole. A further important difference is that the short form can occur sentence-finally in Louisiana Creole, but not in Mauritian Creole. Although we delay a fine-grained exposition and full discussion of the pattern to section 3, a second important question to pose in this introduction is why the alternation in Mauritian Creole has the function it does.

As mentioned in Veenstra (2009), the long/short alternation in Mauritian Creole is reminiscent of the conjoint/disjoint (CJ/DJ) distinction in Bantu languages (Meeussen 1959). Although he is sceptical about the role played by Bantu languages in the remoulding of French into Mauritian Creole and even claims that "the grammatical underpinnings of the alternation in Mauritian Creole and the Bantu languages, Makhuwa in particular, [are] just not similar enough to enable us to come up with a realistic scenario on the emergence of the long/short opposition in Mauritian Creole in terms of substrate influence" (Veenstra 2009: 109), we nevertheless believe that part of the answer to the questions above lies in the contribution of the substrate languages that were present at the relevant period on the Mascarene Islands. An important reason for being less skeptical comes from the fact that the pattern we find in Mauritian Creole is only found in those creoles that have a strong (eastern or southern) Bantu substrate. Moreover, as we will show below in more detail, the absence of the short form in sentence-final position is a property that sets Mauritian Creole apart from other French-related creoles and is shared with the relevant Bantu substrate(s). Thus, we want to maintain that these Bantu languages played some decisive role in the linguistic shaping of the newly emerging contact varieties on the Mascarene Islands, although its precise nature is still far from clear.

Both in Mauritian Creole and in several southern and eastern Bantu languages we find two alternating verb forms expressing the same TMA semantics but differing in the relation with what follows. As already mentioned above, what they have in common is that the short form in Mauritian Creole and the conjoint form in Bantu languages may not appear sentence-finally. Examples from Mauritian Creole and a variety of Bantu languages are presented below, where the conjoint forms in (b) would be ungrammatical were they sentence-final like the disjoint forms in (a):[2]

Mauritian Creole

(2) a. LF *Mo pe mãze.*
1SG ASP eat
'I'm eating.'

[2] The following abbreviations are used: LF = long form; SF = short form; CJ = conjoint; DJ = disjoint; T = tense; A = aspect, M = mood; SM = subject marker; OM = object marker; SIT = situative tense.

b. SF *Mo pe mãz dipen.*
1SG ASP eat bread
'I am eating bread.'

Makhuwa (P31, van der Wal 2008:218)

(3) a. DJ *Ni-náá-thípá.*
1PL-PRES.DJ-dig
'We are digging.'
b. CJ *Ni-n-thípá nlittí.*
1PL-PRES.CJ-dig 5.hole
'We dig a hole.'

Makwe (P20, Devos 2008)

(4) a. DJ *A-ní-yúuma*|.
1SM-PERF.DJ-buy
'She has bought.'
b. CJ *A-yum-ite vítáabu*|.
1SM-buy-PERF.CJ 8.books
'She has bought books.'

Makonde (P22, Kraal 2005:235,265)

(5) a. DJ *Va-na-yangaáta*.
2SM-PRES.DJ-help
'They are helping.'
b. CJ *Va-yangata váyééni*.
2SM-help guests
'They help guests.'

One of the major issues here is how similar (and/or different) the syntactic and interpretational properties of these alternations are in the different languages under consideration. A detailed cross-linguistic comparison of the alternation enables us to provide an answer to the leading question of this paper: which knowledge of/in the substrate was transferred to the creole?

We compare Mauritian Creole with two groups of Bantu languages, from Guthrie's (1948) zones P and S, roughly corresponding to northern Mozambique and South-Africa. From a socio-historic perspective, Bantu P languages constitute the relevant substrate group, as the slave population was mostly from that area. We show that the similarity between the alternation in MC and that in the Bantu P languages is only superficial, and that the underlying mechanisms responsible for the surface patterns are in fact different (focus in Bantu P versus constituency in MC). On the basis of this comparison, we discuss two possible scenarios for substrate continuities from Bantu into Mauritian Creole: (i) there was a complete transfer of the grammatical system from Bantu P, but Bantu P was at that point constituency-based, i.e. more similar to Mauritian Creole than it is nowadays; (ii) there was no wholesale transfer of the grammatical machinery underpinning the alternation, but only the very basic property of the conjoint/disjoint system was transferred, i.e. the absence of the conjoint form in sentence-final position. The conclusion we draw is that the conditioning features of the alternation in

Mauritian Creole represent the lowest common denominator between the creole and Bantu P-zone languages as well as that found in other Bantu languages.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we look at the socio-historic and demographic context of the formative period of Mauritian Creole. We show that that it is most likely that speakers of Bantu P languages constituted the majority of the slave population at the relevant period. Therefore, if there are grammatical continuities from the substrate language(s), we expect them to come from this group of languages. In section 3 we provide detailed information on the grammatical underpinnings of the alternation in Mauritian Creole as well as the Bantu P languages. We show that the languages from zone P pattern differently from Mauritian Creole. In addition, we discuss the conjoint/disjoint system of the Bantu languages from zone S, which we claim have a system more similar to Mauritian Creole than those languages from zone P. However, there is no socio-historic and demographic evidence that links up Mauritius with populations from Bantu zone S. Section 4 first introduces Becker & Veenstra's (2003) analysis of the emergence of the alternation in Mauritian Creole, and presents two possible scenarios for substrate influence from Bantu languages on the grammar of Mauritian Creole. Section 5 concludes this paper and summarizes its main results.

2. Historical Background

The group of southern and eastern Bantu languages is very large indeed (Guthrie 1948, Nurse & Philippson 2003), and not every language in this group has been present in the colonial period in Mauritius. In order to find out which of these (groups of) languages are relevant to our present concerns, it is important to have a closer look at the socio-historic and demographic context of the formative period of Mauritian Creole.

Although there were several attempts by the Portuguese (1507) and the Dutch (1638-1710) to establish visiting posts and/or permanent settlements on the island, it was only when the French took over control of Mauritius in the 1710s that it was permanently settled. Therefore, continuous habitation can be said to date from 1721 onwards. Information on the beginning years of the colony between 1735 and 1767 can be found in Baker (1982), although historical overviews like Haudrère (1989) seems to be unaware of this source. Baker (2008) presents the following timeline of (majority) groups of slaves during this early period:

1721 – 1726	Malagasies
1729 – 1733	West Africans (mainly Wolof-speakers)
1733 – 1765	Malagasies
1765 – onwards	Bantu (the main bulk from northern Mozambique)

Although there are opposing views and different theories on the speed of creolization (cf. Arends 2008, Smith 2006, Veenstra 2008, and many others), we assume the period during which MC stabilized to be between 1760 and 1790, basically following the insights of Baker (e.g. 2008 and earlier work). Fifty years after the start of the colonization in 1721, the population had risen to 29.761, of which 85% were slaves.

According to Allen (2008: 47), as many as 388,000 slaves may have been exported in total to Mauritius (and Réunion). As noted above, most of them came from Madagascar, Mozambique, and the Swahili Coast but also from India and Southeast Asia, between 1670 and 1848 (cf. Larson 2007). The major bulk (approximately 85 percent) reached the islands from 1770 to the early 1830s. The following table summarizes the slave trade to the Mascarene Islands for the relevant period:

Table 1: Slaving voyages involving the Mascarenes, 1768–1809

	Period				
Slaving voyages to the Mascarenes from:	1768-79	1780-9	1790-9	1800-9	Total
Madagascar	32	18	32	147	229
Mozambique	37	27	51	81	196
Swahili Coast	11	16	24	33	84
India	11	1	8	1	21
Muscat	2	--	--	--	2
Anjouan	--	1	1	--	2
Multiple	1	3	5	--	9
Not reported	4	1	--	1	6
Total	98	67	121	263	549

(adapted from Allen 2008: 50)

Thus, at the time of emergence (and stabilization) of MC the majority of the slaves imported came from the east coast of East and South Africa, in particular Mozambique. In fact, the initial and major source was northern Mozambique and the slaves were presumably traded on Ilha de Mozambique. As demand increased, the trade slowly spread along the coast (down to southern Mozambique and right up to the southernmost bit of Somalia (where Swahili-related languages are spoken). The following table lists the different ports in Mozambique from which these earlier slave voyages left:

Table 2: Ports in Mozambique

Ports	Geography	Language	Language group(s)
Ilha de Mozambique	North Mozambique	Makhuwa-Enahara	P31
Ibo	islands close to Pemba	Mwani	G40
Inhambane	South Mozambique	Tonga	S62
Querimba	islands close to Pemba	Mwani	G40
Quelimane	Mid Mozambique	Chuwabu/Lomwe	P32/34

Later slave voyages left from the following ports on Swahili Coast: Côte d'Afrique, Kilwa, Lindi, Mafia, Mombasa, Mongale, Mouttage, and Zanzibar. These are not central to our present concerns, however. The table further provides information on the main languages that were spoken in the areas around the ports, as well as to which groups of Bantu languages they geographically belong (using the notation based on Guthrie's (1948) classification). This suggests that the relevant

languages for comparison with Mauritian Creole are those from the Bantu P group, of which we take Makhuwa to be the most prominent one.[3]

This conclusion is further corroborated by the list of "tribes" whose presence in Mauritius is mentioned in the local literature from the 18th Century (partially based on Allen 2008, Baker p.c.):

Table 3: Tribes present in Mauritius

Tribal Name	Modern equivalent	Bantu Classification
Macouas	Makhuwa	P31
Moudjavoas	the Makhuwa name for the Yao (including the class prefix)	P21
Sénas and Moursénas	Sena	N44
Yambanes		S60
Mouquindos	perhaps Ngindo (in Tanzania)	P14
Mavairs	Mwera?, just possibly Mabiha	P22 (Mwera) P25 (Mabiha)
Macondés	Makonde	P23
Niamoésés	Nyamwezi	F22

Converging evidence for the claim that the speakers of Bantu P languages in general, and Makhuwa in particular, were the clear majority in the slave population, and, as a consequence, played a decisive role in the linguistic shaping of the new emerging contact variety on the Mascarene islands comes from Alpers (1975). Alpers (1975:151) notes that contemporary slave traders concluded that slaves from Mozambique were preferred and sold for a higher price in Ile de France (as Mauritius was called at the time) despite the lower costs of slaves at other ports, such as Kilwa (situated in present-day Tanzania), and that the Makhuwa slaves were the most esteemed of all the Mozambique people. At Ibo, the second most important slave port after Ilha de Mozambique, the great majority of slaves exported were Makhuwa, the remainder being Makonde. For Ilha de Mozambique it is more difficult to find out about the ethnic origin of those shipped to the Mascarene Islands, because there the slave traders drew on resources of the entire colony. Despite this cautionary remark, also here we can safely assume that most enslaved person were presumably speakers of Bantu P languages. Alpers (1975:151) further quotes one contemporary authority, saying "of every 1,000 slaves exported from Mozambique by the French, 150 came from Yao and 370 from Makua, with the remainder coming from Sofala (80), Inhambane (150), and Sena (250)."

The upshot of the discussion in this section is that if we want to establish a link between Mauritian Creole and Bantu languages, we have to compare it with Bantu P languages, because speakers of this group of languages were present at the relevant period of time in the colonial context of the emergence of

[3] It should be borne in mind that "Bantu P" in the sense of Guthrie is essentially a geographical definition; Tore Janson (p.c.) points out that zone P is internally heterogeneous. See also note 4. Another point to bear in mind is that slaves were gathered from further inland to these ports, so there is no one-to-one connection between ports and linguistic background. The linguistic background is established in Table 3, though.

Mauritian Creole. It is most likely that the Makhuwa were most influential in this respect for the following reasons: (i) the Makhuwa were numerically in the majority; (ii) the Makhuwa were the most esteemed in the colony. We thus concentrate on a comparison between Mauritian Creole and a set of Bantu P languages with the most detailed data coming from Makhuwa.[4] In the next section we will compare the different systems of verb form alternations in these languages.

3. Synchronic comparison of Mauritian Creole and (Mozambican) Bantu languages

The second question addressed in this paper is what the precise influence was of the Bantu languages on Mauritian Creole, that is, what knowledge of the substrate was transferred to Mauritian Creole. In order to find an answer, we need to compare the synchonic properties of Mauritian Creole with those of Bantu languages in northern Mozambique. In this section we discuss the formal, structural and interpretational properties.

3.1 Form

In all languages under consideration the alternation is distinguished by segmental morphology on the verb.[5] In Mauritian Creole the long form differs from the short form in the presence of a final vowel, as illustrated in (6). Baker (1972) observed that 70% of the verbal lexicon is subject to this alternation and that those verbs are all vowel final, ending in *e* or *i.* Almost all verbs that undergo the alternation are *e*-final. Henri (2010) notes that only four *i*-final verbs in the lexicon display the alternation and other vowels do not participate in the alternation (see Henri 2010 for a detailed description). The alternating vowel is not connected to tense-aspect morphology and is constant across conjugations. We come back to the morphological origin of the alternation in MC in section 4.1.

Mauritian Creole

(6) a. LF *Sunil pu manze.*
Sunil M eat
'Sunil will eat.'

b. SF *Sunil pu manz min*.
Sunil M eat Chinese.noodles
'Sunil will eat Chinese noodles.'

Although the conjoint and disjoint verb form in Bantu languages also differ morphologically, the situation is slightly more complex. As a generalization we can state that the disjoint form usually has more pre-stem morphological material than the conjoint form, but the precise form of the prefixes and suffixes varies per conjugation. This is illustrated in (7) for Makonde and (8) for Makhuwa.

[4] We do not consider Yao (P22), as it seems to be quite different from the other P languages and does not have the verbal alternation.

[5] In every conjoint-disjoint language at least one tense is marked morphologically, although in some languages not all tenses that display the alternation mark it by segmental morphology; see also the point about phonological phrases.

Makonde (P22, Kraal 2005: 235,265)

(7) a. DJ *Va-na-yangaáta*.
2SM-PRES.DJ-help
'They are helping.'

b. CJ *Va-yangata váyééni*.
2SM-help guests
'They help guests.'

Makhuwa (P31)

(8)	CJ		DJ		
		ki-n-lépá epapheló		ki-náá-lépa	'I write (a letter)'
		ki-lep-alé epapheló		k-oo-lépa	'I have written (a letter)'
		k-aa-lépá epapheló		k-aánáa-lépa	'I wrote (a letter)'
		k-aa-lep-álé epapheló		k-aahí-lépa	'I had written (a letter)'

The morphological marking in the alternation in Bantu languages differs from that in Mauritian Creole in two other respects: first, the morphological differences between the conjoint and the disjoint verb form are linked to the tense-aspect morphology, and second, the alternation is restricted to the 'basic' tenses, excluding for example the relative tenses, and often also subjunctive and negative forms.

Prosodic marking is also present in the languages under discussion and it has a function in the alternation. It remains to be seen, however, how big a role it plays and whether it is a determining factor in the alternation in Mauritian Creole and/or the Bantu languages.

For Mauritian Creole, Corne (1982) argues that syntactic-semantic constraints on the alternation are conditioned by five simultaneously applicable phonological rules, which apply to a subclass of Mauritian verbs subject to the alternation. Henri (2010), however, shows that there are (at least) two counterarguments to this phonological analysis: (i) the proposed rules do not predict which verbs do not alternate; (ii) some of the rules do not predict the correct short form. Although stress is obviously influenced by the form of the verb, we agree with Henri and find the analysis not convincing. A first argument against the prosodic account is in the use of unstressed pronouns. If the appearance of the long form would be triggered by receiving stress, as Corne (1982) argues, we would expect the verb to take a long form when the only element following it is an unstressed pronoun, as well. This is not the case, as illustrated in (9): the verb still takes a short form when followed by an unstressed pronoun.

Mauritian Creole

(9) *Sunil inn konn li.*
Sunil A know 3SG
'Sunil has known it.'

A second argument against a prosodic analysis is the fact that it cannot account for the use of different verb forms and different phrasing of sentential complements, which clearly relates to their syntactic status of CP or IP, as

discussed in the next subsection. Furthermore, there are neither enough data on the prosody of Mauritian Creole (a mere total of three pages in Baker (1972), see Henri (2010) for some additional information), nor a proper analysis of its stress and phrasing, which makes us reluctant to build an analysis on the basis of prosody. We leave a detailed description and account of MC prosody for further research.

For the Bantu languages, a prosodic analysis for focus has been proposed by Costa and Kula (2008). The CJ/DJ distinction has been related to focus in the Immediate After the Verb position (IAV; Buell 2007, cf. Watters 1979). This focus reading, Costa and Kula (2008) argue, can be accounted for by reference to phonological phrasing, which makes that there is no need for a designated syntactic focus position. The focus interpretation of the element in IAV position is in turn directly related to the choice of verb form as CJ or DJ (Van der Wal 2011). This poses the question whether prosody/phonological phrasing can also account for the choice of a CJ or DJ verb form. If that is the case, there should be a linking algorithm between prosody, discourse and syntax, or, as Costa and Kula say, the phonological component "read[s] the syntactic information and map[s] it onto phonological categories". This entails that there is some marking in syntax. Furthermore, if prosody would be the main or only factor, it would be difficult (if not impossible) to account for the segmental marking of the verb forms in the TAM affixes.

From this we conclude that prosody (phonological phrasing and stress) may indeed be a factor in the alternation in the languages under discussion, but that it can certainly not be the only one. Although we do not want to exclude the influence of prosody on the development process of the alternation, a purely prosodic account is not the most interesting hypothesis for the synchronic situation. Therefore, this paper focuses on the distributional and syntactic properties.

3.2 Structure

With respect to the structure, the only common property is the sentence-final restrictions: a conjoint or short form must be followed by some overt element, as illustrated in (10) and (11).

Mauritian Creole

(10) a. LF *Pyer pu manz**e.***
Peter M eat
'Peter will eat.'

b. SF *Pyer pu manz min.*
Peter M eat Chinese.noodles
'Peter will eat Chinese noodles.'

c. SF **Pyer pu manz.*
Peter M eat
int. 'Peter will eat.'

Makonde (P22, Kraal 2005: 235,265, adapted)

(11) a. DJ *Va-**na**-yangaáta.*
2SM-PRES.DJ-help
'They are helping.'

b. CJ *Va-yangata váyééni.*
2SM-help guests
'They help guests.'
c. CJ **Va-yangaata.*
2SM-help
int 'They are helping.'

Two other structural factors are dissimilar for Mauritian Creole and Bantu. First, the use of the short or long form in Mauritian Creole is sensitive to the argument-adjunct distinction (Baker 1972; Zribi-Hertz & Li Pook Tan 1987; Seuren 1990, 1995; Syea 1992; Veenstra 2009; Henri 2010). The short form is used before an argument (12a), while the long form is used before an adjunct, like the locative in (12b). Schematically, the distribution is as in (13). However, see section 3.3 for effects on the interpretation.

Mauritian Creole

(12) a. SF *Pyer ti manz/#manze min.* [Theme]
Peter T eat Chinese.noodles
'Peter ate Chinese noodles.'
b. LF *Pyer ti manze/#manz Rozil.* [Locative]
Peter T eat Rose-Hill
'Peter ate in Rose-Hill.'

(13) a. SF $[_{IP}$ DP $[_{VP}$ V XP_{ARG}]]
b. LF $[_{IP}$ DP $[_{VP}$ V-e (XP_{ADJ})]]

Contrastively, in the Bantu languages both verb forms can be followed by arguments, as in (14), and adjuncts, as shown in (15).[6]

Makhuwa (P31)

(14) a. CJ *O-n-rúw' eshimá.*
1SM-PRES.CJ-stir 9.shima
'She is preparing shima.'
b. DJ *O-náá-rúwá eshíma.*
1SM-PRES.DJ-stir 9.shima
'She is preparing shima.'

(15) a. CJ *Eshímá e-ruw-iy-é tsiítsáale / nańnáanová.*
9.shima 9SM-stir-PASS-PERF.CJ like.that / right.now
b. DJ *Eshímá yoo-rúw-íya tsiítsáale / nańnáanová.*
9.shima 9SM.PERF.DJ-stir-PASS like.that / right.now
'(The) shima was cooked like that/right now.'

Second, Mauritian Creole and Bantu differ with respect to the choice of verb form before an embedded CP or IP sentence. Mauritian Creole employs the short form

[6] The illustrative data are from Makhuwa, because we can display the full variation, but from the data available a similar picture arises for Makonde and Makwe.

before an IP complement (16a), but the long form preceding a CP complement (16b).

Mauritian Creole

(16) a. direct perception

SF *Li inn truv [$_{IP}$ mwa pe kit kot mwa.]*
3SG A see 1SG A leave LOC 1SG
'He saw me leaving my place.'

b. indirect perception

LF *Mo inn truve [$_{CP}$ ki li inn kit so lakaz.]*
1SG A see that 3SG A leave 3SG house
'I saw that he had left his house.'

We also find a sensitivity to extraction. If the construction as in (16a) would have been a kind of subject-to-object raising construction, we would expect it to behave like object extraction as in (17a) and take a long form. The short form in the subject extraction construction in (17b) shows that the (complete) embedded clause is the trigger for the alternation.

Mauritian Creole

(17) a. extraction of object

LF *Ki$_i$ li inn truve* t$_i$*?*
what 3SG A see
'What did he see?'

b. extraction of embedded subject

SF *Kisanla$_i$ li inn truv [$_{IP}$* t$_i$ *pe kit kot mwa.]*
who 3SG A see A leave LOC 1SG
'Who did he see leaving my place?'

For the Bantu languages, sufficient data are lacking with respect to the behaviour of the conjoint-disjoint alternation before sentential complements (cf. Van der Wal 2014, Halpert 20). In preliminary data we found that both verb forms can be used before IP and CP complements, as illustrated in (18) and (19).[6]

Makhuwa (P31)

(18) a. CJ *N-himy-alé [$_{CP}$ wiírá Zainábú o-n-thotonl-é pani?]*
2PL.SM-tell-PERF.CJ COMP Zainab 1SM-1OM-visit-PERF.CJ 1.who
'who did you say that Zainab visited?'

b. DJ *Moo-hímyá [$_{CP}$ wiírá Zainábú o-n-thotonl-é pani?]*
2PL.SM.PERF.DJ-tell COMP Zainab 1SM-1OM-visit-PERF.CJ 1.who
-idem-

(19) a. CJ *Othíló o-ni-phwany-alé [$_{IP}$ ni-ca-áka ohíyu.]*
1.Thilo 1SM-1PL.OM-meet-PERF.CJ 1PL.SM-eat-DUR 14.evening
'Thilo found us (while we were) eating in the evening.'

b. DJ *koh-aá-wéhá [$_{IP}$ (ápíípí) a-katth-áka.]*
1SG.SM.PERF.DJ-2OM-watch 2.grandma 2SM-wash-DUR
'I saw her (the old woman) washing.'

The distributional facts show that structural factors are more determining for the verbal alternation in Mauritian Creole than in the Bantu languages of northern Mozambique.

3.3 Meaning

Regarding the interpretational effects of the verb forms, there is a relation with focus, as mentioned before. The interpretation of the element immediately following the verb is dependent on the form of the verb. We discuss the four possible combinations of verb form and following element (short/conjoint or long/disjoint combined with argument or adjunct).

In Mauritian Creole, the canonical form and interpretation are obtained if the short form combines with an argument and the long form with an adjunct. In the two other combinations, focus effects arise. If the long form is followed by an argument, as in (20), the truth of the proposition is focused. Henri & Abeillé (2008) described this interpretational effect in terms of Verum Focus, defined as "Polarity Kontrast" in the sense of Vallduvi & Vilkuna (1998).

Mauritian Creole (Henri & Abeillé 2008)

(20) LF [$_{IP}$ DP [$_{VP}$ V-e XP_{ARG}]]

Speaker A: *Mo pe al kwi kari poul parski Zan kontan manz kari poul*.
(I'm going to cook chicken curry because John likes to eat chicken curry.)
Speaker B: *Be non. Zan pa manze kari poul.*
but no. John NEG eat curry chicken.
'No, John doesn't EAT chicken curry.'

If the short form is followed by an adjunct instead of an argument, it is the adjunct that receives the focus interpretation. In (21) the focus is on *dan stad* 'in the stadium', as it is a natural answer to a question like 'where did you run?'. We have the impression that an adjunct becomes more object-like when preceded by a short verb form, thus giving rise to an incorporation-like interpretation of the adjunct, as for example in (22).

(21) [$_{IP}$ DP [$_{VP}$ V XP_{ADJ}]]

SF *Mo ti pe <u>galup</u> dan stad.*
1SG T A run LOC stadium
'I was running in the stadium.'

(22) SF *Mo inn <u>manz</u> dan restoran.*
1SG A eat LOC restaurant
'I've been eating in restaurants.'

In summary, the short form in MC is typically used preceding arguments and IPs and marks term focus with used with adjuncts, whereas the long form is typically used phrase-finally, preceding adjuncts and CPs, and induces truth or verb focus when preceding an argument.

In the Bantu languages in northern Mozambique, focus plays a larger role in determining the form of the verb, or vice versa: the form of the verb determines the position of focus and the interpretation of the sentence. That is, what immediately follows a conjoint verb form is interpreted as the focus of the sentence. Hence, the conjoint form must be used in *wh*-questions, as the postverbal *wh*-word is inherently focused (23). For Makhuwa, focus can be defined as exclusive: the predicate of the sentence holds exclusively for the referent of the focused element and not for possible alternatives (Van der Wal 2011). The element following the CJ verb form, whether argument or adjunct, is implicitly or explicitly contrasted with alternatives, as in (24) and (25).

Makwe (P20, Devos 2008:387)

(23) a. CJ *Uyumité* *cáani*
2SG.SM.buy.PERF 7.what
'What did you buy?'

b. DJ * *Uníyúuma* *cáani*
int: 'what did you buy?'

Matuumbi (P13, Odden 1996:60)

(24) CJ *Ni-kata* *kaámba*.
1SG.SM-cut rope
'I am cutting *rope* (not something else).'

Makhuwa (P31)

(25) CJ *Nki-c-aálé* *ni* *kuyérí,* *ki-c-aalé* *ni*
NEG.1SG.SM-eat-PERF with 1.spoon 1SG.SM-eat-PERF.CJ with
matáta.
6.hands
'I didn't eat with a spoon, I ate with my hands.'

For Matuumbi, Odden suggests that the disjoint verb form induces a contrastive focus reading on the verb, as in (26). In Makonde (Kraal 2005:235), Makhuwa (Van der Wal 2009) and Makwe (Devos 2008) the interpretation of the disjoint form is generally unmarked, although when the verb is focused, the disjoint form must be used. As mentioned, the argument-adjunct distinction has no influence on the use of the verb form and/or the interpretation of the following element.

Matuumbi (P13, Odden 1996:61)

(26) a. DJ *eendá-kaatá*
1SG.SM.prog.DJ-cut
'he is cutting'

b. DJ *eendá-kaatá* *kaámba*
1SG.SM.prog.DJ-cut rope
'he is *cutting* rope (not doing something else to it)'

The exclusive interpretation of the element following a conjoint verb form in Makhuwa also seems to apply to adverbial clauses, as indicated in the translations and comments of (27)-(29). The adverbial subordinate clause following the main clause verb contains a verb in the present or perfective

situative tense. When the main clause verb takes a conjoint form, the situation in the adverbial clause is a precondition for the predicate in the main clause to be true (Van der Wal 2014).

Makhuwa (P31)

(27) CJ *ákwáatú a-n-réerá ya-khal' oóríipa*
2.cats 2SM-PRES.CJ-be.good 2SM.sit-stay 2.black
'cats are beautiful (only) if they're black' (other cats are not pretty)

(28) CJ *ehópá tsi-n-khwá ya-rup' epúla*
10.fish 10SM-PRES.CJ-die 9 SM.SIT-fall 9.rain
'a lot of fish is caught *when it rains*', lit. 'many fish die when it rains'
"Only in the rainy season much fish is caught; if it doesn't rain, no fish is caught."

(29) a. DJ *ki-náá-cá wé o-c-áale*
1SG.SM-PRES.DJ-eat 2SG. PRO 2SG.SM-eat-PERF.SIT
'I'll eat when you've eaten'
situation: host says "Serve yourself, dig in!", but out of respect you let him eat first

b. CJ *ki-n-cá wé o-c-áale*
2SG.SM-PRES.CJ-eat 2SG.PRO 2SG.SM-eat-PERF.SIT
'I (will) eat (only) when you've eaten / after you've eaten'
situation: you distrust the food; maffia situation where the plates may have been switched or the food may be poisoned.

The interpretational facts tell us that focus is a much more influential factor in the alternation in the Bantu languages studied than it is in Mauritian Creole.

In conclusion, the synchronic properties of the verbal alternation are quite different for Mauritian Creole and the Bantu languages. Whereas the alternation is primarily determined by structural restrictions in Mauritian Creole, with interpretational effects in the non-canonical cases, the alternation is more dependent on the resulting (focus) interpretation in Bantu languages like Makhuwa. The current systems of verbal alternation of short and long in Mauritian Creole and of conjoint and disjoint in northern Mozambican Bantu languages are obviously related and at the same time they are obviously fundamentally distinct as well.

Interestingly, the alternation as in Mauritian Creole shows points of similarity with the alternation as described for some Bantu languages spoken in South-Africa. The conjoint-disjoint alternation is analysed as 'focus-based' for Makhuwa, but as 'constituency-based' in Zulu (see references below) and Sotho (Zerbian 2006), spoken in South-Africa.[7] As Buell (2006) shows, the conjoint-disjoint alternation in Zulu can more insightfully be analysed by reference to the constituency than by focus. Although focus does play a role, it seems to be related only indirectly to the alternation (Buell 2007, Cheng and Downing 2011). Instead, the form of the verb is determined by the position of the verb in the (IP

[7] This observation could probably be generalized to hold for all the conjoint-disjoint languages in zone P (focus-based) and zone S (constituency-based), but more research is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

or vP) constituent: if the verb occurs constituent-final it takes a disjoint verb form, if the verb is not final in its constituent, it is in a conjoint form (Van der Spuy 1993, Buell 2006).

The constituency analysis is informed by a number of arguments, the clearest of which are illustrated in (30): object marking and phonological phrasing. The disjoint verb form is constituency-final when in sentence-final position, of course, but also when a following object is in a dislocated position, as in (30a). The object *isalukazi* 'old woman' is in a dislocated position, i.e. outside of the vP, which is evident in the obligatory presence of an object marker (incorporated pronoun) *-si-* on the verb, and in the separate phonological phrasing of verb and object. The right boundary of a phonological phrase in Zulu is marked by lengthening of the penultimate syllable, and these right boundaries were shown to be aligned with the right boundary of a syntactic phrase by Cheng and Downing (2009). The disjoint verb form in (30a) is final in its phonological – and hence syntactic– phrase (*-hlu:pha*), whereas the conjoint verb form is phrased together with the object (*-hlupha*). This constituency-based alternation is schematically represented in (31).

Zulu (Buell 2005: 64, 66)

(30) a. DJ Abafana [ba-ya-si-hlu:pha] isaluka:zi.
2.boys 2SM-PRES.DJ-7OM-annoy 7.old.woman

b. CJ Abafana [ba-hlupha isaluka:zi.]
2.boys 2SM-annoy 7.old.woman
'The boys are annoying the old woman.'

(31) a. $[V_{CONJOINT}\ X\ ]_{IP}$ (Y)

b. $[V_{DISJOINT}]_{IP}$ (X) (Y)

The relation with focus is proposed to be indirect: whatever is inside the constituent at the end of the derivation receives a focus interpretation, be that an argument or adjunct, the subject or an object. Focus on the verb or the truth-value is always expressed by a (constituent-final) disjoint verb form.

Thus, in Zulu, there is an adjacency requirement between the verb and an object in a certain domain, which is reminiscent of the pattern in Mauritian Creole. This similarity to the Mauritian Creole alternation begs the question of whether there is a link between Mauritian Creole and the Bantu languages of zone S. However, these languages are an improbable substrate of Mauritian Creole, as there is no socio-historical evidence that links up Mauritius with populations from Bantu zone S. The next section discusses the link between the Bantu languages of zone P, while also addressing the parallels with the alternation as currently found in Bantu zone S.

4. Diachronic link between Mauritian Creole and Bantu

Before presenting two possible scenarios for the influence of the Bantu substrate on the grammar of Mauritian Creole, we first introduce Becker and Veenstra's (2003) analysis of the emergence of the verbal alternation in MC.

4.1 Reinterpreting verb forms in a Basic Variety

The vowel involved in the alternating verb forms in MC is best analyzed as the reflex of French inflectional morphology that survived the creolization process. Becker and Veenstra (2003) show the development and survival of the morphology by analyzing processes of incipient second language acquisition and showing how they can shed a light on creolization. Their point of departure is the untutored language learner, and the input he gets. In the case of the slaves arriving in the French colony on Mauritius, the input was the different regional and social varieties of French spoken by the colonists. Importantly, these learners only had access to the spoken language, which makes a big difference when it comes to verb inflection. The oral input is quite reduced in its distinctive inflectional forms with respect to the written forms (Harris 1989). If one takes into account that the 1PL form is rarely used in casual speech, being replaced by the impersonal form *on*, the paradigm in (32) basically coming down to two forms: [*parl*] and [*parle*],

(32)	1SG	*je parle*	/parl/
	2SG	*tu parles*	/parl/
	3SG	*il/elle parle*	/parl/
	1PL	*on parle*	/parl/
		(*nous parlons*	/parlõ/)
	2PL	*vous parlez*	/parle/
	3PL	*ils/elles parlent*	/parl/

The picture is blurred by the fact that the form [*parle*] is not just used to indicate person (1/3 vs. 2PL), but also figures as the past participle and infinitive (33). Furthermore, this form is also used in much of the imparfait (34), where the opposition /-*e*/ versus /-*ɛ*/ is neutralized in many (regional) varieties of French.

(33)	/parle/	*vous parlez*	2PL present indicative
	/parle/	*parlé*	past participle
	/parle/	*parler*	infinitive

(34)	1SG	*je parlais*	/parlɛ/
	2SG	*tu parlais*	/parlɛ/
	3SG	*il/elle parlait*	/parlɛ/
	1PL	*on parlait*	/parlɛ/
		(*nous parlions*	/parljõ/)
	2PL	*vous parliez*	/parlje/
	3 PL	*ils/elles parlaient*	/parlɛ/

This situation, Becker and Veenstra (2003) sketch, makes the learner realize that there is a short form [*parl*] and a long one [*parle*], but "as both forms carry different values, they might find the form–function assignment problematic" (Becker & Veenstra 2003: 287). This results in a relatively arbitrary use of both forms, being in free variation (without any restriction such as the long/short finality restriction, as found in Mauritian Creole and (some) Bantu languages). In data from second language acquisition of French, it was observed that learners who speak a Basic Variety (Klein and Perdue 1997) indeed use both the long and

the short form, but without a functional value. The idea is then that the slaves on Mauritius that were learning French, reached a similar situation as the level of a Basic Variety of French with two verb forms in free variation and continued creolization from there. In such a situation of functionless morphology, the morphology either gets lost (as happened in many French-based creoles), or is refunctionalized. For which function the morphological alternation is used, depends on a number of factors, of which an important one is the substrate languages. In Mauritian Creole, the distinction of the two forms in French was reanalysed as a syntactic constraint with pragmatic implications.

At this point it may be relevant to discuss Trudgill's (2011) hypothesis that complexification in language contact is only possible in long-term stable bilingual situations, whereas superficial contact with L2 speakers results in simplification. Hence, there is no complexification in creole formation, which is the ultimate L2 contact situation. Nevertheless, the rise of the short/long alternation is surely more complicated compared to French. However, Trudgill argues that "being complex" can only be assessed relative to the L2 learners and their respective L1. Continuing this logic, for L2 speakers of French with a Bantu language as their L1, the long/short finality restriction would already be familiar and therefore not complex to learn. If Trudgill is right and L2 learners do not complexify their language, the only way to explain the apparent 'complexification' in the reanalysis of the French endings as a short/long finality restriction is to assume that this is a Bantu feature that the L2 speakers already knew.

We now consider the role of the Bantu substrate(s) in this reanalysis.

4.2 Scenario 1: substrate was less focus-based

The Bantu substrate of Mauritian Creole had its influence on the newly emerging language roughly between 1760 and 1790. Considering this time-depth, one possibility to account for the differences between the conditions on the verb forms in present-day Bantu and MC is that the predecessor of Makhuwa and other languages of zone P was syntactically more like Zulu (zone S), where the alternation is constituency-based. In other words, the slaves who were taken to Mauritius in the 18th century spoke one or more Bantu languages in which the verbal alternation was more determined by the syntactic restrictions (like current-day Zulu) than by focus considerations (like current-day Makhuwa). Theoretically, there are three highly improbable or downright impossible options to account for the hypothetical "S-like" status of the Bantu substrate in the 18th century. First, a direct influence of the languages of zone S is unlikely, because there is no evidence that "zone-S speakers" were ever in direct contact with Mauritius for a sufficiently long period or with a numerically relevant impact (cf. Veenstra 2009). Second, this substrate language could not have been a predecessor of the languages that are now in both zone P and S, because by the relevant time, these were different languages in different geographical areas (Janson 1991/92). This is also why the third possibility is unlikely, which is that zone S has influenced zone P when the two were separate zones and languages. If zone S were to have had an influence on the languages of zone P, some contact should have existed between the languages of the two zones. However, Janson (1991/92) and Batibo et al. (1997) argue that Makhuwa (in the south of zone P)

and Sotho (in the north of zone S) were separated around 1100 AD by other peoples coming from the north or north-west.

A remaining option is that the languages of zone P had simply not yet developed the strong pragmatically restricted alternation we find nowadays. This option demands some more thought. It presupposes that in the Bantu languages, the conjoint-disjoint alternation came into being as a distinction based on constituency or phrase-finality, which only later developed its semantico-pragmatic interpretation. In this hypothetical scenario, some ancestor of the Eastern Bantu languages would thus have had two verb forms that were reanalysed as an opposition between non-final and final.[8] Of course there must have been pragmatic implications of these forms, simply because the focus cannot be on a postverbal element if the verb is sentence-final, that is, if there is no element to follow the verb. This alternation based on finality developed to become determined by constituency once the 'final' form was used in non-final position as well. The pragmatic implications were presumably still present, but they were not an inherent part of the distinction between the two verb forms, whose use was determined by the syntax.

At that stage, a split would have occurred:[9] the Bantu languages of zone S retained the constituency-based system, whereas the languages of zone P started pragmatic strengthening. Pragmatic strengthening is a process by which pragmatic inferences are strengthened to eventually become conventionalized as (part of) the meaning. In our case, the inferences were that the element following the conjoint/non-final form is more salient than the verb, and that the verb itself is the most salient when the disjoint/final verb is used. When these interpretations are strengthened, the salience of the element following the conjoint/non-final form is semanticized to become an inherent part of the meaning. The focus on the element after the conjoint/non-final form became standard with the use of this verb form. This meant that the form of the verb came to be directly connected to the position of the focus in a sentence, a change that can be seen as a functional reanalysis (cf. Brinton and Stein 1995 on functional renewal): at first, the linguistic form -the verbal alternation- indicated finality, but it was reanalysed as expressing a difference in focus.

This scenario is visualized in Figure 1, where underlining indicates (pragmatic) saliency and boldface indicates (semanticized) focus.

Figure 1

finality		constituency			current alternations	
				'zone P' &	(focus strengthened) V **X**]	conjoint
[V X]	→	[V <u>X</u>]	↗		V (X)	disjoint
V #		<u>V</u>] (X)]	↘		(constituency)	

[8] Güldemann (2003) and Nurse (2008) state that the conjoint-disjoint alternation must have been a trait of an earlier stage of Bantu languages, because it is very unlikely that so many and so widespread languages developed such a similar system independently. The restriction of the conjoint-disjoint alternation to Eastern Bantu may indicate a development after the first spread of Bantu from Cameroon to the east.

[9] This separate development of zones S and P may or may not coincide with the actual geographical split mentioned in the previous paragraph.

'zone S'	[V X]	conjoint
	V] (X)]	disjoint

There are many debatable aspects of the proposed scenario, and no fewer questions that can be posed. One of these is why functional reanalysis would have taken place in the languages of zone P. Although we will never find the full motivation for such a change, one of the facilitating factors may have been the difference in the system of object marking. Synchronic data from zone S (Venda, Sotho-Tswana, Nguni languages) show that the object marker (OM) functions as an incorporated pronoun in these languages (see, among others, Demuth and Johnson 1989, Van der Spuy 1993).[10] It takes up an argument role of the verb, as demonstrated in (35), and a coreferent noun phrase following the verb is in a dislocated position and interpreted as an afterthought.

Setawana (S31, Demuth and Johnson 1989:25, glosses adapted)

(35) a. CJ *Thabo ó-bidítsé ntsá.*
Thabo 1SM-lashed 9.dog
'Thabo lashed the dog.'

b. DJ *Thabo ó-e-bídítse ntsá.*
Thabo 1SM-9om-lashed 9.dog
'Thabo lashed it, the dog.'

As such, the syntactic status of the element following the verb is always clear: if the verb does not have an OM, the following DP is the syntactic object of the verb. But if a coreferent OM is present, the following DP can only be a dislocated phrase (following binding condition C). The status of the postverbal DP, based on the presence or absence of the OM, hence also indicates the position of the verb within its constituent: if an OM is present, the verb is final in its constituent. Logically, only the disjoint form can contain an OM, not the conjoint, as shown in (36) and (37). As a consequence, the constituency is quite easy to notice in these languages, which may be a factor in the persistence of the constituency-based alternation.

Zulu (Buell 2005: 64,66, 2006, adapted)

(36) a. CJ *Abafana [ba-hlupha isaluka:zi.]*
2.boys 2SM-annoy 7.old.woman
'The boys are annoying the old woman.'

b. CJ * *Abafana [ba-si-hlupha isaluka:zi.]*
2.boys 2SM-7OM-annoy 7.old.woman

c. DJ *Abafana [ba-ya-yi-cu:la] ingo:ma.*
2.boys 2SM-PRES.DJ-9OM-sing 9.song
'The boys are singing a song.'

d. DJ * *Abafana [ba-ya-cu:la] ingo:ma*.
2.boys 2SM-PRES.DJ-sing 9.song

Tswana (S31, Creissels 1996: 112,113)

[10] The situation in Changana/Tsonga is not clear, though (see Zerbian 2007:66,67).

(37) a. CJ *Re-thusa Kitso*.
1PL.SM-help Kitso
'We help Kitso.'
b. CJ * *Re-mo-thusa Kitso*
c. DJ *Re-a-mo-thusa Kitso*.
1PL.SM-PRES.DJ-1OM-help Kitso
'We help him, Kitso.'
d. DJ * *Re-a-thusa Kitso*

Contrary to this system of object marking as incorporated pronouns, object prefixes in the languages of zone P (Matuumbi, Makwe, Makonde, Makhuwa) cannot be analysed as pronominal. Instead, they are agreement markers, which in some languages have definiteness effects. In Matuumbi, the presence of an object marker indicates the definiteness of the object, as in (38). Here, OMs are agreement markers, which thus appear on conjoint as well as disjoint verb forms.

Matuumbi (P13, Odden 2003: 544, glosses added)
(38) a. CJ *Ni-nolya baandu yiímbe.*
1SG.SM-sharpen 2.people knives
'I'm sharpening knives for people.'
b. CJ *Ni-ba-nólya baandu yiímbe.*
1SG.SM-2om-sharpen 2.people knives
'I'm sharpening knives for the people.'

In Makhuwa, only objects of noun class 1 and 2 can be object-marked on the verb, and they are obligatorily object-marked when present. Because the OMs are agreement markers, the syntactic status of the object is of no importance, and hence object markers can appear on both conjoint and disjoint verb forms, as in (39). Without the OM's unambiguous marking of the relation between verb and object (as in zone S), the distribution of the verb forms in terms of constituency is less clear. This could be a facilitating factor for the functional reanalysis of the conjoint and disjoint verb forms as indicators of focus.

Makhuwa (P31)
(39) a. CJ *Ki-ni-m-wéha Hamísi / nancoólo.*
1SG.SM-PRES.CJ-1OM-look 1.Hamisi / 1.fish.hook
'I see Hamisi / a/the fish hook.'
b. DJ *Ki-ná-m-wéha Hamísi / nańcóólo.*
1SG.SM-PRES.DJ-1OM-look 1.Hamisi / 1.fish.hook
'I see Hamisi / a/the fish hook.'

The scenario sketched here has an evident historical implication. If the substrate languages from zone P used to have a more constituency-based system, and if this is the system that is supposed to have had an influence on Mauritian Creole, this implies that a language like Makhuwa must have developed the 'focus-based' alternation over the last 200 years. That is, the language as it was brought to Mauritius had not yet reanalysed the conjoint-disjoint distinction in terms of focusing (which would explain the syntax-based system of current MC) and must

have undergone pragmatic strengthening only afterwards, and only on the African continent (northern Mozambique), not in MC.

As no documentation exists on the languages spoken in northern Mozambique at the time, or at least not on the specifics of the grammatical verbal system, we cannot validate the hypothesis or substantiate the proposals sketched above. Nevertheless, one indication might be found in the Makhuwa as spoken by a small society in Durban, South Africa. The descendents of the slaves who were brought there between 1873 and 1880 still keep the Makhuwa culture and language alive (Seedat 1973, Mesthrie 2006). We may hypothesize that their language was more similar to that of the slaves transported to Mauritius than present-day Makhuwa, and we know that it developed separately from the Makhuwa of northern Mozambique. If the earlier Makhuwa (and other substrate languages) indeed had a conjoint-disjoint alternation with different restrictions than the current language(s), one could imagine that the Makhuwa as spoken in Durban has developed a different alternation than that of northern Mozambique. However, from preliminary data we have the impression that this is not the case: the Makhuwa as spoken in Durban is overall the same as that spoken on the northern Mozambican coast (Sarifa Moola, p.c., Charles Kisseberth, p.c.).

In conclusion, although pragmatic strengthening of the alternation in the languages of zone P (after ±1780) is a possible scenario, it is not the most obvious or probable scenario. A more likely scenario is that the development of a focus-based alternation in Makhuwa started earlier on as a gradual and slow process, possibly from the split between Makhuwa and Sotho in the beginning of the 12th century, as suggested by Janson (1991/92).

4.3 Scenario 2: only the basics survive

The second scenario we propose to account for the role of the Bantu substrate in forming the syntactically based verbal alternation in MC, is that the developing creole only took the very basic system of the conjoint-disjoint alternation in the substrate. That is, the alternation in the substrate languages belonging to Bantu zone P did have a stronger link with focus, but only the sentence-finality was used in establishing the creole language on Mauritius. After all, grammatical structures tend to simplify in creolization processes.

In Becker and Veenstra's (2003) account this would mean that the second language learners were confronted with two forms in French, reanalysed these forms and put them to use shaped by their substrate knowledge, and that the only property of the substrate that was taken as relevant or applicable in this reanalysis was the sentence-finality. The limited influence of the substrate conjoint-disjoint alternation in the reanalysis could be due to the occurrence of the two French forms in contexts that would not allow other generalizations. Then again, this is not to be expected, because the first use is in free variation in Becker and Veenstra's (2003) approach.

A further question we may pose for this scenario is why only finality would 'survive' in the creolization process. There are two main reasons, which also form arguments in favour of the second scenario. The first is that the restriction in sentence-final distribution is the only property present in all the conjoint-disjoint languages, from Kinyarwanda in the north to Xhosa in the south, which can thus be seen as a basic and defining property. The second reason is that the sentence-finality is the clearest restriction on the distribution

of the conjoint and disjoint verb form. This is clearly visible in various descriptive grammars of Bantu languages that have the conjoint-disjoint alternation: if anything is mentioned on the alternation, the first thing is the difference in sentence-final distribution. Furthermore, whatever interpretational properties the alternation may have, the difference in use between the conjoint and the disjoint verb form often comes down to being 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate', whereas the sentence-final restriction is a clearer and stronger case of being grammatical or ungrammatical.[11]

5. Conclusion

The paper started out with noting the similarities between the long-short alternation in verb forms in Mauritian Creole and the conjoint-disjoint alternation in Bantu languages. We then observed that the comparison with other French-based creoles suggests that the Bantu substrate had some influence on the emergence of the verbal alternation in Mauritian Creole in its current form. Although there is socio-historical evidence for the relation between Bantu and Mauritian Creole, upon closer inspection there turn out to be few similarities in synchronic data on verb forms, as shown in section 3 and noted in Veenstra (2009). We sketched two possible scenarios in which Bantu substrate(s) could have had influence on the alternation in Mauritian Creole. The first, which supposes that the substrate had an alternation that was based more on syntax and constituency, like present-day Mauritian Creole, was considered implausible. The second is much more likely, which proposes that only the basics of the conjoint-disjoint alternation were taken up in the formation of Mauritian Creole.

We posed three related research questions at the beginning of this paper: 1) Why was the alternation in the Basic Variety kept in Mauritian Creole? 2) Why did it get this function? 3) Which knowledge of/in the substrate was transferred to the creole? After the careful comparison of Mauritian creole and the substrate Bantu languages, and consideration of the various historical scenarios, we can answer the questions as follows. We believe that the alternation between the short and the long form as present in the Basic Variety was kept in the development of Mauritian Creole because it could be utilized for a function that was present in the substrate languages, which was the conjugational category of conjoint-disjoint. This is why it 'survived' in Mauritian Creole and disappeared in other French Creoles. However, the function was not preserved in its elaborate form as found in the Bantu languages that formed the substrate. It is probable that only the very basics of the substrate system had an influence on the persistence and development of the alternation in Mauritian Creole: only finality became a syntactic condition on the use of the two forms, and the semantic-pragmatic effects of focus are indirectly involved with the alternation, only surfacing in the deviations from the canonical use.

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[11] A reviewer adds that this could find an argument in first language acquisition. How children learn these alternations is a worthwhile path of further research.

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