

# ‘Kekfwa ou pa’n ganny sa, kekfwa mon a eksplik li an Kreol’: The COVID-19 lingo in Seychelles Creole.

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## Introduction

‘Language contact is everywhere: many nations have more than one official language, and quite possibly most people in the world speak two or more languages’ (Thomason, 2001). Seychelles is not an exception. An archipelago of 115 islands and with a population of approximately 98,000 people, Seychelles is officially a trilingual country. Each of the three languages: Creole, English and French are national languages, as stipulated in the country’s Constitution. Hence, due to the presence of the 3 languages on the territory, the Seychellois, natives of the Seychelles and speakers of the 3 languages, are subjected, on a daily basis to the phenomenon of language contact, Creole-English-French, described by Kriegel and Ludwig (2018) as a ‘polycontact situation’ with the domination of Seychelles Creole (SC) and English over French.

Moreover, language contact plays a significant role in the enrichment and linguistic evolution of Creoles such as the SC. Over the years, sociolinguistic studies of the particularities of the Seychelles’ context have shown and put into perspective different language practices of the speakers as a result of language contact. The most evoked practices when referring to the situation of Seychelles have, so far, been code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing (Salabert, 2003; Hoareau, 2010; Vel, 2016; Pejakovic, 2020). However, Kriegel and Ludwig (2018) propose ‘new terminological solutions’ that renounce ‘the binary perspective of code-switching vs code-mixing’. They use the terms code alternation and code-copying (introduced by Johanson, 2002) to replace code-switching and code-mixing respectively.

SC is a French-based Creole. In 1981, it was officially recognized as a language, with a standard orthography and lexicon heavily dominated by French, its lexifier. As it was then a standard and official language, and which had also been introduced in school, the need for a repertoire of vocabulary was substantial for its growth. Being one of the youngest languages in the world, not all concepts or technical and scientific words can be translated to SC. According to SC linguist M.T. Choppy (1984):

*It is true that in some domains we lack terminologies. Hence, we see ourselves in a situation where we have to create new terminologies or borrow (copy) them from another language.*

(Own translation)

Speakers would therefore copy the words from the two other languages. In so doing, new words are adopted as the language’s lexicon continues to augment. However, before any

particular word can be adopted and accepted as SC, several procedures are carried out. This has been observed recently with the COVID-19 lingo. With this in mind, we ask ourselves the following questions. Who decides on what word to adopt and its language of origin? How complex are the procedures for adopting new SC words and what are their implications? What happens when the speakers decide to use words other than the ones adopted officially? In this paper, we will shed some light on the processes leading to adoption of new words in SC and reflect on the role of native speakers in those procedures. In addition, several examples are analysed to give an insight into the language practices of Seychellois when adopting new words in SC.

## 1. Definition of key concepts

To better understand the process of creolization of new words, we need to define and illustrate key concepts, the ‘traditional’ (code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing) and the trendier ‘code alternation’ and ‘code-copying’.

### 1.1 Code-switching vs code alternation

Gumperz defines code-switching as:

*The juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems.*

(Gumperz, 1982)

Whilst to Johanson code alternation means:

*Shifting from one code to another, juxtaposing elements belonging to different systems.*

(Johanson 2002a: cited in Kriegel, Ludwig and Salzmann, 2019, p.286)

In both cases, it is a question of two languages being used in a juxtapositional way. To refer to the case of SC, we will consider the term ‘alternate’ rather than ‘switching’. As a matter of fact, in SC, alternation occurs more often due to contact with English. In many instances, it is spontaneous and can be conscious or unconscious:

- ♦ *As fas as I know, in ganny met devan Lasanble Nasyonal, mon pa konnen si Lasanble in konsider li.*

(Attorney General, Tête-à-Tête, SBC TV programme, 13/04/2020)

The speaker starts his answer in English (‘As far as I know’) then alternates to SC (‘in ganny met devan Lasanble Nasyonal, mon pa konnen si Lasanble in konsider li’ = ‘it has been put before the National Assembly, I am not sure if the Assembly considered it’). This occurs within the same sentence fragment.

- ♦ *Ok, thank you for your question. Wi i annan 1 dimoun ki'n, i annan 2 dimoun ki'n fini byen, 1 in al karantenn Beau Vallon Bay, in prefere reste laba touzour pandan ki son partner i ankor lopital.*

(Public Health Commissioner, Press Conference, 14/04/2020)

Whereas here, the speaker alternates languages between sentences. He starts with a sentence in English ('Ok, thank you for your question.') and the following sentence is in SC ('Wi i annan 1 dimoun ki'n, i annan 2 dimoun ki'n fini byen, 1 in al karantenn Beau Vallon Bay, in prefere reste laba touzour pandan ki son partner i ankor lopital.' = 'Yes, there is 1 person who has, there are two people who have already recovered, 1 has gone to quarantine at Beau Vallon Bay, he preferred to stay there as he waits for his partner, who is still in hospital.').

The examples that have been given are typical examples of what one will call a 'classic code-switching', that can also be referred to as 'code alternation'. This is a result of the speaker being 'proficient enough in the participating languages' for them to be able to produce 'well-formed monolingual utterances in both the 'Matrix Language' (SC) and the abstract morphosyntactic frame (English) (Myers-Scotton, 2002). This often happens at a more personal level and does not require new words used in the alternation to be adopted as they exist already in SC and are manifested here only as a result of the speakers own idiolect.

## 1.2 Code mixing vs code copying

This refers to the:

*...embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes) words (unbound morphemes, phrases and clauses that participants in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand.*

(Bokamba, 1989)

Alternatively, Johanson (2002a) defines code-copying as:

*...the insertion of elements copied from one code within the context of another code, without specifying the degree of acceptability at a given stage of development.*

(Johanson 2002a: cited in Kriegel et al., 2019, p. 288)

Kriegel et al. (2019) specify two types of copying: overt copies, copies that are both phonetic encoding and lexical-semantic and/or structural- grammatical information, and covert copies which contain only lexical-semantic and/or structural-grammatical information from the model.

Examples of overt copies:

- ♦ 'Nou annan en group ners ki'n spesyalize dan ICU, critical care, ki nou'n fini reidantifye zot, konmans deploy zot, retrain zot, tousala i part of nou bann

preparasyon ki nou pe fer.’ (CEO, Health Care Agency, Press Conference, 9/04/2020)

**SC:** ‘Nou annan en group ners ki’n spesyalize dan *Younit Swen Entansif, swen kritik*, ki nou’n fini reidentifye zot, konmans *deplway* zot, *reantrenn* zot, tousala i *form parti* nou bann preparasyon ki nou pe fer.’

**English:** ‘We have a group of nurses specialised in ICU, critical care, that we have already re-identified, have started to deploy them, retrain them, all this is part of (our) preparations that we are doing.’

- ♦ ‘*In fact* tou dimoun ki dan *home quarantine* ozordi zot ariv katorzyenm zour e zot pe ganny teste e demen zot a ganny *discharge* ofisyelman. Prezan nou pe *go backwards*, bann ki ti’n deza dan *home quarantine* avan, nou pou fer sa *rapid test* lo zot pour gete si par kont petet zot ti *asymptomatic, I think* zot ti en kontak e sa *rapid test* i kapab detekte si ou’n deza ganny en *past infection*.’ (Public Health Commissioner, Press Conference, 9/04/2020)

**SC:** ‘*Annefe* tou dimoun ki dan *karantenn kot lakour* ozordi zot ariv katorzyenm zour e zot pe ganny teste e demen zot a ganny *desarze/large* ofisyelman. Prezan nou pe *retourn annaryer*, bann ki ti deza dan *karantenn kot lakour* avan, nou pou fer sa *tes rapid* lo zot pour gete si par kont zot ti *napa sentonm*, mon kwar zot ti en kontak e sa *tes rapid* i kapab detekte si ou’n deza ganny en *lenfeksyon dan lepase*.’

**English:** ‘In fact, everyone who is in home quarantine reaches their fourteenth day today and they are being tested and tomorrow they will be discharged officially. Now, we have to go backwards, those who were already in home quarantine before, we will do rapid testing on them to see if perhaps they were asymptomatic, I think they were a contact and the rapid test can detect if you’ve had a past infection.’

The two examples illustrate perfectly the copying of English in SC. The copies are especially at lexical level with some morphosyntactic influences. Whilst in most cases the words can be translated directly from English to SC without altering the morphosyntax of the word (in fact, *deplway*, *reantrenn* etc.) others undergo changes in their morphosyntactic structure with the addition of a word or morpheme (*karantenn kot lakour* for *home quarantine*, *napa sentonm* for *asymptomatic* etc.). This is because if those elements are not added or reformulated, they might lose their semantic properties in SC. In addition, if we were to investigate deeper into the matter, it will be revealed that most speakers who copy or alternate codes are often influenced by the dominant language in their profession or the language in which they have studied in. In most cases, this language is English and therefore they resort to that particular language every time they are at a loss for the term in SC.

### 1.3 More Lexical Copying

1. ‘se pour sa rezon ki i enportan pour fer sa bann *‘contact tracing’* aktivman e sa louvraz in konmanse depi yer swar e pe kontinyen lazournen.’ (Public Health Commissioner, Press conference, 31/03/2020) = ‘It is for that reason that it is important to do those contact tracings and this job has started since last night and is continuing during the day.’ Here, the concept ‘contact tracing’ is overtly copied from English as a compound noun and adapted in SC with its phonological and lexical-semantic encodings intact but with the addition of morphological elements: the determiner ‘sa’ (the) + the plural marker ‘bann’ (contact tracings).

2. *Attorney Zeneral* (Press Conference ribbon on SBC TV-9/04/2020).

Attorney General, in English and Prokirer Zeneral in SC.

The word ‘attorney’ (prokirer in SC) is lexically copied from English and while ‘zeneral’ remains in SC (general in English) to give the ‘hybrid’ word ‘Attorney Zeneral’. This may have been a mistake due to a lack of knowledge of the ‘correct’ SC term. However, many SC speakers frequently use this type of amalgamation when they speak.

3. ‘En *proibisyon* lo mouvman an deor par tou dimoun dan pei.’ (Attorney General, Press conference 9/04/2020)

English: A *prohibition* on outdoor movement of everyone in the country.

The word ‘proibisyon’ is covertly copied from English word ‘prohibition’. It has kept its lexical–semantic information but has been adapted to the SC phonetic system. However, it is not the officially adopted word in SC, which is ‘lenterdiksyon’, copied and adopted from French ‘interdiction’. In fact, a large number of words in SC’s lexicon are of French origin, about 80% (d’Offay and Lionnet, 1982); a figure that has most likely changed over the years, given the ever increasing influence of English in the SC lexicon.

On the other hand, the example below shows words that have already been officially adopted in SC. They are of English origin. This proves that SC’s lexicon does not only copy French words.

**SC:** Son *drayver* in kit loto dan *parking*. (author’s example)

**English:** The *driver* has left the car in the *parking lot/ car park*.

The word ‘drayver’, copied from ‘driver’, has been officially adopted and is now part of the SC lexicon. ‘Parking’ also, but adopted under a different morphological rule, because the word ‘parking’, which is a verb in English (British and American English), is used as a noun in SC. The noun for it in British English is ‘car park’ and ‘parking lot’ in American English. As it happens, the SC ‘parking’, which is defined as the open area where vehicles are parked, is diminutive for ‘parking lot’ (American English). The verb in SC is ‘park’, the same as in English. The ‘ing’ which is a grammeme for verb conjugation for the present continuous tense does not exist in SC. To show that particular tense in SC, the marker ‘pe’ is used. The word ‘parking’ must, therefore, have

been adopted because it was commonly being used by the speakers. The word ‘Karpark’ (car park) has also been officially adopted but is less commonly used in writing. Choppy (1984) explains that to have a good borrowing (copy), the word needs to enter the system of the target language first.

## 2. Seychellois and the COVID-19 lingo

Listening to the news, the numerous press conferences, information dissemination, and Seychellois talking about the highly topical subject – COVID-19 ; and reading about it in the press and on social media, it has prompted us to find out what speakers of SC make of the medical, scientific and technical terminologies being introduced in their day-to-day conversations.

### 2.1 ‘Ki manner i dir sa an kreol?’: Creolization of new words and concepts

To answer the question above, we prepared a list of nine sentences with key concepts (new or existing) and asked random SC speakers in our network to translate them. The objective was to find out how they would translate the key words and concepts (underlined for analysis purpose only) to SC. Nine people responded. We have compiled their translated sentences in a table (see Annexe).

The sentences to be translated were:

1. People are being asked to practise social distancing.
2. We have to break the chain of transmission.
3. The President should lock down the country.
4. Seychellois are asking for a lockdown of the country.
5. The rapid response team is assisting the Department of Health.
6. 221 people have been identified through contact tracing.
7. Strict measures are in place to flatten the curve.
8. It’s better to use alcohol based sanitizer.
9. People who are in contact with the droplets containing the virus can get infected.

#### 2.1.1 *An astonishing range of SC equivalents*

The first thing that we observed from the responses was that the speakers had a wide range of words to say the same thing in SC. In fact, all of the key words were translated in a different manner each time. Not one of them had the same translation (similar: word to word) by all the speakers. Even the ones that we considered as ‘easy and straight forward’ had different translations.

##### 2.1.1.1 *‘Easy and straight forward’*

Taking the example: ‘*break the chain of transmission*’ which translates to ‘*kas sa lasenn transmisyon*’. We considered it ‘easy’ and ‘straight forward’ because all the words exist already in SC and in the same word order as in English. While most

speakers translated it as the above, others proposed other verbs instead of *'kas'* (break). For example: *'briz'* (break). In fact, *'briz'* originates from French *'briser'* (break). The verb *'aret'* (stop) was also used. *'Stop'* can be used in this case; it is not the literal translation but it does not change the general meaning of the notion, which is very important as rightly cautioned by SC grammarian, L. Barbé (1984): 'We need to pay attention to the notion that the creolized word(s) give' (own translation).

Furthermore, for the segment 'chain of transmission' everyone wrote *'lasenn transmisyon'* except for one speaker who wrote *'sa konneksyon en dimoun i transmet avek en lot'*. This paraphrase can be seen as ambiguous (the connection someone transmits to someone else) due to the absence of the morpheme *'ki'* (that). The word *'konneksyon'* connotes *'chain'* but is used here instead of *'virus/illness/infection'*. Adding *'ki'* after *'konneksyon'* will more likely lessen the ambiguity (*sa konneksyon ki en dimoun i transmet avek en lot*).

Another concept which we thought would have been 'easy' to translate and whose SC translation, taking into account its morphological structure, would have been consistent and similar for all speakers, is *'flatten the curve'*. Here it is about the correct word for *'flatten'* – *'aplati/aplatir/fer plat'* and *'curve'* – *'kourb'*. Some speakers utilized the correct SC terminology, *'aplati(r) sa kourb'*. Others proposed different formulations with different verbs *'ralanti to lenfeksyon'* – *'slow down rate of infection'*; *'redwir lenpakt sa maladi'* – *'reduce the impact of the disease'*; *'kit sa laliny plat'* – *'keep the line straight'*; *'bes kourb'* – *'lower the curve'*; *'apez sa kourb (sityasyon)'* – *'to relieve the curve (situation)'*; *'abes bann sif propagasyon'* – *'to lower the propagation numbers/figures'*. All the different formulations connote the same notion but have been paraphrased or structured differently using a different verb and vocabulary but conserving the semantic aspect of the notion. The translation *'ki mwens nouvo dimoun i ganny enfekte'* – *'for fewer new people to be infected'* still contains the same semantic properties as *'flattening the curve'*.

We had the same 'easy-to-translate-expectation' as well for *'rapid response team'* as all three words exist already in SC, although on their own. The challenging part of this translation must have been to find the correct words, as well as placing them in the correct order so that the translation transfers the notion correctly. The more accurate translation would be *'Lekip (l) entervansyon rapid'*. (l) because the word has two variants – *'lentervansyon'* and *'entervansyon'*. *'Lekip'* (from French *'équipe'* which translates to *'team'* in English), is preferred over *'tim'*. Although *'tim'* exists in SC, it is more commonly used in relation to sports and competitions. Some speakers used *'tim'* nonetheless and it is not entirely wrong but less commonly used in this context. As for *'rapid response'*, some speakers used *'lentervansyon'* or *'entervansyon'* rapid, others used *'aksyon dirzans'* or *'lirzans'* to

denote 'rapid' (this may be seen as a mistake as 'rapid' does not necessarily mean urgent or emergency).

### 2.1.1.2 Adding morphemes for adjustments

The translation of the notion 'droplets containing the virus' was one of the translations with the most diverse propositions. The tricky word was 'droplets'. 'Droplets' which is a derivative of 'drop' does not exist in SC. In SC the word for 'drop' is of French origins 'gout' – 'goutte'. In French a 'droplet' is called a 'goutelette' or a 'petite goutte'. In SC it is the latter that denotes more accurately the word 'droplet'. Therefore, the morpheme 'pti' is added to adjust the transfer of the word 'droplets' from English to SC. Also, since in the sentence the word is in plural form 'droplets', the grammeme 'bann' (the plural marker in SC) is used to indicate more than one and therefore translates to 'bann pti gout' in SC. Some speakers found the 'correct' translation. Others wrote only 'gout' (it has a difference in size that is significant and that distinguishes the two words). The absence of the morpheme 'pti' here can wrongly translate the terminology.

'Droplets' was also translated to 'lakras'/'tras lakras' – 'saliva'/'traces of saliva' and 'partikil sa viris' – 'particles of the virus'. In some instances, other lexemes were added: "'droplets" respiratwar' – 'respiratory droplets'; 'pti gout ki en dimoun enfekte i large kan i touse, mouse' (long paraphrase) – 'droplets that an infected person sheds when he coughs, sneezes.'; 'gout (lakras oubyen lerim)' – 'drops (saliva or cold)'. This is done purposely to complement the word 'droplets' to make it more meaningful in the used context. One speaker overtly copied the word 'droplets' and wrote it in inverted commas, a common practice when writing in SC and taking a word from another language that has not yet been creolized. The word 'lasev' was also used by another speaker (erroneously) for saliva 'lasaliv'.

The second part of the phrase 'containing the virus' was translated using different verbs: 'kontenir' – 'contain'; 'kontyen' – a variant of 'contain' in SC; and 'anman' – 'have'. They are all synonymous and fittingly used.

### 2.1.1.3 The right vocabulary

Copying at lexical level was observed with the word 'sanitizer'. In SC, it exists as 'dezenfektan' which is overtly copied from French 'désinfectant', with no change in its phonological and morphological structure. Disinfectant also exists in English as a synonym for sanitizer, but the word 'sanitayzer' (written in SC) does not exist officially in SC. Nonetheless, one person wrote it using the SC orthography. Others copied it from English as it is and some added the inverted commas indicating a copy. In two instances, complementary lexemes were also added to it 'dezenfektan lanmen', 'prodwi/dezenfektan pour lanmen'. This allows the speakers to specify which kind of sanitizer they are referring to; and it is perhaps due to the fact that the word is almost always accompanied by 'hand' (hand sanitizer) when

it is used. Adding *'lanmen'* with *'dezenfektan'* brings more precision to the type of *'sanitizer'* being referred to. Yet, the term *'hand sanitiser'* remains the most commonly used and accepted by the speakers.

#### **2.1.1.4 To creolize or not to creolize?**

Two of the most widely uttered concepts in the COVID-19 lingo is *'contact tracing'* and *'social distancing'*. Both are copied but kept unaltered when used in SC, although there has been an official attempt to creolize *'social distancing'*.

To translate the concept *'(practise) social distancing'*, some context is necessary. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the concept *'social distancing'* (also called physical distancing) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practise social or physical distancing, one needs to stay at least six feet (two meters) from other people, to not gather in groups, and to stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings (CDC's webpage).

When the speakers translated *'practise social distancing'*, they either kept the verb *'pratik'* – *'practise'*, or substituted it with one of its synonyms: *'fer'* – *'do'*; *'gard'* – *'keep'*; *'obzerv'* – *'observe'*; *'mentenir'* – *'maintain'*; *'egzers'* – *'exercise'*; *'respe'* – *'respect'*. As for *'social distancing'* itself, some translated it to: *'distans'/ 'zistans' avek/ek kanmarad* – *'distance from/with each other'*; *'distans antre kanmarad'* – *'distance between each other'*; *'zot zistans'* – *'their distance'*. One speaker did an overt lexical copy and wrote the word using the SC orthography *'sosyal distensing'*. This causes the notion to lose its semantic properties because as a single lexeme, *'distensing'* is not a SC word and it is therefore semantically empty. Whereas, *'zistans sosyal'*, used by two speakers, follows the correct rule of word order, but the notion may lose its meaning when translated in that manner.

On the other hand, another speaker used negation to translate the whole concept: *'pa koste pre avek kanmarad'* – *'do not get close to each other'*, which is a correct paraphrase for the notion. However, although it now has its official equivalent in SC – *'Gard/mentenir distans'*, it seems that *'social distancing'* has now entered our vocabulary and is frequently used (sometimes it is directly translated to *'distans sosyal'*) by health professionals, journalists and speakers in general, instead of its SC equivalent. This gives us the impression that the creolization of the concept does not necessarily convey the message and is, perhaps, not powerful enough for the speakers to take on board.

As for *'contact tracing'*, speakers have translated this in numerous ways. Some have added a lexeme to it to make it a noun: *'metod retras kontak'* – *'method to trace contacts'*; *'legzersis tras kontak'* – *'exercise to trace contacts'*; *'resers bann kontak'* – *'research/ look (for) contacts'*; *'idantifikasyon kontak'* – *'identification of contacts'*. One

speaker did an overt lexical copy: *'kontak tresing'*, which is without any semantic properties in SC as, in itself, *'tresing'* does not mean anything in SC. Orally it does not pose any problem but it is rather a challenge to write it as there are rules for the codification and standardization of the language.

Moreover, some speakers paraphrased the concept: *'prosedir pou idantifye lekel ki bann ki'n ganny enfekte in antre an kontak fizik avek'* – 'procedure to identify those who has been in physical contact with infected people'; *'ler lotorite in verifiye lekel ki bann dimoun enfekte in ganny kontak avek'* – 'when the authority verifies those who have been in contact with the infected person' (this seems like the definition of the concept rather than its SC translation); and *'sistenm retras bann dimoun ki'n ganny/ antre an kontak avek bann afekte'* – 'system of retracing the people who have been in contact with those who are affected (infected)'. The paraphrases are long but they are correct in translating the particular concept.

In English, the grammatical class of *'contact tracing'* is 'noun' (Collins online dictionary). It can even be considered a 'compound noun' as it combines two elements, a verb and a noun. However, when it is translated to SC, it changes to a verb *'retras kontak'*. As a noun it doesn't exist and has not been creolized wholly. Therefore, to creolize the concept, speakers will have to structure their sentence in such a way as to accommodate it as a verb; or add a noun such as *prosedir/ legzersis/ metod* in front of *'retras kontak'*; or simply copy it as it is in English. Otherwise, based on the process of the formation of new words in SC, we can copy and adopt one of the French equivalents for *'tracing'* (SC already have the word *'kontak'* for *'contact'*):

- Repérage which will creolize to reperaz (reperaz kontak);
- Traçage which will translate to trasaz (trasaz kontak).

Nevertheless, although these propositions are made, following the SC typical word formation paradigm, it will only enter the system if speakers are using it. Since the start of the pandemic until now, medical professionals have more often copied the English term *'contact tracing'* when speaking in SC.

The two sentences (3 and 4) containing the words 'lockdown' and 'lock down', are analyzed separately in section 2.3.

## 2.2 The role of the Creole Language Committee

As per its terms of reference, the National Creole Language Committee (NCLC) is the technical committee with the mandate to make recommendations and take decisions on all linguistic-related matter in regards to SC. It is appointed by the Board of the Creole Institute and is comprised of fifteen members who are technicians in different fields with professional and personal interest, and who have a good knowledge of SC. Five members of staff of the Creole Institute are also members of the committee and one is the

committee's secretary. The committee also makes recommendations for linguistic projects including orthography, lexicon, grammar, and syntax of SC according to the speakers' usage and needs.

At the moment, NCLC is actively working on the first SC monolingual dictionary and has, over the years, worked on and published numerous tools for the development of SC for education and cultural sectors and for the country as a whole. Recently, COVID-19 has been one important source of new words and concepts for adoption and creolization. NCLC operates as a regulatory body and, with the expertise and knowledge of the members, the committee has been providing and assisting the Department of Health and the media with creole translations of legal documents and other documents such as posters, advertisements, and press releases amongst other things, while upholding its mandate in doing so. It also makes sure that officially adopted creole words and concepts are disseminated and made accessible to the general public, since its main objective is to safeguard the language and ensure its sustainable growth.

Accordingly, the committee has been very active during the period of the pandemic as this is also a crucial time for the SC language. New words and concepts are emerging all the time and the NCLC has to make sure that they are all captured properly. The committee has been doing its part mainly by providing the Department of Health, the media and other relevant government entities with the correct translation of the COVID-19 lingo and, at the same time, noticing and bringing to their attention misuse of SC words, wrongly-written words, anglicisms which have equivalents in SC. One example is from one of the Department of Health's official posters:

**SC** : 'Mon pe travay dan sa *pandemik* pour ou, swiv gidans lasante pour nou.'

**English**: 'I am working in this *pandemic* for you, follow the health guidelines for us.'

The official equivalent for '*pandemic*' in SC is '*pandemi*' which is from French '*pandémie*'. In SC, unlike in English, there is no letter and no sound [k] at the end of the word. The NCLC has therefore used its authority to advise the Department of Health on the use of the officially adopted SC word for 'pandemic'. However, '*pandemik*' seems to have been fossilized already in some speakers' repertoire. This can be seen in written form on social media and heard in people's oral exchanges.

So, what happens when the speakers decide to use other words other than the ones adopted officially? The case of '*pandemik/pandemi*' is less threatening to the language compared to some other examples as it does not lead to any misconception or misunderstanding. However, some other words and concepts, when misused, can cause confusion (see point 2.3) and can even be detrimental to the language.

### 2.3 'The lockdown confusion'

The word '*lockdown*' has emerged in the SC speakers' daily vocabulary ever since the commencement of the pandemic. So far, Seychellois has copied the English term as no official SC equivalent has yet been adopted by the NCLC to categorize it in the context that it is being used now. However, the word '*fermtir*' (taken from '*fermeture*', the French word for *closing/closure/locking*) exists in SC and it can transfer, to some extent, the notion of 'lockdown' currently trending in Seychelles. In fact, there were some proposals to adopt '*fermtir total (pei)*'.

Otherwise, in French, '*lockdown*' translates to '*confinement*' (in Collins Online Dictionary). Some speakers are using this as the equivalent for SC. It has also been used by the national public broadcaster, SBC, '*Konfinman Larenyon i sipoze terminen le 11 Me*', in the news, by the news anchor. '*Konfinman*' adheres to the rule of formation and adoption of new words in SC. It meets the set criteria of the language regarding the borrowing (copying) of mainly French words. 'It is easier to borrow (copy) a French word rather than an English word because its formation system is easier than for English' (Barbé, 1984, own translation). Hence, it is easier to creolize '*confinement*' than '*lockdown*' as not all the graphemes and phonemes in the word '*lockdown*' exist in SC.

On the other hand, on social media, especially Facebook, people have been experimenting with the creolization of this terminology. It has been transliterated to '*Lokdaoun*' and '*lorkdawn*', paraphrased to '*tal/plak fes lakaz*' – '*keep your backside in your house*' (*stay at home*). It has also been translated literally '*tak anba*' (*tak=lock, anba=down*).

We also asked people to translate it (as part of the exercise described in 2.1). We obtained very diverse translations.

3. The President should lock down the country.

- ♦ blok pei/deklar en konfinman total (block the country/declare a total confinement)
- ♦ deklwar en peryod letan dirzans (declare a state of emergency)
- ♦ ferm pei (close the country)
- ♦ enpoz restriksyon total dan pei (impose total restriction in the country)
- ♦ ferm pei antye/met pei antye anba karantenn (close the whole country/put the whole country under quarantine)
- ♦ pran desizyon 'Tou dimoun reste se li !' (Take the decision 'everyone stay at home')
- ♦ ferm son lafrontyer (close its boundary)
- ♦ enpoz en blokaz lo tou aktivite dan pei e fors tou dimoun pour reste se zot (impose a blockage on all activities in the country and force everyone to stay at home.)

4. Seychellois are asking for a lockdown of the country.

- ◆ ki pei I bloke/en konfinman total (that the country is blocked/a total confinement)
- ◆ ferm pei net (close the country completely)
- ◆ antre dan en restriksyon total (enter in a total restriction)
- ◆ ferm pei antye/met pei antye anba karantenn zeneral (close the entire country/ put the country under general quarantine)
- ◆ ki pei i gany bloke/fermen (that the country is blocked/closed)
- ◆ enpoz en blokaz lo tou aktivite dan pei e fors tou dimoun pour reste sezot (impose a blockage on all activities in the country and force everyone to stay at home)
- ◆ desizyon ‘Tou dimoun reste se li !’ I ganny aplike dan pei (decision ‘everyone stay at home !’ should apply in the country)
- ◆ ki Sesel i ferm son lafrontyer (that Seychelles closes its borders)

It is clear that people have a different understanding of the concept ‘*to lock down*’ and ‘*a lockdown*’. This brings us to the realization that the word ‘*lockdown*’ is perhaps being used incorrectly to label the wrong concepts. Hence the need for clear, non-ambiguous terminology to nominate and distinguish the different concepts, to avoid creating and defining a false concept in SC.

In fact, there has been a further confusion in the use of the word ‘*lockdown*’. This started when a journalist challenged the Public Health Commissioner’s decision not to use the word ‘*lockdown*’ to alert the public about new measures in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Instead of ‘*lockdown*’ the commissioner used ‘*restriksyon sever lo mouvman*’ – ‘*severe restriction on movement*’, which he explained is the term adopted in the legal Prohibition Act. However, the journalist argued that Seychellois would not necessarily grasp what he meant unless he used the word ‘*lockdown*’:

*pour dimoun dan lakour konpran, sanmenm sa ki nou bezwen en terminoloji, aköz pa tou nou dimoun ki dokter, pa tou nou dimoun ki avoka, pa tou nou dimoun ki zournalis.*  
(Journalist, Press Conference, 7/04/2020)

In English, this translates to: ‘For the people at home to understand, that’s why we need a terminology, because not all the people are doctors, not all our people are lawyers, not all our people are journalists’. This reiterates our remark about the incorrect use of the word ‘*lockdown*’.

## Conclusion

We can conclude with the observation that SC is indeed quite a rich language. As Barbé (1984) puts it ‘if we make an effort, we will see that in most cases where we use an English word, we could have used its equivalent in Creole’ (Barbé, 1984, own

translation). In fact, there are so many ways in which a word or a concept can be nominated in SC without its general meaning being changed, although, quite naturally, a change in its morphological structure may sometimes happen. As linguist O. Klymenko puts it, ‘different lexemes capture the same fragment of reality from different angles and with different degrees of detail’ (Klymenko, 2020).

When it comes to translating a word or a concept in SC, speakers translate according to their own plurilingual repertoire and level of competencies in both languages. Very often their idiolect manifests, neologisms are formed, and officially adopted words misused or unused. A speaker will translate what is known to him. Though the words or concepts have already been adopted officially in SC’s lexicon, if the speaker does not know it, he cannot use it. The official lexicon should therefore be accessible to all SC speakers. Additionally, the context associated with the word or concept is also very important. In SC, homophones are common. Therefore, to avoid erroneous translation, the speakers should understand the context in which the word or concept is used, before translating it to SC; as in SC, a variety of words sometimes designate one and same concept.

When it comes to the COVID-19 lingo we realized that not everything can be translated and creolized and that speakers do not always adhere to what has been officially creolized and adopted. In this case, it is hopeless to impose it on them. In addition, it has triggered more reflections on the process of word formation in SC. It has shown that SC still has many voids to fill when it comes to medical, scientific and technical terminologies. It has also made us realize that language contact between SC and English remains significant in the shaping of SC as we know it now. English is a ‘dominant’ language and its global importance can be seen in the various copies or alternations of Seychellois. These phenomena continue to manifest at the same or even higher intensity even outside of the COVID-19 context, hence SC is a perfect illustration of the ‘Code Hybridization Continuum’ of Kriegel et al. (2019) where there is a ‘balanced alternation’ between the matrix language (SC) and the embedded language (English), producing a ‘continuum between two extremes: at one end stands balanced systemic alternation, while at the other stands the strict integration of an embedded element – a copy – in the matrix language’ (Kriegel et al., 2019). While at the same time, a pure form of SC becomes more a ‘myth’ (Wei, 2017) than a reality.

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## Annexe

Sentences to be translated	Speaker 1	Speaker 2	Speaker 3	Speaker 4	Speaker 5	Speaker 6	Speaker 7	Speaker 8	Speaker 9
1. People are being asked to practise <u>social distancing</u>	gard zistans ek kanmarad	gard zot zistans	fer sosyal distensing	bzerv zistans sosyal	Gard/Pratik Gard/Menten ir zot Distans ek Kanmarad	egzers zistans sosyal	pa koste pre avek kanmarad	pratik gard distans antre kanmarad	gard zistans avek kanmarad
2. We have to <u>break the chain of transmission</u>	kas sa lasenn transmisyon	kas lasenn transmisyon	kas sa lasenn transmisyon	kas sa lasenn transmisyon	kaz/briz sa lasenn transmisyon	kas sa lasenn transmisyon	kas sa konneksyoun en dimoun i transmet avek en lot	kas sa lasenn transmisyon	aret sa lasenn transmisyon
3. The President should <u>lock down</u> the country	blok pei / deklar en konfinman total	deklwar en peryod letan dirzans.	ferm pei	enpoz restriksyon total dan pei	ferm pei antye/met pei antye anba karantenn	blok/ferm pei		pran desizyon "Tou dimoun reste se li !"	ferm son lafrontyer

4. Seychellois are asking for a <u>lockdown</u> of the country.	ki pei I bloke / en konfinman total		ferm pei net.	antre dan en restriksyon total	ferm pei antye/ met pei antye anba karantenn zeneral	ki pei i gany bloke/fermen	enpoz en blokaz lo tou aktivite dan pei e fors tou dimoun pour reste sezot	desizyon " Tou dimoun reste se li !" I ganny aplike dan pei	ki Sesel i ferm son lafrontyer
5. The <u>rapid response team</u> is assisting the Department of Health.	Lekip entervansyon rapid		Lekip entervansyon rapid	Lekip lirezans	Lekip Lentervansyon Rapid	sa tim repons rapid	Lekip lentervansyon rapid	Tim Aksyon Dirzans	lekip lentervansyon rapid
6. 221 people have been identified through <u>contact tracing</u>	resers kontak	prosedir pou idantifye lekel ki bann ki'n ganny enfekte in antre an kontak fizik avek	kontak tresing.	metod retras kontak	en resers bann kontak	legzersis tras kontak	ler lotorite in verifye lekel ki bann dimoun enfekte in ganny kontak avek	sistenm retras bann dimoun ki'n ganny/ antre an kontak avek bann afekte	idantifikasyon bann kontak

7. Strict measures are in place to <u>flatten the curve</u> .	ralanti to lenfeksyon	redwir lenpakt sa maladi lo nou pei e sistenm lasante	bes kourb.	aplati sa kourb/ diminyen bann ka	aplati sa kourb	kit sa laliny plat/kit sityasyon anba kontrol	ki mwens nouvo dimoun i ganny enfekte	apez sa kourb (sityasyon)	abes bann sif propagasyon
8. It's better to use alcohol based <u>sanitizer</u> .	<u>dezenfektan</u>	sanitizer	<u>sanitayzer</u>	prodwi/ dezenfektan pour lanmen	dezenfektan	sanitizer	dezenfektan lanmen	“Sanitizer”	dezenfektan
9. People who are in contact with the <u>droplets containing the virus</u> can get infected.	<u>avek lakras / tras lakras ki kontenir sa viris</u>	<u>bann ‘droplets’ respiratwar ki kontyen sa viris</u>	<u>gout ki annan sa viris</u>	bann gout ki annan sa sa viris	pti gout ki en dimoun enfekte i large kan i touse, mouse	lasev ki annan viris	bann pti gout (lakras oubyen lerim) ki annan viris ladan	pti gout ki kontenir sa viris	partikil sa viris