

# Functions of Reduplication in Seychelles Creole

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## 1. Introduction

- (1) *George i ansemoman admit lopital Victoria kot i pe resevwar*  
George is at.this.moment admit hospital Victoria where 3SG ASP receiving  
*tretman vi ki ler i ti ganny retrouve i ti tou fay fay*  
treatment seeing that when 3SG ASP get found, 3SG was all weak-RED  
[George is currently admitted in Victoria Hospital, where he is receiving  
treatment, seeing that when he was found, he was somewhat weak]<sup>1</sup>

This extract from the *Seychelles Nation* newspaper,<sup>2</sup> relaying the contents of a police communiqué, typifies the role that reduplication plays in *Seychelles Creole*<sup>3</sup>, hereafter, SC. Bollée (2003, p.220) posits that it can be considered a characteristic feature of the language. The *Gramer Kreol Seselwa* makes reference to *doublaz* (doubling) in the language: ‘*annandeler letan nou double bann verb, nou ganny en diferans sinifikasyon*’ [sometimes when we double verbs, we obtain a different meaning] (Choppy, 2013). Reduplication – ‘the repetition of a root, stem, or part of a root or stem to form a new word’ (Li & Ponsford, 2018, p.51) is a widely-attested means of word-formation. In SC, it is used as a morphological device for a number of semantic functions (Bollée, 2003).

It is to be noted that most research into reduplication is form-oriented, not functional or pragmatic (Wang, 2005). The aim of this article is to elucidate the functions of reduplication in contemporary SC. While considering the difference between reduplication and repetition, the focus will be placed on three semantic-grammatical function classes: iconic, word class changing, and attenuating. Within the latter category, the study will also analyse the pragmatic functions of adjectival reduplication operating as a hedging device; an element of negative politeness strategies. It is to be noted that hedges as a function of reduplication have received little mention in linguistic literature. As this study is largely focused on describing the functions expressed by reduplication, no attempt will be made to typologically identify the precise origins of these patterns. Stem doubling

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Somewhat weak’ (J.Z - Dr Justin Zelime).

<sup>2</sup> Kominike Lapolis: Trwa dimoun ki tin raporte manke i ganny retrouve (2010, January 12). *Seychelles Nation*. <https://www.nation.sc/archive/225492/kominike-lapolis-trwa-dimoun-ki-tin-raporte-manke-i-ganny-retrouve>

<sup>3</sup> Autoglossonym Kreol Seselwa.

for the ‘playful’ purpose of hypocoristics, baby-talk, echo-word formation, onomatopoeia as well as fossilized reduplicative terms will be excluded.

Even though reduplication in creole languages is more prone to iconicity than languages with longer histories (Inkelas, 2015), it can also result in non-iconicity, changed word class and lexical meanings by derivation (Braun, 2006; DeGraff, 2001; Kouwenberg & LaCharité, 2004, 2011). Research by the latter on Caribbean creoles effectively challenge the assumption that creole morphology is simple and transparent, showing little inflection and predictable semantics, as has been posited by certain linguists (McWhorter, 2001; Seuren & Wekker, 1986). It would not be unexpected for SC reduplicated lexemes to also demonstrate a certain degree of opacity. As the functions of reduplication are so diverse cross-linguistically and even within creole languages, universal hypotheses are not easily applied. However, there are patterns that emerge that are interesting from (at least) a theoretical point of view.

## 2. Data and methodology

Primary linguistic data was obtained as follows:

- ◆ From interviews with three leading SC language experts,<sup>4</sup> who are native speakers: Mrs Marie-Thérèse Choppy, (hereafter, MTC); Mrs Penda Choppy (PC); and Dr Justin Zelime (JZ). Mrs Penda Choppy is the Director of the Creole Language and Culture Research Institute at the University of Seychelles and formerly Director of the Creole Institute. Mrs Marie-Thérèse Choppy is a creolist, author and playwright. Dr Justin Zelime is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Development of the University of Seychelles. The interviews were carried out either in a home or work-free office environment, with all speakers knowing the interviewer/ author (a native SC speaker) well.

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<sup>4</sup> The three SC experts/informants view reduplication in SC as a device that contributes to the creation of meaning associated with the local culture. For them, it reflects a conversational style that is typical of the older (and less alphabetized) generation. ‘We can use Kreol terms well to explain concepts without resorting to English or French’ (MTC). JZ asserts that ‘most of the time, when reduplication is used, I see it in an informal sense. Not thinking too much about what you are saying’. He adds that the audience and their relationship to the speaker determines whether one chooses to use reduplication or not. In other words, the use of reduplication may well be an indicator of pragmatic competence in SC.

- ◆ Unless annotated otherwise, SC sentences and their translations into English were constructed by the author.
- ◆ To test the author's supposition that adjectival reduplication functions as a pragmatic hedging device in SC and understand the motivations thereof, a small survey was administered to the three informants. The author has consistently observed that it is usually the less desirable personal characteristics that are reduplicated in SC. From a list of 25 adjectives in common usage, the informants were asked to identify which ones could viably undergo full reduplication. The master-list of adjectives was drafted by the author and featured twelve 'positive/desirable' (eg. *Zoli* [beautiful]); ten 'negative/undesirable' (eg. *vilenn* [ugly]); and three ambivalent attributes (eg. thin). The intention was to ascertain whether these adjectives could sensibly be reduplicated. It was interesting to observe how the three ambivalent adjectives would be categorized – whether as 'negative' or 'positive'. The feedback of this focus group comprising of only three SC experts would not be unrepresentative of the of general population – taking into account its small size (99,202, World Bank 2021<sup>5</sup>). Nonetheless, in view of the extremely small sample size (of both informants and lexemes under analysis), only broad generalizations can be made in this exploratory investigation.

### 3. Definitions and abbreviations

<b>Fossilized reduplications</b>	Constructs that no longer function as an inflection or derivation, but are fixed as a permanent part of a root (usually foreign loanwords).
<b>Full reduplication</b>	Occurs when the entire word, stem or root is fully repeated (eg. fifty-fifty).
<b>Hedge</b>	A word or phrase that makes a statement less forceful or assertive.
<b>Hypocoristic</b>	Diminutive form of a person's name eg. Mimi for Michelle.
<b>Iconic reduplication</b>	Repetition of the entire word, stem or root whereby more of the same form represents more of the same meaning. (eg. <i>mango-mango</i> = mangoes) (Kouwenberg & LaCharité, 2003, p.8).
<b>Non-iconic reduplication</b>	No apparent relationship between word form and meaning.

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<sup>5</sup> The World Bank. World Development Indicators  
<https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&country=SYC>

<b>Partial reduplication</b>	Reduplication of part of a constituent, either prefixing, infixing or suffixing (eg. <i>takin</i> [sock]→ <i>takin</i> <i>kin</i> [to wear socks]) (Moravcsik, 1978).
<b>Semantic transparency</b>	A compound word that can be easily inferred from its parts.
<b>Semantic/lexical opacity</b>	A compound word that cannot be easily inferred from its parts.

**ASP** – Aspectual marker

**DEM** – Demonstrative

**DET** – Determiner

**FUT** – Future marker

**NEG** – Negative marker

**PL** – Plural marker

**PM** – Predicate marker

**POSS** – Possessive marker

**PREP** - Preposition

**PST** – Past time marker

**RED** – Reduplication

**3SG** – Third person singular

## Reduplication versus repetition

Reduplication differs from repetition in that it is strictly grammatically defined (Michaelis et al., 2013.) although the two terms are often used interchangeably. Repetition has pragmatic functions whereas reduplication is tasked with the expression of grammatical categories. In instances where repetition is associated with meaning creation, the meaning is invariably iconic, with functions of intensivity, iterativity and plurality (Moravcsik, 1978). Stress and intonation as well as positioning play a significant role in determining whether total reduplication or repetition is involved (Baker, 2003). Reduplicated forms do not feature breaks in intonation while repeated forms appear under separate intonation contours. These distinctions will be explored further in the context of SC, within the sections on reduplication across word classes. Hyphens are used in this paper for reduplicated forms and not for repetition.

## 4. Literature review

### 4.1 Historical overview of SC

The vast majority of the SC vocabulary has its origins in standard and non-standard French varieties from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The French were the first to colonize the uninhabited islands in the 1770s. Coming from the Mauritius outpost with their slaves, they brought with them a stabilized type of Mauritian creole (hereafter, MC). To this day, SC and MC remain mutually intelligible. During the early stage of MC formation, Malagasy slaves were prevalent in the colony. In Seychelles, the composition of the slave population during the time of colony settlement was predominantly speakers of Bantu languages (of east African origin). Merchants from China and India, as well as indentured labourers from the latter, were later migrants to the islands. Despite being a British colony since 1815, there was not an influx of British migrants in the nineteenth

century; the pervasive French influence remained from the previous administration. Although there were but a few words of English derivation in Seychellois texts from that era (Baker, 1982), these were steadily added to the SC lexicon due to education and occupations requiring a knowledge of the language of administration. The SC written code was only developed after Independence in the late 1970s; prior to which, it served largely as an oral language. It is today the mother tongue of over 95% of the population (Michaelis & Rosalie, 2013). Alongside English and French, SC has equal status in the revised Constitution (Nadal & Anacoura, 2014), although, in reality, French plays a far smaller role. SC is the main language of oral communication, including between friends, colleagues, in the legislative assembly, and even for political speeches. In the written sphere, it has been largely associated with folk culture. Nonetheless, with the advent of social media, day-to-day discourse is increasingly in SC as well as code-switching with English (Pejakovic, 2016).

## 4.2 Functions of reduplication, cross-linguistically

Morphological reduplication both full and partial is associated with a wide range of syntactic and semantic functions (e.g. Moravcsik 1978, Kiyomi 1993, and Rubino 2005 for cross-linguistic surveys). Reduplication is well-attested throughout Austronesia (including Madagascar), South Asia, Africa and Amazonia. As a word-formation process, it has varying levels of productivity.

Reduplication is often semantically iconic, whereby more of form is equal to more of meaning (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). The effect is pluralization, emphasis, and frequency/repetition. ‘Aspectual functions, having to do particularly with the repetition and extendedness of events, are the most frequent cross-linguistically, followed by functions relating to the plurality of participants in events’ (Li & Ponsford, 2018). While Indo-European languages typically encode these meanings with inflection markings, in certain languages, reduplication of nouns produces plural nouns eg. *rumah* [house] > *rumah-rumah* [houses] (Malay), *búku* [book] > *búku-búku* [books] (Indonesian). The Uto-Aztecan language of Luiseno makes use of two types of reduplication for various plural verbal actions: *lawi* [to make a hole], *law-lawi* [to make two holes, make a hole twice], *lawaw-lawi* [to make many holes, more than two] (Kroeber and Grace 1960, cited in Rubino, 2005, p.20). Reduplication of numerals can express a range of categories including distributives, collectives and multiplicatives. In Santali (Austro-Asiatic, India) *ge-gel* [10 each, by tens], in Javanese, *sanga* [nine] > *sanga-sangane* [all nine] (Rubino, 2005, p.21).

Typologically, the range of functions of reduplication also includes categories that are non-iconic, such as: attenuation, diminution, change of word class or meaning. (Moravcsik, 1978; Brdar, 2013). In Kíhehe, a Bantu language of Tanzania, the verb ‘to cough’ is attenuated via full reduplication: *Kú-gohomóla* > *Kú-gohomolagohomóla* [to cough a bit] (Odden & Odden, 1985, p.500). Reduplication can also be used derivationally (non-iconically) to alter word class, e.g. in Kayardild (Pama-Nyungan language) *kandu* [blood]

> *kandu-kandu* [red]. (Rubino, 2005, p.21). With adjectival reduplication, even if the prototypical function is intensification of the property encoded by the base adjective, the result can be attenuation as well as lexeme formation through derivation.

Reduplication can be used as lexical hedges<sup>6</sup> for mitigating the force of a speech act; hedging being a marker of pragmatic competence. Negative politeness strategies attempt to avoid imposition from the speaker thereby reducing the risk of loss of face to the hearer. Almost any linguistic item or expression can be considered as a hedge (Clemen, 1997). Interestingly, a literature search of the functions of reduplication within the realm of pragmatics reveal a paucity of research to-date. In a small number of areal Chinese studies (Guowen, 2011; Lam; 2013; Zhan,1992), the reduplication of verbs or adjectives have a diminutive outcome, which triggers a hedging effect.

### 4.3 Reduplication in creole languages

Reduplication is a common feature of creoles, possibly more so than other language groups (Bakker & Parkvall, 2005, Rubino, 2005), whereby it typically manifests as full reduplication. As the Western European lexifier languages of most creole varieties do not generally display productive reduplication, the phenomenon is generally attributed to substrate language influence. This is even where it is clearly substrate-influence and where the substrate language utilizes partial reduplication (McWhorter, 2004). Variation is evident in reduplication across creole languages. In Caribbean creole languages, verbal reduplication is rare or non-existent (Kouwenberg & LaCharite, 2015, p.977) although nominal and adjectival reduplications abound. Conversely, Berbice Dutch shows little noun reduplication, as opposed to verbs and adjectives; a distribution that is comparable to SC.

Creole morphology has long been said to be less rich than lexifier languages, both in terms of formality and functional/semantic categories to be expressed (Plag, 2005). Its hallmarks have been that of simplicity and transparency, showing little inflection and predictable semantics (McWhorter, 2001; Seuren & Wekker, 1986). However, Kouwenberg and LaCharité, (2003, 2005, 2011) demonstrate that, even if reduplication is generally iconic in Caribbean creoles, an abundance of non-iconicity can be observed. Conversion is widely used for deriving new lexemes, examples of which can be seen in Table 1.

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<sup>6</sup> Hedging is a commonly-used negative politeness strategy used as a face-saving device (based on Politeness Theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978)).

*Table 1: Examples of productive non-iconic reduplication in Caribbean creoles*

Creole variety	Base	Reduplication	Interpretation	Input > Output relation
Jamaican	<i>laaf</i> [to laugh]	<i>laafi-laafi</i> [inclined to laughter]	Similar to	Adj, V, N > Adj.
Saramaccan	<i>geli</i> [(to be) yellow]	<i>geli-geli</i> [yellowish]	Similarity/ diminutive	N. > Adj.
Saramaccan	<i>singi</i> [to sink]	<i>singi-singi</i> [sunken]	Deverbal/ stative result	V. > Adj.

Source: Kouwenberg and LaCharité (2003:9)

Reduplication, as a morphological process is not a new linguistic phenomenon in the Indian Ocean creoles; it has been attested in Mauritian Creole (MC) since the nineteenth century and largely attributed to Malagasy (Corne, cited in Bollée, 2003). In MC, verbal reduplication signifies iterativity or continuity; adjectival reduplication means intensification or attenuation; nominal reduplication can signify plurality; in some adverbs it can have an augmentative reading while in numerals, it has a distributive effect (Baker, 2003, p.13).

## 5. Reduplication in SC

### 5.1 Orality and lexicalization

The trilingual dictionary of Seychellois Creole, French and English (Gillieaux, 2017) counts only 74 lexical entries of what appear to be SC reduplicated terms, although most are in fact fossilized or onomatopoeic. Of these entries, only a handful can be considered as instances of productive reduplication that involve the doubling or partial repetition of reduplicant bases made up of free SC morphemes. The latter are effectively those that can stand on their own, such as: *pti-pti* [very small]; *pti* [small] or the opposite *gro-gro* [biggish]. ‘*Tipti* (tiny) and *gro-gro* occur so often that native speakers tend to regard them as lexicalized’ (Bollée, 2003, p.222). In reality, there are numerous instances of reduplications of verbs, adverbs and adjectives that are not lexicalized but are in active use in SC. This is why Rastall (2004) points out that, as most of the reduplications that occur in day-to-day life do not enter the language, it is imperative to study word formation beyond the lexical level.

## 5.2 Reduplication across word classes: findings and discussion

SC exhibits (full and partial) reduplication across the major word classes to achieve different meanings.

### 5.2.1 Numeral reduplication in SC

Attestation of reduplication across the class of numerals in SC may at best be labelled as limited; certainly, in relation to MC. Tamil influence is believed to have been the source of numeral reduplication in the latter, which exhibits a largely distributive effect (Baker, 2003). A rare example from SC is as follows:

- (2) *Ti napa bokou kliyan dan laboutik bomaten, zis enn enn koumsa*  
PST NEG many clients in shop this.morning, just one one like.that  
[There weren't many customers in the shop this morning, just the odd one]

It is worth noting that the stacking of numerals is present in SC. This usually involves two consecutive single-digit numerals acting as numeral determinants; this is observed in (3) and (4).

- (3) *Ti annan zis enn de dimoun dan laboutik*  
PST have just one two person in shop  
[There were only a few people in the shop]
- (4) *Ti annan forse trwa kat dimoun laba*  
PST have at.most three four person there  
[There were at most, three or four people there]

One may argue that (2) may only appear as the surface form to be an instance of reduplication but it is technically the product of a stacked (single) noun construction. Nonetheless, its distributive effect differs somewhat to the slightly cumulative effect seen in (3) and (4).

### 5.2.2 Nominal reduplication in SC

Unattested to date in SC (Bollée, 2003), reduplicated nouns do exist, albeit uncommonly. In MC, Baker (1972) provides but a single example - *môtan-môtan* [mountains]. In SC, the form-meaning relationship is that of augmentation. However, in contrast to languages whereby nominal reduplication results in distinct plural forms, the effect here is more diffuse.

- (5) *Mon pa kontan sa lasoup akoz i annan boul-boul ladan*  
1SG NEG like DEM soup because PM have ball-RED in.it

[I do not like this soup because it is lumpy]

(6) *Sa kari i anan zis lezo-lezo*

DEM curry PM have just bone-RED

[This curry has only bones in it]

(7) *I annan tas-tas partou lo karpet*

PRED have stain-RED everywhere on carpet

[There are stains everywhere on the carpet]

The reduplicated forms in these examples encode a general and diffuse plurality that translates into a visually loaded image. This is reflective of elements that are either uncountable or not worth counting. *Lezo-lezo* (6) may be used to describe the texture of a dish that has too many bones and not enough meat.

### 5.2.3 Verbal reduplication in SC

The majority of verbs can be reduplicated in SC. When this happens, the effect is largely iconic as it relates to augmented (continued and/or frequentative) action. Repeated action and duration only occur with verbs (Bollée, 2003). This category features actions that are repeated but that lessens in intensity and focus, as can be seen in the following examples:

(8) *Dan wikenn, nou kontan al mars-marse*

In weekend, 1PL like go walk-RED

[At the weekends, we like to go for a stroll]

(9) *Sa pti fiy pe sot-sot lo karpet.*

DEM little girl ASP jump-RED on carpet

[That little girl is hopping on the carpet]

(10) *Mon pe get-get televizyon anmezir ki mon kwi manze*

1SG ASP look-RED television while that 1SG cook food

[I am watching some television while I cook]

Most verbs in MC and SC display verb alternation between the short and long form, as can be seen in (8) for the long form and (9) and (10) for the short form. This is a relatively unique phenomenon, cross-linguistically. These ‘verbs always adopt their short form when immediately followed by a complement and their long form when they occur predicate finally or are followed immediately by a time adverbial’ (Baker 1972, p.98).

With regards to (8) and (9), it is interesting to note that the equivalent of the verbs ‘walk’ and ‘jump’ when reduplicated, are effectively ‘stroll’ and ‘hop’. Baker (2003: p.212) translates *mars-marse* as a ‘little walk/walk with no particular destination in mind.’ For

reduplicated verbs in SC and MC, the reduplicated stem has the effect of reducing the intensity of the verb. *Mars-marse* evokes a gentle and aimless walk while *sot-sote* denotes a less intense, but more repetitive activity, compared to the non-reduplicated form. There can also be a connotation of randomness in the activity, in that it is not structured or focused. Bollée (2003, p.222) points out that ‘by means of a reduplicated verb, a speaker sometimes wants to express an action repeatedly performed without ever being completed’. ‘Some television’ (10) does not adequately convey the manner in which the television is being watched. The literal translation ‘look-look’ gives a better sense that the doer is repeatedly watching – discontinuous and not focused on the activity. For (8) to(10), an overall diminutive effect on the action is achieved, in juxtaposition to iteration and continuance. Overall, verbal reduplication is a marker of iconicity despite the attenuative properties that it may encode.

The following exemplifies the doubling of a verb stem, which yields an unexpected and interesting result:

(11) *Ale-ale, dimoun pou ne pli bezwen al pey zot bil an person*

Go-RED, people FUT NEG longer need go pay 3PL bill in person

[As time goes by, people will no longer need to pay their bills in person]

*Ale-ale* (literally go-go, with the base repeated once only) iconically encodes the passage of time. Strictly speaking, this construct does not constitute verbal reduplication. The reduplicated form undergoes a semantic shift and category change, emerging as a time adverbial (‘as time goes by’). *Ale-ale* is not to be confused with *I ale, i ale, i ale*, (‘3SG goes, 3SG goes, 3SG goes’). The latter is an example of emphatic repetition involving the ‘i’ as the doer of the verb. By repeating ‘he/she goes’ (in no fixed number of multiples), there emerges a clear representation of the person continually walking away. He/she goes and keeps going. PC associates this iconic form of speech with a story-telling genre that emanates from a bygone era when the Seychellois lifestyle was ‘folkloric.’ MTC adds: ‘maybe the language is not developed in terms of adjectives to embellish what you are trying to say.’ She believes that with the increased use of English, this type of creative language is disappearing, with its vestiges present in the vernacular of the elderly.

As is the case with nominal reduplication, SC offers a number of examples whereby verbal reduplication effectively changes word class, through derivation. The examples in Table 2 demonstrate how the forceful attribute of the verb culminates in a deverbal result.

Table 2: Examples of non-iconic verbal reduplication in SC with deverbal/stative result

Reduplicant base	Gloss.	Reduplicated form	Gloss.	Effect
<i>Fannen</i>	scatter	<i>fann-fannen</i>	scattered (adj.)	V.→Adj. Stative/deverbal result Distributive
<i>kase</i>	break	<i>kas-kase</i>	broken (adj.)	V.→Adj. Stative/deverbal result Distributive <b>Or</b> V.→Adj. Stative/deverbal result Attenuative-stative

*Fann-fannen* encodes the state of the resultant objects (eg. leaves) that are in a scattered state after having been actively dispersed, perhaps by the wind. The effect is also somewhat distributive. The adjective *kas-kase* can refer to multiple breaks (as opposed to a singular one). The effect is evidently distributive. However, it can also be argued that *kas-kase* may refer to an object that is not completely broken, only cracked. This type of breakage would manifest in an attenuated form of the broken state.

Another example of a deverbal result relates to the verb *kabose*:

- (12) *Sa loto ki'n dan aksidan, son deryer i'n tou kabos-kabose*  
 DEM car PM PST in accident, it's rear PM PST all crush-RED  
 [That car that was in the accident, it's rear is all dented]

Example (13) presents yet another example of non-iconic meaning being derived, due to verb doubling. *Tape* [to hit] effectively triggers a change of meaning. Although not fully opaque, there is a significant semantic drift from the simplex to the reduplicated form of the verb.

- (13) *Konmsi zis i tap-tape konmela*  
 As.if just 3SG hit-RED these.days  
 [It's as if he only has casual sexual relationships, these days]

#### 5.2.4 Adverbial reduplication in SC

The (iconic) reduplication of adverbs does occur, although less commonly than that of adjectives or verbs. As is the case with MC, adverbial reduplication in SC typically

conveys an emphatic meaning. Intensification is conveyed by tone and a pause between each stem.

(14) *Koz dusmā dusmā* [speak *very* softly] - MC - (Baker 2003, p.215)

(15) *Koz brit brit* [speak in a *very* ill-mannered way] - MC - (Baker 2003, p.215)

(16) *Sa garson i'n fer byen byen dan son lekzanmen*  
DEM boy PM PST do well well in 3SG POSS examination  
[This boy has done very well in his exams]

Example (16) relays emphatic speech - the stress on each of the *byen* and the audible pause between them.

Conversely, *byen-byen* is pronounced in a single intonation contour with no stress on either the stem or reduplicant. In (17) to (19), the reduplicated *byen* is postposed in relation to a negator, the effect being that of a change of meaning.

(17) *I pa byen-byen manze* (PC)  
3SG NEG well-RED eat  
[He/she hardly eats]

(18) *I pa tro pas isi byen byen* (JZ)  
3SG NEG too.much pass here well-RED  
[He/she hardly comes round here]

(19) *I pa'nn byen-byen al legliz* (PC)  
3SG NEG PST well-RED go church  
[He/she hardly attended church]

Table 3 presents two further examples of adverbial reduplication resulting in changes in meaning: from semantic drift to meaning change/homophony. The form to meaning relationship that characterizes iconicity is not present in these reduplicated forms that emanate from derivation. Significant lexical opacity is evident.

Table 3: Examples of (non-iconic) adverbial reduplication in SC

Reduplicant base	Gloss.	Reduplicated form	Gloss.	Effect
<i>anba</i>	underneath	<i>anba-anba</i>	sneaky	Prep/Adverb → Adj. Semantic drift
<i>kare</i>	square	<i>kare-kare</i>	smart appearance	Adj./N. → Adj. Semantic drift

## 5.2.5 Adjectival reduplication in SC

### 5.2.5.1 Preposed and postposed

‘There is only a small set of high frequency adjectives which precede the noun’ in SC (Bollée 1977, p.42); otherwise, the adjective follows the noun:

(20) *Aswar ek lalin kler*

In.the.evening with moon bright

[In the evening(s) with the bright moon]

All adjectives (preposed or postposed) and adverbs can be repeated when used as predicates, resulting either in emphatic repetition and intensifying meaning, or in reduplication with the meaning of attenuation.

In SC, preposed adjectival reduplication generally results in emphatic repetition. Bollée (2003, p.222) posits that ‘intensifying reduplication occurs only with preposed adjectives’, whereby both adjectives are separately stressed and – optionally – pronounced with a brief pause.

(21) *Li en gran gran dimun* - MC - (Baker, 2003, p.213)

3SG a big big person

[He/she is a really important person]

Conversely, ‘reduplicated adjectives can express attenuation when used as predicates’ (Bollée, 2003, p.223). In these cases, both (postposed) adjectives are pronounced as a unit, with hardly any stress at all. Akin to word formation created by affixation, this type of reduplication generally expresses the equivalent of the suffix ‘ish’, as per (22) and (23):

(22) *En zip rouz-rouz*

A skirt red-RED

[A reddish skirt]

- (23) *En lakaz sal-sal* - PC  
 A house dirty-RED  
 [A rather dirty house]<sup>7</sup>

*Rouz-rouz* and *sal-sal* are unstressed and uttered in one intonation contour. Postposed adjectives are often accompanied by modifiers such as *ase* [quite] and *en pe* [a little]. It is worth noting that the modifier coupled with the reduplicated lexeme produces a tautological effect, although arguably, it is the modifier that is effecting the attenuation:

- (24) *En pti pe sal-sal* - PC  
 A little bit dirty-RED  
 [A little bit dirty]

#### 5.2.5.2 Beyond the lexical level: hedging as a function of adjectival reduplication

In SC, adjectival reduplication with its minimizing, attenuative properties, is often used to achieve pragmatic discourse functions. (25) and (26) demonstrate the attenuating role of the reduplicated lexeme *malgol*.

- (25) *Si ou fiy i malgol-malgol, zot a mor vyey fiy menm* (Bollée, 1977, p.166)  
 If your daughter(s), is/are badly-dressed-RED, they FUT die old girl still  
 [If your daughters are rather badly dressed<sup>8</sup>, they will die as spinsters]

- (26) *Malgre si lekol, zot ti sikann li akoz i vilenn-vilenn, i'n fer gran sikse konman en akter*  
 Even if at school, 3PL PST tease 3SG because 3SG ugly-ugly, 3SG PST has done big success as an actor  
 [Even if at school, they made fun of him/her for being unattractive, he/she has had great success as an actor]

According to the informants, the reduplicated term *vilenn-vilenn* [ugly-ugly] means 'partially ugly'. JZ indicates that 'to say it raw is too harsh; reduplication softens the impact'. PC concurs that the diluted form has the 'effect of making something sound less harsh' (PC). The same principle applies to (28), in which the severity of *kouyon* (considered an insult and to some extent, vulgar) is significantly attenuated:

- (27) *Ou pardonn li akoz i kouyon-kouyon* (MTC)  
 You forgive 3SG because 3SG stupid-RED

<sup>7</sup> PC's translation. An alternative translation would be 'a dirtyish house'.

<sup>8</sup> 'Malgol' is also translated to 'ugly' in the World Loanword Language Database (2009) contributed by Susanne Michaelis (with Marcel Rosalie, Katrin Muhme), although perhaps a more accurate translation would be 'dishevelled'. The latter being the author's translation.

[You forgive him/her because he/she is not very bright]

By resorting to adjectival reduplication, less-desirable attributes can be uttered without causing a loss of face – the very intent of negative politeness strategies. Even insults are mitigated. JZ credits the use of this hedging device to the cultural importance of respect in communications and the use of tact when referring to someone’s shortcomings.

To test the presupposition that adjectival reduplication acts as a hedging device and to understand the motivations for its use, the SC experts were presented with a list of 25 common adjectives (Table 4 refers) and asked to identify the ones that could viably undergo full reduplication. In other words, they were asked to identify the unmarked adjectival doublings.

Table 4. 25 SC adjectives and their perceived ability to be reduplicated<sup>9</sup>

	Adjective	Gloss.	PC	MTC	JZ		Adjective	Gloss.	PC	MTC	JZ
1	<i>malen</i> (+)	clever	N	n/a	N	14.	<i>vilenn</i> (-)	ugly	N	N	Y
2	<i>sal</i> (-)	dirty	Y	Y	Y	15.	<i>zoli</i> (+)	beautiful	N	N	N
3	<i>prop</i> (+)	clean	N	N	N	16.	<i>bet</i> (-)	stupid	Y	Y	Y
4	<i>ris</i> (+)	rich	N	N	N	17.	<i>entelizan</i> (+)	intelligent	N	N	N
5	<i>kouyon</i> (-)	stupid (vulg)	Y	Y	Y	18.	<i>fol</i> (-)	crazy	Y	Y	Y
6	<i>bon</i> (+)	good	N	N	Y	19.	<i>brav</i> (+)	brave	N	N	N
7	<i>kapon</i> (-)	coward	Y	Y	N	20.	<i>drol</i> (-)	strange	Y	Y	Y
8	<i>for</i> (+)	strong	N	N	N	21.	<i>feros</i> (+/-)	ferocious	N	N	N
9	<i>timid</i> (-)	shy	Y	Y	Y	22.	<i>meg</i> (+/-)	thin	Y	Y	Y
10	<i>fran</i> (+)	frank	N	N	N	23.	<i>senp</i> (+/-)	simple	Y	Y	Y
11	<i>edike</i> (+)	educated	N	N	N	24.	<i>fay</i> (-)	weak	Y	Y	Y
12	<i>konpran</i> (+)	civilised	N	N	N	25.	<i>kapab</i> (+)	capable	N	N	N
13	<i>pov</i> (-)	poor	Y	n/a	Y						

The informants’ responses were generally consistent with one another. The adjectives that denote undesirable characteristics were effectively prone to reduplication. These attributes relate to: weakness, poverty, illness, low intelligence, and unattractive physical appearance. Conversely, positive/desirable attributes such as *malen* [clever], *ris* [rich], or *zoli* [beautiful] were perceived as ‘un-reduplicatable’ (author’s terminology); the three adjectives having ‘either/or’ values, appear to have been assigned properties by the

<sup>9</sup> Yes (Y), No (N), and Unsure (N/A) are the responses for whether the adjective can be reduplicated in the opinion of the 3 SC experts.

The adjectives are listed as attributes that are seen to be positive (+) or negative (-) or either (+/-) for ambivalent readings.

informants, based on the principle that strength/might is a positive characteristic in the language. *Meg* [skinny] *senp* [simple] had reduplicative potential and therefore assumed to be potentially undesirable. By contrast, *feros* [ferocious] was not deemed reduplicatable, possibly as it may have been considered a marker of strength. Only five of the 25 adjectives featured of a lack of unanimity between the three experts in respect to which ones could be reduplicated. In other words, there was 80% unanimity, which is significant.

## 6. Conclusion

In languages such as SC, reduplicated morphemes are features prototypically expressed by inflection markings in certain other languages. *Fay-fay* is an example of how a young language with its relatively limited lexicon stands to benefit semantically by this word formation capability. In SC, reduplication is apparent across the major word classes although, with regards to numeral reduplication, this phenomenon is extremely limited. As for nominal duplication which has been unattested to date in SC, this study has confirmed its existence, albeit on a limited scale. Unlike languages whereby plural forms can be quantified by reduplication, reduplication of SC nouns relates to a more diffuse plurality. As posited by Baker (2003, p.13) for MC, verbal reduplication denotes iteration or continuity while adverbial doubling signifies an augmentative reading. The SC findings have generally followed suit. With verbal reduplication, whether long-form/short form or both stem and copy in the short form, the effect is one of iterativity and continuity. Additionally, the diminution of the action's intensity is achieved by verbal reduplication in SC. As aspectual functions relating largely to repetition and continuation of events are the most frequent cross-linguistically (Li & Ponsford, 2018), SC is no exception as far as verbs are concerned. With adverbs, the outcome is an augmented and intensified reading. Adjectival reduplication encodes either attenuation or emphasis depending on whether it is pre or postposed respectively, and whether the stem and reduplicant undergo stressed intonation.

Attenuation brought about by the reduplication of adjectives ushers in a pragmatic effect whereby hedging is used as a negative politeness strategy. There appears to be a lack of literature on negative politeness strategies in SC (from a search in Google Scholar). JZ, in particular, remarks that these strategies form an essential part of the culture. In a small island nation with negligible degrees of separation, politeness strategies embedded in the language of interaction are essential. It is helpful to be able to access a hedging device that allows one to reduce the strength of a negative adjective, thus saving face. The three informants all make reference to the interplay between reduplication and expression of the local culture. The observations made in this small study relating to the pragmatic functions of adjectival reduplication suggest that there are systemic factors determining reduplicability; factors that appear to be based on face-saving motivations. This phenomenon does warrant further investigation.

Even if prototypical reduplication is associated with iconicity, the overall theme of SC reduplication as categorized in APiCS is attenuative. In reality, this generalization only paints part of the picture. Iconic as well as attenuative and word class changing (through derivation), reduplication exhibits transparency and opacity. Opaque lexicalization has been observed with the reduplication of certain verbs and adverbs in SC, via examples of non-correspondence between form and meaning. The belief that the grammars of creole languages are simple and transparent has been challenged in this paper, as has been the case with Caribbean creoles (Kouwenberg & LaCharité, 2004, 2005, 2010). It is clear that SC creatively allows the production of meaning in ways that are not observed in its lexifier language, French. There is a noticeable gap between the number of reduplicated lexemes in oral use and those featuring in the dictionary. With SC's relatively limited lexicon, it would make sense to lexicalize a number of productive reduplications that are in widespread usage.

***In memory of Professor Annegret Bollée (1937- 2021) – architect of the modern Kreol Seselwa orthography.***

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