

Decreolisation in Martinican creole: a perceptual study

Marina Merryweather
Queen Mary, University of London

Introduction

- Martinican Creole is a variety of Antillean Creole spoken in the French overseas department of Martinique (Fennig, Lewis and Simmons, 2016), and has been subject to the whims of French language policy (Adrey 2009).
 - Only received official protection and teaching provisions from the early 2000s (Léglise and Migge, 2008)
- Limited studies have been done on the language
 - French and creole exist as a diglossia, cf. Ferguson (1959) - both are reserved for different situations.
 - Lefebvre (1974) found limited evidence of the traditional creole continuum (cf. DeCamp 1971, Bickerton 1973) - French and creole are distinct languages on the island.
 - Prudent (1981) refers to *interlecte*, a form of constant code-switching between Martinican Creole and French, use of calques, mixed forms, etc.
 - Bernabé and Confiat (2002) refer to decreolisation taking place in Martinican Creole, and hope language education provision will stop it from happening.
- Vaillant (2009) - analysed recordings from radio shows and found the following features.
 - Use of a relative pronoun - optional in Martinican Creole, obligatory in French.

1) A)	mam	ka	panse	ou	vini	
1.SG	DMPF	think	2.SG	come		
<i>I think he came.</i>						
B)	mam	ka	panse	ke	ou vini	
1.SG	DMPF	think	REL	2.SG	come	
<i>I think that he came.</i>						
(Adapted from Vaillant, 2009, p.20)						
C)	je	pense	qw'il	est		
1.SG	think-3.SG	PRES	REL-3.SG	be-3.SG	PRES	
venu						
come-3.SG						PST

- Use of a reflexive construction with calques of reflexive French verbs that are not usually reflexive in Martinican Creole.

3) A)	Mam	ka	di	ko	mven	[...]
1.SG	DMPF	say	body	1.SG	POSS	
<i>I'm thinking to myself [...]</i>						
B)	Mam	ka	sozejé			
1.SG	DMPF	think				
<i>I am thinking</i>						
C)	Je	me	dis			
1.SG	NOM	1.SG	REFL	say-2.PRES.		
<i>I tell myself</i>						
(Taken from Vaillant, 2009, p.15)						

Research questions

1. Is there a perceptual preference for the morphosyntactic features outlined in Vaillant (2009), which could provide further evidence of decreolisation?
2. Do the following factors have any influence of a person's perceptual preference for certain features?
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Education in creole
 - Attachment to the island
 - Attitude towards creole

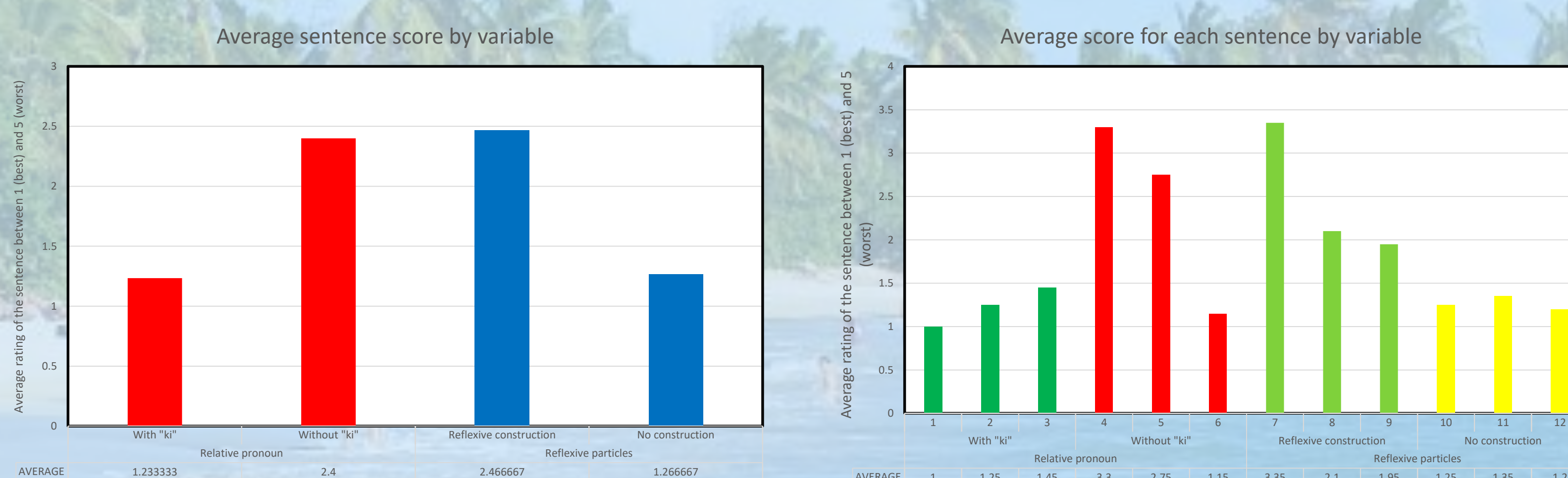
Methodology

- Modified form of matched guise test, based on Freywald et. al. (2011)
 - The test played short and simple sample sentences to compare the acceptability of sentences with the features from Vaillant (2009) to those without them.
 - Instructions were recorded and played to participants to avoid potential literacy issues from aforementioned lack of education provision.
 - Stimuli also included filler sentences considered normatively correct and incorrect, to prime participants and prevent scale bias.
 - Participants rated each sentence from 1 to 5, with 1 being acceptable and 5 being unacceptable.

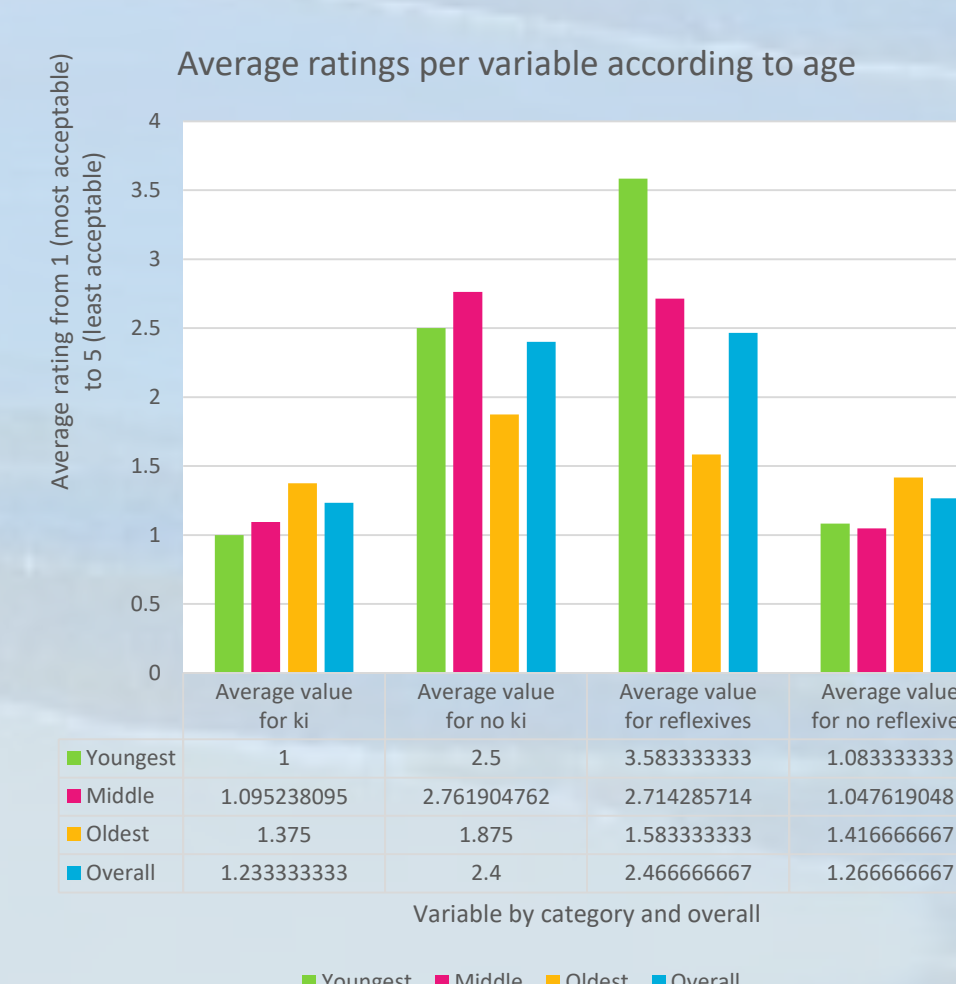
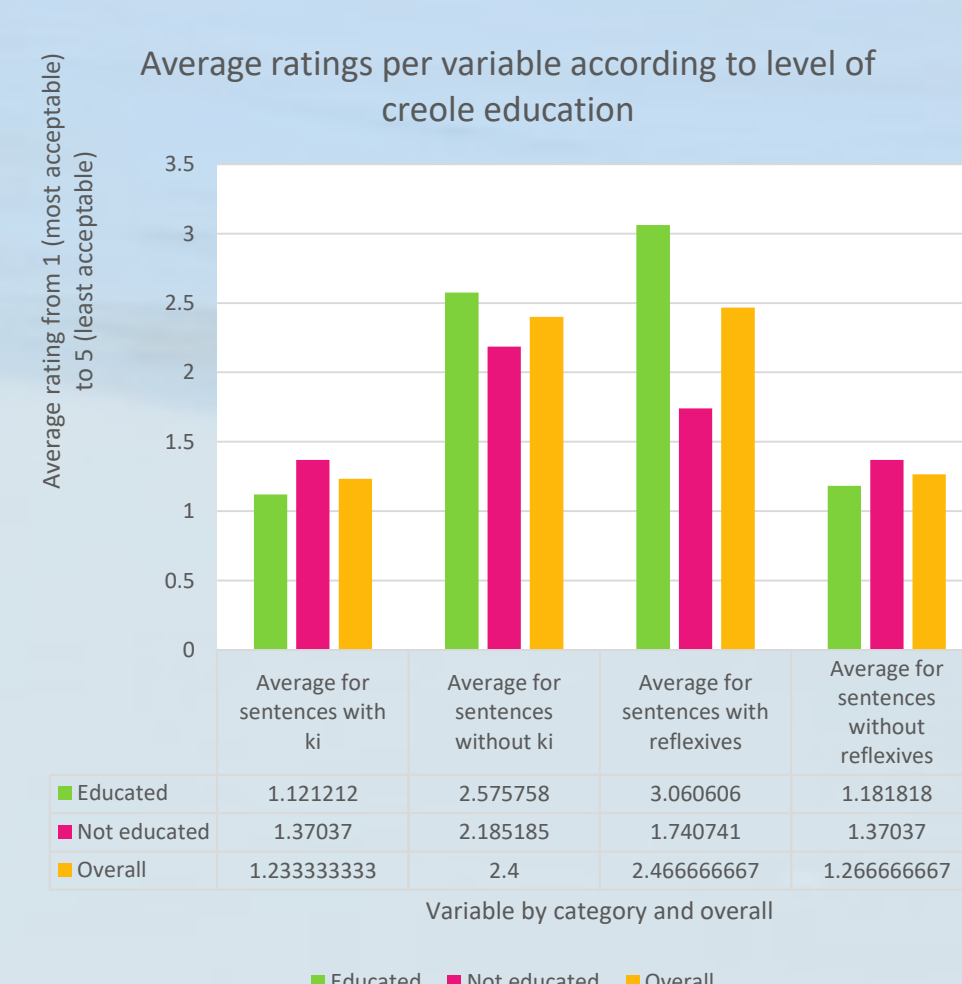
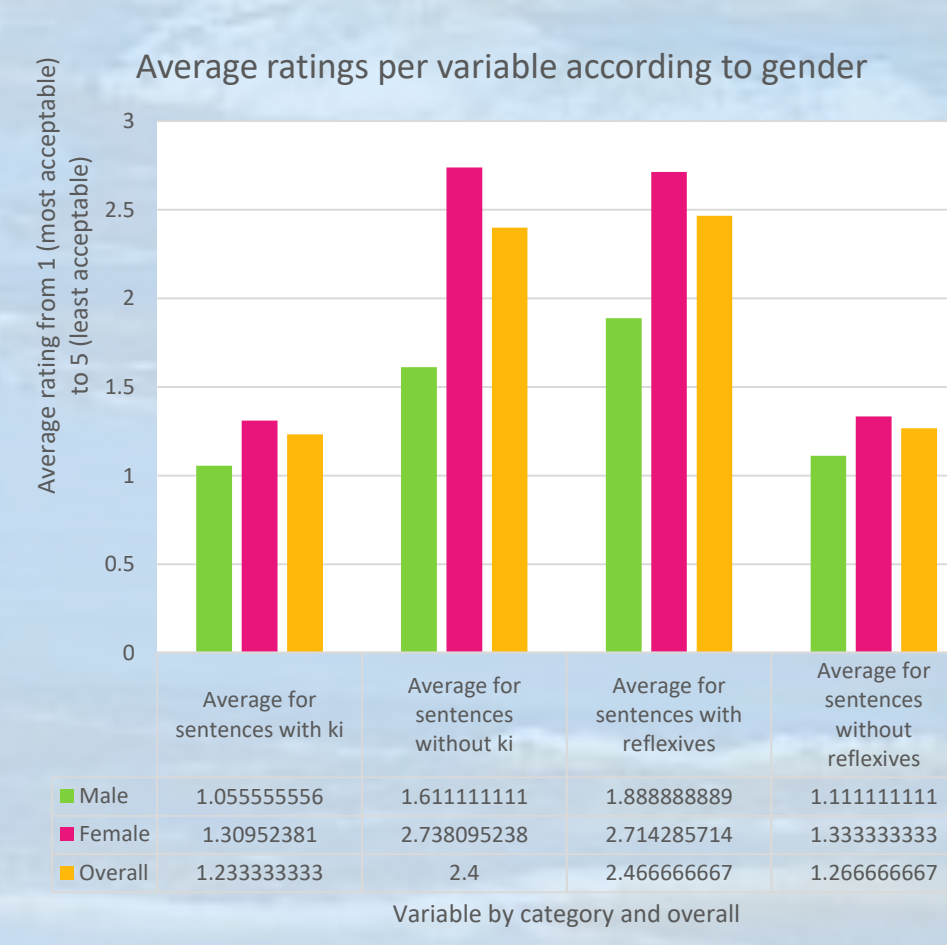
	😊	😐	😞	😡
1	2	3	4	5
A				
B				

- Sentence ratings then tallied up and chi-squared tests were carried out - ratings were collapsed into binary categories as per Blake and Cutler (2003).
- Participants filled in a questionnaire to collect demographic information, as well as information on use of Martinican Creole, and responses to questions about language attitudes.
 - Also provided a space for further comments, to try and obtain qualitative data.

Results



- 57 out of 60 positive responses for using a relative pronoun, versus 37 out of 60 without.
 - $\chi^2(2, N = 120) = 19.64, p = <0.01$
- 38 out of 60 positive responses for using a reflexive construction, versus 57 out of 60 without.
 - $\chi^2(2, N = 120) = 18.24, p = <0.01$



- Of the five factors mentioned in research question two, only three had any significant effect on the distribution of results.
 - Significance of gender against stimuli with no relative pronoun - $\chi^2(3, N = 120) = 5.107, p = 0.0238$
 - Significance of gender against stimuli with a reflexive construction - $\chi^2(3, N = 120) = 4.429, p = 0.0353$
 - Significance of age against stimuli with no reflexive construction - $\chi^2(3, N = 120) = 6.962, p = <0.01$
 - Significance of education against stimuli with no reflexive construction - $\chi^2(3, N = 120) = 6.27, p = 0.0435$

Discussion

- One variant adopted from French was considered acceptable, but the other unacceptable - decreolisation might therefore be the wrong answer.
- Some sentences potentially demonstrate semantic or structural effects.
 - Sentences without *ki* were negatively rated where the noun was a subject, positively in the stimulus where the noun was an object.
 - Vaillant originally referred to calques of reflexive verbs - the stimuli here were not calques.
- Overall, there were a majority of positive responses, supporting Prudent's concept of *interlecte* - different varieties considered equally acceptable in the context of constant code-switching.
- Women more likely to reject sentences without a relative pronoun and with reflexive constructions.
 - Potential to investigate interactive effects with gender of speaker, cf. Aub-Buscher (1993).
- Younger and more educated participants more likely to reject reflexive pronouns - effects of language provisions mentioned in Bernabé and Confiat?
- Study would merit repetition with more stimuli, a larger sample, and a production counterpart, as well as investigating other demographics.

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Contact

m.j.merryweather@hss15.qmul.ac.uk
@MJMerryweather