Kwéyòl Dictionary

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

ADJ	*adjective*
ADV	*adverb*
ART	*article*
CONJ	*conjunction*
Eng.	*English*
Fr.	*French*
INTERJ	*interjection*
N	*noun*
opp	*opposite (antonym)*
PREP	*preposition*
PRO	*pronoun*
syn	*synonym*
V	*verb*
var	*variant*

Preface

This dictionary is published by the Ministry of Education of St. Lucia to meet the need for an authoritative, affordable reference guide on Creole. The research for this dictionary was done by the SIL team in the years 1984–2000. Several years after the project was begun, the researchers became aware of the work of the late Jones Mondesir, who at the time was cooperating with Dr. Lawrence Carrington of the University of the West Indies to publish his own ground-breaking dictionary of St. Lucian Creole, having begun collecting data several decades earlier.[1] With his dictionary and other writings either on Creole or in Creole, Mr. Mondesir earned a place as a pioneer in the development and recognition of Creole as a legitimate, respectable language.

After Mondesir's dictionary was published in 1992, the work on the present Creole dictionary continued, and because the need still existed for a Creole dictionary that was affordable and reliable as a spelling guide, it is now finally being released in this first edition. The compilers have chosen for this first edition to include data that they themselves gathered and have consciously avoided 'borrowing' data from Mondesir. Subsequent editions will likely include input from a greater variety of sources in order to be of maximum usefulness to the public.

Of the SIL team members who worked on this dictionary, Dr. Frank oversaw the project. He wrote a *Dictionary Database Editor* computer program that the team used for entering and editing the data and producing the formatted dictionary. He was responsible for turning the data into a publishable book. Mr. Crosbie worked harder than anyone else on the team on collecting and processing lexical data. He worked mostly in conjunction with Mr. Leon, who served as a knowledgeable mother-tongue Creole language specialist. The team of Crosbie and Leon worked tirelessly over the course of some fifteen years collecting information about the words and phrases of Creole. Mr. Samuel, working primarily with Dr. Frank, also served as a valuable mother-tongue source of information about the Creole lexicon over the years, but his contribution was especially important in the

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[1] Jones E. Mondesir (1992) *Dictionary of St. Lucian Creole*, ed. by Lawrence D. Carrington. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

last year, as Frank, Crosbie and Samuel worked intensively as a team on editing the lexical data in preparation for publication of this dictionary.

SIL International is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to facilitate language-based development through research, translation, and literacy. The following statement is taken from the *Linguistic Creed*: [1] "As the most uniquely human characteristic a person has, a person's language is associated with his self-image. Interest in and appreciation of a person's language is tantamount to interest in and appreciation of the person himself. All languages are worthy of preservation in written form by means of grammars, dictionaries, and written texts. This should be done as part of the heritage of the human race."

The compilers of this dictionary owe a debt of gratitude to the following persons or institutions: Dame Pearlette Louisy, Governor General of St. Lucia, without whose enthusiasm, leadership and scholarship, Creole would not get the respect it deserves today; Dr. Lawrence Carrington of the University of the West Indies, whose solid, pioneering work on the analysis and exposition of St. Lucian Creole[2] paved the way for further descriptions such as the present one; Dr. Didacus Jules, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, who has been working on Creole literacy even before this dictionary project was born and who has the vision, intelligence and confidence to use his position of leadership to deal properly with controversial topics such as the place of Creole in St. Lucian society; Mr. Michael Walker, a prominent scholar and author, a 'mover and shaker' who has used his tremendous energy and his unique intellectual and interpersonal gifts to bring Creole to the public consciousness in a new way and bring together the various parties working on Creole; the Folk Research Centre, which is the foremost promoter and guardian of all things Creole – including both language and culture – in St. Lucia; and not least of all, the hundreds of Creole speakers who joyfully shared a wealth of information about their language with the researchers.

A final note: This first edition of the Kwéyòl dictionary is a work in progress. The authors and publisher hope to replace it eventually with a second, revised and enlarged edition. Comments, corrections, and additions are welcome and can be sent to *SIL, Box 1030, Castries, Saint Lucia*.

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[1] This statement of SIL's purpose and the Linguistic Creed (authored by Benjamin Elson) are taken from the SIL web site. For more information, see www.sil.org.
[2] See especially Lawrence D. Carrington (1984) *St. Lucian Creole: A Descriptive Analysis of its Phonology and Morpho-Syntax*. Hamburg: Helmut Buske.

Introduction

This dictionary for St. Lucian Kwéyòl is in two parts. The first part is arranged alphabetically according to Kwéyòl key words with English definitions. Different senses of the word are given, along an example sentence illustrative of the word used in that sense. Other information is given as well, including the part of speech, any synonyms, antonyms, or cross-references, and an etymology, if known.

The second part of the dictionary is arranged alphabetically according to English key words. Parts of speech and the Kwéyòl meanings are given for each English key word, again with different senses indicated where applicable. As the main purpose of this dictionary is to serve as a reference guide on Kwéyòl, the information given about English is not as extensive as the information given about Kwéyòl. The purpose of the English-Kwéyòl part of the dictionary is to give a quick Kwéyòl gloss of the English words and point the reader to the the right spot in the Kwéyòl-English part of the dictionary for more complete information.

The following gives more detailed information about the different parts of a dictionary entry:

KEY WORD

The term 'key word' here is used to indicate the Kwéyòl (or English) word being explained. Each entry in this dictionary begins with a key word in blue bold type. The order of presentation is according to normal English alphabetic order, with accent marks ignored for the sake of alphabetisation.

Sometimes a phrase is defined in this dictionary rather than a single word. In such a case, the phrase too is in blue bold type, but the phrase comes as a continuation of an entry rather than as a separate entry. Defined phrases are included in this dictionary as part of the entry of one of the key words in the phrase.

Occasionally the key word is followed by a small, raised number, as in the example provided (Figure 1) on the following page. The superscripted number is used to distinguish homonyms, in the case of two or more words that have the same spelling but are unrelated in meaning. For example, the
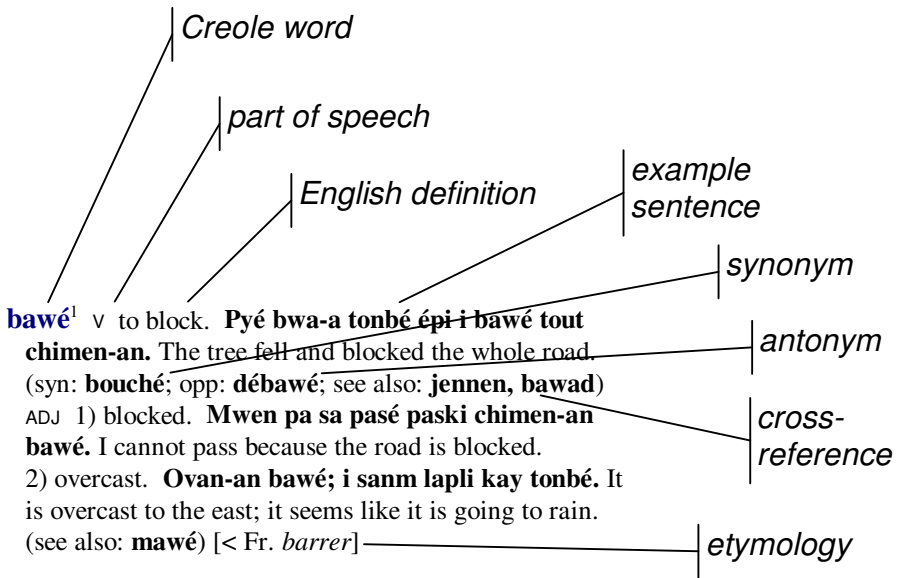
Figure 1: Sample dictionary entry

Kwéyòl word **bawé** can mean 'to block; blocked'. But there is another Kwéyòl word **bawé**, which is a type of fish. To keep these homonyms distinct, the dictionary lists them as **bawé**[1] and **bawé**[2] respectively.

In some cases the key word will be followed by an indication of a variant form, as in **jòdi** (var: **hòdi**). This means that **jòdi** is considered to be the most standard form, but **hòdi** is recognized in this dictionary as a variant form of the same word. Looking up **hòdi** in the dictionary, one would find a minor entry that says this word is a "variant of **jòdi**." Please note that in such cases where one form of a word is said to be a variant of another form of the same word, the authors do not intend to be making a judgment concerning correctness. That is, the way the entries are made in this dictionary is not intended to impose standardisation and say that one form is right and another form is wrong. As a basis for determining which Kwéyòl form is called a variant of another form, the commonly-used form that is closest to the French origin (or, in some cases, origin from another source) was chosen for a full entry, and other forms less directly related to the form of the etymological source were said to be the variants. It is possible, however, that as Kwéyòl develops more into a written language, there will be instances where the forms further removed from the original source language that will eventually be recognized as "standard".

PART OF SPEECH

The set of parts of speech, or word classes, used in this dictionary is as follows: N (noun), PRO (pronoun), ADJ (adjective), ART (article), V (verb), ADV (adverb), PREP (preposition), CONJ (conjunction), and INTERJ (interjection). These are only broad categories. In a more complete grammatical description of Kwéyòl, these broad categories could and should be further broken down into subcategories. For example, what is called here 'noun' would include both common nouns and proper names, but a distinction is not made for the present purposes. Similarly, the category 'verb' would include transitive verbs, intransitive verbs, and linking verbs, but such distinctions are not made in this dictionary. Other word classes could be subdivided as well.

DEFINITION

What is termed a 'definition' in this introduction would perhaps more accurately be called a gloss in the other language, i.e, English glosses for Kwéyòl key words and Kwéyòl glosses for the English key words.

There may be different senses of a word. What is judged to be the primary sense is always put first in the dictionary entry. If there are other distinguishable secondary or extended senses, then a numbering system is used to identify them. For example in Figure 1, **bawé** in its use as an adjective primarily means 'blocked', but it can also mean 'overcast' in reference to the weather. The compilers determined that there seemed to be some thread of shared meaning between these two senses, so they were considered as different senses of the same word and put into a single entry, rather than being a pair of homonyms each deserving its own separate entry. The primary sense is the meaning that one would think of first, such as if the word is cited out of context. Secondary or extended senses are other meanings that the same word can have in other contexts.

EXAMPLE SENTENCE

Generally-speaking, each entry has an example sentence to show how the word is normally used in context. The compilers sought to use illustrative sentences that reinforced the meaning of the word and gave clues to the way the word is naturally used in context. Each Kwéyòl example sentence is followed by an English translation of the same. Often when an entry involves more than one sense, different example sentences are given to show how the word is used in that particular sense. Example sentence are not provided in the English-Kwéyòl part of the dictionary.

USAGE, SYNONYMS, ANTONYMS, CROSS-REFERENCES

It is valuable in a dictionary such as this to have, in addition to the definitions of words and example sentences, notes on usage and observations on the way one word in the language relates to others. Such information was collected in the lexical database, and when it applies to an entry it appears in the printed dictionary in parentheses, following the definition and example sentence. In terms of usage, the main observations that were noted occasionally were that particular words were archaic (that is, they are old words that few people know today), religious (that is, used primarily used in a religious context such as church), or crude. Synonyms of the word in focus – other words with the same meaning – are noted with the abbreviation 'syn'. Antonyms, or opposites in meaning, are marked with 'opp'. In some cases, a certain word will bring to mind certain other words that are not exactly synonyms but are closely related in meaning, and in such a case a cross-reference will be noted with the words 'see also:'.

ETYMOLOGY

Every word has a history, and the term 'etymology' refers to the historical antecedents of a word. St. Lucian Kwéyòl is a French Creole, and most of the vocabulary of Kwéyòl comes from French. There are various sources of Kwéyòl words, as in any language, including African languages, English, Indian languages, Portuguese, etc., but the overwhelming majority of Kwéyòl words derive from French. That is not to say that Kwéyòl is not a unique language – that it is merely a corruption of French. Kwéyòl is a language and deserves to be described as such rather than as a variation of something else. To say that Kwéyòl is a dialect and not a language is to show ignorance of the proper, technical meanings of those terms.

Creole languages are a unique category that arise out of particular socio-historical contexts, whereby a new language is created that derives its vocabulary usually (though by no means always) from a major European 'lexifier' language but the new language form is distinguishable from the language from whence it arises. Thus there are French Creoles and English Creoles in the Caribbean, and also Spanish Creoles, Dutch Creoles, Arabic Creoles, African-language-based Creoles like Sango, etc. It would be beyond the present purpose to go into exactly how a Creole language develops and what makes it unique, and these issues are in fact topics of debate among linguists.

There is not always a one-to-one relationship between Kwéyòl words and their sources in French. There are many cases where a Kwéyòl noun, for example, derives from a French preposition and/or article plus noun, as in

Kwéyòl **lavi** coming from French *la vie*, **nanj** from *un ange*, **zòdi** from *les ordures* and **dlo** from *de l'eau*.

There are certain regular sound changes that can be seen to have taken place in the development of Kwéyòl out French. For one thing, Kwéyòl has fewer vowel phonemes than has French, and certain small sets of French vowels have merged to be represented as one Kwéyòl vowel phoneme. For example, French has a distinction between a high, front unrounded vowel [i] and a high, front rounded vowel [y], where Kwéyòl has only the unrounded variety of high front vowel. So French words with this sound, usually spelled in French with the letter <u>u</u>, normally correspond to Kwéyòl words with the [i] sound, as in the French word *tort<u>u</u>e*, which corresponds to the Kwéyòl word **tòt<u>i</u>**. Also, the distinction between [w] and [r] in French was lost in Kwéyòl so that, for example, the Kwéyòl word corresponding to French *a<u>rr</u>êter* is **a<u>w</u>été**. There are many other regular sound correspondences that can be identified in the development of Kwéyòl out of French.

In the Kwéyòl-English part of this dictionary, etymologies have been noted in square brackets at the end of the entries wherever possible. These are simple etymologies, pointing to a single historical source, rather than complex etymologies pointing to a trail of antecedent forms, which would be more accurate in some cases but beyond the scope of this dictionary. A left wedge means 'comes from', so that an etymology such as [< Fr. *frère*] indicates that the word in question (**fwè** in this case) comes from the French word *frère*. Sometimes the etymologies that were posited amount to educated guesses, and the compilers will be happy to incorporate any corrections and additions that are brought to their attention into further editions.