

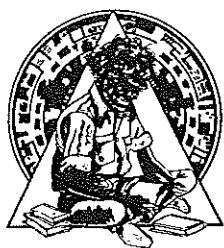
WORK PAPERS OF SIL - AAB

Series B Volume 3

**AN AUSTRALIAN CREOLE IN THE
NORTHERN TERRITORY: A DESCRIPTION
OF NGUKURR-BAMYILI DIALECTS (PART 1)**

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PREFACE

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INTRODUCTION TO
SERIES B VOLUME 3

The purpose of this paper is to make available for the layman a description of the creole language spoken in the Roper River area of the Northern Territory. It is written particularly with Europeans working in the area in mind. It has not been written as a technical paper for linguists, but it is hoped that linguists will find it useful in providing information on the language.

It should be noted that this volume (Part 1) does not contain a complete description of Creole. Intonation and rhythm, word formation, adverbs, conjunctions, questions and commands, complex sentences, and discourse structure are not discussed. It is planned that these sections will be described in a second volume (Part 2) in the future. (In addition, a basic dictionary is being published separately as *Work Papers of SIL-AAB, Series B, Volume 4.*) The sections contained in Part 1 are comprehensively, but not exhaustively, covered.

At several places in this paper the reader is referred to a discussion of a particular item at another location. When the reference is stated as being 'elsewhere', it means that the item will be discussed in Part 2. If the discussion is within Part 1, the chapter or section reference is given.

Examples occur frequently throughout the chapters dealing with Creole grammar. These examples are written in the Creole practical orthography as discussed in Chapter 3. In some situations an example of an unacceptable or ungrammatical construction is given. These examples are marked by a preceding asterisk (*).

This paper is based on some 27 months of fieldwork under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics since March 1973. Of this time approximately 60% has been spent at Ngukurr, 30% at Bamyili, and the remaining 10% elsewhere.

Without the help of many people this paper would not have been possible. I would like to thank the many Creole speakers who have shared their language with me, especially those who patiently worked with me in formal situations: Barnabas Roberts, Mordecai Skewthorpe, Andrew Joshua, Isaac Joshua, Charlie Johnson, Wallace Dennis, David Jentian, and Danny Jentian. Thanks are due to the late Lothar Jagst,

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
Preface	iii
Introduction to Series B Volume 3	iv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE SOUND SYSTEM OF CREOLE	27
3. A PRACTICAL ORTHOGRAPHY FOR CREOLE	53
4. NOUNS, PRONOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND THE NOUN PHRASE	75
5. VERBS AND THE VERB PHRASE	111
6. PREPOSITIONS AND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES	141
7. SIMPLE SENTENCES	163



CHAPTER 4

NOUNS, PRONOUNS, ADJECTIVES, AND THE NOUN PHRASE

	Page
4.1 NOUNS	77
4.2 PRONOUNS	82
4.2.1 <u>Personal Pronouns</u>	82
4.2.2 <u>Possessive Pronouns</u>	89
4.2.3 <u>Reflexive and Reciprocal Pronouns</u>	91
4.2.4 <u>Demonstrative Pronouns</u>	94
4.2.5 <u>Interrogative Pronouns</u>	96
4.2.6 <u>Indefinite Pronouns</u>	98
4.3 ADJECTIVES	100
4.4 THE NOUN PHRASE	103
4.4.1 <u>The Basic Noun Phrase</u>	103
4.4.2 <u>The Complex Noun Phrase</u>	106
Bibliography for Chapter 4	109



The noun phrase in Creole is composed of three major elements - nouns modified by adjectives and pronouns. All nouns, most pronouns, and most adjectives under certain conditions can occur in a sentence in the place of a noun phrase. Note, for example, the subjects and objects in the following 'story'.

Noun Phrase

Subject	Object
<u>Main waitwan dog bin</u>	<u>jadan fetwan gowena.</u>
'My white dog	killed that fat goanna.'

Nouns

Subject	Object
<u>Olgamen bin meigim</u>	<u>baya.</u>
'A woman	made a fire.'

Pronouns

Subject	Object
<u>Imin andi gugum</u>	<u>im.</u>
'She was going to cook	<u>it.</u>

Adjectives

Subject	Object
<u>Drangginbala bin dagat</u>	<u>rowan.</u>
'A drunk	ate the raw (goanna).'

Nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and the noun phrase are discussed in order below.

4.1 NOUNS

A noun in English is commonly defined as the name of a person, place, or thing. It can also be described by the fact that it occurs as the subject or object of a verb. Nouns in Creole can be described in much the same way. A few Creole nouns are given below as examples.

<i>Jali</i>	'Charlie'
<i>Wadagujaja</i>	'Goose Lagoon'
<i>bilibong</i>	'billabong'

<i>gabarra</i>	'head'
<i>boniboni</i>	'colt'
<i>daga</i>	'food'

Nouns in English are either definite (*the colt*) or indefinite (*a colt, some colts*) and either singular (*colt*) or plural (*colts*). Creole nouns are unmarked for all four of these features. In all the examples given above in brackets, Creole would have simply *boniboni*. Thus, the sentence:

Ai bin luk boniboni.

could be translated, depending on what the speaker actually saw, as:

- 'I saw the colt.' (definite-singular)
- 'I saw a colt.' (indefinite-singular)
- 'I saw the colts.' (definite-plural)
- 'I saw some colts.' (indefinite-plural)

This parallels the Aboriginal languages, which rarely mark nouns for number. There are some exceptions, but these are usually restricted to nouns referring to animate or human beings as opposed to inanimate things. (Wurm 1972:63). Alawa, for example, marks plurality on human nouns by reduplication, though it is optional (Sharpe 1972:54).

Likewise, Creole has three nouns referring to human beings that are optionally marked for plurality by reduplication. One of them is marked by reduplicating the whole word:

<i>olmen</i>	'man'	<i>olmenolmen</i>	'men'
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while the other two reduplicate only part of the word:

<i>olgamen</i>	'woman'	<i>olgolgamen</i>	'women'
<i>wangulubala</i>	'orphan'	<i>wanguwangulubala</i>	'orphans'

While it is true to say that Creole nouns are unmarked for definiteness and number, it is wrong to say that Creole cannot indicate definiteness and number. These features may be indicated by the use of demonstrative and indefinite pronouns, as shown in the following examples:

<i>Ai bin</i>	<i>luk</i>	<u><i>dadon</i></u>	<i>boniboni.</i>	(definite-singular)
'I	saw	<u>the</u>	colt.'	

Ai bin luk wanbala boniboni. (indefinite-singular)
'I saw a colt.'

Ai bin luk olabat boniboni. (definite-plural)
'I saw the colts.'

Ai bin luk sambala boniboni. (indefinite-plural)
'I saw some colts.'

Likewise, while it is true to say that Creole nouns are not marked for gender, it is not true to say that gender cannot be indicated. Some words carry an inherent gender. For example, *mami* 'mother' and *olgamen* 'old woman' are inherently feminine, while *dadi* 'father' and *olmen* 'old man' are inherently masculine.

English speakers should beware that the inherent gender of a Creole word may not be the same as that of the English word from which it was derived. The classic example would be *greni*, which is derived from the feminine English word *granny*. The Creole *greni* may, as in English, refer to one's mother's mother, but it may also refer to one's sister's daughter's children whether male or female, to one's daughter's daughter's husband, or to one's wife's mother's mother's husband.

Nouns that do not inherently carry a gender distinction but which apply generally to a person or animal of either sex, may be specified as being male or female by the use of the adjectives *boiwan* 'male' and *gelwan* 'female'. For example, the unspecified gender reference in

Imin kilim lebden wolabi.
'He killed a nail tail wallaby.'

could be specified as

Imin kilim boiwan lebden wolabi.
'He killed a male nail tail wallaby.'

or *Imin kilim gelwan lebden wolabi.*
'He killed a female nail tail wallaby.'

Creole nouns can be divided into three classes (proper, count, and mass) according to the type of modifiers that can precede them. These classes are not absolute as some nouns can occur in more than one class.

1. Proper nouns are names, in the strict English sense, especially of people, pet animals, and places. Some examples are *Wangan*

(a person's name), *Marlu* (a dog's name), and *Burrunju* (a place name). Proper nouns are distinguished from other noun classes in that they occur with very few modifiers.

Aboriginal place names commonly apply to *kantri* 'a defined geographical area' but may also apply to the significant features within that area, such as *riba* 'rivers', *krik* 'creeks', *bilibong* 'billabongs', and *hil* 'hills'. These latter are sometimes specified by reference to the feature. For example, *Karniyarrang*, while referring to a specific *kantri*, may also refer to a specific *krik* or *hil* within that *kantri*. These may be more specifically referred to by a double noun as *Karniyarrang Krik* and *Karniyarrang Hil*.

2. Count nouns, as the name implies, are those which can be counted. In other words, count nouns may be preceded by the numeral modifiers. They are not restricted, however, to numeral modifiers but may take the full range of modifiers. For example, *jaojao* 'water lily stalk' can be used in the following constructions.

Ai bin dagat jaojao. (no modifiers)
'I ate water lily stalk.'

Ai bin dagat fobala jaojao. (numeral modifier)
'I ate four water lily stalks.'

Ai bin dagat sambala jaojao. (indefinite pronoun)
'I ate some water lily stalks.'

Ai bin dagat bigbala jaojao. (adjective)
'I ate a large water lily stalk.'

3. Mass nouns are those nouns that cannot be counted. That is, they cannot occur with numerical modifiers.

Ai bin dagat daga.
'I ate food.'

and *Ai bin dagat sambala daga.*
'I ate some food.'

but not **Ai bin dagat fobala daga.*
'I ate four food.'

It is also possible in Creole to talk about simple nouns, reduplicated nouns, compound nouns, and double nouns.

1. The vast majority of the nouns in Creole are simple nouns being composed of one root word.

<i>binji</i>	'stomach'
<i>brolga</i>	'Brolga'
<i>gamda</i>	'private parts'
<i>marlabangu</i>	'freshwater mussel'

2. Reduplicated nouns have a root word that occurs twice. Many of these words are animal names that have been derived from English words.

<i>bigibigi</i>	'pig'
<i>jukjuk</i>	'chook'
<i>gabigabi</i>	'calf'

Some have been derived from Aboriginal words. Many of these words are onomatopoeic; that is, they are formed from sounds that resemble those associated with the object named.

<i>nirrinirri</i>	'fly (insect)'
<i>karrakkarrak</i>	'Comorant'

3. Compound nouns are made up of two closeknit root words.

<i>sengran</i>	'sand' ('sand' + 'ground')
<i>igulok</i>	'hawk' ('eagle' + 'hawk')
<i>sugabeg</i>	'wild honey' ('sugar' + 'bag')
<i>bakjamba</i>	'bucking horse' ('buck' + 'jumper')

4. Double nouns consist of two root words which are not as closeknit as compound word roots.

<i>gras wolabi</i>	'agile wallaby'
<i>waya spiya</i>	'fishing spear'
<i>ded silip</i>	'deep sleep'
<i>bleksol kantri</i>	'black soil country'

The distinction between double nouns and compound nouns is not well defined.

The first root word of some compound and double nouns can stand for the whole noun.

Mi wangulubala.
'I am an orphan.'

but not *Ai wangulubala.

Mi bin luk boniboni.
'I saw a colt.'

and Ai bin luk boniboni.

Boniboni bin luk mi.
'The colt saw me.'

but not *Boniboni bin luk ai.

Creole also makes a distinction in the third person plural between the subject and object pronoun. *Dei* (from the English subject pronoun *they*), like English, is used only in subject positions, while *dem* (from the English object pronoun *them*) is used only in object positions. (It should be noted, however, that *dem* also functions as a demonstrative pronoun in either subject or object noun phrases.)

Dei bin luk boniboni.
'They saw the colt.'

but not *Dem bin luk boniboni. (subject position)

Ai bin luk dem.
'I saw them.'

but not *Ai bin luk dei. (object position)

Dem boniboni kaman iya. (demonstrative pronoun)
'Those colts are coming here.'

Similarities between the Creole and English personal pronoun systems virtually stop here. Though the actual Creole pronoun forms are derived from English, their meanings are derived from the Aboriginal languages.

Unlike English, Creole does not have a simple set of plural pronouns. Instead, it has two non-singular sets. The one set is 'dual', which refers to two persons or things. The other set is 'plural', which refers to more than two (as opposed to the English plural being two or more). The Creole non-singular second and third person pronouns are given in Chart 4.3.

Chart 4.3. Non-Singular Pronouns

	dual	plural
second person	<i>yundubala</i>	<i>yubala</i>
third person	<i>dubala</i>	<i>olabat</i>

Yundubala *kaman iya.*
'You (two) come here.'

Yubala *kaman iya.*
'You all come here.'

Dubala *kaman iya.*
'They (two) are coming here.'

Olabat *kaman iya.*
'They all are coming here.'

In the first person, not only is a distinction made between dual and plural, but also whether or not the person (or persons) spoken to is included in the 'we'. If the person being spoken to is included, the pronoun is inclusive; if the person is excluded, it is exclusive. The first person non-singular inclusive and exclusive forms are given in Chart 4.4.

Chart 4.4. Inclusive-Exclusive Pronouns

	dual	plural
inclusive	<i>yurmi</i>	<i>wi</i>
exclusive	<i>mindubala</i>	<i>mibala</i>

Yurmi bin *luk boniboni.*
'We (you and I) saw a colt.'

Wi bin *luk boniboni.*
'We (all of us) saw a colt.'

Mindubala bin luk boniboni.
 'We (myself and someone else) saw a colt.'

Mibala bin luk boniboni.
 'We (myself and some others but not you) saw a colt.'

Putting the above together, the personal pronoun system of Creole would look like Chart 4.5.

Chart 4.5. Creole Personal Pronouns

	singular	dual	plural
first person	<i>mi/ai</i>		
inclusive		<i>yurmi</i>	<i>wi</i>
exclusive		<i>mindubala</i>	<i>mibala</i>
second person	<i>yu</i>	<i>yundubala</i>	<i>yubala</i>
third person	<i>im</i>	<i>dubala</i>	<i>olabat</i>

As was mentioned earlier, this parallels the pronoun systems of the Aboriginal languages. Both the distinction of inclusive and exclusive in the first person and the presence of a dual number are widespread, and generally no distinction is made in the gender of the third person (Capell 1937:32, 40; Wurm 1972:62). The third person is also often used as a demonstrative pronoun (Wurm 1972:62).

Chart 4.5 of the Creole personal pronouns is really an oversimplification of the true picture. Continuum variation as discussed in Chapter 2 also affects Creole grammar. This is probably most easily seen in the personal pronoun system. The pronoun Chart 4.5 gives the heavy pronoun sub-system. Chart 4.6 (see following page) gives the light sub-system.

The light sub-system is similar to the English system. Plural object pronouns for the first person (*as*) and third person (*dem*) are used as in English. While *dem* is relatively common, *as* occurs less frequently. When it does occur, it is often in the hortatory construction *Led as . . .* 'Let us . . . '.

Though both first person singular pronouns *ai* and *mi* occur, their usage is not identical with that of English. The so called 'object' pronoun *mi* 'me' is used as the subject in equative sentences instead of *ai* 'I' as in English.

Chart 4.6. Light Pronoun Sub-System

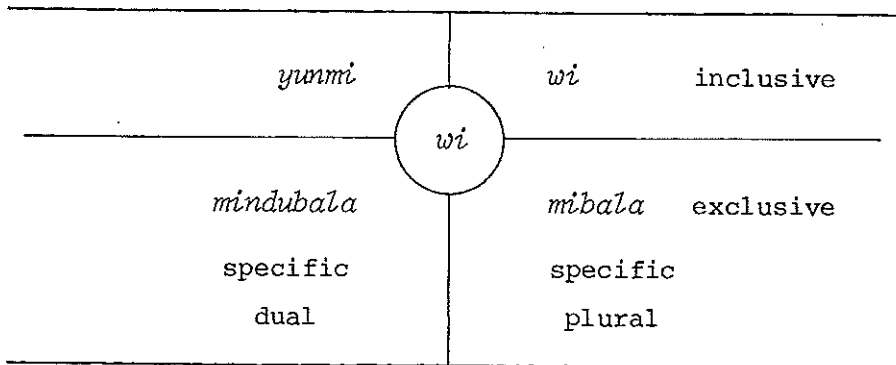
	singular	plural
first person	<i>ai/mi</i>	<i>wi/as</i>
second person	<i>yu</i>	<i>yu</i>
third person	<i>im</i>	<i>dei/dem</i>

Though only one third person singular form (*im*) is listed, other forms sometimes occur. 'It' occasionally occurs, 'he' and 'she' less frequently occur, while 'him' and 'her' rarely occur.

The heavy and light sub-systems do not operate independently in actual speaker usage. Most speakers make use of the full range of pronouns given in Charts 4.5 and 4.6. This means that the two charts, in effect, are superimposed on each other. The singular pronouns of both charts are the same so present no difficulty in understanding them.

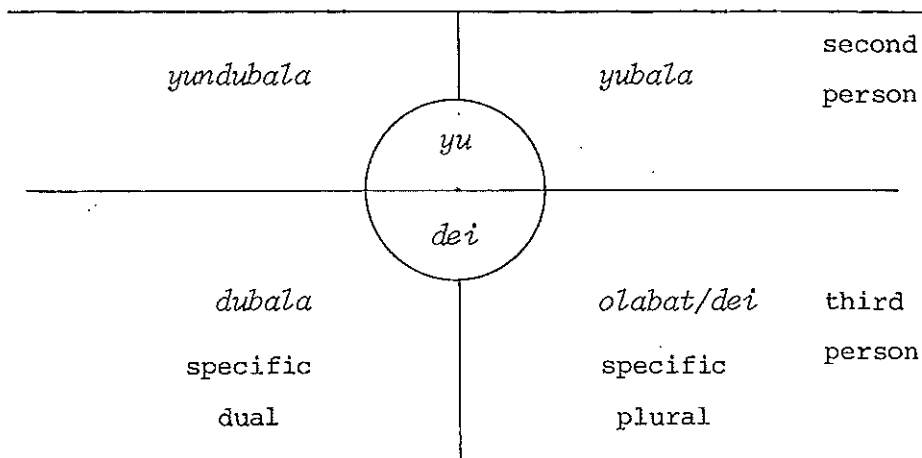
The plural pronouns of the light sub-system may best be thought of as being generic forms, with the dual and plural of the heavy sub-system being specific forms. The first person generic plural is *wi*. There are four first person specific plurals: *yunmi* (dual, inclusive), *mindubala* (dual, exclusive), *wi* (plural, inclusive), and *mibala* (plural, exclusive). These generic-specific pronouns could be diagrammed as in Chart 4.7, the inner circle being generic.

Chart 4.7. First Person Generic-Specific Pronouns



The second and third person pronouns are less complicated since they lack inclusive-exclusive distinctions. They could be diagrammed as in Chart 4.8, the inner circle being generic.

Chart 4.8. Second and Third Person
Generic-Specific Pronouns



Most of the preceding discussion has been on the *system* of the personal pronouns of Creole. The following discussion will deal with variations in the *form* of pronouns used. Most of these variations, unlike that of the variation in the system, are not so much due to the continuum nature of Creole as they are to dialect and age group differences.

The plural set of pronouns given in Charts 4.7 and 4.8 above are those used mainly at Bamyili. Ngukurr speakers tend to use a different set. The two sets are given in Chart 4.9 (see following page). In actual usage, the inclusive-exclusive distinction at Ngukurr is generally not made, *minalabat* seldom being used and *melabat* being used in the generic plural sense.

There are a number of variants that are used mainly by older people and cattle station people. These include *melabat* in place of *melabat*; *yulabat*, *ywalabat*, or *yunalabat* in place of *yumob*; *imalabat* in place of *alabat*; and *imdubala* or *jeidubala* in place of *dubala*.

There are also a number of variants that are used mainly by younger people. These include *mela* in place of *melabat* (though *mela* is reported to be the usual form used at Elsey Station by everyone),

Chart 4.9. Bamyili-Ngukurr Plural Pronouns

	Bamyili	Ngukurr
first person		
inclusive	<i>wi</i>	<i>minalabat</i>
exclusive	<i>mibala</i>	<i>melabat</i>
second person	<i>yubala</i>	<i>yumob</i>
third person	<i>olabat</i>	<i>alabat</i>

minbala or *minbla* in place of *mindubala*, and *yunbala* or *yunbla* in place of *yundubala*. School children at Bamyili also tend to use *yunbala* or *yunbla* as the singular vocative pronoun of address instead of *yu*.

Some forms function in ways other than as personal pronouns. It has already been mentioned that the third personal plural *dem* is also used as a demonstrative pronoun. So likewise is *olabat*. In addition, *olabat* is also used as the plural vocative pronoun.

Olabat kaman na!
'You all come!'

The third person dual pronoun *dubala* is also used as the numeral two.

4.2.2 Possessive Pronouns

Unlike English, Creole does not have a possessive set of pronouns distinct from the personal pronouns. Instead, basically, the personal pronouns are simply placed before a noun to indicate possession.

yu gabarra
'your head'

me labat daga
'our food'

Not all personal pronouns can be used in this type of possessive construction. *Ai*, *as*, *dei*, and *dem* do not occur in possessive constructions.

mi *gabarra*
'my head'

can occur, but not

**ai* *gabarra*

Or *olabat* *boniboni*
'their colt'

can occur, but not

**dei* *boniboni*

Possession may also be expressed by the use of personal pronouns in a prepositional phase (see Section 6.3.3 on prepositions).

gabarra *blanga mi*
'my head'

While it is true that there is no set of possessive pronouns in Creole as such, there are several possessive pronoun forms. These occur as synonyms with the personal pronouns in possessive constructions as discussed above.

The most commonly used possessive pronouns are the first person singular forms *mai* and *main*. Both may be used in place of *mi* in a possessive construction.

mi *gabarra*

mai *gabarra*

and *main* *gabarra*

'my head'

Main, however, as distinct from the possessive use of *mi* and *mai*, is able to stand alone. That is, *mi* and *mai* must be used in a construction in which that which is possessed is expressed following the pronoun, while *main* may be used without overtly expressing what is possessed. In this particular usage, *main* also sometimes occurs with the suffix *-wan* as *mainwan*. For example, the sentence

'I saw my colt.'

could be expressed as

Ai bin luk main boniboni.

Ai bin luk mai boniboni.

Ai bin luk mi boniboni.

Ai bin luk main.

Ai bin luk mainwan.

but not

**Ai bin luk mai.*

nor **Ai bin luk mi.*

The use of the first person plural form *awa* 'our' is not uncommon. For example, 'our camp' though usually expressed as *melabat kemp* can also be expressed as *awa kemp*.

4.2.3 Reflexive and Reciprocal Pronouns

English combines several of its personal pronouns with *self* to form compound personal pronouns, such as *yourself* and *themselves*. Such pronouns are usually referred to as reflexive pronouns because their main function is to reflect the action of a verb back upon the subject instead of passing it onto some other object.

He hit himself.

They are also sometimes used to emphasize a particular participant.

I saw him myself.

or She herself gave it to him.

Creole likewise has a reflexive pronoun. Unlike English, however, which has different forms for the various person-number combinations, Creole has one main form *mijelb* which is used regardless of person and number references.

The basic function of the Creole reflexive pronoun *mijelb* is similar to that of English. It reflects the action of the verb back upon the subject.

Imin kilim mijelb.
'He hit himself.'

Yu labda wajim mijelb.
'You should wash yourself.'

Dubala bin lujim mijelb.
'They lost themselves (i.e. got lost).'

Olabat bin luk mijelb.
'They saw themselves.'

The Creole reflexive pronoun can also be used to emphasize a particular participant.

Mi bin gibit im mijelb.
'I gave it (to) him myself.'

However, unlike English, the reflexive pronoun in the emphatic usage cannot occur as part of the subject. The following construction is not possible.

**Mi mijelb bin gibit im.*
'I myself gave it (to) him.'

Creole does, however, make use of an emphatic particle *na* in a similar construction.

Mi na bin gibit im
'I na gave it (to) him.'

This is discussed elsewhere.

In addition to *mijelb*, several light forms occur. Their occurrence, however, is much less frequent. Forms that are in use include

yuself 'yourself, yourselves'

imself 'himself, herself'

There are also several phonological variants of *mijelb*, including *mijalb*, *mijel*, *misel*, and *miself*.

Mijelb has functions other than its reflexive and emphatic usages. The basic reflexive construction, like many constructions, can mean more than one thing, depending on the context in which it is used.

Yu nomo bogi mijelb.

can mean either

'Do not bathe yourself.'

or 'Do not bathe by yourself.'

Im wokabat mijelb.

could mean

'He is walking himself.
(i.e. He himself is walking.)'

but would most often mean

'He is walking by himself.'

An emphatic form of this meaning would be

Im wokabat mijelb kantri.

or *Im wokabat mijelb, mijelb kantri.*

'He is walking by himself, all alone.

(Literally:

He is walking himself himself country.)'

However, when there is a non-singular subject, as in

Dubala wokabat mijelb.
'They walk themselves.'

it normally means

'They walk by themselves, individually, not together.'

The construction to express 'together, not individually' makes use of the adverb *mijamet*, as in

Dubala wokabat mijamet.
'They walk together.'

An emphatic form of 'individually' is expressed by reduplicating the reflexive pronoun, as in

Dubala wokabat mijelbmijelb.
'They walk each by himself.'

Olabat bin go mijelbmijelb.
'They went their own ways.'

Melabat dagadagat mijelbmijelb.
'We each eat by our ourselves.'

Creole has a reciprocal pronoun *gija* that is used in a variety of constructions to stress a mutual or reciprocal relationship of two or more participants. Consider the following examples.

Olabat bin oldei kilibat gija.
'They were always killing each other.'

Mindubala jidan bekbom gija.
'We are sitting with our backs to each other.'

Dubala silip but gija.
'They are sleeping head to foot.

(Literally:
They sleep foot to each other.)'

Dubala bada gija.
'They are sisters to each other.'

Dubala banji gija bin go.
'By male and female couples they went.

(Literally:
Two husband/wife to each other went.)'

Banjibanji gija barnbarn.
'All (of the grass) is burning.

(Literally:
Husbands/wives to each other are burning.)'

4.2.4 Demonstrative Pronouns

The demonstrative pronouns of Creole are similar to those of English (*this, that, these, those*) in that there is a singular and plural set, both of which distinguish a 'near' and 'distant' reference. In addition, Creole has long and short forms as well as the 'normal' form for the singular set. The plural set also has two alternate forms. The chart below lists the demonstrative pronouns with the commonly used heavy to light variants.

Chart 4.10. Demonstrative Pronouns

	'near' →		'distant' →	
	(heavy)	(light)	(heavy)	(light)
<u>singular</u>	<i>di-jan</i>		<i>jarran</i>	<i>tharran</i>
long	<i>di-jarwan</i>		<i>dadan</i>	<i>thadan</i>
short	<i>di-j</i>	<i>dis</i>	<i>jarrawan</i>	<i>tharrawan</i>
			<i>dadawan</i>	<i>thadawan</i>
			<i>dat</i>	<i>that</i>
<u>plural</u>	<i>di-jlot</i>	<i>dislot</i>	<i>dadlot</i>	<i>thatlot</i>
	<i>di-jmob</i>	<i>dismob</i>	<i>dadmob</i>	<i>thatmob</i>

With the exception of the singular short forms, all Creole demonstrative pronouns are able to stand alone. That is, that to which they specifically refer need not be overtly expressed in the same construction.

Dijan jukijuki ai bin luk.
'This is the Suzuki I saw.'

or Dijan ai bin luk.
'This is the one I saw.'

Ai bin dagat jadlot garniya.
'I ate those water lily roots.'

or Ai bin dagat jadlot.
'I ate those.'

The singular short forms (*di*, *dis*, *ja*, and *da*) cannot stand alone. They occur only in a noun phrase preceding an overt expression of that to which they refer.

Jat pappap bin dagat bib.
'That puppy ate the meat.'

but not

*Jat bin dagat bib.

4.2.5 Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are those used in forming questions. There are four such pronouns in Creole, two having only human or personal reference, one having only non-human or non-personal reference, and the fourth having neutral reference.

hu 'who' (personal)

Hu bin dagat?
'Who has eaten?'

blau 'whose' (personal)

Blau jat daga?
'Whose is that food?'

wanim 'what' (non-personal)

Wanim *bin* *dagat* *main* *daga?*
'What ate my food?

wijan 'which' (neutral)

Wijan *bin* *dagat?*
'Which one ate it?'

In addition to neutral versus non-personal references, *wijan* 'which' differs from *wanim* 'what' in that it is specific while *wanim* tends to be more generic. This is illustrated by placing the two examples above in a larger context:

Wanim *bin* *dagat* *main* *daga?*
'What ate my food?'

Lilbala *pappap* *din* *dagat.*
'A little puppy ate it.'

Wijan *bin* *dagat?*
'Which (puppy) ate it?'

Wijan differs from other interrogative pronouns in being able to occur in a construction preceding the generic reference it is related to.

Wijan *mikibul* *bin* *binij?*
'Which young bull died?'

but not

**Wanim* *mikibul* *bin* *binji?*

Likewise,

Wijan *gel* *bin* *kaman?*
'Which girl came?'

but not

**Hu* *gel* *bin* *kaman?*

Blau 'whose' is a contraction of the preposition *blanga* and the interrogative pronoun *hu*. It is sometimes expressed by the longer form of *blanga hu* as well as by the permuted form *hu blanga*.

Blau *jaman waya?*

Blanga hu *jaman waya?*

Hu blanga *jaman waya?*

'Whose is that fishing spear?'

Hu 'who', *wanim* 'what', and *wijan* 'which' may occur as the object of a preposition, thus making an interrogative prepositional phrase.

Imin gibit langa wijan?
'He gave it to which one?'

4.2.6 Indefinite Pronouns

The indefinite pronouns of Creole are divided into two main groups on the basis of the way in which they can be used in a sentence. The pronouns of the first group are always used as independent pronouns; they always stand alone, never in a modifier position in a noun phrase. For example, the indefinite pronoun *enibodi* 'anybody' can occur in the construction

Enibodi *gin dagat.*
'Anybody can eat.'

but not in

*Enibodi biginini *gin dagat.*
'Anybody child can eat.'

The pronouns of the second group, however, may occur either alone or functioning like an adjective in a noun phrase. The example immediately above could be

Eni biginini *gin dagat.*
'Any child can eat.'

Within a larger context this second group of indefinite pronouns may occur alone, as in

Eni *gin dagat.*
'Any can eat.'

The pronoun in such cases normally has a referent within the larger context. In other words, the example above would be

'Any (child) can eat.'

The pronouns in the independent group of indefinite pronouns may be subdivided into four groups on the basis of their meanings. These groups are:

Universal - the *ebri-* 'every' compounds.

Assertive - the *sam-* 'some' compounds.

Non-Assertive - the *eni-* 'any' compounds.

Negative - the *no-* 'no' compounds.

There are three compound forms in each of these groups carrying a basic personal reference:

Neutral - the *-wan* 'one' compounds.

Personal - the *-bodi* 'body' compounds.

Non-Personal - the *-jing* 'thing' compounds.

Chart 4.11. Independent Indefinite Pronouns

	Neutral	Personal	Non-Personal
Universal	<i>ebriwan</i> 'everyone'	<i>ebribodi</i> 'everybody'	<i>ebrijing</i> 'everything'
Assertive	<i>samwan</i> 'someone'	<i>sambodi</i> 'somebody'	<i>samjing</i> 'something'
Non-Assertive	<i>eniwan</i> 'anyone'	<i>enibodi</i> 'anybody'	<i>enijing</i> 'anything'
Negative	<i>nowan</i> 'no one'	<i>nobodi</i> 'nobody'	<i>najing</i> 'nothing'

The pronouns of the adjectival group of indefinite pronouns do not subdivide into neat categories as do the independent indefinite pronouns. The majority are assertive and are listed here in a somewhat relative order from those indicating paucity to those indicating multitude.

The occurrence of *olagija* as an indefinite pronoun is relatively rare. The non-assertive form *eni* 'any' also occurs as an adjectival indefinite pronoun.

Chart 4.12. Assertive Adjectival Indefinite Pronouns

<i>fyu</i>	'few'
<i>lilbit</i>	'a little'
<i>sam, sambala</i>	'some'
<i>haf</i>	'a portion, "half"'
<i>holot, holbit</i>	'all, whole'
<i>olagija</i>	'(absolutely) all'
<i>blandi, blandibala</i>	'plenty'
<i>naf</i>	'enough'
<i>nomo lilbit</i>	'a lot'
<i>bigmob, karangnyirringba</i>	'lots, many'
<i>tumani, tumaj</i>	'very many, very much'
<i>thadmaj, milyans</i>	'an unbelievable quantity'

There is also a small group of indefinite pronouns that are compounds of *naja-* and all carry the meaning 'other, another'. They are all neutral in their personal reference and occur with singular and plural forms.

Chart 4.13. *Naja-* Indefinite pronouns

singular	plural
<i>najan</i>	<i>najalot</i>
<i>najawan</i>	<i>najamob</i>
'other, another'	'others'

4.3 ADJECTIVES

Adjectives are not always easily distinguished from nouns. There are several reasons for this. Most adjectives commonly occur with a nominalizing suffix *-bala*, *-wan*, and occasionally *-baga*,

though they may occur without it. For example, *bigbala*, *bigwan*, *bigbaga*, and *big* all mean 'big'. This nominalizing suffix allows the adjective to function as a nominal or noun. For example, *blekbala* 'black' as an adjective would be

Im abum blekbala dog.
'He has a black dog.

Blekbala may also be used as a noun as in

Im blekbala.
'He is an Aborigine.'

This example could also mean

'He is black.'

with *blekbala* being an adjective.

Similarly some nouns may be used as adjectives. For example, *munanga* 'European' is usually a noun, as in

Dadan munanga bin meigim mi bush.
'That European made me confused.'

It may, however, be used as an adjective as is

Imin blandim munanga tri.
'He planted a European (i.e. non-native) tree.'

The distinction between adjectives and adverbs, also, is not clear cut. For example, *kwikbala* may be used as an adjective as in

Im gadim kwikbala brambi.
'He has a fast wild horse.'

or *Bla im brambi kwikbala.*
'His wild horse is quick.'

It may also be used as an adverb as in

Im brambi bin ran kwikbala.
'His wild horse ran quickly.'

Adjectives have two major functions. The first of these is modifying a noun in a noun phrase. This is referred to as the attributive function.

Bigbala aligerra jidambat jeya.
'A big crocodile lives there.'

Imin spirrim lilwan wolabi.
'He speared a little wallaby.'

The second function of adjectives is as a complement or comment in a non-verbal clause. (See Chapter 7 on simple sentences.) This is referred to as the predicative function.

Aligerra bigbala.
'The crocodile is big.'

Wolabi imin lilwan.
'The wallaby was little.'

Adjectives may be intensified in several ways. Most common is reduplication where the whole of the adjective is reduplicated.

Im shabalashabala wadi.
'It's a very sharp stick.'

as compared with

Im shabala wadi.
'It's a sharp stick.'

In some cases, however, the adjective may be only partially reduplicated.

Beibi lillilwan.
'The baby is very small.'

as compared with

Beibi lilwan.
'The baby is small.'

Intensity, with a stronger sense of emphasis, can be indicated by modifying the adjective with an adverb such as *brabli*.

Brabli gudbala daga, tharran.
'Very good food, that.'

A few adjectives carry an inherent sense of intensity.

Imin gijim bigiswan bijibiji.
'He caught a very big fish.'

Though the form of these Creole intensive adjectives is derived from the English '-est', they do not function in a comparative-superlative manner as does the English '-est'. In other words, *bigiswan* means 'very big', not 'biggest'.

4.4 THE NOUN PHRASE

Noun phrases can be classified into two groups. The basic noun phrase consists of a noun modified by preceding adjectives and determiners. The complex noun phrase is a basic noun phrase with post-modifiers, that is modifiers that follow the noun; or with compounding of the phrase; or elements within the phrase.

4.4.1 The Basic Noun Phrase

The noun phrase, in its basic form, consists of a noun modified by a preceding adjective.

Adjective + Noun

lilbala gel
'little girl'

As was discussed in the previous section, an adjective need not occur with the nominalizer suffix.

lil budiblawá
'small flower'

The adjective may also occur in a reduplicated form to indicate intensity.

shabalashabala wadí
'very sharp stick'

The adjective may also occur with an adverbial modifier.

brabli bigbala fish
'very fat fish'

The noun of a noun phrase is not restricted to being modified by only one adjective. Several may occur.

longwan shabalashabala wayá
'long very sharp fishing spear'

bigbala budibala redbala *bol*
 'big pretty red ball'

Though noun phrases with more than two adjectives do occur, they occur relatively infrequently.

In addition to being modified by an adjective, the noun head can also be modified by what is called a determiner. Determiners are, for the most part, pronouns. These precede any adjective modifiers that may occur in the noun phrase.

Determiner + Adjective + Noun

yu *bigbala wobla* (possessive pronoun)
 'your big fishing line'

tharran *longwan muranga* (demonstrative pronoun)
 'that tall European'

wijan *gubarwan modiga* (interrogative pronoun)
 'which rubbish car'

sambala *kukwan yarlbun* (indefinite pronoun)
 'some ripe water lily seeds'

Creole does not have any articles as does English (*a, an, the*). There is one determiner, however, that functions somewhat like an article. *Wanbala*, though most often used as the number 'one', is not infrequently used in the sense of 'a certain'.

Wanbala *men bin godan.*

in everyday conversation would most likely mean

'One man went.'

while in a story context, it could mean

'A certain man went.'

In addition to determiners and adjectives, there are two small groups of words that occur in restricted positions in the noun phrase. The first of these is called predeterminers because they precede any determiners that may occur in the noun phrase. Predeterminers include words like *ol, ola, olabat* 'all' and *haf* 'half'.

Predeterminer + Determiner + Adjective + Noun

ola *jadlot yangbala boi*
 'all those young boys.'

'haf dijan bigbala damba
'half of this big damper'

The second group of restricted words is called postdeterminers because they follow any determiners that may occur. They also precede any adjectives that may occur. Postdeterminers include the numbers and words such as *laswan* 'last' and *fe:swan* 'first'.

Determiner + Postdeterminer + Adjective + Noun

yindubala fobala litwan dog
'your four little dogs'

darran laswan nyubala song
'that last new song'

In a given context the noun can be deleted from the noun phrase. In the sentence

Imin kilim bigbala karrakkarrak.
'He killed a big Coromorant.'

the noun *karrakkarrak* in the noun phrase *bigbala karrakkarrak* could be deleted so as to give

Imin kilim bigbala.
'He killed a big (Cormorant).'

This deletion can occur only when the preceding modifier can stand alone. If the preceding modifier is an adjective, in most cases it must occur with a nominalizer suffix (*-bala*, *-wan*, *-baga*) in order for the noun to be deleted.

*Imin kilim big.
'He killed a big (Cormorant).'

cannot occur.

If the preceding modifier is a determiner (or predeterminer or postdeterminer), the noun can be deleted only if the determiner can stand independently.

Imin kilim dijan dakdak.
'He killed this duck.'

can be

Imin kilim dijan.

but *Imin dagat yundubala dakdak.*
'He ate your ducks.'

cannot be

**Imin. dagat yundubala.*

4.4.2 The Complex Noun Phrase

As stated earlier, the complex noun phrase is a basic noun phrase with postmodifiers. These postmodifiers include the reciprocal pronoun *gija*, emphatic particle *na*, locative adverbs, prepositional phrases, and embedded sentences. These are exemplified below but not given detailed consideration.

Reciprocal Pronoun

Jadan dubala baba gija
'Those two are sisters to each other.'

Emphatic Particle

Dijan olmen na bin dalambat mi.
'This man na told me.'

Locative Adverb

Olabat dakdak jeya bla yu.
'All of the ducks there are for you.'

Wanbala olgamen tharrei bin gibit mi.
'A woman there gave it (to) me.'

Blanga Prepositional Phrase

Dog blanga dadi bin binij.
'A dog of Father's died.'

The possessive prepositional phrase may precede the noun in a permuted construction.

Blanga dadi dog bin binij.

Langa Prepositional Phrase

Wanbala yangboi langa Ropa bin duit.
'A young boy at Roper (i.e. a Roper boy) did it.'

Burrum Prepositional Phrase

Blandibala burrum Bamyili *bin kaman.*
'Lots (of people) from Bamyili (i.e. Bamyilites) came.'

Gadim Prepositional Phrase

Main andi gadim modiga *andi kaman.*
'My auntie with a car is coming.'

The negative gadim phrase

Main andi nomo gadim modiga *andi kaman.*
'My. auntie without a car is coming.'

Embedded Sentence

Wambala *olmen* weya imin we:k langa Elsi
'A certain man who worked at Elsy Station

bin dalim mi.
told me.'

Noun phrases may be made into complex phrases by compounding. Compounding may be external with two or more noun phrases joined by a conjunction.

Me labat dadi *bin kaman.*
'Our father came.'

and Yubala lambarra *bin kaman.*
'Your father-in-law came.'

could be combined with a compound subject:

Me labat dadi en yubala lambarra *bin kaman.*
'Our father and your father-in-law came.'

Compounding may also be internal to the phrase with two or more modifiers being joined.

ola greiwan *en* blekwan *hosis*
'all the grey and black horses'

But note also the construction

wambala yelablekwan *ston*
'one yellow and black stone'

Compounding of pronouns requires special note. With the dual exclusive set of personal pronouns, the person or persons included in the pronoun reference other than the speaker may be specified. This leads to constructions such as

mindubala banji
'my brother-in-law and I'

compared with mi dubala banji ;
'my two brothers-in-law'

yundubala olgamen
'you two women'

compared with yu dubala olgamen ;
'your two women'

Jali dubala Maikul
'Charlie and Michael'

compared with Jali en dubala Maikul ;
'Charlie and two Michaels'

main dadi dubala mami
'my father and mother'

compared with main dadi en dubala mami .
'my father and two mothers'

The sentence

Dubala kristin kapul la Injai.

does not mean

'Two Christian couples are at Hodgson River.'

but rather

'Two Christians, a couple, are at Hodgson River.'

The possessive/relationship constructions may be built up.

Im jeya langa mi dadi braja kemp.
'He is there at my father's brother's camp.'

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