

# WORK PAPERS OF SIL - AAB

Series B Volume 3

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

John R. Sandefur

Summer Institute of Linguistics  
Australian Aborigines Branch  
Darwin  
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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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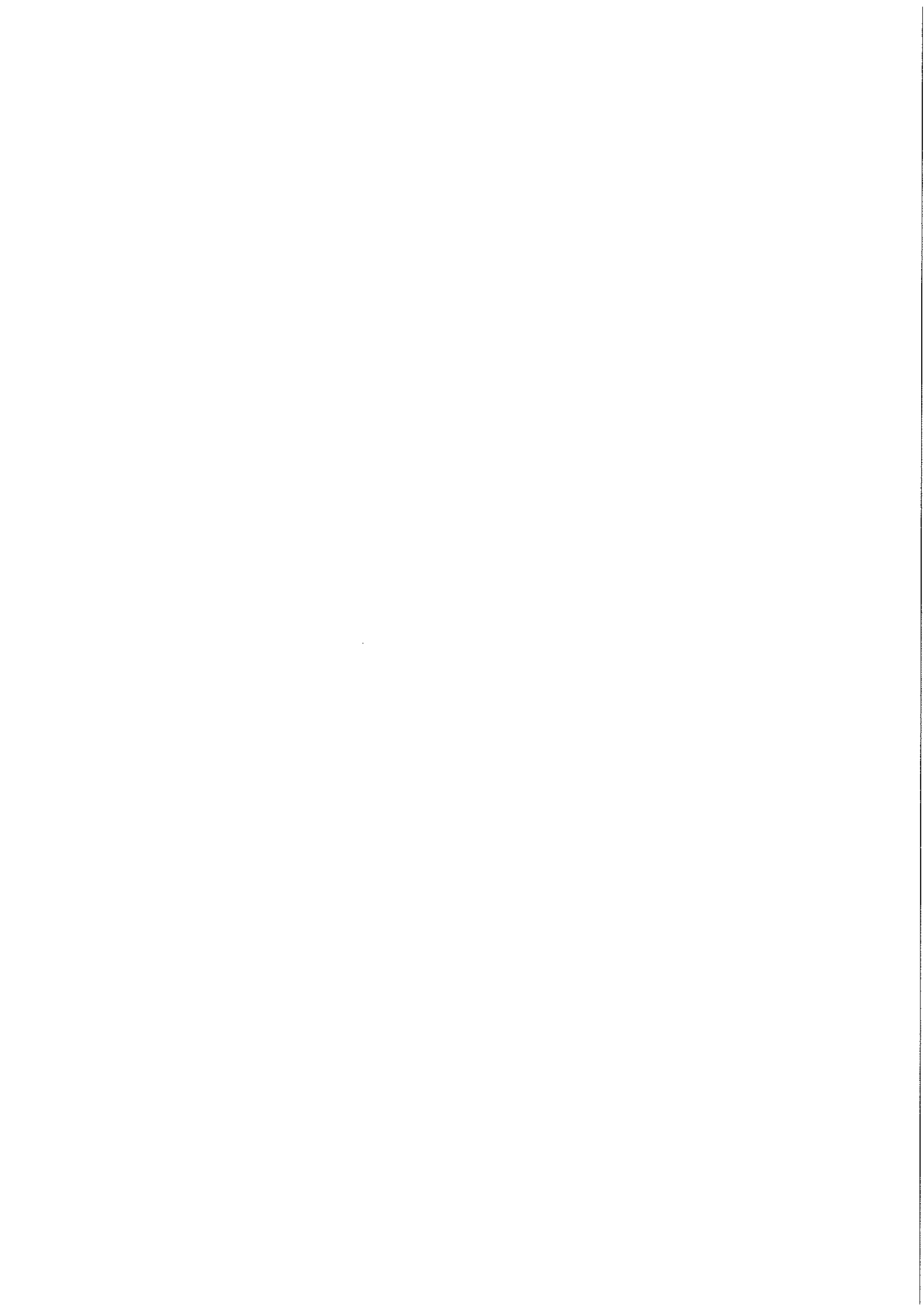




## CHAPTER 5

### VERBS AND THE VERB PHRASE

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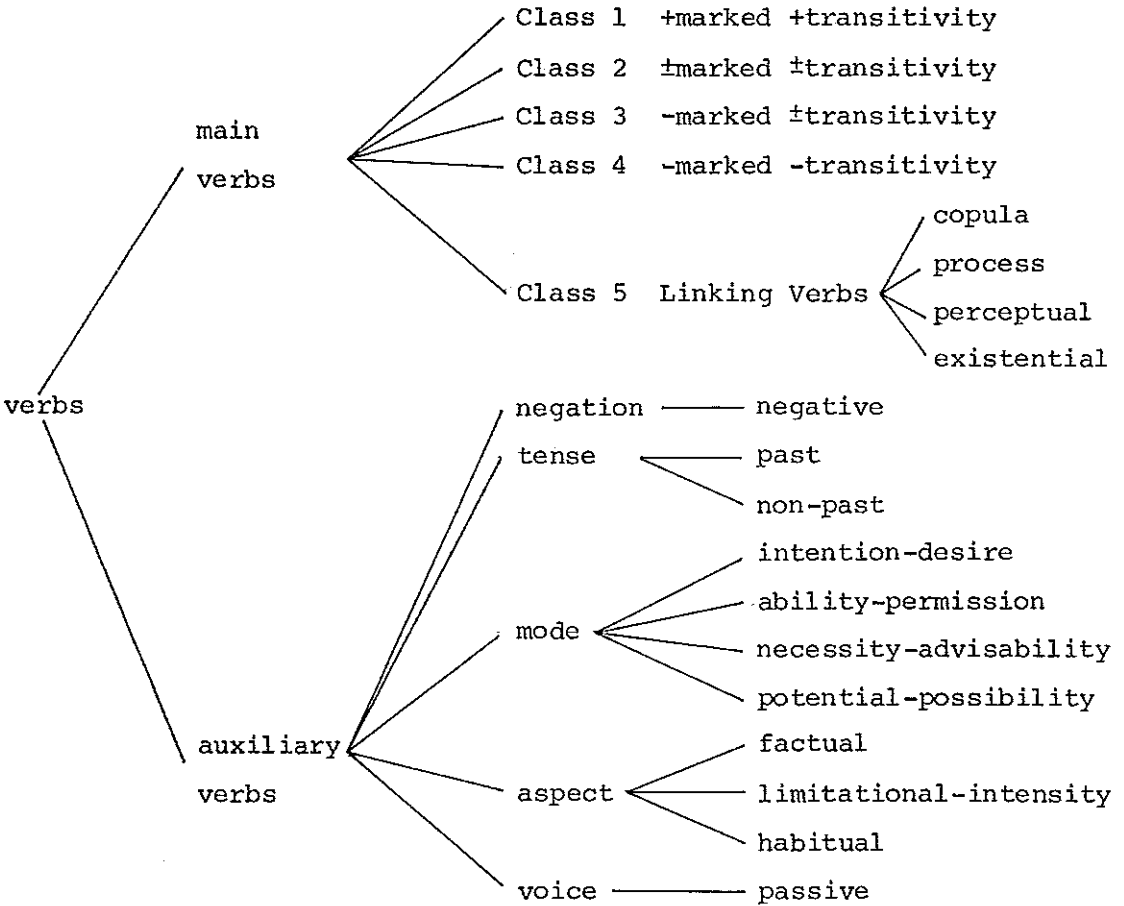


The verbs of Creole can be divided into two major groups: main verbs and auxiliary verbs. Main verbs are sometimes referred to as predicating or lexical verbs. The majority of verbs belong to this group, which is open-ended. That is, new verbs may be generated as new experiences or needs arise. Main verbs can stand by themselves in a sentence.

Auxiliary verbs belong to a small closed group. That is, the verbs in this group can be counted and new ones are rarely added. Auxiliary verbs cannot stand by themselves but are used in a verb phrase to modify a main verb.

The following chart summarizes the division of Creole verbs discussed in following sections.

Chart 5.1. Divisions of Creole Verbs



The basic verb phrase consists of a main verb modified by one or more preceding auxiliary verbs.

## 5.1 MAIN VERBS

It is possible to talk about Creole verbs both in terms of verb classes and in terms of marked and unmarked verbs.

### 5.1.1 Verb Classes

The main verbs of Creole can be divided into five classes on the basis of the way they function in a sentence and the suffixes which occur. These classes are not absolutely distinctive but represent basic divisions.

*Class 1* verbs always occur with a suffix. All verbs in this class occur with the transitive suffix *-im* or one of its alternate forms, in which case they always function transitively. That is, they always take an object.

*Olabat bin grajim yem.*  
'They dug yams.'

but not \**Olabat bin graj yem.*

Most may also occur, though not simultaneously, with the progressive aspect suffix *-ing* or *-in*, in which case they may function transitively or intransitively, depending on the context they occur in.

*Olabat bin grajing yem.* (transitive)  
'They were digging yams.'

*Olabat bin grajing.* (intransitive)  
'They were digging.'

*Class 2* verbs may occur with the transitive suffix, in which case they always function transitively.

*Stakmen bin barnim gras.*  
'The stockmen burnt the grass.'

They may, however, occur without the transitive suffix, in which case they usually function intransitively, though in some contextual constructions some may function transitively.

*Gras bin barn.*  
'The grass burnt.'

*Class 3* verbs never occur with the transitive suffix and they usually function intransitively, though in some contexts they may function transitively.

*Mela bin dagat.* (intransitive)  
'We ate.'

*Mela bin dagat yalbm.* (transitive)  
'We ate water-lily seeds.'

*Class 4* verbs never occur with the transitive suffix and they always function intransitively.

*Bigqini jilip.*  
'The child sleeps.'

*Class 5* is a special group of verbs that functions more as linking verbs than as predicating verbs. Virtually all verbs in this class also occur in one of the other classes with a different function or as an auxiliary verb. This class of verbs is discussed below in Section 5.3.

#### 5.1.2 Marked and Unmarked Verbs

Verbs occurring with the transitive suffix *-im* or one of its variant forms are referred to as marked verbs. Marked verbs always function transitively.

Verbs occurring without the transitive suffix are referred to as unmarked verbs. Unmarked verbs from *Class 4* verbs always function intransitively; those from the other verb classes function transitively or intransitively, depending on the context they occur in.

### 5.2 VERB SUFFIXES

Creole verbs may occur with a number of suffixes. Marked verbs occur with the transitive suffix. Many verbs, both marked and unmarked, may also occur with an adverbial suffix. Some types of verb aspect are also indicated by suffixes.

#### 5.2.1 The Transitive Suffix

As noted in Section 5.1.1, the transitive suffix is affixed to many verbs to indicate that they function transitively, though it does not occur with all verbs that function transitively. In usage

it not only indicates that the verb is functioning transitively, but it can also carry the weight of the object of a transitive construction. That is, its presence allows the object to be deleted.

*Ai bin binijim moni.*  
'I finished (i.e. used up) the money.'

*Ai bin binijim.*  
'I finished (the money).'

The basic form of the transitive suffix is the same as the third person singular personal pronoun *im*, from which it is most likely derived. It has several variant forms that are phonologically conditioned.

In general usage the contrast between the non-back vowels is neutralized in the suffix; thus it may be pronounced as *-im*, *-em*, or *-am*, as in *grajim*, *grajem*, or *grajam* 'dig'.

A non-front vowel in the syllable preceding the suffix tends to affect the vowel in the suffix by pulling it back also; thus the variant form *-um*, as in *gugum* 'cook' and *bulorum* 'follow'.

In quick speech, though sometimes in slow speech as well, there is a tendency on some words to shorten the suffix by dropping the final consonant *m* when it follows a non-back vowel; thus the variant form *-i*, as in *baidim* ~ *baidi* 'bite' and *kilim* ~ *kili* 'hit'.

Another variant form, which is not phonologically conditioned, is *-it*. This form always occurs on the verb for 'give'. It probably developed as an irregular form in order to distinguish the verb for 'give' from the verb for 'keep', both of which would have been pronounced identically otherwise:

*Imin gibit.*  
'He gave it.'

*Imin gibim.*  
'He kept it.'

This 'irregular' form is now occasionally used on some other verbs alternating with the 'regular' *-im* form:

*Imin duim.*

*Imin duit.*  
'He did it.

### 5.2.2 Adverbial Suffixes

Many verbs, both marked and unmarked, occur with adverbial suffixes. These are adverb-like suffixes that indicate a sense of direction, though often of an abstract nature.

These adverbials are considered to be suffixes instead of words standing on their own because:

1. The adverbial and the verb are never separated by other words.

*Olabat bin baj-im-ap daga.*

but not \**Olabat bin baj-im daga ap.*  
'They brought the food up.'

2. The continuative aspect suffix occurs after the adverbial.

*Imin go-dan-bat.*

but not \**Imin go-bat-dan.*  
'He was going down.'

3. When a verb is reduplicated to indicate continuative aspect, the adverbial is also reduplicated.

*Imin baj-im-ap-baj-im-ap.*

but not \**Imin baj-im-baj-im-ap.*  
'He was bringing it.'

4. Some verbs obligatorily take the adverbial. That is, the verb cannot occur without the adverbial.

*Ai bin jinig-ap la im.*

but not \**Ai bin jinig la im.*  
'I sneaked up on it.'

There are nine adverbial suffixes in Creole. The chart on the following page gives their basic meaning, though their specific meaning is determined by the particular verb they occur with and its context in the sentence.

The suffixes *-ran* and *-wei* are often *-aran* and *-awei* respectively when they follow a consonant.

Chart 5.2. Creole Adverbial Suffixes

-an	'on'
-ap	'up'
-at	'out'
-bek	'back'
-dan	'down'
-in	'in'
-op	'off'
-ran	'around'
-wei	'away'

With some verb-adverbial suffix combinations, the basic meaning of the verb may be expanded or made more specific by the suffix. In such cases the verb with the suffix and the verb without the suffix may be substituted for each other in accordance with the degree of specification desired; the adverbial suffix is, in a sense, optional.

*Imin* *barnim*.  
'He burnt it.'

*Imin* *barnimap*.  
'He burnt it up.'

With other verb-adverbial suffix combinations, the basic meaning of the verb is significantly changed or differentiated by the suffix. In such cases the verb with the suffix and the verb without the suffix may not be substituted for each other in the same context; the adverbial suffix is obligatory.

*Imin* *bajimap* *modiga*.  
'He brought a car.'

*Imin* *bajim* *modiga*.  
'He passed a car.'

With a few verb-adverbial suffix combinations, the verb never occurs without the adverbial suffix; the adverbial suffix is obligatory.



Im jidan jeya na.

but not \*Im jid jeya na.  
'He lives there.

(Literally:

'He sits down there.)'

### 5.2.3 Aspect Suffixes

Aspect basically refers to the manner in which the verb action is regarded or takes place through time. Some aspect in Creole is expressed by auxiliary verbs. Two types of aspect - continuative and progressive - are expressed by verb suffixes. Continuative aspect can also be expressed by reduplicating the verb. Closely related to continuative aspect is durative aspect. Though it is not indicated by suffixation, it is discussed here along with the continuative and progressive aspects because of affiliation with them.

1. *Continuative aspect* generally denotes an action as being continuous or repetitious. It can be indicated either by suffixation or by reduplication.

When indicated by suffixation, the continuative aspect suffix *-bat* (or in some cases *-abat* or *-labat*) occurs as the final suffix on the verb. That is, the transitive suffix, progressive aspect suffix, and adverbial suffixes occur before the continuative aspect suffix.

Olabat bin jidanbat.

Olabat bin jidanabat.

'They were sitting.'

Olabat bin leidanabat.

Olabat bin leidanlabat.

'They were lying down.'

Olabat bin gugumbat yem.

'They were cooking yams.'

Olabat bin bajimapat.

'They were bringing it.'

Olabat bin wokinabat.

'They were walking.'

When indicated by reduplication, the whole of the verb form is reduplicated. That is, the verb with all of its suffixes is reduplicated.

*Olabat bin wokwok.*  
'They were walking.'

*Olabat bin godangodan.*  
'They were going down.'

*Olabat bin grajimgrajim yem.*  
'They were digging yams.'

*Olabat bin bajimapbajimap.*  
'They were bringing it.'

Marked verbs tend to occur more often with continuative aspect indicated by suffixation rather than by reduplication, though most may occur reduplicated.

Unmarked verbs as a whole tend to occur more often with continuative aspect indicated by reduplication rather than by suffixation, though they may occur with the suffix. There are a few unmarked verbs, however, which seldom follow this tendency.

There are a small number of unmarked verbs whose meanings are extended beyond the simple continuative aspect when they occur with the continuative aspect suffix.

*Olabat bin wokwok.*  
'They were walking.'

*Olabat bin wokabat.*  
'They were going on an outing.'

2. *Durative aspect* denotes an action as being of an extreme duration, whether it be of a continuous or a repetitive nature. In a sense, durative is the continuous aspect in an extreme degree. It can be indicated in one of two ways:

(1) It can be indicated by multiple reduplication of the verb. This is usually accompanied by a rise in pitch on the verb, the high pitch being sustained throughout the multiple reduplication.

*Imin reinreinreinreinreinreinreinreinreinrein binij.*<sup>1</sup>  
'It rained and rained and rained and rained (but finally) it stopped.'

*Olabat bin weidweidweidweidweidweid najing.*  
 'They waited and waited and waited and waited (but) nothing  
 (came).'

(2) It can also be indicated by lengthening a vowel (usually the final vowel) of the verb and simultaneously raising the pitch and sustaining the high pitch on the lengthened vowel.

*Imin weeeeeein binij.*  
 'It rained and rained and rained (but finally) stopped.'

*Olabat bin weeeeeid najing.*  
 'They waited and waited and waited (but) nothing (came).'

3. *Progressive aspect* predominantly denotes an action continuing through some point of time indicated elsewhere in the context. It is not totally discrete from the continuative aspect; these two aspects overlap with the progressive aspect to a large degree being subsumed under the continuative aspect.

Progressive aspect occurs only with unmarked verbs; it never occurs with marked verbs. It is indicated by suffixation of *-ing* or *-in*. The long suffix *-ing* is generally used in slow speech, while the short suffix *-in* is used in quick speech.

*Olabat bin grajing sengran.*  
*Olabat bin grajin sengran.*  
 'They were digging sand.'

*Olabat bin woking.*  
*Olabat bin wokin.*  
 'They were walking.'

When the progressive aspect suffix co-occurs with an adverbial suffix, it occurs before the adverbial suffix. The short suffix usually occurs in this position.

*Olabat bin gaminap.*  
 'They were coming up.'

*Olabat bin bajinap brambi.*  
 'They were bringing wild horses.'

It is possible for two aspects to co-occur, though the frequency of co-occurrence is relatively low. When the continuative aspect and the progressive aspect co-occur, it is indicated in one of two ways:

(1) It can be indicated by affixing to the verb the progressive aspect suffix followed by the continuative aspect suffix.

*Olabat bin wokinabat.*  
'They were walking.'

*Olabat bin lukinabat.*  
'They were looking.'

*Olabat bin weidingabat.*  
'They were waiting.'

(2) It can also be indicated by reduplicating the verb and affixing the progressive aspect suffix to the reduplicated verb.

*Olabat bin wokwokin.*  
'They were walking.'

*Olabat bin luklukin.*  
'They were looking.'

*Olabat bin weidweiding.*  
'They were waiting.'

When the progressive aspect and the durative aspect co-occur, it is indicated in one of two ways:

(1) It can be indicated by affixing the progressive aspect suffix to the verb and reduplicating the verb, usually with an accompanying high pitch.

*Olabat bin wokimwokimwokimwokin.*  
'They were walking and walking and walking.'

*Olabat bin weidingweidingweidingweiding.*  
'They were waiting and waiting and waiting.'

(2) It can also be indicated by affixing the progressive aspect suffix to the verb and lengthening the vowel of the suffix, simultaneously raising the pitch on the lengthened vowel.

*Olabat bin wokiiiiin.*  
'They were walking and walking and walking.'

*Olabat bin weidiiiiing.*  
'They were waiting and waiting and waiting.'

### 5.3 CLASS 5 LINKING VERBS

Linking verbs are main verbs that are used to 'link' a subject or topic with a complement or comment about the topic's state, its attributes or equivalence with something else. Linking verbs are like the other four classes of main or predicating verbs in that they may occur with preceding auxiliary verbs. Unlike other main verbs, however, the only optional suffix they occur with is the progressive aspect suffix *-in* or *-ing*, though not all of them may do so.

Creole linking verbs are divided here into four groups on the basis of their meanings.

#### 5.3.1 Copula Verbs

Usually a topic and complement are linked by juxtaposition; that is, without a linking verb between them. Auxiliary verbs, however, may occur between the topic and comment in modification of the comment.

*Olabat*            *bigbala yem.*            (no auxiliary)  
'They    are    big            yams.'

*Olabat*    *bin bigbala yem.*            (past tense auxiliary)  
'They    were    big            yams.'

*Olabat*            *gudbala.*            (no auxiliary)  
'They    are            good.'

*Olabat*            *nomo gudbala.*            (negation auxiliary)  
'They    are    not            good.'

When the comment is about a future state of the topic, the linking verb *bi* may be used. It is used only of a future state and must be preceded by a future oriented auxiliary verb. It is optional in its occurrence. Generally, it occurs less frequently than linking by juxtaposition. The form is invariant and cannot occur with the progressive aspect.

*Olabat*    *andi bi bigbala.*  
*Olabat*    *andi bigbala.*  
'They    will    be            big.'

*Olabat*    *nomo gona bi gudbala.*  
*Olabat*    *nomo gona gudbala.*  
'They    will not    be            good.'

### 5.3.2 Process Verbs

These verbs generally express the idea that the topic is becoming, changing, or turning into the complement. They may occur with the progressive aspect suffix. Process verbs include:

<i>go</i> ( <i>goin</i> )		'becoming'	
<i>git</i> ( <i>giding</i> )		'becoming'	
<i>Woda</i>	<i>bin</i>	<u><i>go</i></u>	<i>blad.</i>
'The water		<u>turned into</u>	blood.'
<i>Imin</i>	<u><i>giding</i></u>	<i>dakbala.</i>	
'It was	<u>becoming</u>	dark.'	

### 5.3.3 Perceptual Verbs

These verbs generally express the idea that the topic appears, seems, feels, or tastes like or as if it were the complement. In other words, the topic may not be what the complement says, but it is perceived by the observer as being so. Perceptual verbs may occur with the progressive aspect suffix and include:

<i>luk</i> ( <i>lukin</i> )		'look, appear'	
<i>teis</i> ( <i>teistin</i> )		'taste'	
<i>fil</i> ( <i>filin</i> )		'feel'	
<i>Olabat</i>	<u><i>luk</i></u>	<i>gudbala.</i>	
'They	<u>look/appear</u>	<u>to be</u>	good.'
<i>Dislot</i>		<u><i>teistin</i></u>	<i>prabli.</i>
'This (food)	<u>is</u>	<u>tasting</u>	delicious.'

### 5.3.4 Existential Verbs

These verbs express the idea that the topic is, that is exists. They do not occur with the progressive aspect suffix but do obligatorily occur with an adverbial suffix. Existential verbs include:

<i>jidan</i>	'to be' (literally 'sit down')
	Used of animate beings and objects perceived as 'being' in some sense in a 'sitting' position.

*jandap* 'to be' (literally 'stand up')  
Used of objects perceived as 'being' characteristically in a vertical position.

*leidan* 'to be' (literally 'lay down')  
Occasionally used of objects on the ground instead of *jidan*.

*Sambala pipul jidan jeya.*  
'Some people are there.'

*Blandibala wadi jandap jeya.*  
'Plenty of trees are there.'

*Wayà leidan jeya.*  
'(A roll of) wire is there.'

#### 5.4 AUXILIARY VERBS

Creole auxiliary verbs are divided into five categories: negation, tense, mode, aspect, and voice. These are summarized in Chart 5.3. on the following page.

Auxiliary verbs generally modify the meaning of the main verb of a verb phrase. They differ from main verbs in not being able to stand alone, except in topic-comment constructions which have no linking verbs. In such cases auxiliary verbs stand without a main verb, modifying the comment or complement instead.

*Olabat bin grajimbat yem.* (predicating verb)  
'They were digging yams.'

*Olabat nomo go dakbala.* (linking verb)  
'They do not become dark.'

*Olabat andi gudbala.* (no main verb)  
'They will be good.'

##### 5.4.1 Negation

Negation is expressed by *nomo*, *no*, *nat*, and *heba*.

*Nomo* and its short form *no* express a simple negative. The short form is used less frequently than *nomo*. The negative auxiliary may be used with most other auxiliary verbs. It usually occurs in the first position of the verb phrase.

Chart 5.3 Summary of Creole Auxiliary Verbs

<i>Negation</i>	simple	<i>nomo, no</i>	'not'
	emphatic	<i>nat</i>	'not'
		<i>neba</i>	'never'
<i>Tense</i>	past	<i>bin</i>	
	non-past	∅	
<i>Mode</i>	intention- desire	<i>andi, gona, gada</i>	'will, want to'
	ability- permission	<i>gin</i>	'can'
		<i>gan</i>	'cannot'
	necessity- advisability	<i>gada, ada, judbi, juda</i>	'should'
		<i>labda, mas</i>	'must'
	potential- possibility	<i>mat, judbi</i>	'may, might'
<i>Aspect</i>		<i>gulijap, nili</i>	'almost'
		<i>trai</i>	'attempt'
	factual	<i>stat</i>	'start'
		<i>go</i>	'go'
		<i>kip</i>	'keep'
		<i>stil</i>	'still'
		<i>stap</i>	'cease'
	limitational- intensity	<i>onli</i>	'only'
		<i>jis</i>	'just'
		<i>lilbit</i>	'slightly'
		<i>rili</i>	'really'
	habitual	<i>oldei, olweis</i>	'always'
		<i>yusda</i>	'used to'
<i>neba, gan</i>		'never'	
<i>Voice</i>	active	∅	
	passive	<i>git</i>	



*Olabat*        nomo    *gaman.*  
*Olabat*        no        *gaman*  
'They    are    not    coming.'

*Olabat*    nomo bin    andi        *gaman..*  
'They    did not    want to    come.'

*Nat* is sometimes used to express an emphatic negative. Its co-occurrence with other auxiliaries is more restricted than is *nomo*. It occurs relatively infrequently.

*Olabat*    nat        *gaman.*  
'They    are not    coming.'

*Olabat*    nat bin    andi        *gaman.*  
'They    did not    want to    come.'

*Neba* is also sometimes used to express an emphatic negative, though its primary usage is an expression of negative habitual. (See Section 5.4.4.3 for discussion of this usage.) Like *nat*, its co-occurrence with other auxiliaries is more restricted than is *nomo*. It too occurs relatively infrequently.

*Olabat*    neba        *gaman.*  
'They    are not    coming.'

*Olabat*    neba bin    *gaman.*  
'They    did not    come.'

#### 5.4.2 Tense

In general, tense expresses the relationship of the main verb to time. It indicates the 'location' in time of an event or state relative to the time the statement about the event or state was made. There are two tenses in Creole: past and non-past.

Past tense is indicated by the auxiliary *bin*, which usually precedes all other auxiliaries except the negative. When used with the third person singular personal pronoun *im*, *bin* usually occurs in the contracted form *imin*.

*Imin*    *gaman.*  
'He    came.'

*Olabat*    *gaman.*  
'They    come/are coming.'

*Olabat bin gaman.*  
'They came/were coming.'

*Im nomo bin andi gaman.*  
'He did not want to come.'

Non-past tense is indicated by the absence of a tense auxiliary. A main verb occurring without a tense auxiliary can refer to a present or future event or state. This does not mean, however, that a more specific expression of the principal verb's relationship to time cannot be made. Further specification is made, not by means of tense auxiliaries, but by time adverbs outside the verb phrase but still within the context, and auxiliaries that contain a time oriented component in their meaning. The latter are discussed in following sections.

*Olabat gaman.*  
'They come/are coming/will come.'

*Olabat gaman mailawik. (adverb)*  
'They will come the week they don't get paid.'

*Olabat gona gaman. (auxiliary)*  
'They will come.'

*Olabat labda gaman ailibala. (auxiliary and adverb)*  
'They must come early.'

#### 5.4.3 Mode

In general, mode expresses, not statements of fact, but events or states that exist only as conceptions of the mind. When used with the non-past tense, mode expresses events or states that may or may not eventuate in the future. When used with the past tense, it expresses the fact that the conception took place, but generally makes no statement on whether or not the events or states so conceived eventuated.

*Olabat andi gaman.*  
'They want to come.'

*Olabat bin andi gaman.*  
'They wanted to come.'

*Olabat labda gaman.*  
'They must/should come.'

Olabat bin labda gaman.  
'They should have come.'

Olabat mat gaman.  
'They may come.'

Mode auxiliaries are divided into four classes: intention-desire, ability-permission, necessity-advisability, and potential-possibility. They always occur preceding the main verb and usually, though not always, follow the negative and tense auxiliaries.

1. *Intention or desire* is expressed by *andi* (or one of its variant forms), *gona*, and *gada*.

*Andi* and *gona* are positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. They are future oriented but may be used with the past tense auxiliary. *Andi* has three variant forms generally conditioned by rate of speech: *wandi*, *wani*, and *ani*.

Olabat andi gaman.  
Olabat wani gaman.  
Olabat gona gaman.  
'They will/want to/intend to/plan to come.'

Olabat nomo gona gaman.  
'They are not/do not intend to come.'

Olabat bin andi gaman.  
'They were going to/wanted to come.'

*Gada* is positive and future oriented. It can be negated by the negative auxiliary, but it cannot be used with the past tense auxiliary. Its usage also includes an expression of a mild degree of necessity.

Olabat gada gaman.  
'They want to/intend to come.'

Olabat nomo gada gaman.  
'They do not intend to come.'

2. *Ability or permission* is expressed by *gin* and *gan*.

*Gin* is positive and non-past oriented. It cannot be negated nor can it be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat gin gaman.  
'They can/may/are able to come.'

Olabat gin go dakbala.

'They can turn dark.'

*Gan* expresses inability or denial of permission. It is negative but can be used with the negative auxiliary for added emphasis. It is primarily non-past oriented, but unlike its positive counterpart *gin*, it can be used with the past tense auxiliary to express past inability. *Gan* is also sometimes used to express habitual aspect.

Olabat gan gaman.

'They cannot/may not/are not able to come.'

Olabat nomo gan gaman.

'They cannot come.'

Olabat bin gan gaman.

'They could not come.'

3. *Necessity or advisability* in varying degrees is expressed by *gada*, *labda*, *mas*, *ada*, *judbi*, and *juda*.

*Gada* expresses a mild degree of necessity. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is future oriented and cannot be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat gada gaman.

'They should/ought to come.'

Olabat nomo gada gaman.

'They do not need to come.'

*Labda* and *mas* express a strong degree of necessity or obligation. Though both are positive and future oriented, *labda* can be negated by the negative auxiliary and can also be used with the past tense auxiliary, while *mas* can be neither. *Mas* occurs less frequently than does *labda*.

Olabat labda gaman.

Olabat mas gaman.

'They must/have to come.'

Olabat nomo labda gaman.

'They do not have to come.'

Olabat bin labda gaman.

'They had to come.'

*Ada*, *judbi*, and *juda* express a mild degree of necessity or advisability. All are positive but can be negated by the negative

auxiliary. *Ada* is future oriented but can be used with the past tense auxiliary; *judbi* is future oriented and cannot be used with the past tense auxiliary; *juda* is past oriented and usually, though not always, occurs with the past tense auxiliary following. *Judbi* is also used to express likelihood. All three occur relatively infrequently.

Olabat ada gaman.  
'They should/ought to come.'

Olabat nomo bin ada gaman.  
'They should not have come.'

Olabat judbi gaman.  
'They should/ought to come.'

Olabat nomo judbi gaman.  
'They should not come.'

Olabat juda bin gaman.  
Olabat juda gaman.  
'They should/ought to have come.'

Olabat nomo juda bin gaman.  
'They should not have come.'

4. *Potential or possibility*, in a broad sense, is expressed by *mat*, *judbi*, *gulijap*, *nili*, and *trai*.

*Mat* expresses simple potential or possibility. It is positive and future oriented and cannot be negated nor used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat mat gaman.  
'They may come.'

Olabat mat go dakbala.  
'They may turn dark.'

*Judbi* expresses a strong sense of likelihood. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is present oriented and cannot be used with the past tense auxiliary. It is used relatively infrequently.

Olabat judbi gaman.  
'They should be/are probably coming/on the way.'

Olabat nomo judbi gaman.  
'They probably are not coming/on the way.'

*Gulijap* and *nili* are generally past oriented and express a sense of potential or possibility that did not eventuate but came very close to doing so. Though generally past oriented, they sometimes occur in constructions with a future orientation. Both are positive but may be negated by the negative auxiliary.

*Olabat bin gulijap gaman.*  
*Olabat bin nili gaman.*  
 'They almost/just about came.'

*Olabat nomo bin gulijap gaman.*  
 'They did not almost come.'

*Olabat nili gaman.*  
 'They are almost/nearly coming.'

*Trai* expresses attempt or endeavor. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and may be used with the past tense auxiliary.

*Olabat tra gaman.*  
 'They are trying/attempting to come.'

*Olabat bin tra gaman.*  
 'They tried/attempted to come.'

*Olabat nomo bin tra gaman.*  
 'They did not try to come.'

#### 5.4.4 Aspect

In general, aspect, like tense, expresses the relationship of the main verb to time. It differs from tense, however, in that it indicates the manner in which an event or state takes place in relationship to time, rather than its 'location' in time.

*Olabat gaman. (non-past tense)*  
 'They come.'

*Olabat oldei gaman. (aspect)*  
 'They always/continually come.'

*Olabat bin gaman. (past tense)*  
 'They came.'

*Olabat yusda gaman. (aspect)*  
 'They used to/always come.'

Olabat stil gaman. (aspect)  
'They still come.'

Though aspect auxiliaries generally modify the main verb, some aspect auxiliaries may also modify other components of the verb phrases. They usually occur immediately preceding the component they modify.

Olabat oldei gaman.  
'They always come.'

Olabat oldei go dakbala.  
'They always turn dark.'

Olabat oldei andi gaman.  
'They always want to come.'

Olabat oldei gan gaman.  
'They always cannot come.'

Olabat oldei nomo gaman.  
'They always never come.'

Aspect auxiliaries are divided into three classes: factual, limitation-intensity, and habitual.

1. *Factual* is used as a cover term for aspect auxiliaries that express inception, continuation, and cessation: *stat*, *go*, *kip*, *stil*, and *stap*.

*Stat* expresses inception. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

Olabat stat gaman.  
'They start/begin to come.'

Olabat nomo bin stat gaman.  
'They did not start to come.'

*Go* expresses a sense of action through time from its inception. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary. This usage of *go* is not to be confused with its usage as a main verb.

Olabat go jilip.  
'They go to sleep.'

*Olabat* nomo bin go *jilip*.  
'They did not go to sleep.'

*Kip* expresses continuation. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

*Olabat* kip *gaman*.  
'They keep/continue to come.'

*Olabat* nomo bin kip *gaman*.  
'They did not continue to come.'

*Stil* expresses continuation, though with a sense of persistence. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

*Olabat* stil *gaman*.  
'They still/continue to come.'

*Olabat* nomo bin stil *gaman*.  
'They did not continue to come.'

*Stap* expresses cessation. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

*Olabat* stap *gaman*.  
'They stop/cease to come.'

*Olabat* nomo bin stap *gaman*.  
'They did not cease to come.'

2. *Limitation or intensity* is expressed by *onli*, *jis*, *lilbit*, and *rili*.

*Onli* expresses limitation in the sense of 'solely'. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

*Olabat* onli *gaman*.  
'They only/simplely come.'

*Olabat* nomo bin onli *gaman*.  
'They did not only come.'

*Jis* expresses limitation in the same sense as *onli* but also expresses a diminished or low degree of intensity. It is positive



but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

*Olabat bin jis gaman.*  
'They just/only came.'

*Olabat nomo bin jis gaman.*  
'They did not just/only come.'

*Lilbit* expresses a diminished or low degree of intensity. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

*Olabat nomo lilbit gaman.*  
'They come wholeheartedly/in droves.'

*Olabat lilbit go dakbala.*  
'They turn slightly dark.'

*Olabat bin nomo lilbit go dakbala.*  
'They turned very dark.'

*Rili* expresses a high degree of intensity or quality. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary.

*Olabat rili gaman.*  
'They really/very much so come.'

*Olabat rili go dakbala.*  
'They turn very dark.'

*Olabat nomo bin rili gaman.*  
'Very few came.'

3. *Habitual* is expressed by *oldei*, *olweis*, *yusda*, *neba*, and *gan*.

*Oldei* and *olweis* are positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. They are neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary. *Oldei* is used more frequently than *olweis*.

*Olabat oldei gaman.*  
*Olabat alweis gaman.*  
'They always/habitually come.'

*Olabat nomo bin oldei gaman.*  
*Olabat nono bin alweis gaman.*  
'They did not always come.'

*Yusda* is past oriented. It generally occurs without the past tense auxiliary but may occur with it. Its meaning is equivalent to *bin oldei*, which is used more frequently than *yusda*. *Yusda* is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary.

*Olabat* *yusda* *gaman.*  
*Olabat* *bin yusda* *gaman.*  
*Olabat* *yusda bin* *gaman.*  
 'They used to/always came.'

*Olabat* *nomo* *yusda* *gaman.*  
 'They did not used to come.'

*Neba* expresses a sense of negative habitual. It occurs relatively infrequently and co-occurs with few other auxiliaries. It is neutral oriented. When used with and preceding the past tense auxiliary, it expresses primarily a sense of emphatic negative rather than negative habitual. When used with the non-past tense auxiliary, it sometimes expresses a sense of 'seldom' and is basically equivalent to *nomo oldei*. It is used with *gan* to express an habitual inability. It cannot co-occur with the negative auxiliary.

*Olabat* *neba* *gaman.*  
 'They never/seldom come.'

*Olabat* *bin* *neba* *gaman.*  
 'They used to never/seldom come.'

*Olabat* *neba gan* *gaman.*  
 'They never/seldom are able to come.'

*Gan*, in addition to its use to express inability or denial of permission, is sometimes used to express a behaviour pattern in which the subject has the ability to act but habitually does not. It is negative but can be used with the negative auxiliary for added emphasis. It is neutral oriented and does not occur with the past tense auxiliary.

*Beibi* *gan* *kraikrai.*  
*Beibi* *nomo gan* *kraikrai.*  
 'The baby never/seldom cries.'

#### 5.4.5 Voice

In general, voice expresses the relationship of the subject to the main verb in terms of the 'direction' of the action expressed by the verb. In the active voice the action comes from the subject as

the actor, while in the passive voice the action passes to the subject as the entity acted upon.

Though Creole makes relatively little use of the passive voice, it is expressed in three ways: by the passive auxiliary *git*, by unmarked verbs that are inherently passive in meaning, and by circumlocution.

1. The passive auxiliary *git* expresses a 'true' passive voice. It is used with relatively few predicating verbs though it is very common with those few. It is positive but can be negated by the negative auxiliary. It is neutral oriented and can be used with the past tense auxiliary. Though it only occurs with predicating verbs, it can co-occur with most auxiliary verbs. This usage of *git* is not to be confused with its usage as a linking verb.

*Olabat bin git shat.*  
'They were/got shot.'

*Olabat andi git kil.*  
'They will be/get killed.'

*Olabat nomo andi git kil.*  
'They do not want to be killed.'

2. Passive is also expressed by some unmarked intransitive verbs that are inherently passive in meaning. With such verbs, the active voice is usually expressed by the marked transitive form of the verbs.

*Imin obin.* (passive)  
'It was opened.'

*Sambodi bin obinim im.* (active)  
'Somebody opened it.'

*Olabat binij.* (passive)  
'They are finished.'

*Imin binijim olabat.* (active)  
'He finished them.'

3. Passive, in a sense, is also expressed by circumlocution. The third person plural personal pronoun *olabat* is used as a 'dummy' subject in an active voice construction.

*Olabat kolum yalbu.*  
'It is called water-lily seed.  
(Literally: They call it water-lily seed.)'

## 5.5 CONCORD

Concord basically refers to a relationship between two grammatical elements such that if one has a particular feature then the other in some sense has to have that feature also. For example, in English the most important concord is that of number between a subject and verb. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular; if the subject is plural, the verb must be plural.

The boy runs.  
The boys run.

but not

\*The boy run.  
\*The boys runs.

Creole does not have concord that parallels that of English. Concord, however, is not totally absent from Creole, though it carries a low functional load.

There is a degree of concord in Creole that exists between the verb and the object. This operation has not been studied in detail, so only a general reference is made to it here.

When the object is of a plural nature and the action of the verb relates to individuals within the mass, the verb occurs with the continuative or repetitive aspect.

*Imin gijimbat gusberi.*  
'He picked/was picking (individual) gooseberries.'

but not \**Imin gijim gusberi.*

When, however, the verb relates to the whole of the object as opposed to individuals within the mass, the verb occurs without the continuative aspect.

*Imin gijim gusberi.*  
'He picked (a batch of) gooseberries.'

The converse situation, likewise, holds true. When the object is of a singular nature, the action of the verb relating to it is expressed without the continuative aspect.

*Imin kilim wolabi.*  
'He killed a wallaby.'

but not \**Imin kilibat wolabi.*

It should be pointed out, however, that

*Imin kilibat wolabi.*

is an acceptable construction when the situation it refers to is one in which

'He killed many wallabies.'

'He hit and hit and hit the wallaby.'

or 'Time and again he killed a wallaby.'

NOTE FOR CHAPTER 5

<sup>1</sup>The curved line in these examples indicates the rise and fall of the pitch.