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Maintaining Linguistic Elite Closure:

The durability of language-based class exclusion in Haiti

Doctoral Thesis

Student:	William Scott Frager
College:	St. Hilda's College
Supervisors:	Professor Miriam Meyerhoff Professor Aaron Reeves
Assessors:	Professor Devyani Sharma Professor Philipp Krämer
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Abstract

Linguistic elite closure (LEC) – a sociolinguistic arrangement whereby an elite language or language variety acts as a class marker and barrier to socioeconomic opportunity – represents a particularly pernicious form of linguisticism. Distinct from other phenomena such as heritage language revival, regional accentism, or the linguistic hurdles faced by first-generation immigrants, cases of LEC involve a small minority intergenerationally excluding the majority via language. This poses a sociological puzzle, particularly in contexts known for successful popular resistance against oppression, yet where the majority does not mobilize against their linguistic marginalization. Haiti, sometimes referred to as "the linguistic apartheid," represents such a case of largely uncontested and durable LEC. This doctoral project investigates what maintains LEC in Haiti, exploring the issue through a range of theoretical and empirical approaches. As an integrated thesis, it includes three stand-alone papers. The first stand-alone paper consists of an analysis of Haitian language-in-education policy documents, and finds that mischaracterizations of pro-Kreyòl policy, early-exit transitions to French-medium education, and the unrealistic language acquisition target of *balanced bilingualism* all contribute to *LEC Maintenance*. The second and third papers use interview data collected in Haiti from both elites and non-elites in early 2022. The second paper, drawing on Bourdieu and Elias, explores how pragmatic and affective aspects of *habitus* cause non-elite Kreyòl-monolinguals to eschew mother-tongue education. The third paper investigates how the Haitian elite use French as a currency of *social esteem*, important for both garnering and signaling positive social evaluations. The thesis additionally overviews a range of potential reasons for why French is not spreading, Kreyòl is not rising in status, and stakeholders are not taking action. In addition to these findings, the project contributes both a framework for conceptualizing LEC and insight into the role of language in the mutually reinforcing relationship between individual and society.

Key words: linguistic elite closure, Haiti, habitus, affect, social esteem, Bourdieu, Elias

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I also owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Matt Gardner. Although he had no formal supervisory relationship with me, he read early drafts of this thesis's papers, gave meticulous feedback, and met with me several times to discuss them.

Professor Michel DeGraff and Professor Haynes Miller of the MIT-Haiti Initiative were great collaborators. I deeply admire their work and passion for the Kreyòl language.

Writing a doctoral thesis can at times be a solitary and difficult experience. A shortlist of individuals who over these years offered me support in one form or another includes Mina Lucinescu, Georgi Olentšenko, Ásgeir Berg Matthíasson, Theresa Rule, Thad and Penny Allton, Noah Hamilton, Pete Gero, Bob Glick, Stuart Taylor, Marie-Hélène du Bouëtiez, Lam Joar, Carolin Kröger, and Ben Goodair.

I deeply appreciate the time, honesty, and consideration that the Haitian participants gave to the interviews. The stories they shared were remarkable. They have breathed life into this thesis, fundamentally changing not only the project's course but also my own understanding of the causes and nature of Haitian linguistic practices, aspirations, and exclusion.

Dedication

*Dedicated to the memory of my mother,
to the memories yet to be made with my brother,
and to the memories shared with the Center of Hope (Haiti) community,
all three of which continue to guide and motivate me on a daily basis.*

Preface

Hidden between the lines of every doctoral thesis are thousands of stories, experiences, data points, setbacks, advances, and changes of direction that guided and shaped the work through to its completion. This document is no different. With this preface, I would like to situate this thesis both within the context of my life as well as within the Kreyòl movement at this moment in Haitian history. In doing so, I hope to provide some clarity as to the motivations, challenges, and aspirations of the project.

Haiti and Haitian language issues have been a defining part of my adult life. This journey began, however, with a completely circumstantial opportunity. During the penultimate year of my high school education, one of my best friends told me that a missionary pastor visited his church and was looking for people to go on a trip to Haiti the following summer. At the time, I knew nothing about Haiti. I did not even have a passport. But I was restless to get out of Kansas and see the world. My mother was not keen on it, but I tutored mathematics every day after school to fund my travels and, in the end, she did not try to dissuade me. While the trip was short, it exposed me to a world completely distinct from the tidy organization of middle-class America.

My relationship with Haiti might have ended there, but once again chance intervened. The neighboring University of Kansas – where I began my undergraduate studies – was at the time one of two American universities to have a Haitian studies program. To fill up my schedule, I enrolled in some elective Haitian culture and history classes. These were led by Professor Bryant Freeman, a leading Haitian studies scholar and creolist who produced some of the first extensive Kreyòl-English dictionaries. Inspired by these courses, I sent emails to about a dozen aid

organizations offering my services as a "photographer and videographer," and in this manner found a means to continue to volunteer and travel to Haiti.

After finishing my bachelor's degree – ultimately in Linguistics at New York University – I took a job organizing the opening of a primary school for the NGO Center of Hope (Haiti) in the countryside near the small city of Hinche in the Plateau Central. Now profoundly interested in languages, I dedicated my free time to improving my Kreyòl, the sole language of most Haitians. The learning experience was a pleasure. Haitian farmers' faces would light up when I would greet them with a few words. Bands of children would seize my hand and lead me through plantain fields while explaining the names of everything around us. I was then reading the work of pro-Kreyòl academics, such as Marc Prou, Pierre Vernet, Yves Dejean, Benjamin Hebblethwaite, Renauld Govain, and, notably, Michel DeGraff of MIT, who in 2012 had received a one-million-dollar National Science Foundation grant to make Kreyòl active learning tools. After reading their work, I believed that much of Haiti's underdevelopment was tied to the neglect and marginalization of this language and its speakers. I became an unwavering advocate, feverishly consuming every article and book in Kreyòl that I could find. In 2014, the *Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen*, or Haitian Kreyòl Academy, began operating. Ostensibly, it was meant to promote the language through creating resources and organizing activities. Its existence also had significant symbolic value, giving institutional legitimacy to this historically marginalized language and counterbalancing the *Académie française* – one of the "suspect" governmental language institutions of France whose collective mission to globally promote French was viewed by some activists as neo-colonialist and antagonistic to the Kreyòl movement – and hence to the well-being of the Haitian people.



"Lekòl dete pou ti lektè" ("Summer school for Little Readers") program where we introduced incoming 5-year-olds to Kreyòl books and reading.

I later took the position of Executive Administrator at the Center of Hope (Haiti), sharing responsibilities for all field operations alongside a local Haitian colleague and friend. In this role, I was confronted on a daily basis with the challenges of Haiti's linguistic exclusion. We were operating a grade school within an education system designed for francophone children but our students came from a community where they had essentially no access to this language. Even our teachers, all of whom were graduates of the local teachers' college – a rare level of qualification for most people working as teachers in Haiti (IFADEM, 2013) – were not necessarily comfortable conversing in French. I was fully convinced that giving Kreyòl an expansive role in the classroom could improve learning outcomes and student well-being. With the NGO's team I sought to make us an exemplary model of mother-tongue active learning. I endeavored to find every existing (but often rare) textbook in Kreyòl, and to supplement these with our own original Kreyòl materials. We also launched a small library of a couple of hundred Kreyòl children's books – most of which were made for children of the Haitian-American diaspora and which I brought in a suitcase from Miami, Florida. It was an exciting project to be a part of.



Printout on dinosaurs we made and students in our Kreyòl library at the Center of Hope (Haiti), circa 2015.
See also: <http://youtube.com/watch?v=6iacwANY3cY>

At this time, I believed that Haiti's linguistic barriers could fall with a few demonstrations of Kreyòl's validity accompanied by some vocal activism. I believed that these barriers were in fact already falling, and that the country was on the cusp of a linguistic revolution, which in turn would lead to a social and economic revolution.

Motivated to have a larger impact, I left the NGO to get a Master's degree in International Development at Sciences Po, Paris. I had in previous years intermittently visited Paris and spent thousands of euros on French language courses at the Sorbonne, although my experiences trying to speak it with the locals contrasted starkly with my experiences speaking Kreyòl in the Haitian countryside. These years gave me the chance to become functionally fluent in French and to do a thesis focused on Haitian language-in-education policy supervised by Charles Oman, the former head of the OECD's Development Centre. During fieldwork, I met and interviewed leaders at key pro-Kreyòl institutions, including at the Haitian Kreyòl Academy, the Faculty of Applied Linguistics, the State Secretariat of Literacy, and the publishing house *Kopivit l'Action Sociale*. I spent considerable time in the library of the Faculty of Applied Linguistics, speaking with students about the language question and reading the inspiring thesis projects of past graduates. My final project was entitled *Listening before Teaching – An evaluation of trends towards mother-tongue*

instruction in Haiti for development actors concerned with quality education. I was honored to have Michel DeGraff on my defense committee, a leading Kreyòl language scholar and advocate active at the time.



Outside the Haitian Kreyòl Academy in Port-au-Prince with its then-president, Pauris Jean Baptiste. 2017.

From the start of my travels in Haiti, however, I had experiences which eventually led me to realize that the language problem was in fact immensely more complex than I had initially understood. I met families living in poverty who would sell some of their limited livestock or exhaust their savings to place one selected child into a school where the teachers were perceived to speak better French. During my master's thesis fieldwork, my driver firmly asserted that he would immediately withdraw his son from his school if they switched to Kreyòl-based education. I observed middle-class Haitians who would espouse patriotic pro-Kreyòl sentiments also switch to French when they introduced themselves or entered a formal setting, even when everyone present was more comfortable in Kreyòl. I also came to have some telling encounters with the francophone elite. Once a friend from this milieu introduced me to an extremely rich (albeit vulgar) Haitian man. Unwavering in my advocacy, it was not long before I annoyed him with my proclamations that education should be in Kreyòl. The man then switched from respectfully addressing me as "Monsieur Frager" to mockingly referring to me in the 3rd person as "blan sa a"

("that blan").¹ On another occasion, after sharing my strong position on mother-tongue education with a different elite, he immediately called his cousin to tell him about my ideas. He broke out laughing at the response of his cousin, who said I should force American children to be educated in "English slang." And, despite the arguments, research, and enthusiasm of pro-Kreyòl academics – many of whom were based in the USA – the Haitian government itself continued to maintain language policies clearly ill-adapted for the realities of the country. It is noteworthy that the Haitian president Michel Martelly initially refused to sign the law that would establish the Haitian Kreyòl Academy because the document was written in Kreyòl, not French (HA/radio Métropole Haïti, 2014).

Not deterred, these experiences motivated me to further explore the problem in depth in a doctoral research project, and I was accepted here at the University of Oxford. Soon thereafter, I began to work with Michel DeGraff as a Policy Analyst for the MIT-Haiti Initiative, resulting in the production of various media, including a policy brief for UNESCO, an article for a Haitian newspaper written in Kreyòl, and an academic article published in the *Journal of Haitian Studies* – an adapted version of which is included below as Chapter 5.

¹ The word "blan," meaning "white" or "foreigner," is discussed more in Chapter 3 on my positionality. When this man addressed me as "Monsieur," he pronounced this in the French manner /mɔsjø/ rather than the basilectal Kreyòl /msje/. After deciding that I had ridiculous and incompetent ideas about language and education, he began referencing me in Kreyòl ("blan sa a"). In Chapter 7, we revisit how Haitian code choice may be used to signal positive or negative social evaluations of others.



Moderating a panel on the future of Haitian education at an MIT-Haiti Initiative event. 01/2024.

Despite my background and experience, the completion of this doctoral project has taken more years than expected. This is in part due to events not directly related to my research, including the COVID pandemic and my mother's health decline and eventual passing in late 2023. It was also a period of dramatic change and difficulty for both Haiti and for the institutions and individuals who had led the charge for Haitian linguistic reform. On July 7, 2021, the Haitian president Jovenel Moïse was assassinated, and in the years since no elections have been held. The capital Port-au-Prince has descended into gang warfare, with the majority of the city and major highways now under their control. Bullets fired on commercial passenger airplanes have closed the country's main international airport. Some of the pro-Kreyòl leaders I previously interviewed were amongst the thousands of Haitians kidnapped for ransom, with some choosing to leave the country once freed. The Faculty of Applied Linguistics' complex, where I spent so much time during my Master's degree fieldwork, has since March 2023 been occupied by hundreds of people displaced by gang violence and thus has ceased to operate. More recently, the reinstated Trump administration has drastically cut development aid to Haiti, and the consequences of this will be increasingly felt over time.

It is also a matter of public record that Michel DeGraff has been temporarily removed from MIT's Linguistics Department and designated as Faculty at Large.² It is my sincere hope that he will be able to resolve these issues and that he can continue his work unencumbered on both the Kreyòl language and the educational barriers facing the Haitian people for as long as he chooses to do so.

And so the production of this doctoral thesis did not take place during a golden era of Haitian history, nor a flourishing of the Kreyòl language into scientific, educational, and literary domains. These years were tougher, slower, and filled with a lot more uncertainty and apprehension about the present and the future. In an ironic twist, with my funding running low during my final year of this project, a friend lent me an unfurnished apartment in Paris next to the Institute of France – home of the *Académie française*. It was in their library that much of this document was produced.

Still, despite everything they endure, the Haitian people persist. From this I draw inspiration and hope. While this document is not riding the wave of a Haitian linguistic revolution, it may nonetheless offer some original and different understandings of Haiti's language problem, and even some general insight into the durability of class-based linguistic exclusion, that is, into *the maintenance of linguistic elite closure*.

²The matter originates from a faculty dispute over a course DeGraff proposed to teach which would cover, among other topics, language and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For more information, see Friedman (2024) and DeGraff (2025).



In January 2024, I visited the primary school of the Center of Hope (Haiti) for the first time in many years. Despite these children coming from homes without running water or regular electricity, living in a country filled with uncertainty, they continue to go to school, study, and accomplish amazing things.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 The Dilemma and Puzzle of Linguistic Elite Closure

In every society one can observe differences in the language of the politically and economically powerful and the impoverished and disenfranchised (Bourdieu, 1991; Myers-Scotton, 1990, 1993). Even in fairly linguistically homogeneous contexts, unique characteristics of a person's accent or speech may associate them with differently perceived social origins, educational attainment, or levels of intelligence. When linguistic differences do align with such judgements, speakers of these varieties may be subject to unfair prejudices in social settings or the workplace (Mugglestone, 2003). This is referred to as *linguicism*, a phenomenon formally defined as:

ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, regulate and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language. (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, p. 13)

For example, immigrants often struggle with language barriers which can make it difficult for them to access public services, such as with non-English speakers seeking health care through Great Britain's NHS system (Ali & Watson, 2018; Jones & Gill, 1998), or cause them to accept particularly hazardous jobs without properly adapted safety training and manuals, as occurs with Spanish-speaking immigrants in the USA (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009).

While linguicism likely occurs to some degree in all societies, certain contexts represent more extreme cases. In some countries, particularly in post-colonial settings, the language of privilege may be necessary for many basic life opportunities, such as primary school education or

employment in the formal economy, but may also be incomprehensible and inaccessible to all but a small elite portion of the population (Myers-Scotton, 1990, 1993, 2006). By making this language a requirement for access to and successful participation in key institutions, a deep social schism is created between those who can speak the language of privilege and those who cannot. Where there are few opportunities for individuals born into lower-status language communities to ever acquire the high-status language and little or no effort is made to develop their mother tongues for institutional uses, the inequalities caused by language can both severely limit life opportunities and persist across generations.

Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) describes such phenomena as *linguistic elite closure*³ or *LEC*, “a strategy by which those persons in power maintain their powers and privileges via language choices” (Myers-Scotton, 1990, p. 25). LEC occurs where a small but dominant social group has a language variety in their linguistic repertoires that others do not, and this variety is required in various settings “necessary for participation in situations which yield power” (p. 25). Since her original articles, Myers-Scotton’s concept has been used to describe many contexts. Errihani (2023) applies it to his analysis of Morocco's education system and economy, describing how those in positions of political and economic power are French-educated and use the language as their preferred mode of communication in the private sector. Wornyo (2015) argues that Ghana's elites maintain LEC through English and their ambivalence towards improving the quality of public education, in part due to their own children attending private schools. Naseem et al. (2019) investigate how Urdu-English code-switching is a means for Pakistani aristocrats to signal their elite status and assert power over others. The concept of LEC has also been applied to Haiti

³ The sociolinguist Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) employed the shortened term “elite closure” for this social phenomenon – here the qualifier “linguistic” is added to distinguish it from forms of social closure characterized by ethnicity, region, politics, disability, gender, sexuality, etc.

(DeGraff, 2016, 2020; Coulmas, 2002; DeGraff & Stump, 2018; Migge et al., 2010, p. 12), Kenya (Bunyi, 2005), Senegal (Swigart, 2000), South Africa (De Klerk, 1999, 2003; Orman, 2008), Malawi (Kayambazinthu, 1998), East Timor (Taylor-Leech, 2008), Algeria (Benrabah, 2005, 2007), Côte d'Ivoire (Djité, 2000), Tanzania (Rubagumya et al., 2011), Ecuador (K. A. King & Haboud, 2002), Sudan (Abdelhay, 2007), Israel (Amara, 2002; Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999), and others.

Although efforts can be made to reduce linguicism, language as a cause of social inequality may be impossible to completely eliminate. People are likely to always have differing attitudes about speech varieties and their speakers. Institutions, even those seeking to be inclusive, will probably always struggle to provide perfectly equal accommodation to every minority language community seeking their services. Despite, however, some degree of linguicism perhaps being both ubiquitous and inevitable, the existence and durability of extreme cases of LEC represent a puzzle. How does a small minority manage to use language to exclude a large majority from generation to generation, at times without being challenged? Over very long timescales, what keeps non-elites from learning the language variety of the elite and enjoying its social benefits? What keeps non-elites' mother tongues from entering institutions? Despite its inherent social tension and disequilibrium, what maintains LEC?

How privileged elite minorities are able to exclude and exploit the majority has long been a central question of sociological inquiry (M. Weber, 1921/1978; Marx, 1965; Bourdieu, 1979, 1991; Foucault, 1975). Likewise, linguicism's manifestations, mechanisms, and intersection with social class dynamics have also been extensively explored through various angles, including formal language policy, classroom language use, colonial legacies, naturalization of unfair practices, linguistic insecurity, shame, and other affective dimensions, prestige, institutional

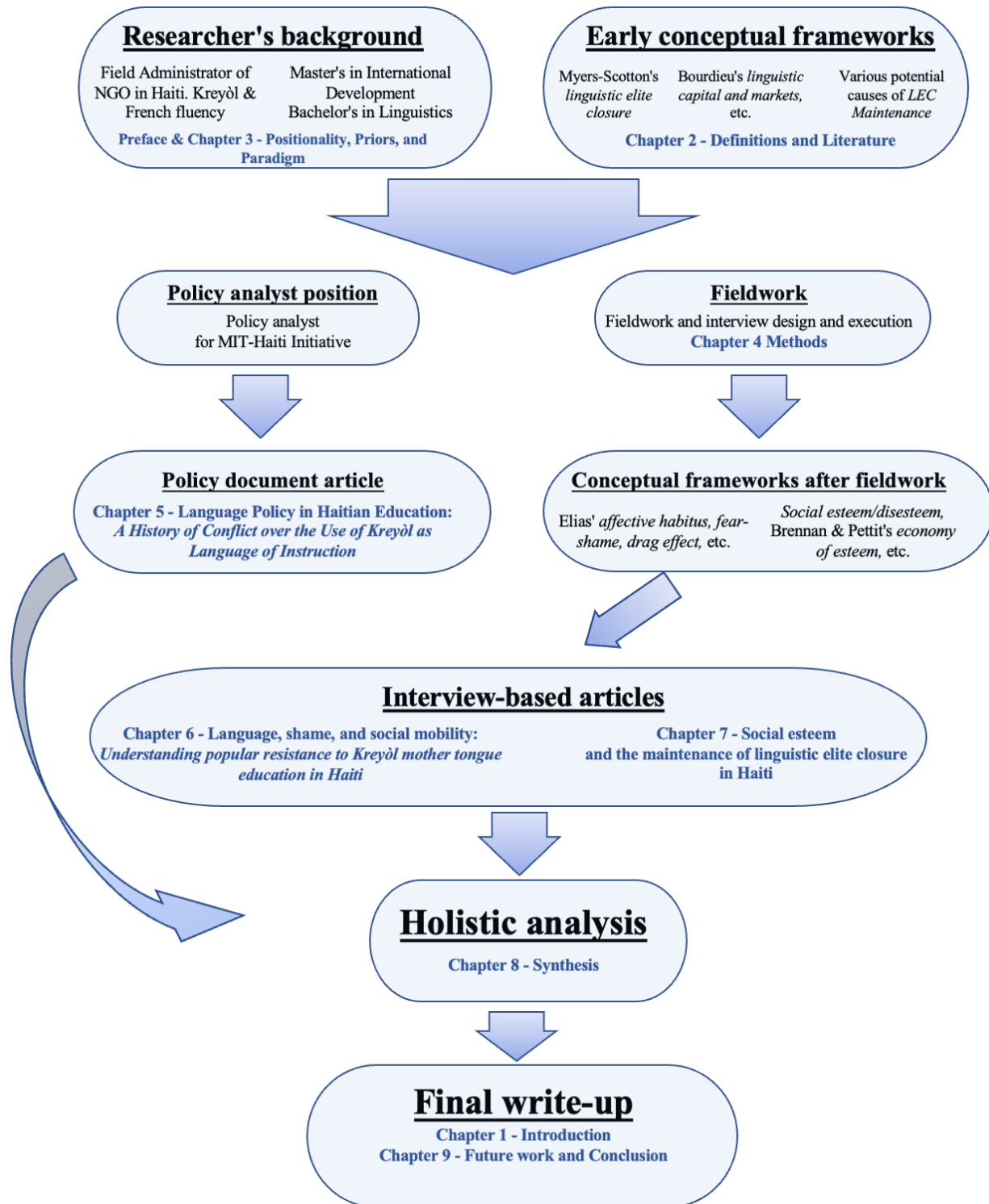
entrenchment, challenges to standardizing and promoting minority languages, and others. These approaches to understanding LEC and relevant findings are further discussed in the Research Questions section below and in Section 2.2.

In this doctoral thesis, I overview the stakes, theory, and literature on the mechanisms of LEC Maintenance. I then apply this to my own original investigative research, using Haiti as my primary case study. The project is entitled *Maintaining Linguistic Elite Closure: The durability of language-based class exclusion in Haiti*. As an integrated thesis, this document consists of standard framing chapters, three stand-alone papers, a synthesis, and a conclusion. The thesis serves to meet the primary requirements for the University of Oxford's DPhil in Linguistics, Philology, and Phonetics.

The thesis is structured as follows: In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I present a visualization of the project's structure and progression (Figure A), followed by the thesis's subsidiary research questions contextualized in existing literature and accompanied by a short summary of the findings for each question. After this, I present the motivations for the thesis, notably the empirical and theoretical contributions which it aims to make. In Chapter 2, I review the key concepts, literature, and theory regarding three topics: first, linguistic elite closure; second, potential causes of its maintenance; and third, the linguistic situation in Haiti. In Chapter 3, I discuss my own positionality, epistemic priors, and research paradigm. In Chapter 4, I discuss the datasets and methods used in this thesis. Chapter 5 is the first of three stand-alone papers and is entitled *Language Policy in Haitian Education: A History of Conflict over the Use of Kreyòl as Language of Instruction*. This larger stand-alone paper has two principal goals. First, it provides relevant historical background on Haiti by discussing in context language-in-education policy from the country's 1804 independence through 2022. Second, it presents an analysis of the trends and

limitations of Haiti's language-in-education policy, notably since Kreyòl's official legalization in education in 1979. Chapter 6 is the first of the two stand-alone papers that use interview data gathered during my fieldwork in Haiti in January and February of 2022. Entitled *Language, shame, and social mobility: Understanding popular resistance to Kreyòl mother-tongue education in Haiti*, this paper explores why monolingual non-elite Haitians may be resistant to their children attending Kreyòl-based schools. Connecting macro-level social structures and the individual through the concept of *habitus* as developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1991) and Norbert Elias (1939/2012), the paper explores how both pragmatic dispositions and linguistic-affective associations can lead to a preference for French-based education. Chapter 7 presents the paper *Social esteem and the maintenance of linguistic elite closure in Haiti* and explores how and why the francophone Haitian elite may engage in practices that maintain the value and exclusivity of French, regardless of their intent. The French language is found to be a *currency of social esteem* in Haiti's *economy of esteem* (Brennan & Pettit, 2004). Given its importance in gaining and signaling positive social evaluations, the study investigates how individuals' esteem-directed linguistic behavior may aggregate into a societal *intangible backhand* which maintains language-based exclusion. Chapter 8 synthesizes data from across the three papers, ethnographic observations from the fieldwork, my background, and the literature discussed in Chapter 2 to provide evidence for or against the various potential causes of LEC Maintenance. Table 8 at the end of this chapter synthesizes the findings. Lastly, Chapter 9 offers a summary, limitations, suggestions for future work, and the conclusion.

Figure A: Visualization of Thesis Project



1.1 Research Questions

This thesis adopts a holistic approach to the study of LEC Maintenance in Haiti, examining the phenomenon through multiple empirical and theoretical lenses. To facilitate this, the question of *What Maintains LEC in Haiti?* has been broken down into a series of subsidiary questions. These include three core questions, each of which is the focus of a stand-alone article (Chapters 5, 6, and 7), followed by a longer set of secondary questions which serve to broadly apply the project's data and analysis to many aspects of Haiti's LEC.

Below we first list the research questions. Following this, we briefly situate each question within existing literature, indicate where the question is addressed in the thesis, and briefly summarize the thesis's findings.

Core research questions of articles

- I) *How has formal language-in-education policy contributed to maintaining Haiti's LEC?*
- II) *What is the role of affect, notably shame, in popular resistance to mother-tongue education in Haiti?*
- III) *What role does social esteem play in maintaining Haitian elites' linguistic practices?*

Secondary research questions

- I) Why is French fluency not spreading to the general Haitian population?
 - i) *In addition to formal policy, why is the school system not broadly spreading French fluency?*
 - ii) *Do non-francophones have opportunities to practice and improve their French outside of the classroom, notably in natural settings with fluent speakers?*

- iii) *Are Kreyòl-monolingual non-elite Haitians not interested in acquiring French as they consider it alone to be insufficient for social mobility?*
- iv) *Do Kreyòl-monolinguals not pursue French fluency because they reject the legitimacy of this language and its dominant position in Haiti?*

II) Why does Kreyòl remain excluded or lower status in many Haitian institutions?

- i) *Do colonial legacies still contribute to Haitians valuing Kreyòl less than French?*
- ii) *How might lay understandings of creoles as a "lesser" form of their lexifiers influence how stakeholders feel about Kreyòl and French in Haiti?*
- iii) *How might pragmatic challenges keep Kreyòl outside of institutions?*

III) Why is Haitian LEC generally left unaddressed?

- i) *Have Haitian linguistic practices become naturalized to the point that other possibilities are not considered?*
- ii) *Is it in the interest of the Haitian elite to maintain the status quo?*
- iii) *Is Haiti's LEC ignored in order to address more immediate, pressing problems?*

Elaboration of central research questions of articles

I) How has formal language-in-education policy contributed to maintaining Haiti's LEC?

How mother tongues should be handled in language-in-education policy has long been a topic of inquiry and debate amongst educators, linguists, policymakers, and international development actors (UNESCO, 1953, 2007, 2012, 2018; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988; Heugh, 2011; Groff, 2017; S. S. Mufwene, 2021; Hebblethwaite, 2012; DeGraff, 2020). One central issue is

when and for how long mother tongues should serve as the *language of instruction* of core subjects, and whether contextually rare but privileged "official" languages should be initially taught apart as *objects of instruction* (C. Benson, 2016; UNESCO, 2018). Many policy approaches exist, but recent research conducted in Ethiopia and Eritrea supports the value of *mother-tongue-based multilingual education* policies for improving learning outcomes and reducing school dropouts (Heugh et al., 2007; Walter & Davis, 2005). This thesis therefore asks: Throughout Haitian history, which types of language-in-education policies have dominated? How has policy evolved? Have adopted policies addressed the reality and challenges of the country's sociolinguistic landscape? These questions are explored in Chapter 5, the thesis's first stand-alone article, *Language Policy in Haitian Education*. The investigation found that while from a longitudinal perspective policy has become more favorable towards Kreyòl, past policy gains for MTE were later reversed or misrepresented, and *early-exit transitions* to French continue to feature in policy.

II) What is the role of affect, notably shame, in popular resistance to mother-tongue education in Haiti?

International development actors and language activists often advocate for mother-tongue education reform not only on pedagogical grounds but also on human rights, cultural, and social justice grounds (UNESCO, 2007, 2012; Marinotti, 2017; DeGraff, 2016; Groff, 2017; James et al., 2017; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012). Despite this, members of these minoritized-language communities at times themselves resist reform (Crenshaw, 2013; Early, 2020; S. S. Mufwene, 2021; Nyarigoti & Ambiyo, 2014; UNESCO, 2017). Explanations for this popular resistance typically focus on stakeholders being pragmatic with regard to the value of dominant languages (Early, 2020; Mahboob & Cruz, 2013; S. S. Mufwene, 2010b, 2021). Such understandings coincide with

Bourdieu's (1991) treatment of language as a form of capital which we employ in our surrounding *linguistic market*. Explanations based purely on pragmatism, however, overlook the role of affect, notably in post-colonial contexts where colonial legacies are argued to leave the population with positive associations with the culture and language of the former colonizer, and negative associations with local counterparts (Bokamba, 2011; Fanon, 1952/2021; Mignolo, 2011). Haitian academics also contend that neo-colonial sentiments that favor European culture and the French language persist in Haiti today (DeGraff, 2017a, 2019, 2022; Casimir, 2020; Marius, 2022). This thesis therefore asks: Could Haitians' linguistic-affective associations be causing a *drag effect* (Elias, 1987/2001) on the adoption of MTE? Furthermore, could feelings of shame for not knowing French undermine potential popular action against linguistic exclusion, resulting instead in *submission* to the current social order (Elias, 1939/2012; Foucault, 1975)? These questions are explored in Chapter 6, the thesis's second stand-alone article, entitled *Language, shame, and social mobility*. The article concludes that linguistic-affective associations can influence stakeholders' language-in-education preferences due to their immediacy and potency. Relevant linguistic-affective associations include shame for not knowing French and aspirational joy triggered by having a child in an ostensibly French-dominant school and imagining their future.

III) What role does social esteem play in maintaining Haitian elites' linguistic practices?

In addition to formal policy, the informal linguistic practices of bi- or multilingual elites who possess exclusive knowledge of prestige languages can create social and economic barriers for non-elites who do not know these languages (Bourdieu, 1991; Myers-Scotton, 1993, 2006; Schiffman, 2017; Selleck & Barakos, 2019). Relatively little research exists with respect to the linguistic practice of the Haitian upper class, though Zéphir's thesis (1990) is a key reference. This

investigation indicates that French is used to signal 'respect' to one's audience – though this depends on the context and characteristics of the interlocutors, such as their age, gender, and social class. This thesis thus asks: Is this use of French to signal positive social evaluations still prominent in Haiti today? Do elites who feel positively towards Kreyòl flout this norm? If so, what consequences does this have for their social esteem and the esteem of their audience? In what contexts is Kreyòl preferred amongst elites? How does code choice intersect with individuals' pursuit of positive social evaluations in Haiti's *economy of esteem* (Brennan & Pettit, 2004)? These questions are addressed in Chapter 7, the thesis's third stand-alone article, entitled *Social esteem and the maintenance of linguistic elite closure in Haiti*. The article concludes that language-based social esteem acts upon upper-class linguistic behavior. Individuals cannot freely choose to use Kreyòl or French without potentially insulting their audience or losing esteem themselves.

In Section 8.0, we consider both how affect influences the linguistic behavior of elites and how social esteem influences that of non-elites.

Elaboration of secondary research questions

I) Why is French fluency not spreading to the general Haitian population?

i) In addition to formal policy, why is the school system not broadly spreading French fluency?

Education systems are often treated as the gateway for minoritized language communities to access dominant languages (Ouane & Glanz, 2011; Kaplan et al., 2000; Fox, 1975; Tollefson & Tsui, 2004; P. Benson & Reinders, 2011; Sundqvist & Sylén, 2016). Myers-Scotton (1993) herself emphasizes that LEC tends to occur in countries where formal schooling fails to spread the elite's language to the general population. In Haiti, it has been observed that the education system

does not generally lead students from Kreyòl-monolingual backgrounds to comfortable French fluency, even for those who complete secondary school. Explanations include the country's ill-adapted language-in-education policies (discussed more above), the poor French level of teachers, a pedagogical style that relies on memorization by heart, the use of physical and psychological punishments in the classroom, and the general lack of resources (Tézil, 2024; Dejean, 2006, 2010; Hebblethwaite, 2012; DeGraff, 2017a; IFADEM, 2013). This thesis asks: Are these explanations supported by this project's interview data, ethnographic observations, and historical review of the education system? Relevant data addressing this question are brought to bear in Section 2.2.1, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6, and then synthesized in Section 8.1. The data indicates that in addition to formal policy, the low French level of teachers, the financial cost of education borne by families, and stressful classroom environments all contribute to schools not spreading French.

ii) Do non-francophones have opportunities to practice and improve their French outside of the classroom, notably in natural settings with fluent speakers?

Second-language acquisition theory posits that language learners require extended interaction in natural settings where they can both receive input (hear and read) and produce output (speak and write) in their target language. Formal language courses alone are not sufficient, as they are often stressful and too grammar-focused (S. D. Krashen, 1985; Swain, 1985; Long, 1996; P. Benson & Reinders, 2011; Brevik & Holm, 2023). It is therefore pertinent to ask: does the general Haitian population have extracurricular opportunities to practice French, notably in extended natural settings with highly fluent or even L1 speakers? If not, what institutional, social, and regional barriers may exist? In Sections 2.2.1 and 8.1 we further cover the various social,

economic, and regional barriers that limit interactions between Haiti's monolingual majority and its francophone minority.

iii) Are Kreyòl-monolingual non-elite Haitians not interested in acquiring French as they consider it alone to be insufficient for social mobility?

Intersectionality theory contends that individuals' experiences of privilege and marginalization arise from the interaction of multiple social properties and identities, including class, ethnicity, gender, religion, region, and educational background (Crenshaw, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Along these lines, Myers-Scotton (1993) proposes that non-elites may be uninterested in learning the language of their country's elite as they are aware that it alone is insufficient to offer them any advantage. This can be described as the *incomplete package hypothesis*. This thesis therefore asks: does the incomplete package hypothesis hold true for Haiti? Are Kreyòl-monolinguals not interested in learning French as it alone is judged to offer few advantages? The topic is further addressed in Sections 2.2.1 and 8.1. The project's data indicate that while ascending to the elite does indeed require a constellation of complex characteristics, lower-class Haitians nonetheless believe that knowing French – even at a basic level – could benefit their lives.

iv) Do Kreyòl-monolinguals not pursue French fluency because they reject the legitimacy of this language and its dominant position in Haiti?

In certain cases, individuals reject the dominant language variety because they do not recognize its legitimacy or that of the dominant class, while simultaneously expressing loyalty to their mother tongue and the community associated with it (Myers-Scotton, 1993; J. Edwards, 1994; J. King, 2013; Urla, 2012). Past commentaries on and observations of Kreyòl-monolingual Haitians, however, indicate that such individuals aspire to French fluency and accept its use even though they cannot understand it – a phenomenon labeled as a *fantasy of diglossia* (Fleischmann, 1984; Zéphir, 2010; DeGraff, 2017b; Lubin Jr, 2018). Does this still hold true for Haitian monolinguals? Or are Kreyòl-monolingual Haitians now rejecting the legitimacy of French and therefore choosing not to learn it or have their children learn it? These issues are addressed in Sections 2.2.1 and 8.1, with the data indicating that non-elites want both themselves and their children to know French – even when they dislike the role it plays in their society.

II) Why does Kreyòl remain excluded or lower status in many Haitian institutions?

i) Do colonial legacies still contribute to Haitians valuing Kreyòl less than French?

In post-colonial settings, the culture and language of the former colonizer are often understood to be superior to traditional and local counterparts (Bokamba, 2011; Fanon, 1952/2021; Quijano, 1992; Mignolo, 2011). Similar attitudes have been observed amongst Haitians (Valdman, 1971; DeGraff, 2017a, 2019, 2022; Casimir, 2020; Marius, 2022). Is there evidence of this holding true today? Do Haitians still believe that French is superior to Kreyòl, notably for use in key domains and institutions, such as formal documents, education, science, and business management? These issues are further addressed in Sections 2.2.2 and 8.2 and Chapter 7, with the

investigation finding evidence that colonial legacies do still influence education policy and that French and its use are positively assessed by both Haiti's elites and its non-elites, corresponding to an expanded version of Bokamba's (2011) *ukolonia*.

ii) How might lay understandings of creoles as a "lesser" form of their lexifiers influence how stakeholders feel about Kreyòl and French in Haiti?

Michel DeGraff (2005) contends that linguists' "most dangerous myth" is *creole exceptionalism* – the classification of creoles as a distinct linguistic type, particularly in its stronger historical forms, which regard creoles as somehow inferior or less capable than "normal" languages. This thesis will not enter into the modern, intra-academic debate as to the validity of classifying creoles as a distinct type – for this, see Bickerton (1984), McWhorter (2018), Sousa et al. (2019), Mufwene (2010a), Fon Sing (2017), and Ansaldo et al. (2007). DeGraff's discussion, however, extends beyond an evaluation of different linguistic taxonomies. He argues that the concept of creole exceptionalism is historically founded in colonial and racial hierarchies, and its continued prominence has real-world, sociological consequences, including "undermin[ing] the role that Creoles should play in the education and socioeconomic development of monolingual Creolophones" (2005, p. 533). Indeed, in creolophone contexts people often hold less positive attitudes toward creoles than toward their lexifiers, notably for scientific and technical uses (Winford, 1976; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994; Bancu et al., 2024; Mühleisen, 2022; Jean-François, 2006; Migge et al., 2010; Migge & Légise, 2012). This thesis therefore asks: is there evidence of belief in a non-academic, lay version of creole exceptionalism in Haiti? Is there a belief that Kreyòl is somehow less "evolved" and less capable than a "normal" language, particularly due to the recentness and conditions of Kreyòl's genesis? These issues are addressed in Sections 2.2.2 and

8.2, and Chapter 7. Interview data, notably with certain members of the Haitian elite, reveal that there persists a belief in Kreyòl being less capable than a “normal” language due to understandings of its origins.

iii) How might pragmatic challenges keep Kreyòl outside of institutions?

Apart from post-colonial legacies and attitudes, there exist various practical challenges to integrating minoritized languages into institutions. These include the economic cost of running multilingual institutions (Kaplan et al., 2000; BBC, 2006; Irshad et al., 2007; Nick, 2001), and the complexities of standardization (Cahill & Rice, 2017; James et al., 2017; Urla et al., 2017). Does Haiti face such challenges to integrating Kreyòl into institutions, including using it for written documentation, textbooks, legislation, and websites? In Sections 2.2.2 and 8.2, we further address the complexities of this issue in Haiti, finding that while the Haitian government and other actors have invested in standardizing and producing resources in Kreyòl, the investment may be insufficient to provoke large-scale institutional and social change.

III) Why is Haitian LEC generally left unaddressed?

i) Have Haitian linguistic practices become naturalized to the point that other possibilities are not considered?

Pierre Bourdieu (1991) argues that one reason for the persistence of inequitable linguistic practices and hierarchies is that they become *(mis)recognized* as natural and hence necessary. Do Haitian stakeholders (mis)recognize their society's current sociolinguistic practices and hierarchies as natural and inevitable? Do they voice awareness that things could be different? In Sections 2.2.3 and 8.3, we further discuss this proposal and the evidence for it found in the datasets. Notably,

policy documents treat French as the natural choice for education in Haiti, whereas Kreyòl's use must be justified.

ii) Is it in the interest of the Haitian elite to maintain the status quo?

Max Weber (1921/1978) theorizes that social closure occurs when a social group's members feel it is in their "spiritual or material interest" to exclude others (p. 42). With respect to sociolinguistic barriers, it has been observed that European vernaculars rose in status and "defeated" Latin only when book publishers realized there was profit to be made by publishing in German, French, etc. (Pettegree, 2017; Anderson, 2006, p. 77). Likewise, linguistic homogenization only occurred when political elites deemed it necessary to create loyal, participating citizens of nation-states (Haugen, 1966; Wright, 2012; Anderson, 2006). On the other hand, African elites at times are ambivalent about addressing linguistic inequalities as they are aware of the advantages that the local rarity of the dominant language grants them (Prah, 1995; Trudell, 2010). Do Haitian elites similarly feel that they benefit from LEC? Are they ambivalent about addressing it? As addressed in Sections 2.2.3 and 8.3, the project found evidence of elite ambivalence to Haiti's LEC. However, elites are not a homogeneous block, and even when they are troubled by their country's linguistic inequalities, they may feel incapable of doing anything about it individually.

iii) Is Haiti's LEC ignored in order to address more immediate, pressing problems?

Kaplan et al. (2000) observe that following the break-up of the European empires, newly formed nation-states in Africa faced a myriad of challenges, such as civil war, poverty, healthcare crises, famine, and more. As such, addressing linguistic inequalities was ultimately set aside to use

the limited available resources to address these other issues. In the framework of Hirschman (1975), LEC in such contexts may be judged as a *chosen problem* rather than a *pressing problem*. Given that Haiti has long been and continues to be subject to political and natural shocks, is addressing linguistic exclusion ultimately sidelined as a chosen problem? This question is addressed in Sections 2.2.3 and 8.3. It is found that the variety and complexity of the challenges facing Haiti, as well as disagreements over how to address its LEC, may result in inaction on this problem.

1.2 Motivations and Contributions

In this section, we outline the general motivations for the project, including the empirical and theoretical contributions that it aims to make. These include: the significance of scholarship on language-based exclusion for addressing global inequalities; a contribution of new data and analyses on Haiti's sociolinguistic condition; the advancement of general understanding of linguisticism through the investigation of an "extreme case"; the use of shame as a lens for understanding sociolinguistic behavior; and the development of LEC as an alternative to diglossia for modeling Haiti's condition.

1.2.1 Addressing the pernicious effect of LEC across the globe

Linguicism, particularly in the *extreme case* of LEC (see below), is a significant cause of inequality in access to education, economic opportunity, and the rule of law (Beqiraj & McNamara, 2014; Desmet et al., 2016; GCE, 2013; Ginsburgh & Weber, 2016; Marinotti, 2017). This regrettable conclusion is evidenced by the linguistic challenges international development agencies have encountered in their initiatives to include the world's excluded, such as the 1990-2000 *Education for All* program, the 2000-2015 *Millennium Development Goals*, and the 2015-2030 *Sustainable Development Goals* (UN, 2008, 2016; UNESCO, 1990, 2000; UNESCO et al., 2015).

In the domain of education, from 1990 until 2015 the United Nations through UNESCO, UNICEF, and various partner agencies pursued achieving *Universal Access to Primary Education* (UNESCO, 1990, 2015) without properly addressing the fact that many school systems have been designed by and for local elite language communities. As a result, today many more children around the world attend newly created schools, but often with textbooks and state exams in

languages that neither they nor their local teachers can understand (GCE, 2013). An estimated 221 million children in developing countries find themselves in this position, which acts as a significant contributor to poor education quality, low literacy outcomes, and high drop-out rates (GCE, 2013, p. 2). UNICEF has found language to be next to poverty in causing student failure in Africa, lamenting that “(t)he findings – that many children are in school, but not learning – represent a huge waste of human and financial resources” (UNICEF, 2016, p. 6). In addition to ineffective education systems, legal documents and courtrooms which exist only in the local elite’s language pose a major barrier for other language communities to receive justice and benefit from rule of law initiatives (Beqiraj & McNamara, 2014). Language policies can also perpetuate an uneven distribution of wealth in contexts where the largely unknown language of privilege is required for participation in the formal economy and access to financial services (Desmet et al., 2016; Ginsburgh & Weber, 2016).

Much progress remains to be made. Concerned by how “the SDGs fall short in their lack of attention to language” (Marinotti, 2017, p. 2), in May 2017 the Study Group on Language and the United Nations⁴ convened a symposium in New York entitled *Language, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Vulnerable Populations*. The symposium’s final report states that “failure to account for language and language diversity in formulating and implementing of global policies have disproportionate effects on vulnerable populations” (Marinotti, 2017, p. 3).

1.2.2 Understanding the sociolinguistic condition of Haiti

The task of understanding a nation's sociolinguistic landscape – what Haugen (1972) describes as a *language ecology* and Bourdieu (1991) as a *linguistic market* – is extremely

⁴ “(A)n independent group of scholars and practitioners on matters related to the international use of language” (Marinotti, 2017, p. 2)

complex. Haiti is no exception, and this project aims to make a contribution to the expansive existing body of literature on this topic (a cursory list of which includes Dejean, 1983, 2006, 2010; DeGraff, 2005, 2007, 2019; Govain, 2011, 2014, 2022; Valdman, 1971, 1984, 2015b; Tézil, 2022, 2024; Prou, 2009; Hebblethwaite, 2012; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994; Zéphir, 1990, 2010; Spears & Joseph, 2010; Chaudenson, 2002; Saint-Germain, 1988; Ulysse & Burns, 2021; Ulysse & Masaeed, 2021; Sylvain, 1936/2012; Efron, 1954; Stewart, 1962; Bentolila & Gani, 1981; Vernet, 1984; Pompilus, 1985; Lefebvre, 1986; Fattier, 1998; Berrouët-Oriol, 2011; Saint-Fort, 2017; Robertshaw, 2019a, 2019b; Jean-Pierre & Cothière, 2016; Léger, 2020; Krämer, 2023; Jean-François, 2006; Lubin Jr, 2018; Devonish, 1986; Hittenberger, 1987; Jean-Charles, 1987; Lainy, 2010; Cothière, 2014; St Fort, 2016).

In this section, I provide a sketch of Haiti's LEC and the motivations for selecting it as a case study (see also the following section on the value of studying "extreme cases"). Throughout the thesis, notably in Section 2.3, additional history – including on the genesis of Haiti's LEC – and existing literature on Haiti's sociolinguistic condition are covered in more depth.

At times described as a "linguistic apartheid" (DeGraff, 2017a), the Caribbean nation of Haiti has roughly 12 million inhabitants (OpenFactBook, 2026) and is traditionally characterized as having two social classes – a small privileged "elite" who speak French and Kreyòl (i.e. Haitian Creole) and the monolingual "masses" or "people" who speak only Kreyòl (DeGraff, 2017a; Hebblethwaite, 2012; J. W. Johnson, 1920; Prou, 2009). According to most estimates, Kreyòl is the only language of 85 to 95 percent of the Haitian population, with 3 to 5 percent speaking French as a mother tongue and approximately 10 percent having some "receptive competence" of French as a second language (Dejean, 1993, p. 74; Hebblethwaite, 2012, p. 256; Valdman, 1984, p. 78).

The origins of Haiti's LEC are deeply rooted in its history. Before becoming independent in 1804, Haiti was the French slave plantation colony of Saint-Domingue. A society highly stratified by both race and language, at its peak the population consisted of 30,000 white Frenchmen, 25,000 freemen – both black and mixed-race people, many of whom could speak French and Kreyòl – and between 400,000 and 700,000 Kreyòl-speaking enslaved people of African descent (Heinl et al., 2005). In 1791, the enslaved people revolted, and after a protracted thirteen-year war, the independent state of Haiti was formed on January 1st, 1804 (see also Section 2.3.1).

While the country's first constitution of 1805 sought to dismantle racial hierarchies by declaring that "*Haitians shall hence forward be known only by the generic appellation of Blacks*" (Article 14),⁵ the linguistic hierarchy was left intact. French remained necessary for accessing and participating in governance, courts, formal contracts, schools, and universities (J. W. Johnson, 1920; Spears & Joseph, 2010; Vincent & Lhérisson, 1895). In 1920, the African-American diplomat and civil rights activist James W. Johnson called the underdevelopment of Kreyòl as a written and academic language "the worst indictment against the Haitian Government" (J. W. Johnson, 1920, p. 30).

Today, language in Haiti unfortunately continues to act as a barrier to access in most key academic, political, and commercial institutions (DeGraff, 2017a; Guillaume, 2011; Spears & Joseph, 2010; Thomaz, 2005). Most often discussed with respect to the education system, the use of French as the language of instruction is judged to be a major cause of poor learning outcomes and high rates of grade repetition and dropouts (DeGraff, 2017a). While an estimated 95 percent of primary school teachers do not have more than an elementary A2 level of French (IFADEM,

⁵ This translation of the 1805 Constitution is found at <http://faculty.webster.edu/corbetre/haiti/history/earlyhaiti/1805-const.htm>

2013, p. 23), most schools – approximately 85 percent of which are private and minimally controlled (ISOS, 2016; Social Action Consulting, 2016) – will exclusively employ French-language textbooks⁶ and present themselves as French-speaking in order to be more desirable to parents⁷ (Prou, 2009). Many students struggle to pass standardized national examinations which are conducted in French (MENFP, 2017). The school system is so inefficient that it takes twenty-three student years to produce one graduate of the six-year primary school program (Locher, 2010, p. 186), and only 1 in 10 students who begin primary school will ever complete secondary school (MENFP & DPCE, 2015). Relying heavily on memorization by heart, the few students who do complete secondary school are often not comfortable speaking in French (Dejean, 2010). Benjamin Hebblethwaite (2012) attributes Haiti's failing school system, poor economy, and high level of social inequality to its use of French as the language of instruction and the resulting poor education outcomes – a perspective shared by numerous Haitian academics (DeGraff, 2017a; Dejean, 2006, 2010; Govain, 2014; Prou, 2009).

Despite the severity and historical length of Haiti's LEC, the Haitian people have never once mobilized en masse to express opposition to the “linguistic apartheid” that is considered to be marginalizing and oppressing them. This fact is surprising given the country's tradition of popular resistance, such as the slave revolt of its independence, the widespread uprising that ended the three-decade-long Duvalier dictatorship in 1986 (Heinl et al., 2005) and more recent protests against government-controlled gas price hikes (VOA News, 2018). In contrast to Haiti, there have been instances of large-scale collective action and civil disobedience in other contexts of linguistic exclusion and minoritization. For example, on February 21, 1952 in East Pakistan (now

⁶ See Chapter 8 for a discussion on Haitians' preferences on textbook language.

⁷ During my NGO work in Hinche, I had the opportunity to observe classroom practices of local schools. Classrooms seemed to follow a fairly narrow script of sentences which the teachers had memorized. Children did not ask questions about the classroom content, but only parroted sentences given to them by the teacher.

Bangladesh), thousands of students protested the government's imposition of Urdu and marginalization of Bangla (Van Schendel, 2020, p. 113). Several students were killed in the subsequent police crackdown, and a "Martyrs' Memorial" was immediately built to honor them. In Wales in the 1960s and 1970s, there were sit-ins, calls to boycott the BBC, and demonstrations due to the treatment of Welsh in the media and lack of representation in signage (Merriman & Jones, 2009; Sweney, 2010; Williams, 1976). In Catalonia, mass demonstrations in support of the Catalan language still occur fairly regularly, such as on December 18, 2021, when an estimated 35,000 people gathered in Barcelona in defense of Catalan-language education (ACN Barcelona, 2021). While the success of such events against linguistic marginalization varies, collective popular action nonetheless can and does occur. Resistance to the hegemony of French in Haiti, however, has largely been limited to a restricted group of academics, intellectuals, education specialists, and seemingly ideologically isolated state actors. There was some notable momentum in the early 1980s for Kreyòl-based education, but the pro-Kreyòl policy victories were soon overturned and distorted – a period of Haitian history extensively discussed in Chapter 5.

Haiti is a paradigmatic case of the puzzle of LEC Maintenance. How can a social phenomenon that severely excludes the Haitian majority be both so durable and largely uncontested, even in a country famous for its organized popular resistance?

1.2.3 The value of studying extreme cases like Haiti

In this section, we will discuss the value of studying *extreme* cases like the LEC of Haiti. We will first elaborate on what is meant by the qualifier “extreme,” and then argue for why studying such cases has value for general understandings of sociolinguistic exclusion.

Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) considers LEC to be present to some degree in almost every society. As such, she makes a type distinction between *weak* LEC and *strong* LEC, with the former being present in many Western societies, such as the USA, the UK, and other European states (Myers-Scotton, 1990, p. 27). While she does not devote much attention to outlining the differences in praxis and policy of these ideal types, she does state that stronger, more exclusionary LEC occurs where there is a significant difference between the linguistic repertoires of the elite and the non-elite and where there are few educational opportunities for non-elites to access the language varieties of privilege. She points out that this is frequently the case in post-colonial African contexts.

Since the publication of her articles, the concept of weak LEC has seldom been employed in academic publications, perhaps due to the relatively little attention Myers-Scotton gave to it and the availability of other notions such as linguisticism, accent bias, etc. That being said, Ristilä (2025) investigates the potential presence of weak LEC in the Finnish parliament. She explores how the insertion of English and Latin words and phrases into otherwise Finnish-language parliamentary discourse serves to signal elite membership and project the authority of the speaker. In general, however, both Myers-Scotton's articles (1990, 1993, 2006) and subsequent publications employing them primarily focus on stronger forms of LEC, and the descriptor "strong" is typically dropped as it is implied.

Setting aside Myers-Scotton's original binary typology, there are various dimensions along which strong LEC, henceforth LEC, may be considered an extreme case of linguisticism, notably in the case of Haiti.

First, there is the distance between the language varieties involved. The elite's exclusive variety is not a close variant of the varieties known by the non-elite. Their differences are more

than just subtleties of accent or minor degrees of separation with respect to standardness (Myers-Scotton, 1993). In the case of Haiti, while Kreyòl is certainly more closely related to French than it is to most other languages (Pompilus, 1985),⁸ they nonetheless have lexical, phonological, and syntactic differences⁹ that make them generally not mutually intelligible (DeGraff, 2007). Even students who complete many years of (ostensibly) French-dominant grade school may still struggle with French, notably to speak it (Dejean, 2010, p. 202). This distance and mutual unintelligibility result in French use in Haiti creating an extra barrier for the Kreyòl-monolingual population to access critical information – be it academic, legislative, judicial, or otherwise (DeGraff, 2019; Dejean, 2006; Hebblethwaite, 2012).

Second, in LEC there is a substantial demographic imbalance with respect to how many people know the language variety of privilege and what their class position is – hence Myers-Scotton's use of the term "elite." By definition, therefore, LEC refers to situations whereby the majority is excluded. This sets it apart from cases of linguicism where a minority community faces linguistic hurdles and exclusion, such as with Burmese refugees in Australia (Watkins et al., 2012) or with Spanish-speaking immigrants in the USA (Elías-Olivares et al., 2015; Mugglestone, 2003). In Haiti, only an estimated 3-5 percent of the population speak French as an L1, with an additional 10 percent middle-class group of L2 French speakers (DeGraff, 2005; Dejean, 1995, 2010; Govain, 2011; Hebblethwaite, 2012; Valdman, 1984). As these are estimations, the precise percentage of French speakers and their level of mastery may be disputed (see Section 2.1.1). Nonetheless, it is generally acknowledged that French is a minority language closely associated with the elite.

⁸ Pompilus (1985) estimates that 85% of Kreyòl vocabulary is derived from French, and that it also has many words of English, Spanish, Taino, and Western African origin.

⁹ The pronunciation of words of French origin is often markedly different, notably due to the general absence of front rounded vowels in more basilectal forms of Kreyòl. For example, from the French “du riz” one finds “diri” in Kreyòl. Additionally, Kreyòl's grammar is distinct from that of French (DeGraff, 2007).

Third, there is the extent to which language represents a socioeconomic and academic barrier in cases of LEC. While most activities of Haitian society are conducted in Kreyòl, many domains key to socioeconomic advancement require knowledge of French to either pass gatekeepers or to receive equal treatment (DeGraff, 2019; Dejean, 1995; Hebblethwaite, 2012; Marius, 2022; Zéphir, 1990). In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, we will present various findings from this project's investigation with regard to how French offers advantages in Haiti.

Lastly, there is the intergenerational durability of the exclusion in cases of LEC. This distinguishes LEC from the language-based exclusion that immigrants or refugees often experience (Jones & Gill, 1998; Isphording & Otten, 2014; Clarke & Isphording, 2017; Ghio et al., 2023; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009). Often, though not always, immigrants' children and grandchildren become proficient in the locally dominant language and thus face fewer linguistic barriers. In Haiti, despite over two centuries of independence from France, the country's "linguistic apartheid" persists (DeGraff, 2019) – see also Chapter 5.

Haiti's present-day linguistic exclusion may also be considered more "extreme" than contexts that share many similarities, such as Martinique and Guadeloupe. Like Haiti, these Caribbean island nations were both former French colonies whose economies were based on the production of cash crops through enslaved Africans, and in both contexts language varieties designated as "creoles" developed (Butel, 2002). Also like Haiti, today French is still important in these countries for accessing institutions and socioeconomic mobility (Managan, 2016). Martinique and Guadeloupe, however, did not become independent from France but rather became *départements d'outre-mer* in 1946, and today French is spoken by the majority of their populations (March, 1996; Beck, 2017). Furthermore, intergenerational transmission of French is growing, whereas intergenerational transmission of Martinican Creole (kréyòl Matinik) and Guadeloupean

Creole (kréyòl Gwadeloup) is decreasing (Beck, 2017). Thus, French in these contexts does not strictly represent a source of "extreme" exclusion as in Haiti, but rather a potential threat to the vitality of their respective creole languages (Ardoino, 2024).

LEC and Haiti can be understood to represent an extreme form of linguistic exclusion and linguisticism. Consequently, one might wonder if using Haiti as a case study can offer broader understandings of linguisticism for other contexts. It is important to note, however, that extreme cases are not synonymous with deviant cases. While the linguistic exclusion's longevity and severity may be greater in cases of LEC, underlying practices, policies, and mechanisms can be similar to other contexts of linguisticism. Indeed, extreme cases “are often regarded as prototypical or paradigmatic of a phenomenon” (Gerring, 2016, p. 68). A key reason for studying extreme cases is that the phenomenon under investigation may be more easily detectable and easier to investigate. For example, identifying the ways that French advantages a person in Haiti could be more striking and salient than how Received Pronunciation or “posh” British English variants advantage a person in modern Britain.

Although extreme cases are atypical in their high value for the outcome – here the durable exclusion caused by language – this does not make them deviant. The exclusion caused by LEC in Haiti, albeit striking, may be maintained by similar social forces as those which maintain the advantages of prestige language variants in other contexts.

1.2.4 Beyond Linguistic Insecurity: Understanding shame as a multicausal phenomenon and social force

Much has been written about linguistic insecurity and the relationship between language and affect (Labov, 1964; Haugen, 1962; Francard et al., 1993; Dewaele, 2010; Preston, 2013;

Lippi-Green, 2012; Pavlenko, 2005; Boudreau, 2021, 2023). In this thesis, notably Chapter 6, the notion of shame is emphasized over that of linguistic insecurity, notably drawing on Elias (1939/2012). There are three reasons for this. First, the concepts of linguistic insecurity and shame differ with respect to their scope. Second, due to this difference in scope, shame sits more easily with the views articulated in the interview data gathered from this project's fieldwork. Third, Elias's theory of shame as a social force has particular analytical utility for this thesis's investigation into LEC Maintenance. We overview these three points below.

The differing scopes of linguistic insecurity and shame

Linguistic insecurity, as the term itself implies, is defined with respect to our language-related self-doubt and perception of self. For example, Boudreau (2023, pp. 1–2) defines the concept in the following way:

Linguistic insecurity can be characterized as a form of discomfort, varying in intensity from one person to another, connected to the fear of not speaking one's language as one should or according to the prescribed norm in certain situations. It is therefore linked to the representations that a group of people, or an individual, holds regarding their own language(s) and those of others.¹⁰

Shame, on the other hand, may have both linguistic and non-linguistic causes. A person may feel ashamed due to their speech, their class position, their level of education, and many other reasons (Stearns, 2017). Identifying a single precise cause of a particular shame sensation is not always evident. Our affective state can be understood to have several causes, and these causes may be inextricably intertwined. Although a particular linguistic exchange may prompt an individual

¹⁰ My translation from original French.

to experience shame, the source may not be reducible to merely not speaking the "prescribed norm" for a given situation.

In order to define shame, social psychologists often contrast it with other related concepts, notably *guilt* (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998; Karen, 1992; Scheff, 2003; Stearns, 2017). While triggers of both shame and guilt are generally understood as socially influenced and embedded, guilt is defined as "an emotional reaction that highlights acknowledgment of a wrong act, an act against community standards, and a desire for reparation" (Stearns, 2017, p. 3). A person feeling guilt may apologize and avoid repeating the socially unacceptable act. Shame, on the other hand, is more self-directed and irremediable:

[With shame, i]t is the self that is at fault, not the commission of the act. This creates greater pain and intensity than guilt—a shamed person feels very bad indeed—but also makes it more difficult to escape. Apology may seem inadequate, since the whole individual is in play; reparation may seem meaningless. The shamed person tends to shrink, characteristically seeks to hide, because of the emotional dilemma involved. (Stearns, 2017, pp. 3–4)

According to Elias, shame is prompted by the recognition of oneself as inferior according to some social ideal (Elias, 1939/2012, pp. 457–463). It is typically accompanied by a fear that others will cease to respect and care for us, not simply because of a wrongful act we have committed, but rather due to who we are – hence Elias's use of the term *shame-fear*.

While linguistic insecurity is, by definition, with respect to one's linguistic production, shame is an affective sensation which may relate to multiple aspects of who a person is.

Shame's broader scope is more appropriate for this dataset

This conceptualization of shame more closely corresponds with the interview data gathered from non-elite Haitians presented below in Chapter 6. Although affect was not originally a planned

aspect of the fieldwork, when discussing their relationship with language, notably their inability to understand French, the interviewees frequently expressed feelings of "*wont*" – etymologically from French "*honte*" and translated into English as "shame" (Valdman, 2007). Interviewees' shame was not just linked to their linguistic insecurity, but rather to their general distance from the social ideal:

If I knew how to speak French, I could have gone far. I could have gotten to a level. I could have started a business. When foreigners would come to my house and speak French... well, I would not be ashamed to have left school.

– A 31-year-old unemployed mother of three, pseudonymized as Lisa
(see Chapter 6 for the original Kreyòl quote)

This dataset highlights that, for these interviewees, the socially ideal person not only comfortably speaks French, but also succeeded academically in a good school and has obtained a certain degree of economic comfort and social standing (i.e. they have "reached a level" – a concept discussed in more detail in Chapter 6). These characteristics were presented as interconnected. As the quote from Lisa above demonstrates, her negative self-assessment is connected not just to her speech, but rather to many aspects of her person. Therefore, rather than trying to disentangle to what extent the participants' negative emotions were specifically a result of linguistic insecurity, the analysis instead focuses on the broader issue of shame.

Shame as a social force

The central question of this thesis concerns how a macro-level social arrangement, LEC, is maintained. Existing literature on language and affect (Labov, 1964; Haugen, 1962; Francard et al., 1993; Dewaele, 2010; Preston, 2013; Lippi-Green, 2012; Pavlenko, 2005; Besnier, 1990; Heller, 2006) reveals three points which are germane to this investigation:

- 1) Our linguistic production and reception are imbued with affect
- 2) Macro-level structures embed common linguistic-affective associations in individuals
- 3) Individuals' linguistic-affective associations act upon macro-level structures and practices

Point 1 is an essential starting point, highlighting that human linguistic exchanges are not mere acts of information transfer but also influence our inner affective state (Besnier, 1990; Dewaele, 2010; Pavlenko, 2005). Point 2 denaturalizes these feelings. Our common, collective feelings towards different language varieties are not strictly due to their innate beauty, sophistication, and correctness, but rather due to how they are used, treated, lauded, or chastised in our institutions and shared practices (Haugen, 1962; Labov, 1964; Lippi-Green, 2012; Preston, 2013). This point has further been established by research into *language attitudes*. Studies on Catalonia, Austria, Corsica, and US Latino speech communities show how language attitudes, including affective associations, are embedded in broader policies, ideologies and social relations rather than existing as isolated opinions (Gal, 1979; Jaffe, 2001, 2013; Mendoza-Denton, 1999; Woolard & Gahng, 1990). Creole languages, notably, are often subject to negative attitudes due to ideologies positing that they are inferior to their lexifiers for many formal and academic uses (Winford, 1976; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994; DeGraff, 2005; Bancu et al., 2024; Mühleisen, 2022; Jean-François, 2006; Migge et al., 2010; Migge & Léglise, 2012).

While these observations are highly relevant, point 3 most directly responds to the thesis's central research question on the causes of LEC Maintenance. One notable example of point 3 is Labov's analysis of *style shifting*, *the cross-over effect*, and *change from above* (Labov, 1966, 2001). The cross-over effect occurs when members of one social class use an overtly prestigious

linguistic feature with greater frequency than members of the next higher social class, particularly when they are style shifting during more attention-focused, careful speech. This occurs as a result of their linguistic insecurity, causing them to more carefully monitor their language in formal contexts. When such speakers are using the feature with even more frequency than members of higher social classes, Labov labels this *hypercorrection*.¹¹ Labov's (1966, 1972, 2001) studies demonstrate that such behavior regularly occurs. It therefore represents a case of the linguistic insecurity of the individual influencing macro-level behavior in the aggregate.

Additionally, language students' shame and anxiety have been shown to play a role in the success of their language acquisition and hence the transmission of second languages through schooling (S. D. Krashen, 1985; Horwitz, 2001; G. H. C. Lin, 2008). In post-colonial settings, individuals' positive feelings towards the colonizer's language and negative feelings towards local languages can shape the course of policy and practice long after independence (Fanon, 1952/2021; Schmied, 1991; Bokamba, 2011; DeGraff, 2019, 2022). Lippi-Green (2004, 2012) explores how individuals' biases and resulting negative or positive reactions to different English accents in the USA result in distinct material and social outcomes for speakers.

Outside linguistics, shame has been extensively theorized across sociology, social psychology, and affect theory as a force that acts upon society (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998; Scheff, 2000, 2003; Jewett et al., 2010; Lerner et al., 2015; Ahmed, 2015). For example, Braithwaite (1993) examines the role of shame in crime control, arguing that modern industrialized societies depend not simply on judicial punishment but also on forms of social disapproval and its affective consequences. Schaumberg and Skowronek (2022) investigate how an individual's outward expression of shame following a transgression communicates social norms to observers, thereby

¹¹ This is an extension of a term originally used to describe when language learners overgeneralize a rule of a language or language variety they are learning (Meyerhoff, 2018, p. 192)

contributing to the spread of shared behavioral practices within a community. Elias (1939/2012) describes shame as a cause of *submission*, resulting in the dominated tacitly accepting rather than contesting their exclusion and marginalization.

These ideas, notably Elias's social theory of shame, are revisited and used to understand the persistence of popular resistance to mother-tongue education in Chapter 6.

1.2.5 From diglossia to LEC: Models of Haiti's sociolinguistic condition

In this section, we will discuss diglossia and LEC as models of Haiti. The discussion is divided into two sections. First, we introduce diglossia and critiques of its use to describe Haiti, notably from the Haitian linguist Yves Dejean. Second, we propose LEC as an alternative and elaborate on how it addresses key points made by Dejean.

Diglossia and critiques of it as a model of Haiti's sociolinguistic situation

During the mid-to-late 20th century the most well-known model used to describe Haiti's sociolinguistic landscape was *diglossia* (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1967; Stewart, 1962; Valdman, 1968). In Ferguson's (1959) original model, diglossia is characterized by two varieties of the same language, one high variety (H) and one low variety (L). The low variety is acquired in children's homes from parents and other family members, whereas the high variety is acquired in school settings. Both varieties are widely known, and the uses of each variety are strictly determined by context, with high varieties used for formal settings and low varieties for informal settings. Ferguson provided four real-world contexts as paradigmatic cases of diglossia: Switzerland, with Standard German (H) and Swiss German (L); Greece, with classically based Katharevousa Greek

(H) and modern Demotic Greek (L); Egypt, with Classical Arabic (H) and modern Egyptian Arabic (L); and Haiti, with French (H) and Kreyòl (L).

Fishman (1967) revisited and adapted the concept in two significant ways. First, he relaxed the constraint that H and L be variants of the same language, permitting them to be two distinct languages. Second, he intersected the presence or absence of diglossia with that of bilingualism, resulting in a typology of four idealized sociolinguistic situations:

Table 1: Fishman's diglossia with and without bilingualism

1) Diglossia with bilingualism	2) Bilingualism without diglossia
3) Diglossia without bilingualism	4) Neither diglossia nor bilingualism

Source: Fishman (1967, p. 30)

Fishman (1967) describes *diglossia with bilingualism* as cases where bilingualism in the functionally compartmentalized H and L language variants is "widespread (if not all-pervasive)" (p. 31). *Diglossia without bilingualism* represents situations where there are two or more social groups who speak distinct language varieties yet are "united religiously, politically or economically into a single functioning unit" (p. 33). In this case, the involved social groups have non-identical linguistic repertoires, although some of Fishman's wording appears open to the possibility that one social group is broadly bilingual in both the H and L.¹² If this is the case, this

¹² "(L)inguistic repertoires in one or both groups are limited due to role specialization" (Fishman, 1967, p. 33). This wording permits that one group may *not* have a "limited repertoire," i.e. their repertoire could include both H and L.

quadrant encompasses cases of what might be better called *diglossia with limited or partial bilingualism* (discussed further in the following section). The specific example that he offers, however, emphasizes the non-overlapping repertoires of the social groups. He elaborates that in various countries in pre-World War I Europe, the majority of the elite and non-elite would never interact with one another, making it impossible for them to directly speak to each other. This necessitated that “their intercommunications were via translators or interpreters (sic)” (p. 33).

These versions of diglossia as a model for Haiti’s sociolinguistic situation have drawn much criticism (Dejean, 1983, 1993; Orjala, 1971; Tézil, 2024; Valdman, 1988, 2015b). Notably, the Haitian linguist Yves Dejean (1983, 1993) critiques Ferguson’s original model of diglossia for its claims that the Haitian people generally know both French and Kreyòl, that Kreyòl should be understood as a variant of French rather than a separate language,¹³ and that Haitian elites first learn French at school rather than in their homes. With respect to Fishman’s revision, Dejean rejects classifying Haiti as any of the four proposed ideal types, notably addressing and critiquing *diglossia without bilingualism* in its stricter sense. Dejean emphasizes that Haiti’s elite are early-bilingual speakers of both French and Kreyòl who directly communicate without interpreters with

¹³ Like Dejean, modern linguists label French and Kreyòl as separate languages. Given that they are generally mutually unintelligible and that their grammars are so distinct, I also agree that calling them two separate languages in acknowledgment of this distance is appropriate and doing otherwise would be highly misleading. This clean dichotomy occasionally breaks down when Haitians engage in constant code-switching between French and Frenchified Kreyòl, as did a couple of my upper-class interviewees. In such instances, I may be hard-pressed to identify the boundaries between French and Kreyòl in an utterance. For the particular quotes that I included in Chapter 7, however, this was seldom a problem.

For a general theory of LEC, I believe that whether the language varieties involved in an instance of LEC are in some technical, academic sense two variants of one language or two distinct languages is secondary to the exclusion that may result. That said, our shared linguistic taxonomies can play a part in how language-based exclusion is addressed (Bourdieu, 1982; Haugen, 1966). When a low-status language variety is understood as a “dialect” or variant of a high-status language variety, that opens the door to it being considered as “non-standard” and hence a natural object of academic correction. On the other hand, if that same language variety is understood as a separate language, it becomes a “mother tongue” and may be argued to merit respect and institutional promotion. Thus, labeling Kreyòl a variant of French is not just a taxonomic question for linguists, but also a social and political issue that influences the inclusion or exclusion of Haiti’s monolingual majority.

the Kreyòl-monolingual majority – the latter being people “on whom they depend for the satisfaction of most basic needs from birth to death” (1993, p. 76).

In addition to these critiques of the particularities of Fishman and Ferguson's models, Dejean's (1983, 1993) most fundamental objection to the concept of diglossia is its tidy allocation of French and Kreyòl to formal and informal settings – an objection similarly raised with regard to the applicability of diglossia to the case of Guadeloupe (Managan, 2016). Dejean notes:

One of the main characteristics of the linguistic behavior of literate Haitians is constant code switching in lengthy and animated discussions on topics like the arts, literature, music, religion, politics, the sciences, etc. Therefore, there is no intellectual activity from which Creole is excluded. And French is by no means absent from the most intimate conversations between schooled Haitian friends, lovers, wives and husbands. (Dejean, 1993, p. 74)

Albert Valdman, a French-born and American-educated linguist who became a leading Creolist and Haitian language scholar during the mid-to-late 20th century, for many years regularly employed the model and terminology of diglossia to describe Haiti (Valdman, 1968, 1971, 1975). By the 1980s, however, he reversed his position and rejected it as an appropriate descriptor for the country (Valdman, 1981, 1988, 2015b):

(T)he linguistic situation of Haiti appears relatively simple. The Black Republic is neither bilingual nor diglossic; it is in essence a monolingual country where only a small proportion of the population — not exceeding 5% — may be considered as balanced bilinguals. (Valdman, 1988, p. 67)

Dejean (1983, 1993) also observes that over time the term diglossia softened and expanded to the point of vagueness.¹⁴ To give a pertinent example, Orjala (1971) proposes an extension of the term to account for his observations of Haiti. Orjala argues that neither Ferguson's (1959)

¹⁴ Jaspers (2017) provides an overview of the evolution of this term and its various extensions, such as triglossia, double-nested diglossia, transglossia, schizoglossia, and others.

original model nor Stewart's (1962) early application of this term to Haiti is appropriate. Notably, Orjala questions the "High" and "Low" labels accorded to French and Kreyòl, as well as the allocation of these variants to formal and informal situations. He instead argues that each Haitian has some understanding of what characterizes French, and in more formal settings they "Gallicize" their speech from their baseline. His description thereby rejects the High and Low binary of two language varieties and instead acknowledges a plurality of idiolectal style shifting. He labels this as *monolingual diglossia*. Orjala's proposal aligns with sociological observations made by others, in particular that when individuals are engaged in more formal or careful speech they style shift from their baseline towards features marked as prestigious or upper-class (Labov, 1972), and that French features have such associations in many Caribbean contexts (Chaudenson, 2002; DeCamp, 1971). Orjala's short piece also presaged Tézil's (2022) later investigations into how Haitians, notably educated Kreyòl-monolinguals, style shift from Kreyòl rèk ("rough Kreyòl") features to Kreyòl swa ("smooth Kreyòl") features in more attention-focused speech. While Orjala's piece is interesting, his label of "monolingual diglossia" considerably stretches the term "diglossia" from its original meaning.

Such expanding and bleaching of the term diglossia is a common and long-standing critique (Jaspers, 2017; Matthey & Elmiger, 2020), with Tollefson (1983) remarking that diglossia is a "concept whose meaning has become so extended that one can find examples quite literally everywhere one looks, [and] has limited descriptive and analytical value" (p. 8). Indeed, Ferguson himself remarked that "the term 'diglossia' has come to mean many different things and the original conceptualization had a number of weaknesses, so that I can imagine a time when the term itself may be abandoned in favor of more precise and principled terminology" (Ferguson, 1991/2005, p. 64).

More recently, the *Revue transatlantique d'études suisses* invited four Haitian academics to contribute to a volume dedicated to the concept of diglossia (Cothière, 2017; Saint-Fort, 2017; DeGraff, 2017b; Berrouët-Oriol, 2017). All four rejected the term as applicable to the situation in Haiti. Saint-Fort (2017) finds Bourdieu's concept of *linguistic market* to have greater analytical utility, and DeGraff (2017b) considers *fantasme de diglossie* to be apt for describing the francophone aspirations of monolingual Haitians (both of these concepts are revisited and defined later in the thesis). Zéphir (1990), by contrast, used the framework of diglossia in her PhD dissertation on the practices of Haiti's bilingual upper class without engaging with Dejean's critiques. Later, however, Zéphir (2010) acknowledges those critiques and that there is an "uneasiness with regard to using a diglossic framework to describe the linguistic situation of Haiti" (p. 60). Like DeGraff (2017b), she argues then that "[Fleischmann's (1984)] term 'phantasm of diglossia,' as opposed to 'diglossia,' would serve to capture more subtly the relationship between French and Haitian Creole in Haiti" (Zéphir, 2010, p. 61).

These critiques and commentaries on diglossia do not represent full consensus in the academic community. Contemporaneously to Dejean and Tollefson's critiques in the 1980s, Winford (1985) argued that the term has particular utility for Caribbean contexts of creole continuum¹⁵ (see Chapter 7). In his PhD thesis on language attitudes of Haitian educators, Jean-François (2006) employs the term at length but also acknowledges Dejean's and Valdman's critiques, albeit without trying to refute them (pp. 60-64). Jean-François subsequently settles into calling Haiti a case of *conflictual diglossia* ("*diglossie conflictuelle*"). Arguments for its utility are not settled and continue in modern academia (Meune & Mutz, 2017; Matthey & Elmiger, 2020).

¹⁵ Ferguson (1991/2005), on the other hand, considers cases of creole continuum to be distinct from situations of his original diglossia.

Diglossia as a concept has been very influential in shaping sociolinguistic thought but has also been the subject of decades-long debate, particularly with respect to Haitian language use. The choice of using LEC in place of diglossia for an investigation of Haiti therefore raises certain questions. In what respects does LEC differ from diglossia? Does it avoid the criticisms levelled against the older and more well-known term? Does it offer advantages that diglossia does not?

LEC as an alternative model for Haiti

While throughout his career¹⁶ Dejean rejected diglossia as a model of Haiti's sociolinguistic condition, he did not propose an alternative model (Jean-François, 2006, pp. 60–64). He nonetheless offered guidance:

Since Ferguson's (1959) concept of diglossia and its metamorphoses do not correspond to the Haitian linguistic situation, we must renounce the forcing of our situation into this mold and look elsewhere for notions that could shed some light on its specific characteristics. It seems that we would be on a more fruitful track if we dealt with the question from the point of view of a bilingualism of social class: a bilingual francophone and creolophone dominant minority in conflict [with] a monolingual creolophone mass. (Dejean, 1983, p. 212)

[F]or 1 to 2 percent of the Haitian population, the balanced bilinguals, there is no compartmentalization between French and Creole and no specialization of the two languages. (Dejean, 1993, p. 74)

Dejean here emphasizes the importance of domination, class conflict, the bilingualism of the elite (in French and Kreyòl), and the monolingualism of the majority (in Kreyòl). Furthermore, he argues that there is no strict allocation of language by domain as code-switching is a regular part of bilingual Haitians' linguistic production (see Section 2.3.3). With respect to the importance of code-switching, Valdman also observes:

¹⁶ Yves Dejean, born May 16, 1927, deceased on March 29, 2018.

Typically, educated, diglossic¹⁷ Haitians will shift from French to Creole in the middle of a sentence, and these shifts are signals of subtle shifts of roles and attitudes between interlocutors (Valdman, 1971, p. 61).

While considering alternatives, it is noteworthy that there is precedent for applying Myers-Scotton's concept of linguistic elite closure to the Haitian context (DeGraff, 2016, 2020; Coulmas, 2002; DeGraff & Stump, 2018; Migge et al., 2010, p. 12). Coulmas (2002), while arguing that Haiti is fundamentally different from Ferguson's other original paradigmatic cases of diglossia,¹⁸ endorses Myers-Scotton's LEC as a "felicitous term" (p. 60) for describing the use of French by the Haitian elite. Indeed, many characteristics of LEC address Dejean's and Valdman's descriptions of Haiti, including:

- Language varieties are not strictly allocated to formal or informal domains. Instead, the *markedness* of our linguistic production is dependent upon the situation – see Section 2.1.2.
- Code-switching can be a ubiquitous, expected, and socially significant form of spoken linguistic production. In some settings, regular code-switching may represent the unmarked choice.
- Code-switching allows speakers to signal dual or multiple facets of their identity. For example, elites who code-switch, even momentarily, from a local language into a prestigious variety (e.g. French, English), signal their "educated" or upper-class

¹⁷ The qualifier "diglossic" when applied to Haiti's bilingual elite appears less contentious in the literature than its application to the country as a whole. See, for example, Zéphir's dissertation (1990) on the linguistic practices of Haiti's bilingual upper class.

¹⁸ Coulmas (2002) argues that the class and racial distinctions underlying Haiti's sociolinguistic condition set it apart from Ferguson's (1959) other paradigmatic cases. He further maintains that, in Ferguson's Arabic, German, and Greek cases, the divergence between H and L varieties resulted from written versus oral traditions, whereas the distinct origins of Kreyòl have contributed to its stigmatization as a "degenerate" form of French.

identity – see Section 2.1.2 and Chapter 9’s “Future work” subsection *Allocation versus Code-switching*.

- In cases of LEC, elite-exclusive language varieties are the unmarked choice (either alone or as part of code-switching) in settings, activities, and exchanges key to socioeconomic advancement and wielding power, and offer elites special access and significant privileges in these contexts (see Chapters 6 and 7). This contributes to a power imbalance between those who possess this variety and those who do not.
- Social class and inequality are integral aspects of the concept of LEC.
- Elites tend to have acquired their exclusive language variety in their homes as children.
- LEC avoids the misrepresentations of Haiti found in Ferguson's (1959) original paper (e.g. French and Kreyòl are variants of the same language, the elite learn and use Kreyòl with their parents, and then later acquire French at school).

It is now worth addressing whether these aspects of LEC are inconsistent with the original versions of diglossia, or whether LEC might instead be considered a specific form or extension of diglossia.

With respect to Ferguson's diglossia, LEC is a fundamentally distinct notion for various reasons, including how different social classes have separate repertoires, linguistic practices, and modes of acquisition. With regard to Fishman's extension, the matter is less straightforward. Fishman's *diglossia without bilingualism* in a strict sense (no social group is broadly bilingual in H and L) is inconsistent with LEC. However, in its more relaxed sense (some but not all social groups may be bilingual in H and L), the notion may still encompass LEC. In her first article

introducing LEC, Myers-Scotton (1990) herself discusses both Ferguson's concept and Fishman's extension, giving particular attention to the latter. She notes that cases of diglossia with "partial bilingualism" occur in many francophone and anglophone countries and lead to exclusion from employment and political participation (pp. 34-35). In this article, she also frequently employs the term "allocation," although within a framework of markedness and consequent privileges and exclusion. Following her discussion of diglossia, she notes:

It should now be evident how all of this is relevant to [linguistic] elite closure. Further, societal allocation of linguistic varieties is deadly efficient. That is, all evidence indicates there is little redundancy in language use allocation; it is not a matter of "either this language or that" but instead one variety is more unmarked than others for appropriate use for one set of purposes. This means either speakers know the variety prescribed for a certain situation or they cannot participate on the same standing as the knowledgeable. (Myers-Scotton, 1990, p. 35)

When Myers-Scotton re-introduced her concept of LEC in a second article (1993), her discussion of diglossia and use of the word "allocation" were both greatly reduced. Her final article on the concept mentions neither "allocation" nor "diglossia" (Myers-Scotton, 2006).¹⁹ Central to all of her articles, on the other hand, are the concepts of markedness and the acknowledgement of code-switching as a regular form of linguistic practice.

Ultimately, Myers-Scotton's articles (1990, 1993, 2006) are agnostic as to the precise relationship between LEC and diglossia, including whether LEC as a social arrangement represents a form of diglossia, or whether LEC as a strategy or process (what this thesis refers to as LEC Maintenance) is responsible for the durability of certain diglossic situations. This thesis similarly

¹⁹ In the main text of Myers-Scotton's 1990 article, there are three paragraphs devoted to discussing diglossia, 8 tokens of "diglossia"/"diglossic," and 10 tokens of "allocation"/"allocate." In her 1993 article, only three sentences are given to diglossia, discussing just Ferguson's original version in reference to Classical vs Colloquial Arabic. This second article contains 2 total tokens of "diglossia"/"diglossic" and 3 tokens of "allocation"/"allocate." There are no occurrences of these terms in her 2006 article.

will not take a stance as to whether or not LEC is a specialized case of diglossia, including its various extensions and re-interpretations over the decades. There are two reasons for this.

First, given that the term diglossia has already been adapted to cover a diverse range of sociolinguistic situations, evaluating LEC's (dis)similitude to these formulations of the term would be an unnecessary departure from the central goal of this thesis. Additionally, given how extended the term has become (Ferguson, 1991/2005; Tollefson, 1983), it is unclear what the utility would be in placing LEC under the umbrella of diglossia, joining other terms such as "schizoglossia," "double-nested diglossia," "polyglossia," etc. That said, existing literature that does employ a framework of diglossia in order to discuss social processes similar to those under investigation here will not be disregarded merely due to their choice of terminology. As noted by Myers-Scotton herself (1990), discussions of diglossic situations with "partial bilingualism" can be relevant to the phenomenon she was describing. Furthermore, some scholars who are critical of the term "diglossia" for Haiti nonetheless accept the concept of *fantasme de diglossie* – that monolingual Haitians aspire to French fluency and prefer its use in certain situations even if they cannot understand it (Fleischmann, 1984, pp. 102–103; Zéphir, 2010, p. 61; DeGraff, 2017b, p. 185; Lubin Jr, 2018, pp. 37–39, 151). This notion of fantasy of diglossia is revisited in this thesis in Sections 2.2.1, 8.1, 8.2, and Chapter 6.

The second reason pertains to particularities of the history of scholarship on Haiti. While diglossia as both a term and concept remains debated and contested in sociolinguistics generally (Matthey & Elmiger, 2020), its application to Haiti is further complicated by inaccuracies in Ferguson's characterization of the country's sociolinguistic condition in his original paper (1959). According to Dejean (1983, p. 201), the "impressionistic remarks" made by Ferguson (1959, p. 340) shaped the following decades of research with respect to Haiti and misled other academics.

Perhaps as a consequence of Ferguson's original misrepresentations and the prominence of Dejean's consequent critiques, recent sociolinguistic scholarship on Haiti – based on my own review – gives little attention to the concept of diglossia. Some authors discuss it critically without adopting it (Berrouët-Oriol, 2017; Cothière, 2017; DeGraff, 2017b; Saint-Fort, 2017; Tézil, 2022, p. 291, 2024, pp. 188–189; Ulysse, 2026, p. 2), whereas many sociolinguistic studies do not reference it at all (DeGraff & Stump, 2018; DeGraff, 2019, 2020; Nelson et al., 2022; Govain, 2022, 2023; Ulysse & Burns, 2021; Ulysse & Masaeed, 2021; St Fort, 2016; Cerat, 2015; Léger, 2020). Whether due to a lack of familiarity, a consensus that it lacks analytical utility, or some other reason, diglossia appears to no longer be prominent in scholarship on the uses and roles of language in Haiti.

As a consequence, one of the motivations of this thesis is to respond to Dejean's (1983) call for alternative “notions that could shed some light on [Haiti's] specific characteristics” (p. 212). To this end, I propose linguistic elite closure, as originally formulated by Myers-Scotton and further elaborated in this thesis, as a potentially more suitable analytical model.

Chapter 2: Definitions and Literature Review

2.0 The Conceptual Framework of LEC

In this research project, the notion of *linguistic elite closure* or *LEC* acts as the theoretical centerpiece. LEC has the benefit of being a straightforward idea which Carol Myers-Scotton presented in two book chapters and one journal article (1990, 1993, 2006), and which she developed using several case studies in Africa. While the concept has since been used to describe many contexts, it has also drawn criticism for lacking theoretical depth and for failing to provide causal explanations for the retention of exclusionary policies (Bokamba, 2011, p. 154). Nonetheless, its clarity and simplicity make it a useful starting point upon which more intricate theory and recent literature can be applied.

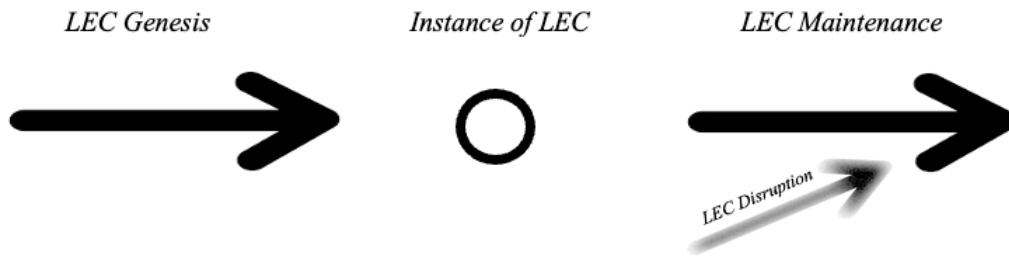
Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) defines linguistic elite closure as “a social mobilization **strategy** by which those persons in power establish or maintain their powers and privileges via linguistic choices. Put more concretely, [linguistic] elite closure is **accomplished** when the elite successfully employ official language policies and their own nonformalized language usage patterns to limit access of non-elite groups to political position and socioeconomic advancement” (1993, p. 149, my bolding).

In her definition and discussion, there is some ambiguity regarding whether LEC is a process executed over time, as is suggested by the word “strategy,” or an outcome or social arrangement that can be “accomplished.” Bokamba (2011) reads her in the latter sense and argues that more theory is required to explain what maintains the social arrangement of LEC once it is

achieved. This reading of LEC as a social arrangement is justified as Myers-Scotton herself considers several explanations for how it is maintained and what may disrupt it (see Section 2.2).

In order to establish conceptual clarity, here we will treat LEC as a social outcome, conceptually distinct from the conditions, processes, and forces that create it and maintain it.

Figure B: Framework of LEC



Let us now define the components of this framework as they are employed in this thesis:

LEC Genesis: The historical processes and social forces which create the three conditions necessary for LEC. These are:

- 1) Socioeconomic stratification and/or the concentration of political control produce a small dominant group, i.e. an elite.
- 2) Linguistic differentiation – through colonialism, enslavement, migration, conquest, education, or other historical processes – results in social groups knowing different language varieties and the elite knowing a variety generally unknown and inaccessible to the wider population.
- 3) The establishment of praxis and policy whereby knowledge and use of the elite’s variety offer advantages in settings, activities, and exchanges key to socioeconomic, academic, and political participation and ascension.

Linguistic Elite Closure or LEC: A social arrangement whereby a small, dominant elite have unique mastery of and access to a language variety which offers significant advantages for social, economic, political, and academic participation and ascension. As a consequence, non-elites have "limit[ed] access... to political position and socioeconomic advancement" (Myers-Scotton, 1993, p. 149).

LEC Maintenance: The processes and social forces which maintain a society's existing LEC intergenerationally or even across centuries.

LEC Disruption: The disruption of *a particular instance of LEC*. That is, the breakdown of a specific social and linguistic arrangement. This disruption may result in a more linguistically egalitarian society, or it may result in yet another case of LEC but with different language varieties and potentially different actors being dominant.

Before proceeding, a point of clarification is in order. While the elite's language variety offers benefits in many important spaces, activities, and exchanges, this does not mean that there needs to be a strict domain allocation of language for LEC to occur. In the language of Myers-Scotton (1993), the elite's language, either by itself or in code-switching with other languages, is the *unmarked choice*. Reframed in the terminology of Bourdieu (1977, 1991), this form of linguistic production can be considered a valuable *linguistic capital*, whose user is able to employ it to successfully accumulate other forms of *capital* (social, economic, etc.). Other language varieties may potentially also be present and employed in these settings, but they do not offer the same benefits.

Let us now review the treatment of these concepts within this research project. In Section 2.3.1, I cover the genesis of Haiti's LEC, tracing its origins to the colonial period. Due to necessary limitations of scope, many important aspects of LEC Genesis are not covered in this thesis, including how the social processes that initially create LEC intersect with and diverge from the processes that maintain it. With regard to LEC as a social arrangement, below in Section 2.1 we dedicate attention to defining and exploring the concept through more recent literature and theory than is found in Myers-Scotton's original articles (1990, 1993, 2006). Furthermore, the included stand-alone research papers offer insight into what LEC is in practice and how it is experienced in Haiti. For example, the interviewees describe the spaces, activities, and opportunities that non-francophone Haitians are excluded from or treated poorly in. Likewise, the language-in-education policy documents reveal how schools are spaces where French speakers are privileged. The project's primary object of investigation is, however, LEC Maintenance. Hence, the investigation focuses on the policies, practices, beliefs, affective associations, and social evaluations which make LEC durable. In doing so, we must also consider why processes that would disrupt LEC are

not occurring – with relevant forms of LEC Disruption defined in Section 2.2. Beyond what is covered in this thesis, each of the components of this framework can be further explored and built upon, and some future projects pertaining to each term are proposed in Chapter 9.

Throughout the remainder of this thesis, empirical findings and theory from sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, applied linguistics, and the language policy literature will be reviewed and reinterpreted through the lens of this framework. Notably, the three stand-alone papers employ past research on challenges to language-in-education policy (Nyarigoti & Ambiyi, 2014; Ouane & Glanz, 2011), Pierre Bourdieu's theory of linguistic markets, linguistic capital, and habitus (Bourdieu, 1991), Norbert Elias's account of affect, submission, and drag effect (Elias, 1939/2012, 1987/2001), and the interrelation between code choice and social esteem (Brennan & Pettit, 2004; Gumperz, 1964). Other relevant literature is also brought to bear in the remainder of this chapter and in this thesis's synthesis in Chapter 8.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into three additional sections. First, we elaborate on the key ideas underlying LEC. Second, we overview the literature on various causes of its maintenance. Third, we discuss relevant literature on the sociolinguistic situation of Haiti.

2.1 What is linguistic elite closure? Elaborating Key Concepts

Myers-Scotton describes LEC as occurring when different social groups have different linguistic repertoires, when elites have a language variety unique to their linguistic repertoire, and when this variety is unmarked and offers advantages in domains key to yielding power and socioeconomic advancement, not excluding when it is employed in code-switching (Myers-Scotton, 1990, 1993, 2006). This description employs or implies several key concepts which are grouped into three sub-sections for discussion below:

- 1) Linguistic repertoires, language varieties, and sociolinguistic taxonomies
- 2) Markedness and code-switching
- 3) Elites

In the following discussion of these concepts, we will go beyond Myers-Scotton's original formulation by considering different theoretical perspectives and more recent literature.

2.1.1 Linguistic repertoires, language varieties, and sociolinguistic taxonomies

People, both communally and individually, speak and write in many ways. Even so-called monolinguals change their linguistic production depending upon many factors, such as context, formality, and intention (Gumperz, 1964; Hymes, 1967; Joos, 1967). In every society, large or small, there exist social expectations governing what are the appropriate ways of talking or writing in various settings and with various audiences (Bourdieu, 1991; Haugen, 1972; Myers-Scotton, 1993). This multitude of tongues and styles within all individuals and communities makes up our *linguistic repertoires*, “the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed in the course of socially

significant interaction” (Gumperz, 1964, p. 137). These linguistic forms in our repertoires may be categorized into *language varieties*²⁰ which are then used differently depending on the domain and function (Gumperz, 1964; Hymes, 1967). How the language varieties are divided and labeled can be done in different ways. They may, for example, consist of categories that are salient, broad, and exist in common parlance, such as “French” and “English,” or of categories that are narrower and more technical, such as the “English of Martha’s Vineyard residents with [əi] ‘price’ vowels.” By associating different linguistic repertoires and language varieties with different social groups, we can define various *sociolinguistic taxonomies* of a society (Hymes, 1972; Patrick, 2004). For example, the sociolinguistic taxonomy of Haitian society provided in this thesis's Introduction divides Haiti's people into two social groups, elite and non-elite, then divides its linguistic production into two varieties, Kreyòl and French, and then states that elites have French and Kreyòl in their repertoire, while non-elites have just Kreyòl.

While Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) implicitly accepts the divisibility of human linguistic production into discrete language varieties, Bourdieu (1991) questions the reality of such partitions, the “mythical categories which introduce a decisive break in the continuum of speech forms” (p. 93). Similarly, modern linguists tend to understand language varieties as having vague boundaries, being ever-evolving, and being innumerable (Labov, 1972; Mühlhäusler, 2000; Vogel & García, 2017). As such, one cannot precisely define or count the varieties in a person’s or community’s repertoire. In an absolute sense, there are no two speakers of the *exact* same language, including even the same speaker at two different stages of their life (Burke & Shafto, 2004). This

²⁰ A *language variety* is “a general term for any distinctive form of a language or linguistic expression” (Nordquist, 2019, p. 1). This term serves as a useful and neutral alternative to the often difficult distinctions, hierarchies, and connotations between terms such as “language,” “dialect,” “slang,” “register,” “creole,” etc. For the sake of readability, I will at times employ other generic terms such as “language,” “tongue,” etc. in lieu of “language variety,” but in doing so I am not intending to make any typological distinction.

variation complicates making sociological claims about the behavior or privileges of different language communities. Given the heterogeneity, internal hierarchies, and continual splitting, merging, and evolution of linguistic phenomena, what does it mean to say the speakers of language "X" are advantaged over the speakers of language "Y," when "X" and "Y" are in truth always changing and have vague boundaries?

The problem of categorization of complex social phenomena is not unique to language. The social sciences are generally confronted with the challenges of studying and discussing complicated and fluid classifications such as race, gender, sexuality, religion, etc. (McCall, 2005; Tajfel, 1978). McCall (2005) argues, however, that the provisional adoption of categories (e.g. “black,” “white,” “man,” “woman,” “gay,” “Christian,” etc.) can be justified for analytical purposes because they approximate real social groups as they are constituted at a given moment in time, “as imperfect and ever changing as they are” (p. 1785).

While it may be difficult to completely avoid categorizations in sociological research, there are important motivations for maintaining a critical perspective on the origins and reality of these divisions. Common preconceived linguistic taxonomies, Bourdieu (1991) warns, often reflect a dominant group’s self-serving classification of their narrow linguistic production as being “high” and “refined,” as opposed to the “diversity of speech forms which are universally relegated to the negative category of ‘popular speech’” (p. 93). Bourdieu likewise cautions against sociologists too readily reifying groupings used or discovered in their analyses by endowing them with class awareness and solidarity – “the intellectualist illusion which leads some to consider the theoretical class, constructed by the social scientist, as a real class, an effectively mobilized group” (p. 229).

Keeping in mind the risks of perpetuating hegemonic ideologies or creating “intellectual illusions” of politically conscious and unified language communities, the provisional treatment of

language varieties as fixed, homogeneous, and static objects in order to define groups of people can nonetheless have analytic utility. From a critical realist perspective, such classifications can serve as approximations of a complex but patterned reality (McCall, 2005). From a constructionist perspective, people's salient linguistic and social groupings represent shared understandings of collectively constructed realities (Burr, 1995). Regardless of one's ontological position, maintaining a critical perspective can shed light on the origins of these divisions and how they may reflect the interests of powerful dominant groups. As Bourdieu (1982) advocates:

(S)ociology must take as its object – rather than let itself be taken in by it – the struggle for the monopoly of legitimate representation of the social world, this fight for classification which is a dimension of any form of class struggle – age, sex, or social. (pp. 13-14, my translation)

Though these considerations may appear abstract, the “fight for classification” over Haitian language varieties is central to the history of Haiti's LEC. Throughout Haitian history, differently politically motivated groups have presented different divisions and hierarchies of French and Kreyòl. For example, despite evidence that French has been known to only a small elite minority of the population throughout the country's history (Heinl et al., 2005; J. W. Johnson, 1920), 19th-century Haitian education policy documents consistently describe French as *the* language of the Haitian people without mentioning Kreyòl or its monolingual speakers, effectively concealing and marginalizing the linguistic majority (Vincent & Lhérisson, 1895). This may result from early treatments of Kreyòl as a “broken” dialect of French, granting it a secondary and negatively connotated ontological status with respect to French (DeGraff, 2005). In the last few decades, a group of pro-Kreyòl academics have argued for Kreyòl to be recognized as the sole language of 90 percent or more of Haitians and as a language capable of the same expressivity and functions as any other (DeGraff, 2005; Dejean, 1995, 2010; Govain, 2011). On the other hand, the International Organization of the Francophonie currently describes Haiti as being 42 percent

francophone (OIF, 2022, p. 34).²¹ Indeed, arguments for differing sociolinguistic taxonomies of Haiti represent an ongoing Bourdieusian battle for classification of the world.

²¹ It is worth reviewing the origins of this "42 percent francophone" figure provided by the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF).

The OIF has been using this figure in its global reports – released every three to four years – since 2014 (OIF, 2014, p. 18). The 2014 report states that this figure is recycled from their earlier 2010 report (p. 24). The 2010 report, however, distinguishes between two different levels of French and states that Haiti is 12 percent "francophone" and 30 percent "francophone partiel" (OIF, 2010, p. 13) – defining a partial francophone as "people with a limited proficiency in French, allowing them to manage a limited number of situations" (p. 17, my translation). Elsewhere in the 2010 report they note that their figure for Haiti (along with many other countries) was an estimation "suggested by francophone cultural and linguistic cooperation networks" (OIF, 2010, p. 17, my translation).

Because the reports stopped distinguishing between levels of French, from 2010 to 2014, Haiti's estimated 30 percent "partial francophones" became just "francophones."

The 2010 figure also marks an increase from their 2007 report's figure, which described Haiti as 8 percent "francophone" and 7.5 percent "francophone partiel" (OIF, 2007, p. 17) – citing these figures from past reports that I was not able to retrieve.

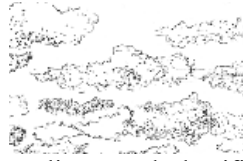
Thus, between 2007 and 2010, according to the OIF, Haiti's combined "francophones" and "partial francophones" jumped from 15.5 percent to 42 percent of the population – which since 2014 has been reported as a homogeneous block of "francophones." This 42 percent figure is currently reported with no nuance or explanation on their webpage for Haiti (<https://www.francophonie.org/haiti-967>, accessed September 15, 2025).

While no large studies have been done to assess the actual French level of the Haitian population, 42 percent is a highly misleading figure. Interestingly enough, a careful reading of the OIF reports also reveals this. The 2014 report – the first to claim that 42 percent of Haitians are francophone – discusses how "French also appears as a factor of socioeconomic discrimination, as it is most often the preserve of the elite, who alone can provide their children access to high-quality private educational pathways in this language" (OIF, 2014, p. 359, my translation).

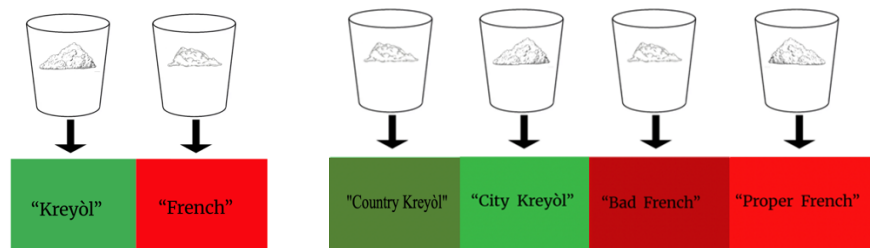
A Google search for "Haiti 42% francophone" reveals that the OIF's figure is frequently cited as a matter of fact by various academics, institutions, and websites.

Figure C: Classifying linguistic phenomena

A person or community's linguistic repertoire consists of differing linguistic forms that have vague boundaries, are evolving, and are innumerable (Gumperz, 1964; Labov, 1972; Mühlhäusler, 2000; Vogel & García, 2017). By way of metaphor, this can be imagined like clouds gradually shifting, merging, and transforming:



These fluid linguistic entities can be split up and classified in various manners – some more scientific than others. These divisions are given labels such as “languages,” “language varieties,” “dialects,” “patois,” “slangs,” “registers,” “accents,” “styles,” etc. For analytical purposes, social scientists can provisionally treat and discuss these divided categories as static and homogeneous, although they in fact continue to evolve, shift, and merge (McCall, 2005). There are many ways of creating such linguistic divisions. For example, when discussing language in Haiti, one might use a palette of varieties with more or less nuance:



These varieties can be grouped in sets as the *linguistic repertoires* of people. When we associate repertoires with different social groups, we generate a *sociolinguistic taxonomy* of a society, broadly describing *who* speaks *what*. How we formulate sociolinguistic taxonomies may also be done in more or less scientific ways and may represent different political agendas – Bourdieu’s “fight for classification” of the world. Examples of different sociolinguistic taxonomies of Haiti include:

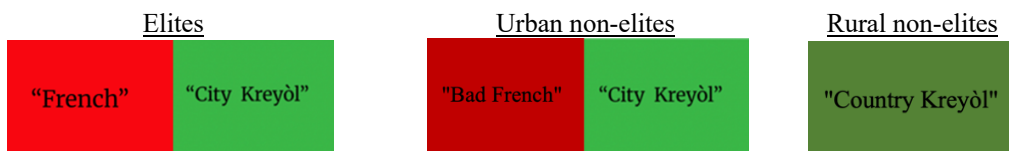
A unary sociolinguistic taxonomy of the Haitian people found in 19th-century education policy documents



A binary sociolinguistic taxonomy of the Haitian people common in discourses about the elitism of French



A potential ternary taxonomy emphasizing class and geography while denigrating non-elite "Bad French"



2.1.2 *Markedness and code-switching*

For LEC to occur, not only must competence in different language varieties be unevenly distributed amongst a population, the varieties exclusive to the elite must offer some form of advantage in domains, activities, and exchanges key to yielding power and socioeconomic advancement (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

Myers-Scotton (1988, 1990, 1993) describes how certain language varieties are the socially expected or *unmarked* choice for a given setting or exchange. Members of the elite will employ their variety in contexts beyond where it is strictly necessary and establish this variety as the unmarked choice for this setting or activity. The elite thereby make these contexts less accessible and navigable for people who cannot speak the privileged language variety – whether or not they consciously intended to do so.

In other settings, however, lower-status language varieties may still be preferred or act as an important marker of a secondary identity, such as belonging to a particular ethnicity or region (J. Edwards, 1994; Myers-Scotton, 2006). Elites may very well hold positive attitudes towards these other varieties but consider them appropriate only for traditional activities or informal settings. They may furthermore take steps to ensure their children are proficient in lower-status languages so that they can successfully navigate their domains of use. For example, elite African parents will sometimes send their children to live with relatives in a rural village so that they acquire the traditional language of their ethnicity and ancestral region (Myers-Scotton, 1990).

Certain situations, Myers-Scotton observes, invoke even more complex linguistic behavior. In particular, she reports instances of informal conversations amongst African elites where they switch back and forth between language varieties, or *code-switch* (Myers-Scotton, 1988, 2006). This behavior can occur so regularly that it becomes the expected mode of expression, which she

labels as *code-switching as the unmarked choice*. When elites engage in such behavior, they are able to mark having dual identities:

By engaging in codeswitching between a strictly-local language and a language with international standing, [elites] present themselves as different from local people who do not speak the elite language with the same facility. True, for including a local language in their speech, the elite can claim that they are simply "ordinary citizens". But when their usual speech patterns contain codeswitching to a language which also may be used locally, but is especially identified by its international connections, such patterns subvert any message of egalitarianism. (Myers-Scotton, 2006, p. 73)

In summary, in some contexts it is beneficial to speak an elite language variety, in others a non-elite variety, and in others to code-switch between both. Myers-Scotton (1990) notes that speakers who do not know the expected or unmarked form of production “cannot participate on the same standing as the knowledgeable” (p. 35).

The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1991) provides a similar albeit more abstract account of markedness along with the payoffs and penalties of correct and incorrect language use through his concepts of *linguistic market* and *linguistic capital*.

Bourdieu (1991) considers few linguistic exchanges to be purely semantic acts. In addition to whatever explicit message is being sent, our linguistic production carries with it and communicates information about who we are and how we are positioned with respect to the receiver. It is a sign of our wealth and authority, capable of procuring us both symbolic and material profit. Our linguistic production, or *linguistic capital*, only has value relative to a given *linguistic market* – that is, the various settings and circumstances where we use language and hence exchange it for other forms of capital, be it economic, social, or symbolic. Individuals will adapt or *censor* (in Bourdieu’s terminology) their language in response to the structure of the linguistic market and their anticipation of the “profit” they may derive from what they might say. This will

cause some speakers to be silent in certain contexts and others to hyper-correct²² their speech in an effort to emulate what they believe is the most correct language variety for the context – often making themselves the object of ridicule. Consequently, they will either be gatekept from certain domains or be unable to draw the same benefits as those who do possess the appropriate linguistic capital. Like Myers-Scotton, Bourdieu argues that the dominant class establishes their language varieties as the expected choice in key domains through their positions and informal language use.

A detailed investigation of French-Kreyòl code-switching in Haiti lies largely outside of the scope of this thesis. However, relevant data points are presented and a future investigation is proposed in Chapter 9’s “Future work” subsection, *Allocation versus Code-switching*.

2.1.3 Elites

Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) does not provide a precise definition of elites. Using post-colonial African contexts as the case studies for her presentation of LEC, she describes them as descendants of individuals who worked in colonial administrations and who continue to pass down their linguistic knowledge from generation to generation.

While giving a precise definition of elites is notoriously difficult, as a point of departure they can be understood as those with “vastly disproportionate control over a resource” which can be either economic, social, cultural, political, or informational (Khan, 2012, p. 361). Beyond the resources that they possess – particularly economic wealth – there are different approaches to understanding, identifying, and studying elites. In a positional approach, elites are those that occupy key positions in public and private institutions (Domhoff, 2005; Mills, 1956). In a

²² Meyerhoff (2018) notes that this term originally referred to the general trend of “overgeneralizing based on imperfect learning in a new language or dialect” (p. 192). The concept is further explored in Chapter 7.

reputational approach, elites are identified by asking upper-middle-class professionals and the other powerful people who they consider to be powerful people in a city or community (Hunter, 1953). In a decisional approach, elites are those who make important societal decisions (Dahl, 1961).

A key advantage of the positional approach – the method selected for this research project – is that it allows for a fairly simple and straightforward way of both identifying elites and differentiating between them based on the nature of the positions that they occupy. In his classic study of the elite in the USA, Mills (1956) proposed that American elites could be categorized into three types based on their association with corporate, political, and military institutions. Though this particular division may not be applicable to modern-day Haiti, it acknowledges the important point that a country's elites are often not a homogeneous group. Myers-Scotton (1993) likewise notes that rising African (proto)-elites with an economic base may reject the dominant language of the traditional elite who maintain their position through language, family name, and status. Along these lines, Edwards (1994) sharply comments that language activists are themselves often members of an academic and intellectual elite living in urban centers, fluent in and regularly using a dominant language while advocating for a minoritized language, all the while “nervously glancing over their shoulders to see how much of the population they claim to represent is following them” (J. Edwards, 1994, p. 111).

The central point from these observations is that what we call a society's "elite" is in fact a heterogeneous set of people who derive power from different sources and can have different or even opposing attitudes and interests with respect to language. Hence, while some elite groups may actively promote a minoritized language, others may be indifferent or actively undermine it in favor of maintaining the status of the traditional dominant language.

2.2 What maintains LEC?

In order for an instance of LEC to endure over long timescales, social processes which would disturb the sociolinguistic status quo must not take place. Such disruptive processes can take different forms. In this thesis, we focus on two general forms of LEC Disruption which are introduced below. These two were selected because of their relevance to Haiti – notably why French fluency has not spread more and why Kreyòl has not risen more in status and taken on more institutional roles. The two forms introduced here are not the only means by which LEC may be disrupted, and in the “Future work” section of Chapter 9 we briefly discuss other possibilities.

LEC Disruption 1: The language of privilege spreads

One way for LEC to be disrupted is for lower-status language communities to acquire the language variety of their society's elite, causing the language to lose its exclusionary power. For example, Europe's gradual adoption of universal education is cited as a policy contributing to this form of LEC Disruption by spreading dominant language variants. In France, "proper French" from the Île-de-France region supplanted regional "patois" (Horiot, 2011). Formal education is also credited with spreading literacy in written language, previously the purview of Europe's nobility, clergy, and state officials (Houston, 1983). While the spreading of dominant language varieties may be disruptive to LEC, it may also result in linguistic homogeneity and the eventual decline or even death of local and traditional languages (J. Edwards, 1994).

LEC Disruption 2: Minoritized language rises in status

Another form of LEC Disruption may occur when a previously minoritized language rises in status and coexists with or replaces the old dominant language in key domains, enfranchising the users of this language. For example, this second form of LEC Disruption has occurred to various degrees in post-colonial contexts following the break-up of the European empires, including in India with Hindi, Tanzania with Swahili, and Botswana with Setswana (Awobuluyi, 2013; Groff, 2017). While such changes may be disruptive to LEC by shaking the absolute hegemony of a colonial language like English or French, they may also generate new forms of linguistic exclusion or even LEC. This may occur if the rising newly dominant language is unknown or inaccessible to the general population. For example, the importance given to Hindi in post-colonial India has been particularly contentious as the language is less widely known in the country's southern regions (Groff, 2017).

As discussed above, social processes disruptive to LEC may have their own undesirable effects. Still, cases of LEC merit attention both for the harms they cause the excluded and for the social puzzle they represent, notably in contexts like Haiti where it remains largely uncontested over a long timespan.

In order for a particular instance of LEC to endure, processes which would disrupt it must either not be "naturally" occurring (without anyone's intent), not be pursued by relevant actors, or be pursued but for some reason not be successful. Linguistically marginalized people are not learning the language of privilege en masse and minoritized languages are not entering institutions and activities key to socioeconomic, academic, and political advancement.

Drawing on literature from linguistics, sociology, language-in-education policy, and international development, below we review various potential explanations for LEC Maintenance. Aligned with the conceptual framework, these explanations are categorized into three sections. We begin with why dominant language varieties do not spread, i.e. what stops LEC Disruption 1. This is followed by reasons why lower-status languages remain excluded, i.e. what stops LEC Disruption 2. Finally, we explore why stakeholders do not generally attempt to address LEC.

In the stand-alone articles of this thesis, certain potential causes of why LEC Maintenance occurs are examined and evaluated in detail, each corresponding to one of the thesis's core research questions (see Introduction). In Chapter 5, the article *Language Policy in Haitian Education*, the strengths and weaknesses of different language of instruction policies are discussed. In Chapter 6, the article *Language, shame, and social mobility*, the notion of *habitus*, Bourdieu's (1991) treatment of *linguistic capital*, and Elias's (1939/2012) treatment of *shame-fear* and *drag effect* are extensively discussed. In Chapter 7, the article *Social esteem and the maintenance of linguistic elite closure in Haiti*, social esteem and its relation to the reproduction of LEC are discussed (Brennan & Pettit, 2004). Following the two interview-based chapters, I synthesize both their data (the non-elite and the elite cohorts) and their analytical approaches (affect and social esteem). This synthesis is presented in Section 8.0.

To minimize repetition within the thesis, the proposed causes for LEC Maintenance which are the focus of the stand-alone articles are not discussed at length here. The causes which are discussed below, rather, correspond to the thesis's secondary research questions (see Introduction). Data pertaining to these issues are often present in the stand-alone articles, but they are not central to their analysis or discussion. Therefore, we revisit and discuss them in the Chapter 8 synthesis.

2.2.1 Why do dominant language varieties not spread?

An essential feature of linguistic repertoires is that they can expand. People, particularly as children, can and do acquire language varieties which are not those of their parents or their home communities (J. Edwards, 1994). If knowing the elites' language variety offers important advantages, why over large time scales do non-elites not acquire this variety and enjoy its benefits?

Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) proposes several reasons for this which are reviewed below and discussed with regard to a wider literature. These include a) the failure of education systems beyond policy, b) lack of opportunities to practice, c) the Incomplete Package hypothesis, and d) rejection of the elites' language.

Failure of education systems beyond policy

Myers-Scotton (1993) attributes LEC Maintenance principally to a lack of formal language teaching in school systems. She states that LEC occurs:

- (a) when the [language] varieties necessary for socioeconomic mobility are non-native for many;
- (b) when universal education is not available; and
- (c) when those varieties are not taught extensively in the schools (p. 153, "[language]" added).

Myers-Scotton published her first articles on LEC at the start of the 1990-2000 *Education for All* initiative, which would go on to add an additional 82 million students into primary schools and increase net enrollment rates in developing countries to over 80 percent (UNESCO, 2000, p. 13). Much of this expansion involved scaling up curricula which had been designed for the linguistic competencies of upper-class children and thus employed local prestige languages.

Hypothetically, that would result in children gaining access to these languages. In actuality, the linguistic misalignment between their home and their school as well as teachers' insufficient fluency ended up not only blocking most children from receiving a quality basic education but also failing to teach them the target prestige language varieties (Marinotti, 2017; Taylor-Leech & Benson, 2017).

Myers-Scotton's assessment that increasing school enrollment and formal teaching of target high-status languages would end LEC appears to not only have been disproven, but in fact represents a major waste of resources and cause of scholastic inefficiency across the globe. The problem may lie, however, in the manner that schools handle mother tongues and target second languages.

In Chapter 5, we will discuss the role of formal language-in-education policy and the debates surrounding which policy works best (C. Benson & Wong, 2015; Ouane & Glanz, 2011; Taylor-Leech & Benson, 2017). Aside from policy, however, many other factors can influence the success of second language teaching. Teachers, particularly outside of upper-class, private, urban schools, may have a low level in the language that they are supposed to be teaching in (GCE, 2013; Heugh, 2011), contributing to a reliance on memorization-based lessons rather than active learning and comprehension. Stressful classroom environments – such as those that use corporal punishment – add an additional barrier to language acquisition (S. Krashen, 1986; G. H. C. Lin, 2008). General under-resourcing and other structural issues also undermine the quality of education systems (Heugh et al., 2007; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). These considerations are relevant for Haiti. The use of corporal punishment in Haitian schools is still documented (Garçon et al., 2024; López García et al., 2022). Most students are in under-resourced private schools (Social

Action Consulting, 2016),²³ and only 17 percent of students will finish secondary school, with the graduation rate being much lower for children from poorer homes (UNESCO, 2026).²⁴ Furthermore, even the rare students from disadvantaged backgrounds who do complete secondary school often fall short of achieving anything close to ‘near-native’ mastery of the French language (Dejean, 2010).

Thus, universal education employing dominant languages does not guarantee that LEC will be disrupted. Beyond formal language-in-education policy, schools may fail to spread the dominant language for many reasons. These issues are revisited in Chapter 6 and in Section 8.1.

Lack of access to opportunities to practice

While Myers-Scotton (1990, 1993) emphasizes the role of formal education as a path to the elite’s language for non-elites, she also mentions their lack of social opportunities to practice it. Such considerations relate to the influential *comprehensible input* and *comprehensible output* hypotheses of second-language acquisition theory (S. D. Krashen, 1985; Swain, 1985). According to these hypotheses, what is essential to language learning is not necessarily formal classroom language courses – which may be too unnatural, grammar-focused, and stress-inducing for effective learning – but rather extended opportunities for receiving (hearing or reading) and producing (speaking or writing) the target language variety, especially in natural relaxed settings where the level is roughly adapted to the current skill of the learner.

Thus, the challenge for the non-elite is not only getting their children into schools with quality language curricula but also getting them into extracurricular activities where use of the

²³80-85 percent of Haitian schools are private (Social Action Consulting, 2016, p. 37).

²⁴ While the overall completion rate for secondary school is 17%, it is 1%, 6%, and 8% for children from Haiti's "Poorest," "Poor," and "Medium" income social classes (UNESCO, 2026)

target language variety is commonplace. One obvious obstacle may be the region where they live. For example, there are often few opportunities for rural Quechua-speaking children in South America to practice Spanish outside of their classrooms (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004). Another reason may be the distinct lifestyles of elites and non-elites. This could relate to a general process of *elite distinction*, which encompasses all manners in which elites signal and demarcate their high status (Bourdieu, 1979; Daloz, 2009). A potential by-product of elites adopting expensive, elaborate, and exclusive tastes and activities through *conspicuous consumption* (Veblen, 1899) is that they effectively close out non-elites from accessing settings where their language variety can be heard and practiced.

While formal education may offer children of the non-elite a basic level of the elites' language, they never truly master it due to being closed out of other opportunities to practice. Furthermore, it can be difficult for one to ever completely emulate the speech of a community different from where one grew up. As noted by Meyerhoff (2018):

Changing your accent or native discourse patterns is much harder than moving house. An upwardly mobile Yorkshireman might pick up Received Pronunciation as he makes his way through the British higher education system, but more than 20 years later, his continued use of a short a vowel in the bath lexical set and the occasional use of [ʊ] where RP has [ʌ] (e.g., in 'cup') may give his roots away. (p. 177)

Findings relevant to these points are discussed in Section 8.1.

The Incomplete Package Hypothesis

Non-elites may not pursue learning the language of privilege as they recognize it to be but one element of a package of attributes required for socioeconomic advancement. That is, even if they can *talk the talk* they may still be faced with racial discrimination, not belong to the right social network, not have graduated from a prestigious school, live in the wrong part of the country,

practice the wrong religion, and so on. Such a multifactorial understanding of exclusion draws parallels to the study of *intersectionality*, which explores how social privilege and discrimination can relate to a composite of variables including race, gender, sexuality, class, language, etc. (Crenshaw, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Myers-Scotton (1993) proposes that non-elites may believe, and perhaps justly, that improving their socioeconomic standing requires an unattainable constellation of characteristics and therefore there is little or no benefit to be gained by investing the time and resources in pursuing the language variety of the elite. The project's findings on this hypothesis are found in Section 8.1.

Rejection of the elites' language

Myers-Scotton (1993) also considers that certain individuals may choose to not learn the language of privilege as they do not accept either its legitimacy or the legitimacy of the current dominant culture (p. 154). Her analysis focuses on members of a rising *protoelite* who have an economic base and who are in conflict with the traditional elite. Her account reflects what has long been known to sociologists: elites are not a homogeneous group but are disparate and at times competing groups, such as an old aristocracy which derives its privilege from status, tradition, and inheritance against a rising bourgeoisie which has acquired material wealth through industrial production and trade (Marx & Engels, 1848/2012; M. Weber, 1921/1978).

By omission, Myers-Scotton's articles suggest that non-elites accept the current linguistic hierarchy and aspire for their children to learn the language of privilege. This observation does not hold true universally, as non-elites are known to demonstrate aversion towards dominant languages. In some social groups the use of lower-status language varieties may offer a *covert*

*prestige*²⁵ (J. Edwards, 1994, p. 97). For example, British men from working- and middle-class backgrounds have been found to claim to speak non-standard language forms even when it is not common for them to do so (Trudgill, 1972). These “nonstandard” British English language varieties may serve as a symbol of masculinity, whereas using “posh” speech can be perceived negatively for men as it may be viewed as effeminate.²⁶

The use of a lower-status language variety can furthermore demonstrate one’s solidarity with a certain community, region, or social class that is in conflict with the dominant class. In such cases, pursuing and using the dominant language variety may result in stigmatization and disapproval from one’s home community. For example, Canadian French speakers and Spanish speakers in the USA who adopt English have at times been labeled as *vendus* or *vendidos*, both terms meaning “sellouts” (J. Edwards, 1994, p. 102). In the case of Basque and Māori, individuals are electing to linguistically reclaim certain spaces (J. King, 2013; Urla, 2012). Similarly, young Arab-Palestinians in Israel may be placed in a difficult position if they wish to pursue higher education at one of the country’s more prestigious Hebrew-speaking universities (Amara, 2002; Hager & Jabareen, 2016). While difficulties with Hebrew are considered an obstacle for such students, the language is also closely associated with the Jewish state and the highly politically charged issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

One reason why individuals may not pursue learning dominant language varieties is that they choose not to or feel pressured not to as an expression of solidarity with their home community and its language variety. In the case of Haiti, however, such a finding would contrast

²⁵ The term *covert prestige* is now often used for when an “officially” lower-status language variety – e.g. an academically “incorrect” variety – nonetheless has a prestige for some speakers, who may very well be conscious of its value. Meyerhoff (2018) notes that this is misaligned with its original definition: “a norm or target that is oriented to without the speaker even being aware that they are orienting to it” (p. 44).

²⁶ Examples of this in Haiti are found and discussed in Chapter 7, where upper-class Haitian men contextually use Kreyòl to appear masculine and down-to-earth.

with past observations made by Fleischmann (1984, pp. 102–103), Zéphir (2010, p. 61), DeGraff (2017b, p. 185), and Lubin (2018, p. 151), who maintain that monolingual Haitians aspire to French fluency, even going so far as to prefer its use in certain spaces and activities even if they cannot understand it – a phenomenon referred to as *fantasy of diglossia* (Lafont, 1982; Fleischmann, 1984). This project revisits these issues in Chapter 6 and in Section 8.1.

2.2.2 Why do minoritized languages remain excluded and low-status?

Above we discussed several of Myers-Scotton's (1990, 1993) suggestions for why non-elites do not or cannot learn the language of the elite. Bokamba (2011), however, criticizes her account of LEC for offering no explanations as to why local languages remain excluded, particularly in post-colonial contexts following the break-up of the European empires.

Below we will review three proposals for this. First, we consider the role of *ukolonia* and *coloniality*. Second, we review DeGraff's description of understandings of creole exceptionalism, notably historical and lay understandings, and the role they may play in undermining the acceptance of Kreyòl in Haiti. Third, we discuss the cost of integrating and standardizing minority languages for institutional purposes.

Ukolonia and post-colonial legacies

Bokamba (2011) proposes that many African politicians suffer from what he refers to as *ukolonia*, a form of “colonization of the mind” (p. 146). More specifically:

Ukolonia is a psychological syndrome that obfuscates the rational thinking of a patient in a postcolonial society and causes him/her to evaluate himself/herself in terms of values and standards established by the former colonial masters' culture(s). In other words, it is an internalized colonial mentality way of self-valuation. (Bokamba, 2011, p. 161)

This “psychological syndrome” has its roots in the *mission civilisatrice* of colonizers to raise the indigenous subjects of their colonies – the supposed “uncouth Africans and ‘fanatical Arabs’” (Bokamba, 2011, p. 155) – to the purportedly higher civilizations of Europe. Such “civilizing” curricula were widespread in the colonies of the European empires, and even after their independence these values and academic material would continue to form both the intellectual foundation of local elites and curricula in newly created school systems. Bokamba (2011) argues that the continued use of European languages in schools and institutions is one by-product of the enduring pro-European ideologies embedded in African leaders’ psyches which have “obfuscated their rational reasoning as leaders of liberated and sovereign states” (p. 162). Specifically with respect to language-in-education, numerous accounts exist on how colonial legacies continue to influence the marginalization of local and traditional languages in school systems around the world (Bamgbose, 1991; Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1991; Schmied, 1991; Heugh et al., 2007; Gutiérrez & Epinayú, 2024; Hassan, 2024; Limerick et al., 2024; Ndhlovu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2024).

Bokamba’s argument closely parallels Fanon’s (1952/2021, 1961/2002) analysis of the effects of colonial domination. Fanon argues that colonialism produces subjects who internalize the superiority of the colonizer’s culture and worldview, while simultaneously devaluing their own. With respect to language, Fanon observes that mastery of the colonial language often becomes associated with intelligence, civilization, and social mobility, causing colonized individuals to seek recognition through proximity to the colonizer’s linguistic and cultural norms. He furthermore notes that once independence is achieved, no true rupture occurs as local elites assume control of the same institutions and power structures as those of the former colonizer.

Both Fanon's and Bokamba's work underscore an important tenet of post-colonial theory: the end of formal colonial rule does not mark the end of colonial influence. After the colonizer

departs, enduring cultural, psychological, affective, and epistemic consequences often remain. This lingering legacy has been referred to as *coloniality*, a term coined by Quijano (1992) and further developed by Mignolo (2011). Conceptually separated from *colonialism* – restricted here to the physical presence and explicit political rule of a colonizer – coloniality refers to the persistence of similar patterns of power, knowledge, economic order, and social hierarchy after the end of colonial rule. The continued dominance of the colonizers' languages is thus sustained by institutional structures that reproduce colonial hierarchies of value and legitimacy. In this sense, the continued exclusion of local languages from formal domains can be understood as part of a broader coloniality of knowledge.

If these assessments are correct, then elites' negative evaluations of local languages and cultures would cause them to support the use of supposedly “superior” European languages in formal institutions and educational systems. Data and analysis on this topic are found in Chapters 6 and 7 and synthesized in Section 8.2.

Lay understandings of creole exceptionalism and attitudes towards creoles

DeGraff (2005) similarly emphasizes the role that (post-)colonial mentalities play in LEC Maintenance. He, however, focuses on how early racially motivated assessments of languages labeled as “creoles” and their speakers continue to contribute to their marginalization today. DeGraff (2005) recapitulates the common theory of creole genesis, whereby two communities who speak different languages come into contact and communicate using a *pidgin*, an amalgamation of words from both languages with little grammar. This pidgin used by adults is then adopted by children who endow it with grammatical structure and expanded vocabulary, creating a *creole*. This formation due to a mixing of different language communities is said to result in creoles having certain shared traits, notably similar simple grammars and limited expressive capacity. DeGraff

contends that language varieties labeled “creoles” are in fact no different from any other language and furthermore the common theory of creole exceptionalism has no sound scientific foundation. At its core, he argues, creole exceptionalism results from colonial-era pseudoscience that has been surreptitiously carried into modern linguistics. These original unfounded claims were part of a program to justify racial hierarchies and the subjugation of non-Europeans by describing them as culturally and intellectually inferior. For example, the 19th-century French linguist, Julien Vinson, characterized creole languages and their speakers in the following unflattering terms:

Creole languages result from the adaptation of a language, especially some Indo-European language, to the (so to speak) phonetic and grammatical genius of *a race that is linguistically inferior*. (Vinson, 1889, pp. 345–346)²⁷

DeGraff (2005) maintains that such characterizations of creoles as the product of “linguistically inferior peoples” are the intellectual forerunner of modern theories of creole exceptionalism. It is important to note, however, that the modern intra-academic debate regarding creole exceptionalism does not rely upon such contentious or racist claims, and the arguments for and against this theory can be evaluated and critiqued based on the strength of the available evidence (for more, see Bickerton (1984), McWhorter (2018), Sousa et al. (2019), Mufwene (2010a), Fon Sing (2017), and Ansaldo et al. (2007)). DeGraff contends, however, that outside of the intra-academic debate, belief in a stronger and particularly harmful lay version of creole exceptionalism still circulates, noting that the “idea that Creoles are degenerate versions of their European ancestors seems also quite popular among the lay public” (DeGraff, 2005, p. 549). Such understandings are used to justify claims of creoles’ inadequacy for use in many sectors and activities, such as governance, education, and rule of law. And indeed, research has shown that

²⁷ As translated into English in DeGraff (2005, p. 538), with my italics. Parenthetical “(so to speak)” from original citation

people often hold less positive attitudes toward creoles than toward their lexifiers, particularly for use in formal and technical domains (Jean-Charles, 1987; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994; Bancu et al., 2024; Mühleisen, 2022; Jean-François, 2006; Migge et al., 2010; Migge & Léglise, 2012). As such, if a lay understanding of creole exceptionalism like that described above still circulates, it could "undermine the role that Creoles should play in the education and socioeconomic development of monolingual Creolophones" (DeGraff, 2005, p. 533). This would contribute to LEC Maintenance by keeping creoles and the communities who are reliant upon them out of domains that require so-called "normal" or "sophisticated" languages, such as English or French. Relevant evidence on this topic is found in Chapter 7, and then further discussed in Section 8.2.

Cost of integrating and standardizing minoritized languages

A common argument against integrating minoritized language varieties into institutions is that monolingual institutions are more cost-efficient (Bokamba, 2011; Kaplan et al., 2000). Furthermore, as the elite's language has already been developed and integrated for such purposes, it is arguably more economically practical to leave it in place (Bokamba, 2007; Ouane & Glanz, 2011).

It is undeniable that running multilingual institutions can be an expensive affair. In the late 1990s, the cost of translating a single page of a UN document into all of its official languages was calculated to be "higher than the cost of living for a person in India for an entire year" (Nick, 2001). According to a BBC report from 2006, that year the UK government spent over £100 million on translation for public services (BBC, 2006). Given such high costs, achieving institutional linguistic equity may be a privilege that only wealthy states and organizations can afford. Even still, this is not necessarily an expense well-received in these contexts. According to

Irshad et al. (2007), the costs of offering public services in other languages drew ire from some sections of the British public, who expressed opposition amounting to “(i)f they can’t be bothered to learn English, they shouldn’t have access to our public services” (p. 87).

An alternative to running costly multilingual institutions is to switch the language of institutions from an exclusive elite language to the language of the majority – if such a linguistic majority exists, as it does with Kreyòl in Haiti, but often does not in linguistically diverse African countries. This alternative is still not without obstacles. Many minoritized languages lack a standard form, notably a written standard which can be used for the operation of institutions (James et al., 2017). The process of selecting or creating the standard, however, may be fraught with difficulty. Stakeholders may disagree over which variant(s) should be considered "standard," and which writing system should be adopted (e.g. Latin, Cyrillic or Arabic script, phonetic orthography or etymological orthography, etc.). Then, once a standard is selected, it may inadvertently create new linguistic hierarchies due to excluded variants now being considered "non-standard" and hence incorrect in school examinations and inappropriate in formal settings (Urla et al., 2017).

Another obstacle is the initial material costs of integrating mother tongues into formal institutions (James et al., 2017). Although for education systems it has been argued that switching to mother tongues will improve overall efficiency by reducing grade repetition and dropouts, thus making such transitions a sound medium- to long-term investment (Ouane & Glanz, 2011), public perceptions to the contrary and current funding deficits can block initiatives to produce materials in minoritized languages and integrate them into institutions. Findings relevant to these issues are discussed in Section 8.2.

2.2.3 Why do stakeholders not address LEC?

A third set of causal explanations pertains to why the sociolinguistic status quo might generally remain unaddressed. Below we will overview explanations including Bourdieu's concept of (mis)recognition, the interests of elites, and addressing LEC being a chosen problem rather than a pressing problem.

Bourdieu's (mis)recognition

In Bourdieu and Passeron's (1964, 1970) analysis of social reproduction, a key aspect of the maintenance of the dominant class's privileged position is the *(mis)recognition* of their culture as naturally and universally valuable, and thus inherently necessary. This (mis)recognition is the result of two factors. First is the *reconnaissance* or recognition and acceptance of the worth and utility of the dominant class's culture. Second is the *méconnaissance* or unawareness that this culture is in fact arbitrary.²⁸ To use one of Bourdieu's preferred analogies, individuals recognize and accept "the game" of their society while simultaneously being unaware that the game could be different. With respect to language, the dominant class's language variety is taken to be "correct" and "proper" and thus the best choice for formal settings. Furthermore, people do not consider that another variety could just as well be the "correct" and "proper" one (Bourdieu, 1991).²⁹ The current linguistic market is known, accepted, and not imaginable any other way.

The fact that a game is taken to be natural and necessary does not, however, explain why the same players always win. To account for this, Bourdieu investigated social reproduction in France following the transition from overt titles and privileges to more covert mechanisms. In *La*

²⁸ The dominant culture is "arbitrary" in the sense that it is one of an infinite multitude of potentially dominant cultures, although Bourdieu considers its privileged position to be socially and historically determined.

²⁹ The aforementioned *ukolonia* and lay understandings of creole exceptionalism may be considered specialized instances of (mis)recognition, where a former colonizer's language or a "real language" is taken to be naturally superior to a traditional language, lower-class language, or creole language.

Reproduction (1970) and *Les Héritiers* (1964), he and Passeron describe how certain forms of cultural capital – such as specific knowledge, skills, behaviors, and tastes – are valued by formal educational institutions but are disproportionately accessible and acquirable in the home environments of children from privileged social backgrounds. It is furthermore not coincidental that schools value the knowledge and culture present in the homes of the privileged class, as it is individuals who are endowed with power who determine academic curricula and who have the ability to shape public opinion as to what is “worthy” to be studied and known. Thus, while universal and free education may officially grant equal opportunity to all children, it can in fact serve to reproduce and even falsely legitimize social hierarchies on the basis of “merit.”

Germane to the present study, Bourdieu and Passeron similarly analyze how the unequal distribution of linguistic capital valued by school systems contributes to academic success and thus social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). While no child enters school with all of the linguistic knowledge they will need to succeed, the language varieties of children from privileged backgrounds will tend to be closer to the target academic varieties and thus they require less “linguistic correction” than their counterparts from less privileged backgrounds (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970, p. 144). Additionally, students whose current language variety is more closely aligned with the speech of their teachers and text of their schoolbooks will be more efficient learners (p. 115). Following a study that Bourdieu and Passeron conducted on the linguistic abilities and social origins of French university students,³⁰ they concluded that “the unequal social-class distribution of educationally profitable linguistic capital constitutes one of the

³⁰ For the referenced study, see Bourdieu et al. (1965).

best hidden mediations through which the relationship (...) between social origin and scholastic achievement is set up”³¹ (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990, pp. 115–116).

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1970, 1964), (mis)recognition coupled with the unequal distribution of academically valuable cultural and linguistic capital results in the progeny of the dominant class disproportionately succeeding in school while being considered naturally gifted, whereas those from disadvantaged backgrounds disproportionately fail while being seen as naturally inept. If their analysis is correct, then LEC may be maintained due to individuals believing that the linguistic practices of their society are natural and inevitable, mistaking the education system for a linguistically fair mechanism of social opportunity, and judging the academic failure and “incorrect” speech of non-elites as evidence of their lack of intelligence and merit, and hence their lower position in society. Evidence for this explanation is synthesized and discussed in Section 8.3.

Interests of elites

Another potential cause of LEC Maintenance is the interests of the upper class which may cause them to use their empowered positions to either reinforce or diminish language-based exclusion as they desire.

In his classic analysis, Max Weber (1921/1978) describes *social closure* as a phenomenon characterizable in terms of *open* and *closed relationships*. A relationship is considered to be closed if “participation of certain persons is excluded, limited, subjected to conditions” (p. 43), whereas it is open if there are no barriers. Whether or not a group pursues an open or closed relationship with outsiders is determined by its current members’ expectations and interests. If group members

³¹ The authors additionally note that “[language’s] weight as a factor varies according to the constellation of factors in which it belongs and, consequently, according to the type and level of education concerned.” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970/1990, p. 116)

expect that allowing others to join their ranks will result in the “satisfaction of [their] spiritual or material interests” (p. 42), then they will pursue an open relationship. Otherwise, they will pursue a closed relationship.

Weber considers language to be but one of several characteristics which can be used to demarcate the boundaries of a closed relationship, his list including “race, language, religion, local or social origin, descent, residence, etc.” (Weber, 1921/1978, p. 342). Which characteristic is selected is a matter of whichever “suggests itself most easily” (p. 342). He elsewhere remarks that groups may employ “secret languages” (p. 45) to maintain closed relationships.

At times, however, elites may feel it is in their interest to disrupt the social barriers of LEC by either promoting a lower-status language or spreading their higher-status language. The rise of linguistic uniformity in Europe has been credited to the financial interests of book publishers (Pettegree, 2017; M. Weber, 1921/1978, p. 45). Anderson (2006) shares this assessment, attributing the “defeat” of high-status Latin to “vernacular print-capitalism” (p. 77).

While Weber does not elaborate on what “spiritual” reasons a group might have for removing language barriers, nationalistic ideologies have been widely credited with driving modern linguistic homogenization via official standardized languages (Anderson, 2006; Haugen, 1966; Wright, 2012). These standards are generally intended to be taught in schools, known by all citizens, and used in every public institution. Known as *one-language-one-nation* models, such policies essentialize competency in an “official” or “national” language as a criterion for being a good citizen. The modern one-language-one-nation model is often attributed to the French Revolution, whose leaders viewed linguistic heterogeneity as a potential cause of inequality and even sedition:

The language of the Constitution and laws will be taught to everyone, and this host of tainted dialects – the last remains of the feudality – will be forced to disappear. Circumstances dictate it.

– Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand (1754–1838)

In a democracy, keeping citizens ignorant of the national language, unable to control power, is a betrayal of the motherland. (...) In a free country, the language must be the same for one and all. (...) As though it were up to us to maintain these barbaric dialects and coarse idioms, which now serve only fanatics and counter-revolutionaries!

– Bertrand Barère (1755–1841)³²

In contrast to elites who have some interest in promoting a shared language, Trudell (2010) observes that many African elites are ambivalent towards linguistic inequalities. While they may be aware that this is a social problem, it is difficult for them to undermine the privilege that they derive from the sociolinguistic status quo. Kwesi Kwaa Prah (1995, p. 71), raised in Ghana and himself a member of the African elite, calls this a “crisis of the will,” where elites are torn between supporting local languages versus protecting their own social advantage.

Thus, whether elites seek to maintain, disrupt, or ignore LEC may be dependent upon which course of action conforms to their ideals while simultaneously preserving or improving their socioeconomic status. Evidence relevant to this topic is synthesized and discussed in Section 8.3.

Addressing language-based exclusion is a chosen problem

Another possibility is that people neither (mis)recognize the status quo as natural and necessary, nor do elites consider maintaining a closed relationship to be in their material or ideological interests. Instead, no change occurs simply because there are other issues perceived to be more pressing. To illustrate this point, despite the language-related concerns of the French revolutionaries, constant wars with surrounding monarchical states and domestic infighting ultimately interrupted their language reforms. Implementing universal obligatory French-language

³² English translations of quotes retrieved from https://slmc.uottawa.ca/?q=french_history#s4b

education would have to wait nearly a century until the prosperity of the Third Republic and the Jules Ferry laws of the 1880s (Booth, 2011).

In the framework of Hirschman (1975), enacting language policy was ultimately a *chosen problem* for the French revolutionaries, an issue for which there was no immediate necessity and which could be ignored while more *pressing problems* were addressed. The widespread failure of many 20th-century language planning efforts in lower-income countries and nascent states following the break-up of the European empires has been attributed to such prioritization due to necessity (Kaplan et al., 2000). For example, many newly independent African states faced crises such as famine, armed conflict, weak infrastructure, disease, and widespread poverty. Thus, in some contexts LEC may persist simply because there are other matters considered to be more urgent to address. This potential explanation for Haiti is discussed in Section 8.3.

2.3 Language in Haiti

In this section we discuss literature relevant to LEC in Haiti. We begin by discussing the genesis of LEC in Saint-Domingue and why it persisted after independence. We then discuss literature on language attitudes in Haiti. Next, we overview literature on Haitian code-switching, language allocation, and style shifting. Lastly, we discuss variation within Haiti's French and Kreyòl.

2.3.1 LEC Genesis in Saint-Domingue

In this section, we trace the genesis of Haiti's LEC to the colonial era, when Haiti was the French colony of Saint-Domingue. This period coincides with the emergence of Haitian Kreyòl. The topic of Kreyòl's origins – and creole genesis broadly – is a subject of considerable academic inquiry and debate (Hull, 1979; Bickerton, 1981; Chaudenson, 1979, 2002; S. S. Mufwene, 1996; Lefebvre, 1986; Singler, 1996; Lefebvre, 1998; DeGraff, 2001; McWhorter, 2013). An in-depth discussion of the theories surrounding creole genesis lies outside the scope of this thesis, but the reader is encouraged to read Véronique (2013) for a general overview and Valdman (2015a) for an overview specifically focused on Haitian Kreyòl.

The following discussion of colonial-era Haiti is structured to align with Chaudenson's (2002) two-phase account of Kreyòl's genesis in Saint-Domingue, which he breaks down into the *homestead society* period (early 1600s to late 1600s) and the *plantation society* period (early 1700s to 1791). General historical information is filled in from Heinl et al. (2005), Garrigus (2006), and other sources.

In the remainder of this section on LEC Genesis in Haiti, I will summarize the relevant history of Saint-Domingue, covering in sequential order the homestead society and the plantation society periods. I will also argue that the social changes which occurred in the plantation society period created the necessary conditions for LEC Genesis. Following this, I will address why the LEC created in the French colony was not dismantled following the revolution and creation of independent Haiti in 1804.

A Homestead Society

On December 5th, 1492, the crew of Christopher Columbus's *Santa Maria* spotted the northern coast of the island of Hispaniola, and the following day made landfall (Heinl et al., 2005). In the coming decades, the Spanish Crown would there establish the colony of Santo Domingo. The indigenous people, the Taino Arawaks, were forced into labor and nearly completely exterminated within a few decades. The resulting colony of farmers and ranchers became a relatively insignificant outpost within Spain's wider New World empire, as the conquest and exploitation of the large indigenous empires of Central and South America generated far greater wealth for the Spanish Crown.

Starting around 1630, French buccaneers began to use the island of Tortuga off the northwestern coast of Hispaniola as an encampment (Chaudenson, 2002, p. 62). Despite attempts by the Spanish authorities to drive them out, by the 1650s they had become increasingly settled and had begun to move onto the mainland. In 1665, there were approximately 1,500 Frenchmen living in what would become Haiti (d'Ans, 1987). The early buccaneers came from the northwestern region of France and spoke a variety of languages from the langue d'oïl family which were significantly different from French. As the settlement grew, wealthier French-speaking settlers from the Île-de-France region around Paris also arrived. In addition to their indentured

servants, this group began purchasing enslaved Africans to work as farmhands. By 1681, there were 4,546 French settlers and 2,102 enslaved Africans (d'Ans, 1987).

As was generally the case in the Atlantic slave trade, the Africans brought to Hispaniola came from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Slave ports along western Africa, despite being limited in number, covered a coastline of over 5,000 kilometers, and traders of enslaved people often captured their victims from deep within the interior of the continent (Chaudenson, 2002, p. 78; Parkvall, 2000). Chaudenson contends that Kreyòl did not yet begin to develop at this time. During the homestead period, the enslaved Africans were in constant contact with their enslavers (cf. Arends, 1994), resulting in them acquiring French or at least a close approximation of it. In support of this position, Chaudenson (2002) cites the observations of two Catholic missionaries who remarked on the ability of the enslaved black population of the French Caribbean to learn and speak French:

I am entirely confident that the people from our country can learn to speak French from the Negro population
– Father Mongin, 1679³³

It would be an infinite task to undertake teaching them[, the slaves,] in their natural languages. One must be gifted for language in order to succeed. That is why we wait until they have learned French before teaching them, which they do as soon as possible in order to be understood by their masters, on whom they depend for all their needs
– Father Pelleprat, 1655³⁴

Towards the end of the 17th century, however, changes in the political environment and agricultural technology would initiate a new social, economic, and linguistic course for the isolated francophone enclave of Hispaniola.

A Plantation Society and the Genesis of Haiti's LEC

³³ As cited in Chaudenson (2002, p. 67).

³⁴ As cited in Chaudenson (2002, p. 111).

In 1697, the Treaty of Ryswick resulted in Spain ceding the western third of the island of Hispaniola to the French government, granting political legitimacy to the colony and paving the way for its expansion. The French portion of the island was named *Saint-Domingue* (Heinl et al., 2005).

Concurrently, advances in agricultural technology caused sugarcane production to expand rapidly, driving the creation of large-scale plantations throughout the French Caribbean that soon overshadowed Saint-Domingue's earlier farmstead economy. Increasing numbers of French-speaking settlers from the Île-de-France region arrived in the colony and began such enterprises. Members of this group amassed immense wealth and came to control the local economy and politics, simultaneously cementing French as the dominant language of the growing colony (Chaudenson, 2002). This group stood in juxtaposition not only with the enslaved Africans, but also with "the small whites" or "petits blancs"³⁵ (Cattarin & Quazzo dit Watts, 2025). By the late 18th century, Saint-Domingue accounted for more than a third of France's foreign trade through its sugar, coffee, indigo, and cotton production (Frankema & Masé, 2014, p. 133). Its sugar production was greater than that of the entirety of the British West Indies (Dupuy, 1985; Frankema & Masé, 2014). European visitors commented on the "obscene" conspicuous consumption of wealthy white "Creole" settlers (see below), and the expression "riche comme un créole" became commonplace in 18th-century France (Abbott, 2009, p. 122; Heinl et al., 2005, pp. 26–31). Hence, the colony of Saint-Domingue had its first true elite.

³⁵Most white settlers of Saint-Domingue were not wealthy plantation owners. Cattarin and Watts (2025) describe the "petits blancs" of the French Caribbean as "all the enterprising white people in the islands who had set out in search of adventure and in the hope of a better life. They constituted the colony's anti-elite, its white subalterns: small-time traders, innkeepers, shopkeepers, soldiers, sailors, clerks, plantation managers, bakers, and others. Their social position, sometimes precarious, stood in contradiction to their racial status, which privileged them within colonial society" (p. 1, my translation).

Table 2: Demographics of Saint-Domingue

~1630	<i>French buccaneers begin to settle North-West Hispaniola</i>
1665	1,500 individuals, most of whom were white
1681	4,546 whites and mulattoes, 2,102 blacks
1697	<i>Treaty of Ryswick cedes western third of Hispaniola to France</i>
1700	Approximately 4,000 whites and mulattoes, 9,000 blacks
1713	5,700 whites and mulattoes, 24,000 blacks
1791	30,000 whites, 28,000 mulattoes, 450,000-700,000 blacks
1791-1804	<i>Haitian Revolution</i>
1804	20,000 mulattoes, ~300,000 blacks

Sources: Chaudenson (2002), d'Ans (1987), Frankema & Masé (2014, p. 133), Logan (1930, p. 410), and Heinl et al. (2005, p. 29).

To fuel the agricultural production of sugarcane, the importation of enslaved African labor rapidly grew and the conditions of slavery became far more brutal. The opportunity for profit meant that the members of the enslaved labor force would be worked to death and replenished as needed, resulting in an extremely high mortality rate³⁶ (Heinl et al., 2005). In his account of Kreyòl's genesis, Chaudenson (2002) argues that these changes transformed the nature of the relationship between enslaver and enslaved, which in turn had important linguistic consequences.

³⁶ For example, "(o)n the Cotineau sugar plantation, [...] over 150 new slaves were added between 1765 and 1778. In 1775, the plantation had 150 slaves, which was the same number as in 1765. In other words, in a 10-year span, from 1765 to 1775, the average number of slaves on the plantation did not increase [...] (T)he slave population on that plantation was replaced in 10 years." (Dupuy, 1985, pp. 94–95)

The French plantation owners no longer extensively spoke to new arrivals from Africa. Instead, a class of overseers was created, often consisting of people of African descent who had been born on the island. These individuals would be qualified as black *Creoles*,³⁷ a term which had a variety of applications during the period. Etymologically the term *creole* derives from Portuguese *crioulo* and Spanish *criollo*, which mean “raised at home” (DeGraff, 2005, p. 541). In the context of the 17th- and 18th-century Caribbean, this term was used to refer to the people born and the plants cultivated in the colonies of the Americas. A person born in Saint-Domingue, whether of white European or black African ancestry, would be described as a “Creole.”

Black Creoles of African descent were tasked with training new arrivals from Africa, or *bossales*. Bossales would first spend at least six months in *ateliers* of over a hundred individuals where they were taught the basic linguistic and labor skills they were expected to have. Once done with the ateliers, the bossales would go to work in fields, managed by overseers, who acted as the intermediaries between the field laborers and the plantation owners (Chaudenson, 2002, p. 119).

According to Chaudenson’s (2002) account of creole genesis, it was here that Kreyòl was developed. Lacking extensive interaction with fluent French speakers, a new bossale would learn an approximation of French from their interactions with the overseers and the more experienced bossales, and, as time went on and there were successive waves of bossales and generations of Creoles, this became an approximation of an approximation and the lingua franca of the enslaved population. Like the “home-grown” people and products of the Caribbean, these new languages formed in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean were called *creoles*. Knowledge of creoles was not restricted to the enslaved labor force. White settlers, especially those born and raised in the

³⁷ For the sake of consistency, in this section I have left the ethnic categories “whites,” “blacks,” “mulattoes,” and “bossales” all lowercase. I do, however, capitalize the ethnic category of “Creole” only to prevent confusion with the linguistic qualifier, e.g. “a creole language.”

colonies, would gain fluency in these languages from interactions with their enslaved house servants, particularly their nannies (Chaudenson, 2002, p. 125; Winford, 1997; Selbach et al., 2009).

By the late 18th century, a mixed-race or *mulatto* population grew to match the white population in size – see Saint-Domingue demographics table above. Often born to wealthy white plantation-owning fathers and black mothers (potentially enslaved by the fathers), these individuals were raised in the plantation estates and lived in the same linguistic environment as the colonists. Fluent in French, they were formally educated and regularly sent to France to continue their instruction (Garrigus, 2006). At the same time, discriminatory racial policies marked them in many ways as second-class citizens. They were banned from holding any public office, as well as from working in the law, the priesthood, medicine, and teaching. Further policies forbade them from eating at the same table as whites, or being outside past a nine o'clock curfew (Heinl et al., 2005, p. 32).

The French Revolution and the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man* challenged the racist hierarchy of the colony. In 1790, a small insurrection occurred when Vincent Ogé, a wealthy mulatto who had spent time in revolutionary Paris, sought to have equal rights with the white colonists (Heinl et al., 2005). Ogé was soon captured and executed, generating a tense situation between the whites and the mulattoes. Then, in 1791, a slave revolt began and the country erupted into total war. The long and complex struggle that ensued included multiple groups who formed and broke alliances throughout the conflict. These include the French, the British, the Spanish, the mulattoes, the black Creoles, and the black bossales. After thirteen years the allied mulattoes and black populations came out victorious. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the victors' commanding general, ordered the massacre of most of the remaining white French population. The new nation was

christened “Haiti,” the original Taino name for the island, meaning *mountainous land* (Heinl et al., 2005).

As stated in Section 2.0, three social and linguistic conditions must be met for LEC Genesis. First, socioeconomic stratification must generate an elite. In the colony of Saint-Domingue, the immense wealth generated by the cash crop plantations had this result for successful plantation owners. Second, linguistic differentiation must occur such that the elite have knowledge of a language variety that is largely unknown and inaccessible to the majority. In Saint-Domingue, the majority of the population, the enslaved labor force of African ancestry, came from non-francophone backgrounds and had little to no access to French in the colony. Third, policy and praxis must be established such that this language variety offers advantages in settings and activities key to socioeconomic participation and advancement. Given that the colony’s institutions were created by francophone settlers and that until the Haitian Revolution the colony was reliant on France’s political, commercial, and academic institutions, the French language was the obvious code of privilege and power. With these conditions converging, LEC took root in Saint-Domingue.

Why did Saint-Domingue’s LEC continue into independent Haiti?

In his account of the Haitian Revolution, Marius (2022) underscores that the defeat of a white European superpower by a coalition of mulattoes and formerly enslaved black people shook the epistemic foundations of the West. Marius also notes, however, that this revolution had its limitations. In many respects, the outcome did not result in a complete or radical change in the practices and hierarchies of the society. While slavery was abolished, tremendous social inequality and models of agricultural production based on exploitative labor conditions continued. Many of the heroes of the Haitian Revolution, including its black leaders, had themselves been born, raised,

and relatively well-positioned in Saint-Domingue. Toussaint Louverture, the black general who led the revolution until his capture, had been a slave owner and had sent his own sons to France to be educated (Marius, 2022, p. 180). The lowest-ranking caste of Saint-Domingue, the bossales, who represented two-thirds of the enslaved population at the start of the revolution (Dubois, 2012, p. 21), fought for the cause of liberty from political and elite control, to return to a pre-state condition like that which they had known in their African homelands (Barthélemy, 1989). The leaders of the black Creoles, however, sought to create an independent nation-state, only with themselves emancipated and in control. Disputes between them during the revolution led to the formation of separate and opposing forces. In April 1803, the Creole *Indigenous Army* led by Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a black Creole who would later accept the title of “Emperor of Haiti,” defeated his bossale opposition in battle. This occurred only months before he would decisively defeat the French at the Battle of Vertières on November 18, 1803 and conclude the Haitian Revolution (Marius, 2022, p. 27; Trouillot, 2015).

Thus, while the leaders of the Haitian Revolution sought to and succeeded in challenging the racist ideologies and hierarchies of the time, their commitment to eradicating political exclusion, exploitative labor, wealth disparity, and class inequality was less evident. Furthermore, the black and mulatto francophones who largely assumed control of the new state were accustomed to using French in governmental, commercial, and upper-class milieux. It is perhaps then not surprising that while Haiti’s first constitution sought to legislate away racial inequality, it was written and promulgated only in French (Janvier, 1886) – but here we have arrived at the early policies and institutions of independent Haiti, a discussion continued in Chapter 5.

To conclude, while the Haitian revolutionaries explicitly fought a war against the racist policies and ideologies that they had suffered under in Saint-Domingue, they were far less

dedicated to eliminating the existing systems of class and linguistic inequality³⁸ which offered them advantages in their newly independent nation-state.

2.3.2 Attitudes towards Kreyòl and French

Considerable literature exists with respect to language attitudes towards creole languages and their lexifiers, with findings generally pointing to persistent asymmetries in prestige and social valuation, whereby creole languages are often associated with informality, local identity, and lower social status, while their lexifiers are associated with education, formality, socioeconomic advancement, and institutional authority, although such attitudes are context-dependent (Winford, 1976; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994; Bancu et al., 2024; Mühleisen, 2022; Migge et al., 2010; Migge & Léglise, 2012). Likewise, numerous studies have examined Haitians' attitudes towards Kreyòl and French, with the vast majority focusing on non-elites' perspectives on language use in the classroom (DeGraff & Stump, 2018; Hittenberger, 1987; Jean-Charles, 1987; Jean-François, 2006). These studies typically reveal that non-elite parents and teachers hold negative or at least skeptical opinions towards Kreyòl use in school.³⁹ According to Prou (2009), these negative attitudes have in the past reflected a concern amongst non-elites that mother-tongue education will entrap children in the “Kreyòl ghetto” (p. 49).

In a more recent interview-driven study, Ulysse and Burns (2021) investigated attitudes towards language in society broadly. Here they interviewed 14 participants from the isolated and largely impoverished Haitian island of La Gonâve. When asked to provide “potential solutions to

³⁸ There are examples of early statesmen who did challenge the social and linguistic inequalities of early Haiti. These individuals are discussed in Chapter 5.

³⁹ DeGraff & Stump (2018) found that teachers' attitudes improved after mother-tongue education training workshops. Some teachers stated, however, that pressure from their schools' administrators would make it difficult for them to add more Kreyòl into their actual teaching practices.

the linguistic problems in Haiti” (p. 22), 7 of the participants expressed the need for language policies that raise the prestige of Kreyòl, while 4 expressed the need for greater access to French. In general, about two thirds of the group supported expanding Kreyòl's role in society, with the remainder expressing ambivalence or pro-French sentiments.

Insights into the sociolinguistic perspectives of Haitian elites are rarer (Thomaz, 2005; Zéphir, 1990). Zéphir's (1990) dissertation offers many insights into the practices of bilingual upper-class Haitians, including where and with whom they feel French and Kreyòl are appropriate. Her findings are discussed more in the following section. More recently, Thomaz's (2005) interview-based study of Haitian elites'⁴⁰ perspectives on poverty provides additional information on how elites view French and Kreyòl. Certain elites were found to associate the French language with universal values and Western culture – “the only culture capable of ‘liberating’ people from ‘slavery’” (p. 144). For some, Kreyòl “encloses the mass of Haitians inside a world of beliefs and proverbs, far removed from the conceptual universe of the French language” (p. 150) and is a cause of the country's poverty. In contrast, other elites, notably politicians, religious leaders and businessmen, expressed that Kreyòl is “the only language that expresses the Haitian ‘soul’” (p. 147) and should be incorporated into all social and formal aspects of Haitian society. Altogether, the participating elites of Thomaz's study were split 40-60 between incorporating Kreyòl into institutions and spreading French competence to the people.

Though insightful, poverty was the primary focus of Thomaz's study. While he notes that French is “a mechanism of social exclusion that affects the majority” (p. 136), he provides no analysis as to how the perspectives of his elite interviewees may maintain this exclusion.

⁴⁰ Thomaz (2005) appears to have used a positional approach to identifying elites, as I have also done in this thesis (see Chapter 4 on Methods). His sixty-four interviewees are described as “well-known intellectuals, ex-presidents of the republic, ex-ministers, bankers and businessmen” (p. 128).

2.3.3 Code-switching, allocation, and style shifting in Haiti

As discussed in the Introduction, one of Dejean's (1993) main criticisms of the diglossia model for Haiti is the claim that French is allocated to certain domains and Kreyòl to others. Instead, he argues that bilingual elites engage in “constant code switching”:

[F]or 1 to 2 percent of the Haitian population, the balanced bilinguals, there is no compartmentalization between French and Creole and no specialization of the two languages. (Dejean, 1993, p. 74)

If Dejean's assessment of his home country is correct, then French-Kreyòl code-switching is the expected form of linguistic production for the upper class, and is hence a valuable form of linguistic capital in the Haitian linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1991; Myers-Scotton, 1988, 2006). That is to say, the country's sociolinguistic schism is not observable with respect to Kreyòl-production versus French-production, but rather with respect to Kreyòl-production versus French-Kreyòl code-switching.⁴¹

Contrary to Dejean, however, Flore Zéphir's (1990) PhD dissertation research into the language use of bilingual Haitians does employ the framework of diglossia (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1967) and reports a complex and compartmentalized allocation of French and Kreyòl. She found that upper-class Haitians consider it preferable to speak French in the presence of bilingual children, as well as with older people, strangers, and upper-class women, especially female acquaintances (pp. 241-243). It is also expected in many important settings and activities, such as job interviews, business meetings, banks, courthouses, and public offices. French use was

⁴¹ A detailed investigation of Haitian code-switching practices lies outside the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, relevant data and a proposal for a future project are found in the *Allocation versus code-switching* subsection of Chapter 9's “Future work” section.

noted to be a tool for signaling respect – a finding which is supported and expounded upon in Chapter 7.

More recently, the Haitian linguist and Dean of Haiti's *Faculté de linguistique appliquée*, Renauld Govain (2022) provided his account of current Haitian multilingualism (see Table 3 below). According to Govain, Kreyòl and French exist to varying degrees in all the same spaces and activities (except "Personal and Administrative Correspondence" where only French is used), suggesting that a strict "domain use" or rigid diglossic allocation of language in Haiti is inappropriate. The table offers a general overview without providing further insights into code-switching, variation, speaker demographics, or how language use may operate as a barrier to access and equal participation in these spaces.

Table 3: Govain's (2022) description of language use in Haiti

Situation	French	Kreyòl	English	Spanish
Political discourse	+/-	+		
Court judgement	+	+/-		
Church sermons	+/-	+		
Literature	+	+/-		
Administrative / personal correspondence	+			
Teaching	+	+/-		
Cinema	+/-	+		
Theatre / comedy	+/-	+		
Administration	+/-	+		
Family conversations	+/-	+		
Parliament	+/-	+		
Public transport	+/-	+	+/-	
Advertising poster	+	+/-		
Written press	+	+/-	+/-	
Radio / television	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
Radio / television advertising	+/-	+	+/-	
Radio / television cultural programs	+/-	+	+/-	+/-
Haitian music	+/-	+	+/-	
Announcement of information at airport	+	+/-	+/-	+/-

Source: Reproduced and translated into English from Govain (2022, p. 7)

There is limited research into style shifting within Haiti's two primary languages. As discussed in the Introduction, Orjala (1971) contends that every Haitian has some understanding of what characterizes French, and they "Gallicize" their Kreyòl in circumstances that require more formal or elevated speech. Tézil (2022) reached a similar conclusion through a variationist study that employed Kreyòl samples from tasks requiring various degrees of attention. He found that Haitians, notably Kreyòl-monolinguals with more than a primary school education, during attention-focused speech tasks greatly increased the frequency of their use of the nasalized /lã/ – a feature characteristic of the more Frenchified *Kreyòl swa* ("smooth Kreyòl") variety but one that

is easier for non-francophones to produce. Given the uses and social weight of different varieties of Kreyòl, he argues that the French-Kreyòl binary of classical diglossia (Ferguson, 1959) is insufficient for characterizing language use patterns in Haiti – a point discussed further below.

2.3.4 Linguistic variation in Haiti

Another complexity of describing Haiti's LEC concerns how fine a palette of differentiated “language varieties” a researcher needs to satisfactorily describe the country's linguistic hierarchies and exclusion. With respect to French in Haiti, Dejean (1993) identifies two main variants. First is the “living French” of the Haitian elite – “a little old-fashioned in relation to that spoken in modern-day France and inevitably marked with local color” (p. 82). A second is a variant acquired by those from largely Kreyòl-monolingual backgrounds, “full of creolismes, fantastical forms, distortions, and bookish expressions poorly assimilated” (p. 82). This second variant of French lacks the social value of the former but is still used in formal settings by its speakers and may serve to mark their status above those with little or no French ability.

Like Haiti's French, variation within Kreyòl has also been documented (Fattier, 1998). A short list of named variants includes Frenchified Kreyòl (*kreyòl fransize*), smooth Kreyòl (*kreyòl swa*), and rough Kreyòl (*kreyòl rèk*) (Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994, p. 179; Tézil, 2022, 2024). Fattier's (1998) atlas provides the most comprehensive study on variation within Kreyòl to date. However, while there are many auditorily distinct forms of Kreyòl, it may not be necessary to discuss each variety separately when addressing Haiti's LEC if they all share similar social values and status vis-à-vis French. The PhD dissertation of Lesly Jean-François (2006) is a rare study which investigates Haitian language attitudes with respect to different categories of Kreyòl – which he designates as “urban Creole” and “rural Creole.” Using a matched-guise test, he found that

Haitian teachers hold similarly positive attitudes towards both French and "urban Creole," and negative attitudes towards "rural Creole." This is a potentially important finding about the nature of linguistic prejudice in Haiti if it proves to be generalizable, but his results were not statistically significant (pp. 111-113).

In summary, the existing literature suggests that French – or French-Kreyòl code-switching (Dejean, 1993) – serves as a form of linguistic production unique to the upper class and is preferable to using Kreyòl alone in many important spaces. Furthermore, variation exists within the umbrella categories of “French” and “Kreyòl,” and these sub-varieties may have differing social values which should be acknowledged for properly understanding Haiti's sociolinguistic landscape. These issues are further explored in Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 3: Researcher's positionality, priors, and research paradigm

3.0 Researcher's positionality and Haitian interviewees

In conversations with other researchers in academic circles, the question of my "positionality" is something that I often feel a bit hesitant to address. I feel expected to respond with something along the lines of "straight white male Oxford student" – if my interlocutors do not themselves volunteer this positionality for me. My issue with such a description is not so much that it is reductive, but rather that whether a person recognizes these categories and how they understand them depends on their sociohistorically constructed worldview and their division and categorization of people therein (McCall, 2005). I believe that for my Haitian research participants, notably those from the lower class, some of these aforementioned descriptors are completely foreign, whereas others are understood in a manner different from mainstream Western discourses. As such, I feel that discussing my positionality as an objective intersectional singularity does not make sense, but rather it is dependent upon subjective divisions and understandings of social groups. Furthermore, certain features of my identity are more relevant or salient given the current setting, conversation, and my presentation of self (Goffman, 1959).

Below I will elaborate on how my identity and presentation of self potentially impacted on the relationships, power dynamics, and data collection with my Haitian interview participants. Much of what follows is based on my impressions from years of living, working, and researching

in Haiti, but I acknowledge that others may have had different experiences from which they have formulated different understandings.

In Haiti, I am not just a *white*, at least not in a way that feels equivalent to how the ethnic category is discussed in my home country of the USA. In Haiti, I am most promptly and recurrently labeled as a *blan*, a word that does mean the color "white" but also is used to signify "foreign." Products from abroad may be qualified with the term, e.g. imported "blan chicken" versus domestic "Kreyòl chicken." Foreigners, regardless of skin color, may be referred to as *blan*. For example, a friend of mine who worked in Haiti and whose parents are Haitian but who grew up entirely in the USA – where he would likely be categorized as *black* or *African-American* – in Haiti has at times been referred to as a *blan*.

Given my academic background, I am particularly interested in the linguistic aspect of *blan*-ness and corresponding in-group out-group boundaries. My friend could not speak Kreyòl – at least at first – and I suspect that this contributed to certain locals classifying him as a *blan* rather than an *Ayisyen* (Haitian) or a *dyaspora* (diaspora). On the other hand, being able to understand and speak Kreyòl did seem to help bridge this divide. For example, once while I was sitting alone in a public area in Hinche, I overheard two locals debating whether I was a *blan* or a *milat* – that is, a *mulatto*, an upper-class Haitian whose skin color is typically lighter-brown but may range to white. When I looked at them and smiled, confirming that I understood their conversation in Kreyòl, the one arguing for *milat* expressed validation. Usually, however, when people hear my accent in Kreyòl, they recognize fairly soon, if not immediately, that I am a *blan*. It is my impression nonetheless that by comfortably speaking Kreyòl, albeit as a second language, I am treated as less *blan* than many other *blan* (i.e. less outsider).

Beyond linguistic factors, my previous experience living in rural Haiti and my ability to talk about that world may offer me some degree of "Haitian authenticity" associated with an idealized rural agricultural tradition (Marius, 2022, p. 8), earning me appreciation from both upper-class and lower-class Haitians. At times when I have demonstrated an understanding of rural Haitian culture unknown to an urbanite (e.g. when a Port-au-Prince resident comes to the Plateau Central), they might honor me with the exclamation "Ou pi Ayisyen pase mwen menm, monchè!" ("You are more Haitian than me, my friend!"). Nonetheless, in Haiti I am and will remain a *blan*.



After losing a round of the team-based card game "casino," my friend and I endure the humiliation of carrying a small branch in our mouths. 2014.

I perceive different uses, associations, and connotations with the social category of *blan* dependent upon the regional origin and socioeconomic class of a Haitian. It is extremely common for Haitians from rural or small-town lower-class backgrounds who do not know me by name to reference and address me as *blan*: "Bonjou blan! Kijan ou ye, blan?" ("Hello blan! How are you, blan?"). I detect absolutely no malice or aggression intended by this form of address.¹ From my

¹ Once I become friends with a Haitian man, I am often casually addressed with the same informal term he would use with his other friends, *nèg*, a word signifying something akin to "guy" and that can also signify camaraderie: "Sa k pase la, nèg pa m?" ("What's going on, my guy?").

experience with such Haitians, *blan* are treated favorably in many respects, and presumed (often incorrectly) to be great intellectual authorities in all worldly, technical, or academic domains. On the other hand, they are presumed (often correctly) to be completely ignorant of local Haitian matters, and possibly incapable of ever truly understanding them. These factors likely impacted on the interview data that I collected in different ways. Despite being less *blan* than other *blan*, some interview participants may not have shared certain things because they viewed me as too much of an outsider or assumed that I would not be able to understand them. On the other hand, it is possible that in other respects this same assumption of my ignorance played in favor of the data collection. If an interviewee assumed that I knew nothing about a certain topic, they may have taken more time to carefully explain it and furthermore not been concerned that I had any preconceived opinions which would result in me judging them for what they might say.

In combination with being a foreign *blan*, for participants coming from the lower class my phenotypic characteristics (light skin, European appearance, etc.) may have drawn both direct and indirect favorable associations. Direct, in that I may resemble foreign light-skinned NGO workers and missionaries who have provided them with services and foodstuff, and indirect, as a general consequence of colonialism and pervasive hegemonic ideologies which value Europeanness and whiteness. My American nationality may have offered some aura of respect, as the USA is viewed by many there as a "well-organized, serious country." Of course, opinions towards Americans, foreigners, and/or light-skinned people are not universally positive in Haiti. It is not uncommon, particularly outside of amicable rural micro-farming communities, to meet Haitians who readily voice negative opinions of the USA's foreign policy and historical relationship with Haiti. In Port-au-Prince, where I have spent relatively little time compared to the country's interior, I have occasionally met Haitians who expressed negative assessments of lighter-skinned people –

although these sentiments have generally been directed at lighter-skinned upper-class Haitians, the *milat*, and it is thus unclear if their animosity is ethnic or more class-based.

Although my foreignness and lighter complexion surely influenced my interactions and the data collection, and while skin color often dominates discourses about Haiti – i.e. "the Black Republic" narrative (see Marius (2022)), I suspect my gender was at least as important with regard to how it influenced who talked to me and what they shared. During my years in Haiti, I have witnessed casual blatant sexism and negative assessments of women's intelligence, but also declarations on the strength and importance of Haitian women (cf. Johnson (2023)). While men have in many respects concentrated political and economic power in Haiti and thus one could call Haiti "the Male Republic" in addition to "the Black Republic," this might not offer it as much distinction. In any case, I believe this aspect of my identity influenced how participants engaged with me. Had I been a woman, different considerations and modes of engagement would have been needed with at least some of the participants.



Lower-class rural wooden home with tin roof in area without running water or electricity.

Given the economic power imbalance between myself and the participants from the lower class, alongside the potential for employment and presumption of authority tied to a *blan* doing "a project" in Haiti, it was important to clearly define what my research was, its intention, its

voluntary nature, and to set expectations ("I have no affiliation with any organization which could provide you with a service or potential employment"). Ultimately, however, the most salient power imbalance was the fact that I had the means to leave the country whenever I wanted. Haiti at this time was designated “High-Risk” for travel. Many of the interviewees were impacted by terrifying gang violence, regular food insecurity, constant interruptions to their education and employment, and a great deal of uncertainty with respect to their future. It is difficult for me to state how precisely this affects my research, but it is something which affects me personally. The extraordinary unfairness of the world is not something with which I have reached "peace," but rather something with which I cope.



Two meals I had during my 2022 fieldwork. *Left:* A typical Haitian meal of cooked vegetables, white rice, bean sauce, and hot sauce from a neighborhood restaurant in Tabarre, Port-au-Prince. *Right:* Plantain-wrapped sushi from a modern restaurant in Pétionville, Port-au-Prince.

My positionality with respect to the upper-class Haitians of my cohort is a significantly different story. Foremost, how they understand and interact with *blan* is distinct from lower-class Haitians. It is not that foreignness, Americanness, and light-skinned European phenotypes have no recognized significations, but rather that upper-class Haitians are far more discerning and far more critical. They recognize, consume, and practice signals of international bourgeoisie – designer

brands, prestigious universities, fine dining, country clubs, vacations abroad, etc. It is dubious that I had economic advantage over most or any of them and being a light-skinned American does not automatically offer me the same degree of respect and status. They know that not all *blan* are the same. In private, I have heard them discussing Haiti's legions of foreign NGO workers with incredulity, if not outright mockery. Unlike members of the lower class, I personally have never heard them initially address a foreigner as "*blan*" – greeting a new person in proper French or English is a signal of their "good education" (see Chapter 7).



February 2022: During the fieldwork, a member of the Haitian upper class invited me to play golf at the Port-au-Prince country club. Having never played it before, he connected me with an instructor for a brief lesson beforehand. At this time, large swathes of the surrounding city were controlled by warring violent gangs, making this another bizarre and somewhat surreal experience in Haiti.

Experience has taught me that members of the Haitian upper class are more than capable of holding their own against *blan*, they have strong (and varied) opinions about language in Haiti, and they will not show deference to whatever a *blan* might say (see Preface). Learning from these experiences, I gradually acquired a different presentation of self from what I tended to use with

lower-class Haitians. The upper class greatly appreciate that I speak Kreyòl but become annoyed if I speak it to them constantly (unlike the lower class, whose esteem for me seemingly only grows the more I speak Kreyòl). With upper-class interlocutors, it is furthermore better to start in English or French. They also appreciate that I can speak French despite being originally from the USA. If, however, I do not know a word or struggle with a pronunciation, I find it better to momentarily code-switch into English than to subject their ears to "bad French." Additionally, my life experience in New York and Paris and my academic institutional affiliations are useful social currencies. The fact that a "researcher from Oxford" wanted to hear their opinions and life story could be potentially validating for them, whereas I doubt the name "Oxford" would have signaled much of anything to many of my participants from the lower class. Although with the upper class I was an outsider with respect to Haitianness, I could position myself as a brother in Western bourgeoisie (see also Marius (2022)).

During the fieldwork, I was invited to a nice Pétionville restaurant with a large group of international NGO workers, whose conversation I did not really enjoy ("You spent three years working in the Congo? How was that?" "It was great! We partied every night."). I wandered off and met a woman who was working as the manager and whose family owned the restaurant. After I complimented the restaurant and shared a brief conversation with her, she invited me to sit with her family and friends. She introduced me as follows:

*Je vous présente Monsieur William Frager. Il étudie à l'Université d'Oxford.
Il parle l'anglais, le français, mais aussi le créole!*

These institutional and linguistic characteristics earned their approval. They particularly enjoyed that I knew Kreyòl – which I demonstrated with no more than an initial sentence or two and followed by none of my old overt and immediate advocacy for mother-tongue education (see

Preface). For at least this one evening, I spatially and symbolically shifted from a standard outsider *blan* to sharing a seat at the table of the Haitian upper class.

Apart from the aforementioned macro-level social categories and durable characteristics of my person and life narrative, securing interviews and gaining the trust of participants depended on many micro-level human elements of each interaction: a smile, an initial joke in Kreyòl, the clothes I wore that day, a positive opinion of Haitian cuisine, appearing empathetic and non-judgemental, allowing things to go off-script and off-theory when someone shared something important to them, and other innumerable details that cannot be taught in a classroom or confined within the methods section of an academic paper.



Left: 2015, myself as an NGO worker standing near where I lived in rural central Haiti with a local boy whose family I was close to. *Right:* 2021, myself as an "Oxford gentleman" in "black tie and gown" with colleagues at a pub.

3.1 Epistemic Priors

An epistemic prior of mine which concerns this research project is my understanding of the nature of Kreyòl and creole languages generally. I did my undergraduate studies in Linguistics at New York University in a program emphasizing descriptivism and Noam Chomsky's generative grammar (Chomsky, 1965). As such, the notions of a "broken grammar" or "inferior language" were immediately rooted out of my thought from an early stage. I began reading Michel DeGraff

(2005) and was introduced to how colonial-era social and linguistic hierarchies may still permeate thought about creole languages. I agreed with his conclusion that the linguistic systems known as "creoles" are capable of performing the same functions as any "normal language." And, as discussed in the Preface, DeGraff's advocacy for mother-tongue education highly influenced my later NGO work in Haiti.

Be that as it may, the overarching goal of the current project is not Kreyòl activism, nor promoting minoritized languages, nor protecting linguistic and cultural diversity. At the heart of this project is a puzzle, a social and linguistic disequilibrium which in certain conditions can persist unresolved across centuries. The goal here is to address the question of "*What maintains linguistic elite closure?*" To work towards providing some answers, a degree of distance from my previous activism has been required. In doing so, I have explored resolutions to the disequilibrium undesirable for Kreyòl advocates (e.g. "*Why has not everyone in Haiti just learned French?*"), to ask uncomfortable questions (e.g. "*Why do some monolingual Haitians not want mother-tongue education?*"), and to report findings difficult to fit into activist narratives without providing nuance (e.g. "*Some lower-class Haitians expressed joy imagining themselves or their children speaking French?*").

I agree that an "objective neutral" gaze is impossible in social science research (Haraway, 1988). My research design, fieldwork, and analysis of the data are situated in my own knowledge and life experience, which at times has been vastly different from that of others, including my participants.² Still, I believe that through ongoing consideration of my own priors via a reflexive sociological approach (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), and through taking some distance from my

² For example, one interviewee, a street hotdog vendor who only finished 3rd grade, expressed that her social position was the result of a voodoo curse that has followed her family for at least three generations. Another interviewee, an upper-class Haitian intellectual, expressed that Kreyòl is a fundamentally limited system due to its origins and is therefore incapable of use in scientific domains (see Chapter 7).

past activism, the project was opened to perspectives and theory not initially considered at the onset of the research.

3.2 Research paradigm and conceptual frameworks

Amongst the main research paradigms in social science, I may be best described as a *critical realist* (Bhaskar, 1979). Although I am not committed to all its tenets,³ I accept that there exists an objective singular reality – contrary to *constructionism* – but that our ability to precisely know it (via observation, mathematics, "hard science," etc.) is quite limited – contrary to *positivism*. I hold that social systems are often patterned but mathematically chaotic, and, to employ critical realism terminology, they are *theory-laden* but not *theory-determined* (Fletcher, 2017). This paradigm is amenable to both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bhaskar, 1979).

In order to understand and study complex social systems, we employ models (Maxwell, 2012; Morgan & Morrison, 1999). Our models translate real-world complexity into approximations that (hopefully) make the world more manageable to understand, capturing essential aspects of our object of study while removing nonessential noise. These models may be mathematically well-defined (e.g. statistical models), in which case we can demonstrate definite "Truth" about the model (e.g. statistical significance). The models used in this doctoral thesis (e.g. *linguistic elite closure*, *linguistic markets*, *habitus*, *economies of esteem*, etc.) do not fall into this category and may instead be labeled as *conceptual frameworks*⁴ – "the system of concepts,

³ For example, critical realism's ontology stratifies reality into three "layers" – the empirical, actual, and real (Fletcher, 2017) – a division for which I do not entirely understand the necessity or utility. While I discuss my participants' empirical experiences, emotions, and socially constructed worldviews, I do not feel it necessary to call these a separate layer of reality, or even to take a stance on whether they are non-biological (e.g. if "emotion" is more than chemicals released in the brain in response to certain inputs, or if "shared world views" are more than similarly functioning neural networks, etc.)

⁴ Following Maxwell (2012), I am using the term "conceptual framework" broadly and not making a distinction with other common terms such as "theoretical framework" or "idea context" (p. 49).

assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research (...) the actual ideas and beliefs that you hold about the phenomena studied, whether these are written down or not" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 49).

The decision to use a qualitative approach and this form of model results in part from the explanatory nature of the central research question "*What maintains linguistic elite closure?*" It also avoids attempting to translate into numerical data various untranslatable aspects of the human experience, such as feeling shame and gaining or losing social esteem. A qualitative approach also aligns with my penchant for conversing with stakeholders, my desire to understand underlying causes, and my previous experience with fieldwork. In another respect, however, the adoption of this approach was coincidental. The planned fieldwork initially included a randomized household survey about language use in a small Haitian city. This quantitative approach would have addressed a separate, more descriptive research question "*What is linguistic elite closure?*" ("How is language used in different spaces and activities of a Haitian city?"). Due to security concerns, this had to be cancelled. Thus, a qualitative approach was used due to a combination of the nature of the particular research question, the type of data I was able to gather during fieldwork, and my own methodological strengths.

Chapter 4: Methods

As an integrated thesis, the stand-alone articles that make up Chapters 5, 6, and 7 include their own individual methods sections. Their discussions of methods are condensed as these pieces are intended for eventual publication in academic journals. The present chapter thus serves to go into greater depth on the methods and fieldwork of this thesis.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part discusses the design and construction of the two main datasets used for this thesis. The first dataset is a systematically collected set of Haitian language-in-education policy documents. The second dataset consists of interview data gathered during fieldwork in Haiti in January and February of 2022. Here particular attention is given to the design and execution of the fieldwork, including safety protocols, sampling methods, design of semi-structured interviews, obtaining informed consent, and ethics approval.

The second part of this chapter discusses the two primary modes of analysis used on the datasets. These are document analysis (Bowen, 2009) for the language-in-education policy documents and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; J. Ritchie & Spencer, 1994) for the interview data. Throughout the chapter, attention is given to addressing the strengths and weaknesses of these data types and analytical approaches.

4.0 Constructing the two datasets

Dataset 1: Haitian language-in-education policy documents

Building the dataset of policy documents

The dataset for Chapter 5, the stand-alone article *Language Policy in Haitian Education*, is a collection of Haitian language-in-education policy documents. This dataset was assembled by myself and members of the MIT-Haiti Initiative team,¹ notably Professor Michel DeGraff and Professor Haynes Miller. I joined this team as a Policy Analyst in early 2021 and worked with them into the fall of 2023. When I joined the project, they had gathered around 15 documents. Using our defined search criteria (see below), we collectively grew the dataset to approximately 60 documents. Of these, approximately 20 were selected for more in-depth analysis as they included passages deemed highly pertinent to language-in-education policy.

A systematic approach was used to build the dataset, following methods similar to those used in building a dataset for a systematic review (Pollock & Berge, 2018). To begin, we delimited our dataset in several respects. Foremost, we restricted the dataset to publicly available policy documents – constitutions, laws, decrees, diagnostic reports, reform plans, and curriculum proposals – ranging from 1804 to 2022. This was in part due to issues of access with respect to non-public documents such as internal memos, classified files, personal correspondence, etc. It also, however, allowed us to capture the public face of Haitian language-in-education policy. Second, our search (and later analysis) placed a particular emphasis on documents post-1979, as this is the year that Kreyòl was made legally permissible in Haitian schools as both a language of

¹ The mission statement of the MIT-Haiti Initiative includes “promoting technology-enhanced active learning and the use of Kreyòl in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) disciplines, to help Haitians learn in the language most of them speak at home.” <https://haiti.mit.edu/> Accessed January 2025.

instruction and as an object of instruction. Third, the dataset was also delimited to documents either produced by the Haitian government (though often with financial and technological assistance from international partners), or by consultancy firms hired by the government to produce reports and make recommendations. This was done to indicate that the Haitian government had some direct interest and commitment to the content of the documents – as opposed to documents done independently of them, e.g. documents produced by NGOs, UNESCO alone, or independent academics.

Next, several search criteria were defined. Combinations of keywords, such as "Haïti", "éducation", "politique linguistique", "langue maternelle", etc., were used to search academic databases (Oxford's SOLO, Google Scholar), but also to do general Google searches. Academic sources, such as past academic articles and PhD dissertations on Haitian language-in-education policy, were also consulted. Collections and lists of Haitian laws were carefully reviewed. References to not yet included policy documents within our existing collection resulted in a form of snowball sampling as well. Lastly, other academics, stakeholders, and government officials were consulted. Some of the documents were accessible online, others were found in print publication, and others were provided to us through our network.

Dataset 2: Interview dataset

The primary dataset for the two articles included here as Chapters 6 and 7 consists of interview data from interviews with Haitian elites and non-elites conducted by myself in January and February of 2022 in southeastern Haiti. Below, we overview the key aspects of the fieldwork, such as its design, informed consent, the structure of the interviews, finding participants, the "elite" and "non-elite" division, and securing interviews.

Fieldwork safety – Finding appropriate settings for interviews and travel

The settings of the interviews were influenced by two safety concerns. First, the interviews took place during the COVID pandemic. Although many countries had relaxed their guidelines by the time of the fieldwork, the disease still posed a serious concern. The Haitian government guidelines at this time were neither clear nor recognized, so I followed common practices established by the UK government in response to the pandemic. The majority of the interviews were conducted outside, though some were conducted indoors with social distancing and masks.

Second, Haiti at this time was considered a High-Risk country due to the assassination of the president in July 2021 and the resulting political instability and gang activity. As such, interviews, particularly those conducted in the capital, Port-au-Prince, were only conducted in neighborhoods known to be safe and during daylight hours. Outdoor seating in well-known restaurants with secure walls and security guards was preferred.

The security situation in Haiti was highly dynamic during this period. Initially, the fieldwork included a planned randomized household survey about language use in Hinche, a city where I have extensive experience and a network from my past NGO work. Due to transportation limitations resulting from gangs controlling the major highways and the heightened kidnapping risk of systematically walking through a city as a foreign researcher, the survey had to be cancelled. The fieldwork instead focused on the planned semi-structured interviews. Unable to travel to Hinche, I instead travelled to more accessible areas in the southeast of Haiti – the city of Jacmel, a small mountain town, and a small fishing village (the latter two unnamed to protect anonymity).

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants. According to the University of Oxford Informed Consent guidelines, informed consent entails that “human participants can enter research freely (voluntarily) with full information about what it means for them to take part, and that they give consent before they enter the research.”² These guidelines detail how the consent process involves two stages: 1) giving information, where the participant is free to reflect and pose questions, and 2) obtaining consent, whereby the researcher reiterates the terms of the research and the participant agrees to each term before agreeing to take part in the project as a whole.

Prior to our interview date, participants were informed orally or through a written information form (see Appendix A) of the nature of the research. These details were revisited at the time of our meeting. If I knew that a participant’s background or professional status clearly implied that they were literate, I presented them with a consent form to read and sign (see Appendix B). Where there was uncertainty, oral consent was accepted. This was done to avoid placing illiterate or semi-literate participants in an embarrassing or stressful situation. I used my years of in-country experience working in a disadvantaged community to assist me in making this judgement. A consent form in Kreyòl was made, but in the end only the French-language form was used as I found that any participant I was certain to be comfortably literate would be literate in French – but possibly not in Kreyòl.

All interviewees were given the option of having the interview recorded or just having notes taken – with the understanding that either way the data would be completely anonymized. All participants consented to having the interview recorded – though on rare occasions they would ask me to pause the recording to share a particular piece of information with me. I informed them

² <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/consent>

when the recording began and when it stopped. Before ending the recording, I would confirm that they still felt comfortable with their participation and ask if they had any questions. Our conversations could continue after the recording had stopped, if they had any questions or comments that they wanted to say while not being recorded.

A number of individuals (both elites and non-elites) declined to participate when initially approached. None of the participants who did participate later asked to have their data withdrawn. In general, I found that language issues are a topic of interest for most Haitians, and my participants seemed to enjoy having the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives. Several expressed a willingness to answer any additional questions that I might have or to meet a second time, though this did not end up being necessary.

Ethics Approval to do research with human participants

This research with human participants went through a University of Oxford Departmental Research Ethics Committee approval process. The project, coded C1A_20_011, was granted approval.

Structure of interviews

The interviews were semi-structured in nature. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher prepares a list of topics or questions, but the order and manner in which these are presented are not fixed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Furthermore, the interviewee may add anything they feel is relevant to the discussion.

These interviews were divided into three central topics (see Appendix C for more details):

- 1) The participants' social origin and exposure to languages as a child
- 2) Their language use in their adult life today (professionally, socially, at home, etc.)
- 3) Their perspectives and preferences on language use in Haiti generally

This structure of the interviews was informed by the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). These questions corresponded to the initial primary research objectives, which were to explore the relationship between social origin and access to valuable linguistic capital, i.e. French, the utility of French in the surrounding linguistic market and how the participant's ability or inability to speak French impacted their life, and whether they (mis)recognized this linguistic system as natural and necessary (i.e. what are their understandings and preferences regarding language in Haitian society). Following the data collection, however, the importance of affect and shame (Elias, 1939/2012) and social esteem (Brennan & Pettit, 2004) became central to the analysis – this is reflected in Chapters 6 and 7.

When interviewing elites, Ostrander (1995) recommends allowing them to talk about things that are important to them, as this can help establish confidence and enable access to additional elites. As such, she recommends interviewers prepare a checklist of issues rather than a precise set of questions. Many of the elites I interviewed wanted to discuss some project or social issue that they were passionate about. I generally tried to strike a balance between allowing them to share what they wanted and not potentially offending them by cutting them off, but also keeping the interview focused on the linguistic issues that I was investigating.

Selecting Participants

In total, 31 interviews were conducted. To select my participants, I used purposeful non-random sampling. In purposeful samples, individuals are selected not to achieve representativeness of the larger population but rather to “inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2016, p. 224). Purposeful sampling is predicated on there being motivated and justifiable inclusion criteria. Two main principles were applied when selecting participants for this study.

First, the sample needed to include both elites and non-elites (for more on this division, see the following section). The inclusion of both was critical as Myers-Scotton's theory of LEC posits that these two groups will experience this social phenomenon very differently. Furthermore, several of the causal explanations of LEC Maintenance under investigation here focus specifically on the practices and attitudes of elites (*economic and ideological interests of elites*, etc.) or non-elites (*rejection of elite language, Incomplete Package hypothesis*, etc.). Thus, despite Haitian elites being a small portion of the Haitian population, here they represent a high percentage of the fieldwork sample (16 of the 31 participants).

A positional approach was used to designate individuals as elites (Domhoff, 2005; Mills, 1956). That is, they were categorized as elites due to their position in Haitian society, often being current or retired high-ranking members of various institutions and businesses. Given the overt inequalities in Haiti as well as the explicit and common use of the word “*élite*” to self-categorize and be categorized in Haitian culture, making determinations of who is or is not elite is likely less difficult in Haiti than in other contexts.

Second, apart from the roughly 50-50 split of elites and non-elites, I pursued *maximum variation* in my sampling, trying to vary my sample as much as possible. Maximum variation is

popular in qualitative studies as it increases the likelihood of capturing different experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016). I sought variation in age (average 47, min 24, max mid 70s), highest education attained (third grade education through PhD), and sex (17 men and 14 women). The sample included individuals from wealthy and poorer neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince, from the southern city of Jacmel, from a small fishing village, and from an isolated town in the mountains. Resource constraints and the current insecurity restricted greater geographic variation.

For more information on the participants, see Appendix D.

"Elite" and "Non-Elite" Division of Participants

While Myers-Scotton's framework of LEC inherently implies a division between elites and non-elites, one can question the appropriateness of this categorization for Haitian society and hence the appropriateness of the separation of my participants, interview data, and consequent analyses in the stand-alone articles representing Chapters 6 and 7. While all divisions of people into tidy or intellectually theorized social groups are reductive (McCall, 2005; Tajfel, 1978), the elite/non-elite treatment of Haitian society is not a novel invention created and imposed just for the structure of this thesis. Below we discuss two justifications for its use while also covering some of its limitations.

First, this division is common in sociolinguistic analyses and discussions of Haiti by both Haitian and non-Haitian scholars. The country's population is often described in terms of an "upper class," "bourgeoisie," or "élite" who grow up speaking French and Kreyòl, and a Kreyòl-monolingual "majority," also referred to as "le peuple/pèp la," or "les masses" (DeGraff, 2019; Dejean, 1993; Hebblethwaite, 2012; J. W. Johnson, 1920; Price-Mars, 1928; Simpson, 1941; Leyburn, 1941; Trouillot, 1990, p. 55). This distinction is not made only by academics. During my

past experience in Haiti, I heard Haitians regularly employ the term "élite/elit" to describe others or even themselves. I also often heard the "pèp la" discussed as an opposing category, a group separated from the elite socially, economically, and linguistically.

Such binaries, whether employed in academic or non-academic contexts, are of course only approximate descriptions of a far more complex reality. There exist more nuanced subdivisions within the elite/non-elite groupings, as well as possibly entirely distinct groupings of the Haitian people. For example, Price-Mars's (1928) ethnographical studies of Haiti were conducted before mass urbanization occurred, and hence he places particular emphasis on urban-rural distinctions. While the Haitian population has since become increasingly urban, such geographic divisions are still relevant today. This point was illustrated by one of my non-elite participants, pseudonymized as Samuel, who is from a remote mountain village (see Chapter 6). He emphasized how children from rural communities are particularly vulnerable to linguistic exclusion as they have essentially no access to French in their home communities.

Second, the interview data lent itself to separate analyses. Although all interviews followed the same semi-structured outline of questions, two general types of experience with respect to language emerged. The upper-class participants introduced into the interviews how correctly choosing between French and Kreyòl helps them to both signal and receive positive social evaluations. As such, the concept of *social esteem* and *economies of esteem* (Brennan & Pettit, 2004) became central to the analysis of this interview data (see Chapter 7). In contrast, interviewees from more modest backgrounds frequently introduced the notion of *shame* into the interview, expressing that they experienced this emotion when confronted with French. As such, how affect shapes behavior and maintains macro-level social practice (Elias, 1939/2012), like

popular resistance to MTE, became central to the analysis of that part of the interview data (see Chapter 6).

There are two key limitations to this separation of my participants which are discussed below. First, this binary division may not be sufficiently detailed, and more subtle sub-categories could provide additional information about how linguistic exclusion is experienced and understood in Haiti. For example, not all my non-elite participants felt bothered by the Haitian linguistic situation (see the Limitations section of Chapter 6). This notably included two middle-aged men from a seaside community. This may be due to the particularities of their age, profession, and geographic location. Seemingly content to work as handymen and fishermen in this rural village, they were seldom directly confronted with French gatekeeping. The salient challenge of their lives at this stage was a decrease in tourism resulting from Haiti's current instability. On the other hand, a younger man from this very same community – pseudonymized as Félix – voiced how not knowing French makes him feel trapped socially, professionally, and economically. In general, the "non-elite group" is quite broad and covers a wide range of people from different backgrounds, including both individuals who only completed 3rd grade and individuals who have completed some tertiary education. Such heterogeneity is not only an issue for this group. Members of the "elite group" also expressed that political elites from lower- or middle-class backgrounds may "need" French more, as they are more insecure about their class and social position (see Chapter 7). Future studies with larger samples could reveal additional insights into how more nuanced demographic characteristics influence the experience of and perspectives on language-based exclusion in Haiti.

The second limitation is that this thesis's separation of participants into elite/non-elite groups may be artificially creating or overstating a division between the Haitian people. While

there exist notable differences in the lifestyles and worldviews of Haitians from different social classes (Casimir, 2009; Marius, 2022), they nonetheless share many common experiences, spaces, institutions, understandings, and linguistic practices and values. Whether a Haitian is a millionaire or a street vendor, they likely share certain common understandings about what French use signals about a speaker and in what settings its use offers benefits. As such, while the distinction has analytical utility, it nonetheless risks depicting the sociological divide as absolute. To address this, Section 8.0 has been included to evaluate the entire cohort as a whole.

Securing interviews

One of the main challenges of interview research – particularly with elites – is gaining access and securing the interview (Goldstein, 2002; Hertz & Imber, 1995). Goldstein (2002) considers this to be more “art than science” which inevitably requires “a fair bit of luck” (pp. 670-671). Nonetheless, he recommends certain steps, such as clearly defining one’s sample frame and writing a clear letter explaining the research project. Ostrander (1995) advises starting at the top of a community of elites, as this individual can help secure access to others. Interviewers may furthermore wish to consider how their interviews benefit their elite participants, such as recognition of their importance by being selected to be interviewed (Herzog, 1995).

I secured my first interviews with upper-class Haitians through a contact who is a relative of a former Haitian president. In addition to this, I spent considerable time socializing in elite milieux, such as restaurants in Pétionville, an upper-class neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, and at the city’s country club. I was introduced to many upper-class Haitians in these settings and had the opportunity to explain that I was a researcher doing interviews. If an individual fit my inclusion criteria, I would invite them to participate and share additional information with them. If I wished

to interview an upper-class Haitian connected to a particular business or institution, I would share the project's information with their secretary and wait for a response.

Due to security concerns, access to non-elite Haitians was easier outside of Port-au-Prince. Contexts such as Jacmel and the fishing community that I visited had a greater range of casual, safe spaces where I could meet Haitians from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and discuss my research with them. These Haitians were generally amenable and interested in sharing their experiences regarding language.

Ultimately, my greatest asset for securing interviews was my background in Haiti and my ability to speak French and Kreyòl (see Chapter 3 on my Positionality).

Limitations of interview data

There are several considerations and potential limitations with interviews as a data type. Weis and Fine (2000) raise questions about the information that interviewees will share. Interviewees may be unable to express forces that oppress or suppress them, and may avoid sharing difficult experiences or stories. Ostrander (1995) emphasizes the ability of elite interviewees to guard secrets even while appearing to share private revelations. There may be a significant gap between what elites experience and believe versus the calculated rhetoric that they produce when speaking to an interviewer (Herzog, 1995). These concerns do not render all interview data collected from elites as compromised, but they require researchers to maintain a critical perspective on what is said.

An interview is an exchange between an interviewee and an inevitably non-neutral, active interviewer (J. Ritchie et al., 2014). A criticism of interview data is that it is unclear to what extent it can tell us anything about the world beyond this singular mutually constructed interaction (Silverman, 2011). These concerns, Ritchie et al. (2014) maintain, should be acknowledged but

not overstated, as interviews can be an effective way of penetrating how participants experience and construct their lives beyond this singular interaction. Through multiple interviews and careful analysis, shared patterns of experience and understanding can be discovered (Braun et al., 2019).

4.1 Methods of Analysis

Document Analysis

Rationale for using documents

Bowen (2009) identifies several advantages of documents as a data type, certain of which were especially relevant to this study. In terms of advantages, the majority of these documents were accessible in the public domain, making for an efficient, cost-effective, and wide-ranging dataset. Like all documents, the dataset entries are stable, unobtrusive, and nonreactive. While members of the Haitian Ministry of Education frequently come and go, may be unavailable for interviews, or adapt their communication based on their audience, the content of the policy documents remains fixed. Additionally, they provide a portrait of how Haitian language-in-education policy has changed, from the independence of Haiti in 1804, to the official legalization of Kreyòl in schools in 1979, and through to the rise of international development goals from the 1990s to today.

Procedure

Procedurally, document analysis consists of three steps: skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation (Bowen, 2009).

In this study, the initial skimming phase helped to identify relevant chapters or sections of large policy documents and to manage the overall size of the dataset by removing entries which

were not relevant to the study. The majority of the obtained documents were OCR ("searchable") PDFs. The skimming phase thus included word searches for key terms such as "langue", "français", "créole", "bilingue", "linguistique", etc.

These selected documents were then thoroughly examined, with important sections of text highlighted, recorded, and compared with other documents. For example, a note would be made of at what grade level the document called for Kreyòl to be removed as a language of instruction.

The documents were interpreted through two analytic perspectives. The first was with respect to modern pedagogical science (C. Benson, 2016; Heugh et al., 2007; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). Here the explicit policies of the documents were evaluated with respect to modern pedagogic science concerning approaches to bilingual curricula and second language teaching, notably in lower-income countries. The second interpretive perspective was through a critical lens on post-colonial linguistics (Bourdieu, 1991; DeGraff, 2005; Gourgues, 2014; Tollefson, 1991). This perspective emphasizes underlying social and historical contexts in which documents are produced as well as the hierarchies of power latent within them.

Limitations of documents as a data type

While important social artifacts, documents provide insufficient detail for understanding certain key dimensions of language policy, such as the agency, perspectives, and actions of stakeholders (Barakos & Unger, 2016; Bowen, 2009; Shohamy, 2006). The dataset cannot tell us about the day-to-day operations of the Haitian Ministry of Education, the processes and editorial decisions behind final drafts, the true circumstances surrounding their production, or actual language practices in Haitian schools (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). In addition to this, some widely cited and apparently key documents could either not be retrieved or were found only in highly

incomplete versions despite the research team's wide network of academics, stakeholders, and government officials who assisted in procuring documents.

Despite their limitations, documents are “social facts” which can tell us about the institutions, contexts, and ideologies that produced them (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004). While documents as a data type are restrictive in many senses, they can serve as testimony to how LEC is perpetuated and manifested in Haitian society. Thus, the content of such policy documents merits careful investigation.

Thematic Analysis

Rationale for using TA

Thematic analysis, or TA, serves as the method of analysis for the interview dataset of this dissertation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Srivastava & Thomson, 2009).

TA is a highly flexible qualitative method with a broad range of applications for analyzing different textual data types. Braun et al. (2019) emphasize its application for finding “pattern(s) of shared meaning” (p. 845) amongst interview and focus group participants, and thus it is often used to analyze transcriptions of interviews, corresponding to the data type of the interview-based papers (see Chapters 6 and 7).

The central question of this thesis – “How is LEC maintained in Haiti?” – methodologically influenced the research in different ways. The “how” nature of the question directed the analysis towards qualitative methodology, as the project seeks to “contribute to [the] description and interpretation of complex phenomena, developing and revising understanding” (Vaismoradi et al., 2016, p. 100). The study aimed to identify prevalent and pertinent phenomena occurring across and within the interviews. This includes not only what is explicitly said but also covert aspects of the data (e.g. French use not being justified and assumed as the natural choice for education,

business, etc.). Such phenomena correspond to TA's primary output, *themes* or "(i)nterpretive concepts or propositions that describe or explain aspects of the data" (Gale et al., 2013, p. 2).

The study was exploratory in nature, and while my background in social theory informed the initial design of the research project, its eventual data collection, analysis, and conclusions remained practically and theoretically flexible. For example, the outline for the semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C) was largely informed by the social theory of Bourdieu, seeking to explore Haiti's linguistic market, people's access to languages at home, how language is exchanged for other cultural, economic, and symbolic capital, etc. As the fieldwork and later analysis progressed, however, the importance of *affect* (Elias, 1939/2012) and *social esteem* (Brennan & Pettit, 2004) became apparent.

Here TA's high degree of flexibility was essential. With TA, a researcher may enter into a study with either a predetermined and fixed set of themes that they are committed to, or they may begin with a completely blank slate, or they may start with a rough set of themes which they actively revise as the study progresses (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gale et al., 2013; Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). There exist different step-by-step procedural approaches to conducting TA related to researchers' commitment to preconceived themes. They follow a generally similar outline but critically differ with respect to the *coding* stage and the origin of their themes.

Procedure of TA

Common to the different approaches, the first step is for the researcher(s) to delimit and build their dataset. Second, the researcher(s) should familiarize themselves with the dataset's contents. This process can include repeated listening to interview recordings, notetaking, word counts of key terms, and word searches to identify pertinent sections of the documents or

transcribed texts. From this, the dataset may be narrowed to entries that are relevant for further analysis.

The following *coding* step is where the various approaches begin to significantly differ. The *coding reliability* approach is typically aligned with (post)positivism. Here, researchers use existing literature to select a predetermined set of themes referred to as a “codebook.” Using this, multiple researchers will independently *code* the same dataset entries – that is, carefully read them and highlight bits of text that they feel correspond to the pre-established themes. If enough researchers independently connect the same excerpt of text to the same theme, then that code is considered to be *reliable* and representative of some objective and reproducible finding (Guest et al., 2012). More aligned with the constructionist paradigm, there is the *organic* approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006), whereby researchers do not use a codebook and engage in *open coding*. Here the researchers highlight any bit of text that they interpret as relevant to the research question and place it within a category that they label. Categories may be merged, split, hierarchically ordered, discarded and renamed as the coding continues. These organically created categories are then used to determine themes and subthemes. This approach emphasizes the active role of the researcher in generating themes, many of which may be covert and only identifiable given the interpretive lens of the researcher. Between these lie intermediate approaches (Gale et al., 2013), which employ a preliminary codebook that is subject to revision and have various degrees of commitment to reliability versus the subjective lens of the researcher.

For my analysis, I employed an intermediate approach between the coding reliability and organic methods. Just as the questions of my semi-structured interviews in Haiti were initially informed by Bourdieusian social theory but adapted based on the data I received from my

participants, so too did my data analysis change. I began with an initial set of themes in mind that I progressively adapted, notably as affect and social esteem became more central to the analysis.

The common final step of the different TA approaches is to produce the write-up of the findings.

Limitations of TA

Two of the main criticisms against TA are that it is procedurally poorly defined and lacks theoretical depth (Braun et al., 2019). The first criticism likely results from TA being an umbrella term for several closely related procedures. As discussed above, there exist fairly explicit guidelines for each (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gale et al., 2013; Guest et al., 2012), and thus it falls upon researchers to explicitly explain which procedure they followed.

With regard to theoretical depth, Braun et al. (2019) contend that TA is an “atheoretical” methodology, meaning that it is not bound to any particular theory. In this respect, TA is a flexible methodology that permits researchers to import appropriate theory that will inform and guide their analysis, allowing researchers to move beyond mere surface-level summaries of their dataset and reveal key underlying phenomena. As such, a particular instantiation of TA has as much or as little theoretical depth as its researchers have brought to it.

The following three chapters represent the thesis's three stand-alone papers. Each chapter addresses one of the project's core research questions:

I) *How has formal language-in-education policy contributed to maintaining Haiti's LEC?*

(Chapter 5)

II) *What is the role of affect, notably shame, in popular resistance to mother-tongue education in Haiti?* (Chapter 6)

III) *What role does social esteem play in maintaining Haitian elites' linguistic practices?*

(Chapter 7)

Chapter 5 (stand-alone paper #1): _____

Language Policy in Haitian Education: *A History of Conflict over the Use of Kreyòl as Language of Instruction*

William Scott Frager
University of Oxford

Michel DeGraff
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Haynes Miller
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Abstract

Language-in-education policy in Haiti has historically favored French as the *language of instruction* from the earliest levels of primary school. This has contributed to preventing most children from the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking majority from receiving a quality education, finishing primary school, and accessing the means for socioeconomic progress. This article aims to inform stakeholders on the history and challenges surrounding Kreyòl as *language of instruction* (LOI). Through an analysis of publicly available documents, this article has two goals. First, it presents a historical overview of Haitian language-in-education policy from 1804 to 2022. Second, it provides a critical evaluation of the documents' contents, focusing on policy from 1979 onwards, as this was the year Kreyòl was first officially permitted as both LOI and *object of instruction* (OOI) and also marked the start of Haiti's most famous mother-tongue education initiative, the *Bernard Reform*. Our evaluation of these documents reveals that, despite the Bernard Reform frequently being cited and lauded in subsequent policy documents, its actual content is frequently misunderstood or misrepresented and used to promote opposing policies. In the subsequent decades, the Haitian Ministry of Education has tended to adopt *early-exit transitional* language policies (early transitions from Kreyòl to only French as LOI) that are known to fail (as opposed to more successful *additive* approaches, such as *mother-tongue-based multilingual education*). Furthermore, student success is often predicated on quickly achieving the unrealistic second-language-attainment goal of *balanced bilingualism*, favoring children from elite francophone households. The language attainment goal of the Bernard Reform, *functional bilingualism*, is better adapted to the Haitian context.

Introduction

Ever since Haiti became an independent country in 1804, French-dominant language-in-education policies have favored a small francophone elite and contributed to blocking the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking¹ majority from succeeding in early education and thus accessing subsequent academic and socioeconomic advancement (Hebblethwaite, 2012). This linguistic barrier that the majority face to accessing educational and professional opportunities contributes to the maintenance of Haiti's language-based hierarchy, or *linguistic elite closure* (DeGraff, 2016; Myers-Scotton, 1993). At the end of the 1970s, Haiti entered a new phase in its education policy when the Haitian parliament overturned a ban on the use of Kreyòl in school by legalizing the language as both *object of instruction* (OOI) and *language of instruction* (LOI) (Haitian Government, 1979). This Law of September 18, 1979 opened the door for Haitian children from Kreyòl-monolingual communities to potentially access a quality education through instruction in their mother tongue. The opportunity was seized by the policies and decrees made in 1982 by Minister of Education Joseph C. Bernard. Since then, Haitian language-in-education policy has largely been one of retrenchment with regard to the use of Kreyòl, offering vague guidance for classroom practice, ill-conceived academic targets, misrepresentations of past pro-Kreyòl legislation, and disregard for the advice of education experts. These policy failures have occurred despite the fact that over the last four decades both the Haitian government and supranational development agencies have made explicit commitments to provide all Haitian children with a quality education through initiatives such as the *Education for All* program of the 1990s, the *Millennium Development Goals* from 2000 through 2015, and the current *Sustainable Development Goals* (UN, 2008, 2016; UNESCO, 1990, 2000; UNESCO et al., 2015). As presaged by the Bernard Reform, these documents and commitments recognize that in order to achieve the

¹ Also commonly referred to as “Haitian Creole”; in this article, we adopt the Kreyòl spelling of the language.

goal of universal quality education, “language policies to address exclusion” are needed and “teaching and learning in the first or home language should be encouraged” (UNESCO et al., 2015, pp. 32, 37).

In the past few years, the Haitian Ministry of Education has proposed and initiated the strongest pro-Kreyòl education policy since Bernard, notably since the reinstatement of Nesmy Manigat as Minister of Education, who initially served in this role from 2014 to 2015 and then again from November 2021 to the time of writing this. Since then the ministry has worked to expand the role of Kreyòl in primary education,² although how successful and how far these projects will go remains to be seen.

The current situation is extremely dynamic, and there are many opportunities and challenges. This article reviews key language-in-education documents, places them in historical context, and discusses their LOI policies in order to explore how Kreyòl MTE has been formally presented, advanced, or undermined in a country which has ostensibly committed to providing quality education for all.

Following the Methodology section below, this article is divided into three parts. In Part I, we summarize policy from Haiti's 1804 independence through 1979, when Kreyòl was officially legalized as both a language and object of instruction in Haitian schools. In Part II, we consider major education-policy documents starting from the pro-Kreyòl reform of Minister of Education Joseph C. Bernard (1979–1982) through November 2022. In Part III, we then discuss our most significant findings from the analysis of the policy documents. These are:

² In February 2022, the Ministry announced that the state would finance only textbooks in Kreyòl for grades 1 to 4 (Sénat, 2022). The Ministry also announced its *Liv Inik* initiative, which aims to publish and pilot a unique set of textbooks for the first two grades of the fundamental school (Manigat, 2023). These textbooks are intended to be entirely in Kreyòl, except for the content that is designed for the teaching of French.

1. From a long-term perspective, the role of Kreyòl in the Haitian education system has made significant gains. Kreyòl is now recognized, at least on paper, as a perfectly normal language and as the primary means of communication of the Haitian people – the one single language that unites all Haitians together (Article 5, Constitution of 1987). It has entered into the Haitian school system as its own separate academic subject, although what status it should have as a LOI for core subjects is still debated.
2. Haiti's most famous pro-Kreyòl LOI policy initiative, the Bernard Reform (1979–1982), has been so completely mischaracterized or misinterpreted that it is frequently used to justify French-dominant LOI policies which directly oppose its actual rationale and objectives.
3. The innocuous-sounding language attainment goal of *balanced bilingualism*, which is adopted by many Haitian policy documents, greatly favors children of the francophone elite. Aligning with the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1970, 1964), Haiti's elite children obtain the academically valuable linguistic capital of French in their homes. On the other hand, Haiti's monolingual children have no such extracurricular access to French and seldom have teachers who are themselves highly fluent. If the school system considers perfectly "balanced bilingual" children to be the objective, this will contribute to the disproportional success of elite children and the reproduction of Haiti's inequitable social hierarchy.
4. *Subtractive early-exit transitional* language policies from Kreyòl to French, like that adopted by the Haitian government in its 2021 *Cadre d'Orientation Curriculaire* (COC) document (MENFP, 2021), contribute to the academic failure of Haitian children from Kreyòl-speaking communities.

We furthermore discuss how modern studies on the science of learning and on second-language acquisition continue to support the basic rationale of the 1982 Bernard Reform, which proposed an additive language policy (i.e., *mother-tongue-based multilingual education*) with the ambitious but achievable goal of graduating *functionally* bilingual students. Such approaches offer many benefits for improving general learning outcomes, increasing the successful learning of second languages such as French, and establishing a school system that celebrates and validates Haitian identity.

Methodology and Analysis

This research project procedurally followed the process of *document analysis* as described by Bowen (2009). The project began with defining, delimiting, and assembling a dataset of Haitian language-in-education policy documents. These consisted of constitutions, laws, decrees, diagnostic reports, reform plans, and curriculum proposals ranging from 1804 to 2022. All the documents were intended for the public. Particular emphasis was given to documents from 1979 onward, as this was the year that Kreyòl became officially permitted to be taught and used in Haitian schools (Haitian Government, 1979).

The documents were all either produced by the Haitian government, although at times in partnership with other organizations (e.g. UNESCO), or were reports contracted by the government to third parties (e.g. think tanks, education experts, etc.). The motivation for this was to guarantee that the Haitian state was somehow invested in and aware of the documents, as opposed to documents produced independently by academics or NGOs. Over 60 documents in total were reviewed. Approximately 20 documents contained passages deemed highly relevant to

Haitian language-in-education policy and were selected for further analysis. These documents were then carefully reviewed, with key citations being selected and coded into thematic groupings.

Once pertinent trends and commonalities across the documents were uncovered, the dataset was then analyzed with respect to modern pedagogical science on language of instruction policy (Benson, 2016; Heugh et al., 2007; Ouane & Glanz, 2011) and through a critical approach to post-colonial linguistics (Bourdieu, 1991; DeGraff, 2005; Gourgues, 2014; Tollefson, 1991). The latter notably emphasizes not just the surface-level content of the documents (i.e. what is explicitly written in them) but rather considers the underlying social and historical context in which documents are produced as well as the power hierarchies latent within them.

As such, below we present the reviewed documents within their socio-historical context and then discuss both how their policies compare to modern pedagogical findings on balancing language of instruction and how these documents represent and perpetuate class-based linguistic hierarchies, i.e. linguistic elite closure (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

A study using only policy documents is unable to cover many relevant issues, including actual classroom practice, for which studies are limited. The dataset furthermore cannot tell us about the daily functioning of the Haitian Ministry of Education, including the various and potentially competing motivations, perspectives, and actions of the documents' creators (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004; Barakos & Unger, 2016; Bowen, 2009; Shohamy, 2006). Despite the research team's extensive network of academics, stakeholders, and government officials who assisted in obtaining documents, some documents could not be retrieved, while others were available only in highly incomplete versions.

Despite such limitations, documents remain important "social facts" and do inform us about the institutions, contexts, and ideologies that produced them (Atkinson & Coffey, 2004).

While policy documents do not provide a complete portrait of Haiti's language-in-education practices and stakeholders, we maintain that rational, coherent policy is an essential starting point. As such, we restrict the focus here to the history and consequences of formal language-in-education policy in Haiti.

Part I: Haitian Education before the Legalization of Kreyòl in 1979

1804 to early 1900s: *The invisibility of Kreyòl and its speakers*

In the years following Haiti's 1804 independence, the new government had to decide on the operational language of the state. For the powerful francophone elite, maintaining French in major public institutions such as schools and universities was the preferred choice. There were notable exceptions, such as Haiti's first head of state, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who would insist even before 1804 on the local population speaking their "own language" (i.e. Kreyòl) when addressing him (Descourtilz, 1809, p. 281). Another voice of support for Kreyòl amongst the elite came from Général Étienne Gérin, a contemporary of Dessalines. Gérin proposed that Kreyòl serve as the school system's LOI to allow broad access to education. To demonstrate the possibility of this goal, he wrote a Kreyòl grammar book intended for use in primary schools (Saint-Remy, 1864, p. 2). Ultimately, however, his initiative did not gain traction. Dessalines was assassinated on October 17, 1806, after which the country split into the Republic of Haiti under President Alexandre Pétion in the South and the Kingdom of Haiti under King Henry Christophe in the North. Both favored the use of European languages in education, with Pétion employing French and Christophe employing English. Following Christophe's death in 1820, Pétion's successor

Jean-Pierre Boyer reunited both halves of the country and established French as the dominant language of education throughout the national territory.

Amongst policymakers of the Haitian elite from this period, pro-Kreyòl voices such as those of Dessalines and Gérin were rare outliers. One of the most striking features of 19th-century Haitian language-in-education policy documents is the invisibility of Kreyòl and thus of the educational needs of the monolingual Haitian majority (Vincent & Lhérisson, 1895). The dominance of French was so extensive that it was not uncommon for documents to fail to specify language altogether as it could be taken for granted that the elite's tongue was the *de facto* language of education. For example, the Law of July 4th, 1820, required students entering public high school to know how “to read, to write, ... and the elements of grammar” without bothering to specify the language.³

This disregard for the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking majority was pushed even further in a memorandum dated August 11, 1822, written by the Commission of Public Instruction. Produced only months after the Haitian government took control over the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo to the East, the Commission envisaged a new shared Haitian identity whereby every citizen of the unified island would be able to freely communicate with each other:

³ Authors' translation into English. Original French: Article 21 – Aucun élève ne sera admis au lycée, s'il ne sait lire, écrire, les quatre premières règles de l'arithmétique et les éléments de la grammaire. Law of July 4th, 1820, as reproduced in Vincent & Lhérisson (1895, p. 126).

...As all Haitians have to communicate with each other, from one end of the island to the other, it is necessary for them to speak the same language in order to better identify their customs and habits. If by frequent and constant communication most of them manage to speak both languages [French and Spanish], it is none the less suitable that they can read and understand them perfectly. A professor of French at the University of Santo Domingo is, therefore, of the greatest urgency, as well as teachers from Lancasterian schools who can teach the language which we use in the various cities of the East.

Memorandum of August 11, 1822 as cited in Vincent & Lhérisson (1895, p. 422)⁴

Thus, the Commission sought French language teachers for the East and not Spanish language teachers for the West. Their plan was for the residents of the former Spanish colony to learn French – “the language which we use,” which would in turn permit citizens “from one end of the island to the other” to speak to each other. As the vast majority of the western population spoke only Kreyòl, it appears as though these individuals did not factor into the government’s vision of a new Haitian identity. The use of French in legal documents would furthermore become a tool to cement a social hierarchy whereby the country’s peasantry were persuaded to sign contracts without understanding their content and that would keep them working in neo-colonial plantation-like arrangements for the benefit of the French-speaking elite (Casimir, 2020, p. 175).

It is in the same vein that the elite’s language was presented as though it were the universal language of the entire Haitian population. For example, the 1830 and 1838 admission requirements to the public school of medicine required students to write correctly in “their language” and “the language in usage in the republic” (Vincent & Lhérisson, 1895, pp. 307, 327).

⁴ Authors’ translation into English. Original French: « ...Car tous les Haïtiens devant communiquer entre eux, d'un bout de l'île à l'autre, il leur est donc nécessaire de parler la même langue, afin de mieux identifier leurs mœurs et leurs habitudes. Si, par une communication fréquente et suivie, la plupart d'entre eux parviennent à parler les deux idiomes, il n'en est pas moins convenable qu'ils puissent les lire et les comprendre parfaitement. Un professeur de langue française à l'Université de Santo-Domingo est, en conséquence, de la plus grande urgence, ainsi que des maîtres d'écoles lancastériennes qui puissent enseigner dans les différentes villes de l'Est la langue dont nous nous servons. » Memorandum of August 11, 1822 as cited in Vincent & Lhérisson (1895, p. 422).

An education report from 1860 written by the Haitian Minister of Public Instruction, François-Elie Dubois, to President Geffrard reveals a different and more honest assessment of the sociolinguistic landscape of Haiti and also shows the elitist and discriminatory nature of the school system:

In general, we conceive primary school education very poorly in Haiti. Many people believe that it is a path to secondary school and that children leaving one of these establishments, where they are inculcated with a few notions of the French language, arithmetic, history and geography, should go to a high school to gain deep and solid knowledge. The intelligence of the elite alone should enjoy this privilege. If at the annual primary school exams we notice a few students apt to take the advanced courses of a high school, we will send them at the government's expense, as I have recently done for three such children.

Minister Dubois's 1860 Report to President Geffrard
Reproduced in Vincent and Lhérisson (1895, p. 445)⁵

The Minister's report reveals several important facts about Haiti at this time. First, many children were going into school without knowing French – although what they were speaking in their homes and communities was not identified. Second, these children would only learn “a few notions” of the French language from their schooling. Third, the only way for them to advance to secondary school was through performing well on school examinations which were undoubtedly conducted in French, and thus by implication the language would act as an academic barrier for the vast majority. Finally, the Minister felt free to express the view that this was an acceptable state of affairs, as only children of the elite should enjoy the “privilege” of education.

A significant factor in the invisibility of Kreyòl during this period was its uncertain and secondary ontological status with respect to French. A prevailing belief at the time was that Kreyòl

⁵ Authors' translation into English. Original French: En général, on conçoit fort mal, en Haïti, l'instruction primaire : beaucoup de personnes croient qu'elle est un acheminement à l'enseignement secondaire et que les enfants, au sortir d'un de ces établissements où on leur a inculqué quelques notions de langue française, d'arithmétique, d'histoire et de géographie, doivent passer dans un Lycée pour y acquérir de profondes et solides connaissances. Les intelligences d'élite seules doivent jouir de ce privilège. Si, aux examens annuels des écoles primaires, on remarque quelques élèves aptes à suivre les cours supérieurs d'un Lycée, on les y enverra aux frais du Gouvernement, ainsi que je viens de le faire récemment pour trois de ces enfants.

Report of François-Elie Dubois as cited in Vincent and Lhérisson (1895, p. 445).

should be understood as merely a *broken* or *inferior* form of French (DeGraff, 2005). Larousse (1869) defines “créole” in its linguistic sense as “corrupted French spoken by the inhabitants of current and former French American colonies” (p. 490).⁶ Such pejorative assessments of languages named “creoles” are unfortunately still all too common in even modern linguistic discourse (DeGraff, 2005).

Complementing the perception of Kreyòl as a lesser and corrupted variety of French, most Haitian intellectuals of the 19th century and early 20th century sought to prove Haiti’s worth through the mimicry of European artistic expression and culture (Robertshaw, 2019b). As such, they sought to minimize the significance of African influences on the Haitian people and their linguistic production. Intellectuals were thus inclined to insist that “this country speaks French” (Delorme, 1870, p. 183) or to insist on the close proximity between Kreyòl and French. For example, the Haitian diplomat, lawyer and author Dantès Bellegarde (1934) opined that Kreyòl differed from French only with respect to pronunciation and certain meanings of words, ignoring their vastly different grammatical systems:

When you have arrived in Port-au-Prince, you will hear French sounds ringing in your ears, which might surprise you: there are still so many people in France who do not know that French is the national language of Haitians! The porters who will rush around you to take your luggage will speak to you in a language that you will not immediately understand. But pay attention: you will soon realize that this language is a simple patois made up almost entirely of French words altered in their meaning or only in their pronunciation. Kreyòl – as we call it – is closer to French than some patois in France. (p. 12)⁷

⁶ Authors’ translation into English. Original French: “Français corrompu que parlent les habitants des colonies françaises d’Amérique anciennes ou actuelles” (Larousse, 1869, p. 490).

⁷ Authors’ translation into English. Original French: “Quand vous aurez débarqué à Port-au-Prince, vous entendrez retentir à vos oreilles des sons français, et vous en serez peut-être étonnés : il y a encore tant de gens en France à ignorer que la langue française est la langue nationale des Haïtiens ! Les portefaix qui se hâteront autour de vous pour vous prendre vos bagages vous parleront un langage que vous ne comprendrez pas tout de suite. Mais prêtez-y quelque attention : vous ne tarderez pas à vous apercevoir que ce langage est un simple patois, formé presque entièrement de mots français dont le sens ou seulement la prononciation a été altérée. Le créole – comme nous l'appelons – est plus proche du français que certains patois de France.” (Bellegarde, 1934, p. 12).

If Kreyòl is accepted to be an approximative and “lesser” version of French, then it would follow that it is French that should be the language of education as it will be both quickly assimilated and allow the students to “improve” their linguistic production. As we will see below, the earliest legislation that sought to expand Kreyòl’s role in education insisted not only on it being the sole means of communication of the Haitian majority but also on it being a language in its own right (Haitian Government, 1979, 1987).

1915-1934 Hegemony Shaken: *Reactions to the English of the US Occupation*

For the first century following Haitian independence, the political, economic, and formal institutional domination of the Haitian elite and the French language over the monolingual Kreyòl-speaking majority was firmly secure.⁸ As such, there was no need to officialize the language of privilege in any form of legislation. During this period French served as the *de facto* language of all formal institutions, whereas Kreyòl officially did not exist in Haitian policy.

In the early 20th century, however, political upheaval would rattle both the political and linguistic order of the country. Between 1911 and 1915, Haiti’s head of state changed seven times, and on July 28th, 1915, US marines began what would ultimately become a nineteen-year occupation (Heinl et al., 2005). Ostensibly, the US government’s mission was to bring stability to the country. In actuality, they were concerned by imperial Germany’s growing commercial and military interest in Haiti – an act of European expansionism inconsistent with the enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine. During the two decades that followed, the United States faced and violently

⁸ Apart from a handful of poems, political communiqués intended for the general population, and Georges Sylvain’s collection of fables in Kreyòl (1901), French dominated early written production in Haiti. There was, however, one notable exception to this rule at the turn of the 20th century. From 1901 to 1908, a small group of Haitian authors known as the *École Nationale* gained notoriety for critiquing the country’s sociolinguistic situation and for incorporating Kreyòl into their work. Its core members included Frédéric Marcelin, Justin Lhérisson, Fernand Hibbert and Antoine Innocent. However, the cultural and political momentum that the movement may have been gaining was halted by the political instability of the early 20th century and, then, by the US Occupation (Robertshaw, 2019b).

suppressed armed popular resistance from Haitian militias, never gaining the support of either the elite or the general population. The US troops ultimately withdrew on August 1, 1934.

This occupation influenced the shape of Haiti's sociolinguistic landscape in several ways. Foremost, in an effort to win over the elite and allay fears that French might be supplanted by English, the elite's language was constitutionally "officialized" for the first time:

French is the official language. Its use is obligatory in administrative and judicial matters. – Haitian Constitution of 1918, Article 23 (Haitian Government, 1918)

The occupation did, however, expose the marginalization of the monolingual majority to the eye of critical foreign observers. James W. Johnson, an African American diplomat, educator and early civil rights activist, traveled through occupied Haiti and summarized the linguistic situation as follows:

The upper Haitian class, approximately 500,000, speak and know French, while the masses, probably more than 2,000,000, speak only Creole. Haitian Creole is grammatically constructed, but has not to any general extent been reduced to writing. Therefore, these masses have no means of receiving or communicating thoughts through the written word. They have no books to read. They cannot read the newspapers. The children of the masses study French for a few years in school, but it never becomes their every-day language. In order to abolish Haitian illiteracy, Creole must be made a printed as well as a spoken language. The failure to undertake this problem is the worst indictment against the Haitian Government.
James W. Johnson (1920, p. 30)

In order to communicate with the general population, the US marines created some of the earliest grammatical descriptions and instructional books for Kreyòl. As no official orthography had been developed, Kreyòl words were written using a mix of French spellings and phonetic approximations (Gendarmerie d'Haïti & The Service Medical, 1921).

At the same time, the US troops exhibited racism towards Haitians from all walks of life, which in turn led to a wave of nationalist discourse and writing amongst Haitian intellectuals (Y. Alexis, 2021). In order to defend their homeland from this foreign invader, these writers first had

to determine exactly what it was that they were defending. What was the Haitian identity and culture that was under threat? What did it mean to be Haitian?

Starting in the 1920s, the *Indigenist School* adopted the rural peasants' culture and Kreyòl language as national symbols to rally the people against the occupation. Then, in the larger Négritude movement of the 1930s, authors and intellectuals of this period focused on themes of anti-colonialism and transnational black identity (Nzengou-Tayo, 2010). Among Haiti's earliest Kreyòl-language proponents and authors, we find Georges Sylvain (1866-1925), Félix Morisseau-Leroy (1912-1998), and Jacques Stephen Alexis (1922-1961).⁹ The pro-Kreyòl sentiment and advocacy of these intellectuals would continue for decades after the departure of the US soldiers.

⁹ Georges Sylvain (1901, p. 8), authors' translation: "I am readily inclined to believe that the day when, through the recognition of a certain number of good works, Kreyòl will have a place in our primary schools, rural and urban, the problem of popular instruction in Haiti will be quite close to being resolved."

Original French: "J'inclinerais volontiers à penser que le jour où, par l'acquis d'un certain nombre d'oeuvres fortes, le créole aura droit de cité dans nos écoles primaires, rurales et urbaines, le problème de l'instruction populaire à Haïti sera bien près d'être résolu."

Jacques Stephen Alexis (1956/2002, pp. 110–111), authors' translation: "We in fact believe that it is a duty to teach the Haitian people to read in their mother tongue, Kreyòl, and that we should not continue to commit the foolishness that has ruined public education efforts for a hundred and fifty years – that is, to stubbornly persist in teaching illiterate individuals to read in a language that is foreign to them, despite the historical affinity."

Original French: "Nous pensons en effet que c'est un devoir d'enseigner au peuple haïtien à lire dans sa langue maternelle créole et que nous ne devons pas continuer à commettre la sottise qui a ruiné pendant cent cinquante ans les efforts d'instruction publique, à savoir s'entêter à apprendre à lire aux illettrés dans une langue pour eux étrangère malgré le cousinage."

1940s through 1960s: *Kreyòl makes its first appearance in policy as international development and literacy campaigns take off*

After the end of the US occupation, French persisted as the sole official language. The mid-20th century, however, saw a continual exchange between Haitians and foreign actors that would lead to the first attempts at a standardized written Kreyòl.

In the 1940s, an Irish pastor by the name of Ormonde McConnell partnered with US missionary Frank Laubach to create a phonemic orthography for Kreyòl that would be easy for people to learn and use (Govain, 2014). The Haitian elite, however, showed disdain towards the McConnell-Laubach spelling system, viewing it as too “Anglo-American,” but failed to supplant it with a more French-inspired alternative.

While McConnell’s intent was to spread the gospel, the international development agencies formed after WWII also took an interest in written Kreyòl as they had identified literacy to be one of their primary education targets. In 1947, less than two years after its creation, UNESCO launched its first pilot project in “fundamental education” – a program including “some sort of instruction in basic literacy skills” in order to create “practical social improvements” (UNESCO, 1949, 1953; Watras, 2010, pp. 220–221). The chosen target was the Marbial Valley in the Sud-Est Department of Haiti. The project involved a Kreyòl-based education program that would lead to eventual French acquisition. The effort was hampered by disagreements with the country’s elite regarding the spelling system, with an ongoing debate over whether Kreyòl should be given a phonemic spelling developed with the intention to accelerate literacy acquisition or a French-based spelling intended to serve as an initial step towards a subsequent transition to the country’s

language of privilege (Lundahl, 2015). The project terminated after a few years before any definitive consensus was reached on how Kreyòl should be written.¹⁰

In 1957, a medical doctor named François Duvalier became president. This same year, after one hundred and fifty years of invisibility in major policy documents, Kreyòl made its first appearance in a major legal document – in the Haitian Constitution of December 19th, 1957:

Article 35

French is the official language. Its use is compulsory in public services. The law will determine the cases and the conditions in which the use of Kreyòl will be allowed and even recommended to safeguard the material and moral interests of citizens who do not sufficiently know the French language.¹¹

– Haitian Constitution of 1957 (Haitian Government, 1957)

Though in several respects quite conservative, this Constitution broke from tradition, not only by explicitly mentioning Kreyòl, but also by acknowledging that French is not the universal language of the entire Haitian population. The Constitution justifies its modest policy of allowing future laws to allow or even recommend Kreyòl as a protection of the “material and moral interests” of those who do not speak French. Although the Constitution is unclear about who these people are that are potentially harmed by the obligatory use of French and what portion of the population they represent, the inclusion of this article seems to represent a concession to the Haitian people by François Duvalier. Going even further, Duvalier initially proposed a literacy campaign that would start with Kreyòl, although this project never came to fruition (Robertshaw, 2019a). In spite of such apparent pro-Kreyòl initiatives, these relatively progressive policies were blatantly contradicted by other legal actions, such as Duvalier’s *Code rural* which enforced the exclusive use of French in all work contracts. This is the very use of French that, according to

¹⁰ For more on the debate surrounding Kreyòl orthography, see Schieffelin and Doucet (1994).

¹¹ Authors’ translation into English. Original French: Article 35. Le français est la langue officielle. Son emploi est obligatoire dans les services publics. Néanmoins, la loi détermine les cas et conditions dans lesquels l’usage du créole est permis et même recommandé pour la sauvegarde des intérêts matériels et moraux des citoyens qui ne connaissent pas suffisamment la langue française.

Article 35 of the 1957 Constitution, would constitute a threat to “the material and moral interests” of monolingual Kreyòl speakers who need Kreyòl as a “safeguard.”¹² Duvalier soon became an oppressive dictator, and many Haitian intellectuals and pro-democracy advocates who supported the Kreyòl movement were forced to flee the country (Robertshaw, 2019a).¹³

In spite of Duvalier’s domestic oppression, Kreyòl’s place in education made certain gains. In 1961, Haiti participated in the Addis Ababa UNESCO conference, which served as an inspiration for many post-colonial nations, particularly in Africa, to promote the cause of universal, mother-tongue education (Locher, 2010, p. 178). This same year, the Haitian government launched the National Office of Community Education or ONEC,¹⁴ and in 1969 the National Office of Literacy and Community Action or ONAAC¹⁵ (Lundahl, 2015, pp. 477–480). The goal of these two government agencies was to increase literacy (i.e. Kreyòl literacy) in both children and adults. The programs made some impact, increasing the countrywide literacy rate from 10 percent to 20 percent by 1971 (Lundahl, 2015, p. 477). At the same time, such initiatives elicited questions regarding the usefulness of Kreyòl literacy as there was very little written in the language at the time and the education system still prioritized French as the language of instruction at all levels.

In 1964, the government under Duvalier adopted a new constitution allowing him to be president for life (Haitian Government, 1964). This was then amended in 1971 to allow his young son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, to assume power after him. These constitutions maintained the thirty-fifth article that banned Kreyòl in public services unless specified by further law.

¹² This use of French against the interests of the population recalls the use of French in Boyer’s *Code rural* against the peasantry. In both Boyer’s and Duvalier’s rural codes, French serves the State against the Nation (cf. Trouillot (1990), Casimir (2020)).

¹³ Fleeing the dictatorship, the Haitian diaspora would come to play a critical role in the Kreyòl movement. Several Haitian scholars made the language the subject of their doctoral studies abroad, and the language became both a means of maintaining a Haitian identity and a tool of popular resistance. See Robertshaw (2019a) for further analysis as to how the Duvaliers unintentionally contributed to the Kreyòl movement.

¹⁴ In French: Office National d’Éducation Communautaire

¹⁵ In French: Office National d’Alphabétisation et d’Action Communautaire

1970 through 1979: *Internal and External Pressure for Language-in-Education Reform*

Jean-Claude Duvalier assumed power in 1971 and immediately worked to improve relationships with the United States, which began making significant financial contributions to the Haitian government (Prou, 2009; Robertshaw, 2019a). Under pressure to keep aid money flowing from the United States, a display of government effort to improve Haiti's abysmal academic record was called for. In 1972, the government's Ministry of Education, then called the Department of National Education (DEN),¹⁶ created the National Pedagogical Institute (IPN),¹⁷ whose task was to find ways to revamp the education system. During this period, there was an international wave of enthusiasm for language-in-education reform in many newly formed states which sought to break from their history as colonies of European empires. Notably, UNESCO's 1961 conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, led to stakeholders in many African nations advocating for universal, mother-tongue education (Locher, 2010, p. 178). In the same spirit, the IPN founded its own pilot primary school that used Kreyòl as the LOI. In the following years, the IPN developed Kreyòl training manuals, textbooks, and radio programming for distance learning (Prou, 2009). In 1979, the IPN presented an astute assessment of the rarity of spoken French, particularly as related to social class and urban/rural distinctions, and gave a strong critique of the impact of its use in schools for most Haitian children:

For the vast majority of Haitian children, Kreyòl, their mother tongue, is intimately associated with the affective, social, and physical experiences of early childhood and with the influences received from their family environment, particularly maternal. On the other hand, especially for rural areas and disadvantaged urban areas, contact with a second language such as French is infrequent, if not nonexistent. (...) The numerous failures observed in schooling during the first two years of primary education are partly linked to a linguistic factor, that of the direct use of French as language of instruction from the start of schooling: (...) The direct use of French does not emotionally motivate

¹⁶ In French: Département d'Éducation Nationale.

¹⁷ In French: Institut Pédagogique National.

the vast majority of children who have been immersed since birth in a Kreyòl-speaking environment which continually nourishes their emotional and social life.

IPN (1979, as cited in DEN, 1982b, pp. 38–39)¹⁸

In late 1979, Haiti and twenty other nations in the region committed to the Major Project in the Field of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (PROMEDLAC) (UNESCO, 2001). With a deadline set for the year 2000, member states committed to improving literacy rates by increasing the accessibility and efficiency of their respective education systems (Hadjadj, 2000). It is in this context that the Haitian government launched its most renowned language-in-education policy reform.

¹⁸ Original French: “Pour la grande majorité des enfants haïtiens le créole, langue maternelle, est intimement associé aux expériences affectives, sociales et physiques de la première enfance et aux influences reçues du milieu familial, en particulier celles du maternage. D'autre part, et principalement pour les zones rurales et les milieux urbains défavorisés, le contact avec une deuxième langue comme le français est peu fréquent, sinon inexistant. C'est donc le créole qui remplit le rôle nécessaire et fondamental du langage dans le développement mental de l'enfant jusqu'à l'âge où ce dernier doit entrer à l'école, c'est-à-dire entre 6 et 7 ans. . . . Les nombreux échecs constatés dans la scolarisation pendant les deux premières années de l'enseignement primaire sont liés en partie à un facteur linguistique, celui de l'utilisation directe du français comme langue instrument, dès le début de la scolarité: l'effort d'assimilation que l'enfant doit réaliser pour utiliser une langue méconnue, sinon inconnue, freine le développement des structures mentales opératoires, surtout si l'on tient compte d'une séparation des aspects cognitifs et affectifs du langage. Le français utilisé directement ne motive pas émotionnellement l'énorme majorité des enfants qui baignent depuis leur naissance dans un environnement créolophone qui alimente constamment leur vie affective et sociale.”

Part II: Haitian Education after the Legalization of Kreyòl in 1979

1979-1982: *The Bernard Reform*

From April 1979 to July 1982, Joseph C. Bernard served as the Haitian minister of education. This period is associated with efforts to radically overhaul the Haitian education system and the role of Kreyòl within it. The policies, documents, and decrees issued during this time have become synonymous with Joseph C. Bernard and are popularly referred to as the *Bernard Reform* (Alexandre, 2013; Hadjadj, 2000; Prou, 2009). As discussed below, there is a great deal of confusion regarding the policies and documents that constitute this reform. To clearly understand it, there are three major policy documents that should be reviewed.

The first of these is the Law of September 18, 1979 (Haitian Government, 1979). Passed by the Haitian parliament, the first article of this law permitted the use of Kreyòl in schools as both LOI and OOI. Though a seemingly modest first step, this measure was required given the standing constitutional ban on Kreyòl in all public services unless otherwise stated by law. The document justified itself by claiming Kreyòl to be the “common language spoken by 90 percent of the Haitian population” (Article 1). While this is inaccurate, as Kreyòl is widely recognized to be known and spoken by *all* Haitians, it is the first major policy document in Haitian history to acknowledge Kreyòl as having an extensive presence in Haitian society and to indirectly suggest that French is the “spoken common language” of only a small minority of the population. The law marked a significant departure from the common nineteenth-century misrepresentation of French as the universal language of the Haitian people (Vincent & Lhérisson, 1895).

The second article of this law strangely legislates Kreyòl to have characteristics that are common to any language: “Kreyòl, as a spoken and written language, is constituted of sounds and

signs corresponding to consonants, vowels, semi-consonants and semi-vowels.”¹⁹ Why the Haitian government felt it necessary to mandate this by law is unclear, though it was perhaps a response to the pervasive belief that Kreyòl is not a language but rather a (broken) dialect of French (DeGraff, 2005).

The second key document is the *Décret organisant le système éducatif haïtien en vue d’offrir des chances égales à tous et de refléter la culture haïtienne*, or more simply, the Decree of March 30, 1982 (DEN, 1982a). In terms of policy reform, this decree is the most significant of Bernard’s tenure. It called for restructuring grade school into a ten-year obligatory program called Fundamental Education, which would be followed by three years of secondary school (Articles 21, 22). In the Fundamental Education program, Kreyòl was mandated to be both OOI and LOI from first through tenth grade. French was only to be introduced as a co-LOI in sixth grade (Article 29).²⁰ The document also expressed a need to both develop practical and culturally relevant school content, and to shift away from memorization to active learning (Article 4).

The third and final key document of the Bernard Reform period is *La Réforme Educative – Eléments d’information* (DEN, 1982b), which elaborated on the motivations, justifications, and goals of the Decree of March 30. Though now four decades old, its arguments for instruction in the mother tongue closely resemble those made by modern advocates. These include:

¹⁹ Original French: “Le créole, en tant que langue parlée et écrite, est constitué de sons, de signes correspondant à des consonnes, des voyelles, des semi-consonnes et des semivoyelles.”

²⁰ Article 29 states: “Le Créole est langue d’enseignement et langue enseignée tout au long de l’École Fondamentale. Le Français est langue enseignée tout au long de l’École Fondamentale, et langue d’enseignement à partir de la 6ème année” (DEN, 1982a).

- 1) Education systems should be based on science, not preconceived beliefs.^{21 22}
- 2) Haiti's education system should promote the nation's own culture and identity.²³
- 3) The current French-dominant approach causes many problems.^{24 25}
- 4) French as a second language will be learned better if Kreyòl is used as the main LOI.²⁶

The language-attainment goal of the Bernard Reform was clear: by the start of eighth grade, make Haitian students *functionally bilingual* in French (DEN, 1982b, p. 50) – that is, students should be able to use this second language in specific domains or while discussing particular topics.

1983–1987: *Constitutional Progress as a Dictatorship Comes Undone*

Bernard faced immediate political backlash for the pro-Kreyòl aspect of the reform, notably from Michèle Bennett Duvalier, the dictator's wife of elite social origins (Alexandre, 2013). Bernard was removed from office on July 12, 1982, and replaced with Frank Saint Victor, a

²¹ Original French: “Les rares solutions proposées à certains problèmes sont souvent des vues de l'esprit et non le résultat de patientes recherches.”

²² Original French: “Là encore, il s'agit d'un choix réfléchi, dicté non par le simple bon sens, mais découlant d'enquêtes, de recherches, d'analyses sur les causes de la déperdition scolaire à travers le monde. Il est nettement démontré qu'aucun enseignement n'est plus efficace et ne laisse de traces plus profondes que celui qui passe par la langue maternelle.”

²³ Original French: “L'enseignement aura pour base essentielle Haiti. Apporter à l'haitien la culture telle qu'elle est distribuée dans les pays industrialisés, c'est lui faire perdre conscience de son identité, lui faire acquérir la conscience internationale avant de l'éveiller à la conscience de soi.”

²⁴ Original French: “Les nombreux échecs constatés dans la scolarisation pendant les deux premières années de l'enseignement primaire sont liés en partie à un facteur linguistique, celui de l'utilisation directe du français comme langue instrument, dès le début de la scolarité.”

²⁵ Original French: “Une méthodologie pédagogique basée sur des attitudes traditionnelles négatives comme l'autoritarisme du maître, la passivité de l'élève, la mémorisation de connaissances dont on sait qu'elles s'oublient très vite.”

²⁶ Original French: “En revanche, l'introduction du créole dans notre enseignement ne signifie pas et n'implique aucunement l'exclusion du français. Au contraire, dans l'esprit de la réforme en cours, l'acquisition préalable des mécanismes opératoires de la lecture et de l'écriture par l'intermédiaire de la langue maternelle devrait faciliter l'apprentissage du français écrit.”

classical Latinist and former teacher of the first lady.²⁷ A moratorium was issued ceasing all reform activities, and the DEN was restructured into the National Education Ministry of Youth and Sports (MENJS)²⁸ (Hadjadj, 2000; Prou, 2009).

Even with the pushback against Bernard's mother-tongue reform, Kreyòl made some advances during this time. On August 27, 1983, the Duvalier government adopted a new constitution that gave the dictator the power to dissolve the Senate (Haitian Government, 1983, Articles 79 and 177) – a power which he immediately exercised (Heinl et al., 2005). Despite the largely antidemocratic nature of this constitution, it removed the general ban on Kreyòl in public services and added the following in Article 62: “The national languages are French and Kreyòl. French is the official language of the Republic” (Haitian Government, 1983).²⁹

Faced with a wave of popular resistance from the Haitian people, Jean-Claude Duvalier was forced to flee the country on January 29, 1986, and the nearly three-decade-long Duvalier dictatorship came to an end (Heinl et al., 2005). An interim government was put in place, and the parliament approved a new, pro-democratic constitution on March 29, 1987. This constitution, whose amended version³⁰ is still in use today, elevated Kreyòl's stature in policy in several respects.

First, it recognized the universality of Kreyòl in Haiti and declared Kreyòl to be co-official with French: “All Haitians are united by a common language: Kreyòl. Kreyòl and French are the

²⁷ Haiti in the 1980s would have a total of twelve ministers of education. See Wikipedia, “Liste des ministres haïtiens de l'Éducation” https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_des_ministres_ha%C3%AFtiens_de_l'%27%C3%89ducation.

²⁸ In French: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale de la Jeunesse et des Sports.

²⁹ Original French: “Les langues nationales sont le français et le créole. Le français tient lieu de langue officielle de la République d'Haïti.”

³⁰ It is worth noting that the 2011 amendments to the 1987 Constitution were published in French only, even though that very Constitution declared Kreyòl to be the sole language known to all Haitians and co-official with French. As such, these amendments to the Constitution violate that very Constitution.

official languages of the Republic” (Haitian Government, 1987, Article 5).³¹ Second, it required all public information be published in both Kreyòl and French: “The State has the obligation to use both Kreyòl and French to publicize in the oral, written and televised press all laws, orders, decrees, international agreements, treaties and conventions on everything affecting the national life, except for information concerning national security” (Article 40).³² Third, it called for a Kreyòl language academy – in the fashion of the Académie française – to promote the language: “A Haitian Academy shall be established to fix the Kreyòl language and enable it to develop scientifically and harmoniously” (Article 213).³³

The article requiring all state communications to be accessible in Kreyòl and French has never been respected and enforced; a quick review of current Haitian government websites and policy documents will reveal almost everything to be available only in French. As for the Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen (i.e., the Haitian Kreyòl Academy), it would have to wait nearly three decades to come into existence (Pierre, 2013).

Late 1980s: Bernard Reform's true policies covered and warped before implementation

Reform activities resumed in December 1987 after the fall of the dictatorship, but by then much of the enthusiasm for their linguistic aspects had been lost (Prou, 2009). Despite the leap forward made by the 1987 Constitution, many members of the Haitian state felt Bernard’s pro-Kreyòl curriculum to be too extreme and sought to roll back the language’s role in the new Fundamental Education program (Alexandre, 2013). Within this context, the Ministry of

³¹ Original French: “Tous les Haïtiens sont unis par une Langue commune: le Créole. Le Créole et le Français sont les langues officielles de la République.”

³² Original French: “Obligation est faite à l’État de donner publicité par voie de presse parlée, écrite et télévisée, en langues créole et française, aux lois, arrêtés, décrets, accords internationaux, traités, conventions, à tout ce qui touche la vie nationale, exception faite pour les informations relevant de la sécurité nationale.”

³³ Original French: “Une Académie haïtienne est instituée en vue de fixer la langue créole et de permettre son développement scientifique et harmonieux.”

Education issued the Decree of December 1, 1988,³⁴ which expressed the aim “to define for the Haitian school a curriculum in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Reform of the Educational System [i.e., Bernard Reform] to establish Fundamental Education” (as reproduced in Fombrun (1989)).³⁵ This decree states that the “aims” and “objectives” of the Bernard Reform include “the necessity of the promotion of a balanced and functional bilingualism” (Fombrun, 1989, p. 75).³⁶ Though it may appear subtle, there is a critical difference between this policy and that of the original Bernard Reform. As mentioned above, the *Réforme éducative* document defined the language-attainment goal of the Bernard Reform as “*functional* bilingualism” by the start of eighth grade (DEN, 1982b, p. 50). The 1988 decree restates the reform’s goal as “balanced and functional bilingualism.” In our review of policy documents, this marks the first observed reference to “balanced bilingualism.”³⁷ The significance of the differences between these two language-learning goals is critically evaluated in the Discussion section below.

The December 1, 1988 decree made other significant changes to the Bernard Reform’s Fundamental Education program. In terms of structure, the program was shortened from ten to nine grade levels with secondary school consisting of four rather than three grade levels. The decree provided no details with regard to the LOI policy of the new school program, but announced a forthcoming set of curricular guides (“programmes détaillés”) that all schools would be required to follow.

Our review of subsequent policy documents reveals subtle and not-so-subtle inconsistencies across several LOI policies, all incorrectly attributed to the Bernard Reform (see

³⁴ This decree is often cited as the Decree of March 6, 1989; this was the date that it was promulgated in the official newspaper, *Le Moniteur*, over three months after it was passed by the Ministry of Education. It can be found reproduced in Fombrun (1989).

³⁵ Original French: “définir pour l’École Haïtienne un curriculum conforme aux finalités et aux objectifs de la Réforme du Système Éducatif instaurant l’Enseignement Fondamentale.”

³⁶ Original French: “la nécessité de la promotion d’un bilinguisme équilibré et fonctionnel.”

³⁷ In French: bilinguisme équilibré.

Discussion section). No clear policy with respect to Kreyòl as LOI was communicated or enforced when the reform was “universalized,” resulting in confusion among teachers and administrators (Saint-Germain, 1988). Kreyòl as OOI, however, was broadly and successfully introduced into schools (Prou, 2009). This movement was no doubt strengthened by the fact that Kreyòl became a subject of evaluation in the standardized national exams to take place in the sixth and ninth grades (Prou, 2009). Still, no uniform policy was put in place. A 1995 report on the state of education in Haiti noted that in order for the reform to be made “more acceptable to all,” schools were allowed “a greater flexibility in the introduction of Kreyòl (certain schools being authorized to introduce it from the 4th year instead of imposing it on everyone from the first year as planned)” (RTI, Academy for Educational Development, & Educat S.A., 1995, p. 30).³⁸ It is unclear whether this was referring to Kreyòl as LOI, as OOI, or both.

1990s and 2000s: *The School System Expands while Education in the Mother Tongue*

Flounders – Haitian schools pursue universality without quality

Three characteristics defined Haitian education policy in the 1990s and 2000s. First, international development organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and USAID began to have a larger direct financial, technical, and advisory role in shaping Haitian education policy (Hadjadj, 2000). In 1983, foreign aid given to Haitian education totaled less than \$9 million, whereas the annual average during the 1990s was \$17.9 million³⁹ (Hadjadj, 2000, p. 38). Second, access to basic education and the overall size of the school system rapidly expanded during this period, with net enrollment going from 22 percent of school-aged Haitian children in 1990 to 75 percent in

³⁸ Original French: “une plus grande flexibilité dans l’introduction du créole (certaines écoles étant autorisées à l’introduire à partir de la 4ème année au lieu de l’imposer à tous dès la première année comme prévu).”

³⁹ This figure excludes the three-year embargo on aid from 1991 to 1993, during which the government was run by a military junta (Hadjadj, 2000, p. 38).

2003 and 88 percent in 2011 (IHSI, 2009). Third, despite consultants and stakeholders flagging LOI policy as a fundamental problem of Haitian education (GTEF, 2010; ISOS, 2016; RTI et al., 1995), actual policy failed to address these concerns and provided only vague guidelines. As a result, an enlarged school system succeeded in reaching more children but too often failed to provide quality education due in part to the misalignment between LOI policy and the teachers' and children's linguistic abilities, resulting in what Yves Dejean (2006) called an "upside-down school in an upside-down country."⁴⁰

The Plan National d'Éducation 2004 Project

In 1990, Haiti participated in UNESCO's global conference on education in Jomtien, Thailand, and subsequently committed to the resulting World Declaration on Education and its corresponding *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs* (UNESCO, 1990). The main objectives of the program were to achieve universal enrollment for school-aged children by the year 2000, decrease repetition and dropout rates, and increase literacy rates in both children and adults – irrespective of the language of literacy (UNESCO, 1990, 2001). Similarly, in 1993 Haiti participated in the fifth *Major Project in the Field of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean* (PROMEDLAC V), a regional conference aiming to strengthen and expand education systems in Central and South America (UNESCO, 2001).

Progress in Haiti toward these internationally recognized goals to improve early education was compromised during this period by domestic political instability. After only a few months in office, Haiti's first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown on September 29, 1991 (Heinl et al., 2005). Despite the illegitimacy of the ensuing military-led

⁴⁰ This is the English translation of the Kreyòl title of Dejean's (2006) book *Yon lekòl tèt anba nan yon peyi tèt anba*.

government, in 1993 the Ministry of Education, with the support of USAID, UNESCO, and UNICEF, created the *Bureau Exécutif du Plan National d'Éducation* to elaborate a ten-year education reform plan, titled the *Plan National d'Éducation 2004* (RTI et al., 1995). The Research Triangle Institute (RTI) consultancy firm was selected to prepare an assessment of the education system and give recommendations for the reform (RTI et al., 1995).⁴¹

With respect to language-in-education issues, RTI acknowledged that Haitian teachers have an insufficient level of French to carry out the government-mandated curriculum. This was treated, however, as merely one aspect of teachers being generally undertrained: “Teacher training should include a strong dose of basic language skills, particularly in French” (RTI et al., 1995, p. 31).⁴² Other than this brief mention, language played no part in RTI’s eight general recommendations for the school system (RTI et al., 1995, pp. 71–75).

In October 1994 Aristide was reinstated as president, and in late January 1996 the government held an education conference consisting of several hundred Haitian and foreign stakeholders in Port-au-Prince (Prou, 2009; UNESCO, 2007). Titled the *États Généraux de l'Éducation*, the conference aimed to define principal areas of action for a new ten-year education plan. The participants identified language as a major point of reorientation for the education system, resolving: “The Kreyòl language should occupy a privileged place in education; it should be studied as a language and used as the language of instruction from pre-school through university” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 1).⁴³ This recommendation, which echoed the aspirations of the Bernard Reform, was, however, not incorporated into the subsequent major education plan, the

⁴¹ RTI subcontracted two additional firms: the Academy for Educational Development and Educat S.A. (RTI et al., 1995).

⁴² Original French: “la formation des maîtres devrait comporter une forte dose de connaissances linguistiques de base, notamment en français.”

⁴³ Original French: “La langue créole devrait occuper une place privilégiée dans l’enseignement; elle doit être étudiée en tant que langue et servir de langue d’enseignement du cycle préscolaire à l’université.”

Plan National d'Éducation et de Formation (PNEF) 1997–2007 (MENJS, 1998), whose authors refrained from offering any clarity whatsoever with regard to the country's language-in-education policy.⁴⁴

The 2000s: Millennium Development Goals and the *Stratégie nationale d'action pour l'éducation pour tous*

The year 2000 was historically significant for a couple of reasons. Following the expiration of the Jomtien Declaration, the UN launched both the 2000–2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Dakar Framework for Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2000). With respect to education, these again focused on “universal education” (MDG2) and literacy – irrespective of language. Consequently, all education projects sponsored by UN agencies were then oriented within this framework.

In Haiti, Aristide was once again elected president and the Ministry of Education was restructured into the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training (MENFP)⁴⁵ (Heinl et al., 2005). Aristide was ousted for a second time in 2004; after a period of political turmoil, elections were held, and René Préval was elected for a second presidential mandate from 2006 to 2011.

⁴⁴ In 1998, a law was drafted titled the *Avant-Projet de Loi Organique du MENJS*, proposing a policy similar to Bernard's Decree of March 30, 1982 (DEN, 1982a). It appears that this draft law was never passed, and it is unclear which actors within the MENJS were behind it. Its Article 3.2 is particularly noteworthy, as it requires not just Kreyòl-only education through grade 4 (the first cycle), but also Kreyòl to be co-LOI at *all* later levels of education:

La langue d'enseignement au niveau du premier cycle de l'École fondamentale est le CRÉOLE, langue maternelle commune de tous les Haïtiens.

Le FRANÇAIS, langue officielle de la République avec le CRÉOLE, est enseigné comme langue seconde dès la première année de l'école fondamentale et devient langue d'enseignement à parti de la 5ème de l'école fondamentale et aux autres niveaux du système éducatif.

Cependant aux fins d'une meilleure transmission de connaissances, le CRÉOLE reste langue d'enseignement à tous les niveaux du système éducatif.

L'enseignement de l'anglais et de l'espagnol sera renforcé et modernisé. (Accessed through UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning library)

⁴⁵ In French: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle.

In 2007, with the PNEF expiring, a new education plan was formulated by the Ministry with the technical and financial support of UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, titled *Stratégie nationale d'action pour l'éducation pour tous* (MENFP, 2007). Produced in the middle of the Millennium Development Goals' 2000–2015 mission to achieve universal education, the document states that it responds to an “obligation contracted by the Haitian state at the Dakar global education conference in April 2000” (MENFP, 2007, p. x).⁴⁶ Its authors call for a “balanced bilingualism approach” (MENFP, 2007, p. 95) to fundamental education with five points of action:

1. Elaborate a coherent language plan
2. Create a Haitian Kreyòl Academy
3. Train teachers in methods to teach both languages
4. Run experimental bilingual programs in the Haitian education system
5. Promote the production of adapted works.⁴⁷ (MENFP, 2007, pp. 95–97)

In February 2008, President Préval created by decree the Working Group on Education and Training (GTEF)⁴⁸ (GTEF, 2010). The mandate of the Working Group was to assess the education system and make recommendations directly to the Executive Branch (p. xxxi). Its first major report was commissioned after the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010, when it was tasked with producing a national education “pact” to address both the current crisis and longstanding structural inefficiencies. The resulting document, *Pour un pacte national pour l'éducation en Haïti–Rapport*

⁴⁶ Original French: “obligation contractée par l'État Haïtien au Forum Mondial de l'Éducation tenu à Dakar en avril 2000.”

⁴⁷ Original French: “Objectif stratégique 4 : Appliquer, au niveau du fondamental, une démarche de bilinguisme équilibré facilitant le développement des compétences linguistiques des élèves en créole et en français.”

“Action 1 : Élaboration d'un plan cohérent d'aménagement linguistique

Action 2 : Création d'une académie de la langue créole

Action 3 : Formation de tous les enseignants du fondamental aux méthodologies d'enseignement des deux langues

Action 4 : Expérimentation de programmes pilotes d'éducation bilingue dans le système scolaire haïtien.

Action 5 : Incitation à la production d'ouvrages répondant à la politique linguistique pour l'école haïtienne.”

⁴⁸ Acronym from the French name: Groupe de Travail sur l'Éducation et la Formation.

au Président de la République (GTEF, 2010), made several notable language-related recommendations. It recommended that Kreyòl be “privileged” as LOI through sixth grade and that French be taught as a second language (GTEF, 2010, p. xli). Returning to the language-attainment goal of the Bernard Reform, the document called for Haitian students to reach functional rather than balanced bilingualism in French, which it aimed to achieve by seventh grade (GTEF, 2010, p. xli).

Following the production of this document, the MENFP produced a five-year plan ostensibly based on the Working Group’s recommendations, titled the *Plan opérationnel 2010–2015 : Des Recommandations du groupe de travail sur l’éducation et la formation* (MENFP, 2011). Produced and endorsed during the presidency of Michel Martelly (2011–2016), this “operational plan” ignored the language-in-education recommendation of the GTEF. Particularly of note, the recommendation of “privileging” Kreyòl in the first six grades was rolled back to “set up a system for the balanced use of French and Kreyòl in fundamental 1 & 2 [i.e. grades 1 through 6]”⁴⁹ (MENFP, 2011, p. 68). Then it incorrectly claimed that the Bernard Reform mandated French as the sole language of instruction from seventh grade onward (MENFP, 2011, p. 36).

The mid-2010s marked a change in direction. In April 2014, the Ministry appointed Nesmy Manigat as its new minister of education. His tenure was characterized by certain steps to advance the role of Kreyòl in school.⁵⁰ For example, Manigat signed an *arrêté* calling for the creation of a partnership between MENFP and the MIT-Haiti Initiative (an “MENFP/MIT-Haiti Bureau”) in order to produce active-learning resources and methods for the teaching of science and mathematics in Kreyòl (MENFP, 2014). He also established a protocol agreement with the newly

⁴⁹ Original French: “Mettre en place un dispositif pour l’utilisation équilibrée du français et du créole dans le fondamental 1&2.”

⁵⁰ Initially Haitian minister of education from April 2014 to March 2016, Nesmy Manigat was reinstated in this post in November 2021 (Césaire, 2021).

formed Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen (AKA) (AKA & MENFP, 2015). This document called for the Ministry of Education to work with the AKA to generalize the use of Kreyòl as LOI at all levels of the education system (Article 6) and to promote the use of Kreyòl in classrooms, school curricula, textbooks, state exams, teacher training, MENFP’s administration and communications, etc. (Article 14).⁵¹ Additionally, the Ministry of Education at this time contracted two consultants, Marky Jean-Pierre and Darline Cothière, to analyze and make recommendations for language-in-education policy (Jean-Pierre & Cothière, 2016). Both recommended that Kreyòl should have a more significant role in early education.

Manigat was removed from office in March 2016. During the tenure of the ministers of education that immediately followed him, neither these pro-Kreyòl measures nor Jean-Pierre and Cothière’s recommendations were implemented or referenced in any major education documents. Instead, policy during this period reversed and Kreyòl’s official role in education was reduced.

2016-2021: *Kreyòl's use rolled back*

The ONAPE Studies and the Plan décennal d’éducation et de formation

On November 9, 2007, the Haitian parliament passed a law creating the National Office of Partnership in Education (ONAPE).⁵² The mandate of this “autonomous organism” was to coordinate exchanges and initiatives between state and non-state education actors (ONAPE, 2017, p. 15). It was not until June 2015 that ONAPE became operational. Soon thereafter, it launched six studies carried out by various consultancy firms to assess different aspects of the Haitian

⁵¹ Original articles in Kreyòl: “jeneralize itilizasyon lang kreyòl la kòm zouti ansèyman nan tout nivo nan sistèm edikasyon an” (Atik 6).

“Entèkansyon pou pwomosyon ak itilizasyon lang kreyòl la nan tout enstitisyon piblik ak non-piblik k ap travay nan sektè edikasyon an ; 3. Entèkansyon pou itilizasyon lang kreyòl la nan : a. sal klas yo ; b. preparasyon kourikoulòm ofisyèl MENFP ; c. preparasyon materyèl eskolè ak liv lekòl ; d. sikilè ak enfòmasyon MENFP ap voye bay lekòl yo oubyen laprès ; e. egzamen leta yo ; f. fòmasyon anseyan yo” (Atik 14).

⁵² In French: Office National de Partenariat en Éducation.

education system. Two of these studies include discussions pertinent to language-in-education policy. The first, the *Déterminants du Rendement Scolaire en Haïti*, carried out by the Port-au-Prince-based *Institut de Formation du Sud*, describes the significance of language planning to academic success in “post-colonial” settings: “The literature surveyed and the experiences of many post-colonial countries have clearly shown that the language policy in use is one of the important determinants of academic success” (ISOS, 2016, p. 104).⁵³ The document goes on to make the following recommendations:

Reinforce the teaching of, in and through Kreyòl in all schools (without exception) by actively motivating and promoting Kreyòl as a tool for academic success; Ensure the quality of teaching materials and teacher training; Ensure the quality of teaching of, in, and through Kreyòl; Promote life in written Kreyòl and ensure availability of Kreyòl in all public services at the local and regional levels. (ISOS, 2016, p. 107)⁵⁴

The second pertinent study, the *Politique du Livre en Haïti*, carried out by the consultant Magny Smith, expressed a need to promote additional written works in Kreyòl and for the state to subsidize the production of children’s books in French and Kreyòl (Smith, 2016, pp. 57, 69). Furthermore, it called for the creation of public libraries throughout Haiti that would include books in both Kreyòl and French (Smith, 2016, pp. 59–60).

Following the completion of the six studies, ONAPE produced a document purporting to be a plan for implementing their recommendations. The *Plan de mise en oeuvre des recommandations des études ONAPE* (ONAPE, 2017) is in effect little more than a brief summary

⁵³ Original French: “La littérature recensée et les expériences de nombreux pays jadis coloniaux ont clairement fait état de l’aménagement linguistique pratiqué comme un des déterminants importants de la réussite scolaire.”

⁵⁴ Original French: “Renforcer l’enseignement du, en et par le créole dans toutes les écoles (sans exception) par la motivation active et la promotion du créole comme outil de réussite scolaire ; Veiller à la qualité des matériels didactiques et à la formation des enseignants ; Assurer la qualité de l’enseignement du, en et par le créole ; Promouvoir la vie en langue créole écrite et assurer une disponibilité en langue créole dans tous les services publics au niveau local et régional”

of the studies' findings and recommendations. All of the language policy recommendations emphasizing the importance of Kreyòl are notably absent from this document.

The ONAPE office would go on to lead the production of a major education policy document, the *Plan décennal d'éducation et de formation* (MENFP, 2020). Produced during the presidency of Jovenel Moïse,⁵⁵ this document presents a major education reform plan situated within the Incheon Declaration – an international commitment to improving education systems across the globe organized by UNESCO in 2015 – and the 2015–2030 Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO et al., 2015). Many development actors contributed technical and financial support to the document, including the European Union, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank (UNESCO et al., 2015, p. 5). Its coordination and write-up were done under the leadership of ONAPE by a group referred to as the Comité Technique National.

The *Plan décennal d'éducation et de formation* document (MENFP, 2020) acknowledges the scholastic barrier caused by the “Kreyòl-French linguistic conflict” (p. 34)⁵⁶ and related issues: “The implementation of bilingualism in early education is still a problematic issue, highlighting problems related to teacher training, pedagogic materials and methodology” (p. 45).⁵⁷ The document furthermore acknowledges the limited language ability of teachers and its impact on actual classroom practice: “Recent qualitative studies such as the observations of the various actors seem to indicate that Kreyòl and French are used according to the abilities of the teachers” (p. 22).⁵⁸ The authors express the sentiment that “Kreyòl, the mother tongue that unites all

⁵⁵ President from 2017 until his assassination in July 2021.

⁵⁶ In French: “le conflit linguistique créole-français.”

⁵⁷ Original French: “La mise en oeuvre du bilinguisme dans les apprentissages de base est une question encore problématique, mettant en exergue les problèmes liés à la formation des enseignants, aux matériels pédagogiques et de méthodes.”

⁵⁸ Original French: “Des études qualitatives récentes comme les observations des différents acteurs semblent indiquer que le créole et le français sont plutôt utilisés en fonction des capacités des enseignants.”

Haitians, must have a better role in order to build social cohesion and develop skills and knowledge” (p. 17).⁵⁹ Oddly, despite this conclusion and the various problems highlighted in the document’s discussion section, the lengthy education plan that follows this discussion contains no concrete actions regarding language-in-education issues. Instead, it states in its opening passage that Kreyòl is the sole LOI for first grade, after which Kreyòl and French “coexist” (p. 22) – incorrectly associating this policy with the 1982 Bernard Reform (see Discussion section below).

The Cadre d’orientation curriculaire pour le système éducatif haïtien–Haïti 2054 (2021)

Despite the *Plan décennal*’s self-description as a ten-year education plan, a year following its publication a second long-term education plan was published – the *Cadre d’orientation curriculaire pour le système éducatif haïtien–Haïti 2054*, or COC (MENFP, 2021). This document was authored by a branch of MENFP called the *Coordination Générale du Pôle Enseignement et Qualité*, with the financial support⁶⁰ of the French Development Agency (AFD)⁶¹ as part of their Project NECTAR⁶² initiative – although no mention of the AFD or NECTAR occurs in the document.⁶³ According to the websites of both AFD and MENFP, Project NECTAR aims to fulfill the Bernard Reform for the third cycle of fundamental education and secondary school (grades 7–13).⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the COC document includes significant curriculum planning for the lower

⁵⁹ Original French: “Le créole, langue maternelle qui lie tous les Haïtiens, doit occuper une meilleure place pour bâtir la cohésion sociale et développer les compétences et les savoirs.”

⁶⁰ This financial support totaled 8 million euros: see AFD, “Projet NECTAR : Pour une éducation citoyenne et tournée vers l’avenir,” June 29, 2017, <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/projet-nectar-pour-education-citoyenne-tournee-vers-avenir>, accessed March 21, 2022.

⁶¹ In French: Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

⁶² Nouvelle Éducation Citoyenne Tournée vers l’Avenir.

⁶³ See the Haitian Ministry’s page on Projet NECTAR (<https://nectar.menfp.gouv.ht/#/Accueil>) and the AFD’s page on Projet NECTAR (<https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/projet-nectar-pour-education-citoyenne-tournee-vers-avenir>).

⁶⁴ In French: “NECTAR se situe dans la filiation de la réforme Bernard (1982), dont l’ambition était de créer un système éducatif plus dynamique bâti sur des pédagogies actives, sur un socle commun d’apprentissages constituant le fondement éducatif de la citoyenneté et, enfin, sur la valorisation de la langue créole acquérant le statut de langue d’enseignement. . . . L’objectif est d’améliorer la qualité de l’enseignement aux niveaux collège (3^e cycle du

grade levels. Of particular note is that it proposes the most restricted use of Kreyòl in a major policy document since Kreyòl's first formal inclusion in education in the 1980s.

This COC's language policy introduces French as co-LOI in third grade, and completely removes Kreyòl as LOI after fourth grade (see Table 4 below). Kreyòl's only place in the classroom is then as an OOI that is given fewer and fewer hours of study per week as the student advances. In grades 7, 8 and 9, the student would hear their mother tongue in the classroom only during two hours of their twenty-eight-hour school week (MENFP, 2021, p. 44). French as OOI, on the other hand, receives five hours of classroom time during these same years, in addition to French being the sole LOI starting in fifth grade.

fondamental) et lycée (secondaire)" (AFD, "Projet NECTAR : Pour une éducation citoyenne et tournée vers l'avenir," June 29, 2017, <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/projet-nectar-pour-education-citoyenne-tournee-vers-avenir>, accessed March 21, 2022).

"L'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) a octroyé à la République d'Haïti une subvention de 8 millions d'euros dans l'objectif d'appuyer la réforme curriculaire entamée lors de la Réforme Bernard et visant à améliorer la qualité de l'enseignement du 3ème cycle du fondamental et du secondaire. En effet, cette réforme doit permettre d'aboutir à la mise en place d'un enseignement fondamental complet et de qualité sur 9 années, suivi d'un cycle secondaire de 4 années.

Le projet NECTAR (Nouvelle Éducation Citoyenne Tournée vers l'Avenir) financé par l'AFD a pour objectif d'accompagner le Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle (MENFP) durant les 5 prochaines années dans la planification, la coordination, et la mise en œuvre de cette réforme d'envergure. Il est question d'une mesure de fond qui concerne l'ensemble du système éducatif, des enseignants aux formateurs, en passant par les élèves et les outils didactiques.

Le déploiement du 3ème cycle de l'enseignement fondamental et la généralisation des nouveaux programmes du secondaire permettront d'achever la Réforme Bernard initiée en 1982. La finalité principale de ce projet est de mettre en place une nouvelle éducation haïtienne résolument tournée vers l'avenir et en cohésion avec l'environnement social, culturel et économique, tout en privilégiant l'intégration des citoyens par une meilleure insertion professionnelle" (MENFP, "NECTAR," <https://nectar.menfp.gouv.ht/#/Acceuil>, accessed March 31, 2022).

Table 4: The language policy of the COC 2021 document

		LANGUES D'ENSEIGNEMENT	LANGUES ENSEIGNEES
PRESCOLAIRE		Créole	-
1 ^{ER} CYCLE DU FONDAMENTAL	1	Créole	Créole, français
	2		
	3	Créole, français	
	4		
2 ^E CYCLE DU FONDAMENTAL	5	Français	Créole, français
	6		
3 ^E CYCLE DU FONDAMENTAL	7	Français	Créole, français, anglais, espagnol
	8		
	9		
SECONDAIRE	10	Français	Créole, français, anglais, espagnol (+ autre langue)
	11		
	12		
	13		

MENFP (2021, p. 30)

The document describes this policy with the following language:

Children are welcomed at school in the language spoken in their family, Kreyòl, and it is in this language that they discover the world and accomplish their first learning. Then, based on the skills developed in Kreyòl, they must acquire French in order to gradually make it a language of instruction at school from the 3rd grade onward. The harmonious passage from one language of instruction to the other is decisive for the success of their scholastic journey. (MENFP, 2021, p. 13)⁶⁵

During the “harmonious transition,” which “must be managed with much care and suppleness” (p. 30),⁶⁶ the learning of French is involved in every academic subject. Thus, lesson structures and student attention are redirected from subjects such as mathematics, science, and history toward the learning of French:

⁶⁵ Original French: “De même, l’une et l’autre langues sont, tour à tour, langues d’enseignement. L’enfant est accueilli à l’école dans la langue parlée dans sa famille, le créole, et c’est dans cette langue qu’il découvre le monde et accomplit ses premiers apprentissages. Puis, en s’appuyant sur les compétences développées en créole, il doit s’approprier le français pour en faire progressivement une langue d’apprentissage scolaire, à partir de la 3e année. Le passage harmonieux d’une langue d’enseignement à l’autre est déterminant pour la réussite de son parcours.”

⁶⁶ Original French passage for context: “Le créole reste langue d’enseignement en troisième et quatrième années, mais doit s’amorcer la ‘transition linguistique’ vers le français. Ce passage déterminant doit être géré avec beaucoup d’attention et de souplesse.”

In this transitional phase, learning French involves all academic subjects. Mathematics, science and history are also language learning situations for children. These contexts should be prepared, conducted and evaluated while taking this dimension into consideration. (p. 31)⁶⁷

As with several of its predecessors, the language-attainment goal of this document is *balanced bilingualism* in Kreyòl and French (p. 30), rather than the *functional* bilingualism called for by the Bernard Reform.

While we were doing final revisions of this article, a new draft version of the COC was publicly released (MENFP, 2022).⁶⁸ In terms of policy, this document notably differs from its predecessor by maintaining Kreyòl as LOI throughout all nine years of Fundamental Education and all four years of Secondary School. French as a co-LOI is still introduced in third grade, and the document still sets balanced bilingualism as its academic target. Education policy in Haiti is currently very dynamic, and it remains to be seen whether the latest COC document will endure and be enforced or whether it will be further revised to bring it closer to achieving the objectives of the Bernard Reform (i.e., the Decree of March 30, 1982) in terms of giving all Haitian children equal opportunity for academic success.

Part III: Discussion

Prior to the Law of September 18, 1979, Haitian language-in-education policy either totally disregarded Kreyòl or officially banned its use. Our review of policy documents since Kreyòl made its official entrance in Haitian schools has revealed three main observations. First, mischaracterizations of the Bernard Reform, whether intentional or accidental, are used to justify

⁶⁷ Original French: “Dans cette phase de transition, l’apprentissage du français implique tous les domaines. Les situations vécues en mathématiques, en sciences ou en histoire sont aussi pour l’enfant des situations d’apprentissage linguistique. Ces situations doivent être préparées, conduites et évaluées en prenant en compte cette dimension.”

⁶⁸ Available on the Project NECTAR website: https://projet-nectar.canoprof.fr/eleve/projet-nectar/res/COC_version_modifiee_juillet_2022.pdf, accessed October 4, 2022.

language policies that favor the use of French as LOI. Second, the stated French language-attainment goal of post-1982 policy documents has shifted from *functional* bilingualism in the Bernard Reform to *balanced* bilingualism, with the latter greatly favoring children of the Haitian elite. Lastly, language policy itself has shifted from *additive* mother-tongue-based multilingual education as advocated by the Bernard Reform – an approach scientifically demonstrated to work well for quality education and second-language learning – to a *subtractive* transitional early-exit strategy – a common approach that is known to fail in post-colonial contexts.

I) Mischaracterizations of the Bernard Reform to Justify Modern Policy That Contradicts Its Rationale and Objectives

The most surprising finding of this review of Haitian language-in-education policy documents was the frequent and significant mischaracterization of the Bernard Reform in justifying modern policy choices. As discussed above, there are three documents central to understanding the Bernard Reform. Together, these documents legalized Kreyòl as LOI and OOI (Haitian Government, 1979) and made it the obligatory and sole LOI for grades 1–5 and co-LOI with French for grades 6–10 (DEN, 1982a). These documents were a first step in an agenda that sought for Kreyòl to serve as LOI at all levels of education (DEN, 1982b, pp. 50–51).

These policies are systematically mischaracterized in modern references to the Bernard Reform. At times, these mischaracterizations are fairly innocuous, such as mislabeling the Law of September 18, 1979, as a decree, or the Decree of March 30, 1982, as a law.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, however, the reform’s program and goals are so completely distorted that they serve to justify a curriculum where French is the primary LOI.

⁶⁹ Original French: “La réforme la plus récente du système éducatif en Haïti a été officiellement décrétée par la Loi de mars 1982, précédée par un décret qui introduisait le créole comme langue d'enseignement.”

Let us consider the last three major education policy documents: *Plan opérationnel 2010–2015* (MENFP, 2011), *Plan décennal d'éducation et de formation* (MENFP, 2020), and *Cadre d'orientation curriculaire pour le système éducatif haïtien–Haïti 2054* (MENFP, 2021).

The *Plan opérationnel 2010–2015* (MENFP, 2011) states that French is the only LOI after sixth grade owing to the Bernard Reform:

With the exception of the first two cycles [grades 1-6] of fundamental education where the text of the Educational Reform of 1982 provides for education in the two official languages (French and Kreyòl) in a balanced manner, the language of instruction adopted in the other levels of the formal system is French. (p. 36)⁷⁰

The *Plan décennal d'éducation et de formation* (MENFP, 2020) implies that the Bernard Reform calls for French to be introduced as LOI in second grade:

The 1982 Bernard Reform laid the foundation for two major transformations of the Haitian school system: (i) the introduction of a 9-year fundamental education and a new 4-year secondary education and (ii) the establishment of a Kreyòl / French bilingualism with the introduction of Kreyòl as the language of instruction alongside French. [Footnote:] Kreyòl must be the sole language of instruction of 1st grade, then Kreyòl and French coexist. (p. 22)⁷¹

Those responsible for the 2021 COC document (MENFP, 2021) and the French Development Agency's project NECTAR website laud the Bernard Reform:

By taking up the still relevant key ideas of the Bernard Reform, this curricular orientation framework today offers an opportunity to give the nation a vision of a “Green and Blue Haiti” for the year 2054 (MENFP, 2021, p. 10)⁷²

NECTAR is situated in the tradition of the Bernard reform (1982), whose ambition was to create a more dynamic education system built on active pedagogies, on a shared knowledge base constituting

⁷⁰ Original French: “À l’exception des deux premiers cycles de l’enseignement fondamental où le texte de la réforme éducative de 1982 prévoit l’enseignement dans les deux langues officielles (français et créole) et de façon équilibrée, la langue d’enseignement adoptée dans les autres niveaux du système formel est le français.”

⁷¹ Original French: “La réforme Bernard de 1982 avait posé les bases de deux transformations majeures du système scolaire : (i) l’instauration d’un enseignement fondamental de 9 ans et d’un nouveau secondaire de 4 ans et (ii) l’instauration d’un bilinguisme créole/français avec l’introduction du créole comme langue d’enseignement aux côtés du français. [Note de bas de page :] Le créole doit être la langue d’enseignement unique de la 1^{ère} AF, puis créole et français coexistent.”

⁷² Original French: “En reprenant ces idées-clés de la Réforme Bernard qui sont encore actuelles, ce Cadre d’Orientation Curriculaire offre aujourd’hui une opportunité de donner à la Nation la perspective d’une “Haïti Verte et Bleue” dans l’horizon 2054, 250^e anniversaire de l’indépendance de notre pays.”

the educational foundation of citizenship and on the promotion of the Kreyòl language through the status of language of instruction.⁷³

But then the COC adopts the most overtly anti-Kreyòl language policy in a major policy document since the 1982 reform, removing Kreyòl as LOI after fourth grade.

All three of these recent policy documents cite the Bernard Reform as either the direct source or the inspiration behind their policies, despite the radical differences (Table 5).

⁷³ Original French: “NECTAR se situe dans la filiation de la réforme Bernard (1982), dont l’ambition était de créer un système éducatif plus dynamique bâti sur des pédagogies actives, sur un socle commun d’apprentissages constituant le fondement éducatif de la citoyenneté et, enfin, sur la valorisation de la langue créole acquérant le statut de langue d’enseignement”

(AFD, “Projet NECTAR : Pour une éducation citoyenne et tournée vers l’avenir,” June 29, 2017, <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/projet-nectar-pour-education-citoyenne-tournee-vers-avenir>, accessed March 21, 2022).

Table 4: LOI policy of major Haitian education documents

	Bernard Reform (1982)	<i>Plan opérationnel 2010–2015 (2011)</i>	<i>Plan décennal (2020)</i>	<i>Cadre d’orientation curriculaire (2021)</i>
1st Grade	Kreyòl	"Balanced" French and Kreyòl	Kreyòl	Kreyòl
2nd Grade	Kreyòl	"Balanced" French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “coexist”	Kreyòl
3rd Grade	Kreyòl	"Balanced" French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “coexist”	Kreyòl, French
4th Grade	Kreyòl	"Balanced" French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “coexist”	Kreyòl, French
5th Grade	Kreyòl	"Balanced" French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “coexist”	French
6th Grade	Kreyòl, French	"Balanced" French and Kreyòl	French and Kreyòl “coexist”	French
7th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French	French and Kreyòl “coexist”	French
8th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French	French and Kreyòl “coexist”	French
9th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French	French and Kreyòl “coexist”	French
10th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French	Not specified	French
Beyond 10th Grade	Not specified, but aspires for Kreyòl to be LOI at all levels	French	Not specified	French

Similar incorrect descriptions of the Bernard Reform have also occurred in the work of ardent Kreyòl educators and academics (Dejean, 2010; Prou, 2009). This confusion may arise from the inconsistent and vague policies of the 1990s following the Decree of December 1, 1988. Despite the fact that these documents of the late 1980s and 1990s claim to be inspired by the Bernard Reform, they are not accurate representations of its policies or motivations.

II) The Language-Attainment Goals of Haitian Education:

Functional Bilingualism vs. Balanced Bilingualism

In addition to the different roles given to Kreyòl as LOI in the Bernard Reform of the early 1980s versus the Decree of December 1, 1988, there exists a subtle but highly significant change in the two programs' language-attainment goals.

The original Bernard Reform called for a fundamental school program where students would achieve *functional bilingualism* in Kreyòl and French by the start of eighth grade (DEN, 1982b, p. 50).⁷⁴ The 1988 decree shifted the goal of the fundamental school into one that aims at both *functional* and *balanced* bilingualism.⁷⁵ While many Haitian policy documents fail to specify in detail the language-attainment goals of the education system, a similar call for both “balanced and functional bilingualism”⁷⁶ was repeated in the 2007 *National Action Strategy for Education for All (Stratégie nationale d'action pour l'éducation pour tous)* (MENFP, 2007, p. 97). The 2021 COC explicitly states that “balanced bilingualism” is the target (MENFP, 2021, p. 20).

⁷⁴ Original French: “En ce qui concerne l'aspect linguistique de l'enseignement, l'objectif général est donc celui d'un bi-linguisme fonctionnel qui devrait être atteint dans le 2ème Cycle de l'Enseignement Fondamental.”

⁷⁵ See reproduction of Decree of December 1, 1988, in Fombrun (1989, p. 75): “Considérant qu'il importe de définir pour l'École Haïtienne un curriculum conforme aux finalités et aux objectifs de la Réforme du Système Éducatif instaurant l'Enseignement Fondamental, notamment . . . la reconnaissance de notre langue maternelle comme premier instrument de la promotion d'un bilinguisme équilibré et fonctionnel.”

⁷⁶ “Stratégie de mise en oeuvre : 291. Dans le but de faciliter la mise en place, à l'échelle nationale, d'un bilinguisme équilibré et fonctionnel devant répondre aux façons et aux besoins d'apprendre des élèves, il sera implanté, à titre pilote, des programmes d'éducation bilingue.”

While this change from *functional* to *balanced* bilingualism may appear to be a fairly innocuous shift in nomenclature, understanding the difference between these two language-attainment goals is of critical importance. This wording defines what students, teachers and schools are expected to achieve in the fundamental education program and, moreover, sets the benchmark for who is considered a successful or “good” student. Let us begin by reviewing what these language-attainment goals actually signify. *Functional* bilingualism has been defined as:

- the ability to use bilingual skills to accomplish basic functions (Baker & Wright, 2021)
- [the] state of a person who in a second language has a practical knowledge that permits them to get by in the second language (Canadian Translation Bureau, n.d.)⁷⁷
- [a level of ability in which] the second language is used for special purposes, mostly study (Nagel, Temnikova, Wylie, & Koksharova, 2015, p. 219).

In contrast, balanced bilingualism has been defined as characterizing:

- a person whose proficiency in two languages is such that his or her skills in each language match those of a native speaker of the same age (APA, n.d.)
- an individual who, in addition to their first language, possesses a comparable competency in another language and who is capable of using either one in all circumstances with equal effectiveness⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Original French: “État de la personne qui a, de la langue seconde, une connaissance pratique qui lui permet de se débrouiller dans la langue seconde.”

⁷⁸ Original French: “Bilinguisme équilibré : Individu qui, en plus de sa première langue, possède une compétence comparable dans une autre langue et est capable d'utiliser l'une ou l'autre en toutes circonstances avec la même efficacité.”

The recent COC (MENFP, 2021) defines its balanced bilingualism target along similar lines. In a section titled “The Choice of a Balanced and Open Bilingualism,” the document states: “The ambition of the Haitian school is to lead everyone to speak, understand, read and write with equal ease in both languages” (p. 13).⁷⁹ Balanced bilingualism thus clearly surpasses functional bilingualism, thereby making the goal of “balanced *and* functional” bilingualism redundant. Given that the draft of the revised version of the COC, as of July 2022, maintains balanced bilingualism as its target (MENFP, 2022, p. 11), the current goal of the Haitian education system appears to still be to produce children who have “equal ease” in French and in Kreyòl. This prompts several questions: How realistic is this goal? Are teachers equipped for this curriculum? How many children will be able to successfully reach this goal? Which children will be able to reach this goal? We address these issues below.

Haitian Teachers Are, By and Large, Best Equipped for Curricula with Kreyòl as LOI, Not for Transforming Students into Kreyòl-French Balanced Bilinguals

For almost all Haitian children, teachers are their primary point of contact with live spoken French. Kreyòl is what they hear and speak in their homes, with their friends, on the soccer field, at the market, etc. For most Haitians, as Dejean (1993, p. 74) puts it, French is “a language as alien to them as Latin was to the Italian masses in the sixteenth century.”

The Haitian education system, with approximately seventeen thousand primary schools and eighty-five thousand people working as primary school teachers (MENFP & DPCE, 2015, p. 134), is thus charged with producing millions of balanced bilingual children. The vast majority of

⁷⁹ Original French: “L’ambition de l’école haïtienne est d’amener, d’une manière équilibrée, chacun à parler, comprendre, lire et écrire, avec une égale aisance dans l’une et l’autre langue.”

these teachers, however, have nowhere near the French fluency level that their students are supposed to achieve. This becomes evident in teacher-training programs that employ educational materials in French. For example, the Francophone Initiative for Long-Distance Teacher Training (IFADEM)⁸⁰ in the early 2010s was immediately confronted with such linguistic hurdles (IFADEM, 2013). Directed by the *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie* and the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*, this project was intended to develop a teacher-training program that would be delivered long-distance via various media platforms. An initial language test revealed, however, that most of their 367 target participants had less than an intermediate “B1” level of French. These participants nonetheless represented an above-average degree of qualification for individuals working as teachers in Haiti, as they were either graduates or current students of teacher training colleges.⁸¹ IFADEM’s designers then split the project’s didactic materials evenly between French language reinforcement and pedagogical training. Still, at the end of the project cycle, less than half of its recipients could pass an intermediate “B1” French exam (p. 17), while scaling up the program was projected to cost between 470 and 1,470 euros per participant (p. 47). Other studies suggest that up to 95 percent of teachers do not have French competency beyond an elementary “A2” level.⁸²

If Haitian teachers are going to be the primary means by which millions of children become balanced bilinguals by age fifteen,⁸³ then it seems evident that they themselves should be individuals who have achieved this balanced bilingualism by adulthood. As most educators now

⁸⁰ In French: Initiative Francophone pour la Formation à Distance des Maîtres.

⁸¹ The participants were originally intended to be “capistes” – individuals who completed a portion of teacher college but had not yet received their final diploma. Despite this, some graduates ended up being among the project’s participants, and the authors further noted that the sample of participants was likely biased: “The selection of teachers whose level of French was better than what one would expect likely corresponded to the desire of the project framers to guarantee its success” (IFADEM, 2013, p. 12).

⁸² From a study cited in the IFADEM report (IFADEM, 2013, p. 23): *Étude 2008 de l’Institut Haïtien de Formation en Sciences de l’Éducation (IHFOSED) réalisée auprès de 1000 instituteurs*.

⁸³ The age at which a student would normally complete Haiti’s fundamental education program.

have a very low level of French, pursuing the current policy requires a complete transformation of the Haitian teacher workforce. Tens of thousands of individuals who speak French at a “native level” must first be identified or trained *and* persuaded to work as teachers in largely under-resourced schools despite the social mobility anticipated by people with such linguistic abilities. Given such infeasible requirements, the current language-attainment goals are dramatically misaligned with the reality of who Haitian educators are and who they are going to be in the near future. If students are reliant on their teachers for attaining fluency in French, then the pursuit of balanced bilingualism will guarantee failure for the vast majority of Haitian children.

The "Balanced Bilingualism" Target Advantages Children of the Elite

But what about the 3–5 percent of the population who are bilingual (Saint-Germain, 1988)? Coming from privileged backgrounds, members of Haiti’s small elite class initially acquire spoken French in their homes and communities from family members, relatives, friends, neighbors, etc., and then later develop academic language skills in expensive private schools with unparalleled access to qualified teachers with a high level of French (Dejean, 1993). The balanced bilinguals, the “ideal” students of the Haitian education policy, thus happen to largely coincide with the children of Haiti’s wealthy and powerful.

This outcome aligns with the account of French sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1970, 1964) of how class hierarchies are covertly maintained by school systems in societies that have transitioned away from overt titles and privileges, such as lordships, racial apartheid, etc. Bourdieu and Passeron observe that children from advantaged backgrounds acquire certain knowledge and skills in their home settings that allow them to disproportionately succeed

in schools and receive socially and professionally valuable academic certifications. While state-designed curricula and standardized exams may outwardly appear unbiased, they often reflect the values and knowledge base of the elite. Elites achieve this, consciously or not, through their high position in society by either directly designing curricula or indirectly by promoting certain activities and knowledge as sophisticated, inherently valuable, and worthy of being studied and known.

Bourdieu and Passeron furthermore contend that one's knowledge of and ability to use language – or *linguistic capital* – is a significant determiner of academic success (Bourdieu, 1991; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). Although all children must develop additional language skills to advance through school systems, children from the dominant class will require less “linguistic correction” than their counterparts from less privileged backgrounds (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970, p. 144). Furthermore, as they are more easily able to understand their teachers and textbooks, they will be more efficient learners in all subjects.

These observations closely align with Haitian language-in-education policy and practice. Regardless of the specific community they serve, Haitian schools tend to treat French not as a second or foreign language but rather as the mother tongue of their pupils, communicating to the students that, for academic learning, Kreyòl is inappropriate or at least of lesser value than French (Prou, 2009). This is but one aspect of how colonial mentalities and values continue to be manifested and perpetuated in Haitian curricula. As scholars such as Jacques-Michel Gourgues (2014) have observed, curricula that place more value on the language and culture of a former colonizer undermine not only the knowledge of local people's cultures and self-identity but also their ability to acquire knowledge, resulting in *epistemicide* against these populations. Thus, such ill-conceived linguistic approaches ensure not only that most Haitian children will never acquire

French but also that they will struggle in all subjects. Setting balanced bilingualism as the goal of Haitian schools all but ensures that only children of the bilingual elite will have any chance of achieving academic success.

As a final note on this subject, the supposed goal of creating “balanced bilinguals” who possess perfectly equal abilities in both languages is a fiction for other reasons as well. The curricula proposed in most recent policy documents do not give Kreyòl any parity with French as either LOI or OOI, and thus most graduates will be weaker in reading and writing Kreyòl than French (Saintil, 2021). Given the relative lack of classroom emphasis on Kreyòl, “balanced bilingualism” appears to actually imply “possessing a little academic ability in Kreyòl and as much as possible in French” – again greatly advantaging children from the francophone elite.

III) Kreyòl and French as LOI – Early Transitions versus Late Additions

The Bernard Reform of the early 1980s and the COC from 2021 typify two fundamentally different LOI policies. Let us review these two again side by side (Table 6).

Table 5: LOI policies of Bernard Reform (1982) and the COC document (2021)

	Bernard Reform (1982)	<i>Cadre d'orientation curriculaire (2021)</i>
1st Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl
2nd Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl
3rd Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl, French
4th Grade	Kreyòl	Kreyòl, French
5th Grade	Kreyòl	French
6th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
7th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
8th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
9th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
10th Grade	Kreyòl, French	French
Beyond 10th Grade	Not specified, but aspires for Kreyòl to be LOI at all levels	French
	French is added as LOI in 6th grade; Kreyòl is never removed	There is a transition to French in 3rd and 4th grades, and Kreyòl is removed at 5th grade

The policy of the 2021 COC is typical of a *subtractive early-exit transitional approach* (Ouane & Glanz, 2011). In such approaches, students first study core subjects in their mother tongue as LOI while a target second language is taught as an OOI. Soon thereafter the students begin transitioning to the second language, and by fifth grade the students' mother tongue is completely removed as LOI. Despite being known to be highly ineffective (Benson, 2016; Ouane & Glanz, 2011), subtractive early-exit transitional policies are widespread in lower-income countries. A major fault of such models is that the students seldom have a sufficient level of fluency in the target second language before the transition occurs. The problem is compounded by teachers who themselves poorly master this other language, resulting in lessons that rely on rote memorization rather than active learning. Despite the sacrifice to their general knowledge, even the rare students who complete secondary school often fall short of achieving anything close to near-native mastery of the target language (Dejean, 2010).

In contrast to this, the Bernard Reform's Decree of March 30, 1982, was ahead of its time in proposing an *additive* approach, today commonly referred to as *mother-tongue-based multilingual education* (MTB MLE) (Benson, 2016). In such an approach, the mother tongue serves as the sole LOI until at least fifth grade and is *never* removed. MTB MLE has been shown to result in better academic outcomes in low-income contexts such as Ethiopia and Eritrea (Heugh et al., 2007; Walter & Davis, 2005). Significantly, it has been shown that students who spend more years with their mother tongue as their LOI are more successful at learning second languages, as they are able to employ their acquired cognitive and academic abilities for language learning (Benson, 2016).

One could argue that the general failure of early-exit policies like that of the 2021 COC is not inherent to the approach itself but rather attributable to material and human resource constraints of lower-income countries such as Haiti. Indeed, the lack of well-trained or highly fluent teachers and the prevalence of overcrowded and underfunded schools are important factors that should not be ignored in language plans. All the same, even in wealthier countries with highly trained teachers and low student-teacher ratios, like Canada and the United States, students in second-language “immersion” models struggle when they have little exposure to this second language outside their classrooms and when they do not come from higher socioeconomic backgrounds with engaged, educated parents who provide them with additional resources and support (Helle, 1995; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). Although, in well-resourced contexts, five to seven years of study is a recommended time period for effective second-language learning and literacy development, Tuija Helle (1995) found that middle-class English-speaking Canadian students who completed their education in French-immersion programs still felt more confident taking their final school-exit exams in their mother tongue. Adama Ouane and Christine Glanz (Ouane & Glanz, 2011, p. 123) note that “if the immersion model has not met with the success it promised early on in the well-resourced Canadian conditions, there is no way that it could serve the majority of children in African countries well.”

As mentioned above, while we were making final revisions of this article, the Ministry of Education released a revised draft of the COC (MENFP, 2022). This updated COC adopts an *early-additive* approach, whereby Kreyòl is never removed as LOI, but French is quickly added as a co-LOI in third grade – likely too soon for most Haitian children to feel comfortable in this language.

The document furthermore maintains the problematic language-attainment goal of balanced bilingualism.⁸⁴

Conclusion

Four decades after Joseph C. Bernard was removed as Minister of Education, his reform is still cited as the source and inspiration for modern Haitian language-in-education policy. Despite this, the authors of present-day policy documents either have never read or have chosen to mischaracterize the actual Decree of March 30, 1982. In an ironic twist, the Bernard Reform, which promulgated a Kreyòl-dominant MTB MLE curriculum targeting *functional* bilingualism, has been repeatedly used to justify early-exit subtractive approaches that favor French as sole LOI as early as possible. These French-dominant approaches purport to pursue *balanced* bilingualism but in truth leave students with underdeveloped academic skills in Kreyòl while greatly advantaging children of the small francophone elite. Rather than allowing Haitian educators and students to employ their pre-existing linguistic strengths through active learning via the mother tongue (Kreyòl) as LOI, these recent policies create passive classrooms that use what often amounts to a foreign language (French) as LOI and that fail the majority of Haitian children.

Since the early 1980s, scientific studies have continued to validate the rationale and objectives of the Bernard Reform. Bernard's goal of creating students who can employ French for domain-specific functions in their academic study remains a far more feasible goal, and therefore a more laudable one. Our review of recent policy documents, however, reveals an unfortunate trend in the opposite direction. Accordingly, the vision of the *actual* Bernard Reform remains

⁸⁴ It must also be noted that such an addition of French as co-LOI, with Kreyòl, as early as the third grade contradicts other aspects of Minister Nesmy Manigat's reforms such as *Liv Inik*, whereby Kreyòl is cast as the *sole* LOI in the first four grades of the Fundamental School.

pertinent today in the promulgation of policies designed to produce a school system that not only generates creative and successful active students but also validates Haitian culture and identity.

In this study, we have sought to shed light on the history of Haitian language-in-education policy and explore how this policy has contributed to the maintenance of the country's linguistic elite closure. In doing so, we have uncovered that the 1982 Bernard Reform is still widely recognized as a turning point in Haitian education, but its content is also equally widely misquoted and misunderstood. More recent policy favors children of the elite who have disproportionate access to French at home and to truly francophone teachers but is ill-adapted for the Kreyòl-monolingual majority and for the linguistic competencies of most teachers. We hope that an understanding of this history will guide future policy stakeholders in a more constructive direction: to support the appropriate use of Kreyòl in the classroom, to promote the achievable and laudable goal of functional bilingualism, and to pursue at long last fulfilling the promise of quality education for all Haitian children.

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Student name:	William Scott Frager
Contribution to the paper:	I worked with the MIT-Haiti team as their Policy Analyst for this Haitian language-in-education policy document project. I contributed to the construction of the policy document dataset. I led preliminary read-throughs, wrote and presented summaries, and led thematic coding of the documents. I contributed to the interpretive analysis of the contents, notably providing a Bourdieusian lens, but also comparative pedagogical perspectives on policy. I led the write-up of the manuscript. The version included in this thesis furthermore differs from the co-authored published paper, including some sections added and other sections removed.
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By signing the Statement of Authorship, you are certifying that the candidate made a substantial contribution to the publication, and that the description described above is accurate.

Supervisor name and title:

Miriam Meyerhoff, SRF All Souls College, Professor of Sociolinguistics

Supervisor comments:

Signature:

M Meyerhoff

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Chapter 6 (stand-alone paper #2): _____

Language, shame, and social mobility

Understanding popular resistance
to Kreyòl mother-tongue education in Haiti

William Scott Frager

University of Oxford

Abstract

A challenge for stakeholders promoting mother-tongue education for marginalized language communities is that sometimes members of these communities resist such policies, preferring their children to be taught in a dominant language, often a home language of the country's elite and that of a former colonizer (such as English or French). A common explanation for this is that parents perceive such education to have greater pragmatic value, believing it to bestow children with valuable *linguistic capital*. An additional and less frequently considered explanation involves the *affective* associations stakeholders may have with the languages and their use in education. Using interview data with Haitian non-elites analyzed through the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias, this article investigates how pragmatic and affective aspects of *habitus* may exercise a *drag effect* on the adoption of mother-tongue education. Affect may notably cause Kreyòl-monolinguals to experience shame when confronted with the contextually "ideal" francophone Haitian, *submitting* to rather than challenging language-based exclusion.

Keywords: mother-tongue education, shame, affect, drag effect, Haiti, Kreyòl, Bourdieu, Elias

Introduction

Promoting minoritized languages and *mother-tongue education* (MTE) has been an official value of international development agencies such as UNESCO since the late 1940s (UN, 1948; UNESCO, 1953, 2018). Such policies, however, have been met with many practical and political challenges. It has been extensively documented and discussed how powerful entities such as international institutions, governments, and local elites have ignored or undermined MTE initiatives in post-colonial contexts in favor of maintaining dominant languages as the sole or primary *language of instruction* (LOI) (DeGraff, 2017a; Myers-Scotton, 1993; Ouane & Glanz, 2011; Tollefson, 1991). These dominant languages are often those of former European empires, such as English and French, and are primarily known by the elite. A less commonly explored and perhaps uncomfortable phenomenon for language activists is that members of marginalized linguistic communities at times themselves resist policies aimed to promote their languages in education (Early, 2020; Mufwene, 2021, p. 157; Nyarigoti & Ambiyi, 2014, pp. 81–82; UNESCO, 2017, p. 190).

A common explanation for popular resistance to MTE focuses on stakeholders' pragmatic understandings of the different social and economic value of languages (Early, 2020; Mahboob & Cruz, 2013; Mufwene, 2010, 2021; Prou, 2009). Indeed, in many post-colonial settings key professional, academic, social, and political domains require oral or written fluency in the contextually dominant language, contributing to a schism between those who possess it and those who do not (Myers-Scotton, 1993). Where stakeholders understand the use of this dominant language as LOI from the onset of primary education as the best available means for children from

marginalized language communities to acquire it,¹ their language-in-education preferences will reflect this. Parents will select and pay more for schools that use the dominant language as LOI, teachers will endeavor to speak or at least parrot it, and administrators will mandate its use in lessons, textbooks, and possibly even during recreation.

The pragmatic logic of pursuing and paying more for a dominant language corresponds to the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu (1991), who elaborated a theory of language use in society through various economic metaphors: *linguistic capital*, *linguistic market*, and "profit maximizing" *habitus*.

An issue for pragmatic accounts of MTE resistance is that it occurs despite the benefits that MTE has been shown to have for students, such as improving learning outcomes, lowering school dropouts, boosting students' sense of self-worth, and facilitating later second-language acquisition (Heugh, 2011; Heugh, Benson, Bogale, & Yohannes, 2007; Walter & Davis, 2005). The resistance is all the more puzzling in cases where stakeholders express awareness of these benefits, yet nonetheless are reluctant to accept MTE (Hittenberger, 1987; Nyarigoti & Ambiyio, 2014, pp. 81–82).

One potential explanatory factor which is overlooked in purely pragmatic explanations is the role of human *affect* – "a feeling or subjective experience accompanying a thought or action or occurring in response to a stimulus; an emotion, a mood" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2024). When the puzzle is addressed from this perspective, a different set of questions arises. How does it *feel* to lack the dominant language? What *emotions* are triggered when you are confronted by it? What

¹ The actual success rate of schools which use a foreign or second language as their primary LOI varies according to many factors, such as the level of the teachers in the target language, the style of pedagogy, students' exposure to the language outside of the classroom, and the funding and scholastic resources available (Helle, 1995).

emotions are triggered when you imagine yourself or your child speaking it? How does it *feel* to have a child attending a school which purports to use the dominant language?

And to explore the more general question posed by the German sociologist Norbert Elias (1939/2012), what is the relationship between macro-level social structures and shared affective associations – our collective sources of joy, shame, and fear?

The following article presents the results of an investigation into popular resistance to MTE through a thematic analysis of data from fifteen original semi-structured interviews conducted in January and February of 2022 with non-elite, largely Kreyòl-monolingual Haitians in the southeast of Haiti. Haiti serves as a particularly pertinent case study as the government is currently pursuing an MTE reform for its education system which has historically been dominated by French, the first language of only a small elite (DeGraff, Frager, & Miller, 2022; Manigat, 2023).

The investigation was initially designed to evaluate access to French and its perceived socioeconomic benefits. The concept of *shame* (Kreyòl "*wont*"), however, was frequently introduced by the participants in response to questions about where French was advantageous. Additionally, for much of the cohort, imagining themselves or their children speaking French invoked expressions of joy. As such, affect became central to the analysis.

The findings exemplify both aspects of Bourdieu's and Elias's social theory. In the Discussion, it is examined how "good French" is perceived as a valuable sociolinguistic capital, essential for "*getting to a level*" and yet largely inaccessible to the lower class. Additionally, being confronted with French can cause monolinguals to experience *shame-fear* and become submissive, feeling inadequate next to the "ideal" francophone. Enrolling their children in an ostensibly French LOI school offers parents immediate affective rewards even if it never yields the desired pragmatic benefits (e.g. French fluency, academic degrees, socioeconomic opportunities, etc.). MTE reform

represents a modification to the Haitian linguistic market, generating a misalignment with a habitus established from hundreds of years of French language dominance. The resulting discrepancy is not only with Haitians' pragmatic dispositions, but also with their linguistic-affective associations.

The findings lend credence to Norbert Elias's description of *drag effect* (Elias, 1987/2001) – how existing habitus may slow or block processes of social change, such as MTE reform. The relationship between language and emotion – the shame and the joy triggered in us from our linguistic exchanges, aspirations, and limitations – should be acknowledged by language-in-education policy stakeholders. Our linguistic-affective associations reflect not only how the world has spoken to and molded us, but also influence how we ourselves shape our society and its institutions.

Haiti and popular resistance to Kreyòl MTE reform

Haiti is one of the best documented cases of severe and enduring class-based linguistic hierarchy and exclusion (DeGraff, 2017a; Dejean, 1993; Govain, 2014; Hebblethwaite, 2012; Johnson, 1920, p. 30; Prou, 2009). Formerly a French colony whose economy centered upon the production of cash crops through the labor of enslaved Africans who came from linguistically diverse backgrounds, today the Caribbean nation has roughly 12 million inhabitants (OpenFactBook, 2026) who primarily speak two languages: French and Kreyòl. Socioeconomically, the country is characterized as having two primary categories – a small privileged “elite” who represent 3 to 5 percent of the population and who speak French and Kreyòl as first languages, and the largely Kreyòl-monolingual “people”² (DeGraff, 2017a; Dejean, 1993).

²An estimated 10 percent of the “people” represent a middle class who possess “receptive competence” in French as a second language (Dejean, 2006). In addition to French and Kreyòl, English and Spanish are playing an increasingly important role in the Haitian landscape. Furthermore, influxes of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants have created a group of often wealthier Arabic-speaking communities.

Despite this demographic imbalance, throughout Haitian history French has been the dominant language of grade school curricula, universities, the court system, governance, and the formal economy. At various points in Haitian history, the French government and the Haitian elite have taken active measures to maintain the privileged position of French (Alexandre, 2013; DeGraff, 2023). Due to the social divide it generates, the language problem has long been a significant issue for promoters of democracy and education for the marginalized majority. Perhaps dishearteningly for such activists, members of this majority have themselves resisted MTE reform. In the early 1980s, the Department of Education attempted but ultimately failed to make Kreyòl the dominant LOI of grade school (DeGraff et al., 2022; DEN, 1982; Prou, 2009). Despite the proposed curriculum heavily emphasizing French as a second language, some members of the majority resisted the reform, viewing it "as a change that would forever relegate their children to a 'Kreyol ghetto' and deny them access to social advancement" (Prou, 2009, p. 49). A survey of forty teachers from this period provides further insight into the matter (Hittenberger, 1987). While the teachers felt Kreyòl-based education would improve their students' learning outcomes and sense of self-worth, they overwhelmingly felt it would harm them in the job market and block their social mobility. Hittenberger summarized his findings thusly: "In short, prejudice against Creole in the job-market and social structure would need to be eliminated before Creole instruction could be truly embraced" (p. 78).

Popular resistance to MTE could pose a significant challenge for the Haitian government's current education reform initiatives (Manigat, 2023), as 85 percent of Haitian schools are private (Social Action Consulting, 2016, p. 37) – many of which are for-profit and bound to the preferences of parents. Furthermore, given current limited governmental resources and strength, it

is difficult for such policy to be adopted without broad stakeholder buy-in. Thus, understanding and addressing potential popular resistance is key to successful policy implementation.

Linguistic capital, unfair markets, and the pragmatic dispositions of the Bourdieusian habitus

The proposition that languages are not merely neutral communicative systems but rather social resources of differing material, cultural, and symbolic value is the subject of Pierre Bourdieu's famous treatise *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991).

According to Bourdieu, each individual's linguistic repertoire can be considered as their *linguistic capital*. As we go through life, we use our linguistic capital to acquire different kinds of capital, such as economic capital in the form of access to employment, or social capital in the form of social networks and marriage opportunities. Our environment with its "exchange rate" of different capitals represents a *linguistic market*. How an individual behaves in and navigates this market is based on their *habitus* – a set of embodied dispositions that drives how we interact with the world, often with automaticity. Initially developed during our childhood and characterized by Bourdieu as our *second nature* or *sense of the game*, our habitus directs our behavior or *practice*. The habitus operates such that we derive various forms of capital from our interactions, following what Bourdieu refers to as *rational practice* or *economic logic* – in his broad sense of the term "economic" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 50).

The most valuable linguistic capital and habitus are not evenly distributed throughout society. Members of the dominant class will have acquired from their backgrounds the linguistic competencies, manners, and dispositions for successfully navigating domains key to wielding power, such as elite schools, boardrooms, politics, prestigious social settings, etc., whereas members of non-dominant groups will often lack the speech and behavior to comfortably

participate in these same settings (Bourdieu, 1991). In schools, unequal initial distributions of academically valuable linguistic capital contribute to children from underprivileged backgrounds failing at a disproportionately high rate (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970).

Haitians' affective associations towards French and Kreyòl

The Haitian linguist Michel DeGraff discusses an additional factor for why members of the Haitian non-elite may resist pro-Kreyòl reform.³ According to DeGraff, the Haitian education system, with its French-based curriculum and common use of physical and psychological punishments for Kreyòl use in school, results in the Haitian people despising their language (DeGraff, 2022). DeGraff considers these affective associations as a form of (neo)colonial hegemony and contends that this causes Haitians to feel more positively towards people, products, and institutions that employ French as opposed to Kreyòl.⁴ As such, they may purchase or pursue francophone products and institutional services over Kreyòl counterparts, including their selection of a school for their children.

DeGraff's observations with respect to Kreyòl have been recognized by others (Jean-Charles, 1987; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994; Jean-François, 2006) and found to hold true for language attitudes towards creole languages in general (Winford, 1976; Bancu et al., 2024; Mühleisen, 2022; Migge et al., 2010; Migge & Léglise, 2012). Rather than being individual opinions or quirks, the attitudes, stances, and affective associations we hold towards languages are connected to broader social practices and ideologies (Besnier, 1990; Dewaele, 2010; Francard et

³ In DeGraff's analysis of Haiti's linguistic exclusion, he also emphasizes the importance of increasing Kreyòl's value as a linguistic capital *à la Bourdieu* and argues that it has unrealized pragmatic value as a tool for education and development (DeGraff & Stump, 2018).

⁴DeGraff draws parallels with the infamous "doll-test," an experiment whereby African-American children expressed preference for white dolls over black dolls as they were somehow "prettier" and "better" (DeGraff, 2023).

al., 1993; Gal, 1979; Jaffe, 2001, 2013; Lippi-Green, 2012; Mendoza-Denton, 1999; Pavlenko, 2005; Woolard & Gahng, 1990).

Affect, submission, and drag effect

The role of affect in human behavior has been considered as a "gap in Bourdieu's metatheory" (Houston & Swords, 2022, p. 1934). Given his persistent use of economic metaphor, such conclusions are understandable despite affect being arguably implicitly present in much of his work.⁵

In contrast, the sociologist Norbert Elias developed his own account of habitus which emphasizes affect and its interrelationship with macro-level structures – his "social figurations" (Elias, 1939/2012).⁶ Studying sources such as etiquette books across centuries of European history, Elias observed that what Europeans have considered shameful corresponds and adapts to changes in society. Differing from Bourdieu's general description of "dispositions," Elias classifies the output of our habitus⁷ into two types, what he calls a *foreign policy* and a *domestic policy*. First, it is "the centre from which a person steers his or her relations with other things and beings," and accounts in part for our "rational," future-directed behavior. Second, it is "the centre from which a

⁵ Certain scholars have proposed to supplement Bourdieu's theory with notions such as "affective capital" and "affective markets" (Cottingham, 2016; Reay, 2000). Even scholars who do draw on Bourdieu for studying the role of affect acknowledge that it occurs but sparsely or implicitly in his work (Matthäus, 2017; Scheer, 2012).

Bourdieu directly engages with affect in several passages from *Masculine Domination* (2001). Here he describes the dominated as experiencing the "tacitly" accepted limitations imposed upon them as "*bodily emotions* – shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, guilt" (p. 38). These affective "passions of the dominated habitus" cannot be overcome by a "simple effort of will" (p. 39).

Here Bourdieu indicates affect to be a significant and durable aspect of habitus, structuring and restricting human behavior. His analysis remains, however, broad and abstract. It is furthermore unclear how these affective dispositions coalesce or contrast with his typical account of dispositions as following an "economic logic" geared to maximize various capitals. In general, affect remains a secondary and often implicit aspect of Bourdieu's work.

⁶ A dual Bourdieusian-Eliasian theoretical perspective has been advocated for in other recent papers (Paulle, van Heerikhuizen, & Emirbayer, 2012, p. 69; Connolly & Dolan, 2019).

⁷ Alongside "habitus," a term commonly used by interbellum German sociologists (Paulle et al., 2012), Elias interchangeably uses the terms "personality structure," "personality make-up," and "structures of the ego and super-ego."

person ... steers and regulates his or her 'inner life', his or her own affects and impulses" (p. 459). Otherwise stated, the Eliasian habitus directs not only the behavior of the individual's exteriority, but also the behavior of their interiority: the situations and circumstances that invoke joy, happiness, shame, and fear.

These two policies are not disconnected. Elias accounts for the maintenance of social inequality in part through *submissiveness*, outward inaction resulting from internal emotions. Submissiveness results when people experience *shame-fear* when confronted with differences between their own person and the current social ideal. The severity of one's shame response represents the extent to which "external constraints have been turned into self-restraints by the structure of society" (1939/2012, p. 458). When this has successfully occurred, rather than resisting social inequalities, the dominated become crippled into inaction by shame of their own "inadequacy"; hence, the dominant have no need to use overt force to enforce their privilege.

A submissive habitus accounts for why individuals do not fight against the status quo. In certain situations, however, the dominated may actively prevent macro-level social changes, notably when the change collides with their existing habitus. What happens in such situations "depends entirely on the relative strength of the social shift and the deep-rootedness and therefore the resistance of the social habitus" which can slow or block a process of social change (Elias, 1987/2001, p. 211). Elias refers to this struggle between habitus and social change as *drag effect*.⁸

⁸ Both Elias and Bourdieu describe habitus and social structure as shaping each other and thus tending to be mutually well-adjusted. Each of these sociologists, however, considers situations where habitus and social structure are misaligned. Elias does this through his concept of drag effect, where society struggles to change due to the resistance of existing collective habitus. Bourdieu has a similar concept, although his analysis focuses on a different aspect of the misalignment. He calls this *hysteresis* and describes it as occurring where social structures change faster than an individual's habitus can adapt (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 130). For example, when "[Algerian] peasants endowed with a precapitalist habitus were suddenly uprooted and forcibly thrown into a capitalist cosmos" (p. 130). Bourdieu's focus, in contrast to Elias, is on the problems that this misalignment causes the individual, now out of sync with the world around them due to their habitus having been shaped under drastically different conditions. Given that this article is focused on popular resistance to MTE reform, drag effect is employed rather than the closely related hysteresis.

In the case of Haiti, the linguistic-affective associations described by DeGraff (2022) – positive emotions felt towards French and negative emotions felt towards Kreyòl – could potentially exercise a drag effect on the adoption of MTE, slowing or blocking its adoption for reasons that extend beyond any pragmatic "*economic logic*." The potential for common, affective dimensions of the Haitian habitus to result in MTE resistance, and how precisely this could operate, are topics of the investigation below.

Methods and Sample

The data used for the present investigation consists of fifteen semi-structured interviews conducted in January and February of 2022 in southeast Haiti with non-elite Haitians who were largely monolingual in Kreyòl. This methodology was selected for exploring Haitians' relationship with and understanding of language in their society as interviews are generally considered the best method for capturing the lived experience, attitudes, and perspectives of individuals (J. Ritchie & Spencer, 1994).

These interviews represent half of the interviews I conducted during my fieldwork. The others were with Haitian elites, most of whom grew up in francophone households (see Chapter 7). The distinction between *elites* and *non-elites* was determined by a *positional approach* (Domhoff, 2005; Mills, 1956), based on the position the participants hold in Haitian society. The elites were typically business owners, managers, professors, or high-level employees in large or successful organizations. The sample here thus consists of individuals not in such positions of privilege, prestige, or power. Beyond this distinction, I pursued *maximum variation* amongst the participants to increase the likelihood of capturing different experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

As a purposeful non-random sample, the participants were found through engagement with non-elites in the communities where I travelled and were invited to participate based on their contribution to the variety of the sample.

The final sample consisted of eight men and seven women. Their ages ranged from 24 to 76 years, with the average being 42.3. Their occupations included fisherman, haircutter, street vendor, groundskeeper, student, artisan, farmer, carpenter, souvenir shop owner, hotel concierge, and public accountant. Several had no current employment. Their educational attainment ranged from 3rd grade through university degrees, though many had never completed primary school, which corresponds with the general population. Ethnically, all of the participants were darker skinned than Haiti's "mulatto" ethnic category, though how they might categorize themselves was not asked or recorded. They were sampled from Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, a small mountain village, and a small coastal town (the latter two not identified to protect anonymity).

Before each interview, I expressed that I could speak both French and Kreyòl, albeit neither is my first language. I voiced no preference for either. The interviews with non-elites were conducted mostly in Kreyòl, although several participants spoke a few sentences in French. One participant spoke almost entirely in French for the entire interview – albeit with “mistakes” or “non-standard” aspects of her pronunciation and grammar.⁹ Certain participants spoke a bit of English or Spanish during their interview, and one participant – appearing quite pleased with himself – additionally spoke a sentence or two in German, Italian, and Latin. I generally engaged these participants in Kreyòl, although if a participant was presently addressing me in French, I might then engage them in French until they switched back to Kreyòl.

⁹ Unrounding the French /y/ vowel to /i/, deleting syllable-final /ʁ/, or not conjugating verbs are very common characteristics in the speech of Haitians who acquire some French through schooling (Nikièma, 2011; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994).

The interviews were semi-structured and divided into three main topics: the participants' social origin and exposure to languages as a child, their language use in their adult life today, and their perspectives and preferences on language in Haiti generally. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and in-person, typically lasting around 30 minutes. Most took place in the homes of the participants, although some were in other convenient and private locations. Before participating, all participants gave informed consent, including to be recorded.¹⁰ Participants' names have been changed to preserve anonymity. After the completion of fieldwork, the interview data was coded and analyzed using a process of thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006).

Results

Part 1: The Haitian linguistic market

French is a valuable linguistic capital

The participants expressed that French offers advantages in many spaces and activities in Haitian society. The highlighted domains of use differed from person to person and likely reflected in part the needs, setting, and lifestyle of each individual. The domains included schools and universities, banks, offices, the court system, hospitals, foreign NGOs, formal community meetings, and politics. Some felt learning French (and English and Spanish) would help them gain social capital and socialize with a wider range of people, including foreigners. A few discussed how these languages could help their children leave Haiti and find a better life abroad.

¹⁰ This research project was evaluated and approved by a University of Oxford Research Ethics Committee, coded C1A_20_011.

Some considered French to be a valuable resource for Haiti generally. Jean-Pierre, a 53-year-old man from a fishing village who makes his living selling fish and souvenirs,¹¹ emphatically expressed “YES! [French] is a good thing,” adding “[y]ou have foreigners coming to the country. How are you going to receive them?”¹² He described tourism as very important for Haiti. Thus, accommodating tourists by speaking French – alongside English and Spanish – benefits the country economically.

Another aspect of Haitian life where French was characterized as highly valuable is the dating and marriage market. Often described with smiles and laughter, my male participants explained that speaking French is a strategy used to impress potential female partners. According to Samuel, a 33-year-old carpenter:

Samuel – If [the girl] is a person who goes to school same as you, you have to say some words in French. For example, if you were to say [in Kreyòl] “Mwen renmen w” [“I love you”] you have to say “*Je t’aime*.” (we laugh)

Interviewer – Why is that?

Samuel – Aaaa, because she hears Kreyòl a lot. Every ol’ guy says “Mwen renmen w.” It kind of lacks meaning. But if you say “*Je t’aime*” (laughs) that gives it value.¹³

Kreyòl is unpretentious, a sign of heterosexual masculinity, and essential to the Haitian identity

The cohort expressed that Kreyòl holds an advantage over French in casual interactions and with non-francophone Haitians. Some said Kreyòl has unrealized potential for clearer

¹¹ Jean-Pierre never finished primary school and it is probable that he has only a basic level of French used primarily for selling his wares to tourists. I cannot, however, be certain of this. I never once attempted to test the French level of my participants, as for some this could be a stressful and humiliating event – see stories of Félix below.

¹² Wi!! (enfatik), [fransè] se yon bon bagay. Pou mwen menm. (...) Ou gen etranje k ap vini nan peyi a. Kòman pou resevwa yo?

¹³ Samuel - Ah wi, depi se yon moun ki ale lekòl menm jan avè w, ou oblije di l de mo an fransè. Pa egzanp, si w ta di "Mwen renmen w" ou oblije di l "*Je t'aime*." (nou ri)

Ankètè- Sa k fè sa?

Samuel - Aaaa, paske w konnen li tande kreyòl la anpil. Tout tonton ap di l "Mwen renmen w" an kreyòl. Li yon tijan manke sans. Men si mwen di "*Je t'aime*" (li ri) li vin bay li valè

governmental communication and political participation, and its use in education would improve learning outcomes (see below). Participants emphasized the importance of using Kreyòl with monolingual family members and residents of rural settings, where French use would be viewed as snobby and condescending.

To a lesser extent, men expressed that using French with other men could be construed as effeminate or as flirting and could cause them problems. This signaling of heterosexual masculinity through Kreyòl was not shared by the entire cohort, as Benoit, a 41-year-old artisan who reached the penultimate year of school, felt at his school there was a “competition” amongst all students to use French as much as possible to demonstrate one's intellectual and cultural status.

Participants expressed that Kreyòl is important for both their personal and national identity. Benoit voiced that its name should reflect this: “I don’t usually say that I speak Kreyòl. I say that I speak Haitian. I am a Haitian, and it is Haitian that I should speak.”¹⁴ Lilly, a 39-year-old hotdog street vendor who only finished 3rd grade, stated that if a Haitian speaks French or other languages apart from Kreyòl too well, they no longer appear like Haitians, but rather like foreigners (“blan”).

"Getting to a level," knowing French, and French LOI education

While discussing social climbing and position, several participants employed the terms "getting to a level" or "having a level."¹⁵ For example, Samuel explained that saying “*Je t'aime*” is better because it “shows you are at a level.”¹⁶ Similarly, David, a 44-year-old accountant working for a public office, described the French speakers of his family as follows:

¹⁴ Mwen pa menm konn di mwen pale Kreyòl. Mwen di mwen pale ayisyen. Ayisyen mwen ye mwen menm, se ayisyen pou mwen pale.

¹⁵ Kreyòl: “rive nan nivo” or “gen nivo”

¹⁶ Samuel - Sa montre ou gen nivo.

There are some in my family. Because I have people in my family who have got to a level. For example, in my family there are priests, doctors, engineers, lawyers. That's to say they are getting along. Not a lot! 80 percent of my family, they speak Kreyòl.¹⁷

Being "at a level," academic achievement, and French fluency were closely interconnected.

David described opposing Port-au-Prince neighborhoods in the following manner:

If you go to Martissant, the majority of people are destitute. They are not at a level. They did not go to school to speak French. But even when they have classes in French, they can't speak it.

When you go to Pétionville, you'll see the majority of children speaking French. All the important big families, people who are already at a high level, you'll see that they speak French with their kids.¹⁸

The state of "being at a level" directly implies a certain high economic and social status. At the same time, people who are "at a level" are also fluent in French and tend to succeed in school, especially a "good" school where the teachers speak French.

Part 2: The joy and shame of language in Haiti

The significance of affect quickly became apparent during the interviews. Participants' judgements of others and themselves as "unable to speak French" and "not at a level" were not neutral observations of their linguistic repertoire and social position. These judgements were frequently accompanied by expressions of self-negativity and shame. Lisa, a 31-year-old

¹⁷ Gen kèlke manm fanmi mwen. Paske m gen moun ki rive nan nivo nan manm fanmi mwen. Pa egzanp, gen moun ki pè, gen doktè, gen enjenyè, gen avoka nan fanmi mwen. Sètadi yo degaje yo. Pa anpil (anfatik)! Men 80 pousan nan fanmi m, [se] kreyòl yo pale.

¹⁸ Si w rive Matisan, majorite moun Matisan, se malere yo ye. Yo pa rive nan nivo. Yo pa t ale nan yon lekòl pou pale fransè. Menm lè kou yo fèt an fransè, men yo pa ka pale.

Si w rive Petyonvil, w ap wè majorite timoun ap pale fransè. Tout gran fanmi yo, depi moun nan gentan rive nan nivo avanse, w ap wè an fransè li pale avèk timoun li yo.

unemployed mother of three, lamented: “If I knew how to speaK French, I could have gone far. I could have gotten to a level. I could have started a business. When foreigners would come to my house and speaK French... well, I would not be ashamed to have left school.”¹⁹

Haitian education and the linguistic-affective "complex"

Primary school either instilled or reinforced the participants' association between a lack of French ability and shame. Almost everyone had a story about how they or their peers had been embarrassed or punished by their teachers for using Kreyòl or making mistakes in French. The practice of shaming was generally an institutionalized part of their education. Many described the use of “jeton” or “senbòl.”²⁰ These are small tokens given to students who transgress in class by speaking Kreyòl or committing some disciplinary infraction such as fighting – suggesting a moral equivalence between such actions – and would result in them being punished if holding the token at the end of the day. The ban on Kreyòl might be limited to certain subjects and days or be every day and encompass not only class time but also recess. In the latter situation, Kreyòl was only permitted to be spoken for two or three hours a week in Kreyòl-language lessons.

A few interviewees shared stories of receiving corporal punishment due to their difficulties with French. Evelyne, a 24-year-old student in her final year of secondary school, explained that in her primary school she would be required to sit on her knees (“ajenou”) whenever caught speaking Kreyòl in the classroom. Félix, a 30-year-old resident of a fishing village, described being frequently beaten by his teachers for forgetting or mumbling while reciting long textbook passages in French. He dropped out before finishing primary school.

¹⁹ Si mwen te konn pale franse, mwen te ka ale lwen. Mwen te ka rive nan yon nivo, mwen te ka monte yon biznis. Depi etranje ta vini lakay mwen, pale franse avè mwen... bon, sa pa ta fè m wont, [ke mwen] te kite lekòl.

²⁰ For more on the use of jeton and senbòl see DeGraff (2023), López García et al. (2022), and Garçon et al. (2024).

Participants recalled how the mockery of classmates silenced some students. Rony, a 60-year-old man from the fishing village, expressed “(in French) *Speaking French in school, perhaps there was a little problem, when you do not know the rules of grammar.* (switches to Kreyòl) You are afraid to make mistakes, to make errors. (...) There were often times students who did not want to express themselves because they did not want to make mistakes. They did not want the other students to laugh at them.”²¹

The participants' French level played a significant role in their self-perception as "good" or "bad" students. Samuel, the 33-year-old carpenter, described his first encounter with a young francophone after moving from his remote village to a city for high school:

He was a little kid! He spoke GOOD French! BEAUTIFUL French! And he addressed me in French. I did not feel comfortable enough to reply to him. It hurt me. I was in a higher class than him, but he spoke French better than me. They were going to say that I was a mediocre student.²²

Judgements were not restricted to just academic ability. Benoit described how the French-speaking clique at his high school snubbed him “as someone who isn’t cultivated.”²³

Haiti's two official languages were treated very differently in the participants' schools. During the formative years of their childhood, their teachers and administrators instilled with institutional authority that Kreyòl is a reason for humiliation and punishment and French is a cause for reward and recognition – but then failed to lead them to comfortable fluency.

²¹ Parler français à l'école, peut-être y avait un ti problème. C'est lorsque vous savez pas les règles grammaticales. Ou pè pou pa fè fòt, pou fè erè. ... Anpil dèfwà genyen elèv ki pa eksprime yo, paske yo pa vle fè fòt, yo pa vle lòt elèv ri yo.

²² Se te yon timoun piti. L ap pale GWO franse, BÈL franse (anfatik)! Epi li abòde m an franse tou. Mwen pa santi m alèz pou reponn li. Sa fè m mal. M ap fè pi gwo klas pase l, men li pale franse pi byen pase m. Yo ta pral tou di ke mwen se yon elèv medyòk.

²³ Bon, yo wè m tankou yon moun ki pa kiltive, paske mwen pa ka pale franse.

The shame of not knowing French experienced in adulthood

Not just an unpleasant childhood memory, participants recounted experiences from their adulthood where not being strong in French caused them or others shame. Benoit, the artisan, frequently engages with Haitian businesses who contract him for work. He recounted his discomfort in office spaces, where secretaries "see you as a different person if you speak French," a language he struggles in:

Interviewer: When you go into an office, what language will you speak with [the secretary]?

Benoit: Eh... I... (in a sad tone) I'll speak Kreyòl. I'll speak Kreyòl... (pause) I'll speak Kreyòl... She'll minimize me, but what can I do? I ask in French why they do not speak Kreyòl so that we would better understand each other.

Interviewer: What do they usually say?

Benoit: There are some that laugh.²⁴

Félix, the 30-year-old resident who was beaten for his poor French recitations, recounted various incidents from later in his life where someone addressed him in French and he was unable to respond. To an observer present at these moments, they would likely appear as trivial exchanges, such as when a passing foreigner asked him about the location of a well in French and he was not able to respond. For Félix, however, these are significant and humiliating memories. Here he recounts one such moment with a romantic interest with whom he had often spoken:

²⁴ Benoit – Lè w prezante w nan yon biwo, ou jwenn yon sekretè. Lè w parèt sou sekretè a, "Bonjou madanm! Èske mwen kapab pale avèk Mesye Patrik?" Li gendwa... yon ti jan... (pòz) Men, anmenmtan, si ou parèt, ou di "*Bonjour Madame, puis-je parler avec Monsieur Patrick? Est-ce que je peux voir Monsieur Patrick?*" li eseye bay ou sèvis. Li gentan wè yon lòt moun.

Ankètè – Ou menm, si w ale nan yon biwo, nan ki lang ou pral pale avèk [sekretè a]?

Benoit – Eh... (pòz) mwen... m ap pale kreyòl. (tonalite vwa li vin tris) M ap pale kreyòl. (pòz) M ap pale kreyòl. (pòz). L ap minimize m. Men kisa mwen ka fè? M mande an fransè poukisa yo pa pale kreyòl, paske n ap konprann youn lòt pi byen.

Ankètè – Kisa yo konn di?

Benoit – Gen ki konn ri.

Now, one time I stop her. I am speaking with her. She says three words to me in French. I cannot understand. I feel ashamed. I cannot say anything. She says THREE words to me in French! I feel like an animal has bitten me. I start cursing at myself. I feel like I cannot communicate. I turn away and leave. (pauses) This always happens to me.²⁵

Joy and anger towards the French language

While the inability to speak French may be considered a cause of shame, the participants differed with respect to their feelings towards the language itself, with many feeling positively towards it. Maddi, an unemployed 28-year-old mother of three, was the only participant of this cohort who spoke in French for most of her interview – albeit with occasional struggles and lapses into Kreyòl. She described her childhood home and family as Kreyòl-speaking, but herself as the best French language student in her class.²⁶ She attributed her success in French to her appreciation for it: (Fr) “*a language that I love a whole lot!*”²⁷ Ultimately, her French acquisition was halted when she had to leave high school after becoming pregnant. After this, she explained, (Fr) “*I found no one to help me continue.*”²⁸ Living now in a mostly Kreyòl-speaking environment, she appeared pleased to have the opportunity to speak French with me during the interview.

Rony, the 60-year-old from the fishing village, expressed that it was “better” to use French with people who can understand it – although he did not provide a clear explanation why. He stated that he began to be comfortable in French around 10th grade. When asked if after this he continued to use Kreyòl in his childhood home, he responded:

²⁵ [Y]on fwa, mwen prale nan [vil akote a]. Mwen wè gen yon ti dam, mwen kanpe l. Men, mwen te toujou konn ap pale avè l - an tèm de renmen - pandan l ap sòt lekòl. Kounye a, mwen kanpe l, m ap pale avè l. Li di m twa mo fransè. Mwen pa konprann, mwen santi m wont. Mwen pa ka di l anyen. Li di m twa mo an fransè! Mwen santi se yon bèt ki mòde m. Joure mwen joure m. Mwen santi mwen pa ka kominike. Mwen vire e m ale. (pòz) Sa toujou rive m.

²⁶ Maddi incidentally struggled to express herself at this moment: “*C’était moi qui était pi... pi... pi brille (sic.) de la langue*”

²⁷ Ankètè - Ou te aprann fransè ase vit?

Maddi - Oui, c'est une langue que j'aime beaucoup beaucoup.

²⁸ Je n'ai pas trouvé quelqu'un pour m'aider à continier. Note: I transcribed her consistent use of /i/ in place of /y/.

I always try to speak French. (Fr) But not with my family. Because it ("il") doesn't know how to speak French. If I speak French with my father and my mother, it is as if I insulted (sic), because they don't know what I just said to them. It is better to speak French with my mother and father. But do they understand? If they did not understand, it is not worth it.²⁹

When asked what language he uses now at home with his own children:

(in Kreyòl) We speak mostly French in the house. Kreyòl is still there. Sometimes [my kids] speak Kreyòl, but it is... how can I say this... the ambiance is nicer when they are speaking French.³⁰

The artisan Benoit, despite being pro-Kreyòl in most all respects and having faced both prejudice and humiliation throughout his adult life for his limited French, expressed that he found the use of French in Haitian courtship "extremely good." He lamented "[n]ow this isn't done anymore – and it is the internet above all that is wrecking this. Before you had to speak French when you addressed a girl. If you could not do that, you could not speak to her (laughs)."³¹

Even Félix, who described being unexpectedly spoken to in this language like being “bitten by an animal,” expressed that “French is a language that I like.”³²

On the other hand, other participants expressed in no uncertain terms hostility towards French. Notably Lisa, the aforementioned 31-year-old unemployed mother, repeatedly interjected "I don't like French!" when discussing her education. She described in detail the day she decided to quit school in 7th grade. Potentially already at risk of dropping out after her father died and she

²⁹ Ankètè - Lè ou te kòmanse konnen fransè byen, lè ou te ale lakay ou, se te toujou kreyòl?

Rony - M toujou eseye pale fransè, mais c'est pas avec ma famille. Parce qu'il sait (sic) pas parler français. Si je parle français avec mon père et ma mère, c'est comme si j'ai insulté (sic), parce qu'ils savent pas ce que je viens de leur dire. C'est mieux de parler français avec mon père et ma mère. Mais est-ce qu'ils comprennent? Et s'ils comprenaient pas, ça vaut pas de la peine (sic).

³⁰ Rony - Nou pale fransè plis nan kay la. Kreyòl toujou la. Defwa [timoun mwen yo] pale Kreyòl. Men yo gen... koman m ka di sa... gen plis anbyans lè y ap pale fransè.

³¹ Sa mwen te twouve ki te ekstrèman byen, lontan ki pa fèt kounye a - se sitou entènèt ki la ki vin kraze sa - ou te oblije adrese w an fransè avèk yon demwazèl. Si ou pa ka fè sa, ou pa ka pale avè l.

³² Lang fransè a se yon lang mwen renmen

Note: there is some difficulty here translating “renmen” which can span from English “like” to “love.”

moved in with her grandmother, one day some foreigners visited her school and addressed each student individually in French in front of the class. Unable to respond to their questions, Lisa recounted "I was ashamed, I cried. I took my backpack and went home. Then [my grandmother] asked for my decision. I said 'I am not going back to school.'"³³

The cohort's affective associations with French were complex and at times contradictory. Interviewees might consider French to be harmful for Haitian society but then feel nostalgic recalling speaking it during their teenage romances. At one moment, a participant might be visibly saddened revisiting a moment of linguistic humiliation, and then at another moment express warmth for the language. Even Lisa, who repeatedly stated "I don't like French," expressed different emotions when it came to her own children's French acquisition, as we will see below.

Part 3: Reproduction of sociolinguistic structures

The perceived necessity and intergenerational difficulties of French acquisition

At times the participants' sense of pragmatic necessity appeared to come first with respect to the academic and linguistic choices that they make for their children. Nadine, a 43-year-old small shop owner who decried French as the language of Haiti's political "thieves," expressed simultaneously a desire for her children to know French and a frustration at the harms she perceives it to cause the country:

Interviewer – If you could choose a second language to give your children, and then they'd speak it completely?

Nadine – I'll choose French, because we live in Haitian society.

Interviewer – And if someone cannot speak French in Haitian society?

Nadine – (animated) That is what makes the country in this state! You see the country?? This is the problem there is here! You see it is divided? Haiti is divided!³⁴

³³ Mwen wont, m kriye, mwen pran valiz mwen, mwen ale lakay mwen. Kounye a [grann mwen] mande m desizyon m. Mwen di l "mwen p ap tounen lekòl la ankò."

³⁴ Ankètè - Si ou ta ka chwazi yon dezyèm lang pou pitit ou yo, pou ba yo, epi pou yo pale li nèt?

David expressed that French makes it harder for students to learn and that he would prefer almost all subjects be taught in Kreyòl. He chooses, however, to put his own children in a kindergarten where “you’ll see the teachers speaking entirely in French with the children”³⁵ – likely paying a much higher tuition for this. He explained his reasoning: “[w]hen a child speaks French, society sees them well. They give them more value. They give the child more importance. They say ‘That’s a kid from an important family.’”³⁶

Antoinette, a 42-year-old haircutter, felt that it would be better if all core school subjects were taught in Kreyòl, but also expressed “[f]or my child, I would like to put him in a big-deal school” – contextually none of which employ MTE – “for them to teach him GOOD French. But I cannot do that with my kind of work.”³⁷

The participants' life stories revealed an intergenerational socioeconomic and linguistic dilemma: they need French to advance socioeconomically, but they need to be socioeconomically advanced to have access to French.

Nadine - M ap chwazi fransè paske nou nan sosyete ayisyen an.

Ankètè - E si yon moun pa ka pale fransè nan sosyete a?

Nadine - (tèlman anime) Se sa ki fè peyi a eta sa a! Ou wè eta peyi a?? [S]e pwoblèm sa a n gen la. Ou pa wè li divize? Ayiti divize!

³⁵ Nan kindègadenn [pitit mwen yo] w ap wè pwofesè se fransè nèt yo pale avèk timoun yo.

³⁶ Lè timoun nan pale fransè, sosyete a wè l pi byen. Yo ba li plis valè. Yo bay timoun nan plis enpòtans. Yo di "Sa se yon timoun de gran fanmi.

³⁷ Pou pitit mwen an, mwen ta vle mete li nan yon GWO lekòl pou yo montre li pale BON fransè. Men m pa gen fòm travay pou mwen fè sa.

Submission and the shame-fear of not knowing French

Participants often expressed that French is a necessity for accessing certain spaces within Haitian society: “(t)here are places, if you don’t know French, you cannot enter.”³⁸ None of the participants, however, reported that an inability to speak French ever resulted in them or someone they saw being physically removed or directly asked to leave. What they described instead is that not knowing French could result in individuals being publicly humiliated. Evelyne, the secondary school student, recounted how the employees of a money transfer office appeared intentionally unaccommodating to a man who needed help with a transfer, who in turn reacted submissively rather than defiantly to this treatment:

[The employees] were speaking French with him. He did not understand anything that they were saying. He felt embarrassed. Other people were telling him what they were saying.³⁹

When asked about instances where a bilingual Haitian would speak French rather than Kreyòl to them, participants typically expressed deference to the use of the dominant language even if they could not understand it.⁴⁰ Félix said he would react as follows: “What I can understand, I will understand. Sometimes [when] they are speaking, I will not understand it. I will just stay in myself. I won’t understand them, I will just stay there. It isn’t a problem. I won’t die.”⁴¹ Lilly, the

³⁸ Ankètè - Pou ou menm, sa w panse ak lang franse nan sosyete ayisyen an?

Nadine - O! Se yon gwo bagay. Gen kote, si w pa konn de mo franse, ou pa ka antre.

³⁹ Nan biwo transfè, te gen yon mesye ki pa konn li. Men y ap pale franse avè l, li pa konprann anyen nan sa y ap di l la. Li santi l jennen, li pa ka konprann, [s]e lòt moun k ap di l kisa y ap di.

⁴⁰ Note Benoit's requests for secretaries to speak Kreyòl appeared to be ultimately unsuccessful and embarrassing experiences for him (see above).

⁴¹ Ankètè - Si yon Ayisyen vini devan w, e li komanse pale avèk ou an franse...

Félix - Sa mwen ka konprann nan, m ap konprann li. Dèfwà, [lè] l ap pale, m p ap konprann li. M ap jis rete nan mwen menm. M pa konprann li, m ap rete. [S]e pa yon pwoblèm, non. Mwen p ap mouri.

street food vendor, expressed that such cases only make her want to know French so that “when they speak French to me, I could understand.”⁴²

The participants' inability to speak French was often tied to poor self-image. Félix's expressions of self-loathing were the most striking. When asked what he would do if he were suddenly fluent in French, his initial answer appeared a calm calculation of the benefits it would offer: “I would look for work where I could speak French well. I could help my family, my mother, my father, my children.”⁴³ He paused there and I moved on to my next question. He ignored this, interjecting:

Christ would be coming down, if... Sometimes, I feel blocked when people are speaking French in front of me. I cannot speak. I tense up. I feel there is a hatred in my heart, I feel unwell. When people are speaking [French], I often think to myself “If I had stayed in school, even if I could not speak a lot, if I could get by with a few words.”⁴⁴

Lisa was the participant who expressed the most negative opinion of French. Her feelings with regard to her own children using it, however, demonstrated the complex and contradictory nature of affect towards language. At first, she light-heartedly expressed that her children are not allowed to speak French at home with her, particularly her oldest child, an 11-year-old son:

[My son] says (*in French*) “*Mami, I want some milk. I want some water.*” I say “OH! You speak Kreyòl with me! Not French! When you are at school, you speak French, when you are at home, you speak Kreyòl with me!” (laughs)⁴⁵

⁴²[Mwen vle konnen fransè pou] lè se fransè y ap pale avè m, mwen ka konprann. Men si se kreyòl y ap pale avè m, m ap gentan konprann kreyòl la. Men lè se fransè, l ap difisil. Se sa ki fè mwen ta renmen pale l.

⁴³ Mwen t ap chache yon travay, kote mwen t ap ka pale fransè trè byen. Mwen t ap ka ede fanmi m. Manman m, papa m, pitit mwen

⁴⁴ Kris t ap desann, si... (pòz) Dèfwà, mwen konn santi m mare, lè mwen wè y ap pale devan mwen. Mwen pa ka pale. M mare. Mwen santi se yon èn ki nan kè mwen. Mwen pa santi m alèz. Lè moun ap pale, dèfwà mwen konn met nan tèt mwen, m di “si mwen te rèt lekòl, menm si m pa ta ka pale anpil, men mwen ta ka degaje m ak kèk mo. »

⁴⁵ Li di “Mami [sic], je veux du lait. Je veux de l'eau.” M di “O! An kreyòl pou pale avè m, pa an fransè!! Lè w lekòl nou pale fransè, lè ou lakay, pale kreyòl avè m! (li ri)

She also expressed, however, that French use is the most important factor for her when selecting a school for her children. She explained that she feels happy seeing her son speak French with his classmates:

[When my son speaks French,] oh!! That makes me feel good! Because I have... I have a child who speaks French. For example, when he meets up with a classmate, he speaks French with them. That makes me feel really happy.⁴⁶

She dreams that through French, alongside English and Spanish, her son will find an important job and travel abroad. She smiled broadly imagining her son in the future calling her and speaking to her in French: "He'll call me [and say] '*Mami, je...*' (she makes nonsensical French sounds for several seconds). I'll say '...yes.' (laughs heartily)."⁴⁷

Towards the end of the interview, we once again revisited the growing linguistic divide between herself and her children. This time, she expressed both pride and submission when confronted with their French use:

Interviewer – [As you said before,] your children come home, and they say (*Fr*) "*Mom, I want some milk, I want some water.*" You see they are speaking French.
Lisa – Yes, I feel proud that they are speaking like that. But, when they speak French like that with me, I don't reply to them. I get them milk, I get them water.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ O! sa fè m plezi [lè ti gason mwen pale fransè]. Paske, m gen... m gen pitit mwen an k ap pale fransè. Pa egzanp, lè li jwenn yon kamarad de klas, l ap pale fransè avè l. Sa fè m plezi anpil.

⁴⁷ L ap rele m: "Mami, je... (li fè son fransè ki pa fè okenn sans). M ap di "Wi." (li ri anpil)

⁴⁸ R - [Kòm ou te di talè a, pitit ou yo] rive lakay, yo di w "Maman, je veux du lait, je veux de l'eau." Ou wè y ap pale fransè

I - Wi, mwen santi m fyè, y ap pale konsa. Men, lè y ap pale fransè konsa avè m, mwen pa reponn yo, non. Mwen pran lèt, pou m ba yo l. Mwen pran dlo, m ba yo l.

Lisa's 11-year-old son has not yet fulfilled his mother's dreams for his life course nor reached "a level." He does not yet have a good job nor has he travelled abroad. He has not married a girl from a "good family" nor become friends with foreigners or people of high society. There have yet to be any significant socioeconomic "profits" from his first years of education. It is furthermore highly probable that his French is very basic and he is mostly parroting sentences he learned in school.⁴⁹ And yet, his mother is already deriving a benefit from his schooling – the joy she feels seeing him "speak French" and imagining what his life may be in the future.

Discussion

In this paper, the data collected from fifteen interviews with mostly monolingual Haitian non-elites has been analyzed in order to investigate why there exists popular resistance to Kreyòl MTE in Haiti. We will now discuss three general points below: how the sociolinguistic status quo is maintained, how French LOI schooling offers immediate affective rewards, and how this affective dimension may create a drag effect slowing the adoption of MTE.

Reproduction of the status quo: French-language scarcity and submission

In many aspects the interview data corresponds to Pierre Bourdieu's theory. Although Kreyòl is required for many common domains and functions, the interviewees recognize French as necessary for "getting to a level." It is a form of linguistic capital with value for employment, romantic courtship, and participation in various prestigious activities. Furthermore, the participants contribute to maintaining its value by paying higher tuition for schools perceived to use more French.

⁴⁹ See Discussion section below regarding how few Haitian students ever truly achieve comfortable fluency in French.

The cohort described an intergenerational socioeconomic and linguistic "Catch-22" – they need French to climb socioeconomically, but they need to be socioeconomically advanced to access French (via expensive schools). Indeed, despite Haiti's history of French-dominant education policy, the language has not spread to the general population (DeGraff, Frager, & Miller, 2022). Most Haitian children who enter school will never acquire French, particularly the most valued "good" French of the elite. Even for the small minority of Haitian children from Kreyòl-monolingual backgrounds who do finish secondary school – noting that only 10 percent of students who start school will one day graduate (MENFP & DPCE, 2015) – they are typically not comfortable in spoken French (Dejean, 2010). This results from a focus on rote memorization and from an estimated 95 percent of primary school teachers not having more than an elementary level of the language (IFADEM, 2013, p. 23). As such, "good French" remains a rare linguistic capital whose distinctiveness acts to signal membership in the elite, a small minority who pass their linguistic repertoire and habitus from generation to generation within their home settings and expensive schools – a situation mirroring Bourdieu's (1991) account of the durability and reproduction of sociolinguistic hierarchies.

Non-elite Haitians' aspiration to acquire French has been noted in the past. Fleischmann (1984) highlights the distinction between a Kreyòl-monolingual Haitian's actual linguistic competence and practice, on the one hand, versus their aspirations and attitudes, on the other. He notes that while most Haitians are not diglossic with respect to their competence, they aspire to one day know French and even prefer its use in many formal or official settings, including school. He calls this a *fantasy of diglossia*, or *un fantasme de diglossie*⁵⁰ (Fleischmann, 1984, p. 102). This

⁵⁰ Fleischmann borrowed this term from Lafont's (1982) analysis of Occitan communities in France. Note, Zéphir (2010) translates the term into English as "phantasm of diglossia." I follow Lubin (2018) in using "fantasy."

understanding has been supported by the research and commentaries of others (Zéphir, 2010, p. 61; DeGraff, 2017b, p. 185; Lubin Jr, 2018, p. 151).

This cohort also gave descriptions of language-related punishment and shaming in school similar to those of DeGraff (2022), resulting in them having a "complex." Beyond school, the participants described the affective costs of not knowing French during adulthood. They told stories of Haitians engaging in a form of shame-based submission. When bilingual Haitians address them in French, participants described feeling embarrassment or even self-loathing – an internalization of macro-level linguistic hierarchies into their habitus' *domestic policy* (à la Elias). As such, they demonstrate deference and submission rather than defiance towards French. From their experiences in formal education and later adult life, they appear to have recognized and tacitly accepted a certain social ideal – the eloquent French-speaker. They see themselves as falling short, and thus consider their exclusion from francophone activities and institutions not as a shortcoming of their society but rather of themselves.

As the data also reveals, the Haitian ideal and its affective associations can have specific consequences for how stakeholders feel with regard to MTE versus French-LOI schooling.

The immediate affective reward of French LOI schooling

The participants discussed three closely interconnected attributes of the socially "ideal" individual in Haiti:⁵¹

- "Being at a level"
- Knowing "good" French
- Having been successful in a "good" French LOI school⁵²

Exclusion from this socioeconomic–linguistic–academic trinity has affective consequences. The participants expressed feelings of shame, regret, and humiliation with respect to lower socioeconomic status, being unable to speak French, and failing to have gone far in school. Gaining entry into this tri-conditional state and enjoying its socioeconomic and affective benefits is not simple. The adult interviewees expressed that it was too late for them – they cannot go back in time and return to school, and as such they will never know French nor "get to a level." Wanting a better life for their children and being unable to personally grant them "a level" or French fluency, they may still have some agency regarding their education given the available schooling options and their ability to pay different tuition prices. The cohort expressed that people who are "at a level" did not go to schools where the teachers were speaking Kreyòl. Putting your child in a French LOI school is thus not only a matter of language acquisition, but also of behaving as the privileged behave, a form of elite emulation.

⁵¹ Due to necessary restrictions of scope, we are focusing the analysis on only three attributes of the Haitian ideal. Future analysis could examine how these intersect with skin color, family lineage, gender, competence in Western bourgeois tastes (Marius, 2022), region, religion, etc.

⁵² This was the *perception* of my non-elite cohort. From my interviews with Haitian elites (see Chapter 7), many are now choosing to send their children to English-medium schools.

As discussed above, the actual pragmatic benefits of this academic emulation are neither immediate nor what lower-class parents might have hoped for. But while the material, social, and linguistic rewards may be slow to arrive and underwhelming, there can be immediate affective rewards. Parents, such as Lisa, can experience joy when their child attends an ostensibly "French-speaking" school and comes home producing French utterances. This permits the parents to imagine a bright, francophone future for the child. This optimism may be facilitated through a degree of ignorance – monolingual parents may be unable to assess if the teachers and later their own children have any real competency in French. Furthermore, according to the interviewees' accounts of their own lives, if a student does not acquire French and never "gets to a level" in society, this is because they were a "bad" or "lazy" student, their parents could not afford tuition, they became pregnant, or even because there was a Voodoo curse on their family. No participant voiced "I failed to learn French and get to a level because my primary school teachers spoke too much French and not enough Kreyòl." The failure and hence negative feelings are not associated with LOI policy, but with themselves and their families.

Even when monolingual Haitians express awareness of the potential benefits of MTE and the harms of French LOI education in Haiti, they nonetheless can feel positively towards their own children attending French-dominant schools. These emotions are *not* related to the actual and often traumatizing classroom practices that their children may be experiencing, but rather to the perceived interconnectedness of French LOI education, higher social status, and Haitian francophonie generally. By contrast, Kreyòl-speaking classrooms are not where the francophone Haitians "at a level" send their children. It is for parents who cannot afford to send their children to French LOI schools, parents such as Antoinette the haircutter, who simultaneously considers

MTE to be better for education but regrets that she cannot afford to send her child to a "big deal" French-speaking school.

These affective associations form a part of the Haitian habitus and can have consequences for the adoption of MTE.

Mother-tongue education and the drag effect: A misalignment between old habitus and transformations of the linguistic market

The interview data shows that the habitus of at least some Kreyòl-monolinguals triggers a shame response when they are addressed in French. The character and strength of this shame should not be considered as either a universal facet of human biology or a quirk found in some people. While everyone "by nature" may feel a degree of discomfort when confronted in a language they do not understand, the specificities of Haitian shame-fear and French are shaped by the country's sociolinguistic history, hierarchies, and practices. Consider how, for example, Félix described that being addressed in French felt like being "bitten by an animal," and how years after the fact he recalled the embarrassment that he felt when a foreigner asked him for directions in French. Consider now a different situation. Suppose a Haitian visiting Paris, New York, or Tokyo asked a monolingual local for directions in Kreyòl and they were unable to respond. It is improbable that this Parisian, New Yorker, or Tokyo resident would years later express humiliation reflecting on their inability to understand Kreyòl during this interaction.

Although parents may have endured horrible experiences with French LOI education, they also live in an environment that shames adults for not knowing French and associates French LOI education with higher socioeconomic status. As such, parents may feel immediate affective benefits when placing their child in a "French-speaking" school. This represents a challenge to

MTE reform. Even if convinced of the scientifically attested advantages of Kreyòl education, parents' gut reaction may be displeasure. The pragmatic benefits are long-term, while the negative affective reaction is immediate. For a family to enroll their child in an MTE school, they would no longer be doing as the francophone elite or acting like people who are “at a level” – an emotionally fraught abandonment of their fantasy of a bilingual, diglossic lifestyle for their child.

These aspects of the Haitian habitus could very well contribute to a drag effect like that described by Elias. They reflect hierarchies dating to Haiti's colonial period. Still today Haitians observe during their schooling, however brief it may be, that French results in reward and Kreyòl in punishment. Throughout their life course, they experience or witness acts of public humiliation for inadequate French. They may have personally been snubbed by romantic interests, barred from work, excluded from social activities, blocked from understanding speeches, and struggled to grasp conversations between people of high society. These events do more than shape their pragmatic dispositions. They form how they *feel* towards language, which in turn can play a determinant role in the type of schooling they want for their own children.

Limitations and Future Research

The dataset used in this research project consists of semi-structured interviews between non-elite Haitians and myself. Interview data has been criticized with regard to what it can tell us about the world beyond the singular, mutually constructed interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Silverman, 2011). Indeed, for most of these non-elite Haitian participants being interviewed by a light-skinned Kreyòl-speaking foreign researcher would represent a most uncommon experience. While what they shared (or did not share) was surely in some way impacted by the particularities of our interview interaction, many of the perspectives, attitudes, and stories

clearly did not originate or exist only in these moments. Some participants expressed that this was a topic they frequently discuss with their friends. Others shared stories from their childhood that they expressed had marked their lives. As maintained by Ritchie et al. (2014), concerns regarding interviews being singular and unreproducible interactions should be acknowledged but not overstated, as interviews are nonetheless an effective way of penetrating how participants experience and construct their lives.

Ultimately, this remains a small-n study and no generalizable conclusions can be drawn regarding Haitians' understandings and affect with regard to language, nor how they may correspond to certain demographic characteristics. The intent of this project is to provide interpretative analysis that may serve as a baseline for large-n studies or as a point of comparison for other focused studies.

Future studies could help untangle how demographic characteristics influence Haitians' relation to language. My study indicates that geography and profession could be significant factors.⁵³ Furthermore, younger participants seemed to be more bothered and defiant towards French, and thus age could be a pertinent factor to consider in future studies.⁵⁴ In recent years, Kreyòl has flourished in texting, social media, YouTube, etc. As such, younger Haitians may have

⁵³ For example, the two middle-aged fishermen from the same village felt fairly positive towards French in Haitian society. It may be noteworthy that in their environment and life course French has been used to make sales to tourists – who are likely linguistically accommodating – and the gatekeeping of "elite French" has been largely absent and irrelevant.

⁵⁴ During the fieldwork I witnessed something unexpected at a public event. Speaking before an outdoor audience, a young man was presenting an award of recognition to a local politician. As would be expected, he was speaking in French. As he was doing so, however, he was repeatedly heckled by a group of young women for not speaking Kreyòl – a blatant act of defiance rather than submission to the traditional sociolinguistic order. Furthermore, the youngest participant of this cohort, Evelyne, the 24-year-old high school student, expressed:

[W]e are Haitians. If we think about the country, we should use Kreyòl. How is it that foreigners, they use and love their language. I can't go looking for another language, adapting myself to another language that is not my own.

[P]aske se Ayisyen nou ye. N ap panse nan peyi a, se kreyòl pou nou itilize. Kijan fè etranje a, li menm li itilize lang pa l, li renmen lang ni. M pa ka ap chachè pou yon lòt lang, adapte m ak yon lòt lang ki pa pou mwen.

a different pragmatic and affective relationship with the language. Ultimately, we will have to wait and see how generational differences could impact the future course of Haitian LOI policy.

Conclusion

Using Haiti as a case study, this research project sought to understand popular resistance to MTE by investigating the functioning of a linguistic market, notably the socioeconomic values of dominant and marginalized languages therein, and how this could cause stakeholders to poorly value and avoid MTE. What emerged during the investigation are the powerful affective associations which exist with respect to language, education, and socioeconomic status. The particularities of these emotions result from specific macro-level structures and practices which promote a certain social ideal. This ideal – the educated, socially connected, and well-off speaker of the dominant language – becomes embodied in individuals' habitus such that they experience shame for their "inadequacy." Emulating the actions of the elite for their children offers immediate aspirational pleasure and hope, even if no pragmatic benefits ever arrive. Social changes preventing this desired emulation can face abrupt affective hurdles. Thus, there is a circularity between social structure and affect – our society not only gives us our shame and our fears, but our shame and our fears give us our society.

Chapter 6 References

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Chapter 7 (stand-alone paper #3): Social esteem and the maintenance of linguistic elite closure in Haiti

Social esteem and the maintenance of linguistic elite closure in Haiti

William Scott Frager

University of Oxford

Abstract

This paper examines the role of *social esteem* in the maintenance of *linguistic elite closure* (LEC) in Haiti, where French remains the language of prestige and opportunity despite being spoken natively by only a small upper-class minority, while Kreyòl is universally known but marginalized. Drawing on sixteen semi-structured interviews with members of Haiti's francophone upper class, the study employs thematic analysis to explore how individuals' pursuit of positive social evaluations shapes and reproduces sociolinguistic hierarchies and boundaries. Findings from the interviews show how upper-class Haitians learn standards of language-based esteem from within their homes as children, observing differences in how language is used based on class, gender, and age. While each language is circumstantially better received depending on characteristics of the speaker, audience, and setting, in formal contexts French is notably an important signal of elite belonging, education, and respectability. Correct language use emerges as a bidirectional bestower of esteem. When correctly used, French simultaneously confers a positive social evaluation from the speaker onto their audience, and vice versa ("We are both educated, upper-class, and/or from a good family"). In contrast, in such contexts Kreyòl use risks conferring negative *disesteem* onto one or both interlocutors ("One of us requires Kreyòl because they are uneducated and lower-class."). Poor attitudes towards "bad" Acquired French and Kreyòl furthermore reinforce linguistic and social boundaries. Additionally, social-climbing political elites' expectation of receiving esteem through their Acquired French perpetuates the language's dominance rather than leading to reform. These dynamics reveal the importance of French as a currency in Haiti's *economy of esteem*, whereby individuals' pursuit of positive social esteem and avoidance of disesteem aggregate into a macro-level *intangible backhand* which maintains LEC.

Keywords: linguistic elite closure, Haiti, elites, social esteem

Introduction

Haiti is a well-documented case of durable *linguistic elite closure* or *LEC*¹ – "a type of social mobilization strategy by which those persons in power establish or maintain their powers and privileges via linguistic choices" (Myers-Scotton, 1993a, p. 149). In the Caribbean island nation of 12 million people, French is a mother tongue of only a small upper-class portion of the population, estimated at 3 to 5 percent (DeGraff, 2017; Hebblethwaite, 2012) but offers social and economic advantages in many domains essential to acquiring education, wealth, and status (DeGraff, Frager, & Miller, 2022; Dejean, 1993; Govain, 2014; Guillaume, 2011; Hebblethwaite, 2012). Although Haiti has been an independent nation since 1804, French has not spread to the general population, nor have key governmental and private institutions operationally integrated Kreyòl (i.e. Haitian Creole) – the only language known to all Haitians (DeGraff, 2007; Haitian Government, 1987). The durability of this sociolinguistic disequilibrium is puzzling. Despite the French language's association with colonialism and the brutal slavery of pre-revolutionary Saint-Domingue, and despite the Haitian population being famous for its history of popular protest (Heinl et al., 2005), Haiti's "linguistic apartheid" continues to persist.

Myers-Scotton (1993a) attributes the maintenance of LEC primarily to education systems which fail to spread the dominant language and to the informal linguistic practices of the upper class which designate certain activities and spaces as reserved uniquely for speakers of the dominant language. While a large literature exists with regard to the problem of language in the Haitian school system (DeGraff et al., 2022; Dejean, 1993; Govain, 2014; Hittenberger, 1987;

¹ Myers-Scotton (1993a) referred to her concept as *elite* closure. Here the qualifier "linguistic" is added to distinguish it from forms of social closure characterized by other traits, such as ethnicity, religion, geography, etc.

Jean-Charles, 1987; Jean-François, 2006; Prou, 2009), relatively little research exists directly addressing the language practices and attitudes of upper-class bilingual Haitians (Efron, 1954; Zéphir, 1990), with it receiving some secondary attention in studies on the Haitian elite themselves (Marius, 2022; Thomaz, 2005).

Building on Zéphir's (1990) observation that bilingual Haitians select between French and Kreyòl in part based on how they wish to be perceived and the respect they wish to confer upon their interlocutor, this paper examines the interrelationship between *social esteem* (Brennan & Pettit, 2004; Salice, 2020), upper-class linguistic practice, and the durability of Haiti's LEC. The study employs data from sixteen original interviews conducted with members of the Haitian upper class in January and February of 2022. A thematic analysis was then conducted on the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006), informed by literature from social esteem theory and sociolinguistics. The results are presented descriptively and categorized into three themes (with various sub-themes): the upper class learn linguistic standards of esteem as children, language is a currency in Haiti's economy of esteem, and language attitudes influence systems of social esteem.

Four points are then discussed for further analysis. First, upper-class Haitians alternate between French and Kreyòl as part of a strategy to guard and gain esteem, not just to ease communication. Second, language choice in Haiti bestows esteem (or *disesteem*) bidirectionally to both speaker and audience, and thus choosing to ignore linguistic norms has consequences for both interlocutors. Third, Haitian upper-class disesteem towards "bad" Acquired French² and towards Kreyòl contributes to the maintenance of social and linguistic boundaries. Lastly, social

² I loosely employ the term "Acquired French" to signal that they acquired French through their schooling or other sources rather than as an L1 from comfortably fluent parents or caretakers. Furthermore, this French does not pass for the "Good French" of the elite.

climbers' anticipation of receiving esteem through their Acquired French further blocks the use of Kreyòl in certain contexts.

While various pragmatic and pedagogical considerations may contribute to the durability of linguistic exclusion, these findings demonstrate that language acts as an important currency in economies of esteem, as speakers use "prestigious" language varieties in anticipation of receiving and signaling positive social evaluations. These findings demonstrate how the practices of individuals seeking to guard or bestow esteem can aggregate into a macro-level *intangible backhand* which works to maintain the social disequilibrium of linguistic elite closure from both above and below.

Literature Review

Haiti's sociolinguistic hierarchy and history

Haiti is one of the best documented cases of LEC (DeGraff, 2017; DeGraff et al., 2022; Hebblethwaite, 2012; Prou, 2009). In what has been described as a *creole continuum* (Chaudenson & Mufwene, 2002), French linguistic features serve as a means of demonstrating higher status, with "good" Haitian French serving as the highest-status language variant or *acrolect*, speech using more French pronunciations and vocabulary being intermediary *mesolects*, and the most French-distant rural or lower-class Kreyòl variants being the *basilect(s)*.

This gradience of French linguistic features and social status dates to colonial-era hierarchies. At the moment of independence in 1804, French competency would have been greater amongst higher-status black *creoles* – African descendants born in Haiti who were either freemen or higher-ranking in the slavery-plantation system – and the ethnically mixed *mulattoes*. Some of these individuals would have been completely fluent, particularly amongst the mulattoes, many of

whom were raised by their French fathers or even studied in France. For the vast majority of the new nation's population, lower-status *creoles* or African-born *bossales*, direct exposure to French and its influence on their Kreyòl would have been rarer (Chaudenson & Mufwene, 2002).

The linguistic hierarchy was maintained and concretized in the newly independent nation's institutions. While the first constitution sought to eliminate racial inequalities, declaring all Haitians to be "black," it was written only in French (Janvier, 1886). Schools, universities, government bodies, and courts were declared to operate in "*la langue de la république*" (Vincent & Lhérisson, 1895). Today, over two centuries later, key institutions are still dominated by French, and yet the language remains a home language of but a small elite (DeGraff, 2017).

Haitian upper-class linguistic practice

There are few modern studies on the attitudes and lifestyles of the Haitian upper class, let alone their linguistic practices (Marius, 2022; Thomaz, 2005; Zéphir, 1990). From the mid-20th century, Efron (1954) noted the importance of French acquisition for social mobility and also that urban Haitians are fond of mocking French mistakes. Zéphir's more recent PhD dissertation (1990) offers many insights into bilingual Haitians' language use. Her findings demonstrate a highly complex bilingual practice with the selection of language dependent on many factors. These include the topic of conversation, location, familiarity, presence of young upper-class children (whose parents want them to master French), and degree of respect associated with gender, age, and professional hierarchy – with women, older elites, and white-collar managers shown respect via French use (p. 241). In a later study, Zéphir discusses how initial Kreyòl use towards an unknown individual may be viewed as very insulting, as it suggests that you have judged the person as lower-class and uneducated (Zéphir, 1996, p. 115). When in doubt, French is the safest language

of initial contact, after which the conversation may continue in Kreyòl contingent on other variables.

Zéphir (1990) describes an inherent tension in French use in Haiti due to its ties with the former colonial power and the slavery of Saint-Domingue, its bourgeois status held to exclude the majority, and its perception as contrary to supporting a true Haitian cultural identity. But even if an upper-class Haitian professes a pro-Kreyòl ideology, she discusses two reasons why it might be difficult for them to reduce their actual French use. The first regards ease of communication, as bilinguals may lack the academic or technical language in Kreyòl to discuss certain subjects. This issue is not sufficient to explain the long-term maintenance of French use, as it is common for languages to create or integrate new words into their vocabulary, also known as *corpus planning* (Haugen, 1983). The second explanation has greater sociological explanatory power. By breaking norms and using Kreyòl where an upper-class Haitian would use French, the speaker risks insulting their interlocutor or suggesting that they themselves do not know either French or proper upper-class etiquette, resulting in "[a]ttribution to the wrong (inferior) social status, which in turn leads to the rejection and denial of the attention, care, consideration and treatment expected" (p. 241). Given the risks of ostracization and benefits of guarding one's respectability and membership amongst the *privilégiés*, upper-class Haitians are ultimately ambivalent about changing their practice by introducing Kreyòl in contexts currently reserved for French.

Social Esteem

Zéphir's conclusion indicates there to be an important relationship between *esteem* and the durability of upper-class Haitian linguistic practice, but she does not evaluate this in depth.

Consequent interest and developments in the social theory of esteem provide a new lens for this interrelationship to be explored.

Esteem, etymologically derived from the Latin *aestimare*, meaning "to determine the material or moral value of something,"³ in modern English typically implies a favorable evaluation, "[t]o regard as valuable; to think highly of; to feel regard for, respect" ("Oxford English Dictionary," 2025). Social theorists of esteem focus on evaluations of people and typically use the term "*esteem*" in either a neutral or favorable sense, employing the term "*disesteem*" to emphasize when an evaluation is negative (Brennan & Pettit, 2004; Salice, 2020).

Esteem can be self-directed (self-esteem) or directed between people (social esteem). Social esteem, the evaluations we have of each other and our perceptions of this, has a significant influence on human behavior. This has led to interest in how esteem operates in the workplace, as feeling valued by co-workers and supervisors has been shown to act as a powerful motivator apart from the financial and material incentives traditionally emphasized by mainstream economics (Carson, Carson, Lanford, & Roe, 1997; Ellingsen & Johannesson, 2007).

What causes a person to gain or lose esteem with others is socially contingent. An evaluator must have learnt, often unconsciously, standards by which to evaluate themselves and others. Furthermore, an evaluator employs different standards dependent upon the evaluated person's (perceived) membership in one group or another – e.g. academics and athletes are esteemed by different standards. Common practices within the given group serve as a baseline by which the standard of esteem is set (e.g. "an average lecturer" or "a stellar golfer").

Brennan and Pettit (2004) describe esteem as a resource that is scarce – it is not freely accessible for anyone to accumulate as they please but requires certain behaviors or work to obtain

³ <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/aestimo>

– and for which there is demand, supply, and competition. Drawing on Adam Smith, they outline their model of an *economy of esteem*. Each individual's pursuit of esteem and avoidance of disesteem aggregates into regularized macro-level social behavior, shaping society like an *intangible hand*. People's esteem-directed behavior may operate for the public good, such as earning esteem for being charitable and productive. On the other hand, one group's pursuit of esteem may be "detrimental to the population at large or to other groups" (p. 246), operating as an *intangible backhand* against the public good.

Their analysis does not, however, explore the role of language use and attitudes. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the pertinent question is thus how language factors into economies of esteem, and when does it generate public benefits or public harm.

Language and social esteem

Drawing on the existing sociolinguistic literature, below we overview four key insights into how language can operate in an economy of esteem.

The first point is that observable linguistic variation within a population corresponds to different standards of esteem for different social identities. A canonical example is that women's speech tends to be closer to standard or high-prestige variants than men's speech, after controlling for education level and social class (Labov, 1990; Trudgill, 1972). In addition to their actual language use, Trudgill (1972) found in his study of English-speakers from Norwich that the women over-reported their use of high-prestige linguistic features and men their use of working-class features. Trudgill argues that the working-class variants offer men a *covert prestige*. While men recognize these variants as lower-status or "incorrect," their use conveys roughness and toughness, traits which are to some degree estimable in men irrespective of class – but not so for women.

Furthermore, the same language variant will have different social significations depending on who is the speaker. Elyan et al. (1978) showed that the higher-status British Received Pronunciation is both marked as authoritative, but more so for female speakers, and as showing weakness, but more for male speakers. Thus, a person may adopt or avoid certain linguistic features given how their use of them will be perceived given standards of esteem for their social identity.

The second point is that speakers alternate between language variants depending on what is most socially appropriate and hence estimable for a given context and audience (Gumperz, 1964; Hymes, 1967). Depending on the sociolinguistic landscape, members of a speech community may regularly alternate between distinct languages (Spanish: Guaraní in Paraguay), varieties of the same language (Standard German: dialect), or pronouns of formality (*tu* : *vous* in French) (Hymes, 1967). Appropriate code selection requires a speaker to have acquired both the linguistic codes and a habitus which reflects an often unconscious understanding of indexicality between language and social signification (Bourdieu, 1991; Myers-Scotton, 1988). A given code may be the generally preferred choice for a specific domain – e.g. school, work, etc. (Ferguson, 1959; Fishman, 1972), or be used alongside other codes within the same conversation, i.e. code-switching (Myers-Scotton, 1993b). This alternance allows speakers to not only show different levels of familiarity and respect, but also to emphasize or downplay different aspects of their identity. Thus, our linguistic production is one aspect of how we present different "selves" depending on our understanding of what will be positively evaluated given the context and audience (Goffman, 1959).

The third point is that prestige language use may be more important when other resources of social esteem are not available. Trudgill (1972) argues that the observed gender differentiation in British speech reflects how men and women have (traditionally) had different means by which

to signal high status, with women depending on their social appearance (behavior, speech, etc.), and men on their careers and the material wealth that this affords. Furthermore, "proper speech" can be more important for social climbers than for those who are already established (Bourdieu, 1991; Labov, 1966). The upper class's status is secured and demonstrated by many attributes (their wealth, manners, cultural competencies, network, family name, etc.) (Khan, 2012). This may furthermore result in *hypercorrection*,⁴ whereby individuals seeking to socially climb adopt linguistic features associated with the upper class, but because they do not have a mastery of their usage, they overemploy these features and hence reveal their lower-class origins (Bourdieu, 1991; Labov, 1966).

A fourth point is that people's attitudes and classifications of language variants reflect the esteem given to their speakers and their appropriateness for various functions. Not all forms of linguistic production are viewed equally, with some receiving the respectable title of "language," while others are described as something lesser, a "slang," "patois," "broken speech," etc. Languages labeled as "creoles" are often subject to negative attitudes and considered inappropriate for the same uses as their lexifiers (Winford, 1976; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994; DeGraff, 2005; Bancu et al., 2024; Mühleisen, 2022; Jean-François, 2006; Migge et al., 2010; Migge & Légise, 2012). Michel DeGraff (2005, 2017), in particular, argues that understandings of "creoles" as something distinct from and really lesser than "languages" not only reflect the historic denigration of their speakers (originally enslaved black Africans) but also contribute to their use still being considered inappropriate in technical and prestigious domains, such as in education, science,

⁴ Meyerhoff (2018) notes that the term *hypercorrection* originally did not apply to situations of linguistic insecurity and social class, but rather to the general trend of "overgeneralizing based on imperfect learning in a new language or dialect" (p. 192).

governance, etc. As such, individuals who use Kreyòl in these domains are using an inappropriate linguistic code and will engender less esteem than those who use French.

Methods

The data used for the present investigation consists of sixteen semi-structured interviews conducted in January and February of 2022 in southeast Haiti with upper-class Haitians. This form of data collection was selected as interviews are generally considered the best method for capturing the lived experience, attitudes, and perspectives of individuals (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014).

These interviews represent half of the interviews I conducted during the fieldwork. The others were with "non-elite" Haitians, members of the lower or middle class who grew up in largely Kreyòl-monolingual environments (see Chapter 6 of this thesis). The *elite* or *non-elite* distinction was determined by a *positional approach* – based on the participants' position in Haitian society (Domhoff, 2005; Mills, 1956). The elite group's professions included business owners, senior managers, the director of a top-performing school, and high-level employees in large or successful organizations. Additionally, this cohort contains one Haitian student doing a Bachelor's degree in the USA. He was visiting Port-au-Prince and staying at a high-end hotel, and his inclusion here reflects the positionality of his family.

One of the main challenges of interview research with members of the upper class is gaining access and securing the interviews (Goldstein, 2002). To find participants, I spent time socializing in upper-class milieux, such as restaurants in Pétionville (a wealthier neighborhood of Port-au-Prince) and at the city's country club. In these settings, I met many upper-class Haitians. If an individual fit my inclusion criteria, I would invite them to participate and share additional

information with them. Additionally, if I wished to interview an upper-class Haitian associated with a particular business or institution, I would share the project's information with their secretary and wait for a response.

The final sample consisted of nine men and seven women with an age range from mid-20s to late 60s. Ethnically, most were lighter-skinned than the average Haitian and would be contextually categorized as "mulatto," although some participants might be categorized as "black" ("noir"), and other context-specific terms might be used to further specify their physical features (e.g. if they have straight hair or kinky hair, "a little color,"⁵ etc.). They were located in Port-au-Prince, Jacmel, and in a small seaside town (in their vacation home). This cohort largely consisted of members of the traditional elite, individuals who have enjoyed their privilege for at least a couple of generations and whose social position was secured by various factors.⁶ Due to the political instability following the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse as well as access and security concerns, political elites were notably absent from this cohort.

The interviews took place in English, French, and Kreyòl. I expressed no preference for language and followed the interviewees' lead. Only one interview took place entirely in French. This was with the female school director in her office. Her choice likely reflects her profession, the setting, the formality of the interview, and her class and gender position (Zéphir, 1990). Many of the other interviews were in English – which the participants were fairly strong in – or in (Frenchified) Kreyòl code-switched liberally with French. My sense was that I was not more often

⁵ For more on descriptive qualifiers of Haitian ethnicity see Marius (2022), notably Chapter 6.

⁶One female interviewee remarked that an in-law once snubbed her as a mere member of the bourgeoisie, not the elite. The interviewee equated this to the in-law's ancestry being traceable to someone with a street named after them in the upper-class neighborhood of Pétionville. She described the in-law as wearing \$400 shirts and never deigning to pack or unpack their own suitcase – although they were now completely dependent upon the interviewee's family's "bourgeois" wealth to maintain their lifestyle.

addressed in French because English is my mother tongue and I have strong but non-native-like proficiency in French.

The interviews typically lasted around 30 minutes and were divided into three main topics: the participants' exposure to languages as a child, their language use in their adult life, and their perspectives and preferences on language in Haiti generally.⁷ These interviews typically took place in restaurants, the participants' private offices, or their homes. Before participating, all participants gave informed consent, including to be recorded.⁸ Participants' names have been changed to preserve anonymity. After the completion of the fieldwork, the interview data was coded into themes and sub-themes and analyzed using a process of thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006).

In the quotes below, I use different font styles for each language: English in plain text, *French in italics*, and **Kreyòl bolded**.

⁷ This structure for the interviews was initially selected as the project design was informed by the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu and his account of unequal access to valuable linguistic capital at home and his account of linguistic markets (Bourdieu, 1991). Upon analysis of the data, the concept of social esteem became more central.

⁸ This research project was evaluated and approved by a University of Oxford Research Ethics Committee.

Results

Part 1: Learning standards of esteem during upper-class childhoods

From their early youth, the members of this cohort were exposed to and disciplined into regulated linguistic practices. Without having to leave their homes, they witnessed that men and women use language differently, and they observed that one class of people can speak French, while another class of people cannot. They also learned about the appropriateness and significance of French and Kreyòl for different exchanges and settings. The privileged childhood homes of this cohort were bilingual environments which followed similar permissions and restrictions on language use, which we will overview below.

1.1 Respecting the parent-child hierarchy – "Mais parlez français, donc!"

French was typically the only language that young upper-class children were permitted to use with their parents, especially for those raised with parents who had belonged to the Haitian elite for at least a couple of generations.⁹

The participants ascribed two reasons for their parents insisting on French. The first was pragmatic: The parents wanted their children to speak French well and thus they insisted on the children practicing it with them as much as possible. The second reason was symbolic. The use of French demonstrated a child's respect towards their parents. For a child to speak in Kreyòl to parents would show disregard for the hierarchy between them. Charlotte, an entrepreneur in her late 40s, emphasized that "[y]ou do not address your parents in Kreyòl. Never. It's a lack of respect."

⁹ If one parent or caretaker was a foreigner, then the child would commonly be exposed to this individual's mother tongue, such as English or Arabic.

Speaking Kreyòl to a parent could result in verbal chastisement, being ignored, or receiving disciplinary sanctions. Alexandre, a member of an old elite Haitian family in his late 60s, received punishments for speaking Kreyòl reflecting the distinct privilege of his social class: "They would not give me dinner. They would not allow me to go to the movies on Sunday. Or they would give me a book to read. Something like that." Mélanie, a woman also in her late 60s and whose maternal side were second-generation immigrants, had less stringent rules, but French was still expected: **(Kr) I was never hit, anything like that, because [my siblings and I] were speaking Kreyòl. But my parents were always saying (Fr) "Come on, speak French!"**¹⁰

1.2 Learning different standards for different genders: Gason yo pale, mais les filles parlent

There existed significant gender-based differences in language use in the participants' childhood homes. For elite men and older boys, Kreyòl use was common amongst male relatives of the same generation. Children would witness their otherwise authoritarian and francophile fathers express themselves in boisterous Kreyòl when male relatives or friends came over to drink and tell jokes.

The men of the cohort described how, at a certain age, typically in their late teens, speaking to their fathers in Kreyòl became more acceptable. They explained one aspect of this was due to their fathers feeling more confident in their sons' French level, so it was less essential for them to always be practicing. A second aspect of this shift was symbolic. It was a signal that their fathers no longer viewed them as mere children but as "men" and thus less distant in social status. This transition to Kreyòl and the relinquishment of the hierarchy of parent-child French use, however,

¹⁰ Men m pa janm resevwa kou, bagay konsa, paske nou t ap pale Kreyòl. Men toutan paran m yo di "*MAIS PARLEZ FRANÇAIS DONC !*"

depends on the relationship between father and son. Louis, a man in his early 30s who works as a manager in his father's company, explained:

After graduating college and being independent and becoming a “full adult,” quote-unquote, I think there's more leeway for me to say more stuff in Kreyòl. But even now, I still don't feel completely comfortable doing so. If I get a call from my dad right now, I'll answer in French and I speak French unless really like there's something specific that we're saying in Kreyòl for a couple of sentences. But it would still be in French.

For many of the female participants, French remained more dominant in familial and social interactions. Charlotte stated that she “really struggle[s] with Kreyòl,” then demonstrated this by producing a perfectly intelligible sentence of Frenchified Kreyòl, noting afterwards that she had used a word of French origin rather than a purely Kreyòl alternative and that her pronunciation was more French-like.¹¹

As the female participants became older, some came to speak more Kreyòl with their parents. This was not, however, expressed as a symbolic recognition of their adulthood or womanhood. They explained that Kreyòl use is particularly good for gossiping or telling jokes, or is necessary for expressing a particular concept where a French equivalent is unwieldy or unknown.¹²

Charlotte described the gender- and generation-based linguistic practice amongst family members as follows: all of the children spoke French to their “elders,” the brothers always spoke Kreyòl amongst themselves, and she primarily spoke French with occasional touches of Kreyòl.

¹¹ During my years of working and researching in Haiti, the only Haitians I have ever met who have claimed to not speak Kreyòl well were upper-class women and one man in his 30s from a lower-class origin who had done university studies abroad and was now attempting to socially integrate with the upper class. I would later observe that most of this man's entourage were still from the lower class and he primarily spoke Kreyòl in his daily life. Thus, his claim to have “forgotten Kreyòl” was obviously fabricated. The phenomenon of Haitians “forgetting Kreyòl” was noted and discussed by Efron (1954, p. 204).

¹² Zéphir (1990) describes the intermittent use of Kreyòl in French-dominant conversation as *functional* – to express an emotion or to more clearly communicate a message.

Furthermore, her brothers would switch from Kreyòl to French when they addressed her, a common practice by men to show respect to an upper-class woman (see below).

1.3 Learning different standards for different social classes: Speaking Kreyòl with "the help"

For most members of this cohort, their earliest exposure to Kreyòl came from the house staff, notably their nannies ("nounou"), but also their family's cooks, drivers, the "yard boy,"¹³ etc. In particularly elite households, some members of the house staff would be expected to understand and speak at least some French. The degree of their expected competency depended on their role. Louis related this to linguistic hierarchies dating from the plantation-slavery economy:

[T]he yard guy, if he's only speaks Kreyòl, that can be fine. [pauses] Oh man, that's bad. See, this comes back to the house slave and field slave mentality. The person working inside of the house is expected to be a little more educated. Because if "I"¹⁴ have friends over, [my friends] will be interacting with them. They're expected to speak and have a certain level of education.¹⁵

Thus, having French-speaking house staff would be a demonstration of status amongst the upper class. This staff, however, were not necessarily expected to be teaching the children French. Arnaud, a man in his late 60s from another well-known elite family, described his father enforcing a strict linguistic compartmentalization:

Arnaud: My father was a francophile. Above all Proust, [but also] a grammarian, a poet. Thus, he spoke to us in French. My mother and him. But it was not allowed for me to speak French with the house staff. [My parents] preferred that we speak Kreyòl with them – not a problem. But not in French, absolutely not!

¹³ The boy or man assigned to the yard, whose responsibilities can include minding the home's entrance gate as well as yardwork.

¹⁴ As he has a domestic worker in his house who does not speak French well, his use of "I" here probably entails "a member of the elite" – not strictly speaking himself. He described trying to help this employee – "hands down one of the smartest guys I know" – learn French so that others would consider hiring him for similar domestic labor.

¹⁵ Note in his phrasing, "speak and have a certain level of education," he does not specify which language they should speak. French is implied as this demonstrates having a "level of education."

Interviewer: **Why?**

Arnaud: **Because [the house staff] were not strong in French. They were going to make us speak a bad French. Maroon¹⁶ French.¹⁷**

For at least some parents, it was very important that their children learn Kreyòl well. Jean-Michel, a man in his 40s who now works in a large international development agency, described his parents as "very social." They considered it essential for their children to learn Kreyòl in order to connect to "their culture" and be able to interact with "different communities" (i.e. with Haitians from lower social classes) – although they remained strict about French use between parent and child.

1.4 A little French on your lips: Language and being a zuzu child

The experience of a child born and raised in the Haitian upper class is extremely different from that of an average Haitian child. Their early socialization, both linguistic and cultural, as well as their family name, economic privilege, and possibly (but not necessarily) their skin color,¹⁸ mark them as not an "average" Haitian child. In certain cases, their distinctiveness forms the basis of tight-knit and exclusionary friend groups. In other situations, particularly when wanting to integrate or avoid bullying, a child of the Haitian upper class might wish to downplay the uniqueness of their family and upbringing. Whether or not French use would earn a child

¹⁶ The word "maroon" (French: *marron*, Kreyòl: **mawòn**) originates from the escaped enslaved Africans who mounted guerrilla resistance against the French. In modern Kreyòl, following the entry in Valdman's (2007) dictionary, the word often signifies "incorrect" or "wild, savage." See also Marius (2022, pp. 82–86).

¹⁷ Arnaud: **Papa m se yon frankofil. Surtout Proust. Yon gramèryan, powèt. Donk, li menm, li te pale avèk nou an fransè. Li menm ak manman m. Men se te entèdi pou nou pale fransè avèk pèsonèl de maison. Yo prefere nou pale an kreyòl avèk yo. Pas de problème. Men pa an fransè, surtout pas!**

Researcher: **Poukisa?**

Arnaud: **Paskè yo pa fò nan fransè. Yo pral fè nou pale yon move fransè. Fransè mawon.**

¹⁸ Marius (2022) provides a thorough analysis of the complexities of skin color as a factor, but far from definitive, in Haitian class identity. He notes that the salience of skin color in discourses about Haiti (e.g. "the Black Republic narrative") ultimately masks the vast similarities in the lifestyle, cultural tastes, worldviews, and interests of Haiti's privileged mulattoes and blacks, individuals he describes as members of a modern Western bourgeoisie, collectively far removed from the constructed worldviews and material exploitation of the Haitian lower class.

admiration and care or disdain and mockery depended on the setting and audience. Jean-Michel, whose parents wanted him to connect with non-elite Haitians, explained:

When we're in the streets, we speak Kreyòl. You don't want people to treat you differently. If you start speaking French, they will see you as a bougie. [...] You just want to fit in. Automatically, you're in the streets, all of the rules of the house are gone.

In lieu of "bourgeois," a common term used to describe any Haitian who appears, speaks, or behaves in a privileged or snobby fashion is "zuzu." The term is phonetically noteworthy as it includes a repetition of the front rounded vowel "u" (IPA /y/) which exists in French but not in most basilectal Kreyòl variants. Thus, the word's very pronunciation forces one to adopt a French air.

Eli, a 24-year-old undergraduate student studying in the USA, described being "zuzu" as both a linguistic and a full-body performative behavior:

A zuzu, this is just someone who takes a pretentious air. Even guys can be zuzu. A really pretentious guy, [who speaks] only in French.

[The girls of a prestigious all girls' school] they walk zuzu. They always have a certain little expression on their face. When they walk zuzu, in your head you already know "Ah! That is not just anyone! That is someone who speaks French!" You better have a little French on your lips if you are going to speak with those people. Otherwise, they'll toss you aside.¹⁹

Depending on their parents' attitudes and where they went to school, an upper-class child might have relatively very little contact with more average Haitian children. Many attended expensive private schools²⁰ or even went abroad for their secondary education. Some, however,

¹⁹ **Bon, zuzu an, se jis yon moun ki pran pòz pwetansyèz. Menm gason nan zuzu a tou. Yon gason vrèman pwetansyè. Se fransè sèlman [li pale]**

[Fi sa yo] mache an zuzu. Yo toujou gen yon ti min nan fon yo. Lè yo mache nan zuzu, ah, nan tèt ou, ou gentan mete "Ah ! Moun sa a pa nenpòt moun, non. Sa se moun ki pale fransè." Fòk yon ti fransè nan pwen bouch ou [pou] ou ka pale ak moun sa yo. Sinon, yo voye ou anlè.

²⁰ For example, the French-medium Lycée Alexandre Dumas, popularly referred to as "le lycée français," charged \$6,824 in tuition for the 2022-2023 academic year for Haitian and French students and \$9,572 for other nationalities.

attended well-respected but inexpensive parochial schools alongside children from other backgrounds. Nonetheless, here class-based distinctions continued to socially distance children, as described by Charlotte:

[My all-girl parochial school was d]efinitely segregated. You kind of... okay, how do I say this. You hung out with your same social level. (...) You give your last name and then they kind of retrace you. "Oh, so you're the daughter of this or sister or the cousin of..." They have to position you to know who you are. So yes, I hung out mostly with [girls of my social class]. But at school, I did hang out with the other people. Nevertheless, I don't think I went to their houses. Never. And they were not invited to my parties either. Everybody was kind of stuck. So it's kind of like everybody knows their place.

In summary, during their childhoods the Haitian upper class not only have unique access to the French language, but are also inculcated with a particular set of linguistic practices and expectations. As we will see below, these practices and expectations remain with them into adulthood and figure into the standards of esteem they use when they evaluate and judge other people.

Part 2: Language as currency in the Haitian economy of esteem

So what is the value of knowing French, or rather "good French"? How important is it for receiving social esteem and under what circumstances? Does this esteem translate into tangible benefits which can impact your life? According to this cohort, it matters a great deal. Jean-Michel summarized its importance:

In formal settings... it's again why my parents made sure that you mastered French. It's because of this. Unfortunately, in Haiti, they automatically give you more value when they see you speak French. They treat you different. More doors will be opened, you have more opportunities, both professionally or personally. (...) [Speaking French, t]hat means you're highly educated, that means

<http://www.lycee-dumas.websco.fr/ADI/files/fiches%20inscription/TARIFS%20FRAIS%20SCOLAIRES%202022%202023.pdf>

you come from a good family. That's automatic. And they will even judge how well you speak French or which accent that you have, to make sure... to kind of place you in society.

The cohort described how "good French" is key to both receiving and giving social esteem in various domains and kinds of interactions. These include when at school and at work, with upper-class women and in courtship, and when meeting people for the first time. French use was also described as important for addressing political appointees – often social climbers coming from lower- or middle-class backgrounds. On the other hand, Kreyòl is important in casual male interactions and with members of the lower class. We discuss these findings below.

2.1 Smart kids and quality employees: French esteem at school and at work

In their French-dominant schools, the cohort's L1 fluency gave them considerable concrete advantages as their lessons, textbooks, and exams are nearly always in French. It also, however, impacted perceptions of their innate ability and value. Judgements could come from both their teachers and the other students. Eli, the undergraduate student studying in the USA, summarized the prejudices of Haitian schools thusly:

[H]ere, if you don't speak French, they say you are stupid. Stupid at school. Now with regard to kids who speak French, Oh!!! That is a zuzu kid! That kid is great! If you speak French, man, schools see you a different way. As I told you about my friend, he did not speak French. In my eyes, I saw him as someone who was dumb. (...) When he was in 6th grade, he was not doing well at all. People disparaged him. 'The dumbest kid in school.'^{21 22}

²¹ [I]si depi w pa pale fransè yo di ou sòt. Ou sòt lekòl. Now pou sije yon timoun nan ki pale fransè, o! Sa se yon zuzu, timoun sa a fò, ou konprann. De(pi) w pale fransè, man, lekòl yo gade w yon lòt fason. Jan mwen te di de zanmi m. Li pa t pale fransè menm. Nan je pa m, mwen te wè li kòm yon moun ki te sòt. (...) Lè msye a te nan 6yèm ane msye pa t bon menm, pa t fò menm. Moun yo t ap kritike msye a, 'elèv ki pi sòt lekòl.'

²² Eli went on to discuss how this student moved to the USA as a teenager where he was able to learn English through immersion and then succeed academically and professionally. "[H]e had a potential in him we did not really see. The guy is a big deal engineer there. French was a handicap for him. French stopped people from seeing his potential."

Original Kreyòl: [M]sye a te gen yon potansyèl lakay li, nou pa t janm vrèman wè. Nèg la yon gwo enjenyè la. Fransè a te yon andikap pou li. Fransè a te anpeche moun yo wè potansyèl li.

Beyond school, both oral and written French fluency is important for most forms of employment beyond manual labor. One dimension of this is functional – hardly any Haitian businesses use Kreyòl for written communications and some foreign French-speaking clientele may require this language for communicating. The second dimension, however, relates directly to gaining esteem, both towards yourself and towards your company at large. As described by Jean-Michel, "[Companies] are projecting an image (...) They want to project that they have quality employees that can represent the firm well." For public-facing positions, French fluency may outweigh other desirable characteristics:

Louis: Honestly, if I were to hire [between] two exact same candidates and one who was smarter but only spoke Kreyòl versus another one, I would go for the one that was bilingual. For any position that was, let's say, client oriented.

Amongst co-workers, various factors impact the choice of spoken language. Manon, a woman in her 50s whose family owns a successful business, chooses to work for a different company. She explained that her co-managers, who are all men, darker skinned than herself, and originating from a lower social background, will generally speak Kreyòl amongst themselves but will always switch to French to address her as a "sign of respect." On the other hand, they speak Kreyòl with "the lady that passes the mop." In a formal meeting, these men are more likely to speak French even to each other.

Jean-Michel described language choice amongst co-workers to be highly dependent on hierarchy and familiarity:

At my office, people the same level as myself, I would speak Kreyòl with them (...) There is no power dynamic. But if it's our boss? You would speak French. (...) There are some bosses that I had,

I broke that barrier. I could easily speak Kreyòl with them. But some others we always stayed formal and always spoke French.

Professional relationships between male employees and male clients begin in French, but switch to Kreyòl once familiarity is established. For example, Louis will always first use French with male clients but expressed "...the second that we realize that we're familiar enough, (he snaps his fingers) we switch to Kreyòl, because French becomes weird now."

He also described a very particular circumstance in professional settings where an unfamiliar upper-class male client would promptly address him in Kreyòl:

You'll also find it with older men, that maybe know or don't know me, but they realize that they're older than I am. And even if we're part of the same society, it's like "You're still a kid, and so I'll assert my dominance by speaking to you in Kreyòl."

Here Kreyòl use is not a sign of friendship and closeness, but rather a somewhat condescending refusal by older upper-class men to accord formality and respect in an exchange with a man much younger than themselves, even if the professional setting would otherwise dictate it. This does not particularly bother Louis, who said he is used to it.

2.2 Date a Kreyòl-monolingual? Not even close – Gender and language

As discussed above, in upper-class families and social circles, girls generally tend to speak more French and boys more Kreyòl. Kreyòl use is especially important for upper-class boys while in the presence of boys from lower-class backgrounds, as noted by Jean-Michel who described transitioning from an expensive private school to a socially diverse parochial school for his secondary education, fulfilling his parents' wish for him to mix with people from "different communities":

When we got to Saint-Louis de Gonzague (a large and well-respected socially mixed all-boys parochial school), we were always speaking French with each other, (...) and we were bullied for it. That was the funny part. You leave a school where you're not allowed to speak Kreyòl, and you go to another one where it's a melting pot. (...) [The other students] already see you as an outsider, because you have come from the *privilègiés*. And now you're speaking French, like a little zuzu.

While the risks of bullying for male-to-male French use may be greater in socially mixed settings, casual interactions even amongst upper-class men will take place in Kreyòl. The overt properness of French use feels inappropriate for (heterosexual) male friendships:

Jean-Michel: (T)wo men will never start speaking French with each other. It is considered weird or even gay.

Alice, an upper-class woman in her 50s: **If guys speak French amongst themselves, often they are called masisi.²³ Between guys, they speak Kreyòl. With girls, French. If two men are speaking French, they say "What's the matter with those two women?" They insult them [as] homosexuals.²⁴**

On the other hand, Charlotte discussed the importance of French use for an upper-class girl or woman to demonstrate proper social etiquette, guarding her own social esteem while also bestowing it on others:

If there was a party or more relaxed [setting], you would joke a little bit in Kreyòl. But you usually always go back to French because it's a mark of respect to everybody present.

An upper-class woman who remains highly socially insulated may feel little pressure to speak in uninterrupted Kreyòl, freely adding French to her speech as needed. Manon recounted that the first time she felt pressured to "improve" her conversational Kreyòl was when she attended a Haitian university and sought to make friends with female students who came from lower

²³ "Masisi" – a pejorative Kreyòl term for a gay man.

²⁴ **Gason antre yo, si yo pale franse, yo te konn di yo se masisi. Antre gason, yo pale kreyòl. Avèk fi, y ap speaking franse. Si 2 gason pale franse antre yo, yo di "Sa madanm sa yo genyen?" Yo joure yo... omoseksyèl.**

socioeconomic backgrounds and who socialized in Kreyòl. She nonetheless confessed to having difficulties forming "true" disinterested friendships with such women.²⁵

The men of the cohort expressed that they speak French to upper-class women as "the same sign of respect that you would have with your parents, you would have with a girl or woman too" (Louis). Charlotte emphasized that French was essential for gaining romantic favor with her female entourage:

Interviewer: Were you or your friends ever approached by guys who couldn't speak French very well?
Charlotte: We wouldn't date them. (laughs) Not even close.

Some upper-class men only demonstrate their "best (linguistic) etiquette" with romantic interests and only in the initial phases of courtship. Jean-Michel expressed that he largely limits his French use with women for the initial phase of a romantic courtship:

[You speak in French w]hen you are flirting with a girl, asking for her number. Until you're close. If the girl is your friend, you don't care. You speak Kreyòl. But yeah, if it's a first impression you are like "Ey! *Comment ça va ? Comment tu t'appelles ?*" You always start in French.

2.3 Bonjour, excusez-moi. Ki kote m ap jwenn... Making an initial impression

A topic of considerable discussion and even some anxiety amongst the participants was which language to use when meeting another Haitian for the first time. On the one hand, introductions in French usually indicate a degree of formality and mutual respect. On the other

²⁵ Manon - My dad made a comment, he said "You hang out with too many people who are not your class." He says that to me all the time. I don't mind anymore as much. But again, I have to be careful because I realized they become my friend to get something. I didn't understand that either. I was like, "Are you my friend!" and they're like "Eh! Okay! How much can you give me?" or "I have this problem and that problem." You have a big dollar sign, which I didn't understand. Took me some time to learn that. I paid a lot. It's true. You have to know when it's a true friendship, or false friendship, which there is a lot of that here unfortunately.

hand, French will not be understood by Kreyòl-monolinguals and may make you appear like a snobby *zuzu* or embarrass the person to whom you are speaking.²⁶

So how does one make this linguistic determination? Various visual cues influence the participants' language choice for initial contact. Clothing, body language, and skin color are factors that were said to play a role. Charlotte expressed:

It's very difficult. You almost are testing to see... If you don't know somebody, and if you see that they're, honestly, they're light skinned, well-dressed, you automatically speak French. If they're not well dressed and they come to you, you have a tendency to speak... and they're black, I'm sorry to say... you have a tendency to just want to address them in Kreyòl.

In addition to these factors, both context and the other's profession also were cited as significant to the choice of language. At a bank, Louis would address the teller in Kreyòl, but the manager in French. With street vendors, "it's automatically Kreyòl. I won't speak French, because you also don't want to sound like a *zuzu* all the time."

At times, the participants find themselves having offended someone by initially addressing them in Kreyòl, such as when Louis misjudged the linguistic expectations of a grocery store employee:

She turned to answer me in French, like, "Who the hell do you think you're speaking to in Kreyòl?" And immediately, I was like "Okay, thank you!" And I left the aisle because I was a bit embarrassed to have addressed her and assumed... basically, it's like, I just assumed that you're of a lower socioeconomic class because I addressed you in Kreyòl first.

When in doubt, it is safest to begin an initial interaction in French. Here the thorny issue still remains as to when to switch to Kreyòl if your interlocutor is struggling with French, as switching too soon can be viewed as "very disrespectful" (Charlotte). As we see below, in certain situations, particularly when dealing with government directors or politicians coming from lower-

²⁶ For more on how being addressed in French can be uncomfortable and embarrassing for a Kreyòl-monolingual, see Chapter 6.

or middle-class backgrounds, switching to Kreyòl is not an option no matter how stilted the conversation.

2.4 "And they start demanding respect" – Social ascent and French

A sociological trend discussed by both Marius (2022) and this cohort is how Haiti's traditional francophone upper class became increasingly removed from political positions beginning with the populist and noiriste rhetoric accompanying François Duvalier's rise to power in 1957. Duvalier's hostility towards the old elite led many families to go into exile – including many members of this cohort. Given their withdrawal from governance and the (imperfect) introduction of democracy in the 1990s, a door was opened for social ascent through political position. Despite often coming from Kreyòl-dominant homes and communities, social-climbing political appointees may insist on being addressed in French during meetings. Louis explained:

A political assignment or a political post in Haiti is like the end-all and be-all for a lot of... it's been the way out of poverty for a lot of people. And so when they get up there, when they become the director of whatever, they start demanding respect. They will demand to be addressed in French. And you will, because if you don't, then you're showing that sign of disrespect and you won't get anything done.

While the traditional elite may be obliged to use French in these exchanges, they do not abstain from either private judgement or mockery of the "mistakes" in the other's speech, as we will see below. One cannot simply learn to speak like them just by going to school.

Part 3: Language attitudes and esteem

3.1 "Woompf" – Recognizing and disesteeming Acquired French

While the cohort was not directly asked about variation within Haiti's Kreyòl or French, they nonetheless pointed out and discussed distinctions within them. In particular, they had very strong opinions about the Acquired French that individuals might learn through their schooling. Their comments and judgements dispel any illusions that the education system – including even good parochial schools that they themselves attended – functions as a manner of creating linguistic equals, a fraternity of indistinguishable francophones:

Charlotte: [For the students from Kreyòl backgrounds at my school, i]t was fine, they ended up... because everything was in French. Math books, history books. So they had to adapt fast. But it's just like when they casually talk, you could tell the accent. (...) There's some words. When somebody speaks a lot of Kreyòl, their French is kind of... woompf.

Members of the cohort pointed out salient linguistic features common to Acquired Haitian French. With smiles and laughter, they described these linguistic features and those who use them:

Charlotte: In Kreyòl, "to come" is "**vini**." In French it is "*venir*." They might say "*Il vini*." The words would be mixed up. The articles would not be placed right.²⁷ The "r"s would not be pronounced properly. Usually you can tell someone is not as comfortable in French when they don't pronounce their "r"s. The "r"s at the end. Or they place it wrong. (laughs) They know there's an "r" coming sometimes, they just say it before (laughs). (...) You can then tell "Uh oh! That person is trying to speak French!"

Political appointees, individuals who in some respects possess power distinct from and even over the traditional elite, are the object of linguistic ridicule:

²⁷ For more on the differences of definite article position in Kreyòl versus French, see DeGraff (2007).

Louis: [I]t's always funny for me, when you see politicians trying to speak French. And it's just broken French. (laughs) And it's funny because a lot of times you see them on WhatsApp groups, people sharing clips of [politicians] making... we even have a term for it. We call it a "surette."²⁸ It's a candy. I guess because your French, your mouth, is sour? (...) It's a telltale sign that French is not your first language.

The comments above demonstrate that the salience of overusing "r" /ʁ/ and "u" /y/ is strong enough that people are consciously aware of it and able to comment on it. This hypercorrection (Bourdieu, 1991; Labov, 1966) reveals individuals' linguistic and class backgrounds, including people who now occupy important political positions.

3.2 *"It is barbarous" – Attitudes towards Kreyòl and barriers to it being an esteemed language*

While this cohort often differentiated between "good" and "bad" French, they did not generally voice strong attitudes towards distinct variants of Kreyòl. Some members noted, however, that their (Frenchified) Kreyòl diverges from "real Kreyòl," simultaneously conferring cultural authenticity to less-Frenchified Kreyòl but also distancing themselves from it.

Louis remarked that he takes his time to write "Proper Kreyòl" when messaging employees and colleagues from lower socioeconomic backgrounds – meaning that he avoids using French spellings of words which occur in both languages. For example, with a family member he might text "**Mwen en forme, et ou?**" but with co-workers he would be mindful to write "**Mwen anfòm e ou?**" ("I am well, and you?"). He explained why:

²⁸ The Valdman Haitian Creole-English dictionary (2007) provides the following definition:

bouch si {siret} a type of linguistic affectation involving the use of the vowel [y] (in French 'du') for the [i] sound of 'li', a way of mispronouncing some words by imitating the pronunciation of other social groups

The suggested imagery is that if a Haitian is hypercorrecting their speech by overusing the French /y/ sound, then their lips will be constantly rounded, appearing as though they have a sour candy in their mouth.

Don't get me wrong, [my colleagues would] understand what I'm saying [if I use French spellings]. But I think they immediately put you in another category. Because they're like, "Yeah, he's not the same as us. He doesn't speak [or write] the same way because he's one of those bougies." So I try to conform a bit to it to be like, "Hey, we're all the same."

Much of the cohort had doubts about Kreyòl's academic and socioeconomic potential. Frédéric, a polyglot medical practitioner in his 60s, voiced that due to Kreyòl's origins in the brutal slavery-plantation society of pre-revolutionary Haiti, it is a fundamentally limited linguistic system, ill-suited for science but apt for artistic expression:

Frédéric: When you analyze a language, you have to start with the use of this language. (...) You have to consider the root of the language. How it was created? What brought it to life? (...) [In the case of Kreyòl, y]ou have a group of people who were kidnapped while in their home. Stripped of their clothes, of their name, of their identity. Thrown on a boat, half of them died. (...) Imagine that you have five people doing the same work, and they all have different languages. The only way I can communicate with them is to use my language with simple vocabulary. Animals' language, you know.²⁹ I will use gestures, like they do with babies. I will just teach them a very simple version of French, but just good enough to make them understand what they have to do. *'Pas faire ça ! Faire ça ! Mangez !'* And that's Kreyòl. That is exactly how Kreyòl was created.

(he elaborates for another minute)

Interviewer: [So because of its origins,] Kreyòl use for philosophy, Kreyòl use for...

Frédéric: (interjects) It's impossible. But for art, yes. Personally I've written poems in Kreyòl. And music, songs. Of course you will also have those people who say that, but it is crazy. When you see those guys on TV trying to explain science in the Kreyòl, they're ridiculous. They are grotesque. Nobody listens to them.

He described people who promote Kreyòl-based instruction at all levels of education as "want[ing] to destroy whatever we have left of the Haitian mind" and "perverse." He added "I will not inflict a five, six-year-old child with a deformity. I think it is barbarous."

²⁹ "Animals' language, you know" – This is a potentially shocking line and requires further unpacking. The interviewee's first language is not English and at times his constructions were awkward. The utterance "Animals' language" lacks a verb and does not express a complete sentence or idea, indicated further by the hedge "you know." Within the broader context, I believe he intended to express that the French enslavers spoke to the enslaved Africans *as if* they were animals (and this treatment was horrific).

After this, he expressed belief in a strong lay variant of the creole exceptionalism thesis (DeGraff, 2005). This is further addressed in the Discussion section below.

While his vehement denunciations of Kreyòl education and its promoters were the most extremely worded, other members of the cohort had doubts about Kreyòl's suitability for technical and scientific functions. A common sentiment was that Kreyòl needed to be somehow adapted before it could be suitable for these domains. Jeanne, the director of a top-performing school, voiced uncertainty about its linguistic category and its supposed problematic heterogeneity:

*If we decide to make Kreyòl... to put it on the level of a language... I don't know if it is a language now. If it is a language or a patois. But if Kreyòl is a language, it will be necessary... (she speaks extensively about regional differences of Kreyòl). So which Kreyòl will we use? It must be a unified language!*³⁰

Alexandre, also a member of a traditional mulatto elite family in his 60s, denounced the "American Christian missionary" spelling system of Kreyòl, which he called a "purely American phonetic language." He also emphasized that "[f]irst of all, Kreyòl is not an African language" and argued that its spelling system should be derived from French and Latin. Towards the end of the one-and-a-half-hour-long interview,³¹ Alexandre switched from speaking in English to speaking in French, and here expressed what were probably his most unguarded opinions. He called the existing Kreyòl movement part of the same "*demagogy*" which politicizes a tension between Haiti's blacks and mulattoes. He described French as "*(i)t's true, a colonial language*" but nonetheless as "*our language*" and it should not be tossed aside.³² He emphasized that the Kreyòl movement must be approached "*scientifically*" and that some necessary changes to Kreyòl must first be made,

³⁰ *Si on décide de rendre le créole, de mettre le créole au niveau de langue. Je ne sais pas si c'est une langue maintenant... si c'est une langue ou patois. Mais si le créole est une langue, il faudra que (...) (elle parle longuement des variations du créole) Mais quel créole on va faire? Il faut que ça soit une langue unifiée !*

³¹ First speaking in English, he spent a considerable amount of time telling me about his distinguished ancestry of Haitian generals and statesmen.

³² *Certains disent qu'on devrait jeter le français. Non, pas du tout. Qu'on le veuille ou pas, c'est une langue coloniale, c'est vrai. Mais cette langue est la nôtre.*

including removing certain foreign words – as "*the French have had to do*" when faced with "*invasion*" from English.³³

Other members of the cohort expressed that Kreyòl is as capable as any other language, and a few members even advocated for it having a greater role in Haitian society. Nonetheless, doubts remained about its socioeconomic value. With a couple of exceptions, they mostly did not consider it a viable option as the main language of instruction for education.³⁴ Jeanne, the school director in her early 60s, remarked:

*[The Kreyòl movement] is a political phenomenon as well. That "We are independent, it is our language, etc." (sighs) I am... I am also Haitian. I want to speak Kreyòl. I SPEAK Kreyòl. But I know that Kreyòl does not go very far.*³⁵

Arnaud, the oldest member of the cohort in his late 60s, felt positive about Kreyòl-based education, but expressed that it has a difficult road ahead given enduring linguistic prejudices and negative evaluations of its promoters:

Arnaud - *Because French is knowledge. Kreyòl is not even a language.*

Interviewer - **Who said that?**

Arnaud - **Everyone in general. In general!** (emphatic) *It is the dominant ideology. (...) If you want to share knowledge in Kreyòl, it is because you don't want children to have knowledge. This is an idea that circulated. Even still today.*³⁶

³³ *Le créole est comme la politique des noirs et mulâtres. C'est purement politique démagogique. Il faut vraiment s'asseoir, scientifiquement faire des recherches sur le créole. Changer ce qui est à changer. Et même interdire l'arrivée des nouveaux mots en le créole. Les Français ont dû le faire. En certains moments, ils étaient envahis par les mots anglais*

³⁴ Some participants expressed the need for a split education system, where Kreyòl instruction is used only in rural and lower-class urban areas. Such proposals in the past have been met with suspicion from the majority, who felt it was a strategy to keep their children from climbing socioeconomically (Prou, 2009).

³⁵ *C'est un phénomène de politique aussi. Que "Nous sommes indépendants, c'est notre langue" etc. (elle soupire) Moi, je suis... je suis aussi Haïtienne. Je veux parler le créole. Je PARLE créole. Mais je sais que le créole ne va pas trop loin.*

³⁶ Arnaud - *Parce que c'est le français qui est la connaissance. Le créole n'est même pas une langue.*

Researcher - **Kimoun t ap di sa ?**

Arnaud- **Toutmoun an jeneral. An jeneral!** *Parce que c'est l'idéologie dominante. (...) Se si ke ou vle pase konesans an Kreyòl, se paske ou pa vle timoun nan gen konesans. C'est ça l'idée qui a véhiculé. Jusqu'à présent d'ailleurs.*

Discussion

In this paper, data collected from 16 interviews with members of the Haitian upper class were analyzed in order to investigate how social esteem and upper-class informal linguistic practices contribute to the maintenance of Haiti's LEC. Above, we presented the results in descriptive themes. Below, we will discuss four points regarding what these findings tell us about Haiti's economy of esteem and the maintenance of its LEC. These points are: I) Both languages act as currencies for esteem, II) the esteem of French is bidirectional between speaker and audience, III) disesteem from the upper class maintains sociolinguistic boundaries, and IV) social climbers anticipate receiving esteem through their Acquired French, also contributing to maintaining French's role in Haitian society.

I) The Haitian Economy of Esteem and code-selection

In many respects, the language use patterns described by this cohort exemplify the general sociolinguistic trend of code-selection being dependent on context (Gumperz, 1964; Hymes, 1967) and duplicate many of the Haiti-specific findings of Zéphir's 1990 dissertation, with age, gender, setting, formality, and professional hierarchy similarly influencing code choice. This cohort additionally discussed how they modify their *presentation of self* (Goffman, 1959) through their language use. Analyzing these patterns with respect to social evaluations, we find a logic between code alternance and guarding esteem.

"Good French" offers speakers a more positive evaluation in many contexts. According to the setting, it may signal that you are an "educated" person, a more gracious dinner guest, a higher-quality employee, and a more appealing romantic life-partner. While language is not the only factor

in these domains, the importance of French is collectively understood. An individual who seeks to maintain and improve their standing in the eyes of others is therefore disincentivized to speak Kreyòl in such contexts – if the thought of breaking norms even occurred to them.

On the other hand, French is not universally the best choice. As also discussed by Zéphir (1990), bilingual Haitians will speak Kreyòl with people from lower social classes. Her interviewees note the pragmatic necessity of this choice – lower-class Haitians are less likely to understand French. The current dataset reveals a second aspect to this. Members of the cohort are quite aware of their upper-class appearance, or rather, of looking like a *zuzu*. For some audiences, French use signals snobbery and unfair privilege, spotlighting the socioeconomic gulf between the speaker and their audience. In these situations, using Kreyòl serves as a means to manage the salience of their social position, important for upper-class Haitians if they want to make friends with a broader range of people or appear more "down to earth." Consider how when Louis messages his employees or colleagues from lower- or middle-class backgrounds he attempts to use "Proper Kreyòl" by avoiding French spellings. This attention to detail is not to make himself easily understood – he feels the French spellings would be understood anyway – but rather to downplay his privileged background, noting again that the company where he works is owned by his father.

While Zéphir (1990) details the importance of French use for showing upper-class women respect, this cohort also emphasized the importance of Kreyòl in casual male interactions. The explanations given for this mirror the general trend of overtly low-prestige language varieties offering men a covert prestige (Trudgill, 1972). For Haitian men to casually chat in French amongst themselves results in a loss of esteem in a manner predictable for social standards of masculinity in a highly patriarchal and heteronormative society (Corbet, 2013; Johnson, 2023) – the men are evaluated as effeminate and may be "insulted" as women or homosexuals.

By switching between French and Kreyòl, upper-class Haitians are able to approach or distance themselves from the social associations of these languages, or more precisely, the social associations held by their current audience for the given interaction. At times French signals intelligence, culture, and *de bonne famille*, at others it signals *zuzu*, unfair privilege, and effeminacy. Sometimes Kreyòl signals being unpretentious, having pride in a shared Haitian identity, and strength and masculinity, at other times it signals poverty, lack of education, and being a lower-quality employee or suitor.

While the linguistic alternance of upper-class Haitians performs the important function of facilitating communication, this is not all it does. It reflects strategies to guard and gain esteem in a society where each code may be positively or negatively evaluated depending on the situation. This is not always easy to ascertain, and even people who have lived in Haiti all their lives can make mistakes and receive negative evaluations because of their code choice, especially when meeting someone for the first time.

Although at times selecting the right language may be difficult, completely disregarding linguistic norms could have negative esteem-related consequences for not only the speaker but also their audience, as we will discuss below.

II) French as a bidirectional bestower of esteem

A fundamental complexity of social esteem is that we do not have direct access to others' inner evaluations of us (Salice, 2020). People are seldom honest, constant, and clear about their assessments of others. Instead, to determine others' judgements we observe their behavior towards us and form our own interpretations. Our behavior therefore both earns us esteem and also generates perceptions of our esteem towards others.

Haitian upper-class language choice demonstrates this bidirectionality. During their childhood, an upper-class child observes two differently esteemed social identities – "their people" and "the people" – and learns two accompanying sets of permissions and restrictions on Kreyòl use. As such, speaking Kreyòl is not problematic per se, but rather what it signals about the speaker's evaluation of their audience's identity.

In certain exchanges French is strictly expected if both interlocutors are from the upper "educated" class. Therefore, in such exchanges French use signals the following conjunction:

I am a member of the higher "educated" social class

AND

I consider you to be as well (at least potentially)

French use not only projects something about my own social background, but also about my judgements of you. It indicates that I (so far) believe you are someone of a similar social standing to myself, that you appear educated and intelligent, that your attire is nice and your etiquette appropriate. Or this is at least what I am signaling, if only to be polite.

If, however, someone is speaking Kreyòl where the upper class would expect French use, they are sending a signal in the form of an inclusive disjunction:

I am a member of "the people"

OR

I judge you to be

In what might outwardly appear an innocuous exchange, here a serious threat is present. Members of the lower class are less esteemed in many regards, resulting in reduced potential to build a close relationship and receive care, poor assessments of one's intelligence and education level, and fewer socioeconomic opportunities. If someone feels judged as lower-class after being addressed in Kreyòl, they might wonder what has caused this. Has their interlocutor just negatively assessed their clothes, manners, or professional status? Is the speaker's determination racist, assuming them to be from the lower class because of their darker skin color? If others witness this, will they also conclude the receiver to be from the lower class? And if the speaker knows their background, why are they "insulting" them by placing them in a disesteemed social identity?

Electing to introduce Kreyòl into contexts where French is expected is therefore not a choice a speaker can make without considering how it may be perceived as an insult or pose a threat to the esteem of their audience.

III) The effect of linguistic disesteem from above

As highlighted above, people's relationship to social esteem is not only inwardly directed. While we are concerned with protecting and improving our own social esteem, we also form evaluations of others and treat them accordingly. In this sense, we are both players and referees in economies of esteem (Brennan & Pettit, 2004).

The cohort revealed that there are restrictions on who they might hire, date, or socialize with based in part on their French ability. With respect to social climbers, the cohort's awareness of Acquired French linguistic features was strong enough that they could voice and describe them, often with smiles and laughter. Speakers of Acquired French, individuals who have likely worked

a great deal to learn the language to the best of their ability given the quality and quantity of their exposure, probably receive social advantages over individuals who cannot speak French at all, especially in largely Kreyòl-monolingual contexts (e.g. a small town's church pastor or grade-school administrator³⁷). As such, it functions as a mesolect on the creole continuum (Chaudenson & Mufwene, 2002). Nonetheless, these speakers are met with a wall of disesteem before members of the francophone elite. For ascension into their world, evidence of the language community you were born into acts as a powerful gatekeeping mechanism. Even if an upper-class Haitian wants to break social norms and offer opportunities to people who do not speak "good French," they still exist within the larger economy of esteem. They are aware of others' derision and the risk by association to their own esteem and interests. How does it reflect on you to have employees who directly address important clients in Kreyòl, or to have a romantic partner who exaggerates their "u"s at social functions due to their "south mouth"?³⁸

A second facet of upper-class linguistic disesteem was attitudes about Kreyòl as a linguistic form itself. In the most extreme case, Kreyòl's original linguistic input – which the interviewee held to be the enslavers' "simple French" (i.e. language like one uses with "babies" or with "animals") – in combination with the dehumanizing condition of slavery endured by its first speakers, ultimately determines and limits Kreyòl's potential for expression. As a consequence, Kreyòl is concluded to be an irreparably restricted system, and hence people who seek to use it for academic or technical domains are at best "ridiculous" or at worst nefarious. This understanding

³⁷ This is something I observed while living in Hinche, where I used to work with an NGO. The town's middle class appeared to gain social and economic advantage from their French, even if it was not the "polished" French of the upper class.

³⁸ In Justin Lhérisson's 1905 novel *La Famille des Petites Cailles*, the author depicts the marital tensions of a female "card-reader" who marries into the Haitian bourgeoisie and struggles with French: "Her witty guests pardoned everything in her except this *Mercir, je vous remercir*, which she was unable to correct, despite the violent remonstrances of her husband, who, because he had a great facility of elocution, thought himself a phoenix." – as translated into English in Efron (1954, p. 51).

of Kreyòl – which was voiced by one of the most educated members of the cohort – lends credence to DeGraff's (2005) concerns about creoles being viewed as "lesser than" normal languages.

In another notable case, Kreyòl was emphasized as "not African." While the interviewee may have a passion for linguistic phylogeny, this statement accomplishes more than just demonstrating his commitment to taxonomic rigor. With this statement, the mulatto interviewee generated distance between Kreyòl and "Africanness" – and by association the black monolingual majority – and moved Kreyòl closer to Europe and his own (partially) European identity. There is an esteem-based logic behind this effort to shift understandings. From within contingent standards of languages' value derived from classical Eurocentrism – which the interviewee was seemingly inculcated with given his appreciation for French, Latin, and Ancient Greek³⁹ – Kreyòl would receive more worth if it had his desired French-based spelling system and would be (re)understood as "European." Given the prevalent Eurocentric ideologies amongst Haiti's upper-class mulattoes (Marius, 2022), the interviewee was in his way endeavoring to help Kreyòl by making it more "European" and hence more estimable and promotable for members of this community. Such a linguistic value system may be considered part of the general phenomenon of *ukolonia* and coloniality, whereby the upper class of former colonies maintain the value systems of their former colonizers (Fanon, 1952/2021; Bokamba, 2011; Casimir, 2020; Mignolo, 2011; Ndhlovu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2024).

The cohort was familiar with discourses that associate Kreyòl promotion with Haitian pride and support for the marginalized majority. This familiarity did not, however, generally translate into concrete action. While many participants expressed positive opinions towards Kreyòl as a

³⁹ He recounted how Latin and Ancient Greek were part of his grade school studies, and that even during school recess his father insisted that he stay indoors and devote more time to these languages. He described what a pleasure it was to go to a Haitian court and hear the lawyers use Latin – *"C'était tout un plaisir d'aller dans un tribunal haïtien et entendre plaider nos avocats. Ils plaidaient en français et en latin !"*

linguistic form, they tended to feel the language was too economically and academically "limiting." As such, the cohort expressed sympathy but a degree of incredulity towards individuals who advocate for Kreyòl's expansion into more professional, technical, and academic functions.

These findings indicate that the sociolinguistic barrier is maintained in part from above, by disesteem directed towards both Acquired French speakers and towards Kreyòl and its promoters.

IV) The anticipation of esteem from below

Myers-Scotton (1993a) suggests that linguistic elite closure may be disrupted by a rising neo-elite who have different social norms and who grant more value to local or regional languages as opposed to those of former colonizers. Haiti does not appear to be affirming this hypothesis, at least not entirely. While Kreyòl has made gains over the past decades concurrent with Haiti's old traditional elite families shifting away from political pursuits (DeGraff et al., 2022; Marius, 2022), the changing demographics of Haitian governance have not led to a definitive rebuttal of French's position (DeGraff, 2017, 2023).

There are various reasons which may contribute to this, including the pragmatic complexities of producing both written corpora and official communications in Kreyòl, as few Haitians, notably older ones, may feel confident in the written standard.⁴⁰ These considerations, however, do not explain this cohort's observation that government officials insist on being addressed in French to "feel respected," despite coming from Kreyòl-speaking backgrounds. This suggests that government appointees from middle- or lower-class backgrounds are well aware of the symbolic value of French use and wish to benefit from it.

⁴⁰ I have seldom met members of the upper class above age 40 who feel comfortable reading – let alone writing – written Kreyòl. This likely relates to it not becoming a standard subject in grade school until the 1990s (see Chapter 5).

Regardless of context or country, the power base of an elite individual may be derived from many sources (Khan, 2012). The privileged Haitians of this cohort were typically from established families, and they draw their status from many sources. In addition to language, they could assess and recognize each other based on many factors, including family lineage, social network, displays of wealth, prestigious education, high-level jobs, body language, cultural tastes, and at times skin color.⁴¹ In this respect, an established member of the elite is advantaged, having a surplus of social, material, and symbolic capitals. A rising political appointee, however, lacks this same multi-modal security and credentials. What distinguishes them from the largely uneducated and impoverished majority? What overtly demonstrates their merit to have a position of authority?

In this game of esteem, there is cause for French use to be more important for a government appointee than for a member of the traditional elite, representing an example of how "good language" can be more significant in the absence of other social resources (Trudgill, 1972). Encounters between the political elite and the traditional elite often take place within a formal context. To use Kreyòl in such a setting would invoke the implicit disjunction that at least one of the speakers is "of the people" – and between two such individuals, it is clear who is who. While the member of the traditional elite can speak French, they do not *need* to speak French for their status to be recognized and secure. They have their wealth, their family name, the address of their home, and their overall upper-class habitus. A political appointee who has risen from the lower or middle class may lack most or all of this. With some degree of acquired power, they are not going to allow a *zuzu* to address them in Kreyòl, speaking to them as they would to a member of their house staff or to a street vendor, symbolically pushing them back down the social ladder.

⁴¹ See Footnote 18 of this chapter.

The expectation of social climbers that French is used for receiving and bestowing esteem continues to demarcate certain exchanges as reserved for this language. Even if a member of the traditional elite would like to use Kreyòl in these contexts, they will be met with resistance from those who have worked hard to acquire it and who expect to be positively evaluated and hence benefit from it.

Limitations

This study employed thematic analysis of interview data from a small non-randomized sample (n=16), and as such it is not intended to provide evidence of statistical generalizability for its findings. The goal of this project is rather to provide theoretical insight into the interrelation between social esteem and LEC Maintenance which may act as a point of comparison for future focused studies or contribute to the design of larger randomized studies.

The goal of this study was to address the longstanding linguistic disequilibrium in Haiti vis-à-vis French and Kreyòl, and as such the analysis did not focus on other languages in the Haitian landscape (e.g. English, Spanish, Arabic, etc.). The growing importance of English for the Haitian upper class is, however, undeniable. Many interviewees expressed concerns that English is threatening their francophone culture, but acknowledged its global socioeconomic and academic importance. As such, English fluency is becoming essential for their children given the anticipation that they will one day work and study abroad – highlighting their dual identity as not only Haitians but also members of a jet-setting Western bourgeoisie (Marius, 2022). To give a concrete example of English's importance, the cohort collectively named Haiti's three most prestigious secondary

schools as the *Lycée Alexandre Dumas*, Union School, and Quisqueya Christian School⁴² – the latter two both being English-medium.

Faced with the pragmatic necessities of English in the modern globalized world but feeling culturally and affectively bound to French, Manon strikes a balance for her children corresponding to gendered norms of career success for elite boys versus carefully crafted presentation of self for elite girls. She enrolls her son(s) in an English-medium school for the practical advantages it will give them, and enrolls her daughter(s) in a French-medium school. She added that she was "not ready to let go" of the French language.

How English may come to disrupt Haiti's linguistic exclusion and standards of social esteem – and create new ones – remains a topic of future exploration.

Conclusion

In this study, it was found that the use of language to guard, gain, and bestow social esteem contributes to the reproduction of linguistic practice in Haiti, even if this practice contributes to the maintenance of the country's LEC, a disequilibrium whereby the universal language, Kreyòl, is minoritized and a minority language, French, remains dominant and exclusive. The use of French as a valuable currency in the Haitian economy of esteem acts as an intangible backhand, blocking social, professional, and academic ascension, and relegating Kreyòl – the language which unites all Haitians (Haitian Government, 1987) – to a secondary status.

⁴² Some participants also included inexpensive parochial schools, such as *Saint-Louis de Gonzague*, whereas others excluded these, placing them on a tier below the more expensive schools.

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Chapter 8: Synthesis

The preceding three chapters were written as stand-alone articles intended for eventual academic publication.¹ They each addressed one of the core research questions presented in the thesis's Introduction:

Chapter 5 addressed:

I) *How has formal language-in-education policy contributed to maintaining Haiti's LEC?*

Chapter 6 addressed:

II) *What is the role of affect, notably shame, in popular resistance to mother-tongue education in Haiti?*

Chapter 7 addressed:

III) *What role does social esteem play in maintaining Haitian elites' linguistic practices?*

The four sections of this chapter provide a synthesis of the thesis's data and analyses and situate the findings within existing literature. The first section below, 8.0, provides a bridge between Chapters 6 and 7, looking at both the non-elite and the elite participants together. There we consider their global experiences with language-related affect and social esteem.

In the subsequent three sections, the datasets from the three stand-alone papers, general ethnographic observations, and my past professional and research experience in Haiti will be

¹ A variant of Chapter 5 is already published as DeGraff, Frager and Miller (2022) (authors' names listed alphabetically). A variant of Chapter 6 has been accepted for a forthcoming Palgrave Macmillan handbook on *Language, Education, and Shame*.

evaluated holistically to address the secondary research questions of this thesis and compare the findings with past literature. These sections follow the structure of the research questions (see Introduction) and the structure of their corresponding literature review (see Section 2.2). The discussion is therefore divided into the following three sections, each addressing a subset of the subsidiary research questions from the Introduction:

8.1 Why is French fluency not spreading to the general Haitian population?

8.2 Why does Kreyòl remain excluded or lower status in many Haitian institutions?

8.3 Why is Haitian LEC generally left unaddressed?

Following these sections, Table 8 provides an overview of this thesis's findings.

8.0 Shame and esteem in Haiti: How a shared sociolinguistic ecosystem is experienced from different positions

In Section 4.0 above and Section 8.1 below, I discuss how linguistic, economic, cultural, and regional differences divide the Haitian people – echoing longstanding observations and commentaries on Haitian society (Price-Mars, 1928; Leyburn, 1941; Simpson, 1941; Trouillot, 1990; Casimir, 2009; Hebblethwaite, 2012; Marius, 2022). In this thesis, my participants and analyses have been separated into elite and non-elite categories. I provide motivations for why this was done in Chapter 4, but also there discuss its limitations. One notable limitation of this approach is that it risks over-absolutizing a division between the Haitian people. Fleischmann (1984) cautions against this very issue:

In reality, “French” and creole society and culture are far from being distinctive entities, neither on the social nor on the geographical level. Individuals or social groups, wherever they may be located, may, irrespective of their real competence, try to orient their actual cultural and linguistic behavior according to what they conceive as “French” or “Creole.” Thus, they create a complex and multidimensional cluster of cultural and linguistic interactions which, in spite of their variability, are part of one overall cultural system. (Fleischmann, 1984, p. 103)

Likewise, the interview data from this research project reveal many commonalities that cross social class boundaries. One important example is that French proficiency carries many of the same indexical meanings for both the elite and non-elite participants. Elite participants stated that seeing an unknown person wearing “nice clothes” as well as performing managerial or white-collar work helps them predict if the person can speak French. Similarly, David, a member of the non-elite cohort, shared that there are a few people in his family who can speak French, but these are people who have “reached a level” – priests, doctors, engineers, and lawyers. For members of both groups, French further indexed being educated, socially connected, international,

economically well positioned, and often, but not necessarily, having a lighter skin color. Kreyòl was notably commonly understood to be more authentically Haitian than French. Thus, despite the differences in their upbringings, economic conditions, and lifestyles, the participants voiced many shared cultural and sociolinguistic understandings of language and linguistic practices in Haiti.

During the interviews with elite participants, the concept of social esteem became prominent, expressed through phrasing such as “showing respect” or “giving value” to their interlocutor through French use. On the other hand, the affective consequences of not knowing French stood out amongst the non-elite group through their stories of “feeling shame” for not knowing French. While these differences motivated separate analytical approaches in the two interview-based papers (Chapters 6 and 7), it is not the case that social esteem does not factor into the non-elites’ linguistic experiences, nor is affect irrelevant to the experience of the elites.

Members of the non-elite cohort were aware of the social evaluations that people receive for knowing or not knowing French. For example, Samuel, the 33-year-old carpenter from a rural village, felt that he would be viewed as a “mediocre student”² when he arrived at his new urban secondary school because he could not speak French as well as a young francophone child whom he met there. Benoit, a 41-year-old artisan, shared that the clique of francophone students at his secondary school negatively assessed him as “not cultivated” because he could not speak French. Now as an adult, he warily deals with secretaries who “see you as a different person if you speak French.” These stories suggest a shared mode of socially evaluating individuals which crosses class lines, and one where the francophone elite happen to be the “winners” and the monolingual non-elite the “losers.” In certain circumstances, however, the elite too had difficulties with language use. For example, upper-class men expressed that while growing up they had to learn to

² See Chapter 6 for original, extended Kreyòl quotes from the non-elite cohort.

selectively use Kreyòl in order to not appear too posh or effeminate. This was necessary for earning the respect of other boys, especially those from lower social classes. Certain upper-class women similarly expressed that they needed to “improve” their Kreyòl by removing French features – that is, by de-Frenchifying it – particularly in settings with people from different social backgrounds. Participants from Kreyòl-monolingual homes and communities did not voice such concerns.

While the elite cohort did not share stories carrying the same emotional weight as the non-elite participants’ accounts of shame, affect was nonetheless present in their descriptions of their linguistic experiences. For example, the use of French at upper-class social gatherings creates a convivial, respectable atmosphere that can be punctuated by the hilarity of a good joke told in Kreyòl. Elite participants often smiled or even broke out into laughter when describing the features of other Haitians’ “bad French.” One participant revealed that members of his milieu share clips in WhatsApp groups of Haitian politicians speaking “bad French” because they find them funny. On the other hand, addressing a stranger in Kreyòl and having them respond in French was described as an uncomfortable experience. While this shows that both the bilingual elite and the monolingual non-elite have negative experiences with respect to “inappropriately” using Kreyòl, the affective character of these experiences differs. This is illustrated by the following two interview quotes:

[The grocery store employee] turned to answer me in French, like, “Who the hell do you think you’re speaking to in Kreyòl?” And immediately, I was like “Okay, thank you!” And I left the aisle because I was a bit embarrassed to have addressed her and assumed... basically, it's like, I just assumed that you're of a lower socioeconomic class because I addressed you in Kreyòl first.

– Louis, early 30s, business manager

And sometimes I would offend somebody who'd say “Why? Do I look like I speak Kreyòl?” The person would be mad. They start speaking French to me and I'm like “Oh! Sorry!” So now I literally ask, “Do you feel comfortable speaking French or Kreyòl?” I give them the choice, so I'm not offending anyone.

– Charlotte, late 40s, entrepreneur

In this type of situation, Louis, who is highly fluent in English, describes his feelings as “embarrassment” rather than “shame.” There are reasons to believe that his choice of wording is significant. Studies on these emotions reveal that embarrassment is typically considered to be both less painful and less intense than shame, as well as more remediable (Miller & Tangney, 1994; Tangney et al., 1996; Keltner & Buswell, 1997; Sabini et al., 2001). On the other hand, shame indicates a recognition of a flaw in oneself, a distance between oneself and the social ideal. Ridding oneself of shame is therefore a very difficult task. Embarrassment is nearly always the result of a public misstep or a social faux pas. To address embarrassment, a person can apologize and try to change their behavior. In the second quote above, this is exactly what Charlotte recounts doing. When she would offend an interlocutor by using Kreyòl when they wanted to be addressed in French, she would apologize. She has since changed her behavior to try to avoid such experiences in the future. In contrast, the members of the non-elite cohort who expressed shame (Kreyòl *wont*) over not knowing French cannot simply apologize and behave differently next time. Participants such as Félix and Lisa stated that their inability to speak French is due to their poor performance in grade school and early withdrawal. Unable to go back in time or afford adult language courses, they feel there is nothing they can do to ever become francophone and escape their shame (see Chapter 6).

To summarize the discussion up to this point, my dataset indicates that Haitians – whatever their social class – share many understandings of the indexical meanings associated with French, Kreyòl, their uses, and their speakers. The non-elite participants too expressed that in many situations French use allows one to receive positive social esteem, whereas being unable to speak it results in disesteem. Unlike the elite, they were not particularly concerned with receiving disesteem for using French or Frenchified Kreyòl where more basilectal Kreyòl would be

preferred. With respect to language and affect, the elites' position was relatively enviable. Rather than experiencing humiliation and shame for not knowing French, they experienced bemusement at the French mistakes of others. And while they also at times had negative experiences due to using Kreyòl with someone who expected French, their affective reaction was one of embarrassment over a correctable error, rather than shame over their linguistic inabilities and what those inabilities signaled about who they were.

So far in this section, social esteem and affect have been treated separately. The interrelationship between these concepts and their influence on human behavior, however, has long been considered and investigated. As early as the 17th century, John Locke (1632–1704) connected the pursuit of reputation and the avoidance of shame, describing them together as fundamental drivers of people's actions:

The principal spring from which the actions of men take their rise, the rule they conduct them by, and the end to which they direct them, seems to be *credit and reputation*, and that which at any rate they avoid, is in the greatest part *shame and disgrace*. (Locke, 1678/1993, p. 236)

Brennan and Pettit (2004), whose concepts of *economies of esteem* and *intangible backhand* were central to the analysis of Chapter 7, themselves explicitly connect social esteem with affect. They argue that the shame caused by disesteem is more powerful than the positive feelings resulting from gaining esteem. As a consequence, “agents will work harder to avoid disesteem than to gain positive esteem: shame is the stronger force for anyone who cares about esteem” (Brennan & Pettit, 2004, p. 156).

Social Rank Theory, or SRT, draws on evolutionary and clinical psychology and similarly explores the relationship between social evaluation, affect, and behavior (Price et al., 1994; Gilbert & McGuire, 1998; Gilbert, 2000; Mahadevan et al., 2023). A central argument of SRT is that

“emotions and moods are substantially influenced by perceptions of one’s social status/rank; that is, the degree to which one feels inferior to others and looked down on” (Gilbert, 2000, p. 174). Individuals monitor their positions within social hierarchies and are affectively responsive to perceptions that others value, respect, defer, or look down upon them. Perceptions of low social rank can trigger a shame response and, consequently, submissive behavior (Gilbert & McGuire, 1998; Gilbert, 2000). Like Brennan and Pettit’s (2004) theory of social esteem, SRT conceptualizes social position, affect, and behavior as closely interconnected. Notably, perceptions of unfavorable social standing can have negative affective consequences, which can in turn shape social behavior.

These perspectives on the centrality of perceived negative social evaluations and their affective consequences offer another way of understanding Haitian upper-class bilingual behavior. The choice to use French where it is expected may be driven less by snobbism or the pleasant feeling of receiving a positive social evaluation than by a desire to avoid the disesteem and negative affective experiences that Kreyòl use might cause. Although the authors above employ the word “shame,” the influence of less intense emotions, such as embarrassment and discomfort, should not be discounted.³ My own interviews and others’ past observations (Efron, 1954; Zéphir, 1990; Marius, 2022) indicate that there are many contexts where a member of the Haitian elite might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed to use Kreyòl, such as being the only person speaking it at an upper-class social function, using it when meeting a romantic partner’s parents for the first time, or employing it with prospective business partners.

Thus, while shame may contribute to the submission of Kreyòl-monolinguals and discourage them from combating linguistic exclusion, the discomfort and embarrassment

³ A complication with comparing different literatures and discussions of shame, guilt, embarrassment, etc. is that these are common, non-technical words. Thus, unless a clear definition is provided, it is not evident that each tradition or author is employing them in the same way.

associated with breaking linguistic norms may likewise make it difficult for elites to extend their use of Kreyòl into additional spaces and exchanges.

Ultimately, far more can be said and investigated with respect to the intersection between social esteem, affect, and linguistic behavior in Haiti. For example, while the literature discussed above emphasizes shame and the avoidance of negative social evaluations, this project's interviews also indicate the importance of positive emotions in shaping behavior and maintaining existing social structures. Elite participants found others' "bad" Acquired French amusing, rather than viewing it either as a linguistic form respectable in its own right or as an impetus to improve access to "good" French in Haiti. Non-elite participants who did speak French to some degree seemed particularly pleased to do so, with one expressing that "the ambiance is nicer" at his home when his sons speak it. Even those who could not speak French, who felt it had been detrimental to their lives, and who professed a deep dislike of it, nonetheless smiled broadly when imagining their own child one day being fluent. Though it might be too late for them, the dream of bilingualism for their progeny, a fantasy of diglossia for their descendants, may well make current real-world exclusionary policies and practices more tolerable to bear.

Further explorations of the relationship between social esteem, affect, and Haitian linguistic behavior are left as topics of future investigation, alongside others proposed below in Chapter 9.

8.1 Why is French fluency not spreading to the general Haitian population?

In this section, we revisit the secondary research questions that address why French fluency is not spreading in Haiti. These are:

- i) *In addition to formal policy, why is the school system not broadly spreading French fluency?*
 - ii) *Do non-francophones have opportunities to practice and improve their French outside of the classroom, notably in natural settings with fluent speakers?*
 - iii) *Are Kreyòl-monolingual non-elite Haitians not interested in acquiring French as they consider it alone to be insufficient for social mobility?*
 - iv) *Do Kreyòl-monolinguals not pursue French fluency because they reject the legitimacy of this language and its dominant position in Haiti?*
- i) *In addition to formal policy, why is the school system not broadly spreading French fluency?*

To date, the formal education system in Haiti has not spread French fluency to the general population. As discussed in Chapter 5, documents from the 19th century reveal that at times this has been the explicit intent of its architects. For example, the Minister of Education in 1860 stated that average children leave primary school "with a few notions of the French language" and the "elite alone" should acquire the deeper knowledge of secondary school (Vincent & Lhérisson, 1895, p. 445). More recently, *early-exit* language policies (e.g. MENFP (2021)) which promptly switch to French-only instruction are ill-conceived due to Haitian students from the monolingual majority having a lack of opportunities to practice outside the classroom (see below) and the low average French level of its teacher workforce (IFADEM, 2013).

In addition to these issues, interviews with Haitian non-elites revealed how their schools' disciplinary and classroom cultures hinder second-language acquisition. Notably, the interviewees discussed shame- and fear-inducing linguistic practices in the classroom – coinciding with other recent research on the continued use of corporal punishment in Haitian schools (Garçon et al., 2024; López García et al., 2022). Some participants shared that they were beaten or suffered other physical punishments for making mistakes in French, such as being forced to kneel uncomfortably on their knees. Others still recounted how students mocked each other's mistakes, silencing those who felt less confident in French and preventing them from practicing speaking in the classroom. As previously discussed, according to Krashen's (1985) model of second language acquisition, stressful environments like these would raise an *affective filter*, blocking Haitian students from effectively integrating any French linguistic input that they might receive. Rather than being spaces where Kreyòl-monolingual children can comfortably learn and speak French, Haitian classrooms prevent acquisition in part due to the stress that they induce.

Another explanation is the economic barrier many families face to educate their children (Hadjadj, 2000). Despite the Haitian constitution guaranteeing free primary school education (Haitian Government, 1987), 85 percent of primary schools are private and many for-profit (Social Action Consulting, 2016, p. 37). Many of this project's non-elite participants discussed this issue, attributing their lack of French fluency to having left school early because their parents could no longer afford to pay the tuition.

In summary, beyond formal language-in-education policy, teachers' generally low levels of French, stress-inducing classroom environments, and school tuition that is too expensive for many families all contribute to the Haitian school system not spreading French in Haiti.

ii) Do non-francophones have opportunities to practice and improve their French outside of the classroom, notably in natural settings with fluent speakers?

Although Haitian policy documents emphasize formal education and the classroom as the gateway to children acquiring French, applied linguistics stresses the importance of extended opportunities to practice receiving input and producing output in target languages in casual and natural settings (S. D. Krashen, 1985; Long, 1996; Swain, 1985). Considering the 31 interviews and general ethnographic observations from the fieldwork, such opportunities do not appear readily available for members of the Haitian lower social classes. There are several reasons why.

First, the interviews and general fieldwork experience showed how Haiti's social classes are in many respects two segregated populations – this being a longstanding observation of Haitian society (Price-Mars, 1928; Leyburn, 1941; Simpson, 1941; Trouillot, 1990; Casimir, 2009; Hebblethwaite, 2012; Marius, 2022). In addition to their experiences and opinions on language, the interviewees spoke to me about their life courses and lifestyles, highlighting many differences between Haiti's rich and poor. Direct observations from the interviews also demonstrated the gulf between them: the modest second-hand clothes of the lower class, the designer brands of the upper class, whether they wanted to meet in a chic restaurant or invited me to sit on a plastic chair in the front yard of their small cement house which lacks both running water and electricity, and many other observations. Even when these two groups reside in close geographic proximity, Haiti's upper and lower classes live in largely different worlds. There is notably a high economic barrier to entry into the spaces and activities of the upper class (Marius, 2022). The cost of prestigious schools, expensive recreational activities, and various signals of upper-class distinction (Bourdieu, 1979) through conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899)⁴ create an obstacle for access to Haiti's "Good

⁴ One of the elite interviewees criticized her in-law, another Haitian living in Haiti, for spending hundreds of dollars apiece for designer shirts.

French" community. This hurdle is insurmountable for many Kreyòl-monolinguals, given that almost a third of the working population lives under the international poverty line of \$2.15 per day (Statista, 2025). As such, one barrier for lower-class Haitians to access Haiti's "Good French," either for themselves or their children, is that they simply cannot afford it. Hence the Haitian proverb: "Kreyòl is the language of roots, French is a bought language" ("Kreyòl se lang rasin, franse se lang achte").

Second, even when Haitians of different class and linguistic backgrounds do participate in the same activity, space, or institution, persistent social barriers may limit the extent of their interactions. Members of the lower class who do work in the homes and yards of the upper class are likely to be kept at a social distance or to be addressed in Kreyòl, restricting the amount of French practice they get in these settings. Similarly, Charlotte, a member of the upper class in her 40s, noted that while her inexpensive parochial school did have girls from middle-class and lower-middle-class backgrounds, it nonetheless remained highly socially segregated.⁵ This blocked girls from non-upper-class backgrounds from gaining prolonged exposure to L1 French speakers in informal settings.

Third, there can exist literal physical distance between rural Haitians and access to fluent French speakers. Though not covered in Chapter 6, some members of the non-elite cohort emphasized the geographic aspect of Haiti's sociolinguistic division. Samuel, the 33-year-old carpenter from a remote mountain village, repeatedly emphasized the unfairness of rural children

⁵ Excerpt of relevant quote by Charlotte from Chapter 7:

"You give your last name and then they kind of retrace you. 'Oh, so you're the daughter of this or sister or the cousin of...' They have to position you to know who you are. So yes, I hung out mostly with [girls of my social class]. But at school, I did hang out with the other people. Nevertheless, I don't think I went to their houses. Never. And they were not invited to my parties either. Everybody was kind of stuck."

She commented that for people to truly rise in Haitian society, they would need to marry into an established family. She also shared that she and her friends would never consider dating someone who did not already speak French well.

not having equal access to French. He stated that if he were Minister of Education, he would insist on French education for rural children because "[w]hen they go somewhere else and hear French, that troubles them. (...) You cannot hang your head low. People are speaking French, you have to speak it too."⁶ Others expressed that limited access to French in the countryside makes the rural peasantry particularly vulnerable to political exclusion and manipulation. Nadine, a 43-year-old small shop owner, had difficulty withholding her frustration about how rural populations are susceptible to political manipulation due to French:

(Speaking in animated Kreyòl) Right ok, the peasantry who live in the mountains, what are they going to do with a president who speaks French? Right here is the problem with Haiti! The president could insult their mothers in French, they'll say "Bravooo!" (she claps loudly emulating their applause)⁷

While Haiti has become increasingly urbanized, the long-attested urban-rural divide of the population (Price-Mars, 1928) remains a barrier to access to French for many.

⁶ Mwen menm, si mwen ta gen yon sèl bagay m ap fè, mwen t ap fè tout nivo lekòl yo nèt, mwen ta oblije fè tout bagay fèt an franse. Paske timoun nan, li pa pale franse byen. Lè li rive lòt kote, li tande lòt moun ap pale franse, sa deranje l. (...) Donk, ou pa ka met tèt atè. Se franse moun ap pale ou oblije pale l tou.

⁷ (Li fristre et eksite) Bon oke, peyizan yo ki nan montay la, kisa yo pral fè ak yon pwezidan ki pale an franse? Men pwoblèm Ayiti a. Pwezidan gen dwa joure manman yo an franse. Y ap di 'Bravoooo!' (li bat men fò, ap imite jan yo bat bravo a)

iii) *Are Kreyòl-monolingual non-elite Haitians not interested in acquiring French as they consider it alone to be insufficient for social mobility?*

and

iv) *Do Kreyòl-monolinguals not pursue French fluency because they reject the legitimacy of this language and its dominant position in Haiti?*

On the other hand, two other potential causes for the maintenance of the rarity of French were not supported by the interview dataset. First, while some lower-status language communities may reject an elite's culture and language variety as a demonstration of solidarity with their social or regional identity (J. Edwards, 1994), this was not evidenced here. Much of the non-elite cohort stated that they felt positively towards French and essentially all of the non-elite cohort wanted to know it well, even if they considered it less authentically "Haitian" or if they felt Kreyòl should have a more dominant role in the school system and society broadly. Maddi, the unemployed 28-year-old mother of three and the only non-elite interviewee who spoke primarily in French during her interview, voiced that if Haitians worked together for everyone to learn French, then the country's social divisions would end and "[t]he country will improve."⁸ As such, this dataset supports past observations that a fantasy of diglossia persists in Haiti (Fleischmann, 1984, pp. 102–103; Zéphir, 2010, p. 61; DeGraff, 2017b, p. 185; Lubin Jr, 2018, p. 151).

Second, Myers-Scotton's *Incomplete Package hypothesis* (1993) – that people may be uninterested in learning high-status language varieties because they feel that for social mobility they need an unobtainable constellation of characteristics apart from just language – was also not

⁸Ankètè – [Selon sa w fèk di a,] si nou mete tout Ayisyen ansanm, e toutmoun aprann pale franse... Maddi – *Le pays va s'arranger*.

evidenced. While the elite interviewees did reveal that membership in their ranks requires diverse and difficult-to-obtain characteristics, such as significant material wealth, a social network, and a prestigious family name, the research participants from lower-class backgrounds were not deterred from wanting to learn French. Although ascension to the true elite may not be attainable, their ambitions were more modest. They voiced that French would help them escape poverty and "reach a level," which largely entailed having a job in the formal economy, reaching Haiti's small middle class, and being able to socialize with people of that milieu and foreigners. As an illustration of the faith people hold in French to improve their lives, Félix, the unemployed 30-year-old from a fishing village, said he often thinks to himself that even if he could only "get by with a few words" he would still be better off than he is now (see Chapter 6).

To summarize this section, the dataset provides evidence that French remains rare in Haiti in part because of characteristics of the school system and the limited opportunities Kreyòl-monolinguals have to practice outside of the classroom due to economic, social, and geographic divisions that separate them from Haiti's francophone elite community. On the other hand, the dataset offers evidence against hypotheses that French remains rare because Kreyòl-monolingual Haitians do not desire to learn it. Members of this cohort neither refuse to learn French out of allegiance to an opposing social identity, nor do they feel that it alone will offer them no social or economic advantage.

8.2 Why does Kreyòl remain excluded or lower status in many Haitian institutions?

In this section, we revisit the secondary research questions that address why Kreyòl remains excluded or lower status in key Haitian institutions. These questions are:

- i) *Do colonial legacies still contribute to Haitians valuing Kreyòl less than French?*
- ii) *How might lay understandings of creoles as a "lesser" form of their lexifiers influence how stakeholders feel about Kreyòl and French in Haiti?*
- iii) *How might pragmatic challenges keep Kreyòl outside of institutions?*

i) *Do colonial legacies still contribute to Haitians valuing Kreyòl less than French?*

In his discussion of the influence of colonial legacies on language policy and practice in Africa, Bokamba (2011) proposes the concept of *ukolonia*. His treatment of this idea, however, is fairly narrow in scope. He focuses on political elites and on their self-evaluations. He argues that politicians' self-evaluations are based on the values of the former colonizer's culture, and as a result the politicians devalue local languages, blocking them from assuming additional societal functions.

Political elites were unfortunately absent from this project's interview sample due to security concerns and questions of legitimacy following the suspension of elections after the assassination of President Moïse in July 2021. Nonetheless, within both the policy documents and interview data there is some evidence supporting Bokamba's thesis.

The analyzed policy documents cannot directly reveal the self-evaluations of their authors. Nonetheless, they demonstrate the prevalence of French (neo)colonial values and standards within

Haitian policy. The clearest instance of French values occurs in the dataset's chronologically most recent document, the *Cadre d'orientation curriculaire pour le système éducatif haïtien—Haïti 2054* document (MENFP, 2021). This document was conceived and generated through the French Development Agency's *Project NECTAR*.⁹ The document includes the most explicit anti-Kreyòl education policy since the early 1980s, removing it as a language of instruction after 4th grade. It furthermore includes values unusual for Haitian society broadly, such as stating that the goal of the school system is to form citizens "tolerant and respectful of secularism."¹⁰ The notion of "secularism" ("*laïcité*") is not present in any of the other documents nor generally in Haitian public discourse,¹¹ but is central to French political and policy discourses (Baubérot-Vincent, 2024). Despite this document being inundated with both French linguistic and cultural values, it was reviewed, accepted, and formally ratified by members of Haiti's political elite. This appears to be another case in which colonial legacies continue to influence language-in-education policy long after independence (Bamgboṣe, 1991; Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1991; Schmied, 1991; Heugh et al., 2007; Gutiérrez & Epinayú, 2024; Hassan, 2024; Limerick et al., 2024; Ndhlovu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2024).

This project's interviews with members of Haiti's traditional elite also offer some insight, as these individuals spoke about their exchanges with political appointees (see Chapter 7). They noted that political appointees insist on French use in these formal exchanges, even if they do not seem very strong in this language. This potentially reflects a self-evaluation whereby the

⁹ See Chapter 5 and NECTAR's website: <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/projet-nectar-pour-education-citoyenne-tournee-vers-avenir>

¹⁰ "[L]e système éducatif doit viser à former un citoyen (...) tolérant et respectueux de la laïcité." (MENFP, 2021, p. 11).

¹¹ This is my experience from years of living and researching in Haiti. For example, I often see schools that include daily Christian prayers or even a Bible class, even if they are not explicitly religious schools.

politicians view themselves as more valuable and important because they can and do use French. A future study with political elites may lend more insight into this matter.

By broadening Bokamba's *ukolonia* in two respects, it has greater theoretical utility for the current investigation. First, rather than considering only how colonial evaluations *of oneself* maintain LEC, the concept can be applied to interpersonal social evaluations, and thus be used to explore the interrelationship between *ukolonia*, social esteem, and LEC Maintenance. Second, as political elites are not the only important actors in LEC Maintenance, evaluating the prevalence and impact of *ukolonia* in other social groups may offer additional explanatory power for LEC Maintenance.

The Eurocentric values of Haiti's traditional elite are well-documented (Casimir, 2009, 2020; Marius, 2022). The elite members interviewed in this study similarly voiced appreciation for European languages and culture.¹² Some spoke several modern European languages and others, notably older individuals, had studied Greek and Latin as part of their private school curriculum. On the other hand, none expressed any interest in studying an African culture or language. Though not asked, some interviewees expressed pride in Haiti's francophone literature and offered recommendations. Haiti's existing Kreyòl literature, however, was mentioned only by a couple of interviewees. One elite interviewee, Alexandre, reconciled his desire to promote Kreyòl from within a pro-European *ukolonia* value set by emphasizing that Kreyòl is "not African" but rather European (see Chapter 7).

These pro-European and pro-French values amongst the elite interviewees translated into tangible barriers and opportunities for other Haitians. They expressed that they are more likely to

¹² One interviewee recounted how they taught themselves German as a teenager because of their appreciation for Nietzsche and Wagner – performing piano concerts of the latter's work.

consider a "Good French" speaker to be a quality employee, an intelligent person, and a suitable romantic partner.

Descriptions of people receiving different social evaluations corresponding to *ukolonia* linguistic values were found not only amongst elite interviewees and in upper-class settings. Participants from the lower class reported that in many of the spaces they frequent people are treated more positively and perceived "as a different person" if they can speak French. One interviewee, Rony, stated that speaking French is generally better than speaking Kreyòl, and that there was a "nicer ambiance" in his home when his sons speak French. Being an eloquent French speaker is thus not only the desired social ideal for Haiti's upper class, but also permeates the middle and lower classes (see Chapter 6).

These findings provide further evidence of the continuing influence of post-colonial legacies and coloniality on Haitian society today (Fanon, 1952/2021; Quijano, 1992; Mignolo, 2011; Casimir, 2020; Marius, 2022). Expanding upon Bokamba's original treatment of *ukolonia* offers utility for explaining the durability of sociolinguistic disequilibrium in post-colonial contexts. A *ukolonia* mode of evaluation not only impacts individuals' self-esteem but also their social esteem, and the influence this exercises on stakeholders goes beyond political elites, contributing to LEC Maintenance from both above and below.

ii) How might lay understandings of creoles as a "lesser" form of their lexifiers influence how stakeholders feel about Kreyòl and French in Haiti?

The dataset provided evidence supporting DeGraff's (2005) concerns about lay understandings of creole exceptionalism and its role in maintaining sociolinguistic barriers. In particular, interviewees from the upper class expressed doubts about Kreyòl's linguistic status and

its capacity to perform the functions of French or of any "normal" language. These concerns came from highly educated individuals, such as a school director and a medical practitioner. The latter notably expressed an extreme form of creole exceptionalism whereby Kreyòl is considered a fundamentally limited communication system and is impossible for use in scientific domains due to the conditions of its genesis (as he understood it). As such, he stated that Kreyòl-education promoters are "perverse" and "wanting to destroy whatever we have left of the Haitian mind" (see Chapter 7). These findings show the persistence of negative attitudes towards creole languages (Jean-Charles, 1987; Schieffelin & Doucet, 1994; Mühleisen, 2022; Jean-François, 2006; Migge et al., 2010; Bancu et al., 2024) and of extreme, lay understandings of creole exceptionalism (DeGraff, 2005). Such opinions and understandings may contribute to the maintenance of LEC when held by individuals in positions of institutional power and intellectual influence.

On the other hand, the longitudinal review of documents in Chapter 5 demonstrates a gradual evolution towards more positive descriptions of Kreyòl, at least within formal public-facing documents. The earliest discussions of Caribbean creoles in the 19th century are often negative, referring to them as "corrupted French" (Larousse, 1869, p. 490) and as the adaptation of a European language to "(...) a race that is linguistically inferior."¹³ Likewise, 19th-century Haitian policy documents do not mention Kreyòl, perhaps reflecting such understandings of it as merely a "bad" form of French. When the Haitian government did finally pass a law in 1979 making Kreyòl permissible in Haitian education, the law included the peculiar Article 2:

Article 2: Kreyòl, as a spoken and written language, is constituted of sounds and signs corresponding to consonants, vowels, semi-consonants and semi-vowels (Haitian Government, 1979).

¹³ French linguist Julien Vinson's 1889 *Dictionnaire des sciences anthropologiques*, as translated into English by DeGraff (2005, p. 538)

This Article may have been included to affirm Kreyòl's status as a "normal language" – something the Haitian government has notably never bothered to do for French. Modern Haitian language-in-education policy documents, possibly influenced by the official support for mother tongues given by international aid organizations such as UNESCO (Marinotti, 2017; UNESCO, 2003, 2007), reference Kreyòl positively and as a normal language without any caveats – regardless of how limited a role they give it in the classroom (see Chapter 5).

Thus while negative language attitudes and historical or lay forms of creole exceptionalism may no longer be explicitly reflected in policy documents, such beliefs continue to persist amongst some educated upper-class Haitians, potentially mitigating support for the language's entry into technical, academic, and professional domains.

iii) How might pragmatic challenges keep Kreyòl outside of institutions?

In economically poor countries, linguistic elite closure is arguably maintained in part due to the cost of developing minoritized languages, including defining standards, producing written materials, and integrating these into institutions (James et al., 2017; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). As Haiti is a lower-income country, its LEC may thus be partially explained as a general consequence of the country's poverty. The evidence from this project's datasets, my fieldwork observations, and my past research experience, however, provides a complex and mixed portrait with respect to this explanation for Haiti.

Foremost is the challenge of creating a written standard (James et al., 2017; Ouane & Glanz, 2011). Unlike many minoritized languages in lower-income countries, Kreyòl has a standard for its orthography which has been in use for nearly four decades (AKA, 2017). While

minor adjustments to this standard are still being made, one major dispute has been *de jure* settled since 1979: whether to use a complex French-based spelling system or a phonetic system which is easier to learn, with the latter having been selected. The Haitian state has furthermore allocated funding to create and operate the Haitian Creole Academy (*Akademi Kreyòl Ayisyen*), established in 2014, which has official jurisdiction over defining the standard (Haitian Government, 1987; Le Moniteur, 2014). Other organizations, such as the MIT-Haiti Initiative, also make contributions to proposing standard terminology for scientific and technical domains.¹⁴

Apart from just being officially defined, a minoritized language's standard must be propagated and accepted by its language community (James et al., 2017). In Haiti, this process is still ongoing, although considerable headway for standard Kreyòl has been made. Notably, since the 1990s Kreyòl has been an object of instruction in Haitian primary schools and is tested on standardized exams that all students – even those from the elite – must pass if they seek to obtain Haitian grade school diplomas (see Chapter 5). Except for students attending schools that are geared towards international certifications, all Haitians with some basic education will thus have been formally taught and tested on Kreyòl's written standard.

On the other hand, many older upper-class members of my cohort were not comfortable reading or writing this standard. One interviewee in his 60s, Alexandre, notably still advocates for reforming the orthography to a French-based system. Another, Frédéric, was dismissive of any technical vocabulary in Kreyòl, stating (in English) "they are all French words. There are no words in Kreyòl to refer to any scientific concept." Many expressed difficulties writing and reading Kreyòl. Charlotte, an entrepreneur in her 40s, stated:

¹⁴ The MIT-Haiti Initiative website provides a glossary for scientific and academic terms. See: <https://haiti.mit.edu/glossaryglose/>

I don't write Kreyòl. I don't know how. I write terribly. My son, thank god, learned Kreyòl for one year [in his English-medium school]. (...) When I write in Kreyòl to the **bòs** (construction workers) my son or my employees have to help me correct my Kreyòl.

Given the wealth of the upper-class participants, the reason for them not knowing written Kreyòl is not an issue of a lack of material resources. If they wanted, these interviewees could afford a tutor or to buy an instruction book that would teach them the standard. As written Kreyòl has a one-to-one phonetic spelling system, learning it would likely not take them very long. They seemed rather to be ambivalent, expressing neither a strong need nor a desire to obtain a proficient level of this written standard. They appear only to be inconvenienced occasionally when texting Kreyòl-monolinguals. While many of them are managers or business owners, none voiced any interest in making this standard the operational written language of their businesses. Thus, while the Haitian state has made some investment in creating both a standard and the Haitian Kreyòl Academy, the data from this cohort indicate that members of Haiti's upper class are not pursuing integrating it into their firms or their everyday use of written language.

This project's review of education diagnostic reports and policy documents discussed how insufficient Kreyòl-language textbooks and investment in their production are a barrier to mother-tongue education (AKA & MENFP, 2015; Sénat, 2022; Smith, 2016). Nonetheless, various organizations are already investing in producing them, notably Haiti's primary textbook publisher, Henri Deschamps,¹⁵ as well as the Ministry of Education through their recent *Liv Inik* initiative.¹⁶

¹⁵ Henri Deschamps – discussed more in main text – produces textbooks for some subjects through third grade. See their catalog here: <https://www.maisonhenrideschamps.ht/product-category?type=LIVRES>

¹⁶ The *Liv Inik*, announced in 2022, was intended to be a set of mandatory textbooks in Kreyòl covering all subjects to be used in primary school. When I last visited Haiti in January 2024, I spoke with teachers about the 1st grade version of this textbook, the only one available at the time. They complained that it was not accompanied by any training or explanation, and that its actual contents needed revision. As such, they continued to use other textbooks from the Henri Deschamps publishing house. Since then, the Minister of Education who launched the project, Nesmy Manigat, has been removed and replaced. It is thus uncertain what the future holds for this initiative.

Other producers and funders of Kreyòl materials include smaller publishers such as Kopivite l'Action Sociale¹⁷ and foreign aid organizations, such as USAID.¹⁸

These textbooks, however, are not the preferred choice of schools. In the summer of 2017, Henri Deschamps carried out a study of required textbook lists from schools across the country – that is, the lists of the textbooks the teachers and administrators planned to use.¹⁹ Their research teams visited 4,560 Haitian schools, gathering and recording into a digital database the schools' textbook lists for the 2017-2018 academic year. Based on figures from this database, even when Kreyòl versions of textbooks are available and cost no more than French versions, schools overwhelmingly select the French versions.

In mathematics, Henri Deschamps offers Kreyòl textbooks until the third grade. For first grade, they offer only bilingual books. For second and third grade, schools select which language version they require:

¹⁷ In 2017, I visited Kopivite l'Action Sociale's headquarters in Port-au-Prince and reviewed their catalog, which included textbooks in Kreyòl through 9th grade. As of July 2025, their website appears to be down.

¹⁸ Examples of USAID-funded Kreyòl textbooks and reading programs:

All Children Reading (Tout Timoun Ap Li, or ToTAL). Timeframe: January 1, 2012 to December 31, 2014. Primary implementer: RTI International.

See:

https://www.haiti-now.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Creole_G2_B3_Reader_L96-150_08-02-14_reviewer5.pdf?srltid=AfmBOor5yMrMTdGg26xjZ8a2lB9eiQKiMlGfHc8wDiPZL-_Q81WlzeeJ
Let's Learn to Read and Write! (Ann ALE!). Time frame: 2015-2016. Primary implementer: FHI 360.

[https://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-15163-haiti-education-\\$33m-to-improve-reading-and-writing-of-100-000-children.html](https://www.haitilibre.com/en/news-15163-haiti-education-$33m-to-improve-reading-and-writing-of-100-000-children.html)

¹⁹ During fieldwork for my unpublished Master's thesis at Sciences Po, Paris, in December 2017 I interviewed a director of Henri Deschamps, Wanda Pierre. She explained their investigation into required textbook lists and shared its results with me. Their teams went to every school that they could easily access – noting that very rural schools were less represented in their database. With their assistance, I accessed the database on 6 Dec 2017 at the Henri Deschamps office in Pétionville, Haiti.

Table 6: Preferred language of Haitian mathematics textbooks

		Occurrences of book titles in school required textbook lists for the 2017-2018 academic year	Percentage of occurrences by language version for each book
<i>Vive les maths 2</i>	(2 nd grade)	2084	93% French
<i>Viv matematik 2</i>	(2 nd grade)	155	7% Kreyòl
<i>Réussir les maths 2</i>	(2 nd grade)	1501	95% French
<i>M ap fò nan matematik 2</i>	(2 nd grade)	72	5% Kreyòl
<i>Vive les maths 3</i>	(3 rd grade)	1750	98% French
<i>Viv matematik 3</i>	(3 rd grade)	41	2% Kreyòl

Amongst schools that provided required mathematics book titles for the database, books produced by Henri Deschamps represented 97 percent of the entries for second and third grade. Thus, the table above provides a representation of the overall language preference of Haitian schools for mathematics books at these grade levels. The situation is similarly imbalanced for other subjects. For second-grade history, 2636 schools require Deschamps's French textbook, with only 9 requiring their Kreyòl version.

Wanda Pierre, the Henri Deschamps director who discussed this dataset with me in December 2017, expressed that the publishing house wishes to support Kreyòl and does what it can, but that Kreyòl versions of their books are not generally desired. She noted that their actual sales for Kreyòl textbooks are different from these lists, as government subsidies and NGOs will at times purchase the Kreyòl versions and distribute them – potentially to schools which would rather have the French counterparts. Although a precise sales figure was not provided, Wanda Pierre stated that the French versions still make up the vast majority of Henri Deschamps sales.

Thus, despite a written standard for Kreyòl having been defined for four decades and there having been some investment in producing materials in this standard, individuals and institutions are electing to continue to use French instead. One issue may be that the investment being made and the amount of Kreyòl resources being produced are insufficient to prompt a wide-scale social

and institutional change. The limited range of Kreyòl resources, such as a few lower-level school textbooks and MIT-Haiti's glossary of technical vocabulary, may not be enough for stakeholders to feel confident that Kreyòl's standard has any real momentum. As such, parents and school administrators may not see the value in Kreyòl-based education, and business owners are not ready to switch to Kreyòl-based documentation. A second issue may be generational. Younger Haitians regardless of social class have studied standard Kreyòl in school – unlike their parents – and thus have a different relationship with the language than previous generations. So while on the one hand the investment already made into Kreyòl's standard and print resources is not abruptly disrupting the dominance of French, further investment and time could potentially expand the standard into additional domains.

8.3 Why is Haitian LEC generally left unaddressed?

In this section, we revisit the secondary research questions that address why stakeholders in Haiti do not attempt to address LEC. These questions are:

- i) *Have Haitian linguistic practices become naturalized to the point that other possibilities are not considered?*
- ii) *Is it in the interest of the Haitian elite to maintain the status quo?*
- iii) *Is Haiti's LEC ignored in order to address more immediate, pressing problems?*

i) Have Haitian linguistic practices become naturalized to the point that other possibilities are not considered?

Finding direct evidence in support of Bourdieu's (1991) theory of (mis)recognition is not straightforward, as this requires insight into what individuals *are not aware of*. More specifically, that individuals are *not aware* that the high value given to the contextually dominant culture and language is socially and historically contingent rather than natural and necessary, and thus their society, its values, and its linguistic practices could be different. Nonetheless, within this project's datasets there is some indirect evidence that the dominance of French in Haiti is (mis)recognized as natural and necessary.

First, interviews with the Haitian upper class revealed that negative attitudes towards Kreyòl still persist. That is, some participants expressed that French is a superior language and that Kreyòl is incapable of many of the same functions (see Section 8.2 above). As such, using French for school, business, governance, etc. is the "natural" and best choice. Second, within the language-in-education policy documents that were analyzed, the dominance of French in the Haitian school

system is taken for granted. The documents do not bother to include any discussion as to the historical, social, and economic reasons for why French dominates or ought to dominate Haitian curricula and be the primary academic object of study for every Haitian child. On the other hand, the few documents which do call for Kreyòl-based curricula offer extensive pedagogical, cultural, and economic justifications for this choice (DEN, 1982; ISOS, 2016). Hence, French in the classroom is treated as a natural or self-evident option, whereas Kreyòl's presence requires extensive justification. Similar asymmetries have been found in the formal language-in-education policy of other Creole language contexts, such as the treatment of Kreol vis-à-vis French and English in Seychelles' policy (Zelime & Deutschmann, 2016).

Every interview during the fieldwork concluded with a variant of the question, "If you could, would you change anything with respect to language policy or practice in Haiti?" As a general observation, the elite cohort responded more readily and easily than the non-elite cohort. With the non-elite cohort, I often felt that I needed to re-state the question, making it more concrete, and ask about specific domains in Haitian society (e.g. "If you were the president of Haiti, how would you change language in the education system?"). Still, often the non-elite participants did not directly respond to the question. Many instead continued to express their own personal linguistic wishes and barriers ("I would like to learn French, but I don't have the means"). It is difficult to say exactly why this occurred. This possibly represents an instance of class-based (mis)recognition whereby the non-elite interviewees had more difficulty than the elites imagining Haitian society any other way, potentially due to having seldom traveled outside of Haiti and having less exposure to contexts with different linguistic values and practices. At times it also appeared that the non-elite interviewees struggled to imagine themselves being so empowered.

This was evident in the following exchange with Félix, the unemployed 30-year-old of the fishing village:

Interviewer – If you were the President... or the Minister of Education, and you could choose what role, what place French, Kreyòl, English, Spanish would have in the education system in Haiti [and] you could change the education system any way that you want...

Félix – You know, for me to have this role, I am supposed to speak several of those languages. If I am going to do an interview, if I host visitors, if there is a meeting. It is not everywhere you can speak Kreyòl. In Haiti, I am telling you, it is not everywhere you can show up and say you are going to speak Kreyòl. It is FRENCH (emphatic) that you have to show off.²⁰

Moreover, certain participants from the non-elite cohort voiced that French is better to use when possible, and many participants expressed a belief that their children could potentially learn it and have a better life. This demonstrates how a *fantasy of diglossia* (Fleischmann, 1984; Zéphir, 2010; DeGraff, 2017b; Lubin Jr, 2018) could also contribute to inaction towards Haiti's LEC.

ii) Is it in the interest of the Haitian elite to maintain the status quo?

Prah (1995) describes African elites as having a “crisis of the will,” torn between supporting local languages and protecting their own social position (p. 71). This same issue may also exist amongst Haitian elites. French is required for many domains key to wealth and power, but its rarity helps ensure the socioeconomic security of those who possess it, particularly the “Good French” known to people born into upper-class francophone families. Given the advantages and distinction this social and linguistic arrangement offers the Haitian elite, is working to

²⁰ Ankètè – Si, ou menm, ou te prezidan... ou minis dedikasyon, e ou menm, ou ta ka chwazi ki wòl, ki plas franse, kreyòl, anglè, espanyòl ta genyen nan sistèm edikasyon an Ayiti... ou menm, ou met chanje sistèm edikasyon jan ou vle.

Félix - Ou konnen, si wòl sa a m ap jwe, lang sa yo, mwen sipoze pale plizyè landan yo. Si mwen pral fè yon entèvou, si m ap gen vizit, gen reyinyon. [S]e pa tout kote pou ou pale Kreyòl, non. Nan Ayiti, m ap di w, se pa tout kote pou ou parèt, w ap di se kreyòl ou pral pale. Se FRANSE (anfatik), wi, pou w met devan.

dismantle LEC ultimately against their interests? Similarly to African elites (Prah, 1995; Trudell, 2010), are they ambivalent about addressing their country's linguistic inequalities?

For much of Haitian history, the elite has drawn wealth through cheap agricultural labor, with the majority of the population living in rural micro-farming communities (Girault, 1981; Heinl et al., 2005). Up through the 1950s, 80 percent of the labor force was engaged in agricultural production (Haggerty, 1991, p. 290). Through often exploitative arrangements (Trouillot, 1994), the rural Haitian majority would produce cash crops such as coffee and sugar, which would then be purchased by the elite through intermediary *speculateurs* and exported abroad. Given the advantage the elite derived from this social and economic model, they had no obvious or immediate material incentive to either spread French fluency and literacy or to define a Kreyòl standard and promote its use in institutions.

Modern Haiti is economically and demographically different in some key respects. In 1960, only 16 percent of the population lived in urban centers. Today, this number has grown to 60 percent (World Bank, 2025). Rather than mostly being subsistence farmers providing a source of cheap labor, more and more of the non-elite are now urbanites who are themselves dependent upon the services and products of others. Though still largely impoverished, they nonetheless represent a growing consumer base. Where there is a profit to be made, Haitian business owners may be inclined to put aside old biases. This was exemplified by one of this project's interviewees, Manon, an upper-class woman in her 50s who previously managed her family's large cafeteria-style restaurant. Despite her penchant for the French language, she ordered her staff to respond in Kreyòl to every customer who addressed them in this language in order to create a welcoming environment

for this clientele.²¹ Other participants discussed how Arab immigrants throughout the 20th century were able to amass wealth in part due to their greater willingness to accommodate the Kreyòl-monolingual market.²² Some large businesses have taken a similar route, notably in telecommunications. During my 2017 Master's thesis fieldwork, I spoke with representatives of Haiti's last two remaining cellphone network providers, Digicel and Natcom, both of which primarily market in Kreyòl. The representatives explained that this linguistic choice was simply the most practical way for them to reach their target market. During this same fieldwork, I also spotted many billboards in Port-au-Prince advertising various relatively inexpensive²³ products and services in Kreyòl:

Figure D: Examples of advertising in Kreyòl



Left: Various Port-au-Prince billboards in Kreyòl that I photographed in December of 2017 – Western Union money transfer, CAM Market's appliances and delivery service (a surprisingly middle-class product and service), Craken's crackers, 7-Up, and Rallye Motor Oil. Right: Text message promotion from Digicel in Kreyòl.

²¹ Note, however, Evelyne's story from Chapter 6, where she described seeing a man publicly shamed at a money transfer office when the staff addressed him only in French. Benoit, the artisan, also described being shamed by the secretaries of businesses that had contracted him.

²² Unfortunately, due to limitations of scope in this thesis I have not been able to discuss the successive waves of Arab immigrants in Haiti throughout the 20th century. Many of these immigrants originated from Syria and Lebanon and arrived in Haiti bilingual in Arabic and French. There they founded businesses and achieved considerable success. My interview participants described them as sometimes integrated with the traditional elite, but also sometimes existing as their own distinct upper-class communities. One of my elite participants was a third-generation immigrant whose family was from Syria. This individual was not particularly comfortable speaking Arabic and maintained friendships both with members of the Syrian upper class and with elites from old Haitian families.

For more on this topic, see the 2005 documentary *Un certain bord de mer, un siècle de migration arabe en Haïti*.

²³ By way of contrast, a billboard for a car dealership stated in French that they have a particular SUV model "à partir de \$22,950.00."

For academic products and services, however, printed French remains dominant. As discussed above, textbooks and educational tools in Kreyòl remain unpopular and less profitable. Various Haitian authors whom I have met throughout my career – individuals who could be categorized as members of an intellectual or academic elite – expressed that they would like to write more books in Kreyòl, but such books do not sell widely. While print-capitalism may have "defeated" Latin in Europe (Anderson, 2006, p. 77; M. Weber, 1921/1978, p. 45), so far the market for Kreyòl publications remains limited, and thus French continues to dominate Haitian literary production.²⁴

The upper-class participants of this project's cohort seemed aware that supporting Kreyòl was the "politically correct" ideological position but also felt that Kreyòl was economically and academically limiting. They shared that hiring Kreyòl-monolinguals for professional roles could harm a company's image, and that there could be social judgements from their peers for dating or marrying one (see Chapter 7). This exhibits the circularity between individual and social structure: whatever their ideological position, due to macro-level practice and prejudice an upper-class Haitian may avoid giving opportunities to Kreyòl-monolinguals in order to protect their own interests. This in turn contributes to maintaining these very macro-level practices and prejudices. Furthermore, while this cohort generally felt that French should guard its place due to the advantages it offers, they did not voice any particular concern or plan for how French could be

²⁴ I used to never miss an opportunity to inspect Haitian street book vendors and bookstores to see what they had in Kreyòl. I seldom found much. Few modern bookstores exist in Haiti, but one particularly notable example is *La Pléiade* in the upper-class neighborhood of Pétionville in Port-au-Prince. Their Kreyòl selection was always limited, with a few novels, some poetry books, and various children's books. The staff told me that the children's books were popular with vacationing members of the Haitian diaspora, who bring them home to their children in the USA or Canada.

spread to the general population.²⁵ Instead, they described with smiles and laughter the "bad French" of Haitians coming from Kreyòl-speaking backgrounds.

Although "ambivalence" may be too strong a word, the elite cohort's ideological preferences were generally not strong enough for them to take action to support either Kreyòl or Kreyòl-monolinguals if it seemed to be against their material interests, nor to worry themselves with how "good French" could be spread. While the elite may be increasingly willing to accommodate Kreyòl into their marketing campaigns as members of the lower class transition out of subsistence farming into consumer capitalism and hence become potential customers, this hardly constitutes the elite pursuing an open relationship (M. Weber, 1921/1978), whereby language (amongst other characteristics) ceases to be a barrier to entry into their ranks.

In general, upper-class Haitians are less affected by the direct harms of LEC, such as being materially excluded, feeling shame, and receiving poor social judgements from others for not knowing French. LEC is, however, arguably a contributor to Haiti's macro-level chronic instability (see "Chosen Problem" section below). If so, then LEC does impact their interests – including their personal security and their businesses – although they may not make this connection. Macro-level social problems in Haiti furthermore impact the upper class differently than the majority. Privileged Haitians can and frequently do leave the country when its situation becomes too untenable or when they need services difficult to reliably maintain in a country lacking reliable infrastructure, such as complex medical treatment or tertiary education. Many elite interviewees espoused passionate patriotic sentiments, but, not contradictorily, also had worked or studied abroad for years. Most of the older elite participants had lived a decade or more overseas when

²⁵ While Louis did notably discuss how he was trying to help one member of his house staff – "one of the smartest guys" he knows – learn French in order to find more work in other upper-class homes, his concern was focused on one select individual, not the general Haitian population.

their families fled the Duvalier dictatorship. This is not to suggest that they are not bound to Haiti both affectively and materially. They are just not trapped or limited by its condition in the same respect as most of their countrymen. While some upper-class individuals may choose to remain in Haiti through turbulent periods of the nation's history, they are not involuntarily stuck there nor are they the worst sufferers of its underdevelopment or its linguistic exclusion. Compared to the monolingual majority, whether Haiti's LEC is addressed has less of a straightforward impact on the elite's well-being and economic interests, and as such they may not perceive it as a problem they need to immediately mobilize to address (see "Chosen Problem" section below).

These observations support the conclusion that one contributing cause of LEC Maintenance is the ambivalence of the Haitian elite. Here, however, some nuance about the elites' role in LEC Maintenance may be necessary. While members of the elite may be far more empowered than the average Haitian who lives in poverty or extreme poverty, they are not a homogeneous and unified political bloc. Individually, dismantling LEC is largely beyond their capacity, and they may not know where or how to begin to effectively address such an enormous societal problem.

Furthermore, one should not remove political agency from the monolingual majority. Their past collective action has been extraordinarily powerful, including the successful slave revolt that led to the country's independence and the popular mobilization that toppled the Duvalier dictatorship (Heinl et al., 2005). Despite this, they have never mobilized en masse against linguistic exclusion, although it is a cause more evidently in their interests than in the elite's. It is also important to consider how established institutions and intergenerationally reproduced habitus have entrenched a certain role for French and a certain role for Kreyòl in Haitian society and linguistic practice. Thus, while the part that elites' interests play in contributing to LEC Maintenance should be acknowledged, other contributing causes should not be ignored.

iii) Is Haiti's LEC ignored in order to address more immediate, pressing problems?

Without a doubt, Haiti has been impacted by many complex and persistent difficulties throughout its history – political upheaval, natural disasters, extreme poverty, infectious disease, high infant mortality rates, and many other issues (Heinl et al., 2005; UNDP, 2014). In the framework of Hirschman (1975), Haiti is a country with many *pressing problems* and limited resources to address them. In the face of crises where people are suffering or losing their lives, when does it make sense to direct resources and attention towards promoting Kreyòl or spreading French language fluency? Although LEC has long been acknowledged as an important issue (J. W. Johnson, 1920, p. 30; Saint-Remy, 1864, p. 2), has addressing LEC been perpetually relegated to a *chosen problem* that could wait until other more immediate issues are addressed?

There is a case to be made for this, including in contemporary Haiti. Since the beginning of this doctoral project, the Haitian head of state has changed seven times. Following the July 7, 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, no elections have been held and there has been a revolving door of ministers and transitional council chairmen heading the country (Charles, 2025). The Minister of Education has similarly changed four times, with the relatively pro-Kreyòl Minister Nesmy Manigat removed in June 2024. As discussed in the Preface, Port-au-Prince has descended into gang warfare, the city's international airport has closed, and major highways have become unsafe to travel. Key individuals and institutions who sought to promote Kreyòl have had their work and lives disrupted, with some leading figures having been kidnapped until ransoms were paid²⁶ and with the Faculty of Applied Linguistics closed due to it being occupied by people displaced by gang violence.

²⁶ I know of this through personal correspondence. I am not identifying the victims because these kidnappings (and consequent ransoms) are not all matters of public record.

While at times in recent Haitian history momentum seems to be building for the Kreyòl movement, notably in the early 1980s with the Bernard Reform (DEN, 1982) and also to a lesser extent in the 2010s with the launch of the Haitian Kreyòl Academy (Govain, 2011), the general instability of the country seems to undermine these efforts. The numerous shocks Haiti has endured throughout its past draw resources and attention away from addressing language-based exclusion. On the one hand, the suspension of activities to address linguistic issues is arguably justifiable, notably in periods of severe crisis. On the other hand, some pro-Kreyòl academics contend that the underdevelopment and instability of Haiti is a consequence of the neglect of the Kreyòl-monolingual majority and their language (DeGraff, 2017a; Dejean, 2006; Hebblethwaite, 2012). As such, addressing language-based exclusion cannot wait for a period of prosperity, as this will not come without the language problem being addressed.

Despite the arguments of such academics, addressing LEC is not a major tenet of the Haitian government's development strategy.²⁷ The reason for language issues being ignored may relate to the general problem of stakeholders being more sensitive to fast-moving, emotionally salient crises with (apparent) quick solutions, while disregarding larger, slower-moving problems, such as climate change (E. Weber, 2006). Striking images of people needing medical care, housing,

²⁷ For my master's thesis, I reviewed major development plan documents formulated by the Haitian government within the previous decade (2007-2017). Five documents were reviewed, covering a range of different issues, including education, poverty, and healthcare. Three of the documents followed the devastating January 12, 2010 earthquake. With the exception of the *Plan opérationnel 2010–2015 Vers la refondation du Système Éducatif Haïtien* (MENFP, 2011) – also reviewed here in Chapter 5 – the other four documents side-stepped language as an issue that needed to be addressed for the rebuilding and development of Haiti. In fact, these documents – which are written entirely in French – do not even mention the word "créole" (i.e. "Kreyòl"), and an uninformed reader would have no idea that this is the sole language of most Haitians. The other four documents were:

Document de stratégie nationale pour la croissance et la réduction de la pauvreté, 2008-2010 (MPCE, 2007)
Plan d'action pour le relèvement et le développement national d'Haïti (Haitian Government, 2010)
Plan stratégique de développement d'Haïti : Pays émergent en 2030 (MPCE, 2012)
Haïti : Cadre de développement durable (MPCE & UN, 2017)

and foodstuff are more likely to grab attention than the myriad of harms – some subtle – that language-based exclusion may cause individuals in their daily lives.

An additional complication is that stakeholders can be fundamentally opposed on how to address LEC in Haiti. Should French be spread to improve access to the nation's existing institutions as well as to the greater international francophonie? Or is spreading French harmful to Haitian popular culture and a form of linguistic neo-colonialism? Should Kreyòl be promoted in additional domains, or is this an isolating and harmful course for an underdeveloped country, regardless of how well-intentioned language activists may be? Should English be brought in due to its growing global economic and academic value, or does this represent the same problems as with French, only with a different façade (see “Future work” in Chapter 9)?

In conclusion, due to the country's history of political, economic, and natural shocks, the attention given to more immediate and salient issues, and disagreements over how to address language-based exclusion, Haiti's LEC is arguably maintained in part due to its treatment as a chosen rather than a pressing problem.

Summary of findings

In the table below, we summarize whether this project found evidence for, against, or a mix with respect to the various explored causes of LEC Maintenance.

Table 7: Summary of thesis's findings

	<i>Evidence for</i>	<i>Evidence against</i>	<i>Mixed</i>	
	WHY FRENCH DOES NOT SPREAD			Location in Thesis
Formal language-in-education policy	✓			Ch. 5
Weaknesses of the school system	✓			Ch. 5, § 8.1
Lack of opportunities to practice	✓			Ch. 6, 7, § 8.1
Rejection of dominant language		✓		Ch. 6, § 8.1
Incomplete Package hypothesis		✓		Ch. 6, § 8.1
	WHY KREYÒL REMAINS EXCLUDED			
Formal language-in-education policy	✓			Ch. 5
Ukolonia and post-colonial legacies	✓			Chs. 5, 6, 7, § 8.2
Attitudes and lay creole exceptionalism	✓			Ch. 7, § 8.2
Lack of resources and a standard			✓	§ 8.2
Habitus and linguistic market	✓			Ch. 6
Affect (shame, submission, drag effect)	✓			Ch. 6, § 8.0
Social esteem (intangible backhand)	✓			Ch. 7, § 8.0
	WHY LEC IS UNADDRESSED			
(Mis)recognition	✓			§ 8.3
Interests of elites and ambivalence	✓			Ch. 7, § 8.3
LEC is a chosen problem	✓			§ 8.3
Fantasy of diglossia	✓			Ch. 6, § 8.3

The findings of this research project, as summarized in the table above, indicate that LEC Maintenance in Haiti is attributable not to any single cause but rather to a wide range of social, institutional, educational, and behavioral causes.

Chapter 9: Summary, Future Work, and Conclusion

Summary and Limitations

This thesis has examined what perpetuates class-based linguistic exclusion, or rather, what *maintains linguistic elite closure* (Myers-Scotton, 1993). This topic is important as the durability of such forms of language-related exclusion represents a challenge for international development actors who seek to create a more equitable and inclusive world through initiatives such as the *Sustainable Development Goals* (Marinotti, 2017). LEC Maintenance furthermore represents a sociological puzzle in contexts which are known for popular resistance yet where no mass mobilization against linguistic discrimination has ever taken place, such as in this project's primary case study, Haiti. The project explored why Haiti's LEC is not being disrupted, either through the dominant language (French) spreading to the general population (i.e. *LEC Disruption 1*) or through the minoritized language (Kreyòl) rising in status and taking on additional social functions (i.e. *LEC Disruption 2*).

Various potential contributors to LEC Maintenance were examined. In Chapter 5, the role of formal language-in-education policy in Haiti was evaluated. In a surprising discovery, it was found that past *mother-tongue-based multilingual education* (MTB MLE) policy was either collectively misremembered or purposely misrepresented to later justify opposing policy, notably early-exit French-dominant curricula. Haitian policy documents furthermore contain latent elitist elements, such as setting language acquisition goals far more attainable for children coming from upper-class francophone homes ("balanced bilingualism") and ignoring that most teachers outside

of expensive private schools are not fluent in French. These aspects of formal policy contribute to the maintenance of the status quo, whereby children from the lower class learn less, seldom complete school, and rarely obtain comfortable French fluency, whereas children from the upper class are more successful learners, progress further in school, acquire polished academic French, and later have greater professional and social opportunities as adults (Hebblethwaite, 2012) – contributing to the reproduction of LEC from generation to generation.

In Chapter 6, it was explored through interview data why non-elite non-francophone Haitians are resistant to mother-tongue education in Kreyòl. Findings showed that there is a pragmatic aspect to this, as French is perceived to offer advantages in many activities in Haitian society, or rather in the Haitian *linguistic market* (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991). This, however, fails to account for the fact that the vast majority of children will never complete school nor acquire French, and so the money parents invest in the largely private school system does not actually offer the desired benefits. To account for this, the study explored *affective* aspects of the Haitian habitus (Elias, 1939/2012), notably the shame Kreyòl-monolingual adults experience when confronted with French, and also the immediate aspirational joy offered by enrolling their child in an (ostensibly) French-medium school. Regardless of their merit, policies like MTE reform which clash with collective sources of shame and joy may face resistance which slows or blocks their implementation – a situation where existing habitus exercises a *drag effect* on social change (Elias, 1987/2001). These linguistic-affective aspects of habitus thus represent an additional hurdle for macro-level change which would be disruptive to LEC.

Chapter 7 explored through interview data the relationship between Haitian upper-class linguistic practice, social esteem, and LEC Maintenance. The findings revealed that, depending on the circumstances, speaking Kreyòl or French may confer a more positive social evaluation on an

individual. Upper-class bilingual Haitians therefore alternate between languages not only to facilitate communication but also in relation to what they anticipate will grant them a more positive assessment from their audience for the given exchange. As such, both languages act as currencies in Haiti's *economy of esteem* (Brennan & Pettit, 2004). It is significant, however, that ("Good") French was found to offer more esteem in activities and exchanges key to socioeconomic mobility. Furthermore, social climbers who speak Acquired French, such as political appointees, expect to be addressed in this language as a demonstration of respect for the position that they have risen to. As a result, even if an upper-class Haitian personally feels Kreyòl should be used in more spaces, disesteem from their peers and the expectation of French use to signal esteem make it difficult for them to change their actual language use. This contributes to fixing the use of language in an inequitable manner. These findings show how individuals' personal pursuit of language-based esteem and avoidance of disesteem may aggregate into an *intangible backhand* (Brennan & Pettit, 2004), preventing macro-level change and maintaining LEC. Section 8.0 synthesizes the findings of Chapters 6 and 7, exploring the role of social esteem and affect in shaping the linguistic practices of both Haitian elites and non-elites.

Using data from the fieldwork, the policy document dataset, and my own past research in Haiti, Sections 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3 address the thesis's secondary research questions and evaluate a range of potential causes of LEC Maintenance. These findings are summarized in Table 8 at the end of Chapter 8.

The doctoral project is qualitative in nature and employs small, non-randomized samples. As such, it offers no statistically generalizable results. Its goal instead is to provide interpretive analysis which may be used in the design of future studies, whether they are quantitative, qualitative, or theoretical in nature.

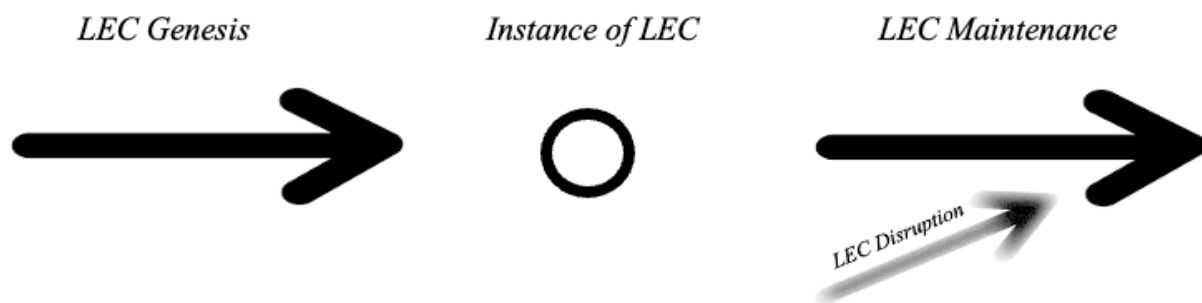
The interview sample in Haiti was restricted in certain important respects. In addition to restrictions on time and resources, the fieldwork was conducted during a crisis of governmental legitimacy and gang violence following the assassination of the president and suspension of elections. The sample therefore did not include broad geographic variation or the participation of political elites – important individuals who were discussed by participants coming from the traditional elite. Future studies would benefit from engagement with Haitians who live further from the metropolis of Port-au-Prince and with political appointees.

The research project was exploratory in nature, addressing a broad range of potential causes of LEC Maintenance. These causes merit additional focused, in-depth studies to assess their importance as contributors to LEC Maintenance. Below, we propose additional projects that could build on the findings of this thesis and the LEC framework introduced in Section 2.0.

Future work

In Chapter 2, we introduced a framework for LEC whereby LEC is treated as a social arrangement which can be conceptually separated from the forces and processes that generate, maintain, and disrupt it. Much remains to be said about each of these four. Below we will outline some potential projects that could be carried out to develop a more robust theory of LEC and to address some unresolved Haiti-specific questions raised during the course of this doctoral research project.

Figure E: Framework of LEC (revisited)



LEC Genesis

Comparative historical study on how and when LEC Genesis occurs

LEC Genesis can intuitively take two forms. The first and perhaps more common form is *external*: a people is conquered or enslaved by a group that speaks a different language. The conquerors or enslavers are not the majority and do not become so through processes such as mass migration, intermarriage, war, or genocide. Instead, as a minority they rule over the larger population, creating or maintaining both their wealth and key institutions that require their language. Their direct descendants as well as the people who worked closely with them become the intergenerational elite of the territory. Such is the case with Latin following the Roman conquest of Europe (Bowman & Woolf, 1996), with various European languages during European

colonization of Africa (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Tollefson, 1991), and with Haiti during the Saint-Domingue colony period (see Section 2.3.1).

The second form is *internal*. This occurs where a society's different social classes traditionally speak the same language (or close varieties of the same language), but then the established elite linguistically distinguish themselves through the acquisition and use of a more distant language. A notable example of this is the Russian elite in the 18th and 19th centuries, who through private tutors and travel abroad came to acquire and predominantly use French (Figes, 2002). While the language had utility for European diplomacy, its use amongst privileged Russians far exceeded this, creating a significant linguistic class marker and barrier.¹ Some privileged families would use it nearly exclusively in their homes, with Russian used primarily to issue orders to servants, and with upper-class children being punished when caught speaking it (Figes, 2002, p. 56) – practices similar to those in elite Haitian homes (see Chapter 7).

A comparative historical study could reveal similarities and differences with respect to how LEC is generated, and if the consequent LEC takes different forms or is more susceptible to disruption depending on how it originated.

LEC as social arrangement

Allocation versus code-switching

A criticism of the diglossic model for Haiti and Guadeloupe is that its allocation of H and L to various domains does not reflect the common code-switching practices of bilinguals (Dejean, 1983; Managan, 2016; see also Section 1.2.5). This thesis relied on data from policy documents

¹Figes (2002, p. 56) provides the following description of the Russian elite: "They conversed in their native Russian as if they were Frenchmen who had only been in Russia for a year." French became expected in Russian salons, court, and everyday conversations between people of high society. The dominance of French was eventually disrupted by the invasion of Napoleon in 1812, prompting anti-French sentiment and Russian patriotism.

and interviewees' reflections on language use, rather than direct observations and recordings of actual language use in Haiti – except for the policy documents themselves and the interviews with myself, a foreign researcher. As such, it is not well suited to make determinations as to the subtleties of code-switching and language balance in everyday settings, activities, and exchanges in Haiti.² Nonetheless, the interview data did provide some insights. At times, participants described certain domains as restricted to one language or another, corresponding to a diglossic model of Haiti (see Chapters 6 and 7). On the other hand, two upper-class women stated that code-switching was a part of their linguistic behavior. They described it in various terms, such as lazy, casual, cool, unconscious, natural, and necessary for best expressing certain things (quotes said in English):

If you notice how we speak, we mix the languages. We don't form a phrase in one language. When the word is difficult to find in one language, we skip to English or skip to Kreyòl and then go back to French. For me, it's like a lack of effort. So that's unfortunate, because it makes you lose your French and your train of thought in one language. But it is cool to speak like that. It is casual.

– Charlotte, entrepreneur, late 40s

[At school] we have a mix of French and Kreyòl with our friends, especially boys. The guys mainly speak Kreyòl with each other. And us, the girls we would do a mix of both. We spoke French with each other and Kreyòl. You switch from one language to another to the other without even realizing it. Without paying attention. It's a natural process. Because both languages are used to express... Kreyòl is so expressive, that certain things can only come out perfectly if you express it in Kreyòl because it has all the atmosphere of what you want to give as a message.

– Manon, business owner, 50s

Interviews with non-elites reveal that even a small amount of French can have a profound gatekeeping effect. Félix described his shame and withdrawal after a romantic interest spoke “three words” in French to him. Benoit expressed feeling intimidated going into businesses where he had

² Furthermore, during the interviews with bilingual Haitians, I did not consistently ask about code-switching. If I were to do the fieldwork again, I would amend this.

been contracted because the secretaries would address him in French. Samuel described how he reassessed himself as a “mediocre student” after a younger child at his new school spoke to him a single time in fluent French (see Chapter 6). It is not necessary for French to be the sole “allocated” language in these situations for it to nonetheless have both affective consequences and a gatekeeping effect.

Rather than understanding language-based exclusion in terms of elite languages dominating key contexts, a more fruitful approach would be to evaluate how key contexts are dominated by speakers of elite languages. In these contexts, a person may need to employ the elite language a lot, or they may need to employ it only a little – perhaps just enough to signal their linguistic, social, and academic credentials and hence their elite in-group status and legitimacy to be in that space. Future studies into Haitian language use could investigate where Haitian code-switching is employed and how it “empowers bilinguals” (Myers-Scotton, 2006) while possibly shaming or gatekeeping Kreyòl-monolinguals.

Create ideal types distinguishing LEC from other macro-level sociolinguistic phenomena

The focus of this thesis was the social arrangement of LEC and the causes of its maintenance. Language-based exclusion and related issues, however, come in many forms. For example, an American Southerner may have difficulty getting employment in the North because of their accent (Armfield, 2020), immigrants to Europe and the USA at times must accept work for which they are overeducated due to language barriers (Chiswick & Miller, 2009), the Welsh community endeavors to revitalize their traditional language against the dominance of English (C. W. Edwards, 2017), and minority Quechua speakers in Ecuador have their language relegated to rural spaces and activities (Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004).

Each of these issues is important, and each differs in some respect from the others and the case of Haiti. However, similarities and distinctions between various types of discriminatory linguistic arrangements are not always made clear. Very different phenomena are sometimes lumped together under umbrella terms such as *linguicism* (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988) or *minoritized languages* (James et al., 2017). This lack of conceptual clarity complicates theorizing, analyzing, and intervening with respect to real-life instances of language-based exclusion and language decline.

To create conceptual clarity, a future project could define and outline a set of ideal types of distinct sociolinguistic arrangements in order to facilitate understanding and help design policies to address them.

Variationist study of formality and language in Haiti

The current project (see Chapter 7) and Zéphir's past research (1990) reveal how upper-class bilingual Haitians' language choice is used to signal formality and social esteem. This binary mapping of informality and formality onto Kreyòl and French, respectively, raises questions. For Kreyòl-monolinguals, Orjala (1971) and Tézil (2022) have explored how Kreyòl-monolinguals may shift to use more “Frenchified” Kreyòl swa features in more formal settings or careful speech. For francophone Haitians, however, when and how do they make use of French's pre-existing *tu-vous* system of formality? Does this interact with gender? Might upper-class women use French *vous* with acquaintances and *tu* with friends, whereas upper-class men strictly use French *vous* for formal male relationships and Kreyòl for informal male relationships? Future variationist studies could provide insight into how Haitians linguistically signal formality according to gender, social class, and context.

LEC Maintenance

Qualitative Comparative Analysis of LEC Maintenance

LEC can occur in extremely diverse contexts. Various examples include the role of Swedish in Finland prior to the 20th century (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2002), Portuguese in East Timor (Taylor-Leech, 2008), and English in Kenya (Bunyi, 2005). In this doctoral project, we explored the presence of various potential causes of LEC Maintenance in a single context. To further establish causality, a future study could evaluate diverse contexts undergoing LEC.

Using qualitative comparative analysis (Ragin, 1987; Wagemann, 2014), the study could evaluate various macro-level characteristics in contexts of LEC, including GDP, form of governance, (post-)colonial setting, ethnolinguistic fractionalization, civil conflict, degree of urbanization, presence and form of media, universal education, language curriculum, and more. In doing so, the study could uncover which characteristics (or constellation of characteristics) may cause LEC Maintenance.

LEC Disruption

Qualitative Comparative Analysis of LEC Disruption

The aforementioned qualitative comparative analysis method could also be applied diachronically in contexts where LEC was disrupted. For example, one could evaluate 18th-century Finland when Swedish was dominant versus 19th-century Finland after Finnish rose in status (Latomaa & Nuolijärvi, 2002). By looking at what changed during and after the presence of LEC in a wide variety of contexts, this study could provide insights into what causes LEC Disruption.

LEC Disruption 3: Introduction of new dominant language and English in Haiti

At the beginning of Section 2.2, we discussed two forms of LEC Disruption: LEC Disruption 1, whereby the language of the elite spreads to the general people and loses its exclusionary power, and LEC Disruption 2, where a minoritized language rises in status and takes on additional social functions. These are not, however, the only means by which an instance of LEC may be disrupted.

As briefly mentioned in the Limitations section of Chapter 7, the elite interviewees of this project discussed the increasing importance of English in Haiti – with some expressing concern about what this change might do to "*notre langue*" ("our language" i.e. French). Despite this sentiment, about half of the elite interviewees spoke in English during the interviews, which they generally spoke very well. Although no studies to my knowledge have been conducted on the subject, English may also be offering opportunities to non-elite Haitians who are able to access it through NGO workers and then use it to gain employment or to study and work abroad.³ Jeanne, one of the elite participants who is a school director in her early 60s, commented that it is easier for young Haitians to learn English than French because they do not have the same affective "complex" and they are permitted to make mistakes without feeling shame. Over the years, some members of the Haitian American diaspora have told me that English should (somehow) replace both French and Kreyòl in Haiti, as they believe this would resolve the issue of exclusion and help the country develop. Despite these perspectives, the growing importance of Global English

³ To share an anecdotal story, one of my best Haitian friends is living proof of how English is disrupting traditional linguistic and economic barriers for Haitians. Coming from a remote and undeveloped area, he diligently finished secondary school in a neighboring town and even attended a semester of university in Port-au-Prince. Despite doing everything "right" within the Haitian school system, his spoken French is still far from conversational, and his written French remains sprinkled with nonstandard "mistakes." This would likely prevent him from ascending very far in Haitian society. He, however, also made a point to practice English with every foreigner he ever met. Through English, he was able to form friendships with NGO workers, who eventually assisted him to study in the USA. He now lives there, where he has started a business and is earning well above the average American income.

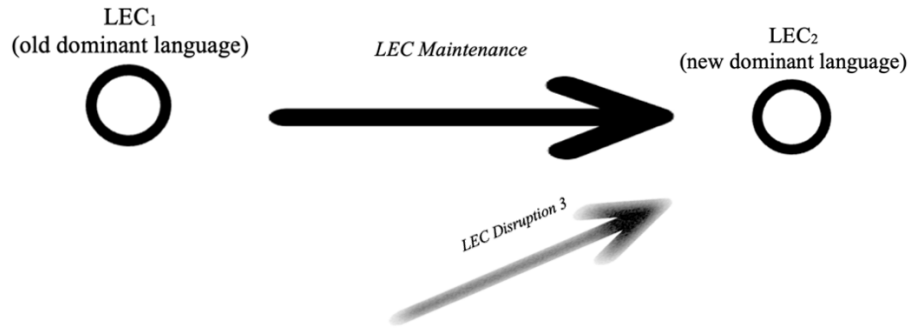
throughout the world is not necessarily a panacea against LEC or language-based exclusion – putting aside the harms this may cause humanity's linguistic, cultural, and epistemic diversity (Guo & Beckett, 2007). In Haiti, like elsewhere, not everyone has equal access to English, particularly the subset of forms considered by academic and professional institutions to be “Good” or “Correct” English and which are required to pass gatekeeping language examinations, such as TOEFL and IELTS (Hamid et al., 2019).

The interview data and fieldwork experience from this project show that a future study focusing on the role of English in Haitian society is merited. This linguistic shift may be allowing new opportunities for some previously marginalized individuals coming from Kreyòl-monolingual homes and may also be potentially harming some formerly privileged francophones, such as slightly older but still working-age upper-class Haitians who struggle with English yet need it for career advancement. Similarly, English may cause issues for socioeconomically rising Haitians, such as political appointees, who have worked hard to gain status from their Acquired French but who are now being confronted with the growing importance of English.

Such changes in Haitian society prompt consideration of a third form of LEC Disruption whereby an outside dominant language enters a linguistic ecosystem and reconfigures old hierarchies and barriers.

Once again, the introduction of a new dominant language into contexts of LEC does not necessarily permanently end LEC but rather may merely change the dominant language, temporarily offering opportunities to different actors but ultimately settling into a new state of rigid hierarchy. The result is LEC being regenerated in a different form.

Figure F: LEC Disruption 3 and Regeneration



LEC Disruption 4: Linguistic elite emulation and flight

One weakness of discussing and modeling human linguistic production in terms of bounded and static categories (fixed "language varieties" – see Section 2.1) is that this obscures changes that occur in social groups' language diachronically. Such changes are influenced in part by social pressures, hierarchies, and exclusion. In his *Principles of Linguistic Change: Volume II Social Factors*, William Labov (2001) discusses how upwardly mobile social groups adopt the speech characteristics of the highest social group, sometimes even overusing these characteristics or hypercorrecting. Labov argues that such change occurs from conscious monitoring of one's speech as a result of linguistic insecurity and a desire to enjoy the prestige (or social esteem) of high-status forms.

Though Labov does not employ this term, what he describes is a linguistic dimension of the aforementioned phenomenon of *elite emulation* (Veblen, 1899). Veblen discusses how elites react to lower-status groups emulating upper-class culture by engaging in *conspicuous consumption*, adopting more expensive tastes in order to protect and mark their distinction. With respect to language, this could mean using rarer or more complex linguistic forms whose acquisition requires time, social capital, and material resources unavailable to the middle or lower

class. For example, this can be achieved by upper-class children attending exclusive and prestigious schools that train them how to speak and write "eloquently" and to use rare and socially distinctive linguistic forms (e.g. Latin expressions, etc.).

Pierre Bourdieu in *Language and Symbolic Power* also discusses these same sociolinguistic forces (1991, pp. 63–65). He describes a constant shifting of linguistic production, whereby rising groups (the “petite bourgeoisie”) move towards the speech of the highest social groups, who in turn change their speech to avoid sounding "common" or "banal." He states that this unceasing movement, despite being prompted by the rising groups' desire to annul distinctive linguistic deviations, ultimately reproduces them, "albeit in a superficially different form" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 64).

These processes of linguistic emulation and flight may be considered as a fourth form of LEC Disruption – although one that ultimately fails to eliminate class-based linguistic distinction and discrimination. While the social groups' linguistic production changes, they remain distinguished by variation in language, which in turn continues to mark old social barriers and hierarchies.

Nonetheless, the *severity* of the exclusion caused by language may be reduced by these processes. This depends on the speed of the emulation versus the speed of the flight of the elite. Altering the written language of established institutions demands significant resources and time, and the content of existing printed materials remains fixed. With respect to spoken language, where the elite and non-elite may previously have been separated by a wall of mutual incomprehensibility, they may now only be distinguished by relatively minor speech differences categorizable under the umbrella of "a common language" – albeit with socially marked accents,

grammatical forms, vocabulary, etc. By closing the gap between the ever-changing language varieties of the elite and the non-elite, a context of LEC may turn into a case of milder linguisticism.

Future studies could investigate how Labov's and Bourdieu's descriptions of linguistic emulation and flight are manifested in cases of LEC and potentially disrupt them by reducing distance between the language varieties of the elite and those of the non-elite.

Conclusion

This doctoral thesis has examined the maintenance of linguistic elite closure with the aim of advancing understanding of why this form of social disequilibrium can be so durable, while contributing to existing literature in linguistics and Haitian studies. The project has explored the topic from multiple theoretical perspectives, and various empirical findings have been presented (see Chapter 8). Beyond its particular and focused findings, the project aims to make two higher-level contributions to the study of language-based exclusion.

The first contribution is a framework which expands upon Myers-Scotton's original notion of linguistic elite closure (1990, 1993), whereby it is explicitly characterized as a societal arrangement, distinct both from other forms of linguisticism and from the processes which generate, maintain, and disrupt it (see Section 2.0). This framework is intended to provide conceptual clarity with respect to different aspects of this social phenomenon, to act as an alternative model to diglossia in contexts where it may not be applicable, and to serve as a foundation for future research.

The second contribution is with respect to the role of language in the mutually reinforcing relationship between individual and society – both how society acts on the individual, and, critically, how the individual acts upon their society. This was explored along three axes in this thesis: pragmatism, affect, and social esteem.

With respect to the first, the project drew upon ideas from Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991), notably his concepts of linguistic market, linguistic capital, and profit-maximizing habitus. Through policy documents, interviews, and ethnographic observation, the project explored how differently categorized forms of linguistic production in Haiti (“Good French,” “Bad French,” “Frenchified Kreyòl,” etc.) can advantage or disadvantage people in

various professional, social, academic, romantic, and regional contexts. The concerns of parents that French is pragmatically more valuable than Kreyòl and that French-LOI schooling is the best means for their children to acquire it can play a role in their rejection of Kreyòl-MTE schooling.

In relation to affect, the project supported past literature showing that linguistic production is imbued with affect and that social policies, institutions, and practices help shape our affective associations and triggers (Labov, 1964; Haugen, 1962; Francard et al., 1993; Dewaele, 2010; Preston, 2013; Lippi-Green, 2012; Pavlenko, 2005; Besnier, 1990; Heller, 2006). In addition to this, the project applied a novel linguistic angle – to the best of my knowledge – to Elias's theory of the *affective habitus* (1939/2012) and his notion of *drag effect* (1987/2001) in order to examine how people's linguistic-affective associations act upon society. Specifically, Chapter 6 explored how the linguistic-affective associations of Haitian non-elites influence their language-in-education preferences. The data found cases of linguistic-affective associations being both immediate and powerful, such as a Kreyòl-monolingual's shame for not knowing French or their joy when imagining their child one day knowing it and having a better life. Such affective aspects of habitus should not be overlooked, as they can themselves influence behavior apart from any pragmatic dispositions.

Regarding social esteem, the project drew heavily from sociolinguistic research. Key points taken from the literature include how separate social identities use language differently to gain esteem (Labov, 1990; Trudgill, 1972), how people modify their linguistic production depending on the context and audience (Gumperz, 1964; Hymes, 1967; Myers-Scotton, 1988, 2006), how using prestige language for esteem may be more important to groups who lack other social resources (Bourdieu, 1991; Trudgill, 1972), and how negative language attitudes may impact social evaluations of their speakers (DeGraff, 2005; Migge & Léglise, 2012; Mühleisen, 2022;

Winford, 1976). With these insights, the project applied a novel linguistic lens, to the best of my knowledge, to the social theory of Brennan and Pettit (2004), notably their concepts of *economy of esteem* and *intangible (back)hand*. This framework was used to explore how bilingual Haitian elites use language to receive and signal social evaluations. The analysis uncovered how their pursuit of positive social esteem and avoidance of negative disesteem make it difficult for them to change their linguistic behavior by, for example, using Kreyòl in activities and exchanges where French offers a more positive social evaluation.

These results reveal how language acts as a conduit for understanding the connection between the private interiority of individuals – our experiences of joy, shame, and feeling valued by others – and the macro-level structures of the exterior world – our common institutions and practices. Language-based exclusion is not only a matter of access to spaces and resources – it is also *felt* through fear and embarrassment, through the joy and hope of imagining a better life, through the recognition and appreciation of others. These feelings are more than inert collateral by-products of an unfair material world. They are themselves powerful forces that act upon and shape our societies, and, in some cases, reproduce them. The linguistic anxiety of parents can support the printing of ill-adapted textbooks, incentivize administrators to ignore mother-tongue education policy, and force the next generation of children into schools where they too learn to be ashamed of their supposed linguistic inadequacies – without necessarily ever having them "corrected." The private evaluations people form of others due to their language use may translate into real economic and social opportunity – who we hire, befriend, and marry – or into ostracism and segregation – who we mock, disdain, and disregard.

Addressing linguistic elite closure requires more than a declaration of linguistic human rights or a multi-state pact on the validity of mother tongues. It also necessitates more than an

economic assessment of the comparative "value" of different languages that can direct governments to pursue the most "rational" course of action. Language – how we use it and how it includes or excludes us – is embedded in our behavioral dispositions, our affective associations, and our judgements of ourselves and others. Understanding these elements, what causes them, and how they can be transformed is therefore as essential as reforming policies and institutions for the disruption of linguistic elite closure.

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Appendix A: Information Form

William Scott Frager
william.scott@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk
WhatsApp: +509 xxxx xxxx



Etude sur les pratiques et tendances sociolinguistiques d'Haïti

Madame, Monsieur,

Je m'appelle William Scott et j'aimerais vous inviter à faire partie d'un projet de recherche que je mène en Haïti. Je suis doctorant à la University of Oxford (Angleterre) et également ancien administrateur exécutif d'une ONG basée à Hinche, le Center of Hope (Haiti), Inc., où j'ai vécu plusieurs années.

Quel est le but de cette recherche ?

Le but de cette étude est de comprendre les perspectives et les expériences d'Haïtiens venant de différents horizons, afin de mieux comprendre les pratiques et les tendances sociolinguistiques actuelles d'Haïti.

Pourquoi avez-vous été sélectionné pour participer ?

Cette étude tente de saisir un large éventail de perspectives d'Haïtiens d'horizons différents. Vous avez été sélectionné car vous avez certaines caractéristiques que le projet de recherche essaie de capturer dans son échantillon. Il n'y a pas de critères spécifiques, mais cela peut inclure vos positions sociales, professionnelles, académiques et économiques.

Votre participation est-elle obligatoire ?

Votre participation est entièrement volontaire. Si vous ne souhaitez pas être interviewé pour l'étude, il n'y aura pas de conséquences négatives. Vous pouvez également arrêter de participer à tout moment de l'entretien sans donner de raison. Vous pouvez prendre tout le temps dont vous avez besoin pour décider de participer ou non à l'étude. Vous pouvez demander que les données de l'entretien soient retirées avant le 14/03/2022.

À quoi s'attendre si vous décidez de participer.

- Tout d'abord, vous aurez la possibilité de poser toutes les questions que vous avez sur l'étude. Lorsque vous aurez tout compris de l'étude, il vous sera demandé de fournir votre signature. C'est

à vous de décider si vous voulez participer, mais vous devez signer le formulaire de consentement pour participer.

- L'entretien durera environ 60 minutes mais il peut être plus court ou plus long selon que vous souhaitez ou non continuer à parler. Nous pouvons faire une pause à tout moment si vous le souhaitez.
- Dans cette interview, je vais vous poser quelques questions concernant le rôle que la langue a joué dans votre vie (français, créole, anglais, etc.). Je vais également vous poser des questions sur le rôle que joue la langue dans la société haïtienne en général et sur le rôle que vous pensez qu'elle devrait jouer. Vous pouvez répondre à ces questions avec autant de détails que vous le souhaitez ou refuser d'y répondre.
- Avec votre consentement, nous enregistrerons nos conversations sur un appareil numérique. Si vous préférez que l'entretien ne soit pas enregistré, je peux uniquement prendre des notes. De plus, je peux également supprimer des parties de l'entretien si vous ne souhaitez pas qu'elles soient incluses dans le résultat de la recherche.

AUCUN des enregistrements originaux ne sera mis à la disposition de qui que ce soit d'autre que moi-même.

Y a-t-il des risques à participer à cette recherche ?

Aucun risque majeur n'est attendu suite à la participation à cette étude.

Avec votre consentement, certaines citations peuvent vous être attribuées, mais je les examinerai avec vous avant qu'elles ne soient incluses dans les résultats de l'étude. Sinon, toutes les informations brutes que vous fournissez, y compris les enregistrements d'entretiens et les notes, resteront strictement confidentielles. Ces notes, enregistrements et vos informations personnelles seront conservés sur un appareil protégé par un mot de passe ou dans une pièce fermée à clé, puis transférés vers une base de données sécurisée, et les originaux seront détruits.

Votre nom n'apparaîtra dans aucune publication ou rapport sur les résultats de cette étude, sauf dans le cas où vous avez explicitement donné votre consentement. Au lieu de cela, vous recevrez un pseudonyme après la suppression de toutes les informations d'identification. Ceci afin que les informations que vous fournissez restent confidentielles et privées. Ces informations seront conservées pendant 3 ans par l'Université d'Oxford.

Je suis très reconnaissant envers tous les participants et la protection de votre anonymat est importante pour moi.

Qu'advient-il des informations recueillies lors de ces entretiens ?

Les points de vue que vous fournissez peuvent être discutés individuellement ou combinés avec les points de vue des autres pour présenter une perspective commune.

Les données d'entrevue analysées seront utilisées dans des documents de recherche dans le cadre des exigences de mes études doctorales. De plus, elles peuvent également être utilisées pour des articles publiés, lors de conférences et éventuellement pour un livre. Les parties pertinentes des

entretiens peuvent être transcrites, mais TOUTES les informations susceptibles de vous identifier seront anonymisées (supprimées des transcriptions) ou pseudonymisées.

Une fois l'étude terminée, je serais heureux de partager ses résultats avec vous.

Qui a revu cette étude ?

Cette étude a été examinée par le comité d'éthique de la recherche de l'Université centrale d'Oxford (numéro de référence : C1A_20_011) et a reçu une autorisation éthique par le biais de celui-ci.

Qui dois-je contacter si j'ai une préoccupation concernant l'étude ou si je souhaite porter plainte ? Si vous avez des questions ou des préoccupations concernant tout aspect de cette étude, veuillez contacter William Scott Frager (william.scott@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk) ou Aaron Reeves (aaron.reeves@spi.ox.ac.uk), et nous ferons de notre mieux pour y répondre et vous répondrons dans les 10 jours ouvrables. Si vous n'êtes toujours pas satisfait ou si vous souhaitez déposer une plainte officielle, veuillez contacter le président du comité d'éthique de la recherche de l'Université d'Oxford qui s'efforcera de résoudre le problème dans les plus brefs délais : Chair, Social Policy and Intervention Departmental Research Ethics Committee Email: ethics@spi.ox.ac.uk

Informations complémentaires et coordonnées

Pour toute question que vous pourriez avoir, à n'importe quelle étape du projet de recherche, veuillez contacter :

William Scott Frager
william.scott@st-hildas.ox.ac.uk
WhatsApp: +509 xxxx xxxx

Appendix B: Consent Form

Entretiens sur les pratiques et tendances linguistiques d'Haïti Formulaire de consentement du participant

1. À REMPLIR PAR l'enquêteur

Nom de l'intervieweur : William Scott Frager

Date: 14 January 2022

Signature de l'intervieweur :

2. À REMPLIR PAR le Participant

Nom du répondant (en caractères d'imprimerie) : Date : _____

Je comprends que:

1. J'ai reçu et on m'a lu les informations contenues dans ce formulaire de consentement expliquant cette étude.
2. J'ai reçu la réponse à toutes les questions que je me posais sur cette étude.
3. Je comprends clairement ce qui se passera si j'accepte de participer à cette étude.
4. Je comprends également que j'ai la possibilité de me retirer et d'interrompre l'étude à tout moment.
5. Je comprends que je peux être enregistré pendant les entretiens sauf si je m'y oppose et que je peux demander que tout ce que je dis ou fais soit effacé.
6. J'accepte que des données pertinentes d'entretien **pseudonymisées et sans aucune information d'identification** peuvent être transcrites et analysées, et certaines citations **pseudonymisées et sans aucune information d'identification** peuvent être publiées.
7. Je suis conscient(e) que toutes les informations que je fournirai dans cette étude resteront confidentielles à moins qu'il n'y ait un risque pour moi-même ou mes enfants.
8. Je comprends que les informations que je fournis (sans aucune information d'identification) peuvent être combinées avec les expériences d'autres participants afin que nous puissions comprendre les pratiques et tendances linguistiques plus générales d'Haïti.
9. Je comprends qui aura accès à mes données et comment elles seront stockées et publiées.
10. Je comprends que cette étude a été examinée par les comités d'éthique de l'University of Oxford (Royaume-Uni).
11. Je comprends comment déposer une plainte ou soulever des préoccupations concernant ma participation. Si je choisis de me retirer, je dois le faire avant le 14/03/2022. Si je me retire, les informations que j'ai fournies ne seront pas incluses dans l'analyse de la recherche et seront détruites.
12. De mon plein gré, j'accepte de participer à cette étude.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Being semi-structured, the interviews did not follow an identical list of questions, but rather they followed a similar three-part structure. This structure was informed by the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu (see “Structure of interviews” sub-section of Chapter 4). Depending on the profile of the participant and the responses they gave, the precise questions asked would differ.

The three-part interview structure consisted of:

- 1) The participants’ social origin and exposure to languages as a child
- 2) Their language use in their adult life today (professionally, socially, at home, etc.)
- 3) Their perspectives and preferences on language use in Haiti generally

Typical questions of Part 1 were:

- What language(s) did you hear in your home growing up?
- What language(s) did your parents speak?
 - What language(s) did you speak to your parents?
- What language(s) did you speak with your siblings? Your brothers? Your sisters?
- [If the participant had house staff] What language(s) did you speak with the house staff?
- Did you play with neighborhood children? What language(s) would you speak with them?
- When you went to school, what language did the teacher speak?
 - [If different from home language] Did this cause you any difficulties?
- What language did you speak with the other students? During recreation? After school?
- What language did you use when you began dating?

Typical questions of Part 2 were:

- [If employed] What language do you speak at work?
 - With your boss?
 - With co-workers?
 - In informal conversations? In meetings?
- What language do you speak at home?
 - With your partner?
 - With your children?
- In what spaces and activities do you hear, use, or expect to find a given language?

Typical questions of Part 3 were:

- *If you could change the role given to Creole and the role given to French in Haitian society (in the school system, in governance, etc.), would you make a change? Do you think the use of language is fine the way it is?* [This could have many follow-up questions, or if they said that they are “Fine” with how language is used in Haiti, I would move on]
- *Are there any other stories or opinions on language in Haiti that you would like to share?*

Appendix D: Anonymized Participant Data

Non-elite cohort (cf. Chapter 6)

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Language spoken in interview
Lilly	Female	39	Some primary school	Street hotdog vendor	Kreyòl
Félix	Male	30	6th grade (no primary school diploma)	Fisherman	Kreyòl
Natacha	Female	36	6th grade (no primary school diploma)	Fruit vendor	Kreyòl
Jean-Pierre	Male	53	6th grade (no primary school diploma)	Fisherman	Kreyòl
Lisa	Female	31	Began 7th grade	Unemployed	Kreyòl
Charles	Male	76	Began 8th grade	Groundskeeper	Kreyòl
Nadine	Female	43	Some high school (no diploma)	Small souvenir shop owner	Kreyòl
Maddi	Female	28	Some high school (no diploma)	Unemployed	Mostly ("non-standard") French, some Kreyòl
Rony	Male	60	Some high school (no diploma)	Handyman	Mostly Kreyòl, some ("non-standard") French
Benoit	Male	41	Some high school (no diploma)	Artisan	Kreyòl
Samuel	Male	33	Most of high school (Rhéto degree completed)	Carpenter	Kreyòl
Evelyne	Female	24	Finishing high school (seeking Philo degree)	Student	Kreyòl
Antoinette	Female	42	Finished high school	Haircutter	Kreyòl
Joseph	Male	54	University	Hotel worker	Kreyòl
David	Male	44	University	Accountant	Kreyòl

Elite cohort (cf. Chapter 7)

Note: The Haitian upper-class community is fairly small and well-connected. To preserve participants' anonymity, precise biographical information is not provided.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Language spoken in interview
Eli	Male	early 20s	Some university (based in USA)	University student	Kreyòl with some English
Jeanne	Female	early 60s	University degree	School director	French
Pierre	Male	early 50s	University degree	Business director	English, French, Kreyòl
Alice	Female	early 50s	University degree	Business director	French, Kreyòl
Nadège	Female	late 50s	University degree	Business director	French, Kreyòl
Jean-Michel	Male	early 40s	University degree	White-collar role for international development agency	English
Véronique	Female	late 60s	University degree	Founder of development project	French, Kreyòl
Gérald	Male	early 50s	High school degree	Business founder and director	Kreyòl
Louis	Male	Early 30s	University degree	Manager	English
Manon	Female	Early 50s	University degree	Entrepreneur and business owner	English
Mélanie	Female	Early 60s	University degree	Retired business owner	French, Kreyòl
Arnaud	Male	Late 60s	University degree	Consultant	Kreyòl
Alexandre	Male	Late 60s	University degree	Entrepreneur and business owner	English, French
Frédéric	Male	Early 60s	University degree	Doctor	English
Olivier	Male	Late 50s	University degree	Sales director	English
Charlotte	Female	late 40s	University degree	Entrepreneur	English