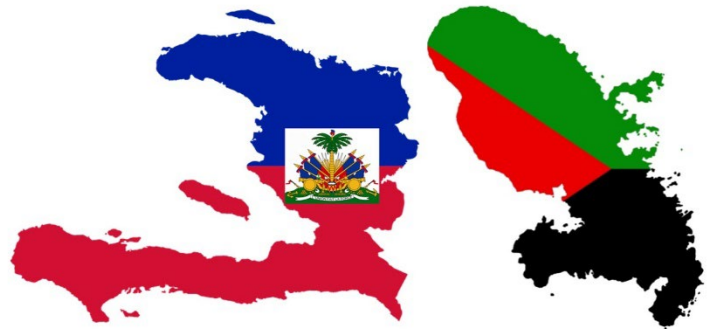


The Department of French & Italian presents
a PhD Dissertation Defense

Ludovic Mompelat

To Infinitive and Beyond, or Revisiting
Finiteness in Creoles: A Contrastive
Study of the Complementation Systems
of Martinican and Haitian Creoles



“ Sa ki ta’w, lariviè pa ka chayé’y ”

9:00 am, Wednesday, November 29, 2023,
in GA 3134 and on Zoom.

For more information, please contact Prof. Rottet at krottet@indiana.edu.

This dissertation advances novel formal research in syntax and semantics, focusing on Martinican Creole and Haitian Creole, through a diachronic and contrastive analysis of their respective complementation systems. This work delves into the intricate concept of finiteness and its relevance/applicability in creole languages, examining the interaction between tense, modality, subject/negation agreement, licensing, and scope, as well as temporal and logophoric specifications. In numerous languages, the distinction between finite and nonfinite clauses is undisputed, facilitated by distinct morphological inflections associated with each complement type. However, in some languages, particularly analytic or isolating ones, debates persist regarding the legitimacy and applicability of a finite/nonfinite distinction, due to the absence of such morphological inflections.

In Mandarin Chinese, for example, the ongoing 50-year discourse on this issue has spawned three factions: one asserting the absence of such a distinction, another affirming its presence, and a third advocating a hybrid approach positing a binary finite/nonfinite distribution while emphasizing the necessity for finer-grained distinctions among complement types. Given that Creole languages fall into the category of analytic/isolating languages, the same inquiries into finiteness arise. Hence, this dissertation pursues three primary goals: a) establishing whether one can reliably differentiate finite from nonfinite complements in Martinican Creole and Haitian Creole; b) determining if additional distinctions are warranted to comprehensively account for diverse complement structures; c) comparing complementation systems in Martinican Creole and Haitian Creole vis-à-vis one another and other languages.

By analyzing a variety of predicates and complement types, we demonstrate that adopting a finite/nonfinite distinction framework for these creoles is justified, provided we accommodate more nuanced distinctions among complement types. By initiating a conversation on finiteness in Creole languages, this work aims to promote more systematic research on Creole languages while offering a theoretical and methodological foundation that facilitates cross-linguistic comparisons across language families.

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