

# Derivational opacity of DE- prefixation in Haitian and Guadeloupean Creoles.

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Creole Exceptionalism stipulates that unlike ‘older’ languages, Creoles do not exhibit “derivation of compositionally opaque denotation” (McWhorter 2018: 38). McWhorter (1998: 797) exemplifies the prototypical derivational transparency with DE- prefixation in Haitian Creole, claiming that one only finds an inersive reading in the language. As Degraff (2000) argues, such a position is not tenable since only a subtype of derived verbs ( $V_{DE}$ ) **DE-** outputs an inersive meaning in Haitian Creole (HC). Building on Degraff (2000) for HC and Villoing & Deglas (2018) for Guadeloupean Creole (GC), we provide a lexical analysis of DE- prefixation as well as the different semantic classes this derivational process outputs. To assess the derivational opacity of DE-prefixation, we extract the  $V_{DE}$  from a Guadeloupean verb lexicon (Henri 2019) and a Haitian verb lexicon (Henri & Glaude 2019) to (a) investigate lexical categories serving as base and (b) examine the meaning that DE-prefixation contributes to when prefixed to the base. Following classification and analysis, we submit these forms as used in syntax to native speakers of both languages for a comprehension test. We show that the phenomenon of opacity, which is observed in French with the use of the DE- prefix, is also present in HC and GC. Furthermore, these creole languages exhibit unique meanings associated with the DE- prefix that are not found in their lexifier. Also, the base is not restricted to verbs and readings vary from (1) the inersive, (2), the (quasi) synonymy, (3) the total semantic conversion, (4) the intensive sense.

## Haitian Creole

1. *Mari dekonseye l enskri nan kou a.*  
Mari DE-advise 3SG subscribe PREP  
course DET  
‘Mari advises him not to enroll in the course.’
2. *Li (de-)gaye rad yo.*  
3SG scatter clothes 3PL.POSS  
‘He scattered their clothes.’
3. *Pòl, demake w la!*  
Pò DE-do’2SG here  
‘Paul, get out of here!’
4. *Li derefize fê devwa a*  
3SG DE-refuse do homework DET  
‘He absolutely refuses to do the homework’

## Guadeloupean Creole

1. *I ka dékolé liv-la*  
3SG ka DE-glue book DET  
‘He peels the book off’
2. *Misyé (dé-)rifizé!*  
Mister (DÉ-)refuse!  
‘The man refused’
3. *I ka dégrenné tout jaden-la*  
3SG KA DÉ-seed all garden-DEF  
‘He’s taking the seeds out of the garden.’
- 4.\* Meaning not found.

Our results demonstrate that while HC and GC have not only inherited this word formation process from French, their lexifier language, but that they have evolved and operate independently within each creole, producing formations not found in French. Indeed, HC exhibits a more diverse range of subtypes compared to GC, as evidenced by the presence of the intensive sense in HC but not GC. In addition, our results attest to the presence of derivational opacity in Creoles.

**Key words:** derivational morphology, opacity, prefixation, Haitian creole, Guadeloupean creole.

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