

Language standardization in Insular Africa: Mapping the routes and roots of Creole languages

Vinesh Y. Hookoomsing

Mauritius

From a socio-historical perspective, Creole languages are rooted in an extreme diaspora context of language contact and language loss created by European colonial expansion. To their initial function as lingua franca among linguistically diverse populations was added that of L1 of the first generations of Creole African slaves. "Creole" here refers to the context and process which gave birth to new forms of langue and culture in transplanted societies.

Creole languages are traditionally distinguished by name tags corresponding to the dominant European languages. These name tags are now being replaced by the names of the countries in which the languages are spoken. Using Mauritian Creole and Seychellois Creole as case studies, this paper proposes to trace the contrasting routes of Creole languages from slave to national and/or official languages and their degree of rootedness as standardized written languages. It will focus on issues of sociolinguistics, pragmatics and education to which orthographic standardization of Creole languages is confronted.