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Martinican complement clauses in *ke*: how to explain variation?

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Martinican is a French-based creole language spoken in the French Caribbean island of Martinique by about 400.000 persons, bilingual in Martinican and French at different degrees. The literature on complement clauses in Martinican (Pinalie and Bernabé 1999; Jeannot-Fourcaud 2003; Damoiseau 2012; Colot and Ludwig 2013; Syea 2017) points to a construction alternation for semantically equivalent complement clauses. The literature states that most complement clauses are formed without any subordinator, as in (1).

(1)

[...] *zot di [zot ka monté]*
2PL say 2PL IPFV go.up
[...] 'you said you are going up'
Descri OTA 1 031

An alternate construction is sometimes used, that differs from the former in that it is introduced by a subordinator, *ki*, *ké* or *ke*, as in (2).

(2)

man pé di [ke man té ka joué]
1SG can say SUB 1SG PST IPFV play
'I can say that I used to play'
FLU Narr 006

The use of a subordinator is explained by an influence of French. Besides, following the linguistic representations, speakers that are the most exposed to French would be those producing it most frequently. Yet, few papers tackle this variation with linguistic and non-linguistic variables, on the basis of a corpus study. In this paper, I present the results of a descriptive corpus-based study of the variation between absence and presence of a subordinator in the declarative complement clauses, that benefits from the statistical approach. The database at hand (Duzerol 2023) gathers 112 complement clauses extracted from 110 minutes of narrations and descriptions collected by the author with the collaboration of 18 Martinican speakers. Twelve linguistic (morphosyntactic, semantic) and non-linguistic (information processing, sociolinguistics) variables are under scrutiny. Generalized mixed models were implemented by Marc Allasonnière-Tang. Firstly, the statistical results align with Jeannot-Fourcaud's (2003) suggestions: for the database, no social variable is statistically significant. These results come in opposition with the explanation of so-called French-influenced changes triggered by those who are the most exposed to French. Second, for the database, this

alternation can be statistically explained by information processing needs, in a similar fashion to what has been observed for languages such as the Santiago variety of Cap Verdean (Araújo Vieira Semedo 2021) or English (Casasanto and Stag 2008; Jaeger 2010). For the database, the density of information within and around a given complement clause has a statistical effect on the presence of a subordinator at the beginning of this complement clause.

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