Hybrid Languages in Canada Involving French

The Case of Michif and Chiac

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Abstract

Valdman et al. (2005) claims there exist two mixed languages involving French in North America: Michif – a blend of French and Cree – and Chiac – a blend of French and English. The purpose of this article is to compare the sociolinguistic history as well as the linguistic structures of these two linguistic entities in order to show that even though there are a number of interesting similarities between the two, their histories, and more importantly their structures, show that Michif and Chiac are not to be considered as belonging to the same linguistic class. Michif is a true Bilingual Mixed Language (Thomason, 1997) while Chiac has not yet attained the status of an independent language and should more rightly be considered as a “fossilized mixed code” (Winford, 2003).

Keywords

Michif – Chiac – bilingual mixed Languages – fossilized mixed codes – French in North America – language mixtures

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1 Introduction

The most recent survey of the situation of the French language in North America (Valdman, Auger, and Piston-Hatlen (eds.), 2005) includes two papers dealing with each of the two hybrid language varieties involving French in North America (Papen, 2005; Perrot, 2005). In the introduction to the book, Valdman (2005: 22–23) states:

It is possible to create a new language by mixing two distinct languages, that is to say a language which has its own grammar, largely derivable from its source languages. In North America, two mixed languages have been created by combining a version of French with another language present in the community: Michif, which combines Cree (an Amerindian language) and French and Chiac, which combines French and English. [...] Above and beyond the sociolinguistic resemblances which unite Michif and Chiac, it is striking to notice to what extent the linguistic structures are also quite similar. Both languages have two phonological systems, each of which corresponds to the two languages on which they are based. [...] At the grammatical level, the actual choices made by each of these languages differ, but generally, the verb conserves the structure of the traditional community language (Cree in Michif, French in Chiac), whereas the NP reflects the grammar of the majority language [French in Michif, English in Chiac (RAP)]. The two languages also present grammatical innovations which are unique to them. [...] To fully understand each language, one must therefore study its phonology and its grammar autonomously. (My translation)

Valdman’s evaluation of Chiac being an ‘autonomous’ hybrid language much like Michif is somewhat surprising, especially in light of the fact that those linguists who have worked on Chiac, including Perrot (2005) herself, have been most careful to state that while it is certainly ‘mixed’ or ‘hybrid’, it is nevertheless merely a ‘code’ (Gérin, 1984; Perrot, 2005; Pöll, 2009), a ‘vernacular’ (Hammers / Blanc, 1989; Perrot, 1995a), a ‘dialect’ (Young, 2002) or ‘a stigmatized variety of Acadian French’ (King, 2008).1 On the other hand Chevalier

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1 Perrot has modified her stance with regards to the status of Chiac over the years: Perrot (1994: 237) considers it to be ‘un système linguistique mixte, autonome par rapport aux deux langues en contact dont il est issu (a mixed linguistic system, autonomous with regards to the two languages from which it derives)’; Perrot (2005: 318) simply calls it ‘un code mixte (a mixed code)’.
In his insightful discussion of mixed languages as autonomous systems, Bakker (2003: 108–109) specifically excludes ‘mixed languages which combine two genetically related languages’ since in these cases ‘it is often not completely clear whether linguistic elements are genetically shared, or whether they are the result of contact.’

Winford (2003: 168) calls them ‘fossilized mixed codes’.

(2001: 15) considers it to be “une langue dont la matrice est française et le lexique généreusement ‘enrichi’ d’anglais (a language whose matrix is French and its lexicon generously ‘enriched’ from English)’. Other than Valdman et al. (2005), Kasparian (2003: 160) is the only linguist to consider Chiac to be ‘a stabilized mixed language’. Nevertheless, even if the general consensus is that Michif should be recognized as an autonomous language, distinct from either of its donor languages, and that Chiac is a distinct variety of (Acadian) French, the two language varieties show a number of distinct as well as common socio-historical, sociolinguistic and linguistic features. As such, a comparison between Michif and Chiac should prove to be interesting and advance our knowledge of the intricacies of language contact in general and more specifically of language contact involving French.

The purpose of this article is therefore to compare Michif and Chiac in order to determine to what extent they are alike or different from a socio-historic and sociolinguistic point of view as well as from a purely linguistic one, above and beyond the fact that one is a distinct and autonomous mixed language and the other a mixed language variety of French.

The paper is organized as follows: in section 2, I shall be quite brief in describing the general linguistic structure of Michif, since it has been extensively described elsewhere (Bakker, 1997; Bakker / Papen, 1997; Papen, 1987; 2005; Rosen, 2007, among others). I then briefly describe the structure of Chiac (cf. Perrot, 1995a; 2005; Young, 2002 for a more complete description) and provide a few relevant examples. In section 3, I review the current literature in the comparison of Michif and Chiac, which, for all intents and purposes, is limited to Pöll’s (2009) paper and provide a number of further sociolinguistic comparisons between the two. In section 4, I compare the broad and finer structural features of Michif and Chiac, again showing in what respect and to what extent they are similar or distinct. In section 5, I conclude in showing once again why Michif and Chiac, although definitely both ‘hybrids’, should not be considered as belonging to the same linguistic class. Finally, I propose that Chiac is perhaps closer in many ways to a variety of other hybridized and more or less codified urban dialects that have been recently described in the literature, such as Nouchi, Indoubil or Camfranglais (see § 6 for further discussion).

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The Linguistic Structure of Michif and Chiac

Below I provide a quick sketch of both Michif and Chiac.

2.1 Michif
Michif is a rather unique hybrid French-Cree language spoken by less than 1,000 Métis speakers in the western Canadian provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and in North Dakota (possibly in Montana and Oregon) in the United States. It has been variously classified as a ‘bilingual mixed language’ (Thomason, 1997; 2001; Winford, 2003), a ‘split language’ (Myers-Scotton, 1993), an ‘intertwined language’ (Bakker, 1997) or a ‘composite language’ (Payment, 2001).4

The Métis are the descendants of French (or English)-speaking men and aboriginal women in the context of the fur trade which existed from the middle of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century in Western Canada. Little is actually known as to precisely when Michif was created but it is generally assumed (Bakker, 1997; Bakker / Papen, 1997) that it probably arose early in the 19th century, a period during which many Cree-French bilingual Métis became buffalo hunters in order to provide dried meat to the fur trading companies with which to feed their workers. Some of the younger hunters, rather than returning to their home villages after the Fall hunt, began spending their winters on the buffalo hunting grounds alongside their Cree cousins and it is presumed that this situation gave rise to Michif, a language distinct from both Cree and French. As far as can be determined, Michif has always been spoken by a minority of the Métis – usually by those on the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder – members of the majority mostly speaking either French or English. The vast majority of current speakers of Michif speak neither French nor Cree and all are bilingual in Michif and English.5

In Michif, verbs massively come from Cree, a language of the Algonquian family, while the Noun Phrase mostly comes from (Métis) French. A relevant example is given in (1) (French-derived forms are in italics):6

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4 Unfortunately, a number of academics (including linguists) still classify Michif as a creole (among others, Brown, n.d.; Chamberlin, 2007; Blake, 2006).
5 Today, nearly all Western Canadian Métis speak only English and a very small minority still speak their traditional Métis French, even fewer speak Michif. The term michif comes from the Métis French pronunciation of the form métif; an older form of the French word mètis ‘mixed (blood)’.
6 The forms derived from (Métis) French are in italics. Métis French is the distinct variety of Laurentian French (the vernacular French that historically developed in the Laurentian valley – now Quebec) spoken by the francophone Western Canadian Métis. The spelling
'These Indians dried moose meat, deer meat. They dried everything. They usually put it in little bags. We used to watch them make it.' (adapted from Bakker, 1997: 78–79)

As can be seen from (1), the NPs lii savaazh ‘Indians (lit. savages)’, la vyand d’orignal ‘(the) moose meat’, la vyand di shovreu ‘(the) deer meat’, the PP daa di pchi sak ‘in (some) little bags’ are all from French. The verb forms kiipaasham-wak, kiiaashtaawak, giikanawaapamaanik and ushit-aachik, the complementizer ee- as well as the adverb maana are from Cree.7 French-derived NPs broadly follow French syntax (determiner, adjective and PP or phrasal complement placement) and Cree-derived verbs come with all the intricate verbal morphology of Cree and typical of Algonquian languages in general, with only a few simplifications or reductions. Although the word order in the first clause of (1) is SVO, the second and third clauses are OV. This also reflects Cree word order, which is relatively free and mostly pragmatically determined.

As to the phonology, French-derived forms are by and large based on French phonemes and follow French phonological rules while Cree-derived forms are

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7 I discuss the presence of a Cree demonstrative determiner alongside a French definite article (eekwaaniki lii savaazh ‘these Indians’) in section 4.
based on Cree phonemes and follow Cree phonological rules. On the other hand, there are a number of Michif innovations, which I will discuss in section 4. Not much work has been done on the suprasegmentals of Michif but it seems that Michif in Canada differs from Michif in the United States in that in the former, stress placement tends to be much as in Cree while in the latter it tends to be much as in French (Rosen, 2007; Rhodes, 2008).

2.2 Chiac

The term ‘Chiac’ has variably been used to cover a broad range of language varieties spoken in the Atlantic provinces of Canada. For some, it refers to any Acadian French variety (Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick) showing heavy English influence; for others it is the vernacular French spoken by Acadians in the province of New Brunswick. For still others, it refers to the vernacular French spoken by Acadians of southeastern New Brunswick and for most linguists who have studied Chiac, the term is restricted to a variety of French spoken by teenagers or young adults in the Greater Moncton area of southeastern New Brunswick. In the following pages, I shall limit the term ‘Chiac’ to the latter definition, since most of the data available on this language variety is based on adolescent speakers. Following is an example of Chiac (English forms are in italics):

(2) Je m’ai fait arrested alright, pour...comme vandalizing pis la shit [xxx]...total-er un car. Pis là mes parents étaient tout comme...ch’ais pas...c’était right pas...comme i care-aient pas...comme, ils étaient comme “Yeah, whatever!” pis là/ Moi, moi j’avais pas besoin de curfew pis la shit...I respectaient. Pis là, je m’ai fait kick-er out du mall pis Crystal. Look out! Je m’ai fait arrested but je m’ai fait kick-er out! Asteur ma curfew est onze! Onze! Un-un-zéro-zéro, man!

‘I got arrested alright, for...like vandalizing and shit...totaling a car. And then my parents were all like...I don’t know...It wasn’t really...Like they

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8 In fact, for some, the term ‘Chiac’ refers to any mixture of French and English spoken anywhere in Canada, much like the term ‘Joual’ used to refer to a variety of Quebec French urban working-class vernaculars heavily influenced by English.

9 This is not to say that only teenagers speak Chiac. It has been spoken for more than fifty years and there is no reason to think that teenagers who spoke it 20 or 30 years ago suddenly stopped using it upon becoming adults. Unfortunately, (as far as I know) there are no studies bearing on the current informal speech of 30-40 year old French-speaking adults of the Moncton area.
I use these terms rather loosely here and not in the technical sense of Myers-Scotton (1993; 2002; 2006).

didn’t care, like… they were like “Yeah, whatever!” n’ that. Me…I didn’t need a curfew and shit…They respected (me). And then I got myself kicked out of the mall and Crystal [Palace] (*an amusement center (RAP)). Look out! I got myself arrested but I got myself kicked out! Now my curfew is eleven! Eleven! One-one-zero-zero, man!” (adapted from Young, 2002: 3)

The ‘basic’ structure of (2) is French (e.g. it is the matrix language), albeit heavily influenced by English (the embedded language). In the literature on bilingual speech, it is quite common to refer to the ‘matrix language’ (ML), e.g. the dominant or major language, which provides the grammar of the overall sentence structure and the ‘embedded language’ (EL), the minor language, from which most code-switches, borrowings or calques originate. It is immediately apparent that Chiac differs from Michif in that it does not have the NP-V split typical of the latter. Verb forms can be either totally French (étaient, j’avais, est, ai fait), totally English (arrested, vandalizing) or a mixture of English verb roots (and verb particles) with French affixation (total-er, car(e)-aient, kick-er out). French verb roots, English verb particles and French affixation is also possible, as in (3):

(3) Il a timbé off la cliff ‘He fell off the cliff’ (from Chevalier / Kasparian, 2003)

It is important to note however that English-based verbs are always morphologically integrated to French verbal morphology. Forms such as arrested and vandalizing are participials or gerunds and there are no cases of 3rd person verbs (French-based or English-based) taking English verbal affixes such as -s or -ed. This contrasts with Michif, where verbs massively have Cree verbal morphology.

English-borrowed nouns usually show French Ø plural affixation but may also take the English -z plural morpheme (cartoons(Ø) vs cartoons(S)). There are no English-derived auxiliaries or modals. The French auxiliary avoir always replaces être in reflexive constructions (je m’ai fait arrested) and optionally in verbs of motion (J’ai rentré ‘I went in’). The copula is always from French (except in code-switches). Avoir can be used instead of the copula être, as in (4):

(4) Ouais, j’ai pas vraiment bored ‘cause... ‘Yeah, I’m not really bored because...’ (from Young, 2002: 139)
Contrary to what Valdman et al. (2005: 22–23) states, the majority of nouns are from French (parents, besoin, onze) but many are from English (shit, car, curfew, mall, man), including compounds (headbangers, heavy metal, girlfriend, horror movie, leather jacket, etc.) or longer collocations (skin tight leather dresses) (from Perrot 1995a: 76–7; 79). Adjectives may be either French or English, usually depending on whether they have attributive or predicative function, in the latter case English being favored. English and French adjectives maintain their original position with regards to the noun, as in (5):

(5) C’est des cool movies(S) intéressantes que j’ai watché hier... (from Chevalier / Kasparian, 2003)

As to the phonology of Chiac, most English forms are pronounced according to English phonology and all French forms are pronounced according to (Acadian) French phonology. To my knowledge, there exists no detailed study of the phonology of Chiac which could inform us about the presence or absence, or indeed of modifications, of typically French rules such as those of liaison, schwa deletion, stress and intonation patterns, etc.

In light of the above, one could propose that the structure of Chiac can be explained by heavy borrowing and calquing from English plus code-switching between French and English. The problem here is that many (if not most) of these borrowings, calques and code-switches have become more or less systematized or 'conventionalized' in Chiac. In other words, there is a certain predictability as to whether a given item will be French-based or English-based. As will be shown in section 4, nouns referring to youth daily life and culture overwhelmingly come from English. Likewise, English verb + particle constructions (look in, hang out, screw up, close down, etc.) are nearly always systematically used instead of their equivalent French cognates. Perrot (2005: 313) sums it up nicely (my translation):

Above and beyond individual and collective variation, Chiac distinguishes itself by the remarkable degree of stabilisation: elements of English origin are for the most part recurrent and their mode of appropriation quite regular and predictable.

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11 Perrot (1995a: 72–73) provides a very partial and general description of the suprasegmental phonology of Chiac. According to her, for some speakers, there is a rise in intonation on the last syllable of a non-final word group and a fall on the sentence final group, typical of French, while for others there is a step-rise on each word group, more typical of the Maritime regional variety of Canadian English.
Finally, detailed analyses by Perrot (1995a; 1998; 2005) and Young (2002) have attempted to show that Chiac has developed rules which exist in neither French nor English, making it (at least semi-) autonomous. We shall see in section 4 to what extent this is in fact the case.

Generally speaking then, major (or lexical) grammatical categories such as nouns, verbs and adjectives can come from either French or English while all minor (functional) grammatical categories prototypically come from French. Interjection-like or frozen expressions are mostly from English, e.g., alright, look out!, whatever..., well..., etc. This immediately makes Chiac different from Michif since Michif shows a general NP-Verb split rather than a major (or open) class-minor (or closed) class split as in Chiac, even though in both Michif and Chiac, the matrix language provides the principal syntactic frame of sentences (Cree for Michif, French for Chiac).

3 Earlier Comparisons of Michif and Chiac

The first (and to my knowledge, the only one) to propose a comparison of Michif and Chiac is Pöll (2009) and below I quickly review the relevant sections of his article.12 It should be noted however that from the outset, Pöll (2009: 184) considers Michif to be a véritable langue mixte (‘a real mixed language’) but views Chiac to be merely a code hybride à autonomisation partielle (‘a partially autonomous hybrid code’).

3.1 An Evaluation of Pöll (2009)

Pöll does not provide much information on the structural aspects of either Michif or Chiac and the comparison he provides is mostly sociolinguistically oriented. Briefly, Pöll considers that it is the type of normative pressure (i.e. the hierarchical organization of the varieties of a given language as well as the dominant use of a particular variety) brought to bear on Michif and Chiac that to a large extent has determined their genesis and their current functioning.

For the Michif situation, Pöll considers that the widespread bi- or multilingualism prevalent among the Indians themselves (most Western Canadian Plains First Nations people at that time spoke their own native language alongside (Plains) Cree, which was the local lingua franca at the time) might have been particularly conducive to linguistic hybridization. As for the speakers of

12 Only the first part of Pöll’s article is relevant to the present article. The second part discusses the merits of various hypotheses concerning code-switching as being the potential source of mixed languages or hybrid codes, a problem I shall not deal with here.
French, Pöll considers that whatever normative pressures on the language varieties that may have existed in New France (which became Lower Canada after the British conquest of 1763) must have diminished the further these men travelled and settled from their original home base; therefore the resulting situation could easily have led to the type of linguistic hybridization typical of Michif. The problem of course is that the scenario Pöll outlines does not fit the historical facts.

According to Bakker (1997) and Bakker / Papen (1997), Michif was not created by the contact between monolingual speakers of French (the first voyageurs, traders, trappers, etc. in the burgeoning fur trade) and bi- or multilingual Amerindian women as Pöll would have it, but by French-Cree bilingual Métis buffalo hunters, some four generations after the first French-Amerindian contact.13 Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the lack of any strong outside normative pressure on the Métis buffalo hunters, prevalent Cree-French code-switching among these bilingual Métis, as well as the fact that French had become their ‘weaker’ language, certainly played a major role in the creation of a hybrid language such as Michif, where the French component, more or less limited to the noun phrase, is highly reduced (e.g. no French derivational affixes are productive in contemporary Michif).

Concerning the Chiac situation, Pöll (2009: 193) first points out that Chiac did not emerge in the context of the creation of a new ethnic entity – in contrast to Michif – although the question of identity certainly played a role. The speakers who originally began using Chiac were definitely members of the French-speaking community of Southeastern New-Brunswick (the Greater Moncton area). In this community there exists socioeconomic and linguistic hierarchization: the ethnic French language variety spoken is ‘traditional’ Acadian French; the prestige language is Standard French (European or Quebecois) and the majority language of the area is English. Pöll (2009: 194) is careful to point out that the speakers of Chiac are French-English bilinguals and that as such their social identity is linked to both languages. Chiac therefore seems best to be able to express their dual ethnolinguistic identity. For Pöll, speaking Chiac affirms one’s allegiance to the francophone community since Chiac is felt by its speakers as being a variety of French; it is linguistically conforming oneself to the group’s language practices.

Perrot’s (1995b; 2006) analyses confirm Pöll’s position. The following quotes from her Chiac speakers are particularly relevant:

13 As far as I know, all cases of bilingual mixed languages were created by speakers bilingual in the two languages involved.
(6) C’est notre chiac/ C’est notre langue/ on l’appelle le français/ parce que ben...vraiment on est français/ pis on est original avec la way qu’on parle...

‘It’s our Chiac/ It’s our language/ we call it French/ because well...really we’re French / and we’re original in our way of speaking...’ (from Perrot, 2006: 146)

Here, the speakers affirm that Chiac is the in-group language but that it is still French because the group also identifies as being French, yet the language is also original – and therefore distinct from other varieties of French.

As well, speaking Chiac is also a mark of resistance to the sole use of English:

(7) Le monde qui parle anglais dans une école français là / ça me piss off / tu marches dans les rangées de casiers là pis t’entends du monde parler en anglais / c’est comme what the hell / je sais que moi je dis des mots anglais mais je parle le français quand même...

‘People who speak English in a French school / that pisses me off / you walk down the rows of lockers n’ you hear people speaking English / it’s like what the hell / I know I use English words but I’m still speaking French...’ (from Perrot, 2006: 144)

This is also the case for Michif. The creators of Michif did not identify with either the Cree-speaking Indians nor with the French-speaking community; they therefore wished (consciously or unconsciously) to affirm their ethnical difference from both the Cree and the French. In both cases, the solution to this ethnic identity conflict lay in the creation of a hybrid form of language. In the Michif case, since contact with Cree was eventually broken, the hybrid evolved into an autonomous language. In the case of Chiac, since contact with both French and English has remained relatively stable, the hybrid form has failed to reach autonomous status.

3.2 Some Further Sociolinguistic Comparisons of Michif and Chiac

There are a number of other sociolinguistic features which Michif and Chiac have in common or by which they differ. First, one of the most important features which distinguishes Michif from Chiac is the fact that Michif speakers are by and large no longer bilingual in Cree and French whereas all speakers of Chiac are bilingual in French and English (at least to a certain degree).
This difference has immediate consequences: since speakers of Michif are no longer bilingual in Cree and French, there are no possibilities of code-switching from one language to the other and the only code-switching that does occur is from Michif to English. On the contrary, since Chiac speakers are all bilinguals, there can be extensive code-switching from French to English.

On the other hand, there are a number of features which Michif and Chiac have in common. First, both the terms ‘Michif’ and ‘Chiac’ are ambiguous and may refer to different language varieties. French-speaking Métis also refer to their own variety of French as ‘Michif’ (and call the mixed language ‘French-Cree’). As well, a northern dialect of Cree spoken in northwestern Saskatchewan shows influence by the French spoken by Roman Catholic missionaries over the years and has borrowed a few hundred nouns and verbs. The speakers of this dialect also consider it to be ‘Mitchif’. As mentioned earlier, the term ‘Chiac’ is equally ambiguous as it may refer to a variety of linguistic entities.

Secondly, the creators of both Michif and Chiac were bilinguals, where one of the languages was their ‘dominant’ languages (Cree for Michif and French for Chiac); in both cases the dominant language constitutes the matrix language and the lesser-known language the embedded language. As well, the matrix language of Michif or of Chiac is not identical to either of the standard varieties (Cree or French). The French on which Chiac is based is closer to Acadian French than to Standard French (for example the use of Acadian French V-ont verbal forms). The case for Michif is more difficult to establish since little is known about the nature of spoken Plains Cree in the 19th century. What we do know is that some of the verb morphology used in Michif is not entirely identical to what has been described by linguists for (Standard) Cree (e.g. Wolfart, 1973; Wolvengrey, 2001). Does this reflect the original Cree spoken by the creators of Michif or merely the fact that Cree verb morphology might have evolved (e.g. simplified) in Michif, especially since speakers of the language have not been speakers of Cree for quite some time?

Third, there exist rather prevalent negative attitudes towards both hybrid varieties: for many, Michif is not really a language, it is ‘broken Cree’ or ‘bad Cree’, a ‘jargon’, etc. (Crawford, 1985: 232). In fact, in some Michif-speaking communities, Michif is referred to simply as ‘Cree’: when asked what language they speak, speakers tend to respond “I speak en-cris (I speak Cree)”. Likewise, Chiac is typically decried by many as being a bastardized or jargonized mish-mash of French and English, with little respect for grammar, etc. (Roy, 1979: 76).

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14 The origin of the term ‘Chiac’ is somewhat controversial (King, 2008: 138).
15 Interestingly, no one considers it to be ‘bad French’.
However, this may merely reflect a generally acknowledged negative opinion towards language mixing of any kind. Regardless, opinions towards Michif and towards Chiac have recently become much more positive. Michif has been declared by the Metis National Council as the ‘historical’ and ‘official’ language of all Canadian Métis (even though a minuscule minority of Métis actually speaks it); substantial sums of money have been spent on trying to revitalize the language, dictionaries, language lessons and children’s books and games have been published, many local or provincial organizations have created websites to teach and promote the language, etc. As for Chiac, there also has been a growing pride in the dialect, as evidenced by the on-line cartoons of Acadie Man, the country-wide popularity of the hip-hop group Radio Radio, which performs mostly in Chiac, etc. (Boudreau / Gadet, 1998; Boudreau, 2001; Perrot, 2006).16

Finally, both Michif and Chiac are fairly ‘unconventional’ in that quite a bit of variation exists within the language as to lexical choice, for example. Even though in Michif most nouns come from French and verbs come from Cree, there are still various ways of ‘saying the same thing’. For example, the Laverdure and Allard (1983) Michif dictionary provides three different ways of expressing the notion of ‘foundling’: en truvaj (< F. trouvaille ‘a foundling’), en mishkaat (C ‘(a) foundling’) and l’anfan kaa-mishkaat (F/C lit. ‘(the) child that is found’) and two distinct ways of expressing ‘X is cold’: lii pataek son fret (< les patates sont froides) ‘the potatoes are cold’ (a French-derived copula + predicate adjective construction) and lii draa tahkwaawa ‘the sheets are cold’ (a Cree-derived intransitive verb construction). Similarly in Chiac, even if some notions are typically referred to uniquely by French nouns or uniquely by English nouns – kinship terms are nearly always from French, notions referring to typical teen-age daily life and culture (sports, movies, music, fashion, television, etc.) are usually from English – the vast majority of concepts can be expressed in either language in a relatively unpredictable way.

4 A Structural Comparison of Michif and Chiac

Before attempting to compare the structural features of Michif and Chiac, I believe the issue of the degree of autonomy of Michif and Chiac respectively must be addressed.

16 The members of Radio Radio are Acadians from Nova Scotia and they have often declared that the language they use is not Chiac but ‘Acadjonne’, the French vernacular of Baie-Sainte-Marie, Nova Scotia.
The Degree of Autonomy of Michif and Chiac

Today, no one seems to doubt the autonomy of Michif. Even though in the first linguistic description of the language to be published, Rhodes (1977) considered it to be a form of Cree with heavy French borrowing (witness the title of his paper), he later revised his position, adopting the notion of Michif being a ‘mixed language’ with two distinct donors (Rhodes, 1985). The reasons for this are quite simple: neither speakers of Cree nor speakers of French can understand Michif. It is even doubtful that bilingual speakers of Cree and French could understand it (though this has not been formally tested, as far as I know). This is largely because there are a number of innovations at all levels of the structure of Michif, making the language largely autonomous from both donor languages.

In phonology, for example, there are considerable differences in the phonemic inventory of the (Métis) French component and of the (Plains) Cree component: French has both voiced and voiceless obstruents, Cree has only voiceless ones; French has both oral and nasal vowels, Cree has only oral vowels; French has labial, alveolar and palatal fricatives, Cree has only alveolars;17 French has two liquid consonants (/l/ and /r/), Cree has neither; French does not make a length distinction among its vowel phonemes, Cree does. Moreover, Michif has developed unique forms derived by Michif phonological rules occurring in neither French nor Cree. In (1), there is a Cree verb form giikanawaapamaanik ‘we used to watch them’ with an initial voiced velar stop. Such a consonant does not exist in Cree (though it does in French, but here, there is no possible French influence). The underlying form is /ni-kii kana-waapam-aanik/. The surface form is derived by three phonological rules (the first of which also exists in Cree): 1) short, lax /i/ (ni-) deletes before the past-tense marker kii-; 2) voiceless stops become voiced after nasal consonants and 3) initial /nC/consonant clusters are simplified to /C/, giving rise to surface voiced stops in the Cree component of Michif.

Turning now to morphology and syntax, other innovations in Michif are the use of French or English nouns or adjectives as bases for Cree verbs, for example:

(8a) li-beur-di-let-iw-an (< le.beurre.de.lait (Standard F. lait de beurre ‘butter-milk’) ‘it is milky’;

(8b) li-zhali-ihkee-w (< le.joli ‘pretty’; lit. make pretty) ‘to decorate’

17 In fact, in the Michif component, both /s/ and /ʃ/ are to be found, though there is a strong tendency for harmony (either both /s/ or both /ʃ/) in French-derived words containing both (as in chanson ‘song’).
(8c) ee-kii-\textit{li-rab-i-hk} (< le.rob ‘steal’) ‘that was robbed’

There also are a number of reanalyzed French verb forms which function as modality markers in Michif, as in (9) (cf. Bakker / Papen, 1997: 322 for further details):

(9a) \textit{en shyen ankur ee-jaaw-ak} (< encore) ‘I wish I had a dog’ (desirative)

(9b) \textit{sa-pran awiyek chi-kanaweeht-ahk} (< ça prend) ‘We need somebody to take care of it’ (necessitive)

(9c) \textit{sa-s-pura-ben ka-kimou-wahk} (< ça se pourrait bien) ‘It might rain’ (potentiative)

None of these forms would be readily understood by either a speaker of Cree or of French. Suffice it to say, these innovations (among others) make Michif rather distinct from both the donor languages and as such, there is no doubt it has acquired sufficient autonomy to be considered a distinct language.

What of Chiac? Most authors who have studied Chiac have limited their evaluation to the fact that it has reached ‘semi-autonomy’ (Perrot, 1995a) or that it has been ‘partially grammaticalized’ (Young, 2002). The general argument offered is that there are a number of grammatical structures which exist in neither of the donor languages; the most frequently given are the \textit{V + back} structure and the use of adverbial \textit{right/right out} as in (10) and (11) (from Perrot, 1995a: 161; 164):

(10) Quand i a arrivé \textit{back} chu zeux... ‘When he arrived back home...

(11) Well, je l’ai \textit{watch-é la semaine passée là} / j’ai \textit{right} aimé ça là / je vais \textit{back} le \textit{watch-er là}... ‘Well, I watched it last week / I really liked it / I will watch it again...’

Concerning the \textit{V + back} structure, Perrot (1995a) and Young (2002) show that in English, \textit{V + back} only has the meaning ‘to come back to an original state or place’; it cannot have the repetitive meaning of ‘to V again’. Nevertheless, in (11), the sentence \textit{je vais back le watcher} can only mean ‘I will watch it again’, while in (10), \textit{i a arrivé back} can only have the meaning ‘to come back to an original place’.

However, King (2008) shows that the \textit{V + back} construction with both a ‘repetitive’ and a ‘return to original state or place’ meaning is not exclusive to Moncton’s Chiac but is also found in Prince Edward Island French as in (12) and (13) (from King, 2008: 161):

(12) Quand i a arrivé \textit{back} chu zeux... ‘When he arrived back home...

(13) Well, je l’ai \textit{watch-é la semaine passée là} / j’ai \textit{right} aimé ça là / je vais \textit{back} le \textit{watch-er là}... ‘Well, I watched it last week / I really liked it / I will watch it again...’
The V + back construction with both meanings is also found in Nova Scotian Acadian French (Acadjonne) (Comeau, 2007, quoted in King, 2008: 162–163) as in (14) and (15):

(14) Je vais back l’amener ‘I will bring it back’

(15) Je en a bu back l’autre weekend ‘He drank some again the other weekend’

It therefore seems that the V + back construction and its related meanings is not exclusive to Chiac. Notice that the position of back does not conform to English usage since in Chiac it regularly occurs to the left of the main verb whereas in English it occurs to its right. King (2008: 163) explains this as follows:

[T]hey [verb particles such as back] occur in exactly the positions in which one can place French-origin adverbs such as encore ‘again’ [...]. Thus an account of the syntax of back is readily available if we assume that it has been integrated into the grammar of certain French varieties as an adverb.

As to the use of right as an adverbial intensifier or emphasizer as in (11), its use is well known in the English vernacular of the Canadian Maritime provinces (or elsewhere) (King, 2008: 164). According to Perrot (1995a: 254 ff.), in Chiac, right can modify any number of grammatical categories (including adjectives, nouns and noun phrases as well as verbs). However, Chevalier and Hudson (2005: 292) consider that in English right cannot modify verbs, which would make the Chiac usage an innovation. Nevertheless, Perrot’s (1995a) English-speaking informants maintain that a sentence such as (16) is grammatically acceptable:

(16) My parents like her right out. (from Perrot, 1995a: 259)

18 The V + back construction is also found in Ontario French (Hull, 1955; Canale et al. 1997) but only with the ‘return to an original state or place’ meaning and it is always placed immediately to the right of the verb phrase.
This means that *right (out)* in Chiac is not particularly innovative, merely an English borrowing. Notice that *right* cannot be the right-most unit in a sentence in Chiac, and it must immediately follow the verb, as in (17a):

(17a) *Le chat braillait right/le chat right braillait* ‘The cat was screeching’  
(from Perrot, 1995a: 256)

In other words, *right* can only modify transitive verbs and *right out* can only modify intransitive (and reflexive) verbs, as in (17b):

(17b) Le chat braillait right out ‘The cat was screeching’

Of course, *right out* can be followed by a sentential prepositional phrase, as in (18):

(18) Ça nuisait right out à mes études ‘It really hurt my studies’ (from Perrot, 1995a: 258)

Young (2002) considers that the innovation of the use of *right* in Chiac is due to the fact that in English, *right* cannot modify a negative verb. Thus for her (19) is ungrammatical:19

(19) *My parents are not right cool/right not cool* (from Young, 2002: 123)

Whereas in Chiac, *right* can indeed modify a negative construction, as in (20):

(20) *I care-ait right pas* ‘He really didn’t care’ (from Perrot, 1995a: 255)

Perrot (1995a), on the other hand, believes that it is the placement of *right* in Chiac which is innovative. She observes that *right* always precedes the element it modifies (*right* beau, funny, fort, beaucoup, etc.) but it must follow verbs, as in (21) (cf. also the agrammaticality of (17a)):

(21) *J’aime right les chevals* ‘I really like horses’ (from Perrot, 1995a: 256)

However, she also notes that in compound verb forms (aux/modals + pst. part/inf), *right* precedes the verb, as in (22):

(22) *J’ai right aimé ça* ‘I really like it’ (from Perrot, 1995a: 257)

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19 Young is a native speaker of Nova Scotian English (Young, 2002: 123).
For Perrot (1995a) then, *right* has two positions: to the left of the element it modifies, including non-tensed verb forms (past participles and infinitives) but to the right of simple tensed verbs. In fact, the position of *right* can be more easily explained if one considers that *right* must simply always follow a tensed verb form: in simple verbs it follows the verb, in compound verb forms it immediately follows the tensed verb form (auxiliary or modal). As such, *right* merely obeys the placement rules of adverbs in French (such as *vraiment* ‘really’) and therefore does not really represent a structural innovation. Nevertheless, *vraiment* and *right* are not really the same, semantically speaking, so a change from the former in French to the latter in Chiac might still be viewed as a type of innovation.

To conclude, I have shown that neither the *V + back* construction nor the use of *right/right* (*out*) are particularly innovative (at least structurally) with regards to either English or French and that the ‘autonomy’ of Chiac has therefore been somewhat exaggerated (*pace* Perrot).

### 4.2 Major and Minor Lexical Categories in Michif and Chiac

In Table 1, I show how the major and minor lexical categories are organized in Michif and Chiac, showing the similarities and differences. A brief discussion follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Michif</th>
<th>Chiac</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Major (lexical) categories</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nouns</td>
<td>Roughly 90% F, rest from E, C or O (in order of importance); lexical choice is determined by language</td>
<td>Lexical choice is primarily semantically based (Ns denoting youth culture are from E; from F elsewhere)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are Ns 1) morphologically and/or</td>
<td>1) Partially. F Ns can take C suffixes; F and E Ns show F Ø plural suffix; E Ns take F determiners; C Ns rarely take F determiners (but may do so)</td>
<td>1) Partially. F Ns can show F Ø plural or E ‐s plural; 2) Gender for F Ns are +/- as in SF; gender for E Ns is variable (cognate words have an effect)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)

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20 Winford’s (2003) list adds to Bakker’s (1997) original list, but both lack the complete details listed here. See Note below Table 1 for abbreviations used.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Michif</th>
<th>Chiac</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2) semantically adapted to the ML?</td>
<td>2) Partially. FNs assume C gender; gender of FNs mostly as in SF</td>
<td>Attributive As are largely from F, Predicative As are largely from E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>All from F; C N-modifying strategies (relative clauses) are frequently used</td>
<td>Yes. F As are pre- or post-posed as in SF; E As are always pre-posed as in SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is A position from source language respected?</td>
<td>Pre-posed As agree; post-posed As do not</td>
<td>F As agree as in SF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do As agree in gender as in SF?</td>
<td>Roots and affixes are massively from C; a few Vs (e.g. <em>être, avoir</em>) are from F; a few C-F or E mixed V forms (F/E root + C affix)</td>
<td>V forms can come from either F or E; E Vs are adapted to F verb morphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbs</td>
<td>All from F; avoir can be used instead of être</td>
<td>All from F; avoir can be used instead of être</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From which language is the copula?</td>
<td>F, but C copula constructions dominate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbs and adverbial particles</td>
<td>From either C or F; Adv-particles mostly from C; some semantic notions can only be expressed by F Advs, others only by C Advs</td>
<td>From either F or E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Minor (functional) categories</td>
<td>Massively from C; there are a few F-derived Modal forms</td>
<td>All from F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tense/Aspect/Mood markers</td>
<td>Roughly 70% from F; 30% from C</td>
<td>All from F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Michif</th>
<th>Chiac</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adpositions</td>
<td>pPs: mostly from F; a few from C or E; some F PPs take on C functions</td>
<td>Only pPs; mostly from F, except about, around, out and off (of) from E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PPs: All from C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>All from F (there are no articles in C); there is no indefinite plural article</td>
<td>F and E Ns are determined and integrated according to F rules, except for null determiner, which functions as in E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative determiners</td>
<td>All from C (except a few from F in frozen expressions)</td>
<td>All from F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive determiners</td>
<td>Either from C or from F, depending on the source of N</td>
<td>All from F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeric quantifiers</td>
<td>All cardinals (except C peyak ‘one’) come from F; almost all ordinals come from F (but ‘1st, 2nd’ can be from C)</td>
<td>Usually have the same source language as the N they modify but there are exceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-numeric quantifiers</td>
<td>Either C or F; both C and F quantifiers take a F definite article</td>
<td>Either F or E and modify either F or E Ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal pronouns</td>
<td>All from C except from F in a few frozen expressions or with F Vs</td>
<td>All from F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative pronouns</td>
<td>All from C</td>
<td>All from F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive pronouns</td>
<td>All from C</td>
<td>All from F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite pronouns</td>
<td>Almost all from C</td>
<td>Either from F or from E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative pronouns</td>
<td>From C</td>
<td>From F, except which, from E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogatives</td>
<td>Almost all from C</td>
<td>Mostly from F; some from E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating conjunctions</td>
<td>55% from C; 40% from F; 5% from E</td>
<td>From F except so, but and (be)cause (as well as or in collocations such as or else, or something, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
What generalizations can be drawn from the above facts? As for the major (lexical) categories, there are more differences than similarities. In Michif, nouns are determined by language: they massively come from French; in Chiac, nouns are determined by semantics: those referring to youth culture, daily life, etc. are from English, others are from French. Since there are no adjectives in Cree, all Michif adjectives are from French, though Cree noun modifying strategies, such as the use of a modifying relative clause, tend to dominate. In Chiac, most attributive adjectives are from French, most predicate adjectives from English. Young (2002: 115 ff.) convincingly argues that this is due to the fact that predicate adjectives “tend to encode assessments or evaluations, while attributive adjectives are less likely to do so.” Young calculates that the majority (a ratio of 5:1) of English-derived adjectives in her corpus are evaluative, such as cool, prime, intense, awesome, etc. “By using units like perfect, awesome, etc., Chiac speakers evoke both their youth and their connections to Anglophone language and culture” (Young, 2002: 116). Participial adjectives in Chiac can have a French or an English root, but if the latter, these nearly always take a French-based suffix (e.g. streak-é ‘streaked/streaky’, pollut-é ‘polluted’, drug-é ‘doped-up’, startl-é ‘startled’, spac-é ‘spaced (out)’, etc. (Perrot, 1995a: 118–119).

In Michif, French-derived adjectives mostly behave as they normally do in French, in that a closed-class small number of adjectives are pre-posed, while the majority are post-posed. Somewhat surprisingly, pre-posed adjectives agree in gender with the noun they modify while post-posed ones do not (they are invariably masculine). In Chiac, French-derived adjectives function as in SF and English-derived adjectives function as in SE. By and large, then, the functioning of adjectives is quite different in Michif and Chiac.

Verbs in Michif and Chiac have both similar and different features. In Michif, verbs overwhelmingly come from Cree, in Chiac the choice of French or
English verb roots seems to be relatively free, though French reflexive verb forms tend to be avoided by using a semantically equivalent English form. In Michif, Cree verb roots, as well as a few French- or English-derived forms, always take Cree verbal affixation; in Chiac English-based verbs are always totally integrated to French verb morphology. In both cases then, the matrix language determines verbal affixation, which is to be expected. The only exception in Michif is that the copula may come from French être but in general, Cree copula-type constructions dominate (there is no copula verb as such in Cree). In Chiac, avoir may be used instead of the copula être (cf. (4)).

It is only with adverbs that Michif and Chiac are quite similar. In both languages, ‘full’ adverbs may derive from either source language. However, in Michif, preverbal modifiers can often have adverbial meanings and functions, as in:

(23) miyu-atushkee-w ‘He works well’
    well - work –  ai3

Obviously, neither French nor English have adverbial particles of this nature.

Let us now consider the minor (functional) categories; these have grammatical functions and therefore one may expect that they are mostly if not entirely derived from the matrix language. This is, in fact, mostly, but not exclusively, the case. In both Michif and Chiac, tense/aspect/modality markers are from the respective matrix language, with the exception of a few French-based modality markers in Michif. This is also true for pronouns in general (personal, interrogative, possessive and relative): they derive from the matrix language. Indefinite pronouns, which are somewhat more ‘lexical’ than other pronouns, can be Cree- or French-based in Michif, although the former are much more prevalent. In Chiac, these pronouns seem to behave much like nouns, in that they may be either French- or English-based. Negative particles also behave differently in Michif and Chiac. Surprisingly, in Michif, the majority of negative particles are French-based while a few are Cree-based; this means that a French negative can function as a Cree verb negator. In Chiac, all negatives are French-derived.

Noun specifiers also function differently in Michif and Chiac. Since nouns are massively from French in Michif, these are always determined by a French-based article, definite or indefinite;21 English-borrowed nouns also take French

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21 The singular masculine and feminine partitive articles (du and de la) no longer exist in Michif.
determiners while Cree-borrowed nouns seem to be freer and may or may not take a French determiner. In Chiac, all nouns, whether French- or English-based are determined according to French, with the notable exception of the null determiner, which seems to function according to its own complex set of rules (cf. Perrot, 1995 for further discussion). Demonstrative determiners in Michif are always from Cree but are always accompanied by a French definite article.

The reasons why demonstratives are Cree-derived is that in Cree, demonstratives agree in (animate/inanimate) gender with the noun they modify. French nouns must therefore take on Cree gender. Gender is extremely important, in that Cree has a highly complex verb agreement system, where verbs agree in gender (and number) both with their subjects and with their object complements (gender of object complements may even change the shape of the verb root itself). Moreover, Cree demonstratives specify the distance of the entity in question relative to the speaker (proximal, intermediate and distal). Cree demonstratives thus convey important grammatical and semantic information, which most probably explains why in Michif they are Cree-derived rather than French-derived, as one would expect. As shown in (1) (ekwaaniiki lii savaazh ‘these (intermediate) Indians’), Cree-based demonstratives in Michif are always accompanied by a French-based definite article. The form of the demonstrative provides information as to (Cree) gender, proximity of the entity with regards to the speaker and number, but it does not provide information as to the French gender of the noun it modifies. This is probably why the definite article is required and distinctions such as awa la fiy ‘this (animate. prox. sing.) girl’ vs awa li garson ‘this (animate.prox.sing.) boy’ show why the definite article needs to be present. In Chiac, demonstrative determiners are all French-based.

Quantifiers also represent a mixed bag. In Michif, numeric quantifiers are mostly from French, with the notable exception of ‘one’ which is always Cree peyak. In Chiac, as opposed to articles, numeric quantifiers are nearly always derived from the same language as the noun they modify but there can be exceptions (e.g. first année); they can therefore be either from French or from English. Non-numeric quantifiers (e.g. indefinites), which are somewhat more ‘lexical’ in nature than their numeric counterparts, can come from either matrix or embedded language in Michif and Chiac.

Prepositions are equally problematic. Cree has both preposition and postpositions and both are found in Mitchif, as are French-derived prepositions. In Chiac, prepositions may come from either French or English.

Finally, coordinating, adverbial (subordinating) conjunctions and complementizers are also a mixed category: in Michif, coordinating conjunctions
(for NPs or for clauses) can be either Cree- or French-based, this being also true for adverbial conjunctions, though for the latter, Cree-based conjunctions are more frequent. Complementizers are always from Cree. This can be explained from the fact that in Cree, complementizers are verbal prefixes; since verbs are generally Cree-based in Michif, it follows that complementizers come from Cree.

In Chiac, conjunctions are usually from French, with the exception of but and so which have more or less replaced their French counterparts mais and donc (Roy, 1979); cause (< because) ([kɔz]) is also quite frequent, as is its French equivalent cause (que) ([kɔz]) (< à cause de/que). Subordinating conjunctions can be French-based (si que ‘if’, parce que ‘because’, etc.) as well mixed English-French-based (so que ‘so that’, unless que ‘unless’, because que ‘because’, except que ‘except (that)’, since que ‘since’, etc. Perrot, 1995a: 246), these being calques of the typical French adverbial conjunction construction (X + que). The typical complementizer is French que, but as in other varieties of vernacular French, complement clauses may have a null complementizer (Martineau, 1993), as in (24):

(24) Je trouve Ø ça serait cool but whatever... ‘I think it would be cool but whatever’ (from Young, 2002: 102)

4.3 The Contributions of the Matrix and the Embedded Languages in Michif and Chiac

As we have seen, in terms of the matrix language vs the embedded language, Cree is the matrix language in Michif, French the embedded language. In Chiac, French is the matrix language, English the embedded. In terms of the contributions the matrix or embedded languages play in Michif and Chiac, the differences are quite noticeable, although there are a number of areas where they are similar. Table 2 compares the contribution of the matrix language (ML) and the embedded language (EL) for both Michif and Chiac. (The different shades of grey identify the degree of similarity or difference between the two language varieties).

As can be seen from Table 2, verb morphology, demonstratives, pronouns (with the exception of indefinites) and complementizers derive from the matrix language in both Michif and Chiac. This is to be expected according to the literature on code-switching and bilingual speech behavior. Verb roots are largely from the matrix in Michif, with a few EL-based verb forms; in Chiac, verb roots can be either from the ML or the EL. The same is true for subordinating conjunctions: they can derive from either the ML or the EL in both Michif and Chiac. However, Chiac also has ‘mixed’ ML/EL adverbial conjunctions.
Table 2 Contributions of the ML and EL in Michif and Chiac.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Michif</th>
<th>Chiac</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matrix Language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Embedded Language</strong></td>
<td><strong>Matrix Language</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cree)</td>
<td>(French)</td>
<td>(French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb morphology</td>
<td>Verb morphology</td>
<td>Verb morphology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstratives</td>
<td>Demonstratives</td>
<td>Pronouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronouns</td>
<td>Complementizers</td>
<td>Complementizers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementizers</td>
<td>Verb roots (Verb roots)</td>
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<td>Mixed ML/EL conjunctions</td>
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<td>Tense/Aspect/Mode markers</td>
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(so que, since que, etc.). Tense/aspect/mode markers generally come from the ML in both Michif and Chiac, however in Michif, a number of EL-based modality markers also exist. Nouns nearly always come from the EL in Michif while they can come from either the ML or the EL in Chiac. The same is true for adjectives and numeric quantifiers. On the contrary, possessives can come from either the ML or the EL in Michif, while they can only come from the ML in
Chiac. Prepositions can also come from either the ML or the EL in Michif, as well as in Chiac. Moreover, Michif also has postpositions, all of which come from the ML, since French does not have postpositions. Finally, negation and articles come from the EL in Michif while these always come from the ML in Chiac.

5 Conclusions

From a sociohistoric and sociolinguistic point of view, there are a number of features that Michif and Chiac share: both the mixed language and the hybrid code are the result of bilinguals trying to establish their own ethnic or social differences from the societies speaking the source languages. Yet, even on this point, there is a major difference. Michif speakers wished to distinguish themselves from both the Cree and the French-speaking Métis communities while it seems that Chiac speakers wish to distinguish themselves both from the ‘traditional’ Acadian French community as well as from the Standard French used in the school community but equally from the English-speaking community. Nevertheless, they still want to maintain their ties to the French-speaking community in general since they insist that their speech variety is still ‘French’ and that they identify themselves as being ‘French’. Finally, Michif is a dying language while Chiac seems to be gaining ground both as to the number of speakers and as to its increasing prestige among the Acadian population at large.

From a strictly linguistic point of view, the structural differences between Michif and Chiac far outweigh their similarities. For the most part, these similarities are due to the very nature of hybrid languages or codes in that they always involve a matrix language which provides the bulk of the grammar. It is therefore to be expected that basic grammatical units will always (or at least most often) come from the matrix language. This is the case for both Michif and Chiac, where verb affixation, pronouns, tense/aspect/mode markers, etc., come from the matrix language. On the other hand, Michif being basically a bilingual mixed (or intertwined) language of the NP-V split type (Bakker, 2003), the structure of the NP comes mainly from the embedded language but with a definite semantico-grammatical influence from the matrix language, e.g. Cree gender and Cree nominal suffixes on French nouns, etc. In Chiac, as in most hybrid codes, embedded language influence is mostly felt in the major lexical categories.

It therefore seems that Valdman et al. (2005) might have been a bit hasty in concluding that both Michif and Chiac are fundamentally alike in their having similar structures and in their grammars being ‘independent’ from both their donor languages. I have shown that even though Michif and Chiac do share a
number of features, the basic structures of the two are quite different and that while Michif is indeed independent or autonomous from both Cree and French, Chiac fundamentally remains a variety of French, albeit heavily influenced by English.

If Chiac cannot be considered to have sufficient structural autonomy to allow it to be promoted to the rank of an autonomous language, yet its evident and systematic hybrid nature makes it distinct from other varieties of French (though perhaps not from other heavily English-influenced varieties of Acadian French). Is Chiac then unique?

King (2008) shows that the structure of Chiac is not unique to the speech of southeastern New Brunswick teenagers. Yet, as such, it seems that it corresponds rather well to other urban, youth-oriented, hybrid codes spoken by "bilinguals caught between two languages and their cultures" (Winford, 2003: 168), such as the mixed Spanish-English speech of many southwestern American states (California, New Mexico, Texas, etc.). All these codes have their own names such as Pachuco, Trilongo, Tex-Mex, etc. (Craddock, 1981: 2009, cited in Windford, 2003: 169; Silva-Corvalan, 2002). Similar codes, which Winford (2003: 168) calls ‘fossilised mixed codes’, exist in various large cities in Europe as well as in Africa (cf. Kerswill, 2010 for further details). Especially interesting are a number of such mixed codes involving French such as Nouchi, spoken in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and Indoubil, spoken in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and particularly Camfranglais, spoken in the Cameroons, which, like Chiac, is also based (at least partly) on French and English.

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