

## Phonology and Syntax of Article Incorporation in Mauritian Creole: Evidence from Bantou Languages

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**Abstract :** This paper examines article incorporation in Mauritian Creole, a French Lexifier Creole which exhibits three forms of article incorporation as illustrated in (1-3). While various analyses of article incorporation have been proposed in the literature, fewer studies have explored the motivation of this widespread phenomenon in Mauritian Creole (MC) as opposed to other French Lexifier Creoles spoken in the Caribbean. For example, Mauritian Creole exhibits 4 times more CV incorporation than Haitian Creole, and 40 times more than Reunion Creole. (1) Consonantal type (C): loraz 'thunder storm', lete 'summer', zwazo 'bird', nide 'idea'. (2) Syllabic type (CV): lapo 'skin', liku 'neck', ledo 'back', leker 'heart', diber 'butter'. (3) Bi-consonantal (CVC): delo 'water', dizef 'egg', lizye 'eye', dilwil 'oil'. The goal of this study is twofold: 1) uncover the rules governing the three types of article incorporation in MC, and 2) account for its remarkable occurrence in MC as opposed to its quasi-absence in Reunion Creole. We have collected a corpus of over 700 cases and organized it into three categories (C; CV and CVC). For example, there are 471 examples of CV incorporation in MC against 112 in Haitian Creole and only 12 in Reunion Creole. Two questions can be raised: 1) what is the motivation and distribution of the three types of incorporation in MC, and 2) how can one account for the high volume of incorporation in MC as opposed to its quasi-absence in Reunion Creole? We suggest that article incorporation in MC is related to the structure of nouns in Bantou languages. While previous authors have largely used population settlement data in the colonies during the Creole formation period to justify their analyses, we propose an account based on the syntactic structure of Bantou nouns. This analysis will shed light on the contribution of African languages to the formation of MC, and on to why MC has exhibited more article incorporation cases than any other French Lexifier Creole.

**Keywords :** article incorporation, creole languages, description, phonology

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