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The lexical particularities of French in the Haitian press: Readers' perceptions and appropriation[1]

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ABSTRACT

Regional French varieties in language contact situations have been widely discussed in Francophone studies. Defining a variety of French involves showing its specificity when compared to other French varieties, assessing its sociolinguistic functionality, and reporting on its speakers' linguistic representations (Robillard, 1993a). This article probes the reactions of a group of the Creole/French bilingual Haitian elite to a sample of lexical particularities drawn from a corpus of the Haitian press (1986–1998). It reports on participants' tolerance or stigmatization of these particularities and explores the reasons for their reactions. Findings indicate participants' concern with creolisms, notably those that are politically related or literal translations from Creole. This concern reveals participants' linguistic ambivalence and reflects the bilingual elite's linguistic identity, which is still influenced by Haiti's colonial past.

INTRODUCTION

The exile of Haitian life-president Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986 ushered in a new era of sociopolitical turmoil, nurtured by the Haitian people's democratic expectations after 29 years of dictatorship. A new constitution emerged in 1987 that promoted Creole to the status of official language, next to French. Since then, the liberalization of public opinion has given voice and impetus to the spoken and written press. Both French and Creole have flourished to describe, reflect upon, and structure the post-Duvalier society. Étienne (2000) and Vilaire-Chéry (2000) give an account of this linguistic – particularly lexical – effervescence of French in Haiti (HF). However, merely drawing up a list of particularities does not entitle a linguist to claim that those particularities constitute part of the so-called regional lexicon of a given variety of French. Robillard (1993a, 1993b) explains that to the internal, formal rules for integrating an element into a language and to objective language behaviours, it is essential to add speakers' opinions and feelings.

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Otherwise, linguists risk gathering items that are part of a variety that exists only in the linguists' mind and that no one else recognizes (Robillard, 1993a:15).

In this article, I describe and analyze the perceptions and attitudes of 25 French/Creole bilingual Haitians toward French in the Haitian press. My study tests participants' reactions to lexical particularities in the Haitian press (tolerance or rejection) and analyzes their justifications and rationalizations for these reactions. The study addresses the following questions: How do Haitian readers perceive lexical particularities in the Haitian press? Do they reject or tolerate them? Which criteria and motivations underlie their decisions? Do they appropriate French as it appears in the Haitian press? Participants' reactions to the particularities of HF in the press show their agreement or disagreement on modes of expression, bringing up the issue of a local French norm and, to a larger extent, the issue of the functionality of French in Haiti.

1 LEXICAL PARTICULARITY

'Lexical particularity' has been defined as any item or lexical trait that does not belong to referential French (RF). RF is French as it is described in the most commonly used dictionaries and grammars published in France and used throughout Francophony. A lexical item may not belong to RF because 'les caractéristiques concernant le signifiant (y compris graphique), le signifié, les latitudes combinatoires ou les règles d'emploi en discours sont différentes de ce qui est décrit dans les dictionnaires de français standard ou observable en français "neutre"' (Robillard, 1993b:128).

The lexical particularities used in this study were drawn from approximately 350 newspaper issues published between 1986 and 1998 (for more information on corpus constitution, see Étienne, 2000). Three of these newspapers are published weekly in the United States and distributed in Haiti: *Haïti en Marche, Haïti-Observateur,* and *Haïti-Progrès*. The fourth is the main daily newspaper in Haiti, *Le Nouvelliste*.

The lexicological analysis of this corpus showed language contact phenomena between French, Creole, English, and, to a lesser extent, Spanish. Lexical particularities were classified according to their origin and the type of difference they exhibit in contrast to RF. They may be of French origin (archaisms or dialectalisms), creolisms, anglicisms, or neologisms. They may be different lexematically or semantically. Adapting Poirier's terminology (1995), I define 'lexematic particularity' as a form that does not exist in RF. I define 'semantic particularity' as a form that exists in RF but has a different or additional denotation or connotation, or that is used in a different or additional speech style or domain in Haiti (Domain refers to an area of human activity characterized by specific vocabulary such as religion, employment, etc).

'French origin' lexical particularities include dated or archaic terms (designated as such by current dictionaries) and dialectalisms. The main sources, which I selected for the thoroughness of their etymological and linguistic information, were *Le*

Nouveau Petit Robert (NPR) and *Le Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé* (TLFI). The following are examples of 'French origin' lexical particularities:

(1) **Souventes fois**, les fils des braceros haïtiens dans les bateys dominicains, privés de documents d'état, sont incapables de savoir s'ils sont haïtiens ou dominicains. *(Le Nouvelliste*, 2/11/89)

Souventes fois is **a lexematic particularity** of French origin because it is not listed in current French dictionaries and because it is marked as archaic in TLFI.

(2) Port-au-Prince – Une ville disparue sous la boue – Les eaux diluviennes ont également fait de nombreux dégats matériels. Plusieurs **maisonnettes** ont été détruites, laissant des dizaines de familles sans abris. (*Haïti-en-Marche,* 10/25/89)

Maisonnette is **a semantic particularity** of French origin. It exists in RF. However, its connotation in HF is different from its connotation in RF. In RF today, *maisonnette* is used in children's literature or fairy tales. However, according to TLFI, it used to refer to any small house in French, as it does in HF today.

Creolisms are items or semantic traits that have been imported into HF from Creole. They do not exist in RF, or if they do, they do not have the same denotation, connotation, or do not belong to the same domain or speech style. Items are considered creolisms when they appear in one of the main Creole dictionaries (see References). Although this criterion might mask the complexities of etymological research in Creole-speaking countries,[2] in particular the overlapping of the Creole and French lexicons, it is sufficient for an epilinguistic study like the present one, which aims at examining speakers' perceptions. For this reason, two of the particularities in the tasks (*dilatoire* 'delaying tactics' and *chaque* + numeral + substantive as in *chaque quatre ans*) were classified as creolisms rather than French origin particularities, although they are both listed in TLFI. The following are examples of creolisms:

(3) La célébration du premier anniversaire du **déchoucage** de la cruelle et absurde dynastie duvaliériste a été pratiquement interdite à Port-au-Prince. (*Le Nouvelliste*, 2/10/87)

Déchoucage is **a lexematic creolism,** or completely new form in French. It comes from *dechoukaj* 'uprooting, removing from office' in Creole.

(4) L'annonce [...] de la manifestation contre la privatisation avait suscité quelque appréhension dans de nombreux secteurs. On annonçait **le béton** particulièrement chaud ce premier mai. (*Le Nouvelliste*, 5/2/96)

[2] Robillard (1990:98) aptly summarizes the etymological challenge in the context of Mauritian French: 'Reste toujours la question de savoir si les divergences par rapport au FS [français standard] sont dues à des survivances en FRM [français régional mauritien], dès le début de la colonisation, de survivances maintenues en créole, qui servirait de conservatoire de formes anciennes, dont il réinséminerait par un contact permanent le FRM (par ailleurs en contact avec le FS) ou d'innovations du créole qui passeraient ensuite en FRM'.

Béton is **a semantic creolism**. The word exists in RF but acquires an additional meaning in HF by metonymy, referring not only to the concrete the street is made of (as in RF) but to the street itself and to people marching in the street. It comes from *beton* in Creole, which has these additional meanings.

Anglicisms are items or semantic traits of an item that have been imported into HF from English. Sometimes, it is impossible to know if this new form or new meaning was first imported from English into Creole and then passed into HF, being then a creolism, or if it first appeared in HF and was adopted into Creole. In those cases, I trusted the native speakers' intuition. When an item is present in both Creole and French and is recognized by the Haitian native speakers as an anglicism, I considered it an anglicism, regardless of the route it followed to enter HF. The following are examples of anglicisms:

(5) Les responsables de **la factorie** sont obligés de nous payer normalement; le syndicat les y contraint. (*Haïti-Progrès*, 10/17/89)

Factorie is a **lexematic anglicism**. It is a new word in French imported from English.

(6) La CIA prédit des millions de morts. Le ministre de l'environnement prévient contre une catastrophe écologique. Le **black-out** s'intensifie. Les prix grimpent. (*Le Nouvelliste*, 2/9/95)

Black-out is a **semantic anglicism**. The word exists in RF, but only to refer to the concealing of lights during wartime or to a news blackout. TLFI mentions that the word is used by analogy to refer to a power outage, but this use is not mentioned by NPR. In contrast, in HF, this use as 'power outage' is very frequent.

Neologisms may be either completely new forms in French, or existing words or phrases in RF that have acquired a new denotation in Haiti or are used in a different speech style or domain. The following are examples of neologisms:

(7) Rosny Smarth, après s'être tant fait prier pour accepter le poste ingrat de Premier ministre, doit sortir de la **Primature** par la petite porte . . . . (*Le Nouvelliste*, 6/9/97)

Primature is a **lexematic neologism**. It does not exist in RF or in any other language or varieties in contact with HF.[3]

(8) Un forum sur l'amélioration de la santé publique en Haïti se tiendra au Capitol Hilton Hotel **sis** à l'angle des rues 16 et K. (*Haïti-en-Marche*, 3/10/93)

Sis is a neologism because it is used in RF but only in legal terminology. In HF, the item is used currently to indicate where any specific place may be. Thus, the domain in HF is not as limited as in RF. The item is a **semantic neologism.**

[3] The word *primature* is used in the French of some African countries. However, in this study, a Haitian 'particularity' only means an item that does not belong to RF, since the chosen norm of reference remains French as described in the main French dictionaries. A particularity may also be used in other Francophone countries.

Creolisms represented 49.8% of the particularities found in the journalistic corpus. Neologisms and anglicisms represented 28.7% and 8.4%, respectively and the remaining 13.1% were particularities of unascertained origin. I took into account the distribution of particularities according to origin when selecting the particularities to be included in the tasks below.

2 THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION OF FRENCH IN HAITI AND THE ROLE OF THE WRITTEN PRESS

According to figures provided by the Haitian Embassy in Washington, DC, there were 7,180,294 inhabitants in Haiti in 1995. In addition, close to 2,000,000 Haitians have emigrated to Canada and the United States. There is also a very large Haitian population in the Bahamas, 75,000 in the year 2000 according to Treco (2002).

A French colony since 1647, Haiti became independent on 1 January, 1804. The Declaration of Independence and the first constitution were written in French. However, Creole has been the native language of all Haitians, regardless of social class, since the colonial period. Not until 1987 did a new constitution, written in French and translated into Creole, recognize Creole as an official language of the Haitian nation, making it equal to French. English and Spanish (the latter to a minor extent) are also used in Haiti, but have no official status.

Until 1982, French was the exclusive language of instruction in Haitian schools. In 1982, educational reform initiated by Minister of Education Joseph Bernard required Creole to be the language of instruction and French to be taught only orally for the first four years of schooling. Today, French remains the language of instruction from the fifth year of schooling on, at all levels of the educational system. The rates of illiteracy, school failures, and dropouts are very high (see Haitian Embassy in Washington, DC, http://www.haiti.org).[4] Haitians with a strong command of French represent only 10 to 15% of the population (depending on the source of the statistics). They generally learn French at school, except for a small minority who learn it as their vernacular. Mastery of French remains the privilege of a small elite. Because of this situation, French has always been a sign of education, an instrument of power, and a symbol of prestige.

In Haiti, everyday communication takes place solely in Creole or by code-switching between Creole and French, depending on the proficiency of the speakers involved. Spoken French is rare, except in the very small bilingual minority. For the masses, French is limited to memorized chunks that act as brief and conventional conversation openers in public situations (e.g., offices, stores, telephone conversations).

In writing, the situation is quite different. Although Creole has had a standard orthography since 1979, French is still the preferred written language of Haiti's

[4] It is very difficult to obtain reliable statistic information out of Haiti. Depending on the sources consulted the rate of illiteracy may vary from 51.23% (Haitian Embassy in Washington, DC) to 90%.

bilingual elite. This bilingual elite often does not read or write in Creole because they feel uncomfortable doing so (they often complain that the phonological graphic system is too different from the more etymological orthography of French). So far, they have not found it necessary to read and write in Creole. French is the language of the majority of newspapers published in Haiti such as the main daily newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*. The three weekly newspapers (*Haïti-Observateur*, *Haïti-Progrès* and *Haïti-en-Marche*) published in the United States and distributed in the diaspora and in Haiti are mostly written in French, but all contain a few articles in Creole. Publications in Creole are still rare (for an overview of written press in Creole, see Étienne, 2000:11).

Because of the nature of its readership, the Haitian press provides an opportunity to explore changes in the use of French. Although the written press is largely read and authored by bilingual Haitians who belong to the most educated group, it is also read by less educated speakers. The written press is torn between two imperatives: abide by its bilingual readership's written norm but also appeal, eloquently and effectively, to a larger readership. Reaching out to this readership in the written press might mean shaking the traditional barriers between a written medium, French, and a much freer oral communication style. The press may reflect a specific norm halfway between the spoken mode (which alternates between French and Creole) and the written formal mode (which is exclusively French) of its readership.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 *Participant population*

The 25 participants (9 female, 16 male) were selected on the basis of their answers to a questionnaire designed to ensure that they could be considered representative of the French/Creole bilingual Haitian community. Although some of the participants were not born in Port-au-Prince, all of them had moved to the capital or its outskirts at an early age. Their ages ranged from 25 to 45. All of them had completed high school and several years of college in Haiti. They were all educated exclusively in French in prestigious Catholic schools. All of them followed the news in Haiti and read the Haitian newspapers that constitute the corpus of the present study. Included in the group were teachers, engineers, public relations specialists, social project coordinators, journalists, accountants, and administrators. All of them spoke Creole and French proficiently.

3.2 *Instruments*

In order to explore participants' perceptions of lexical particularities in the Haitian press, I conducted an epilinguistic study in which I observed how the participants, playing the part of editors-in-chief of two different newspapers, reacted when they read press excerpts in French containing large numbers of Haitian lexical particularities. My goal was to find out participants' degree of prescriptiveness toward these particularities. The design of the two tasks was inspired by the work of Paquot (1988).

Task 1: Tolerance of particularities in a newspaper targeting a Haitian readership.

Participants were given excerpts from the Haitian press containing 29 lexical particularities of various types (a full list is provided in the Appendix, together with glosses, RF equivalents, origins, and differential features of these particularities). They were instructed to pretend they were editors-in-chief of a fictitious newspaper targeting a Haitian readership in both Haiti and the United States. They were asked to react to the French in the newspaper and to assess its appropriateness.

The instructions stressed, on several occasions, that the newspaper targeted a Haitian readership. The instructions intentionally asked the participants to focus on style in general – not just lexical items – to avoid explicitly stating the research goal.[5] The underlying intention was to determine whether it bothered participants, as editors-in-chief, to find Haitian lexical particularities in a newspaper targeting a Haitian readership, and if so, for what reasons, and to address the following questions: As Haitian readers, were they bothered by particularities in French? How prescriptive were they? Did they associate lexical particularities with errors? What types of items did they stigmatize (creolisms, anglicisms, neologisms, lexematic particularities, or semantic particularities)?

The press excerpts were presented in sections, following the structure and format of a real newspaper: international news, local news, news from the diaspora, the world in brief, culture, classifieds, opinions and perspectives, business news, and humour.[6]

Task 2: Tolerance of lexical particularities in a newspaper targeting a Francophone readership.

In Task 2, participants were instructed to pretend they were editors-in-chief of a fictitious Francophone newspaper targeting a wide audience in all French-speaking countries. They were asked to react to the French in the newspaper and assess its appropriateness for both Haitians and non-Haitians. These instructions were designed to prevent participants from determining the research goals and thus being oversensitive to Haitian items. Participants had the opportunity to demonstrate their awareness of Haitian uses and to react to other uses (such as colloquial usages from France or anglicisms used in France only) that they judged inappropriate in a Francophone newspaper with a broad readership.

The press excerpts used in Task 1 and Task 2 were different, but the 29 targeted lexical particularities were common to both tasks. They included 21 creolisms, four anglicisms, and four neologisms.

[5] For most subjects, these instructions worked well: They took their editor's role very seriously and commented extensively on several stylistic aspects, in particular journalistic style.

[6] I did not include any sports section in my fictional newspaper. The analysis of the journalistic corpus had revealed many anglicisms in the sports sections of the various newspapers, but these anglicisms were not particular to Haiti.

Data analysis consisted in comparing participants' rejection rates in the Francophone readership task, Task 2 (Rj2) to their rejection rates in the Haitian readership task, Task 1 (Rj1). I assumed that Rj2 would be equal to or higher than Rj1, since readers would be less likely to accept lexical particularities in the newspaper that targeted a more varied readership. I determined participants' tolerance level according to how much Rj2 exceeded Rj1. The greater the difference, the more tolerant a participant was of lexical particularities in a Haitian context. Note that participants could not be assessed as prescriptive or tolerant in a Haitian context on the basis of Rj1 only, because a low Rj1 could indicate either tolerance or unawareness.

4 TOLERANCE OF LEXICAL PARTICULARITIES: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

4.1 *Results by participant*

As shown in Table 1, participants rejected an average of 4.8 particularities (16.55%) in the newspaper targeting a Haitian readership; the number of rejected particularities ranged from 0 to 13. In Task 2, participants rejected an average of 10.56 (36.41%) of the 29 targeted items, a rate more than two times higher than in Task 1. Clearly, in general, the participants were more prescriptive in editing the newspaper targeting a wider Francophone readership. On the basis of a chi-square analysis, the difference between rejection rates observed in Task 1 and Task 2 was statistically significant ($p \leq .001$).

Based on the average results, first, I labeled participants as 'aware of particularities' when their Rj2 was higher than 8. I then divided the 'aware' participants into two groups. Participants were considered 'prescriptive' if their Rj1 was 8 or higher **and** if the difference between their Rj2 and Rj1 was lower than 6 (i.e., regardless of the targeted readership, they rejected a high number of particularities). Participants were considered 'tolerant' if the difference between their Rj2 and Rj1 was 6 or higher (i.e., their editing behaviour clearly varied with the targeted readerships). Participants who did not fit into any of these groups were labeled as having 'undetermined behaviour'.

The results of this categorization are as follows:

1. Prescriptive participants: Six participants belonged to this group: P4, P6, P12, P18, P21, and P24. Note that, contrary to my previous assumption that Rj2 would be higher than Rj1, P18, P21 and P24 rejected one item less in Task 2 than in Task 1. I considered this difference not significant and attribute it to distraction. For these three participants, Rj1 was eight or higher, which meant that they were at least aware of these eight particularities.

2. Tolerant Participants: Thirteen participants (P1, P3, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P15, P16, P19, and P20) belonged to this group.

3. Participants with Undetermined Behaviours: Six participants belonged to this group (P2, P5, P17, P22, P23, and P25). P17 is part of this group because he

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Table 1. *Rejection Rates of Participants in Task 1 and in Task 2*

Participants N = 25	Rj1	Rj2
P1	7/29	15/29
P2	2/29	7/29
P3	2/29	8/29
P4	11/29	16/29
P5	6/29	5/29
P6	12/29	15/29
P7	9/29	15/29
P8	3/29	9/29
P9	0/29	8/29
P10	1/29	17/29
P11	1/29	10/29
P12	9/29	12/29
P13	0/29	13/29
P14	2/29	11/29
P15	8/29	16/29
P16	0/29	10/29
P17	5/29	9/29
P18	11/29	10/29
P19	0/29	10/29
P20	3/29	12/29
P21	13/29	12/29
P22	2/29	6/29
P23	0/29	5/29
P24	8/29	7/29
P25	5/29	6/29
Average	4.8/29	10.56/29
	16.55%	36.41%

only partly meets the criteria for prescriptiveness: his Rj2 was higher than 9, the difference between his Rj1 and Rj2 was 4, but his Rj1 was only 5. All other participants in this group rejected a less than average number of items in Task 2. Thus, their low rejection rates in Task 1 may not have reflected tolerance but, rather, unawareness of lexical particularities. However, the low informational content of some of the particularities (e.g., *sis*), participants' possible lack of interest in the tasks, or linguistic insecurity could also account for low rejection rates (for further analysis, see Étienne, 2000: 209–210).

Paquot (1988), who conducted a similar study in Quebec, also indirectly tested her participants' awareness of lexical particularities. She obtained an average of

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49.4% (14.33 particularities identified out of 29 targeted particularities). In order to explain this relatively low number, she emphasized an important distinction: Although her study (and mine) tried to test participants' abstract and general awareness of lexical particularities, the tasks she (and I) used only measured participants' 'ability to recognize particularities in the specific situation of the task' (Paquot,1988:47). Particularities may be more or less salient in a specific context, and although participants may be aware of the regional character of a particularity, they may not see it in this specific context. In light of this limitation, Paquot recommends that results be interpreted as minimum figures.

In summary, the epilinguistic tasks administered to the participants allowed me to measure with some degree of certainty 19 of the 25 (i.e., 76% of) participants' tolerance of lexical particularities. Of these 19 participants, 68.5% were classified as tolerant and 31.5% as prescriptive.

4.2 *Results by item*

After looking at individual participants' results, it is essential to examine the extent to which specific items were rejected. The types of items rejected or tolerated may help determine the criteria underlying participants' decisions to appropriate or (not) lexical particularities in the Haitian press. Table 2 provides a list of the targeted particularities and shows the number of times each was rejected in each of the two fictional newspapers. Items are grouped according to their origins (creolism, anglicism, neologism). Items marked with an asterisk are lexematic particularities; all others are semantic particularities. Items in boldface were most frequently rejected in either or both tasks.

Rejected items (Task 1).

The five particularities that participants most frequently rejected were: *béton* 'street'(13), *manche longue* 'extensive' (12), *panzouiste* 'putschist' (11), *rechouquer* 'to reinstate' (9), and *faire un coup de pied* 'to drop by' (9), all of which are lexematic creolisms. Four of them (*béton* in *prendre le béton, panzouiste, manche longue* and *rechouquer*) belong to the political domain. By 'political domain', I mean any word or phrase related to public life. *Manche longue* does not belong to the political domain exclusively, but it has been frequently used to qualify strikes and resistance against oppression and dictatorship.

Six particularities were rejected by at least five participants: *macoutique* 'violent' (7), *natif-natal* 'native, authentic' (6), *dilatoire* 'delaying tactics' (6), *déchouquer* 'to remove from office' (6), *démacoutiser* 'to rid of criminal elements' (6) and *zenglendo* 'armed bandit' (7). All of them are lexematic creolisms and belong to the political domain in a broad sense. *Dilatoire* and *natif-natal* are very often used in relation to public life, although they are not limited to that domain. *Natif-natal* often refers to the 'authentic' Haitian who has not 'abandoned' the motherland to live in the diaspora.

Table 2. *Rejection of Particularities According to Their Origins*

Creolisms N = 21	Rj1	Rj2
béton*	**13/25**	**17/25**
blanc	1/25	2/25
carte	0/25	0/25
chaque*	4/25	2/25
combite*	1/25	**13/25**
déchouquage/déchouquer*	6/25	**23/25**
démacoutisation/démacoutiser*	6/25	**22/25**
dilatoire*	6/25	2/25
Dominicanie*	1/25	0/25
faire un coup de pied*	**9/25**	**12/25**
fatras	1/25	7/25
grandon*	3/25	**14/25**
macoutique*	7/25	**22/25**
mallette	0/25	5/25
manche longue*	**12/25**	**22/25**
natif-natal*	6/25	**13/25**
panzouiste*	**11/25**	**22/25**
rechouquer*	**9/25**	**24/25**
sonner	3/25	3/25
souché*	3/25	4/25
zenglendo*	7/25	**17/25**
AVERAGE	109/525 – 20.76%	247/525 – 47.04%
Anglicisms N = 4	Rj1	Rj2
black-out	2/25	6/25
factory*	3/25	4/25
gasoline	0/25	0/25
payroll*	1/25	2/25
AVERAGE	6/100 – 6%	12/100 – 12%
Neologisms	Rj1	Rj2
bercail	0/25	2/25
écoulé/e*	0/25	0/25
Primature*	1/25	2/25
sis	0/25	0/25
AVERAGE	1%	4%

The least frequently rejected items (18) were the four neologisms; the four anglicisms; and 10 of the creolisms (*chaque* 'each, every', *sonner* 'to telephone', *grandon* 'large landowner', *Blanc* 'foreigner', *Dominicanie* 'Dominican Republic',

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combite 'community work', *fatras* 'trash, refuse', *carte* 'ticket', *souché* 'well connected' and *mallette* 'suitcase'). Of these 18 items, 9 are lexematic particularities (marked by an asterisk in the table); the other 9 are semantic particularities.

From these results, it appears that in the newspaper targeting a Haitian readership, the most frequently rejected particularities were lexematic creolisms belonging to the political domain. Semantic particularities, anglicisms, and neologisms went virtually unnoticed.

Rejected items (Task 2).

The 12 items that participants most frequently rejected were: *rechouquer* (24), *déchouquage/déchouquer* (23), *panzouiste* (22), *démacoutiser* (22), *macoutique* (22), *manche longue* (22), *béton* (17), *zenglendo* (17), *combite* (13), *natif-natal* (13), *grandon* (14) and *faire un coup de pied* (12). All of them are lexematic creolisms and all of them except *faire un coup de pied* are mostly used in the political domain. *Combite* is a word that has acquired a political connotation. Originally, it meant 'cooperative peasant work-team for clearing land and harvesting'. During the 1990 presidential campaign, Jean-Bertrand Aristide used the word to engage people in uniting and working together to save the motherland.

Three semantic particularities were rejected with moderate frequency: *fatras* (7), *black-out* (6), and *mallette* (5). All other items (14) were rarely rejected by any speaker. They included all neologisms, all anglicisms except *blackout,* and seven creolisms. Seven of these 14 items are semantic particularities (*bercail, blanc, carte, chaque, gasoline, sis, sonner*).

Table 2 indicates that creolisms were much more frequently rejected than particularities of other origins. In both tasks, rejection rates for creolisms were more than three times those of anglicisms. The rejection rates of neologisms in both tasks were minimal (1% and 4%). Chi-square analysis showed that the rejection patterns observed in both tasks were statistically significant ($p \leq .001$).

The most frequently rejected items in the newspaper targeting a Haitian readership were also the most frequently rejected items in the newspaper targeting a wider Francophone newspaper. As mentioned before, they are lexematic creolisms and belong, for the most part, to the political domain.

Results of the quantitative analysis obtained through the tasks indicated that:

- In general, participants were more tolerant of lexical particularities than prescriptive (68.5% versus 31.5%).
- Participants were more prescriptive toward lexical particularities in a newspaper targeting a Francophone readership than in a newspaper targeting a Haitian readership only.
- Creolisms were the most frequently rejected items.
- Anglicisms and neologisms were the least rejected.
- Lexematic particularities were the most stigmatized.
- Participants were particularly sensitive to political terms.

5 TOLERANCE OF LEXICAL PARTICULARITIES: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Interviews following administration of both tasks gave participants the opportunity to explain why they rejected or tolerated items. These qualitative data led to tentative interpretations of the quantitative patterns obtained.

5.1 *Reasons for rejection of items*

Participants invoked two types of arguments for rejection: (a) role of the press (educational responsibility; objectivity vs. sensationalism) and (b) linguistic reasons (written discourse vs. oral discourse; literal translations; tone setting).

Role of the press: educational responsibility

One concern expressed by participants was that the press is read by students or younger people who still do not have a good command of French. Participants insisted on the role of the press as a model and reference that sets the norm. They believed that younger or less educated readers could be influenced detrimentally. In P15's words:

> En fait, quand on maîtrise correctement une langue, on peut se permettre toutes sortes d'écarts, mais il y a des gens qui ne maîtrisent pas correctement la langue, vous n'avez pas intérêt à faire ce genre de choses. Moi je sais qu'on ne peut pas dire ça, moi, je vois ça dans un journal, ça ne me dérange pas. Mais je vois un tas de jeunes qui ne maîtrisent pas vraiment la langue française, autrement dit, ils suivent des cours à l'école mais ils apprennent beaucoup en lisant des journaux. Lorsque vous écrivez ça, c'est comme si c'était la norme. (P15)

Role of the press: concern for objectivity

Participants were also concerned about objectivity. All the items to which participants most frequently reacted (*déchouquage, démacoutisation, panzouiste, rechouquer, manche longue, béton, zenglendo*) are politically related. They emerged after 1986, after Jean-Claude Duvalier's departure into exile. The end of Duvalier's dictatorship led to the liberalization of language and to the emergence of new terms that described new realities prompted by sociopolitical changes. For instance, the *déchouquage* era was marked by a series of violent crimes against former Duvalierists and their properties. The root of *déchouquage*, *chouque,* refers to the stump of a tree. *Déchouquer* literally means 'to get rid of the stump, to root it out'. By extension, it means 'to get rid of anything characteristic of a former time' (in this case, the dictatorship). In the years following 1986, Duvalierists took revenge by organizing mass killings of their enemies in an attempt to remain in power. *Déchouquage* came to refer to those actions as well. As defined by Freeman and Laguerre (1996:116), *dechouke* now means 'to fire (from job), remove from office, depose, overthrow; to lynch; to pillage, plunder, burn' regardless of who carries out those actions. The term has gained a wider scope of meanings.

Macoutique is an adjective used to qualify any action that could have been committed by a *macoute*. *Macoutes* or *tonton-macoutes* were members of the private Duvalier militia responsible for creating terror among the population. By extension, *macoutique* now qualifies any arbitrary and cruel political action.

Zenglendo were armed bandits paid to destroy or attack leftist individuals (Aristide supporters) who were targeted for political reasons. According to Freeman and Laguerre (1996:615), the word now refers to any armed bandit who perpetrates a violent crime.

Although all of these words have acquired more general meanings, participants were reluctant to separate them from their original meanings and connections to a particular party or political figure. As P12 indicated:

Quand je dis qu'un groupe de manifestants a incendié la maison d'un ancien Duvaliériste, à ce moment-là je relate des faits, je prouve que c'était un incendie criminel effectué par un groupe de manifestants qui voulait s'en prendre à un ancien Duvaliériste. Mais quand je dis "déchouquer," implicitement je porte un jugement, et ça, c'est pas le rôle d'un journaliste.

For most participants, *déchouquer* cannot be an objective term that refers only to the action of looting and destroying. It always connotes a judgement or criticism and implies, without any clear evidence, that the crime was politically motivated. Similarly, employing the word *macoutique* indicates not only that someone committed a violent, arbitrary action but also, and more importantly, that someone is a *macoute*, linked to the political right and opposed to change and reform.

There was a general consensus among participants that the most frequently rejected terms are not neutral terms: By resorting to them, individuals reveal their political stances. According to one participant, Creole words interspersed throughout French texts were characteristic of Jean-Bertrand Aristide's political speeches in his first presidential campaign in 1989. Other participants mentioned that these words are very emotional mobilization words. Carlo Désinor, *Le Nouvelliste*'s editor-in-chief (personal communication, August 1998) mentioned the use of lexical particularities as a way to allude to serious issues while acting innocent.

In summary, participants perceived a relationship between a newspaper's objectivity and the newspaper's use of lexical particularities referring to political events or views. To some extent, they saw lexical particularities as serving a political function, whether to provoke, rally people to a political stance, or allude to heated, unofficial issues.

Linguistic reasons – written discourse vs. oral discourse

Sixteen participants, when explaining their reactions to the newspaper excerpts, made a clear distinction between oral and written discourse. They indicated that what is common and normal orally should not be found in writing. For them, putting something in writing precludes informality:

Si ou ekri nan yon lang, ou ekri **le plus bien possible**.[7] [. . .] M panse k**eu** langaj pale a, si yon moun kap fè radyo, li kap genyen plis libète, men nan ekri a, m genyen enpresyon ekri a dwe yon ti plis fòmèl. (P24)

'If you write a language, you write as well as possible. [. . .] I think that spoken language, if someone has a radio program, he can take more liberties, but in writing, I am under the impression that written texts should be a little more formal'.

Ce que moi j'accepte, ce qui est très quotidien, ce ne doit pas être à l'écrit, ce n'est plus acceptable, on est supposé avoir le temps de relire, de vérifier, parce que quand on écrit on a le temps de corriger, de vérifier. (P6)

Moi je ferais très attention entre les libertés que l'on peut se permettre quand on parle et la rigueur qu'il faudrait avoir quand on écrit, surtout dans le cas de Haïti. (P15)

On entend les Haïtiens parler, il y a des mots qui, inévitablement, des expressions courantes haïtiennes qui vont venir mais dans le français écrit, non. Il y a des gens même qui vous feront la remarque "non, là, vous écrivez, vous ne parlez pas" si vous utilisez telle expression. (P19)

According to these comments, participants apply different norms when speaking and writing and feel they are expected to do so. For them, writing means monitoring oneself and even 'correcting oneself', in P6's words. The particularities participants most frequently stigmatized are lexematic creolisms that are used orally. Participants perceived written discourse as the formal register par excellence. Implicitly, these participants also indicated that spoken discourse is freer, more spontaneous, and more open to changes in styles and thus to the use of creolisms. Participant P21's reaction was particularly telling. He strongly deplored the use of creolisms by labeling them as part of *parler haïtien*. His choice of term shows the dichotomy between spoken discourse and written discourse and suggests that these Haitians allow French to become Haitianized only when it is spoken.

Linguistic reasons – literal translations

Among the items participants most frequently rejected are phrases translated literally from Creole such as *manche longue* and *prendre le béton*, and borrowings such as *grandon* and *natif-natal*. Participants said that these phrases have equivalents in French, so that literal translations and borrowings sound strange, as if the writer had not mastered French. This is illustrated by the lexeme *grandon*, which means in HF 'person of importance in rural areas'. The word is often spelled as *grand don*. *Don* is a Hispanism in RF and is used as a title for a Spaniard of aristocratic origin. Literally, *grand don* could be understood as 'great sir' and would sound ridiculous in RF. That the

[7] Letters and words in boldface highlight cases of code-switching between French and Creole, as well as some of the French features found in the Creole of bilingual Haitians. On the phonological level, mesolectal Creole spoken by urban bilingual Haitians has three additional vowels: u̲ [y] often used instead of i̲ [i], eu̲ [ø] instead of é̲ [e], and eu [œ] instead of è [ɛ]. Sometimes, bilingual Haitians inflect adjectives in Creole for gender, although basilectal Creole speakers do not.

translation from Creole is ludicrous, participants indicated, is a way to ridicule Creole. Participants said that they hate to have Creole laughed at or denigrated. Here are a few comments relating to literal translations of Creole idioms:

Wi, e kreyòl fransize a ['Yes, and gallicized Creole,'] c'est se moquer des Haïtiens qui ne parlent pas le français convenablement parce que, en Haïti, on reconnaît la personne bien éduquée à partir de la façon de s'exprimer, alors que tu vas dans la campagne, **moun seksprime an franse ak yon kreyòl fransize** ['people express themselves in French in gallicized Creole']. (P24)

Fòm di ou, lè m ekri, m toujou chèche fason ki plis ***elegante****. "****Manche longue****," li sonnen tankou yon tradiksyon literal, li pa sonnen elegan.* (P1)

'I must say that when I write, I always look for a more elegant way to say things. *Manche longue* sounds like a literal translation, it does not sound elegant'.

Furthermore, awkward-sounding literal translations from Creole are perceived as detrimental for the speakers, who might not be taken seriously. It appears from these quotes that using French in Haiti is a way to show off, assert oneself, and distinguish oneself from less educated Haitians. Using literal translations from Creole defeats this purpose.

5.2 *Reasons for tolerance of items*

Instrumental reasons

Some participants tolerated items that were among the ones most frequently rejected, because they believed that the items serve a particular purpose. Eight speakers (not necessarily the more tolerant ones) argued that certain political terms depict the Haitian reality and that they make sense only within this reality. Whereas some prescriptive participants used these items' political connotation as a criterion for rejection, others insisted that terms such as *déchouquage* are essential. Participant P21 explained:

Quand on dit "déchouquage" on voit tout un contexte politique, donc à ce niveau-là, le terme est plutôt propre à la réalité haïtienne. Le terme a pris naissance à l'occasion du changement de régime, donc il y a non seulement le bris de vitres mais il y a tout un contexte politique. Est-ce que l'on peut dire que ça va enrichir le canadien? Le contexte n'est plus le même au Canada où on pourrait avoir une mise à sac mais un déchouquage, non. Si on parle de la réalité haïtienne, ce terme a toute son importance et peut passer à l'écrit.

According to P21, the political connotation distinguishes *déchouquage* from other related terms such as *pillage* or *vandalisme,* which would be more neutral and would thus only imperfectly describe the Haitian context. Participants also mentioned *combite*, *macoute*, and *factorie* as words that are recognized as Haitian and could not be expressed in any other way. This could explain why *factorie*, which refers to a plant set up in Haiti by US investors, went virtually unnoticed in both tasks.

Connotations and style

Five participants insisted on the stylistic function of particularities. For example, they noted that the adjective *natif-natal* expresses more than just 'born in this country, indigenous', which is what the RF word *natif* expresses. *Natif-natal* has a connotation of authenticity, attachment and faithfulness to the motherland. The word is part of the semantic field of the RF *natif*, but is not equivalent. The lexical particularity helps diversify the semantic field in opposition to *diaspora*. Participants explained that *natif-natal* is the opposite of *diaspora* 'Haitian who has been living outside Haiti for many years'. Pradel Pompilus (personal communication, August 1998), the author of *La langue française en Haïti* (1961), indicated that *natif-natal* is phonetically more expressive and stronger than the RF *natif* because both consonant sounds /n/ and /t/ are duplicated.

Instead of rejecting phrases directly borrowed or literally translated from Creole for which a French equivalent could be found, the more tolerant participants favoured intentionally using these phrases to lend a particular tone that RF equivalents do not possess. Participant P25 explained that the adjectival phrase *manche longue* 'long' (one of the most frequently stigmatized items in Task 1) cannot be replaced by *de longue durée* without losing an important part of its meaning, that is, the speaker's attitude toward the fact that is being qualified.

Se pa li pa objèktif, li fè **humour**, se moke y ap moke sou bagay yo fè, li kolore, genyen yon anmèdman ladann **beaucoup plus que lorsqu'on dit "de longue durée."** (P25)

'It's not that it is not objective, it is funny, they are joking about what they are doing, it is colorful, there is the desire to annoy much more than when you say "of long duration."

Carlo Désinor (personal communication, August 1998) corroborated this motivation for using creolisms in French. He explained how the use of *prendre le béton* 'to take to the streets' says more than its RF equivalent *descendre dans la rue*.

Mais par exemple, ceci pour nous réfère à des manifestations monstres. Par exemple, "le peuple a pris le béton," c'est pas la même chose que deux trois employés qui prennent le béton. "Prendre le béton" a pour nous un sens particulier, c'est-à-dire que le peuple prend la rue. C'est plus fort, plus significatif. (Désinor, 1998)

Désinor also insisted that the use of HF sets a particular tone. He stressed that written HF had to be read aloud in order to be fully understood. This comment echoes the strong written/oral discourse distinction established by participants. According to Désinor, HF and its characteristics constitute a special register whose mode of realization is halfway between written discourse and spoken discourse:

. . . le franco-haïtien il y a le ton créole aussi qui joue, la pensée créole qui joue et la pensée créole, c'est une pensée très musicale aussi. La façon dont on lit la phrase, vous française et moi Haïtien, moi je lis avec le ton créole, c'est le ton créole qui donne le sens à ma phrase. Je peux écrire en franco-haïtien et vous n'allez pas comprendre mais

moi je comprends car je lis aussi avec le ton. [. . .] c'est-à-dire que le texte haïtien est un texte parlé, le plaisir du texte, c'est de le lire à haute voix. (Désinor, 1998)

To summarize, the qualitative analysis of participants' comments revealed: (a) different sociolinguistic rules governing participants' use of particularities depending on the context: propagandistic newspapers versus more objective publications, oral discourse versus written discourse; (b) the reasons why lexematic, politically related creolisms and literal translations from Creole were more frequently rejected; and (c) criteria for tolerance of lexical particularities.

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In general, participants' acceptance or stigmatization of lexical particularities depended on their perceptions of the status of Creole versus French and the implications of this status for their own social status. Because proficiency in French has determined bilingual speakers' social success and value for centuries in Haiti, using literal translations and borrowings from Creole when there may be an equivalent in French could be interpreted as a sign that the speaker or writer lacks knowledge of French. However, participants agreed that creolisms in French in the press have essential referential and connotative functions. Creolisms may refer to realities that are exclusively Haitian, or they may change the tone and create a particular connotation that appeals to Haitian readers only. Adding this tone through the use of creolisms extends the existing semantic fields of RF and makes French more 'Haitian'. The ability to interweave Creole and French creates complicity and meanings that are recognized by all Haitian readers. On the other hand, the problem with the French/Creole 'mélange', as several participants called it, is that the mélange is not linguistically and socially correct. It represents a transgression of the linguistic and social rules participants have striven to acquire throughout their lives, particularly in their education. Although participants have considered some literal translations to be more expressive and catchier than their RF equivalents (for instance, *manche longue* instead of *de longue durée*), they were reluctant to use or tolerate such phrases because they fear being ridiculed as less proficient speakers. Creolisms in French might be beneficial to communication, but participants seemed to think they could only use them in such socially safe contexts as the humour sections of newspapers or in oral discourse, which is much more elusive than written discourse.

In general, it was easier to determine which items participants did not tolerate and why than to understand why they tolerated other items in the same category. Typically, participants did not favour political terms, but they tolerated some to a greater extent than others (e.g., *déchouquage* Rj1 = 6/25 to *panzouiste* Rj1 = 11/25). Although frequency of use and specificity may account for participants' preference for certain items over others, the sample of items selected for the epilinguistic tasks was insufficient to fully define the criteria for participants' reactions. Moreover, these criteria may not be entirely clear to Haitian speakers themselves.

Participants ascribed their difficulties in defining these criteria to the linguistic changes taking place in an evolving Haitian press, which reflect the unstable sociopolitical situation in Haiti. Participants perceive these linguistic and political changes with ambivalence: They welcome them as a sign of democratization and greater freedom, but they also fear them as elements that destabilize the foundations of their social status, which is defined, in part, by strict observance of written rules in French.

These bilingual participants feel threatened because the press does not abide by their standards of literacy. In their eyes, language in the press appears to be deregulated. The liberation of public opinion that came at the end of the Duvalier era has caused communication to prevail over the form of communication itself. The urge to communicate new ideas, plan new reforms, and reach out for supporters makes it imperative to address Haitians using their own Haitian references. This communication is possible only by resorting to creolisms, and it marks a drastic change for participants, whose education emphasized the need to master the rules of French before using them freely.

The main purpose of this article was to explore to what extent Haitian French/Creole bilinguals appropriated French in the Haitian press. The present analysis indicates that they are still unable to identify themselves with the changes. The use of creolisms has always been part of participants' linguistic repertoires. What has changed is the domain of their manifestation. Formerly characteristic of spoken discourse, relegated to humour sections, or used as a covert means of expression, creolisms have become somewhat institutionalized and publicized in the press. Participants seem reluctant to identify with this new public linguistic identity, which clashes with the image they wish to present to others. Their ideal social images are still distinct from how they feel as Haitians communicating with other Haitians.

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APPENDIX

Gloss of the lexical particularities included in the tasks:

The definitions provided here were taken from Freeman and Laguerre (1996). Each particularity is followed by its origin (creolism; anglicism; or neologism) and its gloss or definition. For each semantic particularity, the RF equivalent, when it exists, is given in parentheses and the differential trait of the particularity is

mentioned (new or additional denotation; change of domain, or of speech style). Lexematic particularities are in boldface.

1. *bercail* (neologism): homeland (family, home; marked as amusing in NPR) – difference in speech style.
2. ***béton*** (creolism): pavement, road surface (*chaussée, rue*) – additional denotation.
   être sur le béton: to be left without resources, out of work (*être à la rue*)
   prendre le béton: to take the streets, to demonstrate for political reasons (*descendre dans la rue*)
3. *black-out* (anglicism): power outage (*coupure de courant*) – difference in frequency.
4. *Blanc* (creolism): foreigner, any non-Haitian of any ethnic or racial background (*étranger*) – additional denotation.
5. *carte* (creolism): ticket (concert, theatre, movie, etc.) (*billet*) – additional denotation.
6. ***chaque*** + plural noun (creolism) : as in *chaque quatre ans* (*tous les quatre ans*).
7. ***coumbite/combite*** (creolism): working together; originally, cooperative peasant work team for clearing and harvesting.
8. ***déchouquer*** (creolism): to uproot; to fire (from job), remove from office, depose, overthrow; to lynch; to pillage, plunder, burn.
   déchoucage: uprooting, eradication, removing from office, lynching, burning, looting, mob justice.
9. ***démacoutiser/démacoutisation*** (creolism): to rid of criminal elements/ eradication of criminal elements, in particular, the supporters of former President Jean-Claude Duvalier.
10. ***dilatoire*** (creolism): delaying tactics (*tergiversations*).
11. ***Dominicanie*** (creolism): Dominican Republic (*République Dominicaine*).
12. ***écoulé(e)*** (neologism): after a specific date, past, last as in "*le lundi 30 janvier écoulé*"(*passé/e*, *dernier*; often, no specific word is used in RF, the mention of the date suffices to express that it is a past date).
13. ***factory/factorie*** (anglicism): factory, assembly-plant usually set up by US investors.
14. ***faire un coup de pied*** (creolism): to pay a little visit to, to drop by (*passer voir quelqu'un*).
15. *fatras* (creolism): trash, waste, junk (*ordures, immondices*) – additional denotation.
16. *gazoline*: (anglicism): gas (*essence*) – additional denotation.
17. ***grand don/grandon*** (creolism): large landholder, person of importance in rural areas (*grand propriétaire terrien, latifundiste*).
18. ***macoutique*** (creolism): arbitrary, violent.
19. *mallette* (creolism): suitcase of large size and square shape (*valise*) – change of denotation.
20. ***manche longue*** (creolism): extensive, far-reaching (*de longue durée*).
21. ***natif-natal*** (creolism): native, indigenous, home-made, authentic, genuine.
22. ***panzouiste*** (creolism): putschist (*putschiste*).

23. ***payroll*** (anglicism): payroll (*fiche de paie*).
24. ***Primature*** (neologism): Office of the Prime Minister (*Bureau du premier ministre*).
25. ***rechouquer*** (creolism): to replant, to reinstate in office.
26. *sis* (neologism): located (*situé*) – change in domain of use.
27. *sonner* (creolism): to ring, to call by telephone (*téléphoner à, appeler*) – additional denotation.
28. ***souché(e)***(creolism): to be rooted in, to be well established and connected.
29. ***zenglendo*** (creolism)**:** thug, armed bandit.

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