

The development of the noun phrase in Mauritian Creole and the mechanisms of language development

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Introduction¹

This article is concerned with three key developments inside the NP in MC: (a) the development of **la** (< Fr *là*) as a marker of definiteness and specificity, (b) the development of **ban** (< Fr *bande*) as a marker of plurality, and (c) the development of a Saxon-type genitive as an alternative to the Romance-type analytic possessive structure.² Each of these raises interesting questions from the perspective of Creole genesis, how and why these developments took place. The latter question is particularly pertinent given that neither the marking of definiteness and specificity nor the marking of plurality is a universal requirement. Languages such as Latin, Chinese and most of the Slavic languages have no articles at all, while Japanese, for example, has no plural markers.³ As far as the development of the alternative possessive construction is concerned, this too is unexpected given that there was already a possessive structure in use. The motivation for these developments then cannot be explained in terms of communicative needs given that some languages do not have these markers. Rather, they must be viewed as being driven by the internal dynamics of an emerging grammatical system. As I will show, *là* developed into a marker of definiteness and specificity through its strong association with the demonstrative **sa** (< Fr '*ce*') in the early stage, while **ban** (< Fr *bande*) became a marker of plurality through changes in its s(emantic)-selection feature requirements. It came to be used with complements that were not only animate but also inanimate. And, finally, the Saxon-type genitive developed as a consequence of a possessive pronoun being used in the analytic possessive structure. The mechanisms that drive these changes, I argue, are precisely those that drive changes in other (i.e. non-Creole) languages, viz degrammaticalization, grammaticalization and independent principles of grammar. What is clear is that these changes may have come about without any particular effort on the part of the makers of MC. The changes, in my view, occurred as a consequence of whatever else was happening in the emerging system.

This article is organised as follows: Section 1 deals with **la**, the exponent of definiteness and specificity; it looks at the semantics and syntax of this word and discusses how it developed from the French enclitic *-là* through its association with the demonstrative **sa** (< Fr *ce*). Section 2 looks at the plural marker **ban** and how it developed from the French partitive noun *bande* (band/group/collection). Its development is linked to the loss of the semantic restriction on its use. Section 3 discusses the Saxon-type genitive construction and how it came about. I suggest that the position of the possessor NP changed as a consequence of the third person possessive pronoun occurring in the analytic possessive structure. Adopting the recent approach to case checking in Chomsky

¹ I am grateful to Philip Baker, Diana Guillemin, and Daniel Véronique for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

² 'Saxon genitive' is a traditional term (see Adger 2003: 257)

³ Japanese has the plural marker '-tati' with animate nouns. But some languages do lack the category number (see Foley 1997:38).

(1995), I suggest that the change in the position of the possessor NP was driven by the need to check its abstract case morphology. Section 4 analyses these developments in the context of the discussion of Creole genesis. Section 5 concludes the discussion.

1. The development of a marker of definiteness and specificity

In this section, I look briefly at the D(eterminer)-system in French before examining the D-system of MC. We will see that the D-system in MC is a much simplified system and I suggest that the simplification (including the loss of the French definite and partitive articles) was possible as a result of the loss of two morphosyntactic features, namely gender and number. I go on to show that the gap created in the system by the loss of the definite articles was subsequently filled by the development of the French enclitic *-là* into a marker of definiteness and specificity.

1.1 The French D-system

The D-system of French includes the following categories: articles (definite, indefinite and partitive; as in (1)-(2)), demonstratives, possessives, and quantifiers (as in (3)-(5), respectively).

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| (1a) la/une route
'the/a road' | (1b) le/un chemin
'the/a road' | (1c) les/des routes/chemins
'the/some roads' | |
| (2a) de la bière
of the beer
'some beer' | (2b) du vin
of the wine
'some wine' | | |
| (3a) cette route
'this/that road' | (3b) ce chemin
'this/that road' | (3c) ces routes/chemins
'these roads' | |
| (4a) ma plume
'my pen' | (4b) mon crayon
'my pencil' | (4c) mes plumes/crayons
'my pens/pencils' | |
| (5a) tout le monde
all the world
'everybody' | (5b) toute la famille
'all the family' | (5c) tous les garçons
'all the boys' | (5d) toutes les filles
'all the girls' |

As is clear from these examples, each category within the French D-system has members whose forms vary in terms of two morphosyntactic features namely, gender and number. These variations are displayed in the following table.

Table 1

	Masc.	Fem.	Plural
Articles	le	la	les
	un	une	des
Demonstratives	du	de la	des
	ce	cette	ces
Possessives	mon	ma	mes
	ton	ta	tes
	son	sa	ses
	notre	notre	nos
	votre	votre	vos
	leur	leur	leurs
	Quantifiers	tout	toute

French has a rather elaborate and complex D-system where the surface forms of the determiners encode the morphosyntactic information on the nouns that they occur with.

In other words, the gender and number of the referent denoted by the noun are overtly expressed by the different forms that the determiner displays.

1.2 The D-system of MC

The D-system in MC, as the table below shows, has, surprisingly, retained all the categories that exist in the French D-system even though the class of articles has only the indefinite article.

Table 2

	French D-system	MC D-system ⁴
Articles	le, la, les; du, de la, des	∅
	un, une	en
Demonstratives	ce(t), cette, ces	sa
Possessives	mon, ma, mes	mo
	ton, ta, tes	to
	son, sa, ses	so
	notre, nos	nu
	votre, vos [polite singular]	u
	votre, vos [plural]	zot
	leur(s)	zot
Quantifiers	tout, toute(s), tous	tu

The other important changes are: first, the loss of variant forms of the French determiners. In particular, the feminine and plural forms have disappeared while the masculine forms have been retained although in some cases in slightly altered forms. The French singular masculine possessive pronouns for instance occur in MC without nasalization.⁵ The other change is that the French second and third plural possessive pronouns have been replaced by the new form of pronoun **zot** (from French *vous/eux autres*).

The most striking difference between the two D-systems however is the absence of the definite and partitive articles in the MC system. These articles have been lost in two ways: they have either become part of the nominal roots (agglutinated to the roots), as in the words in (6)-(7), or have been barred from occurring with the nouns with which they occur in French, as in the words in (8).

- (6)a. **larut/*rut** (la route) (6b) **lisyeñ/*syeñ** (le chien) (6c) **zanimó/*animó** (les animaux)
 'road' 'dog' 'animal'
- (7)a. **dilo/*o** (de l'eau) (7b) **diveñ/*veñ** (du vin) (7c) **dilwil/*wil** (de l'huile)
 'water' 'wine' 'oil'
- (8)a. **simeñ/*lesimeñ** (le chemin) (8b) **sez/*lasez** (la chaise) (8c) **añgi/*lañgi** (l'anguille)
 'road' 'chair' 'eel'

Without the French articles, the nouns in (6) and (7) are not well-formed and are not therefore part of the lexicon of MC. On the other hand, the nouns in (8) are ill-formed with the French articles prefixed to them. Note that where these articles do occur prefixed to the nouns, they have become an integral part of the root with no morpheme boundary to separate them from the original root. The agglutinated articles consequently have none

⁴ MC examples in bold characters are written in the lortograf-linite orthography used in the Baker & Hookomsing dictionary of MC (1987).

⁵ The forms that the determiners have derive from the masculine forms of the French determiners, but they do not encode gender. Interestingly, this form happens to be the unmarked form, as evidenced from studies on child language acquisition.

of the semantic functions they have in French and the newly formed nouns function in every respect as bare nouns.

What we then have in MC is a D-system that is comparable to the French system in terms of the range of categories it has but not in the number of determiner forms it allows. The D-system in MC is numerically a much simplified system, with each category containing a single member. This may well reflect an underlying principle governing D-systems in contact languages. An obvious question that arises here is what explains the changes that have resulted in the simplified D-system in MC.

A close examination of the two D-systems suggests that the changes can be seen as a direct consequence of the loss of the two morphosyntactic features, gender and number. Their loss provides a straightforward explanation for the loss of the feminine and plural forms of the determiners. However, as we saw earlier, with the definite and partitive articles, it is not just their feminine and plural forms that have been lost but their masculine forms too. The question then is what explains why the definite and partitive articles lost their masculine forms when the other determiners retained theirs.

1.3 French definite articles as expletive elements

The difference noted here between definite articles and the other members of the D-system, I suggest, can be explained by looking at the nature of the definite articles in French. As is well-known, the semantic function of definite articles is fundamentally to specify the reference of the noun they occur with. However, it has been suggested (see Harris 1978 and Foulet 1958) that the definite articles have in Modern French a semantically weakened specifying function and have as a result become mere grammatical markers of the noun's morphosyntax. In other words, they express the noun's gender and number and no longer have the same strong specifying role that they had in Old French for instance.

Some evidence for this historical change in the function of these articles comes from the observation that they occur in constructions in which they do not appear to have a 'specifying' role, as in the following (from Harris 1978).⁶

- | | |
|---|---|
| (9)a. J'aime les livres
I love the books
'I love books' | b. La haine provoque les guerres.
the hate provoke the wars
'Hate provokes wars.' |
|---|---|

Similarly, the occurrence of the definite articles in (10) below also suggests that they do not have a 'specifying' role.

- | | |
|---|---|
| (10)a. tous les jours
all the days
'Everyday' | b. tout le monde
all the world
'Everyone' |
|---|---|

According to Rickard (1978: 62), an example like (10a) was in Old French 'toz les jorz' and importantly meant 'for the whole of those days' and not 'every day'. The definite article in this phrase clearly had a specifying role. The change in the interpretation of this phrase provides additional evidence of the erosion of the semantic function of the definite articles in French. Foulet (1958: 49) notes that the French definite article has become a purely grammatical marker (of gender and number) that introduces the noun in much the same way that '-er' ending on verbs signals that they are in the infinitive.

If the definite articles in French have a weak semantic function and have become grammatical markers of gender and number, then their loss in MC is not at all unexpected. With a weakened semantic function, which I suggest was further eroded given the context-boundedness of Creoles in the early stages, the definite articles became expletive

⁶ The use of the definite articles in such possessive structures as *Vas te laver les mains* ('Go wash your hands') also points to the definite articles not having a specifying function.

elements and therefore susceptible to loss, particularly in an emerging contact language where, for communicative reasons, only semantically valued items are useful.

The determiners that survived then did so because they, unlike the definite articles, retained their semantic function, ‘specifying’ in the case of the demonstrative and possessive pronouns and ‘quantifying’ in the case of the quantifiers (including perhaps the indefinite article/numeral ‘en’). Thus the overall simplification of the D-system can be attributed to the loss of the two morphosyntactic features, gender and number.

The elimination of the French definite articles from the D-system in MC of course meant that there was no longer a way of expressing definiteness and specificity and plurality. As we will see below, MC went on to develop both a marker of definiteness and specificity and a marker of number, thus lexicalising the semantic concepts that the definite articles and plural markers grammaticalize. In what follows, I first look at the development of a marker of definiteness and specificity and then at the development of a marker of plurality.

1.4 Postnominal ‘la’ as a marker of definiteness and specificity

MC uses the independent postnominal morpheme **la** in order to specify the reference of a noun. Compare (11a) and (11b).

- | | |
|---|---|
| (11)a. liv la ti lor latab
book D T on table
‘The book was on the table’ | b. en liv ti lor latab
a book T on table
‘A book was on the table’ |
|---|---|

Note that the reference of the noun **liv** in (11a) is satisfied only if a specific book was on the table. By contrast, the reference of the noun **liv** in (11b) is satisfied if any book was on the table. The postnominal **la** then specifies a particular book, one that the hearer/reader must be familiar with.

Some independent evidence for the semantic function of the postnominal **la** as a marker of definiteness and specificity comes from its exclusion from the postverbal position of existential constructions, a position which, according to Milsark (1977), is only available to weak (e.g. indefinite) NPs.

- | | |
|---|---|
| (12)a. ena en zelev dañ klas
be a pupil in classroom
‘There is a pupil in the classroom’ | b. * ena zelev la dañ klas
be pupil D in class
‘There is the pupil in the classroom’ |
|---|---|

1.4.1 Distribution of ‘la’

As far as the distribution of **la** is concerned, it is unique among members of the D-system in that it alone occurs in a postnominal position. The other members are all prenominal, just like their French counterparts. Another important feature of the distribution of **la** is that it is restricted to the rightmost position inside the noun phrase. In other words, it follows not only the head noun but also all postnominal modifiers, whether they are APs (13a), PPs (13b) or TPs (i.e. clauses (13c)).

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| (13)a. liv ruz la
book red D
‘The red book’ | b. liv ar li la
book with him D
‘The book that is with him’ | c. liv to ti lir la
book you T read D
‘The book that you read’ |
|--|--|---|

Any attempt at reordering **la** and the postnominal modifiers in these examples results in ill-formed nominal phrases.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| (14)a. * liv la ruz | b. * liv la ar li | c. * liv la to ti lir |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|

However, if interpreted as clausal constructions, (14a-c) are grammatical, with **la** postposed to the noun **liv**, and they have the interpretations in (15a-c).

- (15)a. The book is red b. The book is with him c. The /that book you read

The syntactic restriction on **la** to the rightmost position inside the noun phrase suggests that it, rather than the noun, is the head of the nominal expression. Evidence for the head status of **la** comes from the following considerations.

Nominal expressions like those in (13) can also occur without the noun while still retaining their nominal status.⁷

- (16)a. **(liv) ruz la** b. **(liv) ar li la** c. **(liv) to ti lir la**
 book red D book with him D book you T read D
 ‘The red book/one’ ‘The book/one that is with him’ ‘The book/one you read’

Their nominal character can also be inferred from their distribution. As can be seen in the following examples, they occupy the same syntactic positions that they occupy when the noun is present.

- (17)a. **(liv) ruz la zoli** b. **li ti prañ (liv) ruz la** c. **mo ti met li akote (liv) ruz la**
 book red D pretty he T take book red D I T put it beside book red D
 ‘The red book/one is pretty’ ‘He took the red book/one’ ‘I put it beside the red book/one’

Additionally, in (17b,c), the subcategorization requirements on the verb and the preposition are also met. Both require a nominal expression as their complement, and this requirement is satisfied with and without the noun.

Further evidence comes from their ability to undergo clefting and topicalization, processes which, in MC, affect only [-V] categories (i.e. NP and PP).

- (18)a. **ruz la ki li ti prañ** b. **ar li la ki mo ti lir**
 red D that he T take with him D that I T read
 ‘It was the red one that he took’ ‘It was the one that was with him that I read’
- (19)a. **ruz la li ti prañ** b. **ar li la mo ti lir**
 red D he T take with him D I T read
 ‘The red one he took’ ‘The one that was with him I read’

Note that adjectives or adjectival phrases cannot be clefted or topicalized in MC.

- (20)a. ***byeñ grañ (ki) Mari ete** b. ***byeñ move (ki) garsoñ la ete**
 very tall that Mary be very naughty that boy D be

Note also that without **la** and the noun, the constructions in (16)-(19) are all ungrammatical.

- (21)a. ***ruz/*ar li zoli** b. ***li ti prañ ruz/ar li** c. ***mo ti met li akote ruz/ar li**
 red/with him pretty he T take red/with him I T put it beside red/with him

It is clear from these examples that in the absence of a noun, the presence of **la** is obligatory for the expressions to retain a nominal character and have the distribution of NPs. From this it follows that such expressions must get their nominal status from **la** rather than the noun. In other words, **la** not only specifies the reference of the noun but also gives an expression its nominal character. The role that **la** plays and the distribution it has identify it as the head of the nominal expression. It is the source of both the semantic and distributional properties of the nominal expressions in which it occurs. This clearly makes it a head.

⁷ (16c) is better as **seki to ti lir la**.

- (33)a. *(ce) chien-là a mordu mon chat
 D dog has bite my cat 'That dog has bitten my cat'
 b. *(cette) fille -ci s' appelle Marie
 D girl REFL call Mary 'This girl is called Mary'

A third difference between **la** and its historical source is that it has the status of a free standing morpheme as is evidenced from the fact that it does not have to be adjacent to the noun (see (34)). By contrast, *-là* stays suffixed to the noun in French.

- (34) ... cote ça grand pié di-bois piant Aughiste conné là (1818a)
 by D tall tree smelly Aughiste know D '... by that tall smelly tree Aughiste knows'

The change in its status (from bound to free morpheme) is clear from the difference in its distribution if we compare (34) with the historical earlier examples in (35).

- (35)a. *Li bon, ca bon Die-là qui dans vous paye, hein?* (1805)
 He good D god who in your country 'Is he good, the god that is in your country?'
 b. *vous per ca bon Die là qui mauvais?* (1805)
 you afraid D god who bad 'Are you afraid of the god that is bad?'

Whereas *là* stays postposed to the noun and therefore precedes the relative clause in (35), it is postposed to the relative clause in (34).

Together, these changes in the semantics and syntax of **la** in MC suggest that, although derived from the French enclitic *-là*, it has over time acquired a different status with a different meaning. It functions as a free morpheme and, as argued earlier, as the head of the nominal expression. The meaning it expresses is definiteness and specificity rather than proximity.

The question that remains to be answered is, how do we explain the changes in the meaning and distribution of **la**? As far as the change in meaning is concerned, it can be explained in the following way. The proximity meaning of the French *-là* was lost because the opposition between *-là* and *-ci* did not survive in MC. One reason why this opposition was lost is because it was not particularly communicatively useful in the early stages given the context-boundedness nature of the emerging language. At the same time, the acquisition of corresponding adverbs **laba** (there) and **isi** (here) may have made the opposition expressed by *-là* and *-ci* redundant.

It is important to note that the demonstrative **sa**, like its antecedent *ce(s)*, had no deictic meaning either even though it is classed as a demonstrative. The French demonstrative, as Harris (1978) argues, had long since lost its deictic meaning (which used to be expressed in Old French by *cest* (this) and *cel* (that)).⁹ Any deictic meaning it expresses comes from the enclitics *-là* and *-ci*, which came into greater use once *cest* and *cel* coalesced as *ce* in Middle French. Now, although the demonstrative lost its deictic meaning, it retained and continues to have a specifying function. And it is this specifying function that **la** acquired through its early association with **sa**. It is tempting to draw a parallel here with the development of the negative marker *pas* in French. As has been shown (see Price 1969, Harris 1978), *pas* initially had a positive meaning and was used in Old French as a reinforcer of *ne*, then the only marker of negation. It is suggested that through frequent association with *ne*, *pas* came to shed its positive meaning and acquired its negative meaning. Not only that, once *pas* had replaced its positive meaning by the negative meaning associated with *ne*, it supplanted *ne* as the main marker of negation, as is evidenced by its optionality in popular spoken French. In fact, *ne* by itself can no longer express negation while *pas* can, as shown by the contrast between (35a) and (35b).

⁹ The development of the 'démonstratif neutre' (neutral demonstrative) is seen as a consequence of the loss of the deictic meaning expressed by the demonstratives. But it retains a specifying role.

- (36)a. *Elle ne fume.
 She smoke
 'She doesn't smoke.'
- b. Elle fume pas
 She smoke not
 'She doesn't smoke.'

A similar developmental pattern can be proposed for **la**. Thus having lost its proximity function, it acquired its specificity function through its constant association with the demonstrative **sa**. As a result, **sa** became redundant, hence optional. Interestingly, like *ne*, **sa** too has lost its original meaning or function and has become dependent on the new marker of 'specificity', as shown by the ungrammaticality of (37c).

- (37)a. **sa seval la ti tombe**
 D horse D T fall
 'This/that horse fell.'
- b. **seval la ti tombe**
 horse D T fall
 'This/that horse fell.'
- c. ***sa seval ti tombe**
 D horse T fall

The parallel with the historical development of the French negative marker *pas* is therefore quite striking. In both cases, once the meaning/function has been transferred from the original exponent to the new one, the original then becomes redundant (almost an expletive), optional and crucially dependent on the new one. As is the case with the development of negation in French, the development of definiteness and specificity fits in well with what is known as Jespersen's cycle (see Jespersen 1917). The only difference is that whereas the development of *pas* as a negative marker is a case of grammaticalization, the development of *-là* as a marker of definiteness and specificity is a case of degrammaticalization, a potential problem for the unidirectionality hypothesis of Hopper and Traugott (1993).

As I have shown, the development of *la* as a marker of definiteness and specificity can be explained by linking it to the demonstrative, with which it co-existed in the early stages of the development of MC. The pattern of change seems to parallel that we find with the development of the negative marker *pas* in French. To that extent, this particular aspect of the development of the noun phrase is not unique and not restricted to Creole genesis.

2. Development of the plural marker 'ban'

2.1 Some basic facts about 'ban'

The plural of nouns is marked in MC by placing the free standing particle **ban** in front of the noun or in front of the noun and its modifier, as in the following.

- (38)a. **sa ban liv la**
 D PLU book D
 'These/those books'
- b. **sa liv la**
 D book D
 'This/That book'
- (39)a. **sa ban vye liv la**
 D PLU old book D
 'These old books'
- b. **sa vye liv la**
 D old book D
 'This old book'

The meaning difference between the (a) and (b) examples is readily attributable to the presence and absence of **ban**. Where it is present, the noun phrase has a plural interpretation.

The plural meaning that **ban** encodes is also clear from the agreement facts in the following.

- (41)a. **travayer la pe pini so/*zot lekor**
 worker D ASP punish his/their body
 'The worker is punishing himself'
- b. **ban travayer la pe pini *so/zot lekor**
 PLU worker D ASP punish his/their body
 'The workers are punishing themselves'
- (42)a. **zelev la so/*zot mama fin vini**
 pupil D his/their mother ASP come
 'The pupil's mother has come'
- b. **ban zelev la *so/zot mama fin vini**
 PLU pupil D his/their mother ASP come
 'The pupils' mothers/mother have/has come'

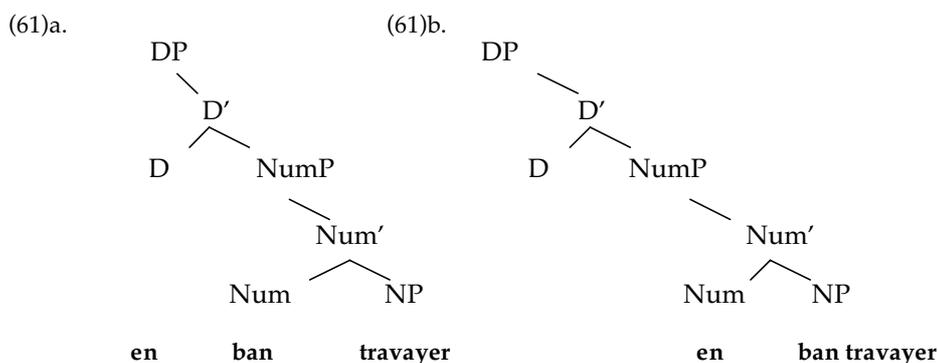
The determiner in this case is phonologically null, but the structure predicts cases such as those in (59) where the determiner is overt.

- (59)a. **sa de ban travayer la**
 D two team worker D
 'those two teams of workers'
- b. **mo de ban travayer**
 my two team worker
 'my two teams of workers'

Example (55a) is also interesting because the categorization of **ban** (whether it is a plural marker or a noun) depends on how **en** is interpreted. If it is interpreted as a numeral (one), then **ban** will of course function as a noun. If, on the other hand, it is interpreted as an indefinite article, then **ban** functions as a plural marker. An example like (60) can thus be read either as 'many/lots of workers' or 'one group/team of workers'.¹⁰

- (60) **en ban travayer**
 a. a lot/many workers ('ban' is stressed)
 b. a team/group of workers ('en' is stressed)

On the first reading, **ban** has a non-partitive reading; on the second, it has a partitive reading and is therefore a partitive noun (just like 'bunch', 'load', etc.). The semantic difference can be structurally represented as in (61a) and (61b).



2.3 Development of 'ban' into a plural marker

Plurality in French is expressed by the articles *les* (definite) and *des* (indefinite). With the loss of these articles, MC had no way of expressing plurality until the French noun *bande* (group/bunch/company) began to be used as a plural marker.

The French etymon *bande* is of Middle French origin and is a partitive noun which selects a PP complement. Indeed the first occurrence of this word in MC is in the context of an immediately following PP.

- (62) *la bande de son jensse* (Lambert 1828)
 group of his people 'a group of his people'

Subsequent examples show *bande* occurring either on its own (i.e. independently of its complement) or with a preposition-less complement.

- (63)a. *et toi sivre la bande comment toujours* (Le Cerneen 1839)
 and you follow D group as always 'and you follow the group as always'
- b. *enne gran bande apré casse maille* (1850)
 a large group ASP pick corn 'a large group was picking corn'

¹⁰ The ambiguity does not arise in spoken MC given the role that stress plays (see (60)).

- c. *enne lotre bande noirs apré coupe canne* (1850)
 a other group black ASP cut cane 'another group of slaves was cutting sugar canes'
- d. *coman voar ça ban dimoune là, ...* (Anderson 1885)
 as see D group people D 'on seeing these people, ...'

An interesting observation concerning the use of *bande/band/ban(ne)* is that in the early examples it occurs strictly with animate human nouns such as *jensse* (people), 'noirs' (slaves) and *dimoune* (people) as in the examples above. Later examples (particularly those that are attested from 1885 onwards) show however that this partitive noun also occurs with non-human animate nouns as in (64) and inanimate nouns (both concrete and abstract) as in (65).

- (64)a. *ein band' p'tits miletons* (Lolliot 1855)
 a shoal little mullet 'a group of little mullets'
- b. *coman mouton dan milié éne band loulou* (Anderson 1885)
 like sheep in middle a band wolf 'just like a sheep in the midst of a pack of wolves'
- (65)a. *ça bande larzent là* (Baissac 1888)
 D pile money D 'this pile of money'
- b. *ça bande lamisière qui li fine passé* (Baissac 1888)
 D amount misery that he ASP pass 'All the suffering that he endured'

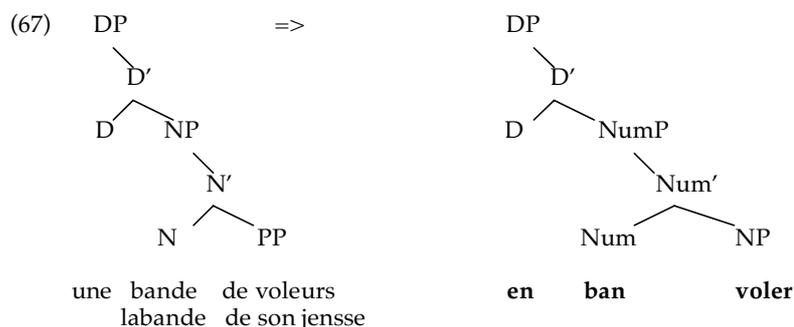
What these examples show is that the word *bande*, which in French selects animate complements as in 'une bande de voleurs' (a gang of thieves), 'une bande de pirates' (a band of pirates) and 'une bande d'oiseaux' (a flock of birds), was initially used with animate complements only, but it later came to be used with inanimate complements as well, as in (65). In other words, what we find here is an extension of the use of this partitive/quantifying noun (meaning 'a lot') to contexts in which it does not occur in French (i.e. with inanimate complements). This means that the semantic restrictions on *bande* were lifted and this enabled it to occur with inanimate complements, as in these examples.

- (66)a. *donne li éne bande mauvés conseils* (Baissac 1888)
 give him a lot bad advice 'gave him a lot of bad advice'
- b. *éne bande pitit cimins* (Baissac 1888)
 a lot narrow road 'many narrow roads'
- c. *ça bande léplats qui làhaut latabe* (Baissac 1888)
 D lot dishes that on table 'those dishes that are on the table'

The change, I suggest, is a reflection of a change in its categorial status. The word *bande* now belongs to the functional category Number and encodes plurality.

Importantly, the categorial change that the French word *bande* underwent in MC fits in well with the traditional idea of grammaticalization, as a process whereby a lexical element becomes a grammatical element (Meillet 1921, Heine, Claudi & Hunnemeyer 1991) or a more independent element becomes less independent (Hopper & Traugott 1993). The change, as far as one can tell from the available historical texts, appears to have been gradual (and therefore a late development (Baker 1994)) and, unlike the development of the enclitic *-là* into a marker of definiteness and specificity, it lends strong support to the central idea of unidirectionality in the theory of grammaticalization, whereby a less grammatical item becomes more grammatical but not vice versa.

It is also worth noting that the categorial change also triggered a structural change in that the complement of *bande/band/ban(ne)* is no longer a PP but an NP. The reanalysis is illustrated in (67).



3. Synthetic genitives

In this section I will look at the development of Saxon-type genitives. This is an unexpected development which suggests substrate influence (see Corne 1986, Baissac 1880). But as I argue here (but see Syea 1994 as well) this might have been the result of language-internal changes, but possibly reinforced by convergence.

3.1 Some data

MC, unlike French, has not only the French analytic possessive construction but also a type of possessive construction that closely resembles English Saxon genitives (e.g. John's book). In Syea (1994, 1995) I referred to this latter type as synthetic genitives (in contrast to the analytic possessive structure we find in French). The following illustrates these two types of genitive construction in MC.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>(68)a. liv Zañ
book John
'John's book'</p> | <p>b. le livre de Jean
D book of John
'John's book'</p> |
| <p>(69)a. Zañ so liv
John his book
'John's book'</p> | <p>b. *Jean son livre
John his book</p> |

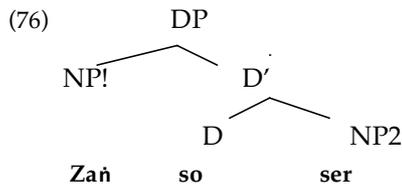
The analytic type (68a) retains the surface word order of the French genitive construction (68b) but importantly lacks the functional words (i.e. the definite article and the preposition). The synthetic type (69a) by contrast has no parallel in French. It is closer at the surface to the English possessive except for the possessive pronoun that separates the two NPs. English possessives have a cliticized possessive marker instead of a possessive pronoun.

3.2 Properties and structure of synthetic genitives

The synthetic genitive construction in MC, like English Saxon genitives, has three basic constituents: the possessor NP (henceforth NP1) followed by the possessive pronoun (POSS) which in turn is followed by the possessee NP (henceforth NP2). This ordering is strict and any deviations result in ungrammatical structures.

Unlike the possessive marker in English genitives (i.e. the apostrophe -s), the free standing possessive pronoun that intervenes between the two NPs in MC is closer structurally to NP2 than to NP1. This is suggested by the fact that the string POSS and NP2 can be coordinated while NP1 and POSS can't.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>(70)a. Zañ so ser e so mama ti vini
John his sister and his mother T come
'John's sister and his mother came'</p> | <p>b. *Zañ so e Mari so mama ti vini
John his and Mary her mother T come
'John's and Mary's mother came'</p> |
|---|---|



This structure for the synthetic genitives in MC appears to be both intuitively and empirically justified.

3.3 Development of synthetic genitives in MC

MC is not alone among Creole languages in having synthetic type genitive construction, as is clear from the following brief survey.¹¹

- | | |
|---|--|
| (77)a. die kind se trui (Afrikaans)
the child POSS jersey 'the child's jersey' | b. Jan shi boek (Negerhollands)
John his book 'John's book' |
| c. ti garson so pje (Louisiana)
little boy his foot 'the little boy's feet' | d. mo pitxit so fwa (Karipuna)
my child his liver 'my child's liver' |
| e. Sami fi jerma (Berbice Dutch)
Sammy his wife 'Sammy's wife' | f. mi tata su buki (Papiamentu)
my father his book 'my father's book' |

How this type of genitive constructions has ended up in French Creoles such as MC, Louisiana Creole and Karipuna for instance is an interesting question. Clearly, it is not derived from French (standard or regional or popular) and so must be attributed to either a substrate or universalist source. Corne (1986) and Baissac (1880) before him attributes this type of genitive to the Indic languages (in particular Bhojpuri and Hindi) of the Indian immigrants, which have exactly the structure that the synthetic genitives in MC have.

- | | |
|---|--|
| (78)a. ap-ki patni ki sthiti (Hindi; Corne 1986)
your wife her health 'Your wife's health' | b. tor burhia ke hal (Bhojpuri; Corne 1986)
your wife her health 'Your wife's health' |
|---|--|

The Hindi and Bhojpuri genitives, like those in MC, have three constituents: the possessor NP followed by POSS, which in turn is followed by the possessee NP. So a substrate claim may be said to have some plausibility. Also, the first example of synthetic genitives appears in a text from 1867, three decades after the first Indian immigrants arrived in Mauritius.

- | | |
|---|---|
| (79) <i>grand Misie son causé</i>
big master his words | (Descroizilles 1867)
'the chief's words' |
|---|---|

This sequence of events could be seen to lend some credibility to the proposals of both Baissac and Corne that genitives of this type owe their existence in MC to the Indian languages. However, as I observed in Syea (1994), the same text also has examples of a type of genitive construction that subsequently became obsolete.

- | | |
|--|---|
| (80)a. <i>dans son lamain Gouvernement</i>
in its hand government | (Descroizilles 1867)
'in the hand of the government' |
| b. <i>son lipie Nicolas</i>
his foot Nicholas | (Descroizilles 1867)
'Nicholas's feet' |

Similar examples also occur later in Baissac (1888):

¹¹ The Afrikaans example is from Taylor (2000); the other five are all from Holm (1988-89).

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (81)a. <i>so kat laru en kales</i> | (Baissac 1888) |
| its four wheels a carriage | 'a carriage's four wheels' |
| b. <i>son fils leroi</i> | (Baissac 1888) |
| his son king | 'The king's son' |

It seems then that in the second half of the 19th century three different types of genitive construction were in use: the analytic, the synthetic and a third type that I refer to as the 'mixed' type in Syea (1994). Close examination of the third type shows that it shares properties of both the analytic and the synthetic. The possessor NP (for example *leroi* in (81b)) is on the right of the possessee NP *fils*, just like in the analytic structures, while the possessive morpheme POSS is to the left of the possessee NP, just as in synthetic genitives.

These 'mixed' genitives have no substrate basis and their occurrence only makes sense if we link them to synthetic genitives and look upon them as an intermediate stage in the development of synthetic genitives. Of course, if the presence of synthetic genitives were attributed to a substrate source, the existence of the 'mixed' genitives would remain inexplicable. This, together with the fact that other French Creoles with no access to an Indian substrate (e.g. Louisiana Creole) or African substrate (e.g. Karipuna) also have synthetic genitives, casts doubts on Corne's proposal that the synthetic genitives in MC had their origin in Hindi and Bhojpuri. However, it is conceivable that the development of the synthetic type was reinforced by the fact that an increasingly large group of speakers had a similar structure in their native languages. There is nothing to rule out the possibility of these two structures converging in order to produce synthetic genitives.

From a syntactic point of view, the mixed genitives could be argued to have been instrumental in the development of synthetic genitives. The presence of the POSS morpheme (which we could interpret as the realization of overt genitive case marking on the left of the possessee) means that the only way the possessor NP could have had its abstract genitive case checked was by raising to the spec of DP position where in a spec-head relation with POSS its case gets checked.¹² From this perspective, synthetic genitives can be treated as an independently motivated innovation.

4. Discussion

In the context of the discussion of Creole evolution, the three developments in the nominal phrase in MC raise interesting questions. One of these is this: what do they tell us about how Creoles develop? All three developments, as they are described here, suggest that they were gradual and may have been linked to other internal changes. The French enclitic *-là* lost its proximity meaning but survived because of its association with the demonstrative *sa*, from which it acquired its specifying function (and therefore its definiteness and specificity meaning). As pointed out earlier, there is a strong parallel here with the development of *pas* which, through its association with *ne*, became the new marker of negation in French. It is also clear from our discussion that the French enclitic was degrammaticalized, a process that is rather surprising in Creole development where the direction is, as generally assumed, from independent, less grammatical, lexical items to dependent, more grammatical and functional items. The general assumption that Creoles develop from pidgins predicts precisely this developmental path, and yet what we find in the case of the development of *la* as a marker of definiteness and specificity is just the reverse. This surprising development is at odds with all theories of Creole development with perhaps the exception of the superstratist theory (Chaudenson 1992). Here the development of the French enclitic into a free morpheme encoding definiteness and specificity is something that is expected as a further development from one language to its vernaculars.

¹² Given that the possessor NP occupies a spec position, I would suggest that the whole NP (a maximal projection) rather than an N moves to spec.

The development of French *bande* into a marker of plurality in MC is one that poses the least problem. It represents a good example of grammaticalization, where a lexical item becomes over time a grammatical item. Such a development is consistent with several of the theories of Creole genesis (for instance, the superstratist (Chaudenson 1992), the universalist (Bickerton 1981) and creativist (Baker 1994). However, it is also a type of change that affects not just Creoles but other natural languages as well.

The third and final development discussed here is one that cannot be accounted for particularly by the superstratist theory or the creativist theory. A convergent approach (as discussed in Bynon (1996) goes some way towards providing an explanation for the emergence of synthetic genitives in MC but it is equally explicable in terms of language internal developments.

5. Summary and conclusion

In this article I have discussed three key developments in the NP in MC. The development of a marker of definiteness and specificity, the development of a marker of plurality (number) and the development of a synthetic structure for expressing possession. These three developments together make the NP in MC significantly different from the NP of French. Definiteness, plurality and possession are expressed in different ways in MC. Interestingly, none of these developments can be said to have been triggered by the communicative needs of the makers of MC. Rather, they are developments that are driven by some of the mechanisms of language change (e.g. degrammaticalization, grammaticalization, etc.) that operate in other languages, not just Creoles.

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