



**HAL**  
open science

## Noun-noun compounds in Reunion Creole

Ulrike Albers

► **To cite this version:**

Ulrike Albers. Noun-noun compounds in Reunion Creole. Patricia Cabredo Hofherr; Elena Soare; Claude Herby. *La grammaire est une fête / Grammar is a moveable feast Mélanges offerts à / A Webschrift for Anne Zribi-Hertz.*, pp.29- 41, 2023. hal-04140277

**HAL Id: hal-04140277**

**<https://hal.science/hal-04140277>**

Submitted on 25 Jun 2023

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

## Noun-noun compounds in Reunion Creole\*

Ulrike Albers  
U. La Réunion / UMR 7023 SFL

### 1. Introduction

Expressions of the following form are frequent and productive in Reunion / Reunionese Creole, or *Réyoné*, a creole language of the Indian Ocean:

- (1)    térin    foutbol  
       field    football  
       ‘football field’
- (2)    roulo    papyé  
       roll     paper  
       ‘toilet roll’
- (3)    manzé    koson  
       food    pig  
       ‘pigfood’
- (4)    kari     volay  
       curry   chicken  
       ‘chicken curry’

The English translation signals that these are noun-noun compounds of a form  $[N+N]_N$ <sup>1</sup>, and that they are endocentric<sup>2</sup>: for instance, a football field is a field. We also find some constructions with another element between the two nouns, either resembling prepositions (8) or determiners (9).

- (5)    bar-d-kou  
       bar *d* neck  
       ‘neck’

---

\* This paper is dedicated to Anne Zribi-Hertz, a great linguist and a wonderful person, who I will always admire for her work as well as for her generosity, her integrity, and her terrific enthusiasm. I’m grateful for this opportunity to thank her for the support and insight she offered so many of us, in order to help move science forward. I would like to thank the editors of this volume, Patricia Cabredo Hofherr and Elena Soare, as well as two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments, and my consultants for their help.

<sup>1</sup> See Section 2 for evidence that these binominal constructions are compounds.

<sup>2</sup> Defined by the presence of a head constituent, as opposed to exocentric compounds which are not hyponyms of either element of the compound (Scalise & Bisetto 2011; Bauer 2011).

- (6) kari lo-ton  
 curry *lo* tuna  
 ‘tuna curry’

Finally, we have some expressions like in (10) where the head seems to be the second noun.

- (7) farine la-pli  
 flour *la*-rain  
 ‘very light rain’

The forms of the compounds in (1)-(4) are expected in a French-related creole language, given the head position in French compounds, and given more general developments observed in these creole languages: English noun-noun compounds such as *football field*, *pigfood*, *walking-shoes*, or *rucksack* frequently translate into French by an expression of the form [N+prep+N] i.e. head noun + preposition + modifier noun (see for instance Ten Hacken 2013, Bourque 2014), as exemplified in (5)-(6) below. The preposition generally is *de*. In other cases, we have a combination of a noun with a relational adjective<sup>3</sup> (7).

- (8) terrain de football (N+*de*+N)  
 field *de* football  
 ‘football field’
- (9) sac à dos (N+*à*+N)  
 sack *à* back  
 ‘backsack’
- (10) conseil municipal (N+relational adjective)  
 council municipal  
 ‘city council’

The preposition *de* in French compounds can be considered a (former) genitive marker<sup>4</sup> (Ten Hacken 2013); prepositions in compounds are also sometimes called linkers or prepositional linking units (cf. Nicoladis 2002, Bourque 2014). On the other hand, Réyoné has essentially adopted lexical – mostly spatial or temporal – prepositions from French, and dispensed with grammatical prepositions, i.e., prepositions without a lexical meaning. This is a common case within French-based creole languages (cf. Sycé 2017:181). Given these facts, the forms of the Réyoné compounds in (1)-(4) are rather expected, since they are head-initial like French compounds, but display no preposition or linker.

The forms of the nouns in (5)-(6) are more surprising: we do not expect determiners in a compound – these would rather hint at genitive constructions – and prepositions are not predicted either (see above). Finally, the head-final construction of the compound in (7) is puzzling. In this study, we will propose an explanation for these unexpected formations. We will

<sup>3</sup> Also called “pseudo adjectives” (Zribi-Hertz 1972) i.e., a word that has the grammatical properties of an adjective, but that is of argumental nature, is not gradable, and is derived from a noun (cf. Nikolaeva & Spencer 2010). These do not seem to exist in creole languages (cf. Véronique 2006); in Réyoné only some borrowings are found – compare the following: *l’eau municipale* (FR) – *dolo la komine* / *\*dolo minisipal* (RC) ‘municipal water’; *instrument musical* (FR) – *linstriman la mizik* / *\*linstriman misikal* (RC) ‘music instrument’; *facture mensuelle* (FR) – *faktir lo mwa* / *\*faktir mansuel* (RC) ‘monthly bill’.

<sup>4</sup> Note that this does not mean that these expressions are genitive constructions (cf. Ten Hacken 2013). At any rate, the modifier has no referential value.

show that that elements such as /lo/ and /la/ sometimes present in compounds cannot be analysed as determiners and that compounds are formally distinguished from genitives. We also show that /d/ in complex nouns cannot be analysed as prepositions here, and that such nouns are lexicalised, fixed expressions. We will have a closer look at seemingly head-final compounds and suggest that these structures may result from language contact.

The next section deals with structures containing elements that resemble determiners. Section 3 describes structures with preposition-like elements. Section 4 shows that compounds in Réyoné are usually head-initial, and Section 5 is concerned with head-final compounds, with Section 6 offering a short summary.

## 2. Distinguishing compounds from genitive constructions in Réyoné

The frontier between compounding, i.e. the combination of two or more lexemes (encompassing the roots, stems, and free words, cf. Bauer 2011) and structures built by the syntax is not always clear, and a matter of debate (cf. Nikolaeva & Spencer 2010; Lieber-Štekauer 2011; Bauer 2011). For instance, in languages with inflection, it is possible that one or more of the elements of a compound contains its own inflection or linking elements (Bauer 2011). This section shows that binominal constructions (genitives and compounds) in Réyoné are not easily differentiated at first sight. We will provide evidence that they are formally distinguished, and that *lo* (or *la*) sometimes present in compounds are not determiners<sup>5</sup>.

Nikolaeva & Spencer (2010) distinguish four semantic types of adnominal dependents: inalienable possession, alienable possession, modification-by-noun, and attributive modification ('modification-by adjective'). Genitives and compounds are not always easily differentiated. It is generally admitted that in genitive constructions, the non-head denotes an individual, while in compounds, it denotes a class/set of individuals and is thus not referential. Determiners do not usually appear in compounds, cross-linguistically, and could be used as a diagnostic for distinguishing them from genitives. There are however some languages, which use the definite article to indicate genericity, where the determiner is found in some compounds (cf. Ten Hacken 2013). The following examples in Réyoné might appear puzzling at first sight, because in (11a) and (11b) both the genitive construction and the compound appear without a determiner, and in (12) both appear with an element *lo* between the two nouns:

- (11) a.      zonou gramoun  
          knee   old.people  
          'old people's knee(s)' (genitive)
- b.      grif    papang  
          claw  harrier  
          'raptor claws' (compound)
- (12) a.      manzé lo      koson  
          food  DET  pig  
          'the pig's food' (genitive)
- b.      kari    lo-ton

---

<sup>5</sup> *Lo* and *la* are usually treated as determiners (Bollée 2013a; Chaudenson 1974, 2007; Staudacher-Valliamée 2004) and thus not expected in compounds.

curry *lo*-tuna  
 ‘tuna curry’ (compound)

The constructions in (11b) and (12b) are compounds: the denotation of a noun-noun compound is a subset of the denotation of the head noun (Nikolaeva & Spencer 2010). *Grif papang* in (11b) denotes a claw of the raptor’s species or type; *kari lo-ton* in (12b) refers to a type of curry. The expressions in (11a) and (12a), on the other hand, are genitive constructions: a genitive always expresses a relation between a possessor and a possessee. (12a) is a case of inalienable relationship<sup>6</sup>. In these cases, the interpretation is determined by the meaning associated with the relational head noun, i.e. the possessee (cf. Nikolaeva & Spencer 2010). *Zonou* is necessarily a body-part. (12a), on the other hand, illustrates a case of alienable possession; these constructions tend to be ambiguous, and the semantic relation is based on a prototype (cf. Nikolaeva & Spencer 2010). Most probably, (12a) refers to the food reserved for the pig but suppose “the pig” is a character in a cartoon, *the pig’s food* could be the food the pig won, or the food the pig always dreams about. But the formal difference between (11a) and (12a), namely the presence/absence of *lo*, is not due to the alienable-inalienable distinction, as shown by the following pair.

- (13) a. Zonou gramoun lé dir. (inalienable possession)  
 knee old.people COP hard  
 ‘Old people’s knees are hard.’  
 b. Varang gramoun lé prop. (alienable possession)  
 patio old.people COP neat  
 ‘Old people’s patios are neat.’

What matters, instead, is the referential status of the possessor NP. Réyoné’s definite determiner *lo* is reserved for a certain type of definite (cf. Albers 2019). Other noun phrases (DPs) comprise determiners such as demonstratives or quantifiers but – unlike French – also bare nouns.

- (14) Siklone la ras **la-tol in kaz.**  
 cyclone PRF tear.off *la*-roof a house  
 ‘The cyclone has torn off the roof of a house.’  
 (15) manzé **koson -la**  
 food pig DET  
 ‘the food of the/that pig’

The possessor NP may consist of a bare noun phrase in cases such as generic NPs, proper names, situational definites, and some others.

- (16) la kaz **monom**  
*la* house mom  
 ‘Mom’s house’  
 (17) Gro-zo **zonou.**  
 big-bone knee  
 ‘bone of my knee’

<sup>6</sup> Inalienable relationships are established by relational nouns such as kin terms, part-of terms, for instance, body parts, topological nouns or nouns denoting an inherent property.

A binominal expression without a determiner which occurs in a context that excludes bare noun phrases is necessarily a compound, not a genitive. This can be shown by the following:

- (18) a. Pran in zèl lo papang. – Kèl papang ?  
 take DET wing DET Reunion.harrier which Reunion.harrier  
 ‘Take a wing of the harrier.– Which harrier?’  
 b. Pran in zèl papang. – #Kèl papang?  
 take DET Reunion.harrier wing which Reunion.harrier  
 ‘Take a harrier wing. – Which harrier?’

Thus, the difference between (11a) and (12a) is related to the interpretation of the modifier noun; ‘old people’ in (11a) is generic while (12a) refers to a specific pig.

The contrast of (11b) and (12b) (*grif papang* vs. *kari lo-ton*) is of an entirely different nature, namely phonological.

Let us first show that expressions such as *kari lo-ton* are truly compounds, not genitives. The translation to other languages is already a good indicator<sup>7</sup>. Some more evidence is given with the following tests. First, a genitives’ constituents may undergo modification whereas, a compound’s constituents may not (see for instance Bourque 2014:58). Therefore, (19) shows that *kari lo-ton* is a compound.

- (19) a. kari lo (\*bèl) ton  
 curry lo big tuna  
 b. kari lo ton (\*la trap yér)  
 curry lo tuna PRF catch yesterday

Second, a compound’s constituents may not serve as a reference for an anaphoric pronoun. This is indeed the case of our expression:

- (20) La prépar in kari lo-ton. #Li / sa té gro.  
 PRF preparea curry lo-tuna. 3sg 3sg PST big  
 ‘They prepared a tuna curry. It was big.’

The presence of *lo* in *kari lo-ton* is related to phonological weight. In (11b) and (12b), it is not the same element that figures between the head noun and the modifier. Réyoné’s determiner *lo*, present in the genitive (12a), has evolved from the French definite article *le*, and so has the pronominal element found in *lo-ton*. However, these forms are, synchronically, homonyms, which result diachronically from a lexical split. The former is an article-like element, encoding (a certain type of) definiteness, and triggering<sup>8</sup> a singular reading; the latter is just some phonological material which is used to build an allomorph. Depending on the structure, one or the other allomorph is used. When monosyllabic nouns only contain a light syllable, i.e., a syllable without a complex rime, *lo-* can attach to them to build a longer / heavier form of the noun, such as *lo-ton* out of *ton* or *lo-zi* ‘juice’ out of *zi*. The long form is mandatory in bare NPs,

<sup>7</sup> Translation can be used “as a heuristic to determine a concept of compound that is semantically coherent” (Ten Hacken 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Probably pragmatically, see Albers (2019).

which require a noun with a minimal phonological weight<sup>9</sup> (cf. Albers 2020). The same applies to the modifier noun in compounds<sup>10</sup>; we can illustrate this with the following example:

- (21) a. kari \*(lo)-ton  
 curry lo-tuna  
 ‘tuna curry’  
 b. kari volay; kari kamaron  
 curry chicken curry shrimp  
 ‘chicken curry / shrimp curry’  
 c. manzé \*(lo)-syin  
 food lo-dog  
 ‘dog food’  
 d. manzé koson  
 food pig  
 ‘pig food’ or ‘leftovers’

Similar to other languages, (see Ten Hacken 2013), a modifier noun in compounds cannot appear with a determiner, in Réyoné. We will show this with the help of examples presenting plurisyllabic / heavy syllable nouns in contexts where genitives are impossible:

- (22) Sa sé in kouvértir (\*lo) marmit.  
 ‘This is a pot lid.’  
 (23) I prépar sa èk zèf (\*lo) poul.  
 ‘One prepares this with chicken eggs.’

A determiner is not agrammatical, in most contexts, but what we get then is a genitive: (24a) refers to pig food or *leftovers* (thus it has a more lexicalized meaning, which also indicates that it is a compound<sup>11</sup>); (24b) refers to a specific pig’s food.

- (24) a. manzé koson  
 food pig  
 ‘pig food’ or ‘leftovers’ (*compound*)  
 b. manzé lo koson  
 food DET pig  
 ‘the pig’s food’ (*genitive*)

To sum up, compounds and genitives are formally distinguished in Reunion Creole. The element *lo* sometimes present in compounds is not a determiner. Determiners can only figure in

<sup>9</sup> The following examples provide an illustration:

- i. Ala {mon ban / in ban / \*ban / lo-ban}.  
 here.is poss.1SG bench a bench bench lo-bench  
 ‘Here is my bench / a bench / some bench(es).’  
 ii. Toulématin, l’ i té trap {\*(lo)-ton / (\*lo) banklos}.  
 every.morning 3SG i PST catch lo-tuna DET Decapterus  
 ‘Every morning, he fished tuna(s) / mackerel scads.’

<sup>10</sup> This fact might be some evidence for the position defended by some authors (see for instance Aboh 2010; Alexiadou 2020) that nouns in compounds are (sometimes) phrasal; we will not discuss this theoretical issue for Réyoné, it is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>11</sup> Compounds tend to acquire fixed uses (see Nikolaeva & Spencer 2010).

genitive constructions, where bare nouns are also felicitous, depending on the context/ interpretation.

Note that APICS<sup>12</sup> indicates that in 30% of the cases, the possessor in genitives is marked by an adposition (Bollée 2013b); the example that is given is the following:

- (25) ó kómansman du mwá  
 ‘at the beginning of the month’ (Bollée 2013b)

This expression should rather be classified as belonging to French though: on the one hand, it is perfectly grammatical in French; on the other, /o/ only occurs in frozen expressions in Réyoné, and *du* is only found in entirely French utterances<sup>13</sup> in corpus data (and considered as French by consultants). A preposition-like element is sometimes found in binominal constructions; as we can show with the following example, this element (discussed in Section 3) is reserved for compounds:

- (26) Na in gou-d-piman / \*gou-piman. (compound)  
 ‘It has a chilli taste’
- (27) Sé lo gou (\*d) piman. (genitive)  
 ‘It’s the taste of (the) chili.’

### 3 Compounds with /d/

In a number of Réyoné binominal constructions still some other element appears between the two nouns, consisting of a consonant, realized [n] or [d] or [t]. This element is related – diachronically at least – to the French preposition *de*. This section will show that expressions containing such elements are lexicalized / not productive.

This consonantal material is found in borrowings such as *tédoryé* from French *taie d’oreiller* ‘pillowcase’ which are not compounds any more (there is no noun *té*). It also appears in expressions that can be quite straightforwardly analyzed as lexicalized, fixed expressions and having acquired a fixed meaning. *Rézin la-mér* in (28) could probably be used to create a neologism (denote a new grape variety), but it definitely cannot denote seagrape / *coccoloba uvifera*. *Rézin-n-mèr* on the other hand, may not be used for a real grape variety. ‘At twelve’ translates to *lér-d-midi* while ‘at eleven’ translates to *lér-onzér*. Finally, /d/ can only occur in these lexicalized structures<sup>14</sup>, not in others (30).

- (28) rézin-n-mèr – \*rézin la-mér  
 grape-n-sea grape la-sea  
 ‘seagrape / *coccoloba uvifera*’
- (29) lèr-d-zordi ; lér-d-midi – lér onzér  
 hour-d-today hour-d-midday hour eleven.hour  
 ‘today’ ; (at) twelve – (at) eleven’

<sup>12</sup> Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures.

<sup>13</sup> As well as in two expressions borrowed from French: *du mal*; *du bien*.

<sup>14</sup> Some of these might originate from syntactic rather than once productive morphological structures (“frozen NPs”); we will leave this issue open because the frontier is a matter of debate; at any rate, these complex nouns are not productive and have to be stored in the lexicon.

- (30) \*bonbon-d-pwason ; \*kari-d-ton ; \*rougay-d-mori<sup>15</sup>  
 ‘*bonbon pwason* (biscuit of fish-form); tuna curry; *rougail morue* (salt cod dish)’

The consonantal material is also found in seemingly productive expressions: *gou-d-piman* ‘taste of pepper’ / ‘pepper flavor’; *gou-d-zirof* ‘taste of clove’ / ‘clove flavor’; *gou-d-sèl* ‘taste of salt’; *kout-pyos* ‘pickaxe stroke’; *kout-pèl* ‘spade stroke’; *kout-pyé* ‘kick’. The following example shows, however, that they too are non-productive<sup>16</sup>. Note that there does not seem to be any phonological constraint (compare *gou-d-piman* and *gou pistas*).

- (31) a. Na            in        gou    pistas.  
           there.is    a        taste peanut  
           ‘There is a taste of peanut / peanut flavor.’  
       b. Na            in        gou    margoz.  
           there.is    a        taste bitter.gourd  
           ‘There is a taste of bitter-gourd.’

In contexts where the N1 ends with a nasal vowel, /d/ is realized [n]. In this case, the consonant is so frequent that we might think it is an obligatory material: *grin-n-sèl* ‘rice grain’, *somin-n-fèr* ‘railway’, *rézin-n-mèr* ‘seagrape’, *grin-n-bibas* ‘loquat’ and many others. Nevertheless, we have found some compounds without this element, in corpus data<sup>17</sup>:

- (32) sink    grin    zirof  
       five    grain    clove  
       ‘five cloves’  
       (33) gato    grin    sousou  
           cake    grain    chayote  
           ‘chayote seed cake’

Our conclusion is thus that the insertion of [n], [d] ou [t] is not a productive way of forming compounds. This however needs further research (especially because factors related to geographic variation, register and code-switching are at stake).

#### 4 Head position in Réyoné compounds

Compounds in Réyoné are generally head initial, as we will show in this section. The head of a compound prototypically imposes a set of semantic, morphological and categorical features on the compound as a whole (Pepper 2016). From a semantic point of view, the compound is usually a hyponym of the head; for instance, a field mouse is a kind of mouse. Semantic features such as animacy or ontological features are transferred from the head (cf. Fábregas & Masini 2015). Grammatical features such as gender are also inherited from the head. The word class of the compound is typically the same as that of the head.

<sup>15</sup> Note that the French translation of these dishes generally does contain a preposition: *carry de thon*; *rougail de morue*.

<sup>16</sup> We have not been able to find any compound with a head noun *kou* though. Armand (2014) lists *koufran* in his dictionary but *fran* is a free-standing adjective. We suggest that the variant of *kou* used in compounds is of the form *kout*.

<sup>17</sup> Spoken corpus data (see Albers 2019). The sequences are clearly articulated, and we had the expressions checked by consultants.

Réyoné does not have agreement; on the other hand, the constituents of binominal compounds are of the same class. It is thus the semantic criteria that can help us determine the head of a given expression. Take the following examples:

- (34) bonbon pwason  
 cookie fish  
 ‘fish cookie’ (special cookie of the form of a fish)
- (35) térin foutbol  
 field football  
 ‘football field’
- (36) N’ a manz in gato tizane.  
 2PL FUT eat a cake herbal.tea  
 ‘We will eat a herbal-tea cake.’

A fish-biscuit is a type of biscuit (not a fish), a football field a special type of field (not a football); one can eat cake but not herbal tea. Thus, the head is the N1, i.e. the first member of the compound.

## 5. Head-final compounds

The preceding examples of noun-noun compounds show a structure [XY]<sub>Z</sub>, where Z is an X (an order head-modifier). This is the most frequent pattern by far. However, we also find some expressions where the head seems to be the second element. Here are some examples:

- (37) a. [mal kabri]  
 male goat
- b. [mal lo-sat]  
 male *lo.cat*  
 ‘male goat / cat’
- c. [fomèl lapin]  
 female rabbit  
 ‘female rabbit’
- (38) [farine la-pli]  
 flour *la.pli*  
 ‘fine rain’
- (39) [papa pwason]  
 father fish  
 ‘big fish’

“Male goat” in (37a) is clearly a male kind of rabbit not a rabbit kind of male; (38) denotes a kind of rain, not flour, and (39) a fish. The first elements of these compounds are adjective-like, but they are not adjectives. There is only a very small class of prenominal (very short) adjectives in Réyoné; also, the modifiers in (37)-(39) do not have the distribution of an adjective:

- (40) \*Li lé mal.  
3SG COP bad  
'He/she is male.'
- (41) Sé in mal.  
COP a male  
'It's a male.'
- (42) \*pli farine  
more flour (flour-ier)

Therefore, we are dealing with endocentric head-final compounds here, a structure [XY]<sub>Z</sub>, where Z is an Y. In French, this pattern only exists in so-called neoclassical compounds (with components borrowed mostly from Greek and Latin, cf. Villoing 2012<sup>18</sup>). Réyoné thus has both head-initial and head-final structures/ noun-noun compounds. This situation is unusual in the languages of the world and often results from language contact (Pepper 2016:2086).

An interesting question is whether or not this type of compounding is (still) productive. The nouns that are able to appear as a modifier on the left in binominal compounds is probably limited to a very small list, but they should be able to combine with new words or borrowings. In corpus data, head-final compounds are rare. One rather original example found in the corpus is the following:

- (43) in [bébèt modèl]  
a monster model  
'a tremendous model'

Another interesting point concerns the possible semantic difference between head-initial and head-final compounds in Réyoné. We have seen that the modifier in the latter type resembles adjectives, in a way. The examples below illustrate the different semantic relations between the two nouns of a compound. Compare (44a) to the other examples in (44).

- (44) a. [baba mai]  
baby corn  
'young ear of corn'
- b. [baba sifon]  
baby cloth  
'doll'
- c. [kanz mai]  
kanz corn  
'corn mush'
- d. [mai koson]  
corn pig  
'corn for pigs'

It can be observed that the relation denoted by a head-final structure (44a) is different from the usual head-initial structure. It establishes a sort of evaluation of N2, meaning 'N2 is an N1', called BE-function by some authors (Levi 1978; Jackendoff 2010). This evaluation is often metaphorical in nature. *Bébèt modèl* in (43) denotes a model which is a 'monster', *papa pwason*

<sup>18</sup> Examples are *hippodrome* 'racetrack' or *mélomane* 'music lover'.

in (39) a fish that is a ‘father’, *farine la-pli* in (38) rain that is flour-like, (44a) corn that is a ‘baby’. This particular type of compound corresponds to a class called attributive endocentric in Bisetto & Scalise (2005), and ATAP appositive<sup>19</sup> in Scalise & Bisetto (2011). It contains compounds in which the non-head element expresses a property of the head constituent by means of a noun, an apposition, acting as an attribute. The attributive value of the noun is associated with a metaphorical interpretation, as in English *key word*. Metaphoricity allows to distinguish between, e.g., *mushroom soup*, classified as a type of subordinate compound, and *mushroom cloud*, where *mushroom* is not interpreted in its literal sense but is rather construed as a ‘representation of the mushroom entity’ (Scalise & Bisetto 2011:52). Both (44d) and (44a) above have a head noun *corn*; however, (44d) cannot express the kind of concept expressed by (44a) – the modifier noun in this position rather indicates the function, purpose, composition, means, source, or form. (44d) is one of the more frequent subordinate ground<sup>20</sup> compounds, like *mushroom soup*.

In French, ATAP appositive endocentric (or attributive noun-noun) compounds are not of the usual form [N+prep+N], which cannot establish a metaphorical relation as found in *key word* or *baba mai*. This class of compound has a different, less productive formation; they are of form [N+N] (Villoing 2012:56) like in *mot-clé* ‘key word’. Consider the following: *soldes monstres* ‘monster sales’; *foule-monstre* ‘crazy crowd’; *succès monstre* ‘amazing success’; *voyage éclair* ‘flash voyage’; *visite éclair* ‘flash visit’; *guerre éclair* ‘blitzkrieg’; *poisson-chat* ‘cat-fish’; *homme-grenouille* ‘frogman’ (see Villoing 2012).

It is reasonable to think that the very productive French [N+prep+N] head-initial structures gave rise to the most frequent compounding strategy in Réyoné, who adopted the head position of French compounds but dispensed with the linking element /grammatical preposition (see Section 1). ATAP appositive compounds, establishing a metaphorical relation, on the other hand, are of a different, less productive structure in French. This fact, we might hypothesize, could be the reason why Réyoné has not retained the typical French head order, for these, and has rather resorted to one or more of its (potential) substrate languages (for instance, Tamil or other Indian languages<sup>21</sup>).

## 6. Conclusion

In this article, we have described some properties of noun-noun compounds in Reunion Creole. We have examined the general formation of these compounds, and we looked at some types of rather unexpected structures, some containing an additional element between the nouns, and some with a different head position. It was shown that compounds are formally distinguished from genitive constructions and that modifier nouns cannot appear with a determiner. Elements

---

<sup>19</sup> Scalise & Bisetto (2011) propose to classify compounds following a first division into 3 categories: Subordination, Attribution/apposition (ATAP, a redesignation of what they called attributive compounds in their earlier work), and Coordination. ATAP compounds are further divided into attributive and appositive. Attributive ATAP compounds are defined as formations whose head is modified by a non-head - adjective or a verb - expressing a ‘property’ or ‘quality’ of the head constituent, such as *high* in *high school*. Appositive ATAP compounds the non-head element expresses a property of the head constituent by means of a noun, an apposition, acting as an attribute, like in *snailmail*. Finally, every subcategory is divided into endocentric and exocentric compounds.

<sup>20</sup> Or *root* in other classifications, as opposed to verbal-nexus (Scalise & Bisetto 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Noun-noun compounds are head-final in Tamil (cf. Rajendran 1997); the same is true for instance for Malayalam spoken in Kerala (cf. Rajendran & Mohan 2019), or for Marathi and Hindi (Kulkarni et al. 2012).

such as /lɔ/, /la/ or /d/ sometimes present in words such as *rezin-n-mér* are neither determiners nor prepositions. One intriguing observation is that apart from frequent and productive head-initial N+N compounds similar to French compounds, we also find some head-final compounds: [*farine la-pli*] ‘very light rain’, lit. ‘flour rain’; [*baba mai*] ‘young ear of corn’, lit. ‘baby corn’; thus Réyoné has both left-headed and right-headed nominal compounds, which is rather unusual among languages; we suggest that this could result from language contact which is frequently the case of this kind of situation (cf. Pepper 2016). The semantic relation between the nominals that compose head-final compounds in Réyoné is a particular one, metaphoric in nature; they constitute the class of ATAP appositive endocentric compounds, following Scalise & Bisetto’s (2011) classification. This semantic relation is not expressed by the usual very productive structure [N1+*de*+N2] in French – this could be the reason why Réyoné has rather resorted to one or more of the substrate languages for that type of compound.

## References

- Aboh, Enoch O. 2010. The P Route. In Cinque, G. & Rizzi L. (eds.), *Mapping Spatial PPs: The Cartography of Syntactic Structures 6*, *Oxford Studies in Comparative Syntax*, 225-260. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Albers, Ulrike. 2019. *Le syntagme nominal en créole réunionnais : forme et interprétation*. Université d’Aix-Marseille.
- Albers, Ulrike. 2020. A description of bare noun phrases in Reunion Creole, *Journal of Pidgin and Creole languages*, vol. 35 n°1, p.1-36.
- Alexiadou, Artemis. 2020. Compound Formation in Language Mixing. *Frontiers in Psychology 11*.
- Armand, Alain. 2014. *Dictionnaire Kréol / Français Dictionnaire kréol réyoné français*. Epica, Saint-Denis.
- Bollée, Annegret. 2013a. Reunion Creole. In Michaelis, S.; Maurer, P.; Haspelmath, M. & Huber, M. (eds.), *The survey of pidgin and creole languages. Vol. II: Portuguese-based, Spanish-based and French-based languages*, 241–249. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Bauer, Laurie. 2011. Typology of Compounds. In Lieber, R. & Štekauer, P. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Compounding*, 343–356. Oxford Academic, Oxford.
- Bollée, Annegret. 2013b. Reunion Creole structure dataset. In Michaelis, Susanne Maria & Maurer, Philippe & Haspelmath, Martin & Huber, Magnus (eds.), *Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures Online*. Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig.
- Bisetto, Antonietta & Scalise, Sergio. 2005. The classification of compounds. *Lingue e linguaggio*, 4.2, 319-0.
- Chaudenson, Robert. 1974. *Le Lexique du parler créole de La Réunion*. Champion, Paris.
- Chaudenson, Robert. 2007. *Bare nouns in Réunionnais Creole*. In Baptista, M. & Guéron, J. (eds.), *Noun phrases in creole languages: a multi-faceted approach*, 225–242. John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam / Philadelphia.
- Fábregas, Antonio & Masini, Francesca. 2015. Prominence in morphology: The notion of head. *Lingue e linguaggio 14.1*, 79-96.
- Fradin, Bernard. 2011. Compounding in French. In Lieber R. and P. Štekauer (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook on Compounding*, 417-435. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Jackendoff, Ray. 2010. *Meaning and the lexicon: the parallel architecture, 1975-2010*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

- Kulkarni, Amba, Paul, Soma, Kulkarni, Malhar, Kumar Anil, Surtani, Nitesh. 2012. Semantic processing of compounds in Indian languages. *Proceedings of Coling*, 1489-1502.
- Levi, Judith N. 1978. *The Syntax and Semantics of Complex Nominals*. Academic Press, New York.
- Lieber, Rochelle & Štekauer, Pavol. 2011. In Lieber R. and P. Štekauer (eds). *Oxford Handbook on Compounding*, 417-435. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Nicoladis, Elena. 2002. When Is a Preposition a Linking Element? Bilingual Children's Acquisition of French Compound Nouns, *Folia Linguistica* 36-1-2, 45-64.
- Nikolaeva, Irina & Spencer, Andrew. 2010. The Possession-Modification Scale: A universal of nominal morphosyntax. Manuscript, University of Essex.
- Pepper, Steve. 2016. Windmills, Nizaa and the typology of binominal compounds. In Körtvélyess, L. ; Štekauer, P. & Valera, S. (eds.), *Word-Formation across Languages*, 281–310. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Rajendran, Sankaraveelayuthan. 1997. Grammatical Formalism and Computational Analysis of Nominal Compounds in Tamil. *South Asian Language Review* 7-1, 27-46.
- Rajendran, Sankaraveelayuthan & Mohan, Raj. 2019. Taxonomy of Word Formation in Malayalam. *Journal of Advanced Linguistic Studies* 8, 1-2.
- Scalise, Sergio & Bisetto, Antonietta. 2011. The Classification of Compounds. In Rochelle Lieber, and Pavol Štekauer (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Compounding*, 34-53. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Staudacher-Valliamée, Gillette. 2004. *Grammaire du créole réunionnais*. Université de La Réunion, Saint-Denis.
- Ten Hacken, Pius. 2013. Compounds in English, in French, in Polish, and in General. *SKASE Journal of Theoretical Linguistics* 10.1.
- Véronique, Georges Daniel. 2006. Les « adjectifs qualificatifs » des créoles français : questions de syntaxe et de sémantique. In Staudacher-Valliamée, G. (eds.). *Méthodes et problèmes de la collecte des données. Tradition orale créole. Travaux & Documents* 27, 11–23. Université de la Réunion, Saint-Denis.
- Villoing, Florence. 2012. French compounds. *International Journal of Latin and Romance Linguistics* 24.1, 29-60.
- Zribi-Hertz, Anne. 1972. Sur un cas de construction pseudo-predicative, *Recherches Linguistiques*, 1:159-168.