

UKLO Round 1 2012

4. Haitian (10 marks)

Haitian Creole is a language spoken by about 10 million people in Haiti. It is based largely on French and some African languages. In the spelling, the combinations *an*, *en*, and *on* denote nasal vowels. The table below contains nouns in Haitian Creole combined with definite articles, meaning ‘the’. The English translation is just for the noun itself; so *kòl la* means ‘the necktie’, and *kòl* means ‘necktie’.

kòl la	necktie
jaden an	garden
lanp lan	lamp
kouto yo	knives
mayi a	maize
lanmou an	love
ri a	street
pant lan	slope
manman an	mother
kabann nan	bed
sant yo	odours
lèt la	letter
sans lan	sense
telefòn nan	telephone
kò a	body
mi an	wall
fanm nan	woman
joumou an	pumpkin
ban an	bench, ban
kay la	house
fanmi an	family
pon an	bridge
liv yo	books
dam nan	lady

Question Provide the words represented by ‘?’ in the table below.

1	lalin ?	the moon
2	pitimi ?	the millet
3	muzik ?	the music
4	maldamou ?	the love-sickness
5	kap ?	the kite
6	radyo ?	the radio
7	vant ?	the belly
8	tan ?	the time
9	?	the knife
10	?	the bodies
11	?	the odour
12	?	the book

SOLUTION

Q4. Haitian (10 marks, 12 points)

- Units: items #1-12
- Points per unit:
 - 1 per correct answer.
 - ½ for correct ‘the’ without noun in #9-12.

1 nan	2 an	3 la	4 an	1
5 la	6 a	7 lan	8 an	
9 kouto a	10 kò yo	11 sant lan	12 liv la	

Comment

- The challenge is to work out what determines the form of the article. In metropolitan French, the determinant is partly phonological (l’ before a vowel, as in *l’enfant*, the child) but mainly grammatical: masculine singular *le*, feminine singular *la*, plural *les*. In Haitian, however, it turns out that the main determinant is phonology, with grammar playing a smaller part (the plural is always *yo*).
- What, then, are the possible forms for the singular? There are just five:
 - a, an, la, lan, nan.
 - these differ in two places :
 - first consonant: *l*, *n*, nothing
 - last consonant: *n*, nothing
- *n* is a nasal consonant, along with *m*.
 - Notice that the introduction tells us that *an*, *en* and *on* are nasal vowels, so nasality is important. (Nasal sounds have breath escaping through the nose.)
 - Notice too that only those three combinations of letters are for nasal vowels – not, for example, *in* or *am* (unlike metropolitan French).
- Since you can see that these are related, it would be helpful to lay them out in a table in the hope of finding patterns, with A1-3 and B1-3 as the possible determining conditions; so for example when we have patterns A1+B1 we find *a*:

a	an		B1
la	lan		B2
		nan	B3
A1	A2	A3	

- What then are these patterns?
 - A1: this is the normal pattern.
 - A2: when the noun’s last vowel is either a nasal vowel or follows a nasal consonant.
 - A3: when the noun ends in a nasal consonant.
 - B1: when the noun ends in a vowel.
 - B2: when the noun ends in a non-nasal consonant (including *y*)
 - B3: as for A3.