

## **Code-switching among Mauritian Facebook users**

This paper aims at observing the use of code-switching in online interactions among members of a multi-ethnic and multilingual society. It is not surprising to witness Mauritian oral conversations that include English, French or Asian (Hindi, Urdu, Mandarin, South Asian) words, even if the most-spoken language is Mauritian Creole. But what about public comments posted on social media?

Even though most Mauritians can interact in at least four languages, it is interesting to note that on an online platform such as Facebook, which is one of the most popular social media among Mauritians, there seems to be a struggle on the language to be used to express oneself. Normally, one would expect people to write mostly in their mother tongue in order to ensure full comprehension, especially on local public pages such as that of *l'express Maurice*, one of the leading Mauritian newspapers.

But what happens when the most-spoken language does not have an officially standardized orthography in the midst of its speakers? Although Creole has been introduced in primary schools since 2012, it does not have an important impact yet and is still undergoing continuous amendments. As such, speakers tend to write in any form they believe is correct, leading to one language having different orthographies, sometimes even on the part of a single person.

Through an investigation of *l'express Maurice*'s Facebook page, this paper will follow public comments of Mauritians to analyse the factors leading to, the extent and impacts of code-switching in a multilingual society, that has a somewhat young mother tongue. This research will be conducted using the constraint-free theory of code-switching, adopted by Jeff McSwan.