

MULTILINGUAL LANGUAGE USE AND CREOLE FORMATION: THE CASE OF PROPERTY ITEMS IN EARLY SRANAN

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Abstract

This paper sets up a comparison between the use of property concept items in a creole language and in the languages that contributed to the creole's emergence. The comparison is extended with equivalent constructions in a different outcome of language mixture, namely codeswitching mode, in order to advance our understanding of the role of language transfer in creole formation. While the type of language transfer that is observed in codeswitching mode differs from the type of transfer typically found in creole formation, that is recipient language agentivity and source language agentivity respectively, it is shown in this paper that the Surinamese creole Sranan Tongo displayed both types of transfer in the early stages of its development, which underlines the slow nativization of this particular creole.

1 Introduction

Multilingual language use can lead to different linguistic outcomes, including codeswitching and creole formation among others, depending on different historical and contemporary social processes. They are the object of study in various subdisciplines of linguistics. Scholars interested in the kinds of language mixture by bilinguals such as codeswitching study in the field of language acquisition, in particular bilingual speech production (L2A studies), while those interested in the creation of contact languages such as creoles, pidgins and other outcomes of language contact operate within sociolinguistics in the field of Pidgin and Creole studies (P/C studies). With the rise of contact linguistics as a new subdiscipline of linguistics, and in particular since Winford's adaption of Van Coetsem's (1998, 2000) powerful framework of contact-induced change (Winford 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009), linguistic outcomes and their underlying mechanisms can be studied in a principled and unified manner. Two types of cross-linguistic influence are acknowledged in Van Coetsem's framework, borrowing and imposition, that can refer to both the result of the change and the processes underlying them. Borrowing refers to the transfer of lexical or structural material from the source language to the recipient language that is the speaker's dominant language. Borrowing is a form of recipient language agentivity; it is the recipient language speaker who is the agent of the transfer process. In contrast,

the source language speaker, who is dominant in the source language, is the agent of the type of transfer that is named imposition. While transfer of lexical items from an external source language (or L2) into a speaker's native language (L1) is a prototypical example of borrowing, the transfer of structural patterns and categories from a speaker's L1 into an L2 is a prototypical example of imposition. In general, "borrowing takes place from a less dominant to a more dominant language, while imposition takes place from a more to a less dominant language" (Winford 2009: 283). In short, van Coetsem's framework is recommended by Winford (2009) as it allows for:

- new connections link between (psycho-)linguistic processes and structural as well as historical and sociolinguistic approaches to language contact.
- a precise determination of the nature and the direction of transfer.
- a distinction between the agents of change from the kinds of agentivity they employ; multilingual agents can employ both recipient and language agentivity.
- language dominance to play an important part in the outcomes in language contact, which is line with current views in bilingual speech production.
- language dominance to change over time at speaker as well as community level.

In this paper we set out to deepen our understanding of the roles of source and recipient language agentivity in the formation of Sranan, a Surinamese creole that emerged from the 1650s onwards. Throughout the 17th and 18th century, Surinam was not only a multi-ethnic society but also a multilingual society, as several African, European and Amerindian languages were being spoken by its inhabitants in addition to newly emerging languages such as Sranan, the Western Maroon Creoles Saramaccan and Matawai, and the Eastern Maroon Creoles Ndyuka, Aluku, Pamaka and Kwinti. The development of the early Surinamese population of European and West African descent has been studied in great detail by Arends (1995a, 2001, 2003), who shows that foreign-born Europeans and Africans outnumbered those born in Surinam throughout the 18th century. Even in late 18th century Surinam, over a century after colonization, a large proportion of the plantation slaves had recently arrived from West Africa, owing to the very high replacement rate of slaves in Surinam. Only 30% of the slave population was locally-born at that time (Arends 1995: 269). In other words, new arrivals from Africa outnumbered the existing population of enslaved Africans every three to five years during the first fifty years since the onset of the colony, and almost every ten years during the next fifty years, resulting in "an ongoing stream of cultural and linguistic input from Africa which lasted until the last quarter of the 18th century" (Arends 1995a: 269). In short, multilinguals formed the majority of the Surinamese population of African descent

(but also among the European population) for a prolonged period of time, which must have affected the emerging creole in earlier stages of its development, and also later on. Compelling evidence for this position is found in recent research by Lupyán and Dale (2010), who argue on the basis of a statistical analysis of more than 2,000 languages in combination with large-scale demographic databases that language structure is partly determined by social structure, finding that “language structures appear to adapt to the environment (niche) in which they are being learned and used” (Lupyán & Dale 2010: 1).

Therefore, models such as the three generational model of creole formation as proposed by Roberts (2000) and Siegel (2008), that so neatly explain the emergence of Hawaiian Creole, may not, in my view, be applicable to the emergence of Sranan. In this model, the first generation, which is dominant in the ancestral language, introduces new morphosyntactic features to the emerging pidgin through substrate calquing. The second generation, which speaks the ancestral as well as the newly emerging language, assigns new functions to these features mostly based on models found in their ancestral language. The third generation, which is mostly monolingual in the new language, systematizes and establishes the use of these features. The socio-historical setting in which Sranan emerged is, in my view, simply too messy in terms of demographics for this type of generational model to work, given the slow nativization of the Surinamese slave population and the high rate of slave replacement. Can a minority of mostly monolingual Surinamese-born creoles have a bigger impact on the developing creole than the speech of the majority of bilingual African-born slaves or freemen? What linguistic features are displayed by Early Sranan, a cover term for several varieties of 18th century Sranan, that can give us some insight in this matter? A first comparison of Early Sranan and contemporary native L1 and non-native L2 varieties of Sranan reveals that some Early Sranan features pattern with contemporary L1 Sranan, while others are shared with contemporary L2 Sranan (Migge and van den Berg 2009). An example of the latter is the use of the imperfective aspect marker that is categorical in contemporary L1 Sranan but optional in L2 varieties similar to Early Sranan.

The focus of this paper is on the expression of Property Concepts. Property concepts have received considerable attention in both P/C studies as well as L2A studies, referring to properties, qualities or characteristics of referents. They are often expressed through adjectives, if a language has this category, or they can be expressed through words that share many properties with the class of nouns or with the class of verbs. Core property concepts are DIMENSION, COLOR, AGE and VALUE (Dixon 1977). In P/C studies these items have often been labeled predicate adjectives, as they share properties with the class of verbs, but in line with Migge (2000) I prefer to use the label ‘property items’ as suggested by Thompson (1988, 2004), because it is

meant to be neutral in terms of category. Early Sranan property items express concepts such as AGE (*nju* ‘new’; *ouwroe/ollo* ‘old’), PHYSICAL PROPERTY (*dotti* ‘dirty’; *krien* ‘clean’), SHAPE (*luntu* ‘round’), VALUE (*bun* ‘good’, *takru* ‘bad’), COLOR (*blakka* ‘black’; *redi* ‘red’), DIMENSION (*bigi* ‘big’; *bradi* ‘broad’) and HUMAN PROPENSITY (*lesi* ‘lazy’; *lau* ‘mad’). Property items in Early Sranan display flexible categoriality: They can function as modifiers in attributive contexts, as in (1a), and as predicators in predicative contexts, as in (1b) and (1c). In the former function they can be regarded as adjectives, in the latter they are verbs.

Attributive contexts:

- (1a) **Gimi krien klossi** (Van Dyk c1765: 45)
give-1SG clean clothes
‘Give me clean clothes.’

Predicative contexts:

- (1b) **A no krin na mi** (Schuman 1783: 91)
3SG NEG clean LOC 1SG
‘I don’t like it.’ (literally: ‘It is not nice to me.’)
- (1c) **Joe mo krien drie pissi fossi** (Van Dyk c1765: 87)
2SG must clean three piece first
‘First, you must clean three pieces (of land).’

In the remainder of this paper Early Sranan property items in predicative contexts are discussed as they appear in the historical sources that are stored in the Surinam Creole Archive, a joint project of the Radboud University Nijmegen, the University of Amsterdam and the Max Planck Institute Nijmegen to collect, catalogue and preserve digitalized historical texts in Sranan and Saramaccan. The Early Sranan findings are compared with their equivalents in Eastern Maroon Creole, English, Dutch and the Gbe languages, as well as mixed speech. Thus we set out to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which recipient and source language agentivity influence language formation in the case of Sranan.

2 The Suriname Creole Archive

The texts that were consulted for the present study were retrieved from the Sranan section of the Surinam Creole Archive. They include a) religious texts such as bible translations and hymns (Schumann 1781); b) judicial documents such as transcripts of interrogations and witness reports (Court Records); c) official documents such as a peace treaty; d) travel reports and e) documents that were created for the purpose of language instruction such as dictionaries and language manuals by a Moravian missionary (C. L. Schumann) as well as secular persons (J.D. Herlein, P. van Dyk, J. Nepveu and G. C. Weygandt). Because of this variety of text types,

variation within and among the texts may correspond to different dimensions, ranging from diachronic to social, stylistic as well as geographical. Furthermore, variation within and among the texts may be linked to the different speech events represented in these texts, ranging from recorded, recalled to imagined and invented. While recorded texts are the most reliable (van den Berg & Arends 2004), texts belonging to other text types need to be assessed carefully in terms of representativeness and validity. Detailed assessments can be found in the works of Smith (1987), Arends (1989, 1995b), Bruyn (1995) and van den Berg (2007) among others. A basic overview of the sources is presented in table 1.

Table 1 *The texts in the Sranan section of SUCA that were used in this study*

<i>text</i>	<i>year</i>	<i>document type</i>	<i>page</i>	<i>SR tokens</i>	<i>token total</i>
Court Records	1707-1767	dl; we	-	500	-
Herlein	1718	w; dl	3	200	400
Nepveu	1762	pt	12	1.900	1.900
Van Dyk	c1765	w; dl; pl	108	14.000	28.000
Nepveu	1770	w; dl	8	700	1.800
Schumann	1783	dl; dc	205	20.000	40.000
Stedman	1790	we	-	300	-
Weygandt	1798	w; dl; pl	144	15.000	30.000
<i>total</i>			480	52.600	102.100

(w = word list; dl = dialogue; pl = play; dc = dictionary; we = Sranan words and expressions in text in another language; pt = peace treaty)

3 Early Sranan property items in predicative contexts

Predicative property items in Early Sranan can occur as verbal heads, as in (2),¹ or in constructions such as (3), where the property item can be analyzed as an adjectival complement to a copula or as a verbal head, as the copula and the imperfective aspect marker have the same form in Early Sranan (van den Berg 2007). The example in (4) illustrates that both strategies can be used interchangeably without an apparent change in meaning.

- (2) **Mastra joe habi retti dirkture pranasie no zal dotti** (Van Dyk c1765: 86)
 master 2S have right director plantation NEG MOD dirty
 ‘Master, if you have the right director, the plantation will not get dirty’

¹ Markers of Tense, Mood and Aspect precede the verb in Sranan. Thus, the modal marker *zal* (later time reference, irrealis) underlines the status of verbal head of *dotti* ‘be dirty’. Other indicators of verbhood on which Early Sranan property items test positive are the following: They can be preceded by other markers of Tense, Mood and Aspect in addition to *za(l)*, as well as negation; they may be followed by degree adverbs and some may take object arguments (see also Migge 2000).

- (3) (...) **foe sie ofoe alla sanie dé boenboen**
to see if all thing COP good-REDUP
'(...) to see if everything is well, (...)'
(Weygandt 1798: 134)
- (4) **alla Ningre de blakka / alla Ningre Ø blakka**
all blackman ASP/COP black / all blackman black
'All blackmen are black.' (meaning: 'the pot is calling the kettle black.')

In the contemporary Surinamese creoles Sranan, Ndyuka and Saramaccan, both strategies are encountered: there are property items that function as verbal heads and there are property items that occur as adjectival complements to a copula (Winford 1997; Migge 2000; Sebba 1986). The type of predication is linked to the status of the property item: If the item derives from a small set of 'true' adjectives such as *bun* 'well' (Sranan, Ndyuka) and *bunu/bumbuu* 'good/well'² (Saramaccan), or it is an ideophone, such as *pii* 'quiet' and *gufuu* 'very angry and quiet' in Ndyuka and *pioo* 'black' in Saramaccan, then it appears as an adjectival complement to a copula.³ Furthermore, temporary states are typically expressed by copular constructions with an adjectival complement in the Surinamese Creoles:

- (5) **Efu den sikin de bunbun da a bun!**
if their body COP good thenit good
'If their bodies are in a good/healthy state, then it is OK.'
(Ndyuka, Migge 2000: 220)

By contrast, reduplicated property items can be verbal heads, but then they express approximation or distribution, not a temporary state. The following example illustrates approximation:

- (6) **Wan meti kon nyannyan ala a kasaba a mi goon**
an animal come eat all the.SG cassave LOC 1SG field
'An animal came and nibbled all of the cassave plants in my planting ground.'
(Ndyuka, Huttar & Huttar 1997: 403)

Since the Early Sranan example in (4) above refers to a state similar to the Ndyuka example in (5), it is more likely that the Early Sranan construction in (4) involves a

² The form **bunu** is used to describe inanimate subjects only, whereas **bumbuu** is used only with persons in Saramaccan (Winford 1997: 293).

³ Migge views Ndyuka adjectives such as **bun** 'good; well', **moi** 'nice; well', **nyun** 'new', **fanya** 'disorganized' as abbreviated reduplications rather than unreduplicated property items (Migge 2000: 219).

copula and a complement rather than an imperfective marker preceding a verbal head.

The Early Sranan construction in (4) is more complicated. Unreduplicated predicative adjectives that function as verbal heads are typically non-stative, process-denoting verbs in the Surinamese Creoles (Huttar & Huttar 1994; Winford 1997; Migge 2000). They can receive a stative reading, but that interpretation always follows from the completed process reading (Winford 1997). However, the construction in (4) is clearly a stative one. One's complexion is not likely to change under natural circumstances. Furthermore, it cannot be regarded as the end result of the completed process of becoming black.⁴ Thus Early Sranan *blakka* 'dark skin complexion' seems to belong to that small set of human propensity and value property items in the Surinamese Creoles that can have a stative interpretation without implying a past process (Winford 1997: 263). In contemporary Ndyuka, human propensity and value property items cannot be marked for progressive aspect (Migge 2000: 218), but *de* in (4) above would be a marker of habitual aspect rather than progressive aspect.⁵ Combinations of (unreduplicated) property items with *de* are abundant in the historical sources, but not all can be assigned the status of imperfective marker. For example, we find:

- (7) **Mie dee piekienso swakkie jetee** (Weygandt 1798: 97)
 1SG COP little weak yet
 ['Ik ben nog wat zwakjes.']
 'I am still a bit weak.'

Here, the degree adverb **piekienso** 'little' precedes rather than follows the property item **swakkie** 'weak' (< Dutch *zwak* 'weak'), which can be regarded as evidence of the adjectival copular complement status of **swakkie**. If **swakkie** had been verbal, similar to for example **siekie** (< English *sick*) in (7) below, the degree adverb would have followed it:

- (8) **A ben dee siekie piekienso. Ma a dee boen noja kwetiekwetie.**
 3S PAST ASP sick little but 3S COP good now really-REDUP
 'He has been a little sick. But now he is fine for sure.'
 (Weygandt 1798: 103)

⁴ According to Arends (1986; 1989), Early Sranan **de** is used to indicate a state with non-stativity. Thus, he regards **de** as a means to distinguish stative from non-stative meaning in verbs and property items. While several examples of verbs and property items with **de** in the historical sources can be explained in these terms, the **blakka** example and several other examples present counterevidence to this claim.

⁵ The item **de** can be used to mark progressive, continuous, habitual as well as inchoative or ingressive aspect in Early Sranan (van den Berg 2007).

It is observed in the literature that particularly Dutch-derived items such as **moi** ‘pretty; beautiful’ (< Dutch *mooi* ‘pretty; beautiful’) and **swanger** ‘pregnant’ (< Dutch *zwanger* ‘pregnant’) occur more frequently as adjectival complements than as verbal heads in contemporary Sranan (Seuren 1981; Arends 1989; Winford 1997). Since the property item in (7) is of English language origin (Eng. *sick*), and the property item in (6) of Dutch language origin (Dutch *zwak* ‘weak’), this could account for the different constructions in which the property items occur. As Sranan items of Dutch language origin generally are more recent additions to the language as opposed to Sranan items of English language origin that are generally assumed to date back to the earliest stages of the emerging creole, the type of construction in which the property item participates may be regarded as an indicator of nativization. The English origin property items appear more integrated in the Sranan linguistic system, more ‘nativized’ than the Dutch origin property items because the former function as verbal heads while the latter participate in a copula construction.

In the Early Sranan sources, however, we find not only Dutch language origin property items as adjectival complements, but also English and other language origin property items:

- (9a) **hufa ju tann? mi de so haffo, OD. mi de so haffohaffo**
 Q-manner 2SG stay 1SG COP so half or 1SG COP so half.REDUP
 ‘How are you? I am fairly well.’
 (Schumann 1783: 55)
- (9b) **da pikin boom heh tumussi; a passa alla tarrawan, mi go brokko**
 DET.SG little tree high enough 3SG overtake all other-one 1SG go break
hem heddi, bikasi dem ourewan de morro tschattu
 3SG head because DET.PL old-one COP more small
 ‘The young tree is too high, it overtakes all the others, I will top it, because the older ones are smaller.’
 (Schumann 1783: 135)

Furthermore, we find examples of Dutch-derived items that function as verbal heads, such as **klarie** ‘ready’ (< Dutch *klaar* ‘ready; done’):

- (9c) **Mie no ben kan klarie moro hesie Masra** (Weygandt 1798: 114)
 1S NEG PAST can ready more hastily master
 ‘I could not have been ready any faster, master.’

In short, language origin of the form of the property item by itself cannot be regarded the sole indicator of nativization. Furthermore, irrespective of their etymological origin, Winford (1997) observes a preference for property items as

complements to copular *de* in L2 varieties of Sranan, but he explains these types of predication as “innovations due perhaps to transfer in the acquisition of Sranan as a second language” (Winford 1997: 292). In section 5 I will discuss several codeswitching studies in which the property items as complements to copular pattern plays a prominent role, suggesting that adjectival complements in copula constructions appear to be a preferred strategy in multilingual language use rather than resulting from transfer.

4 A Gbe model for Early Sranan property items?

The Early Sranan findings presented above show that the use of property items in predicative contexts in the Surinamese Creoles cannot solely be accounted for in terms of substrate retention, as proposed by Migge (2000). On the basis of a comparison of property items in Eastern Maroon Creole and several Gbe languages, Migge concludes that the predicative uses of property items in the Surinamese Creoles are derived from a Gbe model, while the attributive uses of property items can be traced back ultimately to the European languages that contributed to the emergence of the Surinamese creoles. Thus, the Surinamese Creoles display “retention from the primary substrate of the syntactic and semantic behavior of property items on one hand, and on the other the adoption of the phonological shapes of property items, the constituent order with the NP, and possibly one of the strategies for deriving attributive adjectives from verbal property items from second-language and pidgin varieties of English” (Migge 2000: 230).

Retention from the Gbe languages can explain the emergence of those property items that function as verbal heads, as property items can function as verbal heads in the Gbe languages (Ameka 1991; Adjei 2005), but that is not the only predicative construction with property items that is encountered in Early Sranan. In the previous sections it is demonstrated that Sranan property items can also occur as adjectival complements in copular constructions. Similar constructions are also found in the Gbe languages. In Ewe, for example, the complement slot of the verb **nye** ‘be’, used in contexts of identification and equation, is filled by nominals that derive from adjectives via category conversion. Furthermore, the verb **le** ‘be (at)’, that has a locative and/or existential meaning, combines with derived adjectivals (Ameka 1991; Essegbey 1999; Amuzu 2005a, b). Category inversion includes affixation (suffixation of a high-toned high front vowel **-i**; suffixation of a high tone with a small class of reduplicated verbs), reduplication (of an intransitive verbal stem, in some dialects with high-tone suffixation) and compounding (of a verb root and its inherent nominal complement), see further Ameka (1991). While the Gbe property items must undergo category inversion before they can appear as complements to a copular verb, no change is observed in the Early Sranan property items. For example, reduplication of

an intransitive verbal stem is an obligatory requirement for many property items; unreduplicated property items as complements of **le** are ungrammatical. This is, however, not the case in Early Sranan, where reduplicated and unreduplicated property items may alternate, see for example (8a) above. Furthermore, while it is true that both the Gbe languages and Ndyuka are characterized by a small set of property items that appear exclusively as copular complements, the sets differ across the languages. Migge (2000: 219) lists **bun** ‘good; well’, **moi** ‘nice, well’, **nyun** ‘new’, **fanya** ‘disorganized’ and **pii** ‘quiet’ for Ndyuka, and **yōyó** ‘new’ (Maxi), **klòbòtó** ‘round’ (Waci) and **mumu** ‘raw’ (Aja) for the Gbe languages. Only the Property Concept NEW allows a match: both **nyun** ‘new’ in Ndyuka and **yōyó** ‘new’ in Maxi (Gbe) occur exclusively as copular complements. If Ndyuka property items were modeled on Gbe, rather than Kikongo or the Akan languages that must also have contributed to the formation of Ndyuka, as they were spoken by the enslaved Africans in the earliest developmental stages of the Surinamese Creoles, one would expect more sets to match between Ndyuka and the Gbe languages, or other Gbe-specific features related to property items to reappear in Ndyuka. For example there are basic color terms (black, red, white) that have different forms when they are used as adjectives or as verbs in Ewe: **yibo** ‘black’ is the adjectival form, **nyrɔ/nyrɔ̃** is the verbal form (Adjei 2005: 165). In the Surinamese creoles the adjectival and verbal form of the property item are not distinguished (**blaka** ‘black’).

Migge’s overview of the expression of Property concepts in the Gbe languages further reveals some variation between the Gbe languages that makes it more difficult to postulate a single Gbe model, in particular for the property items in copular constructions. For example, Aja, Maxi and Waci reduplicate property items that are marked for progressive aspect and turn them into copular constructions for an inchoative reading. Gen and Xwela, on the other hand, combine the progressive aspect marker with the unreduplicated property predicator to generate an inchoative reading (Migge 2000). The latter languages display the same pattern as Ndyuka, but there is a set of Ndyuka items that cannot take a inchoative reading, while all Gbe property items marked by progressive aspect take on an inchoative interpretation (Migge 2000: 217).

In conclusion, it is undisputed that there are multiple similarities with regard to the use of property items as verbal heads in the Gbe languages and the Surinamese creole languages that suggest that this structural pattern was indeed transferred from the Gbe languages to the emerging Surinamese creole varieties, as suggested by Migge (2000). This instance of source language agentivity, however, cannot account for the occurrence of property items in copular constructions that are also attested in Early Sranan, and that appear to have been used interchangeably, as the following example illustrates:

- (10) **a de morro langa leki mi, ODER a langa morro na mi**
3SG COP more long like 1SG or 3SG long more/exceed LOC 1S
'He is taller than me.'
(Schumann 1783: 100)

In the subsequent sections, I will argue that these copular constructions with property items result from recipient language agentivity. Thus, the emergence of the multiple uses of property items in Early Sranan shows that both source and recipient language agentivity contributed to the formation of Sranan.

5 Property items and codeswitching

Each language expresses property concept forms differently, through adjectives, if a language has this category, or they can be expressed through words that share many properties with the class of nouns or with the class of verbs. From a contact linguistics perspective, it raises the following question: What happens in multilingual speech to property items, when the property item is categorically non-equivalent in the languages of the multilingual speaker? If we want to provide an explanation for the emergence of the multiple uses of property items in Early Sranan, this is the question that we need to address. While property items in the European languages belong to the class of adjectives, property items in the West African languages that contributed to the emergence of the Surinamese Creoles can occur in predicative contexts in various constructions and forms. How do West African bilinguals deal with categorical non-equivalence of property items in predicative contexts in their bilingual discourse? If property items in predicative contexts appear in copular constructions in one language, and as verbal heads in the other, what happens when these languages are in contact? In the following sections findings from case studies of present day language mixture in West Africa are discussed, featuring the same languages that contributed to the emergence of the Surinamese creoles.

5.1 Ghana: Ewe/Akan-English code-switching

In present day Ghana, several languages are in contact that also contributed to the emergence of the Surinamese Creoles three centuries earlier, that is, the indigenous languages Akan and Ewe and English, the former colonial language that is now the official language as well as the dominant language of instruction in school from primary four. Language contact between these languages has resulted in the pervasive use of intra-sentential code-switching since the early 1950s. Despite this prolonged period of language contact, Ewe-English bilinguals display dual communicative competence and tacit grammatical knowledge of both Ewe and English, even though their vocabulary knowledge appears weak (Amuzu 2005; 2009 among others). Amuzu (2009) further presents compelling evidence that code-switching Ghanaian bilinguals

employ “certain mother tongue maintenance mechanisms that preserve the grammar and parts of the lexicon of their mother tongue against interference from English” (Amuzu 2009: 222).

Property items can occur as verbal heads as well as complements to *le* in monolingual Ewe (Ameka 1991; Essegbey 1991; Amuzu 2009 etc.). When property items appear as complements to *le*, their categorial status is not clear. On the one hand, they can be marked for progressive aspect by means of *-m*, as is shown in (11). They share this feature with prototypical verbs.

- (11) **Emɔ́-á le gɔ́-glɔ́-m** (Essegbey 1999: 65)
road-DEF AUX:PRES RED-become_crooked-PROG
‘The road is becoming crooked.’

On the other hand, there are property items that can be marked by the *e*-adverbializer, a derivational morpheme that converts adjectives into adverbials (Ameka 1991; Amuzu 2004, 2005):

- (12) **Eyata as for asige lae, e-le vevi-e**
So as for ring TP 3SG-be.at:PRES important-AdvS
‘So, as for the ring, it is important.’
(Amuzu 2004: 136)

In bilingual Ewe-English discourse, English property items occur as complements of *le* despite the fact that their Ewe equivalents function as verbs (without *le*).⁶ Amuzu (2004, 2005) presents multiple examples of this. The construction *le free* in (13a) with the verb *vo* ‘be free’ in (13b):

- (13) a. **Esi wó-ɖe asi ɖevi-a ɲu wo-le free nenema a ...**
since 3PL-remove hand child-the side 3SG-be.at:PRES as_such TP
‘Since they allowed the child so that he is so free ...’
b. ... **wo-yo nenema a ...**
3SG b be_free as_such TP
‘... he is so free ...’
(Amuzu 2004: 138)

English property items that have Ewe equivalents of similar categorial status (true adjectives such as *vevi* ‘important’ above) also appear as complements to *le*. But

⁶ However, Amuzu (2004) notes that if the English adjectival element is a verb rather than a non-verbal element, it can occur as a verb in a mixed construction: “For instance, *rot* is a one-place verbal predicate, so it has to occur as a verb in CS contexts (as in *e-rot* ‘it is rotten’). But its non-verbal one-place adjective predicate counterpart *rotten* has to occur as a complement of *le* as in *e-le rotten* ‘it is rotten’”. (Amuzu 2004: 142).

they differ from their Ewe counterparts in that they may not be combined with the *e*-adverbializer that is required in Ewe (Amuzu 2004: 140). Examples such as (14) are judged unacceptable by bilingual Ewe-English speakers:

- (14) **Eyata as for asige lae, e-le *important-e**
 so ring TP 2SG-be.at:PRES
 ‘So, as for the ring, it is important.’
 (Amuzu 2004: 140)

In conclusion, Ewe-English bilinguals generalize an existing Ewe structure in which English property items are inserted without any alternations to the English or the Ewe items.

English property items occur in bilingual Akan-English discourse in the same manner as in Ewe-English discourse (Amuzu 2004). While Akan has four different types of copula constructions, English property items (adjectival complements to a copula) are found with *yɛ*, an ascriptive copula that can take a generic co-referential nominal as well as a property-denoting adjectival predicate as its complement as in (15).

- (15) **Ne condition a- yɛ very critical**
 his PF- be
 ‘His condition is very critical.’
 (Forson 1979: 149, in Amuzu 2007: 147)

5.2 Togo: Kabiye-Ewe codeswitching

The case of bilingual Kabiye-Ewe discourse is particularly interesting, as it presents us with a rare case of language mixture of two African languages: Kabiye, a Gur language spoken in the northern part of Togo, and Mina or Gen, related to Ewe (Essizewa 2006; 2007a, b). Both Kabiye and Ewe have the official status of national languages since 1975. Kabiye has an intricate noun class system and noun class agreement, as opposed to Ewe, that has no noun class system and therefore no noun class agreement. Kabiye nouns are morphologically marked according to the class to which they belong and adjectives agree, in turn, with the class of the noun they modify (Essizewa 2006; 2007a, b). Whereas Ewe nouns and verbs may be marked by the appropriate Kabiye affixes when they are inserted into Kabiye discourse, Ewe property items occur in predicative position in the form of adjectival complements to the Kabiye copula *we* ‘be’ (Essizewa 2007a). In his extensive study of Kabiye-Ewe bilingual discourse, Essizewa concludes that “the use of the Kabiye copula *we* ‘be’ with Ewe adjectives appears to be the most common form of code-switched utterances among Kabiye-Ewe bilinguals” (Essizewa 2007a: 36). Since agreement with the copula is not required in Kabiye, and thus, no morphological adaptations of the Ewe

property items are necessary, the Ewe property items can easily be inserted into the Kabiye construction without having to undergo any changes, as in (16).⁷

- (16) **Peló eníyɔ e-tóko wɛ yibɔɔ esí aká yó**
 girl that s/he-dress be black like charcoal EP
 ‘That girl’s dress is black like charcoal.’
 (Essizewa 2007a: 36)

Essizewa (2007a) reports that similar constructions are found in Kabiye-French discourse with property items that are French in origin:

- (17) **Assigame wóndu wɛ joli páa yo** (Essizewa 2007a: 36)
 Asigame things be pretty INT EMP
 ‘Things are very beautiful in Asigame.’

5.3 Benin: French-Fon codeswitching

Meechan and Poplack (1995) compare adjectivization strategies in Wolof-French (Senegal) and Fon-French discourse (Benin). Their research differs from the studies mentioned above in the focus of the research, that is lone French-origin items in Wolof and Fon discourse of bilingual speakers who are highly proficient in both Wolof or Fon and French. The codeswitching patterns appear superficially similar in Wolof and Fon, but Meechan and Poplack find evidence for different underlying patterns: French-origin property items are loanwords in Wolof as they are fully integrated in the Wolof linguistic system, but they should be regarded as code-switches in Fon. In general, Fon property items in predicative contexts exhibit the same pattern as the other Gbe languages discussed in this paper, that is they can function as verbal heads, or they appear as adjectival complements with the existential or copular verb, that is *dò*. Only true adjectives, such as *dáxó* ‘big’ and *dàgbè* ‘good’, and reduplicated adjectives may participate in the latter construction. However, Meechan and Poplack (1995) find that true adjectives hardly occur in predicative or attributive contexts in their corpus of 4 hours of tape-recorded Fon-French discourse among a sample of twenty bilingual Béninois residing in Cotonou. The majority of

⁷ Note while the Ewe items following the Kabiye copula are not adapted in line with Kabiye, they may undergo changes that are appropriate from an Ewe perspective. For example, the true Ewe adjective *yibɔ* ‘black’ appears as an adjectival complement, but Ewe *hámeháme* ‘different’ is reduplicated as it is not a true adjective, requiring reduplication when co-occurring with a copula:

1. **Sɔnɔ wɔndu wɛ hámeháme Asigame-da** (Essizewa 2007a: 36)
 today things be different Asigame-in
 ‘Today, there are varieties of things in Asigame.’

Fon property items occur in predicative position, where they function as verbs. In none of the cases of Fon property items in the monolingual Fongbe utterances is the *dò* + adjectival complement encountered, which brings Meechan and Poplack (1995: 191) to the conclusion that the *dò* + adjectival complement construction is “virtually nonexistent in monolingual discourse”. In the case of the lone French-origin property items, on the other hand, all but one appear in the context of the preceding Fon copula in their corpus. On the basis of these findings, Meechan and Poplack conclude that “the French adjectives in Fongbe predicative contexts are virtually all code-switches, with the copula *dò* serving as a bridge to categorical equivalence. A codeswitching analysis of the lone French-origin adjectives in Fongbe discourse is supported by the behavior of the four unambiguous code-switches in the data, three of which appear after *dò*” (Meechan and Poplack 1995: 189). Summarizing, Fon-French bilinguals utilize a structure that is grammatically acceptable, though quantitatively rare, which prevents them from compromising their bilingual grammars and allows them to maintain not only categorical but also structural equivalence at the same time.

5.4 Conclusion: Property items and codeswitching in West Africa

The findings presented in the preceding sections show that copular constructions are the preferred strategy among West African bilinguals to solve the problem of the categorical non-equivalence of the property items in their multiple languages: Property items of English or French origin participate in Gbe, Akan and Kabiye predicative structures not as verbal heads in line with their Gbe, Akan and Kabiye equivalents, but as complements to copulas. In contrast, some Gbe, Akan and Kabiye property items can occur as complements to copulas in monolingual mode, albeit in a different manner. For example, only a limited set of Gbe property items can occur as complements to *le*, and these property items have to be subjected to processes of category inversion and morphological adaptations. Category inversion is not found with the property items of European origin.

6 Concluding remarks

In this paper we set out to provide an explanation for the use of property items as verbal heads as well as complements to copulas in Early Sranan by comparing past processes of language mixture that lead to the emergence and subsequent development of the Surinamese Creoles with contemporary processes of language contact in present-day West Africa. While in monolingual uses of the Gbe, Kabiye and Akan languages under investigation property items may act as verbal heads, property items of European origin appear as complements to copular verbs in the multilingual uses of these languages. As both patterns are attested in Early Sranan, property items as verbal heads and property items as complements in copular

constructions, we conclude therefore that Early Sranan property items do not only illustrate the impact of source language agentivity on the developing creole, but also recipient language agentivity. This is not surprising given the socio-historical and demographic background of Early Sranan. Throughout the 18th century multilinguals were numerically dominant among the Surinamese population, speaking ancestral languages as well as the developing creole, and thus providing for ample opportunity for imposition as well as borrowing to have an effect on the developing creole.

The findings presented in the previous sections show that the copular verb with property item complement is widely attested in multilingual language use in Ghana, Togo and Benin. Similar patterns are reported to have been found in Punjabi-English, Tamil-English as well as Swahili-English codeswitching. A comparison of all of these codeswitching instances remains for future investigation, but it may be the case that the copular verb with property item complement construction results from a universal tendency. Support for a universal preference for the copular verb with property item complement construction also comes from the field of language acquisition: Adjei (2005) reports on the use of verbal and adjectival uses of color terms among Ewe speaking children that they experience difficulty in differentiating between the adjectival and verbal uses of color terms. The form of the basic color term depends on the categorical status of the item, verbal and adjectival property items have different word forms (*yibɔ* ‘black’ vs. *nyrɔ* / *nyrɔ̃* ‘be black’, *dzíe* ‘red’ vs. *bã* ‘be red’, *ɣie* ‘white’ vs. *fiu* ‘be white’, Adjei 2005: 165). In particular the verbal uses of the color terms are reported to generate incorrect responses from the twenty interviewed children with mean age of 9.2, which may be due to the fine-grained differences in meaning between the basic color verbs and the basic color adjectives that can also appear in predicative constructions as complements to a copular verb (Adjei 2005: 169), as illustrated in (17).

(17a) **Gbɔ̃ la fe agbelē le yibɔ** (Adjei 2005: 169)
 goat DEF POSS fur be black
 ‘The goat’s hair is black.’

(17b) **Gbɔ̃ la fe agbelē nyrɔ/nyɔ̃** (Adjei 2005: 169)
 goat DEF POSS fur dark/black
 ‘The goat’s hair is black/dark.’

The findings presented in this paper show that source language agentivity as well as recipient language agentivity contributed to the formation of Sranan by setting up a comparison between historical creole language data on the one side (they provide a window on the language as it was developing), and contemporary data on multilingual language use on the other. Even though the socio-historical and demographic

backgrounds of the contact settings of 18th century Surinam and 21st century West Africa are very different, the languages that are in contact are the same in the past and the present. If one wants to understand language change, in particular the type of change that contributes to the emergence of new languages such as pidgins and creoles, a principled comparison of the socio-historical and demographic settings of 18th century Surinam and 21st century West Africa in relation to the linguistic outcomes of language contact in these settings is urgently needed. Scholars from the University of Ghana (Legon), the University of Lomé and the Radboud University of Nijmegen recently started to lay down the groundwork on the basis of which this comparison can be set up, by collecting data on multilingual language use in Ghana, Togo, The Netherlands and Surinam via various semi-experimental research techniques, including referential-communication tasks with video stimuli and elicitation via Director-Matcher tasks.⁸ The results of this study will enable us to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of and interaction between social and linguistic factors on language change.

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