

COPULA VERBS IN TWI/ENGLISH CODESWITCHING

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Codeswitching (CS) as a linguistic phenomenon has seen tremendous literature as researchers endeavour to find a universal theory to explain the complexities underlining why speakers switch codes. In the area of grammar, it has become more complex as many of the theories that seek to explain the constraints on CS have seen counter examples from other contact situations. This situation stems from the fact that different languages pattern differently with other languages. The aim of this paper is not to attempt to find a universal model for the many CS situations, but to add to what already exists. The work introduces a structural accommodation model based on the 4-M model of the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model (Myers-Scotton 2002) to explain [the distribution of](#) copula verbs in Twi/English CS. Twi is a dialect of Akan, the biggest language spoken in Ghana. This model [holds](#) that English content morphemes are allowed in Twi/English CS when they fit a predicate-argument structure in Twi [constructions](#). This study found that Twi copula verbs cannot be switched for their English **be** counterparts in CS because Twi copulas play a major role in the selection of complements. However, English content morphemes are allowed as Twi copula complements because Twi has [the grammatical structure to accommodate their](#) predicate-argument structures.

L'alternance codique (AC) comme phénomène linguistique est l'objet d'une riche littérature dans la mesure où les chercheurs s'évertuent à trouver une théorie universelle susceptible d'expliquer les complexités qui mènent des locuteurs à changer de code. En grammaire, c'est devenu d'autant plus complexe que beaucoup de théories qui cherchent à expliquer les contraintes sur l'alternance codique font face à beaucoup de contre exemples à partir d'autres situations de langues en contact. Cette situation dérive du fait que le comportement varie de manière différente selon les langues en contact. Le but de cet article n'est pas d'essayer de trouver un modèle universel pour de nombreuses situations d'alternance codique, mais d'enrichir ce qui existe déjà. L'article introduit un modèle structural d'accommodement basé sur le modèle D-M du Modèle du Cadre de la Langue matricielle (MLF) (Myers-Scotton 2002) en vue d'expliquer la distribution des verbes copules dans les alternances codiques anglais/twi. Le twi est un dialecte de l'akan, la langue majoritaire du Ghana. Ce modèle soutient l'idée que les morphèmes de contenus anglais sont permis dans l'alternance codique twi anglais lorsqu'ils s'accommodent à la structure de l'argument-prédicat dans les constructions twi. Cette étude révèle que les copules twi jouent un grand rôle dans la sélection des compléments. Cependant, le twi permet les morphèmes de contenus anglais comme copules compléments parce qu'il est doté d'une structure grammaticale susceptible d'accommoder la structure prédicat-argument de l'anglais.

0. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at explaining why in spite of the intense codeswitching situation between Twi and English, English **be** copula verbs have not replaced the Twi copula system in Twi/English intra-sentential CS. Twi is one of the dialects of Akan, the biggest language spoken in Ghana; 48% of Ghanaians claim it as their L1 (2010 Population and Housing Census). It is guesstimated that Twi is spoken by about 70% of the population, especially in non-Akan urban centres and in regional capitals as a second language. Akan belongs to the (New) Kwa languages of the Niger Congo (Boadi 2005: 15).

CS works in Ghana have seen tremendous literature e.g. Forson (1979, 1988) has worked on Akan/English CS, Asilevi (1990) and Amuzu (1998, 2005, 2010, 2013) on Ewe/English CS and Quarcoo (2009) also worked on Twi/English CS. Dako (2002) has also investigated the use of English words and phrases by Twi speakers as either borrowings on the one hand or switches on the other hand. This paper introduces a

structural accommodation model that argues that English content morphemes can be complements of Twi copulas because they fit a predicate-argument structure in Twi constructions. In this work, CS constituents will focus on describing the distribution of copula verbs in bilingual constructions.

1. METHODOLOGY

The data for this work are made up of five conversations among friends and family, four radio discussions and three television discussions. All the conversations and media discussions are carried out in Twi.

The conversations are all informal and include one social gathering of six women aged between 35 and 70 and another among office workers aged between 22 and 40. There were also two recordings of a conversation among four university ladies aged between 19 and 24 and another one among three members in a family of three generations aged between 17 and 70. All the recordings were made between 2007 and 2010.

The conversations were not planned, likewise the topics. Therefore, participants continuously shifted from one topic to another and sometimes introduced new ones before a previous one has been exhausted. Some of the topics in the conversations are health, trade, office gossip, and death. Recordings were done with permission from the participants. The media discussions concentrated on specific topics like politics, health, the police service and students' affairs. Because the discussions were already in the public domain, no permission was asked for the recordings to be done.

The recordings lasted between ten minutes and one hour thirty minutes. Transcription convention¹ is adopted from the Jefferson system of notation with some slight modifications. Secondly, to differentiate between languages, English is in capitals and Twi is in normal font. CS constructions being analysed are underlined.

2. TWI COPULA CONSTRUCTION

Amuzu (2005, 2010) identifies four copula morphemes in Twi. These are **yɛ**, **nɛ**, **dɛ** and **wɔ**. He notes that **yɛ** ascribes to its subject NP, the property or quality expressed in the generic co-referential nominal that occurs as its complement. **Yɛ** can also link its subject NP to an adjectival complement. In example (1a), **yɛ** links **Papa no** 'the man' to the generic co-referential nominal complement **ɔkyerɛkyerɛni** 'a teacher' showing that **papa no** possesses the qualities generally associated with teachers.

- (1) a. **Papa no** yɛ ɔkyerɛkyerɛ-ni
 Man DET is teacher -SG

'The man is a teacher.'

(Amuzu 2005: 86)

In example (1b) **yɛ** links the subject NP **Maame no** 'the woman' to its adjectival complement **fɛ** 'beautiful' indicating that the woman possesses that quality.

- (1) b. **Maame no** hɔ yɛ fɛ
 Woman DET body is beautiful
 'The woman is beautiful.'

¹ Orthographic transcription, (.)-short pause, (.) pause, xxx indecipherable speech, // overlapping speech, -- uncompleted word/sentence, : stretched word, wo(h)rd - Laughter bubbling within a word

Ne and **de**, according to Amuzu (2005: 87), take identification/definite co-referential nominal complements and perform two contrastive shades of equative meaning. He argues that **ne** is used when the co-referential nominal complement is a common but identifiable nominal. In Example (2a) **ne** links the subject NP **Papa no** ‘that man’ to the equative NP complement to **ɔmo kyerɛkyerɛni no** ‘their teacher’

- (2) a. **Papa no ne ɔmo ɔkyerɛkyerɛ-ni no**
 Man DET is DET teacher -SG FOC
 ‘That man is their teacher.’

Ne adds definiteness to the subject and its equative complement because **ɔmo ɔkyerɛkyerɛni no** and **Papa no** are identified as the same entity. When **yɛ** is used in the same context, the determiner **ɔmo** and focus marker **no** would be omitted as in example (1a).

De is used when the co-referential nominal complement is a proper noun. In (2b) **de** equates **abaayewa** to **Ama**, the name of the person.

- (2) b. **Abaayewa no de Ama**
 Girl DET is (called) Ama
 ‘The girl is called Ama.’

Wɔ, according to Amuzu (2005), has locational functions and takes a locational NP complement. In Example (3) **ɛdɛɛm** ‘room’ is the complement of **wɔ** showing the location of the speaker.

- (3) **Maame no wɔ ɛdɛɛm**
 Woman DET is.in room
 ‘The woman is in the room.’

These examples show that Twi copula verbs are selected based on the functions of their complements i.e. **yɛ** links a nominal experiencer to a nominal/adjectival complement. **Ne** and **de** link their nominal subjects to equative nominal and **wɔ** performs locative functions.

3. THEORETICAL MODEL

This work employs the 4-M model of the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model of Myers-Scotton (2002) to explain a structural accommodation model for Twi/English CS. The 4-M model identifies four types of morphemes in human language (Myers-Scotton and Jake 2000a: 3ff; Myers-Scotton 2002: 72ff). These are:

- Content morphemes: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs and some prepositions.
- Early system morphemes: verb satellites (e.g. **into** in **look into**), negation, the plural marker, etc.
- Late bridge system morphemes: items that provide grammatical links between two units (e.g. copulas and possessive linkers)
- Lateoutsider system morphemes: most grammatical morphemes, e.g. tense/mood/aspect markers and case markers.

The morphemes are classified according to their relation with conceptual activation with the feature [+/_ conceptually activated]. A morpheme with a plus reading feature shows that that morpheme is semantically and pragmatically salient at the Lemma level. It also shows that that morpheme has all the information needed for the form of the morpheme at the Lemma level. The plus feature separates content and early system morphemes from other morphemes that have minus features. At the same

time, the feature [+/_ thematic role assignment] distinguishes content morphemes from all system morphemes. Content morphemes have a plus feature for thematic role assignment and system morphemes have a minus feature in thematic assignment. At the Conceptual level, content morphemes and early system morphemes share the feature [+ conceptually activated] (Amuzu 2013). ‘The feature [+/- refers to the grammatical information outside of maximal projection of its head] classifies morphemes according to how their forms participate in building larger constituents’ (Myers-Scotton and Jake 2000a: 3, 2001: 98). The distinctions of these features can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1

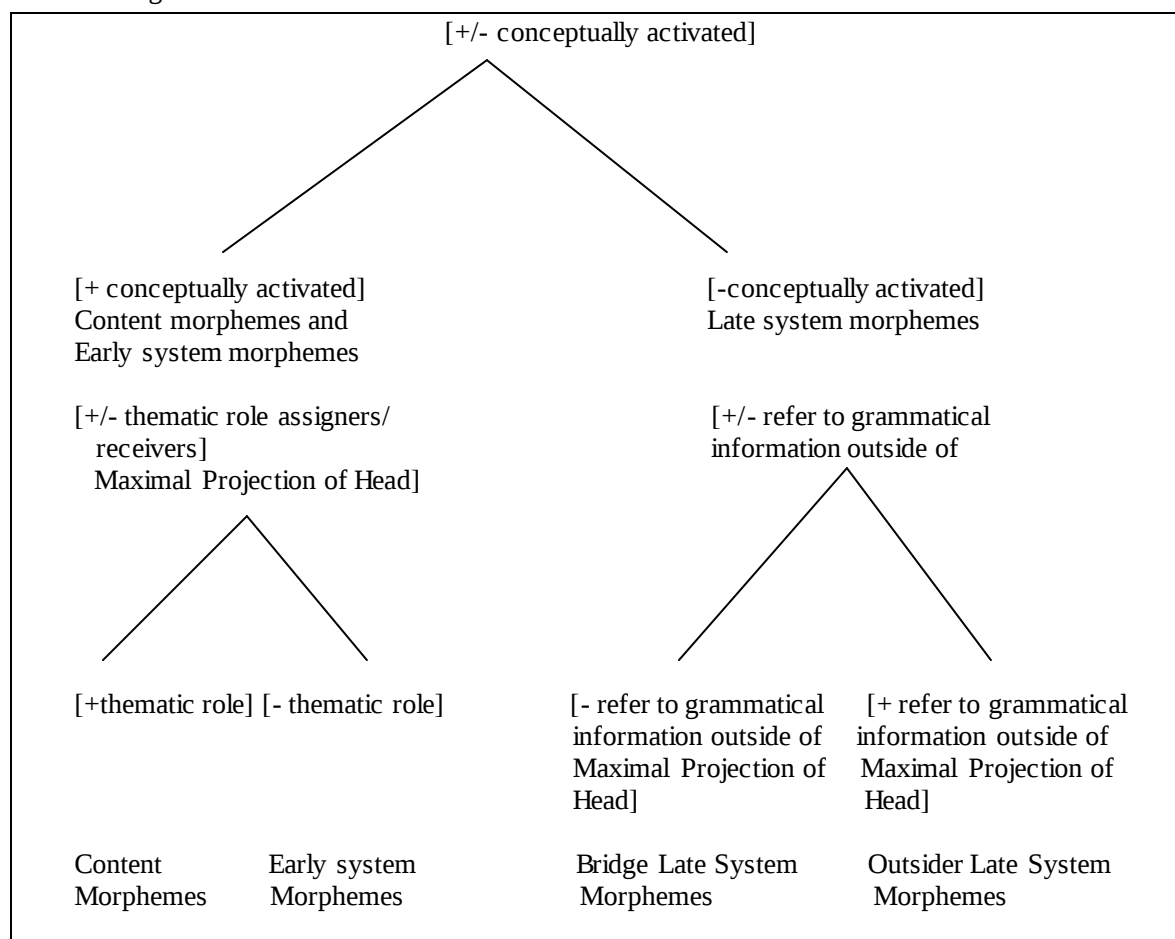


Figure 1. Feature – based classification of morphemes in the 4 – M model (Myers Scotton 2002:73)

i. Content morphemes

Content morphemes assign and receive thematic roles and have plus reading for the feature [+/- thematic role assignment]. Examples of content morphemes are nouns, verbs, adjectives, some pronouns and some prepositions. They also have a plus reading for feature +/- conceptually activated meaning that their semantic and pragmatic meanings become salient at the Lemma level.

ii. Early system morphemes

Early system morphemes have minus reading for the feature [+/- thematic role assignment] and so do not assign any [thematic](#) roles. They are however activated at the Lemma level because the content morphemes they accompany point to them when those content morphemes are activated. Examples are adverbial particles that accompany verbs to make phrasal verbs e.g. **off** in [**dash off**], **down** in [**cool down**], etc., prepositions that accompany prepositional verbs e.g. **after** in **look after**] etc.

iii. Late system morphemes

Morphemes in this category have a minus reading for the feature [+/- conceptually activated] because they are not activated early in the language production process. These are the late bridge system morphemes and the outsider system morphemes. These morphemes build the structures of larger constituents by mapping conceptual structures to phrase structures and are therefore ‘structurally assigned’ (Amuzu 2010: 28). Examples of the late bridge system morphemes are the possessive marker ‘s’ and copula verbs. Outsider system morphemes include tense/aspect [markers and grammatical case markers](#).

3.1 NATURE OF LANGUAGE PRODUCTION

Myers-Scotton’s (1993, 2002) speech production [model](#), adapted from Levelt’s (1989) speech processing model, indicates that the expression of pre-verbal concepts enables a speaker to unconsciously make choices of language-specific lexical items. These items inform the grammatical requirement of their construction, i.e. the syntactic structure. According to Myers-Scotton (2002) [and](#) Myers-Scotton and Jake (2001), there are four stages/levels of abstract operation – (1) the Conceptual level, (2) the Lemma level (3) the Functional level, and (4) the Surface level.

The functions of these morphemes in the nature of language production are discussed in Table 1.

Table 1

The language production model of Myers-Scotton and Jake 2001, Myers-Scotton 2002 adapted by Amuzu 2005: 20-2 [2010: 22])

Conceptual Level	At this level, speakers make selections encapsulating the Conceptual Level structures they wish to convey. What this means is that, pre-verbally, speakers make decisions regarding what their intentions are. Such pre-verbal speaker-intentions (which consist of universally available semantic and pragmatic information) are conflated as specific semantic/pragmatic feature bundles, or SP feature bundles, which are necessarily language-specific. If the discourse includes CS, then the ML for mixed constructions is selected. Information is sent to the Lemma level
The Lemma level	The language-specific SP feature bundles activate entries in the mental level lexicon called Lemma, which support the realization of actual surface lexemes. Specifically, the SP feature bundles activate Lemmas supporting content morphemes (such

	morphemes as verbs, nouns, and adjectives). These content morphemes Lemmas may also point to Lemmas supporting early system morphemes e.g. LOOK requires INTO in ‘ LOOK INTO something’. The lexical-conceptual structure of content morphemes is salient at this level. Information is sent to the Functional Level where a control centre known as Formulator operates.
Functional Level	The Formulator interprets the language-specific Lemma information about the content morpheme, which comprises the already salient lexical-conceptual structure and the two other sub-parts of Lemma information; the predicate-argument structure and morphological realization pattern. Concerning predicate-argument structure, the Formulator maps thematic structure onto grammatical relations. For instance, it detects how many arguments a verb takes and what thematic role the verb assigns each argument. It then maps the grammatical relations among these elements. Concerning the morphological realization pattern, the Formulator detects what language-specific devices for word order, agreement, tense/aspect/mood marking, case marking, negation, etc. that are suitable for expressing the morpheme’s grammatical functional elements – are selected at this level to meet the content morpheme’s morphosyntactic requirements. Information is sent to the Surface level
Positional/ Surface Level	Phonological and morphological realizations take place, i.e. the actualization of surface structure configurations is made.

Based on this language production process, this work introduces the structural accommodation model which argues that Twi as the ML provides the grammatical frame into which English is allowed a slot to insert words following the Morpheme Order Principle (MOP). It contends that English content morphemes can only participate in Twi/English CS when [their](#) predicate - argument structures [can be accommodated in slots in Twi constructions](#). This position has been adopted because I believe this model adequately explains the constraints on copula constructions in Twi/English CS and other constraints in Twi/English CS.

4. THE STRUCTURAL ACCOMMODATION MODEL IN MIXED COUPLA CONSTRUCTIONS

This model bases its argument on the fact that a bilingual/multilingual speaker has all his/her languages stored in one faculty of the brain. During speech production, a speaker decides which of the languages s/he wants to use (most often s/he plans to speak monolingually and does not plan to code switch). However, because the individual has more than one language in his/her language inventory, these languages are simultaneously activated and compete for space at the Conceptual level. For example, when one plans to make a copula construction in Twi, the one begins with it; however, because the speaker has English also in his/her language inventory, English projects itself and competes with Twi. Because the speaker has already selected Twi, it has the upper hand and so creates the structure and checks the slots it will allow English [into](#).

This work employs Amuzu's (2005: 20 -2 [2010: 22]) Composite model based on Myers Scotton and Jake (2001), Myers-Scotton (2002) language production model to explain how the structural accommodation model works.

1. When an English content morpheme is activated at the Lemma level, its lexical-conceptual structure showing the property/entity, etc it encodes becomes salient. At the same time, information on its predicate-argument structure and the morphological realization are sent to the Formulator.
2. At the Functional level, four processes take place. (1) The Formulator checks the grammatical property of the morpheme and realizes that it is a predicate. (2) The Formulator then checks to see if it fits a Twi predicate-argument structure. (3) If it fits, the Formulator finds out the function of the morpheme i.e. whether it performs an ascriptive function, equative function, locative, etc. This information is extremely important because it will influence the next stage of the process. (4) The Formulator recognizes that it must be grammatically bridged to its NP subject for the morphological realization pattern and this bridge is a copula. The selection of the copula depends on the function of the morpheme and that is what makes process number (3) crucial.
3. Twi then selects the appropriate copula for the morphological realization pattern based on the information it received in the third stage because Twi distinguishes among copulas depending on their complements. The morpheme order principle (MOP) also requires that Twi morphosyntactic orders [are](#) followed in such construction.

The work explains the stages with the English complement **problem** in Example (4a)

(4) a. **Sɛ wo yɛ saa a ɛ- bɛ- yɛ PROBLEM**

If 2SG do that FOC it- FUT-be problem

'If you do that, it will be a problem.'

Stage 1: At the Lemma level, a speaker selects an English content morpheme **problem** as the complement of a Twi copula construction. When this is done, the lexical-conceptual structure indicating its property-encoding feature becomes salient. At the same time, information on its predicate-argument structure together with the morphological realization pattern is sent to the Formulator at the Functional level.

Stage 2 - At the Functional level, the Formulator checks the grammatical property of **problem** and realizes that it is a predicate. (2) The Formulator then checks to see if **problem** fits [into](#) a Twi [morphosyntactic frame](#). (3) If it fits, the Formulator finds out that it encodes a generic reference and it is a nominal element. (4) The Formulator recognizes that it must be grammatically bridged to its NP subject for the morphological realization pattern and this bridge is a copula.

Since Twi copulas perform specific roles in the assignment of complements, it detects that the nominal subject from the Twi-origin Lemma information about copula relationship requires a **yɛ** to link it to the nominal complement. Even though the English content morpheme requires a similar **be** copula to link it to its subject, the **be** copula cannot rightly express that generic relation and so **yɛ** is selected. This is also to fulfil the MLF requirement of Twi providing the system morphemes. **Yɛ** is a late-bridge system morpheme because according to the 4-M model, its form becomes accessible at the Functional level and not at the Lemma level. The morpheme order principle (MOP) also requires that Twi morphosyntactic orders is followed in such construction.

Stage 3 - At the Surface level, ϵ is linked to **problem** with **yε** because the pronoun subject possesses the quality attributed to it. **Problem**'s equivalence in Twi i.e. **ɔhaw** can also be projected with a **yε** copula as in 4(b)

(4) b. **Sε wo yε saa a ε- bε- yε ɔhaw**

If 2SG do that FOC it- FUT- be problem
'If you do that, it will be a problem'

Another example that explicates this argument is in (4c) with **woman** and **simple**. At the Lemma level, **woman** and **simple** are selected. At the Functional level, **woman** is found to fit the predicate-argument structure of subject (experiencer) as **maame/ ɔbaa** in Twi. **Simple** on the other hand has no Twi equivalence but its predicate-argument structure allows it to take a quality encoding complement in a Twi-based structure. An adjectival quality-encoding complement in Twi requires a **yε** copula to link it to its nominal subject and so **yε** is selected to link **simple** which is an adjectival quality encoding complement to the subject.

Example (4c), a group of women discussing a rich woman whose dead husband was the client of one of the discussants

(4) c. **BUT WOMAN no yε SIMPLE**

But woman DET is simple
'But the woman is simple'

4.1 THE **Yε** COPULA

Yε, as has already been discussed, performs ascriptive roles and ascribes to its subject NP the property or quality expressed in the generic co-referential nominal that occurs as its complement. **Yε** also ascribes to its subject NP, the attribute of an adjectival complement. In Example (5a), **yε** ascribes to its pronoun NP subject **wo**, the quality of **sure** (an adjectival complement) in the first utterance and **family member** (a noun complement) to **ɔ** in the second utterance.

Example (5a) comes from a conversation in which four young university ladies are discussing a gentleman who was making overtures on one of them.

(5) a. **Wo yε SURE sε ɔno nkoa na ɔ- yε FAMILY MEMBER?**

2SG are sure that 3SG alone FOC 3SG- is family member
'Are you sure that he is the only family member?' (Quarcoo 2009: 63)

The equivalent of **sure** (**gyidi** 'believe') does not require a linker in Twi because it is a verbal element and not an adjective i.e. **wo gyidi?** 'do you believe?', Twi is able to create a slot for **sure** because Twi has the morphosyntactic structure to accommodate such English adjectives' predicate-argument structure.

In example (5b) an English prepositional phrase is linked to its subject pronoun ϵ 'it' by **yε** because the prepositional phrase **of national interest** possesses the qualities of whatever is being discussed.

Example (5b) is a panel discussion on the economy of Ghana.

(5) b. **Me FEEL sε ε -yε OF NATIONAL INTEREST**

1SG feel that it- is of national interest
'I feel that it is of national interest.' (Quarcoo 2009: 64)

Of interest is the fact that Twi does not have prepositions, but does have postpositions. The equivalence of the phrase **OF NATIONAL INTEREST** '**ɔman no aɛmɔhia**' (the state's important case) is a nominal phrase which can be the

complement of **a yɛ** copula. Therefore an English prepositional phrase is accepted in that slot.

4.2 NE AND DE COPULAS

Ne and **de** take identification/definite co-referential nominal complements and perform two contrastive shades of equative meaning. In example (6a) **ne** links the nominal subject, **second** to its co-referential nominal complement **value added approach no**, an identificational but common nominal.

Example (6a) is a panel discussion on the economy of Ghana

- (6) a. **ɛno FIRST, SECOND ne VALUE ADDED APPROACH no**
 That first, second is value added approach DET
 ‘That first, the second is the value added approach.’ (Quarcoo 2009: 64)

In Example (6b) **ne** equates **Mr. O**, an identifiable subject, to the co-referential nominal complement **head** (headmaster). Example (6b), a group of women are discussing a situation in the secondary school of the child of one of the group members.

- (6) b. **MR. O ne ɔmo HEAD anaa?**
 Mr. O is their head or
 ‘Is Mr. O their headmaster?’

It will be noticed that the **head** is the same entity being referred to as **Mr. O** and **ne** is the appropriate copula that can identify **Mr. O** as the head of the school. In example (6a), it is observed that both the subject and complement are English items, yet the copula **ne** which can rightly indicate the relationship between the subject and its co-referential complement is used. This is a function that other copulas like **yɛ** cannot perform. Secondly, while **yɛ** can take both adjective and noun complements, **ne** can only take a noun complement. Also, when the co-referential nominal complement identifies the subject, then that complement adds definiteness to it by the addition of the definite article **no/ ɔmo**, as observed in (6a and b) another function that **yɛ** cannot perform.

De on the other hand is used when the co-referential nominal complement is a proper noun. In example (6c), **Naa**, the co-referential complement of **de**, is the name of the speaker’s sister.

Example (6c) is a conversation by four university ladies who are room mates

- (6) c. **Me SISTER nso de Naa but ɔno nso n- ni English name**
 My sister also is Naa but 3SG too NEG-has English name
 ‘My sister is also Naa but she has no English name.’ (Quarcoo 2009: 65)

4.3 THE WO COPULA

Wo performs locational functions and takes a locational NP complement. In (7a) **inside** is the complement of **wo** showing the location of the speaker (**Inside** here means inside a room). In (7b) **office** is the complement of **wo** and also shows the present location of the person the speaker is inquiring of.

- (7) a. **Me wɔ INSIDE a obi n- hu me**
 1SG am inside PAT nobody NEG-see me
 ‘(When) I am inside nobody can see me.’ (Quarcoo 2009: 65)
- (7) b. **Me kɔ-ɔ hɔ no na yɛ- se ɔ- wɔ ne OFFICE**
 1SG go-PST there EMP FOC 3PL-say 3SG is his/her office
 ‘When I went there, they said s/he was in his/her office.’ (Quarcoo 2009: 65)

English indicates location in such constructions with the preposition ‘in’. The preposition alone, however, cannot indicate location without the support of the **be** copula. Examples (7c and d) are unacceptable in English.

* (7) c. She was her office

* (7) d. She in her office

Twi on the other hand has a copula that combines the two English elements and appropriately performs the locative functions needed for the construction.

5. INSTANCES OF ENGLISH BE COPULA IN MIXED CONSTRUCTIONS

The recordings from the university students and that of a family of three generations indicate that the seventeen-year-old participant and the female university students have started using the English **be** copula system. These young ones use both the English **be** and the Twi **yɛ** interchangeably. One panel member in a recent radio discussion also used the English **be** and Twi **yɛ** interchangeably. This was a political discussion and the panellist cannot be said to be young. These examples are captured in (8a-c). In Example (8a) the subject NP **ɛmo no** is linked to its adjectival complement **useless** with the English copula **is** in the first utterance. In Example (4c) above, even when the subject NP is an English word, **yɛ** is still selected but in (8a) below, **is** is selected even though the subject NP is Twi.

Example (8a), in the kitchen of a family home; a seventeen-year-old girl is complaining about the **waakye**² her mother has prepared

- (8) a. **ɛmo no IS USELESS (.) wei n- yɛ FIRST TIME a w- a- yɛ...**
 Rice DET is useless (.) this NEG- is first time that 2SG-PERF- do...
 ‘The rice is useless. This is not the first time that you’ve done...’

It will be noticed that in the second utterance of (8a), **yɛ** is selected to link **first time** (a nominal phrase) to its subject pronoun **wei**.

Example (8b); another conversation by the four university ladies, **background** is linked to its adjectival complement **nice** with **is**.

- (8) b. **ɛ ɔmo BACKGROUND no IS NICE**
 Yes their background FOC is nice
 ‘Yes their background is nice.’

Example (9c) is a panel discussion on the free fall of the Ghana Cedi on one of the radio stations:

- (8) c. **Nea mee pɛ akyerɛ ne sɛ SITUATION no IS CRITICAL**
 what 1SG want show is that situation DET is critical
 ‘What I want to say is that the situation is critical.’

² A local dish prepared from rice and beans eaten with pepper paste and fish/meat.

The English **be** copulas in the above examples occur in the same pattern as the Twi copulas. It could probably be [an](#) indication of a gradual ML turnover as recorded by other researchers (see Myers-Scotton, etc.). However, several recordings from this research and others from another university by the same researcher have so far not yielded such an ML turnover. This notwithstanding, the examples show that their occurrence [as CS forms](#) is imminent.

It can also be observed that it is only the **yɛ** copula that has been affected by this trend. Moreover, the complements in all the three situations are adjectives but the NP complement in [example \(8a\)](#) did not show that pattern. In the same vein **ne** in [example \(8c\)](#) has not changed. One can [however](#) not conclude that the **yɛ** copula is undergoing an ML shift based on these isolated cases. Further studies need to be conducted to find out whether the other copulas are also showing similar patterns.

6. COMMENTARY

In discussing copula constructions, Forson (1979: 160-161) argues that speakers choose Twi copula over English ones because they are simpler. This work argues that the choice is not a matter of simplicity but because Twi copula verbs differentiate among complement roles i.e. a specific complement needs a specific copula to map onto it, a role English copulas cannot perform.

Secondly, the functions of Twi copula verbs cannot be interchanged, for example **ne** cannot perform the functions of **wɔ** or **de** neither can **wɔ** perform that of **yɛ**. In English, however, one form of the **be** construction (i.e. **is**) can perform all the above functions. For example, we find **is simple** in (4c), **is the value approach** in (6a), **is Naa** in (6c) and **is in the office** in (7b). In CS, because Twi controls the morphosyntactic structure and supplies all the relevant system morphemes, it assigns the English complements to their appropriate copulas so that an ascriptive complement takes **yɛ** and a locative complement **wɔ** etc. A Twi speaker must be able to select the appropriate copula to match a complement and this is a mother tongue mechanism (Amuzu 2006). This probably accounts for why the English **be** does not participate in CS. One therefore cannot agree with Forson's (1979) assertion that speakers choose the Twi copula over the English ones because they are simpler. On the contrary, the Twi **be** copula system is more complex.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has introduced a structural accommodation model based on the MLF model to explain how English content morphemes can be the complements of Twi copulas because Twi has [the grammatical structures to accommodate their](#) predicate-argument structures.

Secondly, Twi copula verbs perform specific functions i.e. ascriptive, co-referential, equative, and locative and for these reasons they cannot be switched for their English counterparts. Moreover, the English **be** copulas will not be able to select the appropriate complements to match their respective subjects if they are used.

The paper has also shown that the English version of the Twi **yɛ** copula that takes adjectival complements is being used in Twi/English CS. It is not certain whether this is an indication of an ML turnover and so further investigations need to be conducted into it.

ABBREVIATIONS

COMP	Complementizer	NEG	Negative
DEF	Definiteness marker	PAT	Particle
DET	Determiner	PERF	Perfective
EMP	Emphasis	PST	Past
FOC	Focus marker	PL	Plural
FUT	Future	PROG	Progressive
INF	Infinitive	SG	Singular
MLF	Matrix Language Frame	SMP	System Morpheme Principle
MOP	Morpheme Order Principle	1, 2, 3	First, Second, Third Persons

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