Journal of West African Languages

Volume 46.1 (2019)

TRANSFER FEATURES FROM LOCAL LANGUAGE CONTACT IN GHANAIAN STUDENT PIDGIN (SP)

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Abstract

Student Pidgin (SP) is a Ghanaian youth language spoken predominantly by male students in the country's high schools and tertiary institutions of education. Akan is an ethnolinguistic term for a group of dialects that constitute the biggest language and the most influential lingua franca in Ghana. Ga is the ethnic language of Accra, the capital of Ghana, and its immediate environment. As these three languages are in contact, we assess the influence of Akan and Ga on Student Pidgin in terms of both grammatical and lexical features. We note that SP appears receptive to grammatical transfers from especially Akan, but that some functional elements also have come from Ga.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses a contact situation involving three Ghanaian languages: Student Pidgin[1] (SP), Akan and Ga. It assesses the extent of transference with emphasis on which features, and which items are transferred to Student Pidgin from Akan and Ga. We will use Thomason's (2001: 1&3) definition of language contact as "… the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time… and most often involv[ing] face-to-face interactions among groups of speakers, at least some of whom speak more than one language". SP has essentially the structure of GhaPE,[2] but because speakers of SP have very different language resources to draw on than the speakers of its precursor, SP has become quite distinct from GhaPE. This study focusses on Akan and Ga in relation to SP because, as explained in detail below, they are increasingly the two languages that SP largely draws from, particularly the former. Besides previous studies (Huber 1999; Dako 2000, 2002, 2012, 2013; Dako & Bonnie 2014; Forson 2006; Osei-Tutu 2008, 2016, 2018; Osei-Tutu & Corum 2014; Baiden 2013) have mainly focussed on the structural influence of GhaPE on SP and the extent to which they differ, and how English serves as an important functional and lexical

[1] Term used by Dako 2000 etc.
[2] Huber's term 1999; Ghanaian Pidgin English.

source. We show, in this paper, that (in addition to English) SP has adopted vocabulary from these two Ghanaian languages, but that the borrowed items are predominantly functional in nature and the transfer of lexical items is minimal.

Our data consist of transcribed recordings of and writing on SP by Dako (2000, 2002, 2012, 2013), Forson (2006), Osei-Tutu (2008), Baiden (2013) and Dako & Bonnie (2014) as well as focus group discussions, totalling about two hours, with students who speak SP, led by Richard Bonnie. Dako, Forson and Osei-Tutu understand SP and have worked on this language, but do not speak it. Baiden and Bonnie speak SP. Examples taken from transcribed recordings have been verified by Baiden and Dako. Osei-Tutu and Quarcoo are L1 Akan speakers and the latter also speaks Ga. Bonnie's L1 is Sekpele/Likpe, but he also speaks Ga and Akan. Baiden and Orfson-Offei are both L1 Ga and Akan speakers.

Akan (which is spoken in Ghana south of the Black Volta and west of what is today the Volta Lake, as well as in some localities beyond the Volta) refers to an ethnic conglomerate as well as an aggregate of dialects spoken by the Akan that include Fante, Akuapim Twi, Asante Twi, Sefwi, Ahanta, Wassa etc. About 50% of Ghanaians speak an Akan dialect as L1[3] and possibly an additional 30% use an Akan dialect in various degrees of competence as an additional language. Ga, on the other hand, is the indigenous language of Ghana's capital, Accra, and its immediate environs. The population of the ethnic group Ga is estimated at under one million.[4] The language is closely related to the Dangme[5] languages: Ada, Shai and Krobo, but shows structural as well as lexical evidence of intensive contact situations with neighbouring and exogenous languages, such as Akan, Portuguese and English, throughout its history. According to the 2010 census, 47.5% of Ghana's population of about 25 500 000 are ethnic Akan whereas 7.4% are Ga-Dangme.[6] Not surprisingly, therefore, Ga is considered a language under threat, particularly so since Akan has become the majority language of the capital.

For the Akan (the Asante Twi dialect) and the Ga examples, we use current orthographic conventions. SP is transcribed as close to verifiable pronunciation as possible, but English lexical items are at times kept in their written form when there is little or no change in pronunciation.

Akan, Ga and SP are structurally related, in that SP has a Kwa substratum, and Akan and Ga are Kwa languages. They are all SVO languages. In this study, we have not included the third major Kwa language in Ghana, Ewe, for we have not found any evidence of Ewe influence in SP. Our study presents a more comprehensive structural account of SP compared to previous studies and we lay emphasis on its substratum, that is, the influence of Akan and Ga on SP. We also make a case for how postcolonial pidgins and creoles are becoming increasingly intertwined with youth language practices and argue for their non-mutual exclusivity.

[3] Ghana national census 2000 indicates 49.1% L1 Akan speakers. Statistics on language patterns in Ghana are not available from the 2010 census.

[4] In 1993 the Ga population was estimated at 300,000, we can speculate that it is in the region of 600,000 today.

[5] The Ga are often counted together with the Dangme groups so that the combined population, according to the 2010 census, is about 1,850,000.

[6] We have not been able to find statistics that separate the Ga from the Dangme.

The rest of the paper is laid out as follows. Section 2 provides a brief background of the language situation in Ghana in order to situate the study. Next, in Section 3, we give a brief overview of Student Pidgin and then go on in Section 4 to outline the structural features of the variety. Then, in Section 5, we identify and discuss the various lexical transfers in Student Pidgin and, finally, make our concluding remarks in Section 6.

2. The Language Situation in Ghana

Ghana is a multilingual country with "approximately fifty non-mutually intelligible languages, almost all belonging to the Gur and Kwa branches of the Niger-Congo phylum" (Anyidoho & Kropp Dakubu 2008: 142). In addition, English and Hausa, a Chadic language originally from Northern Nigeria, are important lingua francas in the country. There are also two distinct varieties of English pidgin in Ghana: Ghana Pidgin English (GhaPE) and Student Pidgin (SP). Huber (1999: 165) makes the distinction ''uneducated'' and ''educated'' to refer to these two varieties and at the same time he refers to GhaPE as the basilectal variety and SP as its acrolectal manifestation. We agree with Huber's classification of SP as an acrolectal variety of GhaPE and thus a variety of WAP. But we also argue that from a sociolinguistic point of view, SP is not a pidgin, as it is not a contact language that fills a language vacuum (DeCamp 1971, Crystal, 1991), but it can be identified as a pidgin because its lexicon and its structure cannot be traced back to the same source language (Thomason 2001:158). However, following Mensah (2016) we contend that urban youth languages in Africa have evolved to include pidgin and creole variants and discuss SP in this paper as an urban youth language that parallels other youth languages like Engsh in Kenya in being a modern youth language spoken by youth with at least secondary education.

GhaPE, as demonstrated by Huber (1999), is spoken in the high-density, low-income multi-ethnic sections of the southern towns in Ghana, as well as to some extent in the police and army barracks all over the country, though Akan, especially the inland Twi dialect (Asante Twi), appears to be increasingly dominant as the inter-ethnic language of choice in the armed forces[7]. Now SP has replaced GhaPE as an alternative language beside Twi in the barracks, because most recruits have had secondary or tertiary education.[8]

The roots of Ghanaian pidgin (GhaPE) can be traced to two major influences: Liberian pidgin, a variety of West African Pidgin that used to be referred to as Kru Brɔfo,[9] and Nigerian pidgin.[10] It is thought that an English pidgin did not develop in the then Gold Coast, (Boadi 1969, Sey 1973, Kropp-Dakubu 2000, Huber 1999) primarily because the coast to a large extent was monolingual, with Fante spoken and/or understood from Axim, near Ghana's western border, to Accra, where Ga was spoken, and beyond, as Protten (1764) informs us:

[7] Pers. comm. from senior officers of the police and the armed forces
[8] Per. Comm. With some friends who are police officers
[9] The Kru are an ethnic group from Liberia and Sierra Leone. *Brɔfo* is the Akan name for English.
[10] There were many Nigerian troupes in the pre-independent armed forces and police. There were also many Nigerian traders from western Nigeria and from the Niger Delta who spoke pidgin.

> "Fante eller Aming-Sprog,[11] som strax sagt er, fra Axim lige till Riovolta, Crepe eller Popo, naest det Neger-Portugisisk, forstaaet, talt og af alle Sorte some et General-Sprog."
>
> *Fante or Amina language that is actually spoken from Axim to the Volta river, Krepi or Popo is aside Negro-Portuguese understood and spoken by all Blacks as a general language.*[12]

But an English pidgin was also not developed along the Gold Coast because as early as the mid-sixteenth century, local young men were brought to England to learn the language, and once they were brought back home, they were to function as translators for the English traders (Spencer 1969, Sey 1973, Huber 1999).

GhaPE has never been, nor is it at present, an important lingua franca in Ghana in the way pidgin is prevalent in Nigeria, Liberia or Cameroon. The main reason is that Ghana has Akan as a more dominant lingua franca, but also because "pidgin in Ghana is more stigmatized and less widespread … than it is in other Anglophone West African countries" (Huber 1999: 156).

3. Student Pidgin

Student Pidgin (SP) is a pervasive, mostly male[13] youth language found in most of Ghana's southern high and tertiary institutions and by the products of these institutions (Dadzie 1985, Forson 1996, 2006; Dako 2000, 2002, 2012, 2013; Frimpong 2008, Osei-Tutu 2008, Baiden 2013, Dako & Bonnie 2014).

SP is one of the new urban youth languages in Africa (Miehe, Owens & von Roncador 2007; McLaughlin 2009, Nassenstein & Hollington 2015, Mensah 2016) but it differs from other documented African youth languages such as Indoubil in the eastern Congo/DRC (Goyvaerts 1988), Tsotsitaal in the South African townships (Ntshangane 2002, Slabbert & Myers-Scotton 1997, Mothsegoa 2005, Hurst 2016), Sheng and Engsh in Nairobi (Githiora 2002, Kiessling & Mous 2004, Barasa & Mous 2017), and Nouchi (Kiessling & Mous 2004, Kube-Barth 2009) in that it has taken over the structure of GhaPE and has become a prestigious code for especially educated Ghanaian males. However, all these African youth languages are ethnically neutral since they usually start off as inter-ethnic codes among young people for solidarity.

Based on conversations with some Ghanaian men who were in high school in the 1950s and 1960s, SP can be dated to the late 1950s – early 1970s. By this time Ghana had had its first coup d'état in 1966, and uniformed "macho men" were very visible in the streets, even as the country was preparing for its first post-coup election in 1969. The language of the barracks in Ghana was at the time still predominantly pidgin.[14] We can speculate that young schoolboys associated pidgin with male power, as so blatantly exhibited by the men in uniform.

[11] It is assumed this refers to some Fante dialect – possibly around Elmina (M.E. Kropp Dakubu p.c.)
[12] Our translation
[13] Recent studies (e.g. Adjei-Tuadzra 2015) are revealing that the use of SP has spread to some all-female high schools.
[14] Personal communication from former senior officers in the Ghana Armed Forces.

SP appears to have been spawned in the prestigious male high schools in Cape Coast, a southern coastal town known for its several well-known boarding schools. The practice of speaking pidgin, a language of no prestige, by urban students from especially Accra, the sons of Ghana's new professional and political elite, was a means of protest. This category of youngsters, whom Stoller (1979:72) refers to as 'marginal-deviant groups' dared to break the mould of speech in the schools where English was used as social control. SP was used not only to legitimize, but also to contest and negotiate alternative identity options for this group of students (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004, Castells 1997).

We can contrast the influences of pidgin and 'macho' behaviour to the insecure adolescent schoolboys under the regimen of the boarding school, who were expected to speak Standard English, an alien language in so many ways, and whose registers the youngsters could not master.

Today, SP signals [+ high] and/or [+/- tertiary] education because speakers are often males who have had high school/tertiary education[15]. Strategically it is a cohesive choice in that it includes the speakers of SP and excludes the non-SP speakers, as we learned from our focus group discussion:

> After I learnt pidgin, only a few of us could speak it among our peers, and that distinguished us from them. We had moved to another level on the scale; everybody tried to learn to speak pidgin to be recognized.

There is a connection here with Halliday's (1976) 'antilanguage', which is explained by Hodge and Kress (1997: 53) as a focus of identity: 'In an antilanguage, language exists primarily to create group identity and to assert group difference from a dominant group…' This is supported by Forson (1996), who argues that SP essentially functions as an argot, i.e. as an anti-language, by young high-school students who constitute a marginal group, and the language thus creates a strong cohesive force: 'the argot serves students' informal, out-of-class language needs for purposes of solidarity and socialization' (135). One of our focus groups echoes this: 'Pidgin was a coded language used among guys, not girls, to show our maturity...'. Huber (1999:147) relates the following to support this:

> 'One of my informants reported that Pidgin was first introduced into his circle of friends at school in Tema in the early 1970s by a new pupil who spoke Pidgin with his class mates. This boy soon assumed group leadership and it became fashionable to imitate his way of speaking. After a while Pidgin was the only language used among group members…'

According to Jacobson as quoted in Thomason (2001: 63) 'a language accepts foreign structural elements only when they correspond to its own tendencies of development', suggesting that a language anticipates its future form. Yet we argue

[15] A survey conducted in ten offices/banks within Accra/Tema by Quarcoo in 2012 shows that SP is spoken widely by office male workers who have had high school/tertiary education, while Akan/Ga/Ewe are used by females and those who could not speak SP.

that it is not necessarily the structural similarities between SP, Akan and Ga but 'the sociolinguistic history of the speakers, …<that> is the primary determinant of the linguistic outcome of language contact' Thomason (1991: 35). It will be argued that SP came into being among young high school students from Accra speaking GhaPE. Even if they were not ethnic Ga, they would have spoken Ga, not only because they lived in Accra, but also because Ga was the preferred code[16] of the high schools before SP emerged. For example, girls in Wesley Girls School[17] acquired Ga as the 'in' language, and boys in Bishop Herman High School[18] who wanted to be on the football team should be able to speak Ga.[19] In addition, Ga has the prestige of being an urban language which shows that the speaker lives or has lived in Accra/Tema, at one time or the other. It signifies sophistication and is a status marker. Akan, on the other hand, has the prestige of being the largest and the most dominant language in the country. It is also the majority language in Accra as well as a lingua franca. A participant in one of our focus groups recognized the urban nature of SP:

> I think pidgin is an Accra language and when you realize it spoken somewhere else, then it was transported by people who once lived in Accra.

We can then speculate: why does Akan appear more dominant in SP than Ga, the indigenous language of Accra? This is especially a puzzle since, as mentioned above, Ga used to be the language of choice among students in the high schools before SP took over. We have noted Ga items in SP, but the Akan influence is far more salient. It might seem very attractive at this point to adopt Yakpo's (2017:32) notional separation of the traditional creolist terms "substrate" and "adstrate" for Ga and Akan respectively. The argumentation in the above scenario will be that Ga had a now "defunct" diachronic influence on SP with Akan synchronically exerting influence on SP. However, our present case is not that straightforward. Ga, no doubt, was a very important substrate for the formation of SP since the earliest SP speakers were usually from Accra and spoke Ga even if they were not ethnic Ga, but Ga is not defunct and continues to influence SP as an adstrate, even if minimally. Besides, although Akan is currently the most important adstrate of SP, it will be counterintuitive to conclude that it was never involved as a substrate in the early development of SP. Even the local terminology for pidgin in Ghana, Kru *brɔfo* (Kru English), during its inception came from Akan. The reasonable explanation will be to subscribe to Mufwene's (2001) language ecology approach, where based on competition and selection, and the ongoing change in the linguistic ecology (Akan is increasingly becoming a language almost all Ghanaians speak and/or understand), Akan is the dominant adstrate of SP. Thus SP, apart from constantly drawing creatively on English language resources, is in contact with these two Ghanaian languages. Other Ghanaian languages, both in the past and currently, also contribute

[16] M. E. Kropp Dakubu pers. comm.
[17] Wesley Girls is a very prestigious female high school in Cape Coast and from personal communication we have learnt that Ga was a language one 'should' learn to be accepted.
[18] A prestigious school in the Volta Region.
[19] Pers. comm. from students who were at the school in the early 1970s.

to the structure of SP but too marginally to be given any attention now and are also beyond the scope of this study.

Kiesling's (1997) work on a US university fraternity attempts to explain how power is central to male identity. An American university fraternity as a speech community is possibly the closest parallel to the male speech community of Ghanaian universities (and high schools). Yet as we consider below – the conception of SP can be imagined as a group of youngsters forming themselves into a community of practice. But the urban nature of the language is also recognized; speakers of SP make conscious decisions in selecting it as a code in lieu of a Ghanaian language or English, and the speakers also consciously mark this code as distinct from GhaPE, both lexically and structurally. They clearly consider themselves to belong to a very different social class than the, to a large extent, illiterate GhaPE speakers from town (and we note Huber's (1999) reference to this variety as 'uneducated').

As noted above, SP is a high social class variant of GhaPE that has creatively reinvented itself over time to the extent that it is perhaps more meaningful to discuss it as a youth language. A theoretical puzzle in our argumentation that needs clarification at this point is whether SP is a pidgin in the sense of a prototypical contact language like Fanakalo, that was used for inter-ethnic communication among speakers of Zulu, Xhosa, English, Afrikaans and later, Indians around the Eastern Cape and Natal in 19th Century South Africa (Mesthrie 2013), or whether SP is like Sheng, the dominant Kenyan youth language (Barasa & Mous 2017). We contend that SP, being a structural variant of GhaPE is a pidgin and does indeed serve the need for cross-linguistic communication as is typical of most pidgins and creoles, although very minimally. However, it is perhaps important to emphasise that pidgin in Ghana has the lowest prestige when compared to its West African counterparts like Nigerian pidgin and Cameroonian pidgin and thus, has always been an in-group code to a very large extent. For instance, it contrasts with the case of Nigeria, where pidgin was always a mainstream code and currently has native speakers. Thus, GhaPE and SP appear to have behaved at least functionally like urban youth languages and can to some extent parallel the social class continuum of Sheng and Engsh youth languages in Kenya (apart from the fact that Sheng and Engsh use Swahili and English as their matrix languages respectively).We maintain that SP is both a pidgin and an urban youth language and further assert that African youth languages and African pidgins and creoles are not necessarily mutually exclusive. We follow previous research (Mensah 2016, Inyabri 2016) to support our claim that the base structure and words and functions of pidgins and creoles in postcolonial Africa (and inevitably globally) are being remodelled and reshaped by the youth with new or negotiated meanings and repertoires to reflect how these young people experience, act, and relate to their modern-day social, cultural and linguistic complexities. To be clear, we do not suggest that youth languages necessarily arise due to conditions of contact. In fact, most accounts of African youth languages that we know of so far originate from multilingual urban centres where there is normally a language that already performs the lingua franca function of a pidgin. As in the case of SP, Akan, Ga or particularly English could have served as a common language among SP speakers, but like other youth languages the decision to use SP is to expresses their 'distinct means of communication with their community of speakers to capture their differentiated identities and collective belongings' (Mensah 2016:4)

4. The Structure of SP

Structurally, SP is clearly an offspring of or a variety of GhaPE, as both mark themselves as distinct from other West African Pidgins (WAP) in a few features. GhaPE, as well as SP, for example, does not have the WAP completive *don*, nor the WAP anterior *bin*. The copula *nà* is also not a feature of GhaPE. Huber (1999: 163) states that 'don and nà are markers that Ghanaians perceive as salient features of NigPE. These markers do not form part of GhaPE grammar, although there is a small number of speakers who use them very occasionally in monitored situations when they are trying to produce what is perceived as 'good' or prototypical Pidgin'. Ofulue (2012) in a footnote remarks "… the use of na as a copula, as focus marker, and as intensifier; the use of don as retrospective marker; and the use of bin as tense marker are found in NP[20] and CP[21], but not in GP[22]." However, as we shall observe below, *nà*, as copula, focus marker and intensifier, is a feature of SP.

4.1 The Verb Phrase in SP

The Verb Phrase (VP) in SP and GhaPE conforms with other WAPs in most TAM features. E.g. in SP, as in GhaPE, the verb phrase marks the past with the base form for action verbs. The VP of SP also displays some VP features of Akan. For example, when the subject of a verb is focus marked, the verb is accompanied by a subject-concord prefix. Subject-concord prefixes are personal pronouns which accompany verbs (Dolphyne 1988: 87) and are often antecedents of the subject and so agree in number with the subject of the verb they accompany. Extract (1a) is an example from Akan and example (1b) shows where the subject-concord prefix **i**[23] comes with the verb 'dance'.
Local language (Akan or Ga word) is italicized.

Extract 1

AK 1a. ***Kwesi na*** ***ɔ-sa-a*** ***Borborbor*** ***no***
Kwesi FOC he-dance-PST *Borborbor* DET
'Kwesi danced the *Borborbor*'

SP 1b. **Kwesi ì-dance the *Borborbor.***
Kwesi, he-dance the *Borborbor*
'Kwesi danced the *Borborbor*'

In SP, the focus marker **na** is lost because like all Pidgins, some features are omitted. The base form is also used to mark the non-past for verbs in SP as in other WAPs. Here too, the subject-concord prefix **i** accompanies the verb stay in extract 2.

[20] Nigerian Pidgin
[21] Cameroonian Pidgin
[22] Ghanaian Pidgin
[23] The item of attention is underlined

Extract 2

SP 2.	**Kwesi, i-stay**	**for**	**my**	**house**
	Kwesi, he-stay	for	my	house
	[Kwesi stays in my house'			

The progressive and habitual tenses in SP are marked by the preverbal **dè**:

SP 3. **We**	**de**	**study**	**all**	**night**
We	PROG	study	all	night
'We are studying all night/we study all night'				

Irrealis (future) is marked by the preverbal *go* in SP:

SP 4. **A**	**go**	**go**	**town.**
I	FUT	go	town
'I will go to town'			

Modality: the Deontic, Intentionalis, Imperative and Ability are all expressed. Ability is marked by the preverbal **fit**:

SP 5a. **A**	**go fit**		**do**	**am.**
I	FUT	have ability to	do	it
'I can do it'				

SP 5b. **You**	**go fit**		**drop**	***blɛ*[24].**
You	FUT	have ability to	drop	English
'You can drop English (as a course)'				

Deontic modality is marked with the pre-verbals **for** or **mɔ** (derived from 'must'):

SP 6a. **You**	**for**	**wedge**	**am.**
You	should	wait	him/her
'You should wait for him/her'			

SP 6b. **You**	**mɔ**	**wedge**	**am.**
You	must	wait	him/her
'You must wait for him/her'			

Intentionalis is marked with **wan** (derived from 'want'): the structure is likely Ga as in example (7b). However, pronoun concord prefix accompanying the verb is dropped in SP

[24] Blɛ (English) from Ga- *Blɔfo.*

SP 7a. **She** **wan** **talk** **me** **something**
She want tell me something
'She wants to tell me something'

Ga 7b. ***E -tao*** ***e-kɛɛ*** ***mi*** ***noko***
S/he-want s/he-tell me something
'She wants to tell me something'

The imperative mood is marked with the causative *make* with the underlying structure coming from Akan or Ga as in e.g. (8b) and ©.

SP 8a. **Make** **a-chock** **small.**
Make I-wait small
'Let me wait a little'

AK 8b. ***Ma*** ***me-ntwɛn*** ***kakra***
Let me-wait small
'Let me wait a little'

Ga 8c ***Ha*** ***ma-mɛ*** ***fio***
Let me-wait small
'Let me wait a little'

4.2 The Noun Phrase in SP

Personal pronouns in SP are marked for case, a feature that is not consistent in GhaPE.

	Subject Form	Object Form	Possessive Form
1st. P. S.	*a / i*	*mi*	*ma*
1st P. Pl.	*wi*	*es*	*wana*
2nd P. S.	*you*	*you*	*your*
2nd P. Pl.	*you*	*you*	*your*
3rd P. S.	*i / she*	*am*	*in*
3rd P. Pl.	*dem*	*dem*	*dema*

4.2.1 Plurality

In the noun phrase of SP, in contrast to both GhaPE and WAP, SP marks for plurality. SP marks for plurality in two forms, (1) –s to conforms to that of standard English and (2) *dem* a calqued item from the Akan suffix *-nom* (Forson 2006:237) used to indicate a group membership. In example 9, 'two trousers' is well formed following Standard

English grammar; however, the underlying structure conforms to Akan NP which allows a head word to be embedded within two determiners. Therefore, 'two trousers' is embedded within the pronoun *ma* and the determiner *no*.

SP 9a.	**Dat**	**guy**	**ì**	**steal**	**ma**	**two**	**trousers**	***no.***
	That	chap	he	steal	my	two	trousers	DET

'That guy stole my two trousers'

In GhaPE, the above will be rendered as:

GhaPE 9b.	**Dat**	**tìfmán**	**ì**	**tíf**	**ma**	**two**	**trausa.**
	That	thief	he	stole	my	two	trousers

'The thief stole my two trousers'

In example 9c, the plural *dem* used to indicate group membership is used. Example 9d is Akan

SP 9c.	**Commonwealth-dem**	**get**	**water**	**problem.**
	Commonwealth-PL	have	water	problem

'Commonwealth (Hall) members have water problem'

AK 9d.	***ɛna-nom***	***ne***	***agya-nom***	***a-tena***	***ase***
	Mother-PL	and	Father-PL	PF-sit	down

'Mothers and fathers have sat down'

In some instances, the English plural marker *-s* as well as the Akan substrate plural marker *-dem* co-occur in SP. See examples 10a and b.

SP 10a.	**Teachers-dem**
	Teachers -PL

'Teachers'

SP 10b.	**The**	**kiddies**[25]**-dem**
	The	children-PL

'The children'

4.2.2 Determiners

In SP the noun also retains the English determiners such as 'the', 'a', 'some', 'any' which may co-occur with the Akan post-positioned determiner **no**, **bi** or both. English definite article 'the' co-occurs with Akan definite article **no** while the indefinite article 'a' and indefinite determiner 'some' also co-occur with **bi**. No Ga determiners have been identified in SP.

[25] SP does not use the Portuguese derived **pikin** for 'child', as is used in GHaPE.

SP 11a. **The** **messenger** **no**
The messenger DET
'The messenger'

SP 11b**.** **A** **car** **bi**
A car ART
'A car'

SP 11c. **Some** **girlie** **bi** **de** **hala** **am.**
Some girl ART PROG call him
'Some girl is calling him'

The co-occurrence of the English determiners and Akan determiners is a structural feature of Akan NP which is transferred to SP. See example 9a above.

4.3 Adverbials

The Akan or Ga adverbial **pɛ** 'only' is also used when the action is expected to be excusable. The Akan adverbial **papa** and Ga **waa** 'very' are also used, especially for emphasis.

SP 12a. **Wey i** **be like today** **pɛ** **we** **de** **go.**
For it be like today only that we PROG go
' It seems like it is only today we will be going'

SP 12b**.** **i** **be** **clever** **papa.**
S/he is clever very
'S/he is very clever'

SP 12d. **The** **man** **i** **fool** **waa.**
The man he fool very
'The man is very foolish / is really a fool'

SP makes extensive use of the Akan emphatic markers: **oo**, **deɛ**, **aa**, **paa**, **koraa** and the emphatics **ankasa**, **saa**, **dada** and the negative emphatic **koraa**.

SP 13a. **As** **for** **me** **deɛ** **a-no-go-sit** **down.**
As for me EMP I-NEG-will-sit down
'As for me, I won't sit down'

SP. 13b**. I mow sef koraa…the thing go mafia am.**
S/he study self EMP... the thing will difficult him/her
'Even if s/he studies all the time, it will be too difficult for him/her.'

SP 13c. **I no play at all paa.**
S/he NEG play at all EMP
'S/he did not really play at all'

13d. **Abi you know dada.**
But you know already[26]
'I guess you know already' (Forson 2006:178)

SP 13e. **As for me deɛ a no go talk koraa.**
As for me, EMP I NEG will talk at all
'As for me, I will not say a word' (Forson, ibid)

Which GhaPE will render as:

GhaPE 13f**. A no go talk some.**
I NEG go talk some
' I will not say a word' (Forson, ibid)

SP also makes use of the Ga emphatic markers **nɔɔ**:

.

SP 13g. **This world i-be like that nɔɔ.**
'This world it-is like that EMP'
'This is exactly how the world is'

4.4 Na as a focus marker

Na has a long and multifaceted history in WAP (Corum, 2012). **Na** in SP is a focus marker following from the Akan focus marker **na**. it can also be used as a connective as in example (14a) to ask a rhetorical question. In (14b), it performs its focus marker role. The repetition of **well** in (14b) is from Akan where adverbials and adjectives are reduplicated for emphasis.

SP 14a. **Na who kill am?**
But who kill him/her
'But who killed him/her?'

[26] Dada (already) is Akan

SP 14b. **Na my PC de work well well…**
FOC my PC PROG work well well…
' At that time, my PC was working very well'

4.5 Contrast

The Akan contrastive **sɛ** and the cognate Ga contrastive **bɛ** are used to introduce questions that require or expect an affirmative response. This use of **sɛ/bɛ** is not considered polite in either speech community, as it somehow anticipates disagreement:

SP 17a. **Sɛ a take give you?**
But I take give you
'But I gave it to you, didn't I?' (Forson, ibid)

SP 17b. **Bɛ I be your paddy?**
But he is your paddy?
'But he is your pal, isn't he?' (Forson, ibid)

5. Lexical Transfers

GhaPE and SP are both 'English Pidgins' in that their superstrate is predominantly of English origin. However, because SP speakers have English as L2, they can draw on the vocabulary resources of this language in a way that GhaPE speakers cannot, as most users of GhaPE were illiterates in English. Consequently, SP speakers can draw on lexical items from English and play around with these, often masking the meaning of the novel acquisitions by semantic shifts (Osei-Tutu 2008), thus exhibiting considerable creativity. For example:

SP 19a. We de **bell**[27] wanna body.
We PROG bell our body
'We are phoning each other'

SP 19b. **I woman de bed i body.**
His woman HAB bed his body
'His woman sleeps beside him/by him'

SP 19c. **The guy boot sake-of *koti*[28] de come**.
The guy ran because police is come
'The guy ran away because the police was coming'

It is interesting that whereas Ghanaian English has extensively borrowed lexical items from Akan and continues to do so (Dako 2001, 2002, 2003), borrowing into SP is not that extensive. Forson (2006:263), in his extensively transcribed data listed only 19

[27] Bell ~ phone i.e. a bell is rings and so does the phone
[28] Hausa for police(man)

non-English lexical items in SP, and of these, a mere five are from Akan (four of which are adverbials and have already been discussed under adverbials). In the years after Forson's work, our data shows that SP has borrowed some verbs, adjectives, a few new adverbs and nouns from Akan and Ga.
As has already been observed, SP tends to transfer topicalizers, emphasizers and contrastives from Akan and Ga, these being more functional than lexical.

Verbs transferred from Akan

Pae[29] 'break / explode'
SP 20a: **Oh charley, *yawa*[30] pae-o.**
Oh Charlie, embarrassment break-o
'Oh, Charlie, embarrassment has occurred'

Te aseɛ 'understand'
SP 20b: **As for dis wan *deɛ,* a no go teaseɛ.**
As for this one EMP I NEG FUT understand
'As for this particular one, I will not understand'

Hwie literally: 'pour'; connotes bad performance
SP 20c: **Yestie, Messi i-hwie for the match inside.**
Yesterday, Messi he-pour for the match inside
'Yesterday, Messi performed badly in the match'

Tie 'listen'
SP 20d: **Oh Charley, make you tie**.
Oh, Charlie, make you listen
'Oh Charley, you have to listen'.

***Kyɛ* '**delay'
SP 20e: **Why you kyɛ so*?***
Why you delay so?
'Why did you delay? / What took you so long?'

Kae 'remember'
SP 20f: **A no de kae.**
I NEG PROG remember
'I don't remember'.

Hia 'need'
SP 20g: **A de hia your number**
I PROG need your number.

[29] *Pae* is only used in a negative sense
[30] *Yawa* is a Hausa word that means 'thrash' or 'something disgraceful'

'I need your number'

None of these verbs are 'necessary' transfers. These are all verbs that the students could easily have drawn from English, but we have not found many examples of English verb equivalents.

Adjectives transferred from Akan

Mrɛ 'weak'

SP 21a: **The guy make mrɛ**.
The guy make weak
'The guy has become weak'

The English version is also used regularly as in 21b.

SP 21b: **A make weak**
I make weak
'I am (very) weak'

Hyɛda 'intentional/ intentionally'

SP 21c: **A no hyɛda**[31] **do am**.
I NEG intentionally do it
'I did not do it intentionally'.

Shi literally: 'hot', but connoting a difficult situation

SP 21d: **A make shi.**
I make hot
'I am in a difficult situation'.

Ben 'intelligent / brilliant'

SP 21e: **Me, a know say she ben**
Me, I know that she intelligent
'As for me, I know that she is intelligent'

English 'intelligent' is also used often as in example (21f)

SP 21f. **I know say the girlie she intelligent.**
I know that the girl she intelligent
'I know that the girl is intelligent'

Fɔn 'lean / lose weight' 'derogatory'

SP 21g: **Ah, why you fɔn**[32] **so?**
Ah, why you grow lean so?
'Ah, why have you grown so lean?'

[31] Adjectival verb
[32] Used here as an adjectival verb

Kakra 'small'

SP 21h: **Ama de wan mow *kakra*.**
Ama PROG want study small.
'Ama wants to study a little'

English *small* is also used to mean *a while/a little* as in example (21i)

SP 21i: ***Chock small!***
'Wait awhile/ a little'

Again, we note that these adjectives do not signal meanings that cannot be expressed by their English equivalents.

Adverbs transferred from Akan

Nansa yiaa 'recently'

SP 22a: **I be nansa-yiaa wey i come this school inside**.
It is recently that s/he come this school inside
'S/he came to this school just recently'

San 'again'

SP 22b: **The girlie san come here**.
The girl again come here
'The girl has come/came here again'.

It was observed that both the English and the Akan equivalents can be used in the same sentence as in example (22c).

SP 22c: **I san cut the line again**.
S/he again cut the line again
'S/he jumped the queue again'

Nouns transferred from Akan

There are surprisingly few nouns transferred from Akan into SP. In our data we could identify only six, and three of these are taboo words:

Osofo 'priest / pastor'

SP 23a: **I flow me *se* i bi osofo**.
He told me that he is priest/pastor.
'He told me that he is a priest'

Ahosh from **Ahohyehye** 'to cling unto someone amorously (usually female)'

SP 23b: **The girlie too, she be too ahosh.**
The girl too, she is too clingy

'The girl too is too clingy'

Ofri'jato[33]**'** 'albino'

SP 23c:	**She**	**de**	**think**	***se***	**she**	**be**	**white; she**	**no**	**know**	***se***
	She	PROG	think	that	she	is	white ; she	NEG	know	that
	she	**be**	**ofri.**							
	she	is	albino.							

'She thinks that she is Caucasian, she doesn't know that she is an albino'

wo-maame/papa[34] 'your mother/father'

SP 23d:	**The**	**paddy**	**talk**	**am**	***se***	***"wo***	**maame",**	**wey**	**i**
	The	guy	told	him	that	"your	mother",	and	he
	bore.								
	angry.								

'The guy told him "your mother", and he got angry'

kwasea[35] 'fool'

SP 23e:	**Kofi**	***dɛɛ***	**i-bore**	***pɛ***	**go**	**tell**	**you**	**"kwasea"**.
	Kofi	**EMP**	he-angry	just	will	call	you	fool

'As for Kofi, as soon as he gets angry, he will call you a fool'

aboa(fun) 'animal/carcass'

SP 23e:	**What**	**pain**	**me**	**pass**	**be**	**I**	**call**	**me**	**aboa-fun.**
	What	pain	me	most	is	he	call	me	animal-carcass

'What hurt me most was he called me a carcass'

We have identified a few Ga nouns in SP like **blɛ** 'English', **gbɛkɛ T** 'evening time', **nibiis**[36] 'things' but there are, however, a number of Ga verbs and adjectives in SP.

Ga Verbs

Jie 'remove'

SP 24a:	**Jie**	**ma**	**lapi**	**give**	**me.**
	Remove	my	laptop	give	me

'Remove my laptop for me'.

Je(e) 'resemble' – the verb lengthens its vowel in SP

[33] Combination of Akan and Hausa – Akan - **ofri** 'albino' Hausa - **jato** 'red'. Ga - **ofli**

[34] A very crude and obscene reference to a person's parentage.

[35] Words like: fool, foolish, stupid, nonsense, mad, silly – are not to be used in Ghanaian English as they are interpreted as translations of Akan and Ga taboo words such as *kwasea* and *buulu*, respectively.

[36] In Ga, **nibii** is already a plural and the stress is on the second syllable. In SP the word always takes the English plural marker and the stress is on the first syllable.

SP 24b: **I de <u>jee</u> im poppy**.
S/he PROG resemble his/her father
'S/he resembles his/her father'

Gbele 'open'
SP 24c**: <u>Gbele</u> the tap make a see *se* i de**
Open the tap make I see that it PROG
flow a.
flow FOC
'Open the tap and let me see if it is flowing'

Bɛnkɛ 'get closer/near' this verb is transitive in Ga and also in SP.
SP 24d: **Take the phone <u>bɛnkɛ</u> the thing.**
Take the phone near the thing.
'Bring the phone closer to the thing.'

Ga Adjectives

Kamkpe 'hard' or 'muscular'
SP 25a: **She be <u>kamkpe</u>**.
She be muscular/ hard
'She is muscular/ hard'

Sha(a) 'slow to learn, dull'
SP 25b: **You <u>shaa</u> *waa.***
You dull **INT**
'You are very dull'

And the intensifier:
Kɛkɛ 'very, extremely'
SP 25c: **The match de be <u>kɛkɛ</u>**
The match PROG exciting INT
'The match is extremely exciting'

Apart from the vocabulary and functional items from Akan and Ga, SP also makes use of some Akan syntactic structures especially for interrogatives. In Akan, the interrogative is expressed in a declarative sentence with a high tone on the final word acting as the question marker. See examples (26a) and (b). (26c) is the Akan equivalent.

SP 26a: **You de go now?**
You PROG go now
'Are you going now?'

SP 26b: **She de come your there yesti?**

She PROG come your place yesterday?

'Was she coming to your place yesterday?'

26c: Akan

ɔ-ba-a	**wo**	**hɔ**	**nnora?**
S/he-come-PST	your	place	yesterday?

'Did she come to your place yesterday?'

6. Concluding remarks

The sociolinguistic background and the history of the speakers of Akan and SP are very different. Akan is an old language in that we find examples of it in manuscripts from as early as the C17th (see Müller 1676) and it has a rich oral proverbial as well as oral literary tradition. Ga is also an old language with a rich oral literary tradition. Protten first attempted to write it in the middle of the eighteenth century. SP, on the other hand, is an alternative language of recent history used within limited domains. Its speakers have English and at least one Ghanaian language as alternative codes. We assume that most SP speakers also speak an Akan dialect, either as L1 or as an additional language.

We have considered SP as an anti-language and as an argot. It is a language that was developed by young male students in the high schools of southern Ghana, both as an expression of protest and as a means of identity formation. In other words, SP is today a prestigious language in that it signals higher education and is spoken by the most influential group of Ghanaian males, and it is at the same time an important neutral code among Ghana's many indigenous languages.

Neither Akan nor Ga are neutral languages. Akan is the most important lingua franca in Ghana spoken by possibly close to 80% of the population with various degrees of competence as a second language. Ga is a much smaller language, spoken by less than one million of the population, and whereas it used to be the language of choice in the high schools in Ghana in the 1950s and 1960s and had prestige as an urban language and as the language of the capital, it is today considered a language under threat, especially from Akan which has become the majority language of the capital.

The study has shown that SP draws essentially grammatical features from Akan with a few from Ga, but does not extensively borrow lexical items from these languages the way Ghanaian English does. These three languages will continue to exist side by side in Ghana, possibly developing closer ties grammatically. Though Akan and Ga appear not to have made much lexical input in SP, it is believed that the influence from these two languages will increase in the future.

Our study has contributed to the theoretical literature on youth language practices in Africa by postulating the non-mutual exclusiveness between postcolonial pidgins and creoles and urban youth languages in Africa. We have used SP to demonstrate how postcolonial pidgins and creoles are being creatively modified and modernised into urban youth language practices.

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