

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC SURVEY OF LANGUAGE CONTACT IN TOGO: A CASE STUDY OF KABIYE AND EWE¹

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This paper examines the sociolinguistic aspects of contact between two languages of Niger-Congo, Kabiye and Ewe in everyday communication in the Kabiye speech community. Before and in the early days of Kabiye contact with Ewe, Kabiye was spoken by almost all members of the Kabiye community. But in recent years, this trend has changed. In the present Kabiye speech community, younger speakers often use Kabiye and Ewe, employing bilingualism (Weinreich 1974, Romaine 1995) with code-switching (Myers-Scotton 1993b). Thus, there is a significant decrease in the daily use of the mother tongue and a significant increase in the daily use of Ewe by younger speakers of Kabiye, particularly in the southern part of Togo.

My investigation, a sociolinguistic analysis of contact between Kabiye and Ewe, seeks to determine the social and linguistic factors (e.g. prestige, pressure, wider communication) that constrain language usage in the Kabiye community. I argue that Kabiye speakers' use of Ewe in everyday communication is a reflection of the historical and present socioeconomic status of Ewe in the "market place" (Calvet 1992), not only in Togo, but in the neighboring countries as well. In doing so, I hope to present data from a less examined language phenomenon.

Cette étude examine l'aspect sociolinguistique de contact entre deux langues, le kabiyè et l'ewe, dans la communication quotidienne au sein de la communauté kabiyè. Les deux parlers appartiennent à deux sous-groupes distincts de la famille Niger-Congo. Avant et au début du contact entre ces deux langues, presque tous les membres de la communauté kabiyè en parlaient la langue. Mais récemment, les choses ont changé. Dans la communauté kabiyè d'aujourd'hui, les jeunes générations font usage du bilinguisme (Weinreich 1974, Romaine 1995) et de l'alternance entre les langues (le 'code-switching' (Myers-Scotton 1993b), avec un mélange du kabiyè et de l'ewe pour leur intercommunication. Ainsi, au quotidien, on remarque chez les jeunes kabiyè, une baisse énorme de l'utilisation de la langue maternelle, et une utilisation croissante de l'ewe, surtout dans le sud du Togo.

Mon étude, qui est une analyse sociolinguistique du contact entre les Kabiyè et les Ewe, cherche à déterminer les facteurs socio-linguistiques (par exemple, le prestige, la pression, le désir de communication plus large) qui limitent l'usage de la langue dans la communauté kabiyè. Je maintiens que l'usage quotidien de l'ewe par les Kabiyè reflète le statut socio-économique historique de cette langue dans "la place du marché" (Calvet 1992), non seulement au Togo, mais aussi dans les pays voisins. Je souhaite, par cet article, présenter des données de phénomènes de langue les moins étudiés.

0. INTRODUCTON

In Togo, local languages such as Kabiye, Ewe, Tem, Lama, Ncam, as well as the former colonial language, French, come into contact with one another daily, and

¹ I would like to thank John V. Singler for his comments and suggestions on various aspects of the paper. I also thank Laurie Woods for reading the abstract, Aaron Balkan and Ken Lacy for reading the paper. I also thank Mr Sizing, Mr Baza, and Dr Simtaro, all members of the *Comité National de Langue Kabiye* (CNLK) 'Kabiye language committee' in Lomé for discussing this topic with me. The first version of this paper was presented at the 35th Annual Conference on African Linguistics held at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts on April 1-4, 2004. Comments and questions have helped reshape this version and are hereby gratefully acknowledged. Any errors remain solely my responsibility.

their respective speakers often switch between their respective native languages and other Togolese languages they know, or between their native languages, and/or another Togolese national language and French. In such a multilingual society, the languages in contact ‘colour one another’ (Kamwangamalu 2000:87).

As will be seen below, speakers of Kabiye have been in contact with speakers of Ewe for several decades due to migration. As a result of this language contact, many members of the Kabiye speech community, have become bilingual in Kabiye and Ewe. The bilingualism of Kabiye speakers has led to what Weinreich (1974) refers to as linguistic interference, that is, ‘deviations from the norm of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language’ (p.1). Thus, the contact of Kabiye and Ewe has resulted in a substantial use of Ewe, particularly by younger speakers and women, in many domains.

The study mainly investigates the patterns and domains of utilization of Kabiye and Ewe in three Kabiye speech communities in Togo: Pude,² a small Kabiye village in the canton of Pya; Kara, the second city of Togo, in which the majority of the population is Kabiye; and Lomé, the Ewe-majority capital city of Togo. In the three areas of research, data is reported on the domains of habitual use of Ewe on the one hand, and the domains of habitual use of code-switching and Ewe on the other hand. The use of Kabiye and Ewe in schools has also been investigated and reported. In order to determine speakers’ attitudes and opinions towards the use of Kabiye and Ewe in the Kabiye speech community, three specific questions were asked to guide the research:

- (i). What is the number of subjects who use Ewe only? And how many of those use code-switching between Kabiye and Ewe, (a) in the family, and (b) outside the family?
- (ii). How would you rate your knowledge (speaking and comprehension), (a) in Kabiye, and (b) in Ewe?
- (iii). Which of the two languages should be made compulsory subject in school?

I will now move on to present the sociolinguistic profile of Togo. I will discuss the contact situation of Kabiye and Ewe, and briefly introduce the official language, French, even though its influence on Kabiye is beyond the scope of this study.

1. SOCIOLINGUISTIC PROFILE OF TOGO

There are 4.5 million people and 42 languages in Togo (Gordon 2005). This study deals with two main languages: Kabiye, a Gur language, and Ewe, a Kwa language, both of Niger-Congo family. French is the official language of Togo. Since 1975, Ewe and Kabiye have become national languages by the decree of *Conseil Supérieur de l’Éducation Nationale du Togo* (Lafage, 1985:553). According to the government, the choice of Kabiye and Ewe is a means of fostering national unity, and both languages would be taught as subjects at all levels of formal education (*La Réforme de l’Enseignement au Togo 1975*). However, from my own observation, I would like to point out that thirty years after its inception, it is clear that no concrete action was ever taken by the Togolese government toward implementing this decree. For instance, I observe that, today, not one national

² Pude is a pseudonym for the village.

language is taught as a subject in a public school, and the prospect for the implementation of the reform of this decree still seems not to be an achievable goal in the near future. Hence, the only sector where the decree is applied is the continued use of Kabiye and Ewe in the media (daily news bulletins on TV and radio, daily half page in *Togo Presse*).³ But apart from that, Kabiye is a national language in name only, and most people concerned, including at least some members of the Kabiye language committee, realise that this policy is by now moribund.

1.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF EWE, KABIYE AND FRENCH

1.1.1. Ewe

Ewe is a Kwa language spoken by 862,000 people in the southern part of Togo and by 1,616,000 people in Ghana (Gordon 2005). Three million people (more than 65% of Togo's population) use Ewe as a second language. Mina, also known as Gen or Gengbe, is a dialect of Ewe (Capo 1991:2) spoken on the coast, including Lomé. Thus, for the purpose of this study Ewe and Mina will be used interchangeably. Togo's coastal population, speakers of Ewe/Mina, were the first to be in contact with Europeans. Lafage (1985) observes that a pidgin English developed along the West African coast, and became the main language for the exchange of goods and services between the traders and the local people. The early contact between Ewe speakers and the English, as well as the proximity of Ewe

Because Ewe was the first language to be in contact with the Europeans, it became the main language of communication in the church (particularly in *the Eglise Evangélique Prébtyérienne du Togo* (EEPT)), school, and in trade. Hence, it was the only local language used to communicate with 'Whites'. Ewe consequently became a symbol of modernity and 'evolution'. As the main local language of communication and commerce, Ewe acquired high status and prestige, and has become the main language used by all ethnic groups in the south, center, and even in the markets of the north (Lafage 1985:61). According to Kozelka (1984:53), 'either Ewe or Mina is understood, and can be used as a market language by approximately 60% of the population [of Togo]'.⁴ Stewart (1968:531) refers to Ewe as the 'socially preferred norm of usage.' Even though Stewart's statement might be too strong in some parts of the country, for example in the north, Ewe certainly has this status in Lomé and many urban areas in the south.

The sociolinguistic role of Ewe in Togolese life has expanded in the post-independence period, and it has become the *lingua franca* among all ethnic groups and backgrounds. Historically, Lomé has always been the political, commercial, and educational center, and thus has exerted substantial influence on other regions of the country. Consequently, because it is the language used in Lomé, Ewe enjoys significant prestige when compared to other languages of other parts of the country. According to Lafage (1985:62), 'l'Ewe est vraisemblablement la langue seconde de la quasi-totalité des ethnies locales non-éwéphones'. She reports that more than 75% of people speak Ewe in Togo. Similarly, Guyot (1997:78) observes that Ewe/Mina enables one 'd'affirmer et de cultiver l'identité urbaine, [et] de commencer une nouvelle vie loin du village', particularly because,

³ News is broadcast for only fifteen minutes daily in Ewe and in Kabiye on television and radio.

French is the main language used in the public media.

⁴ See also Afeli and Lébikaza (1992) for similar viewpoints.

parler correctement le mina (Ewe) est déjà un signe perceptible d'intégration au monde 'chic' de la ville. Aussi les enfants de familles non autochtones (Kabiye, Kotokoli, etc.) nés à Lomé, apprennent à parler cette langue urbaine. La langue devient éventuellement ensuite un moyen pour eux de prendre leurs distances vis à vis de leur origine ethnique, d'affirmer et de cultiver leur identité urbaine, de commencer une nouvelle vie loin du village.⁵

Laitin (1992:93) reports that under the first President of Togo, Sylvanus Olympio (1961-1963) Ewe served with French as official languages in Togo. Both languages were used as the medium of instruction in schools because 'la différence entre l'éwé et le français n'est qu'une question de degré car tous les attributs sont communs: autonomie, histoire, vitalité et standardisation' (Lafage 1985:60). Hence, use of Ewe had the effect of further spreading and giving it new prestige as the language of administration, education and modernity. However, it can be argued that the prestige of Ewe stems not only from its wide use in trade, administration and education, but also from the fact that local people extend the prestige of French and other European languages to Ewe.

1.1.2. Kabiye⁶

Kabiye is a Gur language spoken by more than 800,000 people (Roberts 2000:2). According to Lébikaza (1999:1), speakers of Kabiye represent 23% of the population of Togo. It is the second largest ethnic group in Togo after Ewe (Kassan 1996:3). Kabiye is spoken in the northern part of Togo, mainly in the prefectures of Kozah (Kara) and Binah. It is also spoken in neighbouring countries such as Benin and Ghana.

Although Europeans' contact on the coast dates from the fifteenth century, it was not until 1898 that Kabiye people came into contact with the Germans, and, in 1920, with the French (Lafage 1985:22-27). The northern part of the country was off limits to all missionaries until 1912. Lange (1984) reports that

Nous avons noté que les missions se sont surtout développées dans le Sud du Togo (et donc les écoles s'y rattachent). Lorsqu'elles décidèrent de se propager au Nord du Togo, les ordonnances du 20 septembre et du 5 octobre 1907 ... interdisent l'accès des territoires situés au nord du cercle d'Atakpame. ... c'est donc un retard de 70 années de retard environ que les missions commencèrent à créer des écoles au Nord Togo (p. 9).⁷

⁵ Speaking mina (Ewe) correctly is in itself a perceptible sign of integration into the 'chic' world of the city. Also, children of non native families (Kabiye, Kotokoli, etc) who are born in Lomé, learn to speak the urban language. This language then becomes a means of distancing themselves from their ethnic origin, affirming and developing their urban identity, and beginning a new life far away from the village (my translation).

⁶ Until recently, Kabiye was referred to as Kabrè, Cabrai, Cabrais, or Kabyè in the literature. The denomination 'Kabiye' was adopted by the *Comité de Langue Nationale Kabiye* in 1988.

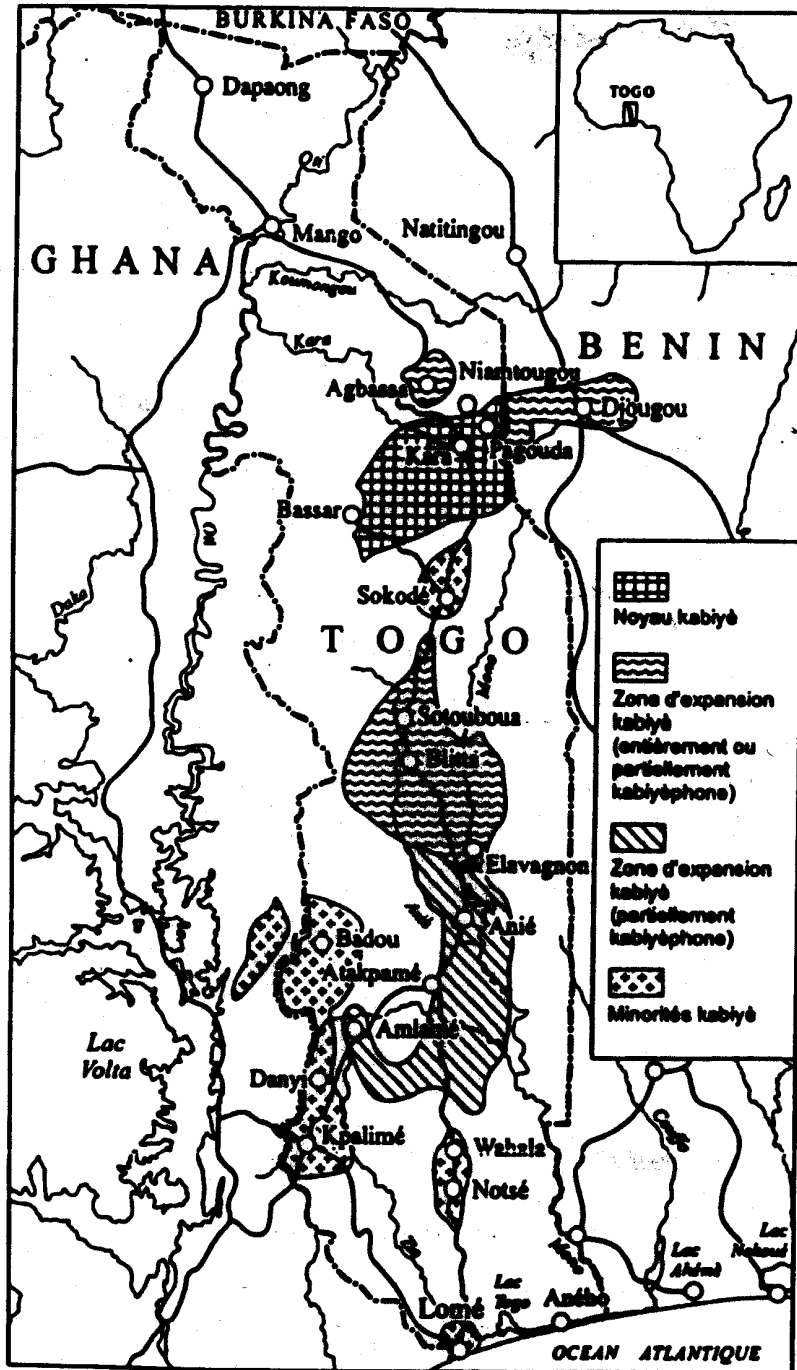
⁷ We noted that Christian missions were developed in the southern part of Togo (together with schools). When they decided to go to the northern part of Togo, the order of September 20 and that of October 5, 1907 ... forbade them from going beyond any territory north of Atakpame (my translation).

Consequently, this part of the country did not have access to Western education in the early days of the arrival of Europeans in Togo.

Kao (1999) observes that many Kabiye people were forced out of their land due to what was known as *la politique de la colonisation des terres*. This consisted of creating coffee, cocoa and teak plantations for exports. Two other reasons that forced the colonial authorities to use a strategy of forced migration are: (a) to reinvigorate the sparsely populated Central region and (b) to supply labour for the main north-south road and railway (Verdier 1982, Piot 1999). Thus, today, many Kabiye speakers are settled in many parts of the country particularly in the central and southern regions (e.g. in the prefectures of Sotouboua, Kloto, Haho, and Ogou) due to migration. Kabiye, as it is spoken today in some Kabiye villages in the Kara region, is influenced by formerly displaced Kabiye speakers and their families who have returned home. These people are often referred to as **kokóte** or **tɛndɛ mba**. Unlike other nicknames (e.g. **maaniukabyu** ‘I don’t understand Kabiye’), **kokóte/tɛndɛ mba** carry a positive connotation showing that the bearer is wealthy.⁸ The Kabiye consider the south as ‘the land of cash-cropping and wealth, wealth that is used to support not only those who reside there but also those they have left behind in the north’ (Piot 1999:165-166). Consequently, the south continues to be perceived as an area of wealth, and continues to attract further Kabiye migrants to date. Today, many more Kabiye people live in the diaspora than the homeland (Piot 1999). Map 1 shows the different areas where Kabiye is spoken in Togo.

⁸ Literally, people from cocoa/rainy lands (i.e., the south fertile lands), meaning rich people. Originally, the terms referred to Kabiye farmers in the south. But today, they are extended to all Kabiye speakers who live there. By contrast, *maaniukabyu* ‘I don’t understand Kabiye’ is a derogatory term used by Kabiye people in the north to refer to those coming back from the south and are incompetent Kabiye speakers.

Map 1: Kabiye speaking areas in Togo



Source: Lebigaza (1999:539)

In their new areas particularly in the south, Kabiye people had to adapt themselves not only socially but linguistically as well. Parents and particularly children born in Ewe areas became Ewe-dominant bilinguals. Today, many Ewe words have become part of the Kabiye speakers' language repertoire that no longer feel foreign. Words like **kpàcà** (from Ewe, **kpàtsà**) 'cutlass', **abatí** (Ewe, **abatí**) 'bed', **lɔɖɛ/lɔrɛ** (English via Ewe, **lɔrɛ**) 'vehicle', **cɔcɪ** (English via Ewe, **tsòtsì**) 'church', **fáda** 'father/priest', **ɖɔ́kíta** 'doctor', **sukúli** (English via Ewe, **sukúlu**) 'school' are used in everyday conversation by both monolingual and bilingual Kabiye speakers. The contact of Kabiye and Ewe has also led some Kabiye people to use Ewe first names and kinship terms. Hence, today, many Kabiye parents give their children Ewe first names. Names given according to days of the week in Ewe like Komlan/Abla, Kofi/Ama, Kossi/Kossiwa, for boys/girls born respectively on Tuesday, Friday and Sunday have become very common in many Kabiye families.⁹ Some researchers have suggested that words like **lɔɖɛ** 'vehicle', **fáda** 'priest' **ɖɔ́kíta** 'doctor', or **sukúli** 'school' have been borrowed from English (Lévikaza 1999, Sizing 1997).¹⁰ While I concur with their proposition, I suggest that such words are borrowed from English via Ewe. My arguments for this suggestion comes not only from the observation that most of the lexemes have an English source, but specifically from the fact that (i) Kabiye speakers did not have any direct contact with the English in Togo, but Ewe speakers did; (ii) Kabiye speakers had been in contact with Ewe speakers from the German period in 1890s, whereas their contact with Ghana dates only from late 1920s (cf. Cornevin 1963, Kao 1999, Piot 1999). As a result, it appears more plausible that Kabiye speakers borrowed from Ewe. Nevertheless, it is also possible that some English borrowed words in Kabiye came through the contact with Nigerian traders through Hausa, Yoruba, and Ibo.

In recent years, economic, educational and professional opportunities have led many Kabiye speakers to settle in the south, particularly the capital city, Lomé, which is on the coast in an Ewe-speaking area. Inter-marriages between Kabiye and Ewe individuals have become very common in many Ewe areas. The most common scenario is a marriage between a Kabiye man and an Ewe woman. Children from these families are often monolingual in Ewe, not simply because of input from their mother but also because of their upbringing in an Ewe-speaking community. Most Kabiye speakers in Kabiye villages in the south and particularly in the capital and other cities are Kabiye/Ewe bilinguals.

1.1.3. French in Togo

Throughout the French colonial period (1918-1960) and after independence in 1960, French continued to be the official language of Togo. It has remained the main language used in schools and by the government. It is the language of economic and political power. The apparent increase in spoken French (particularly in educated families) in recent years can be explained by the fact that success in school, and sometimes in social life, depends on the mastery of French. The use and comprehension of French is, however, not so widespread, as for example Ewe, since French is generally acquired through school. As Lafage (1985 :88) observes,

⁹ For more information on the Kabiye use of Ewe first names and kinship terms, see Essizewa (2001).

¹⁰ While Lévikaza (1999:364) does not specify the contact situation of the borrowing from English, Sizing (1997) says that it is from the contact of the Kabiye with Ghana.

Malgré le rôle important que lui donne sa fonction de langue officielle, le français n'est pas perçu comme une réalité nationale. Il ne constitue qu'un outil de communication nécessaire pour les échanges internationaux et l'accès aux techniques du monde moderne, *reservé à une minorité, ceux qui jouissent du statut social le plus élevé*. Il est de ce fait senti comme *une langue étrangère à statut privilégié, extérieure à la véritable culture locale, inapte à traduire l'âme de l'homme togolais...* (my emphasis).¹¹

Furthermore, as Gbikpi-Benissan (1990:17) notes:

Cette langue [i.e., français] reste *toujours une langue non véhiculaire* au Togo et les gens capables de la parler couramment et de l'écrire correctement *constitue une minorité ...* car les conversations quotidiennes, même entre amis togolais parlant tous français, se font le plus souvent en langues nationales et ceci *sans distinctions de lieu et de domaines*. L'usage des *langues nationales* dans la vie courante est donc plus fréquent que celui du français car ce sont les langues nationales qui assurent la *fonction des langues véhiculaires* (my emphasis).¹²

In Togo, the strength of French lies more on the high-status functions it assumes than on the numbers of its speakers. Although French has been the sole language of instruction, in daily life it has a restricted domain of use. It is mainly used in formal and high status contexts e.g. high-level government administration, national politics, or conversation with foreign francophones. Chumbow and Bobda (2000:46) report that in Francophone West African countries French is frequently used mainly by the élite, who constitute only a tiny proportion of the population. A recent survey by the Conference of Ministers of Education of Francophone Africa has shown that '[L]e français, en dehors des salles de classe, n'est réellement utilisé que par moins de 8% de la population [en Afrique francophone]'. Thus, the survey concludes from the result that '...ce chiffre [i.e., 8%] signifie que le français est *une langue politiquement dominante, mais d'un usage social extrêmement faible. Les communications sociales se font par le truchement des langues nationales*' (Tabi-Manga 1999:32, my emphasis).¹³ In Togo, I observed that in everyday conversations, use of Kabiye and French is generally predominant among younger speakers who have had some formal education than among older people. Hence,

¹¹ Despite its important role as the official language, French is not perceived as a national reality. It is just a tool for communication necessary for international exchange and access to modern world techniques ; *it is reserved for a minority of people, those of a higher social status*. Hence, it is perceived as a foreign language with privileged status, outside of the real local culture, unable to express the soul of the Togolese person, and even mutilating and traumatising in the acculturation it entails (my emphasis and translation).

¹² This language [i.e., French] always remains a non vehicular language in Togo and people that can speak it fluently and write it correctly *constitute a minority ...* because daily conversations, even among Togolese friends who speak French, is carried out in national languages and this *irrespective of place and domains*. The use of *national languages* in daily life is therefore more common than that of French because they are national languages that *function as vehicular languages* (my emphasis and translation).

¹³ See also Kedrebeogo (1995), Adegbiya (1992, 1994), Bamgbose (1991, 2000) for similar observations.

even though the influence of French is particularly widespread among school-children and students, it is beyond the scope of this study.

2. SUBJECTS AND DATA COLLECTION

In order to determine the habitual language use in the Kabiye speech community, I administered a questionnaire to 30 Kabiye speakers in three locations: 10 from Pude, 10 from Kara, and 10 from Lomé. There are 15 males and 15 females, between the ages of 15 and 60. All informants' parents are Kabiye. Because of the complex linguistic situation of Lomé, I chose to focus my study on Agoè, the neighbourhood with the highest population of Kabiye speaking residents. The questionnaire was meant to determine what language the speaker uses when, where, with whom and for what purpose (Fishman 1972). It was aimed mainly at determining the subjects' attitudes and beliefs about the languages they use, the domains of use and the present language situation in the community. The questionnaire covered several areas of everyday life and activities (dating, marriage, market, work, farming, schooling).

I also conducted individual sociolinguistic and group conversation interviews. I supplemented the interviews with participant observations. Because all the informants speak Kabiye, I interviewed them in Kabiye. I also used French or occasionally Ewe, whichever seemed most appropriate in a given situation, to make the interview more natural, and show that I am 'one of them.' (cf. St. Clair and Giles 1980). The questionnaire was carried out in French and Kabiye. The use of French is due to the fact that most of the literate informants cannot read and write Kabiye. I read the oral questionnaire to non-literate informants and I tape-recorded and wrote the answers. I used personal observations and experience of language variation to establish general hypotheses about the sociolinguistic situations in the community.

3. HYPOTHESIS

Use and proficiency of speakers in Kabiye and Ewe depend on the extent to which speakers are exposed to each language, their sex and age group, and their attitudes towards both languages. Ewe is spreading in the Kabiye community particularly in urban areas, and the level of Kabiye bilingualism in Ewe will increase throughout the country.

Now, I consider the domains of the use of Kabiye and Ewe and the speakers' attitudes and opinions towards the use of the languages.

4. LANGUAGE USE IN THE FAMILY

Following Fishman 1972, Mekacha 1993, and Matiki 1996-7, I use some extra-linguistic variables such as 'domain' (i.e. use of language in the family, the neighborhood, work, market and shop) and 'media' (i.e. language as it is spoken and understood), to see which language they report using. For a given domain, I asked speakers which language they were likely to use: Kabiye, Ewe, or both together, which is code-switching. Table 1 shows the number of mother-tongue Kabiye speakers who report using Ewe only, and table 2 combines those speakers who report using Ewe only as well as those who report code-switching between Kabiye and Ewe in the family, in daily interactions in Lomé, Kara and Pude.

Domain of family	Lomé (n=10)	Kara (n=10)	Pudε (n=10)
Younger sister	5 (50%)	4 (40%)	2 (20%)
Older sister	3 (30%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)
Mother	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)
Aunts	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	0
Grandmother	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	0
Younger brother	4 (40%)	3 (30%)	1 (10%)
Older brother	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)
Father	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	0
Maternal Uncles	1 (10%)	0	0
Grandfather	0	0	0

Table 1. Domains of habitual use of the Ewe language by mother-tongue Kabiye speakers in Lomé, Kara, and Pudε

n: indicates the number of respondents in each case

Table 1 indicates that five out of ten (50%) Kabiye subjects resident in Lomé report using Ewe when speaking to their younger sister against 40% in Kara and 25% in Pudε. The informants' report show that while Ewe is often used when speaking to almost every member of the family (except the grandfather), it is not commonly used in the interior, particularly in Pudε.

Domain of family	Lomé (n=10)	Kara (n=10)	Pudε (n=10)
Younger sister	9 (90%)	8 (80%)	6 (60%)
Older sister	8 (80%)	8 (80%)	5 (50%)
Mother	8 (80%)	7 (70%)	4 (40%)
Aunts	7 (70%)	5 (50%)	4 (40%)
Grandmother	6 (60%)	4 (40%)	2 (40%)
Younger brother	8 (80%)	8 (80%)	6 (60%)
Older brother	6 (60%)	6 (60%)	4 (40%)
Father	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	2 (40%)
Maternal Uncles	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)
Grandfather	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	0

Table 2. Domains of habitual use of Kabiye-Ewe code-switching and Ewe language by Mother-tongue Kabiye speakers in Lomé, Kara, and Pudε

In table 2, the respondents report using Kabiye-Ewe code-switching and Ewe at a higher rate when speaking to other members of the family than using Ewe alone. The tables show that the use of Ewe only, and Kabiye-Ewe code-switching, depends on the area. The use of Ewe only and use of Kabiye-Ewe code-switching is reported highest in Lomé, followed by Kara at a middle level, and Pudε with lowest. These reports correlate with my observation and the hypothesis that speakers' exposure to Ewe is highest in Lomé, followed by Kara, and lowest in Pudε. This can be explained by the fact that one's knowledge and proficiency in Ewe depends on his or her proximity to the coast. Consequently, speakers in Lomé affirm prevalence in the use of Ewe only and Kabiye-Ewe code-switching compared to their counterparts in the interior. Furthermore, the tables confirm my

observations and cultural experience that choice and use of Kabiye, Ewe only, and Kabiye-Ewe code-switching is related to age and sex of the interlocutor. Hence, when we consider family relations, the data show that use of Ewe only and Kabiye-Ewe code-switching is reported highest among younger speakers, followed by older female speakers, and least among older male speakers. Overall, it can be said that the use of Ewe and Kabiye-Ewe code-switching is very active among women and younger speakers in the family.

Many studies have shown that the family plays an important role in maintaining the mother tongue (e.g. Barnes 1990, Sridhar and Sridhar 1980). Thus, the informants reported using mainly Kabiye to their grandparents because of their known preference for, and competence in, Kabiye. This implies that Ewe was consciously avoided in such interactions, reflecting the fact that younger people are culturally expected to show more frequent and greater deference and respect when speaking to older people. Furthermore, the fact that grandparents receive Kabiye more than any other person in the family may be explained by the fact that grandparents are generally those who encourage their grandchildren to speak their language, hence younger speakers do not like to be rude in using Ewe with them. The informants also use less Ewe and more Kabiye with maternal uncles and the father than with other members of the family. These family members play an important role in passing on the language to the next generation. In Lomé, five younger informants report that they often reply to their mother in Ewe even when she addresses them in Kabiye. This common phenomenon I observed in some Kabiye families in the south, especially in Lomé is known as ‘dual-bilingualism’. It is ‘the pattern of language use where in conversations between two speakers of two different languages each consistently speaks one language in response to the utterances in the other language’ (Lincoln, quoted in Stoffel 1982:131).

Why do women speak Ewe more often than men in the Kabiye community?

Traditionally, Kabiye women are engaged in commerce or other market activities. They often leave their home to travel to urban areas to buy goods. These activities require the knowledge of Ewe, because it is the main language of trade, an instrument of communication and mobility. Consequently, women are more likely to acquire Ewe than men. Furthermore, some items particularly types of cloth, are often given local Ewe names by Ewe-speaking wholesalers commonly known as *Nana Benz*.¹⁴ Kabiye women need to speak Ewe in order to communicate, appreciate, and buy goods. Trade and most market activities are mainly held by women in Togo (Noyer 1996).

Unlike the Moroccan community (Abbassi 1977), and the Lomwe community in Tanzania (Matiki 1996-7), in the Kabiye speech community in Tanzania, I observed that women migrate more than men mainly for commercial reasons. From a sociolinguistic point of view, this means that women are more likely to acquire a second language (i.e. Ewe), while men are more likely to maintain their mother tongue. As Yawa, 28, a market woman, stated in her interview ‘**Fransi niu we dɛ́u, gake, kíwokinánɔ̄ kaaku esí ahóná yɔ̄**’ (French is good but it cannot take you to the market, like Ewe can).¹⁵ This suggests that Ewe is used for instrumental rather than integrative reasons.

¹⁴ Very rich business and wholesale market women who stereotypically ride in Mercedes Benzes (see also Essizewa 2001).

¹⁵ Yawa is a successful market woman from Kara who has never been to school. She speaks Ewe fluently. Notice also her code-switching.

Socio-economic factors play a major role in language change (see Matiki 1996-7, Gal, 1979, Mekacha 1993, Barnes and McDuling 1995). As Barnes and MacDuling (1995:150) observe,

A shift to the dominant language of the host society in the domain of work and business is a universal pattern in migrant societies as [they] are often severely handicapped ... if they lack competence in the dominant language of a society .

Kabiye speakers are no exception to this trend. Because Ewe serves as the main language for exchange of goods and services in daily economic activities, Kabiye speakers find knowledge of Ewe to be vital in order to conduct market activities and daily business, or even find employment particularly in some local markets and shops in Lomé. Consequently, it can be said that there has been strong instrumental pressure and motivation for Kabiye speakers to learn Ewe; and this, undoubtedly, is one of the most important factors underlying the significant increase in the daily use of Ewe, particularly by younger and female Kabiye speakers in Togo.

I now consider language use outside the family. As above, I consider the use of Ewe only (table 3) and the combination of code-switching and Ewe (table 4).

5. LANGUAGE USE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY

The tables below show data on patterns of language use among the Kabiye in specific domains. As stated above, the concept of domain has been widely used in other studies (see also Fishman 1972, Fishman, Cooper et al. 1971, Mekacha 1993, Matiki 1996-7). The studies have shown that speakers use one language in one domain and another language in another domain. The domains of habitual use of Ewe and Kabiye-Ewe code-switching by mother-tongue Kabiye speakers are presented in tables 3 and 4.

Domains	Lomé(n=10)	Kara(n=10)	Pudε (n=10)
_____ in shops	5 (50%)	5 (50%)	0
_____ at market	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)
_____ at the health center	3 (30%)	1 (10%)	0
_____ on taxis and / buses	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	0
_____ in the neighborhood	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	0

Table 3. Domains of habitual use of the Ewe language by mother-tongue Kabiye speakers in Lomé, Kara, and Pudε

Domains	Lomé(n=10)	Kara(n=10)	Pudε (n=10)
_____ in shops	9 (90%)	9 (90%)	1 (10%)
_____ at market	8 (80%)	7 (70%)	2 (20%)
_____ at the health center	8 (80%)	6 (60%)	1 (10%)
_____ on taxi and buses	7 (70%)	6 (60%)	2 (20%)
_____ in the neighborhood	9 (90%)	5 (50%)	1 (10%)

Table 4. Domains of habitual use of Kabiye and Ewe code-switching and Ewe language by mother-tongue Kabiye speakers in Lomé, Kara, and Pudε

The first observation is that the use of Ewe and code-switching by mother tongue Kabiye speakers in Lomé and Kara is reportedly almost twice as high outside the family as in the family. In other words, the street is more permissive to the use of Ewe than the family is. This is probably related to the fact that in the African cultural value of respect shown by younger to older family members, the relationship among close family relatives is less relaxed than among distant ones, especially peers; hence, the relative freedom of language choice (see also Mekacha 1993). In Lomé and Kara, Ewe is mainly the choice among younger speakers and women, presumably because they want to show that they are ‘modern’ and can speak the language of the city. But in Pude, the use of Kabiye is reported as the norm in everyday interactions. In Pude, the use of Ewe and code-switching is higher in the home than outside the home. A possible explanation is that in the village, speakers do not want to be seen as showing off in the street by using a non-local language. Furthermore, they may wish to avoid censure from people in the village who will accuse them of being incompetent Kabiye speakers and call them by the nicknames such as **máaniɔkabrɔ** (I don’t understand Kabiye) and **ɲjɛmno** (force my mouth to speak). Within tables 3 & 4, the higher reported use of Ewe and code-switching in the shop as opposed to the market in Lomé and Kara comes as a surprise. This is probably due to the fact that most local shops are owned by non-Kabiye, and hence the use of the *lingua franca*, i.e. Ewe.

During the interview, some respondents in Lomé reported that outside the family, they often use Ewe to address someone whose ethnicity is unknown to them. This means that Ewe is considered the unmarked choice in such cases (cf. Myers-Scotton 1993a). The informants were also asked to rate their knowledge¹⁶ of Kabiye, and/or Ewe, particularly in speaking and comprehension. The results are given in table 5.

	Speaking		Comprehension	
	K	E	K	E
Good	14 (47%)	18 (60%)	16 (53%)	20 (67%)
Fair	11 (37%)	10 (33%)	11 (37%)	9 (0.30%)
None	5 (17%)	2 (0.06%)	3 (0.10%)	1 (0.03%)

Table 5: Knowledge of Kabiye (K) and Ewe (E) in Lomé, Kara, and Pude (n =30)

As is often the case in contact situations, table 5 shows that ‘speaking’ and ‘comprehension’ are the first Ewe skills acquired by Kabiye speakers, as both areas do not require schooling. On average, over 60% of informants rated themselves ‘good’ in comprehension and speaking Ewe, as opposed to just 50% for Kabiye. Surprisingly, more speakers show fluency in Ewe than in Kabiye in these two areas. It is often the case that people overrate themselves with regard to knowledge of Ewe, not only for prestige reasons but also to show that they are part of ‘modern’ society in using the language of the city. Interestingly, most of the informants who reported ‘none’ in both speaking and comprehension Kabiye were from Lome, one informant from Kara reported ‘none’ in speaking, and all informants in Pude reported being able to speak and understand Kabiye. However, according to my own observation, the respondents’ reports with regard to their level of linguistic

¹⁶ Knowledge includes ‘all stages of proficiency of the two languages at the present time, from a near perfect active knowledge to a minimal passive one’ (Stoffel 1982:125).

skills in general for the two languages seems to be quite highly accurate and correlates with their daily linguistic behaviour, particularly in Lomé. This is an indication that Ewe is the most frequently used language in the Kabiye community, particularly in Lomé and other cities in the south, because it is the language of wider communication not only in Togo but also in the neighboring Ghana and Benin.

I also asked respondents whether or not Kabiye and/or Ewe, as national languages, should be taught as compulsory subjects in school.

Should Kabiye be made compulsory in school? Yes = 25 No = 3 Not sure = 2

Should Ewe be made compulsory in school? Yes = 10 No = 13 Not sure = 7

More than 80% of the respondents expressed a strong desire to make Kabiye a compulsory subject, as opposed to only 33% for Ewe. However, as Stoffel (1982:136) observes, there seems to exist a conflict between ‘theory’ and the daily realities. This is because very often answers to questionnaires reflect language loyalties more than actual language use (Kachru, 1992: 267). For example, Pañi, 19, a freshman at Lomé University, did not hesitate to clearly speak her mind about the government’s policy on national languages in schools. She uses code-switching to report on Kabiye, ‘**C’est une perte de temps kabiyu kpelikúu sukúliita, mbú bryóo ya, ñdíláa réussir yó, páacəñná langues nationales tɛ pointwaa**’ (It is a waste of time to learn Kabiye because grades in national languages are not counted towards earning your degree). I agree with Pañi’s statement in that, although pupils often choose Kabiye or Ewe at national exams BEPC (O’level) and Baccalauréat (A’level), to my own knowledge, the grades are not taken into account until the candidate is declared ‘pass’ in other subjects.¹⁷ National languages are considered optional subjects at all national examinations. In fact, my observation is that there seems to be no overt official attention and no guidelines at all for national languages from the government. Thus, Gbikpi-Benissan (1990:i) remarks that even though the main philosophy of national language policy is stated in the Reform, ‘Le Togo ne dispose cependant pas d’un document officiel qui formule de façon formelle la politique nationale en matière de développement et de promotion des langues nationales’. For example, even though Kabiye was supposed to be taught as a subject in schools, it was often not introduced until 4e or 3e (9th or 10th grade), right at the end of schooling (for most pupils) rather than in primary schools. According to my investigation, doing so at that time appeared better compared to the current situation where Kabiye is almost not taught in any public school in the country.

During the interview many parents expressed doubts not only about younger speakers’ ability to speak Kabiye, but also their worries about the future of the language. While the majority of informants acknowledged the instrumental use of Ewe they stated that Kabiye should not be lost at the expense of Ewe. The tables in 1-4 would seem to be at odds with this assertion.

¹⁷ BEPC is taken at 10th grade and Baccalauréat (commonly BAC) at 12th grade.

6. CONCLUSION

This study provides a sociolinguistic analysis of Kabiye and shows how the Kabiye speech community is changing. The historical status and the instrumental value of Ewe in the 'market place' (Calvet 1992) have led Kabiye speakers particularly in the south and urban centers to increasingly borrow from and code-switch into Ewe. The study shows that, in everyday conversations, Kabiye-Ewe bilingualism has become more prevalent particularly among younger and female speakers due to prestige and the socioeconomic pressure carried by Ewe, as well as its interethnic use as a lingua franca and language of wider communication. My observation and experience as a Kabiye-Ewe bilingual lead me to predict an increasing level of Kabiye bilingualism in Ewe throughout the country in the future. Thus, the present upward trend in the use of Ewe, the awareness by most Kabiye speakers that prestige and socioeconomic mobility depend on the use of Ewe can be seen as 'fault lines'¹⁸ and germs for risk in loyalty in the use of Kabiye for some time to come.

However, this study shows that while Kabiye speakers have mainly positive attitudes towards Ewe, favorable attitudes are attached to Kabiye which they perceive as being a substantial part of their cultural identity and heritage (cf. Edwards 1985). Today, Kabiye is in far more robust state of health, particularly in population and sense of cultural identity than many other Gur languages in Togo. Furthermore, despite the widespread use of Ewe lexical items in Kabiye-Ewe code-switching, I have observed that Kabiye syntax has not been affected. This indicates that, the Kabiye community displays a strong preference for the maintenance of their language.

I can say that, rather than being 'an exposure to risks' (Lieberson 1991) as some language 'purists' complain, Kabiye-Ewe bilingualism allows the Kabiye people not only to participate in mainstream life but also serves as a strategy to maintain their mother tongue and their cultural identity (cf. Kedrebeogo 1995).¹⁹ Traditional maintenance factors like family and education do not seem to be effective in checking the steady erosion of the language (Barnes and MacDuling 1995:159). Nevertheless, the situation is currently one where no sign of language shift has proceeded yet, and if steps are taken soon, positive attitudes and conscious efforts to maintain Kabiye have every chance of success.

I hope that this study serves as the beginning of a deeper sociolinguistic research in the contact phenomena between Kabiye and Ewe as well as contact between Ewe and other speech communities in Togo.

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¹⁸ I thank Chris Collins who suggested this term to me.

¹⁹ See Aritiba's (1993) article on 'Langue en péril'.

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