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Some notes on bare noun phrases in Haitian Creole and in Gungbe

A transatlantic Sprachbund perspective*

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This paper discusses noun phrases in Haitian Creole (HC), a French-derived Creole, and in Gungbe, a Gbe language. These languages exhibit “bare noun phrases” (BNPs) in a wider range of positions than in French, English and the other most commonly studied Romance and Germanic languages. Studies on the formation of HC show that many of the creators of the earliest Creole varieties in 17th-century Saint-Domingue were native speakers of Niger-Congo languages including Gbe language. We believe that by close analysis of specific domains of the Creole (e.g. BNPs) and by comparing these patterns to their analogues in the languages in contact during the emergence of the Creole, we can better understand how Universal Grammar regulates the emergence of new varieties out of language contact.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses noun phrases in Haitian Creole, a French-derived Creole, and in Gungbe, a Gbe language of the Kwa family. Our discussion of these two languages is motivated by two related interests: one synchronic

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(micro-comparative syntax), the other diachronic (contact-induced language change). With regard to the first, we adopt Richard Kayne's perspective on comparative syntax, a perspective that seeks to uncover properties of Universal Grammar (UG) by conducting detailed comparisons of closely related languages. One may reasonably doubt that Gungbe and Haitian Creole are as closely related as, say, the dialects of certain Romance languages in Kayne's studies. Yet, the diachronic link between Gungbe and Haitian Creole suggests that such an enterprise can be successfully carried out on these two languages as well. Research on the formation of Haitian Creole, as well as historical studies of the settlement of Saint-Domingue (Haiti's former name as a French colony), show that many of the creators of the earliest Creole varieties in 17th-century Saint-Domingue were native speakers of Niger-Congo languages including the Gbe subgroup of the Kwa languages spoken along the Bight of Benin. This brings us to our second interest, namely the emergence of new speech varieties in the midst of language contact. We believe that by close analysis of very specific domains of these new languages and by comparing patterns in these domains to their analogues in the languages in contact during their formative period (the so-called "superstrate" and "substrate" languages), we may come to better understand how UG regulates the emergence of new varieties out of language contact. In our case, a micro-comparative analysis of a specific syntactic domain in Haitian Creole, building on what we can learn from French and from Gungbe, may help us discover some fundamental properties of UG and how these properties constrain the development of new varieties that appear to combine certain properties of different languages.

This paper deals with the noun phrase in Haitian Creole and in Gungbe. Our choice is guided by the following properties of Haitian Creole and Gungbe noun phrases, properties that represent a puzzle for linguistic theory and for studies of language contact:

1. Unlike French and most Romance languages, Haitian Creole and Gungbe display "Bare Noun Phrases" (BNPs) in *all* argument positions. Such BNPs may include modifying expressions (e.g. adjectives, numeral, relative clauses) but they exclude overt functional heads (comparable to, e.g. *a/the* in English and *un(e)/le(la)* in French).
2. Besides BNPs, Haitian Creole and Gungbe also exhibit nominal expressions with overt functional heads whose glosses approximate the above-mentioned articles in French and English. We refer to these as "Determined Noun Phrases" (DNPs).

3. BNPs and DNPs occur in similar positions in Haitian Creole and Gungbe, sometimes with similar interpretation (e.g. as specific definites). This is obviously different from what is known of Germanic and Romance where BNPs and DNPs contrast with respect to their distribution and interpretation (cf. Longobardi 1994; Chierchia 1998).
4. Haitian Creole and Gungbe show noteworthy differences in the use and interpretation of overt functional heads in their respective noun phrases.

Assuming current theories of the syntax-semantics of noun phrases, it is not immediately clear:

1. How to explain the relatively wide distribution of BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe?
2. How to explain the semantics of these BNPs on principled grounds?
3. How to explain the similarities and differences between Haitian Creole and Gungbe noun phrases on principled grounds?

The goal of this paper is to start developing answers to the first two questions. Then, as a first stab at question 3, we explore, at the end of the paper, the implications of our answers for theories of language change and language creation. Section 2 presents some general properties of BNPs and their distribution in the two languages. Section 3 sets BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe in a broader typological context and shows that the distribution of BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe forms a superset of their distribution in more frequently studied languages (e.g. Romance, Germanic, Sinitic). Building on this, Section 4 discusses the structure of BNPs and proposes that they are full determiner phrases (i.e. DPs in the sense of Abney 1987; Szabolcsi 1994; Longobardi 1994; Chierchia 1998; Aboh 2002, 2004a, b, etc.). The assumption there is that NPs are predicates and can provide arguments only if they are introduced by a category converter (or “type shifter”) traditionally labeled as D. Given this assumption, the fact that Haitian Creole and Gungbe seem to involve both overt and covert determiners (i.e. overt and covert D^0 heads) leads us in Section 4 to look into the function and structural properties of these determiners. Section 5 examines the distribution and interpretation of other overt determiners in Haitian Creole and Gungbe. Section 6 sketches the implications of our observations for issues of language creation and language change and concludes this paper, which we hope can serve as advert for more comprehensive work on a larger set of comparative and diachronic issues implicating Gungbe and Haitian Creole.

2. Some properties of BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe

As we mentioned above, Haitian Creole and Gungbe allow BNPs in all argument positions with various interpretations to which we now turn:¹

BNPs can be used anaphorically to previously introduced DNPs. Such BNPs are interpreted as definite: In the following Haitian Creole example, *wosiyòl* ‘nightingale’ is first introduced as a specific indefinite *yon bèl wosiyòl* ‘a pretty nightingale’. This referent is resumed in the following sentence as the definite BNP *wosiyòl* (in bold font in the example).^{2, 3}

- (1) *Bouki te marye ak yon bèl wosiyòl.* [Haitian Creole]
 B. ANT marry with a pretty nightingale
Wosiyòl *te renmen kowosòl.*
 Nightingale ANT love soursop
 ‘Bouki was married to a beautiful nightingale, the nightingale loved soursop.’
 #‘Bouki was married to a beautiful nightingale, a nightingale loved soursop.’

A similar situation is found in Gungbe as illustrated by the following example where ‘*àvún òxó dé* ‘a big dog’ is resumed by just *àvún* ‘dog’.

- (2) *Àgòsú xò àvún òxó dé bò àvún* [Gungbe]
 Agosu buy dog big DET AND dog

1. Except where indicated, the HC data is from Michel DeGraff (a native speaker of the Port-au-Prince variety of the language) and the Gungbe data is from Enoch O. Aboh (a native speaker of the Porto-Novo variety of the language). Our native-speaker intuitions have been checked against those of other speakers of the corresponding dialects.

2. We use the following a-theoretical abbreviations: ANT: Anterior; CL: Classifier; COORD: Coordination; DEM: Demonstrative; EXCL: Exclamation Marker; FEM: Feminine; FUT: Future; SG: Singular; PL: Plural; HAB: Habitual; Num: Number; NEG: Negation; PREP: Preposition; REL: Relative Clause Marker; SFP: Sentence Final Particle; TOP: Topic marker.

3. The BNP upon second mention is represented here in bold face. Joseph (1988:102f, 258ff) provides additional examples of definite BNPs in *reprise anaphorique*, alongside other instances of definite BNPs. Such examples of specific definite BNPs contradict Zribi-Hertz and Glaude’s (2007:280) claim that BNPs in HC are “default nominals” which can only be associated with a “nonspatialised construal of the referent” (i.e. “they take up whatever semantic interpretations are not available for overt determiners”). The data in this paper show that BNPs in HC can have, inter alia, specific definite (i.e. “spatialized”) construal on a par with noun phrases with overt determiners.

wá d̀ù ví ét̀n.
EVENT eat child POSS

‘Agosu bought a certain big dog and the/this dog eventually bite his child.’

*‘Agosu bought a certain big dog and a(nother) dog eventually bite his child.’

As indicated by the infelicitous interpretations, upon second mention *wosiyòl* in (1) or *àvún* in (2) cannot refer to an indefinite bird or dog in this stretch of discourse. Haitian Creole and Gungbe are not unique in exhibiting such resumptive definite BNPs in argument positions. Similar facts are commonly observed in many other Atlantic creoles and in Kwa languages.⁴ What is remarkable in the context of this discussion is that we observe a distinct pattern in Romance and Germanic: nouns that are introduced as indefinite upon first mention must typically take a definite or demonstrative article upon second mention. This is illustrated by the English contrast in (3). Observe that the ungrammatical example (3a) is equivalent to the grammatical examples in Haitian Creole (1) and Gungbe (2).

- (3) a. **I bought a bottle of wine this morning but wine turned out to be a mixture of vinegar, water and probably some spirit.*
b. *I bought a bottle of wine this morning but this/the wine turned out to be a mixture of vinegar, water and probably some spirit.*

Furthermore, in a narrative context as illustrated in (4) in English, the specific indefinite DNP *a cat* followed by a definite specific BNP *cat* sounds strange to our English-speaking consultants:

- (4) *Mickey Mouse married a cat. #(The) Cat was a princess.*

However, when used as proper names or as titles for characters in tales, BNPs generally occur freely in argument positions cross-linguistically. In these contexts, such BNPs are usually capitalized in written texts. Consider, for example, the use of *Goat*, *Cat* and *Dog* in the following passage from the English translation of the

4. Very loosely speaking, BNPs in Brazilian Portuguese, Seychelles Creole, Réunionais and Lesser Antillean Creole (see, e.g. Munn & Schmitt 2004; Déprez 2007a; Chaudenson 2007 and Gadelii 2007, respectively) and in Jamaican Patwa, Sranan and Berbice Dutch (see, e.g. Stewart 2007; Bruyn 2007 and Kouwenberg 2007, respectively) make them more similar to their counterparts in HC and Gungbe than to the more familiar members of Romance and Germanic as studied by (e.g.) Longobardi 1994ff.

Haitian tale *The Education of Goat* (Thoby-Marcelin & Marcelin 1971: 15f, bold font added for clarity):

- (5) It happened in the days of yore ... **Cat**, who was good friends with **Goat**, was teaching him how to climb trees ... **Goat** made some appreciable progress every day ... **Cat** was satisfied ... one fine morning the master came upon his pupil in the company of **Dog**, the hereditary enemy of the cat family, and he was teaching **Dog** how to climb trees ...

Haitian Creole and Gungbe further differ from English and French in allowing specific definite BNPs with inanimate referents.⁵ The use of *machin* in (6a) or *hún* in (6b) seems quite unlike the proper-name use of the BNPs in (5). Indeed, animacy is not a necessary condition for the definite specific reading of BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe.

- (6) a. *Bouki achte yon bèl machin. Men, machin tonbe*
 B. buy a nice car but car fall
bay Bouki pwoblèm. [Haitian C]
 get Bouki trouble
 'Bouki bought a nice car, but the car started to give trouble to Bouki.'
- b. *Àgòsú xò hún yòyò bò hún wá nyín tùklá.* [Gungbe]
 Agosu buy car new AND car EVENT become problem
 'Agosu bought a new car and the/this car became a problem.'

The data in (1) to (6) raise the question of whether Haitian Creole and Gungbe involve definite articles comparable to those found in Romance and Germanic. One would expect such definite articles to occur upon second mention of a newly introduced referent (as in 3b). Though we postpone the discussion of such elements in Haitian Creole and Gungbe until Section 4, one key fact about the specific definite BNPs in (1), (2) and (6) is that their anaphoric use is quite widespread and they are found in environments where specific definite DNPs occur. Witness the Haitian Creole example (7) adapted from Joseph (1988: 102f) where the second mention of the referent is via a BNP even though the previously mentioned antecedent is already a specific definite involving the determiner *la* comparable to articles in Romance and Germanic (compare (1), (6) and (7)):⁶

5. In English and French, such BNPs are allowed in coordinated noun phrases only (Heycock & Zamparelli 2003; Roodenburg 2004)

6. The HC definite determiner *la* has allomorphs *a*, *lan*, *nan* and *an*, with the respective pronunciations [a], [lã], [nã] and [ã] which are determined by the phonological environment, as in: *chat la* 'the cat', *bra a* 'the arm', *dans lan* 'the danse', *machin nan* 'the car', *dan an* 'the tooth'. The French etymon is the deictic locative adverbial and discourse particle *là* in Spoken French

- (7) *Chwal la te lage. Asefi te al chache l toupatou ... Men,*
 Horse DET ANT escape Asefi ANT go look.for 3SG everywhere but
chwal gen tan tounen nan poto pandan Asefi te pati.
 horse have time return in pole while Asefi ANT leave
 ‘The horse had escaped. Asefi had gone to look for it all over, but the horse
 already returned to the pole while Asefi was gone.’

Three inter-related observations are in order vis-à-vis (7):

- a. The BNP *chwal* is anaphoric on a DNP that is overtly marked for “definiteness.”
- b. That such “definiteness” markers can be left out on the second mention of the referent may suggest that they are *not* garden-varieties “definite articles” after all: a challenge to current formal theories of determiners.
- c. The facts in (6)–(7) present a challenge to Chierchia’s (1998) “Blocking Principle” which precludes a covert determiner with a certain type-shifting semantics (e.g. type shifting from non-referential predicate to referential argument) if the language has an overt determiner with the same semantics (but see Longobardi 1994ff for one alternative).

These data point to the possibility that the rule governing the distribution of BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe might be different from those regulating BNPs in Romance and Germanic. As we show in Section 4.3, a possible distinction between Haitian Creole and Gungbe versus Germanic and Romance is that BNPs in the former seem to involve a full DP structure headed by a null D though this null D does not seem specified for any feature such as definite, indefinite or generic, as we now show.

BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe can receive generic (including kind-level) interpretation: The discussion in the previous paragraphs suggests that BNPs can receive their referential interpretation from their antecedent in the linguistic context. The following examples indicate that BNPs can also be interpreted as generic in the appropriate context.

- (8) a. *Wosiyòl manje kowosòl.* [Haitian Creole]
 nightingale eat soursop
 ‘Nightingales eat soursop.’

as in *T’as vu ce chat-là là* ‘Did you see that cat there, yeah?’ (with the first *là* as locational deictic adverbial and the second *là* as discourse particle). HC also has a deictic locative adverbial *la* which, unlike the determiner, does not have allomorphs: *Chat la la* ‘The cat is there’ (literally: ‘Cat the there’); see Fattier 1998, 2000 for further discussion, including observations on earlier varieties and on dialectal variations.

- b. *Àlwé nò dũ vávò.* [Gungbe]
 nightingale HAB eat pepper
 ‘Nightingales eat pepper.’

Put together, these facts suggest that the interpretation of BNPs depends on an appropriate antecedent which is either present in the linguistic context or in the discourse context. This description seems supported by the following examples where it appears that:

BNPs can be indefinite, plural and count-denoting or indefinite and mass-denoting – as illustrated by the HC and Gungbe nouns for *people* and *cholera* in the following examples:

- (9) a. *Moun te pran kolera.* [Haitian Creole]
 person ANT catch cholera
 ‘People caught cholera.’
 ‘There were people who caught cholera’
 *‘A person/someone caught cholera’
- b. *Gbètɔ́ bé kòlérá tàun xwè dè wá yì mè.* [Gungbe]
 People catch cholera a.lot. year that come go in
 ‘People caught cholera a lot last year.’
 ‘Many people caught cholera last year.’
 *‘A person/someone caught cholera last year.’

The BNPs *moun* and *gbètɔ́* in (9) denote plural referents. Such BNPs denote a plural set of individuals, not an undivuated mass (e.g. a group or a crowd). These nouns can be marked by a number marker as in (10).

- (10) a. *Moun yo te pè vote.* [Haitian Creole]
 person DET.PL ANT afraid vote
 ‘The people were afraid of voting.’
- b. *Gbètɔ́ lé wá àgɔ́ cè tèmè tàun.* [Gungbe]
 people PL come party my place very
 ‘(The) people really came to my party.’

Though we give to both HC *yo* and Gungbe *lé* the label “number marker,” their semantics seem different. To wit the translations in (10) where Gungbe *gbètɔ́ lé*, unlike HC *moun yo*, can receive an indefinite interpretation.⁷ We revisit this distinction in Section 5.1 below.

7. This is unlike Lefebvre’s (1998:84) report about Fongbe (a closely related Eastern Gbe language) that “[a] noun followed by the plural marker alone is always interpreted as [+ definite]. It can never be interpreted as [– definite].”

BNPs can be indefinite, non-specific and mass-denoting: The data discussed thus far may be interpreted as indicating that Haitian Creole and Gungbe do not formally distinguish between count and mass nouns. Are the various bare nouns in the previous examples comparable to bare mass nouns in other languages (cf. Chierchia 1998)? The answer is no: Haitian Creole and Gungbe do distinguish between count and mass nouns. In the following examples, the nouns ‘water’ *dlo* (Haitian Creole) and *sin* (Gungbe) do not take the number marker when they are interpreted as mass nouns. This is unlike the Haitian Creole and Gungbe count nouns for ‘people’, *moun* and *gbètɔ́* in (10).

- (11) a. *Mwen vle dlo (*yo).* [Haitian Creole]
 b. *Ūn jró sin (*lé).* [Gungbe]
 I want water PL
 ‘I want water.’
 #‘I want the waters (unless understood as types or quantities of water).’

BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe can be indefinite, non-specific and unmarked for number: In the sentences in (12), the count noun for ‘house’, Haitian Creole *kay* and Gungbe *xwé*, can be interpreted either in singular or plural depending on context (e.g. whether John is a wealthy person; see Joseph 1988: 104f for related comments).

- (12) a. *Jan achte kay.* [Haitian Creole]
 b. *Ján xò xwé* [Gungbe]
 John buy house
 ‘John bought a house/houses.’

In (13) the object DP can only be interpreted as denoting a specific definite and plural referent. Witness the number marker *yo* in Haitian Creole and *lé* in Gungbe.⁸

- (13) a. *Jan achte kay yo.* [Haitian Creole]
 b. *Ján xò xwé lé.* [Gungbe]
 John buy house PL
 ‘John bought the houses.’

All the examples discussed thus far show that BNPs can be used in all argument positions with various interpretations.

BNPs can also be used as predicates: This is indicated by example (14), where it appears that Haitian Creole and Gungbe only differ with regard to the obligatory presence of a copula in the latter but not in the former.⁹

8. We return to the discussion of the number marker in Gungbe (and HC) in Section 5.1.

9. We also find *Mwen se doktè* and *Mwen se yon doktè* in HC, both with the copula *se*, but with subtle differences in semantics (see DeGraff 1998, 1995, 2008 for related facts and references).

- (14) a. *Mwen doktè.* [Haitian Creole]
 b. *Ûn nyin dòtó.* [Gungbe]
 I COP doctor
 'I am a doctor.'

Summarizing, the discussion shows that BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe can occur in all argument positions, where they can be interpreted as definite or indefinite, specific or non-specific, or generic – depending on context. BNPs are not specified for number though they are sensitive to the count vs. mass distinction. Finally, BNPs can be used as predicates. Put together, these facts confirm our observation in Section 1 that the positions where BNPs occur in Haitian Creole and Gungbe form a superset of those where BNPs occur in the most studied languages (e.g. Germanic, Romance).

3. A cross-linguistic sample of BNPs

Haitian Creole and Gungbe are not unique in displaying BNPs in a wide range of argument positions. Actually, the facts just discussed remind us of similar patterns in Sinitic languages where BNPs may occur in argument positions, as indicated by the following examples from Mandarin Chinese. According to Cheng and Sybesma (1999:510) object BNPs as in (15) can be interpreted as definite, indefinite or generic.

- (15) a. *Hufei mai shu qu le.* [Mandarin Chinese]
 Hufei buy book go SFP
 'Hufei went to buy book/books.'
 b. *Hufei he wan le tang.*
 Hufei drink finish LE soup
 'Hufei finished the soup.'
 c. *Wo xihuan gou.*
 I like dog
 'I like dogs.'

It seems however that the comparison stops here. First, Haitian Creole and Gungbe do not have any element that could be formally equated with the classifiers of Mandarin Chinese. Second, BNPs in preverbal position show a semantic restriction in Mandarin Chinese that is absent in Haitian Creole and Gungbe. According to Cheng and Sybesma (1999:510), preverbal BNPs can be interpreted as definite or generic *but not as indefinite*. Consider the following examples:

- (16) a. *Gou yao guo malu.* [Mandarin Chinese]
 dog want cross road
 'The dog wants to cross the road.' (Not: 'Some dog(s) want(s) to cross the road.')

- b. *Gou jintian tebie tinghua.*
 dog today very obedient
 ‘The dog(s) was/were very obedient today’ (and not: ‘Some dog(s) was/were...’)
- c. *Gou ai chi rou.*
 dog love eat meat
 ‘Dogs love to eat meat.’ (Not: ‘Some dog(s) love to eat meat.’)

Cheng and Sybesma’s (1999) description suggests that the interpretation of the BNPs in (16) is not sensitive to the semantics of the verb and the aspect markers or adverbs it co-occurs with. Indeed the ban on indefinite BNPs in subject position in Mandarin Chinese persists even when the predicate is telic as in (17) (Sybesma, p.c., 5/12/09):

- (17) a. *Gou guo-le malu.* [Mandarin Chinese]
 dog cross-LE road
 ‘The dog crossed the road.’ (Not: A dog crossed the road.)
- b. *Gou guo-wan-le malu.*
 Dog cross-finish-LE road
 ‘The dog finished crossing the road.’ (Not: A dog finished crossing the road.)

BNPs in Mandarin Chinese thus exhibit a sharp preverbal versus postverbal asymmetry whereby indefinite BNPs occur postverbally only. In other words, BNPs in subject position are *never* interpreted as indefinites.

While no such asymmetry exists in Haitian Creole and Gungbe, these languages display an interesting interplay between the interpretation of the BNP and that of the predicate they occur with. The next section discusses such examples from Haitian Creole only, but the same contrasts can be constructed for Gungbe as well.

3.1 A stative-vs-eventive contrast in Haitian Creole and Gungbe

Unlike Mandarin Chinese, Haitian Creole and Gungbe do allow indefinite BNPs in subject position, but these BNPs seem restricted to eventive predicates. Compare, for instance, (16c) in Mandarin Chinese and (18) in Haitian Creole: In (18) with a *stative* predicate, the BNP in Haitian Creole is on a par with the BNP in Mandarin Chinese to the extent that it resists an indefinite interpretation.

- (18) *Chen renmen manje vyann.* [Haitian Creole]
 dog like eat meat
 ‘{The dog | Dogs} love(s) to eat meat.’ (Not: Some dog(s) love(s) to eat meat)

But in (19) with an eventive predicate, the BNP *chen* in subject position, unlike its counterpart in Mandarin Chinese, can receive an indefinite interpretation (‘some

dog(s)'), alongside a specific definite interpretation ('the dog'). But the generic reading is excluded.

- (19) *Chen antre nan kay la.* [Haitian Creole]
 dog enter in house the
 'The dog | Some dog(s)} has/have entered the house.'

As for the definite specific reading of *chen* in both (18) and (19), it obtains in the appropriate context – for example, if there is a unique prominent dog in the extra-linguistic context (cf. Joseph 1988: 261f) or in a story-telling context when there is a preceding sentence that introduces *yon chen* 'a dog', as a character in the story (see discussion in Section 2 above). But now, consider example (20a), the Haitian Creole counterparts of the Mandarin Chinese example in (16a). This sentence allows the definite specific reading for the BNP but disallows both the generic and indefinite readings. The same holds true of example (20b), the Haitian Creole counterpart of the Mandarin Chinese sentence in (16b). However, the sentences under (20c) and (20d) indicate that generic BNPs are not categorically excluded in subject position. In these examples, the generic interpretation seems licensed by, the adverb *toujou* 'always' in (20c) and the modal *ka* 'can' in (20d).

- (20) a. *Chen vle travèse wout la.* [Haitian Creole]
 Dog want cross road the
 'The dog/dogs wants/want to cross the road.'
 (not: {Dogs | Some dog(s)} want(s) to cross the road')
- b. *Chen trè obeyisan jodi a.*
 Dog very obedient today DET
 'The dog/dogs is/are very obedient today.'
 (not: {Dogs | Some dog(s)} is/are very obedient today')
- c. *Chen toujou vle travèse wout.*
 Dog always want cross road
 'The dog | Dogs} always want(s) to cross roads.'
 (not: Some dog(s) always wants/want to cross the road')
- d. *Chen ka travèse wout.*
 Dog can cross road
 'The dog | Dogs} can cross roads.' (Not: Some dog(s) can cross the road').

What we observe here is that, unlike Mandarin Chinese, BNPs in Haitian Creole – and in Gungbe as well – can occur in all argument positions and their interpretation as indefinite is not restricted to post-verbal position. Instead, the

interpretation of BNPs in Haitian Creole and in Gungbe seems to reflect sentence-internal context (e.g. aktionsart) as well as discourse context (e.g. shared knowledge).

3.2 Haitian Creole and Gungbe in the context of ‘bare noun’ languages

Recapitulating various observations in works by Longobardi (1994, 2001), Chierchia (1998), Cheng & Sybesma (1999), Heycock & Zamparelli (2003), Roodenburgh (2004), Aboh (2002, 2004a, b, 2006), Déprez (2004), the following generalization emerges:

- a. **French:** BNPs cannot occur in argument positions, except in certain prepositional and coordination structures (e.g. *Chiens et chats avaient tous l'air très sales* ‘Dogs and cats all look very dirty’; Heycock & Zamparelli 2003: 449).
- b. **English:** BNPs headed by mass nouns and plural nouns can occur in argument positions. Such BNPs are typically interpreted as indefinites or generic. Specific definite BNPs are found, like in French, in certain prepositional and coordination structures (e.g. *Forks and knives were equally dirty*; Heycock & Zamparelli 2003: 448).
- c. **Sinitic:** BNPs are possible in all argument positions but their interpretation varies. Postverbal BNPs can be interpreted as (in)definite or generic depending on the language (e.g. Mandarin Chinese vs. Cantonese), but preverbal BNPs cannot receive an indefinite reading.
- d. **Haitian Creole and Gungbe:** BNPs are possible in all argument positions. Their surface distribution vis-à-vis the verb does not induce any interpretive restriction (e.g. unlike in MCH, there is no general ban on indefinite BNPs in subject position). BNPs display distributional and interpretive properties similar to those of DNPs. Note though that the interpretation of BNPs is sensitive to the lexical semantics and aspectual properties of the predicate they are associated with.
- e. All the languages in (a) to (d) display a count versus mass distinction.

It is clear from this description that BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe differ from BNPs in the most commonly studied varieties of Romance, Germanic and Sinitic. Indeed, Haitian Creole and Gungbe BNPs can occur in the same syntactic positions, and can receive the same specific definite interpretation, as full DNPs. This observation leaves us with a paradox that cannot be easily accommodated by current theories of bare nouns. For instance, we cannot straightforwardly invoke Chierchia’s (1998) “Nominal Mapping Parameter” because Haitian Creole and Gungbe manifest neither number inflection, nor classifiers – two properties that Chierchia takes to be necessary for languages with BNPs as

arguments. These facts from Haitian Creole and Gungbe also present a challenge for theories that have been offered in response to Chierchia 1998 (e.g. Munn & Schmitt 2004).¹⁰

4. What is the structure of BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe?

The paradox just observed has already been addressed in the literature. Here, we briefly present two alternative approaches that have been recently proposed to account for the wide distribution of BNPs in Jamaican Creole (Stewart 2007, 2011) and in Haitian Creole (Déprez 2004) and we point to issues motivating our own analysis in Section 4.3.¹¹

4.1 Are BNPs simply Cl(assifier)Ps or Num(ber)Ps?

Can we follow Cheng and Sybesma (1999: 518ff) and propose that BNPs are not just NPs, but include at least a Classifier Phrase (CIP)? If so, we could suggest that BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe involve a CIP whose head is covert. Accordingly, interpretive differences between Haitian Creole/Gungbe and Sinitic could further be linked to the (different) licensing conditions of this null classifier in Haitian Creole and Gungbe. A crucial aspect of Stewart's (2007, 2011) analysis is the observation that BNPs in Jamaican Creole (JC) distinguish between count versus mass though number morphology is absent. Comparing Jamaican Creole to Mandarin Chinese, Stewart (2007: 390) argues that:¹²

“In [Jamaican Creole] there is no overt classifier system, yet individuation clearly occurs without such marking. I suggest, therefore, that the projection whose job is to individuate in JC is the Classifier Phrase (CIP), but that its head is not phonetically realized”.

10. If one assumes Munn and Schmitt's (2004) Free-Agr/Number parameterization for the syntax and semantics of noun phrases, HC and Gungbe would fall alongside English vis-à-vis the relevant D- and Agr-related dimensions: (i) HC and Gungbe, like English, have “weak” D: there's no evidence for N-to-D movement and expletive articles; (ii) HC and Gungbe, like English, fuse Agr and Num in DP: like in English, NPs in HC and Gungbe show no productive agreement. Yet HC and Gungbe do not behave like English in the relevant aspects: for example, both languages, unlike English, have specific definite BNPs.

11. This section only mentions the main points in these approaches that are relevant for the discussion. We refer the interested reader to the corresponding papers for a detailed discussion. Further discussion on the function, morphosyntax and semantics of BNPs in Creoles can be found in Baptista & Guéron 2007; Bobyleva 2011; Guillemin 2011 and references cited there.

12. See also Stewart (2011:375–376)

In terms of our discussion here, this would mean that BNPs in Jamaican Creole, Haitian Creole, and Gungbe have the structural representation in (21) on a par with Sinitic (Stewart 2011: 377):

(21) [CIP [Cl [NP...]]

Under this view therefore, BNPs in these languages do not project a DP and are thus typologically comparable to Sinitic languages modulo the (c)overtness of their classifiers.

4.2 Déprez's (2004) plural parameter

Alternatively, Déprez (2004) hypothesizes a “plural parameter” in order to account for the differences between Haitian Creole (and, by our implication, Gungbe) on the one hand and both Sinitic and the most commonly studied varieties of Romance and Germanic. In this analysis, the “plural parameter” distinguishes between +PL languages where the noun phrase necessarily involves a Number Phrase (i.e. NumP) which contains a counter (i.e. a measure function) versus -PL languages where NumP only projects when needed and does not necessarily perform the counter function. In terms of Déprez (2004: 870), languages like Haitian Creole (and by implication Gungbe) are -PL languages since number in these languages is marked optionally as schematized by the structure below:

(22) [...(NumP) [NP...]]

One common logical conclusion of Stewart's (2007, 2011) and Déprez's (2004) analyses is that noun phrases in languages like Haitian Creole and Gungbe do not necessarily project up to DPs in order to be used as arguments. For Stewart, languages such as JC – and by our own extrapolation, Haitian Creole and Gungbe – are like Sinitic and, thus, minimally allow CIPs as arguments (though their classifier system is never pronounced), while for Déprez they optionally allow NPs, NumPs and DPs in argument positions.

4.3 BNPs are DPs

We will now consider some empirical facts that challenge these approaches to BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe. As we suggested previously, BNPs in these languages can receive specific definite readings and be associated with various modifiers that do not affect their distributions. Let's consider these two facts in turn, along with some of their theoretical implications.

Recall that the BNPs such as *wosiyòl* ‘nightingale’, *machin* ‘car’, *chwal* ‘horse’, etc. in the anaphoric patterns in (1)–(7) all receive specific definite readings. And these BNPs are unambiguously specified for (singular) number as well,

contradicting Déprez's empirical predictions regarding number specification for BNPs in Haitian Creole.¹³

Similarly, in Gungbe certain nominal modifiers (e.g. ordinals, restrictive relative clauses) make the BNP definite and specified for number. This also entails that these BNPs involve some specification for number even in absence of any morphological marking, again contra the predictions of Déprez (2004). In the following examples, the BNP *yòvòzèn* in (23a) is interpreted as indefinite singular/plural, while the modified noun in (23b) is necessarily singular and definite.

- (23) a. *Súrù d̀̀ yòvòzèn s̀̀.* [Gungbe]
 Suru eat orange yesterday
 'Suru ate orange yesterday.'
- b. *Súrù d̀̀ yòvòzèn títán s̀̀.*
 Suru eat orange first yesterday
 'Suru ate the first orange/*oranges yesterday.'

Gungbe and Haitian Creole differ in this context.

- (24) a. *Bouki manje zoranj yè.* [Haitian Creole]
 Bouki eat orange yesterday
 'Bouki ate a piece of orange/an orange/oranges yesterday.'
- b. *Bouki manje premye zoranj *(la/yo) yè.*
 Bouki eat first orange DET.SG/DET.PL yesterday
 'Bouki ate the first orange(s) yesterday.'

In (24b) the Haitian Creole ordinal DNP, like its Gungbe counterpart in (23b), is interpreted as definite specific, but unlike the BNP in Gungbe, the ordinal DNP in (24b) necessitates either *la* or *yo*.¹⁴

13. Furthermore, Déprez's (2007a:332ff) "Generalization 2" (i.e. "Bare nouns allow regular definite readings only in languages that lack lexical definite determiners"), like Chierchia's "Nominal Mapping Parameter," incorrectly rules out the existence of lexical definite determiners in HC and Gungbe: as amply documented here, both these languages manifest specific definite BNPs *and* lexical definite determiners.

14. There is speaker variation with regard to the co-occurrence of *la* and *yo*. While *la-yo* sequences are ungrammatical in the variety spoken by DeGraff, one finds such sequences in the literature (e.g. Lefebvre 1998:85). Such sequences are also mentioned in earlier records, as illustrated by the following examples from Duceurjoly (1803).

- (i) a. *Zozo la yo va bientôt volé.* [Duceurjoly 1803:336]
 bird DET PL will soon fly
 'These/the birds will soon fly away.'
- b. *Mo voir zhomme la yo.* [Duceurjoly 1803:324]
 1SG see man DET PL
 'I saw the/these men.'

Haitian Creole and Gungbe display relative clauses that modify BNPs, as in (25). Again the interpretation differs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe, but the common factor in these examples is that a purely generic reading of the BNP subject is excluded in both languages while a non-specific definite reading is favored – assuming that, although the situation itself is generic (in the “characterizing” sense), the participants themselves are definite, as suggested in the English translation.

- (25) a. *Moun ki pa travay p ap touche.* [Haitian Creole]
 People REL NEG work NEG FUT earn
 ‘Those people who don’t work won’t get paid.’
- b. *Àlwé dé mí wlé dǔ vávò.* [Gungbe]
 nightingale REL 1PL catch eat pepper
 ‘The nightingale that we caught ate pepper.’

What these data show is that the BNPs just discussed must have enough structure to accommodate nominal modifiers including the restrictive relative clause (cf. Longobardi 1994: 619). Indeed, adopting Kayne’s (1994) complementation analysis to relative clauses, Aboh (2005) argues that noun phrases in Gungbe (including relative clauses) minimally involve the structure in (26a) where NumP is embedded within a D-layer. Under this view, both the D and the Num head are covert in BNPs. (26b) represents the order of merge of modifiers within the DP system Aboh 2004a, b, 2007; Cinque 2010).

- (26) a. [DP [D [NumP [Num.... [CP/NP]]]]]
- b. Determiner>Number>Demonstrative>Numeral>Adjective>Noun
- c. *òxwé dǎxó àwè éhè lǎ lé* [Gungbe]
 house big two DEM DET PL
 ‘these two big houses’

That Ducœurjoly uses the spelling *là* for certain DNPs in early Creole (e.g. *cale là* ‘the hold’; *piece là yo* ‘the pieces’ 1803:360,309) is further evidence that HC *la* may have historically originated in the French locative adverbial *là*. There is also contemporary evidence that, in certain dialects where *la yo* has been noted, the *la* in the *la yo* may be a deictic locational adverbial, not the determiner (cf. Note 6). To wit the following contrast in such dialects: *chen an* ‘the dog’ vs. *chen la yo* ‘the dogs there’ vs. **chen an yo* ‘the dogs’. For these particular dialects, the ungrammatical example **chen an yo* suggests that the *la* in *chen la yo* is the locational adverbial, not the determiner – the latter’s allomorph *an* is excluded in that context. One such dialect is spoken by Jacques Pierre, a speaker of the Cap Haïtien dialect of HC, and we thank Jacques for this observation. Fattier (1998, 2000) and Zribi-Hertz and Glaude (2007) note other dialects where the *la* in *la yo* does undergo the allomorphy that is expected of the determiner *la*. So these dialects have sequences as in *chen an yo* ‘the dogs’. We do not discuss such variations here as they do not seem to bear on the conclusions of this paper.

- d. *de gwo kay sa yo* [Haitian Creole]
 two big house DEM DET.PL
 'these two big houses'

Structure (26) therefore suggests that BNPs in Gungbe and Haitian Creole are full DPs. Given this conclusion, the question arises whether D hosts a null determiner or whether the noun raises to D in these languages (as has been proposed for instance by Longobardi (1994, 2001) for certain bare nouns in Romance and Germanic).

A classical diagnostic used for N-raising in the literature is the position of the noun relatively to modifiers (e.g. adjectives) commonly analyzed as maximal projections in the specifier position within the functional domain of N. Under such a view, certain Romance N-Adj sequences are analyzed as N-raising instances where the noun raises to a position higher than the adjective (cf. Longobardi 1994; Cinque 1994). Keeping to this rationale, and assuming the order of merge of modifiers as depicted in (26b), Aboh (2002, 2004a, b, 2006) argues that what raises in Gungbe is not the noun head, but the NP, which pied-pipes the modifiers on its way to [spec DP] leading to what he refers to as 'snowballing' movement. The conclusion then is that D in Gungbe is licensed by snowballing movement of NP to [spec DP] (see also Cinque 2010). Many examples in this paper (e.g. (26c)) lend support to this view as they show that what appears to the left of the determiner and the number marker is the noun head N followed by its modifier in the mirror image of the order of merge in (26b). The details of this analysis are not relevant to the present paper and the reader is referred to Aboh's previous work for further discussion. What matters here, however, is the analysis whereby D does project in Gungbe BNPs.

As for Haitian Creole, much of Aboh's (2002, 2004a) approach to Gungbe can be extended to this language. Indeed, Haitian Creole can also be shown to have snowballing movement within the nominal projection, thus deriving the possibility of N-Adj sequences as in French (e.g. *machin lèd yo* 'these ugly cars' – literally: 'car ugly the.PL') and the fact that the noun together with its modifiers can occur to the left of the determiner as in (24b) or to the left of demonstrative and number marker as in (26c) (cf. Déprez 2007b:299f for such a Spec-to-Spec derivation up to [Spec DP]). However, unlike Gungbe, Haitian Creole does allow adjectives and other modifiers (e.g. cardinal numbers) in *pre*-nominal position as in (26d). Therefore, Haitian Creole does not have the generalized snowballing movement that one finds in Gungbe whereby all nominal modifiers end up in *post*-nominal position. In the following section we further discuss the distribution and interpretation of the determiner and number marker in Gungbe and Haitian Creole.

In terms of the proposed analysis therefore, the facts discussed here indicate that BNPs in Haitian Creole and Gungbe involve full DPs whose head contains a null morpheme D and appears necessary for argument status à la Longobardi (1994). The licensing of this null D requires generalized pied-piping of NP thus leading to sequences where NP occurs to the left of nominal-domain functional heads such as demonstratives, number makers and definite/specificity markers. We thus assume that Haitian Creole and Gungbe BNPs involve a null D. Since the corresponding BNPs with null determiners can be interpreted as specific definite and occur in the same positions as DNPs (i.e. noun phrases with overt functional heads that encode definiteness), the question arises whether Haitian Creole and Gungbe display determiner-like elements which, even though they encode definiteness, must be distinguished from Romance- and Germanic-type articles with similar functions.

5. Overt functional heads in Haitian Creole and Gungbe noun phrases

As mentioned previously, Haitian Creole and Gungbe display overt functional heads that occur postnominally as *la* and *lɔ*, respectively.

- (27) a. *Patriyòt la kouri.* [Haitian Creole]
 Patriot DET.SG run
 ‘The patriot (in question) has run away.’
- b. *Ví lɔ hɔn.* [Gungbe]
 child DET run.away
 ‘The child (in question) has run away.’

These DNPs occur in all the syntactic contexts described in previous sections for BNPs. We will therefore assume that they display the structure (26a) in both languages. However, the semantic properties of these DNPs are not always parallel across Haitian Creole and Gungbe. Accordingly, we will discuss them separately.

5.1 *lɔ* and *lé* in Gungbe

5.1.1 *lɔ* in Gungbe

Aboh (2002, 2004a, b, 2005, 2006) provides extensive discussion of this marker. Here, we can only give a sketch of the distribution and semantics of this marker. Though BNPs and DNPs have the same distribution, they exhibit a sharp semantic distinction in Gungbe. While BNPs can be (in)definite or generic depending on context, DNPs can only be interpreted as specific (and never as generic). Consider the following two invented scenarios. Context: The Queen of Holland went

to the G20 meeting, but when she wanted to talk, her prime minister refused to let her give her speech.

- (28) *Àxòsì Òlándù tòn wá G20 àmón dẹ̀ àxòsì ló jró ná*
 Queen Holland POSS came G20 but REL queen DET want PREP
dẹ̀ xó prèmié mìnìs gbé.
 say word prime minister refuse

‘The Queen of Holland went to G20, but when the Queen (question/this Queen) wanted to give a speech, the prime minister refused.’

Observe that upon first mention, “the Queen of Holland” is a BNP though it is definite (i.e. it denotes a familiar and unique referent). Word order aside, the translation shows that such a BNP, with a postnominal *of* phrase, is impossible in English. To wit: **Queen of Holland*. The same holds of *the Prime Minister*, which is understood here as the prime minister of Holland. Yet, in the follow up sentence, *àxòsì* ‘queen’ occurs with the post-nominal functional head *ló* and the sequence *àxòsì ló* can be understood as ‘the Queen in question’ or ‘this (very) Queen’. Data of this sort could be taken to suggest that *ló* is a (necessary) marker of emphasis.¹⁵ However, this view is not tenable: even in contexts where a referent is prominent enough to require a definite determiner in English, Gungbe nouns may still occur as bare. Compare the following sentence to its English equivalent. Here we see that the associative noun phrase *hòn* ‘door’ (i.e. the door of the taxi) appears bare in Gungbe while it takes a determiner in English.

- (29) *Ūn dọ tàksí tẹ̀ bọ̀ fọ̀fẹ̀ ló jètẹ̀ bọ̀ wá*
 1SG make taxi stand COORD₁ driver DET get.down COORD₂ come
hùn hòn ná mì, má mọ̀ nú mónkòtò kpón!
 open door for 1SG 1SG.NEG see thing like.that never

‘I stopped a taxi, the driver got down and opened the door for me. I never saw anything like that.’

Similarly, the Gungbe marker is not required with uniquely existing entities like ‘the sun’ or ‘the moon’, which occur as BNPs. In the following sentence, the first conjunct is a general statement. In this case, ‘sun’ occurs as a BNP as opposed to the second conjunct where the speaker is referring to the sun as it appears at the moment of speech:

- (30) *Hwè má hùn égbè àmón sọ̀ yà hwè ló hùn tàùn!*
 sun NEG open today but yesterday TOP sun DET open very
 ‘The sun is not shining, but as for yesterday, the/that sun did really shine!’

15. A similar view can be found in Ajiboye (2005) who suggests that nominal markers in Yoruba (Kwa) are saliency markers.

In addition, *lɔ* can occur with elements that can be interpreted as definite even in absence of *lɔ*. As the following examples show, proper names and pronouns are two such elements. Example (31b) illustrates co-occurrence with a proper name.

- (31) a. *Aimé Césaire dɔ xó kpó Sarkozi kpó.*
 Aimé Césaire say word COORD Sarkozy COORD
 ‘Aimé Césaire talked with Sarkozy.’
- b. *Bé mi kà sè dɔ Aimé Césaire lɔ kú?*
 but 1PL at.least hear that Aimé Césaire DET die
 ‘But did you at least hear that Aimé Césaire died?’

In example (32) the marker co-occurs with a personal strong pronoun (see Aboh 2004a for discussion).

- (32) *Mi lé lɔ núdònú dindín ná hù mi.*
 2PL PL DET underneath.of.thing searching FUT kill 2PL
 ‘As for you (all) curiosity will kill you.’

The above facts suggest that, in addition to being interpreted as specific definite, an NP-*lɔ* singles out a discourse referent that is “noteworthy” (i.e. worthy of note in a given discourse, as in Ionin (2006: 188)). In other words, not only does a NP-*lɔ* phrase refer to a referent that is unique and familiar, but it also picks a referent about which there is “something noteworthy” which the speaker wants to communicate to the addressee (see Ionin 2006 for details on “noteworthiness” in the case of indefinite *this* in English).¹⁶ Informally speaking, *lɔ* expresses the speaker’s intention to comment on a definite referent that is familiar and unique. It therefore embeds two dimensions: the speaker’s intention, and a presupposition about the addressee. Accordingly, our analysis of NP- *lɔ* phrases assumes that such phrases only pick up referents that are necessarily known to *both* speaker and addressee (see Aboh 2006) – this is unlike Ionin’s specific indefinite *this*. Given this property, a generic expression in French and English that is marked with the definite determiner as in (33a) must occur as a BNP in Gungbe as in (33b).

- (33) a. *Le poisson est bon pour la santé.*
 the fish is good for the health
 ‘Fish is good for (one’s) health.’
- b. *Hwèví (*lɔ) nyón ná lámè (*lɔ).*
 fish DET good for body DET
 ‘Fish is good for (one’s) body/health.’

16. In many West-African French varieties, NP- *lɔ* expressions are often translated as *le/la NP en question* ‘the NP in question’.

Because the Gungbe marker *l̩* is sensitive to definite specific and noteworthy referents only, the language displays another marker *d̩é*, which marks indefinite specific as in (34).

- (34) *Ūn wlé àgásá d̩àxó yù d̩é.*
 1SG catch crab big black DET
 ‘I caught a (certain) big black crab.’

Space limitations prevent us from discussing the properties of this marker in any great detail, but the generalization is that, contrary to *l̩* which marks nominal phrases that pick a unique and familiar discourse referent that the speaker assumes is noteworthy, the specific indefinite marker *d̩é* is more like Ionin’s (2006) specific indefinite *this*, and does not require such a commitment. Put differently, *d̩é* does not seem to require any presupposition about the addressee’s knowledge of the referent. Following Aboh (2004b) we propose that *l̩* and *d̩é* should not be equated to the sort of articles that are found in, e.g. Romance and Germanic, but that they should rather be analyzed as DP internal topic markers.¹⁷

5.1.2 *Lé* in Gungbe

In previous examples (e.g. (13b) and (32)) Gungbe manifests a number marker that encodes plurality and can co-occur with other determiners. Consider (35):

- (35) a. *Ján xò wémà lé.* [Gungbe]
 John buy book PL
 ‘John bought the books.’
- b. *Ján xò wémà lé kp̩s̩.* [Gungbe]
 John buy book PL many
 ‘John bought many books.’
- c. *Còmè lé sù kp̩s̩ tò yòvòtòmè.*
 unemployed PL abound a.lot in Europe
 ‘There are many unemployed people in Europe.’

It appears from the examples in (35) that the Gungbe number marker *lé* may mark both definite referents as in (35a) and indefinite referents as in (35b, c).¹⁸ In (35b–c), where the number marker *lé* marks an object or subject noun phrase, the indefinite interpretation is forced by the presence of the adverb *kp̩s̩* which can be translated here as ‘many’. These examples clearly indicate that the different readings of *lé* are not linked to any subject-versus-object asymmetry. Instead,

17. The specific definite marker *l̩* and specific indefinite marker *d̩é* are mutually exclusive, and the specific indefinite marker cannot occur with pronouns (see Aboh 2004a).

18. HC and Gungbe differ in this respect and we hope to return to this issue in future work.

it appears that the interpretation of the number marker in terms of definiteness is sensitive to scope properties of quantifiers or adverbs within the clause. This characterization is further supported by the example in (36a) in the context of a discussion about the attitudes of taxi-moto drivers. The example in (36b) corresponds to a situation where the speaker comments on a *Súru*'s decision to leave his goat unattended in the bush.

- (36) a. *Zémijàn lé má nò sí mèn dé.*
 Taxi.moto.driver PL NEG HAB respect person IND
 'Taxi-moto drivers (in general) do not respect anyone.'
- b. *Súru jó gbó étòn dó núkàmè, mèn lé ná*
 Suru leave goat his at bush people PL FUT
fin-i trólóló.
 steal-3SG immediately
 'Suru left his goat in the bush, people will steal it immediately.'

These two examples in (36), unlike the one in (35a), clearly lack a definite reading. These facts further indicate that the seemingly definite reading assigned to the number marker *lé* in other contexts (e.g. 35a) results from certain constraints to be further investigated. What appears clearly from this discussion though is that the Gungbe number marker cannot be analyzed as simple expression of definite plural. If this were the case, the following example where *lé* co-occurs with the indefinite specific maker *dé* would be unexpected.

- (37) *Zémijàn dé lé má nò sí mèn.*
 Taxi.moto.driver DET PL NEG HAB respect person
 'Some taxi-moto drivers are not respectful.'

Similarly, the number marker can co-occur with the definite specificity marker *lɔ* in which case the whole noun phrase is interpreted as definite specific.

- (38) *Ūn wlé àgásá lɔ lé.*
 1SG catch crab DET PL
 'I caught the crabs (in question).'

Clearly, the contrast between (37) and (38) indicates that the number marker *lé* does not unambiguously assign any definite reading by itself. Given this, further study is needed before we understand how definiteness comes about in example (35a) and we hope to return to this issue in future work.

Summarizing, though it is tempting to equate the Gungbe nominal-domain functional heads *lɔ* and *dé* to their (apparent) (in)definite counterparts in, say, French and English, these Gungbe elements are more akin to discourse markers comparable to topic (and emphatic/focus) markers. This hunch is supported

by the fact that the specific definite marker *l5* (like its Haitian equivalent *la*) also occurs at the clausal level where it indicates that the corresponding proposition, or some part thereof, is already familiar to both speaker and addressee (cf. Lefebvre 1998; Aboh 2004a, 2006).

5.2 *la* in Haitian Creole

Like Gungbe *l5*, the Haitian Creole functional head *la* occurs postnominally where it gives rise to a definite and singular-number interpretation,¹⁹ as in (27), repeated here as (39) for convenience.²⁰

19. We disagree with Zribi-Hertz and Glaude's (2007) claim that the HC article *la* does not require number specification. These authors use examples such as *ze a* 'the egg' to argue that such DNPs are unspecified for number, as in the following example

- (i) *Pòl ap achte ze a.*
 Paul fut buy egg the
 'Paul will buy the (single) egg-item.'
 'Paul will buy the egg-material.' (i.e. that unspecified quantity of egg produce which is needed for some purpose or other')

But it seems to us that *la* is singular with the singularity being ambiguous as to the unit of counting: one single egg vs. one given amount of egg (as specified in a recipe, say). Such ambiguity seems most common with ingredients for recipe, and may be lexically determined. To wit the contrast between (ii) and (iii) below:

- (ii) *Mwen bezwen yon douzèn ze pou mwen fè gato.*
 1SG need a dozen egg for 1SG make cake
Tanpri, al chache ze a/yo pou mwen
 Please, go seek egg DET.SG/DET.PL for me
 'I need a dozen eggs to bake a cake. Please go fetch it/them for me'
- (iii) *Mwen bezwen yon douzèn traktè/travayè pou mwen bati kay.*
 1SG need a dozen tractor/worker for 1SG make kay
*Tanpri, al chache traktè/travayè yo/*a pou mwen*
 Please, go seek worker DET.SG/DET.PL for me
 'I need a dozen tractors/workers to build homes. Please go fetch the tractor*(s)/worker*(s) for me'

As far as we can tell, Zribi-Hertz and Glaude's (2007) analysis cannot account for the contrast in (ii)–(iii): *traktè a* and *travayè a* in (iii), like *ze a* in (ii), should be able to enter a structure unspecified for number, contrary to fact.

20. One may be tempted to relate the distribution and semantics of HC *la* to that of its French etymon, namely the adverb *là*. We won't do so here, but suffice it to note that many of the uses of HC *la*, as discussed here, have no counterparts in French constructions with *là* (also see Notes 7 and 15).

- (39) *Patriyòt la kouri.*
 Patriot DET.SG run
 ‘The patriot (in question) has run away.’

However, *la* in Haitian Creole differs from Gungbe *lɔ* in various respects. One dimension where Haitian Creole *la* and Gungbe *lɔ* part company concerns the (im)possibility of referential vs. attributive uses: In the example in (40a), which is inspired from English examples in Heim (1991), the DNP headed by *la* manifests, alongside the referential (specific definite) reading, an attributive reading (the “whoever that is” variable reading that refers to no candidate in particular). The latter reading is similar to certain readings that are possible for French DNPs headed by *le*, *la* or *les*. This attributive (or variable) reading is forced when the sentence starts with an adjunct phrase such as *apre chak eleksyon* ‘after each election.’²¹ Such attributive interpretation does not obtain for Gungbe DNPs with *lɔ*. In Gungbe the sentence in (40b) can be uttered in a situation where it is traditionally the case that reporters always want to interview the winner, whoever that is (attributing reading). On the other hand, (40c) will be used in a context where both speaker and hearer know exactly who the new winner is (specific definite reading), but they prefer to not pronounce her name.

- (40) a. *Jounalis la vle kestyonnen kandida ki genyen *(an).*
 reporter DET want question candidate who win DET
 ‘The reporter wants to question the candidate who has won
 (i.e. Barack Obama).’
 ‘The reporter wants to question whichever candidate has won
 (i.e. whoever that is).’
- b. *Jùnalís lɔ jró ná kàn xó bís mè xè*
 reporter DET want to inquire word ask person who
qù lòtó.
 win lottery
 ‘The reporter wants to question the person who won the lottery
 (whoever that is).’

21. These observations about attributive uses of DNPs with *la* in Haitian Creole disconfirm Zribi-Hertz and Glaude’s (2007:276) claim that HC *la* is not open to variable reading. One additional example of such variable reading is found in the Kreyòl version of the 1987 Constitution of Haiti. All the DNPs in the example below are used attributively.

Lalwa mande pou yo fè moun yo akize a konnen li gen dwa
 Law requires for 3PL make person 3PL accuse DET know 3SG have right
pran avoka depi kòz la kòmansè, jistan jijman an fini nèt
 take lawyer since trial DET begin until trial DET end completely
 ‘The law requires that the accused be informed that they have the right to a lawyer from the beginning to the end of the trial.’

- c. *Jùnalís lɔ́ jró ná kàn xó bíɔ̀ mè xè d̀ù*
 reporter DET want to inquire word ask person who win
lòtó lɔ́.
 lottery DET
 ‘The reporter wants to question that specific person who won the lottery.’

At first approximation it seems as if *la* as a “definite” article can be *non-referential* similarly to French definite determiners (e.g. *la* in *Ils cherchent la cambrioleuse* ‘They are looking for the she-burglar’ in a context where no one knows who that she-burglar is). Gungbe counterpart *lɔ́* cannot be used in such contexts.

Another difference between *la* and *lɔ́* is that *la*, unlike *lɔ́*, cannot be used with proper names. Compare the following Haitian Creole examples to the Gungbe ones in (31) and (32).

- (41) *Aimé Césaire pale ak Sarkozy. Men, mwen tande*
 Aimé Césaire speak with Sarkozy but 1SG hear
*Aimé Césaire (*la) mouri.*
 Aimé Césaire DET.SG die
 ‘Aimé Césaire spoke with Sarkozy, but I just heard that the Aimé Césaire in question died.’

Haitian Creole *la* cannot co-occur with personal pronouns either.

- (42) **Yo-menm la, yo te chape nan goudougoudou a.*
 3PL-EMPH DET.SG 3SG ANT escape in earthquake DET.SG
 ‘As for them, they escaped from the earthquake.’

(Note that the utterance in (42) would be grammatical with *la* as the location adverb “there” as in “Those who are over there, they escaped from the earthquake”; cf. Notes 6, 14 and 21.)

Now we show that the semantics of Haitian Creole *la* is not identical to that of the French definite article *le/la/les*. One striking difference is that Haitian Creole *la*, unlike French *le/la/les*, cannot be used in generic contexts (Joseph 1988: Chapter 5). In this respect, Haitian Creole *la* is similar to Gungbe *lɔ́*.

- (43) *Le poisson est bon pour la santé.* [French]
 the.MASC.SG fish is good for the.FM.SG health
 ‘Fish is good for (one’s) health.’
- (44) *Hwèvi (*lɔ́) nyɔ́ ná lànchè.*
 fish (*DET.SG) good for body
 ‘Fish is good for (one’s) health.’

- (45) *Pwason (*an) bon pou sante.*
 fish (*DET.SG) good for health
 ‘Fish is good for (one’s) health.’

Another property that likens Haitian Creole *la* and Gungbe *lɔ*, and differentiates both from French *le/la/les*, is the fact that the former, unlike the latter, co-occur with demonstratives:

- (46) a. *òxwé dâxó èhè lɔ* [Gungbe]
 house big DEM DET
 ‘this big house’
- b. *gwo kay sa a* [Haitian Creole]
 big house DEM DET.SG
 ‘this big house’
- c. *(*la) cette (*la) grande maison* [French]
 DET.FM.SG DEM.FM.SG DET.FM.SG big house
 ‘this big house’
- d. *cette grande maison là* [French]
 DEM.FM.SG big house there
 ‘this big house over there’

Yet, as (46d) shows, the French deictic locational adverbial does occur in the right position to qualify as the etymon of the Haitian Creole determiner *la*.

How about DNPs with *la* vs. specific definite BNPs? To what degree do these two types of noun phrases overlap in their semantics? There are at least three differences to highlight.

Firstly, recall from (40a) that DNPs with *la* can be assigned an attributive (or variable) interpretation. This is not possible with BNPs.

Secondly, BNPs in Haitian Creole, on a par with noun phrases with demonstrative articles, cannot be used in certain bridging contexts (as in (47b)), though the definite determiner is grammatical in such contexts (see (48b)).²²

- (47) a. *Mwen te achte yon machin tou nèf...*
 1SG ANT buy a car all new
 ‘I bought a brand-new car.’
- b. **... Mezanmi o! Volan (sa a) te kwochi.*
 Friends EXCL steering-wheel this/that ANT crooked
 ‘...And lo and behold! The/*That steering-wheel was crooked.’

22. Gungbe shows *somewhat* similar patterns, but the contrast in Gungbe is not as sharp as the ones in HC. More work is needed in order to better describe, compare and analyze the relevant contrasts in the two languages.

- (48) a. *Mwen te achte yon machin tou nèf...*
 1SG ANT buy a car all new
 'I bought a brand-new car.'
- b. ... *Mezanmi o! Volan an te kwochi.*
 friends EXCL steering-wheel the ANT crooked
 '...And lo and behold! The/*That steering-wheel was crooked.'

The third, and last, difference can be seen in a subtle contrast between (49b) and (49c) below, which are two possible continuations of (49a):

- (49) a. *Bouki te marye ak yon bèl wosiyòl...*
 Bouki ANT marry with a pretty nightingale
 'Bouki was married to a beautiful nightingale.'
- b. *Wosiyòl te renmen kowosòl.*
 Nightingale ANT like soursop
 'The nightingale loved soursop.'
- c. *Wosiyòl la te renmen kowosòl*
 nightingale DET.SG ANT like soursop
 'The nightingale (in question) loved soursop.'

The contrast is subtle and somewhat hard to explain. But as they compare (49b) with (49c) Haitian Creole native speakers often respond that the expression *wosiyòl* in (49b) is more "vivid" than *wosiyòl la* in (49c). It's as if *wosiyòl* in (49b) is the name of a character in a play (somewhat on a par with capitalized animal names in English tales, as *Dog* in (5)) whereas *wosiyòl la* in (49c) is 'just' a noun phrase that describes that character.

Whence the extra "vividness" of *wosiyòl* in (49b)? To answer this question, we'll borrow some analytical tools from Wolter's (2004) analysis of demonstratives, and argue that the null D in BNPs such as *wosiyòl* in (49b) is a covert demonstrative. In Walter's analysis, demonstratives have two arguments: "the NP complement, which contributes a domain, and a second argument, which identifies the unique referent within the domain." In the case of *wosiyòl* in (49b), the first argument is the NP *wosiyòl* and the second argument is implicit. This is on a par with (50a) from Wolter (2004) where the second argument of *that* in (50a), unlike the second argument of *that* in (50b), is implicit:

- (50) a. *That hero will inherit half the kingdom.*
 b. *That hero who kills the dragon will inherit half the kingdom.*

As explained by Wolter, "In the case of deictic demonstratives accompanied by a demonstration [as in (50a)], it makes sense to think of the second argument as something that is literally supplied by an *extralinguistic act*. The implicit second argument of a deictic or anaphoric demonstrative is the property of being

identical to a salient element of the context” (my emphasis). This “extralinguistic act” (a pointing toward “a salient element of the context”) is thus the source of the vividness observed in (49b) as compared to (49c).

By the same token, this analysis would then explain why specific definite BNPs are infelicitous both in bridging contexts and in attributive readings: this exclusion of BNPs from such contexts now becomes expected since DNPs with demonstrative determiners are also excluded from these contexts. This commonality between specific BNPs and DNPs with demonstrative determiners thus gives extra support to our analysis of specific definite BNPs as headed by a covert demonstrative.

5.3 Recapitulation and implications of our micro Trans-Atlantic Sprachbund comparisons

BNPs in Haitian Creole and in Gungbe show striking morphosyntactic and interpretive similarities, as illustrated in Sections 2 to 4. Both languages display BNPs that do not fall in the familiar typologies described in the literature so far:

- i. They don't show morphological number on N.
- ii. They don't have a classifier system.
- iii. They make count versus mass distinction.
- iv. They allow (in)definite, (non)specific and generic readings for their BNPs.
- v. They have BNPs that occur in all positions, in a way comparable to DNPs in other languages.
- vi. They have DP-internal markers that express number, specificity, definiteness, noteworthiness.

The facts presented in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 further indicate that these languages display certain noteworthy differences when it comes to the use and interpretation of overt functional heads in their respective nominal domains. Here, Haitian Creole exhibits properties that intersect both those of the Gungbe functional head *lɔ* and those of the French definite articles *le, la, les*.

In analyzing these facts, we argue that if the operation of type shifting from a nominal predicate to an argument is performed in syntax by a functional category (e.g. D^0), then that category seems active in BNPs in these languages. This would mean that such BNPs in these languages always project up to (at least) DP. If so, then there may not be any ‘parameter’ strictly *internal* to the noun phrase that can explain these facts and allow us to understand the BNP-related differences between Haitian Creole/Gungbe and the most commonly studied varieties of Romance/Germanic. In Aboh and DeGraff (in preparation) we elaborate on the analysis sketched in Section 5.2 above whereby the null D in Haitian Creole and Gungbe BNPs with specific definite interpretation functions like a demonstrative

(à la Wolter), then we consider the discourse properties of the Haitian Creole/Gungbe determiners and we relate their NP-level distribution to their clause-level distribution. More broadly, we hypothesize that the same ‘parameter’ that allows Haitian Creole and Gungbe to manifest bare sentences (e.g. sentences anchored in time without overt tense markers) also allows them to manifest bare noun phrases (i.e. specific definite noun phrases – that is, noun phrases anchored in discourse – without overt determiners). We further observed that the functional heads *la* (Haitian Creole) and *lɔ* (Gungbe) are more akin to discourse markers rather than their counterparts in French or English.

To recapitulate, the data in (40)–(42) suggest that Haitian Creole *la*, is not a replica of Gungbe *lɔ* or the French definite determiners *le/la/les*. Instead, *la* seems to take on usages that overlap with the usages of determiners in both Gungbe and French. We now consider the consequences of our findings for issues of language contact.

6. Implications for language-contact theoretical issues?

The facts and analyses in this paper suggest that Haitian Creole is very much like Gungbe when it comes to the interpretation and distribution of BNPs. With regard to the use of functional heads in the nominal domain, however, Haitian Creole displays a mix of properties: some similar to Gungbe, and others similar to French. There is evidence from history, ethnography and anthropology that Haitian Creole and much else in Haitian culture emerged from the contact between, inter alios, speakers of Gbe (Kwa) varieties and speakers of French varieties (Singler 1996). It thus seems reasonable to conclude that the Haitian Creole has inherited:

- i. DP-related properties from the Gbe substrate – some of these properties (e.g. *post*-nominal determiners) distinguish DPs in both Haitian Creole and Gbe from DPs in French where determiners are *pre*-nominal
- ii. DP-related properties from French – some of these properties (e.g. the occurrence of both *pre*- and *post*-nominal adjectives) set Gungbe and French apart but are found in both Haitian Creole and French (Gungbe allows *post*-nominal adjectives only; see DeGraff 2002 for discussion).

Clearly the morphosyntactic properties of DPs in Haitian Creole overlap with the properties of DPs in Gbe and in Romance. Given this characterization, an immediate conclusion is that Haitian Creole could not have developed from the relexification process proposed by Lefebvre (1998) whereby “substratum speakers rely on relexification to create a new lexicon, and on the principles and parametric values of their own grammar to establish the grammatical properties of the new

language they are creating” (p. 394). In other words, this hypothesis would predict that Haitian Creole grammar is, by and large, isomorphic to the grammars of the Gbe substratum. However, what the discussion here suggests is that Haitian Creole grammar cannot be taken to reflect the principles and parametric values of *any* of the substrate and superstrate languages considered *individually* (also see DeGraff 2002, 2005, 2009).

Similarly, the observations in this paper, especially the systematic correspondences between Haitian Creole and Gbe and between Haitian Creole and French, suggest that Haitian Creole could not have been created *ab ovo* by children faced with a structureless ‘macaronic’ pidgin input as proposed by Bickerton (1999). The intricate morphosyntactic and semantic properties that Haitian Creole inherited from both French and Gbe, as documented in this paper, would not have survived the hypothetical pidgin stage postulated by Bickerton. Furthermore, the similarities (and differences) between Haitian Creole and its source languages seem comparable to those that arise in the comparison of closely related languages. It thus seems unlikely that Haitian Creole emerged from a Language Bioprogram operating with exceptionally impoverished PLD.

In a related vein, the aforementioned correspondences between Haitian Creole and its major source languages, as revealed in this paper, show how important it is to dig deeper and carefully, beyond superficial patterns, into abstract properties of grammar (in our case here, the morphosyntax and semantics of noun phrases) before making overarching claims about, say, putative Creolization-specific processes or some exceptional “Creole typology.”

With this in mind, we take the observed Haitian Creole-Gbe and Haitian Creole-French correspondences seriously and we assume, following DeGraff (2002:391) and DeGraff (2009), that the process commonly referred to as “creolization” ultimately reduces to an L2A-L1A cascade in the history of French in colonial Haiti where the (substrate- and superstrate-influenced) output of second-language acquisition by Gbe speakers with French as target language played a key role in defining the primary linguistic data (PLD) in subsequent instances of first-language acquisition. Put in the context of Mufwene’s (2001, 2003, 2005) views on language change as implemented in Aboh’s (2006, 2009) theory of hybridization, this would mean that the developing “I-Creoles” in colonial Haiti were seeded, not by a Bickertonian pidgin with extraordinarily impoverished grammar, but by relatively *rich* (i.e. heterogeneous) PLD.

Because the French-derived patterns in the PLD of the early Creole speakers were influenced by speakers of full-fledged and mutually distinct native languages, it necessarily expressed a combination of distinct features (i.e. features from different languages such as, e.g., French and Gbe). But heterogeneous patterns that convey distinct and potentially incompatible features for the linguist

would, presumably, not cause any pause to children creating their idiolects with such PLD as input. Children usually do not pause to ask whether determiners in their language can be used for referential readings only (as in Gungbe) or for both referential and attribute readings (as in French and Haitian Creole). Therefore, no matter the heterogeneity in the features underlying the PLD in colonial Haiti, the native speakers of the emergent Creoles used these data to create idiolects which, by definition, were fully UG-compatible linguistic systems. These “I-Creoles” eventually yielded a coherent and stable system of norms that in turn came to define the communal (“E”-)language of the new “Creole” community.

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