UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

Sede Amministrativa: Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Studi linguistici e letterari (DISLL)

SCUOLA DI DOTTORATO DI RICERCA IN: Scienze linguistiche, filologiche e letterarie

INDIRIZZO: Linguistica

CICLO: XXIV

COPULAS IN NIGERIAN PIDGIN

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ABSTRACT

In this work I describe the copular system of Nigerian Pidgin (NigP), a pidgin/creole language spoken in Nigeria. I restricted the analysis to the modern Western metropolitan variety. I built the present work upon both corpus occurrences and grammaticality judgments and, as I explain in Chapter 2, the spoken corpus of NigP was collected during field research in Lagos in 2007; later, I added to this material a sample of written NigP texts. This combined corpus counts about 100.000 words and is accessible in the CD (Appendix A-CD and B-CD). In 2012 I conducted a prosodic experiment in collaboration with the Paduan CNR on the tonal realisation of DE in the spoken production of two speakers from Benin City. This elicited material is also available in Appendix C-CD. I divided the space covered by copulas in NigP into three semantic domains: (1) identification/ascription, (2) location/existence, and (3) attribution. The choice of the copula in NigP is mainly grounded on the syntactic nature of the complement. Thus, the copulas *be* and *na* govern nominal complements in identificational and ascriptive contexts, the copula *de* governs locative arguments or displays intransitively in existential contexts, and the attributive copula *de* is inserted in the verb slot before verbal property item if certain conditions are met. I deal with these issues in the three research chapters (4, 5 and 6 respectively). The main aim was to attest and explain the variation encountered in each domain. In Chapter 4 I explain that the focus introducer *na* has been reanalysed as a copula in identificational and ascriptive contexts. In fact, the copular constructions with *be* and *na* entail two different pragmatic and syntactic encodings of their arguments, which explains the perfect complementary distribution of the two items. In Chapter 5 I deal with the lexical item DE, which encompasses two grammatical categories: existential/locative copula and imperfective aspect. Speakers realise the difference between the two by means of tone, as the results of the prosodic experiment consistently confirmed. Attributive contexts are not always copular due to the verbal nature of property items, as I claim in Chapter 6. The insertion of the copula *de* is governed by diverse syntactic and semantic factors. Also, the prosodic experiment conducted on the tonal realisation of DE allowed attesting the fluctuating aspectual character (stative/non-stative) of property items in NigP and, consequently, their occurrence with both the high-toned copula *de* and the low-toned imperfective marker *dè*.

RIASSUNTO

Questo lavoro descrive il sistema delle copule in Nigerian Pidgin (NigP), una lingua pidgin/creola parlata in Nigeria. Ho ristretto l'analisi alla varietà odierna parlata in contesti metropolitani nell'Ovest del paese. Le fonti dei dati sono le occorrenze del corpus e i giudizi di grammaticalità forniti dagli informatori. Come spiego nel Capitolo 2, il corpus parlato di NigP è stato registrato durante una ricerca sul campo nella città di Lagos mentre in seguito ho aggiunto a questi dati alcuni esempi di produzioni scritte di NigP. L'intero corpus è consultabile sul CD allegato (Appendici A-CD e B-CD). Nel 2012 ho condotto un esperimento prosodico in collaborazione con il CNR di Padova sulla realizzazione tonale dell'elemento DE sulla base della produzione orale di due parlanti originarie di Benin City. Anche questo materiale elicitato è disponibile su CD (Appendice C-CD). Ho diviso lo spazio semantico coperto dalle copule in NigP in tre macro-aree: (1) identificazione/ascrizione, (2) locazione/esistenza, e (3) attribuzione. La scelta della copula in NigP è basata sulla natura sintattica del complemento. Infatti, le copula *be* e *na* reggono complementi nominali nei contesti identificazionali e ascrittivi, la copula *de* regge complementi locativi o si trova come esistenziale intransitivo, e la copula attributiva *de* può essere inserita prima dei lessemi (verbali) che esprimono la proprietà se si danno alcune condizioni. Affronto questi temi nei tre capitoli di ricerca (rispettivamente il 4, 5 e 6). Lo scopo principale era di descrivere e spiegare la variazione che si trova in ciascuna macro-area semantica. Nel Capitolo 4 spiego come l'introduttore di focus na sia stato rianalizzato come copula in contesti identificazionali e ascrittivi. Infatti le

copule *be* e *na* comportano due diverse codifiche sintattiche e pragmatiche dei loro argomenti e questo spiega la perfetta distribuzione complementare dei due elementi. Nel Capitolo 5 descrivo l'elemento lessicale DE, che comprende due categorie grammaticali: copula esistenziale/locativa e aspettuale imperfettivo. La differenza tra le due è realizzata dai parlanti grazie ad una distinzione tonale, come hanno dimostrato i risultati dell'esperimento prosodico. I contesti attributivi non sono sempre copulari perché i lessemi che esprimono proprietà in NgP sono verbali, come sostengo nel Capitolo 6. L'inserzione della copula de è governata da diversi fattori sintattici e pragmatici. Inoltre, l'esperimento prosodico sulla realizzazione tonale di DE ha permesso di attestare l'oscillazione aspettuale di questi elementi verbali esprimenti una proprietà (stativo/non-stativo) e, di conseguenza, la loro occorrenza sia con la copula *de* (tono alto) che con il marcatore preverbale imperfettivo *dè* (tono basso).

Contents

APPENDIX C-CD

- Elicited corpus of spoken Nigerian Pidgin
- Slides provided to informants during the prosodic experiment

APPENDIX D-CD

- Pdf-file of the full dissertation

Acknowledgements

This dissertation was conceived after two stays in Nigeria. I worked as a MAE-CRUI Intern at the Visa and Consular Offices of the Italian Consulate in Lagos from September 2006 to February 2007, and then returned to Nigeria to conduct fieldwork in the cities of Lagos, Ibadan and Benin City from June to November 2007. I give my outmost acknowledgment to the former Italian Consul in Lagos Maurizio Bungaro and to his wife Titti Pilato Bungaro (†). They gave me practical, financial and moral support during my stays and also actively encouraged me to take this research direction. I will never forget their friendship, trust and protective attitude. Not only they enhanced my Nigerian experience, but they taught me things I'll carry forward in my life. I also want to mention my internship colleagues Annalisa Meccariello, Alessandro Siclari, Francesco Bert and Roberto Valussi with whom I shared daily the adventure of living in Nigeria.

I built the present work upon corpus occurrences, grammaticality judgments and the responses to questionnaires that I provided to many speakers, and I need to single out some of them (the full list of research contributors follows below). Among the Ajegunle PMAN members I want to thank Daddy Showkey and Johnny Raphael Sydney; among the Ilupeju speakers I want to thank Tony Arkhami Okolie, Devon Vode Ebah and Ikhide Elens-Eigbokhan; among the Consulate employees I express my gratitude and friendship to Grace Obute, Salihu Sule, Isaiah and Zebedee; among the Italian learners I want to mention Spencer Mbadgu; among the writers of the NigP text samples, I thank Ifueko Fadaka and Agwu Amogu. Their language competence and production served as the major source for my research and writing of this dissertation.

My work at the universities of Lagos and Ibadan was possible thanks to the support of Prof. Patrick Oloko and Prof. Herbert Igboanusi who provided

me with shelter, books and informants. They were always readily available for consulting and chats.

Back in Italy, I actively consulted Anthony Osazee Irogue, a generous person and a friend. Tina Fadaka, Vivian Eweka and Uzoamaka Izuogu participated to the experiment on the tonal realization of DE. The association of The Great Charity Mothers of Padua deserves a special mention here for the attentive curiosity they gave to my research. I also want to thank Tina Fadaka and Okey Izuogu who oversaw the distribution of the questionnaires in Padua and did a great job.

This dissertation materialized during the four years I spent as a PhD student at the University of Padua. It is not easy to express my appreciation for the great deal of knowledge I acquired thanks to the weekly seminars organized by the Linguistic Department, and my gratitude goes to all the people who participated in the activities. I benefitted from their comments and suggestions, especially during my research seminars. The greatest acknowledgement goes to my supervisors Prof. Alberto Maria Mioni and Prof. Paola Benincà. They greatly contributed to this work. With her passion and knowledge Prof. Benincà has been a real mentor, open-minded but always firm. Prof. Mioni has provided advice with his first-hand knowledge of African languages and his historical competence. I also want to thank Prof. Davide Bertocci for assisting me as PhD Coordinator, since he assumed the position last year.

One of the scholars who probably taught me the most is Prof. Cinzia Avesani. At least during the last year of my PhD, she acted like a supervisor and generously offered me her time and knowledge, without bothering to explain the ABCs of experimental phonetics and much more. Together with Prof. Avesani I want to mention here Alberto Benin and Vincenzo Galatà, part of the CNR staff who offered their technical and practical support to realize our prosodic experiment.

The administrative staff of the Linguistic Department deserves a thankful mention because everything would have been much more difficult without their assistance. In particular, Mrs. Elena Piai has been a great

resource and she helped me actively, in many ways. I really appreciated her presence at Palazzo Maldura.

My trips to conferences and seminars have been generously sponsored through the Linguistic Department funds of the University of Padua and through the personal research funds of Prof. Mioni. My participation in these events has been of fundamental importance to expand my perspective, and I wish to thank again Prof. Mioni for sponsoring my participation to each meeting. In this respect, I express my gratitude to the participants in the "42nd Colloquium on African Languages and Linguistics" held at the Leiden University Centre for Linguistics (LUCL) in August 2012 and the participants in the XVII and XVIII "Giornata di Dialettologia", organised by the University of Padua in June 2011 and 2012. Their attentive comments addressed crucial points of this research.

For the partial funding of my field trip to Nigeria I want to thank the Faculty of Art and Humanities of the University of Bologna and Prof. Fabio Foresti, my MA supervisor. The University of Bologna also gave me the opportunity to work as part of the administrative staff during the first three years of my PhD, which made life a lot easier for me. I am thankful for the time spent at the Ufficio Didattico with Serena di Benedetto, Ilaria Tamburini and Carmela Rosafio. In the fourth year of my PhD I received an annual scholarship from the INPDAD (National Institute of Social Security for Civil Servants), which surely helped because I had to suspend my work. For the rest, I would have probably abandoned my PhD if not for the trustful, constant and undoubted financial and moral support of my family.

Many scholars provided me with their papers, many were available for email exchanges and many corrected my drafts or research proposals. Above all, I wish to mention Nicholas Faraclas who acted as my constant resource about anything related to Nigerian Pidgin. I also thank Donald Winford, Kofi Yakpo, Nicola Grandi, Umberto Ansaldo, Enoch Aboh, Norval Smith, Magnus Huber, Margot Van den Berg, Malcom Finney, Ian Hancock, Jacopo Torregrossa, Alessandro Panunzi, Johan Nordlander, Devyani Sharma, Misha Becker, Victor Singler, Peter L. Patrick and Mark Sebba. Some of them may

not even remember my name! However, I have not forgotten theirs since, in the mess of my stream of thoughts and in my need for assistance, they rapidly provided papers or advice and made me feel supported.

Among my colleagues I want to thank Katia Golovko, Sandro Sessarego, Micah Corum, Bart Jacobs, Chiara Truppi, Nicholas Rolle, Marija Runic and Silvia Rossi.

The English speakers who proof-checked this work are Giuliana Racco, Simon Ferguson and Adam Jaffee. Their work was precious.

Silvana and Manu are the people who constantly stood behind me during the last years, especially during the writing process. I call this unconditioned love. I kind of owe them one.

Despite all the suggestions and corrections everyone has provided to the work, any errors and shortcomings are my full responsibility.

The list of all the informants who agreed to have their name shown in the Acknowledgements follows here (I apologize in advance for eventual spelling mistakes):

University of Lagos:

Bentley Ehis Iyoha, Micheal Iyoha and Samuel, Ibrahim Nurudeen, Sodiji Aluseye, Etuk Ibanga Jimmy, Ajayi Adediran, Akinlabi Claudins, Odey Christopher, Agbola Macclemmy Abiodun, Nwachukwu Mcphilips, Obioha Robert, Oulintuga Gbenga, Oloco [*surname impossible to read*], Adepoju B. Hezekiah, Aderibigbe Adewole, Oyenuga Adeboye, Akele Cagherine Idown, Omoru Joy, Adeosun Oyenike, Akande Abimbola, Afolabi Abosede Eudice, Odinigbe Kelechi, Afubera Maria, Momoh Juliet, Osamor Julie – B.

University of Ibadan:

Otogbo Paul Kay, Akanbi Francis Temidayo, Ewékéye Oladuna, Souleyman Lanre Precieux, Abimbola Omyum, Amadu Ayo, Duruibe Ugonna, Odebunmi Tolulope, Okhai Vera, Akanyi Tinuke (?), Oshine Yinka-O, Oluwo Adetoke,

Tokula Lillian.

Members of the Ajegunle PMAN:
Eze Seyi, Johnson Prince Icennetu, Odede Bright, Dike Anthony Oyie, Mounanu Daniel/Ikenna, Uzoeghelu Ifaonigi, Kalu Samuel, Anams Ernest, Ossai Heanyichuknu, Okorie Chisoba Longsohns, Abeanudi Kenneth. David William, Ezebri Henry Ebibralade, Nwakama Chidi, Orji Bless Caretical, Adeoye Abiodun, Onyemauche Emmanuel C.

Members of the Italian classes:
Ingbian Jerry, Obaseki Edwin Igbinosa, Oyebade Adeyori, Sule Salihu D., Irokwe Kingsley, Ganiu Aladeola Fatai, Akpabio Victor, Aki Oghenekaro Christopher, Nwocta Ernest, Aroh Chinasa B.C., Orumezie Oluchi, Azenabor Christabel, Gabriel Mary, Akinnire Rebecca T., Akpejoye Joy, Ihetu Gladys.

Employees of the Italian Consulate in Lagos:
Spencer John, Alfred Alexander, Idoko Godwin, Isaiah, Ebbocmam John, Ebiowei Theophilus.

Speakers consulted in Benin City:
Numa Cinthia, Omoregbe Ameze, Ekairia Philumina, Chiedu Kasim Charles, Adebiyi Christlove, Abu-Shanu Hector.

Speakers consulted in Padua:
Imazongbore Evelyn, Izuogu Okey, Nwosu A. Martins, Nwaobataobie Chuks, Anthony Gertrude, Azotandu Ogechi A., Nwachucwy Charity Chidinma, Emehelu Julius, Nwachukuz Callistus Uchema, Eweka Ogiesoda Prince Richard, Alum Prince Nduka.

This work is dedicated to India and Angelo.

Abbreviations

ADJ	Adjective
ADV	Adverbial
AdvP	Adverbial phrase
AEC	Atlantic English Creoles
ANT	Anterior
AP	Adjectival phrase
ASS	Associative preposition
CEC	Caribbean English Creoles
CC	Clausal complement
CNJ	Conjunction
COM	Complementizer
COND	Conditional modality
COP	Copula
CPL	Completive
DEM	Demonstrative
DET	Determiner
EP	Emphatic pronoun
EPIS	Epistemic marker
EX.LOC	Existential/locative verb
EXH	Exhortative
EXP	Expletive subject
FOC	Focus introducer
FUT	Future
GEN	Genitive
IDEO	Ideophone
INT	Interjection
IP	Intonational phrase

IPFV	Imperfective aspect
IRR	Irrealis modality
ITRG	Interrogative marker
LOC	Locative
MOD	Modal verb
NEG	Negation
NP	Noun phrase
ONO	Onomatopoeia
PI	Property item
PFV	Perfective
PL	Plural
PN	Proper noun
POSS	Possessive adjective
PP	Prepositional phrase
PREP	Preposition
PRES	Present tense
PROG	Progressive
PRON	Pronoun
ProP	Pronominal phrase
PST	Past tense
REAL	Realis marker
REL	Relative introducer
REP	Repetition
SJV	Subjunctive mood
SV	Serial verb
SVC	Serial verb construction
TAG	Tag question
TMA	Tense mood and aspect

0. Introduction

http://youtu.be/D9Ihs241zeg
The danger of a single story. Chimamanda Adichie Ngozi.

In this work I will describe the copular system of Nigerian Pidgin (henceforth most times, NigP), a pidgin/creole language (Bakker 2008) spoken in Nigeria. Despite the common assumption that creole languages tend not to have copulas in their basilectal and radical forms (supposedly due to the relatively recent process of pidginization from which they result), NigP - like many other creoles - has a complex copula structure including different copular lexemes and a non-trivial usage of verbal adjectives. The choice of the copula is mainly grounded on the syntactic nature of the complement but, as the discussion will show, many other factors also contribute to the choice or to the presence of the copula.

This work started in 2007 when I recorded the spoken material that constitutes the main source of data. Since then, I added to the corpus some samples of written Nigerian Pidgin and I also collected a series of grammaticality judgments from informants. In order to elicit some constructions involving the item DE, I assembled an elicited spoken series of Nigerian Pidgin recordings (Appendix C-CD).

The diverse nature of the data included in the corpus aimed at accounting for all the possible domains of language use. In fact, NigP does not have any official recognition, which strikingly contradicts the range of its uses and its potential as a language of aggregation and general communication among Nigerians.

Thus, the Ilupeju recordings (Appendix A-CD) provide an example of informal NigP used among peers in a familiar environment, and include discussions of personal matters, jokes, chats and everyday issues. The recordings demonstrates that Ilupeju speakers use Nigerian Pidgin as a language of intimacy.

The Ajegunle recordings (Appendix A-CD) provide an example of semi-formal Nigerian Pidgin used during the meetings of an association working in one of the most needy areas of metropolitan Lagos, the district of Ajegunle. In this context the choice of Nigerian Pidgin as the language of official discussion reflects its creole nature, its level of nativisation within the community and represents the logical consequence of the community's intense and ideological investment in the language. The Ajegunle speakers adopt Nigerian Pidgin as a political choice.

I included the written texts in the corpus in order to account for a totally different use of the language (Appendix B-CD).

Agwu Amogu's translation of the novel "The Adventures of Jonathan Gullible" (from Ken Schoolland) into Nigerian Pidgin is, to the extent of my knowledge, one of the first attempts to use the language for literary purposes[1]. Thus, the language used in the translation serves as an example of literary Nigerian Pidgin, and the application of Nigerian Pidgin as a literary language is a great step, given the many stereotypes and negative attitudes associated with it.

Finally, the use of Nigerian Pidgin to translate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the brochure of the Integration Agreement for

[1] *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* by Amos Tutuola (1952, London, Faber and Faber) is often referred to as the first book written in Pidgin. However, the language used by Tutuola is a kind of broken English that does not correspond to NigP as intended here. In fact, the novel by Tutuola is one of the most famous and most acrolectal exemplar of a series of booklets written by poorly educated authors during the colonial period and beyond. The Onitscha market novels are a well-known example of this popular literature. For a definition of NigP with respect to other forms of restructured English, see Mazzoli 2008a (164-169). Other extremely relevant literary works by, among others, Ken Saro-Wiwa (e.g. *Sozaboy*), Wole Soyinka (e.g. *The Trials of Brother Jero*) and Chinua Achebe (e.g *A Man of the People*) make use of the Nigerian Pidgin language to typify and portray some of their characters, but still use English as the general medium of expression. Especially in the Warri-Sapele area, Nigerian Pidgin is used in cabaret and comic performances as the main language. Nigerian Pidgin is also widely used in songs. However, the scripts are difficult to retrieve and, moreover, they would not serve as "literature" in the classic sense.

residents in Italy demonstrates some of its new, emerging functions. These two texts represent the use of Nigerian Pidgin as an official language, for official purposes.

Intimacy, political engagement, literature and official/institutional documents: the language has filled all these domains, and the corpus collected here supports this claim.

While the immediate aim of this work is to provide a detailed description of the Nigerian Pidgin copular system (Chapters 4, 5 and 6), its ultimate aim is to contribute to the description of an under-described language. Of course, I had the opportunity to benefit from the outstanding work of Nicholas Faraclas, author of a grammar that will always serve as an essential reference point. Other previous works on Nigerian Pidgin are summarized in Deuber (2005: 4-6). Nonetheless, much work on the Nigerian Pidgin grammar needs to be done and much research on the origins of Nigerian Pidgin must be conducted. In order to enhance Nigerian identity, researchers can provide speakers with a history, a unified description and an orthographic system of their language. The present work should be seen within this general objective.

I have structures the dissertation as follows:

In Chapter 1 I will provide a historical account of the genesis of creoles in West Africa and a synchronic overview of the NigP verbal morphology.

In Chapter 2 I will describe the methodology - how I collected and analysed the data. I will make clear that the variety of NigP that I analyzed can be defined as "Western metropolitan Nigerian Pidgin" and can be geographically located in the stretch of land between Lagos and Benin City (see Figure 57 in section 7.1). The reader should take the point into account when comparing the present data with those provided by Faraclas (1985, 1996), because the variety of NigP he analyzed is spoken in Port Harcourt and labeled by the author "Rivers Pidgin English".

In Chapter 3 I will summarize how scholars have discussed copulas in the literature, and I will propose a taxonomy for Nigerian Pidgin copular

sentences, individuating three domains, each of which will be expanded on in the subsequent Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

In Chapter 4 I will discuss identificational and ascriptive copular sentences with the copulas *be* and *na*. After submitting several questionnaires to informants, I was able to assess that *be* and *na*, in Western metropolitan varieties of NigP, have almost perfect complementary distribution. In particular, I will demonstrate how the focus introducer *na* has steadily entered the domain of identificational and ascriptive copular sentences and that it is apparently gaining in distribution over *be*.

In Chapter 5 I will address the domain of locative and existential copula by describing the lexical item DE and its functions. Since the two essential grammatical categories (EX.LOC and IPFV) that form the root of the functions of DE are distinguished by tone, I will also describe the Nigerian Pidgin mixed system of stress, pitch-accent and tone. In addition, I will present the experiment on the tonal nature of DE in NigP that I conducted in collaboration with the Paduan CNR.

In Chapter 6 I will deal with the attributive domain in NigP. I will concentrate on verbal property items and with the insertion of the copula *de* as a predicator in certain instances. I will show that several syntactic and semantic factors play a role in determining the use of the copula in the NigP attributive domain. I will also demonstrate that the aspectual categorization of verbal property items is variable and that this variation does not entail any morphological change. The results of the prosodic experiment on the tonal realization of DE indicate that, at least, some property items can occur with both the EX.LOC copula *dé* (in their stative uses) and the IPFV marker *dè* (in their non-stative uses).

In Chapter 7 I will draw some conclusions.

1. An introduction to Nigerian Pidgin: history and some structural properties of the verb phrase

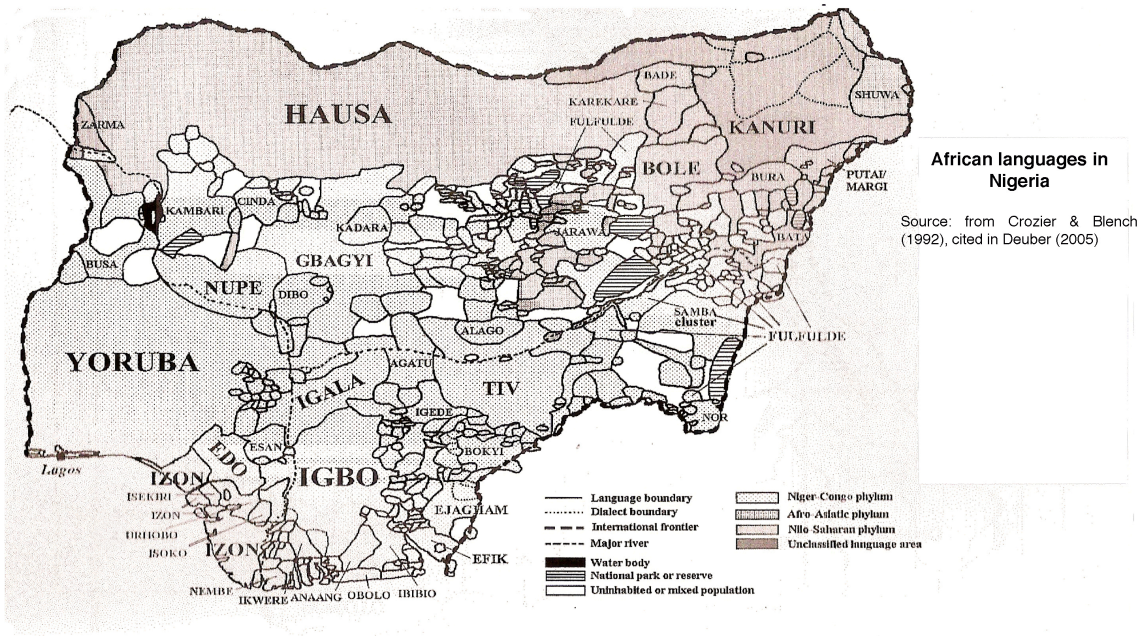
In this Chapter I will introduce to the language under analysis here. In section 1.1, I will provide some socio-linguistic information on Nigeria and on Nigerian Pidgin. In section 1.2 I will describe the historical context that stands as the background to the emergence of creole languages in West Africa and in the New World. In section 1.3 I will sketch a socio-historical account for the rise of modern Nigerian Pidgin (henceforth NigP). In section 1.4, then, I will present some structural properties of the NigP verb phrase. In this respect, one should not expect a thorough treatment because my main aim is simply to prepare the ground for the analysis of the NigP copular system in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. For this reason, I will deal with the tense, mood, aspectual and polarity preverbal markers in section 1.4.1, with the lexical aspectual classification of NigP verbs in 1.4.2 and with the factitive[2] interpretation of the unmarked verb in 1.4.3.

1.1 The Nigerian socio-linguistic situation

Nigeria is a highly multilingual country. According to Crozier & Blench (1992) and Grimes (2000), Nigeria hosts between 450 and 500 African languages and thus is one of the world's territories with the highest linguistic diversification.

[2] Faraclas (1989, 1996) uses the term "factative".

Figure 1. African languages in Nigeria.



The total population is estimated to be 140 million people (Census, 2006[3]). Nigerian languages belong to the three families of Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic and Nilo-Saharan. Three main African languages have a distinctive official recognition as major national languages: Yoruba (main language of the South-West), Igbo (main language of the South-East) and Hausa (main language in the North). The choice of these three African languages to be represented at the Federal level is certainly grounded on demographic but also political reasons. There are some major "minor languages", among others Ibibio and Tiv, which have as many speakers as, say, the Igbo language, but for some reasons they were disfavored (Igboanusi & Peter 2005: 5). Each of the three main African languages has millions of native speakers but Hausa is distinct from the other two because it is also commonly spoken as a second language in the northern part of the country.

About 20% of Nigerians speak Nigerian English (henceforth NigE) among their first languages but for most of the population English remains a second language which is still not easily accessible. However, English is *de facto* the only official language in Nigeria.

[3] http://www.nigeriannews.com/census/

On the contrary, NigP, a language that has no kind of official recognition whatsoever, is probably the most widely spoken language of Nigeria. According to Faraclas (1996: 1), NigP has over one million of native speakers in the Southern regions of the Niger Delta and over 40 million of native speakers who speak it as one among their first languages. It is reasonable to assume that both of these estimates are rapidly rising (Faraclas 2004). In fact, NigP represents one of the main threats to minor African languages, especially in the Southern regions of Nigeria.

NigP is an English-based expanded pidgin. Its denomination as "pidgin" may be misleading. Firstly, linguistic evidence demonstrates a rather advanced level of internal development. Secondly, although its level of socio-linguistic nativization varies from region to region, the language has steadily entered into the domain of informal communications among young speakers, especially in the urban areas. Therefore, the label NigP will henceforth tacitly include these creole varieties.

Even if the popular accounts attribute the birth of NigP to the first contacts among African and English traders in the 17th Century, it is almost certain that the varieties of restructured English spoken in Southern Nigeria as trade pidgins were later influenced by the creole variety (Krio) spoken by immigrants from Sierra Leone. Thus, modern NigP began stabilizing during the colonial era as early as 1850. The languages involved in the contact are, on one side, pre-colonial and colonial English[4] (superstrate) and, on the other side, African languages of the Kwa and Benue Congo families (substrates). Moreover, it seems that the Krio language of Sierra Leone had a relevant influence on NigP in the 19th Century (see 1.2.3 and 1.3.1). NigP is an "odd" creole in the sense that, in many respects, its history does not parallel that of other New World creoles such as Sranan, Jamaican or Haitian. In the Nigerian case, to cite just one element, speakers did not abandon their African

[4] I differentiate the two not because the two varieties are thought to be different in linguistic terms, but because the two had extremely different impacts due to the distinct patterns of British settlements. Pre-colonial refers to a time when the British remained in the coastal regions and used the language mainly for trading purposes either in their homes or with their mulatto entourages. Colonial refers to the period in which the British penetrated in the territory and also started their mission to re-educate and civilize the Africans though the Christian religion and English language.

languages in order to adopt the contact language as their first. The kind of nativisation that NigP is undergoing in certain areas in the Niger Delta region is a recent phenomenon and, most probably, does not pre-date the colonial era. For this and other reasons, it may be inappropriate to speak of "substrate languages" for the Nigerian African vernaculars that are still widely spoken and it may be more appropriate to call them "adstrates".

1.2 The historical context of the creoles' birth

Even if this historical essay may not seem directly relevant to the present work, I decided to include it in this introductory chapter for many reasons. This line of research is extremely relevant to the issue of the origin of NigP, which was one of my first research interests. The controversial issue of the origins of Atlantic creoles certainly falls outside of the scope of this dissertation, but nonetheless it deserves much attention and the joint efforts of linguists, historians, archaeologists and anthropologists are needed to disentangle it. I am aware that the overview I will present here does not make any progress in that research direction, since it consists of only a non-exhaustive recollection of some available information. Nonetheless I felt compelled to study this history because it is so close to us in time and so relevant to our present and yet so overlooked.

1.2.1 The European expansion and the trans-Altantic slave trade

The European discovery enterprise started in 1415, when the Portuguese took the fortress-town of Ceuta from the Moroccans. Over the next sixty years they brought the coasts of sub-Saharan Africa into close relation with the Old Word and for more than a century they maintained the unbroken monopoly of European relations with tropical Africa. The Portuguese reached Cape Verde in 1444 and Sierra Leone in 1460. When in 1475 the Portuguese reached Fernando Po and São Thomé their commercial interests in West Africa were already mainly directed to the import of gold. In 1485 they settled the islands in the Gulf of Guinea. The Portuguese were not much

interested in the African hinterland and were able to maintain their supremacy against other European powers by building fortified bases along the coast. One of the most famous Portuguese forts was the impressive castle *São Jorge da Mina*, now known as *Elmina*, on the Gold Coast in present-day Ghana. In general, the Portuguese kept their bases in the coastal territories or even on off-shore islands. They were the first to discover that the tropical soil was well-suited for the cultivation of sugar cane and they established the first plantations in São Thomé and in other Gulf of Guinea islands with outstanding success. Sugar cultivation required a great deal of labour and the Portuguese demographics could not allow any colonial transplantation of people from Portugal. Therefore, the Portuguese began to import slave labour to the islands from continental West Africa.

America was about to be *discovered*. When the departure and return routes to the New World territories were established, the imperialistic fight among the main Old World powers started: Portugal, Britain, France, United Netherlands and Spain wanted to use the new colonies to enhance their economies. The Portuguese example had shown to the rest of Europe that Africa's resources included not only gold and spices, but also slave labour (Fage & Tordoff 2002: 243).

Between 1637 and 1642 the Dutch seized all the main Portuguese establishments on the West African coasts: they subsequently seized territories in northern Brazil. From the second half of the 18th Century onward, the British gained control. In fact, the fight for control of West Africa was mainly driven by the need of slave labour for territorial expansion in the New Word, where the economy of plantation became the main activity in the colonies by the end of the 17th Century. According to Fage & Tordoff (2002: 249), competition for the American trade necessarily involved competition for trade in West Africa and much competition in West Africa centred around the possession of coastal forts.

The slave trade of the African Population driven by the Europeans was a huge historical event in which many factors have played a role: the

European technological and economic supremacy, the greed for goods and manufactured products from most of the African kingdoms in West Africa, the presence of slave labour in Africa prior to arrival of Europeans, the need for labour in plantations in the New World colonies and, last but not least, the growing markets of consumers in the Western world who were the final engines of the whole mechanism. As Fage & Tordoff (2002: 255) state, "this was undoubtedly one of the greatest population movements in history, and certainly the largest migration by sea before the great European emigration, also primarily to the Americas, which developed as the Atlantic slave trade was beginning to an end."

Table 1. Estimated number of African slaves landed overseas by European traders. Fage & Tordoff (2002: 254).

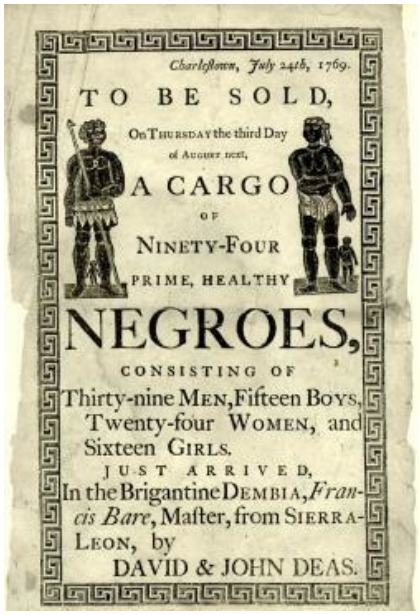
	to Old World destinations		*to the Americas*		*totals*
	totals	*annual average*	*totals*	*annual average*	
1451–1525	76 000	1 000			
1526–50	31 300	1 200	12 500	500	
1551–75	26 300	1 000	34 700	1 400	
1576–1600	16 300	600	96 000	3 800	293 000
1601–25	12 800	500	249 000	10 000	
1626–50	6 600	300	236 000	9 500	
1651–75	3 000	120	368 000	15 000	
1676–1700	2 700	100	616 000	25 000	1 494 000
1701–20			626 000	31 000	
1721–40			870 000	43 000	
1741–60			1 007 000	50 000	
1761–80			1 148 000	57 000	
1781–1800			1 561 000	78 000	5 212 000
1801–20			980 000	49 000	
1821–67			1 803 000	38 000	2 783 000
totals	175 000		9 607 000		9 782 000

As Table 1 shows, the Atlantic slave trade began as soon as the Europeans and Africans first contacted each other in the first half of the 16th Century and then constantly grew until it reached its peak in the second half of the 18th Century. Slavery was not uncommon in either Europe or Africa, because people used to work for free for social imposition and used to be owned by masters; however, the massive sale of human beings and their massive transportation to the opposite side of the world, was certainly not common.

In the 18th Century alone, more than five million people landed in the Americas to serve as slave labour on plantations that grew tobacco, cotton and sugar, produced in large scale for the European market. Then, the slave trade rather rapidly ceased in the first half of the 19th Century and slave labour was replaced with indentured labour.

Figure 2 (on the left). Reproduction of a handbill advertising a slave auction in Charleston, South Carolina, 1769.

Figure 3 (on the right). Advertisement in Charleston newspaper, South Carolina, 1760, announcing forthcoming sale of Africans from the Windward Coast.


Charleſtown, July 24th, 1769.

TO BE SOLD,

On THURSDAY the third Day of AUGUST next,

A CARGO OF NINETY-FOUR PRIME, HEALTHY

NEGROES,

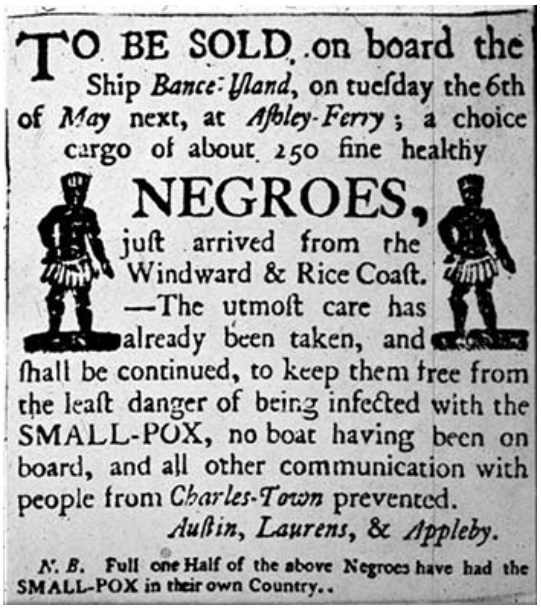
CONSISTING OF

Thirty-nine MEN, Fifteen Boys, Twenty-four WOMEN, and Sixteen GIRLS.

JUST ARRIVED,

In the Brigantine DEMBIA, *Francis Bare*, Maſter, from SIERRA-LEON, by

DAVID & JOHN DEAS.


TO BE SOLD on board the Ship *Bance-Iſland*, on tueſday the 6th of *May* next, at *Aſhley-Ferry*; a choice cargo of about 250 fine healthy

NEGROES,

juſt arrived from the Windward & Rice Coaſt. —The utmoſt care has already been taken, and ſhall be continued, to keep them free from the leaſt danger of being infected with the SMALL-POX, no boat having been on board, and all other communication with people from *Charles-Town* prevented.

Auſtin, Laurens, & Appleby.

N. B. Full one Half of the above Negroes have had the SMALL-POX in their own Country..

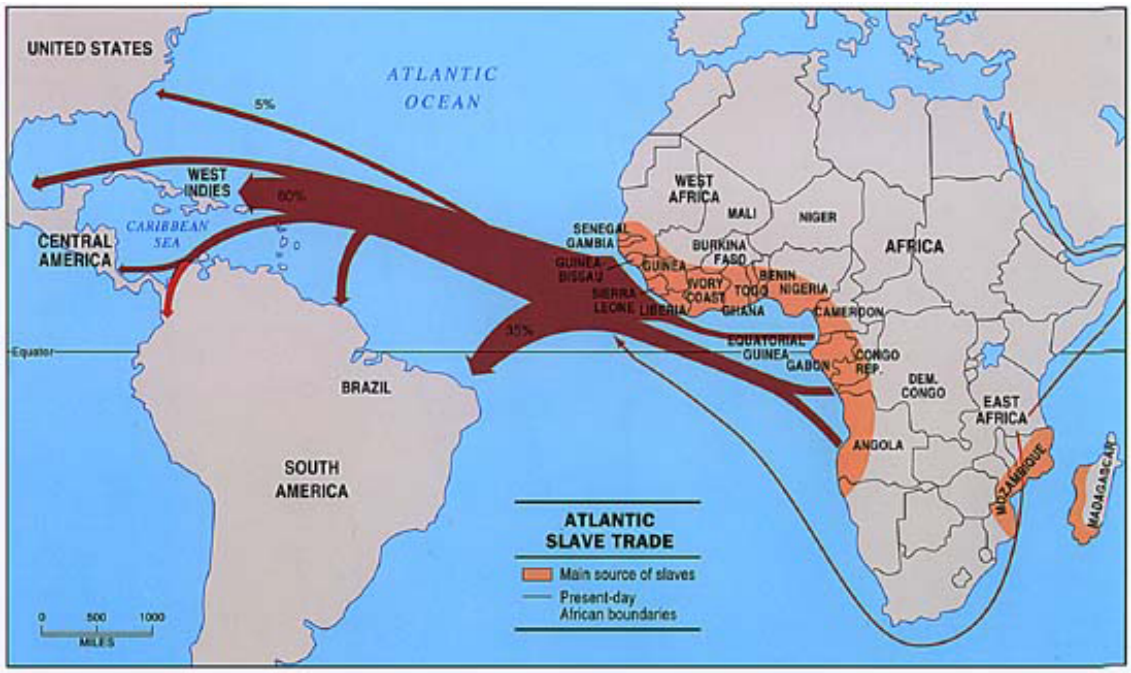
It is important to note that Table 1 shows estimates of people who *landed* in the Americas. The estimated, conservative number of men and women *taken* from Africa by the Atlantic trade is 11.641.000, according to Fage & Tordoff (2002: 255); while the estimated number of people deported from Africa in all human trades run by Arabs and Europeans between the 17th and 19th Centuries exceeds 14 million (Table 2).

Table 2. Estimated totals of slaves exported from Black Africa from c. 1650 to c. 1870. From Fage & Tordoff, 2002: 258.

	Atlantic trade	*Saharan trade*	*Indian Ocean and Red Sea trades*	*totals*	*annual average*
1651–1700	1 230 000	350 000	150 000	1 730 000	35 000
1701–1750	2 350 000	350 000	200 000	2 900 000	58 000
1751–1800	3 780 000	350 000	200 000	4 330 000	87 000
1801–c. 1870	3 270 000	1 015 000	770 000	5 055 000	72 000
totals	10 630 000	2 065 000	1 320 000	14 015 000	

The main source of slaves was coastal West Africa, from Senegambia to the Windward coast, the Gold Coast, the Bight of Benin and the bight of Biafra, namely all coastal regions from present-day Senegal to Cameroun.

Figure 4. The trans-Atlantic slave trade. © Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc., 2000.



Of course, the trade had many opponents. The black enslaved people manifested their opposition with revolts, mutinies, suicides and wars against the masters. Some white people also opposed the slave trade. In the last decades of the 18th Century, the anti-slavery movement in Britain was having

some success: by 1787, "it was possible for an English clergyman, the Reverend Thomas Clarkson, to organise a group of influential people in London into a Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade and for William Wilberforce to speak on its behalf in the House of Commons" (Fyfe 1974: 33). While for some activists the abolitionist movement had a strong humanitarian essence, the United Kingdom and other imperialistic powers joined the movement according to their political agendas and certainly not for humanitarian reasons, as Fyfe points out. First of all Britain demanded new, wider markets. It was argued that vast untapped markets would open in Africa, "could the slave trade only be abolished, and Africans be treated as costumers instead of as merchandise" (Fyfe ibid: 35). Secondly, the British urged the dissemination of the Christian Gospel and, generally, Europeans thought of themselves as "civilised" in contrast to the "barbarism" of Africa. This apparently uneven distribution of knowledge and insight pushed the Europeans to civilise and spread the Christian religion among the uncultured and uncivilised Africans. But, in the words of Fyfe (ibid: 34), the slave trade obstructed the realisation of such dreams: "While Europeans were still trading in slaves they could not in good conscience assert their moral superiority over Africans. […] With the slave trade once abolished they could advance into Africa not merely unashamed, but with the self-righteous zeal of liberators who demand gratitude from the liberated."

In the 1807 a British Act of Parliament declared the slave trade illegal and, from that moment, the British started taking abolition seriously. In 1808 the United States also declared it illegal. The British were in the position of imposing their decisions, and consequently the British navy started intercepting and capturing any ships with slaves on board, no matter which nationality. A squadron of the British Navy patrolled all coastal West Africa to stop illegal trafficking. In 1808 (as I will show in some more detail in section 1.2.2), the British established their first West African colony in Sierra Leone and constituted a Court of Vice-Admiralty in Freetown where cases of slave trading could be treated. The Court prosecuted the ships' captains and crews and, if the prosecution was successful, would free the slaves. Freed slaves

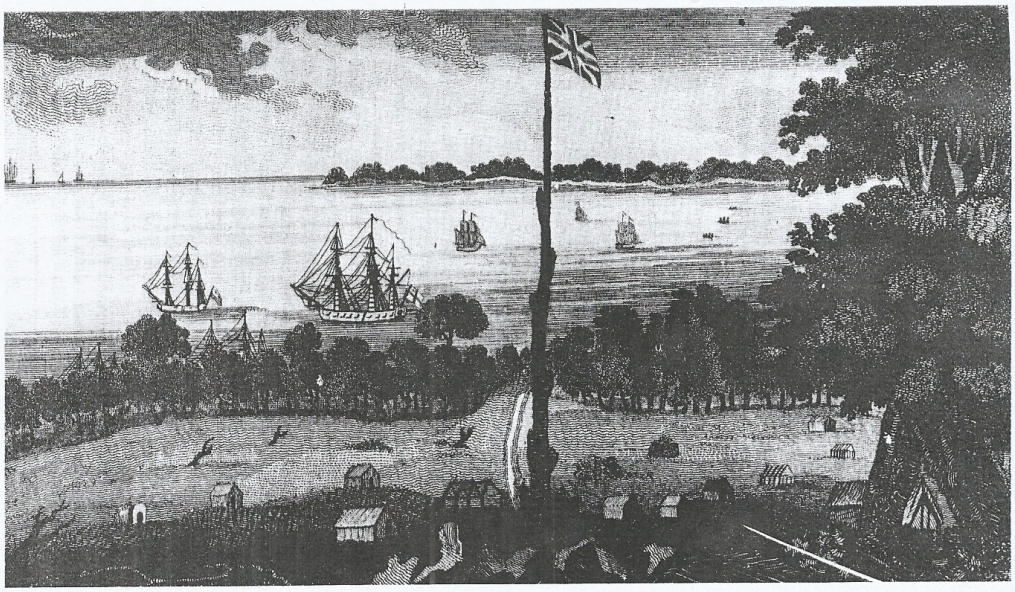
became known as “Liberated Africans” or “recaptives” (taken two times). The Court liberated a large number of people, estimated in the number of 60.000, who were, of course, freed in Freetown, no matter their origins. The British also tried to sign treaties with African rulers along the coasts, and finally, after 1848, destroyed any European premises that imprisoned slaves along the West African coasts (Fyfe 1974: 43-45). However, despite attempts at suppression, slaves were still shipped regularly in the first half of the 19th Century, as Table 1 shows.

The repressive action that really affected the slave trade was carried out in the Americas. Under threat of the British Navy, the Brazilian government, and later Cuba and the US, effectively stopped importing of slaves. The New World market was progressively closed: “The last slave ship was condemned by the Freetown courts in 1864; in 1866 the last shipment of slaves was freed in Havana” (Fyfe 1974: 45). The slave trade in West Africa was replaced with trade in palm oil and timber.

1.2.2 The Sierra Leone colony

After the American War of Independence ended in 1783, a big flux of black people of African descent left the newly formed United States. They were sailors, former slaves who escaped from their American masters, or discharged soldiers. Many of them congregated in London, without job and in need of assistance. In the United Kingdom the Anti-Slavery movement was having its moment of glory. Grenville Sharp, a British philanthropist with good intentions towards coloured people, formulated a plan to settle the blacks “back” to Sierra Leone in a place where they could start anew and feel at home. Hence, the first settlers from London reached Freetown, the new capital of “The Province of Freedom”, in May 1787. Two years later King Jimmy, chief of the Temne, destroyed the settlement.

Figure 5. The Province of Freedom. Fyfe, 1974: 37.



The Province of Freedom. (View taken from near the site of the present State House, Freetown)

Sharp, who had no money to rebuild the settlement, founded the Sierra Leone Company, a business organisation which had the philanthropic aim to provide Sierra Leone with an alternative to the trading of slaves; under the business plan, the new black settlers would introduce new commercial activities and provide profits for the stakeholders[5]. The new settlers came from across the Atlantic. Some ex-slaves who escaped from their masters during the War of Independence had been resettled by the British in Nova Scotia, a peninsula in the Atlantic off the coasts of what is today Canada. In 1792, about a thousand of these Nova Scotians arrived in Freetown. The composition of this group was diverse and remains a matter of debate. Huber (1999) has provided the most accurate estimates of their provenance and linguistic background. According to Huber (ibid: 61f), "roughly 60% of the immigrants from Nova Scotia may have been familiar with some form of

[5] The new Company declared that the Company's employees must not limit themselves to trade but must advance "the introduction of Christianity and Civilization". The Company instructed its members as follows: "On you is devolved the Honorable Office of Introducing to a Vast Country long detained in Barbarism the Blessings of Industry and Civilisation." (Fyfe 1974: 39).

Virginian Black English and up to 30% with Gullah".

For whatever reasons, the settlers and the Company became entrenched in reciprocal hostility, and in September 1800 armed rebellion broke out. The Nova Scotians had gained an advantage over the Company when the British unexpectedly transported to Freetown 550 Jamaican Maroons[6], who were expected to help the British government against the rebels. The British defeated the Nova Scotians rebels and settled a new community in the territory. For obvious reasons, the relationship between the Nova Scotians and the Maroons continued to be hostile for a while and the two communities lived in segregation (Huber 1999: 63).

Peace was not long-standing, and in 1801 King Tom of the Temne attacked the settlers (for an analysis of the deterioration in the relationship between the settlers and the Temne Kingdom see Fyfe, 1974: 36-43) but he was repeatedly defeated. Throughout all these battles, the British governmental influence on the enterprise of the former "Province of Freedom" increased constantly. In January 1808 the British government took over the settlement from the bankrupt Sierra Leone Company and made it a British colony. This was the first concrete step of British colonisation in West Africa, one year after the slave trade was officially declared illegal.

The transformation from Company to Colonial rule triggered a demographic revolution in the new colony of Sierra Leone. In fact, the anti-slavery action of the British government (section 1.2.1) reached its peak and "[s]hiploads of recaptives were constantly being landed. By 1811 they

[6] These Jamaicans were part of the Maroon community of runaway slaves engaged in fierce fights with the British. Jamaican Maroons lived in isolation in the Jamaican mountains for one-hundred years and they used to speak a heavily restructured creole language, probably an off-shoot of the earliest varieties of Surinamese creoles with much African influence. Their language was known as "Uol Taim Patwa" (Old Time Patois) or "Maroon Spirit Language" a secret language that is almost extinct today. African languages also survived among the Maroons. The Maroon rebellions were not an isolated phenomenon on the plantations but they were among the bloodiest. The first uprising took place in 1690 on Sutton's Plantation, followed by the two Maroons Wars in 1731 and 1795-96. Following the second Maroon War a group of Maroons was transported first to Nova Scotia and then, in 1800, to Freetown in Sierra Leone. The reason for the violent atmosphere in Jamaica was mainly demographic. Since 1750 the disproportion between black slaves and European settlers in Jamaica had increased in a dramatic way: there were about 10.000 Europeans to master 100.000 slaves and of course the balance of power tipped before long. Maroon communities lived throughout colonial America, and their name comes from the Spanish word *cimarrón*: "fugitive, runaway", literally "living on mountaintops".

outnumbered the Nova Scotians and the Maroons settlers combined" (Fyfe 1974: 47). According to Huber (1999: 63), from 1808 to 1840 a total of about 60.000 Liberated Africans resettled in Freetown, but the mortality rate was extremely high and by 1860 only 38.375 Liberated Africans and their descendants were counted. According to Huber (1999: 64), the Liberated Africans came from a wide variety of places, but mainly from the Lower Guinea Coast: the majority of them were Yorubas (so called "Akus"), the Igbos and Gbe-speaking Africans. An outstanding testimony of the diversity of African-born people who resettled in Freetown in the mid 19th Century is offered by *Polyglotta Africana*, a study written in 1854 by the German missionary Sigismund Wilhelm Koelle in which he compared around 120 African languages mostly spoken by freed slaves in Freetown. These languages mainly belonged to the families of Mande, Niger-Congo and Gur. While the ruling power initially settled the recaptives irrespective of their provenance, by 1830 settlement by tribal affiliation had become an accepted policy.

The British policy towards the huge number of resettled Africans was to offer them "apprenticeship". Thus, they gave them in service to Nova Scotians, Maroons or Europeans in Freetown. Otherwise, the British enrolled the Africans in the army as sailors or soldiers or sent them to the interior territories of Sierra Leone to form villages. The Colony was explicitly Christian and the Colonial Government viewed the Liberated Africans as potential converts to Christianity, which would enable them to achieve their main aim of spreading Christianity and European Civilisation throughout West Africa. As Fyfe notes (1974: 48), this re-educational mission entailed a large investment of the British taxpayers' money.

The recaptives responded: they started acquiring English as a medium of communication, listened to the Gospel, changed their names and started adopting a European style. The Nova Scotians and the Maroons formed a reference group for them to copy. The recaptives also helped in re-educate one another since those who had already embraced the European style had achieved the social and economic status to convert the new arrivals to

Christianity[7]. Education opened the way to professions and the newly Liberated Africans and their descendants became administrators, doctors, lawyers and teachers.

In the 1810s and 1820s the Krio identity has started to form, as well as the Krio language. According to Yakpo (2009: 4) in the early 19th century "the Krio language was already thriving and gaining a foothold in the hinterland of Freetown". In the midst of the 19th century the Krios were already an existing entity of non-African Africans. The flourishing Krio culture enhanced the British expansion towards the interior of Sierra Leone but when in 1896 the British proclaimed a Protectorate over the hinterland, the Krios were excluded from the administration. A war abruptly broke out, known as the Hut Tax War because it was consequent to the imposition of a tax on the "hut" over the native people of the interior. Related to this event, in 1898 the Krios were massacred in large number by the Mende in the Southern regions of Sierra Leone.

1.2.3 The Krio diaspora

In the 1840s the Krio diaspora had reached its peak. In fact, a significant part of the Krio identity coincides with the concept of diaspora. Many factors contributed to the dispersal of the Krio community over West Africa.

(1) About 300 of the Nova Scotians (the 1792 settlers) were African born. All the Liberated Africans were African born. Of course, among them and their children, there were common aspirations to return to their fathers' homeland, which was suspected not being so far (Wyse 1989: 20). Many of the immigrants, mainly Liberated Yorubas (enslaved after the Yoruba civil war in the 1820s and then freed in Sierra Leone) went first to Badagry and then to Abeokuta and Lagos (present-day Nigeria). The British colonial government refused to sponsor their trip home (it was running a program of indentured work on the American plantations at that time since they needed work overseas), but nonetheless their homeward journeys continued in small private groups. Around 1841 a shuttle service operated back and forth in the

[7] Of course, despite the attempts to transmit a European version of Christianity, influence from African faiths and rites survived in the Krios.

maritime stretch Freetown - Badagry (Nigeria). The number of Liberated Yorubas and other Krio who reached the Gulf of Guinea cannot be established with certainty but what is known is that they mainly formed unassimilated communities in South Western Nigeria. Those who went to Yorubaland from Freetown (mainly children of the original Liberated Africans) were generally known as Saro or Sierra Leoneans although they were sometimes referred to as *Oyinbo oji* ("black white men"). They of course settled also elsewhere establishing communities in other Nigerian sites (Niger Delta, Calabar), in Fernando Po (Equatorial Guinea), Victoria (Cameroun), the Gold Coast (Ghana) and Banjul (Gambia). As Wyse (1989: 28) points out, "further research is needed into the impact these people made on their host societies."

(2) The Krios enjoyed an active and prestigious position in the British colonial rule. They were employed as missionaries, officers, administrators and teachers and were generally enthusiastic and proud ambassadors of the British imperialism[8]. Thus, they were present all over British West Africa also under this official guise. However, linguistically speaking, scholars have diverging opinions on the linguistic influence of these British-appointed Krios. While Holm (1989: 412) attributes the Krio influence on other West African pidgins to the presence of Krio people in the British colonial administration, Huber (1999: 123) points out that their numbers were quite small and considers doubtfully their role in the diffusion of Krio features in West Africa.

In any case, the Krios had a new, lively creole culture, promoted by the Europeans but also fundamentally African, and also brought with them the Christian religion. The Saro immigrants in Nigeria took up many occupations, but distinguished themselves particularly as traders and missionaries. Starting from a modest beginning they went on to dominate commerce. By 1865 the Saros accounted for 20% of the population of the newly founded Lagos Colony and even today there is a strong Saro community in Lagos.

[8] "Thus the dynamic, expansive element in British West Africa during the nineteenth century was not inspired from London. It was provided by the Sierra Leone Creoles" (in Wyse 1989: 24, cited from Fyfe and Webster & al.).

They were the economic "live-wire" of Lagos (Wyse 1989: 21). Among the many Saro-descent personalities of modern Nigeria we have the Nigerian musician Fela Ransome Anikulapo-Kuti who was the great-grandson of a freed Sierra Leonean slave, resettled in Abeokuta at the end of the 19th Century.

In fact, the Krios were excellent traders and they absorbed the very capitalistic essence of the European "civilization". Whether they emigrated with private resources or as British emissaries, they understood how to make money and started doing business all over West Africa. They probably served as the unaware bridgehead of European economic colonization.

1.3 The Atlantic English-based creoles

The history of Atlantic creoles is to a great extent the history of the slave trade. As far as the Atlantic English-based Creoles (AECs) are concerned, their present-day distribution alone is massive evidence of what happened between the 17th and 20th Centuries, namely the odyssey of more than ten million people and their descendants displaced from Africa to the Americas and submitted to slave work.

Thus, the family of AECs divides into two main branches and comprises a total of more than 20 languages.

The African branch consists of the English-based pidgin and creole languages spoken in West Africa: Krio (Sierra Leone), Aku (Gambia), Liberian English (Liberia), Pichi (Bioko Island – Equatorial Guinea), Ghanaian Pidgin (Ghana), Camerounian Pidgin (Camerun) and Nigerian Pidgin (Nigeria).

The American branch consists of Jamaican Patwa (Jamaica), Guyanese Creole (English Guyana), Sranan, Saramaccan and Ndyuka (Surinam), Trinidadian Creole (Trinidad and Tobago), Anguillan Creole (Antilles), Belizean Creole (Belize) and Gullah (USA). Of course, I am omitting all Portuguese-, French-, Spanish- and Dutch-based creoles. The history of these languages tells us how sailors, traders, African rulers and English colonisers negotiated a linguistic code, and then how African slaves expanded this code as a means of

interethnic communication on plantations.

In the process of creolisation, however, many factors have played a role and their relative influence on the different forms of present-day creoles from all the lexifiers is certainly evident and can be traced to some extent. As Mufwene (1996) and Chaudenson (1992) among others note, important factors included the following:

(1) The ration of Africans to Europeans, especially during the first years of the foundations of each colony and henceforth the relative accessibility slaves had to the language of their masters[9].

(2) The presence (or not) of a dominant ethnic/linguistic group among the slave population in the colonies[10].

(3) The permanence of a single colonising power on a given territory or the discontinuity of different dominations and henceforth the subsequent impositions of different "superstrate" languages[11].

Notwithstanding the diverse demographic and historical ecology of each single creole language, the visible, synchronic linguistic phenomenology of creoles from all lexifiers demonstrates surprisingly similar aspects. One finds some remarkably diffuse features such as preverbal free markers of tense, aspect and mood, the use of reduplication as a means of lexical derivation or expansion, the presence of property verbs (see Chapter 6 in this dissertation), the predominance of overt aspectual distinction over temporal ones in the verb phrase, the factitive interpretation of the unmarked verb (section 1.4.3), and the diffusion of serial verb constructions.

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[9] The creole of Réunion (Indian Ocean) is very similar to its lexifier French because of the balanced proportion between Africans and colonizers in the first years of the colony's foundation. The creole of Haiti, on the other hand, is a drastic restructuring of the French lexifier due to the unbalanced ratio of slaves to the European population (10:1) since the moment the colony switched to a plantation economy.

[10] For example, Guyana Berbice Dutch (Smith, Robertson & Williamson 1987) is known for the predominance of lexicon and syntax attributed to Eastern Ijo languages (South-East Nigeria, Calabar) in the Guyana colony; Haitian creole has been analysed by Lefebvre (1998) as a re-lexification of Gbe (present-day Bénin).

[11] In Guyana, for example, the first Spanish exploration took place in 1499 but the Dutch occupied the territory in the 17th Century, until the British conquered it in 1796. Surinam was occupied by the British in 1650 but subsequently given to the Dutch in 1667. The island of Bioko (ex Fernando Po, Equatorial Guinea) was occupied by the Portuguese in 1474 and given to the Spanish in 1778. From 1827 to 1843 the British settled the island (the settlers were in fact Krios) as an operative base in the fight to suppress the slave trade.

The polygenetic hypothesis is based on the assumption that each creole was autonomously born on its territory, the striking similarities being attributable to universal strategies of second language acquisition, universals at play in the creolisation process and the relative typological resemblance of the languages involved in the contact. These factors have certainly played a role in the formation of Atlantic creoles; however, some scholars prefer to view at least some of the striking similarities as evidence of common ancestry. Table 3, adapted from McWhorter (2005: 202-218), displays features from diverse creoles of the Atlantic group for immediate comparison: the equative copula DA (allomorphs *na*/*a*/*duh*), the EX.LOC copula DE, the modal marker FOR (*fo*/*fu*/*fi*) and the anterior marker BIN (*ben*/*bi*/*min*/*mi*).

Table 3. Comparison among AECs. McWhorter (2005: 202-218).

	Cop. DA (He'**s** my partner)	Loc. Cop DE (Where **is** he?)	Modal marker FOR (You **have got to** do it)	Anterior BIN (Three of his friend **were** there)
Krio	**Na** mi padna	Na usai i **de**?	Una **fo** du am	Tri ipadi **bin de** de
Nigerian	**Na** im bi ma fren	I **dé** husai?	Una **fo** du am	Tri fo hi fren **bin déy** de
Sranan	**Na** mi mati	Na usai a **de**?	Mi ben **fu** suku mi susu*	Dri fu e mati **ben de** de
Saramaccan	He **da** mi kompé	Naase a **dé**?		Dií máti fee **bi dé** alá
Guyanese	I **a** mi kompé	Wisaid am **de**?	Unu **fi** du am	Tri a i mati **bin de** de
Antiguan	Hi **a** mi padana	We i **de**?		Tri hi fren **min de** de
Jamaican	Im **a** mi padana	We im **de**?	Unu **fi** dwiit	Tri a fi-im fren **en de** de
Belizean	**Da** mi padana	We i **de**?		Tri a fi-i fren **mi di** de
Gullah	Hi **duh** mi paadnuh	Wisai i **de**?	Hunnuh[12] **fuh** du um	Tri uh hi fren **bin de** de

* "I had to look for my shoes". Sordam & Eersel (1985: 59), the only sentence available

[12] *Unu*/*Hunnuh*/*Una* is another element present in most AECs. Its origin is the Igbo pronoun *únù* (you.PL).

On the other hand, the theory of an original and unique monogenesis for all creoles contrasts with most of the socio-historical information available. Some scholars have tried to provide evidence in favour of the individuation of a single place where the original creole language was born and from which it would have spread on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, but no attempt has been really convincing[13].

The reality may have been much more complex. There seems to have been different places where linguistic *nuclei* of creole forms have sedimented and from there, perpetuated the spread of relatively stable micro- and macro-linguistic systems, transplanted from one colony to the other together with their speakers, slaves and Europeans. In this paragraph I will sum up the overall history. The geographical areas where linguistic creole *nuclei* are known to have emerged or, at least, are early attested are the following:

(1) The Guinea coast in West Africa, which was the starting point of the slave trade in the 17th Century (see Hankock 1986 for an account of an early Upper Guinea Coast Creole);

(2) The Caribbean islands of St. Kitts and Barbados, which were the main arrival points of the slave ships and the first stocking centre where slaves were settled before being sent to the plantations (Baker & Bruyn 1999);

(3) Surinam and Jamaica, especially with the Maroon creole varieties, as early as late 17th Century;

(4) Sierra Leone, landing harbour of the former slaves from the Americas and of the Liberated Africans intercepted by the British, after the slave trade was abolished.

The formative processes that originated these languages were clearly neither linear nor chronologically ordered. There are three factors to take into account. Fist of all, the flux of slaves from Africa to the Americas went uninterrupted for more than two centuries; therefore, the linguistic code that was supposedly being formed along the African coasts could have influenced the New World varieties for the whole period. Secondly, during the 19th Century the flux of black people on the Atlantic stretch went in both

[13] McWhorter (2005: 199-225) has hypothesized that this place could be the fort of Kormantin (present-day Ghana).

directions, so the diffusion of micro-grammars and single words could have travelled both ways, even via small groups of speakers. Thirdly, it is true that one can individuate historical facts that help in construct a chronological order in the development of different languages and determine which language influenced the other[14], it is also true that each language developed for the most part independently from the others.

1.3.1 The history of Nigerian Pidgin

As the lively debate on the Atlantic creole genesis has shown (among others, Huber & Parkvall 1999), the origins of those creole languages that have today become recognisable as distinct, even national, tongues remain controversial. Based on both linguistic and historical evidence, it is clear that repeated contact between different groups generated a series of pidginisations, restructuring and contamination processes. These transformations coincide with the diffusion of single words or subsystems of grammars and, at the same time, they are due to phenomena of second language learning as well as the creative power of new generations of children born in unstable circumstances where multilingualism, displacement and lack of identity were the norm.

Taking NigP as a case, it is known that a language often called in the literature Guinea Coast Creole (Hancock 1986) was spoken in the West African coasts starting from the 17th Century. It was a contact English-based language probably born out of the trading needs of both Africans and Europeans, grew out of a previous bastard Portuguese (Huber 1999: 27), and probably served commercial purposes since the 15th Century. In fact, restructured varieties of Portuguese survived, as Huber points out, even when the Portuguese lost control over these territories to the new emerging European empires (British and Dutch). Many words of Portuguese origin like

[14] For example, Sranan, Ndyuka (Surinam) and the Jamaican Maroon creole varieties are structurally similar. An historical fact that could account for this is the displacement of 1231 people (981 slaves and 250 whites) from Surinam to Jamaica in 1675, after the British sold Surinam to the Dutch in 1667. This would entail that some of the common structural properties one finds in the Jamaican Maroon varieties (and ultimately in Krio and other West African creoles) may have been inherited from the earliest Surinamese creoles.

pikin (“child”), *sabi* (“to know”), *palaver* (“to discuss”), *cujer* (“spoon”) and *dash* (“to give as a present”), survive in modern NigP. We also find *sabi* and *pikin* in Sranan Tongo (Surinam), and *sabi* and *piki* in Uol Time Patwa (Jamaica).

Furthermore, scholars seem to agree on the fact that modern NigP and Krio show strong structural similarities. Huber (1999: 75-134), who conducted extensive work on early West African restructured Englishes, asserts that the pidgins/creoles spoken today in Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon are offshoots of the Krio language.

Two different scenarios, then, could explain the development of NigP:

1) In the first scenario NigP underwent an internal development following the first contact between Africans and Europeans in the 15th Century. The contact language would have served as the medium of interethnic communication between Africans especially in the multilingual Southern regions around the Niger Delta. Thereafter, it would have expanded through “tertiary hibridization” (Whinnom 1971) without being adopted as the first language by any communities and thus remaining in close contact with African languages for several generations of speakers, up to date. When Nigeria became a British colony (progressively after 1861) the English language became an important adstrate, which gained official power one-hundred years later when Nigeria gained the status of an independent Federal Republic adopting English as the official language. Under this hypothesis, NigP has strong pre-colonial roots (it would date to 1650) and originated in the multilingual southern region of the Niger Delta.

2) In the second scenario the present-day appearance of NigP could be due to the influence of the Krio language of Sierra Leone. Under this hypothesis, NigP is a “recent” innovation, independent from the pre-colonial jargon and dates no earlier than 1850. Developing under the influence of Krio speakers, sent as British administrators to Nigeria and of the Saros (the Liberated Africans who autonomously reached the colony of Lagos from its inception), the modern form of NigP could have spread over Nigeria either from the Lagos colony or from the southern regions of the Niger Delta and Calabar.

According to Faraclas (1985: 68): "Whether RPE [River Pidgin English] developed from the marketplace contact situation between European (primarily English) traders and traders of the various Delta ethnic groups or from the influence of missionaries from Sierra Leone remains undetermined. One must be careful not to overemphasize the role of either the traders or the missionaries in the evolution of RPE because, except at its earliest stages of development, the language has been used primarily as a means of communication among Delta peoples rather than between Delta peoples and traders, missionaries, or others from outside."

1.4 The NigP verb phrase

In this section I will focus on three aspects of the NigP verb phrase. These concepts form the essential background to the analysis of the NigP copular system that follows in the Chapters 4, 5 and 6. In section 1.4.1 I will show the preverbal free markers of tense, aspect mood and polarity that can modify NigP verb phrases. In section 1.4.2 I will outline the distribution of the lexical aspect of NigP verbs, and in section 1.4.3 I will describe the factitive interpretation that characterises the unmarked NigP verb.

1.4.1 Order of Tense, Mood, Aspectual and Polarity pre-verbal markers

NigP has a system of seven preverbal markers and one negative polarity item. The negative marker *no* occurs before all other TMA markers except with the conditional marker *for*. In fact, *no* must follow *for* (5). There is also one occurrence in the corpus where *no* follows the anterior marker *bin* (6). *No* virtually never co-occurs with the marker *kom* and cannot co-occur with the marker *don* (which has its own negative version, *neva*). *Bin* cannot co-occur with *gò*, *for* and *kom*.

Dè	IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT	I dèy go
Don	COMPLETIVE ASPECT - POSITIVE POLARITY	I don go
Neva	COMPLETIVE ASPECT - NEGATIVE POLARITY	I neva go

Gò	IRREALIS MOOD	I gò go
Bin	ANTERIOR TENSE	I bin go
For	CONDITIONAL/DEONTIC	I for go
Kom	PERFECTIVE ASPECT	I kom go
No	NEGATIVE POLARITY ITEM	I no go

Preverbal markers are ordered as follows[15]:

Don dè + V	Gò don + V	Kom + V
Gò dè + V	Gò don dè + V	Kom dè + V
Bin dè + V	Bin don + V ?	Gò kom + V
For dè + V	For don + V	Gò kom dè + V
	For don dè + V ?	

In examples 1-8 I give a list of sentences from the corpus that show the behaviour of all the markers.

1 Abeg una get anytin wey una **dè** carry gó, wey I **gò** carry go?
Please you.PL have anything REL you.PL IPFV carry go REL I IRR carry go
'Please, do you have anything that you are carrying to that place, that I can help carry there?'

2 Me and dis man **don dè** speak slang sef before some people wey dè rap
me and this man CPL IPFV speak slang ADV before some people REL IPFV rap
today. People no believe say we **neva** pass boundary because dem tink
today people NEG believe COM we CPL.NEG pass boundary because they think
say we be American.
COM we COP American
'This man and I have been speaking slang even before people that rap today. Other people do not believe that we have never travelled outside Nigeria because they think that we are American.'

[15] The question marks mean that the combinations are unattested in the corpus but the speakers recognized them.

3 Iftosay you **gò** jos find out like dat, e **for** good.
If you IRR ADV find out like that it COND be.good
'If you would just find out like this, it would be good.'

4 Wetin you talk be say we sef we **for no** leave di publicity for only dem.
what you talk COP COM we ADV we COND NEG leave DET publicity for ADV them
We **for** sef do rally around our area.
we COND ADV do rally around POSS area
'You said that we should not leave all the publicity to them. We are supposed to publicise the event in our area.'

5 Di man say na now things beta pass, di woman **kom** explain say di
DET man say.PST FOC now thing.PL be.better SV DET woman PFV explain COM DET
man no fit know because im **bin no** de dis world when things **bin** beta
man NEG MOD know CNJ he ANT NEG EX.LOC this world when thing.PL ANT be. bett
and say she **don** begin **dè** pay library tax before dem born di man.
and COM she CPL begin IPFV pay library tax before they give.birth.PST DET man
'The man said that things are better than ever now. The woman then explained that the man couldn't know because he was not even in this world when things were better and that she began paying the library taxes before that man was even born.'

6 I **no** get work but na music be my work, na me be Warri reggae master.
I NEG have work but FOC music COP POSS work FOC me COP PN reggae master
So, where I for dè work na Westminster.
so where I COND IPFV work COP PN
'I don't have a job but music is my work, I am Warri reggae master. So, the place where I should work is Westminster.'

7 But you **for don** call us, you **for don** tell somebody for meeting mek
but you COND CPL call us you COND CPL tell somebody PREP meeting EXH
dem tell me. Anytin wey dis police people **bin dè** do, nobodi **dè** check
they tell me anything REL this police people ANT IPFV do nobody IPFV check

dem, nobodi **dè** talk.

them nobody IPFV talk

'But you should have called us, you should have told somebody at the meeting to come and tell me. What the police have been doing… nobody is checking, nobody is talking.'

8 I notice say e get some artists wey **gò** climb, di mc **gò don** tell dem say

I notice.PST it get some artist.PL REL IRR climb DET mc IRR CPL tell them COM

one track, dem **gò** go there perform two or three.

one track they IRR go there perform two CNJ three

'I noticed that there are some artists that will climb on stage. The MC would tell them to sing one track, but they will perform two or three.'

1.4.2 Distribution of lexical aspect of NigP verbs

As far as lexical aspect is concerned, NigP verbs falls into three classes (see Yakpo, 2009: 188ff, for the similar distribution of lexical aspect in Pichi): stative verbs, inchoative/stative verbs and dynamic verbs. According to Bybee et al. (1994: 55), "[a] stative predicate describes an unchanging situation which will continue unless something happens to change it, such as *know*, *want*, *be tall*, *be ripe*, *be located*. A dynamic predicate typically describes a situation which involves some sort of change, such as *write*, *walk*, *sneeze*, *ripen*, *drop*." An inchoative/stative verb is a verb that oscillates between a stative and dynamic reading, where the dynamic reading often involves the entering into the state.

In Table 4 I show some of the stative verbs that I found in the corpus. Among them, we find the following: modal verbs such as *fit*, *wan* and *tek* (on the modal status of *tek* see Mazzoli 2012b); copular and semi-copular verbs of existence *be*, *de*, *tay* and *be like*; verbs of cognition like *tink*; and, finally, some of the verbal property items (PIs) as, for example, *good*, *bad* and *fine*, which should be seen as inherently stative.

Table 4: NigP stative verbs

Modal	Fit Wan Tek	'can' 'want' 'manage to'
Existence	Be De Tay Be like	'be' 'EX.LOC' 'stay' 'resemble, seem'
Cognition	Tink	'think'
Property Items	Good Bad Fine Stiff Cheap Expensive Wicked …	'be.good' 'be.bad' 'be.fine' 'be.stiff' 'be.cheap' 'be.expensive' 'be.wicked'

Table 5 lists some inchoative/stative verbs that include verbs of cognition (*sabi* and *know*), perception (*see*), possession (*get*), change-of-state verbs (*vex* and *craze*) and finally some property items such as *happy*, *old*, *white*, *sick* and *ready*. All inchoative-stative verbs may potentially be interpreted as stative or inchoative (and thus dynamic) in the absence of disambiguating information. This is, for example, the case when these verbs remain unmarked in intransitive clauses (Yakpo 2009: 190).

Table 5. NigP inchoative/stative verbs.

Cognition	Sabi Know	'(get to) know' '(get to) know'
Perception	See	'see/catch sight of'
Possession	Get	'have/obtain'
Change of state	Vex Craze	'get offended' 'get crazy'
Property items	Happy Old White Sick Ready …	'be.happy/get.happy' 'be.old/grow.old' 'be.white/whiten' 'get.sick' 'get.ready'

Table 6 displays some examples of NigP dynamic verbs. As in most languages, in NigP the class of dynamic verbs is the widest among the three.

Table 6. NigP dynamic verbs.

Motion	Come Go Comot	'come' 'go' 'take out'
Actions	Quench Hit Collect	'take to a stop' 'hit' 'collect'

Process	Run Clean	'run' 'clean'

1.4.3 Factitive interpretation of the unmarked verb

In most of the Atlantic creoles the key to the VP interpretation is the interaction between the preverbal markers and the internal aspect of the verb. This is particularly clear when one examines the unmarked verb.

In NigP the TAM interpretation of the unmarked de-contextualised verb differs if we deal with a stative or a non-stative verb, as Faraclas (1996: 183ff) clearly points out.

When the verb is non-stative (action or motion verbs, activities, achievements and accomplishments and inchoative verbs such as *go*, *drive*, *walk*, *carry*, *catch, paint*, *sick*, *happy* etc.) the default reading of the unmarked verb, missing other contextual specifications, will be PAST TENSE, COMPLETIVE ASPECT and REALIS MOOD.

[- stative]

9 I go Kano I went to Kano. PAST, COMPLETIVE, REALIS

When the verb is stative (*be like*, *de*, *enjoy*, and some property items like *big* and *good*) the default reading will imply PRESENT TENSE, PROGRESSIVE ASPECT and REALIS MOOD.

[+stative]

10 I like Kano I like Kano. PRESENT, PROGRESSIVE, REALIS

Thus, in sentence 11 the unmarked stative verb *be like* is interpreted as present, progressive and realis, while the inchoative verb *vex* require the imperfective IPFV marker *dè* to be read as present. In fact, in 12 the

unmarked inchoative verb *vex* is read as past, completive and realis.

11 Now, e **be like** say im **dè vex**.
Now it seem COM he IPFV get.offended
'Now, it seems that he is offended.'

12 The man **vex** no be small.
The man get.offend.PST NEG COP small
'The man got really offended.'

In 13, the modal verb *wan* requires the marker *bin* in order to make the verb phrase in the past tense.

13 Wetin I bin **wan** yarn be say […]
what I ANT MOD talk COP COM
'What I wanted to say is that […]'

The unmarked dynamic verb *discover* in 14 is interpreted as past and completive; in fact, any dynamic verb needs the IPFV marker *dè* in order to be read as present, as it is the case for *make*, *see* and *buy* in 15.

14 I discover say progress de for dis place, you know, I see am say
I discover.PST COM progress EX.LOC ASS this place you know I see.PST it COM
progress de here.
progress EX.LOC here
'I discovered that this place has made progress, you know, I realised that there is progress here.'

15 Dem still dè make game. I dè **see** am for Alaba. People dè still buy am.
they ADV IPFV make game I IPFV see it PREP PN people IPFV ADV buy it
'They are still making games. I always see it in Alaba. People still buy them.'

It is noteworthy that tense is relational in NigP, as in most AECs. This means that all tense specification, either explicit or implicit, has to be intended as referred to event time and *not* to the speech time. The factitive reading of the unmarked verb is patently different for verbs having different internal aspectualities, but in fact all the NigP markers change slightly when combined with stative, inchoative/stative and dynamic verbs. Table 7 shows how the tense and aspectual readings vary when different aspectual markers (IPFV *dè*, CLP *don*, PFV *kom*) are employed with verbs from distinct aspectual classes.

Table 7. Interaction between preverbal markers and verbs according to lexical aspect

	Unmarked	Dè IPFV	Don CPL	Kom PFV
STATIVE	Present (imperfective)	Habitual	Past (perfective) with no relevance to current state	Past entry-into-state (become)
INCHOATIVE/ STATIVE	Past action (perfective) / Present state (imperfective)	Present entry-into-state / Habitual	Past (with relevance to current state) / Past (perfective)	Past entry into-state
DYNAMIC	Past (perfective)	Present/ Progressive/ Habitual	Past (with relevance to current state)	Past and bounded event

2. Data and Methodology

In this chapter I will describe the data collection and research methodology adopted here. I embarked on the present research in 2006/2007 when I took two trips to Nigeria. The proper field research has transpired during the period between June-November 2007, when I collected the spontaneous spoken material for my MA thesis (Mazzoli 2008a). That data constituted the starting point for the present work. My field research and the corpus of spoken NigP are described here in section 2.1. In section 2.1.2 I deal with issues concerned with transcription and spelling choices.

During my PhD I decided to expand my corpus and concentrated on written NigP productions. I collected a new corpus with the aim to have it comparable in nature and size with the spoken data. The written NigP material is described in section 2.2. The combination of these two sets of data represents the main bulk of NigP data under analysis here and consists of approximately 100.000 words.

In the last year of my PhD I realized that some more work needed to be done in order to assess the tonal differentiation that NigP speakers make on the lexical item DE, with a special focus on IPFV *dè* vs. EX.LOC *de* preceding (verbal) property items (section 6.7, Chapter 6). Since my field recordings were too noisy for such a fine-grained prosodic analysis, I built a new corpus of elicited spoken material in collaboration with the Paduan CNR and Prof. Cinzia Avesani, who kindly made available to me the sound treated room, as well as technological and empirical support in performing the tonal analysis on DE. The corpus and the methodological issues concerned with this topic are described in section 2.3. Research findings on the tonal differentiation of DE are in Chapters 5 (section 5.6) and 6 (section 6.7).

Since 2007, I have constantly communicated with informants, recorded chunks of discourse, annotated impressions, elicited sparse grammaticality

judgments, asked questions and also had fun. Though this is probably the most elusive part of the methodology, I will try to describe it as systematically as possible in section 2.4, where I will explain to whom I submitted which types of questionnaires and how I conducted the interviews. In particular during the last year of my PhD, the elicitation of grammaticality judgments through questionnaires has become more systematic since I focused on particular constructions (Chapters 4 and 6). I will elaborate further in section 2.4.1.

As a concluding remark, I wish to point out that on some occasions I needed to check the attestation of certain constructions that were not available within my corpus of spoken/written NigP. If, for whatever reasons, native speakers were not available, I searched NigP constructions in Google. Plenty of forums, chats, blogs, sites, etc., publish pidgin online, and represent a rather precious data resource for a language that is otherwise confined to the intimacy of oral interactions and SMS. Though this may sound controversial for obvious reasons (one for all, sociometric information is not available for on-line productions), I found this methodology to be quite useful in cases that I needed to compare the relative frequency of two similar constructions. In those cases, I interpreted the difference, if any, in terms of number of research results between the two constructions as a signal of an uneven level of acceptability, but only in those cases where the difference in the number of search results was very high. I considered constructions that generate more search results as more acceptable. Thus, there will be some reference to Google searches throughout this work.

2.1 The corpus of spoken NigP: the field research

During my second stay in Lagos (June-November 2007) I felt familiar enough with the city to start recording speakers. The generous support of the former Italian Consul in Lagos Maurizio Bungaro and his wife Titti Pilato Bungaro contributed greatly to my sense of ease. I made many recordings and also asked trustworthy people to record their friends and family while speaking

pidgin. At the end, two sets of recordings proved to be long and consistent enough, and these two sets became my corpus: (a) Ilupeju recordings, examples of spoken educated informal NigP, and (b) Ajegunle recordings, examples of spoken uneducated semi-formal NigP.

In total I collected 50.000 words of spoken material (about 18.000 for the Ilupeju recordings and 32.000 words for the Ajegunle recordings). What makes these recordings a good "withdrawal" of NigP is the fact that I managed, in some ways, to overcome the observer paradox.

(a) Ilupeju recordings consist of two hours of spontaneous conversations recorded on six occasions during July-August 2007. These recordings were made by an informant who recorded himself and his friends chatting in their house in Ilupeju[16], a medium-class district in northern mainland Lagos[17]. The informant was trained: he knew that the main research aim was to retrieve spontaneous speech, and he knew that he should not, in any case, encourage his friends to speak pidgin, or obstruct their switches to NigE or African languages. He was aware that long pauses in their conversation would have been cut and thus would not affect the quality of the recordings, so he should not force the verbal exchange. To the extent possible, he tried not to modify his own language either. The other speakers did not know they were being recorded, but they agreed later to let me use this material. Their names are listed in the acknowledgements. The same informant also transcribed the material, which makes the transcriptions rather credible. The Ilupeju speakers are young, male, educated Nigerians, who were recorded in the informal environment of their house. Their ethnic affiliations and knowledge of African languages are diverse. In fact, the recordings contain very few switches to African languages, and those are mainly confined to Yoruba speech, addressed to the young house-helper.

[16] With full tonal notation *Ilùpèjú*.
[17] I thank Devon Vode Ebah for these recordings.

Figure 6. The city of Lagos: Victoria Island.

Figure 7. The city of Lagos: Lagos Island.

Among themselves, they speak NigP and NigE only. Their sociolinguistic profile follows in Table 8 (all information is accurate as of 2007):

Table 8: Sociolinguistic profile of six Ilupeju speakers[18]

Speaker	Age	Ethnic affiliation	Parents' language	Location	Languages	Education	Work
1DE	27	Urhobo	M: Igbo F: Urhobo	Birth: Warri Grew up: Benin City Lives: Lagos	NigE NigP French	Polytechnic graduate	Unemployed musician
2IE	32	Esan	M: Esan F: Esan	Birth: Benin City Grew up: Lagos Lives: Lagos	Yoruba NigE NigP Esan	Polytechnic graduate	Music producer, Sound engineer
3BI	24	Esan	M: Esan F: Esan	Birth: Lagos Grew up: Lagos Lives: Lagos	Yoruba NigE NigP Esan	University graduate	Publicist, DJ, Advertising
4MI	22	Igbo	M: Yoruba F: Igbo	Birth: Lagos Grew up: Lagos Lives: Lagos	Yoruba Igbo NigE NigP	High School graduate	Computer assistant, System engineer, Musician
5SU	35	Yoruba	M: Yoruba F: Yoruba	Birth: Lagos Grew up: Lagos Lives: Lagos	Yoruba NigE NigP	University graduate	Systems engineer, IT specialist
6TA	26	Igbo	M: Igbo F: Igbo	Birth: Anambra Grew up: Lagos Lives: Lagos	Igbo Yoruba NigE NigP	Polytechnic graduate	Unemployed musician

(b) Ajegunle recordings consist of five hours of NigP speech I recorded during three meetings of the cultural association PMAN[19] (Performing Musicians Employer's Association of Nigeria) held in their headquarters in Ajegunle[20] in August-September 2007.

[18] This chart gives some clue about the complex socio-linguistic situations typical of the urban territory of Lagos. Speaker 1 identifies himself as Urhobo for the sake of his father's affiliation, but grew up in a Bini area and does not speak any African language. Speaker 2 and 3 identify themselves as Esan because of their parents' affiliations but speak Yoruba as their first language instead of Esan. For the complete account of the results, see Mazzoli (2008a).
[19] See http://www.pmanonline.net/index.html
[20] With full tonal notation *Ajégúnlè*.

Figure 8. Images from Ajegunle.

Ajegunle is a very poor suburb in Southern mainland Lagos, near the international harbor of Apapa. As Deuber (2005: 55) points out, the ghetto of Ajegunle is a place where NigP has become the main community language, while in the rest of urban Lagos Yoruba is still used consistently as a first language and also as a vehicular language for interethnic communications, alongside NigP. In fact, the district of Ajegunle spontaneously developed rapidly during the 1950s, as a consequence of internal migration of laborers throughout Nigeria. In particular, Ajegunle received migrants from the Niger Delta region (Ijaw, Urhobo) and the East (Igbo). Peil (1991: 44) notes that the Yorubas, despite being the strongest ethnic group all over Western Nigeria as well as in Lagos, constitute a tiny minority in Ajegunle[21] where, due to the ethnic and linguistic diversity and the absence of a major African language to function as a lingua franca, NigP has played this role since the beginning. In this area, NigP has the sociolinguistic status of a creole, and people under the age of 35 speak it as their first language. This generation, in fact, represents the "second generation" of immigrants because they were born in Ajegunle after their parents migrated to Lagos to find work. This second generation

[21] See also http://www.city-data.com/world-cities/Lagos.html

has a labile ethnic identity (in a traditional sense) because most of them have only a passive knowledge of the language of their fathers and mothers.

In Table 9, I give some information on the speakers who took part in the sociolinguistic survey I made among PMAN members in Ajegunle. This will provide an idea of the speakers' sociolinguistic background, even if I cannot provide exact data for all the persons recorded during the meetings. In fact, those presents, only 17 people volunteered to fill in the questionnaires. From the chart one can see that half of them did not answer to the question about their "ethnic affiliation". Also, in an open question, seven of them indicated autonomously that NigP is their first language; 13 of them declared that they have excellent/good command of NigP; 13 indicated that NigP is the language most commonly used at home; and 12 indicated that NigP is the language in which they feel most comfortable. Among six people who answered the question about which language they speak (or would speak) to their children, three persons indicated NigP, which is surprising given the pervading negative stereotype that pidgin is the non-language of uneducated people. Speaking pidgin to children in Ajegunle is an act of identity[22]. As Deuber (2005) notes, there seems to be a sort of "covert prestige" on pidgin in certain areas. Also, Ajegunle speakers proved to be very aware of the existence of many other creoles such as Jamaican Patwa, Guyanese Creole, and also Haitian Creole and Surinamese Creole; they also knew that some of these languages have achieved official national language status in post-colonial settings such as Jamaica. This is something that never came out in interviews with more educated speakers from Lagos and Ibadan Universities (section 2.1.1). This point highlights the fact that, in Ajegunle, NigP has filled a void of linguistic and social identity, in parallel with what happened in many places on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

[22] It is certainly not unheard that parents speak to their children in a language that they do not speak as a mother tongue for social reasons of prestige. Not considering this an option in Ajegunle today seems to me an extremely visionary act of self and group consciousness.

Table 9: Sociolinguistic data for 17 Ajegunle NigP speakers[23]

	Speakers' answers (17)
Sex	Male (16) Female (1)
Age	27 (average)
Education	Secondary school (13) No answer (3) University (1)
Mother tongue[24] (multiple answers allowed)	Igbo (9) NigP (7) Yoruba (1) Edo (1) Isoko (1) Abriba[25] (1)
Knowledge of NigP	Good (10) Excellent (3) Moderate (3) No answer (1)
Ethnic affiliation	No answer (8) Igbo (4) Ijaw (2)[26] Edo (1) Yoruba (1) Agbor (1)
Mixed parents	No (15)[27] Yes (1) No answer (1)
Language most used at home (multiple answers allowed)	NigP (13) NigE (4) African language(s) (4)
Language most used at work (multiple answers allowed)	NigP (11) NigE (8)

[23] For a complete account of the results, and to compare these answers to those given by the more educated speakers of Lagos and Ibadan Universities, see Mazzoli (2008a).
[24] Apart from their mother tongues, NigE and NigP, most of them indicated some knowledge of Yoruba as a vehicular language.
[25] Abriba language is not accounted for in the literature, to the extent of my knowledge. However, I realised this when I was out of Nigeria, and I could not check this information with the speaker. Ethnologue.com mentions Bariba as another name for Baatonum, a language spoken in Kwara State, Western Nigeria. Also, in Abia State (Eastern Nigeria - Igbo speaking) there is a town called Abiriba.
[26] One speaker identified himself ethnically as an Ijaw, but pointed out that he speaks Urhobo better than Ijaw and that the first language of both his parents is NigP.
[27] This answer clearly points to the fact that husbands and wives are usually from the same ethnic group and thus that interethnic marriage was not diffused at first in Ajegunle. However, married couples that spoke the same African language still abandoned their vernacular to adopt NigP, as the answers to the following question in the chart testify.

Language in which they feel more comfortable (multiple answers allowed)	NigP (12) NigE (4) African language(s) (2)
Language used with son(s) and daughter(s), if any (multiple answers allowed)	No answer (11) NigE (4) NigP (3) African language(s) (1)
Place of birth	Ajegunle (12) Imo state (2) Onitcha (1) Igboland (1) No answer (1)
Ever been outside Ajegunle	No (12) Yes (5)

In Ajegunle, I recorded three meetings of the PMAN association, which helps young musicians to meet, organize and participate in concerts and, generally, acts as an outlet where they can express group consciousness, compared to the limiting perspectives they find in the chaotic urban territory. PMAN is the most important association in Nigeria in the field of performing arts and has several "chapters" in the main cities of Southern Nigeria. In Lagos one finds the two sections of Ikeja and Ajegunle. PMAN's meetings were held in NigP mainly because the PMAN associates wish to enhance the youths' identity with a language able to represent them in and outside Nigeria, to qualify them as African people who do not speak either African languages or "di grammar", i.e. English, the exolanguage of the former colonizers. Musicians in Ajegunle also sing in NigP and their daily use and creation of NigP involved a great act of affirmation of identity.

Figure 10. Ajegunle PMAN members at their concert in Lekki Beach. Lagos.

Figure 11. Ajegunle dancer performing in Lekki beach. Courtesy of Alessandro Siclari.

The recordings I made in Ajegunle, then, capture a creole form of NigP, spoken in the semi-formal context of extremely crowded meetings. The spekers' level of education is lower than that that of the speakers recorded in Ilupeju, since most of the PMAN participants did not go to university. Most of the people recorded in Ajegunle speak a non-standard form of English that cannot be defined as standard NigE. Moreover, they do not use that form of English on a daily basis, as Table 9 shows[28]. As such, their pidgin can be defined as uneducated NigP as opposed to the educated NigP spoken by the Ilupeju speakers.

I started recording at the second meeting I attended. My presence was

[28] An analysis of this kind of non-standard Nigerian English can be found in Mazzoli (2008a: 95-105), which is based on the spoken productions of Grace, a young house-helper employed at the Italian Consulate in Lagos. The main finding was that, though her English was difficult to label, it was extremely consistent and fluent. It was a second language but taken a step further; it was a fossilised learner variety. This, according to Mazzoli (2008a), was due to the fact that Grace was not a single learner, but she was surrounded by speakers of English as a second language who had approximately the same access to the input that she had. Since all these speakers of non-standard NigE have a similar linguistic background (pidgin and one or more African language(s) of the Kwa/Benue Congo families), and since they used their learner varieties to communicate among themselves, and not with English mother tongue speakers, this variety of non-standard Nigerian English has crystallised in some way. In brief, pidginization or, to be fair, restructuring processes of the English language in Nigeria are still at play due to limited access and contact.

of course evident, but I hope that their overwhelming majority minimized any disturbance. The speakers did not know that I was recording until the end, but they did know that I was interested in their language. Sometimes during the meetings I was directly addressed and meta-linguistic observations were made:

16 Abeg o, make we bring oursef low small for the English language. Maybe most of us here now gò see some strangers gò take their language up to the English level. You see dat oyinbo wey we see here…
'Please, let us do not speak English. Maybe most of us here now would see some strangers and would take their language up to the English level. I mean that white person over there…'

However, the overall discourse pattern freely switched between NigP and NigE, with a strong predominance of pidgin and slang, and I think the participants forgot my presence more and more as they got involved in the discussion. There were some switches to African languages such as Yoruba and Ijaw but they were limited to sparse statements.

I want to thank, in particular, Johnny Raphael Sidney who introduced me to people in Ajegunle and Daddy Showkey who gave me permission to participate in the PMAN meetings and made me feel safe and comfortable during my stay. I mention the names of the people who participated in the research in the acknowledgements. Transcriptions were made by Sunday Ojo, Devon Vode Ebah and Anthony Ozasee Irogue.

Figure 9. Daddy Showkey with a fan in Ajegunle.

Figure 12. Ajegunle PMAN meeting.

2.1.1 Sociolinguistic questionnaires and interviews

During my fieldwork I submitted sociolinguistic questionnaires and conducted non-structured interviews with speakers. Though the information collected is not the direct focus of the present dissertation, the knowledge I personally acquired in that way pervades this work. Also, information collected through questionnaires and interviews has provided an invaluable, solid sociolinguistic context to the linguistic data. This is why I consider them worthy to be mentioned.

I distributed sociolinguistic questionnaires to 70 speakers in the cities of Lagos and Ibadan[29]. I want to thank Prof. Patrick Oloko who distributed the questionnaires to his students and colleagues at the University of Lagos (24 questionnaires) and Prof. Herbert Igboanusi who helped me with the distribution at the University of Ibadan (13 questionnaires). However, I personally presented my research to their students and colleagues, and answered questions and provided assistance in the compilation of the questionnaire. The same questionnaire was distributed to 16 students of the Italian classes offered at the Italian Consulate in Lagos. While people from both Lagos and Ibadan universities were mainly highly educated Yorubas, the students of the Italian classes had an extremely diverse linguistic and educational background. I want to thank Prof. Salihu Sule and, once again, Titti Pilato Bungaro for giving me the possibility to spend much time with their students and helping me to distribute and collect the questionnaire. I used the same sociolinguistic questionnaire in order to collect information among the young participants of the PMAN's meetings in Ajegunle.

In Appendix 1 I included the sociolinguistic questionnaire distributed in Nigeria, which was organised in four sections. In the first one, I asked questions about the speakers' infancy, namely their mother tongue(s), the language(s) they were taught in primary school, and how they came into contact with pidgin. In the second section, I asked about their present linguistic behaviour: which language she/he uses in which environment (home, work, sons/daughters, loneliness, etc.). The third section concerned

[29] Some sparse questionnaires and interviews have been collected also in Benin City.

their attitude towards NigP. Finally, in the last section I asked about sociographic data relevant to contextualise their previous answers (age, sex, provenance, education, parents' language(s), etc.). This questionnaire worked very well because it was repeatedly tested with Nigerians living in my neighbourhood in the month preceding the distribution. In particular, I want to thank the security staff and the service staff of the Italian Consulate in Lagos (Isaiah, Grace, Zebedee and Spencer) for their enthusiasm completing lots of questionnaires and discussing their answers. I used a modified version of the same questionnaire for the Italian distribution (which can be found in Appendix 2).

I also made non-structured interviews in Lagos and Ibadan. In the last section of the questionnaire I asked people to leave their email address or phone number in case I needed to contact them for further clarifications. After reading the completed questionnaire I asked for an appointment with ten persons either from Lagos University, the Italian classes or the PMAN group. While I proposed the interviews to discuss their answers, all the meetings have provided essential moments of exchange between the interviewee and me. There are also seven interviews I conducted with the three informants I used to consult more often during my stay in Nigeria, and these interviews are far more focused on the grammatical structure of Nigerian Pidgin. I also recorded three "forums" I conducted together with the students of the Italian classes at the Consulate and seven occasional conversations with diverse subjects such as taxi drivers, people I met at theatre, vendors, waiters, etc.

Figure 13. Ibadan University campus. Department of Linguistics and African Languages.

Figure 14. Third mainland bridge. Lagos.

Figure 15. An informant on the Benin-Lagos express-way.

2.1.2 Nigerian Pidgin spelling

Faraclas et al. (1983 and 1984) provided a set of orthographic recommendations for NigP spelling, which is firmly coherent with the language and results optimal in highlighting the prosodic and grammatical specifications of NigP. Some debate on the orthography issue can be found also in Agheyisi (1988), Deuber & Hinrichs (2007), and Elugbe & Omamor (1991: 113-121). However, while transcribing the spoken recordings, I decided to adopt a more English-like spelling (in line with Deuber 2005) because I was not confident enough with the language to transcribe the recordings myself nor could I ask the three transcribers to learn a system of phonological representations for me. Their linguistic intuitions, moreover, were favoured by an English-based spelling of the data. Although theoretically I would stick to Faraclas et al. proposal, in practice this has not been possible.

However, the transcribers and I did our best to make reasoned spelling choices. Thus, in general, words have been transcribed with an English-like spelling except for the following occasions:

(a) We adapted the English spelling if the pronunciation was clearly different

and represented an evident pattern in contrast to English. For example, the dental fricatives ([θ] and [ð]) lose their fricative character and become voiceless and voiced alveolar stops [-continuant] in NigP ([t] and [d]). Thus, we transcribed *di*, *dose*, *dat*, *dis* and *deir* instead of "the", "those", "that" and "this", as in example 17:

17 Wetin dè do **di** guy sef? You know wetin dem dè do? Dem gò wan collect
what IPFV do DET guy ADV you know what they IPFV do they IRR MOD collect
moni from **dier** artiste hand.
money PREP POSS artiste hand
'What's wrong with him? You know what they will do? They will try to take money from their artistes' hands.'

The same holds for many other cases. For example, we transcribed *bodi*, *somebodi*, *anybodi* and *moni* instead of "body", "somebody", anybody" and "money" (17). We also transcribed *jos* and *mos* instead of "just" and "must". NigP and NigE, however, are used almost always by bilingual speakers who make use of them as two complementary varieties: NigE and NigP have different diafasic nature (formal vs. informal) but build together a unique linguistic system. Bilingual speakers are, of course, able to easily switch between the two in discourse, and they can understand the difference between single words such as *jos* and "just" pronounced, respectively, in a pidginized and in an anglicized form. But, still, it is sometimes difficult to track their discursive switching, especially while transcribing a 50.000 words corpus and focusing on grammar more than pronunciation. It is not always easy to tell if a speaker produced an utterance in pidgin or in a non-standard form of Nigerian English, so it is not always easy to tell if a speaker produced an utterance in Nigerian English or in an anglicized form of pidgin.

(b) We modified the English spelling of some words when they clearly underwent a process of grammaticalization or lexical shift. In this vein, the NigP preverbal perfective (PFV) marker[30] *kom* was differentiated from the

[30] See Mazzoli (2008b).

lexical verb *come* (“to come”); the NigP serial verb and modal verb[31] *tek* was differentiated from the lexical verb *take* (“to take”); the pronoun *pesin* (“somebody”, “anybody”) was differentiated from the noun *person* (“person”); and the complementizer *mek* was distinguished from the lexical verb *make* (“to make”).

18 Music wey gò carry **pesin**, **pesin** no dè know am o.
music REL IRR carry PRON PRON NEG IPFV know it INT
‘The music that will take you far, nobody knows which one it is! (Nobody knows how life will be)

(c) We adopted the spelling *say* for the general complementizer, *wey* for the relative complementizer and *dey* for the lexical item expressing both existential/locative (EX.LOC) content and imperfective (IPFV) content, as in the example 19:

19 I know say I suppose go but di tin na say today, I de for Unilag, I dè
I know COM I MOD go CNJ DET thin COP COM today I EX.LOC PREP PN I IPFV
meet one French guy wey I meet first for Alliance française […]
meet DET French guy REL I meet first PREP PN PN
‘I know that I was supposed to go but the thing is that today I was at the University of Lagos and I met one French guy that I first met at Alliance française […]’

However, I later revised the spelling of EX.LOC/IPFV *dey* and adopted the different spelling *de* for the existential/locative copula and *dè* for the imperfective marker (see section 5.6), in line with Faraclas (1996). The spelling *dey*, however, still proved to be the most familiar to all my informants and I therefore used it in the NigP sentences I created for the tonal experiment (see sections 2.3, 5.6 and 6.7), in order to facilitate the reading task. Also, all authors in the written NigP corpus (section 2.2) chose *dey*, but these occurrences have been changed in order to conform to the

[31] See Mazzoli (2012b).

transcriptions of the spoken corpus.

(d) In line with the recognition of the fundamental tonal difference on the item DE, which needed to be encoded in the written examples, we decided to extend this differentiation to another minimal pair differentiated through tone by NigP speakers, namely the lexical verb *go*, "to go", and the irrealis marker (IRR) *gò*. Other tonal specifications are not marked in the texts.

2.2 The corpus of written NigP

In order to be able to check my hypotheses on the nature of NigP copular structure on the highest number of occurrences, I decided to expand my corpus with some written samples of NigP available online. Henceforth, I gathered texts for a total of 50.000 words, which means that the written and spoken parts of the corpus have exactly the same length. In fact, my original aim was to lay the groundwork for some possible comparative considerations about the nature and relative frequency of copular constructions in the two different diamesic[32] varieties of NigP. This, together with the fact that I had two different diamesic levels of oral NigP productions (informal-Ilupeju and semi-formal-Ajegunle), put me in the position of analyzing the kind of variation encountered in copular construction in NigP from a sociolinguistic perspective. However, I ultimately chose to stick to a descriptive task in which I generally disregarded differences among the types of texts, principally because the descriptive task itself was time-consuming and, also, I realized that the length of each variety (written/oral informal/oral formal) was insufficient to permit me to make generalizations.

The written corpus consists of three texts. The first is the NigP translation of the political-philosophical pamphlet "The Adventures of Jonathan Gullible: A Free Market Odyssey" by Ken Schoolland. The book tells the story of a boy, Jonathan Gullible, who is shipwrecked on an unfamiliar island after being swept out to sea in a storm. Jonathan previously lived in a

[32] The term "diamesic" refers to a branch of language variation, which corresponds to the dichotomy spoken vs. written language. It can be used to indicate how languages change with respect to the medium of communication (oral, diary, personal correspondence, written official text, email, SMS, social networks, chat, etc.).

relatively free society, and in this strange unknown land he experiences true culture shock as he learns the repressive laws and traditions of the island's inhabitants, oppressed by a omnipresent State that makes absurd decisions on their behalf. Thus, the story highlights, through Jonathan's bewildered eyes, the absurdities of the laws, the invasive controls imposed on people's lives and the economic drawbacks of these laws. Actually, the laws and traditions of the strange island are recognizable as common to many countries throughout the world[33]. The book was translated in 44 languages, and Agwu Amogu did the Nigerian Pidgin translation, which was published online in April 2004. The translator was unavailable, but still I decided to use the text, given its dimension (46.000 words), which gave me the opportunity to build a written corpus comparable to the oral one. The only information I could find about the translator is that he is male, between 30 and 40 years old, an Igbo native and based in Lagos. His variety of NigP should be characterized as an Eastern variety, but the fact that he is based in Lagos means that he has also been in contact with the Lagos NigP variety. The informants who have read parts of his book have evaluated it as authentic NigP; however, they indicated that the use of pidgin in a literary context gave them the impression of a weird language. Of course, NigP lacks almost entirely a formal register: the only thing similar to a higher register or style is Anglicization, which is legitimate would be fair if it would correspond to a standardized register, but it does not. The lack of internal registers in NigP is also evident in Amogu's translation; the language is flat, and it is difficult to characterize speakers through the language.

The second text is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights written in NigP[34] (3.400 words). I contacted the United Nation Information Center in Lagos, who published the Pidgin UDHR on line, and I got in contact with the author of the translation. She is female, between 50 and 60 years old, Bini first language speaker, born in Benin City but raised in Lagos with a good command of Yoruba as a second language. The information clearly points to

[33] More information can be found at: http://www.jonathangullible.com/
The NigP translation is downloadable here:
www.jonathangullible.com/translations/pidgin.doc
[34] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=pcm

the fact that the variety of NigP used for the UDHR is a Western metropolitan variety of NigP, comparable to the spoken sample of data I collected in Lagos.

The third text is an informative brochure published by the Italian Ministry of Internal Affairs. The brochure concerns the "integration agreement", which is presented as a new opportunity for non-EU citizens to enhance their integration process by learning the Italian language and civic culture. The "integration agreement" was implemented on 19th March 2012[35].

While Agwu Amogu's text provides an example of NigP used in literary texts, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the integration agreement publication can be considered as official texts. The NigP spelling of the occurrences that have been used in this dissertation has been adapted according to the guidelines I gave in section 2.1.2. All the texts composing the written corpus of NigP are to be found in Appendix B-CD.

2.3 Corpus of spoken NigP for prosodic analysis

My analysis of attributive (copular) sentences (to be found in Chapter 6) showed me that verbal PIs in NigP could follow either the EX.LOC copula *de* or the IPFV marker *dè*[36]. The two forms are apparently differentiated only by means of pitch levels that supposedly point to an association with different tones. I use the capital spelling DE when I want to refer to both functions of this item (the lexical item DE is treated thoroughly in Chapter 5). As I mentioned in the introduction, my field recordings were too noisy to let me perform a prosodic analysis; also, the prosodic environment preceding and following DE, as well as its position within the utterance, were to be kept under control if its tonal realisation were to be assessed. Consequently, I decided to run an experiment in which I would record speakers without background noise, producing sentences built to elicit comparable prosodic environments. In the next sections I will describe in some detail how we conducted the experiment. In section 2.3.1 I describe the corpus collection; in

[35].http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala_stampa/speciali/accordo_integrazione/accordi_e_brochure.html

[36] I thank Devon Vode Ebah for bringing this phenomenon to my attention.

section 2.3.2 I describe how we set up the acoustic and prosodic analysis; in section 2.3.3 I describe the prosodic factors that we considered relevant to our analysis; in section 2.3.4, finally, I describe our research hypothesis and procedures.

2.3.1 The corpus collection

After the submission of a socio-linguistic questionnaire (Appendix 2) to 25 Nigerian Pidgin speakers living in Padua, I selected three speakers. Their sociolinguistic profile follows:

Table 10: Sociolinguistic profile of the speakers who participated in the prosodic experiment.

Name	Sex	Age	Ethnic group	Time spent out of Nigeria	Parents' language(s)	Place of birth	Place where they grew up	Education	Language(s) known	Auto-evaluated knowledge of NigP[37]
TF	F	40	Bini	16 y.	M: Bini F: Bini	Oredo	Oredo-Benin City	High School diploma	Edo, NigE, NigP, Italian	5
VE	F	52	Bini	18 y.	M: Bini F: Bini	Lagos	Benin City	Primary school	Edo, NigE, NigP, Italian	5
UI	F	35	Igbo	8 y.	M: Igbo F: Efik-Igbo	Lagos	Lagos-Enugu	B.Sc. Biochemistry	Igbo, NigE, NigP, Yoruba, Italian	3

I chose the speakers according to the following criteria. First, they declared that they acquired NigP during their pre-school years (thus in their primary

[37] Auto-evaluation of knowledge based on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = very little ability and 5 = very good ability.

socialisation); second, they declared that they used pidgin at home with their parents and siblings during their infancy; third, they declared that they have a very good or perfect command of the language; fourth, they showed good consciousness of NigP's grammatical structure[38]; fifth, they proved that they recognised some basic tonal distinctions in their variety of NigP[39]. I did not succeed in finding speakers with mixed parents who used NigP as a primary language at home, even though this was my primary concern when I distributed the questionnaire. However, the speakers' sociolinguistic profiles still assure that the variety of NigP they use is *one among* their first languages.

The three speakers were recorded in a sound-treated room where they could read on a computer screen eight short scripts shown to them as power point slides. Each slide was associated with a meaningful picture that would help familiarise them with the topics. An example is presented in Figure 16. Each slide contained one or more target sentences in which DE occurred in one of its nine morpho-syntactic functions:

- Predicative uses of DE plus PPs (1), described in Chapter 5 (section 5.2).
- Locative uses of DE (2) described in Chapter 5 (section 5.2).
- Existential uses of DE (3), described in Chapter 5 (section 5.1).
- Imperfective (aspectual) uses of DE (4), described in Chapter 5 (section 5.3).

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[38] This was assessed through an evaluation of the coherence of their answers in a separate section of the questionnaire where I asked for grammatical judgments.

[39] This was assessed through a question (which follows here), where the speakers were asked to retrieve the tonal differentiation between *gò* (IRR) and *gó* ("to go"). The sentence's two possible meanings are: "If I say that I will work, I am telling the truth" and "If I say that I went to work, I am telling the truth".

Consider the sentence:

• *If I yarn say: "I go work", na true I dey talk.*

The above sentence could have two possible meanings because the underlined string may mean both "*I will work*" and "*I went to work*". Do you agree with this statement?

o Yes o No

If YES, how do you make the difference while speaking?

_____

If NO, please which is the English translation of the sentence?

_____

- Non-finite uses of DE (5), described Chapter 5 (section 5.3).
- Copular uses of DE in attributive sentences with verbal PIs (6), described in Chapter 6 (section 6.5).
- Copular uses of DE in attributive sentences with non-verbal PIs (7), described here in Chapter 6 (section 6.4.2).
- DE plus change of state (inchoative) verbs (8), described in Chapter 5 (section 5.2).
- Allegedly non-copular uses of DE with property items characterised by non-stative semantic content (inchoative/processual) and/or transitive syntactic nature (9), described in Chapter 6 (sections 6.5.4 and 6.5.5).

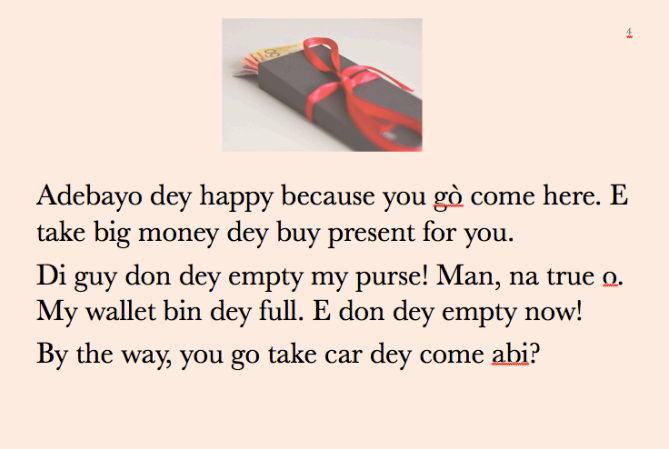
Each script was repeated five times[40] for each speaker (plus one training session at the beginning). The sentences contained in the eight power point slides given to the speakers and the full list of the verb phrases containing DE appears in Appendix 4. We obtained 51 instances of DE repeated five times for each of our three speakers, for a total of 714 occurrences.

For the recording session we used a microphone connected to a computer via AD/DA sound converter (Edirol FireWire Audio Capture FA-66); and each script recorded has been sampled with a 44.100 Hz sampling frequency and 24 bit. The recording equipment was located outside the sound-treated room in order to avoid introducing spurious noises in the recordings.

After the reading task was concluded, I had the three speakers complete a questionnaire to record their data and collect some grammaticality judgments (this questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2 and 3).

[40] Four times for UI.

Figure 16: Example of a power point slide used for the speakers' reading task.



2.3.2 Acoustic and prosodic analysis

The recorded speech material has been acoustically and prosodically analysed using a free software (Praat[41], created by Boersma & Weenink 2001, 2012). Praat allows a user to perform a classical acoustic analysis (displaying waveforms, spectrograms, amplitude and pitch curves) and also to save in separate text tiers time-aligned with the speech signal (TextGrids) (a) information about the time specifications of each relevant segment associated with their labels (e.g. beginning and ending of phones, syllables, words or sentences), and (b) information about the tonal specifications of relevant points in the pitch curve associated with their labels (e.g. turning points in the pitch curve).

Each target utterance was identified in the speech continuum of the scripts and saved as a separate file[42]. Then, each file was acoustically analysed and appropriately annotated in three separate parallel tiers in order to identify (a) the phonetic boundaries of the sentence (in the tier "Sentence"); (b) the phonetic boundaries of each DE occurring in the

[41] See http://www.praat.org/

[42] We assigned each phrase an identification sequence according to:

(a) Initial letters of speakers' name, for instance TF;
(b) Ordinal number identifying the repetition, for instance 03;
(c) Slide number, for instance 05;
(d) Ordinal number identifying the DE in the slide, for instance, the first one would be 01.

Consequently, each phonetic string [de] produced during the recording session was coded with a sequence of letters and number as, for example, TF_03_05_01.

sentence and of the syllables in its right and left immediate context (in the tier "Dey"); (c) the pitch level of each DE based on a perceptual judgment and on the visual inspection of the pitch curve (in the tier "Tone"). We attributed the label H to each DE perceived as high and acoustically realized in the higher part of the speakers' pitch range, and the label L to each DE perceived as low and acoustically realized in the lower part of the speakers' pitch range.

2.3.3 Relevant prosodic factors

We controlled the its prosodic environment for each DE, according to several factors, with special focus on the preceding environment. The pitch levels intended as absolute values are not, alone, the signal of an alleged phonological representation in tonal terms. Pitch levels are always relative with respect to a plurality of factors and, at least, one should take into account the prosodic context of the target item and the position of the relevant phonological phrase (ϕ) within the utterance.

The specifications I will refer to were annotated in the TextGrids using Praat. The terms low (L) and high (H) refer to pitch levels of F_0. In this respect, we first analysed the prosodic realization of each sentence in order to identify its phrasing. We refer to the levels of the prosodic hierarchy as defined by Nespor & Vogel (1986) and Gussenhoven (2007). Specifically we checked:

(a) Whether DE was at the beginning of a phonological phrase (ϕ), roughly equivalent to what Faraclas (1985, 1996) refers to as "stress group" or "pitch phrase";

(b) Whether DE was at the end of a phonological phrase (ϕ);

(c) The position of the ϕ containing DE with respect to the higher level of the prosodic domain in which the ϕ was included (Intonational Phrase- IP and Utterance - E). In other words, we kept track of whether DE was in the first, second or third ϕ within the IP. This was important in order to factor out the position of a DE in the utterance for each morpho-syntactic type and to allow a proper comparison of the different Des occurring in the same prosodic position. That is crucial, especially when dealing with pitch events, because

we need to control for phenomena affecting the global characterization of a sentence melody that can be imputed to the physiology of speech production. Declarative sentences uttered with no special emphasis and without contrastive focus are produced with a slowly declining and narrowing pitch range, a phenomenon known in phonology and in prosody as downdrift or declination. We can hypothesize that in NigP, as in all languages, the pitch level of any given syllable (either low or high) will be affected by the overall pitch range of the utterance in which it occurs. As a result, a H (high) syllable in the final position of an utterance will be lower than a comparable H syllable in the sentence's initial position and, ceteris paribus, could also be lower than a L (low) syllable in sentence initial position, as all the high points in a pitch contour as well as all the low points will show a progressive downtrend (Ohala 1978: 31).

(d) In case DE was at the end of the prosodic unit we should expect his realization as an H or L pitched syllable to be affected in the sense described in section 5.5.2. Since in NigP stress occurs normally at the end of the ϕ, according to Faraclas, stressed H-toned syllables at the end of the ϕ become HL, and stressed L-toned syllables become LH. For this reasons, Faraclas postulated the presence of two contour allotones for each level tone in NigP (see section 5.5.3).

(e) In case DE was at the beginning of the ϕ, we checked which tonal configuration was to be found at the end of the previous ϕ. We used the symbol L- to indicate that the previous ϕ had a low ending point and H- to indicate that the previous ϕ was a high ending segment.

(f) In case DE was the first syllable of a ϕ, and in case it was thought to be a high-toned DE, we checked whether it hosted in its stable segment (plain vowel) the maximum pitch within its ϕ. This is because at the start of a new prosodic unit, speakers tend to produce higher pitch levels for physiological reasons. We wanted to check whether the high pitch level was high enough in relation to the entire ϕ (whether it was the highest in the ϕ) or, contrarily, if it was not that high compared to other pitch picks in the same ϕ (the high appearance was due to the incipient position in the ϕ).

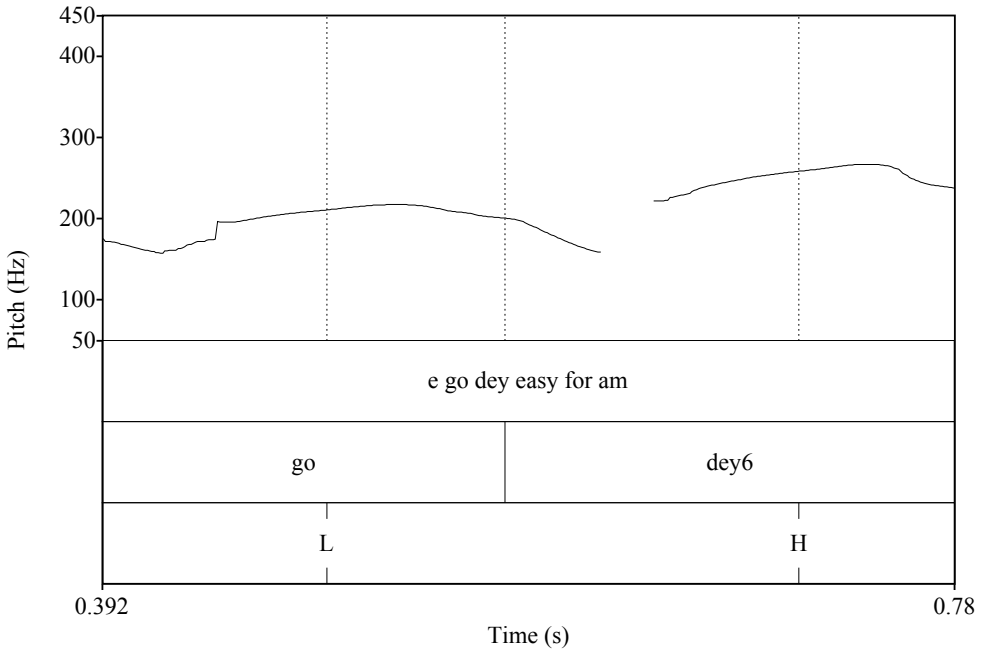
(g) In case DE was preceded by a relevant pause (higher than 300 milliseconds or 0.3 second) we indicated the pause with the symbol @. Long pauses have been considered cues of IP right boundaries[43]. We used the symbol L% to indicate that the IP preceding the pause has a low ending and the symbol H% to indicate the opposite. We also annotated pauses after DE.

(h) In case DE was not at the beginning of a ϕ, we annotated as relevant the tone of the segment preceding it. Since in NigP, as I will explain in section 5.5, not all syllables receive a tonal specification in the lexicon we had to account for three possible preceding environments: the preceding segment could be intrinsically low-toned (L), intrinsically high-toned (H) or not specified for tone (x).

(i) The phonetic string [de] is composed by an alveolar voiced stop and a front mid-high vowel. All occurrences presented a relatively low pitch on the occlusion phase of the consonant followed by a slightly rising pitch at the consonant release that affects the vowel onset and can possibly extend to the first third of the vowel. After the segmental influence of the voiced stop on the following vowel faded, the pitch curve resumed the movement controlled by the higher-level prosodic properties of the sentence (Figure 17). This rising pattern was too brief to be perceived (less than 0.03 seconds) and clearly induced by the aerodynamic and articulatory properties of the consonant; hence, we simply disregarded it as non-pertinent to our analysis. The acoustic values of the pitch level on each DE have been measured on the steady state and stable part of the pitch curve, in order to avoid the segmental influences induced by the consonant.

[43] Even if the pause did not signal a syntactic border between constituents, for example, where an infinitive *de* was preceded by a pause. The pause was considered accordingly also when it was clearly produced due to limits of performance.

Figure 17. Phonetic string [de]: relative low pitch on the occlusion phase of the consonant followed by a slightly rising pitch at the consonant release.



2.3.4 Research hypothesis and procedure

As I said above, we defined nine relevant morpho-syntactic categories realized by DE in NigP (section 5.4) and we coded each DE according to its pertinence to one of these nine categories. However, the nine categories could be grammatically considered as an expression of two broad grammatical functions. Thus, we glossed each occurrence as either imperfective (IPFV) or existential/locative (EX.LOC). This also resulted in a one-to-one correspondence to their tonal realization. In fact, the initial hypothesis was that all DE glossed as EX.LOC (sections 5.1 and 5.2) would be realized as H, while all DE glossed as IPFV (section 5.3) would be realized as L. As I will show in section 5.4.2 this hypothesis has been confirmed in 100% of cases. What was not known was if the speakers were able to produce both types of DE before verbal property items such as *empty*, *full*, *happy*, *hard*, *jealous*, *long*, *short* and *sweet* (see Table 11). In this respect, the slides contained 6 pairs of minimal pairs. In these pairs, property items were used

both in intransitive/stative constructions (e.g. 4_5 *E don dey empty now*) and in transitive/dynamic constructions (e.g. 4_3 *Di guy don dey empty my purse*). Intransitive/stative contructions like 4_5 are supposed to contain the EX.LOC copula *de*; thus we were expecting a H-toned *dé* associated with them. Transitive/dynamic constructions like 4_3 are not supposed to contain a copula but rather the IPFV marker *dè*; thus we were expecting a L-toned *dè* to be associated with them. We also included three sentences (7_7 *Everi month, one line dey short o,* 7_8 […] *and di other one dey long pass,* and 2_5 *At one point, di crowd just kom begin **dey** happy and shout*) in which the dynamic/processual reading was not associated with a transitive encoding, but was rather implicated by the semantic contexts. Results on property items are given in section 5.4.2. Also, we were uncertain of the tonal realization of DE when the two grammatical types co-occurred in sentences such as 6_5 *E dey dey hard before* (see section 5.4.2 for the results).

Table 11. Minimal pairs of property items in the corpus.

SENTENCES		TYPE	VERB	GLOSS
4_5	E don **dey** empty now!	6	Empty	EX.LOC
4_3	Di guy don **dey** empty my purse!	9	Empty	IPFV
4_4	My wallet bin **dey** full.	6	Full	EX.LOC
7_9	[…] as dem bin **dey** full am before.	9	Full	IPFV
4_1	Adebayo **dey** happy because you gò come here	6	Happy	EX.LOC
6_7	People suppose **dey** happy now.	6	Happy	EX.LOC
2_5	At one point, di crowd just kom begin **dey** happy and shout.	9	Happy	IPFV
6_5	E **dey dey** hard before	4-6	Hard	IPFV-EX.LOC
2_7	Baba Fryo too **dey** jealous.	6	Jealous	EX.LOC
8_5	But she **dey** too jealous.	6	Jealous	EX.LOC
2_8	Yes now! E **dey** jealous am.	9	Jealous	IPFV
7_7	Everi month, one line **dey** short o […]	9	Short	IPFV
7_8	[…] and di other one **dey** long pass.	9	Long	IPFV
8_4	She **dey** sweet o.	6	Sweet	EX.LOC
3_3	And wetin **dey** sweet me pass	9	Sweet	IPFV

For the general analysis of DE in all of its nine morpho-syntactic functions as well as before property items, the logically possible prosodic environments

to be checked were as follows:

If DE was in ϕ initial position, the tone of the preceding IP or ϕ was coded. Thus, the possibilities were:

L% @ DE

H% @ DE

L- DE

H- DE

If DE was in ϕ medial position, the tone of the preceding segment was coded. Thus, the possibilities were:

L DE

H DE

x DE

In all cases, if DE was in IP/ϕ final position the presence of the contour allotone was tested (HL for H and LH for L).

We collected a corpus of 51 phrases containing DE, and we had a total of 714 occurrences recorded during the sessions. We proceeded to compare alleged high-toned EX.LOC *de* in each possible environments with alleged low-toned IPFV *dè* in each possible environment.

2.4 Linguistic questionnaires as data source

Although the primary sources of data in this work are occurrences taken from the NigP corpus of spontaneously produced utterances (both written and oral, 2.1 and 2.2), questionnaires were provided to NigP speakers in order to further investigate certain issues. The need for grammaticality judgements was induced by the fact that I could not find in the corpus all occurrences needed to prove or disprove my analysis of the identificational/ascriptive constructions with *be* and *na* (Chapter 4) and the attributive construction with *de* or *zero* (Chapter 6). Consequently, the

answers drawn from these questionnaires constitute part of the data relevant here. Most times, I proposed to informants some modified versions of an utterance I found in the corpus. The best results were achieved when I had the occasion to sit together with one or two of the informants and discuss at length a series of related sentences. I did not keep track of most of these questionnaires. Lots of information has been discussed via email or in chat. However, I provided in Appendix 3 the last questionnaire I gave to speakers, where I had the occasion to finally check the most relevant issues for the analyses of Chapter 4 and 6. I can also provide the sociolinguistic background of the three informants I consulted more often. They are DE, TF and AI: the sociolinguistic background of DE has already been given in Table 8 and the sociolinguistic background of TF has already been given in Table 10. For the sake of simplicity, however, I am going to sum up their profiles together with AI's, in the following chart:

Table 12. Profile of speakers who provided the grammaticality judgements.

Speaker	Sex	Age	Languages known	Parents' language(s)	Place of birth	Place where they grew up	Education
DE	M	32	NigE NigP French Italian	M: Igbo F: Urhobo	Warri	Benin City	Tertiary
TF	F	40	Edo NigE NigP Italian	M: Edo F: Edo	Oredo	Oredo - Benin City	Secondary
AI	M	30	Edo NigE NigP Italian	M: Edo F: Edo	Benin City	Benin City	Tertiary

As one can see from Table 12, the three speakers have a rather homogeneous

socio-linguistic background. They are between 30 and 40 years old and they grew up in the same city. Of course, all of them speak NigE and NigP. Benin City is known to be a place where NigP is spoken often, in an expanded variety, as one among the first languages by most of the inhabitants, due to the mixed ethnic composition of the town. Even if the Bini ethnic group constitutes the majority of the population, non-Edo people rarely speak the Edo language, which means that it does not serve as a vehicular language. Instead, NigP acts as the most common lingua franca for interethnic communications and its diffusion has increased such that the language has started being used also among Bini people. Parallel observations can be made for cities like Port Harcourt and Lagos, which are the two other biggest multi-ethnic metropolises in Southern Nigeria. Port Harcourt has neither a predominant African language nor one prevalent ethnic group, and that is why NigP has found fertile ground since the beginning. In Lagos, on the contrary, the Yorubas form a clear majority, and their language has always been sociolinguistically powerful enough that the non-Yoruba population uses a variety of Yoruba as a second language for interethnic communications, alongside NigP. While in Port Harcourt NigP has no competitor, in Benin City Edo remains a major language but is not strong enough to act as a vehicular means of communication; instead, Yoruba in Lagos managed to maintain its power and competes with NigP as a lingua franca.

Thus, the three speakers from Benin City use NigP as one among their first languages with the difference that the informant DE, having mixed parents whose languages are not major ones in Benin City, grew up speaking no African languages but only NigE and NigP. For this reason, he is actually the most reliable informant among the three, though all have been good. Throughout this work, when I will make reference to grammaticality judgements given by informant(s), I will be referring to them.

However, questionnaires containing grammaticality judgements on sentences relevant to the issues discussed here in Chapters 4 and 6 have also been distributed to 25 NigP speakers based in Padua. I want to thank Tina

Fadaka and Okey Izuogu for the distribution of these questionnaires. They distributed the questionnaires to their friends and acquaintances but in general it is true to say that Tina Fadaka provided informants from the Benin area while Okey Izuogu provided informants from the Igbo side. The main conclusion that I drew from comparing the answers of this two sets of questionnaires was that the grammaticality judgements given by the three main informants from Benin City of Table 12 (and discussed here Chapters 4, 5 and 6) were confirmed by other speakers with the same geographical provenance and, most importantly, they were homogeneous with the judgements given by Igbo people. The consistency of their answers, irrespective of their origins and ethnic affiliation, made me feel more confident with the analysis. That is also why I decided to invite an Igbo speaker (UI) to participate in the tonal experiment on DE, together with two Bini speakers (TF and VE).

In the questionnaires I distributed to informants I proposed to speakers three symbols in order to assess the acceptability of a sentence (see Appendix 3): A (acceptable), N (non-acceptable) and D (dubious). Whenever they judged a sentence as "dubious", they were invited to explain it ("Why is it dubious?", "Is there a way you can fix it?", "Can you provide alternatives?", "Is there someone who could maybe talk this way?"). Throughout this dissertation, the judgements collected in this way correspond to, respectively: (A) the absence of any symbol associated with a sentence, (N) an asterisk (*), and (D) an interrogative point (?). However, when I had occasion to discuss more in detail their answers, I was able to collect enough information to refine the list of symbols characterising a sentence's acceptability. I will expand on this in the next paragraph.

2.4.1 Linguistic competence and grammaticality judgements

In formal linguistics there has been some debate about how to ask speakers to evaluate the grammaticality of single utterances and how to evaluate their answers in a systematic manner (Cowart 1997, Altenberg & Vago 2002, Gervain 2002, Cornips & Poletto 2005). It has been recognised that, although

direct elicitation proves to be an essential method in the investigation of linguistic structure (for it provides far more access to the speaker's competence than corpus analysis), there are many factors which may render direct elicitation unreliable and, thus, these factors must be singled out and controlled in order to avoid interferences:

> "There is generally agreement today that grammaticality judgement tasks do not, necessarily, provide a direct window into an individual' s competence alone; other factors may influence the character of the data elicited."[44]

The main interfering factors are (1) issues related to frequency (i.e. a speaker may consider less grammatical a structure which is simply less frequent), (2) issues related to markedness (i.e. a speaker may not be able to understand a sentence's meaning because its interpretation requires him/her to imagine a complicated context in pragmatic terms), (3) sociolinguistic issues related to the presence of prestigious varieties (i.e. a speaker may tend to interpret as more grammatical variants more closely aligned with the stardard).

In order to take account of these factors, which could possibly interfere in the investigation of the I-Language of the speakers, researchers have started working on common methodologies of elicitation techniques. Many proposals have been put forward. For example, informants should be chosen according to some set of criteria that qualify them as "good" informants. Also, the simple order in which a series of utterances is presented to them is relevant. Furthermore, it has been suggested that a sort of maieutic approach to elicitation may facilitate the speaker's task. Cornips & Poletto (2005) state: "In oral inquiries, a number of researchers have conducted think-aloud tasks, in which subjects discuss their judgments as they are making them. The findings of think-aloud tasks thus far suggest that implicit knowledge[45] is the primary basis for native-speaker decisions." Moreover, indirect questions of

[44] Altenberg & Vago (2002), cited in Cornips & Poletto (2005:942)".

[45] According to Paradis (1994), implicit competence identifies the kind of linguistic knowledge unaware to speakers, who acquired it spontaneously, in opposition to an explicit linguistic knowledge which coincides with the conscious competence learned in primary school. It is also suggested that implicit competence functions automatically, beyond the speakers' awareness, while explicit knowledge is somehow more superficially located and consciously accessible to us.

the type “Have you ever encountered this kind of sentence?” (instead of the straight “Do you judge grammatical this sentence”) have proved to put the speaker at ease; related to this, the dichotomy grammatical/ungrammatical has been overcome for many years, even if a systematic grid for the evaluation of the informant’s answer is still missing. It is generally recognized that acceptability occurs on a continuum presented as ** , * , ?* , ??, ?, but as Cornips & Poletto (2005) suggest, “[w]hat is controversial here is [the] imprecise treatment [of these symbols]. It is not clarified what scale, if any, is being used, how the different degrees relate to each other and how they get interpreted in the analysis.” However, above all, as noted by Cornips & Poletto (2005: 942-3), the mismatch between the judgment about a construction and its use by the same speakers has been known at least since Labov’s work. The fact that a native speaker can judge a certain form to be completely unacceptable but can, nevertheless, use it freely in every-day conversation, is a striking result of elicited introspective judgments (Labov 1996: 78). This mismatch may be due to the fact, as I said above, that the access we have to the speaker’s competence through elicitation is mediated by many factors.

Labov (1972b, 1977: 33-67) conceived linguistic competence as a tight system that regulates the speaker’s linguistic production as well as his comprehension and evaluation of other speakers’ production. When he submitted his linguistic questionnaires to different English speakers in the US, he asked them to evaluate a series of sentences according to the following reference scale:

(a) Every native speaker would say so.

(b) Some, but not all, would say so.

(c) Maybe some speaker could say so.

(d) Nobody would say so.

If the speaker answered that only some people would say so, he/she was invited to tell if and when he/she had heard such a way of speaking. In brief, according to Labov, the broad linguistic competence (production, comprehension and evaluation) of each speaker would allow the linguist to

retrieve the continuum of variation along the territory and social scale. In theoretical terms this means that acceptability judgements would reflect the continuum of linguistic variations in all its dimensions.

In the light of the preceding discussion, I will now describe what emerged during interviews and discussions with informants, and how the systematicity of their judgments was redered. I already mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph that I proposed to speakers three possible answers: 'acceptable', 'non-acceptable' and 'dubious'. However, especially with speakers DE and AI of Table 12, I was able to elaborate a slightly more fine-grained scale. Thus, I give the interpretive key for the symbols used in this dissertation.

(a) An asterisk (*) means that the sentence is unacceptable or unheard.

(b) Two question marks (??) mean that the sentence would not be produced by the speaker, but yet it is recognized and the speaker may eventually point to the (group of) persons who would talk that way.

(c) One question mark (?) means that the speaker recognizes the sentence and admits that he/she would possibly talk that way, but yet he/she points to another construction that would be better for the same context.

(d) A good sentence is just a good sentence and is not marked with symbols.

2.5 Final Remarks

As the preceding discussion has shown, I have adopted different methodologies throughout the course of my research. While the field research and environmental recordings have provided the primary source of data (section 2.1), an additional sample of written language was included in the corpus (section 2.2). Also, grammaticality judgments and discussions with informants have been a fundamental source of data (section 2.4). Finally, for the analysis of the tonal realisation of DE, I collected a new corpus of elicited spoken data (section 2.3). Now the relevant issue would be to state, if possible, which kind of variety of NigP is under analysis here. In all cases, data can be characterised as Southern varieties of NigP. Moreover, I

would say that all the statements and claims I will make throughout this dissertation should be considered valid for Western metropolitan varieties of NigP, since the spoken material has been recorded in Lagos from speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Speakers born and raised in Benin City have provided the grammaticality judgements and spoken data for the tonal analysis (see Tables 8-9-10-12 in this chapter and Figure 57 in section 7.1). Also, the written part of the corpus can be characterised as an example of western varieties, since the authors of the texts are based in Lagos (section 2.2). However, important information on the author of the novel's translation is missing and this undoubtedly constitutes a serious gap in the sociolinguistic contextualisation of the written part of the corpus. I can only assure the reader that I based all my assumptions on the spoken data and the grammaticality judgements given by informants, before looking for confirmations in the written material.

If not differently specified, all NigP examples are taken from the corpus under analysis. Sentences from different sources are signalled and not modified in terms of spelling. However, in most cases the glossing is adapted coherently with the list of Abbreviations.

3. Copulas

The term "copula" is commonly used in grammatical description to refer to a linking verb or particle which has little independent meaning and whose main function is to relate other elements of the clause structure, normally a subject and a predicate (Crystal 1988: 76, Lyons 1968: Ch 7, Matthew 1981: Ch 5). For example, the copular verb in English is "to be", as in "he is a doctor". Even though many other verbs can be said to have similar functions, e.g. "feel", as in "he feels angry", they do not qualify as copulas since they bear too much semantic content. This applies also to NigP, which has many copulative verbs such as *feel* ("to feel"), *be like* ("to seem"), *turn* ("to turn"), *kom* ("to become"), etc. However, in this work, I will limit the scope of this work to the three items *be*, *na* and *de*, which can all be defined as real copulas (even if they may also have non-copular uses). Many philosophers and linguists regarded the copula as a key item in terms of logical and linguistic properties. Aristotle, Frege, Russell and Strawson are among the great philosophers who developed this research from a philosophical perspective, while more linguistically-centered contributions were made by Halliday (1967), Akmajan (1970), Higgins (1973), Jackendoff (1983), Declerck (1988), Moro (1988) and Panunzi (2010), among others.

Lyons (1986/1977: 471) defines the copula as "a meaningless lexeme whose syntactic function is to convert whatever it combines with into a verbal (i.e. predicative) expression". However, this does not mean that all copulas are verbal since, as Lyons indicates, there are languages, particularly those languages in which the copula is optional, in which "the reasons for classifying the copula as a verb are not as compelling as they are in the Indo-European languages". In the literature of creole and non-creole languages we find examples of copulas derived from demonstratives or pragmatic particles that still show varying degrees of their non-verbal origin (see section 4.5)

when they already function as the heads of predicative phrases (Li & Thompson 1977)[46].

In this work I will not deal with cleft or pseudo-cleft sentences, even if they indeed represent an extremely close domain of investigation with respect to the copular domain (Higgins, 1973). Here, I am concerned with the explanations for the different choices of copulas that NigP speakers make, since they have three items available[47]. I found that, in NigP, neither clefts nor pseudo-clefts entail relevant changes in the choice of the copular particle or verb itself: namely, the choice of the predicator always depends on the syntactic factors I will explain in section 3.1. I give three occurrences of cleft sentences in 1-3. In 20 we have a prototypical cleft with the focus marker *na* introducing the fronted argument and the pronoun *na im* introducing the VP. In 21 the focus marker *na* is omitted sentence-initially but *na im* still introduces the VP. Still, the copula remains *de* in order to attribute a qualifying property to the cleft subject (20) or to express the spacial location of the cleft subject (21). In 22, instead, the copula is *be* because the copular sentence type is identificational and the subject is pronominal.

20 So **na** di trading of cash for pure private sexual activity **na im** de bad?
ADV FOC DET trading PREP cash PREP pure private sexual activity FOC it EX.LOC bad
'So it is the trading of cash for pure private sexual activity which is the really bad thing?'

21 One rug wey don old well-well **na im** de on top di ground.
DET rug REL CPL be.old ADV.REP FOC it EX.LOC PREP top DET ground
'It was a very old rug that was on the ground.'

22 **Na** hygiene **na im** be di tin.
FOC hygiene FOC it COP DET thing
'It is hygiene that is the most important thing.'

[46] There is also some evidence of language change in the opposite sense. See section 4.5 for further details.
[47] In most cases, attributive sentences do not use a copula at all. See Chapter 6.

The same holds for pseudo-clefts (23-24). The copula choice depends entirely on the sentence-type[48], thus on syntactic factors involving the copular complement and the copular subject. In sentence 23 there is an attributive construction with a subject modified by a relative subordinate and the copula is *de*. In 24 there is an identificational sentence and the chosen copula is *na*.

23 Whether di tin wey I forecast **de** clear or e no too **de** clear,
whether DET thing REL I forecast EX.LOC be.clear CNJ it NEG ADV EX.LOC be.clear
e no too important.
it NEG ADV important
'Whether the thing I forecast is clear or not, it is not too important.'

24 Di tin wey I like most **na** chocolate.
DET thing REL I like most COP chocolate
'The thing I like most is chocolate.'

Consequently, cleft-sentences are not special with respect to the choice of the copula and will not be discussed further.

This chapter aims to provide a general panorama on copulas. I will first address the taxonomy issue, explaining the choice to divide the NigP copular domain into the three groups: (1) identificational and ascriptive sentences, with *be* and *na*; (2) predicative uses such as locative and Existential, with *de*; and (3) attributive (copular) clauses, with *de* or zero[49]. As it will be clear in the course of the chapter, NigP chooses the copula according to predicate types, on syntactic bases. I deal with the three classes of copular structures in the three research chapters of this dissertation (Chapters 4, 5 and 6). Of course, the three classes are not monolithic and, as I will briefly point out in section 3.2, some occurrences in the corpus clearly escape my classification.

This chapter develops as follows. In section 3.1 I hope to give an idea of

[48] The presence of a relative pronoun in the subject position in attributive sentences (pseudo-cleft) does not affect the presence/absence of the copula *de* either.
[49] Zero copula in NigP corresponds to copula absence and should not be described as omission, deletion or dropping. See note 50 below.

the complexity of the subject from the taxonomic point of view and then provide a theoretical background to serve as a foundation for the terminological and descriptive choices I have made in this work. Since it is not my objective to exhaustively review the literature, the interested reader should refer to the original texts to access the cited authors' full proposals. Section 3.2 provides the overview of the copular domain in NigP, in the light of the preceding discussion. In section 3.3 I give a panorama of the issue of copula variability, as it has been discussed in sociolinguistics, with a special focus on African American English Vernacular and creoles. I will show that these works have focused mainly on the issue of copula dropping[50]. In section 3.4 I will discuss copula variability in first and second language acquisition; in section 3.5 I will describe the copula system of the West African languages that have been the substrate for Atlantic creoles; and in section 3.6 I will briefly consider copulas' typological distribution. In section 3.7 one finds some final remarks.

3.1 Types of copulas and taxonomy

3.1.1 The referential taxonomy of copular clauses

The term copular sentence traditionally refers to sentences where the verb "to be" is followed by an adjectival or a nominal phrase. In Akmajan (1970) we find a fundamental distinction between *predicational* and *specificational* sentences, later accepted and expanded by Higgins and Declerck. The same

[50] Copula absence, dropping, omission and deletion can be seen as slightly different phenomena. In this work I will refer to copula "absence" when the grammatical structure of a certain language does not require an overt copula: the case of verbal PIs in NigP, for instance, falls into this category. In fact, I call copula "insertion" the use of a copular lexemes with PIs items (see Chapter 6). I will call copula "omission" or "deletion" the case in which speakers use consistently no overt copula in certain environments, but still a copula has to be postulated in the deeper structure for independent reasons as, for example, the fact that a copula appears in those positions if certain conditions are met. This would be the case of Russian, where attributive sentences in the present tense are produced without copula but when specifications of TAM have to be expressed then the copula emerges to carry them. Copula "dropping", finally, is when a certain variety of language lets the copula drop for stylistic and sociolinguistic reasons, and this would be the case of African American Vernacular English.

polar distinction is adopted in Salvi (2001: 163ff)[51] and Mikkelsen (2011). This tradition bases the taxonomy of copular sentences on the nature of the complement to the right of the verb "to be" and not on the value of the verb itself (Panunzi 2010: 49). The main distinction separates copular complements with a predicational (non-referential) meaning from copular complements where the constituent has a referential meaning. This has been developed as a polar opposition between *predication* (as in 1 below) and *specification* (as in 4), which can also be viewed as a continuum, as shown in Table 1:

Table 13. Continuum in the referential taxonomy of copular sentences in English.

		grammatical structure	feature ±determinate	semantics	type of clause
1	Carlo is *bald*	COP + AP	-	"having the property of"	**PREDICATION/ ATTRIBUTION**
2	Carlo is *a good student*	COP + NP	indet	"being a case of"	ASCRIPTION
3	The dog is *an animal*	COP + NP	indet	"being included in"	GENERICAL CATEGORIZATION
4	Carlo is *my best friend*	COP + NP	det	"being definable as"; "being identified as"	**IDENTIFICATION**
5	My best friend is *Carlo*	COP + PN	det		SPECIFICATION
6	Clark Kent is *Superman*	COP + PN	det	"is identical to"	EQUATION
7	The morning star is *the evening star*	COP + NP	det		EQUATION

While reviewing this continuum, I will give some information on the copular

[51] Salvi (2001: 163ff) includes in the predicational type ("frasi predicative" in its Italian taxonomy) also locative, possessive and other extended uses of *essere* ("to be") in Italian.

system of NigP. The continuum goes from 1 to 7 according to the referential value of the copular complement, which mainly depends on two factors: (a) the type of phrase and (b) the value of the feature ± *determinate*. When the copular complement is an adjective, or a property item more generally, as in 1, we have a predicational structure since the referential meaning of an adjective is null and the verb "to be" acts as an element joining a property (*baldness*) with its bearer (Carlo). Predicational structures do not project an argument structure: the adjective in 1 (Table 1) cannot be said to be an argument of the verb since it is not attributed any theta role by the verb. The adjective is simply a property predicated in relation to a subject. In NigP the class of adjectives is best addressed as the class of property items (PIs); the syntactic status of the lexical entries included in this class is mixed or, or at least, not homogeneous. Property items often have verbal status so they can occupy the verbal slot without requiring a copula at all. In about half of the cases, the copula *de* is inserted. I will discuss the attributive use of the copula *de* in Chapter 6.

On the contrary, in example 4, the copular complement is a determined noun phrase (*my best friend*), as well as the subject which is a proper noun (*Carlo*). When the two constituents are both definite NPs, and the subject is more referential/topical than the object, I define the sentence with the label "identificational"[52]. (See section 3.1.3 on the relationship between referentiality, topicality and subjecthood). The copular complement is therefore fully referential. While in predicational structures[53] the complement tells something *about* the subject, in identificational (but also in specificational and equative) sentences the complement answers the question *who* or *what* is the subject. Also, the copula's semantic value changes from the predicative "having the property of" to the identificational/specificational/equative "being definable as" (*what*) or "being identified as" (*who*). Identificational sentences require the copula *be* or *na* in NigP, because of the presence of nominal complements. *Be* and *na* are never dropped, absent or omitted.

[52] This is slightly different from Higgins (1973: 246) and Salvi (2001).
[53] Attribution, ascription and general categorisation.

One property of identificational sentences is that they are reversible, so that 5 is a possible sentence, as is 4, while constituents in sentences 1, 2 and 3 can not be reversed. Specification (5) is originally a quite restrictive term in the taxonomy proposed by Higgins (1974), since it includes only the group of copular sentences where the subject constituent is "superscriptional". This means that it is non-referential and defines a class of objects as having a certain property (using operators mainly) and then prepares the ground for one object (the complement) to be the specified element out of the group[54]. Here I use "specification" as a broad label for those copular sentences in which the copular complement identifies an object in a syntactic/pragmatic manner that renders it more referential with respect to the subject constituent (*My best friend is Carlo*[55]). Specificational sentences require the copula *be* or *na* in NigP on syntactic bases.

In 2 and 3 one finds a sort of intermediate case (between the polar opposition predicational-specificational) in which the copular complement is a non-determined noun phrase. In 2, the constituent "a good student" clearly expresses predicational content because its referential status is low or null. This copular use can be labelled "ascriptive" and it is semantically associated with the attribution of property. Some philosophers like Frege (1892), for example, have treated this as a pure predication. According to Pustet (2003: 30), "[a]scriptive predicates with a nominal nucleus establish membership in a class of items that are characterized by the concept that figures as predicate nucleu." We will see that ascriptive copular sentences are associated with identificational sentences in NigP; the copula choice, in fact, holds the syntactic nature of the complement only, which is nominal in all these cases. In 3 the two constituents represent related abstract types; they are "related" in the sense that one should be considered "being included in" the other. This is a generic categorisation, which should be set apart from both attribution/ascription and identification/specification. However, general categorisation should be seen as semantically more similar to the former. In

[54] A typical specificational sentence would then be:
10 What I like about John is his tie.
[55] In the marked interpretation of: "We both know I have a best friend, I am telling you all the time. And this person is Carlo, the person you have just met".

NigP, generic categorisation requires nominal copular complements, and is thus expressed with the copulas *be* and *na*.

Finally, in sentences 6 and 7 we find a special case of identification: equation. There is not a substantial difference between identification and equation but, in identificational and specificational sentences, the syntactic coding *may* express quite clearly the different referential values of the subject and object constituents (say, one is a definite NP and the other a deictic). On the contrary, equations are by definition sentences where the two constituents refer to the same referent in an extremely similar manner (PN COP PN, DEM COP DEM). However, even in equation, the complement/focus constituent should always be detectable in terms of having less referential weight than the subject/topic (see section 3.1.3). Consistent with these observations, there is a strand of work that argues that no copular clause in any language is truly equative (Moro 1997) and that even apparently symmetrical clauses, like 7 in Table 1, are, in fact, instances of predication (i.e. the predicate always remains non-referential). Equation is expressed with *be* and *na*, again on syntactic bases.

3.1.2 The semantic nucleus of copular structures

The copular domain in the languages of the world displays quite a surprising array of variation: one vs. multiple copulas, overt vs. omitted copulas, different lexemes covering different semantic areas and different lexemes displaying different syntactic combinations. However, the semantics of copulas proves to be a uniforming tool of analysis in order to account for copular types. In fact, despite the common assumption that copulas are "the most general and colourless of all verbal concepts"[56], copulas should be seen as always carrying semantic load: the semantics of the copular predicate is determined by the type of complement as well as by the copular semantic type. In this respect, I found appropriate the analysis provided by Panunzi.

Panunzi (2010) analysed the variation of the Italian verb *essere* ("to

[56] From the Grimm Dictionary (1854-1961): lexical entry of the German copula *sein* ("to be"), "der allgemeinste und farbloseste aller verbalbegriffe". Cited in Maienborn (2007).

be") in the C-ORAL-ROM Italian corpus (Cresti & Moneglia 2005)[57], and provided an extended taxonomy that encompasses both (1) the domains I have reviewed in Table 13 and (2) the domains of existential/locative and general predicative uses of the verb *essere* in Italian. According to Panunzi (2010: 108-109), the compositional meaning of any VPs involving the verb *essere* in Italian is ultimately dependent on two basic characteristics, both detectable on the copular complement:

- Whether or not it is referential
- Whether or not it is attributed a theta role by the verb *essere* ("to be")

This leaves us with three categories, clearly detectable in syntactic terms and each corresponding to a semantic nucleus that characterises them at a cognitive level.

Table 14. Panunzi (2012: 109).

Features of the copular complement/ Classification	**Copular uses**	**Identificational uses**	**Predicative uses locative-based**	*
+ **referential**	-	+	+	-
+ **thematic role**	-	-	+	+

According to Panunzi (2012: 111), the copular function (second column) is essentially coherent/homogeneous and encompasses a range of variation that goes from the attribution of a property and the ascription to a class[58]. In this group, predictably, the three classes of attribution, ascription and general categorisation (examples 1-2-3 in Table 13) get conflated. Panunzi assigns the term copula only to this category since in his proposal, the

[57] The C-ORAL-ROM corpus of spoken language is a collection of over 123 hours of speech of four romance languages (French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish). The Italian data have been collected and edited by the Linguistic Laboratory of the Italian Department at the University of Firenze and counts approximately 300.000 words, transcribed and lemmatised.
[58] "La funzione copulare è, dunque, sostanzialmente una, con gradi di differenziazione al suo interno non così stringenti quanto si potrebbe supporre dalla distinzione logica tra l'attribuzione di proprietà e l'ascrizione ad una classe."

primary semantic nucleus that stands below copular sentences is the attribution of a property. The copula in this sense functions in its most primary essence, as a link between a subject and a property concept. The copula does not work as a predicate, and it is not part of the predication: it is merely an indicator. The copula is not necessary in many languages, while in others it emerges when it must convey temporal specifications. Consistently, the copular complement is not attributed any thematic role by the verb. The attributive copula in NigP is *de*; but we will see that also *be* and *na* enter in this domain when they precede an indefinite NP (thus in their ascriptive use).

Panunzi (2012: 116) goes on to define identificational uses of *essere* in Italian: "The distinctive feature of identificational uses of *essere* ["to be"] is that of selecting a complement with referential weight without the attribution of a thematic role"[59]. The primary semantic nucleus of identification is the intensional relationship of equality between two linguistic expressions denoting the same thing. In this group the three copular types of identification, specification and equation (4-7 in Table 13) get conflated. Identification is primarily expressed in NigP by the copulas *be* and *na*.

In order to account for other predicative uses of the verb *essere* in Italian, Panunzi adopts the so-called Gruber-Jackendoff hypothesis (Gruber 1976, Jackendoff 1983). In *Semantics and Cognitions* Jackendoff (1988) expresses the idea that in locative contexts the English verb "to be" (corresponding to *de* in NigP) establishes a thematic relationship of LOCATION between the subject and the complement. This use would then not be copular at all because the complement would be characterised as + referential and it would be express the thematic role of location projected by the verb. Jackendoff claims this locative thematic relation functions as a primitive semantic notion that is extended to other domains such as time, possession, existence, etc. Panunzi (2010: 122) considers the extension of the locative-based thematic relationship pattern as limited to those contexts in which the complement realises both the features of referentiality and

[59] "Il tratto distintivo dell'uso identificativo di essere è quello di selezionare un complemento con valore referenziale senza l'attribuzione di un ruolo tematico."

thematic assignment, and these would be (a) Spatial localisation, with *de* in NigP, (b) Temporal localisation with *de*, (c) Possessive relationship, with *de for*, and (d) Belonging relationship, with *de for*.

If one cross-checks the taxonomies presented in Table 13 and 14, one can abstract a scale of "copularity" as the following[60]:

Figure 18. Scale of "copularity".

attributive > identificational > locative/existential

Thus, the particle or verb found in attributive contexts is certainly defined as copula. As I discussed previously, this appears to be the primary copular function, where the copula expresses its most de-semanticised form. Some authors address as copulas also the equative ones in identificational contexts, but others prefer not to. In the identificational case the copula seems to establish an intensional relation of identity between two constituents and thus seems to carry some heavier semantic weight (it can also be replaced by other lexical verbs). At the edge of the scale are locative copulas, which in many languages also perform the function of existential verbs. These should not be addressed as copulas strictly speaking since they have a specific lexical function, especially if the locative and existential meaning converge into one lexeme. Locative/existential verbs, like any other verbs, attribute theta roles to their complements.

This said, phenomena of copula omission, contraction, deletion or absence can occur (and have been attested) at different languages or in different stages of language evolution, in all three domains. However, it is certainly not the same thing to omit a copula in the context of an attribution of a property, a locative proposition, or an identificational sentence. Yet, one finds in the literature much confusion on this.

To conclude, I found Panunzi's (2010) taxonomy for the variation of the verb *essere* in Italian, accurate and essential enough to parallel the kind of copular variation I observed in NigP. I adopted his semantic tripartition, but I

[60] This scale is not intended as having any typological correlates.

had to slightly adjust the terminology. In fact, I had to discuss together identificational, ascriptive and general categorisation sentences because, as I said, in NigP the choice of the copula is made principally on a syntactic base, and nominal complements always require the same copular type (*be*/*na*), whether they are determined or undetermined. Part of what would be semantically included in the attributive domain, then, is associated with the identificational/specificational domain. Also, I used the term "Attributive sentences" instead of "Copular sentences".

Consequently, I will examine the Identificational/Ascriptive copulas *be* and *na* in Chapter 4, the Locative/Existential and other predicative uses of the verb *de* in Chapter 5, and the Attributive (copular) sentences with *de* in Chapter 6. This approach yields the following schema for NigP:

IDENTIFICATION/ASCRIPTION	→	*be*, *na*
PREDICATIVE USES	→	*de*
ATTRIBUTION	→	Ø, *de*

This will be further explored in section 3.2.

3.1.3 Referentiality, topicality and subjecthood

I will now discuss how different languages relate topicality, referentiality and subjecthood. This is a fundamental issue, especially when one deals with copular sentences of the identificational, specificational and equative types (examples 4-7 in Table 13). In the taxonomy adopted here, I conflated the three copular types in the same group of identificational sentences, which are discussed in Chapter 4 (see in particular section 4.4).

Chini (2010) states that the topic is an anchor that ties the predication to some referents already established in discourse and this, according to the author, entails several consequences. From the syntactic point of view, topics are often fronted or left/right-dislocated. They are nominals, most of the times and, in many languages, they are coded as grammatical subjects of the sentence. Some languages also use grammaticalised morphology (particles or

affixes) to mark sentential topics. From the semantic point of view, Chini noted that many times the topic is identified with the psychological subject of the sentence; also, topics are usually referential and animate.

This last observation is specifically relevant to the analysis of identificational sentences. In *unmarked*[61] copular identificational clauses, the topic coincides with the most referential argument in the sentence. Thus, the subject coincides with the most referential constituent between the two and coincides with the topic in unmarked sentences. Especially when the two constituents are both nominals and both determined in the same way (for instance, no demonstratives appear in either constituent and there is a determined article in both), the identification of which one is used in a more abstract way is not obvious. In these cases, the identification of subject and predicate is based upon the identification of topic and focus. Let us consider 25 and 26:

25 Mary's father is my new neighbour.
PN GEN father COP POSS new neighbour

26 My new neighbour is Mary's father.
POSS new neighbour COP PN GEN father

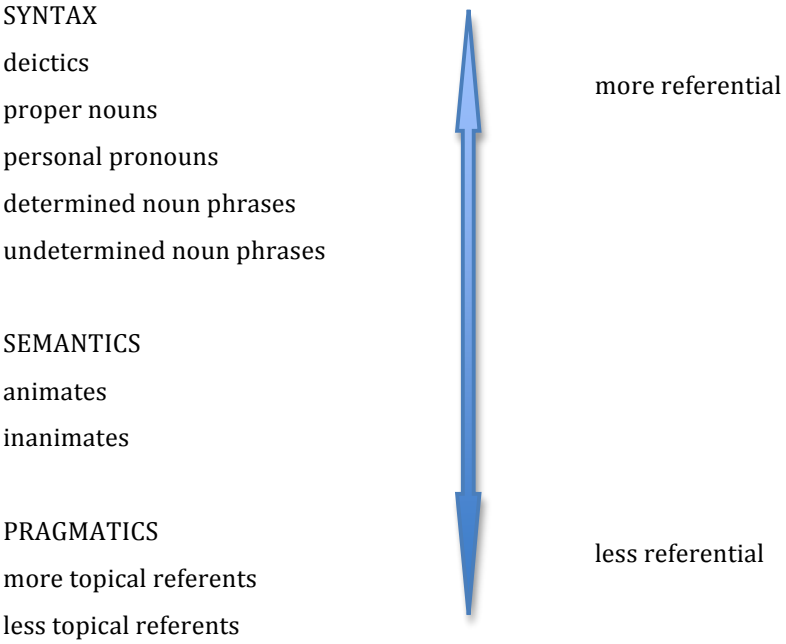
One difference between 25 and 26 is that in 25 "Mary's father" is the topic and thus it represents *that anchor that ties the predication to some referents already established in discourse*. The rest of the sentence provides new information to the listener. Even if the specific and determined nature of the predicate "my new neighbour" entails that this referent too was in some way previously established in discourse[62], it is the speaker's clear choice in 25 to use the constituent "Mary's father" as a discourse anchor, for some reason. More to the point, in the context of the copular predication in 25, even if there is no syntactic signal inherent to the constituents, if not their order (at

[61] See section 4.4 for a terminological clarification on what I intend as "focus", "pragmatically unmarked structure" and "pragmatically marked structure". I relied on Lambrecht (1994) for the definitions of these concepts.
[62] For example, the listener knew that the old neighbour has already moved.

least in English), they should be considered as having two sharply distinct syntactic roles and, concomitantly, bearing a (relative) difference in referential strength. The first is a concrete entity; the second is a predicate.
In 26, it is the reverse. "My new neighbour" is the topic, the most referential constituent and the clausal subject, whereas "Mary's father" is the focus, the least referential constituent and the predicate. The inversion in 25-26 gives me the occasion to note that the values assigned to the arguments in terms of referential weight are not inherent to them, but are established in discourse. In other words, these referential values are relative to each other.

The concept of subjecthood's connection with topicality and referentiality does not require making reference to any referentiality scale or hierarchy, intended as an absolute. The referential measurement is conceived as relative and is based on the mutual relationship between subject and predicate only. However, an indicative ranking as in Figure 19 can serve as a reference (Bickel: 2008)[63]:

Figure 19. Referential scales.



[63] Also, Higgins (1974: 204) points out: "The items that clearly can be used referentially are demonstrative phrases, personal pronouns, proper names and definite noun phrases."

As discussed previously, being the easiest recoverable object, the topic coincides with the most referential element in unmarked copular identificational clauses. On the other hand, the focus coincides with the less referential argument in unmarked copular identificational clauses and it represents the new, abstract, information about a known, concrete subject. This is the so-called unmarked case.

Specificational sentences (example 5 in Table 13) show a kind of reversed nature in this respect. In specificational sentences the topic - the known information - is represented by the *least* referential argument, and the focus - the new information - is represented by the *most* referential argument. This marked distribution of the arguments results in sentences like 27:

27 Mary's father is him/that one/John

In 27 the speakers were probably already talking about "Mary's father", or at least they were adequately familiar with Mary to process the character "Mary's father" as an easily recoverable entity in discourse. Let us suppose that "Mary's father" is recognised in the crowd. In this instance, the speaker can associate *that man*/*him* to the background entity known as "Mary's father". New information is added; the assertion is made.

Chapter 5 of Higgins' dissertation (1974, chapter five is devoted to the elaboration of a copular taxonomy), is concerned with the notion of referentiality. In particular, he repeatedly notes how speakers easily manipulate the referential weight of any linguistic expression to suit the discourse needs. To some extent, this happens irrespectively of syntactic coding. Higgins (1974: 196-198) has provided one of the first extensive descriptions of specificational sentences. As I indicated in section 3.1.1, I use the term "specificational" less restrictively than did Higgins. In his terms, a typical specificational sentences has a superscriptional non-referential subject as 28:

28 What I am pointing at is a cat.

[SUBJECT]	COP	[COMPLEMENT]
INT I be point.PROG PREP	COP	DET cat

According to Higgins, the sentence in 28 yields two possible interpretations. It could be interpreted in a non-marked way, in which case the speaker simply describes what he is doing: the complement is interpreted for pragmatic reasons as a non-referential predicate and the subject is interpreted as relatively more referential. However, in a marked context, one could interpret the complement as being more referential[64] (if, say, the speaker specifies that the thing being pointed at is not an elephant, but a cat!). In the former case we would have a predicational/attributive sentence, while in the latter we would have a specificational sentence. There are no syntactic clues that may help determine the right interpretation in discourse, but the mix of pragmatic and prosodic elements dictates the correct understanding.

3.2 Copulas in NigP

Recapitulating, we can say that copulas cover three main semantic domains: identification, existence/location and ascription/attribution. In NigP, however, the copula choice depends on the syntactic nature of the complement, as I will expand on later, and produces the mismatch I mentioned in section 3.1.2. While English, Italian and many other languages use one item for all the domains, other languages distinguish different copulas and they do so in different ways. NigP has a multi-copula system with three lexical items (*be*, *na* and *de*); also, in the domain of attribution more than half of the occurrences display no copula. This is illustrated in Table 15:

[64] "More referential" with respect to the way it has been interpreted in the former context. Higgins however specifies that, in his view, complements in specificational sentences are *never* to be considered referential. Higgins (1974: 203) further indicated that "[…] all noun phrases that can be Referential can also be used [as complements] Specificalionally […]."

Table 15. The taxonomy of copulas.

Type	**English / NigP examples**	**NigP copulas**
IDENTIFICATIONAL/ ASCRIPTIVE (Chapter 4)	My friend **is** the boy with the hat - Dat boy **na** my friend Im **be** my friend	*be*/*na*
PREDICATIVE (Chapter 5)	My friend **is** there - My friend **de** dere	*de*
ATTRIBUTIVE (Chapter 6)	My friend **is** cute - Dis girl fine o Di girl **de** fine	Ø/*de*

Faraclas (1996: 46) states: "In Nigerian Pidgin the semantic space normally covered by copulas is divided roughly into two parts, each of which is codified by one of two basic copular verbs: the copular identity verb *bì* and the copular location/existence verb *de*. The copular function is always overtly marked: there is no 'zero copula'. Copular verbs have all of the properties that characterize other verbs in the language and there is very little motivation for treating them as a special class. The focus introducer *na* also has some copular features […]". In the course of this dissertation we will see that, in the variety of NigP under examination here (see Chapter 2), the picture described by Faraclas is confirmed with the exception that *na* has a clearer copular (though not verbal) status and a greater distribution than Faraclas reports. This is probably due to diachronic or diatopic change. I will expand on this in my conclusions (Chapter 7). This system could not be intended as a simplification of the English copular system for the obvious reasons

that its results are more complicated and fine-grained[65]. I will briefly review the issue of "simplicity" in 3.4.1.

The semantic classification in Table 15 displays syntactically as follows in NigP:

1.	Identificational/ Ascriptive	NP + COP + NP (det.)	*be*/*na*
		NP + COP + NP (undet.)	
		NP + COP + CC	
2.	Predicative	NP + COP (+ LOC) (or extensions, NPs, PPs, and AdvPs)	*de*
3.	Attributive	NP (+ COP) + PI	Ø/*de*

In fact, the subdivision of the copular domain is quite straightforward when viewed from the syntactic side in NigP. *Be* and *na* require nominal, pronominal or clausal complements; predicative (non-strictly-copular) *de* may stand alone in existential contexts or collocate syntactically with any kind of complement; *de* in its attributive use requires a property item as a complement. Thus:

a) Under the label of "Identification/Ascription" I will consider a group of sentences that encompasses identification, specification, equation, ascription

[65] As many researchers point out, although copula absence is indeed a feature present in most creoles, even if with much diversification, it is ultimately wrong to take this argument as a sign of simplification. Thus, for most creoles it would be wrong to talk about "deletion" as an effect of imperfect language learning (see section 3.3). Arends (1989: 103) states: "Sranan, like all other Afro-American creoles is not at all prone to copula deletion but on the contrary is rather fine-grained in this respect."

and general categorisation, (examples 2 to 7, Table 13). Identificational/ascriptive sentences in NigP are formed using the copula *be* or the focus introducer *na* in its copular function. Both lexical items will be addressed as equative copulas and will be glossed as COP (except *na* in Chapter 4 since its copular status has not been taken for granted). Chapter 4 describes this domain and the kind of variation I show in 29 and 30:

29 Dem **be** oyinbo.
they COP white.people
'They are white people.'

30 Oyinbo ***na*** thief.
white.people COP thief.PL
'White people are thieves.'

b) Predicative uses of *de* comprise the expression of existence, location and other verbal uses (31-34). They will be treated in Chapter 5. I gloss *de* as EX.LOC (also in its attributive copular function, since I consider it to be the same lexical entry). The locative-existential copula is followed by AdvPs, PPs, NPs or may stand alone:

31 Ideas **de**.
ideas EX.LOC
'There are ideas.'

32 Im **de** school.
he EX.LOC school
'He is at school.'

33 Im **de** for Lagos.
he EX.LOC for Lagos
'He is in Lagos.'

34 I **de** in charge of di office.
I EX.LOC PREP charge PREP DET office
'He is in charge of the office.'

c) Attributive sentences are formed without the use of the copula because most PIs behave verbally in NigP (15):

35 My teacher **funny**.
POSS teacher be.funny
'My teacher is funny.' (inherent predication)

Sentence 36, where the locative/existential verb *de* performs as attributive copula, is also possible in NigP:

36 My teacher **de** funny.
POSS teacher EX.LOC be.funny
'My teacher is funny.' (accidental predication)

Chapter 6 will examine this kind of variation in NigP.

Thus, the subdivision of the copular domain one finds in NigP is based on purely syntactic grounds. Nominal, pronominal and clausal complements take the copulas *be* or *na*. Adjectival complements (or property items in the complement slot) take the copula *de*, and all other predicative uses (locative and existential among others) require the copula *de*. However, several considerations are to be made.

The main mismatch between the semantic and syntactic classification in the use of copulas in NigP concerns indefinite nominal predicates. Indefinite nominals would be undoubtedly best analysed as attributive/predicational, but in NigP they require, on syntactic bases, the equative copulas *be* or *na*. Thus, they are treated in this work under identification/ascription (Chapter 4):

37 She **be** doctor

she COP doctor

'She is a doctor.'

38 Bill **na** beta student

PN COP good student

'Bill is a good student.'

There are also other relevant considerations in the opposite sense. Even if syntax is the main criterion that accounts for copula diversification in NigP, I found some occurrences that escape the syntactic grid outlined above. Due to the limited and sparse number of these occurrences, I decided to keep the syntactic classification and to mention these examples here as exceptions. The copula *na*, for instance, is compatible with the general preposition *for* and appears in the corpus in the collocations (*na for sure*, *na for free* and *na for me*). Since the following occurrences (39-44) are not identificational, but correspond to an attributive or predicative use of the copular item *na*, one would, in principle, expect the copula *de* to appear in those contexts:

39 But di light and heat from sun **na for** free.

but DET light CNJ heat PREP sun COP PREP free

'But the light and the heat from the sun are free.'

A Google search gave 1.890 results for the construction *na for free* and 27 results for *dey for free*[66] (*de for free* is not attested in the corpus). Thus, both constructions are possible in principle, but the one with *na* is definitely most attested. The same can be said for *na for sure*:

40 Dat **na for** sure now.

that COP PREP sure INT

'That's sure!'

[66] Search performed on the 8th December 2012. The string searched was: "dey/na for free" + Nigeria.

A Google search gave 5.680 results for *na for sure* and 35 results *dey for sure*[67]. In this case, also, the deictic subject *dat* calls for the equative copula *na*, since deictic pronouns are ungrammatical before the copula *de* in all cases:

41 * Dat de red.
that COP be.red

In sentence 42 too, *na for* could be substituted by *de for* but the meaning would sensibly change:

42 Anonymous voters **na for** people wey get problem.
anonymous voter.PL COP PREP people REL have problem
'Anonymous voters are for people who have problems.'

In many cases, however, the construction *na for* cannot be substituted by the germane *de for*, both because the latter has a fixed meaning (section 5.2) that is not compatible with the meaning assumed by *na for* and because the syntactic context in which *na for* is collocated (clause-initial) is not suitable for *de for* (which requires an expressed subject). Actually, *na for* seems to be a frequent collocation in NigP, and it appears as a sentence introducer or in the predicate slot meaning something like "it is up to" or "it is for the benefit of". I described a further extension in the use of *na* (*na to*) in section 4.3 (in that case there is a clausal copular complement, and this falls into the syntactic classification above).

43 You ready go see di guy? Na **for me** to contact am now.
you get.ready.PST go see DET guy COP PREP me PREP contact him INT
'Did you prepare to go and see the guy? It's up to me to contact him then.'

[67] Search performed on the 8th December 2012. The string searched was: "dey/na for sure" + Nigeria.

44 Na me invite the person come and I believe say **na for** our progress.
FOC me invite DET person SV CNJ I believe COM COP PREP POSS progress
'It's me who invited this person here and I believe that it is for our progress.'

In the corpus, there are also some borderline constructions involving the item *de*:

45 If your lyrics tight as Baba don talk am, if your lyrics **de** wetin dem fit
if POSS lyric.PL be.tight CNJ PN CPL talk it if POSS lyric.PL EX.LOC what they MOD
play, dem gò play am.
play they IRR play them
'If your lyrics are good as Baba has said, if your lyrics are what they can play, they will play your songs.'

In 45 the copular complement is a sentence with a Wh pronominal subject, and the expected copula is certainly *na*. However, given that the overall reading of the complement constituent entails an attributive interpretation, one could only guess that, in this case, *de* has extended its role as an attributive copula beyond adjectives/PIs. An informant has identified 45 as 'Yoruba talk', but I was not able to check this kind of attitudes and, moreover, I recorded this statement in Ajegunle, where the Yorubas are a small minority (see section 2.1).

To conclude, in 46 we find a typical NigP exclamation:

46 **Na** true o!
FOC truth INT
'It's true!'

While I was initially misled by these kinds of occurrences (taking *true* as a property item), I soon realised that *true* is used as a nominal in 46, even if it could perform in NigP also as a qualifying adjective or stative verb. This is an example of the great syntactic multifunctionality of NigP lexical entries (see

section 6.6).

3.3 Copula variability in sociolinguistics and in creoles

In this section I will outline the huge domain of research on copula variability in creoles, beginning in the 60s with Labov's works (1969 and 1972a) on copula variability in BEV and SE (Black English Vernacular and Standard English).

BEV is a relatively uniform linguistic variety spoken by most black Americans throughout the US, in rural areas but especially in the big cities of New York, Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, etc. In 1965 the New York Department of Education commissioned Labov and three other analysts[68] to assess the cause of the learning problems observed in black children and adolescents. Supposedly, reading/writing problems were caused by a deficient linguistic proficiency in Standard English[69]. This study proved extremely important for the history of linguistics because the description of the BEV linguistic system triggered the elaboration of the concept of variable rule, thus forming the foundation of quantitative (socio-)linguistics. One of the first variable rules was the rule of copula deletion in BEV. Data were obtained through the recording of individual and group interviews of (pre)-adolescents in South-Central Harlem. The following chart lists the syntactic structures involving copula deletions. As is clear from 1-5, Labov labelled 'copula' all uses of *be* in BEV, even in those case (like 4-5) where *be* functions as an auxiliary verb.

1	He my friend	NP (COP) NP	IDENTIFICATION
	he [Ø] POSS friend		

[68] The research team was composed by two linguists (Labov and Cohen) and two African-American assistants (Robins and Lewis) who were there to help the researchers get as close as possible to the black communities in Harlem.

[69] In an overtly polemic vein, Labov (1972a: xiv) addressed this matter in his concluding report by saying: "One major conclusion of our work as it emerges in this volume is that the major causes of reading failure are political and cultural conflicts in the classroom, and dialect differences are important because they are symbols of this conflict."

2.	He wild he [Ø] wild	NP (COP) ADJ	ATTRIBUTION
3.	She out the game she [Ø] PREP DET game	NP (COP) LOC	PREDICATIVE
4.	He tryin' some new game he [Ø] try.PROG DET new game	NP (COP) V-ing	AUXILIARY
5.	He gon' try to get up he [Ø] FUT try to get up	NP (COP) FUT V	AUXILIARY

Labov elaborated the concept of copula as sociolinguistic variable in BEV according to the following criteria (a-d), which led him to formulate the rule in Figure 20.

a. There are no BEV speakers that *always* realise the copula and yet there are no speakers who *always* delete it. This is the first impression that attracts the analyst according to Labov. We are not dealing with a variable that different speakers realise in distinct ways; we are dealing with a rule that all the speakers apply but with varying frequencies in different contexts.

b. There are some syntactic positions where deletion is interdicted, for example elliptic forms (*he is too*), after a Wh pronoun (*that's what he is*), sentence-finally or after a modal (*she will be an actress*).

c. In general, one can say that where Standard English (SE) can contract, BEV can delete. The process of deletion in BEV shows phonological constraints, as well as SE. For example, deletion in BEV is interdicted if the copula has the form of a stressed vowel (*be*, *ain't*). Also, the phonological contexts preceding the copula are important in both BEV and SE but they produce opposite effects: contraction in SE is favoured if the preceding element ends in a vowel, while deletion in BEV is favoured if the preceding element ends in a

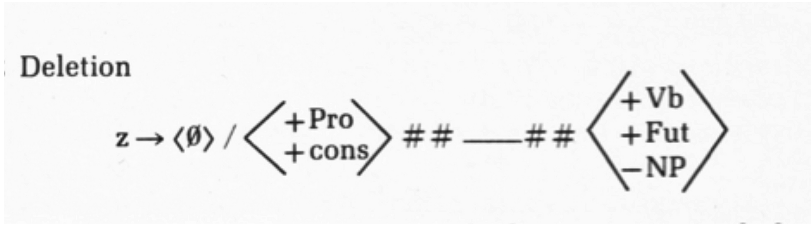
consonant. In both cases then, the application of the contraction/deletion rule tends to re-establish the preferred syllabic structure, namely CVC.

d. The variable rule that describes the phenomenon of contraction and deletion of copula in BEV shows a series of constraints based on the grammatical context. The rule is favoured if the subject is a pronoun and disfavoured if it is a NP. Also, the nature of the copular complement is extremely relevant: Labov was the first to note that the presence of verbs in *-ing* or the modal auxiliary *gonna* sharply entails deletion for most speakers (4-5)[70], while nominal phrases disfavour the deletion rule (1). In the midst one finds adjectives and locatives (2-3) that do not clearly favour nor disfavour (many studies have focused on this controversial point of the relative ranking of adjectives and locatives: for a summary see Walker, 2000[71]). The general pattern for BEV copula deletion, with predicate types listed according to increasing rates of copula dropping is the following:

NP < Loc < Adj < V-ing < gonna

The full variable rule is given in Figure 20:

Figure 20. Variable rule of copula deletion in BEV, Labov (1972a).



So, according to Labov, some phonological and grammatical factors co-occur in determining the probabilities for copula deletion in BEV, and social factors

[70] But these, as some authors have observed (Winford 1990: 230) and I restated above, should have been considered as auxiliary and not a copular functions of *be*.
[71] Supporters of a creole origin of BEV would be willing to find a strong factor weight on deletion associated with adjectival complement since this is the grammatical environment where most creoles show copula absence due to the verbal status of most PIs; however, this strong factor weight on adjectival complement has never been observed consistently.

intervene to strengthen or weaken each factor's weight.

The copula in BEV is a sociolinguistic variable not only because patterns of variation (higher vs. lower percentages of deletion) correlate in a direct way with extra-linguistic factors such as age, geographical provenience (in the case of the pre-adolescents of Harlem, 'affiliation to a certain gang', sex, level of education etc.), but also because various grammatical and phonological factors influence the application of the rule to different degrees. For example, say, one group always deletes copulas preceding adjectives but does not consistently delete them following subject pronouns; another group deletes much more often than the others if there is a preceding consonant but then allows copulas to appear in half of the attributive contexts; a third group consistently deletes copulas after personal pronouns and also deletes them more often than others before nominals[72]). While the general constraints are common to the whole community, each subgroup in a multi-dimensional sense tends to converge in some way, giving similar weight to the same factors. These differences in the weight of factors from all domains of language converge in individual, idiosyncratic speech in a sort of unique way. This linguistic identity is not always perceived as such, but the patterns are so strongly correlated to social meaning[73] that they become relevant to the affirmation of self or group identities or to the recognition of 'friends' and 'enemies' between or within the communities. Speakers can manipulate these factors to some limited extent; however, what makes the rule powerful is the recognition of the existence of the *same* group of factors having the *same* nature of effect throughout the community, albeit not with the *same* strength. This results in individually different rates and frequencies of copula

[72] These examples are imaginary. For the real patterns observed among the young population of Harlem, see Labov (1972a: 103).

[73] In the so-called "Third wave" of variation studies, linguistic variables are considered indexical signs of potentially any kind of extra-linguistic meaning. According to Eckert (2012): "[t]he third wave, the focus of this paper, is still in an early stage. While the first two waves related the meaning of variables quite directly to the social categories with which they correlate, this wave of studies sees variables as having more basic meanings that combine stylistically to construct the kinds of personae that populate social categories. This does not retreat from the examination of the relation between variation and social structure, but follows the power relations that constitute the political economy down to their realizations in everyday local dynamics of meaning-making. This approach reverses the perspective from variation as a reflection of social place, to variation as a resource for the construction of social meaning."

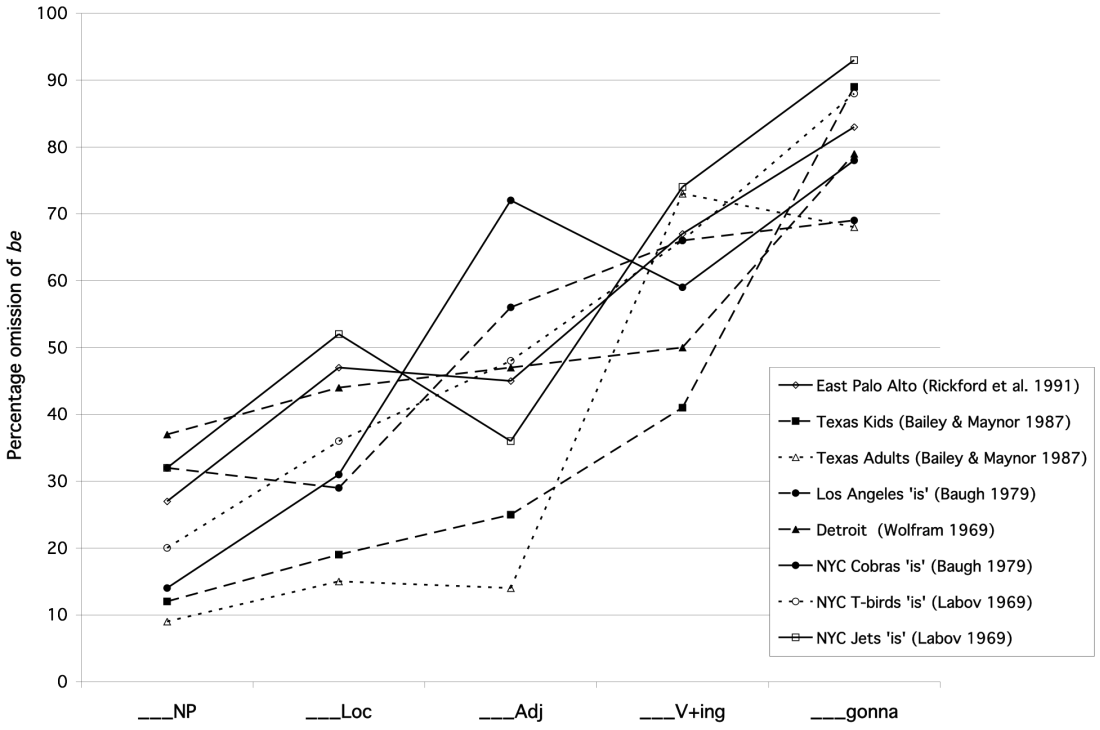
deletion in different phonological/grammatical/social environments.

To conclude, one of Labov's main findings is that the general rule of copula deletion in BEV is uniform with the general rule of copula contraction in SE. In BEV the copula would always be present in the deeper structure, but would not always appear in the superficial one. As a result of his research, Labov supports a non-creole origin of BEV, since the creole origin of BEV would entail that the copula does not surface because it is simply absent, as it is in many creoles (especially in attributive contexts, since PIs behave verbally in many creoles). In a creole-origin hypothesis, then, copula *insertion* would be an effect of decreolisation due to contact with SE (which is more or less what I silently postulate for NigP here).

AMany studies have since followed, including much work on copula variability in various creoles, in BEV and other African-American diaspora varieties[74], in order to prove or disprove the creole origin of BEV. Most authors have abandoned the acronym BEV and adopted AAVE (African American vernacular English), which I adopt henceforth. Most of the works have substantially validated Labov's first findings in the sense that they have consistently reaffirmed his general ranking. Figure 21 shows copula absence by following grammatical environment in eight groups of AAVE speakers, in five geographical sets: East Palo Alto (California), Texas, Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York City. In this stream of research the main controversial point has been the relative ranking of locatives and adjectives with respect to copula deletion. With the overall pattern remaining unchanged, in some studies adjectival complements allowed copula deletion more often than locatives, while in others it was the other way round.

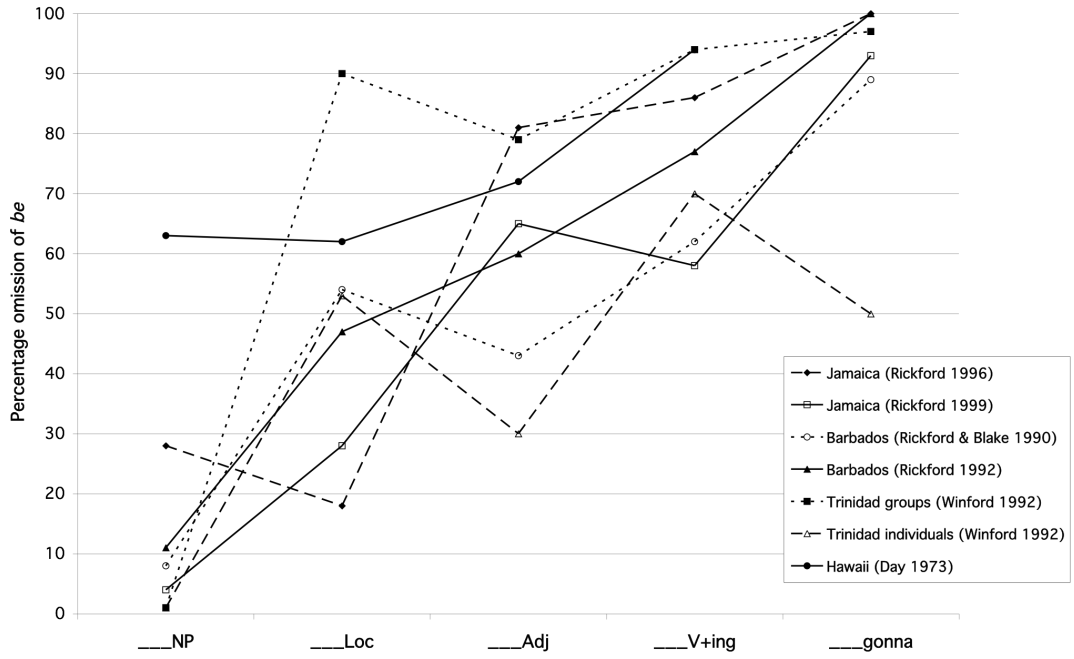
[74] African-American diaspora communities were formed by slaves or former slaves "[who] left the United States during the era of slavery and did not remain in contact with the mainstream African-American community. Such communities can be found in Samaná in the Dominican Republic, in Liberia and in Nova Scotia. […] In all diaspora varieties, locatives favour zero *more* than adjectives. If we assume that these varieties represent a more creole-like stage of AAVE [African American Vernacular English], these findings pose a serious challenge to the creole-origins position." (Walker 2000: 87).

Figure 21. Copula Absence in Contemporary AAVE, based on Table 6.16 in Rickford (1998: 190). Figure taken from Sharma & Rickford (2009: 63).



In Figure 22 a chart summarises the findings on copula variability in Caribbean English-based creoles. The overall pattern is extremely similar to the one given attested for AAVE, as in Figure 21, also in the same unstable and unpredictable behaviour of adjectival and locative complements in the different varieties.

Figure 22. Copula Absence in creoles, based on Table 6.16 in Rickford (1998: 190). Figure taken from Sharma & Rickford (2009: 63).



The debate on the reasons for copula deletion in AAVE and in creoles has been lively and long-standing, yet inconclusive. Many hypothesis have been put forward and I briefly review them here:

1) Copula dropping in AAVE and creoles reflect similar patterns because AAVE is a decreolised language (creole-origin of AAVE). For references, see among others Baugh (1980, 1983), Holm (1976, 1984) and Rickford (1997, 1998).

2) Another hypothesis is that copula dropping in AAVE and in creoles may be due to similar but independent processes of imperfect learning (imperfect SLA hypothesis).

3) A third hypothesis is that copula dropping in AAVE and in creoles shows similar patterns due to common or independent substrate influence of West African languages (substrate hypothesis).

4) Finally, it has been suggested that copula dropping in AAVE and in creoles shows similar patterns due to typologically universal tendencies (universal hypothesis).

Different authors have assumed the relevance of some factors in spite of others, but still a quite general assumption is that more factors have played together, and thus converged, in determining copula absence in AAVE and in creoles.

I am now going to expand on the last three issues, leaving aside the issue of the genetic tie between AAVE and creoles. Thus, in section 3.4 I will review the subject of copula variability in first and second language acquisition; in section 3.5 I will summarise how copulas have been described in West African languages; and in section 3.6 I will discuss copulas in typological research.

3.4 Copula variability in first and second language acquisition

In this section I will first discuss copula variability in second language acquisition (SLA) and then copula variability in first language acquisition (FLA).

3.4.1 Copula and SLA

When studying SLA, it is vital to distinguish three types of effects:

(1) Effects of simplification/restructuring due to first language(s) influence. For example, if a category is not present in the first language(s) of the learner, he/she will make efforts to learn it anew during the learning process, and these efforts may fail partially or totally;

(2) Effects of simplification/restructuring due to the particular structure of the language being acquired. For example, if the target language does not mark gender in a salient manner, it is most likely that gender distinctions would fade out in the learners' variety; however, if the target language does mark gender consistently, the category has more probability to be maintained;

(3) Effects due to universal processes of language learning, language simplification or restructuring. There are some intriguing similarities in the way adults acquired languages. Many studies have noted that implicational

scales can be abstracted from individual learning paths, to define universal steps of SLA.

Based on all relevant factors, the notion of simplification is pertinent to SLA, even if creative phenomena of restructuring, which add complexity rather than reduce it, are not to be ruled out *a priori*. According to Sharma & Rickford (2009: 55): "[c]ertain tendencies are universally characteristic of second language learning, such that all adults learners of English will follow a shared learning trajectory, regardless of their first language. Such trajectory may arise either from relationships among structures in the particular language being acquired (e.g. English) or from universal markedness or simplification tendencies." According to them, the simplification view encompasses:

- regularization of irregularities;
- loss of redundancy (such as grammatical gender);
- increase in transparency;
- phonetic erosion;
- use of less marked forms;
- fewer rules;
- fewer semantic distinctions;
- less inflectional morphology;
- smaller lexicon;
- reduced phonemic inventory;
- fewer grammatical categories;
- fewer bound morphemes;
- fewer exceptions to rules.

Since the seminal work of Ferguson (1968), the absence of copula has been associated with the notion of simplicity in several varieties of imperfect or incomplete language learning (babies' or foreigners' speech, pidgins and creoles). Even if the association between simplification and SLA/creolisation has been the source of harsh controversies (cfr. the issue of simplicity in creoles, McWhorter 2001), one key point concerning copulas appears to be

established. Copula 'dropping' is, impressionistically, a very salient feature in the processes of language learning. In both first and second language acquisition babies and foreign speakers tend to focus on content-full, semantically loaded words, and since the copula its essential form free from semantic charge, it can easily get dropped. This point may seem to get lost among the confusing data sets from diverse L1/L2 learning situations, but I will take up this point again in the conclusions of section 3.4.2. Ferguson's intuition on copula instability in learning situations has inspired many researchers and yet we find in Ferguson's seminal article much confusion among copular types (which I referred to above in section 3.1) since he treats attributive, identificational and locative copular structures together under the label "equative"[75]. Ferguson (1971: 145) also argued for a universal/typological explanation of copula absence, suggesting that it represents the unmarked variant of the copula and that "the simpler of two comparable features is likely to be the more widespread among languages of the world […] [and would also tend] to be used for both [variants] in simpler speech". We will see in section 3.6 to what extent Ferguson's typological speculation is attested. Thus, even if the general association between imperfect SLA, simplicity and absence of copula due to low semantic saliency seems to be a safe one, there is "no specific proposal that a universal SLA order of acquisition exists across all copular and auxiliary uses of *be*", as Sharma & Rickford suggest (2009: 58). The two authors mention some research on L2 learners of German, which shows that the copula is normally acquired later than other lexical verbs (Dittmar 1980 and Pienemann 1981), but in these studies make no reference to order of acquisition according to grammatical types of copular predicates. Sharma & Rickford (2009), then, try to mend this gap in the available data by analysing patterns of copula omission in four L2 varieties, namely Indian English, South African Indian English, Singaporean English and Spanish English. Their data are personal or taken from previous studies, and the authors apply a quantitative

[75] Ferguson distinguishes them in the first footnote but then admittedly disregards the subdivision.

methodology[76] in order to be able to abstract an implicational learning scale for the sake of comparison between L2 varieties and AAVE (their data on AAVE are given here in section 3.3). I will shortly discuss their L2 data on Indian English and Singaporean English.

Sharma & Rickford's (2009) analysis of Indian English is based on eight sociolinguistic interviews with speakers who have bilingual competence in English and Indo-Aryan languages. Their English proficiency is classified as "low" even if all speakers had some English-medium education[77]. The first languages of the eight L2 English speakers require an overt copula in all predicate contexts. Sharma & Rickford's findings show that it is difficult to identify a generalised pattern for these Indian English speakers but, whatever it may be, it does not correspond to the AAVE pattern (section 3.3).

Indo-Aryan speakers.

___ Adj	<	___ NP	<	___ Loc[78]
11.6% (276)		16.5% (164)		26.4% (87)

If one compares this finding with data on AAVE, one should note that the lack of copula absence in the Indo-Aryan L1 may cause "more individual variation in the order of learning English copula, as compared to a language that provides a template for contextually sensitive copula omission"[79] (such as West African substrates for Atlantic creole speakers). Secondly, locative predicates are the highest or second highest context for copula omission for seven of the eight speakers (also very unlike the low rates of omission in

[76] Sharma & Rickford 2009: 59-62.
[77] Copula omission seems not to be a robust feature among more proficient speakers of Indian English.
[78] The scale reported here is adapted from Sharma & Rickford (2009: 67). For the sake of simplicity, I excluded here and in the following examples those contexts in which *be* performs as an auxiliary. However, auxiliary *be* (_ V-ing, _ going to V) has higher rates of omission than copular uses, as an overall pattern. The scale provides the average ordering across the group of eight Indo-Aryan speakers. Percentage and absolute number of copula omissions are also provided.
[79] Sharma & Rickford, 2009: 67.

locative contexts in AAVE). Thirdly, in AAVE (section 3.3) adjectival predicates provide a rather variable context for copula dropping, but still a remarkably consistent pattern shows that they always favour copula dropping more than following nouns. In the Indian English data one finds that the rate of copula omission with an NP predicate is higher than that of adjectival predicates. Adjectival predicates, in fact, show consistently low copula absence in L2 Indian English.

Sharma & Rickford discuss Singaporean L2 English using data from Platt (1979), which is a study on copula use among 59 Singaporeans. Platt divided his speakers into seven groups according to first language and educational background. For the sake of space, I am going to present his results for three groups only:

(a) Malay as first language and Malay-medium education;

(b) Cantonese/Mandarin as first language and Chinese-medium education;

(c) English-medium education with either Cantonese/Mandarin or Malay as first languages.

In a-c below I provide the acquisition implicational scales for each group according to predicate types, together with their percentages and absolute numbers of copula dropping (Sharma & Rickford 2009: 71ff)[80]. In the table's rows I provide a rough representation of copula use in the first languages of the learners (adapted from Sharma & Rickford, 2009: 73):

(a) Malay-medium education: ___ Nom < ___ Adj < ___ Loc

52.9% (17) 65.2% (46) 100% (5)

Malay	-	-	-

(b) Chinese-medium education: ___ Nom ≈ ___ Loc < ___ Adj

16.1% (161) 17.4% (46) 27.7% (224)

[80] As above, I adapted the implication scale by disregarding contexts in which *be* performs as an auxiliary.

Cantonese/Mandarin	+	+	-

(c) English-medium education: ___ Loc ≈ ___ Nom < ___ Adj
9.8% (164) 9.8% (612) 22.5% (835)

The patterns show that Malay speakers omit copulas extensively in each environment clearly due to transfer from their first language, which has zero copulas in each environment. Cantonese/Mandarin speakers do indeed lower the rates of omission and still omit more often in the context where their first language is akin to omit. Those who received an English-medium education omit copulas less frequently than the others. In the three scales we observe that the average maximum rate of omission is associated with adjectival predicates, followed by locative predicates and then nominals. This is actually opposit to the scale observed by Sharma & Rickford for Indian English, given above in this section, suggesting that the patterns of copula omission in L2 varieties may be best explained as a transfer phenomenon from the speakers' first language(s).

3.4.2 Copula and FLA

Copulas are absent in child language too. Moscati (2007)[81] provides some examples from Italian learners:

47 Quetto Giovanni (Martina 2;7.15)
this PN

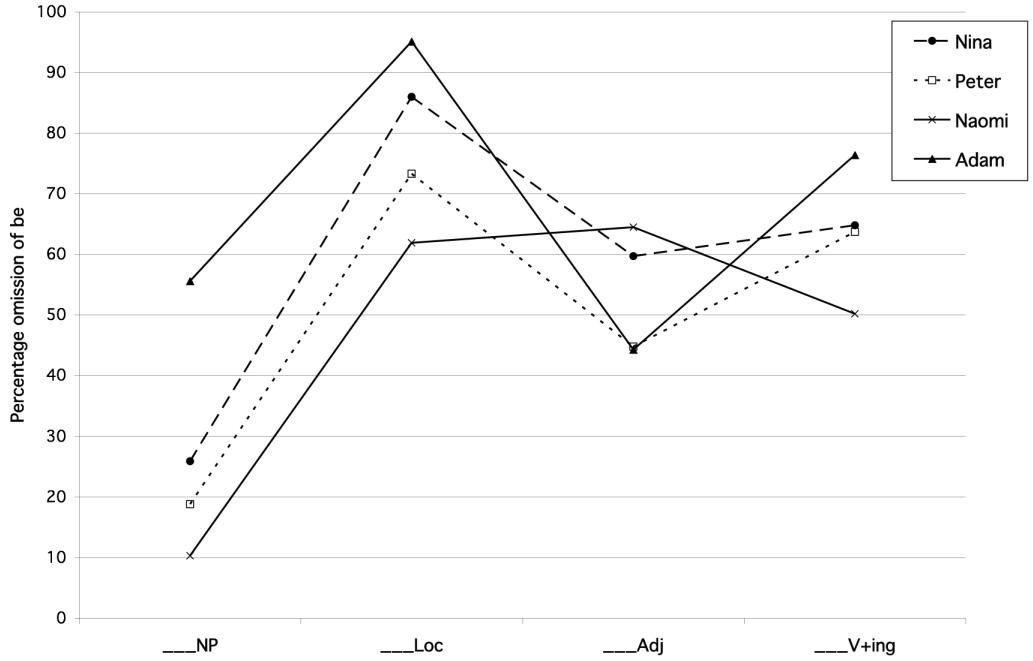
48 Questo bianco (Raffaello 2;04.29)
this white

This pattern is common in L1 learners of English too, as Becker (2000, 2004) points out. She provides data from four children (in the age range of 2;0 - 3;4)

[81] Moscati provides data of copula omission from child speech in different languages. His data show that, despite the fact that in affirmative contexts the rate of omissions is quite similar for different L1s, in negative contexts different L1 learners demonstrate very different patterns.

from all grammatical contexts as illustrated in Figure 23:

Figure 23: Copula Absence in Child English (data from Becker 2000). Taken from Sharma & Rickford (2009: 79).



In her work Becker suggested that the semantic properties of predicates and the incremental development of children's functional projections can explain higher rates of omission of *be* with verbal predicates (*-ing*), locative predicates and certain types of adjectival predicates. In order to reach this conclusion, Becker divides predicates into two categories: individual level predicates which denote permanent or inherent characteristics of the subjects (*Mary is tall*; *Mary is a student*, *Mary is my neighbour*) and stage-level predicates which denote temporary or accidental properties of the subjects (*Mary is tired*, *Mary is happy today*, *Mary is in the kitchen*, *Mary is sleeping*). As may be clear from the examples, adjectival predicates get split between the two categories, nominal predicates fall into the class of individual-level predicates while locatives and verbal predicate (*-ing*) are coded as stage-level predicates. Focusing on adjectival predicates, Becker discovered that this research-key is fruitful. On one hand, individual-level adjectival predicates have a lower rate of copula omission (31.7%) in the speech of the

four English L1 children, and thus they pattern with nominal predicates that are coded as individual-level as well. On the other hand, stage-level adjectival predicates have a higher rate of zero copula (53.8%), patterning slightly more like locative and verbal (-*ing*) predicates. In the words of Sharma and Rickford (2009: 80) "Becker argues for an analysis in which stage-level predicates may occur in non-finite clauses (permitted in child English), with temporal anchoring taking place with the head of an Aspect Phrase rather than Tense, whereas individual-level predicates are non-aspectual and restricted to finite clauses, requiring the functional projection Infl and thus generally corresponding to overt copula use."

It is noteworthy that this finding, though consistent with Becker's data, is in sharp contradiction with its typological correlate, which has been repeatedly re-affirmed since Stassen's (1994) first formulation: the "permanency parameter" associates zero copula with "permanent", "essential" or "inherent" predicates and overt copula with "accidental", "temporary" or "unstable" predicates. The NigP data provided in Chapter 6, also, align to Stassen's typological generalisation. I will expand on this in section 3.6.

Even if patterns of copula omission in SLA and FLA appear inconsistent in each case study, the "scale of copularity" provided here in 3.1.2, and ultimately based on the semantic weight of the copula, may constitute a valuable point to which hang on. Semantically speaking the copula has often been considered an empty dummy verb, an almost transparent connector devoid of independent lexical meaning, which carries grammatical information that cannot be marked on the predicate. The view that "a copula does not add any semantic content to the predicate phrase it is contained in" (Pustet 2003: 5) is, in fact, extremely common. Upon closer examination, there is a lively ongoing debate about what kind of semantic content a copula adds to the sentence it is attached to (Rothstein 1999 and Maienborn 2007) and the so-called Dummy Hypothesis may account for the difference in the rate of omissions in the copular *versus* the auxiliary uses of the verb "to be" in English, as well in AAVE. In fact, the more the element is

grammaticalised, the more devoid it is of meaning, the easier it is to omit. For this reason, the auxiliary *be* drops more often than the copular *be* in both AAVE and L2 English varieties (see Figures 21 and 22 in section 3.3). If one extends the Dummy Hypothesis to distinct copular uses according to predicate types or semantic categorisation, one may consider it a universal clue to start accounting for copula dropping in SLA and FLA. Of course, the semantic "scale of copularity" will not appear as a scalar implication readily available in the data because, as I have shown in section 3.4.1, many factors converge in determining the restructuring of an L2 or the emergence of an L1.

3.5 Copulas in West African languages

Sharma & Rickford (2009) compared patterns of copula dropping in AAVE with patterns of copula omission in L2 English varieties and L1 English learners' varieties, concluding are as follows (ibid: 82): "Although specific L1 influence does not completely determine copula use by predicate type among the L2 speakers in the present paper, there is much clearer evidence of this factor than of a single shared system emerging in all situations. We provisionally suggest that specific L1 influence from shared West African origins remains one of the strongest available explanations for the shared AAVE and creole pattern, with the possible influence of a cross-linguistic 'perceived redundancy avoidance' tendency with verbal predicates.[82]"

Migge (1998) put forward a transfer account of the copula system in Surinamese creoles in her description of Ndyuka and Gbe (a cluster of about twenty related languages stretching across the area between eastern Ghana and western Nigeria) which appears to be Surinamese creoles' most important substrate language(s). However, McWhorther (2005: 167-181), who accounts for an independent development of copulas in Surinamese creoles, rules out the same transfer explanation. The presence of verbal

[82] In section 3.4 I mentioned the Dummy Hypothesis as a possible explanation for the higher rate of copula dropping in auxiliary position with respect to proper copular sentences. This observation, however, does not apply to NigP, where we do not find *be* (nor any other copular item) as an auxiliary.

adjectives or verbal property items in most creoles has been a controversial issue in creole studies. However, nowadays, one can safely claim that Atlantic creoles (from virtually all lexifiers) use verbally at least a sub-class of property items, and that this corresponds to a substrate feature. This verbal encoding of PIs emerged in creoles, if not for the influence of one single African language, because of the areal diffusion of verbal property items in the Kwa and Benue-Congo languages of West Africa. Welmers (1969: 97), for example, states:

> "It is very probable that Urhobo[83] - like many related languages - has no word class or 'part of speech' which may appropriately be labelled 'adjective'. There are, to be sure, attributive forms which translate English adjectives such as 'big', 'new' and 'rotten' but these appear either to be derived from verbs (like 'be-big', 'become-hot', 'rot'), or to be nouns ('oldness' or 'an old one')."

In this respect, he gives examples such as 49:

49 àmè nà dyìrórì.
water DET be.cold[84]
'The water is cold.'

Moreover, non-verbal predication is not confined to attributive contexts in West African languages. Welmers (1969: 98) continues stating that: "[a] number of Urhobo sentences do not contain a verb. These are expressions of identification, description, and location." In general, nominal complements do not take a copula in Urhobo. In fact, the words for "here" and "there" are nouns, so that locative predicates are non-verbal as well. Also, locative expressions translated as "the inside of the house" are nouns, used in associative constructions. Welmers provides the Urhobo examples given here in 50-53[85]:

[83] Urhobo is one of the Edoid languages and is spoken by the Urhobo people of southern Nigeria.
[84] Glosses in examples from Welmers are mine.
[85] I thank Prof. Alberto Mioni for providing assistance in the writing of this paragraph.

50 ònànà úkó.
this cup
'This is a cup.'

51 ọ̀róbóì ì úryé.
that tree
'That yonder is a tree.'

52 àè ótáfè.
they outside
'They are outside.'

53 ọ́ óbúkò rúryé.
he behind tree
'He's behind the tree.'

Igbo (Welmers 1973: 259) has a highly restricted and symmetrical class of eight "proper" adjectives. Semantically, they are four pairs of antonyms (e.g. *úkwú* "large" and *ńtà* "small"). For four of the eight adjectives, there are related nouns and related verbs:

Verb	Noun	Adjective	
imá[86]	ḿmá	ómà	'good'

Attributive predication is expressed either by the verb or by a construction made with the verb /ịdị́/ and the adjective. The two options entail different shades of meaning. The same verb /ịdị́/ (Welmers 1973: 311) is also used "to express location, but only for inanimate nouns, or optionally (with dialect or personal variations) for nouns indicating reptiles, insects, only small animals, or all non-human inanimates. For other animates, including humans in all cases, the verb /ịnọ̀/ is used; in some contexts, this may have the specific meaning 'sit'." Identification and ascription are expressed in Igbo by the verb

[86] The prefix /ị-/ corresponds to the infinitive marker for verbs. The root follows.

/ịbṵ́/. Thus, Igbo appears to make the difference among three copulas used in three different semantic contexts and also has stative property verbs able to be used as attributive predicates without copula. It is interesting to note that, according to Welmers (ibid: 312), the verb /ịbṵ́/ "figures heavily in the grammar of topicalization". The subject of a sentence may be topicalized (emphasized, contrasted) simply by introducing it with /ọ́bṵ́/ 'it is'." The similarities between Igbo and NigP in this domain are evident, since NigP uses the identificational/ascriptive copula *na* as a focus marker in the same way Igbo uses /-bṵ́/; also, NigP makes use of PIs in the same way as Igbo does since they can appear as verbs in the predicate slot or be preceded by the locative copula *de* in NigP and *ịdị́* in Igbo.

The same is true for Yoruba. Yoruba uses the same morpheme *ni* (and the two allomorphs *n'* and *l'*) for identification and ascription. The same morpheme *ni* is used as an introducer for the topicalisation of subjects or full sentences. Attribution is expressed by stative verbs. Location and existence are expressed with the verb *wà*, which has a suppletive allomorph *sí* in negative constructions.

As is clear from the examples, languages such as Urhobo do not need copulas in any sentence construction. Yoruba and Igbo have different copulas according to predicate types or the semantic nature of the copular sentence, but in attributive contexts they can use verbal property items without copulas.

The history of NigP, as I have shown in sections 1.2 and 1.3, has not yet been fully made clear. It is therefore extremely complicated to retrieve the substrate sources of the speakers who created its grammar, and the influence of different African languages is certainly blurred in NigP modern phenomenology. However, some basic assumptions can be made. As noted by Holm (1976) and illustrated here in section 3.2 for NigP and in section 3.3 for AAVE and other mesolectal varieties of CECs, most of these languages show a sharp and, to a certain extent, consistent differentiation in copular use according to predicate types. While English offers no basis for a distinction in copula form or absence by predicate types, most Kwa and Benue-Congo

languages do offer this pattern. For example, Yoruba differentiates nominal, locative, adjectival and verbal predicates using entirely different forms like *ni*, *ri*, *wà* and *ʃe*, as well as Ø (Holm 1976).

For AAVE and other mesolectal CECs, research has focused on the *frequency* of zero copula in different grammatical constructions. This is because most researchers assumed that the copula omission patterns in these Caribbean decreolised varieties parallel the different formal coding made by the most basilectal (creole-like/substrate-like) varieties, which use distinct copulas in each environment. NigP, in fact, distinguishes among nominal complements (*be* and *na*), adjectival complements (*de* or Ø) and existential/locative complements (*de*). Jamaican Patwa and Guyanese English creole distinguish among nominal complements with *(d)a*, adjectival complements with Ø and locative complements with *de*. Decreolisation, in this view, has led to mesolectal systems merging these distinctions to varying degrees. Zero copula, observed in all environments with different frequencies, would then be a mesolectal innovation due to contact, in the process of convergence with the more flat pattern observed in the lexifier (English). In this view, the *frequency* of omission in different predicate types in decreolised Caribbean varieties has to be seen as a corollary of their ancestral differentiation by *form*, which is still present in African languages and in the most conservative creole varieties (Sharma & Rickford 2009: 83).

3.6 The typological distribution of copulas

Typology shows that the three semantic domains of attribution, identification and predicative (locative-based) uses of copulas are encoded extremely differently in the world languages. It would be difficult to prove that the same semantic knot, syntactic structure, or pragmatic configuration is applicable to the three of them. Although in English one finds an obligatory copula in all the environments (at least in the standard varieties), there are languages where none or only some of these constructions involve a copula element. Another important difference is that most of the languages do not use the

same copula in the different environments, so that if we consider that these two criteria are intertwined we should expect quite an array of variation in the world's languages with respect to this area of grammar.

In her cross-linguistic panorama on copulas, based on a sample of 131 languages[87], Pustet (2003) takes into account copulas in their associations with verbs, adjectives and nouns but decides to disregard existential and locative uses. Her aim is to uncover how "languages differ with respect to the use of copula with different lexical items" (ibid: 27) in order to provide a functional model of copularisation. To do so, in line with Stassen (1997), Croft (1991) and Givón (1984), she divides lexical predicates into the three semantic macro-classes of "nominals" (entity concepts), "adjectivals" (property concepts) and "verbals" (event concepts). As such, eight logical patterns are possible; however, only four of them are attested in Pustet's sample, as Table 16 clearly illustrates:

Table 16. Basic patterns of copula distrubution. Taken from Pustet (2003: 64).

	NOMINALS	ADJECTIVALS	VERBALS
Tagalog	-	-	-
Burmese	+	-	-
German	+	+	-
Bambara	+	+	+
?	-	+	+
?	-	-	+
?	-	+	-
?	+	-	+

+ = copula used in predicate position

- = copula not used in predicate position

Even when one takes into account all the specifications made by Pustet (ibid: 66-78) in order to explain the chart above[88], the pattern appears definitely to be a strong one in typological terms. The existing distributional patterns can

[87] For a list of the languages in the sample, see Table 2.6 in Pustet (2003: 74-77).
[88] Mainly concerning languages that split the macro-semantic classes with respect to copular uses (cfr. SPLIT-N, SPLIT-A, SPLIT-V).

be subsumed in the following implicational hierarchy:

NOMINALS > ADJECTIVALS > VERBALS

This means that "copularization is unidirectional: if any class of lexemes copularizes in a given language, the class of nominal does; if any lexical class other than nominals copularizes, the adjectival class does; only if both nominals and adjectivals copularize, verbals may also copularize" (ibid: 73).
Elaborating on this semantic approach, working with minimal lexical couples (such as *sleeping* vs. *asleep*), Pustet discloses three semantic parameters which correlate systematically with presence vs. absence of copulas: valence, dynamicity and transience (time-stability). In this respect she claims (ibid: 110) that: "[i]f aspect is understood as comprising not only the notion of grammatical aspect but that of lexical aspect or aktionsart as well, the following formula is valid: nominals are, as a rule, intrinsically imperfective, while verbals are intrinsically perfective; nominals tend to cover whole lifespans, verbals only fractions of lifespans. Lexemes expressing prototypical adjectival concepts, on the other hand, are intrinsically unspecified as to bounding in time." After performing a multi-factor analysis of the distribution of copulas in the sample languages, based on the semantic factors given above, Pustet (ibid: 130) concludes the following:
(a) The more a lexeme is time-stable (-transient), the more the item copularise.
(b) The more a lexeme is dynamic, the less it copularise.
(c) The more an item is transitive, the less it copularise.
These generalisations have been useful in the analysis of attributive (copular) sentences in NigP (Chapter 6), in which I successfully tested them.

In a second set of conclusions Pustet stated that markedness theory is able to account for patterns of copularization in different languages (ibid: 186-190), since the latter is basically one manifestation of the markedness principle:

(a) Copula usage is sensitive to grammatical categories in many

languages. Copulas tend to be dropped in the present tense and with pronominal subjects, which are unmarked contexts with respect to discourse frequency (Givón 1995: 377f).

(b) Secondly, in some languages, copula use is determined by stylistic factors. If there is a distinction between formal and/or literary vs. colloquial style, copulas always occur in formal and/or literary style, never in colloquial style. Since formal style is employed less frequently than colloquial style, on the whole, one can take it as a manifestation of the markedness principle.

(c) Thirdly, the fully copularising language type (e.g. Bambara) is very scarce, while the non-copularising type is relatively common (e.g. Tagalog).

Pustet (2003: 188) concludes that: "[m]arkedness, together with the semantic parameters obtained through the minimal pair approach, constitutes an indispensable building block of a functional model of copularization".

To conclude, even if typological works of these kinds may contain some mistakes in the description of single languages (as it is the case for NigP for example), the general conclusions reached by Pustet were extremely consistent with my data and findings.

3.7 Final remarks

In this chapter I have given a general overview of copulas. I first described possible taxonomies for copulas (referential taxonomy in section 3.1.1 and semantic classification in section 3.1.2) and then explained how they inspired the three-fold subdivision of the NigP copular domain, as it is shown in Table 17.

Table 17. The taxonomy of copulas in NigP.

Type	**Examples**	**Copulas**	**Syntax**
IDENTIFICATIONAL/ ASCRIPTIVE (Chapter 4)	Dat boy **na** my friend Im **be** my friend	*be*/*na*	NP + COP + NP (det.) NP + COP + NP (undet.) NP + COP + CC
LOCATIVE/ EXISTENTIAL/ PREDICATIVE (Chapter 5)	God **de** My friend **de** dere I **de** in charge We **de** for microbiology	*de*	NP + COP (+ LOC) (or extensions, NPs, PPs, and AdvPs)
ATTRIBUTIVE (Chapter 6)	Dis girl fine o Di girl **de** fine	*Ø*/*de*	NP (+ COP) + PI

In the second part of the chapter I provided an overview about how copulas and copula variability have been treated in the literature. I initially described Labov's sociolinguistic survey on copula variability in BEV in order to introduce the studies on copula variability in creoles, with a focus on mesolectal Caribbean varieties (section 3.3). These studies demonstrate that consistent and significant variation is found in AAVE and in creoles. As far as NigP is concerned, in the two domains of identification/ascription and the predicative uses of *de*, one does not find variation intended as alternation between an overt form and Ø. Locatives, existentials and other predicative uses of *de* do not allow copula omission. In locative contexts the copula *de* is obligatory in the variety of NigP under analysis here. Concerning identification/ascription, the alternation *be*/*na* does not parallel at all the kind of variation between overt/zero copula found in AAVE and the Caribbean English creoles. As it will be argued in Chapter 4, this variation is motivated on syntactic grounds, and the two items are not interchangeable.

The only domain of the NigP copular system where we do indeed find variation in a Labovian sense is the one of Attribution. However, as it will be

argued in Chapter 6, the alternation between *de* and zero correlates most times with semantic differences (stage vs. individual level interpretation; state vs. process), but still it seems reasonable to try to attest (in cases where semantic differences are not prominent) if other grammatical and/or stylistic factors play a role in determining the presence/absence of the copula (some suggestions in this sense in section 6.8). However, in this respect, I am more prone to speak about copula "insertion" than of copula deletion/omission/dropping for NigP. This is because property items are clearly verbal in NigP, and this is almost certainly a feature inherited from West African languages, or during the process of creolisation (that *may* have happened out of Nigeria, see section 1.3), or in the time-span from the colonial era to the present, during which NigP has been in close contact with the African languages of Southern Nigeria.

4. Identificational and Ascriptive copular clauses in Nigerian Pidgin: *be* and *na*

As illustrated in section 3.2, the NigP copular distribution covers the three semantic areas of Identification/Ascription, Existence/Location and Attribution.

Table 18. The taxonomy of copulas in NigP.

Type	**Examples**	**Copulas**	**Syntax**
IDENTIFICATIONAL/ ASCRIPTIVE (Chapter 4)	Dat boy **na** my friend Im **be** my friend	*be*/*na*	NP + COP + NP (det.) NP + COP + NP (undet.) NP + COP + CC
LOCATIVE/ EXISTENTIAL/ PREDICATIVE (Chapter 5)	God **de** My friend **de** dere I **de** in charge We **de** for microbiology	*de*	NP + COP (+ LOC) (or extensions, NPs, PPs, and AdvPs)
ATTRIBUTIVE (Chapter 6)	Dis girl fine o Di girl **de** fine	Ø/*de*	NP (+ COP) + PI

In this chapter I will deal with sentences that express Identification and Ascription in NigP, which will be addressed to with the abbreviation "Id/As" henceforth in the text. To be more specific, I will consider here the group of Id/As copular sentences in the corpus that encompasses Identification, Specification, Equation, Ascription and General Categorisation (namely examples 2 to 7, Table 13 in section 3.1.1).

As I explained in section 3.2, in NigP the choice of the copula mainly depends on the syntactic nature of the complement, and

determined/undetermined nominals and clausal complements require the copulas *be* or *na*. I will sometimes refer to *be* and *na* as "equative copulas", even if this label does not entirely describe their functioning. When appropriate, then, I will specify if ascriptive uses and identifictional uses of *be* and *na* should be set apart for some reasons.

Id/As copular sentences in NigP are formed using the copula *be* or the particle *na* as predicators. Any copular sentences with a nominal or clausal complement make use of *be* or *na*. Both lexemes apparently perform the function of copula even if, as it will be clear from the discussion, the particle *na* has a less clear verbal status with respect to that of *be*. For this reason, whereas *be* is glossed with the abbreviation COP, which stands for "copula", the item *na* is glossed as FOC, which stands for "focus introducer", in this chapter until the conclusions.

According to Faraclas (1989: 99), the identity verb *be* is the most commonly used copular element in copular sentences with nominal complements but "the functions of *be* and *na* overlap to some degree when *a nominal element both precedes and follows nà*" (Faraclas 1989: 106, italics mine). Actually, it is the aim of this chapter to show that, in the variety of NigP under investigation here (see section 2.5), the two copular items are *not* interchangeable in that context: consequently, their functions are complementary and do not overlap. The main point is that in Id/As copular sentences (present tense or tenseless), when the subject is a nominal complement the particle *na* has superseded *be* as the copular element (see section 4.3).

However, there are several syntactic factors and also some semantic issues that are relevant to the choice of the predicator in Id/As sentences. I am going to develop these issues throughout section 4.2. In any case, the alternation between *be* and *na* does not concern a semantic distinction of the type "permanence" vs. "non-permanence" as assumed in Pustet (2003: 51)[89].

[89] Pustet in her claim was supposedly referring to the copulas *be* and *de*, whose alternation *may* be considered in terms of permanence/non-permanence to the extent that Identification and Attribution differ in terms of permanence. However, her reference to Farclas' grammar points to examples concerned with the alternation between *be* and *na* (which I address in this chapter and which I do not consider as related to permanence/non-permanence).

The kind of variation that I am going to analyse here is exemplified in 54 and 55 below. In 54 (a), we see that the copula *be* produces a grammatical sentence, whereas the same occurrence with the item *na* is ungrammatical (54 b):

54 a. I **be** lady. b. * I **na** lady.
I COP lady
'I am a single woman.'

However, in 55, within the similar context of an ascriptive copular sentence, *na* forms a grammatical sentence while *be* does not:

55 a. Bill **na** beta student. b. * Bill **be** beta student.
PN FOC good student
'Bill is a good student'

I have listed 1058 occurrences of the item *be* in the corpus. This number also includes instances where the copula *be* is used in fixed expression such as *wey (e) be say* ("namely"), or in the lexical compound *be like* ("to seem"); the number also comprises instances of the collocation *no be* that should be treated as the negation of the item *na*. On the other hand, the occurrences of the item *na* in the corpus are 1681; this number comprises occurrences where *na* is a focus introducer and occurrences where *na* is placed in between a topic NP and a focus NP. The number also comprises the occurrences of the collocation *na im*.

The chapter develops as follows. In section 4.1 I will illustrate the origin of *be* and *na*. In section 4.2 I will describe the distribution of the two items in greater detail. In section 4.3 I will discuss the copular status of the focus introducer *na* and the main steps of its reanalysis as a predicator. In 4.4 I will use the categories of information structure to get some deeper insights on the structural properties of the constructions with *be* and with *na*. I will make some further considerations on the status of *na* as a sentence introducer in NigP in section 4.4.6. In section 4.5 I will outline some diachronic processes

in diverse languages that show similarities with the change underwent by *na*. In section 4.6 I will focus on the very germane copular system of Sranan. In section 4.7 there are some concluding remarks.

4.1 Origins of the equative copulas *be* and *na*

Be derives from the English verb "to be" and *na* is a focus marker whose etymology is uncertain. According to McWhorter (2005: 202f) *na* derives from a demonstrative pronoun (*that* -> *datti* -> *dat* -> *da* -> *na*). As it will be illustrated thoroughly in 4.6, Sranan has an equative copular item *da*/*na* and there are chances that NigP *na* is somehow related to Sranan *da*/*na*, given the similar syntactic distribution of the items.

In NigP one can use *na* to express new-information focus (56), contrastive focus (57) and to construct cleft sentences (58). Its usage is extremely frequent. Speakers sometimes do not recognise anymore its emphatic strength in discourse: actually, *na* can be used to introduce simple left-dislocations, as in 59[90]:

56 Na she be di oga
FOC she COP DET boss
'SHE is the boss!'

57 If your pikin na your musician, **na** your pikin we want here, no be you.
if POSS child FOC POSS musician FOC POSS child we want ADV, NEG COP you
'If your child is the musician (in your family), it's your child we want here, not you.'

58 Na Kenna na im show me.
FOC PN FOC him show me
'It's Kenna, it's him who showed it to me'

[90] The noun *hand* represents an argument of the verb *tek*, which is in a serial verb construction with the second verb *tear*. The original position of the dislocated item would be in between the two verbs.

59 **Na** hand dem for tek tear am into pieces
FOC hand they COND use.to tear him PREP pieces
'Their own hands they would use to tear him into pieces.'

Na appears in presentative sentences where it simply introduce a (pro-)nominal constituent, as in 60 (*Na me*). As I will claim in 4.3.1, such a structure, where a focused element is presented in isolation, entails the presence of an elided/presupposed/omitted regular copular sentence with *be* (in brackets in the example), ideally placed to the right:

60 A: Who be dat one?
Who COP that one?
'Who is that?'

B: **Na** me! (be dat one) * E be me (dat one)[91]
FOC me (COP that one)
'It's me (that one)!'

The elided argument is the clausal topic, the constituent that would be the subject of the predication in an unmarked copular sentence with *na*:

61 Dat one na me o. * Dat one be me o.
DET one FOC me INT
'That's me! '

In the corpus there are many occurrences where *na* introduces an argument in isolation. In all these occasions, the topic of the predication, the "subject" of *na*, is linguistically null even if contextually clear and recoverable. In 62 the topic is *distin* (meaning a generic, unspecified thing; in this case, my digital voice recorder):

[91] The copular verb *be* cannot apparently take expletive subjects except when it is part of the semi-copular verb *belike* ("to seem") or in the fixed expression *wey e be say* ("namely").

62 **Na** video ehn? Distin abi? Abi **na** voice?
FOC video INT this.thing TAG or FOC voice
'Is it video ehn? This thing, isn't it? Or is it a voice [recorder]?'

According to Faraclas, (1989: 107), in this type of sentences, the item *na* "no longer serves as a signal for focalization and retains only its copular function, in much the same way as the French *c'est*".

4.2 The distribution of *be* and *na* in Id/As copular sentences

4.2.1 Pronominal and non-pronominal subjects

Be appears with pronominal personal subjects and *na* with non-pronominal subjects, as is shown in 63-71.

63 a. I **be** DJ
I COP dj
'I am a DJ'

b. * I **na** DJ

64 a. I **be** lady
I COP lady
'I am a single woman'

b. * I **na** lady

65 a. I **be** Italo
I COP from.Italy
'I am Italian'

b. * I **na** Italo

66 a. You **be** tif
you COP thief
'You are a thief'

b. ?? You **na** tif

67 a. E **be** my best friend
he COP POSS best friend

b. * E **na** my best friend

'He's my best friend'

68 a. Im **be** my best friend
he COP POSS best friend
'He's my best friend'

b. Im **na** my best friend

69 a. We **be** your family
we COP POSS family
'We are your family'

b. * We **na** your family

70 a. Una **be** nice people
you.PL COP nice people
'You are nice people'

b. * Una **na** nice people

71 a. Dem **be** ogbonge actors
they COP big actor.PL
'They are big actors'

b. * Dem **na** ogbonge actors

All pronouns in the paradigm choose, or at least strongly prefer, the copula *be*, except *im*, third person singular emphatic pronoun, which uses both *be* and *na*, as is shown in 68 (a) and (b). This may be due to the fact that speakers (especially if bilingual in Nigerian English) can process *im* as an accusative form, and thus as a topic, while they cannot, in any way, process personal pronouns such as *e* (3ps), *I* (1ps), *we* (1pp) or *una* (2pp) as topics. Also *you* (2ps) is more acceptable with *na* than the other pronouns in the paradigm. Sentence in 66 (b) is far more acceptable than, say, 65 (b). Concerning the use of the predicator *na* with the pronominal subject *you* (2ps), one informant has said: "The more correct form would be 'You be my best friend', but it is not unheard for people to say 'You na my best friend'[92]". If the subject of the predication (the first constituent) can be processed as a

[92] These contexts (*im* and *you* as subjects) are the only contexts where the distribution of *be* and *na* partially overlaps. I can only speculate that *na* has started being used also with personal pronouns, and that it has entered the paradigm from the second and third person singular pronouns (see section 7.4 for future outlooks to this respect).

topic, then the phrase "*na* + NP" can be autonomously interpreted: *na* performs as the introducing particle of a focused constituent, which follows (section 4.2.1). However, in line with this reasoning, speakers should accept also 71 (b), since the accusative form of the third personal plural pronoun is homonymous with its nominative form (thus *dem* in both cases). As one can see in 71 this is not the case.

It should also be pointed out that one speaker has proven to be quite certain of the fact that, when a personal pronoun performs as the subject, even if be is the preferred copula, *na* is slightly more acceptable in ascriptive rather than in identificational contexts. Thus 73 (b) cannot be said to be ungrammatical but still 73 (a) would be a better choice. 72 (b), on the contrary, is ungrammatical[93].

72 a. She **be** di person. b. * She **na** di person.
she COP DET person
'She is the one.'

73 a. She **be** woman. b. ? She **na** woman.
she COP woman
'She is a woman.'

Again, I can only speculate that *na* is slowly gaining in distribution over *be*; in this case, it has started to be slightly more acceptable with pronominal subjects in the context of property-like predications (73)[94].

On the other hand, when the subject of the predication is an NP or a proper noun (PN), the copula *be* is clearly disfavoured, whereas *na* is wholly acceptable, as in examples in 74-81 consistently show:

[93] I checked this only with the personal pronoun *she* as a subject. For example this seems not to work for the third personal plural pronoun *dem*. I should try for example *you* and *im*, which independently proved to be more acceptable than others with the copula *na*. I should probably distinguish identificational from ascriptive uses of *be* and *na* in all examples given 30-38, in order to have both structures checked for each personal pronoun. I thank Prof. Paola Benincà for this suggestion.
[94] See also 7.3.1.

74 a. * Di man **be** my brother. b. Di man **na** my brother.
DET man FOC POSS brother
'The man is my brother.'

75 a. * Dat cd **be** one of my priceless possessions o.

b. Dat CD **na** one of my priceless possessions o.
DET cd FOC one PREP POSS priceless possession.PL INT
'That CD is one of my priceless possessions!'

76 a. * Dat tin **be** nonsense. b. Dat tin **na** nonsense.
DET thing FOC nonsense
'This thing is a nonsense.'

77 a. * John **be** my cousin . b. John **na** my cousin.
PN na POSS cousin
'John is my cousin.'

78 a. * My cousin **be** John b. My cousin **na** John.
POSS cousin FOC PN
'My cousin is John.'

79 a. * Di woman **be** sister. b. Di woman **na** sister.
DET woman FOC nun
'The woman is a nun.'

80 a. * Dat guy **be** my brother. b. Dat guy **na** my brother.
DET guy na POSS brother
'That guy is my brother.'

81 a. * People dè say Ajegunle **be** bad place

b. People dè say Ajegunle **na** bad place
people IPFV say PN FOC bad place

'People say that Ajegunle is a bad place'

In 82 we find the alternation of the usage of *be* and *na* in the same discourse context. In the original spoken chunk there is no change in intonation or rhythm. The three clauses in the example are pronounced one after the other, as a list[95]. The PMAN's president is talking to the senior members of the AJ community and, in order to resolve a dispute between two young musicians, whose names are Linking and Landlord, he says:

82 Dem be your pikin. Linking na your pikin. Landlord na your pikin.
they COP POSS child PN FOC POSS child PN na POSS child
'They are your children. Linking is your child. Landlord is your child.'

The only discriminating factor between the first and the second (and third) clause, in 82, is the change in the type of subject. In the first clause the personal pronoun requires *be* and, in the second (and third) clause, the proper nouns require *na*.

The one outlined above is a very crucial point for the issue on ground. Present or tenseless affirmative copular sentences of the type given in 74-81 above represent the syntactic environment for the emergence of *na* as an equative copula in the variety of NigP under examination here. In Faraclas' grammar (1996: 48f), the two series of sentences in 74-81 (a) and (b) would be given as equivalent and both acceptable. Data gathered for the purpose of this work clearly single out the establishment of *na* as the preferred copular item in these contexts, which may let one think of an ongoing change in the language. I will address the issue in 4.3 and also in 7.3.

One exception to this respect concerns sentences expressing general categorizations (3.1.1), namely those copular clauses where the subject is an

[95] Sentences where the elements can be analysed as subject and predicate, should also be pronounced with an intonation suitable for a single, simple clause, without any break after the subject. In the example 82 there is no intonational difference between the sentence with *be* (*Dem be your pikin*) and the sentences with *na* (*Linking na your pikin*).

indefinite or generic noun. I got some unexpected answers from informants who have judged the following sentences:

83 a. Teachers dem **be** funny people.
teacher.PL PL COP funny people
'Teachers are funny people.'

b. * Teachers dem **na** funny people.

84 a. Americans dem **be** funny people.
american.PL PL COP funny people
'Americans are funny people.'

b. * Americans dem **na** funny people.

85 a. Americans **be** funny people.
american.PL COP funny people
'Americans are funny people.'

b. * Americans **na** funny people.

General categorizations seem to require the copula *be*. Even if this point would require much more work to be assessed, one can guess that, whereas the subject of an equational sentence can be indefinite, the topic in a topic-comment sentence cannot be[96].

4.2.2 Demonstrative pronouns as subjects

In NigP demonstrative pronouns such as *dis* ("this") or *dat* ("that") are avoided but still widely attested in subject position. For example, I noticed some systematic tendency among informants who where asked to translate

[96] But then 86, attested in the corpus, would instead require *be*:
86 Anyone wey gò steal na fool.
Anyone REL IRR steal FOC fool
'Anyone that will steal is a fool.'

in NigP sentences as 87 and 88:

87 This is a telephone

88 This is my brother Nick

These are some quite common sentence types in English and other Indo-European languages where the grammatical subject is a deictic that corresponds to the sentence topic. In this type of sentences the speaker gives an identity to an external object, which is addressed to by the deictic. In specificational sentences (e.g. "My brother is him/this", Higgins 1973), on the other hand, speakers locate in the world an object/entity that they already knew existed; in this latter case, the predicate is most referential in nature than the subject. Getting to the point, informants translate 87 and 88 as 89 and 90:

89 **Na** telephone **be** dis
FOC telephone COP this

90 **Na** my bros Nick **be** dis
FOC POSS brother Nick COP this

Their strategy was to introduce first the complement of the predication, which would be a focused noun or "a comment" in terms of information structure. This noun would be preceded by the focus marker *na*. Then, the copula *be* would follow and finally the subject of the predication, the topic of the sentence, the most concrete object between the two involved in the predication (*dis*). This is given in 91 as a gloss:

91 FOC NP COP DEM

Even a quick look at the corpus would tell that in the data there are plenty of sentences with such a structure. Some examples are given in 92-98:

92 **Na** the cheapest speaker for Alaba **be** dat, Wharfdale.
FOC DET cheapest speaker PREP PN COP that PN
'Those are the cheapest speakers in Alaba, Wharfdale.'

93 **Na** im style **be** dat now.
FOC POSS style COP that INT
'That's the way he is.'

94 Ehn, **na** the level **be** dat now.
INT FOC DET level COP that INT
'That's the point!'

95 **Na** one of the tins wey we dè do for Benin **be** dat.
FOC one PREP DET thing.PL REL we IPFV do PREP PN COP that
'That's one of the thing we usually do when we are in Benin City.'

96 **Na** di problem gangan **be** dat, abi you not fit see am?
FOC DET problem IDEO COP that TAG you NEG MOD see it
'That's the biggest problem, can't you see that?'

97 **Na** good question **be** dat!
FOC good question COP that
'That's a good question!'

98 **Na** wetin comot from Jonathan mouth **be** dis.
FOC what come.out PREP PN mouth COP this
'That's what came out from Jonathan's mouth.'

This observation will be taken into account in 4.4 when we will use information structure's categories to get some deeper insights on these constructions (Higgins 1973). However, it should be pointed out here that when informants are asked to judge identificational sentences with a demonstrative pronoun as the given subject, they choose to use the item *na* and against the item *be*:

99 a. * Dat (one) **be** my telephone. b. Dat (one) **na** my telephone.
that (one) FOC POSS telephone
'That one is my telephone.'

100 a. * Dat (one) **be** my brother Nick b. Dat (one) **na** my brother Nick.
that (one) FOC POSS brother PN
'That one is my brother Nick.'

Thus, demonstrative pronouns and demonstrative adjectives in subject position choose *na* over *be* as a predicator.

4.2.3 Interrogative and relative pronouns in subject position

The presence of any Wh interrogative pronouns prohibits the presence of *na*. The alternation in the use of *be* and *na* is clear from the following couples questions/anwers. In the questions (101-103) *na* is forbidden, but is required in the answers (102-104):

101 a. *Wetin* **be** im name? b. * Wetin **na** im name?
what COP POSS name
'What's her name?'

102 a. * Im name **be** Maria. b. Im name **na** Maria.
POSS name FOC PN
'Her name is Maria.'

103 a. *Who* **be** dat? b. * Who **na** dat?
who COP that
'Who's that?'

104 a. * Dat one **be** my son. b. Dat one **na** my son.
that one FOC POSS son

'That one is my son.'

In 105-110 I give other examples of interrogatives:

105 *Which one* **be** dis? * na
which one COP this
'Which one is this?'

106 *How many* watts **be** the JEDI? * na
how many watt.PL COP DET PN
'How many watts is the JEDI?'

107 *How many* years you **be**?[97] * na
how many year.PL you COP
'How old are you?'

108 *Which* kain home video **be** dis? * na
which kind home video COP this
'Which kind of home video is this?'

109 *Which* kain crazy tin **be** dat!? * na
which kind crazy thing COP that
'Which kind of crazy thing is that?'

110 *Where* **be** your area? * na
where COP POSS area
'Where are you from?'

Even when the sentence is an assertion, the presence of an interrogative

[97] In questions *be* is the preferred copula. I want to note here that, when the subject of the predication is a personal pronoun, it obligatorily precedes the copula:
111 a. Who you be? vs. b. Who be dat? or Who be di guy?
112 a. How many years you be? vs. b. How many years be your brother?
This seems to be the case also for affirmative sentences (see also section 4.4.5):
113 a. Na tiefs dem be. vs. b. Na tief be dat or ?Na tief be your brother?

pronoun prohibits the use of *na*, as one can see in 114-116. The interrogative pronoun may be the subject of the predication as in 114, it may be part of the subject of the predication as in 115, or it may be just the complementiser governing the clause, as in 116:

114 You wan find out *who* **be** omonile. * na
you MOD find out who COP land.owner
'You want to find out who are the land owners.'

115 *Wetin* I wan do **be** dat.[98] * na
what I MOD do COP that
'What I want to do is that.'

116 I know *why* the tin **be** like that. * na
I know why DET thing COP like that
'I know why the thing is like that.'

If the interrogative pronoun remains *in situ*, however, the preferred copula is *na* over *be*: it is clear from 117 that, in this case, the item *na* remains stuck before the sentential focus. In 4.4 I will return to this matter and I will propose an explanation based on information structure's sequences in identificational predications.

117 a. Her name **na** wetin? b. * Her name **be** wetin?
POSS name na what
'Her name is what?'

Informants have been less categorical about their answers in occurrences where the copular item governs a sentential complement, as in 118 and 119:

[98] This is an example of the so-called 'pseudo-cleft sentence' (Higgins 1973, Declerck 1988, Collins 1991). Even though in the literature clefts and pseudo-clefts have received much attention, I decided not to analyse them here as a separate category since their copular characteristics depends entirely on the nature of the copular complement, as it is the case for all copular clauses in NigP. See also the introductory paragraph to Chapter 3.

118 a. *Why* e **be** say we no dè fit sleep?
why it COP COM we NEG IPFV MOD sleep
'Why can't we sleep?'

b. ?? Why **na** say we no dè fit sleep?

119 a. *Wetin* happen **be** say I no de around.
what happen.PST COP COM I NEG COP around
'What happened was that I wasn't around.'

b. ?? Wetin happen **na** say I no de around.

However, a quick confirmation may be found simply by googling the two NigP strings[99], since the number of occurrences confirms the informants' fuzzy intuition:

"why e **be** say": 73.000 results vs. "why **na** say": 1 result
"wetin happen **be** say": 63 results vs. "wetin happen **na** say": 1 result

When the subject of the copular predication is expressed by the relative complementiser *wey*, the copula is obligatorily *be*. In 120 we find an occurrence from the corpus: in the sentence there is an ellipsis corresponding to the slash, so that the discursive meaning of the sentence is something like: "I am the kind of person who is considered talentless. Nevertheless, I was able to create good lyrics for my songs thanks to the creative environment I found here in Ajegunle. The multicultural spirit of Ajegunle will lead me to success for sure":

120 a. Me sef, I be one pesin wey dem look say I no get any talent, but wit
Me ADV I COP DET person REL they look COM I NEG have any talent but PREP
di lyrical wey I carry mix for inside di soup wey **be** Ajegunle/
DET lyrical REL I carry mix PREP PREP DET soup REL COP PN

[99] The search results were annotated on the 22nd May 2011.

Na Ajegunle ego na im I take chop dem, confirm!
FOC PN ego FOC it I SV eat them for.sure
'Me, I am a person that people look at and think that I have no talent, but with the lyrical that I composed here in Ajegunle/ It's the spirt of Ajegunle I am going to use to eat them, guaranteed!'

b. * […] di soup wey **na** Ajegunle […]

4.2.4 The complementiser *mek*

A similar kind of constraint concerns *mek*, a very frequent NigP item deriving from the English verb "to make". It provides a kind of exhortative/oblique meaning and functions as a complementizer:

121 a. Mek distin **be** quick job! b. * Mek distin **na** quick job!
COM.EXH this.thing COP quick job
'Let's hope it will be a quick job!'

122 a. For someone to be good farmer be like mek person **be** disable.
PREP someone PREP be good farmer seem COM/EXH person COP disable
'For someone to be a good farmer, it seems like he has to completely misbehave.'

b. * For someone to be good farmer be like mek person **na** disable.

4.2.5 Clausal complements

Another relevant syntactic context is when the identificational copular clause has a sentential complement introduced by the complementiser *say*. As we saw in 118 and 119 above, informants do not give straightforward answers when asked which predicator, between *be* and *na*, results more appropriate to the two subordinate sentences introduced by the complementiser *say*. However, informants accept both sentences in 123 (a) and 123 (b) and affirm that they make no difference between the two, and that the two are interchangeable. If specifically asked, they do express a bland preference for

sentence (a) over (b):

123 a. Di funny tin **be** say dem no fit refund dat moni.
DET funny thing COP COM they NEG MOD refund that money
'The funny thing is that they can't refund that money.'

b. ? Di funny tin **na** say dem no fit refund dat moni.

In fact, the sentence in 123 (a) is the original one taken from the corpus, while 123 (b) is a modified version. In terms of frequency also, the former construction is far more common that the latter: in the corpus we find 189 occurrences of the collocation "be say" and 15 occurrences of the collocation "na say". Moreover the two strings give very different results when Google-searched[100]:

"the thing be say": 14.500 results vs. "the thing na say": 5 results

It is relevant to note that informants have been more certain with their judgements for sentences in 124 (a) and (b):

124 a. You know, wetin happen **be** say I no de around now, but I gò show.
you know, what happen.PST COP COM I NEG EX.LOC around INT, but I IRR show.up
'You know, what happened is that I was not around, but I will come.'

b. ?? You know, wetin happen **na** say I no de around now, but I gò show.

124 (b) is marked as far more less acceptable that 124 (a) and this is probably due to the presence of the interrogative pronoun *wetin* in the subject constituent (see section 4.2.3).

Hence, the presence of a sentential copular complement calls for the copula *be*, even if a nominal subject may render *na* acceptable as well (123 a

[100] Search results were annotated on the 22nd May 2011.

and b). However, if the subject contains an interrogative pronoun, maintaining that we have a sentential copular complement introduced by *say* (124), then *na* is less acceptable.

4.2.6 A semantic constraint

There seems to be a relevant a semantic constraint that contributes to the choice of *be* or *na* in context. *Na* has a semantic charge that *be* does not have and this may be due to some legacy connected to its etymology as a focus introducer, also used to perform contrastive focus and clefts in NigP (see section 4.1). In fact, the item *na* can be used in metaphorical contexts such as 125 (a), where the same item *be* would not be acceptable, for both syntactic and semantic reasons:

125 a. I gò buy that Alesis abeg. Compressor **na** compressor
I IRR buy that PN please compressor FOC compressor
'I will buy that Alesis, that's it. A compressor is a compressor (it's important to buy a good one).'

b. * I gò buy that Alesis abeg. Compressor **be** compressor.

I return here to the fact that in the variety of NigP described by Faraclas, 125 (a) and (b) would both be correct, as is clear from the examples we find in his grammar (Faraclas 1996: 48ff):

126 a. Wor nà wor. "War is war."

b. Wor bì wor. "War is war."

An informant pointed out to me that actually 126 (b) and all the sentences listed in 74-81 type (a) in section 4.2.1 *could* find an appropriate context if the speaker needed to express a doubt, or, better, in questions[101]. For example, if one imagines 126 (b) spoken by someone expressing a doubt, or

[101] I want to thank Vivian Eweka for this comment.

hesitating, or just wondering, then the sentence starts making some sense:

127 You say war na war? Wetin you dè talk? War **be** war?! You dè craze?
you say war COP war what you IPFV talk war COP war you IPFV get.crazy
No be so.
NEG.FOC so
'You said a war is a war? What are you saying? A war is a war?! Are you crazy? It's not like that.'

Given this, one can conclude that the copula *be* does not have the assertive power of *na*: the former cannot be used in affirmative, present tense or tenseless copular sentences if the speaker wants to make an assertion, the latter serves to make assertions, and can be used to stress the semantic weight of the predication ("to be really")[102]. Also, as I will explain in 4.2.8, the item *na* does not behave as a verb, while *be* has full verbal status.

4.2.7 Borderline contexts: syntax and semantics interplay

There are some contexts where we see the criteria given in the preceding paragraphs interplaying. For example, I was first surprised by informants' judgements on 130 (a) and (b) because they did not express any straight preference between the two and just limited to manifest a weak preference for (b) over (a). I was expecting them to choose unanimously and sharply 130 (b) over 130 (a) because I thought that the NP subject (*di problem*) would require *na* (4.2.1). The point is that *be* was required not only when an interrogative pronoun is around (4.2.3) but also when the speaker does not intend to make a strong assertion (4.2.4 and 4.2.6), as is the case here where

[102] According to this line of reasoning, I was expecting the copula *be* to be used in the protasis of conditional sentences, but this is not the case:
128 If your pikin **na** your musician, na your pikin we want here, no be you. You understand me?
It should also be pointed out that the presence of *na* in questions is not interdicted if there are no interrogative pronouns in the surroundings as in 129 (or if the interrogative pronoun remains in situ as we saw in 117 in 4.2.3:
129 Jonathan kom tire for dis tin wey im dè hear: "So di highest punishment for everi law **na** death?"

the sentence is introduced by the question marker *shey*, that expresses some form of doubt. This explains why 130 (a) is accepted by informants even if it has an NP subject:

130 a. ? Shey you know say di problem **be** the cd?
ITRG you know COM DET problem COP DET cd
'Are you sure that the problem is the cd?'

b. Shey you know say di problem **na** the cd?

This also explains why sentence 129 (in a note) occurs with the predicator *na*: it is a rhetorical statement where the speaker is pragmatically making an stupefied assertion more than asking a question.

4.2.8 Verbal morphology

Be assumes the regular NigP verbal morphology while *na* does not appear associated with any morphological markers. This is actually the strongest constraint on the choice between the two predicators. In 131 there is a sentence from the corpus where the copula *be* represents the head of a verb phrase modified with negation (*no*), irrealis mood markers (gò*),* and the epistemic modal verb (*fit*):

131 If e no gò fit **be** dis Sunday, e gò **be** next Sunday be dat.
if it NEG IRR EPI COP this PN, it IRR COP next PN COP that
'If it is not going to be this Sunday, it will be next Sunday.'

A similar occurrence with *na*, as in 132, is considered by speakers as pure nonsense:

132 * Our meeting no gò fit **na** dis Sunday
DET meeting NEG IRR EPI na this Sunday

I recall here that speakers would not accept the simple equation in 133 (a)

with *be* and instead they would just use *na* as in 133 (b).

133 a. * Our meeting **be** dis Sunday b. Our meeting **na** dis Sunday

To sum up, if one wants to use mood, aspectual, tense markers, or negation[103], in Id/As copular sentences in NigP, one has to choose *be* as the predicator, whatever the type of subject may be (noun, wh pronoun, or personal pronoun).

4.2.9 Plural or collective noun subjects

The item *na* is rarely found with plurals in the corpus. First of all, plural marking is sometimes omitted in NigP when it is redundant (Deuber 2005: 106). Secondly, when the marker *dem* is used after the noun to mark plurality in the subject, then the copula *be* seems to be obligatorily required[104]:

134 Dose guys dem be artist.
those guy.PL PL COP artist
'Those guys are artists.'

The plural status of the first constituents from the following examples from the corpus is doubtful:

135 Dis people na tourist or businessmen.
this people FOC tourist or businessmen
'These people are tourists or businessmen.'

136 All of us na one.
all PREP us FOC one
'All of us are one.'

[103] Where negation occurs the item *na* (whether it is used as a focus introducer or as a predicator) becomes *no be*.
[104] In 134 it is possible to analyse *dem* as a third person plural personal pronoun that performs the subject function, whereas the preceding noun (*dose guys*) would be the topic.

137 All of us na musician.
all PREP us FOC musician
'All of us are musicians.'

138 All of us na brother.
all PREP us FOC brother
'All of us are brothers.'

Probably the only trustful example in the corpus of a plural subject equated to a plural complement using *na* as a predicator is the one in 139:

139 Dose people na crooks!
those people FOC crook.PL
'Those people are criminals!'

Also, a low referential status of the subject of the predication undoubtedly creates some problems for the use of *na*. In other words, unspecific and/or undetermined subjects seems to be incompatible with *na*. In 4.2.1 I have shown that categorization prefers *be* over *na*. Also, informants have rejected the sentence in 140, and one speaker has proposed three similar and acceptable sentences (italics added by the informant), which are given in 141 (a), (b) and (c):

140 * People na fool
people FOC fool

141 a. *Some* people na fool
some people FOC fool
'Some people are stupid.'

b. People *dem* be fool
people PL COP fool
'People are stupid.'

c. People *dem* na fool
people PL FOC fool
'People are stupid.'

The three adjunctions made by the informant in 141 add referential weight to the NP subject. The informant may have given 141 (c) somehow influenced

by the type of task required, in the effort of giving acceptable examples with *na*. I say so because most informants have rejected 141 (c) when asked to judge the sentence in isolation (instead they expressed their preference for 141 (b), as argued in section 4.2.1.

4.2.10 Numerals as copular complements

Cardinal numbers behave like adjectives in many Indo-European languages. They express a property, they can modify nouns and cannot perform verbally. In predicative contexts they take copulas.

This is the case also in NigP. However, numerals do not take the same copula as other property items require (*de*), since they require *na* or *be*. In other words, they behave noun-like in predicative contexts (and not adjective-like). Numerals are grammatically coded as nouns also in African languages such as Igbo (Green & Igwe, 1963: 13). Thus[105]:

142	? My pikin be tri[106]	'I have three children.'
143	My pikin na tri	
144	* My pikin de tri	

145	Ma wife dem be tri[107]	'I have three wives.'
146	Ma wife dem na tri	
147	* Ma wife dem de tri	

4.3 Na in Id/As copular clauses

In 4.2 I described the distributional behaviour of *be* and *na* with respect to a plurality of syntactic factors. In this paragraph I will deepen the issue of the predicative status of *na* as a copula. Faraclas (1996: 47f) classifies the item *na*

[105] I was advised to try with numbers higher than 4, since numbers from 1 to 4 are universally special.
[106] Sentence 142 is marked with a question mark because, although it has not been rejected by informants, most of them pointed to sentence 143 with *na* as the better choice.
[107] In this case, probably as an effect of the plural marker/third person plural pronoun *dem*, both predicators are equally acceptable.

as a focus introducer: "Any focused constituent or phrase may be introduced by *nà* [but] when *nà* occurs in sentences such as [74-81 in 4.2.3 here] it no longer serves as a signal for focalization and retains only its copular function." In the NigP variety described by Faraclas, the functions of *na* and *be* overlap to some degree "when a nominal element both precedes and follows *nà*" (Faraclas 1989: 106), as shown in 148 (a) and (b). The copula *de* results ungrammatical in such contexts, as shown in 148 (c).

148 a. Dì wuman **bì** sista. Faraclas (1996: 48)
DET woman COP nurse[108]
'The woman is a nurse.'

b. Dì wuman nà sista.
DET woman FOC nurse
'The woman is a nurse.'

c. * Di wuman de sista.
DET woman EX.LOC nurse

Faraclas (1996: 47) further notes that: "*nà* cannot take any of the auxiliaries, negators or nonemphatic pronouns that normally occur with verbs in Nigerian Pidgin. The copular extension *làyk* may not be used after *nà*, but *nà* must always be followed by a nominal element." As primarily stated in 3.2, in modern Western metropolitan NigP as spoken by Lagos and Benin City residents, the copulas *be* and *na* (thus not only *na*) can take *only* nominal or clausal complements. In fact, the copula *be*, in the variety of NigP under examination here, results ungrammatical if its complement is a property, whereas it is acceptable in the variety of NigP described by Faraclas (see 7.3.2).

Concerning the distribution of *be* and *na*, I said in 4.2.1 that if the sentence has an NP subject the required predicator is undoubtedly *na* over *be*, thus 148 (a) above is rejected by my informants and unattested in the

[108] Glosses are mine, coherently with the list of abbreviations used here.

corpus. Given this, it would be appropriate to speak about a complementary function of the two items (not an overlapping function). In the variety of NigP described here, *na* has replaced *be* when the sentence is an affirmative assertion, at the present tense or tenseless. I report in 149-152 some examples from the corpus. Informants have judged the correspondent sentences with *be* as unacceptable. I tried to show in the series a variety of constituents both in the subject and the object positions in order to have different degrees of animacy, definiteness, concreteness and constituent length. See also examples in 74-81. Non-specific and non-determined subjects are discussed in 4.2.1.

149 a. Di guy **na** traffic warden. b. * Di guy **be** traffic warden.
DET guy na traffic warden
'The guy is a traffic warden.'

150 a. Nitendo **na** company on its own.
PN FOC company PREP POSS own
'Nintendo is a company on its own.'

b. * Nitendo **be** company on its own.

151 a. Dis tin **na** cable. b. * Dis tin **be** cable.
DET thing FOC cable
'This thing is a cable.'

152 a. Dat one **na** di best wey im don attend.
DET one FOC DET best REL he CPL attend
'That one [workshop] is the best that he has attended.'

b. * Dat one **be** di best wey im don attend.

In these constructions, the constituent preceding *na* would be the clausal topic and the constituent following *na* would be the clausal focus (for a

definition of the concepts of topic and focus as conceived here see 4.4). Actually, if we consider *na* to be the focus introducer in NigP we should note that in sentences 74-81 and 149-152 there is no predicator. Given the sharpness of the judgements, it is reasonable to assume that speakers have reanalysed the focus introducer *na* as a copula in the context of affirmative, positive, present or tenseless clauses. In the next paragraph I will show how this construction has allegedly originated.

I should point out here that sentences in 149-152 (b) could be rendered more acceptable if the first constituents of the predications were introduced by *na*. This eventuality would entail the first constituent to become the focus, while the second constituent would be the topic, as in 153:

153 **Na** di guy **be** traffic warden
FOC DET guy COP traffic warden
'The traffic warden is THE GUY'.

As a concluding remark on the predicative status of *na*, I want to add that a predicative form of the item is found in the collocation *na to*, as in the followings:

154 Ok, **na to** off dis guy. No, leave am. Leave am.
ok na PREP off this guy no leave him leave him
'Ok, we should eliminate this guy. No, leave him. Leave him.'

155 Say di pesin pay moni, **na to** call di guy say oya, shh, come. Take your 25k, COM DET person pay money na PREP call DET guy COM INT ONO come take POSS 25k
dè gó.
IPFV go
'In case the person pay the money, we need to call this guy and say: hey, shhhh. come. Take you 25.000 naira, disappeare.'

This deontic use is probably an elliptic form, where a previous topic/subject

is omitted. In 156 we find the topic/subject constituent expressed (*di tin*), meaning "the only right thing":

156 Di tin now na to hope say collectively together, if we dè work together,
DET thing INT na PREP hope COM ADV ADV if we IPFV work ADV
we fit make a success of dis show.
we MOD make DET success PREP this show
'The (only right) thing to do now is to hope that collectively together if we work together, we can make a success of this show.'

This construction corresponds to the deontic use of the verb "to be" in English and "essere" in Italian:

157 This guy is to bump off.
this guy COP PREP bump off

158 Questo tizio è da far fuori.
this guy COP PREP do out
'This guy is to bump off.'

4.3.1 Reanalysis of *na* as a predicator in Id/As copular clauses

The construction type exemplified in 149-152 originated in discourse and one should postulate the presence of an elided copular predicate with the copula *be*, ideally following the strings in 149-152 as is shown in 159 (b):

159 a. Di guy **na** traffic warden

b. Di guy/ na traffic warden (be dat one / im be)
TOPIC/ NA FOCUS ~~(BE TOPIC / TOPIC BE)~~

The elided constituent would comprise the original predicator, namely the copula *be*, and the sentential topic, ideally expressed by a deictic or a personal pronoun. We have seen in 4.1 that *na* has some presentational

functions, in the sense that it can be used to introduce a nominal predicate (an NP, a pronoun or a PN) as a focalised element in isolation (e.g. *Na me!* – FOC me – "It's me!"). This is possible when a topic is contextually available and accessible. Cognitively, the most economical way to explain such a structure, if we maintain that *na* is a focus introducer, is to assume the presence of an elided predicate at its right, as in 160:

160 Na me (be dat one)
FOC me (COP deictic)
'It's me!'

In 161 and 162 we see the topic of the sentence (*dat one*; *di guy*) left-dislocated, fronted. The speaker probably felt that the topics were not adequately accessible and thus reaffirmed them in first position, as cases of "aboutness" topics. Contextually the speaker omit to re-speak out the topic once fronted and thus omit the copular predicate with *be*. At this point *na* functions as a pointer in between the clausal topic (on its left) and the clausal focus (on its right).

161 Dat one / **na** me ~~(be dat)~~
TOPIC NA FOCUS ~~(COP TOPIC)~~

162 Di guy / **na** traffic warden ~~(be dat one)~~
TOPIC NA FOCUS ~~(COP TOPIC)~~

This analysis would explain some distributional characteristics of *na*. In fact, if this is correct, we will expect the constituents to the left of *na*, the fronted

clausal topics, to behave as topics first and foremost. Consequently:

(a) They should not be pronouns in their nominative form. As I have shown in 4.2.1 personal pronouns in subject position are incompatible with *na*. This would explain why sentence in 163 (a) is perfectly grammatical while its germane in 163 (b) is ruled out from *all* speakers without *any* doubts:

163 a. Me **na** Warri reggae master.
1ps.ACC FOC Warri reggae master
'I am the chief of Warri reggae music.'

b. * I na Warri reggae master

(b) Constituents to the left of *na* should not be operators, since operators cannot be processed as topics by speakers (and rather they occupy a focus position preferably). This prediction correctly explains the impossibility for interrogative pronouns (e.g. *wetin*) and relative markers (*wey*) to show up before *na*.

These considerations correlate with some other facts. *Na* imposed its function as a predicator in affirmative, present tense or tenseless assertion and thus it is yet perceived as incompatible with non-assertive contexts. Accordingly:

(c) *Na* is incompatible with subordinate or principal sentences governed by the complementiser *mek* (4.2.4);

(d) *Na* avoids non-assertive contexts as when an interrogative marker (e.g. *shey*) are present;

(e) *Na* prefers specific contituents to its left against non-specific ones (i.e. it tends to avoid generic topics, as in the case of generic categorization, see 4.2.1 and 4.2.9).

Given this very crucial tie of predicative *na* with a topic constituent placed to

its left, one could raise[109] the hypothesis that *na* performs as a functional head of topics, a marker of topic continuity (and not as focus introducer). However, other topics, in different environments than the predicative contexts exemplified in 149-152, do not require *na* to follow them. 164 and 165 are sentences from the corpus where "aboutness" topics are dislocated in initial sentence positions. In 164 (b) the insertion of *na* after the topic (*Dose cloth*) would entail a contrastive focus on the subject of the proposition (*dem*). In 165 (b) the sentence just results ungrammatical with the insertion of *na* after the topic (*All dese ones wey im take de*):

164 a. Dose cloth/ dem don de my mind ehn.
those cloth they CPL EX.LOC POSS mind INT
'Those clothes, they have been occupying my mind (The person had left laundry to dry outdoors but the weather turned bad).'

b. Dose cloth **na** dem don de my mind (no be sometin else).
those cloth FOC they CPL EX.LOC POSS mind NEG COP something else
'Those clothes, THEY have been occupying my mind, not something else'

165 a. All dese ones wey im take de/ e gò still comot dem, wear am.
all DET ones REL he use.PST EX.LOC he IRR still take.out them wear them
'All those clothes that he used to wear, he would still take them out and wear them again.'

b. * All dese ones wey im take de **na** e gò still comot dem, wear am.

Recapitulating, one can analyse sentences 149-152 using the categories of information structure, topic and focus, rather than syntactic categories such as "grammatical subject" and "copular complement". For instance, "Di guy" and "Traffic warden" in 159 and 162 can be properly analysed as topic and focus (provided that one postulate an elided copular sentence to the right).

[109] I need to thank Prof. Paola Benincà for this and many other insightful suggestions.

To conclude, *na* is a focus introducer that, through topicalisation, was collocated in a position where he had to bear the role of copula in between two arguments, a left-dislocated topic and the focus constituent that *na* originally introduces. I would definitely call this process reanalysis, intended with Langaker (1977: 58) as "a change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation. Reanalysis may lead to changes at the surface level […] but these surface changes can be viewed as the natural and expected result of functionally prior modifications in rules and underlying representation." In particular, according to the categories given by Langaker (1977: 79) this would be a case of *reformulation*, which is a "reanalysis that involves aspect of structure more abstract than the occurrence and placement of morpheme boundaries; these aspects include rules, semantic and syntactic categories, and semantic or syntactic configurations."

4.4 Information structure and Id/As copular sentences in NigP

The present paragraph develops as follows. First of all, I am going to speak about the unmarked sequence of information structure arguments in NigP. This will be the premise, and it follows here. Then, I am going to describe how differently *be* and *na* behave with respect to information structure sequences, in section 4.4.1. Consistently with the distributional description made in 4.2, I am going to see how deictics (section 4.4.2), operators (section 4.4.3) and personal pronouns (section 4.4.4) choose their position in Id/As copular clauses. Section 4.4.5 is dedicated to Id/As sentences where both constituents are NPs. In the end, I am going to make some observations about the referential status of the argument introduced by the focus introducer *na* both in Id/As copular structures and in other sentence types (section 4.4.6). One terminological clarification: when I use the term "focus" I will just refer to new information focus, what many authors call "comment", as directly opposed to "topic". If I want to refer to contrastive focus, or to other types of

focalisation, I will specify each time. A further terminological clarification: from now on when I speak about *na* I will always distinguish between focus-introducer *na* and predicative *na*.

The pragmatically unmarked information structure sequence for lexical arguments in NigP is always TOPIC-FOCUS (see note 113 below for a clarification on the concept of *unmarkedness* intended here). This is valid whatever the nature of the constituents of the copular predication is[110], either they are personal pronouns, deictics, operators, NPs or PNs. I will give two relevant examples in 166 and 167.

In sentences like 166, *she* is the grammatical subject and the sentential topic, and I take here Lambrecht's (1994: 118) definition of topic as "the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is about"; in the same sentence, *di oga* is the focus, and I define focus through Lambrecht (1994: 207) as "that portion of a proposition which cannot be taken for granted at the time of speech. It is the unpredictable or pragmatically non-recoverable element in an utterance". In 166, *she* must be a character of the environment, visible, accessible or recoverable and *di oga* must be a characterization that adds relevant information to the speech act, it must be the new information transmitted.

166 She be di oga.
She COP DET oga
TOPIC COP-FOCUS[111]
'She is the boss.'

The same holds for sentence 167 (pronounced as an unmarked sentence) where *my wife* is the anchor to background information, the clausal topic, and *di oga* is used predicatively, as a characterization to be attributed to the topic. It is relevant here that from 166 to 167 the predicator has changed from *be* to

[110] I restrict my claim to Id/As copular clauses but the same is true for other types of predications.
[111] When I give two glosses the first is grammatical, the second pragmatic.

na, as it was explained in 4.2.1[112]:

167 My wife na di oga
POSS wife FOC DET oga
TOPIC na-FOCUS
My wife is the boss

I have shown in section 3.1.3 that when the referential status of subject and predicate is not differentiated through syntactic means (determinants or type of phrase), their referential weight remains recoverable thanks to their different pragmatic values. In the unmarked clause, topics (and thus subjects) are more referential than focus (or predicates).

subject -- topic -- more referential
predicate -- focus -- less referential

However, if the speakers already knew or spoke about "the boss" being in the surroundings and now just want to identify him or her, sentence in 168 below *may*[113] replace sentence in 166:

168 Na she [na im][114] be di oga
FOC she [COM] COP DET boss
FOC focus [COM] COP topic
'SHE is the boss!'[115]

In the same vein, 169 may replace 167:

[112] Thus, * *She na di oga* and * *My wife be di oga*.
[113] According to Lambrecht (1994: 15-17), the fact that a certain structure is defined as pragmatically unmarked merely means that it has "greater distributional freedom than alternative patterns and, as a corollary, that it has greater overall frequency of occurrence". In the second scenario sketched here, sentence in 168 is more appropriate but 166 would be also good with the right intonation or if the speaker has surely recognised the boss, say from her uniform.
[114] I take *na im* to be a grammaticalising item assuming the function of a complementiser. In other contexts, it performs as a conjunction (*Na im dem kom see say money no de*).
[115] In the right context and with the right intonation 28 could also be read as a sentence involving contrastive focus.

169 Na my wife [na im] be di oga

FOC POSS wife [COM] COP DET boss

FOC focus [COM] COP topic

'MY WIFE is the boss!'

4.4.1 *Be*, *na* and information structure's sequences.

The observation of the occurrences listed in the corpus and the analysis made here in section 4.3.1, suggest that the construction with predicative NA conveys a Topic-Focus sequence; also, *na* does not behave verbally and cannot assign nominative case to any constituent. The same observation also suggests that the constructions with BE as a predicator does primarily project an argument structure with a subject position to its left and an object position to its right. The predicator *be* is a full-fledged verb and it is able to assign nominative and accusative case to the constituents that occupy its argument structure. However, if one wants to observe how pragmatic elements get distributed in Id/As copular clause with *be*, one should notice that (putting aside sentences with personal pronoun as subjects, see section 4.4.4) the construction with *be* conveys a Focus-Topic sequence, in terms of information structure. This is given in Figure 5 below. This is consistent with the fact that the first constituent of the predications with *be* is obligatorily preceded by the focus introducer *na* (except personal pronouns). We have said in section 4.3 that nominal phrases are not allowed to occupy the subject position of Id/As copular clauses when *be* is the predicator (* *Im name be Maria*); however, one can adjust by adding the focus introducer *na* at the beginning (? *Na im name be Maria*), or by substituting the predicator (*Im name na Maria*). In order to understand how this sub-system works in NigP I am going to try all possible sequences of argument in examples 170- 174.

Figure 5

TOPIC	NA	FOCUS
FOCUS	BE	TOPIC

170 * Im name **be** Maria.
POSS name COP PN

171 ? **Na** im name **be** Maria. (<u>only contrastive</u> focus available)
FOC POSS name COP PN
na-FOCUS be-TOPIC
'Maria is her name, not her surname.'

172 Im name **na** Maria. (new info focus; a marked prosody may result in contrastive reading)
POSS name FOC PN
TOPIC na-FOCUS
'Her name is Maria'

173 Maria **na** im name. (new info focus; a marked prosody may result in contrastive reading)
TOPIC na-FOCUS
'Maria is her name.'

174 **Na** Maria **be** im name. (both focus reading available. redundant?)
FOC PN COP POSS name
na-FOCUS be-TOPIC
'MARIA is her name.'

Sentence in 170 results difficult to process because speakers would tend to interpret the first constituent as the topic of the predication, as it is in the unmarked case for all sentences, but *be* requires a focus in that position. Thus 171 should be correct, since it specifies that the constituent *im name* has to be taken as a focus. However, speakers have had much difficulty in recognizing it as a good sentence. Actually, in the first questionnaire, speakers marked as ungrammatical all sentences of this type (with a focus

marker introducing the *least* referential argument between the two, the predicate). I later realised that they were just not able to retrieve the contrastive focus reading from the example I gave (i.e. “Maria is her name, not her surname!”) because it was too marked in terms of pragmatic distribution. Thus, when the example was adequately contextualised, speakers recognised 171, but still stressed the fact that the same content could be better expressed with 173 with predicative *na* introducing new information focus (or contrastive focus but with a marked prosody). This is a key point and I will return to this in section 4.4.6. In sentence 172, instead, the same constituent (*im name*) is optimal in first position because predicative *na* implies a Topic-Focus sequence. In sentence 174, the focus introducer *na* can mark both a contrastive focus or a new-information focus. However, this construction is apparently losing its marked character, when prosody allows it, and it can be read as a pragmatically unmarked statement (pragmatically equivalent to 173). This is because in the system, both focus reading (new-info and contrast) on the most referential argument *Maria* can be conveyed through 172 (*Im name na Maria*). Sentence in 174 is pragmatically redundant. This redundancy may have led and guided the copula *be* in taking back its original grammatical / pragmatic structure Subject-Object / Topic-Focus. I will return to this in 4.4.6.

TOPIC	NA	FOCUS
FOCUS	BE	TOPIC

This analysis is consistent with the fact that the position to the right of *be* tends to attract some constituents which are extremely referential (and thus most times topics), such as deictics, as 4.4.2 will show. The analysis is also consistent with the fact that operators like WH interrogative pronouns always require to be in the focus position (either before *be* or after *na*, see 4.4.3). Personal pronouns prove to be a tougher case, and we will see them in 4.4.4.

4.4.2 Deictics in Id/As copular sentences

The preferred position of the deictic pronouns *dat*/*dis* in identificational copular sentences is definitely after *be*, but this is possible only if *na* introduces the first constituent (see 4.2.2 and examples 92-97 repeated as 175-180 below). This means, in my opinion, that in order to have a dislocated topic to the right, one should make sure to mark the first constituent as a focus:

175 **Na** the cheapest speaker for Alaba **be** dat, Wharfdale.
FOC DET cheapest speaker PREP PN COP that PN
'Those are the cheapest speakers in Alaba, Wharfdale.'

176 **Na** im style **be** dat now.
FOC POSS style COP that INT
'That's the way he is.'

177 Ehn, **na** the level **be** dat now.
INT FOC DET level COP that INT
'That's the point!'

178 **Na** one of the tins wey we dè do for Benin **be** dat.
FOC one PREP DET thing.PL REL we IPFV do PREP PN COP that
'That's one of the thing we usually do when we are in Benin City.'

179 **Na** di problem gangan **be** dat, abi you not fit see am?
FOC DET problem IDEO COP that TAG you NEG MOD see it
'That's the biggest problem, can't you see that?'

180 **Na** good question **be** dat!
FOC good question COP that
'That's a good question!'

Deictic pronouns/adjectives introduced by *na* are, at least, discouraged. They

are unattested in the corpus and judged ungrammatical by informants. In 175-180 above I showed that deictic pronouns are warmly accepted as topics after *be*. In the following two sets of sentences ("That -one- is a good question" and "That -one- is my child") I will show how demonstrative and deictics choose their position in Id/As copular clauses. In 181 and 185 below I show that deictic pronouns are ungrammatical in the focus position after focus-introducing *na* (not even the contrastive-focus reading fits); in 182 and 186 I show that deictic pronouns are ungrammatical in the focus position before *be* (see also section 4.2.2); in 183 and 187 I show that deictic pronouns are coldly[116] accepted as topics before predicative *na*; in 184 and 188 I show that NPs with deictic adjectives are warmly accepted as topics before predicative *na*.

181 * Na dat be good question
FOC that COP good question

182 * Dat be good question
that COP good question

183 ? Dat na good question
that FOC good question

184 Dat one na good question
that one FOC good question

185 * Na dat be my pikin
FOC that COP POSS child

186 * Dat be my pikin
that COP POSS child

187 ? Dat na my pikin

[116] Deictics are definetly attested in this positions. But speakers apparently prefer them after the copula *be*, with a first constituent introduced by *na*.

that FOC POSS child

188 Dat one na my pikin
that one FOC POSS child

Consequently, deictics are always topics and are virtually never introduced by *na* (*Dat na my pikin*; *Na my pikin be dat*). Pure deictic phrases are accepted only in the topic position after *be* (175-180), while deictic adjectives are fine also in the topic position before predicative *na* (184 and 188).

Certainly things can get slightly more complex as in 189, where we find a deictic in a (negated) focus position (before the predicator *be*). In this case, the sentence expresses the idea that 'there are *many* funny things about a certain bridge: one of these things has already been mentioned in discourse and the speaker makes clear that there are others'. Thus, *di funny tin about di bridge* is the clausal topic, which is correctly placed after the copula *be*; the focus, the non-retrievable information at the time of speaking, the new information added, is that there are *other* funny things (*no be only dat*), where *no be*, as I said in 4.2.8, is the negation of the focus introducer *na*:

189 a. **No be** only dat **be** di funny tin about di bridge
NEG.FOC only that COP DET funny thing PREP the bridge
'It's not only that which is the funny thing about the bridge'

An alternative to 189 (a) is given in 189 (b) where there is a sequence TOPIC na-FOCUS: *di funny tin about di bridge* is the topic, and *no be only dat* is the focus, correctly introduced by *no be*:

b. Di funny tin about di bridge/ **no be** only dat

4.4.3 Operators in Id/As copular sentences

If an operator such as an interrogative marker is one of the constituents of the predication, then it is placed in the focus position, after the focus introducer *na* (see also 4.2.3):

190 **Na** wetin **be** your industry?
FOC what COP POSS business
'What is your business?'

191 **Na** wetin **be** dat big horn on=top?
FOC what COP DET big horn ADV
'What is that big horn on your head?'

192 **Na** wetin **be** your name?
FOC what COP POSS name?
'What's your name?'

193 **Na** wetin comot from Jonathan mouth **be** dis.
FOC what come.out.PST PREP PN mouth COP this
'That's what came out from Jonathan's mouth.'

In this case, the focus introducer *na* is dropped most of the times in spoken discourse because the nature of the constituent itself tells other speakers that it cannot be a topic. In other words, Wh interrogative pronouns are easily processed as a focus also when they are not introduced by *na*[117]. Other ordering possibilities are given below as modifications of sentence in 190:

194 * **Na** your industry **be** wetin?

195 * Wetin **na** your industry?

196 Your industry **na** wetin?
POSS business FOC what
'Your business is what?'

[117] The occurrences where the focus introducer *na* precedes the Wh pronouns are far more numerous in the written part of the corpus (this is probably due to the intrinsic lack of prosodic and pragmatic information of written texts), while in the oral corpus this type of questions are virtually never introduced by the focus introducer *na* (prosody and contextualisation alone can convey the same stress).

Operators can only follow *na* (whether it is focus-introducer or predicative *na*), because they are always placed in the focus position (*Na wetin be dat*?; *Dat one na wetin*?).

4.4.4 Personal pronouns in Id/As copular sentences

Personal pronouns are a grammatical category that is set apart from others because they are unable to be processed as topics before predicative *na* (198 below, see also 4.2.1), and they are rarely placed as topics after *be* in constructions of the type exemplified here in 175-180 above. More precisely, they *can* in principle be placed in that position: they can take accusative case as objects and the informant has accepted 197 (a), but still they are unattested in the corpus as copular complements. Not one single personal object pronoun out of a 100.000 words corpus is attested in that position:

197 a. (Na) di people wey chop be os[118]
FOC DET people REL eat COP us
'We are the people who ate.'

As Faraclas points out 197 (b) would be ungrammatical because a personal pronoun in object position should bear nominal case:

b. * Dì pipul we chop bì wì.

The difficulty for personal pronouns to be placed in the topic position before predicative *na*, may be due to the fact that (a) they still bear case[119] and (b)

[118] This example is from Faraclas (1996: 44). The spelling has been adapted. The original example was without sentence-initial *na*; the informant has asked to add it to make the sentence more acceptable (which is consistent with the analysis proposed here).

[119] Table 19. Personal pronouns in NigP. Faraclas (1996: 176).

Person number	Free EP subject	Bound subject	Free EP object	Bound object	Possessive
1	mi	à	mi	mì	mà
2	yu	yù	yu	yù	yò
3	im	Ìm*	am	-am	ìm
4	wi	wì	os	òs	àwa
5	ùnà	ùnà	ùnà	ùnà	ùnà
6	dem	dèm	dem	dèm	dèm

they are easily, effortlessly, processed as topics in first position (subject position) before the copula *be*, as I said in 4.2.1 and exemplified in 198 (a and b) here. Personal pronouns can be focused with sentence initial *na* as in 198 (c):

198 a. I be Warri reggae master
b. * I na warri reggae master
c. Na me be Warri reggae master

This is confirmed with all the persons. Sentences 199-201 (a) are ungrammatical because the easiest way to have the personal pronoun in the topic position would be to put it as the first constituent, as 199-201 (b):

199	a. * **Na** di problem gan-gan **be** you.	b. You be di problem gan-gan.
200	a. * **Na** my family **be** us/we.	b. We be your family.
201	a. * **Na** tiefs **be** dem.[120]	b. Dem be tief.

Again, *na* could be placed before the subject to have classic structure Focus-Topic with *be* as the predicator, as in 199 (c)[121]:

199 c. **Na** you **be** di problem gan-gan

Recapitulating, if the subject is a personal subject pronoun in its nominative case, it forcibly requires the copula *be*. Henceforth, in this context, the personal subject pronoun would be the topic and the second constituent, whatever it is, would be the focus-predicate (198 a). If one wants to have the

* In my data *e* is used as an allomorph for the third person bound subject.

[120] However, an informant (I have to thank Vivian Eweka for this observation) pointed out that a sentence like 201 should just be reformulated as 201 (c) in order to be correct:
201 c. Na tiefs dem be.
I guess this is due to the fact that in 201 (c) the personal pronoun *dem* can be processed as grammatical subject, while it can't be processed as such when it is postponed after the copula *be*.

[121] The sentences in 202-204 are other examples from the corpus:
202 Na dem be di real owners
203 Na im be di tin
204 Na im be di best way to take get more of everything

personal pronoun as the focus, it would be enough to have it in the accusative case and add *na* before it (198 c). All constructions with a personal pronoun in the topic position after *be* and with an NP subject constituent introduced by *na* (see 199-201 a) create troubles to speakers and they are unattested in the corpus.

However, if the two constituents of the predication are say, a personal pronoun on one side, and a deictic pronoun/adjective on the other side, then the linguistic structure forces to process the personal pronoun as the focus and the deictic as the topic (because of relative referential weight):

205	* I be dat (one)	= cannot use deictic in the focus position
206	Na me be dat (one)	= *na* introduces the focused personal pronoun and *be* introduces the topical deictic
207	* Dat (one) be me o	= cannot use deictics in focus position before *be*
208	Dat (one) na me o	= *na* introduces the focused personal pronoun and the deictic is in the topic position before *na*.

4.4.5 Id/As copular sentences when both constituents are NPs

Things get interesting when both constituents are NPs. In this case the chosen predicator would be *na* as outlined in this chapter and shown in 209:

209 a. My sister **na** doctor
DET sister FOC doctor
TOPIC na-FOCUS
'My sister is a doctor'

b. * My sister **be** doctor

In 209 (a) the topic is "my sister" and the focus is "doctor". One can easily move the focus by simply adding the focus introducer *na* at the beginning and accordingly changing the copula into *be* (209 c)

209 c. **Na** my sister **be** doctor

FOC POSS sister COP doctor

'It's my sister who is a doctor (not my brother).'

209 (a and c) may be used in discourse alternatively, in certain contexts, but each of them has a certain distribution that the other does not cover (see note 113). 209 (a) may be used to simply assert *my sister*'s profession, but also to stress the fact that she is really A DOCTOR, in case the interlocutor did not know that, or against whatever assumption the interlocutor may have. As I said, the focus is on the copular complement. Sentence in 209 (c) can be used to assess that SHE, and not anyone else, is a doctor. As I said, the focus is on the first constituent introduced by *na*. It is relevant to note that sentence in 209 (d) is ungrammatical[122]:

209 d. * **Na** doctor **be** my sister

Na does not tolerate to focalise non-referential items, at least not in the context of Id/As sentences when both constituents are NPs, where the most referential item, the topic, is dislocated to the right. I can only guess that this is a mechanism for language to avoid unnecessary redundancy: in fact, if one wants to use the NP *doctor* as a focus, one should simply use 209 (a). 209 (d) is redundant in the system. This is true not only for sentences of the ascriptive type, where the copular complement (e.g. *doctor*) is evidently less referential than the copular subject (e.g. *my sister*), but it also holds for identificational sentences where the two constituents are both determined, as in 210:

210 a. Femi na di oga (new-info focus and contrastive focus available)

PN FOC DET boss

'Femi is the boss.'

b. Na Femi be di oga (only contrastive focus available)

[122] Or, at least, speakers point to another sentence as more appropriate: 209 (a) *My sister na doctor*.

FOC PN COP DET boss

'FEMI is the boss.'

c. ? Na di oga be Femi

The same explanation in terms of language economy given to explain the ungrammaticality of 209 (d) holds for 210 (c). The constituent *the oga* is already in the focus position in 210 (a) and the contrastive reading is available in 210 (a) if prosody allows it.

As a complicating factor, I show in 211 and 212 the effect of deictics and personal pronouns, both extremely referential. In both cases, the grammatical nature of such constituents determine that less-referential constituents like *tiefs* and *problem* can be placed in a focused position after *na*, in a sentence where the main predicator is *be*. Note, however, that 209 (d) and 210 (c) were not accepted:

211 Na tiefs [naim] dem be.[123] (only contrastive reading available)

FOC thief.PL [COM] they COP

'They are THIEVES (Thieves, that's what they are)'

212 Na problem be dat (one) o.

FOC problem COP that (one)

'That's A PROBLEM (A problem, that's what it is)'

On one hand, 211 is accepted because the corresponding sentence in 211 (b) is ungrammatical. The economy of the system this time allows the least referential argument to be introduced by the focus marker *na*, because it could not be introduced as a focus by predicative *na* (which does not tolerate personal pronouns as topics).

[123] As already note in section 4.2.1, 213 is ungrammatical.
213 * Na tiefs [naim] be dem.
The pronoun *dem* has to be placed before the copula *be* to receive nominative case as the grammatical subject. In 211 it is also a topic.

211 b. * Dem na tiefs

On the other hand, 212 is accepted because deictics are preferably placed by speakers in the topic position after *be*, and thus this factor is over-ranked with respect to the preference for *na* to introduce the most referential argument among the two.

4.4.6 *Na* as a subject introducer in Id/As copular sentences

For the reasons illustrated above, *na* as a focus marker has developed a preference in introducing the most referential argument between the two NP constituents in Id/As copular constructions. This general observation is especially true for those cases where the two constituents of the predication are both NPs. It is correct to note that this goes against its role as a focus introducer, since constituents in the focus position are associated with predicates in unmarked sentences, and thus are normally less referential than the subject/topic (see section 3.1.3).

My claim here is that *na* is going to undergo further grammaticalisation in initial sentence position as a subject introducer. This cannot be confirmed by the speakers' intuitions and cannot even be confirmed by the totality of the occurrences in the corpus because *na* keeps performing the role of contrastive-focus introducer, of information-focus introducer and also keeps its role in cleft formations. However, two observations can be made to sustain this claim:

1) *Na* is extremely frequent. It is the 15th most frequent word in the data with a total of 1416 occurrences in a 100.000 words corpus. The frequency of use may have led the item to lose some of its inherent marked/emphatic character. In many occurrences the focusing power of *na* is not perceivable. In 214, for instance, the speaker has just finished speaking about one important issue and, before introducing a second one, he states:

214 Na im **be** the first problem.
FOC it COP DET first problem

'That's the first problem.'

Na still requires personal pronouns in their emphatic or accusative form as its arguments. But given the discourse context in 214, one would imply that the one introduced by *na* is better seen as the topic than the focus of the clause.

In 215 the speaker is acting the role of a discourse character. The story is about some "confidence tricksters" who collected taxes from people living in some lands around Lagos, pretending they were *Omonile* (Yoruba for "land owners"). Once taken to the traditional court in front of the *Baale* ("traditional kings"), these "con tricksters" were asked to justify their behaviour by telling to which *Omonile* (land owning) family they belong. Since they were impostors, according to the speaker's line of reasoning, they would lie and say:

215 Na me be di friend of dat family
FOC me COP DET friend PREP that family
'I am the friend of that family (of land owners)'

There is no focus on the personal pronoun *me* in 215. And the corpus is plenty of similar examples. The marked nature of the construction is fading away. I showed two examples with personal pronouns as the constituent introduced by *na*, but I will show different constituent's types in the next point.

2) The second relevant observation is in line with the thesis exposed in the preceding paragraph, namely that *na* prefers to introduce *the most referential* element between the two constituents in copular sentences (4.4.5). Even when the two constituents have the same referential weights (determined on syntactic grounds - type of phrase and level of definiteness) *na*, as an introducing particle, tends to precede the subject/most referential constituent in the sentences and *not* the predicate/less referential constituent. Some examples include:

216 Na dis place gan gan be di place wey all di powerful people de.
FOC DET place IDEO COP DET place REL all DET powerful people EX.LOC
'This very place is the place where all the powerful people are.'

217 Everibodi gree say na lottery be di best option to use.
everybody agree COM FOC lottery COP DET best option to use
'Everybody agrees on the fact that the lottery is the best option to use.'

218 Na di lords be di winners always.
FOC DET lord.PL COP DET winner.PL ADV
'The lords are always the winners.'

219 Na Vulture be di one wey get better behaviour.
FOC Vulture COP DET one REL have better behaviour
'Vulture is the one that had the best behaviour.'

220 Na my daughter be di number tri student from di right.
FOC POSS daughter COP DET number three student PREP DET right
'My daughter is the student number three from the right.'

221 Na music be my work.
FOC music COP POSS work
'Music is my work.'

222 Na everibodi be winner, young man.
FOC everybody COP winner young man
'Everybody is a winner, young man.'

This is not a phenomenon restricted to copular clauses since any type of subject constituent can virtually be introduced by *na* in the variety of NigP under examination. One could also claim that *na* is used to put the subject in the focus position, and that this is becoming the unmarked

option in NigP:

223 Na everibodi win prize of five bucks!
FOC everybody win prize PREP five buck.PL
'Everybody wins a prize of five dollars!'

224 Na everibodi gò get all di cows together.
FOC everybody IRR get all DET cow.PL ADV
'Everybody will get all the cows together.'

However (and this syntactic text is crucial), *na* cannot introduce a subject constituent in the context of answers given to direct questions[124]. For example:

225 Wetin Fide kom sell for Lagos?
what PN PFV sell PREP PN
(*Na) im kom sell plenty mangos.
FOC he PFV sell plenty mango.PL
'What did Fide sell in Lagos? He sold plenty of mangos.'

To sum up, I claimed in 4.4.1 that *be* and *na* as predicators entail two different information structure sequences. The sequences were identified as being:

TOPIC **na**-FOCUS (~~be-TOPIC~~)
na-FOCUS **be**-TOPIC

This was done (a) using the positions of deictics and operators in constructions with *be* as the predicator; (b) noting that the constituent before *be* must be preceded by the focus introducer *na* (except it is a personal pronoun in its nominative case), and (c) through the assessment of the process which lead to the reanalysis of *na* as a predicator in between two

[124] I thank Prof. Paola Benincà for this suggestion.

NPs, after the elision of the copular sentence (with *be*) on the right.

However we saw that, when it is possible, constituents adapt to the fact that *be* functions first and foremost as a predicator with a standard argument structure Subject-Object (which then corresponds to an unmarked sequence Topic-Focus). Sentences with personal pronouns in the subject position demonstrate this because they conform to a Topic-Focus sequence and they require the personal pronouns to stand always to the left of *be*, where they can receive their nominative case (201 a).

Also, the analysis of Id/As copular sentences with both NP constituents has shown that the construction with *be* is not primarily concerned with information structure, since the ordering of constituents around the copula BE is mainly due to the identification of the grammatical subject and object in an SVO language. The most referential constituent is preferably placed to the left of *be* (and it is preceded by *na* even when there is no focus to be marked); the less referential constituent is placed to the right of *be*, as a predicate. This leads to the conclusion that *na* is losing its pragmatic valence in favour of a more grammaticalised function as a subject introducer. Of course, such a claim would require a detailed corpus study to attest if quantitatively the percentage of sentence-introducer *na* without pragmatic strength is enough to sustain the claim of its grammaticalisation.

4.5 Emerging copulas and pragmatic sources

Many typological works on copula distribution have shown that discourse-oriented and pragmatic structures are a very common source for the emergence of particle with copular characteristics. Pustet (2003: 54) cites Stassen (1997: 85) while suggesting that copular particles may originate as "markers of discourse-oriented categories such as topicalization, backgrounding, or contrastive focus for subjects or predicates." However, language change is attested also in the opposite sense. Belletti (2005: 66, in a note at the bottom of the page) points out that, interestingly, "in a language which disposes of a (new information) Focus marker, such as Somali, the

focus particle has been analyzed as derived from an original copula + 3rd person (clitic) pronoun, i.e. the structure of a cleft":

226 *ak + y+ aa (> ayaa) Frascarelli & Puglielli (2007)
be 3sgm PRES

Information structure in discourse is built upon some very basic categories such as topic and focus (which is called "comment" by many authors). Some recent work from Bambini & Torregrossa has shown how primitive such structures are and how deeply they relate to the most simple forms of predication: in fact Bambini & Torregrossa (2009, 2010) suggest that "children do exploit topic/comment structures to express predication, being still unequipped with syntactic tools, i.e., subject/predicate structures". The two authors further state: "If this line of research is correct, topic/comment structures would represent more basic forms of expressing predication than subject/predicate structures, as assumed by some authors with reference not only to child language but also to second language and pidgin varieties".

When a language originates, in first language acquisition, in second language acquisition, in pidginisation or in creolisation, its very original essence must show in some way, and much research in linguistics has been conducted in these areas in order to uncover that very essence; actually, the basic mechanisms of language, which may be blatantly revealed in those contexts, should be the same mechanisms at work in ordinary language change and variation. This is the line of reasoning I would like to embrace here, as a corollary of the uniformitarian principle postulating that forces at work nowadays in linguistic contact and change are the same forces that have been working throughout the past (Labov 1972b). In this vein, it may result very natural for speakers to use only information structure's category to express basic[125] predicational structures. Sentences in 149-152 are structures with a very simple syntactic chain of arguments: there are just two

[125] The term basic here refers to the fact that (a) we are speaking Id/As copular clauses only and that (b) this domain is further restricted to affirmative, present or tenseless contexts.

constituents, one after the other, in their unmarked sequence (Topic-Focus).

Actually, it is not uncommon for pragmatic particles or, generally, for items with a great pragmatic potential to be reanalysed as copular items. This regards in general deictic or personal pronouns as both Stassen and Li & Thompson (1977: 420f) recognise. Stassen (1997: 76, 95-96 and 612) states that the verbalisation of copulas should be seen as the final stage of the grammaticalisation process by which pronouns and discourse particles are reanalysed as abstract linking morphemes in predicate nominal sentences"[126]. When this is the case, copulas should be seen as lexical items that originate from nonverbal discourse-marking elements. According to Stassen, this process is especially frequent in African languages, e.g. Temne, Zande and Gola, to mention but a few. Li & Thompson (1977: 420ff) focus directly on the very type of mechanism I described above for NigP, namely the development of a copular item via topicalisation (see section 4.3.1). This process has occurred in other languages than NigP, such as Mandarin, Hebrew, Palestinian Arabic, Wappo (American-Indian language from actual California) and Zway (Semitic language from Ethiopia). However, in all the languages examined by Li & Thompson, the etymological origin of the equative copula is pronominal, while in NigP the origin is the focus marker *na* (but see section 4.6 to trace back a pronominal origin for the copula *na*).

Mandarin had zero copula in identificational context (NP Ø NP). *Shì* was a demonstrative pronoun, which developed some copular function through the reanalysis in topic-comment structures:

[126] However, this is just one among the possible sources for copulas, according to Stassen.

Topic	Comment			Subject	Predicate
NP	*shì*	NP	→	NP	*shì* NP

this/that
referring to
the topic

Thus, these topic-comment constructions set the stage for reanalysis. *Shì* went from anaphoric pronoun in topic-comment sentences, to copula in equative sentences via topicalization. Li & Thompson (1977: 426) provide the sentence in 227, which was produced in the 1st century AD, with a copular *shì* in its fully grammaticalised form. They also provide an almost identical sentence from the 6th-7th century BC, which displayed zero copula in that same position.

227 Yú shì suǒ jià fū-ren zhǐ fù yě
I be nominalizer marry woman genitive father decl.particle
'I am the father of the married woman.'

Furthermore, later on in the 6th century AD, there was no trace of the demonstrative use of *shì* anymore[127]. At that time, the reanalysis was completed. The change took around 1.000 years. This is a quite 'normal' time-span when one thinks about language change. NigP is a pidgin/creole whose age should be no more than four hundred years if we want to trace the language back to the very first contact between English and African tradesmen in the 17th century (section 1.3.1); the emerging of *da*/*na* as a copula in Sranan, as we will see in section 4.6 is attested in the first half of the 19th century (for example in Wullschlaegel's *Grammatik* of 1854). Many

[127] The loss of the original function of the item does not happen all the time and it does not represent a crucial step of the grammaticalisation path either. Hebrew kept both the pronominal and the copular functions of its *hu* and *ze* (Li & Thompson 1977).

authors think a sort of cycle in copula change can be observed. Li & Thompson (1977: 437) undoubtedly see the diachronic development of copulas as a cyclic event:

> "Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic are a good case in point: having just done away with the inherited copula verb (Hebrew, *h-y-y*; P. Arabic, *k-n*) in the present tense, they are now developing a present-tense copula from a pronoun. Thus, it seems that the emergence and the decline of the copula may be seen as a diachronic cycle. The cycle is clearly very complex. For instance, a language may have more than two copula verbs depending on the tense, suggesting the overlap of several diachronic processes in the emergence and decline of copula verbs."

This fits with what has been said about NigP, which shows two different elements in the copula slot in the Id/As domain. In the same vein, and from a very different theoretical perspective, Lohndal (2009) states in the introduction of his paper *The Copula Cycle*:

> "It is well-known that copulas often emerged from demonstratives and pronouns historically. The present paper argues that copulas change cyclically. The cycle is understood through a formal theory of grammaticalization."

In the next section I will consider some data from Sranan with the aim (a) to show how similar this two languages are in the domain of Id/As copular sentences and (b) to add some time-depth to the development of the copular item *na* in NigP.

4.6 The development of the equative copula *da*/*na* in Sranan

In this paragraph I am concerned with the copular system of Sranan, a creole language from Surinam, undoubtedly somehow related to NigP (section 1.3).

The analysis made by Arends (1989) about the development and the synchronic status of the copular system in Sranan is strikingly similar to the outline I made here about the respective areas of grammar in NigP. Also,

Arends' survey adds a small piece to the puzzle when he postulates that modern Sranan *na* is a later development of early Sranan *da*, which in turn is a deictic pronoun (*datti* → "that"). Consequently, if we assume *na* arrived in NigP through Sierra Leonian Krios (whose language came from the New World), and maybe *da* arrived in Surinam from Africa[128], then we can conclude that the origin of this copular item, in NigP and in Sranan, is ultimately pronominal, in line with many of the attested copula cycles described in the literature on diverse languages, e.g. in Li & Thompson (1977).

The copular system of Sranan is composed more or less in the same way as it is in NigP. In Table 20 below, I propose a classification based on Arends (1986):

Table 20. Sranan copulas

Type	**English example**	**Sranan**
EXISTENTIAL/ LOCATIVE	My friend is there	de
ATTRIBUTIVE	My friend is cute	Ø copula / de
IDENTIFICATIONAL/ ASCRIPTION	My friend is the boy with the hat	**Da (na/a)[129] - de**

Da (and *na* or *a* in its modern variants) is the preferred copula in sentence initial position in Sranan, according to Arends (1986: 106) and it "functions in a way quite similar to French *c'est*", as in 228-230[130]:

228 Da foe mi. 'It's mine.'
COP for me

[128] This is purely speculative. It is however irrelevant, for the purpose of this work, to uncover the very place and date where *da*/*na* has originated, how it spread out or when it underwent phonetic change.
[129] *Na* and *a* are later developments of the sentence-introducing/equative copula *da* in Sranan. According to Arends (1986: 110), copular *na* was attested in Sranan from the "very first natively written source at our disposal (Cesaari 1836-37: 280) onwards". The change *da* → *na* was later extended also to the determiner *da* ("the").
[130] For all the Sranan examples provided in this section consult Arends (1986 and 1986) for the original sources.

229 Da so. 'That's right.'
COP so

230 Da mi, Filida. 'It's me, Filida.'
COP me PN

In old Sranan *datti* was a demonstrative pronoun (i.e. "that"), from which derived the form *da*, with the loss of the final syllable -*ti*. As a consequence to this change, it happened that (a) *da* was restricted to the role of definite article (b) demonstratives were expressed via circum-nominal constructions of the type DEFINITE ARTICLE - NOUN - DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN (e.g. *a man dati* - "that man"), and finally (c) *da* was used in sentence-initial position as an introducing copula. A plausible context that would have facilitated reanalysis of sentence initial *da~~tti~~* as an introducing copula is given by Arends (1986: 107) and it dates back to 1783. The example is reported here in 231:

231 Datti da soma, dissi ju de suku.
that the person that you IPFV seek[131]
'That's the person you are looking for.'

Arends points out that, in 231, *datti* is not yet reanalysed as an sentence-introducing copula (it has not even lost the second syllable yet): here one should posit a case of zero copula. However, given the use of sentence-initial *da* already attested throughout the 18th century, as in 228-230, "its use as an equative copula, placed between subject and predicate, can be derived historically from this primary [sentence-introducing] function through topicalization" (Arends 1986: 107):

232 'Adjabre', da Djutongo

[131] I left Arends' gloss but I substituted the abbreviation for the imperfective aspect with the one used throughout this work and listed in the Abbreviation's sheet.

adjabre that(-is) Djutongo

'(The word) "adjabre", is Djutongo.'[132]

Arends goes on and states: "Here [232] the carefully placed comma designates the pause that is so typical of this kind of construction. The development is completed when, still later, this resumptive *da* is reanalysed as a regular copula in non-topicalized sentences", like 233:

233 Da soma da wan boen soma.

'That person is a good person'

As soon as the second half of the 19th century (233 is attested in an anonymous text known as *Grammatik* of 1854[133]), *da* is not anymore a demonstrative in Sranan: it performs as a determinate article and as an equative/introducing copula only. What matters here is that *da* was reanalysed as an equative copula in Sranan via topicalisation, which is the same process I postulated for NigP *na* (see 4.3.1).

This is extremely relevant for the issue of the synchronic distribution of *da/na* in modern Sranan, as well for the distribution of *na* in NigP, because, as Arends (1986: 108f) notes "If this deictic, pronominal origin is correct, a number of synchronic problems connected with its use as a copula disappear":

- *Da*/*na* in Sranan, as *na* in NigP, cannot be negated since it cannot be preceded by *no*. In Sranan the negative marker can follow the copula *da*/*na* or, alternatively, the locative copula *de(e)* takes over to bear the negation (*no de*). This is very similar to what happens in NigP where the negative counterpart of sentence-introducing/equative copula *na* is *no be*.
- *Da*/*na* cannot be tensed or infinitivised. *Da* in past contexts

[132] Meaning: "the word 'adjabre' is a word from the language named Djutongo". According to Smith (1987: 125-127), as reported in Arends (1989: 27), Djutongo should not be equated with Saramaccan (one of the modern Surinamese creoles), because it refers to the mixed Portuguese-English creole, which was its predecessor.

[133] *Grammatik*, Anonymous 1984. Kurzgefasste Neger-Englische Grammatik. Bautzen. Reprinted (1965). Amsterdam: S. Emmering.

becomes *ben de*; *da* in future/irrealis contexts becomes *sa de*. *Da* cannot follow modal verbs such as *moe* ("must") because only *moe de* ("must be") is attested in Sranan. Again, this is exactly what happens in NigP as described in 4.2.8, with the exception that, in NigP, the defective paradigm of *na* is completed by the copular item *be* (and not, as in Sranan, by the locative copula *de* - which however exists also in NigP, but with a different distribution, see Chapters 5 and 6).

- *Da*/*na* seems unable to be preceded by personal pronouns in their nominative forms in both early and modern Sranan. According to Arends (1989: 31) the collocations **a da* and **a na* are unattested in his corpus, while *hem da* (early Sranan) and *en na* (modern Sranan) are grammatical, attested and do not require an emphatic reading, as shown in 234:

234 En na datra.
'He/she is a doctor.'

However, I must note here that the explanation given by Arends to this respect is different in nature from the one I provided here in 4.3.1 for the very similar behaviour of *na* in NigP. I claimed that personal pronouns in their nominative form could not be preceded by *na* because: (a) *na* is not verb "enough" to project an argument structure and thus to assign nominative case to a subject and (b) the constituent preceding *na* should be regarded as a topic, thus bearing accusative form[134]. Arends (1989: 32), on the other side, claims that the neuter form of the third personal pronoun, *a*, could not be used before *da*/*na* in Sranan because this pronominal neuter form was historically derived from the same demonstrative pronoun *da*(*tti*): "in that case both forms [*a* and *da*] would be (at least diachronically) identical, and, as is well known, languages tend to avoid the direct

[134] The difference in Arends' and my analysis ultimately bears on the fact that Arends does not apparently consider *da*/*na* to be focus introducer in Sranan, which I do for NigP.

succession of identical forms."

Ndyuka (another creole of Suriname) has a copular system very similar to that of Sranan, which consequently shows some similarities with NigP too. One should consult the grammar of Huttar & Huttar (1994: 137) to get some deeper insights.

4.7. Final remarks

In this chapter I described the variation within the domain of Id/As copular sentences in NigP, encompassing the categories of ascriptive, specificational, equational sentences and general categorizations. Within this domain NigP has two lexical items, the traditional copula *be* (etymologically related to the English verb "to be") and the particle *na*, which is in principle a focus introducer and which is employed in Id/As copular contexts where both arguments are nominal. Some relevant issues raised by the discussion in the preceding paragraphs are:

1. Could *na* be considered a copula? Could it be considered a verb? Does it project an argument structure?
2. Is the distribution of *na* complementary to that of *be*?
3. Can we speak of a grammaticalisation path for the item *na* from focus marker to copula? Can we speak of a grammaticalisation path from focus marker to subject introducer?
4. Should we postulate the existence of two different lexical entries *na*, one for the focus introducer and the other for the copula?

I will address these questions in the following paragraphs.

4.7.1 Predicative *na*

Be and *na* occur approximately with the same frequency throughout the corpus but their distribution is complementary in the variety of NigP under analysis here (2.5). In fact, I discussed in 4.2 the distribution issue and concluded that they have a fairly neat complementary distribution. In 4.3 I

focused on the contexts where *na* has superseded *be* as a predicator in copular contexts, namely in present tense or tenseless, affirmative clause with NP subjects. While my data are definitely consistent and informants are self-confident about their judgements in ruling out as ungrammatical 235 (a) below, Faraclas' grammar (1996: 48) clearly states that 235 (a and b) are both possible and equivalent.

235	a. Dat woman	**be**	sister	-- >	b. Dat woman	**na**	sister
	SBJ	COP	OBJ		TOPIC	?	FOCUS
	'That woman is a nun'				'That woman is a nun'		

I will further discuss this issue in section 7.3, but it is still needed to mention that Faraclas collected his data in the mid 80s, in the city of Port Harcourt while I collected mine in the Western regions of Nigeria in 2007.

In section 4.3.1, I described in detail the kind of process that I postulated having originated the construction with predicative *na*. A syntactic reanalysis of the element has surely taken place, and this is corroborated by the fact that the occurrences with the traditional copula *be* are no longer accepted.

4.7.2 *Na* is not a verbal item

Na has substituted *be* in sentences where two NPs are linked in Id/As copular clauses: faced with the two sentences in 235, informants systematically express their preference in favour of 235 (b). Not one occurrence of copular *be* is attested in this context throughout the corpus. Sentences in 235 (a and b) were acceptable in the mid 80s in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, but today, in Lagos and Benin City, speakers use and prefer 235 (b).

However, the presence of an argument structure in the sentence 235 (b) is, at least, dubious. It would be inappropriate to account for the constituents in 235 (b) as "subject" and "object", as it would be inappropriate to claim the verbal status of *na*. A non-verbal copula is not problematic at all. Actually, most of the world languages do not have verbal copulas (Pustet

2003: 54)[135]. However, in the descriptive task I set here, it is relevant to ascertain the status of the lexical entry. I can make three observations:

1. *Na* can occur only if the subject is an NP or a personal pronoun in its accusative form (this does not hold for all the persons in the paradigm though), so that, according to my analysis, speakers would be able to process these constituents as topics. Personal pronouns in their nominative forms cannot precede *na*. For example, 236 is ungrammatical because *na* is not able to assign nominative case:

236 * I na lady

2. If the topic is contextually available, it may be omitted from the predication. *Na* has some presentative functions, as in 237 (a), where it performs, more or less, the same role of French "c'est". I assumed that the origin of this construction has to be traced in the ellipsis that involved the copular item *be* and the sentential topic to its right as in 237 (b):

237	a. Na video, abi?	b. Na video (be dat), abi?
	na video TAG	FOC video COP that-TOPIC TAG
	Is it a video-recorder, isn't it?	Is it a video-recorder, isn't it?

In 237 (b) we have a regular NigP construction with a predicator (the copula *be*) preceded by a focused constituent (the predicate *video*) and followed by the deictic subject *dat* ("that"). This is assumed to be the origin of the construction. However, given the fact that today's NigP has developed a preference for 235 (b) over 235 (a) as said above, and given that 235 (b) should be considered, between the two, the full, correct and only proper sentence in modern western metropolitan NigP, then we should assume there to be a null topic position to the left of *na* in 237 (a), as exemplified in

[135] Also Berman and Grosu (cited in Li & Thompson 1977: 431) show that there are several respects in which the copula *hu* in Hebrew does not behave like a verb, which suggests that having become a copula does not necessarily entail having become a verb.

237 (c and d) below:

237 c. (Distin) na video? d. (…) Na video?
this.thing-TOPIC na video (TOPIC) na video
This thing, is it a video-recorder?

In case the topic is contextually accessible it would drop; if *na* were a verb it would require the expletive subject *e*, since null subjects are not normally allowed in NigP.

3. Na does not bear any form of verbal morphology. *Na* occurs in sentences that are affirmative, indicative, present tense or tenseless; *be* occurs in all other contexts (negative, subjunctive, past, future, irrealis, interrogatives[136]).

To conclude, *na* performs as an equative copula in contexts where it links two noun phrases; it has superseded the use of *be* when the sentence is affirmative, present and indicative; the distribution of the two items is complementary. A reanalysis has certainly concerned *na*, and this process that has led the focus marker *na* to behave predicatively (4.3). However, this copular particle is not verbal, since it cannot assign nominative case to any element, it does not project an argument structure (the constituents are pragmatically coded), cannot bear verbal morphology and does not require expletive subjects. *Na* is a non-verbal copula.

4.7.3 How many lexical entries for the item *na*?

At this point I should consider the hypothesis that the focus introducer *na* and the copular *na* represent two different lexical entries in modern NigP. While I was reviewing some judgements given by informants in questionnaires, I noticed that two similar sentences, given here in 238 and 239, were systematically judged differently:

238 * Na Kenna wey show me.
FOC Kenna REL show me

[136] *Na* can be used in simple interrogative clauses if the Wh element remains in situ, as we saw in 4.2.3 and 4.4.3.

239 Na di boy wey los im toy.

COP DET boy REL lost.PAST DET toy

'That's the boy who lost his toy.'

The two sentences were elaborated starting from similar occurrences in the corpus and then proposed to informants: in 238 I meant to say "It's Kenna who showed it to me" and in 239 I meant to say "That's the boy who lost his toy". The two sentences attracted my attention just because they were judged differently: 238 is not a good sentence in NigP and 239 is a good sentence. The analysis of this minimal pair revealed many things, and not only about *na*. Actually, the first clue is about the status of the item *wey*, analysed as a relative pronoun by Faraclas (1996: 36). The introducer of relative clauses *wey*, which is insensitive to the semantic features of the antecedent (± animate), is not a pronoun but a relative complementiser and like the complementiser *that* in English, it can only introduce restrictive relative clauses[137]. *Wey* cannot function as a full pronoun, which would be the function it is called to perform in 238: informants have suggested either the composed particle *na im* as in 238 (a) or a null complementiser as in 238 (b) to take its place:

238 a. Na Kenna na im show me

FOC PN FOC it show.PST me

'It's Kenna who showed it to me'

238 b. Na Kenna show me

[137] *Wey* also have a locative/temporal intrinsic meaning such as the English pronoun *where*/*when*. Agheyisi (1971: 65) confirms the semantically neutral character of *wey* by saying: "[…] because of the semantic neutrality or non-specificity of we (*wey*), it depends entirely on its Head-noun for both its feature content and specific semantic interpretation". Also, Eze (1980: 105) calls it a relative pronoun but states: "By virtue of its simplicity, 'wey' is capable of a variety of uses in complex sentences. Its basic function is to modify an NP in a sentence which contains an "intermittent" relative or subordinate clause. However, due to its structural deficiency, 'wey' draws no semantic distinction between animate and inanimate 'antecedent' nouns."

FOC PN show.PST me

'Kenna showed it to me'

The second clue offered by this example is about the item *na im*: I take the informants' suggestion in 238 (a) to be a proof on the grammaticalised status of *na im* as a pronoun.

Getting to the point, the main issue I want to discuss here is about the difference between 238 and 239. Given the fact that the relative complementiser *wey* can function only as a restrictive relative subordinator and not as a pronoun, the string introduced by *na* in 238, *Kenna wey show me*, is unanalysable as a constituent. Thus informants automatically interpret *na* as a focus introducer, but then need to substitute *wey* with a proper pronoun like *na im* (or with zero). On the other side, the string introduced by *na* in 239, *di boy wey los im toy*, is a proper constituent and represents the focus of a copular predication; within this constituent the relative complementiser *wey* is properly used to build a restrictive relative; informants could interpret the introducing *na* as a copular item with predicative strength ("that is"), where the topic position is not expressed:

239 b. [That one over there] [pinpointing] NA [di boy wey los im toy]

TOPIC COP DET boy REL lose.PAST DET toy

In this way I have shown that in NigP there are two different lexical entries under *na* and speakers clearly distinguish the two since they entail radically different structures.

4.7.4 The importance of information structure's categories

The importance of information structure's categories for the analysis of copular constructions in NigP was stressed throughout this chapter (in particular in 4.4). Many authors have noted the same. Higgins (1974: 192) expresses in this way the doubts and problems that have occupied his mind while elaborating his fortunate four-way taxonomy of copular clauses:

"The factor which seems to be important in copular sentences is

more often a distinction between what is known and is familiar and what is not known and not familiar. Because of this, the copular sentence plays an essential role in the communication of new information about known things […]."

For reasons that are probably structural as well as accidental, the equative copulas *be* and *na* in NigP have come to establish different pragmatic structures in this respect. But this is not new to languages. Green (2004: 3), in her most recent work claims that:

"[…] Although languages may vary with respect to the syntactic category and distribution of copular elements, there is something which all these constructions have in common which is frequently overlooked in the literature: there is often a designated focus position in copular sentences, which may have consequences for how we view the syntactic structure of this sentence type."

Green analyses all types of copular sentences in Hausa within the Minimalist framework (Chomsky 1995) and her results, to the extent they are relevant here, can be summarised as follows. Copular sentences in Hausa are best analysed if one presupposes a focus projection, of which the non-verbal copula *n ē / c ē* is the functional head. In the unmarked case, the subject coincides with the topic and the predicate coincides with the focus.

We said in section 4.4 that the unmarked sequence for information structure arguments in copular clauses in NigP is Topic-Focus. We also said that copular clauses with *na* as the predicator embody a Topic-Focus sequence and that predicative *na* does not establish an argument structure (i.e. is unable to assign nominative case). On the other hand, copular clauses with *be* are primarily concerned with a grammatical argument structure with a subject placed on its left and on object placed on its right; however, for a bunch of reasons (sections 4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.4.3, 4.4.4) the pragmatic sequence associated with copular sentences with *be* is Focus-Topic. By the way, the strong grammatical function of *be* is probably exerting some pressure on the nature of the focus introducer *na*, which obligatorily introduces all the first arguments of the constructions with *be* (except if they are personal

pronouns). In 4.4.6, I stated that this syntactic pressure may lead *na* to introduce more and more often the subject constituent to the left of *be*, instead of the predicate-focus. I have shown that nominal constituents can occupy the first position in copula clauses with *be* only if *na* precedes them (240):

240 *(Na) my fada be doctor.
'My father is a doctor.'

I also noticed the impossibility for the less referential constituent between the two, in this case the predicate *doctor*, to be placed before *na*:

241 * Na doctor be my father.

In the end, I noticed the tendency for the introducer *na* to always precede the more referential item within the clause, the topic, the subject of the predication, without any marked character being present in discourse (216-224). This was taken, speculatively, as a clue to envisage a further reanalysis of the item *na* as a subject introducer in copular clauses, but of course this would need a thorough quantitative corpus study to check the pragmatic nature and the referential value of all the constituents introduced by the focus introducer *na* in copular clauses.

5. The lexical item DE and its functions

This chapter will discuss some issues concerned with the lexical item DE in NigP. I will use capital letters to refer to this item every time I intend to mention at one time its role in existential sentences, its broad locative use, its copular use and its diverse functions as an imperfective marker.

DE is a pan-Atlantic creole feature that one can find in virtually all English-based creoles. DE functions not only as a locative-existential verb in all these idioms, but it also performs the role of imperfective marker in most languages, even if in certain cases it has undergone some phonetic erosion or transformation as an aspectual marker (e.g. Sranan *e*). McWhorter (2005: 202-218) provides a chart with some compelling comparative data from English-based creoles from both sides of the Atlantic. In Table 21 (already given as Table 3 in Chapter 1), the second column lists the uses of DE:

Table 21. Comparison among AECs. McWhorter (2005: 202-218)

	Cop. DA (He'**s** my partner)	Loc. Cop DE (Where **is** he?)	Modal marker FOR (You **have got to** do it)	Anterior BIN (Three of his friend **were** there)
Krio	**Na** mi padna	Na usai i **de**?	Una **fo** du am	Tri ipadi **bin de** de
Nigerian	**Na** im bi ma fren	I **dé** husai?	Una **fo** du am	Tri fo hi fren **bin déy** de
Sranan	**Na** mi mati	Na usai a **de**?	Mi ben **fu** suku mi susu*	Dri fu e mati **ben de** de
Saramaccan	He **da** mi kompé	Naase a **dé**?		Dií máti fee **bi dé** alá
Guyanese	I **a** mi kompé	Wisaid am **de**?	Unu **fi** du am	Tri a i mati **bin de** de
Antiguan	Hi **a** mi padana	We I **de**?		Tri hi fren **min de** de
Jamaican	Im **a** mi padana	We im **de**?	Unu **fi** dwiit	Tri a fi-im fren **en de** de
Belizean	**Da** mi padana	We I **de**?		Tri a fi-i fren **mi di**

				de
Gullah	Hi **duh** mi paadnuh	Wisai I **de**?	Hunnuh[138] **fuh** du um	Tri uh hi fren **bin de** de

* "I had to look for my shoes". Sordam & Eersel (1985: 59), the only sentence available.

I will now give some examples of all the functions DE can supply in NigP.
DE is used in existential sentences ("there is/are"):

241 For dis tin ehn, many loophole **de**.
PREP this thing INT, many loophole EX.LOC
'In this respect, there are many loopholes.'

DE is used as a locative ("to be at"):

242 Chiefs **de** here.
chief.PL EX.LOC here
'The chiefs are here.'

DE is used in associative constructions ("be associated to; belong to"), in collocation with the associative preposition *for*:

243 She no **de for** the one wey you de.
She NEG EX.LOC ASS DET one REL you EX.LOC
'She is not interested in what you are interested in (She's not with you on this).'

DE performs as a copula in attributive copular sentences (see Chapter 6):

244 Di beginning **de** pepper but di ending **de** sweet o.
DET beginning COP pepper but DET ending COP sweet INT
'The beginning is difficult but the ending is sweet!'

[138] *Unu/Hunnuh/Una* is another element present in most AECs. Its origini s the Igbo pronoun *únù* (you.PL).

DE is used as a verbal predicate in a variety of construction in the form DE + PP (prepositional phrases):

245 You see, I **de** in charge of di official place.
you see I EX.LOC PREP charge PREP DET official place
'You see, I am in charge of the official place.'

DE is an imperfective marker (IPFV), with a broad range of usages:

246 Guy, if you see all dis nonsense wey dis guy **dè** follow me try…
guy if you see all DET nonsense REL DET guy IPFV SV me try
'My friend, if you see all the nonsense he is playing with me…'

In the examples above I used different spellings for DE because the literature (Faraclas 1989 and 1996) demonstrates that NigP can differentiate two types of tone on the item in order to distinguish between (a) existential-locative and copular uses[139] bearing high tone (*de*) and (b) imperfective uses, bearing low tone (*dè*). I will not analyse the issue any further here since I will treat tone in sections 5.4 and 5.6.

Originally, I chose to treat DE in this dissertation because of its use as a copular support in attributive (copular) sentences, which is the topic of Chapter 6. In the end, though, I decided it was appropriate to dedicate to this lexical item a comprehensive description for reasons that are not concerned with the copular domain *stricto sensu*:

1) The first reason is the item frequency. In the NigP corpus DE exhibits the greatest overall frequency with 3379 occurrences. Also, as I said earlier in this paragraph, it represents an important, prevalent and consistent creole feature with a plurality of similar (though not completely overlapping) functions in many creoles. To this respect, it may be interesting to have a description of DE in NigP.

[139] The tonal nature of DE as a copular item is not specifically stated in the literature. From the spelling used by Faraclas I assumed that locative-existential *de* would pair with copular *de*.

2) Existential, locative and predicational uses are sometimes referred to as “copular” in the literature, given the many resemblances these constructions have with “proper” copular sentences (see section 3.1.2). Also, in many languages other than NigP, the same lexical item performs the functions of existential, locative verb and copula (e.g. among all, English). Consequentially, and given the diffusion of the expression “locative-existential copula”, it is appropriate to additionally treat locative-existential copulas in this dissertation. Not surprisingly, the locative-existential copula *de* is used in NigP as an attributive copula as well, when the context calls for it.
3) The main reason why I dedicate the entire Chapter 5 to DE is because of the hypothesis, which will be further presented in Chapter 6, concerning the nature of property items in NigP. Following extensive research on Atlantic creoles, I will assume that property items in NigP are verbal and undergo a semantic fluctuation among *stative* and *non-stative* meanings. This fluctuation is related to a syntactic fluctuation that characterises them as labile verbs (section 6.6.5), oscillating between *intransitive* and *transitive* structures. In a nutshell, these verbs (e.g. *sick*, *happy*, *sweet*, etc.) can occur without copula (*e happy* - “he is happy/he got happy”) or with the copula (*e de happy* - “he is happy”); however, some judgements provided by informants indicated that, given the dynamic and/or transitive nature of some property items, they could also occur with the imperfective marker *dè*. Thus, ideally, verbal property items could follow the copula *de* (stative and intransitive usages) or the imperfective marker *dè* (inchoative/processual and transitive usages). Copular *de* preceding stative/intrasitive property items corresponds to category number six (6) in section 5.4 and IPFV *dè* preceding non-stative/transitive property items corresponds to category nine (9) in section 5.4. While the particular issue concerning the analysis of such minimal couples will be treated in section 6.7 in Chapter 6, I decided to use Chapter 5 (see section 5.4) to treat the tonal distinctions of DE as such.

That said, Chapter 5 develops as follows. In section 5.1 I will treat existential sentences and the attested variation between structures with *de* and structures with *e get*; in section 5.2 I will describe locative, associative and predicative uses of *de*; in section 5.3 I will explore all domains of use of the NigP imperfective marker *dè*. After this descriptive task, I will treat the issue of tone in NigP DE in section 5.4 and present the details of the phonetic experiment I conducted in collaboration with the Paduan CNR[140].

5.1 Existential *de* and *e get*: the definiteness restriction

In this paragraph I will focus on the variation we find in NigP within the existential domain (247 and 248). Existential use of *de* corresponds to category three (3) in section 5.4.

247 **E get** one chick like dat too wey I suppose hook up wit tomorrow.
EXP get DET chick like that ADV REL I MOD hook up with tomorrow
'There is a chick like that too with whom I am supposed to meet tomorrow.'

248 Na im dem see say moni no **de**.
FOC it they realize COM money NEG EX.LOC
'At that point they realised that there was no money.'

This variation is not accounted for in Faraclas' grammar (cfr. Faraclas 1996: 44-45, 48-50, 52, 217-218) and, to the extent of my knowledge, it is not accounted for in the literature elsewhere[141]. Existential sentences are defined

[140] I thank in particular Prof. Cinzia Avesani who assisted me throughout the elaboration, execution and analysis of the experiment's results. I take the occasion to thank the participants and technicians who took part in the sessions, whose names are mentioned in the Acknowledgements.

[141] Faraclas (1996: 88) also reports a further existential construction-type and names it "NO+NOUN CONSTRUCTION". Faraclas states that: "[a]ny noun phrase constituent within a sentence may also be negated by fronting it to the position of a head noun phrase, preceding it with the negative marker *no* and following it with the rest of the original sentence in the form of a relative clause (glosses mine):

by McNally (2011) as "non-canonical construction which expresses a proposition about the existence or the presence of someone or something." Existential sentences have proved to be a fruitful ground of research on which to test theories in various domains as McNally points out (2011: 1846). First of all, given the selective behaviour of existential predicates on the pivot nominal which constitutes the main clausal argument, much work on existentials has concerned the semantics of noun phrases and of predication (especially the so-called "definiteness restriction"); secondly, their specialised construction has proved to be remarkably favourable to survey non-canonical information packaging in a variety of languages; thirdly, their close relation to locative sentences inspires nontrivial psychological questions on the related character of 'concrete presence' and the more abstract notion of 'existence'; fourthly, typological research has benefited from the rich variety of formal encodings of existential meaning one can find among languages. Thus, the available literature on existential constructions is huge and my efforts here are not meant to provide a panorama on the subject. I refer to McNally (2011) and Francez (2007) for a general overview of these kinds of constructions, and I largely relied on these works in describing the structural characteristics of existential sentences in NigP.

McNally (2011: 1831f) uses five features to identify existential structures:

1. They have an expletive subject the majority of the time (e.g. NigP *e*).
2. Though existential sentences do not always contain a verb, those that do contain verbs meaning "to be" or "to have", or contain some other verb related to possession such as "give", which is bleached of its

249 No maket (we) à gò tek bay nyam (fòr-am).
NEG market REL I IRR MOD buy yam (PREP it)
'There is no market for me to buy yams (at).'
250 No pesin (we) gò bay nyam.
NEG person REL IRR buy yam
'Nobody will buy yams.'
251 No kaynd pesin (we) gò bay nyam.
NEG kind person REL IRR buy yam
'No person of any sort will buy yams.'
This type of construction is not attested in my data.

content (e.g. NigP *get*).

3. All existential sentences have a "pivot" nominal which describes the individual whose existence is under discussion. The pivot is typically subject to certain semantic restrictions.
4. In most languages a "coda" phrase may appear which is external to the pivot noun phrase. Again, coda constituents must meet some semantic conditions in order to be licensed as such (i.e. they have to be a stage-level predicate; individual level predicates are not licensed).
5. In many languages a locative pronoun, bleached of content, obligatorily appears (e.g. English "there", French "y"). According to McNally (2011: 1831), "[t]he presence of such a locative expression has resulted in the frequent grouping of existential sentences together with locative constructions […], although [some authors] have argued that the similarity between existential and locative sentences is superficial or spurious, at least in some languages."

As one may guess, given the five-points description provided above, the authentic and prototypical existential construction in NigP is not the one in 248 (and 241) with the verb *de*, but rather the one in 247 with the existential construction *e get*[142]. This is further confirmed by the crystallised nature of this construction that is virtually unable to be modified by TMA markers and cannot appear in non-finite contexts: in the corpus no items can intervene between the expletive subject *e* and the existential verb *get*, but for the exception made for the negation *no*[143]. There are no restrictions on the use of the construction in subordinate clauses and there are some attested uses in co-occurrence with adverbials of completion (*again*, cfr. 266). Also, the NigP *e get* construction exclusively serves the expression of existential meaning

[142] The presentative use of the construction with *e get*, as will become clear in the next paragraphs, is intimately connected with the pragmatic nature of the pivot nominal as a newly introduced referent in discourse, specifically oriented in the discourse frame which follows it. In this sense, the existential nature of such a construction in some languages (e.g. Italian) has been the subject of debate, and according to some authors no real affirmation of existence should be associated with this structure (Panunzi 2010: 96, Berruto 1986).

[143] 252 E no get how**.** Ehn, bad as e bad, we gò find a way to enter.
EXP NEG get how. INT bad as it be.bad we IRR find DET way to enter
'There's no way. Even in the worse case, we will find a way to enter there.'

and has no locative connotation[144]. On the contrary, the verb *de* indeed does have this and other kinds of usages: *de* is a full-fledged verb that is not undergoing any kind of bleaching or shifting in its existential use. It is also a regular verb indicating location and existence, which can be modified by all the NigP TMA markers (section 1.4.1) and can appear in non-finite contexts. In addition, it also performs as copula in certain attributive constructions (see Chapter 6).

I will now focus on the kinds of nominals that can fill in the existential predicate *e get* as its transitive direct argument, in order to explain which conditions rule upon the alternative uses of the two constructions. Most of the literature on existentials focuses on the so-called "definiteness restriction", namely the fact that only certain types of nominals may appear in the main argument slot and, as the restriction's name itself suggest, the first relevant constraint that has been observed is the syntactic constraint on definiteness. It is true for many languages that existential constructions mostly work with indefinite predicates and that pivots such as proper names, pronouns, definite NPs and strong (e.g. partitive) indefinites are usually ruled out[145]. However, upon closer examination, it is clear that syntactic factors alone cannot account for the nominal types licensed on all occasions. Milsark (1977) proposed a distinction between *strong* noun phrases and determiners excluded by the pivot position and *weak* noun phrases and determiners licensed in that position. In her overview of the existing literature on the definiteness restriction, McNally argues (2011: 1839-1844) that syntactic, semantics and pragmatic factors are simultaneously responsible, to different extents in different languages, for the characterisation of nominals and determiners as strong or weak, and consequently for their acceptability as pivots in existential sentences. The essence is that the grouping of strong and

[144] While the construction EXP + *get* can have only existential meaning, the verb *get* in NigP has a wide range of usages ("to have", "to get", "to possess", "to own", "to hold"). In these cases the verb takes non-dummy subjects.

[145] McNally (2011: 1833):
253 ??There is each/every first-year student present.
254 ??There are most first-year students in that class.
255 ??There is the neighbour's dog barking.
256 ??There is that carpet under the table.
257 ??There are them / Anna and Bob waiting outside.

weak constituents should not be intended as a clear-cut division but rather as a continuum, and the factors intervening in the ordering of this continuum are at the same time syntactic, semantic and pragmatic. I will now review these three groups of factors, to see how they distinguish weak and strong nominals in NigP.

5.1.1 Pivot nominal semantics

The nominal element in NigP existential structures with *e get* is prototypically indefinite but specific as to its semantics. Pivot nominals in existential constructions constitute a *specific quantity of entities that are correlated to a property*. Thus, their semantics should be property-like, as McNally (2011) points out. Sentence 258 (a) should be semantically conceived as 258 (b):

258 a. E get one beta answer.
EXP get DET good answer
'There is one good answer.'

258 b. There is a specific entity (but not yet defined in discourse and not forcibly the only possible one) that characterises itself as "an answer" and as "good".

In sentence 259, the existence of a "specific quantity of entities (*issues*)" is predicated: the quantifying adjective *many* expresses the quantity, and a coda, in the form of a restrictive relative introduced by the complementiser *wey*[146], further specifies (and restricts) it:

259 a. If we de strong, **e get** *many* issues *wey* we gò fit resolve.
If we COP strong, EXP get many issue.PL REL we IRR MOD resolve
'If we stay strong, there are many issues that we will be able to resolve.'

[146] I mentioned elsewhere (section 4.7.3) the restrictive character of the relative clauses introduced by the complementiser *wey* in NigP.

259 b. A certain amount of relevant entities (many) exist, they have the properties of being 'relevant issues' that we are going to resolve.

In existential sentences with *de*, we have a canonical Subject-Verb sequence in which the verb expresses existence, presence or location; the semantics of the pivot nominal do not undergo restrictions since one can find proper names, definite or indefinite NPs and all other strong constituents which the construction with *e get* does not licence:

260 a. Baba Fryo **de**.
PN EX.LOC
'There is Baba Fryo.'

b. * **E get** Baba Fryo

261 a. Thank God, my broda **de**.
thank God POSS brother EX.LOC
'Thank God for my brother.'

b. * Thanks God, **e get** my broda.

In NigP the semantic difference between nominal pivots in existential sentences with *de* and *e get* arises when one compares minimal couple as in 262 and 263: in this case it appears that existential *de* licences *non-specific* indefinite subjects, while existential *e get* licenses only *specific* indefinite subjects.

262 One beta reason **de**. Only non-specific reading allowed
DET good reason EX.LOC
'There is one good reason (and I am probably not going to develop the issue further).'

263 **E get** one beta reason. Only specific reading allowed

EXP get DET good reason

'There is one good reason (and now I am going to tell you what it is).'

5.1.2 Pivot nominal pragmatics

Similar mechanisms are also at work in the alternation between 264 and 265:

264 **E get** some kin artiste ehn/ dem gò de so fucked up, but you gò still

EXP get DET kind artiste INT they IRR EX.LOC ADV fucked up but you IRR ADV

wan work wit dem[147].

MOD work PREP them

'There are certain artists, they would be so fucked up, but you will still want to work with them.'

265 Some kin artiste **de**.

DET kind artist EX.LOC

'There are some kinds of artists.'

In 264 the partitive pivot nominal *some kin artiste* is accepted only thank to the presence of a coda (otherwise the sentence would be ungrammatical: **e get some kin artiste*). Partitives are not allowed in existential construction in NigP because the pivot nominal represents, by definition, a new discourse referent and cannot be licensed with a partitive determiner because of this cataphoric nature, which calls for specific semantics. When the partitive is specified by the coda then the sentence is accepted[148]. In 265 the same nominal is interpreted as a clausal topic, an anaphoric expression referring to a partition of some collective entity already present in discourse or in the speakers' common background. Therefore, the partitive pivot nominal in 265 does not need further specification, thus no coda is needed. I should also note that the semantic restriction imposed by both existential constructions on

[147] In 264 we have a grammatical ellipsis in correspondence with the slash, which is then immediately taken up as a new sentence. A fully grammatically correct sentence out of discourse would be:
264 a. E get some kin artist wey, tosay dem fuk up, you gò still wan work wit dem.
[148] The same holds for English (Hoeksema 1989).

the respective pivot nominals entails some semantic consequences on the noun *kin* ("kind of"): in 264 the noun *kin* is intended in the most generic way, while in 265 the use of the word *kin* entails that, among the types of artists that both speakers know to be relevant to the matter (say, painters, sculptors, musicians and dancers), only *some* are present.

As the previous example shows, there are some pragmatic issues extremely relevant to the variation between the two existential constructions in NigP. In fact, many authors have analysed the restriction upon pivot nominals in existential sentences in pragmatic terms (Ward & Birner 1995, Francez 2007, Partee & Borshev 2007). What emerged from these studies is that pivot nominals of the kind introduced by *e get* in NigP are intrinsically connected with "hearer-new information", i.e. information which is not part of the common ground at the time of utterance. This explains why these constituents are usually introduced by indefinite determiners or must have an indefinite but specific semantic character, namely because new information should not be expressed through anaphoric determiners such as the definite ones. The same claim about the pragmatic characterisation of pivot nominal constituents has also been formulated, in negative terms, as 'the non-topical nature of the pivot nominal' and this account best applies to NigP. In NigP the pivot nominal in the *e get* construction is not always new information, but it is nonetheless difficult for it to serve as the topic of the predication. For instance, while in 264 the pivot represents newly introduced information, in 266 it could not be analysed as such. However, it remains a non-topical constituent:

266 Those guys wey dè buy the game console/ dem don look now,
those guy.PL REL IPFV buy DET game console they CPL look INT
e no get *wetin dem wan buy* again.
EXP NEG get what they MOD buy ADV
'Those guys that typically buy the game console/ they had a look around, but the things they wanted to buy weren't there anymore.'

In its very salient pragmatic function as a presentative construction,

existential *e get* serves indeed as a *discourse* topic introducer. We can see that in sentences 267 and 268 the pivot nominal is fronted in order to introduce the new discourse referent (*one of my friend*; *one proposal*), which may become the clausal topic later in discourse:

267 **E get** one of my friend, e gentle well-well.
EXP get DET PREP POSS friend he be.gentle ADV.rep
'There is one of my friends: he's really gentle.'

268 **E get** one proposal wey Venomous dè work on. When I come Lagos, na
EXP get DET proposal REL PN IPFV work on when I come.PFV PN FOC
im e start the proposal. I gò come, gò come, seven months to one year,
it he start.PFV DET proposal I IRR come IRR come seven month.PL PREP one year
the proposal never finish.
DET proposal PFV.NEG finish
'There is one proposal Venomous is working on. When I first arrived in Lagos, he started the proposal. I would come and go. Seven months later then one year later, the proposal wasn't finished yet.'

269 Abeg, **e get** someting wey I wan say.
please EXP get something REL I MOD say
'Please, there is something I want to say.'

In pragmatically based accounts of existential constructions it is often attested that "the existential construction in most languages exists in a paradigm with one or more other constructions that are conventionally associated with a different information structure" (McNally 2011: 1843). In NigP the proper existential construction with *e get* serves to introduce what the speakers have decided to target as a non-topical constituent (and sometimes pure new-information focus), while in the construction with *de*, pivot nominal subjects coincide with sentential topics. In 270, for instance, we have a generic, non-specific pivot nominal (*wahala*) which is the clausal topic:

270 Na so the man answer Jonathan like say wahala no **de**.
FOC so DET man answer.PST PN like COM problem NEG EX.LOC
'And then the man answered Jonathan as if there was no problem.'

5.1.3 Pivot nominal syntax

As I have just said, syntactically indefinite NPs tend to perform as weak nominals in NigP as well as in many other languages. Thus, indefinite NPs accord well with the existential construction with *e get*. I have shown in 262 and 265 that indefinites also perform as subjects in the construction with *de*, but in that context indefinites prove to be semantically non-specific. However, some definite NPs can show up as transitive arguments in existential constructions with *e get*, but only if they are read as newly introduced entities in a focus position, that will be further specified in discourse. In 271 the construction with *e get* presents a definite nominal in a focus position, which is not anaphoric but rather cataphoric (it semantically corresponds to "only one possible"):

271 **E get** di way wey dem take dè come greet lion. You no gò jos come,
EXP get DET way REL they use.to IPFV come greet lion. You NEG IRR ADV come
you wan come talk for our meeting. No o. You gò come greet lion well.
you MOD come talk PREP POSS meeting NEG INT you IRR come greet lion ADV
'There is only one possible way to greet the lion (tribute the boss). You cannot simply come over if you intend to come and participate in our meetings. Not at all! You will come and greet the lion properly.'

5.2 Locative, predicative and associative uses of *de*

The verb *de* in NigP is first of all a locative verb, expressing a (more or less) physical state of presence or a position[149], as exemplified by 272-275. The locative use of *de* corresponds to category two (2) in section 5.4.

[149] For a discussion of locative predication in NigP, see Corum, 2012.

272 I gò call am, make I know whether im **de** house.
I IRR call to.him EXH I know whether he EX.LOC house
'I will call him, so as to know whether he is at home.'

273 But Sega still **de** market.
but Sega ADV EX.LOC market
'But Sega is still in the market.'

274 Ipod **de** her house.
ipod EX.LOC POSS house
'The Ipod is at her place.'

275 Because no be everybody (wey) **de** here dè sing music
because NEG.FOC everybody (REL) EX.LOC here IPFV sing music
'Because not everybody among those who are here are singers.'

De can also appear in predicational structures where it performs as a full verb in conjunction with a prepositional phrase (276-278). This use of *de* corresponds to category one (1) in section 5.4.

276 Dem no know anytin about Rasta, so me/ I no **de** in support of people
They NEG know anything PREP PN so me I NEG EX.LOC PREP support PREP people
wey you dè talk but me I talk say I **de** in support of make we comport
REL you IPFV talk but me I talk COM I EX.LOC PREP support PREP EXH we comport
oursef.
ourself
'They don't know anything about the Rasta movement, so I am not in support of those people you are talking about, but I am in support of the idea that we should comport ourselves well.'

277 Di royal family wey **de** in charge of di entire acres of land hear
DET royal family REL EX.LOC PREP charge PREP DET entire acres PREP land hear.PST
about am.
about it

'The royal family that is in charge of the entire acres of land heard about it.'

278 Na me be di economist wey **de** at your service.
FOC me COP DET economist REL EX.LOC PREP POSS service
'I am the economist at your service.'

As Corum & Mazzoli (2012) point out, the locative verb *de* can also combine with the locative preposition *for* in the associative/possessive construction *de for* as in 279-280. This use of *de* was not coded in the chart in section 5.4, since it has been considered an extension of the locative use and not syntactically different (category 2).

279 Bèta nó **dé fòr**-am. (Faraclas, pc)
virtue NEG EX.LOC ASS he/she/it
'He/She/It is not worth much.'

280 We still **dé for** donation and contribution.
we ADV EX.LOC ASS donation and contribution
'We are still on the topic of donation and contribution.'

Even if the two elements are locative their association renders a non-locative meaning most of the time:

281 Progres de for dis contri.
'Progress is linked to/associated with this country.'
'There is progress in this country.'

progres	=	abstract Trajector
de	=	LOCATIVE COPULA
for	=	LOCATIVE PARTICLE
contri	=	abstract Landmark

This might be an important feature associated with Atlantic creoles since we find similar constructions in other languages of the area. In Ghanaian Pidgin English, for example, during the 19th Century the locative copula *live* combined with the general locative particle *for* to render a construction similar to *de for* (Huber & Vellupillai, 2011, originally in Chamier-Glisczinski 1925: 54):

282 Massa, plenty big monkeys live for big stick
master plenty big monkey.PL live ASS big stick
'Master, many big monkeys are on the big trunk.'

In Sierra Leonean and Gambian Krio one finds the construction *de pan*, which consists of the existential/locative verb *de* and *pan* (< *upon*) used before nominals meaning something like "to be involved with" or used before verbs "to be engaged in" (Hancock 2012):

283 Dɛn de pan kongosa
they EX.LOC PREP to.gossip
'They're busy gossiping'[150]

In NigP the collocation *de for* appears quite frequently (89 occurrences in the combined corpus of spoken and written NigP). Corum & Mazzoli (2012) carried out a semantic analysis of the two main arguments in the construction (the Trajector and the Landmark) in order to establish which semantic factors contributed to a non-locative reading. In line with Langaker (2008: 32), Corum & Mazzoli referred to image schematic concepts as "schematized patterns of activity abstracted from everyday bodily experience, especially pertaining to vision, space, motion, and force".

[150] In NigP the construction *de for* is unattested before verbs in the corpus with the exception of the sentence in 284 below. However, an informant judged the sentence to be ungrammatical and suggested that *de* was inserted by mistake while speaking. Without *de* the sentence would mean "That person I am telling you would have beaten Jogodo", because *for* would then stand for a marker of conditional modality (counterfactual):
284 Dis one I dè tell you so (de) for nearly beat Jogodo o.
This one I IPFV tell you ADV COP ASS ADV beat PN INT

Concerning the occurrences of *de for* in the corpus, one can single out three possible schemas:

Meaning	Image Schema	Example
Locative	Boundary	I **de for** house
Associative	Part/Whole	We **de for** microbiology
Associative	Link	Progres **de for** dis contri

It is not always possible to distinguish instances in which *de for* has a locative interpretation from instances in which both a locative interpretation and an associative interpretation are possible, and in turn from instances where only an associative interpretation remains available. In 285-292 I give an example of such a continuum (all examples except 290-291 are taken from Deuber, 2005):

285 Me I just dè **de for** house, just dè sleep.
'I was just at home, just sleeping.'
(Locative)

286 Because of di big load wey **de for** di head of motor.
'Because of the big load that is on the car.'
(Locative with a less concrete Trajector)

287 All di young girls wey **de for** dat particular zone.
'All the young girls that come from that particular area.'
(Locative or associative)

288 E be like say one person **de for** trouble.
'It seems like one person is in trouble.'
(Metaphorical use of a locative expression)

289 Dem talk say some disease **de for** our country.

'They said that our country suffers from some diseases.'
(Non-locative Trajector; Link Schema)

290 If you **de for** West Coast/ no artist for West Coast for America dè diss West Coast, dem gò diss East Coast.
'If you are from the West Coast/ any artist from the West Coast in America usually diss the West Coast, they will diss the East Coast.'
(Associative; Part/Whole Schema; locative interpretation possible only out of context)

291 Dat boy wey **de for** Kelvin, Ajegunle Kelvin Studio…
'That boy that is part of Kelvin, Ajegunel Kelvin Studio…'
(Associative; Link Schema)

292 Which faculty you de self? We **de for** microbiology.
'At which faculty are you enrolled? We are into microbiology.'
(Associative; Part/Whole Schema)

A chi-square test demonstrates that within this continuum the concrete/abstract nature of both Trajector and Landmark is relevant, to different extents, to the final interpretation[151]. In Table 22 I calculated the p value indicating the weight of an abstract Trajector upon a final non-locative/associative interpretation, while in Table 23 I calculated the p value for an abstract Landmark.

Table 22. Abstract Trajector and constructional meaning.

	Concrete	Abstract	Column total
Locative	46	7	53
Associative	43	26	69
Row total	89	33	122

p value = .00255

[151] This analysis is based on the data examined by Corum & Mazzoli (2012), namely 122 instances of *de for* in a NigP spoken corpus taken from Deuber (2005) and Mazzoli (2007).

Table 23. Abstract Landmark and constructional meaning.

	Concrete	Abstract	Column total
Locative	22	31	53
Associative	11	58	69
Row total	33	89	122

p value = .0019

The charts illustrate that an abstract Trajector calls for an associative interpretation and that it does so slightly more frequently/inherently than an abstract Landmark. From the same chart we also learn that, by reversal, a concrete Landmark definitely calls for a locative interpretation and that it does so certainly more inherently than a concrete Trajector.

5.3 The imperfective marker *dè*

As Yakpo (2009: 125-126) underscored in his Pichi[152] grammar, "the syntactic category of the imperfective marker has been a subject of debate in research on Atlantic English-lexicon Creoles. For example, it has been suggested that the cognate form of the Pichi [and NigP] imperfective marker *dè* (IPFV) be analysed as a *verbal prefix* in Jamaican Creole (Farquharson 2007: 30)". Along the same line Faraclas (1996: 234) states that: "it would not be unreasonable to classify *dè* as a clitic or an item which is currently undergoing cliticization". The main reasons for this claim is that, according to Faraclas, *dè* would be the only auxiliary in NigP unable to be separated from the verb by a nonclitic adverbial.

However in Pichi as well as in NigP, *dè* is an independent particle like other TMA markers[153]. According to my data, a quite diverse group of adverbs such as *still*, *usually*, *always*, and *jos* ("just") can be placed in between the marker and the verb. However, *dè* definitely acts as the preverbal marker

[152] See 1.3 for some information on Pichi and its relationship with NigP.
[153] Faraclas (1996: 235): "Given its unclear status, however, *dè* is written as a separate word in this work, rather than as part of a larger word".

that forms the closest unit with the verb, since no other TMA markers or negation can intervene after it. For this reason, in NigP as well as in Pichi, the use of resumptive imperfective marking after adverbs is quite common. As Yakpo points out (2009: 126), this "reflects the reluctance with which speakers break up the tighter than usual syntagmatic relation between the imperfective aspect marker and the verb it modifies". We have an example of such a resumptive use of *dè* in NigP in 306 below[154].

This imperfective aspectual marker co-occurs most times with dynamics verbs and has an extremely wide range of uses. Although the functions *dè* is called to perform in NigP are diverse, much of the variation is related to different interactions with the lexical aspects of the verbs it modifies. Nonetheless, all the functions can be easily traced back to its nature as imperfective marker. We find *dè* as a progressive or continuous aspect marker (293-295), habitual aspectual marker (296-298), iterative aspectual marker (299-300), general present marker especially in temporal subordinates and protases[155] (301-302), and future or intention marker (303-304). All these functions are subsumed under category four (4) in section 5.4.

293 House full today and everybodi **dè** talk im mind and inside di mind wey
house be.full today and everybody IPFV talk POSS mind and PREP DET mind REL
we **dè** talk, we **dè** gada tins wey make sense.
we IPFV talk we IPFV gather things REL make sense
'Our meeting is crowded today and everybody is saying what he has in mind and inside the minds we are expressing we also gather valuable things.'

294 I **dè** hear you.
I IPFV hear you
'I am hearing you' (also 'I understand you').

[154] This resumptive use of *dè* is very different in nature from the echoic use of other TMA markers such as *kom* and *gò*.
[155] The unmarked form (here and in all other occurrences in this paragraph) would otherwise entail past tense and completive aspect for dynamic verbs.

295 Im sing am fine, nobody **dè** follow am argue dat one.
he sing.PAST it ADV nobody IPFV SV him argue that one
'He sang it well, nobody is contesting this.'

296 Me I no **dè** stay for outside till dawn unless I dè gó work.
me I NEG IPFV stay PREP outside PREP dawn unless I IPFV go work
'I don't usually stay outside till dawn unless I am working.'

297 E no be like who **dè** fit take correction.
he NEG COP like who IPFV MOD take correction
'He is not the kind of person who can accept criticism.'

298 Dat why you **dè** always see am for Ajegunle.
that why you IPFV ADV see him PREP PN
'That's why you always see him in Ajegunle.'

299 Innocent people jos **dè** die every day.
innocent people ADV IPFV die every day
'Innocent people just die every day.'

300 She gò **dè** come to meeting from time to time.
she IRR IPFV come to meeting PREP time PREP time
'She will come to the meeting from time to time.'

301 People **dè** claim to be what they are not[156].
people IPFV claim to COP what they COP NEG
'People claim to be what they are not.'

302 If you **dè** talk like dis ehn, everybody gò dè fear to come tomorrow.
if you IPFV talk kike this INT, everybody IRR IPFV be.afraid to come tomorrow
'If you talk this way, everybody will be afraid to come tomorrow.'

[156] In this sentence there is a switch to NigE.

303 When you **dè** enter next meeting, if you fuck up you gò pay fine.
when you IPFV enter next meeting, if you fuck up you IRR pay fine
'When you will come next time, if you fuck up you will pay a fine.'

304 No, wait. I **dè** come.
no wait I IPFV come
'No, wait. I am coming.'

However, differently from Pichi (and perhaps surprisingly), IPFV *dè* also co-occurs with many stative verbs in the corpus of NigP under analysis. Co-occurrence of stative verbs and imperfective markers is attested in other CECs. According to Winford (2000), stative verbs can be marked by an imperfective marker and, in that case, the marker gets an iterative or habitual meaning (thus not the progressive).

In NigP, although it is unattested with the stative verbs *sabi* and *tay*, IPFV *dè* is attested in a fair number of occurrences[157] with *de* (EX.LOC, 305), *be* (COP, 306), *be like* ("to seem", 307), *fit* (MOD, 308), *wan* (MOD, 309) and *intend* ("to intend", 310). Thus IPFV *dè* co-occurs with copulas, semi-copulas and modal verbs in the corpus of NigP under analysis:

305 Di roster **dè** de my hand.
DET roster IPFV EX.LOC POSS hand
'The roster used to be in my hands.'

306 Dose programs, na evening dem **dè** usually **dè** be.
those program.PL FOC evening they IPFV ADV IPFV COP
'Those programs, they usually take place during the EVENING.'

307 As king palace **dè** be like/ dem kom dè look say "Ah ah! dis is not face
as king palace IPFV resemble they PFV IPFV look COM INT this COP NEG face
me I face you".
me I face you

[157] It is fair enough not to speak of performance errors in either of the cases listed.

'Given how the king palace looks, they started looking at it like: "Hey, this is not going to be a face to face".'

308 Shey you **dè** fit keep di money wey dem give you as contributions?
ITRG you IPFV MOD keep DET money REL they give.PAST you as contribution.PL
'Will you manage to keep the money that they gave you as contributions?'

309 Some people jos **dè** wan embarrass me.
some people ADV IPFV MOD embarrass me
'Some people just want to embarrass me.'

310 You gò tell us weda you don release album or not, or you be musician
you IRR tell us whether you CPL release album or NEG or you COP musician
and you **dè** intend to release album.
and you IPFV intend to release album
'You should tell us whether you have already published an album or not, or that you are a musician and you intend to publish an album.'

The range of meanings and functions of IPFV *dè* in co-occurrence with stative verbs parallels those listed above for dynamic verbs, exception made for the progressive one. For this reason, the co-occurrence with IPFV *dè* fails to set a good criterion to distinguish dynamic from stative verbs in NigP (see section 1.4.2). Such distinction is made possible by the different readings the two classes of verbs entail when left unmarked (factitive interpretation) as well as their dissimilar interactions with TMA markers (one for all, see section 6.5.4 for the different interplay stative and inchoative property verbs entertain with CPL *don*).

Many situations that may potentially be conceived as stative are expressed as dynamic verbs in NigP (as well as in Pichi, Yakpo 2009: 200). These include change of state verbs such as *crase* 'get.crazy' and *vex* 'get.offended' (see 1.4.2). When left unmarked, these verbs are interpreted as past and completive with relevance to current state. The combination of *dè*

with change-of-state verbs is used to entail a present reading (or better the entrance to a present state - inchoative reading) with no stress on a past, concluded process. Thus, the couple in 311-312 entails the opposition between a concluded process and a more prominent state reading:

311 You crase. PAST COMPLETIVE WITH PRESENT RELEVANCE
you get.crazy.PST
'You have gone crazy -> Thus, now you are crazy.'

312 You dè crase PRESENT STATE
you IPFV get.crazy
'You have been getting crazy = You are crazy.'

Since this opposition is similar to the one I was checked in inchoative property items during the tonal exam, I decided to assign this *dè* to a separate category in order to facilitate comparisons. For this reason, *dè* plus change of state verbs corresponds to category eight (8) in section 5.4.
IPFV *dè* in NigP performs a further relevant function as a non-finite marker in between a modal and the main verb it modifies (*begin*, *fit*, *wan*, 313-314 and 308) or in between two verbs in a SVC (315-317). Seuren (1981, 1986) and Yakpo (2009: 125) describe in a similar fashion the particles corresponding to *dè* in the respective languages: *e* in Saramaccan and *dè* in Pichi.

313 If say I gò begin **dè** fight people, na who gò stop me?
if COM I IRR MOD IPFV fight people FOC who IRR stop me
'In case I start fighting with people, who is going to stop me from that?'

314 I no wan **dè** curse o.
I NEG MOD IPFV curse INT
'I don't want to curse anybody.'

315 When your cd no dè comot, you no dè carry di system **dè** shake am like
when POSS cd NEG IPFV come.out you NEG IPFV carry DET system IPFV shake it like

dis!

this

'When your CD doesn't come out, you are not going to shake the computer in this way!'

316 Na so una take **dè** spoil musician name.

FOC ADV you use.to IPFV spoil musician name

'That's how you are spoiling our reputation.'

317 Jogodo now, dem no fit play am for radio. Dem no fit play am for

PN INT they NEG MOD play it ASS radio they NEG MOD play it ASS

television. Dem first **dè** play am but di time wey dem kom understand

television they before IPFV play it but DET time REL they PFV understand

di meaning, dat meaning now, dem **dè** take am **dè** rub all of us.

DET meaning that meaning INT they IPFV take it IPFV rub all PREP us

'Jogodo, they can't play his songs on the radio, they can't play him on TV. They have been playing his songs before but, when they discovered the meaning, they would use that meaning to rub all of us.'

In 317 we find three occurrences of *dè*. The first is an IPFV marker with iterative meaning and past reading; the second is a complex marker simultaneously expressing reiteration and intention in the past; the third is a non-finite marker in between two serial verbs. As a non-finite marker *dè* is unattested in the corpus before stative verbs (and Yakpo, 2009: 125, restricts the non-finite use of *dè* in Pichi to dynamics verbs), but I found two occurrences online (both involving the collocation *be like*) that were judged positively by informants:

318 The matter don *wan dey be like* **yawa**[158]

DET matter CPL MOD IPFV COP like problem

'The matter has already started to look like a problem.'

[158] http://www.nigeriannation.com/chat/e-be-like-say-dem-don-carry-this-their-matter-go-a/24984/discussions/blogs.html

319 Spanish league wan dey be like Scottish[159]

spanish league MOD IPFV COP like scottish

'The Spanish league wants to resemble the Scottish one.'

In these examples, non-finite usages of *dè* (or *dey* in the examples above) contributes with little or no meaning to the construction. It is the most grammmaticalised function it covers. Faraclas (1996: 234) describes the same pattern stating that: "*[d]è* and the main verb which follows it are used in a protononfinite construction in acrolectal speech in which *dè* becomes even more completely dependent, attached and marginal in relation to the verb that it modifies"[160]. For these reasons, I included a separate category of non-finite *dè* in the tonal analysis, which is category five (5), in section 5.4.

To conclude, I also found in the corpus an occurrence where *dè* was used in this non-finite manner to express an imperative mood:

320 Say di pesin pay moni, na to call di guy say oya, shh, come. Take your

COM DET person pay money COP to call DET guy COM INT ONO come take POSS

25k, dè go.

25k IPFV go

'In case the person pays the money, we need to call this guy and say: Hey, shhhh. Come. Take you 25.000 naira. Disappear.'

5.4 DE in NigP, its spelling and tonal specification

According to Faraclas (1996: 263), tone is used in NigP to mark both lexical and morphological distinctions (e.g. the personal pronoun system and pre-verbal TMA morphology). However, he points out (1996: 272) that despite the fact that neighbouring Cameroonian Pidgin is generally recognized to

[159]http://archiver.co/location/%20%20T%20%2018%20467875%20%2069%20942775/1

[160] "These acrolectal forms can be said to be motivated by several different constructions found in all lects of Nigerian Pidgin as well as by constructions found in Nigerian Standard English (NSE). The nonfinite use of [*dè* + verb] matches the semantics of the NSE [verb -*ing*] gerund with the semantics of the Nigerian Pidgin incompletive aspect, which is marked by *dè*" (Faraclas 1996: 33).

have a tonal system, "there has been some reluctance among researchers to say the same about NigP". Among the many authors, some do not mention tone at all (Agheyisi 1971), and others deny that the language has tone (Elubge and Omamor 1991). In Obilade (1976, cited in Faraclas but unavailable for consulting) we find "the most extensive treatment of tone in NigP".

In the previous sections (5.1-5.3) I showed the extensive range of meanings and functions that DE can cover in NigP. However, I assume that the essential functions of DE are two:

(a) Existential/locative copula, glossed as EX.LOC

(b) Imperfective marker, glossed as IPFV

Following Faraclas[161], I maintain DE to be a single lexical item with two different tonal specifications. In his descriptive grammar, he adopts the unmarked spelling *de* for the locative/existential verb (EX.LOC) bearing high tone and the spelling *dè*, with a grave accent, for the imperfective marker (IPFV) bearing low tone; I adopted this spelling here. Thus, what would distinguishes verbal *de* from aspectual *dè* is a tonal distinction: a high tone marks the locative/associative/existential predicate and the attributive copula *de*, and a low tone marks imperfective *dè* in all its aspectual and non-aspectual uses:

321 Your brothers dem **de** Lagos now. LOCATIVE
POSS brother.PL they EX.LOC PN INT
'Your brothers are in Lagos now.'

322 How you **de**? EXISTENTIAL
How you EX.LOC
'How are you?'

323 Im **dè** follow me talk everytin. IMPERFECTIVE
he IPFV SV me talk everything

[161] According to Faraclas (1996: 271), "a strong argument can be made for the lexical identity of the high-toned locative/existential copular verb *de* and the low-toned incompletive aspect auxiliary *dè*". Moreover, the latter most probably historically originates from the former.

'He tells me everything.'

Leaving aside Faraclas work, which constitutes a milestone, in other NigP descriptions and in speakers' spontaneous writings there exists some confusion on the status of the item DE and, consequently, on the relationship between two items that are, nonetheless, central in NigP grammar: the imperfective marker IPFV and the locative/existential copula EX.LOC. In fact, the two are similarly spelt but with diverse spellings: *dey*, *de*, *dei* or *deh*, depending on the author/writer.

Eze (1980) uses the spelling *dey* in all occasions. Barbag-Stoll (1983) uses the spelling *dei* for the EX.LOC copula and alternates the spellings *de*/*dei* for the IPFV marker without providing any motivation. Elugbe & Omamor (1991) do not distinguish between IPFV and EX.LOC DE; they use the spelling *de* and also rule out that paradigmatic tonal distinctions exist in NigP, except for a few lexically distinguished minimal pairs (ibid: 83-88). Poplack & Tagliamonte (1996) distinguish *de* (IPFV) and *dey* (EX.LOC) as well as Tagliamonte, Poplack & Eze (1997), but they do not motivate the distinction. Tagliamonte (2000) distinguishes *deh* (IPFV) from *de* (EX.LOC) and does not motivate the distinction.

Dey is undoubtedly the most frequent spelling in spontaneous productions, used for both the existential/locative copula and the imperfective marker, as any Google search can testify. *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* written in NigP, the *Integration Agreement* for Italian residents, as well as the NigP translation of *The Adventures of Jonathan Gullible* by Agwu Amogu (which constitute the written part of the corpus) all use the undifferentiated spelling *dey* in all environments. This inconsistency is due to the fact that the spelling of NigP words has not yet stirred any extensive debate[162], so speakers cannot benefit from anything like a standardised, accepted or common spelling.

However, despite this irregularity in spelling, the majority of speakers,

[162] Some debate may be found in Agheyisi (1988), Deuber & Hinrichs (2007), Elugbe and Omamor 1991 (113-121). Faraclas et al. (1983 and 1984), in particular, provided an extremely detailed system of orthographic representations for NigP.

if asked, recognise a tonal difference between the two DE and can use them in co-occurrence (an imperfective marker modifying a copula or a locative/associative/existential predicate), as shown in 324-326:

324 E **dè de** very hard to even talk of am to di extent wey be say my
it IPFV EX.LOC very hard PREP ADV talk PREP it PREP DET extent REL COP COM POSS
chief, Officer Stuart, dè call am 'di invisible Gun'.
chief officer PN IPFV call it DET invisible gun
'It has been very hard to even talk about it to the extent that my chief, Officer Stuart, used to call it "the invisible gun"'.

325 Dis thing don **dè de** for a very long time.
this thing CPL IPFV EX.LOC PREP DET very long time
'This thing has been there for a long time.'

326 Most of una show, she gò **dè de** there.
most PREP POSS show she IRR IPFV EX.LOC there
'She will attend most of your live shows.'

5.5 Tonal, pitch-accent and stress patterns in Nigerian Pidgin

Before relating the results of this analysis I need to explain the role played by tone and other supra-segmental pitch-related phenomena in NigP. To do so, I will completely rely on the description provided by Faraclas (1996: 260-268), Faraclas (1985) and Rivera-Castillo & Faraclas (2006). There is only one other work that extensively treats tone in NigP and this is Obilade (1976) but, as I already mentioned, it was unavailable for consulting.

5.5.1 Tonal specifications in the NigP lexicon: classes of words

According to Faraclas (1985: 74-75), the only analysis that can predict pitch patterns over utterances in a unified way in NigP involves the interaction of tonal, pitch-accent, and stress units:

"Tone is assigned to words lexically, words from tonal languages

being fully specified (one tone per syllable) and words from English being underspecified in most cases (often one tone per word). Underspecified items would then be assigned additional pitches on the basis of their position within a stress-accent group or phrase as well as in relation to the type of tone assigned to them lexically. The existence of a mixed system of pitch assignment and realization in RPE [Rivers Pidgin English[163]] reflects the mixed origins of the language which include stress languages (English, Portuguese) tonal languages (Igbo, Yoruba, etc.) and pitch-accent languages (Ijo). At the surface, one is tempted to apply a stress analysis but the actual system is in many ways a reinterpretation of stress in terms of tone and pitch-accent."

In this paragraph I will present Faraclas' analysis of the actual realization of this mixed system in which stress, tone and pitch-accent patterns interplay in the NigP lexicon. Faraclas (1985) analyses the NigP lexicon and divides the NigP lexical entries into four categories (A-B-C-D) which would corresponds, in his view, to a particular historical state or to different sources of borrowing. *Class A* words appear to have been brought into NigP directly from British English during the first period of commercial contact and from Nigerian dialects of English, later during the colonial era. *Class A* words are, thus, internal developments. *Class C* words reflect pitch patterns commonly found in Sierra Leonian Krio (Fyle & Jones 1980) and were probably introduced by Krio speakers during the late 19th Century. If Faraclas' analysis is correct, his system would represent an extraordinary tool to detect diachronic stratifications in the NigP lexicon. *Class B* words, according to Faraclas, often seem to be the result of an old compounding process which has been replaced by the still productive *Class A* compounding pattern and by low-toned reduplication. *Class D* words are clearly

[163] The variety studied and described by Faraclas (1985, 1996) is the one spoken in Rivers State, whose capital is the maritime city of Port Harcourt. In this work I made clear in section 2.5 that the variety of NigP under examination here is the one spoken in the Western Nigerian territories since I used data from both the Lagos and Benin areas. However, I assumed the prosodic analysis given by Faraclas to be in principle applicable to the Western variety of NigP. Henceforth I will adopt his analysis and apply it to NigP.

borrowings from other Nigerian languages and appear to be increasing in number along with the rise of nationalism in the post-colonial era.

As it will be clear from the following description, according to Faraclas (1985: 73), NigP lexical items can be clearly divided into two sets: one that is underspecified for pitch underlyingly (Classes A, B, and C) and which allows phrase-level accentuation to partially determine surface pitch patterns, and another set (Class D) that is fully specified for pitch underlyingly and is not affected by phrase-level accentuation. In other words, while Class D words are specified with tone lexically and carry tone over each syllable, Classes A-B-C are underspecified for tone and the lexical specification often concerns one single syllable, while the others receive tone according to some rules such as copying and spread, and, ultimately, accordingly to supra-segmental phenomena of pitch-accent, depend on the position of the word and syllables within the phonological phrase ϕ (or "pitch group" in Faraclas' terms).

The nature of pitch level accentuation in NigP will be fully outlined in section 5.5.2, so the interested reader should refer to that section and to the original works by Faraclas, for a complete account. What Faraclas refers to as "pitch phrase" or "stress group" is treated as a phonological phrase (ϕ) as far as the experiment on the tonal realisations of DE is concerned, thus in sections 2.3 (methodology), 5.6 and 6.7 (research results).

CLASS A WORDS

According to Faraclas (ibid: 69f), "when RPE [Rivers Pidgin English] words are considered in isolation, it becomes apparent that the great majority (perhaps 85%-90%) of words brought into the language from languages with stress-dominant pitch patterns (i.e. Portuguese, English, Spanish, etc.) bear a high (or, if word-final, falling[164]) pitch over the syllable which bears stress in the source language." Other syllables to the left of the tone-bearing unit carry low pitch.

The majority of lexical items in NigP, then, display a use of pitch that is a

[164] This will be made clear in section 5.5.2. In short I can say that in pitch phrase final position H tone becomes HL and L tone becomes LH. This is why Faraclas postulated the presence of two contour allotones associated with the two level tones (H and L) of NigP.

reflection of English stress, where high pitch is the main phonetic cue associated to the stressed syllable. Most NigP words are English-derived, and most of them exhibit the pitch pattern just described. Such words are labelled Group A (stress-source) words in Faraclas (1985). In 327 we find a list of some words that pertain to this class. In 327(a), for example, it is evident that in the word *fada* ("father") the same syllable that would receive stress in English receives high tone (thus, [fáda]). The other syllables are not specified for tone. As a rule, however, toneless syllable to the right of a tone-bearing unit receive the same tone for *copying* (thus, [fádá]) and all other syllables to the left receive low tone (as the first syllable in [ànódá], example 327b). When these words are considered in pitch phrase final position, the rules elaborated by Faraclas predict that the tone-bearing unit modifies the nature of its tonal specification. In the case of *GROUP A* words the tone-bearing unit which undergoes modification is the syllable which receives tone as a reflection of stress, and thus a H-toned syllable which becomes HL in pitch phrase final position. If there are syllables to the right of the tone-bearing unit, the contour tone spreads to all the syllables not specified for tone. I will elaborate on this in sections 5.5.2 and 5.5.3. We observe this pattern for *GROUP A* words in the following examples, where double slash signifies the end of phonological phrase, ϕ ("pitch phrase" or "phrase stress group" in Faraclas' terms).

327	a. 'fada [fádá] 'father'	[fádà ||]
	b. a'noda [ànódá] 'another'	[ànódà ||]
	c. 'panya [páɲá] 'Spanish' (Spanish)	[páɲà ||]

Faraclas (1985: 70) also notes that "another interesting parallel between stress patterns in English and pitch patterns in RPE [Rivers Pidgin English] is the fact that words with a greater grammatical than lexical function which are normally unstressed in English (i.e., non-focussed subject pronouns, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, etc.) normally bear low pitch in RPE [Rivers Pidgin English]". In 328 I provide some examples taken from Faraclas:

FUNCTIONAL WORDS

328	a. gò [gò] future auxiliary	vs.	gó 'to go'
	b. fò [fò] preposition	vs.	fó 'four'
	c. dèm [dèm] 'they' (non-focussed)	vs.	dém'they' (focussed)

Of course there are cases in which pitch patterns prove to diverge from English stress patterns. Faraclas (ibid: 71) notes that "[t]he 10-15% of words brought from stress-dominant languages into RPE [Rivers Pidgin English] whose pitch patterns do not correspond to those found over their counterparts in the source language (even preceding pitch phrase boundaries) divides into two groups, which will be called Group B words and Group C words in this work."

CLASS B WORDS

Group B words simply carry more than one high pitch. When they are pitch phrase final group B words bear falling pitch in the last syllable.

Examples:

329	a. wuman [wúmán]	or	[wúmân ||] 'woman'
	b. animal [ánímál]	or	[ánímâl ||] 'animal'

GROUP C WORDS

Non pitch-phrase-final *GROUP C* words carry low pitch over all syllables. In pitch-phrase-final position, the final syllable of a Group C word bears high pitch that never falls. Monosyllabic words of this group bear rising pitch.

330 a. wota [wòtà] 'water'

b. sabi [sàbì[165]] 'know'

c. kruman sabi wota [kruman sàbì wòtá \|\|] 'Sailors know the water.'

d. wota sabi kill pesin [wòtà sàbí \|\| kill pésìn \|\|] 'Water can kill you.'

[165] In agreement with the author, I corrected here some typing mistakes present in Faraclas (1985).

CLASS D WORDS

Finally, there are Class D words. Class D or non-stress-dominant source language words may bear almost any possible combination of two level pitches (high and low) and are not sensitive to the accent- or stress-like pitch phenomena associated with pitch phrase boundaries which have been outlined above.

5.5.2 Stress patterns in Nigerian Pidgin

In this section I will describe in detail stress patterns in NigP. As I anticipated above, stress, tone and pitch-accent pattern constantly interplay in the realisation of pitch phenomena in the language. As Faraclas (1996: 260) puts it: "Stress plays a major role in determining the pitch-related suprasegmental patterns found in Nigerian Pidgin, alongside tone and intonation."

According to Faraclas, all sentences in Nigerian Pidgin consist of one or more phrase stress groups, each of which has a main (head) verb, an adverbial or a non-subject noun phrase as its nucleus. Faraclas claims (1996: 260) that "[s]tress is normally assigned to the final tone-bearing syllable of a phrase stress group." Occasionally, he continues, the stress will be attracted to some other tone-bearing syllable in the group, especially if that syllable belongs to a lexically (inherently) stressed item, such as interrogative pronouns or emphatic personal pronouns. When this occurs, all of the syllables following the stressed syllable usually lose their tones. In a very few cases, tonal distinctions are still maintained after the stressed syllable, but only within a reduced range or envelope of pitch change.

The phonotactic structure of words has no bearing on the assignment or position of stress. Stress is only predictable in terms of the tonal structure of phrases.

The "pitch phrase" or "stress group", which I defined in sections 2.3 and 5.5.1 as the phonological phrase (ϕ), is the basic unit to which stress is assigned in NigP. All types of stress have the same phonetic cues. Faraclas states that "[t]he primary cues for stress are change in pitch and the height of

the resulting peak of pitch prominence". Thus:

(a) Stressed high tones become falling tones (glides) which fall from a higher than usual pitch level.

(b) Stressed low tones become rising tones (glides) which rise to a higher than usual level.

Faraclas (ibid: 260-261) also lists as secondary cues for stress, namely extra length of stressed syllables, or a sequence of stressed syllables and an increase in perceived loudness: "[D]espite the fact that stressed syllables are more prominent than others, reduction of unstressed syllables is minimal, and Nigerian Pidgin can safely be said to be a syllable-timed language."

Thus, each phrase stress group is assigned a single stress, which is signalled by a falling pitch contour, if the final tone of the phrase stress group is high, or by a rising tone, if the final tone of the phrase stress group is low. Faraclas (ibid: 261) notes that "stress-derived falling and rising tones spread from the final tone-bearing syllable of the stress group to any following syllables in the group, creating high-low(-low) and low-high(-high) sequences, respectively." Also, all toneless syllables copy the tone of the syllable to their right after the stress is assigned. Faraclas (1996: 261) illustrates this in examples 331- 334. Each example contains the orthographic spelling chosen by Faraclas, the phonological representation in between slashes and the phonetic representation in square brackets, followed by the gloss and the English translation:

Stressed high tone becomes a falling tone, then spreads to create a high-low sequence:

331	Nà mà fada.	/nà+mà+'fáda=/	[nà mà fádà]
	FOC POSS father[166]		
	'It is my father.'		

We know from Faraclas (1985) and section 5.5.1 (example 327), that the

[166] In this paragraph I adapted Faraclas' glossing to the glossing used here.

word *fada* ("father") is lexically assigned high tone on the first syllable as a reflection of English stress patterns. Thus, *fada* is a word, as Faraclas defined it, underspecified for tone and having only one syllable lexically assigned for tone. The second syllable would copy the high tone of the first when the word is not in phonological-phrase final position (as we have seen in 5.5.1, *fádá*). When the word is at the phonological phrase's boundary, the last syllable specified for tone lexically gets stressed (first syllable in /'fáda/). Thus, the high tone assigned the stressed syllable becomes HL, spreading to the last syllable not specified for tone lexically ([fádà ||]).

Stressed low tone becomes a rising tone, then spreads to create a low-high sequence:

332 Nà mà màma. /nà+mà+'màma=/ [nà mà màmá]
FOC POSS mother
'It is my mother.'

In case the stressed syllable (first one in /'màma/) bears low tone, the tonal specification becomes LH, and the high tone spreads to the right to the second syllable, which is not specified for tone lexically. If the word were not in phonological phrase final position, its phonetic realisation would be [màmà].

In case there is more than one syllable not specified for tone to the right of the stressed last tone-bearing unit, all the syllables acquire tonal specifications according to the contour tone pattern just outlined. Thus (Faraclas 1996: 261):

Stressed high tone becomes a falling tone, then spreads to create a high-low-low sequence:

333 A folo -am. /à+'fólo-am=/ [à fó lò àm]
I follow.PST him
'I followed her/him.'

As one can see from 333, the contour HL tonal specification spreads to the two syllables to the right of the stressed one, creating the high-low-low sequence described by Faraclas.

Stressed low tone becomes a rising tone, then spreads to create a low-low-high-high sequence

334 Im day kpatàkpata. /(ìm+'dáj=)kpa'tàkpata=/ [(ìm dâj) kpà tà kpá tá[167]]
He die.PST IDEO
'(S)he droppped dead.'

In 334 there are two phonological phrases. The first is constituted by a pronominal subject and a verb (*Im day* - "He died"): the lexically specified high tone of the first syllable of the verb *day* becomes a glide on the same syllable since there is no phonetic material for spreading. In the second phonological phrase, the ideophone is constituted by a repetition. According to Faraclas (1985: 74) reduplicated forms are assigned only one low tone lexically (/kpa'tàkpata/). The stressed low tone becomes the glide LH and spreads to the right. All other syllables are assigned low tone. In this way the sequence low-low-high-high described by Faraclas is created.

I showed that stress is signalled in NigP by the presence of a contour pitch movement in spite of level tones. Stress in this sense is grammatically controlled because it is assigned automatically by sentence-parsing rules. In the following paragraphs, I will review some factors that may determine the formation of stress groups (or phonological phrases, ϕ) in NigP.

As Faraclas (1996: 261) notes, "major sentence constituent can be focused either contrastively or noncontrastively by separating it off from the rest of the sentence as a separate phrase stress group that receives its own phrase stress". The speaker controls this type of stress by choosing to focus

[167] Faraclas confirmed that there is a typing error in his Nigerian Pidgin grammar concerning this example (Faraclas 1996: 261, example 1139 in the original). Thus, I report here the corrected version.

or emphasize a particular part of the utterance, modifying the unmarked sentence parsing. In the following examples (ibid: 261) the sentence in 335(a) has an unmarked reading while the sentence in 335 (b) has a topicalised subject:

335 Mà fada go tawn.
POSS father go.PST town
'My father went to town.'

335 a. normal stress pattern (subject noun phrase not separated from verb phrase stress group):
/mà+fáda+gò+'táwn=/ [mà **fà dà** gò tâwn]

335 b. focused subject (subject noun phrase separated from verb phrase stress group):
/mà+'fáda=gò+'tâwn=/ [mà **fà dá** gò tâwn]

Noticeably, only the change in pitch of the second syllable in *fada* lets the hearer notice the topicalisation.

According to Faraclas (ibid: 262), "some words may be said to be lexically (inherently) focused or stressed, due to the fact that they bear stress in nearly every environment in which they occur. Lexically stressed words coincide rather neatly with those words which are used to signal categories which are likely to attract grammatically and/or speaker controlled stress". These are, in Faraclas terms, interrogative pronouns, negation, imperative forms, emphatic/non-bounded pronouns, associative/possessive constructions, compounds, certain reduplicated forms and recent loans from Standard English. He continues: "Lexically stressed items either attract the prominence peak of the phrase stress group to which they belong or they separate themselves from the rest of the sentence to form a distinct stress group":

336 Lexically stressed free (emphatic) pronouns

Mi à go tawn. /'mí= à+gó+'tâwn=/ [mî à gó tâwn]

Me I go.PST town

'It is I who went to town.'

On the other hand, certain grammatical words never attract pitch prominence or any other stress-related marking. According to Faraclas (ibid: 262) such unstressable words include bound pronouns, the general preposition *fòr*, the general article *dì*, the pluralizer *dèm*, the focus introducer *nà*, and the copular verb *bì*. Other items are exempt from stress rules (class D words in Faraclas 1985, in section 5.5.1 here) because they have assimilated into Nigerian Pidgin from other Nigerian languages, including some ideophones and the topic-switching question marker *nkó*.

5.5.3 Types of distinctive tones in NigP and their allotones

According to this analysis, Faraclas (1996: 264) postulates two types of distinctive tones in NigP, and each of them has contour allotones.

The basic tone-bearing unit in Nigerian Pidgin is the syllable (more specifically, a vowel or a syllabic sonorant). Underlyingly, syllables may bear a high tone, a low tone or no tone at all.

High tone has two allotones: (a) a spreading falling tone or high-low sequence that is borne by stressed syllables, and (b) a level high tone that occurs in all other environments.

Low tone has two symmetrically opposite allotones: (a) a spreading rising tone or low-high sequence that is borne by stressed syllables and (b) a level low tone that occurs in all other environments.

In 337-342 I give a summary of all that has been said[168]. The word *anóda* ("another") is lexically specified for tone only on the second syllable (group A words) as a reflection of English stress patterns. The word *ánimál* ("animal") carries two high pitches on the first and third syllable, as all the words in *GROUP B* (the tonal specification H on the second syllable is copied and not assigned lexically). The word *màma* ("mother") carries low pitch on

[168] Examples are from Faraclas (1996: 264) and thus I left the original spelling.

the first syllable lexically.

High tone:

337 àn<u>ó</u>dá (“another”). Unstressed high tone becomes high-high for copying to the syllable on the right (all the others bear low tone)

A si àn<u>ó</u>dá won.

I see.PST another one

‘I saw another one.’

338 àn<u>ó</u>dà (“another”). Stressed high tone becomes high-low for spreading of the contour HL tonal specification to all the syllable to the right not specified for tone in the lexicon.

A si àn<u>ó</u>dà /à+sí+à+'nó da=/ [à sí à nó dà]

I see.PST another

‘I saw another (one).’

339 Stressed high tone over a single syllable becomes a falling tone that cannot spread since there is not phonetic material.

Go! /'gó=/ [gô]

go

‘Go!’

Low tone:

340 màmà ‘mother’. Unstressed low tone becomes low-low for copying on the syllable on the right.

A si mà màmà mòto. /à+sí+mà+màma’mòto=/ [à sí mà mà mà mò tó]

I see.PST POSS mother car

‘I saw my mother’s car.’

341 màmá ‘mother’. Stressed low tone becomes low-high in non ϕ final position.

A si mà màmá. /à+sí+mà+'màma=/ [à sí mà mà má]

I see.PST POSS mother

'I saw my mother.'

342 Stressed low tone over a single syllable becomes a rising tone since there is no phonetic material for spreading on the right.

Mì tù. /mì+'tù=/ [mì tŭ]

Me also

'Me also.'

Tone is used for lexical distinctions in NigP since a few items are distinguished lexically from one another only by differences in the tones that they bear (Faraclas 1996: 263).

High tone	*Low tone*
sista 'sister'	sìsta 'nurse'
awa 'hour'	àwa 'our'
for 'four'	fòr preposition
tu 'two, very much'	tù 'also'
de 'day'	dè incompletive

Tone is also used for morphological distinctions in NigP. In many cases, pitch is used to distinguish morphologically different forms of the same word. As Faraclas notes (1996: 263), "most of the bound pronouns may be distinguished from their free (emphatic) counterparts only by the low tone that the former bear as opposed to the high tone borne by the latter." Other morphological tonal pairs are the low-toned irrealis marker IRR *gò* and the high-toned lexical verb *gó* ("to go") and the imperfective marker IPFV dè and the locative/existential EX.LOC copula *dé*, which is also what I established with the experiment on the tonal realisation of DE.

5.6 The experiment's results

In this section I will to present the results of the tonal analysis on the lexical item DE in NigP that I performed in collaboration with the Paduan CNR and Prof. Cinzia Avesani, to whom I am very much indebted also concerning the

review of the NigP mixed stress/tone/pitch-accent system outlined in the preceding section (5.5). Research hypotheses, methodology and information on the speakers who took part in the experiment are given in section 2.3.

Our main objective was to isolate minimal pairs of sentences where verbal property items were used in conjunction with the copula *de* and with the imperfective marker *dè*, in order to attest their fluctuating semantic content (stative/non-stative) and their labile syntactic behaviour (intransitive/transitive). In order to control the behaviour of DE as a copula and as an imperfective marker with property item,s I had to examine the behaviour of DE in all its possible morpho-syntactic functions, that were coded according to Table 24. The full list of sentences used as scripts during the experiment are listed in Appendix 4, while the slides are given in Appendix C-CD). Examples of sentences containing DE and their categorisation follow below[169]:

Table 24. Sentences containing DE in the scripts used in the prosodic experiment.

SENTENCE	TYPE	FUNCTION
5_3 Now na you **dey** in charge.	**1**	Predicative (*de* + PP)
2_2 Dem **dey** Ibadan.	**2**	Locative verb
2_11 Tomorrow in Lagos Baba Fryo gò **dey**.	**3**	Existential verb
08_01 Laugh dey nearly kill me o,	**4**	Imperfective (aspectual marker)
1_2 E go dey easy for am **dey** know wetin di people […]	**5**	Non-finite uses
1_1 E gò **dey** easy for am	**6**	Attributive copula with verbal property items
1_4 Marketing industry **dey** very very important.	**7**	Attributive copula with non-verbal property items
2_10 Dem tell me say Daddy Showkey **dey** vex now	**8**	DE plus change of state

[169] The spelling adopted here was *dey* in all environments in order to facilitate the reading task, since this has proved to be the spelling most familiar to these speakers. The same holds for corpus transcriptions.

		verbs
3_3 And wetin **dey** sweet me pass	**9**	DE plus transitive/ processual/ inchoative property verbs

Thus, I distinguished nine relevant morpho-syntactic categories:

- Predicative uses of DE plus PPs (1), described here in section 5.2.
- Locative uses of DE (2) described here in section 5.2.
- Existential uses of DE (3), described here in section 5.1.
- Imperfective (aspectual) uses of DE (4), described here in section 5.3.
- Non-finite uses of DE (5), described here in section 5.3.
- Copular uses of DE in attributive sentences with verbal PIs (6), described in Chapter 6 (section 6.5).
- Copular uses of DE in attributive sentences with non-verbal PIs (7), described here in Chapter 6 (section 6.4.2).
- DE plus change of state (inchoative) verbs (8), described here in section 5.2.
- Allegedly non-copular uses of DE with property items characterised by non-stative semantic content (inchoative/processual) and/or transitive syntactic nature (9), described in Chapter 6 (sections 6.5.4 and 6.5.5).

While categories 6 and 9 will be the main focus in section 6.7, what follows here is a general treatment of the tonal nature of DE in all the environments listed above (except 9). As I said in section 2.3.1, we collected a corpus of 51 target sentences containing DE, and each script was repeated and recorded five times for each speaker. For the purpose of the general treatment of the tonal specifications of DE, only one speaker was consistently studied (TF), for a total of 255 occurrences. I will present the results for each morpho-syntactic category with its number and description, associated with the gloss expressing its essential grammatical function and associated with one representative occurrence.

Category 1. Predicative DE before PPs - EX.LOC

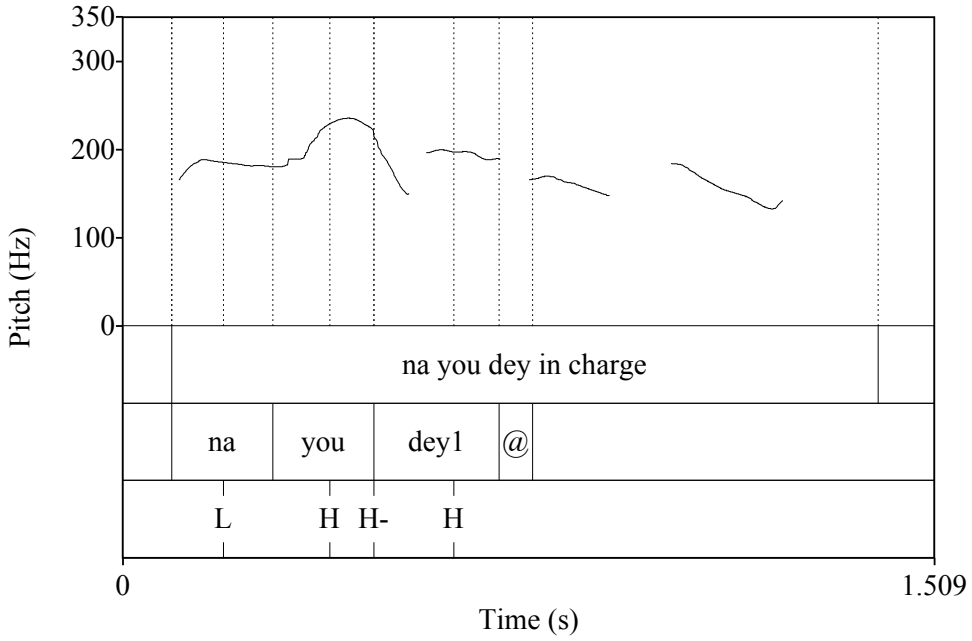
343 Now na you **dey** in charge. (05_03)

ADV FOC you EX.LOC PREP charge

'Now YOU are in charge.'

We had five instances of predicative uses of DE followed by a prepositional phrase. In every cases TF realised DE in the higher part of her speech range. DE was in all cases at the beginning of a phonological phrase (ϕ) or an intonational phrase (IP - in case of a preceding pause) and in all cases the ending segment of the previous ϕ or IP was high-pitched. Thus, in relation to the preceding H- or H% DE was realised in the higher part of the speaker's pitch range; this perceptual and visual consideration was confirmed by the fact that, in all five instances, DE represented the highest pitch segment within the whole IPs. Thus we classified it as high-toned *dé*.

Figure 24. TF realised a high-tone *dé*. Predicative *dey*, category 1. TF_05_05_03.



Category 2. Locative - EX.LOC

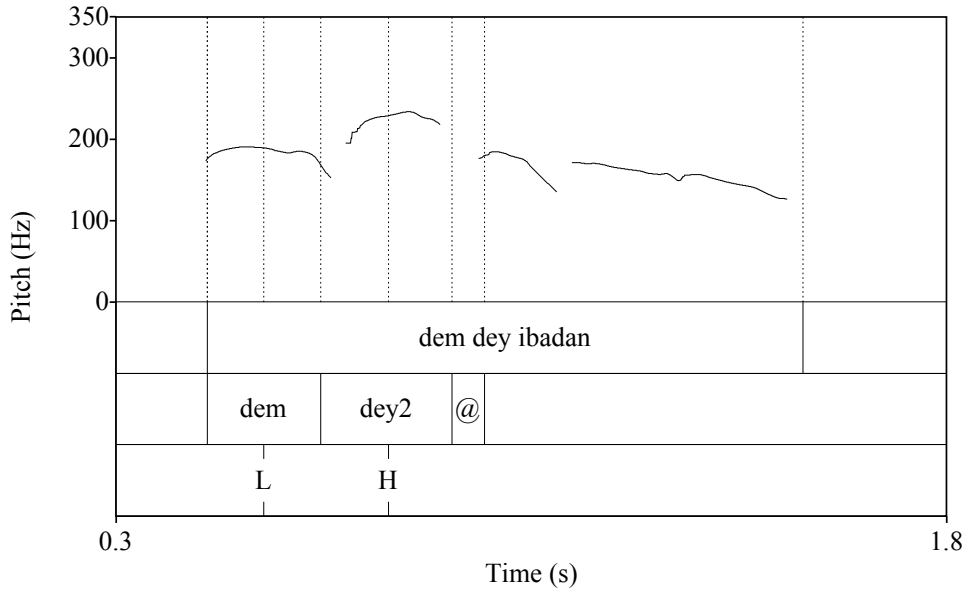
344 Dem **dey** Ibadan. (02_02)

they EX.LOC PN

'They were in Ibadan.'

We had 25 instances of DE used as a locative verb. In 12 cases it was preceded by a low-toned syllable, in ten cases it was preceded by a high-toned syllable and in three cases it was preceded by the end of a ϕ characterized as low (L-). In all cases DE was realized in the higher part of the speaker's pitch range, and it had a higher realization with respect to the preceding syllable or to the ϕ right boundary, thus we classified it as high-toned *dé*.

Figure 25. TF realised a high-toned *dé*. Locative *dey*, category 2. TF_05_02_02.



Category 3. Existential - EX.LOC

345 Tomorrow in Lagos Baba Fryo gò **dey**. (02_11)

tomorrow PREP PN PN PN IRR EX.LOC

'Tomorrow Baba Fryo will be in Lagos.'

We had 20 instances of DE used as a verb of existence. In ten cases it was

preceded by a low-toned syllable, in five cases it was preceded by a high-toned syllable and in five cases it was preceded by a syllable not specified for tone. It is relevant to note that in 15 cases DE was placed at the end of a ϕ and in 5 cases it was not. Actually, the five cases where existential DE was not placed at the end of a ϕ were the five repetitions of sentence 346:

346 Wahalla dey o. (02_09)
problem.PL EX.LOC INT
'There are problems!'

I will discuss these two sets of occurrences separately. In the five repetitions of the sentences in 346, where existential DE is not in ϕ final position, DE is realized in the higher pitch range of the speaker with a steady plateau in the central part of the vowel. In all these cases DE was preceded by the word *wàhálla* ("troubles", "problems") that is realised as L-H-x according to Faraclas (1996: 265), as well as our acoustic perception and visual inspection of the pitch curve (Fugure 27). According to Faraclas (1996: 266), the emphatic particle *o*, following DE in 346, is realised by most speakers as a downstepped high tone even if it would lexically bear low tone, which then would become a rising glide in ϕ final position. In the words of Farcalas: "when the syllable preceding *ò* bears a high tone, a high-low-high sequence is created, which almost invariably is reduced to a high-downstepped high sequence. The result is that *ò* is commonly pronounced with a downstepped high tone. Some speakers have made this pattern invariable, and pronounce *ò* at downstep level in all cases, even when a low tone precedes it." In our corpus, it was not clear whether final *o* was realised as a low tone or with a downstepped high tone. Given the fact that we expected and observed (as we will argue) most existential DE as high-toned syllables and the fact that, in the five occurrences of the sentence in 346, DE and *o* were realised approximately as slightly falling pitch movements of comparable height, we can safely accept Faraclas' tonal analysis of *o* as a downstepped high tone. Thus, based on our perceptual and acoustic analyses and taking into account the preceding and following tonal context, we classified the five occurrences

of non- ϕ final DE as high-toned.

Among the 15 cases where existential DE is in ϕ final position, we have nine cases in which DE clearly appears as having a falling pitch contour HL. This is in line with Faraclas' analysis (section 5.5.2) which predicts that syllables bearing H tone (as we envisage existential DE bears) become HL in ϕ final position. However, in one case the pitch realization of DE in ϕ final position was simply high and in five cases the presence of a falling HL glide is dubious.

Figure 26. TF realised a HL contour tone in ϕ final position for existential *dey*, category 3. TF_05_02_11.

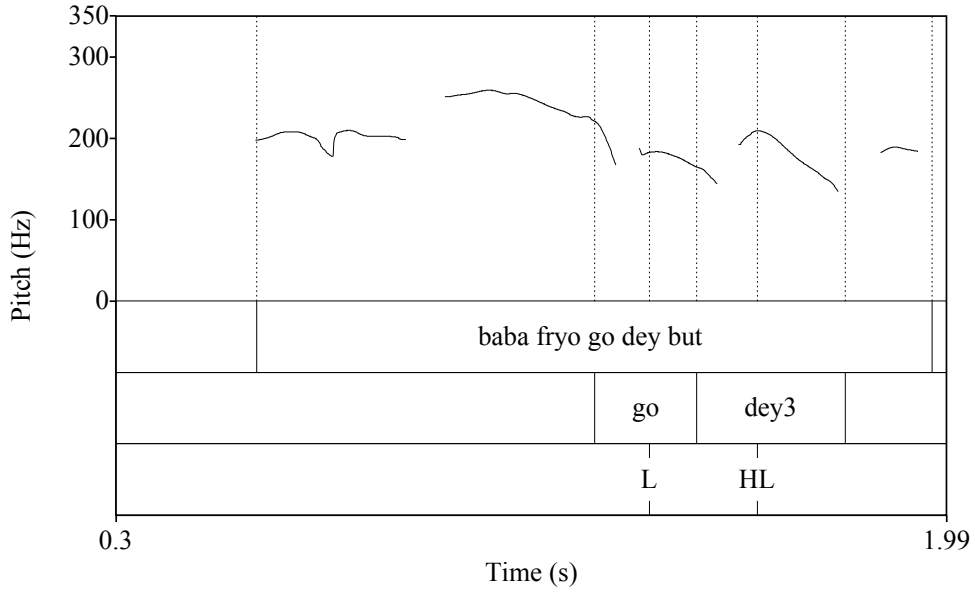
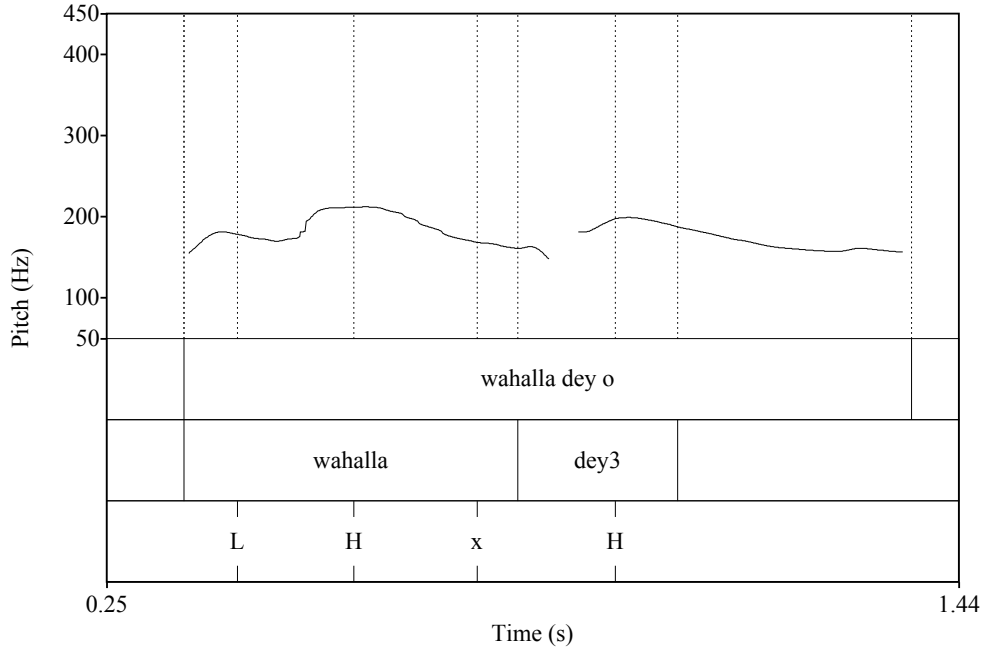


Figure 27. TF realised a high-toned *dé* (existential dey, category 3), followed by a downstepped H tone in correspondence to the emphatic particle o. TF_05_02_09.



Category 4. Imperfective - IPFV

347 Laugh **dey** nearly kill me o. (08_01)

We had 35 instances of imperfective DE used in its aspectual functions as progressive, habitual or continuous. In 19 cases the syllable preceding the aspectual DE was high-toned, but in two cases the high-tone is dubious and these two both concern the realisation of the word people [pìpú]. In 10 cases the preceding syllable was low-toned, and this was the case of the five repetitions of sentences 348 and 349, where the two bound pronouns *e* and *she* are L-toned.

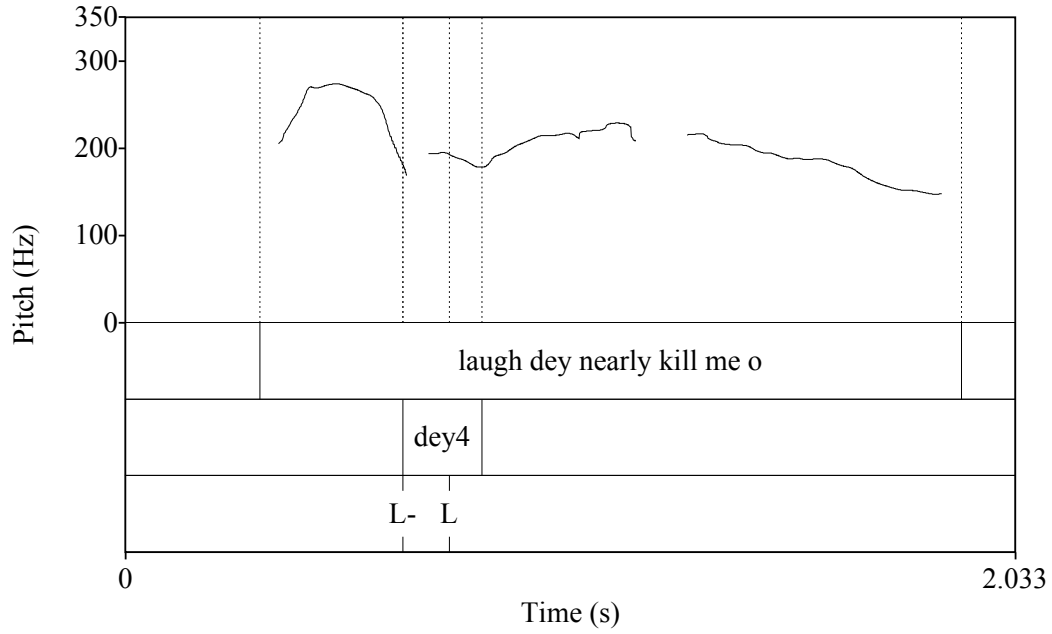
348 **E** dey dey hard before.
it IPFV EX.LOC be.hard ADV
'It used to be hard.'

349 […] any time **she** dey follow me talk anytin.
any time she IPFV SV me talk anything

'[…] every time she tells me anything.'

In six cases then, aspectual DE was preceded by the right-boundary of a ϕ or of an IP (in case a pause was inserted), having low-pitch endings. In all 35 instances, the acoustic and perceptual analyses, the visual inspection of the pitch curve and the comparison with the preceding tonal context converged for a low-tone analysis of imperfective DE as *dè*.

Figure 28. TF realised a low-toned *dè*. Imperfective *dey*, category 4. TF_05_08_01.



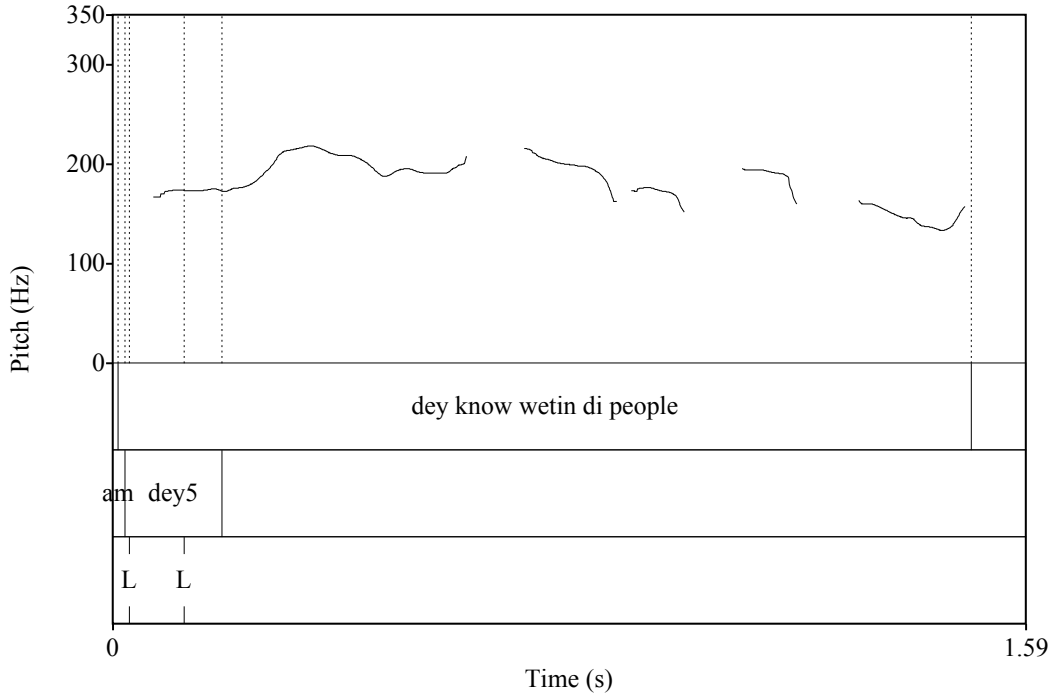
Category 5. Non-finite - IPFV

350 E go dey easy for am **dey** know wetin di people don dey plan. (01_02)
it IRR EX.LOC PREP him IPFV know what DET people CPL IPFV plan
'It will be easy for him to know what those people have been planning.'

We had 25 occurrences of DE in non-finite contexts. In five occurrences DE was preceded by the end of an IP/ϕ marked by a high-pitch movement; in 16 cases the preceding IP/ϕ had a low ending; in four cases DE was not in ϕ initial position, and the preceding syllable bears a low tone (this was the case of the preposition *to*). In all cases non-finite DE was realized in the lower part

of the speaker pitch range, and the visual inspection of the pitch curve confirmed that its realization occurred with a low pitch. In all 25 occurrences all the cues converged for an analysis of non-finite DE as low-toned *dè*.

Figure 29. TF realised a low-toned *dè*. Non-finite *dey*, category 5. TF_05_01_02.



Category 6-7. Attributive copular DE with verbal and non-verbal PIs - EX.LOC

351 E gò **dey** easy for am (01_01)
it IRR EX.LOC be.easy PREP him
'It will be easy for him.'

352 Marketing industry **dey** very very important. (01_04)
marketing industry EX.LOC very very important
'Marketing industry is very very important.'

Figure 30. TF realised a high-toned *dé*. Attributive copula *dey*, category 6. TF_05_01_01.

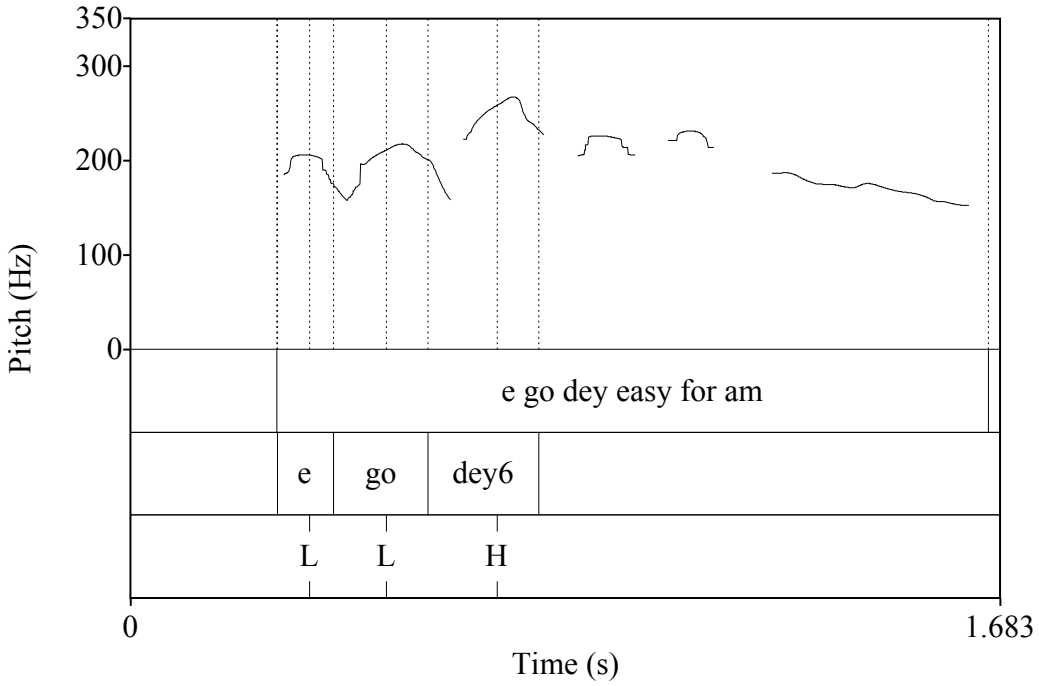
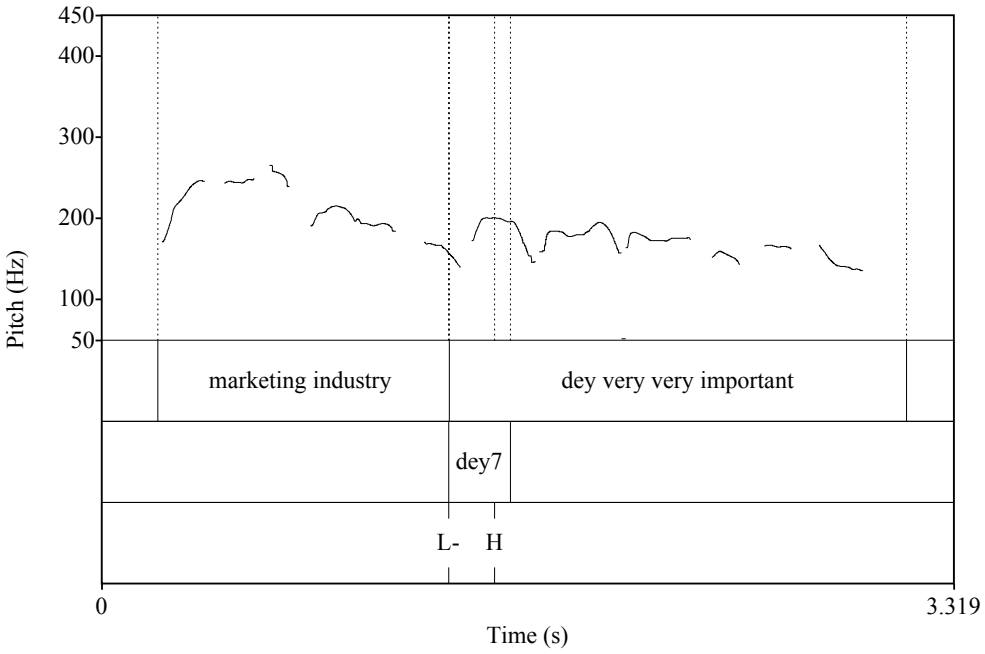


Figure 31. TF realised a high-toned *dé*. Attributive copula *dey*, category 7. TF_05_01_04.



I discuss these two categories together because they proved to be not

substantially differentiated. However, a more fine-grained treatment of the copular use of DE before PIs is to be found in 6.7.1 where one could also find a comparison with imperfective use of DE before the same group of property items. We had 95 occurrences of DE before a verbal (351) or non-verbal (352) property item. In 16 cases, the syllable preceding the attributive copula DE was high tone. This was the case, for example, of the completive marker *dón* as in 353:

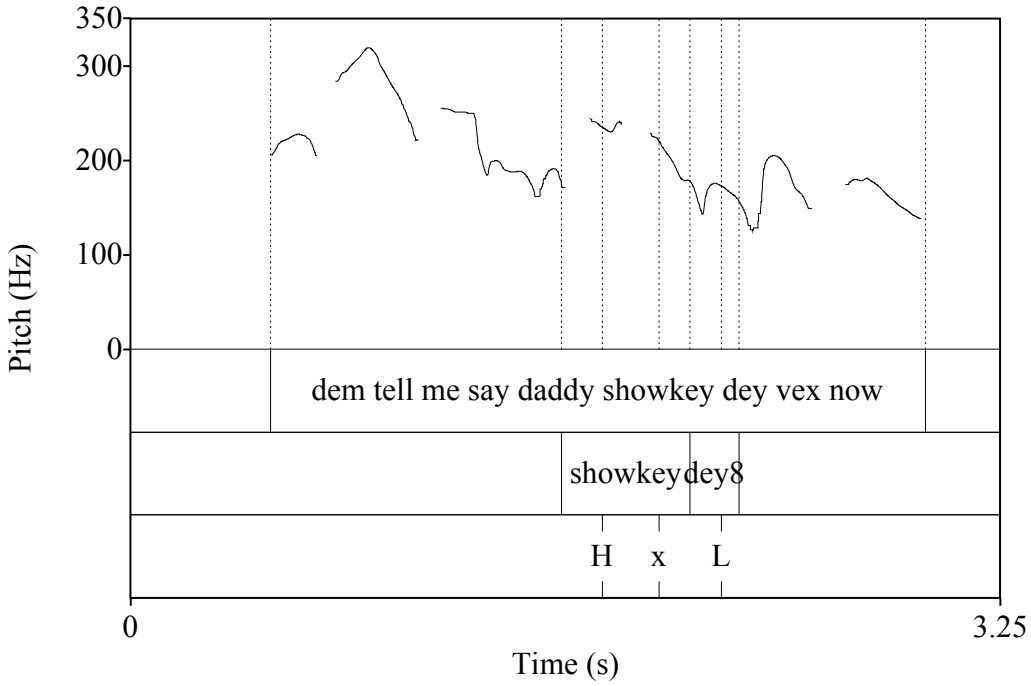
353 E don dey empty now!
it CPL EX.LOC be.empty INT
'It is already empty now!'

In 10 cases DE was at the beginning of an IP/ϕ and the ending of the preceding prosodic unit finished in a high-pitch. In 46 cases, attributive copular DE was preceded by a syllable specified as low-toned. In 24 cases DE was at the beginning of an IP/ϕ and the ending of the preceding unit had a low-pitch realization. In all cases, DE was realized in the higher part of the speaker's pitch range and the visual analysis of the spectrogram and pitch curve in relation to the preceding environment were consistent in indicating a high-toned realization of this type of DE as *dé*, as Figures 30 and 31 above indicate.

Category 8. Imperfective DE before change of state verbs - IPFV

354 Dem tell me say Daddy Showkey **dey** vex now. (02_10)
they tell.PST me COM PN PN IPFV get.offended INT
'They told me that Daddy Showkey is offended.'

Figure 32. TF realised a low-toned *dè*. Imperfective *dey* before change-of-state verbs, Category 8. TF_05_02_10.



The reason why we thought it was worth checking the tonal realisation of DE before these change-of-state verbs is that, as I anticipated in section 5.3, they behave much like verbal non-stative property items (Category 9). In fact, *craze* and *vex* express the meaning of "getting crazy" and "getting offended" and are thus in all instances dynamic (inchoative) verbs with all the consequences this has in NigP (e.g. factitive reading, see section 1.4.3). Thus, we expected these verbs to appear with an imperfective marker with possibly a low-toned realisation.

We had 10 instances of DE before the change-of-state verb *vex* and 5 occurrences of DE before the change-of-state verb *craze*. In 10 cases DE was preceded by a non-emphatic personal pronoun (*she* and *you*) and thus we had a low-tone syllable as a preceding tonal context; in 4 cases we had a preceding syllable not specified for tone (Show**key**) which was realised as interpolation between the high pitch of the first syllable of [ˈʃoki] and the relative low pitch of the realisation of DE. In one case, the speaker topicalised the subject (*Daddy Showkey*) during the reading and thus she realised it in a

separate ϕ with a low ending. In this case we classified the preceding environment as L-. In all 15 cases, irrespective of the preceding environment, DE was systematically realized in the lowest part of the speaker's pitch range and thus we classified it as low-toned *dè* (Figure 32 above).

5.7 Final remarks

The first part of this chapter (sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) was dedicated to the detailed description of the item DE in NigP. The main finding was that, as I explained in section 5.1, existential *de* and *e get* are two constructions in complementary distribution in pragmatic terms. The construction with *de* is anaphoric and the main nominal refers to some topical entity already expressed in discourse (or at least an entity which is not intended as a focalised constituent waiting for specification). The construction with *e get* is cataphoric and makes specific reference to entities that are introduced for the first time in discourse or entities that the speaker commits to expand on (pragmatically focused). The alternation is semantic and pragmatic but, only as a consequence, also syntactic: topical subjects of *de* are usually definite, while non-topical pivot nominals in existential construction with *e get* are usually indefinite. In section 5.2 I described locative, predicative and associative uses of DE and in section 5.3 I described all the functions related to its use as an imperfective marker. In general, I maintained DE to be one lexical item with two different grammatical functions: on one hand, existential/locative copula (EX.LOC), also used in some attributive contexts and, on the other hand, imperfective marker (IPFV).

In section 5.4 I made clear the ambiguity related to the tonal specification of DE, and in section 5.5 I described in some detail the prosodic mixed system of NigP, where tonal, pitch-accent and stress patterns interplay.

In section 5.6 I described the results of the prosodic experiment that I conducted in collaboration with the Paduan CNR on the tonal nature of DE. The experiment on the tonal realisation of DE showed extremely consistent

results. Locative, existential and predicative DE (introducing PPs) are realised in 100% of cases (50 occurrences) with a high pitch level. Thus we classified categories 1-2-3 as high-toned. The same holds for the 95 occurrences of DE as an attributive copula before both verbal and non-verbal property items (categories 6 and 7), which are realised in 100% of cases with high pitch level that we interpret as a high tone. Imperfective aspectual and non-aspectual DE (categories 4, 5 and 8), for which we had 75 instances, are realised in 100% of cases with a relative low pitch that we classified as low-tone.

We will see in section 6.7.1 that the analysis of the realisation of DE before verbal property items (categories 6 and 9) of two different speakers (TF and VE) is not as consistent.

6. Attributive (copular) clauses and property items in Nigerian Pidgin

Attributive clauses are sentences where a certain property is associated with a subject. In most Indo-European languages these types of sentence need copulas as a predicate markers since property items (henceforth, most times PIs) do not normally behave predicatively and are syntactically coded as "adjectives". However, this is not the case for all world languages, as Winford notes (1997: 252): "Although property concepts are typically associated with the grammatical category 'adjective' in languages like English, it is well known that this does not apply universally". In many West African languages, for example, property items make up a subclass of verbs and are mostly "inceptive verbs"[170] (Welmers 1973: 255f). Similar considerations have been made for many East Asian languages such as Chinese and Thai. On the other hand, there is an equally large number of languages (Finnish, for example), in which property items behave syntactically like nouns (Thompson 1988).

In NigP we find attributive clauses where the property item behaves verbally, as the head of the predicate slot (355), yet we also find attributive copular clauses where the copula *de* is followed by an adjectival item (356):

355 E **cheap** for 150 sef.
it be.cheap PREP 150 ADV
'It is cheap even for 150 Naira.'

356 Di tin **de cheap** for Nu metro.
DET thing EX.LOC be.cheap PREP Nu metro
'The thing is cheap at Nu Metro.'

[170] "Inceptive" is the term Welmers used to define what we call herein "inchoative". Both terms mean "entry-into-state".

Even if the ultimate goal of this chapter is to deal with the kind of variation exemplified above in 355-356, I will address the topic from a slightly wider point of view. Specifically, I will take into consideration *all* the property items of the NigP corpus in their predicative functions, either as predicators or as copular complements.

The chapter unfolds as follows. I give some semantic and syntactic descriptions of property items in sections 6.1 and 6.2. I prove that some property items are verbal in NigP in section 6.3. Zero copula is not assumed to exist in NigP: no omission, deletion or dropping is postulated as a transformation rule. In fact, I will speak of copula *insertion*. I will show possible exceptions to this analysis in section 6.3.1. In section 6.4, I group PIs according to their distributional property with respect to the copula. I will not specifically deal with PIs as noun modifiers, except for a brief mention in section 6.4.2, which is the paragraph dedicated to property items that *always* require a copula in order to be used predicatively. I will then concentrate on those property items that display the variation outlined in 355-356 (section 6.4.3). In order to account for the phenomenon of copula insertion, I will propose an analysis of property verbs in NigP based on a multiplicity of factors. In section 1.4.2 I showed the distribution of aspectual verb classes in NigP; hence, in section 6.5.3 I will separate stative property verbs from inchoative property verbs, which are a sub-class of change-of-state verbs in NigP and I will show how this distinction can help accounting for different effects of copula insertion. Some syntactic factors such as the type of subject in the context of attributive predications may entail consequences on the likely and frequency of copula insertion too (section 6.5.1). I will also try to account for different interpretations of PIs in terms of Stage/Individual level (section 6.5.2.). In 6.5.4 I will propose a set of criteria to distinguish stative PIs from inchoative/stative PIs. Section 6.7 will be dedicated to the lexical item DE (see also Chapter 5), which I refer to in capital letters when I wish to address both its use as an imperfective marker (low-toned *dè*) and its use as a locative copula or existential predicate (high-toned *de*): in 6.71 I will

discuss the results of the prosodic experiment I conducted in collaboration with the Paduan CNR and Prof. Cinzia Avesani on the tonal realisation of DE before verbal property items in NigP.

One very important premise here is that, in the variety of NigP under examination, property items do not co-occur with the copula *be* (apart from numerals as we saw in section 4.2.10). Faraclas (1996: 48) states that a property item such as *smol* (be.small) may function "either as the object of the copular identity verb *bì* or as the object of the copular location/existence verb *de*. When this type of deverbal modifier noun[171] occurs as the object of *bì*, it usually denotes an inherent or relatively permanent quality possessed by the referent of the sentential subject [357]. When it is the object of *de*, a deverbal modifier noun normally refers to an ephemeral or relatively temporary quality possessed by the subject [358]."

357 Mà pìkîn bì smol[172]
DET child COP small
My children are small (in build or in number)

358 Mà pìkîn de smol
DET child EX.LOC small
My children are small (in age)

Data from both the corpus and informants interviewed for the purpose of this work does not recognize sentence in 357. In the same line, Deuber (2005: 128), who collected her data in Lagos, confirms that the attributive construction with *be* "does not seem to be well established". I will return to this point in the conclusions (section 7.3.2).

[171] Faraclas defines property items as "deverbal modifier nouns".
[172] In Faraclas' grammar *Mà pikin smol* is also a possible sentence, yet its differentiation with respect to *Mà pikin bì smol* is now clear.

6.1 The semantics of property items

In the following discussion I will refer to items such as *happy*, *tall*, *sick*, *good*, *generous*, etc. with the term "property items" (PIs). I owe the term to the work of Winford (1993, 1997) and Migge (1998, 2000) on Sranan. The authors attribute the term to Thompson (1988: 167), who describes property concepts as "those referring to properties, qualities or characteristics of referents".

A detailed semantic characterization of PIs can be found in Dixon (2006: 1- 49). The author uses the terminology "adjective class" but he makes it clear from the beginning that he is referring to adjectives in the narrow sense, namely "descriptive adjectives such as 'red', 'heavy', and 'loyal' – leaving aside other types of noun modifier, demonstratives, and interrogatives". The broad correlation between parts-of-speech and semantic notions is somehow obvious: nominals are prototypically objects, verbals are prototypically events and adjectivals are prototypically property concepts (Dixon 1977). However, it may be very confusing to use a syntactic term such as "adjectives" to refer to the semantic class of property items and, vice versa, semantic considerations are relevant but not exhaustive to obtain a definition of the parts of speech, classically nouns, verbs and adjectives (Lyons 1977: 423).

According to Dixon (2006: 3-5), from the semantic point of view there are four core semantic types of adjectives. These are:

- DIMENSION – big, small, long, tall, short, wide, deep
- AGE – new, young, old
- VALUE – good, bad, lovely, atrocious, perfect, proper/real, odd, strange, curious, necessary, crucial, important, lucky
- COLOUR – black, white, red

Also, there is "a number of peripheral semantic types [that] are typically associated with medium-sized and large adjective classes", and these are:

- PHYSICAL PROPERTY – hard, soft, heavy, wet, rough, strong, clean, hot, sour
- CORPOREAL PROPERTY – well, sick, tired, dead, absent

- HUMAN PROPENSITY – jealous, happy, kind, clever, generous, cruel, proud, ashamed, eager
- SPEED – fast, quick, slow
- DIFFICULTY – easy, difficult, tough, hard, simple
- SIMILARITY – like, unlike, similar, different, strange
- QUALIFICATION – definite, true, probable, possible, likely, usual, normal, common, correct, appropriate, sensible
- QUANTIFICATION – all/whole, many, some, few, only, enough
- POSITION – high, low, near, far/distant, right, left, northern
- CARDINAL NUMBERS – first, last

I classified PIs of the analysed NigP corpus using the semantic criteria provided by Dixon. As expected, I found lexical items from all the semantic categories (with the exception of "cardinal number"). For example, I found PIs expressing dimensions (359), values (360), physical properties (361) and colours (362):

359 We gò dè repeat di date because di time still *long* small.
we IRR IPFV repeat DET date because DET time ADV be.long a.little
'We will be repeating the exact date [of the concert] because there is still some time [the date is far].'

360 E no *good* now.
it NEG be.good INT
'It's good!'

361 Somebodi wey e face *strong* na good pesin because face no dey
somebody REL POSS face be.strong COP good person because face NEG IPFV
judge pesin as mind.
judge person as mind
'Those whose face is hard are good persons because face doesn't tell you much about the person as mind does.'

362 You *white* and we no wan make you *black*.

you be.white and we NEG MOD SJV you be.black

'You are white and we don't want you to be black (to turn black).'

Property items expressing quantification (e.g. *many*, *much*, *plenty*) can be used as verbs as in 363-365:

363 Because di rabbit **dè** do im work well-well im customers kom

Since DET rabbit IPFV do POSS work well.REP POSS customer.PL PFV

begin *many* put

MOD be.many SV

'Since the rabbit was doing his work well, his customers started being more and more.'

364 Shey dat kain punishment no too *much* for dis kain small offence

ITRG that kind punishment NEG too be.much PREP this kind small offence

'That kind of punishment, isn't it too much for such a small offence?'

365 As customer no *plenty* again, price of food kom go up for private bukka.

As customer NEG be.plenty anymore price PREP food PFV go up PREP private bukka

'As customers aren't no longer numerous, private restaurants have raised the price of food.'

Still on quantification, sentences containing the ideophone "yafunyafun" ("a lot", "plenty", "many") were finally excluded from the data since the item was recognized by informants as not being a verb[173]:

366 Thread gò de yafunyafun.

thread IRR EX.LOC IDEO

'Threads will be plentiful.'

In 366 we have an existential structure (*thread gò de* – there will be threads) modified by a quantifying adverbial (*yafunyafun* – in big number). In nature,

[173] These intuitions were based both on prosodic observations (pause after *de*) and semantic intuitions (*de* is existential in nature).

yafunyafun in 366 works exactly as other sentence modifier. I give an example with another ideophone in 367:

367 I don finish our posta *kpakpa*.
I CPL finish POSS poster IDEO
'I finished our poster completely.'

I will now make a general clarification concerning the semantics of many property items in NigP. Most of the PIs constituting part of the main lexicon of NigP were incorporated into the language at its very inception, likely by English second language speakers with little access to the English language. The main languages of these speakers, as we have seen in 1.3.1, were West African languages of the Kwa and Benue Congo groups. Without further elaborating this concept, I will just note here that the semantics and syntax of these lexical items may have not been kept intact, i.e. neither English-like nor Kwa-like, in the learner variety of the new speakers. This holds even when the phonetic form of the item has not changed much or at all.

As an example, one can observe the item *full*. In 368-373 it is shown that the semantics of the verb *full* in NigP cover the following meanings: be.full/get.full (368), increase (369), be.plenty (370), fill.up (371), be.full (372), fill.up (373).

368 Di woman look-up, her eyes *full* with water for cry-cry.
DET woman look-up POSS eye.PL get/be.full PREP water PREP cry.REP
'The woman looked up, her eyes were full/got full of tears'.

369 Di woman shout because annoyance don *full* reach her throat.
DET woman shout.PST because annoyance CPL full SV POSS throat
'The woman shouted because her annoyance reached that point.'

370 Dirty *full* everywhere.
Dirty be.full everywhere

'Everywhere was dirty.'

371 Plenty people wey wear fine-fine clothes *full* di door-mouth dè wait to
plenty people REL wear fine.REP cloth.PL fill.up.PST DET door-mouth IPFV PREP
enter.
enter
'Plenty of people wearing beautiful clothes filled up the door-mouth waiting to enter.'

372 House *full* today and everybodi dè talk im mind
house be.full today CNJ everybody IPFV talk POSS mind
'The house is full today and everybody is telling what he/she has in mind.'

373 As she raise her hand wey jewellery *full* for air, she finally free Jonathan
as she raise POSS hand REL jewellery be.full PREP air she ADV liberate.PST PN
hand
hand
'As she raised her hand full with jewellery, she finally liberated Jonathan's hand.'

6.2 Syntactic encoding of property items in Nigerian Pidgin and other creoles

In his conclusions, Dixon suggests (2006: 44) that the word class "adjectives" can be identified in virtually any language when:

- it is grammatically distinct from noun class and verb class;
- it includes words from some or all of the prototypical adjective semantic types (DIMENSION, AGE, VALUE and COLOUR)
- and (a) items function either as intransitive predicates or as a copula complements and/or (b) items modify a noun in NPs (prototypical adjectives combine (a) and (b).

In brief, the syntactic criteria provided by Dixon to single out this sub-part of

the lexicon are loose and allow us to compare his "adjective class" to the class of Property Items we will discuss herein. In fact, in NigP Property Items that show the kind of variation in 355 and 356 form a distinct class from both Nouns and Verbs. For example, they can be distinguished from nouns because they cannot be copular complements of the equative copulas *be* and *na*:

374 * Dat guy na *good*
that guy COP be.good

375 * Im be *good*
he/she COP be.good

Also, property items in NigP cannot take plural forms[174], while nouns can.

376 Di book(s) dem
DET book.PL PL

377 * Di book(s) dem de *good*(s) dem
DET book.PL PL EX.LOC be.good.PL PL

Secondarily, even if property items are to be considered verbs most of the times (378), some verbal property items have to be grouped as a distinct class from (perhaps a subclass of) verbs. This is because property items also perform as complements of the copula *de*[175] (379)*:*

378 Dat guy *fine*
that guy be.fine

379 Dat guy de *fine*
that guy EX.LOC be.fine

[174] In this elicited example, the plural morphology is the optional suffix *-s* plus the morpheme *dem*. For a detailed analysis of variation in plural marking forms in modern Western Nigerian Pidgin, see Deuber (2005: 106-114).
[175] Verbs can co-occur with the imperfective marker *dè*.

Finally, unlike verbs, Property Items perform as noun modifiers (380), while verbs cannot (381):

380 Dat *fine* boy na my brother.
that fine boy COP POSS brother
'That fine boy is my brother.'

381 * Dat *run* boy na my brother

Given this, NigP may be considered to have a class "adjectives" in Dixon's terms. Items in this class are part of the typical semantic domains expressing properties or qualities; they are distinct from nouns and verbs, and also (a) they are used intransitively or as complements in copular attributive constructions and (b) they can modify nouns in NPs. However, if we take Lyon's definition of the syntactic category "adjectives", we may be tempted to conclude that the PIs under analysis here are not adjectives *stricto sensu*:

> "When we say that there are adjectives, for example, in such and such a language, we mean that there is a grammatically definable class of expressions whose most characteristic syntactic function is that of being the modifier of a noun in an endocentric construction and whose most characteristic semantic function is to ascribe properties to entities". (Lyons 1986: 440)

Of course, it is a matter of definition: Lyon places more stress on the syntactic role of adjectives as noun modifiers and does not mention the possibility for adjectives to be verbal in nature. Dixon accentuates the semantic content of PIs and gives very loose syntactic boundaries to this category.

In creoles of the Atlantic group, PIs are recognized as having verbal status most of the time. Concerning English-based creoles we find that verbal

adjectives are present in Krio (Finney - in press[176]), in Pichi (Yakpo 2009: 123), in Ghanaian Pidgin (Huber 1999) in Jamaican creole (Bailey 1966: 67), in Ndjuka (Huttar & Huttar 1994), in Saramaccan (Alleyne 1987: 60, 160), in Sranan (Winford 1997) and in Guyanese Creole (Bickerton 1973, 1975 and Winford 1993). See Winford (1993) also for similar considerations on a group of closely related Caribbean English creoles (e.g. Miskito coastal creole, Belizean creole, Limón coastal creole, Cólon creole, San Andrés and Providencia creole, see Winford 1993: 4). So-called "verbal adjectives" are also found in Gullah, a creole language spoken in the US (South Carolina, Georgia and Sea Islands) as indicated by Turner (2002, first 1949: 209, 216).

French-lexicon creoles are attested having verbal adjectives too. References are in Corne (1980) on Ile-de-France Créole (Mauritius, Rodrigues and Seychelles) and Lefebvre (1998: 383f) on Créole Haïtien.

Verbal adjectives are attested in certain syntactic contexts in Fá D'Ambô (or Annobonese), Portuguese-lexicon creole spoken in the Bioko and Annobon islands off Equatorial Guinea (data from the online resources of the Apics project[177]), and similar constructions seem to exist also in Guinea Bissau creole (Kihm, 1994: 38-40). In order to provide the complete list, I add here that no verbal adjectives are attested in either Cape Verdian creole (Baptista 2002: 102), and in Papiamentu (Jacobs 2012: 230-235), a Portuguese-Spanish creole spoken in the ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao).

The verbal encoding of predicative adjectives in Atlantic creoles is unanimously recognised as a substrate feature. There are some West African areal features that are present in most creoles: the encoding of property items as intransitive verbs in West African languages has clearly been the model for the formation of attributive sentences in Atlantic creoles from any lexifiers (for an overview of substrate effects in creoles' grammars, see

[176] I thank Prof. Finney also for pointing out that the kind of variation we find here in 355-356 is not attested in Krio. Krio does never use copulas in attributive constructions with property items.

[177] http://lingweb.eva.mpg.de/apics/index.php/The_Atlas_of_Pidgin_and_Creole_Language_Structures_%28APiCS%29

Muysken & Smith 1986).

Of course things are not always straightforward. For example, there has been a lively debate on the status of property items in Sranan. Among others, Alleyne (1987) and Sebba (1986) considered property items in Sranan as verbs, while Seuren (1986) analysed them as adjectives, i.e. with no predicative strength. But the discussion was not limited to whether or not these items should be considered verbs: among those who argued for the verbal status of property items in Sranan, a debate arose concerning the aspectual class to which those items belong. Voorhoeve (1962) and Sebba (1986) have interpreted them as stative verbs; Alleyne (1987), Winford (1997) and Migge (1998, 2000) interpreted them as non-stative verbs: inchoative or processual, in both cases dynamic in internal aspect.

Winford (1997: 250f) shows that in sentences like 4 and 5 *bigi* and *bradi* are intransitive verbs and they share many properties with regular verbs. Hence, according to this author, there is no underlying copula in 382 and 383:

382 A liba bradi ('The river is wide')
DET river be.broad

383 Yu futu bigi ('Your foot is big')
DET foot be.big

Seuren (1986), on the other hand, notes that the copula *de* occurs in certain types of adjectival predication in Sranan[178], as in the followings:

384 O bradi a liba de? (How wide is the river?)
How broad DET river COP

385 A liba de so bradi (The river is so wide)

[178] I advice the interested reader to consult both references for the full discussion since the two positions are quite articulated and it is not my aim here to present them in detail.

DET river COP so broad[179]

In brief, an alternation of types existing in NigP, shown here in 355-356, is present also in Sranan and has attracted the interest of researchers.

According to Winford (1997), as far as *Aktionsart* is concerned, PIs in Sranan are neither inflexibly stative nor processual. Winford (1997: 262-263) states that: "[i]t would appear that the majority of property predicators of all semantic types in SN [Sranan] are indeed processual in character. Certain property items belonging to the Human Propensity and Value categories[180] appear to behave more like statives […]. They include *breiti* 'happy', *takru* 'bad, ugly', *bunkopo* 'cheap' and others'. Winford was able to distinguish, first and foremost, stative property verbs from inchoative property verbs in Sranan from the fact that while both types can occur with the copula *de*, only inchoative property verbs can be used with the imperfective marker *e*: "My informants accept progressive *e* with items like *drei, faya*, *kowru* etc. (Physical Property), *bigi, langa*, etc (Dimension), *blaka, grun* etc. (Color), *gridi, koni* (Human Propensity), *owru* (Age) and others"[181]. We see inchoative PIs in Sranan marked for imperfective aspect in 386-387:

386 A gotro e drei (The canal is getting dry/is being dried)

387 A bari e furu (The barrel is getting full/is being filled)[182]

Some PIs in Sranan can also turn transitive, and thus fully dynamic, without changing morphologically:

388 A son e dyeri den manya (The sun ripens the mangoes)

[179] Glosses in 382-385 are mine.
[180] Winford refers to Dixon's semantic types given here in 6.1.
[181] In the same vain Corne (1980: 113) uses the distributional criteria of the co-occurrence of property items with the progressive marker (*a*)*pe* in Isle-de-France Creole to assess their aspectual status (state vs. process).
[182] Winford, following Alleyne, states that a passive interpretation is also possible in this context.

389 Den e bradi a liba fu a sipi kan psa (They are widening the river so the ship can pass.

Therefore, on the whole, it would appear that most property items in Sranan are ambitransitive verbs (or "labile verbs" as I address them here in 6.5.5). In their use as intransitive predicates, some are more stative and others are more processual in nature, so that the single item displays a flexible aspectual character.

6.3 The verbal status of property items in Nigerian Pidgin

In line with most of the languages to which it is related, NigP has verbal property items. "Almost all lexical items whose meanings correspond to items classified as adjectives in many Indo-European languages and whose function is to describe certain qualities of nouns may occupy the same sentential slot normally occupied by verbs and may take any and all of the auxiliaries, modals, objects, adverbial modifiers, ideophones, etc., normally taken by verbs in the language" (Faraclas 1996: 214). In this section I will present some evidence (A – G) in favour of this claim.

A) Property items in NigP constitute the head of the verb phrase (390):

390 Freestyle **stiff**. Dat guy, im shi-shi no dè drop from im hand.
PN be.stiff that guy POSS money NEG IPFV drop PREP POSS hand
Di guy **stiff**.
DET guy be.stiff
'Freestyle is stiff. That guy, his money does not fall from his hand. The guy is stiff.'

B) They take TMA markers and negation as any other verb in NigP. This ability of property verbs to take TMA specifications without the intervention of a copula is one of the strongest arguments for their verbal status. Copulas are known to be omitted in some languages in present or tenseless contexts

to then show up in the past tense or in other non-present, non-realis contexts, as in Russian (Katia Golovko, pc)[183]. Another excellent example is Black English where copulas may drop[184] in present or tenseless contexts but then they appear again in critical positions, the so-called "Labov's positions" (Labov 1969)[185]. This is not the case for NigP (391 and 397):

391 E **don** hapi for di beat and everytin, e jos de happy for di
He CPL get.happy PREP DET song CNJ everything he ADV EX.LOC be.happy PREP DET beat.
song
'He got happy for the beat and everything, he was just happy for the beat.'

Also in interrogatives, where an allegedly omitted copula may eventually appear, verbal property items continue behaving verbally in NigP:

392 How di station far reach?
How DET station be.far SV
'How far is the station?'

393 How di river wide reach?[186]
How DET river be.wide SV

[183] Also Arabic, Hebrew, Bambara, Burmese, Hungarian have no copulas in present tense (Li & Thompson 1977: 436). "The equational sentence, being semantically complete, has no need for a copula in the present tense. The reason is that the present tense is the neutral and unmarked tense. In a non-present tense there is a stronger semantic motivation for the occurrence of the copula in an equational sentence since the copula can signal the non-present tense."
[184] Labov notes that copulas may contract in Standard English in the same contexts where they may drop in Black English. Hence, he elaborates a unique variable rule to explain phenomena in both languages. We consider here only syntactic factors but Labov's rule encompasses phonetic, syntactic and sociolinguistic factors. See section 3.3.
[185] In short "Labov 's positions" are: past tense contexts, after modals or other auxiliary verbs and clause-final position.
[186] I should point out that informants give equivalent of 392 and 393 with copular constructions too:
392a How far di station de?
393a How wide di river de?
This confirms the central claim of this chapter, which is that NigP has two possible syntactic options for the encoding of property items: they can be verbal as in 392 and 393 or they can be adjectival in nature, so to require a copula as in 392a and 392a.

'How wide is the river?'

C) Property verbs occur in SVCs like any other verb (394, 397 and 392-393):

394 You take style **wicked** sha o.
You use.PST style be.wicked INT REAL
'You used politeness to be evil!'

D) They can have clausal complements and expletive subjects, as any other verb:

395 E **good** make you give them a while.
it be.good EXH you give them a while
'It's good that you give them some time.'

E) They project an argument structure in both transitive (396-397) and intransitive sentences (397). They are labile verbs (see section 6.5.5):

396 Make I give hard-hard forecast wey gò **sweet** dem.
EXH I give hard.REP forecast REL IRR please them
'Should I give those very negative forecasts that will please them.'

397 I **hot** di water sotay e **gò don hot finish.** Faraclas (1996)
I get.hot the water untill it IRR CPL be.hot SV
'I heated up the water so that it would get completely hot (it would boil).'

F) Like typical verbs, property verbs can be followed by degree adverbs. Their verb phrases are modified through the same strategies employed for other verbs and, accordingly, the strategies used to modify adjectival phrases are not accepted with property verbs. Let us consider the variation in 398 (a) and 399 (a):

398 a. Di machine de big

DET machine EX.LOC big

399 a. Di machine big

DET machine be.big

If one wishes to modify the verb phrases in 398 (a) and 399 (b), an adverb like *very* would be appropriate for the former, which is an adjectival phrase (see 398 b), but not for the latter (399 b):

398 b. Di machine de very big.

DET machine EX.LOC very big

'The machine is very big.'

399 b. * Di machine [Ø] very big.

Instead, to adjust 399 one would have to use a different type of modifier, as in 399 (c).

399 c. Di machine big well-well.

DET machine be.big well.REP

'The machine is very big.'

The same adverb *well-well* may be used with all other verbs like, for instance, *run* in 400:

400 Di guy run well-well.

DET guy run.PST well.REP

'The boy ran away like hell.'

We can examine example 401 in the same vein:

401 a. I fit give you something wey de **as** good **as** money

I MOD give you something REL EX.LOC as good as money

'I can give you something that is as good as money.'

401 b. * I fit give you something wey [Ø] **as** good **as** money

The sentence in 401 (b) is not acceptable. The property item *good* can be used as a copular complement as in 401 (a) and, in that case, it accepts being modified as an adjective. However, the same property item when used without the copula is fully verbal: in this case, it cannot be modified according to strategies adapted to adjectives. Thus, if one wants to modify the item *good* used verbally, one has to use verbal strategies of modification (401 c).

401 c. I fit give you something wey good **reach** money

I MOD give you something REL be.good SV money

'I can give you something that is as good as money.'

The serial verb construction with *reach*, in fact, can modify all verbs in NigP (402):

402 You no love me **reach**

you NEG love me SV

'You do not loce me enough.'

Vice versa, if we take a verbal property item modified by a comparative SVC with *pass* (403 a), the use of the copula is ungrammatical (403 b):

403 a. Dem no **better pass** us now

they NEG be.better SV us INT

'They are not better than us.'

403 b. * Dem no **de** better **pass** us now

they NEG EX.LOC be. better SV us INT

403 c. Dem no **de** better **than** us now
they NEG EX.LOC be.better PREP us INT
'They are not better than us.'

G) PIs can be predicate clefted in NigP (404) as any other verb in the language (405):

404 Na happy di guy happy o.
FOC be.happy DET guy be.happy INT
'The guy is really HAPPY.'

405 Na run di guy run o.
FOC run DET guy run INT
'The guy really RAN away!'

6.3.1 *Defective* behaviour of some property items

After listing all the property items attested in the corpus, I checked their co-occurrence with the copula, TMA, negation markers and serial verbs with the help of my informants. In doing so, I realised that some property verbs are able to occupy the verb slot without a copular predicator in present or tenseless sentences, but cannot be marked by certain auxiliaries without the compulsory insertion of the copula. Let us consider sentence 406 from my corpus:

406 Beggars dem de simple and innocent.
beggar.PL PL EX.LOC simple CNJ innocent
'Beggars are simple and innocent.'

Starting from the sentence in 406 I elicited the following judgements:

407	Beggars innocent.[187] beggar.PL be.innocent 'Beggars are innocent.'	Beggars **de** innocent. beggar.PL EX.LOC innocent 'Beggars are innocent.'
408	* Beggars don innocent. beggar.PL CPL be.innocent	Beggars don **de** innocent. beggar.PL CPL EX.LOC innocent 'Beggars have been innocent.'
409	* Beggars for innocent. beggar.PL COND be.innocent	Beggars for **de** innocent. beggar.PL COND EX.LOC innocent 'Beggars would be innocent.'
410	* Beggars kom innocent. beggar.PL PFV be.innocent	Beggars kom **de** innocent. beggar.PL PFV EX.LOC innocent 'Beggars became innocent.'
411	Beggars **bin** innocent. beggar.PL ANT be.innocent 'Beggars were innocent.'	Beggars bin de innocent. beggar.PL ANT EX.LOC innocent 'Beggars were innocent.'

The property item *innocent* can be used with or without a copula in present or tenseless sentences (407). However, it cannot be directly modified by any TMA marker (408-410) with the exception of *bin* (411). The same holds true for the (verbal) item *generous*.

This said, given sentence in 412 from the corpus, the picture further complicate itself with the item *helpless*. *Helpless* is hardly ever accepted without copula (413)[188] and cannot bear any morphology without the copular support of *de* (414-416). Yet, in 417, we see that informants accept the item modified by *bin*, usually glossed as an *anterior marker*.

[187] Informants point out that sentences of this type (i.e. without the copula) always require a special intonation or pragmatic markers such as final *o* or *now* to be acceptable in discourse. From one informant: "Intonation and contours makes those item verbal". On the other hand, same sentences with the copula *de* may be pronounced with sort of neutral intonation. See also the pitch change pattern given in 6.5.4.

[188] Speakers really have to stress on prosody or make use of interjections (e.g. *now*) or emphatic markers (e.g. final *o*).

412 Every body de helpless for dis strange world.
every body EX.LOC helpless PREP this strange world
'Everybody is helpless in this strange world.'

413 ? Every body helpless
everybody be.helpless

Every body de helpless
everybody EX.LOC helpless
'Everybody is helpless.'

414 * Every body don helpless
every body CPL be.helpless

Every body don **de** helpless
everybody CPL EX.LOC helpless
'Everybody have been helpless.'

415 * Every body for helpess
every body CON be.helpless

Every body for **de** helpless
everybody COND EX.LOC helpless
'Everybody would be helpless.'

416 ? Every body kom helpless
every body PFV be.helpless

Every body kom **de** helpless
everybody PFV EX.LOC helpless
'Everybody became helpless.'

417 Every body **bin** helpless
every body CPL be.helpless
'Everybody was helpless.'

Every body bin de helpless
everybody CPL EX.LOC helpless
'Everybody was helpless.'

This important finding calls for an explanation. In order to explain 407-411 and 413-417, one could posit that property items such as *innocent* and *helpless* are adjectival in nature and yet are somehow borderline within this category because they tend to align with the syntax of verbal property items in non-critical contexts: in fact, they appear without copula in present or tenseless sentences (407 and 413), but in non-present or non-realis contexts the copular support of *de* is needed. In other words, these items are probably non-verbal but may conform to verbal syntax in certain non-critical contexts.

They can surface without the *de* support when unmarked and when informants accentuate prosody or make full use of pragmatic markers (final *o*, interjection *now*) in order to remark their verbal status[189]; however, these items are not verb enough to co-occur with the irrealis marker *gò*, the completive *don* and the counterfactual *for*.

Unexpectedly, the anterior marker *bin* displays a singular behaviour pattern because it is consistently acceptable with this type of property items (411, 417, and also below 445-448). One may speculate that the marker *bin*, perhaps in virtue of its etymology (the inflected English form *been*) retains some predicative strength and performs as a copular verb in these contexts[190].

6.4 Property items and copular distribution

In the corpus we find a total of about 700 occurrences of 174 lexemes that can be classified as property items. *Some* property items *sometimes* appear preceded by a copular item pronounced /de/ and differently written "de", "dei" or "dey" in the literature and in the written NigP examples (see section 5.4). In respect to the patterns of copula distribution, we can divide property items in three sets, which I will discuss in section 6.4.1 (PIs incompatible with the copula), section 6.4.2 (PIs compulsorily with the copula), and section 6.4.3 (variation with respect to copula distribution). The kind of variation exemplified in 355 and 356, which represents the focus of this chapter, will be described in section 6.4.3, while in section 6.5 I will try to provide an explanation for this pattern.

6.4.1 Property items as verbs only

(a) Few property items never occur with any copula. In this first group I expect to find full verbs with a strong and steady predicative function in the

[189] The use of prosody in order to distinguish verb-like from adjective-like property items is used for full verbs as stated in section 6.4.3.
[190] See Bickerton (1979 and 1980) for an early and insightful treatment of the marker *bin* in Atlantic English-lexicon creoles. This has nothing to do, however, with its alleged copular functions mentioned here.

language, unable to occur as noun modifiers. In the corpus we find only one (verbal) item with this distributional characteristics: *senior*, as in 418.

Table 25. Verbal PIs unable to be used as noun modifiers.

FIRST GROUP
senior

418 As im dè go, im jam one police man wey no too *senior* am.
as he IPFV go, he meet.PST DET police man REL NEG ADV be.elder him
'As he was going, he met one policeman who was not much older than him.'

6.4.2 Property items as "proper" adjectives

(b) Some property items must be preceded by the copula *de* and cannot stand alone in the verb slot. In the second group (Table 26) I found new loans or participial verbs that cannot be placed in the verb slot and thus are not verbal in any sense.

Table 26. Adjectival PIs.

Abandoned	Dazed	Hammered	Qualified	Straight
Alarmed	Effective	*Helpful*	Responsible	Stubborn
Allowed	Enough	*Helpless*	Rotten	Tall
Amused	Entitled	Hidden	Round	Thick
Angry	Equal	Impressed	Sad	Tipsy
Available	Filled up	Impressive	Selfish	Ugly
Bigger	Fixed	Interested	Sensible	Useful
Blessed	Formed	Interesting	Serious	Useless
Brutal	Governed	Limited	Short	Wicked
Concerned	Grateful	Late	Shy	Wide open
Connected	Gray	More	Simple	Wise
Crowded	Harder	Occupied	Slow	Wonderful
Cunning	Hardworking	Programmed	Sorry	Wrong

419 a. E *de* harder if you no do am.
it Ex.LOC harder if you NEG do it
'It will be harder if you don't do it.'

b. * E harder

420 a. Na why you *de* so angry?
FOC why you EX.LOC so angry
'Why are you so angry?'

b. ??Why you so angry < Why you de vex?[191]

421 a. I *de* very impressed
I EX.LOC very impressed
'I am very impressed.'

b. * I very impressed

The items pertaining to this group qualify as part of the class of "adjectives" *strictu sensu* in NigP. In fact:
(1) they occur in NPs and can modify nouns (422),
(2) they can co-occur with other noun modifiers (422), and
(3) they may be modified by adverbs of degree as in 398(b), 401(a) and 403(c).

422 Jonathan na honest and sensible boy
PN COP honest and sensible boy
'Jonathan is an honest and sensible boy.'

Faraclas (1996: 221) states that "[t]here is no motivation for any separate category 'adjective' in Nigerian Pidgin [since] [w]hat might be called

[191] Here, the informant has expressed the preference for a construction with the change-of-state verb *vex* in this context. The sentence with *angry* marked with two question marks has been classified as "comprehensible, not distorted but somehow unusual".

'adjectives' in other languages are in fact verbs, modifier nouns (attributive function) or pronominal objects (copular complements) in NigP". Faraclas (1996: 62, 225) also acknowledges that, in acrolectal varieties of NigP (as is the language used in the novel's translation, see section 2.2), there is some attested use of adjectives "beginning with fixed expressions such as *men rod* 'main road' or 'left hand' and then extending to the other environments". Thus, for acrolectal varieties, a separate category 'adjective' would have to be introduced (as I did) in order to produce a full account of the data. In fact, the category "adjective" is a descriptive tool needed to account for the data under analysis. In the corpus there are at least 75 types of items that cannot be explained in any way aside from this category: they are mainly new loans from English and are concentrated in Agwu Amogu's translation of Ken Schoolland's novel "The adventures of Jonathan Gullible" (see section 2.2).

The copular pattern as [COP + AP/NP/PP/AdvP] is a very productive one. This second group of (fully) adjectival property items is certainly an open class, since new loans can easily be incorporated in a copular structure with *de*. It is actually a bridge-structure, able to function with a potentially huge class of property items, prepositional or adverbial verb phrases, mainly borrowed from English. Winford (1993: 174)[192] makes a very similar consideration regarding Guyanese Creole.

I will spend some words on how NigP codes noun modification. The lexical item *wide* in NigP can be used as a verb or as a noun modifier without requiring any morphological change:

423 Di river *wide* (The river is wide, i.e. this is a wide river)

424 Di river de *wide* (The river is wide here/in this moment)

425 Di *wide* river de here (The wide river is here)

[192] "My own GC [Guyanese Creole] data reveal that the pattern shown in [419a and 421a here, namely: *de* + AP/NP/PP/AdvP] is a highly productive one, with a wide range of adjectives occurring as complements to *de* [...] There is a class of items that appear to be adjectives rather than verbs in their predicative functions (e.g. adjectives imported from Dutch)".

However, there are at least two other strategies (the first is syntactic, and the second is morphological) through which speakers can transform a verb/adjective into a noun modifier. Firstly, one finds the relativization strategy as in 426:

426 Di river *wey wide* de here.
DET river REL be.wide EX.LOC here
'The wide river is here.'

We find in 427 and 428 examples of this construction from the corpus:

427 One small animal run follow one road *wey bush full*.
DET small animal run.PST follow one road REL bush be.full
'One small animal ran into one road full of bushes.'

428 One rug *wey don old well-well* na im **de** on top di ground.
DET rug REL CLP get.old well.REP COP it EX.LOC PREP PREP DET ground
'One very old rug, it is on top of the ground.'

Secondly, noun modifiers are also attested as reduplicated items, as in 429:

429 She kom bring out one case of *thick-thick* cigars from her bag.
she PFV bring PREP DET case PREP thick.REP cigar.PL PREP POSS bag
'She took one case of very thick cigars from her bag.'

Many researchers have analysed reduplication one of the (allegedly) few morphological strategies used by creoles[193] to form attributive adjectives out of property verbs. Alleyne (1987: 83), for example, notes that in Saramaccan there is a "class of true adjectives (in contrast with predicative adjectives that behaves like verbs) [...] derived from verbs or [predicate adjectives] via

[193] There is a general, recognized deficiency of studies on derivational morphology in creoles and, as a counterpart, there is an easy enthusiasm towards simplifying theories that find in the scarcity of creole morphological devices the key to their origin and essence.

reduplication (*degi-degi* 'thick, *dede-dede* 'dead'): these reduplicated forms would be properly-derived adjectives". In Saramaccan, according to Alleyne, these forms are never preceded by TMA particles and they do require the copula *de* in their predicative functions. Winford (1997: 243) describes a slightly different picture for Sranan and Ndjuka, but essentially the two languages use reduplication also to derive attributive adjectives. However, reduplicated forms in NigP cannot be considered "properly-derived adjectives" since reduplicated forms are used in virtually any syntactic slot. They are used as verbs (430), as nouns (431), as adverbs (431, 433), as predicate adjectives (432) in small clauses (433), as well as attributive adjectives as exemplified in 429:

430 Yò pìkín *boku-boku*. Faraclas (1996: 229)
POSS child be.plenty.REP
'Your children are very plentiful.'

431 One man wey get *so-so muscle-muscle* kom waka come di farm house
DET man REL have so.REP muscle.REP PFV walk SV DET farm house
from di road wey lead to di house.
PREP DET road REL lead PREP DET house
'One man with much muscle came to the farm house from the road that lead to the house.'

432 Di fish de *small-small*
DET fish EX.LOC small.REP
'There is a small quantity of fish.'

433 As people dè get dis foreign thing cheap-cheap e dè reduce di power of
as people IPFV get this foreign thing cheap.REP it IPFV reduce DET power PREP
giving people work and di wages well-well.
give.PROG people work CNJ DET wage.PL well.REP
'As people can get this foreign thing cheaply, it reduces drastically the possibility of giving people work and the wages .'

Thus, in NigP, reduplication is used as an intensifier tool and cannot be considered a morphological derivational device for making adjectival items.

6.4.3 Property items and syntactic variation in NigP

The great majority of property items can be used alone as verbs or preceded by the copula *de*. In this third group (Table 27) we find many property items that can function either as predicators or as copular complements. All the items of this third group can be used in constructions such as (a) and (b):

(a) Sbj COP PI

(b) Sbj PI

Table 27. Labile PIs.

THIRD GROUP					
Aware	Rich	Strong	Evil	Kampe	Recognized
Bad	Safe	True	Friendly	Lazy	Respectable
Beta	Sick	Worse	Funny	Legal	Right
Big	Small	Worst	Full	Less	Satisfied
Busy	Smooth	Blind	Generous	Lonely	Superior
Clear	Soft	Brave	Gentle	Long	Surprised
Coole	Sure	Bright	Great	Low	Surrounded
Empty	Sweet	Certain	Greedy	Loyal	Taller
Fine	White	Clean	Guilty	Lucky	Unbelievable
Free	Wide	Clever	Harsh	(Too) much	Uncomfortable
Good	Young	Cold	Healthy	Near	Unhealthy
Happy	Boku	Comfortable	Honest	Necessary	Warm
Hard	Brekete	Dark	Hot	*Nice*	Worried
High	Heavy	Different	Hungry	Official	
Much	Jeje	Difficult	Illegal	Plain	
Plenty	Many	Dirty	Important	Plenty	
Possible	Old	Drunk	Incredible	Proper	
Ready	Open	Early	Innocent	Quiet	

As we can see from the chart, copular *de* occurs with a wide range of PIs pertaining to a variety of semantic types. There is no correlation between any semantic type (Dixon 2004, see section 6.1) and the presence or the absence of the copula *de*, except for an attested tendency for property items denoting POSITION (e.g. *low*, *high*) and for the adverbial subject *everywhere* to occur with the copula *de* in the corpus[194]. This is probably due to the prominence of locative information in these sentences: the encounter of a property item denoting position in space (*low*) or an adverbial subject denoting space (*everywhere*) *and* a copular verb denoting location/existence (*de* - see section 5.1) probably encourage copulas to surface in these contexts. However, informants have no problem with property verbs of the Position type occurring verbally. Nonetheless, we can safely assume that this group is transversal with respect to the semantics of the property item. This class is probably a closed class since new loans from Nigerian English (specialised, formal or literary property items) are compulsory preceded by the copula (see section 6.4.2).

Although this variation does not systematically entail a change in the phonetic form of the PI, the informant has noted that some PIs change their pitch when used verbally:

434	I de happy	vs.	I hapì
	I EX.LOC happy		I be.happy
435	I de ready	vs.	I redì
	I EX.LOC ready		I be.ready
436	Di place de dirty	vs.	Di place dotì
	The place EX.LOC dirty		The place be. dirty
437	Di fruit de rotten	vs.	Di fruit rottìn

[194] Examples are:
21 My money wey I dè earn de low
20 Everywhere just de dirty

The fruit EX.LOC rotten The fruit be.rotten

In 434-437 the items following *de* as copular complements (on the left column), receive a more English-like pronunciation or, at least, they *may* be spelt out as full English items by those speakers who wish to do so. On the contrary, the items on the right column, used verbally after pronominal or nominal subjects, are spelt out with a clear word-final pitch that "verbalises" them, gives them a non-English sound and, seemingly, allows them to obtain an "African" syntax. Even if they are not *fully* equivalent in linguistic terms[195], both formulas, with and without *de*, may result as acceptable and exchangeable in some contexts. Simplifying, we can imagine, on the one hand, that the formula with the copula would be more used by people who are fluent in Nigerian English or other English varieties, it would be associated with a more formal style of speech or it could contribute to an anglicization strategy of the speaker's speech. On the other hand, the formula with a verbal property item would be mainly produced by people who speak an African language as their first language, it would be associated with an informal style of speech or it would be the result of a pidginization strategy.

In section 6.5, I will try to account for the type of variation exemplified in 355 and 356 at the beginning of this chapter and in 434-437 above. In 438-439 and 440-441 we find two more couples of examples taken from the corpus, which will serve as a reference for the paragraphs to come:

438 Di woman **happy** well-well as she see somebody wey dè do im work
DET woman get.happyPST well.REP as she see.PST somebody REL IPFV do POSS work
'The woman became happy when she saw someone doing her work.'

439 Im **de** very **happy** for im victory.
He EX.LOC very happy PREP POSS victory
'He was very happy about his victory (past interpretation implicated by

[195] One of the aims of this study is to describe the syntactic and semantic variables that account for variation in the copular domain in NigP. My aim is to describe how the use of the copula is determined by linguistic factors. This said, once in context, different usages of the copula may not entail relevant linguistic differences: in those many cases, copular variation can subsume sociolinguistic values, be used as a strategy, become part of a "grammatical" discourse of identity construction in Eckert's (2012) terms.

context).'

440 How you de? Shebi today **fine**?"
how you EX.LOC EPIS today be.fine
How are you? I am sure/hope/think/wish that today is a good day

441 Di picture **de fine** well-well."
DET picture EX.LOC fine well.REP
'The pictures are really fine.'

6.5 Criteria for variation in (copular) attributive sentences

In this section, I will examine different syntactic and semantic factors that concur in determining the kind of variation in 438-439 and 440-441. All concern speakers choosing between two different syntactic encodings of property items: they can choose a verbal encoding and thus use the item as a verb, or they can choose an adjectival encoding and thus use the construction COP + PI. There are several factors that determine the final output. In principle, these factors are independent from one another but they can interplay. And surely they are in some way ranked but it is not in the scope of this work to deepen either their interplay or their ranking. In section 6.5.1 I will show subject types' effects; in section 6.5.2 I will discuss the time-stability issue; in section 6.5.3 I will divide the class of PIs into the two groups of Stative PIs and Stative/Inchoative PIs; in section 6.5.4 I will review some criteria to distinguish between stative and stative/inchoative property items; finally, in section 6.5.5 I will discuss the labile syntactic behaviour (instransitive/transitive) of some PIs.

6.5.1 Subject types

Unfortunately I cannot provide statistical generalizations, but I can say that there are some tendencies (and non-tendencies) in the data concerning the co-occurrence of subject types and copulas:

(a) Subject NPs of any lengths and complexity do not correlate with a

preference in the use of the copula *de*, nor in the use of verbal property items[196].

(b) Subject proper nouns do not correlate with a preference in the syntactic coding of attributive clauses either.

(c) Among subject personal pronouns, two persons correlate with a preference. First person singular pronouns "*I*" do indeed correlate with the copular use of *de*. Third person singular pronouns correlate (much less strongly though) with the use of verbal property items. No tendencies were observed for other personal pronouns.

These tendencies emerged from the data charts and, referring to those involving personal subject pronouns, no informant was able to confirm or disconfirm them systematically (as it is possible when we go into frequency issues, which may not be controlled by speakers). However, one informant, concerning the "borderline" adjective *wrong*[197] (442-444) has given judgments of acceptability (445-448) that are compatible with the assumption in (c)[198]:

442	Di guy wrong.	Di guy de wrong.
	DET guy be.wrong	DET guy EX.LOC wrong
	'The guy is wrong.'	'The guy is wrong.'
443	?? Di guy don wrong.	Di guy don de wrong.
	DET guy CPL be.wrong	DET guy CPL EX.LOC wrong
		'The guy has been wrong.'

[196] In some languages the length and complexity of the NP subject is a factor that determines the presence/absence of the copula. According to Li & Thompson (1977: 422), for example, the copula *shì* in modern Mandarin "can be omitted and replaced with a pause in simple equational sentences."

[197] For "borderline" adjective I mean a property item that is able to occur without a copula in present or tenseless contexts (perhaps with the emphatic support of pragmatic devices) but requires the copula in non-present and non-realis contexts. See section 6.3.1.

[198] No similar elicitation was obtained for full verbal property items such as *ready*, *happy* or *cheap*. This can be seen as an interplay between factors: the property item *wrong* is not fully verbal, and this is clear from the fact tha it requires the copula if any TMA markers in present (443-444); hence, I elicited the paradigm with all personal pronouns in the present tense and discovered that it necessarily requires the copula in the critical contexts of a first person subject pronoun.

444	? Di guy gò wrong, DET guy be.wrong	Di guy gò de wrong. DET guy EX.LOC wrong 'The guy will be wrong.'
445	* I wrong. I be.wrong	I de wrong. I EX.LOC wrong 'I am wrong.'
446	E/Im wrong. he be.wrong 'He is wrong.'	E/Im de wrong. he EX.LOC wrong 'He is wrong.'
447	? We wrong. we be.wrong	We de wrong. we EX.LOC wrong 'We are wrong.'
448	Dem wrong. they be.wrong 'They are wrong.'	Dem de wrong. they EX.LOC wrong 'They are wrong.'

6.5.2 Time stability and the Individual/Stage level distinction

The presence/absence of the copula *de* can also be accounted for in terms of time stability[199]. Let us consider a minimal pair of examples:

449 The house no fine. PERMANENT - INHERENT
'The house is not a good house (it is unsafe/unhealthy)'

450 The house no **de** fine. TRANSITORY - ACCIDENTAL
'The house is not good-looking'

In 449-450 the insertion of the copula *de* has a repercussion on the PI's time-stability. Sentence 449 expresses an inherent, time-stable property and the

[199] I thank Paola Benincà and Jacopo Garzonio for enlightening me on this issue.

450 expresses a transitory, less time-stable property. In other terms, the first VP, with a verbal property item, tells that the house is inherently not good, while the second VP, with an adjectival property item, tells that the house is just superficially non good-looking. The adjectival complement that follows *de* in 449 is essentially more "time-dependent", in Givon's sense (1984), than the predicative property item in 450. Thus, the presence of a copula indicates a Stage/Individual Level alternation (Carlson 1977).

Winford (1997: 174-175) also notes that *de* may be used in Guyanese Creole to convey a sense of temporary state or current duration in attributive structure. He reports the following statement from his Guyanese informant:

> "If a river is always wide, you wouldn't say *i de braad* [it COP broad], but rather *i braad* [it be.broad]; but if it's wide in places or for a time only, you say *i de braad*".

However, not all property items showing variation with respect to copula also show this Stage/Individual level distinction. For examples, considering the sentences in 438-439 and 440-441 (in the end of section 6.4.3), only the second couple (440-441) is accountable from this perspective. As I will more clearly show in the next section (6.5.3), one relevant factor here is the split within the class of verbal property items in inchoative property items, on the one hand, and stative property items, on the other. Only stative property items[200] (440-441 and 449-450 with *fine*) are concerned in this sense. It will be evident from the next paragraph that inchoative property items (438-439) require a different explanation for their alternative encoding as verbal or adjectival items.

Moreover, there is only a handful of verb phrases in the corpus that

[200] It is important to recall here that the term "inchoative property item" is a simplification for "inchoative/stative property item", since inchoative/stative property verbs may fluctuate between an inchoative and a stative interpretation, as it will be clear in section 6.5.3. This said, not only the class of inherently stative property items is affected by this time-stability factor, but also the class of inchoative/statives, in their stative interpretation of course, can be concerned with this issue. The couple in 451-452 shows the verb *happy* used as plain stative:
451 E happy (he's a happy person – always, in general)
452 E de happy (he's happy now)
However, as we will see in the next paragraph the verb *happy* is first and foremost used as an inchoative and thus 451 would be interpreted as: "He became happy" (past completive action with relevance for current state).

clearly show this time-stability sensitivity. In fact, the alternation in 453 and 454 is not really accountable as a Stage/Individual level alternation even if the item *possible* is classified as a plain stative verb in NigP:

453 Dat one *no gò possible*
that one NEG IRR be.possible
'That one is not possible.'

454 E *no de possible* to compare something when another choice no de.
it NEG EX.LOC possible PREP compare semething when another choice NEG EX.LOC
'It is not possible to compare something when there is no choice.'

In this and many other cases informants recognize the possibility of using verbal encoding (453) to express a higher lever of certainty, while the copular structure (454) does not entail such a level of confidence on the content of the predication. These are some grammatical judgement given by informants[201]:

Imagine yourself saying that:
455- My moni gò smol (A) *my money will be little (high level of certainty)*
456- My moni gò be smol (N)
457- My moni gò de smol (A) *my money will be little (lower level of certainty)*
vs.
Imagine you speak about a place where you are going to play live:
458- Di place gò fine (A) *the place will be beautiful (in terms of structure)*
459- Di place gò be fine (N)
460- Di place gò de fine (A) *the place will be alright (in terms of structure and general ambience)*

6.5.3 Internal aspect of verbal property items in Nigerian Pidgin

Faraclas (1996: 221) states that "adjective-like verbs" are used as stative

[201] (A) stands for "acceptable"; (N) for "not acceptable"; and (D) for "dubious". See also section 2.4.

verbs in NigP:

> " 'Adjective-like' lexical items [may occupy the same sentential slot normally occupied by verbs and] are assigned values for factitive tense/aspect/modality which are identical to those assigned to stative verbs".

The hypothesis that I will now expose now is that in NigP not *all* property verbs can be considered, in *all* contexts, plain stative verbs. In fact, some property items seem to denote a processual and dynamic event, rather than a state. Most often, this dynamic event expresses an ingressive, inchoative or inceptive aspect, so that these property verbs behave much like change-of-state verbs. They are not stative, but they are inchoative/stative. In this regard, NigP is not different from other Atlantic creoles as, for instance, Sranan or Pichi.

Here I would like to stress here that, as described in section 1.4.2, in NigP there is an aspectual class of verbs which is defined by a lexically ambiguous aspectual definition, namely inchoative/stative verbs, and this is independent from the descriptive needs of property items. The class of inchoative/stative verbs is recognised by Faraclas (1996: 196) when he treats verbs like *see* (to see or to catch sight of) or *veks* (to be offended or to get offended) and states that "[s]ome verbs straddle the boundary between [+stative] and [−stative] and can be used both to refer to entering a particular state as well as to existing in that state".

The inchoative/stative verb class is not an *ad hoc* category, but serves to explain the behaviour of many verbs in NigP since their fluctuating internal aspect has important consequences on their syntax. In section 1.4.3, I have shown details of the so-called factitive tense/aspect/modality for unmarked verbs, and I will sum it up below:

[- stative]

461 *I gó Kano* I went to Kano. PAST, COMPLETIVE, REALIS

[+stative]

462 *I like Kano* I like Kano. PRESENT, PROGRESSIVE, REALIS

Given this, inchoative property verbs will be read as [–stative] and thus will have a past and completive reading when unmarked, while stative property items will obviously be read as [+stative] and thus will have a present and progressive reading when unmarked. I will return to this in section 6.5.4.

I will now split the class of verbal property items in two. The criterion will be the internal aspect of the verbal property item. The copular *de* may be seen as having slightly different roles with respect to the aspectual type of the PI.

TYPE A: INCHOATIVE/STATIVE PROPERTY ITEMS

Inchoative/stative property verbs can receive an inchoative reading. Their aspectual interpretation is usually dynamic. *Happy*, for instance, is one prototypical verbal item of this category: when unmarked it usually means "to get happy". Alleyne (1980, 87), Winford (1993, 1997) and Migge (2000: 228-229) are a group of researchers who have argued for a non-stative analysis of property items in most AECs. Their research, focused on Surinamese creoles, argued that verbal property items should receive a dynamic aspectual reading: the stative flavour is given by the resultative implication they entailed when unmarked, so that when a stative reading is implicated, it does not represent an inherent semantic content or a distinct syntactic function. In Winford's (1997: 263) words: "Most property items are non-stative and their 'current state' reading is the result of their completed process reading. […] Their stative reading is an entailment of the completed process reading, and does not represent a distinct syntactic function".

Thus, the sentence in 463 expresses a past action ("the guy got sick in the past") that is relevant to the current state of event time ("the guy is still sick now"):

463 The guy sick

The guy get.sick.PST → 'The guy is sick now.'

The chart in 28 shows some inchoative/stative verbs in NigP including inchoative property verbs.

Table 28. NigP inchoative/stative verbs.

Cognition	Sàbí Know	'(get to) know' '(get to) know'
Perception	See	'see/catch sight of'
Possession	Get	'have/obtain'
Change of state	Vex Craze	'get offended' 'get crazy'
Property items	Happy Old White Sick Ready …	'be.happy/get.happy' 'be.old/ grow.old' 'be.white/ whiten' 'get.sick' 'get.ready'

TYPE B: STATIVE PROPERTY ITEMS

There is a second group of property items in NigP that classifies as stative verbs. *Fine* is one of these: an inchoative interpretation is impossible for this item which always means "to be fine". Stative property verbs align themselves with the class of stative verbs in NigP. This is summarised in Table 29:

Table 29. NigP stative verbs.

Modal	Fit	'can'

	Wan Tek	'want' 'manage to'
Existence	Be De Tay Belike	'BE' 'BE.AT' 'stay' 'resemble, seem'
Cognition	Tink	'think'
Property Items	Good Bad Fine Stiff Cheap Expensive Wicked …	'be.good' 'be.bad' 'be.fine' 'be.stiff' 'be.cheap' 'be.expensive'

In other AECs creoles there are some PIs which are more stative in nature than others. In both Ndjuka and Gbe such items come from the semantic subgroups of human propensity and value (Migge 2000: 218).

6.5.4 Criteria for distinguish stative from inchoative property verbs

I understand that this classification may be considered unnecessary or artificial if one focuses on the undeniable fact that inchoative/statives oscillate between a stative and an inchoative interpretation. I will elaborate the issue of the multifunctional character of NigP lexical entries in section 6.6. However, given the differences in the syntax and semantics of the items in these two groups (see A-D below), I decided to maintain the split. I applied some diagnostic features (most of them are taken from Migge 1998: 319) to NigP PIs in order to determine the aspectual nature of some verbal property items. Differences between the classes of stative vs. inchoative property

items can be detected[202]:

A) in the default reading when the verb is unmarked (factitive marking)
B) in conjunction with the completive aspectual marker *don*.
C) in the association with the copula *de*
D) in association with the imperfective *dè* (I discuss this in section 6.7)

A) The unmarked verb

TYPE A PIs are interpreted as inchoative and receive the dynamic factitive default reading (PAST COMPLETIVE). They imply a concluded past process with relevance to current state (event time):

466 Di woman **happy** well-well <u>as she see</u> somebody wey **dey** do im work
The woman get.happy.PST well.REP
'The woman became happy as she saw someone doing her work.'

467 Di sun don wan go sleep <u>by di time Jona come back</u> to di step of di
DET sun CPL MOD go sleep PREP DET time PN come back PREP DET step PREP DET
library. Im **happy** as im see say di town kom bigin come outside.
library he get.happy.PST as he realise.PST COM DET town PFV MOD come outside
'The sun had already started going to sleep when Jona came back from the library. I felt happy when he realised that the town began coming outside.'

The punctuality of the events described in 466-467 by the verb *happy* is stressed by the presence, in both examples, of a subordinate temporal/causal

[202] As a criterion, I also tried the co-occurrence with the SV *finish*, a completive post-verbal modifier. Examples in 464 and 465:
464 You bin brave *finish* ("You've been really brave – at the best of your capabilities")
465 Na di best fish wey remain for this lake na im I don catch *finish* ("The best fish remaining in this lake, that's what I've just finished to catch").
Post verbal *finish* and correspondent items in other Atlantic creoles (*fin* in Ile-de-France Creole – Corne 1980: 113; *done* in Jamaican Patwa – Patrick 2004) have been analysed as completive auxiliaries and thus I was expecting NigP *finish* to behave differently with respect to the aspectual class of the verb phrase. However, I noticed that *finish* in NigP seems to be used in a same way, irrespectively of the aspectual class of the main verb. It can be seen as an adverbial modifier (degree of completion) and can apparently be added to any verbs.

clause with an unmarked dynamic main verb[203] (*as she see somebody* and *as im see say*), thus read past completive.

TYPE B PIs are interpreted as stative when unmarked, "without implying a concluded past process" (Winford 1997: 26, Migge 1998: 323). Factitive marking reads them as present with respect to event time, as in 468:

468 Reason **easy** now. Di tin **easy die**
Reason be.easy INT. DET thing be.easy SV
Reason is easy! The thing is easy to death

B) **The completive/resultative marker *don***

When they are marked with the completive aspect marker *don*, stative PIs (TYPE B) express the meaning that the state they denote has been in existence for some time in the past with no relevance to current state (bounded/ended state – perfective encoding). In 469 "the state of being cheap" is predicated about a pronominal subject (*e*), which refers to "the Play Station 3".

469 Guy kom count 150.000 and e gò dè believe say e **don cheap** say na
Guy PFV count 150.000 and he IRR IPFV believe COM it CPL be.cheap COM FOC
international price be dat o.
international price COP that INT
'The guy counted 150.000 naira and he believed that it was cheap, that it was an international price.'

In 470, we have another example of a stative PI preceded by *don*. This is quite a compelling instance and should be viewed in context. Speaker V is a music producer who is telling his friends how he negotiated the price of his work for a client. The work consists in mixing and recording some music tracks for the price of 5.000 Naira (30 Euros) per track. The client asks to add some

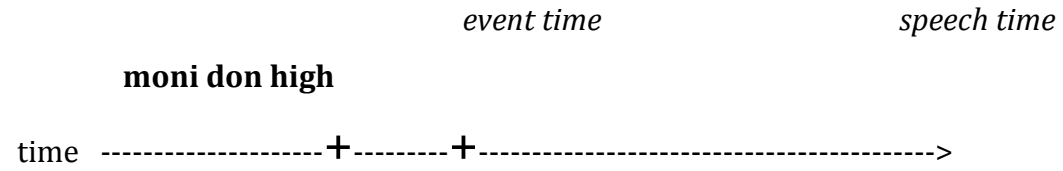
[203] Actually, *see* itself is an inchoative/stative verb here used as an inchoative meaning "to realize".

work ("sequencing") for the same price and V accepts. Speaker S empathises with V and affirms as a justification: "Moni don high". What speaker S meant was something like: "the price you made for them was high enough when you first made your offer". At the same time the sentence implies: "you can easily accept his request for some extra work, because at that point the first price you asked would be just OK". We actually learn from the rest of the conversation that V does not think he negotiated a good price at all, but this is, of course, not relevant now. Here is the extract of the conversation:

470 V: [+Per track, that is mixing and recording+], say I gò collect 5k.
per track COM COP mixing CNJ recording COM I IRR collect 5k
[+That is mixing and recording+]. E say: ah, ah, no o. Mek I add
that COP mixing CNJ recording he say.PST EXH I add
distin: [+sequencing+]. I say ok. No problem. Add am.
this.thing sequencing I say.PST ok no problem add it
S: Moni **don high**.
Money CPL be.high
D: Wait o, 5k [+per track, mixing, recording and sequencing?+] E too small.
wait INT 5000 per track mixing recording CNJ sequencing it too be.small
V: E too fucking cheap.
it too fucking be.cheap
'It's fucking cheap.'

The verb *high* does not entail a process whatsoever: the intransitive VP *don high* just express the existence of a bounded state in the past, which is no longer relevant for the current state ("The price is no longer high, it is alright"). We can picture how the VP "moni don high" is set up in the discoursive time-line as in Figure 33 below:

Figure 33.



5K add sequencing

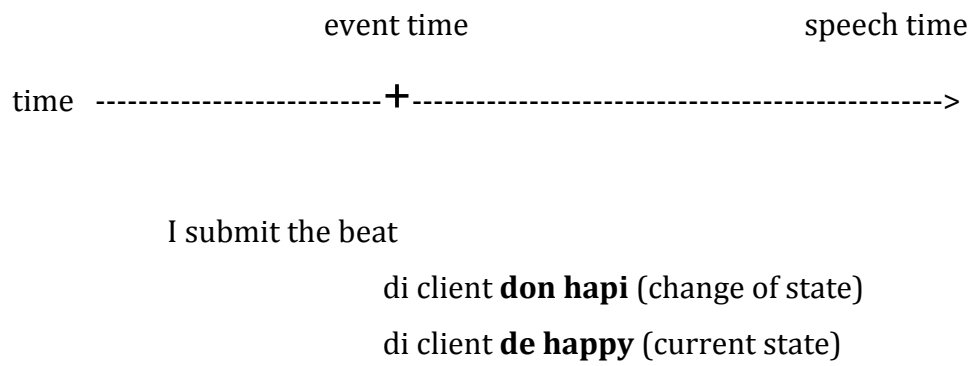
On the other hand, inchoative PIs (TYPE A) with *don* get special semantic emphasis on the *result* of the change of state they naturally entail even as unmarked verbs. In 471 we find the same speaker of 470 (V), explaining that the client was in the end satisfied by his work. Inchoative property verbs are syntactically germane to other dynamic verbs. The actions expressed by *happy* and *spoil*, in 471 and 472 respectively, are both relevant to current state of events and cannot be intended as preceeding, in the sense the state expressed in 471 was anterior to event time. In 471 the VP *don happy* expresses a change of state ("becoming happy") with a strong resultative accent. In fact, the *result* of the change of state appears to be definitely prominent over the *process* itself. Consequently, in the context of 471, the speaker uses *don happy* and *de happy* as synonymous expressions, as we see in Figure 34 below: the stative property expressed by the second formula (*de happy*) can be considered a semantic implication or the result of the change of state described with the first (*don happy*).

471 E **don happy** for di beat and everytin, e just **de happy** for di beat
he CPL be.happy PREP DET beat and everything he ADV EX.LOC happy PREP DET beat
'He has been happy about the beat and everything, he is just happy with it.'

472 Hey, e **don spoil** cd again… 'burn process failed'.
INT, it CPL spoil cd again
'It has spoilt the cd again.'

In Figure 34 I visualised how to view the eventuality described in sentence 471 with respect to discourse time.

Figure 34.



One observation can be made here: not only do lexical items such as *happy* (be.happy/get.happy) or *white* (be.white/get.white) change their aspectual categories in discourse without any morphological variation (see section 6.6), but also a morphosyntactic markers, such as *don*, do indeed change their grammatical meaning, in a nuance but still perceivable, in accordance to the semantics of the verb it co-occurs with. It is a kind of mutual adjustment. In 470, for instance, *don* expresses the fact that a *state* has been in existence and has ended in the anterior past, while in 471 it stresses the result of a change of state, which happened in the past and is relevant to the present. The *kernel* of a grammatical item such as *don* should ideally be defined and circumscribed as a unique and compact seed, but nonetheless its semantic output establishes concrete boundaries in contexts and it is up to speakers to use the item *properly*, *while* defining these boundaries.

In conclusion, one of the main pieces of evidence that property items differ in *aktionsart* is their different output when preceded by the completive marker *don*. Stative PIs do not get any inchoative, dynamic or change of state reading whatsoever when preceded by *don*: they get marked with completive grammatical aspect that bound the state in question in the past. The more stative they are, the more bounded the state remains, the more implausible

the change-of-state interpretation becomes. On the contrary, INCHOATIVE PIs with *don* (471) allow a "past action/completed process" reading with relevance to current state, exactly in the same way as "classic" dynamic verbs do (472). The more dynamic they are, the more resultative the flavour of their output with *don*, the more implausible the bounded-state interpretation becomes. Table 30 summarises what I have observed:

Table 30. Stative and inchoative verbal PIs unmarked and with *don*.

	STATIVE PIs	INCHOATIVE PIs
UNMARKED	E cheap (It is cheap/It was cheap[204] – a *present state* with respect to event time)	She happy (She got happy – Change of state in the past with relevance to event time with accent on the *process*)
DON	E *don* cheap (It was cheap – a past and *bounded state* with no relevance to event time)	She *don* happy (She got happy/She is happy - Change of state relevant to event time with accent on the *result*)

In the next section I will show that the insertion of the copula *de* should be seen as having different roles for stative PIs (*cheap*) and inchoative PIs (*happy*), if we account for it in the context of their respective paradigms. Of course in discourse, both VPs in Table 31 may be seen as syntactically equivalent: copula plus an adjectival property item, stative VP, present state with respect to event time. In point C we deepen this issue.

[204] The English translation can be misleading: unmarked stative verbs receive a present interpretation with respect to event (discourse) time and depending on context it may result past or present with respect to speech time.

Table 31. Stative and inchoative verbal PIs with the copula *de*.

DE	E de cheap	She de happy

C) The copula *de*

The minimum pair in 473-474 has an inherent dynamic/stative aspectual distinction. TYPE A PIs are inchoative when used verbally and unmarked, but render a stative VP when used with the copula *de*:

473	Di woman happy	The woman got happy	INCHOATIVE
474	Di woman de happy	The woman was/is happy	STATIVE

Some confusion may arise, given the fact that both expressions may serve the purpose of expressing a present state in context. But, as stated earlier, the stative flavour of a sentence such as 473 should be seen as an implication of the completed process reading (change-of-state with current relevance):

The woman got happy → The woman is/was happy (event time)

Thus, the copula insertion renders the verb phrase stative and blocks any inchoative interpretation. Further evidence is provided by the sentence in 475 where Jonathan Gullible is introducing himself to a stranger for the first time:

475 a. Jonathan. Jonathan Gullible. I **de** happy to meet you.
'Jonathan. Jonathan Gullible. I am happy to meet you.'

In this context the use of a stative expression is required, which is not encoded by the verbal use of *happy*[205]. Actually, informants mark 28 as weird and inappropriate, even if most of them had some hesitation to mark it as "ungrammatical":

[205] The unmarked inchoative verb *happy* is read as past completive.

b. ?? Jonathan. Jonathan Gullible. I **happy** to meet you.

The minimal couple given in 476-477 does not entail the modifications described above. The alternation, in this case, should be seen in terms of Stage/Individual level as described in 5.6.2.

476 Dis ting cheap This thing is (inherently) cheap

477 Dis ting de cheap This thing is (accidentally) cheap

At this point, we can say that the following pairs are not syntactic equivalents:

	TYPE A		TYPE B
a.	The guy **happy**	≠	The price **cheap**
b.	The guy **de** happy	≠	The price **de** cheap

Instead, the following pairs can be seen as syntactic equivalents:

c.	The guy **don de** happy	The price **don** cheap
b.	The guy **don** happy	The price **kom** cheap[206]

6.5.5 Labile verbs

Labile verbs are verbs whose meanings alternate depending on whether they occur with an object in a transitive clause or without an object in an

[206] Here I want to make two clarifications. First of all, informants acknowledge that in some contexts also stative PIs with *don* may entail a change-of-state, for example if a temporal adverb as *before* is postponed after the verb. Secondly, *don* and *kom* are considered as equivalent here because they express the idea of a state as the result of a processual change-of-state and when they are used together in discourse the former always is used to express a an anterior stage with respect to *kom*. This is exemplified in 478:
478 a. The man face wey **don** old **kom** strong kakaranka.
b. * The man face wey **kom** old **don** string kakaranka.

intransitive clause. As Yakpo points out (2009: 410), this transitivity alternation causes a co-variation of:

- the semantic macro-role of the subject (undergoer vs. actor),
- the causation (causative) reading of the verb (noncausative vs. causative)
- with most verbs, the stativity value (inchoative-stative vs. dynamic), which then provokes different tense interpretations.

Labile verbs form a huge verb class in NigP as they do in other creoles, e.g. Pichi. The verb *spoil*, for instance, oscillates between an intransitive and a transitive nature. In the sentence in 479 we find the two versions of the verb:

479 Dat fight between two artist in Ajegunle… Our name gò dè **spoil**. Na so
DET fight PREP two artist PREP PN POSS name IRR IPFV spoil FOC so
una take dè **spoil** musician name.
you.PL SV IPFV spoil musician name
'That fight between two artists in Ajegunle… Our name got damaged. That's how you managed to spoil our name as musicians.'

Some PIs are Labile Verbs too. *Sweet*, *funny*, *white*, *full*, *jealous* are Labile Verbs. In 480-481 we can observe the alternation of the verb *sweet*:

480 And dat ending mos **sweet** for us, [+in Jesus' name. Amen!+]
And DET ending MOD be.sweet PREP us
'And that ending must be joyful for us, in Jesus' name. Amen!'

481 So, you see dis book. See am. See di place wey dè **sweet** me pass:
so you look.at this book look.at it Look.at DET place REL IPFV sweet me SV
(*reading*) [+AJ Dagga Tolar was born in Ajegunle+].
'So you see this book. Observe it. Let's have a look to the lines that I like most in it: (*reading*) AJ Dagga Tolar was born in Ajegunle.

In 482 and 483 we see a similar alternation with the verb *white*:

482 Anyhow wey you see say e *white*, make you drink am.
Anything REL you see COM it be.white, EXH you drink it
'Anything that you find that is white, just drink it!'

483 Blich gò begin jost dè **wayt** di klot Faraclas (1996: 214)
bleach IRR MOD ADV IPFV whiten DET cloth
'The bleach will just start whitening the cloth.'

In both examples 481 and 483, with transitive, causative and agentive property verbs, we see the property verbs preceded by the imperfective marker *dè*. It would be interesting to know if NigP speakers could make the difference between transitive and intransitive uses of the same property items by simply changing the tone of DE. While 484 would be a state, 485 would be a dynamic event. If we consider that transitive verbs may easily have their direct complement omitted, one may build minimal pairs:

484 E de white It is white

485 E (di klot) dè white The cloth is bleaching

I will come back to this issue in section 6.7.1 below.

In conclusion, some Property Items are a subclass of Labile verbs but their use in conjunction with the copula blocks any syntactic transformation: not only the copula prevents the inchoative or dynamic use of PIs, but also prevents their use as causative and transitive verbs.

6.6 Multifunctionality of PIs

In this chapter, I already mentioned the fact that when a lexical item changes aspectual or grammatical category this does not necessarily entails a morphological change for NigP words. This is quite predictable for an

isolating and young language, born out of a process of heavy pidginization, due to the contact of languages of the typologically isolating type. Faraclas (1996: 216) states that "the multifunctional properties of many lexical items in Nigerian Pidgin allow them to function in different grammatical classes, according to the syntactic slot into which they are inserted". 486 presents a quite compelling example from Faraclas on the multifunctional use of the verb *kot* ("cut"):

486 A si dì kọt-kọt klọt wẹ kọt-kọt man dọn tek kọt mashîn kọt -am.
I see DET cutREP cloth REL cutREP man CPL SV cut machine cut it
kọtkọtkòt
IDEO
'I saw the shredded cloth that the shredder shredded with the shredding machine, shred-shred-shred.'

The lack of morphological devices does not mean that defining grammatical categories itself is a pointless task at all. We have seen that splitting the category of the class of PIs in two different aspectual groups has had some advantages, like the possibility of accounting for their syntactic behaviour. Property items in NigP are most often intransitive verbs that display an inchoative or stative internal aspect. Among these there are some prototypical cases such as *happy*, on one side, and *cheap*, on the other. The behaviour of the intransitive verb *happy* is prototypical with respect to an inchoative interpretation of property verbs; *happy* is best analysed as meaning "to get happy" when unmarked (see 466-467) and this is a kind of behaviour some other PIs may adopt, perhaps less often. On the other hand, the behaviour of the intransitive verb *cheap* ("to be cheap") is prototypical with respect to a stative interpretation of PIs because this verb expresses the plain stative idea of being economical/not expensive, so that it is virtually impossible to interpret it as "to become cheap" when it is unmarked.

However, this is not a clear-cut division and one has to understand the split as quite flexible: many times PIs oscillate between a stative and an inchoative interpretation. In particular, inchoative/stative PIs (TYPE A) may

easily change their aspectual semantic content in discourse (get.happy/be.happy) and thus oscillate between the two classes (and change their syntactic behaviour accordingly), without showing any morphological evidence of change. Winford (1997: 242) also stresses this point for CECs when he repeatedly affirms that these items display "flexible categoriality". *Old* is a lexical item that displays a quite vivid stative flavour when unmarked (487)[207] but, in conjunction with the marker *don*, it gives the idea of a process (488):

487 Di man no too old and im get deep voice.
DET man NEG ADV and he have deeo voice
'The man was not too old and he had a deep voice.'

488 Di papa kom say: "my pikin you don old put".
DET father PFV say POSS child you CPL be.old SV
'My son, you grown older (you are a made man).'

Flexible categoriality sometimes means indeterminacy. In example 489, for instance, it is impossible[208] for the informant to tell if the unmarked verb expresses a *state* in the present (event time) or a *past* and concluded process with relevance to the current state (event time). Put differently, it is in principle not decidable whether the sentence in 489 should be translated as "His mind was relaxed because etc." or "His mind relaxed because etc.".[209]

489 Im mind coole because im feel say im don get house for inside dis
POSS mind be/get.cool because he fell.PST COM he CPL find house PREP PREP this
forbidding land.

[207] However, this may be due to the completed process reading taking over the dynamics of the change of state, as suggested in section 6.5.4.
[208] The single informant may feel quite confident with each judgment concerning sentences in context, yet I found informants can fall in contradiction on similar sentences and, generally speaking, different people have given different answers on the same sentence. Hence, I concluded that they rely on their interpretation, yet, due to the loose boundaries of the category, their intuition cannot be very sharp.
[209] However, we can get a clue from the marking of the other verbs: the unmarked *feel* is interpreted as an event in the past ("he felt") thus we *may* also attribute a past completive reading to the verb *coole*. Of course, this is just circumstantial.

forbidding land

'Hi mind (was) relaxed because he felt that he finally got a home in this forbidding land.'

Moreover, property items oscillate between the verbal and the adjectival categories, as does *near* in examples 490 (verb, inchoative), 491 (verb, stative) and 492 (adjective). In NigP this happens without the need for any morphological device to intervene:

490 Jonathan, wey dè find wetin to do, kom begin **near** dis house, as im
PN REL IPFV find what PREP do PFV MOD be.near this house as he
reach di house, im see some people wey carry heavy sticks dè try
reach DET house he see.PST some people REL carry heavy stick.PL IPFV try
scatter di house
scatter DET house
'Jonathan, who found what to do, came near the house and, as he reached the house, he saw some people that were carrying heavy sticks trying to damage the house.'

491 Jonathan kom go meet one prisoner wey **near** am pass
PN PFV go meet DET prisoner REL be.near him SV
'Jonathan went to meet the prisoner who was nearest to him.'

492 Di top don de **near** well-well, so im continue to climb up.
DET top CPL EX.LOC near well.REP so he continue.PST PREP climb up
'The top was extremely near, so he continued to climb up.'

As a side note, flexible categoriality is not limited to the lexical aspect of verbs, or to the verb/adjective categories. In NigP, the same lexical item, for example a verb, may display changing valence and causativity value, as observed in 6.5.5 with the verb *sweet* (be.sweet/amuse/flatter). In 493, we see a similar example with *empty*:

493 a. Di basket empty
DET basket be.empty.PRES

b. Di guy empty di basket
DET guy get.empty.PST DET basket

6.7 Property Items: copular *de* and imperfective *dè*

The informants were aware that some property items can be realised with either DE according to the different basic semantic and grammatical notions they express, as examples 494-497 (provided spontaneously by an informant) show:

494 Di basket don **de empty**.
DET basket CPL EX.LOC be.empty
'The basket has already been empty for some time in the past.'

495 Di basket don **dè empty**.
DET basket CPL IPFV get.empty
'The process of getting empty the basket has already started.'

496 [*A girl looks like sad*]
A: Wetin dè do am? She be like sad.
B: No, she **de happy**!
A: 'What's up with her? She seems sad.'
B: 'No, she is happy!'

497 [*A guy is behaving in an uncontrolled way*]
A: Wetin e dey do?! E craze?!
B: Make you leave am. He **dè happy**, you no see?
A: 'What is he doing?! He gone mad?'
B: 'Leave him. He is celebrating, don't you see?'

As is clear from the examples above, the semantic oscillation stative/non-stative *can* be correlated to a concomitant change from an intransitive to a transitive predication type (6.5.5), but this is not always the case as we see in

495 and 497 two intransitive/dynamic property verbs.

Many authors who have worked on New World creoles have observed a similar behavior of PIs and, for example, the main clue for attesting the non-stative interpretation of PIs in Sranan has been their co-occurrence with the imperfective marker *e*, which is easily distinguished from the Sranan copula *de*. Thus, Sranan minimal pair in 498 and 499 is easier to differentiate than the equivalent NigP one in 500 and 501, because the two Sranan items *de* (EX.LOC) and *e* (IPFV) are easily recognized also in writing:

498 A pikin **de** sick.
DET child COP be.sick
'The child is sick.'

499 A pikin **e** sick.
DET child IPFV get.sick
'The child often gets sick.'

500 Di pikin **de** sick.
DET child COP be.sick
'The child is sick.'

501 Di pikin **dè** sick.
DET child COP be.sick
'The child is getting sick.'

One can note that the alternative use of the copula and the imperfective entails a different aspectual and syntactic encoding of the property item (*sick*). Some authors have analysed this difference in terms of derivation (Seuren 1981). Four explanations seem to be most likely:

(1) Inchoative/processual: states can be transformed in some kind of process (most time entering into the state) by simply using the imperfective marker ("to get sick").
(2) Causative: states can be transformed in causative terms by the use of

the imperfective marker ("cause to be sick"). This transformation often entails transitivisation and the need of a direct object.

(3) Iterative/durative: states can be interpreted as usual or durative by adding the imperfective marker before property items. This explanation entails a restriction in function for the imperfective marker and actually does not call for any process of lexical derivation of the PI itself.

(4) Passivisation: the PIs in its non-stative use coincides with a passive form where the subject becomes the experiencer of an entry-into-state.

As far as NigP is concerned, my guess is that points 1, 2, and maybe 4 apply.

6.7.1 The prosodic realisation of DE before property items: the experiment

In this section, I will present the results of the tonal analysis of DE that I conducted in collaboration with Prof. Cinzia Avesani and the Paduan CNR. For the methodological details, see section 2.3, and for the general analysis of the tonal realization of DE in the production of one speaker (TF) see section 5.6. As I said in section 5.4, we defined nine relevant morpho-syntactic categories realized by DE in NigP and we coded each DE according to its pertinency to one of these nine categories. The nine categories could be grammatically considered as the expression of two broad grammatical functions. Thus, we glossed each occurrence as either imperfective (IPFV) or existential/locative (EX.LOC), which permitted to have a one-to-one correspondence with their tonal realization. In fact, the starting hypothesis was that all DE glossed as EX.LOC (sections 5.1, 5.2) would be realized as High, while all DE glossed as IPFV (section 5.3) would be realized as Low. As I have shown in section 5.4.2 this hypothesis has been confirmed in 100% of cases in the observation of the spoken production of one speaker. For this reason, from now on, I will take for granted what we established through the observation of the pitch realizations of DE in section 5.6. Thus, we assume that EX.LOC DE is spelt out as high-toned *dé* and IPFV DE is spelt out as low-

toned *dè*.

What was not known was if the speakers were able to produce both types of DE before verbal property items such as *empty*, *full*, *happy*, *hard*, *jealous*, *long*, *short* and *sweet* (see Table 32). If this was the case, we could take this fact to be indirect evidence of the oscillating aspectual character of PIs in NigP. This aspectual oscillation is undoubtedly related, though not conditioned by, their labile syntactic behaviour (transitive/intransitive).

In this respect, the short scripts that we asked our subjects to read contained six minimal pairs. In these pairs, property items were used both in intransitive/stative constructions (e.g. 4_5 *E don* ***dey*** *empty now*) and in transitive/dynamic constructions (e.g. 4_3 *Di guy don* ***dey*** *empty my purse*). Intransitive/stative contructions like 4_5 are supposed to contain the EX.LOC copula *de*; thus, we expected a H-toned *dé* associated with them. Transitive/dynamic constructions like 4_3 are not supposed to contain a copula but rather the IPFV marker *dè*; thus, we expected a L-toned *dè* to be associated with them. We also included three sentences (7_7 *Everi month, one line* ***dey*** *short o […]*, 7_8 […] *and di other one* ***dey*** *long pass* and 2_5 *At one point, di crowd just kom begin* ***dey*** *happy and shout*) in which the dynamic/processual reading was not associated with a transitive encoding, but was rather implicated by the semantic context. Also, we expected the speakers to produce the co-occurrence of two adjacent DE within the same verb phrase (8 Table 32) as a sequence of a low-toned imperfective *dè* and a high-toned copular *de*. I will now examine the spoken production of two speakers, TF and VE. Though they have a very similar sociolinguistic background (Table 10), I will show that there are some sharp differences in their realization of DE before property items. I do not claim that the variation and inconsistency between the two speakers were caused by distinct grammars[210]; instead, the variation was probably due to the different semantic interpretations the speakers gave to the sentences or to the underspecified spelling of *dey*, which does not convey much important information.

[210] Except in one case. See later in this section.

Table 32. Minimal pairs of property items in the corpus.

N°	SENTENCE	TYPE	VERB	GLOSS
1	4_5 E don **dey** empty now!	6	Empty	EX.LOC
2	4_3 Di guy don **dey** empty my purse!	9	Empty	IPFV
3	4_4 My wallet bin **dey** full.	6	Full	EX.LOC
4	7_9 […] as dem bin **dey** full am before.	9	Full	IPFV
5	4_1 Adebayo **dey** happy because you gò come here	6	Happy	EX.LOC
6	6_7 People suppose **dey** happy now.	6	Happy	EX.LOC
7	2_5 At one point, di crowd just kom begin **dey** happy and shout.	9	Happy	IPFV
8	6_5 E **dey dey** hard before	4-6	Hard	IPFV-EX.LOC
9	2_7 Baba Fryo too **dey** jealous.	6	Jealous	EX.LOC
10	8_5 But she **dey** too jealous.	6	Jealous	EX.LOC
11	2_8 Yes now! E **dey** jealous am.	9	Jealous	IPFV
12	7_7 Everi month, one line **dey** short o […]	9	Short	IPFV
13	7_8 […] and di other one **dey** long pass.	9	Long	IPFV
14	8_4 She **dey** sweet o.	6	Sweet	EX.LOC
15	3_3 And wetin **dey** sweet me pass	9	Sweet	IPFV

The main difference in the production of TF and VE may be due to a difference in their grammar, or to different levels of consciousness of the grammatical features of NigP. Although I found several instances of two adjacent DE in the spoken and written corpus of NigP, VE refused to read the sentence in 8 Table 32 and just read one high-tone *dé* (copular - EX.LOC) in all five repetitions, as shown in Figure 35[211]. TF[212], instead, accepted their co-occurrence and read them as in Figure 36:

[211] The reason she gave was: "It is not necessary".
[212] As well as UI.

FIGURE 35. VE realized one high-toned EX.LOC *dé*. VE_02_06_04.

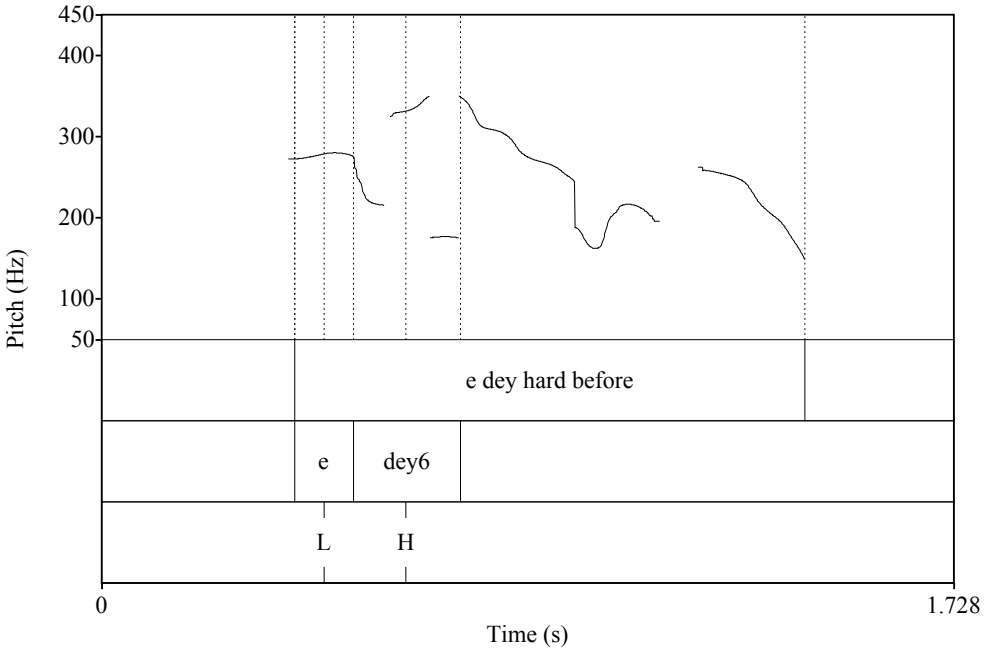
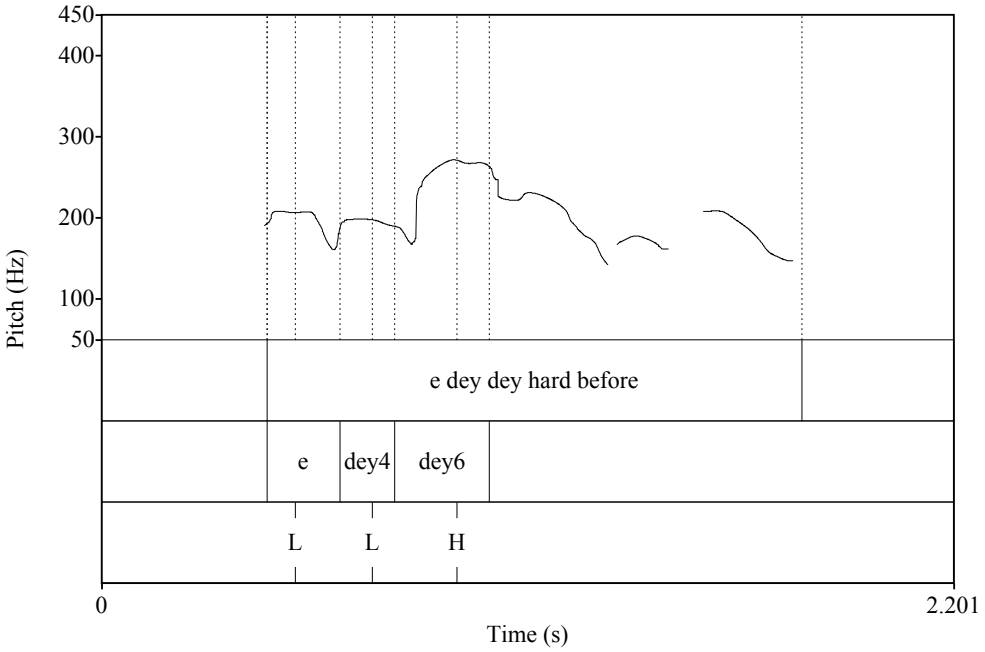


FIGURE 36. TF realized the co-occurrence of one high-toned EX.LOC *dé* and one low-toned IPFV *dè*. TF_02_06_04.



Thus, VE read:

502 E **dey** hard before
it EX.LOC be.hard ADV

While, TF read:

503 E **dey dey** hard before
it IPFV EX.LOC be.hard ADV

I made clear for both informants that the sentence's meaning was equivalent to the English, "It used to be hard before".

That said, it is also important to point out here that both speakers TF and VE were perfectly able to produce both DE (copular EX.LOC *dé* and IPFV *dè*) before property items. Thus, as I will demonstrate, the fact that sometimes one of the speakers does not realize the tonal specification of DE that we expected, does not mean that she is not, in principle, able to produce it. Both speakers proved to be at ease with the existence of stative property items that are preceded by a copula (*dé*) and dynamic property items that are preceded by an imperfective marker (*dè*); they also were aware of the fact that the same property verb may change in its internal aspect.

I will now proceed to analyze each minimal pair in the realization of TF and VE.

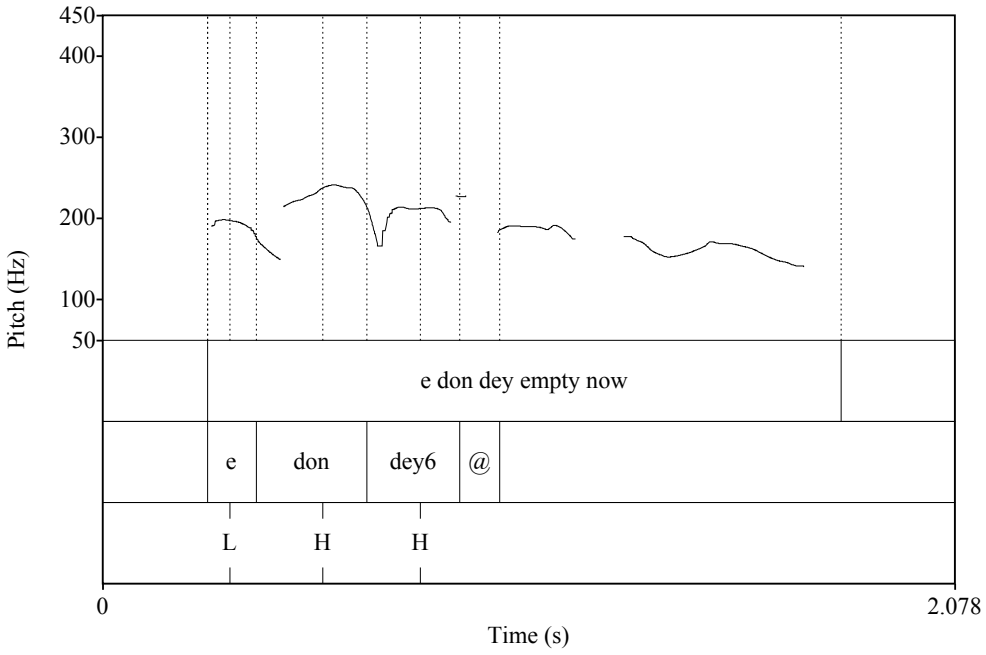
(a) Minimal pair involving the property verb *empty* ("to be empty", "to get empty", "to empty out"), as in Table 33:

Table 33. Minimal pair with the verb *empty*.

N°	SENTENCE	TYPE	VERB	GLOSS
1	4_5 E don **dey** empty now! it CPL EX.LOC be.empty INT	6	Empty	EX.LOC
2	4_3 Di guy don **dey** empty my purse! DET guy CPL IPFV get.empty POSS purse	9	Empty	IPFV

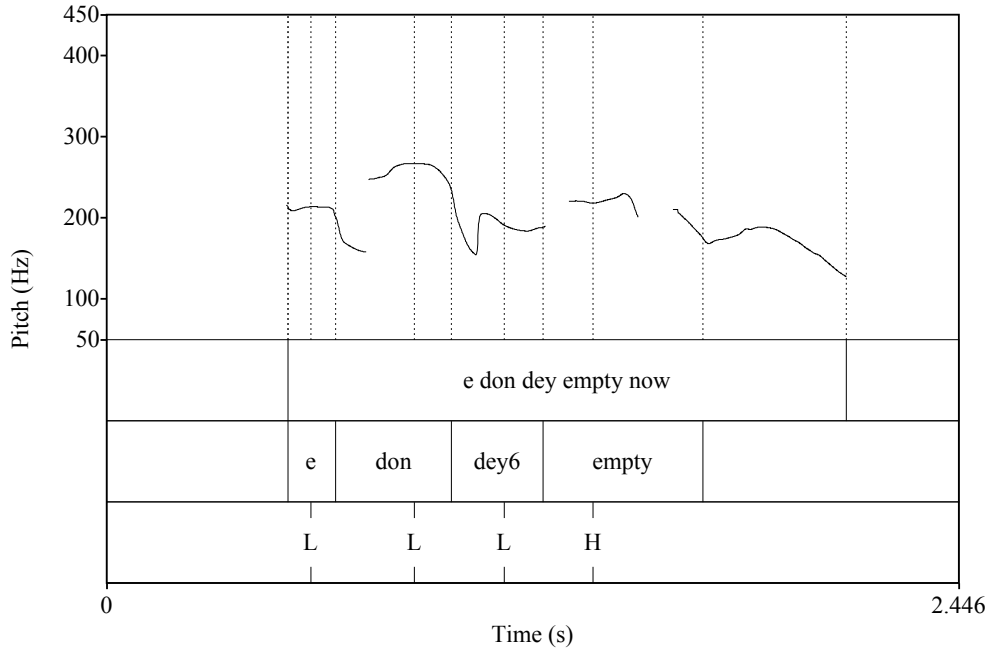
TF realized all DE in 1, Table 33 as H-toned *dé* after a relatively higher pitch realization of the segment [dɔn] (Figure 37).

FIGURA 37. TF realized a high-tone *dé*. TF_05_04_05



Rather surprisingly, VE realized all DE in 1 as L-toned *dè* with respect to the higher preceding segment [dɔn] and the following segment [ɛmti], as shown in Figure 38. This is surprising in the sense that we expected that the semantic context and the intransitive nature of the predicate in 1 would have triggered a stative interpretation of the property item *empty* (be.empty) and thus elicited a copular EX.LOC realization of DE as a high-toned *dé*.

Figure 38. VE realized one low-toned *dè*. VE_05_04_05.



We can only guess that TF interpreted the sentence as meaning "It (my wallet) is already empty" (as we intended it) and that VE interpreted it as "It already started being emptied", or "He has already started to empty it", (providing two possible but unexpected interpretations). Thus:

TF said: E don **dé** empty now!
it CPL EX.LOC be.empty INT
'It (my wallet) is already empty.'

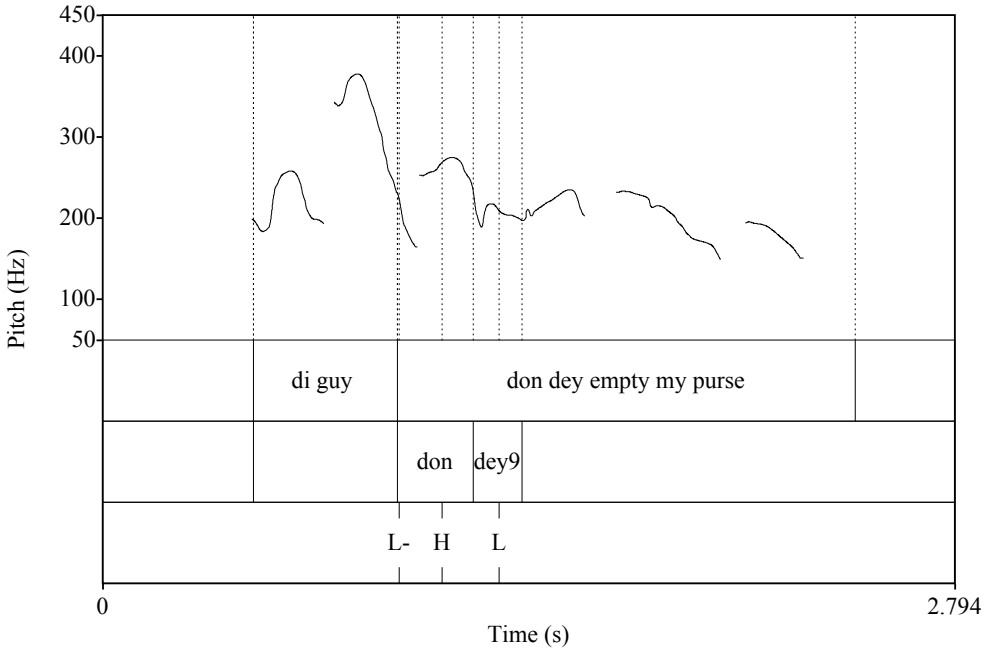
VE said: E don **dè** empty now!
it CPL IPFV get.empty INT
'It (my wallet) has already started being emptied.'
'He (di guy) has already started emptying (my wallet).'

In any case, the fact that the two speakers were consistent in their tonal reading of DE in all five repetitions proves two facts: 1) that a certain semantic interpretation is associated with a determined tonal realization of DE, and 2) that the dual nature of the item can create confusion, at both the

semantic and syntactic levels, if the spelling does not discriminate between them through their tonal specification.

Instead, both TF and VE read the transitive predication in 2 Table 33 with the same interpretation of, “The guy has already emptied my purse”, and thus interpreted the property verb *empty* as a dynamic verb “to empty out” and realized DE as an IPFV low-toned *dè* in all occasions. In Figure 39 I provide an example from the production of VE.

Figure 39. Low-toned *dé* realized with the intransitive verb empty. VE_04_04_03.



(b) Minimal pair involving the property verb *full* (“to be full”, “to get full”, “to fill up”), as in Table 34.

Table 34. Minimal pair with the verb *full*.

N°	SENTENCE	TYPE	VERB	GLOSS
3	4_4 My wallet bin **dey** full. POSS wallet ANT EX.LOC be.full	6	Full	EX.LOC
4	7_9 [...] as dem bin **dey** full am before. CNJ they ANT IPFV get.full it ADV	9	Full	IPFV

As far as this minimal pair is concerned, TF and VE behaved in the same way.

Both realized five instances of sentence 3 (Table 34) as a stative intransitive predication ("My wallet was full before"). They therefore assigned to DE the role of attributive copula (EX.LOC) and spelt it as a high-toned *dé*. Consistently, they realized all the instances of the target sentence 4 (Table 34) as an intransitive predication with a past progressive meaning ("As they have been filling it up before") and thus used the property verb *full* with a dynamic semantics associated with an IPFV low-toned realization of DE, *dè*. This is shown in Figure 40 (from TF) and 41 (from VE).

Figure 40. TF realized a high-tone *dé* before the intransitive verb *full*. TF_05_04_04.

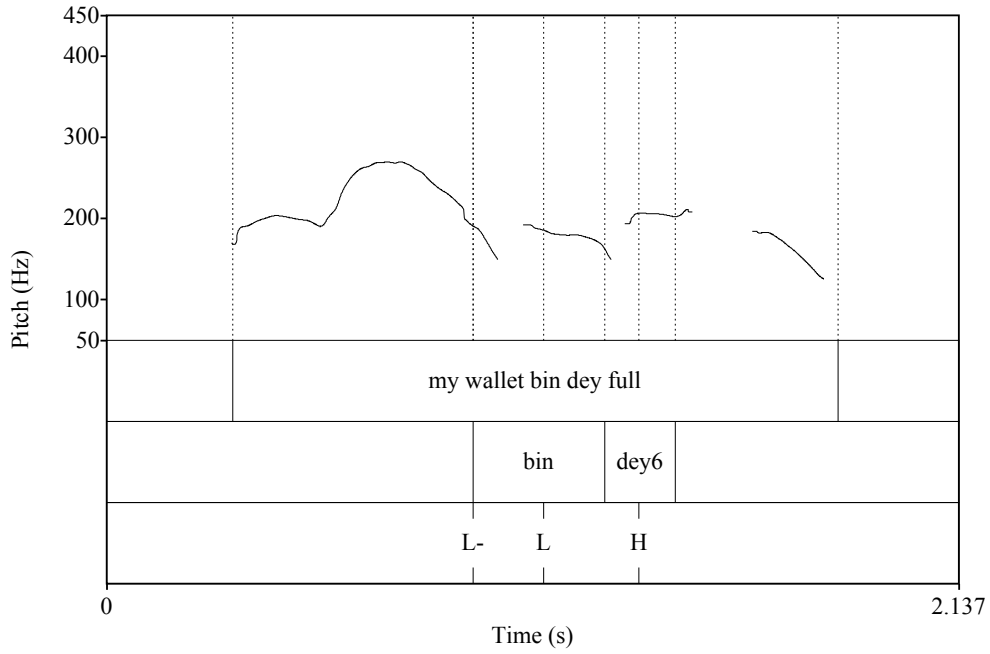
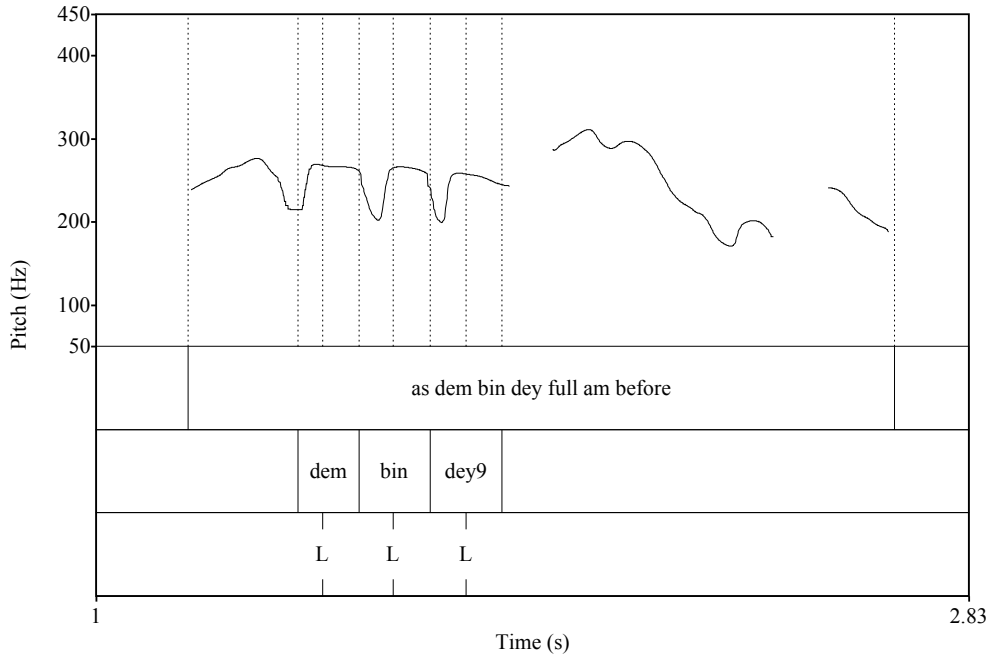


Figure 41. VE realized a high-tone *dé* before the intransitive verb *full*. VE_03_07_09.



(c) Minimal pair involving the verb *happy* ("to be happy", "to get happy", "to celebrate"), as in Table 35:

Table 35. Minimal pair with the verb *happy*.

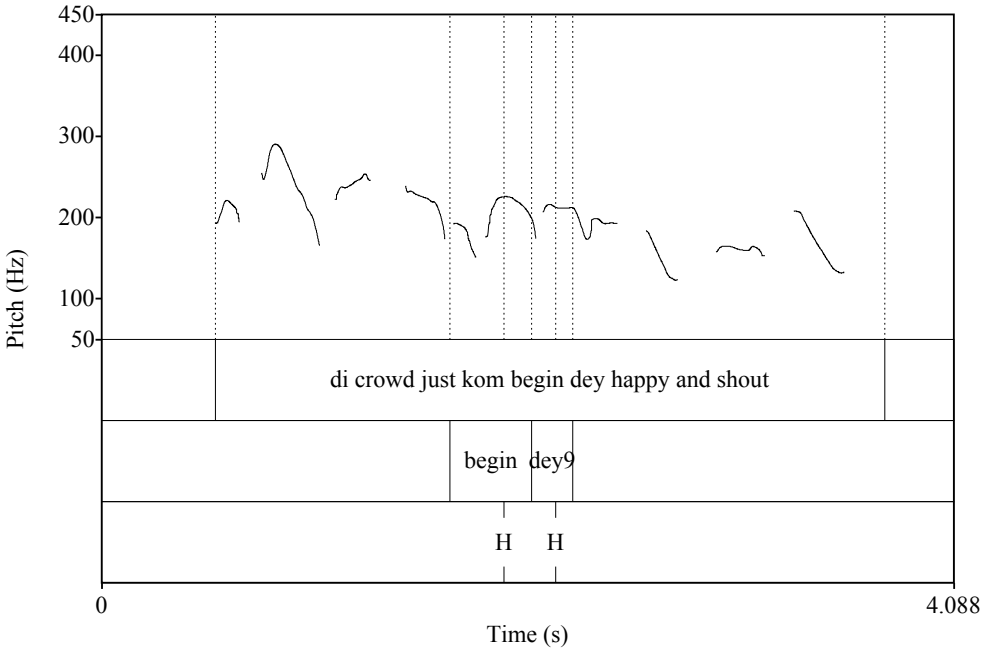
N°		SENTENCE	TYPE	VERB	GLOSS
5	4_1	Adebayo **dey** happy because you gò come here PN EX.COP be.happy CNJ you IRR come ADV	6	Happy	EX.LOC
6	6_7	People suppose **dey** happy now. people MOD EX.LOC be.happy INT	6	Happy	EX.LOC
7	2_5	At one point, di crowd just kom begin **dey** happy and shout. PREP one point DET crowd ADV PFV MOD IPFV celebrate CNJ shout	9	Happy	IPFV

TF and VE read the target sentences in 5 and 6 Table 35, realizing DE as a high-toned attributive EX.LOC copula *dé* in all five repetitions. This occurred irrespective of the preceding phonological context, whether it was a high-toned syllable (*suppose* in 6) or a low termination of a ϕ (topicalised PN *Adebayo* in 5). However, they diverged in the realization of DE in sentence 7. Sentence 7 is one of the three target sentences in the corpus where we tried

to elicit an IPFV low-toned *dè* in association with a dynamic property verb (*happy* - "to celebrate"), without the explicit signal of a transitive structure. We thought that the semantics of the sentence, highlighted by the presence of two inchoative auxiliaries (the perfective *kom* and the modal *begin*) would have helped the speakers to interprete the verb *happy* as a process, instead of a state, and *dey* as an imperfective *dè* (IPFV) instead of a copula *de* (EX.LOC). The presence of a dynamic verb (*shout*) in a coordinated verb phrase should have also suggested also the dynamic interpretation of *happy*.

Apparently, TF did not understand our intention and thus invariably realized DE in 7 in the highest part of her pitch range in all her five repetitions of the sentence. The inspection of the pitch curve confirmed that the pitch realization of her five DE in sentence 7 was higher than the preceding and following prosodic context; thus we classified her spoken productions as high-toned EX.LOC *dé*. One of her repetitions is shown in Figure 42.

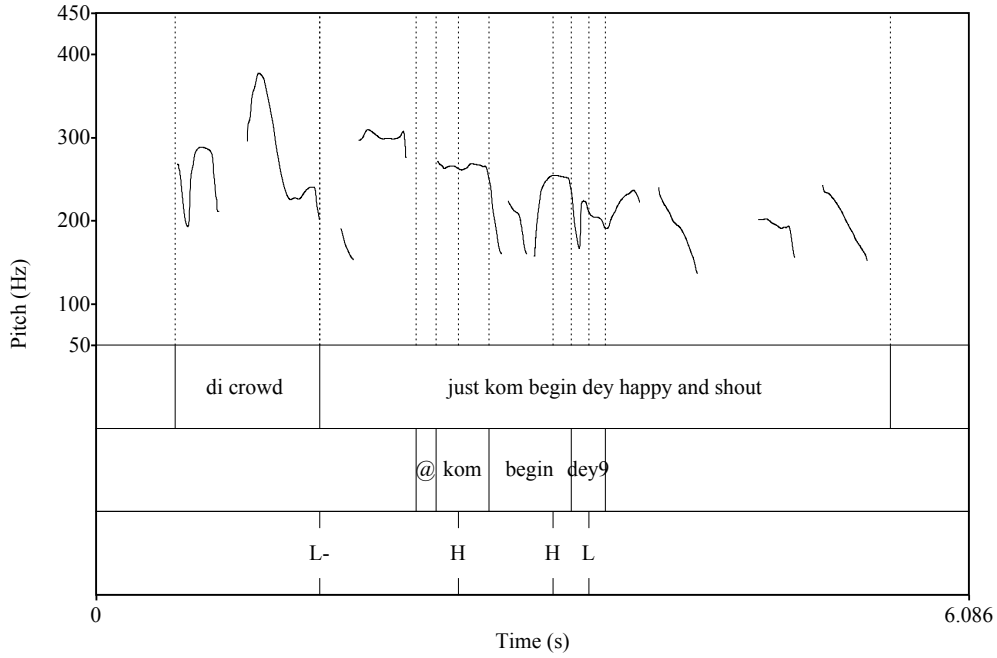
FIGURE 42. TF realized a high- toned *dé* before the verb *happy*. TF_05_02_05.



On the contrary, VE realized her five occurrences of DE in sentence 7 in the lower part of her pitch range and, most importantly, realized it using a lower

pitch compared to both the preceding and following tonal context. Evidently, she interpreted the verb *happy* as a dynamic verb ("to celebrate"), which can only be associated with a progressive marker, not with a copula. Thus, we analyzed it as IPFV low-toned *dè* in all occasions. One of her repetitions is shown in Figure 43.

FIGURE 43. VE realized a low-toned dè before the verb happy. VE_03_02_05.



In sum, TF interpreted sentence 7 as meaning something like, "At one point, the crowd just began being happy and shouting", while VE interpreted it as we intended, "At one point, the crowd just started celebrating and shouting". Thus:

TF said: At one point, di crowd just kom begin **dé** happy and shout.
PREP one point DET crowd ADV PFV MOD EX.LOC be.happy CNJ shout
'At one point, the crowd just began being happy and shouting.'

VE said: At one point, di crowd just kom begin **dè** happy and shout.
PREP one point DET crowd ADV PFV MOD IPFV celebrate CNJ shout
'At one point, the crowd just started celebrating and shouting.'

Again, this shows that a given tonal realization of DE entails sensibly different semantic interpretations of the property verb associated with it and of the sentence in general. The two speakers produced two different tonal realizations because they interpreted differently the sentence, and in this case, their interpretation was consistent throughout their five repetitions.

(d) Minimal pair involving the verb *jealous* ("to be jealous", "to envy"), as in Table 36:

Table 36. Minimal pair with the verb *jealous*.

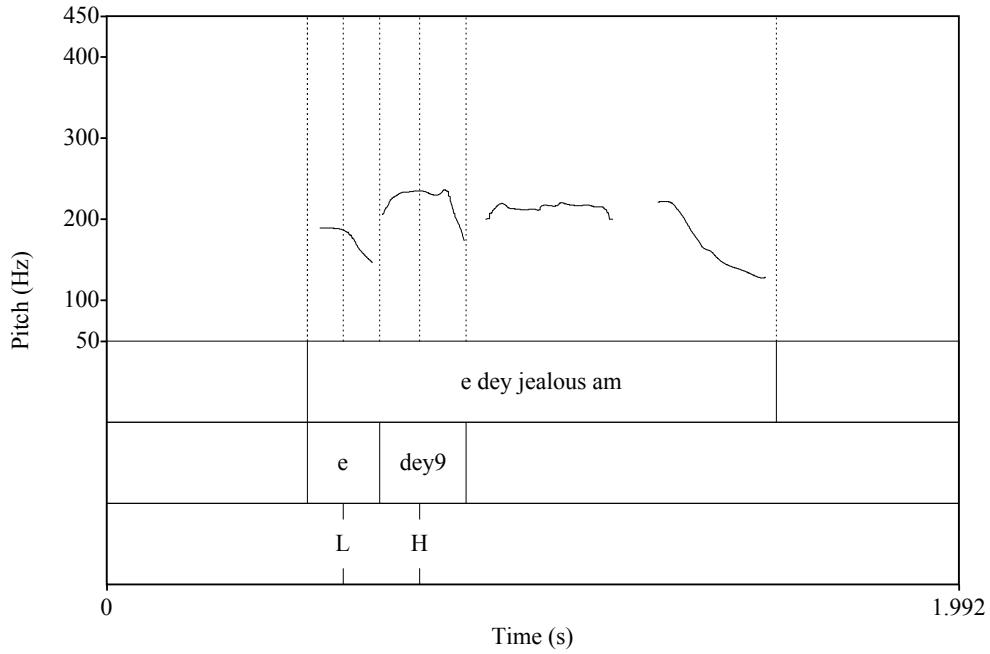
N°	SENTENCE	TYPE	VERB	GLOSS
9	2_7 Baba Fryo <u>too</u> **dey** jealous. PN PN ADV EX.LOC be.jealous	6	Jealous	EX.LOC
10	8_5 But she **dey** <u>too</u> jealous. CNJ she EX.LOC ADV be.jealous	6	Jealous	EX.LOC
11	2_8 Yes now! E **dey** jealous am. yes INT he IPFV envy him	9	Jealous	IPFV

The three sentences in Table 36 were aimed at eliciting two attributive EX.LOC copulas (high-toned *de*) in the intransitive stative predications of 9 and 10 ("to be too jealous") and one IPFV marker (low-toned *dè*) before the transitive property verb in 11 ("to envy him"). Here, again, the two speakers produced different and, in this particular case, we can say *diverging*, interpretations for the property verb *jealous*. The position of the adverb *too* was different in 9 and 10 because we wanted to check whether or not its position could influence the speakers' interpretation of the overall meaning of the sentence and, in particular, whether its position could influence the tonal realization of DE. We expected that the adverb placed after *dey*, as in 10, would most likely trigger a high-toned realization as *dé*. In fact, the presence of an adverb that directly modifies the attributive non-verbal predicate should associate with an intransitive and stative interpretation of the

sentence: only adjectives can be modified in that way, and adjectives (in the sense of section 6.4.2) in NigP are associated with the EX.LOC attributive copula *dé* (high-toned). On the other hand, the presence of a modifier that affects the entire verb phrase, as in 9, would most likely trigger an interpretation of the collocation "dey jealous" as a predicate where "dey" is an imperfective auxiliary and "jealous" is a dynamic lexical verb ("to envy").

TF realized high-toned *dé* in all 15 occurrences, which means that she interpreted DE as an EX.LOC copula in all three sentences in 9, 10 and 11, irrespective of the tonal contexts, the syntactic nature of the predication and the position of the adverb *too*. Thus, we can note that she missed our aim of eliciting an IPFV *dè* in her readings of sentence 11 and that this was consistent, since she repeated it five times. It seems that TF hardly conceives *jealous* as a dynamic verb. One can see her realization of sentence 11 in Figure 44:

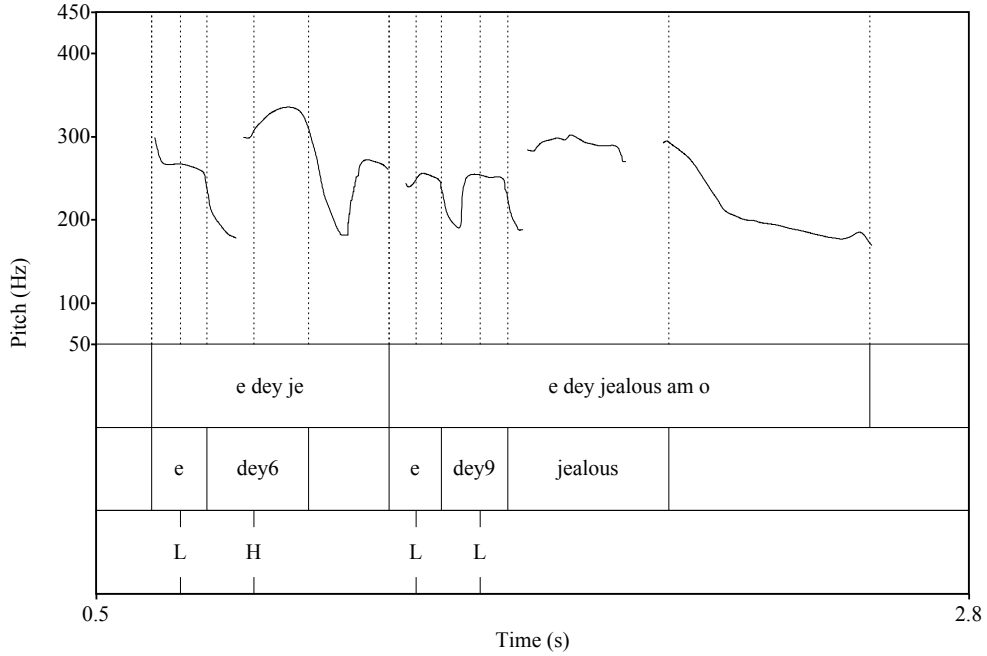
FIGURA 44. TF realized a high-toned *dé* before the intransitive verb *jealous*. TF_05_02_08.



VE showed a different pattern of interpretations. First of all, she realized low-toned *dè* in all her repetitions of sentence 11, even if with some hesitations. We see in Figure 45 that she corrected herself when she first spelt out a high-

toned EX.LOC copula *dé* and then repeated the string with the expected low-toned IPFV *dè*.

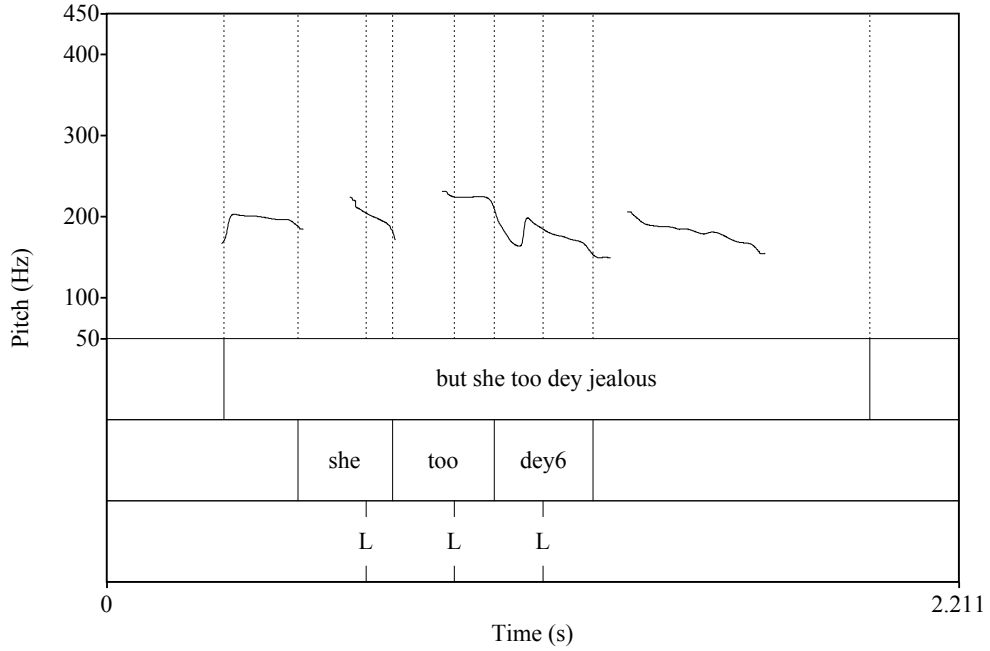
FIGURA 45. VE corrected herself and finally realized a low-toned *dè* before the verb *jealous*. VE_04_02_08.



Then, in her five repetitions of sentence 10, she realized a high-toned *dé* for the first three repetitions and a low-toned *dè* for the last two readings. It seems like she changed her mind at a certain point and decided to interpret the sentence as an intransitive non-stative predicate modified by the IPFV auxiliary *dè*. A similar pattern can be observed for her five repetitions of sentence 9. The first, fourth and fifth repetitions were realized as low-toned *dè*; the second and third as high-toned *dé*.

The first observation to be made is, again, that the underspecified spelling of "dey", though the most familiar to most NigP speakers, creates a bunch of inconsistencies and reading problems. The second observation concerns the position of the adverb *too*. In her fourth and fifth repetitions of sentence 10 (*E dey too jealous*), VE pronounced the adverb before *dey*, and not after *dey*, as one can see in Figure 46.

FIGURA 46. VE displaced the adverb *too* before the VP and realized a low-toned *dé* before the verb *jealous*. VE_ 06_08_05.



We think that her change in the script was consistent with her interpretation of sentence 10 as a dynamic intransitive predication and with her low-toned realization of *dè* as an IPFV marker. VE adjusted the syntactic ordering of sentence 10 in order to make it more consistent with her semantic interpretation. VE said something like, "She is acting jealous too much" in a way that can be understood as, "She is jealousing too much":

VE said: She too dè jealous
she ADV IPFV act.jealous
'She is acting jealous too much.'

(e) The sentences in 12 and 13 (Table 37) are occurrences where the non-stative interpretation of the property verb (and thus the IPFV realization of a low-toned *dè*) can only be retrieved from the semantic context. This is not, strictly speaking, a minimal pair, and was proposed to the speakers as a unique sentence within a longer script.

Table 37. Sentences with the property verbs *short* and *long* where the non-stative interpretation can only be retrieved from the semantic context.

N°	SENTENCE	TYPE	VERB	GLOSS
12	7_7 Everi month, one line **dey** short o [...] every month one line IPFV get.short INT	9	Short	IPFV
13	7_8 [...] and di other one **dey** long pass. CNJ DET other one IPFV get.long SV	9	Long	IPFV

We considered this to be the most critical context, in the sense that there were neither lexical (auxiliary, modal) nor syntactic (transitivity) direct cues that may have helped speakers retrieve the non-stative interpretation. The intended meaning for 12 and 13 was something like, "Every month, one line gets shorter and the other one gets more and more long". VE just missed our aim in all occurrences and realized ten high-toned EX.LOC copular *dé* in all occurrences. I give one example of sentence 12 in Figure 47 and one example of sentence 13 in Figure 48:

Figure 47. VE realized a high-toned *dé* before the verb *short*. VE_05_07_07.

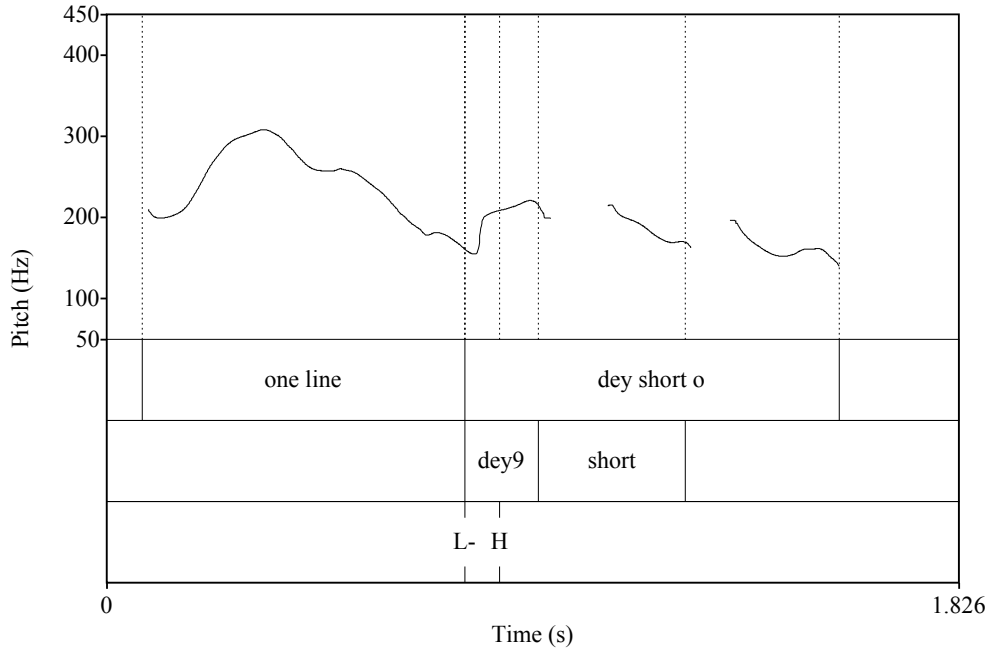
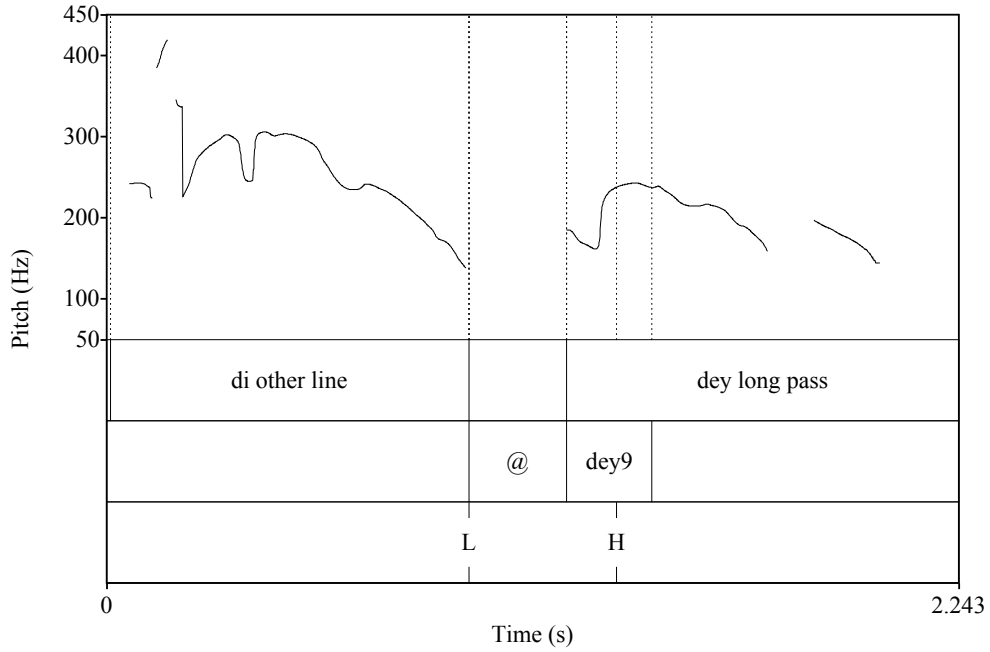


Figure 48. VE realized a high-toned *dé* before the verb *long*. VE_05_07_08.



TF was not that consistent. In her five repetitions of sentence 12 she realized two low-toned IPFV *dè* (which was what we expected) and three high-toned EX.LOC *dé*. Examples for comparison are given in Figure 49 and Figure 50.

Figure 49. TF realized a low-toned *dè* before the verb *short*. TF_05_07_07.

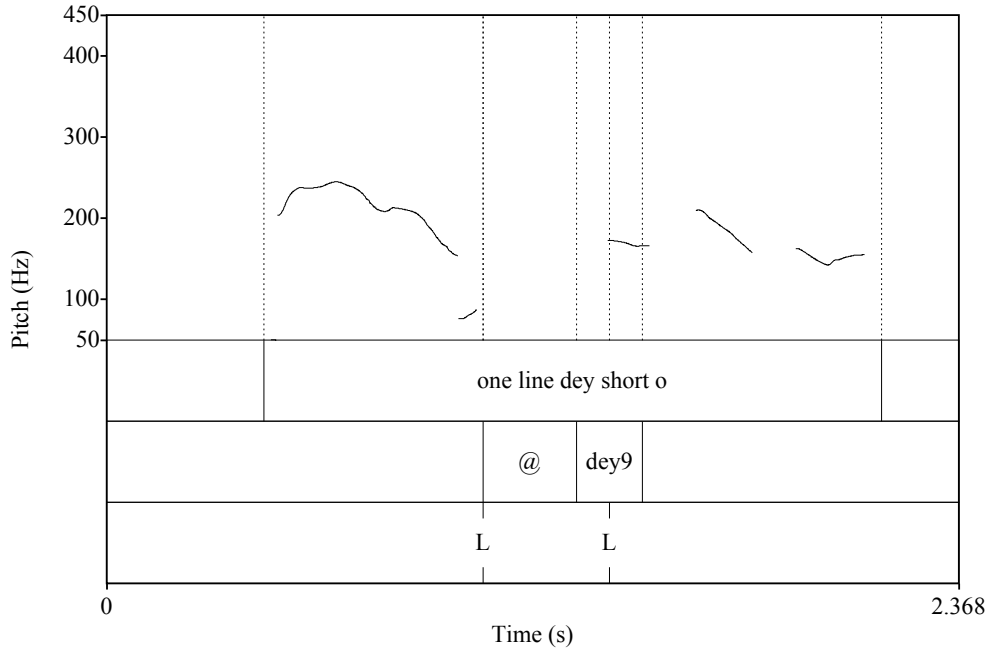
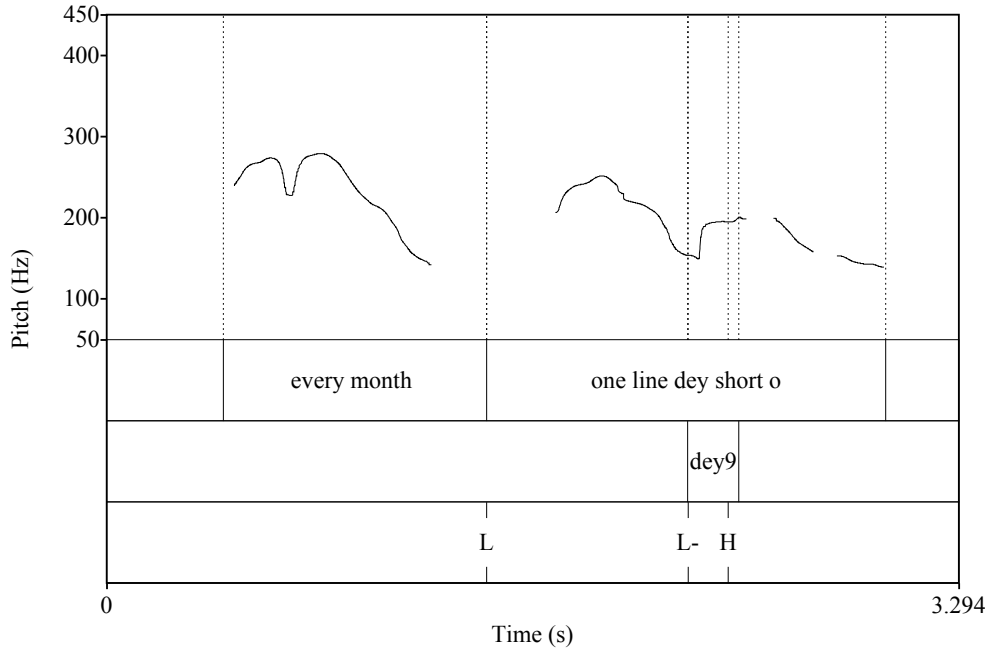


Figure 50. TF realized a high-toned *dé* before the verb *short* TF_02_07_07.



In her five repetitions of sentence 13 (Table 37), TF realized three low-toned IPFV *dè* (which was what we expected) and two high-toned EX.LOC *dé*. Examples for comparison are given in Figure 51 and Figure 52.

Figure 51. TF realized a low-toned *dè* before the verb *long*. TF_05_07_08.

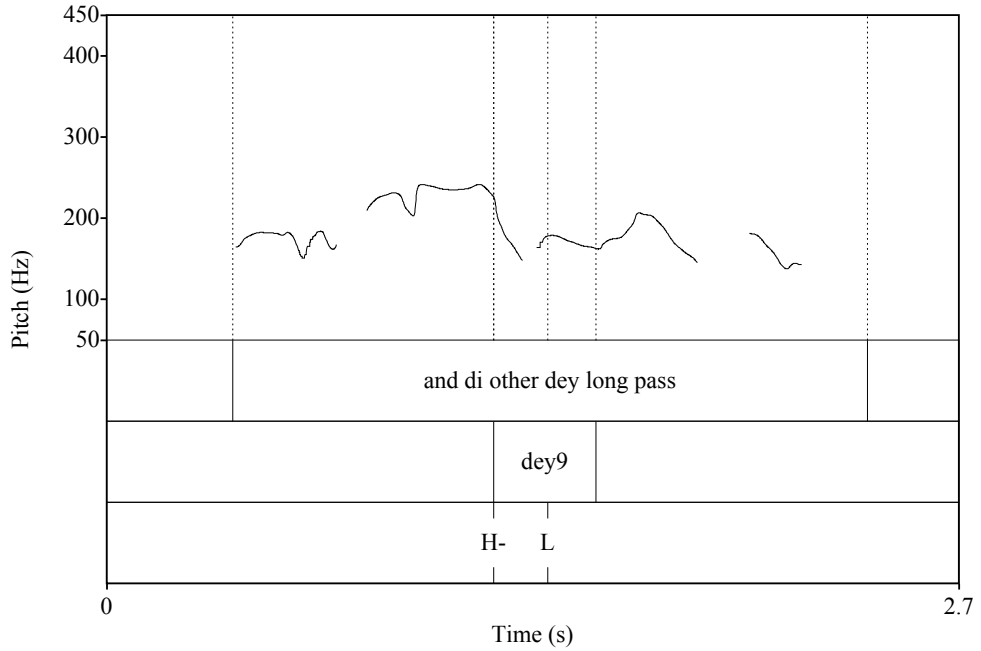
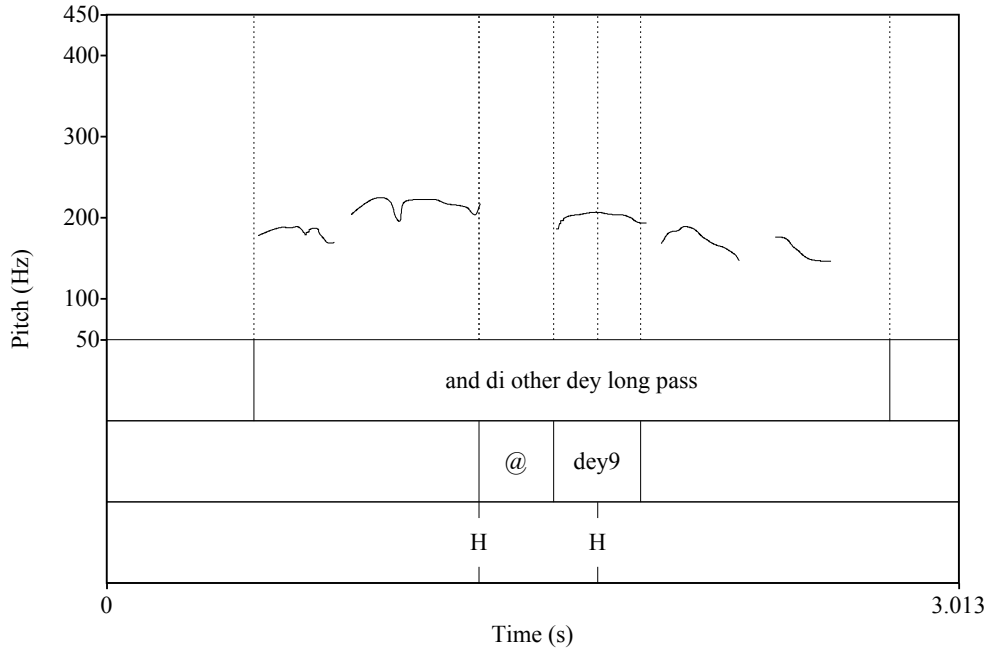


Figure 52. TF realized a high-toned *dé* before the verb *long*. TF_04_07_08.



(f) Minimal pair involving the verb *sweet* ("to be sweet", "to flatter", "to gratify"), as in Table 38:

Table 38. Minimal pair with the verb *sweet*.

N°	SENTENCE	TYPE	VERB	GLOSS
14	8_4 She **dey** sweet o. she EX.LOC be.sweet INT	6	Sweet	EX.LOC
15	3_3 And wetin **dey** sweet me pass [...] CNJ INT IPFV gratify me SV	9	Sweet	IPFV

This last minimal pair gave the fewest problems to the speakers and to the analysts. VE and TF both consistently realized sentence in 14 (Table 38) as an intransitive stative copular predication and thus read five repetitions each with a clear high-toned *dé*, as Figure 53 and 54 show.

Figure 53. TF realized one high-toned *dé* before the intransitive verb *sweet*. TF_05_08_04.

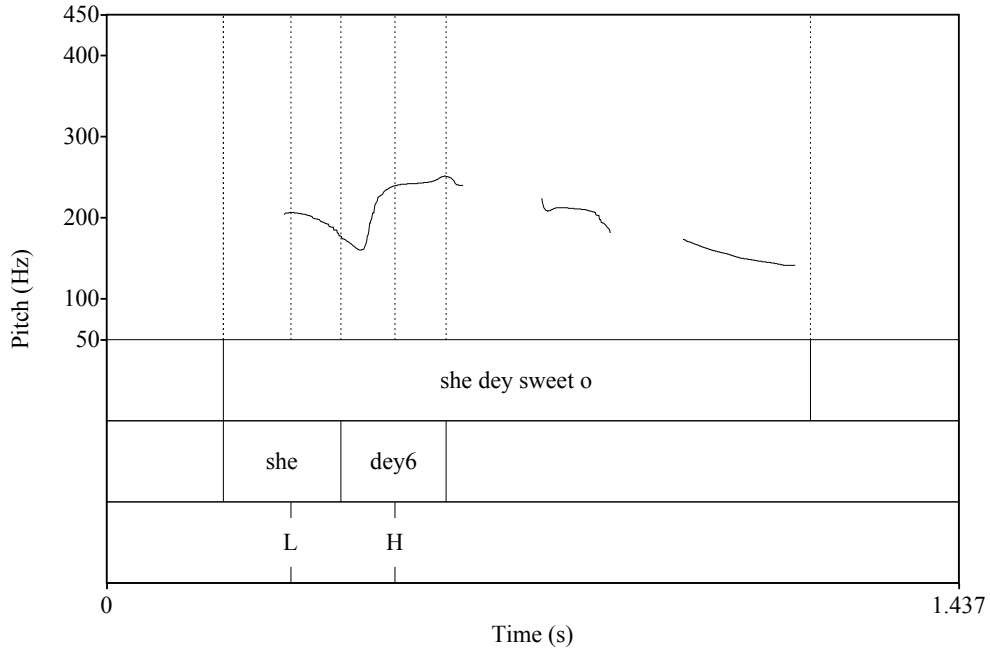
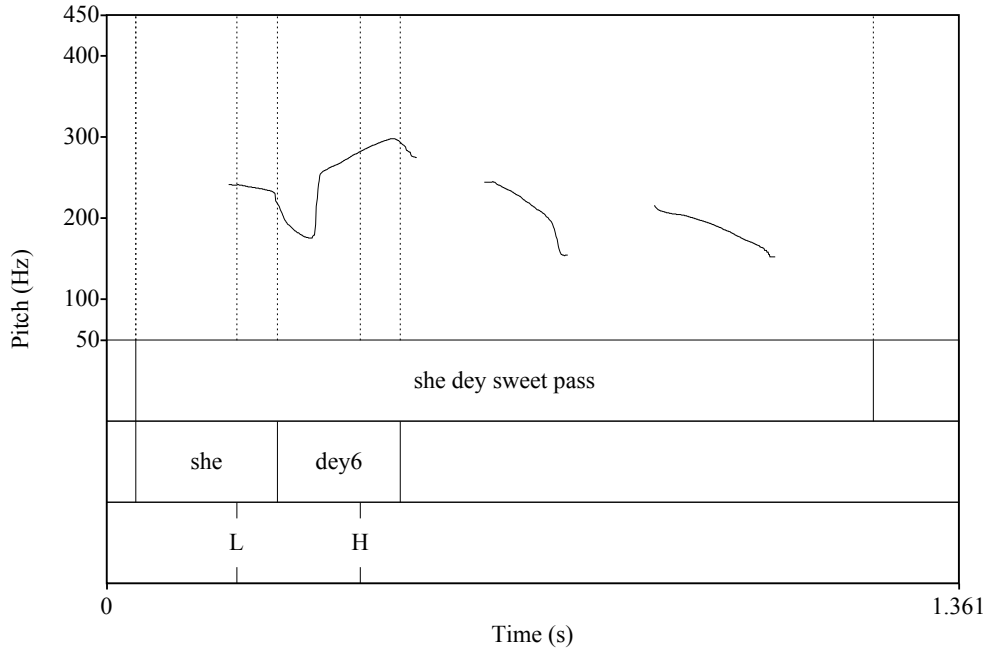


Figure 54. VE realized one high-toned *dé* before the intransitive verb *sweet*. VE_05_08_04.



Also, they interpreted the sentence in 15 (Table 38) as an intransitive non-stative predication and thus they both assigned in all five repetitions a low tone to the IPFV marker *dè*, as Figure 55 and 56 show.

Figure 55. TF realized one low-toned *dè* before the transitive verb *sweet*. TF_05_03_03.

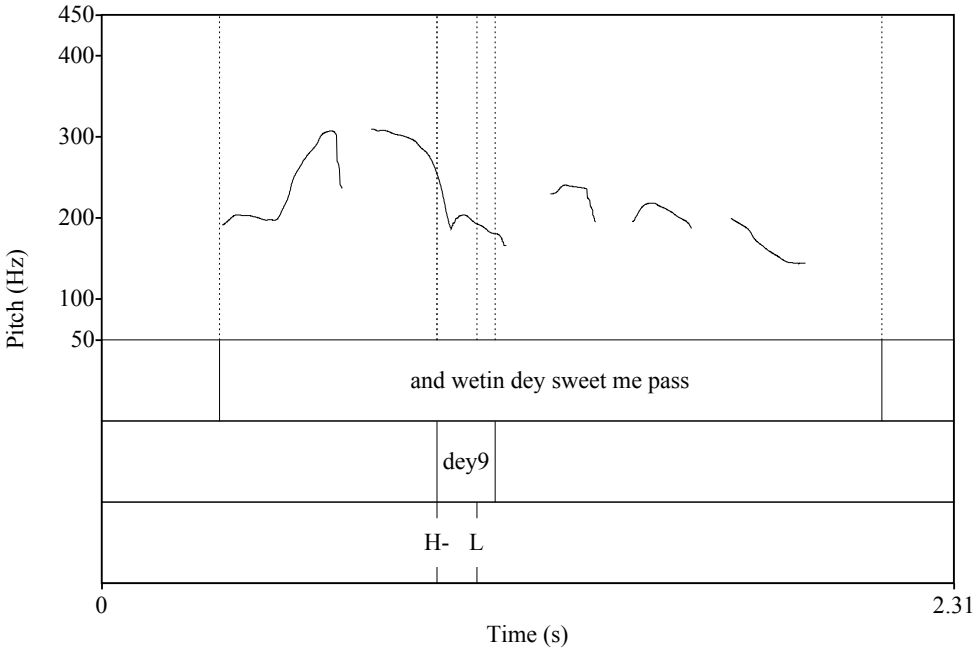
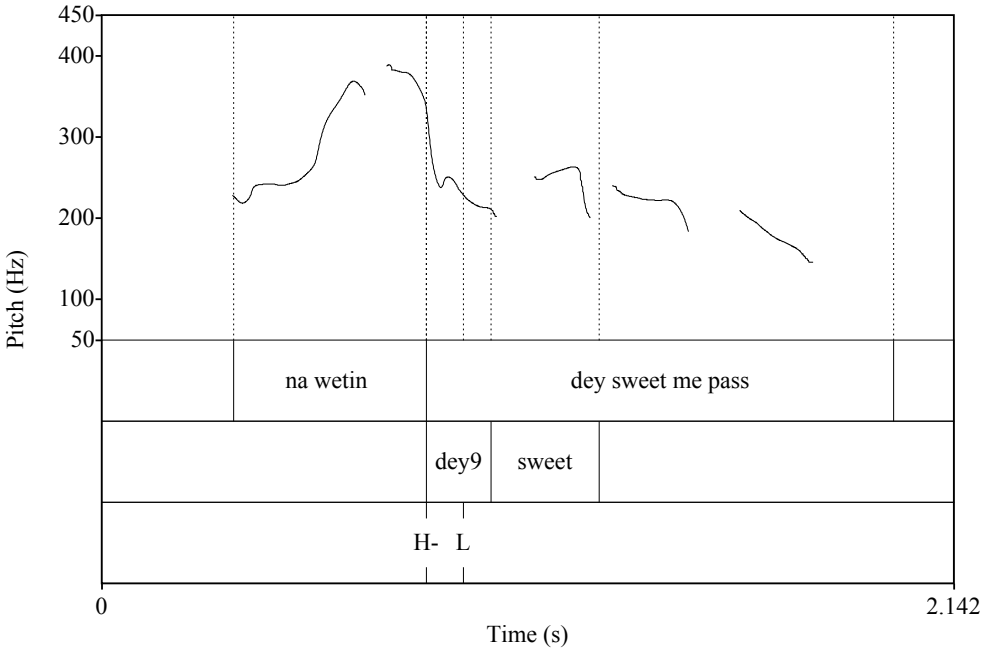


Figure 56. VE realized one low-toned *dè* before the transitive verb *sweet*. VE_05_03_03.



6.8 Final remarks

Most property items in NigP are verbal when they appear in their predicative function, thus there is no need to postulate copula dropping or omission (section 6.3). The copular item *de* may be inserted and occupy the verb slot so that the property item performs as a copular complement (section 6.4.3). When a property item performs as a copular complement, I call it an adjective. There is no compulsory rule of morphological transformation between an adjectival property item and a verbal property item: property items are multifunctional words that display flexible categoriality in discourse. In brief, even if most property items in NigP are verbs there is no need to eliminate the category "adjective", which remains a good tool for classifying many lexical items (section 6.4.2).

In 6.5 and subparagraphs I analysed the kind of copular variation exemplified in 438-439 and 440-441. I identified four criteria relevant to the alternation:

1. Subject type
2. Issues related to time-stability (Stage vs. Individual level)
3. Aspectual class of the PI
4. Transitivity value of the PI

These four criteria are probably ranked and do indeed interplay. However, very few considerations were made in this respect. My conclusions are as follows:

1) Subject types seem to weakly correlate with the use of the copula *de* in attributive sentences. Data charts show that the first personal pronoun *I* does correlate positively with the use of the copula. However, this empirical consideration is not fully confirmed by the informants' judgements. Informants seem to acknowledge this correlation only for those weak verbs (or, borderline property items as defined in 6.3.1) that, due to their weak verbal nature, tend independently to occur with the copula in attributive

sentences.

2) Time-stability is a factor that indeed correlates with the presence/absence of the copula *de* in attributive sentences. Sentences with copulas (i.e. with adjectival PIs) are read as less time-stable than sentences without copulas (i.e. with verbal PIs). However, this holds true only for a bunch of PIs in the corpus, and most of them are stative PIs (TYPE B in 6.5.3). For many other occurrences, a reading in terms of degree of certainty is also possible. The two strategies are seen as related in 6.5.2.

3) Concerning aspectual classes, I split the class of PIs in stative property verbs and inchoative property verbs. This was not an *ad hoc* distinction, since the categories of inchoative/stative and stative verbs were established independently. NigP aspectual verb classes are described in 1.4.2 and they comprise three groups: stative, inchoative/stative and dynamic verbs. NigP PIs just split between the first two classes and can also be used as dynamic verbs.

(I) Some PIs in NigP are inherently stative (TYPE B in 6.5.3, e.g. *good* - be.good, *generous* - be.generous). This entails a series of consequences:
- They receive present reading when unmarked (event time).
- The marker *don* expresses that the state denoted by the verb has been in existence for some time in the anterior past, with no explicit relevance to the current state of event time.
- Some stative PIs are read as more time-stable when verbal and as less time-stable when they are copular complements of *de*.
- Also, the use of the copula *de* blocks any causative and transitive syntactic transformations.

(II) Some PIs in NigP are inherently dynamic or, in most cases, they oscillate between a stative and a dynamic reading. They have been described and analysed as inchoative verbs (TYPE A in 6.5.3, e.g. *happy* – get.happy, *sick* – get.sick). This entails that:
- The present state reading they may receive when unmarked (as in

6.5.4, *I sick* – I got sick --› I am sick) is a consequence of the completed process reading. As unmarked they receive the factitive interpretation assigned to dynamic verbs (past completive).

- The completive aspectual marker *don* implies a completed process reading with relevance to current state. The result of the process is semantically prominent over the process itself.
- Inchoative PIs in conjunction with the copula *de* result in a plain stative verb phrase. The use of the copular item *de* blocks the inchoative potential of the verb.
- Also, the use of the copula *de* blocks any causative and transitive syntactic transformations, as for inchoative PIs.
- This aspectual class of property verbs is compatible with both DE (high-toned EX.LOC *de* and low-toned IPFV marker *dè*). Inchoative property verbs (e.g. *sick*) and dynamic property verb (e.g. *happy* - "to celebrate"), when associated to the imperfective marker *dè*, get a progressive or inchoative interpretation.

6.8.1 DE before property items

Concerning this very last issue, when I realised that some NigP property verbs were able to associate with both DE according to their aspectual lexical classification, I thought that some further investigation was needed. Some speakers confirmed this fact with their intuitions (section 6.7); moreover, Faraclas confirmed in a personal communication that he believed most property verbs to be able to associate with both DE. However, the literature does not contain any discussion of this issue, and the inconsistent spelling of DE in both the specialist literature and the spontaneous productions (section 5.4) undoubtedly creates confusion. The methodological issues related to the experiment on the tonal specification of DE that I performed in collaboration with the Paduan CNR are given in section 2.3.

The general conclusions of the experiment are that speakers associate a consistent tonal level specification (high vs. low) to the grammatical categories of EX.LOC (*de*) and IPFV (*dè*): these conclusions are supported in

section 5.6. In section 6.7.1, I analysed the target sentences involving minimal pairs of property items that speakers were asked to read during the experiment. The first outstanding difference between the two speakers who I analysed (TF and VE) is that while TF accepted the co-occurrence of two adiacent *dey* within the same verb phrase (as in example 8 in Table 32), VE did not, and thus asked us to change the script. This could be attributed to a difference in their grammar, or most probably it is due to their different levels of consciousness of NigP grammar. NigP does not have any standardised common form, and it is commonly called a language where "anything goes". As a matter of facts, this is, of course, not true; however, most speakers perceive a weak sense of constriction and a null sense of prescription while speaking NigP, especially if they do not use it as the main language. It is true to say that there is a great deal of optionality in NigP grammar but this is also true for most oral languages.

Concerning the realisation of DE before property items, the two speakers read a fair number of the DEs in consistent ways. In particular, their reading was systematically consistent for the two minimal pairs involving the verbs *full* (3-4 Table 34) and *sweet* (14-15 Table 38). In their five repetitions of these pairs, they realised a high-toned EX.LOC *dé* for the intransitive stative predicates (*My wallet bin dey full* and *She dey sweet o*) and a low-toned IPFV *dè* for the transitive dynamic predicates ([…] *as dem bin dey full am before* and *And wetin dey sweet me pass* […]). This confirmed our very simple starting hypothesis, namely that stative predications associate with the high-toned EX.LOC copula *de*, while non-stative predicates cannot require a copula but rather require the IPFV marker *dè*. In other words, the two different tonal realisations before the same property items in minimal pairs confirm, in the first place, that NigP property verbs display a flexible aspectual categorisation (stative/non-stative), without any morphological derivation being needed. In fact, the different tonal reading of DE was taken as the only overt clue available for the changing aspectual character of property items.

In some cases the two speakers' readings diverged, and in two cases the speakers read the same sentence differently over the course of her

repetitions. The association between (1) EX.LOC *de* and stative predicates and (2) IPFV *dè* and dynamic predicates was facilitated by a parallel syntactic encoding in most target sentences: intransitive for stative predicates and transitive for dynamic predicates. However, we also tried to elicit dynamic readings of the PIs (and thus, as an overt cue, low-toned of *dè*) in intransitive predications (7, 12, 13 in Tables 35 and 37), but we were aware of the fact that the elicitation task was tougher without the help of the syntactic disambiguation. In fact, in most cases the inconsistencies concerned the elicitation of IPFV low-toned *dè* as a cue of a non-stative predication in *intransitive* contexts. Consequently, we believe that these inconsistencies are not a signal of different semantic and syntactic features associated with the single property items tested, but are simply a signal of different semantic interpretations of the scripts. We can advance the positive conclusion that the verbs *sweet* and *full* are classified as (1) both stative and non-stative verbs, and (2) both transitive and intransitive verbs (Tables 38 and 34), but we are not in the position to attest to the same for the other property verbs.

One relevant observation is that, in all cases, the two speakers spelt out meaningful utterances, even in those cases where their production diverged from the expected one. In fact, each tonal realisation of DE is associated both with a specific grammatical meaning of the lexical item DE (EX.LOC vs. IPFV) and with a specific aspectual lexical categorisation of the property item: stative after the EX.LOC copula *de* and non-stative after the IPFV marker *dè*. The confusion of inconsistent tonal readings probably arose because the scripts created the possibility for different semantic interpretations and were not contextualised enough for the speakers to determine the expected one.

At this point, the underspecified spelling of *dey*, even if it is the most commonly used and the most familiar to speakers, undoubtedly creates a semantic ambiguity that cannot be tolerated in the written form of a language. It is therefore definitely the case to introduce, in line with Faraclas (1985 and 1996), a different spelling for the IPFV low-toned *dè* and the EX.LOC high-toned *dé*.

7. Conclusions

In this concluding chapter I will summarize of the analysis of the copular system of NigP as it emerged throughout this dissertation and, in particular, in the three research chapters (4, 5 and 6) that correspond respectively to the following sub-systems of grammar:

(1) the identificational/ascriptive copular domain (*be* and *na*);

(2) the locative/existential copular domain (*de*);

(3) the attributive (copular) domain (property verbs vs. *de* + property items).

This will be the topic of sections 7.1 and 7.2.

Later (section 7.3) I will make some observations about the status of the copular item *be* in the variety of NigP under examination, with reference to the status of the same copular item as described in Faraclas (1996). The last paragraph (section 7.4) suggests future research directions.

7.1 The copular system of Western metropolitan varieties of NigP

First of all, I need to specify the variety of NigP under analysis. As I argued in the concluding remarks of Chapter 2 (section 2.5), the data I used can be generally classified as belonging to Western varieties of NigP. The spoken data, which make up half of the corpus, were recorded in Lagos (section 2.1), the former capital of Nigeria, which is the biggest city in the country and certainly the most vibrant, economically and culturally. The speakers who provided the grammaticality judgements come from Benin City (section 2.4). The authors of the written samples of NigP are based in Lagos (section 2.2). Therefore, the variety under examination can be geographically located in the stretch of land between Lagos and Benin City (Figure 57) and can be described as “Western metropolitan NigP”.

Figure 57. Map of Nigeria.

As argued in Chapter 3, the copular domain of NigP displays as follows:

Table 39. The taxonomy of copulas in NigP

Semantic types	**Examples**	**Copulas**	**Syntax**
IDENTIFICATIONAL/ ASCRIPTIVE (Chapter 4)	Dat boy **na** my friend Im **be** my friend	*be*/*na*	NP + COP + NP (det.) NP + COP + NP (undet.) NP + COP + CC
LOCATIVE/ EXISTENTIAL/ PREDICATIVE (Chapter 5)	God **de** My friend **de** dere I **de** in charge We **de** for microbiology	*de*	NP + COP (+ LOC) (or extensions, NPs, PPs, and AdvPs)
ATTRIBUTIVE (Chapter 6)	Dis girl fine o Di girl **de** fine	Ø/*de*	NP (+ COP) + PI

Table 39 provides, in the first place, three semantic macro-areas and this is because I considered the semantics of copulas to be the deeper *kernel* at the

base of their general classification. In other words, copular sentences should always be accounted for according to their semantic content (section 3.1.2).

This said, in NigP the choice of the copular lexeme is fundamentally based on the syntactic nature of the copular complement: nominal and clausal complements take the copulas *be* or *na*, locative and other prepositional complements take the copula *de* and property items require, in some instances, the copula *de*.

Copula omission or dropping is not an issue in the variety of NigP under examination here, as it is in Caribbean English-based mesolectal creoles (section 3.3). In fact, the variation between *de* and zero, in the context of attributive predication, has been analysed in terms of copula *insertion*.

I considered the copular domain of NigP to be a tight sub-system of its grammar, and all issues discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 address directly the definition of such a sub-system, either because they relate to its structure or because they are involved in the establishment of its boundaries. Thus, the NigP copulas are the three lexemes *be*, *na* and *de*, and their distribution has been thoroughly assessed in this work.

7.2 Research conclusions

While specific research conclusions on each domain of the NigP copular system are given in the final remarks of each research chapter (4.7, 5.7 and 6.8), in the following paragraphs I will provide a summary and some additional considerations.

7.2.1 Identificational and ascriptive copular sentences

In Chapter 4 I analysed the domains of identificational and ascriptive (Id/As) copular sentences, where we find a variation between the copulas *be* and *na*, as exemplified below.

504 a. I **be** lady. b. * I **na** lady.
I COP lady
'I am a single woman.'

505 a. Bill **na** beta student. b. * Bill **be** beta student.
PN COP good student
'Bill is a good student'

The copula *be* is a verb. It projects an argument structure and assigns nominative case to the subject. The copula *na* is not verbal and does not project an argument structure since its structure is firmly based on pragmatic grounds. I provide an explanation of the reanalysis of *na* from a focus introducer to a copula in section 4.3.1.

In the first part of Chapter 4 (section 4.2), I assessed the complementary distribution of the two copulas in the Western metropolitan varieties of NigP, which accounted for an important difference from the Port Harcourt variety. *Be* requires a personal pronominal subject or an interrogative subject pronoun, while *na* requires a noun or a deictic as the subject (sections 4.2.1, 4.2.2). Clausal complements prefer the copula *be*, no matter the subject (section 4.2.5). The constraints on their distribution are also semantic: for instance, *na* is not easily accepted in non-assertive contexts and, on the contrary, it can be used to add metalinguistic content (irony, certainty, rhetoric intention, etc.) on the predicate (sections 4.2.4, 4.2.6, 4.2.7).

In the second part of Chapter 4, I used the categories of information structure to account for the distribution of the copulas *be* and *na* just sketched. I observed that while *na* entails a Topic-Focus structure, *be* entails a Focus-Topic structure (section 4.4.1). The two sequences were individuated principally by monitoring the positions of deictics (section 4.4.2), operators (section 4.4.3), noun phrases (section 4.4.5) and personal pronouns (section 4.4.4) in Id/As copular sentences. These observations are in line with much literature (Higgins 1973, Green 2004 and 2007), where copular sentences are seen as deeply related to the basic categories of information structure.

7.2.2 The existential/locative copula

In Chapter 5 I analysed the lexical item DE and its function in NigP. I assumed, in line with Faraclas (1996: 271), DE to be the same lexical item with two main grammatical functions: existential/locative (EX.LOC) copula and imperfective (IPFV) preverbal marker. Interestingly, the existential/locative EX.LOC copula also performs as an attributive copula before property items. As I thoroughly explained in section 5.6 the two grammatical functions are differentiated by means of a tonal distinction: the EX.LOC copula is realised with a high level tone (*dé*) and the IPFV function is realised with a low level tone (*dè*).

In the first part of Chapter 5, I analysed all functions of DE in NigP in detail. As far as existential constructions are concerned, the verb *de* is in pragmatic complementary distribution with the *e get* construction (section 5.1). The construction with *de* is anaphoric and the main nominal refers to some topical entity already expressed in discourse (or at least an entity that is not intended as a focalised constituent waiting for specification). The construction with *e get* is cataphoric, and makes specific reference to entities that are introduced for the first time in discourse or entities that the speaker commits to expand on (pragmatically focused). The alternation is semantic and pragmatic but, only as a consequence, also syntactic: in fact, most of the time, topical subjects of *de* are definite, while non-topical pivot nominals in existential construction with *e get* are indefinite. Examples are given in 506 and 507:

506 One beta reason **de**. Only non-specific reading allowed
DET good reason EX.LOC
'There is one good reason (and I am probably not developing the issue further)'

507 **E get** one beta reason. Only specific reading allowed
EXP get DET good reason
'There is one good reason (and now I am going to tell you what it is)'

In section 5.2 I described locative, predicative and associative uses of DE and concluded that they are semantically strictly related. In section 5.3 I described all the functions related to its use as an imperfective marker, including its use as a non-finite marker in between serial verbs and between a modal and the main lexical verb. This first part concluded with the individuation of nine relevant morpho-syntactic categories (Table 24 in section 5.6) that formed the theoretical grid behind the analysis of the tonal realisation of DE.

The second part of Chapter 5 is dedicated to the issue of tone in NigP. The discussion of the mixed prosodic system of NigP, where stress, pitch-accent and tonal phenomena interplay, is based on Faraclas (1996: 260-268), Faraclas (1985) and Rivera-Castillo & Faraclas (2006), and can be found in section 5.5. In section 5.6, then, I analysed the results of the experiment I conducted in collaboration with the Paduan CNR in order to assess the presence of a tonal distinction of the item DE. For this general analysis, I took into account the spoken production of only one of the three speakers who took part in the experiment (TF). The analysis yielded extremely consistent results. Locative, existential and predicative DE were realised in 100% of the cases (50 occurrences) with a high pitch level. Thus, we classified categories 1-2-3 (Table 24 in section 5.6) as high-toned. The same held for the 95 occurrences of DE as an attributive copula (categories 6-7) before both verbal and non-verbal property items, which were realised in 100% of the cases with a high pitch level that we interpreted as a high tone. Imperfective aspectual and non-aspectual DE (categories 4, 5 and 8), for which we had 75 instances, were realised in 100% of the cases with a relative low pitch that we classified as low-tone.

7.2.3 Attributive (copular) clauses

In Chapter 6, I analysed attributive constructions and focused on the type of variation given below:

508 E **cheap** for 150 sef.
it be.cheap PREP 150 ADV

'It is cheap even for 150 Naira.'

509 Di tin **de cheap** for Nu metro.
DET thing COP cheap PREP Nu metro
'The thing is cheap at Nu Metro.'

Most property items in NigP are verbal when they appear in their predicative function (508), so that there is no need to postulate copula dropping or omission (see section 6.3). The copular item *de* may be inserted (509), thereby occupying the verb slot so that the property item performs as copular complement (section 6.4.3). When a property item performs as copular complement, I call it an adjective. There is no compulsory rule of morphological transformation between an adjectival property item and a verbal property item: property items are multifunctional words in NigP that display flexible categoriality in discourse. In section 6.5 and subparagraphs I analysed the kind of copular variation exemplified here in 508 and 509 (or given as a double minimal pair in 438-439 and 440-441 at the end of section 6.4.3). I identified four criteria relevant to the alternation:

5. Subject type
6. Issues related to time-stability (Stage vs. Individual level)
7. Aspectual class of the PI
8. Transitivity value of the PI

These four criteria are probably ranked and they do indeed interplay (see section 6.8). However, very few considerations were made in this respect.

Concerning the aspectual class of property verbs, I assumed that they can be classified in two groups: inchoative property verbs (Group A) and stative property verbs (Group B). Inchoative property verbs show an oscillating semantic character between a state and an entry into a state. Moreover, some property items may be used also as dynamic verbs (*happy* - "to celebrate"). Most of these silent derivations, which are not signalled morphologically, entail transitivisation and causativisation processes in NigP. The tonal realisation of DE before property verbs has proved to be the only

clue that attests to the fluctuating aspectual semantics, especially when they are used intransitively. In 510-511 one finds a perfect minimal pair provided by an informant:

510 Di basket don **dè empty**.
DET basket CPL IPFV get.empty
'The process of getting empty the basket has already started.' or
'The basket has already started being emptied.'

511 Di basket don **de empty**.
DET basket CPL EX.LOC be.empty
'The basket has already been empty for some time in the past.'

The experiment on the tonal realization of DE that I performed in collaboration with the Paduan CNR aimed principally at assessing whether the speakers were able to produce both types of DE before the verbal property items *empty*, *full*, *happy*, *hard*, *jealous*, *long*, *short* and *sweet* (see Table 32 in section 6.7.1). Whenever this was the case, we interpreted this fact as indirect evidence of the oscillating aspectual character of PIs in NigP. This aspectual oscillation is undoubtedly related to, though not conditioned by, their labile syntactic behavior (transitive/intransitive).

In this respect, we asked our subjects to read short scripts that contained six minimal pairs. Each pair used property items in both intransitive/stative constructions (e.g. 4_5 *E don **dey** empty now*) and transitive/dynamic constructions (e.g. 4_3 *Di guy don **dey** empty my purse*). Intransitive/stative constructions, like 4_5, were supposed to contain the EX.LOC copula *de*: thus, we expected a H-toned *dé* associated with them. Transitive/dynamic constructions, like 4_3, were not supposed to contain a copula but rather the IPFV marker *dè*: thus, we expected a L-toned *dè* to be associated with them. The point is that the underspecified spelling of *dey*, which was chosen because it proved to be the most familiar spelling for them, does not carry such a distinction.

The behaviour of the two speakers (TF and VE) was quite consistent (in

section 6.7.1 one finds the full discussion). The only outstanding difference between the readings of the two speakers was that VE refused to read the sentence containing the co-occurrence of two adjacent *dey* in the same verb phrase and asked us to change the script (sentence 8 in Table 32, section 6.7.1). That said, the first conclusion to be drawn is that, in all cases, the two speakers spelt out meaningful utterances, even in those cases where their production diverged from the expected one. In fact, each tonal realisation of DE is associated both to a specific grammatical meaning of the lexical item DE (EX.LOC vs. IPFV) and a specific aspectual lexical categorisation of the property item (stative after the EX.LOC copula *de* and non-stative after the IPFV marker *dè*). The confusion of inconsistent tonal readings, between the two speakers and within the repetitions of the same speaker, arose because the scripts created the possibility for different semantic interpretations or were not contextualised enough for the speakers to determine the expected one. At this point, I should conclude that the underspecified spelling of *dey*, even if it is the most commonly used and the most familiar to speakers, undoubtedly creates a semantic ambiguity that cannot be tolerated in the written form of a language. It is therefore necessary to introduce, in line with Faraclas (1985 and 1996), a different spelling for the IPFV low-toned *dè* and the EX.LOC high-toned *dé*.

7.3 The status of the copula *be*

I should now consider a relevant structural difference between the data provided by Faraclas in his 1996 grammar of NigP and the data I collected between 2007 and 2010, intended as a collection of corpus occurrences and meta-linguistic judgments. In the following paragraphs I will outline the difference in the data for the Id/As domain (section 7.3.1) and the attributive domain (section 7.3.2). In section 7.3.3, then, I will draw conclusions about the status of the copula *be* in Western varieties of NigP.

7.3.1 *Be* in the identificational and ascriptive domain

In Faraclas grammar (1996: 48f), the author states that the occurrences in 512 are equivalent and acceptable:

512 a. Dì wuman **bì** sìsta.
DET woman COP nun
'The woman is a nun.'

b. Dì wuman **nà** sìsta.
DET woman COP nun
'The woman is a nun.'

Faraclas collected his corpus of NigP data in the city of Port Harcourt, in the Niger Delta, between 1985 and 1986. Gathered more than 20 years later from Benin and Lagosian speakers, my data shows that sentences like 512a are *not* acceptable today in Lagos and Benin City. In the South-Western variety of NigP under examination here, we find the clear distribution exemplified in 513:

513 a. * Di wuman **be** sista.

b. Di woman **na** sista.

I summarised the syntactic reasons behind the complementary distribution of *be* and *na* in section 7.2. The central claim is that the copular verb *be* is not acceptable in the affirmative present tense/tenseless sentences of the type NP COP NP (while *be* remains perfectly grammatical in the case of personal pronominal subjects, interrogative subject pronouns and verb phrases marked with any TMA markers). In order to explain the mismatch between Faraclas' data and my own, one could look at the geographic distance between Port Harcourt and Lagos (and the shorter distance between Port Harcourt and Benin City), the difference in the ethnic composition of the population of these cities (even if Lagos and Benin City also have diverse ethnic compositions), and the diachronic gap of 20 years, just about long enough for a generation renewal[213].

Beyond the reasons that cause this variation, the synchronic data provide further information. In Chapter 4, I treated identificational and ascriptive copular sentences together because they behave similarly in terms

[213] For a description of the data sample collected and studied by Faraclas, see Faraclas (1996: 5). Some detailed information on a group of speakers can also be found in Faraclas (1987).

of the choice of the copula; in fact, these sentences always alternate between *be* and *na* for syntactic reasons (section 4.2). However, in at least one case, an informant pointed out that *na* is slightly more acceptable in the ascriptive, rather than in the identificational, context. Thus, according to the informant, 514(b) cannot be considered ungrammatical, but still 514(a) would be a better choice. 515(b), on the contrary, is simply ungrammatical and 515(a) is grammatically correct. If 514(b) and 515(b) are compared, the former certainly appears more acceptable than the latter.

514 a. She **be** woman. b. ? She **na** woman.
She COP woman
'She is a woman.'

515 a. She **be** di person. b. * She **na** di person.
She COP DET person
'She is the one.'

What these synchronic data suggest is that *na* is slowly gaining in distribution over *be*; the case in 514-515 suggests that *na* has already entered the domain of copular structure with pronominal subjects (which normally requires *be*) and that it is doing so in the context of ascriptions, which are property-like predications (514).

The context NP COP NP is certainly not the only one where *bì* is accepted as a copula in the Port Harcourt variety. According to Faraclas (1996: 47), "[t]runcated nominals consisting of such items as quantifiers, modifier nouns or demonstratives may […] function as predicates (objects) of *bì* when their excluded constituents are included in the subject nominal":

516 Mà pìkîn **bì** tri.
POSS child COP three
'My children are three (in number).'

517 Mà pìkîn **bì** dat.

POSS child COP that

'My children are those (ones).'

518 Mà pikin **bì** smol.

POSS child COP small

'My children are small (in build or in number).'

As I will show in the next paragraph, the informants did not accept any sentence in 516-518, and none of those structures is attested in the corpus.

7.3.2 *Be* in the attributive (copular) domain

As suggested by the example 518, there is another set of comparative evidence that should be considered as relevant. This time, the data concerns the attributive (copular) domain. Concerning example 518, Faraclas indicates that: "[w]here a truncated nominal copular predicate is headed by a modifier noun derived from a stative verb (such as *smol* [518 here]) it may function either as the object of the copular identity verb *bì* or as the object of the copular location/existence verb *de*". Faraclas (1996: 221-226) discusses also many instances of fully verbal predicative adjectives, not preceded by any copula, such as *Dì mòto bìg* or *Dì sup swit*. Given this, one can retrieve the paradigm for attributive sentences in 519-521, which is valid for the Port Harcourt variety analyzed by Faraclas:

519 Mà pìkîn bì smol. INHERENT

POSS child COP small

'My children are small (in build or in number).'

520 Mà pìkîn de smol. ACCIDENTAL

POSS child COP small

'My children are small (in age).'

521 Mà pìkîn smol o

POSS child be.small INT

?

Faraclas analyses the alternation between *bì* and *de* in 519 and 520 in terms of Stage/Individual level (as I analysed the alternation between *de* and *zero* in 508 and 509, see section 6.5.2). He states: "When this type of deverbal modifier noun occurs as the object of *bì*, it usually denotes an inherent or relatively permanent quality possessed by the referent of the sentential subject. When it is the object of *de*, a deverbal modifier noun normally refers to an ephemeral or relatively temporary quality possessed by the subject." It is not clear how examples like 521 enter in this dichotomy but one can guess 521 to be equivalent to 519 in the Port Harcourt variety.

Summing up, in Faraclas' grammar (1996: 217), 522(a), 522(b) and 522(c) are given as possible (but not equivalent) sentences.

522	a. Mà pot **bì** smol	b. Mà pot **de** smol	c. Mà pot smol
	POSS pot COP small	POSS pot EX.LOC small	POSS pot be.small

Instead, the NigP data under analysis here and the judgments given by informants clearly point to the fact that 522(a) is not a good sentence in the South-Western varieties of NigP. Thus:

523	a. * My pot **be** smol	b. My pot **de** smol	c. My pot smol

7.3.3 The defection of the copula *be* in modern Western varieties of NigP

Examples 513 and 523 highlight the fact that *be* (or *bì*, in Faraclas' spelling) changes radically its distribution when the Port Harcourt and the Western varieties are compared. This loss in distribution in turn favours the emerging copular item *na*. In fact, when the informants I consulted judged as ungrammatical the sentences with copular *be*, they were asked to provide alternatives:

524	a. * My pikin **be** your friend	b. My pikin **na** your friend
525	a. * My pikin **be** student	b. My pikin **na** student

526 a. ? My pikin **be** tree b. My pikin **na** tree

527 a. * My pikin **be** dat b. **Na** my pikin **be** dat
* My pikin <u>na</u> dat

528 a. * My pikin **be** small b. My pikin **small**

In 524 one finds a typical identificational sentences (precisely an equation, section 3.1) and an ascriptive sentence in 525. In both cases, for tenseless or present tense clauses, *na* is the only copula allowed and the informants unanimously marked *be* as ungrammatical. In 526 one finds an attributive copular sentence, semantically speaking. However, cardinal numbers behave noun-like in NigP. In this case informants proved to be less straightforward in their answers, but still a pattern of preferences of *na* over *be* has emerged (see also section 4.2.10). In 527 there is an identificational sentence with a deictic complement. The behaviour of deictics in Id/As sentences has been described in sections 4.2.2 and 4.4.2, and it will be sufficient here to show that the informants adjusted sentence 527 by simply, and consistently, adding the focus introducer *na* before the NP subject. In 528 one finds an attributive sentence with a property copular complement: the informants gave as an alternative the predication without the copula in 528(b).

The defection of *be* is somehow undoubted in the Western varieties with respect to the Port Harcourt variety. Deuber (2005: 128), who studied the Lagos variety of NigP as well, realised the defective behaviour of the copula *be* with respect to Faraclas' grammar and found that: "[t]he construction with *be* [in attributive contexts] does not seem to be well-established."

The extra-linguistic reasons for such variation may be diatopic, diastratic or diachronic. Faraclas was probably aware of such a pattern of variation when he stated (1996: 47): "In different lects of Nigerian Pidgin, there are slight variations in the areas of overlap in function and meaning among *bì*, *de* and *nà*. The following remarks [internal structure of copular sentences] outline the general contours of the patterns of utilization of copular elements that typify mesolectal speech".

Nevertheless, one should still emphasize that *be* remains *the* main copula in Identificational and Ascriptive copular contexts, while it is ruled out in the Attributive ones. As I explained in Chapter 4, *be* is the only copular element that has a verbal status, which can be modified by any TMA markers, polarity items and modal verbs, while *na* is interdicted in all these contexts.

7.4 Prospective research directions

During the writing process of this dissertation I singled out some research issues that I was not able to discuss in detail. In this paragraph, therefore, I will briefly explain these issues in order to provide a list of prospective research directions.

First of all, while writing Chapter 4, I overlooked the distinction between the identificational and the ascriptive sentence types. At a certain point I realised that the differentiation between the two may be relevant to the syntactic choice of the copulas (*be* vs. *na*). In fact, I believe that if the distinction between Identification and Ascription is maintained during the analysis, some further insights on the distribution of the copulas *be* and *na* may be uncovered. For instance, as I said in section 7.3.1, informants indicated that while the copula *be* is the most acceptable choice when there is a personal pronoun subject, still the alternative choice *na* is slightly less ungrammatical in the ascriptive context with respect to the identificational one. This means that *na* is not categorically ruled out in the context of property-like predications with a bare noun as the copular complement, as in 530(b); instead, *na* is categorically ruled out as a copula in the context of identity predications with a definite noun phrase as a complement, as in 529(b).

529 a. She **be** di person
She COP DET person
'She is the one.'

b. * She **na** di person

530 a. She **be** woman

b. ? She **na** woman

She COP woman

'She is a woman.'

I checked this variation in levels of acceptability only with the personal pronoun *she* as a subject (529-530), and I did it accidentally. However, this seems not to work for the third personal plural pronoun *dem* (* *Dem na di students,* * *Dem na students*). I should probably check consistently the personal pronouns *you* and *im*, which independently proved to be more acceptable than other personal pronouns with the copula *na* (section 4.2.1). I should also probably distinguish identificational from ascriptive uses of *be* and *na* in examples 63-71 (section 4.2.1), in order to check both structures for each personal pronoun. I thank Prof. Paola Benincà for this suggestion.

Concerning the issue of tone and other prosodic phenomena in NigP, Faraclas provided an outstanding descriptive work. However, the issue of tone should receive much further attention, and one interesting issue may be the development of the tonal system of NigP in relation to the level of nativisation of the language in individual speakers.

Concerning the presence of the high-toned EX.LOC copula *de* and the low-toned IPFV marker *dè* before property items, it has been assessed that the tonal alternation of DE is the only overt cue of their oscillating aspectual character, especially when this oscillation is not paralleled by a change in transitivity (510-511 in section 7.2.3). Some work needs to be done in order to attest which property items in NigP display this unstable aspectual character, namely which property items can co-occur with both DE. In this respect, our analysis based on the elicited spoken productions of two speakers can only attest that the two verbs *sweet* and *full* allow both stative and non-stative aspectual readings associated to an intransive and transitive syntactic encoding. Of course, this was attested by the observation of the different tonal realisation of DE associated to them. Other property verbs have created some problems, in the sense that the two speakers were not consistent in the tonal reading of the DEs associated to them. For example, one of the speakers (TF) produced all *dey* before the property item *jealous* ("to be.jealous" / "to envy") as high-toned *dé*, as I showed in section 6.7.1 (see

in particular sentences 9-10-11 in Table 36). She spelt out 15 occurrences of H-toned *de*, and this was irrespective of the prosodic context, of the transitivity value of the verb phrase (transitive/instransitive) and the semantic context provided by the script. However, this cannot be taken as evidence of any structural property of the verb *jealous* in NigP since the production of one single speaker is far less than enough to sustain any generalisations, especially because the other speaker behave differently in her readings. In turn, this could be taken of evidence, again, of the semantic flexibility of these PIs in NigP and of the structural deficiency of the underspecified spelling *dey* used in the scripts.

Concerning the alternation between verbal property items occupying the verbal slot and adjectival property items preceded by the copula *de*, I outlined in section 6.4 the syntactic and semantic reasons that underlie the phenomenon of copula insertion (examples 438-439 and 440-441 in section 6.4.3). I believe that this kind of variation could be analysed in Labovian terms. Thus, the interplay and the ranking between the syntactic and semantic factors involved in the alternation between *de* and zero in NigP attributive contexts should be the object of further investigation.

As I showed in Chapter 1, the history of NigP is far from being uncovered. The joint efforts of linguists, historians, anthropologists and archaeologists are needed to achieve valuable results. The issue of the origin of creoles is of undoubted importance because it would enrich the creole languages with a history, which in turn would help build the linguistic identity of their speakers. Together with the historical and linguistic reconstruction, there is an urgent need for orthographic standardisation of NigP. The adoption of a common spelling system, as for example the one provided by Faraclas et al. (1984), would signify a great step. As I said in section 2.1.2, for practical reasons I decided not to adopt Faraclas et al.'s system in this work and instead used an English-like spelling system. However, the analysis of the tonal realisation of DE (sections 5.6 and 6.7) indicates the fact that at least the tonal differentiation between EX.LOC *dé* and IPFV *dè* should be adopted in any works concerned with the Nigerian

Pidgin language.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN NIGERIA

This questionnaire is part of a research project on the Nigerian socio-linguistic situation (focused on varieties of Nigerian English) commissioned by the Semiotics Department of the University of Bologna. The data will be treated confidentially and used for research purposes only. Please read carefully, fill in the whole questionnaire and write in capital letters.
Any personal comments and contributions are very welcome. Good work.

Place: _____ Date: _____ 2007

1. **What is your <u>mother tongue</u>**? First Language(s) you spoke as a child at home:

_____

In which language were you taught in Primary School? _____

Please, give a list of <u>all the languages you can speak</u> apart from your first language. Indicate in brackets if you have a good knowledge (G) or only some knowledge (S):

_____

_____

_____

If Pidgin English is <u>not</u> among your first languages, at <u>what age</u> did you first come into contact with Pidgin? Briefly explain how:

_____

Where did you use to speak Pidgin <u>at first</u>? (You can tick more than one option)

- o It was a language spoken also at <u>home</u>
  - If so, were there any particular occasions? _____
  - If so, did you speak it only with a particular member (or members) of your family? _____
- o I used it mostly with my <u>brothers and sisters</u>
- o Just with my <u>friends</u> outside the home
- o At <u>school</u>
- o Mostly in <u>particular places</u> such as market or bus stations or _____
- o At <u>church</u>
- o Any other place or occasion: _____

2. **Referring to your <u>present situation</u>, which language do you use MOST?** _____

<u>At home</u>: which is the language used at home?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o Vernacular: _____

With your sons and daughters (if you have any)?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o Vernacular: _____

Please, indicate the reason: _____

At work: in your professional environment and with your colleagues?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o Vernacular: _____

When you think alone, yourself, wondering about what you are going to do or what you've done in the past, or what you wish for your future, which language do you use? Try to think a little before giving the answer:

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o Vernacular: _____

When you dream, at night, which language do you dream in?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o Vernacular: _____

When you have to say something very very important, which language do you choose in order to feel more comfortable?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o Vernacular: _____

Are you satisfied by the role and the presence of African vernacular in your everyday life? o Yes o No

If NO, how do you think the situation could be changed?

- o Their usage should be increased, at least concerning the major ones
- o Their usage should be ceased and replaced by a capillary diffusion of English
- o Any other options or comments: _____

3. Please, evaluate your knowledge of Pidgin:

o Excellent o Good o Mediocre o Rudimentary

Do you think that you speak Pidgin differently, compared to any other Nigerian?
o Yes o No

If YES, how different? _____

If YES, do you think a correct accent or variety of Pidgin exists in Nigeria? _____

Do you like to speak or hear Pidgin? o Yes o No

Do you think Pidgin should be <u>more widely used</u> in Nigeria, apart from informal every day conversations? o Yes o No

<u>If YES</u>, why? (You can tick two answers)

o It is a language that people use to express themselves more directly and satisfactorily
o It is a Nigerian language
o It is an entertaining and pleasing language
o It is the only language that everybody can speak and understand in Nigeria
o Any other reason: _____

_____

<u>If NO</u>, why? (You can tick two answers)

o Only illiterates speak it and this would reveal we are not able to speak proper English
o You cannot formulate a serious discourse using Pidgin
o It is not a language or at least it is a very poor one
o Nobody is going to recognise it as a language outside of Nigeria
o Any other reason: _____

_____

<u>If</u> you answered <u>YES</u> (Pidgin should be more widely used), can you please <u>give examples</u> of how the usage of Nigerian Pidgin English could spread out?
(You can tick two options)

o For <u>teaching</u> purposes, at least in primary school
o For <u>cultural</u> purposes: promotion of books and magazines written in pidgin
o As an <u>official</u> and recognized <u>lingua franca</u> in Nigeria: official documents, newspapers, street signs and public banners…
o For <u>entertainment</u> purposes: comedy, comic strips, tv-shows, radio dramas, theatre…
o Any other option or comments: _____

_____

So, finally, what do you think about Pidgin?

o It is just a corrupted form of English
o It is by now an autonomous and new language
o It comes from English but it does have its own grammatical rules

Any other comment about Pidgin English: _____

_____

_____

Please, now evaluate your knowledge of English:

o Excellent o Good o Moderate o Rudimentary

PERSONAL DATA: INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH CONTRIBUTORS

1. Surname: _____ Name: _____

   o Tick if you do <u>not</u> want your name to appear in the final research result

2. Sex: o M o F Age: _____

3. Current Occupation: _____

   Highest educational qualification: _____

   Currently enrolled for higher studies? _____

4. Ethnic affiliation: _____

5. Place of birth: _____ Place where you grew up (if different): _____

   First Language of your <u>mother</u>: _____

   First Language of your <u>father</u>: _____

   Please, indicate if you lived abroad for some time, and which period of your life:

   _____

6. Indicate a telephone number and/or an e-mail address <u>if you agree</u> to be contacted for further discussion and clarification:

   Tel: _____

   E-mail: _____

Signed: _____

Thank you so much for your participation!

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN ITALY

This questionnaire is part of a research project on the Nigerian socio-linguistic situation (focused on varieties of Nigerian Pidgin) commissioned by the Linguistic Department of the University of Padova. The data will be treated confidentially and used for research purposes only. Please read carefully and fill in the whole questionnaire.
Any personal comments and contributions are very welcome. Good work.

Place: Padova Date: __/__/2012

1. **What is your <u>mother tongue</u>**? First Language(s) you spoke as a child at home:

_____

In which language were you taught in Primary School? _____

Please, give a list of <u>all the languages you can speak</u> apart from your first language. Indicate in brackets if you have a good knowledge (G) or only some knowledge (S):

_____

_____

_____

If Pidgin English is <u>not</u> among your first languages, at <u>what age</u> did you first come into contact with Pidgin? Briefly explain how:

_____

_____

_____

2. **Referring to your present situation, which language do you use MOST?** _____

Which language do (or did) you use with your <u>mother</u>?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____

Which language do (or did) you use with your <u>father</u>?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____

Which language do you use with your siblings?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____
- o Italian

Which language do you use with your husband?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____
- o Italian

Which language do you use with your son/daughter (1)?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____
- o Italian:

Which language do you use with your son/daughter (2)?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____
- o Italian:

Which language do you use with your son/daughter (3)?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____
- o Italian:

Which language do you use at work?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____
- o Italian:

Which language makes you feel more comfortable?

- o English
- o Pidgin
- o African language: _____
- o Italian:

Do you ever speak Pidgin since when you are in Italy? o Yes o No, rarely

If YES, in which occasions?

o At home, with my family
o When I am at the phone with compatriots who are in Nigeria
o When I meet my friends who are not from my same ethnic group
o When I meet my Nigerian friends, even those who can speak my same African vernacular
o It comes to me naturally to speak it with anybody, just at any moment I feel like to

3. Please, indicate your level of ability in the following languages in a scale from 1 to 5.

1 = very little ability to 5 = very good ability

English	1	2	3	4	5
Pidgin	1	2	3	4	5
African language (1) _____	1	2	3	4	5
African language (2) _____	1	2	3	4	5
African language (3) _____	1	2	3	4	5
Italian	1	2	3	4	5

PERSONAL DATA: INFORMATION SHEET FOR RESEARCH CONTRIBUTORS

1. Surname: _____ Name: _____

   o Tick if you do <u>not</u> want your name to appear in the final research result

2. Sex: o M o F Age: _____

3. Current Occupation: _____

   Educational qualification: _____

4. Ethnic affiliation: _____

5. Place of birth: _____ Place where you grew up (if different): _____

   First Language of your <u>mother</u>: _____

   First Language of your <u>father</u>: _____

   In which year did you arrive in Italy? _____

Signed: _____

Thank you so much for your participation!

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE WITH GRAMMATICALITY JUDGEMENTS

Please indicate if the sentences are **A**cceptable (A), **D**ubious (D) or **W**rong (W):

My sister na doctor
Na doctor be my sister
Na doctor na im be my sister
Na my sister be doctor
Na my sister na im be doctor

Femi na di oga
Di oga na Femi

Na di oga be Femi
Na di oga na im be Femi
Na Femi be di oga
Na Femi na im be di oga

Dem be tifs
Na tiefs be dem
Na tiefs na im be dem
Na dem be tiefs
Na dem na im be tiefs

Dem be di tiefs
Di tiefs na dem
Na dem be di tiefs
Na dem na im be di tiefs
Na di tiefs be dem
Na di tiefs na im be dem

Dat one na problem
Na problem be dat one
Na problem na im be dat one
Na dat one be problem
Na dat one na im be problem

Dat one na Wisdom

Wisdom na dat one
Na Wisdom be dat one
Na Wisdom na im be dat one
Na dat one be Wisdom
Na dat one na im be wisdom

Hygiene na important ting
One important ting na hygiene

Na important ting be hygiene
Na important ting na im be hygiene
Na one important ting be hygiene
Na one important ting na im be hygiene

Im be di man wey kill Kola
Di man wey kill Kola na im

Na di man wey kill Kola be am
Na di man wey kill Kola na im be am
Na im be di man wey kill Kola
Na im na im be di man wey kill Kola

Ayodeji na di man wey kill Kola
Di man wey kill Kola na Ayodeji

Na Ayodeji be di man wey kill Kola
Na Ayodeji na im be di man wey kill Kola
Na di man wey kill Kola be Ayodeji
Na di man wey kill Kola na im be Ayodeji

Sunday na my cousin
My cousin na Sunday

Na my cousin be Sunday
Na my cousin na im be Sunday
Na Sunday be my cousin
Na Sunday na im be my cousin

People na fool
Na fool na im be people
Na fool be people

People dem be fool
People dem na fool

Na happy di guy happy o.

Di guy wrong	Di guy dey wrong
Di guy don wrong	Di guy don dey wrong
Di guy gò wrong	Di guy gò dey wrong

I wrong	I dey wrong
You wrong	You dey wrong
E/Im wrong	E/Im dey wrong
Una wrong	Una dey wrong
We wrong	We dey wrong
Dem wrong	Dem dey wrong

Do you feel any difference between:
My moni gò smol
My moni gò dey smol

Jonathan. Jonathan Gullible. I dey happy to meet you.
Jonathan. Jonathan Gullible. I happy to meet you.

Appendix 4: LIST OF SENTENCES FOR THE PROSODIC EXPERIMENT (SLIDES ARE IN APPENDIX C-CD)

My son don study di composition of di marketing industry for computer games well well.
E **gò dey** easy for **am dey** know wetin di people **don dey** plan. Marketing industry **dey** very very important.

Di musicians dem **dey** fine. **Dem dey** Ibadan. Dem take two days **dey** prepare for show.
Di concert **dey** bam. At one point, di crowd just kom **begin dey** happy and shout.
But, after di show, Baba Fryo and Daddy Showkey **kom dey** quarrel. Baba Fryo **too dey** jealous. Yes now! **E dey** jealous am. **Wahalla dey** o.

Your brothers dem **dey** Lagos now. I gò meet dem for Ikeja tomorrow. We gò discuss whether dem don do di project finish for America. Really, e good say **dem dey** here.
And wetin **dey** sweet me pass, na to **dey** follow dem go eat amala for bukka!

Dem tell me say Daddy Showkey **dey** vex now. Tomorrow in Lagos Baba Fryo gò **dey** but Daddy Showkey no gò **dey**. Na im be di ting.

Adebayo dey happy because you gò come here. E take big **money dey** buy present for you.
Di guy don **dey** empty my purse! Man, na true o. My wallet **bin dey** full. E don **dey** empty now!
By the way, you go take car

You dey craze? You say dis **work dey** too much? Dem don do di big job finish. Now na you **dey** in charge. You for just add some detail. E go **dey** easy.

I just comot for Lagos now now. I **dey** very impressed, because dem don open new stores. New Metro **dey** good. Mega Plaza **dey** worse.
E **dey dey** hard before when any big store **no dey**. People suppose **dey** happy now.

Listen, e **dey** funny. E get two lines. Di line **wey dey** for right na where people **dey** line up to pay tax, di one wey **dey** for left na where people **dey** line up to collect di tax money.
You gò fit guess di line wey **dey** popular pass… Everi month, one line **dey** short o! And di other one **dey** long pass. But dis tin gò change now: our money no gò full their tank again o as dem bin **dey** full am

Laugh **dey** nearly kill me o, any time **she dey** follow me talk anything. Now, e be like say she **dey** vex. But… I no wan vex with her. She **dey** sweet o. But she **dey** too