Scaling language competition in a small island state: Graphic verbs in Seychellois Creole and English

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Abstract: One of the sensitive aspects of a small country is the predicament of its language. Seychellois Creole, one of that country`s three official languages and the native language of its Creole population, is asserting its linguistic identity against the globally-established English and French, the other two official languages of the country. How resilient is Seychellois Creole in this language triangle? Are the challenges it faces related to the small number of speakers, citizens of the small country? To what extent, and in what particular way, does Seychellois Creole vulnerable position, as a small language neighboured by two international languages, affect its development? These questions are approached in this paper by means of the comparative analysis of some linguistic parameters of Seychellois Creole and English. Research has been carried out with a group of English and Seychellois Creole verbs conceptualizing the process of graphic representation. The paper focuses on the capacity of the two contrasted languages for concept lexicalisation, patterns of semantic development and syntactic shifting.

Keywords: creole, figurative meaning, graphic verbs, language coexistence, language resilience, lexicalisation, semantic extension, Seychelles, small state, syntactic shifting.

Introduction

The language situation is a significant aspect of any country`s socio-cultural identity. In the case of Seychelles, a small archipelago state with three national languages, the current language balance is a sensitive and controversial topic, characterised by (Fleischmann 2008, p. 50) as a kind of paradox,

> Here, Creole is the mother tongue of the vast majority of the population although trade, administration, and education are preliminary conducted in English.

al languages are not equal in their linguistic weight. Seychellois Creole (SC), a young language which came to existence relatively recently [according to (Fleischmann 2008, p. 38) around the time of colonization of the Seychelles in 1770, as a continuation of either Mauritian or Rodriguez Creoles, having taken shape earlier in the first half of the 18th century], co-exists with English and French, long established global languages. Conditions and effects of this small and global languages adjacency can be better understood through Eriksen`s (2016, p.132) "clashing scales" concept, whereby it is not so much the cultural but scale related differences which more accurately describe the contemporary "overheated" world (p. 132). Such disparity becomes even more obvious when embedded in the context of 'islandness', with its associated boundedness, smallness, isolation and fragmentation (Baldacchino, 2018). In this vein, due to

the above factors, language and other types of influences in small island units are "amplified through compression" (ibid, p. xxx), that is, are more enhanced than similar processes in larger, mainland, locations. As Baldacchino (2018) points out, islands and small states are not just "scaled down versions of larger continental places" (ibid). To continue, "islandness is far more nuanced than its strictly materialist renditions may suggest" (ibid). In terms of languages in Seychelles, language interrelations are too intricate and complicated to be captured by usual scales of bigness and smallness, because a number of factors – intrinsic linguistic, as well as extrinsic socio-cultural and geographic – come into play. So, how resilient is SC in asserting its language identity over and against neighbouring English and French?

This paper sets out to explore some of the effects of SC and English adjacency as national languages of Seychelles, focusing on the semantic dimension of their coexistence. The first section contextualises the problem addressed, providing some information on the current status of SC and English in Seychelles as well as a brief linguistic fact file on SC. It also defines the research material, methodology and underpinning theoretical concepts of the study. Next, it presents the results of the comparative analysis of some linguistic parameters of SC and English: their capacity for concept lexicalisation, semantic and syntactic development of meaning expressed by a group of verbs. The main observations of the undertaken analysis are summarised in the concluding section of the paper.

Context

Current status of Seychellois Creole and English in Seychelles

There are three official languages in the Republic of Seychelles, a small state of around 90,000 citizens, located in the Indian Ocean, and which secured its independence from the United Kingdom in 1976: Seychellois Creole (Kreol Seselwa), English and French (Constitution of Seychelles, Chapter 1(4), Clauses 1 & 2). Since the Seychelles islands were first colonised by France in the 18th century, French has served as the basis for the development of SC. Genetic relatedness of SC to French survived the British period of colonization of almost 170 years and can be traced in the majority of SC vocabulary nowadays. This fact could be explained by the strong connection during British rule with Mauritius, run by the French. However, though taught in schools as a separate subject, French is used less frequently than English and SC (Fleischmann 2008, p. 31).

SC, spoken by 99% of the population at home and in informal settings, is considered to be the common language or the mother tongue in Seychelles (Purvis, 2004). Alongside English and French, SC is used for the media, official speeches, and in education. It is the only language used at early childcare centres and at primary schools. It is taught as a separate subject at higher levels and is usually used as a medium of instruction for physical education, craft and religion. The Christian Bible was translated into SC in 2016 (Orsander, 2016).

English in Seychelles is used as language of official administration, commercial correspondence and as a medium of instruction at school for the majority of subjects from year three onwards (Fleischmann, p.30). English is also the language of instruction in post-secondary and higher education sectors. To illustrate, all programmes at Seychelles National University (2019), both local and licensed ones, are offered in English. Major national newspapers publish predominantly in English (http://www.nation.sc/); and there is an extensive presence of English on local radio and TV broadcasting (https://sbc.sc/).

SC developed in the 17th-18th centuries during European colonisation of the Seychelles (Fleischmann 2008, p. 23). Typologically, it is a French based Creole, with 90% of words derived from French (Choppy, 2013, p. 32). Among other mentioned lexifiers are English, Malagasy, Hindi, and Swahili (ibid.). For the most of its history, SC was unwritten and transmitted orally. The process of its graphisation and standardisation took place progressively in the second part of the 20th century and is associated with the appearance of the first Creole Grammars (Bollée, 1977; Corne, 1969).

Currently, SC has a phonemic orthography, which represents the sounds that are actually used in the language (Fleischmann, 2008, p. 62). The grammatical system of SC is outlined in a number of sources (Bollée, 1977; Corne, 1969), including the SC version: *Gramer Kreol Seselwa* 'Grammar of Seychellois Creole' (Choppy, 2013), providing information on SC phonology, morphology, lexicology, semantics, syntax and punctuation. SC lexical corpus is represented in a trilingual (Creole, English, French) dictionary (Gillieaux, 2017) and a monolingual dictionary of SC is under compilation (Lexical corpus for Diksyoner Monoleng Kreol Seselwa 2019). The development of SC is monitored and regulated by the Creole Institute of Seychelles (https://www.seychelles.fr/lenstiti-kreol%20.php); and its advancement and promotion is on the agenda of the Creole Language and Culture Research Institute at the University of Seychelles (https://www.unisey.ac.sc/). There is a growing amount of fiction and poetry written in SC (Dick, 2016; Dogley, 1994; Esparon, 2006; Gabriel, 1996; Grandcourt, 2001; Melanie, 2018; Lespoir, 2003; Savy, 2007 among others), as well as a number of associations, forums and events to promote creative approaches to this language (http://www.pfsr.org/national-highlights/bling-bling-poetry-association-officially-launched/; http://www.nacseychelles.sc/3rd-annual-poetry-festival-seychelles/). Based on the above, using Haugen`s (1996) key steps in the process of language standardisation, SC has passed the stage of selection and codification in dictionaries and grammars, and has gone through some important stages of elaboration and acceptance: this includes its inauguration as a national language in 1981 and its introduction as the medium of instruction at schools in 1982. Overall, thanks to its current social status, standard grammar and writing system, and its evolution in fiction, poetry and other creative forms of verbal expression, SC can be considered as a language in its own right, serving the needs of a variety of socio-cultural contexts in Seychelles.

Further elaboration of SC, its prestige and functional variation greatly depend on its relationship with other languages in the country, in particular with such a global language as English. The successful analysis of this relationship is not based on simply the matters of scale; it involves the juxtaposition of a number of intrinsic linguistic and extrinsic socio-cultural factors. From the perspective of scale studies, "… *to scale* is not simply to assume or assert 'bigness' or 'smallness' by way of a ready-made calculus" (Summerson Carr & Lempert, 2016, p. 3). The process involves an analysis of social circumstances, dynamics and consequences of scale-making, as scales applied in different social domains to categorise or interpret the world are not given, but are discursively constructed. Mediated socially and linguistically, scales may channel perceptions prompting attitudes and camouflaging certain factors capable of triggering alternative categorisation. A more useful approach seems to be based on operating with "relative degrees of elevation or centrality" derived from comparison of potentially scalable entities and qualities (ibid.). Obviously, SC`s relatively short period of existence, small number of speakers, limited vocabulary, and so on, place it within the category of 'smallness', with a number of implications arising out of its competition with a 'major' global language with an extended history of function, global distribution, wide prestige and a firmly established geopolitical status. However, to what extent and in what way is the 'smallness' of SC an issue for its development? Is the influence of an adjacent global language pervasive or can some resistance be traced? These questions are approached in this paper with a comparative analysis

of syntactic semantics. With a group of SC and English verbs, three semantic processes are examined: how the verbs lexicalise a certain concept; how the meaning is further unfolded in the syntactic structures; and how such meaning develops.

Graphic Verbs

The verbs under study in the present paper belong to the thematic group of graphic representation. As defined by the Oxford Dictionary, the term 'graphic' originates from Greek *graphē* meaning 'writing, drawing' (https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/graphic) and is used relating to various ways of creating visual images, including writing, drawing, engraving and carving. Graphic Verbs (GVs) in this paper are verbs denoting controlled physical actions resulting in a graphic image. E.g.: (English (Eng.)) *to write, to draw, to paint, to carve, to engrave, to ink, to illustrate, to autograph, to touch-type, to scrawl, to sign; to doodle, etc.*; (SC) *antour-e* 'to encircle', *delinyen* 'to mark out', *desin-en* 'to draw', *drafte* 'to draft', *ekrir* 'to write', *grifonn-en* 'to scrawl', *kaligrafye* 'to calligraph', *list-e* 'to list', *kos-e* 'to tick off', *korize-e* 'to correct', *minit-e* 'to write minutes', *ponktye* 'to punctuate', *siny-en* 'to sign', *stenografye* 'to take down in short hand', and so on.

The choice of the above verb group for comparative analysis is motivated by the fact that the lexemes in question denote a cross-cultural concept: in all cultures writing and drawing have been the powerful instruments to capture and store knowledge and experiences, to communicate through time and across space. Goody and Watt (1963) describe writing as a "technology of intellect": while oral societies are organised around speaking and listening, writing societies promote literacy, a pre-condition of critical understanding of the nation`s authenticity (Goody and Watt, 1963, p. 344). The telling example is the case of Seychelles, where graphisation of SC and the adoption of a phonemic orthography is closely associated with the country`s distancing from its colonial past and the sense of independence and national identity (Fleischmann, 2008, p. 63).

Research techniques

The present research has been carried out with the two sets of data: lexicographic samples of SC and English were used to provide GVs definitions and to analyse how the concept of graphic representation is lexicalised in both languages; while textual samples were used to study how the particular meaning instantiations unfold syntactically and develop further through their use.

Lexicographic samples of GVs in contrasted languages comprise, respectively, 147 English lexemes sourced from two monolingual English dictionaries (Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners; Merriam-Webster`s Dictionary) and 65 SC lexemes sampled from a trilingual dictionary (Gillieaux, 2017) and a lexical corpus for monolingual SC dictionary (Lexical corpus for Diksyoner Monoleng Kreol Seselwa, 2019). Textual examples for SC were derived from the above lexicographic resources, fiction sources (Dick, 2016; Dogley, 1994; Gabriel, 1996; Grandcourt, 2001) as well as from the input of SC-speaking respondents. Textual examples for English were derived from the above-mentioned English dictionaries and the British National Corpus.

The analysis has been undertaken in the framework of argument semantics: a branch of linguistics approaching the meaning of a verb with reference to its argument-taking nature (Dowty, 1986, 1991; Fillmore, 1968; Levin, 1993; Tesnière, 1959). In this line of linguistic research, verbs have central position in the lexicon due to their semantic and syntactic properties. Semantically, a verbal lexeme not only names a certain action, but encodes a number of action participants and circumstances, indicating who and what is engaged in the

event and what characteristics or principles apply for the action to be carried out. Hence, the same concept can be lexicalised from a number of perspectives: compare, e.g., the verbs *to write* and *to scribble*, both referring to the process of graphic representation, but presenting this process differently, the latter lexeme foregrounding the manner in which the action is carried out. Information about the event denoted by the verb is summarised in its definition as provided in the dictionary entry. Different action participants are classified into semantic sets known as roles, reflecting the function of the entity in the event. Thus, the semantic role of Agent refers to the entity which produces action; while that of Object refers to the entity which undergoes action, and so on. When used in a sentence, the verb becomes the syntactic centre as it opens slots for semantic arguments – the above mentioned event participants incorporated in the meaning of the verb – which are filled in by the noun phrases. You can say, e.g., that *a letter* or *an essay* (instantiating the Object) was written by *a student* or by *your friend* (instantiating the Agent). The meaning of the verb transforms in context, acquiring new shades and nuances, and transferring to new semantic dimensions of metaphoric use, when you can say, e.g., that *your destiny* (something abstract and impalpable and, therefore, beyond writing) has been written in the stars.

Lexicalisation of the concept of graphic representation in English and Seychellois Creole

Real events of graphic representation can be schematically outlined as a situation in which a Doer (someone who writes, draws, engraves, etc.) creates a Graphic Image (something written, drawn engraved, etc.) on a Surface (a canvas, a sheet of paper, a wall, etc.) with an Instrument (pen, brush, knife, etc.). The above prototypical scenario of the graphic action, as part of our knowledge about the world, is differently captured and incorporated in a number of words that we use to denote it. To be more precise, the nominative focus can shift from the instrument of image creation (a typing device in *to type*) to the manner of such action ('hasty' and 'careless' in *to scribble*). However, regardless of the foregrounded component, the graphic event is perceived in its wholeness, the speaker`s general knowledge allowing for the other implicit components being inferred in course of interpretation.

The data analysis has revealed some similarities and distinctions in how the process of graphic representation is conceptualised in English and SC. In both languages graphic actions are encoded in a variety of ways by GVs foregrounding different aspects of the denoted event. According to the foregrounded semantic component, the following subgroups of GVs can be identified in the contrasted languages.

Foregrounding the nature of the graphic product

In both languages, graphic actions are conceptualised as the two types of representation: symbolic and iconic, based on the nature of their product. Accordingly, there are GVs of writing (the resulting product being a symbolic sign - a letter, a word, a sign of punctuation, a diacritic sign, etc.), e.g.: (Eng.) *to autograph, to touch-type, to scrawl, to sign, to doodle, to hyphen*, etc.; (SC) *ekrir* 'to write', *grifonn-en* 'to scrawl', *kaligrafye* 'to calligraph', *list-e* 'to list', *kos-e* 'to tick off'; and GVs of painting or drawing (the graphic product being of iconic nature, imitating or resembling the image represented), e.g.: (Eng.) *to draw, to paint, to illustrate;* (SC) *desin-en* 'to draw, to illustrate', *barbouye* 'to daub, to scribble, to scrawl', *penn* 'to paint', *pentir-e* 'to scrawl, to scribble'.

Foregrounding the manner of graphic act realisation

Contrasted languages have GVs which connote specific characteristics of the way in which the graphic act is carried out. This includes:

careless, hasty way of writing or drawing resulting in illegible, messy text or picture as a product, e.g.: (Eng.) *to scrawl - to write or draw awkwardly, hastily, or carelessly;* (SC) *grifonn-en - reye, ekrir anpaye* 'to scrawl, to write in an entangled way', *barbouy-e - mal penn en sirfas oubyen en desen* 'to paint a picture or drawing in a messy way';
stylised (elaborate or standardised) way of writing, e.g.: (Eng.) *to calligraph - to produce or reproduce in a calligraphic (artistic, stylised, or elegant handwriting) style*; (SC) *kaligrafye - fer kaligrafi (lar fer zoli lekritir avek bann let ki'n formen dan en fason dekoratif oubyen elegan)* 'to do calligraphy (the art of writing beautiful letters produced in a decorative or elegant way)', *ortografye - ekri dapre lareg lortograf* 'to write according to the rules of orthography'.

Foregrounding the instrument of the graphic act

A number of GVs in English and SC encode information regarding the tool or means with which the graphic object is produced, e.g.: (Eng.) *to chalk - to write or draw with chalk*; (SC) *tip-e - ekrir an servan en konpiter oubyen masin tipe* 'to write with the help of the computer or typing machine'.

Foregrounding the surface on which the graphic image is produced

Both languages have GVs which denote cutting or carving signs on a hard surface, e.g.: (Eng.) *to engrave – to form by incision (as on wood or metal)*; (SC) *grav-e - fouy bann tras pour fer desen, let lo en sirfas dir tel ki dibwa, metal –* 'to cut the lines for the drawing or letters on the hard surfaces such as wood, metal, etc.'.

Foregrounding the stage of action

GVs in both languages encode the particular phase of the graphic act, including:

initial, preliminary phase, e.g.: (Eng.) *to sketch - to make a sketch, rough draft, or outline of*; (SC) *drafte - fer, ekrir en draft* 'to do, to write a draft';

repetition of the action, e.g.: (Eng.) *to redraft –* to draft something again; (SC) *reekrir - ekrir ankor enn fwa* 'to write once again'.

Foregrounding a graphic act as a sub-event

Both English and SC GVs denote actions in which writing is included as an associated action, e.g.: (Eng.) *to subscribe - to pledge (a gift or contribution) by writing one's name with the amount*; (SC) *anrezistre - enskri, met non lo lalis ouswa rezis* 'to register, to put the name in the list or register'.

Though sharing some patterns of graphic act nomination, English and SC also demonstrate a number of differences in this area. This can be illustrated with the subgroup of technology linked GVs, that is GVs which encode graphic acts produced with the help of some recently devised means (e.g. photocopier, computer, mobile phone, etc.) or those graphic acts which involve sophisticated technological processes (e.g. *to etch - to produce (something, such as a pattern or design) on a hard material by eating into the material's surface (as by acid or laser beam)*). To begin with, though in SC there are a number of technology linked GVs, e.g.: *tip-e* 'to type', *skàn* 'to scan', *teks* 'to text', *imel* 'to e-mail', *fotokopye* 'to photocopy',

fotografye 'to photograph', there are substantial lexical gaps in naming certain graphic processes, reflected in such English GVs as, e.g., *to lithograph*, *to etch*, *to stencil*, *to photoengrave.*

Another point of difference is that nomination of technology linked graphic acts in English is more fine-grained, meaning that the same event can be represented by a number of GVs, each focusing on different aspects of the denoted action. To illustrate, there are a number of English GVs which denote writing with a keyboard or touchscreen: e.g. *to type, to key, to rekey, to touch-type*, *to text, to keyboard,* etc. The SC corpus reveals only two verbs with the similar meaning: *tip-e* 'to type' - *ekrir an servan en konpiter oubyen masin tipe* 'to write with the help of computer or typing machine' and *teks* 'to text' - *anvoy mesaz par telefonn mobil* 'to send a message via mobile phone'. It is worth mentioning that some SC technology linked GVs are not included in the dictionary or lexicographic corpus, though they are currently used by SC speakers. In particular, though the noun *imel* 'e-mail' - *korespondans elektronik par enternet* 'electronic correspondence via the internet' is registered in the SC lexicographic corpus, there is no entry in this resource for the related verb. However, the respondents` input includes examples of this lexeme being used as a verb: (1) *Imel mwan bann detay* 'E-mail me the details'.

To sum up, though SC has a verbal resource to present graphic acts from a number of perspectives or with a different degree of descriptivity (see 2.1-2.6), it proves to be limited in some domains, in particular, in nominating processes in constantly evolving area of technological development. Linguistically, the advantage of English lies in its more expansive vocabulary and higher degree of synonymy. However, viewed through the lens of scale studies, the above discrepancies between SC and English can be accounted for not only by the factors contributing to the smallness of the former and the global nature of the latter. With the relatively short period of SC`s existence and with its lexicographic exercises still in progress on the one hand, and English being pervasively present in the majority of contexts as a global language of technology, economy and the Internet on the other hand, there is a higher probability of borrowing and assimilating from a bigger language than developing the vocabulary from the internal resources of the smaller one.

Semantic dynamics of English and Seychellois Creole graphic verbs

The meaning of the words is never fixed; it develops under the influence of a number of factors, including contextual modulation, socio-based variation or knowledge development in general. As a result, the meaning of words can be extended at the expense of additionally attached meaning components or through figurative use which transcend their initial area of application. Observing the use of GVs in everyday speech makes it possible to trace some patterns of their semantic development; that is, to see new components of meaning, different from those defined by the dictionary, or to see them used to denote actions from other domains, distinct from the domain of graphic representation.

Analysis of textual examples of SC and English GVs has revealed both features of semantic parallelism and those of semantic distinction for their secondary derived meanings. Interestingly, in a number of cases, the derived meanings observed in the SC GVs are not registered in their dictionary entries. Thus, the verb *ponktye* 'punctuate' is defined in the SC corpus as *met siny ponktyasyon* 'to put punctuation marks'. However, research data includes examples where this verb is used in a different meaning: (2) *I fer sir pou pran en moman silans avan I delivre son pwen pou ponktye lenportans son mesaz* 'He has made sure to take a moment of silence before making his point, to punctuate the importance of his message'. The meaning

of SC GV *ponktye* observed in example (2) is similar to the meaning registered for its English counterpart *to punctuate*: 'to give emphasis or force to; emphasize': (3) *The meeting on Monday punctuates Mr. Khalilzad's latest diplomatic whirlwind in the region to line up support for substantive talks.* Another example is SC GV *reekri* 'to rewrite' which is defined as *ekrir ankor enn fwa* 'to write one more time'. This direct meaning can be traced in the following example: (4) *Fodre reekrir sa teks, akoz I annan tro bokou fot dan premye draft* 'You have to re-write this text as there are too many mistakes in the first draft'. Nevertheless, the meaning this GV manifests in use is not limited to the meaning outlined in its definition. Another example illustrates the above verb in its transferred meaning: (5) *Listwar pe ganny reekrir an se monman dan lemonn* 'History is being rewritten at this moment in the world'. In sentence (5), the word *reekri* parallels one of the meanings of its English counterpart *to re-write - to try to change the way that people think about an event in the past, often in a way that is not honest or correct,* revealed in the example to follow: (6) *She accused the Secretary of State of trying to rewrite history.*

Thus, similarity of derived meaning for SC and English GVs points to the influence of the latter. On the other hand, alongside patterns of influence, examples of semantic derivation of SC GVs include cases illustrating a way of development distinct from English, e.g.: (7) *La i pe al tip son lemosyon. –* (literally) 'There she/he goes typing her/his emotions', meaning that someone cannot communicate their emotions verbally. Though sharing with its English counterpart *to type* the direct meaning of writing with the help of the keyboard, SC GV *tip-e* is distinct from it in its figurative meaning illustrated by example (7). Another example demonstrates a similar characteristic for the SC GV *mark-e - fer en mark, les en tras ekri lo en keksoz* 'to make a mark, something written in an object': (8) *Sa fiy in fini mark ou non dan son liv, la bliye la, in fini pou ou.* 'This girl has already marked your name in her book, you can forget it, you're done'. According to the informant`s commentary, the meaning of (8) is that the girl has trapped the boy in a relationship for life.

Another difference concerns the extension of meaning of GV in SC, e.g: (9) *Sa artis i fer grifonnaz avan I konmans so desen.* 'This artist makes sketches before he begins the drawing.' In example (9) the noun *grifonnaz* 'scribble, doodle' related to the verb *grifonnen* 'to scribble, to doodle' - *reye, ekrir anpaye* 'to scribble, to write in an entangled way'- reveals the component 'preliminary, as part of preparation', the negative connotation 'aimlessly' typical for the English counterparts being cancelled.

Overall, the examples (2-5) above illustrate how the semantic development of SC GVs is influenced to some extent by their English counterparts, whose extended and transferred meanings, registered in the dictionary, are projected onto SC lexemes in everyday parlance, even though such meanings are not assigned to them in their dictionary entries. With English being pervasively available in film, mass media and the Internet, English patterns of use for certain lexemes are borrowed for SC lexemes, blocking the alternative development of their meaning. However, in a number of more culturally specific domains, such as those related to person`s feelings or emotions (examples (6-9)), semantic development of SC GVs follows its own authentic path, distinct from that of English.

Syntactic development of SC and English graphic verbs

The semantic formula of GVs described in their lexicographic entry is differently instantiated in the course of a verb`s syntactic development: when the verb is used in the sentence, its semantic arguments are expressed by particular words, thus turning an abstract action into a concrete act of doing, referring to a concrete situation in reality. Interestingly, not

all participants of the graphic act find their manifestation in the sentence: implicit components have to be inferred from those presented explicitly. For example, in (9) above, there is no mentioning of the tool with which the sketches are done (a pen or a brush, etc.). However, as such a tool is an inherent participant of the graphic act, its absence in the sentence does not hinder its interpretation.

When some of the semantic arguments do not surface, their positions are taken by other action participants. Comparative analysis of such syntactic shifting in SC and English has revealed a number of distinctions. In particular, a certain semantic argument is differently replaced on the syntactic level in English and SC equivalents, e.g.: (10) (Eng.) *The editor corrected the author's manuscript.* (11) (Eng.) *Please correct your essay for punctuation errors.* (12) (SC) *Sa ansennyen, i annan kaye pou koriz-e avek leson pour prepare.* 'This teacher has exercise books to correct and lessons to prepare'. In sentences (10-12), the syntactic position for the implicitly presented Affected Object (something which is corrected - a letter or a word) is taken by nouns related to other action participants. In case of English GV *to correct* in (10-11)*,* Affected Object is substituted for by the name of the document (manuscript, essay), that is something referring to information product which contains elements for correction. Differently, in case of the SC GV *koriz-e* 'to correct' in (12), the same semantic argument is replaced by the noun *kaye* 'copybook' referring to the place, the physical container for the written document to be corrected.

Another distinct feature is the omission in SC of the syntactic element representing the Created Object, which is not typical of English e.g.: (13) (SC) *Plizyer fwa monn ganny demande pou reekrir akoz dimoun pa konpran mon lekritir* 'Several times I was asked to rewrite because people do not understand my handwriting'. (14) (SC) *Zot in desin partou lo miray.* 'They have drawn all over the wall'. In the examples (13-14) above, SC GVs *reekrir* 'to rewrite' and *desin-en* 'to draw' are used intransitively, that is, without any noun phrase corresponding to the object of the action. English GVs *'to rewrite'* and *'to draw'* are defined as transitive verbs and are used as such in similar contexts, e.g.: (15) (Eng.) *The teacher asked him to rewrite the essay.* (16) (Eng.) *I had to rewrite the letter.* (17) (Eng.) *Students drew maps of the states and labelled them.* What is peculiar is that, in providing an English translation for their SC sentences, informants exhibited some influences of SC on their use of English: in particular, the intransitive use of the English verbs *to rewrite* and *to draw* in the contexts above.

To sum up, alongside sharing the capacity for implicit presentation of semantic arguments in a sentence, SC and English GVs demonstrate different patterns of their syntactic substitution. The difference concerns the nature of the semantic argument which takes over the direct object position (Created Object in English, e.g.to correct the manuscript or the essay, vs Place in SC, e.g. to correct the copybook), or availability of the above syntactic function (transitive use in English vs intransitive use in SC, e.g. the possibility to say 'to rewrite several times' instead of grammatically required 'to rewrite smth several times'). In the multilingual context of Seychelles, SC GVs` syntactic patterns are projected onto their English counterparts, contributing to the specificity of English in Seychelles, modifying the global in a small scale context. The observed influence of SC on English may be seen as a prerequisite evidence for a particular variety of English in Seychelles.

Conclusion

Comparative analysis of some linguistic parameters of two adjacent languages of Seychelles – Seychellois Creole and English – has provided a number of observations which contribute to a better understanding of language coexistence from the perspective of scale.

Though a language in its own right, with an established orthography, vocabulary and grammar, SC, as a small and young language, is challenged by English, its global neighbour, in its further development. The nature and mechanisms of this challenge, analyzed through juxtaposition of some linguistic characteristics, such as nominating capacity, patterns of semantic derivation and those of syntactic shifting, are defined by both the language related parameters and the external socio-cultural factors. The results of the analysis suggest that, internally, SC has a verbal resourcefulness to represent certain concepts from a number of angles, lexicalising various action participants and characteristics. In particular, with reference to the concept of graphic act, GVs in SC explicitly or implicitly present the nature of the graphic product, the manner in which the action is carried out, its stage, instrument, surface and attending circumstances. The meaning of SC verbal lexemes dynamically transforms in use, transgressing its primary domain, e.g. graphic act representation, to other thematic areas, e.g. figuratively presenting the person`s emotions and relationships. On the syntactic level, when unfolding into a sentence, SC GVs follow distinct patterns of surface substitution for implicit semantic participants. The above mentioned arguments support the claim for the linguistic maturity and authenticity of SC, and its resilience in the context of scale based, that is, small vs big, island-bound language competition.

There are nevertheless some manifestations of its vulnerability in the above mentioned coexistence with a big language, such as lexical gaps and low level of synonymy in some areas, in particular, technology related nomination, projected semantic derivation of SC lexemes, prompted by patterns of use lexicographically fixed for their English counterparts, and a parallelism of the syntactic alignment of semantic arguments for English and SC sentences. The above mentioned fragilities of SC can be accounted for by a number of external factors. On the one hand, these are facts related to SC, such as a relatively short period of its functioning as a national language, a small number of speakers, and a relatively restricted lexicographic resource. On the other hand, these are facts characterising English, such as its global reach, its dominance in the majority of socio-cultural domains, including such influential areas as education, mass media and the Internet. The above mentioned factors either stimulate borrowing and assimilation to compensate the lexical shortage in SC, or bring about semantic and syntactic projection. The factors mentioned above are reinforced by the general vulnerability of SC due to the small scale, manifested mainly in the limited variety of language related opportunities available locally and, as a result, dependence on the bigger international context, as is the case with English as the language of instruction in Seychellois schools, motivated by the prioritized educational paths through oversees higher educational institutions.

Given the widely recognized way of globalisation, manifested among other areas in language diversity reduction, special efforts should be made to support the sustainable use of local (albeit non-dominant) languages, such as SC. Steps and choices made today have important implications for this language further development and preservation. As with any language, SC is a unique resource to transmit endemic knowledge and culture, and it presents a particular way of knowing and interpreting the world. For this precious resource not to be diminished or damaged, language maintenance should be part of a collective agenda, involving legislators, educators, researchers and users.

Disclaimer

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