Although written by and for linguists with special expertise and interest in Kwa languages, this volume has much to offer creolists, especially but not only those investigating the development of Atlantic creoles. The data and analyses will be most useful to those researching the historical connections between Gbe and other West African language groupings and the grammars of creoles of the New World, a value enhanced by depth of detail not only about individual languages but also about differences among them. The editors, and the authors of six of the nine chapters, are not only Kwa specialists, but also important contributors to just that ‘Trans-Atlantic Sprachbund’ research (and native speakers of some of the languages in question).

Those specializing in PCs of other parts of the world will find material here on serial verb constructions and on clefting and other focus-marking and topicalization strategies frequently encountered in creole studies. And they and other linguists will encounter much on other language features, such as relativization, the interface between phonology and syntax, bare nouns, argument structure, and negation marking. But this review of a book on Kwa syntax naturally gives most attention to a selection of the material specifically related to current research on Atlantic creoles.

After the editors’ Introduction clarifies their use of Kwa to refer to the older classification (see Westermann 1927), and summarizes the contents of the volume, tree diagrams of ‘Eastern Kwa’ and ‘Western Kwa’ provide a helpful genetic context of each language discussed in the book. The editors’ Chapter 1, ‘The phonology syntax interface’ (pp. 1–9), mentions that almost all Kwa languages have two or three ‘basic tones’ (Akan and Gbe languages, respectively), with only the Ghana Togo Mountain languages having four. After a brief description of lexical tone in Gbe languages and Akan, Chapter 1 goes more extensively into syntactic tone (e.g. to mark negation in Gungbe), ending with a plea for linguists to pay ‘careful attention to the interaction between tone, prosody and syntax’ (p. 8) than heretofore.

Aboh’s Chapter 2, ‘The morphosyntax of the noun phrase’ (pp. 11–37), presents NP constituent order in most Kwa languages as ‘Noun–Adjective–Numeral–(relative clause)–Demonstrative–discourse specificity marker–plural marker’
The description of bare nouns — which at least in Gungbe may be fully
definite in reference — is clearly relevant to our study of creole determiner systems
(cp. Lefebvre 2011); in Kwa languages, one finds a very small number of attributive
adjectives alongside a large number of verblike predicative ones, a situation
which fits well with some Atlantic creoles, as does the presence of both Possessor-
Possessum and Possessum-Possessor structures; and the variation shown in NP
number marking can be brought to bear on the similar variation observed across
Caribbean creoles, where in some cases plural markers precede, in other cases
follow, N.

Chapter 3, ‘General properties of the clause’ (pp. 39–64), also by the editors,
covers tense and aspect, negation, adverbs, modality, alternation between OV and
VO order, serial verb constructions, inherent complement verbs, and discourse
particles. Although their description has much to offer linguists generally, I only
sample here some points that either relate to topics already of special interest, or in
this chapter are shown to merit more interest, among creolists:

1. variation within Gbe regarding presence of a future tense marker (Gungbe,
   Fongbe) or its absence (Ewegbe, with ‘potential’ marker a);
2. variation within Gbe in marking negation (preverbal, sentence-final, and bi-
   partite);
3. the distinction between preverbal and postverbal mood markers;
4. the distinction between adverbs (including ideophones) occurring in the right
   periphery of VP and those occurring between V and O;
5. two types of OV constructions: free gerunds, with the OV sequence function-
   ing as a nominal, and ‘auxiliated’ or ‘controlled’, which ‘often correlate with
   aspect specifications such as progressive, inceptive, ingressive, etc.’ (p. 49);
6. inherent complement verbs, with obligatory complements that ‘run the gamut
   from fully specified semantically, through cognate, to being semantically light’
   (p. 58);
7. a survey of discourse particles encoding, ‘among other things, focus, topic,
   interrogative, insistence, discourse specificity’ (p. 60).

Oluseye Adesola’s Chapter 4, ‘The non-agreeing subject resumptive pronoun in
Yoruba’ (pp. 65–89), briefly describes Yoruba’s resumptive pronouns that agree
with their antecedents in number and person and ‘can occur in subject and object
positions’ (p. 66), then focuses on the much more unusual ‘non-agreeing resump-
tive pronoun’ ọ, which occurs only in subject position. An overview of previous
analyses of resumptive constructions is followed by a detailed comparison of two
hypotheses about the derivation of the Yoruba non-agreeing subject resumptive
pronoun, which uses evidence from Yoruba itself and also from English and Edo
to conclude that an uninterpretable NP is raised directly from SpecvP to SpecCP,
where it is interpretable, skipping the intermediate SpecTP level. More transparently applicable to comparison of New World creoles and Kwa languages is the evidence that where non-agreeing ó occurs, agreeing resumptive pronouns can occur instead, although the former is preferred.

Kofi K. Saah’s Chapter 5, ‘Relative clauses in Akan’ (pp. 91–107), provides a broad and informative coverage of RCs in this Western Kwa language, including the probably pan-Kwa absence of non-restrictive RCs (a cross-linguistically fairly common absence, unsurprising in light of the very different functions of restrictive and non-restrictive RCs), extraposed RCs, and presence vs. absence of determiner on heads of RCs. Akan RCs are characterized by an obligatory invariant relative complementizer áà, a resumptive pronoun, and a clause-final determiner, either distal no or proximal yi. Saah treats the resumptive pronoun as obligatory, although with inanimate heads it is null in some syntactic positions, including direct object. (The example of relativized temporal adjunct on page 100, however, does not show even a null resumptive form.)

Aboh’s Chapter 6, ‘C-type negation markers on the right edge’ (pp. 109–139), continues this thoroughness with its focus on ‘the question of the categorical status of negative particles in [Gbe] languages, as well as their structural positions in the clause,’ in particular ‘whether the Gbe pre- and post-verbal negation markers are all properties of INFL’ (p. 110). After a summary of Gbe I- and C-systems, some major Gbe languages are grouped according to their expression of negation: with a preverbal particle (e.g. Gungbe), with either a pre-verbal or a right-edge particle (e.g. Fongbe), or with the simultaneous occurrence of both types of particle (e.g. Gengbe [Mina] and Ewegbe — both Western Gbe languages, unlike Gungbe and Fongbe). A detailed examination of negation in the languages that include a negative right-edge particle leads to the conclusion that such particles, in contrast with the pre-verbal markers that head NegP within INFL, ‘are modal elements belonging to the complementizer where they encode (negative) evidentiality’ and, ‘[l]ike other left peripheral markers in Gbe, these negative markers surface to the right edge because they take wide scope over the proposition’ (p. 137).

Felix Ameka’s Chapter 7, ‘Information packaging constructions in Kwa: Microvariation and typology’ (pp. 141–176), likewise provides a wealth of data and analysis, especially on focus constructions, across a range of Kwa languages: Akan, Attié, Gbe (Standard Ewe, Kpelegbe, Fongbe), Ga, Yoruba, Likpe, Logba, Tuwuli. After briefly characterizing the functions of three left periphery positions in clauses (frame topic, focus, and contrastive topic), the study concentrates on focusing devices, both in-situ and ex-situ. The former may be unmarked (e.g. in Ewe), marked by pitch-accent or tone (e.g. in Tuwuli and Akan), or marked by a focus-marking morpheme (e.g. Akan na [cp. copula/focus marker na in Suriname creoles], and predicate-initial for predicate focus in some Ewe varieties). More
common are the ex-situ constructions; argument or term focus involves fronting of the focused argument, with or without additional marker, and, for some syntactic positions, with or without in-situ representation, which in some languages is invariant and in others is anaphoric (resumptive pronoun). Ga also allows focus on either Possessor or Possessum within an argument, while Ewe allows neither. Ex-situ predicate focus employs two strategies: fronting a copy of the verb and adding a focus particle that is optional in some languages, obligatory in others; or adding a nominalized form of the verb initially in the clause core, with optional focus particle.

The chapter also describes constructions consisting of only topic and comment, contrastive subject focus (usually marked by scope particles), ‘cleft constructions which are distinct from focus constructions’ (p. 169), and ‘inferential constructions’. The detailed comparison of many Kwa languages for all the chapter’s topics provides a wealth of data and analytical hypotheses for PC specialists, particularly those seeking to understand the history of creoles related to West Africa.

James Essegbey’s Chapter 8, ‘Inherent complement verbs and the basic double object construction in Gbe’ (pp. 171–193), despite its title, also includes some information on the non-Gbe Kwa language Akan and the non-Kwa Benue-Congo language Emai of Nigeria. The three-member (‘give’, ‘teach/show’, ‘ask’) class of double object construction (DOC) verbs is characterized by the variable order of its two objects, in contrast with the larger class of inherent complement verbs (ICV), for which the semantic Theme must be the first of two objects, immediately after the verb. But the two classes are shown to be alike in other dimensions, as seen in Ewegbe: only the Theme can be preposed in certain auxiliary constructions and under nominalization; only the Theme can be subject of the nyá-construction (roughly, Theme-nyá-‘give’-Recipient-for-N = ‘N likes giving Theme to Recipient’, but not *Recipient- nyá-‘give’-Theme-for-N); restrictions apply to the pronominalization of Theme but not of Recipient/Goal; and Theme cannot have a definite article unless the Recipient/Goal is definite. Essegbey concludes that clauses with ICVs are a subset of DOCs; he then extends this account to ‘obviate … the need to posit discontinuous verbs in … Akan’ and to ‘provide … a unified account for Akan and Emai’ (p. 190) even though the latter is non-Kwa. Again, while treating a narrowly defined set of phenomena in a small set of West African languages, this chapter suggests lines of research on sources of structures in Atlantic creoles and provides detailed data that allow a comparison between creoles and potential substrates.

Martha Larson’s Chapter 9, ‘The empty subject construction: Verb serialization in Baule’ (pp. 195–232; Baule is a fairly close relative of Akan spoken in Côte d’Ivoire), provides a solid basis for comparison of this Central Tano language with, say, Gbe languages to determine which subset of Kwa languages is most like a
given Atlantic creole. For example, in Baule SVCs, negation is marked on each verb (p. 205), while in most West Atlantic creoles, such as those of Suriname, negation occurs only with $V_1$. Again, TAM markers on all verbs in a Baule SVC must match (pp. 203–204), whereas in at least some Suriname creoles, aspect markers may vary from one verb to another (see Huttar & Huttar 1994: 522). And while non-initial verbs in Baule SVCs include a tonal prefix indicating projection of an underlying Subject, no such marking has been documented in West Atlantic creoles. In all these cases, unsurprisingly, Fongbe is more like West Atlantic creoles than is Baule (see Lefebvre & Brousseau 2002: 401–404).

Larson's chapter is also valuable for its treatment of:

- ‘Accidental Combination’ vs. ‘Essential Combination’ SVCs (terminology following Christaller 1875: 144 on Twi), corresponding roughly to SVCs expressing sequential events (which tolerate insertion of a conjunction and repetition of the Subject of $V_1$), and those expressing more conceptually close-knit relationships, such as instrumental SVCs (no such insertion tolerated);
- tonal evidence that clauses in SVCs are coordinated, not in complementation;
- restriction of sentence-level adverbs to sentence-initial position;
- extended argumentation for Baule SVCs’ involving parataxis and Pro-drop;
- comparison of Baule SVCs with those in Yoruba, Ewegbe, and Sranan.

For creolists, and indeed for linguists generally, much of the value of this book lies in the depth of detail of description and analysis, whether for one language or a group of languages. Despite rather numerous, sometimes confusing, copy-editing lapses, the clarity of data presentation and argumentation facilitates continued dialogue on alternative analyses of phenomena in Kwa languages and many creoles. This dialogue will serve linguistics far beyond our improved understanding of the diachronic development of Atlantic creoles.

References


