The augment as a construct form marker in Eton relative clause constructions

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prefinal version July 2014

1. Introduction

The only formal characteristic that all restrictive relative clause constructions have in common in Eton is that their head is marked by means of a prefix í- ~ H- traditionally called the augment. Eton does not normally use a relative relator and only a subset of TAM-forms have a special relative verb form, so that for subject relatives the augment on the head is often the only indication for the presence of a relative clause. Hence, relativisation is basically head marking, and the augment is best analysed as a construct form marker in Eton (see Creissels (2009) for an earlier use of this notion in the analysis of sub-Saharan languages). I use the term augment for the Eton construct form marker and its cognates in closely related languages such as Ewondo, Fang and Basaá, without implying that this morpheme can be identified as a reflex of a prenominal Proto-Bantu augment as reconstructed by Meeussen (1967: 99). Rather, the term is here used for any morpheme that is synchronically preposed, procliticised or prefixed to a nominal element and that can be argued to be cognate with an augment, pronominal prefix or weak demonstrative in other Bantu languages.

Section 2 summarises the grammatical description of relative constructions provided in Van de Velde (2008), which was thoroughly double-checked for this paper. We will see that Eton uses two strategies – a gap-strategy and a resumptive pronoun strategy – and that there are no restrictions on accessibility to relativisation. I will subsequently describe the dedicated relative verb forms. Section 3 shows that the augment is an inflectional morpheme in Eton. Section 4, finally, proposes a scenario for its origin and development.

2. Relative clause constructions in Eton

Relative clause constructions are here defined as constructions in which a nominal constituent is modified by a subordinate finite clause (the relative clause) by specifying the role of its referent in the situation described by the relative clause (adapted from Andrews
This definition excludes participial constructions, in which the modifying clause is non-finite (1).

(1) (elicited)

àjám ſpùgl òtìgì
\[à-H-ʤám-H\ u-pùglà օ-tìg-ì\]
1-PST-cook-NF 3-sauce III-be.thick-G

‘She made a thick sauce.’

The definition equally excludes focus constructions that have formal similarities with relative constructions, but that do not imply adnominal modification, or embedding in a matrix clause. In (2) the focused argument dwé ‘name’ is in pre-verbal focus position followed by a focus pronoun and a clause that has the formal characteristics of a relative clause (a relative verb form and a resumptive pronoun after the preposition èèy). Focus pronouns are segmentally identical to personal pronouns, but they always have a falling tone, as opposed to the dissimilating high tone of personal pronouns (low in agreement pattern IX). Therefore focus pronouns may historically derive from personal pronouns preceded by the augment.

(2) tò dwé dọ wɔ̀yì kè èèy dọ

\[tò d-óé dọ ù-à-H-ji L-kò èj dọ\]
CONC 5-name V.FPPR 2SG-SP-REL-want INF-go with V.PPR

‘even if it is the NAME you want to take with you’

Eton relative clauses are always externally headed. They occur after the head noun and can only be followed by a demonstrative in a nominal constituent (see examples (10) and (16) below). Normally, relative clauses are not introduced by a relative relator in Eton, but my corpus contains a small number of examples with an optional non-agreeing relator yá. Example (3) illustrates this with a relative clause construction headed by a cognate object of the relative verb. Many especially older speakers reject the use of the relator yá, claiming that it is due to Ewondo influence.
A pronominal head of a modifying relative clause is expressed by means of an augmented demonstrative (4). The augment is required here for two reasons, nominalising a demonstrative (see section 3) and marking the head of a relative clause.

Relative clauses have a rather heavy functional load in Eton, and are therefore frequent. Relative constructions frequently occur as adverbial clauses. When-clauses, for instance, are relative clauses with the noun jőn ‘time, occasion’ as their head. An interesting type of after-clauses are relative clauses headed by a class 5 noun derived from the verb of the adverbial clause and one type of reason clause is a relative clause with the noun ñmól ‘way, manner’ as its head. A relative strategy is also often employed in circumstances where European languages would use adnominal adjectives, compounding or deverbal nominal derivation. See Van de Velde (2008) for more details.

2.1. Relativisation strategies

Eton has two strategies for relativisation: a resumptive pronoun strategy and a gap strategy. The resumptive pronouns strategy is used for the complement of prepositions other than locative á, as well as for possessors. The gap strategy is used elsewhere.

Depending on the construction, the resumptive element used in the resumptive pronoun strategy can be a personal pronoun, a possessive pronoun or the invariable word í’té, translatable as ‘inside’ in some contexts. The relativised complement of the preposition ábó ‘at [+human]’ is represented within the relative clause by a personal pronoun that follows the preposition in (5b). Example (5b) is ambiguous and can also be read as an example of the gap strategy, meaning ‘the doctor who lives at his place’. A pronominal
complement of the preposition ású ‘for’ has the form of a possessive pronoun, also when used resumptively, due to the connective origin of this prepositional construction (<à-sú ‘face’), as illustrated in (6). The resumptive element for complements of the preposition èèy ‘with’ can a personal pronoun (7b), or ítē. In the latter case the preposition drops (7c). This second option may be restricted to cases in which èèy expresses an instrumental relation.

(5) (elicited)
   a. àbóg ábò dwábdɔ̀
      |à-bóg-á ábò dõbdà|
      1-live-RS at doctor
      ‘He lives at the doctor’s place.’
   b. ídwaàbdɔ̀ àbóg ábò ɲà
      |í-dõbdà à-bóg-á ábò ɲè|
      AU-doctor 1-live-RS.REL at 1.PPR
      ‘the doctor at whose place he lives’ or
      ‘the doctor who lives at his place’

(6) (elicited)
   i'mmɪŋ gà màìlād íjè ású wè
   |í-n-ìŋgá mà-H-làd-H í-dʒá ású H = wè|
   AU-1-woman 1SG-PST-sew-NF 7-dress for III.CON = 1.her
   ‘the woman for whom I sewed a dress’

(7) (elicited)
   a. màtò ‘påd òpùm èèy kɔ̀b
      |mà-tò L-påd H òpùmá èèy kɔ̀b|
      1SG-PR INF-pick LT orange with [9]hook
      ‘I pick oranges with a hook.’
   b. íkwà màtò ‘påd òpùm èèy yə̀ ìnò ʋà?
      |í-kwà mà-tò L-påd H òpùmá èèy yə̀ ì-nò ʋà|
      AU-[9]hook 1SG-PR INF-pick LT orange with IX.PPR IX-be where
      ‘Where is the hook with which I pick oranges?’
c. íkɔ́b mə̀tə́ ‘pád ópùm í’tò inə̀ và?

| ì-kɔ́b mə̀-tə́ L-pád H òpùmá í’tò í-nə̀ và |

AU-[9]hook 1SG-PR INF-pick LT orange inside IX-be where

‘Where is the hook with which I pick oranges?’

Both pro-forms, the personal pronoun and í’tò are apparently combined in an example found in a recorded interview (8).

(8) íbyɛ́m mə̀tə́ dāŋ ‘yág èey byɔ́ í’tò bǐnə̀ nà...

| í-bí-ɛ́m mə̀-Ltɛ̀ L-dāŋ H L-yág èey byɔ́ í’tò bǐ-nə̀ nà |

AU-8-thing 1SG-PR INF-cross LT INF-need with VIII.PPR inside VIII-be COMP

‘The things that I need most are...’

A possessive pronoun is used resumptively for relativised possessors if and only if the possessee is the subject of the relative clause (9). An additional condition may be that the possessor has to be animate or human, but this needs verification.

(9) (elicited)

a. ndá ımì̀nŋgá ımá ‘dìg

| ndá i=m-ımìngá i-Ⅺ-mà-Ⅺ L-dìg |

[9]house IX.CON=1-woman IX-PST-TMN-NF INF-burn

‘The woman’s house has burned down.’

b. í’mì̀nŋgá ndá ỳé ımá ‘dìg

| í-m-ımìngá ndá j-č i-Ⅺ-mà-Ⅺ L-dìg |

AU-1-woman [9]house IX-her IX-PST-TMN-NF INF-burn

‘The woman whose house has burned down’

The absence of the resumptive strategy in the case of non-subject possessees is due to the fact that external possessors are usually preferred over adnominal possessors and that external possessors do not differ morphosyntactically from other unmarked postverbal nominal constituents. The use of the gap strategy for such relatives is illustrated in example (10), which, incidentally, also shows that relative clauses precede demonstratives in the nominal constituent.
As has been said, the gap strategy, further illustrated in (11-13), is the default strategy used wherever the resumptive pronoun strategy is not. As is shown in (11), the beneficiary that is marked by means of the preposition ású ‹h› = in (6) is usually expressed without any marking.

(11) (elicited)

a. mə̀l̥ád ꜜmínŋ ꜜiꜜjə́

| mə- ꜜm- l̥ád ꜜm- ꜜi- ꜜjə́ |

1SG-PST-sew-NF 1-woman 7-garment

‘I sewed a garment for the woman.’

b. én ꜜí- ꜜmínŋ ꜜá- ꜜmə́ ꜜl̥ád ꜜiꜜjə́

| é- ꜜn- ꜜi- ꜜm- ꜜjə́ ꜜm- ꜜl̥ád ꜜi- ꜜjə́ |

V-is AU-1-woman 1SG-PST-sew-NF 7-garment

‘It is the woman for whom I sewed a garment.’

(12) (elicited)

a. àk̥ɔ́m dɔ̂ ású ꜜpâdà

| à- ꜜk̥- ꜜm- ꜜá- ꜜsú ꜜp- ꜜpádà |

1-PST-do-NF V.PPR for III.CON = priest

‘She did it for the priest.’

b. ípâdà àk̥ɔ́m dɔ́ ꜜáw̥ ꜜmíntàg

| í- ꜜpá- ꜜa- ꜜk̥- ꜜm- ꜜá- ꜜw̥- ꜜm- ꜜí- ꜜtà- ꜜg |

AU-priest 1-PST-do-NF V.PPR 1-PST-feel-NF 4-joy

‘The priest for whom she did it was happy.’

Complements of the locative preposition á are accessible to relativisation using the gap strategy (13), but once during elicitation, a speaker used the resumptive pronoun strategy with i’tó too (14). A resumptively used personal pronoun is not possible here.
Finally, there are no syntactic restrictions on accessibility to relativisation. Every referring expression in a sentence is accessible to relativisation by means of the two strategies outlined above, also constituents of complement clauses (15).

2.2. Relative verb forms

A limited number of verb forms have a special form in relative clauses. These are:

- the present affirmative form of the verb nə̀ ‘be’, which has a rising tone in relative clauses instead of its usual low tone
(16) únúŋ pwágó ún'é má ñécígní ákòl ñú
|\[
\text{H-ù-núŋ pɔ́gá ú-nò-H mà ñ-ʧįg-ní H à-kòl ñú}|
\]
AU-3-toe really III-be-REL 1SG.PPR 3-cut-SF LOC 3-foot III.DEM
‘This toe, really, that is cut off my foot’

- the TAM form called Southern Present in Van de Velde (2008): a simple present tense form with a limited dialectal distribution that is identical to the Present tense in Ewondo and marked by the prefix à-. In relative clauses the tense prefix à- is followed by a floating high tone. A relative Southern Present form can be found in examples (2) and (4) above.

- The Future auxiliary èèy becomes èêy in relative clauses. The falling tone on the second vowel is easily explained as a reflex of the floating high tone in the relative form of the Southern present, since the Future auxiliary originates in the verb yi ‘want’ conjugated in the Southern Present. The Present auxiliary Ltó most probably also originates in a form conjugated in the Southern Present, but since it has a high lexical tone, any floating high tone relative prefix would be indiscernible.

- Resultative verb forms also have a different tone pattern in relative clauses, but there is some variation here. Some speakers replace the final dissimilating high tone of Resultative verbs by a simple high tone in relative clauses, whereas other speakers consistently apply a low-high pattern on Resultative verb forms in relative clauses, irrespective of the lexical tone of the verb (17b). This tone pattern is reminiscent of that of the relative form of the verb -nò ‘be’. Finally, speakers apparently also accept the non-relative tone pattern of Resultative verbs in relative clauses.

(17) a. àbógô bèbè vá
    \|à-bóg-ô bèbè vá|  
    1-live-RS close here
    ‘He lives nearby.’

b. ípó mábógó
    \|í-pé mà-bóg-á|  
    AU-place 1SG-live-REL.RS
    ‘the place where I live’
For a number of TAM-forms, such as the Indefinite Future and the relative tense forms Inceptive and Consecutive, I have no examples of their use in relative clauses.

3. The augment is a construct form marker and a nominaliser

The conditioning for the use of the augment in Eton is purely syntactic. In no circumstance are pragmatic-semantic values such as definiteness or specificity relevant for the presence or absence of the augment. The augment is obligatorily prefixed to nouns if and only if their reference is restricted by a demonstrative and/or a relative clause. Example (18) illustrates the fact that nouns modified by a restrictive relative clause take the augment when they are clearly non-specific.

(18) (elicited)

[How can I help you?]

léd mà ímôd àtό ’jáqó î’tón îmòŋ

| léd<IMP> à mà i-N-ôd à-Ltê L-jégà H î-tón ǹ-Bêŋ |
show <IMP> 1SG.NPPR AU-1-person I-PR INF-speak LT 7-eton 3-good

‘Show me somebody who speaks Eton well.’

Some younger speakers sometimes use the augment with nouns that are modified by an ordinal number. The tendency may be stronger if another anchoring modifier, e.g. a possessive pronoun, is simultaneously present, as in (19). Most speakers I worked with firmly reject this as ungrammatical.

(19) (elicited)

’índá úsùsú yàm îtό ǹněŋ

|í-ndá úsùsúà y-àmà î-i-tó î-nněŋ |
AU-house first IX-my IX-PR INF-be.big

‘My first house is big.’

The augment appears only if its syntactic trigger restrictively modifies the noun, i.e. the augment does not appear on nouns that are followed by a non-restrictive relative. This claim is based on examples from spontaneous discourse, but it turns out to be difficult to replicate in elicitation, where an augment sometimes appears with what are meant to be non-
restrictive relatives. This may be due to the unnaturalness of non-restrictive relative clauses in isolated utterances.

The second function of the augment is to nominalise demonstrative (20a) and possessive (20b) adnominal modifiers. Nominalised possessives are rare in spontaneous discourse, where the usual strategy is to use a nominalised demonstrative modified by a possessive (21).

(20) a. íɲú bá
    |í-ɲū bā|
    AU-III.DEM second
    ‘the second one’ (Van de Velde 2008 : 226)
b. íwàmò
    |í-L-wàmà|
    AU-NMLZ-I.my
    ‘mine’ (Van de Velde 2008 : 226)

(21) wàyèm ímá ‘mè?
    |ù-à-jèm í-má m-è|
    2SG-SP-know AU-VI.DEM VI-his
    ‘Do you know his?’ (speaking of mə̀tämá ‘surname’, cl. 6)

The augment has also been found prefixed to relative clauses in texts, apparently with a nominalising function too. The example I found involves a head noun followed by two non-restrictive relatives.

(22) ùkwàngì bùnì, ínç pè ñtwi-mècè, í ‘tè kwàm mé’çí mèpàmgì
    |ù-kɔ̀n-lgì bùnì H-i-nè pè ñtwi mə Livingston ngà|
    2SG-be.sick-G [9]amoebiasis AU-IX-COP.REL also diarrhoea 6-blood

    |H-ì-Ltè L-kòm H mə Livingston ngà mò-pàm-lgì|
    AU-IX-PR INF-make LT 6-blood VI-come.out-G
    You are suffering from amoebiasis, which is blood diarrhoea, which makes the blood come out.’
To summarise, the augment has two inflectional functions in Eton. First, it serves as a construct form marker as defined by Creissels (2009), i.e. nominal head marking of syntactic relations. In this function the augment appears if and only if the noun is restrictively modified by a demonstrative or a relative clause. Second, the augment serves as a nominaliser of demonstratives, possessives and relative clauses. I will suggest in the next section that these two uses are historically related.

4. An explanation for the shape, position and distribution of the augment

This section provides an explanation for the shape, distribution and position of the augment in Eton. Comparative evidence is adduced to show that the presence of the augment in the Bantu A70 languages (Eton, Ewondo, Bulu, Fang) and some closely related languages such as Basaa depends on the type of relationship that exists between a noun and an adnominal modifier. For a noun to take the augment, it has to be followed by a localising modifier. This is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition. The augment has been systematically analysed as a grammatically conditioned marker of definiteness or specificity in the literature on these languages, e.g. Redden (1979) on Ewondo, Ondo Mebiame (2001) on Fang and Jenks et al. (this volume) on Basaa, but this is not insightful. The augment does not mark the discourse-referential status of a nominal constituent, but rather the type of modifying relationship that holds between a head noun and some of its satellites. A genuine explanation for the appearance of the augment must consist of a diachronical scenario that leads from an original demonstrative to the contemporary construct form marker. In the absence of historical records, we can at best suggest a number of plausible scenarios. This section will start with a putative explanation for the form of the augment (4.1). If its origin is ultimately a demonstrative, it must have been classified and a reduction of a paradigm of more than ten noun classes to only one form must have taken place. In section 4.2 I will briefly consider and reject a scenario that may seem appealing at first sight. In this scenario, the Eton augment is a reflex of a Proto-Bantu augment that functioned as a “stage II article” in Greenberg’s (1978) three stage cycle of the definite article. The problem is that no plausible scenario can bring us from this starting point to the current situation. The next section (4.3) situates the Eton augment in a wider comparative context, pointing out the special status of localising modifiers in many Bantu languages. Finally, section 4.4 discusses alternative processes that could have led to the current situation in Eton.
4.1. Perhaps a form of class 7

If we assume that the augment ultimately originates in a demonstrative, the first problem that needs to be resolved is the absence of a paradigm of forms that vary with the class of the head noun. From a comparative point of view, this is not that problematic, since unequivocal examples of reduced augment paradigms abound. Traces of a fuller paradigm clearly point to a loss of paradigmatic oppositions in many of these examples. De Blois (1970: 99-102) cites several languages where the paradigm of augments has been reduced to three (e-a-o, or e-a-ɔ), or two (ɛ-ɔ, or e-o) values. A further reduction is found in languages in which one of the two remaining forms of the augment is restricted to a single class. Thus, in Herero (R30) the form of the augment is o- everywhere, except in class 5, where it is e- (see, e.g., Elderkin 2003). In Ngubi (B40), the form of class 9 í- has spread to all classes except to class 10, where the augment is tsí- (Puech1988). From here, it is a very small step to total reduction.

Now that we can assume that the augment is a reflex of a formerly agreeing form, we should try and identify its original noun class. Comparative evidence points to class 7. The opposition between vowels of the first and second degree of aperture is lost in prefixes in Eton, to the advantage of i for the front vowels. In two other A70 languages, Ewondo and Fang, the augment – é – is segmentally identical to the prefix of class 7 and in Basaá, where the augment is í, the nominal prefix of class 7 is ì-. There are no obvious phonotactic reasons for why it should be the form of class 7 that survives. The agreement pattern of class 7 does function as a default pattern in the absence of nominal controllers in Eton, presumably because j-ôm, the word for ‘thing’, is of class 7.

4.2. Not a stage in the cycle of definiteness

Meeussen (1967: 99) reconstructs the augment in Proto-Bantu as “a separate word, identical in form with the pronominal prefix, and used as a weak demonstrative, or rather anaphoric, in affirmative, non-predicative constructions, with definite meaning.” In his influential paper on the origin and renewal of overt gender markers and markers of gender agreement, Greenberg (1978) too assumes that Proto-Bantu had an augment, which he characterises as a “stage II” article. Stage II refers to a phase in a continuous evolution of markers that start out as demonstratives (stage zero) and become definite articles, i.e. pragmatically conditioned markers of definiteness or specificity (stage I). The presence of these markers subsequently becomes grammatically conditioned. They tend to become obligatory with
common nouns, except in a number of language specific grammatical contexts. These are contexts in which nouns are typically not in need of referential disambiguation, either because they are not used to refer (they are “generic” in Greenberg’s terms) or because they are fully determined. Typical examples of the former type of contexts are vocatives, nominal predicates, adverbials and complements of negative verb forms. Fully determined nouns can be inherently so, which is the case for proper names and certain types of kinship terms, or they can be determined by an adnominal modifier, such as a demonstrative or a possessive pronoun. At stage II, the article has become largely redundant, which can lead to its generalisation, so that it becomes a mere nominal marker (stage III) or to its erosion and disappearance.

Although the validity of this path of language change is beyond doubt, reconstructing a stage II article in Proto-Bantu, of which the augment in the contemporary Bantu languages is a reflex, is not self-evident. The wide array of grammatical phenomena that resemble the Bantu augment in the Niger-Congo languages, within and outside of Bantu, suggests that the definiteness cycle is easily initiated and that it can evolve very rapidly in languages with such exuberant agreement morphology. Assuming only one cycle in the history of Bantu, which at the Proto-Bantu stage was already quite evolved, may need to be reconsidered. Moreover, the augment in Eton and related languages does not fit in this scenario. The grammatical conditioning of the Eton augment situates it at stage II in the cycle. We should therefore expect it to appear in many or most contexts, such as the citation form of nouns or unmodified nouns in subject position, or in object position of affirmative verb forms. We should not expect it to appear on nouns modified by a demonstrative, unless if nouns with other kinds of modifiers also took it. All this is exactly the contrary of what we find in Eton.

4.3. Localising modifiers
In Fang Ntumu (A75a), another member of the Beti-Bulu-Fang dialect cluster, the adnominal modifiers that require the presence of the augment are more numerous than in Eton, viz. ordinal numbers, possessive pronouns and the two selective determiners meaning ‘the other’, on top of demonstratives and relative clauses (Ondo Mebiame 2001). This set of modifiers forms a natural class. In Rijkhoff’s (2002, 2008) terminology, they are typically localising, as opposed to qualifying, classifying, quantifying or discourse-referential modifiers. They help to identify the intended referent of the NP, by locating it in space and time. This section argues that the augment in Eton and similar languages head-marks a
relation of localising modification with a grammatically determined subset of eligible modifiers.

Whether a modifier is localising, may depend on its use in a particular construction. Modifiers that allow both a localising and a non-localising use, are responsible for the impression that the augment marks definiteness or specificity, since the presence of a localising modifier changes the discourse-referential properties of a nominal constituent. Thus, the only concrete indication for calling the augment a definiteness marker in Fang Ntumu is that the modifier -fə́ translates as ‘the other’ when the head noun takes an augment and as ‘another’ in the absence of an augment. However, it is clear that the presence of the augment changes the type of modification from non-selective to selective (and therefore localising), which merely implies a definite interpretation of the head noun. This analysis is confirmed by the syntax of the nominal constituent, in that localising modifiers obligatorily follow other types of modifiers in the A70 languages. Adnominal -fə́ can precede or follow a cardinal number in the absence of an augment (23), but it has to follow when the head noun is augmented (24) (my field notes).

(23) a. mə́tą́ mə́ꞌbɛ́ɲ mə́fə́
     | mə́-tą́ mə́-bɛ́ɲ mə́-fə́|
     6-pile VI-two VI-other
b. mə́țá mə́fə́ mə́bfɛ́ɲ
     | mə́-țá mə́-fə́ mə́-bɛ́ɲ|
     6-pile VI-other VI-two
‘two other piles’

(24) a. mə́țá mə́bfɛ́ɲ mə́fə́
     | [u]-mə́-țá mə́-bɛ́ɲ mə́-fə́|
     AU-6-pile VI-two VI-other
b. *mə́țá mə́fə́ mə́bfɛ́ɲ
‘the two other piles’

Likewise, Jenks et al. (this volume) note that the presence versus absence of an augment on a noun modified by a relative clause in Basaa signals the difference between a specific and a non-specific interpretation of the nominal constituent, e.g. between ‘the person that is
important’ and ‘someone that is important.’ They conclude that “the augment is an overt marker of specificity in noun phrases containing relative clauses and demonstratives” and that “something which is usually marked covertly [sic] in Basaa, definiteness or specificity, is marked overtly in the presence of these modifiers.” But there is no reason why a marker of specificity should appear only in these two contexts where it is redundant. Moreover, if redundancy is no objection and if the augment really marks specificity, it should occur on a noun followed by a non-restrictive relative clause, which it doesn’t. The reason it doesn’t, is that a non-restrictive relative clause is not a localising modifier. It does not identify the referent of the head noun by locating it in space or time.

The A70 and A40 languages are not the only subgroups of Bantu in which the distinction between localising and non-localising modification is marked by means of an anchor. The same phenomenon is found in the C10 group, but here the anchor is in postnominal position. Leke/Bomitaba (C14, van Houdt 1987) has three demonstrative stems: -dò (close demonstrative), -ná (far demonstrative) and -L. Van Houdt probably analyses the floating low tone stem as a demonstrative because it takes the same agreement prefixes as demonstratives and most of the time it appears as a variant of -dò. When a noun is modified by a possessive pronoun, an ordinal number or a relative clause, it is obligatorily followed by a demonstrative with stem -dò, which in this use has the variant -L after a (surface) CV-prefix (van Houdt 1987: 143-153, 191). Example (25) also shows that ordinal numbers are expressed by means of a connective construction.

(25) mwáz òdò wà bè
      |mò-àzí wò-àdò wò-à-bè|
     1-woman 1-DEM 1-CON-IWO
     ‘the second woman’

Nouns that are modified by a nominal possessor or by the modifier -ɔkɔ́, which means ‘the other’ in this construction, are obligatorily followed by the demonstrative with a floating low stem.
It would be interesting to know whether the obligatory demonstrative is adjacent to the head noun or to the triggering modifier in the case of an intervening modifier, and whether the demonstrative is repeated when two adnominal modifiers require it, but van Houdt’s description does not provide the relevant data. Anyhow, the set of modifiers that trigger the presence of the demonstrative in Leke is exactly the same as those that trigger the augment in Fang Ntumu.

Another relevant example can be found in Babole (C101, Leitch, 2003), which has two connective relators, a short form and a long form. The long form is the short form preceded by a high tone vowel (í, é or ó), which Leitch calls a determiner vowel. The long form appears when the connective construction is used to express linguistic possession, i.e. when it is localising (28). In qualifying or classifying uses, the short form is used (29). The long form is also used in the type of relative clause that is introduced by a connective relator.

(28) by-èkà í¬-by-a àmé
    8-food VIII.DET-VIII.CON 1SG
    ‘my food’

(29) mò-lómì w-á ‘nsósò
    3-male 3-CON 9.chicken
    ‘male chicken’

To summarise, in the A70 languages, some of the A40 languages and some of the C10 languages, nominal constituents with a localising modifier contain a marker of demonstrative origin. Depending on the language, this marker may be triggered by a
grammatically determined subset of localising modifiers. The difference between A70/A40 and C10 is the position of this marker, before or after the head noun. The next section explores some scenarios that could explain the prenominal position of the augment in Eton. The absence of historical texts makes it unlikely that we will ever be able to go beyond speculation. Nevertheless, it is important for an analysis to demonstrate that plausible scenarios exist.

4.4. Possible scenarios

There are basically two types of scenario that could lead to the prenominal position of the Eton augment. In the first type, the augment emerged in prenominal position, in the second type it emerged postnominally and then changed its position. Three general properties of the Bantu languages are likely to have played a role. First, there is a prenominal position that tends to attract light modifiers that could be called determiners. Many Bantu languages have prenominal demonstratives, either as the only option, or as a pragmatically or morphosyntactically conditioned variant of postnominal demonstratives (see Van de Velde 2005). Possessive pronouns and the modifier ‘other’ likewise frequently occur in prenominal position. Second, the form of demonstratives tends to be complex diachronically, with layers of reinforcements and renewed deictic markers. Sometimes, demonstratives are circumposed, as in Luba (L33), suggesting that such reinforcements are initially sufficiently independent to move to prenominal position. Third, nominal constituents in Bantu languages can often be argued to have an appositional structure, in which modifiers are not part of an integral phrase, but constitute separate phrases, each headed by a demonstrative form. In such a structure ‘this house’ is literally ‘house, this one’ and ‘the big house’, ‘house, the big one / house, this big’. Diachronic evidence for this can be found in typologically unusual word order patterns, such as (N Dem Num Adj), and in the exuberant noun class agreement morphology.

In one possible scenario, the starting point for Eton was similar to the current situation in the C10 languages we discussed. Some or all of the localising modifiers were introduced by a demonstrative, which may have been the head of a modifier phrase that stood in apposition to the preceding noun. In the following schematic representation, Mod can be any localising modifier, including a demonstrative.

(30) [N] [Dem Mod]
In a process of syntactic integration of the nominal constituent, the demonstrative could easily have been reinterpreted as an element that is syntactically related to the preceding noun as well as to the following modifier:

\[(31) \quad \text{[N Dem Mod]}\]

As has been said, the available analyses of Leke/Bomitaba are not sufficiently detailed to decide which of the above schematic representations, (30) or (31), best represents the current situation in that language. Some evidence for the existence of (31) in a contemporary Bantu language could be found in Bapuku (Cameroon, A32b), a Batanga variety. In Bapuku, nouns modified by a demonstrative are obligatorily followed by an invariable element té (possibly cognate with the Eton anaphoric modifier -tə). When an adjective also modifies the noun, the position of té proves to be immediately postnominal (Van Hille 1989:105). In as far as the Bapuku data are comparable to those of Leke/Bomitaba, they could illustrate a stage in which the original head of a demonstrative phrase has been reinterpreted as a relator or a construct form marker, i.e. as an element that is syntactically linked to the head noun.

\[(32) \quad \text{mè-disì té mé-něně mè}\]

\[4\text{-pestle LK IV-big IV.DEM}\]

‘these big pestles’

At least two alternative paths could lead us from the hypothetical situation in (31) to the current situation. One possibility, the most likely one in my view, is that the demonstrative form was reinterpreted as a relator and then as a construct form marker of the noun. In the process of grammaticalisation, its form would be naturally reduced. Perhaps it cliticised to the noun. Since light adnominal forms easily end up in prenominal position in the Bantu languages, it is not far-fetched to assume subsequent clitic climbing.

\[(33) \quad \text{[N=CF Mod]} \quad > \quad \text{[CF=N Mod]}\]

It is useful to be reminded here that the reflex of Dem in (30), viz. the augment, can still fulfil the role it had at the stage schematised in (30), namely to turn an adnominal modifier
into an independent nominal constituent. In fact, according to Redden (1979:67), the construction in (30) can be observed when a noun is modified by a demonstrative in contemporary Ewondo: “Sometimes the definite article is repeated before the demonstrative, e.g. /é mod é ɲɔ́/ this man; but most of the time only the /é/ before the noun is used.”

Starting from the situation in (31), another possible path involves reinforcing of the demonstrative relator by means of a prenominal light demonstrative. The likeliness of such a step is illustrated by Bantu languages with a circumposed demonstrative. This scenario may be more compatible with the current situation in Basaa, where relative clauses are still optionally introduced by a demonstrative relator, and where the augment does not appear when a demonstrative modifier is reinforced by being fronted. All we would need to assume for Eton, then, is that relative clauses used to be introduced by a relator of demonstrative origin.

Finally, a more direct scenario, starting from the situation in (30), cannot be ruled out. It involves the use of a weak, prenominal cataphoric that points ahead to the information that will allow the identification of the noun’s intended referent (“this man, the one that I met yesterday, …”).

5. Conclusion
The most remarkable characteristic of relative clauses in Eton is that they are head marked by means of the augment, which therefore should be analysed as a construct form marker. Given that the gap strategy is the most common one for relative clause formation in Eton and that several tenses do not have a special relative verb form, this construct form marker can be the only formal means for distinguishing between subject relative clauses and non-relative clauses. The scenario for the origin of this construct form marker that I elaborate in the second part of this chapter may shed a new light on the origin and evolution of the augment in the Bantu languages, as well as on that of similar phenomena in other Niger-Congo languages. The proposed initial appositive structure could explain phenomena as diverse as the typologically unusual word order phenomena in the noun phrase of many Benue-Congo languages and the prosodic break that often occurs between nouns and augmented modifiers. More research should point out whether this scenario can be integrated in a general scenario for the origin and evolution of the augment in the Bantu languages, or whether it is one of several independent evolutions.
References


