

Grammaticalization of tense in the Upper Guinea Creoles

Chiara Truppi and Tjerk Hagemeijer
Universidade de Lisboa

The three genetically related Portuguese-based Upper Guinea Creoles (UGCs), i.e. Capeverdean, Casamancese and Kriyol (Guinea-Bissau Creole), stand out among Atlantic Creoles insofar as they exhibit a postverbal past tense marker. Capeverdean Creole *-ba* is uncontroversially a suffix (ex. 1) (e.g. Baptista 2002; Quint 2000), whereas Kriyol *ba* and Casamancese Creole *ban* have been analyzed as free morphemes, since they are able to occur in different syntactic positions (Biagui 2012; Kihm 1994). Focusing on Kriyol, we depart away from the free morpheme analysis by showing that *ba* in this language has a twofold syntactic and semantic behavior: when adjacent to verbal hosts, *ba* has grammaticalized as a clitic which adds a temporal value [+PAST] to the verb and may form a clitic group together with object pronouns – cf. (2a) and the contrast with (1). If adjoined to a stative verb, it yields a simple past reading (2b); whenever *ba* occurs at the right of a dynamic verb, whose bare form triggers a perfective past reading (5b), a past-before-past interpretation is derived (2a). When *ba* does not adjoin to its specialized verbal host (for instance, following nominals or adverbials), it has the properties of a functional adverb which, along with its temporal contribution, also provides a sense of ‘completion’ (Kihm 1994) relative to the item it modifies (3) or to the whole utterance, if sentence-final (4). The fact that both *ba*’s can be instantiated in the same sentence (3) lends support to this new hypothesis.

To analyze Kriyol *ba* as a verbal clitic has additional consequences from a syntactic perspective. The generalized conclusion is that creole languages lack verb movement (e.g. Roberts 1999), since TMA preverbal particles would block standard V-to-T raising. Even though Kriyol exhibits several preverbal TMA markers in addition to postverbal *ba*, we show that this language responds positively to classical diagnostic tests for verb movement (5a-b, adapted from Pinto 2013), namely adverb placement and quantifier floating. We propose that in order to derive the correct surface word order, including the position of objects and object clitics with respect to *-ba* (2a), verb movement to a projection headed by clitic *-ba* is required, warranting an analysis of Kriyol in terms of short verb movement.

This paper also attempts to shed light on the origin and grammaticalization path of *ba(n)* in the UGCs and to track the syntactic development of (undocumented) proto-UGC, taking into account previous work (e.g. Jacobs 2010; Kihm 1994, 2011; Kihm & Rougé 2008). Under the hypothesis that *ba* was originally a free morpheme in an initial pidginized variety (that creolized and developed into Capeverdean and Kriyol, being Casamancese a later offshoot of Kriyol), we will discuss scenario’s of interaction between the superstrate (European Portuguese) and substrate languages (from the Atlantic and Mande families of Niger-Congo) and how they may have shaped the different syntactic and semantic properties of *ba*.

- (1) *Omi daba el pon.* (Capeverdean Creole)
man give-PST 3SG.strong bread
‘The man had given him/her/it bread.’

- (2) a. *Omi da-l-ba pon.* (Kriyol)
 man give-3SG.clitic-PST bread
 'The man had given him/her/it bread.'
- b. *N sta-ba inda na Guiné.* (Kriyol)
 1SG stay-PST still in Guinea
 'I was still in Guinea.'
- (3) *Purmeru ba nan, e ta da ba nan.* (Kriyol)
 first PST indeed 3PL HAB give PST indeed
 'Previously, they used to give [scholarships].'
- (4) *Anos no tene un kadera li ke e ta fala*
 1PL.strong 1PL.clitic have INDF chair here REL 3PL HAB say
basi di analisi linguistika ba. (Kriyol)
 base of analysis linguistic PST
 'We used to have a discipline here that they used to call 'Introduction to linguistic analysis`.'
- (5) a. *Mininus na kume inda pon.* (Kriyol)
 child-PL PROG eat still bread
 'The children are still eating bread.'
- b. *Mininus lei tudu livrus.* (Kriyol)
 child-PL read all book-PL
 'The children all read books.' / 'The children read all the books.'

References:

- Baptista, M. (2002). The Syntax of Cape Verdean Creole: The Sotavento Varieties, *Linguistics Today* 54, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Biagui, N.L. (2012). Description Générale du Créole Afro-Portugais parlé à Ziguinchor (Sénégal). PhD dissertation. Dakar/Paris: Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD)/Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INaLCO).
- Jacobs, B. (2010), Upper Guinea creole: Evidence in favor of a Santiago birth origins of Papiamentu: Linguistic and historical evidence, *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages* 25/2, 289–343.
- Kihm, A. (1994). *Kriyol Syntax: The Portuguese-Based Creole Language of Guinea-Bissau*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kihm, A. (2011). Substrate influences in Kriyol. In C. Lefebvre (ed.), *Creoles, their substrates, and language typology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Pinto, C. (2013). *Movimento do Verbo em Kriol*. MA thesis, Lisboa: FLUL.
- Rougé, J.-L. (1986). Uma hipótese sobre a formação do crioulo da Guiné-Bissau e da Casamansa. *Soronda* 2, 28-49.
- Rougé, Jean-Louis & Alain Kihm. (2008). Origem da marcação da anterioridade ba(n) no crioulo da Guiné e Casamansa (Kriyol). Paper presented at the acblpe Conference, Lisbon, July 2008.