THE COPULA CYCLE IN KRIYOL

Chiara Truppi
(chiaratruppi@gmail.com)
Post-doc fellow researcher FCT
SFRH/BPD/118401/2016
CLUL, Universidade de Lisboa

0. INTRODUCTION: This study focuses on the copular item *i* in Kriyol (Portuguese-based creole of Guinea-Bissau, West Africa) and its path of grammaticalization. Copulas such as locative and stage-level (*sta* 'to be, to stay'), modal (*parsi* 'to seem') and aspectual (*bida* 'to become') will not be taken into account here.

1. EQUATIVE COPULAS IN KRIYOL AND THEIR ORIGIN

i. Verbal copula **sedu** 'to be' (from European Portuguese (EP) *ser* 'to be' with deltacism of /r/ and insertion of epenthetic vowel /u/; see Kihm 1994:272),
ii. Past verbal copula (*y*)*era* 'was/were' (from EP 3SG ipfv. past copula *era* 'was')
iii. Past verbal copula **foi** (entering the paradigm; from EP 3SG pfv. past copula *foi* 'was/has been')
iv. Copular item *i* (3SG subject clitic pronoun; (neutral) reprise pronoun).

2. SELECTION OF THE COPULA

It depends upon two principles that seem to be shared among the languages of the world (Stassen 1997): (i) complement type and (ii) Tense/Aspect of the sentence.

(i) Type of the post-copular complement:

a. Verbal adjectives that describe a basic quality such as **kumpridu** 'to be tall' and **kontenti** 'to be happy' (Kihm 1994, 2000) usually occur without copula (1).
   1) *E   mininu   kumpridu*.
      DEM child   be.tall
      'This child is tall.'
b. Non-verbal adjectives (2) and nominal predicates (3) usually occur with *i*.
   2) *Badjuda i alema*.
      girl   i German
      'The girl is German.'
   3) *Tina i musika ke mindjeris ta toka*.
      tina i music REL woman-PL HAB play
      'Tina is a/the music that women play.'

(ii) Tense and Aspect in copular clauses:

The copular item *i* may only combine with the postverbal past marker *ba*, but it never combines with preverbal aspect markers *na* and *ta*. *Yera* and *foi* do not combine with *na* and *ta*; they may occur alone or followed by *ba*. Notice that (4a) and (4b) yield the same reading. **Sedu** may combine with all T-A markers (5).

   4) a. *Kasa ku kai   (i) bedju ba dimas*.
         house REL fall.down i (be)old PST very
      b. *Kasa ku kai   yera (ba) bedju dimas*.
         house REL fall.down be.PST PST (be)old very
         'The house that fell down was very old.'
   5) *I   (ka) na /ta sedu difisil*.
      3SG NEG CONT/HAB be difficult
      'It is (not)/will (not) be difficult.'

3. INTRALINGUISTIC VARIATION

Kriyol shows a certain degree of intralinguistic variation, e.g. in the occurrence of *i* with verbal adjectives such as **burmedju** 'be red' (6). Moreover, *i* is sometimes not expressed (7).

   6) *Kil   ropa i (ka) burmedju*.
      DEM cloth i NEG red
      'That cloth is (not) red.'
   7) *Kil omis   la (i) piskadur(is)*.
      DEM man-PL there i fisherman(-PL)
      'These men are fishermen.'

4. EVIDENCE FOR THE NON-VERBAL STATUS OF *i*

• The subject of an *i*-copular clause is either a strong pronoun or a noun, whereas the subject of a verb is either a clitic pronoun or a noun.
• The negation *ka* always follows copular *i* (6); otherwise, *ka* is preverbal (5).
• *I* does not combine with verbal items such as T-A markers; it may only combine with *ba* (in this case, *ba* is an adverb; Truppi & Hagemeijer 2018).
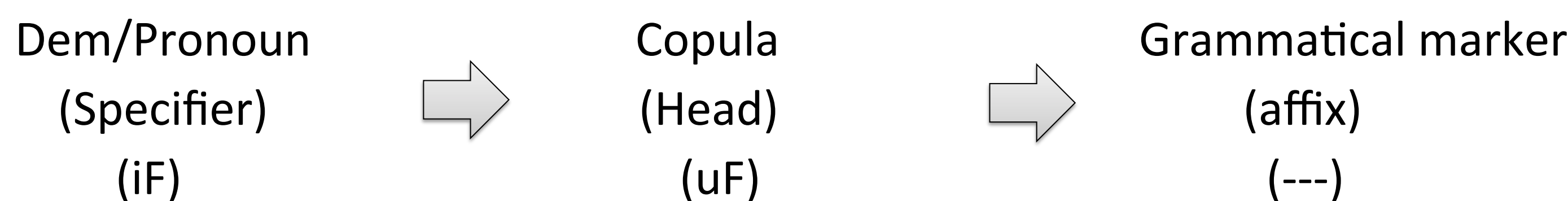
5. FORMER HYPOTHESIS OF EMERGENCE

• Kihm (2007) assumes that the 3SG pronoun *i* has been reanalyzed as a predicate marker in Ancient Kriyol (AK), which was based on *Lingua de Preto* ('Black Tongue', a variety close to EP, spoken by African slaves in 16th c. Portugal, and then brought back to Africa; Kihm 2007, Kihm & Rougé 2013).

   LdP *sa*$_{COP}$ > pidginized LdP *Ø* > protocreole *Ø* > AK *i* $_{Pred.Marker}$ > Kr. *i* $_{COP}$

6. PRESENT PROPOSAL

• On the basis of the striking resemblance to topic-comment structures (see section 7 below), I propose that copular clauses with *i* and complement [+Nominal] (2, 3, and 4a) derive from topic-comment structures through copula cycle. The pronoun *i* was reanalyzed as a copula through *Head Preference Principle* ('be a head, rather than a phrase'; van Gelderen 2004). The full cycle has three major steps (Lohndal 2009).

Dem/Pronoun		Copula		Grammatical marker
(Specifier)	⇒	(Head)	⇒	(affix)
(iF)		(uF)		(---)

7. TOPIC-COMMENT STRUCTURES IN KRIYOL

The following examples show the resemblance between topic-comment structures with reprise pronoun *i* (8) and copular clauses with copular *i* (4a, repeated in 9):

   8) *Badjuda, i   kumpra pon*.
      girl   3SG buy   bread
      'The girl, she bought bread.'
   9) *Kasa ku kai   (i) bedju   ba dimas*.
      house REL fall.down i (be)old PST very
      'The house that fell down was very old.'

Notice that *i* in (4a/9) is ambiguous: it could be either (i) a reprise pronoun in a topic-comment structure (see 8) or (ii) a copular item. As a consequence, (i) the adjective **bedju** is an item [+V]; or (ii) **bedju** is an item [+N].

8. STRUCTURAL CHANGE

For a demonstrative or a pronoun to develop into a copula, it has to occupy the Specifier position of the Predication Phrase (Lohndal 2009). This shift happens, in fact, within the same phrase (structures in (10) adapted from Lohndal 2009 and van Gelderen 2015). The structure in (10a) shows the stage where *i* is still a pronoun (in Spec of PrP, resembling topic-comment structures), whereas in (10b), it shifts to the Head position of PrP:

   10) a. [$_{TopP}$ badjuda [$_{PrP}$ [$_{Pron}$ **i**] [$_{Pr'}$ [$_{Pr}$ [$_{AP}$ alema]]]]
       b. [$_{PrP}$ [$_{NP}$ badjuda] [$_{Pr'}$ [$_{Pr}$ **i**][$_{AP}$ alema]]]

Problem: *i* is arguably a subject clitic, i.e. it is in X^0 and not in Spec (see e.g. Cardinaletti & Starke 1999). We may postulate an earlier stage of Kriyol (see section 5), where a nonclitic pronoun **eli* occurred in copular clauses (see Kihm 2007 for the emergence of Kriyol 3SG pronoun(s): EP *ele* > AK *eli* > K *(el) i*). This reanalysis of 3SG pronoun may have taken place in topic-comment structures, which gave rise to copular clauses of the type discussed here. (10a) => (10c) [$_{TopP}$ badjuda [$_{PrP}$ [$_{Pron}$ **eli**] [$_{Pr'}$ [$_{Pr}$][$_{AP}$ alema]]]]

9. CONCLUSION

Most informants agree that *i* is mandatory in copular clauses. Yet, *i* is often dropped in spontaneous speech (4a, 7). Moreover, sentences such as (4a) show that *i* may still be interpreted as a pronoun. Based on these facts, I assume that *i* in Kriyol did not reach the status of full copula, i.e. it is not fully grammaticalized. It still "swings" between Spec and Head of PrP. This explains why it can be dropped and why it is still analyzable as a pronoun in certain contexts.

What is *i*? It attributes a property (described by the complement) to the subject, but it is not a copula. We may, thus, define *i* as a predicate marker (copula-like functional category).

10. KRIYOL VS. CASAMANCESE

The creole language of Casamance (Senegal) is a later offshoot of Kriyol (17th c.). Casamancese also displays the copular item *i*, which seems to be mandatory in equative sentences (Biagui 2012):

   11) *Pidro i bon soldadi*.
       Pidru i good soldier
       'Pidru is a good soldier.'   (adapted from Biagui 2012:188)

If so, the grammaticalization of *i* as a copula in Casamancese has gone further than in Kriyol and it has reached the status of full copula.

11. FURTHER ISSUES FOR EXPLORATION are, among others: (i) to study Kriyol subject clitics (and the possibility for Kriyol to be a null-subject language), (ii) to analyze the behavior of the past marker *ba* in *i*-copular clauses, (iii) to look at the African substrate languages, e.g. Mandinka and Wolof (are there pronominal copulas?), and (iv) to investigate whether we need to postulate a null copula for explaining the alternation between the presence and absence of the copula.

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