

On the development of nominal and verbal morphology in four lusophone creoles

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This paper focuses on reconstructing the plausible evolution of inflectional and free-standing morphemes in four lusophone creoles, Cape Verdean Creole (CVC), Guinea-Bissau Creole (GBC), Papiamentu (P) and Angolar (A). More precisely, we investigate the syntax and semantics of inflectional and free standing morphemes in both the verbal and nominal domains of these languages.

The purpose of such reconstruction is three-fold: the first is to establish the order in which morphemes emerged while specifically examining whether free standing morphemes appeared *before* or *after* inflectional morphemes (Heine & Kuteva, 2007; Plag, 2003; 2008). Second, we want to ascertain whether the semantic values of those morphemes in the areas of Tense, Mood and Aspect (verbal domain) and of plurality/animacy/specificity (nominal domain) were present from the first stages in the evolution of those languages or whether they are the results of later developments. Third, we wish to test whether a cluster of historically-related creoles shares the same core morphological properties or whether they may follow their own developmental path. To this end, we provide a complete survey of inflectional and free standing morphemes in the verbal and nominal domains of the aforementioned creoles and examine diachronic materials primarily found in Gil Vicente and Teyssier (1959).

Synchronically, the main morphological properties of these creoles are as follows. In the verbal domain, all of them have preverbal Mood and Aspect markers but only two (CVC and GBC) display a post-verbal Anterior (Tense) marker. In the nominal domain, number marking on inanimate objects is sensitive to definiteness and Tense (episodic tense versus generic tense) in all four creoles (Baptista & Guéron, 2007). For animate entities, animacy and definiteness are correlated to each other in CVC, GBC and A but no animacy is required in P for the noun to carry a plural marker (Kester & Schmitt, 2007). P unexpectedly departs from its other two sister-creoles by being insensitive to the variable [+/-human], it is however, sensitive to specificity. This clearly shows that members of historically related creoles may still follow a distinct route when it comes to the semantics and syntactic properties of their morphology.

Diachronically, the core of our findings is that, in the verbal domain, verbal morphemes developed quite late in these languages. When comparing the entire set of morphemes, preverbal mood and aspect markers seem to have emerged much earlier in all four languages, in contrast to postverbal morphemes. In the nominal domain, there are no observable plural marking of any sort in the diachronic sources, and there is therefore no distinction between animate and inanimate entities. This crucially shows us that the specificity variable and animacy hierarchy observable in three creoles out of four emerged much later.