

## Creole languages and *pro*-drop

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### Goals of the talk:

- Survey the treatment of subject clitics in several Atlantic creole languages.
- Reassess claims regarding the *pro*-drop status of these languages, in particular whether clitic pronouns can be analyzed as agreement markers and whether this domain of grammar reveals anything about a “creole prototype”

### 1. On *pro*

#### 1.1. Theory of *pro* (Rizzi 1986)

- ✓ Formal licensing: Case assignment to *pro* by a governing X<sup>0</sup>
- ✓ Identification: antecedent that identifies the phi-features of *pro* (e.g. rich inflection)

#### 1.2. Null subject parameter

- The conditions that identify and license *pro* (null subjects) are not uniform across languages (e.g. Jaeggli & Safir 1989; Sigurdsson 1993):
  - rich verbal morphology (e.g. Romance languages, Rizzi 1986)
  - less rich verbal morphology (Irish, McCloskey & Hale 1984)
  - no inflectional morphology, discourse-oriented (Mandarin, Huang 1984, 1989)
  - residual *pro*-drop (English) (Hyams 1994)
- Most languages exhibit *pro*-drop to some degree

### Typological correlations (e.g. Gilligan 1987; Haider 2001):

- *pro*-drop ⇔ null expletives
- no *pro*-drop ⇔ overt expletives

### 2. Creoles and *pro*

- Relevant general properties of creoles:
  - typically no inflectional morphology
  - typically no V-to-I
  - typically subject-prominent
  - weak/strong pronoun paradigm (Atlantic creoles)
  - subject/object pronouns generally share the same forms (no or few Case distinctions)
- Nicolis (2008): since creoles lack person/number morphology, referential *pro* cannot be licensed and identified.

Table 1. *pro* in creole languages (from Nicolis 2008)

	<i>pro</i> +referential	<i>pro</i> -referential	lexifier
Berbice Dutch	-	+	Dutch
Cape Verdean	-	+	Portuguese
Haitian	-	+	French
Jamaican (basilect)	-	+	English
Jamaican (acrolect)	-	+	English
Kriyol	-	+	Portuguese
Mauritian	-	+	French
Papiamentu	-	+	Portuguese/Spanish/Dutch
Saramaccan	-	+	English / Portuguese

- root null phenomena are dismissed (e.g. coordination, diary style)
- null and overt expletives generally co-exist in creole languages

## 2.1. Haitian Creole (HC)

### DeGraff (1993):

- HC weak subject pronouns are agreement markers spelling-out number and agreement features of INFL (T), licensing *pro* (cf. Rizzi 1986).

(1) [<sub>TP</sub> *pro* [<sub>T</sub> [<sub>Cl</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> ]]]] (cf. Brandi & Cordin 1989)

- The elements of the NEG-TMA-V complex constitute proper hosts with a verbal feature (extended VP) (and should crucially be clitics!)

(2) *M' ap ap sóti.* (HC, Lefebvre 1998: 112)  
 1SG DEF-FUT IMP go-out  
 'I will be going out.'

- Note: TMA-markers do not spell-out person/number information.

### Deprez (1994), Cadely (1994), Roberts (1999):

- HC exhibits phonological clitics:
  - weak pronouns can be separated from the TMA-V-complex by adverbs
  - weak pronouns can be selected by prepositions

(3) *Jan/li toujou ap travay fò.* (HC, Deprez 1994:11)  
 Jan/he always PROG work hard  
 'Jan is always working hard.'

(4) *Mwen ave I fe arye.* (HC, Deprez 1994:11)  
 'He and I will be quarterbacks.' (lit: I and he)

## 2.2. Saramaccan (SA)

Table 2. Subject pronouns in SA (Veenstra 1996).

		weak	strong
Singular	1	mi	mí, m̃
	2	i	í, jú
	3	a	én, hén
Plural	1	u	ú
	2	un, únu	ún
	3	de	dé

### Veenstra (1994)

- weak pronouns in SA behave like syntactic clitics (cf. coordination, focus, apposition, etc.)

(5) [<sub>AgrP</sub> *pro* [<sub>Agr<sub>0</sub></sub> [<sub>TP</sub>  $\bar{t}$  [<sub>T<sub>0</sub></sub> ...] [<sub>VP</sub>  $\bar{t}$  [<sub>V<sub>0</sub></sub> ...]]]]]

- In this configuration:
  - *pro* receives Case in [Spec,TP] and is identified in [Spec,AgrP]
  - Agreement markers and DPs are in complementary distribution

(6) *pro<sub>i</sub> \*(a<sub>i</sub>)-waka* (SA, Veenstra 1994)  
 3sg-walk

'He walks.'

(7) *di womi<sub>i</sub> (\*a<sub>i</sub>)-waka*  
 the man walk  
 'The man walks.'

### 2.3. Papiamentu (Pp)

Table 3. Subject pronouns in Pp (Kouwenberg 2007).

	weak	strong	emphatic
1s	m(i)	mí	àmi
2s	b(o)	bó	àbó
3s	e, el	é, né, djé	élé
1p	nos	nós	nós, anós
2p	bòsó	bòsó	bòsó, abòsó
3p	nán	nán	nán, ànán

#### Kouwenberg (2007):

- Pp weak singular pronouns are syntactic clitics in the extended projection of the verb:
  - contextually acquired tone (cf. other functional morphemes)
  - weak pronouns cannot be split from the TMA-domain
  - weak pronouns cannot be coordinated nor modified
- Kouwenberg adopts a similar analysis to that of Veenstra for SA.

### 2.4. Cape Verdean creole (CV)

Table 4. Subject pronouns in Cape Verdean (Pratas 2007: 257)

	emphatic	free forms	subject clitics
1s	ami	mi	n
2s (informal)	abo	bo	bu
2sg (formal, masc)	anho	nho	nhu
2sg (formal, fem)	anha	nha	
3sg	ael	el	e
1p	anos	nos	nu
2p	anhos	nhos	
3p	aes	es	

#### Baptista (2002)

- CV is a *pro*-drop language

( ) [<sub>AgP</sub> *mi* [<sub>Ag'</sub> [<sub>Ag</sub> *n* [VP *odja bonberu*]]]]  
 'I saw the exterminator [fire man?].'

(CV, Baptista 2002: 258)

#### Costa & Pratas (2008), Pratas (2007):

- CV is essentially a semi-*pro*-drop or partial *pro*-drop language
  - it allows only non-referential null subjects (cf. also Baptista 2002)
  - it allows *pro*'s in embedded contexts where they are variables

(8) a. *Tudu algen ta fla kel ki ∅ kre.* (everybody=embedded subject)  
 Everybody ASP say DEM REL want  
 'Everybody says what he wants.'

b. *Tudu algen fla kel ki-e / es kre.* (everybody#embedded subject)  
 Everybody say DEM REL-**3SG / 3PL** want  
 'Everybody says what s/he/they want.' (CV, Pratas 2007: 265)

(9) a. *Madalena<sub>i</sub> fla-m m'-e<sub>i</sub> ka konxe kel livru nobu di G. A..*  
 Madalena say-1SG COMP-3SG NEG know the book new by G. A.  
 'Madalena told me she does not know the new book by G. A.'

b. \**Madalena fla ma Ø ka konxe....*

- no V-to-T → Spec-Head relation cannot be obtained
- in languages with agreement markers (e.g. Bantu), agreement morphemes are obligatorily realized.

(10) (*Kodí*) *chíyâni \*(chi)-ná-ónek-a?* (Chichewa, Bresnan & Mchombo 1987)  
 Q what SM-past-happen-INDIC  
 'What happened?'

(11) *Kí alunus ki (\*es) le kel livru lí?* (CV, Pratas 2007:135)  
 WH pupils REL 3PL read DEM book LOC  
 'Which pupils read this book?'

- Agreement markers cannot be anaphorically long-distance licensed

(12) *Djon<sub>i</sub> dja ten tres anu ki e<sub>i</sub> faze si kasa.* (CV, Pratas 2007: 120)  
 Djon already have three year that 3SG make POS house  
 'Djon, it is three years ago that he finished building his house.'

- negation and TMA markers are all clitics generated under TP (cf. agglutinating languages)
- In pronoun doubling structures, the strong forms are topics (but this is not totally clear in the case of 1sg and 3sg)

Note: there is strong evidence that PAP and CVC are genetically related (e.g. Jacobs 2009)

## 2.5. Palenquero (PA)

Table 5. Subject pronouns in PA (adapted from Schwegler 2002)

		weak	strong
Singular	1	yo ~ i- ~ y-	yo
	2	bo ~ o- uté ~ te	bo uté ~ te
	3	ele ~ el' ~ e-	ele ~ eli
Plural	1	suto ~ uto	
	2	utere ~ utée	
	3	ané	

### Schwegler (2002)

- Pronoun doubling occurs only in those "persons" (1-3 singular) that exhibit a formal distinction between bound and free morphemes
- morphologically bound clitics

(13) Kikongo **y-** + **a-** bazola 'I loved them'.  
 PA **y-** + **a-** kelé-lo 'I loved them'.

- free pronouns are topics (?)

(14) **Yo i** sabé eso nu. (PA, Schwegler 2002)  
 1SG 1SG know this NEG  
 "I (emph./topic) don't know this."

## 2.6. Santome (ST)

Table 6. Subject pronouns in Santome. (Adapted from Hagemeyer 2007).

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
<b>1</b>	<i>n, am, ami</i>	<i>non</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>ô, bô</i>	<i>a, nansê, inansê</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>ê, êlé</i>	<i>a, nen, inen</i>

Table 7. Distribution of subject pronouns at the syntax-phonology interface (Hagemeyer 2007).

		<i>Syntax</i>		
		<i>Weak</i>	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Underspecified</i>
<i>Phonology</i>	<i>+Clitic</i>	<i>a, n</i>	<i>am</i>	<i>ô, nen, ê</i>
	<i>-Clitic</i>		<i>ami, êlé</i>	<i>bô, non, (i)nansê, inen</i>

- 1sg *n* → weakest form, cliticizes to the right, but can be separated from the extended VP by non-NEG/TMA material.

- (15) **N**    **ten**    *tê*    *ngê*    *nala.*    (ST, Hagemeyer 2007: 35)  
 1SG    also    have    people    there  
 'I also have/has people (I know/he knows) there.'
- (16) **N**    *ten*    **n**    *ga*    *sa*    *ke.*    (ibidem: 36)  
 1sg    also    1SG ASP    be    house  
 'As to me, I'll stay at home.'
- (17) *Mbon, ami*    *ten*    **n**    *na*    *sêbê*    *nadaxi*    *fa*    *ê.* (ibidem: 36)  
 well    1SG    also    1SG    NEG    know    nothing    NEGEMPH  
 'Well, as to me, I don't know anything.'

- 2sg *ô* → reduced form of *bô*, cliticizes to the left

- (18) *N*    *mêsê*    *p'ô*    *ku*    *Zon]*    *be.*    ← (*pa bô*)  
 1sg    want    for-2SG    with    Zon    go  
 'I want you and Zon to go.'
- (19) *N*    *mêsê*    *pa[-am/ami/\*n*    *ku*    *Zon]*    *be.*  
 1sg    want    for-1SG    with    Zon    go  
 'I want you and me to go.'

- 3sg *ê* → full pronoun, cliticizes to the left, object of Preps

- (20) *Ami*    *ku*    *ê.*  
 'S/he and I' (lit: I and s/he)

- Prosodic phrases

- (21) **Ami/\*Am**,    *migu*    *Zon,*    ... (apposition)  
 1SG    friend    Zon  
 'I, a friend of Zon ...'
- (22) [**Am/Ami**    **so**]<sub>φ</sub>    *ka*    *be.*  
 1SG/3PL    FOC    ASP    go  
 'It is me who goes.'

- Pronoun hierarchy from strongest to weakest:

- (23) *êlé* → *ami* → *am* → *bô, non, (i)nansê, inen* → *nen* → *ô, ê* → *a, n*

- Grammaticalization of pronouns

- (24) a. 1sg    *ami* > *am* > \**m* > *n*  
 b. 2sg    *bô* > *ô*  
 c. 3sg    *êlé* > \**êl* > *ê*  
 d. 3pl    *inen* > *nen*

ST exhibits phonological clitics (like HC) and can therefore not be considered a *pro*-drop language. Cases of expletive null subjects are rare.

### 3. A gradualist perspective of *pro*-drop

#### 3.1. Non-referential *pro*-drop

- Creoles show variation, for instance:
  - ST: exhibits overt expletives
  - HC: exhibits overt and null expletives
  - CV: exhibits null expletives

#### 3.2. Referential *pro*-drop

- The development of anaphoric pronouns into grammatical morphemes is well-attested (and in this example also substrate-induced):

(25) *Em i-har-im John.* (Tok Pisin, Givón 1976:168)  
he PM-heard-TRANS-John  
'He heard John.'

- full pronouns → weak pronouns → phonological clitics → syntactic clitics → affixes

#### Affixes:

- In the case of creoles (and beyond), the change from clitics to affixes has to be discussed in the light of the morphological status of the material intervening between the subject and the verb, which is usually NEG and TMA-material (cf. French *Je ne t'en veux pas* (De Cat 2005))
- If creoles exhibit morphological agreement markers, they lack the structural properties associated to better known *pro*-drop languages

#### Phonological/syntactic clitics:

- Creoles like ST and HC exhibit phonological clitics.
- Creoles like Pp, SA, Pp, PA exhibit syntactic clitics. However, in several cases more testing is clearly required (e.g. on strong-clitic sequences).
- Syntactic clitics are base-generated as heads of a functional projection (AgrS?) and are able to license and assign Case to null subjects.

#### 3.3. Change

- The data from the Atlantic creoles show that grammaticalization occurs primarily in the singular domain and, as expected, applies foremost to 1sg.
- Changes in the pronominal paradigm apply to individual pronouns and not to paradigms as a whole (e.g. Fuß 2007)

#### 3.4. Language contact

- Mauritian Creole (Syea 1993, Adone 1994) and Chabacano (Lipski 2001) exhibit specific cases of discourse-related and TMA-dependent *pro*-drop.

(26) Q: *ki Pyer pe fer?* (Mauritian; Syea, 1993: 93)  
what Peter ASP do  
'What is Peter doing?'  
A: *Pe petir labutik*  
ASP paint shop  
'He is painting the shop.'

(27) Pu repar sa sime la dimeñ. (Adone 1994: 114)  
MOD repair DET road DET tomorrow  
'[We] will repair this road tomorrow.'

- This marked form of *pro*-drop is also found in the respective Austronesian substrate languages (Fuß 2007)

- By extension, if substrate indeed turns out to play a role, creoles such as PA and CV may be good candidates for the agreement analysis, since their most important substrates, respectively Kikongo and Wolof, exhibit true agreement markers.

#### 4. Final remarks

- According to the available analyses, creole superficially look alike wrt their pronominal systems, but upon careful inspection show considerable variation (note that the findings are highly theory-dependent).

	pro-drop	non-pro-drop
overt expletives	Saramaccan	Santome
null expletives	Papiamentu Cape Verdean	Haitian

- Within the referential *pro*-drop type, more fine-grained analyses can be pursued for individual pronouns
- Discourse-bound and non-discourse bound *pro*-drop is found in creole languages
- Within the non-referential *pro*-drop type, there exists substantial variation, including optionality.
- No “creole prototype” can be established on the basis of *pro*-drop.
- Creoles typically grammaticalize elements preverbally, which is in line with the position of weak subjects
- The affixal approach may be problematic, since weak pronouns are available for syntactic operations
- The grammaticalization of weak pronouns would not constitute a “redundancy” because person/number is not encoded on the verb (cf. discussion on French)
- If claims regarding the development of agreement markers hold, the implication is that other, non-creole, languages may also be considered *pro*-drop languages (e.g. West-African languages)

- The role of substrate influence: strong/weak paradigms occur in creoles that were lexified by languages that lack this distinction (e.g. Portuguese, English, Spanish)
- Clearly, more research is necessary on the morphological status of the elements intervening between clitic subjects and verbs

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