

Copulas in contact: Kriyol, Upper Guinea Creoles, and their substrate

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The present paper aims to describe copulas in Kriyol from a semantic-syntactic perspective and to compare them to copulas in the other Upper Guinea Creoles and certain substrate languages. We will show that in Kriyol the selection of the copula from the paradigm principally depends on two factors: i) the predicate type, and ii) the aspect and tense properties of the clause. The former is responsible for the *split* encoding of nominal and locative predication. In particular, the copula *sta* occurs with locative predicates, while we find several suppletive forms for nominal predication, each with its semantic-syntactic function, namely *i*, the null copula \emptyset , *sedu*, and (y)*era*. Aspect and tense play a crucial role in the selection of the copula with nominal predicates. Furthermore, we will compare Kriyol copulas to those used in the Santiago variety of Cape Verdean Creole and Casamancese Creole, as well as to copulas in Wolof (Atlantic) and Mandinka (Mande), which are mentioned in the literature as substrate languages of the Upper Guinea proto-creole. On the basis of similarities among these languages, we will argue that Wolof and Mandinka influenced the emergence of UGC system of copulas.

Keywords: copulas, Kriyol, predicate type, aspect, tense, Upper Guinea Creoles, substrate.

1. Introduction

Several authors have contributed to the study of copulas and copular clauses in

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Kriyol (see e.g. Doneux & Rougé 1988; Ichinose 1993; Intumbo 2007; Intumbo, Inverno & Holm 2013; Kihm 1994, 2007; Peck 1988; Wilson 1995). These works provide a general picture of Kriyol system of copulas, but some pieces of the puzzle are still missing.

The goal of the present paper is twofold. First, it aims to offer new insights into the study of copulas in Kriyol. In particular, the criteria underlying the selection of the copula from the paradigm will be identified and Kriyol copulas will be described on the basis of their semantic-syntactic function. Both the nominal and locative predicative domains will be taken into account. For reasons of space, property items and adjectives will not be dealt with in this paper.¹ In a similar fashion, we will limit ourselves to the treatment of inherent predication and leave stage-level predication for future research.

The second goal of the paper is to compare the system of copulas of Kriyol to those of other Upper Guinea Creoles (UGCs) and of their substrate. The comparison aims to show important similarities in the system of copulas of these languages and to provide new evidence of substrate influence on the grammar of UGCs. In particular, we will take into account the Santiago variety of Capeverdean Creole (SCV) and Casamancese Creole (CAS), which are historically and grammatically the UGC varieties closest to Kriyol (see e.g. Jacobs 2010). With regard to the substrate, we will consider the Niger-Congo languages Wolof (Atlantic) and Mandinka (Mande), which are mentioned as major contributors in a number of studies (see e.g. Ichinose 1995; Jacobs 2010; Kihm 2011; Lang 2004, 2015; Quint 2008; Rougé 1999).² This comparison will show that Kriyol, SCV, and CAS share the same predicative encoding: they use distinct copulas for nominal and locative predication. Moreover, UGCs use a non-verbal copula with nominal predicates in clauses that lack aspect marking. Crucially, they share the presence of non-verbal copulas with both Wolof and Mandinka. This represents evidence in favour of the influence of these languages on the emergence of the system of copulas of UGCs.

The paper is organized as follows. After a description of the methodology in section 1.1, section 2 will provide the essential means for our investigation, namely a working definition for copulas and a general description of aspect and tense in Kriyol. In section 3, we will identify the criteria underlying the copula selection and describe Kriyol copulas on the basis of their semantic-syntactic function. In section 4, we will take into account copulas in

¹ For a general description of adjectives and property items in Kriyol, or “basic quality items”, see Kihm (1994: 34ff.; 2000).

² Temne and some other Atlantic languages are also mentioned as substrates (see e.g. Rougé 1999; Quint 2008). Their (lexical) contribution is, however, very limited.

both SCV and CAS and compare UGCs copulas to those of Wolof and Mandinka. Section 5 will summarize and interpret the main findings of the paper.

1.1. Methodology

The present paper is based on both literature study and first-hand spoken data from interview sessions with Kriyol native speakers. The corpus consists of about 30 hours of recorded spontaneous speech and of elicited data. The sessions took place principally in Guinea-Bissau (central, northern, and Bijagos insular regions), but also among Bissau-Guinean communities in Europe (Portugal, Germany, and Italy). The informants' profile includes men and women from different regions of Guinea-Bissau from both urban and rural areas. Most informants have attended school at least up to the 10th grade. Some have academic education, while a few are illiterate. Their age ranges between 18 and 70. Kriyol is the native language or one of the native languages (L1) of most informants: most of them speak Kriyol in every aspect of their life, while some speak Kriyol principally outside their family. Finally, some informant speaks Kriyol as second language, having one or more national languages as L1. However, these informants live in urban areas and use Kriyol for any communication purpose outside their family. Their fluency in Kriyol motivates their inclusion in this study. A quite homogenous picture with regard to copulas and copular clauses resulted from the profiles described above. All Kriyol data presented in the paper were taken from our corpus, unless indicated otherwise. SCV, CAS, Wolof and Mandinka data, on the other hand, were drawn from the available literature.

2. Copulas in Kriyol: some general remarks

Kriyol has a rich paradigm of copulas, in which each item is specified for a certain semantic-syntactic function. The selection of the copula from the paradigm follows certain criteria, which are found crosslinguistically (Stassen 1997), i.e. the predicate type and the aspect-tense properties of the clause. Therefore we will briefly introduce the system of aspect and tense in Kriyol in section 2.1. This will help us understand how the aspect and tense properties of the clause underlie the copula selection. Certain copulas overlap in their syntactic distribution, giving rise to interesting micro-variation in Kriyol. We will see these aspects in more detail below.

Before we go on with the description of Kriyol copulas, we need to provide a working definition for the object of our study, viz. the copula. In the literature on copulas, there is no agreement as to what the term *copula* denotes. In particular, there are two main directions of thinking. For some scholars, the copula is a dummy item, devoid of any lexical content, which only operates a link between a subject and its predicate (see e.g. Lyons 1968; Dik 1989). For others, the copula has semantic content and functions as a kind of semantic operator, which attributes the description or property referred to by the predicate complement to a subject (see e.g. Rothstein 2001). The present paper does not aim to take part in the theoretical discussion of the status and function of the copula. Nonetheless, it will be useful to give a working definition of copulas, since they are the focus of the present study: we will label as copulas any lexical item, both verbal and not, which operates the attribution of a description or a property between a subject and its complement.

2.1. Aspect and tense in Kriyol

In Kriyol, aspect and tense are expressed either by bare verbs or by morphological markers.³ More specifically, perfective aspect corresponds to the non-marked option, i.e. the bare verb. A bare dynamic verb yields a simple past reading (1a), while a bare stative verb receives a present tense interpretation (1b).

- (1) a. *N kumpra pon.*
 1SG.CL buy bread
 ‘I bought (some) bread.’
- b. *I tene un primu na Bula.*
 3SG.CL have INDF cousin in Bula
 ‘S/He has a cousin in Bula.’

The postverbal marker *ba* contributes a [+PST] meaning. As a consequence, *ba* at the right of a dynamic verb yields a past before past interpretation (2a), while

³ For reasons of space, we will not consider mood. For a more detailed description of the TAM system of Kriyol, see Peck (1988) and Kihm (1994).

a stative verb followed by *ba* will receive a simple past interpretation (2b).⁴

- (2) a. *N kumpra ba pon.*
 1SG.CL buy PST bread
 ‘I had bought (some) bread.’
- b. *I tene ba un primu na Bula.*
 3SG.CL have PST INDF cousin in Bula
 ‘S/He had a cousin in Bula.’

Ba in Kriyol may also follow nominals or adverbials and may be found in sentence-final position (3a-b): in these cases, it either emphasizes the past, if it is already expressed in the clause (3a) or places the whole clause in the past (3b).⁵

- (3) a. *No pirdi ke no cultura ba.*
 1PL.CL loose DEM our culture PST
 ‘We lost our ancient culture.’
- b. [...] *e ta fala basi di analisi*
 3PL.CL HAB say base of analysis
linguistika ba.
 linguistic PST
 ‘[...] they used to call [it] introduction to linguistic analysis.’

With respect to imperfectivity, Kriyol always marks it through specified preverbal imperfective morphemes, i.e. continuous marker *na* (4a) and habitual

⁴ Between a verb and *ba*, only object clitics or verbal derivational morphology such as the passive *-du* and the causative suffix *-nta/-nte/-nti* may occur.

⁵ The syntactic status of the past marker *ba* in Kriyol is object of controversy (for different analyses, see e.g. Kihm (1994), Peck (1988), and Truppi & Hagemeyer (2018)).

ta (4b). As the sentence in (4a) shows, continuous *na* may yield either a progressive or a near future reading.

(4) a. *I na kumpra pis.*

3SG.CL CONT buy fish

‘S/He is buying/will buy fish.’

b. *Durante ki dias, inda i ka ta tene nomi.*

during DEM day-PL still 3SG.CL NEG HAB have name

‘During those [first] days, [the baby] does not have a name, yet.’

The future may be expressed either by continuous marker *na* (4a) or by combinations of markers and verbs of movement. According to Kihm (1994: 108-117), *na bin* (CONT + ‘come’) and *na ba ta* (CONT + reduced form of *bay* ‘go’ + HAB) express the specific (5a) and the non-specific future (5b), respectively.

(5) a. *Bo na bin kungsi.*

2PL.CL CONT come know

‘[When you go there,] you will know it.’

b. *Dipus e na ba ta toka.*

after 3PL.CL CONT go HAB play

‘After that, they will play music.’

The picture described so far as for aspect and tense in Kriyol closely resembles the aspect-tense systems of the other UGCs, especially CAS (see Biagui 2012).

3. The paradigm of copulas in Kriyol

Differently from its lexifier language, i.e. European Portuguese (EP), the system of copulas in Kriyol consists of both verbal and non-verbal items. On the one

hand, we have the verbs *sedu* ‘to be’, *sta* ‘to be, to stay’, and the past copula (y)*era* ‘was/were’. Among the verbal copulas, we also need to mention the past copula *foi*. Its occurrence is limited to highly educated Kriyol speakers which are fluent in EP. Hence, we do not consider it as a full member of the paradigm. On the other hand, we find the nonverbal copula *i* (homophonous with the 3SG subject clitic pronoun) and the null copula \emptyset .⁶ Note that all copular items in Kriyol are invariable forms, similarly to Kriyol verbs: they do not show any morphological agreement with their subjects. Kriyol lacks, in fact, verbal inflectional morphology.⁷

With regard to their source, most Kriyol copulas are quite transparent. In particular, *sta* derives from EP 3SG present *está* of locative and stage-level copula *estar* ‘to be, to stay’. (Y)*era* and *foi* trace back to EP 3SG past forms *era* and *foi*, imperfective and perfective, respectively. The origin of *sedu* and *i*, however, is less straightforward. According to Kihm (1994: 272), *sedu* derives from EP verb *ser* ‘to be’ with delatocism of /r/ and epenthesis of final /u/. *Sedu* would, thus, come from an infinitive form, while all other verbal copulas (and verbs, in general) derive from 3SG forms. Otherwise, Kriyol could have innovated a regular past participle *se(r)+ -du* (cf. *fasi* ‘do, make’ + *-du* = *fasi-du*, as compared to EP irregular past participle *feito* ‘done, made’).⁸ The latter option is, however, problematic, given that the suffix *-du* is used, at least in present-day Kriyol, for deriving passives, and not participial forms. Kihm’s explanation, i.e. that EP *ser* is the source of *sedu*, is the most plausible. The presence of verbal copulas such as *ser* and *sedi*, which are found in SCV and CAS, respectively, represents further evidence of EP *ser* as the source of *ser/sedu/sedi* and reinforces the hypothesis of a shared UGC proto-creole.⁹ Moreover, the phonetic change from /r/ to /d/ is well attested in Kriyol (e.g. EP

⁶ The status of *i* in Kriyol grammar is unclear: it has been defined as a pronoun, a predicate marker, and a copula (see e.g. Ichinose 1993; Kihm 1994, 2007; Peck 1988).

⁷ Verbs can undergo derivational processes: the suffixes *-du* and *-nti/-nte/-nta* attach to verbs in order to derive passives and causatives, respectively (see Kihm 1994: 241ff), e.g. *pistadu* ‘be lent’ and *bibinti* ‘make drink’.

⁸ For the latter option, I am grateful to the suggestion of an anonymous reviewer. Differently, the EP past participle *sido* is excluded from the possible sources. If EP *sido* ‘been’ were the source of Kriyol *sedu*, this would imply that Kriyol high vowel /i/ would have lowered to /ɛ/, which is an unusual process in Kriyol. Furthermore, Middle Portuguese displays the past participial form *seudo*. This form is attested in the *Corpus Informatizado do Português Medieval* (CIPM) in texts before the 15th century. This virtually excludes this ancient past participle from the possible sources of Kriyol *sedu*. I thank Rita Marquilhas, Catarina Magro, and Ernestina Carrilho for their help and for sharing their expertise.

⁹ I thank Tjerk Hagemeijer for this observation.

parir ‘give birth’ > Kriyol *padi* ‘give birth’; EP *virar* ‘turn’ > Kriyol *bida* ‘become’).¹⁰

Finally, as to the item *i*, we have two possibilities: it derives either from the personal pronoun *i*, which is both 3SG.CL subject and a resumptive pronoun in topic-comment structures, or from EP 3SG copula *é*, from *ser* ‘to be’. We will assume with Ichinose (1993) and Kihm (2007) that the copula *i* is derived from 3SG pronoun *i*.¹¹ The fact that also SCV and CAS display non-verbal copulas homophonous with the 3SG.CL pronoun, namely *e* in SCV and *i* in CAS, is also suggestive of a common origin of UGCs, i.e. proto-UGC, and of a similar path of copularization.

3.1. Criteria for the copula selection

The distribution of the copulas in Kriyol is primarily based on two principles, which underlie the copula selection crosslinguistically (Stassen 1997): i) the predicate type, and ii) the aspect-tense properties of the clause. In particular, the former is responsible for the split between nominal and locative predication in Kriyol. As we mentioned above, Kriyol and the genetically related SCV and CAS use distinct copulas with nominal and locative predicates; in Stassen’s (2013) terminology, they are *split* languages. While locative predicates select the copula *sta*, the domain of nominal predication is more complex and presents an interesting suppletivism.¹² In particular, the non-verbal copula *i* occurs with nominal predicates in clauses that lack aspect marking. Whenever an (imperfective) aspect marker is present, on the other hand, the copula *sedu* is selected from the paradigm. Note that *sedu* in Kriyol is not only used in combination with aspect markers, but may also occur in its bare form. We will see below that the bare copula *sedu* may have a slightly different semantics than *i*.

As for past tense marking, copular clauses show micro-variation. There are three different strategies for the marking of past in copular clauses with a nominal predicate: either the suppletive copula (y)*era* is selected or the past marker *ba* follows the nominal predicate of a copular clause with *i/∅* or *ba* follows the copula *sedu*. Finally, a further strategy is represented by the past

¹⁰ Kihm (1994: 18f.) shows that the change /r/ > /d/ in Kriyol can be related to the phonology of Atlantic languages such as Manjaku.

¹¹ For a more detailed discussion, see Ichinose (1993) and Kihm (2007). The authors propose different analyses as to the path of copularization of *i*.

¹² *Sta* in Kriyol is also used for expressing stage-level predication with adjectival predicates and with (at least some) property items such as *duenti* ‘to be ill’ (see Kihm 1994: 91f.). However, we will not discuss these cases in the present paper.

copula *foi*: it is inherently perfective and is used by speakers who are fluent in EP. In the following sections, we will describe Kriyol copulas one by one and show their semantic-syntactic properties.

3.2. The copula *i*

The copula *i* occurs in bare nominal predication. In other words, in the absence of aspect markers, *i* operates the attribution to the subject of what is being predicated in the complement (6a-c).

- (6) a. *Ami i pursor.*
 1SG.TOP COP teacher
 ‘I am a teacher.’
- b. *Kil omi i piskadur.*
 DEM man COP fisherman
 ‘That man is a fisherman.’
- c. *Tina i musika ke mindjer-is ta toka.*
 Tina COP music REL woman-PL HAB play
 ‘*Tina* is a style of music that women play.’

If the subject has plural reference, it is overtly marked for plurality by the plural marker *-(i)s*. The predicate complement can be overtly pluralized or not, without any difference in the meaning (7).

- (7) *Kil omi-s i piskadur(-is).*
 DEM man-PL COP fisherman(-PL)
 ‘Those men are fishermen.’

We mentioned above that *i* is a non-verbal copula. As already noticed in Ichinose (1993) and Kihm (2007), among others, *i* does not behave as a verb.¹³ First, whenever the subject of a copular clause is pronominal, *i* selects a strong pronoun, i.e. a topic (8a). By contrast, regular verbs in Kriyol select a weak

¹³ See Baptista (2002, 2007) for similar tests with the copula *e* in SCV.

subject pronoun (8b). The subject of an *i*-copular clause can never be a weak pronoun (notice that (8a) with 1SG.CL *n* as its subject is ungrammatical).

- (8) a. *Ami* (**n*) *i* *pursor*.
 1SG.TOP 1SG.CL COP teacher
 ‘I am a teacher.’¹⁴
- b. (*Ami*) *n* *bay* *Cacheu*.
 1SG.TOP 1SG.CL go Cacheu
 ‘(As for me), I went to Cacheu.’

Second, the behaviour of *i* with respect to negation is different from the typical behaviour of verbs in Kriyol. In particular, the negative marker *ka* always occurs before verbs and preverbal markers (9a), while it always follows *i* in copular clauses (9b).

- (9) a. *N* *ka* *na* *lembra*.
 1SG.CL NEG CONT remember
 ‘I don’t remember.’
- b. *Bula* (**ka*) *i* *(*ka*) *un* *sidadi* *garandi*.
 Bula (NEG) COP NEG INDF city big
 ‘Bula is not a big town.’

A third test regards the marking of aspect. Aspectual markers can only modify verbs (and verb-like items such as property items). We already mentioned that they always occur in preverbal position (see examples 4 and 5 above) and that, whenever the VP is negated, they occur between the negation and the verb (9a). Crucially, aspect markers or combinations of aspect markers and verbs of

¹⁴ The bare noun predicate *pursor* yields an indefinite interpretation. The corresponding definite interpretation would give rise to a specificational copular clause, which is usually expressed in Kriyol by a cleft structure with optional *i*, e.g. (*I*) *abo ki pursor* ‘You are the teacher’. Specificational clauses of the type *Pursor i abo* are also possible, but were often judged as odd during elicitation tasks.

movement cannot co-occur with *i* (10a). The sentence in (10b) shows the suppletive strategy used in Kriyol, i.e. the use of the verbal copula *sedu*.

(10) a. **Abo*/**Bu* **na* *i* *pursor*.

2SG.TOP/CL CONT COP teacher

‘You will be a teacher.’

b. *Bu* *na* *sedu* *pursor*.

2SG.CL CONT COP teacher

‘You will be a teacher.’ (adapt. from Ichinose 1993: 24)

A final test regards the past marker. In particular, the copula *i* may also occur in past copular clauses: in this case, the past marker *ba* does not follow *i*, but the nominal complement (11 a-b).

(11) a. *Sedu* *jurnalista* *i* *ka* *nha* *opson* *ba*.¹⁵

be journalist COP NEG my option PST

‘To be a journalist was, indeed, not my ambition.’

b. *Abo* *i* *bon* *alunu* *ba*.

2SG.TOP COP good student PST

‘You were a good student.’

So far, we have shown that the copula *i* is not a verbal item. The presence of non-verbal copulas is a quite widespread phenomenon crosslinguistically (see e.g. Stassen 1997; Pustet 2003). For the present purpose, what matters is that non-verbal copulas are found not only in the other UGCs under study, but also in Wolof and Mandinka.

¹⁵ *Sedu* in (11a) is glossed as ‘be’ and not as COP, because here it is not in its copular function. We defined above that a copula is any item performing a link between a subject and its predicate complement.

3.3. The null copula

Nominal predication in Kriyol may be expressed by copula-less sentences (12a-b). These are not cases of simple juxtaposition, given that they present a different prosody, i.e. a small pause follows the subject (see also Ichinose 1993 and Kihm 2000). Note that the null copula occurs in the same syntactic and semantic contexts as the copula *i*, as shown in the sentence in (7), repeated in (12b) below. This sentence would also be felicitous if the subject (and its nominal complement) were singular (see 6b above). In other words, the absence of copula is unrelated to the number reference of the subject and its complement.

- (12) a. *Ami* \emptyset *tenista*.
 1SG.TOP \emptyset tennis.player
 ‘I am a tennis player.’
- b. *Kil* *omi-s* *la* (*i*) *piskadur(-is)*.
 DEM man-PL there COP fisherman(-PL)
 ‘Those men are fishermen.’

Copula-less constructions may also contain the past marker *ba*, in a similar fashion to what observed above for the copula *i* (13).

- (13) *Padre di nha parokia* \emptyset *el* ***ba*** *nan*.
 priest of my parish \emptyset 3SG.TOP PST DM
 ‘The father of my parish was him.’

Copula-less structures are very frequent in spontaneous speech. Informants’ intuitions do not reveal any semantic difference between copular clauses with *i* and copula-less structures. Still, elicitation tasks reveal a preference for clauses with the overt copula *i*. Therefore we have two possible explanations: either the null copula is the result of dropping of *i* or the two copulas (*i* and \emptyset) represent two different, competing strategies.¹⁶

¹⁶ These copula-less structures may be evidence of an initial stage of Kriyol as a null-copula language. At a later stage, the copula *i* emerged, but is still frequently omitted in spontaneous speech. Note that, however, several languages of West Africa, e.g. Joola and Bainouk, have zero copulas (thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this observation). Copula-less structures

3.4. The copula *sedu*

The copula *sedu* is a verbal item and is principally found in syntactic environments marked for imperfective aspect (and future tense). We said above that *i* is only allowed in contexts without any overt marking of aspect. The suppletive copula *sedu* occurs whenever an imperfective aspect marker is present (see 10b above, repeated in 14a). The same is true in the case of combinations of markers and verbs of movement for the expression of specific or non-specific future (see section 2.2).

(14) a. *Bu na sedu pursor.*

2SG.CL CONT COP teacher

‘You will be a teacher.’

b. *Algin ka sibi inda ke ku na bin*

somebody NEG know yet what REL CONT come

sedu dipus.

COP after

‘No one knows yet what will happen.’

Interestingly, *sedu* may be also found in contexts in which no aspect marker is present (15).

(15) *N sedu monitor.*

1SG.CL COP coach

‘I am a [tennis] coach.’

We carried out elicitation tasks with informants in order to understand whether bare *sedu* is a simple alternate of *i* or whether there are semantic differences between the two copulas. The sentence in (16a) was judged as odd by most informants when compared to the perfectly felicitous (16b), while some

represent, therefore, a quite widespread phenomenon in the area. Copular clauses with *i* and copula-less structures in Kriyol require further investigation.

between clauses with (y)*era* and *i/∅*-copular clauses with the past marker *ba* (cf. (18b) and (11b), repeated in (18c)).¹⁸

- (18) a. *N yera pikininu.*
 1SG.CL COP.PST little
 ‘I was a young boy.’
- b. *Bu (y)era bon alunu.*
 2SG.CL COP.PST good student
- c. *Abo i bon alunu ba.*
 2SG.TOP COP good student PST
 ‘You were a good student.’

The form *yara* is also attested: for Peck (1988: 252), it is a dialectal variant of (y)*era*. *Yara* is found only once in our corpus (19): it was uttered by a Felup woman living in Cacheu, but native of Elia (sector of São Domingos, region of Cacheu).

- (19) *I yara ba piskadur.*
 3SG.CL COP.PST PST fisherman
 ‘He was a fisherman.’

In (19), we can also notice that the past marker *ba* follows the past copula: this is very common also with the form (y)*era* (20). *Ba* does not add any further meaning to (y)*era/yara*, as is shown in (20) if compared to (18b).

- (20) *Bu (y)era ba bon alunu.*
 2SG.CL COP.PST PST good student
 ‘You were a good student.’

¹⁸ The co-presence of these two past strategies, i.e. (y)*era* and *i/∅*-clause + *ba* in present-day Kriyol is probably the result of different moments in the emergence of copulas in Kriyol (see e.g. Kihm 2007).

According to Peck (1988: 252), speakers “better acquainted with Portuguese” prefer (y)*era/yara* without *ba*. Our consultants confirm Peck’s intuition: *yera* is fully accepted with or without *ba*, but (y)*era* alone is perceived as a Portuguese-like expression.

3.6. The copula *foi*

The copula *foi* is used in past copular clauses (21a). In a similar fashion to (y)*era*, it can be followed by *ba* (21b).

- (21) a. *N* *foi* *jugadur di* *Bafata*.
 1SG.CL COP.PST player of Bafatá
 ‘I was a [football] player of Bafatá.’
- b. *N* *na* *bai toka na ladu di*
 1SG.CL CONT go touch in side of
 disportu, kuma ke i *foi* *ba*.
 sport how REL 3SG.CL COP.PST PST
 ‘I will tell you about my career as a sportsperson, how it was.’

Foi is used by speakers with a high level of education, i.e. speakers who are fluent in EP. Like *foi* in EP, it always yields a perfective reading. This was already noticed in Peck (1988: 137): “highly educated speakers” also use the EP copula *foi* with its original semantics.¹⁹ On the basis of its limited distribution, we do not treat *foi* as a full member of the copula paradigm of Kriyol. It should nevertheless be mentioned in a study on copulas in Kriyol.

3.7. The copula *sta*

Similarly to its lexifier EP, Kriyol expresses location through the copula *sta*.

¹⁹ Peck further notices that highly educated Kriyol speakers also use other EP past forms such as *esteve* ‘s/he was/stayed’ (perfective), *teve* ‘s/he had’ (perfective), *tinha* ‘s/he had (imperfective; *tinha* is both 1SG and 3SG in EP) in their original aspectual meaning. The data from our corpus confirm this: apart from the use of *foi*, verbal forms such as *teve* and *tinha* are used by highly educated speakers.

- (22) a. *Ki kwatru mas pikininu-s sta na Guiné.*
 DEM four more small-PL COP in Guinea
 ‘That four younger [siblings] are in Guinea [Bissau].’
- b. *Si kuku sta dentru di kila.*
 POSS.3SG kernel COP inside of DEM-LOC
 ‘The kernel is inside it [the fruit].’

Sta is a stative verb. Recall from section 2.2 that bare stative verbs yield a present tense reading, as shown in (22a-b). In order to derive an imperfective interpretation, *sta* has to be preceded by an aspect marker or by the combination of markers and verbs of movement (23a-b).

- (23) a. *E ta sta la djenti-s garandi.*
 3PL.CL HAB COP there people-PL big
 ‘Older people are there.’
- b. *I na bin sta na Portugal.*
 3SG.CL CONT come COP in Portugal
 ‘S/He is going to live in Portugal.’

Like any other stative verb in Kriyol, the past tense is expressed by the marker *ba* (24).

- (24) *Bu sta ba la.*
 2SG.CL COP PST there
 ‘You were there.’

3.8. Summary

So far, we provided a description of copulas in Kriyol and their semantic-syntactic function within the domain of inherent predication. A first crucial distinction is between nominal and locative predication. While locative predicates select the copula *sta*, nominal predication triggers an interesting

suppletivism. The copulas *i* and \emptyset occur in both present and past copular clauses in the absence of aspect markers. *Sedu* may also occur in syntactic environments, which do not contain any overt marking of aspect. Whether we are dealing with a variant of *i* or a semantically different form needs to be studied in more detail. Finally, we noticed that Kriyol displays several strategies for the expression of the past tense, of which at least two display the same semantics, namely the suppletive *(y)era* and the nominal predicate followed by *ba*. A further option for the expression of the past tense is the copula *foi*, which is used in its original perfective meaning by Kriyol speakers with EP as L2 and represents influence of EP. Table 1 summarizes the distribution of copulas based on the predicate type and on the aspect-tense properties of the clause.

Table 1: Copulas in Kriyol, predicate type, and Tense-Aspect marking

Copulas	Predicate type	Aspect marking	Tense marking (<i>ba</i>)
<i>i</i>	+N	no	yes
\emptyset	+N	no	yes
<i>sedu</i>	+N	yes	yes
<i>sta</i>	+LOC	yes	yes
<i>(y)era</i>	+N	no	yes
<i>foi</i>	+N	no	yes

Table 1 clearly shows that *sta* is the only copula used for locative predication. Moreover, while all copulas can co-occur with the past marker *ba*, only two of the verbal copulas, namely *sedu* and *sta*, may show up jointly with an aspect marker. Responsible for this split is probably the fact that *sedu* and *sta* may be used as infinitive forms in Kriyol grammar, while *(y)era* and *foi* are inherently specified for (past) tense. Finally, it is not unexpected that the non-verbal copulas *i* and \emptyset can co-occur with *ba*. In fact, *ba* may also occur after nominals/adverbials or in peripheral positions; in the latter case, it marks the whole clause for past (cf. (3a-b) above).

4. Copulas in other UGCs and their substrate languages

Kriyol is historically and linguistically closely related to SCV and to CAS: together, they belong to the UGC group of Atlantic creoles. Most studies, such as Jacobs (2010), Lang (2015), Quint (2008), and Rougé (1999), have highlighted Wolof and Mandinka as substrate languages for the UGCs and for the proto-creole they emerged from.

By providing an overview of copulas in SCV, CAS, Wolof, and Mandinka, the present section aims to contribute new insights into the study of UGC substrate. In particular, the comparison of copulas in UGCs with copulas in Wolof and Mandinka will show crucial similarities in the encoding of nominal and locative predication and in the presence of non-verbal copulas. This will bring new evidence in favour of the hypothesis that these two languages have contributed to the emergence of copulas in UGCs.²⁰

4.1. Copulas in UGCs

Kriyol, SCV, and CAS share the same predicative encoding, i.e. nominal and locative predication use distinct copulas. In particular, SCV and Kriyol exhibit the locative copula *sta*, whereas CAS displays the form *sá*.²¹ In bare nominal predication, i.e. in the absence of aspect markers, SCV uses the non-verbal copula *e*, which closely resembles Kriyol *i*.²² Past tense in SCV is expressed by the suppletive form *era*, which cannot be followed by the past marker *ba*.²³ Moreover, *ba* in SCV only occurs with verbs; this renders the nominal past strategy as found in Kriyol impossible in SCV. Whenever an aspect marker occurs, the verbal copula *ser* is selected. This resembles the case of *sedu* in Kriyol. All in all, nominal and locative predication in SCV are quite similar to the pattern found in Kriyol.

With regard to CAS, the general picture is even more similar to the system of copulas in Kriyol. The copula *i* occurs with nominal complements in clauses which lack aspect markers. *Sedi* is used jointly with aspect markers for the expression of imperfective aspect (and future tense).²⁴ Like Kriyol *sedu*, CAS *sedi* may also occur without aspect markers.²⁵ Differently from both Kriyol and SCV, locative predication in CAS is expressed by *sá*. This copula

²⁰ Note that several other Atlantic and Mande languages spoken in the area have a similar system of nominal and locative predication.

²¹ SCV shows the same distinction between individual-level (*e*) and stage-level predication (*sta*) as in EP (individual-level *ser* ‘to be’ vs. stage-level and locative *estar* ‘to be, to stay’). SCV may express stage-level predication also with nominal predicates (Baptista 2002: 102).

²² Similarly to Kriyol, we have two options as for the origin of *e*: it is either derived from EP copula *é* ‘is’ or from 3SG.CL subject pronoun *e* (see Baptista 2002, 2007).

²³ The past suffix *-ba* in SCV is able to mark *ser* for past and/or counterfactuality, at least in complex VPs such as *e kreba serba* ‘s/he wanted to be’ (Fernanda Pratas p.c.).

²⁴ Like Kriyol, SCV and CAS do not have specialized markers for the future tense. The most usual strategies for the marking of future are the use of the imperfective preverbal markers *ta* in SCV and *na* in CAS.

²⁵ CAS bare *sedi* with a nominal complement yields an accomplished/resultative reading (see Biagui 2012: 188).

may also occur with nominal predicates: in this case, it implies a change of state (Biagui 2012: 191).²⁶ As for the absence of copulas in the case of nominal predicates in the present tense, we did not find any record in the literature on CAS. Finally, the past is expressed either by the past copula *yera* followed by the past marker *baŋ* or by *sedi baŋ*. A non-verbal (copula-less) strategy marked by *baŋ* is also documented in Biagui (2012).²⁷ Whether the latter strategy is also possible with the copula *i*, in a similar fashion to Kriyol, is not clear in the literature. The main findings with regards to copulas within the domain of inherent predication in UGCs are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: An overview of copulas in UGCs

	Copulas	Predicate type	Aspect marking	Tense marking
SCV	<i>e</i>	+N	no	no
	<i>ser</i>	+N	yes	yes
	<i>sta</i>	+LOC	yes	yes
	<i>era</i>	+N	no	no
CAS	<i>i</i>	+N	no	?
	∅	+N	no	yes
	<i>sedi</i>	+N	yes	yes
	<i>sá</i>	+LOC; +N	yes	yes
	<i>yera</i>	+N	no	yes
Kriyol	<i>i</i>	+N	no	yes
	∅	+N	no	yes
	<i>sedu</i>	+N	yes	yes
	<i>sta</i>	+LOC	yes	yes
	<i>(y)era</i>	+N	no	yes

²⁶ Like SCV *sta*, CAS *sá* may occur with both nominal and adjectival predicates (see e.g. Biagui 2012). Whether *sá* also expresses stage-level predication is not clear from the available data.

²⁷ Examples of copula-less structures in the past tense are the following sentences adapted from Biagui (2012):

- (i) *A-nos tudu di la baŋ.*
 1PL.TOP all of there PST
 ‘We all came from there.’ (adapt. from Biagui 2012: 173)
- (ii) *Yel mininu baŋ.*
 3SG.TOP child PST
 ‘He was a child.’ (ibid., p. 280)

4.2. Copulas in Wolof and Mandinka

With regard to the domain of copulas, Wolof and Mandinka show important similarities to the UGCs. First of all, like UGCs, Wolof and Mandinka display non-verbal copulas. Moreover, they show a similar encoding to the UGCs, i.e. they use distinct copulas for nominal and locative predication. However, we will see that at least one of the copulas used with nominal predicates in Wolof may also be used with locatives.

Wolof uses non-verbal copulas in clauses with nominal complements, i.e. *a* and *la* (25a-b).²⁸

(25) a. *Xale yi nàppkat-a.*

child D.PL fisherman-COP

‘The children are fishermen.’

b. *Xale yi nàppkat la-ñu.*²⁹

child D.PL fisherman COP-3PL

‘The children, they’re fishermen.’ (adapt. from Torrence 2005: 226)

Another non-verbal copula that can occur in copular clauses with nominal predicates is the morpheme *di*: it may occur alone or with *a* (cf. (26a-b)). *Di* is an imperfective marker in Wolof: it covers several temporal and aspectual interpretations such as habitual, progressive, and future.³⁰ Yet, whenever it occurs in a copular clause with a nominal predicate, it does not contribute any

²⁸ There is no agreement in the literature as to the syntactic status of (*l*)*a* in Wolof. In particular, Stewart (1970: 6ff.) assumes that *a* and *la* function both as copulas and as subject and complement predicator, respectively, and occupy marginal positions, namely after the noun they refer to. Torrence (2005, 2013) analyses (*l*)*a* as a copula, while Dunigan (1994) and Russell (2006) consider it a focus marker. Finally, Martinović (2015) assumes that (*l*)*a* is a complementizer. For the purpose of the present section, we will limit ourselves to take into account the items that occur in nominal and locative predication and will call them ‘copulas’ following our working definition of ‘items that link a subject to its predicate complement’.

²⁹ Note that we slightly simplified the original annotation of some of the examples inserted in this section. In (25b), for example, Torrence indicates *la* as the combination of expletive *l-* + *-a*; however, he analyses both *a* and *la* as copulas. For the original glosses, I refer the reader to the source of the examples.

³⁰ The situation with respect to the marking of TAM in copular clauses in Wolof is quite complex. See Torrence (2005: 225ff.; 279f.) for a detailed treatment of copular clauses, TAM and negation.

aspectual meaning and may be considered a dummy verbal element.³¹

(26) a. *Gàllaay di jàngalekat.*

gallaay COP teacher

‘Gallaay is a teacher (not something else)’

b. *Gàllaay mu a (y) kàccoor*

gallaay 3SG COP (di) rascal

‘A rascal is what Gallaay is.’³² (adapt. from Torrence 2005: 257)

With regard to locative predication, Wolof displays both a verbal and a non-verbal strategy. In copular clauses, we may find either the existential verb *nekk* ‘to be’ (27a) or a verbless structure with the locative clitic *ngi*, which can co-occur with *a*, i.e. *a-ngi* (27b).³³

(27) a. *Ci kow lal bi la caabi ji nekk.*

P up bed D.SG LA key D.SG COP

‘The key is on the bed.’ (adapt. from Perrin 2005: 702)

b. *Ma-a-ngi ci biir néeg bi.*

1SG-A-LOC.CL P stomach room D.SG

‘I am in the room.’ (adapt. from Martinović & Schwarzer, to appear)

³¹ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this information. For a detailed treatment of *di* in Wolof, see Bochnak & Martinović (2018) and Torrence (2005).

³² Note that the sentence in (26a) yields a contrastive focus reading, ‘Gallaay is a TEACHER (not something else)’, while (26b) represents a subject argument cleft. Moreover, the optional *y* in (26b) is a reduced form of *di*. See Torrence (2005: 257ff) for a more detailed treatment of the occurrence of *di* in copular clauses and of its co-occurrence with (*l-*)*a*.

³³ The presence of *a* is not mandatory, as shown in the following example adapted from Torrence (2005: 255):

(i) *Móódu mu-ng-i ca ja ba*
 Moodu 3SG-LOC.CL P market D
 ‘Moodu is at the market.’

For an in-depth study of locative constructions in Wolof, see Martinović and Schwarzer (to appear) and Torrence (2005: 254ff.). In the present paper, we will not analyse more in detail the possibility of copula-less locative constructions.

According to Torrence (2005: 264), with regard to the expression of past tense in copular clauses, Wolof displays an independent past form *woon* that co-occurs with the non-verbal copulas in both nominal and locative predication and is found in marginal positions (28a-b). Like Kriyol and CAS, Wolof also displays a bound form of the past marker, i.e. *-(w)oon*, which is used with verbs and verbal items.³⁴ Therefore, when the existential verb *nekk* is found with a locative predicate, it can be marked for past by the bound form *-(w)oon* of the past marker (28c).

(28) a. *Sidi (l-)a woon.*

Sidi COP past

‘It was Sidi.’ (adapt. from Torrence 2005: 264)

b. *Móódu mu-ng-i woon ca ja ba.*

Moodu 3SG-LOC.CL PST P market D.SG

‘Moodu was at the market.’ (adapt. from Torrence 2005: 255)

c. *Démb, Ndakaaru laa nekk-oon.*

yesterday Dakar 1SG.EMPH COP-PST

‘Yesterday I was in Dakar.’ (adapt. from Perrin 2005: 224)

We now turn to the case of copulas in Mandinka, which only displays nonverbal predication, with both nominal and locative predicates. The language exhibits two non-verbal copulas: *mú* occurs with nominal predicates (29a-b) and *bé* with locatives (29c).³⁵ Note that (29a) contains a focalized nominal predicate followed by the focalizer *le*, while in (29b) the nominal predicate is not focalized, but followed by the postposition *tí*, which has a functional-transformative value (“valeur fonctive-transformative”, Creissels & Sambou 2013: 146). In Mandinka, *bé* also expresses other types of predication such as

³⁴ According to Torrence (2005: 279f.), the bound form of the past marker *-(w)oon* may also adjoin at the right of the item *di* in copular clauses. Furthermore, this bound form and the conditional cannot co-occur with either *a* or *la*; by contrast, they are allowed in clefts (see Torrence 2005: 264).

³⁵ The locative copula *bé* is also found in the variant *bi*. Although the two forms do not display any semantic difference, they are not in free variation, and the distribution of *bi* is more limited (see Creissels & Sambou (2013: 137).

existential and possessive, and functions as a predicative marker in verbal constructions encoding progressive, future, and resultative (Creissels 2019).³⁶

(29) a. *Mans-óo le mu.*³⁷

King-D FOC COP

‘It’s the king.’ (adapt. from Creissels & Sambou 2013: 146)

b. *A-té le mú mans-óo ti.*

3SG.EMPH FOC COP king-D OBL

‘It’s him, the king.’ (adapt. from Creissels & Sambou 2013: 147)

c. *Díndíŋ-ò bé búŋ-ò kónò.*

child-D COP house-D in

‘The child is in the house.’ (adapt. from Creissels, to appear, p. 24)

Mandinka uses predicative markers for the expression of TAM. These markers only combine with verbs. As a consequence, copular clauses in Mandinka cannot contain predicative markers (see Creissels, to appear). This reminds us of all the cases analysed so far: neither *i* in Kriyol and CAS nor *e* in SCV nor (*la* in Wolof can combine with verbal aspect markers. Intransitive verbs such as *ké* ‘to become’ and *tará* ‘to be at/to find oneself’ replace *bé* and *mú* and combine with predicative markers in order to yield certain aspectual, temporal and modal readings (30a) or for giving a certain emphasis (30b).³⁸

(30) a. *Jamáajamaa, ñĩŋ mǒo-lu ka ké*

Generally DEM person-D-PL INCMP COP

Tilibo-ŋk-óo-lu le ti.

East-RESID-D-PL FOC OBL

‘Generally, these people are people from the East.’ (adapt. from Creissels & Sambou 2013: 149)

³⁶ We will not treat these cases of predication, since it is outside the scope of the present paper. For a more in-depth treatment of *bé*, see Creissels & Sambou (2013: 139-145).

³⁷ The sequence *le mú* can be reduced to *lěŋ / lǒŋ* (or *ñěŋ / ñõŋ* after a nasal) (see Creissels & Sambou 2013: 148).

³⁸ The verbs *ké* and *tará*, whenever used transitively, mean ‘to transform’ and ‘to find’, respectively (see Creissels, to appear, and Creissels & Sambou 2013).

b. *Lúntaŋ-ó máŋ tará jaŋ.*³⁹

Foreigner-D CMPN COP here

‘The foreigner is not here.’ (adapt. from Creissels & Sambou 2013: 145)

With regard to the past tense, Mandinka uses the past marker *nũŋ*, which is found either immediately after the verb or at the rightmost position of the VP. The same is true in the case of nonverbal predication: in past copular clauses, *nũŋ* follows *bé* (or *mú*) or occurs in a more peripheral position (Creissels & Sambou 2013: 82). This resembles the case of Kriyol *ba*, CAS *baŋ*, and Wolof *woon*. In this respect, SCV is different: the past marker *ba* is a verbal suffix.

(31) a. *Mandiŋk-óo-lu, wo-lú le mú nũŋ jáŋ*
 Mandinga-D-PL DEM-PL FOC COP PST here
karammóo-lu ti.
 marabout-D-PL OBL

‘The Mandingas, it’s they who were the marabouts here.’ (adapt. from Creissels & Sambou 2013: 83)

b. *ŋ bé nũŋ ñiŋ saatéw-o to kótóo-ke.*
 1PL COP PST DEM village-D LOC ancient-MAN

‘In the past, we lived in the village.’ (adapt. from Creissels & Sambou 2013: 82)

Table 3 below summarizes our findings with respect to copulas in both Wolof and Mandinka.

³⁹ Note that the presence of *tará* instead of *bé* in (30b) does not depend upon the presence of negation. Mandinka displays specialized forms of copulas in the case of a negated copular clause. In particular, *té* is the negative copula both for nominal and locative predication. Other forms of the negative copula are *tí* and *ńteŋ* (see Creissels & Sambou 2013: 137).

Table 3: An overview of copulas in Wolof and Mandinka

	Copulas	Predicate type	Aspect marking	Tense marking
Wolof	<i>-a</i>	+N; +Loc ((a)-ngi)	no no	yes yes
	<i>la</i>	+N	no	yes
	<i>di</i>	+N	yes	yes
	<i>nekk</i>	+Loc	yes	yes
	Mandinka	<i>mú</i>	+N	no
	<i>bé</i>	+Loc	no	yes
	<i>ké</i>	+N	yes	yes
	<i>tará</i>	+Loc	yes	yes

4.3. Summary

The comparison between UGCs and their substrate has revealed interesting similarities, but also certain differences. The most striking point in common among these languages is that all of them have non-verbal copulas in nominal predication.⁴⁰ The case of locative clauses reveals certain differences: while UGCs have verbal copulas, Mandinka uses a verbless structure. Interestingly, Wolof occupies an in-between position: it has both a verbal and a non-verbal copula for locative predication.

With respect to the marking of aspect, the UGCs pattern together with Mandinka, since the languages use suppletive forms, i.e. verbal copulas that can combine with aspect/predicative markers (*sedu* in Kriyol, *sedi* in CAS, *ser* in SCV, and the intransitive verbs *ké/tará* in Mandinka).

The marking of the past shows both similarities and differences. On the one hand, all UGCs share a verbal suppletive strategy, i.e. SCV *era*, Kriyol (y)*era* (*ba*) and CAS *yera baŋ*. On the other hand, all languages of both groups, except for SCV, have a non-verbal strategy, in which the non-verbal copula (or \emptyset , in Kriyol and CAS) is followed by the (independent form of the) past marker (Kriyol/CAS *ba(ŋ)*, Wolof *woon* and Mandinka *nũŋ*). Finally, Kriyol and CAS present a third strategy, namely the verbal copula *sedu/sedi* followed by *ba(ŋ)*

⁴⁰ Here we treat SCV *e* as a non-verbal copula, based on the fact that its syntactic behaviour closely resembles *i* in Kriyol and CAS. See Baptista (2002) for a proposal of *e*'s dual verbal and nominal behaviour.

5. Conclusions

The present paper has provided a description of Kriyol copulas based on their semantic-syntactic function. We saw that the predicate type and the aspect and tense properties of the clause underlie the selection of the copula from the paradigm. In particular, the predicate type operates the basic split between nominal and locative predication. Moreover, the aspect and tense properties trigger the interesting pattern of suppletivism described above. We further noticed that cases such as bare *sedu* in present and past copular clauses, i.e. in clauses without any aspect marker, partially overlap in distribution with the nonverbal copulas *i* and \emptyset . The case of the past tense is even more complex: Kriyol displays, in fact, three strategies, two of which display the same semantics. The fourth strategy, viz. *foi*, is considered as an influence of EP.

The comparison undertaken in section 4 has revealed a very similar picture among UGCs: besides the morphological similarity of most of their copulas, UGCs share the same *split* encoding, the presence of non-verbal copulas with nominal predicates in clauses without any aspect marker, and a very similar pattern of suppletivism in clauses marked for aspect and tense. Certain differences have also been noticed, especially in the marking of past: Kriyol and CAS display both verbal and non-verbal strategies, while SCV only has the verbal copula *era*. The comparison clearly shows that Kriyol and CAS are closer to each other than to SCV. This is not unexpected, given that CAS is a later offshoot of Kriyol.

Furthermore, the comparison has revealed that UGCs share important similarities with Mandinka and Wolof, namely the same *split* encoding, the presence of non-verbal copulas with nominal predicates in both present and past clauses without aspect markers, and suppletivism in the marking of imperfective aspect (in this regard, Wolof patterns, to a certain extent, differently).

On the basis of our findings, we suggest that Wolof and Mandinka played a relevant role in the emergence and organization of the system of copulas of UGCs. The main influences regard the presence of non-verbal copulas for the expression of nominal predication, the marking of the past in copular clauses through independent past markers (adverbials) and, to a certain extent, the marking of aspect and future tense through the combination of aspect/predicative markers and verbal copulas. The split between nominal and locative predication, on the other hand, is also found in UGCs lexifier EP; this prevents us from claiming that the split encoding is (exclusively) the result of substrate influence.

Abbreviations

CAS=Casamancese Creole; **CL**=clitic; **CMPN**=Completive negative; **CONT**=Continuous; **COP**=Copula; **D**=Determiner; **DEM**=Demonstrative; **DM**=Discourse marker; **EMPH**=Emphasizer; **EP**=European Portuguese; **FOC**=Focalizer; **HAB**=Habitual; **INCMP**=Incomplete positive; **INDF**=Indefinite; **LOC**=Locative; **MAN**=Suffix of adverbs of manner; **NEG**=Negation; **OBL**=Postposition in oblique marker function; **P**=Preposition; **PASS**=Passive; **PL**=Plural; **POSS**=Possessive; **PST**=Past; **REL**=Relative; **RESID**=Suffix of names of residence; **SCV**=Santiago Cape Verdean Creole; **SG**=Singular; **TAM**=Tense-aspect-mood; **TOP**=Topic; **UGC**=Upper Guinea Creole; **VP**=Verb phrase

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