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Typology of Tense Markers and Clausal Architectures in Creole Languages

1 Introduction

In this paper, I explore the position of anterior markers as they occur as pre-verbal, post-verbal independent markers or suffixed morphemes (suffixed to a verb stem) in a variety of Creole languages. The Creoles under consideration may have European lexifiers (i.e., Haitian, Louisiana, Guinea-Bissau and Capeverdean Creoles) or non-European ones such as Chinook Jargon (cf. Thomason 1983).

I argue in particular that the three positions underlined above (that I label Type 1 (pre-verbal), Type 2 (post-verbal independent marker) Type 3 (post-verbal suffixed marker) respectively) have syntactic ramifications that lead Creoles to be classified into different typological verbal systems.

On this matter, I address three crucial issues in the realm of anterior markers and typological variation: Given that Creoles display different positions for Anterior markers, and that a few even develop inflection (meaning Tense inflection), what are the syntactic effects of those various positions? Furthermore, can parametrized variation be predicted between the Creoles with inflectional verbal morphology (Capeverdean Creole and Louisiana Creole for instance) and those without? Finally, how do natural languages such as Creoles develop Tense inflection?

In this paper, I try to show that the position of anterior markers may be symptomatic of a different clausal architecture for the Creoles under investigation. At the theoretical level, I argue that Creoles with inflectional tense markers may have additional heads and specifiers in their clausal structure accounting for uncommon syntactic constructions (in the realm of Creole languages) such as V-raising, subject-verb inversion and post-Neg subjects. In summary, I explore a constellation of uncommon syntactic constructions that I correlate to the presence of an inflectional anterior marker. Following Bobaljik and Thráinsson (1998), I will argue that from the perspective of learnability, the child has to rely on the detectable properties at PF (morpho-phonological properties) to set the parameters of a given language correctly. As a result, different types of clausal architectures may be generated.

Furthermore, while syntacticians have been mostly preoccupied with the syntactic effects of the loss of verbal morphology (as with the English language), the reverse focus of this paper is to examine what happens when languages such as Creoles develop Tense inflection (such as Capeverdean and Louisiana Creoles). On this issue, I compare specifically the post-verbal independent Anterior morpheme *ba* in Guinea-Bissau Creole (Kihm, 1980 & 1994) and its suffixed counterpart *-ba* in Capeverdean Creole (Silva, 1985 & 1990; Baptista, 1997) and show that the position of these markers have important ramifications in terms of verbal behavior and verbal constructions that I link to the different clausal architectures of these and other Creoles.

This paper is divided into 5 sections: In the first section, I will introduce the underlying theoretical assumptions upon which this paper is based, following Iatridou (1990), Ouhalla (1991) and B&T (1998). In the second section, I will summarize Baptista (to appear) and will contrast Creole languages including Capeverdean, Guinea-Bissau Creole, Haitian, Chinook Jargon and Louisiana Creole. In the third part, I will show the points where my analysis joins and also contributes additional stipulations to B&T (1998) in the light of the behavior of Creole languages. In the fourth section, I will provide additional evidence for the existence of more specifier positions in the clausal architecture of some Creoles. Finally, in the fifth section, I will provide concluding remarks regarding the proposed theoretical analysis.

2 Theoretical Assumptions

In this section, I present the theoretical assumptions from three different sources upon which my analysis is based.

2.1 Iatridou (1990)

Iatridou (1990) is among the first scholars to challenge the belief that the data from one language in favor of a functional projection are sufficient to justify postulating the existence of the same functional categories in all languages. In other words, she questioned the universality of functional categories. She proposed instead that languages vary with respect to the functional categories they instantiate, and that evidence for the existence of specific functional categories will have to be found in each language separately.¹ This basic tenet will be at the core of the analysis we propose in this paper.

¹ She argues specifically that there is no AgrP in English or even French (contra Pollock (1989)), and proposes alternative analyses to account for the presence of verbs in a pre-adverbial position in languages like French among others and for the different word order (cf. Iatridou, 1990:563).

2.2 Ouhalla (1991)

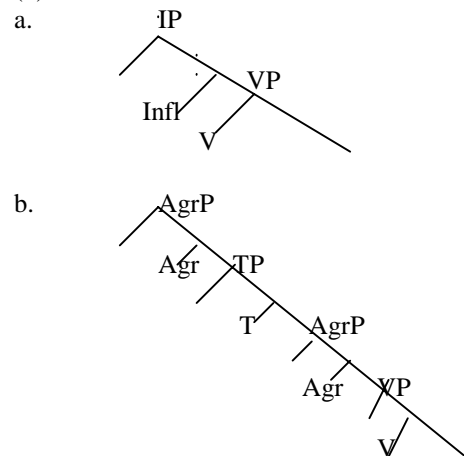
Ouhalla's theory of parametrization assumed that parameters are associated with individual lexical items as part of the information specified in their lexical entries and that the set of lexical items with which parameters are associated is in fact restricted to the class of inflectional, meaning functional categories.

2.3 Bobaljik & Thráinsson (1998)

Following works by Iatridou (1990), Speas (1991), Ouhalla (1991), Bobaljik (1995) and Thráinsson (1996), B&T (1998) make the following hypothesis: Assuming that the inventory of functional projections dominating VP is not universal (e.g., the presence of Agr-Phrases is a point of parametric variation), current assumptions about locality, predict obligatory verb raising in a language with Agr-Phrases, but obligatory V in situ in a simple IP-VP configuration. B & T (1998) predict a correlation with other morpho-syntactic phenomena reflecting the presence or absence of AgrPs, the other pieces of evidence being "extra" subject and object positions, transitive expletive constructions, multiple inflectional affixes, etc...

Consider the structural configurations in (1):

(1)



With regard to the figures in (1), Thráinsson (1996:262) states:

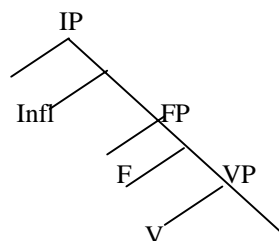
- (2) Languages that have a positive value for the SIP (Split Infl Parameter) have AgrS-P and TP as separate functional projections (1b). Languages with a negative value of the SIP are characterized by an unsplit IP (1a).

The interaction of these assumptions entails that in languages with a simple, unsplit IP, the finite verb must not raise to Infl throughout the derivation. Furthermore, in languages with a split IP, the verb must raise out of the VP and into the IP complex.

B&T's (1998:39) argument is based on the following three-fold assumption:

- (3) a. The features of a projection are those of its head.
 b. Movement occurs solely for the purposes of feature checking.
 c. Features are checked in all and only local relations to a head viz., head-specifier, head complement, head-head (adjoined heads).

(4)



B & T proposed the Verb Position Diagnostic stated in (5):

- (5) Verb Position Diagnostic (B&T 1998:43)
- If the finite verb is in VP in simple non-V2 finite environments, then no functional heads intervene between IP and VP; moreover, there is no functional head dominating IP that has features to check with V(P).
 - If the finite verb raises out of the VP in simple non-V2, finite environments, then there must be at least two heads in the IP complex, the higher of that, at least, must have features to check with V(P).

There is a clear split within VO Germanic languages concerning the position of the finite verb.

On this issue, B & T (1998) argue that this is exactly what is expected for these languages on independent grounds, especially on the basis on ver-

bal morphology and the syntax of argument positions. They contrast the case of Icelandic which displays V-raising in non-V2 environments, object shift and transitive expletives, to other Germanic languages like Swedish and Norwegian which do not exhibit such features. They show that postulating the Split Infl parameter helps predict additional Spec positions in one group of Germanic languages over another.²

In the next section, we will examine in a comparative way the behavior of various Creole verbal systems and show how postulating non universal functional projections may correctly predict different syntactic constructions among them.

3 The Case of Creoles

3.1 A General Introduction

As a rule, Creole languages display a lack or at most minimal verbal inflectional morphology, which would naturally lead us to predict that their clausal architecture would be of the English type, meaning that they would not be set with the Split Infl Parameter. On this matter, I address in this section the following issues: Given that Creoles display different positions for anterior markers, and that a few Creoles even develop inflection (meaning Tense inflection, cf. Table 2 in Appendix), it is worth considering the syntactic effects of those various positions. Furthermore, we will investigate if parametrized variation can be predicted between the Creoles with inflectional verbal morphology (Capeverdean Creole and Louisiana Creole for instance) and those without. In summary, I try to show that the position of anterior markers may be symptomatic of a different clausal architecture for the Creoles under investigation. At the theoretical level, I argue that Creoles with inflectional tense markers may have additional heads and specifiers in their clausal structure accounting for uncommon syntactic constructions (in the realm of Creole languages) such as V-raising, subject-verb inversion and post-Neg subjects. In other words, I explore a constellation of uncommon syntactic constructions that I correlate with the presence of an inflectional anterior marker. As a result, different types of clausal architectures may be generated.

3.2 A Summary of Baptista (to appear)

In this section, I briefly summarize Baptista (to appear) where I show evidence of V-raising in Capeverdean Creole and contrast this to verbal behavior in a variety of other Creoles, may they be European or non-European

² For reasons of space, I refer the reader to B&T (1998:48-54) for specific examples of V-raising, object shift and transitive expletives in Icelandic.

based. I apply the traditional diagnostics for V-raising: A verb found in a pre-Neg position, or before floating quantifiers and VP internal adverbs is believed to have moved to such a position.

The Creoles under consideration are Capeverdean, Haitian, Guinea-Bissau Creole, Louisiana Creole and Chinook-Jargon.

3.2.1 The Case of Capeverdean Creole

3.2.1.1 The Position of Verbs Vis-à-Vis ka

- (6) a. João **ka** staba na kaza.
 João Neg was in house
 'João was not at home.'
 b. *João staba **ka** na kaza.
 João was Neg at home

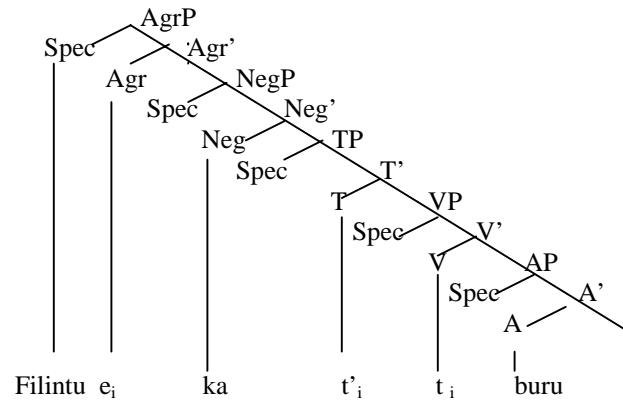
3.2.1.2 The Position of e Vis-à-Vis ka

The morpheme *e* is pre-Neg and allows the negative morpheme to immediately precede adjectival, (as in (7)) and nominal predicates (cf. Baptista, 1997).

- (7) a. Filintu **e ka** buru.
 Filintu e Neg stupid
 'Filintu is not stupid.'
 b. *Filintu **ka** e buru.
 Filintu Neg e stupid.

I propose the structure in (8) for the sentence in (7):

(8)



In summary, the copula *e* raises overtly from V^0 -to- T^0 to Agr^0 , landing in a pre-Neg position. On this issue, I give evidence in the next subsections that verbs can move overtly from V^0 -to- T^0 at least past a certain class of adverbials and floating quantifiers.

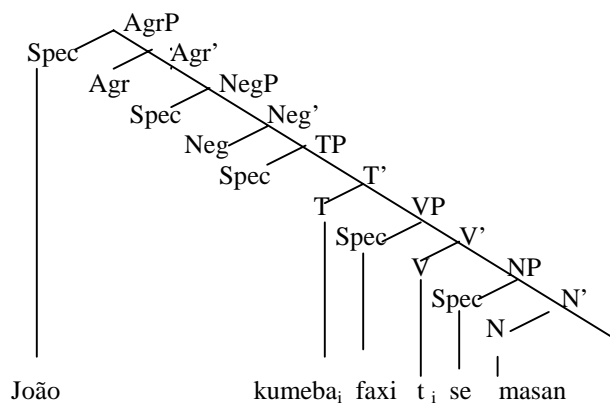
3.2.1.3 Capeverdean Verb Position With Regard to Adverbs

It is generally assumed that whether the finite verb is in V^0 or not can be determined from its position relative to a sentence-medial adverbial (i.e., an adverbial that follows the subject but precedes the complement of the verb).

- (9) a. João kumeba **faxi** se masan.
 João had eaten quickly his apple
 'João had eaten his apple fast.'
 b. *João **faxi** kumeba se masan.
 João quickly had eaten his lesson
 c. ***Faxi** João kumeba se masan.
 quickly João had eaten his apple
 d. ?João kumeba se masan **faxi**.
 João had eaten his apple quickly

The medial adverbial is assumed to left-adjoin to VP, as illustrated in (10):

(10)



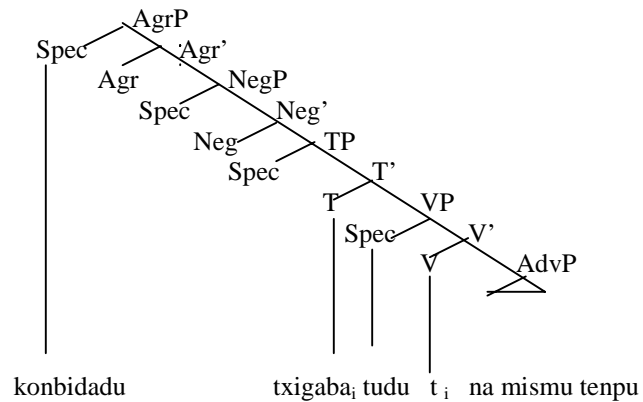
Let us now turn to some evidence from floating quantifiers which provide another diagnostic for verb movement.

3.2.1.4 Quantifier Float in Capeverdean

Capeverdean displays the same type of quantifier float as French; hence, a floating quantifier may be postverbal, as in (11b), or preverbal, as in (11a). (11b) provides us with crucial evidence that the verb has moved to T^0 at least, given that the verb precedes the floating quantifier which has remained *in situ*.

- (11) a. **Tudu** konbidadu **txigaba** na mismu tenpu.
 all guests had arrived in same time
 ‘All the guests had arrived at the same time.’
 b. Konbidadu **txigaba** **tudu** na mismu tenpu.
 guests had arrived all in same time
 ‘All the guests had arrived at the same time.’

(12)



In summary, adverbials and floating quantifiers provide clear diagnostics for overt V-raising in Capeverdean. Interestingly, evidence for additional argument positions involving subject-verb inversion with nonclitics and full DPs and post-Neg subjects lead us to believe that there are more Spec positions than is usually expected in this type of languages. We will examine those constructions in section 4. Before we do, we will briefly compare the behavior of the Capeverdean verb to Haitian, Guinea-Bissau Creole, Louisiana Creole and Chinook Jargon.

3.2.2 The Case of Haitian Creole (DeGraff, 1996)

Haitian has TMA markers that are all preverbal and, crucially, the language has no verbal suffixes. In the presence of VP-internal adverbials, the verb always remains in V^0 , as is clearly shown in DeGraff (1996:17).

- (13) a. Bouki te ap mal manje. (Haitian)
 Bouki TMA TMA badly eat
 ‘Bouki was eating badly.’
 b. *Bouki te ap manje mal.
 Bouki TMA TMA eat badly

3.2.3 The Case of Guinea-Bissau Creole

As described in Kihm (1994), Guinea-Bissau Creole does not have V-raising past Neg or VP internal adverbials, as shown in (14) and (15). It should be noted that Guinea-Bissau does have a postverbal unbound Tense marker, *ba* (cf. Table 2 in Appendix). However, the major difference between Capeverdean *-ba* and Guinea-Bissau Creole *ba* is that *-ba* is a verbal inflection found exclusively bound to verb stems in Capeverdean, whereas *ba* is a non-inflectional (unbound) Tense marker in Guinea-Bissau found not only after verbs, but also after adjectival and nominal predicates.

- (14) Ze **ka** **riba** inda. (Guinea-Bissau Creole)
 Ze Neg return yet
 ‘Ze has not returned yet.’ (Kihm, 1994:42)

In this sense, just as with Capeverdean ordinary verbs, *ka* cannot be used as a diagnosis for V-raising. A contrast between the two Creoles however, arises with respect to VP-adverbials. Indeed, as illustrated by the example in (15), the VP-adverbial *kwiw*, ‘a lot’, cannot occur in a preverbal position, as shown in (15b) (Kihm, personal communication):

- (15) a. Jon ta **kiri** Eliza **kwiw**. (Guinea-Bissau Creole)
 Jon TMA like Eliza a lot
 ‘Jon likes Eliza a lot.’
 b. *Jon ta **kiri** **kwiw** Eliza.
 Jon TMA likes a lot Eliza

The unbound nature of Guinea-Bissau *ba* leads us to predict that the Guinea-Bissau verb remains *in situ* and does not move past VP-internal ad-

verbials, as it has no features to check in T^0 . This prediction is however not borne out with regard to floating quantifiers. Indeed, the Guinea-Bissau Creole quantifier *tudu* can be stranded and the verb can raise past it, just as in the case of Capeverdean. This is shown in (16):

- (16) a. Konbidadu **ni** **iga** **tudu** na mismu tenpu. (Guinea-Bissau Creole)
 guests arrived all at same time
 ‘The guests arrived all at the same time.’
 b. Konbidadu **tudu** **ni** **iga** na mismu tenpu.
 guests all arrived at same time
 ‘The guests arrived all at the same time.’

3.2.4 The Case of Louisiana Creole

As described in Rottet (1992), there is in mesolectal Louisiana Creole a morphosyntactic alternation between full and truncated verb stems which is absent in the basilectal varieties. More precisely, the alternation is \emptyset versus *-e*. Hence, a verb like *mōzhe* “to eat”, can alternate between the full stem *mōzhe* and the truncated stem *mōzh*. Rottet (1992), who draws most of his data from Neumann (1985, 1987), notes that only the short verb stems undergo verb movement, whereas the full verb stems do not.

- (17) a. Na lōtō mo **pa** **mōzhe** gratō (Louisiana Creole)
 PRS for a long time I Neg eat cracklin
 ‘I haven’t eaten cracklin for a long time.’
 b. Mo **mōzh** **pa** gratō.
 I eat Neg cracklin
 ‘I don’t eat cracklin.’ (in Rottet (1992:277) from Neumann (1985:321))

Short and long verb stems also show a discrepancy with regard to NP adverbs, such as *zhame*, “never”. Such adverbs must precede the long verb stem, as in (18), whereas they can occur before or after the short verb stem, as illustrated in (19):

- (18) a. Mo (te, se, sa, ...) **zhame** **zhōngle** òho sa. (Louisiana Creole)
 I (ANT, IRR, FUT) never think about that
 ‘I never thought/would think/will have thought about that.’
 b. Mo (pa) **zhame** (te,...) **zhōgle** òho sa.
 I (Neg) never (ANT,...) think about that
 ‘I never thought about that.’
 (in Rottet (1992:267) from Neumann (1985:330))

- (19) a. Mo **zhame marsh** ni-pje deor. (Louisiana Creole)
 I never walk barefoot outside
 ‘I never walk barefoot outside.’
 b. Mo **marsh** (pa) **zhame** ni-pje deor.
 I walk (Neg) never barefoot outside
 ‘I never walk barefoot outside.’
 (in Rottet (1992:267) from Neumann (1985:330))

The examples in (18) and (19) show that the short verb stem moves past VP adverbials, whereas long verb stems do not. This leads us to the second important observation: The occurrence of verb stems in a pre-Neg position is an innovation in Louisiana Creole. Neumann makes this explicit (Neumann, 1987:20) and this is to be correlated to the emergence of short verb stems. Then the following question arises: How can we account for the different behavior between short and long verb stems? Rottet’s analysis is that verb movement in the present tense occurs, due to the presence of a *null* tense inflection which is in T^0 ; and this morpheme is an affix and a trigger of V-raising (Rottet, 1992:278). The long stem in contrast does not have any inflectional morphology, hence have no affix in T^0 to act as a trigger for movement (Rottet, 1992:280). As a result, the long verb stem remains *in situ*.

The case of Louisiana Creole brings an interesting question to light. It is precisely the verb stem with no overt inflection that raises to T^0 , as opposed to the long stem. Note indeed in the verb forms above that the final *e* in *mōzhe* can be considered an inflection, albeit an infinitival inflection. The infinitival nature of this inflection may be preventing the raising, as it denotes the lack of Tense on the verb. Rottet argues that a *null* affix or inflectional morpheme attracts the verb to T^0 . This analysis is in sharp contrast with current assumptions that *overt* morphology triggers V-raising. I would argue that the symptoms of V-raising in Louisiana Creole in the absence of overt morphology demonstrates that V-raising is occurring not due to morphology but to structural properties of the language (i.e. Split IP). From a learnability perspective, it could be postulated that a mere contrast between an inflected verbal form and a non-inflected counterpart may be all the clue the child needs to trigger V-raising (Table 3 in the Appendix shows the distribution of Tense markers in Capeverdean and Louisiana Creoles).

3.2.5 The Case of Chinook Jargon (Vrzić, 1997)

- (20) a. Shoset **ayak eskom** iht lain. (Chinook Jargon)
 Josette quickly take one rein

'Josette quickly grabbed one of the reins.' (Vrzić, 1997:4)

b.*Shoset **eskom ayak** iht lain.

Josette take quickly one rein

The brief comparison just made between the five Creoles, Capeverdean, Haitian, Guinea-Bissau Creole, Louisiana Creole and CJ shows the complexity of the situation. However, if we assume a Split IP for Capeverdean and Louisiana Creoles correlated to verbal inflection, this will correctly predict the ability of their verbs to raise, whereas a simple IP in Haitian, Chinook Jargon and possibly in Guinea-Bissau accounts for why the verbs in these latter Creoles remain *in-situ*.

In the next section, I consider further corroborating evidence from Capeverdean Creole for assuming a structural motivation for V-raising.

4 Further Evidence for the Split Infl Parameter

This section will focus on syntactic constructions in Capeverdean Creole which may be providing further evidence for a Split Infl Parameter for this particular Creole.

4.1 Inflectional Anterior Marker

4.2 Additional Argument Positions

The structure proposed in (10) also helps predict that there may be two subject positions in Capeverdean. Indeed, if one assumes that Capeverdean has a split IP, one of the possible implications is that Capeverdean would have two subject positions (one in Spec AgrP and the other in Spec TP). This would account for uncommon syntactic constructions (in the realm of Creoles) such as subject verb inversion with full DPs and post-Neg subjects, as illustrated by the examples in (21) and (22).

Consider (21), where the subject and the verb have been inverted:

(21) Es ba konbida Nho Lobo un badju na Ilheu. **Ba kruja, ba ranha,**
they went invite Mr. Wolf a dance at Ilheu. Went owl, went spider,

ba korbu, ba otu pasu.

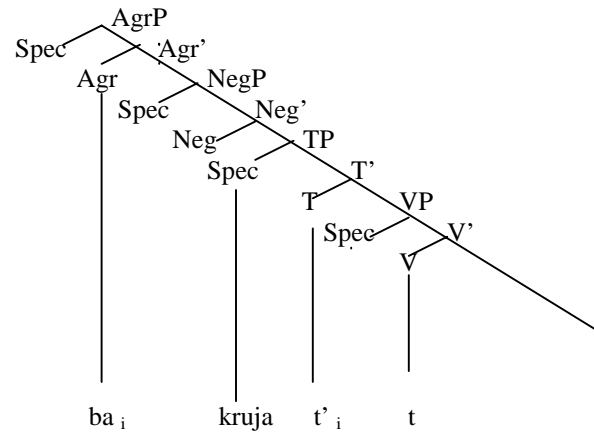
went crow, went other birds

'They went to invite Mr. Wolf to a dance at Ilheu. The owl went, the spider went, the crow went, the other birds went.' (Meintel, 1975:247)

Furthermore, for the Imperative mood, the subject is obligatory found in the noncanonical post-Neg position, as illustrated by (22):

- (22) a. Ka bu bai!
 Neg you leave
 'Don't leave!'
 b. *Bu ka bai!
 you Neg leave

(23)



5 Concluding Remarks

To summarize, we have explored B&T (1998), who proposed that a structural account for V-raising is more explanatory than strength of features, as triggering V-movement. B&T's main assumption is that if there is an extra projection intervening between the V^0 and the head against which the V^0 has to check features, then the V^0 has to raise out of the VP. Otherwise, it does not. More precisely, they propose that separate and clearly separable tense and agreement markers count as evidence for the language learner for hypothesizing a Split IP, and different functional projections. Once one has more than one functional projection above the VP containing verbal features that the V needs to check, the V must raise out of the VP to do so. Otherwise, it does not have to raise, under Bobaljik and Thráinsson's theory. Their theory predicts that Haitian and CJ do not have V-raising because they have an IP structure. In contrast, Louisiana Creole and Capeverdean allow V-raising due to their Split IP, while Creoles such as Guinea-Bissau may still be in a stage of functional projection development.

Interestingly, B&T argued that the availability of extra subject positions is crucial to allow Transitive Expletive Constructions in Icelandic. I would like to add to such claim that extra positions may also result into different types of constructions involving not necessarily transitive expletives or object shift, but instead subject verb inversion and post Neg subjects, as illustrated by Capeverdean Creole.

Finally, in principle, B&T (1998:64) do not rule out the possibility that a language with poor verbal inflection may be endowed with a split IP (diagnosed with verb raising or extra argument positions). I hope to have shown that Creoles may instantiate just such a case. Crucially, from a learnability perspective, we could argue that a mere contrast between an inflected verbal form and a non-inflected counterpart may be all the clue the child needs to trigger V-raising in Creoles such as Capeverdean or Louisiana Creole.

I hope to have shown in this paper that the three positions underlined above (that I label Type 1 (pre-verbal), Type 2 (post-verbal independent marker) Type 3 (post-verbal suffixed marker) respectively) have syntactic ramifications that lead Creoles to be classified into different typological verbal systems.

Appendix

Creoles	V-Raising Past Neg	V-R past Adv.	V-R past F.Q	S-V inversion with full DPs	Post-Neg Subjects
CVC	Limited to <i>e</i>	+	+	+	+
Haitian	-	-	-	-	-
G-B	-	-	+	-	-
L-C	SF /*LF	SF /*LF	?	?	?
C-J	-	-	-	-	-

Table 1: V-raising in five creoles: A comparative analysis

∅	Pre-verbal Marker <i>te</i>	Post-verbal Unbound <i>ba</i>	Post-verbal bound Marker <i>-ba/e</i>
CJ	Haitian	Guinea-Bissau Creole	Capeverdean Creole Louisiana Creole LF

Table 2: Anterior marker typology

(1) Stative verb+ba=Simple Past	Raising
Bare stem stative verb=Present	Raising

Nonstative verb+ba=Pluperfect	Raising
Bare nonstative=Simple Past	Raising
(2) Long form+e	No Raising
Short form (null Tense affix)	Raising

Table 3: Distribution of Tense markers in Capeverdean and Louisiana Creoles³

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³ Inside the Table 3, (1) refers to the Capeverdean Case and (2) to the Louisiana Creole case.

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