Definiteness and genericity in Cabo Verdean Creole and Mandinka

● ● ●

(In)definiteness and Genericity across Languages
Yale-2023

Marlyse Baptista (University of Pennsylvania)
Ousmane Cisse (Boston University)

1

The Founder Principle in Creole languages (Mufwene, 1996)

Creole languages typically emerge in multilingual settings among language users endowed with distinct first languages. As a result of the intense and oftentimes long-term contact between users, the languages in contact leave long-lasting imprints on the emerging Creole language.

The traces of the founding populations (the Founder Principle, Mufwene, 1996) can be observed at the lexical, phonological, morphosyntactic and semantic levels of the Creole language, next to internal developments and genuine innovations that make the Creole language a distinct linguistic system that stands independently from its source languages.

Objective

The objective of this presentation is to compare Cabo Verdean Creole both to its Portuguese lexifier and to one of its main substrates, Mandinka (Quint, 2008), to evaluate whether traces of these source languages are observable in Cabo Verdean, specifically with respect to its use of number morphology on demonstratives and the expression of kind-reference/genericity.

Background and contact setting

- Cabo Verdean Creole and Mandinka were originally part of the same complex linguistic ecology during the transatlantic slave trade. Cabo Verdean Creole, also known as *Kriolu,* is a Creole language that emerged in the Cabo Verde islands as a result of contact between Portuguese colonizers and enslaved West Africans between the 15th and 19th centuries.

- Mandinka is a West African language spoken primarily in the Gambia, Senegal, and Guinea-Bissau.

- Several studies portray Mandinka speakers as being among the major contributors to the genesis of Cabo Verdean Creole. Out of the 76 lexemes that were identified in Cabo Verdean Creole as originating from African languages, 42 (55%) originate from Mandinka (Quint, 2008), 18 (24%) from Wolof, 4 (5%) from Temne and the remainder from other West African languages 5 (7%), Bantu languages 3 (4%) and names of people 4 (5%).

Background and contact setting (cont'd)
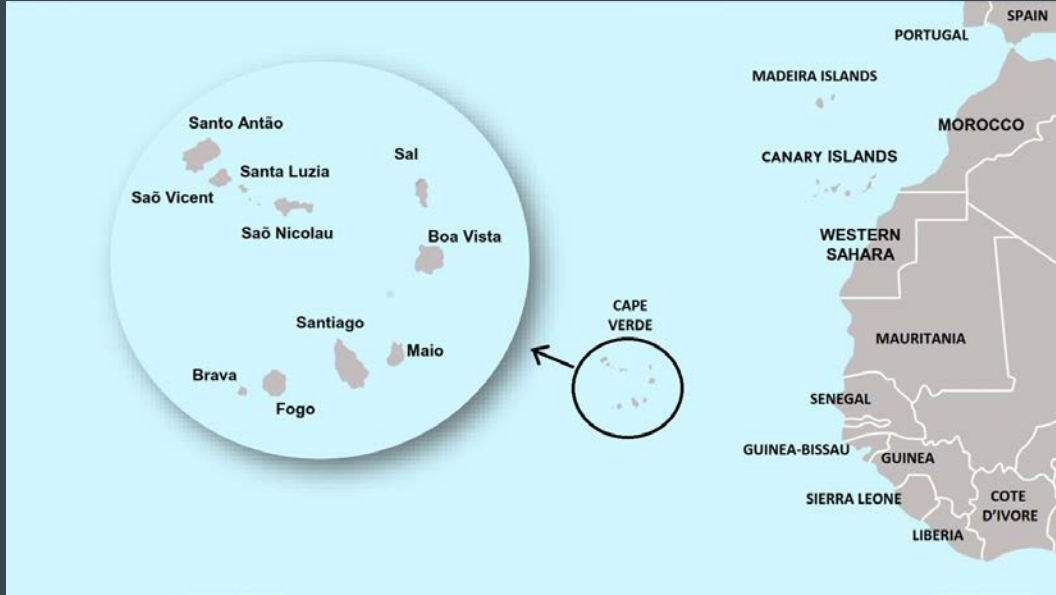
- The island of Santiago was the first to be settled by the Portuguese in 1461 and was the site where the system of slave plantations took hold (Andrade 1996: 51; Pires 2007).

- Most African enslaved populations came from the region of Modern-day Cacheu and Bissau. The consensus among the linguists is that both Mandinka (Rougé, 2006; Veiga, 2019) and Wolof (Santos, 1979; Lang, 2009; Quint, 2008) played a major role in the genesis of Cabo Verdean Creole.

If one considers the *Founder Principle* as a valid concept, then it is important to examine the founding populations of the islands, trying to determine the potential sources of some of the lexical and grammatical properties of Cabo Verdean Creole. In the case that concerns us, we examine number morphology on demonstratives and kind-reference/genericity in two of Cabo Verdean Creole source languages: Mandinka and Portuguese.

Demonstratives in Mandinka (Mnk)

In Mandinka, the lexical items *ñiŋ/ñinulu* 'this/these', *wo/wolu* 'that/those' are used as demonstratives.

Number morphology on demonstratives in Mandinka:

(1) a. ñiŋ/wo   koketo-o   b. *ñinu-lu/wolu   koketo-o(-lu)
     this/that   high heel-DET   this-PL/that-PL   high heel-DET(-PL)
     "This/that   high heel"   "These/those high heels"

(2) a. ñiŋ/wo   koketo-o-lu   b. ñinu-lu/wolu
     this/that   high heel-DET-PL   this-PL/that-PL
     "These/those high heels"   "These/those"

- *ñinu-lu* and *wolu* cannot co-occur with nouns
- they can only function as demonstrative pronouns in the plural and replace the noun they refer to.
- The DP in Mandinka is [$_{DP}$ D (NP)]-PL
- i.e. the plural marker is outside the DP.

Demonstratives in Mandinka (Cont'd)

Fig.1 Mandinka singular proximal and distal demonstratives
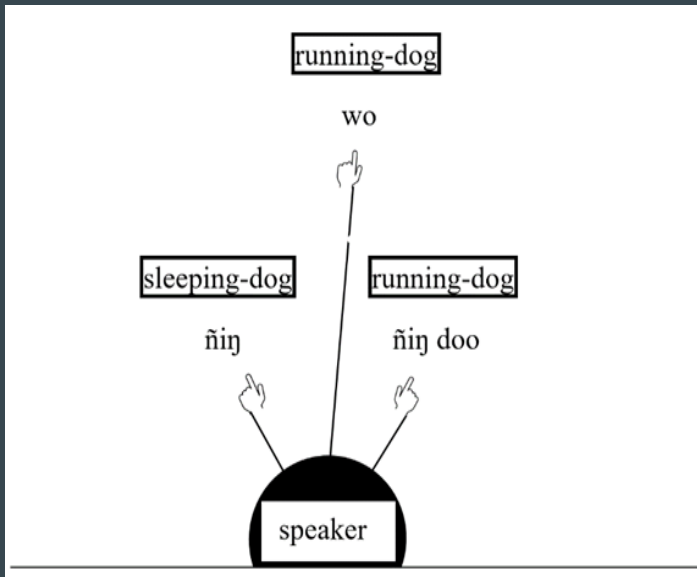
(3) a. **ñiŋ** **sunguto-o** be   sii-riŋ kabiring **wo** **sunguto-o** be   looriŋ

　　this girl-DET AUX   sit   when   that girl-DET AUX standing

　　"This girl is sitting while that girl is standing"

b. **ñiŋ** wulo-o   be   siinoo la   kariŋ, **ñiŋ** wulu **doo** be   boriŋ-boriŋo la

　　this dog-DET.AUX sleep IMP when this   dog   one AUX run around IMP

　　"This dog is sleeping while this one (dog) is running around"

- This test shows that we are dealing with two distinct girls.
- The non-uniqueness test also allows us to classify *ñiŋ* 'this' and *wo* 'that' and their plural counterparts *ñinulu* 'these' and *wolu* 'those' as genuine demonstratives.
- A particle (*doo* "some") can be used with proximal demonstrative in the second clause to mark constrast

Demonstratives in Cabo Verdean Creole (CVC)

(4) a. N   ta   toma **kel** roza

    I   ASP take this rose

    "I will take this rose."

b. N   ta   toma **kes**   roza

    I   ASP take these rose

    "I will take these roses."

(5) a. **Kel**   raparigas sta sintadu

    that (SG) girl-PL   be sitting

    "those girls are sitting."

b. **Kes** raparigas sta sintadu

    those (PL) girls be sitting

    "those girls are sitting."

- The singular demonstrative can be used to modify an overt plural noun, as in (5a).

- However, in contrast to Mandinka, the plural demonstrative can co-occur with a plural noun, particularly when that plural noun is a [+human] noun, as in (5b).

Demonstrative in Cabo Verdean Creole (cont'd)

(6) a. **kel   minina** sta sintádu y   **kel   minina** sta di pé

   this girl   is   sitting and this   girl   is   of foot

   "This girl is sitting while this girl is standing."

   b. **kel   minina** *li*   sta   sintádu y   **kel   minina** *la*   sta di pé

   this   girl   here is   sitting and this girl   there is   of foot

   "This girl is sitting while that girl is standing."

- The compatibility of *kel* with non-uniqueness can be supported by the contrastiveness test as in (6a)
- This contrast has to be reinforced by pointing gestures in (6a).
- In (6b), the contrastiveness is overtly marked by the proximal marker *li* and its distal counterpart *la*.

Demonstratives in Portuguese

Portuguese distal demonstratives 'that'/'those'

Aquele (mas./sg), aqueles (mas., pl), aquela (fem./sg), aquelas (fem./pl)

(7) a. Eu vou levar aquela rosa

     I FUT take that   rose

    'I will take that rose.'

  b. Eu vou levar aquela**s** rosa**s**

     I FUT take those roses

    'I will take those roses.'

Portuguese DP: [$_{DP}$ D-PL NP-PL]

In support of the Founder Principle

The behavior of the Cabo Verdean demonstrative can align either with Mandinka (as in 5a) or with Portuguese (as in 5b) (repeated below for convenience), leading to the observed variation in Baptista and Dayal (to appear). This would support the Founder Principle.

(5) a. **Kel**   rapariga**s** sta sintadu   b. **Kes** rapariga**s** sta sintadu

that (SG)   girl-PL   be sitting   those (PL) girls be sitting

"those girls are sitting."   "those girls are sitting."

Reference to kind/genericity in Mandinka

(8) a.* **Dinosooru** yeeman-ta le

dinosaur disappear-COMPL PRF

"The dinosaur is extinct." / "Dinosaurs are extinct."

b. **Dinosooro-o** mu daafeŋ baa le ti

dinosaur-DET AUX animal big FOC OBL

"The dinosaur is a giant animal." (referring to dinosaurs in general)

c. **Dinosooro-o-lu** yeeman-ta le

dinosaur-DET-PL disappear-COMPL PRF

"Dinosaurs are extinct" (in general)

- In Mandinka, the suffix "-o" is commonly viewed as a specifier or default definite marker (Drame; 1981, Creissels, 2020).

- Based on the examples in (8a) through (8c), we can infer that nouns that are strictly bare (with no determiner and no plural marking) do not contribute to the expression of kind reading in the language.

(9) a. **Ninso-o(-lu)**   ka   ñaamo-o   le   ñimi

    cow-DET(-PL)   HABIT   grass-DET   FOC   eat

    "The cow eats hay." / "Cows eat hay."

- Both singular definite determiner -*o*, and the plural marker -*lu* can modify definite, and specific nouns.
- They can also modify kind and generic nouns.

   b. Jato-**o**(-**lu**)   mu   daafeŋ   saŋarliŋ   baale   ti

     lion-DET(-PL)AUX   animal   ferociousbig   FOC   OBL

   "The lion is a ferocious animal." / "Lions are ferocious animals."

13

Reference to kind/genericity in CVC

Kind reading:

    (10)   Dinozoru dja   dizaparese

             dinosaur COMP disappear

           "Dinosaurs have disappeared."

Generic reading:

    (11)   Baka ta   kume padja

             cow ASP eat   hay

             "Cows eat hay."

This is in contrast to Mandinka where the definite determiner -*o* participates in the formation of both kind and generic readings.

- Bare nouns are used in both examples to express kind and genericity in CVC

Reference to kind/genericity in Portuguese

(12) Os   dinossauros desapareceram

     DEF-PL dinosaurs   disappeared

   "Dinosaurs have disappeared."

(13) As   vacas comem feno

     DEF-PL cows eat   hay

   "Cows eat hay."

Results

Table 1: A comparative analysis of Mandinka, Portuguese and Cabo Verdean demonstratives and definites

Demonstratives and definite determiners	Mandinka	CVC	Portuguese
Demonstratives mark deixis	Yes	Yes	Yes
Singular demonstratives can modify plural nouns	Yes	Yes	**No**
Demonstratives mark contrast	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demonstratives signal anti-uniqueness	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demonstratives mark contrast between two proximal entities by adding a marker in second clause	Yes	**No**	**No**
Plural demonstratives can co-occur with overt plural nouns	**No**	Yes	Yes
Demonstratives have distinct forms from definite determiners	Yes	**No**	Yes
Definite determiners can mark kind nouns	Yes	**No**	Yes
Definite determiners can mark generic nouns	Yes	**No**	Yes

Concluding remarks

We conducted a three-way comparison between Cabo Verdean, Mandinka and Portuguese number morphology on demonstratives and their expression of kind reference/genericity, trying to assess whether the behavior of Cabo Verdean demonstratives and kind/generic nouns align with Portuguese or with Mandinka, as Mandinka speakers were among the major contributors to the language.

We show that with respect to number morphology on demonstratives, the behavior of the Cabo Verdean demonstrative can align either with Portuguese or with Mandinka, leading to the variation documented in Baptista and Dayal (to appear). These results support the Founder Principle.

In contrast, when one examines reference to kind/genericity, the behavior of Cabo Verdean is distinct from both Portuguese and Mandinka which require definiteness marking on both singular and plural nouns. Cabo Verdean only uses bare nouns. This does not support the Founder Principle, showing instead that Cabo Verdean has undergone internal development in that aspect of its grammar.

This type of comparative studies has deep implications for the ontological nature of Creole languages.

References

Baptista, Marlyse (2007). On the syntax and semantics of DP in Cape Verdean Creole. In *Noun Phrases in Creole*

 Languages: A Multi-faceted Approach, ed. Marlyse Baptista and Jacqueline Guéron, 61-105.

 Philadelphia/Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Creissels, Denis. 2020. A sketch of Mandinka. In *The Oxford guide to the Atlantic languages of West*

 Africa, ed. Friederike Lüpke. Oxford University Press.

Mufwene, Salikoko (1996). "The founder principle in creole genesis". *Diachronica.* 13:1. 83-134.

Quint, Nicolas (2008). *L'Élément Africain dans la Langue Capverdienne/Africanismos na Língua*

 Caboverdiana. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Thank you!

Questions?

Contacts:
Marlyse Baptista (marlyse.baptista@ling.upenn.edu)
Ousmane Cisse (ocisse@bu.edu)