

Preverbal *a*-marking in Palenquero Creole

Testing theories of grammaticalization, convergence, and inheritance

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Formally similar grammatical features in a creole and its genetic or areal relatives may indicate substrate transfer, lexifier influence, or grammaticalization. Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the origin(s) of the preverbal past marker *a* in Palenquero Creole (Colombia). Results from distributional analysis and tests for significance indicate that several diachronically-related meanings are *a*-marked at rates approaching obligatory, suggesting advanced grammaticalization. Comparative results for Peninsular *haber* + PP suggest that past marking has grammaticalized much further in half the time in Palenquero Creole than in its lexifier, Spanish. Why? I argue, against traditional accounts about the origins of *a*, that, given the contact history of Palenquero speakers, most likely a pre-existing Kikongo prefixal form merged with an already grammaticalizing *haber*, thus propelling grammaticalization in the creole. The synchronic patterning shows adherence to typological patterns observed for perfectives in line with well-known constraints on competition and selection in contact languages, such as their grammatical congruence or particular social ecologies.

Keywords: Palenquero, Kikongo, Spanish creoles, grammaticalization in creoles, contact languages, congruence, convergence, competition and selection, tense-aspect marking

1. Introduction

Creole studies have advanced competing hypotheses regarding the influences on the structure and origins of creole languages, most prominently contact with the lexifier, substrate influence, and universal processes. One problem that arises is that some creole forms may bear a surface similarity to those of presumed donor languages, and even other creoles, making adjudicating between hypotheses a dif-

ficult task. Indeed, while the attestation of superficially similar grammatical features in a creole and its genetic or areal relatives may be a first indication of substrate transfer or contact-induced lexifier influence, expressions may also have developed language internally, following cross-linguistically attested evolutionary paths. These factors are not mutually exclusive as influence and reinforcement from multiple sources may affect all aspects of emergent creole structures. Although the source(s) of creole grammatical morphemes have received wide attention, we still lack empirical tests for many of them.

The focus of this study is the origins of perfective marking in Palenquero, an Afro-Hispanic creole spoken in northern Colombia, which bears surface similarity to past tense forms in both its super- and substrate languages and the Portuguese-based creole Papiamentu. As with many (creole) languages, we have no historical documentation for this spoken variety. Despite this, several factors make Palenquero an apposite testing ground for evaluating theories of provenance. For one, recent quantitative studies have provided fine-grained descriptions of its tense-aspect system (Smith 2013, 2014, 2018, 2021). Also, much is known about the cross-linguistic development of tense and aspect marking in the world's languages (Bybee et al. 1994; Comrie 1976; Dahl 1985). Further, the historical development of perfective aspect in Peninsular Spanish is also well documented through variationist studies (Coppole 2011; Delgado-Díaz 2021; Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós 2008) and historical treatises (Lapesa 1981; Penny 2004). Finally, descriptions of past tense morphemes in Kikongo are contained in reference grammars (Bentley 1887; Severn 1956) and in recent areal and historical studies (Dom & Bostoen 2015; Dom et al. 2018; Nurse 2007, 2008).

Under investigation is the Palenquero preverbal morpheme *a*, often called the marker of past or perfective (example (1)).

(1) *I a nasé Palenge en kasa ri palma.*

I PAST born Palenque in house of palm

'I was born in Palenque in a thatch-roofed house.'

(Male, 60, Recording 5, 00:55)

It is widely assumed that the lexical source for preverbal *a* is the Portuguese adverb *ja* (Bickerton 1981; Granda 1968). A competing hypothesis for the origin of *a* is the substrate hypothesis which, until recently, has had little evidentiary support (Maurer 1987: 54–57). This paper will challenge the lone-origins hypothesis and the oft-presumed adverbial source. I will investigate the following research questions: What is the provenance of preverbal *a*; that is, what are its lexical sources? Why is perfective marking further advanced in Palenquero than in its lexifier, Spanish? What are the contributions of the substrate language, Kikongo?

Are there factors that interact with and potentially propel grammaticalization in this creole?

To tackle these questions, I utilize the variationist method to first uncover distribution patterns of tense-aspect morphemes with past temporal reference (Labov 1966). Then, the synchronic distributions and functions of preverbal *a* are explained from a *diachronic perspective* (see §3.2 below) (Bybee et al. 1994: 3–4; Smith 2018: 376–378). Under this approach, the degree to which the patterning of preverbal *a* adheres to strong cross-linguistic trends found for the diachronic development of perfective morphemes serves as a proxy for its degree of grammaticalization. I test the claim that grammaticalization theory¹ can be used as a “diagnostic tool that will help to unequivocally identify substrate influence in creole formation” (Plag 2002: 234). The patterns of use are further elaborated in light of factors known to influence or constrain the selection of competing forms in contact languages, such as their grammatical congruence or particular social ecologies (Baptista 2020; Heath 1998; Heine & Kuteva 2005; Mufwene 1996, 2001, 2008), with a view to explaining any unexpected patterns and why Palenquero speakers selected *a* for marking past tense over other choices at their disposal.

Distributional patterns and results from multivariate analysis suggest that preverbal *a* (compared to zero-coded verb stems) is far along a hypothesized grammaticalization path in accordance with trends well-established cross-linguistically. The synchronic patterning, while adhering to typological patterns observed for developing perfectives, also diverges in some ways from the lexifier, Spanish, showing substrate influence and convergence phenomena associated with languages in contact. Comparative analysis reveals that perfective marking in modern-day Spanish is nowhere near as robust as it is in Palenquero (a language that emerged during the colonial period; see below) where preverbal *a* appears to have grammaticalized much further than *haber* in half the time. I argue that the primary reason for this acceleration is that a homophonous form in languages of the Kikongo Cluster (KLC), a continuum of several closely related languages or dialects (Schwegler 2016: 50), which existed in Proto-Bantu long before African and European contacts, merged with Spanish *haber*, thus strengthening

1. Not all scholars agree that grammaticalization is a “theory” or with various ways of describing it or its components. For arguments in support of grammaticalization as a theory, see Heine (1994: 255–259) and Heine & Kuteva (2002: 2–5); for responses to criticisms of grammaticalization theory, see Bybee (2010: 112–114). As Bybee (2010: 114) points out, “grammaticalization leads us directly to usage-based theory: the term ‘grammaticalization theory’ refers both to the synchronic and diachronic dimensions. In this theory the two are not opposed but must be considered together as we strive to understand language. This theory not only makes strong diachronic predictions, but also has profound consequences for synchronic analysis and description.... That makes it a theory.”

it, accelerating the grammaticalization process in the creole compared to its lexicifier.

I begin by providing some historical background about the formation of the village of San Basilio de Palenque and its creole (§2). Establishing this timeline is important for addressing when and how perfective marking may have developed in Palenquero. Section 3 discusses some theoretical issues related to the study of grammaticalization in creoles and constraints on the competition and selection of forms in language contact settings. This section also outlines the ways in which a diachronic perspective can be used as a diagnostic tool to adjudicate questions of provenance. Then, §4 introduces variable past marking in the form of preverbal *a* and zero from a grammaticalization perspective. Section 5 gives an overview of the data, participants, corpus, and methods used in this study, after which §6 presents the results of distributional and multivariate analyses of alternating *a* versus zero. In §7, I challenge traditional theories regarding the origins of Palenquero *a* and propose a new theory of the origins of *a*, based on the results from the current study and recent research on Kikongo languages. Section 8 continues this discussion by presenting Palenquero present tense verbs with past marking as further evidence of substrate influence. Finally, I discuss the factors that most likely facilitated the selection of this form (§9) and present my conclusions (§10).

2. Historical background

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia was the most important port for the Spanish slave trade in all of Latin America for 200 years (Wheat 2011, 2016). This period was marked by tremendous resistance, slave revolts, fugitive flight, the creation of palisade forts, or *palenques* (as they are called in Spanish), and ongoing conflict between the Spanish, the Africans, and the Indigenous peoples in the hills, mountain slopes, and swamps under the purview of the jurisdictional district of Cartagena (Navarrete 2008). All of these *palenques* were eventually abandoned or destroyed by the Spanish, except one.

The maroon village, or *palenque*, of San Basilio² was formed by fugitive slaves between 1655–1674 (Navarrete 2007: 19, 2008: 70). It is located approximately 60 kilometers (or roughly 40 miles) from Cartagena (see Figure 1). The residents

2. The original name of San Basilio de Palenque was *El Palenque de San Miguel Arcángel* and then, in 1713, the name was changed to *San Basilio Magno* (Navarrete 2008: 171). The community elders prefer the designation San Basilio de Palenque over Palenque de San Basilio since presumably the community was not named after the saint (San Basilio), but rather, the saint was adopted for the sake of the community (Natividad Pérez 2002: 4).

speak an Afro-Hispanic creole language called Palenquero, or *Lengua*, as it is called by locals, and a coastal variety of Colombian Spanish. Recent studies, which combine DNA, sociohistorical, and linguistic evidence, point to Palenquero's origins in the small Mayombe region of the Republic of Congo (Noguera et al. 2016; Schwegler 2016, 2017; though see Parkvall & Jacobs 2020:562). Palenquero was first identified as a creole language, and not just a dialect of Spanish, around 1970 (Bickerton & Escalante 1970; Granda 1968). It was this discovery that attracted more linguists to the community who began coming to (and some even living in) Palenque in the 1970s and 1980s (Lipski 2005: 287, fn. 16, 2012: 23–24; Schwegler 2017: 58). In 2005, San Basilio de Palenque was declared a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

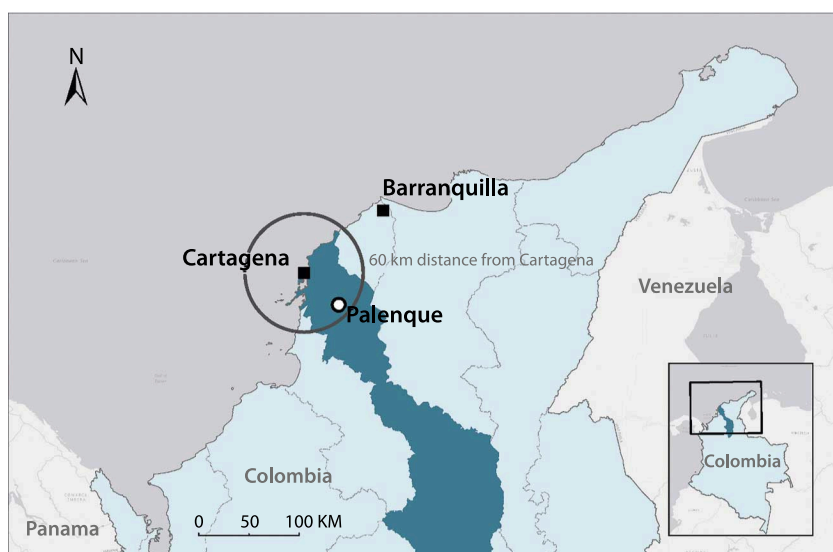


Figure 1. Location of San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia

The first attestation³ of the existence of the Creole of San Basilio was in 1772 in Bishop Diego Peredo's *Noticia historial de la provincia de Cartagena de Yndias, año 1772* (Dieck 2011: 16; Granda 1978: 350–361; Patiño Roselli 1983: 183). This means that as of this writing, the creole language that is spoken there has been in existence for at least 249 years. However, it is possible that *Lengua*⁴ was spoken before

3. We are reminded here of Chaudenson's (2001: 34) observation: "While it is impossible to determine a creole's 'date of birth' (because creolization is a process, not an event), one can, nonetheless, identify specific landmarks."

4. The name Palenquero, an invention of modern-day scholars, would not have been used during that time.

the creation of the *palenque* (Dieck 2011; Granda 1978:359; Parkvall & Jacobs 2020:558–561), although that point still remains unclear (Parkvall & Jacobs 2020:554; Schwegler 2016:38). While there is speculation regarding what this early variety was like, we know that it was not Spanish, since the *Noticia historial* makes mention of a “peculiar tongue” (*un idioma particular*) that was spoken there alongside Spanish (Patiño Roselli 1983:183). Linguists believe that the Palenqueros have been bilingual at least since the middle of the 18th century (Lipski 2005:122; Schwegler 2011:228), a fact supported by primary source historical data (Dieck 2011:16; Patiño Roselli 1983:183).

Kikongo has been identified as Palenquero’s sole (demonstrable) substrate language despite the fact that historical accounts reveal that there were dozens of African languages spoken in Cartagena and its surrounding areas, and in the *palenques*, including San Basilio (Dieck 2011:14; Navarrete 1995:46–58; Schwegler 2016, 2017; cf. Parkvall & Jacobs 2020). Historical sources show that, between 1570–1640, Upper Guinea and Angola provided the vast majority of enslaved Africans, with Angola eventually replacing Upper Guinea as the major supplier of slaves to Cartagena toward the end of this period (Wheat 2011, 2016, and references therein). While it is believed that the *palenque* was formed by African-born *bozales* and indigenous-born creoles, and most likely was the product of ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity at its start, there are solid arguments which suggest that Bakongo slaves (in Cartagena and from other *palenques*) coalesced with other Kikongo-speaking slaves and became linguistically dominant in the *palenque* of San Basilio and in other *palenques* (Navarrete 2007:29, 2008:17; Parkvall & Jacobs 2020:559, 561–564; Schwegler 2017:66–70, and references therein).

The search for African contributions in Palenquero has a long trajectory (see Schwegler 2016, 2017, and references therein, for a history of the scholarship on the question of Palenquero’s African roots). One major conclusion of this research has been that Palenquero may not have as many African contributions as early descriptions suggested, since there are only a few dozen African-origin lexical items in everyday use and much of the lexicon is derived from Spanish (Schwegler 2017). Furthermore, many presumed Africanisms turned out to be erroneous (since early scholars’ proposed etymologies were inaccurate) (Schwegler 2016:45, 2017:76). In other cases, many lexical items that were of Bantu origin had fallen into disuse due to heavy stigmatization of the language by outsiders; however, a few Kikongo words were (re)introduced into the community by scholars and adopted by Palenquero speakers who were imbued with a new sense of linguistic pride which followed from language revitalization efforts (Schwegler 2017:84).

On the other hand, some Palenquero features have unmistakable African origins, e.g., lexical items like *mona* ‘child’, grammatical morphemes such as the

prenominal plural marker *ma*, and phonological features such as prenasalized stops (*ndulo* < Sp. *duro* ‘hard’) (Lipski 2005; Moñino 2007; Schwegler 2007; Schwegler & Morton 2003: 130–153). Other features, though, such as the pronominal system, are believed to be common denominators between Spanish, Portuguese, and Kikongo (Schwegler 2002; though see Jacobs & Parkvall 2020 on the Portuguese contributions). A less obvious feature is that, although Palenquero is essentially a pitch accent language, it may contain vestigial phonologically distinctive tone (Hualde & Schwegler 2008; Lipski 2011). Indeed, the provenance of many linguistic features remains unexplored.

3. Grammaticalization, competition, selection, and change in creoles

3.1 Grammaticalization and constraints on selection in contact varieties

A long-standing problem has been ascertaining how grammaticalization proceeds in creoles (Bruyn 1996, 2009; McWhorter 2018; Mufwene 2008; Plag 2002; Smith 2018: 375–376). Creolization, while not a special diachronic process in and of itself, involves grammatical restructuring and transfer at all levels of the grammar including language-internal grammaticalization (Mufwene 1996: 5–6).

According to Bruyn (1996), creole grammaticalization may be *ordinary* (i.e., gradual and language internal), *instantaneous* (which, despite the name, actually means proceeding not instantaneously but at a considerably faster rate than “ordinary” grammaticalization, e.g., in a few generations, or *apparent* (which is actually substrate transfer). In this framework, structures from one language may transfer into the creole with or without grammaticalization, while other processes can begin “from scratch”, developing more or less fast or slow. In distinguishing the variety of processes that play a role in creole development, Bruyn (2009: 314) argues that *apparent* grammaticalization can be identified when “the direction of development is contrary to the one expected in a grammaticalization perspective”, whereas *reanalysis* without grammaticalization happens when “some creole items...have assumed a grammatical function without ever having had a lexical or less grammatical role in the creole language”. As an example of “abrupt” or “instantaneous” grammaticalization, the indefinite article in Sranan apparently took less than one hundred years to develop, in contrast with the development of Sranan’s definite articles, which proceeded gradually from demonstrative adjectives (Bruyn 1996, 2009: 315–317; though see Mufwene 2008: 163–171).

Cross-linguistically, grammaticalization paths are quite broad, thus, they may show some language-specific differences (Poplack 2011), be influenced by social factors (Hopper & Traugott 1993), develop local anomalies along the same gram-

maticalization path (Tagliamonte 2013:59), take bifurcated paths (Mufwene 1996: 21–22), or exhibit distinct preferences with certain language types and language areas (Drinka 2017; Narrog & Heine 2018). For these reasons, it is not surprising that competing ecological factors, both linguistic and extralinguistic, also influence creole development (Mufwene 1996, 2001:135). Consequently, similar (looking) constructions across creoles that have the same lexifier (or that arose under similar conditions) may show differentiation and various degrees of grammaticalization (Mufwene 1996: 25).

In some cases, a grammaticalization path can be difficult to reconstruct (or decipher) because interruptions to it can occur due to nonuniversal language-specific reasons. For example, it has been found that “a grammatical affix undergoing erosion is sometimes abruptly replaced by a conveniently available lexical stem with which it shares one or more phonological segments” (Heath 1998:728). Because of the phonetic and functional similarity between the new and old affixes and the stem, the unwary linguist may misdiagnose this as ordinary phonetic reduction in unidirectional grammaticalization (Heath 1998:733–734). For this reason, this type of process has been described as “hermit crab restructuring” whereby in a language’s maintenance of an erstwhile grammatical category (the “hermit crab”), the formal expression(s) of it (i.e., the empty mollusk shells the hermit crab temporarily inhabits) is (constantly) renewed by – to all appearances – a grammaticalizing element. (Heath 1998:730, 732). The “hermit crab” analogy posits that grammaticalization does not happen in a vacuum, but that “‘old’ grammatical patterns (categories and forms) are always decisive in determining the way ‘new’ patterns fit into the system” during grammaticalization (Heath 1998:730). This view challenges traditional grammaticalization theorists to pay “particular attention to...*the prior grammatical system* in determining the manner in which lexical material is grammaticalized” (emphasis mine) instead of focusing only on the lexical sources that enter into grammaticalization (Heath 1998:731). A hermit crab metaphor is useful when investigating the origins of creole grammatical phenomena, especially if we do not conceive of early creole restructuring as representing a complete break in language transmission but as a continuance of transmission (albeit with modification) from the source languages (Mufwene 2008: 161).

In situations of contact, grammatical features from the lexifier and substrate languages compete with one another for selection in the creole grammar (Mufwene 1996, 2001, 2008:129).⁵ Nevertheless, it has been observed that con-

5. Of course, it is important to note that linguistic elements in the nonstandard European dialects which contributed to creoles were already in competition for various grammatical functions (Mufwene 1996: 25, 2001: 25, 29, 36).

gruence between languages “favors features shared by the varieties in contact, [and] is itself a factor that drives selection” (Mufwene 2008: 119; see also Mufwene 2001: 23–24). Winford (2003: 98) adds that “the greater the congruence between syntactic structures in two languages, the greater the likelihood that one will replace the other”.⁶ Hermit crab restructuring, as mentioned above, is partially motivated by congruence because the replacement morpheme shares “one or more conspicuous segments” with the eroding one (Heath 1998: 733).

Baptista (2020) reviewed 20 contact languages and surveyed 19 congruent features to examine the role of congruence in the development of creoles. Based on these case studies, she argues that when preexisting features of contact languages are perceived by speakers to be similar (congruent), then they are favored for selection in the emerging languages. Among the features surveyed is Palenquero Creole’s prenominal plural marker *ma*, which displays a “partial overlap in form, overlap in function (conveying a plural meaning), and full alignment in syntax (all of the markers are prenominal, either as an isolated morpheme or as a prefix)” between the Kikongo plural marker *ma* and Spanish *más* (Baptista 2020: 177); further, the Palenquero genitive construction [NP + *ri ele* ‘of him/her’] displays “a complete overlap in form (*de/di*), overlap in meaning (denoting possession), and full syntactic alignment (all of the forms are prenominal)” between the Spanish and Kikongo genitive constructions (Baptista 2020: 178; cf. Megenney 1986; Moñino 2002; Schwegler 2011).

In addition to typological constraints, other factors either constrain or influence the selection of features in situations of contact. These can be sociolinguistic factors, the length and nature of contact, or the tension between markedness constraints and immediate ecological factors (Heine & Kuteva 2005: 234–243; Mufwene 2008: 129–130). For example, it is queried whether a speaker in an early contact situation would most likely select a form that is typologically unmarked over the one that is familiar to him (Mufwene 2008: 129). In addition, it has been claimed that such a speaker would most likely select free and invariant forms over inflected forms (Weinreich 1953/1964: 41; though see Heine & Kuteva 2005: 235–236).

In multilingual settings, such as in creole-speaking communities, speakers of the same or typologically similar substrate languages often conferred a privileged status to a minority of speakers, transferred the same features, or spread certain features disproportionately (Mufwene 2008: 134). Despite the heterogeneity among speakers and the linguistic choices at their disposal, the “cumulation and

6. On the other hand, there is also evidence that “large-scale grammatical replication” can take place even when the contact languages are typologically distinct (Heine & Kuteva 2005: 234–235).

convergence of selections made repeatedly by individual speakers” can accrue at the community level and this can lead to change (Mufwene 2008: 116). While “the lexifier is not devoid of models for the developments in Creoles...the role of the substrate languages is yet to be articulated more thoroughly, at least in determining the options selected into the Creoles” (Mufwene 1996: 24). All of these discussions have called for further empirical investigation (Heine & Kuteva 2005: 234, 242; Mufwene 2008: 129).

3.2 Grammaticalization theory as a diagnostic tool in creole formation

When addressing issues of creole formation, an important caveat is that a “strictly monogenetic view of grammaticalization is ultimately inappropriate” (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 220). However, Plag (2002: 235) proposes that the highly constrained, monogenetic version of grammaticalization theory can be used as a *diagnostic*, or *heuristic tool* to determine transfer in creole formation. His argument is based on core features of grammaticalization theory: the unidirectionality principle, which states that the correlated processes associated with grammaticalization, once underway, proceed only in one direction (compare Bruyn’s 2009: 314 concept of *apparent* grammaticalization above), and gradualness,⁷ that is, “the changes along the clines are usually a matter of hundreds of years and do not occur within only a few generations”.

Studies on lexicalization and other “reverse grammaticalization” phenomena have shown that exceptions to the unidirectionality principle are exceptionally rare, and often controversial (e.g., Börjars & Vincent 2011; Brinton & Traugott 2005; Bybee 2011; Hopper & Traugott 1993: 130–138; Willis 2007). For contact languages, the evidence suggests that the unidirectionality hypothesis holds true as it does for other languages. Heine and Kuteva (2005: 242–243) state: “Of the roughly two hundred cases of grammatical development that we have been able to identify so far in pidgins and creoles (see Heine & Kuteva 2002), hardly a handful are ‘at variance’ with the canonical pathways of grammaticalization”. According to Plag (2002: 235), then, by working “under the assumption that language-internal developments must accord with the principles established in grammaticalization theory, violations of those principles must be interpreted as caused by external factors, which provides us with an independent indication of substrate transfer”.

7. The concept of gradualness is difficult to operationalize even in canonical grammaticalization (Plag 2002: 232–233, 239). I am operating under the assumption that, as in all languages, grammaticalization in creoles is also gradual, however one defines gradualness (Mufwene 2001: 130–131, 2008: 168–170).

3.3 Diachronic perspective on synchronic distributions

Given the lack of direct historical evidence available in most of the world's languages, diachronic processes often must be inferred from synchronic states and an understanding of the directionality of change (Croft 2003: 272). Thus, for languages with no historical documentation, such as Palenquero, the synchrony/diachrony interface becomes indispensable to the study of how change takes place in them (Croft 2003: 272–279; Bybee 2010: Chapter 6; Hopper & Tragoutt 1993: 2, 31, 32). Since variant forms may coexist for centuries, this allows them to be studied synchronically and even within a variationist framework (Hopper 1991; Poplack & Tagliamonte 1996: 72).

Viewing it this way, then, requires that we rethink how grammaticalization is approached, such that “synchrony and diachrony have to be viewed as an integrated whole” (Bybee 2010: 105). So, as we shift our focus away from looking solely at broad typological findings, or purely diachronic changes, we begin to address the process(es) of grammaticalization itself by “captur[ing] change in its dynamism [and] not viewing it as an abstract diachronic process” (Smith 2018: 393).

Recent variationist studies of the expression of habitual meaning in Palenquero have utilized this approach. For example, it has been demonstrated that the preverbal habitual marker *asé* is an emergent grammatical morpheme developing language internally along a well-defined grammaticalization pathway and in accord with typological predictions (Smith 2013, 2018, 2021). These studies report that in the domain of present temporal reference *asé* is quite infrequent as a habitual marker, and, although it occurs more frequently (and has more overt coding) in the past, it is far from obligatory in that environment as well; also, it is favored in affirmative contexts over negative ones and in frequentative over habitual contexts. The distributions also reveal that *asé* is far more frequent than its lexical etymon *hacer* ‘do’ and is strongly disfavored in the context of a co-occurring main verb *hacer*. As these papers argue, all of these findings are consistent with grammaticalization predictions (see references therein). Given the relatively young age of Palenquero, one might also expect to find an emergent past tense morpheme; yet, preverbal *a* stands in stark contrast to preverbal *asé* because it is a marker that has reached near obligatory status (see below). Furthermore, the fact that preverbal *a* has analogs in both the super- and substrate languages (which is not the case for habitual *asé*; Smith 2018: 375) also has consequences for its grammaticalization.

4. Variable past expression in Palenquero (preverbal *a* versus zero) and grammaticalization

In Palenquero, preverbal *a* has been variably described as a preterit, a perfect (Schwegler & Morton 2003:151), a past (Patiño Roselli 1983:115), a completive (Holm 1988:163), and a marker of completed/accomplished events (*réel accompli*) (Moñino 1999:8). From a diachronic perspective, perfective-related functions such as perfect, perfective, simple past, and remote past may be described together because there are synchronic and diachronic relations among them. As stressed by Bybee et al. (1994:42), [when]...a [grammatical morpheme] has two or more uses, this implies a diachronic relation between [them], since it is reasonable to assume *on the basis of our knowledge of documented cases* (emphasis mine) that one use developed after, and probably out of, the other”.

In Palenquero, non-stative verbs with past reference may be *a*-marked or “may occur without any verbal marker”, that is, as a zero-coded (or bare) verb stem (Schwegler & Green 2007:276). It has been proposed that at creole genesis the *a* marker in Palenquero “moved in to fill the ‘vacuum’ created by zero-marked past reference nonstatives” (Bickerton 1981:88; cf. Holm 1988:153). Upon first consideration, this scenario seems plausible because zero-coded forms in creoles usually develop because the inflectional systems of the donor languages are often lost during creole genesis/formation. Additionally, preexisting zero-coded forms may be transferred from a creole’s super- or substrate languages. Due to the plethora of zeroes, overt morphemes are said to develop out of communicative necessity (Bruyn 1996:30).

Cross-linguistically, a *zero-coded* form may express open meanings, that is, meanings that overlap with those of overt morphemes, or a form may be *zero-marked*, whereby zero is the opposition of some overtly coded form (Bybee 1994). Obligatory zero-marking develops gradually and usually in tandem with the grammaticalization of an overt morpheme (Bybee 1994). Variationist studies have shown that “a number of grammatical markers typically alternate with zero in a number of the subsystems of [creole grammars]” (Poplack & Tagliamonte 1999:193). Over time, though, as with other languages, privative oppositions develop in creoles as a result of grammaticalization eventually replacing facultative or optional ones (Sankoff 1990). Let us now turn to a description of the data, corpus, and methodology used for my study of past temporal reference and the coding schema for overtly- and zero-coded verb phrases.

5. Data, participants, corpus, and methods

5.1 The data and selection of participants

The data for this study were taken from *The Bilingual Corpus of Palenquero Creole: San Basilio de Palenque, Cartagena, and Barranquilla* (Smith 2011–2014), a collection of 80 sociolinguistic interviews conducted by the author throughout extended visits to the community from May 2011 to December 2014. The participants chosen for this study were 30 fluent adult speakers of Palenquero, males ($n=15$) and females ($n=15$), ranging from 21 to 88 years of age.

The *sociolinguistic interview* is a set of semi-directed dialogues and conversations, the aim of which is to tap into an individual's *vernacular*; the speech register which, although inherently variable, has been found to be the most systematic and regular, and the one to which minimal attention to speech is paid by speakers. (Labov 1984: 29). To this end, I relied heavily on the expertise of community members in identifying and selecting the consultants, and, in many cases, facilitating and conducting the interviews. To further encourage vernacular language use, the interviews were conducted in settings familiar to the participants, such as in their places of residence, local plazas, and nearby public spaces.

Another goal of the research design was to ensure that I had a stratified, purposefully structured sample of the community (Tagliamonte 2006: 18–19). For this reason, I made a concerted effort not to interview the same person twice, which can easily happen over repeated visits to a small community. For this study, the primary focus was not the individual, but the speech community (Labov 2001: 34; cf. Moñino 2012: 248–250).

5.2 The corpus and transcription

Discourse transcription can be defined as “the process of creating a written representation of a speech event so as to make it accessible for discourse research” (Du Bois et al. 1993: 45). Thus, for varieties with no historical documentation, transcription not only facilitates discourse-based research, it is a constitutive element of it. Corpus research, as opposed to key-informant elicitation via questionnaires, has been a mainstay of Palenquero research (Schwegler & Green 2007: 274–275, and references therein).

The corpus used for this project was intended to be one with widespread usability, that is, a searchable document that is not tied to particular linguistic features or research questions, and which could serve as a language archive (Torres Cacoullos & Travis 2018: 39–49). Twenty minute segments of spontaneous speech

were transcribed in their entirety as part of the corpus constitution, instead of selected narratives or vignettes.

The interviews that comprise the sub-corpus used in this study were transcribed using the transcription software ELAN (2021) and carefully revised by the author and a team of research assistants who were native and heritage speakers. Thanks to intramural and NSF funding, the team was provided with laptops, headphones, and other equipment. Over the course of many months, the team received paid training in the use of ELAN software and transcription methods, sociolinguistic theory, and orthographic conventions. Two members of the research team received individual assistantships to work with the author for one year at Bucknell University, Pennsylvania, USA.

5.3 The variationist method

The variationist perspective of grammaticalization is that “a set of diachronically related functions along a hypothesized grammaticalization path” may be expressed asymmetrically by a variant or variants (Schwenter & Torres Cacoullos 2010: 14). Poplack (2011: 212) observed that “it is particularly instructive to examine what happens to the structure of the grammar *during the course of change* (emphasis mine), when a number of layers/variants are still extant”. Broadly speaking, by enabling systematic quantitative analysis of diachronically-related forms and their distributions produced in spontaneous speech, researchers can test theories of grammaticalization at the level of community discourse (Sankoff & Brown 1976).

The *variable context*, circumscribed here as the “broad domain of past temporal reference”, is defined as the largest domain in which variation occurs. I applied the principle of accountability, which requires that we count, not only where the form of interest occurs, but where it could have occurred, but did not (Labov 1972: 72); thus, all past tense-aspect morphemes, including preverbal *a* and zero-coded (or bare) verb stems ($n=1,327$), were extracted from the corpus. Once the distributions revealed that there are only two competitors for perfective-related meanings, a second variable context was defined: alternating *a* versus zero. Afterwards, the data were coded and analyzed using the statistical program Goldvarb X (Sankoff et al. 2005). The next section outlines the relevant aspectual categories, operationalized as factors, and provides examples illustrating usage for each one.

5.4 Aspectual categories: Definitions and examples

Perfective

Perfective aspect signals that a situation is construed as being bounded temporally, or views a situation as a whole, without distinguishing any internal phases that make up that situation (Comrie 1976: 16).

Examples (2) through (6)⁸ illustrate the variability between *a* and bare verb stems expressing perfective meaning, and particularly in (2) and (3), where we see that *a* co-varies with zero within the same discursive context. In example (2), the 60-year-old interviewee, in narrating the story of when his father caught him drinking underage, foregrounds receiving a couple of whacks with a cable. In example (3), a woman is explaining how she never needed the assistance of a doctor or midwife during childbirth, then, in a summary statement, says that she gave birth to 10 of her 14 children “all by myself”. In examples (4) and (5), note that the temporal adverbials *repué* ‘afterwards’ and *en la noche* ‘that night’ preclude a present perfect reading. Similarly, in (6), the 62-year-old man’s grandmother died at some indeterminate/irrelevant point in the past; the meaning of this example is also perfective.

- (2) **A ndá mi no má hue ndo mochazo. Un kable Ø ndá mi ma**
 PAST give me no more COP-PAST two blows a cable give me PL
juetazo.
 whack
 ‘He gave me just – it was a couple of whacks. A cable gave me some blows.’
 (Male 60, Recording 5, 15:26)
- (3) *Y ma kattose moná I Ø parí. Yo a parí dié – yo solo – sin pattera.*
 and PL fourteen kids I birth I PAST birth ten I alone without midwife
 ‘And I gave birth to fourteen kids. And I gave birth to ten of them – me by
 myself – without a midwife.’ (Female, 80+, Recording 1, 05:41)
- (4) *Repué, i a bendé.*
 after I PAST sell
 ‘Afterwards, I sold [it].’ (Female 70+, Recording 58, 13:53)
- (5) *En la noche, i Ø kumé kumina ane nu.*
 in the night, I eat food their NEG
 ‘That night, I didn’t eat [any of] their food.’ (Male, 60, Recording 5, 15:42)

8. The labels used in the glosses are used for convenience, and do not always characterize the functional range of the forms.

(6) *E abuela mi Ømori ke miná-lo má nunka.*

DET grandmother POSS die REL see-DO more never

'My grandmother died, so I will never see her again.'

(Male, 62, Recording 32, 05:57)

Perfect

Perfects are relational and their meaning "signals that the situation occurs prior to reference time and is relevant to the situation at reference time" (Bybee et al. 1994: 54). Perfects that have several functions indicate later stages of development, while younger perfects are restricted to just one function (Bybee et al. 1994: 52).

In example (7), the participant asked if I had ever tasted the mangoes from Colombia; in (8), another participant asked whether, in all of my travels, I have ever been to Africa. When I responded *No*, she asked if I would be willing to go (*Pero, bo tan bae pa ayá?* 'But, you would go there?'). In example (9), I primed the participant by using the perfect construction (*A kambiá?* 'Has [it] changed?') to ask the participant if the Palenquero language had changed during her lifetime. She responded with two bare stems and a co-varying *a*-marked verb that 'It has not changed'. Finally, a man asked me if I had ever heard of an indigenous plant called *mblelo*. I responded: 'I have never eaten it' (*I a kumélo nu*). He then confirms by asking me again in (10): 'You've never eaten it?'

(7) *Bo a kumé ma mango ri aki?*

you PAST eat PL mango from here

'Have you eaten the mangoes from here?'

(Male 70+, Recording 9, 18:29)

(8) *Bo Øbae ku África nu?*

you go with Africa NEG

'You've never gone to Africa?'

(Female 60+, Recording 71, 15:11)

(9) *ØKambiá nu. Lengua ri aki Økambiá nu.*

change NEG language from here change NEG

Idioma lo ke suto tené aki a kambiá nu.

language REL we have here PAST change NEG

'It has not changed. The language from here has not changed. The language that we have here has not changed.'

(Female, 60+, Recording 71, 11:58)

(10) *Bo Økumé-lo nu?*

you eat-DO NEG

'You haven't tried it?'

(Male, 70+, Recording 9, 08:29)

Remote past

Remote past, or past before past, indicates a situation occurring temporally distant from the moment of speech” (Bybee et al. 1994: 317).⁹ As seen in examples (11) and (12) below, remote past may be expressed by preverbal *a* (Schwegler & Green 2007: 276) and by zero.

In example (11), the participant is describing an event that took place in the past, and then says that by the time the past event had taken place, he had already completed a task. In example (12), the interviewee is describing an occasion where he sat down because his head started spinning. His wife accused him of being drunk, but, as he explained to me, not only was he not drunk, he had not drunk anything at all (prior to the discussion with his wife), but was experiencing the onset of symptoms from diabetes. Notice that the difference between remote past (11) and past perfect (12) is determined by the context – one meaning (past perfect) is relational and the other is not; further, there is a diachronic relation between these two meanings: past perfects are an offshoot (analog) of present perfect, while remote pasts result from a generalization of meaning of past perfects “and parallels the change of [present perfect] to simple past” (Bybee et al. 1994: 102). Here, I code them both as remote pasts.

- (11) *En ndo ria, yo a yená-lo to en bolso.*
 in two day I PAST fill-DO everything in bag
 ‘In two days, I had filled up everything in my bag.’
 (Male 60, Recording 66, 08:40)
- (12) *Entonse, mujé mi ta-ba ablá mi ke i ta-ba borracho – ke*
 so wife my PROG-PAST IMP tell me that I COP-PAST IMP drunk that
i ta-ba bebé. I Ø bebé nu.
 I PROG-PAST IMP drink I drink NEG
 ‘So, my wife was telling me that I was drunk – that I had been drinking. I had not drunk [anything].’
 (Male 61, Recording 57, 09:32)

9. I avoid the term *anterior* here, which is variably understood and can be theory internal. In creole studies, the term *anterior* is used to mean past, past before past, and remote past for dynamics, and past for statives, and is not based on the moment of speech, but rather, the time that is in focus, i.e., that signaled by the unmarked verb (Bickerton 1975: Chapter 2, 1981: Chapter 2, fn. 5; Holm 1988: 151). This notion of anteriority is untenable for Palenquero, since zero is not the opposition of any overtly coded meaning and both *a* and zero have been found robustly with present tense stative and non-stative verbs (Smith 2013: 104, 107, 2021). Contrast this use with Bybee et al.’s (1994) use of *anterior*, which, in their study, means present perfect.

Habitual

Habitual refers to a situation that is characteristic of an entire period of time or that is repeated on several occasions over a period of time (Comrie 1976: 27–28).

- (13) *Ya, pero, en kasa, familia ase-ba pagá muy pokito a suto.*
 okay but in homes families HAB-PAST IMP pay very little to us
 ‘Okay, but, in the homes, the families used to pay us very little.’

(Female, 40+, Recording 36, 09:46)

Progressive

A progressive action takes place simultaneously with the moment of reference (Bybee et al. 1994: 317).

- (14) *Bo ta-ba motrá mi uto kusa. Ke pasá? Saká-lo.*
 you PROG-PAST IMP show me other thing what happened take out-DO
 ‘You were showing me something else. What happened? Take it out.’

(Male, 60, Recording 6, 22:25)

State exists

“The state is begun before reference time and continues after reference time” (Bybee et al. 1994: 318).

- (15) *Ese tía mi tene-ba un pikó.*
 that aunt POSS have-PAST IMP a loudspeaker
 ‘That aunt of mine had a loudspeaker.’

(Male, 53, Recording 21, 04:39)

States of limited duration

Perfective marking that occurs with stative predicates can yield several outcomes: present states, the beginning of a state (ingressive meaning), and completed states (resultatives) (Bybee et al. 1994: 75–78; Comrie 1976: 19–21).

I distinguish between states of extended duration, that is, states which began before speech time and continue indefinitely and limited states, or, “states with temporal limits, which are circumscribed to a period near reference time” (Torres Cacoullós 2012: 90–91). To illustrate, in example (16) the woman describes giving birth alone. Desperate for supplies, she noticed that she had a rag handy and was in that moment able to get a sheet to the ground before the baby came out.

- (16) *Aí parí. I a ten un trapo aí suelo. I a polé tirá*
 there gave birth I PAST have a rag there ground I PAST be able to throw
sábana y monasito a kaí suelo.
 sheet and baby PAST fall ground
 ‘I gave birth right there. I had a rag right there on the ground. I was able to
 throw the sheet [down] and the baby fell to the ground.’
 (Female, 88, Recording 8, 12:14)

We turn now to our analysis of Palenquero tense-aspect forms with past reference meaning, focusing primarily on preverbal *a* and zero. The distributional patterns, multivariate analyses, and form-function asymmetry combined provide insights into the degree of grammaticalization that has taken place.

6. Analysis of Palenquero past reference marking: Preverbal *a* and zero

Form-function asymmetry is confirmed in Table 1. We can see that preverbal *a* and zero are the *only* means of expressing meanings along the perfective grammaticalization path (that is, perfect, perfective, remote past, and states of limited duration) ($n=629$), despite the fact that other tense-aspect morphemes (*asé*, *sabé*, and *ta*) were included in the envelope of variation. On the other hand, *a* and bare verb stems may express other meanings across the broad domain of past temporal reference (Total $n=1,327$). All other meanings such as existing states, habitual, and progressive are expressed by three to five morphemes each, including zero.¹⁰

As highlighted in Figure 2, despite the modest numbers, we observe a closer association of *a* (over zero) with the meanings of remote past (88%, $n=14/16$), perfect (88%, $n=67/76$), and states of limited duration (86%, $n=18/21$), than with perfective (69%, $n=354/516$), though it is closely associated with that meaning as well. These distributions are consonant with synchronic predictions for tense-aspect morphemes that develop from stative auxiliary source constructions along the perfective grammaticalization path (‘have’ > resultative > perfect > perfective/past) (Bybee et al. 1994: 105). Since preverbal *a* expresses all of these meanings, this suggests a diachronic relation between them; however, its closer, near obligatory, association with perfect than with perfective is consistent with a generalization of meaning, as is the greater favoring of *a* in remote past contexts (Bybee et al. 1994: 52–53, 86–87, 101–102). This evidence, when viewed from a diachronic perspective, argues for the status of *a* as a well-developed aspectual morpheme.

10. For examples of the variation in form and functions of these morphemes, see Smith (2013, 2018, 2021).

Table 1. Distribution of past temporal reference aspectual distinctions by their forms

	\emptyset	<i>a</i>	<i>asé</i>	<i>sabé</i>	<i>ta</i>	Total <i>n</i>
Perfective	162	354	0	0	0	516
	31.4%	68.6%	0%	0%	0%	38.9%
Perfect	9	67	0	0	0	76
	11.8%	88.2%	0%	0%	0%	5.7%
Remote past	2	14	0	0	0	16
	12.5%	87.5%	0%	0%	0%	1.2%
Limited states	3	18	0	0	0	21
	14.3%	85.7%	0%	0%	0%	1.6%
Existing states	170	92	0	5	9	276
	61.6%	33.3%	0%	1.8%	3.3%	20.8%
Habitual	25	11	181	83	0	300
	8.3%	3.7%	60.3%	27.7%	0%	22.6%
Progressive	32	12	0	0	78	122
	26.2%	9.8%	0%	0%	63.9%	9.2%
Total <i>n</i>	403	568	181	88	87	1,327
Total %	31.9%	42.8%	13.6%	6.6%	6.6%	

Table 2 shows a multivariate analysis of aspectual meanings contributing to the presence of preverbal *a* (the application value) versus zero (Total $n=1,327$). The overall likelihood for *a* to occur, as indicated by the corrected mean (.35), is about 35% of the time. (Factors with a factor weight above .50 are said to favor the occurrence of the variable, while those below this disfavor its occurrence.) We observe that *a* is strongly favored with perfectives (.80), and even more so with perfects (.94), remote pasts (.94), and limited states (.93). On the other hand, *a* is slightly disfavored with existing states (.49), while being strongly disfavored in habitual (.06) and progressive (.16) contexts. This finding confirms *a*'s status as *the marker* of all meanings along the perfective grammaticalization path. Again, the greater favoring of *a* with the more specific meanings over perfective meaning is consistent with a grammaticalization hypothesis, since a more generalized (and typically newer) meaning (e.g., perfective) is predicted to be less closely associated with the form expressing it than the more specific (earlier) meanings (e.g., resultative/perfect) out of which it presumably developed. These facts, however, do not unequivocally lead to a finding of purely language-internal development

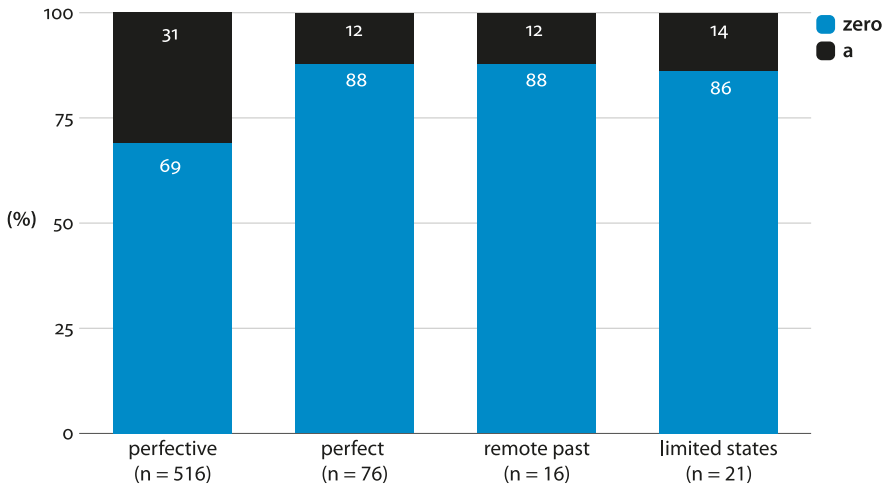


Figure 2. Rates of *a* and zero (shown as percents) expressing meanings along the perfective grammaticalization path in Palenquero ($n = 629$)

(Bruyn 2009: 331–332). The looming issues of language contact and inheritance must be addressed. I turn to that now.

Table 2. Varbrul analysis of factors contributing to the presence of preverbal *a* (over zero)

Corrected mean (.35)			
Total $n = 568/1,327$			
Aspectual meaning	Factor weight	% <i>a</i>	<i>n</i>
perfect	.94	88%	76
remote past	.94	88%	16
limited states	.93	86%	21
perfective	.80	69%	516
state exists	[.49] [*]	33%	276
progressive	[.16]	10%	122
habitual	[.06]	4%	300

* Factor weights in brackets are not significant.

7. Questions regarding the provenance of preverbal *a*

7.1 Spanish *ya*, Portuguese *ja*, and Papiamentu *a*

An Iberian origin, specifically, a temporal adverbial (either Spanish *ya* or Portuguese *ja* ‘already’), has long been suggested as the most likely source for Palenquero *a* (Bickerton 1981; Granda 1968). Granda (1968: 199) alludes to *ya* being the source of Palenquero’s past marker, although he admits that *ya* as a tense-aspect marker is conspicuously absent in Palenquero. He asserts that the existence of another marker, *ta* (progressive), which is one of three aspectual markers usually found in creoles (the two others being *de* and *ya*, and possibly *acabá*), “testimonia, con seguridad, en épocas pasadas...en San Basilio, del esquema completo de formas verbales”¹¹ (Granda 1968: 199).

In addition to the fact that Granda lacks positive evidence that *ya* had ever functioned as a tense-aspect marker in Palenquero, there are other challenges that can be levied against his claim. For instance, of the markers that he claims are found in all creoles, the only one that has aspectual functions in Palenquero is the progressive marker *ta*; by contrast, *de*, which is phonetically realized as *ri*, functions as a preposition, *ya* has adverbial functions, and *acabá* is a main verb meaning ‘to finish’. Also noteworthy is that the adverb *ya* never suffers phonetic reduction (**ya>a*) either in Palenquero Creole or Palenquero Spanish.

Bickerton also attributes *a*-marking in Palenquero to an adverbial source. He claims that “the [Papiamentu] past marker is *a*, presumably cognate with [Palenquero] *a*, [Papia Kristang] *ya* – all of which most probably derive from Pg. *ja* ‘already’” (Bickerton 1981: 78). Holm (1988: 153) notes the improbability of Bickerton’s scenario by pointing out that while written as *ja*, “[*ja*’s] phonological form /ʒa/ makes this source less likely than the archaic Portuguese present perfect auxiliary *há* /a/ or its Spanish equivalent *ha* as in *ha cantado* ‘(he) has sung’”. In fact, Bickerton himself acknowledges the unlikelihood of such a scenario by saying that “adverbs, as we have seen, are not a good source for creole TMA markers” (Bickerton 1981: 78), after which he suggests that Spanish *ya* and Spanish 3sg *ha* “could have easily reinforced one another to merge in *a*” (Bickerton 1981: 79).

Jacobs disagrees with Bickerton on a closely related matter, that is, the adverbial origins of Papiamentu *a* and that creole’s connection to Palenquero. He contends that “if [Papiamentu] *a* were derived from the adverb Port. *ja*, it should at least optionally precede the subject, whereas in reality it is rigidly positioned after the subject and before the verb” (Jacobs 2012: 196, fn. 301). This has clear impli-

11. “gives evidence, for a certainty, for past periods...in San Basilio, of the complete paradigm of verbal forms”, translation mine.

cations for Palenquero since, according to Jacobs (2012: 49), “there is no reason (either linguistic or historical) to assume that ... [Palenquero] and [Papiamentu] have shared origins.” Maurer (1987: 66) also identifies semantic and distributional differences between Papiamentu *a* and Palenquero *a* (among other features) that militate against a monogenetic origin for the two languages.

As we have discussed, the distributions for *a* strongly suggest that it derives, not from an adverbial source, but from an erstwhile stative auxiliary source construction developing along the perfective path (‘have’ > resultative > perfect > perfective/past) (see Figure 2). Indeed, the grammaticalization of past tense markers that develop from adverbials is not robust in creoles, it is not cross-linguistically common, and the grammaticalization path is notably different from that derived from a stative auxiliary as the adverbial-derived pasts do not pass through a resultative/perfect phase (Bybee et al. 1994: 102–103; Heine & Kuteva 2005: 235–236). Thus, to the extent that *a*-marking in Palenquero and Papiamentu derives from any Iberian source, that source is most likely Spanish *ha*; however, both instances of *a* must have arisen independently of each other (Jacobs 2012: 196). In sum, the foregoing seems to narrow down the source(s) of *a*-marking, allowing us to reshift our focus to Spanish *ha* and Kikongo *a*-. We will consider them both in turn.

7.2 Spanish *haber* as a potential lexical source

Spanish *ha* (< *haber* ‘have’) has also been proposed as a lexical source for Palenquero’s *a* marker (e.g., Bickerton 1981: 78; Holm 1988: 153; Lewis 1970: 114). As shown above, the distributions of *a* provide a measure of support for this hypothesis. Despite this, we still need to ascertain whether such a marker developed post formatively, or, instead, was the result of continued transmission from the lexifier or substrate (Mufwene 2008: 161). Some important questions arise: What are the earliest attestations of *haber* + Past Participle (PP) having grammatical functions in Peninsular Spanish before the formation of Palenquero? Was this construction taken to the New World? Does it predate the creation of the *palenque* of San Basilio? And if so, was it fully grammaticalized, that is, obligatory, at that time, or has it undergone further development? Are modern-day rates of Peninsular *haber* similar to modern-day rates for Palenquero *a*?

According to historical sources, the full forms of *haber* were infrequent in Old Spanish but had undergone robust grammaticalization by the beginning of the Renaissance (ca. 14th century) through the Spanish Golden Age (15th–17th centuries) (Penny 2004: 194; Pharies 2015: 139). Specifically, “*aver* was restricted to auxiliary use in the fifteenth century, as its lexical role in Spanish was taken over by *tener*” (Penny 2004: 194), a development that began in the 12th century (Klein-Andreu 2010: 151). Lapesa (1981: 400) provides examples from the 16th

century which demonstrate that Perfect constructions with *haber* were emergent yet generalizing. In the first half of that century, compound tenses with *haber* still showed agreement between the participle and the direct object (e.g., *He la carta escrita* ‘I have the written letter’). Then, by the latter half of the century, constructions with an invariant participle, such as *He escrito la carta* (‘I have written the letter’) had increased in frequency and gained predominance over erstwhile constructions with *ser* ‘to be’ (*son escrito* ‘are written’).

Copple’s (2011) study of Spanish dramatic texts spanning three centuries shows a steady increase over time of perfect to perfective grammaticalization extending into more contexts at the expense of the Preterit, the latter declining steadily over the centuries. For example, in 15th century Spain, rates of perfective PP were only at 26%; however, by that time they had succeeded over *ser* ‘be’ + PP constructions (e.g., *son escrito* ‘are written’) with which they had previously competed (Company 1980: 129). By the 17th century, the rates of PP had increased to 37% and then to 52% by the 19th century. Nevertheless, Schwenter and Torres Cacoullós’ (2008: 13) data showed that rates of Peninsular PP with perfective functions (compared to the Preterit) were only at 54% by the 20th century. Delgado-Díaz’s (2021: 99) study actually shows a decline in PP rates from the Golden Age period (62%) as compared to Modern Spanish (32%).¹² It is noteworthy that these rates are so low given the widespread perception that Peninsular Spanish is far along the cline of *haber* + PP grammaticalization.

A timeline emerges from these linguistic facts and known sociohistorical events (Table 3). First, it is clear that the *haber* + PP construction was in full effect by the founding of Cartagena de Indias (1533) and of San Basilio de Palenque (1655–1674). We can likely assume that the 16th–17th century colonizers’ rates of PP were not (much) higher than the 37% reported for 17th century Spain whence they came (Copple 2011: 171). So, when we compare the modern-day rates for Palenquero past marking, which, as we saw, are currently anywhere between 69–88%, with the rates of perfective PP (54%) observed for 20th century Spanish (Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós 2008: 13), it is evident that grammaticalization in the creole has taken place at a more accelerated rate than in its lexifier. Additionally, results from multivariate analysis reveal that Peninsular PPs are strongly favored in hodiernal (.93) and irrelevant contexts (.94), but strongly disfavored in prehodiernal contexts (.13), thus establishing the Spanish PP as a hodiernal perfective (Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós 2008: 21). By contrast, Palenquero *a* is

12. Delgado-Díaz’s (2021) data differ from Schwenter & Torres Cacoullós’ (2008) and Copple’s (2011) studies (in that there was not a steady increase of PP rates over the centuries) because of low overall token counts for PP and his sample did not include PPs with perfect uses (Delgado-Díaz 2021: 99–100).

strongly favored in both perfective (.80) and remote past contexts (.94). Another important fact is that in Palenquero Spanish *ha* only “signals ‘perfect’ but never ‘preterit’” (Schwegler & Morton 2003:151), although it has both functions in Palenquero Creole; this too is indicative of a greater degree of grammaticalization in the creole.

One reason for this acceleration, if it is one, may be that, in Palenquero, *a* and zero are the only competitors vying for meanings along the perfective path (Figure 2). Spanish *haber*, on the other hand, has had more morphemes “jockeying for the same linguistic work” throughout its development (Poplack 2011: 211), including preterit forms and *ser* constructions (Lapesa 1981: 400). We note that since the *haber* construction was robust during the century in which San Basilio was formed, *a*-marking may represent a case of continued transmission from the lexifier (Mufwene 2008: 161). Another reason for this accelerated development of *a* could be due to influence from the substrate. In the next section, we explore this potential source of *a*- and zero-marking.

Table 3. Timeline of sociohistorical events and comparison of rates of Spanish *haber* and Palenquero *a* (over time)

Timeline	Event	Source
15th century	Spanish PP at 26% compared to preterit	Copple (2011)
1533	Cartagena founded	
17th century	Spanish PP at 37% compared to preterit	Copple (2011)
1655–1674	Formation of San Basilio de Palenque	Navarrete (2008)
1713	Palenque declared a free people	Navarrete (2008)
19th century	Spanish PP at 52% compared to preterit	Copple (2011)
20th century	Spanish PP at 54% compared to preterit	Schwenter & Torres Cacoullos (2008)
21st century	Palenquero perfective <i>a</i> at 69%	Smith (2014)
21st century	Palenquero perfect and remote past <i>a</i> near 90%	Smith (2014)

7.3 Kikongo prefixal *a*- and zero as potential sources

In addition to its formal similarity with Spanish *ha*, Palenquero *a* is homophonous with the prefixal form *a*-, which is found in several languages in the Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC). Descriptions of their tense-aspect systems are contained in older reference grammars (Bentley 1887; Severn 1956) and in recent

research papers and monographs (Dom & Bostoën 2015; Dom et al. 2018; Nurse 2007, 2008).

One reference grammar provides examples showing that *a-* can be used to express past perfect (time in the near past, i.e., yesterday to within a week, while zero-coded verb stems may express several meanings such as present perfect (hodiernal pasts), present perfect continuous (repeated actions in the near past), past perfect (Severn 1956: 103, 147, 153), in addition to hesternal past (Dom & Bostoën 2015: 171). As illustrated in Table 4, “the formation of the Past Perfect is simple once the Present Perfect has been mastered; insert the tense sign *a* between the combined subject pronoun and the Perfect stem of the verb” (Severn 1956: 153).

Table 4. Alternation between *-a-* and zero with Present Perfect and Past Perfect tenses in Kikongo (adapted from Severn 1956: 153)

Present Perfect	Past Perfect	Present Perfect	Past Perfect
tu-tengi	tw- a -tengi	tu-badikidi	tw- a -badikidi
tu-kukidi	tw- a -kukidi	tu-sonekene	tw- a -sonekene
tu-vingidi	tw- a -vingidi	tu-lekele	tw- a -lekele

Maurer (1987: 55–57) believes that the origins of *a* may lie in Congo languages rather than in Spanish primarily because *a* can occur with present statives whereas *haber* cannot.¹³ He adduces evidence from a reference grammar of the San Salvador dialect of Kikongo which provides examples of prefixal *a-* functioning as a past indefinite, past indefinite continuous, past perfect, and past perfect continuous, while a zero morpheme signaled a state of completion in the present tense (Maurer 1987: 56; cf. Bentley, 1887: 644, 649). However, the only evidence Maurer adduced of *a-* marking with present (completive) states came from Kimbundu, not Kikongo (Maurer 1987: 55, 57; cf. Chatelain 1888: 33–44). As we shall see, both *a*-marking and zero-marking are readily apparent in KLC languages. Furthermore, this *a-* marking is not limited to the dialect of San Salvador or to past tense contexts.

An areal study of 25 KLC languages found that perfective-related meanings are variably expressed by circumfixal constructions that contain the prefix *a-*

13. Moñino (1999) believes that Palenquero’s aspectual system functions more like a Gbaya (Niger-Congo) verbal system rather than a Spanish one; however, Kikongo was not among the languages that he used for the comparison. The author notes that it would have been preferable to establish direct genetic lineage between Palenquero and Niger-Congo languages, but the resource materials available at the time were old and of little help (Moñino 1999: 2, and fn. 1).

(*a*-B-*a*, *a*-B-*idi*)¹⁴ or a zero allomorph (\emptyset -B-*a*, \emptyset -B-*idi*) (examples (17)–(19)) (Dom & Bostoen 2015). “The [tense-aspect] prefix *a*- has a wide Bantu distribution. It appears in 84% of Nurse’s (2008:82) [100-] language sample and is most often involved in the expression of past time reference” (Dom & Bostoen 2015:170). According to Nurse (2008:82), it is “easily the commonest pre-stem marker and it is the commonest marker of past reference in Bantu”, marking some form of past tense, near or far, sometimes in combination with another morpheme to mark past or anterior.

(17) Present Perfect (PRS-PRF)¹⁵

Íngá, mu kyeléká, tútidi lo.

inga, mu ki-eleka \emptyset - \emptyset -tut-idi lo

yes LOC₁₈ NP₇-truth SM₁-PRS-pound-PRF PRON₁₁

‘Yes, she has definitely pounded it (*luku* ‘cassava’).’ (Dom & Bostoen 2015:172)

(18) Hesternal Past (P₂)

Yantondele.

i-a-N-tond-idi

SM₁SG-P₂-OM₁-love-P₂

‘I had loved her.’

(Dom & Bostoen 2015:171)

(19) Remote Past (P₃)

Béenu lwásala.

béenu lu-a-sal-a

you SM₂PL-P₃-work-P₃

‘You worked (a long time ago).’

(Dom & Bostoen 2015:170)

Dom et al.’s (2018) historical comparative study found that in some 40 Kikongo languages “the [*a*-B-*a* tense-aspect] construction manifests allomorphy in its prefix slot, which has either the morpheme *a* or is unmarked”. They report that the zero morpheme in some West Kikongo languages, and, most interestingly, Kiyombe, which is the variety spoken in Mayombe, Republic of Congo, whence the ancestors of the village of San Basilio originate (Schwegler 2016:35, fn. 2, 65), is an innovation that resulted from the loss of prefixal *a*- (Dom et al. 2018:302). Crucially, this construction, along with perfective-related meanings, including remote past, is believed to have existed in Proto-Bantu. These authors conclude:

14. -B- in their description represents the base, or verb stem, with potential circumfixes.

15. Dom & Bostoen’s (2015) labels for past marking are: P₁ (hodiernal past), P₂ (hesternal past up to a week), P₃ (past, remote past), PRF (perfect).

We have shown that the central grammatical function of the *-a-B-a* construction in KLC varieties is i) with relation to aspect, to construe the central (nucleus) phase as completed, and ii) with relation to tense, to locate the completed, central phase in a remote past dissociated from the locus of the speech event. Furthermore, this core meaning is found in all modern varieties and historical doculects that have retained this TA construction. Given the widespread attestation of the construction in both synchronic and diachronic varieties, we can propose this central meaning with relative certainty as a semantic reconstruction for the Proto-Kikongo **-a-B-a* construction. (Dom et al. 2018: 324)

Thus, the function of *a-* as a marker of past meanings predates *haber* grammaticalization and Spanish exploration to the New World.

Given the formal and semantic similarities between the super- and substrate past tense forms, and the fact that prefixal *a-* (Kikongo) and the preverbal auxiliary *ha* (Spanish) were both available at creole formation, the most plausible of all the aforementioned scenarios regarding provenance is that these two forms (constructions) merged, albeit with some modification, into what is now the Palenquero preverbal tense-aspect marker *a*. The *a-B-a* construction could have amalgamated with the *haber* + PP construction, the participle of which was replaced by (or reduced to) the invariant infinitive form of the verb which is variably nonrhotic in Andalusian and coastal Colombian Spanish and categorically nonrhotic in Palenquero Creole (e.g., *ha caminado* > *ha caminá*) (Lipski 2005: 187–189, 221–222; Schwegler & Morton 2003: 131). The thematic /a/ vowel, now appearing word finally on the infinitive after the loss of /-r/, could have been reanalyzed by African slaves (or creoles) as the Kikongo *a-B-a* schema, reinforcing the construction (e.g., *a kaminá*). In any case, certainly due in no small part to grammatical congruence, it seems quite plausible that the KLC and *haber* constructions could have mutually reinforced each other.

The high probability that some tense-aspect form was present at creole formation casts doubt on Bickerton's claim that *a* "moved in" post-formatively "to fill the 'vacuum' created by zero-marked past reference non-statives" (Bickerton 1981: 88). Nevertheless, such a gap-filling scenario appears to have happened with Papiamentu *a* (Jacobs 2012: 193); however, even in that case, African contributions cannot be ruled out. Jacobs, while espousing a post-formative Iberian origin (Spanish *ha*) as the source of the Papiamentu perfective marker, acknowledges that "Akan and other Volta languages have a prefix *a-* that marks perfective aspect", and that since large numbers of Ghanaian slaves were brought to Curaçao, "it seems not at all impossible that the Akan prefix *a-*, perhaps in convergence with Spanish *ha*, contributed to the development of [Papiamentu] *a*" (Jacobs 2012: 196, fn. 300; cf. Osam 2008: 79; Rona 1971: 20). It is not at all surprising that the Akan perfective marker *a-* is similar to that of the KLC, as *a-* as a past marker is a widespread fea-

ture that is also attested in non-Bantu Niger-Congo languages (Nurse 2007: 171; cf. Maurer 1987: 55; cf. Parkvall & Jacobs 2020).

Whatever the influences of language contact were during creole formation, a diagnosis of apparent grammaticalization or reanalysis without grammaticalization does not apply to Palenquero past marking (Bruyn 2009: 314). For one, the synchronic distributions are not at odds with what is expected in grammaticalization; in other words, there is no evidence of reverse grammaticalization. Instead, preverbal *a* expresses meanings across the entire spectrum of the grammaticalization path in conformity with cross-linguistic trends. Second, given the age and degree of grammaticalization of the (Proto-)Kikongo prefixal construction, one might expect some past functions in Palenquero to be obligatorily expressed by *a* or zero (as suggested by the reference materials and studies cited above). Recall, however, that perfective meaning in Palenquero is *a*-marked only 69% of the time and the other functions, while nearing obligatoriness, can still be expressed by a zero morpheme. Additionally, perfect meaning in Palenquero is expressed primarily by *a* whereas the references cited above indicate that in Kikongo this meaning is expressed primarily by a zero morpheme. In aggregate, all of the evidence suggests accelerated contact-induced grammaticalization with both super- and substrate contributions. But, there is also evidence for replication of features that are found in Kikongo but not in Spanish.

8. What about *a* and zero with present statives?

In Palenquero, past marking may also occur with present statives, as in example (20), although its functions are still unknown. Research has yet to establish whether *a*- and zero-coded present stative verbs are in free variation (cf. Friedemann & Patiño 1983: 123). Schwegler and Green (2007: 275; cf. Schwegler 2013) state that, as of their writing, “no plausible alternative explanation has been offered”, although some research (Dieck 2002; Friedemann & Patiño 1983: 122; Moñino 1999), they say, is suggestive of “a yet unidentified functional role”.¹⁶ Offering an analysis of the functions of *a* with present statives is beyond the scope of this paper, yet its presence in that context is germane to this discussion.

16. As Table 2 shows, with past statives the function of *a* is clear – it is marking states with limited duration (.93), occurring 86 percent of the time in that environment ($n=18/21$), whereas, it is disfavored with existing states (.49), where it only occurred one-third of the time ($n=92/276$). That domain is more favorable to zero marking (61%, $n=169/276$) (.81) (Smith 2014: 119).

- (20) *Y ané a tené ma jende andi ma África.*
 and they PAST have PL people in PL Africa
 ‘And they have people in Africa.’ (Male 27, Recording 65, 15:38)

Cross-linguistically, “both overtly marked and zero marked perfectives can signal the present with stative predicates” (Bybee et al. 1994: 91). A study that reconstructed tense and aspect in early Bantu and Niger-Congo languages found that 78% of them used prefixal *a-* as a past marker, while in 27% of them *a-* was a non-past marker (Nurse 2007: 171; cf. Dom & Bostoen 2015: 171). The plausibility that these distributions existed as non-pasts in Proto-Bantu and Proto-Niger-Congo was listed as “high” (Dom & Bostoen 2015: 171). The percentage of modern languages in the sample with the past marker was 97%, with 11% of them employing it as a non-past marker (Dom & Bostoen 2015: 173). In the KLC, non-past *a-* can describe durative situations in the present tense, as in example (21), and frequently occurs with present statives, as in example (22) (Dom & Bostoen 2015: 171).

- (21) *Kù Múkábá yávwânla.*
 ku Mukaba i-a-vwanl-a
 LOC₁₇ Mukaba SM1SG-PRS-live-FV
 ‘I live at Mukaba.’ (Dom & Bostoen 2015: 171)
- (22) *Yá mbìzì yàwólá.*
 ya N-bizi i-a-wol-a
 DEM₉ NP₉-meat SM₉-PRS-be.bad-FV
 ‘This meat is bad.’ (Dom & Bostoen 2015: 171)

Figure 3 shows the distributions of *a* and zero with stative and non-stative predicates (and other marking for comparison) in Palenquero across present and past tense contexts. As we can see, present and past statives are similarly marked by *a* and zero; the proportion of statives coded with *a* is 37% in both present ($n = 237/642$) and past ($n = 122/330$). On the other hand, zero occurs slightly more frequently with statives in both domains, appearing 53% of the time in the present ($n = 374/642$), and 58% of the time with past reference statives ($n = 175/330$). This patterning is consistent with the claim that present and past statives can only be distinguished by the context, since they can both take the same *a*-marking (Schwegler & Green 2007: 276). Not surprisingly, non-statives with past reference proportionately take the *a* morpheme 45% of the time ($n = 448/1,007$) relative to all other environments where *a* can appear. Of note, however, is that *a* can also appear with present non-statives, which it does 12% of the time ($n = 65/564$). This

brings the total number of *a*-marked present tense verbs (regardless of stativity) to 25% ($n=302/1,197$).

As mentioned earlier, it has been claimed that *a* replaced zero-coded verb stems at creole formation (Bickerton 1981: 88); however, *a*-marked present statives may shed additional light on this matter. When referring to Bybee et al.'s (1994: 91) observation that past perfective morphemes can often be found with present statives, Jacobs (2012: 195) notes that while Papiamentu does have an overt perfective marker, *a*, it is unusual in lacking a present stative marker of the same source. "This, in turn, means that, if *a* were an original part of [Papiamentu's] grammar, one would expect it to encode not only perfectivity on non-statives but also present-reference on stative verbs, which however it does not" (Jacobs 2012: 195–196). Thus, using the same logic, the presence of *a*-marked statives in Palenquero may be one more bit of evidence that *a* has been there since the language's beginning. This may represent a case of transfer (with or) without grammaticalization.

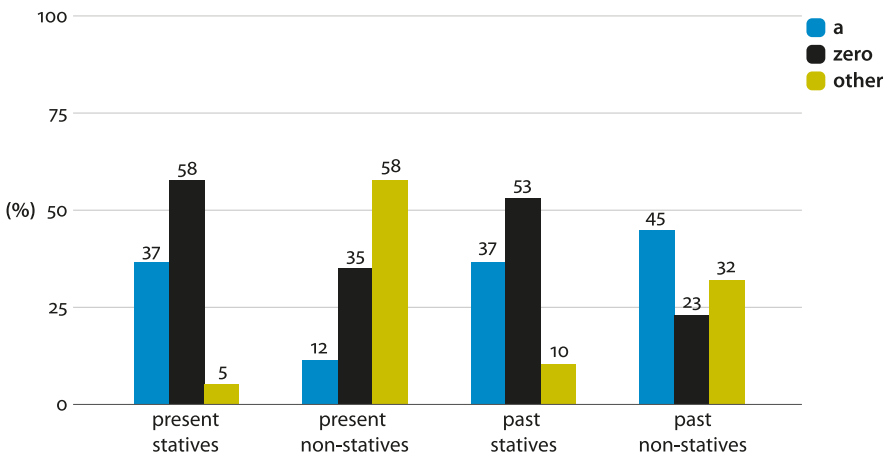


Figure 3. Percentage rates of *a*-, zero-, and other-marking in Palenquero by stativity of verb in present ($n=1,197$) and past tense ($n=1,327$)

9. Discussion: Explanatory factors regarding the selection and grammaticalization of *a*

Why was preverbal *a* selected by Palenquero creole speakers over other options at their disposal? It appears that several factors seem to have driven feature selection in Palenquero past tense marking.

First, congruence between constructions across the contact languages is a driving factor in feature selection (Baptista 2020; Heath 1998; Mufwene 2008: 119; Winford 2003: 98). As we have seen, the similarity of form and meaning between Spanish *ha* and Kikongo *a-* most likely facilitated the selection of preverbal *a* among various competitors, such as inflected Spanish preterit forms (and possibly *son* + PP), Kikongo forms, and other tense-aspect forms in Palenquero (which variably express several tense-aspect meanings).

Second, in multilingual settings where creoles emerge, speakers of the same languages may band together, or, some speakers may receive a privileged status over speakers of other languages, causing their particular linguistic feature(s) to spread disproportionately (Mufwene 2008: 134). As we have discussed, at some point Kikongo speakers most likely predominated in the *palenque* of San Basilio (Navarrete 2007: 29, 2008: 17; Parkvall & Jacobs 2020: 559, 561–563; Schwegler 2017: 66–70). Also, given that *a-* with past meanings was a widespread areal feature in Central West African languages (Jacobs 2012: 196; Nurse 2007: 171), it is possible that in San Basilio, some speakers of African languages other than Kikongo contributed this feature to the milieu (Parkvall & Jacobs 2020: 559).

Third, in contact situations, bilingual speakers tend to select free and invariant forms over inflected forms (Weinreich 1964: 44). The Spanish *haber* + PP construction is periphrastic, whereas Kikongo's *a-* prefix and *-idi* and *-a* suffixes, as well as Spanish preterit verb forms are all inflected. This principle may explain why the preterit or suffixal forms were not used as models. On the other hand, the two principles mentioned above may explain why prefixal *a-* was selected despite its being an inflected form. These factors can be described as competing motivations whereby “no one language type is ideal (wholly motivated) because the different principles governing the existence of language types are in conflict (competition)” (Croft 2003: 64).

Fourth, in the competition and selection of forms in a multilingual setting, what drives selection, markedness or familiarity? (Mufwene 2008: 129). In the case of Palenquero *a*-marking, it is not possible to determine whether the (relatively) unmarked periphrastic verb phrase in Spanish was selected over the Kikongo prefixal construction that was already familiar to the speakers in the *palenque(s)*. Nevertheless, these two factors (markedness and familiarity) in combination would have facilitated the selection of this grammatical feature.

Fifth, how likely is it that a bound prefixal morpheme in Kikongo could become a preverbal clitic in Palenquero? Examples of similar phenomena have been found in cases of contact between typologically distinct languages. What is produced in these situations is a sort of morphosyntactic hybridity between the two languages. Heine and Kuteva (2005: 166, and references therein) provide the example of Bantu languages, “which are known for their rich paradigms of verbal

derivational extensions marked by suffixes” (Heine & Kuteva 2005:167), and Luo, a Nilotic language from Kenya, in which there is “nothing comparable”, whereby the Luo speakers began to use prepositions “in order to develop a new grammatical paradigm that has properties of both verbal enclitics and suffixes” (Heine & Kuteva 2005:167). For Palenquero, preverbal *a* may have resulted from a type of hermit crab restructuring of past meaning forms (constructions) from donor languages (Heath 1998).

10. Conclusion

This study has investigated the provenance of Palenquero’s preverbal *a* morpheme and its lexical sources. Given the linguistic and sociohistorical facts, the most plausible scenario points to the origins of *a* beginning before creole formation. I argued that it was the combined effect of the Kikongo prefix *a-*, which has had past and non-past functions reaching back to Proto-Bantu (i.e., Bantoid) languages, and, in a later development, merging with Spanish *haber*, a construction that had also begun grammaticalizing hundreds of years before initial Spanish contacts with Bakongo slaves, that has propelled the grammaticalization of preverbal *a* at rates surpassing its lexifier. There are several lines of evidence that support this conclusion.

First of all, quantitative analysis of the distributions of *a*-marked verb stems shows patterning that is consistent with a grammaticalization hypothesis. Preverbal *a* expresses several perfective-related functions suggesting a diachronic relationship between this form and those meanings. The close association of *a* with the range of functions from perfect, to perfective, to remote past also suggests that *a* is a well-advanced grammatical morpheme developing along a well-defined grammaticalization path, a morpheme which could have conceivably derived from a lexical verb meaning *have* (Bybee et al. 1994: 105). However, these results, all by themselves, do not establish a post-formative origin for *a*, that is, purely language-internal grammaticalization.

A comparison of preverbal *a* with Peninsular Spanish *haber* + PP revealed that the rates of expression of perfective-related meanings were much higher for *a* than for *haber*. Multivariate analysis further indicated that *a* was strongly favored in both perfective and remote past contexts compared to *haber* + PP, which is a hodiernal perfective that is actually disfavored in prehodiernal contexts. Both of these results suggest a greater degree of grammaticalization in the creole compared to its lexifier. But why is perfective marking further advanced in Palenquero than in Spanish? This peculiar fact advances the question of origins.

In exploring the potential lexical source(s) of *a*-marking in Palenquero, I found no evidence linking preverbal *a* to Spanish *ya* or Portuguese *ja*. The arguments for such claims lacked supporting evidence or were contradictory. Most importantly, an adverbial lexical source would have yielded different synchronic outcomes from what we actually observe in the data (Bybee et al. 1994: 102–103). Although Papiamentu has a past marker that is formally similar to Palenquero's, it seems to have developed independently. This allowed me to narrow down considerably the potential sources of the origins of *a*.

Thanks to recent large-scale studies, which significantly augment the attestations found in old reference grammars, we now know that both a prefixal form *a*- and zero are widely attested as past markers in languages of the Kikongo Language Cluster and are strongly believed to have existed in Proto-Bantu. In these languages, *a*- and zero also occur with present tense stative and non-stative verbs, as is the case for Palenquero. Besides being present at creole formation, it appears that the ecological conditions were ripe for substrate transfer of this grammatical feature.

As we discussed, the selection of *a* was influenced by specific linguistic and extralinguistic ecological factors known to lead to grammatical convergence in contact situations. For Palenquero Creole, these factors included: (1) the structural and semantic congruence of the grammatical constructions across the contact languages, (2) the eventual predominance of Bakongo slaves in the *palenque* of San Basilio, (3) the widespread nature of past tense *a*- in Kikongo and Central West African languages, (4) the role of markedness on speaker selection of one feature over another, and (5) the familiarity a speaker already has with a construction because it was present in their heritage language. All of these factors contributed to the selection of *a* over other choices at creole speakers' disposal. Besides aiding in selection, it is apparent that these ecological factors interacted with and propelled the grammaticalization in this creole.

Even with clear evidence of substrate influence and grammatical convergence, the discourse patterns in Palenquero are still consonant with strong cross-linguistic trends observed in the development of perfective marking (Bybee et al. 1994: Chapter 3). The patterning suggests accelerated, contact-induced grammaticalization along the well-attested perfective path. Palenquero's past marking with present statives, though not present in the lexifier, is attested in Bantu languages and is common cross-linguistically (Bybee et al. 1994: 73, 74–77). This is in line with Bruyn's (2009: 331) observation that apparent grammaticalization "may also be responsible for cases where a functional extension happens to be in the same direction as with canonical grammaticalization".

These results, taken together, demonstrate that grammaticalization theory can be used heuristically to determine the degree of substrate influence in creoles

(Plag 2002). This determination was possible, not because evidence of reverse grammaticalization was found (to the contrary, the unidirectionality hypothesis was confirmed), but because past marking in Palenquero was further along a well-attested cline of grammaticalization compared to the lexifier. Regarding gradualness, the evidence, especially the presence of bare verb stems in all past contexts, and the lower frequency of *a*-marked verbs in perfective contexts, suggests that past marking is still developing gradually. I conclude that it was not the sole effect of substrate influence that has propelled grammaticalization, but rather, grammatical convergence, the continuity of transmission of already highly grammaticalized forms, and a confluence of ecological factors.

On the whole, this paper examined the origins of grammatical marking in a creole language at the level of community discourse (Sankoff & Brown 1976). An important contribution of this project was that it incorporated systematic quantitative analysis of natural speech from an exhaustively transcribed corpus in order to implement a methodology for addressing questions of provenance. Furthermore, this study answers repeated calls for advancing comparative creole studies with quantitative methods (Meyerhoff 2009; Sankoff 1990: 296; cf. Heine & Kuteva 2005: 241–243). The quantitative data simultaneously tested and were elucidated by the theoretical work on competition and selection in contact languages (Mufwene 1996, 2001, 2008) and generalizations found in functional typological literature (Bybee et al. 1994).

In conclusion, we have seen that, though giving clear evidence of inheritance from model languages, such as *a*-marked present tense (stative) verbs, and exhibiting widely-cited creole features, such as preverbal markers and zero-coded verb stems, the grammatical structure of Palenquero still neatly conforms to frequently observed cross-linguistic trends and factors known to constrain the selection of competing forms in contact languages, thus illustrating the systematicity of this creole in the overall structure of linguistic variation.

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Zusammenfassung

Formelle Ähnlichkeiten in den grammatischen Strukturelementen einer Kreolsprache und deren genetischen Verwandten oder geographischen Nachbarn können auf Substrateinfluss, Lexifiereinfluss oder auf Grammatikalisierung zurückgeführt werden. Vor diesem Hintergrund untersucht diese Studie die Herkunft des präverbalen Partikels *a* in der spanisch-basierten Kreolsprache Palenquero (Kolumbien). Distributionelle Analysen und Signifikanztests zeigen, dass verschiedene diachronisch verwandte Bedeutungen durch *a* markiert werden, was vorgeschrittene Grammatikalisierung andeutet ($n=1327$). Ein Vergleich mit dem kontinentalspanischen *haber* + PP weist wiederum darauf hin, dass bei der Markierung der Vergangenheit die Grammatikalisierung im Palenquero in der halben Zeit viel weiter vorgeschritten ist als in dessen Lexifier. Warum ist dem so? Im Gegensatz zur traditionellen Auffassung der Herkunft der Partikel *a* argumentiere ich, dass deren Ursprung am wahrscheinlichsten in einem aus der Sprache Kikongo stammenden Präfix liegt, das mit dem Hilfsverb *haber* – wo bereits Grammatikalisierung im Gange war – verschmolzen ist und so die Grammatikalisierung in der Kreolsprache beschleunigt hat. Der synchronische Gebrauch zeigt deutlich an, dass die typologischen Muster für Perfektiva eingehalten werden, samt der bekannten Einschränkungen für Konkurrenz und Auswahl in der Grammatik der Kontaktsprachen, wie zum Beispiel deren grammatische Kongruenz oder spezifische gesellschaftliche Kontexte.


Résumé

Des caractéristiques grammaticales formellement similaires dans un créole et des langues apparentées (sur point de vue génétique ou aréal) peuvent indiquer un transfert de substrat, une influence de la langue lexificatrice ou une grammaticalisation. Dans ce contexte, cette étude examine l'origine du marqueur passé préverbal *a* en créole palenquero (Colombie). Les résultats de l'analyse distributionnelle et des tests de signification indiquent que plusieurs significations diachroniquement liées sont marquées à des taux quasi-obligatoires, ce qui indiquerait une grammaticalisation avancée ($n=1\ 327$). Les résultats comparatifs pour *haber* + PP en espagnol péninsulaire semblent indiquer que le marquage passé s'est grammaticalisé beaucoup plus en deux fois moins de temps en Palenquero que dans sa langue lexificatrice. Pourquoi? Je soutiens, à l'encontre des recherches antérieures sur les origines de ce *a*, qu'une forme préfixée existant déjà en Kikongo aurait fusionné avec un *haber* en voie de grammaticalisation, accélérant ainsi la grammaticalisation dans le créole. La synchronie de la marque correspond aux traits typologiques des perfectifs, ainsi qu'aux contraintes bien connues de compétition et de sélection dans les langues issues du contact langagier: par exemple leur accord grammatical ou des écologies sociales particulières.

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