**Verbal approximation in Guadeloupean Creole**

The proximative (under the label ‘prospective’), as a category denoting an action that is/was about to occur, was defined by Comrie (Comrie 1976: 64) but only recently has it been introduced as a typologically relevant gram (Heine 1992; 1994). In turn, Kuteva (1998; 2001) showed that the proximative (‘X was/is on the verge of V-ing’) should not be confused with another category, the avertive (‘X was on the verge of V‑ing but didn’t V’). Both categories are still understudied. Another closely related semantic function that receives little attention in typological studies is what we call ‘partial completion’ (‘X almost finished V-ing’).

In the present paper, we discuss how these three categories are encoded in Guadeloupean Creole. In this language, the imperfective, past and future are encoded, respectively, by the preverbal markers *ka*, *té*, and *ké*. Predicates take a default temporal value when unmarked, depending on lexical aspect:

1. stative verbs are mostly read as imperfective (and present), thus incompatible with the imperfective marker *ka*;
2. unmarked dynamic verbs are interpreted as past, thus incompatible with the past marker *té*.

The future marker *ké*, combined with the auxiliary *ay* ‘go’, can be used to refer to a dynamic event that is about to occur:

(1) *Avyon-la* ***k’******ay*** *dékolé.*

airplane-def fut go take.off

‘The airplane is about to take off.’

The combination *té ké* (pst+fut) can yield at least two readings, (a) (counterfactual) conditional and (b) past proximative:

(2) a. *An* ***té******ké*** *achté on pòpòt ba’w*,

1sg pst fut buy one doll to.you

*mé an pa té ni asé lajan.*

but 1sg neg pst have enough money

‘I would have bought you a doll, but I didn’t have enough money.’

 b. *Mari* ***té******k’******ay*** *pati lè Jil fin pa rivé.*

 M. pst fut go leave when J. finish neg arrive

‘Mari was just about to leave when Jil finally arrived.’

The tie-up between counterfactual conditionals and the proximative is an interesting issue. The proximative is typically treated as an ‘aspect’. However, it can be better accounted as a mixed gram, involving both aspect- and modality-related features. Its semantic heterogeneity is thus reflected in the cross-linguistically attested patterns of grammaticalization.

As far as the avertive and ‘partial completion’ functions are concerned, both are marked by the approximative adverbial *près*. However, in ‘partial completion’ contexts, compatible only with accomplishment verb phrases ([+dynamic], [+telic], [+durative]), the completive auxiliary *fin* is required:

(3) a. *Mari* ***près******fin*** *écri lèt-la*.

M. almost cpl write letter-def

‘Mari almost wrote up the letter.’ [partial completion, accomplishment]

b. *An té* ***près*** *mò*.

 1sg pst almost die

‘I almost died.’ [avertive, achievement]

We shall discuss the interaction between verbal approximation markers and event structure on the one hand, and aspect and modality on the other hand, as well as their implications for the general theory of verbal approximation as well as for the research into TAM categories in creole languages.

**Selected references**

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