Rich Agreement in creoles and register-sensitivity.

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Koeneman and Zeijlstra (2014) is aimed at rehabilitating the strong version of the Rich Agreement Hypothesis (RAH), according to which there is a bidirectional implication between *rich* agreement morphology (Arg) in the verbal system and movement of the finite verb to a functional head above vP but below the C system that carries the agreement relevant for the subject argument (V-to-I/Arg movement). The hypothesis has mainly been based on the Germanic languages: the gross generalization is that the standard mainland Scandinavian languages have lost all agreement morphology in the finite verbal paradigm and have also lost V-to-I/Arg, which has been argued to support the biconditional, strong form of the RAH (Bobaljik 2002). But this correlation has also been immortalized for creoles in Roberts (2007: 410): "a corollary of the absence of the person–number agreement on verbs, then, is the absence of V-to-T movement in creoles." In this paper we argue that French-based creoles (as well as Portuguese-based creoles) are in fact a thorn in the flesh of any version of this hypothesis, in particular the strong one.

Two ordering patterns are indicative of V-to-I/Arg movement: (i) negation; (ii) adverb placement. Based on features 101 and 11 of the Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures (APiCS: Michaelis et al. 2013), we show that only two French-based creoles (Reunionais; Lousiana Creole) unequivocally exhibit V-to-I/Arg movement, although lacking "apparent" rich agreement morphology. In addition to these two creoles, Haitian and Morisien have also been argued to exhibit the "V-Adv-O"-signature (cf. Kihm 2008, Henri ms.), although we argue them to be register-sensitive patterns. All other French-based creoles do not have V-to-I/Arg movement. Nevertheless, the point remains: a subset of French-based creoles is an embarrassment to the RAH in having V-to-I/Arg movement with having rich agreement morphology in their verbal system.

To deal with such cases, Koeneman & Zeijlstra (2014) resort to a reanalysis account: some other grammatical element is reanalyzed as a relevant type of agreement, resulting in retention of V-to-I/Arg. This is the account they propose for the persistence of V-to-I in (spoken) French: subject clitics are reanalyzed as agreement markers (cf. Zribi Herz 1994; Culbertson 2010). Based on feature 17 of APiCS (Michaelis et al. 2013) and Valdman (1997), we show that all French creoles have a designated set of subject pronouns, but that only in some cases they are to be analysed as (subject) clitics in the sense of Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), and potentially count as rich agreement in the sense of Koeneman & Zeijlstra (2014). Thus, they behave like clitics in Louisiana Creole (Klingler 2003; Valdman & Klingler 1997) and Guadeloupean Creole (Bonan 2013), but not in the Indian Ocean creoles (e.g. Syea 2017).

Thus, the distribution of the two properties does not show any effect of the purported correlation, and we argue that this constitutes a serious problem for the Rich Agreement Hypothesis (weak as well as strong version).

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