

Martinican Creole *la ka* constructions are biclausal

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Roadmap

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Theoretical background
- 3. Bernabé's (1983) analysis of the LKC
- 4. Evidence for a biclausal analysis of LKCs
- 5. Conclusion
- References
- Appendix A: Towards a new analysis of the LKC

1. Introduction

ka: An ambiguous marker

- In this talk, I will focus on the Martinican Creole (MC) **imperfective marker *ka***
- Notoriously ambiguous in its interpretation
- Example (1) is **ambiguous between a habitual and a progressive reading**

- (1) Jan ka travay lopital
John IPFV work hospital
- 'John works at the hospital.'
 - 'John is working at the hospital.'

la ka constructions: A disambiguating strategy

- To disambiguate between these two readings, MC speakers use the ***la ka* construction** (LKC)
- The LKC combines a **locative marker *la*** ‘there’ with the **imperfective marker *ka***
- Only the **progressive reading** is available

(2) Jan **la** ka travay lopital
John LOC IPFV work hospital
‘John is working at the hospital.’

- Unlike (1), the LKC in (2) is incompatible with a habitual interpretation

How many *kas* are there? One or two?

- The ambiguity of *ka* sentences such as (1) raises the following question: **Is this a case of ambiguity or homophony?**
 - Hypothesis 1: Ambiguity - There's just one *ka* and which happens to be ambiguous
 - Hypothesis 2: Homophony - There are two *kas*, each with a specialized function and its own lexical entry
- Hypothesis 2 predicts that there should be sentences where the two *kas* can cooccur

An interesting fact

- Sentences in which two occurrences of *ka* appear contiguously are ungrammatical

(3) * Lè man ka rann li vizit, i toujou ka ka gadé
when 1SG IPFV pay 3SG visit, 3SG always IPFV IPFV watch
latélé
television

(Intended) 'Whenever I pay him a visit, he is always watching television.'

- Interestingly, such sentences are grammatical if *la* intervenes between the two occurrences of *ka*

(4) Lè man ka rann li vizit, i toujou ka **la** ka
when 1SG IPFV pay 3SG visit, 3SG always IPFV LOC IPFV
gadé latélé
watch television

The puzzle

- In light of (4), **it would appear that there are two *kas*** (Hypothesis 2: homophony)
- But why should (3) be ungrammatical?
- **Why must there be an intervening *la* to license the cooccurrence of the two *kas*?**

The research question

- Critically, we need to answer the following question: **Is the LKC mono- or biclausal?**
 - If monoclausal, strong evidence for Hyp. 2
 - If biclausal, Hyp. 2 is seriously weakened

The proposal

- In this talk, I will show that **the LKC is biclausal**
- The underlying structure of LKCs is schematized in (5)

(5) [_S Subj *la* [_{S'} *ec ka* VP]]

- The biclausality of LKCs doesn't entirely rule out Hyp. 2, but it does weaken the case for it

2. Theoretical background

The cartographic enterprise

- Broadly speaking, my analysis is couched in the generative framework
- More specifically, however, I adopt the **cartographic enterprise** (Cinque, 1999; Rizzi, 1997; Shlonsky, 2010)
- The cartographic enterprise aims to:
 - study the articulated structure of language
 - to map out the functional projections that make up this structure
- Key assumptions:
 - The resulting functional sequences (fseqs) are universal
 - One feature one head

Cinque's (1999) functional hierarchy

■ Cinque proposes a highly articulated inflectional domain

- (6) [frankly Mood_{speech act} [fortunately Mood_{evaluative} [allegedly Mood_{evidential} [probably Mod_{epistemic} [once T(Past) [then T(Future) [perhaps Mood_{irrealis} [necessarily Mod_{necessity} [possibly Mod_{possibility} [**usually Asp_{habitual}** [again Asp_{repetitive(I)} [often Asp_{frequentative(I)} [intentionally Mood_{volitional} [quickly Asp_{celerative(I)} [already T(Anterior) [no longer Asp_{terminative} [still Asp_{continuative} [always Asp_{Perfect(?)} [just Asp_{retrospective} [soon Asp_{proximative} [briefly Asp_{durative} [**characteristically(?) Asp_{generic/progressive}** [almost Asp_{prospective} [completely Asp_{completive(I)} [tutto Asp_{PICompletive} [well Voice [fast/early Asp_{celerative(II)} [often Asp_{frequentative(II)} [completely Asp_{completely(II)}

A first illustration 1/2

- Consider the following sentence:

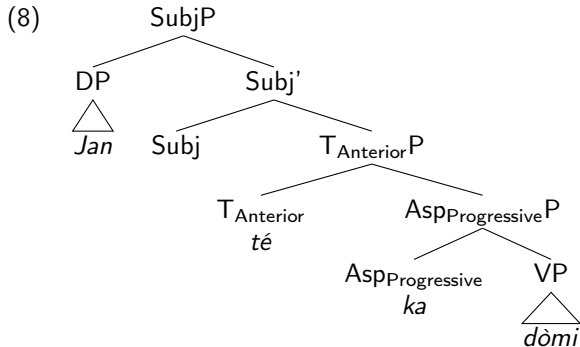
- (7) a. Jan **té** ka dòmi
John ANT IPFV sleep
'John was sleeping.'
- b. *Jan ka **té** dòmi

- Under Cinque's (1999) analysis of the inflectional domain:

- *té* lexicalizes T_{Anterior}
 - *ka* lexicalizes $\text{Asp}_{\text{Progressive}}$
- Crucially, the relative ordering of these heads is fixed;
hence the contrast between (7a) and (7b)

A first illustration 2/2

- Schematically, (7a) may be associated with the simplified structure in (8) below:



A second illustration 1/2

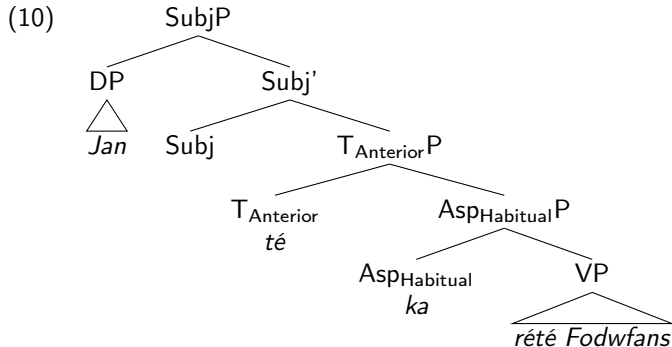
- Consider the following sentence:

- (9) a. Jan **té** ka rété Fodfwans
John ANT IPFV stay Fort-de-France
'John used to live in Fort-de-France.'
- b. * Jan ka **té** rété Fodfwans

- This time, Cinque's (1999) fseq suggests the following:
 - *té* lexicalizes T_{Anterior}
 - *ka* lexicalizes Asp_{Habitual}
- Again, the relative ordering of these heads would be responsible for the contrast between (9a) and (9b)

A second illustration 2/2

- Schematically, (9a) may be associated with the simplified structure in (10) below:



Cinque's hierarchy and the imperfective puzzle

- In principle, under Cinque's hierarchy, nothing should prevent the cooccurrence of two *ka*
- Given the relative ordering of $\text{Asp}_{\text{Habitual}}$ and $\text{Asp}_{\text{Progressive}}$, we would get *ka ka* strings where:
 - The first *ka* lexicalizes $\text{Asp}_{\text{Habitual}}$
 - The second *ka* lexicalizes $\text{Asp}_{\text{Progressive}}$

In the same spirit

- Lefebvre (1998, p. 112) notes the possible cooccurrence of two instances of *ap*
 - By assumption, these would occupy distinct positions in Cinque's fseq

(11) M' ap ap sòti.
 I DEF-FU IMP go-out
 'I will be going out.'

Cinque's hierarchy and the LKC

- Sentences such as (4), repeated below as (12), would find a straightforward explanation under Cinque's hierarchy

(12) Lè man ka rann li vizit, i toujou ka **la** ka
when 1SG IPFV pay 3SG visit, 3SG always IPFV LOC IPFV
gadé latélé
watch television

- But it isn't quite clear what we should make of *la* under this view
- What position does it occupy in Cinque's hierarchy?

3. Bernabé's (1983) analysis of the LKC

A monoclausal analysis

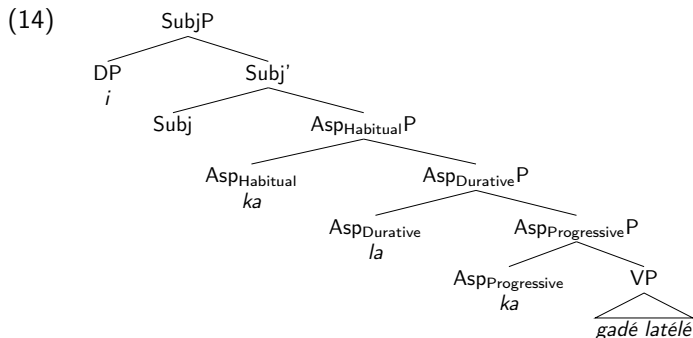
- Bernabé (1983) suggests that *la* should be treated as a marker of durative aspect
- In fact, Cinque's hierarchy includes such a projection:
Asp_{Durative}
 - Interestingly, it occupies an intermediate position between Asp_{Habitual} and Asp_{Progressive}
- In MC, this relative ordering would translate as follows:

(13) [Asp_{Habitual}P *ka* ... [Asp_{Durative}P *la* ... [Asp_{Progressive}P *ka* ... [VP ...]]]]

An illustration

- (12), repeated below, may thus be schematized as in (14):

(12) Lè man ka rann li vizit, i toujou ka **la** ka
when 1SG IPFV pay 3SG visit, 3SG always IPFV LOC IPFV
gadé latélé
watch television



In support of a monoclausal analysis

- Bernabé's analysis is compatible with object extraction, as illustrated in (15)

- (15) a. Kisa_i ou la ka manjé t_i?
what 2SG LOC IPFV eat
'What are you eating?'
- b. Sé an mango_i i la ka manjé t_i?
SÉ a mango 3SG LOC IPFV eat
'It's a mango that she's eating.'

- But object extraction **doesn't rule out other analyses**

Unaccounted facts

- Bernabé's monoclausal analysis fails to provide an account for some of the facts observed
- It doesn't account for the fact that **there cannot be two occurrences of *ka* in the absence of an intervening *la***
- It doesn't explain **how *la* could have developed from a locative marker into a marker of durative aspect**
- Additionally, the evidence in support of Bernabé's analysis (object extraction) **doesn't rule out other analyses of LKCs**
- In fact, **a biclausal analysis remains an option**

4. Evidence for a biclausal analysis of LKCs

Three pieces of evidence

- In this section I will present three pieces of evidence in favor of a biclausal analysis of LKCs:
 - 1 the distribution of *la* w.r.t. certain adverbials
 - 2 the distribution of circumstantial adjuncts in LKCs
 - 3 idiom chunks

4.1. The distribution of low adverbials in LKCs

The predicted distribution of low adverbials

- Given the framework adopted here (cartography), the monoclausal analysis of LKCs makes certain predictions about the distribution of some low adverbials in LKCs
- Recall that:
 - *la* is hypothesized to lexicalize Asp_{Durative}
 - *ka* is hypothesized to lexicalize Asp_{Progressive}
- The prediction is that adverbials below Asp_{Progressive} in Cinque's hierarchy shouldn't be able to precede *ka*

An illustration 1/3

- Let us consider the adverbial *ankò an fwa* 'one more time', which I take to occupy **Spec,Asp_{Repetitive}P**
- Crucially, in Cinque's hierarchy, **Asp_{Repetitive}** scopes under **Asp_{Progressive}**
- It is therefore predicted that *ankò an fwa* shouldn't be able to precede *ka*

- The prediction is **borne out in the absence of *la***

- (16) a. *Mari *ankò an fwa ka* gadé latélé
Mary again one time IPFV watch television
'Mary is watching TV one more time.'
b. *Mari **ka** *ankò an fwa* gadé latélé
c. Mari **ka** gadé latélé *ankò an fwa*

- I attribute the ungrammaticality of (16b) to **obligatory movement of the VP past Asp_{Repetitive}**

- (17) [_{Asp_{Prog}P} *ka* [_{FP} [_{VP} *gagé latélé*] [_{F'} ... [_{Asp_{Rep}P} *ankò an fwa* ... t_{VP}]]]]]

- Interestingly, **the prediction isn't borne out in LKCs**

(18) Jan la *ankò an fwa* **ka** gadé latélé
John LOC again one time IPFV watch television
'John is watching TV one more time.'

- This surprising fact that *ankò an fwa* can precede *ka* finds a **straightforward explanation** if we adopt a **biclausal analysis of LKCS**
- Under this view, *ankò an fwa* would simply not be a clausemate of *ka*

4.2. The distribution of circumstantial adjuncts in LKCs

The typical distribution of circumstantial adjuncts

- Typically, circumstantial adjuncts can be found in either clause-initial or clause-final position, but nowhere inside the inflectional domain

- (19)
- a. **Dépi bonmaten-an** i ka gadé latélé
since morning=DEF 3SG IPFV watch television
'He's been watching TV since this morning.'
 - b. I ka gadé latélé **dépi bonmaten-an**
 - c. *I **dépi bonmaten-an** ka gadé latélé
 - d. *I ka **dépi bonmaten-an** gadé latélé

The distribution of circumstantial adjuncts in LKCs

- Circumstantial adjuncts are (apparently) **not subjected to the same restrictions in LKCs**

- (20)
- a. **Dépi bonmaten-an** i la ka gadé latélé
since morning=DEF 3SG LOC IPFV watch television
'He's been watching TV since this morning.'
 - b. I la ka gadé latélé **dépi bonmaten-an**
 - c. I la **dépi bonmaten-an** ka gadé latélé

- Again, this suggests that the construction is biclausal
- In (20c), the circumstantial adverbial could be in either of these two positions:
 - the **final position in the matrix clause**
 - the **initial position in the embedded clause**

4.3. *Idiom chunks*

Imperfective aspect preserves idiomatic readings

- Consider the following idiom chunk:

(21) Dlo dépassé farine
water surpass flour
'This is the straw that broke the camel's back.'
(lit.) 'Water surpassed flour.'

- Critically, **the idiomatic reading is preserved when the imperfective marker is added**

(22) Dlo ka dépassé farine
water IPFV surpass flour
'This is the straw that is breaking the camel's back.'
(lit.) 'Water is surpassing flour.'

LKCs disallow idiomatic readings

- Interestingly, *idiomatic readings are out in LKCs*

(23) Dlo la ka dépassé farine
water LOC IPFV surpass flour
'Water is surpassing flour.'

- Only a literal reading is available in (23)
- This is **unexpected** if we assume a **monoclausal analysis** of LKCs
- But if we adopt a **biclausal analysis**, this would be rather unsurprising, esp. if **control is involved**

5. Conclusion

Summary

- The monoclausal analysis of LKCs offered by Bernabé (1983) is invalidated by the following facts
 - Low adverbials can precede *ka* in LKCs
 - Circumstantial adjuncts can appear in sentence-medial position in LkCs
 - Idiomatic readings are disallowed in LKCs

The takeaway

- Based on this evidence, I propose that LKCs are biclausal
- Idiom chunks suggest that they involve a control predicate
- For reasons of time, I cannot go into a more detailed proposal (but see appendix)
- Re the imperfective puzzle, the LKC cannot be used as evidence for a homophony-based analysis of *ka*

Mèsi anpil!

Thank you!

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Appendix A: Towards a new analysis of the LKC

Typological considerations

- Beside MC, there are many languages that possess a construction in which a locative marker combines with an imperfective marker to form a progressive construction
- Wolof is one of these languages

(24) Ma-a-ngi di (>maangiy) ñew
1SG-C_{Wh}-LCL IPFV come
'I am coming.'
(Taken from Martinović & Schwarzer, 2018)

- See, e.g., Comrie (1978) and Bybee et al. (1994) for more examples of such languages
- For some of these languages, the construction has been argued to be biclausal (e.g., Wolof (Martinović & Schwarzer, 2018) and Basque (Laka, 2006))

The underlying structure of LKCs

- We have already established that LKCs are biclausal, but **what is their underlying structure?**
- To answer that broader question, let us consider the following narrower question: **What is the relation between the two clauses in an LKC?**
 - Are they in a matrix-complement relation?
 - Are they in a matrix-adjunct relation?
- To settle that question, we can use object extraction as a diagnostic

LKCs involve a matrix-complement relation

- In MC, extraction from an adjunct is ungrammatical

- (25) a. Jan pati [apré Mari ba'y lajan-an]
John left after Mary give=3SG money=DEF
'John left after Mary gave him the money.'
- b. *Kisa_i Jan pati [apré Mari ba'y t_i]
what John left after Mary give=3SG
(intended) 'What is the thing x s.t. John left after Mary gave him x ?'

- Extraction is possible from LKCs

- (26) Kisa_i ou la ka gadé t_i?
what 2SG LOC IPFV watch
'What are you watching?'

- I take (26) as evidence for the existence of a matrix-complement relation in LKCs

Locative *la* is the matrix predicate

- This raises the following question: **How should we parse the construction?**
- Recall that circumstantial adjuncts can only appear in clause-initial or clause-final position but that they can, nonetheless, intervene between *la* and *ka* in LKCs

- (27) a. Jan la ka gadé latélé
John LOC IPFV watch television
'John is watching television.'
- b. Jan la *adan chanm-li* ka gadé latélé
John LOC in bedroom=3SG IPFV watch television
'John is watching television in his room.'

- I take this to mean that (27a) has the structure schematized in (28)

- (28) [Jan la [ka gadé latélé]]

The LKC is a control construction

- Unlike raising predicates (29a), control predicates (29b) do not allow idiomatic readings

- (29) a. My leg appeared to have been pulled
b. *My leg attempted to be pulled

(Adapted from Landau, 2024, p. 5)

- As we established earlier, idiomatic readings are out in LKCs

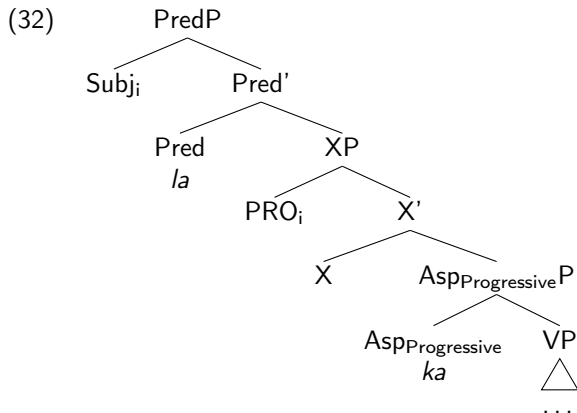
- (30) Dlo la ka dépassé farine
water LOC IPFV surpass flour
'Water is surpassing flour.' (no idiomatic reading)

- LKCs must, then, have a structure in the spirit of (31)

- (31) [Sub_i la [PRO_i ka VP]]

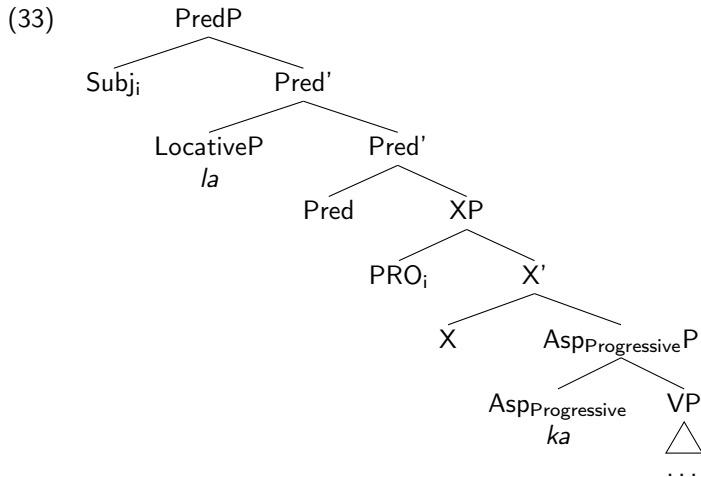
The status of *la* in LKC _{1/2}

- Based on what we have seen so far, I propose that either *la* is either the matrix predicate (32)...



The status of *la* in LKC 2/2

- ...or an argument of the matrix predicate (33)



LKC and the imperfective puzzle

- If my analysis is on the right track, then the LKC cannot be adduced as evidence for the hypothesis that there are two *kas* merged in distinct positions
- That being said, neither is the case that this study offers evidence for an ambiguity-based analysis of the imperfective marker
- To adjudicate between these two views, further investigation is necessary, esp. as regards the relation between the interpretation of *kas* and its distribution w.r.t. adverbials in the inflectional domain