

Parsing and reanalysis: a not-so-common way to borrow inflectional morphology

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In this talk we examine the creation of a wholly new conjugation class through the borrowing of a Marathi inflectional morpheme in Korlai Portuguese (KP), a Portuguese-based creole language spoken in Maharashtra, India, whose regional language is the highly inflected Indo-Aryan language Marathi.

KP exhibits productive verbal inflection going back to its formation and has had minimal to no contact with Portuguese since 1740. The KP verbal system is organized into four conjugation classes, each one marked with its own distinct theme vowel (*-a*, *-e*, *-i* and *-u*). However while the theme vowels *-a*, *-e* and *-o* are of Portuguese origin, the *-u* vowel is clearly not. The *-u* verb class is used exclusively to incorporate verbs borrowed from Marathi (Clements 1996, Luís 2008).

In this study, we argue that KP has borrowed the imperative suffix *-u* and reanalysed it as a class marker. We further argue that the class-marking function could not have been borrowed from Marathi, given that verbal paradigms are not organised into conjugation classes. Thus, the *-u* suffix has not preserved the function it had in the donor language, but rather has acquired a new function in the recipient language. Importantly in KP is that once a Marathi-origin verb is integrated into the KP *-u* conjugation class, it is immediately treated as a native root and takes the inflectional endings that appear on the KP verbs of Portuguese origin.

As for the reasons for KP having borrowed *-u*, we argue that its borrowing and reanalysis as a verb class marker, and the increasing rate of borrowing in KP are due to the ever-augmenting contact intensity between the KP speakers and the Marathi speakers that surround them. More lexical Marathi items are finding their way into KP, including many verbs, which are incorporated seamlessly with the use of the class marker suffix *-u*.

References

- Clements, J. Clancy. 1996. *The genesis of a language: The formation and development of Korlai Portuguese*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Ana R. Luís. 2008. Tense marking and inflectional morphology in Indo-Portuguese. In S. Michaelis (ed.) *Roots of Creole Structures: Weighing the contribution of substrates and superstrates*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 83-121.