

Linking WH-variation in Laurentian French and Brazilian Portuguese to the Copula Cycle  
[Talk]

We argue that the extensive variation seen in wh-question formation in Laurentian French (LFr), i.e. Canadian dialects excluding Acadian (Mathieu 2004; Elsig 2009; Tailleir 2013) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP) (Kato & Miotto 2005; 2008) is the result of near identical diachronic trajectories. We assume, following Tailleir (2013) and Druetta (2003), that a subset of the possible variants of wh-questions in these two languages are in fact remnants of former clefted structures which were productive in Old French (Rouquier 2003) and 19<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese (Kato & Miotto 2005) (Ex. 1-3, which represent some of these variants).

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| 1) BP | <i>Quem que você viu?</i><br>who that you saw<br>'Who did you see?'  | <b>wh-word + <i>que</i> (complementizer)</b><br><br>(Ambar 2008)                   |
| LFr   | <i>Qui que Pierre a vu?</i><br>who that Pierre has seen<br>'Who did Pierre see?'   | <br><br>(Ambar 2008)   |
| 2) BP | <i>O que (que)<sup>1</sup> é que o João comprou?</i><br>det what (that) is that det. John has.bought<br>'What did John buy?' | <b>wh-word + <i>é que/est-ce que</i></b><br><b>(and variants)</b><br>(Grolla 2009) |
| LFr   | <i>Où c'(est) que tu vas?</i><br>where it-(is) that you go<br>'Where are you going?'   | <br><br>(Tailleur 2013)  |
| 3) BP | <i>O João comprou o quê?</i><br>det John has.bought det what<br>'What did John buy?'   | <b>wh-word in-situ</b><br><br>(Grolla 2009)  |
| LFr   | <i>Tu vas où?</i><br>you go where<br>'Where are you going?'  | <br><br>(Tailleur 2013)  |

In both languages, where biclausal cleft structures containing a copula were reanalysed as monoclausal structures, we propose that such a change is compatible with concomitant T<sup>0</sup> to C<sup>0</sup> reanalysis of the copula (Lohndal 2009; c.f. modal V→T reanalysis, e.g. Roberts and Roussou 2003, which also entailed concomitant loss of biclausal structure). We provide data showing that these reanalyses were independently instantiated in LFr (some time during the Middle French period – Tailleir 2013) and BP (20<sup>th</sup> century – Kato & Miotto 2005), and have led to innovative wh-in-situ properties in both languages (Ex. 3). Ambar (2008) had already noted the descriptive similarities between LFr and BP regarding their wh-interrogative inventory, but a detailed theoretical explanation, either synchronic or diachronic, has yet to be proposed.

Our paper aims to answer two main questions: (a) what can the diachronic and synchronic empirical facts of LFr and BP tell us about the extensive variation found in both

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<sup>1</sup> The supplementary *que*, not noted in Grolla (2009), is possible, according to our own elicitation of native speaker judgements.

languages? and, (b) how can these same diachronic facts contribute to the theory of cyclic change, in particular with regards to the Copula Cycle (Lohndal 2009)? We show that the ostensibly idiosyncratic left peripheries of LFr and BP provide strong evidence for the generative approach to cyclic change wherein a simple reanalysis can trigger the availability of new grammatical possibilities in the synchronic grammar. The fact that French *est-ce<sup>2</sup> que* and BP *é que* have grammaticalized is widely assumed, but the exact mechanism underlying this change has not yet been explained through the lens of cyclic change (e.g. van Gelderen 2004). We show that, in fact, Lohndal's (2009) Copula Cycle (Ex. 4) provides an ideal framework for the diachronic data of LFr and BP's (formerly clefted) wh-interrogatives.

4) The Copula Cycle (Lohndal 2009)

Step 1		Step 2		Step 3
demonstrative/pronoun	>	copula	>	grammatical marker
specifier	>	head	>	affix

Our data shows that the copula became a complementizer in the innovative structures with *est-ce que/e que*, becoming invariant and losing inflection (Step 2 to Step 3 in Ex. 4); the wh-variants of LFr and BP is predictable under the learner-driven, cyclic, analysis we propose. Wide, apparently superfluous, variation, which belies usage-based approaches to language change (e.g. Traugott and Dasher 2005), can be reduced to a simplification of the formal properties of the grammar.

Selected References: **Ambar, Manuela.** 2008. On Some Special Adverbs, Word Order, and CP: Variation vs. Micro-Variation. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics/Revue canadienne de linguistique* 53 (2/3): 143-179. **Druetta, Ruggero.** 2003. *Qu'est-ce tu fais?* État d'avancement de la grammaticalisation de *est-ce que*. Deuxième partie. *Linguae &c.* 1: 21-35. **Elsig, Martin.** 2009. *Grammatical Variation across Space and Time: The French interrogative system*, Amsterdam/Philadelphie : John Benjamins. **van Gelderen, Elly.** 2004. *Grammaticalization as Economy*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. **van Gelderen, Elly.** 2009. Renewal in the left-periphery: economy and the complementiser layer. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 107 (2): 131-195. **Grolla, Elaine.** 2009. Speculations about the Acquisition of Wh-questions in Brazilian Portuguese. *Minimalist Inquiries into Child and Adult Acquisition: Case Studies across Portuguese*. A. Pires & J. Rothman (eds.). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. **Kato, Mary Aisawa & Carlos Mioto.** 2005. A Multi-Evidence Study of Portuguese WH-Questions. *Linguistic Evidence: Empirical, Theoretical and Computational Perspectives*, S. Herausgegeben von Kepser & M. Reis (éd.). Berlin/New York : Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 307-328. **Lohndal, Terje.** 2009. The Copula Cycle. *Cyclical Change*. E. van Gelderen (ed.). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. **Mathieu, Eric.** 2004. The mapping of form and interpretation: the case of optional WH-movement in French. *Lingua* 114 : 1090-1132. **Roberts, Ian & Anna Roussou.** 2003. *Syntactic Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Rouquier, Magali.** 2003. La séquence *est-ce* dans les interrogatives en *qui/que* en ancien et en moyen français. *French Language Studies* 13: 339-362. **Tailleur, Sandrine.** 2013. *The French Wh Interrogative System: Est-ce que, clefting?*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto. **Traugott, Elizabeth and Richard B. Dasher.** 2005. *Regularity in Semantic Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>2</sup> We will show also that the former pronoun *ce* goes through a process of cliticization in French; Classical Portuguese was pro-drop so BP variants do not have any trace of a pronoun.