

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

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I. Background

Within the wh systems of Laurentian French (LFr) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP) it is well attested that:

- a biclausal cleft structure containing a copula (*wh est-ce que/wh e-que*) was grammaticalized (Foulet 1921; De Boer 1926; Druetta 2003; Kato & Miotto 2005; Duarte 1992; Galves & Paixao de Sousa 2010, among others).

Now, LFr and BP exhibit extensive wh variation, as seen in examples 1 to 3 below.

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

II. Objective

To provide an analysis for the near-identical trajectories of wh interrogatives in LFr and BP which have resulted in analogous and extensive synchronic variation in both languages.

III. Research Questions

1. What can the diachronic facts tell us about the extensive synchronic variation and innovative wh in situ properties found in both languages (as observed by Ambar 2003)?
2. How can the diachronic facts contribute to cyclic change theory (van Gelderen 2004, 2011), in particular to linking interrogative clefting structures with the Copula Cycle (Lohndal 2009)?

IV. Diachronic Evolution and Copula Cycle

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/pronom specifier	>	copula head	>	grammatical marker affix

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

Table 3 below shows that we have enough evidence to demonstrate steps 2 and 3 of the copula cycle in the history of the wh interrogative system in both LFr and BP.

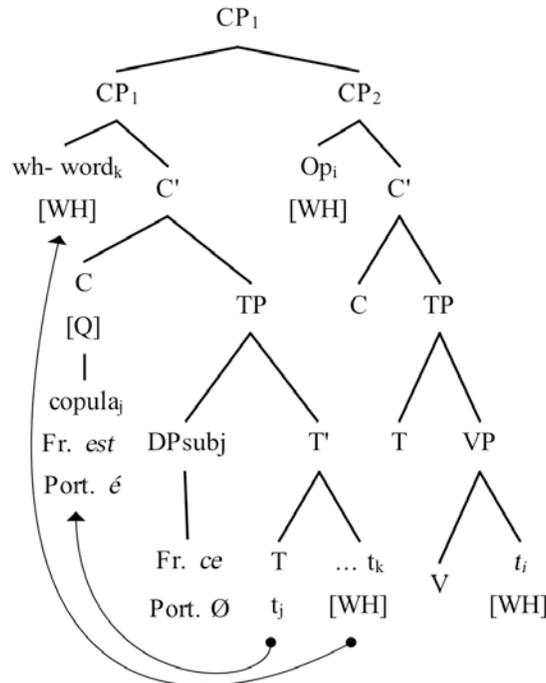
Table 3. Diachronic development of the copula in French and Brazilian Portuguese

Copula		
Old French	Projection : I (head)	
	Diagnostics : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can vary in tense; • obligatory for clefted (emphasized) wh; • for Fr. : needs a subject 	
	<i>Qui est ce, diex, qui m'aparole?</i> Lit. : who is the one, god, who is talking to me? <i>Renart IV 233, Foulet 1921: 253, cited in Rouquier 2003: 340</i>	<i>O que é que eu represento?</i> what is <i>pro</i> that I represent « What is it that I represent? » Kato et Mioto 2005: 309
Middle French	Classical Portuguese (up to the 19th c.)	
Grammatical Marker		
Modern French	Projection : C (higher head)	
	Diagnostics : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fixed position; • invariable; • can be reduced or deleted; • only has these properties in wh interrogatives. 	
Brazilian Portuguese		

V. Analysis

Tree 1 below shows the copula-stage of the evolution (Old French and Classical Portuguese). In this structure, there is a full copular clause, and the copula is Merged within the T domain (T-to-C movement associated to V2). There is also at this stage “regular” wh-movement to the Spec-CP.

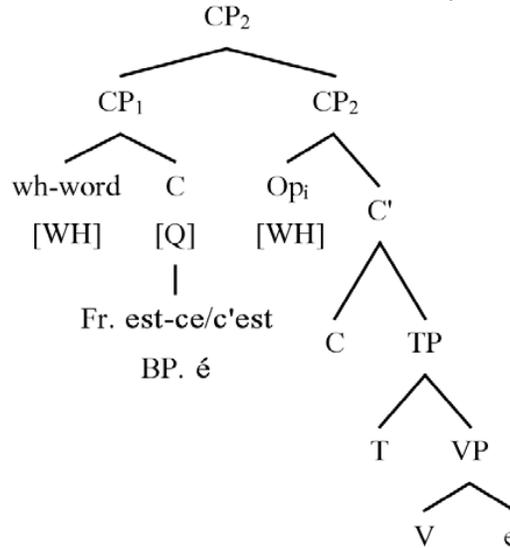
Tree 1. Old Fr. and Classical Por (V2 period) – Full cleft



Next step: the copula becomes a C in the innovative structures with *est-ce que/é que*, becoming invariant and losing inflection. Last step of the copula cycle, in which the copula is now a grammatical marker. In LFr and

BP, the head gets reanalysed as a higher head (upward reanalysis – Roberts & Roussou 2003).

Tree 2. Reduced cleft – from Middle French and 19th c. BP to today



Step 3: Grammatical marker = higher head (C⁰)

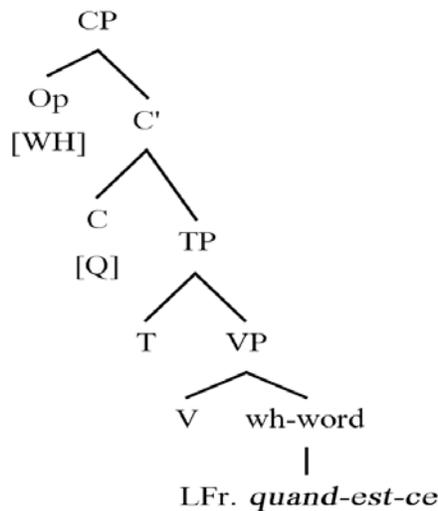
Since Lohndal (2009) mentions that the last step of the cycle involves the copula becoming a full affix, we can hypothesize that this is the next change that will happen in both languages. In fact, we already have some possible evidence for this change, with the *que* in BP and various reduced forms of *est-ce que* in LFr.

Elsig (2009: 194) gives the following example of an affixed wh appearing in situ.

- 5) *Tu as fait ça quand-est-ce?* (Elsig 2009: 194, based on Lefebvre 1982)
 you have done that when-is-it?

For wh in situ, we propose a simple structure involving long distance agreement between the wh operator and the wh element (Tailleur 2013, based on Simpson’s (2000) long distance agreement theory).

Tree 3. In situ structure for LFr and (some dialects) of BP.²



Step 3: Affix

² See Grolla 2009 for details. It seems that BP dialects might vary according to the structure of their in situ wh: some seem to exhibit (covert) movement, others not.

VI. Conclusion

- We have argued that the reanalysis of the copula in the interrogative cleft structure ($T \rightarrow C$), along with the loss of V2 (and the cliticization of the pronoun in Fr. only), created a reduced cleft structure.

This structure reduces movement (in keeping with economy principles in reanalysis, see van Gelderen 2011), but requires long-distance agreement with the wh operator (Tailleur 2013, Simpson 2000).

This explains straightforwardly the presence of both wh in situ and cleft-like interrogatives in LFr and BP.

VII. Selected References

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