

## Copula patterns in Hawai'i Creole

### Creole origin and decreolization

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The present paper demonstrates a multivariate analysis of copula absence in Hawai'i Creole (HC). Results show that the patterns of use of copula absence in HC parallel those of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Caribbean creoles in terms of the constraints on the following grammatical category. Evidence from social constraints shows that similar distributional patterns were observed across age groups. Copula absence has been the center of the debate in terms of the possible links between AAVE and Caribbean creoles. It is discussed that the pattern of copula variability in the following grammatical categories reflects protocreole features and, furthermore, the structure of the substrate African languages (Holm 1984; Holm et al. 1999). Close examination of the creole copula *stay* in HC suggests that the pattern of copula variability in HC in terms of the following grammatical categories should not be attributed principally to the creole copula or to the copula-like structures in the substrate language Portuguese.

#### 1. Introduction\*

Copula absence has been extensively investigated in the literature of English-based creoles (hereafter, EBCs) and African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

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(Rickford 1991, 1998). It has been the center of the debate over the putative creole origin of AAVE, and often discussed as an African influence on the process of creolization of Caribbean creoles (Winford 1993: 155). As Walker and Meyerhoff (2004) pointed out, however, a handful of EBCs (such as Barbadian Creole, Jamaican Creole, Trinidadian Creole, Guyanese Creole) have received most of the attention, and there is a need for more variationist analyses of copula absence in other EBCs. In this paper, I demonstrate a multivariate analysis of copula absence in Hawai'i Creole (HC),<sup>1</sup> a non-Atlantic English-based creole spoken in the islands of Hawai'i. There have not been any variationist multivariate analyses using the VARBRUL program<sup>2</sup> on copula absence in HC so far. The results imply a pan-creole tendency as well as the issue of whether there is a current decreolization process in HC or not.

Amongst the research on copula absence in EBCs and AAVE, the hierarchical ordering of the following grammatical environment has been reported as most significant. Rickford and Blake (1990) argue that if a prior creole origin were to leave its vestiges in a decreolizing or decreolized variety, we would expect to find the following patterns of copula absence in which the environment before *\_gonna* favors copula absence the most and the environment before *\_NP* does so the least:

*\_gonna* > *\_V+ing* > *\_Adj* > *\_Loc* > *\_NP*

In the rest of the present paper, the term 'creole pattern' is used to refer to the above mentioned hierarchical pattern regarding the following grammatical categories. It is argued by Holm (1984) that this pattern reflects proto-creole features and, furthermore, the structure of the substrate African languages. The question arises whether this pattern is also observed in other non-Atlantic EBCs which do not have African languages as substrates.

HC is geographically remote, and has different substrate languages from Atlantic EBCs. Its substrate languages are Hawaiian, Portuguese, Cantonese, Japanese and Visayan as well as other Asia-Pacific languages. However, although HC substrates do not involve any African languages, the possible influence from Atlantic creole features to HC grammatical

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1. The creole in Hawai'i has been referred to as "Hawai'i Creole English (HCE)" in the previous literature. However, following the recent studies by Sakoda and Siegel (Sakoda and Siegel 2004a, b), I will refer to it as Hawai'i Creole (HC) in the present study based on two reasons: First, calling Hawai'i Creole English is misleading in that it suggests Hawai'i Creole to be a dialect of English. Second, Hawai'i Creole is a more consistent reference considering how other creoles around the world (Jamaican Creole, Guyanese Creole, Bahamian Creole just to name a few) are referred to in linguistic literatures.

2. VARBRUL is a probabilistic-based multivariate regression analysis that indicates the relative influence of various linguistic or social factors on a linguistic process. It produces factor weights between 0 and 1 where a weighting greater than .5 indicates a favoring effect while a factor weight below .5 indicates an inhibiting effect (Young and Bayley 1996).

structure was pointed out by Holm (1985). Holm (1985) argued the possibility that features in HC have their origin in the diffusion of Atlantic creole features through jargonized versions of Atlantic creole spoken by sailors and traders. This raises another question whether the distributional pattern of copula absence in current HC has any implications in terms of the Atlantic creole diffusion to HC grammar.

Previously, copula absence in HC was quantitatively investigated with distributional analyses some thirty years ago (Day 1973; Perlman 1973). Day (1973) observed an internal implicational pattern within the use of null copula in four environments. Copula absence occurs most frequently before the *V+ing* construction, followed by the environment before adjectives, locatives, and noun phrases.

\_V+ing > \_Adj > \_Loc > \_NP

Perlman (1973) also found a similar hierarchy of the variability of copula in five environments. Perlman's (1973) study quantified both *stay* copula and zero copula.

\_gon > \_V+ing > \_Adj > \_Loc > \_NP

If HC shares the creole pattern with other EBCs, the argument that claims that copula absence in EBCs reflects influence from African languages might require alternative explanations.

## 2. Data and methodology

The present study analyzed sociolinguistic interviews with rural O'ahu residents collected through the project *External Influences and Internal Variation in Current Hawai'i Creole*. This project was conducted by Jeff Siegel in 2001–2006. HC speech from people who were born and raised in the rural areas of the island of O'ahu was analyzed in the present study. Compared with the outer islands, the island of O'ahu is reportedly where the most “decreolized” and therefore the most acrolectal varieties are found (Romaine 1994). Data from the twenty speakers stratified by age and gender was quantified and analyzed using GoldVarb 2001 (Robinson, Tagliamonte and Lawrence 2001). In the present paper the term copula is used to cover any form (or zero marked with the symbol  $\emptyset$ ) corresponding to a form of Standard English *be*. The following three forms were quantified as variants of copula absence: Full form copula (*am/is/are*), contracted form (*-m/-s/-re*), and zero copula ( $\emptyset$ ). I looked at both copula environment in a narrow sense that occurs before NP (as in “My sista  $\emptyset$  one bus driver”), Adjective (“My sista  $\emptyset$  skinny”), and Locative (“Kent them  $\emptyset$  inside da house”), and auxiliary *be* that occurs before *V+ing* (as in “He  $\emptyset$  helping me”), and *gon(gonna, goin)+V* (“She  $\emptyset$  goin miss da prom”). As for the computation, the present study employs “straight deletion” methodology in which tokens of zero are counted out of tokens of zero, contraction, and full forms combined.

The two age groups (Post-60's vs. Pre-60's) represent the speakers who grew up before and after the American statehood in 1959. Statehood brought social impacts relevant to the linguistic environment in Hawai'i, such as rapid development and a huge influx of new people. Gender of the speakers (Male vs. Female) was also considered as possible source of copula variability.

Tokens were coded for the five linguistic factors as shown in the Table 1: following grammatical category, grammatical person and type of subject, and preceding as well as following phonological context.

**Table 1.** Linguistic factors for variation of copula absence

Grammatical categories	Linguistic environments
1. Following grammatical category	_gonna ( <i>gon, goin</i> ) _V+ing _Adjective _Locative _NP
2. Subject	Personal pronoun Other pronoun (e.g., <i>there</i> ) NP
3. Grammatical person and number of subject	1st sg ( <i>am</i> ) 3rd sg ( <i>is</i> ) Other ( <i>are</i> )
4. Following phonological segment	_Consonant _Vowel
5. Preceding phonological segment	Consonant_ Vowel_

The contexts described below were excluded from the analysis. First, nonfinite (negation) and past tense contexts as in “He Ø not coming” and “He Ø not there yesterday” were excluded. Past tense copula has a different pattern from present tense copula in HC. For example, grammatical person and number are often neutralized as in “She was there” and “We was there”. Secondly, neutralization contexts were excluded. This is because tokens which are followed by a sibilant, as in “Hes sick”, which, in rapid speech, are phonetically difficult to distinguish from deletions, as in “He Ø sick”. Thirdly, reported Standard English speech was excluded. Clause final context as in “You know what that is?” was also excluded because it is not clear whether HC copula absence is possible in such contexts. HC has a creole copula *stay*. This *stay* copula was also excluded. It is not semantically/functionally equivalent to other English-like copula because it has a different co-occurrence constraint. For example, although the *stay* copula in HC may be used before adjective and locative phrases, it is possible only when they denote “a nonpermanent or nonintrinsic quality, or a change

in conditions”<sup>3</sup> (Sakoda and Siegel 2003: 77). In the present study, the *stay* copula was counted and analyzed separately. There were fourteen examples of the *stay* copula in the data. In terms of the following grammatical environment, two tokens occurred before *V+ing*, seven tokens occurred before the adjective, and five tokens occurred before the locative environment. When examining the distribution of the *stay* copula in terms of the social background of the speakers, *stay* tokens were observed more with the older Pre 60's speaker group.

### 3. Copula variability in Hawai'i Creole

The result of the distributional analysis of copula absence concerning age and gender groups suggests that the two social factors do not seem to play the crucial roles in the occurrence of copula absence in HC. Tables 2 and Table 3 show the distributional analyses of copula absence with the age and gender groups. Table 2 compares the two age groups. The distribution of the three variants across age groups does not vary to a large extent. Table 3, below, shows the distribution across gender groups. The pattern of copula absence is also similar across the two gender groups.

Table 2. Distributional analysis of copula absence with age groups

	Full	Contracted	Deleted	Total
Pre-60's	26 (13%)	69 (36%)	92 (49%)	187 (46%)
Post-60's	43 (19%)	61 (27%)	114 (52%)	218 (53%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>69 (17%)</b>	<b>130 (32%)</b>	<b>206 (50%)</b>	<b>405</b>

Table 3. Distributional analysis of copula absence with gender groups

	Full	Contracted	Deleted	Total
Male	36 (17%)	62 (30%)	105 (51%)	203 (50%)
Female	33 (16%)	68 (33%)	101 (50%)	202 (49%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>69 (17%)</b>	<b>130 (32%)</b>	<b>206 (50%)</b>	<b>405</b>

Table 4 below demonstrates a distributional analysis with a linguistic factor – the effect of the following grammatical category. It shows more applications of copula absence for the environments of auxiliary *be*, namely before *gonna*, *gon*, *goin*, and *V+ing*, when compared with the environments of the copula in narrow sense, namely, before NP,

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3. For example, the sentences “He *stay* free aswhy” and “She *stay* sick” are acceptable because *stay* is used before adjectives that denote nonpermanent quality. The sentence “Da wahine *stay* short”, on the other hand, is not acceptable because the adjective denotes a permanent quality (Sakoda and Siegel 2003: 77–8).

Adjective, and Locative. The relative ordering of the frequency matches the patterns expected by the creole origin hypothesis argued in Rickford and Blake (1990).

**Table 4.** Distributional analysis with following grammatical category

Grammatical categories	Linguistic environments	Full	Contracted	Deleted	Total
Following grammatical category	<i>_gonna (gon, goin)</i>	1 (1%)	9 (13%)	58 (85%)	68 (16%)
	<i>_V+ing</i>	4 (5%)	12 (16%)	55 (77%)	71 (17%)
	<i>_Adjective</i>	19 (18%)	32 (31%)	52 (50%)	103 (25%)
	<i>_Locative</i>	1 (4%)	14 (56%)	10 (40%)	25 (6%)
	<i>_NP</i>	30 (34%)	37 (43%)	19 (22%)	86 (21%)
	Miscellaneous	14 (26%)	26 (50%)	12 (23%)	52 (12%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>69 (17%)</b>	<b>130 (32%)</b>	<b>206 (50%)</b>	<b>405</b>

In order to see whether older speakers and younger speakers show different patterns, it is necessary to confirm if this pattern is observed in both age groups. Table 5 below demonstrates distributional analysis of the effect of the following grammatical environment for the two age groups. The pre 60's and the post 60's groups show similar frequency.

**Table 5.** Copula absence for Pre 60's and Post 60's

Following grammatical environment	Pre 60's		Post 60's	
	%	N (Total 92/187)	%	N (Total 114/218)
<i>_gonna (gon, goin)</i>	79%	27/34	91%	31/34
<i>_V+ing</i>	68%	20/29	83%	35/42
<i>_Adjectiv</i>	51%	27/52	49%	25/51
<i>_Locative</i>	46%	7/15	30%	3/10
<i>_NP</i>	15%	6/40	28%	13/28
Miscellaneous	29%	5/17	28%	7/35

The similar patterns in the two age groups in terms of the effect of the following grammatical environment are demonstrated graphically in the Figure 1 below.

This creole pattern was also reported in the two previous study of HC in 1970's. The distributional analyses for the following grammatical category in the two previous studies are compared with the present study. All three studies have the same hierarchical order.

1. Day (1973:111) with 23 male/female speakers from the island of O'ahu, Hawai'i, and Maui.  
*\_V+ing*(94%)>*\_Adj*(72%)>*\_Loc*(62%)>*\_NP*(63%)

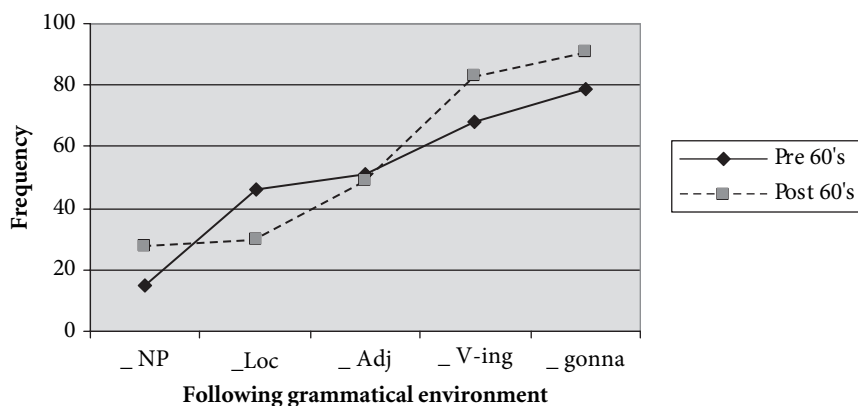


Figure 1. Copula absence in two age groups in Hawai'i Creole

- Perlman (1973: 120) based on his research carried out in the island of O'ahu with 29 male speakers (working-class informants, ages 36–75).  
 \_gon (89%) > \_V+ing (37%) > \_Adj (33%) > \_Loc (25%) > \_NP (20%)  
 \*Stay copula occurred only in \_Loc environment (37% of the tokens in locative environment)
- The present study with 20 male/female speakers from the rural areas of the island of O'ahu.  
 \_gon (86%) > \_V+ing (74%) > \_Adj (52%) > \_Loc (38%) > \_NP (18%)

Figure 2 below compares the patterns in the three studies graphically. In terms of the frequency of copula absence the distributional pattern in the present study is in the

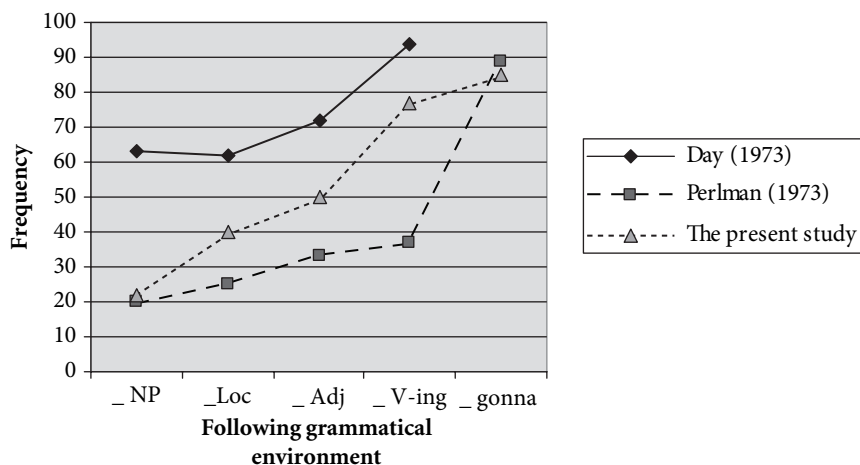


Figure 2. Copula absence in three studies on Hawai'i Creole; Day (1973), Perlman (1973) and the present study

middle of those in the two previous studies. All three studies have the same hierarchical order. The one difference is that there is not any data for before the *\_gonna* environment for Day's (1973) study.

Are there any signs suggesting that decreolization processes are currently in progress in HC? Neither (1) the distributional pattern in the Pre 60's and Post 60's, nor (2) the comparison of Day (1973), Perlman (1973) and the present study suggest evidence to support a decreolization process in terms of copula absence within the past thirty years.

The results of multivariate analysis show that three out of five linguistic factors turned out to play a significant role in the application of copula absence in HC: following grammatical categories discussed above, types of subjects, and grammatical person of subject. As already mentioned, the two social factors, age and gender were not significant. Table 6 shows Variable Rule analysis of the factors contributing to the application of copula absence in HC regarding the following grammatical categories.

**Table 6.** Constraints on Copula Absence (Deleted variant) in terms of the following grammatical categories as analyzed by Variable Rule (Varbrul) Program

Factors Significance = 0.000	Factor weights		N
	Input = 0.514	%	Total N = 405
<i>_gonna</i> ( <i>gon, goin</i> )	.81	85%	58/68
<i>_V+ing</i>	.65	77%	55/71
<i>_Adjective</i>	.49	50%	52/103
<i>_Locative</i>	.40	40%	10/25
<i>_NP</i>	.26	22%	19/86
Miscellaneous	.34	23%	12/52

Table 7 below shows variable rule analysis of the type of subject and the grammatical person of subject.

**Table 7.** Constraints on Copula Absence (Deleted variant) in terms of type of subject and grammatical person of subject as analyzed by Variable Rule (Varbrul) Program

Factors Significance = 0.000	Factor weights		N
	Input = 0.514	%	Total N = 405
<b>Type of subject</b>			
Personal pronoun	.69	73%	165/226
Other pronoun	.15	10%	12/115
NP	.51	45%	29/64
<b>Grammatical person/number of subject</b>			
1st SG ( <i>am</i> )	.36	66%	52/78
3rd SG ( <i>is</i> )	.43	33%	85/252
Other ( <i>are</i> )	.81	92%	69/75

So far, we looked at the effect of the following grammatical environment. As for the effect of the preceding grammatical environment, namely, the type of subject, fewer studies of creoles report data on this environment than for following grammatical environment (Rickford 1998: 183). In the present study, personal pronoun subject favors copula absence more than NP does. This [Personal pronoun > NP] pattern for favored environment for copula absence is also observed in Bahamian English (Reaser 2004) and AAVE (Baugh 1980). However, in some other EBCs such as Barbadian Creole (Rickford and Blake 1990), Jamaican Creole (Rickford 1996) and Liberian Settler English (Singler 1991), the reversed order [NP > personal pronoun] is observed. More study is required to explain the pattern of the preceding grammatical environment.

#### 4. Discussion – Creole copula in Atlantic vs. non-Atlantic creole

While English is considered as one of the languages “in which zero copula encoding is never allowed” (Stassen 2005: 486),<sup>4</sup> copula absence is typologically common, hence does not only occur in EBCs. In terms of the geographical distribution, Stassen (2005) recognized a number of areas where zero copula encoding is highly conspicuous or prominent: Pacific region, South America, as well as in the northern part of Africa. As for the major substrate languages of HC, many of them (Portuguese, Cantonese, Japanese, and the languages in the Philippines) belong to the areas in which a zero copula constitutes a minor or marginal option; Indo-European, China, Japan, and the Philippines (ibid.: 487). Creole languages (especially in their most conservative variety or basilect) often have their own copula forms (referred to as the creole copula in the present paper). For instance, Guyanese Creole has *a/de*, Sranan has *na/de*, and Tok Pisin has *stap* just to mention a few. In HC, the form of the creole copula is *stay* as mentioned in Section 2.

The creole pattern of copula absence has been repeatedly observed across many EBCs. There have been discussions on the source of the creole pattern: *\_gonna/goin+V* as most favorable, *\_Adj* fairly high, and *\_NP* and *\_Loc* least favorable environment for copula absence. Holm (1984) and Holm et al. (1999) discussed three possible sources for this creole pattern in Atlantic creoles: (1) protocreole system<sup>5</sup> (2) creole copula and (3) copula-like structures in substrate languages. According to Holm's (1984: 298) explanation, the hierarchy observed in the creole pattern presumably reflects the structure of the protocreole grammar. *Gonna* is a calque for a protocreole preverbal marker

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4. Note that Stassen (2005) limits its scope to stative predicate nominal sentences only.

5. My understanding of the term ‘protocreole’ discussed in Holm (1984) and Holm et al. (1999) is that it refers to “linguistic factors common to the origin of [Jamaican Creole and Gullah], namely the language situation in West Africa and the English-speaking plantations of the New World” (Holm 1984: 292).

indicating irrealis, V+*ing* is a calque for a proto-creole verb and its preverbal progressive/iterative marker, Adj is a subclass of verb in the proto-creole. Loc and NP require copulas because of proto-creole locative and equative copula, respectively. Especially, proto-creole equative copula was obligatory before NP and hence copulas preceding NP are least likely to delete. As Walker (2000: 37) puts it, Holm's (1984) explanation "implicitly predicts higher rate of absence before *gonna*, V+*ing* and Adj and lower rates before Loc and NP." Holm et al. (1999) reports comparative creole copula patterns based on a database that includes not only Atlantic creoles but also five non-Atlantic creoles. It focuses on the relationship between the form of the copula and the three following syntactic environments represented in copula hierarchy: before NP, before locatives, and before adjectives or adjectival verbs. They summarized their observation as follows:

Among the Atlantic creoles, with few exceptions, an expressed copula is required before NPs; a copula of a different form occurs before locative expressions, but this can often be deleted; no copula usually occurs before adjectives (ibid.: 98, 114).<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, Holm et al. (1999) states that the pattern of the creole copula reflects the common copula pattern found in the Niger-Congo languages forming the substrate for EBCs.

In his study of Bahamian copula absence, Reaser (2004: 5) pointed out that the determination of the kinds of copula forms realized in a language's grammar is a fundamental methodological priority, and thus, an important first step in the detailed analysis of the copula system is a qualitative description of the overall copular system. It is necessary to have a detailed description of the creole copula in HC (*stay* copula) as well as the copula pattern in the substrate languages of HC in order to examine the validity of Holm's argument.

Distribution of HC creole copula *stay* has not been fully described due to the variability of HC. Some of the following grammatical categories have been individually discussed in the description of *stay* in the literatures on HC grammar (Cheng 1969; Day 1973; Perlman 1973; Sakoda and Siegel 2004b). Based on the study with two informants from the Island of O'ahu, Cheng (1969) summarized the optionality of *stay* copula as absent before NP, expressed before Loc, optionally expressed before Adj. More specifically, in *\_NP* environment, copula is generally absent as in "They students" "I one student" (ibid.: 105–6). *Stay* is optional before *\_Adj* as in "She real pretty" and "I *stay* hungry" (ibid.: 105). This optionality was later explained as "present if it

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6. Their observations include that of an equative copula, which was excluded from citation due to the lack of the relevance to the present discussion, which I note here. ". . . a highlighter of the same form as the equative copula often occurs before fronted constituents" (Holm et al. 1999: 114).

denotes nonpermanent/nonintrinsic quality” in Sakoda and Siegel (ibid.) In *\_Loc* environment, the copula verbs in standard English is usually replaced by *stay* as in “My parents *stay* home” and “he over there” (ibid.: 106). Based on the data from 10 speakers from different areas on O’ahu, Day’s (1973: 21) preliminary analysis described *ste* as a copula used before locatives. Perlman’s (1973: 120) study with 29 working-class informants observed 35 tokens of *stay* copula (out of 1104 tokens) all of which occurred in locative environment. Previous literature on the HC creole copula *stay* suggests that it occurs most extensively before *Loc* environment although it is also observed before *NP* and before *Adj* environments to some extent. Sakoda and Siegel (ibid.) stated that *stay* was “not used when the location is ‘here’ or ‘there’ or in ‘where question’”. Cheng (1969) and Sakoda and Siegel (ibid.) observed that *stay* before *NP* environment as “in general, no copulative verb is used” (Cheng 1969: 105), and “usually absent” (Siegel and Sakoda 2004b). According to Sakoda and Siegel (2004b), *stay* before *V+ing* is “frequently left out nowadays”.

As mentioned in Section 1, the substrate languages of HC involve variety of languages such as Hawaiian, Portuguese, Cantonese, Japanese, and some Philippine languages. Among these substrate languages, Siegel (2000) pointed out the dominance of two ethnic groups, the Chinese and Portuguese at the time of the emergence of HC. According to Siegel (2003: 197), the functions of the HC copula *stay* are similar to the copula-like structure *estar* of the substrate language Portuguese rather than to the non-punctual aspect markers in other creoles. Siegel (2003: 197) argued that the functions of HC *stay* (both copula and progressive aspect marker) are overlapping with those of Portuguese *estar*.

**Table 8.** Functions of HC *stay* compared to Portuguese *estar* and nonpunctual markers in other creoles [adapted from Siegel 2003: 197, Table 2.]

Functions	HC <i>stay</i>	Portuguese <i>estar</i>	Other creoles nonpunctual aspect marker
Progressive marker	+	+	+
Habitual marker	–	–	+
Inchoative with statives	–	–	+
Copula with adjectives	+	+	–
Copula with locatives	+	+	–
Perfective marker	+	+	–

The overlap between functions of HC *stay* and Portuguese *estar* suggests that the substrate Portuguese is a good explanation of the pattern in the creole copula *stay*.

Our next question is whether the pattern of current HC copula absence reflects that of both the creole copula *stay* and the copula-like structures of the substrate language Portuguese. Holm et al. (1999: 99) discussed that the difference of the pattern of creole copula between Atlantic creoles and non-Atlantic creoles is that creole copulas are present in *\_NP* environment in all the Atlantic creoles (13 out of 13 creoles)

he examined, but that they are absent in the majority of the non-Atlantic creoles (4 out of 5 creoles) he examined. In terms of the *\_NP* category, HC shows the pattern of the majority of non-Atlantic creoles.

Holm et al. (1999) pointed out that the patterns of copula absence in EBCs are similar to the pattern of the creole copula at least in term of the relative ordering of *\_Loc*, *\_Adj*, and *\_NP* environments. It might suggest that the low rate of copula absence in the *\_NP* environment is explained by the pattern of creole copula that is present in the *\_NP* environment. However, the pattern of copula absence in HC shows the low rate of absence in *\_NP* environment. The low rate of absence before *\_NP* does not match the fact that the pattern of its creole copula *stay* is described as “the copulative verb in SAE [Standard American English] is usually replaced by *stay*” in *\_Loc* environment, but “in general, no copulative verb is used” in *\_NP* environment (Cheng 1969: 105–7). In HC, relative absence of copula in current HC speech does not reflect the relative absence of creole copula *stay* at least in terms of *\_NP* environment. In other words, although the creole copula in HC is “generally absent” with NP – which should lead to a high rate of copula absence if the pattern in the creole copula is to be attributed as the source of the creole pattern – the rate of absence before NP is low as in the cases of creoles that have an expressed creole copula before NP. The present study suggests that the pattern in creole copula is not the principal source of the creole pattern.

This raises another question whether the distributional pattern of copula absence in current HC has any implications for the Holm’s (1985) theory that HC grammatical structures are influenced by Atlantic creoles through diffusion. The use of copula is one of the HC grammatical features that Bickerton (1981) discussed the parallels with Atlantic creoles. As we have seen, although the syntactic distribution and function of the HC creole copula *stay* overlap with those of the substrate language Portuguese, they are not reflected in the distribution of copula absence in current HC speech. This leaves room for other sources including the diffusion of Atlantic creoles to be responsible for the observed creole pattern in current HC speech. Only one of the substrate languages was examined in the present study. More research on the distributional description of the substrate languages of HC might shed light on this issue.

## 5. Summary and conclusion

This study provided a multivariate analysis of copula absence in Hawai’i Creole (HC), an EBC spoken in the islands of Hawai’i. Variation in copula absence in HC in the present study does not provide evidence to support the hypothesis of decreolization within the past 30 years in terms of the HC speakers from rural areas of the O’ahu island. Constraints on the following grammatical category on copula absence in HC are like other EBCs. Creole patterns are often argued to reflect creole copula pattern and the substrate patterns observed in African languages (Holm 1984). This study provided a non-Atlantic case study that replicated the creole patterns in hierarchical

ordering involving the following grammatical category. It suggests that in the case of HC, the pattern should not be attributed principally to the creole copula. This is because the pattern of the creole copula and substrate language do not match the observed creole pattern in current HC speech especially in terms of the rate of the copula absence in *\_NP* environment; different from what we might have expected from the creole copula and substrate which leads to a high rate of absence, the observed pattern has a low rate of absence in *\_NP*.

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