GO FOR IN THE CRUCIAN WIRETAPS CORPUS: INSIGHT ON *MV FOR* CONSTRUCTIONS AND THE VERB/PREPOSITION DISTINCTION IN AFRO-CARIBBEAN CREOLE

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Abstract: In this paper, I examine uses of the construction *go for* in Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier creole (AEC) to gain insight on the verb/preposition distinction in contact languages, as exemplified in the construction *Motion Verb + for* (hereafter *MV for*). The *MV for* construction is employed when speakers wish to profile the purpose substructure of the construction's composite semantic value. If speakers were to use the verb *get* instead of *for*, the acquisition substructure would be profiled. In most cases, however, speakers choose the morpheme *for*, which adds prominence to the purpose value. The morpheme *for* also adds aspectual content to the overall constructional meaning, and that aspectual reading is performed on the fly. It is argued here that *MV for* is processed simultaneously in relation to the other constituents that co-occur with it, not only syntactically, but also in terms of the semantic roles that those units convey.

Keywords: Afro-Caribbean Creole, semantics, cognitive grammar, motion verb

1. Introduction

In this paper, I examine uses of the construction *go for* in Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier Creole (AEC) to gain insight on the verb/preposition distinction in contact languages. I take a usage-based approach like the kind practiced in cognitive semantics and look at instances of the construction that have been extracted from actual language data. Langacker made this point about empirical generalizations explicit in his early work: "Substantial importance is given to the actual use of the linguistic system and a speaker's knowledge of the full range of the linguistic conventions, regardless of whether those conventions can be subsumed under more general statements" (1987: 494). My interest is not so much in what speakers can potentially say in their languages, that is their competencies, but rather what they do with their languages, that is their performance strategies. In this paper, I have used a specialized corpus of AEC to study grammatical and lexical uses of *for* when it co-occurs with motion verbs. The text of the corpus comes from transcriptions of phone conversations by U.S. Virgin Island residents of St. Croix who communicated with permanent and temporary members of their extended Afro-Caribbean creole speaking community[1]. The conversations were recorded in the early 2000s via wiretapping and published as wiretap linesheets in 2006 by the United States Drug Enforcement Agency. The data is referred to as the Crucian Wiretaps Corpus (CWC) in the present work, even though the corpus is not representative of Crucian in general as a dialect of Virgin Islands English-lexifier Creole (see Avram 2011 for a discussion of diagnostic features of that dialect cluster). The data used for the current

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paper contain linguistic examples produced by persons from St. Croix and other areas of the Caribbean region who speak varieties of AEC. Also, most of the persons are males between the ages of 18 and 30. Therefore, conclusions drawn in this work reflect broad claims about features and uses of AEC. I have converted the transcriptions into accessible text (.txt) files to enable a concordancing program, for example AntConc 3.4, to conduct key word in context searches and to identify the most frequent constructions.

2. Motion verb + *for*

In the CWC, it was found that the morpheme *for* is regularly used in place of the verb *get*. Roy (1975: 66) provides an instance of U.S. Virgin Islands Creole that shows this tendency as well: "*I goin fo' mi cutlash to chop dese disgustin' weed*". From a Langackerian perspective, *MV for* is employed when speakers wish to profile a purpose substructure of the composite semantic value of the motion verb construction. If the verb *get* were used instead of *for*, the acquisition substructure would be profiled. In the remaining sections, it is shown that the morpheme *for* adds prominence to the purpose value and provides aspectual content to the overall constructional meaning. The aspectual reading is performed on the fly. That is, *motion verb + for* (hereafter *MV for*) is processed simultaneously in relation to other constituents, not only syntactically, but also in terms of the semantic roles conveyed by those units. Ultimately, pragmatics determines the overall interpretation of *MV for*, as seen in uses of *come for* in the CWC (Corum 2011).

2.1. A review of *come for*

Come for is not uncommon in colloquial U.S. English. The following example illustrates the use of *come for* as a fixed expression:

(1) *Come for drinks on Saturday*. (Walter et al. 2008: 431)

The functional morpheme *for* is used to convey a purposive meaning in (1) above. The sentence type is imperative, so the mood of the speaker must be *jussive*, or commanding (Lyons 1977: 745-752). The speaker encourages the listener to **get** drinks with her. The schema for the construction could be represented as: *come* [MOVE_toward speaker [i.e. with speaker]] + *for* [IN ORDER TO [i.e. purpose of event]]. Yet, one must still take into consideration the semantic composite value Change, in the sense of acquisition and the resulting change of state. The first meaning that one thinks upon hearing (1) is *come in order to partake/experience*. I do not have the feeling that *come in order to collect the drinks and* ***leave*** is the meaning that the editors of the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* want to convey with their use of *come for*. In terms of aspect, then, (1) focuses on *the process of acquiring*, giving it an imperfective, durative sense. It is assumed that the agent will undergo some change of state by going to or experiencing the event. What happens after the event is not conveyed in the meaning of this *MV for* construction. However, a different meaning can emerge from the use of *come for* in colloquial U.S. English, as the following example shows:

(2) *I've come for your census form*. (Walter et al. 2008: 271)

The meaning of *come for* in (2) is *come in order to collect your census form and leave*, not *come in order to collect your census form and **stay***. The aspectual sense of this meaning is completive. In summary, *come for* as an instantiation of the *MV for* construction has a composite semantic value Change. There are differences, however, in the intended meanings of the construction. Figure 1 displays the generalizations that have been made of the two meanings of *MV for* based on examples (1) and (2) in English.

Change_sta meaning: *MV for* implies change of state; *for* = purpose
[+durative] value

Change_loc meaning: *MV for* implies change of location; *for* = purpose/acquisition
[+completive] value

Figure 1. Generalizations of *MV for* meanings

Although two meanings of Change emerge from uses of *MV for*, background knowledge about the agents and patients in the construction will ultimately determine which overall interpretation the construction will have.

3. *Go for, go* V, or *go* infinitive

Linguists are hesitant to admit that U.S. English has serialized verb constructions (Goldberg 2006: 52), and instead argue that a phonologically reduced or even covert *and* appears between two verbs in a V1-V2 English construction (for an overview of generative approaches to this phenomenon, see Wulff 2006: 4-106). Yet, it was shown above that *for* works similar to *get* in that it profiles the acquisition value of a Change of state or location meaning in the *MV for* construction. This morpheme is verbal in nature, similar to satellites in phrasal verb constructions and second verbs in serialized verb constructions in West African languages (Corum et al. 2017). Similarly, *for* in *go for* should not be seen as a preposition. Possible uses of *for* as a preposition in U.S. English include: benefactive- *Go for your team* (Go so that you benefit your team), durative- *Go for two days* (Go over a period of two days), and motion toward- *Go for one mile* (Go that direction one mile).

The purposive meaning of *for* in the benefactive sense comes closest to the kinds of meanings rendered by *go for* in the CWC data, but it fails to provide any sense of *acquisition*, which is what the morpheme profiles in the following example:

(3) *I just going go for the girl to move it* (CWC *go for*: hit 10)
Now I am going to pick up the girl to move it.

In example (3), *go* provides the motion value and *for* profiles the purpose value. Since there is also a retrieve/acquisition meaning, the composite semantic value of *go for* is understood as Change_loc. Most uses of *go for* in the CWC rendered a Change_loc [+completive] meaning. *Go for* is not uncommon in U.S. English, either, as seen in the many fixed expressions in Table 1 below (based on examples of the *go for somebody/something* entries in Walter et al. 2008: 615).

Table 1. *Go for* in U.S. English (Including *came, going,* and *went*)

Go for the gold! (try to win the highest medal)
Go for a million! (attempt to win a million)
Go for broke! (attempt to accomplish… using all of your skills)
He's going to go for it! (He is going to attempt…)
She went for it. (She believed…)
I went for the weekend. (I travelled and stayed somewhere)
I could go for a beer. (I want to consume a beer)
They went for a walk. (They left to walk)
Girls like you don't go for guys like me. (You are not interested in me)
Finally, he went for the jugular. (He made an attack on the jugular vein)
Do you want to go for a ride? (Do you want to ride in my car)
Charles is my go for (go for). (Charles is the person that runs errands)
It's going for 25 bucks a pop. (It is selling at a price of 25 dollars each)
That's when I went for my gun. (That's when I withdrew my gun)

Of the 14 different meanings that are provided in Table 1, less than half appear in the CWC. On the other hand, the most common use of *go for* in the CWC does not occur once in the Frown or Brown corpora. This is significant for a number of reasons. First, *go for* is not a productive construction in U.S. or British varieties of English. It is an expression with various fixed meanings. In order to achieve the fixed meaning, the expression must be employed in the right context. Second, a U.S. English speaker must use two verbs to express the prototypical meaning of *go for* that is observed in most cases in the CWC, for example, ?*I'll go for Levi in 10 minutes*. In this case, either *MV V* (*I'll go get Levi in 10 minutes*), *MV infinitive* (*I'll go to get Levi in 10 minutes*), or *MV and V* (*I'll go and get Levi in 10 minutes*) would be used in place of the *MV for* construction. In the following sections, I look into this prototypical use of *go for* that is preferred by members of the AEC-speaking community who were recorded in the CWC.

3.1. *Go for* in the CWC (including forms *going, gone,* and *went*)

The morpheme *for* is used in *go for* to convey a purpose value in the Change_loc [+completive] meaning, which in most cases refers to an event in which a subject collects an animate or inanimate object. The first instance of *go for* is used to describe an event in which a person requests that someone collect individual [X], and the second example references the acquisition of an inanimate item:

(4) *I wan you go for [X] right now, right?* (CWC *go for*: hit 6)
Listen, I want you to pick up [X] right now, okay?

(5) *I could go for it you know, me ain gone use my car* (CWC *go for*: hit 7)
I could go and get it; I am not going to use my car.

Speakers insert grammatical markers before *go for*, as well. Example (6) contains the completive aspect marker *done*:

(6) *You done went for General?* (CWC *went for*: hit 1)
Have you picked up General?

Go for in the examples above convey purposive constructions, but they are different from the serialized verb constructions that Hollington (2015: 49-151) reviews in her work on V1, V2, and V3 event structure and cultural conceptualizations in Jamaican and African languages. They are also unlike the purposive constructions that Kouwenberg (1994: 307-315) describes for Berbice Dutch and Guyanese Creole, and unlike the constructions that Sabino (2012: 74-180) provides in her discussion of verb serialization in Virgin Islands Negerhollands. This is a surprising finding, since Negerhollands and Virgin Islands English-lexifier Creole coexisted until relatively recently. The difference lies mainly in the construction of the verb phrase. In the CWC data, *for* does not precede a verb; the morpheme only occurs before noun phrases. Still, like the Jamaican and Dutch-lexifier varieties the construction conveys a purposive meaning that is associated with Change_sta, as seen in examples (7) and (8):

(7) *… and in the morning them man went for them* [drugs] (CWC *went for*: hit 9)
… and in the morning the guys went [to the house] to look for the drugs.
(8) *I going out weh my girl we going for dinner an so* (CWC *going for*: hit 8)
I am going out with my girl; we are going to have dinner or whatever.

In (7) and (8) above, *for* works as a V2 element that profiles a purpose value and adds an aspectual [+durative] sense of Change to an event, which in these cases involves *searching* and *dining*. Reviewing the two uses more closely, however, it becomes apparent that g*o for* is used ambiguously. The speaker in (7), for example, could also use *for* to express a purpose value, but [+completive] meaning: *guys went to steal the drugs*. In (8), the speaker might have meant: *we are going to buy dinner* [*and come back*]. This kind of ambiguity between the durative and completive senses of *for* is expected. Multiple meanings and functions are often associated with single morphemes in West African and other AEC languages. The speakers' choices of a functional morpheme like *for* instead of a lexical verb like *search* or *steal* adds support to the argument that polysemy and multifunctionality are features that speakers of creole languages employ to cultivate ambiguity in discourse (Faraclas et al. 2014, Corum 2016: 104-121). These are possibly inherited discursive features from West African languages, which are related to other discursive features like indirection, triadic communication, and other oratory skills,

for example, proverbs, aphorisms, and parables, that constitute distinct modes of communication that are found among many West African communities (Tarr 1979, Yankah 1995, Ameka and Breedveld 2004).

4. Summary

In summary, most instances of *for* in *MV for* constructions found in the CWC provide a purpose value that leads to a *retrieve* or *acquisition* reading. Notwithstanding, *for* can be used in complex ways to profile a purpose value that renders both a Change_sta [+durative] meaning and a Change_loc [+completive] meaning:

(9) *no body suppose to know when he going for a hotel* (CWC *going for*: hit 1)
no one really knows when he will book/stay at a hotel.

(10) *if ain't for you, I going for nothing for no body me son* (CWC *going for*: hit 16)
if it weren't for you, I'd be [do] nothing at all, man.

In (9), *for* profiles the purpose value and, therefore, *acquisition* reading in the event *book a hotel room*, but it implies a stay in the hotel room, as well. Example (10) is more interesting. *Go*(*ing*) does not provide a stative value to the *MV for* construction; it provides a movement value, as it has in many of the other examples reviewed in this paper. The movement is metaphorical, however. *For* is used by the speaker in (10) to indicate a purposive meaning, which together with the metaphorical use of *go* renders a compulsion reading. Yet, the combination of the motion verb and *for* renders a non-compositional, Change of state meaning that is captured by the verbs *be* or *exist* in the English translation. It is noteworthy that West African English-lexifier pidgins and creoles use *for* in this way in *de for* constructions (Corum 2015: 164-172). Compare the Crucian example (10) with the Nigerian Pidgin example in (11), in which *de for* is used to evoke the metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS:

(11) *Im de fòr Legos layf* (Faraclas 1996: 65)
(S)he is into the Lagos Lifestyle.

Krio has collocations involving dé + locative item, as well: "de for: 'be for' = be devoted to, e.g. *A de fɔ yu* 'I am devoted to you/am your admirer', *I de fɔ pwel*, 'He is devoted to spoiling' = He is destructive" (Fyle and Jones 1980: 68).

5. Conclusions

This article has provided a preliminary look at semantic and syntactic characteristics that are common to AECs in the use of motion verb constructions, namely the use of functional items that take on verbal attributes and mirror V2 functions in serialized verb constructions. For the analysis of *MV for* constructions, I adopted a

cognitive approach to grammar, which argues for form-function pairings in language (Langacker 1987, Goldberg 2006). I reviewed the instantiations of *MV for* in the mixed AEC recorded in the CWC and used equivalent translations in colloquial U.S. English to analyse them. In most of the translations into English, it was noted that a verb with an *acquisition* value, such as *get*, could be substituted for the morpheme *for*. The analysis of *for* in English has not been looked at through the lens of serialized verb constructions. It may be because linguists are hesitant to admit that U.S. English has serialized verb constructions, like *go-V* versus *go-and-V* (Wulff 2006: 102), and insist instead that a phonologically reduced or even covert *and* appears between two verbs in a construction like *go* [*and*?] *get your brother*. Based on the examples found in the CWC, I maintain the position that *for* in *MV for* constructions increases valency of the motion verbs *come* and *go*, provides a purpose value, and adds an aspectual sense [+completive] or [+durative] to the constructional meaning. These functions typify serialized verbs in West African languages and AEC languages, where serialized verbs, auxiliaries, adpositions, adverbs, and ideophones constitute frequently overlapping categories with fuzzy and porous boundaries between them.

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