Labelling, creativity and syntactic change in auxiliaries

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Kallulli & Roberts (K&R, 2022) identify and analyse auxiliaries that are synchronically neutralised between HAVE and BE. One such case is non-standard English *ain't* (reduced from *am/are not* and *have/has not*); K&R analyse *ain't* as a negative auxiliary with no Person/Number features and an optional LOC feature present in the possessive reading in (1a), but absent in the progressive reading in (1b). In these varieties, *there* has a LOC feature that allows the clause to be labelled, (2). Modulo the restriction to negative auxiliaries (linked to contracted negation), (2) equals (3):

(1) a. I/you/he/we/they ain't got no money.
     b. I/you/he/we/they ain't going nowhere/nobody/cared what you think.

(2) There ain't no students in the room.

(3) a. Il y a des étudiants dans la salle.   (French)
     b. Hay estudiantes en la sala.   (Spanish)

Following Lass (1999), K&R provide an account of the historical convergence of *have* and *be* on *ain't* involving a sequence of phonological changes (deletion of the final voiced continuant of the auxiliary, compensatory lengthening of the vowel, diphthongisation and /h/-dropping), which cause the two forms of the negative auxiliaries to converge as a single neutralised auxiliary by the early 19th century. Syntactically, the neutralised auxiliary has ϕ-features and an optional LOC feature. Here, we examine a range of further cases of neutralisation of auxiliaries, such as *seva* in varieties of Italian, which appears to function this way; cf. Cennamo 2010:220-3, who argues that *seva* is a form of HAVE "with the incorporation of the initial consonant (*s-*) of the present indicative of *be*", a proposal supported by the double-auxiliary *so''ve* construction of Ariellese (D'Alessandro & Ledgeway 2010). We treat *seva* as a neutralized auxiliary resulting from *s*-incorporation into the original HAVE forms, leading to an optional LOC feature being associated with this form. Bleaching the LOC feature (from location of possessum to external argument of "possess" with associated loss of raising of the locative argument from a small clause) to a generalized external-argument (EA) feature leads to the split-auxiliary patterns in Standard Italian and elsewhere (Kayne 1993; D'Alessandro & Roberts 2010). The fact that *seva* appears variably with unaccusatives, passives, copular constructions, and unergatives and transitives shows that the original LOC (later EA) feature is optional on this element. Cennamo (2010: 222-3) further documents varieties where there is "functional equivalence of HAVE and BE in all their domains", indicating that both auxiliaries have an optional LOC/EA feature. We also analyse aspects of the Albanian auxiliary system, notably the admirative mood, which is derived from the auxiliary *kam* 'I have', also used to build Perfect.