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LACUS FORUM XXXVII

**COMMUNICATION AND COGNITION:
MULTIDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES**

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VII



Historical
Linguistics



THE PHONOLOGIES OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PAPIAMENTU

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Abstract. There has been a debate as to whether Spanish or Portuguese was the Iberian language involved in the origin of Papiamentu, a language spoken in the Dutch Antilles, though there is no dispute as to the subsequent influence of Spanish. Evidence supports the idea that Papiamentu was an Afro-Portuguese creole brought to the Dutch Antilles with the slave trade. But this does not explain the origin of the Spanish element in Papiamentu. It has been suggested that Spanish-speaking priests came from Venezuela to teach Christianity to the slaves. An assessment of the mutual intelligibility of Spanish and Portuguese today and an analysis of the changes in the phonologies of the two languages are combined to estimate the mutual intelligibility of Spanish and Portuguese at the time of the development of Papiamentu and to investigate how Spanish influence on Papiamentu began.

Keywords: Papiamentu, Spanish, Portuguese, Ladino, Iberian, Hispanization, Phonology, Mutual Intelligibility, Creole

Languages: Papiamentu, Spanish, Portuguese, Ladino

PAPIAMENTU, an Afro-Dutch-Iberian Creole, is spoken in the Dutch Antilles islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, which are close to the coast of Venezuela. These islands were conquered by Spain in 1499, and taken over by the Dutch in 1634 (Jacobs in press:4). The Dutch started importing slaves then, using Curaçao as a slave trading center, but expanded the import of slaves after 1640 (Jacobs in press:13). According to Kouwenberg & Murray (1994:5), many Portuguese Jews went to Curaçao after the Dutch lost their Brazilian lands in 1654. Papiamentu arose on Curaçao, which had become the slave trading center of the Caribbean. According to Maurer (1986:108), Papiamentu was stable by 1700.

I. THE ORIGIN OF PAPIAMENTU. There is a debate as to whether Spanish or Portuguese was the Iberian superstrate language for Papiamentu. One of the two main positions is that Papiamentu is a Spanish-based creole derived from Spanish and indigenous languages, which was subsequently influenced by slaves speaking a Portuguese-based pidgin and by Portuguese Jews who emigrated to the Antilles. Munteanu (1991), Wood (1972) and Ferrol (1982) take this position. One of the theories of the origin of Papiamentu discussed by Wood says that Papiamentu began in the Antilles and is an Afro-Spanish creole (1972:18). This explains African influences in Papiamentu but then needs to explain Portuguese elements in the language, as well as how the creole was maintained after the Dutch took over the Antilles in 1634. Another theory, which Wood says was proposed by Bickerton, is that there was a largely Spanish

affiliated creole which was once widespread in Hispanic territories and which had a West African Creole Portuguese substrate (1972: 20). This theory has the advantage of accounting for African, Spanish and Portuguese elements in Papiamentu. Ferrol (1982:47) posits a Portuguese substrate to this pan-Caribbean Spanish-based creole as a way of explaining Portuguese features in Papiamentu. He cites Van Balen's idea of a primitive Spanish/Indian-based jargon spoken on the island which was very heavily influenced by the Jews. This gave rise to primitive Papiamentu which was then influenced by the Spanish of the surrounding countries (Ferrol 1982:21).

The other main position is that Papiamentu is a Portuguese-based creole derived from a West-African Portuguese pidgin, which was subsequently influenced first by Spanish-speaking Catholic priests and later through trade with Spanish speakers in neighboring countries. Megenny (1984) and Maurer (1986) believe Papiamentu to be a Portuguese-based creole later influenced by Spanish, whereas Jacobs (in press) has a modified version of this position. He believes that Papiamentu is derived from Upper Guinea Creole, also known as Cape Verde Creole, (in press:3) , and that Cape Verde Creole/Upper Guinea Creole was brought to Curaçao by slaves (in press:15). According to Jacobs, it was then heavily influenced by Spanish (in press:3). Evidence for Jacobs' views comes from the strong linguistic correspondences between Papiamentu and Upper Guinea Creole and from the socio-historic context of the development of Papiamentu. The linguistic correspondences include the prepositional system (Jacobs 2009:333) and the pronoun system (Jacobs 2009:326). As to the socio-historic context, there is evidence of specific shipments of slaves from Cape Verde to Curaçao. The leader of the Curaçao settlement asked for Cape Verde slaves (Jacobs in press:14). The Dutch dominated slave trade in the Upper Guinea area from 1627 -1678, and it was run there by Dutch and Portuguese Jews (Jacobs in press:13).

2. SPANISH INFLUENCE IN PAPIAMENTU. Jacobs' view that Papiamentu was overlaid by Spanish on arrival in Curaçao (Jacobs in press:3) is supported by Kouwenberg & Murray's comment (1994:5) that the earliest stratum of Papiamentu was covered by a considerable number of Spanish words. The situation of the Hispanization of Papiamentu is not controversial. It is the origin of the Spanish influence which has been the focus of debate.

So how did Spanish come to influence Papiamentu? Maurer (1986) describes Spanish influence as occurring through mixed marriages between Dutch or free colored people and Latin American partners, commercial and cultural contact between Curaçao and South America, the use of Spanish as the language of instruction in various colleges in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and through the religious acculturation of the Africans by Spanish-speaking priests from Venezuela, work which was carried out in secret for a long time (1986:101). Munteanu concurs with this last point, saying that Spanish-speaking priests from Venezuela went to Curaçao to teach Christianity to the slaves (1991:47). Another factor that must be considered is the influence of the Portuguese Jews.

So why did Venezuelan priests go to Curaçao to teach Christianity to the slaves? The answer to this lies in the history of the Antilles before the Dutch invasion in 1634. When the islands were conquered by the Spanish in 1499, as previously mentioned, the nearest Roman Catholic diocese was in Venezuela. According to Lampe (2005:130), the Dutch Antilles became part of the diocese of Caracas in 1638, only four years after the Dutch took control. But Korth (1968:116), in reviewing editions of documents relating to the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Venezuela, says that the diocese of Coro was established in 1531 and that the administrative center moved to Caracas from Coro. This means that there was a link between Venezuela and the Dutch Antilles in terms of ecclesiastical administration from 1531, so the visits of the priests to Curaçao were part of this relationship.

3. THE SPEECH OF THE PRIESTS AND THE SLAVES. There is, however, the question of how the Spanish-speaking priests managed to communicate with the slaves, who spoke African languages. How did the slaves understand new concepts taught to them in a different language? The priests spoke Latin American Spanish, which in some ways is a variety closer to Portuguese than Standard Castilian (Lapesa 1959: 348, 349, 354, 355).

According to Lapesa (1959:355), similarities between Latin American Spanish and Andalusian speech are closest in islands or coastal regions because of the domination of the initial colonization by Andalusians, who spoke the southern variety of Spanish, and because of the continuing link with the Canary Islands. Venezuela would come into the category of coastal regions. According to Penny (2000:151), some varieties of Latin American Spanish share velarized word-final /n/ with southern Spanish. Other similarities with Andalusian Spanish are the aspiration of syllable-final /s/, the merger of /r/ and /l/ in clusters and their loss in word-final position, and the aspiration of the /h/ which was derived from Latin /f/ (Lapesa 1959: 349).

The slaves, in addition to speaking African languages, may well have spoken Portuguese or an Afro-Portuguese Creole. As previously mentioned, the governor of Curaçao asked for slaves from the Cape Verde islands. According to Rego, in Cape Verde it was the practice to teach basic Christianity and Portuguese to some slaves, known as Ladinos. Such slaves were more valuable because they fetched higher prices. Even more valuable were slaves who were Crioulos, born in the Cape Verde Islands and native speakers of Cape Verde Creole (Rego 2005: 3). This means that both Ladinos and Crioulos would have understood some type of Portuguese and that the concepts of Christianity would not have been completely new to Ladinos, at least.

4. THE MUTUAL INTELLIGIBILITY OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE. Lipski (2006:1), in his study of *Portuñol/Portunhol*, refers to the “high degree of mutual intelligibility” between most varieties of Spanish, including South American and European varieties, and both Brazilian and European Portuguese. Krieger (2003:314) describes Portuguese/Spanish interactions on the borders of Brazil in the context of “effective bilingual competence from Portuguese to Spanish and vice versa.” She explains that “speakers of both languages understand that their common origin, phonological sim-

ilarities and equivalent syntactic structures facilitate mutual understanding of their respective tongues” (ibid.). According to Ethnologue.com, Spanish and Portuguese have 89% lexical similarity, though this is not the same as mutual intelligibility.

Jensen (1989) investigated the mutual intelligibility of Spanish and Portuguese. He concluded that there was 50-60% mutual intelligibility between varieties of Latin American Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese when communication was in the form of airport announcements and TV interviews. He found that there were better results from conversational face-to-face interactions (1989:850) and that Portuguese speakers understood Spanish better than vice versa (1989:851). Jensen’s experiments used Brazilian Portuguese and Latin American Spanish (1989:849, 850). So if there is 50-60% mutual intelligibility between varieties of Latin American Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese now, and if there have been changes in Spanish and Portuguese since the formation of Papiamentu which made them less like each other, it would be possible to assume greater mutual intelligibility than there is now.

5. CHANGES IN SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE SINCE 1650. There have been several changes in Spanish and Portuguese since 1650. 1650 is taken as a point in the development of Papiamentu, because, as noted above, Papiamentu was stable by 1700 (Maurer 1986: 108). Maurer (1986:97) thinks that Papiamentu probably developed between 1650 and 1700. One of the changes in Brazilian Portuguese during that time is the palatalization of /t, d/ before /i/ (Camara 1972:44). Another change is standardization in Spanish (Penny 2000:215). Penny (2000:209) says that Spanish was not standardized in the 16th and 17th centuries and that Golden Age Spanish was similar to modern rural Spanish in the absence of syllable-final labials or velars and the presence of atonic vowel variation, so that no distinction is made between atonic /e/ and /i/ or /o/ and /u/. In the 16th century, educated speech was spreading, but the lack of these distinctions continued into the 17th century (2000:210-11). Standardization of Spanish began in the 18th century and continued to the 20th century (2000:215). A third change was the deaffrication of /tʃ/ to /ʃ/ in European and Brazilian Portuguese in the 18th century (Teyssier 1980:66-67, Vázquez Cuesta & Mendes da Luz 1971:220-21). Camara (1972:44) mentions the labialization of syllable-final /l/ in Brazilian Portuguese. Lapesa and Agard both refer to the velarization of /ʃ/, /ʃ/ > /x/, in Spanish. Lapesa (1959:247) says that both /ʃ/ and /x/ were used in the 17th century. Agard (1984:110) says that /ʃ/ had changed to /x/ by 1700, so both may still have been in use during the time Papiamentu developed.

Teyssier (1980:71) says that in Portuguese the atonic vowels /e/, /o/ became /ə/ and /u/ respectively, in either pretonic or atonic final position, towards the end of the 18th century, and that final /o/ became /u/ in Brazilian Portuguese in the first half of the 18th century, (1980:102-3). According to Ian Smith (personal communication, 2009), there is evidence from Sri Lankan Portuguese that the changes from /e/ to /i/ and from /o/ to /u/ had already happened by the mid 17th century, since Sri Lankan Portuguese, which lost contact with Portuguese after 1658, has both *e* > *i* and *o* > *u* in final position (e.g., /pesi/ ‘fish’ (Portuguese *peixe*), /o:ru/ ‘gold’ (Portuguese *ouro*)).

This would argue that these changes were complete by the mid 17th century. This view is followed in the examples below. The examples show the changes in Spanish and Portuguese which affected certain words common to both languages.

1. Palatalization of /t, d/ before /i/ in Brazilian Portuguese (BP)
tio 'uncle'
 Portuguese [tiu], > [ʧiu] BP
 Spanish [tio] / [tiu] > Spanish [tio]
2. Deaffrication of /tʃ/ to /ʃ/ in Portuguese [European and Brazilian]
chupar 'to suck'
 Spanish & Portuguese [tʃupar], > Portuguese [ʃupar]/ BP [ʃupax]/ [ʃupah],
 Spanish [tʃupar] [x, h] are allophones of /t/ in BP (Azevedo 2005: 34).
3. Labialization of syllable-final /l/ in Brazilian Portuguese (Camara 1972: 44)
alto 'tall'
 Portuguese [altu] > Brazilian Portuguese [awtu]
 Spanish [alto] / [altu] > Spanish [alto]
4. Velarization of /j/, /ʃ/ > /x/, in Spanish.
juego, jogo, 'play'
 Spanish [ʃueyo]/[ʃueɣu] / [xueyo] / [xueɣu] > Spanish [xueyo]¹
 Portuguese [ʒogu]

These are examples of some of the changes in the phonologies of Spanish and Portuguese after the development of Papiamentu. These examples show how the phonologies of Spanish and Portuguese have become more distinct since that time and how this greater differentiation affects actual words. These changes mean that the two languages were closer at the time of Papiamentu's development and therefore would have had a higher degree of mutual intelligibility than given in Jensen (1989)'s results.

Burkholder & Johnson (1990:104) give a table showing travel to Spanish America from Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries. This shows that the system of fleet sailings began to fail after 1580 and was breaking down by 1620 (1990:139). Losing contact with the Peninsula would have affected the transfer of changes in language from Spain to its colonies.

6. PORTUGUESE JEWS: SPEAKERS OF SPANISH, PORTUGUESE, AND LADINO. It is important to consider the linguistic profile of the Portuguese Jews. According to de Granda (1974:6), they spoke Portuguese and Spanish. Tavani, quoted by de Granda, says that they encouraged the exchange of phonetic, lexical, sentential, and to some extent morphological and syntactic elements between the two languages. The Portuguese Jews' use of Portuguese and Spanish led to hybrid and dual forms (Tavani in de Granda 1974:6). This indicates that they did not differentiate between Spanish and Portuguese. According to Maurer (1986:98) the Portuguese Jews acted as interpreters for the Dutch in trade with Spanish America and also wrote documents in Spanish. They also spoke Ladino (de Granda 1974: 6), a variety of Spanish similar to Portu-

¹ According to Macpherson (1975:156), [g] and [ɣ] became positional allophones of /g/ in Spanish during the 16th century.

guese in many ways (Penny 2002: 29) because of its phonetic conservatism. These similarities include the retention of the distinction between /b/ and /β/, or /b/ and /v/, in Ladino (Penny 2000:183), the final vowel system /i/, /a/ and /u/ (Penny 2000:187), and the retention of /f/ (Penny 2002: 27-28). According to Lapesa (1959:335-36), Portuguese influenced Ladino, since many Jews took refuge in Portugal after being expelled from Spain in 1492. There are loanwords from Portuguese in Ladino (Lapesa 1959:337) e.g., *anojar* ‘to annoy’, *embirarse* ‘to infuriate’, *froña* ‘restaurant, boarding-house’. Voicing contrasts between /ʃ/ and /z/, /ð/ and /ts/, and /s/ and /z/ remain as they were in medieval Spanish (Lapesa 1959: 335-36).

Mixing Portuguese and Spanish helped blur distinctions, and so made boundaries between them fuzzier. The variation present in Spanish before its standardization in the 18th century (Penny 2000:215), like those in the word-final vowels /o/ and /u/ (as shown in Portuguese [tiu] and Spanish [tio]/[tiu], Portuguese [altu] and Spanish [alto]/[altu] in examples 1 and 3), made people accustomed to coping with variation. In the case of the variation between /o/ and /u/, this meant that one choice of word-final vowel was the same as in Portuguese. Since the Portuguese Jews spoke Ladino, this may have been included in the mix as well. This mixing of Portuguese, Spanish, and possibly Ladino, facilitated a shift from Portuguese to Spanish.

7. CONTACT BETWEEN THE SLAVES AND THE PORTUGUESE JEWS. There is also the question of contact between the slaves and the Portuguese Jews. As previously mentioned, slave trade in Upper Guinea area was run by the Dutch and Portuguese Jews (Jacobs in press:13) and the slaves were likely to have spoken either Portuguese or a West-African Portuguese creole. According to Maurer (1986:98), the Portuguese Jews owned 15% of the slaves in Curaçao, so the slaves and the Portuguese Jews were in contact through the slave process and through the Portuguese Jews’ ownership of slaves. This would have given some opportunity for language contact.

8. HISPANIZATION IN PAPIAMENTU. Some idea of some of the changes due to the process of Hispanization in Papiamentu can be seen by comparing Papiamentu as it is now with Papiamentu in previous times. The first examples come from the earliest extant letter in Papiamentu, written in 1776 by a Portuguese Jew and taken from Ferrol (1982:82-83).

Papiamentu in 1776 letter	Contemporary Papiamentu
<i>borbe</i>	<i>bolbe</i>
<i>aflicaõ</i>	<i>aflikshon</i>

Table 1. 18th-century and contemporary Papiamentu.

Ferrol (1982:82) notes that the change from /r/ to /l/, as in *borbe* / *bolbe*, is very common in spoken Papiamentu today. Wood (1972:28) notes that *aflicaõ* is derived from Portuguese *aflicção* ‘affliction’. There is a Spanish word *aflicción* with the same meaning (Concise Oxford Spanish Dictionary 1998:17), so it would seem that Papiamentu had adapted the Spanish word to fit Papiamentu phonology by the 19th century.

Papiamentu in early 19 th century	Contemporary Papiamentu
<i>fika</i> (auxiliary verb) < Portuguese <i>ficar</i> 'to remain, stay'	<i>keda</i> (auxiliary verb) < Spanish <i>quedar</i> 'to remain, stay'
<i>kumisá</i> 'to begin, start, commence' < Cape Verde Creole <i>kumesa</i> < Portuguese <i>começar</i>	<i>kuminsá</i> 'to begin, start, commence' < Spanish <i>comenzar</i>

Table 2. Early 19th-century and contemporary Papiamentu

The forms in Table 2 are taken from Jacobs (in press: 9). Jacobs says that most of the functional verbs in Papiamentu come from Cape Verde Creole/UGC, but most of the content verbs in Papiamentu show Spanish influence. However, *keda*, an auxiliary verb, is from Spanish *quedar*, a content verb. Jacobs notes that texts from the early 19th century show the use of *kumisá* 'to begin, start, commence' derived from Cape Verde Creole *kumesa*, which in turn is derived from Portuguese *começar* 'to begin, start, commence'. He says that in modern Papiamentu *kuminsá*, from Spanish *comenzar* 'to begin, start, commence', is more common (in press:9).

9. THE PROCESS OF HISPANIZATION IN PAPIAMENTU. Since the Portuguese Jews spoke three very similar languages, Ladino, Portuguese, and Spanish (de Granda 1974: 6), and as shown above, there was a closer relationship between Spanish and Portuguese then, the similarities amongst Ladino, Spanish, and Portuguese could have facilitated Hispanization. The influence of the Spanish-speaking priests (Munteanu 1991:47, Maurer 1986:101) resulted in Spanish being the language of religion (Jacobs 2009:321). These factors combined to start the Hispanization process much earlier than might otherwise have been the case. Because of contact through Spanish-speakers marrying into the community and through trade (Maurer1986:101), both of which factors related to the geographical location of the Dutch Antilles, there would probably have been a longer-term effect in any case, but the work of the Spanish-speaking priests helped to begin the process much earlier. Spanish was used in education in the 19th and 20th centuries (Maurer1986:101), which helped to carry on the process begun in the 17th century.

10. CONCLUSIONS. One consequence of the work of the Spanish-speaking priests was that Spanish became the language of religion on Curaçao and so was part of the Hispanization of Papiamentu. Another element in this was the use of Spanish as a language of education. The greater mutual intelligibility of Spanish and Portuguese at the time of the development of Papiamentu, aided by the greater closeness of the phonologies of Spanish and Portuguese at that time, helped to facilitate communication between the Spanish-speaking priests and the slaves. An additional factor here was that the variety of Spanish spoken by the priests was somewhat closer to Portuguese than was the standard variety of Spanish. However, the effect of the greater mutual intelligibility of Spanish and Portuguese, aided in part by the type of Spanish spoken by the priests, would not have been effective without at least some of the slaves speaking either some Portuguese because they were Ladinos, slaves who had been taught both Portuguese and the basics of Christianity, or Cape Verde/Upper

Guinea Creole, because they were crioulos, born and brought up in the Cape Verde islands. The influence of the Portuguese Jews, who spoke Spanish, Portuguese and Ladino, was another part of the picture, because they used hybrid forms and did not differentiate much between Spanish and Portuguese. They would also have been a source of Spanish words to the slaves they owned. These factors helped Spanish influence on Papiamentu to begin much earlier than the influence from contact through Spanish-speakers marrying into the community or through the use of Spanish in trade with countries where Spanish was spoken, though these latter factors were also part of the Hispanization of Papiamentu.

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