

Minicurso

African-American English and Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese: Parallels in their partial restructuring

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Abstract

Holm (2004, 2008) argued that the partial restructuring of African-American English (AAE), Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese (BVP) and three other non-creoles had result from the transmission of their European source languages to overseas populations made up of both native and non-native speakers in which neither group overwhelmed the other numerically, leading to the retention of much (but not all) of the source languages' morphosyntax as well as the introduction of a significant number of substrate and interlanguage features. This model also sought to identify the linguistic processes that lead to partial restructuring, bringing into focus a key span on the continuum of contact-induced language change which has not been previously analyzed.

This mini-course focuses on AAE and those aspects of BVP that are parallel to it, either socio-historically or linguistically. Many of the linguistic parallels suggest the influence of the West African substrate languages that contributed to the genesis of both vernaculars, leaving those aspects of BVP that are more clearly attributable to the influence of Bantu languages for Holm's talk on November 12th, 2008: "The genesis of the Brazilian Vernacular: insights from the indigenization of Portuguese in Angola".

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African American English & Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese:

Parallels in their partial restructuring

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Table 1: Estimated population of (East) Virginia, 1685-1790

| | 1685 | 1700 | 1715 | 1730 | 1745 | 1760 | 1790 |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Total | 43,600 | 63,500 | 96,300 | 153,900 | 234,200 | 327,600 | 747,800 |
| Red | 7% | 3% | 1% | 0.6% | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.03% |
| White | 87% | 88% | 77% | 67% | 63% | 60% | 59% |
| Black | 6% | 9% | 22% | 32% | 36% | 40% | 41% |

(based on Wood 1989:38, cited by Winford 1997)

Table 2: Estimated proportion of Blacks in American Colonies in 1750

| Colony/Region | Total Blacks | % of Blacks | % in 13 Colonies |
|--------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>New England</i> | 10,982 | 3.1 % | 4.6% |
| <i>Middle Colonies</i> | 20,736 | 7.0% | 8.8% |
| <i>Southern Colonies</i> | 204,702 | 39.8% | 86.6% |

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Maryland | 30.8 |
| Virginia | 43.9 |
| N. Carolina | 27.1 |
| S. Carolina | 60.9 |
| Georgia | 19.2 |

(Based on Rickford 1999:238)

Table 3: Estimated population of South Carolina, 1685-1775

| | 1685 | 1700 | 1715 | 1730 | 1745 | 1760 | 1775 |
|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Total | 11,900 | 14,100 | 19,200 | 33,400 | 62,400 | 97,500 | 179,400 |
| Red | 84% | 53% | 27% | 5% | 2% | 1% | 0.3% |
| White | 12% | 27% | 29% | 29% | 33% | 40% | 40% |
| Black | 4% | 20% | 45% | 65% | 65% | 60% | 60% |

(based on Wood 1989:38, cited by Winford 1997.)

Table 4: Estimated population of Brazil, 1538 to 1890

| | 1538- 1600 | 1601- 1700 | 1701- 1800 | 1801- 1850 | 1851- 1890 |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| African-born | 20% | 30% | 20% | 12% | 2% |
| Creole Africans | -- | 20 | 21 | 19 | 13 |
| Integrated Amerindians | 50 | 10 | 8 | 4 | 2 |
| Mixed | -- | 10 | 19 | 34 | 42 |
| European-born | 30 | 25 | 22 | 14 | 17 |
| Creole Whites | -- | 5 | 10 | 17 | 24 |

(based on Mussa 1991:163, cited in Mello 1997:85)

African American English: the verb phrase

- (1) AAE: Where Miss Annie...live__ now. (Schneider 1989:65).
- (2) AAE: I **members** de first shoes I ever had. (ibid.; Labov et al. 1968).
- (3) AAE: They **taught** me mighty good, they **teach** me good. (Holm 1991:235).
- (4) AAE: I got on a cowboy shirt now that I brought from Texas. **Been** have it all my days. (Holm 1991:235).

- (5) AAE: I hear jus' as good now as I ever **been** hearing. (ibid.).
- (6) AAE: Let me see how that **did** come up. (ibid.).
- (7) AAE: Today I **had went** to work. (Cukor-Avila 2001:105).
- (8) AAE: Bout eight o'clock he **done been** all around. (ibid 238).
- (9) AAE: They all **going** home now. (ibid 236).
- (10) AAE: An' I **does** enjoy certain of his show. (ibid 237)
- (11) Bahamian CE: "They **is be** in the ocean. (Holm with Shilling 1982:111)
- (12) Bahamian CE: Sometimes you **be** lucky. (Holm 1988-89:160)
- (13) Bahamian CE: They just **be playing**. (ibid)
- (14) AAE: Those boys **be messing** with me. (Cukor-Avila 2001:105-7)
- (15) AAE: Them brothers be rappin **steady**. (Baugh 1983:86)
- (16) AAE: We **be done** washed all the cars by the time JoJo gets back with the cigarettes.
(Baugh 1983:78)
- (17) AAE: He **ain't** do it. 'He didn't do it.' (Rickford 1999:8)
- (18) Bahamian CE: Stone at sea bottom **no** know sun hot. (Holm with Shilling 1982:143)
- (19) Bahamian CE: Bookie **ain'** know who do it yet. (ibid 3)
- (20) AAE: We **don'** want **no** six-month investigation! (AAE speaker, Euronews, 11/7/02)
- (21) Bahamian CE: They **can't** sell that in **no** Haiti" (Holm with Shilling 1982:143).
- (22) AAE: **Don't nobody** like him. 'Nobody likes him.' (Sells, Rickford and Wasow 1996)
- (23) AAE: It **ain't no** cat **can't** get in **no** coop.

'There isn't any cat that can get into any coop.' (Labov 1972a:130)

AAE **it's** 'there is', also found in SWVE, seems likely to be linked to Bahamian CE **it have** idem. via the use of **it's** for both 'it is' and 'it has' (Holm 2000:200). There are parallels in Bantu languages as well as creoles based on French, Spanish and Dutch; among partially restructured varieties, BVP uses **tem** '[it] has' (versus EP **há**) and NSCS uses **tiene** '[it] has' (versus S **hay**) (ibid.).

(24) AAE: They ___ all dead. All of them's dead.

Where they ___ at...where they **is**.

The Yankee **be** to the landing, they ___ drunk. (Holm 1991:239)

Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese: the verb phrase

| | | | |
|-----------|------------|-------|-----------------------|
| (25) BVP: | eu | parto | ‘I leave’ |
| | você/ele | parte | ‘you leave/he leaves’ |
| | nós | parte | ‘we leave’ |
| | vocês/eles | parte | ‘you/they leave’ |

| | | | |
|------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| (26) | SBP | BVP | |
| | eu | parti | ‘I left’ |
| | você/ele | partiu | ‘you/he left’ |
| | nós | partimos | ‘we left’ |
| | vocês/eles | partiram | ‘you/they left’ |

(27) BVP: Eli **foi** dis... ‘He PAST said....’ (McKinney 1982:6)

(28) BVP: Eli **vivia** trabayava ‘He HABITUAL-PAST worked’ (ibid. 7)

(29) BVP: Eu ___ mininu. ‘I [was] a child’

(30) BVP: Ela ___ loka pur eli. ‘She [is] crazy about him’

(31) BVP: i eli ___ ali ‘and he [was] there’ (McKinney 1975:15)

African American English: the noun phrase

(32) Yoruba: **àwon** okùnrin [literally ‘they men’] i.e., ‘the men’ (Rowlands 1969:195-7)

(33) Jamaican CE: **dem** bwai / de bwai-**dem** ‘the boys’

(34) AAE: **them** wagon (Holm 1991:240).

(35) AAE: two looms (ibid.).

(36) AAE: had hounds...them hound_.....six mens...six mans...six **men** (ibid.).

(37) AAE: Felicia **an’ them** done gone. (Mufwene 1998:73)

(38) Yoruba: **àwon** Táíwò [literally ‘**they** Taiwo’], i.e. ‘Taiwo and his family, schoolmates or friends’ (Rowlands 1969:196)

- (39) Miskito Coast CE: di sukya **dem** [literally ‘the medicine-man **they**’], i.e. ‘the medicine man and his lot’ (Holm 1988-89:193)
- (40) non-standard E: Mary **an’ them** came over yesterday.
- (41) Miskito Coast CE: di uman_ biebi ‘the woman's baby’ (Holm 1978:286)
- (42) AAE: the white folk__ kitchen (Holm 1991:241).
- (43) AAE: Well the master had promise' to, to give **we** all forty dollars a month in pay.
(Holm 1991:241-2).
- (44) AAE: We had **we** own lawyers. (ibid.)
- (45) AAE: When **us** all leaves dis old world.. (Schneider 1989:66).
- (46) AAE: It's **y'all** ball. (Rickford 1999:7)
- (47) AAE: That teacher, **she** yell at the kids. (Fasold and Wolfram 1970:81)

Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese: the noun phrase

- (48) BVP: um dos mais velho_ orixás ‘one of the most ancient deities’ (Holm 1987:417)
- (49) BVP: o_ meus irmão_ ‘[the] my siblings’ (ibid)
- (50) BVP todo_ os mais vehlo_ ‘all the most ancient [ones]’ (ibid)
- (51) BVP **osêle** ‘they’ (cf. pluralizing **os** plus **ele** ‘he’) (Mendonça 1933:67)

Guy (1989): “...at the same time a variable *syntactic* rule of NP plural marking is required to account for phrases such as **as vez, os espanhol, as nação**, because if they resulted from simple S-deletion, they should be **as veze, os espanhoi, as naçãoe**

The inflections were probably first applied randomly (as in decreolizing English (*the boy go/ the boys goes/ the boy goes/ the boys go*) in free variation.

African American English: other structures

- (52) AAE: Where **can I** go?
Where **I can** go? (ibid.)
- (53) AAE: I wonder {where **can I** go}.

I wonder {where **I can** go}. (ibid.)

(54) I wonder {**can I** go}. (ibid.)

(55) Jamaican CE: Dem aks mi {if **a want** i}.

‘They asked me {if **I wanted** it}.’ (Hancock 1979b:14).

(56) Irish English: I don't know {**is that** right or not}. (Barry 1982:108)

(57) Bahamian CE: **I can** go? ~ **Can I** go? (Holm 2000a:236)

(58) Bahamian CE: I don't know {where **I can** go}. ~ I don't know {where **can I** go}. (ibid.)

(59) AAE: He got a gun { ____ sound like a bee}. (Dillard 1972:68)

(60) Jamaican CE: De man { ____ owe me money} gone a Cuba. (Cassidy 1961:57)

(61) Yoruba: aso { ____ mo rà lánâ } n'iyí (Rowlands 1969:90)

cloth ____ I bought yesterday this-is

‘This is the cloth I bought yesterday.’

(62) Yoruba: málúù { **tí** kò ní irù }

cow **which** no has tail

‘a cow which has no tail’ (ibid.)

(63) Yoruba: èmi { **tí** mo fún e ní gbogbo owó yí }

1s REL 1s give 2s OBJ all money DEM

‘I who [I] gave you all this money.’ (Rowlands 1969:88)

(64) AAE: Dem little bitty hat { **what** dey wearin' **dem** now }. (Dillard 1972:68)

(65) AAE: The boy { ____ won } **he** did a three.

‘The boy who won did a three.’ (Smith 1973:94)

(66) AAE: They told me { **say** they couldn't get it }. (Rickford 1977:212)

(67) Krio CE: A yEri { **se** Olu de fes di buk kam }.

‘I heard **that** Olu is bringing the book along.’ (Yillah fc.)

(68) Gullah CE: dE IO { **sE** wi tu ol }.

‘They admit **that** we're too old.’ (Turner 1949:211)

(69) Sranan CE M sab { **tak** a tru }. ‘I know that it's true’ (Voorhoeve 1962:26)

Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese: other structures

(70) EP, SBP: Não **os** vi. 'I didn't see them.' (Cunha 1982:279)

NEG 3p saw-1s

(71) EP, SBP: Ela chamou-**me**. 'She called me.' (Azevedo 1989:863)

3s called 1s

(72) BVP: Ela chamou **eu**. 'She called me.' (ibid.)

3s called 1s

(73) BVP: Onde **você mora?** 'Where do you live?'

where 2s live

(74) EP: Onde **mora você?**

where live you

(75) EP: Onde é que você mora?

where is-it that you live

(76) **MOST FORMAL:**

a. Onde você caiu?

b. Onde caiu você?

CAREFUL COLLOQUIAL:

c. Você caiu onde?

d. Onde é que você caiu?

e. Onde foi que você caiu?

f. Onde é que foi que você caiu?

MOST INFORMAL:

g. Onde que foi que você caiu?

h. Onde que você caiu? (Lemle 1976:77)

(77) BVP moStré u pão { **ki** eu kumia } [S = IPA long S (= sh)]

'I showed the bread that I was eating.' (Jeroslow 1974:193)

(78) BVP u fradi morava nu sobradu { _____ era múitu áutu }

'The priest lived on-the second-floor, [which] was very high.' (ibid. 194)

- (79) BVP i tudus kuienu us pedasu { ____ kiría kumé}
 And all choosing the pieces [that] they-wanted to-eat.’(ibid. 195)
- (80) BVP: Esse rapaz, {**que** eu conheci **ele**}... (Amaral 1976:78)
 ‘This guy that I met [him]’
- (81) BVP: O aluno { **que** eu conheço o pai **dele.** }
 the student that I know the father of him
 ‘The student whose father I know...’
- (82) SBP O aluno { **cujo** pai eu conheço }...
 ‘The student whose father I know...’
- (83) BVP: O aluno { **que** eu conheço o pai ____ }
 the student that I know the father ____
- (84) BVP: aukâsó a kaza {**ki** tijã duxmidu}
 ‘He-reached the house [in] which he had slept.’ (Jeroslow 1974:193)
- (85) BVP: a menina **que falei...**
 SBP: a menina {**com quem falei**}... ‘The girl I talked to’
 a menina {**de quem falei**}... ‘The girl I talked about’
 a menina {**por quem falei**}... ‘The girl I spoke for’
- (86) BVP: Esse fulano aí, {**com quem** eu nunca tive aula}
 ‘This guy **with whom** I never had a class’ (Tarallo 1986)
- (87) BVP: Esse fulano aí, {**que** eu nunca tive aula **com ele**}
- (88) BVP: Esse fulano aí, **que** eu nunca tive aula.
- (89) São Tomé CP: omi {**ku** zõ sa ka fla **n- e**}
 man who John PROG talk about him
 ‘the man that John is talking about’
- (90) Angolar CP: OmE {**ki** m ba **kw' E**}...
 the man that I went with [him] (Lorenzino fc.)
- (91) Cape Verde CP: kel ome {**ke** n fala **k' el**}...
 That man that I spoke with [him] (Baptista, Mello and Suzuki fc.)

- (92) Guiné-Bissau CP: N mora na kasa {**ku** bu mora-ba **n' el**}
 I live in house that you live ANT in [it]
 'I live in the house that you used to live in.' (ibid.)
- (93) Papiamentu CS: E homber {**ku** m'a papia **kun' e**} a papia malu.
 the man that I PAST speak with [him] PAST speak bad
 'The man that I spoke with spoke badly.' (Michel fc.)
- (94) BVP eli sabi {**ki** nãu se}
 'He knows that I do not know.' (Jeroslow 1974:199)
- (95) BVP eu se { ___ eu ko~jesu a m~aga } (ibid.)
 I know [that] I am familiar with the range.
-

Conclusions

Table 5: Estimated proportion of Whites in various societies in the late 18th century

| <i>Colony</i> | <i>Developing Language</i> | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------|
| Virgin Islands | Negerhollands Creole Dutch | ca. 6% |
| Jamaica | Jamaican Creole English | ca. 8% |
| (rural) Curaçao | Papiamentu Creole Spanish/Port. | ca. 7% |
| Virginia | African American English | ca. 59% |
| Brazil | Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese | ca. 32% |
| Cape Colony | Afrikaans | ca. 47% |
| Cuba } | | ca. 56% |
| Puerto Rico } | Non-standard Caribbean Spanish | ca. 45% |
| Santo Domingo } | | ca. 34% |

Table 6: Key morphosyntactic features in partial restructuring

Sb = relevant substrate language(s) + = attested presence of feature
 infl. = inflection 0 = attested absence of feature
 see also ABBREVIATIONS, p.xxi [?] = not applicable or unknown

----- AAE Sb | AFR Sb | BVP Sb | NSCS Sb | VLRf Sb | E D P S F

Verb Phrase*Verbal morphology**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-------|
| 1. Zero 3s PRES infl. | + | + | + | + | 0 | + | 0 | + | + | + | 0 0 | 0 0 0 |
| 2. Zero 1p PRES infl. | + | + | + | + | + | + | 0 | + | + | + | 0 0 | 0 0 0 |
| 3. Zero PAST infl. | + | + | + | + | 0 | + | 0 | + | 0 | | 0 0 | 0 0 0 |

Aux./ preverbal marker

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|-----|-------|
| 4. Semantic influence | + | | + | | + | | + | | + | | 0 0 | 0 0 0 |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|-----|-------|

Negation

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-------|
| 5. Negative concord | + | | 0 | | + | | + | | + | | 0 0 | +++ |
| 6. Discontinuous double | 0 | | + | + | + | + | + | + | 0 | | 0 0 | + 0 + |
| 7. <i>Non-verbal predicates</i> | + | + | 0 | | + | + | + | + | + | + | 0 0 | 0 0 0 |

Noun Phrase*Number*

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-------|
| 8. Zero plural infl.* | + | + | 0 | + | + | + | + | + | + | + | 0 0 | 0 0 0 |
| 9. Unbound pluralizer | + | + | 0 | + | + | + | 0 | + | + | + | 0 0 | 0 0 0 |
| 10. Associative plural | + | + | + | + | 0 | + | 0 | + | 0 | + | 0 0 | 0 0 0 |

Gender

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-------|
| 11. No agreement in NP | + | + | + | + | 0 | + | 0 | + | + | + | + 0 | 0 0 0 |
|------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-------|

Possession

12. [possessor 0 possessed] + + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 0 000

13. [possessed 0 possessor] 0 + 0 + + + 0 + + + 0 0 000

Pronouns

14. Reduced case marking + + + + + + 0 + + + 0 0 000

15. Zero reflexive pronoun 0 + 0 + + + + + + 0 0 000

Clauses

Word order

16. QW S-V/Aux (direct)** + + 0 + + + + + + 0 0 000

Dependent clauses

17. Zero subject REL + + 0 + + + + + + 00 000

18. Zero subordinator 'that' | + + | + + | + + | + + | + + | +0 000

Total number of +'s 15 9 13 9 14

*refers to spoken, non-suppletive forms only

** with S immediately following QW (non-echo question)

[| = the position of the ends of a vertical line in the above chart, necessary to make the meaning of "Sb" clear]

1. The absence of an inflection indicating the third person singular form of the present tense:

AAE: *Where Miss Annie...live__ now.* (1)

2. The absence of an inflection indicating the first person plural of the present tense:

BVP: *nós parte* 'we leave' (cf. SBP *nós partimos* *ibid.*) (34)

3. The absence of an inflection indicating past tense:

AAE: *They taught me mighty good, they **teach** me good.* (3)

4. Semantic influence of a (creole) preverbal marker on a (source language) auxiliary verb:

AAE: *I got on a cowboy shirt now.... **Been** have it all my days.* (4)

5. The presence of a negator before a verb requires the negative form of indefinite determiners,

pronouns, etc. AAE: *We **don'** want **no** six-month investigation!* (20)

6. The presence of a negator both before and after the verb:

BVP: *Ele **não** sabe **não***. literally 'He doesn't know no.' (38)

7. The absence of the equivalent of a forms of 'be':

AAE: *They ___ all dead.* (24)

8. The absence of a plural inflection on nouns (or other elements of the noun phrase):

AAE: *them hound_* (67)

9. A separate word (often meaning 'they') to indicate plurality:

AAE: ***them** hound_* (67)

10. The use of a pluralizing word to indicate a person's usual associates:

AAE: *Felicia **an'** **them** done gone.* (68)

11. The absence of inflections indicating gender agreement between a noun and its modifiers:

VLRf: ***mon** kaz lé **gran*** 'my house is big' versus F ***ma** maison est **grande*** (130)

12. Nouns have no inflection identifying them as the possessor of the following noun:

AAE: *the white folk_ kitchen* (73)

13. Nouns do not follow a preposition indicating that they possess the preceding noun:

BVP: *kaza ___ Maria* 'Maria's house' (cf. SBP *a casa **de** Maria*) (108)

14. The forms of personal pronouns do not necessarily indicate their grammatical function in the sentence as in the source language: AAE: *We had **we** own lawyers.* (75)

15. Reflexive pronouns required in the source language can be omitted:

BVP: *João cortou ___ com faca.* 'John cut [himself] with a knife.'

cf. SBP: *João cortou-**se** com a faca.* (113)

16. In direct questions with a question word, the subject can precede the verb or auxiliary:

AAE: *Where **I can** go?* (148)

17. A relative pronoun functioning as the subject of the clause can be omitted:

AAE: *He got a gun { ___ sound like a bee}.* (156)

18. The equivalent of 'that' introducing a subordinate clause can be omitted:

NSCS: *Dice _____ jagüey tá chiquito.* 'He says that the liana is small.' (215)

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 - 13 Brazilian Vernacular Portuguese
 - 9 Afrikaans
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The theoretical model for partial restructuring presented here presupposes a population with different first languages shifting to a typologically distinct target language (itself an amalgam of varieties in contact, including fully restructured ones) under social circumstances that partially restrict access to the target language as normally used among a minority or weak majority population of native speakers, and it predicts that some or all of the following linguistic processes will shape the resulting restructuring:

1. **language drift**, following internal tendencies within the target language, particularly phonotactic, morphological or syntactic simplification;
2. **primary leveling**, preserving lexical or structural features that are archaic, regional, or rare in the target language, sometimes extending them to new contexts;
3. **imperfect language shift** by the entire population, perpetuating structural features from ancestral languages and interlanguages in the speech of monolingual descendants;
4. **language borrowing**, incorporating structural features from fully pidginized or creolized varieties of the target language spoken by newcomers or found locally but confined to areas where sociolinguistic conditions were favorable to full restructuring;
5. **secondary leveling**, or the possible loss of features not found in the target language (from any of the above processes) if there is continued contact with the target language and it is perceived to have more prestige.

These processes result in a new variety with a substantial amount of the target language's structure intact, but also with a significant number of substrate or interlanguage structural features, i.e. a partially restructured vernacular.