

## Free at Last: From Bound Morpheme to Discourse Marker in *Lengua ri Palenge* (Palenquero Creole Spanish)

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**Abstract.** The Spanish-lexified creole language spoken in the Afro-Colombian village of San Basilio de Palenque has become endangered due to ethnic and racial prejudice and discrimination. Recent changes in community attitudes, coupled with frequent visits by linguistic researchers, have resulted in heightened metalinguistic awareness as residents strive to speak the "best" Palenquero creole. One manifestation of "fancy" Palenquero speech is the detachment of bound verbal morphemes, which when freely reattached to other elements serve as discourse markers validating "true" Palenquero. The full range of emergent discourse validators is found among community members regarded as the "best" speakers and presented to visitors.

**1. Introduction.** Speech communities in which a creole language is in contact with its historical lexifier are frequently the loci of linguistic insecurity, ambivalent attitudes towards both languages, and more recently—among educators and social activists—metalinguistic commentary on language usage. When the interface between creole and lexifier language is combined with a past history of slavery, marginality, and resistance, the stage is set for a range of variable phenomena that cannot all be derived directly from one language or the other, but rather emerge from the social dynamic within which the languages and their speakers interact. This is nowhere more evident than in the Afro-Colombian village of San Basilio de Palenque,<sup>1</sup> where the Spanish- and Portuguese-derived<sup>2</sup> creole languages known to linguists as Palenquero and to the speakers themselves simply as *Lengua* 'the language' or *Lengua ri Palenge* 'the language of Palenque' is spoken in contact with local vernacular dialects of Spanish.<sup>3</sup> Retained for several centuries as a legacy of cultural resistance, the Palenquero language was reduced to an object of ridicule in the early twentieth century as linguistic and cultural contacts with neighboring communities became commonplace and as Palenqueros sought employment opportunities outside of their village. Considered an endangered language as recently as two decades ago, *Lengua ri Palenge* (henceforth LP) has experienced a remarkable renovation through community activism and educational programs, and most Palenqueros now regard their ancestral language with pride. The renewed vigor of the language—now being taught to young people in the village's schools and spoken without reluctance by older residents—has been supplemented by numerous visits by anthropologists, linguists, and Afro-diaspora activists from around the world, which has led to an enhanced metalinguistic awareness among many community members.

One of the most interesting results of this rapid shift in the linguistic fortunes of LP is the scramble to recover the most "authentic" forms of the language in replacement of elements felt to be unnecessary accretions from Spanish. In the absence of widespread knowledge of the linguistic history of Spanish and LP, many metalinguistically concerned speakers, implicitly adopting the syllogism that linguistic distance from Spanish equals "pure" LP, have hit upon the strategy of detaching bound morphemes felt to be uniquely Palenquero, converting them into discourse markers of ethnolinguistic authenticity. In the following sections attention falls on two verbal suffixes and an object clitic, all of which are acquiring new roles in the speech of sociolinguistically prominent Palenqueros. It is not uncommon for relatively free morphemes such as adverbs, auxiliary verbs, and adpositions to evolve into bound morphemes, but for bound morphemes to detach from their host sites and acquire additional morphosyntactic mobility is a rather unusual development. In San Basilio de Palenque this phenomenon can be attributed to a combination of linguistic, sociohistorical, and political factors, the intersection of which is examined in detail below.

**2. Differentiation of Spanish and LP, past and present.** Residents of San Basilio de Palenque adhere to a superficially plausible but highly speculative account of the creation of the village, but accurate historical data are not easily obtainable. According to many popular accounts, in 1599 groups of African slaves in the Spanish Caribbean port of Cartagena de Indias (now part of Colombia) revolted and fled to the partially forested interior the south. One of the most charismatic leaders was Domingo Bioho ("King Benko"), whose resistance movement was so effective that the Spanish government was forced to sue for peace in 1603. In the following years, Bioho continued to engage in anti-colonial resistance until he was captured and hanged in 1621. During this period of active struggle, Bioho and his followers founded at least one *palenque* 'fortified village'; the residents of San Basilio de Palenque believe that their community was the one founded by Bioho and his name has been inextricably linked with the village's centuries-long history of cultural resistance. A statue of "Benkos" adorns the village plaza, the high school bears his name, and his feats are taught to school children and recited by community elders. According to historians, however, the origins of the contemporary community of San Basilio de Palenque cannot be so clearly delineated. There is some evidence that Bioho's *palenque* was not the one that has survived today but rather another site some distance away (Navarrete 2008:22–23), one of many maroon communities that dotted the region from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Colombian historians generally converge on the second half of the seventeenth century as the probable period in which the Palenque de San Basilio came into existence (Morton 2005:33; Schwegler 2011, forthcoming), i.e., considerably after Bioho's death. The fact that Domingo Bioho himself may not have founded the Palenque

de San Basilio is substantially irrelevant to the linguistic and cultural history of this community, which is clearly the product of the maroon resistance movement originally led by Bioho. "Benkos" is indisputably the spiritual founder of San Basilio de Palenque,<sup>4</sup> as well as of other Afro-Colombian maroon communities to the south of Cartagena. The first unequivocal mention of the Palenque de San Basilio (with its original name, San Miguel Arcángel) comes in a document relating a peace agreement made in 1713 (Escalante 1954:229; Navarrete 2008:155–66), which is consistent with a founding date somewhere towards the end of the seventeenth century.

Traditionally, residents of San Basilio de Palenque have been consciously aware of the existence of two languages in their community, Spanish—as spoken throughout the region—and their own special language, LP. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that Palenqueros deliberately maintained this language as an expression of resistance and cultural identity long after ties had been re-established with the dominant Spanish-speaking society. As early as 1713 the Spanish bishop Antonio María Cassiani visited the Palenque de San Miguel Arcángel to grant this village (renamed San Basilio Magno) official recognition, a unique status among Afro-Colombian maroon communities, and was presumably able to communicate with its residents in Spanish. A document dated 1772 stated that the Palenqueros "speak with one another a particular language that by themselves they teach to their children as well as Spanish which they speak fluently"<sup>5</sup> ("hablan entre si un particular idioma en que á sus solas instruyen á los muchachos sinembargo de que cortan con mucha expedición el castellano de que generalmente usan") (cited in Gutiérrez Azopardo 1980:34; Urueta 1890: 329).<sup>6</sup> Nearly two centuries later, Bickerton and Escalante (1970) were told by Palenqueros that young people in that community were "born speaking Spanish" and were subsequently taught the Palenquero language, which confirms community awareness of two distinct languages for more than two hundred years. Bickerton and Escalante speculate that the fact that Palenqueros continued to teach their children LP in the second half of the twentieth century

may merely reflect a situation in which the language has had to be consciously and deliberately maintained in the face of outside pressures [. . .] the Palenqueros could have preserved their own distinctive speech in order to differentiate themselves from a society which they had once defeated in open warfare, but which now threatened to absorb them by more insidious means, while still offering them the status of second-class citizens. Palenquero, the last souvenir of their days of defiance, would thus form a symbol and focus of community loyalty. [1970:266]

While there is no doubt that Palenqueros have maintained their language against all adversity for more than three hundred years, it is not necessarily the case that LP was always introduced as a second language. The author has interviewed dozens of older LP speakers who affirm that in their childhood they only heard LP spoken in their community, and that they themselves only

learned Spanish after learning LP; Schwegler (1996, 1:37) describes similar accounts. This seemingly paradoxical situation may be at least partially explained by considering the history of Palenque with respect to the surrounding Spanish-speaking communities. During the colonial period Palenque was no smaller than most other communities in northern Colombia and, since everyone traveled either by foot or on horseback or muleback, Palenqueros had as much contact with other communities (and with the Spanish language) as these communities had with one another. Travel to Cartagena by mule took more than a day to cover approximately sixty kilometers, and although some Palenqueros (principally men) did leave in search of work, such trips were atypical of community life (e.g., Morton 2005:39). Once Cartagena grew to a major urban nexus and the surrounding towns became satellite communities, Palenque, which had no roads leading in and whose inhabitants were largely self-sufficient, fell into backwater status. To get to Cartagena Palenqueros would first have to reach the nearest highway some six or seven kilometers away (and the first rudimentary access trail was not cut through to Palenque until 1956), then travel by some conveyance to Gambote on the Dique channel, cross by one of the infrequent ferries, and continue on to Cartagena. Some Palenqueros did always leave in search of work, and the building of the first dirt road in 1967 and the construction of a bridge at Gambote a year or two later greatly increased Palenqueros' geographical and linguistic mobility. Even earlier, in the 1920s, many Palenqueros left the immediate vicinity to work in neighboring sugar plantations and some traveled to banana-producing areas, where they came into contact with other vernacular Spanish varieties, mostly spoken by Afro-Colombians from the Caribbean coastal area. Palenquero children born outside of the community brought with them an expanding awareness of other regional and social varieties of Spanish (Morton 2005:41).

A more nuanced explanation would take into account the increasing availability of public education both in Palenque and in surrounding communities, and the concomitant growing awareness of educated standard Spanish as opposed to the highly vernacularized Spanish spoken in rural communities throughout the region. At the time of the 1772 document that affirmed Palenqueros' ability to speak Spanish, literacy levels in the entire region were near zero, and the *castellano* 'Castilian' spoken by Palenqueros—and by most of their likely interlocutors—would have differed considerably from sociolects found among the growing urban elite.<sup>7</sup> Morton (2005:37) believes that some variety of Spanish has been spoken in Palenque for at least two and a half centuries, and there is no available evidence that would contradict this assumption, although not all community members may have learned Spanish. This vernacular Spanish was probably used by Palenqueros well into the twentieth century, but once schools were founded in the community (in the 1970s), the differences between local Palenquero Spanish and the Spanish taught in school (until very recently only by teachers from outside of the region) were brought into even sharper

focus. Many teachers implicitly or explicitly criticized Palenquero Spanish as much as LP itself (e.g., Hernández Cassiani, Guerrero, and Pérez Palomino 2008:112), and many Palenquero residents came to regard as “Spanish” only the supraregional prescriptive speech taught in school, which consequently blurred somewhat the sociolinguistic boundaries between local Palenquero Spanish and LP. The result was not incipient decreolization, or even a “postcreole continuum,” since there is no indication that, despite considerable lexical borrowing from Spanish, LP grammatical structures have eroded in favor of more Spanish-like constructions. At the same time Palenquero Spanish, while highly non-standard in comparison with urban Colombian varieties, shows little or no evidence of being in contact with a creole language (Schwegler and Morton 2003; Morton 2005).

Regardless of the mechanisms by which LP was taught to children, by the middle of the twentieth century Palenqueros were painfully aware of the scorn and mockery heaped upon them and their way of speaking by *ma jende di ajuela* ‘people from outside’. It was during this time period—and probably for the first time in the history of San Basilio de Palenque—that adult speakers of LP made the conscious decision not to teach the language to their children, and as much as possible to avoid speaking LP outside of the community.

Due to the loss of their own lands many groups of Palenquero men and women left to work in other towns and cities . . . which led to [the Palenquero language] beginning to deteriorate in its original structure and to be influenced by the national language. It suffered this deterioration until the beginning of the 1980’s due to the racial discrimination suffered by the emigrants.<sup>6</sup> [Hernández Cassiani, Guerrero, and Pérez Palomino 2008:95]

The spontaneous comments in (1a)–(1f) collected from older Palenqueros in interviews by the author reveal the extent to which these painful episodes are still vividly recalled. (All these quotations are in LP, except for the third. All are transcribed exactly as pronounced.)

- (1a) *entonce cuando suto sabía salí di aquí digamo que di Malagana pa ’llá,* (LP)  
*ma jende asé ablá cu suto uuuuu, haciendo suto mofa poque suto taba*  
*convesá lengua palenquera*  
 ‘So when we would leave here say to Malagana, people would say “oh” and mock us because we were speaking the Palenquero language.’
- (1b) *poque ma jende ri juela taba aseba suto mofa, suto a dejá ri ablá* (LP)  
 ‘Because people from the outside would mock us, we stopped speaking [LP].’
- (1c) *que a vece había momento de que foratero venía para acá y le causaba* (Spanish)  
*era burla*  
 ‘There were times when outsiders came and [the Palenquero language] made them laugh.’

- (1d) *ané ta miní a bucá eso aquí pa suto ta ablando cu ané pa ané ta burlando di suto* (LP)  
 'They came here for that, for us to to talk to them so they could laugh at us.'
- (1e) *ante ma jende di juela hace a bullá di ma palenquero* (LP)  
 'In the past people from outside would laugh at Palenqueros.'
- (1f) *mamá mi y tatá mi a quelé p'i aprendé ese lengua nu poque cuando jende aseba salí pa lajuela ma jende aseba ablá "o moná, onde bo miní cuando bo te va?" y po ese razón ma mamá suto a quelé pa jende ablá nu* (LP)  
 'My mother and father didn't want me to learn that language because when people went outside [of Palenque] other people would say [in a mocking imitation of LP] "Oh kid, where are you coming from when are you leaving?" and for this reason our mothers didn't want people to speak [LP].'

As a result of this mockery, Palenqueros often chose not to even reveal the existence of a language other than Spanish to visitors from outside of the community. The fieldworkers of the linguistic atlas of Colombia who visited Palenque in the early 1960s as part of a nationwide dialect survey encountered and described only regional varieties of popular Spanish (Montes Giraldo 1962). These experienced linguists and dialectologists would surely have recognized a language as different from regional Spanish as LP, even if they did not possess enough knowledge to classify it as a creole. Children, who are often more uninhibited than adults and whose natural curiosity might have led them to reveal the existence of LP to outsiders, presumably remained silent. Many Palenquero residents interviewed by the author who would have been children during the time of the dialectologists' visit remarked that Palenquero children were taught to hide from the few white visitors that occasionally entered the community to avoid being carried off by the latter. A few years later the creolist Bickerton got together with the anthropologist Escalante and, after a brief but productive visit to Palenque, the two published the first article acknowledging the existence of the LP creole (Bickerton and Escalante 1970).<sup>9</sup> Independently, Lewis (1970) prepared a quite detailed and woefully undercited grammatical sketch of LP. Thereafter, numerous Colombian and foreign linguists visited Palenque, which resulted in several monographs and articles, a research program which continues to expand. However, these early ethnolinguistic encounters did little to change Palenqueros' by now firmly entrenched reluctance to maintain LP as a living language, and until very recently most observers were convinced that this creole language would disappear within a generation or two. Thus, the Colombian scholar Patiño Roselli predicted that "barring the intervention of improbable but not impossible factors, such as a reaction from within the community, or an adequate official policy, the end of the historical cycle of the Palenquero language is not far off"<sup>10</sup> (Friedemann and Patiño Roselli 1983:191). Schwegler (1996, 1:42), describing the situation as of 1993, indicated that many young residents of Palenque did not even understand LP, much less speak the language.

**3. Changing attitudes towards the Palenquero language: language revitalization.** Over the past three decades, attitudes towards LP—held by community members and outsiders—have begun to change, at first gradually and with little total effect, then more comprehensively. Colombians first came to regard this village with pride rather than scorn when the Palenquero boxer “Kid Pambelé” (Antonio Cervantes) won a world championship in 1974, only a few years after the first (dirt) road was extended into the previously isolated community (Salcedo Ramos and Rodríguez 2005). The village suddenly became the scene of visits from journalists and politicians, and the fame (and friendship of the son of Colombia’s president) resulted in the first electrical lines extending into the village. In 2005, Palenque was declared a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.<sup>11</sup> The Colombian Ministry of Culture has declared San Basilio de Palenque part of the “immaterial patrimony” of Colombia, although the town is still without generally distributed running water or a sewer system, and the nearest paved road is still the main highway leading to Cartagena, seven kilometers outside of Palenque. Several documentary films on Palenque have been produced and circulated in Colombia, and annual music and drum festivals draw even more media attention to the community. The music form known as *champeta*, inspired by Palenquero musicians, is very popular in coastal Colombia, which provides an added attraction for Palenquero culture.

Intellectual interest in San Basilio de Palenque and LP has also been instrumental in changing speakers’ attitudes towards this language. Beginning in 1992, the Colombian government instituted programs of ethnoeducation, which in Palenque resulted in the first classes in LP starting in 1994. A small first-reader pamphlet was printed and quickly went out of print, but the classes gradually expanded from the high school down to elementary school and recently even to preschool. A new fully equipped cultural center has recently been completed, replacing an earlier informal center in a small house, and slogans in LP adorn the walls of the high school and various community buildings. Moniño, on the basis of fieldwork in Palenque conducted between 1994 and 1998, asserted that although classes in LP were obligatory in elementary and secondary school, “children and adolescents now only have a passive knowledge of LP and limit their use to some sentences that serve as identity markers rather than as a medium of communication” (2002:228 n. 2; “los niños y adolescentes ya sólo tienen de ella un conocimiento pasivo y se limitan al uso de algunas oraciones que les sirven de emblema identitario más que de medio de comunicación”). Moniño felt that the only sociolinguistic function still adhering to LP was that of “complicity among residents of the same community vis-à-vis members of a global society in which these same residents are included, who by speaking LP exclude those members” (2003:529; “complicidad entre paisanos del mismo pueblo frente a los miembros de una sociedad global en la cual estos paisanos está incluidos, y que al hablar en lengua excluyen a esos miembros”). Morton

(2005) indicated that as of 1998 when he began his field research most conversations overheard in LP took place among residents over the age of thirty-five; a decade later, it is not uncommon to hear school children spontaneously addressing each other in LP (although not always sustaining long conversations), and some young couples who themselves are Spanish-dominant make noteworthy efforts to speak LP to their small children.

Scholarship in Palenquero language and culture has not only brought researchers and students into the community, but has made Palenqueros aware of the "special" nature of the traditional LP language and the desirability of speaking LP and passing it on to subsequent generations. Following the pioneering studies by Bickerton and Escalante (1970) and Lewis (1970), the Colombian linguist Carlos Patiño Rosselli and the Colombian anthropologist Nina de Friedemann published an important monograph that presented a comprehensive grammatical sketch of LP and a detailed description of cultural traditions (Friedemann and Patiño Rosselli 1983). There followed a monograph by Megenney (1986) and a two-volume study of Palenquero funeral chants and etymologies by Schwegler (1996). In 1996, the governments of Colombia and Spain cosponsored a conference in Cartagena with the theme "Palenque, Cartagena and Afro-Colombia: Linguistic and Historical Connections" ("Palenque, Cartagena y Afro-Colombia: conexiones históricas y lingüísticas"), and nearly all of the Colombian and foreign scholars involved in the study of LP were in attendance, as were many Afro-Colombian scholars and activists. The conference received considerable media coverage and the welcoming remarks were delivered—first in LP and then in Spanish—by a government official from Palenque; the final activity took place in Palenque itself. The conference proceedings were subsequently published (Moniño and Schwegler 2002), and the first generation of Palenquero scholars began to publish their own books, including Cásseres Estrada (2005), Pérez Tejedor (2004), Simarra Obeso, Reyes, and Pérez Tejedor (2008), and Simarra Reyes and Triviño Doval (2008). Numerous Colombian and foreign students have visited Palenque, individually and with their teachers, with the intent of learning about LP.

**4. The emergence of metalinguistic awareness and Palenquero "language experts."** One of the direct results of the shift in community attitudes towards the Palenquero language has been a greatly heightened—even exaggerated—metalinguistic awareness, and an implicit and explicit competition to identify the "best" LP and the "best" speakers. As part of their assignments in LP language classes, school children are sent out to interview elderly speakers who know traditional stories and legends, and many of the same speakers have been visited by successive groups of students. Visiting students and scholars are likewise taken to substantially the same group of proficient LP speakers known both for their loquacity and for their willingness to share their language with others. Tourists and other visitors not specifically interested in studying LP are often intercepted



by other, self-acclaimed expert LP speakers, who demand a cash payment up front in exchange for samples of LP.<sup>12</sup> The end result is considerable metalinguistic self-consciousness among Palenqueros who have frequent contact with school students, teachers, and visiting researchers. Most of these individuals have also been acknowledged by name (and by photograph) in published scholarship by Palenqueros and outsiders, which reinforces the sense that some LP speakers or speech varieties are to be preferred over others. These LP “expert witnesses” can be (over)heard proclaiming the superiority of one speaker over another as specimens of “real” LP and in conversations involving more than one LP speaker challenging one another with obscure words and expressions and explicitly correcting others’ use of LP or momentary lapses into Spanish. Morton suspects that “the behavior of someone correcting another’s speech when the speaker was thought to have ‘slipped’ into [Palenquero Spanish] while speaking or demonstrating Lengua only started to occur after linguists and anthropologists began their research looking for Lengua in Palenque” (2005:164). There is also a tendency by teachers and other community activists—and also some older Palenqueros—to purge their speech of elements felt to be Spanish, and to reincorporate archaic lexical items that had been largely superceded by Spanish words (Lipski 2012).<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the reintroduction of obscure or obsolete lexical items and hypersensitivity as to the separation of LP and Spanish speech, many fluent older speakers of traditional LP<sup>14</sup> sprinkle their speech with discourse markers that are in effect detached morphological suffixes that have been regrammaticalized as signaling “true” LP speech. The most frequently used element is the imperfect verbal suffix *-ba*; less frequent, but possibly expanding its domain, is the gerund suffix *-ndo*. Pleonastic *lo*, originally derived from a Spanish third person object clitic, may also be entering the domain of LP authenticator particles.

**5. LP *-ba* as a tense-aspect morpheme.** One of the few inflectional morphemes of LP is the verbal suffix *-ba*, which attaches to verb stems and provides an anterior or imperfect meaning.<sup>15</sup> In Spanish, the obvious source,<sup>16</sup> *-ba* only attaches to verbs having *a* as stem vowel (infinitives ending in *-ar*); Spanish verbs ending in *-er* and *-ir* take the imperfect suffix *-ía* (except for *ir* ‘to go’, whose imperfect forms are based on *iba*). In LP, *-ba* attaches to all verb stems irrespective of the theme vowel, as shown in (2a)–(2c).<sup>17</sup>

(2a) *ma hende kela-ba ku boka abieto*  
 PL people remain-ASP with mouth open  
 ‘People remained open-mouthed.’

(2b) *mahaná mi kele-ba pa yo miní nu*  
 children 1SG want-ASP for 1SG come NEG  
 ‘My kids did not want me to come.’

- (2c) *ele ta-ba kasi po mori-ba*  
 3SG be-ASP almost for die-ASP  
 'He was just about dead.'

In addition to predicates containing a single verb, LP has many two-verb combinations. In Spanish, all complex verbs are inflected only on the first element, the second element being a nonfinite form (infinitive, gerund, or past participle). Traditional LP has no constructions corresponding to Spanish perfect forms (derived from *haber* 'have' plus past participle), and only occasionally makes use of Spanish-like progressive constructions (derived from *estar* 'be' plus gerund). Most two-verb combinations in LP are homologous to Spanish (SP) combinations of finite verb plus infinitive, typically involving a modal verb. In LP, the first verb in two-verb combinations is typically *asé* (< SP *hacer* 'to make, do') for habitual or repeated action, *polé* (< SP *poder* 'to be able'), *sabé* (< SP *saber* 'to know how') also used for habitual meaning, *kelé* (< SP *querer* 'to want'), as well as *ta* (< SP *estar* 'to be') for progressive constructions. In two-verb imperfect constructions, such as those in (3a)–(3c), it is most frequent in LP for *-ba* to attach only to the first verb stem; it seems more than coincidental that this corresponds to the only possible configuration in Spanish, the lexifier of LP and a language that has been in continued contact with LP for nearly the entire history of San Basilio de Palenque.

- (3a) *yo ablá ané ke ese kasa pole-ba bendé nu*  
 1SG speak 3PL COMP that house able-ASP sell NEG  
 'I told them that the house couldn't be sold.'

- (3b) *suto ase-ba bai kaya*  
 1PL do-ASP go street  
 'We would go out in the street.'

- (3c) *i kele-ba pasá ayá má nu*  
 1SG want-ASP pass there more NEG  
 'I didn't want to go back there.'

Less frequent, but still relatively commonplace, is the attachment of *-ba* to the second verb of a two-verb construction, as in (4a) and (4b). This configuration in effect represents the reanalysis of the two verbs as a single verbal complex, with the aspectual suffix *-ba* attached to the end of the complex.<sup>18</sup>

- (4a) *kwando ma mamá asé bai-ba, suto asé pelea-ba*  
 when PL mother do go-ASP 1PL do fight-ASP  
 'When our mothers would leave, we would fight.'

- (4b) *el asé bibi-ba abaho*  
 3SG do live-ASP down  
 'He lived down [the street].'

Occurring still more infrequently is the attachment of *-ba* to both verbs of a two-verb combination, as in (5a) and (5b). These instances represent an innovative abandonment of Spanish-derived combinations, "liberating" the tense-aspect suffix *-ba* from solely occupying its Spanish-like position on the first verb of verbal complexes and creating in effect a system of multiple concord, in which *-ba* optionally attaches to both components of a verbal complex.

- (5a) *ke hwe-ba lo ke i ta-ba abla-ba ku monasito?*  
 what be-ASP 3SG COMP 1SG be-ASP speak-ASP with child-DIM  
 'What was it that I was saying to the child?'

- (5b) *i pole-ba habla-ba ke hwe lo ke i ta abla-ndo ku*  
 1SG able-ASP speak-ASP what be 3SG COMP 1SG ASP speak-GER with  
*ané nu*  
 3PL NEG  
 'I couldn't say what it was that I was telling them.'

Students who have learned LP in school apply *-ba* only to the first verb of two-verb combinations, following the homologous Spanish pattern as well as "canonical" descriptions of LP found in recently published sources. Most of the more than one hundred traditional speakers of LP interviewed by the author produce all three configurations (VERB<sub>1</sub>-*ba* + VERB<sub>2</sub>; VERB<sub>1</sub> + VERB<sub>2</sub>-*ba*; VERB<sub>1</sub>-*ba* + VERB<sub>2</sub>-*ba*) in varying proportions, and in an implicational fashion: all LP speakers who attach *-ba* to both verbs in two-verb combinations such as (5a) and (5b) also produce combinations in which *-ba* is attached only to the second verb (examples (4a) and (4b)) as well as combinations in which *-ba* attaches only to the first verb (examples (3a)–(3c)). There are, however, many older traditional LP speakers who produce only combinations with *-ba* attached to one verb or the other (examples (3a)–(3c) and (4a)–(4b)), but not to both verbs, and a few speakers who have never been observed to attach *-ba* to the second verb of two-verb complexes, producing only examples like (3a)–(3c). These asymmetrical implications as well as the relative proportions of examples like (3a)–(3c), (4a)–(4b), and (5a)–(5b) suggest an evolutionary trajectory from (3a)–(3c) to (4a)–(4b) and finally to (5a)–(5b).

**6. Detachable *-ba* as an LP discourse marker.** The variable placement of *-ba* in multiverb combinations does not appear to correlate with metalinguistic awareness of LP grammar, with frequent contacts with visiting scholars and tourists, or with community activism; this variation can be found among elderly shut-ins, among farmers who spend all day in distant plots of land and who have little or no contact with outsiders, among LP speakers who have lived in Cartagena, Barranquilla, or Caracas, and among LP language teachers with prescriptivist views on LP. Nor are there data to suggest that the variable placement of *-ba* is a recent innovation. Patiño Rosselli (Friedemann and Patiño Rosselli 1983:125), citing data collected in the 1970s, gives examples such as *sé bibiba* instead of the

canonical *aseba bibí* or simply *bibiba* 'used to live', and *sé teneba* instead of *aseba tené* or *teneba* 'used to have', and his monograph contains other noncanonical examples of *-ba*. Davis (1997:122–70, 2000) also presents examples such as *asé yolaba* 'used to cry' and *sabeba yebaba* 'habitually carried' (Davis 1997:168).

For the present study a corpus was prepared from field recordings of forty-seven fluent native speakers of LP, all over the age of fifty and all judged by the LP language teachers to be "expert" LP speakers. Continuous stretches of approximately fifteen minutes were extracted randomly from each recording, consisting of free conversation among Palenqueros (with occasional participation by the author) and conducted entirely in LP. This resulted in a corpus of nearly twelve hours of conversational material. In the corpus, roughly 30 percent of two-verb imperfect combinations did not follow the VERB<sub>1</sub>-*ba* + VERB<sub>2</sub> pattern (see table 1 below), which provides a rather robust first indication of the potential for *-ba* to become a freely detachable imperfect marker. Although the *-ba* suffix is also shared by Spanish first-conjugation verbs (in *-ar*), the existence of numerous LP verbs in *-eba* and *-iba* (by far the most common verbs in the corpus are *teneba* 'have, exist', *keleba* 'want', *hweba* 'be', and the habitual particle *aseba*) adds prominence to *-ba* as a "true" LP element, not just an encroaching Spanish suffix. This validation of *-ba* as a characteristic LP element, together with the variable placement options for *-ba* in multiverb combinations (and the fact that imperfective or durative meaning can be conveyed contextually without using *-ba* at all) sets the stage for a more sweeping innovation: the emergence of *-ba* as a discourse marker associated with affirmation of LP linguistic and cultural identity, and not restricted to verbal constructions. It is precisely this innovation that can be observed among a subset of fluent LP speakers with heightened metalinguistic sensibilities but with little or no concept of grammatical analysis.

The most common way in which *-ba* is extended to nonverbal elements is for it to be attached to personal pronouns, including *mi* 'I, me', *ané* 'them', *bo* 'you', *ele* 'he, she', *enu* 'you (pl.)', and *suto* 'we'. Examples from the present corpus include (6a)–(6m).

(6a) *e se-ba ablá mi-ba*  
 3SG do-ASP speak 1SG-*ba*  
 'He used to tell me.'

(6b) *el asé nda mi-ba mucho idea*  
 3SG do give 1SG-*ba* many idea  
 'He gives me many ideas.'

(6c) *bo kansá mi-ba nu*  
 2SG tire 1SG-*ba* NEG  
 'You are not tiring me.'

- (6d) *un kuñá mi-ba y un monasito di un amigo mi*  
 ART sister-in-law 1SG-*ba* and ART child of ART friend 1SG  
 'a sister-in-law of mine and the child of a friend of mine'
- (6e) *yo bae ku bo-ba nu*  
 1SG go with 2SG-*ba* NEG  
 'I won't go with you.'
- (6f) *bo a ten komo kwatro ría akí, bo-ba*  
 2SG ASP have like four day here 2SG-*ba*  
 'You've been here about four days, you.'
- (6g) *ma kusa suto-ba lengua suto lo tené agüé*  
 PL thing 1PL-*ba* language 1PL 3SG have today  
 'Our things, our language that we have today.'
- (6h) *ma bisabuelo suto-ba, ma tío suto-ba*  
 PL great.grandparent 1PL-*ba* PL uncle 1PL-*ba*  
 'our great grandparents, our aunts and uncles'
- (6i) *i a kelé yebalo-ba andi Dioso pa Dioso lo watiá suto-ba*  
 1SG ASP want take-3SG-*ba* LOC God for God 3SG watch 1PL-*ba*  
 'I want to take [you] to God so God can look at us.'
- (6j) *tó mundo disé ablálo ku ané-ba ke ané ta ngañao*  
 all world say speak-3SG with 3PL-*ba* COMP 3PL be deceived  
 'Everyone says talk to them, since they are deceived.'
- (6k) *ma familia mi ta decuidá maí ané-ba ma moná ané-ba*  
 PL family 1SG ASP ignore corn 3PL-*ba* PL child 3PL-*ba*  
 'My families are not taking care of their corn, of their children.'
- (6l) *i tan ablá ele-ba*  
 1SG ASP speak 3SG-*ba*  
 'I will tell him.'
- (6m) *enú a ablá mi-ba ke enú-ba pole-ba baiba andi kala*  
 2PL ASP speak 1SG-*ba* COMP 2PL-*ba* able-ASP go-ASP LOC face  
*Dioso-ba nu*  
 God-*ba* NEG  
 'You (pl.) told me that you could not go before the face of God.'

In several of these examples (i.e., (6a), (6b), (6c), (6i), (6l), and (6m)) the pronoun to which *-ba* attaches immediately follows a verb and functions as object, suggesting that the combination of verb plus pronominal object has been reanalyzed as a single verbal complex, much as two-verb complexes have been reanalyzed with *-ba* attached to the second verb. Friedemann and Patiño Rosselli (1983:125) give one

example of *mi-ba* in (7) where the suffix *-ba* is also analyzed as belonging to the preceding verb, with the pronoun *mi* "interspersed" (7).

- (7) *entonce el á sé komplá mi-ba mucho planda*  
 then 3SG ASP do buy 1SG-*ba* much plantain  
 'Then she used to buy many plantains from me.'

Davis (2000) provides example (8), where phrase-final *-ba* attached to *mi* 'my' is similarly analyzed as a reduplicated past imperfective meaning marker.

- (8) *kwando i taba monasito ayá kasa mi-ba*  
 when 1SG be-ASP child there house 1SG-*ba*  
 'When I was a little boy there in my house.' (Davis 2000:573)

However, in the present corpus, (6a) is the only example of *mi-ba* that has a clearly past imperfective meaning, and even in this example the preceding verb *ase-ba* contains the suffix *-ba*. The following pronoun *mi-ba* cannot be analyzed as containing a displaced suffix, while in the remaining examples the attachment of *-ba* to personal pronouns shows no correlation with temporal reference. Moreover, in several instances the personal pronoun to which *-ba* is attached is serving as postnominal possessive in atemporal contexts (as in (6d), (6g), (6h), (6k), and (6m)), follows a preposition (as in (6e) and (6j)), or is an appositive or a vocative (as in (6f)). Friedemann and Patiño Rosselli (1983:125) also give the example of an LP imperfective past verb in (9), in which the third person object clitic *lo* has been inserted between the verb stem and the suffix *-ba*.

- (9) *í á sé dejá-lo-ba fiao*  
 1SG ASP do let-3SG-*ba* trusted  
 'I let him have it on credit.'

Davis (1997:52–53) gives additional examples, such as (10a) and (10b), which are all analyzed as displaced imperfective past morphemes and attributed (1997:83–88) to the fact that object clitics may intervene between verb stems and certain verbal suffixes in Portuguese and occasionally in old Spanish.

- (10a) *ejende aseba enterrá-lo-ba aí swelo?*  
 people do-ASP bury-3SG-ASP there ground  
 'Did they used to bury [people] there in the ground?' (Davis 1997:52)

- (10b) *suto aseba kumé-lo-ba to eso utere asé kume*  
 1PL do-ASP eat-3SG-*ba* all that 2PL do eat  
 'We used to eat all the things that you eat.' (Davis 1997:53)

A few examples of *-lo-ba* are found in the present corpus, usually without clear imperfective past meaning, although in all instances reanalysis of the combination

of one or two verbs plus object clitic *lo* to a single verbal complex appears to have occurred. A representative sample includes (11a)–(11f).

(11a) *i a kelé yeva-lo-ba andi Dioso pa Dioso lo watiá suto-ba*  
 1SG ASP want take-3SG-ba LOC God for God 3SG watch 1PL-ba  
 'I want to take [you] to God so God can look at us.'

(11b) *komo lengua ri utere, utere asé hablá-lo-ba*  
 like language of 2PL 2PL do speak-3SG-ba  
 'like the language that you (pl.) speak'

(11c) *bo asé meté-lo-ba lendro nebera*  
 2SG do put-3SG-ba inside refrigerator  
 'You put it in the refrigerator.'

(11d) *i tan ngalá-lo-ba*  
 1SG ASP grab-3SG-ba  
 'I will take it.'

(11e) *suto asé asé-lo-ba asina*  
 1PL do do-3SG-ba thus  
 'We do it like this.'

(11f) *to ma hende suto lo konosé-ba seba chitiá ku suto pa suto*  
 all PL people 1PL 3SG know-ba do-ASP chat with 1PL for 1PL  
*lo prendé-lo-ba*  
 3SG learn-3SG-ba  
 'Everyone that we know would talk with us so we could learn [the Palenquero language].'

In (11f), *-ba* cooccurs with the LP "subjunctive," i.e., an uninflected verb following the complementizer *pa* (< SP *para* 'for'), and even though an imperfective past meaning is appropriate to the context, LP does not normally permit any inflection of verbs in this position.<sup>19</sup>

The extension of atemporal *-ba* to pronouns has been found only in a subset of LP speakers, all in the "traditional older" category (over the age of fifty, with LP as a first language, etc.) and all having frequent interactions with school students, teachers, community cultural activists, and visiting researchers. Even more striking among this same general subset of fluent LP speakers is the attachment of *-ba* to nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Patiño Rosselli (Friedmann and Patiño Rosselli 1983:125) only gives the example in (12), which he believes represents an extension (through reduplication) of the verbal imperfective past suffix *-ba*.

(12) *kuando í tene-ba ocho ría akí-ba*  
 when 1SG have-ASP eight day here-ba  
 'when I had been here for eight days'

Among the dozens of examples found in the present corpus, however, only those given in (13a)–(13j) clearly have an imperfective past reference. In fact *-ba* appears to be an optional attachment to nearly any grammatical constituent.

(13a) *tó lo ke kelé dinero-ba, batante-ba*  
all 3 COMP want money-ba much-ba  
'all those who want money, lots'

(13b) *é un kusa muy ngande-ba*  
be-3SG ART thing very big-ba  
'It's a very great thing.'

(13c) *uto moná ané a ndalo tiro po kabesa-ba*  
other child 3PL ASP give-3SG shot for head-ba  
'Another one of their children was shot in the head.'

(13d) *ané sabé ni ponelo nu-ba*  
3PL know NEG put-3 NEG-ba  
'They don't even know how to put on [diapers].'

(13e) *hwe kwando suto lo empesá miná ma kusa ri mundo ku uto*  
be when 1PL 3SG begin look PL thing of world with other  
*oho-ba*  
eye-ba  
'It's when we begin to look at the world with new eyes.'

(13f) *i nesedita hende-ba, pa hende lo miní*  
1SG need people-ba for people 3 come  
'I need people, for people to come.'

(13g) *oto ría koneho-ba a bai andi kukaracha*  
other day rabbit-ba ASP go LOC cockroach  
'The next day the rabbit went to see the cockroach.'

(13h) *bo-ba a miní aké biahe-ba bo solo-ba*  
2SG-ba ASP come that trip-ba 2SG alone-ba  
'That trip you came alone.'

(13i) *enú ablá mi pero utere é numano-ba nu*  
2PL speak 1SG but 2PL be brother-ba NEG  
'You all talk to me but you are not my brothers.'

(13j) *yo hwe-ba prieto-ba*  
1SG be-ASP black-ba  
'I was black.'



The distribution of *-ba* in all of the aforementioned contexts is presented in table 1.

**Table 1. Examples of *-ba* Collected in LP Discourse**

<i>-ba</i> ADDED TO:	NUMBER	VERB	TWO-VERB GROUP	NONVERB	TOTAL GROUP
single verb	251	49.5%			40.8%
first verb of two-verb combination	179	35.3%	69.9%		29.1%
second verb of two-verb combination	49	9.7%	19.1%		8.0%
both verbs in two-verb combination	28	5.5%	10.9%		4.6%
pronoun	36			33.3%	5.9%
noun	46			42.6%	7.5%
adjective	14			13.0%	2.3%
adverb	12			11.1%	2.0%
total verbs with <i>-ba</i>	507				
total two-verb combinations	256				
total nonverbs	108				
total all <i>-ba</i>	615				

In addition to the fact that the attachment of *-ba* to nonverbal elements (at least in those cases with nonpast or perfective meaning) has only been documented for LP speakers with demonstrated metalinguistic hypersensitivity, another indication that *-ba* in these contexts is acting as a discourse marker signaling LP authenticity is the fact that in a substantial majority of cases, *-ba* attached to a nonverb occurs phrase-finally (a fact also noted by Schwegler [1992:236] and Davis [1997:54, 2000:565]). Leaving aside the attachment of *-ba* to pronouns, out of seventy-two examples of *-ba* attached to nouns, adjectives, or adverbs, fifty-two instances (72.2 percent) occur phrase-finally, giving greater prominence to this inserted suffix. Several speakers produced discourse literally peppered with *-ba*, often several times per sentence, with none of the tokens of *-ba* clearly analyzable as an anterior or perfective marker.<sup>20</sup>

The use of detachable *-ba* has apparently not gone unnoticed by younger community members, who have invented a word game known as *retahila*, a sort of Pig Latin in which the suffix *-ba* is attached to all nouns, verbs, and adjectives in an LP sentence, such as that in (14).

- (14) *a tjémba-ba kwand'-i sé-ba báe-ba pa sankajetáno-ba, í a*  
 ASP time-*ba* when-1SG do-ASP go-ASP for San.Cayetano-*ba* 1SG ASP  
*sé-ba miná-ba, tó ma kúsa-ba, lo-ke sankajetáno-ba tené-ba*  
 be-ASP look-ASP all PL thing-*ba* 3-COMP San.Cayetano-*ba* have-ASP  
 'A while ago when I was going to San Cayetano I would look at everything that  
 was in San Cayetano.' (Moniño 2007:53–54).

According to Moniño (2007:54), Palenqueros believe that this practice is traditional, not a recent innovation. In any event, this language game is quite infrequent today, and when queried on the matter, Palenqueros do not explicitly associate *retahila* manipulations with the free attachment of single instances of *-ba* in normal LP discourse. The fact that the language game consists of carrying to an extreme a practice observable in everyday speech suggests that the two phenomena are indeed related.

Although a strong case can be made that detachable *-ba* comes from the LP imperfective past suffix *-ba*, in many varieties of Spanish the homophonous *va*—third person singular of *ir* ‘to go’—can also be used as a pleonastic discourse marker, for example in response to questions. In many Central American Spanish dialects, *va pues* ‘go well’ can express consent, roughly ‘okay’, and *bueno, va* ‘good, go’ and similar combinations are used in many regions.<sup>21</sup> A reviewer has suggested that such uses of Spanish *va* might have contributed to LP detachable *-ba*; however, in the Spanish of San Basilio de Palenque, as well as in neighboring varieties, such usage of *va* has not been observed. Nor has LP detachable *-ba* become so freestanding that it is used by itself or in combination with *sí* ‘yes’ and *no* ‘no’ or other one-word responses to questions or suggestions. In this sense, LP detachable *-ba* does not behave like Spanish discourse punctuators such as *pues* ‘well’ (with regional variants *pos, pué, po, pu, pe, etc.*), which can occur alone or in combination with virtually any short phrase or response. LP detachable *-ba* may well evolve to freestanding status, but at present its distribution is confined to the patterns described in this study.

The proposed trajectory of *-ba* from a bound verbal morpheme to a discourse marker signaling ethnolinguistic identity can be summarized as follows:

- The imperfective past suffix *-ba* begins to exhibit variable behavior in two-verb complexes, migrating, by reanalysis of the two-verb complex as a single verb, from the canonical position on the first verb (e.g., *i ase-ba bibí Palenge* ‘I lived in Palenque’) to the second verb (e.g., *el asé bibi-ba abaho* ‘he lived down [the street]’ in (4b)).
- In a further innovation, *-ba* associates to both verbs in two-verb combinations (e.g., *i pole-ba habla-ba ke hwe lo ke i ta ablando ku ané nu* ‘I couldn’t say what it was that I was telling them’ in (5b)). This marks the beginning of the emergent status of *-ba* as a more freely detachable element, participating in what amounts to multiple-concord configurations.
- The suffix *-ba*—still marking imperfective past—“jumps over” intervening object pronouns through reanalysis of combinations of verb plus object as single verbal elements, resulting in forms like *í á sé dehá-lo-ba fiao* ‘I let him have it on credit’ in (9) and *entonce el á sé komplá mi-ba mucho planda* ‘then she used to buy many plantains from me’ in (7).
- Perhaps as an intermediate stage, or conceivably as a carryover from earlier stages of LP, *-ba* can be optionally reduplicated<sup>22</sup> phrase-finally in utterances with clear past/imperfective meaning.

- Once *-ba* cliticizes to nonverbal elements (pronouns), it begins to lose its obligatory status as an anterior and imperfective marker, ultimately yielding PRONOUN-*ba* combinations in the absence of any past reference (e.g., *bo kansá mi-ba nu* 'you are not tiring me' in (6c)).
- As metalinguistic awareness of differences between LP grammar and Spanish grammar grows in the community, prompted by increasingly frequent visits by researchers, the attachment of *-ba* to nonverbal elements comes to be regarded—at least by those speakers who have frequent interactions with researchers and language activists—as representing “deep” or “authentic” LP speech.
- Speakers who strive to punctuate their production in LP with elements felt to be traditional and especially authentic freely extend *-ba* to a broad spectrum of nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, preferentially attaching *-ba* in phrase-final position<sup>23</sup> where it is phonetically most prominent.<sup>24</sup>
- Occurring in parallel with the aforementioned stages, the *retahila* cryptolect emerges, in which *-ba* is attached to every available word, creating a density of epenthetic syllables that baffles noninitiates.

**7. Pronoun plus *-ndo* as discourse marker.** Although *-ba* is the most frequently occurring detachable suffix in contemporary LP, other originally bound morphemes occasionally appear in the speech of “fancy-talking” Palenqueros. One such element is the Spanish-derived gerund suffix *-ndo*, sometimes used with gerundival force in LP, which sometimes also attaches to the pronouns *mi* ‘first person singular’ (as object), *bo* ‘second person singular’, and very occasionally *ané* ‘third person plural’ (as subject or object), as in the recorded examples (15a)–(15g).

(15a) *trata mi ta dolendo mi-ndo mucho*  
back 1SG ASP hurting 1SG-ndo much  
‘My back is hurting me a lot.’

(15b) *kotea a molé mi-ndo*  
turtle ASP bite 1SG-ndo  
‘The turtle bit me.’

(15c) *ma hende ku grabadora grabá mi-ndo*  
PL people with recorder record 1SG-ndo  
‘people with recorders recording me’

(15d) *ma masaná lo watiá mi-ndo*  
PL children ASP watch 1SG-ndo  
‘The kids are looking at me.’

(15e) *i ta pelá bo-ndo*  
1SG ASP wait 2SG-ndo  
‘I’m waiting for you.’

- (15f) *po eso i ta ablá bo-ndo*  
 for that 1SG ASP speak 2SG-ndo  
 'That's why I'm talking to you.'

- (15g) *ane-ndo lo baiba*  
 3PL-ndo 3SG go-ASP  
 'They went.'

Reanalysis of verbal combinations implicitly or explicitly embodying a gerund ending in *-ndo* also appear to underlie the extension of *-ndo* to pronouns, as in examples (15a)–(15f). Example (15g) then represents the innovative attachment of *-ndo* to a pronoun not serving as verbal complement. A few speakers combine the suffixes *-ba* and *-ndo* with a pronoun simultaneously, as in (16a)–(16d). In all of the examples obtained by the author, the PRONOUN-*ndo-ba* functions as a complement of the verb and is arguably the result of reanalysis, although synchronically these combinations are quasi-lexicalized for the individuals in question.

- (16a) *ma hende lo watiá mi-ndo-ba komo hende lo ke no watiá*  
 PL people 3SG watch 1SG-ndo-ba like people 3SG COMP NEG watch  
*mi-ndo-ba nu*  
 1SG-ndo-ba NEG

'People are looking at me like people who have never seen me [before].'

- (16b) *ma monasito a ngritá mi-ndo-ba*  
 PL child ASP yell 1SG-ndo-ba  
 'The kids yelled at me.'

- (16c) *lo ke ta pasá mi-ndo-ba ke i sabé lé nu*  
 3SG COMP ASP pass 1SG-ndo-ba COMP 1SG know read NEG  
 'What is happening to me is that I don't know how to read.'

- (16d) *ta matratá bo-ndo-ba*  
 ASP mistreat 2SG-ndo-ba  
 'You are being mistreated.'

Patiño Rosselli speculates that *-ndo* as attached to the object pronouns *mi* and *bo* might be an "African linguistic fossil" (Friedmann and Patiño Rosselli 1983:158), but provides no plausible etymology. The most obvious source for *-ndo* is the Spanish gerund, ending in *-ando* or *-iendo*. In Spanish, gerunds are most common in progressive constructions, such as *está lloviendo* 'it is raining' and *¿qué estás haciendo?* 'what are you doing?' In LP, the Spanish gerund is also used in adverbial expressions and occasionally in progressive constructions, such as (17a)–(17f), in the latter case as a less frequent alternative to the more creole-like combination of the particles *ta* or *taba* plus invariant verb stem.

- (17a) *ma soldao echa-ndo pa ané ané echa-ndo pa ma soldao-ba*  
 PL soldier throw-GER for 3PL 3PL throw-GER for PL soldier-ba  
 'The soldiers shooting at them, they shooting at the soldiers.'
- (17b) *a tene-ba un mahanasito chikito huga-ndo ahí mitá kaya*  
 ASP have-ASP ART child small play-GER there middle street  
*ku bolita*  
 with ball  
 'There was a kid playing in the middle of the street with a ball.'
- (17c) *i ta akí Palenge trabaha-ndo*  
 1SG be here Palenque work-GER  
 'I am here in Palenque working.'
- (17d) *i ta akí abla-ndo utere*  
 1SG be here talk-GER 2PL  
 'I'm here talking to you all.'
- (17e) *i taba kucha-ndo kwando ma mamá ase-ba ablá ku suto*  
 1SG be-ASP listen-GER when PL mother do-ASP talk with 1PL  
 'I was listening when the old ladies would talk to us.'
- (17f) *ele agwantá un rato entrebíta-ndo mi-ndo*  
 3SG stay ART while interview-GER 1SG-ndo  
 'He stayed a while interviewing me.'

Example (17f) is consistent with the notion that *-ndo* is "liberated" for multiple occurrence in progressive constructions, much as *-ba* can attach multiply to verbal complexes. Adding to the frequency of verbal elements ending in *-ndo* is *tando*, which means 'to be going', as in (18a)–(18c), and which is frequent in normal LP discourse.

- (18a) *i tando kamino mi*  
 1SG going path 1SG  
 'I'm going my own way.'
- (18b) *ikwándo utere tando?*  
 when 2PL going  
 'When are you all leaving?'
- (18c) *iké ría bo tando-ba?*  
 what day 2SG going-ba  
 'What day are you leaving?'

A possible reinforcing factor is the frequent combination of *ndo* (from SP *dos*) 'two' (homophonous with the suffix *-ndo*<sup>25</sup>) with the pronouns *suto* 'we' and *ané* 'they' and with quantifiers like *to* (from SP *todo* 'all'), as in (19a)–(19f).

- (19a) *a amanesé suto ndo ku swegra mi*  
 ASP dawn 1PL two with mother-in-law 1SG  
 'The two of us began the day with my mother-in-law.'
- (19b) *suto a tené ese derrota entre suto ndo po ese muhé*  
 1PL ASP have that defeat between 1PL two for that woman  
 'We had that falling-out between the two of us over that woman.'
- (19c) *ímáilo mi kumo tan polé ku ané ndo?*  
 husband 1SG how FUT able with 3PL two  
 'How could my husband take care of both of them?'
- (19d) *i tené akí ninguno ané ndo*  
 1SG have here none 3PL two  
 'I don't have either of them here.'
- (19e) *ma ndo muchachito sabé nu, ninguno ané ndo nu*  
 PL two boy know NEG none 3PL two NEG  
 'The two boys don't know, neither of the two.'
- (19f) *to ndo meklao*  
 all two mixed  
 'Both [languages] mixed up.'

Attaching floating *-ndo* to the plural pronouns *suto* 'we' or *ané* 'they' would create a potentially ambiguous reading with *ndo* 'two', while attaching *-ndo* to the singular pronouns *mi* 'me' and *bo* 'you (sg.)' results in no ambiguity.

**8. Pleonastic preverbal *lo* as a possible LP discourse marker.** The detachable suffixes *-ba* and *-ndo* exhibit the clearest indication of a new status as discourse markers of Palenquero identity. Another possible candidate for this status is *lo*, which in LP typically serves as third person singular object clitic (in alternation with *ele*), as in (20a)–(20d).

- (20a) *ané sabé-lo nu*  
 3PL know-3SG NEG  
 'They don't know it.'
- (20b) *bo konosé-lo nu*  
 2SG know-3SG NEG  
 'You don't know him.'
- (20c) *i tené-lo nu*  
 1SG have-3SG NEG  
 'I don't have it.'

- (20d) *i asé ablá-lo andi kumbilesa mi*  
 1SG do talk-3SG LOC friend 1SG  
 'I talk about it with my friends.'

As shown in (21), LP *lo* also appears in the relativizing complementizer *lo ke* (from SP *lo que* 'that which').

- (21) *i a sankochá ese yuka lo ke ta aquí*  
 1SG ASP boil that manioc 3SG COMP be here  
 'I cooked that yucca that is here.'

This use of *lo* is shared by nearly all LP speakers, regardless of their metalinguistic awareness or contact with scholars and language activists. Some speakers exhibit an additional use of *lo*, in preverbal position with intransitive verbs, illustrated in (22a)–(22g), in which *lo* is not associated with any nominal argument.

- (22a) *ané lo bai-ba aggún patte*  
 3PL lo go-ASP some part  
 'They were going somewhere.'
- (22b) *i nesesita hende-ba, pa hende lo mini*  
 1SG need people-ba for people lo come  
 'I need some people to come.'
- (22c) *ma hende ri película di produción lo mini i lo kelá akí*  
 PL people of film of production lo come and lo stay here  
 'Then the movie production people came and [they] stayed here.'
- (22d) *si bo lo mini agüé tadde i tan akí*  
 if 2SG lo come today afternoon 1SG FUT here  
 'If you come this afternoon I will be here.'
- (22e) *i lo bai kamino mi*  
 1SG lo go path 1SG  
 'I'm going on my way.'
- (22f) *ikwándo bo lo yegá tiela si?*  
 when 2SG lo arrive land 2SG  
 'When will you arrive in your land?'
- (22g) *bo lo kuchá mi-ndo-ba*  
 2SG lo listen 1SG-ndo-ba  
 'You are listening to me.'

Although it is possible that some instances of pleonastic *lo* in LP are carryovers from earlier Afro-Hispanic interpretation of subject clitics in African languages (Lipski 2005:252–52), the fact that all instances of pleonastic *lo* obtained by the author come from the same subset of LP speakers who employ detachable *-ba*, *-ndo*, or both suggests that *lo* may also serve to reinforce metalinguistic assertions of Palenquero identity.

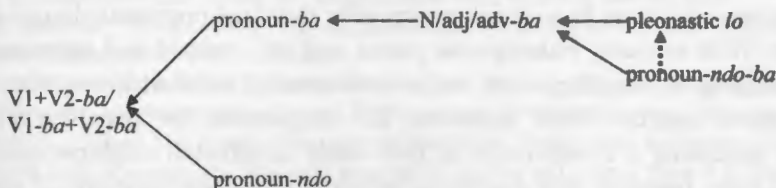
**9. Implicational relationships among the discourse markers.** None of the aforementioned regrammaticalized elements (detachable nonverbal *-ba* and *-ndo* and pleonastic *lo*) have appeared in the speech of the nearly one hundred Palenqueros interviewed by the author who have had little or no contact with foreign scholars, with LP teachers, and with local students. In contrast, among fluent LP speakers who frequently interact with researchers and language activists, one or more of the aforementioned discourse markers were obtained during free conversation. This group excludes the handful of LP language teachers, who are aware of the discourse markers in question and who may occasionally use them in jocular conversation with community elders, but who do not employ these elements with their students or when speaking more formally. It also excludes many of the enthusiastic young language learners (of varying degrees of proficiency in LP), some of whom use other innovative elements as self-assigned markers of LP identity (Lipski 2012), but who never use detachable *-ba* and *-ndo* nor pleonastic *lo*. Table 2 presents data from twelve of the most frequently visited but linguistically untrained LP “experts.” All are over the age of fifty, have no formal education, are nearly or totally illiterate, have lived their entire lives in San Basilio de Palenque, and have no explicit knowledge of grammatical structures or linguistic terminology. At the same time, due to their fluency in LP, their pride in their linguistic and cultural heritage, their extroverted and often charismatic personalities, and their friendly disposition towards visitors, these speakers constitute a virtual “inner circle” to be visited by serious scholars of Palenquero language and culture. These individuals are highly respected within the community; most are consulted by students about language and cultural traditions, and participate in community meetings and informal gatherings, almost always speaking in LP. In the Palenquero community the speech patterns of eloquent orators are much admired, and consequently the linguistic traits represented by the speakers in table 2 are potentially making an impact in the community. When other LP speakers were queried by the author about the innovative uses of *lo*, *-ba*, and *-ndo*, the names of the individuals in table 2 and other speakers with similar profiles often arose as exemplars of this usage. Moreover several of the speakers in table 2 revealed to the author that they themselves had picked up some of their linguistic idiosyncrasies—including the attachment of *-ba* and *-ndo*—from individuals whom they admired and wished to emulate.



**Table 2. Use of Detachable Morphemes as LP Discourse Markers by Prominent Palenqueros**

SPEAKER	PRONOUN	NOUN/ADJ/ADV	PRONOUN	PRONOUN	PLEONASTIC
	<i>-ba</i>	<i>-ba</i>	<i>-ndo</i>	<i>-ndo-ba</i>	<i>lo</i>
M. (f.)	+	-	-	-	-
M. A. (f.)	+	-	-	-	-
C. (m.)	-	-	+	-	-
F. (m.)	-	-	+	-	+
J. (f.)	-	-	+	-	-
F. (f.)	+	+	-	-	-
J. S. (m.)	+	+	-	-	-
Y. (f.)	+	+	-	-	-
V. (f.)	+	+	-	-	-
A. (m.)	+	+	-	-	+
N. (f.)	-	-	+	+	-
R. (m.)	+	+	+	+	+

Table 2 suggests some implicational relationships among the LP discourse markers. The attachment of *-ba* to personal pronouns is the most common phenomenon, and for some speakers is the only use of detachable morphemes. The same holds for the attachment of *-ndo* to personal pronouns, which as nearly as can be determined is homologous to the combination of pronouns and *-ba*, although considerably less frequent: attachment of *-ndo* to pronouns does not necessarily imply that any other LP validators will be employed. However, the attachment of *-ba* to nouns, adjectives, and adverbs is only found in the speech of individuals who also attach *-ba* to pronouns, and the same holds for pleonastic *lo*. Moreover, the small number of individuals who attach both *-ndo* and *-ba* to pronouns also attach *-ba* to nouns, adjectives, and adverbs, and also employ pleonastic *lo*. The speakers who attach *-ndo* and *-ba* to hosts other than verbs, as well as those who employ pleonastic *lo*, all exhibit variable placement of the imperfective suffix *-ba* in two-verb combinations: in addition to the usual  $VERB_1-ba + VERB_2$  (e.g., *asé-ba ablá* 'used to say'), they also present  $VERB_1 + VERB_2-ba$  (e.g., *asé ablá-ba*),  $VERB_1-ba + VERB_2-ba$  (e.g., *asé-ba ablá-ba*), or both. The basic implicational relationships are shown in figure 1. These relationships are generally valid for all the fluent and linguistically naive older (over fifty) native speakers of traditional LP interviewed by the author, and figure 1 is proposed as a model of the use of detachable particles as discourse markers.

**Figure 1. Proposed implicational relationships in the development of LP bound morphemes into detachable discourse markers.**

### 10. Summary: detachable morphemes as metalinguistic validators.

The preceding sections describe the use of detachable morphemes—stripped of specific grammatical functions—in the speech of numerous native speakers of LP. The reattachment of the verbal suffix *-ba* to nonverbal elements appears to be an extension of an analogical process involving two-verb clusters, subsequently extended to nonverbal elements (especially object pronouns) immediately following the verb and retaining the imperfective past meaning of *-ba*, and finally evolving to the use of *-ba* as a free-floating discourse marker that can be (multiply) attached to any nonverbal element in the absence of any past reference. The extension of *-ba* to nouns, adjectives, and adverbs occurs predominantly in phrase-final position, which supports the notion that detachable *-ba* is a discourse marker, and this extension is consistently exhibited only by traditional LP speakers who have actively participated in language revitalization efforts or in research projects by foreign and domestic scholars. The conclusion to be drawn from this array of facts is that detachable *-ba* has assumed the additional function of discourse validator, a mark of “authentic” LP, drawing attention to differences with respect to Spanish, with respect to the imperfect attempts at speaking LP by young students, and even with respect to the fluent but stylistically less elegant LP spoken by older residents who maintain little contact with outsiders. Most of these self-anointed linguistic ambassadors admit to having emulated speech traits of community personages felt to be especially eloquent, and by all accounts such emulation continues at the present time. In San Basilio de Palenque, sociolinguistic or grammatical prescriptivism with respect to the sort of LP to be spoken (as opposed to the desirability of speaking LP at all) never existed until the advent of ethnoeducation language classes in the schools and the frequent arrival of foreign scholars. In a speech community grounded in oral tradition and in which verbal eloquence is a much-admired commodity, linguistic innovations, including analogy, back formation, false etymology, misdivision, and neologism can operate unchecked.<sup>26</sup> It is not surprising that some of these innovations, including the free attachment of *-ba* and the possibly expanding domains of *-ndo* and pleonastic *lo*, might be used emblematically by metalinguistically aware activists as well as by frequently visited research interviewees. What is peculiar to San Basilio de Palenque is the trajectory from tightly constrained bound morphemes to more freely insertable discourse markers, as well as the considerable state of flux occasioned by the rapid shift in attitudes towards the traditional language and the flurry of educational and research projects that produced a virtually instantaneous metalinguistic consciousness in a speech community that had previously languished in obscurity. With so many Palenqueros young and old, trained and untrained, fervently focusing on metalinguistic issues and creating implicit hierarchies of the “best” speech and the “best” speakers, the competition for linguistic bragging rights is producing a constellation of previously unattested combinations. More time and more research will determine which of these combinations, if any, will survive to become permanent fixtures of *Lengua ri Palenge*.

## Notes

*Acknowledgments.* My fieldwork was conducted in San Basilio de Palenque from 2008 to 2012. I am grateful to Bernardino Pérez Miranda, Víctor Simarra Reyes, and Sebastián Salgado for their assistance during all phases of the research. Special thanks to *to ma humbilesa mi* 'all my friends' who have made Palenque so much more than a research project: Raúl Salas, José de los Santos Reyes, María Luisa Reyes Simarra, Florentina "Yayita" Salas, Trinidad Cásseres, Magdalena Navarro, Basilia Pérez, Neis Pérez, Juana Torres, Venancia Pérez, Manuel Pérez, Evaristo Márquez (who once starred in a film with Marlon Brando), Moraima Simarra, Francisco "Siquito" Cañate, Gregorio Cassiani, Rafael Cassiani, Narcida Cásseres, Narciso Padilla "El Cubano," Faustina Valdés, Joaquín Valdés Hernández "Panamá," and the more than one hundred other Palenqueros who have generously shared their memories and their language with me.

*Abbreviations.* The following abbreviations are used: 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; ART = article; ASP = aspect; COMP = complementizer; DIM = diminutive; f. = female; FUT = future; GER = gerund; IMP = imperative; LOC = locative; m. = male; NEG = negator; PL = plural; SG = singular; SP = Spanish.

*Transcription.* Most descriptions of LP have remained close to Spanish orthography; recent works by Palenquero authors prefer a less Spanish-like approach, including the use of the letter *k*; this is the system currently in use by LP language teachers in the village schools and is used in the present study. My transcriptions adhere to current orthographic practice among Palenquero scholars. The letter *h* refers to the sound [h] (not a silent letter as in Spanish), and *j* represents a palatal glide [j]. Grammatical segmentation has been added to some examples cited from sources other than my own.

1. The traditional name for this community is Palenque de San Basilio, but more recently community-based activists and intellectuals prefer the name San Basilio de Palenque.

2. Although LP was formed in contact with Spanish and is lexically most closely related to Spanish, there is evidence that some early form of São Tomé Creole Portuguese, brought via the Portuguese slave trade to Cartagena, was important in the formation of LP. Schwegler (1996) and the references therein explore this matter further.

3. Although there is no official Palenquero orthography, all descriptive materials published by Palenqueros use the Palenquero pronunciation and write the name of the village as *Palenge* and the name of the language as *lengua ri Palenge*; this practice is followed in the present study. The word "Palenquero" will be reserved as a descriptive adjective referring to the village itself and its residents.

4. Davis (1997:13) quotes a personal communication from Armin Schwegler to the effect that "King Benkos" is a convenient historical invention. Although most residents of San Basilio de Palenque continue to accept the historical veracity of the founding of the village by Domingo Bioho, some Palenquero intellectuals are acknowledging that this maroon community was probably founded at a later date, but certainly as a result of Bioho's liberation movement (e.g., Hernández Cassiani et al. 2008:30–31).

5. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Spanish are my own.

6. However, Morton (2005:36) suggests that what the writer may have heard was Spanish-Palenquero code switching.

7. Morton believes that "from the turn of the 20th century until the 1920s to 1930s the entire speech repertoire of the most Palenqueros in Palenque was linguistically less standard [. . .] than the most vernacular style today" (2005:194) and speculates that "it was likely that [Palenquero Spanish] was more similar to Lengua than it is today. Therefore it is probable that these creole-like features were relegated to in-group speech or camouflaged or eliminated" (2005:163).

8. "Con la pérdida de los territorios propios muchos contingentes de hombres y mujeres palenqueras salen a trabajar a otros pueblos y ciudades [ . . . ] lo que permitió que se empezara a deteriorar en su estructura original y se viera influenciada mucho más por el idioma nacional. Sufrió procesos de deterioro hasta principios de los años 80 producto de la discriminación racial sufrida por los emigrantes."

9. Accurate fragments of the language (not explicitly identified as a creole language) had been transcribed in rather obscure earlier publications by Ochoa Franco (1945) and Escalante (1954).

10. "Salvo la intervención de factores improbables aunque no imposibles—una reacción de la propia comunidad, una política oficial adecuada—, la finalización del ciclo histórico del lenguaje palenquero no parece estar muy lejos."

11. The UNESCO statement "The Cultural Space of Palenque de San Basilio" can be found at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&RL=00102>.

12. According to the observations of the present researcher, these commercialized Palenquero language samples are generally legitimate, although language specimens obtained through prearranged "purchase" are inherently suspect, as opposed to freely offered speech (for which appropriate acknowledgment should be offered voluntarily after the fact).

13. This was also noted by Morton (2005:58). Precisely these archaisms, regarded as quintessentially Palenquero, are being taught to children—words such as *enú* 'they, them,' replacing the Spanish-derived *utere* (from SP *ustedes*), *chitiá* 'to speak' instead of *ablá* (from SP *hablar*), *kumbilesa* 'friend' instead of *amigo*, and *lungá* 'to die' in replacement of *morí* (from SP *morir*).

14. Most Palenqueros over the age of about fifty who have remained in the community can be regarded as fluent native speakers of *lengua ri Palenge* and form the cohort from which all descriptions of "traditional" language usage have been taken by previous scholars. Many middle-aged Palenqueros are equally proficient while others are strongly Spanish-dominant, although all have considerable passive competence in LP. As a heuristic classification, the "traditional older" speakers referred to in the present study range in age from fifty to over ninety.

15. Davis (1997) provides a more nuanced analysis of Palenquero *-ba*, the details of which are orthogonal to the structure of the present study.

16. Although accepting the Spanish *-ba* and Portuguese *-va* imperfect suffixes as the most likely source for Palenquero *-ba*, Davis (1997) proposes an additional pidgin Portuguese contribution, namely, phrase-final *ba* from *acabar* 'to finish.'

17. All examples come from field recordings made by the author. Unless otherwise indicated, all examples were produced by traditional older LP speakers, i.e., over the age of fifty with LP as their first language.

18. This type of reanalysis is not uncommon in vernacular Spanish; for example, the third-person plural verbal suffix *-n* is frequently displaced from the verb in combinations of verb with object clitic and reattached after the final clitic, as in (i).

(i) *diga-n me lo > diga me lo-n*  
 say.IMP-3PL 1SG 3SG    say.IMP 1SG 3SG-3PL  
 'Say it to me.'

19. There is another example of *-ba* attached to a verb following *pa*, also produced by a speaker who takes pride in speaking "fancy" Palenquero, and who has had frequent interaction with visiting scholars for more than two decades: *pa si suto lo bai andi Dioso pa Dioso lo bendisi suto-ba*, *pa suto tené-ba igwarrá* 'so that if we go before God God will bless us, so that we can have equality'.

20. In 2011, several sets of experimental stimuli were presented to groups of proficient Palenquero speakers. The stimuli, all extracted from the spontaneous speech of Palenqueros, included examples of “canonical” LP, vernacular Spanish, and putatively mixed Spanish-LP utterances. Respondents were asked to classify each stimulus as all LP, all Spanish, or mixed. Several of the most eloquent and metalinguistically aware Palenqueros “corrected” otherwise “pure” LP utterances by inserting *-ba* at the end of the utterance, irrespective of the grammatical status of the last word.

21. Also in Central America (e.g., Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador), *iva?* is used as a tag question, probably from *verdad* ‘truth’ shortened from *ino es verdad?* ‘isn’t it true?’ (Hernández 2002:97, 2007; Lipski 2000a:196, 2000b:70).

22. In the examples of phrase-final *-ba* analyzed by Davis (1997:54–55), all utterances have a past meaning and all contain the suffix *-ba*, the preverbal past or anterior particle *a*, or both elsewhere in the sentence.

23. Davis (1997:81–83) suggests that at least some instances of LP phrase-final *-ba*—always with past meaning—may date back to the formative period of this language, possibly as a carryover from a proposed trans-Atlantic pidginized Portuguese “reconnaissance language” (as per Naro 1978), and even with some contributions from West African languages. In contemporary LP, however, phrase-final *-ba* is quite uncommon among the speech of individuals who do not demonstrate other signs of metalinguistic sensitivity. Given the lack of other evidence that modern LP is a “decreolized” version of earlier stages of the language, further evidence is needed in order to substantiate the proposal of an originally phrase-final *-ba*.

24. In psycholinguistics, phrase-final position is broadly accepted as being a highly prominent position; for example, many tests of working memory involve recall and repetition of the final words of a string of sentences. For a more elaborate account of crosslinguistic tendencies for suffixation and, by extension, to the enhanced prominence of endings, see Hawkins and Cutler (1988).

25. Strictly speaking *ndo* ‘two’ is a stressed element pronounced with high pitch (Hualde and Schwegler 2008), while the verbal suffix *-ndo* is atonic and realized with low pitch, but in connected speech these differences are generally obliterated.

26. Such deliberate manipulation of language to achieve stylistic or strategic goals may have been part of the Palenquero language from the outset. Moniño offers the claim that the LP pluralizing particle *ma* and other African items were deliberately introduced by maroons “to confuse noncommunity members so as to not be understood by them” (2007:50; “para despistar a los no miembros de su comunidad y no ser entendidos de ellos”). Moniño asserts that combinations of *ma* and other determiners such as the indefinite *ún* and the demonstrative *ése* (e.g., *ún ma óha bédde* ‘some green leaves’, *ése ma tabáko* ‘those cigarettes’) confirm that *ma* was originally inserted in order to create an “exotic” speech that could not be easily understood by noninitiates. While agreeing with Moniño that Palenquero *ma* largely serves to disambiguate plural noun phrases and that superfluous *ma* may also occur in configurations in which plural is already indicated through other means, Schwegler (2007a:69–70, 2007b:216–17) argues that plural *ma* provides such a transparent and easily learned mechanism that it would not be effective as a means of disguising speech. This does not preclude *ma* being retained as a marker of linguistic authenticity among LP speakers, even if its meaning can be easily deduced by noninitiates. My own research (Lipski 2012) has demonstrated that at the present time young learners of LP are further extending *ma* to all nonplural contexts as an innovative validator of “authentic” LP. There is no indication that this innovation is being picked up by fluent native speakers of LP, but it may very well come to characterize the speech of future generations of school-trained Palenqueros.

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