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A TEST CASE OF THE AFRO-HISPANIC CONNECTION

Syllable-final /s/ in Equatorial Guinea

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Many current theories of Hispanic dialectology implicate the influence of African phonotactic patterns on the evolution of Latin American Spanish, particularly as regards the behavior of syllable-final consonants. The present study offers a unique test case which permits the separation of external phonotactic influences from the original dialectal base brought from Spain to Latin America. In this fashion, it is possible to more adequately model the interaction of phonological patterns which shaped the evolution of European languages transplanted to the Americas, since the prototype situation may in principle be extended to other language-contact environments.

Linguistic interfacing between European and African languages has produced numerous creoles in Africa, the Caribbean and possibly Asia, and within Africa these creole dialects are frequently used alongside, or instead of, some version of the former colonial language. English, Portuguese, Dutch and to some extent French have participated in this bifurcation, and the study of language contact and creole phenomena in Africa provides data on universal aspects of pidginization and creolization, and allows a comparative analysis of European-based creoles in other areas of the world. Spanish, however, was never widely represented in Africa, and within Latin America, postulated Afro-Hispanic creoles have all but disappeared with increasing transculturation and assimilation of Afro-American communities.[1] Many investigators have postulated that most Afro-Hispanic linguistic manifestations were in reality versions of an early Portuguese creole, which it is claimed was once a universal maritime *lingua franca*, accounting for fundamental structural paral-

[1] A representative bibliography includes: Alvarez Nazario (1974), Granda (1978), Alleyne (1971, 1981), Mintz (1971), Otheguy (1975), Dillard (1972), Laurence (1974), López Morales (1971: 62–71, 1980, 1983), Taylor (1971), Valkhoff (1966), Whinnom (1956, 1965), Lipski (1985a, 1986a).

lels among such varied languages as Papiamentu, Colombian *palenquero*, Cape Verde, Annobon and São Tomé creole, and Asian and Pacific creole Portuguese, as well as Philippine creole Spanish (*chabacano*); these investigators include Granda (1978), Otheguy (1975), Valkhoff (1966), Hancock (1975), Taylor (1971), Whinnom (1956,1965), Naro (1978), Megenney (1984,1985) and Voorhoeve (1973). At the same time, African influence has been claimed for a variety of phonological phenomena present in Latin American Spanish, especially in the Caribbean region; these include aspiration and loss of syllable-final /s/, neutralization and loss of syllable-final /l/ and /r/, and even velarization of word-final /n/ (e.g. Alvarez Nazario (1974), Otheguy (1975), Cuervo (1901)). Since these processes also occur, frequently to a greater degree, in Spanish dialects of southern Spain and the Canary Islands, it is of utmost importance that data permitting a separation of the two sets of theoretical proposals be scrutinized. Unfortunately, the heaviest and most prolongued African presence in Latin America coincides nearly exactly with zones of Andalusian and Canary Island linguistic influence, with the result that a virtual stalemate has existed surrounding the possible extra-Hispanic influences on the formation of Latin American Spanish (Menéndez Pidal (1958), Rout (1976), Alvarez Nazario (1974), Mellafe (1973)). Within Africa, however, there is one area in which Spanish is in close contact with African languages from one of the subgroups known to have been taken to Spanish America: the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, which enjoys the distinction of being the only officially Spanish-speaking region of sub-Saharan Africa. A closer examination of the symbiosis between Spanish and the native languages of Equatorial Guinea will further refine theories of Afro-Iberian linguistic manifestations throughout the world, while at the same time adding to the available knowledge of European language usage in post-colonial Africa. In particular, we possess detailed information on the Spanish dialects brought to colonial Spanish Guinea, and on the sociolinguistic conditions which surrounded the implantation of Spanish in that territory. At the same time, we have access to accurate data on the African languages used by Guinean Spanish speakers, thus permitting detailed phonotactic comparisons rather than speculative reconstructions.

During colonial times, Equatorial Guinean Spanish was virtually ignored, except for occasional commentaries regarding 'errors' and 'deficient usage'; cf. González Echegaray (1951,1959), Castillo Barril (1964,1969). Perhaps one reason for the comparative lack of serious linguistic interest in Spanish as spoken by Equatorial Guineans was the relatively small Spanish settler population in the colony. Unlike Spanish colonies in the New World, and

other European colonies in Africa, few Spaniards permanently immigrated to Equatorial Guinea; most Spaniards resident in Equatorial Guinea were government officials on temporary assignment, merchants or cacao planters, none of whom regarded themselves as anything other than Spaniards residing temporarily outside of their own country.[2] This lack of a large permanent Spanish colony impeded the formation of a distinctly Guinean variety of Spanish among Guinean-born Spaniards, and no real dialect levelling took place in the colony, with regional accents of Spanish in constant juxtaposition. Native language usage in Equatorial Guinea had almost no effect on the speech of Spaniards in the colony, except for a handful of lexical borrowings, and those Equatorial Guineans in daily contact with Spaniards learned the language well enough so that, despite an identifiable 'African' accent and usage, their ways of speaking would make no impact on the language spoken by Europeans (González Echegaray (1951,1959), Castillo Barril (1969)).

A key feature of Equatorial Guinean Spanish is that it has not become creolized, in comparison with metropolitan linguistic standards, nor is there any evidence of prior creolization (Lipski (1984a), Granda (1984)). Native Guineans predominantly learned Spanish under controlled conditions, in mission schools and/or through daily contact with Spaniards (resulting in one of the highest rates of ability and literacy in the colonial language in all of Africa), and although in some remote regions virtually no one spoke Spanish, those residents who did learn the language did so rapidly and in a fashion which precluded the formation of extensive pidgins. More importantly, there was never a massive ethnic fragmentation in Equatorial Guinea which would have forced its residents to communicate with one another in Spanish. The national languages have always been available for intraethnic communication, and relatively few Guineans even today employ Spanish in home or colloquial speech contexts with members of their own ethnic group, although Spanish elements are freely mixed in. Interethnic communication may rely on Spanish, although the reality of Equatorial Guinean ethnography has provided other alternatives which have relieved Spanish of the burden of a true *lingua franca*. On the island of Bioko (Fernando Poo), the indigeneous group is the Bubi, but in postcolonial times a number of other ethnic groups have moved in, including Fang and *playero* groups from the mainland province of Rio Muni, natives of Annobon Island, São Tomé, Nigeria and Cameroon, and a small

[2] For a representative bibliography, cf. Terán (1962), Nosti Nava (1969), Pélissier (1964), Pujadas (1968,1969,1983), Unzueta y Yuste (1947), Liniger-Goumaz (1979), Baguena Corolla (1950), Moreno Moreno (1952), Cronjé (1976).

but important nucleus of *fernandinos*, creole English-speaking descendents of freed slaves arrived from Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 19th century (Zarco (1938), Sundiata (1972)).[3] This combination of circumstances has implanted West African creole English, known locally as *pichinglis*, as the true *lingua franca* of Fernando Poo, despite the efforts of Spanish and postcolonial administrations to minimize the use of this language in favor of Spanish (Lipski (1986 forthcoming (c)), Quilis (1983)).

In Rio Muni, *pichinglis* is little used, although in the capital of the continental portion, Bata, this language is employed by natives of Fernando Poo. Although the Fang were originally from the interior of the continent, they have migrated to the coast and are the most prominent group in government and commercial activities. The *playero* groups of the coast (Combe/Ndowé, Benga, Bemba, Bapuku, Bujeba, etc.) speak related languages which are somewhat mutually intelligible, but most speak at least some Fang, out of necessity, and the latter language is used at least as frequently as Spanish as a vehicle of interethnic communication in Rio Muni. Spanish is used spontaneously only in the principal cities and towns, although an increasingly effective public education system is creating additional incentives for using this language even within the confines of a single ethnic community.

Although Guinean Spanish is not creolized, few Equatorial Guineans speak the language with the same grammatical precision as is found among true native Spanish speakers, except for those that have lived and studied extensively in Spain. While no specific creole forms have arisen in Guinean Spanish, most Equatorial Guineans exhibit a quasi-random distribution of 'errors', that is, divergences from international Spanish usage (González Echegaray (1959), Lipski (1984a, 1985c)). Despite these significant differences between Guinean Spanish and metropolitan Peninsular and Latin American standards, there is no doubt that the Spanish language is a living force in Equatorial Guinea, and that a state of active bilingualism exists for the majority of the nation's speakers. Consequently, a study of the linguistic interface between Spanish and the conglomerate of the native languages of Equatorial Guinea is of significance to African linguistics and to creole studies, since Guinean Spanish

[3] Also of importance is the British occupation of Fernando Poo in the first half of the 19th century, the founding of the capital city, then known as Port Clarence, and the importation, in the 20th century, of thousands of Nigerian laborers to work on the island's cacao plantations; cf. González Echegaray (1951), Pélissier (1962), Cronjé (1976), Terán (1962). Nearly all the Nigerians were expelled by the first postcolonial government, and few have returned; cf. Cronje (1976), Ndongo Bidgoyo (1977).

is both a legitimate African language and a unique test case for theories of Afro-Hispanic linguistic contacts in Spain and Latin America. The present note will concentrate on a single aspect of this bilingual contact, the behavior of syllable- and word-final /s/ in the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea and its broad linguistic implications.

In many dialects of Spanish, syllable-final /s/ is frequently aspirated [h] or deleted [ø]; thus *este* [ehte] 'this', *los patos* [loh pato(h)] 'the ducks', etc. Phrase-final /s/ may also participate in this process, although in some dialects there is a greater tendency to maintain a sibilant [s] in absolute final position, and when phrase-final /s/ succumbs to a process of weakening, complete elision is the normal result. In the phonologically most 'radical' dialects, reduction of /s/ has been extended to word-final prevocalic environments, such as *los amigos* [lohamiɣoh] 'the friends', in an evident reduction of allomorphy and paradigmatic diversity. Within Latin America, the greatest reduction of /s/ occurs in the Caribbean dialects and along most of the Pacific coast of South America, whereas categorical retention of syllable- and word-final /s/ is found only in Mexico, highland Central and South America (Canfield (1981), Lipski (1983, 1984b, 1985c)). The most massive reduction of /s/ occurs in precisely those areas where the presence of African slaves was most prolongued, and where African lexical elements, together with other cultural contributions, are prominent even today (Rout (1976), Mellafe (1973), Lipski (1985a)). As noted above, reduction of /s/ is found to an equal or greater degree in southern Spain and the Canary Islands, and those Latin American areas in which the influence of these Spanish dialects was strongest are precisely the Caribbean and South American regions in which African linguistic influence was also strongest.[4] It is thus nearly impossible to disentangle the demographic and dialectal variables, with the result that the study of Afro-Hispanic linguistic contacts in other regions is of considerable importance.

The common intersection of African phonotactic patterns supports the notion that syllable-final consonants would be weakened, neutralized and eventually lost in Spanish as spoken by groups of Africans from a wide variety of linguistic zones (Lipski (1985a, 1986 forthcoming (b))). For example, as

[4] Although there was a documented African presence in southern Spain during the 15th and 16th centuries, it is extremely unlikely that this group, socially marginalized and almost entirely composed of slaves and domestic servants, had any influence on Peninsular Spanish dialects (Pike (1967), Sanders (1982), Weber de Kurlat (1962), Chasca (1946)). In the Canary Islands, African presence was even slighter, although there was a small importation of black slaves from Africa during approximately the same time period (Granda (1972), Lobo Cabrera (1982)).

seen in table 1, none of the native languages of Equatorial Guinea employs the consonant /s/ in syllable-final position, except for a few cases in Annobonese creole, which is derived from Portuguese, and which also has virtually no impact on the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea, due to the remoteness of Annobon Island and the small number of Annobonese in Malabo and other areas of the nation.[5]

Table 1
Phonotactics of languages of Equatorial Guinea.

Language	Closed syllables	Phrase-final C	sC	s#
Fang	No	Yes	No	No
Bubi	No	No	No	No
Combe/Ndowé	No	Yes	No	No
Benga	No	No	No	No
Bujeba/Bisió	No	Yes	No	No
Ambó	Yes	Yes	Some	Few

C = consonant; sC = syllable-final /s/; s# = word-final /s/.

For all intents and purposes, word-internal syllable-final consonants are nonexistent among the languages of Equatorial Guinea, and phrase/word-final consonants are relatively rare, with /s/ not being represented at all among native Equatorial Guinean words. Turning to the Spanish spoken in Equatorial Guinea, the behavior of /s/ is not at all what would be predicted by this distribution, for as seen in table 2, /s/ is extremely resistent in Guinean Spanish.[6]

[5] In addition to personal observations on the native languages of Equatorial Guinea, made during field work conducted between 1983 and 1985, the following sources provide documentation. For Bubi: Tessman (1923), Ayemi (1942), Baumann (1887), Pereda (1920), Abad (1928). For Fang: Tessman (1913), Ndongo Esono (1956), Nze (1975). For Combe: Fernández (1951). For Benga: Pérez and Sorinas (1928). For Bemba: Salvadó y Cos (1891). For Bujeba: González Echegaray (1958). For Annobonese: Barrena (1957), Zamora Loboch (1962), Vila (1891), Ferraz (1976), Granda (1976, forthcoming).

[6] These data are based on interviews with 12 natives of Equatorial Guinea, representing the different ethnic groups. All informants were residents of Malabo, and these interviews were carried out in 1983 and 1984, and are described in detail in Lipski (1984a). It should be noted that care was taken to distinguish possible differences in the variable behavior of /s/ in correlation with the ethnic group and native language of the informants, but despite careful observation over more than 200 interviews, representing all ethnic groups of the nation, no significant correlation was found that would suggest differential behavior of /s/. Other aspects of the Spanish language in Equatorial Guinea may be affected by the native language of the speaker, as noted by González Echegaray (1959), Castillo Barril (1969) and Granda (1985).

Table 2
Realization of /s/ in the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea.

/s/ # # (phrase final)	
[s]:	87.7%
[h]:	1.9%
[ø]:	10.4%
N = 2844	
/s/ C (word-internal preconsonantal position)	
[S]:	92.5%
[h]:	4.8%
[ø]:	2.7%
N = 5666	
/s/ # C (word-final preconsonantal position)	
[s]:	76.5%
[h]:	8.5%
[ø]:	15.0%
N = 4554	
/s/ # V (word-final prevocalic position)	
[S]:	92.1%
[h]:	0.0%
[ø]:	7.9%
N = 2150	

In this table it is seen that no categorial reduction of /s/ characterizes the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea, that in those cases where reduction of /s/ occurs this takes the form of deletion rather than aspiration, and that such reduction is sporadic and normally limited to phrase-final position. Furthermore, it may be demonstrated that reduction of /s/ is constrained by grammatical considerations, despite the apparent chaos of the raw data as reported in table 2. In table 3, the behavior of word-final /s/ is subcategorized according to the grammatical function of /s/.

These data (which include only cases of complete effacement) indicate that loss of /s/ is not truly a phonetically-motivated process. For example, /s/ is most frequently lost in words in which it is merely lexical (*seis*, *además*, *Jesús*, etc.), and in the first-person plural verbal desinence *-mos*, where the /s/ is redundant. Loss of /s/ in this position is well attested in literary and folkloric attestations of 'Africanized' Spanish, from the 15th century to the present (Weber de Kurlat (1962), Chasca (1946), Granda (1969), Lipski (1986 forthcoming (b)). It also characterizes many creolized and semicreolized Portuguese dialects

Table 3
Loss of word-final /s/ in Guinean Spanish.

/s/ # # (phrase-final position)	
-mos:	15.6%
2nd person singular:	1.6% (0.0%)
plural, redundant:	3.8%
plural, distinctive:	15.1% (3.4%)
/s/ (lexical)	8.8%
/s/ # C (word-final preconsonantal position)	
-mos:	28.4%
2nd person singular:	5.4% (0.0%)
plural, redundant:	16.2%
plural, distinctive:	13.2% (1.3%)
todos los/todas las:	93.3%
/s/ (lexical)	11.1%
/s/ # V (word-final prevocalic position)	
-mos:	10.3%
2nd person singular:	0.0%
plural, redundant:	3.2%
plural, distinctive:	8.0% (4.6%)
/s/ (lexical):	9.7%

in Africa and Asia, in which other instances of word-final /s/ do not undergo effacement (Giese (1932), Farias de Lacerda (1961), Nogueira Batalha (1959), Coelho (1963), Raimundo (1933), Valkhoff (1966)). In the case of second person singular verb forms, in which the final /s/ is normally the only grammatical signal of verbal person, the figure in parenthesis indicates loss of /s/ when the subject pronoun *tú* was not present; virtually no loss of /s/ takes place when an accompanying subject pronoun will not permit recovering the semantic information. Similarly, 'redundant' plural /s/ (indicated by an /e/ added to the suffix, or by the suppletive articles *los*, *estos*, etc.) is slightly more susceptible to loss than distinctive /s/, which alone signals plurality. The figures in parentheses indicate loss of distinctive /s/ not accompanied by plural verb forms or other pluralized elements of the noun phrase in which they occurred; even in the latter cases the presence of plural verbs or other semantic or pragmatic clues usually permit recovery of plurality. Loss of /s/ in the syntagms *todos los* and *todas las* 'all the' parallels usage in nearly all dialects of Spanish worldwide, where the first /s/ is normally weakened or lost in these combinations even when other instances of /s/ resist effacement.[7]

[7] Similar constraints have been isolated for Latin American Spanish, as shown by Terrell (1977, 1980, 1983).

The extraordinary resistance of syllable- and word-final /s/ in the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea is clearly not a function of the native languages of that country, whose phonotactics would tend to impede such patterns, but rather stems from the dialects of Spanish brought to Equatorial Guinea during colonial times. Although Spaniards from all areas of Spain and the Canary Islands arrived in Spanish Guinea, the majority of them came from central Spain (Castille), whereas the large cacao planters and other entrepreneurs came in large part from Cataluña and Valencia. The Spanish spoken in both of these regions is characterized by a high degree of resistence of /s/ in all positions, in contrast to the dialects of southern and western Spain, the Canary Islands, and those regions of Spanish America (particularly the Caribbean nations) in which linguistic influences from the latter regions predominate. Table 4 offers comparative data on the behavior of /s/ in key Peninsular, Canary Island and Latin American dialects.[8]

Table 4
Behavior of /s/ in key Spanish dialects.

Dialect	/s/C			/s/ # C			/s/ # #			/s/ # V			/s/ # v		
	[s]	[h]	[Ø]	[s]	[h]	[Ø]	[s]	[h]	[Ø]	[s]	[h]	[Ø]	[s]	[h]	[Ø]
Barcelona	99	1	0	92	8	0	95	4	1	100	0	0	96	4	0
Madrid	94	6	0	69	29	2	82	12	6	92	8	0	96	4	0
Cáceres	2	91	7	0	94	6	9	8	83	023	77	0	0	95	5
Granada	0	82	18	0	85	15	1	2	97	0	15	85	2	50	48
Murcia	1	70	29	0	80	20	18	11	71	36	28	38	38	41	21
Sevilla	0	95	5	0	91	9	5	2	93	069	10	21	1	46	54
Las Palmas	2	85	13	0	89	11	2	17	81	75	25	0	0	92	8
Cuba	3	97	0	2	75	23	61	13	26	48	28	25	10	53	27
Dom. Rep.	8	17	75	5	25	70	36	10	54	50	5	45	17	22	61
Panama	2	89	9	1	82	17	25	6	69	69	17	14	2	39	59
Puerto Rico	3	92	5	4	69	27	46	22	32	45	32	23	16	53	31
Venezuela	7	40	53	3	47	50	38	16	46	57	26	17	15	52	33

C = consonant; V = stressed vowel; v = unstressed vowel; # = word boundary; # # = phrase boundary.

These figures clearly show that, while the behavior of /s/ in the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea closely parallels the usage in central and eastern Spain, the Caribbean dialects most closely linked with 'Africanist' theories of phono-

[8] The collection of the data, which includes figures derived from other investigators, is described in Lipski (1983, 1984b).

logical evolution, exhibit patterns of reduction of /s/ nearly identical to those in southern Spain and the Canary Islands. While such patterns do not definitively rule out African phonological influence on Caribbean Spanish, they certainly cast a large measure of doubt on the inexorable effects of such bilingual contracts, since the Spanish of Equatorial Guinea, faced with the same general conditions of bilingualism with African languages lacking syllable- and word-final /s/ and other consonants, retains these consonants in Spanish to a much higher degree than would be predicted by the phonotactics of indigeneous languages. The colonial educational systems, efficient in the case of Equatorial Guinea and nonexistent in the case of African slaves and their descendents in Latin America, may be implicated in the formation of differential phonological patterns in both sets of Spanish dialects, although most Spanish teachers in Equatorial Guinea placed very little emphasis on pronunciation as opposed to grammatical structures, and even today there is no attempt by either native Guinean or native Spanish teachers to establish a standard for pronunciation. Moreover, there is no significant difference in pronunciation of syllable-final consonants; between Guineans who have attended school and those whose Spanish has been learned only by personal contact, such as the older generations of agricultural workers. The principal differences lie in the areas of grammatical precision and lexical availability. The characteristics of metropolitan Spanish dialects brought by colonizers have played a more important role in the elaboration of both dialect zones. Guinean Spanish absorbed from central and eastern Spanish dialects not only the resistence of syllable- and word-final consonants, but also such traits as the interdental fricative /θ/ (absent in all of Latin America), the second person familiar pronoun *vosotros*, equally lacking in Latin America, and a number of lexical variants characteristic of northern dialects of Spain. The behavior of syllable- and word-final /s/ in Guinean Spanish is characterized by the tendency to eliminate some cases of redundant /s/, a process well attested in other bilingual Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking regions throughout the world, and parallels attested examples of 'Africanized' Spanish spoken in previous centuries. This configuration is doubtless related to the lack of verbal and nominal suffixation in the native languages of Equatorial Guinea, in which morphological inflection is normally effected through prefixation, vowel harmony and other means which do not include the variable use of word-final consonants.

The comparative data from the Spanish dialects of Latin America, Spain and Equatorial Guinea provide an additional indirect evaluation of theories of Afro-Hispanic linguistic contacts in Spain and Latin America, and place the

study of European language usage in Africa in a wider perspective. The interaction between Spanish and African languages in Equatorial Guinea serves as a test case for theories of Hispanic dialectology, and consequently permits the separation of linguistic and demographic variables in Spain, Africa and Latin America. It has been shown that contrasting phonotactic patterns are not in themselves sufficient to significantly distort the behavior of syllable-final /s/ in received Spanish, if /s/ is categorically retained in the latter. A reevaluation of Afro-Hispanic contacts in Spanish America is thus called for, taking into greater account both the phonotactic structures of the African and Spanish dialects involved, and the nature of the language transfer environment.

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