

Where and how does *bozal* Spanish survive?

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Bozal Spanish – pidginized language once spoken by African-born slaves acquiring Spanish under duress – has usually been approached only through historical reconstruction based on second-hand written documents. Central to the debate over the reconstruction of *bozal* language is the extent to which *bozal* speech exhibited consistent traits across time and space, and the possibility that Afro-Hispanic pidgins may have creolized across large areas of Spanish America. Literary imitations – all of questionable validity – are insufficient to resolve the issue; only first-hand data from legitimate Afro-Hispanic speech communities may shed light on earlier stages of language contact. The present study reviews four sources of authentic data: surviving Afro-Hispanic linguistic isolates; collective memories of recently disappeared *bozal* speech; ritualized representations of *bozal* language; descendents of return-diaspora *bozal* speakers. The surviving Afro-Hispanic speech communities that have been studied to date are found in Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and Ecuador. These speech communities exhibit only a few deviations from monolingual Spanish, and do not suggest the prior existence of a stable Spanish-derived creole. New data are presented on a recently-discovered Afro-Bolivian speech community, where a fully restructured Afro-Hispanic dialect still survives. The Afro-Bolivian dialect provides a scenario for the formation of reconstructed varieties of Spanish in the absence of a pan-American creole. Ritualized representations of *bozal* language are found among the *negros congos* of Panama and in Afro-Cuban *santería* and *palo mayombe* ceremonies. Collective recollections of recent *bozal* language are found in Cuba, where the last African-born *bozales* disappeared less than a century ago. Finally, return-diaspora speakers have been reported for Benin, Nigeria, and Angola, and may be found elsewhere in West Africa. By combining data from these remaining sources and comparing them with literary and folkloric texts, a more realistic reconstruction of emergent Afro-Hispanic contact varieties can be obtained.

1. Introduction

It is well-known that Africans who learned Spanish in adolescence or adulthood spoke with the characteristics of second-language learners, at times exhibiting areal characteristics of specific African language families, and in other cases replicating errors

found among L₂ speakers of Spanish worldwide (Lipski 2005 and references therein). There exists a large and diverse corpus of literary imitations of the speech of *bozales*, beginning in Spain at the turn of the 16th century, and continuing into colonial Spanish America beginning in the early 17th century and lasting until the early 20th century. Many of the linguistic features of these imitations are typical of all learners of Spanish: unstable subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement, use of disjunctive object pronouns instead of clitics, confusion of the copular verbs *ser* and *estar*, misuse of common prepositions, and avoidance of grammatically complex sentences containing subordinate clauses. Other traits are found in Afro-Iberian creoles and probably represent the influence of African areal features: prenasalized consonants, paragogic vowels used to produce open CV syllables, *in situ* questions, double negation, and use of adverbial particles instead of verbal inflection for tense, mood and aspect. Finally, many of the literary imitations are simply grotesque racist parodies, devoid of any resemblance to the true results of Afro-Hispanic language contacts.

Central to the debate over the reconstruction of *bozal* language, especially in Latin America, is the extent to which *bozal* speech exhibited consistent traits across time and space, and the possibility that Afro-Hispanic pidgins may have creolized across large areas of Spanish America. This discussion is summarized in Lipski (1986e, 1987b, 1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 1995, 1998). The abundant bibliography of studies based on corpora of literary, musical, and folkloric texts has broadened the discussion to include a wide range of hypotheses and scenarios, but ultimately the texts in question are imitations or recollections produced by non-*bozal* authors, and therefore of debatable validity. Only evidence from authentic speech communities can round out the discussion, and the search for such remnants among contemporary Afro-Latin American groups is one of the most exciting research ventures of contemporary Spanish linguistics. The following sections will briefly summarize the types of authentic *bozal* evidence to be had, together with some examples of recent discoveries, and concluding with an enumeration of the challenges still remaining.

Remaining fragments of *bozal* Spanish that go beyond popular culture imitations (e.g. as in popular music, jokes, stereotyped imitations) can be found in the following situations:

- *Isolated enclaves* of Afro-Hispanic speech where post-*bozal* forms coexist with regional varieties of contemporary L₁ Spanish
- *Ritualized folkloric reproductions* of earlier *bozal* speech
- *Collective recollections* of the speech of the last remaining *bozal* speakers
- *Descendants of return-diaspora bozal speakers*

The following paragraphs will discuss each of these categories, with more emphasis placed on little-known or recently discovered configurations.

2. Remaining enclaves of post-*bozal* speech

There exist several isolated Afro-Hispanic speech communities throughout Latin America where traces of apparently post-*bozal* Spanish coexist with regional vernacular varieties. In most cases deviations from standard Spanish are limited to occasional lapses of agreement not found among monolingual Spanish speakers lacking the former *bozal* connection. In a few cases words or grammatical elements once found in *bozal* speech have survived, and in a very few instances regional vernacular dialects coexist with truly restructured post-*bozal* Afro-Hispanic varieties. The following chart

Table 1. Surviving post-*bozal* speech communities

Country	Region	Researchers	Principal traits
Bolivia	Yungas	Lipski	invariant verbs, paragogic vowels, invariant plurals, plural marking only on first element of NP, loss of final consonants, <i>ele</i> , zero prepositions, possible use of particle <i>ta</i>
Colombia	Chocó	Ruiz García, Schwegler	double negation, occlusive prevocalic /d/, occasional lapses of agreement
Colombia	San Basilio	Morton, Schwegler	double or postposed negation, occasional lapses of agreement, postposed genetives
Cuba	Oriente, etc.	Ortiz López, Schwegler	<i>elle</i> , <i>agüe</i> , occasional double negation
Dominican Rep.	Villa Mella, etc.	Green, Megenney, Ortiz López, Schwegler (Lipski)	double negation, occlusive /d/, occasional lapses of agreement, possible use of preverbal particle <i>a</i> (Green)
Ecuador	Chota Valley	Lipski, Schwegler	lapses in S-V and N-Adj agreement, loss of prepositions, possible <i>ele</i>
Mexico	Costa Chica (Guerrero, Oaxaca)	Aguirre Beltrán, Althoff	occasional lapses of agreement, paragogic vowels, loss of prepositions
Paraguay	Camba Cua	Lipski	occasional invariant plurals, 3rd person singular as invariant verb, lapses in N-Adj agreement
Peru	coast, Chincha	Cuba, Lipski	prevocalic occlusive /d/, occasional /r/ > [d], occasional lapses of agreement
Trinidad	various	Lipski, Moodie	occasional lapses of agreement, loss of prepositions, loss of final consonants, possible use of preverbal <i>ta</i> (Moodie)
Venezuela	Barlovento	Dominguez, Megenney, Mosonyi et al.	occasional lapses of agreement, neutralization /r/-/rr/, /r/, /d/ > [d], onset cluster reduction

illustrates the principal post-*bozal* communities investigated to date (corresponding references are in the bibliography):

From the chart it can be seen that few traces remain to indicate what pidginized *bozal* Spanish may have actually been like. Some representative samples are:

Chocó, Colombia: double and postposed negation:

- Yo no lo sé no* 'I don't know' (Schwegler 1996a)
Él no ha vuelto no 'He hasn't returned' (Ruíz García 2000)
No me había ocurrido esas cosas más no 'I didn't think of those things any more' (Ruíz García 2000)
Ellos no le hacen caso a él no 'They don't pay attention to him' (Ruíz García 2000)
Pero atracan no. 'They don't assault' (Ruíz García 2000)
Por no verme acostada ahí, ellos llegan aquí no 'Since they didn't see me lying there, they didn't come here' (Ruíz García 2000)

Afro-Dominican examples – interpreted as post-creole remnants by Green (1997, 2002) but based on fieldwork by John Lipski, Luis Ortiz and Irene Pérez Guerra possibly also representing cognitive language disorder:

- No yo no a mendé e zapote no.* 'I don't sell zapotes'
sí, a siguiú 'yes, [she] went on'
A cogé aquelloh mango. '[I] picked those mangoes'
Hay muchacho sí tabajá sí. 'There are young men who work hard'
yo no hacé eso 'I didn't do that'

Vestigial Spanish of Trinidad (Lipski 1990):

- Tó nojotro trabajaban [trabajábamos] junto* 'We all worked together'
Yo tiene [tengo] cuarenta ocho año 'I am 48 years old'
Asina, yo pone [pongo] todo 'I put everything like that'
Yo no sabe [sé] bien 'I don't know [it] well'
yo mimo [misma] me enfelmó [enfermé] 'I myself became ill'
nosotro ten[emos] otro pehcado que se come bueno 'We have another fish that is good to eat'
Tú tiene [cuando tú tengas] tiempo, viene aquí 'When you have time, come here'
yo tiene [tengo] cuatros helmano 'I have four siblings'

Examples of Spanish-Palenquero hybrids (Morton 1999):

- Esa agua ta malo* 'That water is bad'
Nosotros no quedamo con ese grupo no 'We didn't stay with that group'
Yo no conocí al abuelo mí 'I didn't know my grandfather'
Yo había a tenía [hubiera tenido] experiencia 'I would have had experience'

Chota Valley, Ecuador (Lipski 1982, 1986a, 1986d, 1987a):

- se trabajaban en las haciendas vecino* 'People worked on neighboring estates'
sobre la materia mismo de cada pueblo 'with [building] materials from each community'
era barato la ropa, barato era 'Clothing was cheap, really cheap'

- hay gente colombiano* 'there are Colombian people'
yo soy [de] abajo 'I'm from down [in the valley]'
depende [de] las posibilidades del padre 'it depends on the father's possibilities'
San Lorenzo que queda muy cerca con [de] la Concepción 'San Lorenzo is very near to Concepción'
a poca costumbre se le tiene cuando mucha fuerte está la fiebre 'the custom when there is a very high fever'

The Spanish spoken in the Afro-Colombian village of Palenque de San Basilio is in contact with the creole language Palenquero, itself the product of the Spanish, Portuguese, Kikongo, and possibly other languages once present in a 17th century maroon community. The *bozal*-like features of Palenquero Spanish are due to contact with the creole language, rather than direct descendents of *bozal* Spanish. In the remaining cases so few non-standard Spanish manifestations remain that in the absence of knowledge of the former presence of *bozal* speakers it would be difficult to connect contemporary speech patterns with an earlier pidgin.

The only exception to this extreme erosion of post-*bozal* leftovers comes in the Bolivian Yungas, where I have recently discovered tiny groups of speakers of a highly restructured Afro-Hispanic dialect that more closely resembles a true creole language such as Palenquero than post-*bozal* remnants found elsewhere in Latin America (Lipski, forthcoming a, b). These speakers, who live in isolated hillside squatter communities in the remote tropical valleys of the Yungas to the northeast of La Paz are arguably the oldest surviving Afro-American speech community, and the oldest community members continue to speak a dialect (used only within the extended family groups), combining severe phonetic reduction of final /s/ and /r/ (unlike the highly resistant /s/ and /r/ in surrounding Bolivian dialects), use of the third person singular verb as invariant verb form, marking of plural /s/ only on the first element of the NP as in vernacular Brazilian Portuguese, use of the invariant plural article *lo/lu*, lack of gender concord in NPs, null articles, invariant plurals, many null prepositions, and considerable reduction of complex sentences. Some examples of this unique dialect are:

- lo peón < los peones* 'the peons,' *lo mujé < las mujeres* 'the women,' *persona[s] mayó < personas mayores* 'older people,' etc.
tiene su mujé, mujé aprendió tomá 'he had a wife, his wife started to drink';
mujé murió año pasao 'the wife died last year';
mayordomo pegaba gente, patrón atrás de mayordomo 'the overseer beat the people, the landowner was after the overseer';
negro muy poco fue [a la guerra] 'black people rarely went [to the Chaco war]';
[yo] nació [en] Mururata 'I was born in Mururata';
tengo un hermano allá [en] Coroico 'I have a brother there in Coroico';
en este tiempo di cosecha siempre nojotro va [al] trabajo 'in this harvest season we always go to work';
¿Bo tiene juamía de quién? 'What family do you belong to?'
nojotro tiene jrutita; yo no entiende eso de vender jruta 'we have fruit, I don't understand about fruit';

yo creció junto con Angelino; nojtro creció loj do 'I grew up with Angelino, the two of us grew up together'
ello vivia, ello salia mi avisá aqui 'they lived, they came to tell me here';
¿de qué nojtro pobre va vivi? 'What are we poor folks going to live on?'

The features of Afro-Yungueño Spanish are unlike those of any other contemporary or reconstructed Afro-Hispanic dialect, although all fit generally into established contact variety patterns.

3. Ritualized folkloric imitations that include *bozal* speech

In addition to the use of post-*bozal* remnants in Afro-Hispanic speech communities, imitations of earlier *bozal* language occur in a number of ritualized events throughout Latin America. Most center around two categories of activities: the first is the Carnival tradition, and the second are religious ceremonies in which the speech of *bozal* ancestors is imitated, either through song or through spirit possession in which the possessed individual purportedly channels the voice of an ancestor. The most extensive Carnival-time reproduction of earlier *bozal* speech – although by no means the most trustworthy – comes in the ritualized speech of the *negros congos* 'Congo blacks' of Panama, centered around the colonial ports of Portobelo and Nombre de Dios. The core bibliography on the *congo* rituals includes Béliz (1959), De la Rosa Sánchez (1988), P. Drolet (1980a, 1980b), R. Drolet (1980), Franceschi (1960), Joly (1981), Laribe (1968, 1969), Lipski (1985, 1986b, 1986c, 1989, 1997), Romero (1975), Smith (1975), Tejeira Jaén (1974). During the spring Carnival season and at other times Afro-Hispanic residents of these communities – whose daily speech is simply the local vernacular Spanish – employ a deformed variety of Spanish referred to as *hablar congo* 'Congo talk' and which contains, in addition to humorous distortions of patrimonial Spanish words, a considerable number of African or pseudo-African lexical items grafted onto a Spanish grammatical system with Spanish functional categories. The *congo* dialect spoken only by Afro-colonial Panamanians, is in some way related to the linguistic situation which obtained among black slave and free groups in colonial Panama, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries, when slave trade through Portobelo was at its peak. Members of the community assert that *congo* speech is the direct descendent of the speech of the *negros bozales*, but the reality is much more complex. Nowadays, speaking *congo* involves a high degree of verbal improvisation and prowess, based on the notion of saying things 'backwards' (Spanish *al revés*, which also means 'upside down' and 'inside out'). According to Afro-Panamanian oral tradition, during the colonial period Spanish slaveowners would allow their African slaves some liberties during the Carnival season, allowing the slaves to wear castoff finery, which the slaves put on backwards or inside out as a visual demonstration of their resistance to slavery. Contemporary *congo* speakers use semantic reversals, such as *vivi* (Spanish *vivo*) 'alive' to mean 'dead', *entedo* (Sp. *entero*) 'whole' to mean 'broken,' etc. True

congo adepts can put on dazzling improvisations, at times also introducing formulaic phonetic deformations into each word. These deformations are neither entirely random nor completely systematic, but fall somewhere in between. Nearly all *congo* speakers routinely realize /r/, /rr/, /l/, and /d/ as stop [d] (e.g. [ka-de-te-da] for *carretera* 'road'; [e-te-dao] for *este lado* 'this side'), which departs sharply from normal Panamanian pronunciation, in which postvocalic voiced stops do not occur. These neutralizations are found in other Afro-Hispanic dialects; in particular the three-way neutralization suggests a Bantu substratum. Also frequent is the interchange of -o and -a at the end of nouns and adjectives or their replacement by -e or -i (e.g. *vivi* < *vivo* 'alive'). Word-internal vowels may be substituted apparently at random, but when more than one vowel is replaced there is usually vowel harmony (e.g. *cumpuñeda* < *compañero* 'comrade', *punumeño* < *panameño* 'Panamanian'). Some speakers introduce an epenthetic [r] or semivocalic [i] to create onset clusters (e.g. *pripa* < *pipa* 'coconut'; *momriento* < *momento* 'moment'), and there are occasional shifts of /l/ to [r] in onset clusters (*diabria* < *diablo* 'devil'; *fraquito* < *flaquito* 'skinny'); the latter change is reminiscent of Portuguese and may reflect the early presence of Portuguese slave traders arriving in Portobelo, the principal Spanish port supplying slaves to the Pacific region of South America. Under the layer of verbal improvisation and word play lies a rather systematic suspension of noun-adjective and subject-verb agreement in fashions which closely parallel literary or attested specimens of earlier *bozal* Spanish. Awareness of popular stereotypes of "black" Spanish from other times and places is almost nonexistent in this region, given the traditionally low literacy rate and the lack of availability of literary or popular culture works which would facilitate propagation of ethnolinguistic stereotypes. Any similarities between *congo* dialect and early *bozal* Spanish must be due either to fortuitous similarities, highly unlikely in the case of specific evolutions, or of the transmission, distorted across time and through the jocularly of Carnival, of previous Afro-Hispanic language. Modern *congo* leftovers do not suggest a complete creolization of earlier Afro-Panamanian Spanish, but rather a series of second-language approximations which fell short of the systematic restructuring implicit in creolization. An example of *congo* speech is (Lipski 1986b, 1986c, 1989); the translation is very approximate:

¿Y tú qué haces ahí padoo? Y si tu te pones entedo. Te vas a ponede er cudo Mayadi, aquí pade cubuyete ... y ahoda que vas a ayudá ... si no hay ná que llodá, y uhtede qué hacen en mi dancho, eh, qué dicen ustede, ya ehtama acuanda, e pa da última todavía fatta prusupia, vengán todo que sacúa se ehta cuando ... 'What are you doing standing [sitting] there? You're going to get whole [break yourself up]. You're going to bust your ass, Mayadi, falling off the roof. And now what are you going to help [with], if there is nothing to cry about, and what are you all doing on my property, what do you say, what is today's date, and finally we don't have any budget [money], come and get it'

Some examples of phonetic deformation in *congo* speech:

zucria < *azúcar* 'sugar', *padencia* < *Palenque* 'Palenque', *poquitria* < *poquito* 'little bit', *ahodamima* < *ahora mismo* 'right now', *diabria* < *diablo* 'devil', *momrienta* < *momento*

'moment', *guguntu* < *garganta* 'throat', *pringamá*, *bricamá* < *Panamá* 'Panama', *codó* < *color* 'color', *crado* < *claro* 'of course', *jubriá* < *hablar* 'speak', *cocopraya* [*coco de playa*] < *cocotero* 'coconut palm', *chadé* (< *chalet*) < *rancho* 'shack', *sumuna sunta* < *Semana Santa* 'Holy Week', *conobriá* < *carnaval* 'Carnival', *mugaña* < *mañana* 'tomorrow', *trumuya* < *trasmallo* 'fish net', *cufié* < *café* 'coffee', *pringadigui* < *cigarillo* 'cigarette', *mundebrió* < *Nombre de Dios* 'name of God', *pogriá* < *pagar* 'to pay', *mededa bronzó* < *madera de bronce* 'zinc', *agua sodiya* < *agua de chorillo* (or perhaps *agua de soda*) < *aguardiente* 'liquor'

Congo words of unknown origin:

Dumia (possibly < *rumiar*) 'to eat'
jopia 'to smoke'
cudia (possibly < *acudir*) 'to come'
mojongo / *mojobrio* 'wife'
jotá 'to drink'
sopodín 'motorboat'
potoñá 'to leave'
jurumíngue 'child'
Fuda 'liquor' (possibly < [*agua*] *pura* 'pure water', or [*aguardiente*] *puro* 'pure liquor', this word may derive from the Panamanian expression *fulo* 'Caucasian, blond fair-skinned person', a word of African origin. *Fuda* may also reflect Kikongo *fúla* 'foam (e.g. on palm wine)' or from Fula *fuda* 'gunpowder')

A few vestiges of earlier *bozal* Spanish also survive in the lyrics of Panamanian folk dances, particularly the *Zaracundé* (Rhodes 1998). This dance, also known as *El Cuenequé* or *Danza de los negros bozales*, is currently performed in the town of Los Santos (with a very small population of African origin), but was once performed during Carnival season in other parts of Panama. One of the characters of this ritual dance is the *Negro bozá*, a pronunciation reflecting the truncation of final consonants in Afro-Hispanic speech; final /r/ is frequently deleted in vernacular Panamanian Spanish, but final /l/ almost never falls in contemporary speech. Other characters' names also reflect *bozal* confusion of Spanish morphological endings: *Pajarité* [*pajarito* 'little bird'], *Fransisqué* [*Francisco*]. The *Negro bozá* chants phrases which include Afro-Hispanic *bozal* language, including *yo tené* [*yo tengo* 'I have'], *la huerté* [*la huerta* 'the garden'], *yuqué* [*yuca* 'yuca'], *tamarindé* [*tamarindo* 'tamarind'], *papayé* [*papaya*]. The song even contains a non-inverted question, frequent in the Spanish Antilles but not common in contemporary Panamanian Spanish (except among creole English-speaking Afro-Antilleans, probably through the influence of English creole; see Bishop 1976:62). *¿Cuántos hijos tú teneis?* 'How many children do you have?' (Arosemena Moreno 1984). The frequent replacement of Spanish final -o and -a by -e is similar to phenomena attributed in literature to Haitian L₂ speakers of Spanish in the Dominican Republic, and actually verified by Ortiz López (1999a, 1999b, 2001).

In Cuba Schwegler (2005) and Fuentes and Schwegler (2005) have discovered some Afro-Cuban ritual songs from the *palo monte* tradition that contain fragments of earlier *bozal* language, evidently reflecting the *paleros'* belief that the voices of ances-

tors speak during their ceremonies. In addition to containing admixtures of Spanish and Kikongo lexical items, some of the *palero* songs contain fragments in *bozal* grammar, containing invariant verb forms, derived from the third person singular, as well as the invariant copula *son*, independently attested in Afro-Cuban Spanish (Lipski 1999, 2002):

Yo te llama con mi maña 'I call you with my sorcery'
Riba mundo son bacheche [*saludable*] 'The world is healthy'

Castellanos (1990) also observed the speech of Afro-Cuban religious practitioners during their spiritual trances, when they purportedly speak with the voices of *bozal* ancestors. Although it is not permitted to record these ceremonies, Castellanos' recollections include many typical *bozal* features including non-agreeing verbs and use of disjunctive object pronouns:

ta miní kun yo 'he/she is coming with me'
akoddá ri yo '(he) remembered me'

4. Individual and collective recollections of former *bozal* speech

In Cuba, the last slave-importing country of Spanish America and in which *bozal* Africans could be found through the first half of the 20th century, individual and collective memories of *bozal* speech persist to this day. Older Cubans remember the phrase used scornfully to describe uneducated black Cubans in previous decades: *es un negro de "yo va di, yo va veni"* 'he's just a black who says *I be go, I be come*.' Cuban writers and composers continue to produce texts in which reasonably accurate *bozal* imitations are used, based on the recollections of Cuba's oldest inhabitants. One example comes in the well-known film *La última cena* 'The Last Supper' by Thomas Alea, where the *bozal* language was created in consultation with Cuban linguists. In addition to hundreds of literary imitations, Alea had a large number of purportedly authentic *bozal* texts from which to draw his inspiration. One of the earliest apparently authentic Cuban *bozal* imitations comes at the end of the 18th century, and is cited even today (Perl & Grosse 1994; Castellanos & Castellanos 1988: 101f.). At the end of the 18th century, the Spanish priest Nicolás Duque de Estrada living in Havana published a manual for other priests to teach the Catechism to African-born *bozales*. Although both condescending and designed to convince Africans that slavery was the will of God (portrayed as the "great overseer"), the approximations to *bozal* language show nothing other than simplified Spanish with lapses in agreement and many circumlocutions (Laviña 1989):

yo soi un pobre esclavo, yo tiene dos gallinas no más, gente tiene suelto su cochino, cochino come mi gallina. Yo ya no tiene con que comprar tabaco ni nada ... ¿yo va andando en cueros? 'I'm a poor slave, I have only two chickens, someone lets their hog run

loose, the hog eats my chicken. I have nothing to buy tobacco or anything. Should I go around naked?’

A very interesting comment on *bozal* Spanish in early 19th century Cuba comes from unpublished correspondence between the Cuban scholar José de la Luz Caballero and the American encyclopedist Francis Lieber. Lieber queried whether Afro-Cubans spoke a creole language and whether a creolized Spanish was used in religious teachings (as suggested by the recently published *Catecismo*) or in other literature. Luz Caballero’s response confirms other observations, that *bozales* spoke imperfect Spanish but without the consistent restructuring and transmission to successive generations found in creole languages. He also confirmed that Spanish priests at times spoke deliberately reduced Spanish when confessing the slaves, as suggested by Duque de Estrada’s catechism. In other notes Luz Caballero offers an extensive critique of Duque de Estrada’s pseudo-*bozal* imitations, indicating a high degree of awareness of Afro-Cuban pidginized Spanish, including this comment in an 1835 letter (these as yet unpublished documents were kindly furnished to me by Clancy Clements and Stuart Davis):

Q: *¿La población de color de esa [isla] habla aun un criollo?* ‘Does the black population speak a creole language?’

A: *Casi todas las preguntas ... descansan en el supuesto de que existe un dialecto criollo en la isla de Cuba distinto de la lengua española, así como hay francés criollo y otros dialectos de las demás lenguas europeas en las colonias de otras naciones. Pero no es así, y diré sencillamente lo único que hay en el particular. Los africanos corrompen la lengua cada uno a su modo, y esta corrupción consiste principalmente en el modo de pronunciar, lo que, como bien claro se ve, no constituye un dialecto especial, al que podamos darle el nombre de criollo. Esto es tan cierto, cuanto que a los blancos nos es más fácil entender a unos negros más que otros, y a los pertenecientes a una nación más que a los de otra: los congos v.g. se explican y pronuncian con más claridad que los carabalíes; pero siempre es la misma lengua española la que todos hablan, aunque estropeándola casi individualmente diríamos [...] advertiré que es costumbre que los curas y capellanes, antes de confesar y dar la comunión a los negros, les expliquen el dogma y la moral de un modo que esté a su alcance, y por consiguiente usando un lenguaje corrompido.* ‘Almost all the questions ... are based on the premise that in Cuba there is a creole language separate from Spanish, such as French creole and other European-derived creoles in the colonies of other nations. Each African deforms [Spanish] in his own way, mostly in pronunciation, which clearly does not constitute a special dialect that we could call a creole. This is true even though we whites can understand some blacks better than others, and those from certain ethnic groups more than others. The *congos* speak more clearly than the *carabalíes*; but it is always the same Spanish language spoken by all, although deformed on an individual basis ... I should mention that before confession and communion, the priests and chaplains usually explain dogma and morals in a fashion that [the slaves] can understand, namely using a corrupt language’

In 1963, a 104-year-old former slave – Esteban Montejo – was interviewed and taped by the Cuban writer Miguel Barnet, whose interest lay more in relating 19th century slave revolts with the Cuban Revolution than in reconstructing Afro-Hispanic language and culture. Although Montejo was Cuban-born and spoke vernacular Cuban Spanish, he

recalled the speech of *bozales* (including his African-born father) and offered detailed imitations:

Criollo camina allá adonde yo te diga, que yo te va a regalá a ti una cosa ... Usté, criollo, son bobo ... mire, usté ve eso, con eso usté consigue tó en cosa ... Mientras tú trabaja mayombe, tú son dueño e tierra ... Tú son bueno y callao, yo va a contá a ti una cosa ... ‘White man, walk there where I tell you and I’ll give you something ... you white man are a fool ... look you see that, with that you can get everything ... while you practice *palo mayombe* [Afro-Cuban ritual] you’re the master of the earth ... you are good and discreet, I’m going to tell you something’

Luis Ortiz has traveled to extremely isolated areas of eastern Cuba to interview elderly Afro-Cubans, many of whom were over 100 years old, and who vividly recalled the speech of now-deceased *bozales*. Most of the recollections fit with the pattern of Spanish as a second language, although in Havana itself, some Afro-Cubans recall having heard *bozal* language that might have been more internally coherent, and therefore possibly the first stages of a true creole. Among the more L₂-like *bozal* recollections are (Ortiz López 1998):

Carajo, yo te va joder ... Yo va sarúa [saludar] al niño Otavio ... vá vení o yo ta aquí ... yo te ve se cuento de toro cosa de que to pasó ... poqqe yo ta vení de lo tiera mía de llá de lo de lo Africo ... yo mirá tú do ece ... ahora yo te va catigá ... yo tumar caña la colonia ... ‘Damn, I’m going to screw you ... I’m going to greet young Octavio ... he will come or I’m here ... I’m going to tell you everything that happened ... because I came from my homeland over there in Africa ... I saw you twice ... now I’m going to punish you ... I cut sugar cane in the colony’

Given that no true *bozal* Spanish speakers still remain, individual recollections of actual *bozal* speech – albeit clouded by the passage of more than half a century – are the next most accurate source of data. Collective recollections are less reliable, since stereotyping and parody is also possible, but taken together these accounts provide the only living link to the pidginized Spanish used by African-born speakers just at the end of the slaving period.

5. Descendents of return-diaspora *bozal* speakers

There is a final possible hunting ground for surviving traces of earlier Afro-Caribbean Spanish, which to date has received absolutely no attention from linguists. Indeed, the geographical location where such a search might begin seems incredible at first sight: West Africa, the very region from which the majority of Africans arriving in the 19th century Caribbean were taken. In the final decades of the 19th century, there arose “return to Africa” movements in Brazil and Cuba, as well as in some Caribbean colonies. Many African-born Brazilians and even some of their descendents returned to Nigeria and especially Benin, where their descendents still identify themselves as “Brazilians” (Cunha 1985; Krasnowolski 1987; Turner 1975; Olinto 1964; Verger 1969). This re-

verse diaspora actually began towards the end of the 18th century, where Brazilian slaves who had been freed or purchased their freedom established themselves in Whydah, Dahomey, where they maintained Brazilian customs and lifestyle, and at times even participated in the final decades of the Atlantic slave trade. Afro-Cubans also returned to Africa, but in smaller numbers, and beginning well past the first decades of the 19th century. It is possible that in Benin they blended in with the already established Afro-Brazilian population, an easy task, both culturally and linguistically. The most well-documented Afro-Cuban return migration was to Nigeria, the homeland of the Yoruba-speaking *Lucumies*. Africans who had spent decades in Cuba began returning to Nigeria as early as the 1840's, and in the 1850's a document produced in Lagos quotes one returnee as describing the difference between slave-holding within Africa and slavery in the Caribbean (Pérez de la Riva 1974: 175): *Los negros no Jesús: los blancos todo religión* 'black people [don't have] Jesus; white people [are] all religion.' This brief statement suggests that *bozal* Spanish made its way back to West Africa. More than a century later, in fact just over a decade ago a Cuban scholar (Sarracino 1988) visited Lagos, Nigeria, where he met children and grandchildren of these repatriated *bozales*, some of whom were able to converse in (presumably *bozal*) Spanish (also Pérez de la Riva 1974). Unfortunately, neither recordings nor detailed linguistic observations were made, and given the political instability and urban explosion of Lagos, Nigeria, the chances of recovering *bozal* language in this West African setting grow slimmer by the day. Rural areas of Nigeria and Benin, where family oral traditions still predominate over mass media culture, may still be viable sites for Afro-Hispanic field research. Finally, the Cuban linguist Sergio Valdés Bernal, who lived for a time in Angola, reports meeting a (possibly *bozal*) Spanish-speaking descendent of a Cuban slave in that African nation.

6. Conclusions

Despite the critical importance of obtaining samples of the last living *bozales* or their immediate offspring, almost no field research has been done by contemporary Latin American linguists. Elderly former slaves or the children of former slaves are among the most marginalized citizens of the Spanish Caribbean, and within these nations there has been little interest in tapping the vast historical and cultural knowledge which they represent. Unlike what happened in many former British and French Caribbean colonies, the Spanish Caribbean nations are not run by primarily Afro-American governments, and there have been no nationwide African roots revival movements which would stimulate interest in the language and customs of Afro-Hispanics. As an example of the contrast in national attitudes, the Trinidadian historian and linguist Maureen Warner-Lewis (1991: xx) writes of newly independent Trinidad that

In the second half of the twentieth century there were still people alive who remembered their ancestors from Africa and who could sing and speak in African tongues,

This had important implications for our sense of historical depth, our sense of historical and cultural possession, as well as our ability to reconstruct the processes of cultural transmission in the New World.

Although the same situation obtained for the Spanish Caribbean, there was no comparable interest in tracing the African roots of countries which still continued to identify themselves as anything but African; in South American countries, where denial of negritude has reached even greater proportions, even less attention has been devoted to Afro-Hispanic linguistic studies.

The preceding remarks have demonstrated that much work has been done to uncover remaining traces of *bozal* language, while many challenges remain. Some trails are completely cold, others may still be viable but will require considerable ingenuity and just plain good luck to be traversed. Results to date do not provide definite answers to the ongoing debates over possible creolization of Afro-Hispanic language, nor on the possible monogenesis of all or even most Afro-Hispanic dialects. Most surviving *bozal* manifestations are so fragmentary as to provide only the most ambiguous testimony. Afro-Hispanic dialects such as the Chota Valley of Ecuador may have been influenced by surrounding Quechua speakers, while the Afro-Bolivian dialect of the Yungas, which bears little resemblance to any other *bozal* attestation past or present, was formed long ago and in such complete isolation from both African and European speakers. It is a counterexample to the strongest monogenetic hypotheses and may shed light on other Afro-Hispanic contact phenomena, but can only be fitted into the full perspective of *bozal* language after additional comparative research is undertaken.

In summary, recent and surprising discoveries of hitherto unsuspected speakers and speech communities provide compelling motivation to continue the search for authentic specimens of *bozal* Spanish. Only by comparing surviving speech and living memories with historical reconstruction can the full contribution of Africa to America be appreciated.

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