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The influence of Portuguese on Amazonian French Creole lexicon

Some preliminary observations

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1. Introduction

French-lexified Creole is spoken by three groups in the state of Amapá, the northern Brazilian state bordering French Guiana.¹ The language is spoken as a first language (L1) in the northern Uaçá area of Amapá by two indigenous Amerindian groups, the Karipúna and the Galibi-Marwono (speakers of Kheuól, a branch of French Guianese Creole/Guyanais), and reportedly by a group located in the southern area of Macapá, the capital of Amapá (speakers of Lanc-Patuá, a branch of Lesser Antillean French Creole taken to the area by French Creole-speaking emigrants from the English-official countries of St. Lucia and Dominica, cf. de Andrade 1988).

Kheuól, the focus here, is known by several names (and spellings of those names²), and has been referred to as Karipuna French Creole (KFC, cf. Lewis et al. 2017), although it is spoken natively not just by the Karipúna, but by the Galibi-Marwono as well. Kheuól is also therefore referred to here as Amazonian French

1. Elsewhere in Brazil, Haitian French Creole is spoken by over 50,000 Haitians. Starting with the arrival of the first 10 in 2010 after the earthquake up to 2015, most have gained 'humanitarian visas' (residential visas granted for humanitarian reasons) and have settled mainly in the states of Acre, Amazonas, Paraná, and São Paulo. Some, however, are now reportedly leaving Brazil for Chile. In Brazil, there have been a number of official efforts to assist Haitians in their social and linguistic assimilation into Brazilian society, including official Ministry of Education bilingual materials in Haitian and Portuguese. This is the subject of another study in progress.

2. These names include Kheuól, Khéuol, Kreoul, Patoá, Patua, Patuá, and Crioulo Karipúna.

Creole (AFC), to cover both varieties, in keeping with previous research (cf. Ferreira & Alleyne 2007). It is considered a living but threatened language (Lewis et al. 2017). Lanc-Patúa, practically extinct, has been referred to as Amapá French Creole (Anonby 2007). While the two varieties are essentially similar, the northern Amapá (Amazonian) variety shows some evidence of both recent French and also Portuguese influence, while the southern variety, Lanc-Patúa, shows some English influence because of the origin of the emigrants (St Lucia), and some Portuguese influence as well.

In the northern Uaçá area of Amapá, speakers of AFC number about 3,400. There are some 1,700 Karipúna in 16 villages, many close to the Curipi River, and 1,700 Galibi-Marwono in 4 villages, with the majority in the village of Kumarumã along the Uaçá River. These are all villages relatively near to the Oiapoque³ River, the natural border which separates Brazil from French Guiana. The Fundação Nacional do Índio (FUNAI) (2001) and informants in the Oiapoque, Uaçá area note that most residents of the Galibi-Marwono village of Kumarumã appear to be bilingual in Kheuól and Portuguese. The Karipúna are generally thought to be less bilingual; interestingly, however, FUNAI also notes that the Karipúna variety appears to be more *aportuguesada* or lusophonised than the Galibi-Marwono variety. Both claims need to be further studied.

Speakers of AFC live in a dynamic contact situation with Portuguese, Guyanais French Creole, French, Palikúr⁴, and also Galibi do Oiapoque, a dying Carib language originally from French Guiana where it is known as Kaliña, said to be spoken by 28 people at least in one village in Brazil (Vidal 2000). These are the main languages⁵ in contact with AFC, historically the lingua franca of the area. Most Palikúr and Kaliña speak AFC as a second language (L2), to varying degrees, although the reverse does not seem to be true for native speakers of Portuguese or AFC, as AFC still functions largely as the language of wider communication of the area.⁶ Portuguese, however, may be taking over that role.

3. Oiapoque is also the name of the main town on the Brazilian side of the border, while St Georges de l'Oyapock is the main town on the French Guianese side of the border.

4. Palikúr is an Arawakan language spoken by approximately 1,000 people in 10 Brazilian villages, and some 500 in French Guiana.

5. Picanço (2001: 47) also mentions the Timbira language.

6. According to Green & Green (1996), AFC has loaned words for days of the week to Palikúr (Monday to Saturday but not Sunday: *lendi*, *madi*, *mekhedi*, *jedi*, *wandred*, *samdi*). Other AFC loans in Palikúr include words such as *kuwak* (<AFC *kwak* 'cassava flour', synonymous with Palikúr *uhar*), *fahin* (<AFC *fahin fwans* 'flour'), *fet adahan tululu* (<AFC *fét tululu* 'Carnival'), *finetra* (<AFC *lafinét* 'window'), *butei* (<AFC *butei* 'bottle'), and *fomaj* (<AFC *fhomaj* 'cheese').

The main regular interaction appears to occur among Kheuól speakers and other Brazilians who are speakers of Portuguese, because of factors such as bilingual education, religion, and commerce. Portuguese, as the official language of Brazil, remains the prestige language. L1 Portuguese speakers who are teachers, missionaries and government workers may achieve some degree of competence and bilingualism in AFC, but this type of bilingualism is not the usual. Although there is bilingual education (cf. Ferreira 2010, and Marques de Espirito Santo 2011), Portuguese continues to dominate the educational system of the Oiapoque area (Tassinari 2003). With regard to religion, both Catholic and Protestant academic missionaries have been the ones to produce all of the bi- and multilingual dictionaries (A. W. Tobler (1987) of SIL, Picanço Montejo (1988) of Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI), and Corrêa & Corrêa (1998) of Associação Cristã Água Viva (ACAV)) and the only descriptive grammar (S.J. Tobler 1983 of SIL; cf. a preliminary grammar sketch by Picanço 2003), and have assisted with primers and other materials. However, Portuguese still dominates the Catholic and Protestant churches in and around Oiapoque, as most theological training for church leaders takes place in Portuguese, and as most religious texts used are in Portuguese. Commerce probably takes place in both languages.

Due to the relatively heavy contact between Kheuól speakers and Portuguese speakers, modern Brazilian Portuguese has exerted influence on Kheuól at different linguistic levels. Couto, in a study on the contact between French and Portuguese, notes that ‘Como essas comunidades são ilhas linguísticas no interior do território brasileiro, há muita influência do português no patuá (crioulo francês) de todas elas’ (2010: 113)⁷. This paper will examine the lusophonisation of Kheuól at the lexical level, to begin to understand which semantic fields have been penetrated by Portuguese (briefly considered in an earlier paper by Ferreira & Alleyne 2007). The data sources consulted for this study include the three bilingual French Creole-Portuguese dictionaries mentioned above and two multilingual word lists. All were compiled by researchers living and working in the area, with input from native speakers. Two of the dictionaries are published (Tobler (1987), focusing mainly on the Espirito Santo variety of Karipúna from 1975 to 1977, and Picanço Montejo (1988), focusing on both varieties from 1980 to 1988, in a number of villages, in collaboration with other linguists, including Tobler). The third, unpublished, was compiled by Corrêa & Corrêa from 1986 to 1998, focusing mainly on the Kumarumã variety of Galibi-Marwono). Other data sources are two multilingual word lists by Green & Green (1996 and n.d.) who lived and worked with and among the Palikúr.

7. Translation: ‘As these communities are linguistic islands in the Brazilian interior, there is a great deal of Portuguese influence on the Patuá (French Creole) of all of these communities.’

2. Lexical borrowings in AFC, with a focus on Portuguese

Adstrate languages often play an important role in the development of Creole lexicons. AFC has borrowed from all of the languages in the area: from indigenous languages of three families, from Portuguese (an older stratum, or the Afro-Portuguese lingua franca mentioned by Goodman 1964 and 1987, plus a newer Brazilian stratum), and from French and Guyanais French Creole (including words from African language families via Guyanais), the latter two as a direct result of many speakers' proximity to, and ongoing contact with, French Guiana (Tassinari 2003). The focus here is on Portuguese input, but indigenous words will also be considered, as some of them have entered AFC via Portuguese.

The origin of the following words is probably the older Portuguese stratum rather than solely due to contact with and influence from modern Brazilian Portuguese, as they are found in other French Creole varieties (cf. Goodman 1987, Tobler 1987, and Picanço Montejo 1988):

bhiga or *bhuiga* (< *briga*) 'fight'
kaz (< *casa*) 'house', and
fika (< *ficar*) 'to stay' (also glossed as *quieto* or 'be quiet' in Picanço Montejo 1988).

According to Thomason & Kaufman, 'with a minimum of cultural pressure we expect only lexical borrowing, and then only nonbasic vocabulary' (1988:77; cf. Haspelmath & Tadmor 2009). As there appears to be substantial modern Portuguese influence in AFC lexicon, it is surely the case that AFC has undergone more than a minimum of cultural pressure from Portuguese, at least in specific semantic fields. Still to be determined is the extent to which these borrowings are widespread, or whether they are determined by and related to location and users, or even researchers.

Semantic domains into which Portuguese words have been borrowed include (but are not limited to) household items, family, education, modern living, health and medicine, nature, and a large miscellaneous category. Pending ongoing and further research, it is difficult at this stage to estimate when and how many Portuguese loanwords have entered AFC. Examples from the dictionary data sources include the following:

Household Items

bul (< *bule*) 'teapot' (Tobler 1987)
esponj (< *esponja*) 'sponge' (Green & Green n.d.)
ghâp (< *grampo*) 'hairpin' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998) (*zepenxive* in Green & Green 1996 and Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)

hadj (< *rádio*) 'radio' (also *hadiô*) (Picanço Montejo 1988; Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)

heloj (< *relógio*) 'clock' (Picanço Montejo 1988; *môt* in Tobler 1987)

hip (< *ripa*) 'slat' (Tobler 1987)

hos (< *rosca*) 'coil' (Picanço Montejo 1988; Green & Green 1996)

kam (< *cama*) 'bed, mattress' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998; also *bukā* in all sources)

kuek (< *cueca*) 'underpants' (Green & Green n.d.) *tuahl* (< *toalha (da mesa)*) 'tablecloth' (Green & Green n.d.)

Family

bēs (< *benção*) 'action of blessing' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998; Green & Green n.d.)

kasul (< *caçula*) 'youngest' and *ti mun (tximun) pi deye* (literally, 'little person most behind' or 'last child') (Green & Green n.d.)

Education

kap (< *capa*) 'book cover' (Tobler 1987)

lap (< *lápiz*) 'pencil' (also *khēiô* in Tobler 1987)

Modern Living

adosât (< *adoçante*) 'sweetener' (Green & Green n.d.)

adub (< *adubo*) 'fertilizer' (Green & Green n.d.)

esthad (< *estrada*) 'highway' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)

esthumet (< *estrume*) 'manure' (Green & Green n.d.)

fabhuik (< *fábrica*) 'factory' (Picanço Montejo 1988)

fazen(d) (< *fazenda*) 'farm' (Picanço Montejo 1988)

hélis (< *hélice*) 'propellor' (Green & Green n.d.)

kaho (< *carro*) 'car' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)

Health and Medicine

dhog (< *droga*) 'drug' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)

hég (< *regra*) 'menstruation' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)

heméd (< *remédio*) 'medicine' (Tobler 1987)

puls (< *pulso*) 'pulse' (Picanço Montejo 1988)

Nature

ahãia or *ahëie* (< *aranha*) 'spider' (Tobler 1987; Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)

dekliv or *pan* (< *declive* or < *pente*) 'slope' (Tobler 1987; Green & Green n.d.)

dohad (< *dourado*) '*Salminus maxillosus*, a type of fish' (Picanço Montejo 1988)

espum (< *espuma*) 'foam' (Green & Green n.d.) *hat* (< *rato*) 'rat' (Picanço Montejo 1988)
ingham (< *íngreme*) 'steep' (Green & Green n.d.)
kuwata (< *coatá*) 'spider monkey' (Green & Green n.d.)
korontez (< *correnteza*) 'current' (Green & Green; also *kuhã*, Tobler 1987)
lag (< *lago*) 'lake' (Tobler 1987)

Miscellaneous

abuziv (< *abusivo*) 'abusive' (Green & Green n.d.)
āgu (< *ângulo*) 'angle' (Green & Green n.d.)
amig (< *amigo*) 'friend' (Picanço Montejo 1988)
benefis (< *benefício*) 'favour' (Picanço Montejo 1988)
bigudi (< *bigode*) 'moustache' (Green & Green n.d.)
boat (< *boato*) 'rumour' (Green & Green n.d.)
bordun (< *borduna*) 'war club' (Green & Green n.d.)
dad (< *dado*) 'fact' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)
depós (< *depósito*) 'deposit' (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998)
deve (< *dever*) 'to owe (money)' (Tobler 1987)
dezen (< *desenho*) 'design' (Green & Green n.d.)
djitad (< *ditado*) 'saying' (Picanço Montejo 1988)
eskoh ló (< *escórias (de ouro)*) 'scums of gold' (Green & Green n.d.)
eskud (< *escudo*) 'shield' ('protection') (Green & Green n.d.)
gatxil (< *gatilho*) 'trigger' (Green & Green n.d.)
hesutad (< *resultado*) 'result' (Green & Green n.d.)
laghimas (< *lágrimas*, lit., 'tears') 'agony' (Tobler 1987)
tahéf (< *tarefa*) 'job' (Green & Green n.d.)

Some Kheuól words of French origin are used side by side with those Kheuól words of Portuguese origin. One hypothesis is that what may have started off as code-mixing now gives us synonyms. Three examples include the words for 'pen', 'window', and 'rubber stamp': *stilo* (<Fr. *stylo* 'pen'), also *bik* (<Fr. *bic* 'pen', Corrêa & Corrêa 1998) and *kanét* (<Port. *caneta* 'pen') (also *khëiō*, Tobler 1987), *lafinét* (<Fr. *la fenêtre* 'window', Corrêa & Corrêa 1998), and *janel* (Picanço Montejo 1988) or *janél* (Tobler 1987; Green & Green 1996) or *jahél* (Corrêa & Corrêa 1998) (<Port. *janela* 'window') (also *lapòt*, Corrêa & Corrêa 1998) *tāp* (<Fr. *timbre* 'rubber stamp'), and *kahimb* (<Port. *carimbo* 'rubber stamp') (Green & Green 1996).

The question of their stability remains: it cannot yet be determined whether the newer Portuguese words will become replacements for the French-lexicon words, or whether the latter are actually themselves recent borrowings from French and Guyanais.

Portuguese and French are, of course, both Romance languages, so the following words could have come from either language (Green & Green n.d.):

- mak* (<*marca* or *marque* ‘mark’)
- sin* (<*sinal* or *signe* ‘sign’)
- elikop* (<*helicóptero* or <*hélicoptère* ‘helicopter’)
- fléx* (<*flecha* or *flèche*) ‘arrow’
- sal* (<*sala* or *salle*) ‘living room’

Some lexical items have both been borrowed directly from Portuguese without substantial changes with no syllabic restructuring and almost no segmental differences, particularly in terms of vowel quality (e.g., *kaho* < *carro* ‘car’). Other borrowings have been subject to processes of apocope (of unstressed vowels and weak syllables), and the less common process of excrescence (insertion of a consonant to close a final syllable). These have occurred for the purpose of restructuring word-final open syllables to the closed syllable structure generally preferred in AFC. Picanço Montejo (2001:85) notes, “Outro fator é o empréstimo do português. Acontece com frequência, mas sempre obedecendo a estrutura sonora da língua”⁸. Examples of vowel and syllable apocope are:

- V (or VV) → Ø: *kheuól* (< Port. *criollo* ‘creole’) (all sources)
- CV → Ø: *ros* (< Port. *rosca* ‘screw’) (Green & Green 1996)
- VC → Ø: *lap* (< Port. *lapis* ‘pencil’) (Picanço Montejo 1988)

Sometimes apocopation of weak final consonants takes place, as in *deve* (< *dever* ‘must’). One example of excrescence includes *esthumet* (<*estrume*) ‘manure’.

According to Green & Green, there are also cases of hybrids in the creation of new lexemes:

- bluz dji jip* (<Port. *blusa* ‘blouse’, *dji* ‘of’, Fr. *jupe* ‘skirt’) ‘blouse’ (Green & Green n.d.)
- gem dji djizê* (<Port. *gema* ‘egg yolk’, *dji* ‘of’, Fr. *des oeufs* ‘eggs’) ‘egg yolk’ (also *kotê dji djize ki jon*) (Green & Green n.d.)
- past dji dā* – (<Port. *pasta*, *dji* ‘of’, Fr. *dent*) ‘toothpaste’ (Green & Green n.d.)
- kompāhe dji mem txim* (<Port. *companheiro* ‘companion’, Fr. *même*, Port. *dji time* ‘of the team’) ‘team members’ (Green & Green n.d.)
- māje kōsév* (<Fr. *manger*, Port. *conserva*) ‘tinned food’ (Green & Green n.d.)

8. Translation: ‘Another factor is the borrowing from Portuguese. This occurs frequently, but always follows the sound structure of the language.’

txi pedas (<Fr. *petit*, Port. *pedaço(s)*) ‘in little pieces’ (Green & Green n.d.), and also *dumãde ajud* or *sokorro* (<Fr. *demande* ‘to ask for’, Port. *ajuda* ‘help’) ‘to ask for help’ (Green & Green n.d.)

Since all of the above hybrids are from one Palikúr-based research team only, these could have been explanations or translations given to the researchers who were fluent in Palikúr but not AFC; or it could be that the language consultants/informants were Palikúr who speak AFC as a lingua franca, and that these are used more among Palikúr speakers.

With regard to indigenous words, Portuguese has given AFC some Tupi words (Tobler 1987), since the latter (Tupi words) were already integrated into Portuguese. In AFC, a large number of words for flora and fauna are clearly indigenous in origin, from the Tupi, Carib and Arawakan language families (Rodrigues 2003). These include:

agutxi, from *aguti* – agouti
jenipa(p), from *jenipapo* (genipapo)
pak, from *paca* (agouti paca)
zagai, from *zagaia* (‘type of bird’ or a ‘spear’?)

According to Corne, ‘of Tupi there appears to remain but little: some lexical items (flora, fauna, ...), the content of some tales and riddles, and perhaps other traces’ (1985: 233). Some examples of AFC words of possible (unspecified) Amerindian origin include the following. These data have been extracted from Tobler 1987 (the scientific names of the fauna here were not provided in that source).

ahe – ‘parrot’ (*arraia*)
anauha – ‘type of wood’ (*anauerá*)
atxipa – ‘type of fish’
bakurau – ‘type of bird’
iaia – ‘type of fish’
iauanauí – ‘type of animal’ (*janauí*)
ipapu – ‘type of fish’
kanaxi/kamaxi – ‘type of fish’
kuabio – ‘cassava by-product’
kulubhi – ‘colibri’
kusiri – ‘type of animal’
masuhu – ‘type of fish’ (*kará vermelho*)
tauahu – ‘tracajá (‘species of turtle’)
ture – ‘dance’
urariri – ‘type of animal’

3. Conclusion

Language contact between AFC and Portuguese continues to be intense, and ongoing lexical borrowing from Portuguese can be expected, especially as bilingualism increases. The implications and effects of ongoing contact need to be examined, particularly the rates and paths of language change and possible shift. Further research needs to be done into the history and nature of various stages of contact between AFC and Portuguese (and also between AFC and French), the estimated dates and nature of borrowing, and the productivity of internal AFC word formation processes. Individual use and sociolinguistic factors such as parents' ethnicity, religion, village of origin, age, and (bilingual and monolingual) education must all be considered.

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