

The Case for Fusion: Judeo-Ibero-Romance in Europe, Asia, and Latin America

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ABSTRACT

Judeo-Ibero-Romance has been commonly characterized as a koiné: a mixture of mutually intelligible varieties of closely related languages, showing neutralization or loss of marked and minority forms. This paper argues that although some dialects of Judeo-Ibero-Romance (e.g. Bucharest) appear to be koinés, others (e.g. Istanbul, Salonika, Monastir, Temuco) represent a different category of language types: that of “fusion”. The components of a fusion language are not as well integrated into a single system. Fusion languages manifest “compartmentalization” of components, the co-existence, rather than neutralization, of marked rules and structures. In Salonika, Istanbul, Monastir, and Temuco Judeo-Ibero-Romance, there are many lexical items which display the Spanish intervocalic fricatives [β], [ɗ], [ɣ], final nasal [n], and unstressed mid-vowels [e], [o], in final and other positions. Yet, there are almost as many lexical items where unstressed vowels are realized in the Portuguese manner as [i], [u], where intervocalic sounds are realized as stops [b], [d], [g], and final nasals as the bilabial stop [m] or as a nasal vowel. The emergence of fusion languages is explained as a function of the simultaneous acquisition of literacy in Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, and other languages.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the phonology of several Judeo-Ibero-Romance dialects from Rumania, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece, and Chile. It claims that Judeo-Ibero-Romance dialects such as Bucharest are Spanish koinés [11]. In contrast, Judeo-Ibero-Romance dialects of Istanbul, Salonika, Monastir, and Temuco (Chile) are cases of fusion [9]. The emergence of fusion languages is explained as a function of the acquisition of literacy in a multilingual environment.

2. FUSION IN JUDEO-IBERO-ROMANCE

The Spanish-based Rumanian dialect of Bucharest can be characterized as a koiné [2], [11]; the reason is that this

dialect of Judeo-Ibero-Romance is the result of a mixture of Spanish dialects, where more marked and minority variants have been lost by neutralization [3], [12]. In others, such as Istanbul, Salonika, Monastir, as well as in the speech of émigrés from Monastir living in Temuco (Chile) now, where there is more than one parent language (in this case Spanish and Portuguese), its development leads to what Markey calls “fusion” [9]. Besides, and this may be the acid test of fusion, the components of a fusion language are not as well integrated into a single system as those of koiné, or other linguistic systems. Fusion languages manifest a compartmentalization of components, which appears to be a unique property of these languages.

A close look at the phonological components of the Salonika, Istanbul, Monastir, and Temuco dialects of Judeo-Ibero-Romance suggests that neutralization fails to occur. In contrast, unlike cases of koineization and creolization, the phonological inventories of these Judeo-Ibero-Romance dialects are highly marked [1], [3]. In creole languages, fricatives (other than [s]) and affricates are mostly avoided; consonants [z], [ʒ], [ʃ], [tʃ], [dʒ] are reduced to [s]. Judeo-Ibero-Romance dialects, however, inherited fricatives [β], [ɗ], [ɣ], [f], [v], [s], [z], [ʒ], [ʃ] and affricates [tʃ], [dʒ] from their lexifier languages.

Thus, koinization, like child language and creolization, shows a clear preference for the least marked segments [3]. In some Judeo-Ibero-Romance dialects, however, Spanish in contact with Portuguese produces very different results. In Salonika, Istanbul, and Monastir, as well as in the speech of émigrés from Monastir living in Temuco (Chile) now, there are many lexical items which display the Spanish intervocalic fricatives [β], [ɗ], [ɣ], final nasal alveolar stop [n], and unstressed mid vowels [e] and [o] in final and other positions. Yet there are as many lexical items where unstressed vowels in the same positions are realized in the Portuguese manner as [i] and [u], where intervocalic sounds are realized as the stops [b], [d], [g], and final nasals as the bilabial stop [m] or with nasal vowels [2], [6], [8], [13]. Table 1 presents some examples.

Table 1
Vowels and consonants
in Judeo-Ibero-Romance

Table 1a
Vowels:
Compartmentalization of high- and mid-vowels

u		o	
escuru	Pt. 'dark'	gato	pt. 'cat'
famozu	Pt. 'famous'	niego	Sp. 'I deny'
i		e	
fami	Pt. 'hunger'	dale	Sp. 'give it'
lonzi	Pt. 'far away'	clase	Sp. 'class'

Table 1b
Consonants:
Compartmentalization of voiced stops and fricatives

b		β	
queriba	Pt. 'wanted'	riyiβa	Sp. 'laughed'
abufarse	Pt. 'to swell'	posta de βaka	Sp. 'cow shit'
g		ɣ	
rogu	Pt. 'to beg'	iyaɔo	Sp. 'liver'
zugu	Pt. 'yoke'	litiya	Sp. 'litigate'
d		ɗ	
ferida	Pt. 'sore'	proβeɗaɗ	Sp. 'poverty'
fegado	Pt. 'liver'	kurlaɗu	Sp. 'red'

Table 1c
Consonants:
Compartmentalization of bilabial stop/nasal vowels
and nasal alveolar stop

m/nasal vowel		n	
kem	Pt. 'who'	araygan	Sp. 'lazy'
kū	Pt. 'with'	lision	Sp. 'lesson'

In Table 1, intervocalic stops and final bilabial nasals and nasal vowels are used exclusively in words of Portuguese origin; on the other hand, intervocalic fricatives and final nasal alveolar stops appear exclusively in words of Spanish origin. Additionally, final mid vowels [e] and [o] occur in words of Spanish origin, whereas [i] and [u] are used with Portuguese vocabulary. Thus, as opposed to koiné systems such as Bucharest Judeo-Ibero-Romance, in Salonika, Istanbul, Monastir, and Temuco, certain neutralizations fail to take place; what occurs, rather, is "compartmentalization", that is, the co-existence of rules and structures from both input languages, in this case, both Spanish and Portuguese. In short, In Salonika, Istanbul, Monastir, and Temuco, the result is a less natural, less integrated, less iconic, and more opaque system characterized by a marked segmental inventory.

3. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY OF LINGUISTIC FUSION

Language development in young children is obviously not affected by the knowledge of the history of the language they are acquiring, since children are not yet literate; (they do not go to school nor read books in or about their language(s) and their culture(s)). Today there are probably no children acquiring Judeo-Ibero-Romance as a native tongue. Yet it makes sense to suppose that in the acquisition of Istanbul, Salonika, Monastir, and Temuco Judeo-Ibero-Romance, children spoke some kind of juvenile Judeo-Ibero-Romance; they probably acquired the unmarked patterns of their language first, as children usually do [3], [4], [5]. That is, they might have produced the word [gato] as [gatu], in the Portuguese manner, by raising post-tonic mid-vowel [o] to [u]. Later on, as a result of literacy, through the study of sacred texts and praying, in Spanish and Portuguese, and familiarity with the parent languages in a multilingual environment, they might have acquired the features [+ Spanish], [+ Portuguese], [+ Hebrew], [+ Aramaic], etc. As a result of the knowledge of cultural and linguistic heritage, and as they grow into competent adult speakers of their native language, speakers of Judeo-Ibero-Romance may have revised their phonological rules in order to produce, as adults, a more marked final [o] instead of baby-talk [u]. The above reconstructed scenario looks very probable since the more educated the speaker, the less he or she is given to rely on less marked solutions and more to the preservation of marked structures.

Literacy, enhances awareness of abstract underlying morphophonological structure and motivates surface alternations that otherwise appear idiosyncratic (e.g. underlying gutturals and pharyngeals or historical roots in

Hebrew) [3], [4], [10]. Irregular forms become more accessible to the literate acquainted with the historical form. For example, English speakers literate in other languages such as Spanish reconstruct the segment [x] which is absent in English. The tendency toward natural rule neutralization is checked by the speaker's knowledge of underlying historical representation. The requirement that a grammar be shallow, i.e. maintain a short distance between underlying and surface structures, is violated in the dialects of Judeo-Ibero-Romance analyzed in this study, as well as by literate speakers of English, Hebrew and other languages [7].

The claim here is that a Jewish language like Judeo-Ibero-Romance might be typologically different from other languages in the sense that speakers use their etymological knowledge, acquired through multilingual literacy in Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, Aramaic, Judeo-Ibero-Romance (J-I-R), and other languages, something that constrains the application of phonological rules to keep base components apart, as shown in Table 2 [14].

Table 2
Developmental competence in J-I-R

Linguistic stage	Environment	Age
(1) J-I-R Baby Talk	home	childhood
(2) J-I-R, Spanish Portuguese, Hebrew, etc.	(religious) school, synagogue	adulthood

Thus, because of their different linguistic, historical and psychological background, Jews may originate typologically different and original varieties of language.

4. CONCLUSION

I have examined the phonology of Judeo-Ibero-Romance dialects from Rumania, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece, and Chile. Certain neutralizations fail to take place in Istanbul, Salonika, Monastir, and Temuco, as opposed to koinés such as Bucharest Judeo-Ibero-Romance. What occurs rather is compartmentalization, that is, the co-existence of rules and structures from both input languages, in this case, both Spanish and Portuguese. The result is a less natural and at the same time less integrated system, characterized by more opaque phonological rules and a more marked segmental inventory.

Compartmentalization and the resultant fusion system are explained in terms of the acquisition of literacy in a multilingual environment. Speakers of Judeo-Ibero-Romance dialects in Istanbul, Salonika, Monastir, and Temuco separate the lexicon in items of each input-language. The reason is that they are acquainted with the history of their language and never severed contact with Spanish and Portuguese. The claim is that features such as [+/-Spanish], [+/-Portuguese], [+/-Hebrew], [+/-Aramaic], etc. have psychological reality for the speakers of some dialects of Judeo-Ibero-Spanish.

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