

Me gohtaba ehta linguaji barranquenha: Variable object clitics in Barrancos, Portugal

The border between Alentejo, Portugal, and Extremadura, Spain, specifically, in and around the villa of Barrancos, has a multilingual population that speaks both European Portuguese (EP) and Spanish but, also, maintains a third native contact variety, Barranquenho. Interestingly, this variety is not necessarily required for communication nor encoding reality as the population natively speaks both Spanish and EP. Rather, Barranquenho functions as a marker of cultural identity as residents perceive themselves to be culturally distinct from both Spain and Portugal. Previous qualitative research shows that Barranquenho possesses several phonological and morphosyntactic properties that show more Spanish-like patterns and a largely Portuguese lexicon, an observation which has been used as a basis for classifying it as a *mixed language* (Clements, Amaral & Luís, 2011). However Barranquenho has not been widely studied using quantitative methods. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by analyzing 895 tokens of pronominal object clitics (POCs) taken from a corpus of 20 native-speaker interviews of various ages and examines their placement, morphology and distribution in specific constructions.

Results suggest that while Barranquenho possesses a mixed clitic system containing both Spanish and EP-like properties, it, ultimately, shows a more Spanish-like placement pattern; one that is sensitive to finiteness rather than the presence or absence of specific fronted operators or morphophonological restrictions. For instance, Table 2 reports near-categorical proclisis in contexts in which EP displays enclisis with finite verbs, such as after referential subjects, sentence-initially, in *in-situ* questions and after fronted topics (261 of 277 tokens [94.22%]). In addition to placement data, chi-square tests find that the doubling of indirect object POCs is significant in both third-person forms, *le* [le] (χ^2 [$df = 1, n = 895$] = 7.50; $p = .005$) as in (1) and *lhe* [ʎə] (χ^2 [$df = 1, n = 895$] = 11.53; $p = .001$), which appear to be in variation in this variety (see Table 3). Apart from these quantitative results there are also several other tendencies reflective of Spanish-like patterns. For instance, this study finds instances of *leísmo* (2) as well as multiple tokens of dative-of-interest (3) and double pronominalization constructions (4) which are similar to Spanish and show Spanish-like variation. This is opposed to coalescence in EP which is also seen in the data, (5) but interestingly, coalescence is found alongside non-argumental *se* constructions as in (6), a construction not found in EP. Additionally, we find frequent instances of Spanish-like constructions of psychological verbs with dative experiencers (7).

From these results, it can be posited that Barranquenho possesses many traits of a *semi-shift* contact situation (Croft, 2000) but, despite having these properties, it also has a mixed grammatical system and lexicon like so-called *mixed-marriage languages*. Therefore, while *semi-shift* may best describe the contact situation in Barrancos, it is not a prototypical context. The results of this study suggest that the conceptualization of mixed languages is better represented as points on a continuum as opposed to discrete categories. Further, this study has implications for existing models of the typology of contact varieties as Barranquenho is a stable, relatively aged variety that has displayed rich agreement morphology since its earliest documentation by Leite de Vasconcelos (1939).

Finally, while ultimately social factors and the ecology of the contact situation may have led to the emergence of Barranquenho—i.e. establishing a unique cultural identity distinct from those of the Spain and Portugal—there are also cognitive factors such as frequency, exemplar effects, transfer and cross-linguistic interference that also contribute to the properties observed in this unique variety. In conclusion, we lay out several avenues for future research and how the future study of Barranquenho can help to expand the research base, our knowledge of mixed languages and how they can be classified.

Examples

- (1) *i ã le_i disse asĩ au outru_i...*
 And one cl said_{3sg} thus to-the other...
And one said it that way to the other...
- (2) *...médicu nãu abía i le encontrárom...*
 ...doctor no had and cl found_{3pl}
...there wasn't a doctor and we found him...
- (3) *...i se le_i ehcapô à Maria_i.*
 ...and cl cl escaped_{3sg} to-the Maria.
...and it got away from Maria.
- (4) *Eu achu que se lu tẽnhu que dizẽ...*
 I think that cl cl have_{1sg} that say_{inf}...
I think that I have to say it to him...
- (5) *eu lho agradeço eçe dia quando...*
 I cl-cl thank_{1sg} this_{cl} day...when...
I thank him for it this day when
- (6) *O gato sa-Ø comeu...*
 The cat cl-cl ate_{3sg}...
The cat ate them up...
- (7) *Me gohtaba ehta linguaji barranquenha...*
 cl liked_{3sg} this language
 Barranquenho...
I liked this Barranquenho language...

Table 1: Distribution of tokens extracted

	Enclisis	Proclisis	Accusative	Dative	Singular	Plural
#of Tokens	109	786	280	615	856	39
%	12.18	87.82	32.29	68.72	95.64	4.36

Table 2: Clitic placement in Barranquenho (B) compared to EP

	Enclisis	Proclisis	EP enclitic contexts (finite)	B proclisis in EP enclitic contexts (finite)	B enclisis in EP enclitic contexts (finite)
#of Tokens	109*	786	277	261	16
%	12.18	87.82	30.95	29.16	1.79

* = 93 were the order *infinitive-Cl* in which enclisis is allowed in both EP and Spanish

Table 3: POC doubled forms

	Total	<i>lhe</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>a</i>
#of Tokens	70	23	21	20	4	1	1
%	100.00*	32.86	30.00	28.57	5.71	1.43	1.43

References

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