

## Use of the Progressive Morpheme in the Spoken Papiamentu of Aruba

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In modern Papiamentu (PP), an Iberian-based creole, the Spanish gerundive and progressive morpheme *ndo* is used. Previous work based on textual data (e.g. Sanchez 2002) suggests that the occurrence and usage of *-ndo* in PP can be explained only by referencing the successive influences of Spanish and English. Contact with Spanish led to the borrowing of the affix with its gerundive function, then contact with English extended *-ndo* to a progressive function via surface string matching, a process through which bilinguals have been shown to import the function of a construction from one language to another (Prince 1988, Silva-Corvalán 1993).

This analysis can be further supported and expanded based on newly available data from Aruba. Ethnographic observations, informal interviews, and 50 sociolinguistic interviews (ages 18-82; 26 females; 38 hours of speech) were conducted from March to May of 2003. The analysis presented here is based on 27 hours of speech from 39 speakers (21 females), stratified by age (<30, 31-50, 51-70, >70), class (middle, working), and place of residence (urban, rural; plus a handful of speakers from San Nicolas).

Although the overall frequency of main verb progressive *-ndo* in the spoken and written language differ (2.5% and 10% and respectively), the pattern of change over time is supported by the spoken data as reflected in apparent time. Specifically, the first occurrence of progressive *-ndo* in texts occurred in the 1920s, and use of the form increased until the present. All speakers in the sample were born after 1920; 46 of 50 used the form in speech. Younger speakers use progressive *ndo* more frequently than older speakers, with the primary difference between the over 70 group and the under 70 groups (chi square  $p=0.02$ ). Thus, speakers who learned Papiamentu during the 1920s show little use of progressive *-ndo* in speech, but those who learned after that time, and therefore after English began to exert influence, show a significantly higher rate of use.

Textual data suggested that social and/or stylistic variation might exist. In speech, rural females use more progressive *-ndo* than rural males ( $p=0.0013$ ), but there was no significant difference between urban males and females. In addition, the rural middle class use the form more than the rural working class ( $p=0.022$ ), again with no difference in the corresponding urban groups. The role of two particular women in these results is discussed. Place of residence (urban vs. rural) showed no significant difference in use of the variable.

Thus, spoken and written data show an increase in the use of progressive *-ndo* in the creole. I argue that this change is not decreolization in the direction of Spanish on the grounds that 1) the use of *-ndo* is becoming more unlike that of Spanish rather than more like it and 2) because Papiamentu is in contact with three European languages, there is no strong pressure in any one direction.

### References

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