Afro-Brazilian *Cupópia*: language contact, lexically-driven deliberate change and its grammatical outcomes.

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Structure of the presentation

1. Aims
2. Cupópia’s typological features and use
3. Cupópia’s socio-historical context
4. Classification of Cupópia as a mixed language based on socio-historical context and typological features
5. Origins of Cupópia: contact settings and linguistic outcomes
6. Final considerations
Aims

1. Describe Cupópia's typological features, use and socio-historical context.

2. Identify Cupópia as a mixed language in order to be able to discuss current views on the typologies and social contexts of such languages.

3. Shed light on the processes through which Cupópia emerged.
The Cupópia of Cafundó

Rural Afro-Brazilian community, 144 km from São Paulo.

1978-1983 linguistic data was gathered among the 80 descendants of 2 slave women who inherited their owners’ proprieties. (Vogt & Fry 1996)
Cupópia’s typological features (lexical analysis)

- 103/160 lexical morphemes specific for Cupópia have African origin
- 86/103 African-derived words have Kimbundu origin (most verbs, adjectives and adverbs from Kimb)
- 25 % of the Africanisms belong to the semantic domain of daily/domestic life
- 28 % of the Africanisms are basic vocabulary
- Many semantically bleached verbs and nouns
- Some words may be deformed deliberately
Cupópia’s typological features (morphosyntactic analysis)

- Copula absence
- Possessive constructions with copula
- Variable gender agreement in the NP
- Consistent plural marking 1st element of NP
- Bare nouns in grammatically specific contexts
- Variable subject-verb agreement
- Shares some grammatical particularities with an earlier stage of regional Portuguese (100 years ago)
- Differences Cupópia - Cafundó Portuguese concentrate in the NP
Cupópia

(1) cupópia pro-s tata levar pro ambará
cupópia PREP.DEF.M-PL man bring PREP.DEM.M vila
‘cupópia for the men to bring to the village’

(2) quend-ei com o tata lá d'-ambará
walk-PST.1SG with DEF.M man there PREP-village
‘I spoke with the man there from the village’
**Cupópia: Functional characterization**

- Not L1
- Co-existence with Portuguese
- Not main language of communication
- Used as in-group code to express particular social functions/maintain identity (ancestral or new ethnic group?)
- Signals distance with out-groups, may function as secret language
- Conscious and creative use of language resources (elliptical and allusive use of language)
Cupópia’s socio-historical context

1750: Africans arrived after 1750. Owner’s great grandfather arrived.

1801: Sorocaba 1801: 87% Angolla (= from Luanda, kimb) The receiving slave community may have imposed the Kimbundu-based variety that they probably spoke with newcomers (Slenes, 1996).

1800-1850: aprox 50 % of the slaves were Africans.

~1880: Antônia and Ifigênia (slaves) inherited the land.

Etymologies match historical and demographical data.
**Cupópia: a (symbiotic) mixed language?**

**Mixed languages:** a diverse category defined by mixing

**Cupópia:** 2 identifiable sources, only lexical material from ancestral (African) language, with a regional (Portuguese) grammar frame, no grammatical mixing, some slightly different grammar rules (not from African source)

**Social history:** Small group (~100), presence of bilingual speakers

**Use:** symbiotic and dependent relationship with dominant language (Portuguese), often secret code

**Parallels:** Angloromani
When did *Cupópia* emerge?

Linguistic data indicates that Cupópia probably emerged in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century when:

- there were still Kimbundu (Kimbundu-based lingua franca) speakers (bilinguals?) around when this variety emerged (lexical and historical/demographical data shows that)
- there were enough speakers who were proficient in a common Ig – Caipira Portuguese - to employ it as the frame builder of the new variety
- *Caipira* Portuguese described by Amaral (1920) was the frame language (shared grammatical properties)
On speakers’ intentions

- **Background**: Part of the group was partially bilingual, but not necessarily fluent in Kimbundu/Portuguese.

- One group (older people who knew Kimbundu/lingua franca) may have helped to perform a deliberate ‘undoing’ of a shift towards an introduced language (Portuguese) to reclaim an ancestral language. Or was it a new identity rather than an ancestral identity/language?

- Some individuals may have invented a new variety, also used as a secret code and then passed it on to others.
Processes involved – at a general level

- Gradual grammatical borrowing (from Portuguese) vs reversed language shift (African-Portuguese-African)

- Grammatical restructuring: a result of reductions triggered by the lexicon vs direct transfer from earlier restructured variety of Portuguese
Final remarks: social contexts and linguistic outcomes

Which are the social factors in this Cafundó setting that lead to a deliberate change with a result like the one we see in Cupópia (symbiotic mixed language)?

> not higher proportion of African population
> not higher level of isolation

Hypothesis: important social functions and relatively small group are key factors in the emergence of Cupópia (and other mixed languages?)