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Review of Sprachkontakt und lexikalische Innovation in der karibischen Kontaktzone: Die Beispiele bozal, cimarrón und criollo

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Sprachkontakt und lexikalische Innovation in der karibischen Kontaktzone: Die Beispiele bozal, cimarrón und criollo. By Alla Klimenkowa. Hamburg: Helmut Buske (Kreolische Bibliothek 28). 2017. Pp. 307. Paperback \$66.80. [To order electronically, visit <<https://www.buske.de/>>]

Reviewed by Natalie Operstein

This book explores the concept of a contact zone (Pratt 1991) with the focus on post-fifteenth century cross-cultural and cross-linguistic interactions in the Caribbean involving indigenous and European speech communities. The centerpieces of the inquiry are the Spanish words *bozal*, *cimarrón* and *criollo* (this last together with its Portuguese cognate *crioulo*), singled out for analysis as some of the key words belonging to the same semantic sphere, the vocabulary of slavery. Despite the diverse origins of these words in Spanish, they are regarded as Hispanisms in the context of the Caribbean contact zone since they have been transmitted from or via Spanish to the area's other languages, English included. The twin focus of the study is on the cognitive and ecological factors that have propelled the semantic evolution of these words.

Methodologically, the study relies on the combination of close reading of documentary sources from the past and the author's fieldwork in the French Caribbean. The documentary sources consist of unpublished archival materials as well as published writings of different genres, including letters, reports, travel accounts and lexicographic works; this component of the research is aimed at tracing the historical documentation of the words and their evolving usage in the participating languages. The fieldwork component comprises interviews with multiple speakers of French Caribbean Creoles, mainly Guadeloupean, Martinican and Haitian. In combination with the relevant dictionary data, it aims at revealing these words' present-day usage.

Tracing the historical evolution of Sp. *bozal* provides an early opportunity for introducing one of the central hypotheses of the study, that of co-evolution of Spanish and Portuguese vocabulary of slavery and its crystallization in the Iberian Peninsula prior to its exportation to the respective colonial territories (p. 49).¹ A derivative of *bozo* (< Lat. **buceus* 'of the mouth'), *bozal* went through a series of metonymic shifts, developing the meaning 'fuzz', subsequently extended to 'beardless / young person' and then to 'inexperienced / incompetent (person)'; as well as that of 'face' or 'mouth', subsequently extended to mean 'muzzle'. The meaning 'inexperienced / incompetent' is also seen in the application of *bozal* to untamed, unbroken animals and to newly brought slaves unfamiliar with European ways and language. In this latter sense, *bozal* was opposed to *ladino* (< Lat. *latīnus* 'Latin'), both terms serving to classify slaves along the dimension of cultural and linguistic acculturation, with the possibility of in-between categories such as *muy ladino* 'very *ladino*' and *muy bozal* 'very *bozal*'. In Spanish America and Brazil, the term *bozal* (Ptg. *boçal*) was applied to both African slaves and indigenous people, eventually specializing to mean "slaves born in Africa"; in this sense, *bozal* slaves came to be opposed to *criollo*, or "locally born slaves". Klimenkowa suggests that the vitality of *bozal* in Spanish America was additionally motivated by folk-etymological association with *bozal* 'muzzle' based on the newly arrived slaves' lack of facility with the Europeans'

¹ The following abbreviations are used for language names: Eng. = English, FCC = French Caribbean Creoles, Fr. = French, Lat. = Latin, Ptg. = Portuguese, Sp. = Spanish.

language and the contemporary practice of comparing slaves with animals. In post-colonial Spanish America, *bozal* was applied to outsiders present in the region who spoke Spanish poorly and did not understand the local customs. In present-day French Caribbean Creoles (FCC), *bosal* designates socially unacceptable ('rude, violent') behavior. The application of *bosal* to untidy or unkempt individuals in Guadeloupe Creole is hypothesized to be motivated by folk-etymological association with Fr. *sale* 'dirty'.

The discussion of Sp. *cimarrón* and its congeners (Eng. *maroon* and *Seminole*, Fr. *mar(r)on*, FCC *mawon*, Sp. *jíbaro*) takes the reader through the multiple metonymic shifts undergone by this word. Initially applied to wild uncultivated plants, *cimarrón* was subsequently extended to feral animals and runaway Indians and Africans. The word's semantic history is meticulously traced through textual references, definitions of lexicographers, comments of contemporary observers, and fieldwork interviews. Representative textual samples and collocations illustrating these varied uses include, among many others, Sp. *frutas silvestres, que llaman cimarronas* 'wild fruits they call *cimarronas*' (in a text from 1599), Sp. *gato jíbaro* 'feral cat', and Haitian *tabak mawon* 'wild tobacco'. Klimenkowa surveys the proposed etymologies of *cimarrón*, rejecting several that are based on "folk etymology" and favoring the line of proposals that derive this word from an indigenous source (cf. "*cimarrón* pudiera estar relacionado con *símara*, término que ha sido registrado en locono o arahuaco general con el significado de 'flecha' [*cimarrón* could be related to *símara*, a term that has been recorded in Lokono or general Arawak with the meaning 'arrow']", Arrom 1983: 56). Other topics addressed include the existence of two different shapes of this word in the same and across different languages, with and without the initial syllable, and meaning extensions that took place in more recent times, such as the word's application to unlicensed or ill-qualified persons (e.g. *taxi mawon* for unlicensed taxi driver).

The discussion of Sp. *criollo*, together with Ptg. *crioulo*, Fr. *créole* and Eng. *creole*, relies on multiple sources of information, most notably published and unpublished texts from a vast region comprising the Iberian Peninsula, the islands of Cape Verde and São Tomé, French and English Caribbean, Brazil and Spanish America, which is viewed historically as a shared communicative space. The semantic and syntactic information gleaned from the texts is supplemented with detailed discussion of the contemporaneous political and economic contexts and relevant socio-cultural practices. The approaches to the etymology of *criollo* / *crioulo* that endeavor to reduce their origin to a single prototype in a single Iberian language are discarded in favor of the multiple birth model (Aitchison 1995). The model, which invokes the notions of "profligacy" and "selection", assumes that the language, or languages in contact, "sprout out" a number of competing possibilities which are subsequently winnowed down in response to intra- and extra-linguistic conditioning. This conception of the origin of *criollo* / *crioulo* ties in with Klimenkowa's hypothesis, mentioned above, of co-evolution of Spanish and Portuguese vocabulary of slavery (pp. 196-197). The evolving semantics of *criollo* / *crioulo* is traced in the same careful and unhurried manner as those of *bozal* and *cimarrón*, from the earliest attestations all the way to their current uses, based in part on new documentary evidence. An interesting section of the chapter discusses the use of Ptg. *crioulo* as a language label, briefly addressing the intriguing difference in this respect between

Portuguese and Spanish, in which *criollo* is not used as a language label outside of academic discourse (Schwegler 2003).

It is not possible to condense all the fine details of this dynamic, multifaceted and richly documented study in a brief review. Some of the features that deserve a special mention include sustained focus on the evolving socio-cultural context in which the targeted words are used; the endeavor to correlate the observed semantic changes with the changing environment, broadly understood, in which the respective languages function; and the placing in relief of the difficulties of tracing word origins in a contact zone that involves interaction among multiple participants. In summary, the book provides a valuable contribution to several areas of inquiry, which include but are not limited to contact linguistics, cognitive diachronic semantics, and language ecology.

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