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COMMUNICATIVE COMPROMISE

MAINTENANCE OF A

FIRST LANGUAGE:

LUZO-AMERICAN SPEECH

(MANUTENÇÃO COMUNICATIVA DE UMA PRIMEIRA LÍNGUA:

FALA LUSO-AMERICANA)

ABSTRACT

Portuguese-American families in California, who are predominantly of Azorian descent, speak a variation of Portuguese which incorporates many loanwords from English. The loanwords of concepts arising from the economic, social, political and geographical reality of present day California illustrate a high degree of cultural adaptation and a drive to improve the communicability of their first language.

RESUMO

Famílias luso-americanas na Califórnia, que são de descendência predominante açoreana, falam uma variação de português que incorpora muitas palavras inglesas. Os empréstimos de palavras que denominam conceitos surgindo da realidade contemporânea econômica, social e política ilustram um alto grau de aculturação e um esforço para melhorar a comunicabilidade da fala da sua primeira língua.

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Under the heavy social pressure of having to communicate in an English speaking culture, Portuguese immigrant families in California adopt many English items in their Portuguese speech. These incursions produce a dialect of Portuguese which is more communicable in the environment dominated linguistically by English. This distinctive variant of Portuguese can be called the Luzo-American speech of California. The most apparent manifestation of English in the Portuguese of the Luzo-Americans of California is the accumulation of English loanwords. The present study will attempt to demonstrate how these loanwords improve the communicability of Portuguese, the first language of these families, while at the same time they maintain Portuguese as their dominant cultural trait. It is important to point out that this Portuguese colony is predominantly from the Portuguese province of the Azores Islands and that the immigrant stream from the Azores continues to increase this Azorian dominance. In this study, therefore, "luzo" ought to be understood as predominantly "azorian".

Glossary studies of these loanwords in Luzo-American have been composed. The most monumental one was the work of Pap 1949. The study in question does not intend to merely add items to these glossaries, but it will offer a sampling of items in order to initiate speculation about the linguistic and extra-linguistic circumstances which might have influenced their insertion in the Luzo-American usage of the immigrant families consulted. It is hoped that the initial analysis of this sampling will contribute to opening up the study of how learning a second language influences the usage of the first language of the second language learner to actually create a new variant of this first language; the variant can be seen as a linguistic compromise which maintains the first language in a form that is more communicable in the environment dominated by the second language.

Three sources were used to select the loanword

samplings in this study: 1. A tape recording of an interview between Lewis Dias, born on the island of São Jorge, Azores, raised in California, and his parents, Manuel, born and raised on São Jorge, presently retired in California, and Clara, born in California but raised and married on São Jorge, now residing with Manuel in California; the whole family immigrated to California when Lewis was thirteen years old. 2. A tape recording of a conversation between Eliza Avellar and Mae Cantel, both born of Azorian immigrant families. 3. The personal remembrances of the author. Due to the author's exposure to Brazilian Portuguese for the past twenty years, Brazilian Portuguese usage is used as a source of comparison rather than contemporary usage in Portugal or in the Azores.

| LUZO-AMERICAN | BRAZILIAN | ENGLISH |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| <u>Tape recording 1</u> | | |
| sexsecure | previdência so- cial | social security |
| brij | ponte | bridge |
| <u>Tape recording 2</u> | | |
| meibi carrotas | talvez cenouras | maybe carrots |
| <u>Personal remembrances</u> | | |
| human neisun | natureza humana | human nature |
| low | lei | law |
| larj | associação fra- ternal | lodge |
| showa | espectáculo/cer- to | show/sure |
| esterja | diligência | stagecoach |
| fazer mess | sentir falta | miss |

Tape recording 1

"Sexsecur" is from the Luzo-American vocabulary of Manuel Dias. When he used this word, he was already retired, receiving his social security pension. Upon immigrating with his family to California, he had little opportunity to learn much English. He explained in the recorded interview, "Tiria a prendido se só tivesse com gente americana, mas tava só Mexicanos e depois só Portugueses. Aprendi uma cozita galinhas era chickens" "Cozita", of course, is borrowed from Mexican. The adaption of "social security" which produced "sexsecure" is difficult to speculate about. Possibly, the sound of "ci" in "social", and the tendency of second language learners to shorten unfamiliar sounds could explain cutting down "security" to "secure". At any rate, Manuel felt he would be understood using this expression in his Portuguese speech. It is important to note that Manuel has very little English competence, relying almost always on bilingual speakers to negotiate for him with non-Portuguese speakers.

Manuel also used "brij" in the interview. The Portuguese pronunciation of "j" substitutes the English pronunciation of "dge". This combination of consonants is difficult to pronounce for a Portuguese speaker like Manuel who reduced the sound of the combination to the more familiar Portuguese pronunciation of the consonant "g" which has the soft pronunciation of "j" as the "s" of "measure" or "vision" in English and the "g" in "Gilberto" or "Geraldina" in Portuguese. It is also very probable that Manuel was unfamiliar with the Portuguese word "ponte" because the island of São Jorge, where he was born and raised, did not have any structures similar to the impressive bridges that span San Francisco Bay where he now lives. The word "brij", we could say, is not a substitution for the forgotten "ponte", but it represents the expression of a new reality

in his life.

Tape recording no.2

"Meibi" was used by Eliza Avellar, the sister of the author. She was the first child born in California of parents from the island of Flores, Azores. She learned Portuguese in the early stages of acculturation of the family when Portuguese was still dominant at home. Why, then, did she forget the very frequently used "talvez", substituting it with the anglicism "meibi"? One possible explanation for this substitution is her participation in various Luso-American social organizations like the Sociedade Portuguesa da Rainha Santa Isabel, SPRSI. These associations are dominated by first and second generation Luso-Americans like Eliza, who still serves in the direction of her chapter of the SPRSI. English as well as Portuguese is spoken by the associates, but the tendency is to use more and more English as the old guard native-born Portuguese expire and the American-born Portuguese take over.

Mae Cantel is also of Portuguese descent. She related that when she was growing up she asked her mother what the Portuguese word for "carrots" was. Her mother answered that she thought it was "carr^otas". Like the anglicism "brij", this anglicism seems to have been adopted because of the non-existence of the reality of this vegetable in the old country.

Personal remembrances of the author

The expression "iuman neisun" was often used by Joe Vincent, born in Flores in the Azores and immigrated to California as an adolescent. It seems as though he substituted the sound of the word "nation" for the word "nature" in English. One possible reason for this could be semantic confusion between "human nature" and "humanity". "Human nature" means the sum of those characteristics which define a human being. "Humanity" means the beings that share

this nature. "Human nation", when spoken rapidly, is closer to the sound of "humanity" than it is to "human nature". Unfortunately, no documented dialogue is available to help determine the contextual intention to speak "human nature" or "humanity". But a clear remembrance of the author is of a situation which included talking about the weakness of persons arising from their sharing in "human nature", which indicates the option for "human nature".

"Low" was part of the vocabulary of Antônio Avelar, the father of the author. He was also born in Flores and immigrated to California when he was a teenager. He seems to have borrowed the sound of the English word "low" for the pronunciation of "law". Probably, his lack of familiarity with muted "w" in "law" led him to this substitution.

Antônio said "larj" when he spoke of a fraternal organization. This accommodation of the English "lodge" no doubt resulted from the same causes as those of Manuel's option for "brij" above. Antônio only knew of fraternal organizations, known as "lodges" in English, after he immigrated to California; this was a new word in his vocabulary and not a substitute. He himself entered various Portuguese "lodges" which were referred to by the generic title of "lodges". The modified pronunciation of "lodge" made it sound like the English word "large", again for the same reason that "bridge" was pronounced "brij" by Manuel, since the English "dge" is more conveniently pronounced by the Portuguese "j".

Antônio used "showa" instead of the Portuguese word "espetaculo" for "show" and for the Portuguese word "certo" instead of "sure". The English pronunciation of "show" and "sure" is very close, especially the sound of the English "s" which is equal to the Portuguese "s" when it is pronounced in the Portuguese words "chegar", "caixa".

Antônio's substitution of "esteija" for the proper Portuguese word "carruagem" probably came from the

same reason as that which created "larj" he only knew about this type of vehicle after he came to California. A great portion of the anglicisms of Luzo-American share this type of causality stemming from the new economic, social and geographic reality of the immigrants in California.

The author was informed of "fazer mess" by Lewis Dias. One time a Luzo-American friend said goodbye to him with this phrase. Apparently the speaker could not or preferred not to remember the ordinary Portuguese expression "fazer falta" which would be a Portuguese equivalent for "(we will) miss (you)". Furthermore, he mixed the Portuguese "fazer" with the mispronounced English "miss". Needless to say, at first hearing, Lewis was astonished by this incredible invitation to "make a mess" while he was away.

This initial analysis of these examples of Portuguese adaptations will serve as a point of departure for further investigation about how second languages alter native languages to create new variants of the mother tongue. Those English borrowings in Luzo-American speech which arise from the new economic, social and geographic reality of California, unknown to the immigrants in the old country, demonstrate a genuine attempt to improve communicability while maintaining the basic elements of the maternal idiom. Second Language learners of English in countries like Brazil use many English loanwords of concepts being introduced into their life from the changing economic, social, political and geographic reality of today. This is not a betrayal of their mother tongue. It is a natural process in the evolution of language as a communicative tool. Luzo-American speech with its noticeable borrowings from English, is not a linguistic disgrace. Rather, it is an accomplishment in the growth of language looked at as the communication of meaning.

Contact has been established with some immigrant Azorians living in California who will serve as a control group for the study of the influence of English

upon their native Portuguese. The author gave a short intensive course of English to these American-Azorians in Newark, California during January and February of 1986. Recordings of their English and Portuguese were made; these furnish samplings of the incursion of English into their Portuguese speech. Further contact with these individuals will provide longitudinal data about the progress of the influence of English upon their Portuguese.

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