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The Standardisation of Papiamentu: New Trends, Problems and Perspectives

Eva Martha ECKKRAMMER

Résumé

Cette recherche étudie le processus actuel de standardisation dans le Papiamentu (langue créole parlée par environ 260.000 personnes dans les îles Aruba, Bonaire et Curaçao, appartenant aux Antilles Néerlandaises). Depuis 1825, est écrite une quantité croissante de documents dans ce créole. Ainsi le Papiamentu dispose depuis longtemps d'une tradition scripturale, mais pas d'une orthographe officielle. La discussion autour du code officiel, qui a débuté dans les années 40, s'est développée d'une façon de plus en plus vive et a conduit à l'adoption de deux orthographe officielles : une partiellement étymologique à Aruba, l'autre à base phonologique à Curaçao et à Bonaire. Ce schisme a certainement ses racines dans des raisons politiques régionalistes qui ont également mené à la séparation d'Aruba de l'ensemble des Antilles Néerlandaises. En appliquant au Papiamentu les paramètres d'évolution de la langue minoritaire établis par KLOSS (1974), on se rend compte que le créole est en train de gagner en efficacité, en fonctionnant de façon satisfaisante aux niveaux les plus élevés du corpus, du statut et du prestige (grâce au soutien des organisations gouvernementales). En plus de divers problèmes linguistiques qui sont apparus dans le processus de standardisation lexicologique, et qui sont abordés dans l'article, nous constatons actuellement que le processus est freiné par différentes causes, et surtout par la dépression économique.

1. Introduction

The following article focuses on Papiamentu - a very young Romance language spoken by 260 000 people in the Caribbean¹ - currently undergoing a standardisation process with a number of obstacles, that will be pointed out and interpreted within a larger context of minority languages. We depart from an interpretation of «minority language» in the first place as purely numerical fact such as established by HAARMANN (1973) for any linguistic community that consist of less than five million speakers. In the second place we plead for including all social and political side-effects triggered by the circumstances of linguistic minorisation, that also apply in communities where the linguistic, social and demographic situation further the dominance of the minority language in everyday life; in our case explicitly an acrolect with little proximity to the Creole language, a neglectable social stratification in language issues and the island context that isolates demographically.

¹ According to NARAIN/VERHOEVEN (1993, 112) the number of Papiamentu speakers currently living in the Netherlands amounts to 70 000. The authors argue that the social profile of this group underwent a drastic change throughout the 80ies as the main reason for immigration switched from higher education (elite students) to economically stipulated immigration of fairly uneducated young Antillians.

The predominant reason for choosing a Creole language is the fact that it allows us to witness and observe a linguistic evolution, that the major European languages underwent hundreds of years ago and that some minority languages are still struggling with in our days. Thus – even if the socio-cultural context of Papiamentu due to a multicultural, multiconfessional and multilingual setting is extremely complex – we can easily draw parallels between the current process of Papiamentu and other minority languages. Additionally the creole context – which estimates Papiamentu to be a pioneer language within the process of linguistic elaboration and normalisation demands continuous observation and reconsideration of the process to create a pool of relevant experiences for the elaboration and emancipation of other creole languages. Practical examples will be used to give evidence and explain the current difficulties within the standardisation process and furnish matter for a discussion on general tendencies of language stabilisation and homogenisation within a complicated social and political context.

2. Diachronic synopsis of Papiamentu

The following synopsis of the development of the Creole language of the Netherlands Antilles is meant to provide basic parameters for discussion of the current language consolidation process.

Papiamentu is spoken on Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao (also referred to as ABC-islands), the latter island was discovered by the Spaniard Alonso de Ojeda in 1499. Due to the aridity of the islands the first serious attempt by Spain to colonise the islands only started in 1527 and did not entail strong settling activities. Nevertheless the contact between the scarce Spanish colonisers and the native Arhuac Indians led to a linguistical as well as cultural assimilation of the latter. When the Dutch conquered the islands in 1634, the Spaniards and hispanised Indians jointly and peacefully drew back to the South American continent (predominantly to Venezuelan territories). The Dutch – who dominate the island up to our days – only commenced to effectively colonise the islands when the West Indian Company promised tax advantages to the new settlers. Protestant Dutch families as well as a growing number of Sephardic Jews arriving from Amsterdam or Brazil after 1660 constituted the elite of the islands, whilst the African descendants forced to the New World by the slave traders as well as the Indian natives (on Aruba) constituted the largest part of the population. The lack of water avoided the creation of large plantation societies as we find them on other Caribbean islands at that time. The coloured people on

the Netherlands Antilles were mostly domestic slaves in very close contact to their masters. A key role within the linguistic output of the African slaves can be attributed to the *jaja*, the black nurse who brought up the master's children. The linguistic heterogeneity of the social elite as well as the strong African presence in domestic life stimulated the expansion of the use of a probably Portuguese-based Pidgin, that had emerged in Atlantic slave-trade and was spoken by the Africans as well as Europeans. It rapidly became the predominant *lingua franca* between all socio-cultural groups and subsequently the mother-tongue of the vast majority of the new inhabitants of the islands.

At this point we can state an evolution from a rudimentary Pidgin to a fully developed Creole - thus a process of creolisation. The Creole language undoubtedly passes through a slow relexification process that leads to the following lexical distribution of modern Papiamentu: almost two thirds of vocabulary has a Spanish and/or Portuguese origin, 28% of the lexical borrowings derive from the Dutch language, a small number of words evolved from English and French lexicon and minor influences are observed from African and Indian languages, especially in terms of proper names for plants, animals, food and music. The Afro-Romance Creole with a Dutch lexical influence emerged predominantly on the island of Curaçao stepping over to the territories of Bonaire and Aruba, where it suffered minor modifications (i.e. due to the stronger Indian influence on Aruba). Current studies estimate that Papiamentu was fully established as an independent language by 1750. The first written document in Papiamentu dating from 1775² shows merely slight divergences in grammatical features and vocabulary when comparing it to modern Papiamentu. Printed documents exist since 1825 and we observe a remarkable literary production including splendid translations especially since the 1950ies. The first Papiamentu newspaper was published in 1869 and ever since Papiamentu gains ground in the mass media. Today the majority of the islands' newspapers and radio programmes are issued in Papiamentu and the television channels Telearuba and Telecuraçao emit a large part of their programme in Creole.

3. Social and educational aspects

Contrary to the situation in many other Caribbean territories with a creole mother tongue (i.e. the French Creole territories such as Guadeloupe,

² A letter written by Abraham de David da Costa Andrade Jr. – a Sephardic Jew – to Sarah de Isaac Pardo y Vaz Farro.

Martinique etc. or Surinam) Papiamentu is spoken in all social strata as stated by HERMANS in 1981:

De plaats van het Papiaments in de samenleving van de Benedenwindse Eilanden valt niet helemaal te vergelijken met die van het Negerengels in Suriname. Alle Curaçaoënaars, van rijk tot arm, spreken Papiaments.

(The position of Papiamentu in the community of the Netherlands Antilles under the Wind is not at all comparable to the situation of English spoken by the Blacks in Suriname. All locals on Curaçao, from the poorest to the richest, speak Papiamentu.) (HERMANS, 1981, 143)

Thus Papiamentu does not suffer from a strong social stratification and the Antillian prime minister addresses the population almost exclusively in Creole, which is used on all official levels, i.e. at court (even if adequate translations of the Dutch laws are still missing and the Dutch text remains the base of interpretation).

The three territories acted independently in educational concerns throughout the 18th and 19th century when Catholic schools mostly taught in Papiamentu or Spanish, whereas protestant institutions chose Dutch. The situation changed drastically in the 20ies when a large number of Dutch families moved to Curaçao due to the opening of an oil-refinery owned by the Dutch Shell group in 1918. Additionally, a serious discussion on the financing responsibility in educational affairs entailed a switch to the educational system of the Netherlands. Dutch – all of a sudden – became the exclusive language of instruction and since about forty years a fierce struggle for the right to mother-tongue education – as claimed by the UNESCO since 1951 (cf. FISHMAN, 1968) – keeps the parents as well as the concerned authorities in suspense. Interestingly enough most of the negative attitudes towards the introduction of Papiamentu as the vehicle of school education are detected predominantly amongst the Papiamentu speakers themselves who doubt the quality of their vernacular in many aspects. Thus at this point the discussion allows a number of parallels to be drawn to other minority languages and particularly Creole speaking minorities. In the French Creole context BERNABÉ, CHAMOISEAU & CONFIANT (1993) argue that the fact that the Creole speakers themselves act as the main obstacle for a serious attempt to normalise the situation are the result of a fundamental lack of interior vision and self acceptance. The authors continue arguing that Creole cultures are frequently stricken with exteriority, trapped inside themselves, unable to defend themselves from the “Other” - namely the values of the motherland implemented without being perceived by themselves throughout the centuries.

It is stunning to observe that the defence of Creole languages rarely commences amongst the minority language community itself, but is set forth by foreigners. In the case of Papiamentu the first initiatives and individuals to defend the use of the Creole are tracked amongst Dutch and Spanish speaking inhabitants.

It was not native-speakers of Papiamentu who really took up its first defence but foreigners (Poezie versus Walboomers 1915). (...) Strangely enough the explicit defence by native speakers themselves only emerges some thirty years later, through the voice and work of one of the most distinguished Papiamentu poets, Pierre Lauffer. The attitude of native speakers of Papiamentu, be it intellectuals or the common people, towards Papiamentu has always been hesitant and dualistic (MARTINUS, 1990, 139).

This attitude is even harder to understand if we take into account that the ABC-islands were never exposed to an oppressing policy in cultural concerns on the part of the mother-land, because politically the ABC-islands are given a comparingly high degree of freedom and autonomy (unusual in other colonies). The loss of the navel-string to the motherland during the Second World War undoubtedly advocated the will for self-determination in many fields ultimately triggering the right to an independent domestic policy, that the islands obtained in 1954. At that point the soil for the cultivation and elaboration of the language grows fertile and allows on one hand weighty considerations on the codification of the language and on the other hand the sustenance of a real language planning process including all different levels of “Ausbau” – to use the term employed by KLOSS (1967), that lacks an indisputable equivalent in most other languages.

4. Codification and literature within the context of the 1969 riots

The first strong accelerating moment of the process (especially with regards to the written corpus of the vernacular) can be seen in the 1940ies and precedes political autonomy. As we stated in chapter 3 the occupation of the Netherlands during the War creates a large margin between the motherland and the Antilles, which leads to an increasing cultural as well as political self-consciousness of the islands. As one of the first measurable effects we observe a remarkable increase in the literary production. Many authors start to publish almost exclusively in Papiamentu, which implies an antipode to the previous situation as most of the writers favoured Spanish or Dutch in their earlier publications. This development along with the first discussions on the language to be applied in education urges a call for a consistent codification of the language. Whereas documents printed in Papiamentu throughout the 19th century (mostly

translations of religious texts or didactical material) reflect the particular spelling habits of the writer, hence Papiamentu is either written according to the Dutch or the Spanish orthographical system, the growing number of Papiamentu print after 1940 conducts to a vital discussion about the necessity of an official orthography. The *Union Pro Papiamentu (UPP)*, a private interest-group for the development of Papiamentu, publishes a rough copy of a proposition for an official orthography. This initiative is deemed to be the first serious attempt to unify the spelling of Papiamentu as earlier publications such as Hoyer's *Papiamentu i su manera di skirbi'é* ("Papiamentu and the way to spell it") edited first in 1918 were purely descriptive and meant to guide foreigners acquiring Papiamentu and instruct them how to spell. After a number of finitless private initiatives and proposals for an official orthography, political troubles that culminated in violent riots in Willemstad on May 30th 1969 triggered an acceleration of the process. As the 1969-riots ventilated a profound change in language matters we include a detour into this period of insurrection in our study.

The protests commenced within an admitted legal frame-work when workers of a large Curaçaoan company (*WESCAR*) proclaimed an unlimited strike and were followed by several other companies, which in those days were disposed to release workers to employ them a few days later under worse conditions. Suddenly the entire economic as well as public life (including Aruba) was paralysed and on May 30th the striking workers started a march to the "Forti" (the seat of the Netherlands Antilles government) aiming at its abdication. A crucial role during the strike as well as the organisation of the protest march can be attributed to the Papiamentu newspaper *Vitó*. During the first clash between the police and the demonstrators the labour leader Papa Godett was injured by gunfire of the police. At that point the protests started to get out of control and within some hours the historic town centre of Willemstad was set on fire, pillaged, thus completely devastated. Dutch marines arriving from the Netherlands had to reinstall law and order and half of the current government, that had completely underestimated the problem, renounced. Literally everybody was shocked about how rapidly things could get out of hand, but the incident also made clear that a profound political and social change had taken place: the coloured majority would not withdraw from claiming their political rights, they were to be taken seriously and treated as mature and capable partners in politics.

On the cultural and linguistic level the result of the 1969 riots can be summed up as a growing identification with the Creole language deemed to be the very

essence of local culture: “no more writing in the language of the ‘Other’”. It is interesting to observe that the minority language is used as defining attribute of a segmented society even if it is spoken by all social strata – but within some groups not as the only means of communication. DE JONGH’s historic novel *30 di Mei 1969. E dia di mas históriko* gives evidence that language use is a very central issue within the polemics subsequent to the insurrection of May 1969:

Na entrada di e hanchi tabatin un hèkchi pon’é, ku su bòrchi «Verboden - Gevaar voor Instorting». Parse ku na momento di gran emergensia, tabata difísil pa haña un diksionario pa deskubrí e tradukshon na Papiamentu di e palabra «Instorting», pa asina ofresé protekshon tambe na e parti dje pweblo ku ta emansipando.

(At the beginning of a narrow street there was a rail fence barrier with a sign in Dutch saying “Forbidden - Danger of Collapse”. It seems that in a moment of major emergency it was too difficult to get a dictionary to find out the Papiamentu translation of the word «Collapse» offering protection to the emancipating part of the population as well) (DE JONGH, 1970, 87)

The dawning search for an authentic Creole identity leads to a remarkable push within the development of Papiamentu as the Creole language becomes the explicit heart of native culture as well as the unifying power during the process of reconciliation subsequent to the riots. The use of the Creole vernacular is propagated and stimulated in all social, political and cultural fields. A law which proposes Papiamentu as a coofficial language besides Dutch is prepared (1979) and the claim to teach Papiamentu at school or even apply it as language of education is widely promulgated and discussed.

In the literary field the riots conduct in a first instance to a very strong rejection of foreign cultural influences favouring authentic and original writing in Papiamentu instead of translated literature which has been almost the main source of books and plays since 1825 (cf. ECKKRAMMER, 1996). Especially in the field of drama-translations we state a rapid decrease in the number of translated stage-plays. And even if earlier in 1969 a very well done adaptation of Shakespeare’s “The Taming of a Shrew” by May Henriquez entitled *Kani mi, pa mi kani bon* was performed successfully, the boom of mostly excellent translations of international drama classics comes to a very sudden end. Whereas during the fifties and sixties the local audiences could enjoy plays by renowned playwrights such as Molière, Goldoni, Dickens, Shaw, Casona, Mihura or Garcia Lorca in their native language, this fashion gets almost completely paralysed in the 70ies³. Only a few famous pieces such as Tennessee

³ It has to be taken into account that this fact can be ascribed to a certain extent to the television-boom of the 70ies.

Williams' "The rose tattoo" (*E rosa tatua* by Ecury), Jean Paul Sartre's "Huis clos" (*Porta será* by Henriquez) or Jean Genet's "Les bonnes" (*E dos krianan* by Rooy/Palm) are translated and put on stage during the 70ies, but most of them remain unpublished. Contrary to drama we observe a positive development with regards to prose writing, religious books and poetry. In spite of the general disapproval of translations an increase in the number of published translated works is noted after 1969 as the concerned authorities realise that a radical view allowing nothing but locally written creativity would not take the language very far in concerns of corpus, status and prestige. Thus in less exposed fields such as juvenile literature translations soon regain popularity and acceptance.

These considerations draw our attention back to the question of codification that is still due to be answered. The acceleration in language development also affects the codification process as the government of the Netherlands Antilles entrusts a commission with the elaboration of an official orthography in the early seventies. As a result a team of scientists concerned with Papiamentu headed by Raúl Römer proposes an orthography on a phonological base, a very well thought decision from a linguistic point of view, which becomes the stumbling-block of the subsequent disagreements (cf. RÖMER, 1969). At this stage we can draw a number of parallels to other minority languages that suffered from a similar etymology-phonology spelling controversy (cf. DAHMEN, 1991). The dispute on the Netherlands Antilles evolves to a very critical state due to separatist tendencies from the side of Aruba – the second largest island, that desires to leave the union of the N.A. At last Curaçao and Bonaire officially adopt a revised version of the Römer orthography in 1976, whilst Aruba opts for a slightly etymological spelling and acquires a political *status aparte* within the Netherlands leaving the union of the N.A. in the beginning of the 80ies.

Although about the same time an interinsular commission for the standardisation of Papiamentu is installed, the damages caused by this twofold orthography are manifest up to today. The weak editorial power of the islands is undermined once again as their potential customer-community diminishes and the difficult task of elaborating an efficient norm becomes even more difficult. This argument takes us into the very heart of the standardisation process.

5. The process of standardisation

Like any other language the standardisation of Papiamentu comprises three different dimensions each of them subdivided into four levels of organisational

effectivity as portrayed in the following graphical representation of a paradigm for “Sprachausbau” according to HAARMANN (1993, 295):

Organisational Effectivity (Maximum)	LANGUAGE CORPUS	LANGUAGE PRESTIGE	LANGUAGE STATUS	Level 3 and 4: LANGUAGE PLANNING Level 1 and 2: LANGUAGE FOSTERING
Level 4		OFFICIAL SUPPORT i.e. KOMAPA		Measures and steps on a national level
Level 3		INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT i.e. <i>Instituto Nashonal di Idioma (INDI)</i>		Committees and organisations for particular activities
Level 2		SUPPORT BY INTEREST-GROUPS i.e. <i>Union Pro Papiamentu, Instituto Raúl Römer</i>		Activities of interest-groups, private institutions etc.
Level 1 (Minimum)		INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT i.e. A. Maduro, S. Joubert, E. Muller, M. Henriquez, L. Berry Haseth		Individual measures and initiatives

The examples in the chart show clearly that currently all levels of “Ausbau” are covered to a certain extent, that is why the standardisation process of Papiamentu already reaches the highest level of organisational effectivity which means explicit funding by the government. If we look at the diachronic evolution, however, a recent push that deserves a closer look can be stated.

5.1 The base

Not explicitly as a result of the 1969 riots but obviously in the track of the uprising the standardisation and normalisation of Papiamentu as well as the introduction of Papiamentu into the educational system are secured by law and the institutions which are entrusted with the realisation of these actions are given a solid base to work on. Only then we can speak of serious attempts to standardise the language.

When in the beginning of the 80ies the *Komishon pa Manheo di Papiamentu* (KOMAPA) is founded as a result of the intense discussion on the introduction of Papiamentu in schools throughout the 70ies we can proclaim a real language

planning process. In 1984 the government implements the *Komishon pa Standarisashon di Papiamentu* (KSP) and regulates its duties very precisely. The “Landesbesluit houdende Maatregelen van de 15de februari 1984 regelende de instelling van een commissie voor de standaardisering van het Papiamentu” determines “dat het wenselijk is een commissie van advies ten dienste van de Regering in te stellen met betrekking tot de standaardisering van het Papiamentu” (that it is advisable to provide the government with a commission that deals with the standardisation of Papiamentu). The following article explicitly puts down the tasks of the KSP including the creation of new terminology (*Publikatieblad van de Regering van de N.A.* 1984 N° 19). Subsequently the KSP elaborates general guide-lines for the standardisation of Papiamentu on linguistic grounds to fulfil their mission:

Kuadro lingwistiko pa Komishon Standarisashon di Papiamentu

Tarea di Komishon Standarisashon di Papiamentu (K.S.P.) ta konsistí esencialmente di dos parti:

- yega na un konvenio entre e tres islanan Kòrsou, Aruba i Boneiru enkuanto palabranan eksistente (*konseptonan morfo*);
- yega na un konvenio enkuanto palabranan nobo pa konseptonan pa kua no tin palabra p’e den papiamentu (*konseptonan amorfo*).

(Linguistic frame-work of the Papiamentu Standardisation Commission

The task of the Papiamentu Standardisation Commission (PSK) consists basically of two parts

- reach an agreement between the three islands Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire with regards to existing words (known concepts)
- reach an agreement with regards to new words applied for concepts that still lack an expression in Papiamentu (unknown concepts)).

(Kuadro lingwistiko pa Komishon Standarisashon di Papiamentu, s.a.)

By this means the standardisation activities concentrate in the first place on the standardisation of existing vocabulary and aims at the creation of new terminology in the second place. The linguistic work is carried out on three different levels, each of them performed by a commission that meets periodically. The subcommissions are the first step where concepts covered by existing words (“input”) are discussed on a regional level, hence on the different islands individually. The results and comments are handed on to the small commission as “output” which tries to find an interinsular consensus and decides whether a word is ought to enter the standard lexicon or should be conceived as regionalism or dialectal variant. In the end the small commission prepares the material that is to be presented to the plenary reunion, where the final decisions are taken eventually leading to an “output” of new publications containing standardised vocabulary:

EVALUASHON DEN
REUNION PLENARIO
(evaluation in the plenary reunion)

EVALUASHON NA NIVEL DI
KOMISHON CHIKITU
(evaluation on small commission level)

EVALUASHON NA NIVEL DI
SUPKOMISHON
(evaluation on subcommission level)

As a consequence of the political problems within the N.A., that instigated the segregation of Aruba as well as the individual introduction of a slightly etymological orthography on the A-island, the commissions have to deal with a wide margin of acceptance in concerns of orthographical diversity – a problem that we will refer to in the following paragraph.

5.2 *Practical problems*

The first crucial issue is the chronological choice of concepts to be treated, because the first lists published subsequent to the plenary reunions seem either extremely arbitrary or connected to an urgent need of standardised vocabulary in a certain field. If we consult, for instance, the fourth list of words published in 1990 we encounter evidence for this fact: the list contains predominantly linguistic and literary terms paving the way for the production of teaching materials in Papiamentu and explicitly refers to this need in the introduction (cf. KOMISHON STANDARISASHON DI PAPIAMENTU, 1990, 5). With regards to general lexicon the members of the standardisation committee are called upon to give written and/or spoken evidence of their verbal “input”, consequently a word can be classified as variant, synonym or regionalism. Obviously most of the commissions prefer the full acceptance of all pronounced terms, a fact which entails an enormous lexical diversity to designate a single thing, hence the most recent dictionary (RATZLAFF, 1992) divulges three expressions for the concept “eyebrow”:

- *seha* (the Spanish derivative)
- *kachu di wowo* (the traditional Creole composition)
- *wènkrou/wènbrou* (two variants of the Dutch borrowing)

The two variants of the Dutch borrowing take us to the second crucial issue that derives from the fact that Papiamentu was written arbitrarily during a long period and still today offers a number of different spelling types for one word in a single newspaper. Although the variants mostly represent minor phonological differences and sometimes result from the fait accompli that the Aruban orthography is slightly etymological (i.e. applies *c* for [k], *o* for [u] and conserves the unspoken *h*), a solution within the standardisation process has to be spotted: i.e. which variant of the word designating “tool”, that figures as *hermènt*, *hermèn*, *ermènt* or *ermèn*, is included into the standard lexicon? The commission is opting once again for pluralism and allows all variants with enough evidence. If we draw back to the fact that the standardisation of Papiamentu was predominantly initiated to adjust the conditions to the introduction of Creole at school, the pluralistic approach has to be jeopardised as the teachers will need an unequivocal standard to instruct.

Maybe this doubt about the efficiency of the created standard or the never ending discussions on the acceptance of slightly differing variants of a word are explaining the fact that the standardising activities freeze in the late nineties. When asking Ini Statia, the current director of the National Language Institute *Instituto Nashonal di Idioma* (INDI)⁴, the executing institution of the KOMAPA, early in 1998 about the progress of the standardisation committee the answer was slightly evasive as unfortunately the activity has slowed down. Nevertheless Statia could mention a number of positive moments such as a lexical data base for Papiamentu, which is currently built up on the base of the enormous input of vocabulary from the Antillian Bible Society that has just finished the translation of the whole Bible into Papiamentu (SOSIEDAT ANTIANO DI BEIBEL, 1997). The constraints of the professional translational context compelled the staff of the Bible Society to forge a standard vocabulary as well as new terminology, sometimes by revitalising archaic Creole expressions to avoid neologisms. A stagnation within the official standardisation programme, however, is obvious.

One of the reasons for this stagnation might also be the lack of a central institution for lexicography that gathers the standardised vocabulary preparing it for publication within a wider margin – preferably a monolingual dictionary. The best Papiamentu dictionary so far, a bilingual lexicon Papiamentu-English/English-Papiamentu published in 1992, is the result of a private initiative by the Canadian Betty Ratzlaff (RATZLAFF, 1992), who spent more than 40 years on

⁴ A recent reorganisation of the National Language Institute (INDI), which was converted into a private foundation, urged a new name, thus since 1999 we refer to the former *INDI* oder *Sede di Papiamentu* as *Fundashon pa Planifikashon di Idioma* (FPI).

Bonaire. Unfortunately there are no indications as to whether the vocabulary in her dictionary can be conceived as normative standard (even if it includes all officially standardised words) as it rather illustrates Papiamentu in general avoiding to hurt the feeling of any of the three island-communities or social groups (i.e. the particularities of the three islands or Sephardic Papiamentu, cf. HENRIQUEZ, 1988). Several entrances of the dictionary elucidate how difficult the standardisation process of Papiamentu is. If we search for the Papiamentu expression for “strawberry” Ratzlaff gives i.e. three entrances, obviously employed as synonyms:

- *artbei* (deriving from Dutch)
- *fresa* (the Spanish borrowing)
- *stròbèri* (the English derivation).

If we refer to *artbei* in the Papiamentu-English section, *fresa* figures as synonym with an *A* in parenthesis, which identifies the word as an Aruban regionalism. In the other contexts, however, this supplement disappears. We could refer to numerous other cases reflecting the same problem.

In conclusion the obstacles for the standardisation committee are enormous considering the elevated number of more or less established synonyms. In written and oral discourse it is highly difficult to decide whether an expression is an unnecessary Hispanism or Anglicism or an established term in a certain area. The linguistic support of the development of Papiamentu performed by *ILA* – the *Instituto Lingwistiko Antiano* as a part of the official educational section – that expanded throughout the 80ies recently has been declining and there are even rumours about shutting it down. This fact seems particularly alarming if we consider the current debate on the introduction of Papiamentu as the medium of instruction in elementary schools favoured by the Secretary for Education of the N.A., the linguist Martha Dijkhoff, in concurrence to a bilingual educational model pushed forward by the Roman Catholic schooling office. While the Secretary argues that an official subsidy for the Roman-Catholic model would imply that any school – even if it teaches in Esperanto – could claim official funding, the majority of the local parties is opting for the Creole as language of instruction and currently invites the parents to express their opinion. On Aruba a bilingual system has been discussed for a couple of years while Dutch remains the predominant language at school causing an unbearable number of drop-outs and semilinguals among Papiamentu-speakers. As a conclusion we can state that if Papiamentu is introduced as medium of instruction in elementary schools within the following years, the standardisation process requires a substantial push and financial support to build a solid base for

the various didactical publications that need to be written and published. The loss of interest in language matters, which is more than evident at the moment, has to be impeded. Because if we chronologically measure the socio-cultural capacity of Papiamentu by the parameters of corpus, status and prestige we can still note an increase and growth in concerns of self-consciousness and awareness. The literary production is continuously aggrandised and Papiamentu can undoubtedly be regarded as one of the best developed Creoles. With regards to original literature the uprising of 1969 certainly triggered an awakening of cultural sensitivity - especially in the field of Afro-Antillian poetry. Many Papiamentu speakers or clandestine writers suddenly dared to publish their prose or poems, in particular after 1983, when the *Sede di Papiamentu* (today *FPI*) actively encouraged and supported local writers. Summing up today's situation we can observe a growing number of books published in Papiamentu, some of them translations others originals. Especially referring to childrens' literature, a field which requires special treatment since the factual introduction of Papiamentu in schools as a subject in 1986, an increasing number and a better quality of publications are manifest. But there is no reason for exaggerated enthusiasm, because still today "poets writing in Papiamentu who could live from what their pen produces do not exist. They have a little job like Rosario, live in a poor little house and publish their booklets independently, sometimes printed, sometimes typewritten, and go peddling from door to door" (HERMANS, 1981, 143f). But however difficult the present situation is (Papiamentu is not an exception within the context of minority languages) and in spite of the shortcomings and stagnation of the standardisation process there is no doubt that Papiamentu plays the role of a pioneer within the development and normalisation of Creole idioms. Hence it could be helpful – for the community as well as the observing characters – to regard the momentary evolution in the frame-work of a pilot case-study to analyse the methods to overcome particular difficulties. This point of view does not only reconcile the concerned authorities (who are forced to waste part of their energy in a struggle for financial support), but might be beneficial to other linguistic minorities and their leads in language planning in the future. Complementary to this perspective a look at other minority language communities at a very advanced level of standardisation could render it easier to overcome the stagnation and could positively interfere when deciding on priorities within language planning. The current language policy for Papiamentu explicitly avoids the creation of a restricted functionality aiming at the use of Creole in all social and technical domains. This is why even scientific levels of LSP (Language for Special Purposes) are being focused, a fact which is obviously not in the first place urged by the need of Creole LSP in

the education, but another important step to provide evidence for the quality of the language and augment the prestige of Papiamentu. This aim, however, does not dispense with activity according to well-thought priorities within language planning.

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