1. Introduction

What do Tarzan, Cookie Monster, foreign mercenary soldiers and “guest workers,” Chinese laborers, African slaves, Moorish conquerors, and other exotic human and non-human fauna have in common in the Romance- (and also Germanic-) speaking world? In the popular mind—and media—they all speak reduced forms of the respective target languages, immediately recognizable and often stereotyped. These stereotypes represent what linguists refer to as “foreigner talk,” meaning not approximations to a target language actually produced by foreigners, but rather native speakers’ deliberate simplification of their language when speaking to foreigners or their notions of how foreigners speak their language, especially foreigners considered to be culturally or racially inferior. This is not the same as speaking more slowly, and with repetition, or speaking louder, which universally occur when one’s interlocutor has difficulties with the language of the conversation. Foreigner talk in the technical sense always carries the implicit and often explicit connotation of inferiority, baby-talk, or even “monkey-talk,” which is why in popular culture talking animals or humanoid creatures are often depicted as using the current local versions of foreigner-talk. Foreigner-talk stereotypes are widespread in all societies, and can be easily elicited and compared with actually occurring speech. You can ask your students, for example, how Tarzan might speak to his animal friends, or how they themselves might speak to some hapless immigrant who knows only a few words of the target language. Try sentences (in any language) such as “I’m hungry,” “What is your name?,” “I can’t help you,” and even some complex sentences such as “I don’t know the man that you are talking


about.” Responses will tend to cluster around certain stereotypes, more often than not derived from popular culture than from actual exposure to the speech of foreigners. Below are some examples collected by Roger Thompson and among my own students:

(1) **INVENTED L2 SPANISH SPOKEN TO NON SPANISH-SPEAKING EMPLOYEE (THOMPSON 1991):**

- ¿cómo estar familia? ‘How is [the] family?’
- ¿Jugar niños afuera? ‘Are the children playing outside?’

**IMITATED ‘TARZAN-TALK’ (THOMPSON 1991):**

- ¿Estar plátano bajo tierra? ‘Is [the] banana down [on the] ground?’
- ¿Quién ser hombre? ‘Who is [the] man?’

(2) **ELICITED SPANISH FOREIGNER TALK (LIPSKI):**

**FROM SPANISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES:**

No te puede help ‘I can’t help you’
no saber yo ‘I don’t know [the answer]’
yo no ayudar/no ayuda ‘I can’t help [you]’
¿Donde (tú) vivir? ‘Where do [you] live?’
no sé ella ‘I don’t know her’
¿tener hambre?/¿tú comer? ‘Are [you] hungry?’
¿Cómo tú llamar? ‘What is your name?’
¿Dónde (estar) Roberto? ‘Where is Robert?’
no (hablar) español ‘I don’t know Spanish’

**U.S. BILINGUALS:**

No sabe el question ‘I don’t know the answer’
¿Donde Roberto?/Roberto donde es? ‘Where is Roberto?’
No se ella ‘I don’t know her’
¿Estas hambre? ‘Are [you] hungry?’
Ud. yo no ayudar puedo ‘I can’t help you’
no (con)ocer yo ‘I don’t know [her]’
no saber respuesta ‘I don’t know [the answer]’
no poder ayudar ‘I can’t help [you]’

**SPANISH L2 SPEAKERS (U.S.):**

No sabe/saber/sabo ella ‘I don’t know her’
¿Donde tú vivir? ‘Where do you live?’
No (puedo) ayudar usted/no poder ayudar tú/no puedo te ayuda ‘I can’t help you’
¿tener hambre? ‘Are [you] hungry?’
Roberto, donde? ‘Where is Roberto?’
¿Como costar esto? ‘How much does this cost?’

On the other hand (3) gives actually occurring examples of English foreigner-talk as used by ESL instructors teaching English to Spanish-speaking adult learners:

(3) **ACTUAL FOREIGNER TALK AS USED TO SPANISH-SPEAKING STUDENTS OF ESL:**

Is important
I say bye-bye, I no want.
Why no talk?
He here.
I think I not good teacher
I write all student in office
It should be noted that in most cases, foreigner talk is quite different from “baby talk,” although prejudice and racism may associate the speech stereotypes of certain groups with baby talk. Baby talk as used (and really, as invented) by adults in any language is principally based on phonetic traits found in early child speech ("pwetty boidy," “wittle wun,” etc.), baby words such as *tum-tum* (in English) and *do-do* (in French), lots of repetition, leaving out the copula, and use of third person address instead of first and second person (“baby give daddy a kiss”). Foreigner talk stereotypes only mimic the most noteworthy phonetic traits of interference from a given first language, use few baby words, and incline more heavily towards grammatical distortions. These include uninflected verbs, use of a simplified and preposed negation structure (in English preverbal *no*, in German use of preposed *nix* instead of *kein, nicht*, and *nichts*, French preposed *pas*), confusion of subject and object pronouns, loss of prepositions, elimination of definite articles, and similar traits.

The study of deliberately contrived foreigner talk is of great interest in sociolinguistics, since these stereotypes reveal attitudes and assumptions about “the other,” that is, those from afar who attempt to learn our languages. In most cases foreigner talk as produced by native speakers differs considerably from spontaneous attempts made by naive learners of the languages in question. In societies where the use of foreigner talk is frequent, native speakers’ use of this reduced language may actually influence the acquisition of their language by foreigners. The deliberate and insistent use of foreigner talk to slaves and contract laborers has been implicated, for example, in the formation of many creole languages throughout the world (e.g. Haitian French creole, Jamaican English creole), whose deviations from the original metropolitan languages are unlikely to have arisen spontaneously through imperfect acquisition. Since I am a linguist and educator, and not a sociologist, I can only comment on the linguistic validity of
foreigner-talk and the consequences for second-language acquisition and educational equity. There are, however, additional consequences of the linguistic stereotyping of foreigners that profoundly affect all of society. In today’s world, foreigner-talk stereotypes may result in substandard educational opportunities, based on the notion that the foreigners in question suffer from a cognitive deficit, as “proved” by their inability to properly learn the host country’s language. Other unwanted consequences may include housing and job discrimination, all of which contributes to the continued marginalization of immigrants whose intelligence and usefulness to society is unjustly identified with negative linguistic stereotypes.

But if foreigners do not actually speak in this fashion, what are the linguistic and cultural sources of these widely imitated stereotypes? The answers are obviously many and complex, and only small pieces of the puzzle can be dealt with at any given time. Rather than tackling the impossible task of tracing all imitations of foreigners’ speech, in today’s remarks I will concentrate on two features of foreigner talk as used in the Spanish and Portuguese (and also found in Italian and French), namely the use of uninflected infinitives instead of conjugated verbs, and in the use of object pronouns instead of subject pronouns for the first-person singular: that is “me” instead of “I.” Those of us who teach these languages know that such “errors” are not typical of spontaneous second-language speech, and yet these stereotypes are repeated in literature, popular culture, and “street wisdom.”. A few examples from the French cartoon character Asterix, as translated also into Spanish, illustrate the pervasiveness of this type of stereotype. The Tintín series, originally published in French, contains a volume which in Spanish is called Tintín en el Congo and which, like its counterparts in other languages, contains not only racist stereotypes of “darkest Africa” but also grotesquely deformed Spanish attributed only to African characters.
Moreover these representations are not new; examples can be found in most languages at least from the Middle Ages and probably existed even earlier. Before searching for the sources, let us consider a brief overview of more examples. Most of the examples will come from Spanish, some from Portuguese, and also from Italian, since both are null-subject languages which behave grammatically similar to Spanish.

2. Italian foreigner talk and stereotypes

Italian parodies of foreigners’ speech go back at least to the middle ages. Italian Renaissance literature made reference to greghesco ‘Greek’ approximations to Italian. This term was also applied to other parodies of Middle Easterners’ pidginized Italian. Italian madrigals of the 16th century represented the language of German mercenary soldiers and merchants, known as lanzichenecchi (< German Landsknechte), and their broken Italian was called todesche (cf. modern Italian tedesco ‘German’). The madrigal ‘Matona mia cara’ by Orlando di Lasso has often been taken as a specimen of the Mediterranean Lingua Franca (to be described shortly), but the verses actually parody German speakers’ halting attempts at speaking Italian [HANDOUT #20]

(4) IMITATION OF GERMAN LANZICHENECCHI IN THE MADRIGAL ‘MATONA MIA CARA’ BY ORLANDO LASSO:

Mi folle canzon ‘I want a song’
Si ti mi folle bene, mi no esser poltron ‘If you love me, I won’t be a boor’

Other todesche texts show similar traits, including use of root infinitives and subject mi

(Migliorini 1966: 331):

(5) OTHER ITALIAN TODESCH E IMITATIONS WITH BARE INFINITIVES (MIGLIOFINI 1966):

Noi trincare un flasche plene ‘We drink a full glass’
Mi non biver oter vin ‘I won’t drink more wine’

Beginning early in the Middle Ages pidgnized German and German foreigner-talk routinely used the root infinitive, a trait which continues to the present time in German-based foreigner talk, as well as in actually examples of learners’ German (including my own). Given the strong
historical links between the Italian city-states and Germanic central Europe in the Middle Ages and early modern period, the use of the bare infinitive in German foreigner talk may have reinforced the use of the infinitive in todesche speech.

Continuing well into the 20th century, reduced forms of Italian used by native speakers to Africans have been spoken in North Africa and the former Italian East Africa, particularly Libya, Ethiopia (Eritrea) and Somalia. Migliorini (1963:696) gives the following examples of pidginized Italian from North Africa:

(6) **PIDGINIZED ITALIAN IN MODERN NORTH AFRICA:**

[Eritrea, 1892] Ma tu berché non dato a me baccisc? Io venuto senza tu chimato `Why didn't you give me a gift? I came without your calling me'


Iu mia-fish poder dormire, molte bulci `I can't sleep; there are too many fleas'

Io ghiamato te `I called you'

In contemporary Eritrea, pidginized Italian continues to be used, between Italians and Eritreans, and among Eritreans who share no mutually intelligible language (Marcos 1976). As with the previous examples, the bare infinitive is used for non-past reference, while the Italian past participle forms the basis for past-tense forms:

[Eritrea, ca. 1975]

regasi menjato `the children ate'

non dire ber luy `don't tell him'

nɔy dato soldi ber loro `we gave them money'

tu di dolle stare `where are you from?'

luy come suo madre `she [is] like her mother'

adesso loro stare amico `now they are friends'

Simplified Italian in Ethiopia is used between Europeans and Ethiopians in limited social contexts, and also among Ethiopians of different language backgrounds. Italians in Ethiopia assert that they speak no `special' form of Italian to Ethiopians, while an Italian professor at an Ethiopian university claims that some deliberate simplification does occur (Marcos 1976).

Although present in pidginized varieties of Romance languages, the bare infinitive is not the expected instantiation of an invariant verb paradigm in a language like Italian, but rather bespeaks of deliberate simplification by native and quasi-native speakers. The pioneering
German linguist and creole language scholar Hugo Schuchardt (1979: 28-9 [1909]) makes a case for the deliberate choice of the infinitive by speakers of fluent Romance, as opposed to the spontaneous emergence of the infinitive in emerging Arab-Romance pidgin:

(7) **Schuchardt (1909) on the uninflected infinitive:**

But how then does it turn out that the Arab, who does not yet know Italian, selects mangiar as the expressant for mangio, mangi, mangia, etc.? Only after very extensive conversance with Romance would he realize the statistical preponderance and functional generality of the Romance infinitive. Even then, if he realizes that nothing corresponding to this infinitive exists in his language, much less to the 3rd pers. sing., he still does not say *mi voler mangiar*, for example, but *mi vuole me mangia*. It is the European who impresses the stamp of general currency on the infinitive, thereby controlling all communicative languages of the first and second degree.

Parodic imitations of foreigner talk continue to make their way into contemporary Italian literature. In the novel *Alla conquista di un impero* by Emilio Salgari (2004), a Spaniard pretending to be an English nobleman uses stereotypical pidgin Italian, complete with bare infinitives (p. 10):

(8) **From *Alla conquista di un impero* by Emilio Salgari (2004):**

Da mangiare! Milord avere molta fame! [...] Chiamare me milord, birbante! [...] Io essere trande ingles. Metti qui tondo! Buon profumo. [...] Io pagare e volere mangiare [...] Contare momento sul mio orologio, poi tagliare a te un orecchio [feed me; milord is hungry. Call me milord, you fool. I am a great Englishman. What a fool. I will pay and I want to eat. I'll count the minutes on my watch and I'll cut off your ear].

The child’s story “Vergine abissina” by Carolina Invernizio (1987) has an “Abyssinian” character who speaks pidginized Italian (p. 205):

(9) **From “Vergine abissina” by Carolina Invernizio (1987):**

Padre Carbonara dice essere peccato mostrare crudeltà coi vinti [...] Oh! essere molto lontano di qui, io rimanere per curar voi, altri feriti, non poter esser transportati [...] Io non temere che Dio. Ed i soldati italiani amare il buno Dio, rispettare le donne [...] voi non avere piú febbre, ma soffrire ancora. [Father Carbonara says it’s a sin to be cruel to the conquered. Far from me [to do that] I’ll stay to cure you; the other wounded cannot be transported. I fear no one but God. And Italian soldiers love God and respect women. You have no more fever, but you are still suffering.]

This fragment also contains bare infinitives, together with correctly formed Italian phrases not likely to be found in the speech of a language learner unable to conjugate a single verb.

Umberto Eco’s novel *Baudolino* (2000), set in a quasi-mythical medieval environment, offers a character who after first speaking Arabic, then being addressed in Greek, responds “in un greco tutto suo” (p. 371):

(10) **From *Baudolino* by Umberto Eco (2000), “in un greco tutto suo”:**

Io non sa che lingua parlava. Io credeva voi stranieri e parlava lingua inventata come quella di stranieri. Voi invece parla la lingua di Presbyter Johannes e di suo Diacono. Io saluta voi, io è Gavagai, a vostro servizio [I didn’t know what language you were speaking. I thought you were
foreigners and spoke an invented language like foreigners. Instead you speak the language of Prester John and his deacon. I salute you, I'm Gavagai, at your service.]

Unlike the earlier stereotypes, Eco’s speaker uses second-language traits more typical of the learner of Italian, namely the use of the third person singular (by far the most commonly occurring Italian verb form) as invariant verb. Eco has demonstrated his keen awareness of the subtleties of language, and he does not make use of the stereotypical bare infinitive common to deliberately invented Italian pidgins and foreigner-talk.

3. Spanish and Portuguese foreigner talk and stereotypes

Reduced forms of Spanish and Portuguese, used both by native speakers and by second-language learners, have coexisted with the full languages since their origins, but accurate documentation of L₂ varieties of Ibero-Romance does not emerge until the end of the medieval period. Beginning towards the middle of the 15th century with Portuguese explorations in West Africa, various forms of reduced Portuguese and then Spanish arose between Europeans and sub-Saharan Africans. Trade, then slavery, provided the momentum for Afro-European contact languages, some of which were immortalized in the form of creoles, in West Africa and the Americas. For more than three centuries beginning in the 1450's, Portuguese and Spanish authors, in Europe and later in the Americas, would embellish their poems and plays with the *fala de preto/habla de negro* `black speech. In Spain and Portugal, these literary imitations persisted long after African-born blacks ceased to be a commonplace in the Iberian Peninsula (Lipski 1995). In these imitations use of the bare infinitive was common, alternating with other invariant verb forms, typically derived from the third-person singular:

(11) **Examples of Afro-Iberian imitations from Golden Age Spain, Portugal, and Spanish America:**

**Fernam da Silveira [1455]:**

A min rrey de negro estar Sierra Lyoa, lonje muyto terra onde viver nos, andar carabela, tubtō de Lixboa `I am [a] king from Sierra Leone, from from the land where we live, [I] travelled by caravelle/shark to Lisbon`

**Anrique da Mota (Late 15th Century):**

a mym nunca, nunca mym entornar mym andar augói jardim, a mym nunca ssar rroym, porque bradar? `I never overturned [the wine jug], I was watering the garden, I am never bad, why are [you] angry?"
GL VICENTE, O CLÉRIGO DEBEYRA (EARLY 16TH C.):
Que riabo sempresa’! Abre oio turo ria. Mi busca mulato bai, ficar abora, ratinho ... `What a hell of a surprise. [I] have my eyes open every day. I look for a mulatto to to with, to stay awhile’

RODRIGO DE REINOSA, COPIAS A LOS NEGROS Y NEGRAS [CA. 1500]:
A mí llamar Comba de terra Guinea, y en la mi tierra comer buen cangrejo, y allá en Gelofe, do tu terra sea, comer con gran hambre carabaju vejo, cabeza de can, lagarto bermejo, por do tu andar muy muyto fambriento ... ‘My name is Comba from the land of Guinea, and in my land [we] dine well on crabs, and in Wolof, your land, the starving people eat old beetles, dog’s heads, red lizards, and they all go around hungry’

ANTONIO DE CHIADO, AUTOS DAS REGATEIRAS (CA. 1550)
a mim frugá boso matá, boso sempre bradá ’[If] I am lazy you [will] kill [me], you [are] always angry’

DIEGO SÁNCHEZ DE BADAJOZ, FARSATELOGAL (CA. 1525-30)
Francisco estar mi mariro, ya etar casá ... no etar mueto ‘Francisco is my husband, [we] are already married ... [he] isn’t dead’

LOPE DE RUEDA, COMEDIA LLAMADA EUFEMIA (1538-42)
agora sí me contenta; mas ¿sabe qué querer yo, siñor Pollos’ ‘Now I’m happy, but do you know what I want, Mr. Pollos?’

La vieja Asunción nunca jablá ‘Old Asunción never speaks’ (Armanda Ruiz García, Más allá de la nada [Cuba 1957])

No, siñó, yo no matá ninguno, yo sentá atrá quitrín pa yegá prisa, prisa, na panadería ‘No sir, I didn’t kill anybody; I was sitting in the back of the carriage, to get to the bakery quickly’ (Ildefonso Estrada y Zenea, El quitrín [Cuba 1880])

Imitations of “Africanized” Spanish continued in colonial Spanish America, first in highland mining areas such as Bolivia, Colombia, and Mexico, and finally settling in the regions where the last large African populations arrived: Buenos Aires, Montevideo, coastal Peru, and especially Cuba. Although grotesque parodies and stereotyping continued throughout the colonial period, but gradually increased in linguistic accuracy as writers became more aware of Africans’ true approximations to Spanish. The most accurate texts come, not surprisingly, from Cuba, where over 90% of the more than 2 million African slaves arrived during the middle of the 19th century and where the last bozal speakers lived through the middle of the 20th century (some elderly Cubans still recall the speech of these African-born former slaves).

The use of mi/mim as subject pronoun was found in the earliest Afro-Iberian texts and continues until the end of the 16th century, after which point the correct Spanish or Portuguese subject pronouns yo/eu take over, and are found until the end of the 19th century, when these literary stereotypes finally fade away:

(12) EXAMPLES OF (A)MI AS SUBJECT PRONOUN IN EARLY AFRO-IBERIAN TEXTS

FERNANDA DA SILVEIRA, IN CANCIONEIRO GERAL
I am the king of the blacks in Sierra Leone, far from the land where we live.

Querer a mym logo ver vos como vay 'I wanted to see you right away, to see how you were'

HENRIQUE D'AMOTA, IN CANCIONEIRO GERAL

mym andar augoi jardim, a mym nunca ssar roym 'I was watering the garden, I am not bad'

a mym logo vay tê laa, mym también falar mourinho 'I will get some wool soon, I also speak Moorish'

GIL VICENTE (1520'-1530')

Ja a mi forro, Ø nam sa cativo. 'I am already free, I am not a captive.'

O clérigo da Beira

A mi abre oio e Ø ve 'I open my eyes and see'

O clérigo da Beira

Mi risse a ella: minha rosa ... 'I said to her, my rose'

Nao d'amores

ANTÓNIO DE RIBEIRO CHIADO (MID 16TH CENTURY)

A mim frugâ, bosso matá 'If I rest, you kill me'

(Auto das regateiras)

Mim não quebrar bosso porta 'I did not break your pitcher'

(Auto das regateiras)

Quando mi bay confesa dize padere confessoro que oficio que bosso que tem 'When I go to confess, the father confessor says "what work do you do?"'

(Pratica d'oyto fegaras)

RODRIGO DE REINOSA (CA. 1520)

A mí llamar Comba de terra Guinea 'My name is Comba from the land of Guinea'

A mí llamar Jorge, Mandinga es mi terra ... 'My name is Jorge, Mandinga is my land'

FELICIANO DE SILVA, SEGUNDA CELESTINA (CA. 1530)

a mi no extar tan bovo como i penxar, giá penxar que no entender a mi/nündadex? 'I am not as stupid as you think. Do you think that I don't understand about evil things?'

GASPAR GÓMEZ DE TOLEDO, TERCERA CELESTINA (CA. 1534)

a mi cayar y xenuir extux mercedes 'I will be silent and will serve these people'

JAIME DE GUETE, TESORINA CA. 1550)

En toro oy mi no comer 'I haven't eaten all day'

AUTO DE BELLAMENINA, OF SEBASTIÃO PIRES (EARLY 16TH CENTURY)

mi trazey ca ha recado pera bay a bosso merce 'I bring home a message for your grace'

ANON. AUTO DE VICENTEÂNES JOEIRA (MID 16TH CENTURY)

mui gram trabai que tem homem que mi sere sentar 'This man that I am has much work'

IOÁO SARDINA MEMOSO, ANTONÍO DE SOUZA, 'RELACIÓN DE LA REAL TRAGICOMEDIA CON QUELOS PADRES DE LA COMPANÍA DE JESÚS EN SU COLEGIO DE S. ANTONÍN DE LÍBROA RECEBIRÓ A LA MAGNÉSTAD CATÓLICA DE PÉLÉII DE PORTUGAL, Y DE SU ENTRADA EN ESTE REINO, CON LO QUE SE HIZIÓ EN LAS VILLAS Y CIUDADES ENQUE SE ENTRÓ' (1620)

oya que minim sa doyente tapua, e Ø sar mu gaçados 'Look, I'm very sick, and [I] would be grateful ...

SONG: "¿QUÉGENTE, PLIMA, QUÉGENTE?" BY ALONSO DE BLAS Y SANDOVAL (1699)

Reye zamo del Oriente, que aunque mi extar postillón zi hayar grazia en el Garzón a quien plerenta yevamo mi/ quedan tan reya como mi Amo 'We are kings from the Orient, and although I am humbled before the child for whom we are bearing gifts, I am as much a king as my Lord'

JULIÁN DE CONTRERAS (COLOMBIA, 17THCENTURY), POEM 'TEQUE-LEQUE' (PERDOMO ESCOBAR 1976)
con Juaniya mi sabe entendé ya ‘I know how to get along with Juanilla’

‘O PRETO, E O BUGIO AMBOS NOMATO DISCORRENDO SOBRE A ARTE DE TER DINHEIRO SEM IR AO BRASIL’ (PORTUGAL, 1789)

Min’ agola sem trabalha nom pore conté, ainda que min’ ter abominaçon a captiveiro cruere de blanco ‘I can’t stand not working, although I abhore the white man’s cruel captivity’

CUBA, EARLY 19TH CENTURY

Mi no sabe, ñamito ... niña Paulita ñamá yo, bisa negra pa ni, echa mi saco com plátano, mi no sabe ná ‘I don’t know, master, Paulita called me and told this negro to go, to put some yams and bananas in my sack, I don’t know at all’ (María de Santa Cruz, Historias campesinas)

A mí no bebe aguariente, mi ama ‘I don’t drink liquor, mistress’ (Condesa de Merlin, Viaje a La Habana)

Another source of the bare infinitive in pidgin Spanish texts is the corpus of ‘Moorish’ Spanish imitations, which populated Spanish Renaissance literature following the expulsion of the last of the Moorish kingdoms from the Iberian Peninsula. Appearing nearly simultaneously with Afro-Hispanic imitations, the speech of the *moro* or *morisco* became a literary stock in trade for Spanish writers during the 16th and 17th centuries (Sloman 1949):

(13) EARLY EXAMPLES OF ‘MORISH’ SPANISH:

LOPE DE RUEDA, ARMELINA (CA. 1520):

¿Quin llamar, quin llamar? ¡Hola! ¿Pinxastex quinxordamox porque traquilitraque? ‘Who is calling? Did you think that we were deafened by the racket?’

¿Qué te parexer, xeñor honrado? ¿Tenerlo todo ben entendido? ‘What do you think, good sir? Have [you] understood everything well?’

GIL VICENTE, CORTES DE JÚPITER (CA. 1520):

Mi no xaber que exto extar, mi no xaber que exto xer, mi no xaber onde andar. ‘I don’t know what this is; I don’t know where [I] am going’

FARSA DEL SACRAMENTO LLAMADA LE LOS LENGUAJES (ANON, 16TH C.):

Que mandar, mi bon zonior? ‘What do [you] command, my good sir?’

Mi xonior, no estar cristiano ‘Sir, [I] am not Christian’

Xenpre yo estar ben creado, mi no hurtar, ni matar, ni hazer otro becado. ‘I am always well-bred; I don’t steal nor kill nor sin in other ways’

LUIS DE GÓNGORA (1615):

Aunque entre el mula e il vaquilio nacer en este pajar, o estrelías mentir, o estar Califa vos, chequetilio. ‘Although [you] were born among mules and calves in this hay, either the stars lie or you are a Caliph, little child.’

Grammatically, the *morisco* verb is almost always in the infinitive, and some 16th century texts exhibit use of mí as subject pronoun. Non-agreeing null subjects are frequent, articles are often eliminated, and the verb *estar*, which in 16th century Spanish had fewer purely copular functions than in modern Spanish, became the default copula, used even with predicate nominatives
Another prolific source of literary imitations of pidginized Spanish arose with the arrival of Chinese speakers in Latin America. In the second half of the 19th century, Cuba received at least 150,000 Chinese laborers, while more than 90,000 Chinese workers were imported into coastal Peru. Smaller numbers arrived in Panama, Venezuela, and Central America. The Chinese worked in the sugar plantations and mills as virtual slaves, side by side with Africans and—in Cuba—workers from other Caribbean islands. The linguistic conditions surrounding the lives of Chinese laborers closely parallels that of African slaves, and Chinese workers’ acquisition of Spanish followed similar paths (Lipski 1998a, 1999c). A considerable body of literary texts imitating Chinese speakers’ approximations to Spanish arose in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and these stereotypes continue in Cuba to this day. Our own Voice of America’s broadcasts to Cuba, in the form of Radio Martí, include a politically-charged radio comedy show in which a Chinese-Cuban character speaks in a crude parody of foreigners’ Spanish. In Chinese-influenced Spanish verbs—which almost never agreed with subjects—were sometimes based on the third person singular, sometimes on the infinitive:

(14) Chinese pidgin Spanish imitations in Latin America:

`El chino que no sabía' [Cuba]:

Comandante Lupelto, pa mi no mila, que yo no sabo 'Commander Ruperto, I don't see [anything], I don't know'

`El discurso del chino reaccionario' [Cuba]:

chino so pesona lesente. Si chino no fue pesona lesente, alcalde no tlaía señola, jefe Policía no tlaía hija 'Chinese are decent people. If Chinese were not decent people, the mayor would not bring [his] wife, the chief of police would not bring [his] daughter'

`El picador y el chino tifí' [Cuba]:

Tú tlabaja mucho. Tú tumba mucha caña y ganá mucho dinelo. Pue, tonse, come caña hata sábalo y ven dipué, que yo lipachá comía pa ti. ‘You work hard. You cut much sugarcane and earn a lot of money. Well, then, eat sugar cane until Saturday and then come here, when I’ll sell you food'

Antonio Ortega, `China olvidado' [Cuba]:

Yo no sabel. Chino olvilalo, chino no tenel patientes ... no tenel amigos ... chino estal solo ... ‘I don’t know. Chinese man forgets, Chinese man has no relatives, has no friends ... Chinese man is alone'

Nicomedes Santa Cruz, Décimas [Peru]:

Yo tiene batante aló, batante canne cochino, ‘I have lots of rice, lots of pork'

Trazegnies Grandá [Peru]
Neglo engleído, tu cleel que sólo neglo hacel velso. Pelo pala chino sel palte de su elucació ... `You stuck-up Negro; you think that only Negros can make up verses. But for [us] Chinese, it's part of [our] upbringing'

CHONG RUIZ [PANAMA]
Cuando inglé vino a la China tlajo opio; ningún homble tenel mucha comila, entonces el inglé dijo: yo tomal la comila y el chino comel opio
`When the English came to China they brought opium. Nobody had much food, so the English said: I will take the food and the Chinese will eat opium'

CARLOS LUIS FALLAS, MAMITA YUNAI [COSTA RICA]:
Yo levanta templano pelo quela mucho lato convelsando co Lamilo. `I got up early but I stayed a long time talking to Ramiro'

ACTUALLY OCCURRING CHINESE PIDGIN SPANISH (CLEMENTS 1999):
Llega aquí, no hay trabajando `[I] arrived here, and there was no work'
Yo no sabe él `I don't know him`
yo dise tío conmigo hablando, puede fuela China `I said, uncle was telling me I could leave China'
Nació de Nanking `[I] was born in Nanking'

Yet another source of literary “broken” Spanish comes from the far-flung South Pacific.

The Spanish language was present in Philippines for more than 350 years, although only a very small proportion of the Philippine population ever spoke (non-creolized) Spanish either natively or as a strong second language (Lipski 1987, 1988). Philippine Creole Spanish has survived as a viable first and strong second language in several cities; in addition to creole and quasi-native Philippine Spanish, several Spanish-based pidgins evolved, particularly as spoken by Chinese residents, but also used by non-fluent Filipinos when addressing Spaniards. This was a rough pidgin, and contained few if any of the consistent grammatical structures which characterize true creole languages:

(15) PHILIPPINE CHINESE PIDGIN SPANISH (IMITATIONS):
sigulo, señolía ... como no tiene ahola talabajos; como no tiene capé; y ha de ganalo la vida, sigulo tiene que hace tabaco `of course, sir; since {I} do not have a job now, and since {I} don't have any coffee, and {I} have to earn a living, of course {I} have to make cigars'
Mia quiele platicalo `I want to speak with you'
guerra, señolía, malo negocio ... mía aquí vendelo, ganalo `war is bad business, sir; I am here selling and earning {money}’
muerdo día señolía ... ¿cosa quiele? mia tiene nuevo patila ... `good day, Sir, what do you want? I have new merchandise’
si que le comprala cosa, cosa siñolita `yes, buy many things, miss’

(16) PIDGIN SPANISH OF (NON-CHINESE) FILIPINOS (IMITATIONS):
No puede, ama; aquel matandá Juancho, casado también `[it] isn't possible, ma'am; that no-good Juancho is also married'
¿Cosa va a hacer ya si nació viva? Siguro yo pegué plojo aquel día `what can {I} do if [the baby] was born alive? I must have been wrong that day.’
Pues suya cuidado, pero esa tiene novio castila y seguro no ha de querer con suya `That's your business, but that woman has a Spanish boyfriend and she surely won't have anything to do with you'
Usted señor, bajar, y yo apartar animales `You sir, will get down [from the carriage]; I will disperse the animals'
Bueno, señor, aquí comer `Well, sir, here [you can] eat'
No hay ya, siñol; pudo quedá sin el plasa, porque sisante hace tiempo, cuando aquel cosa del flata ... pero no necesitá `He [doesn't work there] any more, sir; he lost the job, he's been out of work for some time, since the time of the money affair, but [he] doesn't need [it]’
Finally, we bring matters closer to home. A common element in much 20th century Latin American literature is the representation of pidginized Spanish as used by speakers of English. The typical pidgin speaker hails from the United States, and is often portrayed as the domineering gringo or yanqui (expatriate travelers, entrepreneurs, and military personnel), but similar linguistic traits have been attributed to natives of England, and to (West Indian) English speakers in Central America. Most of the examples are derisive and macaronic, but occasionally the English speakers are cast in a sympathetic light. Although there is considerable variation among texts, use of the uninflected infinitive is a common denominator, as is frequent use of mí as subject pronoun. The infinitive sometimes alternates with finite verbs, usually in the third person singular:

(17) **IMITATIONS OF ENGLISH-BASED “GRINGO” SPANISH:**

**Benito Lynch**, *El inglés de los güesos* [Argentina]:

mí trabaca ... mí busca huesas antiguos, viecas, viecas ...

 güesas india, mí bosca, mí lleva pí miuseum ... ‘I work, I look for old bones, Indian bones, I look [for them] I take [them] to a museum’

**Joaquín Gutiérrez**, *Puerto Limón* [Costa Rica]:

No, mí no pueda llevar. Mí llevar y después joden a Tom. Míster, yo sabe bien. Vos decir nada a la compañía. Vos llegar a Limón y te olvidás ...

‘No, I can't take [you]. I take you, and then Tom gets screwed. Mister, I know very well. You won't say anything to the company. You will arrive in Limón and you will forget …’

**Ramón Amaya-Amador**, *Prisión verde* [Honduras]:

Ser inútil. Juana no aceptar. Decir tiene su marido. Por eso yo decir a mister Jones, sí él quiere coger Juana, primero quitar marido '[It's] no use. Juana will not accept. [She will] say [she] has a husband. Therefore I said to Mister Jones, if he wants to seduce Juana, [he should] get rid of the husband first’

**Joaquín Beleño**, *Cirundú* [Panama]:

Ella cree que yo ganar mi plata como el policí ... yo tiene que trabajar ...

‘She thinks that I earn money just like a policeman ... I have to work’

¿quién mandar aquí? si tú no saber, ¿quién sabe? ‘Who's in charge here? If you don't know, who knows?’

**José León Sánchez** [Costa Rica]; "Una guitarra para José Jesús":

Si alguien me dar cien pesos [...] Muchachos bueno, ser bien y tener palabra de negro [\ldots] ¿también tú querer pañuelo? ‘If somebody gives me 100 pesos ... ok guys, be good and take this black man’s word ... do you want the scarf too?’

**Fernando Ramírez Velarde** [Bolivia], * Socavones de Angustia*

No olvidar [...] nosotros contratado palliris, ¡no niñeras!’ ‘don’t forget, we have contracted miners, not babysitters’

**Ramón Marrero Aristy** [Dominican Republic], *Over*

Mi no vuelva ‘I’m not going back’
Literary imitations of Haitian canecutters in the Dominican Republic and Cuba, who speak a pidginized Spanish similar to that of English-speaking West Indians, coincides substantially with actual observations of Haitians' Spanish, although early literary attempts were only crude parodies. In general, finite verb forms are used to instantiate Spanish finite verbs, with a noteworthy preference for the third person singular. Some Haitians occasionally use the Spanish infinitive instead of a conjugated verb, perhaps reflecting the widespread homophony between Haitian Creole verbs and French infinitives, but such examples are not common:

(18) **Haitians' Spanish in the Dominican Republic (from Luis Ortiz López)**

Yo contrao un paisano mía nosotros hablá su lenguaje y nosotros... yo habla con mi paisano patuá... bueno, yo no pue negal mi lengua `I find a countryman, we speak [our] language, I speak patois with my country-men... I can't deny my own language`
yo hacel mucho trabajal; coltal caña baloto; recogel café a sei kilo `I worked hard; I cut sugar cane for little money; I picked coffee for six cents`

Contemporary Spanish popular culture frequently uses foreigner talk, for examples in translations of Asterix as well as in texts originally produced in Spanish. Finally, broken Spanish is even used by an extraterrestrial `hombre de otro mundo' in the Cuban novel Sacchario (Cossío Woodward 1970:13), interspersed with grammatically correct Spanish:

(19) **“Extraterrestrial” Cuban Spanish in the novel Sacchario by Miguel Cossío Woodward:**

No dominan el átomo, ni hacen vuelos interplanetarios ... bien perdone. Yo comprende `they don't control the atom nor undertake interplanetary flight; pardon me, I understand`.

4. The search for sources: Lingua Franca and *mi* as subject

In searching for the immediate sources of the bare infinitive in Romance and Germanic-inspired foreigner talk stereotypes, and also for the origins of the subject pronoun *mi*, we turn first to the Mediterranean, beginning around the 14th century, when a Romance-based trade language known as Lingua Franca or Sabir came into wide usage. Much has been written about this elusively unwritten contact language, whose name is evidently a translation of Arabic *lisan al-farang* or `language of the Franks', but tangible and trustworthy attestations are as scarce as hens' teeth. Indeed, the lack of anything other than questionable literary imitations before the late 19th century yields the suspicion that early Lingua Franca may have been as mythically
effervescent as the Holy Grail. On the other hand, the recent archaeological discovery of the historical site of Camelot does inspire hope that similar traces of his putatively crucial trade language may one day come to light. According to available information, Lingua Franca/Sabir had a high proportion of Italian elements, together with Arabic, and in certain areas Turkish, Berber, Persian and French, as it spread over both shores of the Mediterranean. Most reasonably, each community of users added elements of their native language, while retaining the basic core lexicon and grammar. The Lingua Franca may have arisen as early as the Crusades (the first massive contact between speakers of Romance and Middle Eastern languages outside of the Iberian Peninsula), and it survived in full form until at least the beginning of the 19th century, when the French conquered the last flourishing Lingua Franca outpost at Algiers. Following the expulsion of Moslems from the Iberian Peninsula, many escaped to such North African outposts as Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, where they continued to capture and hold Christian slaves, and to speak various mixtures of Arabic and Romance languages. Eventually the Lingua Franca shed its connotation of enslavement and became merely a useful trade language, which was even known by sailors in England and Ireland, surviving in British slang forms until well into the 20th century. All varieties of the Lingua Franca had an Arabic/Turkish connection, but the proportions of Italian, Spanish or French varied widely, both geographically and across time. The French preferred the term `Petit Mauresque' for this language, while Spanish texts often confused morisco or `Moorish' parodies with what might be authentic Mediterranean Lingua Franca. Italians often referred to this sort of language as greghesco, a term also applied to other parodies of Middle Eastern approximations to Italian.

Only a handful of texts or descriptions of Lingua Franca antedate the 19th century, making reconstruction speculative and venturesome. Surviving texts are suspect as true
specimens of a pan-Mediterranean Lingua Franca, rather than local attempts at mimicking broken Romance spoken by foreigners, or derogatory stereotypes of `infidel' Arabs and Turks:

(20) IMITATIONS OF LINGUA FRANCA OR SABIR

ANON., ITALY (CA. 1353) (FERRARA 1950)

``come ti voler parlare?' how do you want to speak?''
Ø non aver di te paura `I am not afraid of you''

``se per li capelli Ø prendoto, come Ø ti voler conciare! 'If I grabbed you by the hair, how I would like to beat you!''

``Ohio ti farò pigliare 'I will have you caught''

GIOVANNI GIANCARLI, LA CINGANA (CA. 1550)

``mi no saber certa 'I am not sure''

``mi stata sembre curteza, sin ben mi nasuda al monte del Barca 'I have always been well-mannered, even if I was born on Barca [Barbery Coast]''

``mi andar co'l dinari, ti restar ... 'I will go off with your money, you will stay ...''

ANON. SONG `MATONA MIA CARA' (CA. 1581) (COLLIER 1976)

``Ø ti prego m'ascoltare 'I beg you to listen to me''

``Mi follere canzon 'I want (?) a song''

``Si ti mi foller bene, mi non esser poltron, mi ficcar tutta notte, Ø urtar come monton `If you love me, I will not be lazy, I will stay all night, thrusting like a ram'''

JUAN DEL ENCINA, `VILLANICO' (CA 1520)

``ala ti da bon matin 'May Allah give you a good morning''

``Por ala Ø te recomenda ... 'By Allah [I] recommend to you ...''

Per benda Ø dar dos o tres `For a benda [I will] give [you] two or three [eggs]'萍

Peregrin taybo cristian si Ø querer andar Jordan ... 'Pilgrim, good Christian, if [you] want to go to Jordan ...'

LUIS DE GONGORA (1615)

``Yo estar Xeque. Se conmego andar, manteca, senora, mel vos y serva madora comerás senior el vejo 'I am Jeque. If [you] come with me, my lady, you will eat lard and you, sir, will eat honey and ripe fruit''

FRANCISCO MANUEL DE MELLO, VISITA DAS FONTES (CA. 1657)

``Quem pintar senhor cristão? Pintar cristão ou mouro? ... Pois ... bem parecer; porque, se pintar mouro, Ø pôr mouro a cavallo e mais de trinta Santiagoos ao pé! 'Who painted the Christian [St. James]? Did a Christian or a Moor paint [him]? ... Well, that's what I thought; because if a Moor had painted [him], [he] would have put the Moor on horseback and more than 30 Santiagoos at his feet!'''

MOLIERE, LE BOURGEOSGENTILHOMME (CA. 1671)

``Se ti saber, ti respondir, se Ø no saber, Ø tazir 'If you know, you answer, if you don't know, you be quiet''

``Mi star Mufti; ti qui sar qui? 'I am Mufti, who are you?''

ANON. `DANZA DE INDIANOS' FROM ACTIO QUAE INSCRIBITUR EXAMEN SACRUM (17TH CENTURY SPAIN)

``Cuchamé, cuchamé, ¿quen te far venir aquí?''

``Cangoscima tematon, verta toldo en un sotano. praz amor llagado bon, prax la bunga de chuquano. Me martillo coro cano,'
me ficando par á mi.
Cuchamé, cachamé,
¿quién te far venir aquí?

PEDRO CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA, EL GRAN PRÍNCIPE DE FÉZ (1672)
Qué querer dezir aquelio de Baril Morilio ... me estar Morilio Baril, que estar vos ... 'What do you mean by Barril Morillo ... I am Morillo, who are you?'

PEDRO CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA, EL JARDÍN DE FALERINA (1677)
Ala saber donde estar tu 'Only Allah knows where you are'
Que gigante no lo estar? 'What giant is not [drunk]?'

PEDRO CALDERÓN DE LA BARCA, AMAR DESPUÉS DE LA MUERTE (1691)
Ya el portas estar cerradas 'The doors are closed'
Ø no estar loco 'I am not crazy'
...
... me ser Cristiano en mi conciencia 'I am a Christian in my heart'

CARLO GOLDONI, L'IMPRESARIO DELLE SMIRNE (1761)
Ø star omo, o Ø star donna? 'Are [you] a man or are [you] a woman?'
Smirne non aver bisogno di tua persona. Si Ø voler andar Turchia, io te mandar Costantinopoli, sarraglio de Gran Sultan 'You are not needed in Smyrna; if [you] want to go to Turkey, I will send you to Constantinople, to the Sultan's harem'
Ø star voce de omo. Io non star cosí bestia a voler musico che cantar come gatto '[That] isn't a man's voice. I'm not such a beast as to enjoy a musician who sings like a cat'

Dictionnaire de la langue franque ou petit mauresque (ca. 1830)
Comme ti star? Mi star bonou, et ti? Mi star contento mirar per ti. 'How are you? I am fine, and you? I am glad to see you.'
tuo Console nuovo star buono, Ø non cercare me né buono né male 'your new consul is good, [he] doesn't strike me as good or bad' (Archivio del Consolato Sardo, Tripoli, mid. 19th c.)
Re Sardinia mandar ti Tripoli birché Ø tener bona cabesa i procura no pagar rigal 'The king of Sardinia is sending you to Tripolo because [you] have a good head and try not to pay bribes' (Ferrari, La spedizione della Marina sarda a Tripoli nel 1825)
Santar aqui, mosieu 'Sit here, sir' (Anon. 1852)
quand moi gagner drahem, moiachetir moukère 'When I earn some money, I will buy a [concubine]'

Moi meskine, toi donner sord 'I am poor; you [will] give me money' (Faidherbe, L'Alliance français pour la propagation de la langue française dans les colonies et les pays étrangers [Algiers, 1884])

However, there is some direct testimony regarding this language, and even explicit links between the Mediterranean Lingua Franca and Afro-Iberian bozal language. For example the Spanish priest Fray Diego de Haedo, captured and imprisoned by Moors in Algiers in the late 16th century, wrote in 1612 a description of that region which gives clear evidence of a stable Lingua Franca, and a connection with Afro-Hispanic language:

(21) DIEGO DE HAEDO, TOPOGRAFÍA E HISTORIA GENERAL DE ARGEL (CA. 1612)

Description of Lingua Franca (Diego de Haedo, 1612):
La tercera lengua que en Argel se usa es la que los moros y turcos llaman franca o hablar franco, llamando así a la lengua y manera de hablar cristiano no porque ellos hablen toda la lengua y manera de habla de cristiano o porque este hablar... sea de alguna particular nación cristiana que lo use, mas porque mediante este modo de hablar, que está entre ellos en uso, se entienden con los cristianos, siendo todo el una mezcla de varias lenguas cristianas y de vocablos, que por la mayor parte son Italianos y Españoles y algunos Portugueses... y juntando a esta confusión y mezcla de tan diversos vocablos y maneras de hablar, de diversos reinos, provincias y naciones cristianas, la mala pronunciación de los turcos, y no saben ellos variar los modos, tiempos y casos, como los cristianos... aquellos vocablos y modos de hablar viene a ser el hablar franco de Argel, casi una jerigonza o, a lo menos, un hablar de negro bozal traído a España de nuevo. [The third language which is spoken in Algiers is what the Moors and Turks call Lingua Franca, thus referring to a sort of Christian speech, not because they speak the language like Christians or because this language represents a particular Christian nation, but because they use this language amongst themselves and with Christians, being a mixture of various Christian languages and words, mostly Italian and Spanish and some Portuguese... adding to this confusion and mixture of such diverse words and ways of speaking, from various Christian kingdoms, provinces, and nations, the poor pronunciation of the Turks; they do not know how to change mood, tense, and case like Christians... these words and ways of speaking constitute the Lingua Franca of Algiers, almost a jargon or at least a negro bozal/speech returning to Spain]

Haedo's Imitations of Lingua Franca:

mirar como mi estar barbero bonito y saber curar, si Θ estar malat y ahora Θ correr bono`Look what a good doctor I am and how I know how to cure [him], if [he] is sick, and now [he] runs well`

mi saber como curar a fe de Dio ... Θ trabajar, Θ no parlar que Θ estar malato`I know how to cure him, by God ... [he will] work, [he] will not say that [he] is sick`  

mi parlar patron donar bona bastonada, mucho, mucho `I will tell the master to give [you] a good beating`

Beginning at the end of the 15th century and continuing for nearly two centuries, Afro-Iberian speech forms were widely used in Spanish and Portuguese literature, suggesting that they were relatively well known to the same elements of society (merchants in coastal areas, sailors and traders, etc.) who used Lingua Franca. A cross-fertilization of Afro-Iberian pidgin and Lingua Franca forms could well have occurred, since the former would have also occupied a prominent place in the popular imagination as the appropriate way of addressing `Africans,' whether Arabic-speaking or from sub-Saharan regions.

You will have noticed in the Lingua Franca examples that mi and ti are used as subject pronouns, instead of the readily available Italian tonic pronouns io and tu. All available evidence suggests that the use of mi and similar forms as subject pronouns in Romance-derived foreigner talk (and stabilizing in many Romance-derived creole languages) comes originally from the Mediterranean Lingua Franca. In the case of Afro-Iberian language, it will be shown that this use of object pronouns as subjects was reinforced by fortuitous similarities across many West African languages. Lingua Franca texts from the period in which Afro-Iberian linguistic contacts were being solidified—the late 15th century—show incipient use of mi/ti as subject, a
development which does not stabilize in Lingua Franca until a century later. More frequent in early Lingua Franca documents are null subjects, with reference being determined contextually. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the two languages which apparently provided the major impetus for early Lingua Franca, Italian and Arabic, are both `pro-drop’ languages in which null subjects are preferred. Although pidgins, like the Lingua Franca, have no verbal inflection which would obviate the use of overt subject pronouns, most pidgin speech acts involve face-to-face exchanges in which the reference of null pronominals can be effected through physical gestures, or pragmatic rules of conversational turn-taking.

The gradual emergence of *mi* as subject in Lingua Franca suggests that disjunctive object pronouns were not the natural and inevitable choice from the outset. Nonetheless, at the same time that *mi* as subject was developing in the Mediterranean Lingua Franca, *(a)mí* as subject appears in Afro-Iberian pidgin. It is not unlikely that a solution to one issue will bear immediately on the other. Beginning at the end of the 15th century and continuing for nearly two centuries, Afro-Iberian speech forms were widely used in Spanish and Portuguese literature, suggesting that they were relatively well known to the same elements of society (merchants in coastal areas, sailors and traders, etc.) who used Lingua Franca. A cross-fertilization of Afro-Iberian pidgin and Lingua Franca forms could well have occurred, since the former would have also occupied a prominent place in the popular imagination as the appropriate way of addressing `Africans,’ whether Arabic-speaking or from sub-Saharan regions.

It is misleading to judge the Italian contribution to Lingua Franca through comparison with modern standard Italian, a codified and artificially restricted derivative of educated Florentine patterns. Nothing suggests that medieval Lingua Franca was ever inspired by learned or normative speech patterns. To the contrary, everything known about this contact vernacular
indicates that it was the linguistic vehicle of choice among sailors, merchants and nomadic traders. In searching for 'Italian' sources of Lingua Franca, we must turn to regional and social dialects likely to have been used by Italian sailors and merchants in key trading regions. Genoa and Venice were particularly important commercial and mercantile centers during the 15th-17th centuries. Significantly, the regional dialects of Genoa and Venice use first person singular subject pronouns derive from Latin _mihi_, rather than _ego_. The pronouns involved have the general form _me/mi/min_. The same dialects have largely adopted _ti_ for the second person singular subject pronoun, although in some cases this may have resulted from the unrounding of [ü] rather than the conversion of an object pronoun. Interestingly, in a number of northern Italian dialects, second-person plural _voi_ has evolved to _vo/bo_, which could have reinforced the Afro-Iberian development of _a)bo_ (found instead of _tu_ in all Afro-Iberian language varieties) from _vos_. Northern Italian dialects originally had only a single series of subject pronouns, derived from Latin and cognate with those of modern Italian. The adoption of _mi_ as subject pronoun in northern Italian dialects arose during the 14th-15th centuries, with a few examples coming even earlier:

(22) **Early Examples of _mi_ and _ti_ as Subject Pronouns in Regional Italian Dialects:**

**Sermone of the Lombard Pietro da Barsegapè, probably written at the very end of the 13th century:** `siempre staremo _mi_ e le ...' [he and I will always be...] (Salvioni 1891:476)

**Late 14th Century Salentinan Text:** `my Sabatyno Russo judio de Leze vy saluto' [I Sabatino Russo, a Jew from Leze, greet you] (Stussi 1965).

**Brescia, Early 15th Century** (Bonelli and Contini 1935): `Mi sost tut innocent denanz da vo e da la zent de la mort de quest iust hom' [I am innocent before you and before the people of the death of this just man]; `Christ, se _ti_ é fiol de De' [Christ, if you are the son of God]

**Genoa, 15th Century:** _mi_ e me fijo 'I and my son' (Parodi 190119)

**Genoa, Early 16th Century** (Donaver 1910:24): `Mi son Zeneize, e Zena ho sempre amaou' [I am Genoese, and I have always loved Genoa].

Machiavelli, in his *Discorso intorno alla nostra lingua*, commented without surprise that some Italians used _mi_ instead of _io_, and _ti_ instead of _tu_:

(23) **From Machiavelli, Discorso intorno alla nostra lingua [ca. 1519]:**

E per esempio si può dare la provincia d'Italia; la quale è in una minima parte differente nei verbi, ma nei nomi differentissima [...] Intra i pronomi, quelli che importano più sono variati, sì come è _mi_ in vece d' _io_, e _ti_ per _tu_ [and for example we can mention the province of Italy, in which verbs are
minimally different, but nouns are very different [...] among the pronouns, the most important ones vary, as in mi instead of io and ti for tu]  
(Machiavelli 1971:925)

This shift apparently occurred when the original subject pronouns eroded to stressless clitics, bound to the verb and lacking their earlier contrastive meaning. To fill the gap formerly occupied by free-standing subject pronouns, disjunctive object pronouns were pressed into service, thereby giving the northern Italian dialects their characteristic `dual' subject pronouns: an optional stressed pronoun and (for most forms) an obligatory preverbal clitic.

The chronology of the development of mi as subject in Genoese and Venetian corresponds closely to the use of subject pronouns in Lingua Franca. The earliest texts use null subjects, even in the absence of distinctive verb conjugations, alternating with etymologically correct overt subject pronouns. At this time, subject pronouns had not fully evolved to clitic status in northern Italy and could still be dropped, and disjunctive object pronouns were not yet being widely used as subjects. By the early 16th century, mi as subject pronoun was in use both in Lingua Franca and in northern Italian dialects, as well as in emerging Afro-Lusitanian speech. Under the very natural assumption that regional dialects of Italian prevailed over a literary `national language' in medieval and Renaissance times, and given the increasing prevalence of the lower classes in the Venetian/Genoese maritime trade, the most influential dialects would provide a model for the incorporation of overt subject pronouns into Lingua Franca. The dialects of the major trading cities Genoa, Venice and Pisa enjoyed special prominence. The existence of Venetian, Pisan and Genoese lexical items in Lingua Franca imitations demonstrates that these regional languages were indeed instrumental in the formation and development of the Lingua Franca, and may well have contributed their pronouns.

Unlike the nearly uniform disjunctive object pronouns, first person subject pronouns derived from Latin ego vary widely among Italian dialects. In the true sense of a `lingua franca,'
a set of common denominators recognizable to the widest possible group, the use of *mi* and by extension *ti* as subject pronouns would be further enhanced, once backed by the economic and political force of the Northern Italian city-states. If to these factors was added a popular perception, among speakers of other Italian dialects, that use of *mi* and *ti* represented either infantile or `foreign' (e.g. French) interference in Italian, the conscious adoption of these elements in a trade vernacular would be a natural outcome. Finally, it is not irrelevant that Venetians and Genoese were central to the establishment of the African-powered sugar/slave plantation systems, first in the Mediterranean and later in the Azores, Madeira, Cape Verde and São Tomé. In the first two island groups, Portuguese settlers soon outnumbered speakers of other languages, and only regional forms of Portuguese developed. In Cape Verde and São Tomé, however, the majority of the population was drawn from the African mainland, with creolization resulting from the consequent linguistic heterogeneity. Fortuitous similarity of Portuguese *(a)mim* and first person singular forms in local African languages could aid the adoption of disjunctive object pronouns in the developing Afro-Lusitanian pidgin. The regional Italian dialects of Genoese and Venetian sailors and merchants add to the list of contributing factors. This chain of events would constitute an indirect connection between medieval Lingua Franca and Afro-Iberian pidgins: in both contact languages, first and second person subject pronouns could have been influenced by regional Italian dialects.

Returning to the possible African connection in the use of *(a)mí* as subject pronoun, the use of *(a)mí* as subject pronoun is conspicuously absent in Spanish- and Portuguese-derived creoles of Asia and the Pacific, thus suggesting an African connection in the choice of subject pronouns. Among West African pronouns, similarity with counterparts in Ibero Romance is nonexistent, with one striking exception. In one of the most striking linguistic coincidences in in
the entire world, across a broad West African cross-section, first person singular pronouns begin with /m-/ and the accompanying vowel is often /i/; Migeod (1911:98-9) notes that:

(25) FROM MIGEOD (1911: 98-9):

'... the first word that strikes the eye is the familiar “mi” [...] this familiar form of the first personal pronoun ... exists in West African languages [...] as it does also in Aryan languages [...] in some languages where “m” does not appear as the dominant letter of the first person in the nominative case, it does so in the objective case, which is very commonly what is observed in European languages.'

First person singular pronouns similar or identical to mi (sometimes with a non-labial nasal) occur in the majority of language families which are identified by name in early Afro-Iberian texts, including Wolof, Mandinga, Twi/Asante, Kikongo. Coastal languages of Benin, Nigeria and the Bight of Biafra cluster around mi as first person singular, with strong forms including emi and ami: this includes Nupe, Gbari, Yoruba, Efik and Igbo. A number of western Bantu languages, including those spoken in the Congo Basin and coastal Angola, also have first person singular pronouns whose common intersection is essentially (a)mi.

The fortuitous similarity between the first person singular pronoun in many West African languages and a member of the Ibero Romance pronominal paradigm would surely have been noticed by Europeans attempting to make sense of Africans' speech, a comfortably familiar item in the midst of otherwise unintelligible speech. Although it was (and still is) typical for Europeans to regard African speech as nothing but a jumble of meaningless sounds, often compared with the cries of birds and animals, attempts at reducing such languages to writing initially include phonetic patterns which are recognizable in the writers' language. A Portuguese or Spanish speaker hearing a combination like (a)mi, especially when accompanied by a clear deictic reference to the speaker such as a self-pointing gesture, would immediately seize upon the similarity with Spanish/Portuguese (a)mi(m). In the West African languages under discussion these pronouns may only be occasional stressed variants, or object pronouns, but Europeans would not recognize other members of the African pronominal paradigm and would
assume that the familiar-sounding strong forms were the only pronouns. In describing African speech, or Afro-Iberian pidgin, a Spanish or Portuguese speaker would naturally overgeneralize use of (a)mí. In speaking to Africans in Spanish or Portuguese, this pronoun might also be used instead of the correct subject pronouns, with the goal of facilitating the first halting attempts at communication through recourse to what was regarded as a mutually identifiable word. This is not a variant of the `baby talk' model of pidgin formation, since there is no a priori reason why a speaker of Spanish or Portuguese should feel that (a)mí would be inherently more comprehensible than yo/eu to an African. If genuine, albeit misguided, attempts at facilitated communication were at work, then Africans in turn would seize upon the word being proffered to them, especially if it resembled a pronoun in their native language. A mutual misinterpretation at the early stages of pidgin formation would have long-lasting consequences among both Africans and Europeans, propagating the view that `African' versions of the first person singular all involved mi. Thus the West African connection provides the other half of the equation providing for use of object pronouns instead of subject pronouns. In the case of Asian Portuguese and Spanish creoles, where the African connection was attenuated, and where distance in time and space from the Mediterranean Lingua Franca diluted a possible influence on the emerging contact languages, only subject pronouns are used. In French pidgins and foreigner talk, use of moi is to be expected, since French subject pronoun je is a stressless clitic and cannot stand alone. French child language also exhibits use of moi, toi, etc. as subjects, for the same reason. The use of mi as subject in English-based creoles of West Africa and the Caribbean possibly also bears a Lingua Franca imprint (British linguist Ian Hancock has traced other Lingua Franca items that entered the speech of Elizabethan England), but also reflect the
emphatic use of *me* in standard English, as well as the fortuitous similarity with many West African subject pronouns.

5. **Continuing the search: more on infinitives instead of conjugated verbs**

Mediterranean Lingua Franca also showed use of infinitives instead of conjugated verbs, a surprising fact given the fact that Lingua Franca was based on Italian, in which infinitives occur relatively infrequently, and are not the form spontaneous used when second-language learners commit errors. The choice of the infinitive in Lingua Franca is not a natural consequence of the imperfect acquisition of Italian by speakers of Eastern Mediterranean languages, but reflects an originally conscious choice by speakers of Italian and other Romance languages to simplify their verbal system when speaking to foreigners deemed incapable or unworthy of learning a full version of these languages. The same is true for *todesche*, *greghesco*, and other forms of Italian foreigner-talk. Echoing the earlier remarks of Schuchardt, Coates (1970:71) notes:

(26) **FROM COATES (1970:71):**

>'The use of the infinitive instead of person verb forms involves replacement from the language's own resources, and this *lanci* could never carry out. No amount of phonetic confusion would ever produce the infinitive as the reduction of the commonly-occurring Italian verb forms; as a least common denominator one might expect *parla*, for instance, not *parlare*.'

Additional sources of Lingua Franca-like foreigner talk come from the use of the infinitive in imitations of foreigners' French, at least from the early Middle Ages onward. Thus in the fabliau `Des deux anglois et de l'anel,' dating from the 13th century (Reid 1958:11-13), Englishmen speak broken French introducing subject *mi* and invariant verbs, representing both the infinitive and finite forms:

(27) **FRENCH FOREIGNER TALK IN 13TH CENTURY FABLIAU ’DES DEUX ANGLOIS ET DE L’ANEL’:**

Mi cuit un poi alegement `I expect[ed] a little relief`
Mi have tote nuit soué `I sweated all night`
The medieval *Roman de Reynart* also has 'English-speaking' animals producing broken French, with root infinitives and object pronouns used as subjects (Combarieu du Gres and Subrenat 1981: 348-9):

(28) `ENGLISH' SPEAKING ANIMALS IN THE MEDIEVAL FRENCH *ROMAN DE REYNART*:

No saver point ton reson dire 'I don't know how to speak your language'
Moi fot perdez tot mon gaaing 'I [...] lost all my grain'

Given the close cultural and linguistic ties linking French and southern Gallo-Romance languages with both Spain and northern Italian city-states, it is impossible to rule out the collateral influence of these French patterns, which can be linked ontogenetically with Lingua Franca.

Although Lingua Franca in its late medieval avatars provided the immediate model for the plethora of deliberately reduced Romance varieties which ballooned forth as the result of European exploration and trade in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, it is clearly not the ultimate source. For centuries, deliberately and naturally pidginized Latin was used throughout Europe (Cifoletti 1978, 1989), and reduced varieties of Romance languages were used every time sustained contact with other speech communities occurred. Lingua Franca, like insects accidentally caught in a drop of amber, is simply the first reduced Romance variety to be captured for posterity, and as such as valuable for the insights it provides into Romance speakers' foreigner-talk intuitions. The choice of the bare infinitive is a quintessentially Romance choice, and although contrived Spanish, French, Italian, and Portuguese after the 15th century were directly influenced by Lingua Franca, all these languages draw on earlier undocumented but real sources of inspiration. The Italian basis for the original Lingua Franca provides no ready model for the uninflected infinitive, whose roots must be sought in a wider dragnet. In fact, three contributing factors can be identified as having inspired the use of the bare infinitive in Lingua Franca and later congenors:
(29) **The “Ultimate” Sources of the Bare Infinitive in Romance Foreigner Talk**

- French child language and medieval foreigner talk;
- German foreigner talk and pidgins;
- Romance speakers with specific language disorders (SLI)

6. **Foreigner talk as impaired speech**

Given the popular equation PIDGIN LANGUAGE = BABY TALK, it is useful to gather data from early Romance child language to judge the likelihood that adult imitations of child Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and French lies at the root of some or all Romance-based pidgins. Careful examination of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese child language reveals that, whereas articles may be missing in the earliest stages, the other recurring features of pidgins are not common. In particular, the choice of the bare infinitive is not typical of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese early child language. Only in a few instances does one find what appear to be bare infinitives in very early Spanish child language, and most can be attributed to truncated phrases in which an infinitive would be legitimately used or in the colloquial use of the infinitive instead of the imperative:

(30) **Rare Examples of Bare Infinitives in Spanish Child Language [1,10-1,11]:**

- abochá (< a abrochar) `buckle [the shoes]`
- quitá (< a quitar) e zapato `take [your] shoe off`
- a timpá (a limpiar) culito `I'm wiping [my] behind`

French child language is quite different, in exhibiting a significant use of the bare infinitive in lieu of finite verbs. This is despite the fact that in French finite verb paradigms there is always an `elsewhere` form, typically the homophonous cluster 1 s., 2 s., 3 s., 3 pl., (and, using impersonal on, 1 pl.) which frequently replaces the correctly conjugated form in child speech. German, Dutch, and Scandinavian child language also frequently exhibits root infinitives instead of finite verbs. A number of linguists have correlated the use of infinitives for conjugated verbs in child language (and in impaired speech, as will be seen), and the ability of the language to use “null” or empty subjects. Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, for example, are “null subject”
languages, in which the richness of the verbal paradigm allows for subject pronouns to be routinely omitted. Indeed English-speaking students typically employ many more subject pronouns than would be normal in one of the null subject languages. The use of null subjects is not only correlated with rich verbal inflection, since, for example Chinese languages, which have no verb conjugation at all, also allow for null subjects. Rather, it has been shown that null subjects are found in languages that either have no verbal inflection at all, or those in which each person and number is represented by a distinct form (Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Catalan, etc.). Those languages such as French, German, and English, in which there is some overlap between the infinitive and conjugated forms, do not allow null subjects in normal uses, although they are found, for example, in commands, and in “diary entry” and “refrigerator note” contexts’ “Gone to the store, be back in an hour.”

The preceding discussion has demonstrated that reduced Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian could not come directly from L2 learners' spontaneous acquisition of these languages, nor from early child language, although some similarities with the latter can be observed. In Italy and Spain, contact with German and French dialects, respectively, in which root infinitives occur in child speech and foreigner talk since at least the Middle Ages may well have spurred the use of root infinitives and--in the case of French--disjunctive object pronouns as subjects in contrived foreigner talk.

Given the condescending nature of much Romance-based foreigner talk and the negative attitudes extended to the intended recipients, another source of inspiration is likely: the speech of adults with language disorders. Developmental dysphasia, particularly the cluster of phenomena known as specific language impairment (SLI) is characterized by the prolongation into late childhood and even adulthood of morphological and syntactic mismatches characteristic
of early child language. In particular, extended optional infinitives are frequent in impaired English, German, and French. In impaired Italian, bare infinitives are comparatively rare, although more common than in normal child language. Articles, however, are absent more frequently than in unimpaired child speech. SLI Spanish speakers also eliminate articles readily, although seldom use root infinitives instead of finite forms. Clitics are normally omitted in SLI Spanish and Italian. Impaired German and French typically exhibit bare infinitives, occasionally use object pronouns as subjects, but tend to retain more articles.

Adult agrammatism, a form of aphasia, is typically caused by strokes and other brain lesions, and like other forms of aphasia covers a wide gamut of speech impairments, many of which are familiar to unsophisticated members of Romance speech communities. Some of the traits of aphasic speech coincide with child language and vestigial speech (Menn 1989), although significant differences exist. Menn and Obler observe that in languages with rich inflection, there is a tendency to use semantically less marked forms; however, the items which do appear are chosen from actually existing paradigms rather than representing bare roots or completely ungrammatical forms. Since the Romance infinitive, particularly in Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian, is a morphologically rather marked form, it does not commonly appear in aphasic speech in substitution of finite forms. Miceli and Mazzuchi (1990) do describe some root infinitives in impaired Italian, for example:

(31) **BARE INFINITIVES IN IMPAIRED ITALIAN:**

Un personaggio dice [dise] ‘A character [said]’
prendere [?] la sveglia ‘[the man] took the alarm clock’
sta a dormire ‘he is [sleeping]’

Another demonstration of the bare infinitive in apparently impaired Spanish comes from the village of Cambita in the Dominican Republic. In this predominantly Afro-Hispanic area Kate Green discovered a few residents (mostly members of a single family) who spoke what appears
to be a highly deviant post-creole Spanish. Green took this to be evidence of a former Afro-Hispanic creole language in this region. Other community members do not use this language, and describe the family's speech as *media lengua* `broken speech.’ Luis Ortiz López, Irene Pérez Guerra and I visited Cambita and interviewed some of the same informants studied by Green. Based not only on linguistic traits but also on observations of the speakers' behavior, we concluded that congenital developmental disorders underlie at least some of the `creoloid' features, including the bare infinitive. During the course of our interview, one of the brothers came walking up the road and into the yard where we were talking. He had found a small wrench on the pavement, and while waving it about, he asked some boys who were watching:

¿*A vendé?* `To sell?' meaning, roughly, `does anyone want to buy this wrench?' The brother is a speaker of media lengua, while the boys speak normal rural Dominican Spanish. This rudimentary construction illustrates the degree of syntactic reduction in the Cambita idiolects and the congruence with the earliest stages of child language. On some occasions the Cambita family members use what appear to be bare infinitives in finite constructions:

(32) **Possibly Impaired Spanish, Cambita, Dominican Republic (Green 1996, 1997):**

No yo no a mendé e zapote no. `I don't sell zapotes'
sí, a sigui `yes, [she] went on'
A cogé aquellos mango. `[I] picked those mangos`
Hay muchacho sí tabajá sí. `There are young men who work hard'
yo no hacé eso `I didn't do that'

There are other features of the Cambita family's speech which suggest arrested development rather than creole leftovers; for example, there is severe reduction of onset clusters: *flojo > fojo* `weak,' *pobre > pobe* `poor,' *trabajo > tabajo* `work,' *gringa > ginga* `American,' *grande > gande* `big,' *flores > fore* `flowers,' *doble > dobe* `double,' *libra > liba* `pound,' *pueblo > puebo* `town,' etc. Although some onset cluster reduction was found in early Afro-Iberian language, and vestiges are still found in Afro-Hispanic dialects throughout Latin America, the wholesale elimination of onset clusters is found only in Spanish child language.
7. Conclusions

The preceding survey has demonstrated that the bare infinitive in Romance-derived pidgins and foreigner talk is as much an artificial creation as a product of natural second-language acquisition. Spontaneous adult L2 acquisition of Romance languages virtually never produces bare infinitives in place of finite verbs, whereas child language (particularly in French) and various late childhood and adult language impairments provide many instances of bare infinitives. Although perhaps passively aware that actual L2 speech retains AGRs while habitually confusing specific agreement morphemes, native speakers find agreement clashes unacceptable, and shy away from such combinations when spontaneously producing foreigner-talk. These same speakers will regard the infinitive as unmarked for subject-verb agreement rather than manifesting anomalous agreement, in effect analyzing finiteness—as exemplified by overt subject-verb agreement—as a marked morphological option. In other words, it is `better' to attach no person/number features at all to the verb rather than to attach features which conflict with those defining the grammatical subject. Thus the bare infinitive is both a tacit reduction of adult speech in the direction of perceived infantile or impaired speech and a manifestation of implicit grammatical hierarchies which prefer no overt subject-verb agreement to morphologically explicit mismatches.

While the sources of foreigner-talk stereotypes are many, the preceding survey has demonstrated that the search for origins must reach far in time and space, to embrace nearly a millenium, four continents and many nations, and a variety of naturally occurring speech events as well as fanciful inventions. Implicated in the search have been the speech of sailors, mercenary soldiers and guest workers, slavedrivers and slaves, infants and language-impaired adults. Emotions and attitudes have ranged from racism to surreal humor, but a common
denominator is the inferiority of the “other” as “demonstrated” by the inability to use language properly. Not all foreigner talk is sinister or ill-mannered (who can object to a fuzzy blue puppet who loves cookies?), but those of us who were raised with Tonto and the Lone Ranger, with Pancho and Cisco, with Tarzan the Ape Man, with Charlie Chan, with the Swedish janitor in Archie and Jughead’s high school, with Amos and Andy, and with Jon Jonson who comes from Wisconsin, are aware of how linguistic stereotypes can deprive entire communities of human beings of the right to be taken seriously and treated with dignity. Today’s remarks have focused on the linguistic sources of some common foreigner-talk models, because after all I am a linguist and I tread most confidently in the arena of linguistic analyses. As a teacher, a parent, and a fellow voyager on Starship Earth, I also feel the need to urge caution and compassion when using someone else’s language as a vehicle of humor. English refers to one’s mother tongue, while Spanish says la lengua que mamamos ‘the language we nursed with,’ powerful metaphors that underscore the fact that to mistreat language is to mistreat those who are most dear to us. Foreigner talk can tell us much both about true language acquisition, but also about xenophobic rumor-mongering. I hope that the preceding remarks have helped to clarify what foreigner talk is, and what it is not, the respective roles of the self and the other in its creation and propagation, and the manner in which foreigner talk straddles the tenuous boundary between embracing diversity and mocking it.
Tentative sources of *mi* as subject pronoun in Romance-derived pidgins/foreigner talk:

- German child language → German foreigner talk
- French child language → French foreigner talk → French pidgins/creoles
- Impaired French
- Impaired Italian → Lingua Franca/Italian foreigner talk
- Impaired Spanish/Portuguese → Spanish/Portuguese foreigner talk
- Spanish/Portuguese child language

*French child language → French foreigner talk → French pidgins/creoles

*Impaired French

Northern Italian dialects → Lingua Franca/Italian foreigner talk

West African languages → Spanish/Portuguese foreigner talk

* = collateral/secondary sources
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