

# THE RESTRUCTURING OF PORTUGUESE MORPHOSYNTAX IN ANGOLA: EVIDENCE FROM DUNDO (PROVINCE OF LUNDA NORTE)

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## Abstract

While the study of the Portuguese-based creoles in Africa goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a growing body of work as been developed in recent years on the restructured variety of Mozambican Portuguese, not to speak of the overwhelming body of literature on Brazilian Portuguese, little has been done regarding the description of the development and structure of the Portuguese spoken in Angola. The civil war that devastated the country since its independence from Portugal in 1975 until recently is responsible for this, in the sense that it made fieldwork in Angola difficult and dangerous, but the Portuguese neo-colonial myth of *Lusofonia* is no less to blame, fostering a sentimental and false view of the country as exclusively Portuguese speaking, even if some “minor” differences between the Portuguese spoken there and European Portuguese are recognized. This view has not led to investing in the study of actual language use in Angola, despite the fact that there is growing awareness among Angolan linguists that a new contact vernacular in the making is spreading throughout the country as both the first and second language of the population. It is this vernacular that I refer to as Angolan Vernacular Portuguese (AVP), which is the topic of this talk.

I will first analyze the present-day sociolinguistic setting in Angola, in order to give an overview of what the “real” status of Portuguese is in the country. I will then move on to a brief description of what the literature tells us about the linguistic structure of AVP. However, since it gives little or no insight as to the linguistic and sociolinguistic processes which may account for AVP’s linguistic structure, I will discuss some of the theories that have been suggested by contact linguists to account for the emergence of similarly restructured varieties of other European languages. I will argue that partial restructuring (Holm 2004) appears to be the one that best describes the type of restructuring that Portuguese underwent in Angola. I will try to corroborate my thesis by analysing the sociolinguistic setting in Angola from the early days of contact to the present and by discussing four morphosyntactic features that have been identified in the literature as distinguishing AVP from European Portuguese, i.e. (i) number and (ii) gender marking and agreement, (iii) possession and (iv) word order and case of personal pronouns. The linguistic data analyzed is from my own fieldwork in the interior of Angola in 2004.