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## Two Spanish Etymologies:

ajilimójili and chāncharras máncharras

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In recent years,<sup>1</sup> linguists have begun to study speech play (i.e. the modality of language in which the communicative function is subordinated to esthetic ends), and the modifications imposed on normal speech by the playful attitude. Some of the phenomena commonly cited as manifestations of speech play include riddles, verbal duels, proverbs, puns, play languages, and nonsense. In the midst of this activity, I have concentrated on investigating the effect of playfulness in yet another area, word-formation.

As I now understand it, the key difference between playful word-formation and the normal processes of derivation and composition is that, whereas the latter operate exclusively with morphemes, free or bound, the former involves submorphemic particles extracted from morphemes. I classify these particles into three broad categories according to the type of linguistic structures from which and by which they are derived. The first category comprises formatives that are simply truncated individual morphemes to be combined in lexical blends, as in Aragonese cucuchar 'listen clandestinely', from escuchar 'listen' and cucú, from the expression hacer cucú 'peek'. The second category is that of submorphemic particles, often called phonesthemes, which are derived not from individual words, but from whole matrices of formally and semantically, but not etymologically, related words. This sort of association seems to have played a part in the formation of Honduran Sp. fifirifao 'poorly supplied banquet', whose etymon is Sp. pipiripao 'splendid feast' modified by a phonesthematic /f/ derived from a series of words in Spanish having strong pejorative connotations, e.g. feo 'ugly', fu 'interjection of contempt', uf 'interjection of disgust', fofo 'spongy, flaccid', fulero 'useless', 'unsatisfactory', etc. The third and final category is that of the submorphemic particle derived from and added to a root morpheme according to certain rules or patterns. Some of these rules, such as simple reduplication (Fr. fifille (endearment) 'daughter' < fille 'daughter') and apophonic reduplication (Eng. drizzle-drazzle < drizzle), are well known. In my studies of playful word-formation in Spanish, a language that seems to be especially rich in this respect, I have uncovered five others. I propose to examine together the etymologies listed in the title of this paper because they provide a forum for the description of two of these patterns.

Ajilimōjili (first attested 1726) is a variant of ajilimoje (1646) 'piquant sauce made with garlic', (fig. pl.) 'added items, extras'. As to the three basic etymological ingredients of which it is constituted, two are perfectly clear, viz. ajo 'garlic' and moje 'gravy or sauce from stew', which, we suppose, joined together to form a compound \*ajimoje (cf. ajiaceite 'garlic oil sauce' < ajo + aceite 'oil'; ajicola 'glue made of kidskin boiled with garlic, for use in paints' < ajo + cola 'glue', and others). Not so easily explained is the interfix- and suffix-oid element (i)li, which gives the word its highly unusual phonetic form. In fact, as far as I know, Corominas (1980:1:96b) is alone in having attempted to account for it. He claims that it is a macaronic elaboration, parallel to that found in the expression de bōbilis bōbilis (1463) 'free', from vobis vobis 'to you, to you', words which accompanied the giving of money (Corominas 1980:1:602).

There are several problems with this formulation. Perhaps most damaging is the fact that there seems to be no plausible semantic connection between garlic sauce and any context that might invite the use of Latin. I find no indication, for example, that garlic sauce was customarily served by charitable organizations. On the formal side, I question the identification of (i)li with the Latin adjectival suffix -(i)lis because, in the first place, it lacks the crucial s, second, de bōbilis bōbilis is the only clear case of macaronic -ilis in Spanish, third, ajilimōjili is not adjectival, and fourth, the sequence was originally inserted as an interfix rather than a suffix.

I ascribe the change from \*ajimoje to ajilimoje to the first of the two playful formative rules, as formulated below (where L=liquid and N=nasal consonant, and subscripts indicate identity within a single word):

Rule 1. Post-tonic -LV<sub>j</sub>- Affixation.

SD: (C<sub>1</sub><sup>2</sup>) V̄ (N) C V<sub>j</sub>      SC: 1 2 3 4 5 L V<sub>j</sub>

1    2    3    4    5

Examples, besides ajilimoje, include (1) trācala (Mex., P.R.) 'trick, deception' (cf. Andalusian tracalandear 'wander about' < trācala + andar 'walk') < traca 'series of firecracker explosions'; (2) Nav. lfnzili-lanza 'swing' < \*linzi-lanza < lanzar 'hurl'; (3) Nav. zānzala 'swing' < zanza 'id.'; (4) trāpala 'loud noise of voices and feet' < trapa 'id.'; (5) Nav. tīpili-tāpala 'stumbling fall' < tipi-tapa 'light steps', 'continuous labor'. (See footnote 2.) Unlike the only other two-part example here, tipi-tapa, ajilimoje did not undergo a double derivation, to produce \*ajilimojele. Instead, the interfixoid element was simply duplicated after moje, resulting in the variant form ajilimōjili (for the change je > jili, cf. veinte y dos > veintidós).

One of the curious twists to both the rules I will present in this paper is that they are equally viable in Basque. Among the products of Rule 1 in Basque (see footnote 3), for example, are pinpili-panpala 'tumble' < pinpi-panpa 'sound of blows and shooting'; tikili-takala 'awkwardly' < tiki-taka 'tiptoeing'; zipirri-zaparra 'walk awkwardly' < zipi-zapa 'helter-skelter'; aikolo-maikolo 'indecisive' < aiko-maiko 'id.'. I plan to investigate at some time in the future the complex question of the nature of the connection between Spanish and Basque in this respect. Suffice it to say at this point that examples seem to be more numerous in Basque than in Spanish, and in Navarrese Spanish than in other dialects of that language.

Chánchezarras mánchezarras appears first in 1626 in the acceptation 'trick, ruse, lie'. Its modern usage, usually with the verb andar 'walk, go around', is 'pretexts for not doing something', e.g. 'No andemos en chánchezarras mánycharras' 'Let's not beat around the bush'. In etymologizing the first part of the formula, chánchezarras, we first must choose between two plausible starting points, cháchara 'chit-chat', and chancha 'trick, lie'.

Cháchara (1551), a reflex of dialectal Ital. ciàccera 'id.', is chosen as the ultimate etymon of chánchezarras by both Corominas (1980:2:309b-310a) and Morawski (1927:205). Semantically, it is fairly suitable, since beating around the bush, like chit-chatting, involves excessive talk. Formally, the advantage of choosing cháchara is that it provides a source, if somewhat imperfect, for the unusual atonic element -arra. On the minus side, we notice, first, the presence in chánchezarras of a nasal consonant not found in cháchara, a difficulty dealt with by both authors cited above, not implausibly, by positing outside analogical influence, either by chanza 'clever trick' (Corominas), or manchar 'to spot', the supposed etymon of the second constituent (Morawski). A second, and in my opinion, fatal blow to the cháchara etymology is the Catalan form cited by Corominas, xanxes-marranxes (see footnote 4), which appeared in the 1429 Catalan translation of the Decameron. The first element here is xanxa 'dirty trick' (Griera 1935-47:14:308b), the Catalan equivalent of Spanish chancha, both being traceable to Ital. ciancia 'dirty trick, lie', 'trinket'.

Considered as a possible etymon of chánchezarras, chancha (1611, now antiquated, not to be confused with Hisp. chancho, a 'pig') offers several advantages, such as the excellent virtue of having the same meaning as did chánchezarras mánchezarras originally, and incorporating the nasal consonant lacked by cháchara. It leaves, however, the problem of accounting for -arra. José Alemany (1925:675), who along with Monlau (1941:563a) opts for chancha as the correct etymon, identifies this sequence (Monlau ignores the question) as 'el sufijo despectivo arra'. This hypothesis must be rejected, however, because, while there is some scant evidence for the existence of this suffix (pequeñarra 'small and emaciated person' < pequeño 'small', panarra 'simpleton' < pan 'bread', and perhaps

cegarra 'myopic' < ciego 'blind'),<sup>5</sup> the fact that it is tonic, while the corresponding sequence in cháncharras is atonic, effectively eliminates it from consideration.

I would suggest that the sequence in question is merely one more product of Rule 1, cited above. True, cháncharras máncharras is the only Spanish example in which /r/ rather than /l/ is inserted, but there is ample evidence that the two are considered equivalent in playful formations such as these. The pattern exemplified by titiritar 'tremble', paparrasolla 'bogyman', and pipi-liciego 'myopic', for example, which I have studied intensively (see footnote 6), employs all three Spanish liquids indiscriminately. Notice also that the suffixation rule in Basque contains forms with /r/: zipi-zapa 'helter-skelter' > zipirri-zaparra 'walk awkwardly'.

The second half of the cháncharras máncharras formula is identified by Morawski (Corominas does not hazard a guess) as an embellished form of Sp. manchar 'to spot, stain'. He explains the expression as a kind of semantic compound, in which cháncharras, being as he supposes a reflex of cháchara 'chit-chat', supplies the element of talking, while máncharras, from manchar, contributes the nuance of moral repugnance, a combination he regards as especially evident in the variant chacharramanchas 'schemes'. Two difficulties face the manchar hypothesis. First, the semantic formulation is plainly recherché, in that it involves an unlikely degree of figurativeness (besides, 'schemes' is already implied by 'trick, lie'), and second, it is contradicted by the oldest form of the expression, Cat. xanxes-marranxes.

Again, I would argue that the source of máncharras is not some root form independent of cháncharras, but cháncharras itself, in conjunction with a playful formational rule of the following form (where X=any number of segments, and B=bilabial consonant):

Rule 2. Reduplication with bilabial insertion or substitution.

SD:  $(C_1^2) V X$       SC: 1 2 3 B 2 3

1 2 3

As a matter of fact, Alemany championed this interpretation in 1925, in an article entitled 'Acerca del origen de una M'. He noticed that the Spanish affective vocabulary has numerous examples of bipartite expressions whose constituents are identical but for the insertion (where the first member has a vocalic onset) or substitution (where the onset is consonantal) of /m/ in the second member. Moreover, he saw that, in many cases, this second element seems to be etymologically opaque: oxte ni moxte (oste ni moste) 'not a word', where oxte < ox 'exclamation for chasing away birds' plus, possibly, te 'you (pronoun)'; sin chistar ni mistar 'without a word', where chistar 'whisper' < onomatopoeia; and chuz ni muz (chus ni mus, tus ni mus) 'without a word', where chus and chuz are probably variants of tus 'word for calling dogs'. Alemany

concluded that, in each case, the second, m-initial constituent was derived from the first.

Naturally, the problem is considerably more complex than the above list might suggest. In the first place, some pairs manifesting the pattern in question are demonstrably traceable to two different etyma, e.g. tiquismiquis 'affected manners', 'exaggerated courtesy', from the macaronic Latin expression tichi michi (<tibi mihi) 'for you, for me', supposedly used in monasterial debates. Secondly, in other pairs, neither member is identifiable, e.g. chirlos mirlos 'things of little importance', 'food of little nutritive value', which seems impossible to identify with chirlo 'long facial scar', or mirlo 'blackbird'. Thirdly, there are cases which could be called either way. In the expression ni habla ni pabla 'says not a word', is pabla, as Morawski (1927:129) thinks, 'une déformation de parlar pour rimer avec hablar', or could it not simply be a repetition of hablar with the insertion of a bilabial onset? The fourth complication, already evident in pabla, is that the second element may begin with any bilabial consonant, rather than /m/ only. Other examples of this include ajas pajas 'insignificant thing', tarín barín 'approximately', 'barely', zurriburri 'rabble' (see footnote 7), and a pair of words that present a final complication, in that they seem to involve yet another playful variation, tras barrás 'thud of something falling' (<tras 'bang!') and a traque barraque 'at all times, continuously' (<traque 'firecracker explosion'), both of which seem to exhibit some sort of unexplained connection with xanxes marranxes.

Morawski, possibly referring to Alemany's hypothesis, remarks the possibility of considering Rule 2 as a constitutive principle, but rejects it (p. 118): 'Quant aux mots soi-disant engendrés par la rime, c'est là une explication qui ne devrait, à notre avis, être admise qu'a la dernière extrémité'. I fail to see the benefit to be gained by this position. By deciding, on purely doctrinal grounds, what shall be admitted as true, Morawski effectively eliminates the facts themselves from consideration. I favor a more objective approach, which I believe leads inevitably to the conclusion that the pattern

$$(C_1^2) V_i X_j B V_i X_j$$

is an active force in the affective vocabulary of Spanish, and that its effects include (1) causing phonetic changes in pre-existent root forms in order to achieve rhyme (e.g. the change \*troce > troche in trochemoche, var. a troche y moche, 'helter-skelter', from trozar 'to break into pieces' and mochar 'lop off'); (2) acting as a secondary influence favoring the combination or juxtaposition of rhyming words, one of which begins with a bilabial (again, trochemoche); and (3) providing for the complete derivation of the second element from the first, through Rule 2.

Alemany (1925:683) admits to being unable to explain the provenience of Rule 2, or why it should entail /m/ rather than another consonant. He does note, however, the significant fact that Rule 2 is fully productive in Turkish (see footnote 8) as well, with the same semantic effect. To this I will add the more significant fact that it is also productive in Basque: Azkue (1964:2:401-5) asserts that it has produced hundreds of burlesque (he illogically labels them 'onomatopoeic compounds') forms in that language, including andimandiak 'big shots' < andi 'great'; asimasiak 'rudiments' < asi 'begin'; nahas-mahas 'helter-skelter' < nahas 'to mix'; erotean-perotean 'haphazardly' < ero 'crazy'; zuruburru 'hullabaloo' < zurru 'harsh, raucous sound'. Again, I will not go into the details of the Spanish-Basque connection here, although I would note that the extreme productivity of the rule in Basque is highly suggestive. In any case, the nature of the connection will in all probability never be known with certainty, since burlesque reduplication with consonantal apophony, whether with /m/ as in these languages, or /w/ as in Eng. hypocoristics (Davy-wavy, Alice-walice, Ronnie-wonnie) constitutes something of a linguistic universal.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>See Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1976.

<sup>2</sup>The unconventional spelling línzili-lanza is that employed by Iribarren (1952:304a). Both típi-tapa and típili-tápala are lexical items in Basque as well.

<sup>3</sup>There are slight differences. Stress may be irrelevant in Basque. Also, V may be followed by a glide. I hasten to add that I am no expert in the Basque language, but I hope the etymologies given here are utterly obvious. My sources included Azkue 1905 and 1964, Múgica 1973 and 1977, and López Mendizábal, n.d.

<sup>4</sup>I have neither this translation nor the Miscel·lània Fabra, in which Corominas (s.v. chanza 1980:2:325) says xanxes-marranxes is cited, at my disposal. Note that in the chanza article the word is misprinted as sanxes-marranxes. It is cited correctly under cháchara.

<sup>5</sup>In the remaining 22 forms incorporating -arra cited by Alemany in his Tratado (1920:29), the sequence is nonsuffixal. Most are loan-words (cimitarra 'scimitar' < Arabic), pre-Romanic (pizarra < Iberian or Basque), or pre-Romance (cigarra 'cicada' < Mediterranean Latin variant of cicada).

<sup>6</sup>See my article 'Expressive Word-Formation in Spanish: The Case of titiritar 'tremble', pipiritaña 'cane flute', etc.',

forthcoming in Romance Philology. Cháncharras máncharras has become involved with this same pattern, as is evidenced by some of the variants listed by Morawski (1927:120), e.g. chacharra-manchas 'schemes' (which also may have been affected by chāchara), chichiribichi 'knick-knack', chichirimáncharras, chichirinabo, undefined.

<sup>7</sup> Ajaspajas, originally 'straw left after garlic head removed', is from ajo and paja 'straw'; zurriburri is attributed to zumbar 'buzz' by Corominas (1954:4:874b), but is suspiciously like Basque zurruburru 'confusion, disagreement'; tarín barín, traceable to tarín 'small silver coin' and either Rule 2 or some other element, possibly Caló barí 'excellent'.

<sup>8</sup> He cites Luigi Bonelli, Elementi di grammatica turca osmanli (Milano:Hoepli), 1899, who gives the example (paragraph 70) guitti mitti 'se ne andò', presumably from guitti.

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