Papiamentu
Papiamentu is a Creole spoken mainly in the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Curacao, and Bonaire, and is spoken natively by roughly 200,000-250,000 people.
The ABC islands were first discovered by the Spanish in 1499. The original inhabitants of the area were the Caicuetio Indians, who were eventually driven off the islands.

The Spanish occupied the area until 1634, when the Dutch conquered Curacao.

Curacao became important to the Dutch slave trade, and saw an influx of slaves from Africa.
In 1654, Portuguese-speaking Sephardic Jews moved to Curacao after being expelled from Brazil, bringing Portuguese with them.

Many of these people were traders who also spoke Spanish, due to the heavy influence of nearby Spanish colonies on trade.
Papiamentu- History

- Papiamentu is believed to have been formed as a Creole when European children were raised by Papiamentu-speaking housemaids sometime in the early 1700’s.
Portuguese vs Spanish

Spanish is often considered as the original lexifier due to the amount of Spanish words currently in use in Papiamentu, and because of the Spanish influence in the region.

Others argue that Portuguese was the lexifier due to the influence of Portuguese in the African slave trade, and the Portuguese-speaking Jews that moved to Curacao, with heaving borrowing from Spanish occurring later on. Some hypothesize that Portuguese was a fort creole that was created when Africans from varying areas were held together in the Portuguese posts in West Africa before being shipped off to the new world. Others believe that the creole formed from a pidgin used on the ships that brought the slaves to the ABC islands.

Due to this controversy, Papiamentu is often referred to as an “Iberian-based” creole.
**Why not Dutch as a lexifier?**

- Even though the ABC islands were under Dutch rule, they didn’t try teaching Dutch to slaves or other non-Dutch people who settled on the islands.
- Unlike the Spanish, they didn’t try to convert their slaves to Christianity, which later allowed for Spanish missionaries to go to the islands to convert the slave and other non-Christian populations.
- Even though Dutch was used for instruction in schools, the low use of Dutch outside of school led to other languages like Portuguese and Spanish having greater influences on Papiamentu.
Papiamentu currently enjoys a fairly high status, compared to other Caribbean creoles.

While Dutch is still taught in many schools, Papiamentu is used often in newspapers, popular literature, radio, and theater.

As of 2002, Curacao and Bonaire have started to teach the first two years of primary school exclusively in Papiamentu.
## Phonology

### Vowels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Front</th>
<th>Back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-round</td>
<td>+round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Phonology

### Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveo-palatal</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stops</strong></td>
<td>p, b</td>
<td>t, d</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>g, k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fricatives</strong></td>
<td>f, v</td>
<td>s, z</td>
<td>f, z</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affricates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nasals</strong></td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>η</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liquids</strong></td>
<td>l, r</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Glides</strong></td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>j</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phonological similarities to African languages

- While no single African language can be pointed to as having a major influence on Papiamentu, there are some aspects of Papiamentu phonology that are similar to current languages in Africa.
  - For longer words in Papiamentu, there is a tendency to omit the initial vowel sound.
  - There is a strong nasalization of vowels
  - Papiamentu also has a relaxation of implosive or final r.
Unlike many creoles, Papiamentu uses both stress and tone. While the stress patterns tend to follow a more Iberian pattern, most linguists believe that the lexical tone use is a remnant of an African Bantu language.

Papiamentu has two tones—high (H) and low (L). Here are some minimal pairs, where the only differentiating factor is tone:

- [papa] (HL): ‘porridge’
- [papa] (LH): ‘father’
- [mata] (LH): ‘kill’
- [mata] (HL): ‘plant, tree’
Orthography and spelling

- Papiamentu is written in the roman alphabet, but there are two different official forms of spelling.

- Curacao and Bonaire use a phonological spelling, while Aruba uses a spelling that follows Dutch and Spanish spelling norms.

  - The differences in spelling result in the two different ways to spell the name of the language- ‘Papiamentu’ in Curacao and Bonaire, and ‘Papiamento’ in Aruba.
Lexicon

A study in 1971 found that about 2/3 of Papiamentu’s lexicon was Iberian in origin, 1/4 were of Dutch origin, and the rest were of French, English, African, or Indian origin.

Of the Iberian-origin words, it was estimated that about 25% were definitely Spanish, and 4% were exclusively Portuguese. The rest of the Iberian lexicon was either Galician (a language close to Portuguese), or a clear distinction wasn’t discernable.
Morphology and Syntax

The basic word order of Papiamentu is SVO, like in Spanish.

However, unlike Spanish, Papiamentu does not use verb inflection, except for –ndo to mark progressive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Papiamentu</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mi ta bai skol.</td>
<td>(Yo) voy a la esquela.</td>
<td>I go to/ am going to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi ta baiendo skol.</td>
<td>Estoy vayendo a la esquela</td>
<td>I’m going to school (now)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi a bai skol/</td>
<td>Fui a la esquela</td>
<td>I went to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mi tabata bai skol</td>
<td>Fuera a la esquela</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unlike many other creole languages, Papiamentu makes use of clearly defined copula *ta*.

-Mi ta na kas. ‘I am in the house’
-Mi ta Pedro. ‘I am Pedro’
-Esaki ta Maria. ‘This is Maria’
-Mi ta grandi. ‘I am big’
Papiamentu is also unlike other Caribbean creoles in that it often uses passive voice, in a construction similar to European languages.

E potret aki a wordu saka dor di e mucha hober.
The picture here PAST be taken though of the child male
‘The picture was taken by the boy.’
Works Cited