

Lingua Franca

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This paper examines evidence of supralocalisation in the original and eponymous Lingua Franca. Lingua Franca emerged and evolved on the Barbary Coast of North Africa, specifically in the urban metropolises of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, from the early 17th century for more than 250 years. It was a vernacular lexified largely by Italian with the influence of other Romance languages and some Arabic. Pennycook and Otsuji consider today's urban vernaculars to be a revival of Lingua Franca, even terming them metrolingua francas (Pennycook and Otsuji 2015). The supralocalisation characteristic of such vernaculars inevitably occurred in Lingua Franca as a result of the increased mobility and contact of everyday life in Algiers brought about by corsairing and slave trade. According to the Spanish Abbot, Diego de Haedo, in his comprehensive description of Algiers (1612), Lingua Franca was spoken by everyone in the city of Algiers –Arab elites, corsairs, and the slaves they captured from nations across Europe.

Both the *Dictionnaire* (1830), the sole lexical and grammatical documentation of Lingua Franca, and the corpus reinforce the impression of supralocalisation - there appear to be specific features that recur across sources such as, phonologically, the Arabic-influenced three-vowel system. Despite the potential variation of Arabic dialects, the 3 principal vowels /a:/, /i:/ and /u:/ would have been familiar to all Arabic speakers (Cifoletti 2004: 34). Consistent morphological features include the almost ubiquitous employment of the infinitive to indicate both present tense and imperative forms of the verb.

References

- Cifoletti, Guido, 2004. *La lingua franca barbaresca, Roma: Il Calamo. Dictionnaire, 1830. Dictionnaire de la Langue Franque ou petit Mauresque, suivi de quelques dialogues familiers, et d'un vocabulaire de mots arabes les plus usuels; a l'usage des français en Afrique*, Marseille: Feissat et Demonchy.
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