

# The Standardization of Yucatan Spanish: Family Case Studies in Izamal and Mérida

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## 1. Introduction

Yucatan Spanish (YS), a regional variety in contact with Yucatec Maya, has been identified by various researchers as one of the dialects of Latin American Spanish most likely to exhibit indigenous language influence (Lope Blanch, 1987; Lipski, 2004; Klee, 2009). Studies have also indicated that YS is undergoing rapid standardization to a general Mexican or pan-Hispanic norm (Klee, 2009; Michnowicz, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, in press). As Klee (2009, p. 48) notes, the same pattern is found throughout Latin America, as younger speakers reject regional forms, “some of which have been influenced by contact with indigenous languages (or are perceived to have indigenous influence)”.

In this paper, which serves as part of an ongoing research project, I will examine how this reported standardization is taking place at the micro-sociolinguistic level among two different families in two different cities in Yucatan. The first of these families is bilingual Maya-Spanish speaking, in the small town of Izamal, in central Yucatan. The second is monolingual Spanish-speaking, and lives in the state capital of Mérida. Labov (2001, p. 33) notes that small, individual-focused case studies are useful when used to explore group behavior more thoroughly, and the present study of two families allows us to see specifically how standardization is progressing across generations within the same family unit – and across speakers of different social class, language backgrounds and in different cities. The linguistic features studied include morpho-syntactic and phonetic/phonological phenomena, with a focus on three phonological features that have been widely attributed to Maya influence (Barrera Vásquez, 1937; Nykl, 1938; Suárez, 1945/1979; Mediz Bolio, 1951; Alvar, 1969, among others): stop realizations of /bdg/, hiatus across word boundaries via glottal stop insertion, and aspirated voiced stops. The results will demonstrate that the youngest speakers in both families are converging on the same linguistic norm, as both Maya-influenced Spanish and traditional monolingual Yucatan Spanish give way to a more standard, non-regional variety. Given the rapid standardization observed in the dialect, I will also argue that traditional YS should be classified as a moribund dialect, in the sense of Wolfram’s and Schilling-Estes’ work on Ocracoke island (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1995; Schilling-Estes & Wolfram, 1999; Wolfram, 2004), and deserves more attention in the scholarly literature.

## 2. Research sites: Izamal and Mérida, Yucatan

Data were collected in two cities in Yucatan. Izamal is a small city of approximately 15 thousand inhabitants (INEGI, 2005). The city is a minor tourist center, with a restored convent and several ruined pyramids, called *cerros*, that draw tourist buses, but only as a short stop on the way to or from larger tourist sites, such as Chichén Itzá or Cancún. While the historic center of town is well-developed, the outlying neighborhoods consist of dirt roads and numerous traditional Mayan dwellings, made either of wood or cinderblocks, with thatched roofs. Mérida, on the other hand, is the state capital and a much larger city, with over 730 thousand inhabitants, and a metro area of close to 900 thousand people (INEGI, 2005). The city is highly developed, with a compact city center and numerous *colonias*, or neighborhoods, stretching out from the center. The two cities are approximately 60km apart, as seen in figure 1, and the trip takes a little more than an hour by bus.

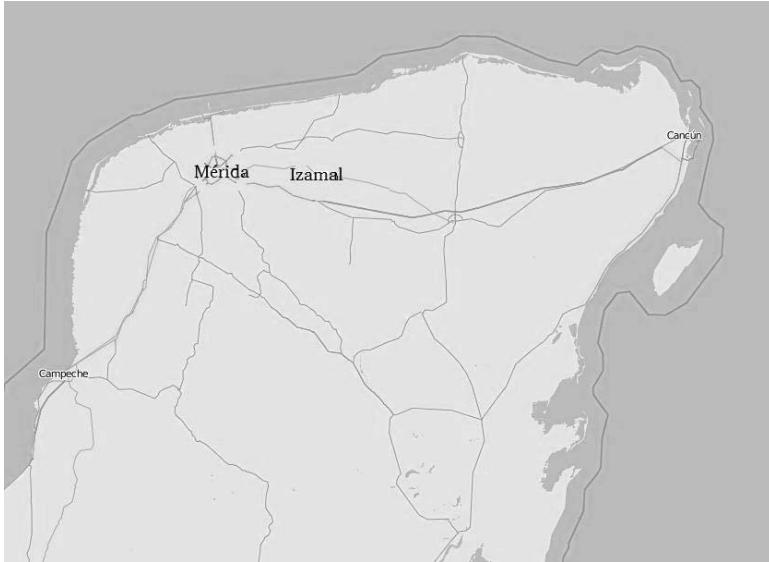


Figure 1. Map of Yucatan showing Mérida and Izamal. © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SA

In addition to differences in size and population, the socio-demographics of Izamal and Mérida are quite different with respect to indigenous language use and average education level, both of which can have important linguistic consequences. The Mexican census only reports data for “indigenous language”, without specifying a particular language. In the case of Yucatan, we can interpret the vast majority of reported uses to refer to Yucatec Maya, the only indigenous language native to the peninsula. Figure 2 details indigenous language use in both cities<sup>1</sup>.

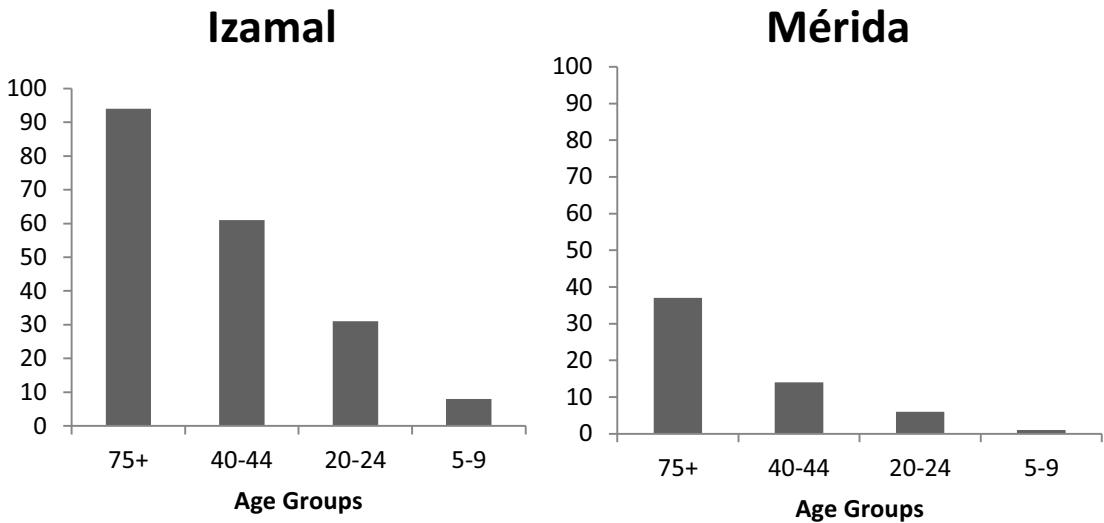


Figure 2: Percent Indigenous language use in Izamal and Mérida (INEGI, 2005).

Here, the same trend is observable in both cities – people over the age of 75 speak much more Maya than do younger people, and there is a steady decline in Maya use across age groups. The frequencies of Maya use, however, sharply distinguish the two cities. Among the oldest speakers in

<sup>1</sup> The 2005 *Conteo de población* reports 538,355 indigenous (i.e. Maya) language speakers in all of Yucatan, equaling 33% of the total population.

Mérida, only 37% speak Maya, compared to 94% in Izamal. The same holds true throughout the *municipios* headed by the two cities; 44% of the *municipio de Izamal* speaks Maya, while in the *municipio de Mérida* 11% speaks the indigenous language. Since most, if not all, of the regional traits of YS have been attributed to Maya influence at one point or another (Barrera Vásquez, 1937; Nykl, 1938; Suárez, 1945/1979; Mediz Bolio, 1951; Alvar, 1969, among others; but see Cassano, 1977 for a counterpoint), it might be expected that more traditional YS variants will be found in areas with more Maya-Spanish contact, for example in Izamal. That possibility will be addressed later in this paper.

Given the data in Figure 2, the future of Maya in Yucatecan cities of all sizes, appears to be in jeopardy. Klee (2009, p. 60) states that “[i]ndigenous populations in Latin America, who maintained their language for 500 years following the Spanish conquest, began to shift to Spanish at a more rapid rate in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of many factors...”. The same trend is evident in Yucatan, and this shift may have important linguistic consequences for the Spanish of Yucatan, apart from the obvious consequence of the loss of Maya, at least in urban environments.

Another socio-demographic variable that distinguishes Mérida from Izamal is overall education level. Figure 3 presents the rates of *educación posbásica* (after elementary school) in both cities.

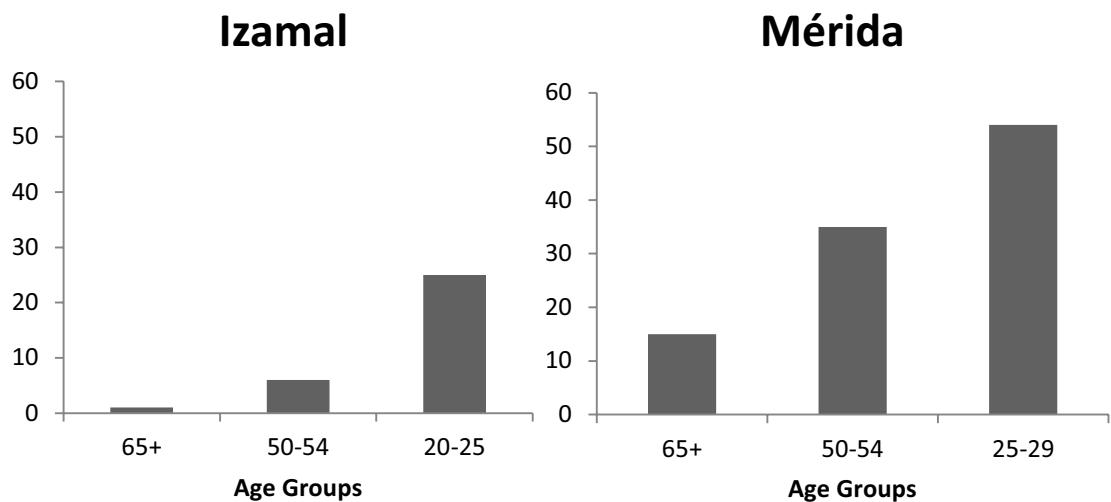


Figure 3: *Educación posbásica* in Izamal and Mérida (INEGI, 2005).

Again, we see the same trend - in both cities younger speakers are more educated than older speakers. The percentages, however, indicate that Izamal is at least one, if not one and a half, generations behind Mérida, given that only a quarter of younger speakers achieve post-elementary education, compared with over half in Mérida<sup>2</sup>. As seen in Figures 2 and 3, the trend of increased education mirrors that of decreased use of Maya. Although there is more than one factor at play in the loss of Maya in Yucatecan cities, it is the case that more education leads to more use of Spanish, and therefore may have an effect on the variety of Spanish employed by speakers.

### 3. Yucatan Spanish as a moribund dialect

The death of regional dialects of “safe” languages (i.e. standardization in dialects of languages like Spanish or English that, as a whole, are not endangered) has not received as much attention in the literature as language death (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1995; Schilling-Estes & Wolfram, 1999; Wolfram, 2004). Various researchers have identified a set of socio-historical traits that moribund

<sup>2</sup> Of course, these numbers hide a great deal of social variation, and education levels are much higher for middle and upper class residents in both cities.

dialects share, that make these varieties particularly susceptible to processes of standardization. Among these are (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1995, p. 701; Klee, 2009, p. 60): 1) a long period of isolation followed by rapid physical connection with other regions; 2) a shift from a traditional economy to one based on tourism; and 3) the formation of social networks that extend beyond the region. As has been outlined in previous studies (Michnowicz, 2007, 2008, 2009, in press), Yucatan as a region possesses all of the traits outlined above. Yucatan was physically isolated from the rest of Mexico until the 1960's, with rail and air service and good highways all arriving within the same period (Quezada, 2001). Tourism is now a major part of the economy (INEGI, 2008), bringing *yucatecos* into contact with speakers from all parts of Mexico, Latin America and beyond. There is also an increasing presence of speakers from other parts of Mexico in Yucatan, with the largest group of outsiders comprised of former residents of Mexico City (INEGI, 2000). As this study will demonstrate, these factors, as they have throughout Latin America, are contributing to a loss of regional forms in YS.

The research questions that guide the present study are as follows:

- 1) *Can standardization be observed within a family across generations?*
- 2) *If so, how is standardization proceeding among a Spanish-speaking family in Mérida, compared to a Maya-Spanish bilingual family in Izamal?*

#### 4. Participants and methods

For the present study, a total of eight speakers were extracted from a larger oral corpus of YS. These speakers represent two families, with four members from each city. The speakers chosen reflect similar age groups in both families. Details of the participants are seen in Table 1.

City	Speaker	Education	Occupation	Language(s)	Notes
Izamal	21M	Some college	College student	Spanish; understands some Maya	Son of 54M
	31F	High School	Housewife/reading tutor	Spanish; speaks some Maya	Sister of 50M and 54M
	50M	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Street cleaner	Spanish; fluent Maya	Brother of 31F and 54M
	54M	4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	Construction worker	Spanish; fluent Maya	Brother of 31F and 50M
Mérida	25M	College	Business manager	Spanish	Great nephew of 67M and 69F
	37F	College	Human resources officer	Spanish	Daughter of 67M and 69F
	67M	College; 2 years of medical school	Retired businessman	Spanish	Husband of 69F;
	69F	3 years of high school	Housewife/retired secretary	Spanish	Wife of 67M

Table 1: participants

In Table 1, speaker code is the participant's age and gender. While the participants from both families have a similar range of age groups, they differ regarding education level, social class and language use. In general, the speakers from Mérida are more highly educated than those from Izamal (with 21M, a college student at a regional university center in Izamal, being the important exception). The differences in education level are reflected in their occupations, with the two oldest speakers in Izamal employed in manual labor, and all of the speakers from Mérida working in or retired from professional jobs. Regarding language, all of the participants from Mérida are monolingual Spanish-speaking, whereas all of the participants from Izamal are exposed to Maya on a daily basis, albeit with differing degrees of use and comprehension. The two youngest speakers from Izamal, 21M and 31F, understand some spoken Maya, but respond in Spanish. Speaker 50M reports the highest rate of daily

Maya use – his wife is from a small village and speaks almost no Spanish, making Maya the default home language. In this he differs from his brother, 54M, who speaks mostly Spanish with his wife and children, although he does speak fluent Maya, not having learned Spanish prior to attending school.

The data are taken from sociolinguistic interviews, carried out by the author, in the speakers' homes. The researcher was presented as a "friend of a friend" to the family in Izamal, and lived with the family in Mérida while conducting research. In order to minimize the observer's paradox (Labov, 1984), participants were encouraged to guide the topic of conversation, which included family life, plans for the future, and local traditions and customs. Recordings were made on a Sony Minidisc recorder with a Sony ECM-MS907 external microphone, and were digitized (sampling rate of 44.1 kHz) for analysis in Praat (Boersma & Weenink 2011). Data was then coded for analysis in GoldVarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte, & Smith, 2005). Due to the size of the corpus and the nature of the study, frequencies of YS variants are the focus in the present study, although preliminary multivariate statistical analyses will be provided where appropriate.

## 5. Linguistic variables

The analysis of standardization in Izamal and Mérida will focus on three major phonetic/phonological variables outlined in the previous literature on YS (Alvar, 1969; García Fajardo, 1984; Lope Blanch, 1987; Michnowicz, 2008, 2009, in press; Yager, 1982; among others): the realization of /b d g/ as stops in non-neutralizing contexts, hiatus across word boundaries via the insertion of a glottal stop, and the aspiration of /k/, as measured by Voice Onset Time (VOT). However, first, in order to obtain a clearer picture of standardization in YS, additional minor variables will be discussed below, including examples of both morpho-syntactic and phonetic variation.

### 5.1. Minor variables in Izamal

The bilingual speakers in Izamal produced several morpho-syntactic and phonetic/phonological features that deviate from standard, monolingual Spanish<sup>3</sup>. While these variables are not the focus of the quantitative analysis, they are included here to demonstrate trends among speakers. Examples of each category (gender agreement, null pronouns, subject verb agreement, preposition use, verb use, clitic placement, lexical items and minor phonological variables) are detailed below.

#### 5.1.1. Gender agreement

Adjectives: *-Nos gusta ver nuestra ciudad [fem] limpio [masc] (50M);*

"We like to see our city [fem] clean [masc]".

Object pronouns: *-Porque esta casa [fem] que estoy haciendo, ya tiene años que lo [masc] tengo empezado (54M);*

"Because this house [fem] that I'm building, it has been years since I started it [masc]".

Determiners: *-Los [masc] fiestas [fem] que hacen... (54M);*

"The [masc] parties [fem] that they make...."

#### 5.1.2. Non-standard verb use

*-Tengo ido a Cozumel (21M); (cf. Standard He ido)*

"I have gone to Cozumel".

*-Pero nada más que nosotros estamos de otro lado, de la parte norte de Izamal (54M); (cf. Standard somos)*

"But we are from another part, from the north part of Izamal".

*-Pues así he sido conociendo... (54M); (cf. Standard ido)*

"Well like that I have been getting to know..."

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<sup>3</sup> No 'non-standard' morpho-syntactic variation was registered among the monolingual Spanish-speaking family in Mérida.

### 5.1.3. Clitic placement

-...*la paciente tuvo que se internar a la urgencia* (31F); (cf. Standard *se* *tuvo que internar* or *tuvo que internarse*)

“...the patient had to be admitted to the emergency room”

### 5.1.4. Lexical ítems

-...*aprender a gente adulta* (cf. Standard *enseñar*, 31F)

“...to learn (i.e. teach) adult people”

### 5.1.5. [p] for /f/ (rare)

...*son [p]echas que celebran* (cf. Standard *fechas*, 54M)

“...they are dates that they celebrate”

### 5.1.6. Elision of /x/

*Trabao* (cf. Standard *trabajo*; 21M, 50M, 54M)

“I work”

### 5.1.7. Liquid substitution (sporadic)

*Dinero* > *dinelo* “money”; *perdón* > *peldón* “pardon” (31F)

*Trabajar* > *trabajal* “to work” (54M)

## 5.2. Major phonetic/phonological variables

While the minor variables outlined above occurred solely in the speech of the bilingual speakers from Izamal, and likely represent second language (L2) features that have fossilized and passed on to the youngest speakers, the three major variables that form the focus of the analysis of standardization occur in both bilingual and monolingual speakers in the corpus. The first of these is the realization of (b d g). Numerous studies have indicated that in YS /b d g/ are produced as stops in contexts where standard varieties of Spanish would employ fricative or approximant variants, such as intervocalically (Alvar, 1969; García Fajardo, 1984; Lope Blanch, 1987; Michnowicz, 2008, 2009, in press; Yager, 1982). A spectrogram detailing two occlusive tokens of (d) produced by speaker 37F from Mérida can be seen in Figure 4 – in standard Spanish only the second token (following /n/) would be occlusive.

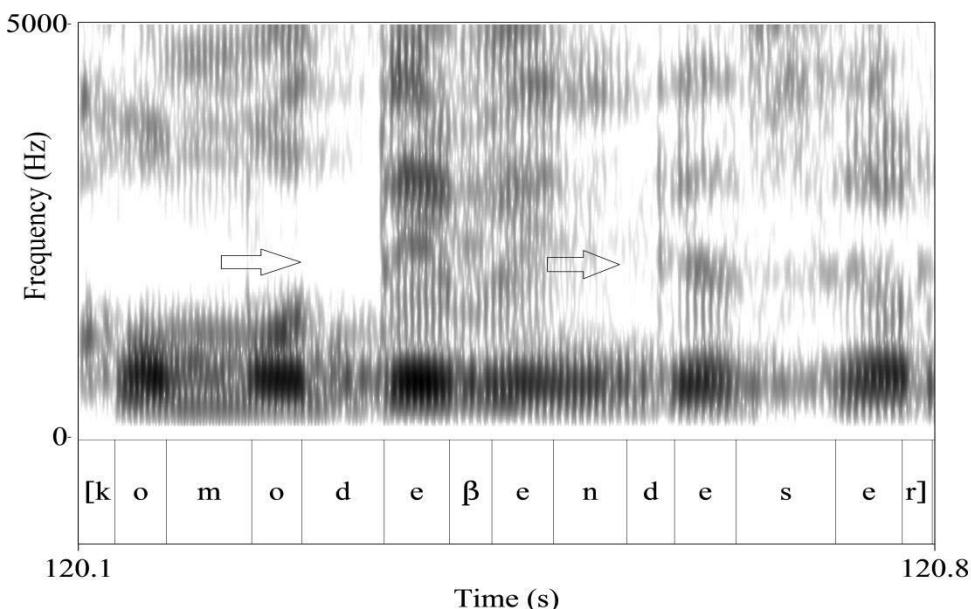


Figure 4: Stop realizations of /d/ in *como deben de ser...* “how they should be...” (Speaker 37F-Mérida)

The second major variable analyzed is the tendency in YS to maintain hiatus across word boundaries, via the insertion of a glottal stop (Barrera Vásquez, 1937; García Fajardo, 1984; Lope Blanch, 1987; Michnowicz, 2006; Nykl, 1938; Suárez, 1945/1979; Yager, 1982). A spectrogram showing a break across word boundaries, instead of the expected synalepha, is seen in Figure 5.

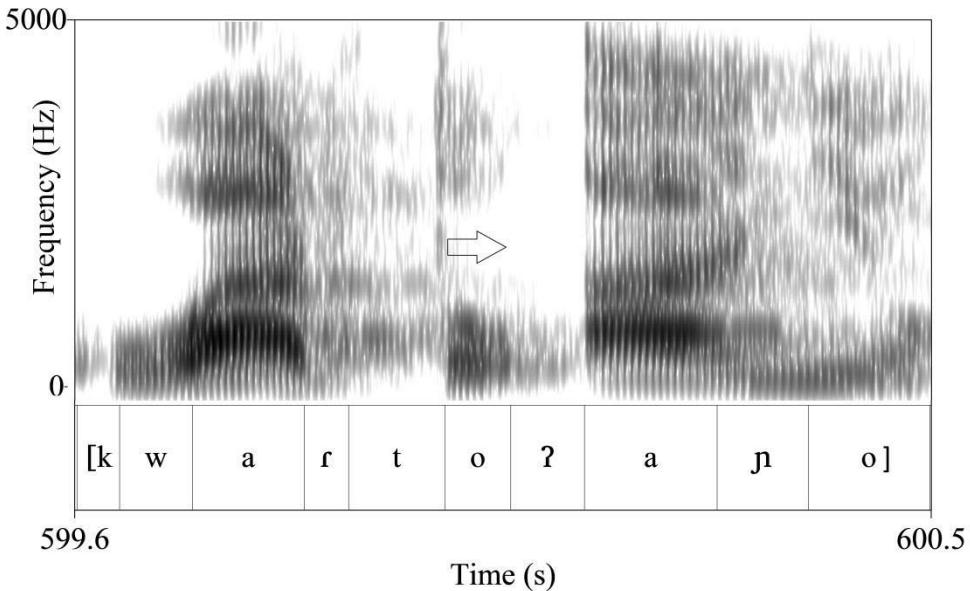


Figure 5: Glottal stop insertion in *cuarto año* “fourth year” (Speaker 50M-Izamal)

The third major variable is the aspiration of /p t k/, widely reported in previous studies of YS (Alvar, 1969; Barrera Vásquez, 1937; García Fajardo, 1984; Lope Blanch, 1987; Michnowicz, 2006; Nykl, 1938; Suárez, 1945/1979; Yager, 1982). Aspiration is studied here via the most frequently aspirated voiceless stop, /k/. Figure 6 shows a spectrogram detailing two tokens of aspirated /k/ - the first in *que* and the second, more strongly aspirated in *cae*. The aspiration in *cae*, as measured by Voice Onset Time (VOT), is 77ms., which can be compared to an average of less than 30ms. for other varieties of Spanish (Lisker & Abramson, 1964; Rosner, López-Bascuas, García-Albea & Fahey 2000).

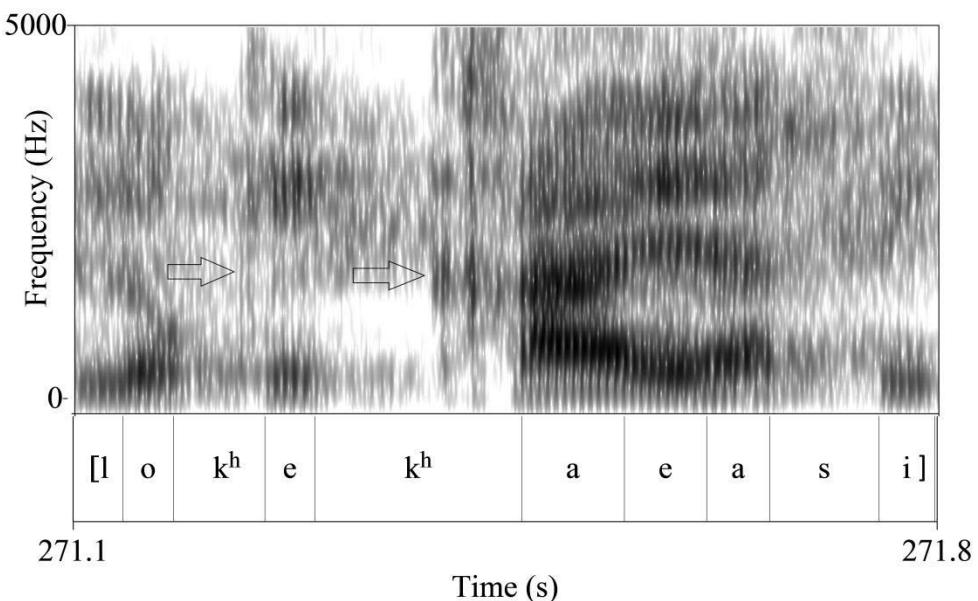


Figure 6: Aspirated /k/ in *lo que cae así* “what falls like that” (Speaker 50M-Izamal)

## 6. Results

First, we will briefly examine the results for the morpho-syntactic variables outlined in section 5. Again, recall that, as expected, none of these L2/contact features were found in the speech of the monolingual family from Mérida. The overall token frequency of non-standard morpho-syntactic variants for Izamal family members is seen in Figure 7.

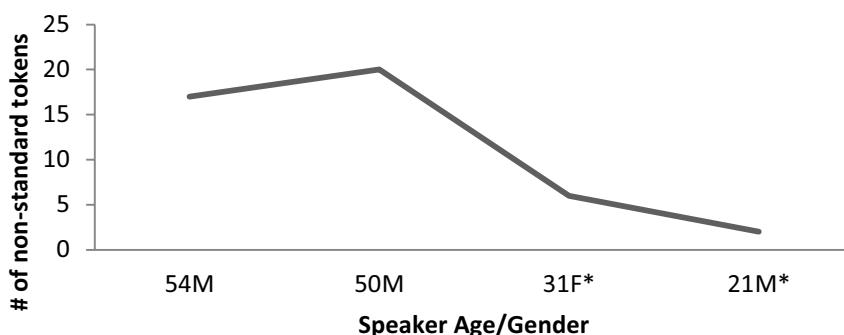


Figure 7: Number of tokens of L2 morpho-syntactic variants for Izamal speakers. \*One of the tokens for speaker 31F and both of the tokens (100%) for speaker 21M are probable gender mismatches<sup>4</sup>.

In Figure 7, we can observe that the two older speakers produce many more tokens of L2 variants than do the younger speakers. The peak among 50M, which is also seen for the other variables as well (see below), may be due in part to his almost exclusive use of Maya with his wife, although the difference between 54M and 50M is only three tokens, so the main distinction seen here is that of older vs. younger, which also coincides with less vs. more educated and fluent vs. passive knowledge of Maya.

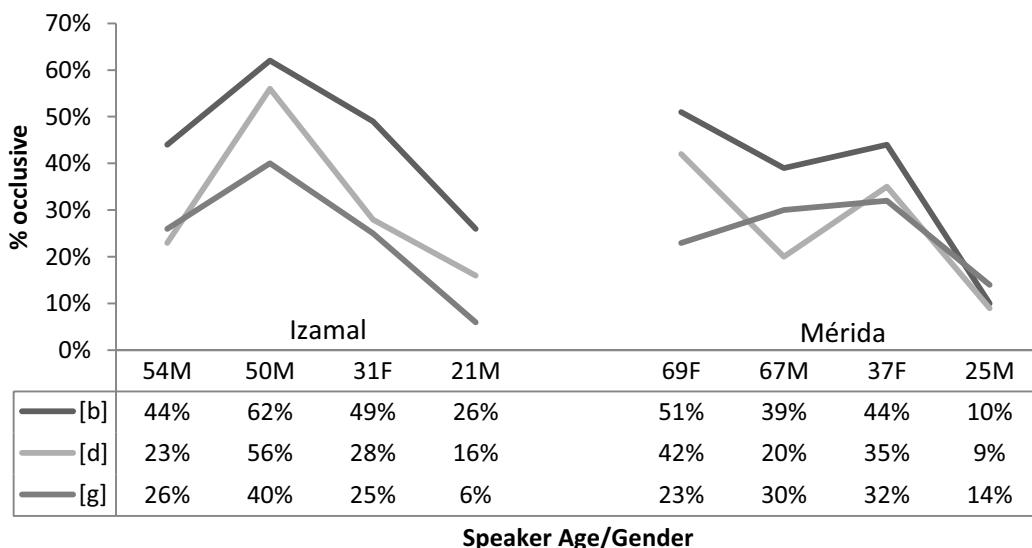


Figure 8: Production of [bdg] in non-neutralizing contexts across generations in Izamal and Mérida

<sup>4</sup> They are classified as “probable” since the three questionable tokens are all *lo*, which appear to lack agreement with a feminine antecedent, but could possibly refer to a broad, neutral concept rather than a specific referent.

Figure 8 presents the overall frequencies of occlusive [bdg] for all speakers. The final analysis is based on 1689 tokens of /b/, 1965 tokens of /d/, and 382 tokens of /g/. Data from both cities demonstrate a decline in non-standard stop usage across generations, with the youngest speakers producing the lowest rates of stop variants (21M 16% stop average; 25M 11% stop average).

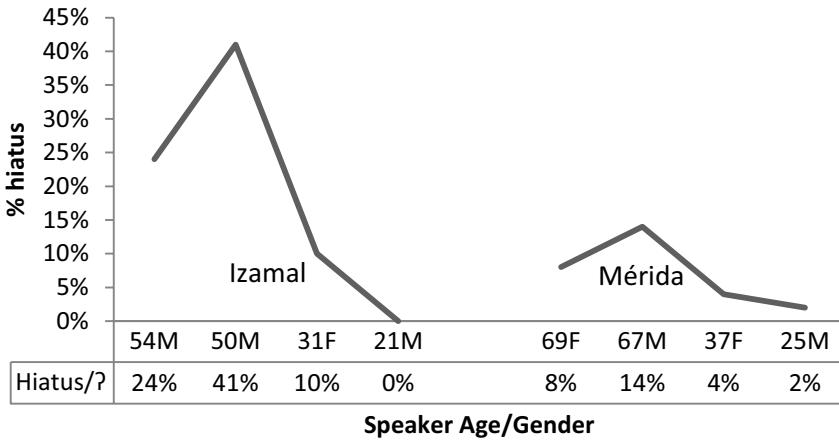


Figure 9: Production of hiatus via [ʔ] across generations in Izamal and Mérida

The analysis of hiatus is based on 2000 tokens of phrase internal vowel-initial words. With hiatus (Figure 9), we again see the same pattern of reduced frequency of YS among younger speakers, with 0% hiatus for speaker 21M, and 2% for speaker 25M. The main difference that distinguishes hiatus from the other main phonological variables is the difference in frequency for older speakers between the two cities. Hiatus occurred very infrequently for all speakers in Mérida, while more substantial rates are seen for older speakers in Izamal. These results lend some support to previous studies that have argued that hiatus in YS is the result of direct influence from Maya (Nykl, 1938; Suárez, 1945/1979), given that monolingual speakers in Mérida produce significantly less hiatus than do bilingual speakers in Izamal, as seen in a preliminary multivariate analysis (detailed below and in the appendix in full).

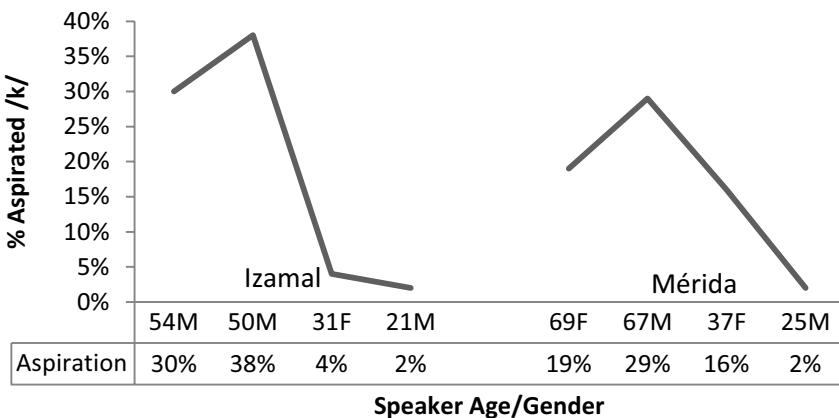


Figure 10: Production of aspirated /k/ across generations in Izamal and Mérida

The analysis of aspirated /k/, based on 2000 tokens, shows the same pattern (Figure 10) as [bdg] and hiatus, with younger speakers producing far less YS variant than older speakers. The youngest two speakers (21M and 25M) produced identical amounts of aspirated /k/ - 2%.

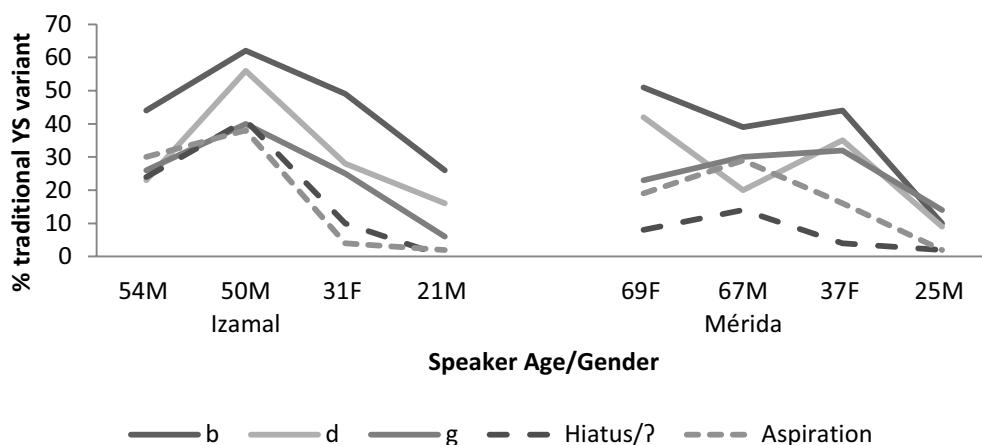


Figure 11: A comparison of all major variables for both cities across age groups.

The major phonetic/phonological variables, in contrast with the morpho-syntactic variation seen above, are found among speakers from both families. At least some of these phonetic/phonological traits of both bilingual and monolingual YS have been argued previously to be fossilized L2 or substrate-influenced forms that have been passed on to monolingual Spanish speakers following the centuries-long language shift of Maya speakers to Spanish (Michnowicz, 2009; see Thomason & Kaufman 1988). The fact that the morpho-syntactic variants seen above have not entered the monolingual population, and decrease with increased education and therefore increased fluency in Spanish, indicates that the morpho-syntactic variation is due to speakers using a non-native, L2 variety of Spanish. Substrate influence at the phonological level, however, is different and may remain for at least several generations once the family becomes monolingual in Spanish. These observations may speak to the relatively greater permeability of phonology compared with syntax, which has been argued to be (relatively) impermeable to contact influence (see Silva-Corvalán, 1994).

Returning to the patterns seen above for all major phonetic/phonological variables, an overall pattern of standardization is evident for younger speakers from both cities. This general pattern, whereby younger speakers use fewer regional YS variants, and conversely more standard, pan-Hispanic variants, is to be expected based on previous research (Michnowicz, 2006, 2009, in press; Klee, 2009). These results are surprising in two ways, however. First, given that all of these variables have at various times been attributed to indigenous language influence, the expected result would be that bilingual speakers of Maya/Spanish would display higher frequencies of YS variants. The fact that the younger speakers in the study, regardless of language background, socioeconomic status or city are all converging on the same external norm is unexpected, and appears to be due primarily to access to education for these speakers. This will be addressed further in the discussion.

The second surprising result is that older speakers also do not display radically different frequencies for YS variants based on city. That is, the older speakers from Izamal – both fluent Maya speakers with 4<sup>th</sup> grade educations and occupations in manual labor, use YS variants at rates not all that different from their older, monolingual, professional well-educated counterparts in Mérida<sup>5</sup>. Thus it appears that, once age is taken into account, the speakers from Izamal and those from Mérida do not behave all that differently from one another with regards to phonology. While the speaker sample for the present study is small, there are sufficient tokens of each variable to allow for a preliminary multivariate analysis, as long as the categories analyzed are kept broad enough to avoid assessing idiosyncratic use by one speaker. Results of the step/up-step/down analyses conducted with GoldVarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte & Smith 2005) indicate that the overall difference between Izamal and Mérida was only significant for /b/ and hiatus, as might be expected from the graphs above<sup>6</sup>. Age was

<sup>5</sup> Hiatus being the notable exception.

<sup>6</sup> Significant factor groups for each Varbrul analysis are found in the appendix, including some linguistic factors, such as phonetic context, not discussed here.

a significant factor for all variables except /g/, which likely due to a low number of tokens (~400) and a low overall frequency of stop [g] (148 tokens) did not return any significant results. The small speaker sample size does not allow for an accurate separate analysis of only older or younger speakers, or speaker gender, but the lack of significant results for “City” for all but /b/ and hiatus along with the distributions seen in Figure 11 indicate that both groups of speakers from both cities of similar ages are behaving in strikingly similar ways.

## 7. Discussion and conclusions

First, we return to the research questions presented at the beginning of this paper:

- 1) *Can standardization be observed within a family across generations?*

The answer here is ‘yes’, as seen in section 6. Younger speakers from both families use more standard variants than older speakers.

- 2) *If so, how is standardization proceeding among a Spanish-speaking family in Mérida, compared to a Maya-Spanish bilingual family in Izamal?*

As we have seen, speakers do not show great differences between cities for any age group, with preliminary multivariate analysis finding “City” to be significant for only two of the 5 variables. Age, however, was found to be a significant predictor of all variables except one, /g/. While education no doubt plays a role in extending prestigious, non-regional variants to younger speakers – speaker 21M from Izamal is the most standard speaker in his family and the only one to attend college – education cannot be the only explanation, given that older speakers from both backgrounds, with very different levels of education, produce similar frequencies of most YS variants. Instead, it is likely that with a combination of factors, such as: increased access to (higher) education, a reduction in the number of Maya-dominant speakers that serve to continually reinforce the L2/contact-induced characteristics, as well as exposure to other models of standard language (through travel, tourism, industry, media etc.), speakers of all backgrounds are rapidly standardizing, making (Maya-influenced) traditional YS an endangered dialect. I argue that YS, in contact with prestigious varieties of Mexican and foreign models of Spanish, is undergoing dialect death by dissipation, defined by Schilling-Estes & Wolfram (1999) as the process by which “distinguishing dialect features are lost or drastically eroded in the postinsular state of the variety” (487). As shown in previous studies (Michnowicz, 2008), Yucatan has undergone a rapid loss of the previous historical isolation that allowed for the development of so many regional forms, both cultural and linguistic. As mentioned in section 3, this is an important and necessary pre-condition of moribund dialects (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1995, p. 701; Klee, 2009, p. 60). Increased interactions outside of the community, no matter how big that community might be (an island like Ocracoke NC (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, 1995) or an entire state like Yucatan), lead to increased contact with other dialects, which can often result in a reduction in distinguishing traits (Trudgill, 1986). Andersen (1988) has argued that moving from a physically closed state to an open state, as Yucatan has done over the last several decades, can lead to increased linguistic accommodation.

Physical connections are not sufficient, however, and are mediated by the role of speakers’ attitudes toward the languages or dialects in contact. An endocentric world view, in which a community looks primarily to its own norms (linguistic and otherwise), will tend to encourage the preservation of regional norms (Andersen, 1988). Yucatan can definitely be considered an endocentric community, as seen in previous research (Michnowicz, 2007; Michnowicz, 2008), and as Andersen (1988, p. 74) notes, “[e]ndocentric open dialects may retain their individuality in the face of relatively extensive exposure to other speech forms...”. While this may in part explain why traditional YS forms, often stigmatized outside of the region, have been able to hang on as long as they have, it does not explain why speakers of YS are now abandoning traditional forms that have served to identify the dialect. Andersen (1988, pp. 74-75) argues that it is “primarily an attitudinal shift from endocentric to exocentric which changes the course of development of a local dialect...”. Why then, when *yucatecos*

express such overt pride regarding YS (Michnowicz, 2006)<sup>7</sup>, are they leaving behind many of the variants that define local speech? I believe that the answer lies in a conflict in loyalty among speakers of YS. On one hand, *yucatecos* are proud of their regional mores, including language use. On the other hand, many of the defining characteristics of YS are perceived (correctly or incorrectly), as indicative of “Mayan Spanish”. It appears that when speakers are faced with the decision of maintaining regional forms and thereby using variants perceived as stemming from indigenous language contact, many are opting for a pan-Hispanic variety of Spanish not influenced by indigenous language contact.

In summary, it appears that traditional YS is declining among speakers from various parts of the peninsula. Factors in this decline, or standardization, include increased education, a reduction in the number of Yucatec Maya speakers that maintained an interlanguage variety over a long period of time, as well as other means of contact with speakers of more standard varieties – through improved infrastructure and tourism, business and industry and increased contact through friendships and marriage with outsiders. YS is undergoing “death by dissipation”, although as has been previously reported, there is some evidence of “concentration”, in the sense of Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999)<sup>8</sup> in Yucatan as well – possibly with the apparent increase in final -m reported in Yager (1989) and Michnowicz (2007, 2008). Further study of YS can provide insight into questions of dialect and language contact, as well as linguistic methods of signaling identity, and certainly warrants the attention of scholars in the field.

## Appendix

Factor group		Factor weight	Range
Age	Older	.59	21
	Younger	.38	
Position in word	Initial	.61	19
	Medial	.42	
Following segment	Consonant	.62	15
	Semivowel	.47	
Preceding segment	Vowel	.45	11
	Consonant	.59	
	Vowel	.49	
City	Izamal	.56	11
	Mérida	.45	

Not significant = syllable stress

Loglikelihood = -920.453;  $p = 0.035$ ;  $X^2$  per cell = 1.2608

**Table 2: Significant factors for (b) in YS; Application value = [b]; Input = 0.396**

Factor group		Factor weight	Range
Following segment	Semivowel	.71	27
	Vowel	.49	
	Consonant	.45	
	Pause	.44	
Position in word	Initial	.59	18
	Medial	.41	
	Final	.39	
Age	Older	.57	14
	Younger	.43	

Not significant = preceding segment, syllable stress, city

Loglikelihood = -872.287;  $p = 0.006$ ;  $X^2$  per cell = 0.8874

**Table 3: Significant factors for (d) in YS; Application value = [d]; Input = 0.281**

### (g) – no factor groups significant

<sup>7</sup> In a pilot study detailed in Michnowicz (2006), speakers reported that good Spanish is spoken in Yucatan and that they like the variety of Spanish spoken in Yucatan.

<sup>8</sup> A model in which “[l]inguistic distinctiveness is heightened among a reduced number of speakers” (Schilling-Estes & Wolfram, 1999, p. 488).

Factor group		Factor weight	Range
Age	Older	.72	45
	Younger	.27	
City	Izamal	.65	30
	Mérida	.35	
Following segment	/o/	.57	17
	/a/	.56	
	/i/	.53	
	/e/	.45	
	/u/	.40	
Syllable stress	Stressed	.61	17
	Unstressed	.44	
Preceding segment	Consonant	.58	13
	Vowel	.45	

All factor groups significant.

Loglikelihood = -642.148;  $p = 0.039$ ;  $X^2$  per cell = 1.11084

**Table 4: Significant factors for (?) in YS; Application value = [?]; Input = 0.082**

Factor group		Factor weight	Range
Age	Older	.72	44
	Younger	.28	
Syllable stress	Stressed	.69	27
	Unstressed	.43	
Following segment	Vowel	.53	24
	Consonant	.38	
	Semivowel	.29	

Not significant = preceding segment, position in word, city.

Loglikelihood = -640.166;  $p = 0.000$ ;  $X^2$  per cell = 1.2918

**Table 5: Significant factors for (k) in YS; Application value = [k<sup>h</sup>]; Input = 0.132**

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