

Sandro Sessarego, *The Afro-Bolivian Spanish Determiner Phrase. A Microparametric Account*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press. 164 pp.



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The book *The Afro-Bolivian Spanish Determiner Phrase. A Microparametric Account* is an ambitious project whose ultimate goal is to raise awareness of the understudied, and highly stigmatized, Afro-Hispanic contact varieties spoken in Latin America, namely the so-called Afro-Bolivian Spanish vernacular (ABS henceforth) spoken in the region of Los Yungas, Department of La Paz, Bolivia. The book opens a new series (*Theoretical Developments in Hispanic Linguistics*, Series Editor: Javier Gutiérrez-Rexach), which aims at addressing current grammatical, historical, acquisitional and/or computational topics in Hispanic Linguistics. The series attaches special importance to describing various dialects of Spanish and integrating diverse theoretical perspectives in the explanation of the linguistic facts described.

The book's three main objectives fit perfectly within the goals of the series. On the one hand, from a formal linguistic point of view, it describes in detail the core morphosyntactic properties of the ABS Determiner Phrase with respect to the behavior of bare nouns, nominal ellipsis and gender/number agreement. The fact that ABS lacks normalization forces the author to set up the basic data paradigms with respect to the facts under scrutiny. Offering these new sets of data to the linguistic community is, *per se*, a priceless asset of the book. Moreover, it provides a microparametric theoretical explanation, framed in a generative-oriented perspective, of the differences found between ABS and Standard Spanish with respect to the aforementioned phenomena as well as the variation regarding gender/number agreement which can be found within this vernacular.

On the other hand, the book endeavors to characterize the ABS dialect from a sociolinguistic point of view, specifically analyzing in detail the synchronic sociolinguistic distribution of the intra-dialect variation related to gender/number agreement mentioned in the previous paragraph. This offers an enriched and multifaceted description of the linguistic phenomena studied in the book, focusing not only on their formal properties but also on their distribution across social groups.

Finally, the book compares and evaluates different theories about the historical origins of ABS, calling into question its creole origin. In order to achieve this goal, the book explores the socio-historical development of this dialect.

The combination of these three perspectives –formal/microparametric, sociolinguistic and historical– which also implies the use of different methodologies, is not frequent in the literature; these features make the book an invaluable contribution to the linguistic field.

The book is structured as follows. After a short introductory chapter, where the general goals and main assumptions of the book are set out, chapter 2 discusses the supposed creole origin of ABS, analyzing both the sociohistorical development of this vernacular and also the main linguistic data that can be used to argue for or against that hypothesis.

Chapter 3 presents the main theoretical approaches to linguistic variation, highlighting the importance of combining both formal/microparametric and sociolinguistic approaches in the study of syntactic variation in order to obtain complete descriptions of data and multifaceted explanations. Chapters 5 (analyzing semantic and syntactic properties of bare nouns in ABS), 6 (analyzing nominal ellipsis) and 7-8 (dealing with gender and number agreement) require some familiarity with the analysis of the Determiner Phrase and agreement operations within the generative syntactic framework. For this reason, the author devotes chapter 4 and some sections of chapters 5-8 to providing this theoretical background. Finally, chapter 9 offers some general conclusions.

Chapter 2 (*A sociohistorical and linguistic sketch of Afro-Bolivian Spanish*) deals with the still uncertain origins of ABS. The author analyzes the main linguistic traits of this vernacular and also its sociohistorical development in order to compare and evaluate the following two possible hypotheses about its origin:

- a) ABS has a creole origin (Lipski 2008, and previous work, a.o.). Assuming that creoles can be characterized and defined by a set of common linguistic features, certain syntactic features of ABS would appear to be traces of a previous creole stage, such as the use of null definite articles in subject position (*Perro<sub>m.sg</sub> ta<sub>3.sg</sub> flojo<sub>m.sg</sub>* vs. st.Sp *Los<sub>m.pl</sub> perros<sub>m.pl</sub> están<sub>3.pl</sub> flojos<sub>m.pl</sub>* ‘Dogs are worthless’), the use of invariant verbal forms for person and number (*Yo<sub>1.sg</sub> no conocí<sub>3.sg</sub> hacienda* vs. st.Sp. *Yo<sub>1.sg</sub> no conocí<sub>1.sg</sub> (la) hacienda* ‘I never knew the hacienda’) or the absence of gender/number agreement in NPs (*nuestro<sub>m.sg</sub> cultura<sub>f.sg</sub> antiguo<sub>m.sg</sub>* vs. st.Sp. *nuestra<sub>f.sg</sub> cultura<sub>f.sg</sub> antigua<sub>f.sg</sub>* ‘our traditional culture’). Lipski proposes that these traits might derive from an earlier colonial Afro-Hispanic pidgin, which developed into a creole. This creole would have undergone a process of decreolization due to contact with Spanish (a process that would have taken place during the 50/60 years after 1952, when the Afro-Bolivian population was freed from forced peonage), and would now be in one of its final stages, closer to the more prestigious regional Bolivian Spanish variety.
- b) ABS is the result of fossilized second language acquisition strategies. The linguistic traits mentioned in the previous paragraph are the result of intermediate and advanced second language acquisition processes, which crystalized in an environment free of linguistic norm and standardization, and happened to fossilize, being only partially restructured due to the progressive standardization process imposed by the socio-historical development of the Afro-Bolivian community. The author shows that the aforementioned linguistic phenomena are commonly encountered in intermediate and advanced interlanguages and also in non-standard Spanish and Portuguese dialects for which a creole origin is not feasible.

Moreover, the sociohistorical development of the Afro-Bolivian community from the sixteenth century does not support a creole origin of ABS either: The introduction of Africans to Bolivia was highly constrained due to laws imposed by the Spanish Crown and the high price of African slaves, so that the size of the black population relative to the non-black populations in the Bolivian *haciendas* was always small. Moreover, manumission seemed to be possible. These socioeconomic conditions would not have favored a context for the emergence

of a creole, so the progressive linguistic assimilation of the slaves to Spanish would seem to be a more suitable proposal.

The author thus concludes that ABS instantiates traces of an imperfect second language acquisition process in a context in which the superstrate language was relatively available to the African slaves. The crystallization of second language acquisition strategies was possible because Los Yungas was an isolated rural area far from the social pressure posed by formal education, standardization and linguistic norming. These crystallized forms would become part of the core grammar of the language natively acquired by following generations (*vernacular universals*, Chamber 2003). The increasing similarities between traditional ABS and standard Spanish (see chapter 8) are due to the progressive assimilation of the original vernacular to standard Bolivian Spanish after the Land Reform in 1952, which made access to formal education possible for the black population.

Chapter 3 (*Language variation and the Minimalist Program*) provides an overview of the main theoretical approaches proposed in the literature to account for linguistic variation. The author situates his work within the microparametric framework, specifically following Adger & Smith's (2005) proposal, which combines a sociolinguistic approach to data collection with the formal hypotheses of the Minimalist Program. This model postulates that syntactic variation –cross-dialectal, intra-dialectal and intra-speaker variation– is driven by properties of uninterpretable/unvalued features of lexical items. More precisely, variation is characterized in terms of the existence of lexical entries with different specifications of uninterpretable/unvalued features (e.g. the presence vs. absence of a specific uninterpretable/unvalued feature). Variation will occur when one item or another takes part in a syntactic derivation. Variation is thus located in the lexical component (the Borer-Chomsky conjecture) since features are properties of lexical items, and syntactic operations (movement, Agree, etc.) are invariant across languages. However, accessing one lexical item or another in a derivation (i.e. variation) is determined by several extralinguistic factors, such as social class/education, gender, age, etc. Consistent with this theoretical perspective, the book combines sociolinguistic interviews with grammaticality judgment in the collection of data, and also resorts to statistical analysis of data as a basis for the formal hypotheses discussed.

Chapter 4 (*From NP to DP*) provides a rich bibliographical review that sets the theoretical context for the proposals developed in the rest of the book regarding the syntactic phenomena that characterize the Determiner Phrase in ABS. The chapter has two goals. First, the author presents the 'Determiner Phrase Hypothesis' (Abney 1987, a.o) and justifies its internal structure (see 1) in terms of: a) the existence of a distinct functional projection Number between D and N (rejecting also the proposal of an independent Gender Phrase); b) the presence inside the DP of one or more functional nP layers above N hosting thematic complements of the noun (possessor > agent > theme); c) the generation of adjectives as specifiers of different positions higher than N: for predicative adjectives in Romance (e.g. st.Sp. *las casas rojas* 'the red houses'), the N-A ordering is derived as a consequence of N movement from its base position to a higher functional projection bypassing the adjective; with respect to the generation of prenominal adjectives, he assumes that prenominal attributive adjectives (e.g. st.Sp. *Las pequeñas casas* 'the small houses') are base-generated in a position higher than the

landing site of N movement (adjectives like *verdadera* ‘true’, *supuesta* ‘supposed’, as is made clear in chapter 6, are also generated close to N/n). More specifically, in chapter 7 (p. 116, (142)) it is claimed that the interpretable gender, number and person phi-features of the DP are scattered in different nodes inside this projection: person is interpretable in D, Number is interpretable in Num and gender is interpretable within the nominal projection N, as illustrated in (1).

- (1) [DP D<sub>(interpretable person)</sub> [NumP AP Num<sub>(interpretable number)</sub> [nP AP n [NP N<sub>(interpretable gender)</sub> ]]]]  
 [p. 119, (148), adapted]

Second, the author presents Longobardi’s (1994) proposal of argumental bare NPs as DPs with a null heading D in opposition to Chierchia’s (1998) ‘Nominal Mapping Parameter’, which proposes a semantic parameter to account for the distribution of bare NPs and DPs as arguments across languages. In sum, the chapter sets the background for the proposals to be developed in the following chapters. Moreover, the chapter constitutes a good summary of the key articles that have studied the internal functional structure of the DP since Abney’s work, and can be used as an introductory reading to the topic independent of the ABS discussion.

In Chapter 5 (*Semantic and syntactic properties of “bare” nouns*), a detailed description (obtained by formal elicitation and grammaticality judgment tests) of the syntactic and semantic behavior of bare nouns in ABS is offered. In this dialect, bare singular nouns co-exist with indefinite and definite DPs in argument positions, specifically, in subject position. In this sense, ABS does not fit the typology of languages established by Chierchia’s (1998) ‘Nominal Mapping Parameter’, according to which there are three kinds of languages: a) Chinese-like languages, where NPs are always arguments with a mass interpretation (i.e. [+argument, -predicate]) –these languages lack articles and number morphology and have a rich classifier system; b) Romance-like languages, where NPs are always predicates (i.e. [-argument, +predicate]) and determiners are needed to convert them into arguments –specifically in subject position– (in these languages nouns inflect for number, and the mass/count distinction is a lexical one); or c) Germanic-like languages, where NPs can be arguments (when mass or plural, but not when they are bare singular nouns) and predicates (i.e. [+argument, +predicate]) –in these languages, the mass/count distinction is established in the Lexicon, and there is explicit number morphology. In ABS, bare mass and count singular nouns can appear in subject (and object) position: *Agua*<sub>mass.f.sg</sub> *ta frú*<sub>m.sg</sub> ‘The water is cold’, p. 72 (47); *Canción*<sub>count.f.sg</sub> *romántico*<sub>m.sg</sub> *es popular*<sub>sg</sub> ‘Love songs are popular’, p. 77 (59), *Nube*<sub>count.f.sg</sub> *ta bien rojo*<sub>m.sg</sub> ‘That cloud/those clouds is/are very red’, p. 80 (65). Moreover, the language has number marking visible on determiners, as in *sus*<sub>pl</sub> *caramelo bonito* ‘His<sub>PL</sub> good candies’ (and interpreted on bare nouns via pronominal anaphora: *Yo tiene hijo*<sub>m.sg</sub>. *Ele*<sub>m.sg</sub>/*Eyu*<sub>m.pl</sub> *vive a Mururata* ‘I have a child/children. He/They live in Mururata’), nouns can be classified as mass or count lacking a classifier system, and there are definite and indefinite articles (e.g. *El perro blanco* ‘The white dog’ p. 71 (43), *Un Boliviano come lechón hoy* ‘A Bolivian eats suckling pig today’ p. 77 (57)). ABS, thus, does not fit into Chierchia’s typology, whose binary distinctions cannot explain the existence of such a language. In conclusion, to account for the features of ABS, Sessarego assumes Longobardi’s proposal arguing for a null D in every argumental bare NP.

Chapter 5 also offers a detailed description of the different readings that bare nouns can receive in ABS. Bare nouns are by default interpreted as kinds (*Chancho<sub>sg</sub> es muy común a Tocaña* ‘Pigs are very common in Tocaña’, p. 73 (48)). However, they can also be interpreted as indefinite NPs with existential or generic readings (*{Un<sub>sg</sub> soneto<sub>sg</sub> / soneto<sub>sg</sub>} tiene<sub>sg</sub> cuatro estrofa* ‘A sonnet / Sonnets has four strophes’) and also as definite NPs (*Yo compró un tarta. {Tarta/La tarta} sabe a fresa*, ‘I bought a cake. The cake tastes like strawberry’, p. 79 (62)) when given the appropriate syntactic and pragmatic environment, as the author describes in detail. Covert determiners in ABS thus encode a variety of functions: they can shift predicates to kinds in the default case (*nom operator*, shifting properties into individuals) or they can be existential or definite (*iota*) operators giving rise to existential and definite-like interpretations given the appropriate contextual parameters.

An interesting question that the author does not discuss, since bare nouns can alternate with DPs (headed by indefinite and definite determiners) in some contexts, is whether this alternation is linked to some social factor such as age or education. If such a link could be established (in connection with the findings of chapter 8 regarding alternation of agreement patterns) it could be indicating that the original feature of this dialect (the fossilized L2 learning strategy) is the absence of determiners, their presence and/or extension of use to different context being a consequence of the progressive assimilation of the original ABS vernacular to Bolivian Spanish. This would indeed be an interesting topic for further research.

Chapter 6 (*N-Ellipsis*) presents the twofold paradigm of nominal ellipsis found in ABS (obtained through formal elicitation), which is mostly coincident with that found in Standard Spanish: a) in elliptical nominal constructions only a switch in number features across clauses is possible (recall that nouns do not inflect for number and adjectives do not inflect for number or gender in ABS): ABS *El<sub>m.sg</sub> chico<sub>m.sg</sub> alto<sub>m.sg</sub> y lu<sub>m.pl</sub> [e] bajo<sub>m.sg</sub>* – st.Sp. *El<sub>m.sg</sub> chico<sub>m.sg</sub> alto<sub>m.sg</sub> y los<sub>m.pl</sub> [e] bajos<sub>m.pl</sub>* ‘The tall boy and the short ones’ vs. ABS *\*El<sub>m.sg</sub> chico<sub>m.sg</sub> alto<sub>m.sg</sub> y la<sub>f.sg</sub> [e] bajo<sub>m.sg</sub>* – st.Sp. *\*El<sub>m.sg</sub> chico<sub>m.sg</sub> alto<sub>m.sg</sub> y la<sub>f.sg</sub> [e] baja<sub>f.sg</sub>* ‘The tall boy and the short girl’); and b) post-nominal adjectives allow nominal ellipsis, contrary to prenominal ones (*El amigo alto y el [e] bajo* ‘The tall friend and the short one’, *\*El verdadero amigo alto y el supuesto [e] bajo* ‘The true tall friend and the supposed short one’, p. 86 (76), similar data is found in st.Sp.). However, elliptical configurations where *cun* ‘with’ heads a PP complement of the elided noun are possible in ABS, contrary to what happens in st.Sp. with PPs headed by *con* ‘with’: ABS *La camisa rojo y la [e] cun mancha* ‘the red shirt and the spotted one’ vs. st.Sp. *\*La camisa roja y la [e] con manchas*, p. 84 (68).

After offering an overview of the main proposals concerning Spanish nominal ellipsis, the author claims that ellipsis affects only the lower DP-internal layer, targeting N (or n) (the underlined chunk in (2)). Accordingly, cases of sloppy identity for number are allowed, since number is located in Num, a position above the ellipsis site, but not for gender. Similarly, prenominal adjectives associated with the N/n projection cannot survive ellipsis either. Postnominal adjectives, being generated as Specifiers of Num, survive the ellipsis of N/n. The *cun/con* contrast is explained on the basis of the different nature of the prepositions *cun* and *con* despite their apparent phonological similarity: *cun* is a functional preposition heading a complementizer-like structure generated higher in the DP structure, thus not being affected by the ellipsis process.

(2) [DP D [NumP AP Num [nP AP n-N [NP t<sub>N</sub> ]]]]

Chapter 7 (*Gender and Number agreement*) offers a formal account of what we find with regard to gender/number agreement within the ABS DP (grammaticality judgment tests and oral questionnaires are used in this chapter to determine the patterns of agreement): a) gender agreement appears only on definite articles, the rest of the DP elements showing default-masculine marking, (3); and b) plurality is marked only on determiners, (4). These agreement properties contrast with st.Sp, where all DP elements carry overt number and gender marking.

(3) ABS: Todo<sub>m.sg</sub> la<sub>f.sg</sub> comida<sub>f.sg</sub> delicioso<sub>m.sg</sub>  
 st.Sp.: Toda<sub>f.sg</sub> la<sub>f.sg</sub> comida<sub>f.sg</sub> deliciosa<sub>f.sg</sub> [p. 112 (134)]  
 ‘All the delicious food’

(4) ABS: Ejes<sub>m.pl</sub> pequeño<sub>m.sg</sub> casa<sub>f.sg</sub> rojo<sub>m.sg</sub>  
 st.Sp.: Esas<sub>f.pl</sub> pequeñas<sub>f.pl</sub> casas<sub>f.pl</sub> rojas<sub>f.pl</sub> [p. 120 (148)]  
 ‘These small red houses’

These facts concerning agreement of phi-features are explained assuming the feature-valuation hypothesis developed by Pesetsky & Torrego (2007) and Frampton & Gutmann (2000). Overt morphological agreement is the result of the application of the formal operation *Agree*, according to which any unvalued feature (be it interpretable or not) acts as a Probe seeking a valued instance of the same feature in its c-commanding domain (a Goal), from which it takes its own value. Every feature must receive a value in some syntactic location before spell-out so as not to cause the derivation to crash. The result of the operation *Agree* is that a single feature is shared by several positions within the derivation. In this proposal, valuation and interpretability of features are independent properties (uninterpretable/valued features and interpretable/unvalued features are legitimate objects).

Within this theory, the differences between ABS and st.Sp. are triggered by

- a) the different featural composition of some syntactic categories in each dialect: e.g. adjectives lack phi-features in ABS, the masculine singular morphology they show being a by-default marking, but they have uninterpretable unvalued gender and number features in st.Sp.
- b) the different feature valuation of certain categories in each dialect: e.g. Num has an interpretable unvalued number feature in st.Sp., thus agreeing with the noun (which shows number morphology), while it has an interpretable valued number feature in ABS, since the noun lacks a number feature in this dialect (all nouns show singular morphology).

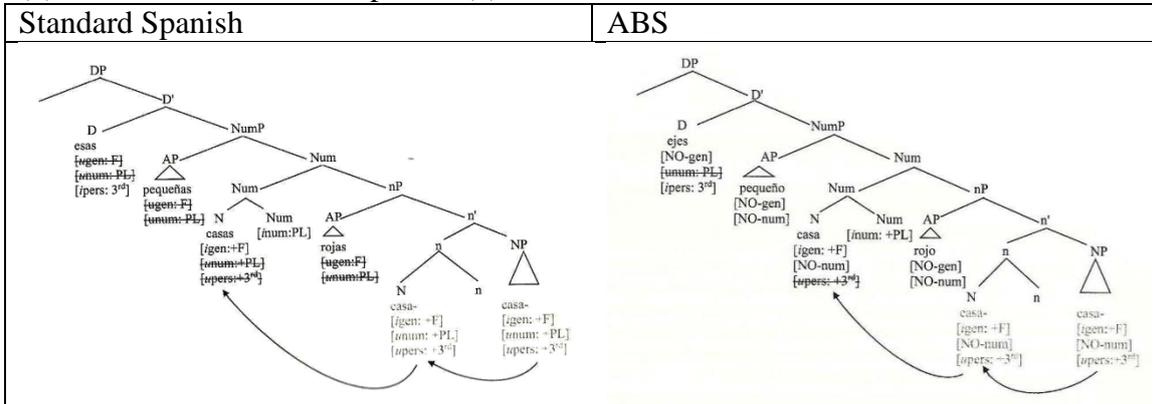
Specifically, the different feature composition/specification of the DP internal categories in st.Sp. and ABS in the examples in (4) above are displayed in table (5). The complete derivation of the sentences in both varieties is offered in (6) (p. 119 (147), p. 121 (149), respectively).

(5) [*u*: semantically uninterpretable; *i*: semantically interpretable]

st.Sp.	D [u gen: ____] [u num: ____] [i pers: ____]	Num [i num: ____]	A [u gen: ____] [u num: ____]	N <i>casa</i> [i gen: +F] [u num: +PL] [u pers: +3 <sup>rd</sup> ]
ABS	D	Num	A	N <i>casa</i>

	[NO-gen] [u num: ____] [i pers: ____]	[i num: +PL]	[NO-gen] [NO-num]	[i gen: +F] [NO-num] [u pers: +3 <sup>rd</sup> ]
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(6) Derivation of the examples in (4)



In sum, in traditional ABS, DP elements lack many of the unvalued uninterpretable features encountered on their st.Sp. counterparts. Such a deficiency results in default morphological realizations. Thus, the *Agree* operation is universal, cross-dialectal variations being due to differences in the lexicon.

Finally, Chapter 8 (*Variation in the Determiner Phrase*) analyzes variable number and gender agreement marking across the ABS Determiner Phrase. According to the author, the reason for this synchronic variability is that after 1952 (the year of the Land Reform) black Bolivians acquired the right to receive public education. This, together with the higher degree of mobility progressively achieved by black Bolivians, provoked a gradual decrease in use of what could be called the “traditional dialect”, which has implied a systematic replacement of stigmatized basilectal ABS features with more prestigious standard Bolivian Spanish ones. With respect to gender and number agreement, the transition from the traditional agreement system to the st.Sp. one follows a specific pattern. Although there are no diachronic data available, this pattern can be observed synchronically by analyzing the behavior of different age-groups, as demonstrated by the qualitative data obtained from interviews to speakers belonging to three different generations (21-50, 51-80, 80+), and quantitative cross-generational statistical analyses (VARBRUL). The transition consists of the introduction of a wider range of agreement configurations differing from the most basilectal one described in chapter 7. The following chart, (7), shows the relation between belonging to a specific age-group and agreement patterns shown in particular grammatical categories (< indicates earlier development and increased frequency).

(7)

Demonstratives/Determiners > Weak Quantifiers > Pre-nominal Adj. > Strong Quantifiers > Post-nominal Adj.

80+	51-80	21-50
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Interestingly, this pattern of development is also found in the acquisition of second languages. From a formal point of view, this phenomenon is analyzed as the emergence and development of unvalued features on elements that previously were not specified for them. ABS would thus appear to be developing *morphological doublets*, that is,

alternating lexical entries differing only in their uninterpretable feature specification, which are diachronically unstable. Age and education would be external factors affecting the item selection. The order in which lexical categories are affected by this process of feature re-specification (i.e. underspecification with respect to their L1 value and specification of a new L2 value, L1 and L2 being different stages of development of the dialect in this case) is determined by locality constraints related to their respective syntactic position with respect to N within the DP structure (*The Local Agreement Gradience Function*).

In conclusion, on one hand, this book offers new data about Afro-Bolivian Spanish and describes in detail the syntax of the DP projection in this specific Afro-Hispanic contact variety. The book sets new data paradigms which are extremely valuable for the study of variation within formal linguistics, specifically if we take consider that many of these data are judged ungrammatical in most Spanish dialects, including Standard Spanish. Moreover, the book establishes an innovative dialogue between formal syntactic theory and sociolinguistic variationist approaches to properly characterize the morphosyntactic facts under study, combining sociolinguistic techniques of data collection with generative models of data analysis. On the other hand, the book offers very up-to-date theoretical explanations (grounded on a microparametric (generative) syntactic model) to account for the main morphosyntactic facts characterizing the Determiner Phrase in Afro-Bolivian Spanish and for the microvariation found in this dialect within this syntactic domain.

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