

CHAPTER 9

Afro-Bolivian Spanish: the survival of a true creole prototype

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This study analyzes data on a unique Afro-Hispanic dialect, spoken in remote areas of Bolivia by descendents of Africans who arrived in the 16th century. Afro-Bolivian speech, now confined to the oldest members of a few isolated communities, has preserved configurations that demonstrate the feasibility of early creolization of Spanish in independent locations. The present investigation concentrates on the Afro-Bolivian VP and DP: quasi-invariant verbs; incipient particle-based verbal system; null definite articles; lack of gender concord; stripped and invariant plurals. There exists a series of unidirectional implicational relationships that span the range from the basilect to the acrolect, and which provide a template for gradual decreolization based on relative markedness and ease of language processing.

1. Introduction

In creole studies the notion of “simplification”, while all-pervasive, rarely acquires an empirically grounded definition. In particular the manner in which Ibero-Romance verbal, nominal, and adjectival morphosyntax becomes transformed into creole paradigms such as those found in Palenquero, Papiamentu, Cape Verdean and São Tomé creole Portuguese has not been satisfactorily explained. Although all of these creole languages have eliminated Spanish and Portuguese morphological agreement in favor of invariant forms, occasional fossil remains of fully agreeing combinations suggest a gradual step-wise restructuring. One of the most significant obstacles in reconstructing the formation of Romance-derived creole languages and their implications for general theories of creolization is time depth: there is little reliable information on the earliest stages of creolization and restructuring, and there are no contemporary configurations containing enough remnants of the first stages of the “big bang” of creole formation to provide corroborative

data. This is nowhere more evident than in the case of creoles arising from the contact between Spanish and a variety of African languages, of which the remaining specimens are few and of debatable origins.

There is considerable historical, literary, and folkloric evidence that the speech of Africans who acquired Spanish as a second language (known as *bozales*) existed over a large enough territory and in some regions for sufficient time as to have produced at least significantly restructured varieties of “Afro-Spanish”, if not fully developed creole languages (Lipksi 2005). Many of the linguistic features of these imitations are typical of all learners of Spanish: unstable subject-verb and noun-adjective agreement, use of disjunctive object pronouns instead of clitics, confusion of the copulas *ser* and *estar*, misuse of common prepositions, and avoidance of grammatically complex sentences containing subordinate clauses. Other traits are not common in learners’ Spanish but are found in Afro-Iberian creoles and probably represent the influence of African areal features: prenasalized consonants, paragogic vowels used to produce open CV syllables, *in situ* questions, double negation, and use of adverbial particles instead of verbal inflection for tense, mood and aspect. Finally, many of the literary imitations are simply grotesque racist parodies, devoid of any resemblance to the true results of Afro-Hispanic language contacts.

Central to the debate over the reconstruction of *bozal* language is the extent to which this pidginized Spanish speech exhibited consistent traits across time and space, and the possibility that Afro-Hispanic pidgins may have creolized across large areas of Spanish America. The abundant bibliography of studies based on corpora of literary, musical, and folkloric texts has broadened the discussion to include a wide range of hypotheses and scenarios, but ultimately the texts in question are imitations or recollections produced by non-*bozal* authors, and therefore of debatable validity. Little contemporary evidence has survived the transition from *bozal* language to ethnically unmarked regional varieties of Spanish. There exist several isolated Afro-Hispanic speech communities throughout Latin America where traces of apparently post-*bozal* Spanish coexist with regional vernacular varieties. In most cases deviations from standard Spanish are limited to occasional lapses of agreement not found among monolingual Spanish speakers lacking the former *bozal* connection. In a few cases words or grammatical elements once found in *bozal* speech have survived, but more robust evidence is still needed in order expand the empirical bases for discussion beyond literary imitations.

2. The traditional Afro-Bolivian dialect of the Yungas

Previously unknown to linguists and even to most neighboring citizens, a unique Afro-Hispanic speech community survives in Bolivia's most remote valleys. To a greater extent than any Afro-Hispanic variety studied to date, this community exhibits enough apparent continuations of early colonial *bozal* Spanish as to attempt a reasonable reconstruction of this set of contact vernaculars. In its most basilectal form—now confined to a tiny group of the oldest residents—this Afro-Bolivian dialect offers a blueprint for the formation of Afro-Hispanic contact language throughout the Americas. Highland Bolivia, known in colonial times as Alto Perú [upper Peru], then the Audiencia de Charcas, was the site of the earliest massive importation of African slaves in Spanish America.¹ In Potosí, Bolivia, at the time the world's richest silver mine, African slaves primarily worked in the royal mint (*casa de la moneda*) and as domestic servants; the actual mining was done by indigenous workers. A small collection of songs and indirect descriptions of Africans' dances and language from the 17th century survives as testimony of a much larger cultural patrimony (Lipski 1994, 1995a). Ultimately, the population of African descent blended into the overwhelmingly mestizo (mixture of European and Amerindian) nation, and today only a tiny fraction of the national population is obviously of African origin.

Most contemporary Afro-Bolivians live in scattered communities in the provinces of Nor Yungas and Sud Yungas, in the department of La Paz, surrounding the capital city. The Yungas are tropical valleys no more than 3000 feet above sea level, surrounded by some of the most forbidding mountain terrain in all of South America, with peaks reaching more than 15,000 feet. The torturous terrain, nearly vertical geography, lack of adequate roads and other infrastructure, and frequent mud and rock slides, has cut off the Yungas communities from the rest of Bolivian society. Most communities are less than 150 miles from La Paz, but to reach even the closest settlements one must travel upwards of six hours in crowded and decrepit vehicles along a one-lane muddy mountain road with steep drop-offs and no guard rails. The region is principally inhabited by an Aymara-speaking indigenous population, while the Afro-Bolivians live in scattered houses on the mountainsides, in the most precarious conditions and without electricity, running water or sanitary installations. As a result of the social and geographic isolation, residents of the Yungas communities have retained cultural and linguistic traits that have faded from more populated urban areas. Black Yungueños in Sud Yungas have frequently intermarried with Aymaras, speak Aymara and wear traditional Aymara clothing. In the Nor Yungas communities, where Afro-Bolivian speech still survives and

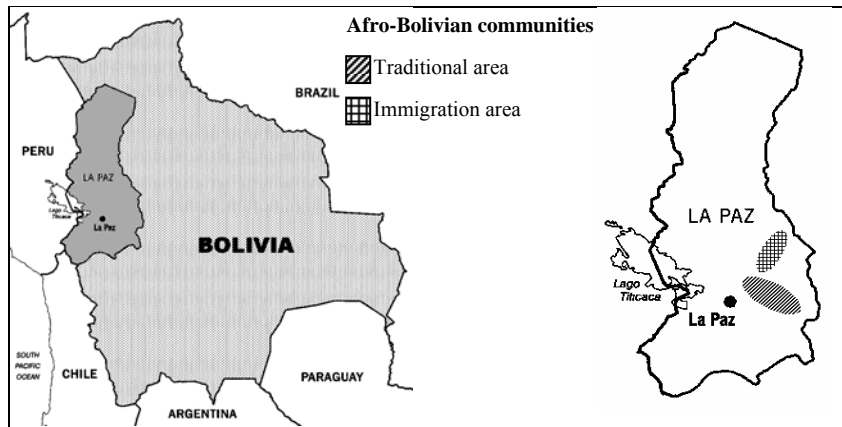
where the present research was conducted, black Bolivians remain linguistically and culturally separate from Aymaras; they learn enough Aymara to function efficiently in the Aymara-dominant local markets, but maintain a completely separate life style through networks of extended families. In the remainder of this study the term Afro-Yungueño will be used; Afro-Bolivians in general have no word for themselves or their unique dialect, other than the ubiquitous and racist *negro* and *moreno*.

The origin of the black population in the Bolivian Yungas is not known with certainty. They almost certainly descend from the slave population originally working in the highland mining towns. The first documentation of black slaves in the Yungas comes at the end of the 18th century and by the middle of the 19th century the use of black slave labor on the plantations or *haciendas* of the Yungas was well established. Nowadays, Afro-Bolivians in the Yungas occupy (usually as squatters) tiny parcels of land that once belonged to large haciendas. Prior to the land reform that came with the Bolivian revolution of 1952, they worked as peons on these same haciendas. The regional African origins of modern Afro-Bolivians are uncertain, since by the turn of the 17th century, when the importation of African slaves to the mining regions reached its peak, Portuguese slave dealers that supplied Spanish colonies were drawing their slaves from across West Africa, from Senegambia down to the Congo/Angola region. Only the African surnames Angola and Maconde (apparently of Kongo origin) persist in the Yungas. These surnames were given by ship captains and slave dealers, but typically approximate the coastal African areas from which the respective slaves were drawn. There are no religious or cultural practices that allow for a more precise reconstruction of the various regional African influences that permeated the colonial slave trade.

The most important Nor Yungas communities containing high concentrations of Afro-Bolivians, and where the traditional dialect still can be heard, are Tocaña, Mururata, Chijchipa, Coscoma, Dorado Chico, and Khala Khala. In Sud Yungas the principal black community is Chicaloma, with black Bolivians scattered in many neighboring settlements. Only a few of the traditional dialect traits are heard in Sud Yungas and in the remaining Afro-Bolivian settlements. All contemporary Afro-Yungueños speak rustic highland Bolivian Spanish (known locally as *castellano*), whose sociolinguistic features vary according to level of education and contact with other areas of Bolivia. Most older Afro-Yungueños in the Nor Yungas settlements mentioned above have at least passive competence in the Afro-Bolivian dialect; an undetermined but evidently shrinking number have total active fluency. Most younger community residents disavow any knowledge of this

dialect, evidently associating the traditional speech with the illiteracy and degradation of the pre-1952 plantation environment. However, observation of these closely-knit extended families suffices to demonstrate the considerable passive competence in the traditional dialect possessed by all community residents. It is impossible to estimate the number of fluent speakers of the Afro-Yungueño dialect, but full active competence is probably limited to at most a few hundred individuals, possible even fewer. The maps in Figure 1 show the relative location of the Afro-Yungueño communities.

Figure 1. Map of principal Afro-Bolivian communities



In order to obtain extensive samples of Afro-Bolivian Spanish, field work was conducted in June, 2004, August, 2005, October 2005, and August, 2006.² Accompanied by Lic. Juan Angola Maconde, a native of Dorado Chico and the author of the only major study on contemporary Afro-Bolivian culture (Angola Maconde 2000), interviews and recordings were made in Coroico, Arapata, Coripata, Coscoma, Khala Khala, Dorado Chico, Dorado Grande, Tocaña, Mururata, and Chijchipa in the province of Nor Yungas, as well as Chicaloma in the province of Sud Yungas. I would like to express my profound gratitude to this remarkable intellectual, writer, activist, and friend. Sincere thanks are also due to Antonia Pinedo Zalles of Mururata, a remarkable activist and voluntary literacy teacher in that community. During these initial field studies, a total of fifty five Afro-Yungueños were interviewed, men and women, with ages ranging from 35 to 92.

3. Overview of traditional Afro-Yungueño speech

The Afro-Bolivian dialect differs from other highland Bolivian dialects in terms of segmental and suprasegmental phonology. It also differs from all other monolingual varieties of Spanish worldwide in the structure of DPs and VPs, both of which exhibit morphosyntactic reduction suggestive of Afro-Hispanic restructured language. The phonetic differences are immediately apparent as Afro-Bolivians shift seamlessly between colloquial highland Bolivian Spanish and their own unique dialect. Highland Bolivian Spanish belongs to the Andean dialect cluster, and is characterized by strong sibilant pronunciation of syllable- and word-final /s/ (e.g. *hasta* [ásta] ‘until’, by the groove fricative realization of the multiple trill phoneme /rr/ (*carro* [káʒo] ‘car’), and assibilation of word-final /r/ (*comer* [komé.ɾ] ‘to eat’), by retention of the palatal lateral phoneme /ʎ/ (*calle* [káʎe] ‘street’), and by devoicing and shortening of atonic vowels, especially those in contact with /s/ (*presidente* [presⁱðénte] ‘president’). In the Afro-Bolivian dialect final /s/ is either aspirated or lost, a feature found in eastern (lowland) Bolivian dialects as well as throughout the Caribbean and southern Spain (*entonces* [entónse(h)] ‘then’). Word-final /r/ usually drops (*mujer* [muhé] ‘woman’), and is completely absent in all verbal infinitives (*hablar* [aβlá] ‘to speak’). The palatal lateral phoneme /ʎ/ has merged with /y/ (a phenomenon known as *yeísmo*), as in much of the rest of the Spanish-speaking world (*llover* [yoβé] ‘to rain’). Unlike in the highland Bolivian dialect, atonic vowels are not reduced, and stressed vowels are frequently elongated far in excess of the duration found in other Spanish dialects. These elongated stressed vowels are accompanied by a striking circumflex intonation (sharply rising and falling contours on the stressed syllable, with pitch change of up to an octave) entirely unlike patterns found in other Latin American dialects. Afro-Bolivian speech makes its greatest contribution to the reconstruction of early *bozal* Spanish contact dialects in the restructured DPs and VPs, since it is here that one can observe patterns that deviate from all other contemporary and historically documented varieties of Spanish.

3.1 The Afro-Yungueño DP

3.1.1 Lack of gender agreement

In the quintessential Afro-Yungueño DP, at least five phenomena distinguish these configurations from patrimonial Spanish dialects: (1) lack of noun-adjective gender agreement; (2) invariant plurals, that is, no

plural suffixes on nouns, adjectives, or determiners; (3) use of a single invariant definite article; (4) elimination of definite articles in generic constructions; (5) “stripped plurals”, i.e. the retention of plural /s/ only on the first element of plural DP. Given more than 400 years of constant contact with standard Spanish, the Afro-Bolivian dialect does not always exhibit restructured DPs in their pure form (with all five points of divergence from modern Spanish), but enough examples of each remain in contemporary speech to allow for a reasonable extrapolation. The gender and number marking in the Afro-Bolivian DP represent the most consistent deviation from other varieties of Spanish and constitute a link to the time when *bozal* pidginized Spanish was in use.

In all dialects of Spanish, all elements of a DP agree in gender and number; masculine gender is typically marked by the suffix *-o* and feminine gender with *-a*, although many nouns and adjectives end in *-e* or a consonant, in which case gender marking is opaque. In the Afro-Yungueño basilect, lack of gender concordance is always manifested by the masculine gender, the most frequent and presumably unmarked form in Spanish. In the basilect there is no gender concord at all; the Spanish masculine form combines with masculine determiners such as *el* (singular) and *lu(s)* (plural and sometimes singular). In the decreolizing contemporary speech lapses in gender agreement co-occur with correct gender concord, with and without plural concord, but when lapses occur it is always the masculine form that prevails. Actually recorded examples include the following (modern Spanish equivalents are in square brackets, with the relevant morphological endings underlined):

- (1) *loh* *persona* *mayó* [*las personas mayores*]
 ART.PL person older
 ‘the older people’
- camisa* *blanco* [*camisas blancas*]
 shirt white.M.SG
 ‘white shirts’
- hartos* *viuda* [*hartas viudas*]
 many.M.PL widow
 ‘many widows’
- unos* *quince mula* [*unas quince mulas*]
 some.M.PL fifteen mule
 ‘fifteen mules’
- nuestro* *cultura* *antigo* [*nuestra cultura antigua*]
 our.M.SG culture old.M.SG
 ‘our old culture’

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|------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>ese</i> | <i>mujé</i> | [<i>esa mujer</i>] |
| DEM.M.SG | woman | |
| ‘that wife’ | | |
| <i>otro</i> | <i>cosa</i> | [<i>otra cosa</i>] |
| other.M.SG | thing | |
| ‘another thing’ | | |
| <i>algunos</i> | <i>enfermedá</i> | [<i>algunas enfermedades</i>] |
| some.M.PL | illness | |
| ‘some illnesses’ | | |

These examples demonstrate that plural marking is more robust than gender marking, but that both may disappear in Afro-Bolivian speech.

3.1.2 Stripped and invariant plurals

All varieties of Spanish maintain morphological signaling of the distinction singular-plural, although erosion of final and intervocalic consonants may lead to non-canonical combinations.³ The widespread loss of word-final consonants, e.g. in rustic dialects of southern Spain, often leads to phonological restructuring in vernacular speech, resulting in the loss of canonical plural endings: *árbo* < *árbol* [*árboles*] ‘trees’; *re* < *res* [*reses*] ‘cows’; etc. (Carrasco Cantos 1981: 99; Salvador Plans 1987: 40). In Afro-Iberian creole languages nouns and adjectives remain invariable, in a form derived from the singular (and in the case of adjectives the masculine gender); when pluralization must be indicated it is by means of established plural markers (e.g. the postposed 3rd person plural pronoun *nan* in Papiamentu, the preposed plural particle *ma* in Palenquero). In Afro-Bolivian speech not only does the frequent elision of word-final /s/ obliterate overt plural marking in nouns and adjectives for which this morpheme is the only indication of plurality, but plural marking also disappears in nouns and adjectives ending in consonants, for which the usual Spanish plural allomorph *-es* is required. The end result is a complete suspension of plural marking in nouns and adjectives. Examples of invariant plurals include:

- (2) *lu peón* < *los peones* ‘the peasants’
lu mujé < *las mujeres* ‘the women’
persona mayó < *personas mayores* ‘older people’
algunos enfermedá < *algunas enfermedades* ‘some illnesses’
lu profesor < *los profesores* ‘the teachers’
tres real [< *reales*] ‘three reales [a small coin]’

In what appears to be partially decreolized evolutionary step past the complete lack of overt plural marking, the traditional Afro-Yungueño DP

at times presents an alternative form of plural marking that separates it from all contemporary and most historically attested Afro-Hispanic dialects and brings it closer to vernacular Brazilian (including Helvécia; Lipski 2006b) and Angolan Portuguese (Lipski 1995b): marking of plural /s/ on only the first element (usually a determiner) of plural DPs. This form of plural-marking is not found in any European Portuguese dialect, and is one of the features that form the basis for theories that basilectal Brazilian Portuguese is a semicreole formed through contact with African languages during the colonial period. Typical Afro-Yungueño examples include:

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| (3) | <i>esos</i> | <i>fiesta</i> | | [<i>esos fiestas</i>] |
| | DEM.M.PL | party | | |
| | ‘those parties’ | | | |
| | <i>luh</i> | <i>guagua</i> | <i>jóven</i> | [<i>los guaguas jóvenes</i>] |
| | ART.M.PL | child | young.SG | |
| | ‘the young children’ | | | |
| | <i>algunos</i> | <i>cosa</i> | | [<i>algunas cosas</i>] |
| | some.M.PL | thing | | |
| | ‘some things’ | | | |
| | <i>personah</i> | <i>mayó</i> | | [<i>personas mayores</i>] |
| | person.PL | older.SG | | |
| | ‘older people’ | | | |
| | <i>unas</i> | <i>muñeca</i> | | [<i>muñecas</i>] |
| | some.F.PL | statue | | |
| | ‘some statues’ | | | |

Occasional examples of similar constructions have been found in the Afro-Hispanic dialects of the Chota Valley in highland Ecuador (Lipski 1986a) and in the Chocó regional of Colombia (Caicedo 1977, 1992), as well as among the L2 Spanish speakers of Equatorial Guinea (Lipski 1985), but never in systematic fashion. In the Afro-Yungueño dialect “stripped plurals” are not as frequent as in vernacular Brazilian Portuguese but they occur often enough to be considered a legitimate feature of this dialect. Marking plural /s/ on the first element of DPs has been a component of Afro-Iberian language at least since the late 16th century, and several clear examples are found in early 17th century Portuguese texts. The first unequivocal examples of stripped plural DPs in Spanish come in the *villancicos* or Christmas carols written by the Spanish nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in Mexico in the late 17th century. These songs are written in *bozal* Spanish and purport to represent the

speech of African slaves newly arrived in the Americas. The poems contain several instances of stripped plurals, such as:

- (4) *las* *Leina* [*las reinas*]
 ART.F.PL queen
 ‘the queens’
- estos* *Parre Mercenaria* [*estos padres mercenarios*]
 DEM.M.PL priest mercenary.F.SG
 ‘these mercenary priests’
- los* *demonho* [*los demonios*]
 ART.M.PL demon
 ‘the demons’
- lus* *nenglu* [*los negros*]
 ART.M.PL black.M.SG
 ‘the blacks’
- turo* *las* *Negla* [*todas las negras*]
 all.M.SG the.F.PL black.F.SG
 ‘all the black women’

Among varieties of contemporary Portuguese, in addition to occurring in vernacular Brazilian and Angolan Portuguese, stripped plural DPs have been documented for the vestigial Portuguese of Macau, the last decreolized vestiges of the formerly vigorous Portuguese-derived creole spoken in Macau and Hong Kong. In earlier times, pluralization of nouns was effected by simple reduplication: *chino-chino* ‘Chinese.PL’, *coisa-coisa* ‘things’, etc. This was eventually replaced by an DP in which plural /s/ was marked only on the first determiner (Batalha 1974: 10):

- (5) *as* *casa* [*as casas*]
 ART.F.PL house
 ‘the houses’
- três pataca* [*três patacas*]
 three pataca
 ‘three patacas’ [monetary units]
- dois mão* [*dois mãos*]
 two hand
 ‘two hands’

Similar stripped plurals were attested for the pidginized Spanish spoken by Chinese contract laborers in 19th century Cuba (Lipski 1998c, 1999b), many of whom learned Spanish from African-born *bozales*, Papiamentu-speaking laborers from Curaçao, and other creole-speaking cane-cutters.

Naro (1998) has presented evidence of very occasional lapses of subject-verb agreement in contemporary and earlier European Portuguese, but never involving the first-person singular. Comparative evidence from historical reproductions of *bozal* Spanish, and from contemporary L₂ varieties and vestigial or semi-speaker varieties of Spanish (Lipski 1986c, 1996b), as well as from the first stages of Spanish child language, confirm the unmarked status of the 3s. verb form (Bybee Hooper 1980; Bybee 1985). The Spanish of Equatorial Guinea and the Portuguese of Angola also make frequent use of the 3.SG as invariant verb, although the respective metropolitan languages are the official standard. Early child language in both Spanish and Portuguese also favors the 3.SG as the unmarked form (Simões 1976: 47; Simões and Stoel-Gammon 1979).

Unlike vestigial, L₂, and literary examples, in the basilectal Afro-Yungueño dialect use of the 3.SG as default invariant verb is categorical, not occasional. Some spontaneously produced examples are:

- (7) *nojotro* *tiene* [*tenemos*] *jrutita*
 1.PL have.3.SG fruit.DIMIN
 ‘we have fruit’
- yo no entiende* [*entiendo*] *eso*
 1.SG NEG understand.3.SG that
 ‘I don’t understand that’
- yo creció* [*crecí*] *junto con Angelino*
 1.SG grew.3.SG together with Angelino
 ‘I grew up with Angelino’
- nojotro creció* [*crecimos*] *loh do*
 1.PL grew.3.SG ART.M.PL two
 ‘the two of us grew up’
- ello salía* [*salían*] *mi avisá*
 3.PL leave.3.SG 1.SG warn.INF
 ‘they came to warn me’
- ¿de qué nojotro pobre va* [*vamos*] *viví?*
 of what 1.PL poor.SG go.3.SG live.INF
 ‘What are we poor folks going to live on?’
- nojotro trabajaba* [*trabajábamos*] *hacienda*
 1.PL work.3.SG hacienda
 ‘we worked on the haciendas’
- lo patrón siempre tenía* [*tenían*] *partera*
 ART.M.PL owner always had.3.SG midwife
 ‘the landowners always had midwives’

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| <i>leña</i> | <i>no</i> | <i>cargaba</i> | <i>como</i> | <i>nojotro</i> |
| firewood | NEG | carried.3.SG | like | 1.PL. |
| <i>cargaba</i> [<i>cargábamos</i>] | | | | |
| carried.3.SG | | | | |
| ‘[nobody] carried firewood like we carried firewood’ | | | | |
| <i>yo</i> | <i>sí</i> | <i>lo</i> | <i>carga</i> [<i>cargo</i>] | |
| 1.SG | yes | it.M.SG | load.3.SG | |
| ‘I really do load [the coca]’ | | | | |
| <i>lo</i> | <i>que</i> | <i>nojotro</i> | <i>ta</i> [<i>estamos</i>] | <i>hablando</i> |
| that.SGCOMP | | 1.PL | AUX.3.SG | speaking |
| ‘What we’re talking about’ | | | | |
| <i>para</i> | <i>ele</i> | <i>e</i> | <i>extraño</i> | <i>como</i> |
| for | 3.SG | be.SG | strange | how |
| | | | | 1.PL |
| <i>habla</i> [<i>hablamos</i>] | | | | |
| speak.3.SG | | | | |
| ‘for him it’s strange the way we talk’ | | | | |
| <i>nojotro</i> | <i>no</i> | <i>sabía</i> [<i>sabíamos</i>] | <i>nada</i> | |
| 1.PL | NEG | knew.3.SG | nothing | |
| ‘we didn’t know anything’ | | | | |
| <i>qué</i> | <i>día</i> | <i>yo</i> | <i>va</i> | <i>í</i> [<i>voy a ir</i>] |
| what | day | 1.SG | go.3.SG | go.INF |
| ‘what day I’m going to go’ | | | | |

3.2.2 Possible combinations of *ta* + INFINITIVE

One of the most controversial issues in the study of Afro-Iberian language is the possible monogenesis of Afro-Romance creoles. A key feature of such a putative creole would be a verb system based on preverbal TMA particles combined with invariant verb stems derived from the infinitive. The various proposals are summarized and analyzed in Lipski (1986b, 1987, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996a, 1998a, 1999a, 2002a). Ziegler (1976) and later Castellanos (1990) offer grammatical sketches of what such a *bozal*-derived creole grammar would look like, based on Afro-Cuban examples taken from literary and folkloric texts. A key feature of this putative Spanish creole is a VP based on the imperfective or progressive particle *ta* (presumably derived from Spanish/Portuguese *estar*), a common denominator found in all Spanish- and Portuguese-derived creoles worldwide. The existence of the particle *ta* in all creoles derived from Spanish and Portuguese has lent considerable support to monogenetic theories based on the notion of a pidginized Portuguese “reconnaissance language” (e.g. as in Naro 1978: 342).⁴ However, despite the presence of *ta*

or its congeners among Ibero-Romance creoles, major differences in the use of *ta* among these creoles suggest multiple routes of evolution.

In the pre-19th century Spanish *bozal* corpus, there are no examples of *ta* or *está(r)* used with an invariable verb stem in a fashion suggestive of its use as a preverbal particle, contrary to the proposal of Naro (1978). However, the 19th century Cuban *bozal* corpus provides a different panorama, with some apparent instances of *ta* as an aspectual particle. This has led to claims that Cuban *bozal* Spanish became a true creole, sharing with Palenquero and Papiamentu (and with Cape Verdian) an earlier Afro-Lusitanian heritage (e.g. Meggenney 1984):

- (8) *como que yo ta cuchá la*
 like COMP 1.SG AUX.3.SG hear.INF ART.F.SG
gente yo ta mirá gente mucho
 people 1.SG AUX.3.SG look.INF people much
 ‘Since I’ve heard the people I look at people a lot’
 (Manuel Cabrera Paz, “Exclamaciones de un negro”; Guirao 1938)
- yo ta robá un gaína*
 1.SG AUX.3.SG steal.INF one.M.SG hen
jabá
 spotted.F.SG
 ‘I stole a spotted hen’ (Cabrera 1976)
- horita ta bení pa cá*
 now AUX.3.SG come.INF for here
 ‘Now (she) is coming here’
 (Ignacio Villa, “Drumi, Mobila”; Guirao 1938)
- ta juí, ta pujá mí*
 AUX.3.SG flee.INF AUX.3.SG push.INF 1.SG
 ‘(he) flees, (he) pushes me’ (Suárez y Romero 1947)
- primero ta llorá na má*
 first AUX.3.SG cry.INF nothing more
 ‘First (she) cries no more’ (Santa Cruz 1908)

In the Afro-Caribbean literary examples, *ta* typically combines with an invariant stem derived from the Spanish infinitive lacking final /r/, an established phonetic reduction which began as early as the 16th century (Lipski 1995a). A probable source for some instances of *ta* in Afro-Cuban texts is Papiamentu, which was present in 19th century Cuba and Puerto Rico as thousands of sugar cane cutters were taken from other Caribbean islands during the sugar plantation boom (Lipski 1993, 1996a, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 2002a). Pockets of Papiamentu speakers are documented for Cuba and Puerto Rico, and other Papiamentu elements

penetrated Afro-Cuban Spanish.⁵ Adding to the plausibility that the Afro-Cuban instances of *ta* are due to language contact is the virtually complete absence of such constructions in the many other Afro-Hispanic corpora from Latin America. This proposal does not completely invalidate the monogenetic hypothesis, since the presence of the particle *ta* in Afro-Cuban texts could in principle stem from an earlier Portuguese-derived creole, twice-removed from Caribbean Spanish via the intermediate stage of Papiamentu. The search must be extended to instances of *ta* as putative preverbal particle in circumstances in which relexification of a Portuguese-derived creole is unlikely.

Outside of Cuba and Puerto Rico, *ta* used as putative verbal particle in Afro-Hispanic speech makes only a few ghost appearances, none of which holds up robustly under closer scrutiny. Tompkins (1981: 311) cites an older Afro-Peruvian informant in Cañete, who recalled a line from an old song: *Lima ta hablar y Cañete ta pondé* ‘Lima speaks and Cañete responds.’ My own fieldwork in the same region (conducted in 2003) failed to uncover any recollection of this song, or other attestations of *ta* used as particle in Afro-Peruvian speech or song (the informant who had provided the quotation to Tompkins was deceased). This suggests that at least some creoloid verb forms may have occasionally surfaced in Afro-Peruvian speech, although apparently never coalescing into a consistent pattern. In her analysis of vestigial Spanish in Trinidad, Moodie (n.y.) uncovered one instance of what she believes to be a creoloid construction with *ta*: *la esposa cuasi ta olvidá el español* ‘his wife is almost forgetting Spanish’. According to Moodie this combination is very infrequent in the speech of even the oldest community members. Moodie’s putative *ta* example may be the result of phonetic erosion not only of forms of the verb *estar* to *ta* (frequent in all colloquial varieties of Caribbean Spanish), but also of the gerund, which accompanies *estar* in progressive constructions: *está hablando* > *[es]tá hablá[ndo]* ‘is talking.3.SG’. Vestigial Trinidad Spanish has many other examples of the erosion of final syllables (Moodie 1986; Lipski 1990).

Another possible instance of the construction *ta* + INFINITIVE found outside of Cuba appears in an enigmatic *bozal* poem by the Panamanian writer Víctor Franceschi (1956: 30):

- | | | | |
|-----|-------|---|--|
| (9) | [...] | Si te pica por allá, cuando tu <i>tá</i> tlabajá yo te puee asegurá que tu vaj a recordá lo que mama <i>tá</i> avertí ... | if it bites you there when you are working I can assure you that you will remember what your mother warned you |
|-----|-------|---|--|

The construction *tú tá tlabajá* ‘you work’ and *mama tá avertí* ‘mother warns you’ are the only known literary examples of the construction *ta* + INFINITIVE outside of Cuba and Puerto Rico.

In Afro-Yungueño Spanish TMA particles are not a usual part of the VP. However, the basilectal Afro-Yungueño dialect occasionally allows, in rapid speech, for constructions based on the auxiliary verb *estar* (usually reduced to invariant *ta* in casual speech) plus what has the superficial appearance of be the Spanish infinitive (lacking the final /r/ as in all Afro-Yungueño speech), instead of the usual gerund ending in *-ando* or *-iendo*. Recorded examples from the Afro-Yungueño corpus include:

- (10) *yo tá vení [estoy viniendo] di*
 1.SG AUX.3.SG come.INF from
tal parte
 such place
 ‘I’m coming from such and such a place’
- nojotro tá hablá [estamos hablando] bien*
 1.PL AUX.3.SG speak.INF well
 ‘we talk well’
- ¿qué oté tá tomá [está tomando]?*
 what 2.SG AUX.3.SG drink.INF
 ‘what are you drinking?’
- yo tá tomá [estoy tomando]*
 1.SG AUX.3.SG take.INF
mi plato
 my.M.SG plate
 ‘I am eating my food’
- ¿ande pue oté tá [estás yendo] í?*
 where then 2.SG AUX.3.SG go.INF
 ‘where are you going?’
- ¿qué oté tá hacé [estás haciendo]?*
 what 2.SG AUX.3.SG do.INF
 ‘what are you doing?’
- eje perro tá ladrá [está ladrando]*
 DEM.M.SG dog AUX.3.SG bark.INF
 ‘that dog is barking’

In the Afro-Bolivian corpus the appearance of *ta* + INVARIANT VERB is infrequent,⁶ but when explicitly queried on this combination, speakers of the Afro-Yungueño dialect do not consider it as a true component of their speech; when presented with specific examples extracted from the corpus all acknowledge the construction as possible. They view the use of *ta* +

VERB as a performance phenomenon, and indeed a comparison with the remainder of the Afro-Yungueño corpus points to phonetic erosion in rapid and unguarded speech as the locus of this construction, which is not an integral part of the dialect's verb system. This is amply demonstrated in the following fragment, from a man remembering how acquaintances greeted one another during chance encounters on the road:

- (11) *¿di ande pue compa ta viniendo?*
 from where then compadre AUX.3.SG come.GER
 'where are you coming from, compadre?'
yo ta vení [estoy viniendo] di mi casa
 I s AUX.3.SG come (inf.) from my house
 'I'm coming from my house'
¿ande pue compa ta indo?
 where then compadre AUX.3.SG go.GER
 'Where are you going, compadre?'

In this example *ta* combines with a rapidly pronounced gerund, which then erodes to a form similar to the infinitive, only to re-emerge as a full gerund a moment later.

The free alternation between progressive constructions with a fully realized gerund and eroded combinations that resemble the Spanish infinitive offers a model for how *ta* + INVARIANT VERB structures could arise spontaneously in emergent Afro-Iberian creole languages. The transitory performance nature of such configurations in Afro-Yungueño speech and the fact that the speakers themselves do not regard *ta* + INVARIANT VERB as the "correct" form precludes including the latter in a definitive genealogy of creole languages based on the use of the particle *ta*. The Afro-Bolivian data are in principle incompatible with the monogenetic hypothesis (although there is no convincing documentation that any form of Portuguese or Afro-Portuguese pidgin or creole language ever reached colonial Bolivia), but they do provide a scenario for multiple sources of the particle *ta*.

4. Decreolization and implicational relationships in Afro-Yungueño Spanish

The basilectal Afro-Yungueño dialect shows evidence of an early restructuring of Spanish in favor of simpler and morphologically less marked configurations. This supposition is supported by data on variation from the contemporary dialect. Given the gradual displacement of the

traditional Afro-Bolivian dialect by modern Bolivian Spanish over the past three generations, there is considerable morphosyntactic variation across generations and as a factor of exposure to standard Spanish. There are also regional isoglosses radiating outward from a geographical locus where the most basilectal variety is spoken. Both the regional and generational variation are systematic enough as to reveal unidirectional implicational relationships. Ranging from the most creole-like features to the least, the Afro-Bolivian implicational scale is as follows:

Table 1. Implicational relationships in Afro-Yungueño speech

| TRAIT | EXAMPLE |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 3.SG verb forms for 1.SG | → <i>yo va trabajá</i> ‘I’m going to work’ |
| 3.SG verb forms for 1.PL | → <i>nojotro va trabajá</i> ‘we’re going to work’ |
| 3.SG verb forms for 3.PL | → <i>eyu(s) va trabajá</i> ‘they are going to work’ |
| Invariant plural article <i>lu(s)</i> | → <i>lu(s) mujé</i> ‘the women’ |
| No gender concord in adjectives | → <i>esos fiesta</i> ‘those parties’ |
| Stripped plurals | → <i>algunos cosa</i> ‘some things’ |
| Invariant plurals | → <i>lu(s) patrón</i> ‘the landowners’ |

In other words speakers who exhibit a given trait will also use all the traits found lower on the chart (e.g. those who say *yo va trabajá* ‘I am going to work’ will also say *nojotro va trabajá* ‘we are going to work’, *lu(s) mujé* ‘the women’, *lu(s) patrón* ‘the landowners’), while features higher on the chart will be absent (there are, for example, speakers who say *lu(s) patrón* but not *lu(s) mujé*, *eyu(s) va trabajá* ‘they are going to work’, *nojotro va trabajá*, etc.). These implicational relationships provide robust evidence for the maximally unmarked status of the 3.SG form in Spanish⁷ (as opposed to the infinitive; Lipski 2002c) and to the masculine singular. An additional complication is found in the grammars of some mesolectal Afro-Yungueño speakers, who effect most cases of subject-verb agreement when there is a single main verb, but suspend agreement on auxiliary verbs, particular *ir* in the periphrastic future combination *ir (a) + INFINITIVE*, and in *estar + GERUND* progressive combinations. Examples include:

- (12) *¿de qué nojotro pobre va [vamos] viví?*
of what 1.PL poor.SG. go.3.SG live.INF
‘What are we poor folks going to live on?’
- lo que nojotro ta [estamos] hablando*
that COMP 1.PL AUX.3.SG speak.GER
este rato
DEM time
‘What we’re talking about right now’

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>qué</i> | <i>día</i> | <i>yo</i> | <i>va</i> | <i>í</i> | [<i>voy a ir</i>] |
| what | day | 1.SG | go.3.SG | go.INF | |
| ‘what day I’m going to go’ | | | | | |
| <i>eyo</i> | <i>va</i> | | <i>leé</i> | [<i>van a ler</i>] | |
| 3.PL | go.3.SG | | read.INF | | |
| ‘they are going to read’ | | | | | |
| <i>nojotro</i> | <i>va</i> | | <i>leé</i> | [<i>vamos a ler</i>] | |
| 1.PL | go.3.SG | | read.INF | | |
| ‘we are going to read’ | | | | | |

It is also more common to hear the 3.SG used instead of the 1st person singular in the preterit than in the present tense. Baxter, in Mello et al. (1998: 126-7) documents a similar tendency for Helvécia Portuguese semicreole.

In Afro-Yungueño Spanish (and judging by published examples also in Helvécia and Angolan Portuguese), gender agreement is suspended more frequently than number agreement, and in an implicational fashion. In other words, whereas an Afro-Bolivian speaker may produce combinations such as:

| | | | | |
|------|------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| (13) | <i>esos</i> | <i>hierba</i> | | [<i>esas hierbas</i>] |
| | DEM.M.PL | herb | | |
| | ‘those herbs’ | | | |
| | <i>algunos</i> | <i>enfermedá</i> | | [<i>algunas enfermedades</i>] |
| | some.M.PL | illness | | |
| | ‘some illnesses’ | | | |
| | <i>luh</i> | <i>persona</i> | <i>mayó</i> | [<i>las personas mayores</i>] |
| | ART.M.PL | person | older.SG | |
| | ‘the adults’ | | | |

in which number is marked (albeit only on the first element) but in which there is no gender marking, there are no observed configurations such as **esa hierba* for plural *esas hierbas*. From the perspective of restructuring under imperfect language acquisition and subsequent decreolization, this suggests that number features are acquired before gender features, and that in decreolization number features will spread to extended projections before gender features. This is not surprising in view of the fact that grammatical number marks a semantically prominent distinction (one versus many), whereas in Ibero-Romance grammatical gender concordance is almost always semantically empty. Even with semantically feminine nouns such as *mujer* ‘women’, *yegua* ‘mare’, *gallina* ‘hen’, the feminine gender markers attached to determiners and adjectives in the DP serve no semantic function. Only in cases of epicene gender—very rare in Spanish

and even less frequent in the daily discourse of the Bolivian Yungas and almost always identifiable through other discourse markers—does grammatical gender marking on determiners and adjectives serve to distinguish the gender of the noun: *el/la agente* ‘the agent[M./F.]’, *el/la estudiante* ‘the student[M./F.]’. Experimental studies demonstrate that processing of grammatical gender in the absence of conceptual/biological information about the sex of the object is more costly; i.e. the processing of gender in *la casa* ‘the house’ requires more processing time than for *la mujer* ‘the woman’ (e.g. Vigliocco and Franck 1999).⁸ The predominance of number over gender has been well documented cross-linguistically in first- and second-language acquisition as well as language impairments (e.g. De Vincenzi 1999; Di Domenico and De Vincenzi 1999; Eberhard 1997), and the decreolizing Afro-Bolivian data bear out this hierarchy. Moreover there is much cross-linguistic experimental evidence that production of grammatical gender in bare nouns requires additional processing time (e.g. Cubelli et al. 2005 for Italian; also Schriefers and Jescheniak 1999). In other words grammatical gender information is selected by the speaker whether or not “needed” for the utterance about to be produced. This occurs independently of the phonological form of the word, i.e. whether or not one of the canonical *-o/-a* endings is present. Cubelli et al. (2005: 52) analyze this result as “reflecting a competitive lexical selection due to an abstract grammatical gender feature rather than to the morphological or phonological similarity of [the relevant nouns]”. In addition, they state that

[...] to produce a given noun, the corresponding lexical-semantic and lexical-syntactic representations, specifying meaning and grammatical properties respectively, have to be selected before accessing its phonological form [...] the selection of semantic and grammatical features is conducted independently and [...] the selection of the lexical form of a given noun is achieved only when competition at both semantic and syntactic levels has been resolved. (ibid.: 53)

They postulate that the semantic information is selected before the syntactic information. By extension, eliminating the grammatical gender category consequently eliminates the need for gender selection, and produces a more efficient (“faster”) processing strategy. De Vincenzi (1999) provides Italian experimental data that indicate that “number information is used in an earlier stage of antecedents identification (where syntactic information is used), while gender information is used at a later stage (where lexical and semantic information are used)” (ibid.: 551). She also suggests that while number heads an autonomous syntactic projection, gender never does so, not even in the case of variable gender. Finally, Caramazza et al. (2001) provide cross-

linguistic information that production and processing of determiners is complicated by the necessity to retrieve gender and number information; “determiner selection in a given language occurs at the same point for *all* determiners, even though some of them could be selected earlier. In the case of Spanish, even though masculine determiners could be selected early, they are nevertheless selected at the same late point as feminine determiners” (ibid.: 223). Many of the L2 Italian data on the acquisition of grammatical gender presented in Chini (1995) reinforce these observations. Afro-Yungueño Spanish reduces this complexity by effectively eliminating the gender and number marking on the determiners.

The processing of grammatical number, on the other hand, is not symmetric, in that there is experimental evidence suggesting that whereas plural is a semantically and syntactically marked category, words lacking a plural affix are not semantically singular but rather unmarked for number (e.g. Berent et al. 2005). This hypothesis is supported by the Afro-Yungueño preference for invariant plurals of the sort (*luh*) *mujé* [*las mujeres*] ‘the women’, *luh varón* [*los varones*] ‘the male children’ even in the most acrolectal forms of the dialect. Rather than representing a mismatch between semantic and syntactic features—a configuration that should augment rather than reduce production and processing difficulty—the bare plural is an unmarked form, whose plural reference can easily be extracted from the preceding plural determiner or from the surrounding discourse.

5. Conclusions: Afro-Yungueño Spanish as a creole prototype

Do the Afro-Bolivian data represent the final stages in the decreolization of an earlier Palenquero-like Spanish creole or the remnants of a stable restructured but not creolized variety of Spanish that co-existed with highland Bolivian Spanish since its inception? A glance at the radically simplified VP and DP of the basilectal Afro-Yungueño dialect suggests that a full-fledged creole once existed here. On the other hand the known historical and demographic data do not offer the conditions typically associated with creolization. Afro-Bolivians never lived in maroon communities nor were they totally cut off from native speakers of Spanish.⁹ Whether or not a true Afro-Hispanic creole once existed in Bolivia, the Afro-Bolivian data represent the consolidation of *bozal* Spanish into a stable restructured variety fueled by considerations of processing simplicity. The contemporary speech community exhibits clear signs of decreolization, gradually bringing the Afro-Yungueño grammar into

alignment with Spanish in a series of steps that reflect the relative markedness of Spanish agreement features. This represents a tradeoff between increased processing requirements and a closer approximation to the national linguistic standard; the latter has been the stronger factor since the arrival of widespread public education in the Afro-Yungueño communities. The survival of this restructured variety in a robust state through the end of the 20th century, together with the more recent decreolization in the direction of standard Spanish nominal and verbal morphology, suggest that the traditional Afro-Yungueño dialect can stand as a prototype for the spontaneous creolization of Spanish in isolation. By extension, the directional implications found in the decreolizing dialects provide independent confirmation of hypotheses about the relative markedness of gender and number inflection in Romance languages. The data obtained from recently “discovered” Afro-Hispanic isolates such as Helvécia Portuguese and Afro-Yungueño Spanish should energize the search for similar linguistic tide pools, before they succumb to the inevitable threat of mass-produced language globalization.

Notes

1. Bowser (1974); Crespo (1977); Cuche (1981); Harth-Terré (1971, 1973); Millones Santagadea (1973); Pizarroso Cuenca (1977); Portugal Ortiz (1977).
2. The fieldwork in 2005 was partially supported by a grant from Penn State’s Africana Research Center, for which the author expresses deep gratitude.
3. For examples in some rustic dialects of Andalusia, the common loss of word-final /l/ is accompanied by loss of intervocalic /l/; this may lead to a new type of plural formation: *arbol/árboe* < *arbol*, *perá* < *peral/perae*, *animá* < *animal/animae* (Moya Corral 1979: 81-4).
4. Indeed, a creole-like verb structure using the particle *ta* is not present in any Afro-Portuguese pidgin texts, from the 15th century to the 20th, although found in some fashion in all Afro-Portuguese creoles. Found in many texts is the portmanteau verb *sar* (apparently a fusion of *ser* and *estar*) or *santar*, possibly a fusion of *sentar* and *estar* (Lipski 1999c, 2002b).
5. Another source of *ta* + *V_{inf}* constructions in Afro-Caribbean Spanish is phonetic reduction of the gerund, suggested by such half-reduced constructions as *pavo real TA bucán palo* ‘the’ peacock is looking for a tree’ (Cabrera 1983).
6. Some speakers interviewed never used this combination. Among those that do produce combinations involving *ta* plus truncated infinitive/gerund, the overall frequency is less than 10% of all instances in which a simple present or present progressive verb could be used.
7. In Afro-Bolivian Spanish the position of the stress accent strongly correlates with the distinction infinitive.3.SG finite verb form in Spanish; forms derived from the infinitive end in stressed vowels, while 3.SG verb forms have antepenultimate stress. In some creole languages (e.g. Philippine Creole Spanish, Papiamentu) there are many ambiguous verbs

that could derive either from the infinitive or the 3.SG but this does not appear to be the case in Afro-Bolivian Spanish.

8. There are dissenting viewpoints, however. For example Domínguez et al. (1999) report experimental findings that suggest that in Spanish “gender information is accessed more straightforwardly than number in an inflected word” (ibid.: 495).

9. However, it appears that early in their history, Afro-Bolivians were surrounded by a monolingual Aymara-speaking majority and had little contact with native speakers of Spanish, so that conditions favoring creolization could have existed. Although Afro-Yungueño Spanish has co-existed with Aymara-influenced varieties for several centuries and has absorbed many Aymara elements, the qualitative differences between Aymara-Spanish interlanguage and Afro-Yungueño Spanish are significant enough to render it unlikely that Afro-Yungueño speech is simply a replica of the L₂ Spanish spoken by Afro-Bolivians’ Aymara neighbors. Lipski (2006a, b, fc) summarizes these differences.

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