

Concordance Variability in Two American Romance Varieties: Using Brazilian Portuguese to Inform Mosquito Coast Spanish Data

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Though widely discussed for Brazilian Portuguese (BP) (Scherre and Naro 2014), number variation in Spanish verb morphology has been the subject of relatively few studies with some notable exceptions, including Afro-Bolivian Spanish (Lipski 2008a; Sessarego 2011, 2012), Spanish in contact with English (Lipski 2008b), and Dominican Spanish (Foote and Book 2012; Guy 2017). The current paper analyzes a case of variable subject-verb concord (1a,b) in a variety of Spanish in contact with Miskitu spoken in Nicaragua, referred to here as Mosquito Coast Spanish (MCS).

- (1) a. *En cuanto al estilo de vida, ellos vivían diferente.*
'Regarding lifestyle, they 3PL-live differently.'
b. *Nuestros ancestros antes vivía de la naturaleza.*
'Our ancestors used to 3SG-live from nature.'

The current analysis draws from literature on subject/verb number variation in BP to inform our predictions for MCS. We address (i) what language-internal factors are operative in this variation and (ii) if the MCS variable concordance is comparable to the ongoing parameter-change phenomenon in BP.

Using an exploratory approach in our statistical analysis of the data, we show what factors interact with the variation shown in (1a,b) and how far it has diffused within the verbal system of MCS. We look at person, TAM, and lexical verb aspect. The data used for this study is oral in nature and was collected from narratives and interviews with speakers of MCS. The results suggest that variable number concord in the verbal system of MCS is found primarily with third-person forms. In addition, this case of number concord displays a categorical collocation between plural subjects and singular verb morphology, but not between singular subjects and plural verb morphology (except with collective nouns such as *la gente*, 'the people').

References

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