

# EXPRESSIVITY (OR LACK THEREOF) IN CHILEAN SPANISH PERSONAL ARTICLES

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# INTRODUCTION

Human-denoting proper names, AKA *anthroponyms* or *personal names*, are definite NPs. As such, they generally do not combine with *definite articles*.

(1) (\*The) Cosmo came early.

*English*

(2) (\*ha)-Yahweh, (\*ha)-David, (\*ha)-Ya'akov  
the-Yahweh the-David the-Jacob  
'Yahweh, David, Jacob'

*Hebrew (Gesenius 1909: §125.2)*

# INTRODUCTION

However, some languages require *definite articles* to combine with otherwise bare personal names.

- (3) Érchetai \*(o) Dimítris  
comes the Dimitris  
'Dimitris comes.'
- (4) \*(I) Rómi íne i protiévousa \*(tis) Italías  
the Rome is the capital the Italy  
'Rome is the capital of Italy.'

*Modern Greek (Guardiano 2011: 192)*

Crosslinguistically, personal names require determiners when modified by adjectives or (restrictive) relative clauses (e.g., Matushansky 2006).

- (5) This is not \*(the) Elizabeth I know. *English*

The same observation applies to plural uses of personal names, e.g., *the Johns*. I will not discuss any of these cases and will focus on “bare” patterns such as (3).

# INTRODUCTION

A third type of language optionally licenses *personal articles*, i.e., they admit the combination *definite determiner* + *anthroponym*.

- (6) (O) João saiu cedo.  
the João left early  
'João left early'.

*Brazilian Portuguese (Sedrans 2017: 240)*

"In Dutch (Flemish) dialects the article *de* 'the' is used [...] to express familiarity with respect to the name bearer" (Van Langendonck 2007: 158).

- (7) Wette gelle nog da we *de* Jan op de met emme gezien?  
Know you still that we the Jan on the market once saw  
'Do you still remember that we have seen Jan in the market?'

*Brabant Flemish (Schmuck 2020: 164)*

# INTRODUCTION

The combination of definite article and personal name is also optionally attested in several Spanish varieties.

- (8) (La) Candela le habló al/a José.  
the Candela 3SG.DAT spoke to.the/to José  
'Candela talked to José.'

This is a Panhispanic pattern that has been observed in the (mostly substandard) speech of many countries. The following is a non-exhaustive list.

- ➡ Argentina (e.g., Vidal de Battini 1964)
- ➡ Chile (e.g., Oroz 1966)
- ➡ Costa Rica (e.g., Agüero 1962)
- ➡ Ecuador (e.g., Toscano Mateus 1953)
- ➡ Dominican Republic (e.g., Henríquez Ureña 1940)
- ➡ Perú (e.g., Kany 1945)
- ➡ Spain (e.g., Calderón Campos 2015)

# INTRODUCTION

The literature systematically describes *personal articles* in Spanish as *expressive markers* of sorts. To name a few examples from the literature...

- ✓ Vidal de Battini (1964) assigns them a *pejorative meaning* in the Spanish variety spoken in the province of San Luis (Argentina).
- ✓ Saab (2021) and Aguilar-Guevara & Oggiani (2023) maintain that the pattern in Rioplatense Spanish expresses *familiarity*, *affective proximity* or, more generally, *interpersonal proximity*.
- ✓ In Costa Rican Spanish, the presence of the definite article gives the proper noun a *negative* and *disrespectful tone* (Arroyo 1971).
- ✓ Jorge Morel (1978) notes that using the definite article before a person's name is normally avoided in Santo Domingo Spanish, and when it does appear, it signals *annoyance* or a *pejorative attitude*.
- ✓ In Colloquial Old Spanish, the pattern expresses different nuances of *closeness* and *subjective evaluation* (Calderón Campos 2015).
- ✓ In Mexican Spanish, the construction expresses *negative attitudes* towards the referent in *“emotionally charged contexts”* (Christodoulelis 2016, 2017, *apud* Tieperman 2020: 11–12).

# INTRODUCTION

Based on these antecedents, it is tempting to advance a descriptive generalization in the lines of (9).

(9) Personal articles in Spanish trigger expressive interpretations.

In fact, this is the position taken by Real Academia Española (RAE).

➡ RAE is a normative and descriptive authority that sets the standard for Spanish across the pan-Hispanic community.

The *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* (RAE & ASALE 2009: 219–220, my translation) states the following:

*Given names are not normally used with an article, although one does appear in the popular speech of many countries: la Juana, el Ramón. They are likewise not normally preceded by other determiners, unless these convey an affective rather than a discriminative value.*

# INTRODUCTION

In this presentation I will focus on the properties of *personal articles* in Chilean Spanish. I will maintain two theses:

- ➡ *Personal articles* in the variety constitute a purely formal phenomenon.
- ➡ There are *two sets of rules* in competition in the variety, one that requires the article and one that does not, which accounts for its optionality.

These conclusions arise from several aspects of the construction in Chilean Spanish that we will examine in what follows in the presentation:

- ✓ *quantitative differences* in the use of personal articles when compare to other Spanish varieties,
- ✓ the corroboration that personal articles trigger no *expressive* nor *discourse-related* interpretations in Chilean Spanish, and
- ✓ the behavior of *nominal placeholders* in Rioplatense and Chilean Spanish.



# Personal articles in Chilean Spanish

# PERSONAL ARTICLES IN CHILEAN SPANISH

Chilean Spanish admits *personal articles* in almost any position and function within the sentence.

- (10) El Vicente llegó temprano.  
the Vicente arrived early  
'Vicente arrived early.'

*subject*

- (11) La Carolina saludó al Vicente.  
the Carolina greeted DOM.the Vicente  
'Carolina greeted Vicente.'

*direct object*

- (12) Le dimos la tarjeta al Vicente  
3SG.DAT gave the card DAT.the Vicente  
'We gave the card to Vicente.'

*indirect object*

- (13) Confiamos en el Vicente.  
trust in the Vicente  
'We trust in Vicente.'

*complement of preposition*

# PERSONAL ARTICLES IN CHILEAN SPANISH

There are two contexts in which personal names reject overt determination: when used as *vocatives*, e.g., (14), and in so-called *naming contexts*, e.g., (15).

- (14) (\**La*) Ana, acuérdate de cerrar la puerta.  
the Ana remember of close the door  
'Ana, remember closing the door.'

- (15) Yo me llamo (\**la*) Ana.  
I REFL.1SG call the Ana  
'I am called Ana.'

# PERSONAL ARTICLES IN CHILEAN SPANISH

The same restrictions are attested in Modern Greek.

- (16) O Yanis vaftistike (\*o) Petros.  
the Yanis baptize.PASS the Petros  
'Yani was baptized Petro.'

*Modern Greek (Matushansky 2006: 286)*

- (17) (\*I) Maria, na grafis prosektika.  
the Maria NA write.2SG carefully  
'Maria, write carefully.'

*Modern Greek (Stavrou 2014: 332)*

# PERSONAL ARTICLES IN CHILEAN SPANISH

The pattern is attested with given names, e.g., (8) to (13), surnames, e.g., (18), a combination of both, e.g., (19), shortenings, e.g., (20) and nicknames, e.g., (21).

- (18) El Milei está más loco que la cresta.  
the Milei is more crazy that the crest  
'Milei is crazy as hell.'
- (19) Ese weón de ahí es el Cristián González.  
that dude of there is the Cristián González  
'That dude over there is Cristián González.'
- (20) ¡Llamemos a la Vicky!  
call DOM the Vicky  
'Let's call Vicky!'
- (21) El Care'Churrasco se había quemado la cara con una línea de vapor  
the face.of.beef SE had burned the face with a line of steam  
a presión.  
to pressure  
'Beef-Face burned his face with a line of high-pressure steam.'

# PERSONAL ARTICLES IN CHILEAN SPANISH

In most Spanish varieties, the pattern is considered *substandard*: it is typically associated with country-side speech or slang.

➡ This is not true for Chilean Spanish.

Consider the following observation by (Oroz 1966: 371, my translation).

*The use of the article with proper names in Chile is not limited to rustic or vulgar speech, but can be considered almost a **general norm**. Omitting it sounds affected when dealing with feminine names; hence one says, for example: **llame a la Juanita** 'call Juanita.' In contrast, masculine proper names are sometimes used with the article and sometimes without it, as L. Cifuentes has already noted (op. cit., p. 397); for example, in Cura-Cautín: **la Rosa, la Filomena; el Lucho; el Edgar**. With nicknames, the use of the article is obligatory: **el Guatón** 'the fat one,' etc.*

That Chilean Spanish differs from other varieties in the use of *personal articles* is also recognized by Real Academia Española (RAE).

# PERSONAL ARTICLES IN CHILEAN SPANISH



**luis felipe ventura** @infraxp · 12 mar.



Hola @RAEinforma #dudaRAE es posible o correcto llamar a las personas de la siguiente manera? "La Gabriela, El Christian, La Natalia, El Pablo" o se considera inapropiado y/o déspota? Gracias 😊



3



10



69



58,1 mil



**RAE** ✓

@RAEinforma



En respuesta a @infraxp

#RAEconsultas Salvo en el español de Chile y entre hispanohablantes catalanes, el uso de artículo ante nombres propios de persona se considera vulgar. Los nombres de pila se usan, en el español general culto, sin artículo.

5:54 a. m. · 13 mar. 2023 · 70,3 mil Reproducciones

106 Retweets 78 Tweets citados 750 Me gusta

*"Except in Chilean Spanish and among Catalan Spanish-speakers, using an article before personal proper names is considered nonstandard or vulgar. In standard educated Spanish, given names are used without an article."*

# Quantitative data



# QUANTITATIVE DATA

There are several quantitative studies focusing on the frequency of *personal articles* in different Spanish varieties.

- ➡ As we will see, the contrasting frequency patterns suggest that the Chilean Spanish version of the phenomenon is distinct from varieties in which it serves as an *expressive marker*.

De Mello (1992) measured the frequency of the pattern with educated speakers of Spanish in ten cities. From 135 instances of the construction...

City	Examples	City	Examples
La Habana	0	Sevilla	0
Lima	0	C. de México	0
Bogota	1	San Juan	1
Madrid	3	Buenos Aires	15
Caracas	17	Santiago	98

# QUANTITATIVE DATA

As mentioned, Chilean Spanish exhibits the pattern with different types of proper names. De Mello's sample shows that other varieties are more selective.

Ciudad	Pila	Dimin.	Apodo	Apellido	Completo
Bogotá	0	0	0	0	1
Bs. Aires	1	0	10	2	2
Caracas	6	0	0	8	3
La Habana	0	0	0	0	0
Lima	0	0	0	0	0
Madrid	2	0	0	1	0
C. de México	0	0	0	0	0
San Juan	0	0	0	1	0
Santiago	53	11	15	3	16
Sevilla	0	0	0	0	0
Total	62	11	25	15	22

## QUANTITATIVE DATA

De Mello (1992) reports an asymmetry between male and female-referring proper names: *personal articles* seem to be much more frequent with the latter.

Ciudad	Mujer	Hombre
Bogotá	0	1
Bs. Aires	10	5
Caracas	3	14
La Habana	0	0
Lima	0	0
Madrid	0	3
C. de México	0	0
San Juan	1	0
Santiago	90	8
Sevilla	0	0
Total	104 (77%)	31 (23%)

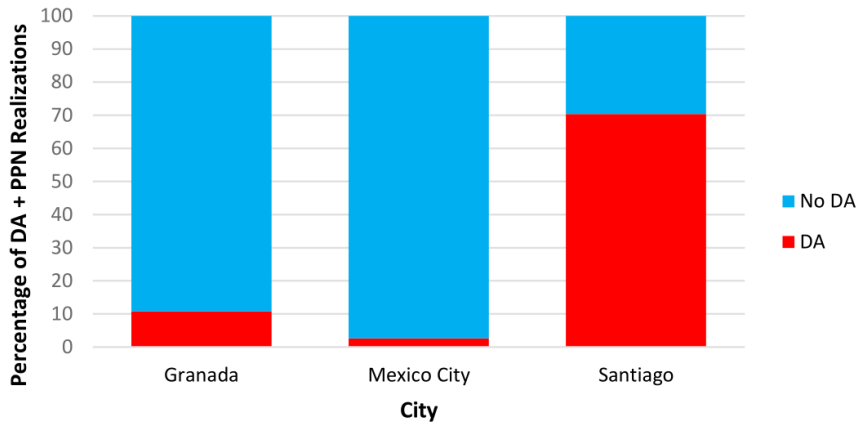
This sort of tendency is also attested in other languages, e.g., Flemish shows a preference for male-referring proper names (Van Langendonck 2007).

Similar observations arise from a study by Tieperman (2018), who analyzed several episodes of the Chilean TV show *Casado con hijos*.

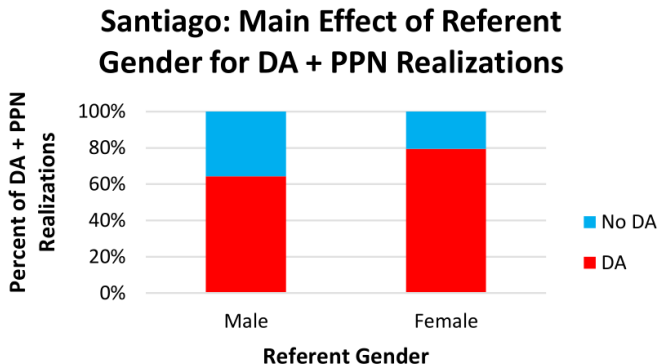
- ✓ She counted 746 instances of human-referring proper names.
- ✓ The definite article appeared with 54.6% of them.
- ✓ The gender of the referent was a significant predictor of the pattern.
  - Female referents (e.g., *La Laura*) favor its use more than male referents (e.g., *El Pablo*).

# QUANTITATIVE DATA

Tieperman (2020) studied the factors governing the pattern in speakers from Santiago, Mexico City, and Granada. She used the PRESEEA Corpus.



The main predictor for the pattern was once again the gender of the referent.



# QUANTITATIVE DATA

This contrasts with the distribution of the phenomenon in Granada, whose best predictor is social class: upper class participants did not produce the pattern.

City	Lower	Middle	Upper
Santiago	68.1	74.9	53.8
Granada	17.9	19	0
Mexico City	4.2	4.3	1.6

In sum, the quantitative evidence calls into question any potential analysis that treats *personal articles* in Chilean Spanish as *expressive markers*.

- ➡ In fact, the frequency and regularity of the pattern suggests that *personal articles* in the variety constitute an obligatory pattern enforced by grammatical requirements.

# An anaphoric resource?



# AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

Unlike Modern Greek, Classical Greek exhibited optionality in the presence of definite determiner with personal names.

- (22) oupou ēn **ho** lōannēs baptizōn  
where was the John baptizing  
'Where John was baptizing'
- (23) kai emarturēsen lōannēs legōn hoti  
and testified John saying that  
'and John testified, saying that...'

*Classical Greek (Guardiano 2011: 191)*

There is a traditional (although imperfect) explanation for the distribution of these forms.

*Insofar as a consensus among Greek grammarians exists, it is that names of persons normally are not preceded by the article (they are anarthrous), but may be preceded by the article (be arthrous) if the reference is anaphoric. However, Winer (1882: 140) considers that, in fact, the use of the article with proper names "can hardly be reduced to any rule".*

*(Levinsohn 1991: 91)*

# AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

According to this hypothesis, the definite article is basically a cohesion marker, i.e., an element that connects distinct parts of a text.

- ➡ Its presence would allow to distinguish between the first and subsequent mentions of a certain human referent.

Levinsohn (1991: 93) illustrates the pattern with the references to proconsul *Gallio* in Acts 18: 12, 14, 17.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>subject</i>	<i>non-subject</i>	<i>summary of contents</i>
v12	Ø <i>Gallio</i>		was proconsul
	the Jews	the Paul	attacked
v14	the Paul		was about to speak
	<i>the Gallio</i>	the Jews	said to
v16	all	Ø Sosthenes	turned on
		<i>the Gallio</i>	nothing mattered to

# AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

Calderón Campos (2015) argues for a similar analysis of determined personal names in (Old) Spanish data taken from CORDE.

- ➡ He contends that in historical prose and witness statements, the pattern has an anaphoric value, equivalent to *el dicho* 'the said'.
- ➡ In literary texts that imitate spoken language, the colloquial use of the structure is reflected, with different nuances of "closeness" and subjective evaluation, i.e., it is an *expressive marker* in these contexts.

We will focus for now in examples that suggest an *anaphoric* functioning. The following example taken from Calderón Campos (2015: 81).

- (24) envió a uno, llamado *Juan*, a África, contra los sarracenos [...] y habida victoria d'ellos, dexó *el Juan* su ejército en la mejor manera que pudo.  
ENG: 'He sent one, named *Juan*, to Africa, against the Saracens [...] and having obtained victory over them, *the Juan* left his army in the best way he could.'

Notice that the first mention of *Juan* is in a naming context, so the absence of *el* there might have nothing to do with anaphora.

# AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

The same observation applies to other examples of chronicles provided by Calderón Campos (2015): the first mention of the name is in a naming context.

- ➡ This invalidates these pieces of evidence, as the first personal name is determinerless arguably for reasons other than introducing a new referent.

The problem can be seen in the following example, dated from 1535–1537.

- (25) y se abrazaron e besaron muchas veces [...] porque eran muy amigos de antes, y por la novedad del caso y por el remedio deste cristiano, el cual se llamaba **Francisco Martín**, y era uno de los que se perdieron con el capitán Íñigo de Vasuña [...] y llegados al pueblo, no hallaron a nadie en él: que habían los indios huido al arcabuco o monte. Y **el Francisco Martín** los fue a llamar.
- ENG: 'And they embraced and kissed each other many times [...] because they were very good friends from before, and because of the novelty of the situation and the remedy of this Christian, who was named **Francisco Martín**, and was one of those who got lost with Captain Íñigo de Vasuña [...] and when they arrived at the village, they found no one in it: the Indians had fled to the thicket or mountain. And **the Francisco Martín** called them.'

# AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

The examples of witness statements provided by Calderón Campos (2015) do not suffer the same issue. The following example is from 1717.

- (26) A la segunda pregunta dijo [...] que [...] viniendo [...] un mozo con un jumento cargado con yerba, le habían venido siguiendo por dicha calle **Miguel Barranco** y **Francisco Ruiz**, portero y ministro de esta dicha ciudad [...] por desirse llevaba una bayoneta. El dicho don Antonio Rodríguez había llegado a dicho alboroto y pedido a dichos ministros soltasen a el referido hombre [...] y que aunque **el Francisco Ruiz** le había obedecido, **el Miguel Barranco** no había querido soltarlo. ENG: 'To the second question, he said [...] that [...] coming [...] a young man with a donkey loaded with grass, **Miguel Barranco** and **Francisco Ruiz**, the doorkeeper and minister of this city, had been following him down that street [...] because he was carrying a bayonet. The aforementioned Don Antonio Rodríguez had arrived at this commotion and asked the ministers to release the referred man [...] and that although **the Francisco Ruiz** had obeyed him, **the Miguel Barranco** did not want to let him go.'

# AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

This final example is from 1797.

- (27) Por las preguntas siguientes, serán examinados los testigos que se presentasen por parte de Josef, Gaspar y Nicolás Rodríguez [...] en los autos que siguen [...] con **Thomás** y Manuel Tortosa, de la propia vecindad, sobre haber estos supuesto que aquellos maltrataron de obra y de palabra a **el Thomás** y su mujer.  
ENG: 'By the following questions, the witnesses presented on behalf of Josef, Gaspar, and Nicolás Rodríguez will be examined [...] in the proceedings that they are pursuing [...] against **Thomás** and Manuel Tortosa, of the same town, concerning the allegation that the latter claimed the former mistreated **the Thomás** and his wife both physically and verbally.'

Could it be that *personal articles* in Chilean Spanish work in a similar fashion?

- ➡ Perhaps they are just cohesive elements that indicate reference to a previously uttered individual.
- ➡ This could account, for instance, for their high frequency.

# AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

In principle, if determined personal names are anaphoric, then they should not be able to function as sentence *foci*.

➡ *Foci* are, by definition, non-anaphoric constituents.

This prediction is not borne out for Chilean Spanish. For instance, the sentence in (28) shows that the pattern can appear in a broad focus sentence.

- (28) A: ¿Qué pasó?  
          what happened  
          ‘What happened?’  
      B: El Carlos llamó a los pacos.  
          the Carlos called DOM the cops  
          ‘Carlos called the cops.’

## AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

The same happens in narrow focus contexts, like fragment answers.

(29) A: ¿Quién dijo eso?  
          who said that  
          'Who said that?'

B: El Carlos.  
     the Carlos.  
     'Carlos.'

A determined personal name can even function as the subject of a cleft-sentence, a syntactic function that is reserved for focal constituents.

(30) A: ¿Quién compró el auto de la Bea?  
          who bought the car of the Bea  
          'Who bought Bea's car?'

B: Fue el Carlos el que compró el auto de la Bea.  
     was the Carlos the that bought the car of the Bea  
     'It was Carlos who bought Bea's car.'



# AN ANAPHORIC RESOURCE?

Chilean Spanish speakers also admit an “inverted pattern”, in which the *determined personal name* precedes its bare counterpart.

- (31) ¿Y por qué no llamamos *al Gonzalo*? Erika siempre dice que *Gonzalo* sabe arreglar computadores.  
ENG: ‘Why don’t we call *the Gonzalo*? Erika always says that *Gonzalo* knows how to fix computers.’
- (32) Abrí la puerta y el único que estaba ahí era *el Gonzalo*. Me puse a hablar con él y le dije que teníamos que guardar todo al tiro. El problema fue que *Gonzalo* es más lento que la chucha para hacer cualquier weá; por eso te dije que no me gusta que me asignen a *Gonzalo* en mi grupo.  
ENG: ‘I opened the door, and the only one there was *the Gonzalo*. I talked to him and told him that we needed to put everything away right away. The problem was that *Gonzalo* is slow as hell at doing anything; that’s why I told you I don’t like being assigned to a group with *Gonzalo*.’

In short, *determined personal names* in Chilean Spanish do not seem to function as anaphoric devices.

# Marker of expressive content

# MARKER OF EXPRESSIVE CONTENT

Let's consider the possibility that *determined personal names* in Chilean Spanish convey some form of *expressive meaning*.

➡ We will use Rioplatense Spanish as a control case.

As discussed, the pattern in Rioplatense Spanish and other dialects exhibits *interpersonal proximity* (either positive or negative) towards the referent.

- (33) María vino a mi fiesta.  
María came to my party.  
'María came to my party.'

- (34) La María vino a mi fiesta.  
the María came to my party.  
'The María (with whom I have a close bond) came to my party.'  
*Rioplatense Spanish (Aguilar-Guevara & Oggiani 2023)*

# MARKER OF EXPRESSIVE CONTENT

Aguilar-Guevara & Oggiani (2023) show that the pattern systematically receives this interpretation by showing that it becomes *infelicitous* in certain contexts.

- ➡ These are scenarios in which the speaker declares not knowing the referent of the proper name.
- ➡ You cannot express *interpersonal proximity* towards someone you have not met for long enough!

Consider the following examples from Rioplatense, all taken from Aguilar-Guevara & Oggiani (2023).

- (35) Hoy conocí a Carla / #la Carla  
today met DOM Carla / the Carla  
'Today I met Carla.'

# MARKER OF EXPRESSIVE CONTENT

- (36) Hoy viene a mi casa Julia / #la Julia, una prima de mi padre  
today comes to my house Julia / the Julia, a cousin of my father  
que nunca vimos.  
that never saw  
'Today Julia comes to my place, a cousing of my father that we never met.'
- (37) X: Fui a la casa del Carlos y no me abrió la puerta. ¿Podés  
went to the house of.the Carlos and not me open the door. Can  
creerlo?  
believe.it  
'I went to Carlos's house and he didn't open the door. Can you believe it?'
- Y: Es que no sé quién es Carlos / #el Carlos / "el Carlos".  
is that not know who is Carlos / the Carlos / the Carlos  
'I don't know who Carlos is.'

# MARKER OF EXPRESSIVE CONTENT

Chilean Spanish speakers are completely oblivious to these distinctions.

- (38) Jamás conoceré al Matías Contreras.  
never will.meet DOM.the Matías Contreras  
'I will never meet Matías Contreras.'
- (39) Mañana viene a mi casa la Patricia, una prima de mi papá que ni  
tomorrow comes to my house the Patricia, a cousin of my dad that not  
sabíamos que existía.  
even we.knew that existed  
'Tomorrow Patricia, a cousin of my dad whom we didn't even know existed, is  
coming to my house.'
- (40) A: Oye, ¿sabíh que fui a la casa del Diego Soto y no me quiso  
listen know that went to the house of.the Diego Soto and not me wanted  
abrir la puerta?  
open the door  
'Listen, can you believe that I went to Diego Soto's place and he didn't  
open the door?'
- B: ¿Y quién es el Diego Soto?  
and who is the Diego Soto  
'And who is Diego Soto?'

# MARKER OF EXPRESSIVE CONTENT

Oddly enough, the pattern can still be used when the speaker is referent of the proper name. Can you express *interpersonal proximity* to yourself?

(41) [*A new teacher is taking attendance.*]

A: ¿Quiénes son Pedro y José?  
who are Pedro and José  
'Who are Pedro and José?'

B: ¡Yo soy (el) José!  
I am the José  
'I am José!'

(42) [*Ding dong*]

A: ¿Quién es?  
who is  
'Who is it?'

B: Soy (el) Carlos.  
am the Carlos.  
'I am Carlos.'

# MARKER OF EXPRESSIVE CONTENT

Chilean Spanish speakers do not report any difference between the alternative sentences in (43) that can be identified with *expressive content*.

- (43)    a. Vino Carlos.  
              came Carlos  
              ‘Carlos came.’
- b. Vino **el** Carlos.  
              came the Carlos  
              ‘Carlos came.’

My students gave me some guesses, but they are way off from what would be expected.

- ✗ Someone suggested that the pattern without the article makes it more difficult to identify the specific referent of the sentence (e.g., “it could be any Carlos!”). Most students didn’t share this intuition.
- ✗ Someone said that the pattern without the determiner is less redundant, therefore correct.
- ✗ Someone suggested that the pattern without the determiner is more “neutral” and “less Chilean”. Well, this is kinda true.

In short, the pattern in Chilean Spanish does not seem to express any discernible meaning.



# A grammatical account

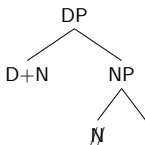
# A GRAMMATICAL ACCOUNT

Longobardi (1994) characterizes definite articles preceding proper names as determiners with no semantic import. There are two alternative structures.

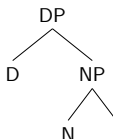
- ➡ The proper name N incorporates into D and is pronounced in this position.
- ➡ If N stays in place, D is pronounced as a definite determiner.

The structure of the left is responsible for bare patterns such as *Carlos*, while the one in the right generates *personal articles* as in *el Carlos*.

(44) a.



b.



I take it that Chilean Spanish speakers have access to both syntactic representations; the optionality of *personal articles* in the variety follows from this.

# A GRAMMATICAL ACCOUNT

This could be analyzed as a form of syntactic diglossia: speakers of the variety have “*two alternative grammars*” (Kroch 1989, 2001) for personal names.

(45) A CONSERVATIVE PAN-HISPANIC GRAMMAR

[<sub>DP</sub> Carlos + <sub>D</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> ~~Carlos~~ ]]

*allows N to D*

(46) AN INNOVATIVE “CHILEAN” GRAMMAR

[<sub>DP</sub> el [<sub>NP</sub> Carlos ]]

*disallows N to D*

There are several important considerations associated to this account.

- ➡ These grammars are in competition, both in the community of speakers and within the linguistic competence of individual speakers.
- ➡ The expressions produced by these grammars are synonymous, although they may differ in terms of *register*.
- ➡ One grammar gradually overtaking the other leads to *language change*.

We find partial confirmation of this split in the behavior of *nominal placeholders* in Chilean Spanish.

# A GRAMMATICAL ACCOUNT

A *placeholder* is a dummy element filling a syntactic slot corresponding to some target expression (Seraku 2022).

- ➔ Speakers employ placeholders when they are unable or unwilling to produce some word or phrase.

The following are examples of *nominal placeholders*, i.e., nominal elements whose target expression seems to be a noun.

- (47) Could you hand me the *whatchamacallit*? *English*
- (48) Je dois aller chercher mon *machin* chez le réparateur.  
I must go pick my machin at the repairman  
'I have to go pick up my thingy from the repair shop.' *French*
- (49) Ich habe gestern mein *Dingsbums* im Büro vergessen.  
I have yesterday my Dingsbums in office forgotten  
'I forgot my thingy in the office yesterday.' *German*

# A GRAMMATICAL ACCOUNT

Rioplatense Spanish and Chilean Spanish have expressions filling syntactic slots corresponding to nouns, i.e., *nominal placeholders* (Muñoz Pérez 2024).

- (50) No encuentro el            coso.  
not find.1SG the.M.SG thing.M.SG  
'I don't find the thingy.'

*Rioplatense Spanish*

- (51) No encuentro el            este.  
not find.1SG the.M.SG this.M.SG  
'I don't find the thingy.'

*Chilean Spanish*

The Chilean pattern is strongly ungrammatical for other varieties, which suggests that it stems from rules specific to the “Chilean grammar” mentioned above.

- ➡ The prediction is that the placeholder *este* should correlate with the lack of N to D movement that we hypothesized for this grammar.

# A GRAMMATICAL ACCOUNT

In Rioplatense, *coso* may replace a proper name. In this scenario, it behaves syntactically as a proper name does, e.g., rejects determiners, triggers DOM.

- (52) a. Coso me trajo un regalo de Waikikí.  
Coso me brought a present of Waikiki  
'The person you know about brought me a present from Waikiki.'
- b. \*El Coso me trajo un regalo de Waikikí.  
the Coso me brought a present of Waikiki
- (53) a. Ayer vi a Coso.  
yesterday saw DOM Coso  
'I saw the person you know about yesterday.'
- b. \*Ayer vi al Coso.  
yesterday saw DOM.the Coso

# A GRAMMATICAL ACCOUNT

Chilean *este* also replaces proper names, but with an important caveat: it cannot drop the definite article.

- (54) a. \*Este me trajo un regalo de Waikikí.  
this me brought a present of Waikiki  
'The person you know about brought me a present from Waikiki.'
- b. El este me trajo un regalo de Waikikí.  
the this me brought a present of Waikiki
- (55) a. \*Ayer vi a este.  
yesterday saw DOM this  
'I saw the person you know about yesterday.'
- b. Ayer vi al este.  
yesterday saw DOM.the this

# A GRAMMATICAL ACCOUNT

This follows from Rioplatense being able to form *proper names* through N to D movement.

- (56) a. [DP D [NP N ... ]] *common noun*  
b. [DP N+D [NP ~~N~~ ... ]] *proper name*

While, Chilean Spanish does not appeal to N to D movement for *proper names*, i.e., it employs a structure akin to the one found with common nouns.

- (57) [DP D [NP N ... ]] *common noun/proper name*

This predicts a split in the behavior of the *nominal placeholders* *coso* and *este*.

- ➡ *Coso* can appear in both structures in (56), so it rejects determination when replacing a *proper name*.
- ➡ *Este* can only appear in the scheme in (57), so it requires determination even when replacing a *proper name*.



# Concluding remarks

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Spanish generally employs *personal articles* to convey expressivity.
- However, the situation differs markedly in *Chilean Spanish*.
  - Speakers of this variety produce these elements at a *significantly higher rate* than speakers of any other variety, suggesting that the phenomenon is qualitatively distinct.
  - In Chilean Spanish, personal articles do not seem to function as *anaphoric devices* or as *markers of expressivity*.
- *Personal articles* in Chilean Spanish are enforced by the grammar, which lacks N to D movement.
- Chilean speakers are nevertheless able to produce *proper names* without overt determination because they also have a more conservative “Pan-Hispanic” grammar that does have N to D movement.
- This proposal aligns well with the behavior of *nominal placeholders* in Rioplatense and Chilean Spanish.

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Thank you for your attention!