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8

# Spanish Language and Sociolinguistic Analysis

Edited by Sandro Sessarego  
and Fernando Tejedo-Herrero

John Benjamins Publishing Company

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## Spanish Language and Sociolinguistic Analysis

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## **Volume 8**

Spanish Language and Sociolinguistic Analysis

Edited by Sandro Sessarego and Fernando Tejedo-Herrero

*To Grace (Graziella)*

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# Introduction

Sandro Sessarego & Fernando Tejedo-Herrero

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*Spanish Language and Sociolinguistic Analysis* explores the current state of Spanish sociolinguistics and its contribution to theories of language variation and change, from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. It offers original analyses on a variety of topics across a wide spectrum of linguistic subfields from different formal, experimental, and corpus-based standpoints.

During the last few decades the development of statistical models and their application to the study of language variation and change has found a strong presence in sociolinguistic research, and, as reflected in this volume, Spanish sociolinguistics has not been an exception to this trend. Indeed, several studies in this collection use a variety of statistical tools to analyze how linguistic and social factors pattern language variation. For instance, the Rbrul statistical analyses of glottalization in Yucatan Spanish discovered a hierarchy of social variables that constrain its use among younger speakers (Michnowitz & Kagan), while a variationist approach based on different regression analyses cast light on the factors affecting /-s/ weakening in costal Nicaraguan Spanish (Chappell). Mixed-effects logistic regression analyses were also employed to demonstrate the constraint hierarchy in the use of subject pronoun expression among first language learners (Shin), and a similar set of tests helped understand the relationship between lexical frequency and subject expression in the speech of native and non-native speakers (Linford et al.). Statistical analyses also proved to be essential in demonstrating the incipient stages of a change in progress concerning the use of *tuteo* in Rocha, Uruguay (Weyers), while the ANOVA tests and multivariate regression analyses applied to subject placement in the speech of New York City Spanish-English bilinguals offered important insights into the external conditions that need to be factored in to understand how this phenomenon operates (Raña-Risso & Barrera Tobón).

Nevertheless, as important as it is to take advantage of existing statistical toolkits to analyze language variation and change, it is also crucial not to lose sight of the qualitative aspects of the analysis when it comes to asking the right questions and explaining the data. With that in mind, this volume begins with a contribution that offers not only an authoritative assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of widely-used statistical tools, but also useful advice for not losing focus on analyzing and interpreting the data in principled and informed ways (Tagliamonte).



Along with variationist analyses, the present volume covers a range of other analytic approaches to studying sociolinguistics. Thus, the present volume includes interdisciplinary methodologies that combine population genetics and historical linguistics to explain the origins of Afro-Hispanic populations in the Americas (Schwegler), models that draw data from historical and present day sources to study the retention of linguistic features in bilingual varieties (Lipski), and analyses that combine variationist and formal approaches within the Minimalist Program to study vernacular features in rural speech communities (Sessarego & Ferreira).

This collection of studies also presents original research within other well-established frameworks, such as social networks theory applied to second language acquisition (Pope) and sociophonetic variation (Barajas); accommodation theory in the context of lexical loss in Judeo-Spanish (Romero); language attitudes toward the history of Arabisms (Giménez-Eguíbar) and non-standard features across generations in Los Angeles Spanish (Parodi & Guerrero). Additionally, this work includes some of the current research conducted in promising areas of study such as socio-cognitive semantics (Korfhagen), and language policy and linguistic landscape (Martínez Ibarra).

As a whole, this book reflects an array of approaches and analyses that show how in its variation across speakers, speech communities, linguistic contexts, communicative situations, dialects, and time, the Spanish language provides an immense wealth of data to challenge accepted linguistic views and shape new theoretical proposals in the field of language variation and change.

The present volume contains seventeen peer-reviewed articles, which were originally presented at the seventh meeting of the *Workshop on Spanish Sociolinguistics*, April 3–5, 2014, hosted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

It is organized around six thematic sections: (i) Cutting-edge Methodologies in Sociolinguistics; (ii) Bilingualism; (iii) Language Acquisition; (iv) Phonological Variation; (v) Morpho-Syntactic Variation; and (vi) Lexical Variation.

Section I includes two chapters that discuss and analyze some of the most advanced methodologies related to sociolinguistic research. In Chapter 1, Sali Tagliamonte provides an overview of traditional methods (e.g., logistic regression) as well as a presentation of more innovative tools, such as condition inference trees, that can be applied to the study of language variation and change. In her essay, Tagliamonte reviews the pros and cons of the available statistical models and reflects on the importance of the qualitative research that underlies any quantitative analysis of sociolinguistic data.

In Chapter 2, Armin Schwegler offers an account of how population genetics (DNA) can be combined with historical linguistic information to shed light on the origins of Latin America's black populations. In particular, he focuses on the ancestry of two Afro-Hispanic communities in the Americas: Palenque (Colombia) and Palo Monte (Cuba). Data point to a single origin for these populations, whose ancestry appears to descend from a relatively small African region, Mayombe, in the Republic of Congo.

Section II concentrates on the analysis of contexts in which Spanish is in contact with other languages: English, Quechua, and Valencian. In Chapter 3, Claudia Parodi and Armando Guerrero Jr. study a set of non-standard Spanish features and Salvadoran lexical items found among speakers of Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish (LAVS). The authors demonstrate how Spanish-speaking immigrant communities in the United States negotiate the acceptability ratings of these features outside of the pressures of standard Spanish. The authors' work focuses on acceptability ratings between first- and second-generation LAVS speakers and, unlike most current research in this area of study, they also examine interactions between each of these generations with monolingual speakers of Spanish. Given the lack of focus on the latter and the promising results of their research, the authors suggest the importance of this type of study with regard to other immigrant communities in the United States.

In Chapter 4, John Lipski takes us to the Andes. In his study, the author proposes a model of trans-generational language change to account for the systematic appearance of Quechua-induced L2 Spanish features in Andean communities of Quechua-dominant late bilinguals. The data collected by means of ethnographic interviews, sociolinguistic inquiries and interactive tasks helps build a framework that attempts to explain the nature and persistence of Andean-Spanish traits in a region characterized by prolonged Spanish/Quechua contact.

In Chapter 5, Francisco Martínez-Ibarra studies an area of increasing interest among specialists in language policy issues: the linguistic landscape, or the use of one or more languages on public signs. The author examines the language attitudes toward Spanish and Valencian based on his analysis of over three thousand data items found in a wide variety of signs in the city of Elche. Martínez-Ibarra analyzes a number of factors related to the linguistic landscape in Elche (e.g., the choice of language, the type of business or author of the sign, and the location of the sign in the city) and offers an assessment of linguistic attitudes toward Valencian, the success of the language policies implemented by the local and regional governments, and what this might mean for spoken Valencian in Elche vis-à-vis the use of Spanish as the dominant language.

Section III brings together three articles that focus on various aspects of Spanish language acquisition either as the L1 variety (Chapters 6 and 8) or as L2 (Chapters 7 and 8). In Chapter 6, Naomi Lapidus Shin offers an analysis of L1 acquisition by exploring the evolution of structured morpho-syntactic variation in the use of Spanish subject pronouns by Mexican children aged 6 to 16. Lapidus Shin sheds light on the constraints regulating variable pronominal use by showing that, while certain linguistic factors appear to have a relatively constant effect across different ages, the second-person singular variable tends to favor *tú* expression among younger children and *tú* omission among older ones. A combination of semantic and pragmatic factors seem to be responsible for such a developmental path.

In Chapter 7, Joshua Pope further analyzes an instance of language acquisition. This time, however, the focus is not on L1, but rather on L2. Pope relies on the examination of the social networks developed by American students studying abroad in Madrid to explain the different mastery of use of Spanish /θ/. Among other findings, he indicates that American students who developed close-knit social networks with other Americans presented lower levels of /θ/ than the learners who branched out and formed bonds with native Spanish speakers. In line with Milroy's (1987) proposal, Pope suggests that the new social relationships can be seen as responsible for the introduction and adoption of new linguistic variants and that input from such social ties may lead to increased change in the American students' spoken Spanish as their bonds with the native speakers grow stronger.

In Chapter 8, Bret Linford, Avizia Long, Megan Solon, Melissa Whatley, and Kimberly Geeslin analyze the effects of lexical frequency on subject expression in native and advanced non-native varieties of Spanish. They find that lexical frequency does not have any significant independent effect on the data distribution of subject expression but that it can mediate the effect of other linguistic factors. Moreover, their analysis is not limited to overt and null pronominal forms. Rather, they also analyze full noun phrases (lexical NPs). Their results appear to be, for the most part, in line with Erker and Guy (2012) and Linford and Shin (2013), but are in contrast with the conclusions of Beyley et al. (2013). The authors' findings provide intriguing similarities as well as differences between their study and the previous literature, suggesting future lines of research.

Section IV includes chapters dealing with phonological/phonetic variation in Mexican and Nicaraguan speech communities. In Chapter 9, Jim Michnowitz and Laura Kagan focus on analyzing the internal and external factors regulating the production of glottal stops in Yucatan Spanish. The authors conclude that glottal insertion before vowel-initial words in this dialect can be understood as the byproduct of a contact-induced change driven by Mayan and mediated by internal development. This phenomenon, as well as many other dialectal features of Yucatan Spanish, are affected by standardization forces. Thus, younger, more educated speakers tend to drop the traditional Yucatan features, in favor of more prestigious standard Spanish forms.

In Chapter 10, Jennifer Barajas presents an interesting study on vowel raising in rural Michoacán, México. Based on an acoustic analysis of /e/ and /o/ in unstressed post-tonic position, her study shows the relationship between vowel raising and particular social groups in the Colongo speech community. Specifically, her study demonstrates that vowel raising is a phonetic feature associated with members of close-knit networks in the community.

The next chapter, by Whitney Chappell, looks at the late acquisition of Spanish by L1 Miskitu speakers in Bilwi, a town in northern Nicaragua. The author examines the production of /s/ in coda position; and, contrary to most research on this issue, she



concludes that, at least in the community under investigation, late L2 Spanish speakers reduce /s/ more frequently where they hear the /s/ reduction the best (i.e. in cue-rich, prevocalic environments). This differs from the linguistic behavior of monolingual Spanish speakers, who tend to reduce /s/ the most in cue-impooverished environments (i.e. in preconsonantal position).

Section V has morpho-syntactic variation as its primary focus. In Chapter 12, Sandro Sessarego and Letânia Ferreira compare variable number agreement phenomena within the DP in Afro-Bolivian Spanish and Popular Brazilian Portuguese. They adopt an eclectic methodology that combines sociolinguistic techniques of data collection with generative models of linguistic analysis (Sessarego 2014). The nature of an impoverished agreement system in these two vernacular varieties is explained in light of a feature geometry account (Harley and Ritter 2002) that favors the emergence and selection of singular values as default values.

In Chapter 13, Joseph Weyers analyzes the morpho-syntactic variation between *voseo* and *tuteo* in Rocha, Uruguay. He finds that, while *tuteo* represents a distinctive feature of this dialect and is connected to a strong sense of local pride and identity, younger speakers, primarily males, are more likely to prefer the *vos* (*sos*) form over *tú* (*eres*) with the verb 'to be' (*ser*). The reasons for such a preference appear to be related to the more informal status of *vos* and the linguistic influence exerted by the nearby capital, Montevideo, over Rocha. Results indicate that Rocha's *tuteo* might not be as stable as traditionally assumed and that a potential shift from *tuteo* to *voseo* might take place in the speech of future generations.

In Chapter 14, Carolina Barrera Tobón and Rocío Raña-Risso offer a corpus-based study of subject placement in the Spanish of New York City bilinguals. They compare the speech of first- and second-generation bilinguals to show that the latter group uses a more rigid word order, which the authors attribute to the higher level of contact with English. In addition, after combining these data with the rate of use of overt and null pronouns between the Caribbean and Mainland varieties of Spanish spoken in New York City, Barrera Tobón and Raña-Risso conclude that for changes in pronoun placement to occur, there must first be a change in the rate of overt pronoun use. For speakers to begin placing more pronouns preverbally, they first have to use more overt pronouns.

Finally, Section VI is devoted to studies on lexical variation in which the authors employ socio-cognitive linguistics, standardization, and accommodation approaches to study various aspects of lexical variation and change. In Chapter 15, David Korfhagen offers a socio-cognitive approach to study historical shifts in the prototypical meanings documented for the word *afeitar* 'to adorn' > 'to apply cosmetics' > 'to shave'. The word's first semantic shift demonstrates an evolving negative attitude from the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries, as *afeitar* acquired the meaning 'to apply cosmetics [excessively]'. Korfhagen posits that the later semantic shift may stem from

the prototypical positive meaning that the word historically enjoyed, leading to a more socially accepted meaning of 'to shave.'

Working within the standardization framework, in Chapter 16 Patricia Giménez-Eguibar discusses textual evidence that demonstrates the existing linguistic ideologies toward Arabisms in the sixteenth century. The author analyzes these ideologies through the prescriptive attitudes expressed in Guadix's works (*La Primera parte de una recopilación de algunos nombres árabigos*), which may have led to the development of lexical stereotypes and eventual suppression of Arabisms over time, as evidenced in Herrera's use of Arabisms in the early versions of his work, *Obra de Agricultura*, only later to excise these items in later revisions and editions of the same work.

In Chapter 17, Rey Romero focuses on lexical accommodation in Judeo-Spanish in three communities: Istanbul, the Prince Islands, and New York City. Romero shows that the three communities present similar patterns of accommodation to model Peninsular or Latin American Spanish varieties: the adaptation is primarily lexically driven, although phonological adaptation is also found. The author discusses other factors of accommodation in these Judeo-Spanish communities such as group age, degree of contact with other varieties of Spanish, and language attitudes.

We would like to conclude by saying that the articles in *Spanish Language and Sociolinguistic Analysis* represent a significant contribution to the growing field of Spanish sociolinguistics. The well-known scholars, as well as young and promising researchers, whose work makes up this volume, demonstrate the most advanced theoretical and technical approaches. We are honored to have had the opportunity to work with all of them and we hope this volume will provide students and scholars with new insights into the field of sociolinguistics.

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PART I

**Cutting-edge Methodologies in  
Sociolinguistics**

