

Introduction

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Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the first studies of quantitative sociolinguistics were carried out (Labov 1966 and 1972; Gumperz and Hymes 1972; Hymes 1974), research on Spanish speaking communities has adopted the new methods and achieved major advances, starting with the early work by Fishman et al. (1971) (Lipski 2000: 11). Accordingly, it is reasonable to claim that besides consolidating its own area, sociolinguistic research based on Spanish data has been of great consequence both to the field of sociolinguistics in general and to Spanish linguistics in particular. This significance is also relevant to other linguistic studies of the many languages that are in contact with Spanish. In addition to this, a constantly growing and already large body of research confirms that Spanish sociolinguistics is, epistemologically speaking, a genuine field of knowledge.

The diffusion of the Spanish language throughout several parts of the world, the dialect variation it displays, and the contact it maintains with other linguistic varieties make Spanish sociolinguistics a very productive and dynamic research field indeed. In the majority of the case studies investigated, the geographical location is the starting point for observations and analyses of a wide range of social and linguistic variables. In reality, studies suggest several zones for Spanish sociolinguistic research (Klee and Ramos-Gracia 1991; Silva-Corvalán 1995; Roca and Jensen 1996): Spain, the United States, Latin America, and other regions including Guinea Equatorial, the Philippines, and North Africa.

Researchers working in Spanish sociolinguistics often have two options when they present their findings in academic gatherings. The first is large conferences that bring together scholars from diverse backgrounds working with different theoretical perspectives and classes of data. This option is interesting in that these events may be informative as far as methodological and theoretical issues are concerned although not necessarily related to Spanish data. The second is conferences organized on Spanish linguistics with the different sub-fields represented, where sociolinguistic papers may not receive enough attention or may be in separate sessions depending on the organizational scheme. In both cases, it is uncertain whether the scientific community working in sociolinguistics using Spanish data gets the chance for deep and close contact that would allow for a more effective exchange of findings and practical methodological tools.

Therefore, the need for a more focused event was the rationale for the organization of the First Workshop on Spanish Sociolinguistics on March 14th and 15th 2002 at the University at Albany, State University of New York. The objective was to bring together research papers that share both an interest in Spanish data and a sociolinguistic perspective. The contributions included in the present volume are a selection from the original twenty-one papers presented at the Workshop. In what follows I will present a brief overview of each one, following the order in which they were presented during the Workshop and in which they are organized in this volume to facilitate easy consultation: first the papers that deal with Spain, then Latin America and the Caribbean, and finally the United States.

The first paper is by J. Clancy Clements who through a meticulous examination of the naturalistically learned Spanish of a Chinese speaker in Madrid and two Indo-Portuguese creoles discusses the classification of the creole varieties and the role that the perception of the speakers plays in considering these varieties separate from their respective families. The next three papers, by Margaret Simmons, Mireia Galindo Solé, and Carles de Rosselló, deal with contact between Spanish and Catalan. In the first one, Margaret Simmons studies the relevance of the notion of “linguistic markets” to language shift and maintenance among adult speakers in Barcelona. By analyzing two sets of data with almost ten years between the collection of the first corpus and the second, she stresses the linguistic mobility that marks the dynamic co-existence of Spanish and Catalan.

Mireia Galindo Solé uses recorded data produced by schoolchildren to study the extent of the effects Catalan has had on the spoken Castilian varieties in Catalonia. Her results show interesting

findings concerning the limited changes observed. In the last paper that deals with Catalonia, Carles de Rosselló analyzes the issue of language choice among preadolescents from one school in Barcelona in order to determine whether the use of Catalan has increased in circles other than the Catalan speaking families. He discovers that the use of Catalan has not increased among the groups of students from monolingual Castilian households in their intra-group interactions; but the use of Catalan in inter-group interactions is higher than what might be believed.

Obdulia Castro's paper takes us to Galicia to look into the nature of pitch accent in Galician Spanish. Through a detailed phonetic analysis she argues that the remarkably high intensity of stressed syllables, unique to this variety, has its roots in Galician and permeates spoken Spanish as a result of the close contact between the two languages.

Moving towards Latin America, Gerardo Augusto Lorenzino presents the interesting case of Quechua speaking immigrants originally from Santiago del Estero who have settled in Buenos Aires. He looks into language attitude and its relevance to the variable competency loss and transfer from Spanish that are reflected in their speech.

Anna Trester studies the status of the extensively used Costa Rican expression "Pura Vida" as a discourse marker and the functions it realizes by comparing it to other markers. Her data is drawn from questionnaires and participant observation carried out in San Jose. The results provide a deep insight into this salient feature of Costa Rican Spanish.

The contribution by Jonathan Holmquist proves how the rates of preservation of high final *i* and *u*, of the distinction between *r* and *l*, and the preservation of velar *rr* in the recorded data he collected in the community of Castañer (Puerto Rico) reflect the degree of integration of the speakers in the community and its economic activity.

The first of the studies on Spanish in the United States is the paper by Raquel Serrano and Elizabeth Howard who present results from a long-term research project on English/Spanish immersion programs. The focus of their paper is the influence that English has on the Spanish writing of native Spanish-speaking fifth-graders. A total of 65 writing samples from different regions in the country were analyzed to determine the nature of this influence in terms of mechanics, lexicon and grammar.

Dora Ramírez on her part analyzes the signs of regression that first-generation Colombian immigrants settled in the Albany area (NY) present in their use of Spanish. She elaborates on the factors that lead to this regression, especially the age of arrival to the US and the type of social network the speakers have, to determine whether this is the first step towards language attrition.

Marilyn S. Feke's contribution is a study of the use of back-channel responses in native-English speakers' and native-Spanish speakers' mixed-sex and single-sex conversations. Her analysis shows that Spanish-speaking females accommodate their back-channel behavior the most, followed by English-speaking females, English-speaking males, and finally Spanish-speaking males.

Colleen Young employs the well-known matched-guise technique to study the reaction that college students of Spanish show towards second language learners of both Spanish and English. The results she reaches confirm her hypothesis that language choice and second language learners' accent influence the linguistic attitudes of listeners.

Philipp Angermeyer analyzes data from Spanish-English bilingual mediation and arbitration hearings in small claims court in New York City to prove that lexical cohesion is a motivation for codeswitching. Both the originality of his data and the approach he adopts to account for insertions made by Spanish-dominant litigants represent an interesting and innovative approach to the study of codeswitching.

Last but not least, Jessica Aaron's paper investigates how energetic constructions with intransitive verbs in Spanish are motivated by parallel effect and the pragmatic weight of the event rather than language contact. She bases her analysis on the use of two verbs, *ir(se)* and *salir(se)*, in a bilingual neighborhood in Albuquerque (NM).

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