Linguistic and Social Variables Influencing the Accent on the Discourse Marker *y* among Puerto Rican Bilinguals in Hampton Roads, Virginia

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1. Introduction

Various scholars have defined discourse markers (DMs) and described their textual functions in both English (Schiffrin, 1987; Fraser, 1988; 1999; Schourup, 1999) and Spanish (Ballesteros, 1993; Zorraquino, 1998; Mujica, 2005). However, studies of the Spanish DM *y* in both linguistic and social contexts are few in number (Rodríguez, 1991; Torres, 1997; 2002; Cepeda, 1999).

2. Purpose of this study

The present study examined the following observations of Navarro Tomás and Real Academia Española (RAE):

> "La partícula *y* se acentúa cuando, con valor adverbial o pronominal, encabeza una frase interrogativa: "¿*Y* tu padre?" "¿*Y* si estuviera equivocado?" (N. Tomás,1985: 193)
> (The particle *y* is accented when, with adverbial or pronominal value, it heads an interrogative phrase: "*And* your father?" "*And* if it were wrong?")
> "La conjunción *y* aparece con acento de intensidad en comienzo de oraciones interrogativas ajustadas a la curva melódica de la pregunta pronominal: ¿*Y* tu padre? =¿dónde, cómo está tu padre?" (RAE: 1983:72))
> (The conjunction *y* appears with accent of intensity at the beginning of interrogative sentences adjusted to the melodic curve of the pronominal question: "*And* your father?=where, how is your father?)

In addition, the frequency of accented DM *y* in relation to linguistic and social variables was studied, and variables that most heavily influence the choice of accented versus unaccented *y* among Puerto Rican bilinguals living in Hampton Roads, VA were identified.

3. Informants and Methods

More than 66 hrs of interview data were gathered during 2002 - 2004. All 48 informants were born in Puerto Rico, and 45 came to the U.S. in their teens or later. Informant ages varied from 21 to 81. After discarding cases of *y* used as a coordinative conjunction (CC) *y*, prosodic features for 12,487 occurrences of DM *y* were classified, first by using Praat and then later auditorily. Crosstab and Chi-square analyses were used to examine the influence of linguistic variables, social variables and style (Labov, 2001). Informants consisted mainly of family and friends.

3.1. Coordinative conjunction y discarded

Spanish *y* may be classified as a coordinative conjunction (CC *y*) or as a discourse marker (DM *y*). Therefore, CC *y* were identified and discarded from the data, based on the criteria for DMs (Halliday and Hasan, 1979). The difference between coordinative conjunctions and discourse markers is shown below. These authors termed the discourse marker *and* as *cohesive coordination,* and the coordinative conjunction *and* as *structural coordination*. They summarize the characteristics of *cohesive coordination* as follows:

1) Cohesive coordination unites one sentence to another to give cohesion to the text. The coordinated elements do not have a conjunct syntactic function, as in structural coordination.
2) Cohesive coordination is restricted to only two members.
3) Cohesive coordination does not have a corresponding negative form.
4) Cohesive coordination includes factors of emphasis that are absent in structural coordination.[1]

In addition to the aforementioned characteristics of *cohesive coordination* (DM), Levinson (1983) adds the following characteristics. Although he does not use the term "discourse marker," he says that when *and* has the meaning of *and then,* it functions as cohesive coordination and unites the phrases in chronological order. Additionally he notes that changing the order of the phrases changes the meaning completely, while conjunctive coordination does not change the meaning. This criterion was also used to distinguish DM *y* from CC *y*. Compare the following examples from Levinson.

a. Getting married and having a child is better than having a child and getting married.
b. Having a child and getting married is better than getting married and having a child.

The following examples of DM *y* and CC *y* are taken from the present study. In example c, the order of segments set off by *y* cannot be changed without changing the meaning. On the other hand, in example d. changing the order does not alter the meaning.

c. Yo empecé a caminar a buscar algo, creo que fue. *Y* cuando yo oigo alguien me dice, me dice en inglés, <Q salte del medio, salte de ahí que va a aterrizar un avión! Q> bien duro. (ER: 0184)--DM
(I started to walk to look for something, I think it was. *And* when I hear someone tell me, tell me in English, "get out of the center, get out of there, because an airplane is going to land!" very loudly.)
d. Bueno. yo conocí, yo conocí al papá de mi papá, *y* a su mamá, ...(FD: 0282)--CC
(Well. I knew, I knew the dad of my dad, *and* his mom, ...)

The following table reports the classification of 15,103 cases of coordinative conjunction and discourse marker *y*. (Table 1.)

	Frequency	Percentage
Coordinative Conjunction	2.616	17.3%
Discourse Marker	12,487	82.7%
Total	15,103	100.0%

Table 1. Number and percentage of Coordinative Conjunctions and Discourse Markers.

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[1] The criteria 1) to 4) are from the author's translation of Ballesteros, Margarita P. (1993:83-93).

3.2. *Method of accent classification*

Fundamental frequency (pitch) seems to be the most important cue for perception of accent in Spanish (Quilis, 1971; Enríquez, 1989; Castro, 2003). The pitches of *y* and its preceding syllable were measured with Praat. If the pitch of *y* was equal or lower than the pitch of the preceding syllable, then *y* was classified as 'without accent'. If the pitch of *y* was higher than the preceding syllable, it was classified as 'with accent'. My auditory perception was trained using Praat to analyze the pitch of 30 tokens. The remaining tokens were analyzed auditorily.

Forty-eight informants were from the Hampton Roads, Virginia area, which includes Hampton, Newport News, Yorktown, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, and Portsmouth.

4. Accent on *y* in relation to linguistic and social variables[2]

4.1. *Frequency of occurrence of Accent on DM y*

The number of tokens with and without accent is shown in Table 2.

Accent on *y*	Frequency	%
Accented *y*	2,215	17.7%
Unaccented *y*	10,272	82.3%
Total	12,487	100%

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Categories: Accent on *y*

4.2. *Frequency of Accented Initial y in Interrogative and Declarative Phrases*

Of the 2,215 cases of initial accented *y*, only 18 were interrogative phrases. By contrast, 2,197 declaratives with an accented *y* at the phrase initial position were observed (Table 3).

Accented *y*	Frequency	%
Phrase Initial *y* in Interrogatives	18	0.8%
Phrase Initial *y* in Declaratives	2,197	99.2%
Total	2,215	100%

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Phrase initial *y* in interrogatives/ declaratives

See the following examples from the present study. All have accented **y** at the beginning of the declarative phrase. The sign ',' indicates level or rising intonation at the end of a clause. The sign '.' indicates falling intonation and '...' designates a pause in the transcription. Empty brackets [ ] indicate that two speakers are overlapping.

> e. El avión se estrelló en Melborne, Florida, **y** mamá murió. (AH: 4:54)
>   (The airplane crashed in Melborne, Florida, and Mom died.)
> f. C: Aja, entonces mi esposa ya, mi esposa nunca iba pa' ningún sitio. Ella me, y ami-, la amigas
>   empezaron a sacar primero a bingo, .. **y** después [empecé] ...
>   A: [Para que se] distrayera. (CV:15:0090)
>   (C: Aja, then my wife now, my wife never went anywhere. She to me, now frie-, her friends
>   started to take her out to bingo. .. and later I started ...)
>   (A: In order that she will be entertained.)
> g. Entonces yo era el mayor, **y** yo cocinaba para mi papá que trabajaba. (CV:04:037)
>   (At that time I was the oldest, and I used to cook for my dad who worked.)

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[2] Linguistic and social variables are capitalized so as to distinguish them from the remainder of the text.

4.3. Accent on y in relation to Length of y

Length of *y* (30 tokens) was analyzed with Praat. The remaining tokens were analyzed auditorily. The average length of short *y* was 0.11 sec., and long *y* was 0.41 sec. Accented *y* tends to be longer than unaccented *y* (Chi-square=305.26, p<.01)(Table 4).

Length of *y*	Accent on *y*		Total
	Accented *y*	Unaccented *y*	
Long	766 (29.4%)	1,843 (70.6%)	2,609 (20.9%)
Short	1,449 (14.7%)	8.429 (85.3%)	9,878 (79.1%)
Total	2,215 (17.7%)	10,272 (82.3%)	12,487 (100%)

Chi-square=305.262, p<.01

Table 4. Frequency and Percentage of Accent on *y* and Length of *y*

4.4. Accent on y in relation to Pause before y

Thirty tokens were analyzed with Praat for the presence or absence of a pause before *y*. When either a slight pause or a glottal stop was heard, *y* was classified as pause. All other cases were classified as continuous. When there is a pause before *y*, the percentage of accented *y* is strikingly higher than when *y* is pronounced continuously after Segment 1 (S1) (Chi-square=971.92, p<.01) (Table 5).

Pause before *y*	Accent on *y*		Total
	Accented *y*	Unaccented *y*	
Pause	2,161 (24.7%)	6,585 (75.3%)	8,746 (70.0%)
Continuous	54 (1.4%)	3,687 (98.6%)	3,741 (30.0%)
Total	2,215 (17.7%)	10,272 (82.3%)	12,487 (100%)

Chi-square=971.923, p<.01

Table 5. Frequency and Percentage Cross Tabulation of Accent on *y* by Pause before *y*

4.5. Accent on y in relation to Subject Familiarity

Prince (1981) studied the taxonomy of information given and new. She used a scale called Assumed Familiarity, which categorizes the familiarity the speaker assumes that the hearer has, regarding the matters that the speaker is discussing. The scale consists of three categories: Evoked, Inferable and New. Her scale was applied to the present analysis of the subject of Segment 2 (S2, after *y*) in comparison with the subject of S1 (before *y*) and this comparison was termed Subject Familiarity. In cases of complex construction, the subjects of principal clauses were compared.

Segment 1 (Subject 1 + Verb + Object) *y* Segment 2 (Subject 2 + Verb + Object)

↑_____compared_____|

The following is an example of Evoked Subject Familiarity. When the subjects of S1 and S2 are different, the subject of S2 may be situationally or textually evoked. In the following example, CM is talking about an incident when he was still a baby in the crib. The subject of S1 (Se escondieron.) is 'mi mamá y mi papá'. The subject of S2, 'yo,' is situationally and textually discernible, that is, the person who is talking about the incident.

h. Na-, nadie sabía cómo yo me escapaba de la cuna. Entonces hasta que una, un día mi **mamá y mi papá** me estaban velando. Se escondieron. *Y*, **yo** cogía un palito de la cuna, lo movía así. Lo sacaba. (CM:6:0051) -- **Evoked**.

(No- no one knew how I escaped from the crib. Then until one, one day my mom and my dad were watching me. They hid themselves. And, I pulled out one of the little bars from the crib, I moved it that way. I pulled it out.)

There are cases when the subjects of S1 and S2 are the same. Such cases were originally classified as Same Subject, but were later merged into Evoked for statistical purposes. The following is an example. WC talks about her experience of confusing "sleeping pill" and "sleeping pillow" at the clinic where she used to work. The subject of S1 is **yo** as printed in block letters. The subject of S2, indicated by the verb conjugation **hice**, is also **yo**.

    i. Los clientes me decían, no se rían, una vez me pidieron, una <L2 sleeping pill L2>, y yo le dí una almohada. yo creí que era un <L2 sleeping pillow L2>. Era un anciano, era un anciano tenían como ochenta años y él con su bastoncito. y **yo** tan contenta -- porque yo decía <Q yo entendí algo Q> -- *y* lo **hice** caminar hasta, hasta las áreas de las almohadas. Y él, sabe como quien dice, <Q para dónde me lleva esta mujer a mí? Q>. **--Same**
(The clients told me, don't laugh, once they asked me for a sleeping pill, and I gave him a pillow. I thought it was a sleeping pillow. He was an old guy. He was an old guy who had more or less 80 years of age and he was with his cane, and **I** was very happy, -- so I said <Q I understood something. Q> --, and **I made** him walk to to the area where pillows are. And he, you know like as if he wants to say, <Q where on earth is this woman taking me?! Q>

The next example is of **Inferable**. CM talks about how his absence from home, by virtue of being in the Navy, affected his daughter. The subject of S1 is 'mi hija'. The S2 subject of '**fue bien fuerte**' may be inferred by common sense as 'the absence of her father', although it is implicit.

    j. .. Especialmente para, para esa época **mi hija**, ya tenía, cuatro añitos o cinco añitos, *y, y,* **fue bien fuerte** para ella. (CM:15:0083.4) **--Inferable**.
(especially for, for that period my daughter, already had four years or five years of age, and, and, it was very hard for her.)

When S2 introduces a totally new entity, it is classified as New. In the following example, WC talks about the clinic in which she started to work on the base, and she relates the manner in which employees at the clinic treated her. In the following pseudo-cleft sentence, '*y* **lo que me gustó ahí** fue que,...ellos te ayudaban mucho,' the new subject '**lo que me gustó**' is introduced.

    k. Yo empecé a trabajar,. *y* **lo que me gustó ahí** fue que, en vez de burlarse de uno que uno no sabe hablar inglés, o que uno no puede expresarse, ellos te ayudaban mucho. (WC:47:0204) **-- New**
(And I started to work, and what I liked there was that, instead of making fun of a person that a person does not know how to speak in English, or a person cannot express himself, they helped you a lot.)

For the statistical analysis of Subject Familiarity, only cases in which there is a subject in Segment 1 and Segment 2, can be used. This meant that cases involving repeated *y* (776 tokens), phrases without subject (769), borrowing and code switching (17), *y* followed by other DMs (618), stuttering (268), final *y* (35), inaudible utterances (26), or onomatopoeia (1) could not be used. In total, 2,510 tokens were discarded, after which 9,977 tokens remained. The percentage of accented *y* increases as the subject of S2 becomes less familiar, relative to the subject of S1 (Chi-square=45.76, p<.01) (Table 6).

Subject Familiarity	Accent on *y*		Total
	Accented *y*	Unaccented *y*	
Evoked	1,361 (17.0%)	6,645(83.0%)	8,006 (80.2%)
Inferable	328 (21.4%)	1,205 (78.6%)	1,533 (15.4%)
New	122 (27.9%)	316 (72.1%)	438 (4.4%)
Total	1,811 (18.2%)	8,166 (81.8%)	9,977 (100%)

Chi-square=45.76, p<.01

Table 6. Frequency and Percentage Cross Tabulation of Accent on *y* by Subject Familiarity.

4.6. Accent on y in relation to Sex

When the percentage of accented *y* was analyzed in regard to Sex, female informants used accented *y* almost as twice as often as male informants (Chi-square=284.99, p<.01) (Table 7).

Sex	Accent on *y*		Total
	Accented *y*	Unaccented *y*	
Male	912 (12.8%)	6,239 (87.2%)	7,151 (57.3%)
Female	1,303 (24.4%)	4,033 (75.6%)	5,336 (42.7%)
Total	2,215 (17.7%)	10,272 (82.3%)	12,487 (100%)

Chi-square=284.987, p<.01

Table 7. Frequency and Percentage Cross Tabulation of Accent on *y* by Sex

4.7. Accent on y in relation to Age

Younger informants (age ≤39 years) used accented *y* more frequently than older informants (age >39 years)(Chi-square=46.93, p<.01) (Table 8).

Age	Accent on *y*		Total
	Accented *y*	Unaccented *y*	
Young	999 (20.7%)	3,830 (79.3%)	4,829 (38.7%)
Old	1,216 (15.9%)	6,442 (84.1%)	7,658 (61.3%)
Total	2,215 (17.7%)	10,272 (82.3%)	12,487 (100%)

Chi-square=46.931, p<.01

Table 8. Frequency and Percentage Cross Tabulation of Accent on *y* by Age

4.8. Correlation of Informant Age and Years of Residence in U.S.

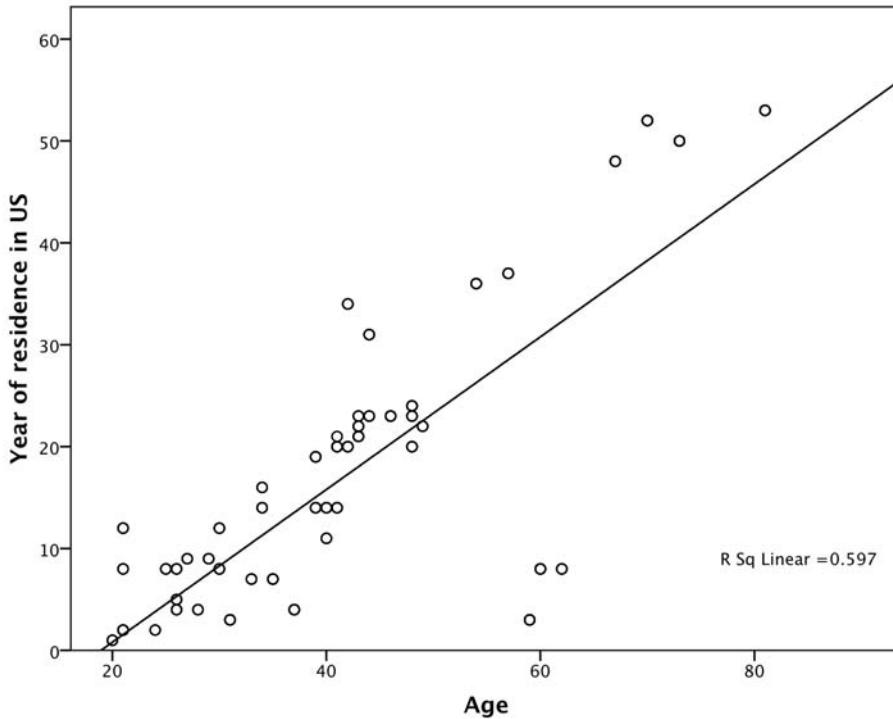Informant Age was strongly and positively correlated with Years of Residence in the U.S. (r=.783, p<.01) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Correlation of informant Age and Years of Residence in the US.

After categorization of these two variables [Age: Young (≤39) or Old (>39); Years of Residence in the U.S.: Long (>5 years) or Short (≤5 years)], Chi-square analysis was used to examine if these two newly formed categorical variables have a statistical relationship with each other. The Cross Tabulation showed that when informant years of residence in U.S. are short (≤5 years), younger informants used more *y* than older informants (81.8% vs 18.2%). On the contrary when years of residence in U.S. were longer (≥6 years), younger informants used fewer *y* than older informants (26% vs 74.0%)(Chi-square=2878.0, p<.001) (Table 9). The Chi-square test showed that these two categorical variables, Age and Years of Residence in the U.S. are significantly independent of each other. Therefore these two variables were used as different variables.

	Accent on *y* according to Age		
Years of Residence in U.S.	**Young (≤39)**	**Old (≥40)**	**Total**
Short (≤5 years)	2,321 (81.8%)	517 (18.2%)	2,838 (22.7%)
Long (≥6 years)	2,508 (26.0%)	7,141 (74.0%)	9,649 (77.3%)
Total	4,829 (38.7%)	7,658 (61.3%)	12,487

Chi-square=2878, p<.001

Table 9. Frequency and Percentage Cross Tabulation of Age (young/old) by Years of Residence in U.S. (short/long).

4.9. Accent on y in relation to Years of Residence in U.S.

Puerto Rican informants with short residence in the U.S. employed accented *y* more frequently than those with longer residence (Chi-square=44.69, p<.01) (Table 10).

Years of Residence in U.S.	Accent on *y*		Total
	Accented *y*	**Unaccented *y***	**Total**
Short (≤5 years)	623 (22.0%)	2,215 (78.0%)	2,838 (22.7%)
Long (≥6 years)	1,592	8,057 (83.5%)	9,649 (77.3%)
Total	2,215	10,272 (82.3%)	12,487 (100%)

Chi-square=44.688, p<.01

Table 10. Frequency and Percentage Cross Tabulation of Accent on *y* by Years of Residence in the U.S.

When the continuous variable, Years of Residence in the U.S., was categorized (7 categories) and compared to Accent on *y*, the percentage of accented *y* decreased as years of residence in the U.S. increased, except for the stratum of 31-40 years of residence. In this stratum, there were only four informants. Since the number of informants in this stratum was small, the higher than expected percentage of accented *y* (Table 11) may be idiosyncratic. The four informants had frequencies of accented *y* as follows: NZ (27.7%), RZ(32.7%), IY(22.2), and JD(15.3%). NZ and RZ are sisters living together with their children. These sisters normally communicate in Spanish. Although IY's husband is American, she has a good command of Spanish, since she used to live among Latinos. JD's wife is Korean and he says his Spanish is not so good anymore. He speaks English, Korean, and German at home.

Years of Residence in U.S.	Accent on *y*		Total
	Accented *y*	**Unaccented *y***	**Total**
1-5 years	623 (22.0%)	2,215 (78.0%)	2,838 (22.7%)
6-10 years	393 (18.6%)	1,715 (81.4%)	2,108 (16.9%)
11-20 years	426 (16.0%)	2,232 (84.0%)	2,658 (21.3%)
21-30 years	334 (14.1%)	2,035 (85.9%)	2,369 (19.0%)
31-40 years	228 (23.6%)	738 (76.4%)	966 (7.7%)
41-50 years	100 (13.6%)	636 (86.4%)	736 (5.9%)
51+ years	111 (13.7%)	701 (86.3%)	812 (6.5%)
Total	2,215 (17.7%)	10,272 (82.3%)	12,487 (100%)

Chi-square=103.224, p<.01

Table 11. Frequency and Percentage Cross Tabulation of Accent on *y* by Years of Residence in U.S.

4.10. Overall results of Chi-square analysis

Chi-square analysis indicated that 9 out of 14 independent variables were statistically significant in relation to Accent on *y* (Table 12).

		Independent Variables	Chi-square value	Significance	Number of categories
Linguistic Variables	**Prosodic Variables**	Length of *y*	305.26	p<.01	2
		Pause before *y*	971.92	p<.01	2
		Pause after *y*	2.18	not significant	2
		Phrase Final Intonation before *y*	8.22	p<.01	2
	Textual Variables	Relevance of S1 and S2	0.019	not significant	2
		Subject Familiarity	45.76	p<.01	3
		Phrase Length S1	16.72	p<.01	2
		Phrase Length S2	0	not significant	2
		Locus of *y* in Conversational Turn	50.53	p<.01	2
Social Variables		Sex	284.99	p<.01	2
		Age	46.93	p<.01	2
		Years of Residence	44.69	p<.01	2
		Education	0.57	not significant	2
		Style*	0.44	not significant	2

*'Style' follows Labov (2001).

Table 12. List of independent variables and their significance.

4.11. Result of Logistic Regression

Logistic regression was performed to determine the best model for Accent on *y*. Only six of nine variables proved statistically significant -- 1) Length of *y*, 2) Pause before *y*, 3) Subject Familiarity, 4) Sex, 5) Years of residence in the U.S. (2 categories), and 6) Age. This model explains 25.1% (Nagelkerke r-square) of the variation in with/without accent on DM *y*. The model predicts the presence or absence of accent on *y* 83.0% of the time. Since the classification cutoff used was 0.5, SPSS dropped variables such as Intonation before *y*, Pause after *y*, Phrase Length S1, S2, Locus of *y* in Conversational Turn, because their value as predictor variables for Accent on *y* was small. (Table 13).

Variables	Exp(B)
Length of *y*	2.05*
Pause before *y*	29.11*
Subject Familiarity	
Subject Familiarity (1)	1.47*
Subject Familiarity (2)	1.16
Sex	0.37*
Years of Residence in U.S.	1.39*
Age	1.19*
Nagelkerke r-square	0.23

*significant at p<.05, cut value=0.50

Predicted Percentage Correct: 83.0

Table 13. Logistic Regression Model predicting Accent on *y*

5. Discussion

Navarro Tomás (ibid.) and the Real Academia Española (ibid.) observed that accented *y* appears in the phrase initial position of interrogatives. This is correct; however, in the present study, accented *y* was found to occur in this position at a very low frequency (0.8%). Of 2,215 phrase initial accented *y* recorded in this study, all but 18 were declarative sentences rather than interrogative ones.

Additionally, the linguistic and social variables that influence the use of accented *y* were determined. In the case of linguistic variables, the current study proved accented *y* was frequently associated with long *y*, and with a pause before *y*. The relationship between syllabic accent and length was also reported by Quilis (ibid.). Accented *y* was also influenced by the degree of difference in the subjects of segment 1 and segment 2 (before and after *y*). The speaker employs accented *y* because he/she wants to convey to the hearer that the information that follows has considerable importance. Thus the *y* is accented and lengthened at the same time. In addition, since a pause signifies the end of an information unit, in order for the speaker to keep the turn, he/she has to signal his/her intention to continue. Thus, the speaker tends to use more accented *y* after a pause. Speakers are aware of a change in subject while they are talking, and when a new subject is about to be introduced in S2, speakers tend to signal the change of subject by increasing the accent on *y*.

The present study also found that sex, age, and years of residence in the U.S. were associated with accented *y*. Female speakers seem to be more eager to signal that they want to continue to talk than male speakers. The concept that females talk differently from males, reported by Bolinger (1989) is supported by the present study. The younger informants tend to have more accented *y* than old informants. The influence of age difference on the frequency of accented *y* may reflect a change in the use of accented *y* in Puerto Rico. However, in order to test this, further study on the island would be required. There is a decreased frequency of accented *y* with increasing years of residence in the U.S. In the framework of Preston (1982) and Andersen (1979), there are 13 areas of "high attrition likelihood." Preston identified both "marked items" and "low-frequency items" as being likely to be lost. Since accented *y* is a marked item and also a low frequency item, Preston's "high attrition likelihood" may explain the decrease of accented *y* with increased time in the U.S. However, a study of change in accented *y* in Puerto Rico would be necessary to assess this.

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