Beyond the Isogloss: Trends in Hispanic Dialectology

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1. Overview

The study of regional and social dialects has always been a major component of Hispanic linguistics. Hundreds of monographs and articles have appeared, describing varieties of Spanish in Latin America and Spain. Dialectology, however, is more than the sum total of individual descriptive studies, and an adequate dialectology must have a firm theoretical framework as well as an empirically valid methodological orientation. Despite considerable attention, many lingering issues remain unresolved, or revert to default 'solutions' which satisfy few observers. Among the more crucial are:

(1) The Peninsular dialect base, regional and social, of Spanish settlers in America, and the extent to which regional dialects of Spain were responsible for dialect differentiation in the New World;

(2) The development of Latin American *voseo,* including the values attached to *tú* and *vos* in the social and regional dialects of Spain during the period of New World settlement;

(3) The influence of Basque, Arabic, Amerindian and African languages on the phonology and syntax of regional varieties of Spanish;

(4) The possible multiple loci of such phenomena as *yeísmo, seseo,* and reduction of syllable-final consonants;

(5) A classification of dialects which transcends simple geographical groupings, or the use of a handful of 'leading indicators.'

The present article will concentrate on work in theoretical linguistics which promises to advance the frontiers of Hispanic dialectol-
ogy, as well as to propose new solutions for old problems. I have been guided by the idea that any 'state of the art' must of necessity make the transition from the specific to the general, and from description to theory. Much of the relevant work is rather recent, which simply reflects the growth pattern of Hispanic linguistics, and embodies no negative assessment of earlier approaches. The presentation is selective rather than exhaustive, representing a cross-section of proposals and ideas which have personally proved useful and exciting, in the classroom, and in research endeavors. Many equally fruitful contributions are not mentioned due to space limitations. The entire discussion is set against the backdrop of the core bibliography, descriptive and theoretical, of contemporary Hispanic dialectology. The names are known to all of us; without their work, none of the research described below would have been possible, and if the studies are not cited individually, it is only because the list alone would use up the allotted space.

2. Phonological phenomena

Phonological theory and dialectology intersect in at least the following domains: (a) the phonological structure of individual segments; (b) processes dependent upon prosodic or autosegmental structures; (c) the nature of the phonological component; (d) grammatical/functional constraints on phonological processes; (e) the interaction of social and phonological variables. The following paragraphs offer a selection of analyses which may account

for variation among dialects, being only a small sample of the current bibliography.

2.1. Changes in the representation of individual phonological elements may occasion differences among dialects. It is generally conceded, for example, that aspiration of /s/ represents phonological weakening (delinking of supralaryngeal features), whose culmination is elision. Velarization of (word-final) /n/ has also been characterized as weakening. Some observers note the relative stability of the velar nasal and question the claim of weakening (cf. Uber 1984, Hammond 1980). Guitart (1982) analyzes velarization of /n/, aspiration of /s/, and velarization of /p/ and /t/ (e.g. *opcional* > *occional*), under the rubric of 'posteriorización de consonantes posnucleares.' This suggests a possible parameterization of rhyme-final consonantal behavior. Additional theoretical aspects of phonological variation are explored in Guitart (1983). Many dialects do not exhibit all the phenomena, while velarization of obstruents cuts across dialect boundaries and in many regions is better treated as a socially stratified process. Nonetheless, this line of research is a promising theoretical model for recurring clusters of phonological processes.

Delateralization of the palatal lateral, known as *yeísmo,* is an important dialectal variable in Spanish. Lipski (1989a) postulates that the Spanish palatal resonants are single timing slots simultaneously linked to two articulator nodes. *Yeísmo* (and occasional 'gliding' of /ñ/) represents delinking of one articulator, with the point of application (lexical vs. postlexical) characterizing the difference between completely *yeísta* dialects, and *lleísta* dialects with incipient and variable *yeísmo* (cf. Carreira 1988 for a somewhat different approach).

2.2. Many phonological processes depend crucially on particular prosodic or autosegmental configurations, at times reflecting differences among dialects. Thus, Amastae (1986) describes occlusive articulation of postconsonantal /b/, /d/ and /g/ in several Spanish dialects as a function of syllabic structure. Núñez Cedeño (1986) analyzes hypercorrect syllable-final /s/ in nonstandard Dominican Spanish and other Caribbean dialects (e.g. *fino* > *fisno*) as a structure-preserving rule, reflecting the potential of the syllabic template in Spanish. This sheds light on the interaction between deletion of syllable-final consonants and hypercorrect consonant insertion in the same group of dialects (cf. also Terrell 1986). Harris's (1985) analysis of gemination and retroflexion of liquids in Cuban Spanish relies crucially on a multi-tiered phonological model, in which configurations of autosegmental linking determine the eventual output. Although Harris does not explicitly compare developments in Cuban Spanish with other dialects in which liquids undergo assimilation or neutralization, the theoretical mechanism is in place for an extended perspective.

Unstressed vowel reduction and loss, especially in contact with /s/, is a frequent feature of Andean and Mexican Spanish. In an effort to go beyond simple lists of conditioning environments, Lipski (1989b) demonstrates that in Ecuadorean Spanish, pretonic vowel reduction in words admitting of more than one prosodic analysis (e.g. *oficinista, presupuestario*) is partially determined by the existence of paradigmatic alternations with morphologically more basic forms in which the targetted vowel undergoes reduction *(oficina, presupuesto).*

Plural formation in Spanish has attracted attention since the inception of generative phonology, but most of the debate surrounded abstractness of underlying representations, and did not facilitate comparison among dialects. Harris (1980) is a noteworthy exception, providing a nonconcatenative model of Spanish morphology which accounts not only for regular plural formation, but also for nonstandard plurals such as *pieses* and *manises.* Moreover, the appeal to morphological templates allows for a systematic account of nonstandard Dominican plurals in *-se (líbrose, mujérese, cásase).* A template-based approach may also aid in characterizing dialects in terms of diminutive formation (e.g. *pueblo* > *pueblito/pueblecito),* perhaps along the lines suggested by Jaeggli (1980).

The dialects of eastern Andalusia have evolved a process of phonological vowel opening which signals loss of word-final /s/, so that, e.g. *perro* and *perros* are differentiated by the height/tenseness of the final vowel. Eastern Andalusian also exhibits a laxing harmony, whereby loss of a word-final consonant laxes preceding vowels from right to left (Zubizarreta 1979, Lieber 1987). Close scrutiny of eastern Andalusian materials suggests that the case just described is but one of many potential configurations, and that choice of opaque vowel, opacity of the tonic vowel, and

degree of leftward spreading may be subject to principled variation.

Other types of vowel harmony occur in the Montañés dialects of Asturias (Vago 1988, McCarthy 1984). Montañés metaphony is part of a long Asturian-Leonese tradition, while laxing harmony in eastern Andalusia derives from compensation for final consonant loss; there is no a priori reason to anticipate discovery of similar processes in other Spanish dialects. Such discoveries are not to be ruled out, however; for example in the Andean region, Spanish as spoken by fluent (Quechua and Aymara) bilinguals alternates between a 3-vowel and a 5-vowel system, which in some instances may have coalesced into a true vowel harmony paradigm.

2.3. Considerable research centers on the place of rule application within the phonological component, the internal structure of the phonological component, rule types, and constraints on rule application. Much of this work impinges directly or indirectly on dialectology. Harris (1983) has provided the most comprehensive modern study of Spanish phonology, including a revised treatment of weakening of /s/ and velarization of /n/ in the syllable rhyme. According to this approach, extension to word-final prevocalic position (*los amigos, con él,* etc.) can be accounted for by positing aspiration and velarization as postcyclic rules ordered before phrase-level resyllabification. The reverse order accounts for dialects in which extension to prevocalic contexts is not frequent. Guitart (1985) handles the same processes by postulating variable lexical rules, operating (perhaps optionally) at both the lexical and the postlexical levels. Wong-Opasi (1987) adds further support to the location of aspiration and velarization in the postcyclic section of the lexical phonological component. Lipski (1984, 1986) analyzes prevocalic extension as rule generalization indirectly motivated by general reduction of allomorphy, while Lipski (1989c) proposes a model of rule generalization which depicts word boundary insertion as adjunction of an unattached timing slot, whose variable opacity to syllable-final consonantal modifications accounts for the differential behavior of these processes among various Spanish dialects.

2.4. A great deal of variational research has focused on grammatical and functional constraints in phonology, particularly loss of /s/ and velarization of /n/. The research paradigm is circumscribed by the pioneering work of Terrell (1975, 1976, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1983), Ma and Herasimchuk (1972) and Cedergren (1973), who first attempted to correlate consonantal modification with grammatical function. The theoretical results have been extended and refined by Poplack (1980a), Hochberg (1986), López Morales (1980) and many others. The initial flush of enthusiasm regarding grammatical constraints on consonant modification has paled somewhat, in view of subsequent conflicting results, nonreplicability of certain research findings, and methodological and theoretical misgivings. Whereas the ambitious functional constraints of the earliest studies may have been overstated, some grammatical conditioning is involved in all but the most advanced stages of phonological erosion, and the nature and intensity of such constraints may be a factor in dialect differentiation.

Also promising are attempts to characterize the interaction of syntax and phonology. Bordelois (1984) notes that in many Caribbean Spanish dialects, word-final /s/ is more resistant to effacement when the word in question is immediately dominated by the left branch of the first binary branching node dominating both words (e.g. *los amigos*), than when the Left Branch Condition is not met *(los buenos amigos).* Harris (1983) offers a phonosyntactic analysis of liquid gliding in the Cibao dialect of Dominican Spanish, accounting for the behavior of clitics and articles. Guitart (1988) in turn analyzes this process (among others) as a consequence of the modular structure of the phonological component, arguing for sensitivity to syntactic information even in the postlexical module.

2.5. Most Spanish variational studies have included data on sociolinguistic differentiation. Of import to Hispanic dialectology are those situations where discontinuities are introduced through the intervention of social processes, providing an external motivation for dialect differentiation. In this vein, Lafford (1982) provides evidence of conservative restoration of eroded syllable-final /s/ in Cartagena, Colombia, while Longmire (1976) demonstrates the effects of the Caracas prestige standard in accelerating erosion of /s/ in the Andean zone of Venezuela. Similar social processes are presumably at the root of the spread of *yeísmo* in Spain and Latin America (e.g. Silva-Corvalán 1989), the disappearance

of liquid gliding in the Cibao (Alba 1988), assibilation of /rr/ and /tr/ in Mexico City (Perissinotto, 1972), the behavior of sibilants and palatals in Buenos Aires (Fontanella de Weinberg 1973, 1979) and other centripetal effects of a prestige variant.

3. Syntactic aspects of dialect differentiation

3.1. Syntactic differences among Spanish dialects have frequently been commented, but little theoretical work has been carried out. One reason is the relatively low frequency of many syntactic tokens, in comparison with phonological processes, and the difficulty of defining contexts for syntactic variables. It may also be impossible to clearly differentiate stylistic optionality and dialect variation. In some instances, substrate influence is reflected, as in the use of *dar* + GERUND as imperative in Ecuador (e.g. *dame cerrando la puerta = cierra la puerta*). The influence may be more subtle, as in use of the pluperfect instead of the simple preterite to indicate reported vs. observed events in the past, in Aymara-speaking regions of Bolivia and Peru (e.g. Laprade 1981). Other syntactic variation may be simply quantitative, as in the preference for imperfect subjunctive forms in *-ra* or *-se, leísmo* vs. *loísmo*, choice of verb tense/mood in complex clauses, of retention of overt subject pronouns.

3.2. Contemporary syntactic theory has begun to shed light on dialectological puzzles. For example, Southern Cone dialects allow direct object clitic doubling with personal NPs (e.g. *lo conozco a Juan*), which Jaeggli (1982) analyzes in terms of the differential case-assigning properties of the preposition *a* in this dialect group (cf. also Luján 1987). A related construction is clitic doubling with inanimate direct objects, found in Andean Spanish: *lo he dejado mi poncho* (e.g. Minaya and Luján 1982). Presumably analogous differences in phrase-structure or rules of cliticization are responsible for 'pleonastic' clitics of the type *te puedo verte mañana*, as well as of clitic coreference with interrogatives as in ¿*Que*$_i$ *lo*$_i$ *compraste?* (Silva-Corvalán 1989). These and other regionally or socially differentiated aspects of clitic usage are being incorporated into syntactic theory, which in turn bears directly on expanded models of dialectology.

3.3. Another regional peculiarity is PREPOSED SUBJECT PRONOUN + INFINITIVE, frequent in the Caribbean and found occasionally in many other regions: *antes de yo venir aquí, lo digo para tú entender mejor*, etc. Suñer (1986) has noted the cooccurrence of this phenomenon with frequent retention of overt subject pronouns, of non-inverted WH questions, and of loss of word-final /s/ and /n/, and has proposed that a strategy of maintaining a fixed word order may be involved. This in turn leads to the possibility for structural case assignment in ungoverned environments. Lipski (1989d) extends this analysis, suggesting that a nonovert [+AGR] specification may be at work, while implicating the previous influence of creolized or marginalized language varieties in the Caribbean region.

3.4. Non-inverted WH-questions (e.g. ¿*Qué tú quieres?*), found in many Caribbean dialects, have been analyzed as the result of syntactic filters (e.g. Núñez Cedeño 1983), as the gradual approach of subject pronouns to clitic status (Lipski 1977), and as a carryover into weakly monitored adult speech of patterns found in intermediate stages of child language (Lantolf 1980). Given that all Spanish dialects permit certain types of non-inverted questions (Torrego 1984), it may ultimately be feasible to discover true syntactic parameters separating dialects along the dimension of types of permitted inversion, perhaps as an epiphenomenon of more global properties.

4. Dialect classification schemes

4.1. To date, the intense research just surveyed has had little impact on dialect classifications. Traditional categories are nearly always used, or else country-by-country surveys are given. Accounts of regional variation in Spain use designations derived from historically important boundaries (Extremadura, Castilla, Murcia), at times supplemented by large-scale geographical divisions (eastern vs. western Andalusia) or by the current or past existence of diglossia or bilingualism (León, Aragón, País Vasco, etc.).

4.2. Latin American Spanish dialectology began with the five-way classification of Henríquez Ureña (1921), based on an oversimplified notion of major indigenous influences. Canfield (1962) put aside questions of substrata and diglossia, and constructed a model based on relative dates of Spanish settlement and intensity of sustained contact with the metropolis, either via port-city commerce, or through the establishment of colo-

nial administrative centers. Rona (1964), using synchronic observations, employed an interesting combination of traits: phonological (*yeísmo* or *lleísmo*), phonetic (groove fricative realization of [y]), syntactic *(voseo),* and morphological (choice of *voseo* paradigms). This classification, however, was heavily weighted in favor of Southern Cone dialects and failed to differentiate adequately many other variants. Zamora and Guitart (1988) offer a similar proposal, using presence of *voseo* plus a more representative set of phonetic traits to derive a nine-category system which is in greater agreement with empirical observation than either of the preceding schemes. Cahuzac (1980) proposes a classification based entirely on lexical factors, but largely excluding indigneous borrowings. Resnick (1975) attempts an exhaustive dialect classification, using phonetic and phonological criteria plus aspects of *voseo* usage, to arrive at a system which potentially includes thousands of variants. This approach is unique in starting not with preestablished dialect zones, but rather with a large corpus of data, representing variation throughout Latin America. The data are then sifted according to the chosen binary criteria, resulting in classifications which cut across geographical and social boundaries.

4.3. Synthetic accounts, coupled with theoretical advances and refined descriptive studies, may ultimately yield a dialectological system which transcends sociohistorical divisions and acknowledges language-internal criteria. Thus Guitart (1978) classifies Spanish dialects into 'radical' and 'conservative,' an originally pedagogical designation which is potentially of theoretical importance. This account was later supplemented by the study of 'posteriorización,' and 'Caribbean Spanish' as a phonologically well-defined entity is now widely accepted. Terrell (1976, 1980, 1981, 1983) has demonstrated diachronic reconstruction based on variable rules, as a tool in establishing dialectal divisions. Many of these individual studies can be combined to produce an expanded perspective on phonological differences among Spanish dialects.

5. Spanish once-removed: bilingual and marginal communities

5.1. Spanish is not confined to regions where it is the sole or official language. Peninsular Spanish is in contact with Basque, Catalan, Galician and (in Gibraltar) English, and each bilingual environment has given rise to a research bibliography. In Latin America, bilingual contacts with Portuguese and indigenous languages have been studied intensely, although much remains to be done. Most of the studies are descriptive, although some theoretical conclusions regarding Andean Spanish syntax have emerged (e.g. Muysken 1981). By far the most fruitful domain of bilingual studies has been Spanish-English bilingualism in the United States, where there is not only a vast descriptive and sociolinguistic bibliography, but also considerable theoretical research, in this enormous linguistic test tube.

5.2. Departing from early studies of lexical and phonological penetration from English, much recent work examines syntactic modifications which arise in a bilingual setting, resulting in qualitative innovations. Silva-Corvalán (1986) has studied the evolution of *estar* in Los Angeles Spanish, and her evidence hints at potentially radical departures from other varieties of Spanish. Silva-Corvalán (1982), Morales (1986) and others examine subject pronoun usage among bilingual speakers, and while the results are not yet conclusive, the potential for divergence from monolingual Spanish is manifest. Verb tense and mood in the bilingual setting has come under frequent scrutiny, but most evidence suggests no major modifications in the structure of verb phrases (e.g. Pousada and Poplack 1982, Reyes 1981). The circumstances under which bilingual interpenetration occurs has been most cogently described by Sánchez (1983), who situates U.S. bilingualism in an appropriate sociopolitical context.

5.3. Another facet of Spanish-English contact is code-switching, a frequent topic of discussion in studies of U.S. Spanish. Originally felt to typify linguistic degeneration and bilingual confusion, code switching has been shown to involve elaborate rule-governed linguistic strategies, whose full import for linguistic theory has yet to be assessed. Accounts such as Poplack (1980b), Sankoff and Poplack (1981), Timm (1975), Pfaff (1979), Lipski (1985a), etc. have isolated grammatical constraints on intrasentential switching, and have attempted to construct a syntactic model which is more than the simple intersection of two monolingual grammars. Recently, the issue has been recast in the Government/Binding framework by Klavans (1985), Woolford

(1983), DiSciullo, Muysken and Singh (1986) and others. These authors agree that in a code-switched sentence, lexical insertion from a given language can only take place in syntactic fragments which can be generated by phrase-structure rules of that language. They disagree as to whether a 'matrix' language can be assigned to the sentence, or whether intrasentential language switching produces truly hybrid syntactic structures. As theoretical investigation of code-switching in other bilingual environments continues, the description of U.S. Spanish will be further enriched.

5.4. In several regions of the world, Spanish is spoken vestigially or unofficially in enclaves surrounded by other languages, and the full description of such zones constitutes a major goal of contemporary dialectology. Sephardic Spanish is the oldest marginal variety, still spoken in pockets scattered throughout Europe, Asia and the United States. Also found in the United States are Spanish-speaking isolates such as the *isleños* of Louisiana (MacCurdy 1950). Elsewhere in the world, vestigial Spanish-speaking groups exist in Trinidad and the Philippines, and have recently disappeared from Guam. Spanish is spoken nonofficially but viably in Gibraltar, Belize, the Netherlands Antilles, parts of Haiti, and other regions bordering on officially Spanish-speaking nations. It is spoken officially but as a (sometimes precarious) second language along the Caribbean coast of Central America from Guatemala to Panama (in contact with varieties of West Indian English), in Equatorial Guinea (in contact with several African languages) and in numerous indigenous communities throughout Latin America. Finally, remnants of earlier Afro-Hispanic pidgin or creole dialects continue to exist throughout regions of Latin America which once contained large African populations; the linguistically most famous case is the Palenque de San Basilio in Colombia, but data are also provided by Afro-Hispanic communities in Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Granda (1988) surveys recent developments in Afro-Hispanic linguistics, while Alvarez Nazario (1974) and Granda (1978) cover most of the time-honored topics.

Aside from serving as a fascinating counterpoint to more widely known varieties of Spanish, these vestigial and marginalized dialects provide crucial data which aid in reconstructing patterns of dialect development. The study of language erosion resulting from social and geographical marginalization is also of theoretical importance, and vestigial Spanish has contributed to the study of creolization, language shift, and the results of weakly monitored speech (cf. Lipski 1985b, Moodie 1986). All in all, the groups and zones mentioned above have become the 'last frontier' of Hispanic dialectology, and research continues unabated.

6. Dialectology in the classroom

Awareness of dialect differences has always existed among Spanish teachers, but only lexical variation was systematically incorporated into pedagogical materials. As courses in Spanish phonetics became widespread in American universities, texts such as Dalbor (1980) and Barrutia and Terrell (1982) included ever larger sections on regional variation, a trend also reflected by the publication of Canfield (1981). More recently still, the study of Spanish dialectology has seen an increase, not only among students of linguistics, but also in programs emphasizing literary studies, ethnography and social sciences, and, naturally, the teaching of Spanish and English in the U.S. setting. In addition to the burgeoning bibliography scattered among journals, anthologies and conference proceedings, students and teachers interested in diverse aspects of Spanish language variation may now consult recently published texts, in particular Cotton and Sharp (1988), Silva-Corvalán (1989), Zamora and Guitart (1988), and for a more Latin American perspective, Moreno de Alba (1988) and Montes Giraldo (1982). These works cover the entire scope of contemporary dialectology, including phonological and syntactic variation, dialect leveling, substrata and adstrata, lexicography, sociolinguistic stratification, and field methods. Armed with such tools, the student need not regard dialectology as an esoteric pursuit on the sidelines of literary and linguistic research, but can begin to appreciate the practical impact of a well-rounded approach to language variation.

7. Towards the future

The intense research paradigm of Spanish linguistics, and the renewed interest in detailed analyses of regional and social dialects, foretells a bright future for Hispanic dialectology. The enthusiasm for theoretical studies,

however justified, should not detract from the need to establish and maintain a firm base of sociohistorical knowledge. The focus must also be broadened beyond a simple horizontal (geographical) + vertical (sociolinguistic stratification) model, to account for similarities among homologous groups (e.g. professional class, urban working class, rural peasantry) in widely separated regions (cf. Hidalgo 1989). Finally, in this age of computerized data bases and effortless globe-spanning communication and travel, it is easy to forget that vast areas of the Spanish-speaking world still lack comprehensive description, that sociolinguistic studies of even well-charted dialects are still relatively scarce, and that many 'classic' studies are inadequate, not through inherent shortcomings but rather due to the fact that the dialects have evolved significantly in the last 50-100 years. Enterprises such as the 'Norma Culta' project (cf. Lope Blanch 1986) are partial solutions, but they are based on a small number of highly centralized samples, and on a speech mode which is likely to be unrepresentative of the entire Spanish-speaking world.

I close by indulging in a bit of well-intentioned daydreaming, extrapolating from a slightly idealized present to a reassuringly near future in order to create a fantasy of Spanish dialectology in the best of all possible worlds. In addition to the complete data base which is a *sine qua non* of all dialect research, I project (i.e., dream of) the eventual resolution of the questions mentioned in Section 1. At the same time, it should ultimately be possible to determine the validity of the principles and parameters approach to syntax and phonology. To the extent that such an approach is justified, it should be feasible to characterize certain dialect-types in terms of parametric differences. Formal criteria alone will never account for Spanish dialect differences, but this should not impede the search for theoretical insights into the diversification of language.

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