

# Undoing and Redoing Corpus Planning

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# **Linguistic consequences of the Sandinista revolution and its aftermath in Nicaragua**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The Sandinista takeover

On July 17, 1979, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, the beleaguered president of Nicaragua, gave up the struggle against the popular insurrection which was fighting to topple a nearly 40 year old dynastic dictatorship, and fled the country. Political power was immediately seized by the spearhead organization of the armed resistance, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), a group which took its name from Augusto César Sandino, a Nicaraguan nationalist hero who had fought against the United States military intervention in Nicaragua in the 1930s, and who, after having been tricked into a peace accord, was murdered by orders of the first member of the Somoza family dictatorship. For the next eleven years, the Sandinista movement would totally dominate Nicaragua, taking over the economic, political, social, military, cultural, and educational structures of the country.

### 1.2. The Sandinista regime

The FSLN had seized power with the departure of Somoza, and although at the beginning they enjoyed broad popular support, they were in effect only the armed vanguard of an ideologically more heterogeneous and considerably less left-leaning Nicaraguan population. As the Sandinistas' Marxist-Leninist ideology became apparent, as ties with Cuba and the Soviet Union broadened, as hostile relations with the United States became the order of the day, and as increasingly totalitarian control of the population sank in, rejection of the

Sandinistas as an illegitimate heir to political power became widespread. In 1984 Nicaragua held presidential elections, in which the Sandinista candidate, Daniel Ortega, won a decisive victory. Although international observers reported the elections to be generally fair and free, the United States rejected the results and intensified political and military pressure on the Sandinista government. In 1990 Nicaragua once more held elections, this time under preconditions and a level of scrutiny that even the United States government found acceptable. It was widely felt that Daniel Ortega would easily be reelected, but the Nicaraguan people opted instead for Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, widow of a charismatic newspaper publisher who had been assassinated for his opposition to the Somoza regime. Chamorro was supported by a broad coalition of opposition groups, ranging from ex-National Guard elements who had supported Somoza to more moderate business leaders and even former Sandinista combatants. Observers on all points of the political spectrum assumed that the clock would quickly be turned back on the social, economic and political changes introduced by the Sandinistas. It therefore came as somewhat of a surprise when Chamorro retained Sandinista military leader Humberto Ortega (brother of the former president) as head of the Nicaraguan armed forces, and failed to undertake the expected purge of Sandinista officials in the new government of "national reconciliation". In many ways, Chamorro's policies have pleased no one; pro-Sandinista groups resent Chamorro's redistribution of confiscated land that had been handed over to peasants during the Sandinista regime, while ultra-conservative groups long for a more decisive return to the privileges of the past. Armed rebel movements broke out on both sides, representing fragments of the former anti-Sandinista guerillas and of disgruntled Sandinista supporters, and during the early 1990s it seemed that Nicaragua would sink back into the same self-destructive civil war that had marked the second half of the 1980s. At the time of writing, the political situation in Nicaragua can best be characterized as an uneasy truce, in the midst of continued economic stagnation, sniping from both political extremes, and little foreign investment.

### 1.3. Linguistic effects of the Sandinista takeover

Among the most interesting aspects of the Nicaraguan political transitions - from Somoza to the Sandinistas to the post-Sandinista regime - are the changes in public language usage, both gradual and abrupt. The first changes were observed as the Sandinista government's ideology and its social, political and military programs achieved wide diffusion. Despite the difficulty in tracing linguistic changes, and the even riskier enterprise of equating linguistic change with political evolution, certain features of language usage in Nicaragua can, with some degree of security, be correlated with the changing political climate. In addition to the usual revolutionary rhetoric, the obligatory vilification of supporters of the deposed regime, and the glorification of the triumphant guerrillas, the Sandinista revolution took an active role in shaping popular thought and its linguistic representation. The effects of the linguistic transformation were most obvious in the mass media, particularly radio broadcasting, as well as in the proliferation of government-sponsored signs, banners and slogans which adorned all corners of the nation. Linguistic traces of the Sandinista revolution were also immediately felt during the literacy campaigns, in official intra-government communication, in materials prepared for the literacy campaign, in international diplomatic representation, and in post-revolutionary literature. With the unseating of the Sandinista government in 1990, some of the more scathing revolutionary rhetoric disappeared from the public sphere, as did the sloganeering and media manipulation. Other linguistic processes set in march by the Sandinista takeover continued apace, and are still felt at the present time. The Nicaraguan linguistic, political, and social profile is thus more complex than the idealized DICTATORSHIP > REVOLUTION > COUNTERREVOLUTION model, which presupposes a simple return to the status quo ante. While it is true that Chamorro's election prematurely thwarted Sandinistas' hopes of establishing a permanent political legacy, the post-Sandinista regime has not simply turned back the clock. The linguistic fallout of the Somoza-Sandinista-Chamorro transition combines frustrated hopes with permanent shifts in the speech and attitudes of the Nicaraguan population.

The impact of the Sandinista movement and its opposition on Nicaraguan speech falls into two main categories. The first involves the incorporation of revolutionary rhetoric, in particular new words and expressions which acquired new meanings in the context of the social and political modifications which swept Nicaragua from 1979 to the early 1990s. The second is the incursion of popular and regional speech forms in public language domains which were previously reserved for more formal and internationally homogeneous varieties. This includes written and spoken declarations by high government officials, and government-sponsored radio and television broadcasting. The results are particularly clear in Nicaragua, in view of the rapid sweep of a small nation by a revolution (within less than two years all areas of public language usage had been affected), followed by the almost equally rapid demise of popular enthusiasm for the Sandinistas, and the election of an opposition slate.

## 2. Nicaragua before the Sandinista revolution

### 2.1. Official media language during the Sandinista period

Prior to 1979, Nicaragua fell into the sadly familiar pattern of dynastic dictatorships in small Latin American republics. The Somoza family and its close associates literally controlled the country, with figures ranging from 50%-75% of the gross national product under the direct ownership of this group. Unlike megalomaniac regimes such as Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Duvalier in Haiti, Castro in Cuba and Pinochet in Chile, there was no government-sponsored campaign to legitimize the dictatorship or to enshrine the dictator as a superhero, exempt from the usual requirements of decency and respect for human rights. Nor was the dictatorship touted as the response to a national threat, since none of the Somozas had seized power from an arguably left-leaning regime. Although the dictatorship controlled much of the country's economy, there was little direct intervention in matters of public language, except inasmuch as criticism of the government was not tolerated, and censorship and repression of anti-Somoza sentiments was common. The

Somozas owned several radio stations, but these played popular music and other apolitical programs, and made little attempt to influence public opinion (Alisky 1981: 219-220). The government stations were limited to news broadcasting and official announcements, usually delivered in the formal, artificially precise style common to radio announcers throughout Latin America (Alisky 1955, 1981).

### 2.2. Early anti-Somoza language

Until early 1978, organized resistance to Somoza was sporadic and non-threatening to the regime, and there was little public acknowledgment of insurrectionist groups within Nicaragua. Matters changed in 1978 due to a number of spectacular guerrilla actions carried out by the fledgling Frente Sandinista. In response to the Sandinista attacks, the Somoza government adopted the classical posture of denial followed by vituperation and accusation of foreign communist-inspired agitation. Nicaraguans were led to believe that the Sandinista movement was a thinly disguised Cuban penetration of Nicaragua, and the principal tack taken by the government was the notion that Sandinismo was not an authentically Nicaraguan movement. These early battles set the stage for the linguistic struggle as to what forms of language most adequately define both the Nicaraguan people and the aspirations of the Sandinista revolution. The media within Nicaragua were unable to actively oppose the Somoza dictatorship, although the largest newspaper, *La Prensa*, did publish openly anti-government editorials during the latter years of the Somoza regime. The assassination of the popular editor, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, was one of the events which raised public outrage to the point where normally apolitical citizens actively supported the Sandinista rebels. During the last years of the Sandinista insurrection, the rebels set up a clandestine radio station, Radio Sandino, which carried revolutionary declarations, incitements to sabotage and armed resistance, and denunciations of government atrocities. Always delivered in the urgent, quasi-military delivery common among rebel clandestine stations, Radio Sandino brought

new voices and speech patterns before the Nicaraguan people, as well as expanding awareness of Nicaraguan language and thought to neighboring Latin American regions. Noteworthy in the Radio Sandino broadcasts was the brother-to-brother appeal, the use of popular turns of phrase that were more likely to be heard among peasants and workers than among the college-educated bourgeoisie (from which nearly all Sandinista leaders were drawn), and the establishment of distinctive linguistic/ideological boundaries separating the old Somoza regime and the new revolutionary program. The broadcasts were directed at insurgents within Nicaragua as well as an international audience of monitoring services and expatriate sympathizers (Hauser 1979; Soley 1983; Soley—Nichols 1987: Chapter 9). With the Sandinista triumph, many of the clandestine broadcasters shifted to the confiscated Somoza radio stations, with the result that official Sandinista radio broadcasting represented a direct continuation of rebel broadcasting.

### 3. The immediate aftermath of the Sandinista takeover

#### 3.1. The first fruits of the Sandinista victory

The fall of the Somoza regime in many ways paralleled the demise of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, who in the face of a troublesome but not overwhelmingly decisive rebel movement abruptly abandoned the country at the beginning of 1959. Like the sudden demise of Batista in Cuba, the rapid departure of Somoza was not entirely expected, and left a vacuum into which the Sandinistas moved with less than total decisiveness. This sudden urgency was reflected in the linguistic aura of the early post-Somoza period, when revolutionary ebullience spilled over into all public and private domains. The wildest and most imprudent expressions and claims were brandished alongside more moderate language. As the politically more tolerant Carter administration quickly gave way to the government of Ronald Reagan and the concomitant emphasis on “containment” of anti-imperialist insurgency in Central America, Nicaraguan newspapers and magazines were filled with caricatures of Reagan

and Uncle Sam. The long history of United States intervention in Nicaragua was endlessly replayed before the public, beginning with the privately financed expeditions of the “filibuster” William Walker in the mid 19th century to the occupation of Nicaragua by the U. S. Marines in the early 20th century, culminating in the assassination of Augusto César Sandino and the initiation of the Somoza dynasty. Anastasio Somoza, Jr. was portrayed as “the last Marine”, and all political and social evils in Nicaragua were attributed to the suffocating influence of the United States (cf. Solórzano 1993a, 1993b for samples of Sandinista political propaganda). The Sandinistas immediately took over government-owned radio and television stations, as well as the stations which had been owned by the Somoza family group. Former station personnel were replaced by Sandinista activists, some of whom were quite young and inexperienced, with little formal education. Sandinista ideology quickly moved into the area of public education, in particular a reevaluation of rural culture, the beginnings of a literacy campaign, the formation of revolutionary organizations such as the block-by-block defense committees, as well as Sandinista organizations of women, peasants, city workers, and youth. In retrospect, the Sandinistas overestimated the average Nicaraguan’s appetite for revolutionary rhetoric as opposed to a simple return to an untroubled life and a freedom from political persecution.

#### 3.2. The Sandinista literacy campaign

In 1980, the Sandinistas undertook a 5-month nationwide literacy campaign, with the aim of reducing the illiteracy rate, among the highest in Latin America. To augment the young Nicaraguan literacy brigade workers, volunteer teachers from Cuba, the United States, Canada, and European countries joined in the crash program, which after six months resulted in a claimed illiteracy rate of only 12% nationwide, down from 55%. These figures must be taken cautiously, since although the pre-Sandinista figures are believable, the amount of “literacy” that can be achieved in a stopgap campaign such as that carried out by the 1980 literacy brigades is quite limited. Most of

the new *alfabetizados* could barely read revolutionary slogans and billboards; the immediate impact of the Sandinista literacy campaign was in effect to insure the ability to read revolutionary broadsides and pronouncements (Canadian Action for Nicaragua 1982; Congreso Nacional de Alfabetización 1980; Goronson 1989; Kaspar 1981; Miller 1983; Ministerio de Educación de Nicaragua 1988; Osborne 1990; Solórzano 1993b: 701-856; Stansifer 1981; Ushida 1991; Yoneda 1983).

The literacy campaign was conducted in Spanish throughout most of the country, and in (standard) English on the Atlantic coast. Some materials in Miskito were also prepared. The pamphlets and other materials contained a highly charged ideological component, praising the Sandinistas, and blasting United States imperialism (Colectivo de Mujeres de Matagalpa 1992; Ejército Popular de Alfabetizadores 1980; Ministerio de Educación de Nicaragua 1980a, 1980b, 1980c, 1980d, 1980e, 1981, 1986). The words and expressions were already known to Nicaraguans, but the fact of learning to read and write on the basis of such a highly selective vocabulary undoubtedly influenced thousands of rural residents for whom literacy had previously been the privilege of the urban elite. The potential impact of literacy on the Atlantic Coast is harder to judge, since there is a considerable mismatch between the home language of the (black) residents - an archaic variety of West Indian/Miskito Coast Creole English - and the language of instruction, a simplified form of American English. Many of the volunteers were drawn from the United States and Canada, and had little or no knowledge of Caribbean creole languages. Along Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, however, the situation had already been mitigated by the long-standing presence of Moravian missionaries, who for decades have maintained (American) English-language schools throughout the region. Although Atlantic Coast residents use English creole to one another, a large number of them have passive proficiency in United States English, and those who have been to school can muster a close approximation. Although the Caribbean coast residents resented Sandinista intrusions into their previously isolated existence, the literacy campaign marks the first time that languages other than Spanish were officially recognized in Nicaragua, and represents the first time a Central American nation officially included creole

English in its educational programs, despite the fact that this is the majority language from the Guatemala-Belize border to the Panama Canal.

### 3.3. The press during the Sandinista regime

During the Sandinista regime, and continuing to the present, Nicaragua had three major newspapers. The controversial *La Prensa* is run by the family of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. Representing conservative business elements, *La Prensa* took a hostile stand towards the Sandinista movement and most of its political articles had an openly anti-government stance. It was the largest newspaper during the entire Sandinista regime, but was closed several times and censored constantly. *El Nuevo Diario* splintered off from *La Prensa* in 1980, formed by members of the Chamorro family who continued to support the Sandinistas. Ostensibly a private independent paper, *El Nuevo Diario* printed exclusively pro-government materials and editorials, flew the Sandinista flag at the newspaper's offices, and vied with *La Prensa* for the claim to being the "true successor" to Pedro Joaquín Chamorro. *Barricada* (which took over the former Somoza-owned paper *Novedades*) is the official organ of the FSLN and provided an ongoing report of government activities and policies. It has been widely read, not as a source of news but rather for an interpretation of the government's position on specific issues. During all but the final years of the Sandinista government, all the newspapers were routinely subject to daily censorship, and all articles had to be pre-approved for publication.

### 3.4. Radio broadcasting during the Sandinista period

During and after the Sandinista regime, Nicaragua had a large variety of radio stations, many of them carried over from the pre-Sandinista days. One of Somoza's stations, Radio Equis, was renamed Radio Sandino, while the government-owned Radio Nacional was rebaptized La Voz de Nicaragua, a name which had been used many decades earlier (Läpple-Wagenhals 1984: 72-77). Whereas the rebel Radio Sandino had a narrow repertoire of incitement to rebellion, the new Sandinista-run stations attempted to place all aspects of the Sandinista agenda before the Nicaraguan people. It was assumed by the Sandinistas that most Nicaraguans would be eager for details of the new government and social order, a welcome breath of fresh air after the violently repressive last years of the Somoza reign. As a result, the airwaves were flooded with revolutionary propaganda, calls for action against former Somoza supporters still present in Nicaragua or seeking to return, diatribes against the United States, praise for Cuba, the Soviet Union, and calls to improve the plight of the large peasant population. At first, confiscated stations were operated haphazardly, each one being essentially autonomous, and subject to little central programming strategies. In 1981, 19 of the 21 government-owned stations (all except the Voz de Nicaragua and Radio Sandino) were grouped into Corporación de Radiodifusión del Pueblo (CORADEP) (Crabtree 1992: 72-74; Frederick 1986a: 72). In the ensuing years, a few stations were destroyed by anti-Sandinista rebel attacks, but the centralized thematic broadcasting continued until early 1989, when lack of funds caused the government to officially disband CORADEP, after which the stations were supposed to become self-sufficient. The CORADEP stations broadcast both nationally oriented and coordinated programs, as well as programs designed for local listening areas, most of which were rural. La Voz de Nicaragua was the government's official voice, although during the Sandinista government it occasionally ran afoul of the ministry of information for broadcasting material not considered entirely favorable to the government. It had powerful AM and FM stations and also originated the material which was transmitted simultaneously by all stations as part of the 'national network' (*cadena nacional*). La

Voz de Nicaragua also had an international branch, which at times transmitted special programs on the short wave bands, aimed at international audiences. Radio Sandino, the official station of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) was also effectively state-owned. During the same time period, there were roughly 30 private radio stations in Nicaragua, several of which consistently ran afoul of the Sandinista government, and were periodically closed or heavily censored. Prior to the Sandinista revolution, Nicaragua had three television stations, one of which had been owned by the Somoza family (Solórzano 1993a: 664; 1993b: 483-484). The other two were semi-private stations, scrutinized but not directly run by the Nicaraguan government. All three stations were taken over by the Sandinistas, and merged with official government organs in managing media access of Nicaraguans. The stations did not run commercials, but contained heavy doses of revolutionary propaganda, as well as nearly constant speeches by Sandinista officials, especially during the early years of the Sandinista regime. These program changes had the cumulative effect of placing Sandinista rhetoric, as well as a distinctly different type of public speaking style (highly militarized instead of the more usual low-key civil bureaucratic style), before the eyes and ears of the public. Ultimately, only two television stations remained in Nicaragua, both under state control.

### 3.5. Sandinista government publications

During the Sandinista period, various government agencies printed books, many of high quality, including literature, sociology and politics. The Sandinista revolution first brought forth a curiosity for sampling the forbidden fruits, including international communism, with the tacit assumption that if Somoza and the United States were against communism, then communism must have something positive to offer Nicaragua. Sandinista-sponsored bookshops were overflowing with books and treatises on communism and Marxism, all published abroad, and most of which were only partially understood by the people who bought them. Many previously obscure

Nicaraguan books were also available in supermarkets and shops, and the Nicaraguan public capable of reading such works had ready access to inexpensive volumes. Magazines with sympathetic political themes, published in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, and Cuba were also freely available.

#### 4. Specifics of Sandinista public language usage

##### 4.1. Popular language and new terminology

Not only was popular Spanish with a rustic tinge proffered on a large number of radio programs, but "Sandinista" ways of speaking and teaching were encouraged in schools and in all public use of language, both spoken and written. In terms of revolutionary language introduced by the Sandinistas, the following points are most salient. Some coincide nearly exactly with revolutionary Cuban usage, but any attempt to posit direct imitation founders on the lack of demonstrable evidence.

(1) The term *contrarrevolucionario* 'counterrevolutionary' (shortened to *contra*) referred to all those opposed to the Sandinista government, regardless of actual attitudes towards the original revolution that brought the government to power.

(2) As in Cuba (Knauer 1984, Smiřický 1968) *compañero/compañera* 'comrade/'companion' became the universal terms of address and reference, replacing more traditional Spanish terms of respect. During the initial insurrection against Somoza, Sandinista combatents were known as *compas*, a colloquial Nicaraguan term of address (derived either from *compañero* 'companion' or more probably from *compadre* 'co-godfather') which narrowed its meaning to include only rebel fighters. After the Sandinista takeover, use of *compa* or *compañero/compañera* among all Nicaraguans became de rigeur as a sign of revolutionary solidarity; use of traditional *señor, señora, don/doña*, etc. were taken as anachronistic and even unpatriotic acknowledgment of former class hierarchies.<sup>2</sup> *Compañero/compañera* were assiduously avoided by those who felt little sympathy for the Sandinista movement, as well as by

rural masses who clung tightly to formal and respectful formulas. During the insurrection against Somoza, the term *compa* vied with *los muchachos* 'the boys' to refer to armed guerrilla fighters. When the attacks of the *contras* were stepped up, the term *compas* again came to refer to pro-Sandinista fighters, often part of popular militias and sometimes independent peasants and farmers intent on protecting their property. After the peace accords which lead up to the elections of 1990, skirmishes were reduced for a time, but the anti-Sandinista rebels' dissatisfaction with the slowness of the Chamorro government to return matters to the status quo ante of the Somoza era, combined with resentment among pro-Sandinista peasant groups faced with the reversal of Sandinista agrarian policies, caused new armed groups to emerge on both sides. The new counterrevolutionaries (in most cases the same *contras* as before, newly replenished by many of the same sources) were referred to as *recontras*, while Sandinista militia groups, no longer under the official protection of the government, became known as the *recompas*.

(3) Nicaraguan Spanish, like the other Central American varieties, employs the familiar second person pronoun *vos* 'you' almost exclusively, instead of *tú*, which is the primary form in Spain, the Caribbean, Mexico, and much of South America (Thiemer 1989). Sandinista slogans and publications made free use of this form to capitalize on the "home grown" nature of their revolution. In other Central American countries, the *vos* form rarely appears in writing, except in local-color novels and stories. Either the formal *usted* or the non-Central American *tú* are used (Lipski 1986b). In Sandinista Nicaragua, billboards, signs and postcards carried such slogans as *Nicaragüense, cumplí con tu deber* 'Nicaraguan, do your duty', using a familiar popular verb form which would be unheard of in neighboring countries. This author has a passport stamped with a Nicaraguan visa which reads *Nicaragua espera por vos* 'Nicaragua awaits you'. This sentence is odd for many reasons, not the least of which is the use of an informal pronoun in such a formal setting. Use of *vos* was extended to many public functions, including written and spoken language used by and offered to high-ranking public officials. The CORADEP training manual even suggested that *vos* was appropriate for the new radio usage (Crabtree 1992: 228).



(4) The terms *revolución* 'revolution' and *proceso revolucionario* 'revolutionary process' became synonymous with the government in power, even years after the original revolution had occurred.

(5) Uncomplimentary animal terms were used to refer to counterrevolutionaries: the Nicaraguan *sapo* 'toad' corresponded to the Cuban *gusano* 'maggot'.

(6) Derogatory terms for United States citizens (like *gringo* in Nicaragua, *yanqui* in Cuba) were used in public speeches even by high government officials.

(7) In the sense of other personalist dictatorships, the Somoza dynasty's political stance was lumped under a single word: *somocismo*, its followers, *somocistas*. In its strictest sense, the terms refer to the Somoza family dictatorship and its puppet political organizations and leaders, and to those members of the National Guard and business community who were most instrumental in sustaining the Somoza regimes. In practice, the terms gained wider currency under the Sandinistas, to include any and all counterrevolutionary elements (sometimes even applied to former FSLN militants or supporters who subsequently became disenchanted). The term *imperialismo* 'imperialism' was synonymous with the United States government (specifically foreign policy), as well as with American-based transnational corporations. At the same time, the use of the unadorned word *imperialismo* allowed a double-entendre, since all and sundry understand the unequivocal reference to the United States and yet no one could quote any speaker, article, or individual of specifically anti-American sentiments merely for having used *imperialismo*.

(8) A number of rhetorical combinations were formed during the Sandinista regime, which while not stereotyped by nature, were repeated so often in revolutionary literature that they became automatism among those professing adherence to the Sandinista revolution. One such expression was *héroes y mártires* 'heroes and martyrs', used to mean those who died in combat against the Somoza regime or as innocent victims of the Somoza governments, as opposed, for example, to war casualties among the ranks of the National Guard. A statement which became a mantra to many new Sandinistas was *ser joven era un delito* 'to be young was a crime', in reference to the Somoza

regime's suspicion and active persecution of adolescents, particularly urban students.

#### 4.2. The unofficial nature of "official" language

Although the Sandinista revolution resulted in profound changes in linguistic usage throughout Nicaragua, some of which are felt even today, there was never an official policy regarding written or spoken language. There was never a dictionary or even a glossary of Sandinista or quintessentially Nicaraguan terms. The previously available dictionaries of regionalisms remained obscure academic curiosities, and the only "linguistic" publications by the Sandinista government were literacy materials prepared in the indigenous languages. There were no official codices regarding language usage. The manuals prepared for the literacy brigades, and the manual for community radio (which came along many years after the Sandinistas were controlling broadcasting) were meant only as suggestions. All influencing of language usage was done through models, through peer pressure, and through mandated changes of personnel, e.g., in some radio stations and newspapers. Throughout the Sandinista period, it was assumed that "true" Nicaraguans would know and use authentic local language, much of which was used in motivational and training manuals for the literacy brigade. School textbooks (i.e., for students already in school, not for the crash adult literacy campaigns) were very traditional, and contained no special Sandinista content. The literacy materials at times used distinctively Nicaraguan expressions, but these were never highlighted. In the schools as elsewhere, students were required to read biographies of Sandinista heroes and to repeat Sandinista slogans; this is the extent of official intervention in students' use of language.

## 5. Pro-Sandinista radio language

### 5.1. Pro- and anti-Sandinista radio broadcasting

One of the most revealing benchmarks of the linguistic impact of the Sandinista revolution is an examination of broadcast language, and in particular key phonological variables. Pre-Sandinista Nicaragua had contained dozens of radio stations, nearly all privately owned. After the Sandinista takeover, the two largest dissenting stations, which constantly ran foul of the Sandinista government and which were subject to censorship, closures and mob attacks, were Radio Católica and Radio Mundial. R. Católica was the official voice of the Catholic Church, which almost immediately had aligned itself with anti-Sandinista forces and which broadcast conservative programs in a usually conservative linguistic style.

By the late 1980s radio censorship began to slacken; Radio Católica, alternately shut down and under censorship orders, began to discuss religious issues more freely, and following the Esquipulas peace talks, the Nicaraguan government used Radio Segovia, located along Nicaragua's northern border, to broadcast more conciliatory messages, including contact with Nicaraguans living in nearby Honduras. The programs also featured frank discussions of political issues, and a call for national reconciliation. Elsewhere in Nicaragua, news programs on the private stations - which had been banned since 1982 - were again authorized, beginning in 1988.

### 5.2. Targets of Sandinista broadcasting

The linguistic effects of the pro-Sandinista domestic broadcasts in Nicaragua is potentially much greater, since the programming reached nearly all sectors of the population, was on the air 24 hours a day, and during enforced national network broadcasts. On the one hand, many of the Sandinista propaganda broadcasts were long-winded, pedantic and repetitious; observations made by the present writer during several research trips to Nicaragua in from 1982 to

1985 indicated that relatively few ordinary citizens consistently listened to these programs, at least in urban areas. In rural regions directly benefited by Sandinista agrarian reform, literacy campaigns and peasant organizations, the existence of programs which directly targeted the *campesinos* was a unique event which warranted attention.

### 5.3. Popular phonetic traits in Sandinista broadcasting

An interesting linguistic correlate of ideology, which was prominent in Nicaraguan radio broadcasting, involves popular phonetic realizations. The Nicaraguan revolution placed immediate emphasis on the use of popular, unpretentious Spanish in all official contexts, to highlight the grass-roots emphasis, the rejection of landed gentry and uncooperative bourgeoisie.<sup>2</sup> One of the most salient characteristics of popular Spanish in any dialect is the pronunciation of certain syllable-final consonants, and the routes taken by these consonants in weakening processes. Vernacular Spanish of all regions is characterized by at least some reduction or elimination of some key consonants; typically as one descends the social scale within any given Spanish-speaking area, the spelling-sound correspondence, which is normally high among educated speakers in formal discourse, becomes less and less precise. One area where the phonologically most conservative language is always heard is in radio broadcasting, where regardless of the area, radio announcers strive to filter from their speech most regional phonetic characteristics, in particular those which arose some negative connotation. The artificiality of radio broadcasting results in a form of chemically pure Spanish, scarcely identifiable as to continent, much less as to region, and this speech is frequently at odds with even the most educated citizens of the area. Within the domain of broadcasting, there is a clear hierarchy of styles: formal news broadcasts and prepared official announcements are the most conservative, followed by musical variety and disc jockey programs, and finally by on-the-spot sports commentary, where ordinary colloquial speech patterns are often closely approximated (Ferguson 1983, Lipski 1983).

#### 5.4. Content of Sandinista broadcasts

Prior to the Sandinista revolution, radio broadcasting in Nicaragua followed the patterns mentioned above. The Sandinista takeover of Nicaragua had immediate and far-ranging impacts on radio broadcasting. Not unexpectedly, the Sandinistas filled the airwaves with programs explaining and interpreting revolutionary political and economic programs. There was much attention to the literacy campaign, and considerable emphasis was placed on rural development and the integration of peasant elements into the national economic panorama. To this end, the Sandinista stations broadcast many documentary programs focusing on rural areas of the country, and describing the daily life of the areas' residents. Interviews with agricultural workers were a common occurrence, as were improvised dialogs between Sandinista representatives, who discoursed widely over a range of topics. During the first few years of the Sandinista revolution, the military leaders made numerous speeches which reflected the rapidly deteriorating political and economic situation, including contrarevolutionary insurgency, political conflicts with the United States, and the frustrating cooperative projects undertaken with Cuba, the Soviet Union, and the eastern bloc countries.

#### 5.5. The public voice of Sandinista officials

In obtaining broadcast personnel for the Sandinista programs and stations, populist tendencies of the Sandinista revolution brought to the forefront a number of announcers whose broadcast speech habits, even during formal announcements, were scarcely different from those of speakers outside of the studio. The CORADEP training manual for Sandinista radio personnel indicated that "*el mejor locutor es aquel que no lo parece*" [the best announcer is the person who doesn't sound like one] (Crabtree 1992: 228), suggesting that popular language should be used throughout. Some of the Sandinista announcers had had short stints on one of the rebel stations during the insurrection against Somoza. Other announcers had no formal training as

broadcasters, while a few were professionally experienced carryovers from pre-Sandinista broadcasting. The combined result gave a distinctly popular flavor to many programs; even the powerful *Voz de Nicaragua* and *Radio Sandino*, heard all over Central America, often contained program material with phonetic tendencies reminiscent of popular Nicaraguan Spanish. Only the international programming of the *Voz de Nicaragua* maintained the more pan-Latin American tendency to overly precise diction (Lipski 1984b). In radio broadcasting during the Sandinista period, it was possible to discern a preference for popular speech patterns when Sandinista programs were aired, or when an editorial commentary took a pro-government anti-oligarchy stance. Similarly, when opposition to the Sandinista government was being expressed on moral or religious grounds, a phonologically more conservative diction was usually employed.

Public speeches by Sandinista leaders also contained the potential for differential characteristics. The speeches were made at public functions in Nicaragua and abroad, before groups of citizens, the United Nations, the Organization of American States, foreign dignitaries and religious groups, and in moments of national crisis. A high standard deviation is present, between individuals like foreign minister Miguel D'Escoto, who always maintained a precise diction, and the Ortega brothers and Tomás Borge, who used popular phonetic tendencies in nearly all occasions. Even lumping together all these data, the public speaking style of the Sandinista leaders was more conservative with respect to the variable /s/ than popular Nicaraguan speech. Moreover, there were discernible differences depending upon the venue of the speeches. The most formal style was foreign representation, and includes speeches by Daniel Ortega and Miguel D'Escoto before the United Nations and the Organization of American States, where an attempt was being made to influence world opinion and to create a favorable image of Nicaragua and the Sandinista revolution. A second category, "domestic-solemn", included civil and religious ceremonies which did not touch directly on revolutionary questions, including funerals, speeches honoring patriots who antedated the Sandinista movement, and presentation of awards to foreign dignitaries. A third category, "domestic-revolutionary", involved speeches made to Nicaraguan

citizens with the express purpose of inspiring revolutionary fervor, in which case a revolutionary response was being solicited from the audience. For example speeches were made following the murder of Cuban teachers in the Atlantic Coast region, after the discovery of plots to blow up the national cement company and the oil refinery, and at other critical moments. Speeches aimed at bolstering revolutionary sentiments made greatest use of weakened articulation, whereas in trying to make a favorable impression before representations of other Spanish-speaking nations (especially in the Organization of American States, the majority of whose delegates listen to Spanish language speeches without an interpreter), many of which manifest considerably different dialect tendencies, Nicaraguan officials appear to have modified somewhat their own linguistic habits.

#### 5.6. The "official" Sandinista position on radio language

Although Sandinista radio personnel were not given detailed instructions on the type of language to be used during interviews and other broadcasts, the unspoken law was that all radio language should be popular in the extreme, not only in terms of phonetic tendencies, but also reflecting the vernacular lexicon. Words with a rustic flavor were to be preferred over words perceived to be more erudite and therefore the exclusive purview of the former privileged classes. The CORADEP radio manual (López Vigil 1988), written several years after the Sandinistas had taken over the majority of Nicaraguan radio broadcasting, explicitly mentioned characteristics which until that time had been implicitly understood. The manual states, for example, "We need to change the content and also the form. There is no popular radio without popular language" (p.62, my translation). In a cartoon dialog between a scholarly-looking individual who defends the purist position, and a humble young man, who explains participative radio, the purist asks: "So we start with vulgarities...what the hell do you want? That we should talk the way that everybody talks? Then who will help the people, who will bring them the culture and education that they need?" To which the populist answers:

"Perhaps the people are more educated than some pedants like you suppose, you who only speak to criticize and put down your fellow citizens." The outraged purist exclaims "...then you want the announcers to stoop to the level of peasant language, street language?" to which the populist adds the last word: "No; stoop down, never!" This is followed by a slogan: "Because one never stoops down to the people; one rises up! Because popular language is on top, because one can't bend down before the masses, but rather must look up to them." (p.62-63; my translation). The manual also contains direct and indirect reference to soap operas, movies, and popular music produced in the United States (referred to as 'gringos' music' (p.72), and announcers are explicitly told to "limit as much as possible North American music" (p.72). Despite the explicit comments made in this manual, it is doubtful whether it ever had a tangible impact on Sandinista radio broadcasting, since it was prepared long after the real changes in radio format had occurred. The intended audience was presumably young Nicaraguans who would be recruited into future cadres of Sandinista radio personnel, but the disbanding of the Sandinista broadcasting organization came shortly after the publication of the manual.

### 6. Anti-Sandinista language from within and without Nicaragua

#### 6.1. The creation of *contra* groups

Active opposition to the Sandinista regime was not long in coming, first from deposed members of the Somoza National Guard and wealthy business owners, later from disenchanted Sandinista activists and even former combatants. Various counterrevolutionary groups were formed in neighboring Honduras and Costa Rica. In the latter country the main leader was Edén Pastora, the famous Sandinista Comandante Cero who had coordinated the attack on the Nicaraguan national assembly which signaled the beginning of the end for Somoza. Disaffected with Marxist-Leninist leanings and heavy-handed rule, Pastora formed a splinter group which eschewed contacts both with the Honduras-based *contras* and with the United States, both of whom Pastora

regarded with hostility and scorn. The *contra* groups based in Honduras enjoyed a much longer life, continued official support from the United States government, and a warmer reception from the host country, which unlike Costa Rica was under a military dictatorship followed by a conservative and precarious civilian regime, and had never prided itself on neutrality in the affairs of its neighbors. Much of the anti-Sandinista propaganda campaign in Honduras was conducted by the Honduran government itself, in editorials and official pronouncements, as well as the frequent denunciation of border incidents.

## 6.2. Legal and clandestine anti-Sandinista radio

From the outset, conservative radio stations within Nicaragua (including those associated with the Catholic Church, and those representing large business owners) took a dim view of the Sandinista clamor, and began calling for moderation in both language and content. Comparative studies of the language used in Sandinista and private (almost by definition more conservative) stations during the early Sandinista period shows an increasing polarization of language, not only in terms of revolutionary vocabulary and slogans but even in the style of delivery, not to mention the overall program content (Lipski 1984b). Most of the counterrevolutionary language directed at Nicaragua came in the form of clandestine radio stations (some of which were directly sponsored by foreign governments), which flooded Nicaraguan airwaves on a daily basis, and also included in their audience international broadcast monitoring services and press agencies. All such stations claimed to be operating from Nicaraguan territory, but in reality most were located in Honduras, and at least one may have transmitted El Salvador or from a United States naval vessel anchored in the Gulf of Fonseca (Richelson 1985: 129; Soley—Nichols 1987: Chapter 9). Honduras was the home of the flagship clandestine station which supported the anti-Sandinista groups, and which waged verbal war within Nicaragua. Radio 15 de Septiembre was named after the independence day celebrated throughout Central America. The transmitter

was always located in or around Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Radio 15 de Septiembre boasted a powerful transmitter of undetermined origin, long operating hours, and most importantly the active encouragement of the Honduran authorities, who not only made no attempt to curtail this ostensibly illegal station, but may actually have provided logistical support.

Radio Miskut was operated by Miskito Indian rebels originally from Nicaragua's Atlantic coast, and was reputed to be operating near the home of Miskito Indian counterrevolutionary leader Steadman Fagoth, in Rus Rus, Honduras (Frederick 1986a; Solórzano 1993a: 732). This station broadcast in Miskito, Sumu and Spanish. Of all the rebel stations, Radio Miskut had the most home-grown sound, and it is likely that the broadcasts were a truly local effort by the Miskito-based insurgents.

La Voz de Sandino, the organ of Edén Pastora's dissent former Sandinista group, operated from northern Costa Rica. Several years into the Nicaraguan radio war, a new clandestine shortwave station appeared, named Radio Monimbó (the name of a predominantly indigenous neighborhood in the Nicaraguan city of Masaya where a decisive victory against Somoza's forces had taken place. Unlike the other stations, Radio Monimbó did not employ inflammatory rhetoric, and did not identify itself with any political or military movement. It was rumored to be funded by members of the Chamorro family, but given the total lack of identifying features of the broadcasts, the true affiliation was not determined. The location of the transmitter was never revealed, but it was probably in southern Florida, and may well have used the facilities of the long-standing Cuban exile clandestine stations.

A powerful US-financed mediumwave station, Radio Liberación, came on the air in 1987, apparently based in El Salvador (Solórzano 1993a: 858). Its 50,000 watt transmitter enabled it to attain coverage not possible for any of the Sandinista stations. La Voz de UNO, representing another anti-Sandinista coalition (which would eventually triumph with the election of Violeta Chamorro) began broadcasting from Costa Rica in 1986 (Solórzano 1993a: 860).

Of these stations, only R. Monimbó approximated the programming styles and format of commercial non-clandestine stations. R. Monimbó's announcers

spoke slowly and carefully, avoiding the extreme phonetic reductions characteristic of popular Nicaraguan Spanish, but making no attempt at avoiding the intonation and more subtle phonetic traits which are unmistakably Nicaraguan. R. Miskut's announcers were probably all members of the Miskito nation, and all spoke Spanish with the slight accent typical of fluent Miskito bilinguals (many Miskitos speak little or no Spanish). The Spanish used by R. Miskut's announcers was popular in the extreme, with phonetic reductions, choice of vocabulary and syntax stemming from and aimed at listeners in the Mosquitia region.

The format and program content of *La Voz de Sandino* suggested that it may have eventually served as a second outlet for the powerful 15 de Septiembre, after the expulsion of Eden Pastora by ARDE and the reconciliation of Pastora's followers with the openly pro-Somoza *contras* based in Honduras. The latter's station was always the principal source for official *contra* rhetoric, and was extensively listened to by *contras* established in urban areas of Central America and the United States, as well as by sympathizers within Nicaragua. The format of R. 15 de Septiembre's broadcasts was similar to those of R. Miskut: shouted announcements of rebel victories, calls for armed resistance to the Sandinista government, and impassioned denunciations of that government's policies. The phonological characteristics of the broadcast language were considerably more conservative than those of (domestic) Nicaraguan official and private broadcasts, perhaps attempting to influence an international audience. Nevertheless, the Nicaraguan origin of the announcers was apparent at all times, and those appeals aimed directly at the Nicaraguan populace enhanced these features. R. 15 de Septiembre's transmissions were directed at a middle/professional class audience, which while employing popular and even vulgar forms and diction in colloquial speech, has a linguistic self-image which rejects such forms as improper under public scrutiny and which attempts to achieve a more "universal" pan-Hispanic form of speech. Lipski (1991) provides more detailed linguistic analysis of these Nicaraguan rebel stations (cf. also Dexter 1984, 1987).

### 6.3. Anti-Sandinista collusion by foreign radio stations

The cultural and linguistic war waged against Sandinista Nicaragua did not only come from internal sources and from United States-sponsored organizations. Powerful broadcasting outlets in neighboring countries were also a powerful tool; as official Central American hostility to the Sandinistas grew, many of these countries turned their powerful governmental and ostensibly private stations into potent instruments of diatribe and dissent. In television broadcasting alone, seven Costa Rican channels, one Salvadoran channel and one Honduran channel could be received in some parts of Nicaragua (Solórzano 1993a: 731). This is especially important since neither of the two Nicaraguan channels could reach all parts of the country; thus in some rural regions - where counterrevolutionary support was particularly strong - only foreign and potentially hostile television stations could be received. In 1985, it was estimated that at least 85 foreign (AM and FM) radio stations could be heard in Nicaragua, many of which of course were international broadcasters with no special interest in Nicaragua, or programs from nearby countries which made no mention of events in Nicaragua. However, since this list excludes international shortwave broadcasts, the numbers become more significant (Fox 1993). By breakdown, 26 Costa Rican stations could be picked up in Nicaragua, 18 Honduran stations, four Salvadoran stations, five Guatemalan stations, and a handful from such areas as Belize, Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia (Solórzano 1993a: 732). Of these, a handful of exceptionally powerful stations devoted to the anti-Sandinista/anti-communist cause continually blanketed Central America with a highly focused criticism of Sandinista Nicaragua. These included HRN (*La Voz de Honduras*), Radio Impacto (TIRI) in Costa Rica, and Radio El Salvador (YSSS). Also putting powerful signals and some anti-Sandinista broadcasting into Nicaragua were the Costa Rican stations Radio Reloj (TIHB), Radio Columbia, Radio Monumental, the religious station Faro del Caribe, and the Voice of America mediumwave station which was officially under Costa Rican ownership.

#### 6.4. The linguistic impact of the radio battles

The linguistic effects of the clandestine vs. official radio fusilades in Nicaragua are difficult to gauge. Many clandestine broadcasts were aimed primarily at international monitoring services, giving immediate news coverage and instant name recognition to small and fragmented groups in isolated areas. Since most of these services either translated the broadcasts into other languages, or excerpted only the content for news analyses in Spanish-speaking countries, the specifics of Nicaraguan language usage were not passed on to the international audience. Within Nicaragua, where possession of shortwave receivers was never common, many of the more fiery broadcasts were never daily staples in the country. The exception would be the Atlantic Coast, where shortwave radio predominates over mediumwave (and there are no FM stations), and where Radio Miskit transmitted directly to the indigenous population. As the fortunes of Radio 15 de Septiembre shifted, the station at times was able to transmit on frequencies and from locations which permitted extensive coverage within Nicaragua. Nonetheless, the content of the programs - shouted slogans, battle reports, invective-laden denunciation of the Sandinista government - were hardly designed to stimulate listener interest, even among anti-Sandinista Nicaraguans.

### 7. Post-Sandinista linguistic observations

#### 7.1. Profile of post-Sandinista Nicaragua

The post-Sandinista government of Violeta Chamorro has done both more and less than to simply turn back the clock to 1979-style politics and social justice. *Barricada* and *El Nuevo Diario* are still being published, although the rhetoric and editorial content is but a shadow of its former potency, and it could be argued that neither paper exerts a significant social or linguistic force. The changes are more noteworthy in the radio spectrum, where Sandinista didactic and editorial programs are virtually absent, and where the hard-hitting anti-

Sandinista language is also missing. Nor are Nicaraguans bombarded with clandestine radio broadcasts and veiled calls to armed insurrection. *Compañero/compa* are no longer politically obligatory terms of address. In many respects, use of language remains loosened up; the familiar pronoun *vos* is still more acceptable in official public language than it was in pre-Sandinista times, and the general tenor of radio broadcast diction has not returned to a substantially more conservative level, except in some official announcements. Violeta Chamorro herself uses a much more formal style of speech than her Sandinista predecessors, but this has been her preference all along, and is not an affectation which accompanies political office. In addition to presenting a more restrained diction and limited use of colloquial language, Chamorro has demilitarized the language of government, by eliminating the confrontational basis for much Sandinista discourse. Book publishing in Nicaragua has been drastically reduced since the heyday of the early Sandinista years, mainly due to the dire economic situation which has beset the country, and none of the new books deals with the obligatory Sandinista-era themes of the anti-Somoza revolution, Marxist-Leninist politics, denunciation of the United States, and emotionally-tinged accounts of historical figures who both aided and undermined Nicaraguan sovereignty.

A few political terms which arose during the Sandinista regime have made their way into Nicaraguan popular culture, and even Nicaraguan sports language has been influenced (Ycaza Tigerino 1992). The presence of Cuban advisors in Nicaragua may also have left more than passing memories. A recent examination of Nicaraguan popular usage (Peñ Hernández 1992: 73) has uncovered instances of non-inverted questions such as *¿Qué tú dices?* 'What do you say?', a typically Cuban construction previously unknown in Nicaragua, instead of the more usual *¿Qué dices tú?*

#### 7.2. The Sandinista linguistic legacy

It is not realistic to analyze the linguistic profile of post-Sandinista Nicaragua in terms of the undoing of all or even most of the linguistic innovations which

characterized the previous regime. The struggle against Somoza and the subsequent decade of Sandinista micromanagement brought awareness of the subtleties of language to nearly all Nicaraguans. Not all of the linguistic correlates of the Sandinista government had patently ideological overtones, and much of the new freedom from artificial restrictions and hypocritical posing is still felt in Nicaragua. Although the early exhilaration which accompanied the overthrow of Somoza rapidly faded, the notion that ordinary citizens, even the most marginalized elements of society, should have a voice and a vote has remained. Ironically, the defeat of the Sandinistas in 1990 is one tangible result of this permanent widening of the Nicaraguan political spectrum.

## Notes

1. Some detractors noted his years of military training in the United States and claimed to detect a *gringo* tinge to his Spanish, but in reality the only incongruity was Somoza's unwillingness or perhaps inability to slip into rigidly formal pronunciation patterns during official pronouncements.
2. The easiest variable to correlate with program content and ideology is syllable- and word-final /s/, which is normally weakened in popular Nicaraguan Spanish (Lipski 19841, 1984b, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1989), but which was often retained in more formal speaking modes, and in official radio broadcasting.

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