

4 Socio-phonological Variation in Latin American Spanish

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1 Introduction

Phonological variation in Spanish can be divided into two fundamental categories. First, there are instances of geographical variation, with little or no deviation within individual locations. Such cases include the presence or absence of specific phonological oppositions (for example the palatal lateral phoneme /ʎ/ as opposed to /j/, e.g. *olla* [ó.ʎa] 'pot,' *joya* [xó.ʎa] 'jewel'; the interdental phoneme /θ/ as opposed to /s/, e.g. *casa* [ká.sa] 'house,' *caza* [ká.θa] 'hunting'), or regionalized pronunciation of specific allophones (e.g. the posterior fricative /x/ realized as [x], [h], [ç], [χ] in a word like *gente* 'people'; the multiple /r/ realized as [r], [ʒ], [ʀ][ɹ], [z], e.g. in *perro* 'dog'; the palatal /j/ realized as [j], [j̥], [ʝ], [j̄], [dʒ]) as in *playa* 'beach'). Such variation is of greatest interest to historical dialectologists, and is frequently the result of sustained language contact, as well as spontaneous language-internal evolution. Regional phonological variation is the basis for traditional dialect geography, in which boundary lines known as isoglosses delimit the geographical areas in which certain pronunciation patterns prevail. More central to the study of sociolinguistics is dialect-internal phonological variation, where quantitative and qualitative phenomena vary among social strata, age- and gender-stratified groups, and other subdivisions linked with assertion of self-identity.

The range of socio-phonological variation in Spanish is enormous, but nearly all instances fall into a small number of categories of phenomena with a robust cross-linguistic pedigree. The syllable forms the central axis for variable processes, and the following sections will adopt a largely syllable-based classification: the syllable onset, the syllable nucleus, the syllable coda, and intonational variation. In essence, the syllable can be divided into three parts: the onset, the nucleus, and the coda. The onset is optional in Spanish, and contains a maximum of two consonants at the

beginning of a syllable, such as the /p/ in *perro* 'dog' or the combination /pr/ in *problema* 'problem.' The nucleus is obligatory, and contains a vowel, and optionally a semivowel, in the latter case forming a diphthong. The two instances of /a/ in *casa* [ká.sa] 'house' are syllable nuclei, as is the diphthong /ei/ in *peine* [pe̞i.ne] 'comb.' Codas are also optional, and contain those consonants that end a syllable following the nucleus, as the /s/ in *hasta* [ás.ta] 'until,' or the /r/ in *comer* [ko.mér] 'to eat.' Word-internally Spanish permits some two-element codas, of which the second element is always /s/, for example /ns/ in *instante* [ins.tán.te] 'instant' and /rs/ in *perspectiva* [pers.pe̞y.tí.βa] 'perspective.' Basic descriptions of Spanish syllable structure and specific restrictions on possible combinations can be found in Harris (1983) and Colina (2006). Although few of the phenomena to be described in the following sections are unique to Latin America, attention will be confined to socio-phonological variation in Latin American Spanish.

2 Variation in the syllable coda

In Spanish, most phonological variation involves consonants, with vocalic variation being relatively infrequent. Within the category of consonantal variation, the widest range of phenomena affects consonants in the syllable coda, traditionally known as implosive or syllable-final position. This position is regarded as the weakest, in terms of phonological processes considered as reduction, including neutralization of oppositions, replacement by weaker versions of the consonant, such as approximants (sounds with very slight constrictions, weaker than fricatives) or vocoids (near-vowel sounds such as semivowels), depletion of all supralaryngeal features (meaning those features involving the action of the tongue, lips, pharynx, and velum), and total effacement. Coda position is also the environment in which the greatest sociolinguistic differentiation typically occurs, and where popular opinion coincides in commenting on the same phenomena as do linguists. Weakening and effacement of coda consonants is a well-documented process, occurring repeatedly in the history of Indo-European languages, and is especially prominent among the Romance languages.

2.1 *Aspiration, glottalization, gemination, and elision of coda /s/*

By far the most common modification of Spanish coda consonants involves aspiration to [h], deletion, and other instances of weakening of coda /s/. The bibliography is vast (e.g. Mason 1994 for an early summary), and spans the spectrum from descriptive studies, through experimental phonetic research, to phonological theory. Well over half of the world's Spanish speakers use dialects in which there is at least some /s/-reduction, making this process perhaps the most robust phonetic differentiator of regional and social dialects. Although aspiration (especially in pre-consonantal contexts) and elision (most common phrase-finally) are the most common forms of /s/-reduction, there are other manifestations, including glottalization, shift

syllable-final /s/ is common even among educated speakers. Similar configurations obtain in Patagonia, Mendoza, Jujuy (Lacunza de Pockorny and Postigo de de Bedia 1977) and Tucumán (Rojas 1980: 57–61).

In the Caribbean region, complete elision of coda /s/ has frequently been associated with populations of African origin, possibly owing to the fact that West and Central African languages that came into contact with Spanish typically lack coda consonants. Megenney (1989) has demonstrated a correlation between massive elision of coda /s/ and contemporary Afro-Hispanic speech communities. Being stigmatized, loss of coda /s/ sometimes leads to hypercorrection among speakers who are sociolinguistically insecure; this means the insertion of [s] in words where no /s/ was ever lost. This tendency is popularly referred to as *hablar fisno* 'speaking fancy,' with hypercorrect /s/ inserted into Spanish *fino*; other examples include [ka.tor.se.sá.ɲo] 'fourteen years' for *catorce años*, [bár.βa.ras] for *Bárbara*.

In Argentina and Uruguay, elision of word-final /s/ was once associated with the speech of Italian immigrants, who interpreted the weakly aspirated Argentine and Uruguayan /s/ as the absence of a consonant, aided by the many cognate words in Italian lacking a final /s/. A typical example is *Chichilo, qué sabé vo ... vo no ve nada* 'Chichilo what do you know, you don't see anything' (Discépolo 1958). The veracity of the literary texts can be put to the test by comparing them with contemporary Italo-Spanish contact language, for example among the speech of Italian immigrants who arrived in Montevideo, Uruguay in the mid-twentieth century, around 1950 (Barrios 1999):

endonse [entonces] aí etabano [estábamos] todo los enfermero [enfermeros]
 'then there we were, all the nurses'
 ... i nosotto [nosotros] ibamo [íbamos] a la kucina a trabaxare
 'and we went to the kitchen to work'

Another modification of Spanish coda /s/ is glottalization, most often found in word-final prevocalic environments, particularly before tonic vowels, as in *los otros* [lo? ó.tro]. This pronunciation has been documented for the Spanish of Paraguay and northeastern Argentina (Thon 1989), where it is correlated with a Guaraní substrate and colloquial speech. In Puerto Rico, glottalization of word-final prevocalic /s/ is an emergent process (Valentín-Márquez 2006), found predominantly among younger speakers in urban areas. The phonological motivation for the glottal stop appears to be breaking hiatus combinations; the shift from a glottal aspiration [h] to a glottal stop [ʔ] involves only a slight constriction of the glottis, since both [h] and [ʔ] are devoid of supralaryngeal features.

In "eye-dialect" literature, aspiration of Spanish coda /s/ is sometimes represented by the letter *j*, and sometimes by *h*, even though the latter grapheme normally corresponds to no sound. Typical examples are:

Yo sé que uhté eh fuerte. Pero ehtá uhté viejo, padre [...] No jaga dihparateh. Cuidese. 'I know that you are strong, but you are old, father. Don't be foolish. Take care of yourself.'
 (Marqués 1963)

Y bien que yo la conojo! Se ñama siña Tatá ... Tú la ejconde en la cosina, Pocque ej prieta de a beldá. 'I know her well, her name is Aunt Tatá. You hide her in the kitchen because she is really black.'

(Mansour 1973: 172)

Glottalization, compensatory lengthening, and gemination associated with /s/-reduction have no literary correlates; in addition to the graphic representation of aspiration, only loss of coda /s/ is reflected in literary texts.

2.2 Neutralization and elision of coda /r/ and /l/

Coda liquids /l/ and /r/ are particularly susceptible to weakening processes in Spanish, and most phenomena affect both consonants to some extent. In phrase-final position, the most common weakening process is complete elision. Although in southern Spain both /l/ and /r/ routinely participate in word-final deletion, in Latin America only final /r/ typically undergoes elision. Elision is prominent in the final /r/ of verbal infinitives, for example *comer* [ko.mé] 'to eat,' *cantar* [kan-tá], and in nouns ending in stressed vowel plus /r/, for example *mujer* [mu.xé] 'woman.' In Latin America, elision of phrase-final /r/ is common in eastern Cuba, in Panama, the Caribbean coast of Colombia, and less frequently in other Caribbean dialects, as well as along the Pacific coast of Ecuador. Elision of /r/ is always associated with vernacular speech and is avoided by educated speakers in more formal registers. In many rural and working-class dialects, however, elision of word-final /r/ is nearly categorical.

Found frequently in Puerto Rico, the southern portion of the Dominican Republic, and to a lesser extent in central Cuba, is lateralization of phrase-final /r/, for example realization as [l]: *comer* [ko.mél] 'to eat,' *mujer* [mu.xél] 'woman.' It is a stigmatized variant wherever it occurs (e.g. López Morales 1983a, 1983b, 1984). In Puerto Rico, the word-internal combination /-rd-/ often emerges as a simple [l], as in *verdad* [be.lá] 'truth,' *ordenar* [o.le.nál] 'to order.' Another form of weakening of coda /r/ and /l/ is vocalization to semivocalic [i]: *mujer* [mu-xei] 'woman,' *cantar* [kan-tai] 'to sing,' *capital* [ka.pi.tai] 'capital,' *alto* [ai.to] 'tall.' Vocalization is frequent in the Cibao region in the north of the Dominican Republic (Alba 1988, 1990), where it is highly stigmatized, and frequently imitated in dialect literature and popular culture. As with other stigmatized pronunciations, vocalization sometimes leads to hypercorrections, as in the pronunciation of *Haití* [ai.tí] as [ar.tís]. As the Cibao grows in economic importance, due to the increasingly powerful tourism industry, there are some signs that vocalization of liquids is being consciously retained by some speakers as a marker of regional identity (Coupal, Germosén, and Jiménez Sabater 1988). Vocalization of coda liquids was once common among nineteenth-century Afro-Cuban men in Havana (Ortiz 1986), and in rural Puerto Rico (Álvarez Nazario 1990: 57, 83), but is now extremely rare in both countries.

When occurring in word-final prevocalic position, reduction of liquids is normally suspended due to resyllabification into the onset of the following syllable: *mujer alta*

[mu-xe-rál-ta] 'tall woman.' In the case of Cibao vocalization, vocalization occurs even in word-final prevocalic position except when the liquid belongs to an unstressed clitic element such as a determiner (Harris 1983: 47–50; Guitart 1981): *el aviso* [e-la-βí-so] 'the announcement' vs. *él avisa* [éi-a-βí-sa] 'he advises.'

In preconsonantal position, there is considerable sociolinguistic differentiation among Latin American Spanish dialects. Lateralization of /r/ to [l] occurs in Puerto Rico, the southern Dominican Republic, eastern Cuba, and occasionally in rural Venezuela, in the same sociolinguistic strata where lateralization of phrase-final /r/ is found. Vocalization of preconsonantal /r/ and /l/ to [i] occurs in the northern Dominican Republic. In western Cuba, including Havana, retroflexion of preconsonantal liquids, especially /r/, occurs in vernacular speech (Choy López 2004; García González 1980; Harris 1985; Uber 1986). Retroflexion of coda /r/ and /l/ alternates with gemination of the following consonant, which if it is a voiced obstruent, emerges as a stop, for example *verde* [béd-de] 'green,' *algo* [ág-go] 'something.' Gemination and retroflexion are common in vernacular speech, but are stigmatized and are avoided by educated speakers in more carefully monitored speech.

In Cartagena de Indias, Colombia and occasionally in other Caribbean dialects, preconsonantal liquids are glottalized; this is often perceived as a partially geminated version of the following consonant, and is so transcribed in popular literature. An example comes from the Colombian novel *Cuatro años a borde de mí mismo* (Zalamea Borda 1958: 39): *¿Tú ere cachaco, vetdá? [...] Eta e la calle latga* 'You're from central Colombia, right? [...] This is the long street.'

2.3 *The hierarchy of reduction of coda consonants*

Reduction of coda consonants in Spanish partially conforms to an implicational hierarchy: neutralization and reduction of coda liquids only occurs in those dialects where coda /s/ is also uniformly aspirated or deleted; at the same time there are many dialects of Spanish in which coda /s/ is aspirated or deleted, but in which coda liquids are not modified. It is not clear whether this is due to some universal phonological properties or to the fact that all Latin American dialects exhibiting modification of coda /l/ and /r/ bear the historical imprint of dialects of southern Spain and the Canary Islands, in which all coda consonants are weakened or elided. Aspiration of /s/, on the other hand, appears to have arisen spontaneously in more than one location, throughout the Romance-speaking world.

2.4 *Phenomena affecting coda obstruents*

In addition to the deletion that often occurs in casual speech, the most common process affecting the voiced obstruents /b/, /d/, and /g/ in the syllable coda is vocalization, namely the conversion of the expected voiced fricative or approximant to a semivocalic [i] or [u]: *absoluto* [au.so.lú.to] 'absolute,' *admirar* [aj.mi.rár] 'admire.' Also found in several rural dialects is the resyllabification of a voiced

obstruent originally occupying an onset position (followed by a liquid /l/ or /r/) into the coda of the preceding syllable, followed by vocalization: *madre* [mai̯.re] 'mother,' *padre* [pai̯.re] 'father,' *hablar* [au̯.lár] 'to speak.' Occasionally this results in the hypercorrect conversion of a postnuclear semivowel into an approximant onset to the following syllable: *aire* [á.ðre] 'air,' *jaula* [xá.βla] 'cage.' The vocalization of coda consonants was a common occurrence in the history of Ibero-Romance (e.g. Martínez-Gil 1990), and accounted for such cases as *lacte* > *laite* > **latje* > *leche* 'milk.' In the contemporary Spanish-speaking world, vocalization of coda obstruents is a highly stigmatized phenomenon, only occurring with any frequency among speakers with little formal education, especially in rural areas. In Latin America, vocalization of /b/, /d/, and /g/ in coda position is frequent in the rural vernacular Spanish of Chile. Vocalization is at best semiactive, largely confined to a handful of partially fossilized lexical items and not usually extended to infrequent or new words. Theoretical accounts of the vocalization of voiced obstruents include Lipski (1994), Martínez-Gil (1996, 1997), and Piñeros (2001).

Voiceless obstruents in coda position only occur in *grupos cultos* 'learned groups,' that is borrowings directly from Latin that do not reflect the loss of coda voiceless stops that occurred in the evolution of Spanish: *doctor*, *acto* 'act,' *séptimo* 'seventh,' *etcétera*. In casual speech of most dialects, these consonants are frequently elided. Interchange of coda consonants also occurs, usually confined to particular lexical items: *Pepsi* [pék.si], *etcétera* [ek.sé.te.ra]. Replacement of a non-velar consonant by a velar is the most common occurrence, but other shifts can be heard, for example [dop.tór] and [dos.tór] for *doctor*, [kár.su.la] for *cápsula* 'capsule.' Alternative pronunciation of coda obstruents is not confined to any particular dialect region, but occurs in nearly all vernacular varieties, and is occasionally found among more educated speakers. All variants other than the etymological consonants are regarded as colloquial and are avoided in careful speech, but the non-canonical configurations predominate among less educated speakers (Hualde 2005: 146–149; Guitart 2004: 100–101).

2.5 Phenomena affecting coda nasals

In preconsonantal position, including across word-boundaries, Spanish coda nasals normally assimilate in point of articulation to the following consonant. In some Caribbean dialects, this assimilation is superimposed on a velarized articulation when the post-nasal consonant is not velar; thus in a word like *también* 'also,' the nasal has simultaneous labial and velar articulation, while in *enfermo* 'ill,' the nasal is both labiodental and velar (D'Introno and Sosa 1988).

The most common process affecting Spanish word-final nasals is velarization to [ŋ] when coming before a pause or a word-initial vowel, as in *bien hecho* [biɛŋ.é.fo] 'well done.' In most dialects that exhibit velarization this process shows some variation, usually with the alveolar nasal [n] or elision coupled with nasalization of the preceding vowel, but sometimes the nasal is totally effaced with no traces on the preceding vowel; this occurs most frequently in final atonic syllables. In Latin America, velarization of word-final /n/ is general in the dialects of the

Caribbean, including the Caribbean coast of Mexico, throughout nearly all of Central America, and to a lesser extent in the Andean highlands of South America (Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia). Dialects in which velarization of /n/ is notably absent include most of Mexico, as well as the Southern Cone dialects of Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, and the lowlands of eastern Bolivia. Velarization of /n/, while readily noticed and commented on by linguists, is rarely noticed by linguistically untrained speakers; nonetheless, there is some sociolinguistic stratification in velarizing dialects, with rates of velarization, especially in word-final prevocalic environments, diminishing in more formal registers (Cedergren 1973; Terrell 1975; Lipski 1983b).

Another variant affecting word-final /n/ is labialization to [m], a variant that reaches its highest level in the Spanish of Yucatan, Mexico. Once relegated to the margins of Yucateco speech, and found only among uneducated Spanish-Maya bilinguals, word-final labial nasals have emerged as a positive identity marker among monolingual Yucatan Spanish speakers, in a reflection of this region's transformation from a provincial backwater to a regional economic boom town (Michnowicz 2006, 2007, 2008).

3 Phenomena affecting syllable onsets

3.1 Elision and flapping of /d/

Spanish intervocalic /d/ is normally realized as a weak approximant, and frequently elides in casual speech, particularly in the past participle ending *-ado*. In Latin America, complete elision of /d/ in this context is frequent in the Caribbean dialects, as well as in most of Colombia, Chile, and coastal Peru. Deletion of /d/ is subject to sociolinguistic variation (e.g. Cedergren 1979; Caravedo 1986; D'Introno and Sosa 1986), with elision being avoided in careful speech.

In a few areas of Latin America, intervocalic /d/ is realized as a short occlusive or flap [ɾ]. This pronunciation is found in regional dialects that were once characterized by contact with African languages or creole languages. This includes some enclaves in the Dominican Republic (Megeney 1990), the Caribbean coast of Colombia, the Colón area of Panama (Tejeira 1964: 17), and parts of coastal Ecuador. This pronunciation is sometimes reflected in dialect literature, for example in the poetry of the Afro-Colombian writer Candelario Obeso (Obeso 1960):

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Negra <i>re mi vira</i> | 'My dear black woman' |
| ¿ <i>Aronde va?</i> | 'Where are you going?' |
| <i>Quérate en mi rancho.</i> | 'Stay at my place.' |
| No te queje má. | 'Don't fuss any more.' |

The flap pronunciation of /d/ is highly stigmatized wherever it occurs, and is presently confined to uneducated rural speakers.

3.2 Deaffrication of /tʃ/

The prepalatal affricate /tʃ/ (written as *ch*) exhibits many regional variants in Spanish, most of which are uniformly stable within their respective regions. Regional variation normally involves point of articulation, reaching nearly the alveolar region [ts] in some dialects of Chile and northern Spain, and approaching the palatal region [tɕ] in some Caribbean and South American dialects; the occlusive element is maintained throughout. Subject to variable intra-dialectal variation in several regions is the deaffrication of /tʃ/ to fricative [ʃ]. Fricative variants are frequent in northern Mexico (Moreno de Alba 1994), the traditional Spanish of New Mexico (Jaramillo 1986; Jaramillo and Bills 1982), and Panama (Alvarado de Ricord 1971: 95). Fricatives are occasionally found in Puerto Rico (Quilis and Vaquero 1973). The fricative pronunciation is regarded as more colloquial, although it is not always overtly stigmatized.

3.3 Delateralization of /ʎ/

The palatal lateral phoneme /ʎ/ (written as *ll*) has disappeared from most Spanish dialects, which are consequently regarded as *yeísta* (neutralizing /ʎ/ and /j/ in favor of the latter). In those Latin American dialects still retaining /ʎ/ (confined to Bolivia, Paraguay, and very small regions of Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia), non-lateral variants have emerged in recent generations, for example in northeastern Argentina (Colantoni 2001, 2005, 2006), and occasionally in Paraguay. The delateralized variants are not regarded as substandard, but only as pertaining to younger generations. The phoneme /ʎ/ is retained in all regional dialects of Bolivia, except for the semicreole Afro-Bolivian speech of the Yungas region, which is completely *yeísta* (Lipski 2008). Afro-Bolivians use [j] when speaking the traditional dialect, and [ʎ] when switching to ethnically unmarked highland Bolivian Spanish.

3.4 Behavior of post-consonantal voiced obstruents /b/, /d/, /g/

The Spanish voiced obstruents /b/, /d/, and /g/ are generally described as voiced fricatives, or more often voiced approximants, in all postvocalic and post-consonantal contexts, except after (necessarily homorganic) nasals. In utterance-initial and post-nasal position, voiced obstruents are realized as stops; /d/ is also uniformly realized as a stop after /l/. In point of fact, the situation is more complex, with considerable regional variation characterizing the behavior of Spanish /b/, /d/, and /g/. Canfield (1960, 1962: 77–78, 1981) noted that in much of Central America (El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Nicaragua), and in highland Colombia, /b/, /d/, and /g/ receive occlusive pronunciation after hemivowels, /l/, /r/, and /s/ (cf. also Flórez 1978; Montes Giraldo 1982). Even in dialects where voiced obstruents are occlusive following syllable-final liquids and /s/, they are normally continuants following syllable-final voiced obstruents (e.g. in *Magdalena*), as are all syllable-final /b/, /d/, and /g/. Amastae (1986,

1989) provides quantitative verification of the occlusive pronunciation of post-consonantal voiced obstruents in Colombia and Honduras, while Fernández (1982) demonstrates the variation of voiced obstruents in Costa Rican Spanish. Geckeler and Ocampo Marín (1973) document occlusive articulation of postconsonantal /b/, /d/, and /g/ in the Andean region of Venezuela. Canfield (1962: 78) affirms that in the highlands of Ecuador and Bolivia, /b/, /d/, and /g/ are occlusive after /s/; my own observations suggest that in these dialects, voiced obstruents tend toward occlusive pronunciation in all postconsonantal contexts. In all Spanish dialects where postconsonantal voiced obstruents receive an occlusive pronunciation, this articulation is more common among rural speakers, and carries a rustic connotation.

3.5 *Aspiration of word-initial /s/*

Found in a small subset of /s/-aspirating dialects is the aspiration of word-initial postvocalic /s/, as in *la semana* [la.he.má.na] 'the week.' Aspiration of word-initial /s/ is most frequently found in the vernacular speech of El Salvador and much of Honduras (Lipski 1983a, 1984, 1985, 1986), and also in the traditional Spanish of northern New Mexico (Brown 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Brown and Torres Cacoullós 2003). In the dialects where word-initial /s/ can be aspirated, rates of weakening are considerably lower than those for word-final /s/-reduction, but there are no Spanish dialects in which word-initial /s/ is aspirated while word-final /s/ remains intact. Aspiration of onset /s/ appears to result from fast-speech phenomena, in which the position of the word boundary with respect to intervocalic aspirated /s/ becomes momentarily indistinct (Lipski 1985). As with word-final prevocalic /s/-aspiration, the presence of a following tonic vowel as in *la sala* [la. sá.la] 'the room' results in very low rates of aspiration, as opposed to before atonic vowels as in *la semana* 'the week.' Unlike the extension of /s/-aspiration to word-final prevocalic contexts (e.g. *los amigos* 'the friends'), aspiration of word-initial /s/ cannot be analyzed as a logical extension of aspiration in coda position, nor of the reduction of allomorphy, since by occasionally aspirating word-initial /s/, allomorphy is actually increased. Since initial /s/-aspiration is found only in dialects where word-final prevocalic /s/ is routinely weakened, initial aspiration appears to arise from a momentary misanalysis of the position of the word boundary vis-à-vis an intervocalic /s/, as regards susceptibility to aspiration. The aspiration environments are near mirror-images of one another (as originally analyzed by Lipski 1985), but the most likely conditioning factor is the ambisyllabicity of word-final prevocalic and word-initial postvocalic /s/ (Lipski 1999), when followed by an atonic vowel (*las amigas* 'the friends (f.)' vs. *la semana* 'the week').

Although aspiration of word-initial /s/ only reaches significant proportions in El Salvador, Honduras, and New Mexico, sporadic cases have also been reported for other Latin American dialects, all of which also aspirate /s/ in coda position and in word-final prevocalic environments. This includes the Dominican Republic (Jiménez Sabater 1975: 343–335), Chile (Oroz 1966: 104), the Caribbean coast of Colombia (Becerra 1980: 105), and in northeastern Argentina (Vidal de Battini 1964:

102–103). In all of these dialects, aspiration of word-initial /s/ is regarded as a rustic vernacular pronunciation, and is avoided in careful speech.

4 Phenomena affecting syllable nuclei

Spanish syllabic nuclei are invariably vowels; the only known instances of syllabic consonants occur only sporadically, as described in Section 4.3. In most varieties of Spanish vowels are quite stable and undergo little regional or intradialectal variation, but there are some recurring instances of vocalic modifications, affecting both tonic and atonic vowels.

4.1 Raising of final atonic mid vowels

The raising of final atonic /o/ to [u] and /e/ to [i] is a frequent phenomenon in the history of Ibero-Romance languages, and coalesced in Portuguese, and some Asturian-Leonese dialects. In the remainder of the Spanish-speaking world, raising of final mid vowels is confined to a few regions, and typifies rural speech. Typical examples include *nochi* < *noche* 'night,' *lechi* < *leche* 'milk,' *vieju* < *viejo* 'old,' *buenu* < *bueno* 'good.' Oliver Rajan (2007) and Holmquist (2001, 2003, 2005) document this trait for the speech of rural highland Puerto Rico. Vowel raising carries negative prestige, and is avoided by individuals seeking upward or outward mobility.

4.2 Reduction of atonic vowels

The reduction of atonic vowels, meaning shortening, devoicing, and in the extreme case elision, is characteristic of only a few Spanish dialects, all found in Latin America, and all the result of previous or contemporary contact with Native American languages. This behavior is found in some parts of central Mexico (Boyd-Bowman 1952; Canellada and Zamora Vicente 1960; Lope Blanch 1963), and in the Andean highlands of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia (Canfield 1981). Phonological analyses are found in Lipski (1990a) and Delforge (2008). The most common instances occur in contact with /s/, as in *pres(i)dente* 'president,' *(e)studiant(e)s* 'students.' The front vowels /i/ and /e/ appear to be subject to deletion more frequently than other vowels. In dialects in which unstressed vowel reduction occurs, the most extreme cases are found among Spanish-recessive bilingual speakers, or among rural and lower-working class individuals. This results in a 'stress-timed' rhythmic pattern in which unstressed syllables are compressed and shortened between stress peaks, a stigmatized speech pattern in most areas of Latin America.

4.3 Syllabic consonants

In the traditional Spanish of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, a syllabic nasal [m̩] can sometimes be heard (Espinosa 1925; Lipski 1993; Piñeros 2005). One of the most frequent combinations involves the possessive *mi* 'my' + noun

beginning with a labial consonant, for example *mi papá* > [m̩.pa.pá] 'my father,' *mi paquete* [m̩.pa.ké.te] 'my package.' Although the syllabic nasal has survived in vernacular speech, for many younger speakers it has accreted a prothetic vowel, to become *empapá*, a quasi-lexicalized form in New Mexican Spanish. This pronunciation is occasionally reflected in regionalist literary texts, for example (Arellano 1992: 91):

Les dio mucho miedo y corrieron derecho a la casa de *empapá* como era la más cerca
 'They got really scared and ran straight to my dad's house, since it was the closest.'
 Salió *empapá* cuando oyó el bullicio y ya entraron las tres más muertas que vivas.
 'My dad came out when he heard the racket and the three women entered, more dead
 than alive.'

Syllabic sonorants were once common in New Mexican Spanish before the diminutive endings *-ito/-ita* as in *lomita* [lo.m̩.ta] 'little hill,' *bolita* [bo.l̩.ta], 'little ball' (Espinosa 1925), but now are seldom heard.

In Andean Spanish dialects in which unstressed vowel deletion is common in contact with /s/, a quasi-syllabic /s/ can arise, as in *pos/pues* > *ps* 'well,' for example *ps no sé* [ps̩.no.se] 'well I don't know.' In word-internal contexts such as *pres(i)dente* 'president,' the failure of the /s/ to assimilate in voicing to the voiced obstruent /d/ even when the intervening vowel is deleted suggests that /s/ has not been resyllabified as a coda, but rather as a syllable head. According to Fleischhacker (2001), /s/ in a consonant cluster can provide misleading acoustic cues that suggest the presence of a front vowel immediately following /s/; this acoustic ambiguity could partially account for the ease with which Andean Spanish unstressed front vowels disappear when in contact with /s/. Unstressed vowel loss in Andean Spanish is frequently represented in dialect literature, for example in the satirical play *La birlocha de la esquina* by the Bolivian Raul Salmón (1999: 15):

todo *esops* nos ocurre por causa de vos 'all this is happening to us because of you'
Tieneps derecho. '[She] has the right'

5 Variation in intonational contours

5.1 Overview

Intonational patterns in Spanish are highly varied and often idiosyncratic, and at the same time present a paradox to the linguist. Accurate and non-ambiguous descriptions of recurring intonational schemes are often elusive, and yet native speakers effortlessly and almost immediately identify a speaker as belonging to their own dialect zone or another area just from the intonational contours. The advent of intonational phonology (Ladd 1996) and the widespread adoption of descriptive and analytical tools for the study of pitch accent behavior, such as the powerful and free software package PRAAT (Boersma and Weenink 1999–2005) have resulted in significant advances in the empirical and replicable study of

intonation. Most recent work on Spanish intonational phonology has concentrated on the possibility that narrow vs. broad focus can be distinguished through the use of different pitch accents (e.g. Face 2000, 2001, 2002; Toledo 1989). Other studies have focused on interrogative intonation, including absolute (yes-no) interrogatives and those based on interrogative (Wh-) words (e.g. Dorta 2000; Face 2004).

In addition to intonational patterns found in most varieties of Spanish, there are many regional and sociolinguistically marked configurations. It was in the study of interrogative patterns that the first systematic comparisons of regional dialectal differences were elucidated, for example by Sosa (1999: 212–213), who analyzed several Caribbean dialects and demonstrated that absolute interrogatives were distinguished from the corresponding declaratives in having an extra tonal rise on the last tonic syllable. Sosa characterizes the phrase-final configuration as H+H* L%, that is the final tonic syllable begins on a high tone, adds a slightly higher tone, which reaches its peak within the tonic syllable, and ends in a low boundary tone.

5.2 *Dialectal differences in intonation: peak alignment*

It has been widely observed, for example, that in many – perhaps the majority – of Spanish dialects, the high tone pitch accent on pre-final stressed syllables occurs either towards the end of that syllable or at the beginning of the immediately following syllable (e.g. Face 2001; Prieto et al. 1995; Sosa 1999). This “late peak alignment” is usually represented as L* + H, which indicates that whereas most of the low tone is confined within the tonic syllable, the high tone reaches its peak in the following syllable. O’Rourke (2004) shows that for Andean dialects of Peru in contact with Quechua, early high peak alignment of pre-final tonic syllables (H* or L+H*) pitch accents are more usual. This is a sociolinguistically marked pattern that is associated – often erroneously – with Spanish-recessive bilingual speakers, even though some monolingual Spanish speakers exhibit the same type of pitch accent. Colantoni and Gurlekian (2004) and Kaisse (2001) demonstrate a similar pattern for the Buenos Aires dialect, in combination with the “long fall” pitch accent on the final tonic syllable. In Buenos Aires, this intonational pattern is regarded as normal within the speech community, while speakers from other countries immediately identify the Buenos Aires dialect by means of this unique prosodic combination.

5.3 *Early peak alignment with no downdrift*

In most varieties of Spanish, phrase-internal L + H* pitch accents are associated with narrow focus, including exclamations. Spanish speakers from dialects that exhibit early high peak alignment in pre-final tonic syllables are often perceived as overly emphatic by listeners from other dialect regions. This is especially true when a series of pre-final L + H* pitch accents is not accompanied by the usual downdrift that results in a gradual lowering of H peaks across the duration of a normal Spanish utterance (Prieto, Shih, and Nibert 1996; Prieto 1998). The combination of early peak

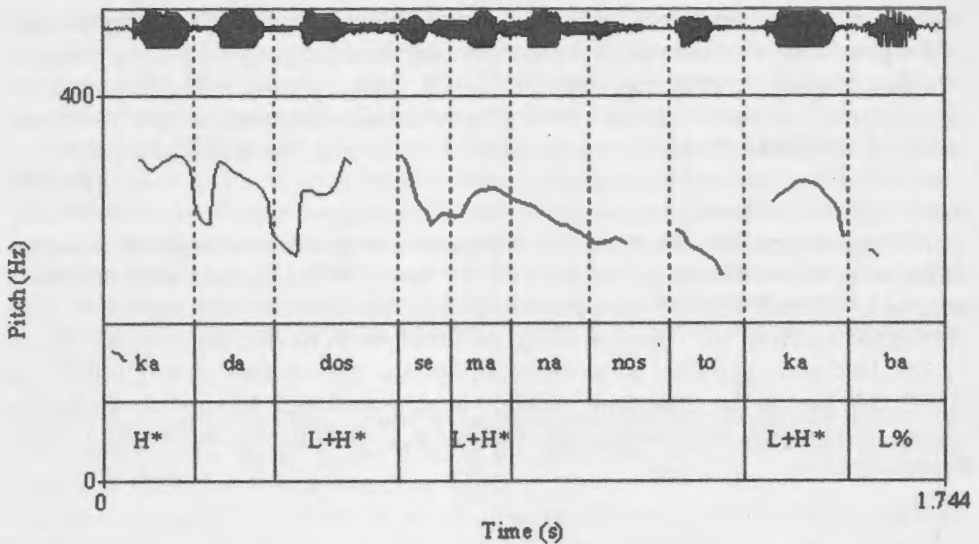


Figure 4.1 Pronunciation of *cada dos semanas nos tocaba* 'every week it was our turn' by an Afro-Bolivian woman from Dorado Chico, North Yungas.

Source: Author.

alignment in pre-final tonic syllables and little or no downdrift is particularly common in some dialects spoken in ethnically homogeneous Afro-Hispanic communities in Latin America. The following example comes from the Yungas region of central Bolivia, where some tiny Afro-Bolivian communities continue to use a traditional semicreole dialect in addition to contemporary Bolivian Spanish (Lipski 2008). Figure 4.1 shows the pronunciation of *cada dos semanas nos tocaba* 'every week it was our duty,' spoken by a middle-aged Afro-Bolivian woman. The early peak alignment and minimal downdrift are clearly visible. This is a highly stigmatized dialect pattern, and the subject of mockery by Bolivians from other communities.

5.4 *Early peak alignment and minimal tonal valleys*

Even more extreme specimens of Afro-Hispanic Spanish combine early peak alignment of prenuclear tonic syllables, little or no downdrift, and minimal tonal valleys between successive tonic syllables. Hualde and Schwegler (2008) describe precisely this configuration in the Afro-Iberian creole language Palenquero, spoken in the Colombian village of San Basilio de Palenque. Similar patterns typically occur in the highly stigmatized vernacular Spanish spoken by Palenqueros. An example of the latter case is shown in Figure 4.2, pronounced by a middle-aged bilingual Spanish-Palenquero male speaker who was not speaking in a distinctively emphatic or excited fashion, is the pronunciation of *e[l]* 'torito [g]uapo' *e[s]* *e[l]* *mi[s]* *mo ble[d]* *o* 'torito guapo' [mean bull] is the same as wild amaranth.'

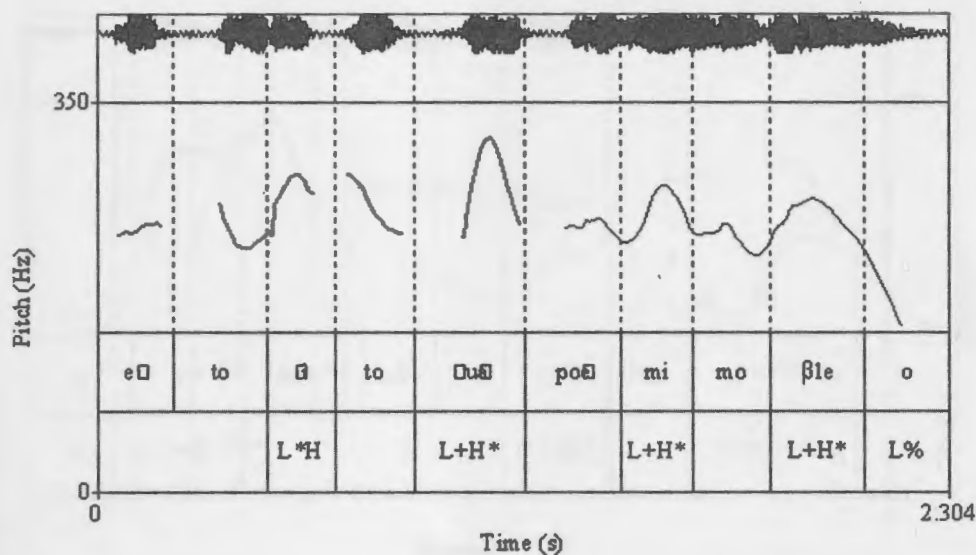


Figure 4.2 *El torito guapo es el mismo bledo* pronounced by a male speaker from San Basilio de Palenque, Colombia.

Source: Author.

Virtually identical patterns are produced by the *Congos* of Panama, groups of Afro-descendants who live in villages along the Caribbean coast, and who during Carnival season speak a ritualized language that combines deliberate improvisation and distortion with legitimate leftovers of earlier semicreole Spanish (Lipski 1990b). Unlike in the case of San Basilio de Palenque, where intonational patterns without peak valleys are stigmatized, *Congo* speech deliberately strives to achieve an exaggerated intonation that differs from regional varieties of Spanish. Figure 4.3 shows the pronunciation of the *Congo* phrase

| | | | | |
|--------------------|------|------|-----|----------|
| huítero | que | elle | no | cambrasa |
| look | COMP | PRON | NEG | speak |
| 'Hey, I'm talking' | | | | |

This sentence is roughly derived from Spanish in the following way: *huítero* is a deformation of *viste* 'you saw' (pronounced [bí.te] in Panamanian Spanish). *Elle* is a traditional Afro-Hispanic genderless third-person pronoun, which in the deliberately manipulated *Congo* dialect is taken to mean *yo* 'I' in this sentence. The negative *no* is also inserted deliberately as part of the *Congo* strategy is saying things 'backwards.' *cambrasa* is a modified form of *conversa* 'to converse.'

Palenquero and Panamanian *Congo* Spanish produce the impression of highly emphatic and excited speech when heard by speakers of other Spanish dialects in which atonic syllables typically bear low tones. In neither case can these patterns be attributed to earlier contact with African tonal languages, since the latter assign

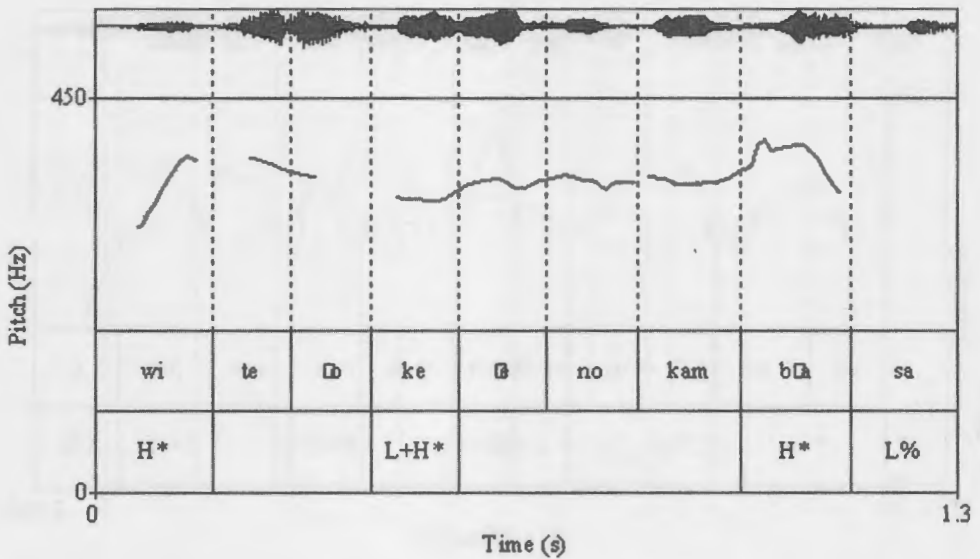


Figure 4.3 Panamanian Congo woman's pronunciation of *húitero que elle no cambrasa* 'hey, I'm talking'; village of Escobal, Costa Abajo de Colón.

Source: Author.

individual lexical tones to each syllable, and do not normally contain long strings of identical H tones.

5.5 *The northern New Mexican/northern Mexican "norteño" intonation*

The preceding examples have shown that Spanish dialectal intonational patterns can be at least partially characterized by a combination of final pitch accent structure, the nature of prenuclear pitch accents, and the amount of downdrift and tonal dip between pitch accents. Most of the pitch accents can be described in terms of the bitonal system utilized in the preceding cases, with no more than two phonologically distinctive tones per tonic syllable, one of which is the nuclear tone, indicated with the asterisk *. Kaisse (2001) has shown that in order to fully describe the quintessential Buenos Aires "long fall" nuclear pitch accent, nominally characterized by the H* + L pattern found in most Spanish declarative utterances, the overall length of the final tonic syllable must also be taken into account.

As a final example where subtle refinements to established descriptive procedures may yield dividends involves the "norteño" intonational patterns found in northern Mexico and New Mexico, and which form the basis for the stereotypical "Mexicano" accent in countless movies, radio and television programs, and comedy routines. The stereotypical patterns are usually ascribed to male speakers of rural origin, and have been adopted by many Mexican-American young men in the United States.

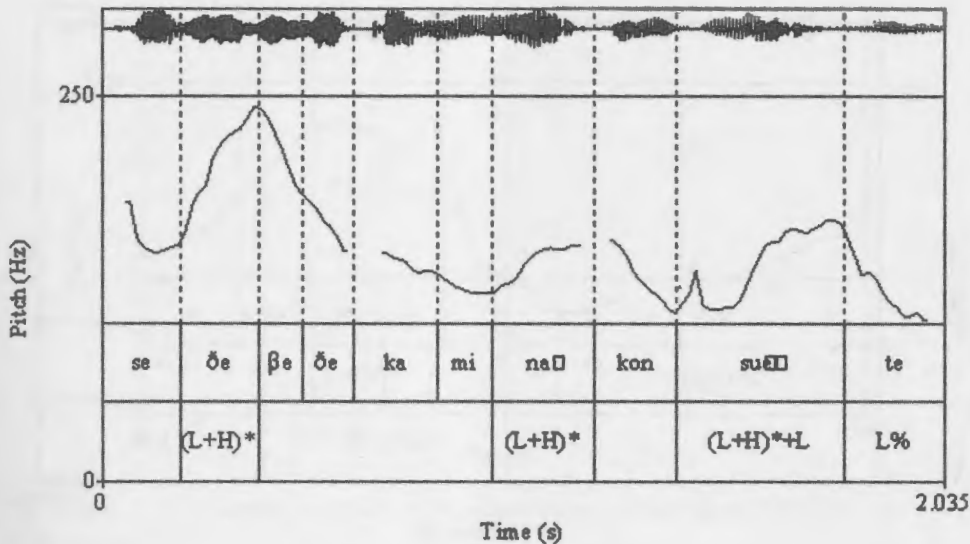


Figure 4.4 *Se debe de caminar con suerte* pronounced by a man from northern Mexico.

Source: Author.

Although the “Norteño” accent is immediately recognizable after the first few words, and can be reasonably imitated by those familiar with this dialect pattern, a complete description of “Norteño” intonation is not an easy task. In essence, the principal defining traits appear to reside in a combination of the nuclear pitch accent, the final boundary tone, and in many cases, the nature of prenuclear pitch accents. Perhaps the single most distinctive component of the “Norteño” intonational pattern is the final or nuclear pitch accent, which in a near mirror-image of the Buenos Aires “long fall” can be termed “long rise.” Consider Figure 4.4, which represents the phrase *se debe de caminar con suerte* ‘one must travel with luck,’ as pronounced by an 82 year-old man from Ciudad Chihuahua, in northern Mexico:

The prenuclear pitch accent on *debe* shows a combination of long rise but pitch peak within the tonic syllable, a trait that is even more apparent in the nuclear pitch accent on *suerte*. Although in principal this could be cast as a typical Spanish L + H* pitch accent, the nature of the long rise – visible both in terms of the delayed rise and the overall syllable length – is best characterized by postulating (L+H)* as the fundamental phonological tone, following the suggestion of Hualde (2002).

Another example of this “long rise” accent comes in the sentence *Ondequiera que ha habido raza ha habido resolana* ‘Wherever there are Latinos there is resentment,’ pronounced by a middle-aged male speaker from Albuquerque, New Mexico. Only the word *resolana* ‘resentment’ is presented in Figure 4.5, to show the elongated vowel and the slowly rising pitch, which peaks some three-quarters of the way through the syllable:

Another fundamental component of the “Norteño” accent, usually occurring in tandem with the “long rise” (L+H)* nuclear pitch accent, is the lack of a low final

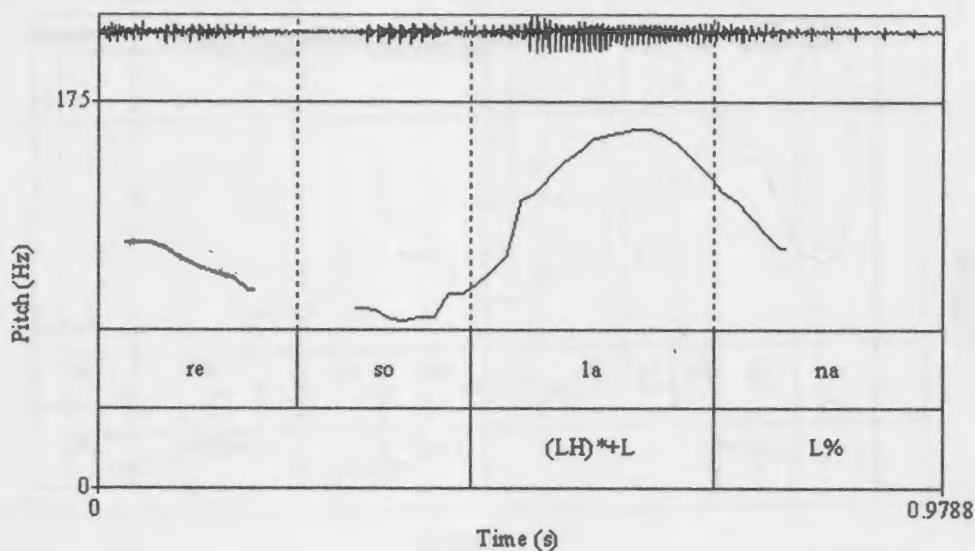


Figure 4.5 *Resolana* 'resentment,' pronounced by a man from Albuquerque, New Mexico.
Source: Author.

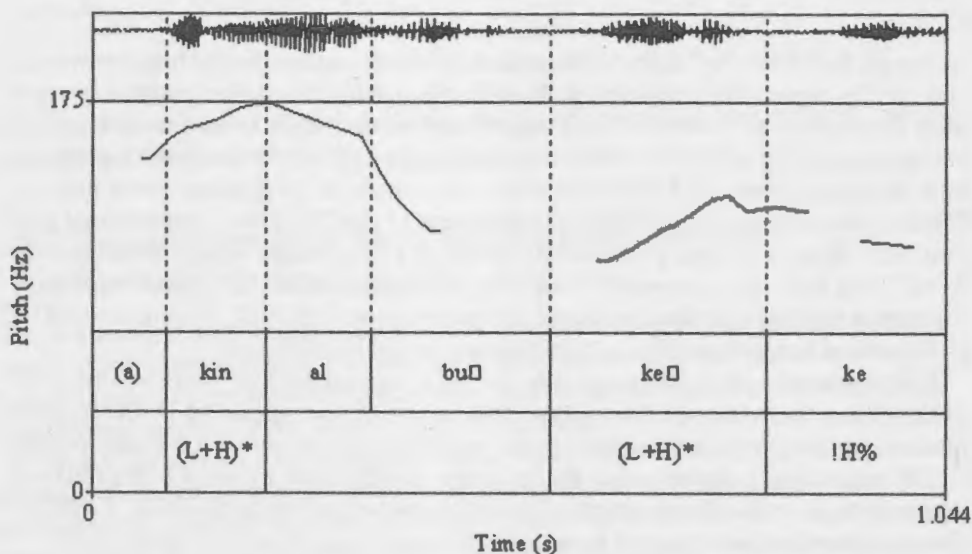


Figure 4.6 *Aquí en Alburquerque* pronounced by a man from Albuquerque, New Mexico.
Source: Author.

boundary tone (L%) that normally accompanies Spanish declarative utterances. Typical "Norteño" declarative sentences often end in a high H% (or slightly downstepped !H%) boundary tone, which produces the impression of indecisiveness, irony, or amelioration, even when no such connotations obtain. When the

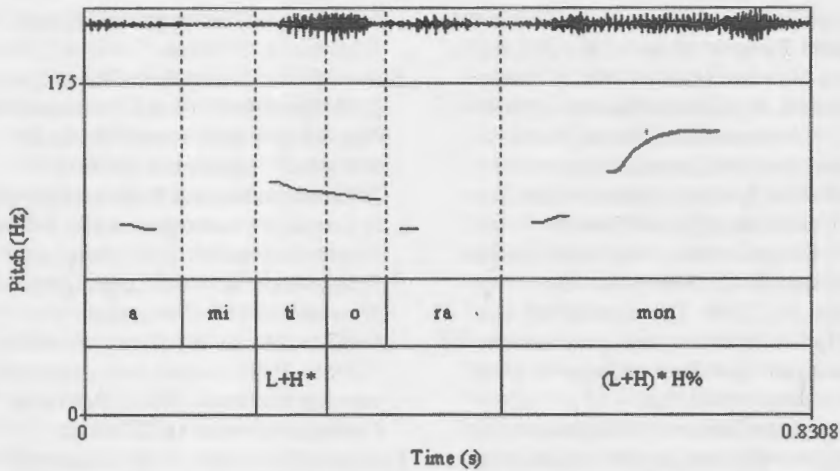


Figure 4.7 *A mi tío Ramón*, pronounced by a man from northern New Mexico.

Source: Author.

final tonic syllable is followed by one or more atonic syllables, there is normally a pitch drop of approximately one whole musical tone between the tonic syllable and the postonic syllable(s), but without a descending pitch at the end. Figure 4.6 represents the declarative utterance *Aquí en Albuquerque* [sic.] 'Here in Albuquerque,' pronounced by a middle-aged male speaker of traditional New Mexican Spanish from Albuquerque.

In phrases ending in a tonic syllable, the "long rise" (L+H)* nuclear accent simply remains with a high (H%) boundary tone, as in the expression *a mi tío Ramón* 'to my uncle Ramón,' shown in Figure 4.7 and pronounced by a middle-aged male speaker from northern New Mexico.

This brief demonstration suffices to show that an accurate portrayal of Spanish dialectal intonation patterns is still in its initial stages, and that a full account will require consideration of numerous interacting factors, including but not limited to the type of pitch accents, boundary tones, relative length of tonic and atonic syllables, and pitch contours between pitch accents. Efforts exerted towards a comprehensive solution will be well rewarded, since intonational patterns constitute one of the prime sociolinguistic differentiators in the Spanish-speaking world.

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