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CURRENT TRENDS AMONG ECUADORIAN DIALECTS: INSIGHTS FROM INTERNET INTERVIEWS

Michael K. OLSEN

University of Montana

michael.olsen@mso.umt.edu

Abstract

The dialectal landscape of Spanish found within the boundaries of Ecuador is diverse. However, the descriptive research that has investigated dialectal features that characterize the different dialects found in Ecuador is somewhat outdated considering the dynamic nature of language. This study takes a first step in investigating current dialectal trends across many Ecuadorian Spanish dialects. The speech of subjects in ten video interviews collected from the Internet representing a wide range of Ecuadorian Spanish dialect zones was analyzed. Phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical features were observed and compared to dialectal features from different dialectal zones reported in previous research. Differences were found between the older generations and the younger generations across dialects. The older generations tended to display characteristics reported in previous research while the younger speakers showed differences. These differences are taken as evidence of a dialectal convergence processes underway among the different dialects of Ecuadorian Spanish.

Keywords

Ecuadorian dialects, dialectal convergence, Internet video interviews, Spanish of Ecuador

TENDENCIAS ACTUALES EN LOS DIALECTOS ECUATORIANOS: EVIDENCIAS OBTENIDAS EN ENTREVISTAS POR INTERNET

Resumen

El paisaje dialectal del español que se encuentra en los límites del Ecuador es diverso. Sin embargo, la investigación descriptiva que ha examinado rasgos dialectales que caracterizan a los diferentes dialectos que se encuentran en Ecuador ha detectado que estos son un tanto obsoletos si se tiene en cuenta la naturaleza dinámica del lenguaje. Este estudio da un primer paso en la investigación de las tendencias dialectales actuales entre muchos de los dialectos del español ecuatoriano. Se ha analizado el habla de los sujetos en diez entrevistas en video recogidas en internet que representan una amplia gama de zonas dialectales del español ecuatoriano. Rasgos fonológicos, morfológicos, sintácticos y características léxicas se han observado y se han comparado con las características dialectales de diferentes zonas examinadas en investigaciones anteriores. Se han encontrado diferencias dialectales entre las generaciones mayores y las generaciones más jóvenes. Las generaciones mayores tendían a mostrar características reportadas en investigaciones anteriores, mientras que los hablantes más jóvenes presentaban ciertas diferencias. Estas diferencias se consideran una evidencia de los procesos en curso de convergencia dialectal entre los diferentes dialectos del español ecuatoriano.

Palabras clave

dialectos ecuatorianos, convergencia dialectal, entrevistas en video por internet, español de Ecuador

1. Introduction

The study of the various dialects that form the Spanish language greatly increased in the 1920s with many different dialects receiving attention and becoming the focus of descriptive studies (Lipski 1994). For centuries before this time, authors had made reference to peculiarities in the various Latin-American dialects as well as similarities to the different dialects found in the Iberian Peninsula; however, the systematic study of Spanish dialects began around the time that Henríquez Ureña proposed to classify the different Latin-American dialects by indigenous substrate languages in 1921 (*apud* Lipski 1994). Since that time, there have been many empirical studies, mostly descriptive, concentrating on the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical peculiarities that exist within different geographical and socio-economic boundaries.

Although attempts to categorize and describe the Spanish language found within current national borders across the globe, the nature of dialectology calls for continual observation because language naturally changes over time. This change creates the

necessity for new descriptive and theoretical research that focuses on the various Spanish dialects. The purpose of this article is to discuss the differences and similarities found in the Spanish of Ecuador between 20th century descriptive studies and current dialectal trends. Ecuadorian Spanish is the focus of this study because of the many distinct varieties found within the relatively small geographical area that the country's borders enclose. The speech from a variety of interviews found on the Internet is analyzed in an attempt to describe diachronic change of the various Ecuadorian dialects. Another purpose of this article is to show that there is much work to be done in order to understand the social and geographical dynamics of dialectal variation in Ecuador.

2. The Spanish of Ecuador

The Spanish of Ecuador has been the subject of a number of articles and monographs and at least one dissertation (Argüello 1978) that describe regional dialects. According to Lipski (1994), the work of Toscano Mateus (1953) is the only major work on dialects of Ecuador that spans its entirety. However, Quilis (1992) as well as Quilis & Casado Fresnillo (1992) have also contributed broad overviews of the Spanish language in Ecuador. Although most authors (e.g., Aguirre 2000; Canfield 1981; Toscano Mateus 1953) have made either a two-way (coastal, highland) or a three-way (coastal, highland, Amazonian) division, Lipski (1994) further divides the highland region into four different dialect zones — the extreme north central, central highlands, Cañar and Azuay (both highland provinces located north of Loja and south of the central highland region), and Loja (the southernmost highland province that borders Peru to the south). Although these geographic divisions make sense intuitively and do constitute major dialectal divisions, dialectal variation, not excluding Ecuador, is much more complicated. In addition to geographic divisions, other layers must be added for a more fine-grained division of dialects. The linguistic description of Ecuadorian Spanish herein comes from a variety sources, including Albor (1973), Boyd-Bowman (1953), García & Otheguy (1983), Lipski (1987, 1989, 1990, 1994), Olbertz (2005), and Suñer & Yopez (1988).

2.1 Ecuadorian Phonology

In general, the phonology of Spanish spoken in Ecuador is split by coastal and highland characteristics, although there is clearly more variation than can be described by this dichotomous division. Coastal Spanish is similar to Caribbean and other coastal varieties in other countries, whereas highland Spanish in Ecuador is similar to Mexican and Peruvian highland varieties. In reality, the phonological differences are largely phonetic distinctions; however, there are some differences in the underlying representations among the Ecuadorian dialects.

Compared to other dialects in Ecuador, phonological characteristics of coastal Spanish exhibit more lenition. Phrase-final and word-final /n/ is realized as a velar nasal before a following vowel as in [pan] *pan* ‘bread’. The intervocalic /d/, which is normally realized as an interdental voiced fricative in other dialects has a very weak realization and frequently elides as in (1). However, in Esmeraldas, /d/ is sometimes realized as an occlusive or alveolar tap similar to English as in (2). As for rhotics in coastal Spanish, /r/ is realized as a trill as in (3) and phrase final taps regularly elide, especially in speakers from lower social strata. Neutralization of /l/ and /r/ also sometimes occurs before another consonant. Syllable-final /s/ is debuccalized to a voiceless velar fricative as in (4) and is often elided as in (5), although in formal speech [s] does *sometimes* emerge. Intervocalic /j/ is very weak and speakers often do not pronounce it in contact with high front vowels. The palatal lateral /ʎ/ does not exist in coastal Spanish, hence *calló* ‘3rd sing. past shut up’ and *cayó* ‘3rd sing. fell’ are both pronounced [ka.ˈjo]. The last phonological characteristic of the coast is that among illiterate speakers, [f] and [ɸ] are in free variation as in (6).

(1) <pescado> ‘fish’: /peskado/ → [pes.ˈka.̞o] or [pes.ˈkaɔ]

(2) <pescado> ‘fish’: /peskado/ → [pes.ˈka.ɖo] or [pes.ˈka.ro]

(3) <rápido> ‘fast’: /rapido/ → [ˈra.pi.ðo]

(4) <todas las casas> ‘all the houses’: /todaslaskasas/ → [ˈto.ðah.lah.ˈka.sah]

(5) <todas las casas> ‘all the houses’: /todaslaskasas/ → [ˈto.ða.la.ˈka.sa]

(6) <falta> ‘lack’: /falta/ → [ˈɸa.l̞.ta]

Although Lipski (1994) separates the Amazonian region from other Spanish dialects, at that time, indigenous languages still greatly influenced Spanish because Spanish was only a second language. Spanish-speaking immigrants that moved into the Amazon maintained Spanish; however, this population was relatively small and unstable. Two of the interviews in the present study involve Amazonian natives and a description of this Spanish is provided in section 3.

The dialect spoken in the extreme northern highlands is more conservative in terms of correspondence between phoneme and allophone than other dialects in Ecuador. Unlike the Spanish of the coast, word-final /n/ is rarely realized as a velar nasal. The palatal lateral /ʎ/ does exist and the words *calló* and *cayó* are realized as [ka.'ʎo] and [ka.'jo]. Syllable-final /s/ is realized as [s] and syllable-final /r/ is realized as a tap or apico-alveolar fricative [ɾ̥]. One characteristic, among others, that sets this dialect apart from the central highland dialect is that unstressed vowels are not reduced, although they do usually become devoiced word-finally. At least one phonetic characteristic that the extreme northern highland dialect shares with the coast is that /r/ is realized as an alveolar trill.

Several phonological characteristics differentiate the central highlands dialect from other dialects in Ecuador. Unstressed vowels become devoiced and shortened, and elide in fast speech when in contact with /s/; the mid-vowels /e/ and /o/ are most frequently affected. Where coastal Spanish speakers produce alveolar trills, the /r/ phoneme in central highland Spanish is realized as the postalveolar fricative [ɻ]. Syllable-final /r/ is realized as a sibilant and the consonant cluster /tr/ is realized as an affricate close to [tʃ]. The phoneme /ʎ/ is distinguished from /j/; however, it is not realized as a palatal lateral, but as a postalveolar fricative [ɻ] similar to the rhotic pronunciations. Syllable-final /s/ is realized as the sibilant [s] and becomes voiced to [z] word-finally before a following vowel as in (7). The labiodental phoneme /f/ is often realized as [ɸ] by Quichua-Spanish bilinguals. One phonological characteristic that central highland Spanish shares with coastal Spanish is that word-final /n/ is realized as [ŋ]; it also sometimes elides.

(7) <has ido> '2s.has gone': /asido/ → [a.'zi.ðo]

The dialect in the Cañar and Azuay zone is similar to the dialect in the central highlands; however, fricative rhotic pronunciation and unstressed-vowel reduction are more prominent than in the central highlands. Although these two dialects are very similar, there are a few distinguishing characteristics. The palatal lateral phoneme /ʎ/ is distinguished from /j/, but the latter is not realized as a fricative. The affricate [tʃ] loses its affrication and becomes [ʃ] and word-final /s/ is not only voiced word-finally before a following vowel, but also in prefix-final position as in (8).

(8) <desata> ‘untie’: /desata/ → [ðe.ˈza.ʦa]

Despite being geographically separated from the extreme north-central highlands dialect by the central highlands and Cañar and Azuay dialects, the phonological characteristics of Loja are very similar to characteristics found in the extreme north-central highlands. Word-final /n/ is [n], /ʎ/ does exist as a phoneme as well as /j/, syllable-final /s/ is [s] and syllable-final /r/ a tap or alveolar fricative, unstressed vowels are not reduced, and /r/ is realized as an alveolar trill in this zone.

2.2 Ecuadorian Morphology

According to Lipski (1994), Spanish-speakers in Ecuador employ the second person singular informal subject pronoun *vos*, but the verbal suffixes that correspond to this pronoun are variable. Diphthongized forms are used along with *tú* forms and *-is* endings are less frequent. Although the use of *vos* is somewhat socially stigmatized on the coast, its use seems to be stable. In the highlands, monolingual Spanish speakers and Spanish-dominant bilinguals use the *tú* forms with *vos* whereas Quichua-dominant bilinguals use the *voseo* forms and sometimes employ diphthongized forms as in *tenéis* ‘you have’ or *estáis* ‘you are’. The pronoun *tú* is used only among educated speakers in the highlands and is more frequent in Loja and the extreme northern highlands. Overall, the use of *voseo* and the forms used are much more variable than in other Spanish dialects that employ the use of *vos*.

The other morphological characteristic of interest in Ecuador is the use of diminutive endings among Quichua-dominant bilinguals. These speakers apply *-ito* and *-ita* to parts of speech other than adjectives. Some examples that Lipski (1994: 250) provides are *estito* 'this-diminutive' (demonstrative), *cuantito* 'how much-diminutive' (interrogative pronoun), *cincuentita* 'fifty-diminutive' (numeral), *corriendito* 'running-diminutive' (gerund), and *no masito* 'no more-diminutive' (comparative).

2.3 Ecuadorian Syntax

The only syntactic characteristics in Ecuador that are not nationally shared pertain only to highland speech. Many of the peculiarities have been attributed to contact with Quichua and at least two of the features are more frequent in Quichua-dominant bilinguals. The first characteristic is that speakers place the auxiliary verb *estar* after gerunds and adjectival participles as in *corriendo estoy*. The second characteristic among Quichua-dominant bilinguals is that these speakers sometimes use the gerund instead of a conjugated verb. Lipski (1994: 252) provides the following examples: *¿Qué haciendo ps?*, *Para eso trabajando*, and *Aquí viniendo a saludar*.

The characteristics that the general highland population employs mainly have to do with the use of object pronouns. Clitic doubling is used with not only personal pronouns as in *les conozco a ellos*, but also with personal nouns, including inanimate nouns as in *le dije a Carlos* and *le veo al edificio*. When an object is left-dislocated in a sentence, speakers of the highland dialects do not employ clitic doubling. Suñer & Yezpez (1988) mention that at the vernacular level, the use of direct and indirect object pronouns together is avoided as in *ábreme[la]* 'open (it) for me'. This usage means that the Ecuadorian highland dialects allow null direct objects like other Andean dialects. Aside from dialectal idiosyncrasies regarding object pronouns in the highland dialects, these dialects also use *dar* (and a few other auxiliary verbs less frequently) + gerund as an imperative construction as in *dame comprando la leche* 'buy me the milk'. The use of *ser* as an intensifier as in *te compró es una casa* is also used throughout the Ecuadorian highlands.

2.4 Ecuadorian Lexicon

Like many of the other linguistic characteristics of Ecuadorian Spanish, uses of certain lexical items generally follow the coastal-highland division. The highland dialects incorporate many words from Quechua as well as archaisms as demonstrated by Álvarez Pazos (1985), Cordero Palacio (1985), Moya (1981), Tobar Donoso (1961), and Vásquez (1925). The coastal dialect shares many lexical items with Caribbean dialects and African lexical items are more frequent in Esmeraldas (Lipski 1994). A small sample of these lexical items is *guineo* ‘banana’, *atarraya* ‘casting net’, and *montuvio* ‘peasant’.

3. Current Ecuadorian Dialectal Patterns

Although dialectologists have carried out research on the dialects in Ecuador, much of the categorical and descriptive work is somewhat dated considering the dynamic nature of language. As far as I am aware, much of the work on Ecuadorian Spanish started in the mid 1950s and tapered off in the early 1990s. Since that time, there have been fewer dialectological studies focusing on Ecuador. In order to understand the current dialectal patterns in the Spanish of Ecuador, current data must be collected and analyzed.

The purpose of the present study is to begin to investigate the differences and similarities between the past and present of the Ecuadorian Spanish dialects. This study constitutes an exploratory look at possible differences. To start this process, video interviews on the Internet were selected to provide a wide range of data that included different social factors such as age and occupation in the different attested dialect zones. In this section, the interviews collected from the Internet are described including the demographic information (albeit limited and in some cases impressionistic) and linguistic features evident therein.

3.1 Internet interviews

The internet interviews consisted of ten videos ranging from 1:11 to 42:36 in length with a total of forty different speakers. The first four videos are representative of the

coastal dialect (mainly in Guayaquil), videos 5 and 6 represent the Amazon dialect zone, videos 7, 8, and 9 represent the central highlands dialect, and video 10 represents the Loja dialect zone.

3.1.1 Video 1- Dónde Jugarémos??

Dónde Jugarémos?? (Postrecord 2010) is an interview with a thirteen-year-old male from Huancavilca Norte (subject 1), a neighborhood in the southern part of Guayaquil. In this interview, the boy talks about the sports he likes to play and how he cannot play them in a particular park because the grass is not cut and the equipment is frequently stolen. This video is a good example of the speech of an urban youth.

3.1.2 Video 2- El Guayaquil que no se ve

In this video, produced by the Secretaría Nacional de Comunicación (Secretaría Nacional de Comunicación 2010) under the Agencia Pública de Noticias del Ecuador y Suramérica, a variety of residents of the southern part of Guayaquil discuss the local government's lack of concern for the area's streets in terms of repair and general living conditions. The speakers in this video, who are from the lowest socio-economic strata in Guayaquil, manifest clearly coastal linguistic features.

In the video, there are two females and two males. One female (subject 2) is in her upper-twenties to low-thirties from the Isla Trinitaria neighborhood. The other female (subject 3) is in her upper-thirties to low-forties and lives in the Cooperativa Patria Nueva. One of the males (subject 4) is a resident of the Guasmo Central neighborhood in his upper-thirties to low-forties. This speaker may also be a transplant since he mentions living in Pablo Neruda for twenty years and shows some traits expected in speech from Esmeraldas. The last male (subject 5), who serves on the city council, is in his upper-forties. One interesting feature exhibited by this speaker is a very short voice onset time (VOT), the amount of time between the release of a consonant and the onset of vibration of the vocal folds, compared to the other speakers.

3.1.3 Video 3- Entrevista a José Cherrez en Canal Uno Guayaquil Ecuador

This video (Cherrez 2009) is a news interview featuring José Cherrez (subject 6), a male security expert in his thirties that works in security consulting for companies and other clients. Cherrez was raised in Guayaquil and has since traveled to other countries for security consulting. The reporter in the interview (subject 7) is a male in his upper-forties or low-fifties. The two men in this video discuss issues regarding security in Guayaquil; especially about hiring security guards and protection. Although the reporter works in a profession that is known for maintaining a prestigious manner of speech, much of his speech displays the coastal debuccalization, as does the speech of Cherrez. Cherrez, however, also displays other interesting speech characteristics that might be explained by exposure to other dialects.

3.1.4 Video 4- Educando Parte 3

This video is part of a documentary on the primary education in Guayaquil, Ecuador (Smashde07 2010). The first speaker in this video is a female clinical psychologist (subject 8) in her upper-thirties to low-forties who talks about different types of child abuse and the symptoms of child abuse. The next speaker is a male (subject 9) in his low- to mid-thirties and is a clinical psychologist as well. He talks about how to report child abuse and the problems that exist in reporting child abuse in schools. The third speaker is a female (subject 10) in her fifties who is a director of Escuela Fiscal Mixta Ma. Solis de Salazar No. 343. She talks about the need for teacher training in the public schools of Guayaquil. The fourth speaker is a male (subject 11) in his upper-thirties to low-forties. He holds an MBA in information technology and talks about training public education teachers and local government involvement in education reform within their own municipalities. The last speaker used in the analysis from this video is a male lawyer (subject 12) in his fifties who talks about the need for capacitating teachers and calls for education reform by depoliticizing teacher training.

3.1.5 Video 5- Entrevista a Marlon Santi

Entrevista a Marlon Santi is an interview with Marlon Santi (subject 13), a thirty-two-year-old male and the president of the organization Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador (CONAIE) at the time of the interview. CONAIE is an organization that advocates for the indigenous people of Ecuadorian political and human rights issues. Santi is originally from Sarayaku, Ecuador, which is located in the Amazonian region where Quichua is the dominant language of most of the inhabitants (Lipski 1994). In this video, Santi talks about laws governing water rights and discusses his opinion concerning how they does not address the rights of the indigenous people. The video is a news segment, which is posted on the website of the television station Ecuavisa in Ecuador (Ecuavisa 2010).

3.1.6 Video 6- Rafael Pandam Habla sobre Conflicto Ecuador-Colombia

This video is an interview with Rafeal Pandam (subject 14), the ex-ministro de etnias (ex-secretary of ethnic groups), an advisory position in the national government of Ecuador (Puntonoticias40 2008). Pandam is a male from the Shuar indigenous group in his forties. The interview takes place on an independent television program based in Quito. Pandam talks about conflicts between Ecuador and Colombia that involve the indigenous population of Ecuador. The speech in this interview is distinct from the others because it is very variable and includes features evident in all of the dialects of Ecuador.

3.1.7 Video 7- Hijos de la Migración

The video entitled *Hijos de la Migración* (Álvarez *et al.* 2009) is a short news segment produced by students at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador in Quito. The video consists of four people talking about their experiences regarding their parents emigrating from Ecuador to live and work in another country while they themselves remained. There are also a few other professionals talking about the effects of emigration and the toll it plays on family relationships.

The speakers who are children of emigrants comprise a twenty-seven-year-old female (subject 15) and three males — nineteen (subject 16), twenty-three (subject 17), and twenty-four (subject 18) years of age. The other speakers in the video have various occupations that involve emigration. The first is a male (subject 19) in his mid-thirties who is a technical analyst for the Secretaría Nacional del Migrante. The next person is a female (subject 20) in her mid-thirties who works for the Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores as a sociologist. Another person is a young twenty-three-year-old male economist (subject 21) working for the Auditoría Democrática Andina. The last person is a female (subject 22) in her upper-thirties who works as psychologist for the Casa de la Familia foundation. Although some variation exists among these speakers, the psychologist (the oldest of the group) seems to match the described central highlands dialect better than the others.

3.1.8 Video 8- Más Racismo en Ecuador

The video entitled *Más Racismo en Ecuador* (Sudamericaracista 2009) consists of three different males in their mid-forties (subjects 23, 24, and 25). This interview takes place in Quito and the speakers give their opinions and stories as evidence of racism in Ecuador. From the phonological patterns of subject 25, it is possible that he is from the Chota valley.

3.1.9 Video 9- Nacencia

The next video, entitled *Nacencia* (HughBurgos 2009), consists of six people from Quito talking about being born in Ecuador. All of the speakers in this video were over the age of mid-fifties at the time of the recording. The first speaker on the video is a male (subject 26), who appears to be in his mid-seventies, may possibly have moved to Quito when he was younger because his speech patterns are variable, showing many more coastal traits than highland traits. The second speaker is a male (subject 27) and appears to be in his mid- to upper-fifties. The next speaker is a female (subject 28) that appears to be over seventy years old and displays a few interesting phonological phenomena. The fourth (subject 29) and fifth (subject 30) speakers are in their low-sixties and are male and

female respectively. The last speaker is a male (subject 31) in his upper-fifties. This group is interesting because they display some of the less common speech characteristics that have been documented in past descriptive work, which would have been carried out when these speakers were in their teens and early twenties.

3.1.10 Video 10- Punto de Vista-Movilidad Estudiantil

Punto de Vista (UTPL 2009) is a program that is produced by the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL) located in Loja, Ecuador. The theme of this particular episode is study abroad opportunities for the students of UTPL. The participants of the interviews compromise a variety of university students, faculty, and staff members that participate in the study abroad opportunities offered by the university. Of the nine speakers, most were in their twenties and thirties, with one speaker being over fifty. Five of the speakers were female (subjects 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36) and four were male (subjects 37, 38, 39, and 40). Some of the speakers showed interesting linguistic features that were not expected considering the dialect zone in which they resided and in comparison with past research.

3.2 Linguistic features

The speakers in the videos represent four of the six dialect zones suggested by Lipski (1994). The two zones that are not represented are the extreme northern highlands and the Cañar and Azuay dialects because of the lack of videos found on the Internet. For the most part, the sample of speech in the interviews is consistent with what past researchers have commented on in each separate dialect region; however, there are a few differences. A discussion of the differences and peculiarities evident in the interviews is provided in this section.

3.2.1 Current Coastal Phenomena

The most prominent phonological feature of the coast (e.g., videos 1, 2, 3, and 4) is lenition, especially the debuccalization of syllable final /s/. As for the trends found in the interviews regarding syllable final /s/, this phoneme elided at a higher rate in younger speakers. The overwhelming trend across social strata was to pronounce /s/ as [h]. Among higher social strata, the rate of an [s] pronunciation was much higher, being pronounced at a higher percentage by subjects 8 and 12.

Intervocalic /d/ also showed signs of lenition. Although intervocalic /d/ is very weak and drops frequently, there were a few differences among the speakers in the interviews. It appears that in general, as can be demonstrated from the interviews, /d/ is beginning to be dropped with more frequency than only a weak pronunciation and this is extending further to final /d/ and sometimes with word-initial intervocalic /d/ as in <deja de ser> ‘ceases to be’: /dexadeser/ → [ˈd̪e.xa.e.ˈser] (from subject 8) as well, which was not mentioned by other researchers. By extension, other intervocalic consonants are also weak in the speech of younger coastal dialect speakers, especially that of the thirteen-year-old boy.

As seen by the interviews, word-final /n/ appears to be much more variable than reported in past research. Although /n/ is pronounced as [ŋ] by lower social strata and younger speakers, the trend in coastal speakers is to pronounce /n/ as [n] in speakers from higher social strata.

The only morphological peculiarity found pertains to one speaker from the coastal dialect region. Subject 6 used a second-person singular form that appears to stem from the use of *voseo*, but is unlike any reported in prior research of Ecuador. Subject 6 uses pronominal *tú*, but the verbal morphology is a paroxytonic monophthong as in *portistes*, *te fuistes*, *estuvistes*, etc. It is possible that this form is an overgeneralization of the present tense 2nd person singular marker -s.

As for syntactic differences, Lipski (1994) reports that *le* is used much more frequently as a direct object pronoun than *lo* and *la*. This phenomenon, however, is not necessarily evident in the interviews. There is only one instance where this happens with the security consultant while talking about how to hire security guards in *tu los vas*

contratando, tu vas seleccionando, les revisas donde... Here, the object pronouns all refer to potential security guards. In all of the other speakers *lo* and *la* are used for direct objects. There were no lexical items that diverged from other dialects in the speech of the speakers from the coastal dialect region.

3.2.2 Current Amazon Phenomena

Although the sample of speakers from the Amazon dialect region was much smaller than the other dialect zones (in videos 5 and 6), some generalizations can be made. The most notable similarity between the speakers is the wide variability in their speech. This variability may be characteristic of Amazonian speech throughout since it is likely that most Spanish speakers in the Amazon region are second language learners or at least the Amerindian language they speak is dominant compared to Spanish.

Phonological trends in both speakers show dialectal traits from coastal and highland regions. Syllable-final /s/ is fairly balanced between [s], [z], [h], and [∅] realizations, with [s] having a slightly higher rate in all contexts. Word-final /n/ is sometimes velar and sometimes alveolar. The phoneme /d/ is consistently alveolar or at least exhibits a longer VOT. Although determining whether the Shuar native (subject 14) realized /ʎ/ as [ʎ] or [j] was not possible, the native Quichua speaker did invariably use [ʎ]. Realizations of the trill are also variable between [r] and [ʒ]. The Shuar native speaker produced the only other distinct phonological feature. Word-initial /f/ frequently realized as [ɸ] and /u/ frequently realized as [o], which may be contributed to Shuar language influence.

The morphology and syntax was also variable among these speakers. Noun-adjective agreement was sometimes mismatched in gender as in *un tema ajena*, and some articles were missing as in *El pueblo colombiano no es responsable, ∅ responsables son....* Some prepositions were also omitted as in *como caso Ecuador* which would be *como en el caso del Ecuador* in other dialects. Another variable syntactic feature was that *le* and *lo* were both used for direct object pronouns and once even in the same sentence with the same referent in '*oblígalos, viólales su soberanía*'.

3.2.3 Current Central Highlands Phenomena

The apparent trend in the central highland region is that the older speakers maintain the speech described by past research, whereas the younger speakers lack some of the features that characterize this dialect zone (e.g., videos 7, 8, and 9). Three phonological features noticeably mark this difference. In younger speakers, word-final /r/ is not realized as a sibilant which is expected in this dialect zone. The younger speakers also manifested a less extensive unstressed vowel reduction compared to the older speakers. Intervocalic /d/ is another characteristic that is somewhat different between younger and older speakers. Older speakers tended to maintain dental and interdental realizations in and the older women produced consistent alveolar realizations. Younger speakers realized /d/ as a weak interdental and sometimes dropped this phoneme similar to coastal trends. Other trends that diverge from the past research in general are that word-final /n/ does not always realize as a velar. Also, although [tʃ̠] is most often the pronunciation for the consonantal group /tr/, often the /r/ is closer to a voiceless retroflex articulation producing something like [tɻ̠].

As for the syntactic phenomena in the central highlands, the only interesting difference that was manifest in the interviews was the frequency of the pronoun *le* used for direct object pronouns. Among the older speakers, most of them used *le* exclusively. Although one of the younger speakers used *le* most of the time, younger speakers use the pronouns *lo* and *la* more frequently to refer to direct objects. Aside from these uses of object pronouns, there was not any evidence in the interviews that suggested the types of syntactic peculiarities mentioned by previous researchers.

3.2.4 Current Loja Phenomena

For the most part, the speakers from Loja (video 10) show much variability between speakers. There are, however a few noticeable trends. Among the females over thirty, the phoneme /d/ is consistently alveolar, but among the younger speakers /d/ is weak. Contrary to reports from past researchers, /ʌ/ is not realized as [ʌ] but as [j]. This pronunciation was the case for all speakers except for one female in her twenties who did

maintain the [ʌ] pronunciation. The only other difference from past research was that the older females also pronounced the /r/ as [ɜ] which is not the pronunciation found in the Loja dialect region (Lipski 1994).

The only syntactic peculiarity evident in the interviews from the Loja region was that subject 32 asked two questions using the construction *¿Qué tan...?* where speakers from other dialects would use *¿Cuánto...?*. Aside from this tendency, there were no other noticeable syntactic rarities.

4. Discussion

Although attempts were made to find a broad selection of interviews for describing current dialectal trends within Ecuadorian borders, demographic information was limited. Some of the interviews shared the ages of the participants, but most of the age information herein comes from researcher estimations. In addition, there was limited information on subjects' personal backgrounds. Other weaknesses of this study are that much of the speech may have represented a more formal register since the speakers all knew they were being recorded and that the phonological descriptions are all based on perceptual measurements rather than acoustic analyses. Although these weaknesses must be addressed in future research, this study does provide important information about the current dialectal picture of Spanish in Ecuador.

Taking all of the data into consideration, there are some considerable differences between prior research on Ecuadorian dialects and the current state of the Ecuadorian Spanish. In general, higher variability, especially among the younger speakers, was found than was reported in prior research. Although this study only roughly calculated rate-of-occurrence for certain variable features, some features were observed to be less frequent and other features were observed to be more frequent across different dialects than previously reported. The production of [ŋ] is an example of a feature that Ecuadorians produce less frequently across dialects and a weak or null intervocalic /d/ is an example of a feature that Ecuadorians produce more frequently across dialects. These phenomena are also features found in many dialects of Spanish (Canfield 1981; Lipski 1994).

The fact that the Amazonian speakers showed even more variability in their speech raises the question of how bilingualism affects dialect studies. If the variable linguistic structures found in these speakers are due to an L1 influence, are we truly describing a particular dialect, or is it only due to widespread bilingualism? Only time and a larger sample size will allow researchers to answer this question regarding Amazonian Spanish in Ecuador. If consistencies in language use become evident across speakers from this region, a separate dialect could be posited. Until that point, however, the speech of the Amazon should be regarded as being in a state of flux due to current language contact rather than an autonomous dialect.

Another interesting phenomenon that emerged from the interviews is that the phoneme /d/ was produced frequently as [d] and not [ð] or [ø] among women. Women in their late sixties to early seventies from the central highlands region most frequently produced [d] followed by women older than thirty from the Loja region, who produced [d] less frequently. However, this pronunciation also emerged sometimes among one of the women from higher socioeconomic strata in the coastal region.

Aside from phonological phenomena, there were some interesting morphological and syntactic trends in the interviews. The lack of the use of *voseo* among all of the speakers, with the one aforementioned exception, may indicate that speakers are moving away from *voseo* towards using *tú*. This claim however cannot be fully supported by the data herein. Because the interviews were more formal, it is possible that the situations did not call for the use of *vos* and it was therefore nonexistent even if this pronoun is frequently used in other situations. Further research needs to be carried out on the use of *voseo* in Ecuador in order to better understand its distribution and use. The unique verbal forms that subject 6 employed also merits further investigation.

The only syntactic peculiarity mentioned by past research that was evident in the interviews was the extension of the pronoun *le(s)* to direct object pronouns. However, this phenomenon was not as widespread as prior research indicates. Again, especially among the younger speakers, the use of *le(s)* as a direct object pronoun was not evident as frequently as the use of *lo(s)* and *la(s)*. There are at least two possible explanations for the discrepancy between current syntactic functions and syntactic functions previously reported in the literature. Prior research could have been based largely on bilingual

speakers. This would have possibly created a skewed representation of the syntactic phenomena in Ecuadorian Spanish. Lipski (1994) does mention that many of the syntactic characteristics are evident among Spanish-Amerindian language bilinguals. Perhaps the reported /e/ extension could have been caused by second language learner error and, in reality, the larger picture of Ecuadorian Spanish did not stray from South American trends regarding these pronouns. The other explanation for a discrepancy is that current syntactic characteristics have followed broader South American dialectal trends. Perhaps through contact with other dialects as well as a more global prestige dialect being accessed through the media, a dialectal shift has occurred regarding morpho-syntax.

General differences between older speakers and younger speakers in the interviews seem to indicate that a dialectal convergence process is underway in Ecuador. Although there are still marked differences in the speech of the different dialects, younger speakers across dialects show similar speech patterns with each other than their older counterparts. This trend is evidenced by the lenition of /d/ and, although at a much lower rate, /s/ as well as less frequent unstressed vowel reduction among younger highland dialect speakers. Another feature that points in this direction is that younger highland speakers' production of /tr/ is generally not [t̪r̪] but usually [tr] as on the coast. The morpho-syntactic phenomena found herein also lend support to a convergence process because there were no noticeable differences between dialects.

Although the possible explanations provided herein could explain the discrepancies between current and past linguistic phenomena that mark separate dialects, these are only hypotheses that have yet to be fully tested. Further research is necessary in order to fully understand the current dynamics of Ecuadorian Spanish. Because much of the work on Ecuadorian dialectology was conducted prior to the early 1990s, a larger body of current data should be collected in a more controlled setting and analyzed to test these hypotheses.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I have presented what past research has reported on the dialectal landscape found within the borders of Ecuador. This research provided generalizations regarding the linguistic features found in the separate dialects at the time the research was conducted. Because much of this research is somewhat dated considering the dynamic nature of language, more descriptive research needs to be carried out to uncover current dialectal trends. This study provides a first step in this process by showing some differences between reported linguistic characteristics of Spanish in Ecuador and current phonological, morphological, syntactic, and lexical tendencies.

For the most part, the interviews found online showed the beginnings of a dialectal convergence underway when comparing the speech of older speakers to that of a younger generation. The speech of older speakers was much more similar to reported speech characteristics whereas that of the younger speakers diverged with reported speech and converged across dialect boundaries, trending towards a more conservative coastal variety. This may be because of exposure to other dialects facilitated by recent advances in technology such as the internet and other forms of communication. Further research is needed to confirm trends found in the interviews used in this study.

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