FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND LANGUAGE CONTACT IN LANGUAGE VARIATION:

The case of ser and estar + adjective in the Spanishes of Limón, Costa Rica

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BACKGROUND

• Ser and Estar + adjective
  • Silva-Corvalán (1986, 1994)
    • Variation between ser and estar is a change in progress accelerated by the language situation between English and Spanish in bilingual situations in the U.S.
  • Gutiérrez (1994)
    • Found a similar pattern in the Spanish of Morelia, Mexico.
  • Ortíz-López (2000)
    • Found that Puerto Rican bilinguals use more ser more than those who were not total bilinguals.
    • He stated that contact with English is not a variable to lead to change (we’ll go back to the reason for this statement in a minute)
BACKGROUND

• Díaz-Campos & Geeslin (2005a)
  • Found that monolingual Caracas Spanish shows similarities to US/Mexican Spanish in the innovative use of *estar*
    • with adjectives of *age, size, physical description, evaluation, color* for certain age groups;
    • with adjectives of *status* and *size* for all age groups; and
    • with *age* and *description* for the older speakers.

• Díaz-Campos & Geeslin (2005b)
  • Found that results on age and gender seem to indicate that the extension of *estar* is a stable phenomenon in Venezuelan Spanish.
BACKGROUND

• Guijarro-Fuentes & Geeslin (2006)
  • Studied the Spanish of Galicia, Spain and found that Galician bilinguals respond to the same linguistic contextual features in using estar as monolinguals.
  • They also found that few of the social variables related to bilingualism were good predictors of copula choice.

• Geeslin & Guijarro-Fuentes (2008)
  • Large-scale study of Spanish in contact with other languages
  • Found that no single variable or combination of variables can distinguish variable contexts from categorical ones.
MOTIVATION FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

• Silva-Corvalán (1986)
  • The innovation present in her findings represent part of an evolutionary trend in Spanish and other Romance languages and that language contact accelerates this trend.
  • The condition of reduced access or lack of access to formal varieties of the language must be met in order for this diffusion to happen and that internally motivated changes which involve generalization across languages are also accelerated in a situation of extended contact.
MOTIVATION FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

• Ortíz-López (2000)
  • The support from formal education in Spanish neutralizes or stops the force that English could have as a conditional factor for the extension of estar.

• Hypothesis:
  • In contexts of language contact (English-Spanish) where a linguistic imbalance is found and formal instruction is geared mostly or exclusively to the teaching of one of the languages (usually English), language change will be said to expand quantitatively and qualitatively until the extension is generalized.
SOCIO-LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Aguilar-Sánchez (2005) and Gordon (2005)
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

• This is part of a larger project that sought answers to the following questions:
  • What linguistic variables predict the use of *ser* and *estar + adjective* in the Spanish spoken by Costa Ricans in Limón.
  • What social variables predict the use of *ser* and *estar + adjective* in the Spanish spoken by Costa Ricans in Limón.
  • Can the pattern of variation in the use of *ser* and *estar* be considered a change in progress or a stable change?
THE SAMPLE

• Considerations taken for the sample size
  • Power .8
    • 80% probability of rejecting the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is false in the population
  • Significance value of 0.5
    • Set prior to the analyses of the data
  • Multi-level logistic regression
    • Omnibus effect (all variables included)
    • Targeted effect (Gradiency as a variable)
• Total sample size needed for this study: Approximately 60 speakers
THE SAMPLE

- **Participants**
  - 58 speakers
    - Age range: 16 – 91 years old
    - 26 males
    - 32 females
    - At least 3 years of formal instruction completed
    - 18 monolinguals
    - 35 bilinguals
    - 5 multilinguals
    - 19 had restricted contact with English
    - 39 non-restricted contact
    - 57 reported a positive attitude towards minority languages
THE SAMPLE

• Participants
  • 5 retired
  • 1 unemployed
  • 31 work in services
  • 6 work at home
  • 8 in education
  • 1 in land administration
  • 6 students
VARIABLES

- Linguistic Variables
  - Sentence Level
    - Predicate reading
    - Susceptibility to change
    - Experience with the referent
    - Adverbs
    - Subject
  - Adjective level
VARIABLES

- Linguistic Variables
  - Adjective level
    - Resultant state
    - Adjective class
    - Underlying structure
    - Gradiency
- Social Variables
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Level of formal instruction
  - Bilingualism
  - Level of contact
ANALYSES

- Multi-level analysis of variance in the context of logistic regression
  - Level 1 analyzes variance that comes from linguistic variables
  - Level 2 analyzes variance that comes from social variables
RESULTS

• Results at Level 1 (Linguistic factors)
  • Experience with the referent
  • Adverb
  • Subject
  • Resultant state
  • Adjective class
RESULTS

• Results at Level 2 (Social factors)
  • Age
  • Education
  • Bilingualism
  • Gender
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

- In order to explain the findings regarding the role of social factors in the prediction of ser and estar + adjective to answer questions 3, three hypothesis were explored while taking a closer look at the data.
  - The education (formal instruction) hypothesis
    - In this particular variety of Spanish, it seems that the higher the level of education, the lower the use of estar and vice versa.
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

Distribution of gender by level of education
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

Distribution of speakers by bilingualism and level of education
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

- The stigma hypothesis
  - The fact that education is triggering the use of one copula over the other, in this case *ser*, seems to be a case where stigma is being attached to *estar*.
  - If this is the case, the explanation of the variation found in gender seems to be in one direction:
    - Attaching stigma to the copula *estar* might be a recent phenomenon and women are beginning to reduce their use of *estar* while men are not reducing their use of it despite their level of education.
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

Distribution of uses of estar by gender and education level
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

• The contact hypothesis
  • Because part of the participants are either bilingual in Spanish and another language or multilingual in Spanish and more two or more languages, the context in which this Spanish is found is one where languages are in contact.
  • Bilinguals and speakers that speak more than one language use ser more than monolinguals; and monolinguals use estar more than bilinguals.
  • Bilingual speakers in Limon have limited access to formal education in English, but have full access to formal education in Spanish.
    • Limonese English has only one copula “be” (Herzfeld, 2004; Winkler, in progress).
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

Distribution of uses of *estar* by bilingualism and education level
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

- All three hypotheses (*education*, *stigma*, and *contact*) seem to have support in the data.
  - The fact that all three seem plausible means there is more to be found regarding these three nonlinguistic predictors in this variety of Spanish.
- A fourth hypothesis was formulated, the *coexistence* hypothesis:
  - This hypothesis is a mixture of the *education* hypothesis set forth by Ortíz-López (2000) and the *contact* hypothesis in this work.
  - It might be that two varieties of Spanish are found in the same geographical region, and their patterns with respect to the production of *estar* are different; therefore, producing interactions that obscure the influence of social factors in each one.
    - That might be the answer why all the previous hypotheses are possible in this data.
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

• The use of *estar* decreases as education level increases for most monolingual speakers of Limonese Spanish.

Distribution of production of *estar* by gender and education level among monolinguals
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

• In a much different fashion, bilinguals’ use of *estar* increases as education level increases.

Distribution of production of *estar* by gender and education among bilinguals
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

• These two figures show evidence for both the education hypothesis and the contact hypothesis.
  • The higher the education level, the higher the number of bilinguals found in the sample.
• The next figure explains how contact with English prompts higher use of estar in the context of copula + adjective.
  • It shows support to the claim that it is contact with English that accelerates change (Gutiérrez, 1992, 2003; Silva-Corvalán, 1986; 1994) in bilingual varieties of Spanish and not the contact with other languages (Ortíz-López, 2000) and access to formal education decelerate it (Ortíz-López, 2000).
  • It is also evidence that two varieties of Spanish coexist in the same geographical area and that both of these varieties are constrained by different social factors.
FORMAL INSTRUCTION AND THE OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS

Production of estar by gender, bilingualism and level of education
FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

- Social Factors such as age, gender, education, and bilinguism help to explain the phenomenon beyond what linguistic factors can explain.
  - A look at just the linguistic factors would have lead me to report spurious results regarding this phenomenon.
- Formal instruction in a language aids language maintenance, but formal instruction in two languages also helps accelerate change in contact varieties.
- It is the contact of Spanish with English that accelerates the extension of estar and not the contact with other languages.
- A multi-level analysis of data such as the one employed (a modification of variable rule analyses) here aids the identification of phenomena that may be obscured by simpler analyses.
FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future research should focus on the understanding of copula choice in the two different varieties of Spanish (i.e., monolingual and contact) that are found in Limon, Costa Rica.
- Further research is needed to tease out the different linguistic features that help predict copula choice in each of these varieties of Spanish.
- We need to look for further evidence of the influence of formal education in the processes of language change and language maintenance.
- Muchas gracias!
REFERENCES


• Aguilar-Sánchez, J. (2009). Syntactic Variation: The case of copula choice in the Spanish of Limón, Costa Rica. Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.


REFERENCES


