

## ***El Voseo: a Look at the Argentine Second-person Verb Form***

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The use of *voseo*, the second-person singular pronoun *vos*, instead of *tú*, is one characteristic feature of many dialects of Latin American Spanish, and has been widely studied from a descriptive perspective (e.g. Lipski 2007; among many others). While this difference has been understood descriptively, Fábregas & Gallego (2014: 102-3) note that there is still a considerable gap between descriptive and theoretical work. This paper provides a theoretical analysis of these singular address forms in Spanish. My analysis is situated in the DM framework (Halle & Marantz 1993) and takes a more morpho-phonological approach.

The main difference between the two [2.SG] verbal forms in Spanish is in the placement of the nuclear stress. In the *tú* form (e.g. *tuteo*) stress is placed on the penultimate vowel, while in the *vos* form stress is placed on the final vowel, as in (1).

(1) *tú*-2.SG *sábes*-know.2.SG | *vos*-2.SG *sabés*-know.2.SG | ‘you know’

I argue that the *vos* verbal form is derived from the *vosotros* (2PL) verbal form and that the surface difference in stress placement between the [2.SG] forms is illusory. For *vosotros* forms, there is an asymmetry between the –ar and –er classes, on the one hand, and the –ir class on the other. The V(ocabulary) I(tem) for *vosotros* AGR and the asymmetry in question are given in (2).

(2) VI | 2PL *habl-á-is* *com-é-is* *escrib-í-Øs* or *escrib-Ø-ís*  
[2PL] ↔ is | Root –th-agr Root –th-agr Root –th-agr Root –th-agr

The analysis of the –ir class is either: (i) the V(owel) of Agr is deleted and stress is assigned to the theme V, or (ii) the theme V is deleted and stress is assigned to the V in Agr. Since stress is assigned to the penultimate V in Spanish (see Arregi 2000), analysis (i) is favored. Consequently, I propose a phonological rule in (3) to delete the second ‘i’ in Agr to account for the asymmetry.

(3) *Deletion*: A high vowel deletes after a preceding high vowel with the same [back] value.

I assume that there was an overgeneralization of this ‘*vosotros*’ deletion rule which led to a leveling for the *vos* form. Synchronically, for Argentine speakers, I capture this fact via a morphological readjustment rule which deletes the ‘i’, as in (4).

(4) *Readjustment*: For [2] person delete the [i] after the Theme V: [i] → Ø / V<sub>Th</sub> \_\_\_

In (5), the placement of nuclear stress receives a straightforward analysis as stress is expected on the theme V in the *vos* form, which underlyingly is the penultimate V, the same pattern of stress as the *tú* form. Since Latin American Spanish lack a singular-plural contrast for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, VIs are specified as [2]. Crucially, the VI for the *vos* variety is distinct from the *tú* varieties. Notably, *Usted(es)*, the formal you, acts morpho-syntactically as a 3<sup>rd</sup> person form whether singular or plural.

(5) VI Stress R  
*vos*: [2] ↔ is | *vos*: /escribiis/ → *escribís* → *escribís* → [escribís]  
*tú*: [2] ↔ s | *tú*: /escribes/ → *escribes* n/a → [escribes]

This analysis accounts for those cases in which the *vos* form is distinct for the *tú* form (e.g. the present, present subjunctive, imperative). However, in a number of verbal forms there is no surface difference between the *vos* and *tú* forms (e.g. the future, conditional, and the past tenses). For these forms, I suggest that the surface resemblance to a *tú* form may be just that, and further investigation will be needed before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

The proposed analysis accounts for the morphology and stress of both *vos* and *tú*, making a novel theoretical contribution to a broader discussion on verbal forms in Spanish.

## References

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