

Niloufar Ansari Dezfuly (Nansarid@uwo.ca)- Kenamy Graterol Perdomo (kgratero@uwo.ca)

The University of Western Ontario

Expression of futurity in the Spanish of Spain and Colombia

This sociolinguistic study investigates the expression of futurity by native Spanish speakers from Spain (n=4) and Colombia (n=4) and focuses on two forms of futurity: Morphological Future (MF) and Periphrastic Future (PF). In total, Spanish has three forms to express the future, including Simple Present (*Yo hablo*, I speak), Morphological Future (*Yo hablaré*, I will speak), and Periphrastic Future (*Yo voy a hablar*, I am going to speak). Previous studies (Silva-Corvalán, 1988, 1994; Orozco, 2005) confirm that PF is the preferred way of expressing the future in all varieties of Spanish. We explore whether this tendency has changed over time by examining the effect of different social and linguistic factors that may influence how futurity is expressed in Spanish, including gender and ethnicity, number of subjects (plural vs. singular), clause type (interrogative vs. declarative), as well as task modality (written vs. oral), in order to determine how these factors may variably modulate the relative frequency in production of MF and PF. Orozco's studies (2005; 2007) are used as the database for the current study and since in his studies, the highest and the lowest percentages refer to PF and MF respectively, these two variants are being studied in this research. According to Orozco's studies (2005, 2007) PF is favoured in the context of interrogative sentences whereas MF is used more with plural subjects. In addition, MF is favoured by women, whereas PF is produced more frequently by male speakers. Berschin's (1986) study on the usage of MF and PF in Spain and Colombia shows that MF is slightly more frequent in Colombia and MF is predominantly used in written Spanish, while PF is used more in spoken language. Nevertheless, in the methodology section of the Berschin's article, only written tasks have been mentioned and he has not studied the task effect. For the present study, individual sociolinguistic interviews were conducted with Spanish-English bilinguals who lived in Canada during or before the time of the study. Four females and four males from Spain and Colombia, aged 18 to 50 years, were recruited. Speakers participated in two controlled tasks including a Picture Naming task and a Preference Perception task, which were designed to elicit the use of expressions of futurity. Our methodology innovates that of previous studies in which we examine both oral and written productions; previous work has not considered task effects as an independent variable that may modulate how futurity is expressed. In total, 574 tokens were coded for two social variables (gender and ethnicity), two linguistic variables (grammatical number of subjects and clause type), and one internal factor (task effect). Statistical analysis was completed in Goldvarb to determine the significance of these independent variables on the production of PF and MF. Results indicate a task effect (FW=0.63), and demonstrate that written task modality tends to trigger the use of PF. With regard to the social and linguistics factors, the results were not statistically significant, likely due to the limiting factor of a small sample size. Nonetheless, considering the descriptive results, this study suggests that the state of MF as the most preferred form of expressing future by native speakers of Spain and Colombia may be changing and further indicates that PF may be more preferred over MF in the written modality.

References

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