

Acquisition of Murcian Lexicon and Morphology by L2 Spanish Immigrants: The Role of Social Networks

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Abstract : Research on social networks (SNs) -- the interactions individuals share with others has shed important light in helping to explain differential use of variable linguistic forms, both in L1s and L2s. Nevertheless, the acquisition of nonstandard L2 Spanish in the Region of Murcia, Spain, and how learners interact with other speakers while sojourning there have received little attention. Murcian Spanish (MuSp) was widely influenced by Panocho, a divergent evolution of Hispanic Latin, and differs from the more standard Peninsular Spanish (StSp) in phonology, morphology, and lexicon. For instance, speakers from this area will most likely palatalize diminutive endings, producing animalico [a.ni.ma.'li.ko] instead of animalito [a.ni.ma.'li.to] 'little animal'. Because L1 speakers of the area produce and prefer salient regional lexicon and morphology (particularly the palatalized diminutive -ico) in their speech, the current research focuses on how international residents in the Region of Murcia use Spanish: (1) whether or not they acquire (perceptively and/or productively) any of the salient regional features of MuSp, and (2) how their SNs explain such acquisition. This study triangulates across three tasks -recognition, production, and preference- addressing both lexicon and morphology, with each task specifically created for the investigation of MuSp features. Among other variables, the effects of L1, residence, and identity are considered. As an ongoing dissertation research, data are currently being gathered through an online questionnaire. So far, 7 participants from multiple nationalities have completed the survey, although a minimum of 25 are expected to be included in the coming months. Preliminary results revealed that MuSp lexicon and morphology were successfully recognized by participants ($p < .001$). In terms of regional lexicon production (10.0%) and preference (47.5%), although participants showed higher percentages of StSp, results showed that international residents become aware of stigmatized lexicon and may incorporate it into their language use. Similarly, palatalized diminutives (production 14.2%, preference 19.0%) were present in their responses. The Social Network Analysis provided information about participants' relationships with their interactants, as well as among them. Results indicated that, generally, when residents were more immersed in the culture (i.e., had more Murcian alters) they produced and preferred more regional features. This project contributes to the knowledge of language variation acquisition in L2 speakers, focusing on a stigmatized Spanish dialect and exploring how stigmatized varieties may affect L2 development. Results will show how L2 Spanish speakers' language is affected by their stay in Murcia. This, in turn, will shed light on the role of SNs in language acquisition, the acquisition of understudied and marginalized varieties, and the role of immersion on language acquisition. As the first systematic account on the acquisition of L2 Spanish lexicon and morphology in the Region of Murcia, it lays important groundwork for further research on the connection between SNs and the acquisition of regional variants, applicable to Murcia and beyond.

Keywords : international residents, L2 Spanish, lexicon, morphology, nonstandard language acquisition, social networks

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