

California Spanish and how language ideologies and sociolinguistic factors shape the language of the south

The Southern California variety of Spanish has yet to be studied extensively, in fact there is a racially biased argument that the variety is invalid. However, the reality is that, in California and especially in the south of the state, Spanish has been spoken for a long time (Perissotto, 1997; Lamar Prieto, 2014a, 2014b, 2018; Moyna, Decker & Martín, 2005) and the same passage of time, together with sociolinguistic factors, has conditioned that the spoken variety, especially from the south, has certain characteristics of its own. The language has undergone several changes throughout its many years of use (Valdés, 2006) and today, although it is not yet recognized, it is considered a different variant in itself, derived from Mexican Spanish and studied in the Los Ángeles area as Los Ángeles vernacular Spanish (LAVS) (Parodi, 2003, 2009, 2011; Villareal, 2013, 2016).

To talk about the evolution of Spanish in California, we must talk about the social changes, the historical and power changes and the educational laws that shaped the region's speakers, positioning them in a situation of second- or third-class citizens. The reality is that Spanish was a dominant language at all levels, and it was mainly from the 19th century that the linguistic panorama began to unravel to the detriment of the Hispanic community in the territory. Mostly pushed by language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2004) and features of prestige and correctness (Trudgill, 1974; González, 1995).

From a bibliographic review of historical and contemporary works with a sociolinguistic and historical linguistic approach, it will be exposed how these changes have shaped the second largest language speaking population in California. For this, literary works in Spanish from the 19th century and more contemporary texts focused on linguistic and educational policies and laws will be taken. In addition, I will share how those institutional, political and social changes positioned Spanish as a second-class language for millions of people in the past and how that is affecting the situation of the language today.

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