

Waltermire, M. (2017). At the dialectal crossroads: the Spanish of Albuquerque, New Mexico. *Dialectologia: revista electrònica*, (19), 177-197.

This critical article review will go over the article above. The main purpose of this article is to suggest a new dialectal division for Albuquerque Spanish, challenging the existing research put forward by Bills and Vigil (2008) that makes the claim that the Spanish of Albuquerque neatly fits into the classification of what is called Traditional New Mexican Spanish (TNMS) as opposed to Border Spanish. TNMS is traditionally characterized by words that represent archaic and English derived vocabulary. For example, at the end of his article Waltermire lists the following words as characteristic of archaisms and anglicisms, *tunica*, *albercoque*, *asina*, and *semos*. Anglicisms would include *biles*, *lonche*, *mopear*, and *yarda*. Border Spanish, meanwhile, depicts the Spanish as spoken on the US/Mexican border and words coming from it are therefore called mexicanisms, such as *chamaco*, *gacho*, *vato*, *plebe*, etc. Although Waltermire does not make the claim that TNMS has never been characteristic of the area, he does state that the traditional variety is being overtaken by Border Spanish. This is reflected in his title with the phrase, “dialectal crossroads.” This critical review of the article will be divided into various sections including, a summary of details, such as information on the author, intended audience, statistics, etc, a summary of the article itself, the methodology, results and the impacts of the conclusion and opening for further research provided by the author of the article.

### **Summary of details**

To begin the first part, the key words that start the article off are lexical variation, social variation, dialect change, and Spanish in the United States. While not explicitly explained in textbook fashion, it is clear what the author means with these terms while the reader progresses

through the article. They are, however, useful in guiding the theme of the article and providing the reader a taste of what they should expect.

The article does not give any biographical information on the author, however, Waltermire is an excellent source on the topic, given that he has published many works on related subjects as well as receiving a Doctoral degree from the University of New Mexico. According to his Academia profile, his work has been published in *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *Journal of Language Contact*, *Sociolinguistic Studies*, *Studies in Hispanic and Lusophone Linguistics*, *Spanish in Context*, *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, *Hispania*, *Folia Linguistica*, and *Dialectologia*. He also teaches Spanish, linguistics, and dialectology at New Mexico State University.

Furthermore, based on the sources provided in the references section of the article, the reader can feel assured that Waltermire is deriving his knowledge from the most informed minds on sociolinguistics, TNMS, and lexical variation. With names such as Bills and Vigil, Silvia Corvalan, and Labov, the sources of information used to the study have proven themselves consistently.

### **Summary of the article**

Waltermire immediately begins his article with an explanation of the history of this “dialectal crossroads” in order to further elaborate on the history of the two varieties and how they differ. During this summary on the history of Spanish in the state, he describes how historically, the self-identified Spaniards of TNMS retained these archaisms through isolation and how, through contact with American settlers, they acquired their anglicisms. However, he states that it has not been uncommon to hear Border Spanish and mexicanisms throughout the state, highlighting that

even words whose meaning in other varieties of Spanish, such as *carnal* and *padre*, can be understood.

Some reasons that Waltermire gives for the supplantation of TNMS are educational, in that the universities and schools of the state often opt for the standardized Spanish of other regions to be taught to students who otherwise have only heard the language at home.

The methods that the author uses in coming to his conclusion, that the Spanish of Albuquerque be reclassified, are quite sound. In order to get Spanish that is most representative of the area, he uses a corpus of sociolinguistic interviews, produced by the author as well, in order to analyze the lexical features of the 20 participants. Most of these participants were also previously known by the researcher, minimizing hypercorrection during sociolinguistic interviews (Labov, 1972). The choice of sociolinguistic interview was motivated by comparison with the work of Bills and Vigil who used solicitation techniques, such as showing an image of an object and asking for the word used for it. Waltermire, looking to report the most accurate lexical usage of the community, chooses to analyze the frequency of terms, archaisms, anglicisms, mexicanisms, in these sociolinguistic interviews. However, it must be noted that the interviews, while not obligatory, were bilingual, they were steered toward Spanish.

The participants also come from one of the oldest neighborhoods of the city, Barelás, which while small, was one of the original settlements that Spanish explorers settled and founded en route to Santa Fe. The small number of participants is justified based on the size of the community, in that less participants are needed to acquire a comprehensive perspective of the speech of the area. The author of the article further justifies this figure by comparing it to the number of participants used by Bills and Vigils, (2008) when studying the Spanish of Albuquerque. Furthermore, as Holmes and Wilson indicate (2017), lower class neighborhoods

tend to preserve characteristics of speech not used in other environments. Waltermire not only acknowledges this, but also provides specific information on the socio-economic conditions of the neighborhood.

### **Summary of impacts and conclusions**

After counting the lexical findings of his participants, Waltermire finds that mexicanisms quadruple their archaic and English derived counterparts, except in the most elderly of participants, in terms of type of utterance as opposed to the individual tokens of utterance. The author attributes what would normally be classified as a characteristic of Border Spanish as an attribute of the increased immigration from Mexico into the community, particularly the children of said immigrants.

Logically, Waltermire, concludes using statistical analysis that the shift in mexicanisms is affected by the age of the participant, with older participants more likely to use archaisms and anglicisms while younger participants use mexicanisms.

The significance of this article regarding Spanish dialectology in the United States and indeed the world, cannot be understated. While still a living variety of Spanish in the United States, Waltermire indicates that the local inhabitants of the region are no longer teaching TNMS to younger speakers, another reason why mexicanisms prevail where traditionally they did not. This more than warrants additional study into the region. Although no conclusion can yet be made by the author or others, without further research, it would almost certainly raise alarm for anyone concerned about the dialectal survival of the area, especially since the neighborhood of study represented is one of the oldest in Albuquerque.

Furthermore, this study encourages a wider research into the lexical, and possibly other, characteristics of the TNMS of Albuquerque and its comparison with other contemporary dialects in the United States.

## **Conclusions**

To conclude, the author of this review would recommend this article for anyone interested in generational dialectal change, Traditional New Mexican Spanish, or the linguistic effects of immigration. While it is clearly written for an academic audience specifically interested in the aforementioned subject, the article does not hide behind obscure academic terms, and while some statistical knowledge is valuable when reading it, the article presents no significant challenge to the common reader. The article challenges the existing literature on TNMS by analyzing a specific community with a more precise method for determining lexical frequency of archaisms, anglicisms, and mexicanisms. Waltermire does an excellent job justifying and explaining the reasoning behind the participants, corpus, and the community analyzed. Not only is he critical of the previous elements, but also of the environment in which the participants of the corpus live, since immigration may be playing a large role in the vocabulary of the area.

However, more info would be helpful in asserting the claim that Albuquerque Spanish be considered a distinct third dialect of Spanish in New Mexico. While this study firmly demonstrates that Barelás lexically differs from TNMS substantially, it may be useful to analyze other areas, such as phonetics, morphology, etc, in order to cement the claim that the Spanish of Barelás, and Albuquerque by extension, represents a third major dialect for New Mexico.

Despite this, the article authoritatively outlines the methods, results, and conclusions of a highly recommendable article with excellent sources. Not only does it challenge previous assumptions held by the existing literature, but it expands on them through different techniques of research.

## References

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