

THE SPANISH OF LEVANTE

The Levantine dialects of Spain include those spoken in Valencia, Castellón, Alicante, and parts of Catalunya. Despite the fact that *Levante* in Spain is acknowledged as a geographical and cultural area, the Spanish language exhibits considerable diversity in this region. In much of Levante, Spanish is in contact with Catalan/Valencian, while the neighboring Spanish dialects are equally diverse: Andalusian and Murcian to the southwest, La Mancha/Castile to the west, and Aragon to the northwest. Whereas once Catalan and especially Valencian was receding in urban usage, these languages have made a strong comeback in post-Franco Spain, which is drastically changing the linguistic profile of Levante. Dialect mixing occasioned by travel and mass media is also affecting the speech of all but the most isolated or elderly residents. Generalizations valid only a few decades ago are no longer current, and considerable new research is required to properly situate the Levantine dialects of Spain in a full dialectological perspective.

PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

(1) Throughout the Levantine region of Spain, the posterior fricative /x/ is given a strong uvular pronunciation [χ].

(2) The apicoalveolar (Castilian) /s/ predominates throughout this region.

(3) Word-final /n/ is uniformly alveolar; there is no significant velarization in the Levantine provinces.

(4) Much of the region fails to distinguish /s/ and /θ/, with the latter phoneme being absent in Valencian Spanish.

(5) In the easternmost Levantine regions (near the coast, principal cities of Valencia, Alicante, Castellón), syllable- and word-final /s/ resists aspiration and deletion, and is pronounced primarily as a sibilant. However, in the western regions, bordering on Murcia and La Mancha, considerable aspiration and deletion occurs. For example Briz Gómez (1991: 50-54) describes extensive aspiration in extreme western Valencia province, at times also entailing compensatory vowel laxing, as in eastern Andalusia (Briz Gómez 1991: 23-24). In Alicante province, reduction of /s/ is also common (Guillén García 1974:49-50; Torreblanca 1976a:58).

(6) The distinction /j/-/ɣ/ is maintained in some Levantine dialects, particularly among older inhabitants of rural regions, but *yeísmo* (neutralization in favor of /y/) is rapidly gaining territory (e.g. Briz Gómez 1991: 54-55).

(7) Through interference from Catalan, word-final prevocalic /s/ may be voiced: *los otros* [lozotros].

(8) Through interference from Catalan, /l/ may receive a 'velarized' or partially retroflex pronunciation, similar to American English /ɫ/.

MORPHOLOGY

(1) At the popular level, interrogative *quién* is invariable (Briz Gómez 1991: 66):
¿Quién son esas personas?

(2) The analogical interrogative pronouns *cuálo*, *cuála*, etc. are used among uneducated speakers (Briz Gómez 1991: 65). These forms also occur in Sephardic dialects and in rustic Spanish throughout Spain.

(3) Archaic or analogical strong past participles (lacking the suffix *-ado/-ido*) sometimes occur (Briz Gómez 1991: 69-70): *preto/prieto (apretado)*, *nulo/nublo (nublado)*, *abrigo (abrigado)*, *panso (pasado)*, *troncho (tronchado)*.

(4) In the first person plural of the present or preterite indicative, *-amos* may change to *-emos* in rustic speech (Briz Gómez 1991: 71): *Ayer almorcemos a las once; la otra ves entremos por la puerta*.

(5) The verb *ser* may be used instead of *haber* in contrafactual expressions: *si fueras (hubieras) venío* (Briz Gómez 1991: 72).

(6) The partitive *de* disappears in many popular combinations (Briz Gómez 1991: 76): *una poca [de] sal, un poco [de] vino, una mija [de] bolsa*.

(7) The Aragonese/Murcian diminutive ending *-ico* is used in much of the western Levantine region. The suffixes *-ete/-eta* are also used: *cerqueta, maquineta, polvete, poquete*, etc. (Briz Gómez 1991: 83).

(8) The preposition *en* may be used instead of *con* (Blas Arroyo 1993:50, Gómez Molina 1986:23):

Juan está en fiebre.

El vino en Tomás.

Corta el pan en el cuch9illo.

(9) In Valencia above all, *hacer* may take over the functions normally assigned to other impersonal verbs (Blas Arroyo 1993:51):

¡qué olor hace!

¿Qué hacen [ponen] esta noche en la televisión?

(10) A pseudo-partitive, similar to the Catalan construction, sometimes occurs (Blas Arroyo 1993:51; Gómez Molina 1986:27):

Me ha gustado ese disco, pero los hay de mejores.

Si tiene tomates, dame tres de maduros.

(11) A preverbal double negative, similar to the Catalan construction, may occur in Catalan-influenced Levantine Spanish (Gómez Molina 1986:27):

Nadie no lo ha visto

Tampoco no estudia.

CASTELLÓN

The province of Castellón (Castelló in Catalan) is located just to the north of Valencia, and is part of the autonomous region of Valencia. Sandwiched between the Valenciano heartland and Catalunya, with the Castilian/La Mancha province of Teruel to the west, Castellón exhibits traits common to transitional dialects in bilingual areas. Blas Arroyo et al. (1992) provide the best information to date, while Alba (1986) offers a description of the speech of a particular town. The Spanish dialect of Castellón shares most of the traits of surrounding Castilian/La Mancha and Valencian dialects. These include:

- (1) Uvular pronunciation [χ] of the posterior fricative /x/.
- (2) Generally high resistance to effacement of syllable- and word-final consonants.
- (3) Alveolar pronunciation of word-final /n/.
- (4) High rate of deletion of intervocalic /d/ in the desinence *-ado*.
- (5) Apioalveolar pronunciation of /s/.
- (6) In general, residents of Castellón distinguish /s/ and /θ/ as in Castilian. However, there is some neutralization to /s/ (*seseo*) as in neighboring Valencia (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 25-6), particularly among Valenciano-dominant bilinguals.
- (7) To a much lesser extent than in Catalunya, word-final prevocalic /s/ is occasionally voiced to [z]: *los otros* [lozotros].
- (8) It is frequent for the word accent to be displaced rightwards to enclitic pronouns: *llevatéla* < *llévate la*, *cogemélo* < *cógemelo* (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 30-1).
- (9) It is common to place the definite article before first names, as in Catalan/Valencian: *el Jorge*, *la Mari* (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 36).
- (10) Although *-ito/-ita* are the usual diminutive suffixes, the Aragonese *-ico/-ica* occasionally appear (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 43).
- (11) The partitive *de* is frequently used: *¿Hay de mejores (lugares)?* (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 48-9).
- (12) *Che* and *cha* are used as interjections. The former is identical to the vocative used in the Rio de la Plata/Paraguay, but Blas Arroyo et al. (1992: 49) relate it to Old Spanish *ce*:

¡Ché, tú, qué asco de trabajo, no me deja ni respirar!
 ¿Estás loco? ¡Ché!

- (13) As in Catalan, the future tense, rather than the present subjunctive, is sometimes used after *cuando* in subordinate clauses referring to the future (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 54-5): *Cuando vendrás* [cuando vengas].
- (14) The prepositions *en* and *a* at times extends their use beyond normal Spanish functions, reflecting Catalan patterns (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 56-7):

Iba en su madre
 Comer paella en [de] conejo
 Iba en zapatos
 Estaban a casa

- (15) *Bajo* can be used as an adverb instead of *abajo*: *están bajo* (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 56).
- (16) Expressions of the sort *no cale que hagas eso* 'you don't have to do that' reflect the Catalan verb *caldre*. Blas Arroyo et al. (1992: 60-61) remark that this expression appears to be confined to negative admonitions.
- (17) The expression *casi que nos iremos* 'we're about to go' is sometimes heard (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 66).
- (18) In Castellón, double negatives of the sort *tampoco no vino* occur with some frequency.
- (19) Non-agreeing *se* in *se [nos] marchamos* appears to come from Catalan *se n'anem* (Blas Arroyo et al. 1992: 68).

Among lexical items associated with Levantine Spanish are:

badado `cracked, broken,' from Catalan

bajoca `green bean'

bufa `flatulence'

carlota `carrot' (Valencia)

destarifo `stupid action'

encantado `dumbstruck'

faena `job, employment'

garrama `trick, cheating'

hacer porra `return emptyhanded (e.g. from fishing)'

menearse `to move about'

no padezcas `don't worry'

paella `skillet, frying pan'

palomilla `clothes hanger'

saltar `to come out [said of stains: *esta mancha no salta*]

tete/teta `brother/sister'

yayo/yaya `grandfather/grandmother'