

Evidence of neutralization /l/ by /r/ in andalusian variety

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Abstract

The andalusian variety is considered as innovative or radical in comparison to North-Center of Spain 'Spanish Castilian'. Specifically the andalusian is characterized by a weakened articulation or by reduction of certain consonants (Hualde, 2005). The purpose of the present study is to analyze and characterize the neutralization in the andalusian variety, specifically regarding the alteration of the laterals and rhotics. Hualde (2005) mentions a number of cases of neutralization /l/ and /r/ or vice versa in different Spanish-speaking places: Puerto Rico *perdón* [peɫ.'don] (*sorry*), Cuba *el golpe* [eg.'gob.pe] (*the blow*), The Dominican Republic *el árbol* [eɫ.'aj.βol] (*the tree*) and Chile; or as in Andalusia, Extremadura, Canarias, The Caribbean, Colombia and Chile *bolso* ['boɫ.so] (*purse*), Silva-Corvalán (2001). However, so far, there have been no further studies focusing on experimental research of this phenomenon in the Andalusian variety. In this study, I am going to add new evidence to improve our understanding of the neutralization of /l/ and /r/ of this variety, carrying out an analysis of experimental data.

My hypothesis attends to: i) Given that cues are weaker in codas which allows for less articulatory precision (Ohala & Kawasaki, 1984), that acoustic-phonetic information is less salient in coda position (Fujimura et al. 1978, Ohala 1990). The patterns observed in the neutralization of /r/ and /l/ in other varieties of Spanish, the patterns observed in the neutralization of /r/ and /l/ in other Spanish varieties, and the neutralization of /l/ and /r/ is performed in coda position, for example, *alma* (*soul*) will be produced as [aɫ.ma]. ii) I predict that this variation will take place mostly in an informal language.

Four native spanish-speakers belonging to the Andalusian middle class participated in three experiments: one involves naming pictures and the other two consist in reading words. Thus to evaluate the percentage of the neutralization of /l/ and /r/ in different linguistic contexts. The first test comprised of eliciting words from 51 pictures. The second task was to read 180 words in slow pace and the third task was to read the same words but fast paced. These words are controlled by, a) number of syllables, b) stress in the word, c) position of /l/, /r/ and /ɾ/ inside the word. There were also 185 fillers included.

The results were analyzed acoustically showing 1644 productions. In the preliminary results 24% of neutralizations were obtained in total, disclosing that the neutralization is exclusively observed in coda position, as *colchón* [koɫ.'tʃon] (*mattress*). In addition, a higher percentage of /l/ and /r/ were obtained in trisyllabic words (33%), followed by bisyllabic words (19%), compared with monosyllabic words (0%). Therefore, the neutralize /l/ and /r/ reflects higher percentages during rapid reading (33%) and in the picture naming task (50%) than in the slow reading (12%).

In conclusion, this study is important because it provides information about the process of neutralization of /l/ and /r/ in a Spanish variety poorly studied, the andalusian variety. This emphasizes the role of a number of universal factors which are involved as in the variation and the sound change, as position prominence, formality and the speed of speech.

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