

How Colombian New Yorkers Express Future Time in Spanish

Orozco (1997) examines the distribution of the morphological future (*cantaré* 'I will sing'), the analytical future (*voy a cantar* 'I am going to sing') and the simple present (*canto* 'I sing') as they are used by New York Colombians to express futurity. In this paper, which has a threefold purpose, I follow up on that study. First, I identify the linguistic and social factors significant in the occurrence of each one of the variants examined. Second, I explain the impact of each one of the factors involved. Third, I compare the distribution of forms with those found in other speech communities.

In this quantitative study I examine conversational data obtained from female and male native speakers of Colombian Spanish in the greater New York City area. I conducted parallel variable rule analyses for each variant in exploring my data. The linguistic factors I explore include imminence of a future event, kind of statement, clause length, verb length, verb regularity, presence of time markers, and grammatical number of the subject. I also tested the effect of widely used social factors such as gender, age, educational achievement and occupation as well as duration of stay in the United States. By presenting a quantitative analysis that includes three variants, this paper expands on previous treatments of this topic and provides a background for further research. Moreover, I provide meaningful comparisons with data from other bilingual as well as monolingual speech communities. These comparisons provide an indication of how language contact influences change in progress.

In terms of the significance of external constraints, the results reflect tendencies which set Colombian New Yorkers apart. In general terms, the results of this study clearly show the effect of a crosslinguistic evolutionary process which affects verbal morphology and triggers a number of internal syntactic and morphological adjustments. These results also show signs of language change that has been in progress over an extended period of time and suggest that the linguistic roles regarding language variation and change that exist in Colombian Spanish are different from those found elsewhere. Furthermore, these results reflect not only how the current situation mirrors changes that have occurred in the past, but also adjustment to crosslinguistic phenomena including cyclicity, grammaticalization, and simplification.

Reference:

Orozco, Rafael. (1997) Distribution of future time forms in Colombian Spanish. Paper presented at N.W.A.V.E. 26. Université Laval, Québec, Canada, 24 October 1997.