

Journey With Language – Variations in Spanish (10) Chile

●Destination - Chile

Pedro Henríquez Ureña, a humanities scholar in the Dominican Republic has separated Latin American Spanish into the following five zones based on their linguistic characteristics and the influence from the indigenous language of each region.¹

1. The Caribbean: Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, the Caribbean coast of Venezuela and Colombia
2. North and Central America: Southwest of USA, Mexico, Central America
3. The Andean: the Andean regions of Venezuela and Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, North of Chile
4. Rio de la Plata Countries: Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay
5. Chile

He explains the zoning criteria as follows.

El carácter de cada una de las cinco zonas se debe a la proximidad geográfica de las regiones que las componen, los lazos políticos y culturales que las unieron durante la dominación española y el contacto con una lengua indígena principal.

The characteristics of each zone are ascribed to the geographic proximity of the composing regions, the political and cultural ties during the Spanish dominion, and the contact with the principal indigenous language.

¹ Pedro Henríquez Ureña, "Observaciones sobre el español en América", *Revista de Filología Española*, 8, 1921.

According to his zoning system, Chile forms by itself a single independent zone among the vast Spanish-speaking world. This is because of the difficulty the country experienced in interacting with its neighboring countries due to geographic conditions; Chile is surrounded by the Atacama Desert (*Desierto de Atacama*) on the north, the Andes (*Los Andes*) on the east, the Pacific Ocean (*Océano Pacífico*) on the west, and the Antarctica (*Antártida*) beyond the Drake Passage (*Estrecho de Drake*) on the south. He also described the use of Araucano (*araucano*), the indigenous language, being limited to current Chile as another factor.

It was August last year (1999) that I visited Santiago, the capital of Chile, to attend the 12th International Conference of the Association of Linguistics and Philology of Latin America (*XII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Lingüística y Filología de la América Latina*) with Prof. Toshihiro Takagaki of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and Prof. Antonio Ruiz Tinoco of Sophia University. This association holds as much importance as the Spanish Society of Linguistics (*Sociedad Española de Lingüística*), and the conference is held every three years in different parts of the Spanish-speaking world. Universidad de Santiago de Chile hosted the six-day conference starting on August 9.200?



【Picture 1: City of Santiago and the Andes】

August means mid-winter in South America. It was not as smoggy as we had expected, and under a sunny sky, the snow-capped Andes on the west of the city provided a sense of direction for strangers like ourselves. There were many patios in

the university, and the participants enjoyed talking while sipping hot coffee in the sun.

I noticed some unique pronunciation used by the local Chilean professors when I joined their conversation. One of which is a [tr] sound with an unvoiced fricative [r], making it sound as if an English speaker was speaking Spanish. For instance, *tres* (three), *cuatro* (four) and *otro* (another) etc. sound close to [tr] of tree in English. Another one is “je” of *mujer* (woman) and *jefe* (boss) sounding [Ce] rather than [he]. Although they used to be explained by the influence of Araucano (*araucano*), the indigenous language, it is considered more accurate nowadays to take the following viewpoints. Here is an explanation on the [r] sound by Rafael Lapesa, a Spanish linguist:²

, Álava y Más tarde se ha demostrado que la conversión de /r/ en fricativa, señalada como araucanismo es un proceso de relajación espontánea que se registra en casi toda América y en Navarra, Aragón Rioja.

Later, the spirantization of /r/, once believed to be of the Araucano (araucano) origin, was explained as a natural relaxation process that was also found in almost all of the America, and in Navarra, Aragon, Alava and Rioja in Spain.

As for the pronunciation of “je” in Chile, he stated that it "(...) representa un grado intermedio en la evolución de la /s/ prepalatal del español antiguo hasta sus resultados modernos velares o faríngeos." (represents a sound amid the development from the ancient Spanish /S/ prepalatal to the modern velar or pharyngeal sound.) As a result, the indigenous language theory for the origin was denied based on these geographic and historical reasons.

●Pursuit of Language - Phonetics

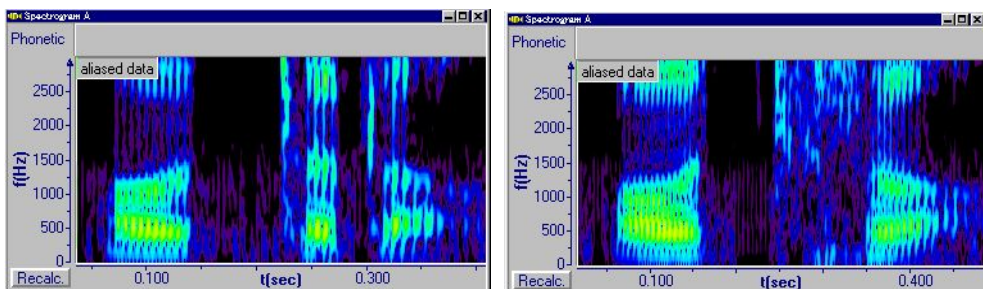
It is very difficult to give a full explanation of pronunciation on paper. Comparing a sound to English and spelling out the sound in katakana (Japanese

² Rafael Lapesa, *Historia de la lengua española*, Madrid, Gredos, cap. 17, 127.4.

characters) or using the alphabet is never accurate. Therefore, I have made a sound file available on the Internet (URL shown below) with the cooperation of Max Echeverría, a Spanish linguist from Chile.

<http://gamp.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~ueda/tabi/>

Phonetics is the study of pronunciation. We try to distinguish the delicate difference in sounds, imitate and pronounce them, and write them down with accuracy. The study includes physical analyses of sounds and research on various phenomena. Here is an example of a sound wave analysis on a computer (SIL Speech Analyzer).



【Graphic-1】otro: Standard Flapped [r] 【Graphic-2】otro: Fricative [r] in Chile

【Graphic-1】 on the left shows the standard pronunciation for [otro], and 【Graphic-2】 on the right shows its variation in Chile. The thick black vertical lines in both graphics illustrate the [t] sound. There are thinner black lines representing flapped [r] sound on the right of [t] in 【Graphic-1】, and there are thick stripes representing the noise of fricative [r] sound in 【Graphic-2】.

●Language Variations --“Cheat Sheet”

After the presentations at the university in the morning, we went out in the city for sightseeing and spoke with the local people. We also learned some “student terms/slang” at the university. Here is a comparison with slang in Spain.



【Picture 2: Courtyard at Universidad de Santiago】

Meaning	Chile	Spain
graduate	<i>egresar</i>	graduarse, licenciarse
grind	<i>mateo</i>	empollón
fail	<i>rajar</i>	suspender, catear
creep	<i>patero</i>	pelota
play hooky	<i>hacer la cimarra</i>	hacer novillos
cheat sheet	<i>torpedo</i>	chuleta

The word for “cheat sheet” varies from place to place. It is *chuleta* (**Ch** in map) in Spain and Venezuela, *torpedo* (**T**) in Chile, *chivo* (**Chv**) in Cuba, Puerto Rico and Guatemala, *droga, droguita* (**Dr**), *bate* (**Bt**), and *nota* (**N**) in Puerto Rico, *acordeón* (**A**) in Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, *chafa* (**Chf**) in Mexico, *chepe* (**Chp**) in Honduras, *forro* (**F**) in Cuba and Costa Rica, *copia* (**Cp**) in El Salvador and Nicaragua, *batería* (**B**) in Panama, *pastel* (**P**) in Colombia, *polla* (**Po**) in Ecuador, *plagio* (**Pl**) and *compromido* (**Cm**) in Peru, *chanchullo* (**Chch**) in Bolivia, *copiatini* (**Cpi**) in Paraguay, *ferrocarril* (**Fc**) and *trencito* (**Tr**) in Uruguay, and *machete* (**M**) in Argentina.



【Map: Cheat Sheet】

***Assignment -10a**

Read Lipski (1996), and explain the phonological, grammatical and lexical characteristics of Chilean Spanish. According to Lipski, “the [tr] sound is almost affricative” (p. 224), compare this with other affricates such as [tʃ] and [ts].

***Assignment -10b**

Read the following reference, and summarize the theory that ascribes the base of American Spanish to the indigenous language. Discuss the conditions on which the theory is denied.

***Reference**

Lapesa, Rafael. Translation: Ch. 17 “American Spanish.” Transl: 127 “Native Language and Thier Influence.” In *Historia de la Lengua Espanola*. Madrid: Gredos, 1981.

***Assignment -10c**

Describe regional variations of the word “cheat sheet” in Spanish.

* Reference: Varilex: <http://gamp.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~ueda/varilex/>