

Journey With Language – Variations in Spanish (9) Andean Countries

● Destination --Andean Countries

Last summer, I traveled to Quito (Ecuador) and Lima (Perú). It gave me a chance to learn a lot from the local people while observing how the language is used in each city.



【Picture 1: Market in the Suburb of Quito】

There are some expressions specific to Ecuadorian Spanish I have learned from the locals. For example, they say “*¿Me da abriendo la ventana?*” to ask someone to open the window. Antonio Quilis, a Spanish linguist, has also suggested this after his observation there (standard expressions shown in brackets «...»)¹

Mención especial merece el uso del gerundio en toda la Sierra, prácticamente. Expresiones como *Dámelo leyendo* «léamelo», *Dame haciendo mi trabajo* «hazme mi trabajo, por favor», etc. son muy frecuentes.

¹ . "Rasgos generales sobre la lengua española en el Ecuador", A. César Hernández (ed.) *Historia y presente del español de América*, Junta de Castilla y León, 1992)

The usage of present participle in most part of the Sierra is noteworthy. Expressions like *Dámelo leyendo «léamelo»* (“Please read it to me.”), and *Dame haciendo mi trabajo «hazme mi trabajo, por favor»* (“Please do my work.”) etc. are used frequently.

Shortly after returning to Japan, I had an opportunity to give a presentation on Japanese benefactive verbs in joint research (The National Institute for Japanese Language²). That was when I realized a strange coincidence in Japanese (in Tokyo) and Spanish in Ecuador. For example, it is strange to translate “¿Me prestas este libro?” to “Do you lend me this book?” or “Te prepararé algo de beber.” to “I make you something to drink.” It would sound more natural in Japanese to say “Will you lend me this book?” and “I will make something for you to drink.” Both forms of offers, ‘Will you ... for me?’ used for yourself and ‘I will ... for you.’ used for someone else would be expressed with the verb “dar” in Spanish. This reminded me of the use of “dar + present participle” in Ecuadorian Spanish. It is uncertain if it was a plain coincidence or if there was a fundamental cause rooted in another language, but we should refrain from making easy assumptions unless there is thorough research based on far more data and information.

Let me change the subject to Spanish in Peru now. I have done research on the usage of possessive adjective “su” in the past (1993). Depending on the context, it is sometimes unclear whose house it is when described as “su casa” since there are various possibilities: “his, her, their, your” “house”. Some grammar books show the addition of “de + noun/pronoun” in order to clarify the possessor, but do they really use expressions like “su casa de Antonio”?

This made me skeptical, and I combed out numbers of theatrical texts in Spain for reference. The result was that it was more common to use the definite article and say “la casa de Antonio” instead. When I presented the research results on the frequency and reasons for the use of “su”, Noritaka Fukushima of Kobe City University of Foreign Studies gave me some information on Spanish in Peru. The following paragraph is an explanation by Rocío Caravedo of Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú) (“Perú”, M. Alvar (ed.) *Manual de dialectología hispánica. Español de América*, 1996).

De modo cada vez más frecuente se encuentra la presencia de los posesivos redundantes, atribuida por lo general al español andino, si bien suele presentarse en la modalidad costeña de los grupos bajos y medios, y también en la amazónica, en relación con la

² 『日本語と外国語の対照研究VI. 日本語とスペイン語(3)』(Translation: “Comparative Study of Japanese and Other Languages VI. Japanese and Spanish (3).”) In 「日本語の授与補助動詞とスペイン語の与格接語」(Translation: *Japanese benefactive verbs and Spanish dative clitics*) Tokyo: Kuroshio Shuppan.).

tercera persona, y no necesariamente en casos susceptibles de ambigüedad: *su casa de mi mamá, celebramos su fiesta de la tierra.*

What is seen more and more frequently in recent days is the redundant possessive, used for the third person, and not necessarily when it is ambiguous. It is attributed to the general Andean Spanish, although it often appears in the lower and middle parts of the coastal area, and also in the Amazons. E.g. *su casa de mi mamá* (the house of my mother), *celebramos su fiesta de la tierra* (We hold the festival of our land).

The form “su casa de mi mamá” (the house of my mother) like the above example was almost nonexistent in the materials I looked into. Nevertheless, referring to numbers of materials is not enough to conclude and define Spanish in general. One cannot discuss general Spanish without thorough research of the language worldwide.

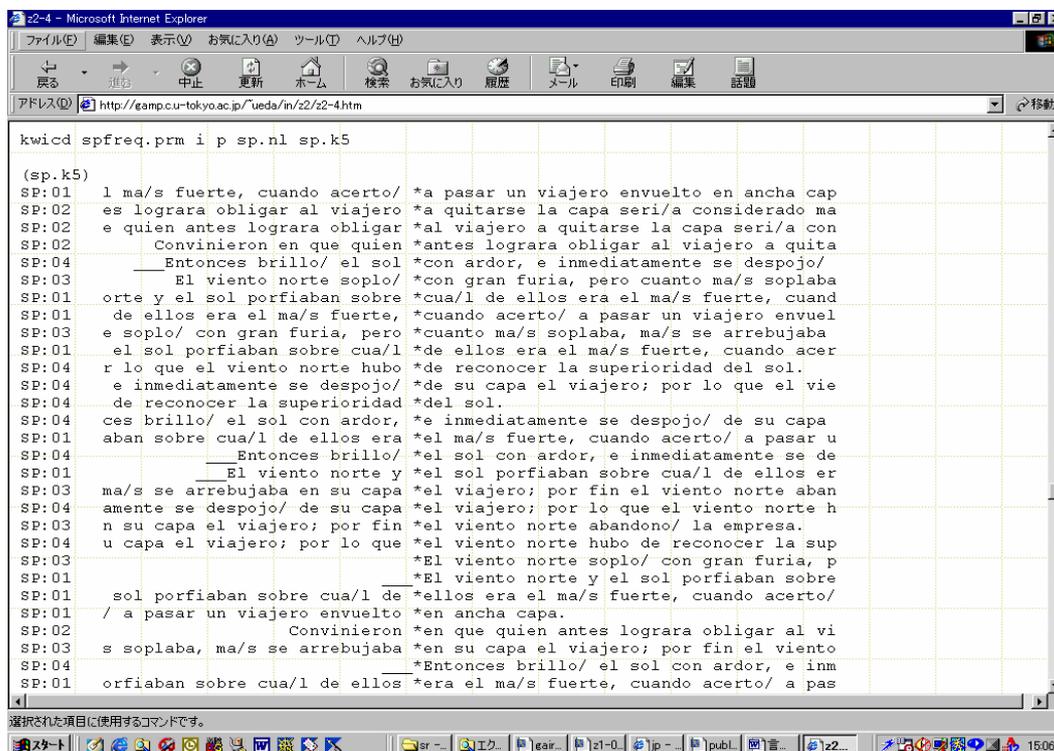


【Picture 2: The Plaza de Armas in Lima】

We cannot discuss the Andean without paying attention to Bolivia. Although I have not yet visited the city of La Paz in Bolivia, I will have a chance to observe and study Spanish in the Andean highlands with some anthropologists next year (2001). I am excited to see what interesting characteristics there are to find.

●Pursuit of Language - Corpus Linguistics

Earlier in the lecture, I mentioned to have “combed out numbers of theatrical texts in Spain” for research on the usage of possessive adjective. However, it does not mean that I was literally going through those books searching for this specific word form. In my past studies, I used to make cards while I read with a focus on a specific subject, but this method required a great deal of reading, making the research very inefficient. Mistakes were also inevitable since all was done by hand. “Corpus linguistics” is a method that was made available by using a computer. “Corpus” is the text for linguistic analysis, and the screen below shows an example of the output results.



【Graphic】

With the word in the center as a key word, it tries to find the rules by examining the contexts around the word. This method (KWIC: key word in context) enables us to repeatedly re-use a large amount of texts stored in database, allowing the study to be remarkably expandable. Another improvement from the traditional method is that these data can be utilized by other researchers as well.

●Language Variations -“Speed Bumps”

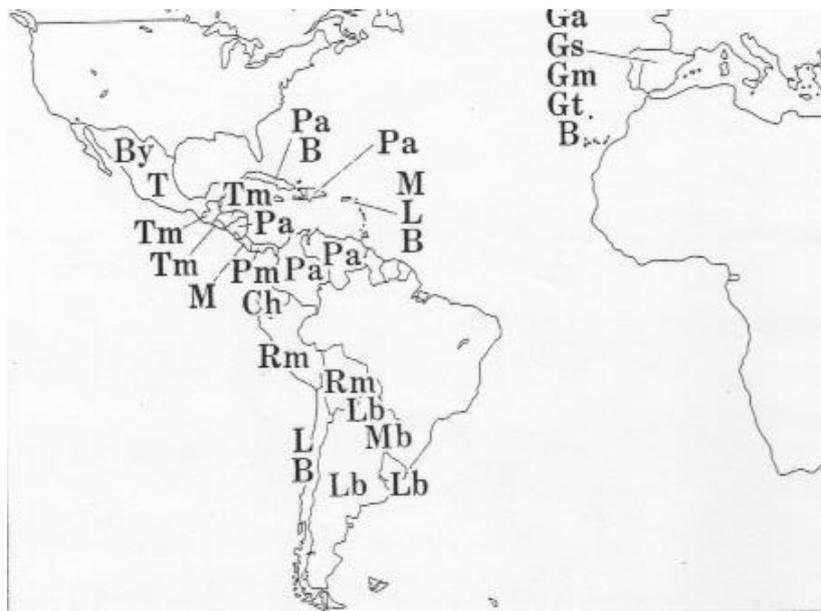
In the November 1999 issue of “NHK TV Spanish Conversation”, I have mentioned an Ecuadorian expression “**chapa muerto**” (dead policeman) meaning “speed bumps”. Let me introduce some other variations in different regions.



【Picture 3: Speed Bumps】

The variations can be divided into two categories: personified expressions related to policemen and metaphors coming from the shape. Personified expressions include: *chapa muerto* (**Ch** in map) or dead policeman in Ecuador; *guardia acostado* (**Ga**) or lying guard, *guardia de asfalto* (**Gs**) or an asphalted guard, *guardia muerto* (**Gm**) or a dead guard, and *guardia tumbado* (**Gt**) or a lying guard in Spain; *muerto* (**M**) or a dead person in Puerto Rico and Costa Rica; *policía acostado* (**Pa**) or a lying policeman in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Colombia and Venezuela; *policía muerto* (**Pm**) or a dead policeman in Panama.

Metaphors coming from the shape include; *boya* (**By**) or a buoy in Monterrey, Mexico, *lomo* (**L**) or a back in Puerto Rico and Chile, *lomo de burro* (**Lb**) or a donkey back in Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina, *tope* (**Tp**) or a tip in Mexico, *túmulo* (**Tm**) or a mound/tumulus in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. On the other hand, *badén* (**B**) in Spain, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Chile has an origin in Arabic meaning depression contour. There were some interesting compound words such as *rompemuelles* (**Rm**) or a springs breaker (of car suspension) (< *romper* (break) + *muelles* (springs)) in Peru and Bolivia and *mataburro* (**Mb**) or a donkey killer (< *matar* (kill) + *burro* (donkey)) in Paraguay. There must be even more if we looked more into it throughout the world.



【Map: “Speed Bumps”】

【Assignment-9a】

Read Lipski (1996), and describe the similarities and differences of phonological, grammatical and lexical characteristics of Spanish in Ecuador (pp. 261-271), Perú (pp. 336-349) and Bolivia (pp. 204-218).

【Assignment-9b】

Lipski (1996: 269-270) introduces the structure of “dar + present participle ” as shown below. Use various references to study its historical/geographical distribution.

- Dame cerrando las puertas.
- Dame comprando unas espermitas.

* References: Corpus del Español: <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>, Google etc.

【Assignment-9c】

Describe regional variations of the word “speed bumps” in Spanish.

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