Sociophonetic accommodation
as a function of interlocutor target language competence:
The case of New York Dominican Spanish

by

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For you, B.

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Abstract

This dissertation contributes to the variationist understanding of the process of phonetic accommodation through the analysis of syllable-final consonant weakening in the speech of native speakers of New York Dominican Spanish (NYDS) during their interactions with second language learners of Spanish. The principal objective is to examine the inner workings of the accommodation phenomenon by using Dominican Spanish as a medium. The data analyzed in this dissertation come from conversations between the informants—native speakers of NYDS— and four different interlocutors, one of whom is a fellow native speaker of NYDS and three who are second-language learners of Spanish with varying degrees of Spanish-language competence. Not only does this dissertation help to fill a large gap in the current research regarding the phenomenon of accommodation as it happens in Spanish by analyzing natural speech in dyadic conversations, but it will also track the accommodative process as it happens in real time by taking measurements from various time points during such conversations.

The informants in this study are bilingual first- and second-generation Dominicans currently living in New York, and their interlocutors are one fellow native speaker of NYDS and three second-language learners of Spanish. The L2 Spanish-speaking interlocutors are divided into three categories based on their proficiency in Spanish: Intermediate interlocutors (those who have taken two years of university-level Spanish), Advanced interlocutors (those who have declared Spanish as a major, have studied abroad in a Spanish-speaking country, and have taken four to five years of university-level Spanish) and Superior interlocutors (those who hold advanced degrees in Spanish and teach Spanish classes at the university level). Data are collected through a series of interview-based conversations between each informant and their

four interlocutors. Each conversation is divided into three sections and a maximum of 350 contexts in which variation could occur in the articulation of syllable-final consonants /s/, /l/, /r/ and /n/ are extracted from each segment of each recorded conversation. The articulation of each token is impressionistically coded as either weakening or retention based on a series of auditory and acoustic cues. Once coded, the data are input into statistical analysis software for descriptive statistical analyses.

The results from this dissertation study show that during interactions with the most- and least-proficient speakers of Spanish, NYDS speakers nearly exclusively retain syllable-final consonants, but the same speakers frequently weaken final consonants during interactions with fellow NYDS speakers and with mid-proficient nonnative interlocutors. The principal contribution that this dissertation makes to the field of language study is that speakers in fact do meter their use of highly salient, emblematic speech features to navigate social relationships and index their belonging to a given group, both with native and nonnative speakers of the language variety in question. In the general study of language varieties in contact, studies such as these that quantify accommodation in real-time conversations are paramount for furthering the discussion of contact phenomena, such as dialect levelling and cross-dialectal convergence.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Motivations

Since its initial conception, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) has had

among its principal concerns social, interactional motivations and identities. After the theory was

introduced by Gile's (1973) work on accent mobility, accommodation scholars have expanded

upon and continued to develop the theoretical model, demonstrating the agentive role that

speakers play during interactions and rejecting notions that mutual convergence is automatized

or entirely mechanistic. Coupland for instance describes the model as "[one] of strategic

operations around linguistic and communicative styling, committed to building predictive claims

about the links between identity and relational aspirations/priorities and styles, and then

between styles and social consequences. […] It invests social actors with a degree of control

over their linguistic actions, and a degree of awareness and understanding of their probable

social outcomes" (2008: 269). In the context of Spanish in the United States, this model is quite

useful for examining interactions between speakers of distinct arterial varieties—to which

distinct levels of prestige are ascribed—who are among different generations of speakers in the

US and who have varying degrees of competence in Spanish. To date, empirical studies in phonetic accommodation have not measured and tracked adjustments in the speech of informants as they interact with a series of interlocutors, all of whom have distinct target language competence levels.

The present dissertation applies the model of CAT to the sociophonetic variation observed during conversations between both native and heritage speakers of New York Dominican Spanish (NYDS) and interlocutors who are nonnative learners of Spanish. NYDS is chosen as a medium through which these links between linguistic actions and social outcomes can be explored, owing to its status as a stigmatized variety of Spanish to which overt prestige is not ascribed in the US and throughout the Spanish-speaking world. For instance, Zentella in her study of linguistic (in)security among New York's Latinos found that when asked if Dominican Spanish should be taught in schools, 80% responded that it should not, citing that it is "*incorrecto*" or "*malo*," (Zentella 1990: 1102). Nonetheless, Dominican Spanish in New York does enjoy a considerable measure of covert prestige (Toribio 2000a, 2000b, among others). While overt prestige is the value associated with a variety that is generally viewed as 'correct' and highly valued by all speakers of the language, covert prestige instead is that which is associated with a variety that is generally viewed as 'incorrect' and viewed by the dominant culture to be inferior. The dynamics between the c/overt prestige associated with the Dominican variety of Spanish in New York make for the use of its marked phonetic features to be emblematic, and endows these speech features with a certain weight for its speakers to throw around as they negotiate multiple identities and navigate social relationships.

The features under study in this dissertation are chosen with their emblematic status in mind—during sociolinguistic interviews with NYDS-speaking informants, the weakening of consonants in final position is often the first feature that comes to informants' minds when asked to describe the Dominican variety of Spanish, as shown in the following interview excerpts taken from the present study's data and the University at Albany Corpus of New York Dominican Spanish.

(1) [007/133] Se comen la <r> ponen la <i> en vez de la <r> como estaba diciendo ahorita: 'comei' en vez de 'comer.'

(2) [025/128] Hablar el buen español es hablar el español de España. Porque los dominicanos, nosotros no decimos la <s>, y todas <r>s son <i>; carne es 'caine' y así hablamos.

Informed by CAT and the unique status of Dominican Spanish in the Spanish-speaking world, this dissertation measures and tracks the deployment of these marked features during interactions with a variety of interlocutors to contribute to our conceptualization of the connections between speech styles and social goals.

1.2 Aim of study

The aim of this study is to fill a gap in the current accommodation literature—to collect speech data from the same informant as they interact with various interlocutors. Explored in further detail, the objectives of this dissertation include tracking the process of phonetic accommodation not only from interlocutor to interlocutor but also throughout each individual interaction, investigating the role that interlocutor target language competence and perceived linguistic affiliation play in the exhibition of phonetic accommodation, and identify how

emblematic speech features (versus those that are less salient to speakers) are employed

during interactions with nonnative learners of Spanish and native speakers of New York

Dominican Spanish alike.

The research questions guiding this dissertation are:

    I.   Do speakers of NYDS increase the rate of retention of consonants in final position as a form of phonetic accommodation during interactions with nonnative learners of Spanish?
        a. How does interlocutor target language competence condition the degree and direction of accommodation?
    II.   Do all final consonants under study (/s/, /l/, /r/, and /n/) show comparable increases in retention across the nonnative interlocutor competence levels?
        a. During interactions with less proficient interlocutors in particular, do the morphological functions of final /s/ play a role in accommodative retention?
        b. Are neutral speech features retained at the same frequency as marked speech features during interactions across all interlocutor levels?
    III. Are there measureable differences in phonetic accommodation at different time points during each interaction?

1.3 Outline

This introductory chapter serves to present the themes, motivations, goals, and structure

of the dissertation. The following two chapters further develop the topics and expand upon the

previous research guiding the study. This dissertation will contribute to the variationist

understanding of phonetic accommodation by analyzing the behavior of a set of final

consonants in the speech of native speakers of Dominican Spanish during interactions with

second language learners of Spanish. The aim of the study is to examine the inner workings of

the phenomenon of accommodation by using Dominican Spanish as a medium. As such, review

of the literature relevant to this dissertation can be bisected into equally important, but quite

distinct, parts—theory and practice. First, Chapter 2 details our understanding of variation in language, the internal and external factors contributing to phonetic variation, and the development and application of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) in previous studies. Second, Chapter 3 outlines the most salient linguistic features of Dominican Spanish and delineates the role that language ideology and covert/overt prestige dynamics play in its selection as the variety used for this dissertation.

Chapter 4 describes the methods used in participant selection, data collection, and data analysis. In total, 30 recorded conversations between the New York Dominican Spanish-speaking informants and their various interlocutors are considered. Participants are grouped into two roles in this study—the NYDS informants and the interlocutors. Interlocutors are further grouped by Spanish competence level. Four levels are considered here: Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and NYDS—that is, three interlocutor levels comprise participants who are nonnative learners of Spanish and one level contains participants who are native or heritage speakers of Dominican Spanish who have spent at least half of their lives in New York. Data were collected during closed, interview-based conversation between each NYDS informant and their various interlocutors. Eight NYDS informants (four men and four women) are recorded, and each NYDS informant recorded is interacting with at least three distinct interlocutors. In order to track the phonetic accommodation process as it occurs throughout each interaction, the conversations are divided into three individual segments and each segment is further analyzed individually. As the objective of this dissertation study is to track the accommodative increase in the retention of consonants in syllable-final position during interactions with nonnative speakers of Spanish of varying competence levels, all contexts in which variation can occur in the

articulation of final consonants (/s/, /l/, /ɾ/, and /n/) are extracted and their realizations are coded based on a series of auditory and acoustic cues. Finally, all data are coded for extralinguistic variables and input into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM Corp. 2013) for descriptive statistical analyses.

Chapter 5 is a presentation and discussion of the results of the analyses described in Chapter 4. First, I find that there is not only a significant difference in final consonant retention rates between interactions with nonnative Spanish speaker interlocutors and NYDS interlocutors, but also—and much more interestingly—between the distinct nonnative interlocutor competence levels. Overall NYDS informants demonstrate nearly instantaneous convergence to the conservative Spanish spoken by the Superior-level interlocutors, and also ultimately converge with the speech of the Intermediate-level interlocutors though not as instantly as with the Superior-level interlocutors. However, divergence is observed throughout the interactions with the Advanced-level interlocutors. As such, the role that target language proficiency plays in the direction (that is, convergence versus divergence) and magnitude of accommodation exhibited by these NYDS informants seems to be one of balance—NYDS informants seem to converge to aid comprehension (in the case of the Intermediate-level interlocutor interactions) and to indicate their own competence in a conservative, Standard variety of Spanish (as is the case during interactions with highly proficient Superior-level interlocutors), but also diverge to capitalize on the covert prestige of the Dominican variety of Spanish (as is found during interactions with the mid-proficient Advanced-level interlocutors). Along with this principal trend of NYDS informants negotiating varietal prestige, comprehension, and social interaction through phonetic accommodation, Chapter 5 also presents and discusses

secondary findings regarding the role that NYDS informant gender, prior experience teaching

Spanish as a second language, and individual differences play in the phonetic accommodation

exhibited across the recorded interactions.

The concluding chapter expands on the discussion of the findings presented in Chapter

5, and explores the significance of this dissertation's findings in the context of second and

heritage language acquisition as well as language varieties in contact. The conclusions drawn

from this dissertation demonstrate that the employment of marked, emblematic speech features

is a manifestation of speaker agency, and in situations of intense and extended contact and

heritage language classrooms alike, the idea that it is speakers rather than varieties interacting

is paramount to our understanding of speech accommodation and, in general, language

variation.

Chapter 2

Theoretical framing:
Language variation and accommodation

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework employed in the current study. First, I

provide a brief overview of the objectives and methods of research on language variation and

change and situate my study within the principles that guide variationist sociolinguistic studies.

Next, I detail both the internal and external factors that condition phonetic variation more

specifically. Finally, I outline the development and application of CAT in previous studies, and

specify the contributions that the present study aims to make to our understanding of not only

the phenomenon of accommodation but also of language variation and change in general.

2.1 Language variation and change

Language variation is a major concern in the field of sociolinguistics, and our

understanding of variation depends on three inherent aspects of language: orderly

heterogeneity, perpetual change, and pervasive social meaning. Variationist studies

demonstrate that the heterogeneity found in language, or the notion that speakers have more

than one way to say the same thing, is far from random and in fact presents patterns and order

(Tagliamonte 2006). Variationist analyses also demonstrate that language is constantly in flux

and aims to put linguistic features in the context of their origin and trajectory—where the

features came from and where they are going (Tagliamonte 2006). And lastly, language

variation studies demonstrate that, while language is used instrumentally for transmitting

information from one person to another, at the same time a speaker is using language to make

a statement about who he or she is, what groups he or she is loyal to, what kind of a

relationship he or she has with the interlocutor, and what kind of speech event he or she is

engaged in (Tagliamonte 2006).

 This dissertation looks at phonetic accommodation within the framework of variationist

sociolinguistics. Empirical studies of phonetic accommodation contribute to our understanding of

language variation in general. In line with the principals of variation, phonetic accommodation

demonstrates order in a heterogeneous articulatory repertoire, innovative use of incipient

speech features, and perhaps most importantly the pervasive social meaning conveyed by

utilizing one variant in place of another. Language variation examined under CAT reveals key

motivations for the exhibition of variation in speech and highlights the importance of external

factors in sociolinguistic variation.

 A principal goal of variationist studies is to establish a variable rule for a phenomenon.

Some examples of a variable rules for /s/ in Dominican Spanish are */s/ → [h] before a nasal*

consonant, or */s/ → [∅] at the end of a phrase*. Variable rules formulate the idea that linguistic

variation does not occur randomly, nor does it depend on free choice of the speaker. Instead, it

is conditioned by a series of factors with quantifiable effects. Internal factors explain the

linguistic processes of a rule, and external factors influence the application (or lack of

application) of a given rule. The following sections will explore both the internal factors that

shape variable rules and the external factors that push the use of variable rules in the context of

Spanish phonetics and phonology.

2.1.1 Internal factors conditioning phonetic variation: the syllable

An analysis of phonetic variation that considers the internal factors of a language

presents the conditions that give rise to variation within a linguistic system—one shared by a set

of speakers of a given speech community at any given moment—and leaves aside conditional

factors of a social or contextual nature. In his chapter in the *Handbook of Hispanic*

Sociolinguistics, Francisco Moreno-Fernández cites the two types of linguistic factors that play

principal roles in Spanish phonic variation: the position of sounds within a sequence and the

relations between sounds in a spoken chain (Moreno-Fernández 2011: 62). The analysis in this

dissertation focuses on the position of sounds in a sequence, specifically on phonetic variation

occurring in consonants at the syllable-final position, both word-internally and word-finally.

Among phonological entities, syllables are unusual due to the degree to which they

stand out to native speakers at the conscious level. In fact, native speakers seem to be able to

identify and count the syllables in a word with relative ease—much more so than identifying and

counting segments—such to the point that speaker arrange syllables in time in verse, chant,

and song (Hayes 2009). With regard to Spanish, Hualde et al. (2010) report that in comparison

to English, native speakers of Spanish tend to have very strong intuitions as to syllabic divisions

within words and phrases. As units of organization for a sequence of speech sounds, syllables

are salient building blocks for words, and their influence on language rhythm and prosody is duly noted by native speakers. Syllables are often the environment for phonological rules, and in the case of this dissertation, they are the site for variable retention and weakening of consonants.

An extensive amount of work has been done demonstrating that there are cross-linguistic preferences for certain types of syllable constructions. For instance, drawing upon the much earlier work of Sievers (1881) and Jesperson (1904), Clements (1990) expands upon the Sonority Sequencing Principle (SSP) and extends the model to include his principle of the Sonority Cycle. SSP states that "[b]etween any member of a syllable and the syllable peak, only sounds of higher sonority rank are permitted," (Clements 1990). According to Clements, an adequate account for sonority in syllabification must also be based on the principle of the sonority cycle, according to which the sonority profile of the preferred syllable type rises maximally at its beginning and drops minimally at its end (1990). The addition of the notion of a cycle is a nod to the quasiperiodic rise and fall in sonority, and provides us with a basis for understanding the "striking and significant regularities" found in syllable structure across languages (Clements 1990: 324). The syllable structure in Spanish adheres to the SSP without deviance, demonstrating the role of sonority in syllabification.

While models like SSP and the sonority cycle are useful in forming cross-linguistic generalizations, more specific descriptions of syllable constructions are best seen when viewed within the confines of one language. Determining syllable boundaries across linguistic systems is something that can be derived from a complete phonological description and can be predicted, but syllabification principles tend to be language-specific. Spanish syllable structure is

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phrasal, and requires full linking among all consonants and vowels within the phonic group

(Whitley 2002). In general, Spanish syllabification rules favor open syllables, or syllables ending

in vowels as opposed to consonants, but the possible maximal structure of the syllable in

Spanish is as follows:

Σ						
Onset		Rhyme				
		Nucleus			Coda	
(C_1)	(C_2)	(G_1)	V	(G_2)	(C_3)	(C_4)

Figure 2.1 Maximal Spanish syllable structure.
C = consonant
G = glide
V= vowel

The onset of a syllable is defined as the consonant, or the sequence of consonants, at

the beginning of a syllable (Hayes 2009). In Spanish, the onset is optional, but may contain up

to two consonants. Any single consonant can appear in the onset of a syllable in Spanish, but

consonant combinations in clusters are restricted—C_2 is only permitted if C_1 is an occlusive (/p/,

/t/, /k/, /b/, /d/, or /g/) or the labiodental fricative /f/, and C_2 must be either /l/ or /r/ (Schwegler et

al. 2010). Below are some examples of maximal onsets:

(3)   transporte   [trans.'por.te]
        flaco   ['fla.ko]
        clave   ['kla.βe]

The Maximal Onset Principle states that the syllabification of intervocalic clusters can be

predicted by observing the set of consonant clusters that can begin a word in a given language.

According to this principle, VC_1C_2V would be syllabified $[V]\sigma[C_1C_2V]\sigma$ if the sequence C_1C_2V

can begin a word (Hayes 2009). In normative Spanish, the following consonant sequences are

found to begin a word, and as such may appear as clusters in an onset: /pr/, /pl/, /br/, /bl/, /tr/,

/dr/, /kr/, /kl/, /gr/, /gl/, /fr/, /fl/.

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In all of the cases listed, the stop or fricative is less sonorant than the following liquid, again demonstrating the role of the sonority cycle in syllabification, as the sonority of the syllable rises to its peak at the syllable nucleus. The only combinations of stop-liquid consonant clusters not found to begin words in normative Spanish is /tl/. While these sequences are not found word-initially in normative Spanish, they do appear in loanwords from native vocabulary, and as such are permitted as onsets in dialects of Spanish influenced by, for example, the Nahuatl substrate (Schwegler et al. 2010). In the case of Spanish, the Maximal Onset Principle correctly predicts the syllabification of consonants as an onset or as a coda. That said, the Maximal Onset Principal still is only a heuristic one and does not tend to be specific enough to be part of a phonological analysis cross-linguistically (Hayes 2009).

The syllable rhyme contains the obligatory nucleus and the optional coda. The nucleus of a syllable is the vowel found at the syllable's core that functions as the sonority peak of syllable (Hayes 2009). In Spanish, the nucleus of the syllable is invariably a vowel. Optionally, Spanish allows the vowel to be preceded or followed by a glide /w/ or /j/ (Schwegler et al 2010). Example (4) presents two instances of a maximal nucleus permitted by the syllabification constraints in Spanish. In both instances, the nucleic vowel is flanked with glides. Since glides are less sonorant than full vowels, a nucleic vowel in between two glides to form a syllable conforms to the SSP and sonority cycle models.

> (4) Uruguay   [u.ru.ˈɣwaj̯]
>   buey   [ˈbwej̯]

The coda of a syllable is the consonant or sequence of consonants at the end of the syllable (Hayes 2009). Codas are optional in Spanish and can consist of up to two consonants.

Any single consonant in Spanish can occur in coda position, but the combinations of consonants allowed in clusters in coda position are restricted. While C_3 can be any consonant, Spanish will only allow for C_4 to be /s/ (Schwegler et al. 2010). Example (5) includes two instances of maximal codas as allowed by Spanish syllabification constraints. In both instances, /s/ is the second segment in the consonant cluster.

(5)   instalar   [ins.ta.ˈlar]
       perspectiva   [pers.pek.ˈti.βa]

Spanish phonotactics allowing for only /s/ in the C_4 position is a testament to both the SSP and the model of the sonority cycle—/s/ has lower sonority than either the nasal or the liquid consonant, demonstrating that the sonority of the syllable declines after the nucleus.

Regarding Dominican Spanish, there is some convincing evidence of slightly different rules for syllabification. As previously stated, Spanish syllabification is phrasal, as Spanish relies on strong linking across word boundaries. In normative Spanish, the phrase *mis amigos* would be split into syllables as [mi.sa.ˈmi.ɣos] with the coda /s/ in the word *mis* being resyllabified to the onset of the following syllable. In a radical[1] dialect like the one found in the Dominican Republic, word-final /s/ is weakened to [h] or [∅]. In normative Spanish, liaison would normally convert word-final coda /s/ into an onset when followed by a word-initial vowel and /s/ would be produced with its standard articulation [s]. However, a Dominican realization of *mis amigos*

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[1] Guitart (1978) considers "radical Spanish dialects" (57) to include Caribbean varieties and contrasts them with "conservative dialects" (57), which are spoken in Salamanca (Spain), Lima (Peru), Quito (Ecuador), and La Paz (Bolivia). Guitart writes that an informal way of expressing the difference between a conservative dialect and a radical one is that conservative dialects maintain pronunciation that is closer to the orthography than a radical one. Nonlinguist observers might describe a radical dialect as one in which speakers "pronuncian mal las letras o se las coman," whereas a conservative dialect would be one in which speakers "pronuncian bien las letras o no se las comen," (57). While, given this characterization, Guitart acknowledges that "linguistically naïve observers" seem to be confusing letter for sound, but are in fact making important fundamental assumptions about the relationship between the phonological and phonetic levels—both speakers who *pronuncian mal las letras* and those who *se las pronuncian bien* have the same underlying phonological representation, but speakers of radical dialects 'eat their letters,' or exhibit what a phonologist would refer to as segment deletion.

would be [mi.ha.ˈmi.ɣoh] or [mi.a.ˈmi.ɣo] —depending on the degree of weakening /s/

undergoes. This is an indication that in phonological theories based on ordered rules, the final

/s/ weakening rule would be applied before liaison resyllabification (Harris 1983). Lipski (1999:

75) was also able to find evidence that weakened intervocalic /s/ is actually ambisyllabic,

meaning that the intervocalic consonant can be associated phonologically to both the preceding

vowel and the following vowel, and often requires that the following vowel be atonic.

Apart from the particular rule ordering of liaison, final /s/ weakening, and resyllabification

in Dominican Spanish, there is not evidence of major deviations from the structure of the

syllable itself. The Maximal Onset Principal is still an accurate tool for predicting the consonant

clusters permitted at the beginning of the syllable, the syllable nucleus is still invariably a vowel,

and there is still a preference for open syllables.

2.1.2 External factors conditioning phonetic variation: the speaker and the interlocutor

This dissertation focuses on variation in the articulation of a set of syllable-final

consonants in Dominican Spanish. While an understanding of the behavior of the syllable in this

variety is paramount for determining the contexts in which variation can occur, the extralinguistic

variables at play will ultimately determine the use of one variant over the other in any given

context of variation. An analysis of phonetic variation that examines the external factors can

provide additional important information to help our understanding of language change within a

community, or even within a person. This section not only considers the social factors of the

speaker themselves that will condition variation found in one's speech, but also the stylistic

factors that have more to do with the person (or persons) the speaker is addressing.

Perhaps the hallmark of studies on language variation is the incorporation of stratified social variables in a linguistic analysis. Studies done in the Labovian tradition tend to include in their analysis factors like the gender, age, or social class of a given speaker, and are able to establish a correlation between the these social factors and phonological variation. With regard to the gender of the speaker, a generalization that sociolinguists have established is that women are more inclined to utilize more prestigious variants, be they standard or innovative (Labov 1990). Also established is that younger speakers tend to be more innovative in their speech and are more likely to use nonstandard forms, whereas the older generation exhibits more conservative speech. Middle-aged speakers, on the other hand, will tend to use more prestigious variants or more standard variants, depending on what the linguistic marketplace[2] calls for (Medina-Rivera 2011). It is generally accepted and has been established through the work of many sociolinguists that, while upper-middle-class speakers tend to use more standard variants and lower-class speakers favor nonstandard variants, the non/standard variant usage patterns for the middle-class group of speakers is more complicated. Speakers from this group have been found to approximate the speech of those with a higher social standing, but often hypercorrect their speech and demonstrate a certain level of linguistic insecurity (Medina-Rivera 2011). These generalizations that correlate social factors with variation in language have been attested frequently enough for them to be accepted in the field of sociolinguistics as patterns, but are by no means rules that apply to all speech communities, or even all speakers.

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[2] Sankoff & Laberge (1978) use this term to explain the extent to which variation in language is associated with the use of, or the access to, a more standard variety.

This dissertation acknowledges the fundamental importance of the differences in the speech of men and women, and will consider the gender of a speaker and the gender of the interlocutor in its analysis. Labov (1990) established two basic principles for analyzing the differences between male and female speech. First, that for stable sociolinguistic variables, men use a higher frequency of nonstandard variants than women and women favor the incoming prestige variants than men. And second, that women are most often innovators. However, in the same chapter, Labov concludes that, after analyzing data from different languages, "not all sociolinguistic variables show a sex effect," (1990: 212). This discord between established principles for the expected behavior of male and female speech and the reality of the gender effect on the patterning of a given variable is also seen in the body of research conducted by Spanish sociolinguists. For instance, in her study of variation of /s/ in syllable-final position in Spanish spoken in Valdivia, Chile, Cepeda (1990: 234) found minimal differences in the rates of deletion in the speech of middle-class men (16%) and women (15.9%). Medina-Rivera (1997: 117) found similar patterns for velarization of /r/ in syllable-final position in the speech of middle-class speakers from Caguas, Puerto Rico, where men produced the velar variant in 8.4% of the cases and women did the same in 10.4% of the cases. Taking these counter-examples into consideration, while the present study will consider gender as an external variable, the argument of this dissertation will not hinge upon gender stratification.

This study will also consider age as a stratifying external variable. Analyses based on age groups in sociolinguistic research are fundamental as a means of demonstrating, and predicting, language change. While the speakers considered in this project will come from two

generational age groups, all of the interlocutors used in data collection will be from only one age

group. Regarding age, Silva-Corvalán remarks that "el grupo que más propende a diferenciarse

lingüísticamente es el de los adolescentes, quienes se identifican con su grupo esencialmente

por medio del uso del vocabulario y expresiones propias de ellos y de su tiempo[3]," (2001: 102).

While historical linguistics analyzes how language changes over long spans of time (real time),

sociolinguistics describes the process of language change in apparent time[4]. Studies, like this

dissertation, that consider speech from multiple generations of speakers simultaneously in

present time are able to form conclusions predicting the possible changes within a community.

While many studies have attempted to use a social class as a stratifying external

variable, other sociolinguists have found social class to be a problematic variable. Perhaps the

most confounding aspect of the social class variable is the subjectivity of dividing a given

community into different classes, which may be incomparable to the divisions of classes in a

separate community. Speaking to the problematic nature of the researcher determining social

class divisions, Medina-Rivera writes: "[s]ocial class is taken sometimes as a homogenous

concept, but the dynamics of many families can help us to understand how diverse and

heterogeneous one family can be in terms of social class, wealth, level of education, and access

to power," (2011: 40). Acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of social class demarcations,

this dissertation will not consider class, either of the speaker or of the interlocutor, as an

external variable.

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3 "The group that is most likely to distinguish itself linguistically is adolescents, who identify themselves with their group by way of the use of vocabulary and in-group expressions of their generation," (My translation).
4 This is perhaps a generalizing remark about the different approaches that historical linguistic studies and sociolinguistic studies take in regards to examining language change and variation across time. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule—notably, the contributions of Sankoff & Blondeau (2007) with their panel study of the change from apical to dorsal /r/ in Montreal French which tracked changes in speech samples taken from a group of 32 speakers 13 years apart.

Along with the demographic characteristics of the speakers, many sociolinguists have taken into consideration the role that interlocutor plays in the variation the speaker exhibits. Motivated by models of language as audience design (Bell 1984), Rickford & McNair-Knox (1994) with their study of Foxy Boston conclude that speakers accommodate to the speech of their interviewer, and tend to use either standard or nonstandard variants based on their addressee. The role of the interlocutor is paramount for this dissertation, and the following section will describe the theoretical framework guiding my analysis, Communication Accommodation Theory.

2.2 Speech and Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) was first developed by social psychologist Howard Giles in his 1973 work on accent mobility. This theory was developed to better answer the questions that were circulating in the field of sociolinguistics at the time regarding affective factors that influence a speaker to augment his or her speech, or other forms of communication. CAT draws upon already established social psychological processes like similarity attraction, inter-group distinctiveness, and social exchange and predicts that any given speaker will modify his or her speech in a way that either converges with or diverges from that of their interlocutor (Giles et al. 1991).

A summary of some of CAT's basic propositions found in Street & Giles (1982) are as follows:

1. Speakers will attempt to converge linguistically towards the speech patterns believed to be characteristic of their interlocutors when (a) they desire their social approval and the perceived costs of so acting are lower than the rewards anticipated; and/or (b) they desire a high level of communicational efficiency and (c) social norms and/or linguistic competence are not perceived to dictate alternative speech strategies.

2. The degree of linguistic divergence will be a function of (a) the extent of the speakers' repertoires, and (b) factors (individual differences and situation) that may increase the need for social approval and/or communicational efficiency.

3. Speech convergence will be positively evaluated by recipients when the resultant behavior is (a) perceived as such psychologically, (b) perceived to be at an optimal sociolinguistic distance from them, and (c) attributed internally with positive intent.

4. People will attempt to maintain their speech patterns or even diverge linguistically from those believed characteristic of their recipients when they (a) define the encounter in inter-group terms and desire a positive ingroup identity, or (b) wish to dissociate personally from another in an interindividual encounter, or (c) wish to bring another's speech behaviors to a personally acceptable level.

5. The magnitude of such divergence will be a function of (a) the extent of speakers' repertoires, and (b) individual differences and contextual factors increasing the salience of the cognitive or affective functions in proposition 4.

6. Speech maintenance and divergence will be negatively evaluated by recipients when the acts are perceived as psychologically diverging, but favorably reacted to by observers of the encounter who define the interaction in inter-group terms and who share a common, positively valued group membership with the speaker.

Convergent behavior can be described as the speaker attuning his or her speech to that of the interlocutor as a strategy to demonstrate affinity, common ground, or closeness (Street & Giles 1982). Divergent behavior can be described as the speaker modifying his or her speech in a manner that emphasizes differences between the speech of the speaker and the speech of the interlocutor as a way of demonstrating a lack of rapport and a social distance (Street & Giles 1982).

2.3 Studies in phonetic accommodation

Phonetic accommodation is the process by which a speaker acquires the acoustic characteristics of the individual he or she is interacting with (Babel 2009). Studies in phonetic accommodation can help to answer questions regarding language variation at a macro level, as mechanisms of dialect convergence and historical sound change, or at a micro level, as spontaneous changes to a speaker's idiolect during a single conversation. Studies of phonetic accommodation have been concerned with whether spontaneous phonetic convergence is automatic and unavoidable, or whether it is consciously mediated by the speaker. Some convincing evidence points to a combination of subconscious procedures at play in phonetic convergence, in that social factors that mediate the process of convergence are often not explicit social choices, but instead are influenced by implicit sociocognitive biases (Babel 2009).

Phonetic accommodation, along with language accommodation in general, has a rich history of laboratory investigations (Goldinger 1997, 1998; Goldinger & Azuma 2004; Namy et al. 2002 as cited in Babel 2009; Kim 2011) and has less frequently been investigated in cooperative, socially rich, dyadic interactions (Pardo 2006; Kim et al. 2011). A survey of this literature shows that phonetic accommodation studies, both in a laboratory context and in dyadic interactions, often rely on perception readings of phonetic similarity rather than direct measurements. And in the studies that do gather their data from taking direct acoustic measurements of informants' speech, measurements are taken from speech data gathered in a laboratory setting through single-word elicitation shadowing tasks. As such, the current body of literature is lacking in studies of phonetic accommodation as it happens in a natural

conversation analyzed by taking direct measurements of the acoustic signals in the informants'

speech. The primary goal of this dissertation is to fill that gap by taking direct measurements

from the informants' speech during naturalistic, one-on-one interactions with a series of different

interlocutors.

Babel (2009) examined phonetic accommodation in terms of vowel imitation in native

speakers of American English. In this study, participants were asked to read aloud a list of 50

monosyllabic words containing the target vowels. This was done to establish a baseline

production for how the participants would produce the target vowels in a word list. Then, the

participants performed a lexical shadowing task, in which they heard a word spoken by a talker

and then repeated the word. In this study, there were two model talkers, both male native

speakers of California English, one Black and one White. Lastly, the participants were asked to

read aloud once again the word list to capture their speech after exposure to the talkers. To

assess the degree of vowel imitation, a Praat script extracted the mean first and second

formants of the middle 50% of each vowel. Formant values were normalized and then the

distance between each word from each participant and the same word produced by the model

talker was calculated. Comparing the values in this manner allowed for a measure of how much

the participants' vowel productions changed as a result of auditory exposure to a model talker. A

negative difference in distance indicated convergence with the model talker, and a positive

value indicated divergence from the speech of the model talker. After the speech data were

gathered from all of the participants, participants took an implicit association task to assess their

racial biases. Babel found that implicit racial biases influenced the degree to which participants

accommodated to the vowels of the Black model talker. That is, participants who scored with a stronger pro-White bias were less likely to converge phonetically with the speech of the Black model talker (Babel 2009). This study found phonetic accommodation to be socially selective, and that accommodation of vowel articulation is not intentional, as the accommodating behavior was limited to specific words (Babel 2009).

While Babel (2009) considered implicit racial biases in her examination of phonetic accommodation, Kim et al. (2011) considered language distance as a factor conditioning accommodation. To accomplish this, Kim et al. recorded pairs of talkers with varying levels of language distance completing a diapix elicitation task. Language distance was determined based on the language background of each of the talkers: "close" language distance was defined as talkers with the same native language and native dialect, "intermediate" language distance was defined as talkers having the same native language but different native dialects, and "far" language distance was defined as talkers having different native languages (Kim et al. 2011). In the diapix elicitation task, each talker is given one of two pictures, scenes A and B, which are identical to one another except for ten differences. The two talkers are seated such that they cannot see the other's picture and are tasked with working together to come up with the ten differences. Assessing phonetic accommodation during the diapix task was done following a methodology developed in Pardo (2006) in which independent informants take an AXB perceptual similarity test. This test involves the independent informants listening to three speech excerpts. One excerpt (A) is taken from the talker's speech early in the diapix task, one excerpt (B) is taken from the talker's speech late in the diapix task, and one excerpt (X) is taken

from the other talker's speech during the diapix conversation task. Differing from Pardo's study, this research team played the clips in the order XAB, such that the target excerpt was played initially, and then the excerpts from early and late in the task were played after and in succession as a means of easing the memory load on the informants in the perceptual judgment task. Results from the perceptual similarity test showed that independent informants were significantly more likely to judge "close" language distance pairs as having converged. This indicates that a closer language distance, or similar linguistic backgrounds, facilitates convergence (Kim et al. 2011).

2.4 The present study

Babel (2009) and Kim et al. (2011) offer two distinct methodologies for studying phonetic accommodation. While Babel takes direct acoustic measurements of the data collected to quantitatively calculate the difference in the articulations of participants before, during, and after model talker treatment, the speech data gathered come from lexical shadowing single-word utterances. And while Kim et al. are able to gather conversational, cooperative dyadic speech data, no direct acoustic measurements are taken and instead conclusions regarding language distance and phonetic accommodation are drawn from perceptions of independent informants. Based upon statistically significant data, these researchers are able to draw conclusions, but each study leaves something to be desired. There exists a large gap in the current literature that would be filled by a study that would collect natural speech data in a dyadic conversation-based interview, and would take direct measurements of the actual data in order to form a data-driven

conclusion. This dissertation aims to fill that gap by recording a series of semi-structured

sociolinguistic interviews between a native speaker informant of Dominican Spanish and

interlocutor interviewers with varying degrees of proficiency in the target language. By

comparing the frequency of use of sociophonetic variants found in the speech of the native

speaker informant across the different interviews, I will be able to determine if and to what

degree the informant accommodates to the interlocutors' Spanish. A study such as this will take

measurements from natural speech data and perform statistical analyses to form conclusions

that contribute to our understanding of phonetic accommodation and language variation in

general.

Previous studies on CAT with regard to Spanish in contact in the United States have

approached the problem from a variety of vantage points. For instance, Callahan (2006, 2007)

explored the role that the perceived linguistic affiliation on one's interlocutor plays in language

choice during service encounters. Callahan finds that workers in her study accommodate to the

customer's language choice the majority of the time, which demonstrates the importance of

maintaining a positive face during service interactions. Matching the language choice of one's

interlocutor considered under CAT is a demonstration of appreciation and is intended to be

evaluated positively. Callahan further explored language choice as accommodation towards the

perceived linguistic affiliation of one's interlocutor, stating that, "[l]isteners may assign strangers

a linguistic affiliation first by visual cues guided by whether or not the person has stereotypical

physical features associated with a group whose members speak—or do not speak—a certain

language," (2007: 17). In other words (and as it pertains to the present study), based on

phenotypes NYDS informants may not assume that a given interlocutor speaks Spanish as a native language. Callahan continues: "[i]f someone is perceived as having a primary linguistic affiliation with one language, weaknesses in his or her linguistic abilities in another language may be exaggerated for the listener," (2007: 17). In the context of the present dissertation, Callahan's assertion has additional relevance as a nonnative interlocutor not having Spanish as a perceived linguistic affiliation may heighten NYDS informant awareness of any detected weakness in their target language proficiency.

More recently, O'Rourke & Potowski (2016) examined accommodation to an interlocutor's articulations of syllable final /s/ and word- and syllable-initial /r̄/ of Mexican, Puerto Rican, and "MexiRican" speakers of Spanish in Chicago. Data collected in this 2016 study were collected during naturalistic, interview-based conversations between the informants and an interviewer who was part of the research team. The authors find that speakers of Mexican Spanish did not exhibit and variation between /s/ and /r/ realizations in accordance to that of their interlocutors', but Puerto Rican Spanish speakers did use the velarized variant /r/ more frequently when their interviewer interlocutor was also a speaker of Puerto Rican Spanish at rates that approach statistical significance. Their findings further investigate accommodation between speaker generations and the ethnolinguistic affiliation of the speaker's mother, but one dimension of accommodation that was not explored in this study was whether or not accommodation to interlocutor language variety occurred by collecting speech data from the same speaker as they interact with interviews of both "same" and "different" Spanish dialect. On this gap in the collection of data, the authors write the following: "[t]herefore, we have no direct

evidence whether any individuals change the way they speak with different interlocutors…[t]hus, multiple interviews with interlocutors who speak different dialects would provide more reliable evidence of phonological accommodation," (O'Rourke & Potowski 2016: 364). Not only will this dissertation help to fill a large gap in the current research regarding the accommodative process as it happens in Spanish by analyzing natural speech in dyadic conversations with multiple interlocutors, but it will also track the accommodative process as it happens in real time by taking measurements from various time points during the conversations. By examining this phenomenon on a small scale during interactions between single speakers, the ultimate goal is to better understand the dynamics of the accommodative process on a larger scale when entire varieties of Spanish (not just individuals) come into contact.

As emphasized by Coupland (2008), "…it is people, not merely dialects, that are in contact, and that interpersonal and intersubjective dimensions of language use are where explanations for change must lie," (268). The conclusions drawn from this dissertation regarding interpersonal interactions will ultimately and importantly contribute to the variationist understanding of cross-dialectal convergence and dialect levelling in diaspora communities by examining these processes at their inceptions.

Chapter 3

Practical application:
Dominican Spanish and Dominican York

3.0 Introduction

While the previous chapter reviewed the literature pertaining to the theoretical framework

guiding this dissertation, the present chapter will speak to the practical application of CAT to

New York Dominican Spanish. First, I describe the linguistic features of Dominican Spanish in

general and then detail the variation found in the final consonants under study in this

dissertation. Next, I present demographic details regarding Dominicans in New York, including

statistics on population and language use. Lastly, I synthesize the most significant works on

language ideology and covert prestige as they pertain to the Dominican variety of Spanish, both

in the homeland and diaspora.

3.1 Features of Dominican Spanish

3.1.1 Overview and historical perspective

The Dominican variety of Spanish belongs to the larger dialect family of Caribbean Spanish and is considered among linguists as a radical, phonologically innovative dialect (Guitart 1978; Zamora Munné & Guitart 1982; García et al. 1988; Toribio 2000c, among many others). Broad generalizations of the Spanish spoken in the Caribbean characterize the language variety as having a strong vowel system, a strong system of consonants in syllable-initial position, and a weakened system of syllable-final consonants (López Morales 1992). While López Morales states that, generally, the Caribbean group of Spanish varieties does not demonstrate morphosyntactic features that differ greatly from a pan-American norm (1992: 295), Lipski (1996) cites various attested examples of morphosyntactic innovation in both Dominican Spanish and other Caribbean varieties. The lexicon of Spanish varieties in the Caribbean is largely patrimonial and, unlike other regions of Spanish-speaking Latin America, there is not notable diglossia in the Spanish Caribbean, meaning that there does not exist a presence of indigenous languages that are in a lower status than Spanish (López Morales 1992).

A language variety is often shaped as a result of historical, geographical and/or social factors, and the Dominican variety of Spanish is no exception. Although Santo Domingo was the first point of contact that the Spanish had with the New World, the island Hispaniola was largely neglected as the Empire grew and conquest marched forth into mainland Latin America. The early slow rate of colonial development in the Dominican Republic contributed to the *aire*

antiguo first noted by philologist Pedro Henriquez Ureña, who wrote at length about archaisms

in Dominican Spanish in his 1940 book *El español de Santo Domingo*. The lack of Arawak

influence on the phonology and morphosyntax of Dominican Spanish is largely because the

Taíno population was eradicated early on in the period of colonization. Slaves from West Africa

were then imported for labor projects associated with colonization, for example, as sugarcane

plantation hands, and as a result the Dominican variety of Spanish contains some features

indicating African influence. Apart from lexical importations, features of Dominican

morphosyntax (reduplication of *no* in negative phrases) and phonology (/l/ → [ɲ], as in *llamar* →

[ɲa.ˈmar]) are evidence of prolonged contact with West African substrates (Lipski 1996).

After the period of Spanish colonization, in the year 1822 the Dominican Republic fell

under Haitian occupation until the country gained independence in 1844. Although there was,

and is, such an extended period of contact between Haitian Creole and Spanish on the

Dominican side of the border, there is not compelling evidence of adstrate influence in the

nation's norm variety. In fact, an instrumental social aspect of the Dominican vernacular is that

its use, both in the Dominican Republic and in diaspora communities, can be used to identify a

Dominican from their Haitian neighbor, as observed by Toribio (2000a, 2000b).

3.1.2 Lexicon

Very little indigenous influence is found in Dominican Spanish, but there are some

Arawak loanwords related to food and natural items incorporated into the Dominican vernacular,

for instance *ají*, *guanábana*, *barbacoa*, and *hurucán*, to name a few. Likewise, only a small

amount of Dominican lexicon has traceable African heritage, but some lexical items with origins

in West African languages are used in Dominican Spanish and are for the most part restricted to the domains of dance and religion (*bachata*, *fufú*). Finally, a small part of Dominican lexicon is borrowed or calqued from English, and is often associated with popular culture or sports, as in *cóctel* and *batear*, respectively (Lipski 1996).

3.1.3 Syntax and morphology

Some morphosyntactic features of Dominican Spanish that are common to other Caribbean varieties are questions without inversion (*¿qué tú quieres?* as opposed to *¿qué quieres (tú)?*) and the higher rates of overt use of subject pronouns. In Dominican Spanish, subject pronoun use is further extended to constructions with nonfinite verb forms: the infinitive (*para yo entender el libro*), the past participle (*después de tú ido*), and the gerund (*yo llegando*). Regarding morphosyntactic variation, another particularity of the Dominican variety of Spanish is the expansion of subjunctive verb forms at the expense of the indicative in the first person plural of –go verbs (*tengamos*, *vengamos*). An additional morphological innovation found in Dominican Spanish is the plural marker *–ses* added to words ending in a vowel, attested as *caféses* and *mucháchases*. Finally, the Dominican variety of Spanish has been shown to employ a reduplication of *no* in negative phrases (*nosotros no vamos no*) and demonstrates the use of possessive adjectives in post-position (Lipski 1996; Alba 2004).

3.1.4 Phonetics and phonology

Dominican Spanish shares some phonetic features with other Caribbean dialects. One feature common not only to the Caribbean but also Latin America and some parts of Spain is *seseo*, or the absence of the interdental fricative /θ/. Another shared feature is *yeísmo*, or the

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merger of /ʎ/ and /ʝ/ in favor of [ʝ]. Another shared feature is the weakening of intervocalic /d/ to complete elision. This reduction occurs at such a high frequency that Caribbean speakers of Spanish are found to insert /d/ into vowel clusters to hypercorrect to a more elevated speech style. For instance, the Spanish word for *cod*, "bacalao" is attested with a realization of [bakalaðo] (Guitart 1978). Additionally, Caribbean varieties are found to have /x/ aspirated to [h] (Lipski 1996; Alba 2004). The present study focuses exclusively on the behavior of a set of consonants in syllable-final position. The following three subsections detail the behavior of these final consonants in Dominican Spanish.

3.1.4.1 Final /s/

Weakening of final /s/ by way of aspiration to [h] or complete elision is one of the most common modifications of coda consonants in Spanish and is a principal dialectal feature of Dominican Spanish. Aspiration of final /s/ is best understood as debuccalization, that is the removal of all oral and nasal gestures, leaving only the air coming from the lungs, and possibly including the action of the glottis (Lipski 2011). Final /s/ weakening has garnered a great deal of attention in variationist studies and, owing to the broad range of environments explored as possible factors conditioning variation in the realization(s) of final /s/, it is perhaps not surprising that conclusions have been drawn regarding the behavior of /s/ that are incongruent and at times even contradictory. Regarding the phonological environment in which final /s/ appears, Alba (2000) demonstrated that /s/ is more likely to be weakened when it appears before a consonant then when it appears before a vowel. Similarly, final /s/ is more likely to be aspirated or elided before a consonant than before a pause (Alba 2000; Lipski 1985, 1987). More

specifically, File-Muriel in his dissertation study of Spanish in Barranquilla posits that the manner of articulation of the following consonant can condition the weakening patterns of /s/ such that following fricatives tend to favor weakening but following stops tend to favor retention (2007). Regarding the word position of /s/, many studies are consistent with Hammond's (1980) findings, which report that /s/ is more likely to be weakened word-final position than in word-medial position. That said, Alba (2000) in his study of a Dominican newscaster reports contradictory results.

Weakening of syllable-final /s/ to the point of deletion is nearly systematic in all sociolects of Dominican Spanish and has spurred incipient phonological restructuring resulting in an elevated use of the hypercorrective intrusive /s/ (Terrell 1979, 1986). A considerable amount of work has been done on /s/ being inserted into coda position in the Dominican variety of Spanish. Earlier theoretical work came to view speakers of Dominican Spanish to be void of underlying representations of syllable final /s/, who would hypercorrect by inserting /s/ into a coda where it would not lexically belong (Harris 1983, 2002; Nuñez Cedeño 1980, 1988, 1994; Bradley 2006; among many others). The standard, traditional assumption regarding hypercorrective intrusive /s/ is encapsulated by the following citation:

> "In certain varieties of Caribbean Spanish, /s/ has been systematically and completely lost in syllable-final position; syllable-initial /s/ is not affected. I will call this variety of Spanish 'lost-s.' …lost-s speakers aren't sure where the s's are in standard dialect, so their 'corrections' are essentially random, missing the target as often as not. For example, standard *hipopótomo* 'hippopotamus' may come out as *hispopótamo*, *hipospótamo*, *hipopótamos* or even *hispospóstamos*," (Harris 2002: 97).

Recently, Bullock et al. (2014) challenged this traditional belief with a thorough empirical study of speech data collected in the rural Dominican Republic from semiliterate speakers. Their findings oppose the traditional generative assumption and demonstrate that, in fact, speakers of Dominican Spanish do not have deficient lexical representations that lack coda /s/, and that such an assumption cannot account for the phenomenon of /s/ insertion. Bullock et al. are able to propose in their conclusions that semiliterate Dominicans know where /s/ belongs, but choose to articulate it variably for reasons of identity and covert prestige—there is something decidedly "un-Dominican" about overtly sibilant speech (Bullock et al. 2014). Additionally, Bullock et al. are able to demonstrate that insertion of /s/ in coda position is not a random process, but can be predicted and is primarily an external sandhi phenomenon occurring between, rather than within, words (Bullock et al. 2014). While well over half of the world's Spanish speakers use dialects in which final /s/ is at least somewhat weakened, the extensive elimination of /s/ in final position in Caribbean varieties of Spanish is socially stigmatized and associated with vernacular speech and speakers who have little formal education.

3.1.4.2 Final liquids

The Dominican dialect of Spanish shows modification of liquids /l/ and /ɾ/ in word- and syllable-final position by way of neutralization or vocalization (Alba 2004; Lipski 2008). Neutralization of final liquids can be further described in terms of two processes: lambdacism (/ɾ/ → [l]) and rhotacism (/l/ → [ɾ]). The lateral articulation of final liquids is associated with the speech of Dominicans is the area surrounding Santo Domingo, the nation's capital, and the rhotic articulation is associated with speech in the southwestern region. As one might expect, the

speech feature most closely related to the *capitaleño* speech carries the greatest social and

political capital (Toribio 2000a). Vocalization of liquids in final position involves the lateral and

rhotic consonants vocalized to the glide /j/. Vocalization is commonplace in the Cibao Valley

region in the north of the Dominican Republic where it is highly stigmatized and frequently

imitated in dialect literature and popular culture (Lipski 2011). The weakening patterns for liquids

in coda position differ substantially from region to region within the Dominican Republic, and

consequently the same word would be rendered with distinct pronunciations in the capital region

of Santo Domingo, the rural Cibao Valley, and the southwesternmost region. For example, the

word *saltar* would be realized as [sal.ˈtar] in normative Spanish, as [sal.ˈtal] in Santo Domingo,

as [saj̈.ˈtaj̈] in the Cibao Valley, and as [sar.ˈtar] in the southwest (Jiménez Sabater 1975; Toribio

2000b). Figure 3.1 shows the Dominican Republic, and its provinces, spilt into the three regions
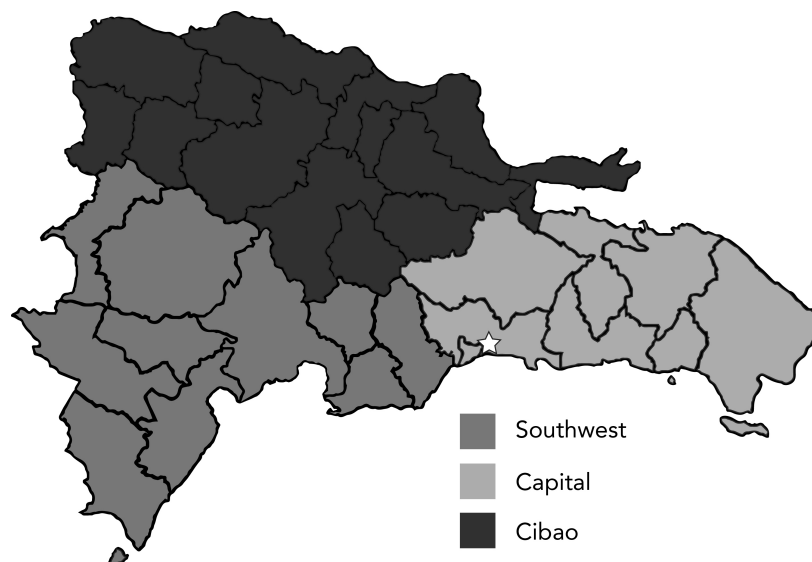
mentioned above.

Figure 3.1 Dominican Republic split into three dialect regions. Source: Author

3.1.4.3 Final /n/

In normative Spanish, nasal consonants in coda position assimilate in the point of articulation to the following consonant. As such, the phoneme /n/ has seven allophones in normative Spanish, all with distinct places of articulation: alveolar [n], bilabial [m], dental [n̪], labiodental [ɱ], alveo-palatal [n̠], palatal [ɲ], and velar [ŋ] (Piñeros 2006). As such, the velar nasal consonant is an allophone of normative Spanish. In Spanish dialects spoken in the Caribbean, such as the Dominican variety, /n/ undergoes unassimilative velarization in syllable-final position. Velarization of /n/ is most common in word-final—rather than word-internal—position, either in environments proceeding a (nonvelar) consonant or vowel (Schwegler et al. 2010; Lipski 1986). In dialects that demonstrate velarization of /n/ regularly in word-final positions, it has also been observed that /n/ in a syllable-internal position velarizes as well, such that *instante* would be realized [iŋs.'taŋ̊.te] (Guitart 1981). In either case, velarization of /n/ is but an intermediate step in a process by which /n/ is weakened to the point of elision, accompanied by the nasalization of a proceeding vowel (Lipski 1986).

While modification of final liquids and weakening of /s/ in postnuclear position are salient speech features that bear varying degrees of social valorization and stigmatization, the velar articulation of the nasal consonant in final position does not seem to be a marked feature. Lipski in fact reports that velarization of final /n/ is rarely noticed by "linguistically untrained listeners," but there is still some sociolinguistic stratification in velarizing dialects, with rates of velarization diminishing in more formal registers (Lipski 2011: 80). Similarly, Alba (2004) places velarization of final /n/ in the 'neutral' category of Dominican speech features that connote an "estimación

social implícita," while retention of final /s/ and final liquids are features that belong to the 'with prestige' category ("estimación social alta") and deletion of final /s/ and neutralization or vocalization belong to the category of Dominican speech features that are 'without prestige' and are associated with an "estimación social baja," (Alba 2004: 107).

The three variables under study in this dissertation (/s/, /n/, and liquids) were chosen precisely because they represent a spectrum not only of saliency and perceptibility to native speakers, but also because their variants reflect a wide range of social currency and prestige associated with their use.

3.2 Dominicans in New York

A recent publication put out by the Pew Research Center on Hispanic Trends estimates that 1.8 million of the Hispanics living in the United States are of Dominican origin, and Dominicans constituted the fifth-largest Hispanic population in the US in the year 2013 (López 2015). In the past few decades, the US has seen a dramatic growth in the Dominican population. Since the year 1990, the Dominican population in the US has tripled—from 517,000 to 1.8 million. While some of the growth seen in this population was due to the new births of Dominican-Americans, there is also an increase in Dominican immigration to the US 55% of Dominicans in the US are foreign-born, and four out of every ten Dominican immigrants have lived in the US for at least 20 years (López 2015).

A large majority of the Dominican population in the US is concentrated on the Eastern Seaboard, with the epicenter being in New York. 47% (840,000) of the Dominicans in the US

live in the state of New York and nearly half (44%) of New York Dominicans were born in the US

(López 2015). In New York City, Dominicans account for 7% of the general population and are

the largest Spanish-speaking immigrant group (Nguyen & Sanchez 2001). The Center for Latin

American, Caribbean and Latino Studies at the Graduate Center, City University of New York

has been monitoring this trend and in 2014 released a report tracking the growth in the

Dominican population in New York City, and its displacement of Puerto Ricans as the largest

Latino nationality in the City (Begard 2014). Along with population growth in New York City,

neighboring municipalities have also seen an expansion in their number of Dominican and

Dominican-American inhabitants. A number of Dominicans have moved out of the City and

followed the Hudson River north to the state's capital. As a result, Dominicans are the third-

largest foreign-born population in Albany, NY, the city in which data for this dissertation were

collected, as of 2000 (Smith et al. 2013).

Researchers studying Dominican Spanish have observed a high degree of language

loyalty among Dominicans in the United States[5] and empirical data collected and analyzed by

the Pew Research Center confirms these observations. In general, 88% of Dominicans in the

United States report that they speak Spanish at home—a relatively high percentage when

compared to the all Hispanic Americans surveyed, 73% of whom reported speaking Spanish at

home. According to the Pew Research Center in the year 2013, 78% of second generation

Dominican-Americans speaks Spanish at home while 96% of adult Dominican immigrants speak

Spanish at home (López 2015).

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[5] Most notably Toribio (2000a, 2000b)

3.3 Language ideology and covert prestige

In New York City, Dominicans are in contact with speakers of many dialects of Spanish, as well as monolingual English speakers and second-language learners of Spanish. In terms of linguistic ideologies, Dominican Spanish represents an interesting case study. Despite the impressive number of speakers of non-European Spanish that there are in the United States, a preference for peninsular Spanish tends to persist. Due to its deviance from the standard in various aspects, Dominican Spanish is one of the most stigmatized varieties of Spanish within the Spanish-speaking world (Toribio 2000b).

Despite such reported linguistic insecurity, Dominicans in the US retain their Spanish to a much larger degree than other Spanish-speaking groups in the US. First- and second-generation Dominicans living in the US tend to use Spanish frequently on a daily basis in intimate settings with family and friends and also in the out-group settings of the greater community (Toribio 2000b). This continued usage of Dominican Spanish shows that their dialect forms an integral part of their unique cultural identity, or "a positive assertion of *dominicanidad* [Dominican-ness]," (Toribio 2000b: 261).

Owing to its phonological innovations, the Dominican dialect is not a linguistic variety to which overt prestige can be ascribed. The Dominican variety of Spanish is stigmatized and relatively undervalued, in particular by middle- and upper-class speakers. According to several informants, the Dominican vernacular is judged so negatively because it lacks certain features of the idealized standard: Northern Peninsular Castilian Spanish (Toribio 2000b). All of this said,

there exists a considerable amount of data[6] demonstrating that the dialect enjoys an

appreciable amount of covert prestige as a symbol and enactment of national, group, and

individual identity.

Below are some excerpts taken from sociolinguistic interviews recorded by Toribio and

her research team in the Dominican Republic and New York City in the fall of 1998 that

demonstrate the affinity for the Castilian variety of Spanish.

> (6)   NY #44: "I think *España* [speaks Spanish best]; they have an <s> and a good accent. Everybody else speaks Spanish different."
>
> (7)   DR#37: "I like the way the Spaniards speak…The way the Spaniards speak and the way we speak here, there is a lot of difference, the way we speak it. I like the way they speak, their accent and all, I like that…they have better form than us speaking."
>
> (8)   DR#29: "The Spanish from Spain is more refined. The Spanish language came from Spain, didn't it?" (Toribio 2000a).

In these three quotes, informants are not shy about voicing the feelings that they have towards

the Castilian, overtly-prestigious norm, especially in relation to their own native and heritage

dialect.

Below are some excerpts also taken from Toribio's interviews with informants

commenting on the lack of overt prestige ascribed to the Dominican variety of Spanish.

> (9)   DR#2: "We Dominicans have the problem of speaking with orthographical errors…no, it's true. Here people speak with orthographical errors, not merely write it, but speak it too."
>
> (10)   NY#42: "Dominicans don't speak Spanish well. … All you see is Dominicans that are from el campo. Everybody knows right away that you're Dominican; you get embarrassed because of those people, (Toribio 2000a)."

---

[6] cf. Toribio 2000a, 2000b; Bailey 2000

These quotes express the linguistic insecurity[7] experienced by speakers of a variety that is not

the overtly-prestigious norm. Here, informants speak openly about their feelings about their

home and heritage dialect being substandard in comparison to other varieties of Spanish

spoken globally and in the US.

Finally, below is a quote taken from an informant in one of Toribio's interviews that

demonstrates the crucial role that language, in particular the Dominican variety of Spanish,

plays in the formation and projection of identity in an immigrant population.

> (11)   NY#45: "La cultura dominicana incluye mucho el idioma. … El
> dominicano que no hable [dominicano] puede sentirse igual de orgulloso,
> pero le falta algo,"
> (Toribio 2000a).

This quote demonstrates that, despite the lack of overt prestige ascribed to the Dominican

variety of Spanish in the Spanish-speaking world and in the United States, speaking 'Dominican'

is an important element of the Dominican identity in the immigrant population. Further examples

taken from sociolinguistic interviews as part of the University at Albany Corpus of New York

Dominican Spanish and the present study (respectively) echo the importance of language

loyalty and Dominican identity experienced by speakers of Dominican Spanish living in New

York are shown in (12) and (13).

> (12)   [025/62]: "Él que no sabe hablar español [dominicano] y es [dominicano],
> es como tener una pierna herida[8]."

---

[7] Linguistic insecurity is defined as a speaker's feeling that the variety that they use is somehow "inferior; ugly or bad," (Meyerhoff 2006). In one of its earliest uses, this term was employed by Labov (1972) in his study of social stratification of the articulation or final /r/ in order to describe the attitudes that retail employees in New York held towards their own varieties compared to Standard American English.

[8] Sayahi et al. (2016)

(13)   [007/126]: "Y yeah, si uno sabe el idioma dominicano uno siendo dominicano, se va a sentir más conectado a la identidad dominicana por usar el vocabulario y la forma de hablar y cosas así."

3.4 The present study

The Dominican variety of Spanish lends itself quite well to a study of phonetic accommodation owing to its phonologically innovative nature, its speech community that demonstrates such high levels of language loyalty, the covert prestige associated with its use, and the high concentration of speakers locally. Instrumentally speaking, of course the ease of access that the author has to the target variety in Albany is paramount. But far more interesting is the social, emblematic nature of Dominican Spanish in accommodation contexts. Being that Dominican Spanish is so innovative and distinct in comparison to the standard classroom variety of Spanish that second language learners are exposed to, there is a considerable amount of distance between the varieties used by the native speaker informants and L2 interlocutors. The aim of this study is to measure not only that distance between the varieties in action, but also how much of that distance closes as the native speaker informants interact with L2 learners with varying levels of competence in the target language. As the competence level—and, perhaps, degree of sociolinguistic variation—increases in the L2 interlocutors, this dissertation aims to determine what role the covert prestige of Dominican Spanish versus the overt prestige of the standard variety will play in both the direction and magnitude of accommodation performed by the native speakers.

Chapter 4

Methods and materials

4.0 Introduction

This dissertation aims to quantitatively measure the direction and degree of sociophonetic accommodation exhibited in the speech of native speakers during interactions with L2 speakers with varying degrees of competence in the target language. In order to contribute to the variationist understanding of the accommodation phenomenon, Dominican Spanish is utilized as the practical medium. In this study, native speakers of New York Dominican Spanish are recorded interacting with three to four different interlocutors who have varying competence levels in Spanish in a closed conversational setting. Figure 4.1 offers a visualization of the different interactions between the native speaker informants and varied L2 interlocutors.

	Interlocutors		Interactions	
First interlocutor		Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Second interlocutor		Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
Third interlocutor		Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
(Fourth interlocutor)		Time 1	Time 2	Time 3
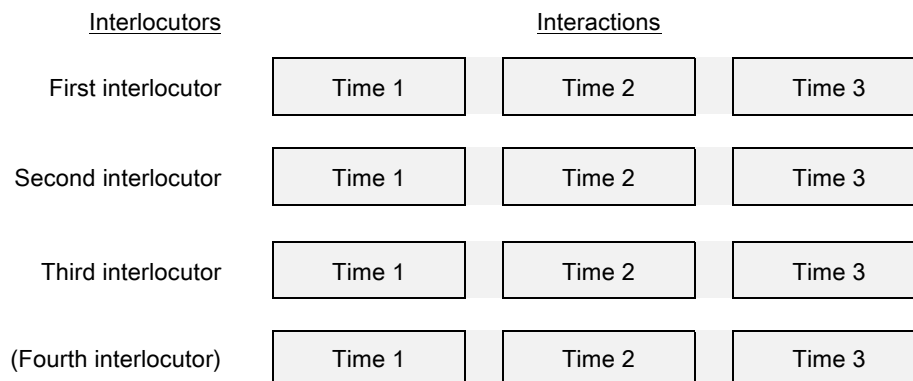
Figure 4.1 Visualization of the recorded conversational interactions and their divisions

As shown, the present analysis considers interactions between each single native speaker informant and their different interlocutors. Additionally, Figure 4.1 shows that each interaction is split into three different time points. As such, the analysis of accommodative behavior exhibited in the speech of native speaker informants considers differences in interactions with different interlocutors (represented by the vertical arrow) and also differences in degrees of accommodation at different time points during a single interaction (represented by the horizontal arrow).

By expanding my analysis to include not only comparisons between reactions to distinct interlocutors but also comparisons between degrees of accommodation at different times during a single interaction with any given interlocutor, my objective is two-fold: first, quantitatively measure the effect of the interlocutor's competence in the target language on the native speaker's degree of sociophonetic accommodation, and second, track the progression and direction of the accommodative behavior as each interaction advances. A description of how data were collected, coded, and analyzed to meet this objective is detailed in the following section, and the findings are presented in Chapter 5.

4.1 Participants

Participants in this study are divided into two categories: the native speaker informants and the interlocutors. As previously mentioned, each native speaker informant met separately with three to four different interlocutors, one who is themselves a native speaker of the variety under study and several others who are second-language learners of Spanish. Specific descriptions of the demography of each participant groups follows in the next two subsections.

4.1.1 Informants

The present study considers speech data collected eight informants who are native speakers of the Dominican variety of Spanish who currently live in New York (NYDS informants). The sample of native speaker informants is gender-balanced, with four men and four women as informants. The NYDS informants were between the ages of 18 and 35 and were currently attending the University at Albany – SUNY at the time of recording. All eight informants were either born in the Dominican Republic and arrived to New York early in life, or were born in New York and grew up in houses where the Dominican variety of Spanish was the language most frequently spoken. The pool of informants was carefully constructed such that age, educational attainment, and linguistic background remain consistent throughout the sample. By limiting the age range for this study, the goal is to mitigate any speech features or communicative behavior that could be more accurately attributed to age-grading rather than accommodation. Similarly, limiting the age of arrival to the timeframe flanking the critical period reduces the effect that differences in time spent in the Dominican Republic versus in the United States will have on the articulation patterns of the native speaker informants during their

45

interviews. Finally, restricting the sample to include only students matriculating at the University

at Albany – SUNY means that all NYDS informants have not only similar levels of education, but

also quite similar educational experiences and opportunities. As such, the role that the target

language competence of the interlocutor(s) can more precisely be isolated as a factor

conditioning the level of accommodation observed during the interactions.

All NYDS informants reported having at least some experience speaking Spanish with

nonnative speakers, but the frequency and magnitude of that experience did differ from

informant to informant. For instance, two informants had previously taught beginner Spanish

grammar courses to second-language learners of Spanish, another informant was currently

serving as a member of the Executive Board for the University's Spanish Club where she would

a few times per month interact with Spanish learners of all levels, and several informants were

currently taking Spanish courses where multiple times per week they would engage in academic

conversations with Spanish learners. The present analysis will consider the experiences that

each of the informants has had regarding interaction with nonnative speakers of Spanish in the

degree and direction of accommodation exhibited in the recorded interactions with interlocutors

who have varying levels of competence in Spanish.

4.1.2 Interlocutors

Each native speaker informant is recorded interacting with either three or four different

interlocutors. Since accommodation studies have demonstrated that a variety of extralinguistic

interlocutor characteristics can play a large role in an informant's use of certain speech features

during a series of interactions (Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994), the demographic characteristics

of the interlocutors in this study have been constricted wherever possible. Interlocutors are men

and women and all were between the ages of 18 and 35 at the time of recording—the same age

range as that of the native speaker informants. This control is set so that each interlocutor that

the native speaker informant will be interacting with is a member of their own age group.

Additionally, all interlocutors are students enrolled at the University at Albany – SUNY.

Since the focus of this study is the interlocutor target language competence, factors like

age and educational attainment of the interlocutors are controlled. The variable that is

manipulated from interlocutor to interlocutor is their level of competence in the target language

variety, New York Dominican Spanish (NYDS). There are four competence levels considered in

this study: Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and NYDS. Since the data collection procedure

requires for interlocutors to hold a conversation with a native speaker of Spanish, the

interlocutors must be at least proficient enough to perform conversational tasks in the target

language—asking follow-up questions, responding to spontaneous questions that the native

speaker informant poses, and the like. For this reason, the lowest competence level that is

considered in the present study is Intermediate. Interlocutors at this level are L2 speakers who

had had between two and four semesters of Spanish courses. These interlocutors are often

Spanish minors—students who have some academic investment in the target language, but

who spend the majority of their scholarly lives within their own respective disciplines. The next

interlocutor competence level is Advanced. This comprises L2 speakers who have progressed

past the Spanish language courses at the university level and are now taking content courses in

the target language. These interlocutors have more academic investment in the target language

than the Intermediate-level interlocutors. They are often Spanish majors or perhaps have even

participated in a Study Abroad program. The final L2 interlocutor group are the Superior

interlocutors. These interlocutors are in advanced degree programs in the target language and

instead of taking language or content courses, they are teaching them. These interlocutors have

immense professional and academic investment in the target language and have spent long

spans of time living in Spanish-speaking countries. The final interlocutor group are the NYDS-

level interlocutors. Members of this interlocutor group are native speakers of New York

Dominican Spanish and have roughly the same demographic characteristics as the native

speaker informants.

4.2 Data collection

In order to assess the accommodative behavior exhibited by the native speaker

informants during their interactions with their various interlocutors, all participants needed to be

engaged in some form of communicative activity. Previous studies on phonetic accommodation

have relied on lexical shadowing tasks (Babel 2009) or diapix elicitation tasks (Pardo 2006; Kim

et al. 2011). While task-based elicitation is an oft-cited method for data collection in laboratory

studies of phonetic accommodation, the present study is concerned with accommodative

behavior in natural, dyadic conversations. In order to foster a natural conversational

environment for data collection, native speaker informants were paired with their various

interlocutors for semi-structured sociolinguistic interviews, a method of data collection that is prototypical of variationist studies designed to collect informal, authentic speech data.

During these interviews, the interlocutors served as the interviewers and the native speaker informants served as the interview subjects. Each interviewer had a list of questions that could be used to help foster dialogue by prompting the interview subjects. Each level of interlocutor was equipped with a different set of questions during their interviews with the native speaker interview subject so that no questions were intentionally repeated, but each set of questions that the interviewers had access to contained questions that were very similar in their nature and subject matter such that interview subjects were discussing more or less the same thing during their interviews with their various interlocutors. Discussion topic was controlled across the series of interviews because topic has been proved to be a factor in speech style (Rickford & McNair-Knox 1994). Topics of discussion included the informant's life in the Dominican Republic, their transition to life New York, plans for the future, hobbies, and daily life. Interview subjects had ample opportunity to elaborate as much or as little as they would like to on any given question, so despite having question lists for each interview, the resulting interviews have more the feel of a natural conversation rather than a scheduled interview.

After the informed consent process and before the interviews began, all interlocutors were privately instructed to speak exclusively in Spanish during the interviews, but the native speaker informants were not given the same instruction. By restricting the interlocutors' language use to Spanish, use of English on the part of the native speaker informant during the interview could be attributed to overaccommodation rather than just convergence to the

interlocutor's own English use. Overaccommodation can be thought of as convergence to a point where it is no longer positively evaluated—when a speaker exhibits convergence to their interlocutor's perceived linguistic abilities or affiliations in excess. Rather than the positive evaluation of convergence, overaccommodation is more often evaluated as patronizing or demeaning (West & Turner 2010). In the context of this study, an informant speaking in English will not necessarily signal overaccommodation, as English use in Spanish discourse is realistically reflective of the bilingual space in which Spanish speakers in the US exist. That said, as Callahan (2007) finds and in the context of the present project, English use by an informant even though their interlocutor speaks exclusively in Spanish signals a divergence to match an interlocutor's perceived linguistic affiliation and/or competence.

Each of the interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes, resulting in roughly 100 minutes of audio data per native speaker informant. All of the interviews were recorded in a laboratory on the University at Albany Uptown Campus using either a lapel or directional microphone and digital audio recorder with a sampling rate of 44.1kHz.

In total, 30 recorded interactions were collected for this study. All six female informants and two male informants are recorded interacting with four different interlocutors. However, two other male informants are not recorded interacting with a fellow NYDS speaker. The author acknowledges the limitation that the incongruence in the data sample presents. Nonetheless each informant is recorded interacting with a series of interlocutors—all of them with varying levels of competence in the target language—and significant patterns of accommodation emerge across the series of interviews with second-language learner interlocutors.

4.3 Data analysis

The recorded interviews are segmented[9] and a combination of auditory and acoustic analyses are performed on the segments to determine the articulation of the consonant under study for each context of variation. A detailed description of the segmentation and extraction, coding processes, and statistical analyses performed follows.

4.3.1 Extraction

Each interview is divided into three equal segments. Out of each segment, a maximum of 350 contexts of variation are extracted. In total, the extraction process produced 21,749 tokens from the sample of recorded interactions.

4.3.1.1 Circumscribing the variables

Included in the contexts of variation analyzed here are /s/ in syllable- and word-final position, liquids /l/ and /ɾ/ in syllable- and word-final position, and /n/ in word-, clause-, and phrase-final position. Excluded from the present analysis were instances of /n/ followed by a velar consonant (for example *en contacto*) where regressive assimilation would result in a velar nasal in most varieties of Spanish, English insertions, false starts, mispronounced words, and lexicalized final consonant modifications—particularly those associated with the Dominican variety of Spanish (such as *dizque,* which is categorically realized in the data sample as [ˈdi∅.ke]).

---

[9] Longitudinal accommodation studies, for instance Ferrara's (1991) study of convergence in a series of psychotherapy sessions, have shown that examining and comparing accommodative behavior at various time points is a useful model for evaluating this type of data. While Ferrara considers accommodation over a series of different recorded sessions with the same interlocutor, the present study instead looks at different time points within the same recorded interview session.

Each context of variation considered here will be coded to reflect a series of dependent and independent variables. The three dependent variables are the final consonants and the variants are first coded as either Dominican or Standard, and then coded more specifically to describe their particular articulation (for example: retention, aspiration, elision, neutralization, vocalization, etc.). Articulation is determined by a combination auditory and acoustic analysis, as detailed in the following section. An additional dependent variable considered is the speech tempo of the native speaker informants, measured in syllables per second, for each interview.

The independent variables considered in the present study include the age and gender of both the interviewers and the native speaker informants, the target language competence of the interviewers (Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, or NYDS), the native speaker informant's experience with nonnative speakers of Spanish (for example: had they ever taught Spanish as a second language?), and finally the interview time point in which the context of variation appeared (initial third, middle third, or last third of the interview).

Also considered as an independent variable is whether or not the segment in question serves a morphological function. According to the Distinctiveness Constraint (Kiparsky 1982), semantically relevant information tends to be retained at the surface level. In fact, it has been argued that in varieties characterized by variable weakening of coda segments, such as the Dominican variety of Spanish, morphemic segments are more likely to be retained than those that are nonmorphemic (Erker 2010). Previous studies considering the morphological predictors of final /s/ lenition in Spanish (Poplack 1980; Uber 1981; Hundley 1987; Ranson 1992; and Cameron 1996 among others) have yielded inconclusive results, but a functional explanation for

the retention versus weakening behavior of final consonants in the context of accommodation to

nonnative speech certainly merits further exploration and is so included in the present

dissertation.

4.3.2 Auditory and instrumental analysis

Each extracted token was examined impressionistically and instrumentally, and then

described segmentally. In other words, each token was listened to and viewed using an acoustic

analysis software and assigned a code. For final /s/, the code options were: retained, aspirated,

and deleted[10]. For liquids in final position, the code options were: retained, neutralized,

vocalized, and deleted. For final /n/, the code options were: retained, velarized, and deleted.

Coding judgments were made based on both auditory and acoustic cues while

examining the tokens in *Praat* (Boersma & Weenick 2013) using a wide band spectrogram. The

window length was set at the standard 0.005 seconds with a dynamic range of 40 dB. The

spectrogram method was for Fourier Analysis and a Gaussian Window shape, with Pre-

Emphasis set at 6 dB/oct.

Once impressionistically coded, the tokens were then coded for the independent

variables considered in the present dissertation including the demographic information of the

native speaker informant, the gender of the interlocutor, the interlocutor competence level, and

the time point in the interview. The values were input into the Statistical Package for Social

---

[10] Any discovered instance of an intrusive /s/ was identified and coded separately. Since there were relatively few intrusive cases of intrusive /s/ in the data sample considered here (20 in total), they are excluded from the principal statistical analysis. The appearance of intrusive /s/ in the speech of the native New York Dominican informants will however be discussed in the descriptive presentation of the results (Chapter 5).

Sciences (IBM Corp. 2013) for descriptive statistical analyses including cross tabulations,

Pearson Chi-Square tests, and overall variant use frequencies.

4.4 Summary

This dissertation considers audio data collected during a series of interactions between

native speaker informants and a variety of interlocutors. Four women and four men who are

native speakers of New York Dominican Spanish between the ages of 18 and 35 were the

informants. Their interlocutors were second-language learners of Spanish also between the

ages of 18 and 35 who had varying degrees of competence in Spanish (Intermediate,

Advanced, and Superior). All of the women and two of the men considered in the present study

also were recorded interacting with a fellow speaker of New York Dominican Spanish. Each of

the 30 recorded interviews were further split into thirds in order to track the accommodation

process not only across separate interviews with separate interlocutors, but also as each

progresses. 21,749 total final consonant tokens were coded impressionistically based on a

series of auditory and acoustic cues in order to describe the articulations as either retained or

weakened. Coded data were entered into SPSS for descriptive and statistical analyses. Results

tracking the accommodation process during each interview and across the series of

interlocutors are presented in the following chapter, along with results that compare the

accommodative behavior of the informants based on their gender and their prior experience with

second-language learners of Spanish.

Chapter 5

Presentation and discussion of results

5.0 Introduction

The extraction and analysis of the recorded interactions yielded 21,749 contexts in which

a consonant under study appeared in a syllable-final position that matched all other inclusion

criteria, outlined in the previous chapter. The following subsections detail the frequency of use

of weakened versus retained consonants in syllable-final position by the NYDS speaker

informants during their interactions with each of their interlocutors. First, the accommodative use

patterns of retained consonants is explored across interlocutors who speak Spanish as a

second language compared to interlocutors who are native speakers of NYDS. Then, the

distinctions between final consonant retention on the part of the NYDS informants across all

interlocutor competence levels are explored. Additionally, the weakening patterns of each final

consonant variable under study are outlined and discussed with regard to Alba's (2004) ranking

of the prestige associated with the possible realizations of each variable. Finally, other factors

that may contribute to the accommodative behavior exhibited by the NYDS speaker

informants—such as informant gender, interlocutor gender, and informant experience teaching

Spanish as a second language—are explored.

5.1 Accommodating different interlocutors

The principal research question guiding this dissertation is whether speakers of New

York Dominican Spanish will accommodate towards the speech of second-language learners of

Spanish by modifying their articulation of consonants in syllable-final position to attune to the

levels of consonant retention exhibited by the L2 interlocutors. Figure 5.1 displays the frequency

of retained versus weakened final consonants in the speech of the NYDS informants during

interactions with L2 interlocutors versus with fellow NYDS speakers, and helps to answer the

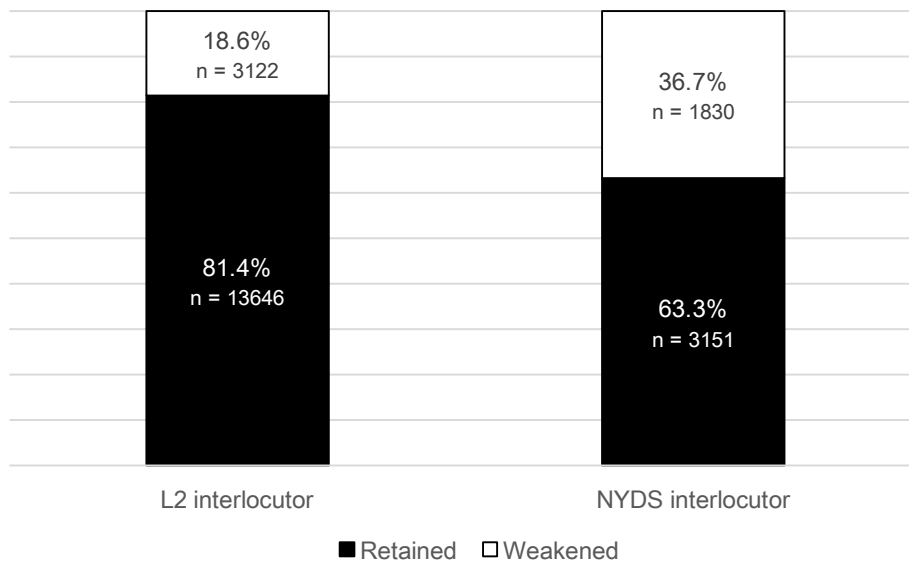principal research question of the study.

Figure 5.1 Frequency of retained versus weakened variants between second language-learner interlocutors and New York Dominican Spanish-speaking interlocutors

As shown, NYDS informants retain final consonants (/s/, /l/, / r/, and /n/) in 81.4% of the contexts in which variation is possible while conversing with L2 interlocutors, whereas they only retain final consonants 63.3% of the time during interactions with NYDS speakers.

While this Figure 5.1 helps to answer the principal research question informing this dissertation, Figure 5.2 presents a much more complete representation of the role that interlocutor target language competence plays in the degree of phonetic accommodation exhibited by the NYDS informants. Here, a difference is seen in the frequency of retention of final consonants not only between native and nonnative interlocutors, but also between the distinct nonnative interlocutor competence levels. Moreover, the relationship between interlocutor competence level and the retention of final consonants /s/, /l/, /r/, and /n/ is found to be statistically significant according to a Pearson Chi-Square test (p = .000). While the rates of final consonant retention are relatively high across all of the nonnative interlocutor competence groups, the most notable difference is found in the Advanced-level interlocutor group. When the data sample of 30 interactions recorded across the eight NYDS speakers are considered as a whole, nearly 84% of all instances in which /s/, /l/, /r/, and /n/ appear in a coda context are realized with the retained variant during interactions with Intermediate- and Superior-level interlocutors. However, these same coda consonants are retained less frequently at only 77% among all NYDS speakers during their interactions with Advanced-level interlocutors.
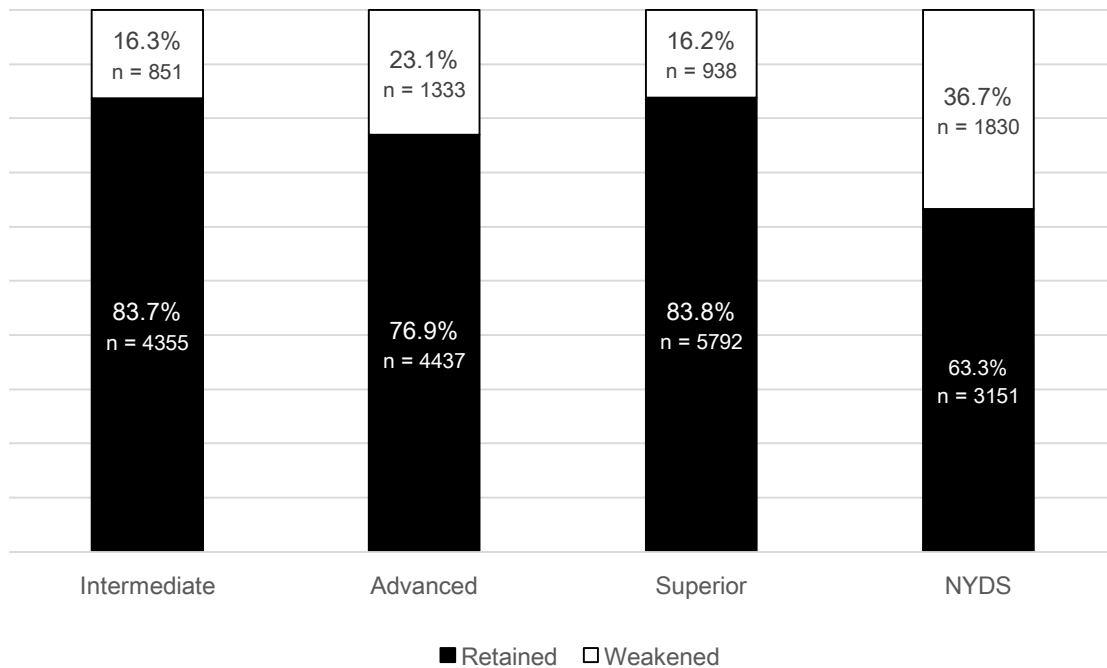
Figure 5.2 Frequency of retained versus weakened variants across each interlocutor competence level

As such, this figure indicates that, while an interlocutor's status as either a native or nonnative speaker of the target variety does play a role in the degree of accommodative final consonant retention, splitting the nonnative interlocutor group further into distinct competence levels tells a more complete story of the relationship between not only interlocutor perceived linguistic affiliation, but also competence. Subsection 5.6 explores the individual differences of each informant considered in the present study.

As code-switching and nonce borrowings are reflective of the highly proficient bilingual reality that they NYDS informants live, English use in conjunction with Spanish during the recorded interactions should not necessarily be interpreted as overaccommodation—rather it serves a separate discursive function and is observed during interactions among all interlocutor levels. That said, overaccommodation to English as an accommodative strategy is attested in

the present data. Though this dissertation cannot describe overaccommodation quantitatively,

it's occurrence is an apparent rejection of the interlocutor's language choice as a strategy to aid

comprehension and, as in the example shown below, is attested with Intermediate-level

interlocutors.

> (14) [006/106]: "Yo lo perdí por dos horas, *so* si yo hubiese estado en el
> aeropuerto por dos horas, dos horas antes, probablemente me haya
> topado con él."
>
> [Intermediate Interlocutor]: {pause} "¿Qué?"
>
> [006/108]: "*I missed him, I- I got to the airport about two hours after he
> did, so, yeah. Yeah, I know.*"

In this example (which does contain more complicated Spanish structures), the NYDS informant

does not attempt to reword or repeat in Spanish his previous utterance to his interlocutor.

Instead, he immediately overaccommodates to English even though his interlocutor spoke to

him exclusively, before and after the switch, in Spanish.

5.2 Accommodative retention patterns by variable

To further investigate the relationship between interlocutor competence level and final

consonant retention among the NYDS speakers, each consonant variable is considered

separately. Table 5.1 presents the frequencies of the retained variants for each variable under

study by interlocutor level.

	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior	NYDS	Total
/s/	82.7%	71.6%	83.9%	50.2%	n = 8724/11977
/l/ and /r/	93.2%	90.0%	92.3%	87.3%	n = 5234/5773
/n/	74.0%	73.5%	71.9%	63.9%	n = 2819/3978

Table 5.1 Frequency of retained variants across interlocutor competence levels by each variable

Once again, this figure demonstrates not only the distinctions in accommodative final consonant retention during interactions with a nonnative speaker of Spanish versus interactions with a fellow NYDS speaker, as well as across the various nonnative interlocutor competence levels. According to Pearson Chi-Square tests, there is a statistically significant relationship (p = .000) between retention of final consonants and interlocutor competence level across each of the three consonant variables under study. While during interactions with another NYDS speaker or an Advanced-level nonnative interlocutor /s/ was the final consonant most frequently realized with a weakened variant ([h] or [∅]), final /n/ is most frequently realized with a weakened variant ([ŋ] or [∅]) among the Intermediate and Superior nonnative interlocutors. Across all four interlocutor groups, final liquid consonants were most frequently retained in comparison to the other final variables under study. Given the significance of sonority in the permitted sequence of phones in the Spanish syllable (see subsection 2.1.1 for a discussion of the sonority cycle), perhaps the more sonorous coda consonants resist weakening overall, regardless of interlocutor target language competence. Among the two neutralization processes observed in the Dominican variety (that is, lambdacism in which neutralization results in the lateral variant and rhoticism where neutralization favors the rhotic variant), lambdacism is favored. Neutralization to the rhotic variant, though apparent in the data sample, accounted for a very small portion of the neutralized final liquid consonants.

In his 2004 monograph detailing the features of the Dominican variety of Spanish as well as language ideologies in the homeland, Alba presents a series of classifications assigning prestige to the weakened versus variants for all of the variable under study in the present dissertation. According to his classifications, moderate retention of final /s/ and the aspiration of /s/ to [h], along with the retention of both /l/ and /ɾ/, are features to which prestige can be ascribed—or those associated with an "*estimación social alta*" (2004: 107). On the other hand, the frequent elimination of final /s/ as well as neutralization (either in favor of the lateral or the rhotic variants) and vocalization of /l/ and /ɾ/ are variables without prestige and are associated with an "*estimación social baja*" (107).

The dynamics of prestige and social associations with the retained versus weakened variants of final /s/ and final liquids that Alba reports are echoed in the results of this study. During interactions with speakers who are highly proficient in Spanish, but are speakers of a normative, academic variety of Spanish—those in the Superior interlocutor level—NYDS speakers tend to restrict their weakening of consonants that could cost them some social standing with a speaker of Standard Spanish. However, during interactions with the Advanced-level speakers, that is those who are competent enough in Spanish so as to not encounter comprehension difficulties arising from weakened final consonants but not so competent that they implore NYDS speakers to attune to a Standard variety, NYDS speakers weaken final consonants at rates that are closer to those during interactions with fellow speakers of Dominican Spanish. With these Advanced speakers, NYDS speakers seem to find themselves in interactions in which they do not lose social ground by employing marked Dominican speech

features. That is, the positive social outcome of indexing their Dominican-ness perhaps is weighed more heavily than the possible negative social outcome of not completely matching the standard articulation of the Advanced-level speakers during these particular interactions.

Furthermore, Alba rates the velarization of /n/ in word-final position to be a neutral variant—one that connotes an "*estimación social implícita*" (2004: 107). The neutrality of this variant is also reflected in the results of this dissertation, as this is the variant most frequently employed during interactions with in particular Superior-level interlocutors. The velarization of final /n/, the use of which demonstrates divergence from all nonnative interlocutors, is a neutral feature nonetheless that indexes the speakers' *dominicanidad*, but does not sacrifice any social standing among highly proficient speakers of Standard Spanish in the same way that, for instance, vocalizing a final /l/ or deleting a final /s/ would. The following three subsections detail the examination of the use of each of the weakened variants for all final consonant variables considered in this study.

5.2.1 Final /s/

Table 5.2 displays the distribution of each possible weakened variant, the aspirated realization and the deleted variant, of /s/ in coda position along with the frequency of retained coda /s/. Across all interlocutors—NYDS and nonnative alike—deletion was favored over aspiration more than 2:1. An interesting observation also noted in this table is that aspiration is most favored with the Superior-level interlocutors. In other words, if one were to consider a hierarchy for weakened final /s/ realization, the least-weakened variant considered in this study—that is, the aspirated realization—is used with the most relative frequency during

interactions with the most proficient interlocutors who are still nonnative speakers of the target

variety.

	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior	NYDS
Retained [s]	82.8%	71.6%	83.9%	50.2%
Aspirated [h]	5.1%	8.6%	5.5%	10.2%
Deleted [∅]	12.7%	19.8%	10.6%	39.6%

Table 5.2 Use of all final /s/ variants across interlocutor competence levels

Excluded from Table 5.2, and the statistical analysis in general, are instances where an [s] was

inserted into a syllable-final position where lexically it would not appear. A total of 20 cases of

inserted [s] were discovered in the entire data sample, and they were found in the speech of all

but one of the informants under study (Speaker 2). Four [s] insertions occurred during

interactions with Intermediate-level interlocutors, nine occurred with Advanced-level

interlocutors, three occurred with Superior-level interlocutors, and the final four occurred with

NYDS interlocutors. As the total number of [s] insertions are quite few, it is not possible to

comment on any sort of pattern with regards to [s] insertion, other than that it was observed in

the speech of all but one of the speakers and during interactions with all interlocutor

competence levels, but most frequently during interactions with the Advanced-level

interlocutors. This finding with regard to [s] insertion is of interest as it is perhaps contrary to

what one might intuit—if there is something decidedly un-Dominican about overtly-sibilant

speech (Bullock et al. 2014), then the results showing the most frequent insertions of [s]

occurring during interactions with Advanced-level nonnative interlocutors (the nonnative

interlocutor group in which NYDS informants tend to deploy the most frequent emblematic

Dominican speech features) seem incongruent. Given the quite small sample of [s] insertions

observed here, the present dissertation is cautious towards generalizing [s] insertion as an accommodative feature during these recorded interactions. These findings are nonetheless of interest, and call for further attention given to the insertion of [s] as a function of interlocutor competence and social/varietal prestige negotiation.

5.2.1.1 /s/-retention in morphemic contexts

As this dissertation examines the role of interlocutor competence in the accommodative retention of consonants in final position, a secondary research question was: is there increased retention of final /s/ in morphemic contexts as a form of accommodation to, in particular, those interlocutors who have lower competence levels in Spanish? That is, can a measurable difference be found in the accommodative retention of /s/ in a word like *mi*s*mo* or *sei*s versus one like *habla*s or *casa*s? In the present study, coda /s/ was assigned a morphemic-context code when it marked the second person singular verb form[11] or the plurality of nouns[12]. Table 5.3 displays the results of an analysis of /s/ retention versus reduction in both morphemic and nonmorphemic contexts across all interlocutor competence levels.

		Intermediate	Advanced	Superior	NYDS
Morphemic context	[s]	77.8%	67.5%	79.3%	42.8%
	[h]	4.9%	6.8%	5.8%	8.5%
	[∅]	17.3%	25.6%	15.0%	48.7%
Nonmorphemic context	[s]	86.8%	75.3%	87.4%	56.2%
	[h]	5.2%	9.5%	5.3%	11.5%
	[∅]	7.9%	15.2%	7.3%	32.2%

Table 5.3 Frequency of all final /s/ variants across interlocutor levels by morphemic context

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[11] All verbal tenses except the preterit indicative are included.

[12] Plural marking was also extended to any concordance with nouns where applicable, such as with adjectives modifying plural nouns or plural clitic pronouns.

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This table shows, once again, the pattern of accommodation to the interlocutor's competence level with regard to weakening versus retention of final consonants. In both morphemic and nonmorphemic contexts, there is a statistically significant relationship between the retention rates of final /s/ across all interlocutor competence levels ($p = .000$). However, the differences in the frequencies of retained final /s/ in all interlocutor levels observed when comparing final /s/ behavior in contexts where it has a morphemic function versus those in which it does not is somewhat counter-intuitive. Given that a review of the literature of the inflectional role that final /s/ plays in its retention versus weakening is inconclusive, the hypothesis of this study was that, in particular during interactions with those interlocutors who had more limited competence in Spanish, final /s/ would be more frequently retained when it occurred in a context in which it marked verb person or noun number. In fact, the opposite pattern presents itself. Across all of the interlocutor levels, final /s/ is retained more often in nonmorphemic contexts than in those that are morphemic. Moreover, in morphemic contexts, deletion of final /s/ is favored over aspiration at a ratio of roughly 4:1, whereas in nonmorphemic contexts elision is still favored but to a lesser extent. In morphemic contexts, total deletion of final /s/ results in a morphological neutralization—there is no longer morphological distinction between for example 'casas' and 'casa' if the coda /s/ is fully reduced. Though when taken as a whole the literature is inconclusive regarding the retention of /s/ in morphemic contexts, these results echo the most convincing results which demonstrate that serving a morphological function does not imply retention (Poplack 1980; Cameron 1996, etc.).

Furthermore, the rates for final /s/ retention are nearly identical among the most- and least- proficient second language learner interlocutor levels—Intermediate and Superior. The findings presented in Table 5.3 indicate that accommodative retention of final /s/ in the speech of the NYDS informants is not increased when final /s/ plays a functional, morphological role either during interactions with fellow NYDS-speaker interlocutors or with those who speak Spanish as a second language. With regards to retention of final /s/ as accommodation to in particular those interlocutors at earlier stages of the Spanish proficiency development, the results of the present dissertation provide counter-evidence for the functional hypothesis.

5.2.2 Final liquids

Table 5.4 displays the use of each weakened variant considered in this study found in contexts where liquids appear in syllable-final position. Liquids were the consonant variable that showed overall the highest levels of retention across all interlocutor groups—nonnative and native alike.

	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior	NYDS
Retained	93.2%	90.0%	92.3%	87.3%
Neutralized	1.5%	2.3%	1.2%	1.6%
Vocalized [j]	0.2%	0.7%	0.3%	1.4%
Deleted [∅]	5.14%	7.0%	6.3%	9.7%

Table 5.4 Use of all final /l/ and /r/ variants across interlocutor competence levels

In Table 5.4, it is shown that, between all of the possible weakened variants considered in this study, deletion of final consonants was the most frequent weakened realization across all four interlocutor levels. Vocalization of final liquids, a highly stigmatized feature of Dominican Spanish associated with speech in the rural Cibao region, was the least frequently employed weakened variant for liquids in syllable-final position during interactions with all interlocutor competence levels. Vocalization was found in the speech of four NYDS informants (two men

and two women), all of whom had spent at least the first decade of their lives living in the Cibao

Valley region of the Dominican Republic before moving to New York around age 13. There was

no vocalization of coda liquids found in the speech of NYDS informants who either hailed from

the Capital region of Santo Domingo before moving to the United States or those who were born

in New York. This observation echoes what is already known with regards to vocalization in

Dominican Spanish—vocalization is losing ground to neutralization in the homeland (Lipski

2008) and based on the results of this project in the diaspora as well. With regard to the

neutralization of liquids in syllable-final position, this dissertation confirms what is reported in the

literature—both neutralization outcomes lambdacism and rhoticism are attested in the data

sample considered here. The lateral realization of /r/ is heavily favored over the rhotic

realization of /l/ however, with rhoticism accounting for a mere 7% of all neutralized final liquids.

Although the objective of this dissertation is not to examine explicitly the realizations of liquid

consonants in NYDS in general, but rather apply what is currently known about potential liquid

consonant outcomes to further explore the accommodation process, an additional contribution

of the study is the fact that rhoticism is quite infrequent in NYDS.

5.2.3 Final /n/

Table 5.5 displays the distribution of the possible weakened variants—velarization

versus deletion—of word-final /n/ along with the frequency of final /s/ retention in the speech of

the NYDS informants across all four interlocutor competence levels. Velarization of /n/ is heavily

favored over deletion.

	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior	NYDS
Retained [n]	74.0%	73.5%	71.9%	63.9%
Velarized [ŋ]	23.4%	23.6%	25.9%	32.5%
Deleted [∅]	2.6%	2.9%	2.2%	3.6%

Table 5.5 Use of all final /n/ variants across interlocutor competence levels

Since modifications of final /n/ are speech features that—although they are marked features that linguists associate with Caribbean varieties of Spanish—are regarded as having neutral social class and prestige connotations among the so-called "linguistically untrained listeners" (Lipski 2011: 80), it stands to reason that there are not largely observable differences in the realizations of final /n/ across the distinct interlocutor groups. That is, in terms of final /n/, there does not seem to exist the same impetus to meter the use of weakened final /n/ variants based on the interlocutor as is found among the other final consonant variables considered in this study.

5.3 Real-time accommodation

A significant contribution that this dissertation study makes is its fine-grained quantitative approach to tracking the process of phonetic accommodation as it happens in real time during interactions. In order to examine the progression of accommodation during the recorded interactions, each recording is split into equal thirds. As such, not only can this study describe phonetic accommodation as each informant's interlocutor competence changes, but also as each interaction progresses.
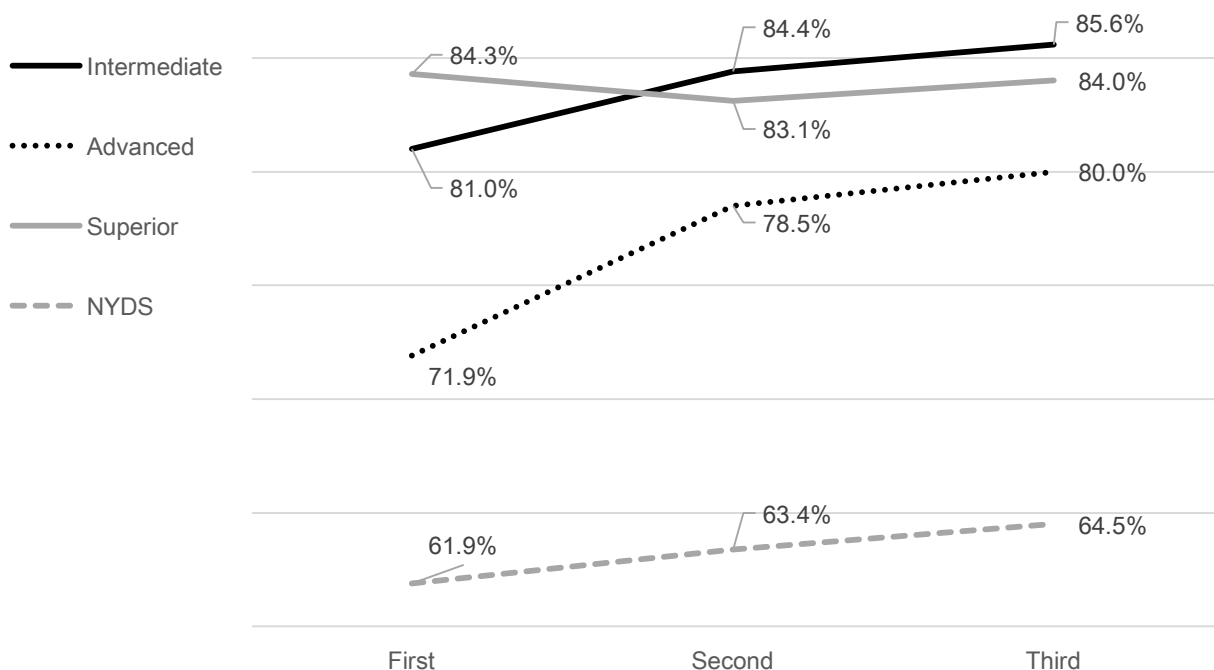
Figure 5.3 Frequency of retained variants across interlocutor competence levels at three time points

Figure 5.3 displays the frequency of final consonant retention across all four interlocutor competence levels measured from three time points during the recorded interactions. For the first third of the recorded interactions, the highest level of retention is found when NYDS informants are interacting with Superior-level interlocutors (84.3% of all final consonants studied are retained). In other words, convergence towards the speech of the Superior-level interlocutors happens immediately as the interaction begins, and remains quite stable throughout the recorded interactions with these highly competent nonnative speakers of Spanish (83.1% retention at the second time point and 84.0% at the third). Similar stability in retention rates across the three time points is observed during interactions with fellow NYDS interlocutors. Though the overall frequency of final consonant retention is much lower with the NYDS interlocutors than with the Superior-level interlocutors, it is still of importance to note the

similarity in stability across the time points: 61.9% retention in the first segment of the interaction, compared with 63.4% retention in the second segment, compared to 64.5% retention in the final segment. However, more flexibility is observed in the final consonant rates as the interaction progresses when NYDS informants are speaking with Intermediate-level interlocutors, and the most dramatic difference in final consonant retention rates between interaction time points is found during interactions with the Advanced-level interlocutors.

These observations regarding the stability of accommodation during interactions with the Superior-level and NYDS interlocutors versus the variance across time points during interactions with the Intermediate- and Advanced-level interlocutors is confirmed with a Pearson Chi-Square test—the time point in the interview is only statistically significant during interactions with the Advanced-level interlocutors ($p = .000$) and the Intermediate-level interlocutors ($p = .001$). However, during interactions with both the Superior-level and NYDS interlocutors, there is no statistical significance associated with the retention of consonants in final position ($p = .572$ and $p = .293$, respectively). These results indicate that while NYDS informants are most stable in their accommodative retention/weakening patterns with fellow NYDS interlocutors and with Superior-level nonnative interlocutors, there is a measure of calibration that seems to take place during the interactions with less proficient speakers. The present dissertation can only comment on the articulation of the final consonants under study as accommodation as the author has only audio data to analyze, but the discussion of accommodation during interactions with interlocutors with varying degrees of competence in the target language could benefit from analysis of audio and video recordings to include nonverbal communicative behavior.

With the exception of the Superior-level interlocutor, interactions with all three other interlocutor groups demonstrate that the time point in which consonants are least frequently retained is the first segment of the interaction—this finding is unanticipated, as often during recorded interactions under variationist study demonstrate that one tends to use one's most conservative speech at the beginning of a recorded interaction, and then once one relaxes into the interaction, less conservative speech features are observed.

An additional unanticipated finding in this study arising from this section of the analysis is that there seems to be both a floor and a ceiling to phonetic accommodation—considering the sample as a whole, there is not any point in any interaction with nonnative interlocutor levels in which all final consonants are retained, nor is there any point in any interaction with the nonnative interlocutors in which final consonants are weakened more frequently than with fellow NYDS speaker interlocutors. In other words, while convergence is observed with the Intermediate- and Superior-level interlocutors during the entire interaction, as well as with the Advanced-level interlocutor during the last two thirds of the recorded interaction, there is not ever convergence matching the categorical final consonant retention of the nonnative interlocutors. Accommodation theorists have concluded that in terms of speech adjustment mechanism, the accommodation process can be described either as full accommodation or partial accommodation (Dragojevic et al. 2016) and perhaps our collective understanding of the accommodative phenomenon can benefit from more fine-grained descriptions of the process, rather than just noting if it happens in full or in part. Furthermore, considering accommodative behavior at specific time points, as in the case of this dissertation, could aid accommodation

theorists and scholars in their conception of the duration of a given adjustment. While some

theorists suppose that long-term accommodation is a mechanism for language change (Nilsson

2015; Trudgill 1986), a closer look at accommodative behavior in the short-term could enrich the

theoretical model by further distinguishing what exactly can be viewed as the short-term.

5.4 Accommodation and informant gender

The informant sample for this dissertation study is gender-balanced, and as such, I am

able to observe differences in accommodative final consonant retention and weakening across

the interlocutor groups between informant gender. Figure 5.4 displays the rates of final

consonant retention exhibited by male versus by female informants across each of the
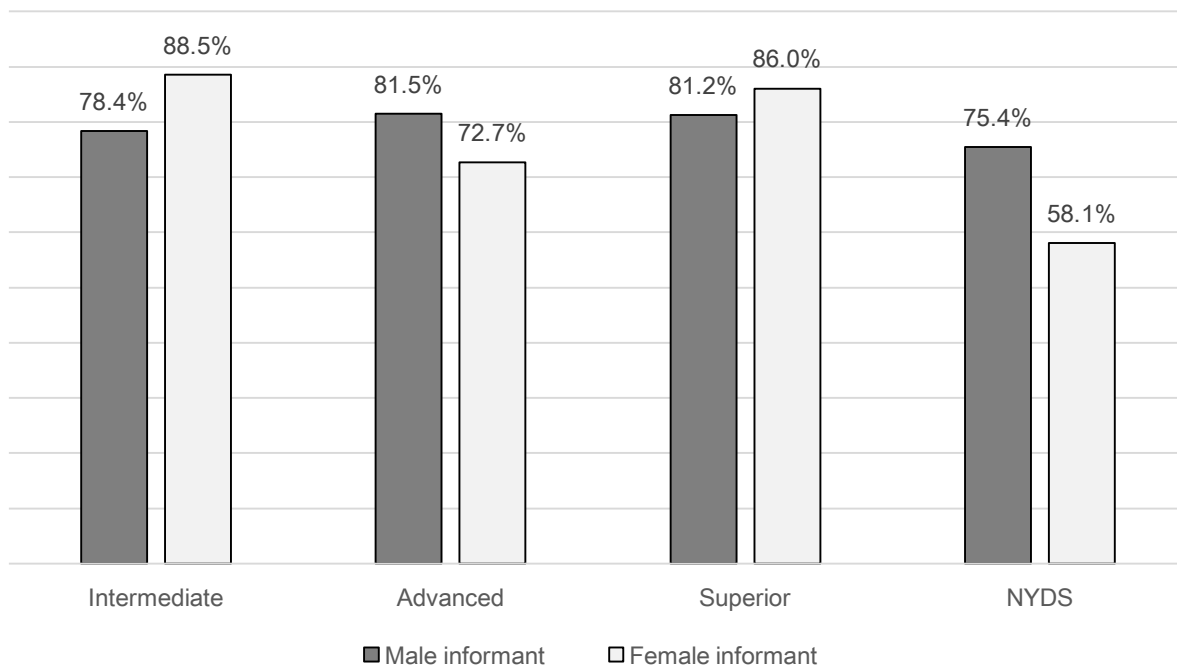
interlocutor levels.

Figure 5.4 Frequency of retained consonants across competence levels by informant gender

At first blush, for male informants the differences between final consonant retention rates across the interlocutor groups does not appear to be indicative of accommodation, but Pearson Chi-Square tests prove that interlocutor competence level does in fact play a statistically significant role ($p = .000$) in the retention versus weakening of consonants in syllable-final position for both men and women who served as NYDS informants in this dissertation study. To this point, there is evidence in the literature of female speakers of so-called radical varieties to be more tuned in to the prestige discrepancies between their arterial variety and those spoken by their nonnative counterparts. For instance, in her study of female speakers of Caribbean varieties studying at the tertiary level, Urciuoli (2008) reports that these speakers demonstrate higher levels of linguistic insecurity, and attributes this to their awareness of the comparison made between their home dialects and normative Spanish. All of the NYDS informants included in this dissertation who are women have studied Spanish at the university level, and as such are perhaps more cognizant of their speech in comparison to their interlocutors, which is signaled in the greater differences in accommodative final consonant retention across the interlocutor competence levels.

5.5 Practiced accommodation

A final research question that this dissertation aimed to answer was: does prior experience teaching Spanish as a second language play a role in the degree of accommodation observed during interactions with nonnative speakers of Spanish? Figure 5.5 aids in answering

this question and displays the frequency of retained variants across the interlocutor competence

levels split by informants who reported having previous experience teaching Spanish to

nonnative learners versus those who reported having no such previous experience. The three

informants who had previously taught Spanish or those who have had extensive experience

socializing with nonnative speakers of Spanish demonstrated very high frequencies of

convergence towards the speech of Intermediate-level (95.2% retention of final consonants) and

Superior-level (92.7% retention of final consonants) interlocutors. On the other hand, these

same practiced accommodators demonstrate a measured divergence from the speech of

Advanced-level interlocutors (only 68.1% retention of final consonants—a 1% difference from

the final consonant retention rates of nonteachers during interactions with fellow NYDS-
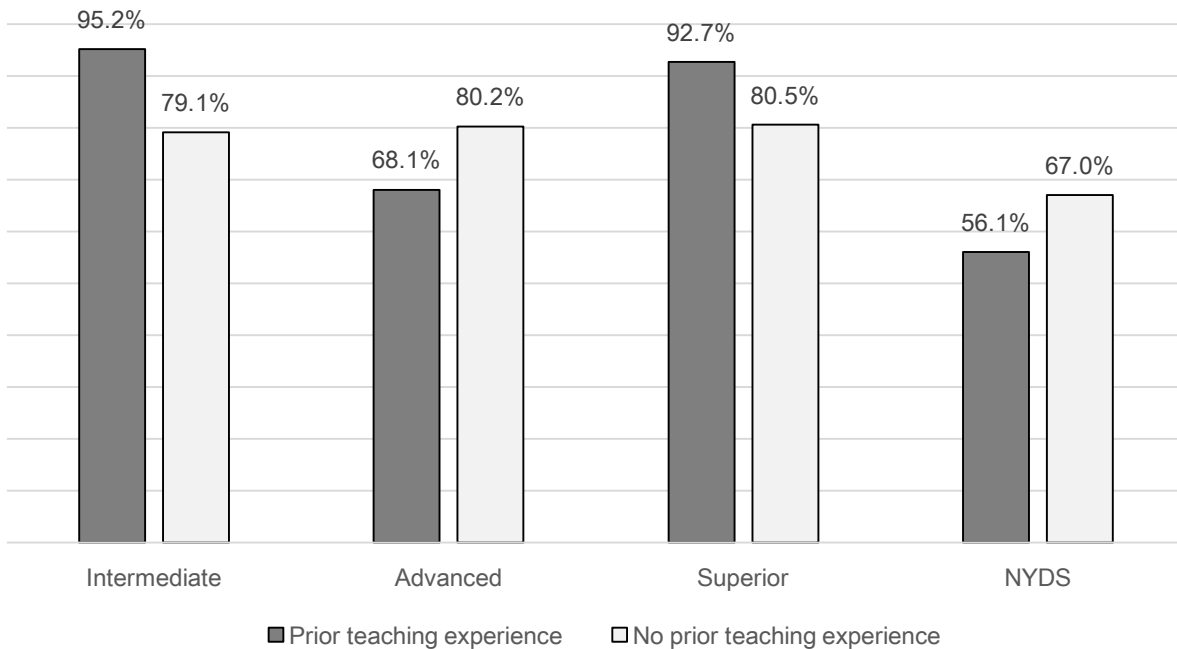
speaking interlocutors).

Figure 5.5 Frequency of retained variants across interlocutors by informant experience teaching
Spanish as a second language

Overall, Pearson Chi-Square tests show a statistically significant relationship (p = .000) between prior experience teaching Spanish as a second language and final consonant weakening in the speech of the NYDS informants in this dissertation study. However, when each consonant variable is tested individually, results indicate that all variables show significance across interlocutor competence level for those NYDS informants who do have prior experience teaching Spanish to students who are learning it as a second language, while only the variables final /s/ and final /n/ are significant for those who have not previously taught Spanish to nonnative learners. For these nonteaching informants, there is no statistical relationship between interlocutor language competence level and consonant retention for /l/ and /r/ in syllable-final position (p = .192).

5.6 Individual differences

The nature of the present study is such that a substantial amount of speech data is gathered from each informant, but the total number of informants included in the study then is constrained. As is the case, significant findings are presented here, but these findings cannot be translated into sweeping generalizations that capture accurately the accommodative behavior of an entire speech community. Rather, they measure and predict how members of this speech community employ marked features during conversation with different interlocutors as either converging or diverging accommodation strategies. The objective of this subsection is to present speech data arranged by each informant included in this study and discuss the role that individual differences play in the results of this study.

Table 5.6 shows the frequency of final consonant retention across all of the interlocutor groups produced by each speaker analyzed, each speaker's gender, and the total number of tokens produced by each speaker. In examining the accommodative final consonant retention patterns by each informant, a few patterns tend to emerge: the first is that *all* nonnative interlocutors are converged to via frequent final consonant retention and NYDS interlocutors are converged to via moderate final consonant weakening (Speakers 2, 6, 7, and 10); the second is that only the Intermediate-, Superior-, and NYDS-level interlocutors are converged towards whereas the Advanced-level interlocutor is clearly diverged from (Speakers 1 and 3); and the third is that all nonnative interlocutors are converged towards, but the highest levels of accommodative final consonant retention are in fact found during interactions with the Advanced-level interlocutors (Speakers 4 and 5). In all cases, interlocutor competence level and perceived linguistic affiliation play a role in the level of accommodative retention of consonants in syllable-final position in the recorded speech of NYDS informants, as confirmed by a descriptive statistical analysis.

	Intermediate	Advanced	Superior	NYDS	Total
Speaker 1 (F)	76.9%	70.8%	77.7%	62.7%	n = 2004/2807
Speaker 2 (F)	93.4%	92.9%	92.3%	67.2%	n = 1818/2147
Speaker 3 (F)	95.9%	55.4%	92.9%	48.7%	n = 3063/4174
Speaker 4 (M)	83.3%	89.2%	84.0%	73.1%	n = 2898/3511
Speaker 5 (F)	83.9%	85.1%	80.6%	57.6%	n = 2398/3184
Speaker 6 (M)	88.1%	88.1%	91.9%	---	n = 1560/1744
Speaker 7 (M)	82.3%	84.1%	87.1%	78.0%	n = 1926/2355
Speaker 10 (M)	61.8%	59.5%	64.1%	---	n = 1130/1827

Table 5.6 Frequency of retained variants across interlocutor competence levels by each individual informant

Speakers 6 and 10 did not participate in recorded interactions with a fellow NYDS speaker, and as such the present study is unable to discuss final consonant retention rates during interactions with NYDS-speaker interlocutors with these two informants. Notwithstanding this limitation, this dissertation does find that there is a statistically significant relationship between interlocutor Spanish competence level and final consonant retention for seven out of the eight informants considered in this study[13]. During the interactions between Speaker 10 and his three interlocutors, there was no statistically significant relationship between interlocutor competence level and consonant retention (p = .261).

5.7 In closing

The results of this dissertation indicate that interlocutor target language competence plays a significant role in the degree and dimension of phonetic accommodation exhibited by New York Dominican Spanish-speaking informants. With regard to the dimension of adjustment during the recorded interactions with various interlocutors, examples (A) and (B) are considered. Both of these examples are extracted from the speech of Speaker 3. She by chance is recorded telling the same story during her interactions with both her Superior-level (A) and Advanced-level (B) interlocutors. Each example shows the contexts of variation in boldface with the realizations of each variable consonant marked with the corresponding IPA character:

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[13] Speaker 1: p = .000; Speaker 2: p = .000; Speaker 3: p = .000; Speaker 4: p = .000; Speaker 5: p = .000, Speaker 6: p = .041; Speaker 7: p = .018. (p <.05 is considered significant).

(A)   to Superior: "Y estábamos detrás de esta cerca, tirando piedras tumbando mangos. Entonces nos volamos la cerca para ir a recoger los mangos pero rápidamente porque si no, las vacas se los comen."

(B)   to Advanced: "Y comenzamoh a tirar piedra∅ a la mata y no∅ volamo∅ la cerca para ir a recoge∅ lo∅ mango∅ po∅que la∅ vacah se loh e∅taban comiendo, *so* no∅ volamo∅ la cejca, cogimo∅ lo∅ mango∅. Entonce∅ llegaroŋ unos hombreh en caballo…"

In (A), there is categorical retention of consonants in final position but in (B), there are only four contexts of variation shown in which a final consonant is retained. In terms of adjustment mechanisms, the sentences in (A) show what is referred to as full convergence, but this is not the case in (B), which is an exhibit of divergence. Along with degree of adjustment, dimension of adjustment (Giles & Powesland 1975)—*upward* or *downward*—is considered. This framework, that upward adjustment is one toward a more prestigious variety and downward adjustment is instead a shift in the direction of a less prestigious variety, seems to be incongruent with the prestige dynamics of Dominican Spanish. The language of this framework seems to imply a hierarchical, longitudinal arrangement of varieties in which the standard variety is at the top, and anything nonstandard is regarded as substandard. In the case of Dominican Spanish, these directional categories of accommodative adjustment do not seem to have the same meaning that accommodation theorists describe. Instead, the divergence demonstrated in (B) is not an adjustment to a variety *without* prestige, but instead is to a variety of covert prestige.

The results of this dissertation study point to a framework that considers not just the overt prestige that a variety lacks, but also the covert prestige that it may connote in spades. As such, the phonetic convergence and divergence that the informants considered her exhibit are

deployments of marked and emblematic speech features to negotiate the informants' identities

as they navigate the series of social interactions in which they are engaged. Dominican speech

features, in the form of weakened final consonants, are used in concert with features of a

standard variety as the informants calibrate their speech according to the competence level and

perceived linguistic affiliation of their interlocutors, balancing social gains and sacrifices as the

conversations progress.

Chapter 6

Conclusion:
Significance and future applications of the findings

6.1 Summary of the findings

This dissertation finds that native speakers of New York Dominican Spanish do exhibit

sociophonetic variation as a form of accommodation during interactions with a series of different

interlocutors. First, NYDS speakers are found to weaken consonants /s/, /l/, /r/, and /n/ in

syllable-final position during interactions with fellow NYDS speakers as interlocutors,

demonstrating convergence to the New York Dominican variety of Spanish. However, NYDS

informants instead retain these same consonants in final position during interactions with

Intermediate- and Superior-level second language learners of Spanish. This convergence to a

normative variety of Spanish across these two interlocutor competence groups is dual

purpose—it both mitigates possible comprehension difficulties that could arise during

interactions with Intermediate-level learners, and demonstrates the NYDS informants' ability to

match the Superior-level learners' high competence in a standard, academic variety of Spanish. Divergence was only measurably discovered during interactions with Advanced-level learner interlocutors of Spanish. With this interlocutor competence group, it seems as though NYDS informants did not have a similar impetus to retain consonants to aid competence—as the Advanced-level learners had more competence than the Intermediate-level learners—or to attune to an overtly-prestigious standard variety of Spanish—as the Advanced-level learners had less competence than the Superior-level learners. In other words, convergence meets several communicative and social goals during interactions with the NYDS, Intermediate, and Superior interlocutors, but does not seem to be required as NYDS informants navigate their social identity and relationship to their interlocutor during interactions with Advanced-level learners—the overt prestige that is sacrificed by weakening final consonants only gains them social standing as they index their *dominicanidad* with mid-proficient speakers of Spanish as a second language.

6.2 Limitations of the study

What this dissertation lacks in terms of the breadth of its informant pool is more than made up for in the depth of analysis with which the speech data from each informant is treated. Although not all informants considered here had the opportunity to be recorded interacting with all four different interlocutor competence levels (two male informants are not recorded interacting with fellow NYDS interlocutors), the results of this study are nonetheless found to demonstrate a pattern and do show statistical significance. The results of this dissertation study underscore the role that the target language competence level of one's interlocutor plays in the

phonetic accommodation process. This further opens the discussion accommodation in native-nonnative interactions, a discussion that could benefit from additional fine-grained analyses of accommodative behavior during interactions between speakers of distinct competence levels, perhaps by incorporating proficiency metrics like an elicited imitation task to neatly and definitively measure interlocutor competence, or by taking acoustic measurements of variable features during such interactions.

6.3 Applications and extensions of the findings

The results of this study indicate that interlocutor target language competence plays a part in the employment of emblematic speech features on the part of native speakers of New York Dominican Spanish. These findings, gathered from natural, conversational speech, can be applied to contexts of the acquisition and instruction of Spanish as a second and as a heritage language.

A growing body of work considering the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation by second language learners of Spanish has given specific attention to the development of varietal features during and after participation in study abroad programs (George 2014; Ringer-Hilfinger 2012, 2013; Knouse 2012, among others). In her review of the literature on the acquisition of variation in the second language, Geeslin (2011) concludes that there is compelling evidence that instruction in and exposure to varieties of Spanish can positively impact the acquisition of the target language. Given the increasing attention paid to immersion acquisition contexts of Spanish via participation in study abroad programs in Spanish-speaking parts of the world, and the resulting evidence that this immersive exposure to target varieties can impact acquisition,

the present study becomes relevant to the discussion. If, as this dissertation study has proven, the competence of a nonnative learner of Spanish can incite accommodative standard instead of varietal realizations in native speech, then perhaps accommodation should be included in the discussion of the acquisition of sociolinguistic variation abroad. By virtue of their own competence in the target language, Spanish students themselves—if accommodation is supposed—are effecting the input that they receive. In such a case, the so-called target language variety becomes a much more moving target. A further dimension that should be considered with regard to the study abroad acquisition context and native-nonnative accommodation is varietal prestige. For instance, the data considered in the present study are gathered from a variety of Spanish to which a considerable measure of covert prestige is ascribed, but one that does not enjoy as much overt prestige in the Spanish-speaking world. Perhaps accommodation towards the speech of nonnative learners of Spanish would not be as trackable in occasions where the native speaker with whom Spanish students are interacting speaks an overtly-prestigious variety. The phonetic variables considered in this study are marked, emblematic features associated with the Dominican variety of Spanish, and further research needs to explore the accommodative use of more neutral or overtly-prestigious speech features during interactions with nonnative speakers of varying target language competence.

As the present dissertation considers speech data gathered from bilingual speakers of Spanish in New York, its findings also have relevance to the discussion of Spanish as a heritage language in the United States, in particular in the context of heritage language instruction. Recent work in the instruction of Spanish as a heritage language has given credence to the

development of critical language awareness—both in heritage language students and those teaching courses to these students. For instance, Leeman & Serafini in their call for the incorporation of sociolinguistic information into heritage language education curriculum write: "…our goals include fostering students' agency and their understanding of linguistic knowledge as a creative resource for performing identities, negotiating social relationships, and navigating political hierarchies," (2016: 71-72). The findings of this study highlight the role that speaker agency plays in the employment of a given speech feature over another in the speech of New York Dominicans. Further exploration into the accommodative use of varietal versus standard speech features in Spanish spoken in the United States could aid in our understanding language variation as the creative resource for heritage speakers (as described by Leeman & Serafini 2016) in particular during interactions between heritage language students and their classmates or instructors.

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