

REGIONAL VARIETY PREFERENCES BY TEACHERS IN USA: THE CASE OF PLURICENTRIC SPANISH

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Abstract: Spanish teachers in the USA are responsible for showing students what Spanish looks and sounds like (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro & Mandell, 2001) and therefore act as role-models for their students in terms of their attitudes towards different varieties of Spanish. They must choose which features from which varieties to teach their students (Burns, 2018). Spanish teachers in the UK found Caribbean Spanish difficult to comprehend (Bárkányi & Fuerte Gutiérrez, 2019) and Spanish teachers in the USA preferred Peninsular Spanish over other varieties (Martínez-Franco, 2019), similar to Spanish teachers in Australia (Ortiz-Jiménez, 2019). The current study investigates (dis)preferences towards different regional varieties of Spanish by 63 primary, secondary and postsecondary teachers of Spanish in the USA. The findings indicate preferences split among four macro-varieties and a dispreference for Caribbean Spanish, highlighting the importance of comprehension and exposure to varieties regardless of prior explicit training on the topic.

Key words: Spanish Teaching, Regional Varieties, Spanish Dialects.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a pluricentric language,¹ Spanish has several prestige varieties with much variation, as shown in Table 1. In terms of geographical variation, there are eight major dialect zones, three in Spain - Castilian, Andalusian, Canarian; and five in Latin America - Mexico and Central America, Caribbean, Andean, Austral, and Chilean (Moreno-Fernández, 2009). This presents an issue of which variety to use for instruction when teaching Spanish in the USA.

Table 1. Examples of different types of variation commonly found in Spanish.

| Type of variation | Example |
|-------------------|--|
| phonological | gra[θ]ias / gra[s]ias ['thank you'] |
| lexical | autobús / guagua / etc ['bus'] |
| grammatical | le vi / lo vi ['I saw her/him/you' / 'I saw him/it'] |
| syntactical | ¿Cómo tú estás? / ¿Cómo estás tú? ['How are you?'] |
| morphosyntactic | vos / tú [second person singular 'you'] |
| pragmatic | Dame una cerveza. / ¿Me podrías dar una cerveza? ['Give me a beer.' / 'Could you give me a beer?'] |

There is no one variety that teachers of Spanish as a foreign/world language are explicitly expected to use in classroom speech or teach, particularly in the USA. Instead, teachers must make choices that are often based on their preferences (Paffey, 2019), yet they should avoid “activation and perpetuating prejudices and stereotypes” in their students (Train, 2007: 227) by focusing alternatively on the social and linguistic significance of varieties of

¹ Pluricentric means there are several standard forms or varieties of a language which often align with a country (RAE & ASALE, 2009).

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Spanish (Moreno-Fernández, 2003). By doing so, instructors play a key role in learners' development of linguistic features of regional varieties (Zárate-Sandez, 2019).

In response to what type of Spanish we should teach, Muñoz-Basols and Hernández Muñoz (2019), who support teaching multiple varieties and ensuring that instructors are educated on this topic, propose that we should consider the linguistic ideology behind the variety in question and the institutions that promote it, and the language attitudes and beliefs of those involved in teaching the language. Burns (2018) advocates for teaching students from the introductory level "accurate and inclusive sociolinguistic information" about the kind of Spanish spoken in their country and communities, which in that case was the Southwestern USA (p. 20). Stollhans (2020) also supports teaching variation from the beginning (to novice learners), adjusting for the context, and notes the positive effect it could have on language course enrollment in the UK, since people typically find variation fascinating.

Given the multiple macro-varieties and distinct views on which variety to teach, the objectives of the current study are to determine the (dis)preferences of Spanish teachers in the USA towards regional varieties of Spanish and reasons for these. In addition, this study seeks to address the extent to which the teachers' language background (L1 or L2 speaker of Spanish), proficiency level, and previous coursework on the topic affects these (dis)preferences.

2. BACKGROUND

Previous research has shown an overwhelming preference for the type of Spanish spoken in North-Central Spain and one's own regional variety (Chiquito & Quesada Pacheco, 2014). This remained true in North America as well up until a few decades ago (Zárate-Sandez, 2019). This preference for this North-Central variety dates back to the 1600s, where Spanish from Toledo was given an A (on an A-F scale where A is the highest), Spanish from other regions in Spain outside of Toledo was given a B and Spanish from outside of Spain was given a C (Quesada Pacheco, 2008).

Much of the research conducted on beliefs and attitudes towards regional varieties has focused on the general Spanish-speaking population (e.g., Cruz, 2006; Gallego & Rodríguez, 2012; Chiquito & Quesada Pacheco, 2014; Callesano & Carter, 2019) or on students (Bárkányi & Fuerte Gutiérrez, 2019). It is crucial, however, to examine teachers' attitudes toward teaching regional variations. Such attitudes encompass: 1) teaching the variety most well-known to the teacher as well as not teaching any variety so as not to confuse the students (Beaven, 1999); 2) only teaching the dialects that the teachers themselves speak due to a lack of self confidence in other dialects (Moneris Oliveris, 2015); and 3) exposing students to many dialects as a necessary and effective way of teaching foreign languages (Bell, 2005).

Three recent studies shed light on attitudes towards regional varieties of Spanish by teachers in places where English is the majority or official language. First, Bárkányi and Fuerte Gutiérrez (2019) employed a 30-question survey to 67 Spanish teachers (54 L1 Spanish speakers and 13 L2 speakers of Spanish) in the UK about knowledge and perception of regional varieties of Spanish, previous training on the topic, classroom practice, materials used to teach the topic and how students are assessed on the topic. Just under half of the teachers lacked training on dialectology, therefore this type of study could fall under perceptual dialectology for those teachers. The results of the survey showed that the most difficult regional varieties for the teachers to comprehend were Caribbean, Chilean, Argentine, Andalusian, and Canarian Spanish. Most teachers agreed that instruction on various regional varieties in the classroom would benefit students; however, it depended on the level and needs of the students and the confidence level of the teachers along with their ability to accurately teach about the varieties. Most of the teachers rejected the idea that one should only teach a single variety of Spanish. In addition, most were opposed to modifying their variety of Spanish in the classroom, with those teachers from Andalucía, Spain, noting that they often did. Second, Ortiz-Jiménez (2019) indirectly measured the language attitudes of 27 L2 Spanish teachers in Australia and 20 in Valencia, Spain (Ortiz-Jiménez, 2019). Using a verbal guise, the teachers listened and rated a series of speakers for qualities related to status (i.e., education level, level of formality, location (urban or rural), confidence level, and wealth) and solidarity (i.e., arrogance (versus humility), fun (versus bored), niceness). The teachers also successfully identified the regional origin of the speakers 73% of the time. In terms of status, Castilian (Spain), Mexican, and Colombian were rated more highly than Andalusian and Caribbean. For solidarity, the ratings were all high, with Argentine being rated the lowest. Chilean was valued significantly higher for status by teachers in Australia compared to teachers in Valencia. This was most likely due to the large number of Chileans that reside in Australia and thus more familiarity with this variety, according to the researcher. Finally, Martínez-Franco (2019) utilized surveys, interviews, and classroom observations of beginning and intermediate university Spanish instructors at the University of Alabama in the USA to determine regional variety preferences. The instructors (three L1 Spanish speakers from Honduras, Spain and Colombia, and eight L2 Spanish speakers) considered Spanish from North-Central Spain to be the most prestigious followed by Colombian Spanish. This was also the trend in terms of overall preference for a regional variety. The instructors noted

that their students are mainly interested in Spanish from Spain. Only a few teachers (3/11) noted that they modify their speech when teaching by changing their dialectal features, aligning with Bárkányi and Fuerte Gutiérrez (2019), who also found that only a few teachers modified their speech in the classroom.

3. MODELS OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

Having explored previous studies on regional variety preferences, this section considers various models of language attitudes. The current study lies at the intersection of three areas. The first is Lambert's (1967) Componential Model of language attitudes which divides attitudes into three components. The cognitive component consists of beliefs and stereotypes about the language or language variety (i.e., Castilian Spanish is the most educated Spanish). The affective component includes evaluations towards the language or language variety (i.e., Spanish from the Caribbean is pretty). The behavioral component is comprised of the actions taken based on the underlying belief (i.e., I will only hire speakers of Caribbean Spanish). The second area is perceptual dialectology, which consist of folk beliefs about language based on correctness and aesthetic appeal (attitudes towards languages/varieties) (Preston, 1989). While perceptual dialectology usually addresses beliefs by the general population (i.e., non-linguists), in this paper we include teachers, particularly since they are not all educated as linguists. The third and final area is on language ideologies, defined briefly as beliefs about language associated with groups of people (Woolard, 1998; Kroskrity, 2004, 2010). Standard language ideology involves "a bias towards an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed from above, and which takes as its model the written language" (Lippi-Green, 1994: 166). In the case of Spanish, each region has its own widely recognized standard variety. Having a standard language ideology entails that monolingualism is the norm and bilingualism is the exception, with acquisition of the most standard variety of the second language considered more prestigious than any other variety (Train, 2003). Expanding on this, "[f]or Spanish and other world languages, the shifting locus of native-speaker normativity and cultural capital has always involved the various language practices of metropolitan, educated urban speakers (in distinction to those positioned as uneducated, rural, and local) who constitute the changing global communicative elites based in educated socio-professional classes" (Train, 2003: 214). Non-standard varieties are then deemed as inherently deficient, a widespread belief even among educators (Ortiz Jiménez, 2013). García and Torres-Guevara (2009) noted that at the secondary and postsecondary level, the monolingual standard of Spanish is the norm, leaving out bilingual language practices of, for example, US Latinx students whose Spanish is often stigmatized. Showstack (2018) discusses previous research showing that US Spanish is considered lesser-than by US Spanish-speaking students, teachers, and textbooks.

In addition, Andi6n Herrero (2007) presents a linguistic model that can be used to determine which regional variety of Spanish to teach in the classroom. The linguistic model of the classroom consists of standard Spanish and the preferred variety, which overlap, along with the peripheral varieties. According to Andi6n Herrero (2007) the preferred variety is the one used the most by students, whether interacting with materials, with each other, or with the teacher. The remaining regional varieties, known as peripheral varieties, should also be taught to students as passive knowledge (Andi6n Herrero, 2007).

In light of the previous research on teachers' preferences for certain varieties of Spanish and the connection between preferences and language attitudes and ideologies, the current study gathers the opinions, attitudes and beliefs of Spanish teachers across the USA as they pertain to (dis)-preferences for regional varieties of Spanish and in doing so, addresses the following research questions:

1. What are Spanish teachers' preferences for regional varieties of Spanish and what are their reasons supporting these preferences?
2. How do teachers' language background (L1 or L2), proficiency level in the L2, and previous linguistics courses influence their preferences for regional varieties of Spanish?

4. THE STUDY

The participants for this study were recruited via email, announcements to Facebook groups for teachers, announcements to listservs, and occasionally through direct email invitation. The participants were Spanish teachers in a variety of settings including preschool, primary school, secondary school and higher educational institutions, with many having experience in more than one context. Table 2 shows the breakdown of participants' self-rated proficiency level and whether they had previously completed a course on linguistics based on whether they were an L1, L2 or heritage language Spanish-speaker.

Table 2. Participant information.

| Proficiency Level | L1 | | HS | | L2 | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|----|-------|----|-------|----|------|-------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Native Speaker | 12 | 100.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 19.0 |
| Superior (C2) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 100.0 | 25 | 51.0 | 27 | 42.9 |
| Advanced Mid or High (B2.2-C1) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 32.7 | 16 | 25.4 |
| Advanced Low (B2.1) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6.1 | 3 | 4.8 |
| Intermediate High (B1.2) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6.1 | 3 | 4.8 |
| Unknown | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4.1 | 2 | 3.2 |
| Linguistics Course | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 12 | 100.0 | 2 | 100.0 | 36 | 73.5 | 50 | 79.4 |
| No | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 26.5 | 13 | 20.6 |

As shown in Table 2, the majority of the participants are L2 Spanish-speakers and the majority of the L2 Spanish-speaking teachers identified their oral proficiency level based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) rating scale for oral proficiency² as being advanced-low or higher. This corresponds to B2.1-C2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR), according to ACTFL (2016). Over half of the participants rated themselves as superior, or C2 on the CEFR scale. A smaller percentage of participants were L1 Spanish-speaking teachers and only two participants were heritage language speakers of Spanish. Both heritage speakers rated themselves as Superior (C2 on the CEFR scale) on the ACTFL rating scale for oral proficiency levels.

Participants completed a 29-question online survey delivered in English. The survey, based on Andión Herrera (2009), consisted of 12 questions eliciting background information, four questions about languages participants reported speaking in the classroom, two questions about dialect preferences, eight questions relating these preferences to the classroom, and three questions about previous education in linguistics and willingness to be interviewed. This study focused on two open-ended questions about language preferences. The first question was 'are there certain regional varieties of Spanish you prefer over others? List those varieties and if possible, explain why you prefer them'. The second question was 'are there regional varieties of Spanish that you dislike? List those and explain why you dislike them'. List those and explain why you dislike them.' In this way, we directly engaged participants with their preferences, gathering their beliefs about regional varieties.

5. FINDINGS

Tables 3 to 8 summarizes the findings, which center on (dis)preferred varieties and reasons for their attitudes. The varieties are grouped according to macro-varieties of Spanish (Moreno-Fernández, 2009). For the L2 Spanish-speaking teachers, these preferences are listed based on their proficiency level. Finally, preferences for varieties are shown, based on previous linguistic courses taken, since those who had a previous course on linguistics may be hesitant to have a preferred or dispreferred variety.

Table 3 shows that Mexican/Central American, Castilian, Austral, and Colombian are the most preferred, each receiving a nearly equal share of support. This trend holds true for L2 participants, and also for L1/HS participants if Colombian Spanish is referring to Andean Spanish. It is unclear if Colombian Spanish was intended to be part of the Andean or Caribbean macro-variety, since participants wrote in their preferences. When asked about variety preferences, 70% of the L2 participants preferred a certain regional variety, 58% of the L1 participants and 50% of the HS participants. The varieties mentioned by only a few L2 participants were Chilean and Caribbean and by L1 participants were Colombian and Venezuelan. Southern Cone, which spans two macro varieties, Austral and also Chilean, was mentioned by one L2 participant. One L2 participant prefers formal registers of Spanish, perhaps confusing the term variety with the term register. Of the two heritage speakers, only one expressed a preference for a certain variety, in this case for Castilian Spanish, since it was easier to comprehend compared to Chilean and Cuban Spanish.

² It should be noted that ACTFL levels range from novice-low, novice-mid, novice-high, intermediate-low, intermediate-mid, intermediate-high, advanced-low, advanced-mid, advanced-high, and superior. There is also a level labeled distinguished, which was left off this scale, since that label is not yet used on official oral proficiency interview assessments offered by trained ACTFL raters. It is assumed that most teachers are familiar with the ACTFL proficiency levels as they do comprise the national standard for oral proficiency.

Table 3. Spanish Teachers' Preferred Varieties.

| Variety | L2 | | L1/HS | | Total | |
|--|----|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Andalusian | 1 | 1.62 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.3 |
| Argentinian / Uruguayan / Rioplatense | 12 | 19.7 | 3 | 15.8 | 15 | 18.8 |
| Chilean | 3 | 4.9 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3.8 |
| Colombian | 10 | 16.4 | 2 | 10.5 | 12 | 15.0 |
| Cuban/Dominican/Puerto Rican | 3 | 4.8 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3.8 |
| Mexican/Chilango/Costa Rican/Central American | 15 | 24.5 | 4 | 21.1 | 19 | 23.8 |
| Peninsular/Castilian/Asturian/Galician | 14 | 22.9 | 4 | 21.1 | 18 | 22.5 |
| Peruvian/ Spanish spoken in Lima/Spanish spoken in Bogotá/Bolivian | 1 | 1.6 | 4 | 21.2 | 5 | 6.3 |
| Southern Cone | 1 | 1.6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.3 |
| Venezuelan | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10.5 | 2 | 2.5 |
| Formal registers | 1 | 1.6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.3 |
| Total | 61 | | 19 | | 80 | 100 |

As shown in Table 4, the reasons provided by L1 or HS speaking teachers for preferring a certain variety included that it is the teachers' own variety, it is considered 'proper' and it is considered to be a variety that is easily understandable due to its clear pronunciation. It is worth noting that not every respondent listed reasons for their preferences. One university-level teacher in Ohio wrote, "I use Peninsular Spanish because that's my native variety". Another postsecondary teacher in New Mexico explained their preference for Mexican Spanish "due to the common roots it shares with our Spanish". This aligns with Burns' (2018) call to teach local varieties. An elementary school teacher in Virginia explained a preference for "the Argentinian, Uruguayan, Mexican, Peruvian, and Bolivian accents of well-educated people" and the "Spanish accent from Spain" because they sound "clear, vowels and consonants are well pronounced and not "eaten", and "[t]he accent sounds melodic and correct". This expresses a sentiment of what is correct, which aligns with a standard language ideology and the concept of native-speaker normativity which includes the language practices of educated urban speakers (Train, 2003). All L1 Spanish speaking teachers had previously taken a linguistics course.

Table 4. Reasons for preferred varieties.

| Reason | L2 | | L1/HS | | Total | |
|--|----|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Shares common roots with our Spanish | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 20.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Born and raised speaking it (cultural identity, feels more natural) | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 40.0 | 2 | 4.7 |
| It sounds clear, well-pronounced and correct | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 20.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Easier to understand | 5 | 13.2 | 1 | 20.0 | 6 | 14.0 |
| Studied there (immersion, affection to it, comes more naturally) | 3 | 7.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 7.0 |
| Enjoys the originality of it (how different it sounds from other varieties) | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Feels like home (knows it best and feels more comfortable) | 9 | 23.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 9 | 20.9 |
| Had more exposure to it (through education (in class) or family/ friends/people they interact with/work reasons) | 7 | 18.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 7 | 16.3 |
| Because of its pronunciation and intonation | 7 | 18.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 7 | 16.3 |
| Because of its grammar | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Because of its lexicon | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Because they lived there | 3 | 7.9 | 0 | 0.0 | 3 | 7.0 |
| Because it is pleasing to hear | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Because it is very different from the standard and other varieties | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |

For the L1 teachers with no preference for a variety of Spanish, one who has taught all levels in North Carolina wrote “I prefer not to talk in terms of “preference” of one variety over another. I use the one I grew up speaking and understand that others will use the varieties they learned”. Another from Andalusia wrote “I do not prefer some varieties over others”. These two teachers could be explaining what the researcher wants to hear, or this could be a result of more linguistic awareness towards language and its accompanying prevalent ideologies. Finally, a secondary school teacher wrote “[e]ven though I am cuban [sic], I speak a different spanish [sic]; being a teacher, over the years I refined my speaking so it’s easily understandable by all students so it’s really a hybrid”, explaining how one’s accent can change over time in order to become more comprehensible for students.

For the L2 speaking teachers, familiarity with the variety was the most cited reason for having a preference followed by ease of comprehension and phonological reasons. One preferred Caribbean Spanish in order to resist racism, demonstrating a knowledge of previous research on the topic. A university-level teacher in Wisconsin wrote “I would say I prefer to listen to more formal registers of Spanish, or more ‘prestigious’ varieties--as in the speakers obviously have more education. More formal language also means I don’t have to work hard to understand what is being said (both vocabulary and pronunciation)”, describing the role of register and also familiarity and comprehension. Ideologies may be a contributing factor, where the view of successful native Spanish speakers is one of an educated middle-class person (Train, 2007). Another university-level teacher who had taught in both Minnesota and Iowa wrote “As a linguist, I shouldn’t, but I do. My favorite is Cuban Spanish because of all of [sic] phonological things going on...”, taking the opposite approach of other participants in the study and preferring a variety because of its unique features. Finally, a middle school teacher in Connecticut wrote “I adore Argentine Spanish. I like the pronunciation, the use of the *voseo* [second person singular ‘you’], and the Italian influence. Unfortunately, I can’t teach the *voseo* [second person singular ‘you’] to my students, as our curriculum emphasizes *tú* [second person singular, ‘you’]”.

One university L2 Spanish-speaking teacher in New York expressed no preference for any one variety of Spanish, explaining, “I enjoy learning about and hearing various varieties. Given my current location in the northeast, I am partial to (and surrounded by) Caribbean varieties, which I find very interesting. But it is also not a variety I try to employ in my own speech”, while at the same time expressing a preference for a variety in which there is more familiarity and more input.

There are two main observations that emerge from the survey results. On the one hand preferences are related to the experience and background of the teacher with certain regional varieties as reflected in 22 of the instances by L2-speaking teachers and three of the instances by the L1-speaking teachers. Often, preferences were framed as difficult to comprehend or lack of knowledge about the dispreferred variety as opposed to overtly stating dislike for a variety. On the other hand, preferences deal with aspects of the regional variety itself, how it sounds, its lexicon, its grammar, etc. as reflected in 10 of the instances by L2-speaking teachers and one by an L1-speaking teacher. Both observations relate to whether the variety is easy to understand, which is also relevant to preferences, mainly for L2-speaking teachers as reflected in five of the instances by L2-speaking teachers and one by an L1-speaking teacher. It is not surprising that more L2-speaking teachers were focused on how easy/hard a variety was to understand.

As shown in Table 5, a little over half (51%) of the L2 Spanish-speaking teachers dispreferred a variety. The most common was Caribbean Spanish, mentioned by 22 participants, followed by Peninsular Spanish, mentioned by seven participants. Other dispreferred varieties identified by one or two participants were Andalusian, Mexican, Andean, Argentinian, Chilean, and US Latino Spanish.

Table 5. Spanish Teachers’ Dispreferred Varieties.

| Variety | L2 | | L1/HS | | Total | |
|---|----|------|-------|------|-------|------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Andalusian | 2 | 5.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 4.8 |
| Andean Spanish | 1 | 2.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.4 |
| Argentinian | 1 | 2.7 | 1 | 20.0 | 2 | 4.8 |
| Caribbean/Cuban/Dominican/Puerto Rican | 21 | 56.8 | 2 | 40.0 | 23 | 54.7 |
| Chilean | 2 | 5.4 | 1 | 20.0 | 3 | 7.1 |
| Mexican/Mexican from DF | 2 | 5.4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4.8 |
| Peninsular/Castilian/Spanish from Madrid/North-central Peninsular | 7 | 18.9 | 1 | 20.0 | 8 | 19.0 |
| US Latino | 1 | 2.7 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.4 |
| Total | 37 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 42 | 100 |

According to Table 6, the majority of the reasons for dispreferring certain varieties dealt with unfamiliarity and comprehension issues. While no heritage speakers dispreferred any varieties, 33% of L1 Spanish-speaking dispreferred a variety. These varieties included Castilian, Argentinian, Chilean, and Caribbean. The reasons provided for not preferring certain varieties included comprehensibility of the variety, how the variety sounds, and specific features associated with the variety. This time, Castilian Spanish was dispreferred due to the use of the second person plural pronoun 'vosotros' [second person plural 'you'] which is rarely found outside of Spain.

Table 6. Reasons for dispreferred varieties.

| Reason | L2 | | L1 | | Total | |
|--|----|-------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Finds it a little funny | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| It does not sound clear or well-articulated | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 25.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Hard time understanding – frustrating experience | 11 | 28.2 | 1 | 25.0 | 12 | 27.9 |
| Due to lack of familiarity with grammatical features (specifically <i>vosotros</i>) | 4 | 10.3 | 1 | 25.0 | 5 | 11.6 |
| Due to lack of familiarity with phonological features (specific sounds) | 6 | 15.4 | 0 | 0.0 | 6 | 14.0 |
| Due to lack of familiarity with the vocabulary/lexicon | 5 | 12.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 11.6 |
| Speak extremely quickly | 5 | 12.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 5 | 11.6 |
| Due to lack of familiarity with its slang | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Speakers are mostly uneducated, and they write/speak in an unintelligible manner | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| The pronunciation is difficult | 2 | 5.1 | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 4.7 |
| Due to grammar and syntax being distorted | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| No personal connection with those varieties | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Because it is the standard one (and the one pushed by textbooks) and students should be exposed to what is spoken in the community instead | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| It has elements that come from indigenous languages | 1 | 2.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |
| Total | 39 | 100.0 | 4 | 100.0 | 43 | 100.0 |

The two main reasons seen in Table 6 are unfamiliarity with that regional variety and difficulty in comprehending certain elements of some varieties. Although only one L2-speaking teacher expressed this view, it is notable that they preferred the variety spoken by the majority of Spanish speakers in that community (who are from Latin America) and dispreferred the standard variety from Spain. This signals that more experience with diverse varieties and possibly more education on the features of regional varieties could help ease these concerns and turn dispreferences into neutral status or even preferences.

Two L1 speakers who expressed dispreferences shared their perspectives on the matter. An elementary teacher from Argentina wrote “Personally I do not enjoy the Caribbean, Cuban accents, I find it not clear [sic] and sounds as if the person speaks with “a potato in their mouth”, as if they cannot articulate clearly”, explaining that her unfamiliarity with these accents make them difficult to comprehend. This belief could in turn mean that students are not taught about these dialects, although more information would be needed to confirm this. Meanwhile, a secondary school teacher in Connecticut who is an L1 Spanish speaker from Cuba wrote about the “[h]ard time understanding some argentinnes [sic]”, again implying less familiarity with this variety of Spanish. Even those who stated they did not disprefer any variety were covertly dispreferring a variety. For example, one wrote “[n]ot exactly dislike, but find a little funny: Chilean Spanish”. A Puerto Rican elementary school Spanish teacher wrote “I shy away from Castilian, since it includes verb forms not anywhere outside of Spain. I do expose the kids to the sound of it and include the verb forms, but we don’t really practice them”, expressing a sentiment that implies that some aspects of this variety are included in classroom instruction but are not assessed. This hesitation to teach, practice, and assess elements of the variety suggests the possibility that some features are more valid than others, but also could be a way of focusing more on features of varieties students are more likely to encounter. Meanwhile one Spanish

teacher from Mexico and one from Spain explained how they encourage linguistic diversity. The elementary immersion teacher in Minnesota wrote, “I value all varieties equally. I believe that all varieties of Spanish have its value and richness”. A university level teacher in Ohio noted, “I embrace linguistic diversity within and outside my classroom and I do not dislike any variety”. Again, this level of awareness indicates a high degree of acceptance demonstrated by many linguists, particularly sociolinguists. Additionally, these teachers see language diversity as an “added value rather than an impediment” (Ortiz Jiménez, 2013: 134).

Similarly, some L2 Spanish teachers expanded on their reasonings for dispreferring certain dialects. One university teacher in MN explained, “I really dislike *Madrileño* [‘Madrid’] Spanish. For lack of a better description, it seems so “brusque”/”*brusco*” to me. I think it’s the uvular /x/, the use of “*vosotros*” [second person plural ‘you’] (which to me makes it sound like an entirely different language) and the lexicon. Maybe if I were more familiar with it [sic] I wouldn’t have such a negative reaction to it. The *theta* [interdental fricative] doesn’t bother me”, elaborating on why some features of this variety are bothersome but others are not. This teacher is demonstrating awareness that more familiarity with certain varieties could equate to more positive attitudes towards speakers of that variety. Likewise, an elementary teacher from Minnesota shared two of the same reasons as the previous teacher, explaining that the variety from Spain is dispreferred “because of the *vosotros* [second person plural ‘you’] term” and due to a lack of experience “with slang terms typically used in Spain”. It seems to be common for L2 Spanish teachers to discuss specific features that make the variety dispreferred. A K-12 Spanish teacher in Nebraska exemplifies this by stating, “I dislike dialects that drop the final “s” sound. I dislike Cuban Spanish mostly because they speak extremely quickly and with a lot of vocabulary I don’t know”, explaining that this “dislike stems from [a] discomfort and lack of knowledge of that dialect”. Finally, a California high school Spanish teacher describes a dispreference for “U.S. Latino Spanish because many of them are uneducated when it comes Spanish and so many of the words they write/speak are unintelligible”, expressing a disdain for the influence of English on Spanish after nearly a century of language contact in the area. This also is representative of the standard language ideology that rejects US Latinx bilingual Spanish as it is considered inferior to monolingual Spanish (García & Torres-Guevara, 2009; Showstack, 2018).

Several L2 Spanish teachers stated that they did not disprefer any varieties, but then expressed caveats to this statement which indicated a dispreference usually due to comprehension issues and lack of exposure. For example, a university level teacher in Minnesota stated, “I’m not really comfortable saying I “dislike” any native varieties, but I do have a bit of a hard time with Andalusian Spanish, mostly because it is just strange to me to hear people from Spain not speak the way I’m used to hearing Spaniards speak. I have a difficult time understanding rapid Chilean Spanish, mostly because of all the elided sounds. And Spanish with a decidedly American or British accent really grates on my nerves”. Another university level teacher in Indiana stated that “[s]ome are more difficult...to understand...due to lack of exposure and number of variable features/extent of different varieties”. Another postsecondary teacher in Tennessee explained that “Caribbeans are hard to understand”, while one in Minnesota stated, “I do not dislike Cuban and Dominican Spanish, but I do have trouble understanding them, which is frustrating for me.” Finally, one elementary teacher in Wyoming stated that in spite of not disliking any variety, “the lisps and pronunciation in Spanish from Spain bother [them] a little and also [they] don’t like how their variety is the one pushed by books and publishers as it is the least common variety in US”. They further explain that “[s]tudents should be taught what they are going to hear and interact with in their communities, not the variety that comes from the strongest country”. This may be difficult to predict, since students may encounter more than one variety. Finally, only one teacher of elementary school and university-level Spanish in Minnesota embraced linguistic diversity, stating “I think all varieties are worthwhile and interesting to listen to”.

Table 7 displays the preferred and dispreferred varieties according to the proficiency level of the L2 Spanish teachers. Those who identified as having superior level Spanish expressed preferences mainly for Castilian, Southern Cone, and Mexican Spanish and dispreferences for Caribbean and Castilian Spanish. This trend was similar at the advanced mid or high level. At the advanced low level Colombian Spanish is preferred, while Caribbean Spanish is dispreferred. Overwhelmingly, these results show a dispreference for Caribbean Spanish regardless of the proficiency level of the teacher.

Table 7. Variety preferences based on L2 teachers' proficiency level.

| Preferred Varieties | Superior (C2) | | Advanced Mid/ Advanced High (B2.2-C1) | | Advanced Low (B2.1) | | Intermediate High (B1.2) | | Total | |
|---|---------------|------|---|------|------------------------|------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Andalusian | 0 | 0.0 | | 0.0 | 1 | 12.5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.9 |
| Argentine/Uruguayan/ Chilean/Southern Cone | 10 | 41.7 | 6 | 28.6 | 1 | 37.5 | 0 | 0 | 17 | 31.5 |
| Caribbean/Cuban | 2 | 8.3 | 2 | 9.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7.4 |
| Castilian/Peninsular | 7 | 29.2 | 5 | 23.8 | | 12.5 | 1 | 100.0 | 13 | 24.1 |
| Colombian | 3 | 12.5 | 3 | 14.3 | 3 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 16.7 |
| Mexican/Californian | 6 | 25.0 | 5 | 23.8 | 3 | 37.5 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 14.9 |
| Peru | 1 | 4.2 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 12.5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.9 |
| Formal Registers | 1 | 4.2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1.9 |
| Total Preferred | 24 | 100 | 21 | 100 | 8 | 100 | 1 | 100 | 54 | 100 |
| Dispreferred Varieties | | | | | | | | | | |
| /s/ weakening dialects | 1 | 7.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3.7 |
| Andalusian | 1 | 7.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3.7 |
| Andean | 1 | 7.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3.7 |
| Argentine/Chilean | 1 | 7.1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 25.0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7.4 |
| Caribbean/Cuban | 5 | 35.7 | 4 | 50.0 | 2 | 50.0 | 1 | 100.0 | 12 | 44.4 |
| Castilian/Peninsular/Madrid | 3 | 21.4 | 4 | 50.0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 25.9 |
| Mexican | 1 | 7.1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 25.0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7.4 |
| US Latino Spanish | 1 | 7.1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3.7 |
| Total Dispreferred | 14 | 100 | 8 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 1 | 100 | 27 | 100.0 |

All of the L1 and HS Spanish-speaking teachers had taken a linguistics course prior to filling out the survey. The most preferred varieties for the 31 L2 teachers who indicated having completed a linguistics course were Castilian and Austral followed by Mexican and Colombian, while the most dispreferred varieties were Caribbean and Castilian. For the four L2 Spanish teachers without any previous linguistic course, Austral was the most preferred and Caribbean the least preferred. The other 14 L2 Spanish teachers who completed the survey chose not to respond to this question.

Table 8. Variety preferences of L2 Spanish speakers based on previous linguistics course.

| Preferred Varieties | Previous Linguistics Course | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| | Yes | | No | | Total | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Andalusian | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 10.0 | 1.0 | 4.8 |
| Argentine/Uruguayan/Chilean/Southern Cone | 4 | 16.0 | 4 | 40.0 | 8.0 | 38.1 |
| Castilian/Peninsular | 8 | 32.0 | 1 | 10.0 | 9.0 | 42.9 |
| Colombian | 3 | 12.0 | 2 | 20.0 | 5.0 | 23.8 |
| Cuban/Dominican | 3 | 12.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 3.0 | 14.3 |
| Mexican/Chilango/Californian | 5 | 20.0 | 2 | 20.0 | 7.0 | 33.3 |
| Peru | 1 | 4.0 | | 0.0 | 1.0 | 4.8 |
| Formal Registers | 1 | 4.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 4.8 |
| Total Preferred | 25 | 100.0 | 10 | 100.0 | 35.0 | 166.7 |

Table 8, continued on next page

Table 8, continued from previous page

| Preferred Varieties | Previous Linguistics Course | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|----|-------|-------|-------|
| | Yes | | No | | Total | |
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Dispreferred Varieties | | | | | | |
| Andalusian | 2 | 12.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 2.0 | 9.5 |
| Andean | 1 | 6.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 4.8 |
| Caribbean | 5 | 31.3 | 3 | 60.0 | 8.0 | 38.1 |
| Chilean | 1 | 6.3 | 1 | 20.0 | 2.0 | 9.5 |
| L2 English | 1 | 6.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 4.8 |
| Mexican | 1 | 6.3 | 1 | 20.0 | 2.0 | 9.5 |
| Peninsular/Madrileño | 4 | 25.0 | 0 | 0.0 | 4.0 | 19.0 |
| US Latino Spanish | 1 | 6.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 1.0 | 4.8 |
| Total Dispreferred | 16 | 100.0 | 5 | 100.0 | 21.0 | 100.0 |

6. DISCUSSION

Overall, regional varieties tend to be preferred rather than dispreferred, which is a positive trend toward the sociolinguistic reality of language variation. Castilian Spanish, preferred by 22.5% of the teachers in the study, is among the four most preferred varieties. This aligns with studies on non-teachers where North-Central Peninsular Spanish is sometimes valued more highly than their own Spanish (e.g., Chiquito & Quesada Pacheco, 2014; Callesano & Carter, 2019). However, Castilian Spanish is also dispreferred by 19% of the teachers in the study, making it the second most dispreferred variety after Caribbean Spanish. The covert reasons for the preferred varieties of the teachers in this study are related to familiarity and ease of comprehension of these varieties. Ortiz-Jiménez's (2019) found similar results with L2 Spanish teachers in Australia and Spain rating Castilian higher than Caribbean in terms of status. Due to the Australian teachers' familiarity with the Chilean macro-variety, this type of Spanish was rated high too, again proving the influence of familiarity on dialect preferences. Martínez-Franco's (2019) also found that Spanish teachers in the USA considered Peninsular Spanish to be the most prestigious.

The teachers in the current study disprefer Caribbean varieties, similar to non-teachers (Callesano and Carter, 2018). This aligns with the results of Bárkányi and Fuerte Gutiérrez (2019) whose Spanish teachers in the UK identified five dialects with /s/-weakening as the most difficult regional varieties to comprehend. This also aligns with Ortiz-Jiménez, (2019) whose teachers rated Caribbean Spanish lower in terms of status compared to Peninsular, Mexican, and Colombian Spanish, which were rated higher in Martínez-Franco's (2019) study. The second most common dispreferred variety was Castilian Spanish due to issues of comprehension and the variety's unappealing sound. It appears that not only do teachers hold some similar beliefs about preferred and dispreferred varieties of Spanish, but also that being a teacher does not preclude one from holding attitudes and beliefs about certain varieties and these often match beliefs held by non-teachers.

Varieties of little mention were U.S. Spanish and L2 Spanish. It could be possible that many teachers do not consider U.S. Spanish to be its own macro-variety. This variety was only mentioned once and not expanded upon to specify which type of U.S. Spanish. The fact that L2 Spanish was not mentioned could imply that L1 varieties are more valued and considered the model for students.

Attitudes towards some varieties are expressed in a covert way. Instead of the teacher stating a like or dislike, there is some hedging where the teacher explains why there is a dispreference. In this way, teachers recognize that they should not hold negative attitudes towards any variety and are acknowledging their own biases towards certain varieties. Future research could investigate how such awareness manifests in the language classroom.

This study offers several implications. First, teachers could challenge the belief that any one type of Spanish is difficult to comprehend, since it has more to do with familiarity and experiences with certain varieties than actual comprehension. Perpetuating the idea that Caribbean Spanish is difficult to comprehend racializes this type of Spanish, particularly when other varieties are also admittedly difficult including Argentine Spanish, yet this type of Spanish is rarely dispreferred. In line with Train (2007: 227), this could be considered a discourse that "reproduce[s] racism and social inequality" and should be avoided if critical language awareness is the goal. Teachers could benefit from more awareness about negativity surrounding Caribbean Spanish and perhaps an intervention to make them more aware and better at comprehending certain varieties. The dialect education

that many feel is unnecessary for students could be given to teachers. Second, avoiding monocentric views that promote only one type of Spanish will benefit teachers and students and promote linguistic diversity. Many scholars support the instruction of diverse varieties of second languages (e.g., Arteaga & Llorente, 2009; Farrell & Martin, 2009; Del Valle, 2014; Giménes Folqués, 2015). Because students are likely to encounter multiple varieties of Spanish, they could enhance their ability to understand linguistic diversity by learning about the various dialects of Spanish. One way to teach regionalisms is through the use of a “sociolinguistically responsive pedagogy” aimed at developing learners’ sociolinguistic agency by teaching the concepts (e.g., geographic origin, social distance, power) that the variable forms index (van Compernelle, 2010; van Compernelle & Kinginger, 2013; van Compernelle & Williams, 2012). Finally, teachers could raise students’ awareness of consequences and implications of dialect choice (Del Valle, 2014). Dialect preferences can influence the teaching and exposure to regional varieties of Spanish.

7. CONCLUSIONS

It appears that the preferences for certain varieties of Spanish which date back to the 1600s have not changed much, with Spanish from Spain being valued the highest. In addition, the results of the survey show that teachers perceive /s/-weakening dialects as difficult to comprehend. Teachers’ attitudes match those of non-teachers in regard to preferences for language varieties of Spanish, with some exceptions by teachers who preferred varieties other than Castilian Spanish and a few teachers who valued all varieties, demonstrating no preference for one over the other.

Many features of regional varieties are influenced by socioeconomic status and race, and only two respondents touched on this, although many of the dispreferred features are found in lower class speech. Also, this paper focuses on preferences for regional varieties as opposed to issues related to the teaching (or not) of regional varieties since that is beyond the scope of this paper. Examining how language preferences are displayed in the classroom, similar to Martínez-Franco (2019), could expand on this study to show the actual behaviors associated with the language preferences.

In this study, language attitudes are gathered directly by open-ended survey questions, as opposed to the indirect methods used in Ortiz-Jiménez (2019). In doing so, unconscious attitudes and preferences are not displayed. Moreover, the fact that the majority of the participants in the current study taught at the university level, and many were trained as linguists, makes the findings even more telling, showing that preferences can transcend scientific training. The outcome appears to be similar, regardless of the direct or indirect measurement of attitudes, with Castilian Spanish being rated highly for status in Ortiz-Jiménez (2019) and being one of the most preferred varieties in the current study.

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