

**V. INTERNATIONAL LINGUISTICS AND
LANGUAGE CONFERENCE**

LILA '18

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

LINGUISTIC ATTITUDES OF THE SPANISH SPEAKERS FROM LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES AND SPAIN RESPECT TO THE SPANISH SPOKEN IN COLOMBIA

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Abstract

The present paper analyzes linguistic attitudes of Hispanic speakers towards the Spanish spoken in Colombia. The data analyzed here comes from different studies (Rojas, 2014; Flores, 2014; among others), which are the result of the research project Linguistic identity and Attitudes in Spanish-speaking Latin America – LIAS, funded by The Research Council of Norway. That project analyzes 8000 surveys (400 per country) applied in the capital city of 20 Hispanic countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, España, Guatemala, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Perú, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela. The present paper includes a quantitative analysis focused on the emerging categories of correctness, unity, otherness, media, and associations between features and speakers. Also it includes a qualitative analysis focused on the emerging categories of pronunciation, understanding, affection, politeness, education and culture, identity and standard variety.

Keywords

Linguistic attitudes, linguistic otherness, linguistic unity, linguistic correctness, media.

1. Introduction

1.1 The best Spanish of the World in the so called "South American Athens": Colombia

Sandoval (2011 pp. 181-187) reviews arguments that support the idea that Colombian people speak the best Spanish of the world. Some of those arguments are the following: 1) The Colombian Academy of the Spanish Language (Academia Colombiana de la Lengua) was the first established in America; 2) the cundiboyacense variety of the Colombian Spanish is considered neutral; 3) Colombian people's speech is understandable; 4) Colombia has a long-standing tradition of linguistic and lexicographical studies in Spanish language.

The idea around the world's best Spanish is spoken in Colombia evidences a positive attitude towards the speech of Bogota. This attitude emerged in the 19th century with the idea that Bogotá was a cultured city with citizens appreciated for their behaviors and values, and even its phenotype (Melo, 1992 p. X). From an external view, people from Bogota were seen as educated and with communicative skills that evidenced and emphasized their intelligence and generosity (Cané, 1968 p.178).

Such linguistic, cognitive and cultural characteristics were creating the imaginary that would label the city of Bogotá as the "South American Athens". In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Colombian politicians such as Miguel Antonio Caro, Rafael Núñez and Rafael Uribe Uribe, José Manuel Marroquín, among others, and scientists like Rufino José Cuervo, Ezequiel Uricoechea, José María Vergara and Vergara, etc., tried to consolidate a national identity based on the use of a "right speech" by citizens (Deas, 1993 p.30).

The "right speech" was implemented as a grammatical, lexicographic and phonetic model, being part of a search for national identity, based on the maintenance of the social order through cultural and literary traditions. The model of "right speech" was disseminated on education, guided by representatives of the ruling and educated social classes.

The positive attitudes of Spanish speakers from Bogotá, and even the perception of their own speech as a linguistic model, come from the 19th century and coincide with other Spanish-American realities in which this perception still prevails until today, with a system of values, beliefs and attitudes that have been maintained due to a hegemonic position based on the prestige, political, socio-economic and academic position of language theorists, as well as their impact on education, the press, government and language institutions.

The idea that the best Spanish in the world is spoken in Colombia is a linguistic attitude. The studies of linguistic attitudes in Colombia, or about Colombia, (according to Bernal *et al.*, 2014), are divided into two groups: firstly, assessments of Colombian speakers regarding variants of their own country; and secondly, linguistic attitudes in contexts of bilingualism. However, there is no research that focuses on the attitudes of Spanish-speaking countries toward Colombian speech. Some research projects do a comparative work of linguistic attitudes on several countries that include Colombia; for instance, Bentivoglio and Sedano (1999) deal with the attitudes of Caracas and Madrilenians toward their speech and the dialects of Argentina, the Canaries, Colombia, Cuba and Mexico. Moreover, Alvar and Quilis (1984) study the reactions of Cuban speakers to different varieties of Spanish, and Solé (1992) takes into account attitudes towards Iberian and American Spanish.

Despite the work that has been done, there is no research that identifies attitudes toward Spanish spoken in Colombia, which includes informants from all Spanish-speaking countries, for this reason, this present paper seeks to fill this gap.

1.2. Attitudes

Attitude is a concept emerged in the 1940s from social psychology. In the 1960s, it was conceptualized in the field of sociolinguistics and involved a willingness to react in favor of, or against, certain objects or persons (Sarnoff, 1970 p.279). Attitudes are structured into three dimensions (Rockeach, 1968; Allport, 1954): A cognitive component grounded on perceptions, beliefs and stereotypes; an affective component based on emotions and feelings; and a conative component that represents the tendency to act in a certain way. Attitudes, as psychological constructs, cannot be directly observed, therefore they must be deduced by the researcher (Oppenheim, 1982 p.32). They do not always lead to actions, so they cannot always predict events, which imply the difficulty of measuring and setting data classification criteria (Hernández Campoy, 2004). Attitudes are learned, they are relatively stable, and are implicit. They refer to specific linguistic phenomena or to linguistic systems (Potter & Wetherell, 1987 p.45).

Studies on linguistic attitudes allow to establish central relations between language and society (Garrett, 2001 p.630), since attitudes are representations, ideas, concepts, opinions, feelings, sensations, perceptions that lead to judgments of some speakers about how other people speak (Garrett, 2001 p.630), either they use the same linguistic variety, a different one, or another language. They may influence the way a language variety user identifies or distances himself from a particular group. From this perspective, the study of linguistic attitudes can help to determine reasons why users of a linguistic variety accept, develop, stimulate or reject different language uses or speakers in specific situations.

2. Methodology

This article is based on the data obtained from the research project Linguistic Identity and Attitudes in Spanish-Speaking Latin America (LIAS), funded by the Research Council of Norway, by researchers in the capitals of twenty Spanish-speaking countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The information was collected in direct conversation with the informants. Initially, the information was written in questionnaires, composed of 41 questions, and later, it was organized as a database on the Surveyxact platform. Answers of 400 people were surveyed for each capital.

The data used here are taken directly from the articles such as Rojas (2014); Flores, (2014), among others, where the LIAS results are published for each one of the capitals surveyed.

The criteria for determining the attitudes of Spanish-speaking countries toward Spanish spoken in Colombia were classified according to the criteria of correctness, unity, otherness and associations related to questions 14, 17, 22 and 23 of the LIAS questionnaire:

-CORRECTNESS: 14. In your opinion, what country do you consider the place where Spanish is spoken more correctly?

-UNIT: 22. If we all had to speak the same Spanish, which country would you like it to be?

-OTHERNESS: 23. If I had to change the accent of Spanish, which country would you prefer?

-MEDIA: 17. What national variety of Spanish would you like to see on TV news?

With this, we compare the responses of each article; nevertheless, not all the articles published the responses of their informants toward the countries that were questioned. In this sense, quantitative results are presented based on the total number of countries that appear in each response.

3. Analysis

3.1. Correctness

The linguistic correctness replies to a series of norms conventionalized by a community that are transmitted in order to make a social regulation of communicative exchanges. Correctness guidelines in Spanish come from norms of institutions whose mission is to regulate the use of the language -*e.g.*, RAE (Real Academia Española) or Fundéu BBVA (Fundación del español urgente)-, from systems of Language Planning and Policy (LPP), and from symbolical community systems that exhibit values such as status, prestige or solidarity, among others.

The correctness norms are not univocal, but rather replies to differentiated communicative situations and circumstances determined by the features of speakers, such as age, social class, gender, geographical origin, and membership of a community or culture.

In addition, Language Planning and Policy seek a standard correctness, trying to keep one system to ensure linguistic unity, and delimit the uses of people who (want to) belong to a community.

The norm of standard correctness is based on criteria such as origin, historicity, legitimacy, authority, education, prestige, tradition, belonging to a culture, identity, progress, geographical circumstances. It is justified from the linguistic criteria linked to grammar, phonology, lexicon and spelling, registered in the handbooks of RAE and the Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española (ASALE).

When LPP is effective, the language users internalize the norm and the criteria of correctness, and they lose the awareness that it is exogenous. This is because, for generations, it has been transmitted and begins to be part of the cultural principles that have circulated through the school, the media and the family, and permeate all social systems. Therefore, speakers' attitudes are shaped and oriented by LPP, which stay for several generations of speakers.

The standard norm offers to the community access to the various systems of society, both in terms of belonging and the symbolic configuration of identity, and it also enables speaker to satisfy their rights and needs (Garrett, 2010 pp.13, 15), therefore, by using standard norm and following the correctness criteria, speakers are more likely to obtain jobs, education and social mobility. By contrast, the speech of those who do not follow the standard norm is judged as incorrect and consequently stigmatized.

On average, surveyed informants from 19 countries showed the following distribution when choosing the country where the most corrected Spanish is spoken: Spain 41%, 19% chose their own country, and Colombia was selected in the third place with a 10% across informants.

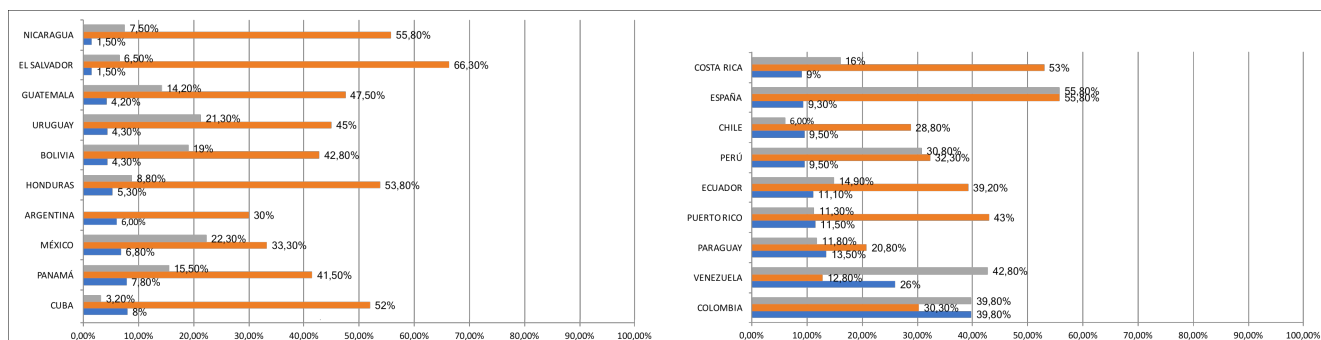


Figure 1. Correctness attitudes towards Colombia, Spain and their own country.

It is remarkable to note the contrast between the perception of speakers' own Spanish variety and the Colombian variety. For instance, the countries that considered Colombian variety more correct than their own one are: Paraguay, 11.80% compared to 13.50%; Puerto Rico, 11.30% compared to 11.50%; Chile, 9.50% versus 6%; and Cuba, 3.20 versus 8%. Meanwhile, 13.50% of respondents considered the opposite, that their dialect is more correct than the others.

The countries which consider that their variety is more correct than the other countries are: Spain (55.80%), Venezuela (42.80%), and Colombia (39.80%).

The countries that consider Spanish spoken in Spain is less correct than theirs one are: Colombia 39.80%, against 30.30%; and Venezuela 42.80%, against 12.80%.

Venezuela was the only country besides Colombia that considers that the Spanish of Colombia is more correct (26%) than the one from Spain (12.80%).

The countries that consider that the speech of Spain is more correct than theirs are: Bolivia, 42.80% compared to 19%; Ecuador, 39.20% versus 14.90%; Peru, 32.30% versus 30.80%; Costa Rica, 53% versus 16%; Panamá, 41.50% versus 15.50%; México, 33.30% compared to 22.30%; Honduras, 53.80% versus 8.80%; Uruguay, 45% versus 21.30%; Guatemala, 47.50% versus 14.20%; El Salvador, 66.30% compared to 6.50%; and Nicaragua, 55.80% compared to 7.50%.

The informants gave the reason why they selected the answer. Based on such responses, emerging categories of description and analysis were identified: positive attitudes towards phonology, communication/understanding, aesthetic/affective, lexico-semantic, politeness/education/culture, forms of address, identity, standard; and also, negative attitudes.

3.1.1. Positive Attitudes

3.1.1.1. Phonology

The informants of Spanish-speaking capitals consider that Colombian Spanish has a neutral accent, does not elide phonemes (such as /s/ or /r/), and they liked this speech because is quiet, modulated, measured, clear and fluid:

Chile

Pronounce all the letters	Rojas, 2012 p.50; 2014 p.148
They pronounce correctly the /s/	
They modulate	

Cuba	
I like their accent, it is so correct	Sobrinó <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.353
They pronounce all the /s/	
They talk slowly	

Ecuador	
They have a nice accent, their expression and their pronunciation are "correct"	Flores, 2014 p.444
They pronounce the /r/ and the /ʎ/ better	
They pronounce all the letters slowly and are elegant	

Guatemala	
They like the accent	Acevedo & Quesada Pacheco, 2014 p.675
They pronounce the words well	
They speak very fluently	

Mexico	
I have heard how they speak, and they did not speak "singing"	Morett, 2014 p.906
I feel that they speak very measured	

Honduras	
They have a pleasant sound	Hernández, 2014 p.761
They have good pronunciation	
They are educated	
I like the accent	
They talk slow	
I like the pitch	

Uruguay	
They have an alleged neutrality in the pronunciation	García, 2014 p.1382

Dominican Republic	
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They speak with...clarity with a neutral accent	Severino, 2014 p.1320
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Panama	
It has been recognized in countless occasions as the variant of Spanish that produces delight in the ear	Tinoco, 2014 p.1034

3.1.1.2. Communication / Understanding

The informants consider that the speech of the Colombians is understandable, clear and precise, in addition it has expressivity:

Chile	
Understandable	Rojas, 2012 p.50; 2014 p.148
What they speak is understandable	

Cuba	
What they speak is understood well (clearly)	Sobrino <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.353

Mexico	
I feel that they speak very measured, very precise	Morett, 2014 p.906

Dominican Republic	
The Colombians have a good expression, speak with precision and clarity.	Severino, 2014 p.1320

3.1.1.3. Aesthetic / Affective

Informants rate Colombians' speech as pretty and affectionate; it is also considered sweet, cheerful, funny, warm, and, in some cases, sensual:

Chile	
It is pretty	Rojas, 2014 p.148
It is happy and fun	Rojas, 2014 p.159
It is sensual	
It is sweet	
It is warm	
It is engaging	
It is relaxing	
It is loving	Rojas & Avilés, 2013 p.111; Rojas, 2014 p.159
Colombia heads the hierarchical list of preferences based on the affective dimension and is the only country whose speech is considered very	Rojas, 2014 p.166

pleasant	
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Cuba	
Speak funny, speak the language very nicely	Sobrino <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.353

Honduras	
It sounds pretty	Hernández, 2014 p.761

Spain	
Sounds pretty to me	Luijpen, 2012 p.44; Yraola, 2014 p.604

Argentina	
The respondents said that these varieties are "sweeter"	Llull & Pinardi, 2014 p.54

Costa Rica	
Affection	Calvo & Castillo, 2014 p.271

Panama	
The perception of Colombian speech as affectionate	Tinoco, 2014 p.1054

3.1.1.4. Lexical Semantics

Informants highlight the richness of the vocabulary used by Colombians, they value the standard language. In Panama, the use of the affective diminutive attributed especially to Colombian women is appreciated:

Chile	
They have a lot of vocabulary	Rojas, 2014 p.148
They have few idioms	
They do not have many idioms, pet phrases, or scribbles	

Cuba	
They say the words as they are	Sobrino <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.353
They conjugate well the verbal forms	

Dominican Republic	
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They do not cripple the language	Severino, 2014 p.1320
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Ecuador		
In the case of Colombia, the informants recognize the good educational lexicon		Flores, 2014 p.453

Panama		
Usually, they use terms in diminutive which produces an affectionate hue, specially, from women		Tinoco, 2014 p.1051

3.1.1.5. Politeness / Education / Culture

The speech of the Colombians is perceived to the informants as polite, courteous, respectful, elegant, and it is highlighted that they do not use "naughty words":

Chile		
Respect and politeness that the people perceives in Colombian speech, which some exemplify through the use of "usted"		Rojas, 2014 p.148
They do not use naughty words		

Cuba		
For the education of their people		Sobrino <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.353
They address each other as "usted", and that gives respect.		
They are more serious, use "Don", "Señor".		
They are not naughty		
A certain sense of hierarchy, distinction and prestige towards the Colombian modality		Sobrino <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.398

Guatemala		
They do not use naughty words		Acevedo & Quesada Pacheco, 2014 pp.675-676
The cultural level		

Honduras		
They are educated		Hernández, 2014 p.761
They are elegant		

Costa Rica		
The most highly valued country in most of the characteristics was Colombia, given its high values in trust in the treatment, respect		Calvo & Castillo, 2014 p.270-271

Ecuador	
In the case of Colombia, the informants recognize the good lexicon due to their education	Flores, 2014 p.453

Mexico	
I think they refer in a very loving, sometimes respectful way	Morett, 2014 p.923
I want to be addressed with "usted"	

Venezuela	
Thus, the linguistic attitudes of Caracas are positive toward Colombia, for affective beliefs, based on attributes of affection, humor and trust, and cognitive beliefs, based on technology, elegance and respect	Coello, 2014 p.1508

Panama	
It is nice to listen to people who treat your interlocutor affectionately and kindly	Tinoco, 2014 p.1051

Nicaragua	
In some parts of Colombia, people also use "vos"	Zamora, 2014 p.987

3.1.1.6. Identity

Informants enhance Colombian Spanish's similarity with their own in the accent, the lexicon, and perceive cultural, geographical and historical proximity, in some cases by migration of Colombian countries, factors that lead to an identification and a sense of belonging to the Colombian same dialectal group:

Chile	
One of the participants prefers it because it is similar to Chilean Spanish	Rojas, 2014 p.159

Cuba	
They speak identical to Cuba	Sobrino <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.353
They speak just like the Santiago people	

Ecuador	
They speak like us	Flores, 2014 p.444

Panama	
Geographical proximity, similar culture, soap operas and, in addition, for the large number of citizens of those countries residing in Panama	Tinoco, 2014 p.1039

The historical circumstances undoubtedly bind us to this country, and although we have different accents, the words are often the same	Tinoco, 2014 p.1041
We have a daily coexistence with a large number of foreigners from that country	Tinoco, 2014 p.1054

Venezuela	
The positive attitude toward Colombia takes place in the affective recognition of the internal group	Coello, 2014 p.1480

Dominican Republic	
The proximity between the Dominican Republic and Colombia can be a relevant factor, since many words are shared	Severino, 2014 pp.1333-1334
Venezuela, Colombia y Cuba, ...These nations share with each other many religious, cultural, social and dialectical traditions, which favors the acceptability towards them	

3.1.1.7. Standard Spanish

The informants consider that Colombian Spanish respects the standard norm, because their uses are considered "pure", their Spanish is "universal", and has a prestigious and recognized literature. These ideas are fostered in the school system of several countries:

Cuba	
This is the one that dictates the language, they respect enough its norm, the rules of the language	Sobrino <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.353

Guatemala	
His Spanish is the purest	Acevedo & Quesada Pacheco, 2014 p.675

Mexico	
I know that the speech there is a little better. I have been told that at school	Morett, 2014 p.885
There are studies that prove it. It can be admired in its literature	
I like that they express themselves well	Morett, 2014 p.906

Venezuela	
The positive attitude towards Colombia takes place in the recognition of prestige, due to its social convention over the linguistic norm	Coello, 2014 p.1480

Uruguay	
Being the possessors of a "universal" Spanish	García, 2014 p.1382

3.1.1.8. Mass Media

The mass media, especially with products such as soap operas, have been a central factor for the participants in the survey to know and value positively the variant of Colombian Spanish:

Guatemala	
It is known for its international prestige, which is manifested through publications	Acevedo & Quesada Pacheco, 2014 p.675

Nicaragua	
Some of these informants consider that Spanish is spoken "more correct" [in mass media] because of the taste and preference for television programming in these countries, which is presented on national and international (cable) channels.	Zamora, 2014 p.972
Colombia in relation to Nicaragua is not a distant country; Betty la fea; however, the element that most contribute to shape the positive attitude is probably the influence of Colombian soap operas (Betty la fea; Café, con aroma de mujer; Pedro el escamoso; etc.) and TV series (El cartel de los sapos; Sin tetas no hay paraíso; etc.) that have been broadcast on the local channels and that have had great acceptance among the Nicaraguan viewers.	Zamora, 2014 p.993

El Salvador	
There is such a lack of awareness about the speech of South America, except in countries with enough production of television programs. These countries have obtained very good citizen perceptions, as for example, in the cases of Argentina and Colombia.	Rivera, 2014 p.548

Honduras	
In fact, the Spanish spoken in Argentina, Venezuela, Chile and Colombia has made great influence on Honduras since June 28, 2009, when the country went into a political crisis. From that moment on, mass media from those countries have spread all over our land	Hernández, 2014 p.781

Dominican Republic	
Also in the Dominican Republic many TV programs from Colombia are transmitted. This could influence the preference of the people and their familiarity with the language, since they interact more with the variety of the Spanish from these two countries	Severino, 2014 p.1333-1334

Panama	
Due to the imports of Colombian and Venezuelan TV productions, especially soap operas, the listening to the way of speaking from the people	Tinoco, 2014 p.1048

transmitting these programs makes them quite agreeable to ear.	
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Argentina	
Another factor influencing the election is the relationship with soap opera characters from those countries that have broadcast massively in Argentina	Llull & Pinardi, 2014 p.54

Cuba	
In a tour for our research, [Colombian variety] has been highly accepted and located among the four or five countries that habaneros prefer as a variant in their media, as well as the second "more correct"	Sobrino <i>et al.</i> , 2014 p.398

3.1.2. Negative Attitudes

Some negative attitudes toward Colombian Spanish are given by the use of personal pronouns like "usted" insofar as it is stigmatized by some informants. It is also criticized the idea or myth that in Colombia people speak the best Spanish. On the other hand, some informants associate Colombian people with the violence, drug trafficking, armed and social conflicts that are presented in their soap operas:

Mexico	
They talk weird, I have seen movies and they use "usted" a lot, even among young people	Morett, 2014 p.926
They address as <i>usted</i> , even in couples	
Because they talk address each other as <i>usted</i> , they feel that they do not know each other	
I do not know Colombia, but it has the reputation that they speak well, better Spanish. Actually, it is a rumor	
I do not know, but they say that in these two countries [Colombia and Venezuela] they speak the cleanest Spanish, but I do not know	

Panama	
In the case of Colombia, we have a daily coexistence with a large number of foreigners from that country and, in addition, the aggressive image that is seen through the soap operas where they show their reality (drug trafficking, guerrillas, etc.)	Tinoco, 2014 p.1054
A large number of Colombian soap operas, whose storyline is based on presenting socio-economic problems, such as drug and human trafficking	Tinoco, 2014 pp.1034-1035

3.2. Unity and otherness

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, before the separation of the last American colonies of Spain, there is a cultural response; for the Spanish linguistics, Menéndez Pidal had guided a process that would extend until the 1960s, a period where the linguistic norm would be determined from a cultured norm tutored by scientific, academic and institutional authorities led by the RAE, under the premise that the cultured language is the only one that allows communicative

mobility, and the language permanence through time and space, along with its values and the prestigious traditions of the Hispanic community. Later, the ideology of standard Spanish, in the last three decades of the 20th century, would be based on the idea of the Spanish as a language of culture with its tradition and its glorious and historical moments of great prestige. A national language that is oriented towards a global community, broadly universal and transnational.

The mobility of the economy and the rise of the mass media have made possible to identify, mainly from Spain, that the Spanish language is a privileged vehicle which transports culture, ideas, people and objects, and is therefore a profitable commercial resource projected to the progress of the great Spanish-speaking community, and the progress of the entire humanity, eliminating with this the concepts of physical and cultural boundaries (Del Valle, 2007 pp.46, 52) [...] Speakers are united by a loyalty to a common standard of language, broad, democratic, anonymous and universal (Gal & Woolard, 2001 p.6).

The search for unity in Spanish is framed within the ideology of Panhispanism that propagates the idea of cultural and linguistic unity, even in the diversity of the Spanish-speaking world, which is part of the ideology for the standard language. There is a possible contradiction between unity, democracy and universality, and the diversity of the Spanish. However, the RAE does not leave out the polycentric reality of Spanish, where the different norms are recognized and legitimized depending on countries or regions, and solves the issue on the condition that the educated speakers, (*i.e.*, the subjects of standardization) use the standard norm in each geographical area as a focus for linguistic norm (Méndez, 2012 p.281).

The recognition and positive appreciation of diversity has been increasing in Latin America, according to Moreno (2011 p.9), "*The Multicultural State-Nation project promoted by contemporary societies is based on the recognition of diversity, differentiated rights and equality as a structural condition of community life*". In this way, the discussion on multiculturalism and the recognition of diversity is central to the international political agenda with the recognition of cultural rights as human rights, in the case of Latin America, they have been included in the constitutions of their countries (cf. Harvey, 1996). UNESCO adopted in 2001 the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, a document intended to complement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with the emphasis on cultural diversity, tolerance, respect, understanding and international cooperation.

The opening to diversity, the recognition of multiple, adaptable and changing identities, depending on circumstances and contexts, is part of the postmodern constitution of subjects, "*whose identity is continuously shaped and changed in relation to the different ways of representing the cultural systems that surround them*" (Morgenthaler, 2008 p.132).

Diversity, with its multicultural, polycentric expression and its situational linguistic variation, is a reality that coexists with the search for linguistic unity and the permanence of a linguistic standard for Spanish in the different countries where it is spoken. Taking into account what has been said, we will review the responses of Spanish informants from their points of view regarding the unity and linguistic diversity, and the position of Colombia in these responses (Tables 1 and 2).

UNITY	SPAIN	ARGENTINA	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	TOTAL
COLOMBIA	19,30%	20%		19%	58,30%
PERU	25%	13,50%		17,80%	56,30%
GUATEMALA	26,60%	17,70%	7,50%		51,80%
EL SALVADOR	35%	14%			49,00%
PUERTO RICO	24%	11,80%	7,30%		43,10%
CUBA	40,80%	10,5%	6,8%	7,8%	40,80%
ESPAÑA	16,50%	20,50%			37,00%
MEXICO	23,30%	13%			36,30%
COSTA RICA	19%	13%			32,00%
CHILE	30,30%				30,30%
PARAGUAY	8,80%	9,30%	8,3%	11,60%	29,70%
BOLIVIA	18,30%		9,30%		27,60%
HONDURAS	27,20%				27,20%
VENEZUELA			21,30%		21,30%
PANAMÁ	16%				16,00%
NICARAGUA		8,80%		6,80%	15,60%
ECUADOR	14,20%				14,20%
AVERAGE	20,25%	8,33%	4,92%	3,25%	36,75%

Table 1. Attitudes toward Spanish unity

OTHERNESS	SPAIN	ARGENTINA	COLOMBIA	MEXICO	TOTAL
ECUADOR	14,20%				14,20%
NICARAGUA		8,80%	6,80%		15,60%
PANAMA	16%				16,00%
BOLIVIA	18,30%			9,30%	27,60%
PARAGUAY	8,80%	9,30%	11,60%		29,70%
HONDURAS	27,20%			12,30%	39,50%
COSTA RICA	19%	13%		11%	43,00%
PUERTO RICO	24%	11,80%		7,30%	43,10%
CHILE	30,30%			13,30%	43,60%
GUATEMALA	26,60%	17,70%			44,30%
MÉXICO	23,30%	13%		8,50%	44,80%
ESPAÑA	16,50%	20,50%		10%	47,00%
EL SALVADOR	35%	14%			49,00%
PERU	25%	13,50%	17,80%		56,30%
COLOMBIA	19,30%	20%	19%		58,30%
CUBA	40,80%	10,50%	7,80%	6,80%	65,90%
AVERAGE	22%	10%	5%	4%	43%

Table 2. Attitudes toward Spanish otherness

On average, the informants from 17 surveyed countries chose Spain 20.25%, Argentina 8.33%, Colombia 4.92%, and Mexico 3.25%, among the first four places, as the country for the unity of Spanish.

The countries where informants more highly chose Spain were Cuba 40.80%, El Salvador 35%, Chile 30.30%, Honduras 27.20%, and Guatemala 26.60%. Also, the countries where informants more highly chose Argentina were Spain 20.50%, Colombia 20%, Guatemala 17.70%, El Salvador 14%, and Peru 13.50%. On the other hand, the countries that chose Colombia were Venezuela 21.30%, Bolivia 9.30%, Paraguay 8.3%, Guatemala 7.50%, Puerto Rico 7.30%, and Cuba 6.8%; and the only country that chose Colombia as first option was Venezuela.

4. Conclusions

The answer of informants from 19 capital cities of Spanish speaking countries about the country where they consider that the most correct Spanish is spoken inclined for Spain 41%, their own country 19% and Colombia 10%. The reasons given for the choice of Colombia respond to phonological criteria, such as: non-elision of sounds and a paused speech rate. In addition, it is considered that the variety is clear, understandable, precise, beautiful, affectionate, sweet, and happy, also Colombian speaking way was associated with education, courtesy and culture. Some informants identify themselves with the speech, culture and the common history of the Colombians. One of the knowledge-expansion focuses for Colombian Spanish is the soap operas broadcast on TV channels in different countries where Spanish is spoken. Some negative attitudes towards Colombian speaking arise from the soap operas where political and social conflicts are shown, emphasizing violence and drug trafficking.

The four most chosen countries by LIAS's informants regarding the criteria of correctness, unity and otherness are: Spain 33%, Colombia 17%, Argentina 6% and Mexico 3%. The highest average in the three criteria was obtained by Spain. Argentina was in the second place with unity and otherness; nevertheless, Argentinian variety is not considered as correct. Contrastively, Colombian Spanish was selected as the second most correct, but is still below Spain and Argentina in the perception of unity and otherness.

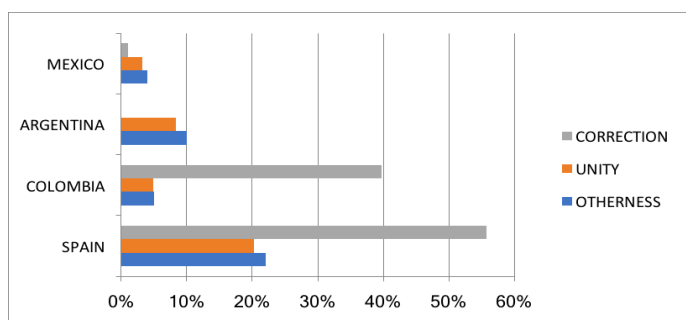


Figure 2. Correctness, unity and otherness attitudes towards Spain, Colombia, Argentina and Mexico.

We can see that the speech of the countries more selected by the informants coincides with the standard radiating centers of the Spanish-American dialects proposed by authors such as Cahuzac (1990) or Quesada (2014). Therefore, the speech of Mexico is preferred for the zone of Mexico and Central America; the speech of Colombia was selected for the zone of the Andean Region; the speech of Argentina stands out for the zone of the Southern Cone. And in addition to this, Spain stands out in all the positive attitudes of the informants.

Then, it was observed a normative polycentrism of Spanish, since the informants of Spanish-speaking countries accept the diversity of linguistic norms, other than their linguistic self-awareness and the election of their own linguistic variety as correct with a 19%.

From the above, Spanish speakers considered that the best Spanish is from Spain, because it is considered as more correct, and it would be chosen in the given case that there was dialectal unity, or if it was necessary to change the linguistic variety. Colombia stands out due to the idea of that Colombian people speak a correct Spanish, and this variety is within the four dialects that presented more positive attitudes. The reasons given by the informants regarding their choice for Spanish spoken in Spain, Argentina and Mexico would still remain to be reviewed in further analyses.

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