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AN EXPLORATION ON THE SPANISH CARIBBEAN DIALECTICAL COMMUNITY:
¿UNIDOS O SEPARADOS?

by

BRYAN JO'MAR JIMENEZ

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Latin American Studies
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ABSTRACT

Latin America holds a diverse array of people and language. Even regions and countries that speak the same language tend to speak it differently. This leads to interesting variations in language and speech. Most people of Latin American origin are able to note that Mexican Spanish and Puerto Rican Spanish are different in terms of intonation, speech pattern, vocabulary, and more. Most popular theories that section Latin America off by dialects group the entirety of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean into a single dialectical community. Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic each hold unique histories and are home to a fascinating array of different cultures and people. Using previously conducted linguistic investigations and research, the goal of this thesis is to make a case which acknowledges the linguistic diversity that exists in the Hispanic Caribbean which will be further supported by theories of sociolinguistics and the historical linguistic model.

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¡Pa'lante!

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An Exploration on the Spanish Caribbean Dialectical Community: ¿Unidos o separados?

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the initial European colonization of the Caribbean, the region has been a unique array of languages, cultures, and people. These islands are often divided by their language since this distinction typically means that these groups of islands share similar identities. The Hispanic Caribbean- consisting of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico- is a testament to this fact. This group of islands share similar language, culture, customs, and more. It is because of these similarities that this group is often clumped together to make their own dialectical speech community. After all, much of the rest of Latin America has a difficult time being able to understand everyday Hispanic Caribbean speech. However, while this might be the case, there are also many differences between the languages of these three countries. These divergences in language include the language of origin for select vocabulary, syntax, and alternative meanings for identical words. Despite these island nations being relatively small, they all hold an abundance of linguistic diversity that challenges the notion of a correlative linguistic community.

My reason for taking on this research task is that I find the fields of linguistics and languages fascinating. The way that we all communicate but communicate in different ways has always interested me. Not only this, but the fact that language has the power to change your perception of yourself and the world around you is astonishing. Language has the ability to change the way that people interpret time, space, and convey emotion. I am very fond of foreign languages

because every new language gives you more insight into different cultures while also allowing you to see the world from the perspective of their native speakers. If you are lucky, you may even learn something different about the way you perceive your environment. However, I felt that I needed to do something closer to home for my first major research project and since I am Puerto Rican and Spanish is my first language, I decided to take this opportunity to learn more about how Spanish is spoken in the Caribbean. As someone from the Caribbean, I always thought of Cuba and the Dominican Republic as sister countries because of our shared history and similar cuisine. In spite of this, I also thought of these countries as worlds apart from Puerto Rico, both politically and socially. When doing preliminary research for this project, I was surprised to find that most dialectology models placed all three island nations into one dialectical community. Some of these models even included coastal regions of countries like Venezuela and Mexico in the same community. It seemed like the Caribbean was an afterthought in these models. As a result of this, I wanted to create a synthesis of different sources and research to defend the Caribbean's uniqueness and richness in linguistic diversity.

LANGUAGE AND DIALECTICAL SPEECH COMMUNITIES

Language, much like culture, follows a similar lifespan to humans. They arise, grow, mature, rebel against the norm, change, and die. To begin the analysis on the Caribbean dialectical community, the basis for what language is must first be established. According to Alvar-Lopez, language can be defined as

the linguistic system of which a speaking community makes use and that is characterized by being heavily differentiated, by possessing a high degree of leveling, by being the vehicle of an important literary tradition and, in some cases, by having imposed itself upon other linguistic systems of the same origin (55).

However, most people only utilize a fraction of any language. The majority of the language one uses is heavily influenced by the region one resides in, class, education, and more social and geographical indicators. Oftentimes, geographical or social boundaries prevent the exchange of language and, as a result, language diverges. These regional language differences create dialects which make it harder for people who speak the same language to fully converse. A *dialect* can be defined as “a local non-prestigious variety of an established language” (Wardhaugh and Fuller 26). A *dialectical speech community* within this research is defined as “a shared set of abstract, tacit norms, externalized as shared patterns of variation and subjective evaluation” (Claes 6). Lastly, the geographical space that a dialectical speech community occupies is referred to as a ‘dialect area.’

Accents and Dialects

There is another important distinction that should be made before continuing. The terms “accent” and “dialect” are occasionally used interchangeably. For the purposes of this thesis, they are separate terms that interact in meaningful ways. An *accent* can be defined as the variety in pronunciations of a certain language and refers to the sounds that exist within a language. While dialect is a variation of a language, accents are variations in pronunciations. It is possible to speak the same dialect but have different accents. As a matter of fact, accents can contrast from one another in two different ways: phonetic and phonological. Phonetic differences refer to two accents having the same set of phonemes that are pronounced or realized differently.

Alternatively, phonological differences refer to accents that have a different number of phonemes. Accents that fall into this distinction make sounds that simply don't exist within the other accents being compared. Accents that hold phonological differences often also have phonetic differences, but this is not always the case. Some accents use a greater range of sounds, but the sounds shared with another remain constant. The distinction between accents and dialects is important to understand because accents only cover a small variation when compared to the variations that occur between dialects (Behravan 16). We will see that there are multiple accents that reside on the Caribbean islands but differences in pronunciations do not constitute whole differences in dialects. People from San Juan do not talk exactly like people from Bayamón, a nearby municipality, but this fact alone does not mean that they are a part of different dialectical communities.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

With regard to this information and the further research that will soon follow, I intend to answer the research question: To what extent does the Hispanic Caribbean constitute their own dialectical speech community? This research aims to contribute to the current debate about whether the Hispanic Caribbean is one or many dialectical communities. The countries in this region are often clumped together in the same way that continental Latin America is divided into different dialectal regions. However, while the rest of Latin America is a continuous landmass, the Caribbean is made up of intricate and isolated land areas that had a more difficult time communicating and sharing ideas throughout history. This research will highlight and explain the differences between these island nations from a sociohistorical perspective of linguistics, sometimes referred to as the historical sociolinguistics approach. A purely historical perspective of linguistics claims that the change in language is natural and preordained. This perspective claims that language is like an organism that grows and changes naturally. However, the historical perspective has recently been substituted with more modern approaches, such as the sociolinguistic model, because this approach was much too limited. Its main critique was that it assumed that speakers had a minimal role in the development and changing of language (Tuten and Tejedo-Herrero 287).

On the other hand, a sociolinguistic approach highlights the role of speakers and seeks to investigate how different social criteria such as race, gender, socioeconomic class, and others contribute to change in language. Not only that, but this perspective also looks at how bilingualism, diglossia, and other aspects affect the standardization of language and their

significance. However, regarding my particular research, the two perspectives can not be separated as they often work together. Within this broader theory of analysis, a historical sociolinguistic perspective is ideal as it allows a review of how society has changed throughout the years and how these changes affect the way that language is used, understood, and experienced. This perspective is especially important for my research given that Spain's acquisition of the region and its historical relationship with the aforementioned countries are an unshaken part of the identity and language in these countries.

Given that language is always changing, the 1940s is the limit for how old investigations and studies can be to be included in this research. Some foundational research would be left out if the cutoff was made more recent. Works conducted more recently are more favorable as they offer contemporary research as opposed to older works which have a higher chance of reflecting outdated ideas. The research will be conducted through inspections of phonetic variations, morphological divergences, and comparisons of speech patterns. Most of the studies being used draw conclusions from observing common conversations and having participants answer general questions normally. These reveal patterns in linguistic variations that are then compared across regions and countries. The goal is to find the similarities that lead linguists to believe that the Caribbean dialect is a single dialectical speech community and later point out the differences that set them far enough apart to possibly disprove the established theory. This research also aims to look at established dialectical speech communities outside of the Caribbean to see how similar and different varying areas within the region are from one another.

BRIEF HISTORY ON THE CANARY ISLANDS AND SPANISH IN THE CARIBBEAN

To start, we have to give credit to the origin of what is now dubbed the “Caribbean Spanish accent.” The Caribbean accent as we know it is a direct descendant of the Canary Islands- an archipelago off the coast of Africa that served as Spain’s closer connection to the Americas. Given the islands’ isolation from the Iberian Peninsula, the inhabitants of the Canary Islands created their own dialect and accent separate from Spain. These differences are best highlighted in the way these regions would say *cerveza* (beer). A Madrid speaker would pronounce the word as “*thervetha*,” as the pronunciation of [c] and [z] are given the “th” sound throughout Spain. On the other hand, a Canary Islander would pronounce the word as “*serveza*,” as [c] and [z] are given the “s” sound in the Canary Islands and, as a result, throughout much of the Caribbean. As mentioned before, differences in pronunciation do not automatically constitute a different dialect, but this is just one example of how Spain and the Canary Islands differ in their linguistic culture. Since the Canary Islands’ dialect did not only influence the Caribbean islands but also the countries that share a coast with the Caribbean, such as Venezuela and Columbia, their impact goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Coastal residents of the Caribbean throughout Central and South America share certain linguistic attributes with the Caribbean islands. However, since these communities are often not grouped within one dialectical speech community, the Canary Islands’ influence is more of a Latin American impact than a uniquely Caribbean one. However, the history had to be mentioned to see how the Caribbean accent is connected back to the Spanish and their emigration to these areas.

SIMILARITIES ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN

Today, Caribbean Spanish separates itself from traditional Spanish in many ways. One of the most glaring examples is the complete omission of the pronoun *vosotros* (*you* in English). While *vosotros* is also not commonly used throughout the entirety of Latin America, it is learned and acknowledged in Latin countries such as Honduras and Argentina. Instead, in Caribbean Spanish, the formal *usted* is preferred in formal and non-formal settings. There are exceptions to this rule, but for the vast majority of Spanish speakers in the Caribbean, this remains to be true. Another quality of Caribbean Spanish that unites the region is the deletion of the /-s/. This linguistic choice can be seen throughout Latin America, specifically in the coastal regions of countries. However, this deletion unifies the Caribbean unlike any other region in Latin America. Also, the Caribbean has repair strategies that are not observed in most other places. For example, in the Dominican Republic, the plural suffix of /-s/ is transformed into a plural prefix as /s-/. As an example, the sentence “What eyes she has!” would typically be said, “Que ojos tiene!”. The Dominican repair strategy would change this sentence to “Que sojo tiene!” However, this repair strategy is uniquely Dominican and is not found elsewhere in the Caribbean or Latin America. Additionally, it is common in Puerto Rico, specifically the rural areas, to make plural words ending in a stressed vowel end with /-ses/. For example, *mangó* (*mango* in English) would become *mangoses* or *revolú* (*mess* in English) becomes *revoluses*, instead of *mangoes* and *revolúes*, respectively. While the deletion of /-s/ is not characteristically Caribbean, these examples of repair strategies are uniquely Caribbean (Claes 35).

COUNTRY DISTINCTIONS

While these islands share similarities, there are also stark contrasts between the three island nations that challenge the notion of a dialectical speech community. These islands all exhibit variations to the implosive /-s/, /-n/, and /-r/. However, these variants vary across the islands and across education, class, and racial status. For example, the implosive /-r/ has four variations. The standard variant is the /-r/, which can be found in all dialects of Spanish and can be found after a pause or in any part of a word. This variant is named the ‘rolling *r*’ in English and is the /r/ in the word *rodilla* (knee). Next, the assimilated /r/ tends to be used after consonants and is characterized as having a weak /r/ sound and presence. For example, this /r/ can be found in the words *tarde* (late) and *forma* (form), where the /r/ is audibly said but does not have the same severity as the standard /r/. The aspirated /r/ is limited to contexts preceding [n] and [l] in Caribbean Spanish (Alfaraz 36). As a result, they are rare in the Caribbean but are used in common words like *horno* (oven) and names like *Carlos*. The aspirated and assimilated variants are often grouped together because they are both different variations of a weak /-r/, so they are denoted by the same character in linguistics- the /r/. Lastly, and the most important in our discussion of the Caribbean Spanish dialects, is the lateral variant. This variant is found internally following a consonant or at the end of a word and makes the sound of an /l/ instead of an /r/. As a result, it is denoted by /-l/. This variant can be found in words like *carta* (letter) and *mejor* (better), which makes them sound like [calta] and [mejol], respectively (Alfaraz 36). These next few paragraphs will explore this variant, the other implosive consonants, and some of the other examples of linguistic diversity that exists in the Spanish Caribbean.

Cuba

To begin, Cuba has been a hub of diverse peoples and cultures since the 19th century. A main reason for this is arguably Cuba's large size when compared to the other Caribbean islands. Its size has given Cuba significantly more arable land, which attracted a lot of day laborers and immigrants throughout Cuba's history. Along with its large population of African descendants, Cuba is also home to Haitians, Chinese, and many more ethnicities that foster different languages and dialects. This fact is shown in its linguistic diversity. The contact that Cuba has had with Haitian Creole, Chinese, English, and Bantu languages makes this country home to the most linguistic diversity in the Spanish Caribbean. For example, communities in the east of Cuba where bilingual Haitians reside, such as Santiago, use unmarked plural noun phrases more than monolingual speakers within the community and throughout the island. Unmarked plural noun phrases are noun phrases that do not have /-s/ at the end despite their plurality. This is similar to how *fish* in English is *fish* in singular and plural form. As a matter of fact, Santiago Spanish shows higher levels of /-s/ dropping compared to communities in Havana. These qualities are indicative of the intense contact with typologically different languages (Claes 23). However, despite the /-s/ dropping done in Santiago, Cuba is the island where the least amount of /-s/ dropping happens on average when compared to the other island in the Caribbean. In other words, Cuba's /-s/ is more sibilant than anywhere else in the Caribbean.

Additionally, the complete omission of *vosotros* in Caribbean Spanish that was discussed earlier is not entirely accurate. In remote locations in the interior eastern side of Cuba, *vos* is still a common way to address the informal singular. A big reason why *vos* is still used has to do with

how secluded these communities that consist mostly of farmers are. On top of the use of *voseo*, the community also utilizes the correct forms *os* and *vuestro* instead of the classic Caribbean *te* and *tuyo* (Blanco-Botta 13). A study conducted by Blanco-Botta found that Cubans who do not use *voseo* find the use of the pronoun “vulgar,” “incorrect,” and “*campesino*,” which roughly translates to “peasant-like.” On the other hand, in the same study, it was found that Cubans that did use *voseo* consider its use to be normal and correct. After all, *voseo* is informal and was exclusively used to refer to family and friends. The same *voseo*-users said that they would use *usted* when respect needed to be given. This interesting case study shows that the Spanish Caribbean can not be put in a box. There are pockets of people throughout the region that use “outdated” vernacular that sets them apart from people living in urban settings (Blanco-Botta 17).

Puerto Rico

Puerto Rican Spanish is a peculiar case. While it has similar influences that the others have, Puerto Rican Spanish is special in its heavy American English influence. Being that Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States for more than a century, American English and its vernacular have made their way into the common speech in Puerto Rico. As a result, Puerto Rico is the only island in this research that is a bilingual country. This alone sets it far apart from Dominican Spanish, Cuban Spanish and even the rest of Latin America. A simple example that shows the heavy use of English loanwords would be how Puerto Rican youths refer to their teachers. While *profesor(a)* (or *profe* for short) is the agreed upon way to call all teachers, Puerto Ricans also find themselves calling their teachers *mistel/misi* modeled after the English words

mister and misses. Even words that are not of English or Germanic language origin make their way into Puerto Rican vernacular if the words or phrases are popular enough in the United States. An example of this would be the French loanword *chauffeur*. In Puerto Rico, this word is used similarly as the United States but spelled as *chofer* (Schorer 22). Another example is the Puerto Rican verb *janguear*, which is derived from the American English verb *to hang out*. The term *janguero* is also the noun equivalent which translates to *a hang out* (López-Laguerre). Interestingly, studies have shown the level of Anglicanism that has penetrated the Puerto Rican public. Lopez-Morales asserts that English loanwords make up 8.10% of the lexicon being actively used in Puerto Rico. This is considerably more than the rest of the Hispanic world, with Madrid, Spain coming in at 4.29% and the Dominican Republic with 5.72% (López-Morales 151).

However, vocabulary is not the only way that Puerto Rican Spanish sets itself apart from the rest. Puerto Rican Spanish also has unique syntax, often attributed to the American English way of speaking. For example, Puerto Ricans have a preference to use the continuous present even when verbs are not long-lasting events. For example, the traditional way to say “I am writing to you to ask you for a favor” in Spanish would be “Te *escribo* para pedirte un favor.” However, the continuous present that is commonly used in Puerto Rico would instead be “Te *estoy escribiendo* para pedirte un favor.” Another example is how the sentence “I will send you the boxes containing the documents” is translated. Traditionally, the sentence would read “Te mando las cajas que *contienen* los documentos.” but the continuous present would instead be “Te mando las cajas *conteniendo* los documentos.” It should be noted that this style of speaking is not exclusive

to Puerto Rico as it is also popularly used in the Dominican Republic but, it does show a way of speaking stylized after English and its use of a gerund (Claes 21).

Additionally, a quality of Spanish spoken in Puerto Rico that makes it unique from the other forms of Spanish spoken in the Caribbean is Puerto Rico's preference to use the [-n] variant over the [-ŋ] variant of the /n/. The implosive /-n/ has three forms that are found throughout Spanish spoken in the Caribbean. The alveolar nasal [-n] bears a resemblance to the /-n/ in the word *nose*. On the other hand, the [-ŋ] variant, or the velar nasal, is similar to the *ng* in the English word *dropping*. This variant has a slight *g* sound at the end as a result of its more nasal nature. There is also a third variation that is found which is the backwards nasalization, or the elided form.

Speakers who prefer this form tend to pronounce *pan* (bread) as [pã] (Claes 27). However, the elided form is not used frequently in Puerto Rican Spanish. Instead, studies have found that Puerto Ricans use the [-n] variant 79% of the time, followed by the [-ŋ] variant, leaving the elided variant last (Lopez-Morales 107). Puerto Rico is the only place in the Spanish Caribbean to prefer the use of the alveolar nasal over the other forms.

Dominican Republic

Lastly, there is Dominican Spanish. The Dominican Republic is a particular case because it shares its border with a country that speaks a different language. Haitians mostly speak Haitian Creole, which is derived from French, and given the Dominican Republic and Haiti's history, this fact has shaped the way that Spanish is spoken in the DR. As a matter of fact, the Spanish spoken close to the Haitian border is unlike most Spanish spoken anywhere else (Bullock and

Toribio 177). This alone is not what sets the Dominican Republic apart. For example, the Dominican Republic has some of the only instances of frequent liquid gliding in their conversational language. Instead of *mujer* (*woman* in English), many Dominicans say something more closely related to *mujei*. This liquid gliding allows Dominican Spanish to have that characteristically sing-songy quality. Variationist studies have also found that Dominicans use the present perfect at a much higher rate than Puerto Ricans (Delgado and Ortiz Lopez 16). Additionally, Dominican Republic is one of the few places that still use the antiquated third-person singular *su merced*. While an observational study showed that no one used it in passing conversations, an interview with an older speaker shows that the phrase is still used outside of Santo Domingo by older generations. The Dominican Republic is speculated to be the only place in the Caribbean that still uses *su merced* (Hummel 307).

Despite all of the contact with foreign languages, the only aspect of Dominican Spanish that has notable differences from Cuba and Puerto Rico is the lexical field. The Dominican Republic has the most loanwords out of the other Spanish Caribbean islands. This is largely because the Dominican Republic uses words from English, Haitian Creole, and French (Niño-Murcia et al., 176). Puerto Rico and Cuba only frequently use English loanwords. While French loanwords were much more abundant half a decade ago, French and its influence on Dominican Spanish has been rapidly decreasing. By the 1970s, French influence had become unfamiliar to 60% of those questioned by Jorge-Morel (164). As for English, its influence has remained strong but is much more limited than it is in Puerto Rico. Unlike in Puerto Rico, the reach of the influence of English is more situational and only permeates certain communities. Loanwords are more

exclusive to certain lifestyles and hobbies, such as sports, clothing, luxury, and transportation. This is not exclusive to the Dominican Republic, as these loanwords are found throughout Latin America and around the world. The word *jonrón*, or home run, meets this example. Additionally, English loanwords are most common in more affluent communities throughout the Dominican Republic, so there is a range of how often Dominicans use English in their daily lexicon (Claes 23).

Furthermore, Dominican Spanish tends to delete the /-s/ more often than other Caribbean islands. Also, unlike most other islands or places in Latin America, this deletion can be observed consistently across class and education statuses. Less educated Dominicans use the elided /-s/ almost exclusively. The frequency of the elided /-s/ starts to dwindle as we climb up the education ladder, whereas those more educated tend to prefer the aspirated or sibilant variations of the /-s/ (Claes 26). Even with this caveat, studies that explored passing conversations in Santo Domingo found that sibilant realizations made up 13% of /-s/ instances, while aspiration occurred only 2% of the time, and the elision of the /-s/ was done 85% of the time. This points to an overwhelming majority of Dominicans who live in the capital preferring to elide the /-s/ (Terrell 305). In these ways, the Dominican Republic is a linguistically unique country.

Table 1

Implosive Caribbean Consonants Comparative Guide

	Havana	San Juan	Santo Domingo
/-s/	[-h] > [-Ø] > [-s]	[-h] > [-Ø] > [-s]	[-Ø] > [-h] > [-s]
/-n/	[-ŋ] > [-Ø] > [-n]	[-n] > [-ŋ] > [-Ø]	[-ŋ] > [-Ø] > [-n]
/-r/	[-r] > [-Ø] > [-l]	[-r] > [-l] > [-Ø]	[-r] > [-Ø] > [-l]

This table offers a visual guide to how the capitals of the different islands use the implosive variants to varying degrees. The capital that showcases a unique order is bolded for easy distinction.

POSSIBLE DIALECTICAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE ISLANDS

However, analyzing these countries as a whole is a simplification. As previously mentioned, in the Dominican Republic, English loanwords are more frequent depending on where one lives and how affluent the community one resides in is. Similarly, Cuba's Santiago shows unique characteristics when compared to the capital and other regions on the island. Linguistic studies have found that dialects exist within these countries as well. First, Navarro-Tomas theorized that Puerto Rico had five distinct zones of individualized speech. These were San Germán, San Juan, Utuado, Cayey, and Vieques and the east coast and their respective surrounding areas. In spite of this, Navarro-Tomas claimed that these zones did not constitute their own dialect. Instead, the zones and their differences were more closely attributed to different accents (Navarro-Tomas). However, this study was conducted more than half a century ago, and much might have changed regarding Puerto Rico and its regional differences.

The Dominican Republic study conducted by Jimenez-Sabater in 1984 is much more recent. Under his dialectical division, four distinct zones were made: El Cibao, the southwest portion of the country, the southeast portion, and the eastern half of the Samaná Peninsula. However, again, most of these zones are not consistent with the definition of dialect; instead, accent is a better word to define the differences between these areas. El Cibao seems to diverge itself from the other varieties of Dominican Spanish by using the subjunctive form of the second and third-person instead of the indicative, higher rates of aspiration, and audible /-s/ for plurals, amongst more linguistic differences. The Peninsula of Samaná is another zone that distinguishes itself from the rest of Dominican Spanish where their Spanish combines interestingly with African

American Vernacular English and Haitian Creole. Additionally, as mentioned before, the contact area near the Haitian border constitutes its own dialect, so, the Dominican Republic has four distinct dialectal areas (Jiménez-Sabater).

Finally, according to Montero-Bernal, as part of the *Atlas lingüístico de Cuba* project, Cuba also has five theorized zones based on phonological characteristics. These zones, according to Montero-Bernal (164) are:

- The Northwest (more specifically consisting of the provinces of Pinar del Rio, Havana City, Matanzas, Cienfuegos, and Trinidad)
- The provinces of Villa Clara, Ciego de Ávila, and Sancti Spíritus
- The Provinces of Camagüey, Las Tunas, Holguín, Manzanillo, and Bayamo
- The Provinces of Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo
- Baracoa- the easternmost tip

However, these distinct areas only differentiated phonological characteristics which, as covered before, are not indicative of individual dialects but rather, accents. Linguists are still determining whether all of these zones are their own dialects, but some distinctions are greater than others. Nevertheless, given this information, the Dominican Republic and Cuba likely have more than one dialect within their borders, which supports the claim that the Spanish-speaking Caribbean constitutes more than one dialect and negates the notion of a homogenous dialectal community.

THE POPULAR DIALECTICAL COMMUNITY THEORIES

However, in the defense of the already established Hispanic dialectical theories, these island nations are the most similar to one another when compared to the entirety of Latin America.

When looking at Latin American dialectology, most proposed theories clump the Caribbean into one dialectical community. For example, Henríquez-Ureña was one of the first researchers to attempt to divide Spanish America into dialectical communities. His proposed theory was primarily based on indigenous influence and the effect that this influence had on their lexical fields (Henríquez-Ureña). While the Caribbean was home to many native tribes at one point in history and still holds aspects of indigenous culture, the Caribbean no longer sustains the same indigenous influence that can still be seen in places such as Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru. For this reason, Henríquez-Ureña's theory can be used more aptly to divide mainland Latin America but using the same methodology would fall short when deciding how to group the Caribbean. Even so, his theory is criticized for having a lack of empirical evidence and not having ample linguistic criteria that go beyond indigenous lexicon.

On the other hand, some researchers, such as Rona, divide Latin America and the Caribbean based on different criteria. Rona is credited with making the first Spanish American dialectical community theory that is truly based on a linguistic approach. He made his divisions on the preference between yeísmo and zeísmo throughout Latin America and the preferred form of the second-person singular. Yeísmo and zeísmo refer to the way that /y/ and /ll/ are actualized in spoken language. Yeísmo pronounces these as /y/ or /j/ to create sounds like the /ll/ in words like

llevar (leave). The zeísmo variant produces these phonemes as more /zh/ and /sh/ sounds, but this variant is not relevant to this research as this is not found anywhere in the Caribbean (Claes 10). In Rona's updated proposed theory, Cuba and Puerto Rico were a part of one community, while the Dominican Republic made up its own. The decision was made because of the high levels of idiomatic mixing done by Puerto Rico and Cuba (Rona 66). Rona's proposal has met criticism for the limited number of linguistic qualities chosen to differentiate the dialectal communities. However, all other proposals that have sought to divide Latin America into common linguistic communities see shortcomings in some way. The original version of Rona's theory had argued that Mexico and the Greater Antilles exist within the same community, which resulted in his update years later.

What seems to be the biggest problem with these proposals is that they all look too broadly at the linguistic divisions in Latin America and use too few linguistic indicators. Latin America encompasses an entire continent and many sovereign islands, yet most of these proposals have only around five different dialectal areas. The United States alone has no less than four with Southern, New England, the Midwest, and the West Coast being the most popular distinctions among many other smaller ones, like Louisiana Creole. How is it that a lone country can have about as many dialectal communities as the entirety of Hispanic Latin America? A key determining factor is culture, but another important reason is disparities in research. In a country such as the United States where there is no official language, topics on linguistics are brought up more and researched more often than in a region that speaks the same general language with select indigenous exceptions. As mentioned before, a lot of the research papers on Caribbean

linguistics are dated and do not reflect the modern outlook of these islands. In short, there is still no undoubtedly correct way to group up the dialectical speech communities in Latin America, but this research aims to argue for a more fragmented Caribbean dialectical area.

THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND HISTORICAL LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVES

With all of this considered, the similarities and differences between the linguistic qualities of these three countries are apparent. While these countries shared similar colonial fates, their historical paths are far different from one another. My research thus far has proven that these countries do not share a single dialectical speech community. The linguistic qualities of these Caribbean islands are distant enough to constitute them as their own community. Not only this, but there is evidence that individual dialects exist within Cuba and the Dominican Republic. From an outsider's perspective, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic appear to be similar in accent, vernacular, syntax, and lexicon. However, apparent contrasts exist for Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans. The sociolinguistic perspective has an easier time explaining the differences between these countries. Each island has a unique blend of people, cultures, and languages. These affect the way that Spanish is spoken, understood, and perceived. Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States means that their Spanish has become more Anglicized than most. More Puerto Ricans live in the continental United States than on the island, so when the Puerto Ricans on the mainland call their relatives or visit during the holidays, they bring back new words and concepts to their speech. Most Puerto Rican television networks have American channels broadcasted in English which makes teaching the Puerto Rican public English much more accessible than what Cuba and the Dominican Republic have. The Dominican Republic's proximity to Haiti produces contact areas that result in novel ways of speaking Spanish. The dialects in these areas are often disparaged amongst the Dominican community because of their perceived similarities to Haitian Creole, which further proves the existence of more than one

dialect within the country (Suárez Büdenbender 148). Cuba's immense diversity results in a multitude of variations in the way that Spanish is spoken throughout the archipelago. Cuba's communist revolution that provided education to all its citizens meant that formal education was given to even the poorest of Cubans. The nationwide move to teach everyone how to read and write must have impacted Cuban Spanish in niche ways that cannot be seen in other places. The mixture of Chinese, Bantu, English, and Creole languages makes Cuban Spanish amongst the most diverse and distinct forms of Spanish in the Caribbean. In a similar way, immigration to the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico has drastically changed the way that the people in these countries speak as well.

The historical linguistic perspective's strengths lie in explaining the similarities between these countries. The Caribbean having a common linguistic ancestor in Spain's Canary Islands means that these countries and their way of speaking have a lot of striking similarities. However, the Caribbean is not the only region that witnessed immigration from the Canary Islands. Venezuela and Panama also saw their Spanish shaped by the Canary Islands, yet these countries are not included in the Caribbean dialectal community. There is more to these nations than their history, so the historical linguistic perspective fails to be as convincing as the sociolinguistic perspective. However, together, these theories show the gray area that the Hispanic Caribbean finds itself in.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

From what has been exposed in this thesis, it is evident that the Hispanic Caribbean does not share a dialectal speech community. These islands have linguistic differences that set them far enough apart from one another and most native speakers will agree. Puerto Rico, with its culture embedded with English and American influence; the Dominican Republic, with its direct contact and historical lineage with Haitian Creole; and Cuba, with its large land area that houses a unique array of people and communities with unique immigrant populations all form distinctive dialectal communities. These islands, while sharing a language, do not share dialects.

An interesting detail that should be included is that when people from Latin America emigrate to places like the United States, their Spanish speaking is looked down upon by English-speaking locals. Hispanic Caribbean speakers not only experience this treatment, but they also face shame from other Latinos for speaking their version of Spanish. This has led to “linguistic insecurity,” which refers to the idea that one’s language or way of speaking is not a legitimate or valued form of communication. Other examples of this concept can be seen in the Portuguese outlook on Brazilian Portuguese and France’s outlook on Quebecois or Haitian Creole. In research conducted by Suárez-Büdenbender (2010), it was established that Dominican Spanish is frequently depreciated and that Dominicans do not think highly of their own Spanish variety. According to the research, Dominicans believe their Spanish to be less “correct” than other versions spoken throughout Latin America and Spain (148). While the research primarily revolved around the Dominican Republic, this same concept can be applied to Cuba and Puerto Rico and their perceptions of their own variety. A major part of this research looks at the role

that immigration plays in the perception of one's language. While my research does not focus on the diaspora of these islands but instead on the local inhabitants, exploring the differences in the linguistic makeup of locals and emigrants would be an interesting way to further this research.

On the topic, there are a lot of topics in this field that warrant additional research. Language is constantly changing, so newer studies and interviews should be conducted in this region. A good number of sources for this field of study are outdated but are some of the only studies conducted on their topic. Additionally, the current relationship between Cuba and the United States means that there is information that I, as an American student, do not have reliable access to. This is a significant limitation to my research as Cuba is one-third of my subject material. Most research that was done on Cuban linguistics focused on that of Cuban immigrants. The majority of these studies focused on the linguistic characteristics of Cubans who reside in Miami, which largely overshadowed and outnumbered research done on Cubans in Cuba. A similar sentiment can be shared with the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, and research conducted on their linguistic characteristics in places like New York City. However, Cuban research was by far the biggest struggle to find.

Another item that could be done in future research is to look at to what extent other countries in Central and South America fall into the Caribbean dialectical speech community. As mentioned before, countries like Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia who share a coast with the Caribbean all have a lot of similarities to the speech patterns of the Caribbean that set it apart from the linguistic norm in places like El Salvador, Chile, and Uruguay. However, only some of the

proposed theories place these countries in the same community. Said studies could focus more heavily on the impact of emigration from the Canary Islands into these locations. Seeing how large the impact the Canary Islands had on the individual speech of Latin American countries would be a fascinating topic to delve into. It is interesting to see that only the coastal areas of these countries exhibit Caribbean characteristics while the interior areas reject these qualities. Additionally, research that compares countries with relatively high and low Canary Islands immigration could allow linguists to see the actual effect that Canary Islanders had on the formation of different dialects across the region.

Nonetheless, further research on the Caribbean and its dialect could reduce the stigma that many Hispanic people hold towards the Caribbean. After reviewing proposed dialectical community theories, it is apparent how little the linguistics within the Spanish-speaking Caribbean are researched when compared to the rest of mainland Latin America. Most of the major theorists were not of Caribbean origin or background, which had an obvious impact on their research and findings. Overall, the lack of research made this endeavor more challenging. A lot of research that focused on Caribbean linguistics revolved around the same few points such as the /-s/ deletion and Anglophone loanwords because of their close relationship with the United States. Beyond this, the best sources were those that came directly from Caribbean scholars and linguists. This often meant that the research was solely written in Spanish, which poses a threat to people who wish to seek further research but do not speak or only have a basic understanding of the language. The differences between Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican Spanish exist.

Though the research pool is slim, the available research, and my reading of it, suggests that there are multiple dialectical communities found within the Spanish-speaking Caribbean region.

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