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Nov 12th, 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Spanish in New Mexico: A Study of Nuevomexicano Words

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Video link: https://youtu.be/U_c851Qo62Q

New Mexican traditional Spanish is changing, evolving from what has been reported since the earlier pioneering studies in the Spanish language of New Mexico more than 100 years ago by professor Aurelio Espinoza . According to Travis and Villa (2011), a key factor has been the contact with Mexican Spanish from immigrants in New Mexico. Another factor is the repressive language policies and constitutional rights regarding language in the state of New Mexico (Gonzales-Berry, 2000). Bills (1997), foresees the eventual demise of the local traditional Spanish variety of New Mexico while other authors, Waltermire (2015), propose a possible mixture between both varieties that can be attested in specific areas of the state.

Dialect contact, linguistic provenance, language ideology, and language use and proficiency are all factors that may play a role in the creation of a new dialect from two separate dialects, also known as a "koine", defined by Siegel (1985) as the mixture of different language subsystems as a result of contact. In the case of existing language subsystems in New Mexico, we can consider the contact and interaction between the two largest Spanish speaking communities in the state of New Mexico, New Mexican Traditional Spanish and Contemporary Mexican Spanish. According to Trudgill (2008), dialect contact leads to dialect mixture throughout the time as a result of the need for a common understood behavior in the speech community.

The purpose of this project is to identify words that Spanish speakers from different linguistic backgrounds know and use in northern and central New Mexico and determine their level of familiarity with each word produced. Finally, Analysis will be conducted to determine the factors that may constrain these choices between speakers such as age, year of Spanish language instruction, gender, Language attitude, English proficiency, linguistic provenance and town in New Mexico.