

“Prospective Study about the Quantity Sensitivity in Spanish”

ABSTRACT.

‘Quantity Sensitivity’ is a term used in phonology to describe how the stress patterns in languages are affected by the weight of their syllables. The general rule for Spanish is that the accent falls on the last syllable if the word ends in a consonant (‘camion’ [ka.mi.ón]) or on the penultimate when the word ends in a vowel (‘casa [’ka.sa]).

In the same way, we say ‘teléfono’ [te.lé.fo.no] but ‘telefonista’ [te.le.fo.nís.ta]: due to the fact that the penultimate syllable is heavy in ‘telefonista’, the accent cannot be placed in the antepenultimate syllable, as we see it in ‘teléfono’, where the penultimate syllable is not heavy because it does not end in a consonant or in a diphthong. Based on this, some researchers point out that Spanish has a restriction on antepenultimate stress when the penultimate syllable is heavy. Therefore, authors such as *Nuñez-Cedeño (1989, 1994)* and *Harris (1983, 2002)* conclude that Spanish presents Quantity Sensitivity. However, a unanimous agreement on the Quantity Sensitivity in Spanish is nonexistent. For example, *Roca (1990)* and *Alvord (2003)*, among others, claim that Spanish lacks QS.

In my study, I aim to confirm that Spanish exhibits QS. In order to do so, I will conduct an experiment similar to the one that Alvord performed, but I will introduce modifications which will certainly improve the viability of the results, such as the methodological features and the number of participants (Alvord used only 10 participants who also spoke English. I will use a much larger sample of monolingual Spanish speakers who have never been exposed to a second

language) and an improved methodology (I will use an Acceptability Judgment Task: the participants will give values from 0 to 5 to the different possible stresses for the same word). With these modifications and additions I believe that I will overcome the difficulties presented in Alvord's first attempt. If my research fails to support Alvord's conclusion, I will have shown that he did not choose the ideal individuals.

Besides the prediction mentioned above, I also want to manifest my position in the matter of QS: the current literature in the subject leads me to believe in the existence of QS. However, it is true that there are good arguments against it. That is why it seems necessary to perform an experiment as the one that I am proposing here. Whether the results support or not my hypothesis, I aim to provide reliable, empirical evidence to contribute to the debate in QS in Spanish.

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