Introduction

Language is often a difficult concept to describe, if only for the fact that it is not stationary. Rather, language is an organic, dynamic entity that changes, adapts, and grows over time. *La Lengua Porteña*: *A Historical Linguistic Perspective* is an attempt to convey this capacity for change as evidenced in the regional dialect of Spanish that is used in present-day Buenos Aires, Argentina. In this project, I have narrowed down some of the most important discrepancies between the Buenos Aires dialect and standard Spanish and then situated them within their historical context in order to find the reasons for these differences.

I chose this topic for several reasons: it had not been done before and it effortlessly combined my academic interests in history, political science, economics, and Spanish. But above all, the *porteño* dialect fascinated me. During the latter half of 2011, I studied abroad in Buenos Aires and while there, I payed a lot of attention to the language. While many downplay Argentine linguistic differences, I found them quite noticeable. Yet, like most contemporary speakers of any language, the *porteños* I asked could not tell me *why* their dialect was so unique.

Much has been written on this topic—the dialect's manifestations at varying socio-economic levels, phonological and lexical differences, and use of antiquated forms of address, for example. However, my research fills a void in the existing material by uniting the dialect's linguistic components with the political, historical, and economic factors that caused them. This gives readers a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of the history of language in Buenos Aires.

This project is divided into three chapters that each refer to not only specific time periods in Argentine history, but to moments of major linguistic change as well. These span some 400 years from Buenos Aires' founding in 1535 until the onset of the Great Depression in late 1929,

and while the regional dialect has certainly continued to grow since then, many of the pillars of the River Plate language can be traced back to these moments. The multitude of dialectal factors that characterize this region of the world made choosing the most important ones difficult. However, I have tried to eliminate those elements that serve to divide speakers—socioeconomically, stylistically, or according to register—in order to focus my research on the language *shared* by a majority of *porteños*. Some of these include the phonetic *yeísmo rehilado*, indigenous and foreign loan words, and the use of *voseo*, which even the current Argentine president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner uses quite frequently.[1]

Taken together, the following chapters explain the slow evolution of language in Buenos Aires and present its most salient characteristics. In Chapter One, I define the River Plate, or Buenos Aires', dialect and its main differences from "Standard Spanish." I then examine the region's colonial legacy and conclude that its early marginalization from Spain heavily contributed to its modern linguistic disparities. Chapter Two builds on these ideas by studying the political polarization that emerged after Argentina's independence in 1810. During this period, the rise of caudillo rulers such as Juan Manuel de Rosas divided citizens over how to rule the Argentine territory. At the same time, political beliefs spilled into the linguistic realm as regional dialects of Spanish across Latin America drifted further from their peninsular origins. This controversy was no better exemplified than in the polemics exchanged between Andrés Bello and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento. Finally, Chapter Three details the foundation of Argentina's liberal constitution that explicitly encouraged foreign immigration in an attempt to populate the countryside. It then chronicles the influential wave of newcomers that forever altered *la lengua porteña*.

[1] "La Inflación que Da el INDEC es la Real," *La Nación*, October 25, 2007. http://www.lanacion.com.ar/956301-la-inflacion-que-da-el-indec-es-la-real.

Chapter 1
Setting the Stage: Language in Argentina's Colonial Past

"Pero la lengua no es un organismo animal ni vegetal; no es ningún producto natural, ni tiene en sí leyes autónomas ni condiciones de existencia ajenas a la intervención de los hablantes. El lenguaje no pertenece a la Historia Natural, sino a la Historia Humana."

Amado Alonso
El problema de la lengua en América (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1935), 105.

Introduction

In this chapter, I will attempt to show the lasting impact of Argentina's colonial legacy on the *porteño* dialect. To do this, I will first define the Río de la Plata region, its linguistic characteristics, and how this regional dialect differs from so-called *standard Spanish*. While no one would argue that the language of the *porteños*—the inhabitants of Buenos Aires—and standard Spanish are mutually unintelligible, this regional dialect contains certain linguistic elements that are unique to this part of the world alone. In particular, this chapter will address lexical, grammatical, and phonetic peculiarities of the River Plate dialect.

Next, I will provide a brief overview of Argentina's colonization. Spain's economic and political goals in the period of conquest isolated Argentina, and Buenos Aires specifically, for nearly a century and a half. This is perhaps the most important reason for the River Plate dialect's dissimilarities with standard Spanish. Lastly, the chapter will discuss the important linguistic changes that took place within Spain before and during the age of colonization in the Americas, as these changes had a profound effect on the Spanish language that was exported to the New World and promulgated across the continent.

Overall, this chapter will lay the foundation for understanding the role of language in Argentina's postcolonial age that will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Many of Buenos Aires' current linguistic peculiarities can be traced back to the colonial era, although due to both

internal and external forces, they continued—and continue—to evolve over time. As a result, a thorough discussion of language in the age of colonialism is imperative in order to identify the changes that took place subsequently, in Argentina's period of state building.

Defining the River Plate Region and Dialect

At its most basic, the Río de la Plata region—or River Plate, as it is commonly Anglicized—simply refers to the areas surrounding La Plata River. This wide body of water signals the convergence of the Uruguay and Paraná Rivers as well as the boundary between Argentina and Uruguay, and while the *rioplatense* dialect discussed in these pages generally applies to this region in its entirety, my research focuses on the province and city of Buenos Aires for several reasons. First, more than Montevideo, the city of Buenos Aires has largely determined cultural, economic, and linguistic trends for the whole region.[2] Second, the history of Buenos Aires and its development of language have mutually fueled each other since the city's first foundation in 1535. As a result, this project looks at the *porteño* dialect as an important component of regional and national development.

Both the province and city of Buenos Aires share this dialect with a large portion of Argentina, but certainly not the whole country. In his linguistic research on Buenos Aires, Américo Castro underscores this idea by highlighting four specific provinces that reject the *rioplatense* dialect:

> …la Argentina, lingüísticamente, dista aún mucho de ser un país uniforme…La falta de armonía entre la capital y muchas extensas zonas del interior es otro hecho revelador de la forma extraña en que se ha desenvuelto la historia argentina. Aún no ha mucho en Córdoba, Corrientes, Mendoza o Salta se oía el hispanoamericano que denominaría normal: seseo, diversos tipos de entonación, indigenismos en el vocabulario, arcaísmos, etc. [3]

[2] Américo Castro, *La Peculiaridad Lingüística Rioplatense y Su Sentido Histórico*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Taurus, 1961), 95.
[3] Ibid., 95.

In other words, the dialects found in several provinces, especially those in the northern portion of the country, have been more influenced by indigenous populations, neighboring countries like Paraguay and Brazil, and their own local histories than by Buenos Aires' sphere of influence.

Before continuing, a brief definition of the term *regional dialect* as I use it here is imperative. By concentrating on the variety of Spanish that is employed by nearly all inhabitants of present-day Buenos Aires, this project does not address social dialects, personal styles, or registers. However, this is not intended to devalue the importance of these factors. In fact, in any society, citizens decide to employ particular languages or dialects depending on the context—the individual's class origin, the level of formality required, the topic of conversation, etc.[4] Regardless, when looking at the River Plate, or *porteño,* dialect, I have sought to minimize these factors in order to present only the most common elements of the regional patois. Yet, it should be noted that social class, style, and register have all occupied a large role in the historical development of the present-day dialect and these will become especially salient in the post-independence period covered in Chapter Two: "When Politics and Language Meet."

To summarize, the Río de la Plata includes parts of Argentina and Uruguay, and although linguistically, the region is nearly homogenous, my research focuses on Buenos Aires and the language of the *porteños*. Given this context, the terms *River Plate, rioplatense,* and *porteño* dialect will be used interchangeably here, but will refer to Buenos Aires unless otherwise stated. Additionally, I have sought to minimize the differences in social status, style, and register that color daily communication in order to present a more cohesive representation of the language employed in contemporary Buenos Aires.

Discrepancies with Standard Spanish

Much like the River Plate dialect, defining *standard Spanish* can easily cause problems.

[4] Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 41, 46-50.

In contemporary Spain, there are several prominent dialects of the Spanish language, such as Andalusian, Leonese, and Aragonese, but the widespread use of Castilian has become the most prominent. Its omnipresence in "the public school system, telecommunications, radio and TV, laws, public signs, and so on" has led to its synonymous use with the term *Spanish*; although Castilian is in fact, a regional dialect, most Spanish speakers no longer consider it such.[5] In general, bilingualism amongst Castilian and other Spanish dialects is now the rule, rather than the exception. In fact, its influence is so great that some scholars such as the renowned Rafael Lapesa have even examined the "castellanización" of other regional dialects within Spain.[6]

Castilian is associated with several prominent characteristics. The most obvious of these is the phonetic use of /θ/ for "*z* and for *c* before *i* and *e*."[7] However, a complete linguistic profile of the Castilian dialect is not necessary in this study for one main reason: nearly all varieties of Latin American Spanish differ greatly from Castilian. Therefore, there is little need to discuss Castilian's use of /θ/ or even the presence of *vosotros* when both are absent in nearly all Latin American dialects—not only the River Plate.

Instead, we now turn to a discussion of the *porteños*' linguistic attributes. Some of the most unique aspects of this regional dialect are its use of local and non-local *indigenismos* as well as lexical items taken from select European languages—Italian, in particular. Phonetically, River Plate Spanish is recognized for its *yeísmo rehilado*—the leveling of *ll* and *y* to a "buzzing" /ʒ/ or /ʃ/ that has often drawn comparisons to the French pronunciation of the letter *j* and Portuguese pronunciation of *z* when found at the end of a word.[8] The frequent use of the *voseo* to

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[5] Eleanor Greet Cotton and John M. Sharp, *Spanish in the Americas*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1988), 54.
[6] Rafael Lapesa, *Historia de la Lengua Española*, 9th ed. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1983), 477.
[7] Cotton and Sharp, *Spanish in the Americas*, 55.
[8] María Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg, "El Rehilamiento Bonaerense a Fines del Siglo XVIII," *Thesaurus. Boletín del Instituto Caro y Cuervo* 28, no. 2 (1973), 339-342. http://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/thesaurus/pdf/28/TH_28_002_150_0.pdf.

refer to the second person singular in familiar, and sometimes even formal situations, is yet another distinction. In fact, the *voseo* is such an oddity in modern speech, scholars Cotton and Sharp have dubbed it "morphologically, the single most important archaism" in the Spanish language today.[9] Other notable differences of the *rioplatense* dialect include an often-utilized form of Pig Latin called *vesre* (a scrambling of the term 'al revés') and the minimal use of *haber*, among others.[10]

Spain's Conquest of the Region

In 1516, the Spanish explorer Juan Díaz de Solís sailed into the Río de la Plata with a small crew of men, unaware of what they would find in the unexplored territory. Unfortunately for them, however, their mission was cut short when they were promptly killed and eaten by the nomadic Indians they encountered.[11] After that ill-fated expedition, there were two other brief trips to the region, including Pedro de Mendoza's formal foundation of the city of Santa María de Buenos Aires in 1535, though no one stayed in the area for long. In fact, it wasn't until 1580—quite late by colonial standards—that Juan de Garay, a notable Spanish conquistador, reestablished the city. This was late not only in comparison with the foundation of other colonies, but with the foundation of other cities within modern Argentine territory as well:

> Of the principal modern Argentine cities most were founded before Buenos Aires was permanently established by Juan de Garay: Santiago del Estero in 1553, Corrientes and Paraná in 1558, Mendoza and San Juan in 1562; Tucumán in 1565, Córdoba and Santa Fé in 1573. Buenos Aires was almost the last of the colonial foundations…[12]

Curiously enough, even after Juan de Garay's arrival, Buenos Aires remained an afterthought to the Spanish Crown. The settlement's small population reaffirmed this fact; towards the end of

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[9] Cotton and Sharp, *Spanish in the Americas*, 85.
[10] María Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense: Cuatro Siglos de Evolución Lingüística (1580-1980)*, (Buenos Aires: Hachette, 1987), 33.
[11] H.S. Ferns, *Argentina* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), 25.
[12] Ibid., 26.

1580, the total population of Buenos Aires was around 300 people, but even 100 years later, its population barely reached 5,000.[13]

An explanation for the River Plate's slow growth rate can be found by examining Spain's intentions in the New World. Spain's expeditions to, and subsequent colonization of Latin America was primarily aimed at the extraction of raw materials—precious metals in particular. Despite the auspicious name Sebastian Cabot bestowed upon the region, the Río de la Plata offered no *plata*, or silver, to speak of and as a result, it was largely ignored. While the Crown's attention focused on more profitable regions, Buenos Aires was left to its own devices, almost entirely disconnected from the rest of Latin America for nearly 200 years since Juan Díaz de Solís first arrived in the area. Because the bullion shipped from Potosí and the Viceroyalty of Peru was generally routed away from the ports of the Río de la Plata, and because the young colony lacked legitimate internal markets, Buenos Aires found itself deprived of "commercial growth and prosperity."[14]

This was the case until the Bourbon Reforms, carried out under Charles III (1759-1788), drastically changed the region's fortune. Rather than spurring immediate improvements however, the Reforms gradually cultivated Buenos Aires' importance in three ways. First, new regulations opened up trade with Spain and the rest of the Americas. Although Argentina lacked precious metals, as previously stated, it benefitted from one invaluable resource: land. This vast abundance of fertile land sustained an enormous cattle industry that boosted local incomes as European demand for leather goods grew.[15] Yet not everyone benefitted from free trade with the Spanish empire; the domestic markets of several interior Argentine provinces (although there was still no unified "Argentina" at the time) were heavily impacted by inexpensive agricultural

[13] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 13-15.
[14] Ferns, *Argentina*, 27.
[15] Ibid., 30.

imports from Spain as well as increased trade with other provinces. In time, prices in the Interior plummeted as cheaper products found their way to the market.[16] In the city of San Juan, for example, producers were forced to go to great lengths in order to sell their locally made *aguardiente* and wine:

> After the collapse of prices provoked by free trade, the only possibility left was commerce on a small scale exercised, with very small profit-margins, by the producers themselves, who travelled round the centres of consumption, as far as Salta, carrying with them the water necessary for a forty-day journey across the desert, Potosí, Tucumán, Santa Fe, and Buenos Aires, where the San Juan mule-drovers opened improvised shops, to the considerable consternation of the inland revenue authorities, who had no idea exactly what taxes they should collect from them.[17]

While this case illustrates the heterogeneous reaction to the ease of trade restrictions within the Spanish empire, it also highlights the speed at which economic reforms took place. Even the authorities in Buenos Aires, an area that benefitted from its access to new markets, were unsure of how to tax new shops. It is important to note that this stage of the Bourbon Reforms helped increase Buenos Aires' sphere of influence, but in other areas, it also created lasting discontent.

The second important change caused by the Reforms was the division of the Viceroyalty of Peru. Whereas previously the River Plate region, along with the majority of South America, was considered part of the Viceroyalty of Peru, in 1776 it became the center of a new territory. Thus, the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata was born, and with Buenos Aires as its capital, it began to develop in both power and size. Naturally, the Crown's oversight of the new viceroyalty intensified; government positions such as Viceroy and intendants were almost exclusively reserved for *peninsulares*, and although city governments were often controlled by

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[16] Tulio Halperín-Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society in Argentina in the Revolutionary Period*, trans. Richard Southern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 12.
[17] Ibid., 15.

local creoles or mestizos, "in the Río de la Plata the town councilors and *alcaldes* [mayors] were seldom selected, elected, or appointed without the direct or indirect exercise of royal authority."[18] In this way, the Crown guaranteed the viceroyalty's political allegiance and obedience. In time, however, Spain established a *consulado* in Buenos Aires, staffed and run by locals. Unlike similar governing bodies found in other parts of Latin America, the *consulado* in the Río de la Plata was responsible for important matters involving regional trade, education, and infrastructure projects, among others.[19] As a result, the creation of the *consulado* was no insignificant occurrence; the authority vested in this organization played a large role in the nation's independence process that we will soon discuss.

The third important result of the Bourbon Reforms was the reorientation of the cities towards Buenos Aires. While this was essentially a side effect of the previous two changes, the location of the city also played a critical role. When the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata made Buenos Aires its capital, the growing city became a cultural and political powerhouse. In addition, the opening of colonial markets brought this region economic success. However, being a port city made these Reforms all the more useful to Buenos Aires. People, products, and more importantly, capital moved through the region with ease. From a population of some 5,000 people in 1680, Buenos Aires grew to 8,900 in 1720, and remarkably, to 38,000 by 1800.[20]

As we will discuss more in the next chapter, this laid the groundwork to make Buenos Aires wealthy and powerful; controlling the port meant having the authority to collect taxes and dictate trade regulations in Argentina's interior provinces. The new redirection of power also set the stage for strong provincial leadership that took root after independence.

But problems in Europe loomed on the horizon. Several years after the start of the French

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[18] Ferns, *Argentina*, 37.
[19] Ibid., 37-38.
[20] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 51.

Revolution, revolutionaries invaded Spain, essentially forcing the neighboring state into action. At first, Spain was eager to join in an anti-French alliance with other nations, including Great Britain, but after hasty negotiations with France in 1795, Spain's foreign policy shifted radically. In fact, only a year later, the two nations were formal allies, fighting together against the British. Britain, in turn, responded by blockading the southern Iberian Peninsula—a maneuver that immediately damaged Spain's authority in Latin America; the blockade itself "cut exports from Buenos Aires from 5½ million pesos in 1796 to less than half a million in 1797. To meet this circumstance the Spanish government authorized trade with neutrals, and thus the first breach was made…in the exclusive Spanish system of trade."[21] By no means was this the end of colonial rule in the River Plate, but it was certainly a portent of what was to come. Additionally, we should not dismiss the significance of the break in economic order—temporary as it was—because the political relationship between the colony and its colonizer was highly dependent on its economic relationship.[22]

As the Napoleonic Empire took root, inter-state tensions in Europe mounted and Great Britain grew ever more emboldened. Twice, the British invaded and attempted to take over key cities in the River Plate. Spain, facing its own challenges at home, was unable to send assistance and left the viceroyalty to defend itself. Rising to the occasion, local militias formed to defend the territory and the British suffered defeat. This pivotal success gave birth to the Argentine independence movement; proven capable of effectively dodging foreign intervention on its own, Buenos Aires saw a need for autonomy from Spain. With much help from the members of the *consulado,* independence triumphed and in 1810, the Spanish Viceroy ceded power to a junta of regional representatives. The effect of Spain's domestic troubles and Britain's retaliatory efforts

[21] Ferns, *Argentina*, 45.
[22] Halperín-Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society*, 118.

on Argentina's independence can be simplified by a statement made by H. S. Ferns: "From this rape the Argentine Republic was born. This violation of a sheltered child of Spain not only revealed the weakness of the parent, but wakened in the colony the resources of independent life."[23]

In summation, Buenos Aires' colonial life was relatively distinct from that of other American colonies. However, the brief history presented here is but one part of the story; linguistic changes in the River Plate echoed the historical progression of this period.

Linguistic Permutations

The Río de la Plata's linguistic history during the colonial period was incredibly influential to the rise of the region's modern patois. Although not all of the dialect's peculiarities can be traced back to the pre-independence age, several of them can. These characteristics include indigenous and Andalusian influences as well as the use of *voseo* and the *yeísmo rehilado*.

Indigenous Influences

Although Argentina today is not known for having a large indigenous population—especially in comparison with other Latin American countries such as Guatemala or Bolivia—the *porteño* dialect has a surprising number of indigenous influences. These include loan words from Quechua, Guaraní, and Mapuche, as well as the native *pamperos*, the nomadic tribes from Argentina's plains. While this was likely caused by a confluence of factors rather than one sole explanation, part of the indigenous influence can be explained by the region's colonization. During the 1500s, Asunción, Paraguay was a hub for Spanish activity and it was from here that Juan de Garay traveled when he trekked to the River Plate and officially founded Buenos Aires. In Asunción, intermarriage between the native Guaraníes and Spaniards was quite frequent so it

[23] Ferns, *Argentina*, 47.

should not be surprising that the 300 or so *asunceños* who accompanied Juan de Garay as the first settlers of Buenos Aires brought both languages to the new city.[24] Spanish emerged as the dominant of the two, but many Guaraní words like *tatú* (armadillo) remained.[25]

Various other factors could have also contributed to the use of *indigenismos* in the River Plate. During the nearly 150-year interim between Buenos Aires' second foundation and its rise to prominence, *porteños* traded extensively with the *pamperos*. In fact, their relationship was largely "egalitarian, open and free."[26] This, in addition to the gauchos' integration with Indians, likely brought Buenos Aires into contact with several different indigenous languages. Furthermore, regional trade through the ports of Buenos Aires increased after the advent of the Bourbon Reforms; this provided ample opportunity for heightened intercultural exchange. Regardless of the means, indigenous languages certainly played a large role in the development of the *Río de la Plata* dialect. In fact, it has been noted that long after the Spanish language's victory over Guaraní in Buenos Aires, Manuel Belgrano, a national revolutionary in Argentina's independence movement, wrote letters in Guaraní when he was communicating with Paraguayans or Argentines living in the northeast who had yet to adopt Spanish.[27]

Andalusian v. Castilian

Much attention has also been given to the Spanish dialectal debate: what dialect was brought to the New World at the time of colonization? As previously mentioned, there are several main dialects in Spain, and in order to track changes in Latin American Spanish over time, it is helpful to know its linguistic origin. Most scholars point to either Castilian or Andalusian as the exported variety of Spanish, but there is strong evidence to support both

[24] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 14.
[25] Cotton and Sharp, *Spanish in the Americas*, 134.
[26] Ferns, *Argentina*, 29.
[27] Lapesa, *Historia de la Lengua Española*, 544.

arguments. In fact, based on present-day regional dialects in the Americas, one theory posits that Castilian was brought by the conquistadors to "'highland' regions of Hispano-America, Mexico, Guatemala, and the Andes," while Andalusian took hold in "'lowland' areas, i.e., the Caribbean, much of Central America, South American costal zones, and the 'Cono Sur.'"[28] When the period of conquest began, Castilian had already emerged as *standard Spanish*, so it is logical that the regional dialects of many of the first colonies echo these characteristics. Additionally, Spain's initial motive for colonization was the extraction of valuable resources that were mainly located in these 'highland' areas.[29] In contrast, the Andalusian influence found in the 'lowland' areas stems from later contact with the Casa de Contratación, the House of Trade conveniently located in Seville, the capital of Andalusia.

The colonization of Buenos Aires upholds this model. For its lack of precious metals, Buenos Aires was neglected by Spain in favor of the more lucrative Andean territory. As a result, the Spanish treasure fleet did not stop in any cities on the Río de la Plata. Beginning around 1600, however, Buenos Aires saw limited, but significant contact with ships from Seville. This change not only altered the region's dialectal makeup, but its demographic makeup as well:

> …es evidente que la presencia reiterada de barcos de procedencia andaluza significaba en Buenos Aires un importante contacto con el habla del sur peninsular, que en una población del reducido tamaño de la porteña debió tener una decisiva significación. Esta apertura habrá conllevado como consecuencia, además, la incorporación ilegal de nuevos pobladores de origen sud-español—muchos de ellos miembros de la propia tripulación de los barcos—que aprovecharían su llegada a Buenos Aires para afincarse en América.[30]

Andalusian, therefore, had substantial legal and illegal opportunities to implant itself in the River Plate region.

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[28] Cotton and Sharp, *Spanish in the Americas*, 82.
[29] Ibid., 82.
[30] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 15.

Use of Voseo

Interestingly enough, Castilian continued to evolve after the conquest period; some of its most identifiable modern features—the use of the phoneme /θ/ for graphemes *c* and *z*, and the use of *vosotros* to refer to the informal, second person plural—are not found in Latin America. Conversely, some archaisms continue to flourish in the New World despite having been eliminated from the peninsular dialect hundreds of years ago.

The *voseo*, an absolute staple in the *porteño* dialect, perfectly illustrates this discrepancy. Before the period of colonization, *vos* was used in Spain as the more respectful version of *tú*, the informal pronoun for the second person singular. Over time, using the term *vuestra merced*—and its subsequent abbreviation to *usted*—became the preferred method to respectfully address another person, but *vos* was not completely eradicated in peninsular Spanish until the 17th or 18th century.[31] During the process of consolidation *usted*, *vos*, and *tú* were all brought to Latin America, yet "as *vos* eventually disappeared from use in Spain, Mexico, and Peru by the seventeenth century, it remained in those areas that were distant from the colonial centers of power."[32] As a result, Argentina is not the only country to use *vos*, although it is one of the few places where this phenomenon does not coexist with *tú*.[33]

In the contemporary *porteño* dialect, the *voseo* is the favored form of address among all social groups and, although *usted* is still used, it is reserved for very formal settings only. *Tú* has long since disappeared from the region and can now only be found in the object pronoun *te* and the possessive *tu* that are used with *vos*.[34] In fact, *vos* is so ingrained in the language of Buenos

[31] Lapesa, *Historia de la Lengua Española*, 579.
[32] Joseph R. Weyers, " The Impending Demise of Tú in Montevideo, Uruguay," *Hispania* 92, no. 4 (2009): 830, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40648464.
[33] Ibid., 830.
[34] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 112.

Aires that for locals, "it may feel 'uncomfortable' if not difficult to produce *tú* forms of the verb."[35]

This was not always the case, however. Just as Spain's consolidation of *vos* and *tú* lasted several centuries, the River Plate did not totally eliminate *tú* until the 1900s.[36] In the colonial period these two pronouns were often used interchangeably with the opposite verb form; an individual might employ the *vos* pronoun with the *tuteante* verb conjugation, or vice versa. The prevalence of *vos* in Buenos Aires continued to grow, as we will see in Chapters Two and Three, until its eventual consolidation.

Beginning of the Yeísmo Rehilado

Yeísmo is a fairly common feature of Spanish, both peninsular and Latin American varieties, which equates *ll* and *y* graphemes to a single phoneme: /ʝ/ (sometimes simplified as /y/). Therefore, in *yeísta* regions of the Spanish-speaking world, the nouns *maya* and *malla* would both be pronounced [má.ja]. Likewise, there are also *lleísta* regions in which *ll* and *y* are both pronounced /ʎ/, as well as regions that differentiate the two.

Present-day Buenos Aires unarguably employs *yeísmo*—with a twist that we will soon discuss—but *porteños* actually differentiated *ll* and *y* during the first half of the city's colonial life. In fact, the *yeísmo* did not appear until the beginning of the 18th century, and even then, it was a mark of lower class speech.[37] By the end of the century, however, the phonetic leveling of both graphemes to /ʝ/ had grown in popularity within all social classes. This change was most likely an effect of the increased presence of the Andalusian dialect in the River Plate.[38]

As previously mentioned, the presence of *yeísmo* is widespread, but its pronunciation in

[35] Weyers, "The Impending Demise of *Tú* in Montevideo, Uruguay," 831.
[36] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 116.
[37] Ibid., 25-26.
[38] María Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español de América*, (Madrid: Editorial Mapfre, 1992), 58.

the *porteño* dialect is atypical due to its *rehilamiento*. While there is no easy translation for this word, Gabriel G. Bès approximates it to the English "buzz" and describes the phenomenon as "disminuyendo la presión del aire proveniente de los pulmones."[39] In Buenos Aires, *ll* and *y* are leveled to the phoneme /ʒ/ or /ʃ/. This pronunciation is so frequent and widespread that the *yeísmo rehilado* is even gaining popularity in other parts of contemporary Argentina.[40] So-called "buzzing" became quite frequent in the decades following Argentine independence, but documentation from the late 1700s proves that it originated in the colonial period. In her research on the topic, María Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg cites a theatrical script that fuses Spanish and Portuguese pronunciations three times as early proof of the *yeísmo rehilado*. She writes, "La presencia de estos tres casos, en los que se reproduce la /ž/ portuguesa por *y*, muestra, sin duda, la existencia de rehilamiento en la pronunciación bonaerense de la época."[41] As the earliest record of *yeísmo rehilado*, this document also implies that the influence of Portuguese provoked this pronunciation in *porteño* Spanish.

Still, the early appearance of this phonetic peculiarity did not signify its immediate popularity. Much like the use of *tú* and *voseo*, regular *yeísmo* coexisted with the *yeísmo rehilado* until the late 1800s, when the latter became the dominant pronunciation.[42] The next chapter will reexamine this concept and its general acceptance in the regional dialect.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to describe the modern *rioplatense* dialect and examine its linguistic foundation in the colonial period. By linking this information with its broader

[39] Gabriel G. Bès, "Examen del Concepto de Rehilamiento," *Thesaurus. Boletín del Instituto Caro y Cuervo* 19, no. 1 (1964): 32. http://cvc.cervantes.es/lengua/thesaurus/pdf/19/TH_19_001_018_0.pdf.
[40] D. Lincoln Canfield, *Spanish Pronunciation in the Americas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 24.
[41] Fontanella de Weinberg, "El Rehilamiento Bonaerense," 342.
[42] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español de América*, 58.

historical context, we are able to explain the presence of many dialectal peculiarities found in Buenos Aires today. For nearly 150 years after the colony's formal establishment, Buenos Aires was largely ignored by Spain. During this time, contact with *pamperos* and other indigenous groups drove new words into the *porteño* dialect while limited trade with Andalusia brought the young colony new citizens as well as a new linguistic model from southern Spain. The Andalusian influence signaled the beginning of *yeísmo* in the region, although the pronunciation eventually became *rehilado*, or "buzzed." Additionally, while Spain eliminated the *voseo* during this time, Buenos Aires' sheer lack of communication with its colonizer caused *vos* to overshadow *tú* in the regional patois.

After the onset of the Bourbon Reforms, the River Plate rose to prominence with Buenos Aires as its capital. *Porteños* enjoyed the newfound freedom to trade openly within the Spanish Empire, the clout of hosting the new viceregal government, and the power that came from controlling the region's ports. After a relatively bloodless independence movement, Buenos Aires' increasing political and economic authority helped it establish the River Plate's autonomy from Spain.

Chapter Two: "When Politics and Language Meet" will build on the ideas presented here by focusing on the next phase in Argentine history: the period of state building. Here, the quest for good government will intersect with the debate on proper Spanish as political tensions rise and the early characteristics of the *porteño* dialect become more salient.

Chapter 2
When Politics and Language Meet

Hay países, o épocas dentro de ellos, en que el cuerpo social y particularmente sus grupos normativos, aspiran a determinada perfección lingüística….Eso indica que el cuerpo social funciona, en lo esencial y profundo, como un motor bien engrasado.

Américo Castro
La Peculiaridad Lingüística Rioplatense y Su Sentido Histórico (Madrid: Taurus, 1961), 99.

Introduction

This chapter serves as a link between the Río de la Plata's colonial roots and its Golden Age of industrialization and immigration that lasted from the late 1800s through early 1900s. Between these two periods, we see the establishment of local government, the division of provinces, the emergence of a regional identity, and curiously enough, a strong connection between national politics and language in the River Plate. Throughout this chapter, I aim to highlight this connection by presenting the important actors in Argentina's post-independence period and their individual roles within the context of the regional dialect.

To do this, I will first present a historical timeline of Argentina after 1810 that includes the revolutionary and civil wars that troubled the River Plate for years, and the subsequent rise of caudillo leadership across the region. I will then shift the focus to Juan Manuel de Rosas, who is regarded as Argentina's archetypal caudillo for various reasons. Formally, Rosas was only the governor of Buenos Aires, but because he controlled international trade via the port system, he was granted significant authority in matters of provincial economics and foreign relations. Additionally, Rosas had a special connection with language; highly interested in lexicon and socioeconomic dialects, it is no surprise why many accuse the dictator of singlehandedly altering the national vernacular.

Second, I will address the political shifts that occurred during Rosas' reign and after his

fall from power. As the ideological debate between conservatives and liberals—Federalists and Unitarians, respectively—permeated all aspects of public and private life, it carried over into the linguistic realm as well. This can be seen in the heated debate between Andrés Bello and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento that united politics and language in an attempt to identify the proper dialect of Spanish for the River Plate region and Latin America as a whole.

Above all, this chapter attempts to show the constantly evolving nature of language in Buenos Aires as it interacted with the Argentine state building period. Many regional linguistic characteristics, such as the *voseo* and *yeísmo rehilado*, became increasingly common during this time, but not without considerable controversy. The three men presented in these pages—Rosas, Bello, and Sarmiento—each played a role within these controversies and helped permanently shape the *porteño* dialect.

Buenos Aires, Post-Independence

The Viceroy's deposition in 1810 was the first stride towards autonomy in the River Plate, but an official declaration of independence from Spain was not issued until 1816. In the interim, the newly formed Junta dispatched military units throughout the former viceregal territory to consolidate the regional government's authority. However, the break from colonial order was not universally accepted; royalist armies commonly fought against the militias and even after 1816, tensions remained high.

Although after independence, *equality* became a major buzzword in the Río de la Plata, its actual practice was quite restricted. Strong hostilities divided Americans and foreign-born members of society, and this tension colored personal interactions as well as political structures. In fact, the authoritarian nature of the new government—comparable with its colonial predecessor in its strict regulation of civil liberties—served as a means to perpetuate

discrimination against Spaniards. While the Junta claimed to "observe religiously the sacred dogma of equality," it often reserved leadership positions for nationals only.[43] In addition, citizenship to the United Provinces was only granted to those Spaniards who could prove their allegiance to the "patriot cause."[44] In time, the discord between American citizens and Spaniards was tamed; in part, this was because the Junta could not afford to isolate such a large portion of the population. Additionally, the passage of time diffused the social divisions caused by independence from Spain. However, this did not signify the end of political polarization in the region. On the contrary, citizens and local governments began to divide over a new issue.

After unseating the Viceroy, supporters of independence disagreed on *how* to govern the newly autonomous territory. While some provinces supported the idea of a central government under the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, others joined the *Liga Federal*, or Federal League, which favored provincial sovereignty. The sheer lack of consensus between the two groups can be seen in the 1816 Declaration of Independence from Spain, which was issued by the United Provinces only. The rift between so-called Federalists and Unitarians widened and eventually erupted in a series of civil wars, the effects of which continued to permeate political thought for more than a century. The many battles and political assassinations that occurred during the course of these wars pitted provinces against one another and left Buenos Aires despised by many; while the port city continued to reassert its dominance, the provinces of the interior refused to acknowledge its ultimate authority. Chaos peaked in 1820 after the previous year's attempt at promulgating a Unitarian constitution was brought down by the Battle of Cepeda. It was then that,

> After a decade of conflict between Buenos Aires and the provinces, between central government and regional interests, between [unitarians] and federalists,

[43] Halperín-Donghi, *Politics, Economics and Society*, 177.
[44] Ibid., 175.

> the framework of political organization in the Río de la Plata collapsed. Independent republics proliferated all over the provinces, and when Buenos Aires tried to reduce them to submission, they fought back, their caudillos leading irregular gaucho hordes, the *montoneros*, against the capital.[45]

Things began to improve in 1821, however, under the Unitarian governance of Bernardino Rivadavia, one of the most significant leaders to emerge out of the original Junta. As Minister of Government in Buenos Aires, Rivadavia pursued liberal policies to promote modernization and economic advancement throughout the region. His administration focused on infrastructure, education, and banking, and trade blossomed as a result. In fact the capitalist market reforms set in place by Rivadavia were incredibly successful; "By 1825 the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata were, on paper, the most advanced liberal and capitalist community in the world."[46] And, although the Federal League provinces were not directly influenced by these Unitarian policies, many had since signed agreements with Buenos Aires and thus enjoyed relative peace during this time. It seemed as though the River Plate was finally settling on a successful path, but the stability of Rivadavia's first few years in power would not last long.

The outbreak of war with Brazil over the control of territories in modern-day Argentina and Uruguay completely shifted the liberal course of government in Buenos Aires. During the three-year war from 1825-1828, Argentina hemorrhaged money in an attempt to match the well-equipped Brazilian forces. Then, when Brazil blockaded its southern neighbor, Argentina's thriving free market was destroyed and, along with it, died Rivadavia's vision of a unified government. However, the economy reoriented itself towards domestic markets in short order. Land and cattle became safe investments due to the absence of property taxes and the slack in agricultural exports. Essentially, "what seems to have happened simultaneously was the

[45] John Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo: Juan Manuel de Rosas* (Wilmington: SR Books, 2001), 11.
[46] Ferns, *Argentina*, 78.

debilitation of the commercial system based on Buenos Aires and the international market and the strengthening of local economic forces."[47] This economic adaptation exalted the rural world, increased the role of *estancieros*, and effectively gave rise to caudillo politics across the River Plate region. Most importantly, the chaos that Rivadavia left behind in Buenos Aires brought Juan Manuel de Rosas—dictator, caudillo, and Federalist—to power.

The Age of Juan Manuel de Rosas

Juan Manuel de Rosas (1793-1877) was, and continues to be, a figure of great contention in Argentine history. To some, his reign was vengeful, ruthless, and bloody, yet others remember Rosas for unifying the Argentine provinces, expanding the national territory, and creating social and political stability. As a result of the highly politicized environment of the time, his actions have long since fused with his character, making objective analysis of his policy or personality extremely rare.

Even after his downfall, he continued, and continues, to hold relevance for several reasons. First, Rosas personified the struggle between the Federalists and Unitarians that pervaded Argentine history for ages. He represented a populist government that spoke to the masses—a stark contrast to the liberals who saw themselves as worldlier and more elite than the "wild" or "savage" rural populations. Second, Rosas is often remembered as the nation's first dictator. This point, however, is simply untrue as many dictatorial governors, colleagues of Rosas, concurrently ruled other Argentine provinces. Yet, it can certainly be argued that Rosas was the first dictator to exercise some degree of power over much of the national territory. In fact, despite his position as governor of Buenos Aires, Rosas largely determined the economic policy of all the provinces because he controlled the port system. Based on these two factors, Juan Manuel is clearly an important historical figure, but one of his biographers, John Lynch,

[47] Ibid., 81-82.

adds yet another layer of detail. Lynch asserts that the study of Rosas "reveals the growth of great estates, the expansion of frontiers, the role of patron and client, the roots of dictatorship, and the use of state terrorism" in Argentina.[48] In essence, understanding Rosas unlocks the main themes that run through modern Argentine history.

Personal Background

Juan Manuel was born in 1793 to a wealthy family in the Buenos Aires province—the second of twenty children. He spent the majority of his youth outdoors, working the Rosas family's vast plots of land, learning to ride horses, and wrangling cattle. He was formally educated and, while there is some debate about how much schooling he actually acquired, most Argentines and foreigners agreed that Juan Manuel was capable of speaking at highly elevated levels.[49] At a young age, he started a business exporting cured meats and quickly found success as an entrepreneur.

The women in his family were arguably the most influential people in Juan Manuel's life. He was always closest with his mother, Agustina López de Osornio, a highly independent woman who, during occasional fits of brutality, fiercely beat her children. It was she, who by all accounts, was the dominant parent and leader of the Rosas family. It is only fitting then, that when Juan Manuel fell in love with the young Encarnación Ezcurra, it was his mother who objected to his marriage. Knowing full well that she would never approve, the lovers devised a plan. Encarnación wrote a false letter to Juan Manuel in which she claimed to be pregnant and when Agustina saw the letter, she promptly insisted that her son marry. And thus, in 1813, Juan Manuel married Encarnación. The couple conceived three times, but only their daughter Manuela survived. Both Juan Manuel's wife and daughter went on to occupy very important roles in the

[48] Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo,* ix.
[49] Julio Irazusta, *Vida Política de Juan Manuel de Rosas a través de Su Correspondencia*, vol. 1, *El Advenimiento de Rosas* (Buenos Aires: Jorge E. Llopis, 1975), 44-47.

leader's life. Encarnación supported her husband from the very beginning of his career and was considered the patron of his followers. To many, she was even saintly. After her mother's death, Manuelita, as she was affectionately called, largely filled that role.

Political Control

As for his political career, Rosas began simply as an *estanciero* who was dependent upon rural gauchos and hired Indians to protect his land. These men eventually became his militia when he called upon them to not only defend his own property, but also to join the Buenos Aires army in defending the "center" from the "periphery"—the armies of other provinces that fought for control. His efforts earned him a new title: commander of rural militias. And because he was a member of the Federalist Party, Rosas was "received not simply as a military servant of the government but as a victor and leader of the Federalist party" when his army defeated governor Lavalle's.[50] Soon he was elected Governor of Buenos Aires, a position that he would hold numerous times. Rosas' government was characterized by his love for order and stability above all else and, to this end, he is often remembered for his use of terror. For this, the Unitarians deemed him a barbarian.[51]

His Role in the Porteño Dialect

Rosas' politics only comprise half of the story, however; this contentious figure is curiously pulled into Argentina's linguistic history as well. Many biographers have debated Rosas' use of *tú* and *vos*, his penchant for foul language, and his level of education, yet some have made much more substantial claims. For example, Arturo Capdevila, an Argentine intellectual, for example, wrote that Rosas singlehandedly popularized the *voseo* in Buenos Aires:

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[50] Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo*, 12.
[51] Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, "Civilization or Barbarism," in *The Argentina Reader*, eds. Gabriela Nouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 83.

> Casi en las vísperas de la revolución hubo, por fin, un Vértiz [sic] progresista en Buenos Aires. Y todavía quiso nuestro destino que, iniciada la ímproba labor cultural de los prohombres de mayo, obras y proyectos fuesen desbaratados por Rosas. Todo el Buenos Aires culto de 1810 decía de *tú*; todo Córdoba también. Mas, venido que fué el tirano, se retornó al voseo. Que también hubo de parecer el voseo una adecuada forma de adulación y bajeza federal.[52]

At first glance, it is not clear whether these bold claims are fact or fiction. What was Rosas' role, if any at all, in the River Plate dialect? The answer proves somewhat convoluted, but several truths stand out.

To begin, Juan Manuel was undoubtedly interested in language. He enjoyed reading the dictionary while he was alone in the pampas and even wrote one himself—*Grámatica y Diccionario de la Lengua Pampa: Pampa-Ranquel-Araucano*.[53] In fact, his intelligence was nothing to scoff at. Rosas dazzled in conversation and was often able to cite information from the classic texts and almanacs that he scoured in his spare time.[54] All of this information, however, is a stark contrast to the Rosas who was known for his connection to the rural masses. Among less refined company, he still enjoyed "obscene stories and jokes, foul language, and gross physical clowning."[55]

This ability to recognize and alter his use of language tells us a great deal about the dictator, especially in terms of his connection to the people. Despite being a member of the wealthy, land-owning elite, Rosas was still able to market himself to the lower class and he even lectured his predecessors for not doing the same: "A mi parecer todos cometían un grande error: se conducían muy bien con la clase ilustrada, pero despreciaban a los hombres de las clases

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[52] Arturo Capdevila, *Babel y el Castellano* (Madrid: Compañia Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1928), 140.
[53] Ángel Rosenblat, *Las Generaciones Argentinas del Siglo XIX Ante el Problema de la Lengua* (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1961), 35.
[54] Irazusta, *Vida Política de Juan Manuel de Rosas*, 46-47, 66.
[55] Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo*, 125.

bajas, los de la campaña, que son la gente de acción."[56] He went on to say that for this reason, he found it necessary to "hacerme gaucho como ellos, hablar como ellos."[57] In essence, Rosas deliberately catered to this previously neglected audience in order to win their support, and he did this in part, by speaking like a gaucho.

If Capdevila's argument were correct, we should expect to see the preferential use of *voseo* over *tú* among both Rosas and the rural populations. This, however, is simply not the case. Beginning in the late 1700s, gauchos employed a unique mix of both pronouns; in the present tense, *tuteante* conjugations coexisted with two *voseante* conjugations (monophthong and diphthong variations) while in the imperative tense, the *voseante* conjugations were more common.[58] Rosas' own correspondence proves that he also mixed both pronouns and employed diphthonged—such as *sois* instead of *sos*—and monophthonged *voseante* conjugations.[59] It would be difficult to argue that the rising popularity of *vos* in Argentina was caused by Rosas when the dictator himself lacked a clear preference. However, we can see the cultural shift towards the *voseo*—in both pronoun usage and modern monophthong conjugation—in the younger generation during the latter half of the 1800s; in letters to her father from 1863 to 1874, Manuelita Rosas used only the *voseo* with its monophthonged *voseante* conjugation.[60]

The truth probably has a lot less to do with Rosas than it does with pro-rural sentiments. Having been thrust into the spotlight after the disintegration of Rivadavian government, the countryside, and Federalism by extension, grew in popularity. In many ways, the language of the uneducated lower classes triumphed as a result. Américo Castro also sees this as a flaw in Capdevila's argument:

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[56] Rosenblat, *Las Generaciones Argentinas del Siglo XIX*, 32.
[57] Ibid., 32.
[58] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 117-118.
[59] Ibid., 115.
[60] Ibid., 116.

> Me encantaría que la noble y generosa humanidad de mi amigo Capdevila estuviera aquí en lo cierto; mucho me temo, sin embargo, que Rozas fuera un simple y tremendo símbolo, un símbolo de la siniestra y auténtica vitalidad de abajo, frente a la espectral de arriba. La cultura del siglo XVIII, en último término, sirvió más para excitar los instintos rurales que para amansarlos."[61]

However, this logic cannot completely explain the use of the *voseo*; as shown in Table 1, rural use of the pronoun was divided between monophthonged and diphthonged conjugations, while urban-dwellers used much fewer variations between 1800-1830.

Table 1. Forms of Address Used by Rural and Urban Speakers in the 19th Century [62]

CUADRO 1

Formas de voseo urbano y rural en el siglo XIX

	Habla urbana						*Habla rural*					
	Usos pronominales				*Usos verbales*		*Usos pronominales*				*Usos verbales*	
	Suj.	*T. Comp.*	*Obj.*	*Pos.*	*Pres.*	*Imp.*	*Suj.*	*T. Comp.*	*Obj.*	*Pos.*	*Pres.*	*Imp.*
1800-1830	vos/ tú	vos (ti)	te	tu	tienes (sois)	ten/ tené	vos/ tú	vos/ti	os/te	vuestro/ tu	tenéis/ **tenés/** tienes	tené ten
1830-1860							vos	vos	te	tu	tenés (sois)	tené
1860-	vos	vos	te	tu	tenés	tené/ten	vos	vos	te	tu	tenés	tené

Diphthonged conjugations were virtually nonexistent in second half of the 19th century, but perhaps this leveling was simply a matter of simplification or standardization. Regardless, these changes should not be attributed solely to Juan Manuel de Rosas. Rather than an architect of language, Rosas was an emblem for the direction in which language was moving. The rise of Federalism and ruralism led to a clear preference for rural, lower class forms of language.

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[61] Castro, *La Peculiaridad Lingüística Rioplatense y Su Sentido Histórico*, 65-66.
[62] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 119.

Political Polarization and Language

During Rosas' administration, a new generation, born and educated in the age of independence, found its voice in politics. Despite the expansion of strong provincial governance in Argentina, the conflict between Federalists and Unitarians did not disappear. In fact, it deepened, and the terms *Federalist* and *Unitarian* acquired additional meaning—now synonymous with mindset, actions, religious affiliation, and more.

Over time, the dichotomy between conservatives and liberals—found not only in Argentina, but throughout much of Latin America as well—spurred fierce, politically charged debates that even entered into the linguistic realm. Both sides debated the proper use of Spanish in Latin America, its corruption since the colonial era, and the role of education in establishing the region's linguistic heritage. Although the dialect of Buenos Aires is the focus of my research, it would be a mistake to ignore the concrete linguistic changes that were occurring in the region as a whole. In his research on the topic, scholar Alfredo Torrejón declares that "una vez que se afianzó la independencia política, la lealtad lingüística fue paulatinamente transfiriéndose de la norma peninsular a una indefinida norma hispanoamericana y de ésta a una norma nacional asociada con las hablas de los círculos cultos de las capitales."[63] As discussed in Chapter One, this process began even before independence in Buenos Aires, but newer modifications to the Spanish language roused substantial controversy both within Argentina and the rest of Latin America. While conservatives looked to Spain as the arbiter of the Spanish language, liberals sought cultural autonomy from the colonial ruler and felt free to adapt the language as part of a new regional and national identity. Though widely circulated at the time, these ideas were best articulated by the polemics exchanged between Andrés Bello of Venezuela and Domingo

[63] Alfredo Torrejón, "Andrés Bello, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento y el Castellano Culto de Chile," *Thesaurus. Boletín del Instituto Caro y Cuervo* 44, no. 3 (1989): 541.

Faustino Sarmiento of Argentina in the 1840s.

Bello: Linguistic Purism

Andrés Bello was born in 1781 in Caracas, Venezuela and became involved in politics at a young age. He participated in the independence movement, but by leaving Venezuela for London in 1810, he consequently avoided the war with Spain that plagued the nation for another decade. Early on, Bello grew passionate about classical texts and the perfection of the Spanish language—both topics that he went on to teach in private lessons. After accepting a position with the Chilean government in 1829, he moved to Santiago where he lived until his death in 1865.

Bello was a staunch conservative in respect to his feelings about the Spanish language. He was horrified by its perversion throughout Latin America and genuinely feared the consequences of change. If anything, his position was patronizing; Spanish needed to be carefully preserved by the educated elite in order to prevent corruption by the lower classes.[64] Yet overall, Bello wanted language to unite Latin America, not divide it.

Despite sharing a common language and a similar colonial legacy, the nations of Latin America were, and are, incredibly diverse. Bello recognized this fact and believed that regional dialects, if permitted to develop, would eventually destroy one of the region's only bonds:

> …el mayor mal de todos, y el que, si no se ataja, va a privarnos de las inapreciables ventajas de un lenguaje común, es la avenida de neologismos de construcción, que inunda y enturbia mucha parte de lo que se escribe en América, y alterando la estructura del idioma, tiende a convertirlo en una multitud de dialectos irregulares, licenciosos, bárbaros, embriones de idiomas futuros, que durante una larga evolución reproducirán en América lo que fue la Europa en el tenebroso periodo de la corrupción del latín. Chile, el Perú, Buenos Aires, Méjico, hablarán cada uno su lengua, o, por decir, varias lenguas, como sucede en España, Italia y Francia, donde dominan ciertos idiomas provinciales, pero viven a su lado otros varios, oponiendo estorbos a la difusión de las luces, a la ejecución de las leyes, a la administración del estado, a la unidad nacional.[65]

[64] Torrejón, "Andrés Bello, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento y el Castellano Culto de Chile," 547.
[65] Andrés Bello, *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana Destinada al Uso de los Americanos*, ed. D. Felipe Robles Dégano (Paris: Catalán Hermanos, 1921), 15.

Here, we get a sense for Bello's genuine fear: that linguistic evolution, if left unchecked, would divide Latin America into islands of mutually unintelligible languages. To combat such deterioration, Bello advocated for the adoption of a Pan-Hispanic linguistic standard that echoed the forms of Classical Spanish.[66] As a prolific writer, his ideas on the purity of language were widely circulated in the form of journalism, creative works, and his pièce de résistance, the *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana Destinada al Uso de los Americanos*.[67] His opinions did not go unchallenged, however; Sarmiento argued that linguistic change was not only necessary, it was inevitable.

Sarmiento: Linguistic Regionalism

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was born in 1811 to a poor family in San Juan, Argentina. He was well educated and, like Bello, had a passion for languages; learning Latin throughout his youth, Sarmiento gradually acquired a working knowledge of Italian, English, and Portuguese in addition to his native Spanish.[68] Politics were also an important part of his upbringing. Liberal role models, including his father who had fought in the War of Independence, surrounded him and he, too, joined the Unitarian Party at a young age. Although he would return later in life to become the seventh President of Argentina, Sarmiento spent a significant amount of time exiled in Chile. While there, he found a passion for journalism and writing became an outlet for his ardent beliefs.

Although politically speaking, Sarmiento wasn't opposed to "control by the few," in terms of language, he was much more democratic than Bello. He recognized that environment played a prominent role in the development of language and therefore, emphasized the

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[66] Torrejón, "Andrés Bello, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento y el Castellano Culto de Chile," 542.
[67] Ibid., 542.
[68] Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Sarmiento en el Destierro*, ed. Armando Donoso (Buenos Aires: M. Gleizer, 1927), 163.

importance of education. Sarmiento also believed that the spoken word took precedence over written language and that orthography should be simplified to echo pronunciation.[69] Had he succeeded, these changes would have made proper spelling much more intuitive, but his methods never caught on. In general, Sarmiento's linguistic opinions revolved around two main themes that portrayed language as a tool to shape regional identity and as a living entity in constant evolution.

First, Sarmiento pointed to Latin American independence from Spain as justification for its cultural independence. According to him, "La soberanía del pueblo tiene todo su valor y su predominio en el idioma; los gramáticos son como el senado conservador, creado para resistir a los embates populares, para conservar la rutina y las tradiciones."[70] This quote reaffirms the intellectual's desire for a unique identity, separate from its colonial oppressor. In addition, we see his political standpoint quite clearly; conservatism in both politics and language opposes the desire of the masses by hiding behind a veil of traditionalism. Furthermore, Sarmiento saw nothing inherently *wrong* with Latin American dialects.[71] Their value, like the dialects of peninsular Spanish, was derived from the people since common use gave them legitimacy.

The second theme that guided Sarmiento's linguistic arguments referred to the evolutionary nature of language itself. If languages have multiplied, adapted, and died in the past, what authority did man have to stop them from doing so now? Certainly, "Sarmiento entendía que si se aceptaba que se había producido el desarrollo y la evolución de las estrellas, la tierra, el hombre y la civilización, en el transcurso de los siglos, debía reconocerse que las

[69] Torrejón, "Andrés Bello, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento y el Castellano Culto de Chile," 550.
[70] Sarmiento, *Sarmiento en el Destierro*, 50.
[71] Torrejón, "Andrés Bello, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento y el Castellano Culto de Chile," 557.

lenguas se hallaban en permanente transformación."[72] Linguistic evolution was therefore, a natural response that not even peninsular Spanish had escaped. To that effect, Sarmiento noted that, even within Spain, no one was attempting to revert Spanish back to Latin.[73]

If left unchecked, however, who would determine the correct forms of language? How could Spanish be taught in Latin America if linguistic corruption was permissible? Naturally, Sarmiento had an answer to critiques such as these. He declared that "Cuando una parte de la sociedad, la plebe solamente dice *quero, sordao, benío, truje*, etc., puede considerarse estos defectos como verdaderos vicios; pero cuando todos los hombres que hablan un idioma sin excepción lo dicen, eso no es vicio, sino transformación, y entra a figurarse en el lenguaje correcto."[74] This response has two main flaws: it's not specific and, by prioritizing the spoken word, it neglects changes within written language. Regardless, it wholeheartedly represents democracy in the linguistic realm.

Polemics in the Media

The bulk of the conflict between Sarmiento and Bello took place in a series of fervently written articles that ran in Santiago de Chile's *El Mercurio* newspaper in 1842. Sarmiento published the first polemic, "Ejercicios Populares de la Lengua Castellana" in *El Mercurio* in April 1842. The following month, Bello answered with a retort signed "Quidam." These articles led to many others and sparked a small frenzy that often bordered on personal attack. Ultimately, Sarmiento ended the controversy to avoid angering the Chilean public; still highly opposed to Rosas' government in Argentina, Sarmiento hoped to find political support among his fellow

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[72] Mabel N. Cernadas de Bulnes, "La Actitud de Sarmiento Frente al Problema de la Lengua," in *Aspectos de la Historia del Español de la Argentina*, ed. María Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg (Bahía Blanca: Departamento de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional del Sur, 1986), 145.
[73] Ibid., 151.
[74] Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *Obras Completas*, vol. 4, *Ortografía, Instrucción Pública* (Buenos Aires: Felix Lajouane, 1886), 90.

exiles as well as among the Chilean audience.[75] Both men went on to write highly controversial works regarding their linguistic beliefs, but the personal critiques largely stopped here.

Lasting Effects of the Debate

Although it is difficult to declare a precise winner of the debate, Argentina's present-day linguistic pride clearly reflects the attitude of Sarmiento. Specifically within Buenos Aires, there is an "afán por conservar y perpetuar las características lingüísticas propias suyas (estén sancionadas o no por las academias)."[76] And although *porteños* seem to have overcome their Hispanophobia of the past, "parece prevalecer al mismo tiempo una tendencia en defensa de la autonomía lingüística" that speaks to a call for national identity.[77] This effect, as seen in Rosas' case, could also have been caused by a surge in Unitarian popularity in the late 1800s. Indeed, when Sarmiento went on to become the president of Argentina in 1868, he paid special attention to the nation's education system and the manner in which language was taught. However, Sarmiento was one of numerous liberal presidents who came to power after the fall of Rosas, and the liberal oligarchy that took power in 1880 also reformed the education system. So to what extent did Sarmiento's stance on language affect *la lengua porteña*? His ideas are visibly echoed in the modern dialect, but the diffusion of Unitarian ideology that succeeded him helped to instill these linguistic beliefs in the nation's education system as well.

It's worth noting that to a lesser degree, Sarmiento also had an effect on Chilean Spanish. While it largely rejected the *voseo*, as Bello had recommended, the Chilean dialect allowed itself greater flexibility in the use of neologisms and likewise, Sarmiento's ideas resonated with the

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[75] Efraín Kristal, "Dialogues and Polemics: Sarmiento, Lastarria, and Bello," in *Sarmiento and His Argentina*, ed. Joseph T. Criscenti (Boulder: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1993), 68.
[76] Carlos A. Solé, "Lenguaje y Nacionalismo en la Argentina," in *Language and Language Use: Studies in Spanish*, eds. Terrell A. Morgan, James F. Lee, and Bill VanPatten, 209.
[77] Ibid., 217.

growing sense of national pride.[78]

Political Shifts and the Downfall of Rosas

While Rosas' dominance set the backdrop for the linguistic quarrel between Bello and Sarmiento in the 1840s, the next decade left Buenos Aires facing an uncertain political future. As the emblematic caudillo who found notoriety in the chaos of post-independence, Rosas' authority over Buenos Aires and, to an extent, over the rest of Argentina, made him powerful and memorable. Ferns eagerly declares that "he more than any politician in Argentine history fixed the socio-political structure of the country and determined the outcome of the revolution," but he did not fix all of Argentina's problems.[79] Rosas served his purpose; he imposed order and began the process of unification, but by the time he was defeated in 1852, Argentina was ready for a new path.

The forces that had held Rosas in power since 1829 would not hold forever. Frustrated by the caudillo's unceasing tyranny, Justo José de Urquiza, the Federalist governor of Entre Ríos, collaborated with Brazil to overthrow Rosas in the Battle of Caseros in 1852. Urquiza took over as governor of Buenos Aires and mobilized around his plan for national organization. However, the downfall of Rosas did not signify an immediate regime change; Urquiza belonged to the same political party and was just as authoritarian as his predecessor. In fact, "he seemed destined to perpetuate the ideological conflicts and the caudillo politics of the time."[80] Be this as it may, things *did* change in just a few short years when Argentina officially became one nation, Liberals came to power, and the Río de la Plata embarked upon a course of industrialization and modernization. I will discuss all of these topics and their relationship to the *porteño* dialect in Chapter Three: "Immigration and Language."

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[78] Torrejón, "Andrés Bello, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento y el Castellano Culto de Chile," 557.
[79] Ferns, *Argentina,* 85, 90.
[80] Lynch, *Argentine Caudillo*, 159.

Conclusion

This chapter emphasized the relationship between language and national politics in Argentina's post-independence period. Many of the River Plate's dialectal transformations were simply continuations from the colonial era, but not everyone was willing to accept these changes. To accurately present the linguistic controversies of this stage in Argentine history, I first presented the historical and political events that took place following the overthrow of the Viceroy in 1810. The chaos that ensued gave rise to caudillo politics, Federalism, and ultimately, Juan Manuel de Rosas.

Next, I examined Rosas and his role in both the government of Buenos Aires and the regional dialect. Although he marketed himself as a rural gaucho by speaking like one, he cannot be completely blamed for the increasing popularity of the lower class forms of language. Rather, he should be viewed as a emblem of the changes that occurred.

Finally, I described the influence of politics in the linguistic debate between Andrés Bello and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento in the 1840s and its lasting effects in the *rioplatense* dialect. While Bello promoted a linguistic purism that would unite the young nations of Latin America, Sarmiento argued for flexibility and democracy within the Spanish language as part of the region's cultural autonomy from Spain. And while their controversial polemics were published in Chile's *El Mercurio,* they addressed dialectal changes that took place throughout Latin America. Sarmiento was the victor in the case of Buenos Aires, as evidenced by the region's modern linguistic peculiarities and the citizens' preference to continue using them.

Chapter Three: "Immigration and Language" will address the political and cultural changes that ushered in Argentina's Golden Age of immigration and industrialization. During

this period, liberal ideology laid the foundation for the massive influx of immigrants that altered the nation's demographics and language forever.

Chapter 3
Immigration and Language

Un idioma es la expresión de las ideas de un pueblo, y cuando un pueblo no vive de su propio pensamiento, cuando tiene que importar de ajenas fuentes el agua que ha de saciar su sed, entonces está condenado a recibirla con todo el limo y las arenas que arrastra en su curso; y mal han de intentar los de gusto delicado poner coladeras al torrente, que pasarán las aguas y se llevarán en pos de sí las telarañas fabricadas por un espíritu nacional mezquino y de alcance limitado. Esta es la posición del idioma español que ha dejado de ser maestro para tomar el humilde puesto de aprendiz, y en España como en América se ve forzado a sufrir la influencia de los idiomas extraños que lo instruyen y lo aleccionan.

Domingo Faustino Sarmiento
Sarmiento en el Destierro, ed. Armando Donoso (Buenos Aires: M. Gleizer, 1927), 59.

Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyze the important changes that occurred before and during Argentina's Golden Age as they affected the regional dialect. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Argentina played host to one of the largest waves of immigration the world had ever seen—second only in number to the United States.[81] Although most newcomers settled in Buenos Aires and the northeastern littoral region, the effects of such a large demographic influx were felt on a national level. At the same time, the now-unified state witnessed major economic growth, the adoption of liberal political structures, and the creation of an "Argentine" culture. To be certain, this historical moment of prosperity had dramatic consequences, many of which are visible in the region's linguistic alterations. Throughout the chapter, I will attempt to identify the Golden Age's lingual repercussions and situate them within a larger historical context.

First, I will detail the political and economic changes that took place after the downfall of Rosas. Urquiza, the new caudillo in power, laid the foundation for the liberal oligarchy that ushered in a new era of immigration and industrialization. In addition, I will describe the role

[81] María Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg, "Algunos Aspectos de la Asimilación Lingüística de la Población Inmigratoria en la Argentina," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 18 (1978): 5-6.

that Juan Bautista Alberdi and his *Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina* played in the construction of the national constitution. Many of Alberdi's recommendations became the basis for popular opinion and later, concrete laws that structured the liberal oligarchy that came to power in the 1880s.

Next, I will discuss the factors that influenced the immigrants' linguistic assimilation. Depending on their mother tongue's proximity to Spanish, different groups of foreigners adopted the *lingua franca* at varying speeds. In general, Buenos Aires' rapid industrialization propagated the use of Spanish among immigrants. However, the quick pace of language adoption also prompted the creation of neologisms as well as *Cocoliche*, a fusion of Italian and Spanish, and *Lunfardo*, the language of crime.

In the end, this chapter will build on the previous two chapters to reveal the modern form of *la lengua porteña*. Here, we see many of the linguistic factors of the colonial and state building periods become staples of the River Plate dialect. The immigration boom discussed here represents the last major influence in shaping the language that is spoken today.

From Urquiza To Liberal Oligarchy

Although General Urquiza, the new Argentine head of state, was as much a Federalist as his predecessor, he managed to cooperate with liberals for the betterment of the nation. His administration focused heavily on economic expansion through free-market opportunities and investment in infrastructure—especially in the means of transportation such as railways and waterways. This era also witnessed the national consolidation of Argentina, effectively ending the vacillation between independent provinces and a united country. Most importantly, Urquiza's presidency set a precedent for "modernizers, landlord-liberals, and believers in strong,

concentrated presidential power centered in Buenos Aires."[82] And while Rosas's government had previously followed some similar policies, he "ruled a closed society," whereas Urquiza and his successors were open to the outside world.[83] The creation of the Argentine Constitution, overseen by Urquiza in 1853, validated this observation; the document sought to resolve Argentina's problems by opening its borders to foreigners.

Politically, there were several important changes after Urquiza left power in 1860. The liberal governments that followed were in many ways an extension of the caudillo's administration, but they eventually gave rise to a liberal oligarchy. Gaining power in 1880, the oligarchy was composed of a series of presidents—each a member of Argentina's *Partido Autonomista Nacional* (PAN). Over time, fraudulent elections and corruption charges tarnished the PAN's reputation, however, and brought the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR) to power in 1916.

Despite these political shifts, the economy largely flourished. Although throughout the state building period, Argentina was still dependent on the production of agricultural products, it was economically characterized by a steady increase in exports and a general improvement of international terms of trade. Carlos Newland lists three main factors to explain why this happened. First, within Europe, growing wealth from industrialization boosted the demand for international trade. Second, selective breeding improved livestock yields. And third, migration from peripheral Argentine provinces to Buenos Aires and the littoral region accounted for increased productivity.[84] Despite brief interludes of economic turmoil, "In 1830, as in 1860, average per capita exports from Argentina were about three times greater than those of countries identified by Bairoch and Etemad as 'Developed' and 25 times greater than those of the 'Third

[82] Ferns, *Argentina, 94.*
[83] Ibid., 97.
[84] Carlos Newland, "Exports and Terms of Trade in Argentina, 1811-1870," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 17, no. 3 (1998): 409-410. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3339579.

World.'"[85]

These factors, then, formed the backdrop for the Golden Age of the agro-export model that lasted until the world depression in 1929. At its peak, Argentina was one of the wealthiest countries in the world. But without a doubt, the region's newfound wealth did not benefit everyone. The growing population in urban areas forced many poor immigrants to live in unsanitary and overcrowded *conventillos* or *villas miserias*. Likewise, working conditions were often less than ideal; strenuous manual labor, twelve- to fourteen-hour days, and paychecks that could not always cover the cost of transportation in downtown Buenos Aires were not uncommon.[86] We cannot, however, ignore the large sums of money that surged into the country, and into Buenos Aires specifically. Wealthy *barrios* sprang up across the city, most citizens had access to education, and "food was abundant, cheap, and good."[87] This was the era in which Buenos Aires earned its nickname as the "Paris of Latin America," the age of grandeur, sophistication, and economic success. At this time, "the landed class and the controllers of the supporting commercial structure grew enormously rich so that in the pleasure capitals of Europe Argentina became a synonym for wealth and luxury."[88]

Juan Bautista Alberdi and the Constitution

Before Argentina grew so fabulously wealthy, it needed a constitution and Juan Bautista Alberdi had strong opinions about what it should include. Alberdi, one of the most influential Argentine thinkers, was born in the province of Tucumán in 1810, the year in which the nation's independence process began. In 1825, Alberdi was fortunate to receive a scholarship to study at the Colegio de Ciencias Morales in Buenos Aires. At a young age, he involved himself in politics

[85] Ibid., 410.
[86] James Scobie, "The Paris of South America," in *The Argentina Reader*, eds. Gabriela Bouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 176.
[87] Ferns, *Argentina*, 120.
[88] Ibid., 120.

by joining Young Argentina (later called the Asociación de Mayo) and starting his career as a writer. But his anti-*rosista* opinions won him no favors with the ruling caudillo; neglecting to "subscribe to the loyalty oath required of all law graduates under Rosas," the young thinker spent the next fourteen years exiled abroad, bouncing between Uruguay, Europe, and finally, Chile.[89] It was during his time in Chile that Alberdi wrote his most influential work, *Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina*, which was quickly, and widely, circulated among Argentine political elites. Immediately after the fall of Rosas, Alberdi returned to his native Argentina to assume a prominent role in politics. Later, he served as a diplomat in Europe, where he died in 1884.

Alberdi's political views were a unique amalgamation. First, he was paradoxically contented with Urquiza's regime. Despite staunchly opposing the Federalist government led by Rosas, he embraced Urquiza's equally authoritarian and equally Federalist control. In a letter to the General, Alberdi gushed over the new leader:

> Los argentinos de todas partes, aun los más humildes y desconocidos, somos deudores a V. E. del homenaje de nuestra perpetua gratitud por la heroicidad sin ejemplo con que ha sabido restablecer la libertad de la patria, anonadada por tantos años. En cortos meses ha realizado V. E. lo que en muchos años han intentado en vano los primeros poderes de Europa, y un partido poderoso de la República Argentina.[90]

This attitude seemingly contrasts with Alberdi's participation in the Asociación de Mayo—the literary group noted for its liberal tendencies—as well as his personal publications, which later formed the backbone of the nation's staunchly liberal constitution. Second, despite having lived in Buenos Aires for many years, he did not subscribe to the *porteño*-centric path that dominated Argentina. As previously noted, internal migration was steadily drawing citizens towards the

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[89] Harold Eugene Davis, "Juan Bautista Alberdi, Americanist," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 4, no. 1 (1962): 59-60. http://www.jstor.org/stable/164831.
[90] Juan Bautista Alberdi, *Bases y Puntos de Partida para la Organización Política de la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sopena Argentina, 1957), 9.

more productive province of Buenos Aires, thereby leaving the interior provinces underpopulated, socially isolated, and deficient in infrastructure and economic resources. Not only did Alberdi dislike the idea of provincial depopulation, but he also, like many of his fellow citizens of the interior, abhorred Buenos Aires' self-determined authority over the peripheral provinces. Distilling his reaction to these topics, he wrote and published his famous *Bases* in Valparaíso in May of 1852. This publication date could not have been a coincidence as it was released just months before the convention to draft the Argentine constitution was held.[91] Moreover, Alberdi sent copies of his new book to political heavyweights that he knew would be receptive to his ideas, including Sarmiento, Mitre, and even Urquiza.

The Ideal Immigrant

Although he desperately wanted to populate the Argentine countryside with foreigners, Alberdi had a specific immigrant in mind. Ideally, they would be well educated and well mannered so as to having a "civilizing" effect on Argentine citizens. In addition, they would be willing to invest in infrastructure works in order to compensate for the state's lack of capital. So eager was Alberdi for imported wealth, that he declared, "An immigrant without funds is a soldier without weapons."[92] Even more important than education and wealth, however, were matters of race and origin; according to Alberdi, the best immigrant would be European and white. His writings make it quite clear that he did not appreciate the small indigenous population within Argentina and had no desire to see it grow: "En América todo lo que no es europeo es bárbaro: no hay más división que ésta: 1°, el indígena, es decir, el salvaje; 2°, el europeo, es decir, nosotros, los que hemos nacido en América y hablamos español, los que creemos en

[91] Sam Schulman, "Juan Bautista Alberdi and His Influence on Immigration Policy in the Argentine Constitution," *The Americas* 5, no. 1 (1948): 7. http://www.jstor.org/stable/978129.
[92] Juan Bautista Alberdi, "Immigration as a Means of Progress," in *The Argentina Reader*, eds. Gabriela Bouzeilles and Graciela Montaldo (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 99.

Jesucristo y no en Pillán (dios de los indígenas)."[93] In other words, Alberdi expected white, wealthy European immigrants to serve as the perfect foil to the "barbarous" and uncultured natives.

Interestingly enough, the Argentine Constitution did not echo Alberdi's harsh discrimination against particular ethnic groups, but it did show a clear preference for Europeans. In fact, scholars have noted this as a characteristic unique to the Argentine situation; given that "discrimination can be *negative* (for example, the ban on Chinese in the United States) or *positive* (the preference for Spaniards in Cuba)," Argentina only outwardly exhibited positive discrimination while many other immigrant-receiving nations in the Americas utilized negative discrimination. [94] However, by simply analyzing Argentina's constitutional laws, we risk overlooking the nation's unofficial policies. In reality, the situation domestically was not so welcoming.

In fact, Alberdi wasn't the only one with racial and class biases; during the years of immigration, the eugenics movement was also starting to gain traction in Latin America, and in Argentina specifically. In 1918, the Argentine Eugenics Society was founded and, although the original movement evolved from concerns about birth control and sanitation, this new society "reflected a reorientation of eugenics in much more conservative and racist directions…. Growing worries about national identity and the disturbances to national culture and mores caused by 'foreign' customs and peoples made immigration and race salient issues."[95] Many similar organizations emerged over the next twenty years including the Argentine League of

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[93] Alberdi, *Bases*, 65.
[94] David Cook-Martin and David Fitzgerald, "Liberalism and the Limits of Inclusion: Race and Immigration Law in the Americas," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 41, no. 1 (2010): 14, 17, http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jih/summary/v041/41.1.cook-martin.html.
[95] Nancy Leys Stepan, *"The Hour of Eugenics": Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 59.

Social Prophylaxis, the Argentine Catholic Action (although dedicated to religion, it also concerned itself with racial purity), as well as the Argentine Association of Biotypology, Eugenics, and Social Medicine. In addition, the founding physician of the Argentine Eugenics Society, Victor Delfino, used eugenics as a justification to demand more controls over immigration. These concerns were a direct result of the massive flood of foreigners—an eruption caused by rapid demographic change. Such xenophobic sentiments also appeared in the linguistic realm, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

Comparison with the Constitution

From its very publication, Alberdi's *Bases* was destined for greatness. It landed in the hands of influential people, touched on the liberal ideology that was gaining momentum at the time, and was published just before the constitutional convention. After reading the book, Sarmiento wrote to Alberdi and reaffirmed its fate:

> Su constitución es un monumento: es usted el legislador del buen sentido bajo las formas de la ciencia. Su constitución es nuestra bandera, nuestro símbolo….Es posible que su constitución sea adoptada; es posible que sea alterada, truncada; pero los pueblos, por lo suprimido o alterado, verán el espíritu que dirige las supresiones: su libro, pues, va a ser el Decálogo Argentino: la bandera de todos los hombres de corazón.[96]

But just how much did the Argentine Constitution actually derive from *Bases*? With many passages directly copying text from Alberdi's book, the answer is, quite a lot. The Constitution followed Alberdi's suggestions by enumerating citizen's civil rights and extending them to all residents of Argentina, regardless of citizenship. Certainly, these were enticing to potential immigrants. However, for Europeans desperate for a new start, nothing was as appealing as Article 25. It reads, "El Gobierno federal fomentará la inmigración europea; y no podrá restringir, limitar ni gravar con impuesto alguno la entrada en el territorio argentino de los

[96] Alberdi, *Bases, 12.*

extranjeros que traigan por objeto labrar la tierra, mejorar las industrias, e introducir y enseñar las ciencias y las artes."[97]

Conversely, in its treatment of the interior underpopulation problem, the Constitution *did* differ from *Bases*. Alberdi had sought to explicitly encourage immigration to rural areas by allowing exemptions from his proposed two-year naturalization requirement; he recommended that immigrants who settled in "indigenous and unpopulated areas" or brought "large fortunes into the country" should be eligible for immediate citizenship.[98] However, the corresponding passage in the Constitution is much more vague: "They obtain nationalization by residing two consecutive years in the Nation; but the authorities may reduce this period in favor of an applicant claiming and proving services to the Republic."[99] Although this statement leaves exemptions to the two-year citizenship requirement as a possibility, it clearly shows that Alberdi's main concern was not as important to the constitutional delegates.

In the end, Alberdi's *Bases* was influential in shaping not only the 1853 Constitution, but the course of government that came after Urquiza as well. The new Constitution effectively solidified the nation's unity and advertised Argentina as a land of opportunity for foreigners.

Immigration and Demographic Change

The response to the nation's new foreign-friendly policies was overwhelming. The 1869-1914 period saw the population of Buenos Aires—capital and province—rise from 500,000 to 3,600,000 and its share of the nation's total residents rise from 28% to 46%.[100] Many other countries in the Americas received large waves of immigrants at this time, but Argentina was the second most popular destination after the United States in terms of absolute numbers. Yet if we

[97] Constitución de la Nación Argentina de 1853, art. XV.
[98] Ibid., 224, quoted in and translated by Sam Schulman, "Juan Bautista Alberdi," 12-13.
[99] Constitución de la Nación Argentina de 1853, art. XX, quoted and translated by Sam Schulman, "Juan Bautista Alberdi," 13.
[100] Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 147.

consider the percentage of foreigners to native citizens, we see that the demographic change in Argentina greatly exceed that in the U.S. While the tens of millions of immigrants that made their home in the U.S. between 1821-1932 never accounted for more than 15% of the total population, the nearly 6,500,000 immigrants that moved to Argentina during the same time period reached over 30% of the national total in 1914.[101] Many of these newcomers were male. In fact, the 1887 census in Buenos Aires found that among the men between 15 and 50 years of age, 80% were foreign-born.[102] Furthermore, the vast majority of the immigrants were European—coming from Italy and Spain especially—as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Nationality of Immigrants by Decade [103]

Principales nacionalidades por cada 100 inmigrantes (saldo migratorio) de ultramar. 1857-1958

Períodos	Italianos	Españoles	Polacos	Otros
1857 - 1860	79	21	—	—
1861 - 1870	65	21	—	14
1871 - 1880	44	29	—	27
1881 - 1890	57	21	—	22
1891 - 1900	62	18	—	20
1901 - 1910	45	45	—	10
1911 - 1920	12	68	—	20
1921 - 1930	42	26	13	19
1931 - 1940	33	—	58	8
1941 - 1950	66	29	4	1
1951 - 1958	58	34	—	8
1857 - 1958	46	33	4	17

FUENTE: Dirección Nacional de Estadística.

[101] Fontanella de Weinberg, "Algunos Aspectos de La Asimilación," 6.
[102] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 136.
[103] Germani, *Política y Sociedad en una Época de Transición:De la Sociedad Tradicional a la Sociedad de Masas*, (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1971), 247.

Table 3. Geographic Distribution of Foreigners [104]

Distribución geográfica de los extranjeros. 1869-1960

Años	Zona metropolitana de Buenos Aires * %	Provincias de Córdoba, Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, Mendoza, Santa Fe, La Pampa %	Resto del país %	Total %
1869	52	38	10	100
1895	39	52	9	100
1914	42	48	10	100
1947	51	35	14	100
1960	57	27	16	100

FUENTE: Censo Nacional Argentino.
* Incluye la población del sector rural del área.

Table 4. Immigrants' Socio-Occupational Level[105]

Estratos socioocupacionales de los inmigrantes, de acuerdo con la ocupación que declararon en el momento de ser admitidos en el país. 1857-1925

Categorías socioocupacionales	1857-1870	1871-1899	1900-1920	1921-1924	Total 1857-1924
Empleados en el comercio, la industria, servicios, agricultura; profesionales independientes, técnicos	4,4	5,4	8,6	13,4	7,2
Administrativos y afines; trabajadores especializados y no especializados, peones y afines	95,6	94,6	91,4	86,6	92,1

FUENTE: *Resumen estadístico del movimiento migratorio.* Ministerio de Agricultura, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1925.

As Table 3 shows, the vast majority of immigrants settled along the eastern coast. Therefore, Alberdi's desire to populate his own Tucumán and the other peripheral Argentine

[104] Ibid., 250.
[105] Ibid., 266.

provinces went largely unsatisfied. In the northwestern region, for example, new immigrants made up a paltry five percent of the total population and, despite infrastructural and industrial advancements, "the northwest—Jujuy, Salta, and Tucumán in particular—led the nation in illiteracy, illegitimate births, infant mortality, and alcoholism."[106] In other words, the modernizing, "Europeanizing" effect of immigration was not dispensed equally throughout the nation. Nor did it bring as many upper class foreigners as Argentina had anticipated. In fact, as Table 4 confirms, the average immigrant was unskilled.

Linguistic Transformations

The major population boom and sheer diversity of foreign speakers who entered the country temporarily converted the River Plate into a quasi Babel. Logically, the sheer number of new, non-Spanish speakers coupled with the incredibly low native population in Argentina should have encouraged immigrant groups to retain their maternal language. Yet, in this case, Spanish rapidly—in less than one generation—emerged as the dominant language. This was the result of a wide, but unique set of factors.

First, incidental factors made Spanish convenient and useful. The advent of the nation's industrialization and urbanization kept the majority of immigrants on Argentina's eastern littoral region, as we saw in Table 3. The city of Buenos Aires, in particular, was not infrastructurally prepared to accommodate the swarm of newcomers so *conventillos* became popular housing units. These dwellings "[crowded] as many as 350 persons into a building that formerly had accommodated twenty-five family members and servants," and were usually partitioned off into a multitude of twelve by twelve feet rooms that each housed a family.[107] Within such cramped confines of urban life, the Spanish language was unavoidable. In addition, the nation's obligatory

[106] Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation*, 143-144.
[107] Scobie, "The Paris of South America," 178-179.

public education system was incredibly effective in promoting the use of Spanish among the youth. In fact, many second-generation immigrants were entirely monolingual, using Spanish as their only language.[108] Next, the generally low educational level, especially among Italians facilitated linguistic assimilation. Many were illiterate when they arrived in Argentina and therefore, were more linguistically malleable. It is important to note that this factor actually had the opposite effect among the German immigrants of low educational level who resided in the countryside instead of the city, but they constituted only a small minority within the immigrant population.[109]

Second, we see that factors of necessity also forced immigrants to utilize Spanish. In their desire for upward social mobility, many foreigners were willing to abandon their mother tongue because "las posibilidades de acceder a los estratos medios estaban en gran medida correlacionadas con un eficiente manejo del español."[110] Whereas before 1880, there were only two real socio-economic classes—poor or landowning elite—Argentina's Golden Age paved the way for a burgeoning middle class and allowed real opportunities for advancement. In fact, by 1914, some 30% of *porteños* belonged to this new class.[111] Perhaps the most important cause of linguistic assimilation however, was that Spanish served as a standard language. It was a vital tool for communication with Argentine natives, immigrants of other nationalities, and, given the many dialects that existed within each language, with members of an individual's own ethnic group.[112] Although these factors are not comprehensive, they summarize the important reasons for immigrants' rapid linguistic assimilation.

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[108] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 141.
[109] María Beatriz Fontanella de Weinberg, "Variables que Actuaron en el Mantenimiento y Cambio de Lengua," in *Lengua e Inmigración: Mantenimiento y Cambio de Lenguas Inmigratorias* (Bahía Blanca: Departamento de Humanidades, Universidad Nacional del Sur, 1991), 22-23.
[110] Ibid., 19.
[111] Scobie, *Argentina: A City and a Nation*, 174.
[112] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 136.

At the same time, foreigners and new urban dwellers began to alter the regional dialect of Spanish as well. *Cocoliche*, an amalgamation of Italian and Spanish, was used by Italian immigrants to navigate the language of the River Plate as well as by Argentine natives to culturally incorporate the newcomers. *Lunfardo* was a jargon invented by criminals that eventually made its way into popular culture. Although neither is used today, both of these linguistic adaptations contributed heavily to the *rioplatense* dialect's lexical growth.

Cocoliche: Xenophobia and Assimilation

The term, *Cocoliche*, carries several different meanings, but at its core, it references the pidgin-like mixture of Italian and Spanish that was employed by Italian-Argentine immigrants. Unlike a true pidgin, however, *Cocoliche* had no simplified standards and its use differed from speaker to speaker. It was not taught, nor intentionally learned because it "was not an end in itself but a language of transition—an example of imperfect secondary language acquisition."[113]

Originally, the term *Cocoliche* referred to an invented theatrical character whose purpose was to entertain audiences while simultaneously mocking the Italo-Argentine population for its adaptation of gaucho culture. As discussed earlier, the nation's hunger for prosperous and well-educated European immigrants was largely unsatisfied by the invasion of foreigners—many of which came from low socio-economic backgrounds. As a result, *Cocoliche*'s theatrical derision was a visual manifestation of an increasingly xenophobic environment:

> The nineteenth-century population policy appears to have succeeded until one considers the fact that most of the immigrants who entered Argentina were fleeing depressed areas in Europe, looking for manual labor rather than bringing elite refinements. Argentine intellectuals unabashedly expressed disappointment in the types and classes of newcomers, most of whom were not of the "Nordic race." Throngs of Italians, whose "low cultural level" Sarmiento judged no appreciable improvement over the backward native Spanish and mestizo population, occupied

[113] Ana Cara-Walker, "Cocoliche: The Art of Assimilation and Dissimulation Among Italians and Argentines," *Latin American Research Review* 22, no. 3 (1987): 52. http://www.jstor.org/stable/ 2503558.

> the land. Indeed, Argentina had become temporarily Europeanized, but without benefit of elite notions of "civilization."[114]

These sentiments formed the unwelcoming context in which *Cocoliche*, the stage character, was created. However, the character faded from popularity over time, outgrowing his role as a symbol of ridicule. Instead, Argentines started using the term *Cocoliche* to describe the *language* that the original character represented and, in doing so, they gave the word a new purpose; Italians spoke *Cocoliche* to linguistically adapt to their new environment while Argentine *criollos* spoke "mock *Cocoliche*" to propel a cultural transition of acceptance.[115]

The exact proportion of Italian to Spanish that was present in their speech was nearly impossible to measure. The mixture the two became so natural that it was hard to tell if a speaker was using an Italianized Spanish or a Hispanicized Italian; "[En el habla de Cocoliche] los fenómenos de encuentro y de contaminación se sobreponen, se cruzan, se complican a tal punto que *no se puede hablar de un límite absoluto entre las dos lenguas*."[116] Because spoken *Cocoliche* was only necessary for language adaptation, it fell into disuse within a generation or so when Italian-Argentines fully learned Spanish. Despite this, the legacy of the hybrid language can still be felt in Buenos Aires today; Italian words for food (*capuchino, ricota*), friends and family (*pibe, mina*), and life (*fiaca, laburar*) continue to thrive in the modern *porteño* dialect.[117]

Crime and Language

Lunfardo, although often mistaken as another Spanish-Italian hybrid like *Cocoliche*, was actually a jargon with much more nefarious roots. Indeed, *Cocoliche* and *Lunfardo* did share certain characteristics; both had strong ties to Italian and were, in essence, languages born out of necessity. Still, *Cocoliche* was a paradoxical tool for Italian degradation and social integration,

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[114] Ibid., 40.
[115] Ibid., 51.
[116] Giovanni Meo Zilio, "El 'Cocoliche' Rioplatense," *Boletín de Filología* 16 (1964): 62.
[117] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El Español Bonaerense*, 161.

whereas *Lunfardo* was a language designed for optimum secrecy. As is the case with most large cities, when Buenos Aires began to grow in size, its crime rates skyrocketed. Thieves, pickpockets, and other varieties of petty criminals created their own "argot delictivo" in order to communicate with each other without alerting suspicion.[118]

The birth of *Lunfardo* can be traced back to around 1870, but at the time, the *porteño* public was oblivious to its presence. This was the result of careful precaution; the jargon's use was restricted not only by membership to a select social group, but also by one's physical surroundings. In general, men monopolized *Lunfardo*—since women were much less involved in the world of crime—and they spoke it only amongst themselves, though never in public.[119] Little by little, *Lunfardo* terms crept into the *porteño* dialogue and, within a few decades, they became commonplace in the lyrics of Argentina's famed tango music.

While Italian loan words were a significant component of *Lunfardo*, languages such as French and English, among others, found their way into the language of crime as well. The mixture of languages was a clear reflection of the population boom in Buenos Aires, but it also added multiple layers of secrecy to the jargon's use. Further heightening its clandestine nature were elements of pure invention—most notably in the form of *vesre*, a quirky Pig Latin spin-off that scrambled the syllables of a word, turning *café con leche* into *feca con chele*, for example. The creativity and playfulness of *Lunfardo* both introduced Argentine Spanish to a host of foreign loan words and invented a plethora of neologisms, many of which remain in the modern River Plate dialect today.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the post-Rosas political context that oversaw the creation of the

[118] Ibid., 142.
[119] Ibid., 143.

national constitution and brought the liberal oligarchy to power in 1880. These years marked the start of Argentina's Golden Age of immigration and industrialization, which rapidly modernized and populated the eastern region of the country. Additionally, these changes had serious repercussions in the regional dialect.

I began the chapter by first presenting the historical background of General Urquiza's administration and his successors. Then, I discussed the role of Juan Bautista Alberdi in construction the Argentine Constitution. Although he advocated the adoption of pro-immigrant policies, Alberdi specifically desired to fill the peripheral provinces with wealthy, white Europeans. Millions of foreigners flooded the nation, but most were neither well educated nor wealthy. In addition, they tended to settle in Buenos Aires and the eastern littoral region, rather than the northwestern periphery. Disappointed by the newcomers, many Argentine natives developed xenophobic sentiments that were manifested in the burgeoning eugenics movement and blatant discrimination against foreigners.

Next I discussed the role of language during the immigration boom. Many factors such as crowded urban housing, the education system, and the need for a common language helped first and second-generation immigrants learn Spanish quickly. At the same time, *Cocoliche* was born as a stage character who intentionally mocked the characteristics of Italian immigrants. Eventually, the term *Cocoliche* was used to represent the mixture of Italian and Spanish languages that helped new immigrants adapt to the *lingua franca* and aided Argentines in changing the national culture to accommodate foreigners. Although the pidgin-like language existed but briefly, a wealth of Italian loan words live on in the modern River Plate dialect. *Lunfardo* also appeared in Buenos Aires during this period. Used secretively by criminals since the 1870s, the jargon gradually found its way into general use. It utilized a mixture of Italian,

French, Spanish, and English words, and even invented forms of speech, that are still heard in Buenos Aires today.

Conclusion

This project has highlighted the singularities of the *porteño* dialect and discussed the important historical moments that helped create the modern regional patois. Because language exists on a spectrum—never stopping on a fixed point—it can be difficult to pinpoint the exact causes of change. However, as we have explored throughout the previous chapters, the first three periods of Argentina's past each contributed to the *porteño* dialect's linguistic deviations from the original peninsular Spanish.

In the colonial era, Buenos Aires was completely isolated from Spain for almost 200 years. During this enormous gap, the River Plate continued using archaisms that had since been eliminated from Castilian and began to develop its own unique linguistic traits. Later in this stage, contact with the Casa de Contratación, the Spanish Empire's House of Trade located in Seville, promoted the use of Andalusian forms of Spanish in the region. Then, after independence from the Crown, the contrast between Federalists and Unitarians divided the provinces, the political structures holding them together, and eventually culture. An individual's political partisanship became synonymous with his or her religion, clothing style, actions, and even language. As the *porteño* dialect grew increasingly distant from its colonial origins, major political actors debated the proper forms of language. Finally, the liberal political structures set out in the constitution ushered in a new period; Argentina blossomed economically and demographically during the Golden Age of immigration and industrialization that brought millions of foreigners to its doorstep. The influx of immigrants coupled with the increase of urban-dwellers brought languages in contact and left lasting impressions on the modern Argentine dialect.

Naturally, there is much more to be said on this topic, as the scope of my research limited

its breadth. In an effort to portray the *rioplatense* dialect in its most general form, I have not addressed socioeconomic dialectal differences—a topic that certainly deserves more attention in the field of historical linguistics. In addition, while language never stops evolving, my analysis ends with the onset of the Great Depression. Although I believe the three eras represented here are the most influential in shaping the current language of Buenos Aires, I recommend that scholars examine the dialectal shifts since 1930 to determine the effects of recent history. For example, did Juan Domingo Perón's presidency add to the *porteño* lexicon? Likewise did the Dirty War eliminate specific words from the nation's vocabulary? Or, how did the nation's current educational system chose a linguistic norm to teach in schools? These are questions that have yet to be answered, but would certainly yield interesting results.

La lengua porteña: La perspectiva lingüística histórica

Los hechos lingüísticos son de sensibilidad prodigiosa, pues en ellos se manifiesta el alma colectiva, lo mismo que la epidermis, al ceñirlo, marca el volumen y figura del cuerpo.

Américo Castro
La peculiaridad lingüística rioplatense y su sentido histórico, Madrid: Taurus, 1961, 98.

Introducción

Un idioma no resulta en un concepto muy fácil de describir porque nunca para de crecer, adaptar y cambiar con el paso de tiempo. Por eso, *La lengua porteña: Una perspectiva lingüística histórica* intenta representar la capacidad de cambiar que vemos en el dialecto regional del español que se usa en la ciudad actual de Buenos Aires, Argentina. Al escribir esta monografía, quiero explorar los elementos que diferencian el dialecto rioplatense del español estándar y ubicarlos dentro de su contexto histórico para encontrar las razones que explican esas diferencias.

Escogí esta tema por varias razones, pero sobre todo, me fascinaba. En 2011, estudié en Buenos Aires y, mientras aquí, presté mucha atención al dialecto local. Aunque muchas personas les quitaban importancia, las diferencias lingüísticas me resultaron muy marcadas. Es verdad que se han estudiado mucho este tema, pero las investigaciones se han limitado a examinar solo los factores lingüísticos. Es decir, mis estudios del dialecto porteño llenan un hueco importante; yo coordino los componentes lingüísticos con los factores políticos, históricos y económicos que causaron los cambios en el dialecto. Como resultado, esto es un proyecto multidisciplinario de la historia de la lengua en Buenos Aires.

Capítulo 1: El idioma en el pasado colonial de Argentina

En el primer capítulo discuto el impacto del legado colonial de Argentina en el dialecto regional de Buenos Aires. Primero, defino la región rioplatense, sus características dialectales y

cómo se diferencia del "español estándar". Después, proveo un resumen de la colonización de Argentina dado que las metas económicas y políticas de España durante la conquista aislaron la nueva colonia y tuvieron un efecto muy significativo en el idioma regional. La información de este capítulo forma la base en que se fundan los capítulos siguientes porque muchas de las peculiaridades lingüísticas actuales de Buenos Aires nacieron durante este período.

Dentro de cada sociedad, los ciudadanos deciden cómo usar la lengua o el dialecto según el contexto—si la persona pertenece a las clases altas o bajas, si la ocasión demanda más o menos formalidad, de qué se está hablando, etc.[120] Sin embargo, he intentado minimizar esos factores para presentar solo los elementos más comunes y más compartidos del dialecto regional. Además, cuando hablamos de la región rioplatense, nos referimos al Río de la Plata, el río que une los ríos Paraná y Uruguay, y también forma la frontera entre Argentina y Uruguay. Aunque yo utilice los términos *rioplatense* y *porteño* de manera intercambiable, mi investigación se enfocará en Buenos Aires y la lengua que se habla allí solamente.

Para comparar el dialecto porteño con el "español estándar," primero tenemos que definir el estándar. Hoy en España, hay varios dialectos prominentes del español como el andaluz, leonés y aragonés, pero el uso amplio del castellano es lo más saliente. Si bien muchos usan *castellano* y *español* como sinónimos y no lo consideran como tal, el castellano es, de hecho, un dialecto regional también.[121] Muchos relacionan el castellano con la presencia de *vosotros* y el uso fonético de /θ/ para vocalizar los grafemas *z* y *c*.[122] Sin embargo, no voy a destacar cada característica del dialecto aquí porque casi todas las variedades del español latinoamericano difieren mucho del castellano. Así que no hay por qué hablar del uso de /θ/ ni la presencia de

[120] Wardhaugh, *An introduction to sociolinguistics*, 41, 46-50.
[121] Cotton y Sharp, *Spanish in the Americas*, 54.
[122] Cotton y Sharp, *Spanish in the Americas*, 55.

vosotros cuando ambos estén ausentes en casi todos los dialectos latinoamericanos—no solo en la región rioplatense.

En su lugar, destacaré los elementos que caracterizan la lengua porteña. En su léxico, vemos muchos indigenismos (de las pueblas nativas y de fuera) y numerosas palabras prestadas de idiomas europeos—el italiano en particular. Asimismo, el yeísmo rehilado, un fenómeno fonético, es ubicuo. En muchas partes de América Latina, se pronuncian los grafemas *ll* y *y* igualmente. No obstante, en Buenos Aires se los pronuncian como /ʒ/ o /ʃ/, sonidos parecidos al *j* francés y al *z* portugués.[123] El uso frecuente del *voseo*, la forma de tratamiento familiar para la segunda persona singular, en vez del tuteo es también llamativo. Otras distinciones del dialecto regional incluyen, entre otros, el uso mínimo de *haber* y la presencia de *vesre*, una especie de jerigonza.[124]

Vida colonial de Buenos Aires

En 1516, Juan Díaz de Solís, explorador español, navegó por primera vez al Río de la Plata. Su misión no se cumplió a causa de que los indios nómadas del área lo mataron. Casi quince años después, en 1535, Pedro de Mendoza llegó y fundó oficialmente la ciudad de Santa María de Buenos Aires pero él se fue en búsqueda de otros territorios, dejando la ciudad despoblada. Así quedó hasta que el conquistador español, Juan de Garay, restableció la cuidad en 1580—muy tarde en comparación con la fundación de otras colonias latinoamericanas y con otras ciudades importantes argentinas como Mendoza, Córdoba y Santa Fé.[125] Aunque la nueva colonia crecía con el paso de tiempo, su desarrollo fue un proceso bastante lento. En gran parte, esto se debió a la falta de recursos minerales; en explorar y colonizar el Nuevo Mundo, España estaba buscando recursos naturales—los metales preciosos en particular—y a pesar de su nombre

[123] Fontanella de Weinberg, "El rehilamiento bonaerense", 339-342.
[124] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El español bonaerense*, 33.
[125] Ferns, *Argentina*, 26.

propicio, el Río de la Plata no ofreció ni un pedazo de plata. Entonces, durante casi 200 años, Buenos Aires fue marginada mientras la Corona concentraba sus esfuerzas en las zonas de América Latina más lucrativas.

Todo eso cambió, sin embargo, con el advenimiento de las Reformas Borbónicas entre 1759-1788, bajo la autoridad de Carlos III. Aunque el cambio no fue inmediato, las Reformas cambiaron la fortuna de Buenos Aires de tres maneras. Primero, nuevas leyes permitían comercio libre con España y las Américas. A pesar de su falta de metales preciosos, la Argentina tenía tierra fértil en abundancia. Por eso, se creó una industria agropecuaria y ganadera muy competitiva. Segundo, las Reformas dividieron el Virreinato del Perú. Antes, la región rioplatense, acompañada por la mayoría de Sudamérica, pertenecía al virreinato susodicho, pero en 1776, Buenos Aires se convirtió en el capital del nuevo Virreinato del Río de la Plata, y de pronto, su poder y tamaño empezaron a crecer. Tercero, como resultado de los dos cambios previos, había una reorientación a Buenos Aires como ciudad portuaria. Personas, productos y dinero entraban en la capital con facilidad y la ciudad creció de una población de 5.000 en 1680 y 8.900 en 1720 hasta unos 38.000 en 1800.[126]

Pero muy de pronto, el país paterno tuvo problemas con sus vecinos. Unos años después del comienzo de la Revolución francesa, España se involucró en la guerra y Gran Bretaña respondió con un bloqueo de la península ibérica en 1797. Esta acción cortó brevemente la relación comercial con las colonias de Latinoamérica, incluso con el Virreinato del Río de la Plata. Además, las tropas inglesas invadieron el territorio rioplatense con ganas de controlar las ciudades claves de la región. Sin ayuda española, se formaban milicias locales que efectivamente defendieron la tierra. Después de todo, el Río de la Plata había demostrado su capacidad de defenderse y comerciar afuera del imperio español; así nació el movimiento independentista en

[126] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El español bonaerense*, 51.

la región. En 1810, el virrey del Río de la Plata cedió su poder a una junta de representantes regionales.

Los factores lingüísticos

La historia lingüística de Buenos Aires en la etapa colonial influyó mucho el dialecto contemporáneo. Primero, a pesar de que la Argentina no tenía una población abundante de indígenas, la lengua porteña muestra una cantidad sorprendente de influencias indígenas. En particular, nos llama la atención el uso de palabras que vienen del léxico quechua, guaraní, mapuche y de los pamperos—los tribus nómadas que vivían en la llanura argentina. Es probable que esto se haya causado por un conjunto de factores. Cuando restableció la ciudad de Buenos Aires, Juan de Garay vino de Asunción, Paraguay con unos 300 asunceños que formaban los colonos primeros del territorio y hablaban el guaraní tanto como el español.[127] Además, la relación entre los nuevos porteños y los pamperos era muy favorable—comerciaban frecuentemente y los gauchos criollos vivían entre los indios en la pampa. Todo esto ofreció mucha oportunidad para los intercambios interculturales.

Segundo, el colonialismo trajo influencias españoles al Río de la Plata. Muchos investigadores ahora creen que los primeros conquistadores españoles divulgaron el dialecto castellano en partes de América Latina, mientras el contacto con la Casa de Contratación hizo lo mismo con el dialecto andaluz.[128] Como los conquistadores ignoraron la región argentina a favor de los áreas más lucrativas en la primera etapa colonial, tiene sentido que actualmente, el dialecto rioplatense tiene más en común con el andaluz. Según Fontanella de Weinberg, "es evidente que la presencia reiterada de barcos de procedencia andaluza significaba en Buenos Aires un importante contacto con el habla del sur peninsular, que en una población del reducido

[127] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El español bonaerense*, 14.
[128] Cotton y Sharp, *Spanish in the Americas*, 82.

tamaño de la porteña debió tener una decisiva significación".[129]

Tercero, aunque esta época se vio la eliminación del voseo en España, el término permanecía en las zonas más desatendidas por la Corona.[130] Como resultado, Argentina no es el único país que todavía usa el voseo, pero es uno de los pocos que no usan el tuteo también. El tuteo, si bien se usaba en el periodo colonial, perdió importancia a través de los años y se eliminó por completo en el siglo diecinueve.[131]

Por último, vemos el nacimiento del yeísmo rehilado del dialecto rioplatense. La presencia del dialecto andaluz en América Latina estimulaba el fenómeno fonético del yeísmo—una manera de pronunciar los grafemas *ll* e *y* como el fonema /j/. Sin embargo, unos documentos que datan de los fines de los años 1700 sugieren que el yeísmo empezó a ser rehilado en Buenos Aires por una influencia portuguesa en la lingüística.[132] De esta manera, *ll* e *y* se pronuncian como /ʒ/ o /ʃ/, y su uso es tan frecuente que hoy en día se torna más popular en otras partes de Argentina.

Capítulo 2: Donde se cruzan la política y la lengua

En el segundo capítulo, presento los problemas políticos que Argentina enfrentó después de declarar su independencia y los conecto con los cambios dialectales que ocurrieron al mismo tiempo. Primero, ofrezco una cronología de los acontecimientos que contribuían a la difusión de caudillaje en la región. Después, enfoco en Juan Manuel de Rosas, el caudillo arquetípico argentino que también tenía una conexión al idioma. De hecho, muchos lo han acusado de alterar la lengua vernácula por su propia cuenta. Finalmente, examino la conexión entre la polarización política y la lengua que vemos en la polémica entre Andrés Bello y Domingo Faustino

[129] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El español bonaerense*, 15.
[130] Weyers, "The impending demise of tú in Montevideo, Uruguay", 830.
[131] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El español bonaerense*, 116.
[132] Fontanella de Weinberg, "El rehilamiento bonaerense", 342.

Sarmiento.

Como mencioné antes, el virrey del Río de la Plata se fue en 1810, pero la nueva junta de representantes no declaró independencia de manera formal hasta 1816. La ruptura con España no era reconocida universalmente por los argentinos; muy a menudo, los ejércitos monárquicos lucharon contra las milicias bajo el control de la junta. Aun entre los partidarios de la independencia, la pregunta de *cómo* gobernar el nuevo territorio autónomo dividió la opinión corriente. Las Provincias Unidas del Río de la Plata querían un gobierno central mientras la Liga Federal deseaba soberanía provincial. El desacuerdo entre los llamados unitarios y federalistas se convirtió en una serie de guerras civiles y en 1820, la organización política de la región se desintegró completamente. Un año después, sin embargo, la situación mejoró bajo el gobierno semi-centralizado y unitario de Bernardino Rivadavia. Mientras su administración enfatizaba la importancia de progreso en la infraestructura, la educación y el sector bancario, el comercio prosperó. Y, aunque las provincias de la Liga Federal no figuraban en este programa rivadaviana, muchas habían firmado acuerdos con Buenos Aires y por lo tanto, ellas disfrutaban un período de paz relativa. Por fin, parecía como si el Río de la Plata estuviera en buen camino, pero de pronto, la guerra contra Brasil entre 1825-1828 destruyó el mercado libre de Argentina y dio lugar al poder aumentado de los estancieros y caudillos en la región.

La época de Juan Manuel de Rosas

En 1829, Juan Manuel de Rosas, un caudillo de Buenos Aires, subió al poder para llenar el vacío que dejaba Rivadavia. Rosas (1793-1877) era un líder muy controvertido como resultado del entorno tan polarizado en este periodo. Aun hoy, encontrar un análisis objetivo de su política o persona es difícil. Su mandato todavía tiene relevancia, sobre todo porque él personificaba la lucha entre los federalistas y unitarios. Su gobierno populista corría en contra de los unitarios

liberales que se consideraban más cultos y elites que la población rural y "salvaje". Asimismo, mucha gente cree que Rosas fue el primer dictador del país, una valoración que simplemente no es cierto. Al mismo tiempo que gobernó la provincia de Buenos Aires, sus colegas—igualmente autoritarios—gobernaron otras provincias argentinas. A pesar de esto, Rosas sí fue el primer dictador que tenía tanto poder en las provincias no suyas. Es decir, si bien fue gobernador de Buenos Aires, él controló el sistema portuario y eso le dio el poder de hacer decisiones económicas en nombre de las otras provincias.

Rosas nació en 1793 a una familia de la clase alta en la provincia de Buenos Aires. Como niño, trabajaba la tierra familiar y muy joven se convirtió en empresario cuando empezó un negocio que exportaba carne ahumada. Entró en la política cuando, como estanciero, tenía que formar una milicia de los gauchos rurales e indios para proteger su tierra. En el caos político después de la independencia, su milicia se unió con el ejército de Buenos Aires para defender el "centro" de la "periferia". Cuando sus tropas derrotaron a las de Lavalle, Rosas se nombró comandante de los ejércitos y poco después, el Gobernador de Buenos Aires. No había nada que a él le gustó más que el orden y la estabilidad, y para alcanzar ambos, Rosas usaba el terrorismo.

Pero su política no revela todo; esta persona polémica entra en la historia lingüística del país también. Varios biógrafos debaten su uso de *tú* y *vos,* su afición por la lengua grosera y su nivel de educación. Aun otros aseguran que él tenía una influencia sobre el dialecto regional. Arturo Capdevila, por ejemplo, escribió que Rosas popularizó el *voseo* en Buenos Aires sin ayuda de nadie:

> Casi en las vísperas de la revolución hubo, por fin, un Vértiz [sic] progresista en Buenos Aires. Y todavía quiso nuestro destino que, iniciada la ímproba labor cultural de los prohombres de mayo, obras y proyectos fuesen desbaratados por Rosas. Todo el Buenos Aires culto de 1810 decía de *tú*; todo Córdoba también.

> Mas, venido que fue el tirano, se retornó al voseo. Que también hubo de parecer el voseo una adecuada forma de adulación y bajeza federal.[133]

Estas acusaciones son interesantes, pero ¿son verdaderas? La respuesta es complicada. No hay duda que a Rosas le interesaba mucho el idioma. Le gustaba leer el diccionario y hablar de los textos clásicos.[134] Además, escribió su propio *Gramática y diccionario de la lengua pampa: Pampa-ranquel-araucano*.[135] Para él, la lengua fue una herramienta política que usaba para cultivar relaciones con las clases bajas—las poblaciones rurales, gauchos e indios. De hecho, dijo que para conectar con su público, fue necesario "hacerme gaucho como ellos, hablar como ellos".[136]

Entonces, si el argumento de Capdevila tuviera razón, supondríamos ver el uso exclusivo del voseo entre Rosas y las poblaciones rurales, pero no fue el caso. Los gauchos utilizaban una mezcla de ambos pronombres—el tuteo y el voseo—desde los fines de siglo dieciocho. En el presente, las conjugaciones tuteantes coexistían con dos tipos de conjugaciones voseantes, mientras en el imperativo, el voseo fue más común.[137] En las cartas de Rosas, vemos que él también empleaba ambos pronombres así que sería difícil razonar que el crecimiento del voseo era la culpa del dictador. Él no creó el cambio, si bien fue emblema de la dirección en que la lengua estaba moviendo; el desarrollo del federalismo en la región causó una preferencia obvia para las formas de hablar más rurales y más de las clases bajas. El uso del voseo se fortaleció en la próxima generación—la de Manuelita Rosas, la hija de Juan Manuel.

La polarización política y la lengua

A pesar de la expansión de poderosos gobiernos provinciales durante la época de Rosas,

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[133] Capdevila, *Babel y el castellano*, 140.
[134] Irazusta, *Vida política de Juan Manuel de Rosas*, 46-47, 66.
[135] Rosenblat, *Las generaciones argentinas del siglo XIX*, 35.
[136] Ibid., 32.
[137] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El español bonaerense*, 117-118.

el conflicto entre los federales conservadores y los unitarios liberales no desapareció. De hecho, empeoró y los términos *federalista* y *unitario* se convertían en adjetivos para describir la personalidad, religión y acciones de una persona. Además, la dicotomía entre los conservadores y los liberales afectó a la lingüística; en toda América Latina, estos partidos debatían la variedad correcta del español en el Nuevo Mundo, la corrupción de la lengua desde el periodo colonial y el rol de educación en establecer una norma. Según Alfredo Torrejón, "una vez que se afianzó la independencia política, la lealtad lingüística fue paulatinamente transfiriéndose de la norma peninsular a una indefinida norma hispanoamericana y de ésta a una norma nacional asociada con las hablas de los círculos cultos de las capitales".[138] Mientras los conservadores miraron hacia España como árbitro del idioma, los liberales buscaron autonomía cultural y se sentían libres de adaptar la lengua como parte de la nueva identidad regional y nacional. Estas ideas se expresaron mejor en las polémicas entre Andrés Bello de Venezuela y Domingo Faustino Sarmiento de Argentina en los años 1840.

Bello fue conservador devoto en cuanto a sus pensamientos sobre la lengua española. Odiaba su perversión en América Latina y temía las repercusiones que el cambio lingüístico causara. Aunque promovía un estándar panhispánica basada en las formas del español clásico, su actitud fue muy condescendiente; él quería que la elite culta protegiera la lengua contra su corrupción por las clases bajas.[139]

Por el otro lado, los pensamientos lingüísticos de Sarmiento, liberal acérrimo, fueron más democráticos, si bien él no se oponía al "control por los pocos" en la política. Él vio la independencia de Latinoamérica como la justificación para su independencia cultural también. Según él, "La soberanía del pueblo tiene todo su valor y su predominio en el idioma; los

[138] Torrejón, "Andrés Bello, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento y el castellano culto de Chile", 541.
[139] Ibid., 547, 542.

gramáticos son como el senado conservador, creado para resistir a los embates populares, para conservar la rutina y las tradiciones".[140] Aquí, vemos las opiniones políticas de Sarmiento muy claramente; el conservadurismo en la política y la lengua resiste a los deseos de la gente por esconderse detrás de las tradiciones. También, Sarmiento consideraba natural la evolución lingüística porque aun los dialectos peninsulares del español habían evolucionado.

Las ideas de Bello y Sarmiento causaron una gran controversia cuando salieron en una serie de artículos en *El Mercurio*, un periódico de Santiago de Chile, en 1842. Sarmiento publicó la primera polémica, "Ejercicios populares de la lengua castellana", en abril y el mes siguiente, Bello le respondió con una réplica firmada "Quidam". Estos artículos provocaron varios otros hasta que el debate se aproximaba a un ataque personal. Finalmente, Sarmiento terminó la controversia y aunque ambos escribirían textos controversiales sobre sus creencias lingüísticas en el futuro, los insultos personales se acabaron. Es difícil nombrar un ganador del debate, pero el orgullo argentino del dialecto rioplatense hoy refleja la actitud de Sarmiento. Dentro de Buenos Aires, hay un "afán por conservar y perpetuar las características lingüísticas propias suyas (estén sancionadas o no por las academias)".[141] Ahora, las peculiaridades dialectales forman parte de la identidad regional.

En 1852, el general Justo José de Urquiza, entonces gobernador federalista de Entre Ríos, colaboró con Brasil para derrocar a Juan Manuel de Rosas. Si bien su gobierno fue igualmente autoritario como el de Rosas, Urquiza empezaba a cambiar la nación poco a poco. Como vemos en el próximo capítulo, él promulgó una constitución que determinaría el rumbo político de Argentina hasta la Gran Depresión.

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[140] Sarmiento, *Sarmiento en el destierro*", 50.
[141] Solé, "Lenguaje y nacionalismo", 209.

Capítulo 3: La inmigración y el lenguaje

En este capítulo, analizo los cambios importantes que ocurrieron antes y después de la época de oro en Argentina y cómo ellos afectaron al dialecto porteño. En este período, muchos de los factores lingüísticos de los previos dos capítulos se convirtieron en características claves de la lengua porteña moderna.

Primero, discuto lo que pasó después de la caída de Rosas. Las acciones políticas y económicas de Urquiza, el caudillo nuevamente en poder, crearon las bases de la oligarquía liberal que viniera al fin del siglo y la ola de inmigración e industrialización que la acompañara. También, hablo de Juan Bautista Alberdi y el rol de su libro, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la republica argentina*, en formar la constitución nacional. Como veremos, muchas de sus recomendaciones se incorporaron en las leyes constitucionales. Después, discuto los factores que influyó la asimilación lingüística de los inmigrantes. Hay una multitud de cosas que afectaron la velocidad de asimilación, pero en general, los extranjeros aprendían la lengua franca rápidamente como resultado de la industrialización de Buenos Aires. Sin embargo, su paso rápido al español tuvo repercusiones; los nuevos inmigrantes crearon *Cocoliche*, una fusión del italiano y el español, *Lunfardo*, la lengua de los ladrones, y muchos neologismos que siguen influyendo al dialecto porteño moderno.

Por más federalista y autoritario que fue, Urquiza, el nuevo jefe de estado después de la caída de Rosas, empezó una nueva era en la historia argentina; se concentró en la expansión del mercado libre, la inversión en la infraestructura—especialmente en los medios de transporte—y la consolidación de la nación argentina porque antes la división entre la Liga Federal y las Provincias Unidas impedía la formación del país. Además, Urquiza supervisó la creación de la Constitución de la Nación Argentina de 1853, que intentaba resolver los problemas domésticos

por medio de la inmigración. Después de Urquiza hubo una serie de presidentes liberales que eventualmente dio lugar a la oligarquía liberal. Consiguiendo el poder en 1880, la oligarquía se componía de miembros del Partido Autonomista Nacional (PAN) que gobernaron hasta que su corrupción y elecciones fraudulentas llevó al poder la Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) en 1916.

A pesar de los cambios políticos, en gran parte la economía prosperó. Todavía dependiente de productos agropecuarios, el modelo agro-exportador duró hasta el comienzo de la depresión mundial en 1929 porque el aumento de exportaciones y la mejora de los términos de intercambio estimularon el crecimiento económico. En su apogeo, Argentina fue uno de los países más ricos del mundo. En Buenos Aires se crearon nuevos barrios elegantes, la mayoría de la gente podía asistir a la escuela y la comida era rica y barata.[142] No obstante, no toda la gente se beneficiaba con la nueva riqueza; el fuerte aumento de la población obligaba que muchas personas vivieran en conventillos o villas miserias. Asimismo, las condiciones laborales con frecuencia incluían trabajo manual, turnos de doce hasta catorce horas al día y salarios pequeños.[143] Dicho esto, ésta fue la época de esplendor, sofisticación y éxito económico—la época en que se le puso el apodo "la París de América Latina" a Buenos Aires.

Juan Bautista Alberdi y la constitución nacional

Antes de que el país pasara a ser tan rico, necesitó una constitución y Juan Bautista Alberdi tenía opiniones muy fuertes sobre su construcción. Alberdi, uno de los intelectuales argentinos más influyentes, nació en Tucumán en 1810, el mismo año de la independencia nacional. Exiliado por su odio de Rosas, él vivía unos catorce años en el extranjero, pasando por Uruguay, Europa y Chile—donde escribió su obra maestra, *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la república argentina*, en mayo de 1852. Esta fecha no pudo haber sido

[142] Ferns, *Argentina*, 120.
[143] Scobie, "The Paris of South America", 176.

una coincidencia porque el texto salió sólo meses antes del congreso constitucional.[144] Además, Alberdi envió copias del libro a los políticos más influyentes, incluso a Sarmiento, Mitre y Urquiza.

Esencialmente, *Bases* fue un anteproyecto de la constitución, pero sus partes más interesantes hablaban de la inmigración. En esta época, hubo una ola de migración nacional hacia Buenos Aires que despoblaba las provincias del interior. A Alberdi, como a cualquier otro ciudadano del interior, no le gustaba el dominio de la capital y por lo tanto, quería poblar las provincias con extranjeros para desarrollar el país y contrarrestar la atracción magnética de Buenos Aires. Él tenía en mente un tipo de inmigrante ideal: culto, bien educado, rico, europeo y blanco. De hecho, sus escritos muestran que él no apreciaba a la pequeña población indígena en Argentina en lo más mínimo. Escribió en *Bases* que, "En América todo lo que no es europeo es bárbaro: no hay más división que ésta: 1º, el indígena, es decir, el salvaje; 2º, el europeo, es decir nosotros, los que hemos nacido en América y hablamos español, los que creemos en Jesucristo y no en Pillán (dios de los indígenas)".[145] Para Alberdi, los europeos blancos y ricos necesitaban compensar el efecto "bárbaro" de los nativos incultos.

También hay que agregar que si bien se influyó mucho por *Bases*, la Constitución Argentina no refleja la discriminación que muestra el texto de Alberdi. De hecho, el caso de Argentina es bastante único; la nación sólo utilizaba la discriminación positiva—mostró su preferencia por los europeos—mientras otros países de las Américas sí empleaba la discriminación negativa.[146] Sin embargo, la situación doméstica no fue tan de bienvenida. Con el creciente movimiento eugenésico la discriminación negativa fue como una norma no oficial. En 1918, Víctor Delfino fundó la Sociedad Eugénica Argentina, la primera de una serie de

[144] Schulman, "Juan Bautista Alberdi", 7.
[145] Alberdi, *Bases*, 65.
[146] Cook-Martin and Fitzgerald, "Liberalism and the limits of inclusion", 14, 17.

sociedades similares como la Liga Argentina de Profilaxis Social, la Asociación Argentina de Biotipología, Eugenesia y Medicina Social y la Acción Católica Argentina (si bien dedicada a la religión, tenía opiniones fuertes sobre la pureza racial). Sus preocupaciones fueron basadas en el cambio demográfico rápido que ocurrió como resultado de la entrada de inmigrantes.

Cambios demográficos y lingüísticos de la ola inmigratoria

Muchos países americanos recibieron inmigrantes al mismo tiempo, pero Argentina fue el segundo destino más popular después de los Estados Unidos en números absolutos. Pero, si consideramos el porcentaje de extranjeros a ciudadanos nativos, vemos que el cambio demográfico en Argentina fue mucho mayor que en EEUU. Mientras las decenas de millones de inmigrantes que se mudaron a EEUU entre 1821-1932 nunca alcanzó más del 15% de la población total, los 6.500.000 inmigrantes que se mudaron a Argentina en los mismos años alcanzaron más del 30% del total nacional en 1914.[147] Muchos de los recién llegados fueron varones europeos—de Italia y España en particular—y trabajadores no especializados.[148] Además, la mayoría de los extranjeros se quedaron en la costa oriental del país; entre 1869-1914 la población de Buenos Aires—ciudad y provincia—creció de 500.000 hasta 3.600.000 personas y su proporción de habitantes nacionales subió del 28% al 46%.[149] En general, no poblaban las provincias interiores y muchos argentinos, Alberdi inclusive, se sentían desilusionados por este fracaso.

A pesar de la diversidad de lenguas y culturas que entraron en el país, el español surgió como la lengua suprema gracias a dos tipos de factores. Primero, los factores de casualidad hicieron conveniente y útil el español. Como mencioné antes, la industrialización y la urbanización que acompañaron a la ola inmigratoria obligaban que muchos inmigrantes vivieran

[147] Fontanella de Weinberg, "Algunos aspectos de la asimilación", 6.
[148] Germani, *Política y sociedad*, 247, 266.
[149] Scobie, *Argentina: A city and a nation*, 147.

en conventillos. Allí, las interacciones con los hispanohablantes fue inevitable. Asimismo, el sistema educativo ayudaba a promover el uso del español entre los jóvenes. De hecho, muchos de la segunda generación de inmigrantes fueron totalmente monolingües—hablando español como su única lengua.[150] Segundo, los factores de necesidad enfatizaban la obligación de usar español. Muchos extranjeros abandonaron sus lenguas maternas porque "las posibilidades de acceder a los estratos medios estaban en gran medida correlacionadas con un eficiente manejo del español".[151] Sobre todo, el español fue un estándar—el idioma necesario para comunicar con los argentinos nativos, inmigrantes de otras nacionalidades y, dado el número de dialectos que existían dentro de cada lengua, aun con otros miembros de cada grupo étnico.[152] Aunque esto no es una lista comprensiva, estos factores resumen las razones importantes que explican la asimilación lingüística rápida de los extranjeros.

Mientras se asimilaban, sin embargo, los inmigrantes y nuevos residentes de la ciudad de Buenos Aires alteraron al dialecto rioplatense. El *Cocoliche* fue una mezcla del italiano y el español que fue usado por los inmigrantes italianos para aprender la lengua franca tanto como los argentinos para incorporar a los recién llegados a la cultura popular. El legado de esta lengua híbrida se ve en Buenos Aires hoy; préstamos del italiano para la comida (*capuchino, ricota*), la familia y los amigos (*pibe, mina*) y la vida (*fiaca, laburar*) prosperan en el dialecto moderno del español. Además, los ladrones crearon el *Lunfardo*, una jerga que mezclaba varios idiomas con palabras inventadas, para comunicarse en secreto. Con el paso de tiempo, el argot se incorporó a la cultura popular y en las letras de tango en particular, la razón por la cual muchas de los neologismos y prestamos del *Lunfardo* todavía existen en la lengua porteña.

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[150] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El español bonaerense*, 141.
[151] Fontanella de Weinberg, "Variables que actuaron en el mantenimiento y cambio de lengua", 19.
[152] Fontanella de Weinberg, *El español bonaerense*, 136.

Conclusión

En este proyecto, he intentado destacar las peculiaridades lingüísticas del dialecto porteño y mostrar los momentos importantes de cambio que las causaron. Por lo tanto, analicé tres etapas de la historia argentina. En el período colonial, la relación distante de Buenos Aires con la Corona de España aisló la región de los cambios lingüísticos en el español peninsular y ayudaba a promover el uso porteño de arcaísmos como el voseo. También, el contacto con la Casa de Contratación que venía del sur de España traía la influencia significativa del andaluz. En la época después de independencia, la división política entre los federalistas y unitarios—conservadores y liberales—se impregnó cada elemento de la sociedad incluso la lengua. Rosas, Bello y Sarmiento jugaban un rol importante en los debates dialectales del tiempo. Finalmente, en la edad de oro argentina, el General Urquiza y Juan Bautista Alberdi sentaron las bases para el acenso al poder de los liberales. Ellos abrieron el país a la ola masiva inmigratoria que alteraría la composición demográfica y lingüística para siempre. Por supuesto, el dialecto sigue cambiando pero estos tres capítulos representan los periodos más influyentes en la creación de la lengua porteña moderna.

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