Table of Contents

Abstract iv

Introduction 1

Chapter 1: Setting the Stage: Language in Argentina's Colonial Past 3
- Introduction 3
- Defining the River Plate Region and Dialect 4
- Discrepancies with Standard Spanish 5
- Spain's Conquest of the Region 7
- Linguistic Permutations 12
- Conclusion 17

Chapter 2: When Politics and Language Meet 19
- Introduction 19
- Buenos Aires, Post-Independence 20
- The Age of Juan Manuel de Rosas 23
- Political Polarization and Language 29
- Political Shifts and the Downfall of Rosas 35
- Conclusion 36

Chapter 3: Immigration and Language 38
- Introduction 38
- From Urquiza to Liberal Oligarchy 39
- Juan Bautista Alberdi and the Constitution 41
- Immigration and Demographic Change 46
- Linguistic Transformations 49
- Conclusion 53

Conclusion 56

La lengua porteña: La perspectiva lingüística histórica 58
- Introducción 58
- Capítulo 1: El idioma en el pasado colonial de Argentina 58
- Capítulo 2: Donde se cruzan la política y la lengua 63
- Capítulo 3: La inmigración y el lenguaje 69
- Conclusión 74

Bibliography 75

List of Tables

Table 1. Forms of Address Used by Rural and Urban Speakers in the 19th Century 28
Table 2. Nationality of Immigrants by Decade 47
Table 3. Geographic Distribution of Foreigners 48
Table 4. Immigrants' Socio-Occupational Level 48

Abstract

Within the community of Spanish-speaking countries, the regional dialect found in contemporary Buenos Aires, Argentina is an oddity. Outsiders are often puzzled by its features: the use of the archaic *voseo*, strange pronunciation of *ll* and *y* graphemes, and abundance of foreign loan words, among others. While scholars have studied individual characteristics of the dialect, none have attempted a complete historical linguistic analysis of the regional language. My research seeks to fill this void by uniting linguistic information with an investigation of political, historical, and economic factors in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the history of language in Buenos Aires. To determine why this dialect is so unique, I have examined three stages of Argentine history that discuss the nation's colonial birth, post-independence period, and era of immigration and industrialization. I conclude that although many of the region's dialectal peculiarities date back to the colonial era, Buenos Aires' linguistic evolution has been a slow process that spanned some 400 years from the city's foundation in 1535.