Non-Standard Plurals in Peninsular Spanish Dialects

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In second person (formally third person) plural imperatives, certain non-standard varieties of Spanish (Kany 1951, Menéndez Pidal 1941) variably double the plural marker /-n/, placing one before enclitic objects and one after as in (1a), while others realise the plural /-n/ after enclitic objects as in (1b); in Standard Spanish /-n/ occurs after the verb stem and before object clitics (1c):

1. a. Siénten sen  
   sit-imp-PL-CL-PL
   Sit (yourselves) down!  
   b. Siéntesen  
   sit-imp-CL-PL
   c. Siéntense  
   sit-imp-PL-CL

Following Minkoff’s initial formalization (1993), Harris & Halle (2005) propose a Distributed Morphology analysis for this ‘enclitic –n’ and also discuss cases (2005:213) like (2ab) where it follows an object clitic appearing after non-finite verb forms (gerundives or infinitives) with no immediately adjacent /–n/ to copy:

2. a. están besándosen  
   are-PL kissing-CL-PL
   They are kissing each other
   b. Quieren vermen.  
   want-PL to-see-CL-PL
   They want to see me.

They caution however that ‘it is not known that familiar Kopy [1ab] and the [2ab] phenomena occur together in any dialect of Spanish.’ (2005:213-214) – unsurprisingly, given the less-than-systematic data available to them. Unpublished dialect data from the Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica (2002-2009) surveys allow us to test this question explicitly, since the questionnaire includes both (1c) which elicits forms like (1a-c) (ALPI, I:364) and also (3a), which elicits some non-standard responses like (3b), similar to (2b):

3. a. No quieren abrigarse.  
   neg. want-PL wrap-up-CL
   They don’t want to wrap up.
   b. No quieren abrigarsen.  
   neg. want-PL wrap-up-CL-PL
   (ALPI, I:365)

Of the 527 ALPI survey points, 284 correspond to Spanish varieties with relevant responses for both these forms. Of these, 74 show non-standard plural imperatives like (1ab) while only 64 show non-standard plural infinitives like (3b). By mapping these two sets of responses we can now better document the geolinguistic interaction between these two dialectal phenomena.

References


Online data: University of Western Ontario, 2002-2009, www.alpi.ca


