LEXICAL VARIATION ACROSS ASTURIAS AND THE ‘DOMINO ASTUR’

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IN THIS PAPER, we present the Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica (ALPI) as a source of data for research on the dialects of Spain, as well as examining the Asturian language, and the ‘Dominio Astur’ as a linguistic entity. We also present some new maps of lexical variables, based on ALPI data from the Asturian region.

1. THE ALPI PROJECT. The Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica (or Linguistic Atlas of Iberian Peninsula, here ALPI) was a project begun in 1930 and almost concluded by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. In 1939 the project’s director Navarro Tomás took the fieldwork notebooks with him into exile in New York. In 1951 the materials were returned to Madrid, on the condition that the project be completed by members of the original fieldwork team trained by Navarro Tomás. By the mid-1950s the surveys were completed, but it took until 1962 for Manuel Sanchis Guarner, Lorenzo Rodríguez-Castellano and Aníbal Otero to complete the editing and cartography for the first and only volume to appear in print (ALPI 1962). The project was discontinued by the mid-1960s; in 1975 Navarro published a Noticia Histórica del ALPI, and nothing much more was heard about the materials until they were unearthed in 2001 (Heap 2002, in press). In all, more than 36,000 pages have been preserved: two notebooks (Cuaderno I, Fonética y gramática; Cuaderno II, Vocabulario) for each of 527 survey points across the Iberian Peninsula.

The most complete collection of ALPI notebook materials is currently housed in the Theoretical and Applied Linguistics Laboratory at the University of Western Ontario, where since 2002 we have been publishing the data electronically on the internet (see http://www.alpi.ca). Scanned facsimiles of the original fieldwork notebooks can be accessed via an interface which allows users to select a province or provinces, then survey points and finally questionnaire pages which are of interest to them. The data are freely available for scholarly purposes (teaching and research): To access them, users are simply required to register and agree to the terms of use. There are currently over 450 registered users, who have downloaded thousands of pages of data like the one shown in Figure 1 (overleaf), available in both jpg and pdf formats.

While it is still not an ‘atlas’ in the traditional sense of linguistic forms being projected onto maps, the current online ALPI format makes available to the scholarly community a wealth of unique linguistic data which were otherwise unavailable for decades. The flexibility of the internet publication format also allows for the pages to be made available as soon as ready and for corrections to be made whenever necessary. Future aspects of the project include the possibility of automatic mapping on the internet (as had been done with data from the Varilex project, see Ruiz Tinoco 2001), but this requires the retranscription of the
notebooks into relational databases (Kretzschmar 1999), a massive undertaking which will only be possible with international collaboration involving teams of scholars from different institutions.

Currently, only phonetic and morphosyntactic data (Cuaderno I) are available online; while the lexical material (Cuaderno II) are being prepared for internet publication, there are technical difficulties yet to be resolved (Cuaderno II exists in two versions, General and Extended, each with different pagination, which make the interface for accessing the data more complex). The variables we have selected for presentation in this study are drawn from these as yet unpublished lexical data.

The links shown in Figure 1 allow users to scroll backward or forwards through the pages of a given notebook.

2. THE ASTURIAN LANGUAGE (*ASTURIANU*). One of regional languages of Spain which does not have co-official status under the 1975 Constitution, Asturian counts some 600,000 speakers according to the 1994 census, mostly in the current Principality of Asturias Autonomous Region in northern Spain. Virtually all speakers of the language are Asturian-Spanish bilinguals. Since 1980 Academia de la Llingua Asturiana (see http://www.academiadelallingua.com) promotes language revitalisation and education, with the support of the regional government. These speech communities were considerably more vital in the 1930s and 1940s when the ALPI data were collected and when there were both a larger proportion of native speakers and more Asturian monolinguals.
Map 1. ALPI points in the historical 'Domino Astur'.

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2.1. THE 'DOMINIO ASTUR'. Asturias is traditionally divided into three major dialect areas: western, central and eastern Asturian, without any one variety being seen as a 'prestige norm' or standard. Historically, what some call the 'Asturian Domain' ('Dominio Astur') extended further south than the current administrative boundaries of Asturias, covering much of the former Kingdom of León. For the purpose of this study we have included all the ALPI points from Asturias (24), and selected points from the provinces of Cantabria (5), León (12), Zamora (10) and Salamanca (1), as well as the Portuguese region of Bragança (3), for a total of 55 points as shown in Map 1, on the previous page.

3. LEXICAL VARIATION ACROSS THE 'DOMINIO ASTUR'. We examined a large range of lexical variables from ALPI (Cuaderno II, Vocabulario), specifically terms for flora and fauna, from line #442 (niscao 'wild mushroom') through line #575 (names for swine), and chose the ones shown below to investigate whether terminological distributions might reflect regularities in the classification and naming of plants and animals among peoples of traditional, nonliterate societies (cf. Berlin 1992). Some botanical lexical items had too limited a range to be mapped: This was the case of line 470. Nispero 'medlar', [< Lat. MESPILUM/ NESPILA], which showed the variants mispero / niésper, but only appeared at a handful of points, since this fruit-tree was apparently not well-known at the time in most of the
area studied. The selection presented here show different geographical distributions across the 'Dominio Astur.'

Map 2 shows the distribution of lexical variants for line 4.4.4. Margarita (daisy), with three main variants which we can divide by etyma: magarza, amargaza < alfarma 'ruda, silvestre' [ < Ar. hármal], manzanilla [ < Moz. massanella], reflecting culinary uses, and artemisa < Artemisa (Diana), reflecting medicinal uses. Here the lexical variants seem to line up primarily with the administrative boundaries between Asturias and Cantabria to the north, as opposed to all points to the south of the Cantabrian mountain range.

Forms corresponding to 4.4.8. Escaramujo 'roschip' are shown in Map 3, with a wider range of etymological types: agavanza / gavanza / agavanzal [ < Moz. gabánso], escaramujo [ < Lat. ESCARIUS MULLEUS 'edible + fleshy'], zarza [ < sarza], espino [ < Lat. SPINUS], garameta [ < ganzaba] 'rosebush', calambruna [herba bruna], escayu 'bramble, thorn', rosal [ < Lat. ROSA] 'rosebush, artu 'bramble'.

The distribution here is a bit of a patchwork, with different forms characterizing different sub-areas, with only the southern gavanza variant having currency beyond one province.

Map 4 (oveleaf) shows the distribution of an important staple foodstuff, line 458. Guisantes 'peas', which has as a main variant the same form as in the standard language: guisantes [ < Lat. PISUM SAPIDUM 'tasty pease'], as well as other variants attested elsewhere in the
Iberian Peninsula, arvejas / arveyos (Old Spanish arveja / arbeja / arbeya [< Lat. ERVILIA ‘dried peas’] and grabanzos [< garbanzos].

In this case we see which appears to be the intrusion of guisantes in the centre of Leon and Zamora and in Cantabria, with arbejas remaining to the north (on both sides of the Cantabrian range) and to the south (western Zamora and Bragança).

In Map 5 we see the distribution of lexical variants for line 481. Bellota ‘acorn’, where alongside the standard form [< Ar. ballûţa] we find a paragogic form abellota and lânda / alanda [< Lat. GLANDEM].

Here it is the vernacular variant abellota which dominates both north and south of the Cantabrian range, with standard bellota concentrated in a compact area to the south and in a band across the modern-day principality of Asturias and Cantabria. The small number of lânda / alanda forms are concentrated in eastern Asturias, in the area of Galician-Asturian influence.

4. CONCLUSIONS. The exploratory approach adopted here examines regional variation in ‘the vocabulary of the intimate everyday life of the home and farm.’ (Kurath 1949:9–10) on
the hypothesis that use in traditional lifestyles may influence why some concepts exhibit a greater amount of lexical variation than others.

We have not found clear evidence for or against Berlin’s (1992) contention that plants that have the greatest cultural importance as food and medicine have the fewest different names, while plants that are (believed to be) less useful may have names that vary more from region to region. While the contrast between the rich lexical variation for an item like escaramuzo vs. the relatively few variants for terms like guisantes (common human food) and bellota (a common animal fodder) is evocative in this regard, much more careful mapping work needs to be undertaken before any conclusions can be drawn regarding the nature of lexical variation in the area (see also Pato, in press).

In the future, we also hope to exploit the ALPI data on informants, which will allow us to explore correlations of linguistic variables with such demographic factors as age, gender, occupation, mobility and literacy level of speakers. We hope that future collaborations with dialectologists in Spain and elsewhere will help develop geolinguistic databases using the ALPI fieldwork notebooks which will allow us to map not just lexical but also phonetic and morphosyntactic data for this linguistic area for which no overall geolinguistic survey has yet been published.
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