

5-18-2016

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Cuban Research Institute, Florida International University, "Language Change in Cuban Spanish: Subject Pronoun Variation" (2016).
Cuban Research Institute Events. 301.
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Language Change in Cuban Spanish: Subject Pronoun Variation

Lecture by Gabriela G. Alfaraz

Wednesday, May 18, 2016 | 12:30 PM | FIU Modesto A. Maidique Campus | Deuxième Maison (DM) 353

Although Caribbean varieties have long been at the center of work on subject pronoun expression in Spanish, the Cuban variety has received little attention. In this talk will discuss the proportion of overt and null subject pronouns in 8,300 tokens extracted from the speech of 57 individuals born in Cuba, and the linguistic and social factors that influenced the variation of the forms. The findings of a comparative analysis of three generation cohorts, born between 1885 and 1970, that showed that although the frequencies of null and overt forms were not significantly different over time, there was evidence of change in the variable grammar, namely the linguistic factors with a lesser effect, including verb type, tense mood aspect, and polarity, had changed; however, the factors with the strongest effect, person and number and coreference, were stable over time.

Gabriela G. Alfaraz is an Associate Professor in the Department of Romance and Classical Studies at Michigan State University. She is a sociolinguist whose research has focused on variation and change in Caribbean Spanish, language attitudes, and Spanish in the US. Her recent work on language attitudes has examined the attitudes of Spanish-speakers in the United States toward regional varieties of Spanish, the evaluative norms of Cuban newcomers and established immigrants in relation to speech community and migration, and the influences of transnationalism on formation and maintenance of language attitudes. Her research on variation and change has examined subject pronoun variation in Dominican and Cuban Spanish, the quotative systems of Dominican and Cuban Spanish, the variation of *ser* and *estar*, and accusative object marking in Cuban Spanish.

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