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English Dialects in San Antonio

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Introduction. This paper reports on research that depends heavily upon detailed phonological analysis of the pronunciation of select place names in San Antonio, Texas. The place name analysis, coupled with previously published research by other scholars, permits me to conclude that three distinct dialects of English exist in the San Antonio area. Arguments for that conclusion take two forms. First, a summary of previous claims and issues raised by scholars using the methods associated with linguistic geography is presented. Second, a recent sociological survey will be reviewed and new research using place name analysis — the city name, "San Antonio," and several San Antonio street names — will be discussed.

1. *Linguistic Geography Surveys.* Scholarly literature on the San Antonio dialect(s) of English is limited to a series of articles by Janet Sawyer, based on her 1957 doctoral dissertation, and pertinent sections of Bagby Atwood's study of Texas vocabulary.

1.1 *Previous Claims.* Sawyer makes three basic claims about English language usage in San Antonio. First, there is no San Antonio Spanish influence on English phonology, morphology, syntax, or even vocabulary (Williamson and Burke, p. 581; Gilbert, p. 38). Second, the pronunciation of the English monolinguals is strictly Southern (Williamson and Burke, p. 574; Sawyer (1964), p. 9; Gilbert, p. 26). Third, the English vocabulary is more South Midland than Southern. Sawyer attempts to make a fourth claim but articulates it quite differently in different places: Latin bilinguals, she says, strive to conform to the Southern pronunciation (Williamson and Burke, p. 579). No, what she really means is:

> . . . they are taught English along with native speakers who need to learn the special kind of English known as formal written style. Those students who wish to become competent bilinguals adopt the 'book-words' and formal usage rules of this special style for ordinary speech situations, and this precise, elegant style often sets off a bilingual from the English speaking community. . . . (Sawyer (1964), p. 8; Gilbert, p. 38)

Atwood makes three basic claims about English vocabulary in San Antonio. First, there is insufficient evidence to make much more than tentative claims about Texas in general (p. 98). Second, all of Texas, including San Antonio, is basically General Southern (p. 79) in vocabulary; in fact, Texas vocabulary constitutes a major branch, which Atwood labels Southwestern (p. 98), of General Southern. Third, San Antonio appears to be sitting within the confines of both Coastal Southern influence and within the confines of a Spanish-based South Texas influence (pp. 83, 87, 98, 181).

1.2 *Issues*. These two previous studies leave a solid basis for those of us who wish to study the language situation two decades later. In particular, this paper builds on Sawyer's and Atwood's work to address four issues that, to me, appear in a different perspective than they did twenty years ago:

(1) Is there really a Southern prestige dialect in San Antonio?
(2) Is there indeed no such thing as a unique South Texas blend in San Antonio?
(3) What is this school English business?
(4) Is there really no Spanish influence on English in San Antonio, other than in general Texas vocabulary?

My own research over the past nine years indicates that both Sawyer and Atwood are correct:

(1) There is really a Southern dialect, which is prestigious, in San Antonio.

However, Sawyer is incorrect and Atwood partially correct:

(2) There *is* a blended, unique, South Texas dialect — which I shall term Southwest (following Atwood's tentative map on p. 131).

Sawyer is partially correct, but too limited in her demography:

(3) Sawyer's 'book-words' are really part of a local standardized dialect in San Antonio.

And Sawyer is misleading in her denial of Spanish influence on English:

(4) Spanish influence on the pronunciation of place names — precisely those place names that have entered through borrowing from Spanish — is quite evident.

By concentrating on these four issues, and their answers, the picture of English in San Antonio becomes much more complex than one can infer from the two previous studies. We now have evidence that *three* dialects exist in the Anglo urban monolingual speech.

2. *Sociolinguistic Surveys*. Sawyer and Atwood used well the methods associated with linguistic geography. Sawyer analyzed vocabulary, pronunciation, and morphology within a confined geographical area, the city of San Antonio. Atwood analyzed vocabulary over the entire State of Texas and compared his results with those of previous studies.

Researchers today have the advantage of additional methods of language survey: those associated with sociolinguistics. Conclusions in this paper are based on two sociolinguistic surveys, both completed in 1975. The first survey followed patterns similar to those established by Labov (1966) and has been published separately (Hamilton, 1977). The second combined Labov's data-gathering techniques with my own experimental attempts of place-name analysis. Results of this second survey are discussed below.[1]

2.1 *Hamilton's Grocery Market Survey.* In the spring of 1975, as a project in a graduate course in dialectology, Wes Hamilton visited all 29 of the Handy Andy grocery markets in San Antonio. With a tape recorder in his shopping basket and with an ingenious spiel designed to elicit aid from store personnel and fellow customers, Hamilton obtained spontaneous elicitations of key words in Janet Sawyer's research: *grease* and *greasy*; *pin* and *pen*; *new*; *roots*; and *three*. On the basis of 253 valid iterations from 61 different people (about 60% of both iterations and people represented by Mexican-American speakers — a realistic reflection of the city's ethnic makeup), Hamilton found evidence of a Southern, a Southwest, and a Standardized dialect (Hamilton, 1977). This was our first clue that three dialects existed within the city of San Antonio.

2.2 *Street Names Survey.* During the same spring of 1975 that Hamilton was conducting his research, eleven other students in an undergraduate course compiled a list of 24 major streets in downtown San Antonio.[2] In the middle of their list they inserted a fictitious street, *Quintanilla*.[3] Wearing conspicuous *Trinity University* buttons, they went individually to the seven major shopping malls in San Antonio, each mall located in distinct geographical districts, and to the downtown shopping area; then stopped people for interviews. Each person stopped was shown the list of 25 streets; told that the students were conducting a survey on traffic patterns in downtown San Antonio (a live issue at the moment); asked a few questions about the informant's background; asked which streets on the list were used frequently by the interviewed and which not; and then told that the students would merely record the interview rather than waste time by writing down answers. The technique worked splendidly.

Each of the eleven students was required to analyze the pronunciation variables (if any) of at least one of the streets on the list. While the primary purpose of the survey was for pedagogical purposes, all of the students and I were aware of the potential importance of the data — warned by Atwood's confession:

> Some time elapsed before I became fully aware that I had on hand a valuable collection of field records. As a result of the traditional views which I held,

> I was slow to realize that the professional fieldworker is not the only competent one, or even necessarily the best one, so far as vocabulary investigation is concerned. (p.31)

While Atwood limited his admiration of non-professional fieldworkers to "vocabulary investigation," we now have the technological advantage of cassette recording equipment. Phonological analysis does require professional competence; but with a little training even non-professionals can, and in the case of these eleven students *did*, obtain valid data.

The students were given freedom to choose which street names to analyze. Not surprisingly, all street names chosen for analysis were of Spanish origin; and all had a variety of pronunciations. With no coaxing, each student independently chose to rank the pronunciation of English or Spanish or a mixture of English and Spanish. None of the analyses were able to convincingly correlate demographic data with phonological variation, even though most of the students tried to correlate Spanish-speaking ability with Spanish pronunciation.

While none of the students chose to analyze the pronunciation of the fictitious 'Quintanilla,' one of the two students who did analyze the pronunciation of 'La Villita' did observe that only those people who pronounced the *-ll-* as /l/ in 'La Villita' pronounced it as /l/ in 'Quintanilla.'

2.3 *'Blanco' Analysis*. Further discussion of the student papers would lead to no further insight, and might begin to give hints as to the earning of course grades. Suffice it to say that their work piqued my own curiosity enough that I wished to explore the possibilities of a detailed analysis of one of the street names. I chose the name 'Blanco' because we had a significant number of audible responses (66) and because the three malls involved represented three different locations in town that Hamilton's research projected would be significant: Terrell Plaza and Oak Park (17 informants) in the older, established near north part of town, where we were most apt to hear Southern speech; North Star Mall (22 informants) in the newly settled northern part of town, where we were most apt to hear a hodgepodge of speech; and Las Palmas (27 informants) in the older, established Mexican-American part of town, where we were most apt to hear Spanish-influenced speech.

With minor idiosyncratic variations in raising, lowering, fronting or backing of the two vowels in 'Blanco,' the pronunciations were of eight types:[4]

1. /blanko/
2. /blæŋkow/
3. /blæ^{ə}ŋko/
4. /blæ^{ə}ŋkow/ ~ /blæ^{ə}ŋkow:/

5. /blæŋko/
6. /blankow/ ~ /blankow:/
7. /blaŋko/
8. /blaŋkow/

Intuitively these eight variations should be grouped into four categories, which I shall term: Spanish, Standard English, Southern, and Southwest.[5]

The *Spanish* uses one pronunciation, (1) above. The *Standard English* also uses one pronunciation, (2) above. The *Southern* adds a medium to heavy centralized glide on the first vowel, with either the Spanish /o/ or the English /ow/ — sometimes with a lengthening of the /ow:/, (3) and (4) above. The *Southwest* "compromises" the Standard and Spanish either by using the English /æ/ on the first vowel and the Spanish /o/ on the final vowel (5); by using the Spanish /a/ on the first vowel, followed by the Spanish alveolar /n/ and either the Standard or lengthened Standard /ow/ on the second (6); by using the Spanish vowels, but with the English velar /ŋ/ (7); or with the Spanish /a/ on the first vowel, followed by the velar /ŋ/ and the Standard or lengthened Standard /ow/ on the second vowel (8).

Codes for each of the pronunciations of the 66 valid iterations were entered into a computer program[6] with the sociological information given by the informant: race (white, Mexican-American, or black), sex, residency (north, west, east, south San Antonio, or out of town), time in San Antonio (visitor, recently moved, moved in before high school, moved in as an adult, native), age (10-22, 23-35, 36-49, 50+), and self-evaluated knowledge of Spanish (good, fair-good, poor-fair, none).

Much to my disappointment, the computer analysis showed no correlation between geographical location (location of the three malls) and pronunciation. My explanation is that we assumed too much on the relationship of residency to location of the malls. At least in a subsequent survey (see below) a change in soliciting residency information did result in pronunciation and residency correlations.

Much to my gratification, however, the computer analysis did show a relationship between race and pronunciation. Of the Anglos (33) and Blacks (2) interviewed, none used the Spanish pronunciation; 52.5% used the Standardized pronunciation; 35% used the Southern pronunciation; and 12.5% used the Southwestern pronunciation. Of the Mexican-Americans interviewed (31) 10% used the Spanish pronunciation; 29% used the Standardized pronunciation; 16% used the Southern pronunciation; and 45% used the Southwestern pronunciation.

In addition, the analysis of variance isolated a correlation between knowledge of Spanish and pronunciation. (A reminder: one may be Mexican-Amer-

ican or Anglo or Black and know — or not know — Spanish.) The correlations are displayed, in percentages, in Table 1. The four categories of pronunciation are listed at the left, the four categories of Spanish fluency at the top.

The composite picture (ignoring race and knowledge of Spanish information), though, was the most revealing. In all three malls the dominant pronunciation is the Standardized (46%), followed by an equal distribution between the Southern and the Southwestern (both with 25%). Least prevalent is the Spanish pronunciation (4%).

These data reveal two facts about English monolingualism (column 'none' in Table 1) that are revealing. First, the intuitive designation of 'Southwest' for the compromise pronunciations was significant in a statistical analysis. I expected "blending" of pronunciation on the part of bilingual speakers; I expected a loss of blending on the part of monolingual English speakers who evaluate their own Spanish as 'poor to fair.' But I did not expect "blending" on the part of monolingual English speakers with no knowledge of Spanish. Yet the monolingual English speakers *did* use the blended Southwestern pronunciation of 'Blanco' as much as they did the Southern (27%).

	good	fair-good	poor-fair	none
Standardized	11.1	39.0	64.7	45.5
Southwestern	47.4	37.2	-0-	27.0
Southern	30.4	15.2	35.3	27.5
Spanish	11.1	8.6	-0-	-0-

TABLE 1:

'Blanco' Pronunciation and Knowledge of Spanish (shown by percentage of usage)

Second (a point that brings into question Sawyer's contention that only educated bilingual speakers opt for the Standardized pronunciation), *all* speakers, *except* the good speakers of Spanish, showed a preference for the Standardized pronunciation. When one considers that the correlation between race and pronunciation shows that the Anglo speakers prefer the Standard pronunciation also, one must conclude that the 'school' influence concept is too limited; there is a major Standardized dialect in San Antonio that is found outside the schools (in Handy Andy stores and at the Malls, at least) that influences Mexican-American pronunciation just as much as the schools do. Perhaps it is best to suggest that the schools merely reinforce what is already prevalent in San Antonio.

2.4 *'San Antonio' Analysis.* While processing some of the raw data from the Hamilton and the Blanco surveys in 1975, I discovered an interesting range of pronunciations for the name of the city, 'San Antonio.' Later, in the spring of 1976, during a city-wide debate on zoning over and around

the city's water supply, I discovered that the spokespersons for the moneyed builders were consistently saying (I thought) /sæ̀n táwnyə/ — with a definite Southern schwa on the final unaccented syllable. On the other hand the spokespersons for the opposition to the builders were consistently saying (I thought) /sæn æntowniow/ — with a definite Standardized pronunciation.

Discussions with friends, colleagues, and students indicated that the obvious third pronunciation, /sæn æntown/, would not likely turn up on television since people in San Antonio did not use this pronunciation — only strangers did.

During the following eighteen months students again helped me gather data. We concentrated on three shopping centers, North Star Mall in the rapidly developing north part of town; Terrell Plaza in the established near north part of town; and downtown San Antonio itself. We used the same street-use questionnaire format we had successfully employed in the Street Names Survey. However, we made one major change in soliciting information about the informants' places of residence. We asked people if they did most of their shopping "around here or closer to home?" The technique solicited much more accurate answers on residency. For the final analysis we were able to collect 227 iterations of 'San Antonio.'

Unlike 'Blanco,' 'San Antonio' received *no* Spanish pronunciations. I therefore divided the 'San Antonio' pronunciations into three English "dialect" categories. (All pronunciations used /sæn/ as the first word *San*. We will consequently ignore the pronunciation of *San* in our discussion.)

The Standardized pronunciation always ended in an /ow/ — /æntowniow/ with 104 iterations; /əntownɛow/ with 21 iterations; /ɪntowneow/ with 21 iterations; /townɛow/ with 15 iterations; /townɪow/ with 26 iterations; and /townyow/ with one iteration — 188 iterations in all.

The Southern pronunciation always ended in an unaccented schwa on the final syllable — /æntowniə/ with seven iterations; /əntowniə/ with one iteration; and /towniə/ with 12 iterations — 20 iterations in all.

The Southwestern pronunciation, which we were able to solicit, always deleted the final vowel — /æntown/ with twelve iterations; /əntown/ with three iterations; /ɪntown/ with one iteration; and /town/ with three iterations — 19 iterations in all.

Table 2 displays the results of the analysis. On the left are listed the areas of residency (as determined by the responses to the new residency question). At the top are listed the three dialect categories of pronunciation. At the right are listed the total number of iterations attributed to each area of residency. And at the bottom are listed the total number of iterations within each dialect categorey.

	Standardized	Southern	Southwestern	Total
North Star	93	03	08	104
Terrell Hills	15	07	00	22
Downtown	37	01	01	39
East Texas	03	02	00	05
North Texas	13	01	02	16
Central Texas	02	00	00	02
West Texas	05	01	02	08
South Texas	00	01	06	07
Non-Texas	20	04	00	24
	188	20	19	227

TABLE 2:
Pronunciation of 'San Antonio'

These data allow for three, I think valid, interpretations that we could only hint at in the Hamilton, Street Names, and Blanco surveys. First, there are three distinct English dialect pronunciations in the city of San Antonio and the most apparent dialect used in public is Sawyer's 'Southern' — my local Standardized. The Southern and the Southwestern dialects appear to have equal representation. Note that while the distribution is similar to the distribution of the three dialect pronunciations associated with the word 'Blanco,' the percentage figures differ significantly 25% of the time. In 'San Antonio' they each appear about 11% of the time. Statistically the larger data base for 'San Antonio' is sufficient to reveal a real distribution; the smaller data base for 'Blanco' (66 iterations) was sufficient to reveal only a trend.

Second, different geographical sections of the city of San Antonio do have different mixtures of the three dialects. For people citing the downtown area as their area of residence, the Standardized dialect appears to be the overwhelmingly accepted dialect for public communication (95% of the iterations). For people living in the established Anglo part of town (Terrell Hills), the Southern dialect has the highest representation in public (32% of the iterations); the Standardized dialect is still the dominant dialect with 69% occurrence; the Southwestern dialect was not heard. For people living in the newly developed northern part of town, the Standardized dialect is used less than downtown but more than in Terrell Plaza (89%); the Southern dialect is used about the same as in the downtown area (3%); but the Southwestern dialect is significantly more prevalent than in either other location (8%).

Third, there is evidence (but with only 38 iterations no statistically relevant evidence) that the presence of the three dialects may be found in a much wider Texas area than the immediate San Antonio vicinity.

It should be possible, in light of these three interpretations, to reconcile

the earlier Sawyer-Atwood research with our more recent research. Let us look once more at our original four issues.

(1) The Southern prestige dialect in San Antonio is not the one described in Sawyer's research. Instead, the prestige dialect is the 'Coastal Southern' that Atwood wondered about. Sawyer's 'Southern' is, in reality, Atwood's 'Southwestern' and my own local 'Standardized.'

(2) My own 'Southwestern' is, in reality, Atwood's predicted 'Southwest.' Sawyer was incorrect in dismissing the blend.

(3) Sawyer's school English is an idiosyncratic hypercorrection which I have indeed heard in San Antonio. Its occurrence, though, as Sawyer implied, is rare — rare enough that it did not appear in any of our grocery market or mall surveys.

(4) Obviously Sawyer overlooked the obvious in regard to Spanish influence on English. Place names *are* vocabulary and they *are* pronounced. What was, and is, not so obvious is that monolingual English speakers can be, and are, influenced by Spanish pronunciation of these place names.

I have alluded several times to methods of data gathering and analysis not available to Sawyer and Atwood. My students insist that a more relaxed social climate has also freed Mexican, Black, and Anglo speakers alike from constraints that prevented them from speaking a variety of dialects in public. This, the students claim, explains the lack of correlation between ethnicity and the 'three dialects' in our own research. I feel obligated to give the students' explanation an airing. I am not convinced myself, though, that other methods of analysis will not obtain the correlations after all.

3. *Combining Methodologies*. In a paper I published in Japan in 1973 and in the final chapter of a book I published in Japan in 1977, I have proposed that each speaker has a unique blend of geographical and social dialects which are filtered through various culturally determined styles of speech, resulting in varied dialect blends in each utterance. I propose that extremely complicated solicitation and analysis methods, drawing on both traditional linguistic geography methodology and contemporary sociolinguistic methodology, are needed to isolate the underlying dialects in an individual's speech. Gary Underwood (1975, p. 36) proposes that any given language is composed of macro-dialects which are in turn made up of micro-dialects. While I have emphasized the speaker and Underwood has emphasized the language, we do seem to agree that current dialect methodology (based on no articulated theory of language) and current sociolinguistic methodology (tied in too closely, perhaps, with its obsession with changing order of transformational rules) are both shallow and one-sided and prevent a comprehensive understanding of language within a given space and time.

My contention is that the English in San Antonio cannot be understood unless traditional methodologies (such as those used by Sawyer and by Atwood) are fused with sociologically oriented methodologies (such as those demonstrated in this paper). Using many linguistic items and few informants Sawyer and Atwood discovered insights into San Antonio English that in some respects agree with and in some respects disagree with insights I have found using few linguistic items, in this case place names, and many informants.

At present, and for some time into the future, we are, and intend be, involved in studies in San Antonio using both traditional and sociolinguistic methodologies. I am especially pleased that our university library now has the comnplete set of microfiche data from the Linguistic Atlas of the Gulf States project. We are already working with the eight San Antonio protocols found in the urban supplement. Our place name analysis has, if nothing else, given us several hypotheses that call for verification.

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Notes

[1].These data were first presented in a paper "English Monolingualism in San Antonio," given at the annual meeting of the American Dialect Society in 1977. I am indebted to comments and criticism by Victoria Aarons, Glenn Gilbert, Bates Hoffer, Allan Metcalf, Carroll Reed, James Sledd, Gary Underwood, and H.R. Wilson. None of these scholars should be blamed for my stubborn selectivity in deciding which ideas to incorporate, which to twist to my own gain, and which to reject outright.

[2]The street names were Blanco, San Pedro, Goliad, Zarzamora, Culebra, Soledad, Navarro, Market, East Houston, Alamo, South Flores, Quintanilla, Commerce, Nacogdoches, South Presa, Durango, Buena Vista, La Villita, San Saba, Nogalitos, Broadway, South Pecos, Laredo Highway, West Nueva, Fredericksburg. The students were Gordon Ledford, Glenda Love, Pam Matera, Amelia McMillan, Christina Ng, Ardelia Poret, Barbara Pritzlaff, Marnie Schaetti, John Sneddon, Beverly Stauber, Erica Willbanks.

[3]'Quintanilla' was chosen after a pilot study using 15 fictitious names. All fifteen names were selected because they contained Spanish-English interference problems. More people tried to pronounce Quintanilla when it was placed in the middle of the list of 24 — the other names elicited varying degrees of finger pointing and verbal responses like "I don't recognize that one."

[4]I am indebted to Beverly Stauber for the time she spent in verifying my analyses of these data — and for her patience when I tried to bully her with my "teacher-knows-best" when we strongly disagreed on our phonetic transcriptions.

In all occurrences of the /a/ pronunciation the preceding /l/ was more fronted, more dental than alveolar. Since the two phonological features appear together, I have not noted the /l/ variation in this discussion. Also, since all utterances were given with primary accent on the first syllable, I have not marked accentuation.

[5]I mentioned earlier the advantages given dialect research by the development of sociolinguistic research methods. I depart from these methods somewhat by concentrating, in this section and in the section to follow, on place-name pronunciation. I also depart somewhat from the more empirical-minded sociolinguists by using intuitive judgments for grouping of these phonological variations. My choice of

the English and Spanish terms for the first two variations can easily be backed by referring to Spanish language dictionaries for the latter and English language dictionaries for the former — yes, 'blanco' is considered an English word by Merriam-Webster's *New International Dictionaries*, second and third editions, anyway. But my intuitive approach certainly has the backing of established sociolinguists such as Erving Goffman (1974) and theoretical linguists such as Noam Chomsky (1965, fn. 33, p. 207). Moreover, as we shall see in arguments to follow, 'intuition' can easily be termed a 'hypothesis' which is empirically verifiable.

[6]In the summer of 1975 Beverly Stauber, one of the original interviewers, used a conference course to follow through on some of the ideas formulated in the spring course. Stauber also formulated the computer program ultimately used for analyzing the data, basically adapting an APL input language to a SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. Both a cross-tabulation and a scattergram analysis were used.

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