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Murcian Spanish (MuSp) is a regional variety of Spanish spoken in the Comunidad Autónoma de Murcia in south-eastern Spain. It is commonly heard in the capital city, Murcia, with 450,000 inhabitants, situated in the Segura River plain (Central Zone), and in a number of towns like Cartagena (Coastal Zone), Yecla and Jumilla (Altiplano or High Plateau Zone), Lorca and Águilas (Guadalentín River Zone), and Caravaca and Calasparra (North-western Zone). The overall population of the region amounts to well over 1,100,000 inhabitants (Hernández-Campoy 2003: 621).

The speech described here is representative mainly of the city of Murcia. The transcription is based on samples from 25 Murcian speakers, ranging from 20 to 40 years of age, who have lived in this autonomous community most of their lives. The first of the two transcribed passages in the final section of this Illustration is an extract from an account provided by a 63-year-old Murcian peasant woman; the samples were produced by a man and a woman in their thirties. This type of speech is usually identified as a Murcian accent by speakers from other regions of Spain. It should be noted that, as is true of all systems, there is considerable phonetic variation within this accent depending on the speaker's provenance (Cartagena speech differs from Yecla speech, and the same applies to other Murcian towns), the educational background, and – to a lesser degree in this region – the speakers' age and income level.

Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Occlusive	p b		t d		ʃ	k g
Affricate					tʃ	
Nasal	m		n		ɲ	
Flap				r		
Trill				r		
Fricative		f	θ	s		x
Lateral approximant				l	ʎ	

Table 1 Phonotactics of Spanish in word-final position (Monroy 1980: 60).

Codas	Examples	
	Singular	Plural
(-p), (-b)	stop, pub	stops, pubs
(-t), -d, -s	hábitat, ciudad, diabetes	hábitats, ciudades, diabetes
(-k), (-g), (-x)	coñac/anorak, zigzag, reloj	coñacs/anoraks, zigzags, relojes
-θ	feroz	feroces
(-m), -n, -l, -r	álbum, examen, canal, amor	álbumes, exámenes, canales, amores
(-ps)	bíceps, tríceps	bíceps, tríceps
(-ks)	tórax	tórax
(-nk)	cinc	cinc
(-lz)	selz	selz

Phonetic peculiarities will be discussed below, while comparing them with similar realizations in Standard Spanish. As general articulatory patterns (see Table 1), MuSp consonants exhibit a different behaviour depending on their position within the word: prevocalic (onset) consonants are realized as in Standard Spanish (*casa* ‘house’, *perro* ‘dog’, *mano* ‘hand’), but postvocalic consonants in coda position undergo either regressive assimilation (*canasta* ‘basket’, *digno* ‘honorable/worth’, *espera* ‘wait’) tending to gemination when word-medial or deletion in word-final position (*casas* ‘houses’, *carpet* ‘card’, *ciudad* ‘city’), except nasals /m n/ (*álbum* ‘album’, *camión* ‘lorry’).

In the Murcian system, voiceless occlusives are realized as such word-initially (we prefer this name to ‘plosive’ since plosion is not a regular feature of these consonants in Spanish, see Navarro-Tomás 1918:79). Only in learned terms may /p t k/ appear in mid position in clusters (e.g. *aptitud* ‘aptitude’, *atmósfera* ‘atmosphere’ and *actual* ‘current’), where they alternate in colloquial speech with a geminate showing complete assimilation to the following consonant ([at-ti¹tuð], [æm-m¹offera] and [æ-t-¹twæɫ], respectively). No voiceless occlusives occur in final position, even in words borrowed from other languages (see Hernández-Campoy & Trudgill 2002), with preference for an open syllable (e.g. *estó* [et-¹tó] ‘stop’, *chú* [‘klu] ‘club’).

The voiced set alternates in Spanish between an occlusive realization after a pause or after a nasal (or in the case of /d/, after /l/), a fricative realization when any other consonant precedes or follows, and an approximant realization, used mostly when they are flanked by vowels, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Behaviour of occlusives, fricatives and approximants.

	Bilabial	Dento-alveolar	Palatal	Velar
Voiceless occlusives	piso	tono		casa
[p t k]	[¹ piso]	[¹ tono]		[¹ kasa]
	‘flat’	‘tone’		‘home’
Voiced occlusives	un vaso	anda	con yema	un gorro
[b d j g]	[¹ baso]	[¹ aŋda]	[kon ¹ jema]	[un ¹ gorro]
	‘a glass’	‘(s)he walks’	‘with yolk’	‘a cap’
Voiced fricatives	objetar	adjuntar	las yemas	los gatos
[β ð j γ]	[oβxe ¹ tar]	[aðxuŋ ¹ tar]	[las ¹ jemas]	[los ¹ γatos]
	‘to object’	‘to attach’	‘the yolks’	‘the cats’
Voiced approximants	una bala	la ducha	la yema	la goma
[β ð j γ]	[una ¹ βala]	[la ¹ ðuʃa]	[la ¹ jema]	[la ¹ γoma]
	‘a bullet’	‘the shower’	‘the yolk’	‘the rubber’

Opinions differ as to the phonemic status of the voiced palatal occlusive sound found in the fourth column of Table 2. While Navarro-Tomás (1918: 127), Quilis (1985), Canellada & Madsen (1987: 119) and Martínez-Celdrán, Fernández-Planas & Carrera-Sabaté (2003: 255) include a voiced affricate phoneme in their inventories for (Castilian) Spanish, others, like Quilis (1985: 115), argue that the ⟨y⟩ grapheme in *mayo* ‘May’ and *cónyuge* ‘spouse’ stands for the two allophonic variants of a ‘voiced fricative’ /j/, and Hualde (2005: 165–166) claims that the ‘the most common realization in Standard Castilian is a voiced palatal weak fricative or approximant consonant [j] (*mayo* [májɔ] “May”), except that the (affricated) stop [j] occurs after a nasal or a lateral’. Indeed this is an issue that is closely linked to constraints like status and modality, not to mention singularity features (Crystal 1969: 76) as well as other stylistic dimensions, such as the speaker’s geographical origin, his/her class dialect, etc. Our view (see Monroy 1980: 111–144), based on spectrographic and mingographic analyses carried out using five native speakers of Spanish from León, Madrid, Zaragoza, Huelva and Murcia, is that a voiced occlusive phoneme can be posited for Castilian Spanish. Its allophonic variants – occlusive [j], fricative [j̥] and the approximant [j̞] – appear to be subject to the same set of restrictions as the other Spanish voiced occlusives. However, we did not find in the speech of our informants any instance of a voiceless palatal occlusive in words like *muchacho* ‘boy’, *Camacho*, etc. as proposed by Sempere-Martínez (1995: 28). In MuSp, voiced occlusives follow the pattern of the voiceless set: they assimilate to the following consonant, producing a geminate sequence of the two segments (e.g. *adquirir* [æ̥k̥-kiˈrir] ‘acquire’, *absurdo* [as-ˈsur̥ðo] ‘absurd’, etc.), neutralizing minimal pairs such as:

<i>sexta – secta</i>	/ˈsetta/	feminine ‘sixth’ – ‘sect’
<i>contexto – contesto</i>	/konˈtetto/	‘context’ – ‘I answer’
<i>pacto – pasto</i>	/ˈpatto/	‘pact’ – ‘pasture/grass’
<i>arna – asna</i>	/ˈanna/	‘beehive cell’ – feminine ‘donkey’
<i>acto – apto</i>	/ˈatto/	‘act’ – ‘apt/suitable’
<i>acta – asta – apta</i>	/ˈatta/	‘accord/minutes’ – ‘horn/flagpole’ – feminine ‘apt/suitable’
<i>capaz – capadas</i>	/kæˈpæ/	‘capable’ – feminine ‘castrated’
<i>cacto – casto – capto</i>	/ˈkatto/	‘cactus’ – ‘chaste’ – ‘I capture/understand/receive’

It is in terms of the phonetic realization in checked position that differences between Murcian and the standard variety are most noticeable, particularly in the case of postvocalic /s/. The assimilatory character of checked /s/ is so powerful in Spanish that there is a great divide between [s] and [s]-less varieties (Castilian vs. Southern Spain accents as well as many South American accents). As a member of the [s]-less group, MuSp is peculiar in the way /s/ in coda position (marked by + below) assimilates to the neighbouring consonant. Thus, if a stop follows, it will take its value as in:

<i>los pies</i>	[lɔp+ˈpje]	‘the feet’	<i>los tonos</i>	[lɔt+ˈtɔnɔ]	‘the tones’
<i>las casas</i>	[læk+ˈkæsæ]	‘the homes’	<i>los vasos</i>	[lɔb+ˈbæsɔ]	‘the glasses’
<i>los dedos</i>	[lɔd+ˈdeðɔ]	‘the fingers’	<i>las gomas</i>	[læɡ+ˈɡɔmæ]	‘the rubbers’
<i>las manos</i>	[læm+ˈmænɔ]	‘the hands’	<i>los nenes</i>	[lɔn+ˈnɛnɛ]	‘the kids’
<i>las ñoras</i>	[læɲ+ˈɲɔræ]	‘the peppers’			

And there are some minimal pairs whose only difference is regressive consonant assimilation:

<i>pescado – pecado</i>	‘fish’ – ‘sin’
<i>pastilla – patilla</i>	‘pill/bar/tablet’ – ‘sideburn/leg’
<i>pasto – pato</i>	‘pasture’ – ‘duck’
<i>pesca – peca</i>	‘fishing’ – ‘freckle’
<i>basta – bata</i>	‘tacking/it’s enough’ – robe’
<i>gasto – gato</i>	‘expense/I spend’ – ‘male cat’
<i>pasta – pata</i>	‘pasta/paste/pastry/money’ – ‘leg/paw/foot’

<i>raspar</i> – <i>rapar</i>	‘to scrape/sand/rasp’ – ‘to shave/crop’
<i>tosco</i> – <i>toco</i>	‘rough’ – ‘I touch’
<i>caspa</i> – <i>capa</i>	‘dandruff’ – ‘layer/cape/stratum’
<i>astado</i> – <i>atado</i>	‘horned’ – masculine ‘tied’
<i>gastillo</i> – <i>gatillo</i>	‘minor expense’ – trigger’
<i>sesgar</i> – <i>segar</i>	‘to cut/slant’ – ‘to reap/shatter’
<i>empastar</i> – <i>empatar</i>	‘to fill/prime/bind’ – ‘to draw/tie/equalize’
<i>empaste</i> – <i>empate</i>	‘filling/filler’ – ‘tie/draw’
<i>busque</i> – <i>buque</i>	3rd.sg subject/2nd.sg imperative of ‘to seek/look for’ – ‘ship/vessel’
<i>mosca</i> – <i>moca</i>	‘fly’ – ‘mocha/coffee’
<i>asno</i> – <i>ano</i>	‘donkey/ass’ – ‘anus’
<i>mismo</i> – <i>mimo</i>	‘same’ – ‘cuddle/pampering/mime’
<i>cisne</i> – <i>cine</i>	‘swan’ – ‘cinema’
<i>muslo</i> – <i>mulo</i>	‘thigh’ – ‘male mule’
<i>pisto</i> – <i>pito</i>	‘ratatouille’ – ‘whistle/horn/fag/willie’

Note that voiced occlusives do not spirantize after /s/, as is the case in Castilian Spanish. Thus, unlike the standard variety, where /b d g/ become fricatives after a sibilant (e.g. [loʃ βasos] *vasos* ‘the glasses’), Murcian favours an occlusive realization in cases where occlusives and nasals intervene (Cutillas-Espinosa 2001: 689), e.g. [εp-¹pera] *espera* ‘wait’, [εt-¹tæβæ] *estabas* ‘you were’, [lɔd ¹dεðɔ] *los dedos* ‘the fingers’, [læŋ¹gomæ] *las gomas* ‘the rubbers’, [læm¹mænɔ] *las manos* ‘the hands’, [lɔn¹nene] *los nenes* ‘the kids’, [læp¹ɲɔræ] *las ñoras* ‘small round peppers typical of Murcia’. In this way, consonant duplication fulfils both a lexical function, helping to distinguish otherwise minimal pairs (*pecado* [pek¹kæ(ð)ɔ] ‘fish’ vs. *pecado* [pe¹kæ(ð)ɔ] ‘sin’), and a grammatical function as in *estás cansado* [εt¹tækkæn¹sæ(ð)ɔ] ‘you are tired’ vs. *está cansado* [εt¹tækænsæ(ð)ɔ] ‘he is tired’. Fricative realizations may also be heard alternating with [d], e.g. [lɔð ¹dεðɔ] (we agree with Navarro (1918) that intervocalic Spanish fricative [ð] is marginally interdental and less tense than English /ð/). Spirantization, however, is systematic when /s/ is replaced by [r], a phenomenon restricted socially to a working-class, older-generation, rural type of speech, e.g. [lɔr ¹dεðɔ] *los dedos* ‘the fingers’, [lɔr¹βæsɔ] *los vasos* ‘the glasses’, [læp¹ɲomæ] *las gomas* ‘the rubbers’. This substitution of [s] by [r] occurs before nasals as well: /n/ in particular (e.g. [lɔr¹nene] *los nenes* ‘the kids’), but not exclusively (e.g. [læp¹mænɔ] *las manos* ‘the hands’, [læp¹ɲɔræ] *las ñoras* ‘the peppers’). In general, the replacement of /s/ by [r] is disapproved of by the local population, who judge it to be typical of a very marked local accent.

The voiced palatal occlusive /j/ shows a pattern of behaviour identical to the rest of the voiced plosive group, as pointed out above: any preceding /s/ assimilates progressively to the value of the occlusive (e.g. [læj¹jemæ] *las yemas* ‘the yolks’), a pattern not found in standard Castilian. The occlusive extends even to instances with /k/ if pronounced [j/j], as is the case of speakers with a *yeísta* pronunciation (i.e. those who make no distinction in Spanish between /k/ and /j/, e.g. [se ka¹jɔ] for both *se calló* ‘(s)he kept silent’ and *se cayó* ‘(s)he fell down’; *conleva* [kɔp¹jεβa] ‘involves, implies’, [kɔp¹jema] *con yema* ‘with yoke’, both with [j] or, alternatively, [ɟ].

Although frowned upon by speakers using a more refined variety, the replacement of /l/ by /r/ in coda position is another distinguishing characteristic of Murcian speech, also found in other Southern Spanish accents (Andalusian, Canario and Extremeño according to García-Mouton 1994: 35). As a result, pronunciations like [ˈaryo] for [ˈalyo] *algo* ‘something’ and [ˈarto] for [ˈalto] *alto* ‘high/tall’ are very commonly heard, yielding instances of homophony (e.g. *alto/harto* [ˈarto] ‘tall’/‘fed up’, *caldo/cardo* [ˈkarðo] ‘soup’/‘thistle’, *falda/farda* [ˈfarða] ‘skirt’/‘(s)he boasts’).

Linked to this is the specific behaviour of syllable coda /r/ followed by syllable onset /l/ acting as codas and heads of a syllable. One of the most noticeable characteristics of Murcian is the full assimilation of /r/ to /l/, so that words like *Carlos* ‘Charles’, *peinarla* ‘to comb

her', *decir le* 'to tell him/her', *por la calle* 'along the street', etc. are pronounced with double [l], e.g. [ˈkæl-lɔ], [peɪˈnal-la], [deˈθil-le], [pɔl-la ˈkaje], respectively. Gemination can then be a regular feature of MuSp. The opposite phenomenon – the replacement of /l/ by /r/ – is also common in colloquial Murcian, e.g. *está en el río* [... er-ˈrío] 'in the river, *alrededor* [æɾ-reðeˈðɔ] 'around', *el ramo* [... er-ˈramo] 'the branch'. This may happen not only in cases where /r/ follows: /l/ may become /r/ in front of any single consonant with the exception of /r/ itself, so it is not uncommon to hear expressions like [er ˈsɔ] *el sol* 'the sun', [er ˈθumo] *el zumo* 'the juice', [er ˈkæmpo] *el campo* 'the country', [er ˈβjento] *el viento* 'the wind', [er ˈtʃiko] *el chico* 'the boy', etc.

Finally, one of the most peculiar features of Murcian speech is the systematic consonantal loss in word-final position, as in *pub* 'pub', *coñac* 'cognac', *ciudad* 'city', *zig-zag* 'zig-zag', *reloj* 'watch', *mal* 'wrong'/'bad', *álbum* 'album', *examen* 'exam', *stop* 'stop', *mar* 'sea', *lunes* 'Monday', *habitat* 'habitat', *tórax* 'thorax', *pez* 'fish'.

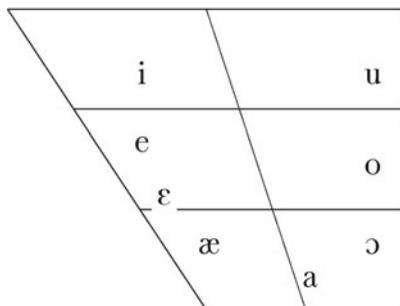
Unlike standard Castilian, where /n/, /s/, /l/, /r/, /θ/ and /d/ are all consonants that can occupy final position in a word, Murcian reduces this choice drastically, [ŋ] being the only surviving element, as in *álbum* 'album' /ˈalβuŋ/ or *camión* 'lorry' /kaˈmjoŋ/ (Hernández-Campoy & Trudgill 2002: 38). All the other consonants are dropped, producing vowel opening in the preceding mid or low vowels, e.g. [lɔ ˈɔxɔ] *los ojos* 'the eyes', [læ ˈæɫæ] *las alas* 'the wings', [birˈtu] *virtud* 'virtue', [perˈði] *perdiz* 'partridge', [kɔˈræ] *corral* 'farmyard', [kæˈlɔ] *calor* 'heat', and yielding minimal pairs based on vowel quality, such as:

<i>clavé – clavel</i>	/klaˈβe/ – /klaˈβe/	'I nailed/hammered into' – 'carnation'
<i>amó – amor</i>	/aˈmo/ – /æˈmɔ/	'(s)he loved' – 'love'
<i>dio – Dios</i>	/ˈdjo/ – /ˈdjo/	'(s)he gave' – 'God'
<i>bisté – bistec</i>	/bitˈte/ – /bitˈte/	'beef steak'
<i>me – mes</i>	/me/ – /mɛ/	1st.sg.obj.pron – 'month'
<i>caló – calor</i>	/kaˈlo/ – /kaˈlɔ/	'gypsy slang' – 'heat'
<i>ve – vez</i>	/βe/ – /βɛ/	2nd.sg imperative of 'to go' – 'time'

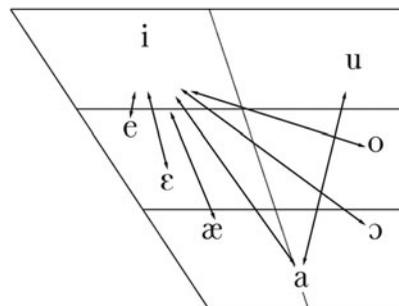
Note that this behaviour contravenes one of the fundamental phonological rules operating in Castilian Spanish, whereby any single consonant flanked by vowels syllabifies with the following vowel (e.g. *los ojos* /lo-so-xos/ 'the eyes'). Murcian, by contrast, keeps syllable nuclei as if there were no consonant in between (e.g. [lɔ-ˈɔ-xɔ] 'the eyes', [læ-æ-βæ] *las habas* 'the broad beans') and again, in contrast with what happens in standard Castilian, where two or three identical vowels can be drastically reduced to the value of a single one with no semantic effect (e.g. *iba a Alicante* = *ib-A-licante* '(s)he was going to Alicante'), Murcian does not allow vowel fusion in instances where /s/ is dropped, so that a case like our previous example, [læ-æ-βæ] *las habas* 'the broad beans', would never be pronounced as [ˈlæ-βæ] *lavas* 'you wash'.

Vowels

Monophthongs



Diphthongs



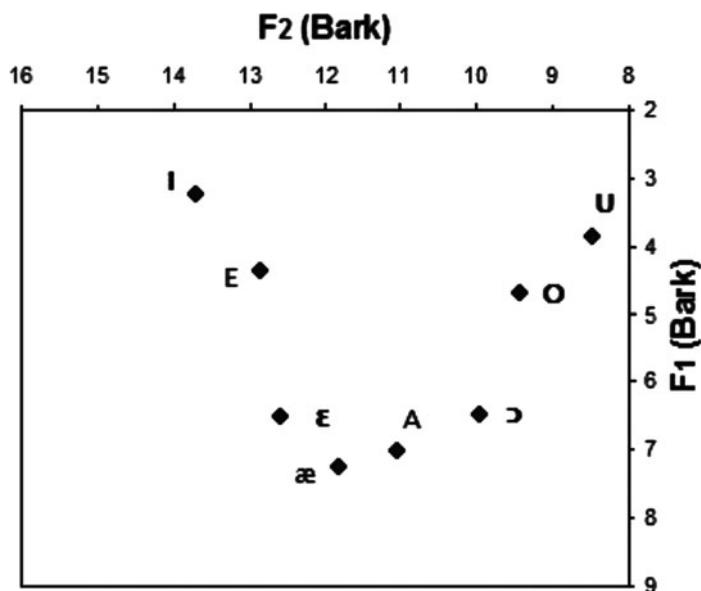


Figure 1 Murcian vowel formant average values of two male speakers (our data). In capitals, Standard Spanish vowels; average frequencies of five male speakers. Data from Martínez Celdrán & Fernández Planas (2007: 175).

Monophthongs

The system of vowel contrasts is fairly homogeneous across Murcian speakers and is markedly different from Castilian Spanish. There is a richer set of monophthongs due to the splitting of Castilian mid and low phonemes into three further allophonic variants – [ɛ], [æ] and [ɔ] – to make up for the loss of /s/ in checked position, and of any other consonants (except nasals /m/ and /n/), as the vowel chart and [Figure 1](#) show. As stated in Hernández-Campoy & Trudgill (2002: 32), diachronically speaking, the loss of consonants had dramatic consequences for the Murcian vowel system, leading to the phonologization of originally allophonic differences and the development of an eight-vowel system: historical word-final /eC oC aC/ have become /ɛ ɔ æ/, and the same vocalic developments have occurred word-internally in the case of vowels before assimilated consonants. This phonologization had the consequence that some nominal and verbal forms which had earlier been distinguished by the presence or absence of /s/ were now distinguished by vocalic differences. This is true for noun phrases, where /s/ is the plural marker on articles, adjectives and nouns:

la casa bonita ‘the nice house’
las casas bonitas ‘the nice houses’

and it is equally true of verb forms, where word final /s/ is heavily involved in person-marking:

Simple Present Tense

2nd.sg (tú) *com-es* ‘you eat’ (familiar)
 (usted) *com-e* ‘you eat’ (polite)
 3rd.sg (él/ella) *com-e* ‘he/she eats’

Simple Past Tense

1st.sg (yo) *com-ía* ‘I ate’
 2nd.sg (tú) *com-ías* ‘you ate’ (familiar)
 (usted) *com-ía* ‘you ate’ (polite)
 3rd.sg (él/ella) *com-ía* ‘he/she ate’

The disambiguation of number and person marking in MuSp is thus solved with changes in vowel quality.

This, incidentally, parallels a similar phenomenon found in Eastern Andalusian, which also has an eight-vowel system, the only difference being that, in the latter, /s/ is regularly replaced by an aspirated voiced velar [h] (Zamora-Vicente 1960: 290), a feature occasionally found in some Murcian areas bordering on the Andalusian region. The split can best be seen in examples like the following:

<i>tiene este</i> . . . [ˈtjenεette]	<i>tienes este</i> . . . [ˈtjenεette]
‘he has a . . .’	‘you’ve got this . . .’
<i>lo otro</i> [lo ˈotro]	<i>los otros</i> [ˈlɔˈotɾɔ]
‘the other’	‘the others’
<i>la aspira</i> [la æpˈpira]	<i>las aspiras</i> [lææpˈpiræ]
‘(s)he breathes it in’	‘you breathe them in’

It is obvious that the distinction between the close and the open varieties is linked to the presence or absence of /s/, acting as a marker of person (*tiene* ‘he/she has’ – *tienes* ‘you have’), number (*otro* ‘another’ – *otros* ‘others’), or simply as a syllabic coda; this brings about consonantal duplication word-internally (e.g. *aspirar* ‘to breathe in’/‘to suck’). Furthermore, consonants other than /s/ (i.e. the ones phonotactically allowed in final position in a word in Spanish, with the exception of nasals), produce vowel opening, too, as a result of their systematic loss in this position, as mentioned above. Our examples also reveal another characteristic pointed out by Hernández-Campoy & Trudgill (2002: 39), namely that there is metaphony or vowel harmony in MuSp. Lapesa (1968) mentions that the same phenomenon takes place in the speech of Granada, Almería, and in the town of Cabra (Córdoba). Arguably, this is triggered by the absence of an /s/ signalling plurality or person.

Diphthongs and triphthongs

Murcian has a set of diphthongs that differ from their Castilian equivalents in various ways, as the vowel chart and Figure 2 show.

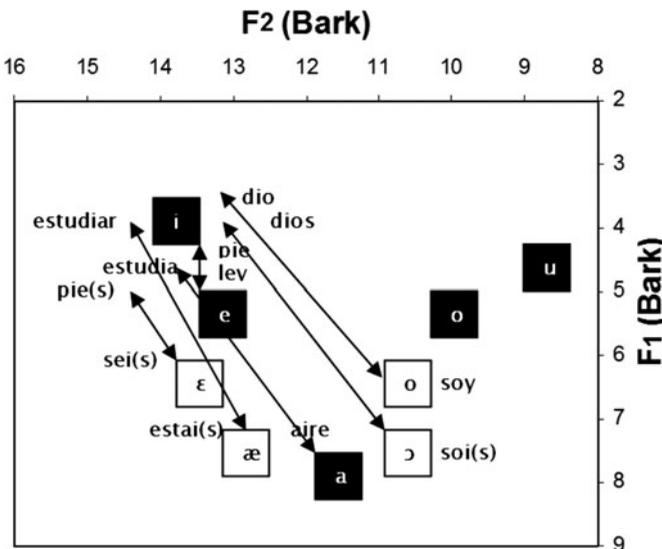


Figure 2 Murcian diphthongs (white squares: data from Monroy 2008). Spanish vowels (black squares: data from Martínez Geldrán & Fernández Planas 2007). Words indicate the beginning and direction of the diphthong.

As in the case of monophthongs, their behaviour is closely linked to the presence/non-presence of /s/. Thus, we have the following as falling diphthongs,

[ai] – [æi]: [ˈaire] – [et-ˈtæi] *aire* – *estáis* ‘air’ – ‘you are’
 [ei] – [ɛi]: [ˈlei] – [ˈsɛi] *ley* – *seis* ‘law’ – ‘six’
 [oi] – [ɔi]: [ˈsoi] – [ˈsoi] *soy* – *sois* ‘I am’ – ‘you are’

and the following as rising diphthongs:

[ja] – [jæ]: [etˈtuðja] – [ettuˈðjæ] *estudia* – *estudiar* ‘(s)he studies’ – ‘to study’
 [je] – [jɛ]: [ˈpje] – [ˈpjɛ] *pie* – *pies* ‘foot’ – ‘feet’
 [jo] – [jɔ]: [ˈdjo] – [ˈdjɔ] *dio* – *Dios* ‘(s)he gave’ – ‘God’

There are cases where this phonetic variability has clear semantic implications, as in the *dio* – *Dios*, *pie* – *pies* examples. This opening of mid and low vowels is a departure from the *EXQUISITA LIMPIDEZ* [exquisite purity], which characterizes Castilian (Zamora-Vicente 1960: 290), and it is probably one of the reasons for the mixed feelings ‘murcianos’ have towards their own accent (Hernández-Campoy 2003: 624; 2008: 124–125). Other peculiarities, like the monophthongization of /ue/ to [ɔ], as in *pues* [pɔ] (e.g. *pues díselo* [pɔˈdiselo] ‘well, tell him/her’), heard in very colloquial Murcian, the occasional hiatic rendering of the diphthong /oi/ (e.g. *boina* [bo-ˈi-na] ‘beret’), or instances of vowel assimilation (*SINALEFAS*) like [lokæˈjæmɔ] for *lo que hagamos* ‘what we may do’ are not unique to MuSp: they are also found in other southern Spanish accents (Salvador 1987).

Unlike the diphthongs, Murcian triphthongs coincide with the set of triphthongs found in Castilian (see Figure 2). They differ though in the phonetic realization of the nuclear elements: in line with the diphthongs, Murcian favours an open realization of the mid (and also of the final) vowels as a result of the loss of a checked /s/ (e.g. *estudiáis* [jæi] ‘you can study’ – *estudiéis* [jei] ‘you might study’, *averigüáis* [wæi] ‘you can find out’ – *averigüéis* [wei] ‘you might find out’). No reduction occurs in any of these nuclear elements.

Lexical stress

The lexical stress system of Murcian is essentially that of Castilian Spanish. It is both phonologically contrastive, in the sense that the meaning of a word can change as a function of the syllable being stressed (e.g. *cántara* [ˈkaŋˈtara] ‘large pitcher’, *cantara* [kaŋˈtara] ‘(s)he would sing’, *cantará* [kaŋˈtaˈra] ‘(s)he will sing’), and, although subject to certain constraints, free. Thus, words can be oxytones (with stress falling on the last syllable as in *circunvalación* [θirkumˈbalaˈθjon] ‘ring road’), paroxytones (with stress on the last syllable but one, e.g. *sorprendente* [sorpreŋˈdente] ‘surprising’) and proparoxytones (with stress falling on the last syllable but two, e.g. *contrólalo* [konˈtɾolalo] ‘keep an eye on it’). Like in Standard Spanish, the difference between stressed and unstressed vowels is very small duration-wise (Monroy 1980: 55–57) and, unlike in English, stress has little effect on vowel quality. In fact, consonantal reduplication and metaphony make unstressed nuclei in MuSp resistant to vowel weakening (e.g. *estabas* [et-ˈtæ-βæ] ‘you were’).

Rhythm

Overall, Murcian rhythmical patterning conforms basically to the syllable-timed rhythm standard with which Castilian has traditionally been credited (Roach 1982:75). However, there are instances in Murcian where stressed syllables are specially prominent, producing a perceptual staccato effect. This occurs whenever consonants functioning as heads of a stressed syllable geminate due to regressive assimilation (e.g. *nos dieron estos esquemas* [nɔd-ˈdjeron ˈet-tæk-ˈkɛmæ] ‘they gave us these outlines’). This phenomenon is not to be equated with the syllabic clipping characteristic of some northern accents (the Basque country, Navarre and part of Logroño). Murcian, on the other hand, follows other southern regional varieties in the

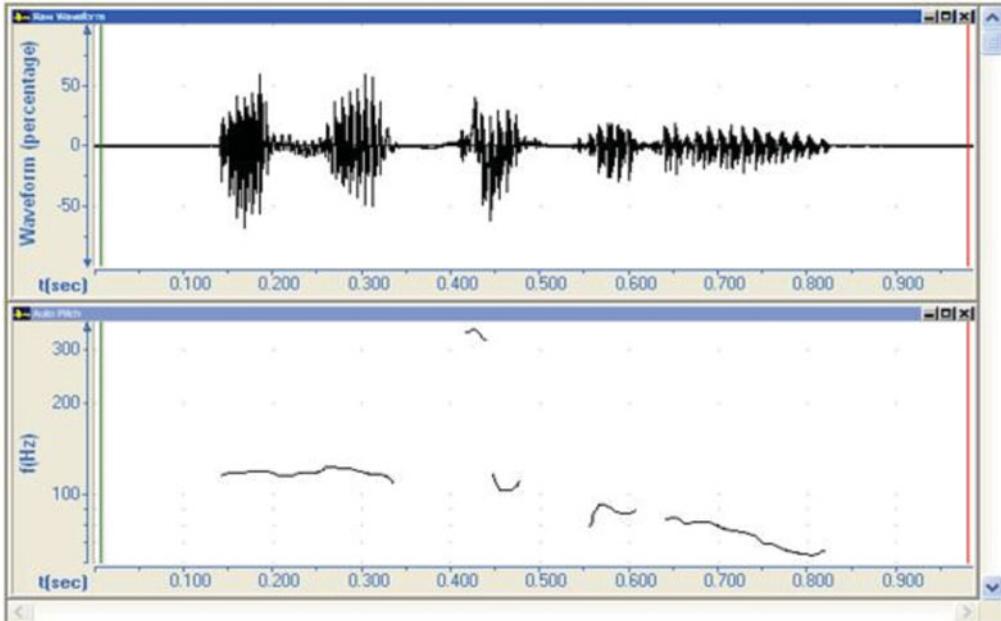


Figure 3 (Colour online) f0 tracings of *¿Dónde está Correos?* 'You want to know where the Post Office is?.'

way unstressed word-final syllables are suppressed in some words (e.g. *se pegó una panzá* (for *panzada*) [se pe'ɣo una paŋ'ta] '(s)he stuffed him/herself', *le dio una bofetá* (for *bofetada*) [le 'ðjo unabofe'tá] '(s)he slapped her/him round the face', *puen* (for *pueden*) ['pwen] 'they can'). Other phonological processes responsible for rhythmicity, like /d/- deletion in words ending in *-ado*, *-ido*, *-odo* (e.g. *cansao* (for *cansado*) [kan'sao] 'tired', *salío* (for *salido*) [sa'lio] '(s)he is gone out', *too* ['too] (for *todo*) 'all'), apocope in word-final position (e.g. *mu*['mu] (for *muy*) 'very'), the use of a rising diphthong instead of a falling one in certain expressions (e.g. ['bwa'θe] for *voy a hacer* 'I am going to do/make'), and levelling of [ue] to [o] in the case of the conjunction *pues* [pɔ], although common in MuSp, are also heard frequently in the colloquial/informal register of other Spanish regional varieties.

Intonation

Although the stress and rhythm of MuSp are essentially the same as in Castilian, the intonation shows some differences. In general, colloquial Murcian favours a narrow range of tones, to the extent that it may be considered one of the 'flattest' varieties among the Spanish accents, and one that may leave other native speakers, particularly South Americans, with an occasional impression of indecisiveness. High-fall and high-rise tones are not very common; they occur with yes/no questions and exclamations showing a dissenting, reluctant or very emotionally involved attitude on the part of the speaker. In contrast, level tones in different keys pervade most speech interactions, alternating with narrow low-rises and low-fall nuclei at the end of a turn. Such is the case of expressions with a marked referential function (see Monroy 2002: 84–86 for a full discussion). Attitudinal import can be intonationally conveyed by the conjunction of narrow high falling heads. Murcians tend to be reluctant to produce either high or low sustained heads and to use a broad tonal range to convey the illocutionary force of the message (disagreement, connivance, doubt, etc.). Tench's suasive function (Tench 1996: 98) is usually achieved by a combination of high or mid-high falling heads followed by a low-level tone, the result being that the former are perceived as having greater prominence

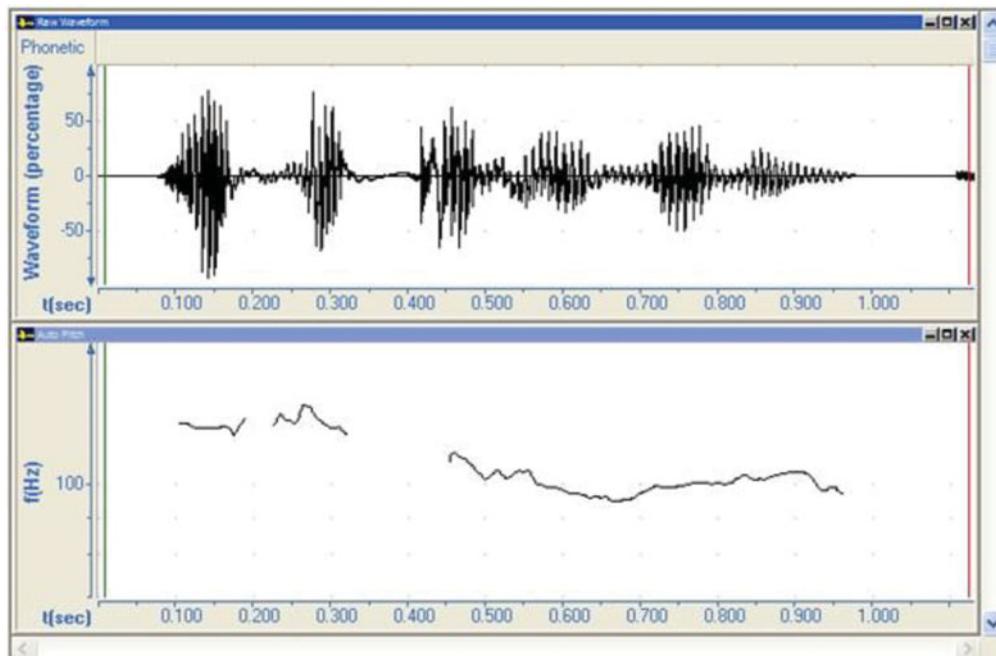


Figure 4 (Colour online) f0 tracing of *¿Has visto a mi hermano?* 'Have you seen my brother?.'

than their corresponding nuclei. As in Castilian Spanish, questions in Murcian hinge on two basic patterns: *wh*- and yes/no questions. The former favour low-level tones preceded by high falling heads, whereas in the latter, mid-level tones alternate allototically with mid-rise. An identical pattern occurs in indirect speech, where the main verb is usually dropped; in this case, the pattern of the resulting sentence and that of a simple *wh*-question look intonationally alike. Thus, an utterance like [*doŋde'et'tako'reo?*] *¿Dónde está Correos?* 'Where is the Post Office?' (see Figure 3), meaning 'You want to know where the Post Office is?', made in reply to a stranger who is actually asking for the Police Station, is pronounced in Murcian with a mid-low or low-level nucleus instead of with a rise, typical of indirect questions in Castilian Spanish (i.e. *¿Sabe(s) Dónde está Correos?* 'Do you know where the Post Office is?'). Together with the tendency to favour level nuclei and narrow-range tones, this mid- or low-level nucleus with yes/no questions as in [*'ab 'bittɔ a mjer'mano?*] *¿Has visto a mi hermano?* 'Have you seen my brother?' (see Figure 4) is a feature not so common in other varieties of Spanish. In fact, is one of the most striking characteristics of Murcian speech at a suprasegmental level.

Transcriptions

This section includes transcriptions of two passages. The standard 'The North Wind and the Sun' is preceded here by a narrative by a 63-year-old Murcian peasant woman.

Recuerdos de niñez 'Childhood memories'

|| me kri'e en una 'epoka 'mu ma'lika | 'mu 'mala || et'tæβan un 'sitjo sɔ'sjæ | i pake me 'ðjeraŋ de kɔ'me | pɔ me oβli'γaron a 'ir a 'misa | si 'no no me 'ðaβan de 'kɔ'me || loffalaŋ'xittæ no me 'ðaβan de 'kɔ'me si 'no 'iβa 'misa || pɔ'fwi a 'misa | mense'jaron a re'sæ | jentonsɛ a mi pri'mera komu'njon || komo me 'ðjeron um be'liko | j'un apary'a'tiko | j'un betti'ðiko | i ðe kɔ'me || pɔ'ale || al 'otrɔ 'año si'yjente | otra'βe 'ise la komu'njon

|| i ðe'sia la seño'rita | 'oi 'ke 'niña 'mæl 'litta | ke 'saβe ləm maŋda'mjento ðe la 'leiðe
'ðjɔ | 'tɔ:lɔ 'saβ'etta 'niña || 'oike 'niña 'mæl 'litta || pɔ'klaro | 'otrɔ'ajo | otra'βe || 'naða || a'si
'sei 'βese ke 'ise la komu'njon || j'er 'urtimɔ ajo me ðjor 'kura 'una βofe'tæ ke me ti'ro
kontra um mo . . . baŋ'kiko || i le 'ðixe pɔk 'ke || i me 'ðixo pokke 'tæntæk komu'njone 'no
se 'pwena'se ||

Recuerdos de niñez: Orthographic version (Standard Spanish)

Me crié en una época muy malica, muy mala. Estaba en un sitio social. Y para que me dieran de comer, pues me obligaron a ir a misa; si no, no me daban de comer. Los falangistas no me daban de comer si no iba a misa. Pues fui a misa; me enseñaron a rezar, y entonces, a mi primera comunión. Como me dieron un velico y un apargatico [unas alpagatas] y un vestido y . . . y de comer, pues ¡hale! Al otro año siguiente, otra vez hice la comunión. Y decía la señorita: ¡Oy que niña más lista que sabe los Mandamientos de la Ley de Dios! ¡Todo lo sabe esta niña! ¡Oy que niña más lista! Pues claro, otro año, otra vez. Nada, así seis veces hice la comunión. Y el último año me dio el cura una bofetada que me tiró contra un banquico. Y le dije ‘¿Por qué?’ Y me dijo: ‘Porque tantas comuniones no se pueden hacer’.

El viento norte y el sol ‘The North Wind and the Sun’

Murcian Spanish version read out by Consuelo Gil-Moreno, aged 28.

|| el 'βjento 'norte j'er 'sɔ | por'fjaβan soβre 'kwal de 'ejɔ 'era el 'mæf 'fwerte | kwaŋdo
aθer'tɔ a pa'sæ 'um bja'xerɔ em'bweltɔ en 'aŋtja 'kapa || kombi'njeron eŋ ke kjen 'æntel
lo'yrara obli'yæ al βja'xerɔ a kit'tasse la 'kapa | se'ria konsiðe'rao 'mæp pode'roso || el
'βjento 'norte so'plo koŋ 'gran 'furja | pero kwaŋto 'mæ so'plaβa | 'mæ sɛ areβu'xaβa en
su 'kapa el βja'xero || por 'fin | el 'βjento 'norte aβaŋdo'no la ɛm'presa || en'toŋθe | bri'jo
er 'sɔ kon ar'ðɔ | e immedj'atamēte | se deppo'xo de su 'kapa el βja'xero || pol lo kel
'βjento 'nortɛ 'uβo ðe rekono'θe la superjori'ðæ ðer 'sɔ ||

El viento norte y el sol: Orthographic version (Standard Spanish)

El viento norte y el sol porfiaban sobre cuál de ellos era el más fuerte, cuando acertó a pasar un viajero envuelto en ancha capa. Convinieron en que quien antes lograra obligar al viajero a quitarse la capa sería considerado más poderoso. El viento norte sopló con gran furia, pero cuanto más soplaba, más se arrebujaba en su capa el viajero; por fin el viento norte abandonó la empresa. Entonces brilló el sol con ardor, e inmediatamente se despojó de su capa el viajero, por lo que el viento norte hubo de reconocer la superioridad del sol.

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