Speaking Spanish with Style: (s)-deletion in Argentine Spanish and Labov's Decision Tree

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1 Introduction

The aspiration and deletion of word-final /s/, a prevalent (though stigmatized) feature of most varieties of Spanish, is perhaps one of its most extensively studied variables (Cedergren 1973; Weinberg 1974; Terrell 1976a & b, 1978a, b & c, 1979, 1986; Poplack 1980; Sanou de los Ríos 1980; Guy 1996, among others). Interestingly enough, although this linguistic phenomenon has existed for more than five hundred years, no cases of language change have been observed where /s/ ceased to exist entirely as an affix in any of the lexical categories[1]. This suggests that /s/ deletion, at least up to the present time, might not be a case of language change in progress, but rather a situation of stable variation.

Being highly stigmatized among Spanish speakers, /s/ deletion is expected to occur more often in informal, rather than formal, contexts. Labov (1966) proposed contextual criteria to identify those sections of the sociolinguistic interview where speakers showed less self-monitoring, and introduced the use of channel cues to identify stylistic change. Recently, Labov (2001) has proposed the Decision Tree as a methodological tool to distinguish *Casual* and *Careful* speech within the same interview. Using a modified version of Labov's Decision Tree, this paper reports on an analysis of stylistic constraints on variable /s/ deletion in the Spanish of Corrientes, Argentina. The goal of this study is to contribute to the development of the Decision Tree as a methodological tool for the analysis of style-shifting within the sociolinguistic interview.

The variable form analyzed in this study is word final /s/, which may be part of the stem of a word (i.e. monomorphemic words), attached as a suffix to a noun to indicate plurality, or attached to verbs to mark second person singular or first person plural, as shown in the examples below:

[1]But see Hooper (1974) for an apparent case of loss of /s/ in verb forms in Andalusian Spanish.

(1) a. *Pais* (country): monomorphemic words
     b. *Autos* (cars): plural nouns
     c. *Comes* (you eat): 2nd sg. verbs
     d. *Comemos* (we eat): 1st pl. verbs

Through phonological processes of weakening and deletion, word-final [s] can be variably realized as:

*   [s] voiceless alveolar fricative
*   [h] voiceless laryngeal fricative
*   [Ø] phonetic zero

2 Data Collection and Analysis

Over 4,000 tokens of word-final /s/ were extracted from 12 sociolinguistic interviews conducted in the summer of 2002. The subjects, native speakers of Corrientes Spanish, were selected on the basis of their membership in different social categories (see Table 1). The data were analysed with Gold-Varb 2001 (Robinson et al. 2001).

Social Class	Education	
	Low Education	**High Education**
UMC	✓	Young, Adult and Old
LMC	Young, Adult and Old	Young, Adult and Old
LC	Young, Adult and Old	✓

Table 1: Distribution of speakers according to Age, Social Class, Level of Education and Gender.

Designed to elicit not only the vernacular but also the more formal style of speech, sociolinguistic interviews are the only means of obtaining the volume and quality of recorded speech that is needed for quantitative analy-

sis (Labov 1984:29). The questions were organized into modules using the sociolinguistic interview method, as suggested by Labov (1984:35). Each module, or potential interview topic, is designed to elicit *Careful* or *Casual* speech. The modules often align with the branches of Labov's Decision Tree (see Figure 1 below). Style-shifting can, therefore, be accomplished by manipulating the topic, with the assumption that some topics will make interviewees focus on their speech while others will drive their attention away from it (Labov 2001).

Each token was coded for whether /s/ was retained, aspirated or deleted, as well as for a number of linguistic and social factors (see list below). These factors have theoretical and empirical support from previous studies on /s/ deletion in different Spanish dialects (e.g. Cedergren 1973; Weinberg 1974; Terrell 1978; Poplack 1980; Sanou de los Ríos 1989; Guy 1996, to name but a few). Labov's Decision Tree was used to categorize each of the tokens according to degree of formality.

Linguistic Factor Groups
Phonological:
> Following Phonological Segment
> > (vowel, consonant and pause)
> Current Syllable Stress
> > (stressed, unstressed)
> Following Syllable Stress
> > (stressed, unstressed)
> Preceding Phonological Segment
> > (presence or absence of /s/ in the onset of the same syllable)

Grammatical:
> Grammatical Category
> (verbs, pronouns, plurals (articles, adjectives, nouns), or monomorphemics (high frequency words, other words))

Relevant to Plurals:
> Linear Position
> > (first, second, third/fourth)
> Disambiguating Information
> > (Inflection within the DP, Other Types of Disambiguating Information and Combination of Inflection and Other Types of Disambiguating Information)
> Preceding Marker
> > (Ø, h, s)

Social Factor Groups
Gender: (male, female)
Age: (15-35, 36-65, over 66)
Social Class: (Upper Middle Class, Lower Middle Class and Low
                       Class)
Level of Education: (high, low)
Stylistic Factor Groups
Speech Style:
    Careful (Response, Language, Soapbox, Residual,
                 Beginning, Future, Work)
    Casual (Narrative, Group, Kids, Tangent, Jokes, Gossip,
                 Vicarious Experiences and Pseudo Narratives)

3 Style: Careful vs. Casual

Labov (1966) defined style as the "amount of attention paid to speech". This definition was criticized by Bell (1984), who proposed an *audience design* model to account for style. According to this model, style-shifting is seen not as the amount of attention a speaker pays to his/her speech, but rather an active response to audience members. In other words, speakers adjust their speech to that of their audience to win their approval (Bell 1984). According to Schilling-Estes (2002:384), the audience design model "provides a fuller account of stylistic variation than the Attention to Speech model". However, Bell's model is more concerned with variation that occurs across situations and audiences. In contrast, the Attention-to-Speech approach focuses on variation by the same speaker in the same situation and with the same audience.

The Attention-to-Speech model interprets variation within the speech of the individual in light of the fact that certain features are associated with particular groups of individuals (i.e. dialects or sociolects) or with particular situations of use (i.e. registers) (e.g. Crystal 1991:295; Halliday 1978; Schilling-Estes 2002:375). The deletion of /s/ is a case of register-based variation, since speakers show a higher rate of /s/ retention in more 'formal' situations than in more 'informal' ones (Cedergren 1973; Poplack 1980; Sanou de los Ríos 1989). Formal or *Careful* style is associated with high usage levels of phonological and morphosyntactic features usually related to the standard variety (Schilling-Estes 2002:376). *Casual* style is characterized by phonological and morphosyntactic features more associated with 'vernacular' speech (i.e. the language variety first acquired by the speaker), which is more regular in its patterning and more accurately represents the speaker's linguistic system (Labov 1972).

As Labov (2001:18) states, the aim of a stylistic analysis is "to disengage those sections where the effects of observation and audio-monitoring are more clearly diminished, which come as close as possible to the vernacular speech that is used when the interviewer is absent". In his first approach to the study of style, Labov (1966, cited in Labov 2001:88) defined five contexts characterized by unmonitored speech: (1) speech outside the interview format; (2) speech with a third person; (3) speech not in response to a question; (4) talk about children's games; and (5) the danger of death question. In addition, Labov (1966, cited in Labov 2001:89) identified five 'paralinguistic channel cues' that seemed to be associated with casual speech: changes in tempo, pitch, volume, breathing and laugher. However, problems in the application of 'paralinguistic channel cues' to sociolinguistic interviews led researchers to reject this approach as an aid to the identification of *Casual* style (Labov 1966, cited in Labov 2001:89).

In earlier studies, *Careful* style was elicited through several tasks that informants were asked to perform at the end of the interview. These tasks consisted of: (1) a reading passage, (2) a word-list and (3) a list of minimal pairs, which would yield tokens of the variants under study (Schilling-Estes 2002:378). Earlier stylistic analysis of /s/ deletion and retention (Cedergren 1973; Weinberg 1974; Sanou de los Ríos 1989) utilized reading texts and word lists to elicit formal speech. However, since some of the informants in the present study cannot read or write, the interviews contained no such formal elicitation devices. As explained below, formal style was elicited through questions designed to increase self-monitoring (e.g. questions about language, work, politics, etc.).

As previously stated, Labov (2001:87) defines style as "the intra-speaker variation where the interlocutors and the social situation are roughly constant". He affirms that the study of intra-speaker variation must be pursued systematically. His Decision Tree (2001:116) is intended as a contribution to that systematic study.

The Decision Tree (see Figure 1 below) consists of eight branches or contextual criteria that correlate with *Casual* and Careful styles of speech; four of the branches (on the left) define *Careful* speech and four branches (on the right) define *Casual*. The *Careful* categories include: *Response, Language, Soap Box* and *Residual*. The *Casual* categories consist of: *Narrative, Group, Kids* and *Tangent*.
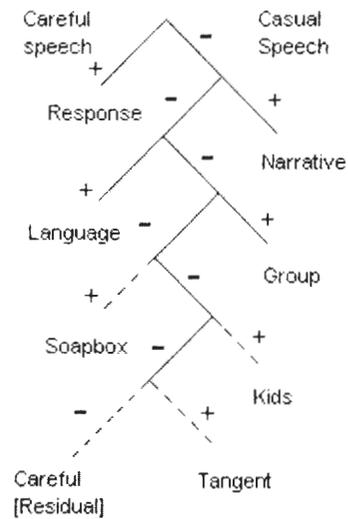
Figure 1: Labov's Decision Tree for stylistic analysis of spontaneous speech
in the sociolinguistic interview.

The contextual branches are organized in order of decreasing objectivity; that is, the first four decisions can be made with a higher degree of reliability than the last four decisions. The *Residual* category, which is the last branch of the Decision Tree, contains all speech that has not been classified under any of the preceding seven categories (Labov 2001:89).

- *Response* refers to utterances in direct response to the interviewer's questions. In the examples that follow, the sections coded as *Response* are in square brackets.
- *Narratives* are accounts of personal experiences.
- *Language* entails questions about grammar, specific dialects and language in general.
- *Group* contains any speech addressed to a 3rd person other than the interviewer.

As explained above, the first four branches of the Decision Tree (*Response, Narrative, Language*, and *Group*) provide a more transparent identification of *Casual* and *Careful* styles than the last four branches (*Soapbox,*

Kids, Tangent, and *Residual*). A dotted line that connects the last four categories to the stylistic tree (see Figure 1) is used to show less objectivity in contributing to the differentiation of style.

- *Soap box* consists of beliefs or opinions about particular (sometimes controversial) topics not addressed to the interviewer, but enunciated as if for a more general audience.
- *Kids* refers to children's games from the child's point of view. This was a problematic category for the data under study. *Kids* becomes a subclass of *Narrative*, since in all the instances, people talked about their experiences from the child's point of view, using the past tense. The *Narrative* category is considered to be one of the four objective categories; therefore I decided to code these exchanges as *Narrative*, rather than *Kids*.
- *Tangents* contain comments that deviate plainly from the topic introduced by the interviewer, reflecting the interest of the speaker.
- The last category, *Residual*, includes everything not classified under any of the seven categories described above.

For the analysis of style-shifting, I applied Labov's Decision Tree to classify tokens into *Casual* and *Careful* speech styles. I also studied the contribution of individual categories to the differentiation of styles. Such an analysis would help me to determine which contextual criteria provided a sharper and more accurate identification of *Casual* and *Careful* styles.

A first concern was the methodological difficulties in applying the Decision Tree (Baugh 2001). Since a large portion of the tokens fell into the *Residual* category, the necessity to develop a sharper distinction among the proposed categories became evident. Therefore, I added five categories to the Decision Tree: two belonging to the *Casual* style of speech (*Gossip* and *Jokes*) and three to *Careful* (*Beginning, Work*, and *Future*). These are explained and exemplified below.

Gossip describes the kind of "relaxed in-group talk that goes on between people in informal contexts" (Holmes 1992:331). Its overall function is to affirm solidarity and maintain the social relationship between the participants involved. Women's gossip is said to focus predominantly on personal experiences and personal relationships, on personal problems and feelings (Holmes 1992:332), and may include criticism of the behavior of others. In contrast, Holmes (ibid.) states that men's gossip tends to focus on things and activities, rather than on personal experiences and feelings. However, Holmes' (1992:332) statement cannot be taken at face value, since both the women and men in my sample gossiped about both personal and non-

personal issues. Since there were not many instances of gossip in this corpus, I did not distinguish between personal and non-personal gossip. Subdividing this factor into smaller categories would lead to a very sparse distribution in some cells. Guy (1980) points out the inadequacy of statements based on sparsely-distributed data.

The following excerpt is an example of gossip in which a fifteen-year-old talks about his friends:

(5)   M 012:02:04

I: '¿No sales más con Alfredito?'

I: "Don't you go out with Alfredito anymore?"

JACINTO: [*'No, porque está castigado'*]. *'Se llevó todas las materias el ignorante. O sea, él siempre fue un poco medio que le costaba y eso, más que él no estudia, sabes que ...'*

JACINTO: "[No because he's being punished]. The ignorant failed in all his courses. I mean, he's been always a bit dumb, besides he doesn't study, you know ..."

I: '¿Qué hacen los fines de semana, se van al boliche?'

I: "What do you do on the weekends? Do you go to the club?"

JACINTO: [*'Sí'*]

JACINTO: ["Yes"]

I: '¿El gordo, eso, se van al boliche?'

I: "Do fatso and his friend go to the club?"

JACINTO: [*'Sí, el gordo de vez en cuando'*]. *'La que se suele ir, o la que nos encaja el cuanto que se va, es Eliana. Se va ella con algunas amigas.'*

JACINTO: "[Yes, fatso does sometimes]. The one who often goes, or claims that she goes is Eliana. She goes with some friends."

I: '¿Y a vos te sigue gustando Eliana?'

I: "Do you still like Eliana?"

JACINTO: [*'Noooo'*]. *'No sabes lo que está. Está un monstruo. O sea, es una buena mina, una buena amiga, pero está un monstruo.'*

JACINTO: "[Noooo]. No, you don't know what she is. She is a monster. I mean, she is a good girl, a good friend, but she's become a monster."

Jokes comprises all humorous stories based on characters, real or imaginary, other than the speaker. A joke is similar to a narrative in that it consists of a sequentially ordered series of events. However, it differs from narratives in two principal ways: they are (1) non-personal accounts and (2) are generally told in historical present (i.e. they use Simple Present to refer to past events). Although it is also possible to find narratives of personal experience

told in the present, I found that the use of the present tense to tell jokes was categorical in this data.

Humorous experiences that happened to the informant (i.e. personal narratives) were classified as *Narratives*, not *Jokes*. From my analysis of the interviews, I also noticed that jokes were generally signaled by laugher, and, at times, they also included changes in tempo and intonation. Since the identification of jokes can also involve the use of 'paralinguistic channel cues' (changes in tempo and mood), which previous researchers have found "unreliable indicators of casual speech" (cf. Wolfram 1969:58-9; cited in Schilling-Estes 2002:382), I will not consider *Jokes* as an objective category.

The conversation shown below concerns the topic of death and religion. I asked Jacinto, a fifteen-year-old male informant, whether he believed that people went to heaven or hell when they died. While explaining how he imagined hell, he suddenly remembered a joke:

(6)   M 017:01:58

I: *'¿cómo te imaginas el infierno?'*
I: "How do you imagine hell?"
JACINTO: [*'Andar en el mundo vos solo. Como alma vos solo sin nadie a tu lado. Sin escuchar la voz de alguien, así, hasta el fin de los tiempos]. [...] O sino, un caldero gigante donde sale fuego y viene un negro y te encaja latigazos, hasta que le digas "me arrepiento, me arrepiento!", pero te sigue dando igual. Tipo un chiste, baja un asesino serial al infierno. Y le dice el Diablo, "mira, vos fuiste muy malo, tengo tres castigos para vos". Entran a la primera puerta para ver el castigo número uno y estaba un vago acostado en una plancha de clavos y otro que le martillaba arriba para que se clave más. "No, no ese, no, por favor". Bueno, entran a la puerta número dos. Había uno en una horca y otro que le estaba por dar un machetazo. "No ese no, por favor!". "Bueno, vamos a la puerta número tres". Y estaba una mina ... a un vago, entendes o no? (Sí) Entonces, el vago le dice, "Sí, ese sí, por favor señor Diablo, ese quiero". Entonces le dice el Diablo a la mina "Bueno Norma, anda nomás que ya llegó tu remplazo".*
JACINTO: "[Being alone in the world. Like a lonely soul without anybody around you. Without hearing anyone's voice, until the end of times]. [...] Or, a giant cauldron where there is fire and a black guy lashes you, until you say "I repent, I repent!", but he keeps hitting you anyway. Like a joke ... a serial killer goes to hell and the devil tells him "Look, you were very bad, so I have three punishments for you". They go through the first door to see punishment number one and there's a guy lying on a bed of nails and another who's hammering him down. So he says "No, not this one, please!" Then, they go through door number two, and there's a guy in shackles and another one

ready to chop his head off. So he says "No, not this one, please!" So the devil says, "Ok, let's go to door number three". And there's a girl sucking a guy off. So, the guy says, "Yes, yes I want this!!!" So the Devil tells the girl, "Well Norma, you can go now. Your replacement has arrived."

Through a change of mood (the informant was smiling and more emotionally involved) the speaker was able to actively shift the tone or mood of the interview from the formal topic of death and religion to an informal joke on them[2]. According to Schilling-Estes (2002:385), "speakers often creatively initiate style shifts, in order to alter the situation in some way".

The *Beginning* category consists of setting aside the first five minutes of the interview, when people are more aware of the tape recorder and generally tense. Feagin (2002:30) states that in the first portion of the interview, there is a high rate of question and answer exchanges; therefore, speech tends to become more formal:

> The sociolinguistic interviews usually begin by asking subjects about themselves – year and place of birth, parents' birthplace, schooling (speaker's and parents'), occupation (their own or their parents or spouse). Questions like these elicit relatively formal or self-conscious speaking style, known as the Interview Style [....] The most self-conscious speech comes from asking people to talk about their credentials (Feagin 2002:30).

Admittedly, the time-limit of five minutes was set in an arbitrary way, but I noticed that informants generally became more relaxed after the first few minutes of the interview, when they could discuss topics of more emotional and personal involvement to them.

In coding the interviews, I first placed the speaker's direct responses under the *Response* category, and then I coded the portion of the interview that occurred during the first five minutes as *Beginning*. The following is an example of a *Beginning* passage:

(7)   M 01:01:58
I: '¿Ud. nació en Ctes?'
I: "Were you born in Corrientes?"

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[2]Note that I have defined *Tangential* shifts as shifts in the *topic* of the interview, not the tone or mood.

SOFIA: *'Sí'*
SOFIA: "[Yes]"
I: *'¿Acá en capital?'*
I: "Here in the capital?"
SOFIA: [*'Sí, soy nacida y criada acá hace 52 años'*].
SOFIA: ["Yes, I was born and I have been here for 52 years"].
I: *'¿En este barrio?'*
I: "In this neighbourhood?"
SOFIA: *'Sí, acá en este barrio nomás. Mi mama es del Chaco, pero ella se casó acá.'*
SOFIA: ["Yes, here in this neighborhood"]. "My mom is from Chaco, but she married here."
I: *'¿Su papa es Correntino?'*
I: "Your dad is Correntinian?"
SOFIA: [*'Sí, de acá es'*].
SOFIA: ["Yes, from here"]
I: *'¿Ud trabaja acá nomás?'*
I: "Do you work only here?"
SOFIA: [*'Acá nomás'*].
SOFIA: ["Yes, only here"].
I: *'¿Es casada? ¿Tiene hijos?'*
I: "Are you married? Do you have children?"
SOFIA: [*'No, soy concubina nomás'*].
SOFIA: ["No, I live in common law"].
I: *'¿Y tiene hijos?'*
I: "Do you have children?"
SOFIA: [*'Sí, cinco varones y dos nenas'*]. *'Uno tiene quince, después tengo uno de dieciocho ...'*
SOFIA: ["Yes, five boys and two girls"]. "One is fifteen, then I have one of eighteen ..."
I: *'¿Ese es el más chico? ¿El de quince?'*
I: "Is that the youngest? The fifteen-year-old?"
SOFIA: [*'El de quince, sí'*].
SOFIA: ["Yes, the fifteen-year old"].
I: *'Ahh, que joven que parece para tener hijos tan grandes ...'*
I: "Ohh, you look too young to have kids that age ..."
SOFIA: [*'Si, y tengo nietos también'*]
SOFIA: ["Yes, and I have grand children as well"].
I: *'¿Cuénteme un poco de cuando era niña. Estudió?'*
I: "Tell me a bit of when you were little. Did you go to school?"

SOFIA: [*'Sí, hasta sexto grado nomás hice, porque después me gustó la vagancia y dejé']. 'No llegué a séptimo grado'.*
SOFIA: ["Yes, I did only up to sixth grade, because after that I only wanted to have fun and I left school"]. "I didn't get to seventh grade."
I: *'¿Desde entonces trabajó?'*
I: "Have you worked since then?"
SOFIA: [*'Sí, desde los ocho años que trabajo']. 'Te voy a decir, me crié yo sola. Yo me manejé sola en la vida.'*
SOFIA: ["Yes, I have worked since I was eight years old"]. "I mean, I grew up alone. I managed alone all my life."

The next category added to the Decision Tree is *Work*, which includes all those excerpts where people describe their jobs, what they consist of and their responsibilities. This portion of the interview is characterized by the use of technical vocabulary or jargon that informants use at work, as well as the use of present habitual tense. According to Sankoff and Laberge, (1978, cited in Feagin 2002:30) discussions of school and the workplace yield self-conscious speech, since subjects are asked to reflect on their histories and accomplishments. In coding the data, I included descriptions of past jobs or how they got started in a job under the *Narrative* category. In the following excerpt, a fisherman talks about his work:

(8)   H 003:01:45
I: *'¿Y cómo es el tema de la pesca? ¿Salen todos los días?'*
I: "So, how is fishing going? Do you go everyday?"
MIGUEL: [*'Mientras que hay se sale de seguido']. 'Cuando no sale, ya se pesca menos. Por el alto costo del combustible'.*
MIGUEL: ["While there is fish, we go out all the time"]. "When there is no fish, we go out less. Because the fuel is expensive."
I: *'¿No tienen problema, así con prefectura? ¿No los controlan mucho?'*
I: "You don't have problems with the prefecture? They don't control you too much?"
MIGUEL: [*'Prefectura nos controla el tema si es que estamos molestando en la zona del canal únicamente']. 'Zona del canal o te vas muy cerca del puente. Ahí únicamente ellos te controlan.'*
MIGUEL: ["The Prefecture controls us only if we are fishing in the zone of the canal"]. "The zone of the canal or if you are too close to the bridge. They only control you there."
I: *'¿En qué zonas pueden pescar Uds?'*
I: "In what areas can you fish?"

MIGUEL: ['Hay canchas']. 'Denominadas canchas. Partes donde se puede largar, porque en partes hay piedras, en partes hay mucho tranquerio y te rompen los mallones.'
MIGUEL: ["There are fields"] "We call them fields. Parts where you can cast your nets, because there are parts where there are rocks. There are places where the net gets stuck and it breaks."

The formality of this passage is revealed through the use of formal terms such as *denominar*, *costo*, and *combustible*, as well as jargon such as *canchas* and *mallones*.

The next formal category is *Future*, which consists of those exchanges in which informants expressed their hopes and plans for their professional or personal future. *Future* predictions concerning non-personal issues, such as the country, the world, etc. were classified under the *Soap Box* category. The following excerpt illustrates both cases. The informant begins his answer with an opinion concerning the future of the country (*Soap Box*) and continues with his work plans for the next year (*Future*).

(9)   A 007:02:23
I: '¿Che Alberto, y cuáles son tus perspectivas a corto plazo? ¿Cómo ves el 2003? ¿Cómo ves este año?
I: "So, Alberto, what are your short term perspectives? How do you see 2003? How do you see this year?"
ALBERTO: ['Feo']. 'O sea, ahí va a haber mejoras. Pero lamentablemente yo estoy atendiendo gente que está, como quien dice, en un mercado, están dentro del mercado político. Y al político no le conviene que esta gente progrese. Como por ejemplo mi idea es, cierro todo esto, hago todo galpones, y comienzo a criar pollos y gallinas. Para tener mi produccion de pollo y hacer trabajar todos estos chicos antes de que anden paveando por ahí. Hacerlos trabajar y que tengan su plata y que no pierdan el tiempo.'
ALBERTO: ["Bad"]. "I mean, there will be improvements. But, unfortunately I am assisting people that are, like they say, in a political market. To the politicians it is not convenient that these people progress. Like, for instance, my idea is, I roof all this, make barns and start to raise chicken. So that I can have my own production of chicken, and make all these kids work instead of fooling around. Make them work so that they can have their money and not waste time."

The following two categories, *Pseudo Narratives* and *Vicarious Experiences* have been defined by Labov (2001) as distinct from *Narratives*. The first consists of events that occur habitually in the present, rather than at one

point in the past. For example, *Pseudo-Narratives* refer to people's daily routines, when they go to work, stay at home, what they do on the weekends, etc. This is illustrated by the following excerpt, in which the fisherman talks about his weekends with family and friends:

(10)   H 007:01:54

I: '¿Qué haces los fines de semana?'
I: "What do you do on the weekends?"
MIGUEL: ['Nos juntamos con los muchachos del barrio'].'Hacemos un rejuntado entre todos, con mis hermanos, eso. Van mis cuñados, mis sobrinos que ya están grandes. Jugamos y después nos juntamos a tomar algo. Generalmente, los días que no trabajo comemos un pescado.'
MIGUEL: ["We get together with the guys from the neighbourhood"]. "We make a team among us, my brothers, and so. My brothers-in-law, my nephews that are big also go. We play and then we get together to drink something. Usually, when I don't work we have fish."

The second category, *Vicarious Experiences* consists of sequences of temporally ordered clauses referring to a past event. They differ from *Narratives* in that the speaker did not directly experience or witness these events. For instance, when speakers were asked whether they had been in a situation when they felt their lives were in danger, in relation to the topic of crimes, the ones who answered negatively added stories about relatives or friends who had been victims of such crimes. The following account was given by seventy-year-old Rosa, whose daughter, Estella, was in the middle of a shootout between the police and some thieves. Estella could not find her husband after she ran away:

(11)   B 04:01:47

ROSA: 'Se iban a cuidar autos. A las tres de la mañana venían, dos y media, tres. A veces venían a las cuatro, a las cinco de la mañana. La Estela venía con las dos criaturas en el chango por delante. Y siempre uno traía una bolsa de pan, el otro traía un tarro de comida. Y bueno, la Estela trajo la bolsa de pan en el changuito con las dos criaturas. Y él dice que venía con un balde de comida, porque se iban en el Turismo, cuidaban autos y despues le llamaba el cocinero, le hacía limpiar la cocina y le daba la comida que sobraba. Bueno, él dice que venía con el taro de comida, atrás de la Estela. Y después, nosotros, dice la Estela, sentimos un tiroteo, dice, y salimos a disparar. Y nos olvidamos de él, dice. Y después no apareció, no apareció, y no apareció. Le buscaron por todos lados y no estaba. Después al otro día vienen a avisar que estaba preso.'

ROSA: "They were taking care of cars. They would come at three in the morning, or two thirty, three. Sometimes they would come at four. Estela was coming with her two kids in a stroller. One would always bring a bag of bread, the other one a container of food. So, Estella was bringing the bag with bread in the stroller with the two kids. So, her husband said that he was coming with a bucket of food. Because, they would go to the "Turismo" Hotel, they would take care of cars and then the cook would call him and let him clean the kitchen and give him the left over food. Well, he says that he was coming with the bucket of food behind Estela. And then Estela says "We heard a shooting", she said. And we started running and "We forgot him", she said. And then, he wouldn't show up, wouldn't show up, and wouldn't show up. They looked for him everywhere, and he wasn't there. Then, the next day they came to tell that he was in prison."

Although Labov (2001) stated that *Pseudo Narratives* and *Vicarious Experiences* are distinguished from *Narratives*, he did not empirically test their effect. In this study, not only have these two categories been treated separately from *Narratives*, but their effects on the distribution of the linguistic variant have also been examined (see below).

4 Results

In this section, I present the results of the effect of style on the occurrence of the stigmatized variant. Besides investigating the frequency of the variant in *Careful* and *Casual* speech, I will examine the contribution of each individual category of the Decision Tree to the analysis of style-shifting.

Multivariate analysis using GoldVarb 2001 selected the degree of formality as significant, with deletion favored in *Casual* speech and disfavored in *Careful* speech.

Input	0.66		
Log Likelihood	-1004.174		
Total N	1898		
Style	**Prob.**	**%**	**N**
Casual	.52	68	855
Careful	.46	61	956
Residual	**.65**	77	87

Table 2: Contribution of style to the analysis of [Ø]

In Table 2[3] the *Residual* category presents high rates of deletion, suggesting that it may itself be composed of more *Casual* categories, as Labov (2001:107) himself noted. As the table indicates, the range of effect between *Careful* and *Casual* speech is not as wide as we would expect, given the highly stigmatized nature of /s/ deletion. An examination of individual decisions will allow us to determine which categories provide a clear differentiation of *Careful* and *Casual* styles of speech. Table 3 shows the distribution of [Ø] by individual categories to the differentiation of style within the sociolinguistic interview, presented in decreasing order.

	[Ø]	
Total N	3851	
Contextual Branches	**%**	**N**
Pseudo Narratives (CASUAL)	92	82
Jokes (CASUAL)	87	36
Group (CASUAL)	79	34
Gossip (CASUAL)	77	59
Residual (CAREFUL)	75	224
Vicarious Experiences (CASUAL)	70	84
Tangent (CASUAL)	69	213
Work (CAREFUL)	67	155
Narrative (CASUAL)	66	1335
Response (CAREFUL)	63	514
Language (CAREFUL)	61	279
Future (CAREFUL)	59	67
Beginning (CAREFUL)	55	336
Soap Box (CAREFUL)	50	453

Table 3: Contribution of individual categories to the analysis of style shifting for /s/ deletion

Table 3 shows that among all the subcategories, *Pseudo Narratives* have the highest rate of /s/ deletion (92%), followed by *Jokes* (87%), *Group* (79%) and *Gossip* (77%). While the results obtained for these categories might at first suggest that they are the most effective indicators of *Casual* speech, a note of caution is required: the uneven distribution of tokens by speakers may bias the results obtained. For instance, *Jokes* and *Pseudo Nar-*

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[3]The results shown in Table 2 are taken from a multivariate analysis which also included linguistic factor groups (see page 3). The results for the linguistic factor groups, which can be found in Mazzaro (2003:95) have not been included for reasons of space.

ratives were only found in two speakers. Since the two speakers who provided *Pseudo Narratives* belonged to the lower class, this may have inflated the percentage of deletion in this category. To obtain more reliable results, a larger sample of data is required. The next subcategories with high rates of deletion are *Residual*, *Vicarious Experiences* and *Tangents*. As noted above, the fact that the *Residual* category has a high rate of deletion may suggest that more *Casual* subcategories could be extracted from it. The *Work* category exhibits relatively low rates of deletion. As previously suggested, when people talk about their work and credentials there is an increase in self-monitoring. Contrary to my expectations, the *Narrative* category, which is one of the most reliable categories to identify *Casual* speech, shows a low rate of /s/ deletion. This is an important consideration, since the *Narrative* subsection is the most substantial in this study, comprising approximately one third of the data. Given that *Narrative* is a broad type of discourse that includes different topics (e.g. dating, school days, danger of death), comparing *Narratives* with categories based on topic (e.g. *Kids*) may be both inappropriate and ineffective. This justifies the need to separate discourse-based and topic-based decisions in the tree.

5 Discussion

The results presented above seem to show a clear tendency toward the use of the stigmatized variant in *Casual* speech. However, as I pointed out, the difference in the range of /s/ deletion for *Careful* and *Casual* speech was not substantial, given speakers' awareness of the stigmatized nature of the [Ø] variant. Despite Labov's (2001:107) contention that the Decision Tree should be developed further rather than reconfigured, the present analysis suggests that a distinction should be made between topic-based and discourse-based categories. This division of categories by difference in their nature may indeed imply a change in the shape of the Decision Tree. A second consideration is the small contribution the *Narrative* criterion to the identification of *Casual* speech. Concerning this, Labov states the following:

> On the whole, we cannot point to any subcategory that is not contributing to the overall categorization of style: there is no reason to think that dropping any one of them would enhance our view of stylistic differences. Indeed, the narrative category, which we have relied on as the most substantial and the most objective, is doing less work in this analysis than any other (2001:107).

While I agree that excluding categories will not solve the problems that arise from the application of the Decision Tree, I believe that, as previously stated, the criteria used to separate *Casual* from *Careful* speech need further consideration. For instance, since *Narrative* is a discourse category that conflates different topic-based portions of the interview, it would not be unreasonable to expect that these topics may themselves be of different stylistic natures. Since *Narrative* is the largest category and is characterized by a mixture of topics, this may actually dilute our view of style shifting. As a result, if we compare *Narrative* with other *Casual* categories such as *Kids* and *Jokes*, the smaller categories seem to yield a sharper and more accurate picture of style shifting within the interview.

Moreover, since the contextual criteria represent a mixture of two considerations: 1) topic, such as *Language, Kids*, etc., and 2) discourse/genre/interaction, such as *Response, Narrative, Group, Soap Box* and *Tangent*, it is often difficult to classify tokens exclusively. In addition, a large portion of the tokens fell into the *Residual* category, which exhibits high rates of /s/ deletion. This suggests that the *Residual* category may itself be composed of other *Casual* categories. Therefore, I propose that five categories be added to the Decision Tree: two belonging to the *Casual* style of speech: *Gossip* and *Jokes* and three to the *Careful: Beginning, Work* and *Future*. Four of these new categories (i.e. *Gossip, Jokes, Beginning* and *Future*) seem to provide a clear differentiation of *Casual* and *Careful* speech, thus contributing to a more precise analysis of style-shifting within the sociolinguistic interview.

Overall, the results of my analysis call for a finer distinction of categories, to avoid the aggregation of categories of different stylistic natures, as well as the addition of categories. In addition, coding the elements of the Decision Tree as two factor groups would help to extricate the effects of topic from those of discourse or interaction. Future work that tests the new categories on more data may shed light on the usefulness of the present proposal.

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