

A Quantitative Study of Paradigm Gaps for L1 and L2 Speakers of Spanish: *abolo, abuelo or zero?*

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Abstract

This paper contributes to current interest on paradigm gaps in inflectional morphology by adding new production data on gaps in Spanish. Certain verbs are impervious to particular inflectional categories, resulting in paradigm gaps, such as the first person singular form of *abolir* 'to abolish'. Attempts to explain these gaps have ranged from formal explanations based on Optimality Theory (Prince & Smolensky, 1993; Orgun & Sprouse, 1999; Hansson, 1999; Rice, 2005, 2007; McCarthy & Wolf, 2005) to accounts based on principles of lexical conservatism (Steriade, 1997; Pertsova, 2005) to experimental studies of morphophonological factors and the speaker's certainty judgments of gapped forms (Albright, 2003, 2006; Sims, 2006, 2008). In the present paper, a pilot study (n=13) with native and advanced L2 speakers was conducted to replicate and expand Albright (2003) by asking participants to not only inflect potentially gapped verbs and indicate certainty levels as in Albright, but also to indicate any other potential forms for the verbs in question. A previously undocumented gapped verb *saber* 'to taste' was also included. Results showed that the native speakers produced more than one form for the majority of the verbs from three unpredictably alternating morphophonological categories: diphthongization of /o/, raising or diphthongization of /e/, and velar insertion. Speaker agreement rates were positively correlated with confidence rates (Spearman's rank order correlation, $r=.61$, $p<.001$). *Saber* emerged as a new gapped word as speakers produced four different forms, but avoided the listed form 'sé' which contradicts the lexical conservatism hypothesis (Steriade, 1997; Pertsova, 2005). For the non-native speakers, a positive correlation was found between agreement and confidence (Spearman's rank order correlation, $r=.49$, $p < .014$). The non-native speakers did not leave any verbs gapped, which provides new insight into the differing nature of the inflectional systems of native and non-native speakers.