THE ANGLICIZATION OF HISPANIC PLACE NAMES IN COLORADO, USA

JOHNNYE AKIN*

The Territory of Colorado, USA, was admitted to the Union as a state in 1876. Many ethnic groups and cultural influences have played a role in the settlement and development of Colorado. The Hispanic sub-culture has been the greatest influence with the exception of the Anglo-American.

With the establishment of Mexico City as the capital of New Spain the early Spanish explorers were able to colonize this part of the world at least a century before French explorers began to penetrate the region. After the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 King Philip of Spain turned with avenging zeal to the settlement of the Pacific before the English took possession.

The early Hispanic explorers needed land marks for guidance. They had been instructed by the Spanish king to name all places, for he believed that naming was part of empire. They fought the native Indians for possession of the land and proceeded to enculturate the people and Hispanicize the area.

On the Atlantic seaboard the Colonies gained independence from England in 1776 and with independence they began the settlement of the west. The English speaking settlers came late, but remained longest and in greater numbers. Although many places had been named they rejected most of them and gave new names of their choice and in their own language.

Today Colorado has a population of approximately two million, 75,000 of whom are bilingual, Spanish surnamed citizens. Because of the Hispanic subculture and the predominance of the Anglo-American linguistic influence this research was undertaken. The aim was to investigate the approximately one hundred eighty Hispanic place names that remain and to determine the extent of Anglicization used in the native culture. The conclusions are based on examples of actual usage of several hundred informants who were interviewed.

SUMMARY OF THE VOWELS


* University of Denver, Denver, Colorado.

Del —> [del/g] Dolores —> [delouri ~ i]. Exceptions: Hermosa —> [kermosə]; Verde —> [va~dor].

Final e —> [a ~ o]. Grande —> [grændi ~ o], de —> [de]. Exception: Santa Fe —> [et], sometimes [i] thus, [sæntə fer ~ i/]

3. The vowel i: Initial i —> [at ~ i]. Idalia —> /aɪdəlɪə/. Medial i —> [i ~ i] with more frequent use of [i], San Luis —> [sæn ljuɪs]; Bovina —> [boʊɪnə]. In a few words the expected [i] —> [aɪ] as in Limon [lɪmən].

4. The vowel o: Initial o —> [ɔ ~ o]. Oro —> [ɔrəʊ]; Orlando —> [ɔrlandə]. Medial o, if it receives the primary stress, —> [aʊ] as [kæbɔlə [kæbʊlə]]. If it receives the weaker stress [aʊ ~ a] as Bonita [bəʊ'naɪtə]. In a few words such as Norte, Florida —> [ɔr ~ a], thus [fɪbo ~ arida]. Final o unstressed usually remains [a], less frequently [a]. Rico [rɪko].


SUMMARY OF THE CONSONANTS


The stress pattern has shifted to the first syllable in the following words: Conéro ~ [koŋəˈnoʊʊn] Conimaron ~ [kənɪˈmaɾon]; Limón ~ [lɪˈmɑn]; Arreba ~ [ɑˈrɛba]; Florida ~ [flɔrəˈlaʊ]; Pino ~ [pɪnəʊn]; Romeo ~ [ˈroʊməʊ]; Cristóbal ~ [krisˈtoʊbəl]; Vigil ~ [ˈvɪgəl].

The following words have become Anglicized in graphemics: Arroyo ~ Arəʊyə; Bronco ~ Bronkə; Cañon ~ Canən; Pinón ~ Pinən; Fruta ~ Frʊtə; Guía ~ Gʊįə.

The prosodic features of intonation, rhythm, stressing and timing were not considered in this paper. These features belong primarily to the sentence and not to the word.

A final summary seems to indicate that Hispanic influence in Colorado is one of names rather than orthoepy. The early Spanish explorers gave part of their culture to this new land. The English speaking settlers who arrived later have taken the place names and changed them according to their linguistic patterns.

DISCUSSION

Hill:

I would merely like to add a comment since I come from an area in which similar phenomena occur. We, however, occasionally, go a step further and create pseudo Spanish names. One such is a street I pass every day—Verde Vista—evidently a translation of the next street, Greenview.

Marquardt:

The anglicization of Hispanic names is probably being paralleled in Colorado by Spanish speaking Americans in the Hispanicization of Anglic names there. To what extent do you know this to be true and what is happening to Anglic names among such speakers where it occurs?