

What does hypercorrection mean?

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In the sociolinguistic literature, hypercorrection is assumed to index a speaker's attitude toward the more (overtly or covertly) prestigious dialects that they are attempting to emulate (Labov 1966, 1972). What I'd like to demonstrate here is that, hypercorrection, when approached empirically proves not to be a very transparent concept. This talk focuses on and illustrates with audio examples the phonological, phonetic, and social correlates of at least two, but mostly like three, forms of hypercorrection involving a single variable: postvocalic-s in the Spanish spoken in a rural region of the Dominican Republic. Previous work in this community has demonstrated that the variable manifestation of a postvocalic, etymological-s, (*las mujeres*), is subject to linguistic and social constraints that are not matched or are absent in the (sporadic) occurrence of intrusive-s (*holas < hola; Jacqueline; as todo*) (Bullock, Toribio & Amengual 2014, Bullock & Toribio 2015); such a situation turns out not to be unusual (Janda & Auger 1992; Foulkes 1997; Hay & Sudbury 2005). This leads to the often-asked question of whether the lexical and intrusive-s productions are phonetically the same or whether they might be distinguished by length, spectral moments, or intensity, a problem to be tackled here. But, as I will demonstrate, a straightforward comparison between intrusive and lexical-s realization becomes decidedly more complex when we take into consideration the fact that there appears to be yet a third type of hypercorrect s-use; one I call a "nervous-s" in which [s] appears to be parasitic on a phrasal boundary. In other words, despite the obvious fact that each of these manifestations of hypercorrection uses the same variable and all of them *can be measured*, they do not appear not to represent a unified phenomenon linguistically, indexically, or pragmatically. So on what basis do we classify the linguistic variables we are measuring (where does one hypercorrect variable stop and another begin)? I will pursue the implication of these data and the questions they raise for linguistics in general.