



## Job Market Practice talk

**January 19, 2023**

**LOCATION :**

*Modern Languages 306*

**TIME:**

*2-3 p.m.*

**PARKING :**

*Second Street Garage*



## The variable grammar of US Spanish: An analysis of mood variation among Spanish-English bilinguals in Southern Arizona

As it is well-known, US Spanish is commonly approached in a problematic way, through a deficient perspective in which bilingual speakers' abilities are seen as unstable and not as pure and complete as monolinguals' language use (Bessett & Carvalho, 2022; Otheguy, 2016). In this talk, I discuss the relevance of variationist sociolinguistics and its community-based approach to uncover linguistic patterns of Spanish spoken in the US. I illustrate this approach by presenting a study of mood variation among Spanish-English bilinguals in Southern Arizona (i.e., variation between subjunctive and indicative). Subjunctive use in Spanish has traditionally been investigated from a prescriptive perspective, and a normative effort has been made for dictating when subjunctive should and should not be used. A point in case is the claim that US Spanish speakers overextend the use of indicative to contexts where subjunctive is normatively expected (Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Lynch, 1999; Montrul, 2007). These studies often conclude that this is due to contact with English, claiming that US Spanish speakers' use of subjunctive results from simplification, language attrition or incomplete acquisition. Nevertheless, my results, based on quantitative analyses of data from sociolinguistic interviews with bilinguals in Arizona, show strikingly similar variable patterns to those found in other Spanish varieties, including the ones spoken in New Mexico and Mexico City (LaCasse, 2018), pointing to continuities across monolingual and bilingual varieties. Additionally, when examining different measures of contact with English, my results show no effect of immigrant generation, language use, or language proficiency on subjunctive use. In this presentation, I show how these results together present strong evidence that counters claims of mood simplification in US Spanish, highlighting the integrity of its variable grammar (Bessett & Carvalho, 2022). Finally, I discuss the implications of this type of research for the public good, such as the need for translating rigorous variationist research into social action in and outside the academic context.

**Talk Lead by: Isabella Calafate de Barros**