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Author

Widdison, Kirk A.

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Updating a Spanish American Grammatical Tradition: Observations on Spaulding's Revision of *A Textbook of Modern Spanish*

Kirk A. Widdison, Illinois State University

Introduction

On the eve of the quincentennial celebration of the New World discovery, Spaniards and Hispanists alike recognize the significance of that historic moment in the unification of the Spanish peoples as a sovereign state. This new-found political oneness was accompanied by a growing need for linguistic unity, not only to aid in the assimilation of the diverse Christian kingdoms of the Peninsula, but also to be used as a tool for imperial conquest. The appearance of Nebrija's *Gramática de la lengua castellana* in 1492, the first language treatise of Spanish, attests to such concerns.¹ Subsequent grammars, together with the flourishing Golden Age letters, helped forge a developing sense of national identity among the people of Spain by lending prestige and legitimacy to a shared form of communication formerly viewed only as a crude vernacular.

From Nebrija to Bello, down through the publications of the Real Academia Española (RAE), grammars of Spanish have not only established norms of correct usage in the prescriptivist mode, but also remain as socio-linguistic documents describing the state of the language of a period. These grammars share a common desire to lay down rules which systematically reflect the structures and patterns present in the Spanish language. However, they often differ in content and organization according to the purposes for which they were written.

Thus, Nebrija's frequent references to Latin are consistent with one of the purposes of his grammar: to facilitate the study of the classical languages. Bello designed his grammar to harmonize the various nascent

dialectal peculiarities with a single linguistic standard in order to halt what he perceived to be a dangerous fragmentation in the speech of the Americas. The RAE's authoritative posture and professed goal to "purify, fix, and lend splendor" to its national language have also shaped the nature of its' grammars.

This grammatical tradition was continued in the United States by Ramsey's pioneer work *A Textbook of Modern Spanish* written in 1894. Ramsey carefully tailored his grammar to an English speaking audience in order to promote the study of language as a vehicle for cross-lateral understanding of Hispanic peoples.² He strove to maintain the integrity of Spanish as an autonomous language system on the one hand, while making it maximally accessible to the non-native learner on the other. As a consequence, Ramsey presented the rules of Spanish grammar in such a way as to complement and contrast them with the linguistic background of his readers.

The result of Ramsey's effort was a grammatical masterwork which has remained a standard reference manual for students of Spanish today. Moreover, it has served as a model for nearly every North American pedagogical text since.³ Yet language is ever changing and in order to be useful grammars must be updated to reflect current practices.⁴

In 1956 Ramsey's *Textbook* was revised by Robert Spaulding who offered the corrections, modifications, and restructuring necessary to bring it into line with the demands created by over a half a century of language change. At present, a nearly equal

interval has elapsed since Spaulding's revision of Ramsey, in which time we have seen not only the usual shift in socio-linguistic norms governing language use, but also revolutionary changes in the way language is presented and taught in the classroom. From such a vantage point the strengths and weaknesses of the Ramsey-Spaulding *Textbook* are readily apparent and merit reexamination.

My intent here is to highlight Spaulding's contributions to the original in order to appreciate the challenges involved in such revisionary work, while examining those areas of the grammar which could yet be improved. I have organized my discussion according to the ways in which the revisions altered the *Textbook*: structural/organizational changes, contextual improvements, errors of commission and omission, and terminological differences. To conclude I offer a few comments on the first part of the *Textbook* dedicated to orthography and pronunciation.

Structural/Organizational Changes

Spaulding had a major task before him in restructuring the original *Textbook*. It was no longer practical to continue with the original division of materials directed at the beginning as well as the advanced student. By Spaulding's time the *Textbook* had fallen into complete disuse as an introductory grammar and had taken on its present identity as a reference manual for advanced students and teachers alike.⁵ This was Spaulding's assessment as stated in the Reviser's Preface and his goal was to make the grammar maximally accessible for such use. His decision was to eliminate all of the exercises and vocabulary items from the end of each chapter as well as the general vocabulary list from the end.

Undoubtedly, the biggest task undertaken during the revision was the integration of Ramsey's preliminary lessons (Part II) with his more extended treatment of the same grammar points (Part III) in order to offer a

unified presentation of materials. In the revised *Textbook* this section is renamed Part II: Forms and Uses.

This restructuring and fusion of materials follows a basic pattern. Generally, Spaulding's chapters 1-15 are composed of material found in the preliminary lessons combined with the corresponding subject matter given in the extended treatment of Ramsey's original. Two examples should suffice to demonstrate the type of work involved. The revised chapter 1 on the peculiarities of nouns includes materials from the preliminary lessons 1, 4, and 17 together with the more extended treatment in chapter 25 of the original. Spaulding's chapter 5 dealing with the possessives, interrogatives, and demonstratives borrows material from preliminary lessons 4 and 7 and all of chapter 3 of the extended treatment on the possessives found in the original.

The pattern continues with a near one-to-one correspondence between chapters 16-31 of Spaulding and their Ramsey counterparts. However, there is some fluctuation in the order of the chapters presented in the two editions. Originally, grammatical material of urgent need to the beginner was logically introduced earlier. However, the constitution of a reference grammar does not follow the same criteria as a student workbook. For example, Spaulding's treatment of *para* and *por* moved from Ramsey's chapter 6 to much later in the revision while his first chapter dealing with nouns and their peculiarities was introduced only in the latter part of the original *Textbook*. Likewise, the section on forms of address, initially introduced as a preliminary lesson, found its way to the revised appendix.

Spaulding sought unity in his work and, where possible, reorganized material with a common theme which Ramsey had dispersed throughout his book. There are cases where entire sections have been moved or combined to allow for a more logical and consistent presentation. Thus, chapter 32 of

the revision incorporates three different sections from the original: word making, substantive combinations, and words common to English and Spanish. Since these three chapters all deal with the same basic concept, Spaulding combines them into one and they are considered only as separate subcategories of the general process of word formation.

There are many examples of statements and concepts which Ramsey included in individual sections which had only superficial ties to its content. These Spaulding had to relocate to a more pertinent section for consistent treatment. A prime example of this type of correction is lesson 10 of the original on *ser* and *estar*. All of the material from statements 131 to 137 were duplicated in the revised chapter 16 with only a few changes and additions to fill out the explanation. Yet statements 138-144 were not included at all for lack of relevancy to the subject being treated. Ramsey must have included them in Lesson 10 because they were groups of sentences containing either *ser* or *estar*, but they have little to do with the distinctive uses of these verbs. Spaulding recognized this and reclassified them as follows: statements 138-141 dealing broadly with impersonal statements using *ser* moved in the revision to those chapters dealing with personal pronouns (Ch. 3), the articles (Ch. 2), prepositions (Ch. 29), and conjunctions (Ch. 30) respectively. The last three statements 142-144 in Ramsey's treatment on *ser* and *estar*, which include interrogatives employing *ser*, ended up in Spaulding's sections on negatives (Ch. 11) and order of words (Ch. 33).

Apparent in his work as a revisionist is Spaulding's penchant for cross-referencing, a welcome addition to any reference manual. Aside from simply renumbering the few original references made by Ramsey, he includes extensive cataloging of his own in every chapter. For example, in Spaulding's chapter 5 on possessives we find statements

tied in with chapters 31, 9 (twice), and with other points in the same chapter (thrice), none of which are found in the original.

Additionally, the revision included a modest bibliography listed as "useful works of reference," an expanded index of 15 pages (the original was 7), an alphabetical enumeration of verbs, adjectives, and nouns requiring prepositions in Chapter 29, as well as Spaulding's own personal insights expressed in the reviser's preface. From this brief exposition it should be clear that the organizational changes alone required much time and thought in updating the original. A summary of structural changes made on the original *Textbook* is provided in Tables 1 and 2 on the following page .

Contextual Improvements

Many of the contextual improvements in the *Textbook* are not outright corrections of misconceptions that Ramsey may have had. Rather, they consist of qualifications, generalizations, and necessary updating of the original remarks. Most frequent are exceptions noted by the reviser for dialectal differences and literary vs. colloquial usage of the language. As Spaulding himself notes in his preface, this is in keeping with the spirit of the original (sub)title: *A Textbook of Modern Spanish - As now written and spoken in Castile and Spanish American Republics*. Spaulding certainly benefitted from the geographical dialect studies undertaken by the Madrid School of linguistics in the first half of the 1900's and consequently was more aware of regional variation than was Ramsey.

Spaulding generally observes such dialectal and stylistic variation by means of notes at the bottom of the page or remarks set below the original grammatical statement. In some cases the distinctions are sufficiently important to warrant a separate, new grammatical statement of their own. For example, Spaulding notes the frequent use of the perfective in Madrid due to the French influence (17.8 Remark), the use of

Table 1
Structural Changes in Spaulding's Revision of Ramsey

Spaulding	Update from Original
Reviser's Preface	Not in Ramsey
Introduction	Unaltered
Useful Works of Reference	Not in Ramsey
Part I:	
Orthography and Pronunciation	Modified
Part II:	
Fusion of Ramsey's Forms and Uses	Preliminary Lessons (L.1-20) & Extended Treatment (Ch.1-30)
Appendices:	
I Spanish Forms of Address	Moved from Ramsey's L.16
II Social and Epistolary Usages	Unaltered
III Derivative Geographical Adjectives	Unaltered
—Section Deleted—	General Vocabulary
Index	Originally 7 pages; Expanded to 15 page

Table 2
Spaulding's Reorganization of Lesson Material

Spaulding	Ramsey
1 Peculiarities of Nouns	L. 1, 4, 17; Ch. 25
2 The Articles	L. 1, 3, 4, 15; Ch. 26
3 Personal Pronouns	L. 2; Ch. 1
4 Personal Pronouns (cont.)	Ch. 27
5 Possessives, Interrogatives and Demonstratives	L. 4, 7; Ch. 3
6 Parts of the Body	Ch. 5
7 Plural and Feminine of Adjectives	L. 7, 8
8 Comparison of Adjectives and Adverbs	Ch. 8
9 Adjective Pronouns	Ch. 9
10 Relative Pronouns	L. 20; Ch. 10
11 Negatives	L. 12; Ch. 11
12 Numerals	Ch. 2
13 Inflection of Model Verbs	L. 5; Ch. 19
14 Irregular Verbs	L. 6; Ch. 20
15 Defective Verbs	L. 14; Ch. 21
16 Uses of <i>ser</i> and <i>estar</i>	L. 10
17 Imperfect and Preterite	Ch. 4
18 Compound Tenses	L. 14; Ch. 12
19 Particular Uses of the Tenses	Ch. 23
20 The Present Participle	Ch. 7
21 Classes of Verbs	Ch. 13
22 <i>Haber</i> and <i>hacer</i> Used Impersonally	Ch. 14
23 The Subjunctive Mood	Ch. 15
24 The Conditional	Ch. 16
25 Correspondence of Tenses	Ch. 17
26 The Auxiliary Verbs <i>deber</i> and <i>poder</i>	Ch. 18
27 Idiomatic Uses of Some Verbs	L. 19; Ch. 22
28 <i>Para</i> and <i>Por</i>	Ch. 6
29 Remarks on Certain Prepositions	L. 11; Ch. 29
30 Adverbs	L. 13; Ch. 28
31 Laws of Agreement	Ch. 30
32 Word-making	L. 9, 18; Ch. 24
33 Order of Words	L. 1; Ch. 10, 12

vosotros in Castile (3.4), the practice of “*voseo*” in the River Plate Region of South America (13.8 Remark II), the normal enclitic use of pronouns in Northern Spain (4.1), the prevailing “*loísmo*” outside of Madrid (4.22, note b), and the improper plural form of the impersonal verb *haber* common in South America (22.4, footnote 1), to cite only a few such refinements.

Spaulding was also sensitive to the distinction between literary and colloquial usages of the language. Thus, we find new additions for the preferred use of pronouns in literary language (4.7), the colloquial replacement of *mientras*, *entre*, or *contra* for *tanto* in comparisons of equality (8.21), the idiomatic use of *quien* and *que* as nouns with depreciative value (10.27 - new section), the discriminate selection of the imperfect and preterite forms as a stylistic device (17.3 - new section), and even the use of *por* in stage directions (28.13, footnote 1).

In his improvements Spaulding adheres to the philosophy in vogue today among transformational/generative grammarians that rules effectively describing a grammar should be few in number, generalizable in nature and widely applicable to as many related concepts as possible. Thus, we find many instances where the original grammar statements were amended to make them relevant to more generalized circumstances. For instance, to Ramsey’s statement concerning the redundant pronoun construction (3.56), Spaulding added that this practice extends to a noun, and in the case of objective personal pronouns to relative and interrogative pronouns as well.

As might be expected in the revision of an older grammar, there is also a need to fill in, expand, and update some of the original statements either for clarification or simply to give the student a more complete picture of the concept at hand. For example, in a remark added to 5.64 on the interrogative *cual* Spaulding stated “Nowadays *qué tal* . . .

is used with frequent ellipse of the verb *ser*,” reflecting a trend perhaps subsequent to Ramsey’s time. Also, in commenting on intensifying words used in the comparison of adjectives and adverbs (8.60). Spaulding gives *requete-* where Ramsey had only mentioned *re-*, undoubtedly an adjustment due to inflation. Spaulding also reported on the increasing grammatical variation known as “*leísmo*” and “*laísmo*,” by adding an extensive treatment of the dative personal pronouns with their alternative *le/la* forms (4.31).

Spaulding not only cross-referenced old material, he also provided detailed documentation of any significant alteration of the original grammar, including abundant supportive examples. As Ramsey rarely did this, it is easy to detect the reviser’s contributions in the new edition. For example, in the chapter on numerals and numerical values, Spaulding updated Ramsey’s remark that *ciento* becomes *cien* when it comes before a noun or *mil* by generalizing this alternation to “almost every position except before another numeral” (12.4 - Remark). He then provided four new examples to lend credence to his claim. In Chapter 1, Spaulding specified that the distinctive *a* is dropped before collective nouns as well as plural nouns as originally stated. Included are five documented examples which represent this phenomenon.

Also needing repair were the minor inconsistencies that inevitably crop up in any work as extensive as Ramsey’s. Spaulding did his best to resolve such incongruities in the least offensive way without making unnecessary deviations from the spirit of the original *Textbook*. For example, he notes in 3.55 that with the concurrence of two pronouns as objects the dative assumes the form *se* NOT “to avoid the concurrence of two short syllables beginning with an [l]” as Ramsey had originally stated. Rather, Spaulding correctly

hints at an historical explanation, stating that this *se* "is of different origin from the reflexive *se*." This is indeed an improvement, although it could certainly be improved with the addition of a footnote and the appropriate historical data.

Errors of Commission and Omission

If one were to add up all of the pluses and minuses of Spaulding's revisions there is no doubt that his work would be rated very commendably indeed. Even so, there remain certain problem points left behind by the reviser which have come to light over the course of time. These can be divided into minor errors committed by Spaulding and those where failure to act constitutes an oversight just the same. In his review article Bolinger suggests that the latter represent the more serious transgression (61).

To exemplify one of the more obvious errors committed by Spaulding I offer the statement given in 17.7, an entirely new addition by Spaulding in the chapter dealing with the imperfect and preterite. The statement indicates that "the preterite of some verbs (*conocer, poder, querer, saber, ser, tener*) often has a special translation," followed by the customary documented examples. Which of the thousands of modern textbook writers has not followed Spaulding in this tradition? A major flaw in Ramsey's and later Spaulding's reasoning is the tendency to explain Spanish grammatical concepts in terms of English notions and point of view. Ramsey doubled his culpability by also relating everything within the Latin model. Spaulding freed himself from the latter pitfall, but could not escape the former. With respect to the given example, the concept at hand is the idea of verbal aspect, a notion not peculiar to the past tense. English handles this notion with a change in lexical items, while Spanish depends on context and different verb forms. However, to tie the question of aspect solely to the preterite of

certain verbs is neither true of Spanish nor English.

Other errors committed by Spaulding may be traced to the same type of faulty reasoning explained above. Spaulding's additional comment in 16.7 on the use of *ser* to mean 'to take place' is purely an English crutch. There are errors of a similar nature committed by Ramsey so obvious that one would expect Spaulding to correct them. These are technically oversights in the revision but deserve mention here as they so closely tie in with the present discussion. For example, Ramsey's list of transitive verbs used intransitively by making them reflexive in 21.25, and the relative pronouns *quien* and *cuanto* which may include their antecedent (10.10) are two such blatant examples which endure to the present.

The errors of omission are diverse in their nature. They generally consist of careless explanations in the original that should have been cleaned up in the revision. In 23.35 on the subjunctive there is a good explanation of how certain tenses are formed from the preterite stem of the verb. Unfortunately, Ramsey finishes by stating that with regular verbs the same result is achieved by removing the infinitive stem and adding the appropriate verbal ending. The effect is to weaken a valuable grammatical generalization by introducing an alternative formula which only holds true part of the time. From a pedagogical perspective this can only create unnecessary confusion and complications for the student. One would expect Spaulding to recognize the redundancy of a second explanation when one is sufficient and delete this last line from the statement.

There are also entire chapters which need reworking such as Chapter 8 on the comparison of adjectives and adverbs. The basic distinction of the three degrees of comparison is not a useful one in Spanish. Ramsey was referring to the Latin-historical tradition but Spaulding was further removed

from that notion and should have revised this section to include only two degrees. Also the section on pronunciation and orthography needs much more work than Spaulding actually did, as I will note following the next section.

Language and Terminology

Over the years certain grammatical terms have gained in popularity while others have fallen into obscurity. Spaulding updated the terms to appeal to what was more commonly accepted by grammarians of his day. It is interesting to note that Ramsey used "aorist" everywhere except in the chapter on correspondence of tenses where he allows preterite as a generic term for both past forms insofar as they influence other verbs (Ramsey 1972, 356). Spaulding retains the distinction, deleting from 25.2 the above-mentioned fusion in the original. Table 3 below summarizes the changes made in terminology under the revision.

Spaulding added flexibility to many of Ramsey's statements by the insertion of softening words or phrases. These are generously added and represent the majority of modifications made by the reviser. Sometimes biased remarks are toned down

such as the phrases "un-educated and inelegant repetitions" which Spaulding reworded as "colloquial or common usage." At other times the shade in meaning is very slight, for example Ramsey's "should be avoided" is revised to say "not considered good style." One need only to read through Ramsey/Spaulding to find each page abundant in such corrections.

On Orthography and Pronunciation

At first glance there is a lot to criticize in Spaulding's handling of Part I in the original dealing with orthography and pronunciation. While Spaulding did make many revisions and clarifications in this area, he did it all within the outdated, original framework established in the *Textbook*. Yet, to go beyond this would have meant erasing Ramsey completely and introducing an entirely new section on phonology based on modern theory. At some point such a major overhaul might be seriously considered, but a proposition of this kind would have to be undertaken with the usual precautions in basing one's analysis on the ephemeral substance of modern phonological theories.⁷

As for what Spaulding actually did (or didn't do), we see in Part I a continued

Table 3
Changes in Terminology

Spaulding	Ramsey
Preterite	Aorist
Present Participle ⁶	Gerund
Conditional	
Conditional Future	
(-se) Imperfect Subjunctive	Aorist Subjunctive
(-ra) Imperfect Subjunctive	Imperfect Subjunctive
"Stressed" Words and Vowels	"Accented" Words and Vowels
Vowels/Semivowels	Strong/Weak Vowels
Possessive Adjective	Possessive Pronoun
Fuller Form of Possessive	Possessive used
	Absolutely
Demonstrative Adjective	Demonstrative Pronoun
Demonstrative Pronoun	Demonstrative Pronoun used Absolutely
True Superlative of Adverbs	Superlative of Adverbs

preference for the written word and the "sound of the letters" rather than the modern view of the written language as an imperfect representation of the physical sounds produced in speech. To Spaulding's credit he did alleviate this confusion to some extent when treating accentuation by distinguishing between the spoken and written variety.

In the sections dealing with the alphabet and vowels there is little new except for note 3, p. 1 and note 3, p. 2 which distinguish between the Spanish short, tense vowels and their English counterparts which tend towards the diphthong due to the off-glide. From a pedagogical perspective this is a useful distinction when trying to improve the pronunciation of English speaking students of Spanish. Spaulding also modernized Ramsey's description of diphthongs and triphthongs by replacing the impressionistic terms "strong" vs. "weak" vowel with the functional notions of vowel vs. semivowel according to rules governing the constitution and division of syllables in Spanish. In some cases (sections 10 & 11, p. 4) he simply used the vowel symbols *i* and *u* where Ramsey had called them the "weak" vowels.

There are some curious inconsistencies in the original *Textbook* in the section dealing with consonants which Spaulding generally corrected. For example, in statement 14 on those consonants with "nearly (Spaulding's modification) the same [phonetic] value in Spanish and English," Spaulding eliminated [l] and [p] from Ramsey's original listing. Justification for this decision is found later when Spaulding modified the description of these Spanish sounds to exclude the aspirated nature of [p] and the velar pronunciation of [l] commonly realized in their English counterparts. In the course of describing other consonantal sounds Spaulding also provided good structural statements on phonetic articulation, distinguished between stops and fricatives, and offered (in prose)

the essence of complementary distribution laws governing allophonic variation (see statements on B, D, G, S, T, etc.).⁸

In the section on double letters Spaulding corrected Ramsey's misleading notion that (-rr-) is a doubling of the (-r-) letter (sound). It is true that aerodynamically the trilled [R] may be conceived of as a brief sequence of single taps made in rapid succession. However, in the Spanish sound system they represent separate, autonomous sounds just like other minimal pairs such as /p/ and /b/, /g/ and /x/ or /m/ and /n/.⁹ Spaulding was not as diligent with regards to Ramsey's statement 18 on the pronunciation of (-cc-) as [k] + [θ]. Here a note concerning dialectal pronunciations outside of Castile was clearly in order.

Finally, in the section dealing with the division of syllables everything appears in order except for the glaring absence of anything on phonosyntaxis. In the treatment of capitals and punctuation, Spaulding added a great deal of subject matter on capitalization (examples a-e, p. 18) and the list of names of the chief punctuation marks (43 a,b, p. 19).

Conclusion

Viewed as a whole, what Spaulding did to improve Ramsey's *Textbook* both structurally and contextually is impressive. I have presented this brief analysis in appreciation of the tremendous labor which Spaulding accomplished as a reviser in spite of certain limitations imposed upon him by his office. In so doing I have wished to extrapolate the types of revisionary efforts that might be carried out in future updates of a formidable and authoritative text.

Notes

¹ Nebrija expounds his views of language as a social and political instrument in remarks made to Queen Isabel in the prologue to his *Gramática*. Perhaps the most oft-quoted phrase is his state-

ment that "siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio" (Nebrija 97).

² In his introduction Ramsey writes "The present course of events, tending to bring the United States into more intimate relations with the Latin Republics of the South, calls for instruction in the Spanish language. . ." (xiii). In retrospect, this statement appears somewhat ominous coming only 4 years prior to the U. S. involvement in the Caribbean during the Spanish-American War.

³ Witness the standard treatments in beginning grammars of such trouble spots as *ser* vs. *estar*, "meaning changing" adjectives, uses of *para* and *por*, and aspectual considerations in the past tense. These and other neatly divided grammatical micro-lessons largely reproduce Ramsey's original explanations both in organization and content.

⁴ This is particularly true with the fairly recent shift in grammatical orientation from prescriptive to descriptive analyses. Prescriptive grammars tend to be conservative, only allowing revisions when significant developments in the language render established norms obsolete, often long after such norms have fallen into disuse among speakers. On the other hand, descriptive grammars require nearly constant revision to account for the dynamics of popular usage.

⁵ It may be argued that this change resulted from a diluting of the preparation of students coming into the foreign language classroom. However, more to the point is that the orientation of language instruction itself has radically changed over the last century, motivated by learners' objectives. Thus, the methodical reading and translation approach taken by Ramsey was supplanted by the patterned response drills of Spaulding's time, which today has given way to the various "natural" methodologies reflecting a shifting student interest towards oral communication.

⁶ Spaulding distinguishes the present participle or gerund from the "true" present participle as derived from Latin (20.1 and 20.2).

⁷ Had Spaulding rewritten this section in accordance with the accepted structuralist framework of his day it would nonetheless stand in need of further updating at present. New analytical models are proposed with such frequency today that the selection of a "standard" for pedagogical application is not only difficult, but transitory at best.

⁸ Given these efforts, perhaps Bolinger was too harsh on Spaulding when he criticized him for making "scarcely an attempt at traditional articulatory description" (61).

⁹ Curiously, Harris has recently used metrical phonological theory to propose precisely what Ramsey had affirmed nearly 100 years earlier. He argues that the trilled [r] is really only a superficial derivative of the basic tap /r/ and is fully predictable from rules governing syllabic well-formedness in Spanish (66-70).

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