

Sociolinguistic Variation in the “If Clause”

The following work deals with grammatical variation. In this analysis, the variable we will focus on is the “pretérito imperfecto del modo subjuntivo” used in cases of narration of hypothetical or counterfactual events performing an explanatory function. The two variants studied will be the “pretérito imperfecto del modo subjuntivo”, considered the standard, and the “condicional simple del modo indicativo” as the non-standard variant used in what in English would be considered the If clause: “si atendería en un consultorio, ganaría más plata”. The variation we will be concentrating on is grammatical.

Context

This analysis will be based on the analysis of the informal and spontaneous speech of different speakers. It will take into account different factors such as social status, age, years of education and place of residence of the speakers, as well as the context in which the observed variants occurred. We have analyzed the speech of speakers in real time interactions and on social media posts to conduct this report.

We will analyze the use of the “condicional simple del modo indicativo” instead of the standard “pretérito imperfecto de subjuntivo” in sentences expressing conditions such as “si yo tendría dinero, me compraría ropa”.

Purpose

As future language teachers, we are especially interested in analyzing the different uses of the structure mentioned and how speakers express themselves. By analyzing the factors that influence the use of these variants, we aim to throw light on the Spanish grammar and why there is variation in the realization of the verb morphology by the observed group of speakers. We are particularly concerned with the study of how the speech of different groups is conditioned by different factors such as years of education, social class and place of residence.

Examples:

- Hombre, 45 años, conductor de taxi, contexto informal/casual “pero si llegaría a pasar algo, el seguro no nos cubriría”

- Mujer, 24 años, licenciada en psicología, contexto informal, charla en un parque “si atendería en un consultorio, ganaría más plata”

Analysis

Through our investigation and contrary to what was initially thought, we can observe that years of education, place of residence and social class are not determining factors of the use of one variant over the other. We analyzed the use of the non-standard variant present in the speech of individuals with different years of education such as university level and secondary school. At the same time, we have observed that no matter the social classes and the places of residence speakers come from, both the non-standard and the standard variant are present in the speech samples we have collected.

Out of 20 speakers analyzed, 10 used the non-standard variant and the remaining speakers used the standard one.

This variation is not free. The choice of “condicional simple del modo indicativo” is socially conditioned. The non-linguistic factors that constrain the use of a variant over the other we analyzed are social class, age, level of education and place of origin. We do not consider the variants are linguistically constrained since it is not possible to predict from the linguistic context when a speaker would be likely to use one variant rather than the other. It has also been observed that the variable being analyzed is a stable one, since both variants coexist and none of them is pushing the other out of the system.

A previous study on the variable by Beatriz Lavandera (1983) has shown that the variable undergoes sociolinguistic variation, i.e. it is susceptible to sociodemographic factors like socio educational strata (people with primary education favor it), age (adolescents favor it) and region of residence (The vernacular variant is widely spread and predominant in Buenos Aires).

Subject Recruitment

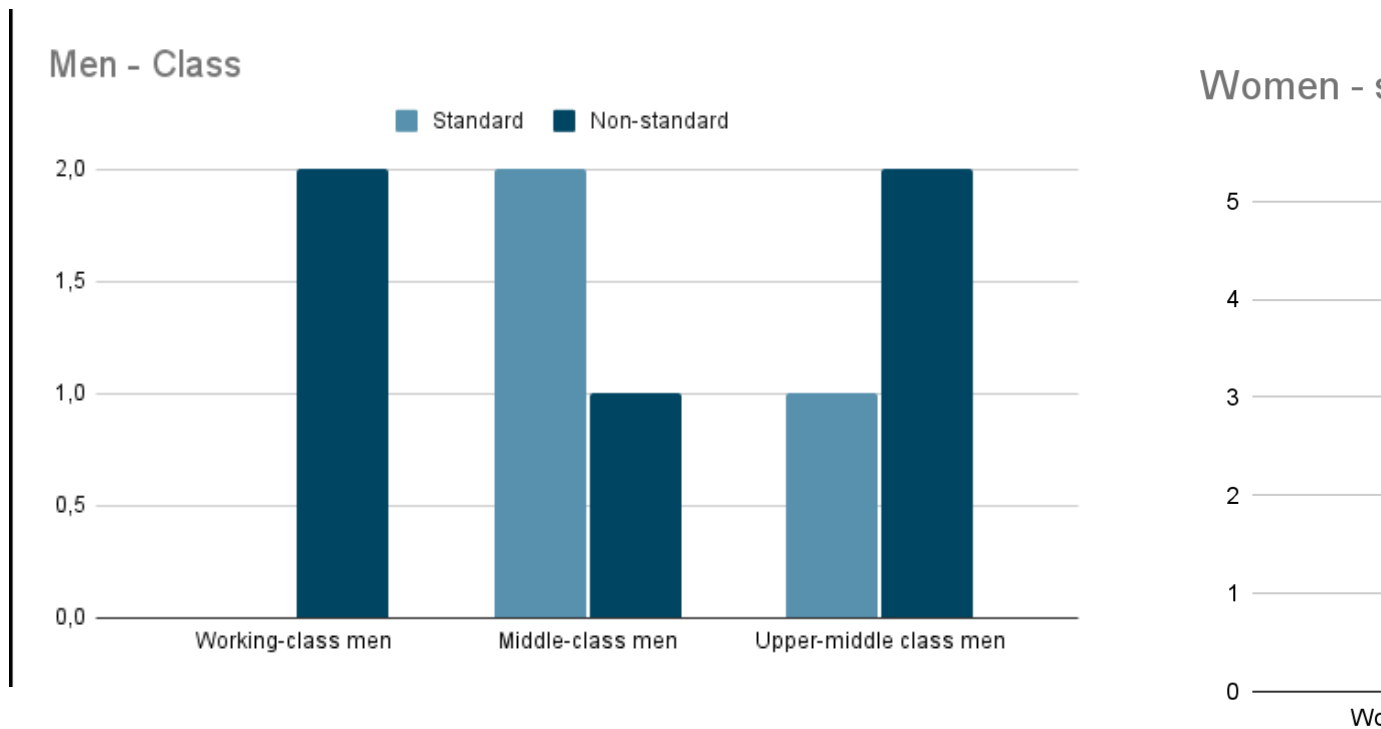
Gender	Years of education	Social stratus	Place of origin	Context	Age	Example
Woman	University education	Middle class	Córdoba Capital	friends gathering	25	“Es como si agarraría todos los mensajes y contestara uno solo, entendes?”
Man	Tertiary education	Middle class	San Guillermo, Santa Fe	social media post	20	“Si yo tendría que hacerlo, sería famosa”
Woman	University education	Upper middle class	Río segundo, Córdoba	meet session	26	“Es como si nosotras seríamos amigas de la decana de nuestra facu”
Man	Secondary education	Working class	Córdoba Capital	taxi ride	45	“Pero si llegaría a pasar algo, el seguro no nos cubriría”
Woman	University education	Upper middle class	Córdoba Capital	friends gathering	24	“Si atendería en un consultorio, ganaría más plata”
Man	Secondary school	Working class	Ceres, Santa Fe (ciudad)	Social media post	26	“Cuanta plata tendría si me pagarían por renegar”
Man	University education	Upper middle class	Oliva, Córdoba (pueblo)	Meet gathering with friends	22	“Mi domingo sería más bello, si tendría ¼ de frambuesa de la cremolatti”

Woman	University education	Middle class	San Guillermo, Santa Fe	social media post	23	“Si sería tan buena jugando, no estaría acá en la zona”
Woman	University education	Middle class	Esperanza, Santa Fe (ciudad)	Social media post	22	“Me di cuenta que mi vida sería mucho más fácil si no tendría sentimientos”
Man	University education	Upper middle class	Villa Trinidad, Santa Fe (pueblo)	social media post	26	“Si tendría que elegir, elegiría a Zoe y Virginia”
Man	University education	Middle class	Córdoba Capital	lunch with relatives	63	“Si buscaras otro trabajo, ganarías más plata”
Woman	(assumed) Tertiary/university education	Middle class	Córdoba Capital	a mother talking to a child on the street	43	“Si vieras menos televisión, podrías jugar más tiempo afuera”
Man	Secondary education	Middle class	Córdoba Capital	a conversation among friends while having dinner	50	“Podrías sumarte al equipo si te gustara el futbol”
Woman	University education	Middle class	Hersillia (town), Santa Fe	social media post	26	“Si hubiese nacido con la cara de Ori Sabatini no tendría tantos problemas”
Woman	University education	Middle class	Oncativo, Córdoba (city)	a conversation with the mother of a friend	55	“Si tuvieran más tiempo libre, podrían disfrutar más”
Woman	Secondary education	Middle class	San Guillermo, Santa Fe (city)	social media post	33	“Me iría a las Sierras un finde si tan solo tuviera con quien”
Woman	Tertiary education	Middle class	San Guillermo, Santa Fe (city)	social media post	28	“Si tuviera lugar en el patio y mucha plata adoptaría a todos los perritos abandonados que haya”
Woman	University education	Upper middle class	Córdoba Capital	family gathering	60	“Si tuviera una pava eléctrica no la sabría usar”
Man	University education	Upper middle class	Porteña, Córdoba (ciudad)	friends gathering	21	“Si me dieran un dolar por cada persona que cumple años hoy, tendría seis dólares”

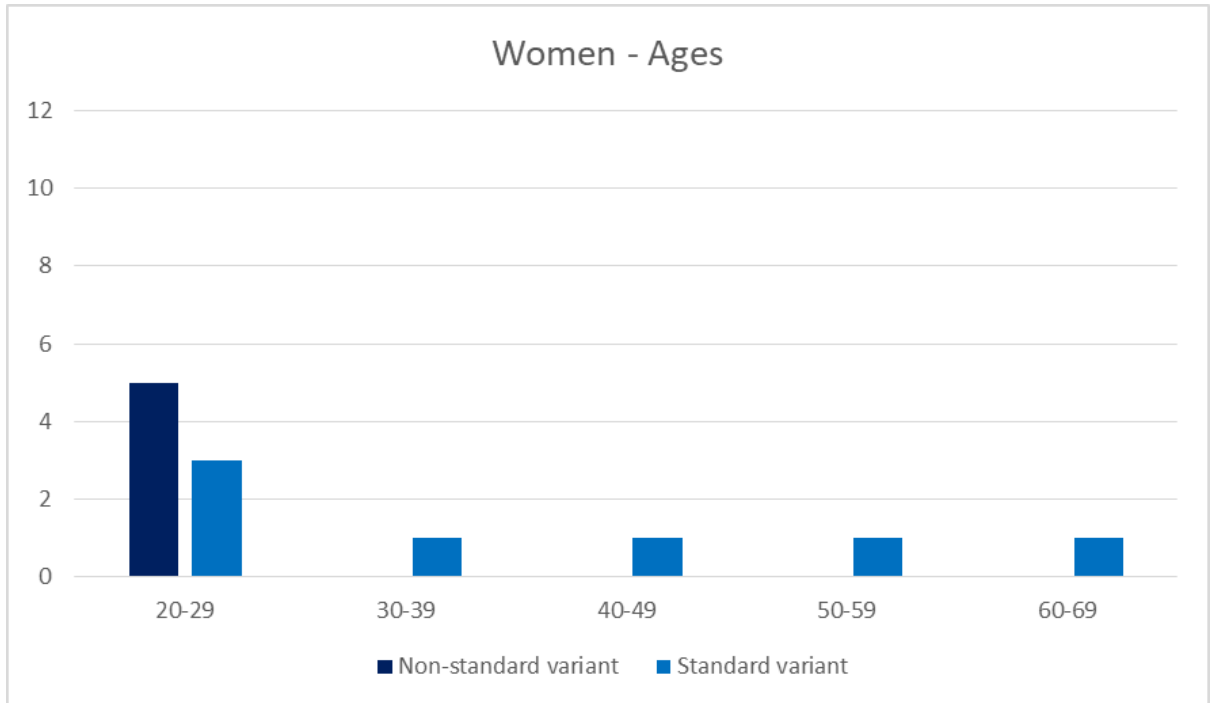
Woman	University education	Upper middle class	San Guillermo, Santa Fe (city)	social media post	26	“Quiero un serum de Vichy que sale 50 mil. La piel que tendría si tuviera plata”
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Statistical analysis

1. Use of standard and non-standard forms among men and women based on the sociodemographic factor of social class

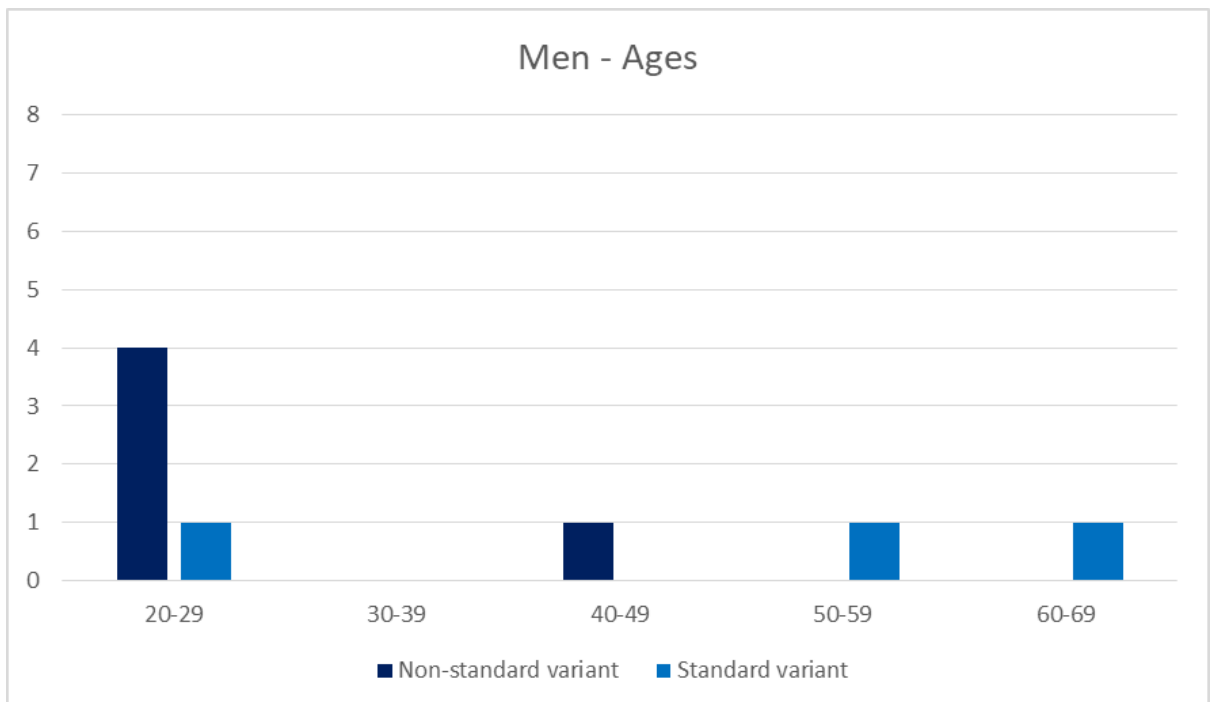


2. Use of standard and non-standard forms among men and women based on the sociodemographic factor of age



Based on the data collected, women between 20 to 29 years old are more likely to use the non-standard form than the standard form.

Considering only the speech of the women analyzed and their ages, there is a higher frequency of use of the standard variant over (no se si esta bien poner over) the non-standard one.

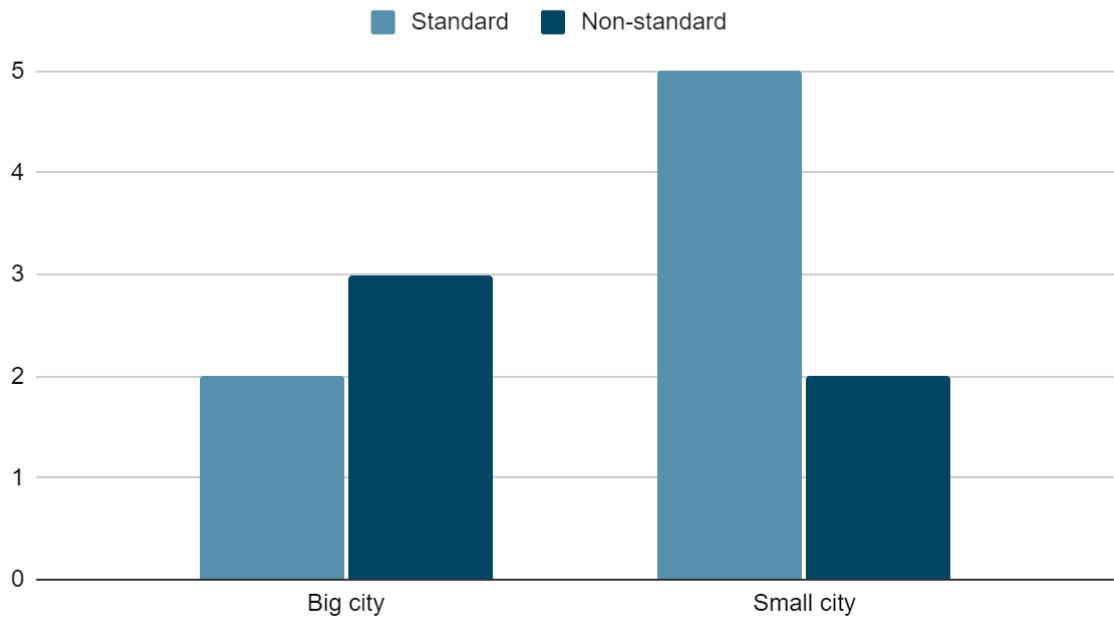


men between 20-29 are more likely to use the non-standard variant than the standard one.

If we consider the speech of the men analyzed and their ages we could conclude that there is a higher proportion of use of the non-standard variant over the standard one.

3. Use of standard and non-standard forms a.60.ng men and women based on the sociodemographic factor of place of origin

Women- Place of origin

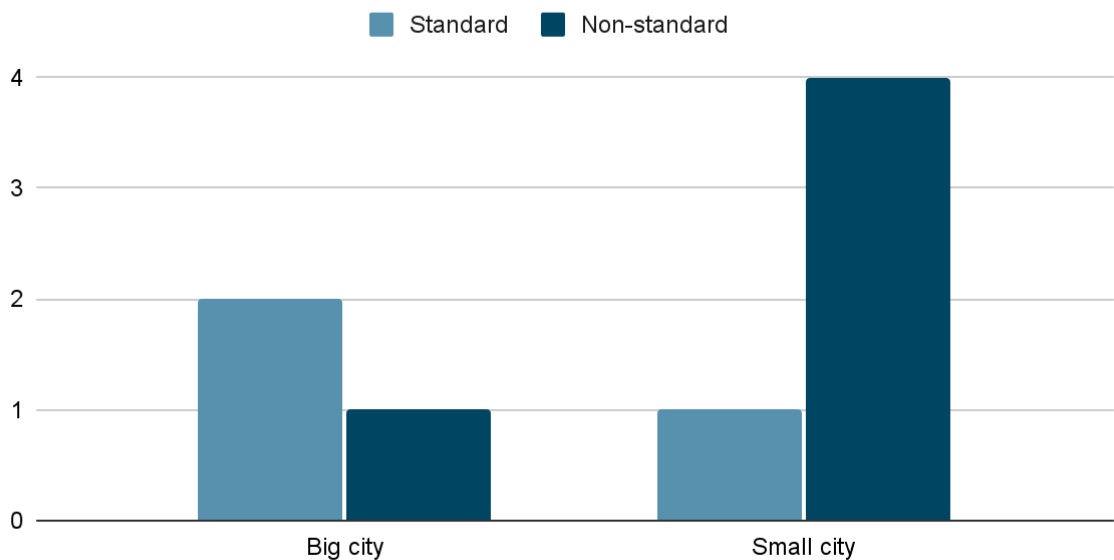


Women in small cities are more likely to favor the use of the standard than the non-standard variant. On the contrary, women in big cities according to our findings are more likely to use the non-standard variant than the standard one.

If we consider the speech of all the women analyzed we can conclude that there is a higher proportion of use of the standard form over the non standard one.

Men- Place of origin

* Small city: up to 30.000 inhabitants

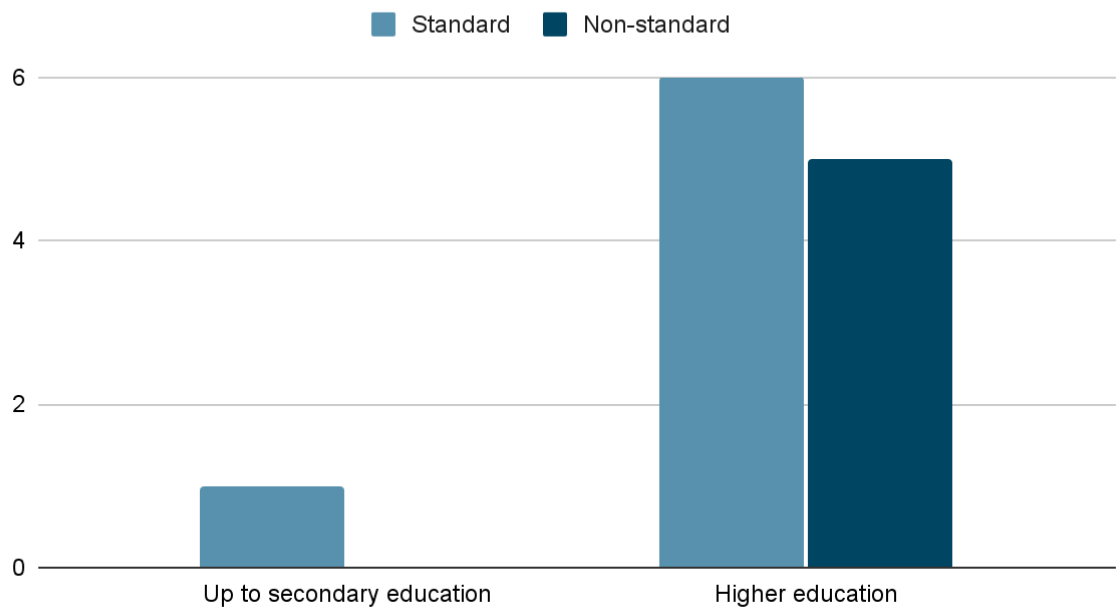


The speech of men in big cities according to the data collected is more likely to favor the use of standard form than the non-standard one. On the contrary, men in small cities are more likely to use the non-standard variant than the standard one.

If we consider the speech of all the men analyzed we can conclude that the non-standard variant is higher in the speech of the men analyzed than the standard variant.

4. Use of standard and non-standard forms among men and women based on the sociodemographic factor of education

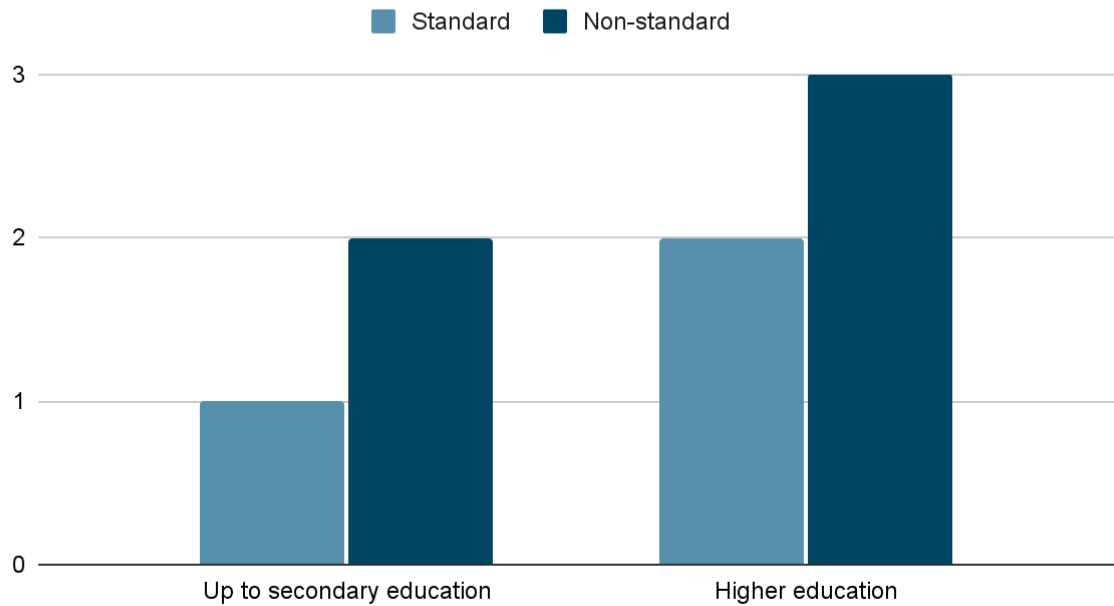
Women



Based on the data collected, women with a secondary education degree are more likely to use the standard form than the non-standard one. At the same time, there is a lower frequency of use of the standard variant in the speech of women who do not have higher education qualifications than in the speech of women who do have higher education qualifications.

If we consider only the speech of women with higher education degrees we analyzed, our study shows that they are more likely to use the standard variant than the non-standard one.

Men



Now, let's turn to the results of the men analyzed. We've found that both men with secondary education degrees and those with higher education qualifications are more likely to use the non-standard variant than the standard one.

Conclusion

Initially, we expected that higher social classes, highly educated people and speakers living in big cities would use the standard variant over the non-standard one. After reading Lavandera (1983) and analyzing the results obtained in our study, we concluded that even though the non-standard variant is constrained by the sociodemographic factors of years of education, social class, age and place of origin, in our small-scale study we found that this variant is used by speakers belonging to the different social classes, places of origin and with different years of education analyzed.

Based on the results of our study, we can conclude that:

- both middle class men and women favor the use of the standard variant (even though there is a great percentage of middle class women that favor the use of the non-standard one)
- young people, both women and men, between the ages 20-29 favor the use of the non-standard variant
- women living in small cities favor the use of the standard variant while men living in small cities favor the use of the non-standard one
- women with higher levels of education favor the use of the non-standard variant while men with higher levels of education favor the use of the standard one