Convergence patterns in the city of Seville

Sociolinguistic study of *seseo*

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Research carried out over the past few years in several Andalusian cities has revealed the processes of convergence towards conservative realisations that are occurring among the allophones of the phoneme /θ^s/. This time, using the Seville PRESEEA corpus, we have analysed the frequency of the *seseante* and dento-interdental pronunciation patterns that coexist in this city, and we have correlated them with linguistic, social, and individual parameters. Our data showed that this variation process was mainly influenced by closeness of [s] and [θ] in the immediate phonetic context, and by the educational attainment level, the age, and the sex of the respondents. The analysis per surveyed subjects indicated that most of them combined both variants.

Keywords: *seseo* , PRESEEA-Seville, convergence patterns, sociolinguistics

1.   Introduction

The sociolinguistic studies carried out in recent years in various Andalusian cities have highlighted the variation between vernacular pronunciation patterns and convergent realisations with the standard. This is the case with consonants in the onset position (Villena 2012; Moya 2018). This time we will focus on the phonetic realisations corresponding to the orthographic segments <z + vowel> and <c + e, i> that have been recorded in the city of Seville in recent years in PRESEEA[1] corpus. Specifically, we intend to analyse what degree of variation exists between the *seseante* norm (i.e., *zona* [sóna] – *ciclo* [síklo]), the dialectal variant of the selected geographical area (Alvar et al. 1973, map 1705), and the dento-interdental pronunciation (i.e., *zona* [θóna] – *ciclo* [θíklo]), which is typical of the northern norm

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and the standard. We will relate this alternation with linguistic variables (position in the word, number of syllables, stress, following vowel, closeness of [s] or [θ] in the phonetic context, and use in proper nouns) and social factors (educational attainment level, age, and sex). In addition, we will examine whether the distribution of the two variants is conditioned by their use in lexemes or recurrent word endings in the sample. Finally, we will also focus on the individual variation in each respondent.

2.   Background

S*eseo* is one of the phonetic results of the dental consonant /θˢ/, which is a product of the phonological reduction that occurred in southern areas of European Spanish after the readjustment of medieval sibilants (Lapesa 1991, 374–377). As an innovative or divergent realisation, the *seseo* forms part of the phonetic features in Andalusia, with a heterogeneous distribution on both the spatial and the social levels.

Regarding the geolectal framework, without intending to make an exhaustive delimitation, the *seseante* norm is located between *ceceante* and *distinción* zones and covers "las tierras occidentales del sur de Badajoz, el sudoeste de Huelva, el norte de Sevilla, el sur de Córdoba y el norte de Málaga, junto con algunas localidades de Jaén y de Granada" (RAE and ASALE 2011, 190). Narbona et al. (1998, 170) specify that the city of Seville is included in this *seseante* area. Therefore, *seseo* is widely distributed in different parts of the Andalusian geography.

On the other hand, sociolinguistic studies have demonstrated that this dialectal landscape is complex and heterogeneous, especially in urban areas (Villena 2012). This is principally because Andalusia has, over time, permeabilised pronunciation phenomena of central-northern Spanish, mainly those that are perceived as more prestigious phonetic realisations because they have been associated with the standard. In fact, the sociolinguistic research has shown that the alternation between the *seseante* and the convergent pattern is a characteristic that affects different Andalusian cities.[2] Thus, in Malaga (Villena 1997, 98–99; Villena 2001, 130–131) and Granada (Salvador 1980; Moya and García 1995; Moya and Sosiński 2015; Moya 2018) the dialectal realisations, *seseante* and *ceceante*, and the pronunciation patterns coming from the northern norm, have been coex-

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2. Similar processes of convergence towards the northern norm have been detected in the Andalusian cities of Huelva and Jerez de la Frontera, where *ceceo* is the main local variant (Regan 2017; García-Amaya 2018).

isted for decades. Broadly speaking, this change is mainly led by subjects with high level of formal education, young people, and women.[3]

For the city of Seville, we have sociolinguistic analyses that can be distributed in two stages. In the first phase, when recordings from the seventies and eighties were studied, it was revealed that *seseo* was the most prominent dialectal variant, with upward progression as the educational attainment level of the respondents decreased (Sawoff 1980, 245–246; Lamíquiz and Carbonero 1987, 36–39; Carbonero 2003 [1985], 43). Therefore, it was suspected that changes were taking place in subjects with higher level of formal education, that pushed towards the dento-interdental allophone. Indeed, research in recent years on recordings from the beginning of the twenty-first century (Santana 2016; Santana 2016–2017; Santana 2017; Santana 2020a), reveals the presence of this phonetic realisation, with a different distribution among the speakers, which mainly depends on their educational attainment level: the degree of university education favours the convergence towards the prestigious variants of the northern norm and the scarce academic formation reinforces the dialectal realisations. Unlike what has been done so far, in this paper we present an integral analysis of all the recent recordings we have in the Andalusian capital, low, middle, and high levels, this time considering a wide range of linguistic factors. We start from the hypothesis that some of the latter, such as similar allophones in the closer phonetic context or the use of the variants in the same lexeme or word ending, can influence this alternation. On the other hand, we think that social variables, mainly education and sex, may also affect. It is also likely that the study by subjects will reveal an important degree of hesitation in the use of one or another variant among the respondents.

If we look for an explanation to these convergence processes, we cannot forget that the Castilian variety has been the main reference for the conformation of the correct idiomatic speech model for centuries (Méndez 1999, 122–123). This characteristic is reflected in the beliefs of Europeans Spanish-speaking, who extensively think that the Castilian variety is the most prestigious dialect modality (Yraola 2014, 584–585; Cestero and Paredes 2018, 55; Hernández and Samper 2018, 186; Manjón-Cabeza 2018, 152; Méndez Guerrero 2018, 96). If we focus on Seville, Ropero and Pérez (1998, 283) point out that more than 60% of the respondents considered that the most prestigious speech model is the one used in Castile, followed by the Andalusian modality. We have documented similar data some decades later, when we surveyed the perception of a group of Sevillian university

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3. This permeation has also been documented in Andalusian politicians who lived and worked in Madrid for years (Cruz 2020). This is another example of the incidence of this phenomenon in people with a high educational attainment level who were in contact with the northern norm and had a significant role in public life and media projection.

students (Santana 2018a, 121; Santana 2018b, 88–89; Santana 2020b, 83–85). In this case, 46% of respondents considered that the prestigious reference speech was in the Castilian variety and that it also projects a higher social status among those who use this dialectal pronunciation. It is worth noting how this recent data has special relevance for our research, because it gathers the opinions of young people from Seville, a group of individuals that can champion possible future changes in their community.

Regarding to what has been said, it is not surprising that in the last decades, Andalusian cities have documented processes of convergence towards pronunciation features from the northern norm, which have a high social status. Concerning *seseo*, we must not forget that it is a pattern of southern prestigious pronunciation (Villena 2012, 65). Therefore, the two variants that we are discussing in this research constitute, in turn, patterns which are positively valued by speakers. According to Villena (2001, 129), this has caused the convergence towards the uses of the northern variety to follow a slower rhythm in the western area of Andalusia, because they come into conflict with the allophones of the regional norm that is spread from Seville. Hence the importance of knowing the current phase of this phonetic variation process in the Andalusian capital.

3.   Methodology

To carry out this research, we used the PRESEEA corpus of Seville, composed of 72 recordings that were compiled between 2009 and 2019 (Repede 2019a; Repede 2019b; Repede 2019c). Following the methodological guidelines of this project (Moreno 1996), the speech samples collect semi-targeted surveys in which a researcher directs the dialogue towards topics that are established in advance: housing, family, neighbourhood, travels and so on. With this technique you get an orality that is raw and without prior planning. The goal is to get the respondent to express himself/herself with speech that is as fluid and natural as possible.

The subjects surveyed were classified according to the variables of educational attainment level (low: without studies, with primary education or, in the case of some young people, some courses of compulsory secondary education; middle: compulsory secondary education, vocational training or baccalaureate; and high: university studies), age (first generation: from 20 to 34 years; second generation: between 35 and 54 years; and third generation: 55 years old and over) and sex (12 men and 12 women per sociolect). The respondents have remained all or most of their lives in Seville. Therefore, it can be said that all of them are fully integrated in the life of the city.

Regarding the collection of the analysis units, we took the first 20 minutes of each recording. Thus, the sample consisted of a total of 1440 minutes. The fraction of time selected allowed us to make sure that the respondents go from the first minutes of the interview, where there may be some increase in the tension due to them being observed, to a phase in which their linguistic production tends to be more natural, without them being so aware of the recording. Initially, we thought that this might be an interesting aspect to take into account in the research, in case it might have influenced the respondents' pronunciation, but, in general, it did not.

The location of the variants was made through direct listening of the recordings. Although we carried out a careful and slow review to identify the allophones under study, there were cases in which we could not specify exactly what the subject said. This is because, along with the realisations in [s] and [θ] that we clearly identified, intermediate allophones were also given that do not fully conform to one or the other phonetic variant. This has been verified more precisely when recordings like ours have been analysed from the acoustic point of view (Lasarte 2012). For this reason, those cases in which it was impossible for us to delimit if it was a realisation in [s] or in [θ], we had to leave them out of the analysis. Along with the intermediate pronunciation of the allophone, we also had to rule out some occurrences in which the speed of the enunciation or, mainly, the overlap of the sound that we were interested in analysing with a background noise or with the speech of the interviewer prevented us from identifying the pronounced phonetic segment.

Finally, the data was processed through version 26 of the SPSS programme and the Pearson X^2 test was used to identify the statistical significance of the variables considered (Preacher 2001).

4.   Data analysis and results

When analysing the whole sample, we could see that, as shown in Table 1, of the total of 8472 registered realisations, 52.2% belong to the dento-interdental variant, [θ], and 47.8% belong to *seseo* pronunciation, [s]. Therefore, a very close ratio between one variant and another was noted.

Table 1. Global distribution of [s] and [θ]

	n	%
[s]	4049	47.8
[θ]	4423	52.2
Total	**8472**	

The relevant fact is that our materials point towards an advance of the conservative pattern in recent decades. While data from Lamíquiz and Carbonero (1987, 36–39) showed approximatively 90.0% of *seseo* pronunciation, in the latest semi-controlled interviews that we have analysed, this phenomenon is accompanied by a decline in the pronunciation norm. The percentages between both allophones, however, are quite balanced, so we are facing a close fight between vernacular and convergent phonetic realisation. This is probably due to the fact that there are two prestigious pronunciation patterns, a southern and a national one. So, it is necessary to look carefully at the internal distribution of these two variants in close competition in our sample.

This struggle between the two allophones was also reflected in the fluctuation that each subject demonstrated in their interventions. This factor allowed us to know the degree of linguistic individual variation presented by the individuals surveyed with respect to the phenomenon we are dealing with. Specifically, we observed two possibilities, as can be seen in Tables 2, 3, and 4: the subjects who chose only one of the variants[4] and those who used both. In the first case, it will be necessary to know which of the two was favoured by a greater number of respondents. In the second case, it will be relevant to know how many individuals had predominantly *seseante* or conservative preference indexes.

Table 2. Subjects with one or two variants

	n	%
Subjects with one variant	20	27.8
Subjects with two variants	52	72.2
Total		**72**

Table 3. Subjects with one variant

	n	%
Only [s]	9	45.0
Only [θ]	11	55.0
Total	**20**	

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4. In this block we included the respondents who recorded only one example of the other realisation, which may have been a slip.

Table 4. Subjects with two variants

	n	%
Prefer [s]	29	55.8
Prefer [θ]	23	44.2
Total		**52**

It draws attention to the high level of individual variation that was detected among the subjects surveyed concerning these two allophones (Table 2), as a large majority, 72.2%, used the two forms in alternation. In turn, when they used only one of the phonetic realisations (Table 3), there was a slight increase in the respondents who only used [θ], 55.0%. This data reinforces the drive that the convergence with the northern pronunciation is receiving, since it is about people who do not have *seseo* in their linguistic competence. However, compared to what would be expected by the percentages we are recording, among the individuals who combined the two variants (Table 4), those who opted for *seseo* formed a larger group, 55.8%. These results should be interpreted along the lines of the fierce competition between the two allophones that are recorded throughout the corpus, with very balanced percentages in both cases, and with a very significant presence in a large number of individuals.

4.1   Linguistic factors

Next, we will consider a selection of linguistic variables that have been taken into account in previous research (Moya and García 1995; Villena 2007; García-Amaya 2008; Santana 2016; Santana 2017; Santana 2020a; Regan 2017; Cruz 2020): position in the word (initial or middle: i.e., *cinco, lanzada*), number of syllables (bisyllabic, trisyllabic or polysyllabic: i.e., *hizo, macetas, relacionar*), stress (if the variant is in stressed or unstressed syllable, the latter pretonic or posttonic: i.e., *quizás, coincidir, espacio*), following vowel (i.e., *empiezas, cerca, relación, hizo, azul*), closeness of [s] or [θ] in previous or later syllables (i.e., *esencia, precisa, organización*), and use in proper nouns (i.e., *Galicia*). Finally, we will analyse the distribution of the two variants in syllabic sequences forming lexemes and word endings that were recurrent in our materials, to see if there were pronunciation patterns associated with these forms. The quantitative data can be seen in Table 5. On this occasion we are only working with the 52 subjects who used the two allophones in their interventions (totalling 6131 cases).

Table 5. Distribution of [s] and [θ] according to linguistic variables

	[s]		[θ]		X^2	Sig.
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**		
Position						
Initial	427	49.1	443	50.9	2.524	0.112
Middle	2735	52.0	2526	48.0		
Number of syllables						
Monosyllabic	8	66.7	4	33.3	7.139	0.068
Bisyllabic	981	49.5	999	50.5		
Trisyllabic	1279	53.3	1122	46.7		
Polysyllabic	893	51.4	844	48.6		
Stress						
Stressed	1503	50.6	1469	49.4	2.139	0.128
Unstressed	1659	52.5	1500	47.5		
Following vowel						
a	279	47.6	307	52.4	9.408	0.052
e	1168	52.6	1051	47.4		
i	1518	51.1	1452	48.9		
o	177	56.9	134	43.1		
u	20	44.4	25	55.6		
Closeness of [s] or [θ]						
No closeness of [s] or [θ]	2692	51.2	2568	48.8	80.355	0.000
Closeness of [s]	459	59.2	316	40.8		
Closeness of [θ]	11	11.5	85	88.5		
Proper name						
Proper name	95	43.4	124	56.6		

When relating the linguistic variables with [s] and [θ] realisations, no statistical profitability was found in four of them: location in the word, number of syllables, stress, and vowel that follows the consonant segment that we study. This data indicated that the alternation of allophones was not only the most widespread among the respondents, but it was also quite established in their pronunciation habits, without there being, in principle, too many linguistic constraints that justify the use of one or the other. Therefore, we focus on those phenomena that did affect their distribution.

First, the presence of [s] or [θ] in the immediate, preceding or following phonetic context (the influence will be, at most, three syllables before or later, which may or may not belong to the same word), favoured the vernacular (i.e., *ne*[s]*esito, evolu*[s]*ionar Sevilla, pases un ve*[s]*ino*) or convergent (i.e., *urbaniza*[θ]*iones, peatonalizar el* [θ]*entro, celebra*[θ]*iones*) pronunciation respectively.[5] Thus, there was an assimilation process, without being statistically relevant whether it was progressive or regressive. Similar results have been obtained in Granada (Moya and García 1995, 148–149) and Malaga (Villena 2007, 69–70). In the city of Seville, the influence of [θ] is perceived more decisively in the use of the conservative variant (88.5%), with almost 38 points of difference with respect to the cases without a close [s] or [θ] (48.8%). It is important to point out that this assimilation process of dento-interdental pronunciation maintained its solidity even in those subjects who were mostly *seseantes* (22/32, 68.8%). On the other hand, dissimilation acted negatively, since it clearly contributed to the descent of *seseo* when there was a [θ] in the immediate context (11.5%) and, although in a less forceful way, the northern realisation also decreased when there was a [s] close by (40.8%).

With regard to the presence of the variants under study in the proper nouns, we could think that the univocal nature of this grammatical unit, as far as it serves to identify one or several of the elements of a same class, but not all, would favour standard pronunciation, which in turn is more directly associated with the orthographic representation. In this way, it would help to identify the reference more precisely. In fact, the results of the sample corroborated our initial hypothesis: the majority of the speakers who used the two variants in their interventions preferred the dento-interdental pronunciation in the designation of proper nouns (56.6%). However, the results varied significantly when we considered only the subjects who preferred the *seseante* pronunciation in their interventions. In this case, the percentage of the vernacular variant was more significant than that of the convergent (81/114, 71.1%). Therefore, we can conclude that the proper noun is a variable that, in general terms, favoured dento-interdental pronunciation, but it was not a determining factor in our corpus, since this variant presented a clear decline in individuals who promoted dialectal pronunciation more prominently.

Lastly, we analysed the alternation of the two variants in a group of terms that were used repeatedly in our materials. For this we focused on the recurrence of lexemes, with or without affixes (i.e., *especial-: especial/-es, especialmente, especialidad*, and *especialistas*; i.e., *azul*), and word endings. Specifically, in the latter context we analysed the diminutives and the participles (with variations of gender

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5. We only considered the influence of allophones that responded to a norm-based pronunciation (*fran*[s]*esas*) and not those that constitute a dialectal realisation ([s̠]̱ *erve*[s]*a*).

and number) when they were preceded by <z> or <c> (i.e., *grandecito, empezado*), the suffix *-azo* (i.e., *pelotazos*), and the word endings *-ción* (i.e., *comunicación*), *-encia* (i.e., *convivencia*), *-ecer* (i.e., *crecer*), *-izar* (i.e., *organizar*), and *-icionar* (i.e., *acondicionar*). The initial hypothesis is that pronunciation patterns are reproduced, either vernacular or conservative, associated with a specific syllabic sequence that is repeated in the constitution of the words. In this research, we only worked with the terms or endings that recorded 19 or more cases[6] and that presented a percentage difference of 10 points or more between one variant and another,[7] as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Distribution of [s] and [θ] according to lexemes and word endings

Lexeme / Word ending	[s]		[θ]		Subt.
	n	%	n	%	
Predominates [s]					
Necesi-[a]	44	83.0	9	17.0	53
Especial-[b]	14	73.7	5	26.3	19
Atención	16	69.6	7	30.4	23
Vecin-[c]	68	64.2	38	35.8	106
Facil-[d]	18	62.1	11	37.9	29
Nazareno/-s	18	62.1	11	37.9	29
Cena-[e]	15	60.0	10	40.0	25
Habitación/-es	26	56.5	20	43.5	46
Quizá(-s)	35	56.5	27	43.5	62
Andaluc-[f]	22	56.4	17	43.6	39
Dec-[g]	15	55.6	12	44.4	27
Quince(-na)	21	53.8	18	46.2	39
Diminutive	34	68.0	16	32.0	50
-azo	16	84.2	3	15.8	19
-encia	86	65.2	46	34.8	132
-cionar	12	63.2	7	36.8	19
-izar	19	57.6	14	42.4	33

6. That is the reason why we excluded from the study words ending in *-ecer* (n = 16).

7. This quantitative result was observed in 20 lexemes and their corresponding derivatives (i.e., *comerc-* [*comercio/-s, commercial/-es*], *entonces, veces*, etc.). This situation also affected the participles and the word ending *-ción*. Concerning the latter, we decided to analyse, separately, some lexemes which were very frequent in the corpus: *atención, habitación/-es, tradición/-es, situación/-es, estación-es*, and *vacaciones*.

Table 6. *(continued)*

Lexeme / Word ending	[s]		[θ]		Subt.
	n	%	n	%	
Predominates [θ]					
Caz-[h]	1	4,0	24	96.0	25
Doce	6	21.4	22	78.6	28
Bici(-cleta)	5	26.3	14	73.7	19
Once	5	26.3	14	73.7	19
Confianza	12	28.6	30	71.4	42
Tradicion-[i]	7	29.2	17	70.8	24
Utiliz-[j]	17	30.4	39	69.6	56
Servicio/-s	6	31.6	13	68.4	19
Piscina/-s	8	36.4	14	63.6	22
Socia-[k]	8	36.4	14	63.6	22
Situación/-es	7	36.8	12	63.2	19
Azul	9	37.5	15	62.5	24
Zona/-s	55	39.0	86	61.0	141
Principio/-s	20	39.2	31	60.8	51
Estación/-es	15	39.5	23	60.5	38
Etcétera	8	40.0	12	60.0	20
Cerca-[l]	33	42.3	45	57.7	78
Vacaciones	17	43.6	22	56.4	39
Cinc-[m]	53	44.5	66	55.5	119
Cien-[n]	18	45.0	22	55.0	40
Conoc-[o]	58	45.0	71	55.0	129

a. Derivatives: *necesitar*, some tenses of the verb conjugation (*necesito, necesitan*, etc.), *necesario/-a, necesidad/-es*, and *necesariamente*.
b. Derivatives: *especial/-es, especialmente, especialidad*, and *especialistas*.
c. Derivatives: *vecino/-a, vecinos/-as, vecindario, vecindad*, and *vecinales*.
d. Derivatives: *fácil, facilidad/-es*, and *fácilmente*.
e. Derivatives: *cenar, cena, cenaba*, and *cenando*.
f. Derivatives: *Andalucía, andaluces*, and *andaluza*.
g. Derivatives: *dieciséis, diecisiete, dieciocho, diecinueve*, and *décimo*.
h. Derivatives: *cazar, caza, cazadoras*, and *cacería*.
i. Derivatives: *tradición/-es, tradicional/-es*, and *tradicionalmente*.
j. Derivatives: *utilizar*, some tenses of the verb conjugation (*utilizo, utilizaba*, etc.), and *reutilización*.
k. Derivatives: *social/-es, sociable*, and *sociabilidad*.
l. Derivatives: *cerca, cercano/-a, cercanos/-as, cerquita, acercando, cercanía*, and *acerquen*.
m. Derivatives: *cinco, cincuenta*, and *veinticinco*.
n. Derivatives: *cien, ciento, doscientos/-as, seiscientos, setecientos*, and *cuatrocientos*.
o. The infinitive *conocer* and some tenses of the verb conjugation (*conoce, conocemos*, etc.).

First, the lexeme *necesi-* stood out among the terms that favoured the *seseante* pronunciation. This preference is justified by the assimilation that occurs with the [s] in syllable *si* after the segment *ce* that, as we have pointed out, is a factor that favoured this pronunciation.

Second, it is not irrelevant that a word as rooted in the culture of the Seville as *nazareno* 'nazarene' mostly had the vernacular pronunciation. We believe that there is a connection between its meaning, associated with the important tradition of the Holy Week in the city, and the local *seseo*.

Third, *atención* and *habitación* (the latter only when used in singular, 10/15, 67.5%), with more uses of the *seseante* norm, and, on the other hand, *situación* (only singular, 11/17, 64.7%) and *estación* (only singular, 15/27, 55.5%), with more cases of the dento-interdental pronunciation, show a similar situation to the words ending in *-ción* as a whole, with no definite rule but a slight preference of the dialectal variant ([s] 278/553, 50.3%; [θ] 275/553, 49.7%).

Furthermore, the behaviour of the numbers was mixed: while in the derivatives of the lexemes *dec- (dieciséis, diecisiete, dieciocho, diecinueve*, and *décimo)* and *quince- (quince* and *quincena)* the divergent norm prevailed, in the case of *doce, once, cinco- (cinco, cincuenta*, and *veinticinco)*, and *cien- (cien, ciento, doscientos/-as, seiscientos, setecientos*, and *cuatrocientos)*, the convergent norm was preferred. Based on the data, we discard the initial hypothesis that the numbers were mostly added to one of the two pronunciation patterns. Apart from that, the influences observed in the alternation of the two variants in the numbers were due to assimilation. Thus, *seseo* was preferred in *dieciséis, diecisiete, seiscientos*, and *setecientos* (13/18, 72.2%) because of the closeness of another [s].

Concerning word endings, in the diminutive, the *seseante* variant was more common. However, we recorded differences according to grammatical gender: whereas masculine favoured [s] (26/32, 81.3%), feminine was mainly used with [θ] (10/18, 55.6%) (X^2 = 7.172 sig. = 0.000). Something similar happened with the participles that, although in general terms their influence on the distribution of the allophones was not significant, we did note that masculine slightly favoured *seseo* (55/95, 57.9%), and feminine the dento-interdental pronunciation (23/30, 76.7%) (X^2 = 10.894 sig. = 0.000). On the other side, the *-encia* ending is a morphological context that promoted the vernacular variant. Therefore, the two most repeated lexemes (*delincuencia* and *difer-* [*diferencia/-s, diferenciadas*, and *diferenciar*]) also followed this pattern (*delincuencia*: [s] 22/31, 71.0%; [θ] 9/31, 29.0%; *difer-*: [s] 21/30, 70.0%, [θ] 9/30, 30.0%).

The terms that favoured [θ] were led by *caz-* and its derivatives. It is evident that in this case the functional character of the *distinción* has been decisive, which makes it possible to differentiate between the pair *casar* 'marry' / *cazar* 'hunt.'

Finally, it is interesting to point out that dento-interdental pronunciation was preferred in the lexemes *servicio/-s, situación/-es, social- (social/-es, sociable*, and *sociabilidad)*, although there is a dissimilation process (closeness of previous [s]), which was an unfavourable factor for the use of this allophone. Therefore, we believe that they are terms that promoted this pronunciation among the subjects surveyed, even though the phonetic context made it difficult for this to happen.

4.2   Social factors

As we have already pointed out, the convergence towards pronunciation patterns characteristic of the northern norm, as dento-interdental variant, is usually led by the sectors of society with higher attainment educational level, together with other variables that are also influential, such as youth and being a woman. Let us then look at what influence these social variables had on the distribution of [s] and [θ] in the PRESEEA-Seville corpus, focusing in the first place on the formal education (Table 7).

Table 7. Distribution of [s] and [θ] according to educational attainment level

	Low sociolect		Middle sociolect		High sociolect	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
[s]	1639	69.1	1579	55.4	831	25.6
[θ]	734	30.9	1273	44.6	2416	74.4
Subtotals	2373		2852		3247	

$X^2 = 1137.388$ sig. $= 0.000$

Our data showed how the permation of [θ], which a priori was the most outstanding variant in the whole city, was conditioned by this social factor: the greater the education, the greater the presence of the dento-interdental allophone. On the other hand, *seseo* remained fundamentally in the low sociolect and, in addition, there was a clear decrease in its use as the educational attainment level of the subjects increased. That is to say, the dento-interdental variant followed a characteristic pattern of a prestige model, with greater acceptance among the educated classes, and *seseo* seems to be socially lagging behind the first. Moreover, it is worth noting how, while the competition between both allophones in the high and low sociolects presented clearly polarised tendencies, the respondents with middle educational attainment level presented a more balanced situation. Although the vernacular variant continued to gain momentum, the convergent pattern was also quite strong among these subjects, perhaps due to influence of

the tendencies led by speakers with more formal education, who usually become a reference for the rest of the members of their community. Therefore, this sociolect represented in a more forceful way the close competition between the two pronunciation patterns that has been noticed throughout the sample. Thus, Seville joins the processes of convergence, specifically the dento-interdental pronunciation, that are being experienced in different Andalusian urban areas, mainly led by individuals with higher academic education.

Second, as can be seen in Table 8, the age of the subjects was also a variable that influenced the distribution of the two variants.

Table 8. Distribution of [s] and [θ] according to age

	1st generation		2nd generation		3rd generation	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
[s]	1190	43.0	1375	47.8	1484	52.5
[θ]	1577	57.0	1502	52.2	1344	47.5
Subtotals	2767		2877		2828	

$X^2 = 50.251$ sig. $= 0.000$

While *seseo* increased with age, although minimally, even slightly surpassing the other realisation in the third-generation respondents, the conservative pattern was more frequent as age decreased. Therefore, individuals from the first two age groups promoted the realisation of the dento-interdental allophone, mainly the younger ones, while older respondents had a slight preference for *seseo*.

Third, data in Table 9 shows that sex was also revealed as an influential category in the distribution of the two allophones.

Table 9. Distribution of [s] and [θ] according to sex

	Males		Females	
	n	%	n	%
[s]	2476	55.7	1573	39.0
[θ]	1965	44.2	2458	61.0
Subtotals	4441		4031	

$X^2 = 237.05$ sig. $= 0.000$

Indeed, men were more inclined to choose *seseo*, in contrast to females, who were the main drivers of the convergent variant. Moreover, the predominance of

this realisation was very significant in women, with 22 advantage points over the *seseante* norm.

We complete this part of the analysis by looking at whether the combination of more than one of the variables considered yielded relevant results for the research. First, we asked ourselves what relationship exists between sociolect and age (Table 10). That is, did all young people opt for the conservative variant in a similar way or do differences occur depending on their level of formal education?

Table 10. Distribution of [s] and [θ] according to educational attainment level and age

		Low sociolect			Middle sociolect			High sociolect		
		1st gen.	2nd gen.	3rd gen.	1st gen.	2nd gen.	3rd gen.	1st gen.	2nd gen.	3rd gen.
[s]	n	529	605	505	394	521	664	267	249	315
	%	68.6	70.7	67.8	40.9	58.1	66.9	25.9	22.1	28.9
[θ]	n	243	251	240	569	375	329	765	876	775
	%	31.4	29.3	32.2	59.1	41.9	33.1	74.1	77.9	71.1
Subtotals		772	856	745	963	896	993	1032	1125	1090

Low sociolect: $X^2 = 1.719$ sig. = 0.423; Middle sociolect: $X^2 = 137.357$ sig. = 0.000; High sociolect: $X^2 = 13.37$ sig. = 0.001

Our results indicate that this correlation of variables was not significant in the low sociolect, but it was in the other two educational levels. While subjects with university studies clearly promoted the conservative variant, without relevant differences by age group, there were some notable movements at the middle level. Specifically, young respondents of the latter group led the inclusion of the dento-interdental variant in their interventions (59.1%). It seems logical that people of age to start working adopt pronunciation habits that they consider more prestigious. This trend decreased as the age of the subjects increased. So much so that adults (58.1%) and, especially, older individuals (66.9%), clung to the *seseante* vernacular pronunciation more strongly. The second generation behaved differently from the data obtained from the entire sample, where the convergent variant was also chosen minimally. In the middle level of formal education, the subjects from the second age group still held onto the traditional, the local pronunciation, so that the change in tendency was only noticeable among the youngest respondents (59.1%). Therefore, we are witnessing a pattern that indicates a change in course.

In second place, we propose the following question: Did all women promote the conservative variant and did all men promote *seseo* in the same way, or were there differences according to their level of attainment education? Quantitative data to obtain an answer to this issue are broken down in Table 11.

Table 11. Distribution of [s] and [θ] according to educational attainment level and sex

		Low sociolect		Middle sociolect		High sociolect	
		Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
[s]	n	1012	627	865	714	599	232
	%	81.3	55.6	57.5	53.0	53.4	14.9
[θ]	n	233	501	639	634	1093	1323
	%	18.7	44.4	42.5	47.0	64.6	85.1
Subtotals		1245	1128	1504	1348	1692	1555

Low sociolect: $X^2 = 182.965$ sig. = 0.000; Middle sociolect: $X^2 = 5.945$ sig. = 0.015; High sociolect: $X^2 = 178.514$ sig. = 0.000

Men of the low sociolect were the main drivers of *seseo* (81.3%), distancing themselves a lot from the other two blocks: middle and high. These showed a downward trend as academic education increased. Men of the high sociolect also reinforced the conservative variant (64.6%), following the general tendency of the surveyed subjects with this level of attainment education. On the other hand, women of the high sociolect were the main promoters of the dento-interdental allophone (85.1%), at a considerable distance from the females of the middle level (38.1 percentage points), and even more from those of the low one (40.7 percentage points). Women in the initial and intermediate levels of formal education continued to be more inclined to maintain the local variant and their uses reflected a more balanced situation between the two pronunciation alternatives. Therefore, the females of the high sociolect were the main promoters of the phonetic change of convergence towards the northern realisation [θ].

Finally, in Table 12 we observe to what extent the age of men and women could influence the variation process that we analyse.

Table 12. Distribution of [s] and [θ] according to age and sex

		1st generation		2nd generation		3rd generation	
		Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
[s]	n	924	266	861	514	691	793
	%	62.5	20.6	60.1	35.6	45.2	61.1
[θ]	n	554	1023	572	930	839	505
	%	37.5	79.4	39.9	64.4	54.8	38.9
Subtotals		1478	1289	1433	1444	1530	1298

1st generation: $X^2 = 492.705$ sig. = 0.000; 2nd generation: $X^2 = 172.86$ sig. = 0.000; 3rd generation: $X^2 = 71.462$ sig. = 0.000

The most outstanding fact, concerning the relation between age and sex, is that the opposition of the two variants was much more pronounced in the first two generations: women opted more significantly for the convergent pronunciation, especially the youngest ones (79.4%), while men decided on *seseo* to a greater extent, also mainly being of a younger age (62.5%). Therefore, the conflict between the two allophones takes on special relevance among the subjects of the first age group, which led this process of change.

If we look at the analysis per individual (Table 13), we could think that if the dento-interdental allophone was fundamentally driven by respondents with a higher educational level, the subjects who used this pronunciation exclusively or mainly would principally belong to that social group.

Table 13. Subjects with one or two variants according to educational attainment level

	Only [s]	Prefer [s]	Only [θ]	Prefer [θ]
Low	6	11	2	5
Middle	1	14	2	7
High	2	4	7	11
Subtotals	9	29	11	23
Totals	38		34	

Our data confirms that, in effect, this is true: 66.3% of the respondents only used the conservative variant (7/11) and 47.8% of those who preferred that allophone (11/23) had university studies. On the other hand, just as the vernacular pattern was the majority option in the low sociolect, those subjects also used this allophone prominently as the only variant (6/9, 66.7%) or as the preferred phonetic realisation (11/29, 37.9%). On the other hand, the respondents of the middle educational level showed high indexes of individual variation, since most of them used the two variants (21/24, 87.5%), where the subjects who opted for the local *seseante* pattern prevailed (14/29, 48.3%). This confirms our initial hypothesis: the individuals of this sociolect are more noticeably divided between holding on to the local allophone or following the pattern that projects greater social consideration and that is used among speakers with higher formal education. As we already pointed out, the latter was the majority option among the youngest subjects. A further symptom of the degree of hesitation between both variants in this sociolect is that almost half of them (10/21, 47.6%) had poorly polarised use percentages between them, that is, that the majority allophone had less than 80% of the cases. This means that the alternation of [s] and [θ] for <z + vowel> and <c + e, i> was constant in their interventions, and they were not only isolated uses as a

result of a more punctual or sporadic hesitation. The profile of these respondents was preferentially second generation (5/10, 50.0%) and female (7/10, 70.0%).

Next, data in Table 14 show the correlation between individual preferences and their age.

Table 14. Subjects with one or two variants according to age

	Only [s]	Prefer [s]	Only [θ]	Prefer [θ]
1st generation	5	6	5	8
2nd generation	2	11	4	7
3rd generation	2	12	2	8
Subtotals	9	29	11	23
Totals	38		34	

As can be seen, it was the youngest respondents who showed the lowest rates of individual variation, since they are half of those who only used one of the variants (10/20, 50.0%). In addition, the majority of the subjects of this age group opted for the conservative realisation.

Finally, based on data in Table 15, we are going to analyse the distribution of the surveyed subjects according to whether they preferred one or another pronunciation variant and its relationship with the variable sex.

Table 15. Subjects with one or two variants and sex

	Only [s]	Prefer [s]	Only [θ]	Prefer [θ]
Males	8	14	3	11
Females	1	15	8	12
Subtotals	9	29	11	23
Totals	38		34	

Our results showed that women led the group of individuals who only used the most normative and prestigious phonetic realisation (8/11, 72.7%), while, on the opposite side, men were the majority among the respondents who exclusively used the *seseante* norm (8/9, 88.9%).

5.   Conclusions

The results of the PRESEEA-Seville corpus indicate that today it is not possible to firmly state that this city is a *seseante* nucleus. On the contrary, it can be deduced from our materials that a convergence process is taking place towards the prestigious normative variant, the realisation of the orthographic segments <*z* + vowel> and <c + e, i> in a dento-interdental allophone [θ]. The permeation of this northern phonetic realisation is already verified since we noticed that the latter slightly surpassed the vernacular pattern *seseante* when contrasting them. This fairly tight competition was also reflected in the individual variation, where a high index of hesitation between the two variants prevailed, since most respondents used both allophones in their interventions. This process of variation was influenced by linguistic and social factors.

With regard to the linguistic variables, the assimilation with a [θ] in the close phonetic context especially favoured the dento-interdental variant and, to a lesser extent, when the allophone was used in a proper noun, although in this case it was not a decisive factor when the subjects were preferably *seseantes*. We also observed the association of each of these pronunciation patterns with certain lexemes and some word endings: *seseo* was preferred in *especial-, vecin- facil-, nazareno/s, cena-, quizá(s), andaluc-*, among other terms, and in the suffixes diminutive, *–azo, -encia, -icionar*, and *–izar;* and the convergent variant was more frequent in lexemes *caz-, doce, bici(cleta), once, confianza, servicio/-s, piscina/-s, social-*, among others. Therefore, there were some trends related to certain lexemes or suffixes, although we could not find any unquestionable rule. We think that this is an area that needs further research.

Concerning social variables, our materials have allowed us to verify that a convergence process similar to that found in other Andalusian cities is taking place in the city of Seville, which is mainly driven by respondents with higher formal education, by young people, and by women. More specifically, young women of the high sociolect were the main promoters of this change, while young men of the low sociolect led the vernacular pronunciation. The use of both allophones showed more polarised positions between the upper and lower educational levels, in contrast to more balanced percentages in the middle sociolect. In this group, both the local pronunciation *seseante* and the northern dento-interdental were strongly represented, which highlights a close struggle between the two prestigious patterns alternating in our sample. In other words, Sevillian informants debated between remaining to the vernacular or accommodating to the northern pattern, the latter led by individuals with higher formal education. Once again, the dento-interdental allophone found greater follow-up among the respondents from the first generation, which might make that pronunciation pattern even-

tually progress in the years to come. Regarding the high rates of linguistic levels of individual variation registered in our corpus, in relation to the alternation we analysed, it should be noted that young subjects constituted the group that showed less indexes of hesitation, since they outperformed the other participants interviewed by using only one of the variants in their speech. On the other hand, the respondents of the middle level of formal education were those that most fluctuated between the two realisations. This is one more characteristic of the narrow competition that occurs in this population sector between the local *seseante* norm and the convergent pattern.

Based on our data, it can be considered that we are facing a variation process and change in course that, while it has a great impact on young people, is likely to continue to advance and settle among the linguistic habits of Sevillians.

Funding

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Publication history