

Convergent conceptualizations as predictors of degree of contact in U.S. Spanish

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0. Introduction

The factor that is usually invoked as the primary cause of lexical borrowing is the need by members of an impacted culture to name newly adopted objects and concepts for which their language contains no readily available formulation. This same explanation will be offered here to account for why speakers of contact varieties differ so markedly from one conversation to another in their use of lexical contact features of all types (switches and calques, as well as loans).

That the causes of lexical borrowing are to be found in conceptual differences holding between cultures is the standard assumption made in the field. Scholars have noted correctly the need by speakers of contact varieties to express “new concepts and ideas” (Casagrande 1954: 140), to name new “acts or objects” (Turano 1974: 364), or to adapt their vocabulary to the novel contents of a foreign habitat (Weinreich 1953 [1974: 59 ff, 91 ff]). Researchers accurately describe the contact community as having to give linguistic form to a new conceptual reality (Pratt 1980: 62), and as lacking certain concepts that exist only in the dominant group (Appel–Muysken 1987: 165). This conceptual explanation has a long history in the study of language, and can be found not only in the authors cited, but also in work spanning several generations (Whitney 1881: 10 ff, Bloomfield 1933: 445 ff, Haugen 1938 [1972: 22 ff], Hockett 1973: 119 ff).¹

It is proposed here that this need to name new concepts varies in strength depending on the cultural context in which a conversation among bilinguals is situated; and that it is this variation that accounts for cross-conversational differences in rates of contact in impacted varieties. Evidence is presented that when a conversation’s context is one to which the

language is newly adapted, there is a marked increase in the use of switches, calques, and loans; and that when the context is the one to which the language is indigeneous, there is a drop in the use of these items. Based on transcripts of tape-recorded sessions with contact Spanish speakers in New York City, it is shown quantitatively that English contact features increase when conversations are culturally situated in a North American setting, and decrease when in a Latin American one. Qualitative data is then used to show that this is because in Spanish conversations situated in North America the pressure to give new linguistic form to newly acquired concepts is greater than in conversations situated in Latin America.

The findings here appear to cast some doubt on approaches that explain variation in rates of contact through such constructs as discourse strategy or social meaningfulness.² Little support can be gained here for the proposal that the introduction of contact elements responds in any significant degree to strategies of persuasion or of appeal to shared bilinguality, or to a desire to signal attitude, ethnic affiliation, sense of identity or even the conversation's social context itself. The facts suggest that speakers use contact features, not primarily because of social symbolism, but because without them it would be difficult to say what they want to say. Rather than to social meaning as the motivation for contact, these findings point simply to plain cognitive-referential meaning; to strictly conceptual, rather than to more broadly social, needs.

In extending the conceptual explanation beyond loanwords to cover also switches and calques, and in applying it to cross-conversational differences, it is taken as a fact that the conceptual inventories of different speech communities are not entirely overlapping. In the words of Sapir (1929 [1949: 162]) "no two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same worlds with different labels attached" (1929 [1949: 162]). The same idea is expressed by Hudson (1980: 85), who says that "we can point to items in some languages which certainly express meanings not expressed in others"; by Hymes (1967: 16), who stressed the importance of recognizing that cultures differed in "what is to be said"; and by Ullmann (1957: 217–218), who emphasized the "system of ideas" peculiar of each culture. The insistence on this same principle by Ferdinand de Saussure (1916 [1972]) was, according to Culler (1976: 14), his most central and long-lasting contribution to a theoretical understanding of language.

In the standard account of lexical borrowing, the correct assumption is made that these partially unique conceptual systems, when placed under the strain of contact, undergo a significant amount of convergence, and that it is this conceptual convergence that eventually leads to borrowing. That conceptual and linguistic convergence are separable, and that each can occur independently of the other, is a familiar assumption among linguists and anthropologists. In their analysis of directional terms used by the Yurok and Karok of Northwestern California, Bright – Bright (1965) noted that each group, in its own different way, expresses cardinal points on the basis of position with respect to the Klamath River (upstream, downstream, toward the river, away from the river). However, Bright – Bright argue that there is no linguistic convergence between the languages, that "it is rather that both languages reflect the same conceptual structure" (1965: 251). A similar awareness lies behind the distinction drawn by Hymes (1967: 16) between *Sprechbund* (shared understandings about what to say) and *Sprachbund* (shared linguistic resources with which to say it).³

By carefully separating conceptual and linguistic convergence, it can be established that the conceptual adaptation of U. S. Hispanics does not in all cases result in additions or alterations to U. S. Spanish (see Otheguy, this volume), but that yet in many cases it does. The expectation should be that utterances expressing newly adopted concepts should be more likely to contain new linguistic elements than those that express indigeneous notions. While it is possible in many instances to express the newly acquired North American conceptualizations using Spanish linguistic resources alone, at some point only the linguistic resources of English will do. It is thus that the new concepts act in many cases as triggers for linguistic hybridization.⁴

The present study is an attempt to invest these speculations with a measure of empirical support. In what follows, quantitative evidence is presented correlating the variable of cultural context with degree of hybridization, and comparing its predictive force with that of other factors. Cultural context will be shown to be a far stronger predictor of rates of contact than many of the other variables that have been proposed in the literature, such as conversational topic, or the age, sex, nationality or education of the speaker.⁵ In addition, qualitative evidence is presented to support the explanation that the differences observed between the North American and Latin American contexts are due to differences in the conceptual structures underlying each.

1. The questions and the study

The present study was based on interviews with fully bilingual first-generation Hispanic informants who, (a) had lived in their countries of origin until at least the age of 18, (b) had held a job there at least once, (c) had lived in New York City for longer than fifteen years at the time the research was conducted, and (d) had raised children and seen them through school in New York City.

This selection of informant characteristics made it possible to hold constant the experiences associated with bilingual proficiency (living through and past adolescence in the setting of origin, long stay and intensive involvement in the new setting). It was thus possible to rule out incomplete acquisition of Spanish, Spanish loss, or complete lack of awareness of English as the causes of the linguistic behavior observed. The fact that the subjects had significant adult experiences both in the native country and in the United States made it possible to question them about a topic having their country of origin as a context, and then later about the same topic but within the context of the United States. There is thus an important imperfection in the experiment. Informants were not physically transported from one cultural setting to another. They were simply asked to talk while “placing” themselves first in Latin America, and later in the United States.

In an effort to separate the notion of topic from that of cultural context, an interview guide was developed covering the social environment, the neighborhood, the family, schooling, and work. Informants were first asked about their experiences with these four topics in their native country, and then, in a separate interview, about their experiences with the same topics in the United States.⁶ The twenty-five subjects were questioned in their homes by five City College of New York graduate students who knew them personally. The interviews were conducted exclusively in Spanish, were tape-recorded, and lasted from a half-hour to an hour. And they dealt exclusively with the informants' lives in Latin America. Two months later, informants were interviewed again under the same circumstances (that is, by the same students, in Spanish, and for the same length of time). This time they were asked about the same four topics but within the context of the United States.

The 25 subjects included 16 women and 9 men. Their areas of origin were Puerto Rico (11), Dominican Republic (7), South America (4),

Central America (2), and Spain (1). (These areas will be referred to respectively with the initials PR, DR, SA, CA, SP.) They included people who had completed college (11), completed high school only (7), and completed elementary school only (7).

2. Contact neologisms

In order to compare the results of the interviews, a composite linguistic feature was created called the *contact neologism*. The construct contact neologism covers what are frequently discussed in the literature as three distinct features: *loanwords*, *one-word switches*, and *calqued words*. Although Poplack (1987) and Poplack–Sankoff (1988) have drawn distinctions between borrowing and code-switching based on considerations of frequency and phonological and morphosyntactic integration, it was impossible in the corpus used for the present study to develop any principled way of distinguishing between these constructs. The inability to distinguish between established loanwords and single-word switches had to do, in part, with the limited quantity of the data as well as with the fact that the informants used Spanish phonology throughout. It was also impossible to effectively distinguish between loanwords and calqued words.⁷ In many cases it was impossible to tell, for example, whether speakers were using the English word *application* that had become phonologically adapted into Spanish *aplicación*, or the old Spanish word *aplicación* that had acquired the meaning of English *application*.⁸ Although the corpus also contained some cases of multiple-word code-switching, these were not included. Thus contact neologisms are in every case either single lexical items or compounds.

The decision to collapse all three types into a single category was based, in addition, on the fact that what is important in this study is the message-driven need to reach for English meanings while talking in Spanish, not the question of whether these English meanings come into Spanish along with their English forms (as in borrowing and switching), or lodge themselves in Spanish forms, as in calquing. For purposes of the study, then, a contact neologism was any single or compound word whose *meaning* was of recent English origin, irrespective of whether the *form* of the word was originally from one language or the other.⁹

3. Quantitative results

Table 1 compares the number of contact neologisms that occurred in the first interview when the informants were discussing their lives in Latin America with the number that occurred in the second interview in which they discussed the same topics in a United States context.

Table 1. One-word contact neologisms by setting

| | Latin America | United States |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| N words | 55,435 | 58,047 |
| N neologisms | 121 | 502 |
| Percentage of neologisms | 0.22 | 0.86* |
| Standard deviation | 0.002 | 0.005 |

*Significant at the .05 level

As shown in Table 1, there were only 121 neologisms uttered by our informants during the first, Latin American – situated interview, but 502 during the second, North American-situated interview. Expressed in percentages, contact neologisms represented 0.22 percent of the discourse in the Latin American context. But they increased four-fold during the second interview, constituting 0.86 percent of the discourse in the North American context. The difference between these two proportions is highly significant.

In addition, Table 1 shows that the standard deviation is more than double in North America than in Latin America. While during the second, North American conversation some informants used many contact neologisms and others used few, during the first, Latin American conversation all informants were consistently spare in their use of neologisms.

The difference in percentage of neologisms shows that when Latinos speak in Spanish about their experiences in the United States, they borrow, switch, and calque much more than when they speak about analogous experiences in Latin America. The interpretation proposed here is that the mediating variable explaining this increase is the bilinguals' need, when speaking in Spanish in a North American context, to bring their conceptualizations more in line with those used by people who describe those same experiences in English.

Moreover, the larger standard deviation shown in the North American conversations reflects the fact that, when situated in the United States, speakers have a measure of choice between the two patterns of conceptualization which is not as available when situated in the home country. This more ample choice offered by the North American setting, where the North American conceptualizations prevail but the Latin American ones are still available, allows for greater variation between informants.

The explanation advanced here for the results outlined in Table 1 entails a corresponding downplaying of the proposal that the hybridizing behaviour of bilinguals is to be explained primarily through the construct of social meaningfulness. Such explanation would amount to a claim that, while discussing the same topic in the two different settings, the informants communicate the same messages, conceptualize the situations very similarly or perhaps identically; that they, that is, in some general sense say the same things. The high use of English elements when situated in North America would then simply be a socially symbolic act serving to signal location in a particular setting, but would not be directly connected to the substantive content of the messages being conveyed. Under the social meaningfulness explanation, and but for the social symbolism, these messages could just as well be communicated without neologisms.

In rejecting this explanation, the alternative proposal is that informants in the different settings were indeed discussing the same topic, but that they were saying different things, conceptualizing these topics differently, conveying – sometimes slightly, sometimes sharply – different messages. The qualitative analysis offered below supports the view that the use of contact features in conversations in Spanish about North American life is motivated by the desire to express conceptualizations that are easily accessible through English but difficult to convey through unaltered forms of Spanish.

4. Qualitative results

As reflected in Table 1, many contact neologisms used in the North American context are not found in the Latin American one. This distribution becomes particularly significant when informants are not only dealing with the same topic, but making what appear on first inspection

to be closely related references. In these cases, the use of contact neologisms for the North American context and of traditional Spanish formulations for the Latin American one allows the different conceptualizations that shape the choice of linguistic form to become more apparent. In addition, the informants' own metalinguistic comments lend support to the conceptual explanation.

In (1 a) below, taken from the first, Latin American situated interview, a woman comments on her experiences eating in school in Puerto Rico. In (1 b), taken from the second, North American situated interview, the same woman talks about her children's experiences eating in school in New York City. In the Latin American context, she uses *el comedor escolar*; in the North American one, she uses *el lunchroom*:

- (1) a. *Comíamos en el comedor escolar y era una comida sabrosa, comíamos arroz y habichuela, carne y ensalada y leche con mani, chocolate o blanca, me gustaba mucho el almuerzo.* [S # 4, PR, F]

'We used to eat in the school dining room and it was a tasty meal; we ate rice and beans, meat and salad, and milk, either by itself or with peanuts or chocolate; I used to like lunch a lot.'

- b. *Comen en el lunch room y les sirven pescado, hamburger, sandwich, ensalada, leche, frutas, hot dogs, pizza, en fin, es un menú bastante variado.* [S # 4, PR, F]

'They eat in the lunchroom and they serve them fish, hamburger, sandwiches, salad, milk, fruit, hot dogs, pizza; it's a pretty varied menu.'

In Latin America, *comedores* are conceptualized as spaces devoted to eating in general, at all times of the day, that can be found in private homes as well as in institutional buildings. (Thus the need to add the clarification *escolar* when the room is in a school.) In other words, a *comedor* is conceptualized as a place where one in fact has morning, noon, and evening meals, and that can be the dining room of a house no less than of a factory or office. In North America, the lunchroom is conceived as a place whose primary purpose is the consumption of the noon meal, and that is found only in institutions. These different conceptualizations reflect broader environmental differences. According to the experience of these informants, in Latin America many schools have *comedores*, but many do not, whereas in New York City, practically all

schools have lunchrooms. While the referents are superficially the same or similar, the concepts are different, and require different linguistic formulations, *el comedor escolar* in one case, *el lunchroom* in the other.

Under a slightly different explanation, one would simply argue that *comedor escolar* is the name of the room in Latin America while *lunchroom* is the name in North America. Bilinguals, known for their disregard for linguistic boundaries, simply use the culturally appropriate name for each item, irrespective of the language in which outside observers may think they are speaking. Under this explanation, it would still be the different conceptual demands of communication in the different settings, and not social meaningfulness or discourse strategies, that would primarily account for the higher presence of contact features in the North American context. And since the different names often involve different conceptualizations, the explanation in terms of names is ultimately the same as the one being proposed.

In (2), a different Puerto Rican woman actually makes an explicit comment about how two superficially equivalent formulations (*Easter* and *Semana Santa* 'Holy Week') involve different culturally conditioned conceptualizations, which in turn motivate the choice of different forms:

- (2) *Todavía yo llevo aquí unos dieciseis, diecisiete años, y todavía yo no caigo bien con eso de Easter aquí, porque en Puerto Rico es la Semana Santa, es una semana triste y que todo el mundo ve que no se trabaja ...* [S # 5, PR, F]

'I've lived here seventeen or eighteen years and I still can't really handle this business of Easter here, because in Puerto Rico it's Holy Week, it's a sad week and everybody can see that there is no work going on ...'

Faced with a communication in Spanish in which reference is made to the end of the Lenten period, this informant will use the contact neologism *Easter*. This is not because of its social meaning, but because the conceptualization that would be forced on her if she stayed with Spanish and used *Semana Santa* would be incongruous in the North American setting. Interestingly, this informant does not appear to be entirely aware of the chronological differences involved (*Semana Santa* is actually Holy Week, the last week of Lent before the Sunday of the Resurrection, while *Easter* usually refers either to the Sunday itself, or to the week after). Rather, it seems that for her the two notions are different in that the Latin American one involves somber penance while the North American one suggests joyful rebirth. Thus the alternating use among U. S. Hispanics between

Semana Santa and *Easter*, no less than between *el comedor escolar* and *el lunchroom*, should be seen, quite simply, as a response to the fact that each member of the pair means something different.

The second most diffused contact neologism in the data is the use of *principal* (a classic case of indeterminacy between loanword and calque-word) to refer to the head of a school in New York. Informants make clear, as for example in (3), that the concept of a person who runs a school but does not teach is, in their experience, a peculiarly North American one.

- (3) *Mi primera escuela elemental ... quedaba lejos de mi casa, teníamos que subir una loma grande y entonces, al llegar a la cima, caminar otro tanto para llegar a la escuela ... Cuando yo me criaba no era cosa de decir que había principales, porque yo lo que me acuerdo es que ella siempre estaba sola en aquella escuelita.* [S # 6, PR, F]

'My first elementary school ... was far from my house, we had to climb a high hill and then when we got to the top we had to walk a stretch just as long to get to the school ... When I was growing up it wasn't a matter of saying that there were principals, because what I remember is that she was always alone in that little school.'

In (4a) and (4b), two informants from the Dominican Republic and Colombia, who during the North American situated interview used the contact neologism *principal* when speaking about the schooling of their children in New York, said this about their own schooling:

- (4) a. *La primera escuela elemental a que yo asistí fue una escuelita privada que tenía una señora amiga de mi mamá en su propia casa ... nos reuníamos todos en la sala de la casa, había una sillita para cada niño, y cada niño recibía la enseñanza que impartía la maestra, la escuela estaba atendida por ella misma, y ella era la que desempeñaba toda la labor escolar.* [S # 10, DR, M]

'The first elementary school that I attended was a little private school that was run in her own home by a lady who was a friend of my mother's ... we gathered every day in the living room, there was a little chair for each child, and each child received the instruction given by the teacher; she herself ran the school and she handled all the teaching chores.'

- b. *La escuela era de la señorita Ofelia Cabanzo. Eso era en una casa vieja en el campo, al pie del camino, tenía una piecita donde ella enseñaba, tenía su tablero y no tenía más.* [S # 15, SA, M]
'The school belonged to Miss Ofelia Cabanzo. It was an old house in the country, at the foot of the pathway; there was a little room where she taught, she had a blackboard and that was it.'

It would seem that the widespread use of *principal* in the Spanish of New York is a straightforward response to the need to express a concept that is typical of North America but unheard of in the Latin America the informants knew. (Which of course is the Latin America that counts in an explanation of their behavior; the fact that Latin Americans having a different set of experiences may have been exposed to *directores de escuela* 'school directors, i. e., principals' is irrelevant here.)

But it is perhaps the informants' use of the most prevalent contact neologism in the data, *el bldin* (< Eng. *building*), that provides the most insight into their use of contact neologisms in order to express conceptualizations that fit the North American cultural context. While discussing her early impressions of Brooklyn, a woman gives in (5) a hint as to why the word *edificio* seems to have lost so much ground in the Spanish of people who live, it would seem, mostly inside of and surrounded by *edificios*:

- (5) *Lo que más me llamaba la atención era que todas las casas eran iguales, en ladrillo y altas, edificios que le llaman casas, a una casa de tres pisos, de seis familias; eso para nosotros son, para mí eso es un edificio.* [S # 5, PR, F]

'What really caught my eye was that all the houses were the same, all tall and made of brick, buildings that they call houses; a house that's three-stories high, with six families living in it, that for us is, that for me is a building.'

The informant was not only impressed by the brick monotony of multi-family dwellings in Brooklyn. She was struck by the fact that these structures were called *houses* instead of *buildings*, which is what she expected them to be called on the basis of her limited knowledge of English and her experience with the use of *casa* and *edificio* in Latin America. An informant from Tunja, Colombia also explained in (6) that what in New York is called a *two-family house* or a *three-family house* is for him an *edificio*:

- (6) *Bueno allá no teníamos edificios, family house que llaman aquí.*
[S # 15, SA, M]
'Well, over there we had no buildings, what they call family houses here.'

And another one from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, while using both words, confirms in (7) that for many Latin Americans these structures often called *houses* in New York City would have been called in Latin America *edificios* and not *casas*.

- (7) *Pues fijate, la casa de la hermana de mi papá que queda cerca del Parterre, hay tres edificios, uno amarillo, uno rosado y uno verde, son las únicas casas de plantas de alto, tienen tres pisos, tienen unos balcones bien anchos y tienen un estilo español bien lindo, siempre me gustó la casa, y me gusta a pesar de que es bien antigua, pero me encanta.* [S # 2, PR, F]
'Well, my father's sister's house, which is near the Parterre, there are three buildings, a yellow one, a pink one and a green one; they are the only houses with more than one floor, they are three-story houses, they have wide balconies, they are of a beautiful Spanish style, I always liked that house, even though it's so old, but I like it.'

This testimony appears to suggest clear differences of conceptualization between the two groups. While both languages lexicalize the distinction between small and large structures (*casa: edificio, house: building*), their speakers apparently carry out different conceptual analyses of referential reality.

In addition to the fact that the referents for which *edificio* would seem natural are called not *buildings* but *houses* in New York City, there is the additional problem that the structures that are in fact called *buildings* in New York are of a very different shape and character than anything that these informants ever called an *edificio* in Latin America. As these informants showed, the *edificio* was usually either a two- or three-story dwelling for two or three families. Or it was a small but very important structure in the town or city, as shown by the remarks in (8) by informants from Guatemala City and from Santa Catalina, Puerto Rico.

- (8) a. *De mi tierra el edificio más bonito era el Palacio Nacional ... después la Municipalidad otro edificio bonito.* [S # 13, CA, M]
'In my country, the most beautiful building was the National Palace ... after that, City Hall was another pretty building.'

- b. *El único edificio que había en ese campo era el de la escuela.*
[S # 18, PR, F]
'The only building that existed out there in the country was the school.'

This use of *edificio* is not congruent, then, with the imposing tall structures that greeted informants when they arrived in New York City. This is confirmed by the adjectives they used with, and the descriptions they provided for, the objects designated by the contact neologism *bildin*. The area described in (9a) is around 137th Street and Broadway, and in (9b) around 108th Street and Lexington Avenue, both in Manhattan. In (9c) the area described is in Brooklyn:

- (9) a. *Aquel barrio era algo serio, había muchos bones, mucha basura y todos los bildin estaban sucios ...* [S # 10, RD, M]
'That neighborhood was really bad, there were a lot of bums, a lot of garbage, and all the buildings were dirty.'
- b. *Habían muchos hispanos — esos bildin altos — muchos bildin — y muchos hispanos.* [S # 17, PR, F]
'There were many Hispanics — those tall buildings — many buildings, and many Hispanics.'
- c. *Cuando yo vine primero fue en Brooklyn, este ... y cuando yo vi los bildenes quemados ¿tú sabe la impresión que me dio? ... cuando tú entra ya a la ciudad que ve los bildenes quemados y todo feo, horrible, eso bildenes me dieron una impresión mala a mí, ¿sabe?* [S # 22, RD, F]
'When I first came it was in Brooklyn, and ... and when I saw those burned buildings, do you know what impression that made on me? ... when you get into the city you see the buildings all burned out and everything so ugly, horrible, those buildings really made an impression on me, you know.'

These informants seem to show that their alternation between *edificio*, when speaking in Spanish about Latin America, and *bildin* when speaking in Spanish about New York, is caused by the simple fact that they are talking about two different things; that the concepts being expressed are different. In one case they are talking about small, well-kept structures that inspire admiration and respect. In the other they are talking about large structures that inspire repugnance and fear.

Again in the cases in (9), as in the cases involving *lunchroom* and *principal*, the key to the informants' hybridizing behavior is not the topic

of neighborhood or social environment, nor the social meaningfulness of using items from English. Rather, their choice of linguistic form can be explained by the fact that speakers of English in New York City have a conceptualization of architectural structures (or of schools rooms or school employees) that differs considerably from that of speakers of Spanish in Latin America, and that it is these conceptualizations, and not the Latin American ones, that must be used to make sense of life in New York City.

As the domains of a conversation change from work to home, from school to family, from the wider city to the local neighborhood, U. S. Latinos are constantly shifting the situation of their speech, now in a North American context, now in what is in effect a Latin American one. If the line of thought pursued here is correct, this would explain the prevalence of switching, calquing, and borrowing behavior that characterizes some types of Spanish conversations among Latinos in the United States, a behavior that then tends to diminish considerably in other types of conversations.

5. Conceptualizations compared to other predictors

The question should be raised now of the relative strength of these conceptualizations as motivations for the presence of contact neologisms in comparison with other, more traditional sociolinguistic variables. Table 2 presents the results of tests of significance between the contact neologisms produced by respondents of different sex, age, ethnicity and schooling.

Males and females and younger and older respondents do not behave significantly differently in their use of contact neologisms. A one-way analysis of variance also shows that the various national origin groups represented in the sample are likewise not significantly different in their behavior. Schooling also does not make a difference with regard to patterns of contact neologism. A second one-way analysis of variance has shown that those respondents who had only an elementary school education, those that were high school graduates, and those that were college graduates showed no statistically significant differences with re-

Table 2. Contact neologisms by sex, ethnicity, schooling, and age

| | Respondents (N) | Neologisms (%) | Significance |
|------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Sex | | | |
| Female | 16 | .60 | .229 2-tail prob. NS |
| Male | 9 | .45 | |
| Age | | | |
| 33–55 | 20 | .49 | .068 2-tail prob. NS |
| Over 55 | 5 | .77 | |
| Country | | | |
| PR | 11 | .62 | .6337 F prob. NS |
| DR | 7 | .56 | |
| SA | 4 | .36 | |
| CA | 2 | .40 | |
| SP | 1 | .65 | |
| Schooling | | | |
| Elementary | 7 | .67 | .2185 F prob. NS |
| Secondary | 7 | .61 | |
| College | 11 | .43 | |

NS = Not significant

Only probability values of .05 or less are considered to be statistically significant.

gard to contact neologisms. Thus, no variable included in the study made a statistically significant difference in proportion of contact features except the one of cultural context shown in Table 1.

6. Summary

Conversations in Spanish by the same participants speaking with the same interlocutors and dealing with the same set of topics can produce low levels of English-based hybridization when situated in a Latin American context, and high levels when in a North American one. No topic drives the informants to use large numbers of English elements in their Spanish as long as the context is Latin America. And all topics drive them to hybridize as soon as the context is North America.

This generalization applies equally well to speakers of different sexes, ages, nationalities, and levels of education. None of these variables are good predictors of degree of contact, and neither is the topic of conversation. The only good predictor is whether the topic is being placed in one cultural context or the other. Moreover, there is little reason to believe that this influence of the cultural context is mediated by the need to symbolize the fact itself of being situated in one society or the other. Instead, the English features appear to be a response to the fact that the North American situation calls for substantively different conceptualizations than the Latin American one. This interpretation is supported by pair-wise comparisons between referentially similar but conceptually different terms, and by comments spontaneously produced by the informants themselves.

The empirical results reported here are consonant with our speculation that Latinos who speak Spanish in a North American context are, in many conversations, caught in a mismatch of language and culture, and that they resolve the contradiction by holding on to Spanish while expressing the same concepts that are more normally expressed in English (Otheguy – García 1988; Otheguy – García – Fernández 1989). While in many cases this maneuver can be accomplished using traditional Spanish meanings alone, in many instances this becomes impossible, and English meanings have to be imported, either by themselves for lodging within Spanish forms, as in calqued words, or along with their English forms, as in loanwords and switches. It is this process of conceptual adaptation to North American contexts, and not social meaning or personal characteristics, that we continue to regard as the primary motivation for the hybridizing linguistic behavior of speakers of Spanish in the United States, and as the primary explanation for the cross-conversational differences that characterize this behavior.

Notes

1. Evidence that a conceptual factor is also at play in grammatical borrowing is offered by Jagendorf (1988). The conceptual prompt is implicit as well in the notion of *mot juste* given as a motivation for code-switching in Poplack (1987). A less central role is assigned to the conceptual motivation by Samuels (1972: 52, 88 – 94).

2. Differences in the nature and amount of hybridization have been attributed to differences in social meaning by, among others, Gumperz (1982) and Zentella (1981 a). For discussion of contact features arising as discourse strategies see, for example, Zentella (1981 b).
3. There are, however, some scholars who appear to make no distinction between conceptual and linguistic convergence. Nash (1980), in her study of Spanish-influenced English in Puerto Rico, speaks of “reconceptualized English”, and appears to regard reconceptualization as itself a kind of linguistic hybridization. The position of the present work is precisely the opposite. Reconceptualizations can be the trigger for, but are not themselves instances of, language contact.
4. The germ of this idea came from Haugen’s (1938) description of speakers of U. S. Norwegian, who used English loanwords to refer to rivers, cellars, and teachers in Wisconsin but Norwegian words to refer to these when in Norway. Haugen speculated correctly that these adoptions resulted from the informant’s perception that the Wisconsin referents, by the mere fact of being in Wisconsin, were somehow different from the ones in Norway. This appears to be a much more insightful and fruitful line of analysis than the suggestion forty years later (Haugen 1978) that these apparently unjustified loanwords should be considered as a form of cultural laziness.
5. Differences in the nature and amount of hybridization have been explained through sex, age, ethnicity, level of education, and socioeconomic status by Labov (1984), Milroy (1987), and by Poplack – Sankoff – Miller (1988).
6. Research in the River Plate area of South America on contact between Spanish, Standard Italian, and Dialectal Italian has stressed the linguistic correlates of speakers who place themselves now in the village of origin, now in Italy as a whole, now in Montevideo (Barrios – Elizaincín – Mazzolini 1987). This work, however, does not distinguish between topic and cultural context, nor does it offer statistical correlations between cultural context and rates of contact.
7. We prefer the term *calqued word* (Otheguy – García – Fernández 1989) for what were called *loanshifts* by Haugen (1950, 1956), *semantic extensions* by Weinreich (1953), *semantic borrowings* by Ullmann (1957), and a profusion of other names, all variations on these, by students of contact since.
8. The difficulty in making this distinction has been known at least since Weinreich (1953 [1974: 49]).
9. The proviso of “recent” English origin is included, for obvious reasons, to avoid counting as a contact neologism such established words as *fútbol* (< Eng. *football*).

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Creoloid phenomena in the Spanish of transitional bilinguals

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1. Introduction

The study of the non-immigrant varieties of United States Spanish has usually revolved around the combination of nonstandard regional/archaic variants and the penetration of Anglicisms in vocabulary and syntax. From a pedagogical perspective, attention has been directed at spelling, grammatical subtleties such as subjunctive usage and conditional sentences, and elimination of obvious lexical and syntactic Anglicisms. The majority of textbooks and supplementary materials work on the assumption that the Spanish speakers in question are in full control of the basic structures of the language, while hopelessly enmeshed in nonstandard variants which must be dealt with in some fashion. Finally, those few attempts at identifying possible systematic differences between United States Spanish and contemporary dialects in the respective countries of origin have concentrated once more on lexical Anglicisms and on the extension of regional use of certain constructions. The results have been inconclusive, and despite the vast amount of research and materials produced for bilingual education and proficiency testing programs, there is no consensus as to the routes of evolution of the Spanish language in the United States, or of the methods of classifying degrees of abilities among U. S. Spanish speakers.¹ Outside of the U. S., the opinion is general that nearly all forms of U. S. Spanish are in some way distinguished from Spanish as spoken in monolingual regions, in fashions attributed to the incursions of English as well as to the inferior sociolinguistic position of Spanish vis-à-vis English. Objective studies carried out within the U. S. reveal a much wider range of variation, whose highest level is indistinguishable from Spanish as spoken throughout Latin America, and some enthusiastic defenders of U. S. Spanish have even gone to the (scientifically unsustainable) extreme of claiming that no essential differences are found between *any* varieties of U. S. Spanish and those found in other