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## 5 Speaking in Cuban

### *The language of Cuban Americans*

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### Transculturación

There is perhaps no better way to develop an understanding of Cuban Americans than to start with the notions of *transculturation* and *neoculturation*, two interrelated theoretical constructs introduced by the Cuban ethnologist Ortiz in his monumental study *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y del Azúcar* (1940/1978). Though Ortiz's study focused on Cuban society, his two concepts have universal import and are explicitly offered in sharp contrast to the notion of *acculturation* that characterizes European American approaches to the study of ethnolinguistic contact and change:

We understand that the word *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the transitive process of one culture to another, because this consists of not only acquiring a different culture, which is really what the Anglo-American word *acculturation* means, but the process also necessarily implies the loss or lack of hold of a first culture, that which can be called a partial *deculturation*, and it also points to the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena that could be called *neoculturation*. In effect, as the Malinowski school claims, in all embraces of cultures there is something of what happens in the genetic copulation of individuals: the child always has something of both progenitors, but it is always different from each of them. (p. 96, our translation)

The core of Cubaness adds Ortiz, rests upon a prehistorical as well as historical process of repeated transculturations and their resulting neoculturations. First, there was the transculturation of the paleolithic natives, Ciboneyes and Guanajabibes, into Neolithic Tainos. Then, with incredible speed, Taino culture disappeared in the aftermath of the tumultuous arrival of Europeans from Andalusia, Castile, Galicia, Catalonia, the Basque provinces, Portugal, Genoa, and Florence, who were soon joined by Levantines and Berbers. Soon, Blacks of Guinean and Congo background arrived from Spain. Then, from all over Africa, came waves of Yorubas, Mandingos, Hausas, and Dahomeans. Finally, the English, North Americans, Chinese, and Jews arrived in Cuba. Initially, none of these newcomers, whether White or Black, Spanish speakers or

The title of this chapter mirrors that of *Dreaming in Cuban*, the best-selling novel by Maria Cristina Garcia (1992). The chapter is based on Garcia and Otheguy (1988).

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not, were committed to remaining in Cuba, feeling that they were only transients who had been temporarily thrown together in a place that lacked any prior cultural or linguistic definition. In time, however, they all remained and contributed to the waves of Cuban transculturations.

In the prologue to Ortiz's (1940/1978) *Contrapunteo*, the renowned anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski explains Ortiz's use of transculturation:

What is essential in the process that we're trying to define is that it is not a passive adaptation to a cultural standard that is rigid and defined. . . . It is a process in which both parts of the equation are modified. A process in which a new reality emerges, compounded and complex; a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of characters, *nor even a mosaic*, but a new phenomenon, original and independent (p. 4, our translation)

Transculturation and its attendant neoculturation not only surpass the implications of European American acculturation but even go beyond the more contemporary ideas of *multiculturalism* and *pluralism*, a mosaic of cultures, a salad bowl. Ortiz's transculturation implies a new reality that is like neither of the old components but preserves elements of both. Cubans in the United States have embodied this concept in their way of life and their use of language, creating in the process a new Cuban American cultural and linguistic reality.

The new Cuban American identity is simply one more in the long history of transculturated Cuban identities. Transculturation, including neoculturation, has long been evident in Cuban music and religion. Cuban music is best known for its mixture of Spanish and African rhythms, which has given rise to the *rumba*, the *conga*, and the *guarancó*, sung in Spanish lyrics interspersed with words from African languages. Musical transculturation is even more noticeable in the work of the Cuban composer and pianist Ernesto Lecuona, known not only for *Siboney*, which evokes aboriginal sounds, but also for *Malagueña*, reminiscent of Peninsular Spanish rhythms, and *Canto Carabali*, filled with African accents.

Religion in Cuba shows considerable evidence of transculturation. Although most Cubans are Catholics, there are also many believers in the Yoruba-based religion known as *Santería*. Significantly, many Cubans believe in both Catholicism and *Santería*, and the images of the mother of Christ and of the saints are also images of African *orichas*. For example, the image of the Blessed Mother that Cubans claim as their patron, the Virgin of Charity, known in Spanish as the *Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre*, is syncretized into the African goddess *Ochún*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* derives her name from the sanctuary of Cobre in eastern Cuba. She is usually portrayed as a mulatto floating peacefully above a turbulent sea, looking down benevolently on a boat in which three desperate fishermen beg

Similarly, the patron of the port of Havana, the *Virgen de Regla*, is also the Yoruba goddess *Yemayá*. In neoculturated Cuba, the procession that takes place on her feast day in the town of Regla is led by a Catholic priest, but the faithful march to the tune of African rhythms produced on three *batás*, the Yoruba liturgical drums, and of *oriki* melodies sung in the Cuban variety of the Yoruba language, known as *Lucumí*.

Transculturation and neoculturation have also long been evident in the language Cubans speak. Throughout the colonial period but especially in the nineteenth century, Spanish in Cuba was in deep contact with a number of West African languages whose grammatical structures and sound systems were quite different from those of Spanish. Throughout the period, many Cuban Blacks spoke a form of Spanish known as *habla bozal*, which exhibited many African elements (Granda, 1971; Otheguy, 1973). Some of the features of *habla bozal* are still found in the speech of some Cubans (Ortiz López, 1998).

Speaking in Cuban in the United States today, then, has to be understood in the context of a process of Cuban transculturation that took place prior to and only partially connected with the contact between Cuban and North American societies and between the Spanish and English languages. As Cubans grow stronger and more rooted in the United States, especially in the South Florida area of Miami-Dade County, their centuries-old experience of transculturation has paved the way for the creation of an original and independent way of being that is distinct from its Cuban and American components and is expressed in more than simply Cuban Spanish or American English.

### Cubans in the United States

Since the end of the eighteenth century, an important agent of Cuban transculturation has been U.S. society itself, whose impact on Cuban and Cuban American culture has long been considerable at all levels. (For a study of the presence of English in Cuba in the past and present, see Corona & Garcia, 1996.) This impact stems not only from the extensive U.S. commercial and military presence in Cuba at a number of different points in the island's history but also from the continuous presence of Cubans in the United States since the nineteenth century.

The central works of early Cuban literature in the nineteenth century were written by Cuban exiles in the United States. The most important Cuban novel of the 1800s, *Cecilia Valdés*, was written by Cirilo Villaverde in New York. Much of the towering prose and exquisite poetry of José Martí, the famous patriot, prolific writer, and initiator of

to be spared the horrors of the storm. The three fishermen represent Cuban transculturation, one of them being Black and the other two, Indians.

the first independent Latin American literary movement, *modernismo*, was also written in the United States in the late nineteenth century. The cities that came alive in Martí's essays were not Havana or Santiago but Manhattan and Brooklyn. The beach in the famous verses of "Los Zapaticos de Rosa" was not Varadero, Santa María del Mar, or any other Cuban beach, but Newport, Rhode Island (Otheguy, 1990).

The years around the turn of the twentieth century were witness to the boom in the cigar-making industry in Tampa, the Spanish American War, the first occupation of Cuba by the United States, the first independent Cuban government, and the second North American occupation of the island. These events caused close to 56,000 Cubans to move to the United States between 1896 and 1910. By the latter part of the nineteenth century approximately 100,000 people of Cuban origin were living in New York and in the Florida cities of Tampa and Key West (Pérez, 1986).

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Cuban immigration to the United States was steady but slow, with an increase in the period 1951–1958, when 63,000 Cubans fled Fulgencio Batista's regime (Pérez, 1986). Another, even sharper, increase in the number of arrivals occurred after the revolution that gave Fidel Castro control of the Cuban government in January 1959.

The Cuban exodus to the United States since 1959 been highly episodic. Since Llanes (1982) described the three large waves of arrivals, there has been a significant fourth wave. The first wave, arriving between 1959 and the missile crisis of 1962, carried approximately 248,070 people who were mostly White and well educated. By 1961 the Kennedy administration had established the Cuban Refugee Program, providing these early-arriving Cubans with help in the form of food, clothing, resettlement services, and loans. In the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis, from 1962 to 1965, only 56,000 Cubans arrived in the United States, coming mostly through third countries or clandestinely in small boats. Released prisoners from the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, and their families, made up another 6,000 arrivals during this interlude (Boswell & Curtis, 1983).

In September 1965, the Cuban government announced that it would allow Cubans in the United States to pick up relatives from the port of Camarioca. By December, both countries had agreed to an orderly airlift. The two daily Freedom Flights as they came to be known in the United States, carried approximately 302,000 Cubans (Boswell & Curtis, 1983). This second wave was racially and socially more heterogeneous than the first. It comprised many more working- and middle-class Cubans, 24% of whom were Black or Asian. By 1973 the Freedom Flights were brought to a halt. Between 1973 and 1980 only 50,000 Cubans arrived in the United States, mostly through third countries.

The third wave was initiated when thousands of Cubans took refuge in the Peruvian Embassy in Havana in April 1980. These events eventually led to the Cuban government's authorizing a boatlift from Mariel, a small port city west of Havana. The 125,000 Cubans who arrived in the United States during this episode included more Blacks, younger single males, unskilled and manual laborers, and many whom the Cuban government regarded as undesirable (mental patients, people with criminal records, and, according to some reports, homosexuals). Months before the boatlift started, the U.S. Congress had passed The Refugee Act of 1980, which required Cubans to prove that they were victims of political persecution before being granted automatic refugee status.

The fourth wave was initiated in July 1994 with the exodus of an additional 37,000 Cubans, known as *balseros* for the rudimentary rafts on which many of them sailed. Eighty-four percent of this group was male, and 31% was either Black or mulatto. During this episode, President Bill Clinton terminated a 30-year-old policy that had given Cuban immigrants preferential treatment, sending all rafters to camps in Panama and Guantánamo, from which they were not released until after 1995. To halt another massive influx of *balseros* during the summer of 1995, Cuba and the United States held extensive bilateral talks, leading to an agreement under which the United States committed to admitting 20,000 new immigrants from Cuba each year for an unspecified period.

Cuban Americans in the United States today are an extremely heterogeneous group, racially, economically, and linguistically. In October 1997, four Cuban Americans made national headlines, each representing one facet of the Cuban American community. The Florida Marlins won Major League Baseball's World Series behind their most valuable player, a Black Cuban named Liván Hernández, who at the time had been in the United States for only 2 years. In a televised interview after winning the first game of the World Series, Hernández spoke in Spanish through an interpreter. Just weeks before, Roberto Goizueta, the enormously wealthy and fabulously successful president and chief executive officer of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company, died of lung cancer. Goizueta had attended U.S. high schools and colleges in the 1950s and had lived in the United States since the early 1960s. That same week, Luis Felipe, a young Cuban who had come to the United States during the 1980 Mariel boatlift and who according to New York authorities had gone on to become the leader of the fearsome Latin Kings gang, was sentenced to solitary confinement for ordering murders from jail. And Gloria Estefan, the immensely popular lead singer of the Miami Sound Machine, who with her English-language *Conga* has contributed to the transculturation not just of Cubans and Cuban Americans but of the entire U.S. society, found herself embroiled in controversy for supporting

the right of artists residing in Cuba to perform in the United States. Hernández, Goizueta, Felipe, and Estefan all represent the cultural and linguistic continuum that embodies the transculturation of Cuban Americans.

### Sociodemographic characteristics

In 1990 there were 1,053,197 Cubans in the United States, which means that in fact 1 of every 10 Cubans was a U.S. resident (Castellanos, 1990, p. 50). The characteristics of Cuban Americans reported in the 1990 census yield information of considerable relevance to the development of educational and social policy. Almost three fourths of Cuban Americans were born in Cuba (a small number were born in Spain or other countries), only 28% having been born in the United States. In 1990, 26% of those who were Cuban born had entered the United States in the immediately preceding decade. Almost 90% of Cubans spoke Spanish at home, and almost half (49%) claimed in 1990 not to speak English well. The majority of Cuban Americans, about 65%, lived in the state of Florida, most of them in Miami-Dade County (Boswell, 1994). The strength of Spanish among Cuban Americans thus stems from three factors: the predominance among them of the Cuban born, the continuous flow of immigration from the island, and the fact that Cuban Americans have congregated primarily in Miami-Dade County. This area was much smaller when Cuban Americans began settling, allowing them to become a significant proportion of the population and to turn Miami into a heavily Spanish-speaking area (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992).

The comparison with other Latino groups offered in Table 1 shows that in 1990 Cuban Americans were the oldest Hispanic group in the United States and the group with the highest median family income. More Cubans than Mexican Americans and Puerto Rican Americans were foreign born (i.e., Cuban born), and approximately the same proportion of Cuban Americans and of the more recently arrived Dominicans, Central Americans, and South Americans were foreign born. More Cuban Americans than Mexican Americans and Puerto Rican Americans spoke Spanish at home, and their English language ability was less than that of these two groups.

Although the Cuban American community still labors under serious economic difficulties, particularly when compared with the United States population as a whole, Cuban Americans have had more success than other Latinos in achieving economic incorporation into North American society. For the most part, this success stems from the greater racial, social, and class congruence between the Cubans of the early

TABLE 1. A COMPARISON OF NATIVITY, ENGLISH ABILITY, AGE, AND MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME OF CUBAN AMERICANS AND OTHER LATINO GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1990

Characteristic	Cuban Americans		Mexican Americans		Puerto Ricans		Dominican Americans	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Native born	298,481	28	8,933,371	67	2,618,963	99	153,078	29
Foreign born	754,716	72	4,459,837	33	32,852	1	367,073	71
All	1,053,197		13,393,208		2,651,815		520,151	
Speak a non-English language	890,183	89	9,054,572	77	1,920,231	81	442,719	94
Do not speak English well	484,106	48	4,60,389	39	794,283	34	281,491	60
Median age (years)	39		24		26		28	
Median family income (dollars)	32,417		24,119		21,941		19,726	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990).

waves and the power groups in the United States (García & Otheguy, 1985, 1988). There is also evidence that the economic success of Cuban Americans is due to the large number of workers per family. The percentage of Cuban American women in the labor force is higher than that of female workers in the U.S. population as a whole (Pérez, 1986).

Another important factor in the relative success of Cuban Americans has been their concentration in Miami-Dade County, where they have established enclaves that provide economic and social support. Cuban Americans of the first two waves quickly created their own Cuban-owned and Cuban-run enterprises, which provided jobs for other Cuban Americans, who in turn became the customers of these Cuban American businesses (Portes & Bach, 1985).

In addition, the evidence suggests that Cuban Americans owe a large part of their success to having turned a deaf ear to the notion that assimilation and dispersion are the keys to success. A comparison of Cubans with other Latinos, yields a telling negative correlation between English language skills and income levels (García, 1995) and an even more telling negative correlation between settlement outside the original ethnic enclave and economic success. Instead, Cuban Americans have been able to use their adherence to the Spanish language and to the Miami-Dade area to create a relatively successful group with, in Ortiz's terms, a *neocultural identity* in a United States context.

Despite their relative success, Cuban Americans have experienced downward occupational mobility (Fradd, 1983). Even though a higher proportion of Cuban Americans than of all other Latino groups work in managerial and professional occupations, the modal occupational status of Cuban Americans is still that of blue-collar workers. (Of all Cuban Americans in the labor force in 1990, 23% were working as managers, compared with 20% of South Americans, 17% of Puerto Rican Americans, 12% of Mexican Americans, and 11% of Dominican Americans.)

In short, Cuban Americans are a highly successful group relative to other Latinos but in many ways continue to be a struggling minority that is not completely incorporated structurally into U.S. society. Moreover, Cubans have succeeded in the United States in part simply because they are escapees from a Communist revolution that initially pushed out onto North American shores a large pool of highly educated, highly skilled professionals who, in the mostly small-town environment of Dade County, succeeded in exploiting to their advantage not only their skills but also their status as welcome allies of North American power groups.

## Geographic concentration: Havana USA

Cuban Americans live mostly in four states. In 1990, 65% (674, 052) lived in Florida, 8% (85, 378) in New Jersey, 7% (74, 345) in New York, and 7% (71, 977) in California. Other states that had a significant number of Cuban Americans in 1990 were Illinois, with 18,204, and Texas, with 18,195. More than half of all Cuban Americans (56%) live in Florida's Miami-Dade County, and an additional 15% live in the metropolitan area of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut (Boswell, 1994b).

In an effort to disperse the Cuban American population throughout the United States, the Cuban Refugee Program, established in February 1961 under the U.S. secretary of health, education and welfare, mounted a massive resettlement program. By 1978, approximately 470,000 Cubans had been resettled (Portes & Bach, 1985). The program turned out to be a failure, as the resettled Cubans worked their way back to the three focal points of Florida, New York, and New Jersey, which, when the dust settled, had ended up with close to 80% of the Cubans who had arrived in the country between 1970 and 1978. Of the 125,000 Cubans of the 1980 Mariel period, 60% settled in Miami-Dade County. The ingathering of the resettled Cubans has focused increasingly on Miami-Dade County. Since 1978 there has been a steady decline in the Cuban American populations of New York and New Jersey and a corresponding increase in that of Miami-Dade. About 40% of Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade County have lived in other parts of the United States (Boswell & Curtis, 1983).

The towns of West New York and Union City cover a large part of the northern section of New Jersey's Hudson County. The settlement of Cuban Americans in West New York started in the 1960s. By 1970 over a third of West New York's total population of 40,666 was of Cuban origin. In 1978, almost two thirds of the population was Latino, with Cubans constituting the vast majority (Rogg & Cooney, 1980). Although in 1990 West New York was three fourths Hispanic, with Cubans representing 32% of the total population, by 1998 Cubans were no longer the majority of the Hispanic population, representing only 45% of Latinos. Union City has experienced the same phenomenon. Although it was three fourths Cuban in the 1970s, in 1990 it was still three fourths Latino, but in 1998 Cubans represented only one fourth of that population.

Cuban Americans have thus reversed the dispersal experience of Mexican and Puerto Rican Americans, increasingly returning to what they perceive to be their home, a U.S. Cuban American city, Miami-Dade. In 1970 only 46% of all Cuban Americans lived in metropolitan Miami, but by 1994 that figure had increased to 54% percent (Boswell, 1994b).

Miami-Dade County, referred to by García (1996) as "Havana USA," has held a great deal of attraction not only for the nation's Cuban Americans but for other Latinos as well. In 1960, only 5% of Miami-Dade's population was of Latino descent, but by 1995 that proportion had risen to 55% (Fradd & Boswell, 1996, p. 285; García & Díaz, 1992, p. 15). The growth of the Latino population in Miami-Dade County, Florida, is displayed in Table 2.

Miami-Dade has the highest percentage of foreign-born residents among all counties in the United States and the largest metropolitan population density of Spanish speakers, being second in absolute numbers of Hispanic population only to Los Angeles (García & Díaz, 1992, p. 14). In 1990 the Hispanics of Miami-Dade were concentrated in the municipalities of Sweetwater (which is 93% Latino), Hialeah (88%), Hialeah Gardens (82%), West Miami (79%), and Islandia (77%) (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990).

Miami-Dade, with a Cuban-origin population of 563,979 in 1990, was second only to Havana in the number of persons of Cuban descent. Cuban Americans in Miami constituted two thirds of all Latinos and a fourth of all residents. In 1990 Cubans were followed in number in Miami-Dade by Nicaraguans and then Colombians (Castellanos, 1990, p. 50). Havana USA has had Cuban American mayors in all its large municipalities. The annual Calle Ocho Festival, a March carnival that takes place along the main street in the section of Miami known as Little Havana, attracts over a million revelers each year.

Despite the relative success of many Cuban Americans, there are many problems in Miami-Dade, including the feelings of animosity against Cubans felt by significant segments of both the White and Black population, feelings that often take the form of negative attitudes toward the Spanish language. Castro (1992) refers to Miami-Dade as "the birthplace of the contemporary English Only movement" (p. 151). In 1973, the Board of Commissioners for metropolitan Miami-Dade County passed a resolution that declared the county a "bilingual and bi-

TABLE 2. HISPANIC-ORIGIN POPULATION IN DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, 1990

Year	Total Population	Hispanic population	% Hispanic
1950	495,000	20,000	4
1960	935,000	50,000	5
1970	1,268,000	299,000	24
1980	1,626,000	581,000	35
1990	1,937,000	953,000	43
1995	2,057,000	1,134,000	55

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1990).

cultural county, where Spanish language is considered the second official language" (Castro, 1992, p. 173). But on November 4, 1980, more than 59% of voters approved an antibilingual ordinance barring the expenditure of county funds on Spanish-medium activities and requiring that "all county governmental meetings, hearings and publications" be in English. The referendum obtained a "yes" vote from 71% of Whites, 44% of Blacks, and 15% of Hispanics. In 1989 an amendment to Florida's constitution made English the state's official language (García & Díaz, 1992, p. 15).

### The languages of Cuban Americans

The use of Spanish in Miami-Dade is widespread. Resnick (1988), Castellanos (1990), and Roca (1991) have shown that Spanish is prevalent in the public domain. Castellanos reports that in health settings, banks, government institutions, workplaces, and businesses Spanish is widely used. For example, more than 60% of second-generation Cuban Americans report speaking Spanish at least some of the time with doctors (p. 53). At work, bilingual communication is the norm with colleagues, with English spoken only to superiors. Although inter-administrative functions take place in English, in banks and government institutions, services are offered in both English and Spanish (Castellanos, 1990). And even in schools, where Spanish is sometimes formally absent, there is a high frequency of bilingual usage among teachers and students, even those who are second-generation Cubans (p. 55).

An important study by Fradd and Boswell (1996) has shown the importance of Spanish as an economic resource in Miami. Ninety-six percent of the businesses surveyed indicated the need for a bilingual workforce, and more than a quarter claimed that their employees simply did not have the bilingual skills needed for future economic growth (p. 310).

The Spanish media boom in Miami is startling. There are more Spanish media in Miami than in Los Angeles and New York City combined (Fradd & Boswell, 1996, p. 290). The *Miami Herald* started a Spanish language supplement in late 1976, but in 1987 *El Nuevo Herald*, a distinct paper with professional editors and distinguished writers, came into being. By 1990 *El Nuevo Herald*, under Cuban American publisher Roberto Suárez, had a daily circulation of over 100,000. There are ten Spanish language radio stations in South Florida, among them WQAB, *La Cubanísima* (the Cubanest); WFAB, *La Fabulosa*; and WRHC, *Cadena Azul*. There are three Spanish language television stations in South Florida: WLTW, Channel 23, an affiliate of the Spanish

International Network, later renamed Univisión; Channel 51, the Miami affiliate of the Hispanic Broadcasting Network (now Telemundo); and Channel 40, an independent station known as TeleMiami (García, 1996, pp. 106–108).

In 1990, almost 90% of Cuban Americans spoke Spanish at home, and almost half of those who did claimed not to speak English very well. Although the Cuban American community uses Spanish at home more and is more monolingual than other Latino groups, it has clearly started to edge away from the Spanish end of the bilingual continuum, with the Dominican and Central American communities now showing more Spanish monolingualism (see Table 1).

The still-strong presence of Spanish among Cuban Americans has much to do with the economically viable ethnic enclaves in which they live and work. Because of the enclaves' unusual beginnings as beachheads for professional and entrepreneurial refugees rather than for poor immigrants, the Cuban *barrios* in Miami have generated the economic and personal resources that other Latino settlements have found difficult to produce. Castellanos (1990) gives the example of weekly credit meetings at a Miami bank that have to be translated into Spanish because the chairman of the board does not know English.

Nevertheless, a study of second-generation Cuban Americans reveals that 80% of them prefer to use English instead of Spanish in everyday conversation (Portes & Schaufli, 1993). And Castellanos (1990) reveals that over three fourths of second-generation Cuban Americans use both languages at home. Castellanos observes that second-generation Cuban Americans show a register restriction in Spanish that does not exist in English. García and Díaz (1992) show that among Cuban American youths, English is encroaching on Spanish even in the intimate family domain, especially among siblings.

Although Cuban American youths in Miami-Dade hear more Spanish in public domains than do other U.S. Latino youngsters, they seldom travel to Cuba or other parts of Latin America and are therefore seldom in situations in which they are forced to speak Spanish. For the most part, Cuban Americans interact bilingually in a bilingual city where they can usually be understood regardless of the language they use. Although their receptive bilingual ability may last longer intergenerationally than that of other Latino groups in the United States, their productive bilingual ability may indeed be even less stable than that of their Mexican American and Puerto Rican American counterparts.

The point is worth stressing. Cuban Americans, especially young ones born in the United States, have only in very few cases ever gone back to Cuba, since their families and often they themselves regard the present Cuban government as an illegitimate usurper and Cuba as a place to be avoided. The harsh U.S. government embargo on all types of transac-

tions with Cuba, combined with entry visa requirements on the part of the Cuban government, makes travel to Cuba by Cuban Americans cumbersome. Therefore, even though constant waves of new arrivals replenish Miami's ranks of monolingual Spanish speakers, most young Cuban Americans have had contact with Spanish only in the United States and thus have never had the experience of being in a country where Spanish is the sole language of power and prestige. For them Spanish only is truly the language of the past, the language of *la Cuba de ayer*, in the familiar plaintive phrase of Miami exiles.

### Speaking in Cuban

More than second- and third-generation Mexican Americans and Puerto Rican Americans, Cuban Americans see Spanish and English bilingualism as the norm. This is due to two factors. First, the greater socioeconomic power of Latinos in Miami-Dade gives the Spanish language a greater role in public and official life than in any other U.S. context. Second, these second- and third-generation Cuban Americans, isolated geographically in the Florida peninsula, have little familiarity with monolingual contexts of language use. They know neither the English monolingual context that is the norm in most settings in the United States nor the Spanish monolingual context that is the norm in their country of origin. Young Cuban Americans thus have little need to speak either solely in English or solely in Spanish.

The sociolinguistic context of Cuban Americans is therefore different from that of Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, and other language minorities in the United States. This context reinforces and assures maintenance of receptive bilingual ability across generations yet weakens productive ability in Spanish.

Reinforcing the sociolinguistic context are the stirrings of transculturation that animate the heart of Cuban identity. Just as those who arrived in Cuba centuries earlier through involuntary or voluntary immigration felt that they were transients in a place with no cultural definition, the Cubans who arrived in Dade County in the early 1960s felt that they were in the United States only temporarily. Dade County was then a rural and underdeveloped context, best known for Miami Beach, where the elderly gathered only for the summer. In over four decades, the process of transculturation has taken hold of Miami-Dade and its communities, not only those of Cuban American descent but also those of other Latinos, African Americans, Jews, and Anglos.

An understanding of intergenerational speaking in Cuban in Miami-Dade might require a reexamination of the traditional concept of

*diglossia* (Fishman, 1967) in this special transcultural context.<sup>2</sup> Writing about the Indian subcontinent, Sridhar (1997) explains that code mixing with English, which is pervasive not only in speech but also in written documents, may actually serve to strengthen the other languages of the subcontinent. Most Indians are not literate in the languages they speak, and they do not use all their languages in their repertoire in all domains. Likewise, young second- and third-generation Cuban Americans are only partially bilingual, having better receptive than productive bilingual skills and often lacking literacy in Spanish. The transcultural and bilingual context of Miami-Dade may be enough to maintain this partial bilingual competence even though full bilingual maintenance and especially biliteracy cannot be supported intergenerationally.

### The Spanish of Cuban Americans

The Spanish of Cuban Americans reflects the general characteristics of the Spanish of Cuba. It is usually classified by dialectologists as a form of Caribbean Spanish, a variety that includes the three Antillean islands as well as the coastal areas of Mexico, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela.<sup>3</sup> Along with many other of what are sometimes called *coastal* varieties of Spanish, such as those of the River Plate area, Caribbean Spanish is noted for the word- and syllable-final pronunciation of the phoneme /s/ in alternants that include a glottal and a dental/velar realization, [h] and [s]. This phenomenon, widespread and widely noted in Spanish, is observed in the interior of such words as *esto* (this), *cuesta* (it costs), and *basta* (enough), and in nominal and verbal suffixes in words such as *casas* (houses) and *tienes* (you have). Caribbean Spanish is also noted for certain morphosyntactic phenomena, for example, the overt expression of subject pronouns at rates that are statistically higher than those observed in other regions, especially in first- and second-person contexts such as *yo tengo* versus *tengo* (I have), and *tú tienes* versus *tienes* (you have).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Diglossia refers to the specialization of languages for different communicative domains and purposes in multilingual settings. In highly diglossic settings, one language is used for one purpose (say, family or church) and another language for a different purpose (say, business or commerce). In less diglossic settings, more than one language is used in the same domains and for the same functions (say, two languages used both at home and in public domains).

<sup>3</sup> Surveys of Caribbean Spanish are available in López Morales (1992), Lipski (1994), and Zamora Munné and Guitart (1982). Discussions of the features of Cuban Spanish can be found in López Morales (1971), Ruiz Hernández and Miyares Bermúdez (1984), Paz Pérez (1988), and Valdés Bernal (1986).

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of this feature in the Caribbean in general, see Cameron (1996) and Morales (1997). For a discussion of this trait in Cuba and among Cuban Americans, see Lipski (1996).

Within the Caribbean, Guitart (1978) has distinguished four phonological phenomena that, though not exclusive to Spanish in Cuba, are often regarded as typical of Cuba and form part of the Spanish spoken by Cubans in Miami-Dade:

1. segment deletion, for example, [ma] for /más/, más (more)
2. segment-internal changes, for example, [sekka] for /serka/, cerca (near)
3. epenthesis or the addition of segments, for example, [fuiestes] for /fuieste/, fuiste (you went)
4. metathesis or the transposition of segments, for example, [delen] for /denle/, denle (give him)

For the second generation of Cuban Americans, Varela (1992) has identified the following additional phonetic traits, which are generally not found among Cubans on the island:

1. the use of [v] as a variant of /b/, particularly in words spelled with a v, such as *vamos* (we go), a pronunciation not found in other varieties of Spanish
2. the pronunciation of /r/ and /rr/ with a palatal point of articulation, as in English
3. the use of schwa, especially in the article *la*, and the use of /æ/ for /o/, for example, [l] for /la/, *la*, (the) and [æk-tu-bre] for /ok-tu-bre/, *octubre* (October)

With regard to morphosyntax, the Spanish of Cuba fits not only within the broad region of Caribbean Spanish but shares most of its features with the Spanish of wider areas of Latin American and Spain. Cuban Spanish is like that of Latin American but unlike that of Spain in its lack of a fifth person in the verbal paradigm, an innovation that is now centuries old. Cubans, like all Latin Americans, say *tieneen* whereas Spaniards say *tenéis* (you [plural] have). Again in common with Latin America but in contrast to Spain, Cuban Spanish displays a conservative pronominal paradigm in the expression of direct and indirect objects, eschewing still-substandard innovations that are common in Peninsular dialects. Thus Cubans go along with the general standard in saying *le dije* (I told her) whereas many popular varieties in Spain commonly say *la dije*. And Cuba, along with the rest of the Caribbean, Spain, Mexico, and sections of the rest of Latin America, adheres to the general standard usage of second-person pronoun *tú*, as in *tú tienes* (you [singular] have) when many Central and South Americans use *vos*, as in *vos tenés* (you have).

Varela (1992) mentions several additional usages that are characteristic of Cuban Americans and that are generally not found in the Spanish



of the island. Some of these usages, which in some cases may represent structural influences of English on the Spanish of Cuban Americans, are also in some cases parallel to usages noted in other U.S. Hispanic communities, such as those in the Spanish of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles (Silva-Corvalán, 1994). Among the most prevalent of the Cuban American innovations recorded by Varela are:

1. omission of the definite article, for example, *Carne es buena para la salud* where Cubans would say *La carne es buena para la salud* (Meat is good for your health);
2. addition of the indefinite article to the attribute, for example, *Es una cubana* where Cubans would say *Es cubana* (She's Cuban);
3. change in the order of the adjective and noun, for example, *La Suprema Corte* where Cubans would say *La Corte Suprema* (The Supreme Court);
4. lack of agreement of the adjective and the noun, for example, *El y ella están felices* (He and she are happy);
5. confusion between the preterite and the imperfect, for example, *Era un placer conversar contigo el lunes* where Cubans would say *Fue un placer conversar contigo el lunes* (It was a pleasure speaking with you Monday);
6. the substitution of the indicative for the subjunctive, for example, *Espero que vendrá hoy* where Cubans would say *Espero que venga hoy* (I hope he will come today);
7. the idiosyncratic use of the gerund, for example, *La ley condenando el aborto* where Cubans would say *La ley que condena el aborto* (The law condemning abortion); and
8. the omission of, the addition of, and changes in prepositions, for example, *Se atreve mirarme* where Cubans would say *Se atreve a mirarme* (He dares to look at me).

Young Cuban Americans express a less strict attitude toward Spanish than the older, first generation does. Olimpia Rosado, author since 1977 of the well-known column in *El Diario Las Américas*, "¿Conoce Ud. su idioma?" is in her nineties and appears to have no successor of comparable status. Since 1980 many Cuban American writers have begun to write in both Spanish and English. Fernández, perhaps the best known of the new generation of Cuban American writers, published *La Vida es un Especial* (1981), *La Montaña Rusa* (1985), and *Raining Backwards* (1988). Ethnolinguistic identity and the use of language becomes the focus of the work of this generation of Cuban American writers. In a poem entitled "Dedication," Pérez-Firmat (1995) explains the subject of his poetry:

how to explain to you  
that I  
don't belong to English  
though I belong nowhere else,  
if not here  
in English.

The bestseller by García (1992), *Dreaming in Cuban*, also displays features of the transculturation revealed by Pérez-Firmat's use of prepositions. In the words of the poet, Cuban Americans do not belong "to" English, although they are "in" English, an English that they, with sounds of Spanish, are making their own.

In general, speaking in Cuban involves speaking Spanish or English while transferring or replicating features of the other language. In addition to features associated with morphosyntax, such as those noted by Varela (1992), García and Otheguy (1988) identify three kinds of English-origin innovations in the Spanish of Cuban Americans.

1. *Loanwords* bring both a form and a meaning from the donor language, usually adapting the form of the word, to some degree, to the phonology and morphology of the host language. In the case of Cuban Americans, the donor language is usually English and the host language Spanish, but loans from Spanish to English are also found. Examples are *Tengo oportunidad de hacer overtime* (pronounced [oBertain]) (I have a chance to work overtime) and *I'm watching my libras* (I am watching my pounds).
2. *Code switches* involve the use in the host language of usually multiword sequences from the donor language, generally without adapting them to the phonology or structure of the host. That is, code switching does not involve the introduction of a linguistic element from one language into another but the alternating use of both.<sup>5</sup> The conversation in the following example has to do with cheerleading:

*Porque unas veces nos fajamos, tú sabes, no somos we don't agree on one thing, y todo el mundo quiere ser lo que quiere, y no puede ser. Y si queremos be, to be good, we would have to agree on one thing, y no es así.* (Because sometimes we fight, you know, we're not, we don't agree on one thing, and everybody wants to be the way they want to be, and that can't be. And if we want to be good, we would have to agree on one thing, and that's not the way it works.) (Otheguy, García, & Fernández, p. 43)

3. *Calques* are meanings taken from words in the donor language that have been borrowed without their corresponding word forms and

5 For a thorough study of code switching in another U.S. Latino community, see Zentella's masterful study of Puerto Ricans in New York, *Growing up Bilingual* (1997).

that have come to be lodged in word forms of the host language. Again, Cuban Americans usually calque the meaning of English words onto the forms of Spanish words, but the inverse process also occurs. Words that have suffered this kind of change are often said to have undergone a *semantic extension*. Examples are *Está corriendo para alcalde* (He's running for mayor), where Cubans on the island would be more likely to say *Se ha postulado para alcalde*; and *Is it my turn to rob?* (said during a card game), where monolingual English-speaking North Americans are more likely to say *Is it my turn to draw?*<sup>6</sup>

The particular pattern of appearance of loanwords, code switches, and calques in the Spanish of Cuban Americans gives some hint as to the future of Spanish in this community. Weinreich (1953/1974) suggested that whereas situations of language shift are characterized by loans and code switching (p. 109), stable bilingualism is marked by calquing. The importance of calques as a differentiating factor between the generations points to elements of stability in the bilingualism of the second-generation Cuban Americans. In a statistical study on the Spanish of the Cuban American community of West New York, Otheguy, García, and Fernández (1989) have shown that although loanwords are much more prevalent than calques in the Spanish of Cuban Americans, what distinguishes the Spanish of the second generation from that of the first is the increased use of calques in the second.<sup>7</sup>

A distinction that is relevant to an understanding of the Spanish of Cuban Americans is that between word-scope and phrase-scope calquing. Word-scope calquing refers to using words from the host lan-

<sup>6</sup> García and Otheguy (1987) made reference to their New York-born 10-year-old son's using the calque in the last example, *Is it my turn to rob?* during a card game. Ten years later, the authors were faced with another 10-year-old, their third daughter, again born and raised in New York, who was recently heard asking the same question to a perplexed Anglophone uncle: *Is it my turn to rob?* Emma, our 10-year-old, often gets herself into trouble with that uncle. Once after having dinner at his house and while still sitting at the table, she asked him, "*Can I get up?*" He was totally confused. Of course, Emma is used to asking her parents in Spanish after dinner: *¿Me puedo levantar?* in the context where an English-monolingual child might have said *May I be excused?* But Emma apparently wants to communicate something different that she has learned in Spanish, namely, that one doesn't ask to be excused but to get up from the table. The only trouble is that when trying this approach on someone who has never heard the Spanish language message, the communication does not always work out.

<sup>7</sup> We heard an interesting exchange between our two daughters and their cousins that also involved the use of calques. After tasting some food, one of the cousins said, "It tastes like thunder" (calqued from Spanish, *Sabe a rayo* [It tastes like lightning]). Raquel, our 14-year-old, repeated it for her cousin and said, "It tastes bad," to which he replied, "No, it's worse than bad, it's like thunder." Bilingualism is in itself a trans-cultural experience, and most of what transpires linguistically has to do with this transculturation.

guage with meanings taken from words of the donor. And it is English-based calques that distinguish the Spanish of second-generation Cuban Americans from that of first generation. But these calques, which represent a true structural change in the meanings of words in the host language, are to be distinguished from the calquing of entire phrases, items that often go under the name of *loan translations*. Otheguy (1993, 1995) has shown that in most cases these phrasal calques are cases of cultural, not linguistic, contact. He shows that many loan translations, ranging from those that are highly acceptable, such as *El día de dar gracias* (Thanksgiving Day) to those that are highly stigmatized, such as *lamar para atrás* (call back), are in fact linguistically traditional rather than innovative from a structural point of view.

Loan translations of this type are rampant in the language of Cuban Americans, and they contribute to the mostly false impression that their Spanish is highly Anglicized and that their English is highly Hispanized. These loan translations show precisely the opposite, that is, they are examples of Cuban Americans incorporating American elements into their culture without bringing English elements into their language. The studies by Otheguy (1993, 1995) show that these loan translations in the Spanish of Cuban Americans are manifestations of a changing transcultural identity that makes use of a linguistic medium that is itself considerably more stable than it may at first appear.

### Implications for teaching Cuban Americans

The Miami-Dade public schools have now been schooling language minority students since the 1960s. In 1963 Miami-Dade was the site of the first contemporary bilingual dual-language experience in the United States, the Coral Way School. This successful bilingual experience in U.S. schooling, a product of circumstances created by the unique characteristics of the early Cuban Americans, the specific social context of Dade County in 1960, and the national political context at that time, has consistently affected the way in which the school system educates language minority students in Miami-Dade County.

Today the language minority population in the Miami-Dade public school system constitutes 40% of its nearly two million students. Although Miami-Dade County has developed large programs in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), it also provides native language instruction to all students who so desire. All elementary schools in Miami have 30-minute Spanish language classes after second grade for both Spanish and non-Spanish speakers. Recognizing the importance of a bilingual workforce for the multinational companies in Miami, Superintendent of Schools Octavio Visiedo issued a position paper in 1994 stat-

ing, "Foreign languages should be an integral part of the curriculum and full proficiency should be the goal of our teachers and students" (cited in Fradd & Boswell, 1996, p. 293).

In 1997 five public elementary schools used a bilingual curriculum in which 40% of classes were in Spanish, French, or German. Six other elementary schools offered 1 1/2-2 hours of daily instruction in academic subjects in Spanish. Besides the public schools, several Cuban American independent schools require Spanish language proficiency (García & Otheguy, 1985, 1988). Perhaps more than other U.S. cities, Miami-Dade schools provide many opportunities to develop bilingualism through schooling.

The concept of English language learners seems inadequate in the Miami-Dade County context, especially for Cuban Americans. English monolingualism is not the linguistic goal in this bilingual U.S. city, where schools and businesses actively promote bilingualism as a preferred goal. In Havana USA, *bilingual language learners* seems to be a more useful concept.

Yet, despite educational and business efforts, intergenerational maintenance of productive ability in Spanish, especially of full Spanish literacy, is difficult to achieve. A recent study showed that of one hundred secondary school students in Miami-Dade, only two could be considered native fluent Spanish speakers and biliterate (Barry, 1996). The school system has been faulted for its ineffectiveness in halting the language shift toward English monolingualism among Cuban Americans and other Miami-Dade Latinos.

The public school system not only has proven ineffective in promoting Spanish-English bilingualism but is starting to experience the same failure as other large urban school systems in educating second- and third-generation Latinos. The dropout rate for Miami-Dade's Latino population, most of whom are Cuban, neared 40% in the mid-1980s. The number of youth gangs has increased to more than sixty, and 80% of gang members are estimated to be of Cuban origin (Badía, 1994). Cuban American youths are showing the same discontent as other second- and third-generation immigrant youths (see Pedraza & Rumbaut, 1996; Rumbaut, 1997).

An analysis of the reasons for this discontent is needed, but clearly what we have described as "speaking in Cuban" may have something to do with the increased educational failure of second- and third-generation Cuban Americans. As gradual but persistent transculturalization and language shift continue to mark the passage of the generations among Cuban Americans, the ways of speaking of this bilingual community become more distant from those of the monolingual communities that claim standard English or standard Spanish as their linguistic

norm. In turn, the gap between the ways of speaking in Cuban of youths and the ways of speaking English and Spanish by teachers in school becomes greater. Unless teachers become sufficiently sensitive and learn to embrace rather than reject the ways in which bilingual communities use their languages, and unless they can apply this sensitivity to develop the standard languages of school and to educate their bilingual charges, it is likely that bilingual learners will fail.

The schooling needed in bilingual Miami-Dade County must build on the success of the 1963 Coral Way model and the ESOL programs, but it must go beyond them. There is a difference between teaching English as a second language to newcomers, or maintaining and developing the Spanish of Spanish-speaking students, and teaching English (or Spanish) to bilingual students. As experience with bilingual education increases and as the United States becomes more linguistically heterogeneous, twenty-first-century educators would do well to address the second task. In the context of Miami-Dade County, this will mean being able to develop a transcultural educational model that can build on the community's ways of speaking in Cuban to develop the community's success in using English as well as Spanish in complex academic tasks.

### Suggestions for further reading

Boswell and Curtis (1983) and Llanes (1982) continue to be excellent accounts of the Cuban American experience, and García (1996) is a good recent account of Cuban Americans in South Florida. Still relevant as accounts of the schooling of Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade are García and Otheguy (1985, 1987). Important studies of language use in Miami-Dade are Castellanos (1990), Fradd and Boswell (1996), García and Díaz (1992), and Roca (1991). Otheguy, García and Fernandez (1989) look at language contact in a Cuban American community in West New York, and Lipski (1996) looks at the evolving Spanish of Cuban Americans. The most comprehensive treatment of Cuban American Spanish is that of Varela (1992).

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## 6 The linguistic situation of Central Americans

John M. Lipski

### Introduction: Central Americans in the United States

Latin American immigration to the United States is certainly not a new phenomenon, but the geographical areas of Hispanoamerica that are represented by the major migratory trends have shifted over time, although always set against the constant background of immigration from Mexico. The major population shifts have come from Puerto Rico and Cuba, respectively, but in the 1980s and 1990s the immigration from Central America gave every indication of eventually attaining the same proportions as the Caribbean groups (Jamail & Stolp, 1985; Peñalosa, 1984; Wallace, 1989). Economic reasons were the original motivating factor, but political pressures in the convulsed the Central American region played an ever more important role in stimulating the northward migration of economically stable family units, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s. Since Central America and the United States share no common border and since many families arrive by air or by sea, immigrants have a greater tendency to settle in geographically delimited population clusters, which then form centripetal nuclei attracting further immigration. Like their fellow Latin Americans, Central American immigrants commonly settle in cities with large Spanish-speaking populations; this follows both from the geographical location of such cities, which usually represent the southern border of the United States or a major airline terminus, and from the desire to live in a minimally foreign environment. Although the Central Americans who have moved to established colonies at first interact principally with their compatriots, before long the inevitable contact with other Latino Americans and American-born Latinos takes place, with the resulting transculturation and expansion of social horizons of all groups involved. Traditionally (i.e., before the political turmoil of the past three decades), the majority of Central Americans immigrating to the United States represented the professional classes, those with funds to travel and establish themselves in the United States. The lower middle classes have also come in large numbers, particularly to the major cities, whereas members of the lower working classes, particularly from rural regions of Central America, were not as frequently represented. As a result of the

