

SECTION E: INSIGHTS INTO SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Linguistic cohabitation of Spanish and English in the United States

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Abstract

The study of speech communities characterized by language contact has been a major goal of modern sociolinguistics. However, the term, linguistic cohabitation is best used to describe the coexistence of Spanish with the English language in the United States. This paper looks at the linguistic outcomes of this cohabitation from the perspective of borrowing and substratum interference. The insights gained reveal that the co habitation of Spanish and English in the US is based on socio-historical and demographic factors whose relevance demystifies the myth of the United States as the melting pot for other languages other than English, and aligns its linguistic panorama with the language situation in many other parts of the world in the era of continuous immigration and globalization.

Keywords: Spanish and English in the US, borrowing, substratum interference, language contact

Introduction

Conquest and immigration are two major social processes that give rise to language contact processes (Sankoff, 2001, p. 4). From a socio-historical perspective and with regard to the Spanish language in particular, the former can be confirmed through the Spanish discovery and conquest of the Americas (the Americas is used here in a broad sense to include Spanish speaking Central, South, North and the Caribbean Americas) which marked the beginnings of a series of conquests; and ensuing contact of the Spanish language with Amerindian languages. To these belong Carib, Arawak and Taíno (Caribbean) followed by contact with the main language of Mexico by the Aztecs (Nahuatl), and Quechua of the Inca empire. Other Amerindian languages include Maya, Chibcha, Tupí-Guaraní, and Mapuche. These linguistic outcomes are still prevalent today in the occurrence of *amerindianisms* or Amerindian borrowings in the lexis of Spanish (see Buesa, 1967; Penny, 2002).

Migration of Spanish-speakers to the United States on the other hand, forms the basis in this paper for the analysis of some linguistic features that have arisen through Spanish-English contact. The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 gives a brief overview of factors that contribute to the diversity of Spanish in the United States. Section 3 examines Thomason & Kaufman's (1988) interpretations of the linguistic terms borrowing and substratum interference in relation to languages in contact. Section 4 dwells on the characteristics of United States Spanish, while section 5 is the summary and conclusion.

Varieties of Spanish in the United States

Spanish in the United States is a continuum whose origins can be traced to the 16th century (Noll, 2001, p. 99). However, there is no one homogeneous Spanish in the Spanish-speaking world. While Spain through the Royal Spanish Academy or *Real Academia Española* (RAE) in cooperation with the Associating Academies in Latin America (*Asociación de las Academias*), has been able to fix the norm for the standard variety (see Fries, 1984; Stewart, 1999; Mar-Molinero, 1997; 2000), the Spanish spoken in each Latin American country bears distinct features that distinguish them from standard Peninsular Spanish. Though the differences are more pronounced in the lexicon than in the linguistic rules as such; the consequence is that with the influx of immigrants from these countries into the United States, the Spanish spoken in the United States bears the peculiarities of the varieties of Spanish spoken by its native speakers from the different Latin American states. Research by Cardenas (1970) groups the dialects of Spanish spoken in the US into four: the Mexican or Chicano, the Puerto Rican, the Cuban and the Peninsular dialects. Whereby, the Mexican or Chicano variety is further sub-classified into New-Mexico-Colorado, Texas, Southwest, and Arizona-California dialects.

Lipski (1990) lists Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Central American under which Salvadoran, Nicaraguan, and Guatemalan featured. Lipski also includes the Sabine River dialect (spoken at the border between Louisiana and Texas) as well as the Isleño dialect spoken in Saint Bernard Parish in Louisiana.

Because of this prevailing complex linguistic situation, Mar-Molinero (1997, p. 161) criticizes the use of the term "Hispanic community" because it ignores the diversity of this group; more so, as according to Waltermire (2014), the varieties of Spanish spoken in major cities have become much more diverse over time, as immigrant populations from other parts of Latin America have expanded to a large extent.

Unlike the development of Peninsular Spanish from Vulgar Latin, the Spanish spoken in the US is the outcome of socio-historical developments as "linguistic outcomes of language contact determined in large part by the history of social relations among populations, including economic, political and demographic factors (Sankoff, 2001, p. 3). With the focus of this paper on the Latino/Hispanic population, this socio-historical development encompasses the Spanish

historical conquest of the Americas, the country of origin of the speakers, their length of stay in the United States, the continuity of Spanish within specific areas and the sustained cultural links of the speakers with their home countries. This last factor in particular, enhances the retention of Spanish in the US.

That Spanish, unlike other migrant languages such as French or German, can coexist with English in the United States is not only due to the continuous inflow of Latinos/Hispanics, but the fact of a more or less homogeneous cultural identity in the Hispanic/Latino community. That the coexistence with English gives rise to linguistic outcomes such as code-switching, and transference at all linguistic levels is not peculiar to Spanish alone, but presents a general feature of the different linguistic outcomes of language contact.

The next section addresses the concepts of borrowing and substratum interference as explained by Thomason & Kaufman (1988).

Borrowing and Substratum Interference

Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p. 37) define the linguistic term borrowing as “the incorporation of foreign features into a group's native language by speakers of that language”. In addition, the authors state that even though the native language is maintained, it undergoes changes by the addition of the incorporated features from the foreign language; whereby words from the foreign language are consistently the first elements to enter the native language in a borrowing situation.

Substratum interference on the other hand, is a subtype of interference that results from imperfect group learning during a process of language shift (p. 38). That is, in this kind of interference a group of speakers shifting to a target language fails to learn the target language (TL) perfectly. The errors made by members of the shifting group in speaking the TL then spread to the TL as a whole when they are imitated by original speakers of that language. However, as the authors also state, imperfect learning is not to be understood as the lack of ability to learn. Instead, attitudinal factors may be a substantial contribution to why speakers' version of the TL undergoes a shift. Another factor which may be crucial is also availability of the TL. In conclusion, Thomason and Kaufman explain that "errors" are identified solely from the viewpoint of preexisting TL structure (p. 39).

The above defined concepts are reflected in the Spanish spoken in the United States through the linguistic contact situation of Spanish and English. A prominent characteristic of this contact situation is reflected in borrowings which appear as *anglicisms* in US Spanish. This feature, which Penny (2002) says has been erroneously defined as ‘interlanguage borrowing’, actually refers to:

Loans whose immediate etymon is an English word or expression,

irrespective of the source of the English word...it does not include those words in Spanish whose ultimate etymon is an English word, but which have reached Spanish through the etymon of another language

(Pratt as cited in Penny, pp. 277-278)

The author, therefore, includes lexical items such as *anorak* (Eskimo), *géiser* (Icelandic), among *anglicisms* in the Spanish language, while excluding words which can etymologically be traced to English, but were originally French (Gallicisms).

To the linguistic outcomes of Spanish English contact include the phenomenon of code-switching which has given rise to Spanglish, a term used to describe the process of switching from Spanish to English by bilinguals; and erroneously described as evidence of a lack of proficiency in the English language (see Zentella, 2002). Research has, however, shown that people who code-switch unconsciously draw on linguistic principles and consequently, code-switching is a rule-governed bilingual behavior and “the ability on the part of bilinguals to alternate between their linguistic codes in the same conversational event” (Toribio, 2001, p. 184). Another is the adoption or borrowing of English lexical items into Spanish through direct translations, phonological and morphological adaptations (Espinosa 1975, p. 99) and ‘linguistic homogenization’ (Mar-Molinero, 1997, p. 163).

Generally, the Spanish spoken in the United States is characterized by borrowings and substratum influence from the English language, all of which can be found on all linguistic levels. At the morphological level this includes semantic extension, verbal and nominal adaptations, and hybrid formations. Included also are morphosyntactic adaptations in literal translations, word order, and passive constructions. There are also cases of phonological adaptations at the phonological level. Each one of these aspects is treated separately below.

Semantic Extension and Literal translation

Extension in the meaning of a lexical item occurs when foreign expressions that in their meanings bear a certain similarity to some native words are adopted and expanded. In the case of Spanish, “se atribuye a una palabra existente en español el significado de una palabra inglesa parecida” (Azevedo, 2005, p. 381). In other words, English lexical items and verbs which have Spanish equivalents are borrowed and their original English meanings undergo semantic extension. All examples are from Azevedo (2005, pp. 380-384). Table 1 below shows that the meanings of verbs can also be expanded.

ENG: English

USSP: US Spanish

SPS:Standard Peninsular Spanish

ENG	USSP	SPS
a. cup	copa	Taza
b. 'to apply'	aplicar	Solicitor

Table 1

a. The ENG noun, 'cup' and the USSP 'copa' are synonyms with the simple meaning 'cup'. The ENG 'cup' also has the additional meaning of 'football cup'. The USSP 'copa' however, extends the meaning of 'copa' to include the ENG 'cup'. Meanwhile, 'cup' in SPS is realized as 'taza'.

b. The ENG verb 'to apply' means 'to request for a job'; 'be relevant to/affect'; 'use method/process'; 'put something on surface'; 'use physical force' (Macmillan English Dictionary, 2002).

In USSP, the English 'to apply' is hispanized into a verb, 'aplicar' in the sense of the ENG equivalent. The verb 'solicitar' in SPS means 'to request for a job'.

Verbal Adaptations and Neologisms

Spanish verbal formation uses a specific set of verbal suffixes. In SPS the suffix, *-ear* is one of the most productive verbal formatives. Instances of verbal adaptation in USSP show that English verbs are borrowed and incorporated into Spanish through the addition of the suffix, *-ear* to the English base. Further observations also show that through adaptations to the phonological and morphological structure of English, more neologisms are formed also with the ESP productive suffixes, *-iar/-aras* in Table 2 below:

SUFFIX	ENG	USSP	SPS
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a. ear	‘to park’	parquear chequear dostear	‘estacionar’ ‘revisar’ ‘limpiar el polvo’
b. iar	‘to type’	taipiar pickiar donquiar	‘escribir a máquina’ ‘ecoger’ ‘danciar (bailar)’
c. ar	‘to weld’	güeldar deschachar correctar	‘soldar’ ‘descargar’ ‘corregir’

Table 2

a. The USSP verb, *parquear* is a borrowing of the English noun ‘park’, and an incorporation of the Spanish suffix, *-ear*. The USSP substantive, *parque* is a phonological adaptation of the English, ‘park’. The verbal suffix, *-ear* is attached to *parque* and the USSP verb, *parquear* is with the meaning, ‘to park’ is produced. The verb *estacionar* in SPS translates ‘to park’.

b. The USSP verb, *taipiar* is produced similar to *parquear*. The USSP noun, *taipais* also a phonological adaptation loaned from the English verb, ‘to type’. The Spanish productive verbal suffix, *-iar* is attached to *taipa* and the verb, *taipiar* ‘to type’ is formed. The English equivalent of ‘to type’ is realized as *escribir a máquina* in SPS.

c. The SPS verb, *soldar* translates the English ‘to weld’. The USSP *güeld* is a loan word phonologically adapted to the English verb, ‘to weld’. The attachment of the productive suffix, *-ar* to *güelda* produces the USSP verb, *güeldar*.

Nominal Adaptations

In standard Spanish, the adaptation of a foreign unit into its system involves the immediate acquisition of the morphological features characterizing the nominal categories of the Spanish language. In SPS, the description of professions, objects and situations are further derived through prefixation as the examples below show.

Profession

In the newly formed verb such as *güeldar* (4.1.1 c) above, the description of a profession can further be derived as illustrated in Table 3 below:

USSP Verb	Profession (ENG)	Profession (USSP)	Profession(SPS)
Güeldar ‘to weld’	welder/soldner	Güeldador	soldador
Trabajar ‘to work’	worker	Trabajador	trabajador

Table 3

In Table 3, *güeldador* is a substantive derived from the USSP verb, *güeldar*, ‘to weld’. This formation obeys the SPS rule of nominal formations through the suffixation process. In the same manner, the Spanish productive suffix *-dor* when added to the verb, *trabajar* ‘to work’ gives the nominalized *trabajador*, ‘a worker’. The same pattern occurs with the formation of *soldador* from the verb, *soldar*.

Object description

USSP Verb	Object description (ENG)	Object description (USSP)	Object description (SPS)
Lonchar ‘to have lunch’	Lunch shop	Lonchería	merendero

Table 4

An object is described in Table 4. The USSP verb, *lonchar* is derived from the English ‘to have lunch’. The noun, *lonchería* on the other hand, is a prefixation according to the SPS rule of prefixing the suffix, *-ía* to describe objects as in *panadería* ‘bakery’, *peluquería* ‘(hairdressing) saloon’, etc. The USSP *lonchería* translates the English Lunch shop whose equivalent is ‘*merendero*’, derived from the verb, *merendar* ‘to have lunch’ in SPS.

Hybrid Constructions

Further borrowings include hybrid constructions formed through morphological incorporation whereby the borrowing includes a part from both languages as *incalendador-* (*calend-*) *calendar* and (*calendario*). Where the English morpheme, *-ar* carries out the function of the European Spanish suffix, *-dor*. Other examples are *aire de pompa*; which is not a literal translation, but instead, a morphological incorporation because the Spanish *pompa* is adapted to the English *pump*. In addition, the English syntactic structure is also adapted through the positioning of the adjective, *aire* before the substantive, *pompa*.

Summary and Conclusion

If as opined by Sankoff (1988), the linguistic outcomes of language contact are determined in large part by the history of social relations among populations, including economic, political and demographic factors (p. 2), and substratum interference results from imperfect learning of the TL by the foreigners to the TL, the situation in the United States presents a different scenario. This is more so because not just for demographic reasons (see Mantilla, 2008), or economic (see Goldman Sachs Strategy Research 2007) but, as clearly stated by Sankoff, it is not a situation of inability to learn the TL, but more of a situation of cohabitation as expressed between two languages because of the need for both.

However, and in the long run, the immigration volume and regional concentration of the Hispanics in America might prove the most favorable factors for retaining the Spanish spoken in the United States. This growing trend viewed from an economic perspective was already coined the hispanization of the United States by Goldman Sachs Strategy Research in 2007.

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