

Maintaining Spanish Proficiency in the United States: The Influence of English on the Spanish Writing of Native Spanish Speakers in Two-Way Immersion Programs¹

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1. Introduction

Language contact is a phenomenon that has taken place for thousands of years. There is no evidence of any language that has developed in total isolation, with no contact with any other language (Thomason, 2001). The pioneering work on “languages in contact” started with Haugen (1950a, 1950b, 1956) and Weinreich (1953). As described in Weinreich (1953), one of the consequences of such contact is the adoption of borrowings and semantic shifts from one language to the other. The focus of this paper will be on English borrowings into the Spanish language that are the result of migration of native Spanish speakers into the United States.

The United States has been an illustration of language contact since its very origins (Crawford, 1998). Among the minority languages that are spoken in the U.S., the most prominent one is Spanish, with 20 million speakers (Wright, 2000). Because of the contact of Spanish and English in this country, both languages have had an impact on each other, giving rise to borrowings, loan-shifts etc. Examples of Spanish words in the English vocabulary are: *sombrero*, *patio*, *canyon*, *plaza*, *burro*, *stampede*, *rodeo*, *tortilla*, etc. In spite of the fact that Spanish has influenced American English, the latter has had a deeper impact on the former for obvious reasons. It is the majority language in the United States, it is a high prestige language, and it is therefore the language of education, business, science and technology, not only in this country, but worldwide.

Since the 1970's, there has been a great deal of research conducted on U.S. Spanish. Some of the research on Spanish in contact with English in the U.S. has focused on the borrowings and loan-shifts that have been incorporated from English into Spanish (Mendieta, 1999; Ramírez, 1992). Other studies have looked at the different dialects of Spanish, especially Mexican-American Spanish (Elías-Olivares, 1995; McClure, 1977; Silva-Corvalán, 1982) and Puerto Rican Spanish (Zentella, 1981; 1982; 1997).

At the individual level, one way that languages in contact plays out is through language transfer, an issue that has been widely studied (Gass, 1979; Kellerman, 1983; Lado, 1957; Odlin, 1989; Selinker, 1966). Most of the work on language transfer has been done in foreign language learning and has looked at how the first language (L1) affects the second one (L2) in either positive ways (transfer) or negative ones (interference). In this context, transfer has been studied in relation to the different language domains (phonology, morphology, grammar, discourse) both in written and oral modes. There has also been a fair amount of research on the language transfer of bilingual students in the U.S., but again the focus has been on transfer from L1 to L2: Durgunoglu, Nagy & Hacin-Bhatt (1993) Jiménez, García & Pearson (1994), Koda (1989), Taylor (1975).

A current microcosm of languages in contact in the United States is an increasingly popular educational approach known as two-way immersion (TWI) education. Two-way immersion education

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integrates native English speakers with native speakers of another language, usually Spanish, and teaches all students through both languages. As such, these programs provide excellent environments for studying a variety of issues related to bilingualism in the United States. TWI programs are considered additive bilingual programs for both groups of students because they afford all students the opportunity to maintain and develop oral and written skills in their first language while simultaneously acquiring oral and written skills in a second language (Cazabon, Nicoladis, & Lambert, 1998; Howard & Christian, 1997; Lindholm-Leary, 2001).

This paper serves as a complement to the bodies of research that have been briefly summarized here – languages in contact, language transfer, and two-way immersion education. First, the body of research on languages in contact will be enriched by this study because most research in this field has been conducted using the oral language of adults, while this study draws upon the written language of elementary school students. The research on language transfer will also be enriched by our study, since our focus is the opposite of the norm in this field. That is, while most transfer studies look at the ways in which first language abilities transfer to the second language, our study does the reverse by looking at second language influence on the first language, or what has been called “reverse transfer” (Cenoz et al., 2001, p. 42). Finally, the body of research on two-way immersion education will be enriched because most studies to date that have looked at language and literacy outcomes of students have relied primarily on standardized test scores (Cazabon, Lambert & Hall, 1993; Cazabon, Nicoladis & Lambert, 1998; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Thomas & Collier, 1997; Thomas & Collier, 2002) and have not looked closely at students’ language or literacy samples in order to understand how proficiency in the two languages develops and the extent to which the two languages have an impact on each other.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Questions

Given that TWI programs are in themselves environments of language contact, there are many interesting questions that arise in these settings with regard to how languages work when they are in close contact with each other. In the same way that language societies that are geographically close affect each other and give rise to borrowings, loan shifts, code-switching, etc., we expect similar phenomena to take place in a small setting, such as a school. In particular, we were curious about the ways in which a second language (English, in the case of native Spanish speakers) can affect the mother tongue (Spanish) due to language contact. In order to analyze this, we decided to examine the writing samples of native Spanish speakers in Spanish-dominant two-way immersion programs. Specifically, the following questions guide this particular study:

1. To what extent does English influence the writing of native Spanish speakers in Spanish-dominant two-way immersion programs?
2. What types of English influence are found in the domains of mechanics, vocabulary, and grammar? Does the amount of influence vary across the domains?

2.2. Definition of terms

Before moving forward, it is important to clarify what we mean by “English influence” or “transfer from English”². For the purposes of this study we used the term “English influence” or “transfer” to refer to situations where something that could be expressed through the Spanish language system is expressed through the English system. This does not necessarily mean that all of the instances of English influence are literally in English, it just means that they are based on or strongly influenced by the English language system. Some of the words or constructions that will be considered English influenced for the purposes of this paper have become widely used and accepted in some Spanish-speaking communities (e.g. *lonche* –from *lunch*- and *troca* –from *truck*-), while others are

² It must be pointed out that throughout this paper we will use “English transfer” as more or less equivalent of “English influence” without any connotation of positive or negative effect (transfer vs. interference). See Romaine (1995, pp. 51-55) for a deeper discussion on how the terminology has been used in the literature.

more idiosyncratic or individual and seem to be a case of either individual children making their own adaptations (e.g. *quemecales* -from *chemicals*-) or fossilized forms that are widely reported by immersion teachers (e.g. *yo gusto*). We did not consider as cases of English influence any proper nouns that do not have a translation in Spanish (e.g. *McDonnald's*, *Disney World*, etc.). Similarly, we did not include occurrences that did not seem standard Spanish but also could not be attributed exclusively or at all to English influence. For example, “*yo nunca a resevido un maestro*” (“I have never received a teacher”, i.e. “I’ve never had any teacher” –) is a statement that is not likely to be made by a native Spanish speaker, but it is probably not due to the influence of English.

2.3. *Programs and Participants*

Data for this paper come from three Spanish-dominant TWI programs (in which from 80% to 90% of instruction time is in Spanish in the early grades) in three different geographical locations: the Southwest border (SW), the West Coast (WC), and the Midwest (MW). The larger project of which this study was a part involved 11 Spanish-English TWI programs across the United States³. These three programs were chosen for this sub-analysis because they are similar in terms of program model (Spanish dominant) and Spanish-speaking student population (primarily Mexican-American). They are also all whole-school programs, and therefore had larger student populations to draw from than some of the other programs in the project. The total student population for this study is 55 native Spanish speakers, distributed fairly evenly across the three sites: 15 (SW), 20 (WC), and 20 (MW).

Before presenting the findings related to English influence in the students’ Spanish writing, it is worthwhile to first spend some time describing the participants in the study. Based on parent questionnaires that were sent home when the students were in fourth grade, we were able to gather information about the students’ birthplace, home language use, and time spent per year in a Spanish-speaking country. These background characteristics are shared here because they may be contributing factors to the amount of English influence seen in the students’ Spanish writing.

First, with regard to birthplace, it is interesting to see that nearly all of the students in the sample are U.S. born. Out of the 55 students, only 2 were born in Latin America (one from WC and another one from MW). In relation to language use, most of the students speak both English and Spanish at home (30 out of 55); very few of them interact mostly in English (5) or in Spanish (14) and there are only 4 who are monolingual Spanish speakers at home; additionally, there are two students for whom we are missing data. As for time spent in a Spanish-speaking country, most students spend a minimal amount of time each year in such a location. Many parents reported that their children spend no time each year in a Spanish-speaking country, and the majority reported that their children spend 2-3 weeks or less per year in a Spanish-speaking country. Few (7) typically spend one month or more per year in a country where Spanish is the national language.

In summary, the data presented above demonstrate that the populations in the three schools are very similar in terms of the background characteristics presented here. Most of the students have had a lot of contact with English since they were born, given that the majority were born in the U.S., use both languages at home, and do not typically spend a lot of time each year in a Spanish-speaking country. From such a group of students, we can easily anticipate that their knowledge and use of English will be reflected in their Spanish writing.

2.4. *Data Collection*

For the CAL/CREDE Study of Two-Way Immersion Education, English and Spanish narrative writing samples were collected three times per year (October, February, May) while the students were in third, fourth, and fifth grade. To ensure a reasonably consistent environment across sites, a memo

³ These data came from a longitudinal, national study of two-way immersion education conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). The study was funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement through the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE).

was sent to all participating teachers prior to each period of data collection to remind them of appropriate data collection procedures and classroom conditions. For the most part, the guidelines mirrored typical pre-writing activities, such as introducing the topic, brainstorming for possible writing ideas, and issuing basic reminders regarding mechanics, topic development, etc. Children were given approximately one hour to complete the writing task after the brainstorming activity, and were allowed to talk and interact with each other as they normally would during a writing activity in class; however, teachers were asked not to help the children by translating words or phrases, or by providing correct spellings. The genre was always personal narrative, and the students were allowed to write about anything they wanted as long as it was a true story about themselves. The narratives varied in length, but on average they ranged from a maximum of 450 words (3 and a half pages) to a minimum of 50-100 words (one page); the most frequent length was around 200 words (1 and a half pages). For this particular analysis, we focused on the final narratives (one per student) that the students wrote at the end of fifth grade (Spring 2000). We chose these samples because they were a clearer reflection of the students' writing skills in Spanish.

3. Data Analysis

After reading through the students' compositions several times, we developed a coding scheme for identifying and quantifying the types of English influence present in the Spanish writing samples. It is important to keep in mind that for each individual student we only counted types, not instances (e.g. if a student wrote *Mayo* twice, we only counted it once for English influence). Drawing on previous coding schemes (Mendieta, 1999; Weinreich, 1956) we decided on the following categories: mechanic transfer, lexical transfer (or word level transfer), and beyond the word level transfer. These categories and their sub-categories are described here in greater detail.

1. Mechanic Transfer

This type of transfer refers to the cases where the student followed the English rules of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc. Each of these subtypes will be reviewed independently.

We classified as spelling transfer the instances where the student used English rules of spelling/sound matching when s/he was writing in Spanish. This can happen in the case of cognate words that are spelled differently in the two languages, such as *example/ejemplo* or *English/inglés*. Because of this similarity, students occasionally wrote something like *exemplo* or *engles* in Spanish. However, we can also see illustrations of this subtype of transfer when the words are not cognates, but the student followed English rules of sound/letter matching, as in the case of *haua* for *jaula* ("cage"), or *prema* instead of *prima* ("cousin"), where the students tried to represent the sounds [h] (in *jaula*) and [i] (*prima*) according to the normal English spellings "h" and "e" respectively, instead of the Spanish spellings "j" and "e".

The second subtype of mechanic transfer is capitalization transfer. This refers to the cases where the student followed English rules of capitalization and capitalized words in Spanish that are not written in capital letters in this language. This normally happened with months and days of the week (which are the most typical cases where English and Spanish differ in terms of capitalization). Examples of this are *Mayo* (instead of *mayo*, "May"), or *Viernes* (instead of *viernes* "Friday").

Finally, other mechanic transfer is the third subcategory. This general category includes more low-frequency mechanics issues such as punctuation and abbreviation. In the case of punctuation, English influence occurred when the student followed English punctuation rules when writing in Spanish. In most cases, English and Spanish share similar rules. However, in the case of questions or exclamations, English only uses one question or exclamation mark at the end of the sentence, whereas Spanish uses two, one at the beginning and another one at the end. An example from the writings we have analyzed would be *E.E. es la mejor escuela*

del mundo. Por qué? (“E.E. is the best school in the world. Why?”). The correct Spanish punctuation would be *¿Por qué?*.

2. Transfer at the Word Level

As the name of this category indicates, this type of transfer occurred when the student transferred words from English into Spanish. Here we can distinguish between three different sub-categories: English words incorporated directly into Spanish texts, English words adapted into Spanish morphology and phonology, and semantic transfer to already existing words.

First of all, we have unmodified English words incorporated into Spanish discourse⁴. We have found many instances of this type of transfer in the writings we have analyzed. Most of the cases occurred when talking about sports (*soccer, basketball, pitcher*, etc.) or school (*high school, middle school, bus, student store*, etc.); there were also others that referred to everyday life, such as *mall, shuttle*, etc.

Another instance of transfer at the word level is the case of adaptations of English words into the Spanish morphological and phonological system. There are some that are widely used and accepted among the Spanish-speaking population in the U.S.A., such as *lonche* (from *lunch*, meaning “almuerzo/comida”), *rentar* (from *rent*, meaning “alquilar”), *troca* (from *truck*, meaning “camión”), etc. However, there are others whose acceptability is more questionable, for example *quemecales* (from *chemicals*, meaning “productos químicos”).

Finally, we have also classified as instances of transfer at the word level the cases in which a word already exists in Spanish, but it acquires a different meaning, which corresponds to the meaning it has in English. Some instances are: *letra* (from *letter*, intended to mean “carta”), *bloque* (from *block*, intended to mean “manzana/cuadra” or *pretender* (from *pretend*, intended to mean “fingir/aparentar”).

3. Transfer beyond the Word Level

In this group we have considered the cases where English influences Spanish at the sentence level. Here we can see, first of all, instances of idioms or collocations in English that are translated directly into Spanish. For example: *somos mejores amigas* (“we’re best friends”), instead of the more common Spanish *somos muy buenas amigas*; *es mi mejor amiga*; *adivina qué* (“guess what!”), instead of *¿sabes qué?*; or *cuando juego deportes* (“when I play sports”), instead of *cuando practico/hago deporte*.

Another type of transfer beyond the word level is word-order transfer. Spanish is very flexible in relation to word-order. You can have S V (O) (Subject Verb (Object)), as in *mi hermana llegó* (“my sister arrived”) or you can have V S, as in *llegó mi hermana*. In the same way, adjectives normally follow the noun as in *conocí una persona estupenda* (“I met a wonderful person”). However, in some cases the reverse order is not ungrammatical. The word-order that is chosen in Spanish is frequently determined by the type of verb we are dealing with (some verbs appear more commonly before the subject and others after), or in other cases the word-order can be pragmatically determined (depending on the information we want to convey). The situation of English is different. This language is much more rigid in relation to word-order, with S V (O) being the only possibility (*my sister arrived*), and adjectives preceding nouns (*a wonderful person*). Sometimes students follow these patterns when writing in Spanish; thus we find sentences like *mi favorito tipo de manejar es freestyle* (“my favorite type of riding is freestyle”, or *al siguiente día fuimos a Las Vegas* (“on the next day we went to Las Vegas”). As we mentioned before, Spanish word-order is very flexible; therefore, these sentences do not sound completely ungrammatical; however, they are not

⁴ The instances we will be dealing with in our study are not generally considered code-switching because the speaker only uses one or two words from the other language (this has sometimes be referred to as tag-switching). For a deeper discussion on the topic see Mendieta, 1999; Poplack, 1980)

typical Spanish for the context in which they are used. We assume that the students produced them because of the influence of English⁵.

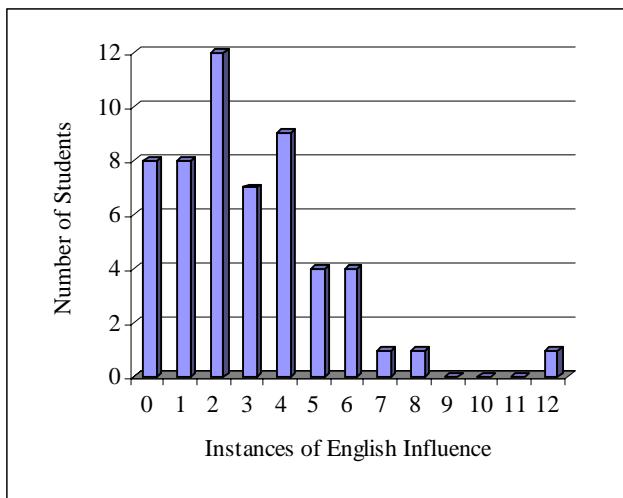
Finally, we can also see some cases of English syntactic constructions incorporated into the Spanish grammar. For instance, *yo era nacido* (“I was born”) (cf. Spanish “yo nací”), or *conocí a dos muchachos que me enamoré de* (“I met two boys that I fell in love with”) (cf. Spanish “conocí a dos muchachos de los que me enamoré”). Most of these cases of transfer are ungrammatical in Spanish. It should be pointed out that the overuse of subject pronouns could also be considered as syntactic transfer; however, since it is not technically incorrect in Spanish and the analysis of it is more subjective, it is not something that was coded or included in the analyses presented here. In general, though, the statement can be made that the students in this sample tended to use pronouns more frequently than would seem likely for monolingual speakers of Spanish.

4. Findings

4.1. To what extent does English influence the writing of native Spanish speakers in Spanish-dominant two-way immersion programs?

After analyzing the students’ written narratives, we discovered that the majority of them displayed at least some evidence of English influence in their Spanish writing. In most cases, however, the influence was minor, with a mode of two instances per student and an average of 2.93 (counting the student who had 12 instances –see figure below) and 2.76 (not counting that student). This information is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Total number of Instances of English influence in Each Writing Sample



As we can see in Figure 1, most of the students had 0 to 6 instances of English influence in their Spanish writing. There were only a few students who had more than 6 cases of English influence. The largest number of instances found in a single sample was 12. This student’s composition was about baseball, and as a result, there were perhaps more opportunities for the student to use the more common English sports terms than the less common (and apparently unknown to the student) Spanish sports terms.

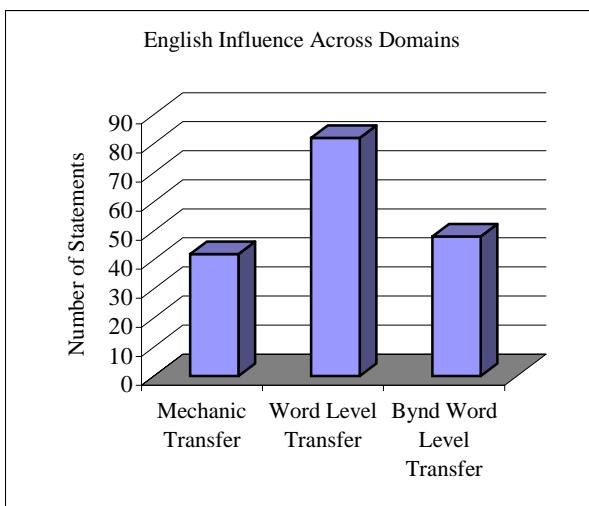
⁵ We assume that a monolingual Spanish speaking student in the same context would not use similar constructions. Nevertheless, we make this statement cautiously because since this study was conducted solely in the United States, we do not have the necessary empirical data to confirm this assumption.

In summary, most students had at least some evidence of English influence in their Spanish writing, as there were more students who had one or more instances of English influence in their writing than those who had none (only 8 students out of 55 had 0 instances of English influence). However, the cases of English transfer were hardly overwhelming, with 2 instances being the most common outcome.

4.2. *What types of English influence are found in the domains of mechanics, vocabulary, and grammar? Does the amount of influence vary across the domains?*

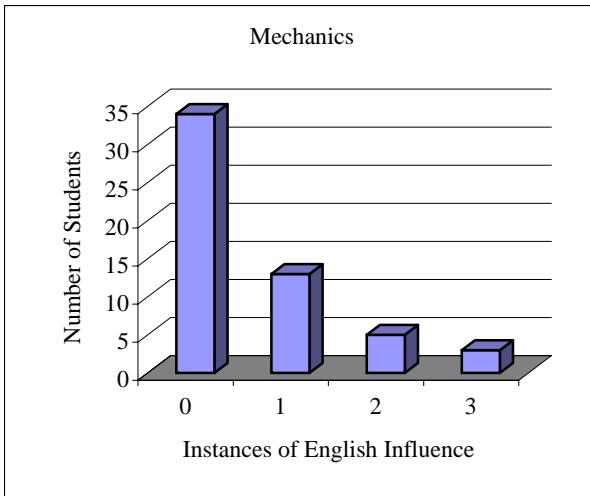
English influence was found across all three domains: mechanics, vocabulary and grammar. Nevertheless, the greatest amount of influence was in the lexical domain, followed by grammar and then mechanics. This finding is not surprising, since the lexicon is a domain where language transfer is more likely to take place (Weinreich, 1953). As for mechanics, there are not too many cases where English and Spanish differ from each other, and the students did not normally create those contexts in which such differences are likely to occur. For example, the students rarely included questions or exclamations in their writing samples, or names of months or days of the week, and these are the types of situations that are most likely to lend themselves to mechanic transfer. There were a few cases of grammatical transfer, which are not as common as word transfer, but are not unusual. Figure 2 shows how the amount of English influence varies across the three different domains.

Figure 2: English Influence across the Three Coding Categories



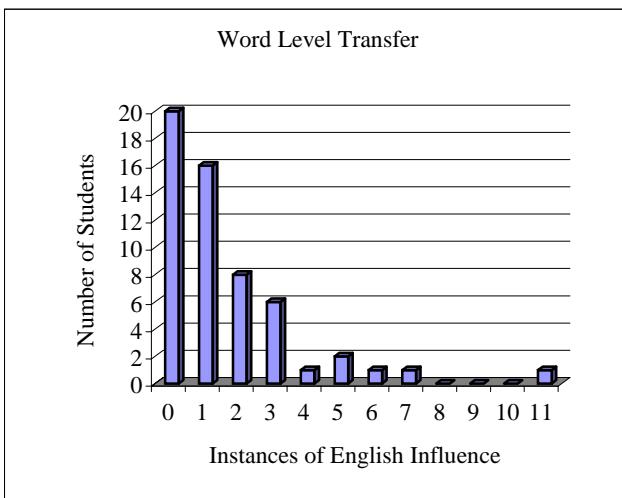
The following charts indicate the distributions for each category. Mechanic transfer can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: English Influence on Mechanics



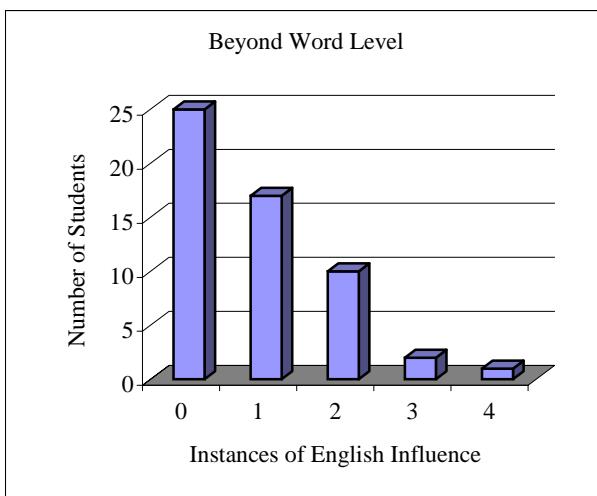
We can see that in mechanics, most of the students fall in the category of 0 instances of English influence, indicating that this is not a very prominent area of influence. However, there are some who had 1 instance and a few others that had more. On this graph we can observe that mechanical transfer is not an issue of great magnitude in the compositions of these students, probably for the reasons mentioned previously. As for the sub-categories within mechanical transfer, we found an equal distribution among the instances of spelling transfer (33% of the cases), capitalization transfer (33%) and other (34%). The most common cases of spelling transfer were those of cognates spelled differently in English and Spanish: *ejemplo, engles*, etc.. Additionally, there were a few instances where the students spelled the sounds [i] and [e] as “e” and “a” such as *deho* (for *dijo*), *prema* (for *prima*), *envitados* (*invitados*), and *lavantamos* (*levantamos*), *anamore* (*enamoré*) respectively. In relation to capitalization transfer we found words like *Mayo, Junio, Viernes, Lunes*, etc. In the “other” sub-category, the most common case was punctuation transfer (only a final question mark or exclamation mark) and *a.m./p.m.* Figure 4 shows the results for transfer at the word level.

Figure 4: English Influence at the Word Level



Here we can see a different situation than what we observed with mechanics. In this case, although the mode is still 0, there are more students who had some instance of English transfer than those who had none. An ample amount of students fall in the 1-instance category. We can also see that there is an extreme case with 11 instances of word level transfer (this is the student writing about baseball that we mentioned previously). In relation to the different word level sub-categories, the results show that there are more cases of English words as such (54%) than English words adapted into Spanish (23%) or semantic transfer (23%). Within the first sub-category, most of the English words referred to school (*Student Store, P.E., History, middle school*, etc.) and sports (*freestyle, indor, outdor, strikes, outs, pitcher*). In the second sub-category, there are some everyday words, such as *lonche* (from *lunch*), *rentamos* (from *rent*), *troca* (from *truck*), and also some words related to sports: *pichar*, (from *pitch*), *puchar* (from *push*), *cacho* (from *catch*), *poncho* (from *punch*), and finally, some words related to school: *reporte* (from *report*), *quemecales* (from *chemicals*). Within the last sub-category (semantic transfer), we found some common verbs like *atender* (from *attend*) meaning “asistir”; *introducir* (from “introduce”) meaning “presentar”; *pretender* (from “pretend”) meaning “fingir”; and also very common nouns, such as *tiempo* (from “time”) meaning “hora, época”; *linea* (from “line”) meaning “fila”; *soda* (from “soda”) meaning “refresco”; etc. All in all, we can see that this word level transfer from English into Spanish takes place with common words referring to everyday objects or activities, or to school or sports, for which the English names are more familiar. Figure 5 shows the results for the category “beyond the word level”.

Figure 5: English Influence Beyond the Word Level



In this case, we see again how there is a substantial amount of students who had no instances of grammatical transfer; nevertheless, if we add up all those students who had one instance or more, we observe that the number of students who had some English influence is greater than the number of students who demonstrated no English influence in this category. Again, as in the previous categories, the cases of English influence in grammar are not alarming, as most students had only one or two instances in their writing samples. We also analyzed whether English transfer in grammar leads to ungrammaticality in Spanish. Out of the 48 total cases, we found there are 16 that are grammatical in Spanish, whereas there are 32 that produce an ungrammatical outcome in this language. The grammatical cases usually deal with word-order transfer (due to the flexibility of word-order in Spanish) and less frequently of collocation transfer. The remaining cases of “beyond the word level transfer” were ungrammatical, including mostly cases of syntactic transfer. We will discuss all the different cases in the following paragraphs.

Regarding the different sub-categories within grammar, we observed that there were more cases of what we called syntactic transfer (69%), which is expected, since that category is more encompassing

than the other two. Within this sub-category we found constructions where the wrong preposition was used in Spanish (*una profesora para matemáticas* (meaning “una profesora **de** matemáticas”) (cf. “a teacher **for** math”), *para 10 minutos* (“por/durante 10 minutos”) (cf. “**for** 10 minutes”), or other cases where there is no preposition in Spanish, however, the student translated the preposition from English: *pagó para la entrada* (“pagó la entrada”) (cf. “paid **for** the ticket”). Additionally, we found cases of English influence in constructions where Spanish requires a definite article but English does not: *después de escuela* (“después de **la** escuela”) (cf. “after school”), *me encanta ciencias* (“me encantan **las** ciencias”) (cf. “I love science”), or *mi deporte favorito es fútbol* (“mi deporte favorito es **el** fútbol”) (cf. “my favorite sport is football”). We also found *gustar* constructions that are incorrectly formed: *todas también les gusta a mi hermano Alberto* (“a todas les gusta mi hermano Alberto”, “everyone likes my brother Alberto”), *le gustaba a la gente que lo tocaban* (“le gustaba la gente que lo tocaba”, “he liked the people who touched him”)⁶. Within syntactic transfer we also noticed cases of *-ing* constructions (gerunds) where Spanish would use an infinitive: *conociendo a nuevas personas es todo en la vida* (“conocer a nuevas personas es todo en la vida”) (cf. “meeting new people is everything in life”), or a finite verb: *hay muchas actividades ocurriendo en la clase del Sr. Martín* (“hay muchas actividades que ocurren en la clase del Sr. Martín”) (cf. “there are many activities taking place...”). Another case of syntactic transfer is the use of the possessive determiner in front of body parts as in *me duele mi mano* (“me duele la mano”) (cf. “my hand hurts”). In Spanish such a construction would be redundant, since the Indirect Object *me* (“to me”) already indicates it is *my* hand that hurts. An additional case of syntactic transfer are the constructions that require the use of *to be* in English but do not use *ser/estar* in Spanish. Some examples are *desde que yo era 5 años* (“desde que yo tenía 5 años”) (cf. “since I was 5”), or *yo era nacido* (“yo nací”) (cf. “I was born”).

In relation to the other sub-categories within the category “beyond the world level transfer” we found 17% cases of collocation transfer (cases like *tomar un examen* (“hacer un examen”) (cf. “take an exam”), *jugar deportes* (“practicar/hacer deporte”) (cf. “play sports”) and 14% of word-order transfer: *un día cuando mi cumpleaños llegaba* (“un día cuando llegaba mi cumpleaños”) (cf. “one day when my birthday was coming”), *al siguiente día* (“al día siguiente”) (cf. “on the next day”), etc.

Summarizing, we have observed that English influence takes place in all three domains considered: mechanics, vocabulary and grammar; nevertheless, the amount of influence varies across categories. More cases of English influence were found at the word level, followed by grammar, followed by mechanics. These findings are consistent with previous research on language transfer, in making the lexicon the area in which transfer from one language to the other occurs the most.

5. Conclusion

The results from our study show that English influence takes place in the Spanish writing of native Spanish speakers. This conclusion does not come as a surprise, since most of the students were born in the U.S.A, come from bilingual homes, have spent little or no time in a Spanish speaking country and attend a bilingual school, where they are in daily contact with English and English speaking peers. This influence was not shown to be too large (2 instances being the common case). We also showed that there is a difference among language domains in relation to the amount of English influence. The domain where English transfer is more prone to occur is vocabulary, followed by grammar and followed by mechanics.

It must be emphasized that our study investigated cases of English influence in bilingual individuals. As Adler (1977) stated in his chapter “Language contact and interference,” whenever there

⁶ Silva-Corvalán (1994, pp. 180-181) states that these constructions are English-influenced, because of the following reasoning. “*Gustar* constructions” in Spanish have an experiencer thematic role, which is the Indirect Object (*a todas*), then a Subject in nominative which is the theme/patient (*mi hermano*). On the other hand, English has an experiencer in nominative case, which is in turn the Subject (*everybody*) and a theme/patient, which is the Direct Object in accusative case (*my brother*). When a student says *todas les gusta a mi hermano* s/he is transferring the English structure Subject/Experiencer in nominative (*todas*) Verb (*gusta*) and Direct Object/patient in accusative (*a mi hermano*).

are two languages in contact spoken by the same individual, both languages will have influence on each other, unless a speaker is especially interested in keeping them apart and makes an effort to do so (which is very unusual among people who do not have linguistic interests). Therefore, not only is it likely for the L1 to affect the L2, but also for the L2 to affect the L1. In situations where the L2 has more prestige than the L1, the former will be highly expected to influence the latter. The participants in our study are an illustration of this claim: they are bilingual Spanish/English, and the results from the present study confirm that their L2 (English) has an impact on their L1 (Spanish). In this case, the L2 has more prestige and is the official language of the country where the students live, a condition that also favors transfer.

Two-way immersion programs are typical settings for languages in contact; therefore, all the expected effects of such a situation (e.g. code-switching, language transfer, etc.) occur. At the same time, the Spanish writing of the native Spanish speakers in such programs only exhibits a modest amount of English influence, indicating that the programs and communities are effective in maintaining and developing the Spanish language and literacy skills of the native Spanish speaking students. As a result of our research, having identified the domains and sub-domains in which English influence occurs in Spanish writing, we could provide feedback to two-way immersion teachers about curricular modifications that could further strengthen the Spanish writing abilities of all students in two-way immersion programs.

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