

# Women as Leaders of Language Change: A Qualification from the Bilingual Perspective

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## 1. Introduction

The role of gender differences in language change has been widely discussed in the variationist sociolinguistic literature. The broadest generalization is that women are at the vanguard of change in monolingual settings (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003, Labov 2001). But this *women effect* has not been thoroughly investigated for bilingual settings where factors such as language contact come into play. The current study investigates the leading role of women in a change taking place in the Spanish-English bilingual context of the Latino population of New York City (NYC). The change has to do with a well-studied feature of Spanish, the alternation between use and omission of subject personal pronouns with tensed verbs (e.g. *canto* ~ *yo canto*, ‘I sing’).<sup>1</sup> The present study uses data from the Otheguy-Zentella corpus and expands the NYC findings reported in Livert & Otheguy (2010), Otheguy, Zentella & Livert (2007), and Otheguy & Zentella (2012). As studied in these works, the change in progress in Spanish in NYC involves: (a) increases in occurrence rates<sup>2</sup> of pronouns within the immigrant generation, as longer residence in NYC is associated with higher pronoun rates; (b) increases in pronoun rates in generational apparent time,<sup>3</sup> as many more pronouns are found in the speech of bilingual Latinos raised in NYC than in the speech of the immigrant generation; (c) changes across the generations in the ranking of factors that influence pronoun use; and (d) changes across the generations in the values of the ranges of the factors where the ranking of factors remains the same. These changes appear to be the result of contact with English, as well as dialect leveling between Caribbean and Mainland Latin American Spanish.

In their study of ongoing changes in pronoun use in NYC, Otheguy & Zentella (2012) found that immigrant Colombian, Ecuadorian, and Mexican women produce higher rates of pronouns than their male counterparts. The current study finds evidence for the women effect, not just among these groups, but also among Cubans and Puerto Ricans. Analyses of the speech of 93 Latin American-born consultants show that women lead men, not only in terms of increasing pronoun rates, but also in a related change having to do with decreasing sensitivity to a discourse variable called switch-reference, defined in Section 5.2 of this paper. At the same time, we don’t see the women effect in US-born

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<sup>1</sup> There is debate about whether or not US bilinguals’ pronoun use diverges from that of monolingual Spanish speakers. Some scholars find differences between bilinguals’ and monolinguals’ usage (e.g. Silva-Corvalán 1994; Otheguy & Zentella 2012), while other scholars do not (Flores-Ferrán 2004; Travis 2007; Torres-Cacoulllos & Travis 2010, 2011). In this paper, I am guided by the evidence to adopt the former view, namely that, at least for Spanish in NYC, the case for an ongoing change in the use of subject pronouns is clear.

<sup>2</sup> Scholars have cautioned against relying on occurrence rates to demonstrate differences between groups of speakers (Poplack & Levey 2010; Torres Cacoulllos & Travis 2010, 2011; Travis 2007). Nevertheless, the fact that pronoun rate changes in NYC are associated with changes in grammatical patterning indicates that rates should not necessarily be disregarded (See Otheguy & Zentella 2012:216-217).

<sup>3</sup> Differences between generations (i.e. ‘apparent time’ differences) are used as evidence for diachronic change (Chambers 2004:355-263).

participants; analyses of 23 US-born speakers' pronoun use show no difference between men and women.

Why are Latin American immigrant women ahead of men with respect to changing pronoun use in NYC? Like US-born Latinos, both male and female immigrants' pronoun use is influenced by increasing knowledge of English and dialect leveling. So, what differentiates immigrant women from men? In this paper I propose that the answer lies in exposure to yet another source of high-pronoun using speech, that is, the speech of US-born Latinos. I suggest that, compared to men, women have more extensive contact with US-born Latinos including their own children. In light of the evidence that women can lead men in change in bilingual settings, I propose that current explanations for the women effect, which focus on the projection of social identity (e.g. Labov 2001, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003), need to be expanded in order to incorporate and highlight the importance of immigrant women's roles in bilingual communities.

## 2. Previous research on women leading linguistic change

There is robust evidence that women are almost always at the vanguard of linguistic change in monolingual settings (Eckert 1989, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003, Labov 2001, Rissel 1989). The evidence is so strong that Labov (2001:501) writes: "any theory of the causes of change must deal with the general finding that in the good majority of linguistic changes, women are a full generation ahead of men." The prevailing explanation for the women effect is that those who initiate linguistic innovation are social nonconformists; they project an image of being different by talking differently (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003, Labov 2001). Labov (2001:516) asserts that the leaders of linguistic change tend to be working or lower middle class "women with a particular ability to confront established norms and the motivation to defy them." To explain the spread of innovation, Labov (2001:516) proposes that "linguistic changes are generalized to the wider community by those who display the symbols of nonconformity in a larger pattern of upward social mobility." Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003:300-302) agree that working class women are typically the leaders of linguistic change. Additionally, they find that upper class women resist change, and that men, regardless of their social class, tend to be somewhere in the middle, not leading or resisting change. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003:302) interpret these gender differences as an indication that "women are using language more to construct social differences among themselves while men are avoiding extreme usages." Labov's and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet's explanations for the women effect differ in terms of the emphasis they place on whether the differences are between men and women (Labov) or between working and upper class women (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet). Nevertheless, both accounts propose that linguistic innovation is related to the projection of social identity.

While it is appealing to extract broad generalizations regarding women's role in language change, the research thus far is limited in at least two ways. First, there has been a tendency for studies of variation and change to concentrate on phonology to the exclusion of (morpho)syntax. The focus on phonology is most likely due to the abundance of tokens of phonological variation in naturalistic data (Cheshire 2004:439, Schwenter 2011), as well as to the skepticism some scholars have expressed regarding the influence of social variables on (morpho)syntax (Lavandera 1978, Silva-Corvalán 2001:133). Nevertheless, there is increasing evidence that social variables, including gender, play a role in shaping (morpho)syntactic variation and change (Poplack & Levey 2010:404, Reig Alamillo 2009, Schwenter 2011).

The second limitation to previous research on gender and language change is that most of the studies have focused on monolingual settings. There is growing evidence, however, that women can lead linguistic change in bilingual contexts, too.<sup>4</sup> Orozco (2007, 2009) found women to be leading ongoing changes involving the increasing use of periphrastic constructions to express futurity and possession in Spanish in NYC. Alfaraz (2010) found that young Spanish-speaking women in Lansing,

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<sup>4</sup> A substantial amount of research has investigated the role of gender in *language shift*. Men tend to lead shift from minority to majority languages because of their access to the dominant culture (Holmes 1996); however, women sometimes lead shift in more established bilingual communities (Gal 1978, Holmes 1996:722-723).

Michigan are leading the increase in use of Spanish copula *estar* in contexts where the other copula (*ser*) is expected. Another example comes from Van Ness's (1995) study of Pennsylvania German spoken in Ohio, where young Amish women led a change involving the increasing use of neuter pronominal form *es* instead of feminine form *sie*. In this same study, Van Ness (1995:77) found that older, monolingual Amish women also used the innovative pronominal form *es* as a result of extensive contact with younger women in the community. Finally, in the research that serves as the foundation for the current paper, Otheguy & Zentella (2012:118-124,136-139) found a subset of women leading the increase in pronoun rates in Spanish in NYC. For that study, the 140 speakers in corpus were divided into two dialectal regions: the Caribbean (Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico) and Mainland Latin America (Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico). The authors found that immigrant Mainland Latin American women are ahead of their male counterparts with respect to pronoun rates. At the same time, they found no women effect among Caribbean immigrants. Nor did they find a women effect among speakers who were either born in the US or had arrived by age three, which they interpret as an indication that the change is complete at that stage.

While Otheguy & Zentella 2012 are the first to discuss the women effect for Spanish subject pronoun use in the US, there is some evidence that females produce higher rates of Spanish subject pronouns in other bilingual settings, too. In their study of children of Mexican-descent in California, Bayley & Pease-Álvarez (1996:93, 1997:360) found that girls produce more pronouns than boys. Similarly, Carvalho & Child (2011:22) found that women produce more pronouns than men in Spanish spoken in Uruguay near the border with Brazil. While these authors do not interpret their findings as evidence that there is a female-led change toward increased pronoun expression, it is likely that the female lead is indicative of a change that is underway in these bilingual settings.<sup>5</sup>

Using bivariate and multivariate analyses, and building on Otheguy & Zentella (2012), the current study shows that the women effect for changing pronoun use in NYC is not limited to Mainlander women. Once Dominicans – who do not undergo the change in progress (See Shin & Otheguy 2013) – are excluded from the analyses, it becomes clear that gender plays a significant role in the ongoing change in NYC. Furthermore, the current study shows that women are ahead of men not just in terms of pronoun rates, but also with respect to decreasing sensitivity to a discourse constraint known as switch-reference.

### 3. Method

This study uses data from the Otheguy-Zentella corpus<sup>6</sup> in order to investigate whether or not women lead change in a bilingual setting. The corpus consists of sociolinguistic interviews conducted with 140 adult Spanish speakers in NYC. Interviews were selected based on various sociodemographic criteria including regional origin (Mainland Latin America vs. Caribbean), national origin (Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, and Puerto Rico), gender, and social class. The result is a fairly balanced sample, with similar numbers of participants in each category (see Otheguy & Zentella 2012:25-44). The current study includes Colombians, Cubans, Ecuadorians, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, but not Dominicans. Dominicans are excluded because they do not experience the increase in pronoun rates to the same degree that the other speakers do (Shin & Otheguy 2013). The current study groups together the remaining 116 consultants.

In addition to representing five different national origins, the 116 speakers have varying degrees of exposure to life in NYC, and, therefore, different degrees of contact with English and with features of Spanish other than their own. As the study examines the change in pronoun use across one apparent-time generation, the speakers are divided into two generation groups: the immigrant generation, called

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<sup>5</sup> In contrast to studies with bilinguals where there appears to be a female lead, studies of pronoun use conducted in monolingual settings generally find no difference between men and women (e.g. Holmquist 2012:216, Orozco & Guy 2008:78) or, in some cases, that men produce more pronouns than women (Bentivoglio 1987:60-62; Enriquez 1984:196-197, 224, 226, 244, 250, 278-279, 285, 306).

<sup>6</sup> The author wishes to thank Ricardo Otheguy and Ana Celia Zentella for the use of their corpus, which was developed at the CUNY Graduate Center, with support from University and Professional Staff Congress grants and the National Science Foundation (0004133).

‘Latin-American Raised’ (or LAR); and the New York natives, called ‘New-York Raised’ (or NYR). The criteria for being LAR or NYR are as follows.<sup>7</sup>

- LARs are consultants who arrived in NYC after age three. The average age of arrival of LARs is 24 years old. The majority (71 percent) of LARs arrived after age 17.
- NYRs are consultants who were born in the US or arrived by age three.

Table 1 displays the distribution of speakers by generation, as well as by gender.

Table 1. Consultants in the present study, by generation and speaker gender

Generation	Men		Women		All speakers	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
LAR	42	71	51	78	93	80
NYR	12	29	11	22	23	20
Total	54	100	62	100	116	100

While there are four times as many LARs as there are NYRs, there are similar proportions of men and women in each generation group.

The envelope of variation for this study includes tensed verbs that occur either with a subject pronoun or without one, where such usage is *variable*, that is, contexts where either the presence or absence of a pronoun is possible. To illustrate, consider example (1). Variable contexts are underlined.

- (1) Yo veo varias novelas. Porque es en lo único que me entretengo. (007U)<sup>8</sup>  
 ‘I see various soap operas. Because that’s the only way (I) entertain myself.’

The speaker produces the pronoun *yo* (I) with *veo* (see), but could have omitted it. In the context with *me entretengo* (entertain myself), the speaker does not produce the pronoun *yo*, but could have. There are contexts in which usage is not really variable. For example, the use of subject pronouns referring to inanimate entities is so rare that we restrict our examples to animate references only. For an in-depth discussion of the envelope of variation of subject pronoun use, see Otheguy & Zentella (2012:45-67).

#### 4. Change in pronoun rates

This section of the paper presents further evidence for the finding that pronoun rates increase across one apparent-time generation (Otheguy & Zentella 2012), as well as within the immigrant generation (Livert & Otheguy 2010). The dependent variable for these analyses is a continuous variable called ‘Pronoun Rate.’ Each speaker’s Pronoun Rate is the percent of pronouns used out of all possible contexts. For example, participant 194C, a 24-year-old woman from Barranquilla, produced 375 tensed verbs within the envelope of variation. Of the 375 verbs, 71 occurred with a subject pronoun, so this participant’s Pronoun Rate is 19 percent. Section 4.1 presents quantitative analyses in order to show the increase across one apparent-time generation. Section 4.2 presents discourse excerpts from two participants in order to illustrate the nature of the change.

##### 4.1. Quantitative evidence: a change in pronoun rates

This section provides further quantitative evidence for the known finding that pronoun rates in Spanish in NYC increase over the course of one apparent-time generation. Table 2 presents results from an ANOVA in which the dependent variable was Pronoun Rate and the independent variable was Generation (LAR versus NYR).

<sup>7</sup> These criteria are the same as those used by Otheguy & Zentella (2012:30-31).

<sup>8</sup> The number and letter combination at the end of the example identifies the speaker.

Table 2. Pronoun rate by generation (LARs vs. NYRs)

LARs			NYRs			Pct Point Increase
N	Pro Rate	SD	N	Pro Rate	SD	
93	<b>30.7</b>	10.5	23	<b>37.7</b>	9.8	<b>+7.0</b>

The seven percentage point increase from the LAR to the NYR stage represents a statistically significant change across the generational cohorts [ $F(1,115) = 8.48, p = .004$ ]. In addition to increasing across one generation, there is evidence that the increase occurs within the immigrant generation (Livert & Otheguy 2010). Among the 93 LARs in the current study, Pronoun Rate positively correlates with number of years spent in the US ( $r = .26, p < .02$ ). In other words, the more time spent in NYC, the more pronouns Spanish-speaking immigrants use.

#### 4.2. *Qualitative evidence: Discourse showing abundant pronoun usage*

To gain some understanding of how this quantitative change impacts speakers' discourse, this section presents two excerpts of speech, one from a Cuban who arrived in the US at age 34, and a second excerpt from a Cuban who arrived at age five. Let us begin with 'Rafael' (not his real name), who arrived at age 34. Rafael is a 43-year-old man who reports that his English is poor. His interview contains 346 verbs within the envelope of variation, of which 77 (22 percent) occur with a pronoun. His pronoun rate is lower than average for Cuban LARs, but well within the average rate for LARs in general. An excerpt that is representative of his speech appears in example (2), in which he talks about hitchhiking in Cuba. In this example there are 13 eligible verbs, all of which are underlined. Contexts that appear without a subject pronoun are identified by the symbol  $\emptyset$  in the original Spanish version and by parentheses in the English translation.

(2) Bueno pues nos paró un carro, le  $\emptyset$  agradecemos que  $\emptyset$  nos monte en el carro,  $\emptyset$  nos lleva a Santiago de Cuba, pero antes de llegar, de llegar a la casa  $\emptyset$  me dice no, no, no pero es que ustedes no van a la casa ahora, ahora ustedes van conmigo a un restaurant,  $\emptyset$  van a comer conmigo, y entonces  $\emptyset$  creo que  $\emptyset$  insistimos, ahora  $\emptyset$  no recuerdo,  $\emptyset$  creo que  $\emptyset$  no fuimos al restaurant, pero él compró comida. (372U)

'Well a car stopped for us, (we) thanked him that (he) picked us up in the car, (he) brings us to Santiago de Cuba, but before arriving, arriving at the house, (he) says to me no, no, no but you-pl are not going to the house now, now you-pl go with me to a restaurant, (you-pl) are going to eat with me, and so (I) think that (we) insisted, now (I) don't remember, (I) think that (we) didn't go to the restaurant, but he bought food.'

Three (23 percent) of 13 contexts appear with a pronoun: *ustedes no van* (you-pl are not going), *ustedes van* (you-pl go), *él compró* (he bought).

Now consider an excerpt of speech produced by Cuban who arrived in the US at age five. Her rate of pronoun use is the highest in the corpus. Carla (not her real name) is a 23-year-old woman who arrived in the US at age five. She reports that her English is better than her Spanish. Carla's interview contains 185 verbs within the envelope of variation. Of those 185 verbs, 111 (60 percent) occur with a subject pronoun. Given that the average pronoun rate for all NYR Cubans is 46 percent, Carla's rate of 60 percent is particularly high. Consider example (3), in which she talks about her mother and about being Cuban American. In this excerpt there are 21 variable contexts, all underlined.<sup>9</sup>

(3) Yo creo que ella se cree que los juventud de este país está echado a perder. Yo he tenido esta discusión con ella muchas veces. Porque ella me dice que en Cuba esto y en Cuba lo otro y yo le digo, mami,  $\emptyset$  no estamos en Cuba,  $\emptyset$  estamos en los Estados Unidos. Y y no yo no puedo decir que yo soy completamente Americana porque todavía  $\emptyset$  tengo muchas cosas, tú sabes, de crianza hispana o

<sup>9</sup> Two sentences from this excerpt appear in Otheguy & Zentella (2012:207).

cubanas. Pero a la misma vez Ø voy a la escuela aquí, Ø trabajo aquí, Ø me he crecido aquí, so I have like a mix. But I can speak, like I combine the English and Spanish, that's the way my head thinks and that's the way my values are. So ella se pone muy brava porque ella cree que yo soy demasiado de independiente. Pero yo creo que yo hubiera sido independiente en Cuba anyway. Ø No sé, Ø tengo ese carácter. (012U)

'I think that she believes that the youths of this country are spoiled. I have had this argument with her many times. Because she tells me that in Cuba this and in Cuba that and I say to her, mami, (we) are not in Cuba, (we) are in the United States. And and no I can't say that I am completely American because still (I) have many things, you know of Hispanic or Cuban upbringing. But at the same time (I) go to school here, (I) work here, (I) have grown up here, so I have like a mix. But I can speak, like I combine the English and Spanish, that's the way my head thinks and that's the way my values are. So she gets very angry because she believes that I am too independent. But I think that I would have been independent in Cuba anyway. (I) don't know, (I) have that character.'

Carla's discourse in (3) clearly demonstrates her tendency to use pronouns more often than not: 13 out of 21 (62%) eligible tensed verbs appear with pronouns. Such abundant use of pronouns can sound redundant to monolingual Spanish speakers (Shin & Cairns 2012). In sum, the difference between Rafael's and Carla's pronoun usage is noticeable, demonstrating that the ongoing change in pronoun use in NYC is apparent not only in statistical analyses measuring pronoun rates, but also in discourse.<sup>10</sup>

## 5. The women effect in the change in progress in NYC

Having illustrated that pronoun usage increases in NYC, I now compare men and women to see if they differ in their pronoun rates (Section 5.1), as well as in their sensitivity to switch-reference, a discourse predictor of pronoun use (Section 5.2).

### 5.1. Evidence for the women effect in Pronoun Rates

Table 3 presents results from three ANOVAs, one performed with LARs, one with NYRs, and one with all speakers. For all three, the dependent variable was Pronoun Rate and the independent variable was Gender (men versus women).

Table 3. Pronoun rate by Gender, LARs and NYRs

	Men		Women		Pct. Point Difference
	Pro Rate	SD	Pro Rate	SD	
LARs	27.8	9.3	33.1	11.0	+5.3
NYRs	39.0	8.5	36.3	11.2	-2.7
All speakers	30.3	10.2	33.6	11.0	+3.6

The top row in Table 3 shows that LAR women produce a higher Pronoun Rate (33.1 percent) than LAR men do (27.8 percent), and this difference is significant by ANOVA [ $F(1,92)=6.02$ ,  $p < .02$ ]. Among the NYRs, however, there is no significant difference between men and women [ $F(1,22) = .443$ ,  $p = .513$ ]. The results for all 116 speakers, reported in the bottom row of Table 3, show that women produce higher rates of pronouns, but the 3.6 percentage-point difference is not statistically significant [ $F(1,115)=2.82$ ,  $p = .10$ ]. Thus bivariate analyses indicate that there is a women effect among LARs, but not among NYRs.

<sup>10</sup> I assume that abundant pronoun use is felicitous for the bilingual varieties in this study, even if it appears pragmatically odd to some Spanish speakers. My goal is to describe and explain differences between monolinguals and bilinguals from a perspective that heeds Treffers-Daller & Sakel's (2012:3) advice to move away from "the monolingual view of bilinguals ..., and to stop considering bilinguals ... as failed monolinguals who have only partial knowledge of two separate language systems."

The bivariate analyses reported above reveal the impact of Generation and Gender on increasing pronoun rates. I now turn to multivariate analyses to further investigate the impact of these variables on pronoun rates. The benefit of multivariate analysis is that it measures the impact of an independent variable while controlling for other independent variables. For example, the linear regression analysis reported below measures the relative impact of Gender on pronoun use, while controlling for other independent variables, such as Region (Caribbean versus Mainland). For further discussion of the advantages of multivariate analysis, see Guy (1993: 237-238) and Otheguy & Zentella (2012:130). Table 4 presents the results from a linear regression performed with the same dependent variable used above, i.e. Pronoun Rate. The independent factor groups most central to the current study are Generation (LAR, NYR) and Gender (men and women). Also included in the regression are Region (Caribbean vs. Mainland) and Social Class.<sup>11</sup> The relative weight of each factor group is expressed in terms of standardized beta values, which are coefficients that describe the influence of the factor groups (Newton & Rudestam 1999:263). The larger the standardized beta is for a given factor group, the larger the effect that the factor group has on predicting pronoun expression. The *p* values show whether or not each factor group is significant, with two asterisks indicating significance at  $< .01$ .

Table 4. Linear regression, all speakers, Dependent variable: Pronoun rate

$R^2 = .39^{**}$	Standardized Beta	<i>p</i>
Region	0.54	**
<b>Generation</b>	<b>0.27</b>	**
<b>Gender</b>	<b>0.23</b>	**
Social class	0.09	ns

Table 4 shows that Region, Generation, and Gender are all significant predictors of pronoun rates in NYC, whereas Social Class is not. Region and Generation are thoroughly discussed by Otheguy & Zentella (2012). Here I focus primarily on the result for Gender, which shows clear evidence for the women effect.

Given that the results presented above in Table 3 indicate that the women effect applies to the LAR generation in particular, a second linear regression was performed with LARs only. The variable Generation is not included here, as all LARs belong to the same (immigrant) generation. Included instead of Generation is a continuous variable called ‘Years in the US,’ representing the number of years each participant had resided in the US at the time of his or her interview. Region and Social Class are also included. The results are presented in Table 5. Two asterisks indicate significance at  $< .01$ , and one asterisk at  $< .05$ .

Table 5. Linear regression, LARs only, Dependent variable: Pronoun rate

$R^2 = .40^{**}$	Standardized Beta	<i>p</i>
Region	0.51	**
<b>Gender</b>	<b>0.25</b>	**
<b>Years in the US</b>	<b>0.17</b>	*
Social class	0.12	ns

The results in Table 5 provide further evidence for the change in progress and the women effect. The significant result for Years in the US confirms that the change takes place not only across generations, but also within the immigrant generation (Livert & Otheguy 2010). The result for Gender clearly shows that the change within the immigrant generation is led by women.

<sup>11</sup> Social class categorizes speakers as either middle or working class.

### 5.2. Evidence for the women effect in sensitivity to switch-reference

In this section pronoun use is further examined to determine whether LAR men and LAR women differ in their sensitivity to ‘switch-reference,’ a discourse variable that guides Spanish speakers’ use of pronouns. Switch-reference refers to whether the subject of the verb is the same as, or different from, the subject of the previous verb. When the referent of two consecutive grammatical subjects is different, the frequency of subject pronoun occurrence with the second verb is significantly higher than when the subjects share the same referent (Abreu 2012; Bayley & Pease-Alvarez 1996, 1997; Bayley et al. 2012; Bentivoglio 1987, Cameron 1992, 1994, 1995, Carvalho & Child 2011, Enríquez 1984; Erker & Guy 2012; Flores-Ferrán 2002, 2004; Holmquist 2012; Hurtado 2005; Orozco & Guy 2008; Otheguy & Zentella 2012; Silva-Corvalán 1994, Shin & Cairns 2012; Shin & Otheguy 2009; Torres Cacoullós & Travis 2011; Travis 2007). Consider example (4), which includes three ‘same-reference’ contexts, i.e. contexts in which two consecutive grammatical subjects have the same referent.

- (4) [Interviewer: ¿Y tu papá terminó su licenciatura?] Participant: Nada más. Se dedicó a otras cosas, de hecho trabajó muy poco tiempo en su carrera, y ya después se dedicó a otras actividades.

‘[Interviewer: And your father finished his BA?] Participant: Nothing more. (He) devoted himself to other things, in fact (he) worked very little time in his field, and later (he) devoted himself to other activities.’ [308M]

In (4) the subjects of all three verbs appear in same-reference contexts and, as expected, without a subject pronoun. Now consider a context where two consecutive grammatical subjects have a different referent, as in (5).

- (5) Ella tenía su novio allá y él pensaba venir pero Ø no le dieron la visa. [038C]  
‘She had her boyfriend there and he planned on coming but (they) didn’t give him the visa.’

In (5) the subject of *pensaba* (planned on) is different from that of the previous verb *tenía* (had), and the use of *él* (he) with *pensaba* is an illustration of how the switch in reference can increase the likelihood that a pronoun will be included.

Previous research has shown that, in NYC, US-born speakers are less sensitive to switch-reference than Latin American immigrants are (Otheguy & Zentella 2012:163,185, Shin & Otheguy 2009), a change that is concomitant with (and perhaps due to) the increase in pronoun rates. Here I investigate whether LAR women lead men in decreasing sensitivity to switch-reference. The dependent variable for these analyses is a binary, categorical variable (present vs. absent pronoun) called ‘Occurrence,’ necessitating the use of non-parametric tests (Newton & Rudestam 1999:181). Here bivariate analyses consist of chi-squares, and multivariate analyses consist of logistic regressions. Table 6 presents results from bivariate analyses of Pronoun Occurrence in same- and switch-reference contexts.

Table 6. Pronoun Occurrence by Switch-reference, LAR men & women

	LAR Men		LAR Women	
	N Verbs	% present	N Verbs	% present
Same-reference	8,746	20.9	11,058	25.3
Switch-reference	9,565	36.2	12,889	37.3
Pct point difference		<b>15.3</b>		<b>12.0</b>

The difference between same- and switch-reference contexts is significant for both LAR men [ $X^2(1) = 522.47, p < .0001$ ] and LAR women [ $X^2(1) = 396.49, p < .0001$ ]. While the discourse variable is operative for both the men and women, the means suggest that the variable is slightly stronger for the former than for the latter. Looking at the bottom row in Table 6, we see that there is a greater percentage-point difference between percent of present pronouns in switch- versus same-reference among the LAR men (15.3) than among the LAR women (12.0).

Multivariate analyses of Occurrence, presented in Table 7 provide further evidence that the decrease in sensitivity to switch-reference is a female-led change. Two logistic regressions were performed, one with LAR men and one with LAR women. In addition to Switch-reference, the following six independent variables (or ‘factor groups’) were included: person/number of the pronoun (Person); tense, mood, and aspect of the verb (Tense); clause type (Clause); lexical content of the verb (Lexical); whether or not the verb appears with a reflexive pronoun (Reflexive); and whether or not the referent of the pronoun is specific or nonspecific (Definite). Each factor group is associated with factors, i.e. the specific factors within the variable. Switch-reference includes two factors: same- and switch-reference. Reflexive also has two factors, either occurring with a reflexive pronoun or not. Some other factor groups, such as Clause, Person, and Lexical, include more than two factor groups (For details, see Otheguy & Zentella (2012:155-157, 251ff).

Table 7 provides information about the Switch-reference variable in two separate constraint hierarchies, which show, for each factor, the probability of Pronoun Occurrence expressed as an Exp(B) value. Exp(B) values above 1.0 indicate that a factor promotes pronoun presence, whereas values below 1.0 indicate that a factor promotes pronoun absence. The further away from 1.0, the stronger the factor. So, a factor with an Exp(B) value of 2.0 is a stronger promoter of pronoun occurrence than a factor with a value of 1.5. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a factor with a value of .2 is a stronger promoter of absence than a factor with a value of .5. The column with the title *p* tells us whether or not the probability weight associated with each factor reaches statistical significance, with two asterisks signifying  $p < .01$ .

Table 7. Logistic Regressions, Dependent variable: Pronoun Occurrence, Independent variable: Switch-reference

LAR MEN				LAR WOMEN			
Factor	N vbs	Exp(B)	<i>p</i>	Factor	N vbs	Exp(B)	<i>p</i>
Switch-ref	8682	1.54	**	Switch-ref	12,459	1.46	**
Same-ref	9447	.42	**	Same-ref	10,814	.69	**
Range		1.12		Range		.77	

Other factor groups included in regression: Person4, Tense, Clause, Lexical, Reflexive, Definiteness

Table 7 shows that, for LAR men and women, switch-reference contexts significantly promote pronoun use, and same-reference contexts promote absence. To compare the men and women, we need to look at the range between the Exp(B) values for same-reference and switch-reference. The range indicates the strength of the factor group, and the greater the range, the greater the magnitude of the effect. The bottom row of Table 7 shows that the range is greater for men (1.12) than for women (.77), indicating that LAR women are less sensitive to Switch-reference than LAR men are. These results provide support for the conclusion that women are ahead of men in the change involving decreasing sensitivity to Switch-reference.

In summary, the study provides robust evidence that women are leading the change in increasing pronoun rates (Tables 3, 4, and 5), as well as the change involving decreasing sensitivity to Switch-reference (Tables 6 and 7).

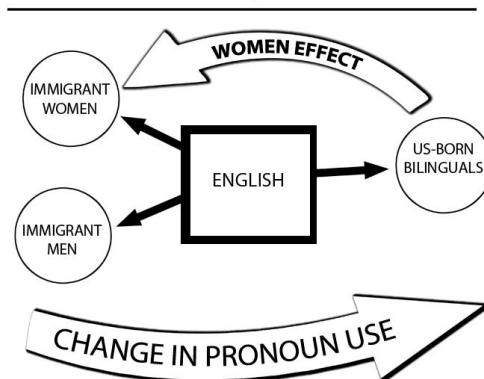
## 6. Discussion: Why do immigrant women lead change in bilingual settings?

This study presents evidence that increasing rates of subject pronoun use and decreasing sensitivity to Switch-reference are changes in progress in Spanish in NYC that are led by Latin American women. In light of the growing evidence that there is a women effect in bilingual settings (see also Orozco 2007, 2009 and Alfaraz 2010), we are in a position to ask why it is that immigrant women are ahead of immigrant men with respect to changing pronoun use. I consider three possible explanations for this women effect: Compared to immigrant men, immigrant women have (1) higher levels of English, (2) more contact with varieties of Spanish that differ from their own variety, or (3) more contact with US-born bilinguals. I consider each explanation in turn and conclude that contact with US-bilinguals accounts best for the women effect among immigrants undergoing change in NYC.

First consider the English contact explanation. As the change in pronoun use is, in part, due to contact with English, we must consider the possibility that immigrant women experience more contact with English than do immigrant men. But in the Otheguy-Zentella corpus a higher percentage of LAR men rate their English proficiency as good or excellent, as compared to LAR women (49% and 44%, respectively). Thus, it is highly unlikely that the women effect in NYC is a consequence of higher levels of English proficiency among the women. The second explanation to consider is that the immigrant women experience more dialect leveling than do their male counterparts. In NYC there are more Hispanics of Caribbean origin than of Mainland origin, making the high-pronoun using Caribbean variety the dominant one. Otheguy & Zentella (2012:99-145) find that Caribbean varieties influence Mainland varieties. Mainlanders' exposure to two high-pronoun types of speech (English and Caribbean Spanish) creates a kind of double-barrel effect, resulting in greater increase in pronoun use among Mainlanders than among Caribbean speakers. Could the Caribbean influence on Mainland varieties account for the women effect? Perhaps, especially if it could be shown that Mainlander-Caribbean contact is asymmetrical in terms of gender, that is, if Mainlander women have more contact with Caribbean speakers than Mainlander men do. This line of reasoning is worth pursuing, but it cannot entirely account for the women effect found in the current study. The analyses above show that the women effect pertains to all Latinos undergoing changes in pronoun use NYC, including Cubans and Puerto Ricans. A dialect leveling account does not explain the women effect among these Caribbean groups. Therefore, in order to explain the women effect, we need to consider yet another explanation, beyond the impact of English and dialect leveling.

Here I propose another reason for the women effect in NYC. I suggest that, in addition to impact from English and, in the case of Mainlanders, impact from Caribbeans, Latin American immigrants are exposed to yet another source of high-pronoun using speech, that is, the speech of US-born Latino bilinguals. Seen this way, the women effect suggests that changes in immigrant women's Spanish are, in part, due to contact with their US-born friends and family members, including their own children. Figure 1 visually illustrates the change in progress, as well as the sources for the change, highlighting the women effect in the top arrow. I leave aside dialect leveling as the graphic captures change in both Mainlander and Caribbean immigrants.

**Figure 1: Sources of Change in Pronoun use in Spanish in NYC**



As shown in Figure 1, the proposal is that there are several sources for the change in progress in NYC, including knowledge of English, dialect leveling, and intergenerational contact. In other words, the reason for the change is multi-factorial, with intergenerational contact being one factor among at least three.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the proposal highlights intergenerational contact as a primary factor accounting

<sup>12</sup> An anonymous reviewer suggested that perhaps the ongoing change in NYC begins in Latin America and then is accelerated in the contact setting. Indeed linguistic change can originate in the pre-contact variety and then be accelerated in the language contact setting. This type of contact-induced acceleration has been posited for

for the women effect specifically, as neither English influence nor dialect leveling sufficiently explains why immigrant women are ahead of men in the change. The intergenerational contact explanation is also consistent with Van Ness's (1995) finding that older, monolingual German-speaking Amish women in Ohio employ innovative features in their speech, not because of their own contact with English, but because of contact with their bilingual daughters. In sum, the women effect in bilingual settings in NYC and Ohio suggests a more general phenomenon captured by the top arrow in Figure 1 whereby changes that occur among bilinguals can be transmitted in a backwards trajectory to immigrant or monolingual female relatives.

An additional question is raised by the proposal that women's speech is affected more than men's by contact with US-born bilinguals and that therein lies the explanation for the women effect: Do immigrant women actually have more contact with US-born bilinguals, or do they have a similar amount of contact, but are more susceptible to external influence? Both accounts are possible. First, it is likely that women have more contact with US-born bilinguals, due to their role as mothers of US-born children. In fact, research on US Latinos whose parents speak different varieties of Spanish has shown that children tend to speak the dialect of their mothers (Potowski 2008, Potowski & Matts 2008). This mother-to-child dialect transmission is a strong indicator that US-born Latinos have more conversations in Spanish with their mothers than with their fathers. Second, there is reason to believe that women tend to adapt their use of language more readily than men. There is research that suggests that women, more than men, use language to establish interpersonal sensitivity (Hall & Mast 2008, Leaper & Friedman 2007), a tendency that is likely to increase their susceptibility to change. Furthermore, there is evidence that women use language to demarcate social differences among themselves (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2003:302), indicating that women have a heightened sensitivity to linguistic form and a tendency to change their speech. I suspect that both explanations, i.e. that women have more contact with US-born bilinguals and that they are more susceptible to change, play a role in explaining the women effect in bilingual settings.

In light of the evidence that there is a women effect in bilingual settings, explanations for generalizations regarding women's role in language change should be slightly modified. Recall that both Labov (2001) and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003) assert that the leaders of change in monolingual settings use linguistic innovation as a means of expressing nonconformity. But projection of nonconformity is not a likely explanation for the women effect in bilingual settings. I have argued in this paper that the women effect in Spanish in NYC is, in part, the result of contact between immigrant women and US-born bilinguals. To gain a better understanding of why women are so important in advancing language change, future research should examine women's roles in various social networks, as well as the possibility that women are more susceptible than men are to external influences on speech patterns.

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innovative *estar* (Gutiérrez 1992; Silva-Coravlán 1994:112-113), as well as for the increasing use of the periphrastic construction to express futurity (Claes & Ortiz-López 2011, Orozco 2007). Otheguy & Zentella (2012:144) tentatively consider a similar situation with respect to the change in pronoun use in NYC. Still, studies of pronoun use in Latin America thus far have not found evidence of a female-led change in progress. For example, Avila-Jiménez (1995:36) finds increasing pronoun rates in San Juan, Puerto Rico, but she finds no gender effect. The issue of whether or not the change in progress in pronoun use originates in Latin America and is accelerated in NYC or originates in NYC is not a simple one to tease apart. I would argue that, in either case, intergenerational contact between immigrant women and their US-born children is likely to play a role in the transmission of the change.

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