

THE IMPACT OF THE SOCIETAL LANGUAGE ON WRITING DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIRST LANGUAGE: THE CASE OF NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS IN TWO-WAY IMMERSION PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES

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1. Introduction²

Two-way immersion (henceforth TWI) is an increasingly popular educational approach in the United States. Two-way immersion programs integrate native English speakers with native speakers of another language, usually Spanish, and teach all students through both languages. 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 (Christian, 1994). As such, these programs provide excellent environments for studying a variety of issues related to bilingualism in the United States. One such topic, the issue of cross-linguistic influence, is the focus of this paper.

The fact that the students involved in these programs transfer from one language to the other is not surprising. In many instances, this transfer can be positive, especially in the case of language skills. There has been a fair amount of research on the language transfer of bilingual students in the U.S. Much of this research has stressed how L1 transfer can help students in the early stages of L2 acquisition, since language skills developed in the first language can facilitate the acquisition of similar skills in a second language. For example, Jiménez, García & Pearson (1994) and Koda (1989) showed

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that the more vocabulary and reading knowledge in the native language (Spanish) the students had, the better their reading skills and vocabulary recognition was in their second language (English). Similarly, Durgunoglu, Nagy & Hacin-Bhatt (1993) stated that readers' performance on English word and pseudoword recognition tests was predicted by the levels of both Spanish phonological awareness and Spanish word recognition. Apart from this type of research on language transfer in bilingual programs, most of the research on 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 (Lado, 1957; Selinker, 1966; Gass, 1979; Kellerman, 1983; Odlin, 1989).

In our study, we will use the same approach; however, we will apply it to native Spanish speakers enrolled in bilingual programs in the United States as opposed to a language majority group in a foreign language setting. Our purpose is to investigate English influence in the Spanish writing of native Spanish speakers (NSS) in TWI bilingual programs. Spanish in the U.S. has obviously been influenced by English because of the extended contact between the two languages. 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), while other studies have looked at the different dialects of Spanish, especially Mexican-American Spanish (McClure, 1977; Silva-Corvalán, 1982; Elías-Olivares, 1995) and Puerto Rican Spanish (Zentella, 1981, 1982, 1997). Because we do not have extensive information about the varieties of Spanish spoken in the communities where the children live, we did not try to distinguish between English influence at the societal level vs. English influence at the individual level. In other words, some of the items that we identified as English influence may be reflective of the varieties of Spanish spoken in the children's communities, perhaps even to the point where such constructions are no longer considered examples of English influence by people in those speech communities. Other instances may be more idiosyncratic and may relate more to a given child's developing knowledge of the two languages. In order to begin to investigate this issue and get an emerging sense of the extent to which the Spanish writing of these

students may show English influence beyond what has become “acceptable U.S. Spanish”, we asked a group of native Spanish-speaking adults in the United States to rate the items we identified in terms of acceptability. We are aware that what has been called “U.S. Spanish” is not a well defined, homogeneous variety. The Spanish spoken in the U.S. is likely to vary according to many factors. By collecting feedback from several teachers living in different parts of the U.S. and coming from different Latin-American countries, our intent was to observe the commonalities between all of them in order to see what is “generally” accepted in the Spanish spoken in the U.S. As a result, this study should be seen as a preliminary exploration of this topic, and there is clearly a lot of additional research to be done in this area.

After this introduction, the paper consists of the following sections: 1) a methods section, in which we present our research questions, our programs and participants, and the process of data collection; 2) an overview of our coding scheme together with examples of each coding category; 3) a brief quantitative analysis of the data that indicates the extent of English influence on the writing of the students in our study and the differences in amount of English influence across coding categories; 4) a summary of the data we collected regarding acceptability of the children’s statements relative to the norms of U.S. Spanish; and finally, 5) a discussion of the findings and a conclusion.

2. Methods

2.1. Research questions

We were curious about the ways in which a second language (English, in the case of native Spanish speakers) may affect the mother tongue (Spanish) due to language contact. In order to analyze this, we examined the writing samples of native Spanish speakers in Spanish-dominant two-way immersion programs. Specifically, the following questions guide this study:

1. What types of English influence are found in the domains of mechanics, vocabulary, and grammar?
2. To what extent does English influence the writing of native Spanish speakers in Spanish-dominant two-way immersion programs? Does the amount of influence vary across the three different language domains considered?
3. According to a sample of native Spanish speakers in the U.S., how acceptable are the cases of English influence found in students’ written narratives?

2.2. Definition of terms

Before moving forward, it is important to clarify what we mean by “English influence” or “transfer from English”³. 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, in terms of vocabulary, mechanics, or grammar. 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. As we noted earlier, some of the words or constructions that we classified as English influenced for the purposes of this paper have become widely used and accepted in some Spanish-speaking communities in the United States (e.g. *lonche* –from *lunch*– and *troca* –from *truck*–), while others are more idiosyncratic or unusual 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*). Our purpose in including all of these forms of English influence is to document the full range of English influence in the students’ Spanish as a means of developing a starting point for a discussion about it. We did not consider as cases of English influence any proper nouns that do not have a translation in Spanish (e.g. *McDonald’s*, *Disney World*, etc.). Similarly, we did not include occurrences that did not seem standard Spanish but 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’ve never had a teacher”) is a statement that is not likely to be made by a monolingual Spanish speaker, but neither does it seem due to the influence of English.

2.3. Programs and participants

Data for this paper come from three Spanish-dominant TWI programs (where instruction is carried out in Spanish at least 80% of the time 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 States. 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. According to school records, all of the students were classified as native Spanish speakers at their time of entry into their respective program. 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 were born in the United States. 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 spoke both English and Spanish at home (30 out of 55); very few of them interacted mostly in English (5) or in Spanish (14) and there were only 4 who were monolingual Spanish speakers at home; additionally, there were 2 students for whom we are missing data. As for time spent in a Spanish-speaking country, most students spent a minimal amount of time each year in such a location. Many parents reported that their children spent no time each year in a Spanish-speaking country, and the majority reported that their children spent 2-3 weeks or less per year in a Spanish-speaking country. Few (7) typically spent 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 from infancy, given that the majority were born in the U.S., used both languages at home, and did not typically

³ It must be pointed out that throughout this paper we will use "English transfer" synonymously with "English influence" without any connotation of positive or negative effect (transfer vs. interference). See

spend a lot of time each year in a Spanish-speaking country. As a result, it would not be surprising to find a fair amount of English influence 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, and May) while the students were in third, fourth, and fifth grade. 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 150 to 200 words (1 - 1 ½ pages). The shortest compositions were approximately 40-100 words (½ page) and the longest had up to 400-450 words (3 ½ pages). For this particular analysis, we focused on the final narrative that each student wrote at the end of fifth grade (Spring, 2000). We focused on a single time point in order to simplify the analysis, and chose the last time point as it should be reflective of the students' best writing performance in Spanish.

3. Data analysis

3.1. Coding

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. When reviewing the quantitative findings, it is important to keep in mind that for each individual student we focused on types rather than tokens (e.g. if a student wrote *Mayo* twice, we only counted it once for English influence). Drawing on previous coding systems (Weinreich, 1953; Mendieta, 1999) and the content of the students' samples, we developed a coding scheme with the following categories of transfer: mechanics, vocabulary, and syntax.

3.1.1. Mechanic transfer

This category designates the cases where the student followed English rules of spelling, capitalization, punctuation, etc. in their Spanish writing. Each of these subtypes will be reviewed independently.

Romaine (1995: 51-55) for a deeper discussion on how the terminology has been used in the literature.

We classified as spelling transfer the instances where the student used English rules of spelling/sound matching while writing in Spanish. Some examples of this are the following: *hau* for *jaula*, *deho* for *dijo*; *prema* instead of *prima*, *envidados* (*invitados*); or *lavantamos* (*levantamos*), *anamore* (*enamoré*), *quiaras* (*quieras*); where the students tried to represent the sounds [h] (in *jaula*, *dijo*), [i] (*prima*, *invitados*), and long [e] (in *levantamos*, *enamoré*, *quieras*) according to the normal English spellings “h”, “e” and “a” respectively, instead of the Spanish spellings “j”, “i” and “e”. Another example of English transfer in spelling is *ensenya* instead of *enseña*. What we find here is a situation where similar sounds in the two languages are spelled differently. The letter “ñ” does not exist in English, and the closest sound to the nasal palatal is represented by “ny”. When a student writes “ny” instead of “ñ”, s/he is using the English sound/spelling matching and not the Spanish one. In addition to spelling issues related to sound/letter mapping, there were also instances of spelling transfer that related to cognate words that are spelled differently in the two languages, such as *example/ejemplo*, *English/ingles*, or *Spanish/español*. Because of the similarity of words across languages, students occasionally wrote invented hybrid terms like *exemplo*, *engles*, or *spañol*.

The second subtype of mechanic transfer is capitalization transfer, which 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 happens 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, our third subcategory is constituted by the “other” cases of mechanic transfer not included in the two previously mentioned subcategories. This general group includes more low-frequency mechanics issues such as punctuation and abbreviation. In the case of punctuation, English influence occurs when the student follows English punctuation rules while 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. Some examples from the writings we have analyzed are *E.E. es la mejor escuela del mundo. Por qué?* (“E.E. is the best school in the world. Why?”). The correct Spanish sentence would be *¿Por qué?* Other instances

are *Se van a reir muy fuerte!* (“You’re going to laugh very hard!”), instead of *¡Se van a reir muy fuerte!*, *No te acerques nunca!* (“Don’t you ever get close!”), instead of *¡No te acerques nunca!* Other cases that we identified within this subcategory are: 70’s, a.m./p.m, and the symbol # (to indicate number).

3.1.2. Vocabulary transfer

This type of transfer occurs when the student transfers words from English into Spanish. Here we can distinguish between three different subcategories: English words incorporated directly into Spanish texts, English words adapted into Spanish through morphological and phonological changes, and semantic transfer to already existing Spanish words.

The first subcategory is unmodified English words that are incorporated into Spanish discourse. We found many instances of this type of transfer in the writing samples we analyzed. Most of the cases occurred when talking about sports (*soccer, basketball, coach, pitcher, indoor, outdoor, freestyle, strikes, out, home run*, etc.), or school (*high school, middle school, bus, student store, Mr. (Teacher), P.E., spirit week, spring break*, etc.). We also found words that referred to popular culture, such as *mall, shuttle, Dragon Ball Z, CD player, roller coaster*, etc.

Another instance of vocabulary transfer 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”). Other cases of English words adapted into Spanish are *reporte* (from *report*, “informe”), *pichar* (from *pitch*, “lanzar”), *cachar* (from *catch*, “tomar”), *puchar* (from *push*, “empujar”), and *chor* (from *short*, “pantalón corto”).

Finally, we have also classified false cognates as instances of vocabulary transfer. That is, the cases in which a word already exists in Spanish, but it is used with the meaning that a similar word has in English. We have referred to this subcategory as semantic transfer. Some instances are: *pretender* (from *pretend*, intended to mean “fingir/aparentar”), *atender* (from *attend*, meaning “asistir”), *introducir* (from *introduce*, meaning “presentar”) and also very common nouns, such as *letra* (from

letter, intended to mean “carta”), *bloque* (from *block*, intended to mean “manzana/cuadra”), *tiempo* (from *time*, “hora, época”), *linea* (from *line* “fila”), *soda* (from *soda*, “refresco”) or *grados* (from *grades*, notas/calificaciones”).

3.1.3. Syntactic transfer

In this group we have identified the cases where English influences Spanish at the syntactic 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 amigos* (“we’re best friends”), instead of the more common Spanish *somos muy buenas amigas* or *es mi mejor amiga*; *adivina qué* (“guess what!”), instead of ¿sabes qué?; *es divertido cuando jugamos juegos* (“it’s fun when we play games”), instead of *es divertido cuando jugamos*; and *este año escolar nuevo yo iba a ir con Mr. Brown* (“this year I was going to go with Mr. Brown”), instead of *iba a tener a Mr. Brown*.

Another type of syntactic transfer is word-order transfer. Spanish is very flexible in relation to word-order. However, there are certain cases where the word-order that is used sounds “marked” in a specific context. The situation of English is quite different. This language is much more rigid in relation to word-order, being Subject Verb (Object) the only possibility (*my sister arrived*), and adjectives preceding nouns (*a wonderful person*). Sometimes students follow these rigid 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”), *un día cuando mi cumpleaños llegaba* (“un día cuando llegaba mi cumpleaños”) (cf. “one day when my birthday was coming”), *y así es como mi hermana es* (“y así es como es mi hermana”) (cf. “and that’s what my sister is like”), *soccer es mi favorito deporte* (“el fútbol es mi deporte favorito”) (cf. “soccer is my favorite sport”). These word-orders are not ungrammatical; however, they are not natural in Spanish.

The last subcategory is more encompassing than the other two, as it includes all the “other” cases of syntactic transfer. To begin with, 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”), *era la maestra de segundo grado para mi hermano Carlos* (“era la maestra de segundo grado de mi hermano Carlos”) (cf. “she was the second grade teacher for my brother Carlos”); 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”). Another illustration of syntactic transfer is the use of preposition stranding in Spanish. Preposition stranding (a situation where the preposition accompanying the verb appears at the end of the sentence and not following the verb) is grammatical in English but not in Spanish. An example from the students’ writings is the following: *yo conocí a dos muchachos que me enamoro de* (“conocí a dos muchachos de los que me enamoré”) (cf. English “I met two boys that I fell in love with”).

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”), or *mi deporte favorito es fútbol* (“mi deporte favorito es el fútbol”) (cf. “my favorite sport is football”). We also found ungrammatical “*gustar* constructions” in Spanish that followed the English structure for “like constructions”: *todas tambien 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”)⁴.

Within syntactic transfer we also found *-ing* constructions 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. Martin* (“hay muchas actividades que ocurren en la clase del Sr. Martín” or still more accurate in Spanish “ocurren muchas actividades 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.

⁴ Silva-Corvalán (1994: 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*).

A final case of syntactic transfer is the transfer of 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”). 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.

3.2. Issues with coding

The coding scheme we designed was very helpful and straightforward for most cases. The majority of the instances of English influence that we found were easily classified within one of the main categories and subcategories. However, there were a few ambiguous cases that could have been incorporated into two groups. In order to be consistent we defined the following criteria, so as to be able to determine to which group a particular example belonged when its classification into a specific category was more ambiguous.

One problem we faced was the categorization of *my* as in *my mamá... my hermana... my madrina*. We classified it as spelling transfer originating from the similarity of the English cognate. However, it could also be syntactic transfer of the possessive. We thought the first possibility was more probable, since transfer of a modifying function word is not very likely to happen between languages.

The most problematic issues we met in relation to the coding system were the categorization of some instances as either semantic or collocation transfer on the one hand, and collocation or syntactic transfer on the other. The first issue we tried to solve by deciding that semantic transfer would only involve one word in the sentence, since it is included in the vocabulary transfer category. A way to test this was to substitute a given word with the more traditional Spanish word in order to see if it would make the sentence more acceptable. For instance, we considered *juego deportes* as semantic transfer of *to play*, because we could simply substitute *juego* for *practico/hago* and the sentence would be more standard. In contrast, we considered *jugamos juegos* as a collocation transfer of *play games* in English, because Spanish has a different way of

expressing this action, simply by the intransitive verb *juego*. *Jugar juegos* is redundant, since *juegos* is included in the meaning of the verb⁵. Additionally, there is no verb that can be substituted for *juego* in this sentence and still keep the same meaning. In this way we solved what could have been a problematic situation when counting and classifying the instances, because collocation and semantic transfer are not only different subcategories, but they also belong to different main categories.

The second challenging issue we mentioned was to differentiate between collocation and “other cases” of syntactic transfer. This situation is less problematic, since both subcategories belong to the same main category (syntactic transfer), and quantitatively the results would be less misleading, even if an instance were classified in the less appropriate subcategory. We agreed to consider an instance collocation transfer when it was a fixed expression in English whose incorporation into Spanish did not violate syntactic rules of this language. For example, something like *podemos tener un tiempo divertido* could be considered collocation transfer, because it does not alter the Spanish syntax (verb followed by a noun that is modified by an adjective). However, *cuando ya era hora para mi papa llegar a la casa mi hermano y yo(...)* does indeed alter the Spanish structure, since this language does not allow the English construction “for somebody to do something”; it employs the subjunctive and not the infinitive for these cases. As a result, this type of situation was included in the “other cases” of syntactic transfer.

4. Quantitative analysis⁶

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

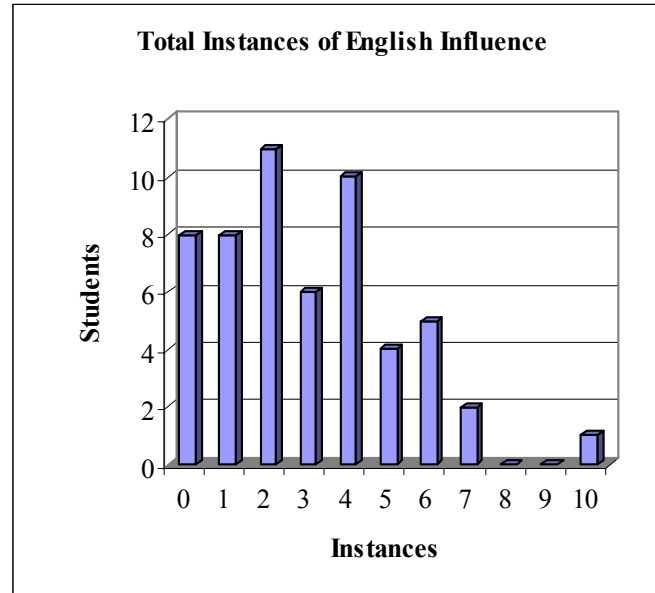
After analyzing the students’ written narratives, we discovered that the majority of them displayed at least some evidence of English influence in their Spanish writing.

⁵ There are constructions in Spanish with the verb *jugar* plus a direct object: *juego a las cartas*, *juego a(l) fútbol*, etc. Those are specific games that you can play, and therefore you have to specify what you are playing. However, when you are just *playing games*, Spanish simply uses the intransitive *jugar*.

⁶ We presented a similar analysis in our paper “Maintaining Spanish Proficiency in the United States: The Influence of English on the Spanish Writing of Native Spanish Speakers in Two-Way Immersion Programs” (2003). Our numbers now are slightly different because of the feedback we obtained after the presentation of that paper; however, the overall patterns remain the same.

In most cases, however, the influence was minor; the mode being 2 instances per student. This information is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Total number of Instances of English Influence in Each Students' Writing Sample.



As we can see in Figure 1, most of the students had from 0 to 6 instances of English influence in their Spanish writing sample. There were only a few students who exhibited more cases than that. The largest number of instances found in a single sample was 10. 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.

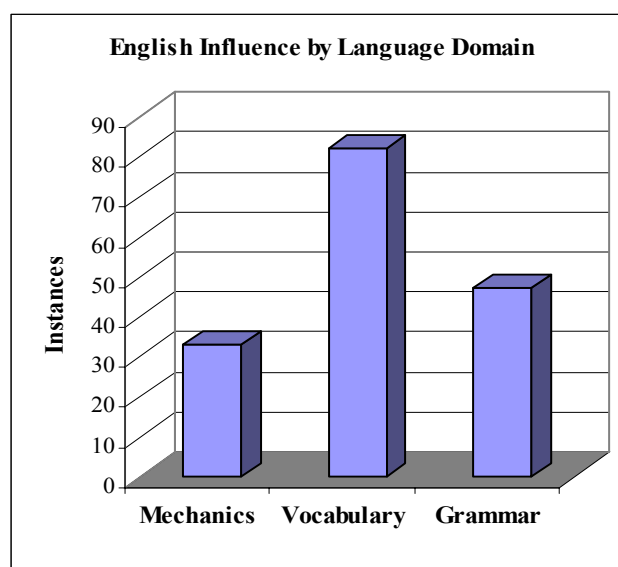
In summary, most students had at least some evidence of English influence in their Spanish writing, as there were more students who had one or more instances of English influence in their writing than those who had none (only 8 students out of 55 showed 0 instances of English influence). However, the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

4.2. Does the amount of influence vary across the three different language domains considered?

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 in the cases of language contact (Weinreich, 1953: 56), and also in the acquisition of a foreign language (Odlin, 1989). As for mechanics, there are not too many cases where English and Spanish differ from each other, and the students do not normally create those contexts in which such differences 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 varied across the three different domains.

Figure 2. English Influence across the Three Coding Categories.



Taking all the instances per category together, this graph shows how the different domains compare to each other. Here we can clearly see how the instances of vocabulary transfer exceeded the cases of transfer in the other two domains. Half of the total amount of instances of English influence was at the word level (82 out of 162), and the other half reflected slightly more cases of syntactic than mechanic transfer (the former with a total of 47, the latter with 33).

In summary, we can see that the outcome of our research is in agreement with previous research; in the sense that it shows that vocabulary is the area where language transfer is more likely to occur.

5. Acceptability of the instances in U.S. Spanish

In order to get a broader perspective on the acceptability of the words and statements that we extracted from the students' writing samples, we asked native Spanish speaking TWI teachers to evaluate the items in terms of acceptability. We hoped that these supplemental perspectives would help us identify the situations in which students might be transferring from English into Spanish because of a lack of knowledge of words or structures in Spanish (or because they are imitating the Spanish of their English-speaking peers), and in which cases students were simply demonstrating constructions that are considered acceptable in U.S. Spanish. For cases where the teachers agreed that the constructions were not acceptable, an argument could be made for the need for greater emphasis on the teaching of particular aspects of Spanish in TWI programs; in cases where the teachers rated the constructions as acceptable, we would just be witnessing an evolution of Spanish due to its contact with English in the U.S. The reason we decided to ask teachers in particular was that they are not only insiders to the U.S. Spanish-speaking community, but they are also aware of the mistakes TWI students make. Therefore, they could easily identify what constitutes a fossilized error, common in this group of students, from an individual, idiosyncratic error. These teachers have varying levels of education in Spanish, come from a number of Spanish-speaking countries and live in different areas of the U.S. What we are trying to learn from this heterogeneous population is what is "generally acceptable" in U.S. Spanish. Our opinion is that the cases that are not considered as such by a majority of the teachers are either errors from the students or expressions acceptable only in a specific community. While it is certainly appropriate for schools to develop students' proficiency in the regional variety of Spanish, we believe that TWI programs also have a responsibility to promote oral language and literacy skills in both languages that will allow students to perform well in formal academic and professional environments.

We distributed questionnaires to 27 teachers in two TWI related conferences during the summer of 2002. We asked the teachers to classify each statement (or rather the underlined part of each statement) as either standard Spanish, not standard Spanish but accepted in the community, fossilized error, or individual student error. The feedback we obtained from the teachers was very enriching but very diverse at the same time. Since there were three versions of the questionnaire and few teachers filling each version (16 filled version 1, 4 filled version 2 and 7 filled version 3), we only used for

our analysis those statements that all three versions had in common (34 out of a total of 128). Our sample is very small and our results not very clear-cut, consequently, we will not present a quantitative analysis, but rather a qualitative one in order to show what the general tendency for the teachers was in relation to acceptability of the instances we considered as English influence. As stated earlier, it must be emphasized that this is only exploratory work in this respect, and that further research is needed in order to better assess the acceptability of these cases among U.S. Spanish speakers.

Despite the variety in the responses, we were able to extract the following conclusions. First, approximately two thirds of the statements in the questionnaire were classified as a type of error, either a fossilized error or an individual error. Statements like *en la fiesta he ganado muchos juguetes como bubbles y cosas que hacen ruido*, or *Lunes de nuestro spring break yo y mi familia nos fuimos a el aeropuerto* (focusing on the capital letter), or *conoci a dos muchachos que me anamoro de* were normally included in this group. The remaining one third was equally divided between cases that were more frequently classified as either standard Spanish or not standard Spanish but accepted in the community (*mi papá comio y tomo soda*, or *yo tengo sus Cd's*) and statements that did not show a clear tendency among the teachers: *conociendo a nuevas personas es todo en la vida* (focusing on the tense) was considered equally “standard Spanish” as “individual error”. Similarly, *en Abril 23* (focusing on word order) was equally classified as “not standard but accepted”, “fossilized error” and “individual error”.

If we consider the different linguistic categories, we observe that in mechanics all of the instances presented were considered as individual student errors (e.g. *la cosa mas curiosa que me paso!* or *tuvimos muchos envitados*). Regarding vocabulary transfer, the opinions were more diverse. Nevertheless, taking into account only a “more acceptable” and a “less acceptable” end of the spectrum, half of the cases of vocabulary transfer were on the “less acceptable” end (e.g. *el Lunes de nuestro spring break yo y mi familia nos fuimos a el aeropuerto*, or *yo juego indor y outdor*); the other half was considered either “acceptable” (*rentamos un cuarto, yo tengo sus Cd's*) or did not show agreement among teachers: *Cd player* was classified as both “not standard but accepted” and “fossilized error”, the same as *tennis* (“tennis shoes”). As for syntactic transfer, the opinions were equally diverse. Approximately half of the cases were

considered errors, with the other half being either regarded as acceptable or showing mixed opinions. Examples of statements that were considered errors were *ya era hora para mi papa llegar a la casa*, or *ella esta haciendo un buen trabajo haciendo una mama*. An illustration of a statement that was considered acceptable is *ella no sabia como nadar*. Cases like *en Abril 23* or *conociendo a nuevas personas es todo en la vida* were not clearly considered as either acceptable or unacceptable.

In summary, we can say that the teachers' responses were very diverse and in many cases showed disagreement. This situation is not surprising, since they all had different backgrounds in Spanish, came from different Spanish-speaking countries and lived in different areas in the U.S. We have collected background data from these teachers, and a future study could include an analysis of how the differences in opinion are linked to differences in country of origin, part of the U.S. where the person lives and other variables. Despite this variety, we were able to extract some general degrees of acceptability for some of the items under our study. The fact that more than half of the statements were on the "less acceptable" end shows that, even if English influence is not very predominant in the students from our sample, when it exists it often constitutes an error. This may indicate a lack of knowledge of the more appropriate Spanish form on the students' part, which has instructional implications for TWI programs, as was previously discussed.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The results from our study show that English influence is a phenomenon that exists in the writing of native Spanish speakers in TWI programs. These results do 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 bilingual schools. These students are learning English in a bilingual context, having daily contact with the language, not only in the community, but also in the school. As Adler (1977) stated in the chapter "Language contact and interference", whenever there 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 (as most

research on language transfer in second language acquisition has shown), but also for the L2 to affect the L1. In situations of language contact where the L2 has more prestige than the L1, the former will be highly expected to influence the latter. The participants in our research are an illustration of this claim: they are bilingual Spanish/English, and the outcome from the present study demonstrates 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.

Genesee (2000: 327-344) analyzes the reasons why children transfer. The children he was considering were younger than the ones in our study; however, we believe that his claims still hold for our population. It has been reported in the literature that children mix because they lack the appropriate vocabulary in a particular language (Fantini, 1978; Lindholm & Padilla, 1978, in Genesee, 2000). In our samples words like *roller coaster*, *sit-ups*, *Cinderella* could be instances of this. Another reason can be that they identify a referent with the word in the language they first learn it in or use more frequently (Imedadze, 1978; Swain & Wesche, 1975, in Genesee, 2000). This can be the case for *coach*, *pitcher*, *soccer*, etc. A third reason can be that some structures are simpler or more salient in a language than in the other (Tabouret-Keller, 1962; Murrell, 1966; Vihman, 1985, in Genesee, 2000). An illustration of this from the samples we analyzed could be *yo también admiro a ellos jugar*, which is probably easier than *yo también admiro como juegan ellos*. Apart from these reasons, Genesee adds another one: parental input. If the parents mix languages themselves, the input the children receive is already mixed, therefore, it is not the child that is mixing, s/he is simply repeating what s/he is hearing from her/his parents. To this important point, we can add society or community input, which is especially relevant for the age of the children in our study (approximately 10 years old), who are exposed to the input of their community as much as their parents' input. If the community where the child lives already uses terms that have been influenced by the other language, s/he will probably reproduce what s/he hears. *Lonche* is an example of this. A few of the students in our study used this word. However, it is not them personally and individually who are coming up with that word, they have probably heard it around them. In order to have a better idea of how much of the English influence we found came from the community, we distributed some questionnaires among TWI teachers. From their responses it became apparent that while many of the students' constructions seemed to be indicative

of errors, a sizeable percentage was indicative of U.S. Spanish norms. These acceptable constructions would not be a reflection of transfer on the part of individual students, but rather, an illustration of the natural evolution of Spanish in contact with English. In contrast, the cases of English influence that are not acceptable in U.S. Spanish are more important from an educational point of view. These are the constructions that TWI teachers need to be aware of, since they reflect a lack of knowledge of the appropriate Spanish constructions, and therefore indicate a need for some form of instructional intervention.

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