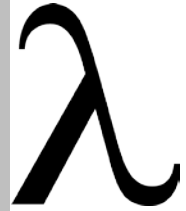




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Lexical borrowing in the spanish spoken in New York city: cultural and linguistic motivation

Préstamo léxico del español hablado en la ciudad de Nueva York: la motivación cultural y lingüística.

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Trabajo recibido: 02-05-2009 Aceptado: 25-05-2009 Publicado:20-06-2009

ABSTRACT:This article addresses the issue of motivation for lexical borrowing in the Spanish spoken in New York City. One of the main explanations given for borrowing has to do with filling a cultural gap that arises when the contact speaker encounters a new or different cultural reality and has to give linguistic form to new objects, acts, concepts or ideas (Haugen 1938, Weinreich 1953, Otheguy &García 1988, Otheguy & García 1993). Other common reasons for borrowing involve expressivity or the prestige the lending language has over the recipient one (Romaine 1995, Mendieta 1999, Silva-Corvalán 2001). But while these explanations are applicable to many instances of loanwords, they do not cover all the cases. While English loanwords in Spanish in NYC such as Thanksgiving Day, sophomore,sundae clearly respond to new conceptual realities, there are others like subway, weekend or basement for which the explanation is not so straightforward. In this paper it is argued that there are mainly three causes that motivate borrowing in the Spanish spoken in NYC. As indicated above, cultural borrowing (filling a cultural gap) will constitute one of the main reasons for borrowing. However, it is also believed that the structure of the target language will play a determinant role as regards borrowing. More specifically we will be dealing with two main factors: the length of words and collocations (groups of words that customarily cooccur).

Keywords: motivation, loanword, cultural borrowing, collocation.

RESUMEN: En este artículo se aborda el tema de la motivación para el préstamo léxico del español hablado en la ciudad de Nueva York. Una de las principales explicaciones del fenómeno dice relación con la necesidad de llenar un vacío cultural que se produce cuando el hablante se encuentra con una realidad cultural diferente y tiene que dar forma lingüística a los nuevos objetos, hechos, conceptos o ideas (Haugen 1938, Weinreich 1953 , Otheguy y García 1988, Otheguy y García 1993). Otras razones comunes para el préstamo léxico se deben a la expresividad o el prestigio que el idioma fuente tiene sobre el idioma meta (Romaine 1995, Mendieta 1999, Silva-Corvalán 2001). Si bien estas explicaciones son aplicables a muchos casos de préstamos lingüísticos, no cubren todos los casos. Mientras que algunos préstamos del inglés en español de Nueva York, como Thanksgiving Day, sophomore o sundae responden claramente a nuevas realidades conceptuales, existen otros casos como Subway, Weekend o Basement, cuya explicación no es tan sencilla. En este artículo se argumenta que hay principalmente tres causas que motivan los préstamos en el español que se habla en Nueva York. Como se indicó anteriormente, los préstamos culturales (llenar un vacío cultural) constituyen una de las principales razones para el fenómeno. Sin embargo, también se cree que la estructura de la lengua de destino jugará un papel determinante en lo que respecta al préstamo léxico. En concreto, vamos a tratar dos factores principales: la longitud de las palabras y de las colocaciones (grupos de palabras que habitualmente co-ocurren).

Palabras clave: Motivación, palabras prestadas, préstamo cultural, colocaciones.

1. Introduction

This article addresses the issue of motivation for lexical borrowing in the Spanish spoken in New York City (henceforth NYC). One of the main explanations given for borrowing has to do with filling a cultural gap that arises when the contact speaker encounters a new or different cultural reality and has to give linguistic form to new objects, acts, concepts or ideas (Haugen 1938, Weinreich 1953, Otheguy & García 1988, Otheguy & García 1993).

Other common reasons for borrowing involve expressivity or the prestige the lending language has over the recipient one (Romaine 1995, Mendieta 1999, Silva-Corvalán 2001). But while these explanations are applicable to many instances of loanwords, they do not cover all the cases. While English loanwords in Spanish in NYC such as *Thanksgiving Day*, *sophomore*, *sundae* clearly respond to new conceptual realities, there are others like *subway*, *weekend* or *basement* for which the explanation is not so straightforward.

In this paper it is argued that there are mainly three causes that motivate borrowing in the Spanish spoken in NYC. As indicated above, cultural borrowing (filling a cultural gap) will constitute one of the main reasons for borrowing. However, it is also believed that the structure of the target language will play a determinant role as regards borrowing. More specifically we will be dealing with two main factors: the length of words and collocations (groups of words that customarily co-occur).

For this research data from Spanish as it is spoken in contact with English in NYC is used. A corpus of 20 interviews has been selected from the Otheguy-Zentella corpus distinguishing between two main generational groups of informants: first generation and second generation. The dialectal region where these informants are from has also been taken into account, distinguishing between speakers from the Caribbean and those from the Latin American Mainland.¹

The discussion will proceed as follows: first other approaches as regards the motivation for lexical borrowing are reviewed. Then I discuss the methodology and propose a series of predictions that will be tested. Finally, the analysis of the data and results are presented.

¹ The data has been drawn from the corpus of the *CUNY Project on the Spanish of New York* directed by Ricardo Otheguy (Graduate Center, CUNY) and Ana Celia Zentella (University of California in San Diego). The Project has been funded by a grant from the National Science Foundation (BCS 0004233), and by seed grants from the City University of New York and the Professional Staff Congress of CUNY.

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

The search for the speaker's motivation to borrow has mainly taken into account the influence of social factors. As stated earlier, one of the main causes for lexical borrowing has to do with conceptual differences holding between different cultures. As Mendieta (1999: 43) argues:

“La motivación principal del préstamo se relaciona con la incapacidad de un vocabulario dado para nombrar cosas nuevas, es decir, nace de la necesidad de extender la función referencial del lenguaje. La función de estos préstamos es, por tanto, referencial. Los préstamos que mejor reflejan esta función son los que se integran a L1 en etapas tempranas”.

[“The main cause for borrowing is related with the inability of a given vocabulary to name new things, that is to say, it originates in the necessity of extending the referential function of language. The function of these borrowings is, therefore, referential. The loanwords that best show this function are the ones that are incorporated into the L1 at earlier stages”].

When the Spanish speaking immigrant arrives in the USA he finds a new cultural reality with new cultural concepts, ideas, things which have to be named. The most common examples are to be found in the fields of food, education, social and political structure, that is, all those things that typically belong to the culture of one country or community and distinguish it from others. Thus, for the contact speaker in the USA terms such as *brunch*, *Thanksgiving Day*, *sophomore*, *community college*, *happy hour*, *spring break* etc. might represent new and different concepts from the ones he is used to. The contact speaker therefore tries to adapt to this new environment where he needs to convey new and different messages culturally linked to his new situation. As Beltramo & Porcel (1975) put it, borrowings into the Spanish of USA represent a sign of acculturation by the minority group.

On this issue, Otheguy & García (1993) remark that the cultural context in which the interaction is placed is very significant as regards borrowing: there will be more calques, loanwords and switches whenever the conversation taking place in Spanish, in a U.S. location, is culturally situated in a North American setting than when it is situated in a Latin American one. So what is important is not the topic of conversation, but whether the topic is being placed in one cultural context or the other. For example, if the topic is situated in the USA it is more likely that the contact speaker will use the

word *principal* than the word *director*. Accordingly, we appear to be dealing with different ways of conceptualizing the referent.

In other cases, it is sometimes possible to find the borrowing of words where the target language seems to already have a direct equivalent form. One of the reasons that could explain this fact has been related to semantic specialization. In his study of Norwegian immigrants in the USA, Haugen (1938) proposed that whenever a word that already had a direct equivalent in the target language was borrowed, the speaker would use one of these words in a more restrictive way; that is, one of the words would become semantically specialized. For example, Haugen (1938: 19-20) remarks that the Norwegian word *hage* refers to any kind of enclosed garden or orchard; but among the Norwegian immigrants in US however, it was restricted to refer to an orchard while the flower and vegetable garden was called *garden*.

Another example related to semantic specialization could be the use of *lunch* in the Spanish spoken in Spain. In Spanish *almuerzo* or *comida* are the equivalent forms for *lunch*. However, Spanish speakers (from Spain) use the word *lunch* with a different meaning; it does not refer to 'the meal you have in the afternoon' but 'a light meal served to the guests in a celebration' (e.g. *Habrà un lunch después de la conferencia* 'There will be a reception after the conference').

Mendieta (1999) and Silva-Corvalán (2001), among other authors, also point out expressivity as another reason inducing borrowing. This has to do with loanwords which have developed expressive or emotive connotations, that is, their meaning conveys the speaker's attitudes and feelings. In this way, the contact speaker may associate some forms in the source language with expressive values not found in his own language – i.e. the use of interjections such as *oh my God!* or *no way!*

Another reason for borrowing deals with the prestige a certain language may have over another (Romaine 1995, Silva Corvalán 2001). If one of the languages in a contact situation is of greater prestige than the other, then speakers will use more loanwords as a means of displaying social status. Silva-Corvalán (2001: 290) provides these examples of the use in Spanish speaking countries of English *staff* or *shopping center* instead of Spanish *personal* or *centro comercial*. On this topic, authors like LePage and Tabouret-Keller (1985) or Constenla (2002) argue that instead of prestige we should rather talk about the necessity for identifying oneself, that is, speakers will use borrowed forms depending on the identity they want to adopt or maintain.

Zentella's (1990) study on dialectal leveling in the Spanish of NYC is also worth mentioning. This author reviews the factors already mentioned that contribute to word borrowing, such as new cultural reality or prestige. Zentella (1990: 1101) remarks that loanwords may also function as neutralizers of dialectal conflict. In the four main Hispanic dialects in NYC, we find different words for 'kite' – *chiringa*, *cometa*, *chichigua*, and *papalote* used by Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Dominicans, and Cubans respectively; however, the speakers of these dialects tend to use the English loanword *kite* to neutralize those differences.

Most of the previous factors follow Thomason & Kaufman's (1988: 35) idea that "it is the sociolinguistic history of the speakers, and not the structure of their language, that is the primary determinant of the linguistic outcome of language contact". In other words, social factors such as education, nationality or age for instance, will affect the linguistic output of the contact speaker and not the structure of the language. On the other hand, Myers-Scotton (2002) puts forward that the extent and type of interference are not only socially determined but that the structure of language also plays a dominant role in setting the nature of borrowing. For instance, as a relevant linguistic factor for predicting how much and what kinds of interference will occur we find typological distance. Several authors have argued that source language features that fit well typologically with functionally analogous features in the borrowing language tend to be borrowed first. Zentella (1990) for instance notes that similarity in phonological or morphological structure between languages can be a motivation for borrowing (e.g. *carpeta* used in Spanish in the U.S. with the meaning of 'carpet' instead of the general Spanish sense of 'folder'). In a similar way, Heine & Kuteva (2005: 23) remark that the genetic patterning of linguistic properties can provide important clues for linguistic transference (e.g. both Finnish and Estonian, two languages closely related, use the verb for 'come' as a modal auxiliary for deontic modality of necessity – 'must', 'have to' – a feature that may have been transferred from one language to the other).

On the grounds of the previous literature review, there are three main predictions that will shape the present research:

- Loanwords will deal mostly with cultural values related to USA. In this sense, it is expected that newcomers to the USA will tend to borrow more words related to their new conceptual reality.
- Shorter words (more reduced in the number of syllables) in English will be borrowed more frequently if their equivalents in Spanish are longer or have a more extensive dictionary definition (e.g. *weekend*: 'fin de semana'). This may be explained through Nettle's (1999) adaptation theory or functional economy.

- Groups of words that constitute collocations (words that frequently occur together) will be also recurrently borrowed.

While the first prediction constitutes a cultural factor since it deals with the borrowing of new concepts for the contact speaker, the last two reasons will be considered linguistic factors since they are related to the structure of the target language.

As regards the corpus, it has been stratified by taking into account the two social variables mentioned above: different generational types in NYC and the dialectal region where these informants are from. With these variables the purpose is to have a corpus sample as diverse as possible representing the Spanish spoken in NYC. Besides, generational type is considered to be an important factor since it can influence the type and/or frequency of borrowing. These generational types have been chosen on the following grounds: speakers in the first generation group were born in Latin America and arrived in NYC after being 16 years old; speakers in the second generation group were born in NYC or arrived in the city before being 3 years old.

Thus, the corpus consists of 10 First Generation informants (5 from Caribbean/5 from Mainland) and 10 Second Generation informants (5 from Caribbean/5 from Mainland).

As regards the types of words considered for this study, the focus is on noun phrase borrowings. Individual nouns of the type *customers* and also noun phrases such as *foreign language program* are included in the analysis. The main reason for this has to do with frequency of borrowing. Authors such as Romaine (1995) or Poplack, Sankoff and Miller (1988) explain that nouns are more frequently borrowed because they are structurally less well integrated into the recipient discourse, thus facilitating transfer, and they are the forms with the most lexical content.

In the analysis words of English origin but which are used in the informant's countries such as *chance*, *shock*, *hall*, etc. were not taken into account since they do not derive from the language contact situation.² Cases of code switching like *trabajaba para una compañía y I was doing fine*, *I was doing real well* are also excluded from the analysis. In this sense, and following Otheguy *et al* (2003), English utterances with

² In order to determine which borrowings were already used in the informants' countries of origin Spanish dictionaries from those regions were consulted and in some cases people from those countries were directly asked.

sentential quality are not considered as part of this study. As these authors point out, the interest here is in how/why English words are borrowed and not in the informants' ability to speak in English sentences.

3. Analysis and Results

Before discussing the results in the following table the borrowings are classified in terms of semantic categories and organized by generational type. The number of borrowings per each group (types) is also shown plus some illustrative examples. Likewise, there is also an account for those cases where some types were used more than once, i.e. tokens.

Semantic categories	1st generation	2nd generation	Examples
Work related terms	11	11 (15 tokens)	<i>social worker, parole officer, boss, foreman</i>
Education	4	18 (22 tokens)	<i>high school, college, bachelor, foreign language program, record</i>
Financial and monetary	2	5 (5 tokens)	<i>taxes, biles (bills), welfare check</i>
Housing (parts of a house, building)	1	4	<i>building, basement, lunchroom, homeroom</i>
Food	0	2	<i>hamburguer, marshmallows</i>
Transportation	2	1	<i>subway, transfer, six train</i>
Leisure time	1	3	<i>recreation, nightclubs, mole</i>
Other	8 (11 tokens)	26	<i>realization, role, speaker, probation, soup kitchen, teenage years, ID, common denominator</i>

Table 1. Results by generation and semantic categories.

One of the biggest differences found after examining the data has to do with frequency of borrowing. First generation informants have a total of 29 loanword types while the second generation group has borrowed a total of 70 types. The reason for this is straightforward, second generation informants have spent a longer time in NYC

and they have been therefore more exposed to the communicative situation of language contact. As Thomason & Kaufman (1988: 67) remark: “the more intense the contact situation is, the more likely it is that extensive structural borrowing will occur”. In the following sections these results are analyzed according to cultural and linguistic motivation.

3.1. **Cultural factors: filling a cultural gap**

With respect to the type of loanwords, and as predicted by many authors, lexical borrowing seems not to affect the so-called core vocabulary (e.g. body parts, numbers, personal pronouns, etc.). In this way, there were no references in the corpus related to core vocabulary.³

As stated above, one of the main motivations for borrowing arises from differences between cultures, where the loanword function would consist of filling a cultural gap. Several borrowings specifically related to the American (USA) culture have been found: *freshman*, *marshmallows*, *soup kitchen*, *welfare*, *quarter*. In all these cases there is no direct equivalent in the target language, hence the speaker may find it more convenient to use the term in English in order to be understood. Thus, if we look up these words in an English-Spanish dictionary it can be seen that the translation is not a direct or equivalent one:⁴

(1)

- Freshman: *estudiante de primer año universitario*.
- Marshmallows: *malvavisco, gomita*.
- Soup kitchen: *comedor de beneficencia*.
- Welfare: *bienestar social*.
- Quarter: *moneda de 25 centavos*.

³ Romaine (1995: 65) however gives examples in several languages where core vocabulary is borrowed. Also on the issue of core borrowing, Myers-Scotton (2002: 239) distinguishes cultural from core lexical borrowings. Cultural borrowed forms are words for objects new to the culture (e.g. *CD* or *compact disk*), but also for new concepts (e.g. *overtime*). Core borrowed forms are words that more or less duplicate already existing words in the L1 (e.g. words for *brother* or *home*). While cultural borrowed forms fill lexical gaps in a language, Myers-Scotton (2002) suggests that core borrowed words are forms that appear for the first time in the recipient language when bilinguals use code switching. From there they can move as single loanwords into the recipient language.

⁴ For the translation English-Spanish the Oxford Supelrx dictionary (in electronic format) has been used as well as the Merriam-Webster dictionary online found at www.m-w.com.

Thus, the informant may have the option of translating or looking for a term or terms in Spanish to convey a similar meaning, but this would imply an extra cognitive and communicative effort.

Other groups of words which seem to respond to cultural motivation have to do with work related terms and education. It is also where we find the bigger number of borrowings by both generational groups (more noticeable in the second generation group).

Out of the 29 borrowed words from first generation speakers, 4 are related to education – representing 13,7% of the total of borrowing types: *high school*, *advanced level*, *kinder*, and *day care*. In these cases, however, the dictionary provides a more direct translation into Spanish (e.g. *high school* < 'instituto, escuela secundaria', *day care* < 'guardería'). Still, it might be predicted that most of the words used by these informants, who have only spent a few years in this new communicative context, would be used to fill cultural gaps. Thus, *high school* would not refer to the same conceptual entity as 'escuela secundaria'. That is, the educational system is something that belongs to the social structure of a country or cultural community and as such it has its own specific rules. In the semantic frame associated with high schools in the USA we may find, in contrast with other educational systems, different kinds and numbers of subjects, different grading systems or shorter/longer vacation periods.

As regards the borrowings related to jobs by the first generation group, there are 11 loanwords out of 29 (37,9%): e.g. *teacher*, *manager*, *foreman*, *parole officer*, *accountant*, etc. In these cases, the informant could have the option of saying these words in Spanish, since apparently most of them have their equivalents in his country of origin (e.g. *customer service* – 'servicio al cliente'). However, in my opinion, the contact speaker uses them in the source language because they may represent new labels assigned to him; they function in a way like proper names. Thus, if the speaker starts working as a dishwasher or as an accountant it might be easier for him to refer to his new status using the English word, the new 'title' that has been given to him. Furthermore, it can be assumed that these words are used in a frequent way in the speaker's discourse or environment, that is, the contact speaker gets used to being named a 'teacher', a 'manager' or a 'foreman'. This can also be related to the psycholinguistic factor of lexical availability. Following Silva-Corvalán (2001) sometimes it can be difficult to remember words of infrequent use in one of the languages (in this case the minority language) and then these are replaced for words used more commonly in the other language (the dominant language – English).

Regarding the group of second generation, 18 borrowings dealing with education (25,7%) and 11 dealing with jobs (15,7%) were found. Accordingly, the proportion of borrowed words dealing with the field of work related terms is higher in the speech of first generation. It could then be argued that the main reason for borrowing in the second generation group has to do more with the length and intensive influence of the communicative situation they have been exposed to. That is, while first generation informants may know those loanwords in Spanish, they may consider them as different conceptual entities or new labels, belonging to their new cultural reality. However, second generation informants have been more influenced by the contact situation and they may use those words because they may not know the equivalents in Spanish.

Other frequent borrowings where an equivalent or counterpart in Spanish would seem straightforward have been found in the corpus. For instance, one might wonder why the speaker uses the words *subway* and *basement* where he could say *metro* and *sótano*. It could be argued that in a similar way to loanwords dealing with jobs, *subway* and *basement* represent labels; they are entities belonging to the American culture, or more specifically to the cultural context in NYC. Thus, although the core definition for *subway* and 'metro' as transportation systems is the same, both are associated with different cultural frames. All those things that belong to the subway in NYC (numbers, color lines, rats) make it a distinguishable and distinct entity that cannot be equated with the 'metro' in other places. To this, it might be also added that many contact speakers come from places in their countries where there is no such means of transportation. With respect to *basement*, both *basement* and *sótano* are places that are commonly located below the ground level and which are used for storing things. What makes *basement* a different conceptual entity from *sótano* for the contact speaker can be again the cultural frame associated with it, like its particular location (in USA it can be at the ground level).

Another similar example is *lunchroom* (*al mediodía se veían en el lunchroom*). It is likely that the contact speaker does not use the word *comedor* since, due to frequency of use by other speakers – and again a different conceptual frame – *lunchroom* became a label, a given or proper name for a place. Accordingly, frequency is also an important factor in the borrowing of these kinds of words, but it should be considered together with a different conceptualization.⁵ That is, frequency solely cannot

⁵ Although no data dealing with frequency are provided, it is assumed that the use of certain words is done in a more frequent way by the speaker. This can be deduced from the semantic nature of some words (e.g. work related terms since working constitutes a majority of the speaker's daily life) and from the speaker's personal information provided during the interview (e.g. in the case of *lunchroom* for instance, the speaker used to meet his classmates at this place every day in a US location).

explain the borrowing of words such as *basement* or *subway* since other commonly used words like *house*, *car* or *table* are typically found in Spanish in the informant's speech ('casa', 'carro', 'mesa'). Therefore, there are specific notions or domains which are felt to be new or different by the contact speaker. These domains, as stated earlier, are those which are specific of and configure a particular culture differencing it from others (e.g. education, political and social structure, food, holidays, etc.). In this sense, and for a more efficient communication, the speaker uses the English term in order to convey a concept which also belongs to the English (North American) setting.

Otheguy & García (1988: 212) also discuss the use of frequent borrowings in the Spanish spoken in NYC where different conceptualizations are involved. These authors remark that it is common to find the term *building* instead of *edificio* in the Hispanic speaker's speech since *building* represents somehow a new notion that requires a new means of expression. Similarly, *aplicación* is frequently used instead of *solicitud* since the activity here is or feels different from the activity back home.⁶ Correspondingly, and as Otheguy & García (1988: 220) put forward, loanwords are incorporated into US Spanish "so as to equip it to express the same notions that are communicated in English".

3.2. *Linguistic factors: length of words and collocations*

While the previous causes for borrowing have mostly dealt with cultural factors I also believe, as already stated, that the structure of the language can play a significant role as regards interference among languages in contact. Functional economy deals with words that are lexically more accessible for the contact speaker due to formal or structural properties. Following Nettle's (1999) adaptation theory, the insertion of structural constituents into the grammar of a language has to do with the cognitive and communicative use of those constituents. Thus, structure is a response to functional demands. In this sense, the use of shorter words in English may be found more frequently – i.e. with a reduced number of syllables, when in Spanish a longer expression would be used. For instance, it might be easier and faster for the speaker to use the English loanword *heater* than its equivalent in Spanish *calentador* or *calefacción*, or the English loanword *roommate* than *compañero de cuarto*. By using the word in English the speaker allows a more fluent, rapid and probably effective

⁶ In their typology of lexical innovations in the Spanish of US, Otheguy & García (1988) consider a word like *aplicación* a phonologically merged word calque, i.e. a word that already existed in the Spanish language but which is used in a manner that calques the usage of the lending language.

communication. In the following table some words from the corpus that can be explained through functional economy are shown plus their translation in Spanish:

Borrowing	Translation in Spanish
Estamos en una ciudad donde hay tanta pobreza y tanta dificultad y tanto mismanagement ..	Estamos en una ciudad donde hay tanta pobreza y tanta dificultad y tan <u>mala administración</u>
Me llamaron al draft del 66..	Me llamaron al <u>servicio militar/reclutamiento</u> del 66
este furry no sé, mi mamá se lo dieron...	Este <u>muñeco de peluche</u> no sé, mi mamá se lo dieron...
Comencé a trabajar los weekends	Comencé a trabajar los <u>fines de semana</u>
Aquí tratamos al paciente, mira...con folletos, con charts	Aquí tratamos al paciente, mira...con folletos, con <u>gráficos</u>
Tengo clientes que vienen de probation	Tengo clientes que vienen de <u>libertad condicional</u>
si la gente necesita un lo que tienen un refill de las pastillas	si la gente necesita un lo que tienen un <u>repuesto/recambio</u> de las pastillas
Voy tanto a los nightclubs	Voy tanto a los <u>clubes nocturnos</u>
Y dimos la vuelta, como un ambush type	Y dimos la vuelta, como un <u>tipo de emboscada</u>
Estoy cogiendo un break	Estoy cogiendo unas <u>vacaciones</u>
La realización que mi primer idioma fue español	El <u>darme cuenta</u> de que mi primer idioma fue español
Mi goal era hacer un político	Mi <u>objetivo</u> era hacer un político
Necesitas ID para tomar	Necesitas <u>identificación</u> para tomar

Table 2. Borrowings and functional economy.

As illustrated by the previous examples, the Spanish equivalents of the English borrowings are syllabically or structurally longer; in this way it is natural that the first word that comes to the speaker's mind is the shorter one, the most accessible or 'economic' in terms of function. Thus, it may be easier – using less cognitive effort – to say *la realización que mi primer idioma fue español* than 'el darme cuenta de que mi primer idioma fue español'. It is also possible to find overlapping in some cases regarding functional economy and different conceptualization. Thus, the speaker may

use the word *draft* not only because it is syllabically shorter than 'servicio militar', but also because it is very likely that the draft in the USA feels like a different activity or notion than 'el servicio militar' back home.

A limitation to this kind of analysis lies on the fact that it is possible to find the use of many other words in Spanish in the speaker's discourse which are also longer than their English counterparts (examples from the corpus: *pastillas*, *radiografía*, *comida*, *invierno*). Accordingly, together with functional economy it can be said that other factors come into play for the borrowing of the aforementioned words. In my opinion the main ones would be lexical availability or frequency and typological distance. As it was discussed above, the speaker would borrow words which are shorter but also which are more frequently heard and/or used in English depending on his lifestyle. In the case of typological distance, the speaker would tend to use words in English when the Spanish version is very different in phonological or morphological terms – this can be seen in the words in table 2 (e.g. *probation* and *libertad condicional* are not phonologically related at all). However, the speaker may use a Spanish word even if it is syllabically longer in those cases where this Spanish word resembles somehow phonetically its English counterpart (examples from the corpus: *pastillas* instead of 'pills', *proyecto* instead of 'project', *estrella* instead of 'star', *costumbre* instead of 'custom').

Other kinds of borrowings which are worth commenting on are those of some noun phrases. In the analysis of the data it has been found the borrowing of many phrasal groups such as *hardware store*, *travel checks*, *community college*, *Middle East*, *common denominator*, *computer engineering*, etc. One possible explanation for this has to do with the syntactic status of these phrases in the sense that they represent collocations. Collocations are combinations of words distinguished from other phrasal units in terms of their selectional or combinatorial restrictions. In this sense, collocations consist of group of words that occur together more often than by chance. Unlike idioms (e.g. *It's raining cats and dogs*), individual words in a collocation can contribute to the overall semantics of the compound, but unlike free word combinations (e.g. put + [object]: *put a glass*, *put a pen*, *put a book*), they constitute a more cohesive and integrated sequence of words where substitution is restricted to certain words.⁷ Thus, phrases such as *credit card* or *high school* would constitute collocations, i.e. they are words that frequently occur together where one of the words usually predicts its company.

⁷ For a more detailed discussion on collocations see McKeown & Radev (2000). On collocations and its influence on languages in contact see Ortigosa & Otheguy (2007).

In this way, the possible reason causing the borrowing of phrasal groups such as *common denominator* or *community college* is that they constitute well-established and cohesive phrases. Thus, whenever the Spanish speaker in NYC encounters these expressions, he borrows them as an indivisible linguistic expression; that is, they become part of his mental lexicon repertoire in the same way as he stores individual lexical items. Consequently, since these combinations of words have a strong cohesion, the contact speaker may consider more difficult to look for an equivalent in his own language and ends up adopting them from the dominant language.

To summarize, in the following table it is shown how the words analyzed in this study could be classified under the three main factors— just a sample of some words is displayed due to space limitations:

	Words	Cultural gap	Length of words	Collocation
<i>First Generation</i>	High school	X		X
	weekends		X	
	quarter	X		
	customers	X		
	goal		X	
	break		X	
	dishwasher	X		
	subway	X		
	kinder	X		
	advanced level	X		X
	travel checks			X
	customer service	X		X
	basement	X		
	day care	X		X
<i>Second Generation</i>	college	X		
	Community service			X
	fraternity	X		
	Parole officer	X		X
	business	X		
	real state	X		X

	principal's list			X
	probation		X	
	hamburger	X		
	ID	X	X	
	record	X		
	receptionist	X		
	taxes	X		
	Summer school	X		X

Table 3. Summary of results.

As it was said above, in the borrowing of certain words there may be more than one factor that comes into play. Thus, *high school* may be borrowed not only because it represents a different cultural entity but also because it is a collocation. In a similar way *ID* is a shorter word than 'identificación' but it is also something specifically related to the US context (i.e. a specific US document used in particular situations).

It should be also pointed out that this study has certain limitations. Thus, there were a few borrowed words in the corpus which were difficult to classify following the parameters above such as *opening*, *conditioners*, *values* or *health*. After all, it must be borne in mind that we are dealing here with language choices that may be influenced by the personal characteristics of each individual. Furthermore, some other motivations which have not been part of this study like prestige or expressivity may bring about interesting results.

4. Conclusion

As we have seen the use of borrowings in the Spanish spoken in NYC cannot be explained relying on one single theory or approach. Among the causes that induce borrowing we find several factors that come into play and which sometimes overlap each other. One of these main factors involves differences between cultures where the contact speaker has to express new or different messages. In these cases, and as Otheguy & Ofelia (1988: 220) remark "US Hispanics seem to feel that they somehow are not saying exactly what they want to say if Spanish words are used". Therefore, these new messages or ideas are frequently expressed through loanwords from the dominant or source language.

Although the previous factor has a clear cultural nature, it has been proved that linguistic form can be also a decisive cause for the borrowing of certain words. Thus, a speaker may use an expression in English due to its reduced syllabic structure or

because of the frequency by which a group of words appear together. Following Nettle (1999) it has been argued that this fact responds to functional demands: structure is in service of function.

Finally, in this study two main social variables have been considered: exposure time to the NYC communicative situation (generational types) and **nationality**. It should be borne in mind that other social factors such as education, age or sex may yield significant results as regards types of borrowings. Likewise, a more exhaustive analysis including other causes for borrowing such as prestige or expressivity may be relevant. All these would constitute interesting topics for a future research.

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