When contact speakers talk, linguistic theory listens

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1. Introduction

Students of language contact are largely in agreement that borrowing varieties regularly acquire new lexical and grammatical items and, moreover, that their existing items often undergo significant changes of meaning and distribution. These two types of innovation are usually called borrowing (or transfers) and modeling (or semantic extensions). They are illustrated in (1) and (2) with examples taken from New York City contact Spanish:

(1) *Hoy no están dando estín.* [RO-85]
Today not they-are giving steam
'They're not providing heat today.'

(estín < Eng. steam)

(2) *Cuando no tengo nada que hacer juego música en mi casa para oírla, eso que yo hago en mi casa siempre.* [MF4.3]
When not I-have nothing that to-do, I-play music in my house to-listen-to-it, that what I do in my house always.

'When there's nothing to do, I play music at home so I can listen to it; that's what I do all the time.'

The estín of (1) would appear to be an instance of borrowing, since it has almost certainly been coined on the basis of English steam, and it is in wide circulation and well adapted phonologically and morphologically. The jugar of (2) is said to be a semantic extension because it is applied to the operation of a musical instrument, a sense commonly found in the word play in English, but not in the word jugar in general Spanish.

But scholars have seldom regarded the types illustrated in (1) and (2) as exhausting the possibilities of language change under contact. First, and in passing, because many linguists believe that in addition to the lexical changes subsumed under borrowings and semantic extensions, contact varieties also undergo changes in syntax. Second, and more to

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the point of our concern here, because linguists have long insisted that in addition to borrowings, semantic extensions, and syntactic alterations, influenced varieties undergo yet another kind of contact-induced change. This change, sometimes described as lexical, sometimes as grammatical, involves the items usually referred to as "loan translations" (which are also called "loanshifts", "semantic loans", or "calques"). Examples of such loan translations, taken from my own observations and recordings of New-York Spanish, as well as from the scholarly literature, are listed in (3):

(3) 

a. English Cape of Good Hope 
   calqued on Portuguese Cabo de Boa Esperança 
   (Lehiste 1988)

b. Contact Spanish Dia de dar gracias 
   calqued on English Thanksgiving Day

c. Contact Spanish primer nombre, último nombre 
   calqued on English first name, last name

d. Canadian French escalier de feu 
   calqued on English fire escape 
   (Weinreich 1953)

e. Spanish luna de miel 
   calqued on English honeymoon 
   (Whitley 1986)

f. Contact Spanish Tengo dos hamburgers trabajando 
   calqued on English I have two hamburgers cooking 
   (Dillard 1975)

g. English I've told him I don't know how many times 
   calqued on French Je le lui ai dit je ne sais pas combien de fois 
   (Bloomfield 1933, Hudson 1980)

This paper aims to uncover an important theoretical incoherence lying behind the notion of loan translation; to explore the intellectual roots of the incoherence; to spell out some of its consequences, both theoretical and practical; and to offer some constructive alternatives. It will be shown that loan translations are seriously regarded by scholars as representing an important type of contact-induced diachronic development. But it will be argued that the notions of diachrony and loan translation are incompatible. That is, it will be argued that the theoretical position that allows for the existence of loan translations must disallow any type of diachrony; and conversely, that the position under which
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diachrony is rendered coherent must then disallow any notion of loan translation. As an alternative formulation, it will be shown that what are usually called loan translations are simply curious instances of the use and exploitation of an intact linguistic structure, of little relevance to the study of the historical evolution of that structure. Pursuing this line of thought, it will be argued that loan translations do not constitute any type of language contact, nor in fact any type of linguistic phenomenon at all.

Once this is established, it will be shown that the existing misconceptions regarding loan translations are ultimately rooted in the incompatibility between Saussure's general conception of the language system and his specific formulation of the concept of the linguistic sign. This incoherence has survived implicitly in most modern linguistic theories, and has informed most approaches to the study of language contact and change. A proposed alternative, rooted in Columbia School theory, will offer a more acceptable formulation of the linguistic sign, one that allows for a more coherent conception of the language system and a more viable approach to its diachronic evolution under the pressures of contact. This in turn leads to a better grasp of the notion of loan translation, and to a clearer understanding of the nature, as well as of the quantitative extent, of linguistic contact in bilingual communities.

2. Loan translations

The first thing to note with regard to loan translations is that, from the point of view of the language system, loan translations are very different from the borrowings and semantic extensions illustrated in (1) and (2). For those, a case can be made that the language system has changed under contact. But for loan translations, that case is very difficult to make. In borrowings and semantic extensions, one can argue for the change on the grounds that either a new sign has emerged, as in the case of estin, or that at least something real has happened on the meaning side of an existing sign, as in the case of jugar.

But in loan translations, is there a systemic change? Are the phrases in (3) really illustrations of change under contact? Was the English system any different before and after speakers began to say Cape of Good Hope? Was the system of New York Spanish any different before and after speakers began to refer to their first name as their primer nombre, or before and after they started to talk about a Día de dar gracias?
The answer given by students of contact is a clear "yes". That is, there is every indication that linguists take the notion of loan translation quite seriously; that the term is not simply a "façon de parler", and that scholars intend it as a reference to a contact-induced change occurring within the structure of the language in question. For example, all the major survey or theoretical works on language contact of the past fifty years make use of the construct loan translation (e.g., Appel—Muysken 1987, Holm 1988, Thomason—Kaufman 1988, Weinreich 1953). Further, in studies that correlate micro social-interaction factors with types of contact phenomena, one of the types is always loan translation (Oksaar 1979: 106). In the specific case of Spanish, the notion of loan translation is standard fare in discussions of the influence of English on varieties spoken within the United States (cf. Craddock 1976, Dillard 1975, Espinosa 1975, Milán 1982, Montes Giraldo 1973, 1985, Zentella 1981). And the same is true of areal studies conducted in several parts of the world. For example, in an important recent analysis of language contact and diffusion among the indigenous languages of Meso-America, Campbell—Kaufman—Smith-Stark (1986: 558) distinguish Sprachbund features from Sprachbund features properly so called. Sprechbund has to do simply with ethnographic factors related to diffused patterns of communication, whereas Sprachbund relates to contact in the area of "formal grammar and structural traits". Significantly, loan translations are not relegated to the Sprechbund section, but are placed squarely in the area of Sprachbund, and regarded as evidence of structural, systemic linguistic diffusion.

Similarly, the definitions offered by major scholars leave no doubt that loan translation is seriously intended as a type of systemic change caused by contact (e.g., Haugen 1950, Craddock 1981, Dillard 1975, Milán 1982, Zentella 1981). In the work of these scholars loan translation is defined in terms of such notions as "functional shift", "borrowed construction", "structural breakdown", "grammatical convergence", or "syntax from one language with words from another". Sometimes, taking a slightly different tack, loan translation is defined as "word-for-word translation", or "literal translation".

But this widespread consensus of scholarly opinion regarding the systemic character of loan translations does not stand up to scrutiny. Looking first at the component lexical items of so-called loan translations, one finds, for example, in the item Cape of Good Hope in (3a), that the combination of good and hope used to name the cape is perfectly acceptable in English. The phrase good hope is systemically no different from blind faith, or sweet charity (just to stay with cardinal virtues), and no
Different from any other arrangement of what syntacticians may call attributive adjectives and abstract nouns. Similarly, and with regard to the phrase *Día de dar gracias* in (3b), it would seem that to speak of a day set aside to give thanks to God does not require any alteration in the meanings of the Spanish words *día*, *dar*, and *gracias*, and no change in the meaning of *de*. The phrase *Día de dar gracias* may sound quite Anglicized to speakers of general Spanish when first exposed to the Spanish of the United States, but it is in fact no different, from a linguistic point of view, from such classic Spanish items as the *Día de Navidad* 'Christmas Day' and the *Día de Reyes* 'Kings' Day'. Likewise, the phrases *primer nombre* and *último nombre* listed in (3c) are unusual in that no speaker of general Spanish would ever describe a person's given name in such terms. But still, there is nothing Anglicized about the choice of items, the manner in which they are combined, or the meanings that have justified their choice by users trying to convey the notions of first and last name. If one were to speak in Latin America of the first or last name on a list, for example, one would speak confidently of the *primer nombre* and the *último nombre*.

Turning now to some of the more structural definitions given for loan translations, one finds, for instance, that in Weinreich's example of *escalier de feu* the construction would appear to be [Noun-Preposition-Noun], which is a familiar French collocation, as is the specific construction [Noun-de-Noun]. The construction is, moreover, different from that of the presumed model *fire escape*, which is not a [Noun-Preposition-Noun] construction, but rather a [Noun-Noun] compound. The same point can be made about *primer nombre*. And the same can also be said about *Día de dar gracias*, which is clearly not modeled structurally on *Thanksgiving Day*. One is hard pressed to imagine in what sense it can be said that *escalier de feu* or *Día de dar gracias* are loan translations because they reproduce the structural or constructional features of *fire escape* or *Thanksgiving Day*, when *escalier de feu* and *Día de dar gracias* are constructed in a manner different from *fire escape* and *Thanksgiving Day*, and in accordance with structural principles that are indigenous to Spanish and French. Insofar as one can come to any conclusions from these representative examples, whatever it is that resembles the model phrase in a loan translation - over and beyond the borrowings or semantic extensions it may contain - it is certainly not its structure.

Other definitions offered for loan translations, such as that they constitute "word-for-word" substitutions or "literal translations" of the model, also run into difficulties. First, if the Québécois had translated *fire escape*
word for word they obviously would not have come up with *escalier de feu*. They would not have come up with the word *escalier* at all, since there is no mention of ladders or stairs in the model phrase *fire escape*. Only if the model was *fire stairs*, which is not at all clear, could one even consider the notion of word-for-word substitution for *escalier de feu*.

More generally, the question must be raised whether it even makes sense to think that there can be such a thing as word-for-word substitution. Presumably, a word-for-word substitution would require the existence, prior to contact, of words in the borrowing language that are direct counterparts of the words in the source. Yet it is a generally recognized fact of lexical structure that words in one language do not have these "direct counterparts" in another (Culler 1976). If the vocabularies of languages provided the perfectly equivalent crosslinguistic pairs that the notion of word-for-word substitution presupposes, then speakers of contact varieties would show no tendency to make meanings more congruent, for the simple reason that they would already be so.

Another common definition of loan translation and calque is found, for example, in Craddock (1981), who regards these items as reproductions of "entire idiomatic phrases" (1981: 208), apparently suggesting that non-idiomatic material does not give rise to loan translations. But though it may very well be statistically true that source language idioms are a common model for true instances of contact, no explicit demonstration of this has been offered. Moreover, the claim that it is only idioms that serve as models for loan translations and calques would be difficult to sustain. Many of the most frequently cited loan translations in English-influenced French and Spanish have models that do not seem to be compelling candidates for idioms. Phrases like U.S. Spanish *primer nombre* and like Canadian French *escalier de feu* are modeled on English *first name* and *fire escape*, neither of which is obviously idiomatic. And the same is true of a compound like *skyscraper*, which is cited as the model for calques in many languages. Likewise, there seems to be little or no idiomaticity in many of the models offered by Lehiste (1988), such as the French sentence *Je le lui ai dit je ne sais pas combien de fois*, the Portuguese phrase *Cabo da Boa Esperança*, or the Italian word *Giovanni*, which are given as sources for the English loan translations *I've told him I don't know how many times*, *Cape of Good Hope*, and *John* respectively. In general, given the still uncertain status of idioms, it is unlikely that a definition based on this concept can be useful at the present time.

This initial examination of the concept of loan translation shows, then, that there is nothing in these phrases that would distinguish them from
phrases of the non-contact dialects. Loan translations thus stand out as really different from borrowings or semantic extensions, in that in loan translations there is nothing that would justify the claim of systematic change. To be sure, items called loan translations may contain borrowings or may contain semantic extensions, but in such items those are the only detectable changes. If (1) and (2) were called loan translations one would readily agree that there had been changes in the Spanish system, but the changes would simply reside in the loanword estin or in the semantic extension of jugar. No other type of change, and in particular nothing called a loan translation or a calque, would need to be invoked.

3. Communicative versus linguistic innovation

But if loan translations are not instances of systemic change, what are they? A loan translation is a familiar, linguistically unremarkable phrase that happens to express a communicative innovation carried out by members of the borrowing culture in imitation of the source culture. What strikes the observer is that contact speakers are saying something new, communicating an idea that was hitherto not usually expressed by speakers of that language. Until recently, there were no speakers of Spanish whose communications included the notion of a holiday in November devoted to being thankful to God, and none who conceived of given names and family names in terms of first and last. But under the normal pressures of assimilation, speakers of Spanish in the United States have started to communicate many North American notions, among them the ones about the order of the names and the feast on the fourth Thursday of November.

What seems to be taking place, then, is a change in the inventory of notions communicated by a borrowing community in the direction of the inventory of the donor one. Let us refer to this as a case of "communicative convergence." What has been pointed out in escalier de feu, primer nombre, and Dia de dar gracias is that, in all these cases, communicative convergence is not at all accompanied by linguistic convergence.

In distinguishing communicative from linguistic convergence, a distinction is drawn between concepts that are encoded in linguistic structure — in words, affixes, constructions, or what have you — and those that are not. Concepts that are part of the communication but not encoded in language are those derived from the combination of encoded concepts and from contextually conditioned inferences added by the users. The
words último nombre refer sometimes (in the contact dialect) to “Pérez” in the name Juan Antonio Pérez, and sometimes (in general Spanish) to the full name “Juan Antonio Pérez” as this name appears last on a list. These two communications, taking place in different contexts and leading users to derive different inferences, have clearly different conceptual imports, but the conceptual input encoded in the items último and nombre, and in the order in which they appear, is the same in both.\(^9\)

The point bears making in another way. One aspect of a language system is always the collection of concepts which is encoded in lexical forms, grammatical forms, patterns of word order, or whatever. But this set of encoded concepts is smaller than the set of conceptual notions that it partially contributes to communicating. Communicative convergence thus refers to the growing similarity of communicative notions between neighboring communities; linguistic convergence would refer to a growing similarity between the concepts actually encoded in their languages.

There is no reason to think, of course, that communicative convergence never leads to linguistic convergence. Clearly, it sometimes does. In fact, the usual motivation given by linguists for borrowings is precisely communicative convergence.\(^10\) And communicative convergence is probably also the motivation for contact-induced semantic extensions and grammatical changes.\(^11\) The point is not to deny that communicative convergence can, and often does, lead to linguistic convergence. The point, rather, is that communicative and linguistic convergence are two different things, and that while they can occur together, one can also occur without the other.

Here is what seems to happen. In many cases when speakers of contact varieties express notions learned from a donor culture, they do take resources from the donor language, do encode newly borrowed concepts in new or previously existing forms. But in many other cases when speakers of contact varieties communicate newly learned notions, they do not use any new linguistic resources at all, and express the new notions using material that is ready at hand and no different from that of the noncontact dialects. To put matters this way is to insist on a sharp distinction between linguistic resources and the use to which they are put, between, on the one hand, language properly so called (encoded concepts), and on the other the use of language (communicated concepts). As will be seen below, this point is crucial for a theory of language contact. Spurious loan translations such as primer nombre, Día de dar gracias, or Cape of Good Hope are, in this view, instances of mistaking novelty in what people communicate with innovation in the system with which they communicate it.
4. A case-by-case approach

If the line of thinking just outlined is correct, it means that the student of a contact variety who encounters a conceptual innovation, a new communicated notion, can only determine whether there is also a linguistic innovation through individual, case-by-case analysis. By looking at new communications one by one, it has been possible to determine that items like primer nombre and Día de dar gracias in New York Spanish, or Cape or Good Hope in English, are not linguistic innovations at all.

Let us now apply the same approach to constructions that are more complex, such as the Spanish ones shown in (4), that is, combinations of a verb followed by the preposition para, generally translated as 'for', and atrás, generally translated as 'back'.

(4)  

a. Le dije a Carlos que cuando tuviera tiempo me llamara para atrás. [RO-85]  
   I told Carlos that when he had time he should call me back.

b. Entonces voy para atrás para la escuela.  
   Then I go back for the school.

   Porque no tengo mucho tiempo para caminar y
   Because I don’t have much time to walk and
   puedo para atrás. [MF5]
   to walk back.

   'Then I return to school, because I don’t have much time to walk and come back.'

c. Papi, tú me prestas esa pluma y yo te la doy  
   Daddy, you lend me that pen and I give it back
   para atrás: please, please, préstamela y yo te la
   for back: please, please, lend-me-it and I give it
   doy para atrás. [RAO-7/89]
   I give back.

   'Daddy, you lend me that pen and I’ll give it back to you; please, please, lend it to me and I’ll give it back to you.'

The formula verb + para atrás to express repetition has become quite generalized in the Spanish of the United States and, as has been amply documented in the excellent study by John Lipski (1985), the combination occurs in all varieties of English-influenced Spanish, and with nu-
merous verbs besides *llamar*, *ir*, and *dar*. For speakers of general Spanish, the construction is most jarring, as it expresses the reciprocating repetition of an action in a manner that differs markedly from the one used to express reciprocating repetitions in the noncontact culture. Here, if anywhere, one is faced with what appear to be Spanish words with an English construction.

Scholars share the sense of strangeness of standard speakers. Lipski (1985: 93–95; 100), for example, is at pains to point out the continuities with standard Spanish, but ends up by asserting, nevertheless, that this verb + *para atrás* construction has had an effect "on local syntactic patterns", and ends up by regarding it as "a syntactic Anglicism," as well as "an apparent calque on English *back*", concluding that any proposed explanation of this formula must postulate "bilingual interpenetration".

The reason that items with verb + *para atrás* appear even more Anglicized than items like *Día de dar gracias* and *primer nombre* is not only that general Spanish has a very different way of expressing a similar notion, but that the referent now is completely abstract, a type of activity, a kind of event, rather than an entity like a festivity or a name. But it can be shown that here too there is only a new conceptualization.

It must be noted, first, that *llamar para atrás*, like so many other spurious loan translations, is not structurally parallel with the presumed model. Depending on the analysis, the Spanish phrase *para atrás* is either a preposition followed by an adverb or a complex adverbial. The simplex adverb *back* in English is not structurally parallel under either analysis. And as in all the previous examples, the structure *llamar para atrás* is quite familiar in the noncontact dialects. Verbs followed by adverbial prepositional phrases are commonplace in general Spanish, as is the specific sequence of a transitive verb followed by *para atrás*, as in the following utterance by a monolingual, native-speaking Uruguayan recorded in Montevideo in 1989:

(5) *No me quiero meter por esa calle, porque*  
Not me I-want to-get-in through that street, because  
*más adelante te encuentras que están en*  
more forward you you-find that they-are in  
obras, *y tienes que volver para atrás*  
construction, and you-have that to-return for back.  
'I don't want to go down that street, because further up you find that there are men working and you have to turn around.'
In addition to displaying a construction that is different from the English model and thoroughly familiar in general Spanish, combinations of verb + \textit{para atrás} appear to be built on the basis of familiar semantic elements. Analysts of different theoretical persuasions agree that the meaning of \textit{para} involves the notion of spatial or temporal movement toward a goal. For example, the European Structuralist analysis by López (1970: 138), the meaning of \textit{para} is 'future union', and is represented by a diagram in which, from a point labeled ''V'', an arrow moves toward a target: \( V \rightarrow | \). And in the analysis by Lunn (1988: 169), performed under the theory of Cognitive Grammar, the meaning of \textit{para} is similarly said to involve a trajector moving toward a landmark. To be sure, these notions are not entirely equivalent in the different schools. But still, there is a striking similarity between the analyses and considerable agreement on the examples chosen to illustrate them. López’s example is (6a) and Lunn’s is (6b).

(6) a. \textit{Voy para tu casa.} (López)
   1-go for your house
   'I’m going to your house.'

b. \textit{Mi primo se fui para Venezuela.} (Lunn)
   My cousin himself he-left for Venezuela
   'My cousin left for Venezuela.'

Students of the meaning of \textit{para} all take cognizance of the well-known fact that, in many languages, items that once in their etymological origins may have described only physical movement or location have long since come to be used to describe movement and location of a more abstract nature, such as a temporal one (Ullmann 1951). Examples of this in English are words like \textit{within} and \textit{behind}, in phrases such as \textit{He’ll get it done within the hour} or \textit{They put that problem behind them long ago}. For Spanish, analysts routinely offer examples of \textit{para} in which the target or goal has to do with time rather than with space, as in (7):

(7) \textit{Nos habíamos citado para la tres.}
   Us we had summoned for the three
   'We had made an appointment for three o'clock.'

This direct linkage to a target by means of the meaning of \textit{para}, in our case the target \textit{atrás}, suggests that \textit{llamar para atrás} is structured semantically in a very different way from \textit{call back}, where no connection between a vector and a goal, and no directional or movement sense of any kind, appears to be operative.

It turns out, then, that the sequence verb + \textit{para atrás} that is used to communicate the notion of repeating or reciprocating an action is very
much unlike English after all, and very much like general Spanish. Quite
independently of any English influence, para can have atrás as a goal or
point of future union, as in (5); this goal or landmark can be a point in
space, as in (5) and (6); and it can also be a point in time, as in (7).
Thus neither para nor atrás has undergone any semantic extension. Each
expresses in llamar para atrás what it expresses everywhere else: in the
case of para, the notion of movement toward a goal; in the case of atrás,
the notion of a point situated behind the speaker in either time or space.
The innovation in the llamar para atrás of the contact dialects is thus
neither in morphology, nor in lexis, nor in grammar.

Where is the innovation? The innovation is in conceiving of repetition
and reciprocity, as do North Americans, in terms of a physical “return”
metaphor. What distinguishes U.S. Spanish speakers from speakers in
noncontact areas in this case is that the U.S. ones have chosen to express
the reciprocal aspects of actions (the calling again in response to a first
call, the giving back in response to an initial giving) through the meta-
phor of spatial revisiting, of returning physically to the original point of
the action. This metaphor is commonly employed by speakers of English
but had not been hit upon by those speakers of Spanish not exposed to
the Anglophone. The point, then, is that llamar para atrás is no different
from primer nombre or Día de dar gracias, whose only novelty resided
outside of language, in the new communication.

To place the new communication of llamar para atrás in its proper
context, it is instructive to look at varieties of general Spanish spoken
outside of, and very distant from, the United States, where similar meta-
phorical extensions from space to time are at work, and where a similar
connection has been established between “return” and “repetition”. In
the River Plate dialects of Spanish, as well as in many other areas of
South America, temporal returns and repetitions are commonly ex-
pressed using the phrase de vuelta, which relies on a preposition plus the
word vuelta, commonly defined as ‘turn, turning’ (de Gámex 1973). This
movement can range from the very concrete ir de vuelta ‘to go back’, to
the more abstract, entregar el trabajo de vuelta ‘hand the job/paper in
again’, or, more to our point, llamar de vuelta, ‘to call back’, as in (8):

(8) Le dije a Carlos que cuando tuviera tiempo me
Him I-told to Carlos that when he-had time me
llamara de vuelta.
he-call of turn
‘I told Carlos that when he had time he should call me back.’
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Both *llamar de vuelta* and *llamar para atrás* can be explained by seeing repetition of an action in time as a metaphorical rendition of repeated physical passage through a point in space. In this account, the meaning of traditional *de vuelta* would be a physical turning around and looking backwards, while the meaning of *para atrás* would be a physical movement toward a point in space. Both would be extended to time, so that either by facing a point left behind in time, as in River Plate *de vuelta*, or by reaching it after covering a trajectory, as in United States *para atrás*, the current act of calling would be related to a prior act of calling. What makes River Plate Spanish *llamar de vuelta* a repetition is exactly what makes U.S. Spanish *llamar para atrás* a repetition, namely that the second call is being seen in terms of a first call that is located, metaphorically, in a prior space-time spot.

To be sure, as Lipski and other analysts have insisted, the English model *call back* very likely did play some role in the rise of *llamar para atrás*. But it was not a linguistic or structural role. Rather, it was a role similar to that played by *Thanksgiving Day* in the creation of *Día de dar gracias*. Speakers of Spanish in the U.S. almost certainly got the idea from speakers of English that the concept of “behindness” in space could be applied metaphorically to the temporal notion of repetition, just as they got the idea from speakers of English that a person’s given and family names could be conceptualized in terms of the order in which they are said. But having adopted these notions, they then deployed the resources of their language in a manner that, to repeat, is different from that of English, and that, furthermore, appears to involve no addition or alteration of any concept encoded in any systemic area of Spanish lexis or grammar.

By misrepresenting newly expressed notions as newly encoded features of lexis or grammar, loan translations can have unfortunate theoretical consequences, as they produce an inaccurate picture of the linguistic situation in bilingual communities. For example, in his overview of North American minority languages, Einar Haugen speaks of the “well documented drift of the immigrant languages away from their original bases, including the dialectization of their structure and the anglicization of their semantic content” (1978: 75, underlining in the original). But there is reason to believe that these conclusions are overstated, in part due to the misreading of loan translations as instances of linguistic change.

Haugen’s conclusion must be based, in part, on his well known estimate that in the Norwegian spoken by third-generation Norwegian-Americans in Wisconsin “the significant parts of the language are half
English” (1938: 31). But this claim is based on a count where in fact only 28 percent of the vocabulary consists of borrowed or switched items. The remaining 22 percent that allows for the characterization of U.S. Norwegian as half English was added to cover “idioms and changes in meaning” (1938: 31). Haugen does not make clear whether his altered semantic contents, idioms, and changes in meaning are actual modifications in the concept side of Norwegian linguistic items, similar to the semantic extension of *jugar* mentioned above, or simply changes in what these Norwegian-Americans said to each other. But judging from Haugen’s definitions discussed above, it would appear that his conclusions are based in part on his counting as contact items many phrases that are most likely nothing of the kind. Similarly, we have seen that the characterization of U.S. Spanish as a contact dialect is based in part on the evidence of loan translations, whose status as contact items is quite dubious. In all these cases, loan translations misrepresent speech varieties that are widely used to communicate new cultural notions while remaining structurally fast to their traditional base as if they were in fact highly structurally evolved.

5. The maximalist bias of modern linguistics

But if it can be demonstrated that loan translations represent communicative rather than linguistic convergence; that they constitute new forms of thought but not new forms of language; and that they are crafted out of resources traditionally found in the noncontact variety, why then do so many scholars who look at contact dialects insist on flagging these items as deviant, and on defining them in systemic, structural terms?

The answer to our question lies in the persistent failure in our intellectual tradition to distinguish between the study of language and the study of cognition, a failure that results from contradictory ideas that stake competing claims in the mind of the linguist. On the one hand, there is the wish to make room for the distinctions of system versus use and synchrony versus diachrony; on the other, there is the hope of making the field directly relevant to the study of the categories of thought and the structure of the mind. One side of the linguist wants to accept that the endless flow of conceptual innovation that characterizes communication is of no interest to the student of language, who should carefully heed the celebrated closing statement of the *Courses*: “[T]he only true object of study in linguistics is the language, considered in itself and for its
own sake" (Saussure 1916 [1983]: 230). But then there is another side, the one aware that language can be “the window to the mind”, and that linguistic categories can be deeply revealing of the categories of thought. When this awareness takes center stage, as in the work of scholars like Givón (1984), Lakoff (1987), or Langacker (1988a), there is often no sharp line between the system and its use, no separation, that is, between concepts in the language and concepts in the communication. The label “maximalist linguistics” has been aptly used to describe this approach.12

Since maximalists regard concepts in the language and concepts in the communication as blending imperceptibly into a cognitive—linguistic continuum, they tend to subscribe to what Langacker (1988b: 150) calls an encyclopedic view of linguistic semantics. They thus tend to reject Saussure’s construct of a discrete linguistic system — what Roy Harris (1990: 29–32) has disparaged as Saussure’s fixed code — and to postulate instead a more fluid sort of linguistic knowledge, one that can shift even as communication is taking place. Maximalists thus tend to also reject the Saussurean construct of a synchronic stage, and to postulate a contingent linguistic structure in which the synchrony—diachrony distinction plays little or no role. Finally, and of most relevance to our discussion, maximalists looking at a contact community would necessarily be led by these rejections to a position where communicative and linguistic convergence themselves are not sharply distinguished, but instead form part of a wider process of cognitive—linguistic assimilation.

The fact that the construct loan translation enjoyed widespread acceptance even long before the advent of Langacker’s cognitive grammar, of Givón’s functional grammar, of Harris’s redefined linguistics, or of any of the other current maximalist scholarly trends, suggests that a tacit maximalist bias has long held sway in the thinking of linguists; or it suggests, at least, that linguists have managed to be reasonably restrained when looking at data in noncontact settings, but unfettered maximalists when studying contact. The very new expression teología de la liberación ‘liberation theology’ came and went in the Latin American setting without attracting the attention of the linguist who, despite its novelty, would give it no special name, or tag it as an instance of linguistic change. The fact of being home-grown earned this patently new phrase the linguist’s rightful disregard. But let the foreign-born Día de dar gracias, every bit its equivalent, appear on the scene and the same linguist will mark it as a new unit under the rubric of loan translation.

In this tacitly maximalist climate, then, it would seem that the scholarly efforts of Givón, Lakoff, Langacker and others are but the most thought-
ful and contemporary manifestations of a long intellectual tradition, one in which the Saussurean dichotomies and limits, the guiding principles of what we might call a discrete, or systemic, linguistics, have long been disregarded. The closing statement of the Cours thus seems to have fared no better than any other famous last words.

6. Language contact in a maximalist linguistics

Loan translations, as shown in Section 4, do not have any status within a discrete, systemic approach, where they would be unremarkable as any of the other communicative innovations that are ignored by the linguist because of their lack of systemic impact. For the scholar working within a discrete conception of the linguistic system, *Día de dar gracias, llamar para atrás, último nombre*, and all the rest, are every bit as unremarkable as *teología de la liberación*, for they are all innovations produced out of existing material, they are all, that is, newly communicated concepts crafted out of previously encoded ones.

Loan translations are thus in every sense the product of a maximalist linguistics, and therein lies the incoherence. In a maximalist approach there is no separation between the discrete linguistic system and the communication, since the content of the communication is also the content of the system; and there is no effort to postulate a stable system inscribed in an abstract synchronic stage, since the myriad innovations of the communications are instantaneously registered as innovations also in the nondiscrete nonsynchronic structure. In a maximalist linguistics there is, then, a blurring of the distinction between the communication and the language, as well as a blurring of the distinction between linguistic stasis and change.

But without these distinctions the notion of contact is incoherent, for language contact only makes sense within a theory that includes a discrete system and a synchronic stage. In order to study language contact, the analyst must be able to tell the difference between new communications expressed through previously existing systemic features and new communications expressed through systemic features that did not exist before. That is, the analyst must be able to distinguish synchrony from diachrony, for in order to speak of contact one must conceive of a stasis in terms of which a change can be recognized.

Stating the matter somewhat differently, the problem is that loan translations are supposed to be systemic linguistic alterations, yet, as we have
seen, they exist only in usage. This then means that the very existence of loan translations requires that the system—usage distinction be blurred, so that a change of usage can be also a change of system, so that communicative convergence can be also linguistic convergence. But once this blurring occurs, all systemic alterations evaporate, as there is no system to be altered and no stasis from which to change. Loan translations as types of systemic change cannot have a theoretical home because the theory that would allow for their detection recognizes neither system nor change; and the theory that includes both discrete systems and change does not allow for their detection. The conclusion that one is forced to is that loan translations are a communicative but not a linguistic phenomenon, that they are relevant to the study of society and culture, but irrelevant to the study of language and of contact-induced linguistic change.

7. Language contact in the Columbia School

Implicit in this critique of the notion of loan translation is a position that is easily recognized for its close affinity with Columbia School linguistics. Let us now spell out in explicit terms how the Columbia School vantage point has led us to uncover this important incoherence, and to remove these phrases from the stock of constructs through which language contact is studied.

One of the defining attitudes of Columbia School linguistics, particularly in the work of William Diver (1986, 1990), is the reluctance to assume that languages and linguistic theories include constructs that are but vaguely named or dimly recognized, or that are tacitly accepted simply because they are part of a long-standing analytical tradition. This hard-nosed approach is useful when one goes wandering among the bilinguals. To the vaguely worded claim that loan translations are alterations in structure, it has been possible to answer: Which structure? Where specifically is the alteration? We have seen that not even a confirmed syntactician would recognize structural changes in such items. The claim of structural change stems from the habit of assuming that if there is something going on that is not well understood nor assignable to a lexical item it must be, in some sense, "structural".

Another defining tenet of the Columbia School has been the distinction that is drawn between "meanings", which are the conceptual import of linguistic signals, and "messages", which are the conceptual import of
the derived communication (Diver 1975, Garcia 1975, Kirsner 1979). Meanings in Columbia School are precisely formulated hypotheses about concepts inside the language in constant association with an observable signal; whereas messages are elusive and unique, and found outside of language, in the vagueness of everchanging communications. From the Columbia School point of view, our criticism of the construct loan translation can be formulated in transparent terms: Loan translations are simply new messages; in particular, they are the kind of new messages that have been derived by listeners on the basis of old meanings. The novelty is therefore outside of language, in the message, and not at all within the inventory of meanings that makes up the linguistic system.

Making the point from a slightly different angle, loan translations are simply messages that monolingual speakers in noncontact settings could have conveyed all along (because they had the available meanings) but did not (because they had no need to, or because it had not occurred to them to do so). Contact speakers, having been exposed to the hitherto unknown messages exchanged by members of the donor society, have put the same old meanings to work in ways that strike their noncontact colleagues as odd. Noncontact speakers find these usages strange precisely because they recognize the foreignness of the message; and because, not being linguists, they fail to recognize the indigenous nature of the deployed meanings.

The nonmaximalist, systemic, discrete nature of Columbia School linguistics makes it easy to recognize that the messages of an assimilating community will necessarily differ somewhat from those of unassimilated monolinguals in noncontact areas, since people in different places and in contact with different groups will naturally have different things to say to each other. The Columbia School theoretical position also makes it easy to recognize that these new messages, which are always evidence of a kind of conceptual convergence toward the cultural system of the donor group, are not necessarily evidence of conceptual convergence toward the linguistic system of the donor language. Contact speakers are often communicating new, borrowed messages; but they only occasionally do so with new, borrowed meanings.

Thus grounding the study of language contact in the distinction between meaning and message allows the linguist to reach a better understanding of the place of language in cultural assimilation. In the case at hand, it allows the linguist to understand that United States Hispanics regularly exchange in Spanish messages that are typically exchanged in English by members of the donor community in the United States, but that are not typically exchanged in Spanish in Latin America. Observa-
tion of the community through the more coherent lens provided by Columbia School theory allows the linguist to see that phrases like Dia de dar gracias, llamar para atrás, and último nombre do provide strong evidence of the North-Americanization of Hispanics, but not of the Anglicization of their Spanish.

8. The maximalist nature of the Saussurean sign

The incoherence uncovered here with regard to the notion of loan translation has been seen as a painful demonstration that Ferdinand de Saussure did not convince very many scholars that language is, in the words of his most recent editor, primarily "a system of limits" (de Mauro 1972: xii). That is, it illustrates Saussure's failure in most cases to rein in the maximalist temptation and to establish a truly discrete and systemic approach to the study of language.

Ironically, the blame for the prevalence of a maximalist linguistics, wherein the spurious notion of loan translation could flourish, must rest with Saussure himself. For the discrete, systemic, and synchronic nature of the language to be studied "in itself" was to be embodied, after all, in Saussure's principal theoretical construct, the linguistic sign. Yet in the *Cours* the sign was defined in such vague terms that it could not bear the burden of establishing boundaries that Saussure had entrusted to it.

Most damaging in this regard was Saussure's vagueness on the issue of what one might call "the size" of the sign, that is, the question of whether the sign was a minimal unit. The *Cours* encourages the question but gives no definitive answer.

Though reluctantly, Saussure equated his new sign with the conventional "word". But parts of words, and groups of words, were to be signs too:

...In any case many words are complex units, in which one can clearly distinguish smaller units (suffixes, prefixes, stems). Derived forms ... divide into distinct parts, each with its own clear meaning and function. On the other hand, there are units longer than single words. These include compounds ... phrases ... flexional forms, etc. (1916 [1983]: 104).

Rather than offering a solution, Saussure in this passage simply expresses frustration over the problem:

These units [i.e., compounds, phrases, flexions] raise the same problems of delimitation as words proper, and it is extremely difficult to unravel in a sequence of sounds the arrangement of units present, and to say which are the concrete elements the language is using ... (1916 [1983]: 104).
In other places, however, Saussure is more sure that elements larger than the word are signs no less than the word:

Normally we do not express ourselves by using single linguistic signs, but groups of signs, organized in complexes which themselves are signs ... (1916 [1983]: 104).

These somewhat contradictory passages licensed several generations of linguists to be themselves unclear as to what they meant by a sign, and made it possible for any “group of signs” that struck the analyst as unitary to be at least implicitly regarded as part of the system’s inventory. But if anything can be a sign, and if combinations of signs can themselves be signs, then there is no principled way to put limits on the system and make it discrete. Under this open-ended formulation of the sign, it becomes possible for the ever-changing concepts of the communications to be promoted, on the back of ever-bigger signs, to the status of concepts encoded in the language, without any limiting restraint. The Saussurean sign thus encourages the linguist to transgress Saussure’s own limits, and to blend together the system and its use. The limitless, infinitely recursive Saussurean sign, then, is the sponsor of maximalist linguistics. Saussure is thus indeed the father of modern linguistics, but in more ways than one. He is the father of the discrete-systemic approach through his notion of limits and the force of the closing :logan in the Cours; but he is the father as well of the maximalist approach through his exceedingly vague notion of the linguistic sign. In time, it would seem, the maximalist temptation was to win out. The bounded, discrete, systemic langue that Saussure brought to life was buried in the grave that Saussure’s own signe linguistique had dug.

Seen in this light, the theoretical approaches that argue today for an end to the Saussurean dichotomies of system—use and synchrony—diachrony are simply making explicit what was implicit both in Saussure and in all modern theories that came to inherit his hidden maximalist bias. In some forms of cognitive grammar, for example, the open-ended nature of the Saussurean sign is much in evidence. For Langacker (1988 b) the elements of the system are conceived of as “symbolic units”, which contain a phonological and a semantic side. A semantic unit is “an established conceptualization of some sort, i.e., a fixed configuration in semantic space” (1988 b: 148). The lexicon is “the inventory of fixed expressions in a language, regardless of size or the regularity of their composition” (1988 b: 155). Moreover, these “specific expressions learned as fixed units are part of a speaker’s knowledge of linguistic convention, even when they conform to a regular pattern” (1988 b: 164).
These formulations leave open, as in Saussure, the place occupied by the "established conceptualizations". And they do not specify how one is to discover which "specific expressions" are learned as "fixed units". What was unclear in Saussure continues unstated in Langacker, except that there is now greater awareness and consistency. In both, the inventory of units is ill-defined, making it very easy to attribute to the conceptual inventory of the language what would be more reasonably confined to the ever-shifting conceptual set of communication.

The consequences of the maximalist view of the sign are particularly serious for the area of language contact that has been studied here. For just as it is not clear under Saussure's definition of the sign what the synchronic units should be, it is also not clear how one determines, diachronically, when a new such unit has arisen. The result, as we have seen, is that new, diachronically evolved units of all sorts are postulated that, under scrutiny, turn out to be simply instances of synchronic creativity. It is this theoretical permissiveness toward the proliferation of units, sponsored by Saussure and taken up by his maximalist followers, that has allowed loan translations to stage their spurious claim to constituting a type of structural unit in the language of contact communities.

9. The signal—meaning unit in Columbia School

Like the Saussurean sign, the Columbia School signal—meaning pair is a theoretically postulated construct. But in contrast to the vaguely defined, easily postulated sign of Saussure and his maximalist descendants, the Columbia sign is a tightly constrained analytical hypothesis. The postulation of a signal—meaning pair in a Columbia School analysis requires both a highly sophisticated theoretical justification and a complex empirical validation, based on qualitative and quantitative evidence (for discussion, see García 1975: 38–40; Kirsner 1979: 37–40). Unlike the Saussurean sign, the Columbia School one is thus seen as controlling linguistic analysis, and providing a principled way by which to avoid postulating an ever-increasing set of units (Reid 1974).

The controlling power of the Columbia School sign stems from its conception as an explanatory construct that is postulated only because there is an analytical problem to be solved, only, that is, because there are observable distributions that need to be explained (Diver 1990: 42–43). As soon as the distributions are explained, the motivation for the
postulation of signs ceases (for further discussion see Reid [1974: 44–51]; [1991: 351–359]).

The positing of signs is thus in the Columbia School not an open-ended activity responding to every grouping that is possibly felt to have an identity of its own. Rather, it is a limited analytical enterprise that ends once the existing distributions are explained (Reid 1991: 95). When the presence of units in larger stable groups can be accounted for on the basis of the existing signs, the felt stability of the larger group is not in and of itself a motivation for postulating new signs.

Putting the point somewhat more technically, once Columbia School meanings are postulated, they justify their existence only because they account for the observed distributions of their signals and, more to our point, because they account for most of the novel distributions produced by speakers (whether monolingual or bilingual, whether in their homelands or in a contact setting). But once the distribution of a postulated signal has been accounted for by its postulated meaning, no further analytical work, and no further expansion of the inventory of units, is required.

The reason that from the point of view of a Columbia School analysis one would not postulate a sign Día de Reyes ‘Kings’ Day’ despite its clear and stable identity is that the meaning of día, de, and reyes can already quite independently explain the distribution of these forms inside the phrase. And so when the new contact phrase Día de dar gracias arises, the same controlling principle leads one to ignore claims about its special status as a loan translation.

Similarly, the reason a Columbia School analysis disregards the new usage teología de la liberación is that the existing component meanings would appear to account for the existing component signals of this new phrase no less well than in older phrases in which one finds de, la, teología, and liberación. And again for the same reason, one would disregard any claims to special status for the peculiarly contact usage of último nombre. It is true, of course, that a Juan Antonio Pérez residing in Latin America would never deploy the meanings of último and nombre to refer to the Pérez part of his name. But it is also true that the existing meanings of último and nombre account for this new North American usage as well as they account for the old Latin American one (in which the phrase would refer to the entire name, Juan Antonio Pérez, at the bottom of a list).

Finally, in the case study presented here, it was shown in detail that the meanings of para and atrás accounted for the North American exploi-
tation of these forms with as much success as they accounted for the general Spanish one. This being the case, the new communicative use that is made in the United States of verbs followed by para atrás does not justify the postulation of a new unit nor the recognition of a change in the semantic system.

In all these cases, the new facts of communication have been ignored in principle, guided by the theoretical tenet that linguistics is not the study of communication but the circumscribed, limited science that studies language in itself (Reid 1991: 370). Since linguistic resources are used by people, and since people, particularly those in different communities, have vast and varied communicative needs, the analyst should expect considerable variation and change in the deployment of resources. But change in the deployment of signs is not linguistic change until and unless the existing signs fail to account for the new usages, thus forcing the analyst into the postulation of new units.

10. Summary and conclusions

The confidence with which linguists in the past have spoken of loan translation as a type of contact-induced change at the level of the linguistic system seems unjustified. The belief that loan translations or calques involve truly linguistic modifications is based on definitions worded in systemic-structural terms that, when confronted with the evidence, turn out to be untenable.

The notion that loan translations and calques are instances of language contact is based on an excessively loose, maximalist definition of what constitutes language, and on an insufficiently developed appreciation of foreign messages as sources of synchronic creativity in a contact community. Instead of seeing language as the abstract underlying system that makes acts of communication possible, for the maximalist the communications themselves are taken to be the language. When the communications change, as they must in a new environment, the language itself is mistakenly assumed to have changed. The constructs loan translation, loanshift, calque, and all the rest constitute, in a large measure, nothing but the misrepresentation of these new communications as new units of the language.

These spurious systemic descriptions contribute to a state of affairs in which the interaction between language and culture becomes impossible to discuss, since the expression of every cultural change is described by
the analyst as if it were a linguistic change. The striking communicative bond, the *Sprachbund*, that donor and borrowing communities tend to develop interacts in important ways with the linguistic bond, the *Sprachbund*, that they also partially form. But by describing the one in terms of the other, and thus confounding the two, the interactions between them become impossible to investigate. Much of what passes for *Sprachbund* phenomena in the study of language contact belongs in fact to the *Sprachbund* side, representing the expression, through an unchanged language, of the borrowing community's acculturation.

A conception that is much more useful for the study of contact regards language as a structure consisting of lexical and grammatical forms carrying broadly applicable semantic contents, or meanings, that motivate usage. Thus the investigation of the points at which foreign usages give rise to language contact must be firmly anchored in the study of changes in the content or in the inventory of these forms, that is, in changes at the level of the sign.

The new usages called loan translations attract attention because they reflect a selection of lexical and grammatical forms that is not found, or is found but utilized to communicate something else, in the noncontact community (e.g., the selection of *último* and *nombre* to refer to one's family name). But differences of item selection between communities do not in themselves constitute systemic breaks. Selecting some items and not others in order to achieve a communication is part of what speakers do with language, not language itself.

As illustration for these broader points about language contact, data on so-called loan translations from United States Spanish and other contact varieties have been examined, showing that these are spurious contact items, which tend to overstate the amount of contact actually taking place. The position taken here has been that the Spanish spoken in the United States does indeed contain a plethora of peculiarly North American usages, which reflect a high level of cultural and communicative convergence between Hispanics living in the United States and their Anglophone neighbors (e.g., *están, jugar* as applied to musical instruments, etc.). But we have stressed that whether, and if so at which points, this communicative North Americanization entails linguistic Anglicization is a separate analytical question. Even some of the most glaring so-called loan translations of United States Spanish, when properly analyzed, turn out to be constructed from semantic resources that are identical to those of general Spanish. The cultural and conceptual convergence between North-Americanized Hispanics and their neighbors is thus expressed through nonconvergent, non-Anglicized linguistic means.¹⁵
From the perspective that is offered here, the speech of borrowing populations continues to display a fair amount of contact, all in the form of either borrowing or of changes in the meanings of individual lexical or grammatical signs. But apart from such importations and such changes of meaning, most of the items that are described as instances of contact represent synchronically creative responses to new, culturally conditioned conceptualizations, metaphorical and otherwise, that are expressed through unaltered linguistic means. Thus, while the amount of linguistic hybridization found in these communities is indeed high, it does not reach the huge proportions suggested by Haugen and other scholars.

In trying to understand the widespread acceptance among linguists of the spurious notion of loan translation, it has been suggested that modern linguistics has long had an implicit maximalist bias, always viewing language not in the limited terms urged by Saussure, but in the open-ended terms explicitly called for in such modern theories as cognitive grammar. But the blame for this view of a nondiscrete language system without boundaries can be traced to Saussure himself, for it is the vagueness in the formulation of his key concept of the sign that has made possible the proliferation of maximalist approaches to language. In contrast, it is suggested that the constrained, controlling nature of the Columbia School sign makes possible the rise of a truly discrete, systemic linguistics, one where it is possible to come to a clear understanding of language contact and change.

Notes

1. For the term "borrowing variety" see Thomason—Kaufman (1988: 35). In their classification of contact phenomena, which is based on both linguistic and socio-historical criteria, "borrowing" is used for communities maintaining their language and "substratum" is used for those shifting from it.

2. The terms "transferring" and "modeling" were introduced in Uriel Weinreich's classic work (1953 [1974]: 47). But for most types of transfers the term "borrowing" continues to prevail along with the related "loanword", particularly when the transferred material is clearly identifiable as lexical. For modeling where the scope is a single word, the term "semantic extension" was used by Weinreich and prevails still. For phrase-scope modeling, the most widely used term, as will be seen below, is "loan translation".

3. Examples are drawn from taped interviews or are otherwise widely attested. Items with the notation MF were collected by Mariela Fernández in taped interviews that are more fully described in Otheguy—García—Fernández (1989). Items with the notation RO are widely attested and were collected by the author in the year indicated after the initials. Items with the notation RAO were collected from the spontaneous speech of the author's daughter (born 1984) in the year indicated after the notation.

4. The term "general Spanish," itself modeled on español general, is widely used in the field and refers to the noncontact varieties of Latin America and Spain.
5. The question of whether borrowing varieties undergo contact-induced syntactic changes is a difficult and controversial one. And in any case, whether there are changes in these varieties that can be described as syntactic in the contemporary, generative sense of the term depends on the role that the student of contact envisions for syntax. The question is beyond the scope of this paper. For some discussion of contact-induced changes of word order in several languages, see Appel–Muysken (1987: 158–163). For changes that might be described by some as syntactic in varieties of Spanish in contact with indigenous languages in South America, see De Granda (1979) and Lozano (1975).

6. The terms "loan translation" and "calque" refer always to instances of Weinreich's phrase-scope "modeling". The two terms are always equivalent to what Jensen, writing in French, called "emprunts de traduction" and "expressions calquées" (1912: 116). The terms "loan shift" and "semantic loan" are for some scholars equivalent to semantic extension, although for others they, too, are often interchangeable with loan translation and calque. Hope (1971: 639 note) suggests that the proliferating terminology is mostly a feature of North American scholarship. But these terms do not, in fact, have sharp boundaries anywhere. For a complete summary of their use by scholars writing in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, see Lázaro-Carreter (1953: 77).

7. Some of the data and ideas presented here have been discussed, for a different readership and from a different perspective, in Otheguy (1993).

8. For discussion of the origin of these terms in the work of Trubetzkoy, see Campbell–Kaufman–Smith-Stark (1986: 531).


11. For discussion of the role that new concepts play in the rise of contact features, see Otheguy–Garcia (1993).

12. The term "maximalist" is taken from Kirsner (1993), who appears to attribute it to Langacker (1988).e.

13. The observable signal, of course, is not necessarily always morphological. Word order, and absences of signals, can also be signals.

14. The profound differences between the Saussurean sign and the signal–meaning pair of the Columbia School tend to call into question the frequently repeated phrase that Columbia School analysis is fundamentally based on Saussure. While the discrete, systemic conception of the language in Columbia School is Saussurean, the Columbia School units of analysis are not.

15. This should not necessarily provide any solace to those who contemplate with distaste the cultural separation of Hispanics who live in areas of North American cultural hegemony from their brethren in less impacted areas. The rise of cultural differences between these two groups may be as deplorable as, or perhaps to some even more so, than the emergence of strictly linguistic differences.

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