24 Functional Adaptation and Conceptual Convergence in the Analysis of Language Contact in the Spanish of Bilingual Communities in New York

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1 Introduction

The Spanish spoken in New York City (NYC) shares with that spoken in Latin America and Spain a broad set of characteristics; it also contains features that are found seldom or never elsewhere in the Spanish-speaking world and that may be the result of contact with English. These features are in some cases matters of usage, and in others matters of grammar. That is, in some cases Spanish in NYC differs from that spoken in Latin America and Spain merely in what people say, while in other cases it differs in its underlying lexical and grammatical system. This chapter provides ample illustration of how Spanish is spoken in NYC, and takes as its central concern understanding the difference between innovative usage and innovative grammar. This understanding requires a theory that focuses on the question of the causes of language contact (by which we mean contact-induced language change, or innovative grammar) and that provides an answer grounded on two elements: conceptual convergence and functional adaptation.

Stated in the simplest terms, conceptual convergence refers to the tendency in bilinguals to abandon saying different things in their two languages in favor of saying the same things, often aligning the messages communicated in their socially weaker language with those communicated in their socially stronger one; in the case at hand, conceptual convergence refers to the tendency by Spanish-English

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bilinguals in NYC to say in Spanish the same things they say in English. The consequence of this tendency is that, in many instances, the messages exchanged in the NYC Latino communities when speaking in Spanish resemble those favored by monolingual speakers of English in NYC more than those favored by monolingual speakers of Spanish in Latin America or Spain. We call forms of Spanish used in NYC bilingual communities the contact lects and those used in Latin America and Spain the reference lects. In these terms, conceptual convergence refers to the tendency for the content of many communications in the contact lects to drift away from those of the reference lects, and to approach instead the communicative content of expressions in English. Conceptual convergence is not language contact, but it does constitute one of its two root causes, and thus one of the two central elements required to explain it.

In addition to considering a conceptual-communicative factor, an explanatory approach to language contact must appeal to a human-functional factor, that is, it must take into account not only what contact speakers say but also the way that basic human characteristics impact their use of language. It is the push of the communicative drive toward conceptual convergence, strengthened in some cases and tempered in others by the pull of human limitations and preferences, that together account for the presence of linguistic elements from a donor language in contact lects in general, and in Spanish in New York in particular. Because this second explanatory factor, the human-functional one, under a variety of names and approaches, is familiar from its treatment in several sources, I deal with it first, and relatively briefly, in Section 1, devoting the bulk of this chapter in Section 2 to the notion of conceptual convergence.

2 Functional adaptation

2.1 Functional adaptation among bilinguals in New York

Of the several manifestations of the human-functional factor in the behavior of speakers of contact lects, the most familiar one is the tendency toward simplification (Mougeon and Beniak 1991: 91ff.; Silva-Corvalán 1994: 6; Thomason 2001: 64; Winford 2003: 52ff.). As is generally the case with paralinguistic behavior, not all the simplifying activities of bilinguals result in language contact, that is, not all of them result in the sort of change that makes certain parcels of the grammar of the contact lects different from that of the reference lects (where grammar is taken in its broader sense to include phonology and lexis). Simplification and other forms of functional adaptation by bilinguals lead to language contact in some cases but not in others, and it is up to the linguist to analyze which cases are which. The simplest illustrations come from that most familiar of all phenomena in contact linguistics, namely lexical borrowing, and, in particular, the specific ways that the new lexical items become incorporated into the contact lect. I will illustrate several types of simplifying paralinguistic behavior related to borrowing by English-Spanish
bilinguals in NYC, and then discuss which ones are likely to be instances of language contact and which are not.

The examples provided in this and subsequent sections come from three sources. First, illustrations are drawn from the considerable research literature that is available on Spanish in NYC. Second, qualitative and quantitative data are drawn from the formally stratified Otheguy-Zentella corpus, which contains a large sample of speech that is highly representative of the Spanish of the NYC bilingual communities. We refer to it here simply as “the corpus,” or “the NYC corpus.” It contains not only many hours of interviews in Spanish, but also much personal and socio-demographic information about the speakers from whom Spanish speech samples were obtained. Finally, other qualitative examples come from extensive notes regarding Spanish in NYC taken by the author over the course of a lifetime of careful observation. These informally gathered expressions represent valuable data for the analytical insights that they provide, even though the limited information available about their frequency and dispersion, and about the speakers that produced them, needs to be taken into account when drawing conclusions.

The first example of simplifying paralinguistic behavior in bilinguals in NYC comes from the reshaping of English loanwords into phonologically canonical Spanish words. The English word appointment, which in English is variably pronounced with or without coda /-t/ in the second and third syllables, becomes in the NYC Spanish contact lects apeinmen, with invariably absent coda /-t/ in both syllables; the word building, which in English has lax front vowels in both syllables (or a schwa in the second one) becomes in Spanish in NYC bildin, with a stressed tense vowel in both syllables. This pattern holds for all or most English loanwords in NYC Spanish; variable coda /-t/ and /-d/ tend to become categorically absent, and lax or short vowels and schwas tend to become tense or long. Other frequent examples are bit (Eng. bill), grín car (Eng. green card), lánfio (Eng. landlord), médiquéi (Eng. Medicaid) and pin (Eng. pin). The phonological adaptation of these words is clearly a case of functional adaptation. Even though many bilinguals activate English phonological features such as lax vowels, schwas, and coda stops when speaking in English, they do not usually do so when speaking in Spanish, that is, they tend not to turn these features on for loanwords and then off for the rest of the stream of Spanish discourse. Rather, when speaking in Spanish they deploy Spanish phonological features in the pronunciation of all words, irrespective of how they themselves would pronounce these words when speaking in English.

A second case of functional adaptation comes from what we may call duplicating loanwords, that is, the subset of loanwords that enters contact lects even though there is no discernible conceptual motivation for borrowing, since the lexical meaning that is added by the new word is the same, or nearly the same, as one already available in an existing lexical item. Research by Naomi Lapidus Shin has turned up a large number of such words in the NYC corpus, among them cash, army, stomach, and way, whose lexical meanings appear to be already available in such nouns as efectivo, ejército, estómago, and manera (Shin 2010). Since there is no conceptual motivation for this type of loanword, why borrow them? The key, it turns out, is to
look not only at cases where borrowing has taken place but also at cases where it hasn’t. That is, the key is to look not only at pairs consisting of a borrowed item and its corresponding patrimonial item (such as *el cash* — *el efectivo*, *el army* — *el ejército*, etc.), where borrowing has occurred, but to look also at pairs where no borrowing has occurred, such as English *January* — Spanish *enero*. Through a careful statistical comparison of the length difference (measured in syllables) between these two kinds of pairs in the NYC corpus, Shin has been able to establish that there is a statistically significant tendency for speakers to borrow when shorter English words can replace longer Spanish words (shorter *army* replaces longer *ejército*), but not to borrow when this functionally advantageous condition does not hold (long *January* does not replace long *enero*). That is, borrowing of duplicating loanwords happens when the loanword effects a significant savings in word length. (More precisely, and since English words are on average shorter than Spanish ones, the tendency in NYC is for borrowing to take place when the saving is especially advantageous, that is, when the savings difference is larger than the normal average difference.) Shin attributes this pattern of paralinguistic behavior to what she terms efficiency, which she links to a variety of other phenomena related to language use and acquisition, and which is a form of functionally adaptive behavior.

A third case of functional adaptation comes from the gender that is assigned to loanwords. Nouns in the Spanish reference lects tend to be evenly split between masculines and feminines (Navarro Tomás 1968; Poplack 1982). But this pattern does not hold up for loanwords in many bilingual settings. Research by Naomi Lapidus Shin and Nancy Stern (Oteguy and Lapidus 2003) shows that English loanwords in the NYC Spanish corpus do not break down in the 50–50 gender pattern found in the reference lects, but tend to be overwhelmingly masculine, the vast majority appearing exclusively with the masculine article *el*, as in *el apoinmen*, *el biltén*, *el cash*. This tendency for loanwords to be masculine in Spanish in NYC holds even if the displaced or duplicated Spanish word is feminine, as in *el swimmin* (< Eng. *swimming*, cf. Sp. *la natación*) and even if the referent is a female, as is often the case in the common loanwords *el bebisiter* (< Eng. *baby sitter*) and *el socialuerker* (< Eng. *social worker*). This reduction of the gender system is functional, as it solves the problem of having no basis on which to assign gender to the loanwords and reduces the cognitive demands of memory load that may be associated with maintaining the gender system.

A final example of simplifying behavior comes from the frequent appearance in Spanish in NYC, especially among second-generation speakers, of animate direct objects without the preposition *a*, as for example *tengo que ir a ver Rebecca* ‘I have to go see Rebecca’ (cf. the reference lect’s *tengo que ir a ver a Rebecca*). In one of the most notable events of public life in the recent history of the NYC Latino community, New York’s Judge Sonia Sotomayor was named Justice of the US Supreme Court in the year 2009. In interviews with friends and co-workers in NYC Spanish radio and television, descriptions of her powers of persuasion often included phrases like *Sonia siempre supo convencer sus colegas* ‘Sonia could always persuade her colleagues’ (cf. the reference lect’s *Sonia siempre supo convencer a sus colegas*).
2.2 Language contact

Having seen these examples of functionally motivated simplification, the question is which of these paralinguistic behaviors, if any, constitutes an instance of language contact. The term language contact has been used in the literature to refer to kinds of sociolinguistic settings where certain types of these behaviors take place, but also to the systemic or structural consequences of the behaviors. It is the latter sense of the term that is of interest here. The term language contact does not refer in this chapter to a setting where two languages are spoken by many bilinguals, nor to the paralinguistic behaviors of these bilinguals. In particular, language contact here does not refer to the bilingual NYC environment, or to the paralinguistic practices and behaviors of Latinos in the City. Rather, the term is reserved for systemic features of the contact lects that mark off linguistic differences between them and the corresponding reference lects, when those features, and those differences, can reasonably be attributed to a donor or influencing language, and where the term linguistic is taken in its strictest sense as a reference to grammar. Although not always stated explicitly, this sense of language contact as grammar contact is what lies behind terms like interference or contact-induced change that have been used in the relevant literature throughout the halfcentury of the study of contact linguistics (Weinreich 1953; Winford 2003).

This approach to language contact envisions an immigrant community in NYC whose grammar is, in the early years of immigration, identical to that of colinguals left behind in Latin America or Spain. Saying it in a different way, the contact lects and the reference lects are assumed to be, in the early stages of the immigrant experience, identical in their grammars. Large parcels of this shared grammar remain unchanged throughout the life of first-generation immigrants, and are handed down unchanged to their NYC-born, second-generation children. But other parcels of the patrimonial grammar are likely to change under the influence of English, even in the first generation, setting off the difference between the reference and contact lects.14 This chapter is about the question of exactly which speech behaviors in the NYC bilingual community do, and which do not, justify the postulation of changed parcels in the grammar of the contact lects that truly constitute language contact.

When used in this sense, language contact can never be a simple matter of observation and must be a matter of linguistic analysis. One cannot directly observe language contact; one can only observe speech and other patterns of paralinguistic behavior that may or may not provide evidence for the postulation of the kind of linguistic change that represents language contact. Language contact itself, being a matter of grammar, requires analysis and argumentation. This applies directly to our topic of Spanish in NYC. The paralinguistic behaviors that we have just documented in the previous section represent observations, not necessarily instances of differences between the grammars of the Spanish contact lect and reference lects. These behaviors, as all the behaviors of bilinguals, require a case-by-case analysis before any conclusion can be reached whether or not language contact is involved.
2.3 Functionally motivated language contact in Spanish in NYC

Determining with some level of confidence whether or not an instance of simplification (or, as we will see in the next section, of conceptual convergence) is also a case of language contact usually requires the sort of extensive, individualized treatment that is beyond the scope of this chapter. My interest is not to provide definitive answers, but to show the need to analyze speech behaviors that are not necessarily or pre-analytically instances of language contact. Still, a brief analysis is provided here for each one of the simplifications described above.

The adaptation of English loanwords to the phonology of Spanish (as opposed to the fact of their introduction into the lexicon) is probably not a matter of language contact, for nothing has changed in the phonology of the contact lects as a result of the behavior of the bilinguals. In fact, it is the opposite type of behavior that would have resulted in language contact. If words like *apointment*, *bldin*, *bl*, and *pin* had kept their English phonology, and if as a result Spanish in NYC were to acquire lax high front vowels, as in *bill* and *building*, and full coda */-t/ as in *appointment*, then we would be faced with the sort of difference between the grammars (in this case the phonologies) of contact and reference lects that would constitute language contact. But these words, in the familiar Hispanized pronunciation they are given in NYC, represent continuity and consistency between Spanish in NYC and elsewhere, and are examples of functionally motivated behavior that takes place in the contact setting by speakers of the contact lects that, however, most likely does not constitute language contact in the sense of grammar contact.

The same can be said about the functionally motivated process that apparently guides speakers in their selection of duplicating loanwords. The pattern of incorporating into the Spanish contact lects those English words that provide a saving in word length while keeping out English words where such a saving is not practicable is functionally motivated, but it most likely fails as a case of language contact. (The fact of borrowing new words makes the lexicon of the contact lects different from that of the reference lects, and is therefore a case of language contact, but the display of what Shin calls efficiency in the selection of these words is not.) Just as the phonological accommodation of new words to Spanish canonical patterns is a case of functionally adaptive behavior that very likely produces no change in the grammar, selecting loanwords on the basis of pairwise length considerations represents efficient, and thus functionally adaptive, behavior that also fails to qualify as a clear case of language contact.

In contrast, the fact that loanwords tend not to enter into the gender-marking system does very likely provide us with an instance of language contact, since a section of the lexicon of the contact lects now differs from the reference lects in the structure of lexical entries. To be sure, the reference lects too have portions of the lexicon that are mostly masculine (e.g. words for males, such as *el hombre* 'the man,' or for fruit trees, such as *el naranjo* 'the orange tree') and portions that are mostly feminine (e.g. words for females, such as *la mujer* 'the woman,' or for fruits, such
as la naranja ‘the orange’). But in the grammar of the Spanish reference lects these restrictive operations are based on semantic classes (male, female, trees, fruits), whereas the restrictions in the contact lects have no such basis. With these considerations in mind, it would seem that the linguist should lean toward the conclusion that the behavior in the contact lects related to gender apportioning is reflective of language contact in the sense of grammar contact.

Finally, we ask the language contact question in regard to the behavior that leaves out the preposition a in direct objects denoting animates. The answer, for this and every instance of this question, lies in comparing the grammars of the reference and contact lects to see whether they have become different. If the grammar of Spanish categorically requires all animate direct objects to appear with a preposition a, then the grammar that underlies, in NYC, tengo que ver Rebeca or that generates Satomayor convence sus colegas must be somewhat different from that of the reference lects, and these usages must be reflective of language contact in the sense of grammar contact. If, on the other hand, the grammars of the reference lects allow variability in these structures, then the answer to the question would become more complex. My point is that the answer to the contact question always hinges on the linguist’s careful assessment of the details of the grammar that the bilingual community brought to NYC, and the constraints and restrictions that were active in that grammar, which may or may not be violated in the behaviors of the bilingual community.

An additional piece of behavior related to loanwords illustrates the difficulties associated with determining whether or not the practices of bilinguals reflect language contact. Speakers of the contact lects tend to use loanwords in what appears to be a reduced set of syntactic environments. For example, the tendency is not only for the word college to be masculine (despite the femininity of universidad) but also to be variably, and surprisingly, used without a determiner, as in está en college ‘he is in college.’ This is in contrast to the nearly categorical usage with determiners in the reference lects, as in está en la universidad. This usage might lead us to expect, in the contact lects, the parallel está en el college, which is however rare. Other examples are easy to find. The tendency is not only for the word cash to be masculine, but also to be variably, and also surprisingly, used without a preposition in the contact lects, as in pagué cash ‘I paid cash.’ This contrast with the nearly categorical usage in the reference lects with a preposition, as in pagué en efectivo, which might have led to the expectation that speakers in the contact lects would say consistently pagué en cash. Depending on how the linguist understands syntactic subcategorization, especially in variable phenomena, the conclusion may be that the grammar of the contact lects that generates está en college without a determiner and pagué cash without a preposition is different from that of the reference lects, making these simplifying behaviors of bilinguals (no determiner, no preposition) also reflective of underlying language contact. But complications immediately arise, for while it is true that the usage in the contact lect of college and cash differs from that of universidad and efectivo, it may be that está en college and pagué cash can be generated by the same grammar as that found in the reference lects. After all, locative complements with no determiner are occasionally found in
all forms of Spanish, as in esté en casa 'he is home.' Likewise, it is possible to find, in the reference lects, uses of pagar taking a direct object rather than a prepositional one, as in pagué una fortuna 'I paid a fortune.' The question of whether esté en college or pagué cash have to be generated by a different grammar from that of the reference lects may require much deeper forms of syntactic argumentation. The point, again, is not to provide a definitive answer, but to show that whether or not the usages and behaviors of contact lect speakers that are motivated by simplification are reflective of the difference in grammar that we call language contact is an exceedingly difficult question, and one that cannot be answered through simple observation without recourse to analysis.

In summary, then, there appears to be no language contact other than borrowing in the behavior of speakers who simplify English appointment into Spanish apóimen, or who prefer el army to el ejército but do not prefer el mes de January to el mes de enero. Neither of these functionally adaptive paralinguistic behaviors is likely to reflect the type of underlying grammatical change that represents language contact. However, the behaviors that fail to apportion loanwords to gender classes, that use these words in restricted syntactic ways, or that produce animate direct objects without prepositions, do allow us to mount an argument that they are reflective of language contact, and to propose that they mark off an area of grammatical difference between the Spanish contact lects of NYC and the corresponding reference lects.

3 Conceptual convergence

3.1 Conceptual convergence within and across languages

Conceptual convergence refers to a type of bilingual behavior where the conceptualizations of speakers of the contact lects are pushed closer to those of speakers of the donor language and farther from those of speakers of the reference lects. Like functional adaptation, conceptual convergence is not itself language contact but represents a kind of paralinguistic behavior that leads to language contact in some cases but not in others. And, once again as in functional adaptation, case-by-case linguistic analysis is required to determine which is which. Conceptual convergence is described and illustrated in this section first within the same language, then across languages, and finally in the specific case of Spanish in NYC. This leaves for the following section the question of which NYC Spanish cases of conceptual convergence represent the true instances of differences of grammar that constitute language contact.

In general terms, conceptual convergence refers to the reduction or elimination of differences of conceptualization holding within or across languages. Consequently, before we can understand conceptual convergence, conceptual differences have to be clearly apprehended. A first step involves recalling the familiar distinction between sense and reference (usually traced to Frege 1892): the same real-world reference is often conveyed by linguistic expressions that are very different in sense.
Frege’s example is the morning star and the evening star, which can be used to refer to the same object (the planet Venus), even though the two expressions are clearly different in sense. The Fregean point addresses a common, easy-to-illustrate feature of language. The referent of my wife is often the same as that of the mother of my children, even though the two expressions are very different in sense; the referent of the best-known Colombian writer is the same as that of the author of One Hundred Years of Solitude, though the two expressions mean two different things. The distinction between sense and reference is relevant here for the recognition that any difference in linguistic sense carries with it a difference in conceptualization. In Frege’s example, one expression describes the first star to appear in the evening while the other describes the last star to disappear in the morning, so a speaker who chooses one is expressing a different conceptualization from a speaker who chooses the other. In the woman example, one expression describes her relationship to the speaker while the other describes her relationship to the speaker’s children, so that the referent (the woman involved) is conceptualized very differently in the two cases. In the reference to Gabriel García Márquez, one expression is about a country and its writers, the other is about a book and its author.

These examples have been drawn from the same language, but of greater relevance here are examples of different conceptualizations involving two languages. When discussing book bindings, the English “hard-cover” book is the Spanish “cloth-bound” book (encuadernado en tela); when discussing telephone message instruments, the English “answering machine” is the Spanish “automatic answerer” (contestador automático); when discussing a type of high government official, the English minister of “foreign affairs” is the Spanish minister of “external relations” (ministro de relaciones exteriores). The two languages offer different conceptualizations for all these referents. In the case of the book’s binding, the notion of hard has to do with a quality, while that of cloth has to do with a type of material; the English conceptualization is in terms of covers, which are absent from the Spanish, while the Spanish conceptualization is in terms of binding, which is absent from the English. For the telephone message contraption, the only shared conceptualization has to do with answering, but the English conceptualization is in terms of a machine, which is not part of the Spanish, while the Spanish conceptualization expresses the notion of automaticity, which is missing from the English. For the cabinet official, “external” is a simple physical or geographic description, while “foreign” is a technical, nationality-centered characterization; moreover, the concept of a “relation” involves a connection between the parties that is absent in the notion of “affairs.” The difference of conceptualization for the cabinet minister between English minister of foreign affairs and Spanish ministro de relaciones exteriores is even greater when one compares the Spanish expression to the rather peculiar US English way of making the same reference, using the expression secretary of state. Now, no ministers are involved, and the difference is not just the small one between external and foreign concerns, but the greater one between external matters and matters of state. The Spanish ministro de relaciones exteriores, the general English minister of foreign affairs, and the US English secretary of state offer three different conceptualizations for the same reference to the same cabinet official.
Differences of conceptualization can be reduced, or subjected to conceptual convergence. In the Frege example, one speaker can conceptualize the planet as the morning star and another one as the evening star. The first may be exposed to and influenced by the second’s conceptualization, leading him to switch to saying the evening star. With regard to the central bank example, US economists are often heard in British venues such as the BBC speaking of the president of the US Central Bank, abandoning the conceptualization that is expressed, in the United States, by the familiar expression the chairman of the Federal Reserve. This is an instance of conceptual convergence, as US speakers adopt the conceptualization favored in the British milieu.

Just as conceptual differences hold both across and within languages, conceptual convergence can take place cross-linguistically as much as intra-linguistically. When an English speaker discussing Cuban history in the late twentieth century calls Roberto Robayna, in English, the minister of external relations (instead of the minister of foreign affairs), cross-linguistic conceptual convergence has taken place; when a Spanish speaker discussing the history of the United States during the post-World War II period calls Foster Dulles in Spanish el Secretario de Estado (instead of el Ministro de relaciones exteriores), cross-linguistic conceptual convergence has again taken place.

It bears repeating that a firm grasp of the difference between sense and reference leads to the realization that differences of conceptualization do not amount simply to speakers saying the same thing in a different way, but involve their saying two different things. Consequently, conceptual convergence, including cross-linguistic conceptual convergence, is not saying something in the manner that speakers of the other language say it, but rather saying what speakers of the other language say. Thus the speakers of Spanish who say secretario de estado to refer to Foster Dulles are not saying ministro de relaciones exteriores in a different way; they are saying something different, adopting, when speaking in Spanish, the conceptualization favored by speakers of English.

### 3.2 Conceptual convergence in Spanish in NYC

Cross-linguistic conceptual convergence is ubiquitous in bilingual communities and central to the effort to understand language contact. The illustrations of cross-linguistic conceptual convergence offered so far have been the easier-to-understand cases of speakers of one language adopting the conceptualizations of speakers of another one. But in the bilingual communities that are the subject of this chapter, cross-linguistic conceptual convergence takes place within the speech of the same individuals and the same bilingual and bicultural communities. Cross-linguistic conceptual convergence in bilingual communities is widespread but asymmetrical; the bilingual community engages in conceptual convergence in the use of both its languages, but more frequently when they use their socially weaker one. In the case of NYC Spanish-English bilinguals, cross-linguistic conceptual convergence involves bilinguals expressing English conceptualizations when speaking in Spanish much more than Spanish conceptualizations when speaking in English.
An initial example of cross-linguistic conceptual convergence in Spanish in NYC can be offered from the case we have already seen of Spanish speakers calling an "automatic answerer" the telephone contraption that English speakers call an "answering machine." In the NYC contact lecs, the item is often not a contestador automático but a máquina de contestar, aligning the contact Spanish conceptualization closely with the English one in terms of "answering" and "machine," and distancing it from the conceptualization of the reference lecs in terms of "automaticity." A second case has to do with the conceptualization of the act of washing hair. Speakers of English tend to say *I have to wash my hair* whereas speakers of the Spanish reference lecs tend to say *Me tengo que lavar la cabeza* lit. 'I have to wash the head.' In NYC, bilinguals commonly adopt the former conceptualization even when speaking in Spanish, *Me tengo que lavar el pelo* lit. 'I have to wash the hair' or *Me tengo que lavar mi pelo* lit. 'I have to wash my hair.' Instead of washing their hair when speaking in English and their head when speaking in Spanish, the action is conceptualized as one of washing hair no matter what language is being used.

Another set of reconceptualizations in Spanish in NYC caused by convergence with the conceptualizations of English involves Spanish nominal or verbal lexicalizations. The lexical meaning of Spanish adelgazar 'to thin out' (cf. the noun delgado/a 'thin') involves a conceptualization different from the English one for the same reference, namely *to lose weight*. In the NYC contact lecs, the word adelgazar is often set aside, replaced by perder peso lit. 'to lose weight.' Bilinguals in NYC conceptualize the reference in the same way irrespective of the language being used, as a loss of weight rather as a slimming down. Similarly, the lexical meaning of Spanish apellido is 'surname,' which represents a different conceptualization from the referentially equivalent English *last name,* since apellido makes no mention of relative order in the placement of names. In NYC, this reference is rendered by many speakers by means of *último nombre* lit. 'last name'; here too the Spanish speaker is opting for seeing the name as the one that is uttered last, whether speaking in one language or the other. In another example, Spanish guardaría is conceptually different from the English *day care center*; the Spanish lexicalization includes simply the notion of "watching" or "guarding" the children, while the English one has instead the notion of "caring" plus the additional specification that this takes place during the day and in a center. In NYC, these institutions are often called, in Spanish, centro de cuidado, representing a transparent reproduction of the English conceptual structure. Similarly, the English *double bed* is in many Spanish reference lecs cama doble, but in the contact lecs a cama doble, which more closely adheres to the English conceptualization. For days where in the Catholic church the faithful are bound to attend mass, speakers in the reference lecs have fiestas de guardar, conceptualizing the referent as a holiday that is "observed" or "reserved." For the same reference, Catholics in English have a *holy day of obligation.* But in the reconceptualization in the direction of English, Latino Catholics in NYC often say días de obligación, setting aside the notion of observing or reserving of Spanish and adopting instead the obligatoriness of the English conceptualization. Finally, in discussions of the controversial question of punishment for crimes, one speaks in English of *life in prison* while in the Spanish reference lecs of cadena perpetua. In the
reconceptualization in Spanish in NYC, one often hears *vida en prisión*, a convergent conceptualization that tracks the elements of "life" and "prison" of English while making no mention of the Spanish concepts of "perpetuity" and "chains." A final example can be given by noting the English speaker's habit of discussing ambient temperature by specifying the temperature out-of-doors, as in the question *Is it cold outside?* Users of the Spanish reference lects do not usually specify location, tending to say simply *¿Hace frío?* 'Is it cold, lit. Does it make cold?' But users of the NYC contact lects often say, in Spanish, *¿Hace frío afuera?* lit. 'Does it make cold outside?' thus encoding the question in both languages as one that pertains to the out-of-doors.

The foregoing examples of reconceptualization in the direction of English in Spanish in NYC have dealt with matters of conceptualization that hinge on choices involving lexical meanings, that is, items drawn from open classes. But the same kind of convergence is involved when the choices involve what may be regarded as grammatical meanings from closed classes such as determiners, possessives, prepositions, and inflectional endings.

One's own body parts tend to be conceptualized by speakers of English in parallel to conceptualizations of possession, for example *I broke my arm.* In the Spanish reference lects, the same reference is more often conceptualized in terms of definiteness rather than possession, *me rompi el brazo* lit. 'I broke the arm.' Speakers of the Spanish contact lects in NYC often reject the definite conceptualization preferred in Spanish in favor of the possessive one preferred in English, *me rompi mi brazo.* Again here, the Spanish of the NYC bilingual community is much more conceptually integrated with English than with the Spanish reference lects, because it describes the body part as an inalienable possession, as in English, rather than as a mere definite description, as in Spanish. The Spanish contact lects' *me rompi mi brazo* is now conceptually closer to English *I broke my arm* than to the Spanish reference lect's *me rompi el brazo.*

Another illustration of converging conceptualization involving grammatical meaning is found in messages having to do with what we might call corresponding responses. Speakers of the Spanish reference lects tend to frame these responses by conceptualizing a metaphorical physical return or turning around. To promise a call back, speakers of the Spanish reference lects say *te lamo de vuelta* lit. 'I call you on the turn,' or *te devuelvo la llamada* lit. 'I return the call.' In contrast, speakers of English tend to conceptualize the message in terms of a physical back location, saying *I will call you back.* Adopting the latter conceptualization, speakers of the Spanish contact lects in NYC tend to say in Spanish *te llamo para atrás* lit. 'I call you for back,' aligning the conceptualization used when speaking in Spanish with the conceptualization deployed when speaking in English.

Another set of examples of reconceptualizations in the direction of English in Spanish in NYC involving meanings located toward the grammatical rather than the lexical end of the spectrum has to do with prepositions and verbal inflections. The Spanish prepositions *con* and *de* appear to encode two very different types of meanings; the form *con* encodes ideas of accompaniment, cooperation, and co-occurrence that are not present in the more general encoding of *de.* The two prepositions are
involved in different conceptualizations for the same reference in the two languages. For example, while English refers to the emotion of love by means of an accompaniment conceptualization, Charles fell in love with Mary, Spanish disperses with accompaniment and uses the more general de, Carlos se enamoró de María. In the NYC corpus, we find utterances such as se enamoró conmigo pero yo no me enamoré con él, where the conceptualization of the contact lect, using the notion of accompaniment with con, now differs from that of the reference lect, but resembles that of English, which uses with. This tendency to line up prepositional choices following the English rather than the Spanish conceptualization is abundant in the corpus and very common in the NYC contact lects, where one frequently finds expressions like se graduó en medicina 'he graduated in medicine' (cf. reference lect se graduó de medicina), yo pertenecí en ese drama 'I belonged in that drama' (cf. yo pertenece a ese drama).

With regard to verbal inflections, consider the contact lect’s handling of realis and irrealis conceptualizations of future or conjectural events that appear in adverbial and complement clauses. In English the usual conceptualization is with the realis, for example I don’t think I can live this way. In the Spanish reference lects, the equivalent realis conceptualization, using the indicative, No creo que pueda vivir así, is disfavored. Instead, the favored conceptualization is with the irrealis, using the subjunctive, No creo que pueda vivir así. But in our corpus, we often find these complements with realis conceptualizations, as in English, for example No creo que puedo vivir así; Quiero que mi hija pueda decir eso a sus hijos ‘I want my daughter to be able to say that to her children’ (cf. the reference lect’s Quiero que mi hija pueda decir eso a sus hijos). We also find the realis conceptualizations in adverbial clauses, for example Cuando salgo de la escuela te doy un beso ‘When I get out of school I’ll give you a kiss’ (cf. the reference lect’s Cuando salgo de la escuela te doy un beso).

In the context of these English-convergent reconceptualizations in Spanish in NYC, it is worth stressing again that just as saying secretario de estado is to say something different from ministro de relaciones exteriores (and not just a different way of saying the same thing), likewise saying máquina decontestar, se enamoró conmigo, te llamo para atrás, and cuando salgo de la escuela te doy un beso is to say something different from contestador automático, se enamoró de mí, te llamo de vuelta, or cuando salga de la escuela te doy un beso (and not just a different way of saying the same things). We are dealing, in all these cases, with same or similar references that, however, are effected by means of substantively different communicative contents. As a result of conceptual convergence between English and the Spanish contact lects, these expressions delineate clear conceptual differences between them and the Spanish reference lects.

Of all the examples offered above, I find particularly significant the cases of te llamo para atrás and se enamoró conmigo, for they make perfectly clear that what we are witnessing is a form of reconceptualization toward the content of English phrases and not any sort of purely formal copying or imitation of the English form. The form of a conceptually converging phrase like te llamo para atrás is radically different from that of I will call you back, not only because Spanish shows typical preposed object pronouns where English has typically postposed ones but, more importantly, because Spanish has a prepositional phrase where English has an...
adverbial word. The form of English has been ignored by the bilinguals, who have copied the conceptual content instead. Likewise, the form of enamorarse con is totally different from that of falling in love with; the Spanish has a reflexive that English does not have, and the preposition con is formally totally different from the preposition with. There is little room for thinking that what we have here is anything other than imitation at the conceptual rather than the formal level.

I have left for last the most transparent illustration of conceptual convergence in the bilingual community's two languages, which involves the familiar phenomenon of lexical borrowing. The clearest case of conceptual convergence occurs when the bilingual community uses the same words in both languages. More precisely, given the asymmetry characteristic of most bilingual communities already alluded to, this paradigmatic case of conceptual convergence occurs when the bilingual community, when speaking the socially weaker language, uses lexical items with origins in the socially dominant one. In the contact lects of Spanish in NYC, and in the Spanish of consultants in the NYC corpus, one notes words like aplicación, apoinmen, Eipi-baioloy, beisísíter, bildin, boila, breinesíster, cash, colech, jásícul, sóbbuey, and so on, which are clearly the same words as, or whose proximate origins can be clearly traced to, the English words application, appointment, AP biology, babysitter, building, boiler, brainstorm, cash, college, high school, subway, and so on. To be sure, and as we have discussed, some of these words enter Spanish in NYC even though there are already existing words in the Spanish of these speakers that have the same or very similar meanings. But there can be no doubt that many of them also represent conceptual gaps in anybody's Spanish (e.g. AP biology, babysitter); that some of them certainly filled gaps that existed in the lexicon of at least the speakers that borrowed them (boiler, college, subway); and that others, which do not appear at first to be gap-filling, can be argued in fact to have a conceptual motivation as well (appointment, building), as we shall see presently. The relevant point is that lexical borrowing is the quintessential case of conceptual convergence because, after borrowing, the two languages (or more precisely, the donor language and the contact lect of the recipient language) become conceptually more integrated than they were before, because the correspondence between lexical meanings has increased. Two lexical inventories containing, for example, appointment-apoinmen, building-bildin, and so on, are conceptually much closer than two inventories containing appointment-cita, building-edificio, and so on. The reason is that the underlying lexical meanings of appointment and apoinmen are very likely to be exactly the same, while the lexical meanings of appointment and cita are almost certainly different, since the ranges of usages licensed by the meanings of appointment and apoinmen appear to be identical, while those of appointment and cita are obviously different. A cita can involve meetings between friends or couples (as in English date), a usage which is found in neither apoinmen nor appointment, whose lexical meaning appears to restrict usage to encounters related to business, medicine, education, and the like. Similarly, Otheguy, García, and Fernández (1989) have shown that the meaning of bildin in the NYC contact lect is different from the meaning of edificio in many reference lectures, while it is probably identical to that of English building.
By developing in Spanish a lexicon that contains parcels where the meanings of Spanish lexical items (appointment, building), the NYC Latino community is engaging, through the adoption of loanwords, in a process of conceptual convergence parallel to the one they engage in when máquina de contestar is lined up with answering machine, or lavarme mi pelo is lined up with washing my hair, or me rompi mi brazo with I broke my arm. In all these lexical and phrasal examples of utterances typical of the Spanish contact lecits of NYC, the members of the bilingual community say when speaking in Spanish the same things that they, and everyone else in NYC, says when speaking in English. But it bears stressing that this is not by any means an absolute, consistent pattern of speech behavior. That is, the conceptual alignment that the community effects between its two languages does not take place every time that the conceptualizations of Spanish diverge from those of English. Rather, in many cases and, if this were the sort of thing subjected to quantification, perhaps in the majority of cases, the conceptualizations of the contact lecits are, from the perspective of the reference lecits, wholly unremarkable. For example, for references to the sensations caused by fear, food deprivation, or temperature discomfort, speakers of the Spanish reference lecits tend to formulate messages parallel to those involving possession (that is, "having" fear, hunger, cold, and so on, cf. tengo miedo, hambre, frio), while speakers of English tend to conceptualize the same reference as states of being ("being" afraid, hungry, cold). For these references, the Spanish conceptualizations of the bilingual community in NYC remain firmly allied with those of Spanish communities elsewhere, deploying the verb tener ‘to have’ and saying tengo miedo, hambre, and so on. In these cases, no conceptual convergence with English is observed in Spanish in NYC, the conceptualizations preferred in the NYC contact lecits being the same as those preferred by speakers of the Spanish reference lecits. What is true of phrases is also true of individual lexical items; many instances of conceptual differences in the lexicon are made to converge through borrowing in Spanish in NYC, but many others are not. For example, speakers of the contact lecits speak of la escalera whether they are referring to a staircase or a ladder, the conceptual difference between escalera and ladder, and between escalera and staircase, not prompting the coining of a loanword.

Bilingual communities in NYC thus show two different sets of expressions that are relevant here. One set is the result of conceptual convergence, the other one keeps separate the distinct conceptualizations of the two languages. Examples of the former in Spanish in NYC are máquina de contestar, me lavo el pelo, me rompi mi brazo, te llamo para atrás and countless other phrases, and also apotixmen, bilidin, jai-scul, and countless other loanwords; examples of the latter are tengo miedo, tengo hambre, tengo frio, and also escalera and countless other, firmly retained patrimonial words. But as we have been stressing, this is not to say that the former represent cases of language contact while the latter do not. The situation is exactly parallel to what we saw in the previous section with regard to functional adaptation; some cases of conceptual convergence represent language contact, others do not, and it is left to the linguist to determine which is which.50

In closing this section, a warning is in order to avoid misleading the reader with respect to the exact locus, and the specific agent, of convergent conceptualizations.
It is indeed accurate to say that speakers of English conceptualize as a realis event, or as an answering machine, what speakers of the Spanish referencelects conceptualize as an irrealis occurrence, or as an automatic answerer. But it is quite inaccurate to say that these are English or Spanish conceptualizations; this sort of phraseology, to which I myself resort in this chapter, should be regarded as shorthand for the sake of expediency. There are no English or Spanish conceptualizations, only the conceptualizations that speakers of English or Spanish favor. Conceptualizations are what speakers do with language, not the language itself. Consequently, to speak of the conceptualizations of the NYC Spanish contactlects is misleading because the contactlects have no conceptualizations, only speakers of the contactlects do.

In short, then, functional adaptation and conceptual convergence represent two main paralinguistic behaviors (most likely the main or only two) that in some but not all cases give rise to language contact. In this view, all language contact is, most likely, either adaptation or conceptual convergence, but not all conceptual convergence or functional adaptation is language contact.

3.3 Conceptually motivated language contact in Spanish in NYC

As mentioned above with regard to functional adaptation, determining which instances of conceptual convergence represent language contact requires the sort of individual in-depth treatment that is beyond the scope of this chapter. Still, tentative answers are given in each case to the question of whether the reconceptualized usages require us to postulate the existence of language contact.

The easiest answer can be given, in the affirmative, for individual lexical items. Quite obviously, loanwords do fulfill, even if in a small way, the requirement imposed here for simplifying or reconceptualizing bilingual behavior to be regarded as language contact, namely that it produces a difference between the grammars (including the lexicons) of the contact and referencelects. Lexical inventories in the contactlects containing items like *apótamen, bładin, jáscul, Mediquéi, sobbhey,* and so on, are obviously, even if in a small way, different from the inventories of the referencelects; conceptual convergence involving loanwords can thus be safely assumed to be always a case of language contact.

For the early examples of conceptual convergence on our list, it seems that the grammar of the contactlects remains identical to that of the referencelects, though matters are more complicated for some of the latter examples. The grammar that generates the Spanish contactlects’ *máquina de contestar* is most likely the same grammar that generates the referencelects’ *máquina de escribir* ‘typewriter,’ *máquina de sumar* ‘adding machine,’ and, more generally, the thoroughly familiar [NP de Infinitive] phrases of Spanish everywhere. Similarly, the grammar that underlies the reconceptualized *lavarme el pelo* cannot be different from the grammar that licenses *lavarme las manos, lavarme los pies,* and so on, and, more generally, the familiar Spanish [*lavar* + direct object]. Likewise, it is difficult to see how an
argument could be mounted that would require different grammatical machinery to generate día de obligación (cf. the reference lects' día de fiesta 'holiday'), vida en prisión (cf. vida en peligro 'life in danger'), centro de cuidado (cf. centro de servicio 'service center'), or any of the countless phrases where speakers of the contact lects have made choices of conceptualization that are the same as those made by speakers of English but different from those made by speakers of the reference lects. In all these examples, it appears that the usages of the contact lects are cases of synchronic creativity, where new conceptualizations are expressed by means of an uncharged Spanish grammar, identical with that of the reference lects and not reflective of language contact. To be sure, for a speaker of a Spanish reference lect, these phrases have an odd ring to them. But it would seem that it is the Americanized conceptualization that is odd, not an Anglicized Spanish.

Matters become more complicated for items where the meanings involved tilt more toward the grammatical end of the spectrum, as in me rompi mi brazo. The question here is whether the grammar of the reference lects allows possessives with body parts. If it does not, then we have a case of language contact; if such possessives are allowed, then we don't. It seems that the latter is the case. Spanish everywhere has sentences like mi brazo defenderá la patria 'My arm will defend the motherland' and others like it that routinely have possessives modifying body parts, including familiar idioms like no da su brazo a torcer 'you cannot argue with him,' lit. 'He does not give his arm for twisting,' as well as contrastive cases like fue su brazo el que recibió el golpe, no el mio 'It was his arm that took the blow, not mine.' It appears, then, that the conceptualization of the contact lects that routinely uses possessives with body parts is licensed by an unchanged Spanish grammar and that since, for these cases, the grammars of the contact and reference lects are the same, these English-convergent conceptualizations should not lead us to postulate language contact.

The question now needs to be raised whether the same grammar that underlies se enamoró de mí in the reference lects can also underlie the contact lect's se enamoró conmigo, or whether this utterance and others like it require that we postulate a changed parcel in the grammar of the contact lect that guides these typically New York prepositional usages. The answer hinges on how the analyst handles, in general terms, the familiar co-occurrence patterns of certain verbs with certain prepositions. For example, in Spanish in general, one says entró a la casa 'he entered the house' but salió de la casa 'he left the house,' and not the other way around; and one says se casó con Ana 'he married Ana' but se divorció de Ana 'he divorced Ana' (and not se casó de Ana or se divorció con Ana). There are three alternative ways of thinking of these restricted co-occurrences. One could invoke the traditional notion of government, or the equivalent contemporary construct of lexical subcategorization, and propose that the grammar of Spanish marks lexical entries as to whether they can take a preposition, so that both entrar 'to go in' and salir 'to leave' would be subcategorized as [__ PP]. One could also take the position that government of prepositions by verbs is more finely grained, allowing only specific prepositions with specific verbs, [__ a] or [__ de]; but syntacticians would likely balk at such micro-subcategorizations, especially because the list of allowed and disallowed prepositions for any particular verb can become unmanageable. Finally, one could
propose that the co-occurrence of specific verb and specific preposition results simply from the combination of coherent meanings (marriage "with," but divorce "from": entrance "to," but exit "from"), in which case the meanings of the verbs and the prepositions would be stated in the grammar, but the combinatorial restrictions would follow from these meanings, and would not have to be stated as part of lexical entries. If one takes the micro-subcategorization alternative, where the lexical entries of verbs govern specific prepositions, the reconceptualized se *enamoró conmigo* is a case of language contact, because the lexical entry for *enamorarse* in the contact lect now has a different syntax from that of the same lexical entry in the reference lect. If one takes the broader approach to subcategorization, and envisions *entrar, salir, enamorarse*, and all other preposition-taking verbs as having a lexical entry that simply specifies [ _ PP], then the reconceptualized *enamorarse con* of the contact lects is produced by the same grammar that underlies *enamorarse de* in the reference lects, and no language contact needs to be postulated. The same is true if one takes the meaning coherence approach. Under it, contact speakers are simply choosing a different preposition from the one chosen by reference speakers in order to fit their different conceptualization. Under this approach, no changes would then be postulated for the grammar of Spanish, and *se enamoró conmigo* would be just one more reconceptualizing innovation in the usage of the contact lects that was always allowed by the same old grammar of the reference lects, and that therefore does not represent a case of language contact.

A similar reasoning applies to the effort to determine whether the realis conceptualization of future and conjectural events represents a case of language contact. If the grammar of the Spanish reference lects bars indicatives, and requires subjunctives, in the complement and adverbial clauses of verbs like *creer, dar, querer*, and so on, then the conceptual convergence with English in the NYC Spanish contact lects represents, for these cases, a clear instance of language contact. In this view, the indicatives documented in the NYC corpus like *No creo que pueda vivir así, Quiero que mi hija pueda decir eso a sus hijos*, *Cuando salgo de la escuela te doy un beso* would be clear evidence that something in the grammar of the contact lects is different from the grammar of the reference lects, and we would conclude that the new realis conceptualization has required for its expression the sort of altered grammar that constitutes language contact. If, on the other hand, the indicative is not forbidden here by the grammar of Spanish, but is simply disfavored by speakers of the reference lects, then the grammars of the contact and reference lects are still the same and there is no language contact in these cases either.21

4 Determinations of language contact are theory-dependent

We see, then, that decisions about which cases of simplifying or reconceptualizing behavior reflect language contact in the sense of grammar contact, and which do not, is always a matter of analysis. And because matters of analysis are also always matters of theory, these decisions are always going to be theory-dependent, turning
sometimes on very general theoretical questions and sometimes on very specific ones, such as whether micro-subcategorizations of verbs with respect to co-occurrences with prepositions are tenable within a given theory of syntax. In this regard, one cannot disagree with the point by Ruth King, who in a generative study of English-French bilingualism in Prince Edward Island (King 2000) laments the lack of concern with grammatical theory in contact linguistics. An example of this problem at the highest level of generality is most relevant here. The central idea animating the present chapter, that not all simplified or reconceptualized speech practices of the bilingual community are manifestations of language contact, depends crucially on the judgment, common to many generative and functionalist schools, that Ferdinand de Saussure was basically right, in his 1916 seminal work, in distinguishing between langue and parole, and that subsequent theoreticians have been also right in accepting some version of the Saussurean distinction. With different degrees of emphasis on either the social or the psychological, the system-use, language-speech, grammar-usage, competence-performance, or meaning-message distinction has informed the thinking of linguists for over a century, and it informs my thinking about language contact as well, in that I recognize that new conceptualizations, or new messages, or new usages, or in general new speech are not always the product of new grammar. But if the insistence, by me and many other linguists of several theoretical persuasions, on the grammar versus speech separation were to be misguided, then the edifice built here in order to understand language contact would collapse. If instead of the classic Saussurean distinction, what is needed in order to think correctly about language is to be found in, for example, the intriguing proposal by Ronald Langacker that knowledge of language and knowledge of the world (or of the dictionary and the encyclopaedia) cannot be distinguished (Langacker 1991: 280), then my separation between the conceptual and the grammatical would evaporate, and every reconceptualized utterance of the contact community would end up being a case of language contact. Similarly, my thinking is informed by the assumption of a reasonably sharp line existing between stable, pre-assembled lexical material in Spanish in NYC, like aparitmen, and syntactically constructed material, like máquina de contestar, te llamo para atrás, and me rompi mi brazo, such that the former, when inspired by the usage of a donor community, is always a case of language contact, but the latter may or may not be. If however, and again as in the thinking of Langacker, the realm of stable units extends outward to encompass máquina de contestar, te llamo para atrás, and me rompi mi brazo and others like it, then the position held here would be untenable, as every one of these reconceptualized new usages would become an addition to the undifferentiated knowledge base of the bilingual community and, in that sense, a case of language contact.

5 Categorical and variable features

The examples of behavior involving functional adaptation and conceptual convergence on which we have based our query regarding the existence of language contact are not always categorical. Much more research is needed to establish
whether contact speakers who say, for example, *me rompí mi brazo* also occasionally say *me rompí el brazo*, and whether those who say *Quiero que mi hija pueda decir eso a sus hijos* also produce this kind of sentence with a subjunctive *pueda*. Almost certainly, the answer is Yes at the community level (some speakers use possessives, others use definite articles for the arm example; some use indicatives, others subjunctives for the daughter example). The assumption here is that if the grammar of the reference lects forbids any of these usages, that is, if these expressions are categorically absent in the reference lects, then their presence in the contact lects, even if variable, would represent an instance of language contact in our sense.

With this in mind, mention must be made of phenomena that are likewise variable in the contact lects but that were already variable in the reference lects, the difference now being that the two lects differ in rates and perhaps also in the order of constraining variables. A well-known case is that of subject personal pronouns, as in *yo quiero que vengas* 'I want you to come,' with an overt subject pronoun, which alternates in all forms of Spanish with *quiero que vengas*, with an absent or null pronoun. In Spanish in NYC, the situation is, for the most part, categorically the same as in the reference lects, but quantitatively different, in that the speakers of the contact lects use many more overt pronouns. This very high use of overt pronouns is found both when all environments are taken together and when the focus is limited to specific environments such as generic references in the third-person plural. These cases where variability already exists in the reference lects, which are more difficult to fit into our general schema, are left out of the discussion here, and the reader is referred to the considerable literature that has addressed this problem for Spanish in NYC (Flores-Ferrán 2002, 2004; Lapidus and Otheguy 2005a, 2005b; Otheguy and Zentella 2007; Otheguy, Zentella, and Livert 2007).

6 Summary and conclusion

The two goals of this chapter have been to provide a wide sampling of innovative paralinguistic behaviors that are characteristic of speakers of Spanish in NYC (innovative in the sense that they are usually not found in the reference lects), and to outline the demands that need be made of analytical proposals that these behaviors are reflective of the sort of innovation in the underlying grammar that, because of its exogenous origins, is called language contact. A third goal of the chapter has been to provide an explanation for these behaviors (and consequently, an explanation of those among them that represent language contact) as stemming from either simplification or reconceptualization. I have attempted to show that while language contact in NYC Spanish appears to be always caused by either simplification or reconceptualization, not all simplification and reconceptualization produces language contact. I have insisted in this chapter that, since some of the simplifying or reconceptualizing behaviors of the bilingual community are the consequence of underlying language contact and some are not, determining which is which is never a matter of pure observation, but of in-depth, case-by-case analysis. And since linguistic analysis is necessarily embedded in a theory, all analytical decisions regarding the existence of language
contact are theory-dependent. The chapter thus underscores that one can never simply point to instances of language contact; one can point to paralinguistic behaviors that, in some cases, and after considerable theory-embedded grammatical analysis, may be reflective of underlying language contact.

In NYC, speakers of Spanish produce distributions unknown in the reference lects. These distributions are explained by the fact that they are making life simpler for themselves, or by the fact that some of the things that bilinguals have to say in NYC are different from what speakers of the reference lects have to say in Latin America or Spain. The speakers of the NYC Spanish contact lects often say different things from those of speakers of the reference lects for reasons that have to do with culture, identity, and adaptation to a NYC speech surround impregnated with the conceptualizations favored by speakers of English. The bilingual community often says when speaking in Spanish in NYC the same things they say when speaking in English, because there is no earthly reason not to say in one language what one says in the other. To say the same things in one’s two languages seems odd only from a perspective that looks at speakers of the contact lects from the point of view of speakers of the reference lects; from the perspective of the bilingual speaker of the contact lect, it is a perfectly natural thing to do. Bilinguals make the conceptualizations expressed in their Spanish converge with the ones expressed in their English for the same reason that, in NYC, they have a light meal during the day and a heavier one in the evening, which is perfectly normal for everyone in NYC to do, but quite odd from the perspective of the societies where the reference lects are spoken, where one usually has a heavy meal during the day and a lighter one in the evening. If you live in NYC, it makes sense to eat meals on the same schedule as everyone else, just as it makes sense to talk, also as does everybody else, of breaking “my” arm rather than “the” arm, of calling “back” rather than “of return,” of falling in love “with” rather than of being enamoured “of,” and of future events being realized rather than irrealis, irrespective of the language being used. Then, as quite a separate matter, and as a matter for the linguist to study and tell apart, some of these things that one has to say require for their generation simply a grammar that is identical to that of the reference lects, while others require the sort of changed grammar that has undergone what we call language contact.

NOTES

1 Features of Spanish in NYC are often also found in the Spanish spoken in many other parts of the United States. But no effort is made to establish which of the items discussed here are found elsewhere and which exclusively in NYC. For an overview of Spanish in the United States, see Lipski (2008) and Klee and Lynch (2009: 193ff.).

2 Conceptual convergence, under a variety of names, has been noted in contact settings by several scholars, among them Bright and Bright (1995), Gumperz (1967), and Otheguy and Garcia (1993). Functional considerations, including simplification, overgeneralization, and a preference for unmarked forms, have been relevant to the analysis of language
contact in the work of many authors, including those doing research on Spanish in the United States, among them Silva-Corvalán (1994). An explanation of language contact based on functional adaptation and conceptual convergence can be contrasted with explanations that see contact as resulting from the constant practice of code-switching, as in the classic study of the Indian village of Kupwar in Gumperz and Wilson (1971).

3 The terms contact lect and reference lect are purposely vague, and are often used here in the plural to purposely increase their vagueness. They are far from ideal, in that they overlook and paper over numerous complications, such as who exactly speaks the contact lects in NYC and which exactly are the reference lects in Latin America or Spain. But those very important questions are not the subject of the present chapter. Contact linguistics is a comparative science, and the terms are useful as points of comparison. Contact lect is a shorthand reference to the Spanish spoken in NYC by many, probably most, people when in unguarded, informal registers (and by many people, in all registers). Reference lect is the point of comparison, that is, the form of Spanish spoken in the relevant area by the relevant people in Latin America or Spain, which changes depending on the contact lects being compared. The reference lects are thus almost never forms of standardized Spanish, but the informal registers of the popular Spanish of corresponding Latin Americans or Spaniards who remained in their countries and did not immigrate to New York.

4 Conceptual convergence is also a characteristic, though to a much lesser extent, of the English of the Latino bilingual community in NYC, but that behavior is beyond the scope of this chapter. The position adopted here, where conceptual convergence can be the cause of, but does not itself constitute, language contact, can be contrasted with that of Nash (1980), where reconceptualization is a form of language contact.

5 Functional motivations have been proposed as explanatory factors for a wide array of linguistic phenomena, for discussion see, among many authors, Nettle (1995, 1999). The relevance of the distinction between communicative and functional motivations for the understanding of a variety of linguistic phenomena is stressed by many scholars. I base the distinction on Diver (1995) and Garcia (1975) who, for explanations of synchronic distributions in monolingual data, distinguish between two orientations that they call the communicative factor and the human factor.

6 We use the admittedly cumbersome term para-linguistic behavior to stress that these behaviors sometimes lead to grammatical innovation but are not themselves matters of language in the sense of grammar. We thus reserve the term linguistic for matters of grammar, and insist on para-linguistic for matters whose connection to grammar cannot be taken for granted but requires case-by-case analysis.

7 The act of borrowing, which will be discussed at length in Section 2, is of course not itself an instance of simplification. We discuss here not the fact of incorporating new lexical items, but the way that the incorporation takes place, which does involve simplification.

8 The Otheguy-Zentella corpus was created by the author and by Professor Ana Celia Zentella of the University of California at Davis. It contains equivalent numbers of interviews with speakers of different nationalities, immigrant generations, levels of education, English proficiency, Spanish proficiency, years of residence in NYC, and ages of arrival. The corpus was developed under grants from the City University of New York (CUNY grant number 62666-00-31), the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York (PSC grant number 09-91917), and the National Science Foundation (NSF grant number BCS 0004133). These sources of support are gratefully acknowledged. Information about the corpus is available in Otheguy and Zentella (2007) and Otheguy, Zentella, and Livert (2007).
While the theoretical proposals advanced here can be reasonably interpreted as having universal applicability, this chapter is about contact Spanish in NYC, and space limitations make it impossible to connect specific examples given here to related phenomena found in other places where Spanish is spoken in bilingual settings, or to contact situations involving other languages in similar or more advanced stages of contact.

The assistance of Rachel Varra in locating loanwords in the NYC corpus is gratefully acknowledged. See also Varra (2007).

It would be an oversimplification to say that all bilinguals always deploy these and other English phonological features when speaking in English; many of them do not. But many of them do (certainly all second-generation ones do, and large numbers of established immigrants do too), and in any case our concern here is not with the English of New York Hispanics, but with their Spanish. While the matter needs further research, the present point is that even the very large number of bilinguals who use lax vowels and schwas for building when speaking in English, will often dispense with these features and use tense vowels for building when speaking in Spanish.

To be sure, not all bilingual New Yorkers convert all loanwords to Spanish phonology, and this matter too requires further research. Some speakers do not convert, and change over to English phonology for some or all loanwords in their Spanish discourse, in a phenomenon usually known as one-word code-switching. The point is that the usual pattern, under which many speakers do normally stay with Spanish phonology in a discourse composed of both patrimonial Spanish words and English loanwords, is a clear example of the type of paralinguistic behavior that is explained by functional adaptation.

That many loanwords have a conceptual motivation in the sense that they fill a gap in the lexicon of the recipient language is a long established position in the study of bilingualism. See Appel and Muyssen (1987: 165), Bloomfield (1933: 445ff.), Casagrande (1954: 140), Haugen (1938 [1972]; 22ff.), Turano (1974: 364), Weinreich (1953) [(1974)]; 59). It is also a well-established position that there are many words to which this gap-filling explanation does not apply (Poplack et al. 1988: 61). There is some risk of oversimplification in these positions, since determining who exactly are the speakers whose lexicon one is talking about when making these determinations is not at all a straightforward matter. But the existence of some duplicating or unnecessary loanwords seems clear, and that is all that needs to be acknowledged for the present purpose.

Students of language contact interested in theoretical generalizations often focus on situations where contact has lasted for many generations (see, among others, Thomason and Kaufman 1988). In the NYC environment, Spanish is spoken only by first generation immigrants and their second-generation children, transmission beyond that becoming quite uneven and reflecting clear elements of language attrition (Zentella 1997). But the points made here about the motivation for language contact are relevant not only because of the inherent interest of the NYC setting, but because even the long-term cases discussed in the literature must have involved, at some point in history, a first encounter such as that experienced between English and Spanish in the first and second generations of Latino bilinguals in NYC.

The masculinity of college is known, of course, not from this type of sentence, but from ones where it is subject or direct object, such as el college queda muy lejos ‘the college is too far’ or cerraron el college ‘they closed the college.’

Cross-linguistic conceptual differences have been noted by many scholars, among them Bright and Bright (1965), Hudson (1980), Hymes (1967) and, in the work of previous generations, by Sapir (1929) [1949] and Ullmann (1957). Moreover, and according
to Culier (1976), the idea was central to the work of Ferdinand de Saussure in his seminal 1916 work on linguistic theory.

Specific examples of cross-linguistic conceptual convergence beyond the two languages that are of interest here, English and Spanish, as well as a general awareness of the process on the part of scholars, are easy to find. Perhaps the clearest comes from Yurok and Karok in Northwestern California, where in both languages, as a result of conceptual convergence, cardinal points are expressed in terms of positioning with respect to the Klamath river, "upstream," "downstream," "toward the river," "away from the river" (Bright and Bright 1965: 261). The tendency by speakers of Hindi to use "translation equivalents," discussed in Gunperz (1967) is also a case of cross-linguistic conceptual convergence. The most general statement of the idea of conceptual convergence is in the notion of *Sprachbund* (to be distinguished from the structural notion of *Sprachbund*), defined by Dell Hymes as shared understandings about what to say (Hymes 1967: 16).

The assistance of Agustina Carando and Rachel Varra in locating prepositional and inflectional examples in the NYC corpus is gratefully acknowledged.

An extensive discussion of verbal inflections in speakers of NYC contact lects is Zentella (1997).

It is precisely because many cases of conceptual convergence are not language contact that terms like *caleque* and *loan translation* are ultimately of little use. These terms are easily interpreted as suggesting that all conceptualizations with a foreign origin are cases of language contact, which is clearly not the case. For discussion, see, among others, Otheguy (1993) and Smead and Clegg (1996).

A similar reasoning would apply to our example of that most widely noticed, and most frequently discussed, feature of bilingual speech in NYC, the use of verbs with *para atrás*, as in our example of *te llamo para atrás* 'I will call you back.' Because these questions are matters of analysis, different linguists will have different answers to the language contact question on this feature of NYC Spanish speech. For discussion, see, among many others, Lipski (2008: 223ff.) and Silva-Corvalán (1994: 171ff.), as well as my own treatment of the problem in Otheguy (1993, 1995).

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FURTHER READING


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