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SHIFTING SENSITIVITY TO CONTINUITY OF REFERENCE: SUBJECT PRONOUN USE IN SPANISH IN NEW YORK CITY

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Previous studies have shown that some of the probabilistic discourse-pragmatic predictors of overt and null subject pronouns are subject to erosion in Spanish in the U.S. (Silva-Corvalán 1994, Flores-Ferrán 2004: 69, Montrul 2004, Toribio 2004, Lapidus & Otheguy 2005). In this study we investigate the 'Continuity of reference variable'. This variable refers to whether a verb maintains the same subject as the previous verb or changes it. Overt subject pronouns are used more frequently in 'switch-reference' contexts than in 'some-reference contexts'.

We analyzed over 27,000 instances of verb use among first-generation newcomers and second-generation Latinos in New York City (NYC). Results showed that second-generation Latinos are less sensitive to the Continuity variable than newcomers. But this change is conditioned in part by functional considerations, in this case by the communicative utility of pronouns in different contexts. Bilinguals born or raised in NYC are less sensitive to Continuity of reference in first- and second-person singular verbs, but in third-person singular verbs they are like monolingual newcomers. Thus the change occurs in the part of the grammar where using an overt pronoun is less crucial. Establishing clear referents is easier for first- and second-person singular pronouns than for third-person due to the possibility of competing referents for the latter, but not the former. These findings support a functional explanation of linguistic change in contact situations: areas of the grammar that are more useful for communication tend to resist change under contact, while less crucial areas are more permeable to change.
Introduction

The precise form of functional accounts of variation and change in language is still a work in progress. In a now classic paper, Labov (1987) showed that while some findings in the variationist literature were susceptible to functional explanation, others were not. Functional explanations are broadly understood as those that appeal to factors outside of the structure of language per se, such as effective communication, memory limitations, ease of effort, and vocal tract configuration. The value of this type of explanation has long been recognized by scholars whose main interest lies in functionalism (Lindblom 1986, Lindblom & Maddison 1988, Cowan 1995, Nettle 1995, 1999) as well as those who, in their own research, prefer explanations focused on formal and genetic factors (Chomsky 1975: 56, Newman 1998: 126). Of special relevance to the present work is the fact that functional reasoning can lead to discoveries of important new forms of synchronic variation and their gradual translation into functionally mediated forms of diachronic change (Otheguy & Lapidus 2003). In this paper, we take a functionalist approach to one of the most widely researched features of Spanish grammar and usage, namely the variable use of subject personal pronouns, and one of the most consistent findings regarding this feature, namely the tendency for overt pronouns to occur with greater frequency in switch-reference environments than in same-reference environments. We study this variable feature in the frequent Spanish of second-generation bilingual speakers in New York City (NYC), using, as point of reference, the Spanish of newcomers recently arrived in the City.1 We show that the pattern of pronoun selection for same- and switch-reference contexts is changing among these second-generation speakers, but doing so in different ways in the different persons of the verb, in a fashion herebefore unknown, but predictable by the assumption that the change is mediated by functional considerations. More generally, and in a manner similar to that shown by Otheguy & Lapidus (2003) for the grammar of loanwords, we show here that usage patterns that are more highly motivated by communicative effectiveness resist simplification and erosion in situations of language contact more than those that have less communicative value.

1 We take our data from the Otheguy-Zentella corpus, which consists of 142 sociolinguistic interviews conducted in Spanish in NYC. The corpus was developed by Ricardo Otheguy and Ana Celia Zentella at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York with support from University and Professional Staff Congress grants, as well as from a grant from the National Science Foundation (0004133). A more detailed description of the corpus is available in Otheguy & Zentella 2007 and in Otheguy, Zentella & Liver 2007.

A preliminary illustration from another U.S. Spanish setting

A transparent preliminary to this principle is available from the analysis of another feature in a different Spanish bilingual setting, namely the study of the Spanish copulas 'ser' and 'estar' in the speech of bilinguals in Los Angeles, Silva-Corvalán (1986, 1994) found that in Los Angeles 'estar' is used in a variety of contexts where 'ser' is usually preferred in monolingual varieties.2 An example of such innovative usage is presented in (1). In this context 'ser' would typically be used in Latin America, as in (2):

(1) Los Angeles: Si el hombre está soltero, puede hacer lo que quiera.
   'If the man is single, he can do what he wants.'

(2) Latin America: Si el hombre es soltero, puede hacer lo que quiera.
   'If the man is single, he can do what he wants.'

These examples, where the use of either 'ser' or 'estar' makes little or no difference, are correctly called by Silva-Corvalán cases of 'apparent synonymy' (1994: 112). The author also finds expansion of 'estar' in cases where the innovative 'estar' alters the meaning of the utterance, but not the meaning of the predicate adjective, as in (3) and (4):

(3) Los Angeles: El mole poblano está bueno ahí.
   'The mole poblano is good there.' (good in the present)

(4) Latin America: El mole poblano es bueno ahí.
   'The mole poblano is good there.' (always good)

Silva-Corvalán considered example (3) to be an innovative use of 'estar' when it was used in contexts that did not include the possibility of change. In other words, if the intended meaning was 'The mole poblano is always or usually good there', then the use of 'estar' in such contexts was considered innovative. Although there is a greater semantic difference between (3) and (4) than between (1) and (2), the main idea of the quality of the mole is expressed with either copula. Now compare the above examples with examples where the distinction between 'ser' and 'estar' is crucial for communication, as in (5) and (6), also taken from Silva-Corvalán (1994: 111):

(5) Esta radio está buena.
   'This radio is working well.'

2 The expansion of estar is also found in varieties of Mexican Spanish, as demonstrated by Gutiérrez's study of Spanish in Morelia, Michoacán (1989, 1992). However, Silva-Corvalán (1994: 114f) finds that the innovative use of estar is more pervasive in the speech of Mexican-American bilinguals than in the speech of Mexican monolinguals.
(6) Esta radio es buena.  
'This radio is good.'

The author points out that whereas (5) means that the radio is working well, (6) means that the radio being discussed is of good quality. In these cases, there is no apparent synonymy, as each of the copulas contributes to a different communication. In cases like (6), Silva-Corvalán (1986: 601, 1994: 112-113) found fewer innovative usages of 'estar' than in cases like (4) or (2). Her apt generalization is that: "This context, as expected, is not favorable to diffusion", adding that the "diffusion of estar is least favored when the opposition ser/estar is associated with clear semantic differences" (1994: 112, 113).

We think that Silva-Corvalán is correct in expecting that the erosion of the distinction between 'ser' and 'estar' will be lessened in cases where copula choice is associated with clear semantic differences. This is precisely what we mean when we say that this innovation in the Spanish of bilinguals in Los Angeles is mediated by considerations related to communicative need: in environments where meaning and communication are not compromised by the innovation, the innovation tends to advance; but where meaning and communication are endangered, it tends to be inhibited.

Spanish subject pronouns and Continuity of reference

In Spanish, subject pronouns can appear as overt, as in (7), or null (indicated by the symbol Ø in Spanish and by parentheses in the English translation), as in (8):

(7) Ella está en la biblioteca.  
'She is in the library.'

(8) Ø está en la biblioteca.  
'(She) is in the library.'

The alternation between overt and null pronouns has been found to be probabilistically conditioned by several grammatical variables, including the person of the verb, the person of the pronoun, the tense of the verb, the type of clause where the verb appears, etc. A conditioning variable that has a particularly strong effect, and that has been found to work the same way in all varieties of Spanish where subject pronouns have been studied, is whether the subject of the verb is the same as, or different from, the subject of the previous verb (Morales 1982, Silva-Corvalán 1982, Bentivoglio 1983, 1987, Enriquez 1984, Hochberg 1986, Cameren 1992, 1995, Bayley & Pease-Alvarez 1996, 1997, Flores-Ferrán 2002, 2004, Shin 2006). This conditioning variable, often called 'switch reference' but that we prefer to call 'Continuity of reference,' is usually defined in terms of whether the referent of two consecutive grammatical subjects is the same or different. When they are the same, the frequency of null pronouns with the second verb is significantly higher than when they are different. Conversely, when two consecutive verbs are different in reference, the frequency of overt pronouns with the second verb is much higher than when the two verbs are the same.

To illustrate these tendencies, consider first a context in which two consecutive grammatical subjects have the same referent, as in (9), taken from the speech of a Mexican participant in our corpus:

(9) Int: ¿Y tu papá terminó su licenciatura? Part: Nada más. Ø se dedicó a otras cosas, de hecho Ø trabajó muy poco tiempo en su carrera. y ya después Ø se dedicó a otras actividades. (30BM)

Int: And your father finished his BA? Part: Nothing more. (He) devoted himself to other things, in fact (he) worked very little time in his field, and later (he) devoted himself to other activities.

Here the verbs se dedicó, 'devoted himself', trabajó, 'worked', and se dedicó, 'devoted himself', are all in same-reference contexts, since their subjects are all tu papá, 'your father', carried over from the subject of terminó, 'finished', in the interviewer's question. As expected, the subject pronouns of these verbs in same-reference contexts are all null. Now consider a context where two consecutive grammatical subjects have a different referent, as in (10), taken from a Colombian participant:

(10) Ella tenía su novio allá y él pensaba venir pero no le dieron la visa. (03BC)

'She had her boyfriend there and he planned on coming but they didn’t give him the visa.'

Here the subject of pensaba, 'planned on', is different from that of the previous verb, tenía, 'had', and the use of the overt él, 'he', by this speaker reflects the tendency in this type of environment to temper the general disfavoring of null pronouns and to introduce overt pronouns. The favoring of nulls is not eliminated; even in switch-reference environments, the rich verbal inflection of Spanish appears to be responsible for the statistical prevalence of nulls. The point is that the disfavoring of nulls is much less in switch-reference environments. In the Otteguy-Zentella corpus as a whole, the occurrence rates of overt subject pronouns in same-reference environments is 26%; in switch-reference environments it is 40% (p < .0001).

3 The number at the end of the example identifies the participant in our project. The abbreviation Int indicates the turn of the interviewer, Part indicates that of the participant.
To avoid misunderstanding, it is worth stressing that these are tendencies, not categorical restrictions; that is, it is not the case that only nulls occur in same-reference contexts or only overt pronouns in switch-reference contexts. Consider (11) and (12), where nulls appear in switch-reference environments:

(11) Están casadas, siguen estudiando, cada una de ellas tiene un bebé. Y un niño comiendo. Ellas también pienso se sienten bien, así que actualmente yes bien poco 0 puedo pedir... (021C)

“They are married, they keep on studying, each of them has a baby. And a child eating. They also (I think) feel well, so currently well (I) can ask them very rarely…”

(12) Pero que no los entiendo porque, cuando hay dos cubanos hablando, hablan y yo me quedo... porque, o sea, ya uno dice una cosa y luego 0 le contesta. (005U)

‘But (I) don’t understand them because, when there are two Cubans talking, (they) talk and (I) am like ... because, I mean, one already says one thing and later (the other one) answers him.’

In example (11), the verb puedo pedir, ‘I can ask’, represents a switch in reference from the previous verb, se sienten, ‘they feel’; and in (12) the subject of contesta is ‘the other one’. In these cases of switch-reference, the pronoun is nevertheless null. We also find counter-tendency examples of overt pronouns in same-reference contexts, as in (13) and (14):

(13) ... y ella me decía: no, Olga, no... Y ella era cubana. Ella me decía: no, increíble. (038C)

‘... and she said to me: no, Olga, no... and she was Cuban. She said to me: no, incredible.’

(14) ... es poco el cambio que yo pude encontrar, pero yo hubiera llegado a un medio bajo más bajo, al que yo estoy. (172C)

‘... it’s small the change that I could find, but I would have ended up in a lower type of environment, lower than the one I am in.’

In (13) the verb me decía, ‘told me’, maintains the same referent as the previous verb, era, ‘was’, and yet has an overt ella, ‘she’. In (14), the verbs hubiera llegado, ‘would have ended up’, and estoy, ‘am’, are in same-reference contexts with overt yo, ‘I’.

The tendency for overt pronouns to be more frequent in switch- than in same-reference environments is clearly detectable in our corpus no less than in all previous studies. And, no less than in other corpora, we find, as we have just shown, examples of the counter-tendency. But even though the distribution is not categorical, recent studies have shown that adult speakers of Spanish tend to judge the use of overt pronouns in same-reference contexts as redundant and the use of null pronouns in switch-reference contexts as infelicitous (Shin 2006).

Subject pronouns in studies of Spanish in the U.S.

Occurrence rates

Studies of subject pronouns in Spanish in the U.S. have sparked much debate, especially with regard to the question of whether Spanish pronominal usage is under the influence of English, and especially as this influence is said to be reflect ed in increased occurrence rates of overt pronouns. Many researchers argue against English contact influence on the basis of their finding that the frequency of use of overt subject pronouns does not increase with increased exposure to English, as one would expect if English were an operative force (Silva-Corvalán 1994, Basley & Pease-Alvarez 1997, Flores & Toro 2000, Flores-Ferrán 2004, Travis 2007).

Silva-Corvalán found that the occurrence rate of overt pronouns for Mexican-American speakers born in the U.S. was actually lower than the rate of those who immigrated to the U.S. after age 11 (1994: 153). Flores-Ferrán (2004: 58) found that Puerto Ricans in NYC produced the same rate of overt subject pronouns as the Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico studied by Cameron (1992). Other researchers, however, report that contact with English does indeed influence subject pronoun use in Spanish in the U.S. (Klein-Andreu 1985, Lipski 1996, Montrul 2004, Toribio 2000, Lapidus & Otheguy 2005). The position taken in the present chapter is consistent with that of the latter group of scholars, and with recent findings by Otheguy & Zenetella (2007) and Otheguy, Zenetella & Livert (2007) who, on the basis of the same corpus that we use here, have documented increases in occurrence rates of overt pronouns in Spanish that are positively correlated with the amount of time spent in the U.S. and with exposure to and familiarity with English, and negatively correlated with age of arrival and knowledge and use of Spanish.

Discourse pragmatic constraints

Research of Spanish in the U.S. has also documented the relaxation of some of the discourse-pragmatic constraints that condition the use of subject pronouns

4 The differences between the findings of different scholars studying Spanish in the U.S. some indicating increased rates of pronoun use and others decreased rates, are very likely due to differences in sample size and perhaps also to differences in coding methods (for discussion of this problem, see Otheguy, Zenetella & Livert 2007: 78ff).
(Silva-Corvalán 1994, Montrul 2004, Toribio 2004, Lapidus & Otsguy 2005). These studies attempt to show that certain contextual factors that probabilistically constrain the use of nulls or overt subjects in Spanish in Latin America and Spain exert less of a force on pronoun selection in the U.S. However, in the specific case of Continuity (whether the verb is same- or switch-reference), findings have been inconsistent. While some scholars find that in Spanish in the U.S., Continuity remains a strong predictor of the use of null or overt pronouns, others find that the relevance of this variable to pronoun selection has diminished. In her study of Spanish in Los Angeles, Silva-Corvalán found desensitization to Continuity for the alternation between lexical subject NPs and null subjects (1994: 161-162). However, she did not find any weakening of this variable for the alternation between overt and null subject pronouns. Bayley & Pease-Alvarez found that participants who were born in the U.S. did not differ from those born in Mexico with respect to pronoun rates in same- and switch-reference contexts, but these findings may be related to the fact that the data came from the speech of children (1996: 96). In a recent study, Shin (2006) found that sensitivity to Continuity of reference develops quite late among monolingual Spanish-speaking children (after age nine). Since Bayley & Pease-Alvarez (1996) did not examine whether age differences (eight versus 12, for example) influenced pronoun use in same- and switch-reference contexts (Robert Bayley, personal communication, September 17, 2007), it is possible that the discourse-pragmatic systems constraining pronoun use might not have been fully developed in some of the younger children in the study.

In another study of the alternation between overt subjects (both nominal and pronominal) and null subjects among bilinguals, Montrul (2004) divided her participants into two groups based on their scores on a Spanish proficiency test. Treating the alternation as if it were categorical, she coded overt subjects in same-reference contexts and null subjects in switch-reference contexts with the term "illicit." Montrul found that bilinguals with the lower score on a Spanish proficiency test produced significantly higher rates of illicit overt and null subjects than the other two groups (2004: 133). The conflation of lexical and pronominal subjects in Montrul’s study makes it difficult to compare her results for overt subjects to studies in which only pronouns are analyzed. Still, the high rate (15.5%) of illicit null subjects in switch-reference contexts in the speech of the lower-proficiency bilinguals is relevant since it indicates desensitization to Continuity, at least in the switch-reference context (2004: 133).

Flores-Ferrán found that bilinguals of Puerto Rican descent in NYC produced overt subject pronouns in switch-reference contexts at a rate similar to that of monolingual Puerto Ricans (2004: 63). For same-reference contexts, however, Flores-Ferrán (2004: 63) found that bilinguals produced a slightly higher rate of overt pronouns (38%) than did monolinguals (31%). Toribio (2004) studied the use of overt pronouns in the speech of two Mexican-American bilinguals. Six people judged whether each overt pronoun was pragmatically felicitous. Since the judges found an abundance of infelicitous overt pronouns, she suggests that these two bilingual speakers are less sensitive to Continuity of reference (2004: 172).

The position taken in this paper is consistent with that of scholars who find that, in Spanish in the U.S., especially in the Spanish of bilinguals, Continuity is not as strong a predictor of the pronominal alternation as it is in the Spanish of Latin America and Spain, or in the Spanish of monolingual or recently arrived speakers in the U.S. We build on the findings of these scholars and study Continuity of reference using a very large data set of Spanish in the U.S., paying particular attention to functional factors. With this in mind, contexts where a change in pronominal usage has a minimal impact on communication are analyzed here separately from contexts where the change can reduce communicative effectiveness.

Continuity of reference in the different persons of the verb

We make the functionally mediated assumption that the role of reference tracking, which is at the heart of the favoring of overt pronouns by switch-reference contexts, is much more important in third-person than in first- or second-person pronouns. While first- or second-person referents are almost always present in the extralinguistic context, third-person referents are often not. Furthermore, there can often be competing referents for third-person pronouns, but not usually for first- or second-person ones. An example makes the point clear. In (15) below, the switch-reference in the second verb, ‘voy,’ is as clear with an overt pronoun in (15a) as with a null in (15b)

(15a) Tú estás dándole demasiado dinero, yo voy a volver a mirar la cuenta.
You are giving him/her too much money, I am going to look at the check again.

(15b) Tú estás dándole demasiado dinero, voy a volver a mirar la cuenta.
You are giving him/her too much money, I am going to look at the check again.

But the same is not true of (10), repeated here as (16a), in which the overt ‘él’ is very helpful in reference tracking; its removal, as in (16b), would make it more difficult to understand the sentence correctly.

(16a) ¿Qué te gusta más? Tú estás dándole demasiado dinero, él no sabe que estoy aquí.
What do you like more? You are giving him/her too much money, he doesn’t know that I’m here.

(16b) Tú estás dándole demasiado dinero, no se da cuenta de que estoy aquí.
You are giving him/her too much money, he doesn’t realize that I’m here.
Shifting sensitivity to Continuity of reference

The study

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to answer two main research questions: (a) Do we find a partial shift away from Continuity of reference as a conditioning variable in the use of null and overt subject personal pronouns in Spanish in NYC? In other words, do we find that the passage of time in NYC and the resulting bilingualism of Spanish speakers are associated with a reduction in the relevance of Continuity as a predictor of pronoun selection? (b) If so, is such desensitization to, or shift away from, Continuity of reference mediated by functionality? That is, do we find that in order to understand the shift we must take into account considerations related to the use of language in communication?

PARTICIPANTS

Data consist of a subsample of the Otheguy-Zentella corpus. Participants for this corpus were selected from a larger pool of interviews to conform to a stratification based on place of birth (Latin America vs. NYC), country of origin (Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Puerto Rico), educational attainment, levels of English and Spanish proficiency, and, for the Latin American born, age of arrival and years spent in NYC. The result is a sample that is balanced on all these criteria and thus has a reasonable claim to being representative of Spanish-speaking New York. The interviews, which were conducted in NYC by the principal investigators or their graduate students, lasted for approximately one hour. With few exceptions, the person conducting the interview was of the same national origin as the informant. There were no requirements of participation other than conforming to the stratification criteria and the ability to participate in an interview conducted in Spanish.

For the present study, we extracted from the corpus a subset of participants, consisting of one group of informants who were first-generation newcomers to the U.S. at the time of the interview (newcomers) and of a second group of informants who were second-generation, born or raised in NYC (NYBRs). We used the following exact definitions to create the two groups:

Newcomers: Participants who arrived in New York at age 17 or older and have lived in the City for no more than five years (i.e., Age of arrival > 16 and Years in NYC < 6).

NYBRs: Participants who were born in NYC or were brought to the City at or before the age of three (i.e., Age of arrival < 3.1 or actually born in NYC).

(16a) Ella tenía su novio allá y él pensaba venir pero no le dieron la visa. (OBC)
She had her boyfriend there and he was planning on coming, but they didn’t give him the visa.

(16b) Ella tenía su novio allá y él pensaba venir pero no le dieron la visa.
She had her boyfriend there and he was planning on coming, but they didn’t give him the visa.

In (16b), much more so than in (15b), the possibility exists that the switch in reference will not be caught by the hearer, and the subject of pensaba, ‘planning on’, will be misinterpreted as referring to ella, ‘she’. Instead of the intended She had her boyfriend there and he was planning on coming, but they didn’t give him the visa—which is clear with the overt in (16a)—, the interpretation with the null in (16b) could very well be mistaken as She had her boyfriend there and she was planning on coming but they didn’t give her the visa. Since reference tracking is easier in the first- or second-person, linguistic mechanisms such as the use of overt pronouns in switch-reference contexts are more functionally relevant when referring to third-person entities than when referring to the first- or second-person.

The idea of isolating third-person from first- and second-person is supported by the formal representation of grammatical person in many languages. For example, there are possessive pronominal prefixes in Yuma for the first- and second, but not the third-person (Benveniste 1971: 221). Harley & Ritter (2002), in their feature-geometric analysis of pronouns, discuss 110 languages that formally distinguish between first- and second-person on the one hand, and third-person on the other. Their examples include Maltese and Lydè. In Maltese, gender animacy, humanness, size, and the count/mass distinction are manifested in the third-person only. In Lydè, a formality morpheme is manifested in first- and second-person only (2002: 488). There are languages in which third-person pronouns are obligatorily overt, but first- and second-person pronouns can be variably omitted. For example, in Hebrew, the use of null subject pronouns is restricted to first- and second-person in the past and future tenses (where, not coincidentally, the verb forms are marked for person and gender).

In light of the differences between first- and second-person on the one hand and third-person on the other, we suggest that these grammatical persons cannot be conflated when investigating changes in sensitivity to Continuity of reference. Moreover, separating these grammatical persons provides an excellent opportunity to test the functional approach to language change: if functionality mediates change, we should expect desensitization to Continuity to occur with first- and second-person verbs much more than with third-person verbs.
Using these definitions resulted in a participant pool of 67 speakers (39 newcomers and 28 NYBRs). Information about the participants included in the present study is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
Participants, by national origin and generation group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Newcomers</th>
<th>NYBRs</th>
<th>Total-by origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puerto Rico</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total-by generation</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 67 informants described in Table 1, including the 28 NYBRs, were all fluent speakers of either educated or popular varieties of Spanish. To be sure, one finds, especially among the NYBRs, the features that one would expect in bilinguals, including loanwords, lexical calques, code-switches, and, in several cases, instances of English-influenced syntax. But all informants spoke in fluent Spanish and demonstrated control of the register and dialect features through which their native mastery of the language had been acquired. Consider (17), an excerpt from an interview with a 34-year-old NYBR woman whose parents are from Ecuador:

(17) 

Int: ¿Cuántas veces ha ido al Ecuador? Part: Dos. Int: ¿Y qué tal? ¿Cómo fueron esas experiencias? Part: Bueno, la primera vez tenía, creo, 20 años, y era una cosa, olvidate, uno lo que iba es a festear, las fiestas, y todo así los jóvenes, todos los primos y... y toda la gente joven se iban y... así y.. me gusto, pero fue como tomar... como se puede decir un cultural shock porque había cosas que no... no estaba acostumbrada. Int: ¿Cómo por ejemplo qué? ¿qué? Part: Como, por ejemplo, se iba el agua... Se iba el agua, y uno aquí acostumbrado tener agua siempre, agua caliente también, porque ellos viven en la Sierra y casi no tenían agua caliente y para obtener agua caliente tenían que... no sé. Ni sé. Hacer algo con la electricidad, y era una cosa que se tenia que bañar en dos segundos y... y que’s it, porque no había la agua caliente, entonces cosas así... (326E)

Int: How many times have (you) gone to Ecuador? Part: Two. Int: And how was it? How were those experiences? Part: Well, the first time (I) was, (I) think, 20 years old, and (it) was something, forget about it, one what (one) did was to party, the parties, and everything like that the young people, all the cousins and... and all the young people would go and... and like that, and I liked it, but it was like... how does one say a culture shock because there were things that no... (I) wasn’t used to. Int: Like for example what... what? Part: Like, for example, the water would shut off... the water would shut off, and here one is used to having water all the time, hot water too, because they live in the mountains and (they) barely had hot water and to get hot water (they) had to... (I) don’t know. (I) don’t even know. To do something with the electricity, and it was a thing that one had to bathe in two seconds and... and that’s it, because there was no hot water, things like that...

One notices in this New Yorker’s Spanish speech instances of English lexical insertions (cultural shock) and code switching (that’s it). There are also some grammatical features that appear to deviate from monolingual norms, such as the lack of the preposition a in acostumbrado tener, ‘used to having’. One can perhaps add to this list the use of the definite article la, feminine ‘the’, with agua, ‘water’, instead of el agua, ‘the water’ (with masculine ‘the’), in the last sentence, though this may be part of her monolingual reference norm. Still, the language being spoken in this interview is clearly generated by a Spanish grammar whose central features do not correspond to English but are rather consistent with monolingual structural and lexical norms. The speaker uses two different past tenses, a preterite and an imperfect (e.g., gustó, fue vs. tenía, era, iba, ‘liked’, ‘was’, vs. ‘had’, ‘was’, ‘would go’, respectively); postposed adjectives (gente joven, ‘young people’, agua caliente, ‘hot water’); subject omission (tenía, era, gustó, fue, había, estaba, tenían, etc., ‘had’, ‘was’, ‘liked’, ‘was’, ‘were’, ‘was’, ‘had’, etc.); impersonal se (se tenía que batir ‘one had to bathe’), gender and number agreement between articles and nouns (la sierra, la primera vez, las fiestas, los jóvenes, los primos, etc., ‘the mountains, the first time, the parties, the young people, the cousins, respectively’); and the headless relative lo que, ‘that which’, to list just a few. Notice too that the features of this woman’s Spanish that appear to deviate from the monolingual norm are variable. For example, later in this same transcript, this speaker uses the correct preposition a with the adjective acostumbrado, ‘used to’, as in uno no está acostumbrado a eso ‘one isn’t used to that’, and estaba acostumbrada a eso, ‘was used to that’. The use of la agua, ‘the water’ with feminine ‘the’ in the last sentence, should be seen in light of her use of el agua, ‘the water’ with masculine ‘the’, as in se iba el agua, ‘the water would shut off’, a few sentences before. Furthermore, we note that although the interviewee uses some English words, most of the transcript is
squaredly drawn from a Spanish lexicon; in fact, English words represent less than 1.2% of the total words used by the interviewee. In sum, this Ecuadorian New Yorker, whose speech is representative of the NYBRs in the corpus, is clearly a fluent speaker of Spanish. It is beyond the scope of our work to address the question of whether there are NYBRs in NYC who should be considered attrited speakers of Spanish; the point is that the NYBRs selected for the corpus were fluent users of the language, a fact that allows us to use their speech to raise the questions that guide the present research.

THE DATA

The study includes only finite verbs; no infinitives or gerunds are included. As is common practice in research on subject personal pronouns in Spanish, we include inside the envelope of variation and count in our study all and only those finite verb tokens that are found in the transcripts with (a) an overt pronoun in an environment where one is also likely to find a null, or with (b) a null pronoun in an environment where one is also likely to find an overt. All other verb tokens are outside the envelope of variation and are excluded from the study. Among verbs placed outside the envelope are those in construction with a subject NP that is not a personal pronoun, such as lexical subjects, as in María canta muy bien, ‘María sings well’, or impersonal se, as in Se trabaja mucho en NYC, ‘One works a lot in NYC’. Contexts in which null pronouns occur but where there is little or no possibility of occurrence of an overt are also excluded from the study, null subjects referring to inanimate objects are excluded since it is very rare to find overt subject pronouns in these contexts. Null subjects in subject-headed relative clauses, such as el hombre que él trabajó allí, ‘the man that he worked there’, are also outside the envelope of variation, since overt pronouns do not typically appear as subjects in these contexts, as in el hombre que él trabajó, ‘the man that he worked there’. All meteorological environments like Nieva mucho en NYC, ‘(It) snows a lot in New York’, are outside the envelope as well, on the grounds that they are not personal references, and that sentences in which an overt pronoun is used in this context, like Ella nieva mucho en NYC, ‘(It) snows a lot in NYC’, are very rare in our corpus, even though they are attested in some varieties of Spanish.

To further illustrate which verbs are in and out of the envelope of variation, consider the following excerpt from an interview with a 24-year-old Ecuadorian man who had been in NYC for five years at the time of the interview. Verbs in bold are inside the envelope and included in the study; verbs in italics are excluded. As before, parentheses in the English version represent null pronouns in the original Spanish version.

18. Conozco a una amiga que está aquí estudiando... y ella sí tiene, sí ha tenido un problema, es decir que ella extraña la comida, extraña su almerro y extraña sus cosas de allá y... a mi como que yo estaba acostumbrado. (384E)

(I) know a friend that is here studying... And she has, yes (she) has had a problem, (that) is to say that she misses the food, (she) misses her lunch and (she) misses her things from home and... me, well I was used to it.

Verbs conocía, ha tenido, and extraña, ‘know’, ‘has had’, and ‘misses’ all appear with a null pronoun (extraña appears with a null pronoun twice) in environments where overt subject pronouns could very likely occur, that is, where one is likely to find yo conocía, ella ha tenido, and ella extraña, and for that reason they are included in the study. Verbs ella tiene, ella extraña, and yo extraña, ‘she has’, ‘she misses’, and ‘I was’, appear with overt pronouns in environments where they could have easily been found with a null, tiene, extraña, and estaba, and are therefore included. Notice, however, that there is little or no possible variation in subject-headed relative environments like una amiga que está aquí estudiando, ‘a friend that is here studying’, or in impersonal environments like es decir, ‘(that) is to say’. That is, it is very unlikely that one would have found una amiga que está aquí estudiando, ‘a friend that she is here studying’, or él es decir ‘he is to say’, so these verbs are excluded. For the present study, we also excluded verbs found in set phrases, such as tú sabes, ‘you know’, as in example (19) from a Puerto Rican participant.

19. un parquecito que hay allí detrás de la escuela, a que corran, tú sabes, se cansen. (0906P)

’a little park that is there behind the school, so that they run, you know, (they) get tired.’

After all verbs outside the envelope of variation and all verbs in set phrases were excluded from the 67 transcripts, we were left with 27,670 finite verbs, which were coded for whether they occurred with an overt or null subject personal pronoun.

THE CONTINUITY OF REFERENCE VARIABLE

As we have seen, Continuity of reference is one of the variables that probabilistically condition the appearance of a null or an overt pronoun. And as discussed, the Continuity variable includes two factors, switch-reference and same-reference contexts. Thus, the prediction that follows from the analysis that the NYBRs are becoming desensitized to this variable is that we will find in the speech of NYBRs either an increase of overt pronouns in same-reference contexts, or an increase of null pronouns in switch-reference contexts, or both. For
example, in the speech of two NYBRs of Colombian origin, we find in (20) an overt pronoun in a same-reference context and in (21) a null pronoun in a switch-reference context.

(20) Yo tenía un hermano mayor y, eh, Y él iba a la casa y él hablaba y así mismo me enseñaba el inglés. Más, él hablaba con el otro hermano mío. (181C)

'I had an older brother, and uh. And he went to the house and he would talk and like that (he) taught me English. Actually, he would talk with my other brother.'

(21) Part: La abuela se fue para Colombia para..., porque el hobby de ella es ir a la casa y reconstruyendo la casa otra vez. Int: Claro, esa es la... Esa es la idea de todas esas visitas, ¿no? Part: Me entiende y ellas llegan allá y dize que apenas Q hizo dize un jacuzzi a uno... a un... a un piso, ya quiere hacer otro jacuzzi en el otro piso. (311C)

Part: My grandmother went to Colombia to... because her hobby is to go to the house and reconstruct the house again. Int: Of course, that is the... that is the idea of all those old ladies, no? Part: (You) understand me and they get there and let's say that (she) just made let's say a jacuzzi on one... on one... on one floor, (she) already wants to make another jacuzzi on another floor.

In (20), we find in él hablaba, 'he used to talk', an overt pronoun making reference to the same subject as that of the previous verb, enseñaba, 'he taught'; in (21) we find in hizo dize un jacuzzi, 'she made let's say a jacuzzi', a null pronoun making reference to a subject that is different from that of the previous verb, ellas llegan allá 'they get there'.

The examples of NYBR Spanish in (20) and (21) are useful to illustrate the phenomenon under investigation, but they are not sufficient to demonstrate desentiment to Continuity of reference, for the simple reason that examples of counter-tendency usages, such as those we saw above in examples 11-14, can and do exist in monolingual Spanish. We illustrate counter-tendency usages in the newcomers in (22) and (23) below:


Int: What city was your father born in? Part: In Riobamba. Int: What did (he) do? Part: He worked in the... he was a professor in the chauffeurs' union.

(23) Int: ¿Tú eras el mimado, hasta ahora sigue siendo el mimado? ¿y tus tíos eran celosos? Part: Sí, hasta ahora, dicen que más O me prefirió a mí, que... que todo O me da a mi, a ellos no les da nada que... (312E)

Int: Were you the spoiled one, even now are you still the spoiled one? And were your siblings jealous? Part: Yes, even, (they) say that (he/she) prefers me, that... that (he/she) gives everything to me, (he/she) doesn't give them anything.

In (22) era profesor, 'was a professor', occurs in a same-reference environment, repeating the subject of él trabajaba 'he worked', and yet is found with an overt él. In (23) prefirió, 'prefers', occurs in a switch-reference environment, and yet a null is used. The previous verb, dicen, 'they say', refers to someone other than the referent of prefirió, 'prefers', and in fact the referent of prefirió is nowhere mentioned in the preceding discourse. This is why the English translation includes a null 'he' or 'she'; we do not know the gender of the subject of 'prefers'.

Examples like (22) and (23), which occur in the speech of monolingual newcomers, serve to confirm that instances of the disfavored pattern found in the speech of NYBRs, such as in (20) and (21), are not enough to answer the first research question. More generally, no difference between two groups of participants can be established with regard to a quantitative favoring by means of qualitative data, for in the mere fact of displaying in their speech both the favored and the disfavored pattern, both groups are the same. What has to be shown is that the skewing of the favoring is different in the two groups. Saying it differently, in order to detect desentiment to Continuity of reference among NYBRs, we need to show that the strength of the Continuity variable is weaker among NYBRs than among newcomers, that is, that the relative weights of the favored and disfavored patterns have changed in a statistically significant manner. To do this, we appeal to quantitative data, generated by means of bivariate analyses.5

5 All quantitative analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS.

BIVARIATE ANALYSES: OCCURRENCE RATES

We begin by analyzing differences between the relevant participant groups with regard to occurrence rates of the feature under study. We calculate the percentage of verbs that occur with overt pronouns in same-reference environments and compare it with the same percentage in switch-reference environments. And we make this comparison between environments twice, once for newcomers and once for NYBRs. The results are shown in Table 2. In statistical terms, the table presents a cross-tabulation of two variables, Continuity and Pronoun selection, and it does it twice, once for newcomers (on the left side of the table) and a second time for NYBRs (on the right).

As expected, Table 2 shows that, among newcomers, the percentage of overt pronoun use is significantly higher among verbs found in switch-reference contexts (nearly 38%) than among those found in same-reference contexts (slightly over...
TABLE 2
Crosstabs: Pronoun rate by Continuity in two generations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NYBRs</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N verbs</td>
<td>% overt</td>
<td>N verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same reference</td>
<td>8,038</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>5,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switch reference</td>
<td>8,046</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>5,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct pt difference</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23%). This is also true for NYBRs. Although overt pronoun rates are higher in general among NYBRs than among newcomers, the typical pattern is maintained for NYBRs among whom the pronoun rates are higher in general than among newcomers, higher occurrence rates of overt pronouns (nearly 42%) than same-reference contexts (almost 32%). These results are statistically significant (Newcomers: Chi square = 416.92, p < .0001; NYBRs: Chi square = 114.86, p < .0001).

Consistent with our prediction, the difference between same- and switch-reference contexts is smaller for NYBRs (9.8 percentage points) than for newcomers (14.5 percentage points). That is, the table shows that, in support of the hypothesis regarding the weakening of Continuity, the percentage spread in the occurrence rates of overt pronouns differentiating same- from switch-reference contexts has shrunk over the course of one generation. A secondary analysis shows that this narrowing of the percentage spread in the NYBR generation is statistically significant: a logistic regression, run with Pronoun selection as the dependent variable and Continuity and Generation (newcomer vs. NYBR) as independent variables, revealed a significant interaction term (p < .0001) for the relationship between Continuity and Generation. This tells us that the cross-generational difference with regard to the percentage spread between same- and switch-reference is statistically significant. Therefore, the answer to our first research question is affirmative: we find a partial shift away from Continuity of reference as a conditioning variable in the use of null and overt subject personal pronouns among second-generation speakers of Spanish in NYC.

Now we turn to our second research question: Is desensitization to Continuity among NYBRs mediated by functionality? To answer this question we compare the generational groups again, but this time we perform separate analyses on subsets of our data in order to examine possible differences between, on the one hand, first- and second-person singular pronouns (yo and tú) and, on the other hand, third-person singular pronouns (él, ella). We did not study usted or uno, nor the very few cases of vos found in the corpus.

We begin by studying first- and second-person pronouns, that is, null and overt yo and tú. As in the previous table, we cross-tabulate the variable Continuity with the variable Pronoun selection twice, once for each generational group. The results are presented in Table 3, which is the same as Table 2, except that it shows only a sub-set of the data, namely first- and second-person pronouns only.

In these results of Table 3 for first- and second-person pronouns, we see the same trend reported in Table 2 above. The association between Continuity and Pronoun selection is significant for both groups (Newcomers: Chi square = 358.21, p < .0001; NYBRs: Chi square = 97.77, p < .0001). As predicted, and as in Table 2, the difference between same- and switch-reference is smaller for NYBRs (12.7 percentage points) than for newcomers (17.7 percentage points). To test whether the difference of same- and switch-reference percentage spreads between newcomers and NYBRs is significant, we performed the same type of logistic regression as before. The interaction term for Continuity and Generation was significant (p < .0001). This indicates that the weaker impact of Continuity on Pronoun selection among NYBRs than among newcomers in first- and second-person pronouns is statistically significant. Therefore, just as when we considered all the pronouns in all three persons in Table 2, we can conclude from the analysis of first- and second-person pronouns in Table 3 that NYBRs are less sensitive to Continuity of reference in pronoun selection.

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6 The analysis is limited to singular pronouns because overt forms of the pronouns yo, tú, él, ella have similar rates of occurrence (39%, 35%, 35%, respectively), whereas overt forms of the pronouns vosotros and ella are rare (13% and 14%, respectively).
TABLE 4
Crosstabs: Pronoun rate by Continuity in two generations, only él-ella included

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Newcomers</th>
<th>NYBRs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N verbs</td>
<td>% overt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same reference</td>
<td>1,486</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switch reference</td>
<td>1,090</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pet pt difference</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next we isolate third-person singular pronouns, that is, null and overt él and ella, in order to determine whether they follow the same pattern as first- and second-person pronouns, as well as for all pronouns. Specifically, we test whether NYBRs have a narrower spread between same- and switch-reference verbs than newcomers do. Our expectation, based on our assumption that the weakening of Continuity is functionally mediated on the greater contribution of third-person pronouns to reference tracking, is that the pattern of the previous tables will not hold up here. The results are presented in Table 4.

For a data set containing only third-person pronouns, we again find the same general trend as for first- and second-person pronouns: for both generational groups, the association between Continuity and Pronoun use is significant (Newcomers: Chi square = 100.81, p < .0001; NYBRs: Chi square = 62.95, p < .0001). There is less of a spread in overt pronoun occurrence rates between same- and switch-reference contexts among NYBRs (16.9 percentage point difference) than among newcomers (18.9 percentage point difference).

Significantly, there appears to be less weakening of Continuity for the data set containing él-ella in Table 4 than for the one containing yo-tí in Table 3. The difference between pronoun use in same- and switch-reference contexts is only two percentage points weaker for NYBRs than for newcomers in the él-ella data set, whereas this difference was five percentage points in the yo-tí set. More importantly, we once again tested the statistical significance of the percentage spread differences between newcomers and NYBRs. Unlike before in Table 3, we find in Table 4 that the interaction between Continuity and Generation is not significant (p = .19). This means that the narrowing of the same- vs. switch-reference spread in the NYBR generation occurs for first- and second-person pronouns, but not for third-person pronouns. We can conclude that NYBRs are less sensitive to Continuity than are newcomers for first- and second-, but not third-person singular pronouns. Therefore, the answer to our second research question is affirmative: we find that desensitization to Continuity of reference is mediated by functionality. Second-generation speakers reduce the importance of Continuity as a probabilistic predictor of pronoun choice in environments where communicative effectiveness is less impaired (first- and second-person pronouns) and hold on to Continuity in the same fashion as the newcomer generation where it carries a higher functional load (third-person pronouns).

Discussion

The study presented here demonstrates that in the selection of null or overt pronouns by second-generation speakers of Spanish in NYC there is desensitization to Continuity of reference as a predictor of the overt/null alternation of subject pronouns. In the second generation, the tendency to favor overt pronouns more in switch-reference than same-reference contexts is weakened. This desensitization occurs where this variable is less important for communicative purposes, namely in first- and second-person verbs. In cases where reference tracking is more difficult, i.e., when referring to third-person singular entities, sensitivity to Continuity is maintained essentially at the same level as in the previous generation. We see, then, less weakening of this particular discourse constraint where it is crucial for communication and more weakening where the relaxation of the constraint is less costly. This finding is consistent with the generalization that changes that occur in situations of language contact are mediated by functionality.

One issue that we have left aside for now is the possible influence of dialect differences. Our data set in this study included participants of Caribbean descent, from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and Cuba, as well as participants from Mexico, Ecuador, and Colombia. Dialect studies of Spanish have shown that speakers from Caribbean countries differ from speakers from the Mainland of Latin America in phonological and morphosyntactic features, including more frequent use of overt subject personal pronouns (López-Morales 1992). Otheuy, Zentella & Livoort (2007) found clear dialect differences between Caribbean and mainland Latin American newcomers to NYC with respect to the influence of grammatical person on subject pronoun use. Interestingly, several of these differences were diminished in the speech of the NYBR participants, indicating some dialect leveling. Shin and Otheuy (2007) analyzed data from Caribbean participants and found similar results to the ones we report in the present study, suggesting that dialect does not influence desensitization to Continuity. Still, a more detailed comparison of Caribbean and mainland Latin American participants is warranted.
Another issue that has not been addressed here but that will require attention is the matter of multivariate analysis, since bivariate analyses such as the ones we have shown have certain limitations. In every context where a null or overt pronoun is found, there is a multitude of variables influencing pronoun selection. Consider example (24) from a NYBR Cuban participant:

(24) Yo tenía 13 años, ¿no? ... yo estaba con... O Cállete. (206U)
   *I was 13 years old, no?... I was with... Be quiet.*

Cállete, ‘be quiet’, occurs in a switch-reference context and appears with a null subject. However, cállete is an imperative form, and imperatives very rarely occur with overt subject pronouns (in the corpus there are only 19 examples of overt subject pronouns that occur with the imperative out of 489 total cases in the data set including newcomers and NYBRs). If we were to analyze this example in isolation, we would surely attribute the null subject in cállete to the imperative form, and not to Continuity of reference. If we measure the impact of Continuity on pronoun selection without taking into account other influential variables, we may be overestimating the effects of Continuity. In order to distinguish the influence of Continuity on overt vs. null pronoun use from that of other variables, we must study Continuity in the context of all those other variables, which means that we must perform logistic regression analyses.

Future research on Continuity in U.S. Spanish should also include multivariate analyses of the two factors that make up the Continuity of reference variable, i.e., switch-reference and same-reference. In this study, we focused primarily on the variable as a whole. It appears, however, that rates of pronoun use increase more in same-reference than switch-reference contexts. Notice that in Table 2 the difference between NYBRs’ rate of overt pronouns and that of newcomers is 8.6 percentage points for same-reference contexts (compare 31.9% for NYBRs and 23.3% for newcomers). For switch-reference contexts the difference between NYBRs and newcomers is smaller: it is 3.9 percentage points (compare 41.7% for NYBRs and 37.8% for newcomers). There is also evidence from first language acquisition that these discourse contexts develop differently. Shin (2006) conducted an experiment with monolingual Spanish-speaking children and found that their sensitivity to switch-reference developed earlier than their sensitivity to same-reference. Also, from a functional point of view, these two contexts are quite different. The use of a redundant overt pronoun in a same-reference context never impedes communication, whereas the use of null pronouns in switch-reference contexts may impede reference tracking. Therefore, following a functionalist line of reasoning, desensitization to same-reference contexts should be more prevalent than desensitization to switch-reference.

An analysis of sensitivity to switch- and same-reference contexts may also shed light on the influence of English on the change reported in this paper. If the majority language is important in determining the changes taking place in the minority language, we should expect different outcomes for the two discourse contexts. Since English has nearly obligatory subjects, we would expect the appearance of overt pronouns in same-reference contexts to increase. But influence from English would not be as useful to explain an increase in the occurrence of null pronouns in switch-reference contexts (cf., Sorace 2004: 144 for a similar observation). In our study, NYBRs produced more overt pronouns in switch-reference contexts (41.7%) than newcomers did (37.8%). However, given that pronoun rates are higher among NYBRs regardless of context, we cannot rule out the possibility that NYBRs are less sensitive to switch-reference contexts than newcomers are. This would be best investigated by multivariate analyses and would help decipher the role of English in the change taking place in New York Spanish observed in this study.

There is another question that is not addressed here but that should be kept in mind when analyzing, in a bilingual population, desensitization to a particular variable, such as Continuity of reference. We alternate between speaking of ‘desensitization to’ and ‘shifting away from’ Continuity of reference to stress our assumption that the Spanish usage of these bilinguals is as orderly and rule-governed as that of their Latin American and Peninsular counterparts, and that these speakers’ diminished attention to Continuity of reference is probably being matched by increased attention to some other variable. That is, we assume that as bilinguals reduce the relevance of Continuity to their choice of overt and null pronouns, some other consideration comes in to guide their choice. Discovering the factor that must be, so to speak, picking up the slack created by desensitization to Continuity is an important question that is, however, beyond the scope of the present report.

Summary and conclusion

In the Spanish of second-generation bilinguals in NYC, the panhispanic tendency to use overt pronouns in switch-reference contexts and nulls in same-reference contexts is still detectable, but appears to be losing some of its strength. That is, the bilinguals are less sensitive to the distinction between same- and switch-reference contexts than speakers of Spanish who are newly arrived in NYC. But this diminished sensitivity to Continuity of reference operates through the mediation of functional factors. In the contexts where overt pronouns are most needed for reference tracking, namely third-person contexts, there has been no generational change: the NYBRs use Spanish the same way as the newcomers. In the contexts where overt pronouns are less needed, namely first- and second-person singulars,
the change is much more readily apparent. Our study shows that functionality mediates the changes that occur in situations of language contact. Changes that are evident in the minority language do not affect all areas of language equally. Language change in a contact setting is a process of adaptation. The parts of the minority language that are more disposable may erode, but the most necessary parts of the language resist change.

References


Shifting sensitivity to Continuity of reference


CODE-SWITCHING AND DISCOURSE STYLE IN A CHICANO COMMUNITY

MARYELLEN GARCÍA
University of Texas at San Antonio

This study explores the nature of ‘codes’ in a Spanish-English bilingual Chicano community in Texas in which education in English and the use of Spanish as a home language have produced bilinguals. In this chapter, sociolinguistic notions of marked vs. unmarked codes in the code-switching literature are challenged, as are notions of style and the observer’s paradox in what is considered the prototypical sociolinguistic interview. Using representative discourse samples from interviews with two Chicano speakers, it is possible to distinguish among code-switching types, revealing qualitative and quantitative differences among them. At the beginning of the interviews, the speakers are careful to use Spanish as the matrix language, as requested, with some code-switching for lexicon, phrases, and discourse markers. However, by the latter part of the interview, speakers use a mix of Spanish and English in larger discourse chunks, which appears to be representative of a much more informal code-switching style. The community norm seems to emerge as the familiarity between speaker and hearer increases and the interviewee settles into the content rather than the form of the interaction, as predicted by Labov (1972). The explanation for the shift in style suggested here is based on work in another Mexican-heritage community, in which the sincerity of the interlocutor was reported by a community insider to be the most valued aspect of the interaction. Although the interviewers in the present study were known to be collecting information on behalf of a university, these two bilingual speakers appeared to view them as neighbors or ethnic insiders, with the result that the social distance was minimal and the interviewee could speak sincerely. The interactional frame of the interview was secondary to its conduct as a simple conversation, allowing for the speakers’ informal code-switching style.

Introduction
As long as code-switching has been a topic for serious linguistic study, switching languages inter- and intra-sententially has been associated with a speaker’s cre-
Lengua y Sociedad en el Mundo Hispánico
Language and Society in the Hispanic World

Edited by
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Vol. 21

Español en Estados Unidos
y otros contextos de contacto
Sociolingüística, ideología y pedagogía

Spanish in the United States
and other contact environments
Sociolinguistics, ideology and pedagogy

Manel Lacorte/Jennifer Leeman (eds.)

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