A reconsideration of the notion of loan translation
in the analysis of U. S. Spanish

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0. Introduction

The notion of loan translation, under a variety of such largely synonymous names as calque, loanshift, and semantic loan, is a staple in any discussion of Spanish-English contact in the United States and, more generally, in any treatment of the linguistic consequences of bilingualism. This paper attempts to show that, under any of its many names, the notion of loan translation tends to obscure rather than illuminate the nature of English influence over U. S. Spanish and, more generally, to misrepresent the process of language contact in any setting.

It is proposed here that loan translations are either: (a) phrases revealing contact-induced systemic linguistic changes already encompassed under other constructs, or (b) phrases that do not reveal any systemic linguistic changes at all. Further, it will be argued that (c) because of this flawed construct, the amount of linguistic interpenetration taking place in contact communities is highly overstated. In the specific case of U. S. Hispanics, it will be argued that (d) the notion of loan translation contributes to mistaking as Anglicization of their language what is simply the Americanization of their culture.

In recent theoretical work, Thomason-Kaufman (1988: 35 ff) have advanced new proposals regarding correlations between sociolinguistic processes and types of linguistic interference. But within the newly proposed interference types (borrowing, for communities maintaining their language; substratum, for those shifting from it), it is still useful to distinguish, as in Weinreich (1953), between transferring and modeling. In transferring, the alterations result in additions to the inventory of the impacted variety; in modeling, alterations occur in its existing inventory. Within modeling, those alterations that affect only a single word are generally known as semantic extensions; those that encompass entire phrases, which are the focus of attention here, are usually called loan
translations or calques. The illustrations of both types of modeling in (1) and (2) are taken from the speech of a six-year-old Spanish-English bilingual girl living in New York.

(1) [After seeing another child yell across the street to say hello to her brother, she asks:]
Mami, ¿cómo ese niño sabe a Eric? [RAO 2/90]
‘Mami, how does that child know Eric?’

(2) [She is mounting what she knows is a difficult case for taking a prized pen from her father’s desk]
Papi, tú me prestas esa pluma y yo te la doy para atrás; please, please, préstamela y yo te la doy para atrás. [RAO 7/89]
‘Daddy, you lend me that pen and I’ll give it back to you, please, please, lend it to me and I’ll give it back to you.’

The saber of (1) appears where speakers of general Spanish would almost certainly use conocer. It is said to be a semantic extension because, on the model of English know, the meaning of saber has been extended to areas that in unimpacted varieties are covered by conocer. The dar para atrás of (2) appears where speakers of general Spanish would almost certainly use devolver ‘to return’, and is said to be a loan translation or calque modeled on English give back.

There is every indication that in works on language contact the term loan translation is not simply a façon de parler about contact settings, but that it is intended as a reference to systemic changes occurring in the structure of the impacted languages. Almost without exception, linguistic studies of bilingual settings include discussions of loan translation. All the major survey or theoretical works on language contact of the past fifty years make use of the construct. It is included, for example, in Weinreich (1953), Appel-Muysken (1987), Holm (1988), and Thompson-Kaufman (1988). In studies that correlate micro social-interaction factors with types of contact phenomena, one of the types is almost always loan translation (Oksaar 1979: 106). The same is true of areal studies. In a recent analysis of the languages of Meso-America, the authors separate out those Sprechbund features “that are perhaps better considered part of an ethnography of communication than of a formal grammar” (Campbell—Kaufman—Smith-Stark 1986: 558). Significantly, loan translations and calques are not in this Sprechbund section, but rather in the Sprachbund section dealing with “formal grammar” and with “diffused structural traits” (1986: 558). The notion of loan translation is also standard fare in discussions of the influence of English on Spanish (Cradock 1976, Dillard 1975, Espinosa 1975, Milán 1982, Montes Giraldo 1973, 1985). As shown below, these authors leave no doubt that they conceive of loan translation as an alteration in the structure of U. S. Spanish.

Similarly, with reference to the particular construction that will become the focus of attention below, namely verbs in contact Spanish followed by para atrás, calquing is taken seriously as a manifestation of contact-induced systemic changes. The thorough and carefully nuanced treatment by Lipsky (1985: 91 ff) presents this construction as “an apparent calque on back,” and places it in the context of “syntactic Anglicisms.” After correctly pointing out the many ways in which the contact usage of para atrás exploits inherent Spanish possibilities, Lipsky nevertheless concludes that “[b]ilingual interpenetration is a necessary component of any proposed explanation” (1985: 99).

Contrary to these prevailing views, then, this paper will take an alternative approach to items described under the label loan translation/ calque. It is an approach that rests on three generalizations that are standard in the study of language, but whose consequences for an understanding of contact-induced phenomena have not been sufficiently appreciated. This paper will stress the familiar assumptions (a) that different speech communities operate with conceptual inventories that reveal only some areas of overlap, (b) that under the pressure of contact many of the non-congruent areas in these inventories tend to converge, and (c) that this conceptual convergence is distinct from, and can occur independently of, linguistic convergence.

Based on these assumptions, and using data from the Spanish of the United States, this paper will argue that items described as loan translations are simply either: (a) semantic extensions (or in some cases grammatical alterations) that happen to be reported in phrasal contexts; or (b) phrases that adhere to a non-contact linguistic system (in this case general Spanish) but that reveal the impacted community’s adaptation to cultural and conceptual patterns prevalent in the dominant group, in this case the broader North American society. It is in these latter cases that the notion of loan translation overstates the amount of linguistic contact, presenting as adaptations occurring in linguistic structure what are simply cultural or conceptual adaptations expressed through language.
1. Loan translations as mislabeled semantic extensions

The root of the problem lies in the criterion that is used to define loan translation, especially to distinguish it from semantic extension. Because it continues to serve as model for all subsequent definitions, the relevant source to examine the distinction remains Weinreich (1953), who defined semantic extensions as contact-induced changes in the meanings of individual words. This definition seems workable in principle, since the locus of contact is squarely within the linguistic system, in this case within lexical semantics. But Weinreich then defined loan translations as “unusual combinations of words” (1953 [1974]: 51), giving rise to the uncertainty as to whether the combination was unusual for cultural or linguistic reasons.

Among Weinreich’s examples of semantic extension was the use in U.S. Spanish of ministro to mean a minister of a Protestant church; among those of loan translation, Canadian French escalier de feu to refer to a fire escape. Weinreich proposed that what he called the semantemes of English minister allowed it to be used for officers of both government and church, while those of Spanish ministro only allowed its use for officers of a government. (For an officer of a Protestant church, general Spanish would have had pastor.) In the Spanish of the United States, and under pressure from English, the distinction between ministro and pastor collapsed, so that one could find phrases such as ministro pentecostal ‘pentecostal minister’. The trouble with this account of semantic extensions is that exactly the same analysis can be provided for loan translations. In non-contact French a semanteme presumably distinguished feu from incendie, so that feu referred to burning in general while incendie was specialized for accidental fires. Under the influence of English fire, which has both the general and the specialized senses, the meaning of feu would have been extended, thus making it possible to say, not escalier d’incendie but escalier de feu.

It would seem, then, that even assuming the facts to be as Weinreich saw them, escalier de feu would be readily explainable simply in terms of semantic extensions, without having to appeal to a separate notion of loan translation. Granted, the combination escalier de feu may have been at some point “an unusual combination”; but also unusual was at some point the combination ministro pentecostal, and unusual in fact will necessarily be any combination of words that arises by the process of semantic extension. (If there were no unusual combinations, no semantic extensions would be detected in the first place.) On Weinreich’s definition, there seems to be no way to sustain a construct loan translation that would be different from, and additional to, semantic extension.

Other definitions have been preferred both before and after Weinreich, some using the term loan translation itself, others using the synonymous semantic loan, loanshift, and calque. Most center on the idea that loan translations involve structural or functional changes. Haugen (1950 [1972]: 85) characterizes these items as resulting from “functional shifts of native morphemes”; Craddock (1981: 202 ff) sees them as “constructions” of the source language that have come into the recipient variety; and Dillard (1975: 194, 202) describes them as items reflecting a “structural breakdown.” Sometimes the process is described as involving “word-for-word translations” (Craddock 1981: 208, Holm 1988: 86) or “literal translations” from the source language (Dillard 1975: 194, Milán 1982: 197).

But if these definitions are applied to some of the typical examples of loan translation discussed in the literature, difficulties arise immediately. The structure of escalier de feu, for example, would appear to be [Noun-Preposition-Noun], which is a familiar French collocation, as is the specific structure [Noun-de-Noun]. The construction is, moreover, different from that of the model (fire escape or fire stairs) which is not a [Noun-Preposition-Noun] construction, but rather a [Noun-Noun] construction. One is hard pressed to imagine in what sense it can be said that escalier de feu is a loan translation because it reproduces the structural or constructional features of fire escape, when escalier de feu is constructed in a manner different from fire escape and in accordance with structural principles that are indigenous to French. Insofar as one can come to any conclusions from this example, whatever it is that resembles the model phrase in a loan translation — over and beyond the semantic extensions it may contain — it is certainly not its structure.

There should be no misunderstanding regarding what is, and what is not, being called into question here. It seems clear that contact settings can and do give rise to crosslinguistic influences in grammar that go well beyond the long-recognized borrowing of inflectional and derivational affixes (already pointed out by Whitney 1881). Such influences are well documented in the work of prior generations of scholars (Casagrande 1954, Hoijer 1948) as well as in that of current ones (Daita 1984, Dvorak 1983, Gal 1989, Hill-Hill 1980, Lindenfeld 1971, Thomason-Kaufman 1988). The point is not to deny the soundness of postulating contact-
induced systemic changes. The point, rather, is that such deviations cannot be postulated for the kinds of items generally called loan translations and calques.

Similar difficulties attend definitions of loan translations as “word-for-word” substitutions or “literal translations” of the model. First, if the Québécois had translated fire escape word for word they obviously wouldn’t have come up with escalier de feu. They wouldn’t have come up with the word escalier at all, since there is no mention of ladders or stairs in the model phrase fire escape. Only if the model was fire stairs, which is not at all clear, could one even consider the notion of word-for-word substitution for escalier de feu.

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

In sum, neither the notion of structural deviance nor that of literal or word-for-word translation appears as a likely criterion for establishing a construct loan translation that would be in any way distinguishable from the independently necessary one of semantic extension (or from the also independently necessary one of grammatical contact).

A final possibility remains for establishing loan translation as a separate contact type. In Weinreich’s presentation of examples, feu is reported within a larger phrase while ministro is presented by itself. A case might be made that the semantic extensions that appear within loan translations will, in every other context, adhere to traditional usage, that what defines a loan translation is being the unique environment where a semantic extension is found. In the case at hand, the argument would be that escalier de feu is the only context in which feu is used with the extended meaning.

But once the meaning of a word is extended, the same pressures that made for the extension in some initial context are likely to make for its operation in other contexts as well. In point of fact, not only does it appear to be the case that the “accidental” sense of feu predates incendie, but dictionaries of Canadian French (Narcisse-Eutope 1974, Turenne 1962) list the phrases station de feu ‘fire station’, assurance contre le feu ‘fire insurance’, and aller au feu ‘to go to the fire’, all of which appear to contain the extended meaning of feu. The same is true of saber mentioned above. The child who produced saber a Eric ‘to know Eric’ in (1) once heard someone make a reference to a soap-opera character with whom she was familiar and reacted in surprise by saying ¿sabes esa novela? ‘do you know that soap opera?’ Again here saber has encroached onto the area of conocer, a usage also readily observable among many adult Latinos in the United States.

It would seem, then, that contact varieties undergo semantic extensions, of which the saber of (1) may very well be a good example (and of which ministro and feu would also be good examples if the facts were as presented by Weinreich). And they also undergo foreign-inspired grammatical changes. But there is no evidence that they produce an additional type of contact item called loan translation.

2. Loan translations as cultural, not linguistic, contact

The incorrect postulation of loan translation does more harm than simply provide an inaccurate taxonomy of language contact phenomena. As impacted varieties develop features of foreign provenience, they also retain, unchanged, a sizable portion of their traditional make up. It is in this sense that from a strictly linguistic point of view there are no contact varieties, only contact features (Hudson 1980: 48 ff). Distinguishing between features that show evidence of contact and those that do not is thus essential for the study of linguistic hybridization. But misled by the notion of loan translation, scholars consistently misidentify as cases of systemic contact many phrases that reveal no systemic traits that would differentiate them from phrases used in non-contact varieties of the same language.

The impression that these linguistically unremarkable usages are instances of language contact comes from the fact that either: (a) reference is being made to an object or cultural item that is little known to speakers of non-contact varieties; or (b) reference is being made to an item which, though familiar, is being conceptualized in a manner different from the one usually found in non-contact varieties. In both cases these spurious
loan translations give evidence, not of language contact, but of the familiar phenomenon of synchronic creativity. Each case will be taken up in turn.

(a) The phrase El día de dar gracias, used by U.S. Hispanics to refer to the holiday that is celebrated in the United States on the fourth Thursday of November, illustrates a new usage of the first kind. The phrase would have no referent and serve no purpose in Spain or Latin America. Yet despite its unmistakable Anglo-American cultural flavor, nothing in it is linguistically Anglicized, as it adheres to a familiar Spanish grammatical pattern and uses lexical items in their familiar senses. And it cannot even be said that the phrase constitutes a literal translation of an English model. While its cultural model is Thanksgiving Day, its linguistic model cannot be the English phrase Thanksgiving Day, where word order and the choice of verb form are different. Rather, its linguistic models are such Spanish phrases as El día de Navidad ‘Christmas Day’, El día de Reyes ‘Three Kings Day’, etc.

To be sure, in using the phrase El día de dar gracias, and in taking the day off from work and gathering with relatives to eat turkey, U.S. Latinos are certainly giving strong evidence of cultural adaptation. But they are not engaged in linguistic modeling, since the lexical and grammatical systems through which the cultural adaptation is being expressed have themselves remained unchanged.

(b) A new usage of the second kind is illustrated by the name often given in U.S. Spanish to telephone answering machines, namely máquina de contestar, a formulation based on the verb contestar ‘to answer’ and on máquina ‘machine’. In contrast, the general Spanish designation for this appliance is contestador, or contestador automático, a formulation based on a noun derived from the same verb contestar ‘to answer’, combined with the word automático ‘automatic’. In this case the United States and Latin America have few or no differences when it comes to the referent (an answering machine); they differ, rather, in the culturally dictated conceptualization of this referent, and in the resulting linguistic formulation used to name it (an automated answerer in traditional usage versus a machine that answers in the contact usage).

Since we only know about the difference in conceptualization between English answering machine and traditional Spanish contestador automático through the different linguistic formulations, it is of considerable relevance that these formulations form part of much broader patterns. For speakers of standard Spanish, other appliances besides the answering machine are conceptualized in terms of the pre-appliance function having become automatic (e.g., cajero automático ‘teller machine’ from cajero ‘teller’; lavadero automático ‘laundromat’ from lavadero ‘sink, washer’). Similarly, for speakers of English the formulation in answering machine, though occasionally abandoned for other patterns, is also broad and not limited to a single item. Thus the cajero automático coined by Spanish speakers from cajero is paralleled by the English speakers’ teller machine coined from teller.

The position that identical referents can be conceptualized differently accords well with the long-standing view that the linguistic value of an expression is not the same as the object it names (Frege 1892). Two expressions can refer to the same thing and yet have very different meanings, even within the same language. To put a Latin American twist on the familiar example by Alston (1970), the expression Gabriel Garcia Márquez does not mean the same as the author of A Hundred Years of Solitude, and yet they both name the same referent. The same is true when expressions are compared, not within, but across languages. Even though contestador automático and answering machine do refer to the same thing, they, like Alston’s Walter Scott and the author of Waverly, do not mean the same, and do not express the same conceptualization.

Assimilating populations, then, are not only exposed through the donor language to new conceptualizations connected to new referents, but also to new conceptualizations connected to familiar referents. A day set aside to be thankful to God (new conceptualization) is connected to the feast on the fourth Thursday of November (new referent); a machine that answers (new conceptualization) is connected to the telephone appliance (familiar referent). In both cases, the tendency among impacted populations is to adopt the influencing group’s conceptualizations. But as in the cases discussed above, in máquina de contestar the words of the new usage, the senses in which they are utilized, and the construction in which they appear, [Noun-Preposition-Noun], are all familiar in non-contact varieties of Spanish. And just as the model for El día de dar gracias was not the linguistic item Thanksgiving Day, but rather the notion of a day to be thankful to God, the model for máquina de contestar is not the linguistic item answering machine but the notion of a machine that answers. The usage máquina de contestar is thus another case of conceptual Americanization without linguistic Anglicization.

The standard assumption is made here that the concepts expressed by means of combinations of semantic and structural units are not language but the product of language. Once one draws sharply the distinction between linguistic resources and their use — a distinction which has long
commanded consensus among linguists — the only conceptual elements that can properly be said to be part of language are those that are encoded in lexical or structural form. All other conceptualizations are derived from, but do not constitute part of, language. The point being made here is that in loan translations all encoded structural and conceptual elements have remained unchanged, and that the contact alterations all reside in derived, non-linguistic conceptualizations.\textsuperscript{20}

New usages produced to express new conceptualizations of foreign origin are in fact parallel to new usages produced to express novel conceptualizations of indigenous origin. The usage Teología de la liberación 'Liberation theology' arose in Latin America to give expression to a new religious concept developed by Spanish speakers, which is exactly the description of how El día de dar grássicas arose in the United States. Both must have been at some point “unusual combinations of words”. But the combinations were unusual from a cultural, not a linguistic standpoint. The reason no one had produced Teología de la liberación was that the concept it expresses did not exist for speakers of Spanish before. And this is exactly the reason no one had produced El día de dar grássicas, which also did not exist for speakers of Spanish before. In both cases, the new usages were allowed by the Spanish system all along.

Thus El día de dar grássicas and máquina de contestar, no less than Teología de la liberación, are instances of synchronic creativity without diachronic change. From a linguistic point of view, it does not matter that the concept that prompted a new Latin American Spanish usage arose within the ancestral home of the language, whereas the concept that prompted a new U.S. Spanish usage was adopted from foreigners. What matters to determine whether there is language contact is not the cultural origin of new conceptualizations, but the lexical, semantic, and structural resources with which they are expressed.

In works on areal phenomena, the position that loan translations involve conceptual but not linguistic convergence receives an interesting sort of confirmation by omission. In the process of marshalling an impressive array of evidence for their contention that Meso-America is a linguistic area, Campbell—Kaufman—Smith-Stark (1986) carefully document all cases of contact through use of the actual phonological forms of the lexical and grammatical items under study. The only exception is the list of the loan translations shared by many of the languages of the area. For these, only an English gloss is given (1986: 553). Thus we learn that in many Meso-American languages wrists and thumbs are referred to by items glossed as “head of hand” and “mother of hand” respectively. But the actual phrases, the words of the Meso-American languages themselves, are not offered.

This is a most reasonable and sensible omission, and therein lies a lesson. Contrary to what is suggested by placing the discussion of “head of hand” and “mother of hand” in the linguistic rather than the cultural section of the study, these items do not owe their status as loan translations to their linguistic characteristics. What makes them instances of modeling is what they say, not the words, affixes, or constructions with which they say it. It is the mere fact of calling the thumb a “head of hand” that turns that particular item into a loan translation, no matter how this notion is rendered in any particular language. What these Meso-American communities shared at the time of contact was not a set of linguistic traits, but a set of concepts.\textsuperscript{21} And it was these concepts that diffused through the area in order to produce the current array of phrases. No information other than the common conceptualization reflected in the English gloss is relevant to the analysis of these items as loan translations, and thus, correctly, no other information is offered. Perhaps no clearer demonstration of the irrelevance of linguistic form need be given than its complete absence.\textsuperscript{22}

The generalizations in this section can be summarized in the following points. (i) The significant motivating novelty for modeling phenomena lies in the changing conceptual inventory to which impacted populations are exposed. It is a minor matter whether there is also a parallel inventory of new objects or institutions. (ii) The prompt for these new usages is not a newly adopted referent, since new usages arise for familiar referents too (and since one cannot always tell the difference between new and old referents anyway). (iii) The prompt for the new usages is not a new linguistic expression, since we have seen that it is not the form of new expressions that is being copied. The simplest generalization, therefore, is that loan translations are motivated by the adoption of what impacted speakers perceive as new conceptualizations of the donor group.\textsuperscript{23} (iv) One cannot simply assume, as do many proponents of loan translation, that the mere expression of a foreign conceptualization is a case of language contact.\textsuperscript{24} In the absence of systemic evidence to the contrary, such usages are better regarded as instances of synchronic creativity.
3. The analysis of modeling in U.S. Spanish

The criticism of the construct loan translation is not intended to minimize the impact of English on the Spanish of the United States. The point, rather, is that finding the specific areas in which such impact has taken place is made impossible by reliance on the construct. The kind of linguistically expressed conceptual modeling embodied in *El día de dar gracias* and *máquina de contestar* is rampant among U.S. Hispanics. But if one is to distinguish linguistic creativity pressed in the service of cultural imitation from true linguistic imitation, a case-by-case approach must be used. Under analysis, utterances that would first pass unnoticed may turn out to be clear manifestations of linguistic mimesis, while highly stigmatized loan translations will turn out to be innovative exploitations of an untouched traditional system.

For instance, most analysis of Spanish agree that, in general Spanish, *calificar* can be transitive in both verbal and adjectival usages, as in numbers (3) and (4):

(3)  
*Calificó a Carlos de incapaz de desempeñar ese cargo.*  
‘He judged Carlos incapable of occupying that position.’

(4)  
*Carlos no es un hombre calificado para ese cargo.*  
‘Carlos is not a man who qualifies for that position.’

But most analyses point out (e.g., Torrents dels Prats 1976) that speakers of general Spanish do not use *calificar* intransitively, as in (5), which is, however, quite common in the Spanish of the U.S.:

(5)  
*Carlos no califica para ese cargo.*  
‘Carlos does not qualify for that position.’

For any theory that includes the distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs as part of the language system, number (5), which is seldom remarked upon, would appear to be a clear case of language contact within the area of modeling, like the *saber* in the first example given above.35

In contrast to (5), it can plausibly be argued that there is no case of language contact in (6), or in (2), even though *llamar para atrás*, modeled on English *call back*, is regarded by many as a clear instance of loan translation.

(6)  
*Le dije a Carlos que me llamará para atrás.*  
‘I told Carlos to call me back.’

It must be noted, first, that *llamar para atrás*, like so many other spurious loan translations, is not structurally parallel with the presumed model. Depending on the analysis, the Spanish phrase consists of a preposition followed by an adverb or, if no such combination is to be allowed, of a complex adverbial. The simplex adverb *back* in English is clearly not structurally parallel under either analysis. And as in all the previous examples, the structure of *llamar para atrás* is quite familiar in the non-contact dialects. Verbs followed by adverbial prepositional phrases are commonplace in general Spanish, as is the specific sequence of a transitive verb followed by *para atrás*.

(7)  
*No me quiero meter por esa calle, porque más adelante te encuentras que están en obras, y tienes que volver para atrás.*  
‘I don’t want to go down that street, because further up you find that there are men working and you have to turn around.’

In addition to differing syntactically from the presumed English model, *llamar para atrás* and other phrases with *para atrás* differ also in the semantic content of their components. Analysts of different theoretical persuasions agree that *para* should be analyzed in opposition to the preposition *por*, and that its meaning involves the notion of spatial or temporal movement toward a goal. For example, in the European Structuralist analysis by López (1970: 138), the meaning of *para* is “future union,” and is represented by a diagram in which, from a point labeled ‘V’, an arrow moves toward a target: V → T. And in the analysis by Lunn (1988: 169), performed under the theory of Cognitive Grammar, the meaning of *para* is similarly said to involve a trajectory moving toward a landmark. To be sure, these notions are not entirely equivalent in the different schools. (The target for the Structuralist López, for example, is not theoretically equivalent to Lunn’s landmark, which forms part of the figure-ground approach to meaning within Cognitive Grammar). Still, there is a striking similarity between the analyses and considerable agreement on the examples chosen to illustrate them. Lunn exemplifies her landmark with *Venezuela* in (8) while López exemplifies her target or point of future union with *tu casa* in (9).

(8)  
*Mi primo se fue para Venezuela.*  
‘My cousin left for Venezuela.’
Voy para tu casa.
'I'm going to your house.'

All these analysts take cognizance of the well-known fact that, in many languages, items that once in their etymological origins may have described only physical movement or location have long since come to be used to describe movement and location of a more abstract nature, such as a temporal one (Ullmann 1951). Examples of this in English are words like within and behind, in phrases such as He'll get it done within the hour and They put that problem behind them long ago. For Spanish, analysts routinely offer examples of para in which the target or goal has to do with time rather than with space. Example (10) is from Lunn:

Nos habíamos citado para las tres.
'We had made an appointment for three o'clock.'

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

It turns out, then, that quite independently of any English influence, para can have atrás as a goal or point of future union, as in (7); that this landmark can be a point in space, as in (8) and (9), and that it can also be a point in time, as in (10). Thus neither para nor atrás has undergone any semantic extension. Each expresses in llamar para atrás what it expresses everywhere else: in the case of para, the notion of movement toward a goal; in the case of atrás, the notion of a point situated behind the speaker in either time or space.

The innovation in llamar para atrás is thus neither in lexis nor in grammar, and resides outside of language, in the new conceptualization of repetition in terms of a physical "return" metaphor. What distinguishes U.S. Spanish speakers from speakers in non-contract areas in this case is that the U.S. ones have chosen to express the repetition of an action (the calling again in response to a first call) through the metaphor of spatial revisiting, of returning physically to the original point of the call. Thus llamar para atrás is no different from máquina de contestar, whose only novelty resided outside of language, in the decision made by speakers of Spanish, in the manner of speakers of English, to conceptualize the appliance as a machine that answers.

To place the new conceptualization of llamar para atrás in its proper context, it is instructive to look at varieties of general Spanish spoken outside of, and very distant from, the United States, where similar metaphorical extensions from space to time are at work, and where a similar connection has been established between "return" and "repetition." In the River Plate dialects of Spanish, as well as in many other areas of South America, temporal returns and repetitions are commonly expressed using the phrase de vuelta, which relies on a preposition plus the word vuelta, commonly defined as "turn, turning" (de Gómez 1973) or "movement around a point" (Real Academia Española 1984). This movement can range from the very concrete ir de vuelta, 'to go back', to the more abstract, entregar el trabajo de vuelta, 'hand the job/paper in again', or, more to our point, llamar de vuelta, 'to call back'. (Serrana Caviglia, Mirta Groppi, and Marisa Malcuori, Departamento de Lingüística, Universidad de la República, Montevideo, personal communication, 1988).

In the analysis in terms of prototypes that is favored by the more recent proponents of the old idea of space-time metaphors (Lakoff—Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987), both llamar de vuelta and llamar para atrás would be explained by seeing repetition of an action in time as a metaphorical extension of repeated physical passage through a point in space. In this account, the prototypical meaning of traditional de vuelta would be a physical turning around and looking backwards, while the prototypical meaning of para atrás would be a physical movement toward a landmark in space. Both would be extended to time, so that either by facing a point left behind in time, as in River Plate de vuelta, or by reaching it after covering a trajectory, as in United States para atrás, the current act of calling would be related to a prior act of calling. What makes River Plate Spanish llamar de vuelta a repetition is exactly what makes U.S. Spanish llamar para atrás a repetition, namely that the second call is being conceived in terms of a first call that is located, metaphorically, in a prior space-time spot.

To be sure, as Lipski (1985) and other analysts have insisted, the English model call back very likely did play some role in the creation of llamar para atrás. But it was not a linguistic or structural role. Rather, it was a role similar to that played by answering machine in the creation of máquina de contestar. Speakers of Spanish in the U.S. could very well have gotten the idea from speakers of English that the concept of "behindness" in space could be applied metaphorically to the temporal notion of repetition. But they then deployed the resources of their language in a manner that, to repeat, is syntactically and semantically different from that of English, and that, furthermore, appears to involve no alteration of any systemic area of Spanish lexis or grammar.
4. Summary

The problem of contact-induced modeling has been framed in terms of the need to distinguish, (a) those utterances by speakers of impacted varieties that express simple reconceptualizations, that is, that reflect a cultural or conceptual break with the ancestral society, from (b) those that embody a true linguistic break with the ancestral dialects. It has been proposed that this distinction between linguistic and cultural modeling — between contact and creativity — can only be drawn on a case-by-case basis.

The case-by-case approach is particularly important because by defining loan translations as unusual combinations of words, Weinreich created a theoretical impasse in which it became impossible to distinguish between unusual things to say and unusual linguistic means with which to say them. By proliferating the examples of loan translation, this approach tends inevitably toward overstatement, by a considerable margin, the actual amount of language contact.

It has been shown that some so-called loan translations do not display any constructional features that can be ascribed to the influencing language, and that their only diverging items are the semantic extensions of component words. It has been shown, further, that other so-called loan translations are entirely traditional from a linguistic point of view, containing no modeled elements whatever, not even semantic extensions.

In dealing with modeling phenomena, a sharp distinction has been drawn between cultural or conceptual modeling, on the one hand, and linguistic modeling on the other. Under examination, loan translations seem to be cases of the former, while true linguistic modeling only takes the form of semantic extensions. Though it is quite likely that semantic extensions (as well as loanwords and other contact phenomena) are found in greater proportions in phrases expressing conceptual or cultural modeling, our point has been that many such phrases remain free of such interference and are unhybridized from a linguistic point of view.

In previous works on U.S. Spanish, when dealing with semantic extensions of the type illustrated by saber and calificar we have essayed the term calqueword, precisely to stress that the phenomenon is found at a specific level of linguistic analysis (Otheguy—Garcia 1988; Otheguy—Garcia—Fernández 1989). For items like máquina de contestar and llamar para atrás, it would be useful to always speak of cultural or conceptual modeling. This will remind us that these items represent, not diachronic developments in the lexicon or grammar of the Spanish language, but synchronic adaptations to the largely non-Hispanic cultural and conceptual environment of U.S. Latinos. In this view, contact settings illustrate not only the diachronic instability of linguistic systems, but also their synchronic stability and expressive adaptability to ever changing cultural and conceptual needs.

Notes

1. Comments on earlier versions of this paper from Edward Bendix, Joseph Davis, William Diver, Susan Gal, Alan Huffman, Robert Kirchner, Raymond Mougeon, Wallis Reid and William Stewart were extremely useful and are gratefully acknowledged. All errors, of course, remain mine.

2. Hope (1971: 639 n) suggests that the proliferating terminology surrounding this phenomenon is mostly a feature of North American scholarship. But these terms do not seem to have sharply differentiated definitions anywhere. For a summary of their use by scholars writing in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish, see Lázaro Carreter (1974: 77).

3. Changes that take place in contact settings due to internal developments within the impacted variety and without direct intervention of the donor language are beyond the scope of this presentation. For discussion of this topic with regard to U.S. Spanish, see Klein-Andreu (1985) and Silva-Corvalán (1990).

4. There is nearly complete agreement in the use of “loan translation” as synonymous with “calque” (e.g. Jensen 1912: 116, Lehiste 1988: 20, Hudson 1980: 59). But scholars disagree in many other aspects of terminology. Following the use originally found in Whitney (1981: 18) and Jensen (1912: 116), loan translation/calque is used only for lexical phenomena in, for example, Casagranda (1954) and Campbell—Kaufmann—Smith—Stark (1986). But following Haugen (1950 [1972: 85]), the term is used also for morphosyntactic contact in, for example, Dillard (1975), Hudson (1980), and Montes Giraldo (1985). Furthermore, only some authors adhere to a distinction between “semantic extension” or “loanshift” for modeling in single words and “loan translation/calque” for modeling in phrases (Henzl 1981, Lehiste 1988, Weinreich 1953). Appel—Muysken (1987: 165) regard both “loan translation” and “calque” as interchangeable with “loanshift”; and so do Craddock (1976: 46, 1981: 208) and Dauia (1984: 70). And Haugen (1950 [1972: 85]), who coined the term loanshift, considered it synonymous not only with “loan
translating” but with “semantic loan” as well. For ease of presentation, henceforth we will dispense with the doublet “loan translation/calque” and will use “loan translation” alone, but will continue the practice of applying it only to phrasal phenomena, reserving “semantic extension” for modeling in single items.

5. For analyses of dar para atrás as a loan translation, see for example Varela (1974). For thorough documentation on the use of this form in many varieties of English-influenced Spanish, see Lípcki (1985).


8. The distinction between linguistic or cultural or conceptual convergence is drawn with clarity in, for example, the work on contact between different Northwestern California languages by Bright—Bright (1965: 251).

9. While the discussion here is primarily focused on U. S. Spanish, the critique of loan translation is applicable to any environment where the construct is used to describe systemic change. This includes not only contact settings, where the roles of donor and recipient language are fairly clearly defined, but also the more complex situations of creole and post-creole communities. For the use of this construct in such settings, see for example Holm (1988: 86 ff).

10. Weinreich (1953) was a continuation of such prior analyses as Bloomfield (1933: 455 ff), Haugen (1938 [1972: 19 ff], 1950 [1972: 85 ff]) and Ullmann (1951 [1957: 162 ff]), and the precursor of subsequent ones such as Craddock (1981: 202), Henzi (1981: 310), Lehiste (1988: 20), and Milán (1982: 197). Exceptions to this treatment of the distinction between semantic extension and loan translation can be found in Hope (1971: 637) and Ferguson—Heath (1981: 527), whose classificatory scheme recognizes instances of modeling only in individual lexical items, lacking, in effect, any reference to loan translations.

11. Weinreich may have been hasty in attributing escaler de feu to English influence. Raymond Mougeon (personal communication) points out that Le dictionnaire Robert gives the use of feu to refer to an accidental fire as preceding the rise of the word incendie. Similarly, the Spanish Academy’s Diccionario de la lengua española lists several ecclesiastical senses of ministro that are common in Latin America now, suggesting that this example too may not have been, even in Weinreich’s time, an instance of English influence. But in order to focus on Weinreich’s analysis, it will be necessary to accept for the moment his contention (1953 [1974: 47 — 51]) that these usages were peculiar to the contact dialects and were not found in general French or Spanish.

12. Synchronic creativity is called productivity by Lyons (1977: 77) in order to stress its more mechanical aspects, as also found in Chomsky (1965: 15 and 1986) or in Weinreich (1969 [1980: 260]). It is called versatility by García (1975: 41) in order to stress its more conceptual or instrumental features, as also found in Bolinger (1965: 568 ff) or in Diver (1980: 5). And it is called openness by Hockett (1973: 108) to stress the role of analogy. By whatever name, creativity is widely recognized as a systemically non-invasive factor.

13. The fact of cultural without linguistic hybridization is even more patent in those speakers who refer to Thanksgiving Day as Día de acción de gracias, distancing themselves even more from the North American model.

14. Given that answering machines are found in traditional Spanish-speaking areas, the referent here is not as new or as uniquely Anglo-American as Thanksgiving Day; and given the availability of a traditional formulation (contestador automático), U. S. Spanish usage competes in this case with traditional usage in a way that it did not in the case of Thanksgiving Day. Of course, for speakers of U. S. Spanish whose experience of answering machines is limited to the United States the referent will be new, and the contact usage will not compete with the general Spanish one.

15. Relevant here is the observation in Haugen (1938) that apparently identical referents (such as cellars and rivers in Wisconsin versus cellars and rivers in Norway) may feel different to contact speakers simply by virtue of their different location. This means that in many instances it is impossible to tell whether referents in the new society (answering machines in the United States) are in fact the same as those in the ancestral one (answering machines in Latin America).

16. Speakers of English often name new appliances by means of derived lexicalizations, as in computer. The Spanish pattern is also at times abandoned in favor of derivation, as in nevera ‘refrigerator’. The point is that the patterns under discussion are widespread in each language yet different form each other, not that they hold exclusive sway in the naming of new appliances.

17. Significantly, the names for an older generation of appliances were often approached by speakers of Spanish in a manner similar to that used for the answering machine by contact speakers. So, for example, in many traditional varieties of Spanish the conventional formulation for the lawnmover is máquina de cortar hierba and for the typewriter máquina de escribir.

18. The points made here about contact settings can be applied as well to creole or post-creole environments. For example, the phrases that translate into English as “greedy” in several African-influenced varieties (big eye in Bahamian Creole, go ze in Haitian Creole, olho grande in Brazilian Portuguese) do not necessarily constitute contact features induced in these languages by
Twi or Ibo, as seems to be suggested by Holm (1988: 86 ff). These Bahamian, Haitian, and Portuguese phrases may be instances of contact if they constitute new lexical units, or if the new usage cannot be made to fit into the existing meaning of the component items. But they may be simply new usages of existing units that adhere to each of the languages’ lexical and grammatical principles; all that may be remarkable in these items is their reflecting a conceptualization of a referent (greed) in the manner of speakers of Twi and Ibo (by calling it the big eye). Only detailed analysis can decide, and in its absence there is no reason to assume hybridization.

19. Under some interpretations, the maximalist view of language adopted by cognitive grammarians such as Langacker (1988: 150) may constitute a significant challenge to this assumption.

20. Even assuming that the encoded meanings of words include denotation and potentiality for appearing only in certain collocations (Lyons 1977: 237 ff; 613 ff), loan translations such as the ones examined here would show no structural or semantic convergence with English. The denotations and collocations of the individual words are all familiar in traditional Spanish. Only their combined applicability to the expression of a new conceptualization is new.

21. To the extent that these concepts were expressed by compounds, and to the extent that these compounds have to be regarded as new dictionary units, then these Meso-American items could be said to involve contact-induced changes in the lexicons of these languages. But this question is beyond the scope of the present discussion.

22. One might argue that what diffused was more than a set of conceptualizations; it was a set of conceptualizations of a set of referents. Alternatively, one might argue that what diffused was a selection of words with similar meanings to use for the same referent. In either case it would still be non-linguistic diffusion. Selection of items for the purpose of making a reference is not part of language, and diffusion of such patterns of selection is not linguistic diffusion. The combinations of words formed to name a referent respond to how the referent is conceptualized, which is a fact of culture, not of language. Only under a very broad notion of Pragmatics could such selections start to be examined as possible members of some peripheral area of the use of the language system. Their inclusion under structural change would be highly inaccurate in any event.

23. This position is thus in sharp contrast to that assumed by Nash (1980) in discussing Spanish-influenced English in Puerto Rico, in which reconceptualization is seen as something that happens in the language, that is, as itself a form of language contact.

24. In cases like máquina de contestar, a possible area where linguistic contact may be detected involves lexical loss. If as a result of using this strictly Spanish phrase these speakers lose, or fail to acquire, the use of contestador, for example, then it may be argued that linguistic contact is at work. But it would be contact of a different kind, falling under the category of simplification (Klein-Andreu 1985, Silva-Corvalán 1990), and not of loan translation or modeling.

25. The issue whether this kind of modeling should be regarded as a semantic, or as a grammatical or syntactic, extension is beyond the scope of this paper. Scholars who in such cases prefer to see a syntactic change may also regard cases like calificar as instances of transferring (of a syntactic feature) rather than of modeling. This issue too is beyond the scope of the present work.

26. The term “calque phrase” which we ourselves have used in the past to refer to these items itself partakes of some of the flaws being pointed out now, and does not represent a clear enough separation from the approaches being criticized here.

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