DOCID: 3927953

Approved for release by NSA on 11-29-2011, Transparency Case# 63852

Anglicisms in Puerto Rico*

BY BRADIER RIVERA

Unclassified

Discusses the influence of American English on the Spanish language in Puerto Rico as detected in total linguistic borrowing, semantic borrowing, and syntactical borrowing and provides examples of each category.

With advances in the means of communication, distances have narrowed, and this world appears to be getting increasingly smaller. Consequently, it is natural that a constant language interchange has been occurring, and languages of highly developed nations are obviously influencing others. The influence of American English upon other languages, because of the political and commercial predominance of the United States, should not surprise anyone. Many countries of Europe and Latin America have been flooded with American expressions. Names of manufactured commodities, movies, newspapers, magazines, books, foods and a variety of cultural expressions have been the subject of linguistic borrowing by these nations.

As examples one can mention Cuban radio broadcasts that have used words such as "average," "Palmolive," and "Colgate" with a Spanish pronunciation; in Mexico words such as *perro caliente* ("hot dog") and *loncheria* ("snack bar") are commonly heard; in Central America the word *toronja* ("grapefruit") is used for grapefruit with a thick skin, and the word *greifru* for a grapefruit with a thin skin.

It is quite understandable that because of the political relations between Puerto Rico and the United States the impact of English on Puerto Ricans has been greater than on the people of any other Spanish-speaking country. A linguistic "laissez-faire" has existed there for a long time. Although schools and newspapers have actively encouraged correct use of Spanish in an effort to achieve a better instrument of communication, only the most undesirable borrowings have disappeared, and what is more important, new ones have appeared. The influence of American English in Puerto Rico can be detected in three different types of anglicisms: *total linguistic borrowing, semantic borrowing,* and *syntactical borrowing.*

*For this paper Mr. Rivera won Second Prize in the 1971 Crypto-Linguistic Association Essay Contest.

TOTAL BORROWING

Total borrowing occurs when an English word is used in Spanish with more or less the same pronunciation. This type of borrowing is less harmful than other types and is usually non-permanent in those cases where the borrowing can be replaced by proper Spanish expressions. In some cases the borrowed expression has to be adopted when there is no Spanish equivalent or when the speaker does not know the valid Spanish expressions. This happens mainly in names of new industrial products originating in the United States or England. Some examples of this include the following:

Sports	*Industries*	*Foods*
baseball	starter	hamburger
basketball	wiper	lunch
volleyball	mop	punch
home run	payroll	fruit cake
knockout	cold cream	ice cream
record	flashlight	pie
standard	folder	sandwich
catcher	freezer	popcorn
field day	hamper	baking powder

Others are: scholar, boy scout, girl scout, acting, all right, all around, assembly hall, attorney, baby face, background, parking, bartender, beauty parlor, big shot, blind date, etc.

In some cases the total borrowing is preferred to the valid Spanish expressions:

English	*Total Borrowing*	*Correct Spanish*
flash light	flash light	linterna eléctrica
girl scout	girl scout	niña escucha
beauty parlor	beauty parlor	salón de belleza
blowout	blowout	reventón
deodorant	deodorante	desodorante
drink	drink	trago
research	research	investigación
rubber band	rubber band	liguilla
clip	clip	presilla
sampling	sampling	muestreo
spark plug	spark plug	bujía
special delivery	special delivery	entrega inmediata
stencil	stencil	estarcido
swimming pool	swimming pool	piscina
weekend	weekend	fin de semana
team	team	equipo, conjunto

English	*Total Borrowing*	*Correct Spanish*
two-way	two-way	bidireccional
zipper	zipper	cremallera

Some English words are not readily accepted. For example, the words "irrigation" and "suggestion," common in Mexico, are not usually heard in Puerto Rico. *Riego* and *sugerencia* are used instead.

Total *adapted* borrowings (English words pronounced according to native phonetic rules) related to professions, industrial products and fashions are also commonly used, however. Examples:

English	*Total Adapted Borrowing*	*Correct Spanish*
clutch	cloche	embrague
dribbling	driblear	driblar
to drop out	dropear	darse de baja
speedometer	espidometro	taquímetro, velocímetro
to indoctrinate	indoctrinar	adoctrinar, inculcar
to lunch	lonchar	almorzar
nurse	norsa	enfermera
glamorous	glamoroso	encantador, fascinador
pioneer	pionero	explorador, colonizador
switch	suiche	interruptor
to park	parquear	estacionar
to leak	liquear	goterear
magazine	magazin	revista
pamphlet	panfleto	folleto
muffler	mofle	silenciador
to train	treinar	entrenar
trick	trique	truco, artificio

It is an accepted idea among scholars that anglicisms of the "total borrowing" type cause no harm to the mother tongue.

SEMANTIC BORROWING

In semantic borrowing the *meaning* of a Spanish word is altered or changed because of its similarity to an English word. The effect of this type of anglicism is more harmful to the native language than total linguistic borrowing, since it is hard to detect. It looks like a

DOCID: 3927953

Spanish word. For example, the Spanish word *romance* is given the English meaning of "romance" which actually means *idilio* in Spanish. In other words, the semantic boundary of the Spanish word *romance* has been altered or changed. This Spanish word *romance* means variously "language" (adjective), "Spanish language," "octosyllabic verse," "narrative poem" and "to speak plainly" (*hablar en romance*). It never means, however, "love affair" or "romance" when it is properly used. Other examples include:

English Meaning	*Semantic Borrowing*	*Spanish Intended Meaning*
application	aplicación	solicitud
appropriation	apropiación	asignación
block	bloque	manzana
copy	copia	ejemplar
to finance	financiar	costear
gang	ganga	pandilla
interference	interferencia	intervención
to report (for duty)	reportarse	presentarse, comparecer
to report (an event)	reportar	informar
rubber band	gomita	liguilla
audience	audiencia	auditorio
authority	autoridad	corporación pública
explode	explotar	estallar

The point of view of some scholars is that natural linguistic renovation cannot be stopped, but they condemn a "laissez-faire" attitude on the part of the speaker, since it is harmful to the native language; however, they consider purism to excess to be harmful as well.

SYNTACTICAL BORROWING

The hardest type of borrowing to detect, and one that is very harmful to the Spanish language, is syntactical borrowing. This may be recognized by the use of Spanish words in an English sentence structure. It is also hard to avoid, considering the great number of American newspapers and magazines read in Puerto Rico. All Puerto Rican newspapers derive most of their information from English-language sources; translations and adaptations are done in a hurry and not always by the most competent translators. As a result, obviously, syntactical anglicisms are constantly printed.

There are other reasons, of course: for example, the commercial relations of Puerto Rico are strictly with American enterprises, with the result that a great number of English syntactical expressions are

"digested" through commercial letters. Furthermore, a great number of Puerto Ricans attend American universities, and movement of people between Puerto Rico and the United States is on a large scale.

Since this type of anglicism occurs primarily in industrial, commercial and professional terminology, it is not as common among the non-educated Puerto Rican of the rural areas. The most common examples are the following:

1. *Excessive use of personal pronouns*

English	*Anglicism*	*Normal Spanish*
I run	yo corro	corro
you run	tu corres	corres
he runs	el corre	corre

In Spanish personal pronoun subjects are not included as frequently as in English or French. Contrast the following sentences, meaning "We are in San Juan":

Anglicism: *Nostros* nos encontramos en San Juan.
Preferred: Nos encontramos en San Juan.

2. *Misplacement of the adverb between the auxiliary and the main verb*

For example, for the meaning "He has cordially invited his friend":

Anglicism: El ha *cordialmente* invitado a su amigo.
Preferred: El ha invitado *cordialmente* a su amigo.

3. *Excessive use of the "ing" form (gerund)*

In English the present progressive form is very common, but in Spanish the gerund has limited uses. For example:

English	*Anglicism*	*Correct Spanish*
they are having	estan teniendo	tienen
we are including	le estamos incluyendo	le incluímos
we have been giving	hemos estado dando	hemos dado

4. *Miscellaneous*

Other incorrect literal adaptations are widely used in the press, radio, television and class rooms. Some of these are:

English	*Anglicism*	*Correct Spanish*
take action	tomar acción	tomar medidas
in line with this	en línea con esto	en armonía con esto

English	*Anglicism*	*Correct Spanish*
establishing opposition	estableciendo oposición	oponiéndose
on or before the 15th	en o antes del 15	no más tarde del 15
I believe that is a necessity	siento que es de necesidad	creo que es necesario

The situation in Puerto Rico is not unique. That island is more exposed to English influence than any other Spanish-speaking country, but when the Spanish Language Academy accepts words such as *crol* (from "crawl"), *craquear* (from "crack"), *flirtear* or *flirteo* (from "flirt"), *filme* (from "film"), *boicotear* (from "boycott"), among others, it is a clear sign that such an influence is affecting other Spanish-speaking countries as well.