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Spanish Speakers in Australia: Exploring the Motivation behind Language Contact

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Abstract: The Spanish language, like numerous other languages is exposed and comes into contact with many other languages. This paper presents an exploratory qualitative and quantitative study documenting the linguistic analysis of the use of Spanish and English of 50 Hispanic-Australians in Australia. It examines the field of Spanish and English language contact, and the Spanish-English bilingual speech practices of both native and heritage Spanish speakers in Australia, devoting attention to the phenomena of language contact and interaction, especially salient in code-switching. This study's survey and interview data proffers several outcomes in the linguistic contact in the speech practices of Hispanic-Australian speakers. More specifically, rather than compensating for linguistic deficiency, informants interact in a bilingual mode utilising a variety of bilingual speech practices. It reveals how several linguistic practices promote Spanish and English language contact, whilst at the same time presenting serious obstacles to the preservation of Spanish in an English dominant country such as Australia.

Keywords: Spanish, Linguistics, Australia

Introduction

In recent years, the field of contact linguistics has seen many publications (Schreier & Hundt, 2013). Many societies today are multilingual, such as Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America (USA), Canada and Argentina. Hence, language contact or language variation emerges when different ethnolinguistic group members interact and influence each other's language. One such example of contact linguistics in Australia is Spanish and English (Natolo, 2012, 2007). In Australia, bilingualism is prevalent due to the nation's multilingual and multiethnic migratory history since the 1960s (Jayasuria, Walker & Gothard, 2003). At times, language contact is premised on the fact that there must be language conflict. Languages in contact are often languages in opposition. Thus, language contact cannot exist nor occur without language conflict (Igboanusi & Oha, 2001, p. 125).

This paper examines the issue of language contact at three interrelated levels by the social, psychological, and linguistic facets of contact linguistics. Each facet is itself an area of investigation. The social aspect concerns language choice or language use issues. The psychological aspect centres on language, language attitudes, and ethnicity, whilst the linguistic aspect focuses on code-switching.

Language Contact

Language contact is a phenomenon whereby two or more distinct languages are spoken within a diasporic speech community. Weinreich (1974) views that when "Two or more languages are said to be in contact if they are used alternately by the same persons" (p. 1). Whenever an individual or a community uses two languages; this individual or community eventually becomes bilingual (Crystal, 1997). In analysing language contact, it is now pertinent to provide insight of the case of Spanish in Australia.

The Case of Spanish in Australia

Australia is one of the world's most culturally and linguistically diverse nations. Whilst English is the dominant official language *de facto* in Australia, many diasporic communities speak a language other than English as their native language (hereon L1) with their families and within their own ethnolinguistic community. English holds on to its power via hegemonic means: proficiency in the English language is critical for successful participation in Australian society (Australian Government Culture and Recreation Portal, 2008). Spanish is the official dominant *de facto* language of 21 Spanish-speaking countries (Cervantes Escuela Internacional, 2009). According to the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Spanish language was ranked the seventh most spoken language in Australia with 117, 498 speakers, 0.6% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

In Australia, in terms of population numbers Hispanics are a minority group. In the 2011 ABS Census, Chileans were the highest Spanish speaking group with a total population of 24,936, followed by Spaniards (13,057), Argentines (11,985), Colombians (11,318), Salvadorians (9,651), Uruguayans (9,237), Peruvians (8,440), Venezuelans (3,404); whilst Mexicans were recorded to be the lowest group with a population of 3,255 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2012a-i). Australia continues to receive immigration from Spanish-speaking countries (Valverde, Hale & Ramirez, 1994). Spanish-speaking immigrants arrived to Australia at different times and for various reasons, resulting in Australia having a diverse Spanish-speaking population (Martín, 1998; Natolo, 2011; Poyatos Matas & Martin, 2014; Poyatos Matas & CuatroNochez, 2011). Demographically, in the present many Spanish-speakers reside in diverse cities around Australia. They are no longer concentrated in certain suburbs of cities such as Melbourne or Sydney as they once were until the late 1980s.

The Concept of Standard Spanish

Regardless of the socio-political and linguistic implications, the Spanish language has emerged as a major force; used by more than 406 million Hispanics, spanning all generations, nationalities, and socio-economic classes worldwide (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2013). In regards to the issue of 'standard' Spanish, it is imperative to remember that Hispanics are not a homogenised group. Unlike English, the Spanish language has a regulatory body, the *Real Academia Española de la Lengua Castellana* [Royal Academy of the Spanish Language], which serves to standardise and officially legislate the Spanish language across the Spanish-speaking world in order to preserve as Pountain (1999, p. 34) says its "acknowledged and much prized" linguistic purity. This prestigious enterprise views using improper Spanish as a threat to the "lexical purity" and "structural rigor" of both source languages (Keats, 2004, p. 48).

Not speaking a "standard" or mutually intelligible Spanish would unquestionably be one negative factor, given that the Spanish language is one of the most visible unifying factors amongst such a diverse diaspora (Johnson, 2000). Aside from the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, many language purists are scandalised that English words are making their way into Spanish dictionaries; although some say its threat to the status of Spanish is minimal as long as the majority of its users are in the USA (Ramos, 2005). To illustrate this, Bills (2000) proffered that in the USA there was an inverse correlation between English proficiency and maintaining Spanish in the home domain. Individuals who immigrated to the USA from a Spanish-speaking country had higher levels of English proficiency, and had a predisposition to abandon their use of Spanish for quotidian needs at home.

A study conducted by Zentella (2003) examined the linguistic communicative practices of *El Bloque*, a Puerto-Rican community in East Harlem, USA. Her data yielded that young Hispanics were mixing Spanish and English in order to assist them "to hold on to some of their Spanish, in the face of ever-mounting pressures to become English monolinguals" (p. 245). Sociolinguistic

analysis of language choice in interaction rests upon Fishman's view of "who uses what language with whom and for what purposes" (Fishman, 1973 cited in Sridhar, 1996, p. 51). Sociolinguistically speaking, all languages are equally important, as a language alone cannot just be considered based on its structure and system. In order to analyse language contact-induced situations, it is pertinent to firstly provide a linguistic perspective of this.

Language Contact-Induced Practices

In language contact-induced situations, lexical, structural, or conceptual material transfers from one or more source languages to one or more receiving languages. In contexts of stable bilingualism or multilingualism, if language 'A' has a structural category that does not exist in language 'B', the category from language 'A' may be transferred to language 'B', creating a new structural category in that language. Not all contact-induced change results in the replication of a structure, and not all structured levels are transferable (Chamoreau & Léglise, 2012, pp. 2-3).

Language shift is a terminology applied when individuals abandon their L1 and shift to another language. For Lipski (1993) this is due to what he referred to as 'transitional bilingualism.' This occurs:

- a) Where there was little or no school education in Spanish;
- b) Spanish was spoken in early childhood as the home language in conjunction with English;
- c) There was a swift shift to English before adolescence; consequently Spanish was limited to use only in intimate circles;
- d) Responding to bilinguals partially or wholly in English when addressed in Spanish.

Many language shift studies in the European context have been researched in Scotland, Ireland, and Gibraltar (see Hickey, 2013; Weston, 2012, Corrigan, 2010). This has also occurred in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. Recent Australian studies (see Crezee, 2012; O'Shannessy, 2013, 2012, 2005; Meakins, 2012; Meakins & O'Shannessy, 2012) have also examined mixed languages – Light Warlpiri and Gurindji Kriol – spoken in the Warlpiri and Gurindji communities of northern Australia for the last thirty-five years. Both contact fusions derive from Warlpiri, Gurindji, and a contact English variety, Kriol (an English-lexified Kriol, spoken in Northern Australia) (Ibid). To enumerate with the ongoing discussion in the Australian context, the appearance of English language elements in the Spanish language may not be indicative of language attrition. It may be an instance of code-switching, borrowing, or code-mixing, which will be discussed next.

Code-switching

Code-switching is defined as the change of language from one sentence to another, or when starting a new topic. That is, the speaker initiates an utterance in one language, then switches to another, and continues his/her utterance in the other language. The phenomena of code-switching invites focus on how it affects language maintenance and language shift. In language maintenance, code-switching comprises of inter-speaker and inter-turn alternation, keeping the languages apart. In language shift, code-switching consists of the complex structural integration of diverse languages resulting to a matrix language turnover (Myers-Scotton, 2002). What is interesting about code-switching is that most speakers do not consciously take in account they are code-switching languages. Speakers focus more on expressing an idea, and in the process of formulating an accurate expression of that idea, they make use of the known vocabulary in the two languages. As mentioned by Crystal (1997), bilingual speakers who converse in one

particular language, and switch to another in order to create a special linguistic effect. This notion proposes that code switching is a socio-linguistic tool used by bilingual speakers.

In linguistically diverse communities, like Australia, speakers find themselves situated along a gamut that generates different ‘language modes’ (Grosjean, 1998) within a ‘bilingual range’ (Valdés, 2000). In language contact situations, “unwritten” social rules also exist. These rules influence where, when, and with whom code-switching is permissible. Language users may have negative attitudes towards the use of code-switching, if it is spoken in formal contexts with individuals such as educators or an older ethnolinguistic group member who knows and possesses knowledge of Spanish grammar (Chan, 2001, p. 286). Zentella (1997) supports this statement stating that children were witnessed speaking English with one another, while shifting to Spanish in respect to their elders. For these children, Spanish and English represents their linguistic competence, and their linguistic performance will draw primarily upon English or Spanish, as required by the ‘observables’ of the speech situation, for instance, pragmatic norms, setting, and informants. Hence, it is common that bilingual speakers will interact in a bilingual mode, thus extending this ability to alternating languages in unchanged speech situations, therefore code-switching. Gumperz’s (1982) work on discursive strategies listed the salient discourse functions marked by code-switching. The underlying premise is that code-switching is a conscious choice on the part of the speaker, as individuals who code-switch do not receive instruction on how to code-switch, they just simply apply it.

Just as monolingual native speakers of Spanish and English have a sense of linguistic form in their language; Spanish-English bilinguals depend on unconscious grammatical principles in producing and assessing code-switched speech. Code-switching alternations may be a measure of bilingual ability, rather than deficit. However, Smith’s (2009, 2002) studies found that reduced exposure and use of Spanish had severe effects on informants’ linguistic performance; nevertheless, their Spanish language competence remained intact. In fact, the degree of language proficiency that a speaker possesses in two languages has been shown to correlate with the type of code-switching engaged in. In her research on bilinguals of diverse levels of competence, Poplack (1980) observed that those who reported to be dominant in one language tended to switch by means of tag-like phrases (for instance ...*sabes* [you know] and ...*verdad?* [right?]). Similarly, speakers who reported and demonstrated a vast degree of bilingual ability preferred intra-sentential switches. This is corroborated by Zentella (1997), which attested that proficient bilinguals display distinct behaviours in code-switching from their more Spanish dominant or English-dominant diasporic members.

Language is aligned with the concept of allegiance and belonging. When one or more languages are involved and an individual belongs to many groups, there are ramifications for individual and collective group identity (Natolo, 2013, 2011, 2010). According to Adendorff (1996), “languages are carriers of social meaning and express the identity value systems of their user” (p. 401). Understanding social meaning is important to interpret language choice behaviour, as a language is vital aspect communicating individual and group solidarity (Ibid). Code-switching divulges users’ social messages, ancestry and cultural value systems, providing an understanding of language contact and socio-expressive functions across a bicultural context.

Borrowing

In the field of linguistics proper, studies in bilingualism have taken place alongside other closely related subfields such as sociolinguistics. Borrowing - a form of language contact - consists of borrowing words or idiomatic expressions from another language, and modifying the original word or expression to agree with the morphology of the recipient language (See Wei, 2013). Thus, speakers, who live in a diasporic community where borrowing is a communicative norm, tend to borrow more words. The borrowed word can be one commonly used in the other language. Alternatively, the word is borrowed from the other language due to there being no

equivalent in meaning in the L1 (Poplack, Sankoff & Miller, 1988). General social features influencing borrowing includes: bilingualism, the amount of contact, and the number of speakers in the group. Just as bilingual abilities develop, they can also decline. Silva-Corvalán (1988, p. 19) has termed ‘a bilingual continuum’ as being the case where when a speaker gradually becomes more proficient in English, the speaker in turn will become gradually less proficient in Spanish.

Code-mixing

In a mixed language, although there may be regularizations and adaptations of forms from one language to another, elements from the source language are typically transferred with its structure mostly intact (Matras & Baker 2003a, 2003b). Yet, in code-switching, the change of language occurs in topics or at the end of sentences. In the case of code-mixing, the change of language is present within the same sentence. That is, the sentence might begin in one language and end in another (Ardilla, 2005).

Bilingualism

The cohort under examination in this paper presents an occasion for the discovery of ‘Additive bilingualism’ or ‘subtractive bilingualism’. Absolute bilingualism refers to perfect bilingualism or ambilingualism - an individual’s mastery of two languages. Additive bilingualism and subtractive bilingualism were defined by Lambert (1975). Lambert (1975) indicates that ‘Additive’ bilingualism refers to a bilingual situation, which results in the acquisition of both L1 and L2 skills. ‘Subtractive bilingualism’ results in L1 loss skills while paying greater attention to learning and/or using the L2.

Individuals become bilingual and/or multilingual in various manners. Some individuals are born in bilingual and/or multilingual families and thus exposed to multiple languages from birth. Others learn and acquire languages later on in life due to the nation’s current educational policy or life circumstances. Thus, every individual is different, resulting in different rates of bilingual behaviour.

Aims

This study aimed to investigate the case of absolute, additive or subtractive bilingualism and language contact among 50 Hispanics in Australia. As Spanish is an international language and that of wider communication, the study explored whether the social and psychological aspects responsible for the prominence of English among Hispanics have given rise to absolute, additive or subtractive bilingualism.

Methodology and Procedure

The case study used a mixed-methods research approach (Cresswell, 2003, 2005; Yin, 2009). This involved collecting quantitative data through a survey, followed by the collection of qualitative data through interviews with the participants. This was done to gain a better understanding of the factorial causes to Spanish-English language contact in Australia. Hence, 50 native Spanish-speaking informants from diverse Spanish speaking countries living in Australia were recruited in order to answer the questions objectively. The data was interpreted following quantitative and qualitative analysis procedures (Gillham, 2000).

The Informants

Informants for this study comprised of 50 native Spanish speakers. They were randomly selected and classified according to three age subsets: (a) Individuals aged 60 years or older (classified as Group 1 or G1); (b) Individuals aged between 35 and 59 years (Group 2 or G2); and (c) Individuals aged between 18 and 34 years (Group 3 or G3). This study's variables comprised on L1, age, gender, level of education, and occupation. Informants consisted of 24 males and 26 females whom completed the survey. Preceding the survey, a semi-structured interview was conducted with 12 informants (four from each age group were randomly selected).

The Survey

All 50 Hispanics completed the survey. The survey elicited data on: (a) demographic variables, (b) linguistic background, (c) language/s, and informant's language behaviour and attitudes with diverse interlocutors, and (d) investigating the case of language contact. The surveys were coded, and a pattern matching technique was entailed discovering patterns within the data that could present reasons for language contact.

The Interview

The interview further examined informants' use of language/s, their attitudes, and beliefs concerning Spanish and English. The interviews were digitally recorded with the informants consent, and transcribed to identify emerging themes. This data was interpreted using qualitative analysis techniques (Sarantakos, 2005). For survey and interview data analysis, frequency counts and percentages were utilised.

Findings

Thirty per cent of survey informants were from G1 (60+ years), 32 percent were from G2 (35-59 years), and 38 percent were from G3 (18-34 years). The largest diasporic community originated from Argentina (32%), followed by Uruguay (18%). The remaining informants were born in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and Spain. Data analysis showed that across the three groups there was no relationship between country of birth and Spanish language proficiency. All survey informants reported that their native language was Spanish. Forty per cent from G1 were aged pensioners; whilst those aged between 35 and 59, (G2) reported professions ranging from medical doctors to homemakers. Last, 62.5% of informants aged between 18 and 34 were students; constituting the highest percentage in the sample. The median age of immigration for G1 was 30 years; for G2 - 18 years, and for G3 the age was 16.

Informants provided data concerning their educational background. This aimed to capture informant's linguistic competence in these two languages, and is this affected their language choice. Those who had a Spanish tertiary degree from a Spanish speaking country held a higher level of comprehension and knowledge of the Spanish language. Informants also reported on their perceived self-assessment of their Spanish language capabilities ranging from "Excellent" to "Poor." As Spanish was informants' L1, their own perception of L1 proficiency was a factor taken into account, as informants already possess a particular attitude concerning their abilities in this language.

Sixteen percent of informants stated that their level of knowledge and comprehension of Spanish was "Excellent." Sixty percent of respondents indicated that their level was "Good," whereas 24 percent informants perceived their level as "Adequate." Furthermore, none of the

informants answered that their Spanish language capabilities was “Poor.” This fact reiterates how informants already possess a preconceived idea on their Spanish language proficiency.

Subsequently, informants were asked to self-assess their perceived level of knowledge and comprehension of English. Thirty-six per cent of informants stated that their English was “Excellent.” Thirty-four per cent self-rated their proficiency as “Good”, 22% selected “Adequate”, whereby eight per cent self-rated their English as “Poor.” The findings reported here are supported by those in Smith’s (2009, 2002) study where G1 also held lower levels of English. Also, reduced exposure to and use of Spanish has had consequences on linguistic performance, yet competence has remained.

The informants were asked about the language/s that they use to speak and write in their quotidian life in private and public domains (i.e. at work, university, home, with family and friends). Evidently, G3 spoke less Spanish and utilised more English. Yet, individuals from G2 stated that they were more likely to speak either Spanish or English. It is interesting to note from the data that some informants from the two older groups, G1 and G2, reported using Spanish and English to speak with other interlocutors outside their family circle. These results are also supported by those findings previously discussed in the literature, in that young US Hispanics code-switched more (Zentella, 2003, 1997). In this study, the co-existence of English and Spanish in Australia resulted in ‘subtractive’ rather than ‘addictive bilingualism.’ For informants, the loss of their L1 is a result of them using the L2. Even though bilingual abilities develop with contextualised practice, so too can they decline. It has been reported that as speakers become increasingly proficient in English, they tend to become progressively less proficient in Spanish, in what Silva-Corvalán (1988) has termed ‘a bilingual continuum.’

Concerning the choice of written language to communicate, G3 chose to actively code-switch in both English and Spanish in their quotidian life despite the fact that all the informants’ L1 was Spanish. In contrast, G1 stated that they wrote more Spanish, and they did not code-switch, while G2 reported to write equally in Spanish and English. The increase use of English for G2 and G3 can be substantiated for reasons that English is used by the majority in the informants work and educational domains.

All 15 G1 informants reported speaking Spanish in the home domain. Only 13 percent of G1 informants reported to use Spanish at work. For English, 73 percent from G1 mostly spoke English with friend/s, followed by 33 percent who spoke English at home. Sixteen G2 informants spoke Spanish with their family. Fourteen informants also spoke Spanish with their friends at home and social gatherings. For G2, 14 respondents indicated that they spoke English with their friends in public and private domains, followed by 13 informants speaking English at work. Data analysed from G3 found that 14 informants spoke Spanish at home, followed by 13 speaking Spanish with their family and in social gatherings. Seventeen G3 informants stated that they spoke English with friends, and 16 spoke English with their family in public and private domains. Contrary to Bills (2000) findings, informants in this study, although they did not undertake an objective proficiency test, did not abandon their use of Spanish at home.

With respect to the regular L1 use, there was a clear division between G1 and G3. There was a preponderant use of Spanish – English code-switching in both private and public domains across all age groups analysed. Thus, the present situation where the regular use of Spanish decreases with age holds implications for Spanish language maintenance and shift. Questioned as to the language they regarded as being the most important in their lives, G1 informants, not surprisingly, chose Spanish, whilst the majority of G2 and G3 informants selected both Spanish and English. Justifications of language/s choice varied and included statements such as:

- a) “Because I am bilingual” (34%);
- b) “It is normal after immigrating to Australia because people mix both languages” (22%);

- c) "English is an important language that I need to be able to integrate into Australian society" (16%); and,
- d) "Spanish is the most important language because it is my first language" (10%).

Thus, bilingualism or absolute bilingualism is widespread among Hispanics in Australia. Data yielded that time living in Australia, and thus exposure to Australia's dominant language, English, was a significant variable contributing to code-switching. Data revealed that G1 have lived in Australia on average for 35 years, G2 for 25 years, and G3 for an average of 13 years. Thus, the time factor had affected some respondents Spanish, resulting in code-switching. When asked about their personal views on code-switching, most informants mentioned that they approved the use of code-switching. Others proclaimed that Spanish words were losing their original and true meaning during the transferring from Spanish to English. As P3-Q lamented that: "Hispanics are forgetting the Spanish language and their cultural heritage." Some G1 informants claimed this was also a result of individuals not being able to speak proper Spanish.

For eight G1 informants and eight G2 informants "time living in Australia" was a prudent factor for their code-switching. María* (age 27, P49-I) commented on the constant presence and influence of the English and Spanish language in her life. She remembered that she shifted towards English during her adolescence. Germán* (age 21, P35-I) relayed how Spanish was used in intimate circles. He remembered bilinguals partially and/or wholly responding back in English when they were addressed to in Spanish. For Silvia* (age 26, P44-I) she code-switched because she immigrated to Australia with her parents when she was young, thus she speaks English the majority of the time. She stated during her childhood the language of the home was Spanish and it was often used in conjunction with English.

Eighteen percent of informants claimed that 'all' Hispanics code-switch. Horacio* (age 55, P33-I) stated, "Anyone who is bilingual and speaks English and Spanish will mix both languages." Others elaborated on how an individual's social group might influence in her/his language choice. As Germán* (age 21, P35-I) commented:

"I think that Latinos that live in Australia eventually adapt to the way people are speaking in the community. If you socialise with people that switch between languages you are eventually going to talk the same way."

Moreover, four informants mentioned that in Australia, Hispanics have the opportunity to learn both languages properly without the need of code-switching. Yet, not all the informants from G1 agreed on this point. Eight informants from this sub-set stated that it did not bother them that Hispanics code-switched, and the remaining six informants reported that they were accustomed and accepted speakers who code-switched. As evident from the above statements, informants acknowledged that their control of Spanish –English speech production language has adversely affected the manner they use these languages and their proficiency in them (See Wei, 2013 for more commentary).

Similarly, native language proficiency skills are essential for self-enrichment and expression of identity, culture and ancestry. Informants remarked that Spanish language represented the first tangible reality of their ancestry and was a reminder of who they were. Nonetheless, G3 acknowledged that they approved those who code-switched as it represented their bicultural identity. The majority of the informants attached prestige to English language use. In particular, English was considered beneficial by many from G2 and G3. For them, English is an international language, associated with wealth, power, and the developed world. This notion was collaborated by one of the study's informants. Juan* (age 53, P46-I) explained "At the present the English language is considered as a language practiced and pertaining to First World countries, in which benefits those who speak, write and read it." Informants expressed their thoughts about being bilingual, and a few criticised the growing dominance of English. It is interesting to note that informants in this study did not hold the same views as those held by the

Real Academia de la Lengua Española. Others stated that new Spanish translations of English terms which are accepted by the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española* arrive too late to become part of their everyday vocabulary. Nine informants stated that code-switching is performed by all social classes in Australia, thus creating a feeling of collectiveness in the Hispanic-Australian community. Seven informants mentioned that code-switching occurred due to an individual's ability to know English and Spanish fluently. This result is supported by Adendorff (1996) in that code-switching is viewed as a linguistic advantage, communicating individual and group solidarity.

The interview further explored whether any of the informants' family members code-switched. Code-switching was widely reported to occur by their family members only in the private domain, parties and social gatherings. All informants displayed negative attitudes towards the use of code-switching in formal contexts, and with individuals of higher rank or authority. Code-switching, in a formal arena, is undeniably one factor against Spanish language shift. Some informants noted that G3 were more likely to code-switch, as they would be more fluent in English. Many G3 Spanish speakers completed some or the majority of their primary and secondary education in Australia. When asked which group would code switch, it was interesting to note that none of the three age groups selected G1 as the group more likely to employ code-switching as a communicative form. The informants also expressed that individuals who only speak one language are more likely to experience social and economic disadvantages. Surprisingly, the vast majority of informants acknowledged that their children and grandchildren should be encouraged to learn both the Spanish and English languages properly.

Conclusion

Language conflict at the individual and societal level can be regarded as a natural concomitant in languages contact situations. This paper describes the linguistic situation in Australia with particular reference to language use, proficiency, and prestige of two languages, Spanish and English. The use of Spanish and English as communicative codes is present among native Spanish-speakers residing in Australia. This linguistic construct is a natural consequence of language shift and language loss, a trajectory of most immigrant speech communities worldwide.

Variables such as occupation and place of birth did not influence informants' choice to code-switch, and there was no correlation between code-switching and gender across all three sub-sets. Data analysis illustrated a progressive loss of Spanish by all age groups. The amount of time living in Australia was a prudent factor affecting some informants' use of Spanish, resulting in language variation. All of G3 informants displayed largely positive attitudes towards code-switching, demonstrating their activation control of language's in specific contexts. The fact that this phenomenon appears in Australia, where Hispanic-Australians represent only 0.6 percent of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012), indicates that Spanish-English language contact is emerging, despite the absence of a large population of native Spanish speakers.

The main variable contributing to language contact growth is age. Despite G1 living in Australia the longest, they were less likely to have a positive attitude towards code-switching, and were less inclined to using it. Five reasons for language contact were identified in the mixed-methods research study described here. These include those who: 1) had little education in the Spanish and/or English language; 2) spoke Spanish during their childhood in the home domain in conjunction with English; 3) shifted towards English before adolescence; 4) used Spanish and English language in the private domain; and, 5) responded partially or wholly in English when addressed to in Spanish. Thus, the before-mentioned factors reflect the true position of language contact in this diasporic community in Australia.

The 50 Hispanic-Australian informants displayed positive attitudes towards Spanish, while continuing to value the English language as the language critical for participation in Australian society. The attachment the Spanish language has for the informants is culture and ancestry, thus

being tangible and symbolic. Finally, this paper suggests that language contact and variation in Australia is regulated by complex factors and is indeed a highly sophisticated and complex tool that requires further research.

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