Code-switching or Borrowing? No sé *so* no puedo decir, *you know*

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1. Introduction

In the study of bilingual code-switching, identifying the typology and language of individual switched elements has generally proceeded from theoretical models involving the identification of a base language and the phrase structure of both languages. Such fundamental notions as word order, the language of functional heads, relations of syntactic government, and purely quantitative measures of the amount of material in each language have variously been used to classify language switching within a single clause. The formal study of bilingual code-switching—with Spanish-English bilingualism receiving high prominence—has enjoyed more than three decades of serious activity, incorporating the intersection of sociolinguistics and variationist models, syntactic theory, psycholinguistics, neurolinguistics, and literary and cultural studies. After more than three decades of research on Spanish-English code-switching it might seem that there is little left to explore; there are, however, some phenomena that do not fit easily into current typologies, and one such manifestation will be explored in the present study.

An accepted axiom of Spanish-English code-switching is that there are clear quantitative and qualitative differences among the language switches of fluent bilinguals, Spanish-speaking immigrants who learned English in adolescence or adulthood, and native speakers of English who have acquired Spanish as a L_2. The first group is most noted for intrasentential code-switching and for the use of language switches to achieve pragmatic ends such as foregrounding, ethnic solidarity, persuasion, and the like. Calques of idiomatic expressions in English are frequent when speaking Spanish, with fewer cases of Spanish calques in English discourse, and numerous loans from English are present. Spanish-speaking immigrants typically switch only at major discourse boundaries such as sentences and paragraphs, usually in response to shifting domains of discourse. Calques from English are rare and English lexical items are usually inserted in non-assimilated fashion. English-speaking students of Spanish switch to English primarily when their abilities in Spanish are exceeded by the demands of a particular communicative task, and often show less sensitivity to the linguistic abilities and preferences of their interlocutors. Calques from English are common, including combinations that violate Spanish syntactic rules, and unassimilated English words may be freely inserted whenever the Spanish word is unknown. Seldom does a single type of language shifting span all three groups of nominally bilingual speakers. The reasons for these qualitative differences constitute a major research question, as does the related issue of what the bilingual grammars of all three groups of speakers have in common.

2. The study of Spanish-English code-switching in the United States

Grammatical constraints on Spanish-English language switching formed the basis for some of the earliest and most influential studies of bilingual code mixing, and form part of the core bibliography to this day. A number of specific claims about the grammatical structures of allowable code-switches emerged from these early studies, and were frequently extrapolated to include other instances of bilingual usage. As the number of individual case studies grew—including languages from widely differing families such as Korean, Japanese, Tagalog, Arabic, Hebrew, Cantonese, Berber, Nahuatl, and Polish, among many others—it became apparent that the close typological similarity between Spanish and English facilitated fluent intrasentential code-switching of a sort not as often found when typologically very different languages are switched. While none of the syntactic claims made for

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Spanish-English code-switching has been invalidated, some of the proposed restrictions cannot be easily extended beyond the Spanish-English interface. Moreover the effortless interweaving of languages within a single clause occurs more frequently and with a higher density among Spanish-English bilinguals in the United States than in communities involving similar Romance languages in contact with English: French-English in Canada and Louisiana, Italian-English in the northeastern United States, and even Spanish-English in Gibraltar[1] and creole English-Spanish in Belize.[2] Thus to the syntactic peculiarities of Spanish-English code-switching must be added an as yet not fully understood set of sociolinguistic variables that facilitate high density intransentential switching among most bilingual Latino communities in the United States.

3. The status of switched functional words

Sitting firmly astride the boundary between borrowing and code-switching are cases involving insertion of non-assimilated L_2 functional elements—particularly conjunctions—in the midst of L_1 discourse. If such insertion becomes frequent, full grammaticalization of the borrowed functional item may be the end result. A number of indigenous languages that have coexisted with Spanish for long periods of time have fully incorporated Spanish functional words, at times producing syntactic innovations that depart significantly from the base structures of the borrowing language. Thus Tagalog has *pirmi* < *firme* `always,' *para (sa)* `for the benefit of' (e.g. *Ito ay álaala ko para sa aking iná* `this is my gift for my mother'), *puwede* `can, may, [to be] possible' *gustó* `like, desire,' *siguro* `maybe,' *por eso, pero, puwés* < *pues* `therefore,' etc. (Oficina de Educación Iberoamericana 1972). The related Philippine language Cebuano (of the Visayan group) also contains: *peró* < *pero*, *para*, etc., (Quilis 1976). Contemporary Mexican Náhuatl contains such well-integrated items as *porque, que, de, por, para, pero, tlen tanto* `how much,' *para tlenon* `why,' *cerca, ya, maske* `although,' *pos, como, hasta, después, apenas, entonces, solo,* etc.[3] Karttunen and Lockhart (1976:35-39) give an analysis of the introduction of Spanish particles and connective elements in early colonial Náhuatl. According to their perspective, Náhuatl borrowed Spanish particles because they functioned differently than their closest Náhuatl equivalents: `Since Nahuatl achieved its ends with quite dissimilar means, a Spanish particle usually had a different semantic domain and different syntactic characteristics. This could be seen as a reason for introduction, especially when more and more Nahuatl speakers came to hear Spanish daily and felt the need for equivalents' (36). They also observe that in Nahuatl, the same items usually have the dual function of modal particles and connectives, while prepositions come from a different set. In Spanish, modal particles form a separate category, while connectives and prepositions frequently come from the same set (e.g. *hasta que, para que,* etc.): `It was the prepositions/connectives that were new to Nahuatl. The Nahuatl adverbials, including the modal particles, already covered the Spanish modals, and we do not find loanwords among our examples like *muy* "very" or *quizá* "perhaps" ... (36). The borrowing of Spanish prepositions is particularly interesting, since classical Náhuatl (and to a very large degree the contemporary language as well) is a postpositional language.

Another major language contact zone is the Andean region, where Spanish has coexisted with Quechua and related languages for five centuries. Quechua is also a postpositional OV-type language, and various Quechua dialects contain the following functional elements from Spanish: *porque, i, en, si, entós* < *entonces, después, pero, que* (complementizer), *komo, para, por, de, astake* < *hasta que, pues,* etc. (e.g. Lastra 1968). Mayan-speaking Mesoamerica (Mexican Yucatan, Belize, and most of Guatemala), is another contemporary language contact area. Contemporary Mayan languages, which are noteworthy for their overall resistance to absorbing Spanish loan-words, make use of many Spanish functional words, including: *de, y, a, pero, mientras, como, con, entonces, menos, porque.*

[1] E.g. Lipski (1986a), Moyer (1992).

[2] Lipski (1986b).

[3] Cf. Karttunen (1985), Karttunen and Lockhart (1976), Lastra de Suárez (1986), Suárez (1977), and the transcribed conversations and analyses of Hill and Hill (1986) and Lastra de Suárez (1980). In particular, Hill and Hill (1986: chap. 6) give an extensive analysis of the incorporation of Spanish particles into contemporary Náhuatl.

These words occur even in relatively isolated and marginal Mayan languages, many of whose speakers are not fully fluent in Spanish.[4] Many of these functional borrowings had already been incorporated into Yucatecan Mayan within a century of the arrival of the Spaniards.[5]

The functional elements borrowed from Spanish into these indigenous languages have several traits in common:

(1) None represents a grammatical configuration already present in the indigenous language. Not only the linear word order but also the grammatical relationships are usually modified upon borrowing.

(2) These borrowed elements do not normally replace an already existent element in the indigenous language, but rather create new configurations.

(3) The borrowed elements become fully integrated syntactically and morphologically into the receptor languages, often diverging sharply from their semantic and syntactic content within Spanish.

(4) The borrowed items are used consistently and exclusively, and many speakers are unaware of their origins in Spanish; the borrowed elements are also used by monolingual speakers of the indigenous languages.

(5) The integrated borrowed functional items are not a natural concomitant of code-switched discourse, and are equally common among totally monolingual speakers or when no Spanish is being used.

4. The insertion of English *so* and similar items into Spanish-only discourse

Some insight into the issues surrounding the interface between code-switching and borrowing in the case of functional elements can be obtained by observation of incipient language change. In such circumstances, it may be possible to determine the factors that facilitate the seamless introduction of L_2 functional elements into an expanse of L_1 discourse. One apparent change in progress involves the insertion of English *so* into monolingual Spanish discourse. Other commonly inserted items include *but*, *anyway*, *you know*, *I mean*, with somewhat different pragmatic distribution. This phenomenon occurs in the speech of a wide variety of Spanish-English bilinguals in the United States, cutting across the entire spectrum of bilingual abilities, from Spanish-dominant speakers through balanced bilinguals, to highly English-dominant `semi-speakers' of Spanish. It is found in the speech of many individuals who disavow any conscious use of Anglicisms. It has also been observed in the speech of Spanish speakers born and raised outside of the United States, and who became bilingual upon learning English in the United States. Of the bilingual speakers who introduce *so* into Spanish discourse, some freely engage in various forms of code-switching when speaking informally to other bilingual interlocutors, while others seldom or never do so. Finally, *so*-insertion is found in the speech of native speakers of English who are acquiring Spanish as a second language, and whose abilities in Spanish range from rudimentary to quite fluent. Typically, second-language speakers of Spanish, regardless of the level of fluency in Spanish, do not engage in code-switching of the sort observed among true bilinguals, and those instances of language switching which do occur among second-language speakers are qualitatively different from patterns found among fluent bilinguals. *So*-insertion is one of the few bilingual switching phenomena to occur in both bilingual and second-language speech. The incorporation of *so* potentially represents a window of opportunity, highlighting the means by which functional elements from one language gradually insert themselves into another language during bilingual encounters.[6]

5. Collecting the data

As with any form of spontaneous speech phenomenon, the insertion of *so* must be caught on the fly, extracted from fragments of free conversation and analyzed without recourse to conscious

[4] Hofling (1991:9) and passim., and the texts in Furbee-Losee (1976).

[5] Karttunen and Lockhart (1985:63-65).

[6] *So*-insertion also occurs in other bilingual contact environments, for example in Louisiana French and Canadian French (Roy 1979), and Japanese-English (Nishimura 1986). I have also observed this phenomenon in the speech of Haitian-English bilinguals.

intuitions and introspection by native speakers. *So*-insertion will be treated like a limiting case of intrasentential code-switching, in which speakers cannot be `primed' to produce appropriate examples, and are frequently unaware of having inserted *so*, even after the fact. In the case of intrasentential code-switching, some researchers have attempted to supplement their observations by presenting native code-switchers with contrived examples of switched discourse, to elicit acceptability judgments. In the case of *so*-insertion, this procedure has so far failed to produce any usable results. I have yet to encounter a bilingual speaker who possesses any intuitions about this phenomenon; indeed, only a tiny fraction of the bilingual speakers with whom I have spoken seem to be aware of this process, even after having listened to recorded examples. When presented with transcribed or contrived Spanish sentences in which *so* or similar items have been inserted, all bilinguals that I have interviewed reject such sentences as unacceptable, although when pressed many will admit to having heard such combinations. Most of the cases to be discussed here come from my personal collection of recordings, in this case representing nearly 1000 tapes of the Spanish and English usage of bilingual speakers throughout the United States. There are also examples taken from published sources, which coincide qualitatively with the recorded texts. Perhaps two thirds of the recordings were made by me personally, and the remainder were conducted by students working under my supervision. All the data were collected as part of earlier research efforts or as class projects, prior to the decision to study *so*-insertion. Therefore none of the interviews was affected by prior expectations as to the data to be elicited. The recorded interviews were chosen randomly from the larger collection. The level of fluency in Spanish and English varies widely among the speakers included in the sample. Some are completely fluent in both languages, nearly balanced bilinguals. Others speak little English, while still others are Spanish-recessive bilinguals. Some of the speakers are known to frequently engage in code-switching, while other speakers seldom or never do so. A wide variety of attitudes toward Spanish and English is also represented in the sample, but as will be seen, even speakers with a markedly negative attitude toward English may engage in *so*-insertion. The non-native speakers of Spanish included in the sample are all native speakers of English, and all learned Spanish after adolescence, in a variety of circumstances which include formal instruction, foreign travel, volunteer and work experience, and marriage. Fluency in Spanish ranges from halting speech to total mastery.

6. The status of inserted *so*

Before examining specific cases of *so*-insertion en route to a model of language change, the status of such inserted items must be discussed. In a survey of Anglicisms in U. S. varieties of Spanish, Mendieta (1999:144-5) considers *so* to be a `préstamo no adaptado' and gives examples, including some from Teschner (1972) and Phillips (1967):

Una vez íbamos a México y tenía que ir pa'l baño *so* nos fuimos para una gasolinera (San Antonio)
Pero los niños creen que la madre es lo único que lo va a ayudar o curar, *so* mi mamá estuvo allí aguantándome la mano (Miami)
El pega más bueno que yo, *so* juega él (Phillips 1967:643).

Phillips (1967: 643) and Teschner (1972:580, 719) also give examples of inserted *or, I mean*, and *when*:

Lo agarran *or* en veces en español ...
Pero en ese tiempo no había bastantes trabajo, y después de la ... como de treinta y dos, *or* por ahí, era ...
... y más o menos estamos ahí esperando si MacArthur iba a decir si entramos, y *or* no, *so* más o menos no entramos, *so* fuimos a ...
... que usan parar hacer un edificio *or* los niños para jugar
Y ya, como el dinero, *I mean*, la escuela se está poniendo muy caro
Aquí un laborer gana dos sesenta, *I mean*, cuatro sesenta la hora
Well, I mean, me enfermé de ... de eso de ... de flue, con gripa y eso

Lloraba *when* hacía tangle ...

Mendieta (1999:105, 113) considers *anyway* and *but* to also be unassimilated borrowings, with the following examples (also Teschner 1972:262-3):

No sé, para proteger la, quizá, la gente, para que no pase más de allí o quizá pasan *anyway, so* ... (Perth Amboy, NJ)
Se sienten que no quieren ir a la escuelo pero [quieren] ir, *anyway* (Perth Amboy, NJ)
El muchacho pequeño está enfrente, no, está al frente de la mesa, *but* ... (San Antonio)
Es bueno pa un soltero, *but* no me pesó tanto pa que ... (Teschner 1972:263)
Pues de la policía no he tenido quejas. *Anyway,* yo no he necesitado de ellos todavía (Teschner 1972:157)
Anyway como en el inglés, hay muchas palabras del pachuco en inglés que se usa (Teschner 1972:157)

Teschner (1972:896) indicates that *so* was frequent in his Chicago corpus, collected in the 1960's, pronounced with Spanish phonetic patterns in unstressed position and with English phonetics in stressed positions:

es un poco difícil encontrar trabajo en Los Ángeles y papá no pudo establecerse, *so* nos fuimos entonces para México.
Compramos una casa cerca de la [calle] 45 ¿te dije antes? *So* [sou] antes teníamos una pader entera, y mi esposa quería ...
So [sou] este año le dieron cuando ... le da un scholarship ...
No hay naiden que les dé trabajo; necesitan vivir, *so* se meten a robar.
... y tengo que pensar por el futuro de esa niña, *so* no puedo derrochar el dinero así ...
... y yo soy el mayor de la familia. *So* yo tuve que ir a trabajar.
... y que hay otro niño que quiere tener ese lugar. *So* [sou], tiene el padre que ...

Teschner (1972:1031-2) also gives examples of inserted *you know*:

Porque todos necesitamos de todo un día, Porque todos necesitamos de todo un día, *you know*, aunque no lo reconózcamos
Pues, el bate es ... *you know* ... un palo de madera que ...
Pues no me he dado cuenta, porque realmente lo he ido aprendiendo, *you know*, es una palabra ...
Una película que tenga un tema, *you know*, Ud. sabe, un tema especial ...
...para tener más lugar, o para tener más, *you know*, más espacio para la familia
Pues allí hubo muchos desórdenes, *you know*. A uno de mis muchachos, ...
Y en estos temblores que han habido últimamente, se han desbaratado los, *you know*, the ... se han venido para abajo, se han sentado.
...Prefiere que traigas al esposo para que trabaje y todo, en vez de darte, *you know*, help.
Mucho cuidado con la fumada; cáncer, cáncer, *you know*.

Silva-Corvalán (1994:171), commenting on the use of *so* in Los Angeles Spanish, states briefly that it is `a loan that replaces the Spanish conjunction *así que* even in the speech of Group I [Mexican-born: JML] speakers. It is a stable, widespread loan in LA Spanish ...' Typical examples are similar to those found in the present study, e.g.

So él sabrá si se cambia su mente (Silva-Corvalán 1994:173).

Silva-Corvalán does not pursue this matter further, but her study gives no other case where a conjunction or other functional item has been borrowed from English into Spanish, even among highly Spanish-dominant bilinguals.

Unlike code-switching between typologically different languages, Spanish-English *so*-insertion makes use of identical syntactic configurations, so that structural integration cannot be used as a criterion to determine the status of *so*. Therefore, none of the grammatical constraints that delimit code-switching opportunities comes into play, and criteria of morphosyntactic integration are of no use.[7] Those speakers who were explicitly queried about use of *so*, although many were not previously aware of introducing this word, were unanimous in asserting that the word is English, and not an established Anglicism, such as *lonche*, *troca*, *sute*, etc. This self-appraisal, while not sufficient in itself, is a key bit of evidence in determining the status of *so*. However, it runs against the notion that frequently repeated L_2 items embedded in L_1 discourse cease to be code-switches, and attain the status of borrowings. The matter is put succinctly by Meyers-Scotton (1992:36): `It is not that a B[orrowed] form *must* recur, it is that a C[ode]S[witched] form must *not* recur in order to be a CS form' [emphasis in original]. This contradiction between speakers' intuitions and general linguistic practice, combined with the frequently unconscious nature of *so*-insertion, motivate the claim that more than simple code-switching is at stake.

In theory, it could be possible to determine the `base language' of *so*, i.e. whether it is produced as an English word or as an assimilated borrowing into Spanish, through its phonetic realization. The tense vowel /o/ in English is realized as a diphthong, while Spanish /o/ is never diphthongized. In practice, this determination can almost never be made. In the first place, *so* is not only a minimal monosyllable, but as a connective element all its occurrences are in unstressed and prosodically weak positions, which makes determination of vowel quality next to impossible. Moreover, the majority of the informants used one basic phonotactic system for both Spanish and English.[8] Most of the native bilinguals realized English /o/ without significant diphthongization, while the second-language learners of Spanish often diphthongized vowels in both Spanish and English.

If *so* is still behaving as an English word, then its relatively high frequency, and its status as a function word rather than a lexical content item, rules it out as a `nonce borrowing.'[9] The fact that *so*-insertion often occurs in discourse with no other English elements, and is used by individuals who do not normally engage in intrasentential code-switching, leaves little doubt that the sentences are produced in Spanish with English *so* embedded at appropriate points. In fact, Meyers-Scotton (1992:22) regards relative frequency as the most important single factor in assigning a matrix language. Similarly, Poplack (1988:220) ranks frequency as the major factor (together with phonological integration) for distinguishing borrowings from code switches. She also notes that fluent code-switching, such as observed in the New York Puerto Rican community, is characterized by `an apparent "unawareness" of the particular alternations between languages (despite a general awareness of using both codes in the discourse), insofar as the switched item is not accompanied by metalinguistic commentary, does not constitute a repetition of an adjacent segment ... and is used for purposes other than that of conveying untranslatable or ethnically bound items.' By these criteria, *so*-insertion could be regarded as momentary code-switching. As a resolution of this potential impasse, it will be suggested below that in a very real sense, Spanish sentences containing English *so* are metalinguistically bracketed by English. *So* `pops through' into Spanish discourse not as the usual nonce-borrowing, which temporarily fills a lexical gap, nor as the usual code-switch, which signals the transition to the other language. Rather, it reflects the fact that the speaker's bilingual monitoring mechanism--whether activated by a `switch'[10] or by some other mechanism of language-tagging,[11] is circumscribed by a metalevel based on key English discourse delimiters such as *so*.

Muysken (2000) develops a three-way typology of bilingual language switching: (1) **insertion** of material from one language into a base structure of another language; (2) **alternation** between structures of each language; (3) **congruent lexicalization** of lexical items from each language into

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[7] Cf. Bentahila and Davies (1983), Eliasson (1989, 1991), Meyers-Scotton (1992), Nishimura (1986), Park (1990), Poplack et al. (1989), Sankoff et al. (1990), Scotton and Okeju (1973), Treffers-Daller (1991), for approaches to the determination of borrowing vs. code-switching and language assignment in other cases.

[8] A problem also noted e.g. by Poplack (1988:220), *inter alia*.

[9] In the sense of Poplack et al. (1988), Poplack et al. (1989), and Sankoff et al. (1990).

[10] E.g. Grosjean (1982), Macnamara and Kushnir (1971), Paradis (1980).

[11] E.g. Sridhar and Sridhar (1980).

shared grammatical structures. In terms of sociolinguistic correlates, Muysken (2002:8-9) asserts that alternation `is particularly frequent in stable bilingual communities with a tradition of language separation …' Insertion `is frequent in colonial settings and recent migrant communities, where there is a considerable assymetry in speakers' proficiency in the two languages.' Congruent lexicalization `may be particularly associated with second generation migrant groups, dialect/standard and post-creole continua, and bilingual speakers of closely related languages with roughly equal prestige and no tradition of overt language separation.' The use of English *so* in Spanish discourse obviously does not fit the category of alternation. It does fit Muysken's sociolinguistic description of insertion for some speakers, but also correlates with congruent lexicalization for others. Muysken suggests (p. 10) that insertion can evolve into congruent lexicalization among immigrant communities. Indeed, Muysken (2000:146-7) regards the insertion of English *anyway* (and other items) in code-switched discourse from Gibraltar (from Moyer 1992) represents congruent lexicalization:

> *Anyway*, yo creo que que las personas *who support* todos estos grupos como los *Friends of the Earth* son personas que *are very close to nature*.

It would appear that the placement of English *so* and similar items into Spanish discourse in the United States began as insertion among immigrants and among vestigial or transitional bilinguals, and evolved to congruent lexicalization. This model does not readily account for the addition of *so* by L_2 speakers of Spanish, nor do the proposed sociolinguistic correlates hold even for fluent bilingual speakers in the United States, since there is typically a significant difference in prestige between Spanish and English, and a long tradition of language separation.

7. Spanish insertions into English-only discourse

Among bilingual Latino speakers in the United States, Spanish tag items are sometimes introduced into English discourse, but these usually take the form of tags, prosodically set off from the remainder of the sentence, and do not form part of the basic syntactic structure of the sentences in which they occur. Moreover such insertion of Spanish items, irrespective of the degree of deliberate choice, occurs exclusively among members of the same bilingual speech community and has the function of establishing ethnic solidarity. Tag items in Spanish may be introduced even by speakers who are not fully proficient in Spanish and who rarely speak entirely in Spanish. The use of tag *este*, a pause-filler roughly equivalent to English *uh/um*, is frequent among Chicano speakers and occurs occasionally in other bilingual groups. Bilingual speakers from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic (and to a lesser extent from Cuba) may interject *¿tú sabes?* during informal speech. Young Dominicans in the northeastern U. S. are often drawn into a complex linguistic network involving Spanish, vernacular African-American English, and ethnically unmarked English, and code- and register-shifting is as frequent concomitant of the evolving Dominican-American cultural identity. Nearly all such speakers are fully bilingual, some with limited proficiency in English, and when speaking English with one another a wide range of Spanish elements may be inserted:

> Jenadis is the prettiest. Jenadis *después* Lala *y después* Rosanna, *después* Mable (Bailey 2002:238).
> I love the way *como l'*American be doing sandwich, they be rocking … (Bailey 2002:51).

Much less frequently, Spanish conjunctions or other items similar to English *so* are inserted during English-only discourse: Phillips (1967:644), in describing the Spanish of Los Angeles, gives the example:

> No, just *para* myself

Zentella (1997:99, 119), studying Spanish-English bilingual speech among Puerto Ricans in New York City, gives the examples:

He came last night *pero* the thing was he stood up Millie's house
I go out a lot *pero* you know *que no* [...unintelligible]

Zentella (1997:120) notes that `The majority of the constituents that favored English or Spanish decidedly were short code shifts inserted into a longer stretch of discourse in the other language. Constituting almost half (48 percent) of all switches, the frequent embedding of small constituents had the effect of continually reasserting and recreating children's dual New York-Puerto Rican identity. Because they had a foot in both worlds, they never spoke in one for very long without acknowledging and incorporating the other, especially in informal speech.' This account clearly holds for such content items as English *you know* and Spanish *¿oíste?*, *ándale,* etc. which are well-incorporated as tags within their respective languages and therefore aid in the reinforcement of bilingual solidarity. It does not readily explain the insertion of *so* into otherwise Spanish discourse, since this is a short, phonetically non-prominent item serving as a conjunction, and not a good candidate as a prototype of Anglo-American language and culture.

8. The sociolinguistic correlates of *so*-insertion

The impetus for the insertion of *so* and similar items cannot be found by examining purely grammatical constraints nor the distinct developmental avenues by which bilingual competence has been achieved. The qualitative nature of Spanish-English code-switching in the United States is intimately bound up with the history of Spanish-speaking groups in the U. S. and the status of Spanish as a minority language, often officially persecuted and even more often associated with socioeconomic marginality. Second-language learners of Spanish face a different set of obstacles, sometimes including ambivalent attitudes towards the language, but the frequent inability to shed English while speaking Spanish is the principal defining feature of this group. In the case of inserted *so*, sociolinguistic and developmental factors coincide to produce a phenomenon that spans the full range of Spanish-English bilingualism.

In most bilingual communities, the two languages are not on an equal footing as regards prestige, official recognition, or correlation with socioeconomic mobility. It has frequently been observed, although seldom quantified, that in bilingual societies in which one of the languages is clearly dominant from a sociolinguistic point of view, code-switching is more frequent from the subordinate language to the dominant language, rather than vice versa. This may occur even among speakers who are more proficient in the subordinate language. One possible influencing factor is that in most bilingual communities in which one language is dominant over the other, clearly discernible ethnic and/or racial differences also separate the two groups. Members of the subordinate ethnic group are typically bilingual by necessity, while members of the dominent group view `bilingualism' only in terms of the subordinate group's learning of the dominant language. A native speaker of the subordinate language is constantly forced to use the dominant language, and switching to the dominant language is further encouraged by the use of the latter for all official functions. Discourse reflecting the language of power, e.g. when speaking of government, technology, education, etc., normally find the most straightforward expression in the dominant language. Thus, members of the subordinate ethnic group/speech community often find themselves switching to the dominant language to express facets of their public lives; moreover, it is assumed that any interlocutor who speaks the subordinate language will also understand material presented in the dominant language. There is little danger of inadvertently excluding a member of a conversational group by suddenly switching to the dominant language. When initiating discourse in the dominant language, matters are different, since there is no a priori certainty that all members of the conversation will be able to follow the conversation through a shift into the subordinate language. A shift from dominant to subordinate language typically involves a manifestation of ethnic solidarity, or a culturally-bound comment which is closely tied to a particular language. Such a shift implies a more intimate relationship between speaker and interlocutors.

These may not be the only factors which account for the imbalance in language switches in bilingual communities with a clear dominance relation, but they are relevant for the contact environments involving Spanish which result in the transfer of functional and connective elements. Throughout the United States, Spanish is sociolinguistically subordinated to English, regardless of the proportion of the population which speaks each language. Among Spanish-English bilinguals from the

United States, comparatively few have had formal education in Spanish, and many have been subject to ethnic and linguistic discrimination, and have been coerced into embracing Anglo-American language and cultural values. The past two decades have brought some relief, as Spanish speakers achieve economic and political power, but the rapid shift to English as a concomitant of upward socioeconomic mobility is a constant factor. Sánchez (1983:139), describing a situation which continues to plague many of this nation's Spanish speakers, comments that bilingual code-switching arises from:

> […] language contact of a subordinate lingual-national minority with a politically, economically and linguistically dominant majority. This scenario leads first to the overlapping of functions for the languages and eventually to transition from the subordinate to the dominant language even in those areas previously reserved for the minority language. It is during this dynamic period of bilingualism marked by a great deal of mobility, geographical and social, where role differentiation and appropriation prepare the ground for assimilation and language loss that mass code-switching sets in; its duration is determined by these same social, economic and political factors which create antagonism and maintain social distance between the two lingual societies as well as force the subordinate community to assimilate to the language of the dominant population.

This pessimistic appraisal is sometimes offset by the use of code-switching as a literary device, and there is evidence that many socially conscious younger bilingual speakers view code-switched discourse with pride.[12]

In such bilingual areas as Náhuatl- and Maya-speaking areas of Mexico, Guatemala, and the Andean region, the sociolinguistic situation is similar, but with Spanish playing the role of official, prestige language, while the indigenous languages are in an increasingly subordinate position, regardless of the proportion of the population which speaks such languages.[13] Although in some areas (e.g. the Andean region, parts of Yucatan, much of rural Guatemala), the indigenous languages are freely used on the radio and in other public settings, there is no prestige associated with using these languages. It is assumed that an interlocutor who speaks the indigenous language will understand Spanish, although active production may not reach total fluency. Thus Spanish particles and connectives, among the most commonly-occurring words in Spanish, will be readily understood by virtually any interlocutor, during the time period in which active borrowing may be assumed. Following this point, the connective words are incorporated into the indigenous languages, albeit with a conscious tag as being of foreign origin. As in the Spanish-English bilingual interface in the United States, in bilingual areas of Latin America, indigenous particles and other connective elements are rarely introduced into Spanish-language discourse, although code-switching may be frequent.

During the Spanish colonial period, the situation in the Philippines was similar to that found in contemporary Latin America. The indigenous languages were used by the overwhelming majority of the population of all areas; unlike in Spanish America, the Spanish language never became implanted

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[12] E.g. Zentella (1997:82) for Puerto Ricans in contemporary New York City.

[13] The use of *pero* in contemporary Mexican Náhuatl exhibits patterns similar to *so*-insertion in United States Spanish. A glance at extensive transcriptions of spontaneous speech, shows that *pero*--which functions almost identically to English *so* in these cases--is more common phrase-initially than in phrase-internal contexts. The examples in question were produced by Náhuatl-Spanish bilinguals, whose handling of the two languages is similar to the use of Spanish and English by Hispanics in the United States. In Mexico, Spanish is unquestionably the dominant, prestige language, while modern Náhuatl (or *mexicano* as it is termed within Mexico) is an increasingly marginalized speech mode. The sociolinguistic configuration of Spanish and English in the United States is the mirror image of the Mexican situation, with Spanish lacking prestige and English being the dominant language. In both bilingual environments, the dominant language has contributed particles and functional words to the subordinate language, indicating a high degree of structural penetration through bilingual absorption, while the subordinate language has only contributed lexical content items to the dominant language. Data on Mayan languages are not as complete, but the transcriptions in Hofling (1991) and the various studies in Furbee-Losee (1976) also show a number of Mayan sentences which begin with *pero*, *porque*, and similar connecting elements. The sociolinguistic status of Spanish and Mayan are similar to the Spanish-Náhuatl interface, although in many rural areas of the Yucatan and Guatemala, speakers of Mayan languages are indisputably in the majority.

natively in any significant population of the Philippines, although Spanish-based creoles arose in several areas. Despite the fact that relatively few native Filipinos spoke Spanish natively or near-natively during the more than 400 years of Spanish presence, the Spanish language contributed massively to the principal native languages. A bilingual contact situation in which Spanish elements freely penetrated Philippine languages radically changed the profile of such languages as Tagalog and Cebuano, with the result that in the case of some short simple sentences, it is impossible to determine whether the base language is Spanish (with a few indigenous borrowings), Chabacano (Philippine Creole Spanish, combining both Spanish and indigenous elements) or a Philippine language.[14] It was during this time period that the large number of Spanish functional words entered the Philippine languages, where they remain today.

According to Karttunen and Lockhart (1976:35-39), another reason for the borrowing of Spanish particles into indigenous languages is the significant structural differences between the two language families, the fact that Spanish particles at times carry semantic nuances not found in the homologous indigenous elements, and the fact that Spanish particles can frequently be placed phrase- and clause-initially, which facilitates their use as a discourse marker, even when the indigenous language has a completely different word order. However, this argumentation does not carry over to the case of Spanish-English *so*-insertion. Spanish and English are typologically very similar, a fact which facilitates the large number of syntactic calques from English to Spanish produced during sustained bilingualism. This same syntactic congruity makes it difficult to claim that English functional items such as *so* occupy different positions than their Spanish homologues, or that they carry nuances of meaning unavailable in the Spanish words. Indeed, English *so* in the range of meanings examined in the present corpus is virtually identical to Spanish items such as *pues, así que, de manera que, de modo que*, etc. English *so* has the advantage of being a short monosyllabic form with a wide range of uses, as compared with the sometimes more cumbersome Spanish equivalents. The advantage in favor of English is not overwhelming, so that this factor alone is unlikely to be the principal motivation for *so*-insertion. *But* is also monosyllabic and corresponds almost always to Spanish *pero*, while *I mean* (used mostly by non-native Spanish speakers) and *you know* are usually pronounced as phonological clitics; once more there is nothing special about these elements that would facilitate their ready insertion into otherwise monolingual Spanish discourse.

9. Contexts of *so*-insertion

An examination of the contexts in which *so* (and related *you know, I mean*, etc.) occur gives a hint as to the route of penetration of these English elements in Spanish-only discourse. In the corpus of bilingual language examined for the present study, all instances of *so*-insertion function as a coordinating conjunction; I discovered not a single instance of *so* functioning as a complementizer or subordinating conjunction with the meaning `in order that.' In about 20% of the examples that I have examined, *so* is the last element in the phrase; what follows is usually a pause or hesitation. The context suggests that *so* is still operating as a coordinating conjunction:

También puede trabajar, *so* ## {Mex-Am. 35}
Estábanos cansados de pagar tanto renta, *so* ## {Mex-Am. 35}

In another 20% of the instances, *so* is found at the beginning of a phrase, either in response to a comment by the interlocutor, or in taking up the thread of an earlier discussion by the same speaker:

... *so* a veces ella se cansaba {Mex-Am. 37}
##*So* eso fue a bajar tamén aquí ... {New Mex. 2-1}
So como tres millas de Jensen {Colorado 60-1}.

[14] With many Spanish borrowings; see Lipski (1992).

In approximately the same number of cases, *so* appears phrase-internally, but set off by at least a slight pause:

Había gente que Fidel soltó de la cárcel. *So* había de todo. (Cuba-Am. A-50}
... la gente de Colombia domina, *so*, los coqueros ... {Colombia A-5}
Aquí tienen más tecnología, *so* un pequeño pueblo ... {Costa Rica A-26}
O me das tu caltera o me das tu hima. *So* soltó la caltera. {Puerto Rico A-12}
Mi acento es como los del sur. *So* yo tengo otras palabras. {New Mex. A-22}
Hicia *flood* todas las casas, *so* ... a mí me da mucho miedo. {New Mex. A-22}
No sé qué va pasar ahorita, *so* ... me pusieron en la cama. {Anglo A-77}

In the remaining cases, *so* is inserted without pause:

Pa él su herencia es muy importante *so* ende que era pequeño, él me enseñó hablar español. {New Mex. A-1}
El domingo no trabajas *so* ?vas a descansar el domingo? {Mex-Am. 41}
él no jabía ler *so* nos volvimos pa tras. {Colorado 60-1}
Estaban muy pobres *so* se casaron ... una boda en la casa. {Cuba A-4}
Siempre me ha gustado estudiar *so* creo que eso me va a ayudar. {Puerto Rico A-12}
Inglés es loco *so* yo creo es más fácil aprender español. {Anglo A-72}
Era una ciudad más grande *so* llamaron por un taxi. {Anglo A-77}

These examples provide the first clue as to the status of *so* in the examples under consideration. *So* unquestionably behaves as a coordinating conjunction, a category which is among the most amenable to bilingual code-switching between Spanish and English. Among the informants whose speech provided data for the present study, 23% used *so* only phrase-peripherally, while 36% used *so* only phrase-internally. The remaining speakers used *so* both phrase-peripherally and phrase-internally. Among speakers who used *so* only phrase-peripherally, usage was evenly divided between phrase-initial and phrase-final position. These rudimentary quantitative results hint that *so* might be first introduced into bilingual speech in phrase-peripheral position, where code-switching density is inherently lower than in phrase-internal contexts, and where the frequent use of *so* to initiate thoughts or trail off into a pause would allow *so* to function as a discourse marker--hence susceptible to production in another language--rather than as a conjunction. It is not implausible to note that in the examples under consideration, phrase-final *so* was most often followed by a thought-collecting silence rather than by an intervention of the interlocutor. At the juncture where phrase-final *so* is produced, the speakers may have lowered the threshold of the monitoring system[15] that normally keeps the discourse in a single language, to the point where a momentary slip into L_2 can occur. Similarly, phrase-initial *so* indirectly refers to a previous context, in which the speaker *qua* listener may be thinking partially in English before responding in Spanish.

The distribution of patterns of *so*-insertion is consistent with the notion that phrase-peripheral position could be an environment favorable to the initial use of *so*. If we include phrase-internal uses of *so* with at least some pause, then *so*-insertion flanking a pause represents nearly 60% of all examples. Moreover, more than 40% of the informants used *so* only phrase-peripherally (counting only cases of phrase-initial and phrase final, not instances of phrase-internal *so* with some pause). In all these cases, *so* occurs at a major prosodic boundary, but at the same time nearly always with a weak pronunciation, suggesting that *so* may be a quasi-clitic.

10. *So*-insertion as metalinguistic bracketing

The commonly inserted items *so, you know, I mean, but*, etc. have not become lexicalized as part of the Spanish grammar of bilingual speakers, although it is not inconceivable that a few individual

[15] E.g. in the sense of Albert and Obler (1978), Obler and Albert (1978).

speakers may use these items exclusively instead of their Spanish equivalents. No speaker who has been queried about use of the insertion of these elements acknowledges the words to be Spanish (all agree they are English words, capriciously inserted into Spanish). Nor is it likely that they will become lexicalized as exclusively Spanish items, under the present circumstances of bilingual interaction in the United States. English is a constant presence in the linguistic environment, and will provide an eternal reminder of the source of these words, which after all are not used by all bilingual speakers (in contrast to legitimate Spanish words, which extend to the entire speech community). Only if a bilingual variety of Spanish were to become cut off from intense contact with English, through an unforeseen demographic shift, ghettoization, or migration, would there exist the potential for *so* and the other inserted items to lose their identification as English elements.

In a very real sense, a speaker who inserts *so* and similar items into a Spanish-only discourse is simultaneously operating on a metalevel in which discourse is framed in terms of English. This is not to say that bilingual *so*-insertion represents speakers who are `thinking in English and speaking in Spanish.' The latter description is adequate only for rudimentary second-language learners. Among fluent bilinguals, even word-by-word syntactic calques are the result of momentary attempts to superimpose the two languages in particular constructions which are initially different. On the other hand, incipient second-language learners of Spanish who are still struggling with the language, will often make metacommentaries in English (e.g. *I just can't think of it*), especially but not exclusively when the interlocutor is also fluent in English. This behavior is a source of constant frustration to foreign language teachers and learners; students who are asked to interview each other, or to respond to conversational gambits by native speakers, will often highlight their difficulties by brief metacommentaries in English, as well as momentary tags and tics such as *you know, I mean, but, so*, etc. The key fact is that individuals who spontaneously and unconsciously insert *so* and similar items into monolingual Spanish discourse spend most of their day speaking English and—often against their preference—automatically turn to English when faced with new challenges or tasks.[16] This is the common denominator shared by most native bilinguals (working in an English-dominant society), Spanish-speaking immigrants who live and work outside the pale of this country's de facto Spanish-only enclaves, and native speakers of English who may use Spanish either spontaneously or when requested to do so (e.g. by teachers), but who naturally revert to English when not making a conscious effort to speak Spanish.

I suggest that the asymmetrical values which accrue to each of the two languages in the bilingual encounters under study also create the appropriate conditions for a metalevel in which English--the `official' language, and the language of evaluation, criticism, and correction--is used to set off, correct, or highlight discourse fragments presented in Spanish. The social conditions under which Spanish and English are used in most of the United States are consistent with this hypothesis. In schools, nearly all grammar and other content courses are taught in English, and switches to English in order to explain technical matters, or simply to include a larger audience, are a familiar event in the lives of most bilinguals. Spanish bilingual speakers who employ *so*-insertion almost invariably spend more time each day speaking English than Spanish, use English predominantly or exclusively at work and in school, frequently use English with most or all close family members, and spend much time in the presence of monolingual English speakers for whom any code-switching into Spanish would be inappropriate. This profile also characterizes a good number of foreign-born native Spanish speakers who became bilingual upon moving to the United States, but who for reasons of work, residence, and study, use English more frequently than Spanish. English speakers who study Spanish formally in the United States are frequently exposed to textbooks in English as well as to classroom discussions and grammatical explanations conducted partly or wholly in English. English speakers who have become bilingual through frequent contact with Spanish speakers in the United States normally adopt the full range of sociolinguistic features of the respective speech community, including code-switching in all its manifestations.

Bilingual *so*-insertion is technically a type of intrasentential code-switching, but it is qualitatively different from the code-switching patterns normally studied in the Spanish-English bilingual

[16] Phillips (1967:643) observed that informants that insert English function words like *so* into Spanish discourse speak primarily English.

community in the United States. *So* and similar items in bilingual Spanish have not been assimilated as lexical borrowings, and in most instances, do not function as pivotal elements, since they do not mark a point of transition to a switch to English or Spanish, but rather a punctuation of a discourse realized entirely in Spanish. At least among individuals who have internally adopted Spanish as the primary language, *so* signals a meta-level in which discourse in Spanish is mediated--or circumscribed--by a small group of English functional items. Discourse realized in English never passes through a Spanish-circumscribed component; this mirrors the fact that unexpected and involuntary code-switches from English to Spanish do not typically occur among the groups of speakers that spontaneously insert *so* and similar items when speaking Spanish. On the other hand, Spanish discourse is normally filtered through the English meta-system. Once more, this rudimentary model is not meant to imply that any fully fluent bilingual processes Spanish discourse through English grammatical structures. Rather, this model provides a mechanism by means of which English functional words, particularly conjunctions and complementizers, can be freely and unconsciously inserted into Spanish discourse, while the opposite shift seldom or never occurs.

Recent research (e.g. Grosjean 1995, 1996, Muysken 2000) has demonstrated that in some modes of bilingual speech both languages can be simultaneously activated. This is no better exemplified than in the fluid and unconscious introduction of *so* into Spanish discourse by a wide cross-section of bilingual speakers. These items, which may ultimately yield congruent lexicalization, arise precisely because the two grammars interact collaboratively under conditions dictated as much by social and attitudinal considerations as by linguistic abilities. This calls for a more detailed examination of the relation between political and social configurations of bilingual societies and the types of language-mixing that occur, a task already begun by Muysken (2000), among others. In particular the concept of metalinguistic bracketing by means of a targeted subset of connectives is a likely candidate for inclusion in the typology of language-mixing.

The analysis presented above indicates that the question of `base language' in a bilingual utterance containing non-assimilated material has an additional dimension, which has not often been considered to date. Even the notion of what constitutes intrasentential code switching vs. borrowing or momentary lexical insertion must also be further explored. *So*-insertion is as much a function of the sociolinguistic environment in which Spanish and English are used as it is a function of relative proficiency in each language. According to the present analysis, *so*-insertion in bilingual discourse is better treated as a diagnostic of language shift and domain of language usage, rather than solely as an exemplar of code-switching. Given the transitory nature of the phenomenon under study, the lack of reliable intuitions and even conscious awareness, the present remarks must be regarded as highly tentative. The further study of subtle aspects of bilingual discourse will aid in establishing a more adequate model of bilingual language behavior, and in developing a greater mutual understanding among groups who speak Spanish, English, and both languages together.

11. Summary of switch/borrowing typology

LEXICAL BORROWING:

- Original choice to borrow is conscious and deliberate
- Become lexicalized and is used consistently
- Becomes adapted to phonotactics and morphology of borrowing language
- Knowledge of “foreign” origin disappears
- Eventually used by monolingual individuals lacking knowledge of the donor language

INTRASENTENTIAL CODE-SWITCH

- Produced by bilingual speakers, usually those raised bilingually
- Switch may be conscious and deliberate or (apparently) unconscious
- Does not normally violate grammatical restrictions in either language
- Normally occurs in discourse in which Spanish and English are liberally used

INSERTED *SO, YOU KNOW,* ETC.

- Spontaneous use is usually unconscious

- Upon reflections, speakers are aware of "foreign" status
- Can occur in Spanish-only discourse with no other code-switching
- Used by native bilinguals, immigrants who have learned English, and English speakers who have acquired Spanish as L_2
- Not (yet?) found among monolingual speakers.

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