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Discourse as a language contact phenomenon: evidence from Mexican-American bilinguals

This article is the result of a study conducted within the theoretical framework of ethnography of communication. One of the main purposes of this study was to examine discourse strategies among Mexican-American bilinguals residing in the Los Angeles area. The examination of strategies used in oral and written conversations demonstrates the existence of numerous stylistic features. Mexican-American bilingual discourse is characterized by the use of code-switching, culturally-motivated borrowings from English and, in general, the dominance of the English language in conversation. Undoubtedly, these discursive phenomena stem from socioeconomic and cultural forces and the prestige of English as the dominant linguistic system of the American society.

Keywords: Mexican-American immigrants, Spanish-English discourse, code-switching, discourse strategies

Diskurs als Phänomen des Sprachkontakts: Analyse des Bilingualismus in der mexikanisch--amerikanischen Diaspora

Dem Beitrag liegen Untersuchungen zur Ethnografie der Kommunikation zugrunde. Eines seiner wichtigsten Ziele ist die Analyse des Diskurses der zweisprachigen mexikanisch-amerikanischen Einwohner von Los Angeles. Die Untersuchung der in mündlichen und schriftlichen Gesprächen eingesetzten Strategien zeigt das Vorkommen von zahlreichen Stileigenschaften auf. Der zweisprachige mexikanisch-amerikanische Diskurs ist durch Code-Switching, Entlehnungen mit Kulturcharakter und Dominanz des Englischgebrauchs gekennzeichnet. Quelle der erwähnten Strategien im Diskurs sind zweifellos gesellschaftlich-ökonomische und kulturelle Einflüsse, aber auch das Prestige des Englischen als dominierende Sprache der amerikanischen Gesellschaft.

Schlüsselwörter: mexikanische Immigranten, spanisch-englischer Diskurs, Code-Switching, diskursive Strategien

Dyskurs jako zjawisko kontaktu językowego: analiza bilingwizmu meksykańsko-amerykańskiej diaspory

Artykuł powstał w oparciu o badania związane z etnografią komunikacji. Jednym z głównych jego celów jest analiza dyskursu dwujęzycznych meksykańsko-amerykańskich mieszkańców Los Angeles. Badanie strategii stosowanych w rozmowach ustnych i pisemnych wykazuje istnienie licznych cech stylistycznych. Dwujęzyczny meksykańsko-amerykański dyskurs charakteryzuje się przełączaniem kodów językowych, zapożyczeniami o charakterze kulturowym oraz dominującym użyciu języka angielskiego. Źródłem wymienionych strategii dyskursu są bez wątpienia wpływy społeczno-ekonomiczne i kulturowe oraz prestiż języka angielskiego jako dominującego w społeczeństwie amerykańskim.

Słowa kluczowe: meksykańscy imigranci, dyskurs hiszpańsko-angielski, zmiana kodu językowego, strategie dyskursywne

1. Introduction

At present, since the Latino population continues to increase dramatically, with upwards of 38.8 million native Spanish speakers, Mexican immigrants living in the United States typically exhibit a wide range of language-contact phenomena. As pointed out repeatedly by Gumperz (1982: 132) in order to achieve effective communication it is important for the participants to agree on the models of discourse that they both use rather than on the type of linguistic system. Indeed, in a situation where members of various ethnic groups use different discourse models, problems in communication may occur.

The above raises interesting questions: What does language discourse reveal about Mexican immigrants residing in America? What discourse strategies are employed by Mexican-Americans in the area of Los Angeles? Thus, the surge in the field of language contact studies presented in this paper has led to in-depth analysis at an exploratory level into Spanish-English discourse. In what follows, the experiences of Mexican-American immigrants in Los Angeles are examined based on in-depth, open-ended interviews conducted in the years 2014–2018. Vivid description of language contact adds value to this account by depicting the inevitable continuum between social and linguistic factors.

2. Research design

Objective. The purpose of this study was to examine through discourse analysis bilingual discourse and other language abilities among Mexican-American bilingual immigrants residing in Los Angeles. Of uppermost importance

to the study was the way Mexican-Americans used their linguistic system in conversation and discourse, including code-switching as well as other discourse strategies. In order to provide a more explicit understanding of how and why language is used, discourse analysis was perceived in the study as the examination of a linguistic system. Vocabulary and measures of language alternation such as code-switching and English/Spanish language use were perceived as indicators of language ability (Fairclough 1989: 124–125).

The aim of the study was to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What discourse strategies are used by Mexican-American bilinguals residing in Los Angeles?
2. What does the language discourse of bilingual Mexican immigrants reveal about its speakers?

Subjects. 128 Mexican-American bilinguals (77 females, 51 males) aged between 15–56, participated in the study. All of them were residents of Los Angeles, USA. All the respondents had learnt the English language either in Mexico or America through ESL classes, public or private school attendance, and naturalistic exposure. By the time of the study they were communicating in Spanish and English languages on a daily basis.

Method. Various methods of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were employed in the present study. Qualitative examination is referred to as descriptive and it involves using words to describe the findings instead of numerical data (Bogdan 2007; Glesne and Peshkin 1992). During the research, data was obtained mainly by individual interviews conducted via Skype and online questionnaires. Additionally, correspondence via Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter enabled the gathering of language material in written form over an extended period of time. The quantitative methods for pragmatics, vocabulary, and language alternation were measured by percentage of occurrences obtained from the linguistic samples.

The discussions were based upon a previously developed questionnaire addressing cultural experiences at work and study, language acquisition, code-switching, bilingualism and general interactions. The sessions were recorded for later transcription and analysis.

Period. September 2014 – April 2018

3. Discourse strategies

Hymes (1972: 11), Prutting and Kirchner (1987: 105) and Tyler (2005: 34) point out that the language discourse is also referred to as pragmatics. In the present article discourse is defined as the rules governing the use of a linguistic system in social settings.

Mexican immigrants in America encounter two types of problems while obtaining communicative competence, that is (1) becoming proficient in speaking (i.e. semantics, morphology, syntax), and (2) learning how to use words and sentences in specific situations to trigger desired reactions (i.e. pragmatic competence).

Perhaps one of the most widely recognized concepts in this regard is that pragmatics intimately includes both the speaker and listener, the nature of their encounters, and the contexts in which these interactions occur (Silva-Corvalán 1997: 228). Bilinguals must choose a linguistic system that is suitable in a given social situation. Other authors agree: pragmatics, or discourse, is a better marker of language skills within a bilingual speech community than use of formal measures such as standardized and norm-referenced tests (Brice 2009; Brice, Mastin and Perkins 1997; Brice and Montgomery 1996; Damico, Oller and Storey 1983).

Nevertheless, discourse in English may pose a barrier for an individual learning the language due to the fact that English serves not only as a content subject, but also as a way of giving instructions. According to Faltis (1989: 117), bilingual speakers may avoid these challenges by employing alternation between their two languages.

In what follows I examine some of the discourse strategies used by Mexican-American bilinguals residing in Los Angeles:

1. Adding -s in second person singular of the preterit form.
   *Aqui estan los libros que acupastes (*instead of: *ocupaste*)
   Here are the books that you used.
   Vi cuando te caites. (instead of: *caíste*).
   I saw when you fell down.
2. Regularization of irregular participles.
   *Tuve las ropas más rompidas (*instead of: *rotas*) *en la Universidad.*
   I had the worst torn clothes at the university.
3. Using the plural morpheme -*ses* on words ending in stressed vowels.
   Mis papases (instead of: papás) vinieron de Mexico.
   My parents came from Mexico.
4. Creating words by adding an *a*-prefix.
   Se me afiguraba (instead of: *figuraba*) *como que ella no habla español.*
   I figured that she doesn't speak Spanish.

5. Using *estar* instead of *ser* in constructions with predicate adjectives[1]. It is used particularly with adjectives related to physical appearance, size, evaluation and age.
    Yo sé que es importante, pero está (instead of: *es*) *sacrificio.*
    I know it is important, but it is a sacrifice.
6. Using borrowings.
    populaciones, span. población, eng. population
    rocker/rockero, span. musico de rock, eng. rock musician/fan
    gangas, span. pandilla, eng. gangs
    bilingualismo, span. bilingüismo, eng. bilingualism
    Drawing from the collected material, borrowed nouns used by the Mexican immigrants living in Los Angeles may be classified into 10 thematic groups according to the semantic criterion (Table 1).

Thematic centre	Number of lexical items	%
Fashion and lifestyle	5	4%
Sport	13	11%
Computers and technology	17	15%
Food and drink	12	10%
Society	11	9%
Music	8	7%
Locations	10	9%
Entertainment	8	7%
Work	24	21%
Health	8	7%
Total	**116**	**100%**

Table 1. Thematic division of Spanglish words

7. The use of quotations. Mexicans borrow elements from the English language in their original version as quotations, trying to recreate the English model as closely as possible. Quotes are words and phrases that Americans use both orally and in writing in the original English form. As reproductive processes, they are characterized by a lack of grammatical determinants of adaptation. Selected examples of quotes derived from the linguistic material are as follows:

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[1] It is significant to note that the use of *estar* is very common in Spanish spoken in the area of Los Angeles. Indeed, this verb has penetrated semantic spaces which were exclusive domain of *ser*, thus, may be perceived now as the norm in informal domains within Mexican-Americans residing in Los Angeles. To read more see: Silva-Corvalán (1997: 229).

– designation-motivated quotes:

GP[2], span. médico de familia, example: *Arreglé con GP.* (I made an appointment with the GP.)

time sheet, span. la hoja de horas-trabajas, example: *Debe rellenar la hoja de time sheet.* (You must fill in the time sheet.)

tax credit, span. crédito fiscal, example: *Yo pago tax credit durante tres años.* (I have paid tax credit for 3 years.)

payslip, span. recibo de sueldo, example: *Muéstrame tu payslip.* (Show me your payslip).

– culturally-motivated quotes:

fish, span. pez, example: *Me siento como fish.* (I feel like eating fish.)

tea, span. té, example: *Voy a tomar el tea e ir.* (I will drink tea and go.)

price, span. precio, example: *Te voy a dar un buen price si quieres.* (I will give you a good price if you want.)

– stylistically-motivated quotes:

whatever, span. lo que sea, example: *Whatever, cosa que diga va a estar bien, tengo hambre.* (Whatever, just order something, I am starving.)

you know, span. ya sabes, example: *No encuentro trabajo me van a dar el beneficio, you know.* (If I don't find a job, they will give me dole, you know.)

OMG[3], dios mío, example: *OMG! Este vestido es tan caro.* (OMG! This dress is so expensive.)

never mind, span. no importa, example: *Never mind, no quiera ir con usted.* (Never mind, I do not want to go with you.)

maybe, span. tal vez, example: *No sé si voy a ir, maybe.* (I am not sure I will go with you, maybe.)

BTW[4], span. a propósito, example: *By the way, has oído hablar de esta nueva película?* (By the way, did you hear about this new movie?)

ASAP[5], span. lo antes possible, example: *Necesito esto ASAP.* (I need this ASAP.)

The examples presented in the conducted research, faithfully imitating the English originals, makes up only a part of the collected linguistic material. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that all of the adjectives presented in the study have been adopted as quotations and retained the original English spelling; they have not been subject to morphological adaptation. As is visible in the examples presented below, all of them are also culturally-motivated quotations:

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[2] GP – acronym: general practitioner.

[3] OMG – acronym: oh my God.

[4] BTW – acronym: by the way.

[5] ASAP – acronym: as soon as possible.

span. *Mi novio habló con ella. Estoy **jealous***! (My boyfriend talked with her. I am so jealous!)

span. *No quiero hablar. Estoy **tired***. I do not want to speak. I am tired.)

span. *¿Qué estamos haciendo esta noche? He terminado el trabajo que (...). Estoy **free***! (What are we doing in the evening? I finished my work (…). I'm free!)

span. *¿Qué estás haciendo? ¿estás **crazy***?* (What are you doing? Are you crazy?)

8. Use of words adapted phonologically. Among the most frequent forms of phonological and orthographic adaptations are the following:

– addition of a final vowel:

*bos**a***, span. la jefa/el jefe, eng. boss

*ruf**o***, span. techo, eng. roof

*cauch**o***, sofa, eng. couch

*nors**a***, enfermera, eng. nurse

– addition of a final vowel and shift of stress to the penultimate syllable:

marqueta [malkkta], span. Mercado, eng. market

furnitura [fulnit~ira], span. mueble, eng. furniture

carpeta [kalpkta], span. alfombra, eng. carpet

– change of /r/to [l] in syllable final position:

norsa [nolsa], span. enfermera, eng. nurse

frizer [frisel], span. congelador, eng. freezer

army [almi], span. ejército, eng. army

foreman [folman], span. capataz, eng. foreman

mister [mihtel], span. señor, eng. mister

– change of [m] to [g] in final position:

o*vertime* [obeltayg], span. horas extraordinarias, eng. overtime

room [rug], span. habitación, eng. room

– reduction of clusters or omission of a final consonant:

lipstick [lihti], span. lápiz labial, eng. lipstick

saibo [saybol], span. aparador, eng. sideboard

department store [deparmenehtol], span. grandes almacenes, eng. department store

sweater, [suera][6], span. suéter, eng. sweater

– epenthesis:

gauchiman, span. sereno, eng. watchman

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[6] Interestingly, the attested spelling [suera] stems from articulatory similarities between Spanish /r/, which is a single-tap voiced alveolar, and the English voiced variant of /t/ in intervocalic position, which is voiced *alveolar stop*. Thus, as Orsi (2008: 46) cogently argues, an English-speaking person with voiced /t/ may make no distinction between *latter* and *ladder*. In such cases, the speaker of Spanglish hears /r/, and as a result he/she uses the *r* grapheme.

–   interpretation of *ge* as [he]:
     tinager [tinahel], span. adolescente, eng. teenager
9.   Use of words adapted morphologically. Perhaps the most persistent example
     is the use of both the feminine articles *la* and *las* and the masculine articles
     el and *los* by bilingual speakers. In fact, not only do these articles agree in
     number and gender with their nouns, but also some of them adopt the gender
     of the Spanish words they replace (*el rufo*[7] instead of *el techo*)[8].

Singular masculine	Plural masculine	Singular feminine	Plural feminine	English	Spanish
-	-	la troka	las trokas	the truck	la camioneta
-	-	la jaiwei	las jaiweis	the highway	la autopista
el rufo	los rufos	-	-	the roofs	los techos
el lonche	los lonches	-	-	the lunch	el almuerzo

Table 2. Gender and number assignments to English nouns in Spanglish (own elaboration based on the Skype interviews)

Furthermore, numerous nouns appear in both masculine and feminine forms, following the pattern of gender marking in such pairs as *la hermana* (sister) and *el hermano* (brother), for instance *la bosa* and *el bos* (boss) (Table 2 above).

Going back to the Mexican immigrants' comments, as illustrated in Table 3, it seems that some verbs in bilingual speech are created by addition to the productive infinitive of the suffixes *ar*, -*ear*, and –*iar*, a.k.a. infinitive markers. New verbal forms reflect the everyday life activities that are the primary source of Spanish vocabulary. If used in written form, these new formations may adopt various spellings, depending on either the speaker's familiarity with the English form or the frequency of adaptation occurrence. Indeed, numerous common expressions, as well as words, for example *parquear* (to park), have a well-established orthographic format, which is visible within all social classes. Others are in a state of flux with regard to spelling, but not pronunciation.

According to the interviewees, at home, one hears *bakear* (to bake), *mopear* (to mop), *heatear* (to heat), *freezear* (to freeze), *vacuunear* (to vacuum); in the office: *taipear* (to type), *chequear* (to check); and in sports, *pitchear* (to pitch), *catchear* (to catch), *hitear* (to hit), *trainear* (to train), *bowlear* (to bowl). One may

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[7] Eng. roof.
[8] Exceptions include: *la marqueta* (also *la marketa*), which replaced *el mercado*, and *el window*, replacing *la Ventana*.

also hear *lonchear* (to eat lunch), *flirtear* (to flirt), and many other new creations appearing each day with no loss of intelligibility.

Spanglish	English	Spanish
Liquear	to leak	Perder
Chatear	to chat	Charlar
Bakear	to bake	Cocer
Formatear	to format	dar forma
Nerdear	to do things nerds do	actuar como un *nerd*

Table 3. Examples of infinitives in Spanglish

Moreover, among the six informants, the affix *[-eando]* was used in a similar way to English *-ing* for creating the progressive forms of verbs. For example, this correspondence was visible in one of the participants comments: "Yo estoy chateando con mi madre […]" (eng. I am chatting with my mom […]).

10. The use of code-switching. The classification offered in the present study categorizes language change into the following groups that will shortly be discussed (Muysken 2000: 221):

– Alternation: alternation between the structures of languages A and B.
  Structure A - B.

– Insertion: insertion of elements (i.e. words) from one language into another.
  A single element of language B is incorporated into the structure of A.
  Structure A - B - A.

– Congruent lexicalization: grammatical structure is common to the languages A and B; elements from both languages appear with varying frequencies.
  Structure: A - B - A - B.

Table 4 summarizes the number of switches present in each Skype and Facebook conversation analyzed for each category.

Alternation	Insertion	Congruent lexicalization	Total
226	298	105	629

Table 4. Number of switches in Skype/Facebook conversations

The research reveals that alternation is a common strategy of mixing language codes. Building on closer analysis of the participants' narratives about personal experience of Spanglish, it can also be presumed that the sociolinguistic aspect is of the uppermost importance. Mexican immigrants very often use Spanish and English alternation. Here are some fragments of conversations using social media, in which alternational CS was used:

Example 1: Conversation between two friends:

Martina: *I was learning whole day!!!But enough already.*

Lucia: **Ya basta.** (Stop it) *It's a Friday, it's summer and I feel like dancing.*
O como dicen en México, es viernes y el cuerpo lo sabe. (As they said in Mexico,
it is Friday and the body knows it)

Martina: *Ya basta with the news. We need #PaisaZumba.*

Lucia: *Ok but where should we go???*

Martina: **No lo sé.** (I don't know)

Lucia: *Maybe to the Paulo's disco?* **¿Querrías bailar conmigo?** (Will you
dance with me?)

Martina: *:D Sure!*

Example 2. Conversation between a girlfriend and her boyfriend:

Daniela: **¡Hola!** (Hi!) *How are you darling?*

Lucas: **¡Hola querida!** (Hi my darling!) *Bien gracias, and you?*

Daniela: *I'm OK.* ☹ **¡Tanto tiempo sin verte!** (I didn't see you for such a long
time!)

Lukas: *Maybe we will see this weekend? I will finish earlier. Maybe I will ask
my boss for a day off* 💻

Daniela: **¡Buena suerte!** (Good luck!) *He will never let you go before Christmas* ☹

Lukas*:* **¡No se preocupe!** (Don't worry!) *We will figure something out* 💻

Example 3. Conversation between friends:

Ernesto: **¿Qué tal?** (How are you?) *When do you have this bizz trip?* Anne:
Next week. But I still have a lot to do. **Necesito ayuda** ☹ (I need help) Ernesto:
Will your boss come with you?

Anne: *Nope, only Andre.*

Ernesto: **¿Quièn?** (Who?)

Anne: *He works in Legals [Legal Department]. Going out together to
integrate with the pack today. Maybe you will join us?*

Ernesto: *I can't.*

Anne: **¿Por què?** (Why?)

Ernesto: *Seeing Anna today.* **¡Diviértete!** (Have fun!) 💻

Anne: *You, too.* **Hasta luego.** (See you later)

The second strategy of code-switching is to add a second/other language
element. Many researchers refer to this process as *insertional CS*, a.k.a. *classic
CS*[9] (Muysken 2000: 8; Gabryś-Barker 2007: 290). In one additional study,

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[9] In point of fact, in her research, Gabryś-Barker (2007:290) also often refers to this type of
CS as *intersentential*.

Myers-Scotton's (2006: 240–242) analysis of the classic type of CS has received scholarly attention since, as the author states, "codes switching includes elements from two (or more) language varieties in the same clause, but only one of these varieties is the source of the morphosyntactic frame for the clause" (2006: 241).

Examples of insertion:

*Creo que estoy **in love**.*
(I think I am -//-).
*¿**Where** lo compraste?*
(-//- did you buy it?)
*Dame esas fotos porque las chicas **chasing me** desde la mañana.*
(Give me those photos because girls -//- me from the morning.)
*¡Te deseo **all the best**!*
(I wish you -//-!)
Siempre están juntos - él *es su alma **soulmate**.*
(They are always together, he is her -//-.)
*It was really nice to have gone and spent some time with **la familia**.*
(-//- with family)
*We had a kick-ass **pachanga** for Anna.*
(-//- dance -//-)
***Dios mío**, I don't have a job right now.*
(Oh God, -//-)

A large number of the dysfluent mixing examples coincide with instances of fluent code-switching characterized as *congruent lexicalization*, in particular the notion of "words inserted more or less randomly" (Muysken 2000: 8). From the wealth of data provided, two reasons for this apparent randomness of the linguistic blend can be identified: (1) shared structures between the two languages and (2) limited proficiency in the second language resulting in "gap filling" by means of words from the speakers' first language. In fact, this gap-filling process occurs freely when there is also at least some shared knowledge of the speakers' first language. Surprisingly enough, the more or less random nature of language mixing is at least as apparent in the dysfluent cases investigated here as in any of the examples of fluent bilingual language mixing presented by scholars who have adopted congruent lexicalization as a category of code-switching.

Examples of congruent lexicalization:

*Este **city** es un **big traffic** (sic!).*
(In the -//- is -//-)
*Fue **the best** vacaciones **ever** (sic!).*
(It was -//- holidays -//-)
*Usted y su **boyfriend** está **together** en el certificado.*
(You and your -//- are -//- on the certificate.)

4. Conclusions and directions for further research

In conclusion, having briefly investigated processes involved in discourse analysis in the context of the Mexican-American community, it must be noted that this vast area of evolving exploration, together with the size and scope of this article, have not permitted anything close to a comprehensive study of the issues in question. Nonetheless, the research study addresses some of the topics that the issue raises and thus expose some of the phenomena that characterize the discourse of the given Mexican-American speech community in Los Angeles.

The examination of strategies used in oral and written conversations exhibit the existence of numerous stylistic features used by the speakers in the area of Los Angeles. The preliminary data collected from spontaneous oral discourse and structured interviews demonstrates that the existence of these phenomena is caused by socioeconomic and cultural forces and the prestige of English as the dominant linguistic system of American society.

As demonstrated by the research, Mexican-American bilinguals use numerous discourse strategies, including addition of *a-* prefix, regularization of irregular participles, the use of quotations, code-switching, words adapted morphologically and phonologically. In fact, the stronger the exposure to the English language, the higher the number of borrowings used by the bilingual speakers. What is also important to note is the fact that the male Mexican-American participants in the study who were professionally active use English more frequently. Thus, they usually become the initiators of the use of borrowed words and code-switching in their social network. As an example, Daniel interacts with English-speakers on a daily basis at work and used 63 percent of the borrowings used by the total of five of his family members. Daniel uses words that are not completely incorporated into the morpho-syntax of Spanish, such as *bank holiday* (span. *feriado bancario*), *boss* (span. *la jefa/ el jefe*), *staff* (span. *el personal*), *team leader* (span. *líder*). Likewise, culturally-motivated quotes also appeared in Daniel's discourse: *discount* (for example: ¿Tiene *algún descount para estudiantes?* 'Do you have any students' discounts?'), *price* (for example: *Te voy a dar un buen price si quieres*. 'I will give you a good price if you want.'), *home* (for example: *Me quedo en home.* 'I am staying home.') as well as other semantic extensions such as *marqueta* (span. *mercado*, 'market'), *forma* (span. *formulario*, 'form').

Research question number two seems to be supported by the data which exhibit the dominance of English use in the oral conversation of bilinguals. During the investigation three hundred forty-five utterances were studied for the occurrence of English (59.4%), Spanish (25.5%), and code-switching (15.1%). Mexican-American bilinguals expressed greater use of language alternations through code-switching strategies during which participants inserted Spanish phrases into their

English sentences in the middle of discourse. Alternation between two languages spanned from single-word switches (70%) to phrase switches (20%) and clause switches (10%). These users of language have a strong command of both grammars: they are able to combine the two linguistic systems without violating the rules of either of them. As Brice (2009: 115) cogently argues, such a skillful and flowing exchange between two linguistic systems is a demonstration of high-level language and cognitive skills in both English and Spanish.[10]

To sum up, a truly bilingual person is not the sum of two monolinguals but a unique speaker and listener created by the two linguistic systems coexisting together (Grosjean 1989: 3–15). Thus, in the present study it is postulated that bilingual people demonstrate their cognitive skills in ways that are different from monolingual speakers and this may be evidenced in their discourse. As some qualitative comments imply, Mexican immigrants may encounter some English vocabulary and pronunciation problems, grammar errors, and even loss of Spanish abilities[11]. Thus, further studies exploring the nature of how two languages coexist and interact, positively or negatively, make up what is still a new field of research which merits additional examination. It is recommended that further studies employ a greater range of conversational topics in obtaining language samples.

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[10] According to numerous scholars, code-switching is a highly complex and structured occurrence composed of sociolinguistic strategies, which envelop a syntactical system with very real constraints (i.e. Equivalent Constraint, Free Morpheme Constraint). See: Poplack, Sankoff and Miller (1988), Rothman and Rell (2005), Bartmiński (2016).

[11] A difficulty was evident when participants used a word-for-word direct translation of a Spanish phrase to English. This is exemplified in the following quotes: *Está p´arriba de ti*. (General Spanish: *Depende de us*. 'It's up to you.), *Llamar pa´trás* (General Spanish: *Está p´arriba de ti*. 'to call back'). An example of yet another difficulty was noted when a Mexican-American bilingual confessed that she cannot pronounce the sound / tʃ/ while saying 'cheat' or 'chocolate'.

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