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# ENGLISH LOANWORDS IN CHICANO SPANISH: CHARACTERIZATION AND RATIONALE

*Robert N. Smead*

## **Introduction**

One highly visible, often stigmatized feature of Chicano Spanish is lexical innovation due to intimate contact with English and the mainstream culture. As noted in table 1, these Anglicisms are the result of varying degrees of host language adaptation and integration and include at least three distinct types of innovations: the lexical switch, the loanword, and the calque.

TABLE 1

*Typology of Lexical Innovations in Chicano Spanish*

<b>Lexical Switch</b>	<b>Loanword</b>	<b>(Phrasal) Calque</b>
high school	jaiscul	escuela alta

This typology is based on a model originally proposed by Garcia and Otheguy (1988) and revised in Clegg and Smead (1989) and Smead and Clegg (1996). Our revisions include the addition of the category of lexical switch and an application of Haugen's (1972) notions of *importation* (I) and *substitution* (S). Succinctly stated, importation replicates a particular linguistic level of the model in the host language, while substitution accomodates a specific linguistic level of the model to the patterns of the host language. For the purposes of this paper, I have also proposed the criterion of *syntactic integration* (see, for example, Gardner-Chloros 1987; Poplack et al. 1988) whereby, in this case, the replica is assigned a gender and functions ostensibly like any other Spanish noun. Table 2 includes the relevant parameters and the corresponding values for the categories delineated above.

The notion that a lexical switch may constitute an instantiation of borrowing receives support from Appel and Muysken's observation that "there may be different degrees of phonological adaptation [for a contact neologism] and it is not evident that all non-adapted items are clearly cases of code-mixing" (1989:172). Indeed, the characterization of distinct, yet related, types of bilingual behavior such as *spontaneous borrowing* (Peñalosa 1980) and socially integrated borrowing is frequently based on nonlinguistic criteria. Thus, the distinction between *nonce* or *idiosyncratic* borrowings on the one hand and established borrowings on the other, as Poplack and Sankoff (1984) discuss, is related to at least four extralinguistic factors: (1) frequency of appearance, (2) dispersion across

TABLE 2  
Typology of *Anglicisms*

	Lexical Switch <i>high school</i>	Loanword <i>jaiscul</i>	(Phrasal) Calque <i>escuela alta</i>
<i>Levels</i>			
Phonological	I	S	S
Morphological	I	S/I*	S
Semantic	I	I	I
Syntactic			
Integration	V**	F**	F**

\*Lexeme is imported; affixes may be imported or substituted.

\*\*Gender assignment (as evidence of syntactic integration) may be variable (V) or fixed (F).

social contexts, (3) displacement of native-language synonyms, and (4) native-speaker acceptability. Murphy (1974) applied similar criteria in an attempt to determine the degree of lexical integration of a number of attested Anglicisms among speakers of Chicano Spanish in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

According to Otheguy and Garcia's model (1988), calquing was assumed to exist on the word and phrasal levels. Studies such as Otheguy et al. (1989) and Smead and Clegg (1996) have validated the construct of the calque word. Moreover, Lipski (1985) provides a detailed illustration of a putative phrasal calque in his treatment of the construction *pa(ra) (a)trás* ascribing a limited role to the English language model 'back' in its formation and dissemination. However, Otheguy himself, in a paper published in 1991, makes the case that some loan translations are merely mislabeled semantic extensions. Such is the case with *escuela alta*: the qualitative adjective occupies the unmarked position in the replica, which differs from the order in the model (that is, *\*alta escuela* does not obtain). What is innovative about this putative phrasal calque is not the syntactic configuration of the replica, but the use of *alta* (which generally refers to physical dimensions) instead of *superior*. Otheguy (1991) also argues that other loan translations are the result of "cultural or conceptual modeling" and cannot be regarded as linguistic innovations. My inclusion of the category of (phrasal) calque in tables 1 and 2 is merely an attempt to represent, as completely as possible, the role that American English and U.S. culture have played in the lexicon of Chicano Spanish.

It is the category of loanword that constitutes the focus of this paper. Utilizing a representative corpus of Chicano Anglicisms, I characterize some 840 loanword tokens in terms of five descriptive analyses: (1) model source and mode of transmission, (2) representation among lexical categories, (3) representation in selected semantic fields, (4) geolinguistic diffusion, and (5) token redundancy. Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, I argue that the "acquired behavior of borrowing" (Poplack et al. 1988), as exemplified by the Chicano loanword, responds to a set of sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic factors that have been slighted or overlooked in previous research.

## Descriptive Analyses of DEC Loanwords

### *Methodological Considerations*

The methodology for the Chicano lexicon project has been described in detail in Clegg and Smead (1988), Clegg and Smead (1989), and Smead and Clegg (1996). In brief, our corpus derives from *El diccionario del español chicano* (DEC), which is clearly the most authoritative and scholarly work of its kind.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of the DEC entries represents the culmination of some thirty years of fieldwork in Texas Spanish by the senior compiler, Roberto A. Galván. Supplementary, secondary sources also based principally on fieldwork by other researchers were carefully reviewed prior to their inclusion in the DEC. Thus, while some forms are quite dated (having achieved currency in the forties and fifties), there can be little doubt that all entries are nonetheless legitimate, authentic, attested Chicano Spanish forms.

Entries from the DEC were extracted and catalogued in a computerized database, which allowed us to cross-reference pertinent entries in regional lexicons as well as consultant recognition responses.

Several works facilitated the classification of an item as an Anglicism. These included Cerda et al. (1953), Santamaría (1942 and 1959), Alfaro (1964), Morinigo (1966), Velasco Valdts (1967a and 1967b), Teschner (1972), and for the present paper Sala et al. (1982). In terms of tokens, approximately 1060 (12% of 8,544 database entries) can be classified as Anglicisms. As Smead and Clegg (1996) report, some 126 entries are English calque words (representing 12% of the Anglicisms and 1.5% of all lexical entries). An additional 840 entries (79% of the Anglicisms and almost 10% of all lexical entries) can be classified as English loanwords. Of the 94 remaining forms (approximately 9% of the Anglicisms), the majority falls into the category of phrasal calques.

### *Model Source and Mode of Transmission*

The English loanword is virtually ubiquitous in the Spanish-speaking world. Therefore, its mere presence in the lexicon of Mexican American speakers of Spanish is not a distinguishing feature of this particular variety. However, one principal difference between the Chicano loanword and what I have termed the *generalized loanword* (one that has achieved wide currency) is the source of the model and the dominant mode of transmission. As Hernández-Chávez et al. (1975, viii) observe, the majority of Chicano Anglicisms have entered through interaction with the spoken word rather than via print media (as is the case with most widely disseminated Anglicisms). Higa, who investigated Anglicisms in a Hawaiian variety of Japanese, confirms the existence of these two modes of transmission, noting additionally that "intellectuals tend to borrow foreign words through the eye while others borrow through the ear" (1979, 284). Perhaps the most salient feature of the English loanword disseminated via an oral/aural mode is its distinctive pattern of phonological adaptation. Compare the following doublets (where the first item represents an *oral/aural* loanword and the second derives from a written model): *bos/bas* versus (*auto*)*bús* 'bus'; *suera* versus *suéter* 'sweater'. If one posits the oral/aural mode as dominant for this variety of Spanish, approximately 84% of the English loanword tokens are consistent with that mode of transmission and dissemination (i.e., the form attested to in the DEC shows no evidence of graphemic transfer). In the remaining 16% a written or hybrid model is hypothesized to play some role in the creation and dissemination of the loanword.

### *Representation among Lexical Categories*

The loanword tokens fall into four lexical categories: nouns (74%), verbs (20%), modifiers (4%), discourse markers (2%). Thus, the vast majority of Chicano loanwords are nouns, followed by verbs (at less than one-third the total of the nouns). These two categories alone account for 94% of all loanword tokens.

Modifiers, of which all but two tokens are adjectivals, and discourse markers account for the remaining 6%. This latter category includes lexical items that demonstrate little syntactic dependency, such as greetings: *jaló, aló, alo* 'hello'; leave-takings: *(bai) bai, babay* '(bye-)bye'; vocatives: *míster* 'mister', *madama* 'madame' (maid's address to women employers), *jone, joni* 'honey', *quiro* 'kiddo'; and interjections and imprecations: *¡falláu!* 'far out!', *¡¡i lore!* '(oh) Lordy', *(sana)babiche* '(son) of a bitch'. While these borrowed discourse markers add up to only 2% of all loanword tokens, they provide a glimpse into the intimate coexistence of Spanish and English in the Mexican American community.

### *Representation in Selected Semantic Fields*

Three semantic fields were selected for analysis. Two of these, the automobile (internal combustion engine) and sports/recreation correspond to semantic fields that include a significant number of generalized Anglicisms. The third, academia, corresponds to a set of principally English language experiences for the Chicano. The results of this analysis are summarized as follows:

**Automobile** (11%): *breca/breque* 'brake', *bómpen/bompa* 'bumper', *cloche* 'clutch', *detur/ditur* 'detour', *Doche* 'Dodge', *fletearse* '(to) go flat?', *güinchil* 'windshield', *ovaroles/overoles* 'overalls', *pícap/pícop* 'pick-up', *cámpen, quémper, quémper* 'camper', *reca/reque/réquer* 'wrecker', *rin* 'rim', *troca/troque* 'truck', *yaque/yec* 'jack'.

**Sports and Recreation** (14%): *ace* 'ace, person who excels in an activity', *cachar/quechar* '(to) catch', *chutiar/chutar* '(to) shoot', *dribliar* '(to) dribble', *escor* 'score', *faubol/fáubol* 'foul ball', *füldiar* '(to) field', *naquiado* 'knocked-out', *pícha/pícher* 'pitcher', *pimpón* 'ping-pong', *pul* 'pool, billiards', *ranquear* '(to) rank', *riley, riley* 'relay', *socar* '(to) soak, sucker, clean out in a game of chance', *tochdáun/tochdaun* 'touchdown'.

**Academia** (7%): *chiriar* '(to) cheat', *espeletiar* '(to) spell (it)', *deán* 'dean', *juqui* 'hookey', *ricés* 'recess', *sainear* '(to) sign one's name', *taipear* '(to) type', *tícha/tícher* 'teacher'.

### *Geolinguistic Diffusion*

Geolinguistic diffusion of the DEC loanword tokens was measured in terms of the appearance of a given form in the regional lexicons cited. Some 64% of all loanword tokens are found exclusively in the United States, while 14% are attested to in Mexico and the Caribbean/Central America. Approximately 15% have reached South America (at least Venezuela and Colombia). The remaining 7% cannot be classified unambiguously due to contradictions in the sources consulted.

An additional measure was provided by two adult, female consultants (from Chihuahua, Mexico, and Andalucia, Spain, respectively), both of whom responded to oral queries regarding their knowledge of the item in question and its meaning. The con-

sultant from Chihuahua recognized 22% of the loanword tokens, and the Andalusian recognized 7%.

### *Token Redundancy*

This analysis was performed on the data in order to provide a more accurate estimate of the extent of English influence on the Chicano lexicon. As table 3 indicates, the token file contains a large number of redundancies due to five factors: (1) model source and mode of transmission (oral/aural versus written), (2) ambiguous phonemic assignment, (3) phonotactic variation (canonical form), (4) phonetic/orthographic variation, and (5) inclusion of semantically transparent derivatives.

TABLE 3

#### *Token Redundancy in the DEC Corpus*

*Tokens (entries in the DEC) N = 840 Types (redundancies eliminated) N = 520*

#### **Model Source and Transmission**

Oral/Aural	Graphemic	Model
<i>Babito</i>	<i>Bobito</i>	'Bobby'
<i>chat</i>	<i>chot</i>	'injection'
<i>daiame</i>	<i>dimo</i>	'dime'
<i>güensta</i>	<i>gángster</i>	'gangster'
<i>paipa</i>	<i>pipa</i>	'(water) pipe'

#### **Ambiguous Phonemic Assignment**

Assignment	Model
/a/	/æ/
<i>brandi</i>	'brandy'
<i>naquin</i>	'nap kin'
<i>yas</i>	'jazz'
/a/	/ʌ/
<i>bas</i>	'bus'
<i>blaf</i>	'bluff'
<i>flanquear</i>	'(to) flunk'

#### **Phonotactic Variation**

-Adapted	+Adapted	Model
<i>aiscrim</i>	<i>aiscrín</i>	'ice cream'
<i>brich</i>	<i>briche</i>	'bridge'
<i>choc</i>	<i>chocle</i>	'chalk'
<i>lipistic</i>	<i>lipistique</i>	'lipstick'
<i>straique</i>	<i>estraiقة</i>	'strike (out)'

TABLE 3 continued

Phonetic/Orthographic Variation		
Variants		Model
<i>cinc, sinc</i>		'sink'
<i>cho, chou, sho</i>		'show'
<i>güeldear, huedear (-iar)</i>		'(to) weld'
<i>liquear, liquellar</i>		'to leak'
<i>queique, queque, quequi</i>		'cake'
Semantically Transparent Derivatives		
Root	Model	Derivations
<i>bet</i>	'bat'	<i>betear, beteo, betero</i>
<i>fon</i>	'fun'	<i>fone, fonazo, fonis</i>
<i>guain</i>	'wine'	<i>enguaynarse, guainero</i>
<i>lonch</i>	'lunch'	<i>lonchar, lonchería</i>
<i>map</i>	'mop'	<i>mape, mapear, mapiador</i>

### Borrowing: A Sociolinguistic Perspective

Borrowing that is motivated by gaps in the lexicon of the host language is generally considered acceptable or even necessary. Most cultural borrowing (resulting in generalized Anglicisms, in this instance) can be traced to the introduction of some new referent and the corresponding linguistic sign. However, most purists, such as Alfaro (1964), see the intimate borrowing that takes place in the Chicano community as pernicious because no such motivation is apparent. Their shrill refrain points to the existence of perfectly adequate Spanish terms and laments the impoverishing effect that the "superfluous Anglicism" has. Such a reaction is unwarranted and ignores important sociolinguistic realities.

As Otheguy and Garcia assert, "novelty is in the mind of the speaker of the contact dialect" (1988,211). In other words, the existence of a lexical gap may not be appreciated by the academician who speaks a variety of Spanish that is quite distant (not only regionally, but socioeconomically, too) from Mexican American varieties. Little wonder, then, that outsiders who merely tap their own intuitions and consult a Spanish-language dictionary or two would find many Chicano Anglicisms superfluous!

When viewed from the proper perspective, however, approximately two-thirds (68%) of the DEC English-loanword tokens respond to a neologistic inducement. Indeed, I find Espinosa's observation regarding New Mexican Spanish around the turn of the century equally applicable to the contemporary Chicano situation. He states:

As a rule, the English words adopted have no Spanish equivalent. In most cases the adoption of the English word has not been a case of fashion, luxury in speech, neglect of Spanish, or mere desire of imitating the language of the invaders, but an actual convenience and necessity. (1975, 102)

A second inducement to borrowing among Mexican Americans is related to the effects of experiencing significant, domain-related activities in English. That is to say, although the Chicano bilingual is capable of assimilating linguistic input in two languages, it is rare for a recurring activity not to be primarily associated with single-language variety. Since English serves as a vehicle for experiencing much of what occurs in the public domain, it becomes intertwined with certain daily activities. One way Spanish-English bilinguals may resolve the linguistic tension created by this asymmetry is to introduce English loanwords into their Spanish. These facts have not escaped the attention of other researchers. Sánchez (1983, 122-24) provides a summary of the Chicano experience on the basis of prominent public-domain-related English loanwords. In a similar vein, Ramírez (1992, 193-98) notes that among Mexican American adolescents in Texas and New Mexico the largest number of Anglicisms belongs to semantic fields that are associated with the public domain. Indeed, Green and Garcia assert the following:

English terms borrowed by Spanish are generally from the public domain because English is the language of school, work, sporting events, public administration and politics, and [to a lesser degree] mass communication. (1989, 81-82, interpolation mine)

Haugen, interpreting a similar set of circumstances among Norwegian Americans, eloquently expounds the role that this factor plays. He observes:

Without affectation and snobbishness they were speaking an Americanized tongue to each other before they were fully aware of what was happening to them. The needs of understanding and of social solidarity were most effortlessly met by the gradual infiltrations of loans. These were not limited to actual cultural novelties or so-called necessary words; the terms most characteristic of the new environment were often impressed upon their minds by mere repetition in vivid situations. Their experience in the new language began to outstrip their experience in the old, and the discrepancy set up a pressure which led to linguistic change. (1969, 372)

### **Borrowing: Psycholinguistic Correlates**

Beneath the sociolinguistic dimensions discussed above lies a psycholinguistic reality that remains largely unexplored. To paraphrase Haugen, how is it that unfamiliar English-language terms are impressed upon the Chicano's mind? In other words, how are the English models (principally root morphemes) acquired aurally in an unstructured learning environment? In responding to these questions, there are three interrelated factors, I believe, that merit discussion. To begin with, some principle of linguistic simplicity seems to be involved. Poplack et al. (1988, 60) conjecture that morphologically simple French-Canadian Anglicisms are preferred to more complex indigenous terms. Higa (1979, 285) found syllabic length to correlate with the acceptance of English loanwords in Hawaiian Japanese: a contact neologism was more readily disseminated as a loanword if the competing calque word contained more syllables than its counterpart. He also discovered that polysyllabic loanwords were frequently abbreviated to a two- or three-syllable form.

Table 4 presents eight measures of linguistic complexity for the loanword types. The model as perceived by the Spanish-dominant ear constitutes the unit of analysis. Such models typically consist of a root morpheme; the accompanying (derivational) affixes were only included when they were judged to be semantically opaque.

TABLE 4

*Cumulative Percent Representation of Phonemic, Syllabic, and Morphemic Complexity of English-Loanword Types in the DEC*

Phonemes			Syllables			Morphemes	
<=3	<=5	<=7	=1	<=2	<=3	=1	<=2
21%	71%	92%	47%	86%	97%	70%	95%

By any measure, the loanword tokens can be considered linguistically simple: 71% of all tokens contain five phonemes or less; 86% consist of one or two syllables; 95% are composed of no more than two morphemes.

According to research summarized in Aitchison (1987, 118–21), initial and terminal sequences of unfamiliar words are psycholinguistically salient. That is, when a tip-of-the-tongue state is induced, word beginnings and endings (which do not correspond neatly to syllabic or morphemic divisions) can be accessed, although the entire word may be unretrievable. Another slightly less salient position corresponds to the stressed syllable. Since nearly all the DEC loanword types consist of minimally complex initial and terminal sequences where the stressed vowel or syllable occupies the middle of the word, the entire model remains accessible to the Spanish-dominant bilingual.

Further insight into the psychological processes that underlie borrowing is provided by research in vocabulary acquisition among first- and second-language learners. With regard to learning vocabulary in one's native tongue, it is clear that most new items are apprehended in context, as Sternberg (1987), among others, has noted. That is to say, most vocabulary learning takes place in natural(istic) conditions. Second-language researchers have found that between six and twelve repetitions of an item in a variety of contexts lead to its acquisition (Brown 1993, 265). Brown's own research points to the frequency of occurrence in general as well as in specific social milieus as facilitating factors. She also discovered that words that are central to understanding the topic in question or for which a concept (signified) exists but no term (signifier) is readily available are easily acquired.

It is certain that the English models for Chicano loanwords as well as the loanwords themselves occur naturally and frequently in a variety of specific and general contexts. Moreover, as has been shown, terms that fill a particular lexical gap as well as those that are central to the Chicano experience have been borrowed.

The role that repetition plays in the acquisition of the loanword is further clarified by research into lexical access and retrieval. It is well-known that (auditory) repetition can lead to what is termed the word frequency effect: the more familiar or frequent a word is, the easier it is to access and retrieve. Furthermore, as Miller (1991, 142) notes, any member of a morphologically related word family can prime the others—thus the repetition need not be exact. Teschner, describing the situation among Mexican Americans in Chicago, has summarized the role that repetitions play, affirming that "[since] the pressure of English words and phrases is ceaseless and ubiquitous, many Spanish-speakers have simply come to use what they so often hear" (1972, 1071).

## Summary and Conclusions

It is now possible to provide a summary of the principal characteristics of English loanwords in the DEC. Most are nouns (74%) or verbs (20%), and the vast majority (84%) have been disseminated in an oral/aural mode. Almost two-thirds of the tokens are exclusively U.S. Spanish. Nearly one-third is present in some variety of American Spanish (primarily Mexican). Approximately one-quarter of the tokens are found in *norteño* (Northern Mexican Spanish) and a significant percentage of the loanwords (7%) is found as far away as southern Spain. Finally, representation in three semantic fields amounted to slightly less than one-third of the loanword tokens. Or, viewed another way, almost 70% of the tokens fall into semantic fields other than those investigated here.

In terms of inducements to borrowing, a majority of the loanword tokens (68%) respond to lexical need (when viewed from an ethnosensitive perspective). Another important sociolinguistic factor that plays a significant role in loanword creation and dissemination is the strong tendency for a particular language variety to be intimately intertwined with recurring, domain-related activities. Thus, while the Chicano bilingual receives linguistic input in both languages, English is most often heard/spoken in the public domain. It is hypothesized that the introduction of English loanwords into Spanish discourse facilitates the communication process and eases linguistic tension.

Several psycholinguistic factors underlie the borrowing process. These include linguistic simplicity, frequency of occurrence (repetition), and the importance of the term. The relatively short length of the loanword model (in terms of constituent phonemes, syllables, or morphemes) results in a high degree of saliency for the entire form. "Mere repetition in [a variety of] vivid situations" (Haugen 1969, 372) primes lexical access and retrieval of the loanword and its semantically transparent derivatives. These two factors, coupled with linguistic need, insure that an unfamiliar model is rendered familiar and retained in long-term memory—in a word, that it is learned.

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## Note

<sup>1</sup>The DEC (Galván and Teschner 1977) was preceded by *El diccionario del español de Texas* (Galván and Teschner 1975), which included some seven thousand lexical entries and was limited in scope, as the title indicates. In 1995, Galván published a second edition of the DEC (increasing the total number of lexical entries to over nine thousand); however, a perusal of the same shows very few additions or corrections with regard to the items marked as Anglicisms. The computerized database that I utilized for this article derives from Teschner and Galván 1977—the first edition of the DEC, which contains some eighty-five hundred entries by our count.

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