

TEACHING SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: ANALYSING SYNTACTIC CALQUES IN BILINGUAL SPEECH

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Abstract

Globalization and growing migration affect the ways modern languages evolve and change. An important issue connected with language acquisition is bilingualism, which is related to language interference (Shin & Otheguy, 2013; Myers-Scotton, 2006; Wei, 2013). This mixed method study is aimed at firstly, analyzing the speech of Spanish bilinguals and secondly, suggesting the ways of using the authentic speech for language teaching purposes (Tavil, 2010). In particular, the authors were interested in the use of syntactic calques by Spanish bilinguals who are representatives of 1.5, the 2nd and the 3rd generations of immigrants in the United States (heritage speakers) (Rodríguez González & Knospe, 2019). The genre of video interview was chosen as the research material. The choice of this particular genre is explained by the fact that it involves spontaneous interaction between the interlocutors and allows language learners to observe the characteristics of spontaneous bilingual speech.

The data of the study is drawn from YouTube video hosting (<https://www.youtube.com/>) where the authors found video interviews (N=29) with the representatives of contemporary American and Spanish pop cultures (N=11). All of the celebrities are of either Latin American or Spanish descent and are heritage speakers of Spanish. The authors were focused on the linguistic analysis of interviewees' speech. For the purposes of linguistic description of authentic speech, we transcribed the texts of the video interviews and singled out sentences relevant for further analysis (N=1604) since these were the examples of language interference and contained syntactic calques (N=107). The syntactic calques that were allocated in the transcribed texts were classified according to their morphosyntactic properties. The most frequently used syntactic calques are those associated with changes in the use of pronouns (42%), verb forms and verb groups (41%), noun phrases (11%) and structures with coordination and subordination (6%). Qualitative method was applied to reveal and compare the types of syntactic calques used in the video interviews. The data showed that syntactic calques represent a productive type of transference in the speech of Spanish bilinguals.

Linguistic analysis of the revealed cases of interference allowed to collect important data for language teaching purposes. Syntactic calques are found not only at the level of idiolects, but also represent certain patterns that are characteristic of heritage native speakers of Spanish. The number of syntactic calques and their nature depends on the national version of the Spanish language spoken by the bilingual and on the age at which he/she immigrated to the United States.

The study proved that video interviews are important authentic material for teaching Spanish as a foreign language. We suggest that although the presence of syntactic calques and other types of interference might impede teachers from using video interviews as models of language to follow by students, video interviews still present valuable material for advanced Spanish students whose L1 is English. Watching authentic interviews with heritage Spanish speakers and studying syntactic calques may benefit students' general metalinguistic competence and help in raising their linguistic awareness in terms of the geographical variability of Spanish. The study can be viewed as a descriptive contribution to the growing literature of heritage language studies.

Keywords: authentic texts, bilingualism, Spanish, heritage language, syntactic calques.

1 INTRODUCTION AND RELATED WORK

Globalization and growing migration (in particular, immigration of residents of Latin American countries in the USA), makes the issue of linguistic self-identification of immigrants and the problem of bilingualism particularly acute [1], [2], [3], [4]. Since the nature of this problem is social, the studies devoted to it cannot be purely theoretical: the study of any of its aspects (social, psychological, pedagogical or linguistic) makes a certain contribution to understanding the prospects for the development and change of the immigrant language in its host country, and in determining the language policy of a given state.

A concept directly related to the linguistic behavior of bilinguals is interference. Interference can manifest itself at all levels of the language: phonological, grammatical and lexical. A decisive role in the manifestation of interference in an immigrant's speech at the level of grammar can be influenced by the following factors: dominant language proficiency, membership in a particular national group and gender [5].

Currently, interference is mostly studied in the aspects of foreign language learning and teaching, especially when investigating the influence of mother tongue on adults learning a second language [6], [7].

1.1 Issues of interference and bilingualism in the Spanish language

The appearance of the Spanish language in the United States in late 19th – early 20th centuries is associated with those that began in the migration movements from Latin American countries. The Spanish language in the United States is a mixture of national variants of groups of migrants from Latin America. Currently, Latinos are the largest minority ethnic group in the United States, among which the most numerous are Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Salvadorans and Dominicans. 41 million US residents consider themselves Hispanic [8], making the United States the fifth Spanish-speaking country in the world after Mexico, Colombia, Spain and Argentina, and the first country among those that do not speak Spanish [9]. Thus, 10% of the total number of Hispanics in the world live in the United States. Moreover, the USA is the country with the largest number of learners of Spanish as a foreign language in the world. A total of 8 081 585 Americans study Spanish, of which 7 363 125 are in the framework of primary, secondary and vocational education, which indicates the importance of language at the state level [9].

Regarding language competence, only first-generation migrants call Spanish the dominant language of communication. The largest percentage of English-Spanish bilinguals represent the second generation (53%). 69% of representatives of the third generation of immigrants consider English to be their dominant language. In general, it is believed that the Spanish language shows the greatest resistance to English substitution among all minority US languages [8], [10]. In the Spanish language of the first generation of immigrants, common features could hardly be found, since each representative continues to speak their native national variant of Spanish upon arrival in the USA. Despite this, the Spanish language of the second generation of immigrants can observe similar features, the reason for which is bilingualism. Spanish of this generation is characterized by lexical and grammatical simplification, a large number of borrowings from the English language and a code-switching within the framework of a single communicative act [10].

While some researchers believe that Spanish will maintain its position as the language of communication within small closed groups, others see that a new national variant of Spanish – the Northern-American – is emerging [11]. The traces of influence of the English language that can be found both in lexis and grammar represent the main characteristic of the new variant [12]. One of the modes in which such interference can be manifested are syntactic calques that suppose that certain grammatical relations between words be recreated within another language using its own means [13], [14], [15]. Consequently, heritage speakers' linguistic system also presents examples of syntactic calques.

1.2 Authentic texts for teaching Spanish as a foreign language

With the growth of Spanish-speaking population and Spanish-speaking media broadcasters throughout the USA, the possibilities for using authentic video and audio materials within the classroom have also increased. Since the end of the previous century, researchers have emphasized the importance of the language teaching classroom as a space for real communication, within which authentic materials play a crucial role [16], [17]. Authentic texts have become a common part of FL lessons, and are widely used by teachers for presenting 'real' and exemplary pieces of language, being designed by native speakers and for native speakers [18]. These texts not only have been shown to be of great effectiveness in terms of working on specific grammatical or lexical questions, but also have been proven to be more motivating and interesting for students, compared to inauthentic, student's book texts [19], [20].

Speaking of video and audio texts, which are of our particular interest, these have been used as input for working on students' listening comprehension skills. Research has given experimental proof to this effect; moreover, it has also shown positive effects on the quality and quantity of students' oral production, namely, in the number and diversity of words that constitute their discourse, the confidence in speech production, and its breadth and scope [21].

Among the different types of video and audio materials, the genre of interview presents examples of speech that are closest to 'real-life' conversations, as it supposes unprepared and spontaneous speech at least from the side of the interviewee. Modern popular American culture, being the reflection of its society, also presents artists of Hispanic descent, for whom Spanish is the so-called heritage language, as opposed to English, which is the dominant language of the American society.

In this paper, we aim to analyze the syntactic calques that can be found in the authentic speech produced by native speakers of Spanish who are representatives of 1,5, the 2nd and the 3rd generations of migrants in the United States. Analyzing the material of video interviews with the representatives of contemporary American and Spanish pop cultures, we suggest why and how these interviews can be used in the classroom of Spanish as a foreign language.

The questions we seek to answer in this paper are:

- 1 Are there any common syntactic characteristics (syntactic calques as a result of the influence of the English language) in the authentic language system of Spanish heritage speakers in the United States?**
- 2 How can the analysis of syntactic calques in bilingual speech be used in teaching Spanish as a foreign language?**

2 METHODOLOGY

The research suggests the results of the analysis of authentic speech of bilingual Spanish speakers presented in the form of video interviews. Following the linguistic analysis of this material, the authors suggested the ways of using the texts of video interviews for language teaching purposes.

The study included three main stages.

At the first stage, the authors collected information about famous representatives of the contemporary American and Spanish cultures (N=11) from Internet Movie Database, an online recourse related to TV programs, films, home videos etc. (<https://www.imdb.com/>). All of the celebrities are of either Latin American or Spanish descent and are heritage speakers of Spanish. Among them are representatives of the 1.5, the 2nd and the 3rd generations of immigrants in the USA, where 1.5 generation are those who immigrated to the USA before reaching early adolescence (before they were 13-14 years old). This particular age was chosen following the critical period hypothesis, according to which it is possible to acquire a language if one finds himself/herself in a linguistically rich environment before the age of 12-14) [22]. The personal data of the heritage speakers of the Spanish language including gender, year of birth, country of origin and the age of immigration to the USA (or the fact of birth in the USA) was analyzed and presented in the form of a table (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Personal data of heritage speakers of Spanish.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>	<i>Age of immigration/ born in US</i>	<i>Generation of immigration</i>
Camila Cabello	F	1997	Cuba	6	1,5
Pedro Pascal	M	1975	Chile	3	1,5
Zoe Saldaña	F	1977	Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico	born in US	2
Eva Mendes	F	1974	Cuba	born in US	2
Alex Rodríguez	M	1975	Dominican Republic	born in US	2
Enrique Iglesias	M	1975	Spain	8	1,5
Armando Cristian Pérez (Pitbull)	M	1981	Cuba	born in US	2
Luis Fonsi	M	1978	Puerto Rico	10	1,5
Carlos Santana	M	1941	Mexico	14	1,5
Rebecca Marie Gomez	F	1997	Mexico	born in US	3
Michelle Rodriguez	F	1978	Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico	born in US	2

At the second stage, the authors singled out and downloaded video interviews with the chosen celebrities from YouTube video hosting (<https://www.youtube.com/>). For 11 celebrities we found 29 video interviews lasting from 13 to 21 minutes each.

At the third stage, the authors were focused on the linguistic analysis of interviewees' speech. For the purposes of linguistic description of authentic speech, we transcribed the text of the video interviews and singled out sentences relevant to further analysis (N=1604) since these illustrated the examples of interference and contained syntactic calques (N=107). All syntactic units in which a predicate could be distinguished were viewed as sentences. Repetitions were not considered as separate sentences (*Sí, pensé en todo, pensé en todo* – Yes, I thought about everything, thought about everything), as well as incomplete sentences (*Ahí en 1995 mi ...* – Then, in 1995, my ...), sentences in English (*there's no a second time for a first impression*) and discourse markers like *tú sabes* (you know). Qualitative method was applied to reveal and compare the types of syntactic calques used in the video interviews.

The linguistic analysis of video interviews and their transcribed texts allowed the authors to draw conclusions about the possibility of using the authentic materials in teaching Spanish as a foreign language.

3 RESULTS

As a result of a continuous selection of syntactic calques in transcribed texts, 107 units were allocated, which amounted to 7% of the total number of sentences. In our study, by syntactic calques we understand those that previous researchers divided into lexical-syntactic calques (certain lexical units, among which some verbs, adjectives and nouns can be distinguished, which are usually accompanied by a certain syntactic structure. An example is *esperar por* instead of *esperar* in Spanish under the influence of English *to wait for*) and morphosyntactic calques (which include changes at the level of the noun phrase (determinatives, quantitative words, etc.), the verb group (aspect and time, verbal periphrasis) or the whole sentence (coordination, subordination etc.)).

3.1 Types of syntactic calques

The syntactic calques that were allocated in the transcribed texts of the interviews were classified according to their morphosyntactic properties. The calques were divided into four groups shown in Figure 1.

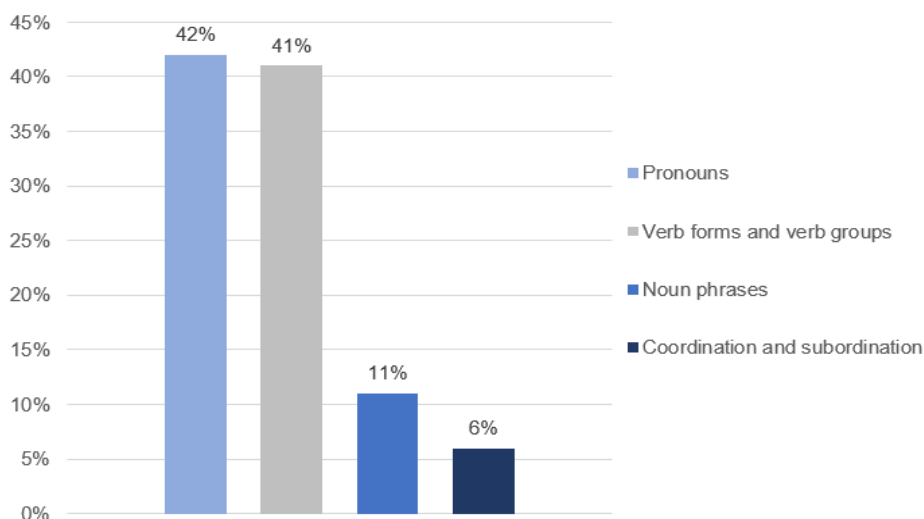


Figure 1. Types of allocated syntactic calques.

Among the syntactic calques, the most common are those associated with changes in the use of pronouns (42%). Among them, the most productive ones are using personal pronouns as a subject, and the postposition of pronouns in the dative and accusative cases. Duplication of proclitics and enclitics in Spanish as a calque of the reflexive pronoun *oneself* in English is also common. The significant predominance in the use of personal pronouns can be explained by the influence of the English language. However, that is not the case with native speakers of the Spanish Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico), since the frequency of use of personal pronouns is a

distinctive characteristic of the Spanish language of this dialectic zone (e.g. *'dependiendo en cómo tú la ves y cómo tú las usas'* – *'depending on how you see them and how you use them'* (Camila Cabello), *'pero yo creo que hoy en día yo he aprendido'* – *'but I think that today I learned'* (Alex Rodríguez)). Regarding the representatives of continental Latin America (the so-called Mainlanders, in our case, Pedro Pascal (Chile), the influence of the English language cannot be denied, since in English the subject should always be used in the sentence (e.g. *'yo sabía que iban a seguir pero yo no sabía con quien'* – *'I knew that they were going to continue, but I didn't know with whom'*). In Spanish, the subject expressed by a personal pronoun is usually omitted [5].

The pronouns in the accusative and dative cases have also undergone changes, many interviewees are inclined to duplicate them and use them in postposition (e.g. *'siempre mi abuela me decía a mí'* – *'my grandmother always told me (to me)'* (Pitbull)). Despite the fact that the duplication of the object expressed by the pronouns (*me decía a mí*) in Spanish is correct, it is usually used only in special cases, in particular, with an emphatic function, so the frequent use of this construction in bilingual speech can be considered a so-called 'frequency calque' [23].

Syntactic calques are productive in verb forms and verb groups (41%). Most common types include agreement of a predicate with a subject expressed by a pronounced collective noun, verb government, the use of the subjunctive mood (el Subjuntivo), agreement of the verb *haber*, and calques of fixed verb phrases. Five of the eleven interviewees, when agreeing on a subject expressed by a collective noun with a predicate put the latter in the plural (e.g. *'la gente no quieren saber más'* – *'people do not want to know more'* (Eva Mendes)), however, this grammar structure is not considered the norm in the Spanish language.

Among the syntactic calques associated with noun phrases (11% in total), changes in agreement by gender are most frequently observed. This is an indication of the degradation in Spanish language proficiency. The examples of this type of syntactic calque were found in the speech of two interviewees, one of whom is a representative of the third generation of immigrants, while the other immigrated to the United States at the age of three.

The least productive type of syntactic calques is change in coordination and subordination (6%). In the speech of several interviewees, the use of the adversative conjunctions *sino* and *pero* is most productive.

Syntactic calques can be regular and occur in the speech of several interviewees or form part of the idiolect of some of them. The most productive calques (in particular, the frequency of using personal pronouns as a subject, the subjunctive in the Spanish language, the government of some verbs) can become part of the Northern American national variant of the Spanish language.

At the same time, we can say that most types of syntactic calques form part of each speaker's idiolect and their manifestation will probably vary depending on the situation. For example, the position of an attribute relative to the core of the noun phrase, the prepositional phrase *of + possessive pronoun* etc.

3.2 Using video interviews of Spanish heritage speakers in a FL classroom

We suggest that using video interviews of Spanish heritage speakers could benefit high-level Spanish students whose L1 is English. This could have advantages both in language tasks and in general language learning process.

Assignments based on video interviews with bilinguals may help raise students' linguistic awareness. These interviews can be used as an exercise for identifying syntactic calques and help English-speaking students become conscious of the ways in which their native language may influence their speech in the target language. Moreover, this kind of activity could be used to discuss which syntactic calques might be 'harmless' traces of student's native language, and which of them can actually change the meaning of the transmitted message. For example, one of the most common ways in which English influences the syntactic properties of heritage Spanish speakers is the frequency of the use of personal pronouns as the subject of the sentence. However, this does not change the semantic meaning of a sentence – it only might sound 'unnatural' to some native Spanish speakers. If we talk about the use of the Subjunctive mood in Spanish – changes in its use may also influence the semantic meaning of the sentence, which can be illustrated by the example below:

'Voy pa' Cuba cuando ella se abre' – *I'm going to Cuba when it's open.*

Here, the Indicative *se abre* means that the exact date of when Cuba will be open to the world is already known, and has the pragmatic meaning of speaker's certainty about what is being transmitted.

Consequently, we suggest that this kind of activity would help students become conscious of the grammar categories and contexts of their target language (Spanish) which are most vulnerable to the influence of their native language (English).

Listening to the interviews with heritage Spanish speakers may benefit students' general metalinguistic competence, it can help in raising their linguistic awareness in terms of the geographical variability of Spanish. Presently, although some researchers [11] point out that the Northern American variant of Spanish has already started being formed, it still represents groups of immigrants and their descendants who maintain the characteristics of the national variant of Spanish of their country of origin. Video interviews present valuable material that can help students understand how different Spanish can be depending on where you find yourself, even if we are talking about the territory of one country (in our case, the USA).

Psychological aspect of language learning may also be influenced positively by incorporating authentic interviews in the Spanish class, as students will see that even heritage Spanish speakers struggle with interference from English, and it could help them understand that making mistakes in their spontaneous speech, especially if the source is their native language, is normal.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The article presents the analysis of syntactic calques found in the speech of heritage Spanish speakers residing in the USA, and implications under which video interviews with these bilinguals might be useful within the context of a Spanish teaching classroom.

The choice of the genre of video interview as the material for the study is explained by the fact that it involves spontaneous interaction between the interlocutors and allows language learners to observe the characteristics of the spontaneous speech of the interviewee.

Syntactic calques represent a productive type of transference in the speech of Spanish-English bilinguals. They are found not only at the level of idiolects, but represent certain patterns that are characteristic of heritage native speakers of Spanish. The number of syntactic calques and their nature depends on the national version of the Spanish language spoken by the bilingual, and on the age at which he immigrated to the United States.

We suggest that, although the presence of syntactic calques and other types of interference might impede teachers from using these videos as models of language to follow by students, they can be used in the classroom, and the advantages of their use might lay precisely in these calques. Authentic interviews with heritage Spanish speakers can become an effective tool in foreign language learning and teaching which develops foreign language competence and metalinguistic awareness.

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