



Synonymy in Contemporary United States Spanish

Re-thinking synonymy
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Objectives of today's talk

- Introduce the issue at hand
- Define Spanish doublets
- Discuss diachronic and synchronic formations of doublets in Spanish
- Explain a new trend
- Conclude by offering considerations for future research, if time permits



Spanish synonymy

“Synonymy considers the degree of sameness of meaning among different signifiers...synonymy is a lexical concept *par excellence*” (García-Hernández, 1997: 381, 385).

A salient characteristic of Spanish is its *abundance* of doublets, which according to Ortega Ojeda (1982: 93) serve as a “mechanism that eliminates or diminishes occurrences of polysemy, which are, potentially at least, producers of ambiguity.”



The issue at hand

- (1) Diachronic:

hostigar

fustigar

‘to pester’

injertar

insertar

‘to graft’

lindar

limitar

‘to restrict’

- (2) Synchronic: Standard Spanish

los pantalones de lona

los jeans

‘jeans’

descanso /descansar

relax / to relax

‘to relax’

los fideos

espaguetis

‘spaghetti’



The issue at hand

<u>US Spanish</u>	<u>Standard Spanish</u>	<u>English</u>
la luz	el semáforo	'the traffic light'
la carpeta	la alfombra	'the carpet'
vacunar	pasar la aspiradora	'to vacuum'
aplicar	solicitar	'to apply'



Lexical synonymy in Latin

Latin (García Hernández, 1997: 391-393)

plangere / plorare = 'to cry'

colubrum / anguis / serpens = 'snake'

audire / auscultare = 'to listen'

brachium / ulna = 'arm'

occipere / incipere = 'to begin'

grandis / magnus = 'large', 'big'



Word transmission

- Patrimonial words may also be referred to as ‘popular words’. Their transmission is generally oral.
- (Semi) learned words are generally transmitted via written modes of communication and undergo few, if any, phonological modifications.



Patrimonial / (semi)learned doublets in Spanish

Latin learned / patrimonial English

calidus cálido / caldo ‘hot’ / ‘broth’

masticare masticar / mascar ‘to chew’

solidus sólido / sueldo ‘solid’ / ‘salary’

operare operar / obrar ‘to operate’ / ‘to work’

fabulare fábula / hablar ‘fable’ / ‘to speak’



What are Spanish doublets?

- Working definition:
- Becerra (1989): “A doublet is comprised of two words with the same etymological origin”
- Example: *collocare* *colocar* / *colgar*
- Calvi & Martinell (1997), Hornero Corisco (1999), Jacinto García (2003), Gorelova (2010)
- Stala (2009): ‘etymological doublets’
- Pérez Edo (2007): ‘lexical or etymological pairs’



Diachronic categories of doublets – Becerra (1989)

- Stala (2009) – notes the traditional division of:

i) abstract - concrete

Example: bautizo / bautismo ‘baptism’

- Becerra (1989) adds another category:

ii) general – particular

Example: canto / cante ‘song’



Diachronic categories of doublets – Ortega Ojeda (1982) – 5 categories

- 1) variants of the same etymon – one is an archaic form
- 12.2%

Example: mascar / masticar ‘to chew’

- 2) same basic meaning – one is reserved only for
metaphoric purposes – 23.8%

Example: hervor / fervor ‘boiling’

- 3) one is patrimonial; the other is learned and has
undergone grammatical change – 28.3%

Example: huraño / foráneo ‘strange’ (nota bene: ‘foráneo’
has gone from a noun to an adjective)



Diachronic categories of doublets – Ortega Ojeda (1982)

- 4) one is patrimonial; the other is learned and it adopts a new meaning

Example: llave / clave ('clave' = 'important')

- 5) miscellaneous – 21.6% - of which approximately half (12.2%) are 'true synonyms'

Example: apertura / abertura 'opening'



Modern Standard Spanish – abstract/concrete

- corrupción (abstract) / corruptela (concrete) ‘corruption’
- mando (abstract) / gobierno (concrete) ‘authority’ / ‘government’
- orar (abstract) / rezar (concrete) ‘to pray’ / ‘to recite; to pray’
- casamiento (abstract) / boda (concrete) ‘wedding’



Modern Standard Spanish – general / specific

- canto (general) / cante (specific) ‘song’ / ‘song of a particular musical genre’
- banca (general) / banco (specific) ‘bank federation’ / ‘bank’
- televisión (general) / televisor (specific) ‘television’ / ‘television set’
- guerra (general) / batalla (specific) ‘war’ / ‘battle’



Modern Standard Spanish with neologisms

- la red / el (la) internet ‘the internet, the web’
- el correo electrónico / e-mail ‘e-mail’
- un disco compacto / cedé ‘CD’
- un sencillo / un single ‘single’ (a released song)
- un aficionado / un fan ‘a fan’ (of sports or music)
- un gerente / un mánager (a manager or agent in sports or music)
- la mercadotecnia / el marketing (marketing)
- una reunión / un mítin (meeting)



Language borrowing in Modern Standard Spanish

- Janíčková (2008) notes cases of borrowing in which the neologism is the only (known) lexical entry:
- Lexical borrowing, characterized by a pronunciation of the LI: pizza, golf, mozzarella
- Semantic borrowing: jefe ‘chef’ / ‘boss’



Spanish and homonymy – Dworkin (1995)

- Spanish has historically avoided (near) homonymy
- Wright (1976), (2004) – Tendency for languages to avoid ambiguity
- Dworkin's (1995) treatment of verbs
- Very few cases of homonymy in Old Spanish
- In Modern Spanish, slightly more cases due to consonant realignment



US Spanish - What do we call it?

- Perissinotto (1999) ‘Spanglish’; Otheguy (2008) ‘Espanglish’; Molinero (2010) ‘Spanglish’ o ‘espanglés’; Villegas (2006) ‘espanglés’
- In the current study, I use ‘US Spanish’; like many, I do not use a variant of ‘Spanglish’ as it carries negative connotations.



Otheguy (2008)

- In Otheguy's (2008) well-written and extensive article, he discusses 'léxico localista del español popular', which emphasizes words used at the local environment.
- Taking words from López-Morales (2006), he cites such words for 'bus' as the standard, 'autobús', 'camión', 'guagua', 'ómnibus', 'micro'; for 'sidewalk', he notes the standard 'acera', 'banqueta', 'bordillo', 'vereda', 'andén', and more.

Semantic extension in US Spanish

English	Standard Spanish	US Spanish
• ‘carpet’	la alfombra	la carpeta (folder)
• ‘to vacuum’	pasar la aspiradora	vacunar (to vaccinate)
• ‘to apply’ motion)	solicitar	aplicar (to put into
• ‘to realize’	darse cuenta de	realizar (to carry out)
• ‘grocery store’	el supermercado	la grosería (something disgusting)
• ‘regular’	‘mediano’ ‘corriente’	regular (así así)
• ‘traffic light’	el semáforo	la luz (light)
• ‘job application’ (application)	la solicitud	la aplicación
• ‘principal’	director	el/la principal (main)



Gómez Capuz (2005)

- 1) Word enters the language, often times in a technical field. In the case of US Spanish, often times it enters as the speaker attempts to best explain his/her local environment.
- 2) In the second stage, it is no longer seen as a neologism and is viewed as part of the language. That is, 'jáiscul' separates itself from the English counterpart and is seen as its own lexical entry. In this stage, morphology, orthography, and phonology of the L2 are employed.
- 3) In the final stage, it becomes the root from which active morphological processes may occur. The word 'biles' means 'bills' and one can use the diminutive with anglicisms, as in 'bilecito', raitecito', etc.



Conclusion

- In the case of US Spanish, the presence of doublets as a result of the introduction of a neologism does not make it unique.
- US Spanish is unique in that it actively employs homonymy; a process generally avoided in Standard Spanish.
- As shown in the current study, this is something that Spanish, with few exceptions, has gone to great lengths to avoid.



Kiitos!

Thank you!