

## CHAPTER I

*Language Contact, Immigration, and Latino Englishes**Erik R. Thomas***1.1 Latino Englishes**

Latino English varieties, especially Mexican American English (henceforth MxAE), have received a considerable amount of research over the past six decades. In spite of that, they are still poorly understood in most respects. The reasons are numerous: most of the research has consisted of studies of limited scope, a fair amount of it was published in obscure venues, the issues of Spanish maintenance and of code switching often seem to overshadow Latino English in research efforts, Latino communities are widely dispersed across the United States, and there is a host of social issues that complicate exploration of Latino language varieties even as they enrich it. One aim of this book is to help rectify the weak understanding of Latino Englishes and MxAE.

We cannot aspire to answer every possible question about Latino Englishes or even MxAE by itself. No study could address the entire myriad of such issues. In addition to clarifying issues regarding Latino Englishes, however, a second aim we aspire to accomplish is to draw scholarship on Latino Englishes into the more general body of research on language transfer and new dialect formation. To do so, it is necessary to take a primarily linguistic perspective, with the development of linguistic variables as the primary focus. Several groundbreaking studies, notably Mendoza-Denton (1997, 2008), Fought (1999, 2003), and Eckert (2008b), have taken a micro-variation approach, examining how patterning of specific linguistic variables in Latino communities is intricately tied to interpersonal networks and individuals' identity construction. These studies have provided vital insights. Here, however, we focus on the language as a whole and how it evolves from a collection of interference features to a stable dialect. Studies of substrate influences on languages typically focus, as the present study does, on linguistic features, appealing to social

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developments as explanatory factors. Much work on substrate influences, though, has been on historical developments for which social information is limited and the lack of sound recordings prohibits examination of a large number of phonetic details or of most prosodic features. Latino Englishes, on the other hand, are developing now, so that it is possible to watch the process as it unfolds, to collect and analyze sound recordings, and, most of all, to examine a far larger number of linguistic variables than are available for historical situations, thereby making it less likely that the overall picture is skewed by a few linguistic features that pattern in ways that are unusual within the community.

The formation of Latino English in general, and MxAE in particular, touches on several strains of research. One is that of models of interference and substrate influence, which have tended to examine historical situations in which groups of people have shifted from one language to another or have adopted linguistic elements from another language. Another strain with a focus on the last few centuries is new dialect formation, which has largely dealt with colonial situations and newly formed urban and suburban communities. Then there are studies of second-language learners and how they negotiate the details of their target language, particularly subtle phonetic details that are often quite difficult to acquire, but also of the social pressures that such learners encounter. Some of the most vigorous research in recent years has examined ethnolects (as defined by, e.g., Carlock and Wölck 1981 and Clyne 2000) around the world and how their composition relates to the speech of heritage speakers of the target language. Finally, studies of Latino English itself, perhaps the most studied example of an ethnolect – or, more properly, a group of ethnolects – have a long history involving a succession of trends in research.

One important facet of MxAE is that it is still undergoing its formation in some locales. In contrast, the most heavily studied group of ethnic dialects, African American English, saw its initial formation more than three centuries ago. Because there are no recordings of speakers from its formative days, numerous details of its formation, encompassing certain phonetic and morphosyntactic details among other features, are unknowable and a contentious debate over its origin has raged for decades. With MxAE and other Latino varieties, many of the oldest speakers in numerous communities are still alive and can still be recorded. As a result, the issues that keep the origins of African American English mysterious can still be elucidated for MxAE. Nevertheless, it is crucial to address them quickly before these elderly speakers are no longer with us.

**1.2 Models of Language Contact**

Any understanding of how MxAE and other Latino English varieties have materialized rests on the long tradition of language contact research. This research has led to models of how language contact situations result in altered forms, which is to say new dialects, of both source and target languages. Modern approaches to the effects of language contact can be said, with some fairness, to begin with Weinreich (1953). Weinreich employed the term *interference* extensively and did so under his definition of interference as “instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language” (Weinreich 1953: 1). He used *interference* indifferently for influence of one’s first language (L1) on one’s second language (L2), for L2 on L1, or for simultaneously acquired languages on each other. Moreover, Weinreich regarded influences of one language on another both for an individual speaker and for a language in general as “phases” of interference (Weinreich 1953: 11). He also drew any sort of influence, even lexical borrowing, within his definition of interference. He focused much of his attention on phonological interference, even in his chapters on morphological and lexical effects, discussing at length, for example, how borrowed words are affected by the phonological structures of languages into which they are borrowed.

More recently, Thomason and Kaufman (1988) and Van Coetsem (1988) simultaneously developed models that refined Weinreich’s ideas significantly. Additional discussion may be found in Van Coetsem (2000) and Thomason (2001). The two new models are remarkably similar to each other. Both recognize a crucial distinction between situations in which a group shifts its language in the face of contact and situations in which a group does not shift its language. The former situation, which Thomason and Kaufman call “interference” (a narrowing of Weinreich’s definition) and Van Coetsem calls “imposition” and “source language (SL) agentivity,” shows its strongest effects on phonology/phonetics and morphology/syntax. The latter situation, dubbed “borrowing” by Thomason and Kaufman and “borrowing” or “recipient language (RL) agentivity” by Van Coetsem, consistently affects the lexicon most quickly and most heavily, with other linguistic features typically (though not always) following only after considerable lexical borrowing has occurred. The most important point of difference between the two models is that Van Coetsem recognizes a third situation, which he calls “neutralization.” In neutralization, a group remains bilingual, with equal or nearly equal

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dominance of the respective languages, over an extended period of time, and the result is that linguistic features of any sort can flow in both directions between the languages. Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 74–76) treat cases in which long-term bilingualism occurs as one end of their five-point borrowing continuum, and they refer to the result, which exhibits a great deal of phonological and syntactic influence, as “structural borrowing.”

The roots of Latino Englishes, including MxAE, clearly fall on the side of “interference” or “imposition/SL agentivity.” Latino Anglophone varieties show greater or lesser degrees of phonetic and phonological influence from Spanish in both segmental and prosodic features. They also show some grammatical influence, such as in their characteristically high rates of negative concord, although the full extent of the grammatical influence is unclear. In the lexicon, however, they show relatively light influence from Spanish. Spanish words in some Latino varieties may be limited to food terms such as *sopa* and *tortilla* and other cultural concepts such as *quinceañera* “lavish celebratory ritual and party for a girl’s fifteenth birthday” for which there is no exact English equivalent, or words such as *cantina* “bar (for serving alcohol)” or *telenovela* “soap opera” that are portrayed as uniquely Latino versions of referents familiar in Anglo society. These terms tend to be the very words that are borrowed into Anglo English. Of course, some Spanish borrowings adopted in Anglo English several generations ago that lack native English equivalents, such as *canyon* and *mesquite* “thorny tree of the genus *Prosopis*,” are readily used by everyone.

Nevertheless, the bulk of the known influences of Spanish on Latino Englishes lies in the phonetic and phonological realm. Among the commonly reported examples are replacement of final /z/ with [s], failure to distinguish vowel pairs such as the BEET and BIT vowels or the BOOT and BOOK vowels, and confusion of /tʃ/ and /ʃ/, as in *cheap* and *sheep*, respectively (see, e.g., Lynn 1945; Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia 1985). These features are all easily traced to the phonology of Spanish, which lacks contrasts for any of the English sounds confused with each other. As such, they quite obviously represent interference (in the sense of Thomason and Kaufman 1988) or imposition (as Van Coetsem 1988 termed it). However, the degree of persistence of these Spanish-derived features is poorly understood. Some of these features may typify primarily the English of L2 speakers, whereas others have greater staying power and contribute to more stable Latino English dialects. Many previous authors have failed to differentiate variables along these lines. Currently, which

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Spanish-derived features persist is poorly known and even less is understood about what causes some interference variants to remain but others to disappear. Models such as those put forward by Thomason and Kaufman (1988), Van Coetsem (1988, 2000), and Thomason (2001) are better at explaining why interference features show up in the speech of L2 speakers and their descendants than at answering the question of why some of these features persist and others vanish. These authors have examined numerous historical cases and can ascribe persistent contact features to their language of origin, even when the correspondences between source and target languages are not one-to-one, as with Thomason and Kaufman's (1988) example of copula absence in Uralic substratum languages and Russian. Even so, when it comes to explaining why some features succeed and others fall by the wayside, the best they can do is to appeal to vaguely defined social factors. To solve the riddle of how new dialects select their features, researchers must undertake close observation of what is occurring on the ground in specific communities. Increased examination of how new ethnic dialects materialize from substrate influence, while the process is unfolding and not when it has faded into history, is a pressing need in sociolinguistics.

### 1.3 **New Dialect Formation**

Models of new dialect formation are generally based on events that have occurred only during the past few centuries, ranging from colonization events of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries to the formation of planned cities and less-planned suburbs in the twentieth century (and continuing in the twenty-first). Of the latter, the best-known model is the koinéization model of Trudgill (1986). Trudgill describes situations from various parts of the world, such as Hindi speakers in Fiji and Trinidad and Norwegians in the town of Høyanger, and proposes that the resulting koinéization – i.e., the creation of a new dialect from mixtures of pre-existing dialects – takes place through focusing, a reduction of the number of variants that are present. The reduction involves a process of leveling in which dialectally or socially marked forms are discarded and a process of simplification as complex phonological and morphological alternations may be dropped. The model has been exemplified and amplified by Kerswill (1996) and Kerswill and Williams (2000), who investigated the planned community of Milton Keynes, England. Analogous cases are seen in Lane (2000), a study of a rural but young community in Denmark, and in studies of rapidly growing cities in the US South (Thomas 1997; Dodsworth and Kohn 2012). These studies transparently pertain more to

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the Spanish of Latinos in the United States than to their English, as they do not involve language shift. However, there are some parallels in that Latino Englishes, like other speech forms arising from language shift, necessarily undergo some linguistic focusing as they carve out their collective identities with regard to their target language.

Language shift scenarios represent a more common subject of new dialect formation in scholarly studies than do dialect mixture cases. A great deal of work has focused on language shift in situations in which a language spreads far beyond its homeland and groups that hitherto had spoken other languages acquire it. One of the key architects of this scholarship was Braj B. Kachru. Kachru (1985, 1988) proposed that there are three recognizable states of English – ENL (English as a Native Language), ESL (English as a Second Language), and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) – that can be depicted as three concentric circles insofar as nations could be classified as falling into one of those categories. ENL nations, the “inner circle,” consisted of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. ESL countries, the “outer (or extended) circle” (Kachru 1985: 12) included former British colonies, such as Nigeria, India, and Singapore, in which English was recognized as an official language. EFL countries, the “expanding circle,” were those in which English was learned primarily for international communication, including a number of other former British colonies. Kachru conceded that certain nations, such as South Africa and Caribbean countries with creole continua, could not be classified readily in his system. He also noted that the distinction between the outer and expanding circles was somewhat fluid. Classifying entire nations as a single category creates other problems, and Onysko (2016) notes that Kachru’s national view has attracted criticism from various camps because it downplays creoles, social variation within nations, and cross-national developments. It certainly overlooks immigrant groups in “inner circle” countries. Accordingly, Onysko (2016: 213) discusses “Englishes in multilingual constellations” (EMCs) and he says that both postcolonial contexts and “scenarios of migration to English speaking countries” fall under that description, singling out “Hispano Englishes in the US” as an example. In these situations, two or more languages are spoken at the same time, but English serves as the official language and as the lingua franca among ethnic groups. Onysko recognizes five kinds of linguistic situations in his model: Global Englishes (GEs), Learner Englishes (LEs), EMCs, English-based Pidgins and Creoles (EPCs), and Koiné Englishes (KEs).<sup>1</sup>

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Nevertheless, colonization represents the key link between Kachru's inner and outer circles and plays a key role in Onysko's scheme. The most detailed and prominent model of colonialization, called the "Dynamic Model," was developed by Edgar W. Schneider (see especially Schneider 2007). Schneider deals primarily with situations in which a group of settlers from outside a region intrudes on territory formerly controlled by one or more indigenous groups who speak a language or languages different from that of the settlers. He focuses on examples involving British settlers. The Dynamic Model consists of five phases, as follows:

Phase 1: Foundation. A substantial group of settlers brings their language, but usually a variety of dialects of it, to a new territory. The dialectal differences diminish, but the settlers remain socially separated from the indigenous group(s), with minimal contact through a few interpreters, often borrowing only toponyms from indigenous peoples.

Phase 2: Exonormative stabilization. The settlers' communities become stabilized, though the settlers still tend to think of the mother country as home. Some members of the indigenous group(s) learn the settlers' language, often gaining prestige in the process. Names for local flora, fauna, and customs are borrowed into the settlers' language.

Phase 3: Nativization. The settlers begin to identify more with the new territory than with the mother country and take a greater role in governing themselves. Local settler speech begins to take on its own character. More indigenous people acculturate to the settlers, but they are still seen as subordinate. These indigenous people develop a recognizable accent of the settlers' language.

Phase 4: Endonormative stabilization. "This phase typically follows and presupposes political independence" (Schneider 2007: 48). The settlers' descendants see themselves as a new nation and establish their own linguistic norms, though with some controversy. Ethnic differences with indigenous groups slowly become less important, and speakers of indigenous languages may dwindle, often until the languages become extinct.

Phase 5: Differentiation. The new country becomes more stable and the new linguistic norms are no longer controversial. Social and regional dialects may develop, as may ethnic dialects between descendants of the settler and indigenous groups.

The Dynamic Model is based on colonial situations, in which a dominant group migrates to the territory of one or more subordinate groups. Here, *dominant* is used in the sense of Bourdieu (1973) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) to refer to elements of society that possess privileges, such as wealth and political power, and *subordinate* to refer to non-dominant groups.<sup>2</sup> Latino Englishes and those of many other

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immigrant groups, especially in Western nations, represent the opposite situation, in which a group has migrated to the territory of a dominant group and become subordinate. Observers may disagree on whether Schneider's model can be adapted to cases such as Latino Englishes or if the model should be set aside and a new model posited. There are obvious similarities between the two situations. In Latino communities, especially in former times, there was often a wide gulf between Spanish-speaking Latinos and English-speaking Anglos, bridged by a few interpreters. The descendants of Latino settlers acquired English, gradually at first but now as a matter of course, while Anglos borrowed biological, topographical, and cultural terms such as *huisache* "acacia tree," *mesa* "flat area falling off steeply at its margins," and *lariat* "lasso" from Spanish. Some Latinos have assimilated into Anglo culture, often helped along by factors such as church affiliation, intermarriage, or living in locales with few other Latinos. However, there are also serious differences. Most importantly, the power relations are reversed. Thus, it is the subordinate group that has migrated and the dominant group that has not. As a result, the migrants undergo language shift and with the shift comes interference (in Thomason and Kaufman's terminology) or source language influence (in Van Coetsem's terminology). The migrants' speech becomes a low-status variety. The subordinate migrants ordinarily come from numerous different communities, so that while they are acquiring the language of the dominant group, they, not the dominant group, also undergo koinéization of their heritage language. Having both to learn a new language and to develop a new dialect of their heritage language leaves the migrants, as a group, without long-standing ties to any community, whereas the long-term local residents have firm ties to both their language and their community, as well as the accompanying senses of identity, investment, and ownership of the community. The overall political system is not overthrown by the newcomers and the threat of genocides usually does not loom, but instead, the long-term residents may use the established political structures to exploit the migrants. However, eventually the newcomers become able to take part in the political system and may even win dominance of it – though a struggle is often necessary first. In addition, political (i.e., national) independence is never an issue at all. Because political independence does not figure into the picture, the dominant group already has established language norms and, aside from limited lexical borrowing, ordinarily does not need to develop new norms in response to the presence of the subordinate group – unless, that is, the subordinate group comes to outnumber it greatly.



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Schneider's solution to the disparities of the two scenarios is to extend the model to subordinate immigrant cases. He names a separate category, "adstrate," alongside settler and indigenous to account for immigrant groups to countries where a dominant group – English in the cases Schneider covers – already holds power. His generalities about how such situations progress – that the immigrants shift to a new language, that factors such as group size affect the process, and that the immigrants need to develop identity with the new country – seem accurate as a whole. *Adstrate*, however, may not have been the best choice of a name. For one, it departs from the traditional use of *adstratum* for situations in which neighboring groups of nearly equal power speak different languages. Second, it conceals the mirror image relationship of such situations with Schneider's settler/indigenous settings. He downplays the fact that adstrate immigrants enter the scene subordinate.<sup>3</sup> Concomitantly, the extension of Schneider's model does not differentiate dominant groups that are pre-established in a locale from dominant groups that have migrated to a new home, undergone *koinéization*, and set up new governments.

One aspect of Schneider's model, the acculturation of native people, has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years. Certain journals, particularly *English World-Wide* and *World Englishes*, have been among the primary venues for this research, and summaries of the findings from many nations can be found in Burrige and Kortmann (2008) and Mesthrie (2008), which are the latter two volumes of the book series *Varieties of English*. These publications have shed a great deal of light on the status and development of the "new Englishes" that are emerging in Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

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Immigrants need one or more sources for the features that become markers of the developing ethnolect. The earliest source of these features, and one might say the most convenient source as well, is their heritage language or languages – the interference or imposition spoken of by the language contact theorists discussed above. Exactly how L1 features transfer to a speaker's L2 has generated considerable theorizing in its own right.

Traditionally, transfer of features from an L1 to an L2 was examined by means of contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis, outlined by Lado (1957), consisted of comparing the two languages to determine how they differ and assuming that learner difficulties would be associated with the

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differences, whereas shared features would offer few or no difficulties. When the L2 contained a feature absent in the L1, it was assumed that the learner would substitute an L1 feature closest to the L2 feature. This approach encountered various problems, however. Some non-phonological aspects of a language are harder to compare than phonological features, and even when features of the two languages coincide, learners sometimes produce forms differing from those of the L1 and L2. As a result, newer models were introduced and now dominate thinking in the field.

Among the most important current models that address phonetic transfer are the Speech Language Model (SLM) developed by James E. Flege (e.g., Flege 1987, 1995) and the Perceptual Assimilation Model (PAM) devised by Catherine T. Best. SLM employs contrastive analysis but differs in two important respects. First, it holds that L2 learners identify positional allophones, not phonemes, of their L1 and L2 with each other. Second, it hypothesizes that learners create new categories when they perceive that an L2 sound does not match any L1 sound. Flege (1995) outlines other aspects of SLM, such as a postulate that learning mechanisms do not terminate or decrease sharply during a childhood critical period, in contrast to Lenneberg (1967), who proposed that the critical period exists. This postulate helps to explain both how some L2 learners may ultimately learn an L2 sound accurately and how a speaker's L1 production may be altered by experience with an L2 (e.g., Flege 1987; Yeni-Komshian, Flege, and Liu 2000). Some of Flege's work has examined how native speakers of Spanish negotiate the production and/or perception of certain aspects of English, mostly for voice-onset time, or VOT (Flege and Eefting 1986, 1987, 1988; Flege 1991; Bohn and Flege 1993) but also for vowel quality (Flege, Munro, and Fox 1995).<sup>4</sup> For a further empirical test of the theory, see Guion (2003).

PAM is quite similar to SLM. It grew out of observations that adult listeners sometimes showed excellent discrimination of sounds not found in their L1 (Best, McRoberts, and Sithole 1988). In fact, PAM focuses on individuals' perception of L2 sounds. The key assumption of PAM is that listeners identify L2 sounds on a sliding scale, from recognizing an L2 sound as a good exemplar of a sound in their L1 through non-ideal exemplars and deviant exemplars to uncategorizable speech sounds to non-speech sounds. In comparing L2 sounds, the various combinations of those identifications are predicted to yield a range of levels of discriminability (Best 1995; Best, McRoberts, and Goodell 2000). For example, two L2 sounds that are identified with different L1 categories are expected to show high levels of discriminability, whereas two L2 sounds that are both