

# THE ANGLICIZATION OF CUBAN SPANISH: A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

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## 1. Introduction

Cuban history and the English language have been inexorably related since the earlier migrations and political bonding. Geographical proximity and economic interests have been paramount driving forces in the assimilation of linguistic and cultural traits, entailing a deep sense of transculturation and social acceptance.

This empirical article is intended to examine the influence of the English language, especially the North-American variant, on Cuban Spanish from a historical point of view. Thus, the study is divided into three main periods: Colonial Period (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), Neocolonial Period (1902-1959), and Post-1959, or Revolutionary Period (1959-present). This diachronic distribution is aimed at depicting these socioeconomically dissimilar periods more extensively, by analyzing the sociolinguistic features borrowed by Cuban Spanish, and by relating the phenomena of borrowing and pragmatic permeability. Methodologically speaking, this research account is based on prior studies, dictionaries, and corpora on the impact of English on Cuban Spanish diachronically.

The importance of this analysis relies on the need to provide a clear-cut description of the socioeconomic and political conditions Cuba has undergone in the last two hundred years, and how Cuban Spanish has been a reflection of these extralinguistic variations. Therefore, the understanding of the evolution of English-induced loans and calques reveals significant etymological and semantic data.

## 2. The inevitable ascent of English

The dominance of the English language over other *in-contact* languages, to a lesser or greater degree, has undoubtedly prevailed over the last two hundred years. Thus, a number of twentieth-century linguists have foreseen the anglicization of Spanish lexis and syntax: Alfaro (1948), Seco (1977), López Morales (1971), Lope Blanch (1972), Lorenzo (1996). It is an unquestionable fact the way English has become the language of commerce and technology, and a vibrant international lingua franca, whose influence scope is in some cases regarded as a threat to other languages and local cultures (cf. Mallo 1954), especially in developing countries.

The earliest extralinguistic factors, recognized to be highly influential, date as far back as the defeat of the Franco-Spanish fleet in Trafalgar in 1805, the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and the economic and political splendor undergone in England during the reign of Victoria I. The industrialization era and the politically influencing British Empire extended to Spain and the American Spanish-speaking

regions, in which navigation and trading terms were chiefly loaned: the names of cardinal points, *ron* < *rum*, *monis* < *money*, *tiquete* < *ticket*, *corte* ‘courtroom’ < *court* (cf. Montes 1987: 177). In the nineteenth century as Britain emerged as a world power, English began to exert a significant influence on Spanish as it did on other European languages, and this influence increased greatly causing English to replace French as the main source of foreign loans (cf. Rodríguez 2002: 128).

Nevertheless, it was the recently-founded North American nation of the United States of America, which truly wielded its emerging economic and political significance over its neighboring American countries. Throughout the twentieth century, the English language, particularly the North American variant, was responsible for transmitting and spreading newly-coined words, especially those in relation with technology, economics, politics, and social traits. American Spanish-speaking countries have ever since undergone a tremendous process of linguistic *intrusiveness*, which has been variably assimilated by the Spanish language in conjunction with the geographical and socio-political features of the countries involved. “Pero ahora se halla la lengua de las naciones hispánicas amenazada por otra invasión deformante y desnaturalizadora, la de los anglicismos, producida por la acción del inglés de los Estados Unidos y derivada de la influencia económica y cultural de este gran país” (Mallo 1959: 115). [Nowadays Hispanic nations are threatened by another deforming and distorting invasion, the one concerning anglicisms, caused by the action of American English and brought about by the economic and cultural influence of this great nation]

Not all Latin-American regions, as far as their geographical and historical characteristics are concerned, are expected to be influenced equally by English. The Antilles and Mexico are obviously the regions in which this linguistic phenomenon is more clearly perceived (Valdés 2001a: 110). Needless to say that those bordering North-American territories, i.e. New Mexico, Florida, California, etc., convey a clear-cut, two-way linguistic borrowing, leading to both an *anglicization* of Spanish and a *hispanization*, or romanization, of English, i.e. *Spanglish*.

### 3. Cuba and the English language (Colonial Period)

From a diachronic perspective, the contribution of English lexis to Cuban-Spanish was nearly inexistent in the eighteenth century, not even during the eleven-month occupation of Havana by the British (1762-1763). According to the *cabildo*<sup>1</sup>’s minutes revised, scribes didn’t need to resort to anglicisms to depict Havana’s sceneries and endeavors at the time, even though economic and cultural activities were fully in the invaders’ hands (Valdés 2001a: 110).

Despite the absence of anglicisms and lack of willingness to loan these lexical elements into Spanish, there existed certain Spanish-based utterances describing the attitude of the invaders in a humorous way. One example that has remained until these days is *trabajar para el inglés* ‘working for the Englishman’, which implies the unprofitable nature of such an economic activity. However,

those who are in contact with south Florida Spanglish, particularly *Cubonics*, will spot this eighteenth-century utterance among those Cuban-Americans whose English calques of Cuban Spanish sayings seem to be increasingly common.

Meanwhile, a young North-American nation, comprised of thirteen English colonies in its earlier years, was naturally lured by the geographically nearby and wealthy Cuban city, especially those who lived under Spanish governance in Florida. Smuggling and trafficking of goods were especially common between Florida and Havana. This was the beginning of progressively growing commercial ties between these two territories, and the preface to bittersweet times of cultural and linguistic assimilation.

The United States represented an economic revelation for Cuban settlers, particularly those interested in establishing new trade routes. The reason relied on the short-distance and low-cost nature of the journeys needed (Valdés 2001a: 112). Europe, on the other hand, was regarded as a risky trade partner, whose geographic location involved costly goods packaging and transportation.

Fearing independence outbreaks, Madrid would successively prohibit Cuban settlers from trading with non-Spanish ships. Yet *Capitanes Generales* (Governor-Generals) on the island disobeyed since they were more inclined towards strengthening trade ties with the North-Americans. Consequently, in the early nineteenth century the economic dependence of Cuba on the United States was getting molded, leading to subsequent influxes of social standards, and let alone an irreversible linguistic loaning.

The social and economic repercussions of the Spanish foreign affairs were felt in Cuba. Due to continuous confrontations with other European powers, especially the Napoleonic occupation of the country (1808-1813), and the independence warlike outbreaks taking place all along the South-American territories, Spain needed to take further measures to find new sources of income. Therefore, Cuba was immersed in a free trade area, which was meant to bring about not only prosperity for the Spanish settlers both on the island and on the peninsula, but also for the North-American entrepreneurs, eager to foster commerce and navigation.

The *openness* of the island to the empowering Northern neighbor also raised Cubans' awareness of the technological advances made in the new nation. Islanders felt appealed to the American standards of living and how a freshly-established economic order was run. From this period on, the relations between Cuba and the United States were direct and non-stop. The progress made by the American people, their customs, and their pastimes started to influence the Cubans (Portell 1938: 199).

Manufacturing and industrial production were significantly developed by the freshly economic dealings. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the value of manufactured goods increased sevenfold, and the number of factories quadrupled, and industrial capital increased fourfold (Pérez 2008: 65).

The Cuban market was flooded by American products, and Cuban exports reached a highest volume of operations. It was precisely the United States that benefitted most from the free trade agreement in Cuba. From 1818, the annexation to the US was seen as an indispensable means to ensure the economic control of the prosperous island (López Segrera 1989: 45). It has been estimated that between 1841 and 1860, eighty percent of all merchant maritime transportation in Cuba was handled by U.S. merchant ships, and in 1868, the United States was receiving eighty-two percent of all Cuban exports (Cervantes-Rodríguez 2010: 107). This flow of commodities, ideas, information and technology resulted in higher political contributions and involvement between both nations.

The number of Americans living in Cuba doubled in one year: from 1,260 inhabitants in 1863 to 2,500 in 1864. Aspirations and motivations were shifting under the era of modernity: the ambition of any youngster seemed to be to go to *el Norte* whereas women considered the United States a dream country, where life and freedom were fully enjoyed (Hazard 2007: 86). Curiously, the toponym of *el Norte* has long-lived, and it is still used to refer to North-America, regardless of the political connotations that might have overruled its original sense. The expanding economic trade between the two nations was reflected in the growing presence of Americans in the island. “Although a number of Cubans had acquired U.S. citizenship (and, therefore, it would be inaccurate to state that all U.S. citizens living in Cuba lacked Cuban ancestry), a growing number of U.S. citizens with no Cuban ancestry arrived on the island in the last decades of the nineteenth century” (Cervantes-Rodríguez 2010: 135). There was an array of occupations the American settlers were mostly involved with: technicians and professionals, especially engineers and chemists; others represented or owned enterprises on the island; others were simply investors in real estate.

Equally significant was the way Cubans were in flight, and never before had they fled in such large numbers. Between the 1860s and the 1890s, tens of thousands of Cubans emigrated north, an astounding exodus that confirmed the proximity of intercourse between both nations. “In 1892 a Senate Committee on Immigration estimated that between 50,000 and 100,000 persons traveled annually between Cuba and the US. During the latter third of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of Cubans moved constantly back and forth between the island and the US mainland to vacation, work, live, and plot revolution” (Pérez 2006: 37).

In short, the nineteenth century was crucial in the formation of Cuban nationality and language. Not only was immigration decisive in the sociolinguistic anglicization of the island, but also in the undertaking of American habits and standards, denoting thus the consolidation of a long-term process of cultural and social assimilation, particularly observed in subsequent periods.

It was sport, without doubt, which really accentuated the assimilation of English-based lexical units. Boxing, horse-riding and more importantly baseball, contributed greatly to the import of the highest terminological word stock of all:

*uppercut, ring, inning, catcher*, etc. Never before had such a massive influx of loanwords entered Cuban Spanish so rapidly and dispersedly, as some of the most important Havana-based weeklies show: *El Sport, El Base-Ball, El Sportsman Habanero, El Club, La Pelota, El Pitcher, El Catcher, El Score*, and *El Pelotero*. Even some of these periodicals or magazines are preferably named in English in conjunction with the current assimilation process. Nothing in baseball was translated. In 1881, *El Base-Ball* even published a glossary describing baseball terms, in which terms and moves were clarified to readers; not even definitions could escape from English usage: “*foul ball* (pelota que al ser golpeada se dirige al terreno ‘foul’)” (Pérez 2008: 78).

This borrowing process was continuously productive, and some of the lexical units underwent further lexical-phonological variation: *fielder* < *fildeador* < *jardinero* ‘a player who is in the field while another player is batting’; *base-ball* < *béisbol* < *pelota*. These units have co-existed throughout specific stages of Cuban history, and their preference of usage mostly depended on the extralinguistic factors (cf. Sánchez 2016a)

In the mid- and late nineteenth century, various Cuban newspapers and magazines were clearly influenced by those American standards, and they served to exemplify how North-America would hold sway over Cuban sport, cultural, literary and social life. *El Sport*, whose title is, in and of itself, a lexical borrowing would portray valuable information on the extent of how printed Cuban Spanish was a reflection of the social standards shifting. Its 1888 edition (Number 14, issue 3) shows sport-related terms, in reference with hunting (*bull’s eye, American target, score*); horse-riding (*jockey, practicar el turf*); navigation (*yacht, steam yacht, sportsman, scull, beam*); baseball (*base-ball*, which in time derived in *béisbol*). Sport-related borrowings are certainly one of the most important sources of loaned lexical units in Cuban Spanish, thus proving the high-levelled awareness of these sports and their terminology.

English began to enter into constructs of class and status. European clothing fashion and mannerism was no longer in vogue. The utterance of “ok” and the act of chewing gum, for example, denoted a symbolism of modernity and personal aspirations. In *Leonela* (1893), a Cuban novel by Nicolás Heredia, one of the characters (John Valdespina), who returns to the island after many years of residence in the U.S., blindsides residents by behaving so *yankee*.

Needless to say that Spanish language, being a mirror of the technological and scientific laggardness of the Iberian metropolis, was in want to resort to various technical lexical units, borrowed from England, the United States, France and Germany, in which an industrialization era was, on the other hand, being brewed. Even José Martí, on the grounds of the necessary and unstoppable terminological borrowing process, complemented the work of Néstor Ponce de León, author of *Diccionario terminológico inglés-español y español-inglés*, in 1883 (Valdés 2001a, 123): “Hambre e invierno son padres de ciencias. Por lo que no hay que buscar en castellano muchos vocablos científicos; y el industrioso

erudito cubano Néstor Ponce de León hace bien en injerir con discreción y propiedad la lengua corriente y necesaria de la industria y el comercio en el idioma español, para expresar los estados del alma muy propio y rico”. [Hunger and winter are the parents of science. There is no need to create in Castilian numerous scientific terms; and the industrious Cuban scholar Néstor Ponce de León does it well by ingesting correctly and discretely the common and necessary language of the industry and commerce in the Spanish language, to express the states of the soul, suitable and rich]. By *correctly* and *discretely*, J. Martí probably meant the graphemic and phonetic adaptation of the new English-derived lexico-semantic variants.

The increasingly economic dependence of Cuba on the United States, especially during the peace period between 1878 and 1995, was equally accompanied by a number of American land-ownership investors, whose anglicizing footprints are still palpable nowadays by their alterations of place names, e.g. *Wajay* < *Guajay* (native *g* was replaced by Anglosaxon *w*); *Kawama* < *Caguama* (*c* replaced by *k*).

According to Valdés (2001a: 120), the influx of anglicisms at that time was still far smaller, in comparison to gallicisms. In his *Diccionario Provincial* (1875), Pichardo only registered six anglicisms as opposed to thirty-six gallicisms. These anglicisms are: *bifteq* (< *beefsteak*), *bloque* (< *block*), *brandi*, *bul-dog*, *yanqui*, *yin* (< *gin*). Based on the first data collected from nineteenth-century publications, the number of anglicisms could have been higher than the one listed by dictionaries. Presumably, those anglicisms being merely terminological (*yacht*, *baseball*, *jockey*, etc.), keeping its phonetic and morpho-syntactic traits unadapted, or possibly conveying specific paradigmatic features, i.e. register, sociolect, would have been a solid reason to be ruled out.

As to the sociolinguistic influence of North-America on Cuban literature, the character of North-Americans (or *yanquis*) was assimilated by humorous one-act farces to depict comical situations in a progressively mixed society. Hereafter a sketchy list of the most outstanding ones: *El novio de mi mujer* (1842), by José Agustín Millá; *Debajo del tamarindo* (1861), by Bartolomé Crespo; *Caneca torero* (1891), by José Ma. De Quintana. Those *yanquis* appearing in the plays utter anglicism-sprinkled speeches, conveying grammatical interferences and linguistic incoherence, as shown in the following excerpt, extracted from *El proceso del oso* (1882), by Ramón Morales:

¡Caramba! Mi no sabe como empieza para hablar con esta señora. Mi no tenga culpa desto...Señora...mi ser inglés. Mi estar en La Habana hace tiempo, pero tenga poco concocimiento por que [sic] nadie quiere hablar conmigo. Mi entiende bien el castellano...pero tenga la desgracia de que no entiende nunca ni una letra por que [sic] esta gente de la Habana tenga una manera de hablar bastante rara y no diga más que ¡Guamba!

Not only were one-act farces penetrated by a number of anglicisms, but also modernist and romantic Cuban writers, e.g. José María Heredia, in his famous *Oda al Niágara*: “Yo digno soy de contemplarte: siempre lo común y mezquino desdeñando, ansí por lo *terrífico* y sublime”. *Terrífico* is a clear-cut example of semantic borrowing; its sense is closer to the English word *terrific* meaning *great, incredible*. What is not precise is whether that anglicism was acquired on the island or during his forced exile in North-America.

One of the most interesting phenomena registered in glossaries and dictionaries at the time was the building of reduplications, which were mostly derived from English or Amerindian words. Esteban Pichardo’s *Diccionario provincial casi razonado de voces y frases cubanas* (1875) includes some of these English-derived lexical reduplications: *luculucu* ‘to look or to watch’ < *to look*; *guasi-guasi* ‘to wash’ < *to wash*; *pisipisi* ‘to piss’ < *to piss*; *tifitifi* ‘to steal’ < *thief*; *napinapi* ‘to sleep’ < *to nap*. López Morales (1971: 39-40) also refers to other reduplications of this type registered in the 1836 edition of Pichardo’s Dictionary and Fernando Ortiz’s *Los negros esclavos: estudio sociológico y de derecho público* (1916): *meri-meri* ‘to be drunk’ < *merry*; *soqui-soqui* ‘to fornicate’ < *to suck*.

Linguistically speaking, these reduplications were intended to intensify the meanings of verbs, adjectives and adverbs, and they are still in existence in colloquial Cuban Spanish (Perl 1988: 64). The origin of these English-derived duplications might have been a standardized lexicon used among slave traders, who were as well strongly influenced by the Portuguese language due to the control of slave routes on the Eastern coast of Africa and the Caribbean colonies. Some lexical traits were occasionally found between the *bozal*<sup>2</sup> language in Cuba and the creole languages in the rest of the Caribbean territories. The choice of English reduplications was basically a reflection of the empowered English and North-American slave traders, who would provide these colonies with a considerable number of slaves, and consequently their *bozal* trading lexicon.

#### **4. Cuba and the English language (Neocolonial Period)**

Unquestionably, it was the intervention of the United States in the Cuban-Spanish war (1895-1898) that established a historical turning point as to the influence of the English language in Cuban Spanish. The progressive borrowing and calque processes would be irreversibly fostered by the imposition of new extralinguistic features: the absolute economic and political dependence of Cuba on the United States; and the completion of invasive American ways of living, only parallel with the late-twentieth-century globalization process.

One of the first linguistic disruptions carried out by the new American authorities on the island was to issue a decree to impose the learning process of English inasmuch teachers needed to be prepared to teach elementary English, according to the ‘Decreto de las escuelas primarias y superiores de Cuba’, published in *Gaceta de La Habana* on December 6, 1899 (Valdés 2001a: 136).

Many Cuban teachers were as well dispatched to Harvard University and schools in New York to become better acquainted with up-to-date educational methods (Fairford 1926: 25).

The American political strategies were oriented to guarantee and favor the economic intervention as annexation was regarded as a threat by many Americans, particularly with respect to competitiveness and price. Consequently, President W. McKinley (1897-1901) took all the necessary steps to have Cuba be subject to the United States by establishing an *independent* republic, and thus everyone was satisfied: those who wanted to strengthen American economic dominance on the island, and those who rejected the annexation. By 1907, there were already in Cuba a total of thirteen thousand American settlers, whose possessions and investments were worth fifty million pesos (cf. Guerra 1958).

An evident illustration of the Americanization of identity and language is observed on the Isle of Pines (*Isla de la Juventud*), in which an estimated 4,850 registered US property owners claimed to own more than half of the island. Even new communities were modeled in a physical and toponymic fashion after American towns: Columbia, McKinley, Palm Grove, Westport, San Francisco Heights, Santa Barbara Heights. “English became the dominant language and US currency the medium of exchange (...) Two weekly newspapers were published in English: *the Isle of Pines Appeal*, *the Isle of Pines News*” (Pérez 2008, 110).

A social influx that might have had as well a linguistic impact on Cuban Spanish – clearly on a lesser degree than the Americans – was the arrival of Jamaicans, whose population in the Eastern part of Cuba was promoted. Jamaicans were somehow preferred over Haitians due to their cultural level, their condition of being British citizens, and last but not least, their being English-speaking cheap labor. The latter represented a significant socio-linguistic condition, which led to a lesser social discrimination (Valdés 2001b: 140).

Some historical documents of the time, especially those depicting Cuba as a melting pot before the eyes of Anglo-Saxon travelers, would stress out the coexistence of Spanish-speaking citizens with English ones: “Today, the population of Cuba (2,045,000) is composed of Spaniards, Cubans, Americans, English, Canadians, Germans, Chinese and several other nationalities” (Fairford 1926: 23).

Even though the Americanization of Cuban society was a fact, the degree of such a process affected social groups in a different manner. Whilst middle and upper classes embraced these new American standards naturally, intellectuals were against this invasive process. “It is not so trivial as many foolish people believe but, on the contrary, profoundly affects the future of the Cuban people, whose first sign of doom and ruin will surely be first the corruption and later the complete disappearance of their language.”<sup>3</sup>

Although a remnant part of society still minds the *corruption* of the language, it was inevitable that the Cuban variant of Spanish was being flooded by numerous *superfluous* borrowings, defining the Republican times as the most productive in terms of English-derived lexical borrowings and calques.



Another significant sociological feature of that period was that the emerging bourgeoisie was inclined to embrace the fetishist American consumerism. Thus, “the Cuban language would undergo the impact of this dissemination: *beauty parlors, canasta parties, baby showers, country clubs, business academies*, etc.” (López Segrera 1989: 185). The bourgeoisie was most likely to consume both American material products and cultural works, which explains the existing disconnection between the Cuban bourgeois and national identity. One significant aftermath of the lack of identity conveyed and of empathy within the bourgeoisie was “an intense intra-class conflict” (Padula 74, 8), which led to a great deal social pressure to climb up to the upper social stratum, “fostered by intense American-style advertising, and by the knowledge that it was possible indeed to get ahead”.

Simultaneously to the new technological era, newer Cuba-based companies had English names, probably in an attempt to gain more credibility from scratch: *Cuban Telephone Company, Cuba Lumber Company, Havana Construction Company, the Regla Iron Works Company, the Cuban Electrical Supply Company*, etc. So did a number of shops, department stores or retailers, whose names have been subsequently kept in the vernacular to refer to the buildings where they were once based in: *Sears* (pronounced /sía/), *Tent Cent* (pronounced /tensén/), *Harris Brothers*, etc. Besides, the escalating number of American tourists visiting the island (between 1920 and 1940 more than two million visited Cuba, to a record 356,000 in 1957) encouraged many Cuban and American investors to establish bars, clubs and hotels, whose names were originally conceived in English: *the Albany Hotel, Lincoln Hotel, Vanderbilt Hotel, Hotel Packard, Hotel Cecil, Hotel Biscuit, Hotel Bristol, Hotel Palace, Hotel Boston; Dirty Dick's, Hollywood Cabaret, Pennsylvania, Johnny's Dream Club, Tally-Ho, High Seas, Skippy's Hideaway, Turf Club*, etc. (Roberts 1950: 62).

The proliferation of English language reached newspapers and magazines, almost as many as Cubans had published in the US. The leading Havana dailies (*La Lucha, La Discusión* and *Diario de la Marina*) published English-language sections. The media turned into a first-hand loanword showroom, through which a significant number of these lexical units were silently coming in unnoticed into Cuban Spanish. Thus, *grocery* was preferred over *bodega*; *collector* over *coleccionista*; *hall* instead of *pasillo*; *market* instead of *mercado*; etc. Now Cuban residents were becoming more familiar with the English language, and what it implied: sophistication and *la jai < high life*. “English-language words entered Spanish as a function of social relationships, particularly unequal power relationships. Use of English words and phrases was to be taken as evidence of acceptance and adaptation, but it also served as proof of sophistication” (Pérez 2008: 377).

This is probably one of the most noteworthy features of English-derived loanwords in Cuban Spanish: English turned from novelty and *intrusiveness* back in colonial times, into the language of classiness and obligation in neocolonial times. Not only was Cuban Spanish word-stock enriched by technological

inventions, brands, and pastimes, but also by a major semantic shifting of anglicisms in the language. These lexical units were no longer deeply alienated by intellectuals and publications, in an attempt to protect the language from linguistic *corruptions*. This time, as post-colonial periodicals show, English-derived loanwords are more likely to be assimilated, to be used as a sophisticated touch of modernity, not as an oft-quoted italicized word, implying a disruption of the language.

Not surprisingly, English was the means to success. “English was the route to advantage and advancement” (Pérez 2008: 150). Due to a swelling demand of English-speaking personnel, a great number of language schools – or *academias* – increased abruptly, as well as a growing number of ‘English spoken here’ all over large cities, implying the rising correlation between speaking English fluently and finding a job. Consequently, education in English was progressively gaining importance in neocolonial times due to work requirements and social standards. Primary schools were intended to provide students with three or four courses of English. The creation of the Universidad Católica de Santo Tomás de Villanueva in 1946 meant the peak of the relation of higher learning institutions and English inasmuch some of its lectures and courses were rather conducted in English.

Some of the assimilation channels used by anglicisms to penetrate into Spanish language, which could be easily applied to neocolonial times in Cuba, have been summarized by José J. Montes (1982: 111): (1) “daily press through hasty pseudo-translations made by news agencies, careless translations of English articles and books, film dubbing containing many syntactic and semantic calques”; (2) new inventions keeping their English names – or conveying figures of synecdoche, e.g. *frízer* < *freezer*, *frigidaire*, *colcrím* < *cold cream*, *fab* or *ase* (detergent brands); (3) those people who spend some time working or studying in English-speaking places and come back with anglicized habits of speech; (4) the mentality of authorities who would find the introduction of anglicisms elegant and cutting-edge: *lounge*, *meeting*, *doméstico*.

In addition to the above-mentioned channels, there existed powerful economic interests, which were responsible for a remarkable number of anglicisms. These lexical units were assimilated through massive publicity campaigns that are noticeable in old Havana’s photographs and publications at the time (*Bohemia*, *Rosendo*, *Ellas*, *Diario de la Marina*, *La Nación*, etc.). Not a single corner of Havana or its most popular written publications escaped the flooding of English-speaking publicity and social references: *delivery*, *baby-shower*, *buffet-supper*, *rombeer*, *drink*, *cocktail*, *party*, *yacht*, *lounge*, *beauty fashion show*, *camp-fire*, etc. The wealthiest social stratum was targeted, and their response relied on a deeper assimilation of the American way of life: English words and utterances turned into a symbol of wealth and social empowering.

The first half of the twentieth century also witnessed the continuity of an invasive wave of anglicisms, already started in the late nineteenth century, taken from American pastimes: baseball (*béisbol*, *pitcher*, *quetcher* < *catcher*, *jonrón* <

*home-run, inning, bola < ball*); boxing (*boxeo, noquear < knock*); tennis (*tenis* ‘sport shoes’, *raqueta, match, net*). This lexical assimilation of sport-like units was the product of a cultural assimilation starting as early as the first decades of the twentieth century, in which cricket, tennis, golf and baseball were played everywhere in Havana (Fairford 1926: 24).

The existence of English-speaking towns has been registered by travel-guide writers at the time, who dared not hide their amazement before such a surrealistic scenery; “Hershey, twenty-eight miles by rail from *Casa Blanca* on the east side of Havana Harbor. This is the sugar *central* of a North American company which has operated in Cuba for a generation or two. The trip is enjoyed by tourists because they are greeted in English and made to feel thoroughly at home” (Roberts 1950: 271).

It is thought that continuous migration to the United States started after 1959, but during the 1950s, “Cuba showed a greater relative importance as a source country of emigration to the United States. Among the independent republics of Latin America, the island was second only to Mexico in immigration to the United States. This can be seen in the number of Cuban immigrants, nonimmigrants, and naturalized persons compared to the rest of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America between 1950 and 1959” (Cervantes-Rodríguez 2010: 147).

In summary, the influx of the English language reached its highest influence over the Cuban Spanish with the establishment of the so-called Republic at the beginning of the twentieth century, in parallel with extra-linguistic factors such as the enormous dependence on the United States’ economy and foreign policy. Geographical proximity, and more importantly, an irrefutable economic situation of dependency weighed more significantly over the migration of Americans to the island at the time (Valdés 2001b: 150). According to the percentage of English-speakers throughout the first part of the last century (0,46 % in 1899, approximately 1,0 % in 1917, and 0,36 % in 1953), there is no room for doubt that impact of migration was not as meaningful as other dialect variants; it was rather extralinguistic reasons – economic and political dependence – and not the presence of migrants as historically referred to as natural language-carriers.

The republican period meant a time of social transition, in which a growing number of children and adolescents, mainly of the upper and lower strata of the middle class, were being raised to expect a U.S. education and to live and work *the American way*. “*The North* was where many Cubans went or were expected to go to make something of themselves and return ‘made’, appropriately formed by the North American experience and prepared to succeed in Cuba” (Cervantes-Rodríguez 2010: 150).

From a historical perspective, English was in Neocolonial times (1902-1958) the second language in importance in the country, and the process of anglicization of the language found an even more favorable situation than French did as early back as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By and large, seventy-four percent of indigenous or differential anglicisms were borrowed and coined in Neocolonial

times (Sánchez: 2016b). This number suggests the historical relevance of this period in the anglicization of Cuban Spanish, in contrast with the other periods accounted.

### 5. Cuba and the English language (Post-1959 period)

The triumph of Fidel Castro's Revolution in 1959 brought about radical changes with regard to, among other socio-cultural fields, the North-American linguistic *penetration*. In 1961, the relations between the United States and Cuba were interrupted indefinitely by President Eisenhower, and the imposition of an embargo to the island that has prevailed until today; thus the main source of anglicisms was seemingly interrupted (Holešová 2013: 6). The creation of their own editorial agencies to avoid the oft-quoted pseudo-translations might have had repercussions on the number of anglicisms imported. Thus, Cuban Spanish witnessed a different era in which English-induced units, both already-coined and newly-coined, were likely to undergo semantic variations:

“Nadie puede negar que con el triunfo de la Revolución Cubana, disminuyera grandemente el uso del idioma inglés oficialmente al sustituir toda una serie de anglicismos por términos equivalentes en nuestro idioma. Sin embargo, tampoco se puede negar que, a pesar de los cambios producidos en nuestra sociedad, la influencia de la lengua inglesa sea fuerte, pues existen otros fenómenos o motivaciones que coincidan su uso. Así lo demuestra e impone el propio contacto y desarrollo de determinadas esferas y tecnologías en la actualidad, y en consecuencia, la incorporación y empleo de palabras como: stress, test, líder, pitcher, show, bar, barman, block, champú, hit, marketing, ticket, bisté, cake, file, printer, mitin, spray, zipper, blúmer, coctel, bacon, frigidaire, etc.” (Valdés 1998: 112). [No-one can deny the fact that after the triumph of the Revolution, the official usage of English decreased greatly, by replacing those anglicisms by their equivalent words in our language. Yet, we cannot deny either that, in spite of the changes taking place in our society, the influence of English remains solid since there exist other motivations leading to its usage. This is widely proved by the current development and contact of specific fields and technological advances, and the corresponding acquisition and usage of words: *stress, test, líder, pitcher, show, bar, barman, block, champú, hit, marketing, ticket, bisté, cake, file, printer, mitin, spray, zipper, blúmer, cóctel, bacon, frigidaire*, etc.]

Nevertheless, the coinage of newer anglicisms was visible through other channels of linguistic assimilation:

a. An increase in the number of Cuban migrants living in the United States, or Cuban-Americans, who would visit the island regularly and would be direct carriers of language-contact lexicon and phraseology: *estraples* ‘an item of clothing’ < *strapless, jeans, shorts, kiss* ‘a chocolate delicatessen’, *nice, fula* ‘stupid, bastard’ < *fool, shopping, parole, llamar para atrás* < *call back*. It is difficult to track down the etymology of the English-loaned units and calques, but

studies have shown that their dissemination has taken place during the post-revolutionary period (Holešová 2013: 44).

b. The development of tourism, especially in the 1990s, has led to an acquisition of a bulk of English-derived units, e.g. *transfer, cigar, tip, resort, voucher, driver*. They are semantically connected with tourism-related utterances, and in fact they are commonly used among Cubans, who deal directly or indirectly with this new economic sector.

c. The import of undubbed American audiovisual materials, e.g. films, series, documentaries. The media have undoubtedly been identified as a potential boosting factor capable of spreading a globalizing anglophile culture, contributing thus to the growing increment of anglicisms within our linguistic community (cf. Lorenzo 1996). Even though the first decades of the twentieth century were of great importance, the situation changed drastically after 1959 since “the new sociolinguistic era derived from this historical point favored the continuous disappearance of many anglicisms, mostly passed on through the media” (Fasla 2007-2008: 76). Curiously, Cubans have always found a way through the consumption of foreign TV materials, especially from the U.S. These mechanisms vary from the primary copies of American films and series to a more sophisticated interception of satellite signals and “their widespread diffusion across neighborhoods” (Cervantes-Rodríguez 2010: 230). Not only were Cubans exposed to English programs but also to a plethora of Cuban-American ones, in which south Floridian Spanglish forms are easily noticed, e.g. *llamar para atrás* < *call back*, *lonche* < *lunch, part-time*, etc.

Notwithstanding the lack of lexical borrowings in post-1959 period, it is widely recognized that the number of anglicisms attested in Cuban Spanish is currently lower than elsewhere in the South-American region. Extra-linguistic factors, e.g. Fidel Castro’s Revolution, might have greatly contributed to diminishing the bulk of systemic units and shifting their connotational meaning in the learned norm of the language.

A number of lexico-semantic variations have been noticed, particularly in terms of speakers’ pragmatic characteristics. Some of the English-derived borrowings and calques extracted, especially *fresher* ones (*drinking, láguer* < *lager, break, tri* < *three, llegar de fly*), are merely regarded as slang or containing marginal traits, i.e. a low-register word- and phrase-bank contrasting with the high sociolect of pre-revolutionary period’s anglicisms. However, there are studies showing that present-day anglicisms are also frequent in high sociolects, with the exception of referential or daily-activity units, namely *blúmer* < *bloomers, chance* < *chance, cloche* < *clutch, panqué* < *pancake, ponchar* < *to punch, soya* < *soy*, etc., which are socially scattered regardless of social strata and registers (Fasla 2007-2008: 86). A reminiscence, perhaps, of well-assimilated English borrowings during neocolonial times.

It is also pertinent to point out that these *indigenous* Cuban anglicisms have naturally co-existed with other *imported* ones, mostly taken from other Spanish-speaking countries, or regions, and through some of the channels described above (*beicon* < *bacon*, *suéter* < *sweater*, *mouse*, *mitin* < *meeting*, *champú* < *shampoo*, etc.). The so-called *par-excellence* borrowings, e.g. *lifting*, *drinking*, *pitcher*, tend to keep the newly-coined words morphologically and phonologically identical to the original words they are derived from, but occasionally they are also involved in lexical creativity processes: *meterle al drinking* ‘to be a drunkard’, *ser un pitcher* ‘to be sexually active’.

In general, Post-1959 Period is clearly characterized by (1) a continuity of usage of long-existing anglicisms in the language, especially those having to do with sport, pastimes, household appliances or furniture, which are evidently too well-assimilated or – rooted to be disrupted (*catao* < *cut-out*, *pitcher*, *frigorifero*, etc.); (2) a significant decrease of the number of these lexical units – exclusive of sport-related terms – used on official newspapers and magazines, and a return to symbolic italicized words, frequently accompanied by a rephrasing or explicative utterance; (3) a considerable increase of tourism-related words, mostly used as differentiating terminology (*cigar* / *tabaco*, *bus* / *guagua*); (4) the ever-increasing assimilation of pure loanwords derived from Cuban-American Spanish, and used in a low sociolect, which might explain why most of these newly-coined words are colloquial or slang, e.g. *drinking*, *estraples* < *strapless*, *money*, *brother*, *bye-bye*.

## 6. Conclusion

The evolution of English-derived loanwords and calques throughout Colonial, Neo-colonial and Post-1959 periods is a distinctive feature of Cuban Spanish, in contrast with other variants of Spanish in the region. Geographical proximity, unstable political and social unrests, and a highly productive capableness of specific sociolects – both high and low – to assimilate a significant number of loanwords have endowed Cuban Spanish with an unparalleled sociolinguistic uniqueness.

The Colonial Period (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries), in spite of being the most extensive one, was not precisely relevant for the number of anglicisms attested. Earlier dictionaries and glossaries (Pichardo 1875; Marinello 1926-1927) reveal that gallicisms outnumbered English-induced units by far, being the latter ones utterly scarce. Nevertheless, after revising dailies and magazines of the time, e.g. *Diario de La Marina*, *Rosendo*, *Bohemia*, *Juventud*, etc., there were indications of a higher influence and deeper assimilation of anglicized forms than it had previously been thought of. As per baseball-related words, this period represented the starting point of an expanding adaptation process, whose prior novelty in the language mushroomed into a massive and innovative word stock, in contemporary Cuban Spanish.

With the establishment of the Republic in 1902, and until 1959 (Neocolonial Period), Cuba experienced the highest level of exposure to American English, owing to an array of sociolinguistic factors: geographical proximity, political and economic dependency, cultural loans, *Americanized* high sociolect, etc. The rise of English was palpable in written materials, and their compilation is crucial to understand their etymology and semantic shifting. Another important conclusion is that, as opposed to an oft-quoted logical correlation between migration and linguistic borrowing, the number of American settlers in Cuba before 1959 (0.36% of the population on the island) suggested that American migration was not a key factor in the influx of English-induced units. Socioeconomic elements were clearly more significantly involved.

Despite the drop in anglicized coinages after 1959, this type of borrowing continued unendingly, but at a different rate. Post-1959 Period is particularly characterized by undergoing fresher assimilation processes, which are fully conditioned by the new socioeconomic situation in Cuba: a continuous *inflow* of already-coined anglicisms, especially those having to do with sports, pastimes, household appliances or furniture; a considerable increase in tourism-related vocabulary, tending to convey differentiating markers (*bus, guagua; cigar, tabaco*); a rising assimilation of Cuban-American English-induced lexical units, and an expected redistribution of semantic load: these anglicisms – e.g. *brother, bye-bye, part-time, drinking* – are mostly either colloquial or vulgar in present-day Cuban Spanish.

The study of the linkage between these three periods and the anglicization process of the language denotes a distinctive dialectal feature of Cuban Spanish: short-term visible semantic and pragmatic variations. By relating the unstable political and social unrests to the sociolectal assimilation of anglicisms, the understanding of the sociolinguistic dimensions of any borrowing process is unraveled.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A former Cuban municipal administrative unit governed by a council.

<sup>2</sup> (*muzzle* in English): language used by Africa-born slaves.

<sup>3</sup> *Diario de la Marina*, June 19, 1901, p. 2; Juan Antonio Barinaga to Editor, September 20, 1900. (In Pérez 2008: 149).

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### **ABSTRACT**

A diachronic study of the Anglicization process in Cuban Spanish necessarily entails an account of the shifting socioeconomic and political scenarios between the island and the United States. As to linguistic and cultural borrowing, three major periods have been allotted: Colonial Period, Neocolonial Period, and Post-1959 Period. This distribution is fundamental to comprehend how semantic and linguistic variations have been tightly linked to these changing conditions. A relevant finding indicates that eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Colonial Period) were characterized by a higher influence and deeper assimilation of anglicized forms than previously thought. However, the first half of the twentieth century (Neocolonial Period) represented the most productive era in terms of anglicization, in which the influx of the English language reached its highest influence over the Cuban Spanish. After 1959, with Fidel Castro’s Revolution, the borrowing of these English-induced units continued but their assimilation channels and semantic structures changed significantly. A historical study of this sort is vital to have a better understanding of how the process of linguistic borrowing echoes the existing pragmatic variations.

**Key words:** Cuban Spanish, American English, contact linguistics

### **REZUMAT**

Un studiu diacronic al procesului de anglicizare a spaniolei din Cuba necesită o prezentare a schimbărilor contextului socioeconomic și politic dintre această insulă și Statele Unite. În ceea ce privește împrumuturile lingvistice și culturale, au fost stabilite trei mari perioade: perioada colonială, perioada neocolonială și perioada post-1959. Această distribuție este fundamentală pentru a înțelege modul în care variațiile semantice și lingvistice au fost strâns legate de aceste condiții în schimbare. S-a constatat că secolele al XVIII-lea și al XIX-lea (perioada colonială) au fost caracterizate de o influență sporită și de o asimilare mai profundă a formelor anglicizate decât se crezuse înainte. Totuși, prima jumătate a secolului XX (perioada neocolonială) a reprezentat perioada cea mai productivă din punctul de vedere al anglicizării, când aflusul limbii engleze a atins influența maximă asupra spaniolei din Cuba. După 1959, odată cu revoluția lui Fidel Castro, împrumutul acestor unități a continuat, însă canalele lor de asimilare și structurile semantice s-au schimbat semnificativ. Un studiu istoric de acest gen este fundamental pentru a înțelege mai bine în ce fel procesul împrumuturilor lingvistice reflectă variațiile pragmatice existente.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** spaniola din Cuba, engleza americană, lingvistică de contact