

The status of loan-words in modern monolingual dictionaries

Chris Pratt

1. Introduction

The theme of this paper is to suggest theoretical criteria by which to identify loan-words, together with some ways of applying these criteria in contemporary monolingual dictionaries. I shall refer mainly to Anglicisms in modern Spanish,¹ but it is hoped that the approach will be sufficiently broad to encompass other loan-words in other languages.

The influence of English on contemporary European languages of culture is perhaps one of the most noteworthy features of diachronic contrastive lexicography.² The attitudes, both popular and official, of these languages towards this influence vary widely, and can play a crucial role not only in the acceptance or rejection of loan-words in monolingual dictionaries, but the actual way in which loan-words are classified and even identified.

2. Theory

Firstly, a few remarks on the theoretical problems of identifying loans in foreign languages. This is perhaps the appropriate moment to recall the difference between immediate and ultimate etyma, a crucial concept in the establishment of the status of borrowing.³ The language of an immediate etymon is that which directly supplies the loan-word to the borrowing language; the language of an ultimate etymon is that which acts as the final language as far back in time as we are able and/or willing to go.

In the contemporary era, and with reference to contemporary European languages of culture, neologisms come from basically three sources. In the first place, someone creates a new word in a given language by inventing *ex nihilo* an entirely new word, a resource which is relatively infrequent, the majority of neologisms of this type being nonce-words (such as «quark») or acronyms; secondly, he or she may draw on the considerable pre-existent resources at hand within the confines of that language⁴; thirdly, the inventor may have recourse to other languages, especially Latin

1. See Pratt, C. J., *El Anglicismo en el español contemporáneo peninsular* (Gredos, Madrid, 1981), and «Anglicisms in Contemporary European Spanish», in Viereck, W., and Bald, W.-D. (eds.) (*op. cit.*, pp. 345-367).

2. The most recent overview is the volume of studies in honour of Broder Carstensen, *English in Contact with Other Languages* (Viereck, W., and Bald, W.-D. eds., Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1986).

3. For a full discussion of these terms, see Pratt, C. J. «El arraigo del anglicismo en el español de hoy», *Filología Moderna* (Nov. 1970-Feb. 1971) 40-41, p. 85.

4. In the case of modern English, for example, we are talking principally about the well-documented resources of affixation, compounding, category change, blending, clipping, back-formation, and various combinations of these.

and/or Greek, and select words or roots which contain the meaning or idea being sought. This is especially the case of most scientific and technological neologism.

Let us briefly recall the fundamentals of the neological process, with its three stages: (1) a person invents a word; (2) his contemporaries get to know of the word; (3) the word is either accepted or rejected. The basic problem with respect to identifying coinings is that of ascertaining who carried out the borrowing. This means at best which individual created the word, and at worst, in which language the neologism was created.

3. The Neological Process: An Historical Overview

Centuries ago, before the onslaught of McLuhan's Electric Village, things linguistic moved quite slowly. Stage two could take many years, probably several decades, while final acceptance might well take even longer. However, in contemporary times, international communications are globally instantaneous, a factor which makes identification of the individual coiner and/or his language extremely complex.

The crux of the matter here is deciding which language actually coined the form in question, since any one of a number of contemporary European languages of culture (especially English, French, German, Italian and Spanish itself) would be capable of having recourse to classical roots, while any one of the others would be capable of adopting the coining with minimal morphological adaptation.

It is also very possible for an international scenario to develop as an alternative stage two. The genesis of the loan-word occurs when a listener or reader becomes aware of a neologism created in a **foreign** language. If he or she finds it useful, the word is taken and incorporated into his or her own ideolect.⁵ The word then undergoes the same fate as in the native stage three situation: acceptance or rejection by other speakers and hearers. In all these processes it is important that we never lose sight of the fact that linguistic borrowing is an act started by **one** individual in one specific language.

Space does not allow for detailed discussion of complex etymological questions, but certain key points must be made. Firstly, it is assumed —wrongly— by Spanish etymologists (or at least Coromines, and those responsible for the Spanish Academy's etymological dictionary, now fast approaching the conclusion of the letter «A») that if certain words belong to the same etymological family, a real autochthonous, causal linguistic relation tacitly pertains. This assumption is indefensible.

Secondly, allied to this error is another which further assumes that all patent Latinisms and Hellenisms now in use in contemporary Spanish have been coined in and by Spanish. Here the whole question is quite insidious and surreptitious, since nowhere is this overtly stated. But a close examination of etymological data given in the entries of Spanish monolingual dictionaries show beyond a shadow of a doubt that this assumption is being made. This procedure is very dangerous, and can and does give rise to totally false associations, some deliberately fostered.⁶

5. This incorporation may adopt four different forms: (1) the word may be adopted without change; (2) some modification may occur so that the word conforms to the patterns of the receiving language; (3) the word may be translated; (4) a new word may be invented in the receiving language.

6. I believe that one minor repercussion of the malaise usually associated with the 1898

The kind of scenario and time-scales already postulated above in relation to the neological process in general, and borrowing in particular, would work very well from the very birth of modern languages till the beginning of this century, when for reasons well-known, the whole nature of language contact changed radically—and irreversibly.

4. Loan-word Identification in Spanish

I shall now turn to the specifics of loan-word identification in Spanish.

4.1. Patent Anglicism⁷

I shall first examine what I call «patent Anglicism» and its treatment in Spanish monolingual dictionaries. In the case of Romance languages such as Spanish, Germanic-based vocabulary sticks out like the proverbial sore thumb; words like «snack», «sandwich», «cocktail», «sketch», «bit», and literally thousands of others proclaim their Germanic nature from the rooftops—their very form shows that they are alien to the linguistic system of Spanish.⁸

These borrowings are the ones most stringently, not to say hysterically, objected to by most Spanish dictionaries and the linguistic authorities, precisely because they do not conform to current linguistic patterns. The Spanish Academy bemoans their un-Spanish look, in addition to the fact that many are allegedly difficult to pluralise.⁹

generation is linguistic, in that the inward-looking, claustrophobic attitudes caused etymologists to discover and/or reaffirm «home-grown» Spanish vocabulary. Currently, most etymologists of Spanish persistently, even blatantly, refuse to see the intervention of any other language in the mass of Classical-based neological vocabulary coined over the last few centuries. The result of this attitude is that Spanish has —seemingly— created this vocabulary in an autonomous fashion, and this in turn means that Spain has not, in their view, been totally dependent on other languages and cultures during this time. For a further discussion of this topic, see Pratt (1980, Ch. 3).

7. The term «patent Anglicism» refers to those words which obviously derive from Germanic roots, or are not based on either Classical or Romance roots (e.g., words like «anorak», or «kimono», which have been propagated via English).

8. In the corpus studied in Pratt (1980), a mere handful of patent Anglicisms were acceptable in terms of current Spanish linguistic structures, i.e. there is nothing in their structure which makes them unacceptable to Spanish in any way. The list is sufficiently short to include in its entirety: *bacon, badminton, banjo, bar, boy, bus, cameraman, cárter, clan, container, corner, charter, drive, dumper, fan, fuel, gasoil, gin, gingerale, gospel, hamster, jersey, leader, manager, míster, morse, nurse, performance, pianola, panel, pórtor, póster, rádar, raglan, rail, rayón, sidecar, ténder, trailer.*

9. With regard to the plural of «club» as «clubs», pronounced /klus/, peninsular Spanish earns vociferous reprimands from the Argentinians, who insist on writing «clubes», and pronouncing /klúbes/. So strong is the feeling that foreign nouns in Spanish take «s» to form the plural that even forms which do take «es» in English (nouns ending in sibilants) are sometimes made to adapt to the standard «foreign» pattern (e.g., «sandwichs», «sketchs», etc.), even when Spanish itself should use «-es». Another solution is to treat the nouns as invariable, e.g., «unos [esnák]», usually written without the final «s», «snack».

The upshot of this negative attitude is that most patent Anglicisms are frostily ignored by standard Spanish dictionaries. The reaction of most Spanish lexicographers is that such words must be passing fads, and that self-respecting Spaniards cannot be so perverse and anti-patriotic as to incorporate such barbarisms into their pristine language.¹⁰

The Spanish Academy forces these Anglicisms and other obviously foreign words to undergo a test of fire: they are put into abeyance (formerly into a linguistic limbo in the form of a filing-card in an old shoe-box), while the Academy waits—and waits, and waits. Occasionally (and invariably once the word has been totally accepted by the population at large for several decades) the Academy relents, but often insists on making ludicrous changes to the words so that they conform rigorously to contemporary Spanish linguistic structures.¹¹ The paradoxical point still remains, nevertheless: patent Anglicisms, which are extremely easy to identify, are not usually accorded access to standard Spanish dictionaries. If they do get in, and the dictionary does offer some etymological information, it tends to be correct.

The main problems of identification occur, however, in non-patent Anglicism (that is, absolute and derivational neological vocabulary based on Latin and Greek roots, semantic Anglicism, structural Anglicism, and collocations) to which I shall devote the rest of this paper, together with some possible solutions.

4.2. Absolute Neologism

A couple of examples will illustrate the kind of problems which arise. Take the word «international» and its various cognates in European languages of culture. We happen to know, thanks to the superb OED, nothing like which, alas, exists in any other language, that it was J. S. Mill who coined «international». Therefore, only an English etymological dictionary has the right to say that this word is derived from the Latin prefix «inter», and English «national». The dictionaries of all other languages which have a cognate of this word **must** specifically state in their etymological notes that the word in their particular language comes directly from **English**; or which language acted as intermediary if not taken directly from English.

In the case of Spanish, where does «internacional» come from? Certainly **not** from Latin «inter» and «nacional», as the Academy dictionary states. If we are to undertake serious, responsible etymological research, we must start a long, difficult hunt through 18th century European writings to see the first documentation in each language and try to discover, if possible, the linguistic chain. European 18th century history would lead us to the hypothesis (since dates of first documentation of this period, and the whole of the contemporary period are not reliable) that «internacional» reached Spanish through French.

10. This is the sort of wording used *passim* by Alfaro in his *Diccionario de Anglicismos*, 3rd ed. (Madrid, 1970).

11. Words ending in final consonant clusters or those final consonants not to be found in Spanish (such as «clipe», or «ofsete», never used by anyone), suddenly grow an extra final «e». Slightly more acceptable is the placing of an «e» before a word beginning with «s» plus consonant, since all Spaniards pronounce such words in this way anyhow. Efforts such as «cricquet» [*sic!!*] are nothing short of grotesque.

Once we have established the language of the immediate etymon, we are in a position to apply various lexicographical solutions. If space in the dictionary for etymological information is at a premium (as it tends to be), then the lexicographer must select his criteria: immediate or ultimate etyma? If the former, then the dictionary should state which language actually gave «internacional» to Spanish; if the latter, then passing mention should still be made to the creating language (English in this case), and then the Classical roots would be given. Very few dictionaries of contemporary modern languages adopt this methodology.

What is totally unacceptable is the trick the *DUE* tries to pull by stating that «coalición» in Spanish, ultimately derived from Latin, is a Gallicism **and** Anglicism—some Spanish expert has even coined the wondrous term «Galo-anglicismo» to refer to this phenomenon. This statement is plainly nonsense, and merely indicates the most supine ignorance of basic etymological procedures. It is totally impossible for two different languages to provide the source for a given word at a given time: multilingual polygenesis must be dismissed as a myth.

But such philological sleight-of-hand (or rather cooking the books) occurs, simply because it is the soft option to the question we are posing. The main reason why ultimate etyma are always preferred in Spanish dictionaries (and many others) is that they circumnavigate the problem of attempting to discover which language acted as immediate donor of the loan. The dictionary of the Real Academia Española always insists on stating a Classical etymon, that is, an ultimate etymon, when one can be found. Furthermore, it is far more willing to accept into its dictionary foreign words derived from Latin, Greek, Arabic and modern Romance languages than from other modern non-Romance languages. An intermediary language is rarely stated, a situation which further fosters the delusion that it is Spanish itself which has carried out the coining.

The truth is that in very many cases we do not have enough reliable etymological information to state unequivocally that a given word derives directly from a given language, and we are forced to cast our net over a wider area of investigation to include extra-linguistic data; I shall return to this all-important point later (see 5 below).

But even when such rare properly linguistic data are available, Spanish dictionaries wilfully ignore them: we know that Baird invented the word «television», and that «allergy» was coined by a German doctor. Yet none of these facts is reflected in Spanish dictionaries. Television, we hear, comes from Greek «tele» and Latin «vision», and we are led to conclude by omission (the sinisterly surreptitious element I referred to earlier) that it is Spanish that has actually coined the word. No mention of German either in the etymological information given for «alergia». There are literally thousands of absolute neologisms which Spanish dictionaries derive from Classical roots, and which are in reality Anglicisms, Gallicisms, or Germanisms.

4.3. Derivational Neologism

Much new vocabulary consists of derivational neologism (i.e., the addition of a suffix or prefix onto a pre-existing Spanish word). In many cases, properly linguistic clues that native autonomous Spanish derivational structures are not at work are clearly visible to eyes not blinded by historical and political prejudice, yet are totally ignored (ignorance? design?) by Spanish etymologists and lexicographers.

The case of the derivational negative prefix is particularly thorny. Spanish is in fact rather weak on the negative of certain adjectives like «importante», «práctico», and many others. Traditionally, Spanish has used the cumbersome «poco» construction¹², yet one hears and reads more and more forms such as «inimportante», «impuntual», «inusual», «impráctico», which I have no hesitation in classifying as Anglicisms.

Although it could be argued (and often is) that these are standard derivations from pre-existing Spanish words, the case remains that all of the negative derivations existed in English and/or French long before they did in Spanish, and this is a key linguistic factor, on top of any extralinguistic cultural considerations (see 5 below).

Other clues of non-native procedures abound. Traditionally, Spanish used the «-dor» suffix to derive adjectives and nouns from verbs, such as «hablador», «perdedor», etc. So what are we to make of neological adjectives such as «alarmante» or «preocupante»? Are we naïvely to follow the Spanish Academy, «del verbo alarmar»? Why isn't it *«alarmador»? In fact, just about all contemporary post-verbal adjectival Spanish coinings ending in «-ante» and «-iente» are based either on similar pre-existing French cognate gerunds ending in «-ant» or «-ent», or English present participles ending in «-ing». Spanish dictionaries do not consider this possibility.¹³

4.4. Semantic Anglicism

Whenever traditional words are not being used in their normal way, it may well be another indication that outside factors are at work, and once more dictionaries should note this fact; I am referring here to calque. There are many cases of this in contemporary Spanish: «tambor» meaning «a drum» (of detergent); «cadena» referring to a «chain» (of shops or supermarkets); «flota» referring to a «fleet» (of cars, taxis, etc.), plus hundreds of others.

The traditionalists will argue that such semantic extensions are perfectly logical, and have nothing to do with outside *interference* (their terminology, not mine); however, the extralinguistic theory referred to in 5 below makes such claims highly unlikely; Spanish indeed **could** have invented such coinings; but it didn't. English did. Drums of detergents, chains of supermarkets and fleets of cars are cultural importations in Spain (along with televisions and allergies), and Spanish added the new anglicised meaning to the old meaning of the Spanish word. Dictionaries should record this fact.

12. This is inadequate from another point of view too: nouns cannot be easily formed from the adjective, the traditional solution being «lo» plus adjective.

13. In fact, the «-dor» suffix probably stopped becoming productive a couple of centuries ago—precisely because of the growing influence of French gerundial adjectives. Even popular, colloquial and down-right vulgar contemporary coinings now follow the new «-ante» pattern (e.g., «acojonante»). It is noteworthy too that the active use of the past participle is no longer generative (e.g. traditional «cansado» meaning «tiring» rather than tired).

4.5. «Structural» Anglicism

There is an even more indirect kind of Anglicism, which I refer to, *faute de mieux*, as structural Anglicism, a process whereby a given English structure gives rise to a neological lexical element in Spanish from a different word-class. One example is the repercussion in Spanish of the neological English noun-compound.

In this typically Germanic construction, the adjectival function of the first element is carried out by an unmarked **noun**; that is, **adjectives** are not required to fulfill this adjectival function. In the vast majority of cases, the neologism consists precisely of the **collocation**, the words themselves being those of standard vocabulary (e.g. «noise pollution», «road-safety», etc.). That is why I refer to this Anglicism as being «indirect»: a non-neological English noun, usually of common Germanic stock, gives rise to a neological Latin-based adjective.

This process as it affects Spanish is quite complex. As an opening remark, let it be stated that Spanish has always traditionally been weak on generic adjectives meaning «pertaining to...»; many nouns simply do not possess an etymologically related adjectival form, since the traditional solution to the generic function is the formula «de» plus noun. Paradoxically, however, a few nouns do boast more than one post-substantival adjective (cf. «carnal»/«cárnico»).

The process of adopting these Eurospeak collocations, invented mostly by Luxembourg language louts, is as follows: firstly, as with any neologism, the new collocation is created in English and/or French, in itself a process fraught with dangers linguistic and political (cf. «federal» in English, French, and German!); secondly, Spanish, now a fully-fledged Market language, is faced with the obligation of translating the collocation (and all Market documents) into Spanish. It is interesting to note that there is no choice at stage three (acceptance or rejection): Spanish is **obliged** to find an equivalent.

The usual solution is the invention of a neological adjective. Indeed, hundreds of new adjectives have been appearing in the last decade or so, and I have no hesitation in cataloguing them all as Anglicisms or Gallicisms. Some examples include «vial» (and «viario»), «peatonal», «competencial», «inercial», «tribunalicio», and recently in the Madrid metro «zonal»¹⁴; Whether such neological adjectives as these should be classified as Anglicisms in monolingual dictionaries is a moot point. But it seems beyond doubt that we are faced here with influence of one kind of English **structure** (the neological noun-compound) on Spanish, which results in the creation of neological **adjectives**.

4.6. Collocations

And finally, if a particular dictionary actually gives common collocations, then an etymological note should be given stating the source of the collocation; e.g., it should state under «contaminación acústica» that it is a translation of English «noise pollution».

14. The most used suffixes are «-al», «-icio», «-ario», and «-ístico».

5. The Extralinguistic Component

Several allusions have already been made to «extralinguistic» and «cultural» criteria, so mention must be made at this stage of the extralinguistic component of etymology. It is my view that, for the contemporary era, we must look beyond the narrow confines of language itself when trying to decide where words are likely to come from. More specifically, it is important to look at inter-cultural relations much more widely in order to decide which cultures influence and which cultures are influenced. Unfortunately, certain societies like the French and the Spanish see the linguistic influence of another language as somehow detrimental to their own. Influx of foreign words, far from enriching the language, somehow actually impoverishes it, in their view.

Provided we accept —and we must accept— that at the moment English-speaking culture (be it because of McDonalds or Mitsubishi)¹⁵ is dominating the Western world —and now a lot of the former Ostblock too—, it is a logical rider to suppose that the English language is influencing their languages as well.

We are now, in fact, in a position to answer our original question: who first coined the neologism? The answer is the person who thought up or invented or described or analysed the new structure, idea, object, or concept. The conclusion may be painful for foreign ears and hearts, but it is inescapable. «Taken to its logical conclusion, this hypothesis [...] states that it is culturally highly improbable for modern Spanish to be in a position to coin most kinds of neological vocabulary [...] owing to Spain's total subservience to other cultures, notably those of America and Western Europe.» (Pratt, 1986, p. 350.)

6. Conclusion

To conclude briefly, three main points:

1. All the types of Anglicism examined here refer to objects, machines, concepts and nuances originating outside Spain. The words lexicalising these objects are therefore words originally coined in English. Spanish has taken them either directly, or via other languages, usually French.

2. It is the duty of dictionaries, or rather, their compilers, to record the lexical items prevalent in the language at that time. As a corollary of this statement, it is specifically **not** the purpose of dictionaries to prescribe, proscribe, censure or censor.

3. It is high time Spanish lexicography abandoned criteria which have more to do with the politics and philosophy of the 98 Generation and the ancien régime, and adopted strict, rigorous etymological procedures.

15. We must not lose sight of the fact that it is not just the *native* English-speaking world which is responsible for the boom in Anglicisms; just about all Japanese multinationals use English as their language of international communication (despite the fact that the Japanese are terrible linguists), as do those of many other European countries, such as the Dutch and the Swedish.