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Spanish-English contact in the Falkland Islands: an ethnographic approach to loanwords & place names

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Citation

Rodriguez Gutiérrez, Y. V. (2022, June 14). *Spanish-English contact in the Falkland Islands: an ethnographic approach to loanwords & place names*. LOT dissertation series. LOT, Amsterdam. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3348457>

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Spanish-English contact in the Falkland Islands

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loanwords & place names

Published by
LOT
Binnengasthuisstraat 9
1012 ZA Amsterdam
The Netherlands

phone: +31 20 525 2461

e-mail: lot@uva.nl
<http://www.lotschool.nl>

The illustration on the cover shows the author and her then 1-year-old baby doing fieldwork in Pebble Island, part of the Falkland Islands countryside. The aircraft behind them is operated by the Falkland Islands Government Air Service. It is one of the 5 Britten-Norman Islanders light utility aircrafts used to connect the archipelago's sparse population. The picture synthesises the joint venture of mother and son in travelling to the archipelago to do fieldwork together.

ISBN: 978-94-6093-406-3
DOI: <https://dx.medra.org/10.48273/LOT0621>
NUR: 616

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Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van

de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van Rector Magnificus Prof. Hester Bijl,
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties
te verdedigen op dinsdag 14 juni 2022

klokke 13:45 uur
door

Yliana Virginia Rodríguez Gutiérrez

geboren op 2 juli 1983
in Montevideo, Uruguay

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This thesis results from a double doctorate under the co-tutelle of Universiteit Leiden and Universidad de la República. Yliana V. Rodríguez's work in this thesis was supported by a Ph.D. studentship sponsored by the Postgraduate Academic Commission of Universidad de la República. Fieldwork was funded by the British Embassy in Montevideo, the Falkland Islands Government, the Shackleton Fund and the Foreign Commonwealth Office.

Voor Dante, que creció acompasado con esta tesis.

Foreword

This academic trip started in a bar -where transcendent things often happen- during a conversation with my dear friend George Stewart, who had been to the Falklands several times. "Falkland Islanders use Spanish words", he said, and provided the exemplar case of 'camp'. I was intrigued. That chat was enough to light a Ph.D. bonfire. Some days later, still in bewilderment, I shared my revelation with my dad who clear-headedly explained that long ago Uruguayans had been there as a workforce for many decades. No surprise to him. I knew he was an exception, and that those who were not aware of the events would be just as mind blown as I was. American Spanish in contact with a British English variety in the Southern Hemisphere was quite a thing. Some years later, on the verge of starting my Ph.D., Professor Adolfo Elizaincín received me in his office. I told him about the Spanish-English contact in the Falkland Islands as a possible research topic. He did not hesitate to say it was a fascinating case to study. Even though other professors underestimated the potential and scope of the topic, I trusted my gut -especially after having received Adolfo's blessing. I went on to do a serious exploratory literature search, to find out there was almost no sociolinguistic information on the Falklands -in contrast to the rivers of ink spilt about the recent armed conflict. I must admit that I was both worried and excited about 'finding no findings'. It then became obvious that somebody had to do it first. Well, somebody with a baby. Consequently, this thesis was not written at an office desk but while breastfeeding, commuting, in coffee shops and sitting in playgrounds. Notes were taken mainly on my phone, as revelations tend to happen whenever one is *not* seated and ready to work in front of a computer. I wrote in South America, in Europe and in between them during flights. I wrote on buses, ships, aeroplanes, trains and whenever and wherever my bundle of energy and joy fell asleep. Doing fieldwork with my baby will probably remain one of my biggest life accomplishments. And it happened with the support, and zero questioning from friends, advisors, universities and funding institutions.

Variously and strangely, much as human beings live, by ranging hither and thither, by falling in love, and mating together. It is true that they are much less bound by ceremony and convention than we are. Royal words mate with commoners. English words marry French words, German words, Indian words, Negro words, if they have a fancy. Indeed, the less we enquire into the past of our dear Mother English the better it will be for that lady's reputation. For she has gone a-roving, a-roving fair maid.

Virginia Woolf, 29 April 1937 (transcript of the BBC *Words Fail Me* series broadcast).

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Acknowledgements

I have been thinking about the acknowledgements section of my thesis since the beginning of my Ph.D. journey, as kindness has accompanied me throughout the process. Even though a doctorate is said to be a lonely trip, scientific findings are seldom the result of one person only.

This thesis required, first and foremost, the collaboration of the Falklands inhabitants. Their precious help was mandatory in order to have a solid understanding of the contact phenomenon under study. My deepest thanks go to all informants, with whom I had long conversations that quenched my thirst of curiosity. I also want to express my thanks to the Falkland Islands Museum and National Trust staff for organising my talks and facilitating relevant documents from their archive; Tansy Bishop from the Jane Cameron National Archives; Ross Chaloner, the Falkland Islands Land Surveyor; Sally Heathman for arranging the logistics of fieldwork as well as interviews with locals around the archipelago; Keith Heathman for being the best guide/driver one can imagine to do off-road expeditions in the Falklands camp, Sally Blake and Joan Spruce for diligently guiding me to useful texts; Riky Evans for sharing with me Colgate's wonderful book; James Peck, and his son Joshua, for sharing their knowledge and friendship, Gail Steen for making me aware of her daughter Kimberly's precious work on horse tack lexicon, Derek Lee for sharing the Penguin News with me at the beginning of this journey, and Malvina House Hotel's chefs for cooking improvised vegan dishes!

I am indebted to my supervisors who did not hesitate to show their trust in me from the very beginning. Thanks to Adolfo Elizaincín, I discovered that my thoughts and observations on language contact phenomena are valuable. Niels Schiller always had great advice in structuring my thoughts and aiming at the big picture and Paz González would never hesitate to share her valuable experience, views and knowledge on the nitty-gritty of the academic craft. My most sincere thanks to all three of you! I also very much appreciated the feedback of the Ph.D. committee who were both kind and rigorous in their comments. In addition, I am grateful to my boss at the Centre for Foreign Languages in Montevideo, Laura Masello, for encouraging my kangaroo-mom scientific approach; and to the administrative staff of both Universidad de la República and Universiteit Leiden for their patience in dealing with the cotutelle agreement, especially to Iris Rahusen-van Ooijen. Throughout my research, I have also been lucky to profit from the feedback and discussions with respectful experts like Federico Lorenz, Jim McAdam, Marcelo Kohen and Iman M. Nick, amongst others (mainly many anonymous reviewers). I am also thankful to Peter Siemund and his research team for an enriching meeting in Hamburg. I must also thank Carolina da Silva for seeing potential in my research and pitching my project to the British Embassy of Uruguay, the Falkland Islands Government, the Shackleton Fund and the Foreign

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Commonwealth Office. Without their aid, fieldwork would not have been possible. Furthermore, the three-year scholarship awarded by the Postgraduate Academic Commission of Universidad de la República was of substantial help. Moreover, the Sectorial Commission for Scientific Research of the same University also collaborated financially on this project. I am very grateful to all these institutions.

I would also like to thank my dad, Ney Rodríguez, for his extraordinary help regarding the understanding of Uruguay's country-life jargon and in the identification of rural Spanish words (for city-dwellers such as I, these varieties can sound like a different language). Special thanks also go to Fernando de Mello for his constant encouragement and pep talks; Andrea de los Santos for holding my back in hard times; Lucía López Risso for her invaluable virtual assistance; and Patrice Riemens and Vesna Manojlovic for hosting me in the Netherlands.

I am also thankful to my chosen family, my friends: George and Raquel Stewart who are to blame for my interest in the Falklands, Lucía Bovio who helped me obtain books from the U.S., Matías López Rosenfeld who scanned books for me from Buenos Aires during the COVID lockdown, Daina Green who was always happy and ready to proofread my writing, Paula Gualano who helped me with graphic design matters, Carla Custodio who would praise my efforts and achievements like no one else, and to the love and support of my best friends (they know who they are!).

Errors, omissions and infelicities are all my own. Last but not least, the most heartfelt thank you goes to my son, Dante. Mainly for his sweet company, but also for putting up with more than a dozen flights, off-road bouncy trips in Land Rover, sleeping on library desks, and having her mom stare at blue light for thousands of hours to become what he calls 'a book doctor'.

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