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

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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.

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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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