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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>

Version: Publisher's Version

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

## Chapter 8

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### 8. Final Considerations

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#### 8.1 Overview

This dissertation is in the area of contact linguistics, a field of study that has developed within contemporary linguistics. It is a dynamic area of research interested in understanding how language systems change when speakers of different languages and cultures interact. Contact studies are valuable for many areas of knowledge, for instance, language change research, sociolinguistics, language awareness, ethno-linguistics, anthropology and archaeology.

The socio-historical contexts in which the different varieties of Spanish and English have come into contact with other – typologically similar and/or different – languages have given rise to complex and varied situations. The contact between these two languages in the Falklands does not escape the rule. This dissertation elaborated on a study of the historical and sociolinguistic factors (mainly outlined in Chapter 2) that defined the linguistic encounter between Spanish and English in the Falkland Islands, focusing on the contact's repercussions, both in the toponymic sphere (Chapters 3-5) and in its lexis (Chapters 6 and 7). This final chapter summarises and evaluates its main findings.

The approach of this work follows the idea that contact varieties are shaped by their social histories, as pointed out by 20th century as well as contemporary linguists (e.g., Weinreich, 1953; Thomason and Kaufman, 1988; Mufwene, 2001; Hickey, 2003; Schreier, 2008). Within such an outlook, this dissertation intended to build on this research tradition, hoping to collaborate with the scholarly community in proposing satisfactory explanations of the phenomena of language contact. This work – composed of several case studies– aimed to show that the changes induced by contact obey communication strategies, economic necessities, the impact of immigration, and attitudinal factors, amongst others.

In §8.2, I propose an outline of the scenario that led to the contact-induced lexical innovations attested, in §8.3, I address some limitations of the study, and in §8.4, I summarise the contributions and methodological implications of his work. Finally, in §8.5, I provide a few suggestions for future research.

## **8.2 The socio-historical contact scenarios leading to Falkland Islands English Spanish components**

Falkland Islands English is one of the three varieties of the South Atlantic Ocean and ranks amongst the group of “lesser-known varieties of English” (cf. Schreier et al., 2010). Since the English settlement in 1833, the Islands have been continuously inhabited by English speakers. Sudbury (2000) points out that the history of the Islands’ settlements is atypical compared to the colonization of much of the English-speaking world, since the only linguistic varieties that came into contact were those English dialects spoken by the settlers, without the influence of other languages (Sudbury, 2005). However, English was also in contact with the Spanish spoken by the *gauchos*, resulting in a Spanish linguistic contribution in terms of vocabulary.

This work presented a broad array of data confirming that FIE is also the result of contact with Spanish, asserting that ‘pure’ dialect contact scenarios are the exception rather than the norm. The linguistic evidence of such contact, however, is reduced to words and place names emerging from what was probably a jargon for cattle business and lifestyle. I argued that FIE lexicon originated from the contact of English varieties as well as Spanish. The latter, together with some native American words (see Chapter 7), contributed to the ultimate shape of FIE’s lexical idiosyncrasy. These words have been included in the local dictionary, and light up old Islanders’ eyes when asked about their meaning or use.

Even though Spanish-English contact continues into the present, heavy Spanish-English contact took place simultaneously with FIE formation. The onset of the contact – and chiefly its peak – can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century when businessman Lafone leased part of the southern part of East Falkland, the largest of the Falkland Islands which today is named after him: Lafonia. This dissertation’s focus, i.e., Spanish-English contact in the Falklands, began with the launching of Lafone’s cattle raising business, followed by labour force migration, in a territory where the British Crown had just settled, marking the beginning of a still-lasting bond with the mainland. The 19th century was decisive for FIE configuration, and the fact that archives show significant numbers of people with the occupation of *gaucho* and related duties indicates the origin of the many camp-related Spanish loanwords found in this study.

Given the number of Spanish loanwords attested in the FIE lexicon (around 20% of the words registered in the local dictionary), a jargon was probably spoken as a result of Spanish and English speakers’ interactions. This jargon was probably a simple sound system, one- or two-word utterances, without much grammatical complexity (see Chapter 2). *Gauchos* left the Islands when the economy shifted to sheep husbandry, therefore, the jargon did not undergo expansion so as to represent the first stage in the life cycle of a pidgin. It is worth noting, that even though it is common to talk about *gaucho*-heritage and *gaucho* words, it is important to acknowledge that people with professions other than the *gaucho* one (but related to it) were also agents

of linguistic contact. Rural labourers, women and children were very probably part of the contact scenario.

This dissertation has attempted to bridge a gap in the literature on English as a contact language, arguing that FIE is both the result of contact amongst English varieties as well as contact with a Spanish variety, a product of both linguistic and social factors.

### **8.3 Limitations of this study**

There were two clear limitations of this research. One was the unavailability of written sources, a common impediment to the study of lesser-known language varieties (Meyerhoff, 2012) that is not easy to overcome. Building a traditional corpus was virtually impossible, hence limiting the linguistic inferences. Furthermore, this prevented an evaluation of whether the lexical influences affect other levels of language structure. Secondly, fieldwork data collection was hindered in terms of time because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though three trips were originally planned, only the first went smoothly and allowed for plenty of interviews, talks, and mingling with the Falklands community. The second, on the other hand, was truncated by the South American lockdown, and returning home became primordial. This imponderably hampered data collection, resulting in the lack of data on more recent contact outcomes planned for the third visit. Furthermore, a third trip would have allowed for a better insight into how Islanders reflect on this facet of their linguistic heritage.

### **8.4 Summary of the contributions and some methodological implications**

Jointly with the socio-historical contact outline presented in §8.2, the findings of this dissertation can be narrowed into the two main topics: toponomastics and loanwords, and delve into theoretical, factual and methodological findings.

Place naming analysis revealed that within the Spanish toponyms used to refer to the archipelago – as well as to its various geographical features and places – there are two groups: one that is used locally and belongs to the gaucho legacy (over 200 toponyms), and another group used by the Argentinians in their maps of the Islands as a bastion of their long sovereignty claim over the archipelago (for the Islanders, the first constitutes endonyms and the second exonyms). Until now, it had been argued that no Spanish toponymic inventory was used in the archipelago (cf. Woodman, 2006). Furthermore, the data suggested that the second group of names is being used as instruments of the sovereignty claim, thus provoking negative feelings in the Falklands population, a subject that is well known to Islanders but which,

to my knowledge, had not been studied until now. With respect to the Spanish place names that are actually used by Islanders, data showed that they correspond to the archipelago's gaucho era, i.e., they were coined by then. Maps and Islanders' narratives constantly refer to them, and locals are well aware of their origin. These toponyms reveal profound acculturation and inter-linguistic processes, i.e., dropping the generics, omitting articles and adapting to the English phonology.

Methodologically, this work provided some relevant findings to the tradition of toponymic research. Visiting the archipelago and speaking with Islanders in person unveiled facts that go unnoticed when one limits research to maps and gazetteers, i.e., finding micro toponyms, understanding how the place names under study are used *in situ*, observing their pronunciation, discovering the stories behind them, as well as what Islanders think and feel about these place names (especially bearing in mind the ongoing political conflict with Argentina). In addition, despite the drawback mentioned in §8.3 regarding not having a traditional corpus, a years-long library and bookshop hunt allowed me to find a fair number of texts that mentioned the use of Spanish words in FIE. This metalinguistic corpus can be listed as an unexpected methodological finding since the limited local literature was not initially expected. Hence, this adjustment can also prove useful for other scenarios in which building a traditional corpus is not feasible.

Studying FIE lexis unveiled and evidenced historical facts that can otherwise go unnoticed. This suggests that lexicon studies help better understand the development of cultures. The 168 words attested in this work (by no means a terminal figure of this case) are an indicator of the volume of words that Spanish-speaking gauchos lent to FIE, making visible the role of the South American actors and their interactions with the local population of the Islands. Furthermore, fieldwork data made evident that these words are not limited to horse-riding terminology, as it had been claimed by other scholars (e.g., Sudbury, 2000), but also to other semantic fields such as animals, food, tools, clothing, and physical elements, amongst others. Fieldwork also indicated robust evidence of disuse of these words. Understandably, the modernisation of countryside practices, such as transportation and animal farming, has made the words redundant. Finally, it was noted that the Falklands variety has not been included in Oxford University's historical dictionary, denoting the under-researched status of the dialect.

This dissertation was not only the first to study a South American Spanish variety in contact with a British variety of English, but it was also the first scholarly work to study Native South American names in a Southern Hemisphere English variety. Even though these words have probably made their way through Spanish, contemplating their etymology is instructive in the absence of other historical data to reveal the myriad types and contexts of cultural encounters.

## 8.5 Suggestions for further research directions

When it comes to research on islands, it has been claimed that islanders develop a strong sense of idiosyncrasy to the place where they live (e.g., Gaffin, 1996). Such a sense of singularity stood out in this study, given that Falkland Islanders embrace their past, both the one related to Britain as well as the local one and point out how proud they are of it. Future directions of this work could look into these issues.

With regards to the contact characteristics, the questions that remain to be answered are: Did South American gauchos speak English? Did Islanders, British immigrants and English-speaking gauchos, speak Spanish? If so, where did they learn it (maybe in Patagonia)? Did these actors speak a Spanish-based or an English-based jargon? Additionally, further research could study the recent history of the contact. Contacts with the Spanish-speaking continent have been maintained virtually uninterruptedly throughout the Falklands' history; hence, it is very unlikely that neither the 20th nor the 21st-century Spanish speakers have lent FIE clearly identifiable words.

Concerning the origin and outcomes of this contact, there are four remarks worth making with respect to future research. The first is that toponymic studies still deserve far greater attention within academic inquiry with a wider scope of analysis. Place name research in the Falklands and elsewhere deserves detailed analysis, looking at toponymy from the aspect of societal acceptance. This, I believe, is both a valuable exercise for many disciplines, as well as a promising field with lots of ground for novel research. The second revolves around loanwords and place names adaptation. Preliminary observations show a strong adaptation to the English phonological system; experts in this field could benefit from studying this particular case. Thirdly, finding out how integrated the South Americans were and what interaction patterns they had with other residents, would be of great help to complete the puzzle. Finally, comparing the FIE scenario with other micro-contact settings involving Spanish and English also has the potential of throwing some light on the many questions that remain to be answered within contact linguistics.

This concludes my discussion on Spanish-English contact in the Falkland Islands, and an attempt to lay the basis for further linguistic analysis on this under-researched English variety.

