CHAPTER 10

Insertion and Backflagging as Mixing Strategies
Underlying Guarani-Spanish Mixed Words

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1 Introduction

Paraguay has two official languages, Guarani and Spanish.1 Whereas “pure” Guarani (Guaraniete) and “pure” Paraguayan Spanish can be occasionally used by some speakers, a substantial proportion of interactions are conducted in a mixed code (see Zajíčková 2009). Paraguayans refer to this mixing of Guarani and Spanish as Jopara (or less frequently, and often with a stronger derogatory connotation, Jehe’a). Based on data from the novel Ramona Quebranto (Ayala de Michelagnoli 1989; henceforth, RQ), Estigarribia (2015) concluded that the Jopara portrayed in the novel displays characteristics not of a third language (as is often claimed), but of code-switching, and best fits the definition of a mixed lect (Backus 2003). This is due to Jopara’s low degree of conventionalization (speakers have choices as to whether to use Spanish or Guarani forms, and these choices have meaning), and the frequent presence of insertions and alternations in the sense of Muysken (2000) (see section 3 for definitions of these terms).

The purpose of the present chapter is to complement the analysis found in Estigarribia (2015) with a specific examination of Guarani-Spanish mixed words in RQ.2 Based on Muysken’s (1997, 2000, 2013) code-mixing typology, I inquire what code-switching strategy gives rise to these mixed words. I show that mixing at the word level can occur when Spanish bases receive Guarani bound morphology, but not the converse. In spite of this, mixed words do not result from a single process. Spanish content roots with Guarani morphology in Guarani clauses appear via a process of insertion. On the other hand, sentential markers and a few other particles appear in non-Guarani clauses via backflagging. Finally, Guarani postpositions in Spanish clauses do so via a process of double insertion, first insertion of a Guarani PostP, and then insertion of a Spanish NP as complement of the Guarani PostP. However, this last case

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1 See Estigarribia (Chapter 2) for a basic description of Guarani.
2 I discuss briefly the issues raised by using a novel to study code-switching in section 2.1. For an in-depth discussion, see Estigarribia (2015) and Estigarribia and Wilkins (forthcoming).
is rare and not found in other, naturalistic data sources. The data presented here, I conclude, supports Estigarribia’s (2015) contention that Jopara is best described as a mixed lect, in the sense of Backus (2003).

1.1 Mixed Words, Code-Switching, and Borrowing

Given that many of the mixed word forms studied here are commonly presented in the literature as a result of borrowing (Granda 1980, 1996; Krivoshein de Canese & Corvalán 1987; Gómez Rendón 2008; Penner, Acosta & Segovia 2012), a brief note is needed at this point on the relationship between borrowed and code-switched forms. Theorists who argue for a strict separation between borrowing and code-switching generally view mixed words as borrowings (perhaps as part of a general relexification of a language), and exempt them from any constraints that apply to code-switched forms (e.g., the Free Morpheme Constraint, Poplack 1980; Sankoff & Poplack 1981). My position in this chapter is that borrowings and code-switches are synchronically distinct phenomena but that nevertheless some constructs used in the analysis of code-switching are applicable to analyzing borrowed forms. First note that, in general, code-switching involving agglutinative languages (such as Guarani) frequently runs afoul of the Free Morpheme and similar constraints because the use of agglutinative morphemes can result in a non-negligible number of mixed words (Azuma 1996; Backus 1992; Gardner-Chloros 2009; Myers-Scotton 1997). Furthermore, Muysken (2000) explicitly draws parallels between code-switching strategies—viewed as dynamic processes—and the outcomes of language contact—viewed as the static products of dynamic processes. Crucially, among the latter figure prominently lexical borrowing and relexification which “rely primarily on insertion” (p. 274). Myers-Scotton (2002) as well defends a position in which borrowing is not antithetical to code-switching, because “codeswitching provides an easy avenue for core borrowed forms to come into the recipient language” (p. 243). We can therefore view lexical borrowing as the community-wide result of the prior, consistent application of bilingual code-switching insertion strategies, a view that is consonant with that of Gardner-Chloros (2009). All this suggests that established borrowings may display residual properties from their use as code-switching items, and that some constructs from the study of code-switching can be applied to the analysis of borrowed forms.

In what follows, I take phonological integration as the main criterion for distinguishing borrowing from code-switching synchronically. Given this 3

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3 For discussion of this and of other criteria to distinguish borrowings from code-switches see Azuma (1996), Halmari (1997), and Muysken (2000).