

SPANISH- ENGLISH CONTACT IN BELIZE: THE CASE OF ‘*HACER* + V’*

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss the little studied phenomenon of the Spanish verb *hacer* (to make, to do) as a borrowing strategy in situations of Spanish-English contact. In this strategy, *hacer* is used in conjunction with an English verb form rendering the structure ‘Hacer + V’, where the Spanish verb appears to carry grammatical meaning of tense, mode, aspect, and agreement while the English form carries lexical meaning (Jenkins in press; Mendieta 1999; Silva-Corvalán 1994; Reyes 1976). As (1a) and (1b) demonstrate, a periphrasis is formed using *hacer* (carries inflection) and an uninflected English verb form which contributes lexical meaning.

- (1) a. Hizo improve mucho. (Reyes, 1976:183)
‘She improved a lot.’
- b. El padre lo [the place] hizo bless. (Hagerty, 1996:137)
‘The priest blessed it.’

This paper draws on empirical fieldwork carried out in Belize with Spanish-English bilinguals in March, 2005.

1. Do-verb constructions and ‘Hacer + V’

The strategy of using a helping verb such as *hacer* has been noted in other contact situations such as Turkish-Norwegian and Spanish-Maya (Türker 2002; Winford 2003; Suárez Molina 1996). In the Spanish of Yucatan, for example, the verb *hacer* is used in conjunction with a Mayan form as in (2a) and (2b).

- (2) a. *hacer loch*
‘to hug’
- b. *hacer xix*
‘to shred, to chop’

Alternatively a Mayan verb meaning *do* is used to borrow Spanish verbs and in Turkish-Norwegian contact *yap-* (to do) is used to incorporate Norwegian verbs, forming a do-verb construction (Winford 2003:52; Türker 2002)

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In the case of Spanish English contact the use of ‘Hacer + V’ has been noted in the speech of Spanish-English bilinguals in the South-western United States (Jenkins, in press; Silva-Corvalán 1994; Reyes 1976) and in Belize, Central America (Hagerty 1996). Spanish does permit the use of *hacer* followed by an infinitive but in this case it forms a causative construction as in (3). Reyes (1976) suggests that ‘Hacer +V’ as a borrowing strategy, although it functions differently, may be based on the syntactic frame of the causative construction.

- (3) Las películas tristes me hacen llorar.
 ‘Sad movies make me cry.’

A pre-existing structure in the languages in question can facilitate the formation of a new but similar structure. However, in this case, we know already that the periphrastic structure we’re interested in does not act as a causative, as the examples (1a) and (1b) show where both the verb *hacer* and the English verb form have one agent (*priest* in (1a) and *she* in (1b)). In addition, the verb *hacer* does not lose its lexical meaning *to make* or *to do* and continues to act as an auxiliary which is one of its functions in monolingual Spanish. Since we also know that do-verb constructions occur in other contact situations it is unlikely that the structure is based on an already existing syntactic structure but rather that this strategy takes advantage of auxiliary do-verbs in order to borrow bare verb forms in contact situations.

These do-verb constructions do not seem to occur with all verbs. As Reyes (1976) points out, not all English verbs are borrowed into this structure, the verbs *eat* and *go*, for example, do not occur in ‘Hacer +V’. These verbs belong to a more familiar style in Chicano Spanish and so (4a) and (4b) will not occur (Reyes 1976:188). The English verbs that can be borrowed into this structure, then, are governed by constraints based on familiar and formal style. I will later refer to this in terms of high (familiar) versus low (formal) frequency following Jenkins’ (in press) proposal that ‘Hacer + V’ occurs with low frequency verbs and verbs associated with English language domains .

- (4) a. * hacer eat
 To eat
 b. * hacer go
 To go

In addition, on observation of the examples of ‘Hacer +V’ cited in the literature, I noticed that the incorporated English verbs seemed to belong to the general class of dynamic verbs as no examples with stative verbs have been cited. This paper then discusses two possible constraints on the English verb form, the first being stativity and the second being verb frequency.

2. Study context: Belize

Belize has a population of some 250,000 people and is located south of Mexico and east of Guatemala. The country is divided into six districts, the Belize

District in central Belize along the coast, Corozal and Orange Walk to the North, Cayo to the West, and Toledo and Stann Creek to the South (Cubola Productions, 2002). Spanish speaking regions of Belize are in the North (Orange Walk and Corozal) and West (Cayo District) of the country as well as the Cayes (Caye Caulker, Ambergris Caye) (see Figure 1).

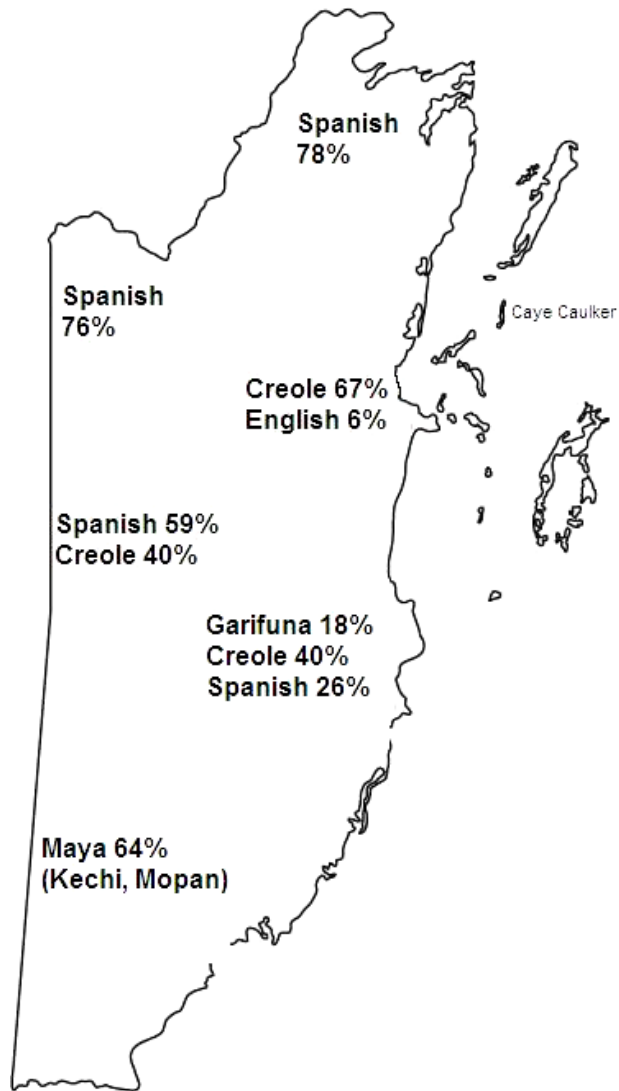


Figure 1: Map of Belize: Distribution of languages. (CSO, 2000; Graphic Maps)

While the official language of Belize is English, Spanish speakers currently comprise 46% of the population and Creole speakers make up 32.9%

(Central Statistical Office [CSO], 2000). Census data also indicates that over 70% of the population in the Orange Walk and Corozal Districts have Spanish as their first language while in the West, in the Cayo District, this number sits at 59%. In contrast 67% of people in the Belize District have Creole as their first language and 6% claim English as their first language (CSO, 2000). Although only 6% claim English as their first language, the number of speakers of English is higher as it is the language of government and education and is used in formal situations. As a result, there are a high number of Spanish-English bilinguals and as such, Belize represents a situation of stable bilingualism. This situation and the documented use of 'Hacer +V' make it an ideal context for the current study. While Spanish and Creole speakers make up the largest linguistic groups in the country pointing to Spanish-Creole bilingualism, the role of Creole is not discussed here. Belize Creole is an English lexicon based Creole and while it may well play a role in the use and formation of 'Hacer +V', so far the lexical items (V) borrowed in this construction are English lexical items and can exist in both English and Creole in Belize.

3 Methodology

Since previous research was based on data collected for a purpose other than studying 'Hacer +V', the goal of the current study was to collect empirical data to determine if the hypotheses would be supported as well as to see if the phenomenon in question could be studied through the use of elicitation techniques. The research was based on the following five hypotheses, the last three are discussed here.

- I. *Hacer* functions as a non-causative verb in 'Hacer +V.'
- II. *Hacer* carries tense, mode, aspect, and agreement.
- III. English verbs that occur in 'Hacer +V' are restricted by frequency so that high frequency verbs will not occur in 'Hacer +V' (see (4a) and (4b))
- IV. English verbs are restricted by stativity, so that stative verbs will not occur in 'Hacer + V'
- V. 'Hacer +V' will occur with unfamiliar or new verbs (e.g. verbs associated with technology).

3.1 Participants and data Collection

A total of 21 Spanish-English bilinguals were interviewed, of which 14 were women and seven were men all ranging in age from 18 to 89. Ten participants were from the West, five from the North, three from the Belize District, and three from Caye Caulker. I used both a grammaticality judgment task (not reported on here) and a picture task intended to elicit the use of 'Hacer + V'. I collected information on participant characteristics through a Language Profile questionnaire.

3.1.1 Picture Task

I conducted a semi-structured interview with participants where they were asked to describe a series of images intended to elicit the use of 'Hacer + V' and the conversations were audio-recorded. A total of 18 images were used and they were based on (i) known examples such as *hacer bless* (see Figure 2), on (ii) illustrations of actions corresponding to dynamic verbs such as someone painting, (iii) high frequency verbs (e.g. eat, sit) and low frequency verbs (e.g. testify) and (iv) images associated with technology (e.g. someone working at a computer). One final category (v) was based on activities that I anticipated to be outside of the everyday experiences of participants since I expected the majority of participants to be from urban centres (e.g. a farmer ploughing land)¹.



Figure 2: Picture # 6. Priest blessing house.

In order to determine verb frequency a search was done in the *Corpus del español* (Davies, 2002) for each verb in Spanish. Verbs that had less than 2000 occurrences in the 20th Century were considered low frequency while those that had a higher number of occurrences were considered high frequency. A broad classification was used for stativity, where dynamic verbs include realizations, accomplishments, and activities and stative verbs refer to verbs of state.

4. Results

In approximately nine hours of recorded speech, 18 participants produced 35 tokens of 'Hacer + V' of which 22 were with different English verb forms. This last figure was used as a total when looking at stativity and frequency since the number of times a token was repeated has no bearing on its classification as dynamic or stative nor on its categorization as a high or low frequency verb as

¹ Images from categories (i)-(iii) were created for this study by Nyd Garavito and images from the subsequent two categories were taken from Microsoft Clipart.

per the criteria used for this study. If, for example, *hacer bless* was repeated three times, it was only considered here once.

4.1 Stativity

Of the 22 different tokens collected, 20 belong to the class of dynamic verbs and two tokens belong to the class of stative verbs. The two tokens with stative verbs were collected through participant observation after the interviews were complete. It is possible that the task itself used to elicit ‘Hacer +V’ inherently led participants to use dynamic verbs as they were describing what was happening in the pictures, in other words describing actions. The general tendency so far, however, supports the hypothesis that the English verbs that combine with *hacer* are restricted by stativity.

Table 1: Tokens of Hacer + [\pm dynamic] verbs

VERB	TOKENS	EXAMPLE
[+dynamic]	20(90.9%)	Está haciendo graduate ‘She’s graduating’
[-dynamic]	2 (9.1%)	La hermana que hace own... ‘The sister that owns...’
	22 (100 %)	

4.2 Verb frequency

Verb frequency was determined by means of a search in the *Corpus del español* using the Spanish equivalent of the English verb used with *hacer*. With the exception of one token, all tokens were formed with verbs that fall into the category of low frequency verbs (see Table 2).

Table 2: High and low frequency verbs in ‘Hacer +V’

FREQUENCY	TOKENS	EXAMPLE
Low	21 (95.5 %)	...pa hacer plant ‘in order to plant’
High	1 (4.5%)	Tiene miedo que se haga drop down ² ‘She’s afraid that he’ll fall’
	22	

What is interesting in these results is that the stimulus for both high frequency and low frequency verbs was present. In Figure 3, for example, participants could have easily produced *hace eat*, *hace drink*, *hace sit down*,

² This represents an ambiguous example since the Spanish translation of *fall* can render either a high frequency (*caer*) or a low frequency verb (*caerse*). I chose the broader interpretation of *drop down* and considered it a high frequency verb.

hace get up, or hace drink, instead of the Spanish equivalents of he's eating, drinking, sitting down, or getting up.



Figure 3: Picture # 7 Mealtime

None of the participants, however, produced tokens of ‘Hacer +V’ with these high frequency verbs and instead used the Spanish verbs to describe those activities. In addition, no tokens using high frequency verbs were produced outside of the picture task. Thus, there is clear evidence to support the hypothesis that the verb forms borrowed through the periphrasis ‘Hacer +V’ are restricted by frequency.

4.3 New and Unfamiliar verbs

Of the total number of tokens produced (35 tokens), 18 are associated with technology; 16 are computer-related and two refer to farming (see Table 3).

Table 3: New/Unfamiliar verbs in ‘Hacer +V’

EXAMPLES	TOKENS
hacer chat	3
hacer print	1
hacer download	3
hacer click	4
hacer type	3
hacer burn	1
hacer plough	2
hacer refine	1
	18/35

The notion that *hacer* is used as an auxiliary to borrow English verb forms that are associated with new or unfamiliar domains is also supported in the data.

The lexicon related to computer technology tends to be borrowed heavily from English so it is not surprising to find that close to half of the total number of tokens produced were computer related. In addition as was anticipated, 'Hacer +V' was used when describing images related to farming which is outside the everyday experience of most people from urban centres.

5. Summary and Conclusion

The data shows that stative verbs are not likely to occur in 'Hacer +V' thus supporting Hypothesis IV. I would suggest that further study of this variable is warranted. As mentioned, there were two examples of statives found which may indicate a higher use of statives than that what is reflected in the data. Moreover, stative verbs tend also to be high frequency verbs and it may be that a constraint based on frequency rather than stativity determined which verbs were used.

The second and fifth hypotheses are also substantiated in that over 90% of the 22 different forms were with low frequency verbs and approximately 50 % of all tokens were produced in relation to new or unfamiliar domains (i.e. technology). The fact that high frequency verbs are not borrowed through the *hacer* periphrasis seems to indicate that it is linked to the functional need of the speaker (Jenkins, in press). That is to say, if the lexical item in Spanish is available to the speaker then there will be no need for 'Hacer +V' but if it is unavailable then 'Hacer +V' is used. It could be that low frequency verbs, and verbs associated with English language domains or with unfamiliar contexts are unavailable either because they are less accessible or simply because the item is not in the speakers lexical inventory. In other cases the lexical item may not yet exist in the language in question. This of course, is precisely when items are likely to be borrowed.

The objectives of this study were in part to see if elicitation techniques would meet with any success in obtaining data on 'Hacer +V' since previous research has not been based on empirical studies that focus on this structure. Subsequently, I was interested to see if data would support previous research. So far the elicitation tasks have proved to be effective and the data does show that the verbs that can be borrowed through the use of 'Hacer +V' are restricted by frequency and as such only low frequency verbs can be borrowed in this way. Whether or not this is a reflection of functional need is outside the scope of this paper, however the data does lend support to that suggestion as well. I was also interested in determining if there was a second restriction based on stativity and the data does point to that hypothesis. Further research and analysis may present a clearer picture with regard to this last issue.

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