Abstract Evaluative Morphology in Action – Intensification and attenuation in Miami and El Paso: Evaluative morphology in English–Spanish bilingual speech varieties

Evaluative phenomena such as intensification and diminutives constitute a valuable tool for research on English–Spanish bilingual communities. Specifically, intensification and the diminutive constitute an analytic–synthetic conflict site between the grammars of English and Spanish, with English mostly employing analytic forms to intensify or attenuate (e.g., very cheap, a little house; Quirk et al., 1985; Schneider, 2003), while Spanish additionally has rich paradigms of intensifying and diminutive affixes (e.g., requetebarato 'very cheap', baratísimo 'very cheap', una casita 'a little house'; Lázaro Mora, 1999). Because of this discrepancy, it is of interest to examine which forms and which formation strategies (viz., analytic vs. synthetic) English–Spanish bilingual speakers use to intensify or attenuate. One hypothesized outcome in this respect is that English–Spanish bilinguals, even those from different speech communities, fuse the most prototypical forms from both languages into an integrated, simplified bilingual paradigm. Another possibility is that the intensifying paradigms of both languages remain more or less intact when in contact, in which case it would be possible to observe variation across different bilingual communities in terms of intensification or diminutives (Bellamy & Parafita Couto, 2022). To investigate this, corpus data are analyzed from two bilingual corpora, which are the Miami Corpus (Deuchar et al., 2008) and the El Paso Corpus (Vanhaverbeke et al., 2022). Additionally, data from two monolingual corpora, which are the Santa Barbara Corpus (Du Bois et al., 2005) and Ameresco (Albelda Marco & Estellés Arguedas, 2016), are also analyzed and compared to the bilingual datasets to observe the effects of language contact in the bilingual speech varieties. The analyses reveal that, in bilingual contexts, intensification and diminutives display both similarities (such as a dispreference for codeswitching within constructions) and differences (such as cross-community uniformity or diversity in terms of the overall productivity of the phenomena).

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