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SPANISH/ENGLISH CODESWITCHING IN SERVICE ENCOUNTERS: ACCOMMODATION TO THE CUSTOMER'S LANGUAGE CHOICE AND PERCEIVED LINGUISTIC AFFILIATION*

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ABSTRACT. This paper reports on data collected in service encounters in New York and California. Assuming the role of customer, fieldworkers visited businesses and addressed service workers in Spanish. In the majority of 715 encounters, accommodation to the customer's language choice came at the first turn. That is, in the worker's next turn after having been addressed in Spanish, he or she commenced to speak in that language. In a minority of instances the worker maintained English throughout the exchange, even as the customer continued to speak only Spanish. In other encounters, the worker engaged in codeswitching between Spanish and English. These are the cases examined here. It is shown that on most of these occasions the worker's codeswitches instantiate a form of accommodation to the customer. The worker accomplishes this by matching the customer's language choice, or by responding to his or her perceived linguistic affiliation or linguistic abilities.

1. INTRODUCTION. What constitutes codeswitching has been the subject of debate.¹ I will use the following definition, which will be modified for the purpose of our discussion further on:

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¹See, for example, Álvarez Caccamo (1999); he argues that code and language are not synonymous and 'that research based on code-as-equivalent-to-a-distinct-language departs from a

Codeswitching is the use of words and structures from more than one language or linguistic variety by the same speaker within the same speech situation, conversation or utterance. Conversational codeswitching refers to the use of two languages by the same speaker within the same speech event. Codeswitching may occur at inter- and intrasentential levels, and may consist of single words or phrases. (Callahan 2004: 5)

Set phrases are composed of two or more words that regularly occur together; the resulting fixed expression is often formulaic in nature (Cowie 1998).² Fixed expressions generic to service encounters include phrases such as: 'Can I help you?' 'Do you want a bag?' 'Paper or plastic?' and 'Thank you.' In the United States certain set phrases may be mandated by store policy. They appear on lists affixed to the cash register, and service workers are required to utter them to every customer. Such phrases include 'Have a nice day,' 'Did you find everything OK?' and 'Thank you for shopping at X establishment.' In the context of a commercial transaction, some prices, common sequences of numbers, can also be considered a type of set phrase.

Speech accommodation refers to a speaker adapting his or her speech, gestures or paralinguistic features to more closely approximate those of an interlocutor (Giles et al 1977, Giles and Powesland 1997). A change to the interlocutor's language is one of the most observable forms of accommodation. As I note elsewhere (Callahan 2005, 2006), answering in a language different from the one in which a conversation partner has just spoken may not always signal non-accommodation, but it is less acceptable in situations in which the two speakers do not know each other well. Most service encounters are examples of this type of situation.

Service encounters are commercial exchanges in which a provider attends to a consumer; these often involve the purchase of an item or service. Such encounters can take place via telephone, email, or other remote means, but for this study they were restricted to face-to-face interactions in which a worker and customer speak to each other at a place of business. Service encounters in the U.S. are characterized by a power differential in favor of the customer, and there is an impetus to please or at least not to anger the service consumer. Codeswitching in this context facilitates this objective, by accommodating in some way to the customer: to his or her language choice, perceived linguistic affiliation, or linguistic abilities. Set phrases in the opposite language, due to their contextual ubiquitousness, occur in the worker's speech even as he or she is attempting to follow the customer's language choice.

false premise' (Callahan 2001). Borrowing vs. codeswitching is another issue of contention; for a comprehensive review of criteria used to distinguish the two, see Callahan (2004: 5-11).

² Idioms, word collocations in which the meaning of the expression as a whole cannot be deduced from the meaning of the words in isolation, are a type of set phrase. An example would be 'He kicked the bucket,' which means 'He died.' Idioms do not figure in the present investigation.

Listeners may assign strangers a linguistic affiliation first by visual cues, guided by whether or not the person has stereotypical physical features associated with a group whose members speak—or do not speak—a certain language (Callahan 2005). If someone is perceived as having a primary linguistic affiliation with one language, weaknesses in his or her linguistic abilities in another language may be exaggerated for the listener. Take, for example, the case of a customer who initiates an exchange in Spanish, when this language is not associated with his or her ethnic group, and suppose further that the customer's pronunciation or some other feature in his or her speech indicates that Spanish is not his or her native language. The worker might switch to English, despite the customer's use of Spanish. The worker's use of English would show accommodation to the customer's perceived linguistic affiliation and abilities, but not to the customer's language choice.

The fact that it was the customer's language choice to which workers accommodated most of the time (Callahan 2006), demonstrates the importance placed on maintaining positive face for the customer by avoiding a non-reciprocal response. Face is a concept in politeness theory; positive face refers to the desire to be liked and appreciated, while negative face refers to the desire to be unimpeded (Brown and Levinson 1978). A non-reciprocal response may threaten the customer's positive face, in that it implies a failure to show appreciation of the customer by matching his or her language choice.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH.³ A comprehensive review of the literature on service encounters falls outside the scope of this paper.⁴ On codeswitching there is likewise a huge body of work.⁵ What follows is a summary of work focusing on the issue of language choice in service encounters, which is what concerns us for the present discussion.

Bernsten (1994) reported on English and Shona use in Zimbabwe. Discussing her experience as a Westerner speaking Shona in Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, she noted that special accommodation was sometimes given to less fluent speakers due to explicit recognition of their status as language learners. Service workers interviewed for Callahan (2005) made reference to this, stating that they

³The portions of this section concerning language choice in service encounters were first published in Callahan (2006).

⁴Work on various aspects of service encounters includes: Anderson 1994; Antonopoulou 2001; Bayyurt and Bayraktaroglu 2001; Brodine 1990; Buttny and Williams 2000; Coupland 1983; David 1999; Gardner 1985; Gavioli 1995; Gibbs and Mueller 1988; Hall 1993; Iacobucci 1990; Ide 1998; Kalaja 1989; Kidwell 2000; Kong 1998; Kulik and Holbrook 2000; Lamoureux 1988-89; Lovik 1983; Márquez Reiter and Placencia 2004; Martin and Adams 1999; Merritt 1976, 1980; Pan 2000b; Placencia 2004; Ryoo 2005; Siehl et al. 1992; Taylor 2002; Traverso 2001; Van Leuven 1998, 2002; Vélez 1988; Ventola 1987; Winsted 1997; Yamazaki et al 1993.

⁵For an overview of codeswitching research, see Álvarez Cáccamo (1999) and Callahan (2004).

might refrain from switching to English when speaking to a customer who had addressed them in non-fluent Spanish, in deference to what they assumed to be the customer's supposed wish to practice his or her skills in that language.

Myers-Scotton's codeswitching data include an example of an encounter in a grocery store in Nairobi, in which a woman tried—but failed—to get preferential treatment from her brother, the store owner, by strategic use of their shared mother tongue (Scotton and Ury 1977: 17 in Myers-Scotton 1993: 144-5). In the brief transactions that were undertaken for the present investigation, the concession of special treatment was neither a factor nor goal, but there was one instance in which the author's use of Spanish appeared to mitigate a shopkeeper's initial brusqueness, as suggested by a change in the tone of voice used in his second turn. In other instances however, service workers were noted to use a tone of voice and display facial expressions suggesting annoyance; these often coincided with the encounters in which the worker refused to speak Spanish with a non-Latino customer.

Pan (2000a) used data from service encounters to study what influence the return of sovereignty to China might have on the use of Mandarin and Cantonese in service encounters in Hong Kong, and the effects of economic reform and increased development on the choice between these two languages in Guangzhou province, People's Republic of China. She found cases in which service workers greeted the customer in one language, in this case Cantonese, but switched to Mandarin after the customer's first turn in that language. This is identical to the majority of encounters in data collected for the present investigation, in which workers initiated the exchange in English, and then switched to Spanish once the customer responded in Spanish. Pan also reports on encounters in which what she terms *PARALLEL CODES* are used, in which the worker uses one language for all of his or her turns and the customer uses the opposite language. She attributes this to a lack of oral proficiency on the part of each speaker in the language used by the other person, although receptive proficiency enables each participant to understand the interlocutor's utterances. The same type of interaction occurred in my corpus, wherein the customer used Spanish for each turn and the worker used only English. However, I would be less inclined to attribute this to a lack of Spanish speaking proficiency and more to a lack of desire on the worker's part to accommodate to the customer, since each worker was observed to speak Spanish to coworkers or other customers prior to or after interacting with the fieldworker.

Torras and Gafaranga (2002) investigated language alternation and social identity in service encounters in Barcelona involving Catalan, Spanish and English. Following the work of Sacks (1992), they characterized language preference as a Membership Categorization Device. Language preference itself might be based on linguistic proficiency, or on an external ideology that dictated which language was to be spoken in a given speech situation. This is consonant to some degree with the comments of interviewees in Callahan (2005), in which some of the service workers made reference to implicit or explicit workplace policies regarding

language selection, or to their own beliefs as to which language was most appropriate for a given situation.

Gardner-Chloros (1997) investigated the use of French and Alsatian in Strasbourg department stores, finding that Alsatian was more likely to be used in customer to customer and worker to worker interactions than in encounters between workers and customers. Likewise in Callahan (2005), informants referred to an informal distribution in which more monolingual English and more monolingual Spanish was spoken between customers and workers, while more Spanish and English together was spoken by the workers in ingroup situations, that is, in worker to worker exchanges, especially those that took place out of hearing range of customers and supervisors.

In the only study that includes some discussion of telephone—as opposed to face-to-face—service encounters from a perspective relevant to the present investigation, Heller (1982) studied how French or English was selected for both in person and over the telephone exchanges between staff members and patients at a Quebec hospital. She noted that even Anglophone clients who spoke French fluently, but whose speech gave indications of their non-native speaker status, were apt to be answered in English.

Weyers (1999) investigated language choice among workers in two commercial districts in El Paso, Texas, finding that young Latino men responded in English more often to questions asked in Spanish by a young non-Latino male. Valdés, García, and Storment (1982) focused on the relationship between speech accommodation and sex with respect to the customer's use of Spanish in New Mexico. Members of the research team engaged salespeople in conversation in Spanish, and counted the number of turns before the salesperson switched to that language. All of the fieldworkers as well as the salespeople were Latino. They found a higher rate of accommodation on the part of male workers to male customers than to female customers. Both Weyers and Valdés et al report on data sets smaller than that of Callahan (2006); in the latter neither the customer's nor the worker's sex turned out to be significant, although Latino vs. non-Latino ethnicity was.

3. METHOD.⁶ Data for the present investigation were collected during anonymous service encounters, in-person exchanges in which the customer and worker are unknown to each other. Torras and Gafaranga (2002) refer to this as a first-time encounter. Neither person has any knowledge of his or her interlocutor except what can be judged by appearance, actions, and speech during the exchange. The corpus includes service encounters conducted by nine fieldworkers (hereafter CUSTOMER) in New York City and by one fieldworker in the San Francisco Bay Area,

⁶Portions of this section were first published in Callahan (2006); the present paper reports on a different facet of the same investigation, hence the methodology for data collection was the same.

California, between October 2003 and June 2006. Assuming the role of customer, each person visited businesses and addressed service workers (hereafter WORKER) in Spanish.

New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area are two urban areas in the United States with much in common: each has a total population of approximately 6 million, 25% or more of which is Latino, and Spanish is spoken in many public venues. The origins of Latinos living in New York City are diverse, but there are large concentrations of Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, and Ecuadorians; among Latino residents of the Bay Area Mexican and Central American origins predominate. Statistical analyses did not yield any significant differences between data collected in the two regions, in regard to correlations between the service worker's language of response and the worker's sex, age, and location of the encounter. It would be worthwhile to expand this research to include other U.S. cities with large Latino populations. In light of their demographic similarities, the selection of New York City and the San Francisco Bay Area as areas in which to conduct this research is well-motivated. Apart from this, the two regions were chosen for convenience, since my research institution is located in New York and I spend several weeks a year in the Bay Area. I am thus familiar with and have access to both areas, without the need for additional funding to support travel and leaves of absence.

The encounters were not audiotaped.⁷ Members of the research team took notes immediately after each exchange, recording as much detail as possible about the interaction and surroundings, with attention to the worker's language use before, during, and after the encounter. The total sample comprises encounters with some 715 workers. The nine members of the research team engaged individually in 50 to 160 encounters each.

Businesses in which Spanish and English are used to attend to customers—as verified by observation—were chosen on the basis of their accessibility to the general public. The businesses in which encounters took place included booths selling food and other merchandise in open air markets, pharmacies, convenience stores, grocery stores, delicatessens, clothing and shoe stores, electronics and other retail establishments. Although the business types were heterogeneous insofar as products for sale, they were homogeneous in other aspects. Most offered inexpensive items for sale, which facilitated the process in that customers were able to make purchases for less than one dollar. Making a purchase gave their presence a legitimacy that might have been lacking if they had spent several minutes

⁷ The decision not to audiotape was made for three reasons. The first and most important reason is that I believe it is unethical to record people's speech or image without their knowledge, and to do so with their prior consent would have made observation of spontaneous behavior impossible. Secondly, it would have been much more difficult to secure approval from my Institutional Review Board had the investigation involved electronic recording. And finally, audiotaping would have increased the cost of the investigation, funding for which barely covered the fieldworkers' wages.

in a small store, for example, without buying anything. In other stores, customers were able to make the necessary observations while pretending to examine more expensive merchandise, such as a television set or stereo system. All of the businesses attracted a steady stream of customers, which made it possible for the customer to observe the worker's language use with others.

Each exchange was initiated in a natural manner; therefore, members of the research team did not use one single uniform opening line, and they avoided marked behavior and context inappropriate utterances. Since the research concerned language choice, and monolingual speakers are unable to choose between two languages, customers verified that each language was used by the worker before, during, or after the encounter. If the worker did not speak Spanish to the customer, and was not heard to speak it to anyone else, the customer returned later and tried to observe the worker speaking Spanish, either to coworkers or to other customers. Conversely, if the worker spoke Spanish to the customer and was not heard speaking English, a verification visit was made later in which the customer tried to engage the worker in English. A small number of encounters were discarded after customers were unable to establish that the worker had at least functional proficiency in both languages.

For the purpose of this study, workers were deemed functionally proficient in English if they were heard speaking English to other customers, or if they addressed the customer in English, including English sentences or phrases in codeswitched utterances. Workers were deemed proficient in Spanish if they were heard speaking Spanish to other customers, or if they addressed the customer in Spanish, including Spanish sentences or phrases in codeswitched utterances.

The purpose of the parent investigation, reported in Callahan (2006), was to conduct a variationist analysis of what factors might influence the worker's language choice when addressed in Spanish by a customer. These factors were: the workers' sex and age, the type of neighborhood in which the encounter took place, and the customers' (i.e. the fieldworkers') sex, age, and ethnicity. No significant correlations were found between the language of response and the worker's sex, nor were there any with the neighborhood in which the encounter took place. However, there did seem to be an association between the workers' age and language, where younger workers answered in English when addressed in Spanish at a higher rate than older workers. The number of fieldworkers was too low to have complete confidence in correlations between the customers' characteristics and the workers' language choice, but a possible effect of customer ethnicity on worker language choice was seen. The percentage of non-accommodation experienced by the non-Latino fieldworkers was more than twice as high—17% compared to 8%—as the percentage for the Latino fieldworkers. In all of the cases of non-reciprocal language use, the workers were observed to speak Spanish with coworkers or other customers (Callahan 2006).

In the present paper I will not be concerned with these correlations, but rather

with the qualitative characteristics of one subset of the encounters: those in which the worker produced one or more codeswitched utterances during the exchange with the customer. Codeswitching in exchanges between workers, or between those turns when the worker addresses first the customer and then a coworker, will not be examined here.

Codeswitched utterances included those featuring both Spanish and English within the same conversational turn, spoken by the same speaker, to the same addressee, as well as entire turns uttered in a language different from that of the same speaker's immediately preceding turn. The measurement begins only after the customer addresses the worker in Spanish. Under this definition, a worker who greeted the customer in English, but then answered in Spanish a question asked in Spanish by the customer, was not considered to be codeswitching. If the worker switched back to English within that turn or at or within a subsequent one, however, it was counted as a codeswitch. It was likewise counted as a codeswitch if the worker answered in English the first time the customer addressed him or her in Spanish, but changed to Spanish at or within subsequent turns, as we see in (1):

- (1) W: CAN I HELP YOU, SIR?
 C: *Sí, ¿tiene algo de Hello Kitty?*
 'Yes, do you have anything by Hello Kitty?'
 W: WE HAVE A COUPLE OF THINGS, LET ME SHOW YOU.
 C: *No, eso no es. ¿Sabes de otra tienda por acá que tenga mas cosas de Hello Kitty?*
 'No, that's not it. Do you know of another store around here that has more Hello Kitty stuff?'
 W: HELLO KITTY IS HARD TO FIND. *Tiene que ir allá a downtown por Times Square.*
 'You have to go way downtown around Times Square.'
 C: *Sí, me va a tocar ir hasta allá. Gracias.*
 'Yes, I'm going to have to go down there. Thanks.'
 W: *Que tenga buen día.*
 'Have a nice day.'
 (J.N.37)⁸

The customers did not codeswitch; they used only Spanish throughout the encounter unless it became clear that the worker could not understand Spanish, in which case the encounter was excluded from the corpus, as noted above.

⁸ In the encounters reproduced in this paper, English appears in capital letters, Spanish in italics, and my translation of the Spanish is given between single quotation marks. "W" stands for worker, and "C" for customer. The first letter in parentheses corresponds to the fieldworker. The fieldworkers' characteristics are given in the Appendix. The second letter indicates where the encounter took place, with "N" for New York City and "S" for the San Francisco Bay Area. The numbers are random codes.

4. RESULTS. Most of the conversations were brief, with the customer and worker having just one or two turns each. The majority were thus what Bailey (1997: 333) characterized as socially minimal service encounters: 'limited to no more than greetings/openings, negotiation of the exchange, and closings.' If more of the encounters had been of longer duration, there might have been more codeswitched utterances in the corpus overall. As it was, codeswitched utterances as defined above were recorded in 62 of the 715 encounters. They can be grouped into six categories: codeswitching for prices, other numbers, set phrases, repetition and elaboration, requests for clarification, and metalinguistic commentary.

4.1 PRICES. There were several instances in which a worker made all of his or her contributions to an exchange in Spanish, once he or she had been addressed by the customer in that language, with the exception of naming the price of an item. This pattern is seen in (2):

- (2) W: *¿Esos chiquitos?*
 'These little ones?'
 C: *Sí, uno solo, por favor. ¿Cuánto es?*
 'Yes, just one, please. How much is it?'
 W: FIFTY CENTS.
 (A.N.42)

Example (3) shows a variation on this pattern, in which the worker switched to English to name the price, as in (2), but immediately repeated it in Spanish:

- (3) C: *¿Cuánto vale esto?*
 'How much is this?'
 W: NINETY-SEVEN CENTS. *Noventa y siete centavos.*
 'Ninety-seven cents.'
 (A.N.80)

The opposite is also seen, in which the worker states the price in Spanish and immediately repeats it in English, as in (4):

- (4) W: THESE?
 C: *Sí, ¿cuánto vale?*
 'Yes, how much is it?'
 W: *Cincuenta centavos.* FIFTY CENTS.
 'Fifty cents.'
 (A.N.25)

In (5) and (6), the worker glanced up at the customer, who in both cases was non-Latino, and switched to English at precisely that point:

- (5) W: *Dígame.*
 ‘Yes?’
 C: *Un café con leche y una de esas galleticas de sprinkles.*
 ‘A coffee with milk and one of those cookies with sprinkles.’
 W: [Points at sprinkle doughnuts.]
 C: *No, abajo, una galleta.*
 ‘No, below, a cookie.’
 W: *¿Cuánto azúcar en el café?*
 ‘How many sugars in the coffee?’
 C: *Uno.*
 ‘One.’
 W: [Handing customer bag with purchases] *Uno* [glance at customer]
 SIXTY-FIVE.

‘One’

(A.N.77)

- (6) C: *¿Tienen espejos?*
 ‘Do you have mirrors?’
 W: *Sí, afuera. Al lado de la puerta.*
 ‘Yes, outside. Beside the door.’
 C: *Gracias.* [Customer leaves and returns in a few minutes with
 purchase.]
 ‘Thanks.’
 W: *Quince...*[glance at customer]... FIFTEEN SEVENTEEN.
 ‘Fifteen.’

(D.N.54)

4.2 OTHER NUMBERS. Codewitches in this category included numbered street names and the time of day. There were examples of the same patterns as those seen for prices, with numbers uttered in English first and followed by repetition in Spanish, as in (7), or with a switch to English in mid-phrase, as in (8):

- (7) C: *¿Dónde se coge el tren nueve?*
 ‘Where does one get the nine train?’
 W: One eighty one and St. Nicholas. *Uno ocho uno con San Nicolás.*
 ‘One eight one and St. Nicholas.’

(A.N.57)

- (8) C: *¿Ud. sabe hasta cuándo va a estar abierto hoy el mercado?*
 ‘Do you know until when the market will be open today?’
 W: *Mañana, no. Jueves, no. El viernes.*
 ‘Tomorrow, no. Thursday, no. On Friday.’
 C: *¿Pero hasta qué hora hoy?*
 ‘But until what time today?’

W: *Hoy, hasta* THREE, FOUR.

'Today, until'

(A.S.29)

4.3 SET PHRASES. There were multiple examples of workers uttering the set phrase in English 'Do you want a bag?' Closing formulas in English were also heard, even when the rest of the exchange (i.e. starting after the customer's first turn) was in Spanish, as in (9) and (10).

(9) C: *Un café, por favor.*

'A coffee, please.'

W: *¿Con leche?*

'With milk?'

C: *Sí.*

'Yes.'

W: *¿Dos azúcar?*

'Two sugars?'

C: *Sí.*

'Yes.'

W: YOU WANT A BAG?

C: *No. ¿Cuánto es?*

'No. How much is it?'

W: *Setenta.*

'Seventy.'

C: [Pays.]

W: THANK YOU.

(A.N.72)

(10) W: CAN I HELP YOU?

C: *Un café con leche, por favor.*

'A coffee with milk, please.'

W: *¿Cuánto azúcar?*

'How many sugars?'

C: *Sin azúcar.*

'No sugar.'

W: WOULD YOU LIKE A BAG?

C: *Sí.*

'Yes.'

W: *¡Qué linda! ¿De dónde eres?*

'How pretty! Where are you from?'

C: *De Finlandia.*

'From Finland.'

W: *¿De España?*
'From Spain?'

C: *No, de Finlandia, en el norte de Europa. Gracias.*
'No, from Finland, in the north of Europe. Thank you.'

W: TAKE CARE.
(D.N.73)

Example (11) featured a closing formula in English also, although the use of English was not limited to this formula. The other English utterance in this example will be discussed in section 4.4.

(11) C: *¿Tiene café hecho?*
'Do you have coffee made?'

W: *No, mami, la otra bodega.* THE ONE DOWN THE BLOCK.
'No, honey, the other grocery store.'

C: *Gracias.*
'Thanks.'

W: GOD BLESS YOU.
(E.N.41)

In (12), the worker used a set phrase in English, switching within a Spanish verb phrase. Due to the noise level in the establishment it was impossible to know whether the worker was rephrasing his previous utterance, or whether he had interpreted the customer's request for repetition as a cue that she had not understood Spanish (cf. Heller 1982).

(12) C: *¿Cuánto por más café?*
'How much for more coffee?'

W: [Utters something in Spanish; customer cannot hear it clearly.]

C: *¿Cuánto?*
'How much?'

W: *Es* ONE REFILL FREE.
'It's'

(A.S.64)

4.4 REPETITION AND ELABORATION. Repetition is a common pattern in codeswitching, as seen above in the examples featuring prices and other numbers. There was repetition of other information as well, in bidirectional patterns. First,

there were cases in which the worker uttered something in English followed by an immediate translation to Spanish, as shown in (13) and (14):

- (13) C: *¿Por dónde está el metro?*
 'Where's the subway?'
 W: *¿El metro?*
 'The subway?'
 C: *El tren. Cualquiera. La estación más cercana.*
 'The train. Any train. The closest station.'
 W: THREE BLOCKS. *Tres bloques.*
 'Three blocks.'
 C: *¿En la Houston?*
 'On Houston [Street]?'
 W: *Sí, sigue derecho.*
 'Yes, go straight.'
 (A.N.16)
- (14) C: *¿Tienen Kleenex? ¿Los paquetitos chiquitos?*
 'Do you have Kleenex? The little packets?'
 W: *No entiendo qué... Lo que hay está en la isla cuatro.*
 'I don't understand what... What there is on aisle four.'
 C: *¿Al fondo?*
 'In the back?'
 W: *Sí, allí.*
 'Yes, there.'
 C: (Returns to cash register with a box of several small tissue packets.)
¿Todo esto a noventa-nueve centavos?
 'All this for ninety-nine cents?'
 W: *Sí, todo eso a noventa-nueve centavos. IT'S GOOD, HUH? Está bueno.*
 'Yes, all that for ninety-nine cents.' 'It's good.'
 (A.N.48)

The opposite pattern was also observed, as seen in (15):

- (15) W: [Utters price in English; due to noise customer cannot hear it clearly.]
 C: *¿Cuánto?*
 'How much?'
 W: *Tres cuarenta y nueve.*
 'Three forty-nine.'
 C: [Gives worker \$20.]
 W: *¿No tiene suelto? DO YOU HAVE CHANGE?*
 'Do you have change?'
 (A.S.1)

Finally, there were cases of switches to English in which the worker elaborated on information provided in the preceding utterance, as seen in (16), reproduced from (11):

- (16) C: *¿Tiene café hecho?*
 'Do you have coffee made?'
 W: *No, mami, la otra bodega.* THE ONE DOWN THE BLOCK.
 'No, honey, the other grocery store.'
 (E.N.41)

4.5 CODESWITCHING FOR CLARIFICATION. In a few cases workers articulated requests for clarification in English, using Spanish for the rest of their contributions. This pattern is seen in (17) – (20):

- (17) W: Hi.
 C: *¿Tienen chocolate?*
 'Do you have [hot] chocolate?'
 W: *Sí.*
 'Yes.'
 C: *Uno pequeño, por favor.*
 'One small one, please.'
 W: [Shows customer size of cups.] HOT CHOCOLATE, YOU WANT?
 C: *Sí.*
 'Yes.'
 (A.S.28)
- (18) W: CAN I HELP YOU?
 C: *¿Puedo comprar sólo la mitad de esto?*
 'Can I buy just half of this [large loaf of bread]?'
 W: YOU WANT HALF?
 C: *Sí. ¿Cuánto es?*
 'Yes. How much is it?'
 W: *Setenta y cinco.*
 'Seventy-five.'
 (A.S.59)
- (19) C: *¿Tiene toallas? ¿Por la cocina?*
 'Do you have towels? For the kitchen?'
 W: KITCHEN TOWELS? YES.
 C: *Bueno. ¿Dónde están?*
 'Ok. Where are they?'
 W: *A frente.*
 'Up front.'
 (E.N.44)

(20) C: [Addresses worker behind sandwich counter.] *Perdón, ¿tienen pan integral?*

‘Excuse me, do you have whole wheat bread?’

W: [Pointing to loaves of bread at the back of the store.] *Sí, por atrás.*
‘Yes, in back.’

C: *No, no. Para los emparedados.*

‘No, no. For the sandwiches.’

W: FOR THE SANDWICHES? YES.

(D.N.48)

4.6 CODESWITCHING FOR METALINGUISTIC COMMENTARY. Several workers commented on the fact that a customer was speaking Spanish, often prefaced by a question about the customer’s origin. Not surprisingly, this occurred only in those cases in which the customer was non-Latino. In a few of these instances, the worker switched to English for these comments, after one or more turns in which he or she had been speaking in Spanish. In (21), the worker switched back to Spanish after remarking on the customer’s use of that language:

(21) W: WHAT DO YOU WANT?

C: *Leche condensada.*

‘Condensed milk.’

W: [Walks over to the aisle where the condensed milk is located.]

C: *Gracias.*

‘Thanks.’

W: YOU SPEAK SPANISH. *¿De dónde eres?*

‘Where are you from?’

C: *Aquí. ¿Y tú?*

‘Here. And you?’

W: *La República Dominicana. ¿Cómo te llamas?*

‘The Dominican Republic. What’s your name?’

C: *Sara, ¿y tú?*

‘Sara, and yours?’

W: *Diego. Un placer conocerte.*

‘Diego. A pleasure to meet you.’

(E.N.36)⁹

⁹Names have been changed.

In (22), however, the worker used Spanish to ask about the customer's national origin, but continued in English after establishing that the customer was non-Latino:

- (22) W: DO YOU NEED ANY HELP?
 C: *Bueno, sí, ¿cuál es la diferencia entre estos?*
 'Ok, yes, what's the difference between these?'
 W: *Son la misma cosa, una es genérica.*
 'They're the same thing, one is generic.'
 C: *Ah, ¿sólo por eso es más barata?*
 'Ah, just because of that it's cheaper?'
 W: *Sí. ¿De dónde eres?*
 'Yes. Where are you from?'
 C: *De Finlandia.*
 'From Finland.'
 W: I WAS THINKING, YOU DIDN'T SEEM LIKE SPANISH.¹⁰ HOW COME YOU
 SPEAK SPANISH?
 C: *Lo he estudiado.*
 'I've studied it.'
- [From this point on, the worker continued speaking in English; the customer continued speaking in Spanish while she paid for her purchase.]
 (D.N.77)

5. DISCUSSION. The workers' language choices overall can be seen to facilitate the service encounter. This takes two forms. When the worker uses Spanish, he or she accommodates to the customer's current language choice. When the worker uses English, he or she accommodates to the customer's perceived linguistic affiliation, which for all but one of the fieldworkers with an encounter cited in this paper would be English (see Appendix). This seems particularly obvious when the worker's switch to English occurs at mid-phrase and coincides with a first-time glance at the customer's face, and even more so when the worker has asked where the customer is from.

Choices may be affected by either the worker's or the customer's proficiency in Spanish. If the worker perceives that the customer's primary language is English, and the worker is more comfortable in that language, he or she may use English, being careful to include a little Spanish in order to avoid the appearance of ignoring the customer's choice of the moment. More often the case in this corpus is when the customer's command of Spanish is judged by the worker to be questionable, based on an incomplete control of the sound system or some other

¹⁰In New York City, "Spanish" is used as a racial-ethnic label, roughly equivalent to Hispanic or Latino.

aspect, as in (19) when the customer uses the wrong preposition in '*por la cocina*,' the expected version being '*para la cocina*.' The use of words unfamiliar to the worker, such as *metro* in (13) and *emparedado* in (20), may also contribute to his or her perception that the customer's primary language is not Spanish. These two words are used in various Spanish-speaking regions but are less common in popular varieties of New York Spanish. For the linguistically naive subject, the use of words unfamiliar to one's own dialect can be enough to suggest that the person who utters them is an imperfect or inauthentic speaker of the language (Callahan unpublished).

The reader may have noticed features of non-standard Spanish in the workers' contributions to the exchanges. These include words borrowed from English, such as '*downtown*' in (1), or Spanish words that have undergone semantic extension in contact with English, such as '*bloque*' for city block in (13), and '*isla*' for store aisle in (14). Another non-standard feature is the reduction of numbers from a double to single digit rendition, as in '*uno ocho uno*' in (7), as opposed to '*uno ochenta y uno*' for one eighty one. The use of non-standard Spanish does not affect the present analysis, however; workers using such features were still speaking Spanish, and hence accommodating to the customer's language choice.

6. CONCLUSION. This study has advanced the thesis presented in Callahan (2006), in which it was concluded that service encounters in the U.S. engender a high rate of linguistic accommodation toward the customer. This was borne out even in cases in which the worker engaged in codeswitching between Spanish and English. Most of the time workers used at least some Spanish, showing deference to the customer's ostensible language preference. But even when the language of the workers' contributions did not match that of the customers', their use of English was either minimal, as in naming prices, other numbers, and set phrases, or else it facilitated the exchange of information, as in the case of clarification requests. An exception to this was the workers' use of English for commenting on the customer's origin and on the fact that he or she could speak Spanish. However, the corpus also contains instances in which this type of commentary is proffered in Spanish, as in (23):

- (23) W1: *¿Eres de Argentina?*
 'Are you from Argentina?'
 C: [Has difficulty hearing due to loud music.] *¿Cómo?*
 'Pardon me?'
 W1: *¿Eres de Argentina?*
 'Are you from Argentina?'
 R: *No, soy de California.*
 'No, I'm from California.'
 W2: *Hablas bien el español.*
 'You speak Spanish well.'
 (A.N.82/83)

Even though many of the encounters took place in neighborhoods in which the public use of Spanish by service personnel is not unusual, English is still the default language. It is the language used most often to initiate an exchange with a customer, especially if there is any uncertainty as to the latter's linguistic affiliation (Callahan 2005). In the present investigation the customers used Spanish exclusively throughout the encounter. It would be interesting to compare instances of workers codeswitching in service encounters in which the customer confined his or her contributions to English.

The results were limited by the short duration of the service encounters. A future investigation could document exchanges of greater length between worker and customer, to see whether this would yield more instances of codeswitching for analysis. A previous study suggested that more codeswitching is apt to take place in conversations between coworkers (Callahan 2005). Some members of the research team noticed occurrences of this prior to their initiation of an exchange. A quantitative study could be undertaken to determine if codeswitching is in fact more common in worker to worker exchanges than in those between worker and customer. Finally, codeswitching patterns in service encounters carried out over the telephone or via email might also prove to be a fruitful avenue of investigation.¹¹

¹¹Some research has been done on codeswitching in email correspondence, although not, to my knowledge, on service encounters conducted over email. See Dascalu 1999, Georgakopoulou 1997, Hinrichs 2006, Montes-Alcalá 2005. Telephone service encounters that include a very small amount of Spanish/English codeswitching are reported on in Callahan (In press); more research is in progress.

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APPENDIX

Characteristics of the customers (i.e. the fieldworkers) in the encounters cited in this paper:

- A: Female, non-Latino, early 40s
- D: Female, non-Latino, mid 20s
- E: Female, non-Latino, mid 20s
- J: Male, Latino, mid 30s

Characteristics of the service workers in the encounters cited in this paper (all are Latino):

- (A.N.16): Male, late teens
- (A.N.25): Male, mid 20s
- (A.N.42): Female, late 30s
- (A.N.48): Female, early 20s
- (A.N.57): Female, late teens
- (A.N.72): Female, early 20s
- (A.N.77): Female, early 40s
- (A.N.80): Male, mid 20s
- (A.N.82): Male, early 20s
- (A.N.83): Male, early 20s
- (A.S.1): Female, early 40s
- (A.S.28): Female, early 50s
- (A.S.29): Male, early 50s
- (A.S.59): Male, early 20s
- (A.S.64): Male, early 20s
- (D.N.48): Male, late 20s
- (D.N.54): Female, early 20s
- (D.N.73): Female, early 40s
- (D.N.77): Male, mid 30s
- (E.N.36): Male, mid 20s
- (E.N.41): Male, mid 20s
- (E.N.44): Male, mid 20s
- (J.N.37): Male, late teens

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