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From "Spanish-only" cheap labor to stratified bilingualism: language, markets and institutions on the US-Mexico border

Abstract: Recent sociolinguistic research adds new economic sectors, such as the service economy, to the list of key forces that shape unequal, dynamic and complex diglossia (e.g., Spanish in the United States). However, little detailed work has been done on the linguistic characteristics of specific labor sectors in the wider contexts of "debordering" and "rebordering". In this article we develop in depth the market mechanisms and institutional constraints that shape the valuation and social expansion of Spanish in El Paso, Texas. The study finds that in sectors with low skills and low linguistic intensity, linguistic management policies are effectively "Spanish-only". However, as skills increase and there is a greater need for regulated communication in the occupational role, more constraints are observed on how Spanish functions in work use and professional careers.

Keywords: markets, language institutionalization, El Paso, debordering, rebordering

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1 Introduction

This article analyzes the market mechanisms and institutional constraints that act on the valuation and social expansion of the Spanish language in the socioeconomic setting of El Paso, Texas, a historically bilingual location on the US-Mexico border. Our analysis of linguistic change focuses on processes of debordering and rebordering. Debordering weakens territorially demarcated social, cultural and political patterns and institutions; it is often glossed as globalization. Rebordering is the strengthening of existing bounded patterns and institutions and the development of new ones (Spener and Staudt 1998). Applied to language, debordering processes widen the institutionalized uses and styles of

languages, by drawing on processes that cross borders, such as Mexican Spanish associated with migration to the United States. Rebordering processes then create or reinforce domains and hierarchies of language use related to territorial, social-political distinctions. We connect those processes with the impact on languages of the new economy (Heller 2003), characterized among other factors by a greater linguistic intensity of work (Grin et al. 2010: 47–50), occurring substantially in the context of globalization.

In the southwestern United States from the 1970s onward researchers reported a persistent, unilateral intergenerational change from Spanish to English (see, e.g., Veltman 1981; Bills 1989; Bills et al. 1995; Rivera-Mills 2001; Mills 2005; Silva Corvalán and Lynch 2009), which brought Otheguy (2009: 224) to speak of la *lengua de pocos nietos* 'the language of few grandchildren'. However, various studies have noticed changes in this pattern. Among the most notable is that maintenance of Spanish is not necessarily associated with the lowest economic returns, or that even when this pattern still holds, it is less powerful than in the past (Mora et al. 2005; Mora et al. 2006; Jenkins 2009; Martínez 2009a). Hidalgo (2001) identified a linguistic change favorable to Spanish – "language shift reversal" (LSR) – especially evident in the use of Spanish in the public domain as a consequence of unintentional factors. Demographic factors (growth of the Hispanic population) and market factors, particularly "consumer demands for goods and services in the ancestral language, and the ready response to these demands on the part of providers of goods and service" (2001: 63), stand out.

With regard to the second of these factors, on which we focus our investigation, we must consider the important changes in the organization of production of goods and services produced during the last decades of the 20th century. These changes have important linguistic consequences. In the Taylorist-Fordist industrial context that begins in the first quarter of the past century, work is typically manual and routine, incorporating immigrants relatively easily and with few training costs. By contrast, the "new economy" context, where production is based on information and knowledge, makes workers' cultural and linguistic competencies into a factor of productivity and competition (Castells 1998; Reich 1991; Boutet 2001; Cohen 2009; Heller 2003, 2010). Organizational tendencies toward more decentralized and independent structures, supported by new, more linguistically intensive technologies, imply greater volume and complexity of linguistic exchanges involving a higher percentage of employees across different levels in organizational hierarchies (O'Hara-Devereaux and Johansen 1994; Charles and Marschan-Piekkari 2002; Alarcón 2007).

As a hypothesis, these changes in economic and labor configuration ought to modify previous linguistic equilibria. Nevertheless, far from observing a singular trend in linguistic change, Heller (2003, 2010) emphasizes that in the new econ-

omy the linguistic policies of enterprises shift between searching for Taylorist standardization of language use, and the valuation of authenticity in a context of the saturation of products and growing competition, where distinctions on the basis of authenticity and affective-identity ties with clients can be key to entrepreneurial success. Likewise, following this author, enterprises oscillate between understanding language as a technical competency, thus being directly compensable, or as a social competency or innate personal talent, rendered invisible as a capability, with compensation and investment considered unnecessary.

Our analysis shows these contradictions in El Paso. The form in which language is adopted as a technical consideration in the market or is utilized as a local talent does not occur in an institutional vacuum, nor is it foreign to social disputes over the control of resources. Exactly the opposite: the redefinition of the role of borders and the defense of each sociolinguistic group within that (see Martínez 2006) proves key to the linguistic arrangement of enterprises in El Paso and, in that way, to the form that bilingualism takes in the new economy. In particular, while the process of debordering places the Spanish speakers of the two sides of the border in a competent role in the labor market, the process of rebordering orients sociolinguistic groups toward US markets and national institutions as the judges of each group's legitimate competency, which puts into competition the inherited varieties of Mexican American Spanish with other varieties of Mexican Spanish.

2 The context of the study: El Paso

El Paso County, with 740,241 inhabitants in 2009 (American Community Survey [ACS] 2009), is a border enclave located in the extreme west of Texas. It constitutes, together with Ciudad Juárez, its neighbor to the south, a border metropolitan area of approximately 2.5 million people. Due to its border location, El Paso has been a site of intense ethnic, linguistic and dialectal contact, with historical interaction ranging from conflict to accommodation (Hidalgo 1995; Teschner 1995). Today, the city presents one of the highest indices of ethnolinguistic vitality for Mexican-origin Spanish and, according to Hidalgo (2001), is undergoing language shift reversal in favor of Spanish.

There is a high level of bilingualism in El Paso. According to the ACS 2009, 71.6% of the population speaks Spanish at home of whom 29.7% speak English "less than very well". Geographic and ethnic origins are the starting point for explaining different degrees of individual bilingualism. The principle sociolinguistic groups are, according to ACS 2006–2008, US-born Mexican Americans (53.2%), Mexican immigrants (24.3%), and non-Hispanic whites (12.9%). Almost

all Mexican immigrants maintain Spanish in the home (97.3%), but only a minority (30.4%) indicate that they know English well. In the case of Mexican Americans, 86.4% use Spanish at home, while 82.9% have very good knowledge of English. In the non-Hispanic white group, 12.5% use Spanish at home, owing fundamentally to mixed marriages.

Despite the historical presence and demographic dominance of the Spanish speaking population, there is a notable asymmetry between the two languages, with Spanish as a subordinate language and English as the prestigious language in public and institutional life. This has its origin in El Paso in the economic and political control by an Anglo minority and the segregation of a Mexican-American majority until the last half of the twentieth century (Timmons 1990), as well as the national (US) domination by English continuing to the present. This prestige difference correlates with economic differences between sociolinguistic groups, with large advantages to whites and to English speakers over Mexican-origin persons and Spanish-speakers (bilingual and monolingual) (ACS 2008). Despite this, there are important forces giving value to Spanish and bilingualism, including cross-border business, the purchasing power on the US side of Mexican shoppers (Teschner 1995: 103–104) and the *maquiladora* industry in Mexico. In this context, a distinct feature is the existence of a substantial group of bilinguals and binationals on both sides of the border, at all social levels, from workers of humble origin to the new networks of local elites (Heyman 2001).

El Paso has undergone an important occupational shift. Manufacturing industry, especially garment making, dominated the private sector in the mid to late 20th century. Their work was routine and the linguistic component of that work was irrelevant (traditional "cheap labor"). The workforce was in the majority formed of Mexican women with low education and little knowledge of English. From 1994 onward, due to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), this sector declined to the point of complete disappearance (Spener 2002). The occupational structure shifted toward professional services, education, health care, and administration, among which the important bilingual call center industry stands out. Despite the market value of bilingualism in such sectors (e.g., providing service flexibly in either language), their pay levels are low (e.g., $11.23 per hour on average in call centers). With this new form of "cheap labor", resistance to Spanish language loss becomes an instrument for labor incorporation.

The study is based on 115 interviews done in El Paso in two phases (2009, 2010). Interviews were done in four sectors with different degrees of linguistic intensity, defined by: (a) the number of languages required (intensity by diversity); (b) the need for language as an instrument of work and the range of activities involved (intensity by extension); and (c) the "quality" (status, skill and complexity) required of language in use (intensity by quality) (Alarcón 2007; Grin

et al. 2010: 47–50). The sectors were: (a) janitorial services; (b) health services; (c) call centers; and (d) interpreters and translators. Interviews sliced across the managerial-labor hierarchy, and when possible included ethnic variability (Mexicans, Mexican-Americans and Anglo-Americans). Although using a convenience sample, these interviews captured much of the potential universe of variability by deliberately choosing workers across the managerial hierarchy, work and skill levels, and linguistic backgrounds.

We collected abundant information from secondary sources, mainly statistical and journalistic. However, our analysis concentrates on interviews with local workers and managers. The number of interviews performed, recorded and transcribed was determined by the criterion of saturation, affected by the complexity and heterogeneity of the work activities in each sector. Interviewees were located by the snowball method. The length of the interviews varied between three quarters of an hour, and an hour and a half, except for a few exceptional, longer instances. The interviews were done in the language chosen by the interviewee, three-fourths in Spanish and one-fourth in English. Besides those workplace interviews, we also did participant observation in the health sector and observations of the sanitation sector. In addition, we interviewed key informants including local economic development agencies personnel, university experts and public authorities.

The interview protocol included the following categories of questions: (1) language skills (oral and written); (2) characteristics of the enterprise; (3) linguistic characteristics of work; (4) language preparation and adequacy of language skills for work needs; (5) past occupational language use; (6) the enterprise's language policies; (7) personal history in terms of nation, family and schooling, focusing on language acquisition, as well as residential mobility (especially border crossing); (8) linguistic ambitions and educational methods for children; (9) language ideologies; and (10) basic demographics. In regards to the content analysis, following Spolsky (2009: 4–5) we have focused on the language policy observable in these sectors and workplaces, that is to say on the practices, beliefs, and management of language.

3 Results

3.1 Cleaning services

This section describes the janitorial staff in a large public educational institution with English as the main working language in the teaching, administrative and

research spheres. This sector contains elements of the older pattern in El Paso, the close association of low qualification and low communication-skill jobs with the Spanish language. The low linguistic intensity and almost universal ability to speak Spanish when needed reduces the practical (workplace communication) importance of language. Instead, abilities and accents in Spanish and English function more as elements of symbolic differentiation between US citizens (Mexican Americans) and immigrants (Mexicans). Historically a sharp ethnolinguistic division into two teams has been made among the employees. On each side, Spanish monolingual and English-Spanish bilinguals, there is a certain resistance to mixing languages and crossing linguistic lines. Three fifths of the 70 workers in this service are Mexicans, generally not fluent in English, with the rest being bilingual Mexican Americans, including the manager. The only Anglo American, who is also the only English-only speaker, is the supervisor of the Mexican American group.

Although low in linguistic intensity, even these jobs are affected by contemporary changes in the communicative intensity of work, under the pressure of outsourcing, that partially affects this service (around 30% of the janitors at the institution). Workers are expected to "serve the customers", the building users in the university. Cleaners are also expected to participate in complex forms of coordination needed for intensified but also flexible work activities, covering multiple buildings as teams instead of being isolated workers with single buildings (which requires less coordination). Coordination is carried out through walkie-talkies as well as direct supervisor visits. Moreover, workers are expected to engage in work quality management and intensification, in particular through periodic meetings, related to rising standards in the cleaning industry.

Most of the Mexican immigrant segment of this workforce have learned little English, and those newly included in the workforce are mainly Mexicans monolingual in Spanish. Because of this, Spanish has greater communicative efficiency because misunderstandings and lost communications are minimized when management deals with the staff (Alarcón et al. 2009), an efficient result from the perspective of including all members of the organization in communication (Van Parijs 2003). These demographic factors, together with the changing work demands, give an increasing relevance to Spanish in the organization with the goal of increasing involvement of monolingual Spanish speakers in work planning. As a manager observed: "The political debate is if [the employees] should know English, but they pay me to get the work done."

A linguistic resistance to English can be observed among Mexican employees as a way to increase their control. Historically, employees have had an active role

in the hiring of new personnel. Employees of this institution have high job stability, and relatively good salaries and employment benefits, so that control over recruitment is a relevant issue. Currently, managers are pursuing a more active role, privileging worker profiles that can carry out efficiently tasks in accord with more modern work processes and higher quality standards. As a result, the new hiring practices are in conflict with the interests of workers and their leaders, whose objectives are to hire their friends and relatives from the same sociolinguistic group. Given the struggle of interests concerning the rationalization of work and language, the Mexican employees have adopted a discourse of the greater importance of technical competence, but simultaneously, using the managerial discourse, they reason that Spanish is the most efficient language for the service: "English wastes time: if you speak Spanish, then I prefer to speak Spanish so we can understand and finish more quickly. In Spanish, better, faster. Just as the director says, no more English; it is a waste of time." (Custodian. Translation from Spanish.)

As a practice that embodies this discourse, Spanish monolingual workers are reluctant to take English language courses offered to employees by the university, even though they are paid for the time in the classes, preferring to dedicate their time to their work in a Spanish-dominant (cleaning) sector. In recent years, the policy of English lessons for employees has not been applied and the tacit requirement for new hires is that the workers need to be competent in Spanish.

Mexican Americans, for their part, mostly stay on the margin of the linguistic debate in its instrumental dimension, owing to their bilingualism. However, at the symbolic level they continue frequently to use English on the radio and in formal and informal communications with monolingual Spanish speakers, even knowing that they have difficulty in comprehension. Management is not able to impose Spanish on the operations of the entire workforce, given that it is seen as illegitimate in the status quo of El Paso, nor are they able to incorporate Mexicans into the Mexican American group. As a result, ethnolinguistic division continues to be one of the principles of workforce organization.

Clearly, the managerial response to this situation is to convert Spanish progressively into the language of control as a strategic move ("debordering" in the US context). Nevertheless, this does not produce a discourse about Spanish as a technical competence, but rather as a social capital, recognized only tacitly, that has been integrated into the workforce in the pursuit of intensification and participation in the arrangement of work in a situation of growing competition. The growing instrumental value of the language in the organization has not reduced its symbolic importance ("rebordering") in relations among ethnolinguistic/citizenship groups.

3.2 Health services

The US health sector is fragmented and complex. It is mainly private although there are public health services and clinics. Clients often have some choice which health business to use, although this is limited by their insurance and ability to pay. As a market influence, this means that some linguistic capacity in Spanish is often an advantage in El Paso. Although largely private, it is heavily regulated by formal institutions, both public (regulations, legal documentation, government insurance programs) and private (insurance companies). These use English. Both market and institutional forces affect language use.

Two workplaces were examined in detail, an autonomous section providing specialized physical and occupational therapy of a medium-sized regional health corporation, and a small physician's office providing advanced specialty care. The regional setting requires great linguistic complexity and flexibility. Clients (patients) include monolingual English speakers, monolingual Spanish speakers (from both Mexico and immigrants to the US), and bilinguals (immigrants and post-immigrant generations in the US). There is high need to operate in and switch between languages, a debordering process.

High level professional personnel, for employment, are subject to professional certification in national terms, not linguistic criteria, despite the regional setting. We focus on two key professionals, a doctor and a physical therapist. One is a binational bilingual of Mexican ancestry. The other moved to the region as an adolescent, is of Anglo ancestry, and is monolingual in English. However, they share the fundamental element of formal professional certification in English.

Of these two professionals, one easily interacted with Spanish-only patients, while the other had to have translation done by less educated bilingual paraprofessionals. Despite the obvious limitations, this lack of linguistic skill was not officially part of professional or organizational strategies. US professional certification – and the underlying education and skills – were all that mattered as sources of legitimation. For advanced professionals, there are both debordering and rebordering tendencies, but rebordering ones are dominant.

Likewise, the public and private insurers that make up the main market for health expenses, and those entities that regulate health care (government agencies, the legal system) all operate in English. In most cases, their offices are in the national interior, away from the border. All forms, computer records and communications, and phone communications (problem-solving) are in English. Insurance is billed in English. Legal medical records must be kept in English, and statements in Spanish must be translated. The input from clients often is in Spanish, but bilingual office personnel translate such inputs into official English. The translation is usually done rapidly, in the untrained employee's head, rather than

through a professionalized process of trained oral or written translation. Rebordering effects are clear in this case.

To accomplish all these functions – health service provision, medical record keeping, and office services/billing – service providers in El Paso rely on informal translation by bilingual paraprofessionals (low level nurses, medical assistants, therapy technicians) and "pink-collar" office staff. Strikingly, given the important practical and emotional/symbolic nature of health services communication, low level paraprofessionals are central, translating between doctors/nurses and Spanish monolingual patients (cf. Martínez 2009b).

These positions require high school through some college, but not completion of a four year degree. Many of the people occupying them are second generation, with a representation of immigrants and third or higher generation. Because of this generational placement and because of the relatively extensive maintenance of Spanish in the borderlands, it is easy to recruit bilinguals for these necessary translation/mediation tasks.

According to our interviews, bilingual roles and staff are not formally valued, though personally they are appreciated. They are assumed to come naturally out of the border environment, with little or no effort. Admittedly, there is some deliberate effort to hire bilingual staff. But there is no extra pay and the promotional ladder involves non-linguistic technical education (e.g., from a therapy technician to therapist, etc.). As one bilingual medical office administrator told us:

> The language [bilingual ability] has served me well. For me it has been a great source of employment and accomplishment. . . . For example, I need to make corrections when I see translated pamphlets . . . or when the doctor's words are not appropriate or correct. . . . Receptionists always have to be bilingual. We need to be aware of that when we hire them. On occasion when there are English monolingual receptionists, they are "invited to leave". (Bilingual medical office administrator)

Yet when we analyze this office, the receptionist, who had moderate Spanish skills (sufficient for her job) but was stronger in English, and the fully bilingual administrator had relatively low-pay office staff positions and no place to rise within the enterprise. The next promotional level was the nurse, a Registered Nurse (RN), with a Bachelor of Science degree. She had almost no capacity in Spanish, and the bilingual office administrator did extensive translation for the RN in collecting patient histories and delivering health services. Language capacity was functionally important to be an RN, in a debordered consumer setting of language diversity, but RNs are hired based on a bordered set of qualifications, technical education in English. We also studied another, much larger health service unit and, while more complex, the basic pattern was the same, indicating that this situation goes beyond a small, constrained workplace.

There is also little cultivation of the actual language used by bilinguals. This workforce usually has some college credits, often a two year degree, but rarely a four year degree, and do not have specialized training in Spanish language and translation (e.g., the administrator cited above, with no such training). Yet these employees communicate and translate complex medical concepts. Bilingualism is a qualification for an adequate job, but not a good job. Symbolically, bilingualism is associated with an informal, unrecognized and unvalued place in work and society, versus English with elites and institutions and Spanish monolingualism with silent, working class jobs. Symbolism does not match functional [work process, market] importance. Rebordering processes are stronger than debordering ones, though both are present.

3.3 Call centers

Employment in El Paso in this industry has grown since the 1990s to 14,000 positions in 34 worksites, becoming one of the main sectors of private employment (REDCO 2010). This reflects the appearance of new actors, large call center businesses, with distinct roles in linguistic management, that interact with local practices and beliefs. The inclusion of the border into the call center industry implies a physical rebordering of cheap labor at the same time as a virtual debordering of accents and linguistic varieties from El Paso. The call center sector can be labeled "cost oriented". El Paso, averaging $11.23 wage per hour in 2009 across all occupations, is number 543 of 577 US metropolitan areas according to the 2009 Occupational Employment Statistics. Wages are even lower in comparable locations, such as south Texas (another border region) and Puerto Rico. There is no evidence that the large concentrations of Hispanic workers and their "bilingual capital" has produced higher wages than in monolingual call centers in the rest of the United States.

The employees in this sector, principally Mexican Americans (64.0% according to Public Use Microdata Sample [PUMS] of the American Community Survey) and Mexicans (16.8%), have as their main interlocutors clients in the US who speak English. In the nine call centers that we researched, more than 92% of the calls were in English and less than 8% in Spanish. Our estimate is that 60% of the workers in this sector have calls only in English while 40% have bilingual workstations. Despite how call routing systems could allow a linguistic division of labor, the businesses prefer "linguistic flexibility" at a considerable proportion of the workstations.

The processes of credentialing linguistic skills in recruitment and promotion to bilingual positions are very informal. According to a manager in an outbound

center: "we give them a text in Spanish and another in English. If they can read them, they can speak them." Also, discussions highlighted that to central management: "If they [El Pasoans] understand Spanish, then they can sell in it." A local economic promotion officer indicated that: "They [managers] do not have a very good idea about what is Spanish." The managers and professionals in charge of editing scripts speak publicly about promoting a high quality, "neutral" and standardized Spanish. Nevertheless, at the practical level, the managers at the local level end up favoring local varieties of Spanish and English, even recruiting Mexicans not fluent in English and employing Mexican Americans with notable difficulty in maintaining a conversation in Spanish without code-switching. As proof of these statements, according to the PUMS (2006–2008), 11.6% of employees indicate that they speak English "less than very well," despite the fact that of the diverse Call Centers studied, none had monolingual Spanish positions.

Cameron (2000) has pointed the importance of practices of scripting (standardizing what is said) and styling (standardizing how it is said), as ways of control over speech and talk, in a general framework of control over workers. Although operators should strictly follow scripts, there is little control over their ways of talk. Moreover, supervisors and technical customer service representatives act with great linguistic freedom in the use of local varieties in their ways of speaking. For Mexican Americans, the imposition of a different English accent than their own, as a part of styling of communication with customers, is considered illegitimate. As was repeated in the interviews, "*En los Estados Unidos todo el mundo tiene acento*" [In the United States, everyone has an accent]. This sentiment resists the use of interior US English as a "styling" norm. However, in regard to Spanish, the Mexican workers, generally with a high educational level, often exiled from Juárez due to violence, feel fully legitimate in their Spanish abilities, identifying their Chicano colleagues as acculturated and criticizing the excessive use of code switching between Spanish and English, viewed as a variety associated with a low educational level and inadequate to offer high quality service in Spanish.

Managers adapt to the local context by transforming technical competencies into unrewarded "authentic" social competencies. In contrast to practices observed by Poster (2007) in India regarding the stylization of talk and management of identity, the explicit instructions by managers and supervisors in El Paso to workers when they have communication problems with clients are: "Tell them the truth. Say that you are in a call center in El Paso, Texas", taking advantage of the legitimacy of being located in a plural America.

The examination of linguistic policies of these centers provides a greater understanding of the contradictions between practices and explicit philosophies

in corporate discourses (especially, access to the Hispanic market, satisfaction of the Hispanic consumer and promotion of Hispanic "talent" within these companies). Specifically, with respect to the pro-Spanish discourse, we observe: (a) handling of calls in Spanish being subordinated to the reduction of wait times, the main objective of the companies; (b) minimization of service time thanks to the use of Spanish, owing to the inefficiency of English for part of the Hispanic population, rather than as a strategy of customer satisfaction; (c) reduction of wage costs without decreasing the worker commitment by means of labeling the workplace with a Hispanic identity; (d) Spanish at no cost, treating the language more as an innate talent than as a technical competence. The authenticity of the different varieties of Spanish spoken on the border is used to guarantee an abundant and cheap supply of bilingual labor.

3.4 Translators and interpreters in the private sector

In this section, we focus on the Spanish language professionals who work in the private sector in translation and interpretation departments of US corporations with work centers in El Paso. The origin of these employees mainly is Mexico, frequently young people with part of their university education in Mexico and part in the United States. In the majority they are young people from prosperous Mexican origins that have definitively shifted to El Paso due to the violence in Juárez. This pattern of new economic immigrants with advanced education permits businesses to develop tasks requiring qualifications in Spanish at a relatively low cost, a need that the educational system in El Paso is not capable of supplying internally. We also encountered in our fieldwork translation and interpretation personnel working as freelancers (e.g., for the City) or working for outsourcing companies; they have a more diverse ethnolinguistic profile.

Their salaries vary between $12 and $22 an hour. For the most professional of these translators and interpreters, the highest aspiration is to obtain a position as an interpreter in the Federal Courts, a goal mentioned on diverse occasions by our informants, which pays about $90,000 a year, very distant from their current salaries. But their more realistic options for promotion are found within their own firms, which offer opportunities to "Hispanic talent", since Spanish has become a work language, albeit subordinate, in these organizations.

With regard to the work role we observed that the majority of tasks in in-house centers are fundamentally interpretation (Interpretation Unit) in both directions, English-Spanish and Spanish-English, and translation (Spanish Translation Services Unit) from oral Spanish to written English. The firms need to

convert conversations with their monolingual Spanish clients into the bureaucratic language of the organization, English. The legal departments of these firms establish norms for the use of language in wording, and sanction the quality of the translation. Concerning interpretation, the main task is converting popular Spanish of clients to internal, technical English, in which these firms provide services – legal, accounting, clinical, etc. – and vice versa, making this information understandable to the client. That is to say, the role of translation and interpretation is between authentic Spanish and English as a technical competency – an example of debordering (responding to the market) and rebordering (responding to the corporate bureaucracy and legal system within the United States).

To get a job as translator or interpreter in these private businesses, as a general rule there are various tests of English and Spanish, but a university degree or universal credential are not required. The credentialing tests for entrance to these jobs are found externally, implemented by private firms (of US capital) that administer the hiring process. This enables anyone who has relatively good knowledge of formal Spanish and English to compete for these positions. The contract firms do not trust nor do they intend to accept Mexican certificates and titles, or those given by the *Instituto Cervantes*.

In the large companies there is an important system of internal markets for promotion, in corporate language, for "Hispanic talent". This is due to the incorporation of Spanish as a work language, presenting serious problems of the control of communication due to the predominance of English monolingual speakers in the main offices of the companies. Promotion requires moving to the corporate centers and functional mobility, abandoning the role of translator or interpreter (considered marginal and outsourceable in these companies). The highly Anglocentric character of these companies is considered a problem by many of these workers due to their Mexican origin. The northern Mexican accent and generally that of El Pasoans of Mexican origin is perceived as a problem for internal promotion. Mainly young, these workers face a crossroads: debordering but remaining as cheap labor in El Paso, or rebordering and developing a career in the US interior.

4 Conclusion

The observed processes act positively on the valuation of Spanish from the point of view of economic-instrumental ends, affecting a wide spectrum of sectors and workers, from operatives to managers. This process contributes to Spanish going beyond being mainly a symbol of the working class and immigrants, principally

confined to jobs with low communicative profiles, and it contributes to new generations of El Pasoans being able to develop more positive attitudes to the intergenerational transmission of Spanish (Velázquez 2009).

Nevertheless, the way that Spanish is acquiring value in the market and the varieties of Spanish that the market recognizes are key aspects of the future of Spanish. Managers of Anglocentric corporations located in El Paso are taking an active role in the interplay between Mexican Americans and Mexicans in the struggle to establish linguistic legitimacies. An especially important finding is the business ideology of handling Spanish as a "heritage language", that builds the commercialization of Spanish on the basis of the "authenticity" of popular Spanish in the United States. Hence, in business policies, a view of Spanish as social and authentic (not compensable) predominates over a technical conception of it. That is to say, the recognition of diversity is growing, favoring the incorporation of diverse types of bilingual employees (such types as the borderlands offers) at bilingual workstations, but without formal and technical competencies in Spanish that would need to be paid for directly in wage premiums. What is seen locally is a process of spillover, in which the need for bilingual operatives brings also need for bilingual supervisors and technicians, capable of controlling the work of their subordinates. For this reason, even though the arrival of call centers, for example, brings transferred units from corporate homes or other affiliates, these people frequently end up following the pattern of outmigration from the region (Fernández et al. 2007). This reinforces the informal Spanish reinforcement of the area.

In summary, we observe that this community is undergoing realignment of its linguistic system in a context of globalization and renationalization. The data show that the process of debordering has contributed substantially to changing the productive structure of El Paso, reducing the stock of work positions for monolingual Spanish speakers in the lost garment sector. But Spanish monolingualism persists in the working class. As we have seen, they even adopt business discourses as a way to legitimate the use of Spanish to get work done – but at the cost of a loss: working class English monolinguals are excluded from the labor market as the linguistic intensity of all jobs increase while managers institute Spanish-only policies in the control of these "disposable people". When greater competency in Spanish and English are needed for serving the US national market, the speakers from the border are exposed to national ideologies concerning the linguistic quality of service. Facing a possible penetration of the Spanish spoken by well educated refugee Mexicans as a legitimate linguistic capital, there emerges a rebordering of legitimacy in the borderland Spanish that is addressed to the Hispanic public, utilized as a heritage language, carried out by a neo-Taylorization of linguistic competencies and drawing on an enormous stock of

disposable labor, thus, as a consequence, reducing the potential value of investing in Spanish language education.

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