

# We Hear, We See, We Say: The Role of Orthography in the Adaptation of Loanwords from Spanish into English

Stacey M. Jacobson

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of orthography on the process of loanword adaptation from Spanish into English. This study used eighty-four Spanish nonce words, modeled after conditions found in actual Spanish words, presented to two groups of English speakers (forty-eight in total) who had had different amounts of Spanish instruction. These items were presented to the participants in three different conditions: audio, visual and audiovisual; in the audiovisual condition, the stimuli were presented simultaneously. Thus, for the participants who were exposed to both visual and auditory input, would one type of input carry more weight than the other and cause the speakers to respond a certain way? It was hypothesized that while the audio and visual conditions would overwhelmingly favor responses based on auditory and visual information, respectively, there would be a fight for dominance in the audiovisual condition between the two stimuli.

This study found that the presence of the orthographic representations of the nonce words affected the responses of the participants (Detey & Nespoulous, 2008; Vendelin & Peperkamp, 2006), but there were also instances of auditory input also affecting these responses, leading to the conclusion that speakers access their knowledge of the source language during adaptation (Paradis, 2006; Paradis & LaCharité, 1997, 2001; Rose & Demuth, 2006; Uffmann, 2006) but also utilize perceptual information (Brasington, 1997; Hsieh, Kenstowicz, & Mou, 2005; Peperkamp & Dupoux, 2003; Shinohara, 2006). Thus, both the perceptual approach and the phonological approach have merit and a place in the study of loanword phonology; moreover, both approaches need to be considered together in order to fully comprehend the intricacies of loanword phonology and adaptation (Kang, 2003; Kubozono, 2006; Silverman, 1992; Yip, 2006). Additionally, this study affirms that the amount one has been exposed to the language from which words are being borrowed and adapted affects one's adaptations of these words.

Orthography should be considered when interpreting phonological adaptations of loanwords. This study found that when orthography is considered as a factor in the adaptation process, principles, such as the Threshold Principle, no longer account for all the data. For instance, participants in this experiment gave two different responses to the same phoneme (/β/) when presented with different graphemes (<b> and <v>). Additionally, it was clear that under certain conditions, the participants could access information regarding the L2, but in other conditions, they did not. When adapting the grapheme <ñ>, a highly significant number of the participants responded by adding a palatal sound, even when they were not presented with acoustic input, even though there is nothing about the grapheme itself that would signal a palatal pronunciation. Conversely, even though the participants were informed that the language they were being exposed to was very similar to Spanish, many of the words that ended with a consonant followed by <e> were adapted according to English reading rules, in some cases even when acoustic input was present. Therefore, especially considering languages in a high amount of contact, such as English and Spanish, orthography must be considered as a factor in the adaptation of loanwords.

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