

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND GERMAN STUDIES

**Bridging the Rock and the Hinterland: Language
Contact and Phonological Transfer in Present-Day
Gibraltar**

Treball de Fi de Grau/BA dissertation

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the influence of Gaditano Spanish—the variety spoken in and around the province of Cádiz—on the phonology of Gibraltarian English within the multilingual context of Gibraltar. As a result of centuries of language contact in the Rock between English, Gaditano Spanish, and other languages, Gibraltar has developed a unique sociolinguistic reality in Europe in which English, Spanish, and Llanito coexist and interact. The study situates the analysis within its historical and sociolinguistic context so as to understand the multilingual environment in which Gibraltarians live.

Additionally, the dissertation explores the contact-induced language changes, paying particular attention to phonological transfer, and provides a comparison between the phonological systems of Gaditano Spanish and Southern Standard British English. The analysis focuses on vowels, consonants, phonotactics, and rhythm and identifies potential areas of cross-linguistic influence. Furthermore, as an illustrative complement to the literature review, the dissertation also includes a small-scale perceptual analysis of a podcast produced by the Gibraltarian Broadcasting Corporation through perceptual auditory analysis. The results reveal the influence of Spanish on several phonetic features. Ultimately, this dissertation demonstrates that Gaditano Spanish continues to leave a significant imprint on Gibraltarian English, despite the increasing dominance of English in the territory.

0. Résumé de la dissertation en français

0.1. Introduction

Gibraltar est un territoire britannique à la pointe sud de la péninsule ibérique. Ce territoire se caractérise principalement par l'histoire entrelacée entre l'Espagne et le Royaume-Uni, qui a entraîné une réalité sociolinguistique unique en Europe. Sa position stratégique et le contact linguistique, notamment entre l'anglais et l'espagnol, a donné lieu à une communauté parlant couramment ces deux langues, à travers lesquelles s'est créée leur langue vernaculaire : le llanito ou yanito.

L'objectif de cette dissertation est de fournir une analyse du contexte multilingue via l'étude des circonstances historiques et sociolinguistiques. De surcroît, elle explore les systèmes phonologiques de l'espagnol gaditan, celui de Cadix et des alentours, et de l'anglais britannique standard du sud, afin d'obtenir les variations linguistiques provoquées grâce au contact de ces deux langues. Comme complément à la révision littéraire, un podcast produit par la Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation a été analysé, et les résultats ont été présentés à la section finale.

0.2. Contexte historique et sociolinguistique

Gibraltar a été occupé par l'Angleterre en 1704 lors de la guerre de Succession d'Espagne. C'est le point de départ du contact linguistique entre l'anglais et l'espagnol (Kramer, 1986). Après la guerre, de nombreux immigrants sont arrivés à Gibraltar, parmi lesquels des Gênois, des Portugais, des Maghrébins et des groupes d'origine juive.

Malgré l'occupation britannique, la langue prédominante des Gibraltariens était l'espagnol, fondamentalement puisque Gibraltar était un territoire trop petit pour échapper à l'influence de l'Espagne et parce que la plupart des immigrants parlaient une

langue latine. Toutefois, l'anglais était la langue officielle et grâce à cette diversité d'origines et de langues, le llanito s'est formé. En fait, selon Kramer (1986) et Moyer (1992), dans le llanito actuel, il y reste des traces des langues qui ont été parlées à Gibraltar, mais qui ont disparu au cours du temps.

Au moment de la guerre d'Espagne en 1936, environ une dizaine de milliers de personnes provenant de la province de Cadix ont traversé la frontière à la recherche d'un refuge, ce qui a intensifié le contact avec l'espagnol. Cependant, juste après la fin du conflit espagnol, Gibraltar est devenu un bastion britannique à cause de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, et les Gibraltariens ont été évacués, notamment à Londres. Cela a marqué un tournant parce que l'évacuation a renforcé la position de l'anglais et a relégué l'espagnol à un usage familial (Kramer, 1986).

Plus récemment il y a eu du changement à Gibraltar. D'après Kellermann (2001), le blocus imposé par Franco a entretenu un déracinement et un sentiment de séparation dans la population par rapport à tout ce qui venait d'Espagne, donc par rapport à l'espagnol. Le territoire s'est donc rapproché du Royaume-Uni.

Actuellement, l'anglais occupe une position prépondérante au gouvernement et dans l'administration, l'éducation, les médias et la littérature. De plus, il est très apprécié et considéré comme un symbole d'appartenance au Royaume-Uni (Levey, 2008). L'espagnol, à son tour, et plus particulièrement le gaditan, a servi de lien entre les communautés habitant le territoire au cours de l'histoire. Néanmoins, il est maintenant perçu différemment : il a perdu du prestige et les Gibraltariens ne le considèrent plus comme partie de leur identité et il est presque seulement utilisé pour les relations avec le Campo de Gibraltar (Moyer, 1992; Di Maggio, 2019). Finalement, le contact linguistique dans un territoire si petit a entraîné l'apparition d'un vernaculaire de contact, connu

comme Llanito. Il est considéré, en outre, comme l'alternance codique propre du territoire, et il est formé par une base en espagnol d'Andalousie, et par l'anglais comme langue enchâssée.

0.3. Cadre théorique : contact linguistique et transfert phonologique

0.3.1. Le contact linguistique

Thomason (2001) propose une définition simple de ce qu'est le contact linguistique : "Le contact linguistique est l'usage de plusieurs langues au même lieu et au même temps" (p.1). Historiquement, les invasions, la colonisation, l'immigration ou la globalisation ont joué un rôle moteur dans le contact linguistique. Ce contact déclenche ce qu'on nomme le changement linguistique induit par le contact, y compris le changement phonologique.

Selon Van Coetsem (1988), il y a deux mécanismes afin qu'une langue emprunte un trait phonologique d'une autre : l'imitation et l'adaptation. Dans l'imitation, les locuteurs d'une langue s'écartent du système natif ; alors que dans l'adaptation, ils alignent le son de l'autre langue à celui qui est le plus proche dans leur langue native.

Une fois un emprunt phonologique transféré, on peut distinguer trois étapes : premièrement, le matériau étranger lui-même ; deuxièmement, ce qui est inclus dans le message et qui remplit une fonction sociale, les locuteurs imitant la prononciation de la langue source ; et troisièmement, lorsque le mot emprunté est complètement adapté à la prononciation de la langue cible.

Dans le contexte de Gibraltar, les emprunts phonologiques provenant de l'espagnol gaditan sont inclus en raison du contact constant avec l'Espagne, puisqu'ils sont largement utilisés et parce qu'il remplit une fonction sociale dans la communauté du territoire. Toutefois, on ne pourrait pas affirmer qu'ils ont été intégrés du fait qu'ils sont

restreints à une région particulière et qu'ils ne sont pas présents dans le code général de l'anglais.

0.3.2. Les systèmes phonologiques de l'espagnol gaditan et de l'anglais britannique standard du sud

L'objectif principal de cette section est d'offrir une vision comparative des systèmes phonologiques de l'espagnol gaditan et de l'anglais britannique standard du sud, dont les voyelles, les consonnes, la phonotactique et le rythme, afin d'identifier les divergences et les chevauchements les plus significatifs.

D'abord, l'inventaire vocalique de l'espagnol est beaucoup plus simple que celui de l'anglais. L'espagnol compte cinq voyelles /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/ et /u/, qui ont tendance à être très stables (Zhang, 2023). En revanche, selon Roach (2009), l'inventaire anglais est formé par douze monophthongues. De plus, les voyelles anglaises peuvent être courtes ou longues, selon la durée ; et relâchées ou tendues, en ce qui concerne l'effort musculaire. Qui plus est, la voyelle la plus récurrente en anglais est connue comme 'schwa' et transcrite comme ça 'ə'. Cette voyelle apparaît toujours dans des syllabes faibles, dans la version faible des prépositions ou conjonctions et lorsque le même mot change de catégorie : 'abstract' comme nom est prononcé ['æbstɹækt], alors que quand il est un verbe, on prononce [əb'stɹækt] (Yavaş, 2011).

Ces différences peuvent engendrer des influences interlinguistiques, notamment de l'espagnol vers l'anglais, car le système vocalique complexe de l'anglais doit être filtré par le système plus rigide à cinq voyelles de l'espagnol. Il faut préciser, néanmoins, que l'espagnol gaditan produit des voyelles plus longues que l'espagnol standard, particulièrement après l'omission d'un son ou syllabe (Payán, 1988).

Quant aux consonnes, l'anglais britannique standard du sud contient vingt-quatre sons, dont neuf sourds et quinze sonores. Par rapport à l'espagnol gaditan, il est formé de dix-neuf sons consonantiques, dont huit sont sourds et onze sonores. De ces inventaires, les deux langues partagent quatorze phonèmes. En dépit de partager quelques sons, il y en a qui se comportent différemment : par exemple, en anglais les sons occlusifs sourds sont aspirés ; les phonèmes /t/ et /d/ en anglais sont articulés sur la crête alvéolaire, et en espagnol ce sont des sons dentaires ; et les sons occlusifs sonores sont approximés, c'est-à-dire, qu'il n'y a pas une fermeture totale des articulateurs, sinon qu'il y a une approximation (Yavaş, 2011 ; Campos-Astorkiza, 2018).

En plus de ces différences, le fait que les deux langues contiennent des phonèmes consonnantiques n'existant pas dans l'autre langue peut entraîner des influences de l'espagnol gaditan lorsque les Gibraltariens parlent anglais. Levey (2008) affirme que certains sons peuvent être fusionnés en raison d'un manque de distinction entre ces sons en espagnol. Il propose les exemples de /s/ et /z/, /b/ et /v/, /ʃ/ et /tʃ/, ou /d/ et /ð/.

Ensuite, la phonotactique et le rythme peuvent aussi amener des dissimilitudes. Concernant le premier, les combinaisons possibles aux attaques et aux codas sont asymétriques. D'après Levey (2008), ces asymétries permettent de prédire les éléments de transfert phonologique de l'espagnol vers l'anglais. Face à la complexité des codas anglaises, les locuteurs gibraltariens ont tendance à omettre les consonnes finales. De surcroît, les restrictions de l'espagnol influencent également l'attaque des mots : n'autorisant aucune combinaison débutant par la consonne /s/ + consonne et ajoutant un /e/ épenthétique.

D'autre côté, les langues peuvent aussi être, selon Pike (1945), opposées vis-à-vis du rythme entre langues à rythme accentuel et langues à rythme syllabique. Dauer (1987)

propose d'y voir un continuum dans lequel l'anglais et l'espagnol occupent des extrémités opposées. L'influence la plus significative que cette différence pourrait provoquer est l'application d'un rythme syllabique dans l'anglais de Gibraltar, donc la disparition de la réduction vocalique, donnant l'impression que toutes les syllabes ont la même durée. En fait, grâce à l'étude menée par Enzinna (2016) à Miami et Henriksen (2016), on a pu démontrer que ce contact prolongé pousse à la convergence phonologique, menant même des anglophones monolingues à adopter un rythme syllabique. Par analogie, la coexistence entre l'anglais et l'espagnol à Gibraltar a pu amener les locuteurs anglophones à assimiler les traits du rythme syllabique de l'espagnol.

0.4. Analyse

L'analyse a été menée au moyen d'un podcast de la Gibraltar Broadcasting Corporation appelé "Llanito : Exploring the Landscape". Les locuteurs sont des Gibraltariens qui parlent un anglais natif, mais avec des différents niveaux d'accent espagnol. L'animatrice n'a presque pas d'accent espagnol, et les invités, Dale Buttigieg et Manuel Enriles qui appartiennent à l'association "Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society", ont plus d'accent, notamment le dernier. Dû à des limitations de temps, l'analyse a dû être menée à bien à travers une écoute répétée et pas moyennant des logiciels comme "Praat".

Les résultats principaux extraits de cette écoute par rapport aux voyelles sont l'assimilation des sons vocaliques, étant donné que les locuteurs s'adaptent au système de cinq voyelles de l'espagnol ; et la perte de la réduction vocalique avec le 'swcha' en faveur de la réalisation de voyelles espagnoles non réduites. En ce qui concerne les consonnes, les locuteurs montrent une moindre aspiration des sons occlusifs sourds, ainsi qu'une dentalisation du son /ð/ ou l'approximation du phonème /b/, qui sont prononcés [d̪] et [β],

entre autres. Dans quelques occurrences, ils prononcent l'approximant postalvéolaire anglaise comme une consonne rhotique alvéolaire voisée simple [r] ou multiple espagnole [r].

Concernant la phonotactique, étant donné que l'espagnol est beaucoup plus contraint que l'anglais à propos des combinaisons des sons possibles, les locuteurs, dans quelques exemples, ne prononcent pas le dernier son de la coda. Dans la position d'attaque, en outre, comme l'espagnol ne permet aucune combinaison débutant par /s/, ils ont tendance à ajouter un épenthétique /e/.

0.5. Discussion et conclusion

Les résultats de cette dissertation prouvent que l'influence de l'espagnol gaditan envers l'anglais gibraltarien n'est pas simplement une conséquence de l'acquisition d'une langue seconde, mais l'aboutissement d'un contact linguistique prolongé et du multilinguisme à Gibraltar. Le cadre théorique et l'analyse perceptuelle montrent que l'espagnol continue à laisser une empreinte dans l'anglais malgré le statut dominant de ce dernier. Des événements historiques, comme la fermeture de la frontière avec l'Espagne ou l'influence croissante des médias anglais, ont contribué à ce qu'il y ait une différence générationnelle : les locuteurs plus âgés exhibent une plus forte influence phonologique de l'espagnol que les jeunes (Kramer, 1986 ; Kellermann, 2001 ; Levey, 2008). L'étude révèle aussi que l'adaptation phonétique, plutôt que l'imitation, caractérise le procès de transfert, en soutenant les théories de contact linguistique proposées par Van Coetsem (1988), Thomason (2001) et Matras (2009). L'analyse du podcast, en outre, souligne le rôle de l'anglais gibraltarien et du llanito comme une bannière de l'identité locale, en reflétant la position culturelle unique de Gibraltar entre le Royaume-Uni et l'Espagne.

En guise de conclusion, en explorant l'influence phonétique et phonologique de l'espagnol de Cadix sur l'anglais de Gibraltar, cette dissertation a éclairé les dynamiques propres du contact linguistique et du multilinguisme dans ce territoire. Par suite de l'analyse auditive et perceptive d'un podcast de la GBC, on a pu relever les transferts phonétiques qui constituent de véritables marqueurs d'identité au sein de la société gibraltarienne, malgré la perte d'influence de l'espagnol. Cette étude a également ouvert une voie pour la continuation de la recherche sur ce domaine, qui est encore très peu documenté, avec des logiciels comme "Praat". L'étude phonétique des variantes de contact implique plus qu'une analyse linguistique ; elle concerne de même l'histoire, les relations sociales, la coexistence culturelle et la construction d'identité, et c'est précisément pour cela que c'est une branche de grand intérêt.

1. Introduction

Gibraltar—also known as *the Rock*—is located at the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula. It is characterised by its intertwined history with Spain and the United Kingdom, to which it currently belongs, that has brought about a unique sociolinguistic reality within the European context. Its long history has given rise to a bilingual community that is fluent in both English and Spanish, through which they have created a contact vernacular known as Llanito, known as Llanito or Yanito, all of which have a special status within the territory.

Firstly, English is the official language in the territory, the one used by the government, in education, and in administration. Furthermore, it is highly regarded and sometimes considered a symbol of their belonging to the United Kingdom. However, Gibraltarians speak their own variant of the language, the so-called Gibraltarian English, which is phonetically influenced by other languages, in particular by the contact with Gaditano Spanish, spoken on the other side of the border (Levey, 2008; Di Maggio, 2019).

Spanish, in turn, has an ambivalent status. The continuous conflicts between Spain and Gibraltar due to the British occupation of the territory have in a way contributed to it being viewed as a language of lower prestige compared to English, and according to Moyer (1998) and Di Maggio (2019), standard Spanish is usually associated with the concept of “otherness”, as if it does not form part of their identity. Nonetheless, most Gibraltarians consider themselves fluent in Spanish, and it is widely used to enhance cross-border relations.

Finally, Llanito is a direct outcome of the code-switching between English and Spanish—mostly based on the latter—that Moyer (1998) classifies as an unmarked

practice by which speakers negotiate meaning, belonging, and social relationships. Additionally, the term “Llanito” is not only used to refer to the language but also to Gibraltarians themselves. This reinforces the idea that Gerke (2018) points out by which Llanito in the Gibraltarian context not only reflects the identity but also “becomes part and parcel of its forging” (p. 36).

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a clear analysis of the multilingual context in Gibraltar and to understand the linguistic situation in the territory through the analysis of its historical and sociolinguistic context. Furthermore, this dissertation explores the change induced by language contact and provides a comparison of Gaditano Spanish and Southern Standard British English phonological systems in order to assess the extent to which Spanish has an influence on the vernacular English. As a complement and a way to showcase the phonological transfer, a podcast produced by the Gibraltarian Broadcasting Corporation—*Llanito: Exploring the landscape - Gibraltarian for a multilingual society* (2025)—will also be analysed and the results will be presented in the final section.

2. Historical background

The part of the history of Gibraltar that concerns the purpose of this paper started in 1704, when the English forces captured the Rock. At the time, Spanish people were confronted for the election of the new king after the death of Charles II without succession. Furthermore, the main European powers also became direct actors in the conflict as each of them sided either with the Habsburg candidate Charles III or with the Bourbon Philip V. It was in this context that the English army seized the territory on King Charles’ II behalf.

The occupation of Gibraltar took until 1713, when the two sides agreed through the Treaty of Utrecht to cease the hostilities. As a consequence, French candidate Philip of Anjou was proclaimed King of Spain under the condition of ceding some territories to the allies of Charles III, including Gibraltar to the English, which legally henceforth belonged to them. It can be stated, therefore, that this is the event that started the coexistence of Spanish and English in Gibraltar (Kramer, 1986).

As Kramer (1986) points out, most of the Spanish civilians that were living in the territory at the time of the conquest decided to follow the Spanish garrison that retreated to the nearby city of San Roque. Only a few Spanish people remained in Gibraltar, and some returned as time went by. Owing to the withdrawal of the Spanish civilians, the composition of the population in Gibraltar changed remarkably during the following decades. In fact, the majority of the population was formed by Genoese fishermen that did not see any benefit in leaving. Besides, according to Stockey (2012), by 1725 the influx of immigration resulted in the formation of communities of different origins, notably from the British Isles—mostly members of the army—Italy, North Africa, and also a significant group of Jews from Morocco, whose mother tongue was Sephardic Spanish.

In spite of being occupied by the British, the dominant language of Gibraltarians' everyday life kept being Spanish. Kramer (1986) asserts that many factors favoured it, although the Spanish people were not, by far, a majority in the rock: firstly, Gibraltar was too tiny a territory to escape the influence of the hinterland and Spanish was the language used to communicate with the people across the border; secondly, the Jews already spoke a variant of Spanish as mother tongue; and thirdly, as most of the immigration arriving in Gibraltar—like the Genoese or the Portuguese—spoke other Romance languages, it was not difficult to learn the language. Even so, English was the official language, and it was

used by the members of the garrison, who, owing to their short stays, rarely learned Spanish.

The population diversity as well as economic dynamism were the defining features of a highly militarized territory. The first Gibraltarians had to abide by the strict military jurisdiction; they lived under the incessant threat of a Spanish invasion (Stockey, 2012). In fact, during the 18th century, Spain tried to reconquer the Rock twice, in 1727 and between 1779 and 1783. The latter is known in the history books as the *Great Siege*.

Notwithstanding the military restrictions, the 19th century meant for Gibraltar an epoch of economic growth. Stockey (2012) points out that the main cause of this was the opening of the Suez Canal that allowed British ships to arrive faster to its markets in the Far East. Gibraltar became, thus, a middle point in the journey in which ships could stock up on supplies. Thanks to this economic dynamism, the Rock also increased in population. Furthermore, the ceaseless influx of immigration and the Spanish that crossed the border daily established Andalusian Spanish as the means of communication, although a vernacular, known as Llanito or Yanito, was being created. The Spanish in Gibraltar was influenced by all the other languages present in the territory, so even if they were gradually disappearing, they left their traces in it, particularly in the lexicon (Kramer, 1986).

Besides, during the first half of the 20th century, Gibraltarian politics revolved around Spain. Gibraltar people participated in the debates and suffered the political changes in the hinterland. The Spanish Civil War, for instance, had a considerable impact on the territory, since around 10,000 refugees crossed the borderline and had to be accommodated. According to Stockey (2012), despite welcoming the refugees, the

colonial authorities initially thought that Franco's victory was positive for the Rock, as it implied law and order, and it contrasted with the instability of the Republic.

A few months after the Spanish Civil War, nonetheless, the Second World War started. As Gibraltar was a strategic military stronghold and colonial authorities were afraid of a Spanish attack with the connivance of Nazi Germany, most civilians were evacuated to facilitate military operations. They were evacuated chiefly to London and Northern Ireland, but some also were transported to French Morocco, Madeira, and Jamaica. For most of them, this was the first time in which their lives would develop fully in English, and it would signify a turning point for the linguistic landscape in Gibraltar. As a matter of fact, as Kramer (1986) states, the evacuation reinforced the position of English, and Spanish was relegated to family use, although Gibraltarians maintained an emotional link with it.

After the Second World War, Gibraltarian politics were characterised by the sovereignty conflict with Francoist Spain. Spain raised this debate at the United Nations and received most of the UN support, mainly from Latin America and Third World countries. The United Kingdom, in turn, defended the self-determination of Gibraltar. Hence, in 1967 a referendum to decide the future of the Rock was held. Gibraltarians were asked if they wanted to pass under Spanish sovereignty or to retain their link with the United Kingdom. The result undermined the Spanish position, since the second option won by a landslide (Kramer, 1986; Stockey, 2012).

Spain, however, considered the referendum illegal and a violation of the Treaty of Utrecht. Consequently, on 9th June 1969, the Spanish government enacted a complete closure of the border with the objective of forcing the United Kingdom to give up Gibraltar, to suffocate the Rock economically and socially (Kramer, 1986). Nonetheless,

the United Kingdom retained Gibraltar, it provided economic support, and Gibraltar's economy was adapted to the situation. The closure of the border, rather than advancing in the cession of Gibraltar to Spain, made Gibraltarians more skeptical and distrustful of their neighbour. Additionally, it enhanced the British sentiment, and more specifically the Llanito identity. As Stockey (2012) claims, Gibraltar was turning its eyes to London and losing its ties with Spain. In fact, in 1981 Gibraltarians were granted full British citizenship. It was not until 1982, at the very onset of the Spanish democracy, that both sides agreed in the Lisbon Agreement to reopen the land frontier for pedestrians. Later on, when Spain joined the European Economic Community, the frontier was fully reopened.

Throughout the 21st century, Gibraltarians were called to cast their votes in two more referendums. The first one, in 2002, addressed the co-sovereignty of the United Kingdom and Spain in Gibraltar. Once again, Gibraltarians rejected the proposal with 98.97% of the votes. As to the second referendum in 2016, it dealt with the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, widely known as Brexit. Contrary to what the United Kingdom as a whole voted, Gibraltar overwhelmingly cast their ballot in favour of remaining in the European Union. To be precise, 95.91% voted to remain (Toszek, 2019). Nevertheless, they had to officially leave the European Union with the rest of the country on January 31st, 2020.

It took more than 4 years to finally reach an agreement between the United Kingdom, Spain, and the European Union on the new status of Gibraltar. The aim of the agreement was to remove all the physical barriers between Gibraltar and the European Union and to create a so-called 'area of shared prosperity'. The sides agreed upon the elimination of border infrastructures and free circulation of persons and goods. In

exchange, however, border controls would be carried out by the Spanish police applying the Schengen rules; this means enacting the same taxes on both sides of the border. Besides, Spain will be in charge of migration controls and visa issues, but the sovereignty conflict between the two sides will remain unchanged. These changes came into force on April 10th, 2026 (European Commission, 2026).

On balance, Gibraltar's history has been modelled by its strategic position at the entrance of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as the long-standing sovereignty conflict between Spain and the United Kingdom. What is more, the diverse origins of the inhabitants of the Rock and the contact with the hinterland during history have always entailed a linguistic variety that persists in the linguistic ecology of present-day Gibraltar, which is going to be dealt with in the following section.

3. Linguistic ecology in present-day Gibraltar

Gibraltar's linguistic landscape is unique within the European continent. The heterogeneity in the population that characterises the Rock has brought about a long-standing multilingual reality: Andalusian Spanish and English have always been and continue to be the predominant languages in the Rock, but Genoese, Jewish Spanish, and Portuguese, among some other languages, have also been spoken, although they have already disappeared or reduced to small circles. Nonetheless, traces of them have remained in Llanito (Moyer, 1992; Levey, 2008).

According to the data that Levey (2008) presents in his study, there is a sharp change concerning the language of everyday use in Gibraltar: while the Gibraltarians that were born before the blockade in 1969 are undoubtedly proficient in Spanish, the younger generations have prioritised English over Spanish, and even some of them have claimed

not to feel fluent in the latter. As a matter of fact, in line with what Kellermann (2001) states, the generation born prior to the blockade (1938-1957), despite having a great proficiency in English, tended to have Spanish as their mother tongue, chiefly because their parents still were Spanish monolinguals or could not communicate effectively in English. That is why older generations are more likely to preserve stronger phonological transfer from Spanish.

English use experienced, nonetheless, an increase with the following generation that was born after the border closure, and it was further intensified among those born after the opening of the border in 1982. What is more, Gibraltarians' exposure to Spanish was also limited during the blockade, as many Spanish workers were not allowed to cross the border anymore, and the labour vacuum was filled with workers from other countries, especially Morocco (Levey, 2008).

Kellermann (2001) attributes the frontier closure to generating a feeling of resentment in Gibraltar people that will result in a more distant relationship with anything coming from Spain and, thus, in the formation of closer ties to Britain and the English language, although the evacuation of most Gibraltarians to the British Isles during the Second World War also entailed a huge influence.

Besides, a new education system was established for Gibraltar along the lines of the 1944 Education Act in England. This means that, since then, the language of study and the one in which classes are taught is English. Spanish, in turn, has been relegated to the position of a foreign language (Picardo, 2012). In fact, not only is the education in English in Gibraltar, but, essentially, everything that is official is in English (e.g., the government, the administration, the media, or the literature). In present-day Gibraltar, English is highly regarded, and it is also considered to be a symbol of belonging to the United Kingdom.

Another factor that may have influenced the thriving of the use of English over Spanish has been the introduction of the UK TV satellite in 1997, which meant an increase in exposure to the English-speaking media; hence, fewer and fewer Gibraltarians watch Spanish TV shows produced on the other side of the borderline (Levey, 2008).

Spanish, in turn, and in particular the Andalusian dialect, has always been the language of communication in the Rock, and it has served as a *lingua franca* to unify all the communities living in the territory due to the fact that the language of the migrants used to be Romance. Currently, however, owing to the long-standing conflicts between Spain and the United Kingdom, it is perceived differently: its prestige has decreased, and Gibraltarians associate it with the concept of ‘otherness’, that is, they do not deem it part of their identity (Moyer, 1992; Di Maggio, 2019). Despite this, it is a very useful language to enhance cross-border relations.

Lastly, the linguistic contact in such a small territory resulted in the contact vernacular known as Llanito, which emerged from sustained code-switching¹ between Andalusian Spanish—the dominant language—and English—the embedded one. Additionally, it also includes substrates, chiefly lexical items, from the languages that were once spoken in the Rock, such as Genoese, Arabic, or Maltese (Moyer, 1992).

Moyer (1998) classifies Gibraltarian code-switching as an unmarked practice by which speakers negotiate meaning, belonging, and social relationships. Besides, Gerke (2018) asserts that Llanito is more than the result of the history and the peoples that have inhabited the territory; it is an identity builder that makes Gibraltarians neither British nor Spanish, but, in fact, it creates a blended identity. Furthermore, the fact that the term

¹ Code-switching is a term coined by Einar Haugen to describe when people switch languages within a single conversation and sometimes within a single sentence. Most of the time it is made up of a dominant language and an embedded one (Haugen, 1953).

“Llanito” also refers to the Gibraltarians themselves reinforces the idea that the code-switching not only reflects the identity but also “becomes part and parcel of its forging” (p. 36).

Nevertheless, although Gibraltarians’ code-switching is sometimes perceived as a lack of mastery, it is in fact a sign of comfort, the language that you would speak to a friend or an immediate family member. It could be compared, for instance, to anyone who adapts their accent to a particular situation—usually adopting a more standard accent—and, later on, uses a more casual accent with people from their own community (Chevasco, 2021). Many Gibraltarians also feel that their Andalusian-like pronunciation of English and Llanito is somewhat stigmatised. However, they are proud that this makes them unique and can differentiate them from any other peoples in the world (Levey, 2008).

Ultimately, despite Llanito being such an important identity banner in Gibraltar, it is increasingly less used as an indirect consequence of the loss of Spanish and the growth of English. Although this tendency could be reversed by the recent reopening of the border on April 10th, 2026, under the conditions agreed upon by the United Kingdom, Spain, and the European Union, there are still some associations, such as *Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society*, that are speaking out so as to change this situation.

4. Language contact and contact-induced language change

Thomason (2001) provides a very simple definition of language contact: “It is the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time” (p. 1). Nonetheless, the author also acknowledges the flaws in her definition. Thomason (2020) concedes, for instance, that it is not just a matter of the use of more than one language in the same context but an actual interaction between these languages, which is what subsequently brings about the language change. For instance, language contact would not occur if two groups of people are in the same space speaking a language within their group but not interacting with the other group, who, in turn, is speaking another language. On the contrary, the author acknowledges that despite not being in the same space, some languages like Latin and Classical Arabic can influence other languages, in this case through sacred religious books.

What is more, the circumstances under which language contact occurs are diverse and have evolved throughout history, since it has been enhanced by invasions and colonisation, through immigration and human mobility, and, in the present-day world, globalisation and the internet are the chief driving forces that sustain it. In fact, it is as a consequence of globalisation and the Internet, among other reasons, that English has become the *lingua franca* of the world (Thomason, 2001). These language interactions are what eventually give rise to what is called ‘contact-induced language change’.

Language change can manifest itself in different fashions, spanning from surface-level lexical phenomena to deeper structural disruptions. The structurally less disruptive language change, so to say, is ‘borrowings’, which can be lexical items adopted due to a genuine lexical gap or due to fashion or prestige, or can also be phonological loans, among others. In addition to this, there also exist language change phenomena beyond single lexical items that make speakers alternate between languages in the same conversation,

called ‘code-switching’. This phenomenon is a multilayered language mix that can serve different goals even in the same conversation, and it is motivated by various factors, such as asserting their identity. A perfect example of code-switching would be Llanito. At a deeper level, new linguistic systems can emerge due to linguistic contact, known as pidgins and creoles. The former appears in contact situations, such as trade, in which two groups need to communicate but do not share a language and thereby create a pidgin, a makeshift lingua franca. The latter, by contrast, is already a native language, and very often it is a pidgin that later becomes the first language of a speech community (Matras, 2009).

Bilingual contact also models how speakers deploy their L1 when acquiring an L2, giving rise to what is known as ‘transfer’ and ‘interference.’ As Matras puts it (2009), on the one hand, ‘transfer’ refers to all the knowledge and features of our L1 that we transpose into the L2, and, on the other hand, ‘interference’ is the same, with the only difference that interference yields negative effects in the L2. When this influence becomes mutual and not only unidirectional, the term ‘convergence’ is rather used (Thomason, 2001), and when two languages coexist in the same territory, processes of convergence are likely to emerge.

By definition, under these conditions, the similarities between the phonological inventories of the two languages increase, giving rise to the incorporation of phonemes non-native to one of the languages or even the elimination of segments, as well as the acquisition of prosody, usually of the one of the dominant language by the less dominant language (Matras, 2009). Besides, Matras (2009) defines two mechanisms of language contact by which a phonological loan can be introduced in a language: imitation and adaptation. In imitation, speakers reproduce the foreign sound, while in adaptation, they

adjust the foreign sound to the closest equivalent in their language's phonological system. What is more, two transfer types in language contact can be distinguished: recipient language and source language agentivity. The former occurs when a speaker of the recipient language is the agent of the change and adopts a phonological loan into their own language. On the other hand, the latter takes place when the speaker of the source language is the agent and imposes their phonological habits on the second language. Once a phonological element has already been transferred, three different stages can be differentiated: first, the foreign material itself; second, what is included in the message that fulfills a social function and speakers imitate the pronunciation in the source language; and, third, when the loan is completely adapted to the pronunciation of the recipient language (Van Coetsem, 1988).

In the Gibraltar context, it is difficult to determine whether imitation or adaptation predominates, given that not all Gibraltarians have the same L1, but it could be argued that adaptations appear to be the predominant mechanism, as they usually accommodate English sounds to the Gaditano Spanish phonology. Likewise, between the two transfer types that Van Coetsem (1988) puts forward, the most relevant one is source language agentivity, given that Spanish has historically been the dominant language in the territory, and thus, its speakers have transferred their phonological habits into English. Finally, it could also be asserted that when Gibraltarians speak English, all the phonological loans adapted from Gaditano Spanish are an included feature because they are highly used in everyday communication and because they fulfill a social and communicative function in the Gibraltarian community. Nevertheless, it could not be claimed that they have been integrated, since it is restricted to a specific region and not the code of general English.

In sum, language contact is a structured and predictable phenomenon that produces observable changes in the languages involved, including phonology. As a matter of fact, when two languages coexist within the same community over generations, the phonological convergence intensifies. In order to better understand how Gaditano Spanish influences the English in Gibraltar, the phonological systems of both must first be examined individually and subsequently compared in the following section.

5. Gaditano Spanish and Southern Standard British English

The chief purpose of this section is to offer a comparative outlook of the phonological systems of Spanish and English—including vowels, consonants, phonotactics, and rhythm—so as to identify the influence of Gaditano Spanish in Gibraltarian English and the differences between the two systems. Given that Gibraltar is a territory at the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula, the variety of Spanish that the Rock has been most exposed to is Gaditano Spanish. With regard to English, Southern Standard British English (SSBE) is going to be employed as the reference, since it encodes standard British English; thus it can be used as a point of departure for a comparison of these two varieties.

5.1. Vowel systems

One of the most significant phonological differences between English and Spanish lies in their vowel system, particularly in terms of inventory size and phonemic realisations.

When it comes to the number of vowels in English we can count up to 20 vocalic phonemes; thus it is a more intricate system, including 12 monophthongs—/ɪ/, /e/, /æ/, /ɒ/, /ɔ/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /i:/, /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/—and 8 diphthongs—/eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /əʊ/, /aʊ/, /ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/—(Zhang, 2023). Apart from the number of phonemes in each language, English

vowels differ in duration, while Spanish ones do not. English vowels are classified as short—/ɪ/, /e/, /æ/, /ɒ/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/—and long—/i:/, /ɑ:/, /ɔ:/, /u:/, /ɜ:/—(Roach, 2009). According to Yavaş (2011), besides, there is also a difference between tense and lax vowels in terms of muscular effort. As a matter of fact, in the pairs /i:/ and /ɪ/, /u:/ and /ʊ/, /e:/ and /ɛ/, and /o/ and /ɔ/, the first member is called ‘tense’ and the second one ‘lax’.

Furthermore, a segment that deserves special attention is the ‘schwa’, transcribed as ‘ə/’, which is the most frequently occurring vowel in English. This vowel is always associated with weak syllables, although not all of them contain it. It also occurs in other contexts, such as in weak forms of function words. For instance, the word ‘and’ can be pronounced /ænd/ in its strong version or /ənd/ or even /ən/ in its weak version (Roach, 2009). Moreover, in morphologically related words, other vowels may reduce to schwa in unstressed syllables, as happens with ‘photograph’ and ‘photography’, which are pronounced [ˈfəʊtəɡrɑ:f] and [fəˈtɒɡrəfi], respectively. Lastly, it can also appear when the same word may change its grammatical category: ‘abstract’ as a noun is pronounced [ˈæbstɹækt], while when it is a verb, it is pronounced [əbˈstɹækt] (Yavaş, 2011).

In turn, according to Zhang (2023), Spanish has a very simple and straightforward vowel system with 5 vowels—/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/—that tend to be pure and quite stable. With respect to the Spanish spoken in the province of Cádiz, the vowels can tend to be longer than standard ones in particular cases. For instance, when an intervocalic ‘d’ is elided, as in the case of [tó:] for ‘todo’; it also occurs when an ‘s’ is elided and then a synalepha has taken place, as in [pwé:ʃo] for ‘pues eso’; there are other sorts of synalephas between vowels, such as [a:βido] for ‘ha habido’ or [me:íðo] for ‘me he ido’. Another example in which the lengthening of the vowel in Gaditano Spanish occurs is when an ‘l’ or the ‘r’ is elided after an ‘a’, as in [totá:] for ‘total’ and [seřá:] for ‘cerrar’ (Payán, 1988).

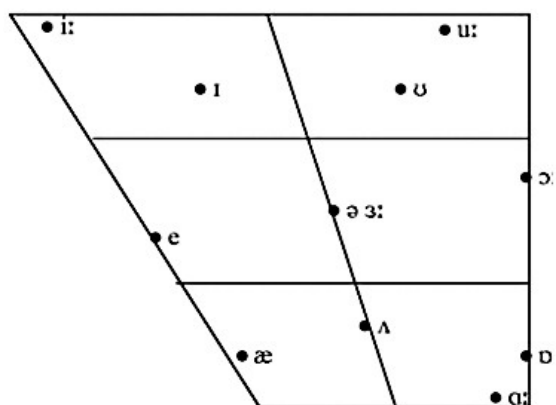


Figure 1. Monophthongs in Received Pronunciation, also valid for Southern Standard British English (Extracted from Roach, 2004, p. 242)

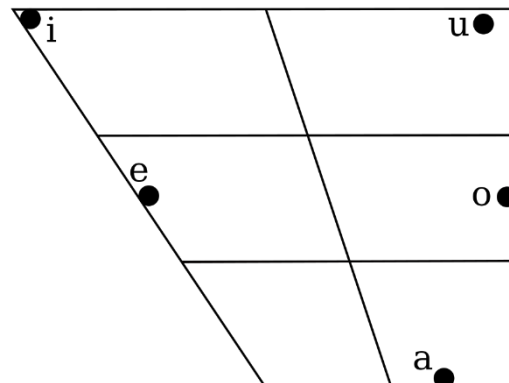


Figure 2. Monophthongs in Standard Spanish, also valid for Gaditano Spanish (extracted from Ladefoged & Johnson, 2011, p. 227)

These differences may carry cross-linguistic influences, especially from Spanish to English, in a situation of language contact like the one in Gibraltar—or when someone who is a native speaker of Spanish or is bilingual and has Spanish as the dominant language—due to the fact that the intricate English vowel inventory must be filtered through the more rigid five-vowel system of Spanish. The permeability of the two systems might result, for instance, in the collapse of the tense-lax vowel pairs and the merge of these sounds into a single vocalic phoneme. As Flege (1995) points out, native Spanish speakers of English may detect the difference between /i:/ and /ɪ/ tokens, although they do not categorize them as different, since their brain directly groups them together and matches them with the closest sound in Spanish, in this case /i/, therefore affecting the production thereof. The transfer may also manifest in the length of the vowel, since Spanish does not make the distinction between long and short vowels, except for the

particularities of Gaditano Spanish elision that would allow longer vowels, or the absence of vowel reduction.

5.2. Consonant systems

This section will be dedicated to the comparison of the consonant systems of both English and Spanish, and the most important divergences will be highlighted in order to have a wider understanding, together with the vowel description in the previous section, of the influences of Gaditano Spanish in Gibraltarian English. Figures 3 and 4 present the consonant inventory of Southern Standard British English and Gaditano Spanish, respectively. In these figures you can see the place and manner of articulation, as well as if the consonant is voiced—placed on the left—or voiceless—placed on the right.

Firstly, as it can be seen in Figure 3, Southern Standard British English contains a total of 25 consonant phonemes, of which 9 phonemes are voiceless and the other 16 are voiced. With regard to the Spanish spoken in Cádiz, it has 19 consonant phonemes. Out of these 19 phonemes, 8 are voiceless and 11 are voiced (see Figure 4). Gaditano Spanish, however, differs from Standard Spanish in some cases. For instance, there is a very common phenomenon labeled as ‘seseo’ through which speakers neutralise the opposition in Standard Spanish between /s/ and /θ/; therefore, /θ/ is not present in Figure 4. Furthermore, Gaditano Spanish produces the /h/ either as a substitution of the sound /x/ in Standard Spanish or when the ‘h’ is in the initial position; hence, unlike Standard Spanish, Gaditano Spanish shares this sound with SSB English (see Figure 4). There is also a neutralisation of the sounds /l/ and /r/ that are pronounced as [r] in certain contexts, like in ‘caldo’ [‘kardo] or alto [‘arto]. Lastly, there is a phenomenon called ‘yeísmo’ that

describes the disappearance of the difference between /k/ and /j/. Thus, ‘calló’ and ‘cayó’ would be pronounced exactly the same (Payán, 1988). By contrast, 14 phonemes are shared by both SSB English and Gaditano Spanish, and the main differences between the two systems lie in terms of voicing.

Additionally, there are phonemes that are exclusive to one of the languages, and that could yield cross-linguistic transfer from one language to the other. On the one hand, Gaditano Spanish does not have the following English phonemes: the sound /θ/ as in ‘think’; the sound /ð/ that we can find in ‘they’; the sound /v/ as in ‘vague’; the sound /z/ as in ‘zoo’; the sound /ʃ/ as in ‘shoulders’; the sound /ʒ/ as in ‘measure’; and the sound /dʒ/ as in ‘jungle’. There are two special cases that exist in both languages but with different phonemic status: the sound /ŋ/ as in ‘sing’, and the sound /w/ as in ‘one’. While in English these sounds are considered to be phonemes, in Spanish they are allophones. On the other hand, English does not contain in its phonemic inventory the following sounds, while Gaditano Spanish does: the sound /ɲ/ as in ‘cariño’; the alveolar trill /r/ as in ‘carro’; the tap /ɾ/ as in ‘pero’.

For example, /p/, /t/, and /k/ are aspirated—[p^h][t^h][k^h—in the initial position of a stressed syllable, while in Spanish this phenomenon never takes place. Another example is that the place of articulation of /t/ and /d/ is different: in English they are alveolar, while in Spanish they are dental. In addition, Spanish voiced stops are produced with an approximation of the articulators after continuant sounds, rather than a full closure, thus becoming [β], [ð], and [ɣ] (Yavaş, 2011; Campos-Astorkiza, 2018).

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Approximant	(w)				r	j	w	
Lateral approximant				l				

Figure 3. Consonants in Received Pronunciation, also valid for Southern Standard British English (Extracted from Roach, 2004, p. 240).

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d			k g	
Affricate					tʃ ʝ		
Nasal	m			n	ɲ		
Tap or flap				ɾ			
Trill				r			
Fricative		f		s			h
Lateral approximant				l	j		

Figure 4. Consonants in standard Spanish (extracted from Martínez-Celdrán et al., 2003, p.255). Adapted so as to meet Spanish pronunciation in Cádiz.

Despite sharing some sounds, some of them behave differently at a phonetic level.

As a consequence of the divergences of the two systems, when Gibraltarians speak English, some influences from Gaditano Spanish may be manifested. Levey (2008) claims that some English sounds may experience a fusion due to the lack of the voicing distinction in Spanish, such as /s/ and /z/, /b/ and /v/, /f/ and /tʃ/, or /d/ and /ð/. Therefore, the difference in pronunciation in the words ‘peace’ and ‘peas’, ‘berry’ and ‘very’, ‘wash’ and ‘watch’, or ‘day’ and ‘they’ would diminish, if not completely disappear. Additionally, there might also appear some allophonic and articulatory transfer like those

explained previously: lack of aspiration in /p, t, k/, spirantization of /b, d, g/, or a dental articulation of /t, d/. The linguist also puts forward that the velar nasal /ŋ/ tends to be realised as alveolar [n], especially in word-final <ing>, since in Spanish this allophone never appears in pre-pausal position, and that Spanish may also interfere in the realisation of post-alveolar /r/, among others.

5.3. Phonotactics

Phonotactics—the set of constraints governing permissible sound sequences and syllable structures (Kreidler, 1989)—is one of the linguistic areas in which the influence of Spanish in Gibraltarian English is revealed most clearly. Given that English and Spanish differ with respect to the consonant combinations they allow, both in onset and coda position, it is of interest to compare them and predict which may be the transfer from Spanish to English.

Traditionally, a syllable is made up of segments grouped around a nucleus, which is the element of greatest opening. In Spanish, the nucleus of a syllable is always a vowel. In English, nonetheless, even if it is normally a vowel, schwas can sometimes be omitted, and, as a consequence, certain consonants can become the nucleus of the syllable, like in the cases of ‘bottle’ /'bɒtl/ and ‘button’ /'bʌtn/. Furthermore, the segments that precede the vowels make up the ‘onset’, and those that follow it form the ‘coda’ (Hualde & Colina, 2013).

As Kreidler (1989) describes, in English up to three consonants are permitted in the onset position. Additionally, empty, one-consonant and two-consonant onset structures are also possible. Clusters, however, show strong constraints on what consonants can go together. In English, the two-consonant onset clusters can be formed

either by a consonant + /l/, /r/, or /w/, as in ‘brave’, ‘play’ and ‘twin’, or by /s/ + consonant, such as ‘spy’. Regarding three-consonant onset clusters, the first consonant is always /s/, then we add up another consonant and either /l/, /r/, or /w/. Some examples would be ‘sprit’, ‘splendid’ and ‘squint’.

With regard to the coda, English permits three-consonant coda clusters formed by three obstruents, as in ‘midst’; a nasal + two obstruents, such as ‘prompt’; a liquid + a stop + a fricative, like in ‘corpse’; and two liquids + a stop, with only one example: world. Besides, a zero consonant or only one is also allowed, and certain clusters of two consonants like /l/ or /r/ + consonant, nasal + consonant, fricative + stop and vice versa, and two stops. Take as examples the following words: verb, belt, lamp, list, fox, and act, respectively.

Spanish, in contrast, is much more limited than English in terms of phonotactic structure. A Spanish onset can only be made up of a maximum of two consonants that are always either a stop + /l/ or /r/, like in ‘pronto’, ‘blanco’ and ‘gramo’, or the sound /f/ + /l/ or /r/, as in ‘frutero’ (see Figure 5); and empty or one-consonant onset structures are also permitted, as in ‘otro’ and ‘copla’, respectively. When it comes to the coda, Spanish only allows up to two consonants, the latter of which is always either an /s/ or a /θ/ in certain Spanish surnames, in native Spanish words. What is more, it also allows empty and one-consonant coda structures. Examples of this would be ‘pájaro’, ‘pan’ and ‘Sanz’. (Hualde & Colina, 2013).

On the whole, English is less constrained with respect to the syllable combination than Spanish. As a result, some cross-linguistic influences can be deduced. According to Levey (2008), Hispanophones may have “difficulties when pronouncing consonants in word-final position or when occurring in clusters” (p. 143), and he also

argues that this phenomenon takes place as well in Gibraltarian speakers of English. The dropping of consonants in coda position is due to the cross-linguistic transfer from Spanish, which permits a smaller set of sound combinations in word-final position. In addition to this, the fact that Spanish phonotactics are more limited may also carry influence on the onset, particularly with respect to two-consonant and three-consonant clusters that start with /s/. In this case, the transfer lies in the addition of an epenthetic /e/ before the /s/, rooted in the fact that Spanish does not allow such a combination in the onset position.

5.4. Rhythm

Linguistic rhythm—a feature of suprasegmental phonology referring to the relative timing of strong and weak prosodic units in speech—defines the prosodic structures of any language. Particularly in contact linguistic contexts, these patterns can interact, giving rise to some convergence phenomena of great interest (Henriksen, 2016). This section will delve into the rhythm properties of English and Spanish and the possible influences that may arise when they coexist in the same space.

First, Pike (1945) distinguishes between two rhythm units of languages: stress-timed and syllable-timed. On the one hand, the linguist described the former as having durations that vary according to the placement of the stress. What is more, he added that, with this rhythm pattern, syllables seem to be less uniform throughout the entire phrase. On the other hand, he argues that syllable duration in syllable-timed languages is relatively uniform within a phrase. Dauer (1987), nonetheless, asserts that rhythm should not be perceived as either stress-timed or syllable-timed, but rather it should be conceived

as a continuum, of which English and Spanish exist near the opposite ends. English, hence, is a stress-timed language. According to Giegerich (1992), in the example “‘This is the ‘house that ‘Jack ‘built”, the bisyllabic foot (‘house that) would be expected to have twice, and the trisyllabic one (‘This is the) three times the duration of the monosyllabic one (‘Jack) (p. 259). Thus, in English, despite containing more than one syllable, feet—the interval stretching from the onset of one stressed syllable to the onset of the next stressed syllable—are quite similar in duration. This is, in part, owed to the vowel reduction of the weakest particles in the foot (Dauer, 1987). On the other side of the continuum, Spanish is an example of a language “that gives the impression that all the syllables, either stressed or weak, have the same duration” (Hualde & Colina, 2013, p. 279).

As a matter of fact, a study carried out by Enzinna (2016) on monolingual English speakers in Miami revealed that, as a result of the frequent and prolonged contact between Spanish and English in the region, speakers of this dialect have incorporated a syllable-timed rhythm in their English, even if those speakers did not speak Spanish at all. In another study, Henriksen (2016) found that Spanish-English bilingual speakers exhibit convergence effects in their phonology, including the rhythm pattern. Consequently, from these studies, we could deduce that, given that in Gibraltar we can find both English monolinguals and bilinguals with Spanish, Gibraltarian English may assimilate some syllable-timed language features due to the contact with Gaditano Spanish.

6. Perceptual analysis of Gaditano Spanish influence on Gibraltarian English

6.1. Methodology and goal

The following analysis will be conducted as a complement to the literature review in order to give examples of the actual influence of Gaditano Spanish in Gibraltarian English. Since there is little literature on Gibraltar English that allows a comprehensive analysis of these linguistic transfers, this section aims to contribute to providing additional evidence. First, a set of hypotheses about what the expected interferences are based on the literature review made in the previous sections will be presented. Subsequently, the data analysis, together with the results, will outline the main findings of this study. These findings will also be summarised in a table included in the Appendix.

The analysis will be carried out focusing on the first twenty minutes of a podcast of the Gibraltarian Broadcasting Corporation called ‘Llanito: Exploring the Landscape’. The chapter that corresponds to the analysis is the second one, ‘Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society’, posted on February 26, 2025. Three speakers take part in the podcast, two of whom belong to the organisation, and the host. They are all native Gibraltarians, fluent in English, and at least Manuel Enriles and Dale Buttigieg—the spokespeople of the organisation in the podcast—are fluent in Spanish and Llanito. In fact, the latter is a Spanish teacher. With regard to their English, the host is the least Spanish-accented, Dale Buttigieg is at a middle point, and Manuel Enriles is the most accented of the three.

The goal of the section is to detect, via a perceptual auditory analysis of the podcast, the chief phonologic and phonetic features that originate from the contact with Gaditano Spanish and manifest in the English spoken by the participants of the podcast.

Owing to time limitations, the analysis will be solely perceptual and not by means of a program such as ‘Praat’.

6.2. Hypotheses

Thanks to the literature research conducted in the previous sections, especially that in Section 5, we can deduce what the main influences of Gaditano Spanish over the English of Gibraltar may be. Concerning vowels, it could be assumed that the English vowel system becomes simplified and adapts to the Spanish five-vowel system, as well as the vowel reduction disappears due to the absence of schwa /ə/ in Spanish.

Regarding consonants, it could be expected that there would be a change in the behaviour of some consonants that both languages share. For example, word-initial stressed voiceless stops may lack aspiration, /t/ and /d/ might be articulated in the teeth and not in the alveolar ridge. There might also be some allophonic traits transferred from Spanish to English, such as the approximatisation of voiced stops after continuant sounds. Some voicing distinctions may be lost, such as /b/ and /v/, may also be merged due to the lack of distinction in Spanish.

With respect to phonotactics, the fact that Spanish is considerably more limited than English in that sense may give rise to some phenomena of great interest for the analysis, such as the consonant dropping in coda position or the appearance of an epenthetic /e/ in some onset clusters such as /s/ + consonant. Finally, a change in the rhythm from a stressed-timed to a syllable-timed might also be observed.

6.3. Data analysis and results

Following the perceptual auditory analysis of the selected GBC podcast, clear evidence of phonetic and phonological transfer from Gaditano Spanish to Gibraltar English was identified, particularly in vowels and consonants. Some of the findings will be presented in the subsequent paragraphs organized by linguistic category, and the actual recordings of the analysed segments will also be provided, together with the speaker that shows the transfer: Manuel Enriles (ME) and Dale Buttigieg (DB). It will also be presented in the Appendix section in which all the instances of influences are gathered in a table. I must acknowledge, however, that due to time limitations, an acoustic analysis has not been carried out; hence, this analysis may not be completely accurate. Furthermore, the transfer appears to be highly inconsistent, as I have found instances of sounds that showed a clear influence of Gaditano Spanish, and later on the same sound pronounced in SSBE. That is why some examples of words with the properly pronounced phonemes will be provided.

To start with, as mentioned in previous sections, the English vowel system is more intricate than the Spanish one. As a result of the Spanish negative transfer, the speakers in the podcast assimilate some of their vowels to L1 categories and may produce full, unreduced vowels, especially in cases in which the syllable is weak, and in SSBE the vowel would be reduced to a schwa /ə/. Some examples of vowel assimilation are ‘street’ /stri:t/, ‘punished’ /ˈpʌnɪʃt/, and ‘soon’ /su:n/, which are pronounced [‘street’ \[4:30\]](#) [strɪt] (DB), [‘punished’ \[7:57\]](#) [ˈpʌnɪʃt] (ME) and [‘soon’ \[20:17\]](#) [sun] (ME). However, speakers sometimes do produce instances of these vowels in a target-like manner. For instance, they pronounce the sound /ʌ/ in accordance with SSBE [‘other’ \[8:08\]](#) [ˈʌðə] (ME). Additionally, there also are some examples in which the speaker fails to apply

vowel reduction and uses a full vowel: [‘when we speak about’ \[0:37\]](#) (DB) or [‘a hundred years ago’ \[1:43\]](#) (DB), in which ‘about’ /əˈbaʊt/ and ‘ago’ /əˈɡəʊ/ become [aˈbaʊt] and [aˈɡəʊ]. This failure to apply vowel reduction, which is typical of stress-timed languages, moves their speech a little bit more towards syllable-timed rhythm in the rhythm continuum, which is characteristic of Spanish.

With regard to the consonants, more examples of transfer from Spanish have been detected: change in the place of articulation, devoicing, and some other allophonic processes—or the absence of them—such as aspiration and approximantisation. It has been found an example of a change in the place of articulation of /t/ from alveolar to dental. This is illustrated in ‘to highlight’ /təˈhaɪlaɪt/, which is pronounced [‘to highlight’ \[2:57\]](#) [t̪əˈhaɪlaɪt]; and also it can be seen in the /ɹ/ because, in some cases, rather than uttering the English postalveolar approximant /ɹ/, the speakers shift to a traditional Spanish tap [ɾ], as it can be heard in ‘three’ /θriː/ and ‘through’ /θruː/, which become [‘three’ \[6:57\]](#) [θɾi] (ME) and [‘through’ \[11:35\]](#) [θɾu] (DB). Even if this may take place in some of the other varieties of British English, it is definitely deviant from SSBE (Foulkes & Docherty, 2001). However, in the specific case of the speakers of this podcast, this phenomenon does not occur consistently, so it may be a sign of transfer. Furthermore, there is an example of devoicing from /z/ to [ʃ]: ‘television’ /ˈtelɪvɪʒən/ is pronounced as [‘television’ \[4:47\]](#) [tɛləˈβɪʃən] (DB). Another example of transfer would be the voiced dental fricative /ð/ being substituted in a few instances with a voiced dental stop [d̪]. Two examples are ‘those’ /ðəʊz/ and ‘that’ /ðæt/, which are actually pronounced [‘those’ \[1:14\]](#) [d̪əʊz] (DB) and [‘that’ \[1:47\]](#) [d̪æt] (DB). Nonetheless, they also pronounce /ð/ properly in some cases, like in [‘that classroom’ \[2:31\]](#) [ðætˈklaːsrʊːm] (DB). When it comes to allophonic processes, ME shows a lack of aspiration in some of his voiceless stops. The

most revealing instances are ‘popular’ [ˈpʰɒpjələ] and ‘point’ [pʰɔɪnt], which he pronounces as [‘popular’ \[3:14\]](#) [ˈpɒpjələ] and [‘point’ \[19:18\]](#) [pɔɪnt]. Nevertheless, in some cases they aspirate stressed initial voiceless stops, as in [‘term’ \[3:15\]](#) [tʰɜ:m] (ME). With regard to /b/, it is sometimes pronounced as the bilabial approximant [β]—characteristic of Gaditano Spanish—thus undergoing a process of approximatisation and resulting in words like ‘vocabulary’ /vəˈkæbjələri/ and ‘television’ /ˈtɛlɪˈvɪʒən/ being pronounced like [‘vocabulary’ \[1:10\]](#) [βəˈkæbjələri] (DB) and [‘television’ \[4:47\]](#) [tɛləˈβɪʃən] (DB).

Ultimately, in relation to phonotactics, during the podcast, speakers dropped final consonants in complex English clusters in order to ease pronunciation. In connected speech, however, this may also occur in SSBE, especially in informal contexts, but due to the strict limitations of possible combinations in coda position in Spanish, it is plausible that this may be an influence thereof. Some of the examples that were identified are ‘first’ /fɜ:st/ and ‘interest’ /ˈɪntrest/ which become [‘first’ \[7:05\]](#) [fɜ:s] (ME) and [‘interest’ \[8:48\]](#) [ˈɪntres] (DB). Besides, unlike what could be expected, clear examples in which they include an epenthetic vowel in clusters in onset position that are made up of /s/ + consonant have not been spotted. They pronounce this cluster in accordance with SSBE, as in [‘Spanish’ \[2:00\]](#) [ˈspæniʃ] (DB).

All things considered, the data extracted from the podcast validates the suggested hypothesis prior to the analysis. As initially believed, there are a few instances of assimilation of the English vowels to the Spanish system, or the failure to apply vowel reduction in some cases. Furthermore, some changes of articulation in some consonants have been found, together with devoicing, and also allophonic changes such as the lack of aspiration or approximatisation. Lastly, regarding phonotactics, in some examples the

speakers drop final consonants in complex English clusters. These findings provide the basis for the following discussion, which examines how these phonetics and phonological patterns can be interpreted in relation to language contact, transfer phenomena, and the sociohistorical context of Gibraltar.

7. Discussion

The findings presented throughout this dissertation demonstrate that the influence of Gaditano Spanish on Gibraltarian English cannot be reduced to a simple issue of second-language acquisition. Instead, the sociohistorical background—which set forth the main historical and social events that have brought Gibraltar to this contact situation—and the theoretical framework about contact languages, together with the perceptual analysis, reveal that the phonetic features of Gibraltarian English may be a direct outcome of a long-standing contact between English and Spanish and the multilingualism that still today characterises such a tiny territory. Furthermore, the phonological transfer showcases that, in spite of English being the dominant language in the Rock, Gaditano Spanish still leaves a phonetic imprint on English, and that the coexistence of both, together with Llanito, creates adequate conditions for phonetic influence.

As Kramer (1986) points out, only after the evacuation of the population of Gibraltar during the Second World War, which is relatively recent, would the lives of Gibraltarians develop fully in English. The reinforced position of English relegated Spanish to a familiar use; however, Spanish remained the most widely used language. The closure of the border enacted by Franco in 1969—which remained closed until 1982—and the installation of the British TV satellite in 1997 resulted in the thriving of the use of English at the expense of Spanish. That is why older generations, who were raised in a

more Spanish-dominant Gibraltar, are more likely to preserve stronger phonological transfer from Spanish (Kramer, 1986; Kellermann, 2001; Levey, 2008). By contrast, younger generations, who have been educated and brought up in an English-dominant Gibraltar, tend to exhibit a pronunciation closer to British English norms. In fact, this is clearly illustrated by the speech of Manuel Enriles, who, by 2026, is 60 years old; thus, he was born before the blockade and is the one with the strongest Spanish accent. Nevertheless, Daniel Buttigieg, who is younger, does not have such a considerable influence. For instance, throughout the podcast, Manuel Enriles frequently produces unaspirated voiceless stops in stressed positions. Although this pattern is not consistent, as aspirated realisations also occur in his speech, the feature appears considerably less often in Daniel Buttigieg's speech. Nonetheless, in other cases, such as the realisations of vowels, the transfer from Gaditano Spanish occurs more evenly across the speech of both speakers.

Additionally, Section 4 has allowed us to understand the different contact-induced language changes, and more particularly the different ways in which phonological transfer and interference manifest. In the Gibraltarian context in particular, it has been found that adaptation prevailed over imitation, since Gibraltarians adapt English structures to the phonological pattern available in Gaditano Spanish (Matras, 2009). This is explained by the fact that Spanish has been historically the dominant language of communication; hence, regarding Van Coetsem's (1988) classification of transfer, this phenomenon may be interpreted as an instance of source language agentivity, whereby speakers transfer their Spanish phonological habits into English.

With respect to the data extracted from the podcast, it validates the suggested hypothesis prior to the analysis. As initially believed, there are a few instances that

demonstrate how English vowels are transferred from the Spanish system and also how they tend to do fully unreduced vowels instead of schwa, which, in turn, points out an influence from a syllabic-timed language. With respect to consonants, there also are some examples that reveal a lack of aspiration in word-initial stressed voiceless stops, some examples that show that after continuant sounds voiced stops are approximantised, and instances in which the English postalveolar approximant becomes a Spanish tap. When it comes to phonotactics, contrary to what was expected, there were no clear instances of epenthetic /e/ before the onset combination /s/ + consonant; however, the recordings showcase how they drop some consonants in coda position due to the coda restrictions in Spanish. Consequently, it can be asserted that, nowadays, there still exists a transfer from Gaditano Spanish to Gibraltarian English, irrespective of the decrease in the use of Spanish within the society of the Rock.

Finally, it has been confirmed that this unique accent functions as an identity marker for Gibraltarians, and the Andalusian traits in it, and more precisely Llanito, index Gibraltar's hybrid identity, which, as Gibraltarians themselves state, is neither British nor Spanish (Moyer, 1992; Gerke, 2018; Buttigieg & Enriles, 2025). Llanito and the bilingual context in which Gibraltarians live foster local authenticity and signal membership in a community. This is also underscored by the creation of associations such as *Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society*, which shows the endeavour of the local population to maintain the foundations of what they are. Besides, by virtue of the podcast (2025), most of the hypotheses proposed have been validated, even if the instances of transfer were not consistent given that not every speaker showed them, and individual speakers also displayed variability in their pronunciation.

8. Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the phonetic and phonological influence of Gaditano Spanish on Gibraltarian English within a broader framework of language contact and multilingualism in Gibraltar. Moreover, through the comparison of the phonological systems of Gaditano Spanish and SSBE, it has been possible to identify the main areas in which cross-linguistic influence may occur. What is more, thanks to the examination of Gibraltar's historical development, its linguistic ecology, and the language contact theory, we could understand why this took place, especially from a social perspective.

Additionally, an analysis of a GBC podcast has been conducted and has revealed the significant imprint that Gaditano Spanish continues to leave on Gibraltarian English, despite its declining presence in the territory's linguistic environment. From the speakers of the podcast, several phonetic traits associated with Gaditano Spanish were displayed, including the assimilation of some vowel categories to Spanish, lack of vowel reduction in some cases even if not consistently, approximantisation of the phoneme /b/, and coda consonant cluster simplification, among others. Furthermore, the present dissertation has also highlighted the strong relationship between language and identity in Gibraltar. Although English has gained greater prestige among the Gibraltarian youth, Gaditano Spanish and Llanito continue to shape the vernacular English and remain central elements of their identity. Therefore, the phonetic transfer should not be interpreted merely as 'interference' but rather as an index of belonging and of a unique bilingual and multicultural society shaped through prolonged linguistic and cultural contact. In addition, after having analysed the podcast and all the previous literature, it appears that

Gibraltarians promote multilingualism in their territory, and they should give particular special attention to the loss of Spanish to avoid, in turn, the loss of Llanito. Due to time constraints, this dissertation had to be limited to a perceptual auditory analysis. Nonetheless, it has also revealed the need for further research on Gibraltar English, given that there is not much literature about it, and more thorough research could be carried out in the future using tools such as Praat.

In conclusion, this dissertation has examined the phonological influence of Gaditano Spanish in Gibraltar English, which has been illustrated with instances thanks to the comparative analysis of two speakers' speech from a GBC podcast. Besides, it has been possible to frame the phonological transfer in a context through the literature research of the history of Gibraltar, of its present-day linguistic ecology, of the theory of language contact and the comparison of the phonological systems of SSBE English and Gaditano Spanish. Overall, phonetic studies of contact varieties always involve more than just linguistic analysis; they encompass history, social relations, cultural coexistence, and identity construction, and it is precisely because of this that they are such a valuable field to explore and conduct future research.

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10. Appendix

Phenomenon	Word	SSBE	GibEng	Speaker	Minute
Vowel assimilation to L1 category	Romance	/rəʊ'mæns/	[rəʊ'mans]	Dale Buttigieg	0:34
	Street	/stri:t/	[strit]	Dale Buttigieg	4:30
	School	/sku:l/	[skul]	Manuel	5:29

				Enriles	
	Who	/hu:/	[hu]	Manuel Enriles	5:47
	Launch	/lɔ:nʃ/	[lɒnʃ]	Manuel Enriles	6:51
	Punished	/'pʌnɪʃt/	['pʌnɪʃt]	Manuel Enriles	7:57
	Two	/tu:/	[tu]	Manuel Enriles	9:01
	Through	/θru:/	[θru]	Dale Buttigieg	10:38
	Soon	/su:n/	[sun]	Manuel Enriles	20:17
Epenthetic vowel	Stage	/'steɪdʒ/	['esteɪdʒ]	Manuel Enriles	20:09
Lack of vowel reduction	About	/ə'baʊt/	[a'baʊt]	Dale Buttigieg	0:37
	Ago	/ə'gəʊ/	[a'gəʊ]	Dale Buttigieg	1:43
Voiced dental	Those	/ðəʊz/	[d̪əʊz]	Dale	1:14

fricative stopping				Buttigieg	
	That	/ðæt/	[dæt]	Dale Buttigieg	1:47
	They	/ðei/	[dɛɪ]	Manuel Enriles	4:05
	Themse lves	/ðəm'selvz/	[dɛm'selβs]	Manuel Enriles	9:30
Voiceless alveolar stop dentalisation	To highlight	/tə 'haɪlaɪt/	[tɹə 'haɪlaɪt]	Manuel Enriles	2:57
Approximantisation	Vocabulary	/və 'kæbjələri/	[βə 'kæbjələri]	Dale Buttigieg	1:10
	University	/,ju:nɪ'vɜ:səti/	[,ju:nɪ'βɜ:səti]	Dale Buttigieg	8:38
	Debate	/dɪ'beɪt/	[dɪ'βeɪt]	Manuel Enriles	13:16
Lack of aspiration	Popular	['pɒpjələ]	['pɒpjələ]	Manuel Enriles	3:14
	People	['pi:pəl]	['pi:pəl]	Manuel Enriles	7:42
	Point	[pɒɪnt]	[pɒɪnt]	Manuel	19:18

				Enriles	
Devoicing	Television	/ˈtɛlɪvɪʒən /	[ˈtɛlɪvɪʃən]	Dale Buttigieg	4:47
/r/ tapping	Three	/θri:/	[θri]	Manuel Enriles	6:57
	Through	/θru:/	[θru]	Dale Buttigieg	11:35
Deletion of a consonant in coda position	First	/fɜːst/	[fɜːs]	Manuel Enriles	7:05
	Prepared	/prɪˈpeəd/	[prɪˈpeə]	Manuel Enriles	8:12
	Interest	/ˈɪntrest/	[ˈɪntres]	Dale Buttigieg	8:48