Questions and responses in Spanish monolingual and Spanish–English bilingual conversation

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on a corpus of naturally occurring conversation, this study presents a quantitative and qualitative overview of the design of questions and responses (567 sequences in total) in monolingual Spanish conversation and in bilingual Spanish–English conversation. First we describe various features of question design and examine their relationship with action formation (e.g., requests for information vs. requests for confirmation). We then focus on responses to polar questions and show that interjection answers are the default answer type in Spanish, with other formats (i.e., repetitions and various marked interjections, including code-switching) being produced 'for cause'. While some aspects of turn construction do appear to differ for monolinguals and bilinguals (e.g., the (in)availability of code-switching as an interactional resource), others are shown to not be significantly different between the two groups of speakers (e.g., pro-drop in question construction). Throughout the report, we make reference to studies of several other languages in an attempt to situate Spanish within cross-linguistic research on question-response sequences.

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1. Introduction

Given that questions and their answers constitute the prime example of an adjacency pair (Schegloff, 2007), and adjacency pairs are the most basic form of sequence structure in interaction, an understanding of how questioning and answering turns-at-talk are constructed in relation to one another is fundamental to our understanding of the "syntax of interaction" (Goffman, 1971: 171–202) more generally. It therefore comes as no surprise that a considerable amount of conversation-analytic research has been dedicated to the detailed study of how questions are designed for recipients, and how recipients design their responses to those questions (Bolden, 2009; Clayman, 2013; Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Fox and Thompson, 2010; Hayano, 2013; Heritage, 1984b, 1998, 2002, 2011, 2013b, forthcoming; Heritage and Clayman, 2010; Heritage and Raymond, 2012; Heritage and Sorjonen, 1994; Lee, 2009, 2010, 2015; Pomerantz, 1984; Raymond, 2003; Sacks, 1987 [1972]; Schegloff and Lerner, 2009; Sorjonen, 1996, 2001a, 2001b; Stivers, 2004, 2005, 2010, 2011; Stivers et al., 2010; Stivers and Hayashi, 2010; Stivers and Robinson, 2006). More recently, such work has taken a more explicitly cross-linguistic turn as researchers investigate which aspects of Q–A sequences hold across languages and cultures (and thus are candidates as universals for human social interaction; cf., Dingemanse et al., 2013; Stivers et al., 2009), and which appear to be
language-/culture-specific. This is best exemplified in the ten-language comparative project conducted at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics (Stivers et al., 2010).

The present study continues in this vein of comparative research by examining questions and responses in Spanish. Applying the coding scheme described in Stivers and Enfield (2010) to a dataset of naturally occurring conversation in Spanish and Spanish/English, the findings reported here contribute to our understanding of Q-A sequences in two main ways. First, core conversation-analytic work on Spanish is significantly lacking compared to other languages—both within the Romance family (e.g., on Italian), as well as outside it (e.g., on English, Japanese). While a single investigation of course cannot cover the complete range of phenomena observed cross-linguistically in Q-A design, here our aim is to lay some of the groundwork necessary to bring Spanish into the discussion. How and where does Spanish fit in with these other languages? Second, this paper opens up inquiry into how the question and answer designs of native bilinguals compare to those of their monolingual counterparts. These two aims are accomplished through a quantitative and qualitative comparison of discourse amongst monolingual Spanish speakers and amongst bilingual Spanish-English speakers.

2. Data and coding

The data for the present study consist of naturally occurring conversation amongst Spanish-speaking friends and family members (e.g., at mealtimes). A corpus of video recordings was assembled from data collected by Centro de Estudios del Español de Estados Unidos (CEEEUS) at the University of California, Los Angeles, and from recordings made by the author. The present analysis reports on twenty-two (22) interactions: Six (6) conversations between monolingual Central American Spanish speakers, and sixteen (16) conversations between native Spanish–English bilinguals.

For each 25–35-min interaction, 10 continuous minutes of video were selected for analysis. All questions and responses (or non-responses) occurring within this timeframe were then coded according to an expanded version of the scheme outlined in Stivers and Enfield (2010). While consistency with these coding criteria was crucial to ensure maximal comparability with the results reported in the Stivers et al. (2010) edited volume, additional coding (e.g., of pro-drop in question design; see Section 3.1.3) was added as well to permit additional comparisons—both between mono- and bilingual speakers of Spanish, as well as cross-linguistically in future research. These inclusion criteria generated a dataset of 567 total (398 from bilinguals, 169 from monolinguals) question-response (or non-response) sequences on which the results of this paper are based.

3. Results

In what follows, we begin by describing features of question design, after which we turn to the design of responses to questions. Both quantitative and qualitative evidence will be shown, with particular emphasis on salient similarities and differences between Spanish monolinguals and Spanish–English bilinguals, and also between these speakers and those included in previous cross-linguistic research.

3.1. Question design

3.1.1. Type

The first trend that very clearly surfaces in examining question design in Spanish is that polar (yes/no) questions are far more common than other question types (i.e., Wh-questions and alternative questions).

As illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2, this high frequency of polar questions occurs amongst both monolinguals and bilinguals ($p = 0.752$)—representing 68% and 66% of all questions, respectively—which is also consistent with distributional reports of

![Fig. 1. Question type (monolinguals).](image-url)
languages such as English, in which 70% of questions are polar (Stivers, 2010). Such a design, Bolinger (1978: 104) observes, 
"advances a hypothesis for confirmation", which the interlocutor can then affirm or reject (Heritage, 2010; Pomerantz, 1988; Quirk et al., 1975; Raymond, 2003; Sacks, 1987 [1973]). This is seen in example (1) below.

(1) F12.100B.35:36
01 Ele: => Oh—entonces cada casa tiene su laguito atrás. Oh then each house has its lake.DIM back
02 Mar: Sí. Yes.

While alternative questions (e.g., “Está trabajando o está con su novio?”/Is she working or is she with her boyfriend?) were quite rare in the dataset, content questions (also called Wh-questions, or Qu-questions in Spanish) represent about one-third of all questions in Spanish, for both monolinguals (30%) and bilinguals (33%). Table 1 below shows that “Qué”/What accounts for nearly half of all content questions in Spanish, with all other Wh-/Qu-words being roughly equally infrequent by comparison. There is no significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals in the frequency of their use of such words to form questions ($p = 0.505$).

Following Stivers and Enfield (2010), ‘open’ class repair initiators such as “eh?”/huh? (Drew, 1997), as seen in example (2) below, were also included in the “Qué”/What category as they appear to be asking “What did you say?” (cf., Dingemanse et al., 2013; Schegloff et al., 1977).

(2) Di.Gar:514
01 Gio: No encontraste más? You didn’t find any more?
02 (.)
03 Hom: Sí pero no más uno. Yeah, but just one
04 (0.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Distribution of Wh-/Qu-word questions by category.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monolingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What/ Qué/Cuál</td>
<td>48% (n = 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who/ Quién</td>
<td>10% (n = 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where/ A dónde</td>
<td>13% (n = 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When/Cuándo</td>
<td>6% (n = 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why/ Por qué</td>
<td>10% (n = 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How/ Cómo</td>
<td>10% (n = 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many/ much/ C uánto/a(s)</td>
<td>2% (n = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (n = 48)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It bears mention that, within the “Qué/What” category, approximately one-quarter of questions were produced for the purposes of OIR, as seen above, with the other three-quarters being genuine requests for information, as in case (3) below.

(3) Ki. Cam:353
01 Gom: -> Y qué más cocinan:, aparte de arroz.
   and what more cook.2p apart of rice
   And what else do you guys coo:k, besides rice.

3.1.2. Syntax

Spanish typically follows a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) ordering in transitive declarative sentence formation (cf., e.g., Butt and Benjamin, 2000: 513; Gutiérrez-Bravo, 2007), although departures from this norm are indeed possible as well. In the construction of content questions, however, Wh-/Qu-words are regularly fronted to the beginning of the utterance (e.g., Contreras, 1999: 1939). This is seen in the following example (4) in which Ana asks Juan what other internships are offered through a class he is taking. In this case, the Wh-/Qu-headed noun phrase “cuáles otros internships”/what other internships is the direct object of the verb “ofrecer”/to offer, but rather than appearing after the verb, it is displaced to the beginning of the phrase in the formation of the question.

(4) F12.100B.21:48
01 Ana: -> Cuáles otros internships te ofrecí:an?
   what other internships to-you offered.3p
   What other internships did they offer you?

02 Jua: U::hm (.) Iba a hacer uno de a::h
   uhm Was-going.1s to to-do one of ah
   U::hm (.) I was going to do one from a::h

03 (.) en el Staples Center?
   in the S C
   (.) in the Staples Center?

As Wh-fronting is the norm for English as well, it is unsurprising that both the monolingual and the bilingual speakers of Spanish in the corpus displayed this tendency.

Despite this general syntactic preference, instances of in-situ Wh-/Qu-words were also noted. These occurred almost exclusively to initiate repair. Take the following case (5) in which a wife is announcing to her husband that three of their friends are traveling to Mexico, but they are not going together as a group. This is offered up as interesting news given that the three travelers are siblings, so one might presume they would be visiting Mexico together. Nonetheless, the delivery of this news is interdicted by the husband who, in line 3, initiates repair on the location to which the friends are traveling. This initiation of repair is realized through the Wh-/Qu-word “adónde”/to where left in an in-situ position, repeating the syntactic structure from his interlocutor’s line 1.

(5) CWR:HusWif-2
01 Wif: Los tres se van a ir a México,
   the three self go.3p to to-go to M
   The three of them are going to go to Mexico,
but not at the same or be that go.3p
but not at the same time.=>So like<

So like<

They’re going to go where?

They’re going to go where?

They’re going to go where?

They’re going to go where?

They’re going to go where?

In such instances of repair, speakers produce the Wh-/Qu-word within the noun or prepositional phrase, but without fronting the phrase to sentence-initial position. Interlocutor responses to such questions can be fully clausal or, as is the case here, phrasal, simply replacing the question word with the repair proper within the prepositional phrase. Here, for instance, “adónde/to where in the husband’s in-situ question in line 3 becomes “a México/to Mexico in his wife’s response in line 4.

Reflecting the norm reported for most dialects of Spanish, all of the speakers in this study demonstrated subject-verb inversion when subjects were realized overtly in the formulation of Wh-/Qu-questions (see discussion of pro-drop below) (cf., e.g., Contreras, 1999: 1939; Goodall, 1993; Torrego, 1984). Take the following two “Dónde/Where questions as examples. In (6), the verb “estar/to be is inverted with the noun phrase “tu taza/your cup in producing an offer; and in (7) the same verb is inverted with the second-person plural pronoun “ustedes” in making a request for information.

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Routine subject–verb inversion was not seen, however, in the construction of polar questions. Of the 239 polar questions that included a conjugated verb and that could thus potentially host an overt subject, only 61 (26%) did so. While we will discuss non-overt subjects in the following section, here we draw attention to the fact that 45 of the 61 polar questions with an overt subject—that is, 74% of such questions—were produced with declarative syntax, i.e., without subject–verb inversion. This prevalence of declarative syntax, which parallels Stivers’s (2010) results for English in which 63% of polar questions are produced declaratively, is particularly noteworthy given the various, conflicting claims in grammars of Spanish as to the ‘preferred’ or ‘usual’ word order for polar questions (e.g., Bradley and Mackenzie, 2004: 289–290; Butt and Benjamin, 2000: 516–517; Contreras, 1999: 1934–1937).

The majority of declaratively formulated yes/no questions were requests for confirmation, as in the following example (8). Here, Eve has been explaining how her mother, despite not liking the U.S. herself, sent her and her sisters to live with family

Note that subject–verb inversion is not present to this extent in all dialects. Specifically, speakers of Cuban and Dominican dialects, in addition to some contact varieties (e.g., with Quechua and Aymara in South America), often demonstrate diverse word orderings (Lipski, 2012).
members in the U.S. immediately after each of them was born in Guatemala. As all of the children have now reached adulthood, Clara surmises from this telling, and description of Eve’s mother’s assessment of the U.S., that Eve’s mother does not have any plans to immigrate to the U.S. herself, producing the negatively formulated request for confirmation seen in line 6.

(8) 2013.Sum.100A.19
01 Eve: Tuvo (.) ob- obviamente a nosotras tres?
She had (.) ob- obviously us three?

02 (.).

03 Y::: (0.7) Siempre tenía a alguien que la ayudaba,=
and always had.3s to someone that her helped
A:::nd (0.7) She always had someone to help her,=
04 =↑O sea que nunca sufrió con los bebés.
or be that never suffered.3s with the babies
=↑So she never suffered with the babies.

05 (0.3)

06 Cla: ->Tú mamá no va a venir?
your mom no is.going.3s to to-come
07 (.).

08 Eve: ↑↑↑U:::h! hh ↓No mamita.
no mom.DIM
↑↑↑U:::h! hh ↓No my dear.

In line 6, the subject “tu mamá”/your mom remains in clause-initial position, with the conjugated verb phrase “no va a venir”/isn’t going to come following it. While interrogative syntax would certainly be grammatically possible here (i.e., “No va a venir tu mamá?”), subject-verb inversion was found to be comparatively rare in the dataset when producing requests for confirmation.

Requests for information, however, were indeed routinely produced with interrogative syntax, i.e., with subject-verb inversion. This again parallels findings for English in which 92% of requests for information were shown to be formulated interrogatively (Stivers, 2010). Consider the following example (9) in which a daughter asks her father if the tools that are necessary for a project will arrive on site in time for him to perform the work he has been contracted to do.

(9) F12.100B.27:413-414
01 Dau: -> Llegan a tiempo las cosas?
arrive.3p at time the things
Will the things arrive on time?

02 Dad: Se van primero,
self go.3p first
They go first,

03 Mom: [Sí:, se van primero.
yes self go.3p first
Yes, they go first.

Indeed, this syntactic distinction between action types is statistically significant (p = 0.017): If a subject is overtly realized, requests for confirmation are typically produced with declarative syntax, while requests for information are typically produced with interrogative syntax. Debates over preferred word ordering in question formation in Spanish may thus, in part, be the result of conflating these two action types into a single category. There is no statistically significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals in this feature of question design.

Continuing with our analysis of questions formulated with overt subjects, although perhaps not as pervasive as the practice appears to be in French (cf., Pekarek Doehler and Horlacher, 2013), Spanish speakers do produce utterances—including questions—with left-dislocated subjects (cf., Ordóñez and Treviño, 1999). In such cases, the syntactic fronting draws additional attention to the element through its displacement to utterance-initial position, thereby creating emphasis that can be relevant to the action being undertaken in the turn. In (10) below, Jenny and Miguel are arguing about times of arrival to work. Miguel, who works in an office building, maintains that there is no traffic on Wilshire Boulevard at 7:00am because everyone has already arrived to work (line 1). Jenny disagrees, citing that office employees do not need to arrive until 8:00am (lines 3–4). Following two noticeably argumentative initiations of repair by Miguel (lines 5 and 7), he
ultimately contests Jenny’s claim in line 9, using an and-prefaced (Heritage and Sorjonen, 1994), left-dislocated pronominal subject to challenge his interlocutor and her base of knowledge.

(10) 2013.Sum.100A.17:295
01 Mig: Todos ya están en el trabajo.
Everyone already are.3p in the work
02 (0.5)
03 Jen: A las siete de la mañana?=
At seven in the morning?
04 =Que no entran a las ocho?
that no enter.3p at the eight
=Don’t they start work at eight?
05 Mig: Quién. (0.2) Quién.
who who
06 Jen: Como en las oficinas.
like in the offices
07 Mig: [Cuáles oficinas.
what offices
08 Jen: Es todo Wilsh::re!
It’s all W
09 Mig: - Y tú Cómo sabes que entran a las ocho.. And you How do you know that they start work at eight.

Objects too can be left-dislocated for the purposes of topicalization in Spanish question formation. This is seen in the following case (11) in which Gomero calls attention to the stove’s flame having been left on after cooking was (as he apparently thought) complete.

(11) Ki.Cam:356
01 Gom: Y la estufa,=por qué no la has apagado? and the stove for what no it have.2s turned-off
02 (0.3)
03 Bre: Oh=la >iba a dejar< oh it was-going.1s to to-leave
04 prendida para: l[:o:s: turned-on for the
05 Gom: |Oh pa los tacos?
|Oh for the tacos
06 Bre: Tacos.
Tacos.

Note that the syntactic fronting of “la estufa”/the stove necessitates the use of the direct object clitic pronoun “la”/it (fem.) later in the turn, within the clause containing the verb.
3.1.3. Pro-drop

In the preceding section, we focused primarily on the word order of questions with overtly realized subjects. Nonetheless, as a null-subject language, Spanish does not require its verbal subjects to be explicitly pronounced. Over the years, much research has been dedicated to the description of when/where subjects are overt vs. dropped in the linguistic production of various dialects of speakers of Spanish (e.g., Bayley and Pease-Álvarez, 1997; Flores-Ferran, 2002; Lipski, 1996; Montrul, 2004; Otheguy et al., 2007; Otheguy and Zentella, 2012; Parodi, 2011; Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Shin and Montes-Alcalá, 2014; Shin and Otheguy, 2013). Indeed, as Shin (2012: 130) notes, “The alternation between overt and null SPPs [subject personal pronouns] has become one of the most widely researched variables in Variationist studies of adult Spanish”.

In the present dataset, the majority of questions with conjugated verbs were indeed produced without explicit subjects: 74% (n = 265) of the total 359 questions demonstrated pro-drop.2 Excerpts (3) and (4) above provided illustrations of pro-drop in Wh-/Qu-question formation, with the subject personal pronouns “ustedes”/you all and “ellos”/they being dropped, respectively. The same occurs in the construction of polar questions, as seen in case (12) below. Here, in asking Aydett whether her brother has already decided on a topic for a class project, Nancy elides the third-person singular subject “él”/he from both verbs in her question—“tiene”/has and “quisiera”/would like.

\[
\text{(12) La.Wa:91}
\]

01 Nan: -> Ya **tiene** idea de qué (**.) **quisiera** hacer?
already **has**3s idea of what **would-like**3s to-do

02 Ayd: No sé:.
I don’t know.1s

In instances of pro-drop, the morphology of the conjugated verb informs the interlocutor who or what the verb’s subject is. Although cases of potential reference ambiguity technically do exist within the inflectional morphology paradigm of Spanish (e.g., “tiene”/has in (12) above could potentially take he, she, it, or even a deferential you as its subject if the turn were taken in isolation), hearers use the unfolding sequence-in-progress to guide their interpretation of the intended subjects of verbs. As a result, in real conversation, such ambiguity only rarely causes interactional difficulty for interactants themselves, and indeed did not occur at all in the dataset compiled for the present study.

Investigation of the pro-drop parameter has been of particular interest to researchers of Spanish in the United States. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that Spanish–English bilinguals overproduce subject pronouns—that is, failing to drop them in contexts where monolingual Spanish speakers typically would drop them (e.g., Lipski, 1996; Montrul, 2004; Parodi, 2011; Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Shin and Montes-Alcalá, 2014; Shin and Otheguy, 2013). The cause is often presumed to be interference from English, a language that is usually classified as non-pro-drop (despite considerable evidence to the contrary; e.g., Cote, 1996; Harvie, 1998). The results from this study, however, do not show any significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals in their production of null vs. overt subjects in the design of questions (p = 0.177). Indeed, as illustrated in Table 2 above, both monolinguals and bilinguals show a clear tendency toward pro-drop when constructing questions in naturally occurring conversation, with overt subjects being produced less frequently—but certainly not rarely—by comparison.3

How might these results be explained in light of the vast amount of research that has reported evidence to the contrary—namely that bilinguals pro-drop far less frequently than their monolingual counterparts? One potential explanation lies in comparing the sort of data used for the present study with that used in the vast majority of the prior literature.

Investigation of pro-drop behavior amongst Spanish–English bilinguals in the United States typically makes use of standard sociolinguistic interviews (e.g., Otheguy et al., 2007; Otheguy and Zentella, 2012; cf., Labov, 1966) and/or narrative/story-telling discourse (including oral production tasks in which story-telling is the objective) (e.g., Bayley and Pease-Álvarez, 2010).

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2 For the purposes of comparison, note that, according to the Stivers and Enfield (2010) coding scheme, all 359 of these questions formulated with pro-drop would be coded as declarative given that they “lack interrogative morphology or syntax” (2622).

3 While it is true that these figures do not distinguish subject pronouns that are truly ‘redundant’ (i.e., ‘should have’ been dropped but were not) from those that are purposefully not dropped to achieve some interactional objective (e.g., to disambiguate or to emphasize), this does not affect the present findings. Given the maximally informal, conversational nature of the entire dataset, there is no evidence to suggest that the interactional contingencies that would occasion the purposeful use of a redundant subject pronoun would be distinct amongst monolingual vs. bilingual interactants; and thus the statistical comparison between the two groups remains uncompromised.

### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monolingual</th>
<th>Bilingual</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Null</td>
<td>68% (n = 83)</td>
<td>76% (n = 202)</td>
<td>74% (n = 265)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overt</td>
<td>32% (n = 29)</td>
<td>24% (n = 65 )</td>
<td>26% (n = 94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% (n = 92)</td>
<td>100% (n = 267)</td>
<td>100% (n = 359)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the present study, by contrast, we have used maximally informal conversation in our examination of pro-drop in question formation. This divergence at the level of the data on which analysis is subsequently built has two interconnected rami
cations for the structure of the talk produced by speakers in each context, and these structural incongruities may account for the divergence between the findings of prior research and those reported here.

First is the issue of action formation. Informants participating in sociolinguistic interviews and narrative tasks rarely, if ever, produce initial actions such as questions. Indeed, the objective in such interactions is for interviewees to provide extended tellings in response to interviewers’ questions. In the present study of ordinary conversation, however, a wide variety of first actions were produced by the interactants in their questioning turns, including requesting information, requesting confirmation, suggesting, offering, assessing, initiating repair, and so on. Thus one explanation for the results reported here may lie in the wide range of social actions produced in natural conversation, compared with the relatively restricted/specialized few produced as the data for previous research. This action-level perspective also suggests that the two, seemingly divergent sets of findings are not as incompatible with one another as perhaps initially assumed. That is, the discrepancy may be a consequence of the specific sorts of actions present in the data—the multi-turn action of story-telling potentially constituting a locus for divergence in rates of pro-drop between monolingual and bilingual speakers (as demonstrated by previous research), while in the production of at least some other action-types (e.g., requests for information/confirmation), monolinguals’ and bilinguals’ rates of pro-drop appear quite similar (as we have demonstrated here).

Intimately related to the issue of action formation is the co-construction of sequences of action. The turn-taking system of the (sociolinguistic) interview differs from that of ordinary conversation in that it restricts the ways in which participants can collaboratively structure their turns-at-talk within sequences of action (Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Drew and Heritage, 1992; cf., Sacks et al., 1974). That is, in producing a multi-TCU narrative of Little Red Riding Hood, or an extended/uninterrupted telling about one’s childhood, a speaker is not able to demonstrate his/her ability to formulate utterances that are structurally parasitic on a prior speaker’s turn, and built in a way that both reflects as well as constitutes that structural cohesion. This is crucial for any comprehensive analysis of pro-drop tendencies given that, as discussed above, interactants must use sequential organization to interpret potentially ambiguous morphology (i.e., in the third person). Here we have shown that both monolinguals and bilinguals do indeed appear to make use of the pro-drop parameter available in Spanish as they design questions to be appropriately fitted within ongoing sequences of action. Again, though, this result is not incompatible with prior findings: It is conceivable that monolinguals and bilinguals may diverge in their use of pro-drop for the purposes of structural cohesion in some sorts of sequences (e.g., in the design of extended tellings), but they may use pro-drop equivalently for the purposes of structural cohesion in other sorts of sequences (e.g., in the design of questions within ordinary talk). Continued exploration of these hypotheses through examination of various sorts of data will undoubtedly provide us with a more nuanced understanding of the pro-drop parameter in both monolingual and bilingual speech.

3.2. Response design

3.2.1. Type

We now move on to discuss the design of responses, focusing specifically on responses to the 378 polar questions in the dataset. Of these, 54 (14%) received what were coded as “non-answer responses”, in accordance with Stivers and Enfeldt (2010) to allow for maximum comparability. These responses included transformative answers4 (15 total, equating to 4% for both monolinguals and bilinguals) (Stivers and Hayashi, 2010), as well as various non-answers (e.g., “Maybe”, “I don’t know”, cf., Excerpt (12)) (Stivers and Robinson, 2006), or no response at all. The remaining 324 questions (86%) received answers in the form of interjections, repetitions, or marked interjections, the distributions of which are seen in Figs. 3 and 4 below. Note that this figure seems to pattern closely with Germanic languages such as English and Dutch, in which upwards of 80% of polar questions received answers (Englert, 2010; Stivers, 2010).

4 While subsequent research by Stivers and Hayashi (2010) classified transformative answers as answer responses, here we follow the original coding scheme, which classified them as non-answers, to allow for maximal cross-linguistic comparability of distributional results. Nonetheless, the specific numbers of transformative answers are provided in the text.
3.2.2. (Unmarked) interjection answers

As illustrated in Figs. 3 and 4 above, interjection answers were by far the most prevalent form of response to polar questions for both monolinguals (76%) and bilinguals (72%). Indeed, statistical analysis reveals no significant difference between monolinguals and bilinguals in the distribution of their answer types in response to polar questions ($p = 0.44$). Similarity between monolinguals and bilinguals with regard to this feature of answer design is unsurprising given the preference for interjections both in other dialects of Romance (e.g., Italian at 89%; Rossano, 2010) as well as in the language by which the bilinguals in the present study could potentially be influenced, namely English, which is reported to use interjection answers 77% of the time (Stivers, 2010).

A simple confirming interjection response was seen in the first excerpt presented in this report. An additional example is provided in (14) below in which Ángela issues a negatively formulated request for confirmation that her interlocutor, Rubén, has not yet seen the new line of designer shoes being offered by their favorite clothing company. In line 2, Rubén confirms this with his negative minimal interjection answer “Mm mm:.” Ángela’s newmark question in the following turn does not receive an answer from Rubén, but rather a new question (line 4) that invites Ángela to positively assess the shoes under discussion, which she does through her affirmative confirming interjection answer in line 5.

(14) La sudadera

01 Ang: No has visto los zapatos?
You haven’t seen the shoes
02 Rub: Mm mm:.
03 Ang: No?
04 Rub: Son bonitos?
Are they pretty?
05 Ang: Sí. A mí me gustaron.
Yeah. I liked them.
Such unmarked confirmation interjections in Spanish accept the terms of the question as it was designed and simply affirm the state of affairs that was put forth by that design (Heritage, 2010; Pomerantz, 1988; Quirk et al., 1975; Raymond, 2003; Sacks, 1987 [1973]).

Paralleling what has been widely reported cross-linguistically in the literature, disconfirming answers in Spanish conversation are routinely accompanied by preceding pauses, hedges, prefaces, and other forms of mitigation which delay delivery of the disconfirmation (Heritage, 1984b; Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987 [1973]; Stivers et al., 2009), in addition to accounts for delivering a dispreferred response. In case (15), Cándida and Jimena are coworkers discussing what happened at work a few days prior. In line 1, Cándida issues a request for information, to ask if Jimena bought something for herself from the food truck during her shift.

(15) 2013.Sum.100A.03:265
01 Can: Te agarraste algo tú?
   Did you get something for yourself?
02   (0.2)
03 Jim: Mm: No: porque- Ese día me olvidó mi wallet.
   no because that day self me forgot my wallet
   Mm: (.) No: cuz- That day >I forgot < my wallet.

Here, in accordance with Sacks’ (1987 [1973]) original argument, slight delays and a mitigating Mm: precede Jimena’s disconfirming interjection answer to Cándida’s request for information (cf., Kendrick and Torreira, 2014). Note also that this disconfirmation is immediately followed by an account for why she did not buy anything for herself, namely that she had forgotten to bring her wallet.

It bears mention that even interjection answers that are type-conforming (Raymond, 2003) and provide confirmation can nonetheless include a variety of turn-initial particles that qualify the response being delivered. One quite recurrent example from Spanish is the preface pues, which, as Raymond (forthcoming) argues, casts the prior turn’s action or design as inap-posite in some way (cf., Vázquez Carranza, 2013; cf., also English well-prefacing; Heritage, forthcoming; Heritage and Clayman, 2010; Schegloff and Lerner, 2009). When the problematized turn is a question, the pues-prefaced response often includes some form of confirmation/disconfirmation following the turn-initial particle, with the remainder of the turn then going on to explain why some aspect of the question’s design was incorrect or inapposite from the answerer’s point of view. Consider example (16) in which Milton issues a request for confirmation regarding where a mutual friend works.

(16) F.12.100B.30, 24:00
01 Mil: Trabaja en las oficinas, no?
   She works in the offices no
   works.3s in the offices, no?
02   (0.5)
03 Ele: Pues sí: And then she works outside like when ...
   Y luego trabaja afuera como cuando ...
   pues yes and later works.3s outside like when ...
   Pues Ye:::s, (.) And then she works outside like when ....

Here, although Eleno does provide a type-conforming, confirming (albeit hesitantly), interjection answer “sí”/yes in line 3, the preceding pause and pues-preface signal some problem with the design of the question. In the remainder of his response, he then teases apart the question’s implicit presupposition that the friend in question only works in the offices (cf., Drew, 1992; Levinson, 2000; Sacks, 1992), explaining that she also works “outside” on certain occasions.

In sum, the frequency, minimality of form, and the relatively low epistemic gradients they respond to firmly situate the unmarked interjections “Sí” and “No” as the default answer formats for polar questions in Spanish—amongst both monolinguals and bilinguals—with other answer designs, as we will see in the following sections, departing from this default, in Raymond’s (2003) terms, “for cause”.

3.2.3. Marked answers forms

When compared to interjection answers, other answer types—repetitions and marked interjections (Stivers and Enfield, 2010)—were far less common: 24% in the case of monolingual speakers, and 28% for bilinguals, including both full and partial repeats, as well as various lexemes/phrases for marked interjections (e.g., “claro (que sí)”/of course). This is not, however, solely a quantitative difference. As we examine qualitatively the sequential environments in which these sorts of answers are produced, it becomes apparent that such formulations are interactationally motivated. That is, answerers are seen to be agentively departing from the unmarked interjection answer in favor of another design that will do more than simply affirm/reject the candidate proposition put forth in the question.

Take the repetitional response in the following case (17) for example. Here, Sofía has just finished telling Arturo about her experience at the Denver airport, which she describes as “enormous” (data not shown). The comparative size of airports
subsequently becomes topicalized, and it is in this context that Sofía announces that the San Diego airport is also being made larger (lines 1–2). Following a few hitches caused by overlapping talk (lines 6–10), Arturo inserts a question into Sofía’s launch of her description of how she has access to this information (line 11). In contrast with an interjection answer, Sofía’s repetition in line 12 actively confirms that she had already alluded to the fact that the San Diego airport was being renovated (Schegloff, 1996), thereby simultaneously underscoring her primary access to the information in the question.

Observe that the repetitional answer here also serves to leverage an additional TCU (Heritage and Raymond, 2012) that goes on to further demonstrate Sofía’s epistemic access to the San Diego airport.

Another repetitional answer is seen in case (18) below. Here, in comparing monthly rates for rent, Gomero announces that in Inglewood (where he lives), the rent is “muy caro”/very expensive (line 1). In response, Lourdes, supported by her roommate Brenda, takes a divergent stance than that of Gomero toward rent in Inglewood, citing that a friend of theirs only pays … nine hundred (line 6). In overlap with Brenda, Gomero issues a [declarative + tag]-formulated request for confirmation that this friend must live in a one-bedroom apartment (line 9), thereby claiming that his own assessment of Inglewood rent as expensive has not been undermined by his interlocutors’ announcement. It is in this context that Lourdes produces a
repetitional answer "Es un cuarto."/"It’s a one-bedroom," which serves to resist Gomero’s intrusion into a domain over which she has primary epistemic rights, namely her friend’s living situation (Heritage and Raymond, 2005, 2012; Raymond and Heritage, 2006; Stivers, 2005).

Examples (17) and (18) illustrate that, in Spanish, repetitional answers constitute a deviation from the default answer type of unmarked interjections in that they are “motivated” or produced “for cause” (Raymond, 2003). Spanish therefore clearly patterns with a wide variety of languages such as English (Raymond, 2003; Stivers, 2010), Italian (Rossano, 2010), Japanese (Hayashi, 2010: 2700), and Lao (Enfield, 2010: 2662) in which the distinction between interjection answers and repetition answers has been shown to be interactionally relevant.

In addition to repetitions, various forms of marked interjections (Stivers and Enfield, 2010) are also noticeably produced for cause. In case (19), two friends are discussing sports and sports team preferences. In line 1, Sam offers up a Mexico City-based soccer team called “Cruz Azul” for assessment. Roberto responds that he does not like this team and never has (lines 2/4). Likely already aware of Roberto’s team preferences, Sam overlaps the end of Roberto’s turn to ask if he likes the other Mexico City-based team, called “América” (line 5). In response, Roberto delivers a marked “Claro que sí”/"Of course" answer, which, in line with Stivers’ (2011) analysis of English, pushes back on the askability of the question: Given the fierce team loyalties displayed by these two participants throughout their interaction, that Roberto has been cast (merely through the asking of the question) as the sort of person who could potentially not support the “América” team is treated as morally

The tension between these divergent points of view continues as Gomero, in line 12, restates his assessment of the rent in Inglewood as expensive, and Lourdes overlaps to restate her own opinion that the rates are actually “casi igual”/"almost the same" (line 13).
problematic through the response form. Note also the preceding Oh and pues prefaces which are additional indicators of trouble with the design of the prior questioning turn (Heritage, 1984a, 1998; Raymond, forthcoming).

(19) F12.100B.10:475
01 Sam: Qué- Qué tal la Cruz Azul. What about the C A
02 Rob: Na::: No me gusta Cruz Azul. Nah no to-me please C A
03 Sam: [No? No?
04 Rob: Nunca me ha gustado Cruz Azul. Never to-me have.3s pleased C A
05 Sam: ¡[Y la América? And America?
06 Rob: Ah pues Claro [que sí::: clearly that yes Oh well Of course.
07 Sam: [Psh::::! ((big smile/breaks eye contact))

In overlap with Roberto’s marked interjection, Sam produces a large display of disagreement (line 7) before moving on to elaborate on what is, from his point of view, clear evidence of Cruz Azul’s superiority over América (data not shown).

Another common context in which marked interjections occur in Spanish, as has been demonstrated in other languages, is in response to assessments that are implemented through questions. In (20) below, Armando claims that it is important to select a venue that appropriately matches the number of guests one plans to have in attendance for an event. In lines 1–3, he uses the room that he and his interlocutor are sitting in, which can hold twenty people, as an example: If only five guests were to arrive in such a space, one’s attention would be drawn to how empty it looks (line 5). In response to the negative assessment of this hypothetical state of affairs, a simple unmarked interjection “Sí” from Ignacio would run the risk of being interpreted as coerced in the moment, perhaps the result of the epistemic gradient established by the question’s design; that is, that Ignacio does not truly agree with Armando, but rather is just going along with him. The marked interjection “Es cierto”/It’s true (line 6) thus works to disengage his agreement “from the taint of being produced merely ‘in agreement with’ or ‘in conformity with’ the first speaker’s opinion” (Heritage, 2002: 219).

(20) U.I.563
01 Arm: Es como aquí que lleguen, is.3s like here that arrive.SBJ.3p
It’s like here if there were to arrive,
02 Hay espacio pa: (.) veinte personas,= there is space for twenty people
There is space for twenty people,=
03 =llegan cinco:, arrive.3p five
=Five arrive,
04 I: Ah [si,oo
Ah yes oo
05 Arm: -> Va a ver (.) solo el lugar,=no? is-going.2s to to-see only the place no
You’re going to see only the place no?
06 I: -> Es cierto. is.3s true
It’s true.
These various marked answers (repetitions and marked interjections) are described as such not only due to their relative infrequency compared to unmarked interjections, but also due to the fact that, as case-by-case qualitative analysis reveals, they are clearly produced “for cause”. As opposed to simple unmarked interjections that accept the design of—including the terms set forth by—the question, these marked answer formats embody an agentive departure in responsive position that actively works to deal with some aspect of the prior questioning turn.

### 3.2.4. Code-switched answers

Within the category of marked interjections, one difference revealed itself between monolingual and bilingual interactants: Code-switching was produced in responsive position in the speech of bilinguals, but (unsurprisingly) not in that of monolinguals who do not possess another code into which to switch. For the bilinguals in the present dataset, this meant English-language answers produced in response to Spanish-language questions. In fact, 34 of the 41 marked interjections (i.e., 83%) shown in Fig. 4 above for bilingual interactants contained such a code-switch. This equated to 15% of all answers to polar questions amongst the bilinguals. Such answers were grouped with other marked interjections on the hypothesis that the lack of language concordance would pattern with other practices for resisting the various terms set forth by a question’s design.

Qualitative examination of the data suggests that language discordance in responsive position is, like repetitions and other marked interjections, agentively produced “for cause” in Spanish-English bilingual discourse. One sort of evidence in support of this claim is the co-occurrence of language discordance with other marked answer forms. In the following case (21), for instance, Jessica announces that she has never been to see her (and her interlocutor’s) university football team play in a game (lines 1–2). Given that Jessica is in her last year at the university, Camila seems to find it surprising that she has never attended a game. After a sequence involving a repetitional newsmark (lines 3–4), Camila issues a request for confirmation—“Pero ni al Rose Bowl para:::_/But not even to the Rose Bowl to:::_” (line 6)—that is oversupposing in its design (Heritage, 2013a): It inappropriately infers that Jessica’s never having been to a university football game is synonymous with her never having been to the “Rose Bowl”, the football team’s home stadium. It is in this context that Jessica produces a repetitional answer that is prefaced with a code-switch (lines 7–8).

### (21) Rose Bowl

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<td>01</td>
<td>JES:</td>
<td>En: el tiempo que he estado aquí, in the time that have.1s been here</td>
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<td>Nunca he ido a un juego. never have.1s gone to a game</td>
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<td>07</td>
<td>JES:</td>
<td>-&gt; He ido al Rose Bowl a corre::r well have.1s gone to run</td>
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<td>08</td>
<td>JES:</td>
<td>-&gt; Rose Bowl a corre::r R B to-run</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>JES:</td>
<td>-&gt; Porque soy de Pasadena so de unos cinco minutos de allí, because am.1s of P so of some five minutes of there</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>CAM:</td>
<td>[Ajá? Uh huh?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>JES:</td>
<td>-&gt; .hhh He ido a corre::r hhhh o a eventos, have.1s gone to to-run or to events</td>
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Given that Spanish provides its speakers with Spanish versions of well-prefacing (e.g., *pues*, seen in Excerpts (16) and (19) above), what is the motivation for the code-switch in this case? Here, Jessica’s turn-initial language discordance seems to combine with the repetitional answer form in the turn proper to agentively resist the oversupposing formulation of the prior question. Indeed, as part of the repetition, Jessica goes on to explain precisely why the question’s conflation of never having attended a game with never having been to the Rose Bowl is inapposite for her as a question recipient. In the present dataset, code-switched answers were routinely produced in response to such questions that oversuppose the questioner’s access to knowledge that lies firmly in the answerer’s epistemic domain.

An additional example of this phenomenon is found in Excerpt (22) below between co-workers Diego and Martina. Martina has just announced that she has obtained a new job that she will work concurrently with the job she already has. In lines 1–7, Martina responds to Diego’s questions about her new schedule, clarifying how many days she will be working in total at each location. Likely orienting to the amount of time Martina has said she will be working, Diego’s next question—“*Ya no sigues estudiando.*”/Yes you’re not studying anymore. (line 9)—is produced with negative polarity and period intonation, thereby heavily tilted toward a “No” response. From Martina’s perspective, however, this question is oversupposing in its design and jumps to a conclusion that she had not intended. Indeed, from her point of view, she has not provided any indication that she has stopped studying. Her code-switched interjection “*Yeah.*” thus works to agentively resist the design of this ill-fitted question by reasserting the boundaries of her epistemic domain, over which she possesses primary rights.

(22) 2013.Sum.100A.04:234-237

01 Die: Cuántos días trabajas allá?
   how-many days work.2s there
   *How many days do you work there?*

02 (0.5) ((Martina sipping her drink))

03 Mar: Cinco.
   Five.

04 Die: Cinco y cinco aquí?—o::
   five and five here or
   *Five and five here?—or::*

05 Mar: Cinco y dos aquí.
   five and two here
   *Five and two here.*

06 Die: [Oh* "está bien."*]
   oh is.3s well
   *Oh* "*okay.*"

07 Mar: [Dos o uno.
   two or one
   *Two or one.*

08 (0.3)

09 Die: ->
   Ya no sigues estudiando.
   already no continue.2s studying
   *You’re not studying anymore.*

10 (0.3)

11 Mar: ->
   [Yeah. heh heh heh [heh

12 Die: [Todavía?
   Still?

13 Mar: Sí. () Ah: Empiezo mañana.
   yes uhm start.1s tomorrow
   *Yeah. () Ah: I start tomorrow.*

This discussion of code-switching practices also sheds light on the relative differences in frequency of marked interjections vs. repetitions amongst monolinguals vs. bilinguals, as seen in Figs. 3 and 4. The availability of code-switching as an additional type of marked interjection amongst bilingual interactants seems to account for the decrease in their use of repetitional answers and the increase in their rates of marked interjections when compared to their monolinguals counterparts. It thus appears that code-switching in Spanish-English bilingual discourse is accomplishing some of the interactional work that repetitions are typically used for in monolingual Spanish discourse, the present data suggesting that code-switching occurs in response to questions that are oversupposing in their design. Nonetheless, while it is clear from both the quantitative as well
as the qualitative evidence that language discordance in responsive position patterns similarly to other sorts of non-conforming answers by being agentively produced “for cause”, we leave open for future research the issue of what specific, systematic similarities and differences exist between these various agentive answer formats in bilingual interaction, as well as how an understanding of these practices can contribute to the extensive literature on conversational code-switching more generally (cf., e.g., Auer, 1984; Wei, 2002).

4. Conclusions

The objective of this study has been to provide an overview of the question-response system of Spanish. In doing so, we have provided additional comparisons between monolingual speakers of Spanish and bilingual speakers of Spanish and English. While many features of monolinguals’ and bilinguals’ question and response designs in Spanish conversation were shown to be quite similar (e.g., word order in question formation, rates of pro-drop, preferred use of unmarked interjections in response to polar questions, etc.), other aspects did indeed differ (e.g., options available for use as marked answers). Throughout this discussion, we have made reference to a typologically diverse range of languages on which similar research has been performed (including Dutch, English, Italian, Japanese, and Lao) in an effort to situate Spanish within cross-linguistic research on ordinary conversation. It is our hope that this work will inspire future research to be conducted on question and response design in Spanish, as well as investigation of talk-in-interaction in Spanish more generally.

This study explicitly made monolingual vs. bilingual interactional practices a topic of comparison. Here, it was shown that Spanish monolinguals pattern similarly to English monolinguals in terms of their shared preference for unmarked interjections over repetitions, for example, and thus it is perhaps unsurprising that Spanish–English bilinguals displayed the same tendency. Future conversation-analytic research pursuing this line of comparative inquiry may seek out communities whose speakers are bilingual in two languages with distinct patterning. For instance, if Spanish prefers interjections over repetitions, as we have shown here, but Tzeltal (spoken in the Chiapas region of Mexico) shows the opposite preference (Brown, 2010), how are responses designed amongst Spanish–Tzeltal bilinguals conversing in one language or another? Is it compromise between the two systems, or does one language or the other “win out”?

Continued replication of this sort of research with diverse languages and bilingual language pairs will allow continued systematic comparison of the mechanics of what Goffman (1983) called the “interaction order”. It is precisely from such work that we will develop a more concrete understanding of the fundamental structure(s) that make human social interaction a cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, human phenomenon.

References


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