

A rediscovered contact language: Ranquel Pidgin Spanish

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An 1870 Argentinian travel account contains examples of a language variety which we call Ranquel Pidgin Spanish. It was used between speakers of Spanish and Mapudungun (or Mapuche). Previously untapped by contact linguists, the source is fairly rich in data, which we here exploit to provide the first description of the pidgin. Following the description is a discussion of some of the findings.

Keywords: Pidgins, Spanish, Argentina, Grammar, Mapudungun, Pidginization, Ranquel, Contact languages, Reduction, Pidgin Spanish.

1. Introduction

The 19th century Argentinian travelogue *Una excursión a los indios ranqueles* includes specimens of a what looks like a Spanish-lexified pidgin which has hitherto escaped the attention of contact linguists.

The author, Lucio Victorio Mansilla (1831-1913), was a Buenos Aires-born colonel and journalist who later also had a career in politics and diplomacy. He participated in the devastating Paraguayan War (1864-1870), in which he was wounded, and on its conclusion he became the military commander of Argentina's southern frontier in the province of Córdoba.¹

It was in this capacity that Mansilla was tasked with exploring the lands of the Ranquel (or Rankülche)² people, ultimately in order to pave the way for effective Argentinian control, land appropriation and organised settlement in the area. Shortly after his expedition, Argentina embarked on the so-called Conquest of the Desert, which (in a way much similar to the better known U. S. western expansion) entailed massive displacement of indigenous groups, including outright genocidal components. While the events are customarily referred to as *Conquista del desierto*, and much of southern Argentina is indeed desertic, the area referred to here is not desert-like, but rather a steppe, and

¹ For the life and deeds of Mansilla, see e.g. Popolizio (1985), Contreras (2010), Luna (2001) and Auza (1978).

² Their autonym is composed of *rangkül* 'reed, cane' + *che* 'person, people'.

contains fully usable farmland. The North American parallel extends even to the region being climatologically similar to (the drier parts of) the Great Plains.



Figure 1: Map of Argentina, with the box situating the area shown in greater detail in figure 2. The dotted lines represent the frontier of agricultural settlement in the mid-19th century. (Map by the authors)

The reconnoitring documented by Mansilla was a brief affair. While his incursion reached about 300 km into Ranquel lands, it lasted for a mere three weeks in the spring of 1870. He did, however, produce a detailed account of it in 68 short chapters. These were originally published as daily instalments in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Tribuna*, and soon afterwards they were compiled into book form as Mansilla (1870). It received a good deal of attention, it was translated into several European languages, and it was prized at the *Congrès International de Géographie* in Paris. It has since become a classic in Argentinian literature.³

The account includes some lexical items and occasional sentences in the local indigenous language, but from a contact linguistics perspective, the book is most notable in containing about 75 utterances⁴ in what appears to be a Spanish-lexified pidgin used between the members of the expedition and the Ranquel. A further 15 are found in Mansilla (1889). Other pidginized utterances from the same period and region are found in Zeballos (1881), on which we intend to do a follow-up study.

The short time-span excludes the pidgin having emerged in the contact between the expedition and the locals⁵ – it clearly must have existed prior to Mansilla's entering the scene, but as of yet, we are unaware of prior documentation of it. Our discussion is therefore limited to quotations in Mansilla's two accounts. All material is added as an appendix.

A welcome aspect of the data is that Spanish and the pidgin are rather clearly delimited, and there are hardly any sentences that occupy a middle ground between the two. That said, there are some few utterances which feature atypical features, mainly by being closer to Spanish. Such cases will be pointed out in the following.

³The book is available in digital form in its entirety at <https://es.wikisource.org/wiki/Una_excursi%C3%B3n_a_los_indios_ranqueles>.

⁴ The exact number is obviously dependent on how to define an “utterance”.

⁵ While we believe that at least the foundations of a pidgin can be laid in a short time, this would require far closer contacts than those portrayed in the Excursión.



Figure 2: The route followed by Mansilla's expedition is shown in yellow. The area concerned is located just where the fertile grasslands in the east transition into steppe. (Map by the authors).

The area explored by Mansilla's expedition is located about 550 km to the west of Buenos Aires, around the tripoint of the current provinces of Córdoba, La Pampa and San Luis. Córdoba was (and is) the country's second largest city, and it had about 100 000 inhabitants at the time. While the city had existed for almost three centuries by the late 19th century, its agricultural hinterland still did not extend very far to the south. Instead, Amerindian populations dominated the regions around the rivers of Cuarto and Quinto.

These indigenous people spoke a variety of the Mapudungun (or Mapuche) language, locally called Ranquel. If considered separate from Huilliche, Mapudungun is one of two members of the Araucanian family; if the two are considered the same language, this would be an isolate (Adelaar & Muysken. 2004; Adelaar & Pache 2022).

2. Mansilla's linguistic data

The colonel himself does not comment on the language he reports. He does not attach a label such as "pidgin" to it, nor does he himself attempt any analysis.

He simply provides the uncommented data. The analyses (including glosses and translations) and the label are ours.

We believe that the variety featured in Mansilla's writings qualify as a pidgin. Functionally and structurally it fits definitions like in Parkvall & Bakker (2013). It functioned 1) as a lingua franca which was native to neither part (hence it was not an L2 variety or Foreigner Talk), it was 2) structurally much less complex than either of the input languages, and 3) there is a high degree of consistency across speakers, situations and ethnicities. In other words, this speech variety had norms which were not derivable by ad hoc simplification nor by inserting random words of a native language.

In general, Mansilla's linguistic observations do not strike us as unreliable. A welcome aspect of it is that the documentation occurs almost in real time – his writing was done while being in the field, rather on the basis of retiree reminiscences.

One particularly interesting detail: most of the utterances are made by natives, but some are produced by the members of the expedition, usually Mansilla himself.⁶ Now, while he portrays himself as (at least occasionally) speaking the pidgin rather than Spanish, his variety contains slightly more Spanish-like elements than do those uttered by the Ranquel. The total number of relevant sentences is limited, and the number of mesolectal features even more so, so one cannot exclude coincidence – though it bears mentioning that the exact same observation is valid for both the main corpus and the additional sentences from Mansilla (1889:215).

As pidgins are by definition second languages, they are susceptible to L1 influences, and Mansilla's mother tongue happened to be identical with the lexifier of the pidgin. Is it possible that the author could both faithfully render the non-Hispanised speech of his interlocutors while in actual conversation being mainly, but seemingly not perfectly, able to accommodate to their variety? We will never know, of course. But the fact that the speech of Mansilla or other Spanish speakers (in otherwise pidgin-like utterances), contain structures absent from that of Amerindians⁷ is intriguing, and this could potentially be an additional indication of authenticity.

⁶ Apart from Amerindians and Euro-Argentiniens, Mansilla (1889:215) also contains two utterances by a Chinese woman.

⁷ Examples include a minority of verbs not ending in *-ndo* (*guste, quiera, volver, pegar*), suffixed plurals (*toldos, cristianos, tierras*), plurimorphemic pronouns *tuya* and *tus*, a definite article *la*, an apparent fusion of a preposition and a definite article (*al*), and the uncharacteristic NP *por los campos* 'in the countryside' (20, 22, 43).

In any case, the fact that the Euro-Argentines also used the contact variety is important to us, since this reciprocity strengthens the case for its being an actual pidgin rather than just interlanguage Spanish.

To the best of our knowledge, this Spanish pidgin has never been studied before, even though papers have been written on certain other linguistic facets of Mansilla's bestseller. Zaslavsky (2020) is devoted to the discourse aspects of the interaction between Mansilla and his party on the one hand, and the indigenous populations on the other. It contains observations on the indigenous language and the use of English and French, but strangely enough, nothing about the simplified form of Spanish used. Severino (1983) discusses in more or less detail the special aspects of the different groups (locals of Buenos Aires called *porteños*, farmers of the interior and the indigenous languages), but again, the pidgin used in the interaction between the Ranquel and Mansilla's men is ignored.

So what can be said about the language that Mansilla captures in his travelogue?⁸

2.1. Phonology and lexicon

Mansilla presents his data in a generally unmodified Spanish orthography, which thereby fails to give much in terms of phonological clues. An exception is *achúcar* 'sugar' (15), where the digraph <ch> presumably represents a [tʃ] in lieu of the (Latin American) Spanish [s] in *azúcar*. Indeed, [s] is present in Mapudungun only in loanwords (Echeverría & Contreras 1965:133; Garay 1991:100, 102),⁹ so the adaptation is hardly surprising.

Most of the phonemes of Spanish are also found in Mapudungun, something that would aprioristically make us expect rather limited divergences from lexifier pronunciation.

⁸ Given the large number of reeditions of the book, we find it more convenient to give the chapter references rather than the actual page of the quotations in the following, since the chapter numbering remains constant. Most of the chapters are only a few pages long, so little precision is lost. (The examples from Mansilla 1889 are referenced in the conventional way).

⁹ As it happens, one such is the modern Mapudungun word for 'sugar', *asukura*. In contrast, *chumpirú* 'hat' (← sombrero) behaves like Mansilla's example.

However, as Mapudungun phonotactics are stricter (permitting no complex onsets) than those of Spanish, some cluster reduction might be expected, though Mansilla gives no evidence of it.¹⁰

While some Mapudungun lexicon does feature in the account, especially toponyms (cf. Severino 1983), the actual pidgin samples only include very few non-Spanish items. Apart from proper names and toponyms, *winca* (*wingka* in modern orthography) ‘Christian; white man’, *achumao* ‘drunk’ and *peñi* ‘brother’ are the only three borrowings from Mapudungun. *Gualicho* ‘talisman’ could be ultimately of Amerindian origin, but it is also used in Rioplatense Spanish. Its ultimate origins are unclear.¹¹

Not only are most morphemes of Spanish origin, the vast majority of them are also used with semantics closely matching their etyma.

While the actual string is given in Spanish rather than in the pidgin, *las botas de las manos* (literally ‘the boots of the hands’) represents a circumlocution strategy typical of pidgins in general (Parkvall & Bakker 2013). Mansilla (43) uses it to mean ‘gloves’.

2.2. Parts of speech

It is typically difficult to identify parts of speech in pidgins, as morphology is all but absent, with roots often being multifunctional. In this variety, there seem to be roots that from a semantic point of view serve primarily or exclusively as verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs, in addition to personal pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions and demonstratives among the closed classes. These divisions would be close to what is found in the lexifier, though the material at hand is too limited to ascertain their exact morphosyntactic status. Numerals are absent in the material, which is presumably an accidental gap.

Verbs in pidgins tend to be uniform, and in those with European lexifiers they are often based on the infinitive. In Ranquel Pidgin Spanish, almost all verbs are indeed invariable, but instead derived from Spanish gerunds. This means that they typically end in *-ndo*, which thereby comes close to being an

¹⁰ Spanish loans in modern Mapudungun, on the other hand, display epenthetic vowels serving to break up the undesired clusters, as exemplified by e. g. *pulata* ‘silver’ (← *plata*), *pürezu* ‘captive’ (← *preso*), *fürin* ‘to fry’ (← *freir*), *pülatillu* ‘saucer’ (← *platillo*), *pülatiko* ‘plastic’ (← *plástico*), *fülör* ‘flower’ (← *flor*), *türen* ‘train’ (← *tren*), *külafo* ‘nail’ (← *clavo*) and *kürus* ‘cross’ (← *cruz*).

¹¹ The *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* ascribes it to the Patagonian language Tehuelche. Others propose a Spanish origin.

indicator of verbhood. Other parts of speech are not formally distinguished by their shape. Nouns and adjectives are also mostly invariable.

The following adverbs are used: *muy* ‘very’ (but only with nouns as in *muy toro* ‘really like a bull’ and *muy silencio* ‘all silent’), *nomás* ‘only’ or ‘no more’, *cerquita* ‘close by’, *allá* ‘there’, *acá* ‘here’, *entonces* ‘then’, and *ahor(it)a* ‘now’.

Personal pronouns are attested for three persons in the singular, but there are no pronominal references to plural entities, with the possible exception of the difficult-to-analyse *ese*, to which we shall return later. No relative pronouns are present in the material.

There is only one demonstrative, with four variants: *ése* ~ *eso* ~ *ésa* ~ *esos*. We find the following prepositions: *de* ‘from, of’, *con* ‘with’, *por* ‘for’, *para* ‘for, to’, *a* ‘to’ and *en* ‘in’, all used within the range of their Spanish meanings. The conjunctions *y* ‘and’, *si* ‘if’, *pues* ‘so’, *pero* ‘but’, and *como* ‘as’ are used as in Spanish.

2.3. Structure

In terms of structure, Ranquel Pidgin Spanish displays two particularly salient features: the (virtually) invariable verb forms ending in *-ndo*, and the abundant use of the demonstrative *ese*. They will be discussed below.

2.3.1 Nominal domain

Spanish nouns display a number (singular vs. plural) distinction on the noun itself, and masculine or feminine gender, manifested by agreement on articles, demonstratives and adjectives. With rare counterexamples, neither number nor gender are marked in the pidgin.

2.3.1.1. Nominal number

There are some utterances which likely involve multiple reference, but where the nouns are unmarked for number. The one case produced by Ranquel speakers¹² where plurality of reference is *certain* does contain the *-s* that the lexifier would require.¹³

¹² In Mansilla’s own pidgin speech, we find four more cases of apparent overt number marking: *indios* ‘Indians’, *tierras* ‘lands’, *cristianos* ‘Christians’ and *toldos* ‘dwellings’.

¹³ Glossings of example sentences follow the Leipzig glossing rules.

- (1) *Boleando* *guanacos*
 hunt.with.bolas guanacos
 ‘They are hunting guanacos with bolas’

However, as guanacos are herd animals, it could be that the default form of the noun is the etymological plural.

There are also cases where the interpretation leaves room for both a singular and a plural (generic) form:

- (2) *Bueno, vos no pegando más mujer*
 good 2SG NEG strike more woman
 ‘Fine, you’re not beating this woman (OR *women*) again’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

On the basis of Mansilla’s data, it is thus not entirely clear whether or not nominal number was overtly marked in the pidgin speech of the Ranquel.

2.3.1.2. *Gender*

Pidgins almost universally lack gender (Parkvall 2017). As expected, then, there is basically no evidence of gender distinctions in this pidgin either:

- (3) *Ese comisión, lindo, grandote*
 DEM? parley fine huge
 ‘That’s a fine parley; it’s really big’ (22)

The word *comisión* is feminine in Spanish, and would therefore require the forms *esa*, *linda* and *grandota* in the lexifier. Etymological masculines seem to be default source for adjectives.

The one exception to the non-marking of grammatical gender is (4), where feminine forms of the adjectives are used:

- (4) *Cosa linda, güena*
 thing beautiful good
 ‘They’re really nice’ (43)

There are no instances of pronouns referring to women, so we cannot exclude the possibility of biological (as opposed to grammatical) gender being overtly marked.

2.3.1.3. *Case*

Pidgins never have case distinctions in nouns, and only rarely in pronouns (Parkvall & Bakker 2013). Spanish itself only distinguishes case in pronouns. As we shall see below, it does seem to be the case that at least some of these were retained in Ranquel Pidgin Spanish.

2.3.1.4. *Articles*

Articles are generally absent:

- (5) *Yo Ø indio pobre, vos Ø cristiano rico*
 1s Indian poor 2SG Christian rich
 ‘I’m just a poor Indian, and you are a rich Christian’ (43)

- (6) *¡Winca! ¡winca! ¡matando! ¡matando, Ø winca!*
 Christian Christian kill kill Christian
 ‘Let’s kill the Christian!’ (15)

- (7) *Dando Ø camisa*
 give shirt
 ‘Give me a shirt’ (45)

- (8) $\emptyset$ *Mujer* *mía*
 woman 1SG.POSS

‘The woman is mine’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

There are two instances of *la* (Spanish DEF.F) and one of *los* (DEF.PL), but two of these three occurrences come from Mansilla himself, rather than from Ranquel speakers. The normal state of affairs is that European articles correspond to zero in the pidgin.

2.3.1.5. *Quantifiers*

No numerals are attested. Quantifiers are *mucho* as in *mucho aguardiente* ‘much liquor’ and *poquito* as in *poquito galope* ‘gallop slowly’.

2.3.1.6. *Prepositions*

Commonly used prepositions are *de* ‘from, of’ (also used to mark lexical possessors, as in the lexifier), *con* ‘with’ and *en* ‘in’. *Por* ‘for’ and *para* ‘for, to’ are each attested once, though the latter is only used in the phrase *para qué* ‘for what’?

Examples include: *con mucho aguardiente* ‘with much liquor’ *por los campos* ‘in the countryside’ (uttered by a Spanish speaker), *de quién* ‘of whom’, *de mí* ‘of me’, *de afuera*, ‘from elsewhere’. There is one occurrence of *a* in the apparent role of an infinitive marker, one in a dative function, as well as one in the fused form *al* ‘to the’ (all in the mouths of a European speaker).

- (9) *Allá* *en* *Tierra Adentro* *mucho lindo* *teniendo*
 over.there in inland much fine have

‘There are lots of nice things in the Indian country’ (25)

- (10) *¿Y para qué haciendo eso, teniendo camino y baqueano?*
 and for what do DEM? have path and guide

‘And why do that, when you have the way and a guide?’ (45)

In true pidgin fashion, prepositions are sometimes left out where they might be expected:

(11) *¿Por qué entonces midiendo tierra Ø gualicho redondo?*

why then measure land talisman round

‘Then why are you measuring the land with your compass?’ (45)

(12) *Yo comprando Ø padre*

1s buy father

‘I bought her from her father’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

2.312.7. *Noun phrase word order*

The pidgin follows Spanish in having prepositions rather than postpositions (Mapudungun has both).¹⁴ The placement of modifiers and determiners also agrees with the lexifier, as in *gualicho redondo* ‘round talisman’ (45) and *ese pobre indio* ‘this poor Indian’ (17).

2.3.1.8. *Personal pronouns*

As for personal pronouns, there seems to be a case distinction in at least 1SG between subject *yo* and an oblique *mi*. It is possible that this extended also to other forms, but the main support for this are the hapax 3SG forms *él* vs. *lo*.

(13) *Yo indio pobre*

1SG Indian poor

‘I am just a poor Indian’ (43)

(14) *Ése mi toldo, ésa mi tierra*

DEM? 1SG.OBL dwelling DEM? 1SG.OBL land

‘This is *my* house and *my* land’ (19)

In a conspicuously mesolectal sentence, with gender-marked demonstratives, Mansilla himself also displays a distinction between adnominal and pronominal

¹⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the Mapudungun data quoted here are from Zúñiga (2000), Smeets (2008) and Echeverría & Contreras (1965).

possession (“absolute possessive”) (15), and the distinction is also present in the speech of his Amerindian interlocutor in the same conversation (16):

- (15) *Mujer tuya, allá en tus tierras,*
 woman2SG.ABS.POSS¹⁵ there in 2SG.POSS-PL lands
 ‘The woman may be yours in your country’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

- (16) *Mujer mía, mía, mía*
 woman 1SG.ABS.POSS 1SG.ABS.POSS 1SG.ABS.POSS
 ‘The woman is mine, mine, mine’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

It is potentially relevant that this particular conversation takes place at Mansilla’s residence rather than in Ranquel territory, and thus in a situation of more sustained contact.

With the absence of subject marking on the verbs, one might expect pro-drop to be disallowed. Such is generally the case in creoles, but pidgins tend to be more liberal in this respect, and indeed, there is zero marking not only of subjects/agents (17, 18), but also of patients/objects (19):

- (17) *¿Con permiso de quién Ø pisando mi tierra?*
 with permission from who tread 1SG.OBL land
 ‘With whose permission are you entering my territory?’ (19)

- (18) *Vos rico, dando, Ø pues, pobre indio*
 2SG rich give so poor Indian
 ‘You are rich, so you can afford giving something to a poor Indian’ (45)

¹⁵ For want of a standardised glossing abbreviation, we are here using the somewhat antiquated “ABS.POSS” (for “absolute possessive”) to denote the pronominal as opposed to adnominal forms.

- (19) *Puitrén, Ø pegando*
 Puitrén strike
 ‘Puitrén beat me’ (Mansilla 1889:215).

Overt subject (and object) pronouns are nevertheless very common:

- (20) *Yo pegando vos*
 1SG strike 2SG
 ‘I will hit you’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

2.3.2. Verbal domain

There is normally no verbal inflection for tense, mood, aspect or person in pidgins, and the same is generally true for Ranquel Spanish Pidgin. The few exceptions found in the data are uttered by Euro-Argentines:

- (21) *Cuando quiera topando, hermano*
 when want run.into brother
 ‘Whenever you want to gallop, brother’ (22)
- (22) *Cuando guste, hermano, topando no más*
 when want brother run.into just
 ‘Whenever you like, brother, just go towards them’ (22)

Note, however, that the *quiera* form does not follow the norms of Spanish (which would have used *quieras*, with a second- person ending) nor those of the pidgin (where one would expect a gerund). The form *guste* is the singular present subjunctive form of *gustar*, and not to be expected in a pidgin, but it is correct in Spanish, although the form *gusta* is much more common.

Apart from having been produced by Euro-Argentines, another possible explanation for the deviant form of these verbs could be their status as auxiliaries rather than full verbs.

2.3.2.1. *Tense, mood aspect*

In pidgins, marking of tense, mood and aspect is rarely obligatory and often absent altogether in grammaticalised form. This appears to be true of Ranquel Pidgin Spanish as well.

Temporal clues are instead provided either by linguistic context – the presence of the adverbs *ahora* ‘now’ and *ahorita* ‘right now’ and *entonces* ‘then’ in (23-24) suggest present and future reference respectively:

(23) *Ahora topando*

now run.into

‘Full gallop, brother’ (22)

(24) *Entonces dando, mejor*

then give better

‘So give me that, that will be better’ (19)

In most cases, however, it is only the conversational context that allows the listener to infer the intended temporal or aspectual setting.

(25) *Mariano teniendo mucho*

Mariano have much

‘Mariano already has plenty’ (19)

(26) *Yo pegando vos*

1SG strike 2SG

‘I will hit you’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

(27) *¿Vos pegando mujer?*

2SG strike woman

‘Have you beaten the woman?’ (Mansilla 1889:215).

There is also the element *ya*, whose counterpart in Spanish has the basic meaning ‘already’, but which also corresponds to a host of other time adverbials in English, and furthermore has a range of discursive functions in Spanish. It is not immediately obvious which of these meanings (if any) that *ya* covers in the pidgin, but ‘now’ is perhaps closest at hand:

- (28) *¿Entonces, indios no desconfiando ya de mí?*
 then Indians NEG mistrust now? from 1SG.OBL
 ‘So the Indians no longer mistrust me?’ (20)

- (29) *Ahora topando ya, hermano*
 now run.into now? brother
 ‘Now, brother, full gallop’ (22)

- (30) *Cerquita ya, topando*
 near now? run.into
 ‘We’re close now, full speed ahead’ (22)

Mood is expressed with reduced forms of verbs, like *quiera* ‘want’, *guste* ‘like’, or *pudiendo* ‘be able’ (31), but modal meanings are often implicit, as in (32):

- (31) *Acá, no pudiendo pegar mujer*
 here NEG be.able strike woman
 ‘Here, you mustn’t beat women’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

- (32) *Ese coronel Mansilla Ø cargando*
 DEM? coronel Mansilla carry
 ‘Colonel Mansilla can lift a lot’ (25)

2.3.2.2. Copulas

Copulas are most often absent, in at least attributive and equative contexts:

- (33) *Cristiano Ø malo*
 Christian bad
 ‘(The) Christian(s) is/are bad’ (17)

- (34) *¿Vos Ø amigo indio?*
 2SG friend Indian
 ‘Are you a friend of the Indians?’ (45)

- (35) *No, Puitrén, Ø achumao*
 NEG Puitrén drunk
 ‘No, Puitrén was drunk’ (Mansilla 1889:215).

An overt existential, however, surfaces in (36), derived from the verb *tener* ‘to have’.

- (36) *Allá en Tierra Adentro mucho lindo teniendo*
 over.there in inland much fine have
 ‘There are lots of nice things in the Indian country’ (25)

In addition, an uninflected *estando* occurs once, alongside two instances each of inflected *soy* ‘I am’ and *son* ‘they are’. From the perspective of lexifier grammar, these are inflexionally correct (1SG and 3SG, respectively). Both are, however, instances of Spanish forms of *ser*, the copula used for intrinsic properties, despite the locative context in (38) instead calling for a form of *estar* in the lexifier:

- (37) *Ese soy Wenchenao*
 DEM? COP.1SG Wenchenao
 ‘I am Wenchenao’ (19)

- (38) *Ese son, poquito galope*
 DEM? COP.3s a.little gallop
 ‘There they are; gallop slowly’ (20)

So while there is a partial divergence from lexifier norms here, the very presence of an inflected copula is highly unexpected. Yet, the absence of overt copulas is more frequent, both in this variety and in pidgins in general (Parkvall & Bakker 2013).

2.3.2.2. *Negation*

The sentence negation marker is, as in Spanish, a particle *no*, which appears preverbally, as shown in the examples (39-40):

- (39) *¿Entonces, indios no desconfiando ya de mí?*
 then indios NEG mistrust now? of 1SG.OBL
 ‘So the Indians no longer mistrust me?’ (20)
- (40) *No siguiendo camino si no pagando*
 NEG continue path if NEG pay
 ‘You cannot pass unless you pay’ (19)

In addition, *nunca* ‘never’ is attested. In some pidgins and creoles, a word meaning ‘never’ is used as a general sentence negator, but here it seems to have the meaning of the etymon.¹⁶

- (41) *Ese coronel Mansilla, bueno, no mintiendo, engañando*
 DEM? colonel Mansilla good NEG lie cheat
nunca pobre indio
 never poor Indian
 ‘Colonel Mansilla is a good man; he never lies or cheats poor Indians’ (3)

¹⁶ Note, however, the postverbal placement – this does not seem to be patterned on the substrate, whose counterpart *turpu* is preverbal.

2.3.3. The simple clause

2.3.3.1. *Sentence types*

There are examples of declaratives, commands and questions in the material, exemplified by these three utterances:

- (42) *Entonces dando la libra esterlina*
 then give DEF? pound sterling
 ‘I’ll give you a pound for it’ (43)

- (43) *Ese coronel, dando la mano, amigo*
 DEM? coronel give DEF? hand friend
 ‘Coronel, my friend, shake my hand’ (25)

- (44) *¿Dando caballo?*
 give horse
 ‘Will you give me the horse?’ (16)

Word order in declaratives and polar questions is the same, and we assume that the latter sentence type was indicated by rising intonation (Mapudungun uses a question particle).

- (45) *¿Vos pegando mujer?*
 2SG strike woman
 ‘Have you beaten the woman?’ (Mansilla 1889:215).

- (46) *¿Vos engañando con cristiano?*
 2SG cheat with Christian
 ‘Are you lying to a Christian?’ (Mansilla 1889:215).

2.3.3.2. Interrogative pronouns

Attested WH-words are *quién* ‘who’, *qué* ‘what’, *por qué* ‘why’ and *para qué* ‘for what’. They are fronted just like their Spanish etyma:

- (47) *¿Y entonces qué haciendo gualicho redondo?*
and then what do talisman round

‘Then what does the compass do?’ OR ‘Then what do you do with the compass?’ (45)

2.3.3.3. Word order

The dominant word order is SVO, as in both input languages:

- (48) *Yo dando mano amigo no más*
1SG give hand friend NEG more

‘I only shake hands with those who are my friends’ (45)

Occasional deviances from this pattern occur, however, such as VS in (49) (which would be permissible in the lexifier as well)¹⁷:

- (49) *Viniendo parlamento*
come parley

‘A parley is approaching’ (20).

Sometimes the adjectival predicate precedes the subject as well, in a comment-topic type structure:

- (50) *Mucho frío ese pobre indio*
much cold DEM? poor Indian

‘I am [lit. this poor Indian is] very cold’ (17)

¹⁷ Example (9) above represents another rare counterexample.

2.3.4. Clause combining

As expected from a pidgin, zero marking is common when two clauses are combined:

- (51) *Esos viniendo de afuera, Ø boleando*
 DEM? come from outside hunt.with.bolas
 ‘They’re coming from the south, where they have been bola hunting’
 (20)

Mansilla himself produces more conjoined clauses than do his Amerindian interlocutors, and one of his sentences contains no less than five clauses:¹⁸

- (52) *Si marido pegando y vos callando, no contando*
 if husband strike and 2SG be.silent NEG tell
a mí y yo sabiendo, castigando
 to 1SG.OBL and 1SG know punish
marido y no dejando vos volver toldos
 husband and NEG leave 2SG return dwellings
 ‘If your husband beats you and I know about it even if you’re not telling me, I will punish him and not let you go back to him’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

Clauses can be combined with coordinate conjunctions, but subordinate clauses are quite rare. Examples are given in the next subsection.

2.3.4.1. Conjunctions

The conjunctions featured are *y* ‘and’, *si* ‘if’, *pues* ‘so’, *pero* ‘but’ and *entonces* ‘then’.

¹⁸ Note also the mesolectal *volver* instead of *volviendo* (which he also uses in the same conversation) and the overt plural marking in *toldos*.

(53) *No dando lo más; pero dando aguardiente*

NEG give 3SG.OBL more but give liquor

‘Never mind the other stuff, just give me some liquor’ (21)

(54) *No siguiendo camino si no pagando*

NEG continue path if NEG pay

‘You cannot pass unless you pay’ (19)

2.3.4.2. *Relative clauses*

There are no examples of relative clauses in the material.

3. Discussion: gerunds, deictics and ethnicity

As hinted at earlier, two remarkable features of the pidgin require a more detailed discussion: the use of etymological gerunds, which is interesting from a regional and global perspective, and deictic elements, which seem to have functions that are not present in Spanish.

3.1. Verbs from gerunds

Verbs in pidgins tend to be uniform, in European-lexifier varieties often based on the infinitive. In Ranquel Pidgin Spanish, however, almost all verbs (including stative ones) are derived from Spanish gerunds.

This is unusual among pidgins, and it is virtually only found in the few Spanish-lexicon pidginized varieties of Latin America.¹⁹ It has been attested in several varieties of Amazonian Pidgin Spanish (Riley 1952; Simson 1879, 1886; Muysken 1980) in Venezuela, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, as well as in (but with less regularity) the Tierra del Fuego Trade Jargon (Roberts 2006:5). Other Spanish pidgins use infinitives, third person presents and/or past participles (Bakker & Parkvall, *forthc.*). The use of gerunds in South American

¹⁹ A possible parallel is India’s Butler English, whose pidgin status is somewhat dubious, but which generalised the English *-ing* form (Schuchardt 1891:7). An English Traveller in Morocco in the 1880s also mentions a local who used Spanish gerunds when he was “speaking Spanish after the Arab fashion, that is without the particles, and substitution of the gerund for every portion of the verb” (Cunninghame 1997:4). Despite Cunninghame’s implication, we have not come across other depictions of Arabs generalising the gerund in their L2 Spanish.

Spanish pidgins is so common that one Venezuelan novelist Rómulo Gallegos (1935) even called the speech of the Maquiritaré a “gerund jargon” (*jerga de gerundios*).

The unexpected choice appears to have its roots in Hispano-American foreigner talk tradition, and may ultimately go back to Quechua L2 Spanish (Hasler 1978:241-242; Muysken 1980; Lipski 2001, 2012:18, 2013).

In Ranquel Pidgin Spanish, the gerund-derived verbs are used indiscriminately to refer to habitual actions (55), as well as to past (56-57), progressive (58-59) and future ones (60-61) and to commands (62):

- (55) *Yo dando mano amigo no más*
 1SG give hand friend only
 ‘I only shake hands with those I consider my friends’ (45)
- (56) *Padre Burela viniendo con mucho aguardiente*
 father Burela come with much liquor
 ‘Father Burela has brought a lot of liquor’ (19)
- (57) *Puitrén, pegando*
 Puitrén strike
 ‘Puitrén beat me’ (Mansilla 1889:215).
- (58) *Boleando guanacos*
 hunt.with.bolas guanacos
 ‘They are hunting guanacos with bolas’ (22)
- (59) *¿Vos engañando con cristiano?*
 2SG cheat with Christian
 ‘Are you lying to a Christian?’ (Mansilla 1889:215).
- (60) *¿Dando caballo?*
 give horse
 ‘Will you give me the horse?’ (16)

- (61) *Yo pegando nomás*
 1SG strike no.more
 ‘I won’t hit again’ (Mansilla 1889:216).

- (62) *Dando más aguardiente*
 give more liquor
 ‘Give me more liquor!’ (34)

This variety of contexts clearly shows that the gerund is the unmarked form for all verbs, with only occasional and unsystematic deviations from the pattern, which appears limited to the speech of Hispanophones.

3.2. The demonstrative (?) *ese*

The item *ese* (with its occasional variants *ése* ~ *ésa* ~ *eso* ~ *esos*) is derived from the Spanish intermediate demonstrative, but its precise functions are difficult to grasp.

In fact, a minority of all occurrences of *ese* (including the assumed allomorphs) appear to function as the demonstrative that is its etymon.

A possible label might in many cases be a third-person pronoun (this being syncretic with the demonstrative in Mapudungun):

- (63) *¿Y para qué haciendo eso, teniendo camino y baqueano?*
 and for what do DEM? have path and guide
 ‘Why would you need that/it if you have a path/route and a guide?’ (45)

- (64) *Eso no vendiendo*
 DEM? NEG sell
 ‘They are not for sale’ (43)

Most, however, rather give the impression of being a presentative element, along the lines of French *voici* ~ *voilà* or Russian *этом*.

(65) *¡Ese indio guapo!*

DEM? Indian brave

‘I am a brave Indian’ (16)

(66) *Ese, otro comisión*

DEM? other parley

‘There’s another parley’ (22)

A third category refers the author himself – his name or title are almost invariably preceded by this item when he is mentioned by Ranquel speakers.

(67) *¡Ese coronel Mansilla, ese cristiano toro!*

DEM? colonel Mansilla DEM? Christian bull

‘Colonel Mansilla is a Christian bull’ (16)

(68) *Ese Coronel Mansilla!*

DEM? Coronel Mansilla

‘It’s colonel Mansilla!’ (15)

Given that his surname is usually preceded by his rank, one could consider the possibility of glossing the *ese* as a definite article, resulting in a reading ‘the coronel’. Yet, we also find similar constructions without the putative definiteness marking, such as the *Ø Padre Burela* ‘father Burela’ in (56).

One might also consider *ese* a preproprial article, along the lines of e. g. Portuguese (*O João e a Maria* ‘John and Mary’). If so, it is again not compulsory, as several names of people occur without any *ese*.

In any case, one might expect the extension of the demonstrative to be patterned on substratal practices, but apart from the possible interpretation of *ese* as a third person pronoun, we fail to find any obvious candidates for calquing in the descriptions of Mapudungun by Smeets (2008) or Zúñiga (2000).

4. Conclusion

By virtue of being a pidgin, Ranquel Pidgin Spanish has of course done away with most of the grammatical apparatus of its lexifier.

However, just like any pair of unrelated languages, Spanish and Mapudungun share a number of typological features. These include for instance verbal argument marking, a three-way deictic contrast in demonstratives, articles, passives, overt copulas, inflexional futures and a good deal of suffixation.

One popular view of contact language formation (e. g. Mufwene 2001; Aboh 2015, but even more common in lay writings) sees the process as preserving the least common denominator among the languages involved. Yet, almost none of the commonalities such as the ones just mentioned found their way into the pidgin.

Another common conception of pidgins is that they combine lexifier vocabulary with substratal grammar. If this were true, we would for this variety expect e. g. negative suffixes, associative plurals, duals, Adj N order, *in situ* WH words, an unbound pluraliser, and strong agglutinative tendencies, as influences from Mapudugun. Again, though, this is not what we find evidence of.

It is also often claimed that pidgins are mere attempts of second language acquisition. In this regard, we may note that large Spanish corpora such as the Corpes XXI and CREA indicate that the most frequent verb forms in Spanish are infinitives and present indicatives (even when the various inflected forms are treated separately), followed by past forms, with gerunds hardly even being a blip on the radar. There are of course slight differences according to time, space and genre, but the overall order is stable. This strongly suggests that the pidgin is not the result of naturalistic second language acquisition of Spanish, at least not as vernacularly spoken. In fact, the near-complete dominance of gerunds in the pidgin versus their insignificant frequency in the lexifier virtually excludes this possibility. The fact that Spanish speaker Mansilla himself uses pidgin rather than Spanish demonstrates adaptations and efforts on behalf of both parties to establish successful communication, rather than a mere teacher-learner relationship.

Instead, the material displays a variety that by and large looks like pidgins in general do – one which displays a minimum of structural conventions (but, crucially, not lacking them altogether), and where the lack of elaboration is far more strongly manifested than parallels with any of the input languages, or, for that matter, with second language acquisition, failed or not.

The comparatively simple grammar does not seem to have led to extensive communication problems. In the encounters recounted by Mansilla, the pidgin apparently fulfilled its intended function as a means of interethnic communication with great success. And by doing so, it manifests the ingenuity of pidginisation – in comparison to traditional languages, pidgins provide a good deal of expressive potential at a low cost by getting maximal mileage out of the limited material at hand. Simply put, they are highly affordable in terms of learner input – or even simpler: they give plenty of bang for the buck.

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Appendix: The corpus.

Appendix 1: Mansilla (1871)

Column 1: ethnicity (E = European; I = Indigenous)

Column 2: original phrases

Column 3: free translation (taking the context into account).

Column 4: chapter number in Mansilla's book

eth	original	attempted translation	chapter
I	<i>Ese coronel Mansilla, bueno, no mintiendo, engañando nunca pobre indio</i>	Colonel Mansilla is a good man; he never lies or cheats poor Indians	3
I	<i>Ese Coronel Mansilla!</i>	It is colonel Mansilla!	15
I	<i>¡Winca! ¡winca! ¡matando! ¡matando, winca!</i>	Let's kill the Christian!	15
E	<i>Bebiendo, peñi</i>	Drink up, brother	16
I	<i>¡Ese coronel Mansilla, ese cristiano toro!</i>	Colonel Mansilla is a Christian bull	16
I	<i>¡Ese indio guapo!</i>	I am a brave Indian	16
I	<i>¡Ese soy Caniupán! ¡Capitanejo Mariano Rosas!</i>	I am Caniupán, war chief of Mariano Rosas.	16
I	<i>¿Dando caballo?</i>	Will you give me the horse?	16
I	<i>Mucho frío ese pobre indio</i>	I'm really cold	17
I	<i>Cristiano malo</i>	(The) Christian(s) is/are bad	17
I	<i>Padre Burela viniendo con mucho aguardiente</i>	Father Burela has brought a lot of liquor	19
I	<i>Ese soy Wenchenao</i>	I am Wenchenao	19
I	<i>Mariano teniendo mucho</i>	Mariano already has plenty	19
I	<i>Bueno, amigo, siguiendo camino no más, pero dando camisa, pañuelo, calzoncillo</i>	OK, friend, you may now pass, but first give me your shirt, handkerchief and underwear	19
I	<i>Dando, dando más, Coronel</i>	Please give me more, colonel	19
I	<i>Entonces dando, mejor</i>	So give me that, it is better	19
I	<i>Ese coronel Mansilla, ¿con permiso de quién pisando mi tierra?</i>	So with whose permission is colonel Mansilla entering my territory?	19

eth	original	attempted translation	chapter
I	<i>Ése mi toldo, ésa mi tierra</i>	This is my house and my land	19
I	<i>¿Con permiso de quién pasando?</i>	With whose permission are you trespassing?	19
I	<i>No siguiendo camino si no pagando</i>	You cannot pass unless you pay	19
E	<i>Bueno, topando <u>al</u> galope</i>	All right let's set off at a gallop	20
E	<i>¿Entonces, <u>indios</u> no desconfiando ya de mí?</i>	So the Indians no longer mistrust me?	20
E	<i>¿Qué habiendo por los campos, hermano?</i>	What happened in the countryside?	20
I	<i>Muy silencio estando Cuero, Bagual y Tres Lagunas.</i>	It was all silent at Cuero, Bagual and Tres Lagunas.	20
I	<i>Topando con él, galope</i>	Now, let's set off at a gallop	20
I	<i>¡Ese son hermano, topando!</i>	There they are, brother. Head-on!	20
I	<i>Ese son, poquito galope</i>	There they are; gallop slowly	20
I	<i>Viniendo parlamento</i>	A parley is on its way	20
I	<i>Esos viniendo de afuera, boleando</i>	They're coming from the south, where they have been bola hunting	20
I	<i>No dando lo más; pero dando aguardiente</i>	Never mind the other stuff, just give me some liquor	21
E	<i>Cuando guste, hermano, topando no más</i>	Whenever you like, brother, ???	22
E	<i>Cuando quiera topando, hermano</i>	Whenever you want to gallop, brother	22
E	<i>Topando como guste</i>	Dash whenever you like	22
E	<i>Topando</i>	Head-on!	22
I	<i>Ahora topando ya, hermano</i>	Now, brother, full gallop	22
I	<i>Ese comisión lindo, hermano, ahora no más topando</i>	That's a fine parley, brother, let's gallop towards it	22
I	<i>Ese, otro comisión</i>	There's another parley	22
I	<i>Boleando guanacos</i>	They are hunting guanacos with bolas	22
I	<i>Formando gente, hermano</i>	Fall in, brother	22
I	<i>Ahora topando</i>	Full gallop, brother	22
I	<i>Topando fuerte, hermano</i>	Full speed ahead, brother	22
I	<i>Ese comisión grande viniendo a topar</i>	A big parley is coming towards us	22

eth	original	attempted translation	chapter
I	<i>Poquito parando, hermano</i>	Let's stop in a little while, brother	22
I	<i>Formando gente, hermano, ese comisión</i>	Make the men fall in, brother, here's the parley	22
I	<i>Caminando poquito, hermano</i>	Now, slow down, brother	22
I	<i>Mandando hacer alto, hermano</i>	Order halt, brother	22
I	<i>Ese comisión, lindo, grandote</i>	That's a fine parley; it's really big	22
I	<i>Ese comisión ahorita topando</i>	The parley is approaching fast	22
I	<i>Cerquita ya, topando</i>	We're close now, full speed ahead	22
I	<i>Ese coronel Mansilla cargando</i>	Colonel Mansilla can lift a lot	25
I	<i>Ese coronel Mansilla muy toro</i>	Colonel Mansilla is a really like a bull	25
I	<i>Ese coronel Mansilla lindo</i>	Colonel Mansilla is an impressive man.	25
I	<i>Ese coronel, dando la mano, amigo</i>	Colonel, my friend, shake my hand	25
I	<i>Allá en Tierra Adentro mucho lindo teniendo</i>	There are lots of nice things in the Indian country	25
I	<i>Winca engañando</i>	The Christian is a liar	26
I	<i>¡Ese cristiano bueno, ese cristiano toro!</i>	The Christian is good! The Christian is a bull!	32
I	<i>Dando más aguardiente, Coronel</i>	Please give me more liquor, colonel	33
I	<i>Dando más aguardiente</i>	Give me more liquor!	34
I	<i>¡Parando, hermano!</i>	Stop, brother	20, 22
E	<i>Entonces dando la libra esterlina</i>	I'll give you a pound for it	43
I	<i>Yo indio pobre, vos cristiano rico</i>	I'm just a poor Indian, and you're a rich Christian	43
I	<i>Eso no dando</i>	I'm not returning them	43
I	<i>Eso no vendiendo</i>	They are not for sale	43
I	<i>Cosa linda, güena</i>	They're really nice	43
I	<i>Vos engañando</i>	You're lying	45
I	<i>¿Vos amigo indio?</i>	Are you a friend of the Indians?	45
I	<i>Dando camisa</i>	Give me a shirt	45

eth	original	attempted translation	chapter
I	<i>Yo dando mano amigo no más</i>	I only shake hands with those who are my friends	45
I	<i>¿Y entonces qué haciendo gualicho redondo?</i>	Then what does the compass do? OR Then what do you do with the compass?	45
I	<i>¿Por qué entonces midiendo tierra, gualicho redondo?</i>	Then why are you measuring the land with your compass?	45
I	<i>¿Y para qué haciendo eso, teniendo camino y baqueano?</i>	Why would you need that if you have a path and a guide?	45
I	<i>Vos, coronel Mansilla</i>	You are colonel Mansilla	45
I	<i>Vos rico, dando, pues, pobre indio</i>	You are rich, so you can afford giving something to a poor Indian	45
I	<i>¡Engañando!</i>	You're lying!	45
I	<i>¿Conociendo Chañilao?</i>	Do you know Chañilao?	52
I	<i>¡Winca!, ¡winca!, ¡mintiendo!</i>	The Christians are lying!	54

Appendix 2: Mansilla (1889)

Column 1: ethnicity (C = Chinese; E = European; I = Indigenous)

Column 2: original phrases

Column 3: free translation.

Column 4: page number in Mansilla (1889)

eth	original	attempted translation	page
C	<i>Puitrén, pegando</i>	Puitrén beat me	215
C	<i>No, Puitrén, achumao</i>	No, Puitrén was drunk	215
E	<i>¿Vos engañando con cristiano?</i>	Are you lying to a Christian?	215
E	<i>¿Vos pegando mujer?</i>	Have you beaten the woman?	215
E	<i>Si marido pegando y vos callando, no contando a mí y yo sabiendo, castigando marido y no dejando vos volver toldos.</i>	If your husband beats you and I know about it even if you're not telling me, I will punish him and not let you go back to your homes	216
E	<i>Allá, acá, tierra de cristianos, no pudiendo pegar mujer.</i>	In a Christian country, you don't beat women	216
E	<i>Si vos volviendo pegar mujer, yo matando vos, pícaro!</i>	If you ever hit a woman again. I'll kill you, you bastard	216
E	<i>Mujer tuya, allá en tus tierras, acá, no pudiendo pegar mujer</i>	The woman may be yours in your country, but here you mustn't beat women	216
E	<i>Yo pegando vos</i>	I will hit you	216
E	<i>Bueno, vos no pegando más mujer.</i>	Fine, you're not beating this woman (or women) again	216
I	<i>Yo pegando nomás</i>	I won't hit again	216
I	<i>Mujer mía</i>	The woman is mine	216
I	<i>Mujer mía, mía, mía</i>	The woman is mine, mine, mine	216
I	<i>Yo comprando padre</i>	I bought her from her father	216