

A linguistic analysis of Spanglish: relating language to identity

Jason Rothman and Amy Beth Rell

Abstract

According to the 2000 census, 35.3 million Hispanics live in the United States. This number comprises 12.5% of the overall population rendering the Latino community the largest minority in the United States. The Mexican community is not only the largest Hispanic group but also the fastest growing: from 1990 to 2000, the Mexican population grew 52.9% increasing from 13.5 million to 20.6 million (U.S. Department of Commerce News, 2001). The influx of Mexican immigrants coupled with the expansion of their community within the United States has created an unparalleled situation of language contact. Language is synonymous with identity (cf. Granger, 2004, and works cited within). To the extent that this is true, Spanish is synonymous with being Mexican and by extension, Chicano. With the advent of amnesty programs such as Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which naturalized millions of Mexican migrants, what was once a temporal migratory population has become increasingly permanent (Durand et al., 1999). In an effort to conserve Mexican traditions and identity, the struggle to preserve the mother tongue while at the same time acculturate to mainstream Americana has resulted in a variant of Spanglish that has received little attention. This paper will examine the variant of Spanglish seen in the greater Los Angeles area and liken it to the bi-national identity under which these Mexican Americans thrive.

KEYWORDS: SPANGLISH, LATINO, IMMIGRATION, ETHNIC MINORITY, LANGUAGE CONTACT, IDENTITY

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Introduction

Who could have imagined that mundane phrases known to all through mass commercialization of the Hispanic culture such as *Yo quiero Taco Bell* and *Livin' la vida loca*, would in and of themselves embody a highly contentious academic, artistic and political debate between immigrants and natives alike. These phrases made famous by the Taco Bell Chihuahua and Ricky Martin have implications far beyond the mere television ad campaign and the music industry. They have come to represent an amalgamation of two languages, and by consequence that of two cultures, traditionally viewed as separate: Spanish and English. For many, this separation is *passé*; it is quite simply non-existent. The result: Spanglish.

What exactly is Spanglish? Where does it come from? Who speaks it? Moreover, since, as we will argue, it has come to define a sense of unique identity, we should also put forth the question: Who lives it? Indeed, while the aforementioned questions have somewhat indexical answers, the question of whether Spanglish is 'good' or 'bad' is as an emotionally charged issue as it is impossible to offer an adequate answer. Of course, linguistically speaking, Spanglish is no better or worse than its constituent parts: Spanish and English. That is, if it serves the function of communication and is rule governed, it is, quite simply, a language. Judgments pertaining to its status, however tangible and defensible, are merely opinions¹. Nevertheless, recent newspaper articles such as 'Spanish in America has a new threat: Spanglish' underscore the popular opinion that the mere presence of Spanglish and its proliferation endangers monolingual Spanish and, as a consequence, encroaches on the collective Hispanic identity. Even prolific Mexican icons, such as Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz have weighed in on the subject. Paz has commented that '[Spanglish is] neither good nor bad, but abominable' as cited in Hernandez (2003). Conversely, what some have labeled a 'gutter language', others coin a 'dynamic fusion' of crashing cultures noticeably merging at the interface of language and subsequently validating the existence of many immigrants and the 'nether world of language duality [they] grow up in' (Pimentel, 2003: 7B).

The present article includes an analysis of the 'language' of Spanglish yet reaches farther. We will not be the first to suggest that language is synonymous with identity, as argued by researchers in the field of language and culture as well as psychoanalytic theory (see Granger, 2004, for detailed discussion of the pertinent literature). A notable example that correlates language and identity can be found in Richard Rodríguez's (1988) autobiography in which he cites his own struggle with identity in learning English as a child second language learner from a Hispanic background. He reflects that:

for my part, I felt I had somehow committed a sin of betrayal by learning English. But betrayal against whom? I felt that I had betrayed my immediate family ... I came to feel guilty (this guilt defied logic). I felt that I had shattered the intimate bond that had once held the family close. (Rodríguez, 1988: 30)

Rodríguez comments on the fact that he lived, literally and figuratively, between two cultures and two languages, where Spanish was his private language and English his public language. Perhaps his parents said it best. In an effort to acculturate Richard, they requested that '*Ahora, speak to us en ingles*' (1988: 21). After all, their request encapsulates the situation of Richard and so many other young Mexican-Americans who find themselves between two worlds.

On a larger scale, the influx of Mexican immigrants coupled with the expansion of their community within the United States has created an unparalleled situation of language contact. The effort to conserve Mexican traditions and identity, adopt American ones, and create a sense of self, which is an unequivocal byproduct of both, has resulted in a variant of Spanglish that has received relatively little attention in comparison with the Cuban and Puerto Rican cases. This article will examine the variant of Spanglish seen in the Mexican-American community and liken it to the bi-national identity under which this community thrives. It is just this analysis that is needed to validate the largest and fastest growing Hispanic group living in the United States, the Mexican-American community who number more than 20.6 million (Guzmán, 2001: 1, U.S. Department of Commerce News). Given that language compromises identity, Spanglish is the identity under which a majority of this 20.6 million lives: a 'cultural ambiguity' as evidenced through language and unparalleled in history (Hernandez, 2003: A30).

Demographics and legislation of Mexican migration

According to the 2000 census, 35.3 million Hispanics live in the United States. This number comprises 12.5% of the overall population rendering the Latino community the largest minority in the United States. Of all Hispanic groups represented in these figures, the Mexican community is not only the largest but also the fastest growing with a population increase of 13.5 to 20.6 million between 1990 and 2000 (U.S. Department of Commerce News, 2001: 1). Of this 20.6 million, the great majority resides in the southwest region of the United States, and in particular, Southern California (Durand et al., 2000: 9). While geographic proximity certainly contributes to the fact that 58% of Mexican immigrants chose California as their new home as of 1990, it is not the only factor (Durand et al., 2000: 8).

Historically, Mexican migration to the United States has been a continuous social process existing with significant numbers since the turn of the twentieth century (Durand et al., 2000: 1). This migration was largely temporal (during agricultural harvesting or railroad constructions) and rarely resulted in permanent residence in the United States. However, Reagan's 1985 infamous reference to the United States losing control of its borders drastically changed this temporal migration (Durand et al., 2000: 3). With the passing of the unprecedented immigration legislation entitled the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986, what was once a temporal, undocumented male migration due to labor needs during a prospering economy in the United States, converted to a legal and often permanent migration of entire families (Durand et al., 2000: 9). While the borders tightened, a once symbolic border between Mexico and the United States became a very real physical border with more than 30 miles of fences standing between the two nations and the first major increase in the Border Patrol budget (Durand et al., 2000: 10).

Along with heavy border-patrolling to prevent crossings of additional illegal Mexican immigrants, IRCA, in what amounts to little more than a sanctimonious gesture of feigned solidarity, allowed for the legalization of more than 2.3 million undocumented Mexicans already working in the United States. As a result of naturalizing the 2.3 million migrant workers who were largely male and did not intend to permanently reside in the United States, the paradigm of Mexican migration was radically altered. First, these newly documented workers were permitted to bring over family members, converting the traditionally male-oriented migration into a paradigm that included men, women, and children, and consequently triggered additional migrations. With the presence of family, the once temporal migration became quite permanent. Additionally, with naturalization papers being handed out liberally to workers under the amnesty provisions of IRCA, the black market for fraudulent documents soared (Durand et al., 2000: 9). Ultimately, as Durand et al. succinctly note:

although IRCA's primary purpose may have been to deter undocumented migrants, it does not seem to have made much progress in meeting that goal. Rather than slowing down the rate of undocumented entry, IRCA seems only to have succeeded in transforming a seasonal flow of temporary workers into a more permanent population of settled legal immigrants. (Durand et al., 2000: 5)

As previously discussed, a great many Mexican migrants settled in California, in particular, Southern California – many as a result of the IRCA amnesty programs. Given the perceived attraction that the greater Los Angeles area provides in terms of its urban appeal and subsequent employment opportunities,

millions claimed Los Angeles proper, amongst other destinations in the region, as their new home. This changing geography has resulted in an unparalleled situation of language contact.

The issue of Mexican migration related to Spanglish

'The 2000 census tells a story about the inevitability of Spanglish in California' (Morales, 2002: 177). Yet, with the most densely populated Latino community as a result of Mexican migration, the issue of language contact and Spanglish within California has received relatively little attention while the related but distinct issue of bilingual education has taken the front seat. In contrast, the Puerto Rican and Cuban strongholds, New York City and Miami, share a rich tradition of examining the Spanglish seen in their communities. One can go back as far as 1971 to Dr. Carlos Varo's work entitled *Consideraciones antropológicas y políticas en torno a la enseñanza del 'Spanglish' en Nueva York*. Here, the author argues that English is the language of the invader exerting its influence on the Spanish of Puerto Ricans in New York which results in a variant of Spanglish that should be considered '*una enfermedad crónica*' (a chronic illness) (1971: 47, 109). Others, such as Alvarez (1998), Aparicio (1988), and Nash (1971), examine the Spanglish of New York from a more optimistic framework, discussing its rich influence on the Puerto Rican immigrant communities.

The Cuban experience in Miami, resulting in what some coin one variant of Spanglish as 'Cubonics', has also been documented widely. Ribes-Gil (1998) suggests that many Cuban-Americans now consider Cubonics as 'a necessary third language after English and Spanish' (1998: 14). Jongh (1990) goes so far as to publish an article entitled 'Interpreting in Miami's federal courts: code-switching and Spanglish' in which she argues that standard, monolingual Spanish is not generally spoken in Miami. Rather, Spanglish is spoken and, as a consequence, court interpreters must have a command of this variant of language. 'The ability to interpret Spanglish ... is of prime importance in achieving the communicative competence which is so vital in the legal setting' (1990: 277).

Yet, the Mexican experience with Spanglish has received relatively little attention. Robert Friedman, in his article entitled 'Language purists dismayed by Spanglish' argues that 'each region ... has its own Spanglish' and proceeds to discuss Cuban-Americans in Miami and New York Puerto Ricans but ignores the largest Latino immigrant population in the country: the Mexican population in Los Angeles (2001: 196). Even David López, in his tour-de-force article on linguistic assimilation from the critical text *The Handbook of International Migration: the American experience* (1999) makes no mention of Spanglish.

When speaking of the California situation, he does comment that Mexican Americans comprise one-third of California's population, that 'Los Angeles today is among the most linguistically diverse cities in the world' (1999: 213), and that 'the implications for the use of languages other than English are profound' (1999: 214) but absolutely no mention is given to the mixing of Spanish and English. They are considered totally separate entities to the extent that Lopéz reviews census information which questioned which of the two, either Spanish or English, Mexican immigrants spoke in certain situations (1999: 215). Even more negligible than the utter discounting of Spanglish as an existing phenomenon in California is the author's admittance of 'the complex Puerto Rican case' where language mixing does occur (1999: 216).

Despite the perpetual ignoring of the Californian case of Spanglish, some scholars have witnessed this trend and begun to expand on its implications. Morales entitles an entire chapter of his *Living in Spanglish*, 'California Dreamin'', which examines Los Angeles as the epicenter for Spanglish in the United States (2002: 177–223). The Mexican linguist Claudia Parodi also explores the magnitude of language contact in Los Angeles and offers the view that the Spanish of Los Angeles has become its own dialect, what she terms a *koiné*, and one fundamental part of this dialect is the mixing of English and Spanish (2003: 33). For if Spanglish is 'significantly influenced by immigration' (Ribes-Gil, 1998: 13) and the Mexican immigrant community is the largest Latino immigrant community in the United States by a landslide, this variant warrants further attention.

The definition and structure of Spanglish

Prior to analyzing the identity of Mexican immigrants living in the United States as evidenced through their language use, it is critical to more clearly define what is being spoken in these communities: Spanglish. This is not an easy task. In its most basic conception, Spanglish is just what its title indicates: a mixing of Spanish and English. Authors often describe it using terms such as 'hybrid', 'mestizaje', 'fusion', 'collage', and 'eclectic'. Ilan Stavans, the forefather of scholarly Spanglish analysis who has gone so far as to publish a Spanglish dictionary as well as an enormously controversial Spanglish translation of *Don Quijote*, defines Spanglish as 'the verbal encounter between Anglo and Hispano civilizations' (2003b: 5). Furthermore, we would like to offer the notion that the structure of Spanglish can essentially be divided into three subdivisions:

- 1) the adaptation of lexical units or phrasal constituents from one language into the other on a phonological, morphological and/or morphophonological level;

- 2) the adaptation of some lexical elements or phrasal constituents from one language into another semantically;
- 3) the phenomenon of code-switching or a rule governed amalgamation of the two languages at the level of syntax.

What do we mean by phonological adaptation? First, let us start out by saying that borrowings or transfers of this kind are indeed bi-directional while heavily favoring the ‘Spanglification’ of English loan words. That is, words of English or Spanish origin are borrowed from the lexicon of either language yet pronounced with the phonological rules of the other. In most cases, you will find that these words do indeed have a minimal pair (equivalent translatable word) known to the speaker in the other language. However, for reasons of association, effect, emphasis, etc., the speaker decides at the moment of simultaneous speech to adapt the word from one of the languages while superimposing the phonology of the other. For example:

- 1) *Cuando fuimo[h] al [super-marketa] la [babi-siter] e[h]taba en casa con la[h] niñas que jugaba[ŋ] a las [Barβie].*
When [we] went to the supermarket the baby-sitter was home with the children who were playing Barbies. (Rothman, 2002)

This speech sampling is taken from a Salvadorian woman living in Los Angeles for over 25 years, nearly half of her life. Given her perceived command of the English language, she categorizes herself as a monolingual Spanish speaker. The interview took place in Spanish and the interviewer quite consciously spoke in standard Spanish with no occurrences of Spanglish. It is also interesting to note that through the course of time and despite contact with a huge population of Mexican Spanish speakers, she has conserved many typical Salvadorian features to her language such as the aspirated [s] and the velarized [ŋ]. However, it is equally interesting to point out that throughout this interview, there is an overwhelming amount of occurrences, as seen in the above example ([super-marketa]/ [babi-siter]), in which she takes English words and pronounces them without pause or hesitation as if they were part of the Spanish lexicon. Specifically interesting is the addition of an empathetic [a] to the English word ‘supermarket’ as it is phonologically adapted. This is done because the word final coda position in Spanish is almost never a consonant, much less a voiceless alveolar occlusive [t], but almost exclusively a vowel. Phonological assimilations of this type are indeed quite common in the Spanglish of Los Angeles.

What is meant by morphological adaptations? It is prudent to point out that the amalgamation of two languages, such as the case of Spanglish, entails by definition a level of complexity where certain linguistic adaptations may not be mutually exclusive. Rather, the same example may be a result and

indicative of more than one linguistic process. Such is the case of morphological adaptations, which often imply phonological adaptations as well. Let us examine the emergence of new verbs into the lexicon of Spanglish as an example of both morphological adaptations and the rule-governed nature implicit to the formation of Spanglish. Spanish infinitives come in three varieties. Spanish, unlike English, has morphological infinitives that are comprised of a verbal root and any of the following three infinitival morphemes: 1) *+ar+*, 2) *+er+*, or 3) *+ir+*. Likened to these infinitival affixes are corresponding morphological verbal paradigms. Verbs that end in *+ar+* are often referred to as the first conjugation. These verbs are not only the most abundant in Spanish, but also comprise the only active infinitival category in Modern Spanish. That is, the only class of verbs that allow for new members is the *+ar+* category of verbs. In fact, the majority of new verbs in Spanish and Spanglish alike do not only conform to the aforementioned, but also share the particular ending [-*ear*], such as:

<i>telefonear</i>	to call
<i>luncheare</i>	to eat lunch
<i>chequear</i>	to check
<i>watchear</i>	to watch
<i>parquear</i>	to park

and the like. As can be seen in the case of *luncheare*, whose minimal pair in Spanish is *almorzar* (to eat lunch), the English word 'lunch' has been borrowed to form a new Spanglish verb by means of phonological and morphological adaptation.

Language contact on the scale of Spanish and English will logically result in the adaptation of lexical items or manipulation of the already existing lexicon to take on the semantic value of the other language's (in this case English) words or phrases. Often when borrowings of this type occur it also assumes a phonological shift as well as a morphological reorganization of the words to fit within the paradigms of the other language. For example, *tener un buen tiempo* instead of *pasarla bien* 'to have a good time' or *parquear* rather than *estacionar* 'to park' (Llombart, 2003: 3). Other commonly cited examples include *viaje redondo* rather than *viaje de ida y vuelta* 'round trip', *te llamo pa' tras* for 'I'll call you back' and *voy a ordenar la comida* rather than *voy a pedir la comida* for 'I'll order food' (Sánchez, 2001: 10). Additionally, we note other types of semantic adaptations such as the expansion of the semantic field of already existing Spanish words so that in their Spanglish form, their meaning is expanded or modified. Often is the case with so-called false cognates. For example one may note that *realizar* in a Spanglish sense means both 'to fulfill', the exclusive monolingual Spanish meaning, as well

as 'to realize', *darse cuenta*, the transferred English meaning. Moreover, the adjective 'sensible' can mean either 'sensitive' or the English transferred interpretation of 'sensible', *sensato*. Examples of these types abound. Furthermore, lexical elements also vary according to region, rendering vast the number of Spanglish dialects. Indeed, Stavans argues that 'there isn't one Spanglish but many' and that 'the lingo spoken by Cuban Americans is different from the so-called Dominicanish and Nuyorrican Spanglish' and, we would add, Mexican Spanglish (2003a: 136).

In addition to lexical adaptations and localisms, which result in dialectical variation, Spanglish also entails code-switching. Defined by Myers-Scotton as 'the selection by bilinguals or multilinguals of forms from an embedded variety in utterances of a matrix variety during the same conversation' or, more simply, 'the accessing of multiple languages' (1993: 5), code-switching is of paramount importance in Spanglish. This alternation between Spanish and English has resulted in what many critics consider a haphazard, unstructured phenomenon. In contrast, linguists such as Belazi et al. (1994), MacSwan (1999; 2000), Myers-Scotton (1993), Sankoff and Poplack (1981), and Zentella (1997) have shown that code-switching is a highly complex and structured occurrence composed of sociolinguistic strategies, which envelop a syntactical system with very real constraints. Zentella's work on Puerto Rican bilinguals in New York resulted in her classification of 21 separate and distinct categories for code-switching, all which offer further evidence that code-switching is much more than a mere random phenomenon but rather a complex system composed of a variety of patterns and constraints (1997: 94–7).

Other authors agree. In fact, the linguistic community argues that code-switching is not only a rule-governed natural human language, but also a mark of a truly proficient bilingual. Numerous academics have cited the existence of formal rules and constraints seen in code-switching, regardless of the two (or more) languages in question. As Zentella remarks:

The notion that Spanish-English code-switching is a haphazard jumble of two languages has been rebutted by many analyses, principally Pfaf 1975; McClure 1977; Poplack 1980; Zentella 1982, Lipski 1985; Alvarez 1991; Torres 1992; Toribio and Rubin 1993. (Zentella, 1997: 116)

Universally, these researchers have demonstrated that code-switching repeatedly occurs at particular points in conversation and, conversely, cannot occur at other specific junctures in discourse. Perhaps one of the most widely recognized studies in this regard is Sankoff and Poplack's 'A formal grammar for code-switching' (1981). Here, the researchers discuss the concepts of the Free Morpheme Constraint as well as the Equivalence Constraint. The Free Morpheme Constraint prohibits the intra-word mixing of morphemes and

states that a switch may indeed take place at any point within a particular discourse at which it is possible to make a surface constituent cut and still maintain a free morpheme². This constraint has indeed stood the test of time and explains why the following examples are not grammatical:

- (2) **Estamos talk-ando.*
[We] are talking.
- (3) **Al llegar, me di cuenta que ellos estaban leave-iendo.*
Upon arriving, I realized that they were already leaving.

The Equivalence Constraint states that codes will switch at points where the surface structures of the languages map onto each other, thus explaining why switches like the following for 'I gave him/to him the present' are unacceptable: *I gave *le un regalo*; *Le I gave *un regalo*; *Him/to him *di un regalo*; *Di* him/to him *un regalo*. However, it should also be noted that this constraint is not without counter evidence. The following sentences are deemed unacceptable switches despite the fact that they conform to the Equivalence Constraint:

- (4) **Las chicas han arrived early for class today.*
The girls have arrived early for class today.
- (5) *My mother had *salido ya cuando tú llamaste.*
My mother had left already when you called.

In light of counter evidence to the Equivalence Constraint, other researchers have offered modifications and/or alternative approaches to examining the autonomous structure of code-switching. Building on previous works, Belanzi et al. have offered yet another constraint called the Functional Head Constraint (1994), which stipulates that a code-switch may not occur between a functional head and its complement. This, however, is somewhat problematic as counter examples abound in Spanish for this analysis. In accordance with the Functional Head Constraint, sentences (6) and (7) should be unacceptable since the head of the CP (the relative pronoun) is in Spanish while the rest of the phrase is in English.

- (6) *Las razones por las que* we love to code-switch are many.
- (7) *Creí que* María always told the truth.

However, these sentences are not only acceptable, but moreover decisively so. Myers-Scotton has proposed an ML (Matrix Language) model of analysis (1993), which offers two different constraints known as the System Morpheme Principle and the Morpheme Order Principle which together highlight the importance of the ML and stipulate that all syntactically relevant system morphemes and their order must be derived from and/or not violate the ML system.

According to Myers-Scotton, the ML is noted by a 'frequency-based criterion,' making the claim that the ML is the language that contributes the greater number of morphemes to the discourse (1993: 68), and that '... the ML may change across time, and even within the same conversation' (1993: 69).

Most recently, MacSwan (1999; 2000) and Jake et al. (2002) have provided minimalist approaches to analyzing the phenomenon of code-switching. Under the Minimalist Program, syntactic variation is associated directly with the lexicon itself. Therefore, it is feasible that code-switching is a result of mixing two lexicons in the course of a single derivation. From this ideology, lexical units may be chosen from the lexicon of either language to introduce features into numeration. These features must subsequently be checked for convergence in the exact same way as monolingual features must be checked (MacSwan, 1999). In this lexicalist approach, no 'control structure' is *a priori* compulsory to mediate contradictory requirements of the two grammars because the computational system is assumed to be invariant.

As is the case in most academic disciplines, there may not be a unanimous consensus on the exact way to account for all acceptable code-switches. Nevertheless, there is a clear consent within the field that the phenomenon of code-switching is both a product of natural human language formation and is controlled by universal constraints. Certainly, the mere existence of these constraints suggests the formal and structural component of code-switching. In essence, 'code-switching is not distributed randomly in the sentence but rather it occurs at specific points' (Muysken and Milroy, 1995: 177).

The argument that Spanglish is unstructured and haphazard is hence of little value. The omnipresent code-switching seen in Spanglish is not only structured, but, more significantly, a mark of bilingual competence that enables a particular cohort of people to select one language or another in order to increase effective communication. Stavans echoes this comment noting that Spanglish is 'not a haphazard jumble of words ... [but] ... it is fixing its own morphosyntax' (2003a: 144). This 'selection' of dual-language use accompanied by lexical adaptations serves as the creation of not only an individual identity but also a community identity. It is just this dual-identity that the term 'Spanglish' itself encompasses.

The relationship of Spanglish to identity within the Mexican-American community

The platform on which Spanglish stands, that of code-switching and lexical adaptations, serves as the basis for the discussion of how Spanglish relates to identity, in particular within the Mexican-American community. In its most basic function, language expresses identity, for identity is language. Per Soler:

'Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language' (1999: 276). Most would argue that one can not truly be Chinese, meaning identify oneself as Chinese, without speaking Chinese; or French without speaking French; or Mexican without speaking Spanish. Yiddish, a language frequently related to Spanglish in its origin and development (see Stavans, 1999; 2000; 2003a; 2003b), serves as a primary example of the stringent relationship between the language in question and the identity of those who speak it. The term 'Yiddish' translates to 'Jewish', marking the strict relationship between the language spoken and the ethnic group speaking it and further demonstrating that even the name of the language encompasses the identity of those who speak it.

It is for just this reason that languages often take on the name of the country or region associated with them. As Ávila purports, '*La identidad de una nación – entendida como grupo étnico – tiene como un atributo fundamental, sin duda, el idioma que se aprende* [the identity of a nation – understood as an ethnic group – has as a fundamental attribute, without a doubt, the language that is learned]' (2003: 40). In the less frequent case where the language does not overtly mark the location where it is spoken within its name, such as Spanish, which can denote someone from Spain, Venezuela, Mexico, Paraguay, or a myriad of other countries possibly including the United States, problems arise with terminology. The United States Census Bureau, aware of this issue, has consistently been forced to modify terminology for questions regarding the race of those who speak Spanish in the United States, ranging from years where the term 'Latino' sufficed, to now the varying options which include 'Latino', 'Hispanic', 'Chicano', 'Puerto Rican', 'Mexican', 'Cuban', 'Other Hispanic or Latino', and others (Durand, 2004).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Spanglish is the term most commonly denoted to refer to those who speak this variant. The term itself incorporates two languages, Spanish and English, and by consequence, two cultures. 'Spanglish' is identity. It is the reality under which the more than 25 million Mexican-Americans in California find themselves living. For this reason, Morales entitles his entire book about the identity of Spanish speakers living in the United States as *Living in Spanglish* (2002) and Stavans cries out time and time again that the separation of Spanish and English no longer accounted for the new identity under which he was living as a Mexican in the United States: 'expression came with a price. I felt inhabited by another self, another identity' (2003a: 130). This 'other self' is Spanglish.

As in the case examined earlier of Richard Rodriguez, it is not surprising that Stavans found himself literally between two worlds. Both social and psychoanalytic theories have long been working under the assumption that one's self-identity is its own non-unitary object whereby communication is

'directed not only to others but also to the individual himself' (Mead, 1934: 139). Moreover, in search for self-identity, individuals often feel 'divided within themselves' (Burkitt, 1991: 1). We can thus assume that a person who literally finds himself between two cultures, as in the case of many Mexican-Americans, will encounter even more division within themselves as they search for an identity that represents their bicultural existence. Other writers, such as Soler, express this same sentiment. 'This new identity, [a] source of cultural strength and survival, needs a new language' and Spanglish is the result (1999: 275).

Within the fields of sociology and anthropology, a term often used to describe the status of Mexican migrants in the United States is 'transnationalism'. While scholars argue about what the term 'transnationalism' truly denotes, an examination of the two root words it contains will suffice. 'Trans' meaning across or between and 'nationalism' meaning pertaining to a nation, succinctly describes the situation of Mexican migrants and subsequent Mexican-American generations, that of the meshing of two cultures, and by consequence two languages. Thus, the vital Mexican identity brought with them, or in the case of the second generation, inculcated by their immigrant parents, and seen in their language use, has reflected their 'cultural reality' (Vivanco Cervero, 2003: 233) or been a 'manifestation of culture' (Llombart, 2003: 4). Even a lay-person without expertise in linguistics, anthropology, or sociology could predict that the extensive and prolonged contact of two cultures will likely result in language change.

In the case of the first generation, upon arrival to the United States, a new self begins to emerge which reflects the immigrant's dual-identity that is constantly re-forming. Most desperately want to retain at least part of their heritage, for nothing makes you feel more attached to your identity and nation of origin than leaving it. As one recent immigrant struggling with her identity proclaims, 'I'm not turning my back on what I came from' (Alvarez, 1998: 487). However, most also want to assimilate to the country and culture they have joined. What results is a 'mishmash [of] what Latino identity is about [and] the verbal mestizaje that results from a transient people' (Stavans, 2003b: 54). In the case of the second generation, many would contend that while their citizenship is American, they do not quite feel as American as their Caucasian counterparts or as Mexican as their first-generation parents. The labels 'Chicano' and 'Mexican-American' have come to define more for them than a mere marking of ancestry but more accurately the realm in which they live, not Mexican or American enough to be truly either.

Soler even dedicates an entire section of her analysis to 'code-switching as an expression of identity conflict' (1999: 276). Here, she argues that immigrants are searching for a linguistic model that accurately represents and expresses their experiences and that Spanglish validates the shared experience of Mexican

immigrant community living in Los Angeles and elsewhere as the language itself incorporates mixing and a 'sense of rootlessness under which transnationals and their kin must survive' (1999: 276). When describing the Chicana experience, she asserts:

Chicana identity is the result of a synergy of cultures. Chicanas or Mexican-American women live in the borderlands, at the crossroads of different and often contradictory cultures. They are considered neither white nor black nor fully Indian; they are not viewed as Spanish or Latin Americans, and they are definitely not 'real' Americans. They suffer from a painful struggle of identities. (Soler, 1999: 271)

This synergy of cultures and struggle with identity is reflected in language use and results in the mixing of Spanish and English, which is quite possibly the only way to linguistically validate the experience of the Mexican-American living in the United States.

The struggle with identity after migration has recently been reflected in the poetry of many immigrant writers. As Aparicio comments in his article entitled *La vida es un Spanglish disparatero*, Spanglish is the linguistic code used to mark the incoherence and bilingual nature of the writer's identity as it offers a 'solution to this linguistic dilemma [with] a reconciliation in [the writer's] acceptance of Spanglish as his tool of expression and as an identity marker' (1988: 157). While coming from a Puerto Rican poet, Stavans echoes this sentiment in illustrating Tato Laviera's poem:

i think in Spanish
i write in English
i want to go back to puerto rico,
but I wonder if my kin could live
in ponce, mayaguez and carolina
tengo las venas aculturadas
escribo en spanglish
abraham en espanol
abraham in English
tato in Spanish
'taro' in English
tonto in both languages
how are you?
??como estas?
i don't know if I'm coming
or si me fui ya. (Laviera, 2000: 556)

Laviera's use of Spanglish and poetic liberty go so far as to neglect to use accents and capitalize certain words such as 'i' and 'puerto rico' in an effort to more fully convey his struggle with this dual identity which has resulted in an often incomplete and bifurcated self that can only be justly expressed in Spanglish.

Comments from Mexican-American Spanglish speakers

Thus far, we have put forth and/or analyzed a fair amount of argumentation in support of the notion that Spanglish is the linguistic embodiment of the juxtaposition of two very different cultures, which meet, intertwine, amalgamate and finally emerge as a unique identity for a particular cohort of people. However, we have yet to discuss how this idea translates into the conscious thought process of Mexican-Americans. How do they view Spanglish? What are their insights as to how and why the linguistic variant is used? Indeed, this section will present interview data that addresses these questions. In doing so, it will be demonstrated that, when probed, the average Mexican-American is quite consciously knowledgeable and systematic in reference to defining what Spanglish is to them, isolating with whom they most naturally use Spanglish as well as why they use Spanglish in most contexts and how this is attributable to their self-identity.

Interviews with five Mexican-Americans living in Los Angeles, who range in age from 20 to 36 years, highlight the fact that Spanglish is a pervasive form of communication since all five, chosen at random, indicate that they use Spanglish on a consistent basis. Given the overwhelming conformity in the subjects' responses, this analysis will primarily take the form of direct quotes from the interviewees as well as any deviations from the group norm. Of the five participants, one labeled herself Spanish dominant – a Mexican native who moved to the United States 20 years prior at the age of 16, three claim to be English dominant and one rates herself a 'true bilingual'. Interestingly, all five provide a similar definition of Spanglish, which invariably mentions the mixing of Spanish and English in discourse.

Turning to the reported use of Spanglish, we note that all subjects state that they employ Spanglish most frequently in intimate relationships, most commonly with family, close friends and others who address them in Spanglish. For example, a 20-year old woman who we will call Angela states:

I use Spanglish in the sense that I change languages from sentence to sentence or for particular words that can't be better said in one language than the other, but I only use this type of Spanglish with my siblings and some of my close bilingual friends.

Conversely, and perhaps more interestingly, all subjects report that they would not feel as comfortable using Spanglish with non-Hispanic people. Another female Mexican-American, 36 years of age, who we will call Sara, claims that such a use would be ‘contrived’. Angela maintains that she would not feel natural speaking to a non-Hispanic in Spanglish because ‘Spanglish is used to describe cultural things’ that non-Hispanics would not identify with. Additionally, a male subject, age 20, ‘Miguel’, states:

Sometimes, if I attempt to speak Spanglish to non-Hispanics, even if they speak a high level of Spanish, they either react in confusion or they mock me, acting as if I didn’t know the word whereas I switched only because it made more sense to me [and so in general I don’t]. I also avoid Spanglish with non-Spanglish speaking Hispanics, a.k.a. Hispanics who despise the ‘improper use’ of Spanish.

Moreover, every interviewee vehemently maintains that they would never use Spanglish in Mexico when visiting family and friends. To the question of whether or not she would use Spanglish in Mexico, Angela retorts, ‘Never! I would never live through the ridicule they’d put me through.’ Additionally, Miguel responds, ‘No, I would avoid it. I often feel ridiculed when I [re]vert to Spanglish. I only use Spanglish with close friends and family [members who] I know are comfortable with it and are like me.’

To further isolate the discourse context in which these speakers would elect to speak Spanglish, they were asked if they would use Spanglish with a Hispanic person from another country – other than Mexico – that they have just met. Uniformly, all adamantly claim they would not. Angela states that Spanglish can be ‘very touchy and personal’. She adds, ‘You have to trust them to be able to switch.’ Another, who we will call Alicia, a 30-year old, replies that she would ‘not want to offend them. I would just speak in Spanish.’

Thus far, the interview data presented offers strong evidence in favor of likening Spanglish to an identity marker. It seems clear that these speakers feel most natural speaking Spanglish with people who they identify as being ‘like them’. Furthermore, when directly asked if they believe Spanglish helps to more precisely define the identity of Mexican-Americans, respondents were all very specific in how and why this is true. Miguel remarks:

Spanglish is a cultural symbol, which represents *la mezcla* which is California culture ... I enjoy speaking it because it shows my diverse identity. I’m not just a Hispanic and I’m not just an Anglo-American – I’m mixed and Spanglish represents that identity.

Alicia ascertains that Spanglish captures her identity as it reflects ‘a hybridity of cultures’. Finally, Angela culminates with:

Spanglish has become a defining point for Mexican-Americans too Mexican to be American and too American to be Mexican.

In conclusion, it seems clear that the link between Spanglish and identity is not at all a clandestine one. That is, the speakers of Mexican-American Spanglish, when asked to ponder why they resort to Spanglish, are quite lucid as well as articulate regarding its usage. As Miguel states:

I'm not 'Mexican', I'm not 'Caucasian'. I'm 'Chicano'. Spanglish is essential to my Chicano identity and community.

Spanglish and the media

Spanglish is a means of accessing and personalizing products for the particular consumer demographic discussed above in the United States and shrewd companies take full advantage of this in Los Angeles. Currently, there are three national networks whose principle language for broadcasting is Spanish: Univisión, Galavisión, Telemundo. Additionally, in many major metropolitan areas within the United States, people have access to many more Spanish local channels. On all of these channels, local or national, Spanglish serves as a common second language and is employed with the explicit intent of identifying with or capturing the attention of a particular demographic. The media and entertainment capital of the world, Los Angeles, frequently reflects this dual identity that Spanglish encompasses. Nely Galan, the president of the Los Angeles television and film company Galan Entertainment, urges, 'Spanglish is the future' (Alvarez, 1998: 483). Whether television, radio, film, newspapers or magazines, Spanglish is present. Spanglish is frequently seen on television programs such as *Cristina* and *Sábado Gigante* (Stavans, 2003b: 14) and even 'Saturday Night Live', in a satire of *Sábado Gigante* which aired on March 6, 2004, broadcast a skit mimicking the Spanglish for which this program is known (Michaels, 2004).

In the realm of radio in which there are more Spanish language radio stations in California than all of Central America, Spanglish abounds. The following is one expert from a local station:

Recuérdales que hoy, esta tarde, vamos a estar en vivo in Dilliards, broadcasting live from 3 to 5, with your chance to win some cool KXTN prizes. Acompañen a sus amigos. (Alvarez, 1998: 485)

Not only the discourse of the disc jockey, but also the music played, incorporate Spanglish. Mexican *raperos* such as Latin Alianza, Chicano 2 Da Bone, Latin Lingo, and Dr. Loco's Rockin Jalapeño band all compose music stemming from Chicano Spanglish. Spanglish is not only embraced by local radio stations

that serve the needs of the greater Los Angeles Hispanic community, rather Spanglish can be heard on the English channels as well in forms of commercials and public-service announcements. In fact, the highest rated talk radio station, KLSX 97.1, in Los Angeles, an Anglo-oriented channel, is the proud provider of Los Angeles' only Spanglish talk radio show entitled *Reyes and Solís*. While callers and hosts alike are encouraged to speak any language they prefer, the most common vernacular heard is undoubtedly Spanglish.

The genres associated with printed press, newspaper and magazine alike also reflect the Spanglish identity of their subscribers. The publisher of *Latina* speaking on behalf of her Spanglish magazine and others such as *Generation ñ*, argues that 'we are the intersection of two and we reflect a life between two languages and two cultures that our readers live in' (Alvarez, 1998: 485). Finally, the more formal segment of media, the newspaper, has not escaped the influence of Spanglish either. Indeed, *La Opinión*, the Los Angeles newspaper founded in 1926 which is the largest circulation Spanish language newspaper in the nation, incorporates a wide range of Spanglish, to the extent that Zaro Ruíz (2003) wrote an entire article dedicated to and entitled the *Influencia del inglés en el español del periódico La Opinión*.

It seems apparent that the media as well as the economic interests that fund its existence have converged on the same conclusion as far as the Hispanic community and Spanglish is concerned. Not only are they aware that the Hispanic community is a crucial consumer group whose collective buying power rivals that of any other minority group, but they also realize that a key part of reaching and identifying with this community is through Spanglish itself. Every medium of the mass communication from comedy shows and talk shows, to serious news, from magazines and newspapers to movies and songs seems to have no doubt that Spanglish is a necessary vehicle of communication as well as a way to identify with a community that truly lives between two cultures.

Conclusion

To summarize, the array of topics discussed in this article demonstrate the inherent connection that human sciences share. That is, in order to fully comprehend the role of identity implicit to language and the conservation of culture through language, one needs to look outside of the proverbial black box of a single discipline. As a result, this analysis calls upon various academic fields including linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and political science. Looking at the topic of Spanglish from the view of only one of the aforementioned disciplines has yielded commentary, opinion, and research that often finds itself in opposition with other analyses. As we have seen, the

topic of Spanglish, and the social and political milieu in which it thrives is a complex and emotionally laden issue. To the extent that opinion is implicit in the analysis of Spanglish, there is no clear much less totally unbiased answer to the question on the status of its legitimacy as a language proper. Therefore, we have provided an analysis of the tangible elements of Spanglish including its rule-governed structure as well as its historical socio-political framework.

There is little doubt that Spanglish is here to stay and will continue to evolve in order to meet the needs of its speakers. In essence, 'only dead languages are never changing' (Stavans, quoted in Friedman, 2001: 196). With the significant increase in the Mexican-American community, in California in particular, Spanglish is far from dead and constantly transforming. Spanglish meets the needs of its speakers in that it allows for the expression of the dual-identity that is the essence of the immigrants' being. Scholars and politicians may find it repugnant but 'language can not be legislated; it is the freest, most democratic form of expression of the human spirit' (Stavans, 2000: 557). Linguists and anthropologists may find it enlightening, but Spanglish will elude us as well as it continues to expand the notion of language contact as never before. Language and identity are intrinsically related and, to this extent, we cannot deny the linguistic reality *de los hispanos*, a group whose population is expected to more than double by 2025 and reach numbers higher than 21 million in California (U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division: 14). Whether Spanglish, and its most widely spoken Mexican dialects, will flourish and become a solidified language has yet to be seen but for now, acknowledgment of this linguistic variety is inevitable for as Sánchez succinctly concludes, *hablemos como hablemos* (let's speak the way we speak) (2001: 11).

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Notes

- 1 The case of Spanglish, in this regard, parallels that of Black Vernacular English (BVE) in which many would argue from a socioeconomic perspective that BVE is nothing more than an improper dialect of Standard English. However, linguistically, we know BVE to be a rule-governed language whose particular grammar is a substrate of English with African influences such as the habitual use of the copula 'be' (Pullum, 1997; Whatley, 1981).
- 2 We acknowledge the possibility that for some speakers code-switches of the type seen in Examples (2) and (3) where a stem + morpheme switch is realized within a single word is produced. However, we also note that such occurrences happen sporadically and are clearly not systematized. It would appear that these types of switches are isolated to one-off occurrences in the moment of simultaneous speech. In fact, these one-off occurrences are often systematically rejected by the same speakers who produced them under the constraints of simultaneous speech when the token is fed back to them. Moreover, the ability to produce such a switch, albeit ungrammatical, only serves to underscore the intimate knowledge of both grammars (English and Spanish) on the part of the bilingual Spanglish speaker.

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