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DEFINING SPANGLISH: A LINGUISTIC CATEGORIZATION
OF SPANISH-ENGLISH CODE SWITCHING IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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Abstract

This paper will linguistically explore the forms of Spanish spoken by Spanish-English bilinguals in the United States in order to argue that Spanglish is a complex linguistic system governed by a set of specific linguistic rules and patterns. I will do this by drawing on previous research in this field that examines the phonological patterns, morphological trends, and syntactic constraints that govern acceptable code switches between English and Spanish (Otheguy, 1993; Rodriguez-Gonzalez and Parafita-Couto, 2012; Rothman and Rell, 2005; Lipski, 2008; et al.). This evaluation of Spanglish will also include description and assessment of different arguments regarding how it can best be described linguistically, ultimately claiming that the most compelling argument poses Spanglish as a well-developed system of Spanish-English code-switching.

Introduction

Spanglish is a significant linguistic phenomenon in the United States, particularly prominent in certain large urban centers such as Miami and Los Angeles. Large numbers of immigrants continue to enter the United States each year from Mexico, Central America, and South America, adding to the population of approximately 53 million people of Hispanic/Latino heritage living in the United States as of 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau). Of this population, over 34 million are Spanish speakers, 26 million of whom speak English either fluently or “well” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). As native Spanish-speaking families adapt to life in the United States and raise children who are quickly acculturated into the broader English-speaking American culture, the forms of Spanish spoken in the home and in the surrounding community become markedly Anglicized. This linguistic change encompasses structural, lexical, and phonological elements of the language.

Spanglish, when examined linguistically, represents a set of complex and rule-governed processes that make it a topic ripe for study. It is widely spoken, and the pervasiveness of the Spanish language and of Latino culture in the United States is difficult to ignore. However, despite its relevance and linguistic value, Spanglish has not received the amount of scholarly attention that it seems to merit. Alfredo Ardila (2005) claims that “Spanglish, in any one of its diverse variations, is spoken by millions of people. There is no question that it represents the most important contemporary linguistic phenomenon that the United States has faced that has unfortunately been understudied” (p. 65). Despite its interesting possibilities for linguistic research, Spanglish has been the subject of a disproportionately small amount of study.

One possibility for the relative lack of research in this field is the fact that Spanglish has historically been viewed in a negative light. The tense political climate surrounding issues of illegal immigration and residency has led to negative perceptions of Spanish speakers. Even the presence of a recognizably Hispanophone accent while speaking English may be perceived as a marker of lower socioeconomic status or lack of U.S. citizenship. Standard forms of English tend to be favored, and many consider Spanish-English code switching to represent incompetence in one or both languages. González-Echeverría (1997) goes so far as to say that Spanglish “poses a grave danger to Hispanics culture and to the advancement of Hispanics in mainstream America” (p. 46). Many argue that Spanglish does a disservice to its speakers by preventing them from being able to speak standard English in other social contexts. Yet the fact remains that a large group of people in the United States speak this way, and that Spanglish is more socially and linguistically complex than simply failing to speak either English or Spanish well. These misconceptions provoke ample motivation for the study of Spanglish and scholarly validation of the people who speak it.

By reviewing past literature on Spanglish and exploring its linguistic patterns, this paper will argue that Spanglish is not an uneducated, unstructured mixing of two languages, but a complex communicative system that demands attention. The speech patterns that are characteristic of Spanglish can be found among Americans who are well-integrated into American society and perfectly capable of conversing in standard English. Spanglish is not a chaotic mashup of two languages, but a rule-governed and expressive hybrid of two sociolinguistic identities that can co-exist within a particular person, family, or community. Like Spanish, English, Japanese, or any other language, Spanglish can be studied analytically,

examined grammatically, and characterized in terms of patterns and rules that are shared among its speakers. While in society it seems to function at the bridge between two prominent cultures, it remains the linguistic equal of essentially any other language.

Before examining the rules and patterns of Spanglish, it remains necessary to understand the various contexts in which the term is used. Some uses of the word, although common, are irrelevant to the focus of this paper. The term “Spanglish” can be used to describe many different phenomena. Lipski (2008) asserts that “Spanglish is an overly facile catchphrase that has been used to refer to so many disparate and inaccurately described language phenomena as to have become essentially meaningless” (p. 70). For example, many of my classmates over the years have used the term “Spanglish” to refer to the chaotic learner-language spoken by English-speaking Spanish students whose Spanish is riddled with English words and inaccurate translations. Alternatively, it may be used to describe the integration of Anglicisms into Spanish, or even the use of pseudo-Spanish words in a derogatory way (Lipski, 2008, p. 53). John McWhorter (2000) argues that most people use the term “Spanglish” to refer to “the increasing tendency for first- and second-generation immigrants from Puerto Rico and Mexico to use a great many English words when speaking Spanish” (p. 45).

Generally, all definitions signal something that exists in the shared space between the English language and the Spanish language, either on purpose or due to some kind of linguistic interference. Despite the wide variety of definitions, this paper will focus primarily on the speech patterns of Spanish-English bilinguals. As a result, the discussion will encompass many different linguistic processes, such as loan translation, phonological assimilation, semantic extension, and

code-switching, as these elements illustrate the many complex features of bilingual speech patterns.

Spanglish, in the context of this paper, will refer to the language of Spanish-English bilinguals in the United States. One group within this category includes heritage speakers of Spanish, typically children of immigrants from Hispanophone countries who were born in the United States. They have grown up attending English-speaking schools, yet may continue to speak varying amounts of Spanish in the home, especially with grandparents and other older relatives. While these speakers tend to speak both Spanish and English, their articulateness in each language is not necessarily equal. Heritage speakers may speak both Spanish and English, although some may not be able to use their Spanish as eloquently as others within a full range of social contexts. Also included in this group are vestigial speakers, people who, according to Lipski (2008), “spoke the language in question during their childhood, but who have subsequently lost much of their native ability” (p. 56). Speakers in this category usually live in places where there has been very little recent immigration from Hispanophone countries, as continued immigration tends to prevent the complete replacement of Spanish by English in some U.S. communities.

The attrition of certain aspects of standard Spanish is often directly correlated with the individual’s generational displacement from the family’s immigration from Mexico. Silva-Corvalán (1994), in a study of different generational groups of Mexican Spanish-speakers living in Los Angeles, found that second- and third-generation speakers exhibited, to varying degrees, loss of clause complexity, simplification of auxiliary-type verbs, and evaluation/orientation adjunct information while telling narratives in Spanish (p. 75). Gutiérrez

and Silva-Corvalán (1993) found that speakers within this group exhibited a high level of clitic loss and neutralizations in case, gender, and number (p. 85). Despite the potential for some language attrition, Spanglish as code-switching still requires speakers to be perfectly capable communicators in both languages. John McWhorter (2000) argues that “if the switching were a matter of gaps in vocabulary or grammar, then we would expect pauses and ‘umms,’ but a quick listen to a Puerto Rican code-switching on a subway in New York will assure you that there is nothing of the kind” (p. 42). While these Spanglish speakers exist along a nuanced spectrum of articulateness, Spanglish is not a learner language, but one shared among Spanish-English bilinguals.

Within the United States, the language of bilinguals differs within the various contexts in which Spanish is spoken. The Hispanophone community in the U.S. is comprised of immigrants from many countries whose residents speak markedly different forms of Spanish. While the majority of U.S. Hispanophones claim Mexican heritage, the United States is home to many Spanish-speakers from Central America, South America, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and elsewhere in the Hispanophone world (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The regional variations among these dialects influence the diversity of Spanish spoken on U.S. soil. Research on the Spanish language in the United States is typically centered in particular communities, particularly those that are home to large concentrations of immigrants from the same country. Cuban Spanish in Miami, Puerto Rican Spanish in New York, Mexican Spanish in Los Angeles — each offers its own set of linguistic peculiarities. While both Cuban and Puerto Rican Spanish have been the subject of significant scholarly work, Mexican Spanish in the United States has received a relatively small amount of study for representing the largest portion of country’s Hispanic

population (Rothman and Rell, 2005, p. 519). This type of Spanglish is often called *Chicano*, a term used to refer to second-generation Mexican Americans and anything to do with the collective cultural identity of this group. Most of my research is drawn from generalized patterns of Anglicized Spanish across the U.S. and is considered to be consistent at the structural level among many groups, but I will use examples that may pertain to a particular group.

Exploring Definitional Approaches to Spanglish

Investigation into the language of Spanish-English bilinguals in the United States sparks a need to categorize it. Linguists use a specific set of terms to define various systems of communication. These categories can be helpful in understanding the social function of a particular set of speech patterns, as well as its relationship to other linguistic forms. Important distinctions are made, for example, between languages and dialects, or between pidgins and creoles. Just as there are many disparate definitions of Spanglish, there exists no consensus among scholars regarding how to categorize the language of Spanish-English bilinguals in the U.S. Even so, many attempts have been made to either assign Spanglish a linguistic definition or argue against its inclusion in a particular category.

Some scholars are unconcerned by the status of Spanglish, acknowledging the subjective nature of many of the judgments made for the sake of categorizing it. For example, Jason Rothman and Amy Beth Rell (2005), in their article *Linguistic Analysis of Spanglish*, are interested in the features of Spanglish as spoken by Mexican-American population in Los Angeles, but not in assigning it any particular distinction. In their words, “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 opinions” (p. 516). In other words, Spanglish has no need for categorization beyond the acknowledgement that it is a vehicle for effective communication within a particular group. This response is reasonable but unsatisfying. Ardila (2005) refutes this line of thinking, arguing that taking Spanglish seriously means that it “should be analyzed in a systematic way, using standard linguistic procedure” (p. 62). Acknowledging the validity of Spanglish means analyzing it within the existing framework for linguistic categorization of other language forms and seeing where it fits best. The following paragraphs will explore several different possibilities for the categorization of Spanglish, including pidgin, creole, language, interlanguage, dialect, or something else entirely.

In the places where two mutually unintelligible languages make contact, pidgins often form, allowing speakers of both languages to forge communication. Does Spanglish, often serving as a “bridge” between English and Spanish, fit this definition? Most scholars agree that Spanglish is likely not a pidgin. A pidgin develops when two languages need to forge some kind of communication for a specific purpose, such as trade or forced labor, in a setting where there is “an unequal bilingualism” (Rodríguez-González & Parafita-Couto, 2012, p. 473). Ardila (2005) acknowledges that similar processes may occur in Spanglish, noting that “many of the English borrowings are due to the need to have a common communication code” (p. 66). But as most true Spanglish speakers are Spanish-English bilinguals, Spanglish fails to fit this definition. A pidgin is further ruled out because the hybrid form usually develops into a “complete natural language” (a creole) in subsequent generations (Lipski, 2008, p. 69). As Spanglish speakers are able to

code-switch between the two languages in nuanced social settings, there is little evidence that it is evolving into a single natural language.

Another interesting model to consider is interlanguage. At first glance, the idea is certainly compelling, as the word itself implies something that exists in the space between two languages, which seems like a reasonable understanding of Spanglish. Ardila (2005) regularly uses the term “interlanguage” to describe Spanglish, even while arguing for it to be considered a dialect of Spanish. He says that “when two languages come in close contact, an interlanguage may emerge,” and argues that Spanglish exemplifies this (p. 64). Yet Ardila’s definition of interlanguage is unsatisfyingly general. Scholars in the field of second language acquisition use the term interlanguage more specifically to refer to the language of L2 learners, not of bilinguals. Kramsch and Whiteside (2007) define interlanguage as “a psycholinguistic concept meant to validate learners’ errors by considering them not as reprehensible lapses but as positive evidence of learning, that is, of the restructuring, generalizing, analyzing, inferencing, and testing of hypotheses going on in the mind” (p. 908). This definition poses Spanglish as a kind of learner language, marked by repeated interference from the L1 as the brain continues to learn the structure of the L2. Yet Spanglish is a structured system of code-switching that seems to generally follow the same rules regardless of the speaker’s grammatical abilities in standard Spanish. The challenge here is that, as Lipski (2008) mentioned, many Spanglish speakers are not perfect speakers of either standard English or standard Spanish. While this is often true, Spanglish is not produced by speakers trying to speak one language over the other and making mistakes. There are more complex social and identity factors in play. Therefore, to categorize

Spanglish as an interlanguage is not only linguistically inaccurate, but also failure to acknowledge its social function.

Others argue that Spanglish is simply a language in its own right. While this may seem outlandish, similar claims have been made in the past in an attempt to affect language policy. In 1996, the Oakland Unified School District in Michigan issued a statement that upheld the linguistic value of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), spoken by many of its students, by appealing to the phonological, morphological and syntactic features of the language and its patterned similarities with African linguistic structures. The resolution states, “the validated and persuasive linguistic evidence is that African-Americans. . . have retained a West and Niger-Congo African linguistic structure in the substratum of their speech and by this criteria are not native speakers of black dialect or any other dialect of English” (Oakland Unified School District, 1996). The school district clearly labeled AAVE as its own language, and called for fair opportunities to be given to students in the district who had the disadvantage of not being taught in their native language. Many linguists and linguistic organizations crafted responses to this argument, further refining the distinctions between a language and a dialect (see also Rickford, 1997; McWhorter, 1998). The difficulty here is that defining something as a language rather than a dialect or some other form often comes down to political or identity factors.

The idea of Spanglish as a dialect is somewhat more compelling than calling it a language in its own right, but the two concepts are closely intertwined. As a given language changes and evolves within communities that speak it, different dialects of that language may emerge. Speech from each dialect community will be clearly distinct from one another, even while they may still be mutually intelligible. At some point, over time, these dialects may

develop into different languages in the same way Spanish, French, and Italian each developed from Latin. However, as mentioned previously, distinctions between languages and dialects can often be purely political. Two mutually intelligible speech forms may be labeled as different languages, especially if there is a national border or intercultural tension involved. John McWhorter (2000) notes that “dialects of a language are all the result of the exact same kind of gradual change as different languages are; the difference is simply that in dialects, the change has not gone far enough to produce what we would process as different languages” (p. 4). Ardila (2005) argues that Spanglish might be considered an “unrecognized Spanish dialect,” but that it will likely not develop into a full language because of the constant immigration of monolingual Spanish-speakers into the U.S. and the fact that “Spanish speakers move to Spanglish only after years of living in the country, or as a result of being exposed to both languages since birth” (p. 78). Another challenge of analyzing Spanglish as a dialect is that it has so many disparate forms. The development of a dialect often involves the isolation of a particular community from another in order for the speech patterns to develop collectively among all its speakers. Lipski (2008) argues that “Although there are lexical Anglicisms and calques that are used by nearly all bilingual Latino speakers, spontaneous creations are more common, which thus undermines the notion of a stable Spanglish core” (p. 70). The lack of a common core makes the idea of Spanglish as a dialect questionable at most.

As Spanglish does not seem to fit within the particular categories mentioned here, the most compelling argument for Spanglish is the one proposed by Lipski (2008), which argues that Spanglish is no more than a set of borrowings, loans, and instances of fluent and rule-governed code-switching. Spanglish is governed by instances of code-switching that conform to a number

of specific patterns and rules at many linguistic levels. Its complexity demands attention to these rules. This definition is helpful because it takes into account that Spanglish, though exhibiting some hybridization of the two language through loanwords and semantic extensions, requires complete and functional knowledge of the “traffic rules” of two separate languages. It is a patterned system in that the ability to switch between these two languages takes place in certain contexts and under certain restrictions. Spanglish is its own entity only in its successful alternation between two pre-existing entities — English and Spanish. For this reason, labeling Spanglish as a system of code-switching seems especially compelling.

Zentella (1997) asserts that “English-Spanish switching is a creative style of bilingual communication that accomplishes important cultural and conversational work” (p. 49). This definition contributes many important factors to our understanding of Spanglish. First, it affirms that Spanglish is spoken by bilinguals, as discussed previously. Additionally, Zentella argues that this form of language serves a purpose that is both conversational and cultural. In doing so, she affirms the social value of Spanglish and its ability to accomplish two important goals of language: to convey information and to construct social relationships. Finally, Zentella’s definition introduces Spanglish as synonymous with code-switching. While many models exist for trying to explain Spanglish as a linguistic phenomenon, the patterns and rules of code-switching remain central to understanding how it works.

Many scholars who have studied Spanglish have put its defining patterns into distinct categories. For example, Rothman & Rell (2012) define Spanglish using three distinctions:

- 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. (p. 521)

These three levels of Spanglish helpfully categorize some of the patterns exhibited in the speech of Spanish-English bilinguals. First, Spanglish is seen in changes at the surface level through word borrowing, phonological changes and morphological changes. Other changes happen more deeply at the structural level. There are also changes in meaning, seen through semantic extension and the use of certain words over others to represent different cultural realities and relationships. Rodríguez-González and Parafita-Couto (2012) offer three simpler categories: borrowing from English to Spanish, inter- and intra-sentential code-switching, and calques. Borrowing from English to Spanish is realized through loanwords, derivational blends, and extensions or semantic loans. Code-switching can happen within a sentence or between sentences (p. 465). Each of these will be explored in greater depth through analysis of many scholars' observed examples of Spanglish.

Phonological, Morphological, and Syntactic Patterns of Spanglish

Often the first examples of Spanglish talked about are new words or phrases that (often humorously) combine English and Spanish elements. While these in themselves do not constitute Spanish-English code-switching, they are a good place to start as they show some of the linguistic influences of English on U.S. Spanish. Within this category are nouns like *rifo* ("roof," Spanish "*techo*") and *lonche* ("lunch," Spanish "*almuerzo*"). English nouns are adopted into Spanish spoken in the United States and are naturally altered to conform to Spanish phonological

patterns. This is evident in sentences like “*El baby está bonito con su T-shirt,*” a perfectly Spanish sentence that contains two loanwords from English, “baby” and “T-shirt.” Why use *baby* instead of Spanish *bebé*? Why use *T-shirt* instead of Spanish *camiseta*? The choice to borrow the English word does not signal that the speaker does not know the word in Spanish. Rothman and Rell (2012) note that there is almost always a minimal pair, or equivalent translatable word, for words of either English or Spanish borrowed into the lexicon of another, yet “for reasons of association, effect, emphasis, etc., the speaker decides that the moment of simultaneous speech to adapt the word from one of the languages while superimposing the phonology of the other” (p. 521). A possible explanation for this phenomenon will be discussed shortly.

Nouns make up the most populated category of English loanwords in Spanish, but many verbs have also undergone this process of adoption and assimilation:

Telefonear - to call (*llamar*)
Luncheare - to eat lunch (*almorzar*)
Chequear - to check (*verificar, comprobar*)
Huachar - to watch (*mirar, ver*)
Parquear - to park (*estacionar*)
Taipiar - to type (*escribir [a máquina]*)
Espeliar - to spell (*deletrear*)
Frizar - to freeze (*congelar*)
Hanguear - to hang out (*pasar un rato [con amigos]*)
Tochar - to touch (*tocar*)
Liquear - to leak (*gotear*)

(Lipski, 2008; Rothman and Rell, 2012; Sanchez, 2008; González-Muñiz, 2005)

Rothman and Rell (2012) call these “derivational blends,” as they appear to be an English word combined to a Spanish affix (p. 465). Interestingly, each of these examples ends in *-ar*, known as the first conjugation and certainly the most common. It makes sense that new additions to Spanish would adopt the most unmarked infinitive verb ending. The adoption of English

loanwords changes the words to conform to not only the phonological patterns of Spanish, but also the morphological structures.

If each of these loanwords and derivational blends has a direct Spanish equivalent, what leads a bilingual speaker to choose the English word? Why go to the trouble of adopting an English word and outfitting it with the morphology and phonology of Spanish when an equivalent word already exists in Spanish? Otheguy and García (1993) argue that the conceptions and associations a person has around a word in a particular language influences her decision to use that word over another. For example, they gave a Spanish interview to a Puerto Rican woman in New York City and asked her to speak about two different topics: the first was her experience eating school lunch during her childhood in Puerto Rico, the second was her kids' experience eating lunch at their school in New York City (p. 142). When talking about her school in Puerto Rico, she tended to speak standard Spanish, and remembers eating in the "*comedor escolar*" ("school lunch room"). When talking about her kids, however, she said, "*comen en el lunch room*," ("they eat in the lunch room"). Both *comedor escolar* and *lunch room* essentially refer to the same thing. The interviewee clearly knows and uses the standard Spanish *comedor escolar* for "school lunch room," but for some reason she chose to use "*el lunch room*" when talking about her kids' school in the U.S.

Otheguy and García (1993) claim that this decision comes down to the cultural conceptualizations the woman has about each word. Because the woman's childhood took place in Spanish, her idea of a Puerto Rican lunchroom is connected to *comedor escolar*. While her kids also go to school and eat lunch, their school experience is wrapped up in English, and her mental conception of this lunchroom is in English: "while the referents are superficially the same

or similar, the concepts are different, and require different linguistic formulations” (Otheguy and García, 1993, p. 142). González-Muniz (2005), in his mini-glossary of Spanglish, describes *coffí*, an adoption from English “coffee,” as an American-style coffee, markedly different in meaning from the Spanish *café*. Examples such as these demonstrate that Spanglish words may exist because they become associated with concepts that are different from those of their equivalents or cognates in standard Spanish.

Another example of both phonological and conceptual adaptation is found in one of Amy Rothman’s studies of Spanglish and identity (2002). The sentence was spoken by a Salvadoran woman in Los Angeles who considers herself a monolingual Spanish speaker:

Cuando fui(mo) al [super-marketa] la [babi-siter] e[h]taba en casa con la[h] niñas que jugaba[η] a las [Barbie].

When [we] went to the supermarket, the babysitter was home with the children who were playing Barbies. (Rothman, 2002, p. 521)

Two words in this sample are English loanwords that have been phonologically adapted into Spanish — *babysitter* and *Barbies*. Note, for example, the lax front vowel /ɪ/ in *babysitter*, not present in the phonemic inventory of Spanish, has been made tense to match the similar front vowel /i/ present in Spanish. The word *supermarketa* seems almost English, or at least closer to the English word *supermarket* than it is to the Spanish *supermercado*. However, the phonemes in the word reflect those present in the phonemic inventory of Spanish, not the English ones in *supermarket*. The addition of the final “a” [*supermarket* → *supermarketa*] is merely a meaningless morpheme that makes the English word more consistent with Spanish phonology — especially since it differs in grammatical gender from its Spanish equivalent.

Why use *supermarketa* over *supermercado*? Again, the idea of what comprises a “supermarket” as compared to a *supermercado* comes down to the cultural conceptualization of

each word and its appropriate social context. It is important to note that words like this are used by self-proclaimed monolingual Spanish speakers as well as bilinguals, as this example shows us. Words like *rufó* and *supermarketa* are loanwords and therefore do not exemplify true Spanish-English code-switching; however, they helpfully demonstrate the ways in which Spanish in the U.S. is being continually shaped by contact with English.

Other examples of English influence on U.S. Spanish are English idioms and phrasal verbs translated directly into Spanish. Idioms are phrases or sayings that “become commonly known and understood within communities with meanings that are not literally tied to the meanings of words used” (Hall, 2005, p. 142). These new phrases are often word-for-word translations for English idiomatic expressions that retain the meaning of the English idiom even though they may not function idiomatically in standard Spanish. A Peruvian or Argentine speaker of Spanish would understand the words being uttered, but not the meaning of the phrase as a whole. One popular example is *te llamo para atrás* (“I’ll call you back”). The *para atrás* construction — often shortened to *patrás* — has produced a number of Spanglish phrasal verbs which replicate Spanish expressions that originally have the same meanings as expressions using the English verb + *back*. A few more examples are listed here:

Te llamo patrás - I’ll call you back
Pagar patrás - To pay someone back
Pensar patrás - To think back
Hablar patrás - To talk back (Lipski, 2008).

Other examples that do not use the *patrás* construction:

Tener un buen tiempo - To have a good time (*pasarla bien*)
Patearla - To “kick it”/relax (*relajar*)
Viaje redonda - Round trip (*viaje de ida y vuelta*)

These translated idioms are unique to U.S. Spanish because they carry semantic meaning that is unequivocally derived from U.S. English.

How structurally significant are these changes? Some argue that these idiomatic phrases are simply the result of adopting an English structure into Spanish and replacing the English words with Spanish ones. Ricardo Otheguy (1993) offers an alternative perspective, claiming that the use of *para atrás* is as fully consistent with standard Spanish as the similar phrase *de vuelta* in River Plate Spanish. He argues that

Speakers of Spanish in the U.S. could very well have gotten the idea from speakers of English. . . . But they then deployed the resources of their language in a manner that, to repeat, is syntactically and semantically different from that of English, and that, therefore, appears to involve no alteration of any systemic area of Spanish lexis or grammar.

(Otheguy, 1999, p. 35)

However, regardless of the exact structural impact of these phrases on their Spanglish counterparts, these idiomatic expressions remain unique to Hispanophones in the United States and clearly reflect English's influence on U.S. Spanish. Just like the loanwords *lonche* and *rufo*, the idioms are not spoken exclusively by Spanish-English bilinguals, but have been adopted into Spanish in the United States because of close contact with English. Therefore, while not representative of Spanish-English code-switching, they serve as a helpful starting point in determining the kinds of influence English has had on U.S. Spanish.

As seen with the previous examples, the semantics of English and Spanish words begin to shift and reflect new conceptualizations in the places where both languages are in close contact. This often happens through semantic extension, which occurs when the meaning of a particular

word is extended beyond its actual scope in the language. This is clearly seen in Ricardo Otheguy's observation of a bilingual six-year-old girl from New York:

Mami, ¿cómo ese niño sabe a Eric?
Mami, how does that child know Eric? (Otheguy, 1993, p. 23)

The child's use of the verb *saber* in this sentence is not standard Spanish, but reflects a semantic extension of "to know." *Saber*, as she is using it, is modeled after the broader usage of English word "to know," despite the fact that in standard Spanish this context calls for the word *conocer*, the word used to talk about knowing or being familiar with people. Other examples of semantic extension include examples of Spanish words with false cognates in English. In these instances, the meanings of certain words are changed from their original Spanish definition to fit the definition of their false English cognate. Examples include:

Sensible (in standard Spanish, "sensitive"; not "sensible")
Realizar ("to perform" or "to accomplish"; not "to realize")
Principal ("first"; not "head of a school")
Aplicar ("to enforce"; not "to apply [for a job]")
Libreria ("bookstore," not "library")
Ordenar ("to arrange"; not "to order [food]").

Much to the chagrin of Spanish purists, these words are commonly used among Spanish-English bilinguals in the U.S. to refer to the meaning of their false cognates.

While the adoption or extension of individual words or phrases produce noticeable changes in U.S. Spanish, the type of Spanglish categorized by code-switching takes the form of rule-governed Spanish-English alternation at the phrasal or sentence level. Generally, code-switching is always acceptable at the sentence level, typically called inter-sentential code-switching. There is no problem with switching between sentences, even within the same utterance: "I'm fine. *¿Tú cómo estás?*" (Rodríguez-González and Parafita-Couto, 2012, p. 465).

When one sentence is English and the other is in Spanish, there is little danger of violating the “traffic rules” of either language. Each sentence, though semantically related in the context of the conversation, stands alone structurally.

What causes an individual to switch intersententially from one language to another within a single conversation? Both linguistic and identity factors may be involved in this switch. Skiba (1997) argues that “a speaker may not be able to express him/herself in one language so switches to the other to compensate for the deficiency. As a result, the speaker may be triggered into speaking in the other language for a while.” If Spanglish speakers are always bilinguals, how does this happen? Perhaps, as with the *comedor* vs. *lunchroom* example, certain topics are simply easier and more natural for someone to talk about in one language over the other. For many heritage speakers who speak Spanish primarily at home and English primarily at school or work, certain topics of conversation may lend themselves more naturally to discourse in a particular language. The speaker may feel more able to fully express him or herself in English when talking about school, but use Spanish to discuss family matters. This is either because they have the vocabulary to better discuss these things in a particular language, or because their identity in that particular setting is connected to one language over the other. Skiba (1997) adds that “switching commonly occurs when an individual wishes to express solidarity with a particular social group,” or even “to convey his or her attitude toward the listener.” For these reasons and others, a speaker may alternate between languages at the inter-sentence level.

Within the confines of a single sentence, the rules become more complicated. A speaker cannot logically switch between English and Spanish at any given point in the sentence; intra-sentential code-switching is subject to specific syntactic rules. Lipski (2008) claims that

there are specific grammatical and syntactic environments in which code-switching can and cannot occur. The following table lists some of the constraints of Spanish-English code-switching:

Code-switching CAN happen:	Code-switching CANNOT happen:
Between an article and a noun Between a complement and a subordinate clause Between a conjunction and one of the conjuncts	Between a pronominal subject and a predicate Between a pronominal clitic and a verb Between a sentence-initial interrogative and the rest of the sentence Between an auxiliary and a main verb

(Lipski, 2008, p. 51)

In addition, words of negation usually are in the same language as the thing they modify. While Lipski (2008) also stresses the general unpredictability of code-switching, he finds these patterns significant, as they “reflect the general need to maintain the grammatical rules of each language, following the linear order in both English and in Spanish, and to retain easily identifiable chunks of discourse” (p. 51).

The clearest code-switching examples come from nouns or noun phrases:

I visit *mi abuelo* on the weekends (Rodríguez-González and Parafita-Couto, 2012, p. 465)
Va a haber un benefit at the Starlight Ballroom. (Lipski, 2008. P. 234)
Necesitamos hablar por thirty minutes (ESRC, Seuchar 1)

In the first sentence, *my grandfather* is easily replaced with *mi abuelo*. This is process is essentially the same as the borrowing of loanwords discussed earlier, as in the sentence “*El baby está bonito con su T-shirt.*” While substitution and borrowing of personal nouns are generally acceptable, pronouns are not always, particularly in the subject position. For example, one could say “I visit *mi abuelo*,” but not **Yo* visit my grandfather.” The first and second sentences above show that, as Lipski argues in the table above, the noun and its article do not have to be in the

same language. In the second sentence, however, the speaker doesn't replace a word but starts the sentence in Spanish and finishes it in English. While the switch happens at the noun phrase, the corresponding prepositional phrase is in English. In the third example, the noun phrase "thirty minutes," even while functioning as the object of the preposition, constitutes an acceptable code-switch. The switch must be initiated at an appropriate point in the sentence, but once the language has been changed, the speaker continues according to the rules of the new language.

Some environments are especially favorable for code-switching, such as the anticipation of a proper nouns (Lipski, 2008, p. 51). Rodríguez-González and Parafita-Couto (2012) capture this in their analysis of a conversation fragment taken from the Bangor Miami Corpus, a body of Spanish-English bilingual speech samples collected by Bangor University's ESRC Centre for Research on Bilingualism. I have italicized the Spanish, kept the English in regular print, and bolded proper nouns to highlight their function in this particular example.

Sofia: *pero mi... la... la gente que viven aquí en **Miami Lakes**, they get very upset because of that because dice que **Chili's** was in **Miami Lakes**.*

(Translation: But my... the... the people that live here in Miami Lakes, they get very upset because of that, because they say that Chili's was in Miami Lakes.)

(ESRC, Seuchar 1)

The speaker here exhibits intra-sentential code-switching twice in this sentence, each time motivated by the use of a proper noun. The first time, she switches to English after the proper noun "Miami Lakes," and stays in English until after "because." The subordinating clause, an acceptable switching point in the sentence, allows an easy transition back to Spanish. The proper noun "Chili's" initiates a switch back to English. While there is no way to know for certain what prompted the speaker's alternation from one language to the other, the proper nouns in this

sentence, both from English, seem to have something to do with the switch. The reason these English proper nouns provoke a language switch may be phonological ease or conceptual consistency. Either way, they represent a part of the sentence where code-switching can take place acceptably and naturally.

The Search for a Predictive Framework for Acceptable Code-Switches

How do we know which syntactic environments allow for proper code-switching? Several theories currently exist for what constitutes viable code-switches across languages. While these theories attempt to account for patterns seen across large chunks of data, it is important to note that exceptions abound and that no theory can exhaustively predict every acceptable instance of Spanish-English code-switching. Although research in this field has uncovered a few clear patterns, most scholars admit that “there are many questions that still need to be answered regarding how universal the patterns are and how much variation is allowed” (Rodriguez-Gonzalez and Parafita-Couto, 2012, p. 470). Especially given the proficiency disparities and regional differences among Spanglish speakers, using data to conclusively determine what is an “acceptable” code-switch becomes complicated. MacSwan (2005) notes that “we cannot confidently assume that the absence of a form in naturalistic data means that the structure is not permitted; it may be absent because it cannot occur, or it may be absent because it has not occurred” (p. 2). Lipski (2008) also acknowledges the unpredictability and inconsistency of code-switching. He claims that “more recent research has revealed that a priori hierarchies or typologies of grammatical elements susceptible to borrowing are so riddled with exceptions as to be meaningless in a global sense, although recurring patterns emerge” (p. 230). Exceptions abound, but nonetheless some patterns emerge. Exploration of the patterns of

code-switching has informed a great deal of scholarly work, and these patterns remain helpful in offering generalizations that might account for and predict reasonable switches.

The Equivalence Constraint (Sankoff and Poplack, 1981) attempts to account for acceptable code-switches based on the structural constraints of each language. The Equivalence Constraint (EC) claims that, in general, “codes will switch at points where the surface structures of the languages map onto each other” (Rothman & Rell, 2005, p. 524). Code-switching between English and Spanish typically happens only where the grammatical structures of the two languages are similar enough to allow simple transfer. Rothman and Rell (2005) give the example of the sentence *I gave him a present* (in Spanish, *le dio un regalo*) as one that is unlikely to yield an intra-sentential code-switch because of the indefinite article, *le*, which must precede the verb in the Spanish rendering of the sentence but not in the English (p. 524). In this sentence, the grammatical structures of each language are not similar enough to allow a switch, at least within the verb phrase.

Under the Equivalence Constraint, Spanish-English code-switching cannot happen within possessive phrases or noun/adjective clauses, because the structures of English and Spanish differ in these grammatical contexts. In general, switches occur “at neutral points between whole clauses and sentences, so the traffic rules of both languages are left intact” (McWhorter, 2000, p. 42). Lipski (2008) echoes this, claiming that “in general, there is an overarching requirement that no grammatical rule in their language be violated” (p. 55). The idea that code-switches must maintain the “traffic rules” of both languages is widely accepted. However, while the Equivalence Constraint tends to be a generally helpful guideline, it is neither steadfast rule nor entirely predictive. Just as not all acceptable sentences conform to the EC, not all switches that

conform to the EC are acceptable. For example, the sentences *She has visited the museum* and the Spanish equivalent *Ella ha visitado el museo* are grammatically equivalent, but a switch like **Ella ha visited the museum* would not be acceptable even though it conforms to the Equivalence Constraint. While it is a helpful guideline, it cannot explain all observed patterns of code-switching.

The Free Morpheme Constraint (Sankoff and Poplack, 1981), developed alongside the Equivalence Constraint, is one of the few rules of English-Spanish code-switching that has generally stood the test of time. It states that intra-word code switches are never acceptable and switches can only 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 morpheme” (Rothman and Rell, 2005, p. 524). This eliminates the possibility of some proposed switches that would surely make any bilingual cringe, such as **estamos talk-ando* and **ellos estaban leave-iendo*. Mixing of morphemes at the word level does not create any acceptable code switches. This has been proven to be generally consistent.

At first glance, the Free Morpheme Constraint seems to contradict the evidence of words like *espeliar* and *frizar*, which appear to be English words that have been given Spanish inflectional morphemes. However, I would argue that these words are loanwords, not instances of code-switching. They have become part of the Spanish language in the U.S., and can be used by Spanish-speakers who are not code-switching. They have been phonologically and orthographically adapted into the patterns of Spanish. Once accepted into the Spanish language, they will naturally become subject to the same inflectional processes as any other Spanish word. The Free Morpheme Constraint does not deal with loanwords but with code-switching, which

requires shifting between two set languages and generally retaining the phonological patterns of each language. For this reason, words like *frizar*, though reflecting clear English influence on Spanish, do not violate the Free Morpheme Constraint.

Several other theories emerged in the 1990's regarding the patterns of possible Spanish-English switches. The Functional Head Constraint (Belazi, 1994) states that code-switching cannot occur in between a functional head and its complement. The head of a sentence or phrase is a syntactic feature that determines what the most important lexical item is. For the noun phrase *a large dog*, for example, *dog* is the head and the additional information is the complement (Napoli, 1993, p. 29). The Functional Head Constraint suggests that the language of the head must match the language of its complement. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that this is not always true. Take, for example, these two perfectly grammatical sentences:

Las razones por las que we love to code-switch are many.
Creí que María always told the truth. (Rothman and Rell, 2012, p. 524)

In both sentences, the head of the complement phrase is in Spanish, while the rest is in English. These acceptable code-switches and many others offer counter evidence to Belazi's theory. Therefore, while it remains a helpful guideline, the Functional Head Constraint is not consistently predictive.

Another theory developed to account for switches between two languages is the Matrix Language Model of Analysis (Myers-Scotton, 1993). This theory is based on the premise that one language in the code-switching situation functions as the Matrix Language (ML), or the system that all relevant morphemes and syntactic structures must conform to in order to be deemed acceptable. The ML model argues that code-switches cannot violate the patterns of the

Matrix Language, such as morpheme order. It is similar to the Equivalence Constraint in the sense that code-switching is governed by disparities in the respective structures of the languages involved. However, the ML goes a step further by claiming that, in any given situation, one language is being used as the structural framework that determines which code switches are acceptable. How do we know which language is the Matrix Language in a given code-switching situation? According to Rothman and Rell, this can be discerned by “frequency-based criterion.” In other words, “the ML is the language that contributes the greater number of morphemes to the discourse” (2005, p. 525). It is important to note that the functioning Matrix Language can change over the course of a single conversation.

MacSwan’s Minimalist Program (2005) rejects the Matrix Language framework and argues that code-switching results from the mixing of two lexicons, as long as the features are “checked for convergence in the exact same way as monolingual features must be checked” (Rothman and Rell, 2012, p. 252). The focus of this theory was on “parameters” within the lexicon, not on syntactic rules. MacSwan claims that “phrase structure is derived from the lexicon” through a series of complex mental operations of selection (2005, p. 3). The Minimalist Program (MP) has received some criticism, because his approach seems to suggest the existence of a code-switching specific mechanism, which, some argue, does not have sufficient empirical evidence (Bullock and Toribio, 2010, p. 704). However, when tested, both the Minimalist Program and the Matrix Language Framework (MLF) showed more than 90% accuracy for predicting Spanish-English switches, although neither theory has been able to fully account for all codeswitching data. Rodríguez-González and Parafita-Couto (2012) note that “the MP covered more data, but the MLF was more accurate in its predictions of the adjective position.

The differences in the percentages obtained for coverage for the two theories showed that, in most cases, the MP approach fares better” (p. 470).

Conclusion

Spanglish, the language of Spanish-English bilinguals in the United States, is not an uneducated butchering of two languages, but a complex and rule-governed communicative system that accomplishes important conversational work. It is not a pidgin, a creole, an interlanguage, a dialect, or a language in its own right, but is a structured system of Spanish-English code-switching whose prevalence in the United States means it likely merits much more scholarly attention than it has presently received. While there is still much work to be done to find a complete framework for Spanish-English code-switching, the observable patterns of Spanglish-English alternation demonstrate its structured consistency while still leaving room for variation.

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APPENDIX

Faith and Scholarship

As a committed Christian and passionate student, I find that my faith in Christ naturally influences how I approach my academic field. My current religious convictions give rise to a richer understanding of linguistics and cultural studies because I see language and culture as clear expressions of the diversity of God's people. While phonological transcription or syntactic analysis may not be considered work done directly for the Kingdom of God, I do believe that God's Kingdom includes the speakers of a multitude of languages and dialects and is all the richer because of it. The values of my Christian faith naturally inform an approach to linguistics that assumes the inherent dignity all human cultures, languages, and dialects. If I believe that all people are made in God's image and that God is actively present within all cultural contexts, then I have solid reason to assign meaning and value to speakers of all languages and dialects. This includes the ones that may be labeled as uneducated, insignificant, or indicative of a religion, ethnicity, or social class that is viewed unfavorably.

My interest in studying and characterizing Anglicized forms of Spanish stems from a personal love for languages and cultures as well as a desire to better understand and assign proper value to the linguistic forms spoken by our Latino/a neighbors. Through various classes I have taken to fulfill my minor in Global and Urban Ministry, I have had the opportunity to spend time at several Spanish-speaking church communities in the Seattle area. From my quarter at Iglesia Fuente de Vida, I got to know many wonderful Christian families whose lives are filled with Spanglish. The adults of the church are mostly immigrants from Mexico and Central

America who are working hard to learn English while their children speak mainly English outside the home and are more deeply acculturated into American culture than their parents. Additionally, I have travelled in South America, Central America, and Spain, and through communication with friends and acquaintances in each of these places I have become acutely aware of the ways in which English influences my own usage of Spanish. These sentiments drive my personal interest in studying Spanglish for my honors project, especially as Spanglish is a form of language that is often stigmatized or seen as representative of incompetence in *two* languages instead of as a valid expression of an emerging cultural identity. I am intrigued by Spanglish and I do not see it as an uneducated, less-valuable form of the language, or a failure to speak either language well, but as a legitimate expression of linguistic interference and creativity in its own right.

My faith also provides the basis for practical application of my studies. As I see it, faithful scholarship is not merely acquiring and integrating knowledge, but also channelling that knowledge into the service of God's people. As a Christian scholar, I seek to gain a solid academic grasp on the complexities of human languages and cultures *and* use that understanding to interact respectfully with people from other cultures and be an effective advocate. As both a scholar *and* a Christian, I cannot avoid the reality that my faith in Christ calls me out of where I am most comfortable and into the service of God's people, whether that means working in Seattle or taking my work globally. As I feel a particular drive to work with Hispanophone communities, I am excited by the opportunity to apply my linguistic knowledge to the exploration of this particular manifestation of cultural hybridity.

In constructing my personal approach to Christian scholarship, I strongly resonate with Mark Noll's model presented in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, which is framed within the important assertion that "learning matters because the world matters." (50). My Christian faith challenges me to be somehow "in the world but not of it," yet in living out the call of Christ, being "in the world" seems to mean caring deeply about its welfare. As Noll suggests, scholarship matters because the people who might benefit from our intellectual labor deeply matter. This sense of purpose should drive us out of the kind of self-glorifying scholarship that is not uncommon in academia today. The call of the Christian scholar is humility and care for the other, but also a commitment to putting our sense of value and accomplishment not in ourselves, but in God. In Noll's words, "all are called, with scholars who boast in their books, to subordinate the object of their affections to the absolute glory that belongs to God alone" (32). This is reminiscent of the Jesuit motto *ad maiorem dei gloriam*: "for the greater glory of God." I am challenged to channel my scholarly pursuits to the glory of God and to the service of God's people.