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Looking for Identity in a Multicultural World: the Case of Spanglish in the United States

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*To my parents,
for I owe this to them*

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Introduction

The first time I came across Spanglish, I just thought it was a funny label referring to the language used by people who do not speak either English or Spanish well, and who try to communicate in some ways by mixing the terms they know in both languages. This is perhaps what the majority of people think when hearing this word. After five years spent studying both English and Spanish and taking courses in Sociolinguistics, the decision of which language to choose for my thesis was hard for me to take, and the possibility of dealing with them both attracted me. Thus, I began to investigate the issue and I discovered that Spanglish is a very complex topic. The more information I obtained about it, the more I came to realize that Spanglish served as a kind of summing up of my whole university experience, because it touches on many of the topics I have approached.

The first important issue we are concerned with is globalization, a phenomenon that permeates almost every aspect of post-modern society. As a consequence of increasing global communication, human mobility and economic interdependence made possible by technological advancements, the number of people who know more than one language is growing, and they are in ever-increasing contact with each other; this situation requires some degree of mutual adaptation to cultural and linguistic difference. Hence, another important issue concerned with Spanglish is that of multiculturalism: the co-existence of different cultures can imply cross cultural

understanding, but also the likely possibility of the upsurge of racism, intolerance, isolationism, and sometimes even xenophobia. Indeed, with the worldwide phenomenon of ethnic pride and the upsurge of ethnic solidarity that began in the second half of the twentieth century – and particularly in the 1970s, with the Civil Rights Movement and the immigration reform of 1965 (Johnson 2000) – ethnic groups have made it clear that they do not intend to be absorbed into larger or universalistic groupings. They affirm a distinctive collective identity which preserves, rejects, modifies or transforms elements taken from the culture of origin, from the surrounding world of the immigration setting, and from their interaction with other minority groups with whom they share cultural and racial affinities or a similar position in society. However, in situation of high immigration, economic insecurity and high unemployment, there is a particularly low tolerance for group differences.

Diversity based on racial and ethnic differentiation implies a separation from the dominant society, a 'recognition of the lack of privileges and the fallaciousness of the myths of equality, prosperity and democracy that U.S. society promotes' (Acosta-Belén 1992: 987). Indeed, Anglo-American ethnocentrism does not welcome cultural and linguistic differences, unless they remain folkloric, picturesque and culinary; when they go beyond this, a general paranoia about the impossibility of integrating satisfactorily these groups into mainstream society emerges, and the consequence is that this general sense of anxiety causes the upsurge of movements like English Only, which aims at preserving one of the supposed defining thread of the nation – its language. Hence, from this point of view, language serves as an important medium for achieving unity, and the fact that in the United States there are many languages other than English can become

the basis for a debate over whether and how minority language groups should be recognized and taken into account when dealing with language policy.

Within this framework, the anthropological perspective I have adopted in this dissertation is not the antiquated positivistic one, which saw cultures as something immutable and perfectly determinable; in this thesis, instead of being conceptualized as a monolithic entity composed of an essence with intrinsic characteristics, culture is conceived as something with permeable borders, that is always changing and adapting according to the contexts (Schultz and Lavenda 2010). The same can be said with regard to languages: they are dynamic entities, and their primary purpose is that of rendering communication possible, which means that they evolve in order to meet the ever-changing needs of their speakers. Language provides the people who use it with a particular worldview, it is the principal means whereby we conduct our social lives, and it is bound up with culture. When two languages – and therefore also two cultures – meet, something new can arise from the encounter. Moreover, language functions powerfully to centre impressions and judgements; from this point of view, then, language can be submitted to stereotyping, too, a fact which implies important consequences for the people who speak a denigrated language. Thus, language, culture and identity are intrinsically woven together, and it is from this complex framework that Spanglish arises.

This thesis is not meant to analyse the topic of Spanglish from a strictly linguistic point of view, even if of course I will also partly deal with the issue. There are many reasons for this decision. First, considering the heated debate that exists with regard to the nature of this linguistic phenomenon, I do not have the presumption to shed some light on the issue, and besides collecting the different opinions of the scholars who have dealt

with the topic, I do not think I could have added something valuable. Second, I feel that in order to conduct a valuable study concerning language contact, one should have the possibility to gather first-hand material, such as interviews with the people who actually use this language, and unfortunately I did not have to possibility to do this. Last but not least, what I was really interested in was not the grammatical rules governing this phenomenon or the assessment of a widely-accepted definition of this mixed language. I wanted to investigate its meaning, the reasons why people use it, how they feel about it, to what extent they think this language represents themselves. In short, my aim is that of investigating the relationship existing between the phenomenon of Spanglish and the definition of a Hispanic identity of the people living in the United States. What is the meaning of being Hispanic in an American cultural milieu shaped by dominant U.S. ideology?

In the first chapter – which serves as an initial insight into the magnitude of this phenomenon – I provided a panorama of the Hispanic people living in the United States. In chapter 2, I dealt with the issue of language policy, to show how the decisions taken in this regard can have important consequences for minority language groups. Then, I went more deeply into the topic of the relationship between language and identity, obviously with reference to Hispanic peoples. The penultimate chapter concerns the debate existing within the academic context regarding the very essence and the nature of this mixed language. The last one offers a more concrete perspective by analysing its actual use and spread in contemporary society.

1. A panorama of the Hispanic population living in the United States

‘As we (either Hispanic or Anglo) think about the presence of Hispanic peoples and cultures in the United States, the turn of the century offers a marker of significance for a nation rapidly becoming Hispanicized’

(Johnson 2000: 176)

Both English and Spanish are among the most spoken languages in the world. English, second only to Chinese Mandarin, has spread widely with globalization and the Internet, as has Spanish, which is one of the top languages of international trade and communication, ranking in third or fourth place, depending on the criteria. These two titans live in the United States side by side, and they are experiencing various kinds of contact: sometimes colliding, sometimes collapsing.

Lawrence Fuchs’ metaphor of the kaleidoscope¹ to refer to the United States perfectly represents the ever-changing reality of this country: a mosaic with a multitude of colours and shapes, in which varied cultural backgrounds, racial groupings, ethnic identities and

¹ In his book *The American kaleidoscope: race ethnicity and the civic culture* (1990), Fuchs investigates about whether the American national motto *e pluribus unum* is at last becoming reality; he examines the historical patterns of American ethnicity and the ways in which a national political culture has evolved to accommodate ethnic diversity. He concludes that diversity itself has become a unifying principle, and that Americans now celebrate ethnicity. We will see that actually things are more complicated, and the situation is not likely to be considered only from this optimistic perspective.

regional origins all concur in shaping a reality of cultural and linguistic diversity and a society of increasing complexity. The sounds of the United States are characterized by many voices, a 'cacophony' that all produce important differences in the ways in which English is spoken and understood. The great extent of the phenomenon of Spanglish is primarily rooted in the demographic data, which show the massive presence of Hispanic peoples in the United States.

1.1. Demographic data

A first important insight into the multi-ethnic nature of the United States is to be found in the changes that have occurred in the last few years with regard to the Census questionnaire, since the increasing complexity of the notions of race and ethnicity has led to important revisions. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is responsible for issuing standards for the classification of federal data. Since 1997, OMB has required federal agencies to use a minimum of two categories regarding ethnicity - *Hispanic or Latino* and *Not Hispanic or Latino* - and a minimum of five race categories - *White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander*. In fact, Hispanic people can be of any race, their skin colour can vary from white to black, passing through different shades of the *mestizo* concept of brown, which Gloria Anzaldúa (*Borderlands*, 1987) uses to describe the complexity and variety of this population, whose mixed progeny represents the Americas, Africa and Europe. Hence, race and Hispanic origin (ethnicity) are considered separate and distinct concepts in the Census survey and so two different questions when collecting these data

must be used². However, many did identify their race as 'Latino', 'Mexican', 'Puerto Rican' or other national origins or ethnicities, and other provided entries such as multiracial, mixed or interracial. For this reason, OMB approved the Census Bureau's inclusion of a sixth category – *Some Other Race*. If the responses provided to the race question could not be classified in one or more of the five OMB race groups, they were generally classified in this sixth category. Thus, responses to the question on race that reflect Hispanic origins were classified in the *Some Other Race* category, although they cannot be exhaustive considering the complexity of the notion of race with regard to Hispanic people. Consequently, in order to obtain a complete panorama of the Hispanics in the United States, the data of both questions must be analysed.

It is sufficient to have a look at the U.S. Bureau of the Census to realize the growing importance of Spanish-speaking people: the first thing one can notice is the massive size of the Hispanic population in the United States: more than 50 million people (16.3 %) declared they have Hispanic origins in the 2010 Census survey.

² For the first time in the 2010 questionnaire, the Hispanic origin question (number 5) and the race question (number 6) were preceded by the note 'please answer BOTH Question 5 about Hispanic origin and Question 6 about race. For this Census, Hispanic origins are not races'. (U.S Bureau of the Census, *2010 Census Questionnaire - summary file*).

	2000	2010	Change, 2000 to 2010
Total population	281.421.906	308.745.538	27.323.632 (+ 9.7 %)
Hispanic or Latino ³	35.305.818 (12.5 %)	50.477.594 (16.3 %)	15.171.776 (+ 43.0 %)
Not Hispanic or Latino	246.116.088 (87.5 %)	258.267.944 (83.7 %)	12.151.856 (+ 4 %)

Table 1. Population by Hispanic or Latino origin in the United States: 2000 and 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011b)

The population growth from 2000 to 2010 shows the United States' changing racial and ethnic diversity. In the last decade, the population has changed, particularly with regard to the Hispanic component. The vast majority of data regarding the growth of the total population came from increases in those who reported their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino: their growth rate was more than four times the growth rate of the total population (43 %, compared to only 9.7 %). These data clearly show the growing importance of Hispanics, who are becoming an increasingly fundamental part of the United States; the label 'minority group' is extremely limiting if we consider the percentage of growth from 2000 to 2010, and the future data are not likely to sustain this label anymore.

	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060
Hispanic or Latino	63.784	78.655	94.876	111.732	128.780
Not Hispanic or Latino	270.111	279.816	285.140	288.072	291.488

Table 2. Projections of the population: from 2020 to 2060 (number in thousands). Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2012b)

As mentioned above, race and ethnicity are considered two distinct concepts, and so it is useful to provide some data about the U.S. race panorama, too, in order to understand

³ Definition of *Hispanic* or *Latino* origin used in the 2010 Census: *Hispanic* or *Latino* refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Hispanic origin can be viewed as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of birth of the person or the person's parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. People who identify their origin as Hispanic, Latino or Spanish may be of any race. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010*, p. 2)

better the complexity of the American kaleidoscope. The following table shows both the data about race with regard to the total population and those concerning ethnicity in detail.

<i>Race</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Change, 2000 to 2010</i>	<i>Origin or ethnicity</i>	
			<i>Hispanic or Latino</i>	<i>Not Hispanic or Latino</i>
White	72.4 %	+ 5.7 %	53.0 %	76.2%
Black or African American	12.6 %	+ 12.3 %	2.5 %	14.6 %
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.9 %	+ 18.4 %	1.4 %	0.9 %
Asian	4.8 %	+ 43.3 %	0.4 %	5.6 %
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.2 %	+ 35.4 %	0.1 %	0.2 %
Some Other Race ⁴	6.2 %	+ 24.4 %	36.7 %	0.2 %

Table 3. Population by Hispanic origin and race in the United States: 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011b)

Almost paradoxically, the major race group (the White population) experienced the smallest growth rate – only 5.7 %. The white-centred worldview is always the most influential one, but all the other races are growing increasingly, even faster than Whites are. Perhaps one day the gap between the white mono-cultural majority and all the other colours of this kaleidoscope will no longer be so deep; the dominant white American will have to get used to sharing the stage with what at present are called (and consequently treated and considered) minority groups.

From the comparison of the data about race and ethnicity, it is clear that Hispanics are the major minority group; they predominantly identify themselves as either *White* or

⁴ The “Some Other Race” category includes all the responses not included in the White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander race categories. Respondents reporting entries such as multiracial, mixed, interracial, or a Hispanic or Latino group (for example Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or Spanish) in response to the race question are included in this category (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010*, p. 3).

Some Other Race; the majority of the people who identified themselves in this sixth category were Hispanics, as shown in table 4.

<i>Some Other Race category</i>	<i>Population 2010</i>
Total	21.748.084
Hispanic or Latino	20.714.218 (95.2 %)
Not Hispanic or Latino	1.033.856 (4.8 %)

Table 4. Population belonging to the *Some Other Race* category by origin in the United States: 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011b)

In the 2010 Census, of the 21 million people who identified themselves in the *Some Other Race* category, 20.7 million were of Hispanic origin – which means nearly the totality – compared with only 1 million people of non-Hispanic origin. This is significant to understand the complexity of their identity if compared to those who were not of Hispanic origins. The fact that Latinos can actually be of any race makes it more difficult for them to decide to what category they belong, because the *mestizo* nature of many can relate to different races at the same time.

As a matter fact, in the 2000 Census, individuals were given for the first time the possibility to self-identify with more than one race, and this continued in the 2010 Census, as prescribed by OMB. This tendency can be seen as the first step towards the recognition of a multiracial society, where people are somehow legitimized to feel they belong to different races at the same time. The United States is showing the changing reality of a nation which is going far beyond the tyranny of the black-and-white dichotomy: not even the simple use of the word ‘brown’ to name the sons of interracial marriages would be right, because actually there can be different shades of brown as well (Morales 2002) . Contemporary societies are multi-ethnic, multiracial, multi-coloured. Ilan Stavans brilliantly describes this new sense of multiple-race-belonging with the expression ‘hyphenated identities’ (1995: 17), which fits the concept perfectly.

<i>Race</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Change, 2000 to 2010</i>
One Race	97.1 %	+ 9.2 %
Two or More Races	2.9 %	+ 32.0 %

Table 5. Population reporting multiple races in the United States: 2000 and 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011b)

It is interesting to notice the significant growth (32 %) of the *Two or More Races* category; these data reflect the general trend towards a multicultural society, where belonging to only one race is not enough to describe one's identity satisfactorily. The self-identification with multiple races has become a more common part of the discussion and understanding of race and ethnicity in the United States, and a considerable amount of research has been conducted on people reporting entries as multiracial or mixed.

The reality of Hispanic life is laced with both threads of unity and distinctive ancestral and cultural identities. In the context of the United States, the ties that bind Hispanics may depend just as much on differences from the English-speaking population as on similarities among Spanish-speaking peoples (Johnson 2000). However, among Hispanics there exist many differences that all concur in shaping a heterogenic reality. There is not a monolithic Latino identity, and the term Hispanic generalizes across a broad diversity of people, while there are more culturally meaningful labels that name the identity of particular groups. The main ones are Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans, but the Spanish heterogeneity includes also Dominicans, Chileans, Peruvians, Argentineans, Salvadorans, Columbians and many more. Every Hispanic group, with the exception of Puerto Ricans, includes both those who have immigrated to the United States and those who were born in the country. Since Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens

whether they live on the island or on the mainland, they are not foreigners – a fact that many Anglos⁵ fail to recognize.

<i>Type of origin</i>	<i>Population</i>
Mexican	63 %
Puerto Rican	9.2 %
Cuban	3.5 %
Dominican	2.8 %
Central American (excludes Mexican)	7.9 %
South American	5.5 %
Spaniard	1.3 %
Other	6.8 %

Table 6. Distribution of Hispanic peoples by ancestry origin: 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011e)

About three-quarters of the Hispanic population is reported as Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban. Each of these groups represent a different type of cultural contact with mainstream America, and each, although present in various areas, is concentrated in a different region of the country, as we will see in the next section.

1.2. Geographic distribution

Hispanics are not distributed equally within the United States; the majority of them – more than half of the total population – reside in just four areas: California, Texas, Florida and New York.

⁵The term ‘Anglo’ refers to native English-speaking people born in the United States (Johnson 2000; Morales 2002).

<i>State</i>	<i>Percent</i>
California	27.8 %
Texas	18.7 %
Florida	8.4 %
New York	6.8 %
Illinois	4.0 %
Arizona	3.8 %
New Jersey	3.1 %
Colorado	2.1 %
All other States	25.4 %

Table 7. Distribution of the Hispanic population by State: 2010 Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011e)

In the short term, the factors creating the concentration of certain groups include gateway points of entry into the country – large metro areas such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago – and family connections facilitating chain migration, considering the importance given to *la familia* by Spanish-speaking people. In the longer term, internal migration streams, employment and economic opportunities, and other family situations help to facilitate the diffusion of Hispanic groups within the country.

Like other minority groups, Hispanics live primarily in a small set of urban or metro areas, as already mentioned, either because of economic opportunities or because these cities act as points of entry into the country.

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Hispanic population</i>
1	New York, NY	8.175.133	2.336.076
2	Los Angeles, CA	3.792.621	1.838.822
3	Houston, TX	2.099.451	919.668
4	San Antonio, TX	1.327.407	838.952
5	Chicago, IL	2.695.598	778.862

Table 8. Cities with the highest number of Hispanics or Latinos: 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011e)

Moreover, the melting pot that is typical of such large urban areas can make people feel less like strangers than in a smaller place where the majority of people are more likely to belong to the monolithic American mainstream. In New York, where there is the

highest number of Hispanics, it is easy to see different skin colours and hear various languages when walking in the streets. On his arrival in the Big Apple, Stavans observed that ‘the ethnic juxtaposition was exhilarating. But sight wasn’t everything. Sound was equally important. Colour and noise went together, as I quickly learned’ (2003: 1). The sense of being a stranger among other strangers can be reassuring, and perhaps it can help foreign people to feel more at home, somehow.

Moreover, there are also some cities where Hispanics account for the majority of the total population, sometimes even reaching almost the totality. In an American world where English speakers are the dominant ones, there are some places where Spanish is on the way to dropping its foreign status; here it may happen that English-speakers feel overwhelmed by Spanish in their immediate environment, just as it can be easy for some other Anglos to hear Spanish rarely.

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Percent of Hispanics in the total population</i>
1	East Los Angeles, CA	97.1 %
2	Laredo, TX	95.6 %
3	Hialeah, FL	94.7 %
4	Brownsville, TX	93.2 %
5	McAllen, TX	84.6 %

Table 9. Cities with the highest percentage of Hispanics or Latinos: 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011e)

As we have seen, the Hispanic population varies by type. The different groups are concentrated in different areas, as shown in the following table.

<i>Origin</i>	<i>Rank</i>				
	<i>First</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Third</i>	<i>Fourth</i>	<i>Fifth</i>
Mexican	California	Texas	Arizona	Illinois	Colorado
Puerto Rican	New York	Florida	New Jersey	Pennsylvania	Massachusetts
Cuban	Florida	California	New Jersey	New York	Texas
Dominican	New York	New Jersey	Florida	Massachusetts	Pennsylvania

Table 10. Top five states for detailed Hispanic or Latino origin groups in the United States: 2010. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011e)

Mexicans live primarily in California, Texas and Arizona, all bordering on their ancestral state of origin. Cubans are to be found in Florida, whose conformation naturally extends towards Cuba. Puerto Ricans and Dominican are settled most of all in the large metropolitan area of New York.

1.3. Standard of living

The general standard of living for the Hispanic population is substantially inferior to that of Non-Hispanic whites.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Not Hispanic</i>
Median household income	\$ 39,589	\$ 51,980
Per capita income	\$ 15,136	\$ 29,023
Median earnings for workers	\$ 21,565	\$ 32,331
Median family income	\$ 40,982	\$ 65,331
Poverty rate for families	23.2 %	9.9 %
People without health insurance coverage	29.8 %	12.2 %
Families below \$25,000 annually	14.1 %	6.4 %

Table 11. Selected economic characteristics of the American population by origin: 2011. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011c)

The vast majority of Latinos are in the lowest economic strata of the United States: they have the lowest median household income and the highest percentage of poverty rate, as well as the highest rate of people without health insurance coverage; in general, their earnings are inferior to those of non-Hispanic origin, and the percentage of families below \$25,000 annually is more than twice compared to that of non-Hispanics.

The panoramas of occupation and educational attainment reflects the previous data. Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites are the two major segments of the American labour force, and a comparison between them shows considerable evidence of the fact that there is an occupational divide, since they perform different types of work.

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Non-Hispanic Whites</i>
Management, business, science, art	19.2 %	40.1 %
Service	26.7 %	15.2 %
Sales and office	22.2 %	25.2 %
Natural resources, construction, maintenance	15.3 %	8.7 %
Production, transportation and material moving	16.7 %	10.8 %

Table 12. *Occupation by origin in the United States: 2011. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census - S0201 (2011c)*

In particular, the occupations in which Hispanics are concentrated rank low in wages, educational requirements and other indicators of socioeconomic status (Kochhar 2005). The most relevant differences are to be found with regard to well-paid jobs, concerning the fields of management, business, science, and art, where the Hispanic percentage is less than half that of non-Hispanic whites. This lack of representation in professional occupations is a distinctive feature of the occupational profile of Hispanic workers, while they are more likely to be employed in service, construction and production occupations. Hence, Hispanics are concentrated in non-professional service occupations, such as building and ground cleaning, maintenance and food preparation and serving. This situation is a likely consequence of the limited English proficiency among Hispanic peoples, which will be discussed in the next section.

According to the Census data⁶ concerning the economic characteristics of the people living in the United States, the occupational profile of Hispanic immigrants is the most dissimilar from that of white workers. Of the three largest components of the Hispanic community—Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans—only the occupational profile of Cubans comes closest to resembling that of whites. An important reason for this gap is

⁶ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *American FactFinder*, my tabulation.

differences in the levels of education, which plays an important role in shaping the occupation distributions of workers.

<i>Educational attainment</i>	<i>Hispanic</i>	<i>Non-Hispanic Whites</i>
Less than high school diploma	36.8%	8.9%
High school graduate	27.1%	29.1%
Some college or associate's degree	22.9%	30.1%
Bachelor's degree	9.1%	19.9%
Graduate or professional degree	4.1%	12.0%

Table 13. Educational attainment by origin in the United States: 2011. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2011d)

Among Hispanics, almost 37 % of the people have less than a high school diploma, while only 4 % obtained a graduate or professional degree.

1.4. Language use in the United States

As mentioned, Hispanics are a very heterogenic population and the Spanish language is the most important unifying element despite the many differences that exist among them. Indeed, for the majority of Hispanics the Spanish language runs deeply into cultural and personal identities; passion and commitment to one’s native language is not just a matter of superficial linguistic loyalties for Spanish-speaking people. Anzaldúa’s eloquent phrasing of this principle perfectly captures the language-identity fusion: ‘[...] if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language’ (1987: 81). To relinquish Spanish either literally or symbolically is to relinquish a significant and powerful part of personal and social identity. Thus, the Spanish language helps to create and cement cultural unity, and proficiency in English does not replace the importance of Spanish because it is the assumed basis of community interaction among Hispanic people.

Data from the 2007 American Community Survey (ACS) describe the language use of the U.S. population aged 5 and over. Fuelled by both long-term historic immigration patterns and more recent ones, the language diversity of the country has increased over the past few decades, and from the following data we can observe the continuing and growing role of non-English languages as part of the national fabric.

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Percentage change 1980-2007</i>
Spoke only English at home	80.3 %	+ 20.5 %
Spoke a language other than English at home	19.7 %	+ 140.4 %

Table 14. Languages spoken at home in the United States: 2007. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2010a)

The population speaking a language other than English has grown steadily in the last three decades. The number of speakers increased for many non-English languages, but not for all; Spanish was the language with the highest percentage.

<i>Languages other than English⁷</i>	<i>Speakers</i>
Spanish or Spanish Creole	62.3 %
Other Indo-European languages	18.6 %
Asian and Pacific Island	15.0 %
Other languages	4.1 %

Table 15. Languages other than English spoken at home in the United States: 2007. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2010a)

Besides the massive demographic presence of Hispanics, which with no doubt enhances the maintenance of their native language, there are many reasons why the Spanish

⁷ Spanish includes also Spanish Creole and Ladino. Other Indo-European languages include most languages of Europe (the Germanic languages, such as German, Yiddish and Dutch), the Scandinavian languages (Swedish and Norwegian), the Romance languages (French, Italian and Portuguese), the Slavic languages (Russian, Polish and Serbo-Croatian), the Indic languages (Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi and Urdu), Celtic languages, Greek, Baltic languages and Iranian languages. Asian and Pacific Island languages include Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Khmer, Lao, Thai, Tagalog or Pilipino, the Dravidian languages of India, and other languages of Asia and the Pacific, including the Philippine, Polynesian and Micronesian languages. All other languages include Uralic languages (Hungarian), the Semitic languages (Arabic and Hebrew), languages of Africa (native North American languages (American Indian and Alaska Native languages), and indigenous languages of Central and South America. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Language use in the United states: 2007*, issued April 2010, p. 2).

language flourishes in the United States. First, geographic proximity to the homeland fosters native language use as well as language maintenance: the vast majority of Hispanics in the country experience life as immediately connected to an ancestral culture whose proximate borders invite continuous cultural and linguistic interplay. Second, for Spanish native speakers in the United States, loyalty to and love for Spanish partly explains the continuing vitality of this language in a cultural context of English dominance: 'unlike other ethnic groups, we Latinos are amazingly loyal to our mother tongue' (Stavans 1995: 123). Third, *la familia* is crucially important in the Hispanic culture, more than for Anglos, and this commitment to extended family ties provides motivation to cultivate at least some level of Spanish language proficiency in a context of English dominance in the public sector, education and employment. A fourth reason pertains to economic interests, since the massive growth of the Spanish-speaking population represents an important new segment for marketing planning which has to be taken into account. Moreover, specific employment needs also encourage Spanish fluency. Fifth, the local circumstances of isolation from the Anglo community, which is experienced by many Hispanics who live in segregated enclosed communities within the United States, can promote the maintenance of Spanish. Finally, as the number of Spanish-speaking people have been growing consistently in the last decade, so have resources and entertainments via Spanish.

Among the speakers of a language other than English, there are different levels of speaking proficiency, as shown in the table below.

<i>Native languages of the speakers</i>	<i>English speaking ability</i>			
	<i>Very well</i>	<i>Well</i>	<i>Not well</i>	<i>Not at all</i>
Spanish or Spanish Creole	52.6 %	18.3 %	18.4 %	10.7 %
Other Indo-European languages	67.2 %	19.6 %	10.4 %	2.8 %
Asian and Pacific Island languages	51.4 %	26.2 %	17.0 %	5.4 %
Other languages	70.1	19.7 %	8.1 %	2.1 %

Table 16. *English speaking ability by non-native English speakers: 2007. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2010a)*

As a likely consequence of the above, the highest percentage of limited English proficiency (*not well / not at all*) is to be found among Spanish-speaking people. The fact they are so deeply devoted to their native tongue, together with the widespread presence of the Hispanic population throughout the country, can limit their need to learn English effectively, a fact that has immediate consequences on the occupational distribution of this population (see the previous section).

In fact, state schools offer bilingual and bicultural education more often to Spanish speakers than to any other language group because of sheer numbers, a fact that surely helps to enhance the vitality of Spanish in the United States. At colleges and universities across the country, enrolments on Spanish language courses are growing out of proportion, while programs in other languages often struggle to attract students. Even a new acronym has recently been created: LOTS, that is, *Languages Other Than Spanish* (Lipski 2002). The Spanish sections at the American universities outnumber all the other languages: Spanish has become a high-demand course of study, and also courses in the culture of Spain, Latin America and of Latino groups in the United States are on the rise. Programs in business Spanish, translation and international studies have become common at many colleges and universities, too.

According to John Lipski (2002: 1249), Spanish is definitely useful ‘for aspiring to a vast array of interesting and challenging job opportunities, for interacting effectively with

millions of neighbours both in this country and abroad, and for understanding and appreciating a very large, diverse, and significant portion of the world’.

Spanish is well on the way to taking its place among the knowledge and skills required by well-rounded university graduates; this language is here to stay, a fact some regard with optimism and others with alarm, and it is increasingly becoming part of the fundamental educational needs rather than an elective component freely interchangeable with courses in other languages (*Ibid.*).

‘For some two centuries the United States has been an aggressively and often xenophobically monolingual nation, whose melting pot cauterized and amputated every language and culture that refused to be melted. Now that another language and set of cultures are sharing the stage, universities are the ideal forum to embrace, enhance and propagate this state of affairs’ (Lipski 2002: 1250). From this perspective, Spanish departments do not only have the mission to provide specific course contents, but also an entry into a broader worldview and an antidote to xenophobia. Conflicts over whether this diversity should be not only tolerated but also embraced, or whether standard English is under threat and must be protected, is a fundamental part of what will be discussed in this dissertation.

2. The controversial debate about language policy in the United States: an overview

Considering what has been said up to now, we have before us a culturally and linguistically diverse nation, where the number of Spanish-speaking people is high enough so as not to be ignored. The growth rate is increasing year by year, and although native speakers of Spanish are very loyal to their mother tongue, this does not mean they do not speak English, even if their proficiency may be lower than that of other minority groups. It is common to hear people speaking Spanish in many areas of the nation, even if the unchallenged dominant tongue remains English (see chapter 1, table 14).

The sheer fact of the co-existence of different languages implies some kind of contact between them; in such situations, the corpus of the languages involved suffers adaptations at various levels, such as vocabulary, spelling, pronunciation, rules of grammar and so on (Berruto 1995). The status of languages, which is related to the prestige and prevalence of use in the different linguistic domains of a given society, is also affected by such changes; from this point of view, then, languages may be seen as being in competition with each other. All this, together with the expectation that the state should play an active role in dealing with the social facts related to linguistic diversity, generates a debate about what the government should do with regard to language policy.

The majority of American citizens are unaware that language policy is becoming a politically contentious issue, because most of the time it passes unnoticed. However, among those who are concerned with such a salient topic, the opinions are divided into two fronts: on the one hand, pluralists, and on the other assimilationists. Pluralists favour using the state to enhance the presence and status of minority languages in the United States, while assimilationists support state policies that will ensure the status of English as the country's sole public language. The two groups have radically different understandings of what is at stake in the language policy debate. Linguistic pluralists believe the conflict is a question of justice involving the struggle of language minorities for equality in a country that has dominated and suppressed them for over two hundred years. Their arguments are deeply connected with the U.S. history of conquest, annexation and oppression of peoples of different races, and consequently the conflict is deeply linked to the struggle for racial equality. Since overt racism is no longer publicly acceptable in the United States, they believe that linguistic prejudice and discrimination have become the modern arguments and practices of white supremacy. For them, adopting policies of linguistic pluralism is to be seen as a necessary step to overcome racism.

In contrast, for linguistic assimilationists the issue is not minority rights at all, but the integration of immigrants into the dominant culture, for the common good. Assimilationists are especially preoccupied with their perception of an increasingly dangerous threat to national unity brought about by centrifugal forces of change in the late twentieth century: first, the massive wave of immigration since the mid-1960s, and second, a politics of cultural pluralism that hinders the traditional process of immigrant integration. Their appeal to U.S. history is focused on the efforts of previous immigrant

groups to become 'Americanized' as soon as possible. For them, the English language is one of the few ties that hold this self-proclaimed 'nation of immigrants' together; linguistic pluralism, in their opinion, would mean ethnic separatism, and national unity would be under threat irremediably (Schmidt 2000).

Basically, three types of issues have been predominant in the ongoing battle over language: first, educational policy for language minority children and especially the place of bilingual education in their schooling; second, linguistic access to political and civil rights (such as the right to vote) for non-English speakers of all ages; and third, the establishment of English as the sole official language of the United States.

2.1. Educational policy for language minority students

As might be expected from the demographic shifts occurring in the United States, schools increasingly reflect racial, ethnic and language diversity; the policies regulating the way in which non-English speaking students are to be instructed have a long-standing social and political history plagued by a forty-year debate about the goals and effectiveness of such policies (Grooms 2011). The debate is mainly about whether such students ought to be immersed in an English-only environment or whether they should be provided with bilingual education.

The first national legislation supporting the latter was the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968, which recognized that children speaking a minority language were not receiving an adequate education in schools that operated exclusively in English. The new *title VII* of the BEA amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, arguing that poverty and ignorance had denied millions of people an opportunity to live

the American dream: President Lyndon Johnson provided a series of domestic policy innovations (such as resources to support educational programs, to train teachers and develop appropriate instructional material) known collectively as the 'Great Society' program. However, *title VII* was at first more symbolic than substantive, most of all because of problems in finding funds. Anyway, political support for bilingual education continued to grow, and the major impetus for its expansion came in 1974 with the *Lau Vs Nichols*⁸ decision: the U.S. Supreme Court maintained that placing children speaking a language other than English in a classroom with no special assistance and providing them with instruction that was not comprehensible to them was to be considered unlawful discrimination that violates those children's civil rights. However, the *Lau Remedies* – guidelines to help local school districts receive federal funds according to the *Lau decision* – did not provide bilingual education, even if the issue was given prominence. In the same year, the Congress adopted the Equal Educational Opportunity Act (EEOA); section 1703(f) requires school districts to 'take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs': by the mid 1970s, bilingual educational had become a nationwide force for change in the public schools, where many states authorized or even mandated bilingual education. Yet the BEA did not specify the pedagogical methods and approaches involved in bilingual education, and by the early 1970s controversy had erupted; the debate was between transitional and maintenance approaches to bilingual education. As Ronald Schimdt explains, 'the transitional approach uses the student's native language in subjects other than English only until the student masters the

⁸ 'A class of approximately eighteen hundred non-English-speaking students in the San Francisco schools raised an equal protection claim and a claim under *title VI*, which prohibited discrimination on ground of race, colour or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance' (Schmid 2001: 96).

dominant language well enough to be mainstreamed into monolingual English classroom; the orientation is remedial in that the child's home language is considered a crutch that should be dispensed with as quickly as possible' (2000: 14). The maintenance approach is also oriented to enabling students to master English, but in a different way: 'rather than seeing the home language as a crutch, the maintenance approach views it as a valuable resource – for the child, the community, and the nation – that should be nurtured and developed along with other academic skills [...] the aim for maintenance programs is mastery of both languages, not just English' (*Ibid.*). In the 1980s bilingual approaches were generally considered expensive, and the results were difficult to verify, especially with regard to Hispanic people⁹; the issue was no longer between the transitional versus maintenance arguments, but over whether bilingual instruction for Limited English-Proficient (LEP) students would be maintained at all. School districts pressed legislators for permission to experiment with other approaches, one of which was called 'English immersion'. This technique involved placing non-English-speaking student in an English-only environment, which was obviously attacked by supporters of bilingual education. With President Reagan, funds for the BEA were cut back, because in his opinion it was 'absolutely wrong and against American concepts to have a bilingual educational program that is openly, admittedly dedicated to preserving their [the non-English-speaking children] native language and never getting them adequate so they can go into the job market and participate' (quoted in Schmidt 2000: 15). With the

⁹ 'Complaints began to arise from citizens that bilingual education was not bilingual at all, since many Spanish-speaking teachers hired for the program were found not to be able to speak English. Despite the ministrations of the Department of Education, or perhaps because of them, Hispanic students to a shocking degree drop out of school, educated neither in Hispanic nor in American language and culture' (Hayakawa 1985, in Crawford 1992: 94). For further information about the results of these programs, see Morris 2011, chapter 5, pp. 105-198 'About bilingual educational research 1970s-2000s'.

appointment of William C. Bennett as secretary of education in 1985, the country experienced a further barrier to bilingual education, with English promoted as the sole national language and as the key to achieve equal educational opportunities. Nevertheless, these efforts to derail bilingual education were never totally successful, and progressively the orientation of the Congress became more positive towards the bilingual program, especially with Bill Clinton's election as President in 1992. However, the programs remained undeveloped, and the number of LEP students increased because of high levels of immigration; moreover, attacks on the effectiveness of the programs to teach English to LEP students were published in the press with ongoing regularity. In 1994, with the Democratic party controlling both the Congress and White House, federal educational policy was restructured in the *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA): the BEA was reauthorized for the fifth and last time¹⁰, and the most important achievement was that federal law finally gave formal and legislative support to the goal of maintaining LEP students' native languages. This last reauthorization marked the BEA's most ardent show of support for bilingualism as a fundamental goal of education and as a national resource that would promote and sustain the United State's international competitiveness. From this point of view, minority languages were seen as something worth preserving, a source of valuable skills, and bilingualism was conceived as an advantage, rather than a hindrance to cognitive growth (Grooms 2011). In 2002 the BEA expired and became the *English Language Acquisition Act* (ELA), incorporating mandates and funding for the education of non-English speaking students under *Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Act*, also known as the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB). The new name of the legislation - the *English Language Acquisition*

¹⁰ The other reauthorizations occurred in 1974, 1978, 1984 and 1988.

Act - clearly emphasized its renewed goals; 'even if monetarily this legislation supports bilingual education, the testing program encourages English-only instructional methods' (Grooms 2011: 104).

Generally speaking, nowadays there seem to be very contradictory goals in the United States: on the one hand there is English 'monolingualism' for immigrants, who need to be integrated into English-speaking society, and on the other bilingualism or multilingualism for Anglos, who would undoubtedly benefit from knowing more than one language. This antithetical goals definitely shed light on the complexity of the debate concerning language policy. However, bilingualism is likely to go on being considered a skill and a resource of increasing importance and a tool of cross-cultural understanding, in a world which is becoming the more and more globalized.

Considering the multicultural reality of the United States and the growing number of non-English speakers – particularly of Hispanic origins – the controversy over bilingual education remains heated at both the state and local level, and the debate about native language instruction for minority language students is sure to continue in the foreseeable future.

2.2. Language and access to political and civil rights

A second area of contention is the debate about linguistic access to electoral participation, governmental institutions, public services, and employment rights. The most controversial issue in this regard has been that of providing ballots and other election materials in languages other than English. Throughout much of the twentieth century, in the United States several ethnic groups had voting participation rates that

were consistently below those of Anglo Americans. According to many political activists, the cause of this disparity was discrimination in electoral participation, due to the absence of equal educational opportunities that had led to disabilities and illiteracy in the English language. Furthermore, the exclusion of some minority groups was often aggravated by acts of physical, economic and political intimidation (Schmid 2001).

Although it is assumed that any non-English native speaker who is an American citizen has the right to vote in his/her mother tongue, actually the right to the bilingual ballot is much more limited. The 1975 amendment of the 1965 *Voting Rights Act* (VRA) – namely *title II* and *III* - required that 'state and local government publish bilingual election materials when more than 5 percent of the voting-age residents were members of a single language minority and when the illiteracy rate in English of such groups was higher than the national average' (Schmid 2001: 74). The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights defined as 'language minority group' those who are American Indian, Asian American, Alaskan native or of Spanish heritage. As seen above with bilingual education, this law became the subject of widespread opposition, particularly in areas with large numbers of non-English native speakers, where multilingual ballots were seen as divisive, unnecessary, costly and as a barrier for the integration of immigrant citizens. The Reagan administration cut back on federal interventions concerning electoral practices and restricted the protection for language minority citizens, while with George Bush language minority activists saw the reauthorization of the VRA (1992), which also expanded the language provisions of 1965.

A second issue in the campaign for linguistic access is that of overcoming language barriers to governmental institutions and public services. On the one hand, the government is obliged to make itself understood, and on the other, citizens should be

able to communicate freely and effectively with their governors. However, the Congress has not provided legislation concerning the needs of language minority groups, and the arena for these debates have been the courts; hence, linguistic access activists have made claims founded on both the U.S. Constitution and the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, and many local governments have made provisions to communicate with the citizens in languages other than English (Schmidt 2000).

The third linguistic access issue involves the question of language rights in the workplace. A first problem is the degree to which English fluency should be considered a legitimate criterion in marketing employment decisions (such as hiring or promotion). The second question concerns the circumstances in which employers have the legitimate authority to require their employees to speak only in English, even while talking informally with each other (*Ibid.*); in this regard, in 1964 the *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission* (EEOC) was established to implement the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*. *Title VII* of the *Civil Rights Act* prohibits employers from discriminating on grounds of race, colour, religion, sex or national origin, and since one's language is considered the core characteristic of national origin, the EEOC looked for ways to prevent discrimination concerning language use. The 1980 revision of the EEOC's guidelines provided strong opposition to English-only work rules, and it generally adopted a policy of protection of language minority rights in the workplace. However, the federal courts have been less consistent in this issue, and the legal status of the EEOC remains a highly controversial question.

2.3. The movements for English as the official language: U.S. English

In the United States, despite the growing presence of non-English speaking people, English continues to be the dominant language, and no other tongue has come close to challenging or displacing its role in the country; despite policies in bilingual education and ballots, as mentioned above, English is still the main language of government and politics and it is the dominant language of commerce and education (Schmidt 2000).

In spite of this, contrary to what the majority of Americans think, English is not the official language of the United States; actually, the constitution of the wealthiest and most powerful English-mother-tongue country in the world has not designed a language with such a status. Lacking a unifying culture, many Americans think that English is one of the few values that hold Americans together, what really makes the States 'United', and there are several movements that seek to reach the status of official language for English. The most aggressive and most successful of these political organizations is the group 'U.S. English', which formally began in 1981 (and officially in 1983), when Senator S. I. Hayakawa introduced into the Senate a proposed amendment to the Constitution to designate English as the sole official language of the United States. In a speech of 1982, he said that:

Language is a unifying instrument which binds people together. When people speak one language they become as one, they become a society. [...] This is not to say, Mr. President, that I oppose the study of other languages. We are very backward as a nation in our study of other languages. I think more of us should study Spanish. I am very proud of the fact that two of my children speak Spanish very well. I do not. [...] Nothing I say in this amendment encouraging the use of an official language in the United States is intended to discourage the study of all languages around the world so we, in business and diplomacy, will be better represented around the world. [...] There are those who want separatism, who want bilingual balance, who want bilingual education. I am all in favour of bilingual education only insofar as it

accelerates the learning of English (from the official website, <http://www.us-english.org/>)

After sponsoring the *English Language Amendment*, together with John Tanton, Hayakawa helped to establish a lobby to promote it, and he still remains the organization's honorary chairman.

Similar constitutional amendments have been proposed to each Congress since that time, but the United States still lacks an official language. However, at a local level 'U.S. English' policy has been more successful: nowadays, thirty-one states have some form of official English law, and this group is currently working to pass measures that will enact new official English bills or strengthen existing legislation. Some of these policies have been adopted by statute in legislature, while the more controversial ones have been proposed as constitutional amendments by the voting public; they range from being purely symbolic to having sanctioned restrictions (Schmid 2001).

An important remark to be made with regard to U.S. English concerns the labels used to refer to this movement: 'official English' on the one hand, which clearly and neutrally emphasizes its primary aim, and 'English-only' on the other. What lies beyond the more aggressive label of this movement – 'English-only' – is the reaction of the Anglo population against initiatives concerning bilingual education and linguistic access that I have discussed in the previous section. Anglo-Americans began to feel somehow 'short-changed' by the increasing measures that were being adopted to help non-English speaking people; Fishman (1988: 165-170) speculates that the English-only laws represent a simplistic response to middle-class Anglo fears and anxieties: in his opinion, native English speakers perceive a threat to their life-style; they fear the decline of better job opportunities, health facilities and other taxpayer-funded services. Anglo-

Americans perhaps feel they are in competition in their own country for what, in their opinion, ought to be theirs first of all.

All these anxieties are rooted in the ideology of English monolingualism, according to which immigrant minorities should surrender their languages as a compensation for the privilege of immigrating into the receiving society, because they are likely to do better in this country than in their country of origin. An important element of this ideology is the 'anti-ghettoization argument', which contends that language and cultural maintenance lead to a self-imposed segregation from the dominant-mainstream society (Schmid 2001).

This general sense of anxiety is fomented by the advocates of English-only with paranoia about the possible inability of one part of the nation to communicate with the other (*ibid.*); they fear that an English-speaking nation will become a plurilingual babel, destroying the sole unifying feature of the country.

However, there is no internal evidence at all to confirm such fears. On the contrary, there seems to be a general pattern of language shift to English followed by virtually all newcomers to this country and their descendants: the first generation struggle to learn the dominant language and urge their children both to master English in order to be successful and to retain the home language as well; the second generation (the children of immigrants) typically retain the ability to speak and sometimes read and write their parents' language, even as English becomes the dominant tongue of their own homes and in their public lives at work and in the community; the third generation (the grandchildren of the immigrants) are English monolinguals, retaining very little, if any, ability to speak, read or write the 'old country' language. This process means that by the time the ethno-linguistic minorities have been in the United States for three generation,

in part they have become able to communicate only in English. Hispanics are no exception; they simply have a longer retention of Spanish. Accordingly, many second- and third-generation speakers who have not learned any Spanish at home, and whose parents may have stopped speaking it themselves, learn some kind of Spanish from life in the neighbourhood.

Hence, the desire to maintain bilingualism and the culture of minority groups in the school environment, and the provision of bilingual ballots and government services, exist contemporaneously with language loss for most individuals by the third generation (Schmid 2001). Although there is considerable evidence that this pattern of language shift continues today, the conflict over language policy in the United States is believed to be spreading and growing in intensity.

The group U.S. English strongly disapprove of the label 'English-only'; they claim that it is an inaccurate term for any piece of official English legislation, and that it is used most of all by its detractors. In the group's official website¹¹, the promoters claim that 'U.S. English has never and will never advocate for any piece of legislation that bans the use of languages other than English within the United States'; this assertion aims at dissociating from those organizations more focused on a resurgence of antforeigner sentiment that recall the Americanization movement of the 1920s. This group only aims at making English the official language of the country, because it 'empowers immigrants and makes [Americans] truly united as a people'.

However, rather than promoting national unity and tolerance of newcomers, the laws – whether referred to as 'official English' or 'English-only' legislation – have often

¹¹ <http://www.us-english.org/>.

promoted an antiforeigner attitude among the population, a fact that explains the wider spread of the second label. As Crawford (1988: 176) exhaustively argues,

English Only is a label that has stuck, despite the protests of U.S. English, because it accurately sums up the group's logic: that people will speak English only if forced to do so. That the crutch of bilingual assistance must be yanked away or newcomers will be permanently handicapped. That immigrants are too lazy or dim-witted to accept 'the primacy of English' on their own

There also exists wide criticism of the English-only movement. Basically the opponents contend that the organization ignores the civil rights tradition of the nation, that it fails to promote the integration of language-minorities and restricts the government's ability to reach all citizens. One of its opponent is the *English-Plus*, which was formed in 1987 to preserve and promote linguistic and cultural diversity (Combs 1992).

2.3.1. U.S. English and people of Hispanic origin

The U.S English movement – it would be better to use the label 'English-only' in this regard - experienced several setbacks, and it is interesting to notice that most of the times what was involved was a negative attitude towards people of Hispanic origins.

In the period when the organization was born, the particular situation of the Hispanic peoples was stressed by Hayakawa (1985: 96), who argued that

In the past several years, strong resistance to the melting pot has arisen, especially for those who claim to speak for the Hispanic peoples. Instead of a melting pot, they say, the national ideal should be a 'salad bowl', in which different elements are thrown together but not 'melted', so that the original ingredients retain their distinctive character

In 1988 John Tanton, an ophthalmologist and the co-founder of the organization, expressed fear about the nature and character of Latin American immigrants, and he enumerated a range of cultural threats posed by Spanish-speaking immigrants¹². Although it was not meant for publication, his memorandum was widely reported in the press, and it led to much condemnation; Tanton was forced to resign from the group to limit the political damage of it being label as a racist organization, and also Linda Chávez – U.S. English second director at that time – resigned to express her disgust, defining him as ‘anti-Hispanic, anti-Catholic and not excusable’ (quoted in Crawford 1992: 172). Before resigning, Chávez had struggled to stress the inclusionist potential of the organization: ‘Hispanics who learn English will be able to avail themselves of opportunities [...] Those who do not will be relegated to second-class citizenship. I don’t want to see that happen to my people’ (*Ibid.*). Chávez (1991: 161) argued that:

Assimilation has become a dirty word in American politics. It invokes images of peoples, cultures, and traditions forged into a colourless alloy in an indifferent melting pot. But, in fact, assimilation, as it has taken place in the United States, is a far more gentle process, by which people from outside the community gradually became part of the community itself

Subsequently, since the U.S. English movement obviously did not wish to be associated with intolerance, it proclaimed its pride in American ethnic and linguistic diversity, and its commitment to the freedom of all citizens to be multilingual and speak languages other than English in their homes – even if in the opinion of the group this should be seen as a private right.

¹² ‘Will Latin American migrants bring with them the tradition of the *mordida* [bribe], the lack of involvement in public affairs? Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile?... Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!’ (quoted in Schmidt 2000: 34).

In 1990 Guy Wright, who described the U.S. English's program in a letter to the *San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicles*, wrote that he did not agree with the public support given to 'those who don't want to learn English' (quoted in Schmidt 2000: 31-32). He argued that 'the resistance comes from leaders of ethnic blocs, *mostly Hispanic*, [my emphasis] who reject the melting-pot concept, resist assimilation as a betrayal of their ancestral culture, and demand government funding to maintain their ethnic institutions' (Wright 1983: 128). He went on to say that such ethnic groups were motivated by an anti-assimilationist ideology that rejects the traditional American belief that 'anyone who wanted to share in the benefits of American citizenship should learn English' (*Ibid.*).

The limited English proficiency of Hispanic people also reflects the contemporary situation, as seen in the previous chapter (see chapter 1, table 17). However, the high percentage of LEP citizens is not to be intended as absence of willingness to learn the English language; as many opinion polls have shown, learning English is very important for Hispanic people: it figures prominently as a kind of moral obligation that a citizen owes to the country in order to be part of the American society, and as something which is needed to succeed in the United States. According to Chávez, 'a Houston Chronicle Poll in 1990 found that 85% of all Hispanics believed that it was their duty to learn English, and that a majority believed English should be adopted as an official language' (1991: 163). To name but one of the many contemporary opinion polls, the 2011 *National Latino Survey*¹³ showed that 87% of Hispanics think adult immigrants need to

¹³ From the Pew Hispanic Centre, *Hispanic Attitudes Towards Learning English*, available online at <http://www.pewtrusts.org/>, last visited April, 2013.

learn English to succeed in the U.S. – but also that they want future generations to speak Spanish.

Thus, racial and ethnic segregation, along with poor and underfunded urban schools, rather than a lack of desire to learn English, are the major factors responsible for limited English proficiency and low educational attainment among Hispanic peoples. According to Carol Schmid, ‘many social scientists view the focus on language differences and opposition to bilingualism as thinly veiled hostility toward Hispanics and other minority language group’ (2001: 202). For Hispanic people, the willingness and need to learn the English language co-exists with the desire to maintain their native tongue and teach it to their children. Thus, we have seen that the fuel for the fire of the battle concerning language policy is basically national unity and the quest for equality. Another fundamental issue which is at stake in this controversial conflict is the central role played by language in defining a group’s identity, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

3. Language and identity

Since it fuels such a controversial debate, it is clear that individuals can be deeply attached to their mother tongue, and this is a consequence of the fact that language plays a fundamental role in defining one's identity. In some ways, we can say that Spanish-speaking people living in the United States today have a sort of double identity: on the one hand, they have Spanish blood and Spanish-speaking parents and relatives; on the other, they are immersed in a predominantly English-speaking world, where English is considered the key medium for achieving high education standards and better job opportunities. Surely, language can be considered a core characteristic of one's identity; but to what extent do English and Spanish concur in defining the Hispanic identity? How can these two facets of their identity co-exist?

The strong relationship between language and identity has a long historical background, and the same can be said with regard to the existence of a divide between a dominant language and the less powerful ones. In medieval times, the cultured notion of language referred to Latin; it was the language of the Church and consequently also the prestigious language of culture, while ordinary people used to speak local dialects in daily life. For example, at the time of Dante Alighieri there was no 'Italian language'; among the various dialects that were spoken, Dante's task was to determine which one was best suited to serve as the *volgare illustre*; in his *De vulgari eloquentia* (composed in 1306 but not published until 1529), he elevated the status of the *vulgaris* – or Italian

vernacular – in order to put it to use in place of Latin. In this way, the language of common people was able to become a sort of official language to represent its speaker, a very important fact considering that Italy was not unified until 1861: language was to be conceived as a key to unity even before the formal unification of the peninsula.

An important step for the assessment of the Spanish language occurred in the same year as the discovery of America, when Antonio de Nebrija wrote the first grammar of a European language, the *Gramática Castellana*, with the announced purpose of bringing Castilian – the basis of the modern Spanish language – under control, in order to ‘aggrandise the nation, better employ men’s minds, and prevent the language from change’ (Joseph 2004: 103). This fear of language corrosion also is reflected in the *Diálogo de la Lengua* (1535-6), by Juan Valdés, which is typical of a genre of the same period in which arguments are made in favour of a particular vernacular language, or, very commonly, to assert the advantages of one vernacular dialect over another as the basis for the building of a national language. The debates over which dialect or vernacular is the best one are also concerned with questions of purity, and, in the opinion of Valdés, Castilian was the most appropriate, because ‘its Spanishness had been less diluted from outside influence than Catalan or Valencian’ (Joseph 2004: 105). It is significant that among the first intellectuals concerned with questions of language purity there were European Spanish-speaking people; in the next chapter, we will see that the concern for language purity is something that fuels part of the debate about Spanglish.

3.1. Identity politics: national identity and ethnic identity

The fundamental issue that stands in opposition to those who support national unity by trying to make English the official language of the USA and those with a vital interest in ethno-linguistic equality is not only language as such, but rather an ethnic conflict in which language is implicated in several ways. In fact, ethnic identity seems centrally important to some people, while others argue for the pre-eminence of national identity. The dispute between nationalists and ethnic minority activists is essentially a 'disagreement over the meanings and uses of group identity in the public life of the nation-state' (Schmidt 2000: 47). Consequently, what is to be gained or lost, and by whom, in the debate about language policy, is also to be understood in terms of identity politics, which involves the contemporary increasing contention over several aspects of group membership in nation-states.

What is at stake here is the strong relationship between language and identity on the one hand, and the existence of both national identity and ethnic identity on the other. Generally speaking, personal identity can be intended as the product of a complex set of interactions between individuals and their environments, which means that identity must be understood as having multiple facets: 'it is constitutive and relational, contextual and therefore mutable, but inherently contestable as well' (Schmidt 2000: 51). That is to say, there are different kinds of identity, depending on the power resources that each of us is able to mobilize in our relationships. The fact that identity can be contestable is particularly true with regard to what Benedict Anderson called 'imagined communities', such as ethnic and national groups; they are 'imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their

community' (Anderson 1991, quoted in Joseph 2004: 115). Because such communities are 'imagined', it is always possible that they may be imagined differently, with different characteristics, boundaries, and historical memories.

It is precisely because language may be something experienced as a core aspect of personal identity, that it can become a highly explosive fuel motivating political conflict in struggles over collective identity, as we have seen up to now. The fact that somebody can think of a language as inferior or dominant has important implications for the people who use it. Moreover, language is a powerful instrument for promoting internal cohesion and providing ethnic or national identity.

3.1.1. National identity

Since the eighteenth century, the dominant ideal form of political association has been the nation-state, and since such a structure does not exist in nature, it has to be constructed and maintained through human agency. Accordingly, state political elites have tried to bind their members into some form of conscious belonging to a 'nation', a form of membership in which political identity is to be experienced. Thus, a nation is to be conceived as a collection of people who share a sense of collective identity in comparison to the members of other nationalities. In this context, the role of language is to help build national unity and national identity through the elevation of the status of the nation's language and/or through its standardization; the absence of a national language is the highest obstacle that has to be overcome in establishing a national identity (Joseph 2004).

As mentioned before, the central political value around which the U.S. debate over language policy has swirled is precisely that of national unity, which conceives language as the core identity and the unifying thread of a nation. As Johann Herder¹⁴ (quoted in Schmidt 2000: 44) wrote in his essay *On the Origin of Speech*¹⁵:

Has a nationality anything dearer than the speech of its fathers? In its speech resides its whole thought domain, its tradition, history, religion and basis of life, all its heart and soul, to deprive a people of its speech, is to deprive it of its own eternal good... with language is created the heart of a people.

To reiterate the concept, Fichte (quoted in Joseph 2004: 110), in 1806, argued that what defines a nation most clearly is exactly its language:

The first, original, and truly natural boundaries of states are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human arts begin; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and an inseparable whole.

Eric Hobsbawm agrees with Fichte on the central importance of national languages, but whereas Fichte takes them as something furnishing the foundation on which the rest of national identity can be constructed, Hobsbawm (1990: 51) realises that the national language is itself a discursive construction:

National languages [...] are the opposite of what nationalist mythology supposes them to be, namely the primordial foundations of national culture and the matrices of the national minds. They are usually attempts to devise a standardised idiom out of a multiplicity of actually spoken idioms, which are downgraded to dialects.

¹⁴ A German Romantic credited for having spread the idea that language is essential in defining and expressing a nation's spirit.

¹⁵ This essay won a top prize of the Berlin Academy of Sciences in 1770.

From this point of view, then, national language has the hidden purpose of degrading other languages, which will be therefore subordinated in terms of status and prestige.

3.1.2. Ethnic identity

The efforts to construct a national identity through language policy, however, are complicated by the existence of multilingualism in the United States: the process of nation-building described in the previous chapter with regard to the aims of the U.S. English movement may be conceived as reflecting the perspective of nationalist elites who are interested in making their own language the official language of the country. However, from the perspective of the speakers of other languages, these efforts may be seen as an attempt to establish hegemonic languages to help in the domination of minority language groups by the elites of dominant groups. This is particularly true if this 'minority group' – a label which is to be intended as the descriptive perception that dominant ethno-linguistic groups have of less powerful ethnic groups and their languages – has a consistent size, as it is for Hispanic peoples in the United States.

In fact, in the history of the United States several languages have always existed side by side, from the very beginning when Columbus sailed the Ocean and arrived on the continent for the first time. If a language has been successively installed as a hegemonic national language signifying a core part of a national identity – as it is the case for English in the United States – efforts to recognize that national identity as multilingual and multicultural will represent a direct threat to the personal identity of the dominant elite. By the same token, the very existence of a hegemonic language in a multilingual society

represents and expresses a subordination of the minority languages and the people who speak them in that society.

If language becomes an important marker of ethnic identity – and Hispanic people effectively feel a deep belonging to their mother tongue – language policy represents one way through which to gain greater public recognition and respect for a particular ethnic community. By gaining public recognition for my language, I enhance the status not only of my language, but of my ethnic community and myself, too. Insofar as my language infuses and represents my way of life, the latter is given public validation and respect through a status-enhancing language policy. Conversely, language policy may be used by a state's political elite to demean or deny recognition to an ethnic community, thus contributing to its continuing subordination in the wider society (Schmidt 2000).

Language is conceived by the supporters of U.S. English as the sole unifying thread of the nation and as a potent symbol of political identity, but the same could be said with regard to Hispanic peoples: as mentioned in the previous chapters, Hispanics can be of any race, and they are generally considered a very heterogenic population; among all the differences, it is the language that might unify the Hispanic community, regardless of race, class, education and local linguistic differences. Moreover, it is when people feel economically and ideologically disempowered that language may become an issue and a major symbol of cultural integrity – and this is exactly the case, considering the 'linguistic imperialism' which is being pursued by the English language (Kramsch 1998) and the fact that Hispanics are in the lower economic strata of the American society (see 1.3). In such conditions, the status of one's language affects self-esteem, too. Thus, language is an especially salient symbolic issue, because it links political claims with the psychological feelings of group.

From this perspective, people need what Ronald Schmidt calls ‘symbolic recognition’: ‘the acknowledgment, acceptance, and respect by others of the legitimacy and value of particular identity formations and communities’ (2000: 52). In this regard, Taylor (1994: 25) describes the central thrust of the movement for multiculturalism as follows:

The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *misrecognition* [emphasis in original] of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Non-recognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being

Another aspect of symbolic recognition is that membership in significant identity groups renders a personal identity vulnerable to the behaviours and characteristics of those within the group as well. If speaking a language is the most important way to show the belonging to a group and to define somebody, it means Hispanics should speak Spanish to show affiliation with their country of origin. But what happens when a Hispanic person can speak two languages and decides to speak English in a predominantly Spanish-speaking context or vice versa? And what happens when this person speaks a hybrid and mixed language that crosses between the two? It is easy to see how symbolic recognition functions as a central dynamic and motivating force for the politics of identity, and how language can be a key signifier in this process. To sum up, then, the principal fuels of the language policy conflict in the United States are ethno-linguistic inequality and identity politics, which is connected to language diversity and is centred on the relationship between national and ethnic identities.

3.2. Growing up bilingual: diglossia and code-switching

As the major symbol system of our species, language comes to symbolize the peoples and the cultures that utilize them. Moreover, 'what is most unique and basic about the link between language and culture is the fact that in huge areas of real life language *is* the culture and that neither law nor education nor religion nor government nor politics nor social organization would be possible without it' (Fishman 1999: 445). Hence, language, culture and identity are to be conceived as being intrinsically woven together. The kind of identity specifically related to the topic of this study is what Henri Tajfel calls 'social identity': 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups), together with the values and emotional significance attached to that membership' (1978: 63). This form of identity is central to the constitution of the self and to the self's relationship to other selves; although there is no one-to-one connection between anyone's language and his or her cultural identity, language is the most sensitive indicator of the link between an individual and a given social group. It is sufficient to think of everyday experience: the languages a person uses, to some extent, concur in determining what we think of him or her.

How a person speaks plays an important role in understanding how this person is: sometimes we seem to be able to size somebody up simply through linguistic contact (just think, for instance, of accents). But what happens when a person grows up bilingual? As mentioned in chapter 1, the majority of the Hispanic peoples living in the United States can speak at least two languages, which means they are provided with two worldviews, and their cultural background has several facets depending on how such languages influence each other. How do these two facets co-exist in the same

person? Although one can think of bilingualism as a source of personal strength and of broader cultural, racial and political understanding, it is often considered a problem, a barrier to social integration, particularly for poor Hispanic communities in the United States (see 2.1.1.); sometimes it is so even in the opinion of native Spanish-speaking people: 'no children in an American school are helped by being held back in their native language when they could be learning the language that will enable them to get a decent job or pursue higher education' (Chávez 1991: 164).

Indeed, ample evidence points to the fact that being bilingual in a country where there is no official language is stigmatized; in particular, 'native speakers of languages such as French, Norwegian, or German report that U.S. monolingual students admire their bilingualism but seem unimpressed by the Spanish-English bilingualism of a growing number of U.S. citizens' (Johnson 2000: 181). On the one hand, this can be explained if one considers that Spanish-English bilingualism can become common in a country where 16.3 % of the total population is of Hispanic origins; on the other, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it might be a consequence of the anxiety that this situation generates. Attitudes revealed in statements such as 'talk English, you are in the United States' (Montaner 1988) are unfortunately familiar to most people.

In the United States, an equally common attitude in bilingual situations is that of assuming that, in order to be a citizen and earn a living, Spanish and in general the Hispanic culture should be compartmentalized for home life only. Such a division whereby different languages are used in different domains is called *diglossia*; with regard to the Hispanic situation, it often means the devaluation of Spanish, because the result is the use of Spanish as a private language, and English as a public language. Philip Riley defines this as a form of 'societal bilingualism characterized by the complementary

distribution of the functions of two language varieties' (2007: 58), where there is a relationship of superiority/inferiority between a high variety and a low variety. This state of affairs obviously has important social implications, because from this point of view Spanish – which, in this context, is the low variety – is once again devalued, since English becomes the language of political and social power and it acquires cultural prestige, too. Sometimes it happens that people avoid speaking their native tongue in public contexts because of the fear of being judged or even blamed. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987: 75), recalling her childhood, says

In childhood we are told that our language is wrong. Repeated attacks on our native tongue diminish our sense of self. [...] I remember being sent to the corner for talking back to the Anglo teacher when all I was trying to do was tell her how to pronounce my name. 'If you want to be an American, speak American. If you don't like, go back to Mexico where you belong'

Along the same lines, she continues by arguing that the first person who had a negative attitude towards the use of Spanish was her mother, who had grown up in a Spanish-speaking world:

I want you to speak English. *Pa' hallar trabajo tienes que saber hablar el inglés bien. Qué vale toda tu educación si todavía hablas inglés con un 'accent'*¹⁶, my mother would say, mortified that I spoke English like a Mexican

Even the accent, as already mentioned, becomes a marker of identity in similar situations. Anzaldúa's mother was part of the first generation of immigrants, which means that by that time the presence of Spanish-speaking people was much inferior, and the ability to speak English was to be pursued at all costs in order to have the chance to become part of American society.

¹⁶ 'In order to find a job you have to be able to speak English well. What is the usefulness of your whole education if you still speak English with an accent' [my translation].

Child of the ethnic revivals of the 1960s, Anzaldúa (1987: 81) feels a deep relationship with her mother tongue:

If a person has a low estimation of my native tongue, she also has a low estimation of me. [...] until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak *Spanglish*, [my emphasis] and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate

Her reference to Spanglish is a clear remark of her need to identify with both languages, since both are part of her personal identity.

Nowadays things have changed somewhat; Spanish-speaking people are the major minority group, and in general young Hispanics are used to speaking both languages, at least at some levels, and they can choose in which one to communicate (according to the context, the interlocutor etc.). Even if Spanish is still underestimated by the Anglo dominant elite, its use is undoubtedly spreading, as already mentioned (see 1.4).

Ana Celia Zentella (1997) analysed the meaning and consequences of growing up bilingual for Puerto Rican children in New York. In *el bloque*¹⁷, these children learn to construct a new kind of multiple and shifting identity by integrating the many ways of speaking and behaving that surround them; the result is the creation of a particular blend that identifies them as 'Nuyorcan'. The very coining of this term is itself evidence of the recognition that their identity is similar to but different from that of island Puerto Ricans and other New Yorkers; Nuyoricans are a linguistically, racially and culturally diverse community.

¹⁷ 'A impoverished but vibrant NYPR [Nuyorican] community'; it is one of the many communities that lived in the over two hundred block areas of *El Barrio*, which is 'the area that stretches north from 96th Street to 125th Street, and east from Fifth Avenue to First Avenue' (Zentella 1997: 2;8).

The aim of Zentella was that of investigating how bilingualism and community identity build on to each other; her study provides an insight into the social construction of bilingualism in twenty families (and particularly five children) of one of the largest and most disadvantaged Spanish-speaking groups in the United States. All native speakers demonstrate a tacit cultural knowledge of how to speak their language appropriately in different speech situations, according to their community's 'ways of speaking' (Hymes 1974). Whereas monolinguals 'adjust by switching phonological, grammatical, and discourse features within one linguistic code, bilinguals alternate between the languages in their linguistic repertoire as well' (Zentella 1997: 80). Children in bilingual speech communities acquire two grammars and the rules for communicative competence which prescribes not only when and where each language may be used, but also whether and how the two languages may be woven together in a single utterance. Zentella recalls Uriel Weinreich's contention that 'the ideal bilingual switches from one languages to the other according to the appropriate changes in the speech situation, but not in unchanged speech situations, and certainly not within a single sentence' (quoted in Zentella 1997: 80). From this perspective, a bilingual speaker could not switch within the same situation, while actually it is something that happens very often in many parts of the world where two or more speech communities live in close contact. In multicultural societies, more and more people are living, speaking, and interacting across multiple languages and cultures, and one way of surviving culturally in immigration settings is to exploit, rather than stifle, the endless varieties of meanings achieved through participation in several speech communities at the same time (Riley 2007).

Code-switching is something that has been studied all over the world, and it refers to a wide range of phenomena. At first, its study focused mostly on bilingualism, and this 'practise' was associated with a lack of competence of both the languages which were involved, a sort of attempt to communicate in some way, without being sufficiently proficient in either language. Celso Alvarez-Cáccamo (1998) argues that the first explicit mention of this phenomenon is to be found in Hans Vogt (*Language Contact*, 1954), who theorized a psychological approach: 'code-switching in itself is perhaps not a linguistic phenomenon, but rather a psychological one, and its causes are obviously extra-linguistic' (1954: 368). The turn to a linguistic, functional and interactional view of code-switching was initiated by Joseph Gumperz, although he also took the psychological perspective into account. He describes it as 'the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems' (1982: 59). Carmen Silva-Corvalán (1989) argues that both external social factors and internal linguistic factors concur in influencing the occurrence of code-switching. Among the external factors, she mentions the physical environment, the people participating in the conversation, the topic and finally ethnic identity, because the alternation of language use can establish solidarity within the members of a bilingual community. With regard to the linguistic factors, she speaks of questions of stylistic or metaphorical choices, the use of quotations in indirect discourse, repetition to convey emphasis of clarification, interjections, personal style, and rhetorical functions. Furthermore, she distinguishes this kind of 'fluent' code-switching from that occurring when there is a lack of knowledge of certain words, or when a sort of mechanism of self-correction enters the discourse; in this case, she talks of *sustitución de códigos* (code/language substitution).

Francisco Fernández Moreno (1998) opposes the simple alternation of language use (or code-switching) – meaning the juxtaposition of phrases or sentences of different languages in the same speech act, each sentence maintaining its morphological and syntactic rules¹⁸ (Moreno 1998) – with what he calls *mezcla de lenguas* (mix of languages), which is typical of bilingual people who lack proficiency. Indeed, what comes out of code-switching often implies some level of interference between the two codes, which means influences at a morphological, syntactic, phonological and semantic level. Sometimes this situation creates ungrammatical utterances, which are seen as a ‘hodgepodge’, which threatens the purity of the languages involved. People speaking such mixed languages are often accused of language corruption; because it can lead to ungrammatical utterances, code-switching is seen as a mark of linguistic deficiency, and this practise is therefore often blamed, while an accurate knowledge of the social-cultural context, the grammatical rules that code-switchers follow, and the discourse strategies that it accomplishes might make its detractors appreciate these bilingual skills. The impact of such a negative attitude is devastating, particularly when ‘the young are told they speak Spanish ‘mata’o’ (‘killed’) or that their ‘Spanglish’ is ruining both languages’ (Zentella 1997: 269). This can even lead to loss of the native language, because of fear of being stigmatized.

Nowadays, research into code-switching seems to be at a crossroads: on the one hand, ample research has shown that the alternate use of distinct speech varieties in discourse may have accountable meanings and effects. On the other hand, some research has shown the impossibility or inappropriateness of assigning specific meanings to some

¹⁸ *‘la alternancia consiste en la yuxtaposición de oraciones o fragmento de oraciones de lenguas diferentes en el discurso de un mismo hablante; en este fenómeno, cada oración está dirigida por las reglas morfológicas y sintácticas de la lengua correspondiente’* (Moreno 1998: 268).

types of variety alternation, and thus implicitly started to question whether meaningless code-switching can be called code-switching at all (Alvarez-Cáccamo 1998).

For Hispanic peoples, shifting back and forth between Spanish and English appears to be a language variety and style in itself. It functions to announce specific identities, create certain meanings, and facilitate particular interpersonal role relationships; it can serve as 'a badge of community membership which symbolizes authentic identity in two cultures and their languages' (Johnson 2000: 184). At the root of the inability to appreciate the wide range of language behaviours that flourish in multilingual communities is the belief that there is only one correct or pure form of language that everyone should speak, and that a true competent bilingual never mixes languages. Moreover, some languages have come to be considered the correct or pure form simply because of the historic, economic and political power of their speakers, not because of any intrinsic quality or logic in the language's features. Contrary to what Weinreich argued (see above), when there is intense and prolonged contact among different networks and generations, 'it is precisely the ability to switch languages in the same sentence and situation that characterizes the most effective bilinguals' (Zentella 1997: 270). Thus, a personal social and ethnic identity may not be an immutable monolithic entity, but rather it is to be conceived as a kaleidoscope of various representations of self through language; the concept of appropriation – rather than appropriateness – is definitely more correct in a situation of multilingualism: people have the ability to make a foreign language and culture their own by adapting it to their own needs and interests (Schmidt 2000).

3.3. How Hispanics view their identity: hyphenation and borderlands

It is clear that Spanish-speaking people living in the United States have a complex sense of their identity; they are virtually unified by language, although national varieties of Spanish sometimes emphasize regional borders, but those borders recede when the Spanish language is embraced as a common denominator. Nevertheless, Hispanics are divided into various nationalities and with often-conflicting agendas, which means they belong to several worlds at the same times. The Hispanic peoples represent the extreme melting pot (Morales 2002), the most astonishingly example of a multicultural and multiracial community. Besides what separate them from mainstream dominant Anglos, there are also several borderlines between them: one between first generation immigrants and those who became American citizens; one between Caribbean Latinos, who are more influenced by African culture, and Mexican-Americans, who are more influenced by Mesoamerican cultures; one between Puerto Ricans and those who settled on the mainland – Nuyoricans – and finally one between North Americans and South Americans, whose societies tend to be more Euro-colonial in tenor (Johnson 2000).

A 2012 study by the Pew Hispanic Centre¹⁹ with regard to Hispanic identity shows that, when Spanish-speaking people have to describe their identity, the majority of them are more likely to prefer a label which recalls their family's country of origin – such as Mexican, Cuban, Dominican – over pan-ethnic terms. In this regard, they prefer the term 'Hispanic' to 'Latino' (33% compared to 14%; the rest simply do not care about it), probably because the latter is more associated with South Americans, a fact which is

¹⁹ *When Labels Don't Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity*, by Paul Taylor, Mark Hugo Lopez, Jessica Hamar Martínez and Gabriel Velasco, issued April 2012, available at <http://www.pewhispanic.org>, last visited 6 May, 2013.

evidence of their need to be distinguished from their near neighbours. Moreover, about half (47%) say they consider themselves to be very different from the typical American, and just 21% say they use the term 'American' to describe their identity. Furthermore, most Hispanics claim they do not see a shared common culture among U.S. Hispanics: 69% say Hispanics in the U.S. have many different cultures, while 29% say they share a common culture (the rest do not know).

In the following section, we will see how the three major Hispanic groups – Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Cubans – view their identity in the United States, how they feel and how they manage to live in this multiple subjectivity. Stavans, when talking of Hispanic peoples, uses the phrase 'life in the hyphen' (1995: 7) to symbolize through a linguistic metaphor the state of continuous translation between cultures; this metaphor suggests a sense of reciprocal influence between two identities. Their race, their language, their family, the environment in which they live in, everything concurs in shaping a complex Hispanic or Latino identity.

Hence, Spanish-speaking people have to come up with their having two worldviews, two languages, two identities. Moreover, especially for the third generation, the more times passes, the more the language shift seems to be towards English. Does it imply they feel more American? We will see that not only language represents the unifying thread of this heterogeneous community; their sense of self is very similar, too.

3.3.1. *Mexicans*

The largest group of Spanish-speaking people living in the United States, Mexican-Americans are all the Hispanics whose ancestors settled in what had been territories

owned by Mexicans before the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo* of 1848. Their massive presence is also due to the fact that legal immigration to the United States has been determined by the need for cheap labour, especially in agriculture; their economic status is low, largely as a consequence of the combined impact of educational and job factors associated with this group; this state of affairs helps to create the conditions of marginalization and stereotyping.

In the brilliant work *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa argues that Mexican Americans – Chicanos – live on borders and in margins; the border she deals with in the book is not only that between Texas and Mexico, but also the psychological one that naturally emerges where people of different races and cultures occupy the same territory; in her opinion, this place is full of hatred, anger and exploitation.

On the one hand, Chicanos are constantly exposed to the Spanish of Mexicans on the other side of the border, while on the other, they are immersed in a world of English-speaking people, and they need ‘their’ language to become part of American society.

Anzaldúa (1987: 85) describes Chicanos as having

[...] a kind of dual identity – we don’t identify with the Anglo-American cultural values and we don’t totally identify with the Mexican cultural values. We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalized the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one. *A veces no soy nada ni nadie. Pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy*²⁰

The last sentence is very significant in my opinion. The sense of alienation that emerges from their being not fully part of either side of the border can be harmful; however, it is

²⁰ ‘Sometimes I am nothing and nobody. But until I am not, I am’ [my translation].

exactly because of the consciousness that they do not belong wholly to any of these worlds – the Anglo one or the Mexican one – that they feel the need to create or invent a new identity, which possibly could welcome both sides without having a predominant one that excludes the other. From the consciousness of what they are not, a first sense of self can arise, even if from negation. She continues:

When not copping out, when we know we are more than nothing, we call ourselves Mexican, referring to race and ancestry; *mestizo* when affirming both our Indian and Spanish (but we hardly ever know our Black ancestry); Chicano when referring to a politically aware people born and/or raised in the U.S.; *Raza* when referring to Chicanos; *tejanos* when we are Chicanos from Texas (*Ibid.*)

The concept of *Mestizo* clearly refers not only to the Indian-European mixed progeny of this community, but to a cultural mix, too, which provides them with the ability to live in different worlds at the same time. *La Raza*, literally meaning the race but culturally referring to the people, is 'a spiritual notion providing unity for the webs of connection through culture in a hyphenated land [...] it celebrates commonalities in history and survival; it has to do with resilience against the forces of domination, both in ancestral history and in the context of Hispanic marginalization and otherness in the United States' (Johnson 2000: 170). It helps to create a common sense of cultural identity among the different Hispanic groups of the nation.

Since language is a fundamental part of one's identity, Anzaldúa also speaks about the needed presence of a new language giving proper voice to this community, which comes from the contact between the Anglo and the Hispanic world. She explains that Chicanos did not even know they were a people until 1965, when Cesar Chavez and the farmworkers united and *la Raza Unida* party was formed in Texas. With that recognition, they became a distinct people out of the nothingness which had characterized their view

of themselves before; they acquired a name and a language, and so they began to get glimpse of what they might eventually become. With regard to their language, Anzaldúa (1987: 77) argues that

Chicano Spanish is considered by the purists and by the most Latinos deficient, a mutilation of Spanish. But Chicano Spanish is a border tongue which developed naturally. [...] Chicano Spanglish is not incorrect, it is a living language. For a people who are neither Spanish nor live in a country in which Spanish is the first language; for a people who live in a country in which English is the reigning tongue but who are not Anglo; for a people who cannot entirely identify with either standard (formal, Castilian) Spanish nor standard English, what resource is left to them but to create their own language? A language which they can connect their identity to, one capable of communicating the realities and values true to themselves – a language with terms that are neither *español ni inglés*, but both. We speak a patois, a forked tongue, a variation of two languages. Chicano Spanish sprang out of the Chicanos' need to identify ourselves as a distinct people. We needed a language with which we could communicate with ourselves, a secret language. For some of us, language is a homeland closer than the Southwest

Once again, it is language which provides the space where people find a definition of their identity; Mexican-Americans, or Chicanos, need to express themselves with words that come from both their worlds.

3.3.2. Puerto Ricans

Historically, Puerto Rico became an occupied U.S. territory at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War in 1898. In 1917, residents of Puerto Rico were granted U.S. citizenship, but commonwealth status was not achieved until 1952. In the same year, the United States allowed the reinstatement of Spanish as the primary language for instruction, but mandated English as a compulsory subject; theoretically, then, all Puerto

Ricans are bilingual in Spanish and English, but actually many of them developed only limited proficiency in English. Economically, Puerto Ricans are in the lowest economic strata of the Hispanic community living in the United States; geographically, the majority of them live on the mainland, in New York to be precise. As already mentioned, their presence in the Big Apple has coined the term Nuyoricans.

In *Living in Spanglish* (2002), Ed Morales – a Nuyorican – examines the diverse community of the Hispanic people living in the metropolitan area, and tries to move beyond identity politics into a postmodern melting pot:

Latino culture, particularly our Spanglish American variation, has never been about choosing affiliation with a particular race – it is a space where multiple levels of identifications are possible. [...] it is a Spanglish space. If the postmodern era is characterized by heterogeneity and randomness, then Latinos are well prepared to take advantages of it. We have spent the last several centuries preparing for our role as the first wholly postmodern culture (2002: 17)

From this perspective, then, Spanglish can be viewed as the expression of the extreme melting pot, a way to overcome all the differences between the various Hispanic groups and bind them as Spanish-speaking Americans; the European Spanish language is no longer sufficient to unify this community, because many of them actually do not speak the Spanish of *la Real Academia Española*, but a language that has been adapted to meet the needs of the people living in the United States. Not by chance, there is ample research concerning the diatopic variation of Spanish in the United States.

Even the label ‘American’ carries too many implications to be adopted by Hispanics. Somehow, it can imply a sort of neutralization whose aim is levelling all the nuances of the Hispanic kaleidoscope to become part of the mainstream dominant ideology. Thus, trying to feel American is quite controversial for Spanish-speaking people, because most of the time it implies being white and speaking English:

First, I imagined myself as hyphenated, something that for Puerto Ricans is a state of redundancy [...] Then, in the attempt to consider myself 'American', my identity evaporated completely, like liquid sizzling into nothingness on a hot grill. When I became aware of the mistake that I had made, the way I had been removed from the bosom of Latino-ness, I knew that somehow I had to spend the rest of my life making up for my error. [...] I began a long struggle to understand the necessity of creating my new Spanglish identity (2002: 11)

Like Chicana Anzaldúa, Morales also refers to the sense of nothingness that emerges from the search for a definition of a Latino identity; it is not a question of trying to become American, because the very essence of a 'nation of immigrants' is the melting pot, the co-existence of racially and culturally diverse peoples side by side. Morales continues:

Living in Spanglish argues we are already American. The Chicanos say, 'We didn't cross the border. The border crossed us.' There is a trauma involved in trying to make sense of life on the border, on the hyphen. But the mistake many writers and observers have made is the demonization of the hyphen, the self-negation of being at the border. Neither white nor black, we are, poor Latinos, wallowing in a pool of nothingness. We will never be anything until we're somebody else's idea of what it means to be an American. But we are not defined by a negation, we are the celebrators of contradictions, the revellers in the thorniness of the human condition, the slayers of category [...] Latinos give the chance for America to move beyond identity politics (2002: 20-21)

Once again, there is reference to the sense of alienation which is connected to Hispanic identity; but in this case, it is exalted because of the great possibilities that this condition implies: being at the border, living on or in²¹ the hyphen, does not mean they do not belong to either side; it is not a question of trying to decide which part is the dominant one in order to become somebody. On the contrary, being Latino means welcoming both

²¹ While Pérez-Firmat (1994) uses the expression 'life on the hyphen', Stavans (1995) opts for 'life in the hyphen'.

sides into a new sense of multiple identity, where there are no stereotypes and compartmentalisations do not exist, because of the multiracial nature of these peoples. The fact that the essence of being Latino is not defined by a negation is evidence of the rise of a new consciousness, something which goes beyond Anzaldúa's '*pero hasta cuando no lo soy, lo soy*' (see above). He continues:

[...] being consigned to a South of the Border ethos and all the foreign-tongued otherness that it implies – nor are we viewed as white, black or even Asian in the American race hierarchy. [...] if, as Frederic Jameson writes, postmodernism is characterized by the loss of the modern subject, then Latin-ness has evolved from a culture where that subject, teetering on the edge of economic insecurity, has always been in doubt (2002: 24)

Consequently, he also talks about Spanglish as the medium to express this hybrid culture and identity:

Spanglish is something birthed out of necessity. There is a need for Latinos to assimilate in the United States, but we have always searched for a way to do it without losing what we are. In fact, generations living in *el Norte* have allowed Latinos the space to begin to create a hybrid American culture that reflects the flexibility and absorptive ability of Latin America's (2002: 25)

Unlike Chicanos, Puerto Ricans are very close to black peoples; in New York, one may see Puerto Ricans and Blacks talking and walking in the same manner, singing and dancing with the same style and often seeming indistinguishable in appearance and action; they both participate in forms of contemporary street art and performance, such as graffiti, rap music and break dancing. The closer cultural proximity to American Blacks is based on their Caribbean origins. Francisco Alarcón argues that perhaps African Americans are to Puerto Ricans what Native Americans are to Chicanos: 'a kind of cultural tap root, a latent bond to ethnic sources indigenous to the United States, yet radically challenging to the prevailing cultural hierarchy' (Alarcón 1985, in Flores 1993:

184). The title of one of his articles – *Qué assimilated, brother, yo soy asimilao: the structuring of Puerto Rican identity* – is evidence of the fact that the transformation of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. setting is something different from assimilation, as Morales has argued. He finds four moments in the awakening of Nuyorican cultural consciousness and identity. First, a state of abandon, hostility, disadvantage and exclusion experienced most of all by the first generation. Second, a state of enchantment at the striking contrast between the cultural bareness of New York and the imagined luxuriance of the Island culture, which is symbol of a search for cultural guidance and meaning in a hostile social context. Third, a ‘spiritual’ return to New York, which now includes Puerto Ricans, if only by force of their own deliberate self-insertion, and where now they begin to feel home. Fourth, the branching-out, the selective connection to and interaction with the surrounding North American society, which implies a heightened sense of the duality of their cultural life. Thus, in Alarcón’s opinion, Puerto Ricans did not experience a simple assimilation in the U.S. setting: ‘the process here is not headed toward assimilation with the dominant ‘core’ culture, nor even toward respectful coexistence with it’ (*Ibid.*). It would be more correct to speak of a self-affirmation of their identity as something other from that of Island Puerto Ricans, from that of New Yorkers, from that referred to with the general label ‘Hispanic’ and ultimately also from that of Americans.

3.3.3. Cubans

Of the Hispanic groups in the United States, Cubans are unique in many ways; they are the smaller Hispanic group, a fact that is due to the presence of many refugees, and their economic condition is better than that of other Hispanic groups. In the post-Castro era,

the flow of immigrants was controlled on the U.S. side by immigration and refugee reception policies, and on the Cuban side by Castro's policies about who could leave the country and under what conditions.

The cultural life of Cubans, to some extent, is more pronounced and better preserved on the mainland than in Cuba; this is due to a kind of 'refugee mentality' (Johnson 2000: 175), according to which an imagined return to the island in the future explains some of the propensity of Cuban cultural retention, although for the younger generations, of course, the tradition is interlaced with mass American culture. This fact is immediately evident to anyone who visits Miami Beach, where the vitality of the mix of Cuban elements with mainstream America is to be observed in food, music, dress and in the presence of a mixed language that combines English and Spanish (*Ibid.*).

In *Life on the Hyphen* (1994), Gustavo Pérez Firmat argues that, in order to describe the blending of cultures that has taken place in many parts of the world – particularly in the Americas – anthropologists have employed the terms 'acculturation' and 'transculturation'; while the former stresses the acquisition of culture, the latter calls attention to the passage from one culture to another. Not satisfied with them, he coins the term 'biculturation':

In my usage, biculturation designs not only contact of cultures; in addition, it describes a situation where the two cultures achieve a balance that makes it difficult to determine which is the dominant and which is the subordinate culture. Unlike acculturation or transculturation, biculturation implies an equilibrium, however tense or precarious, between the two contributing cultures. Cuban-American culture is a balancing act (1994: 6)

He stresses that equilibrium does not necessarily mean stasis; it is not a motionless co-existence. Like Alarcón, he also specifies that it is not assimilation that he is talking about: 'Cuban-American culture heightens and draws out certain tendencies inherent in

mainland island culture – most prominently, the tendency toward hyphenation’ (1994: 16).

Like Anzaldúa and Alarcón, Pérez Firmat (1994: 7) also stresses the impossibility of Cuban-Americans to feel really part of one side rather than the other:

Spiritually and pshyologically you are neither *aquí* nor *allá*, you are neither Cuban nor Anglo. You’re ‘Cubanglo’, a word that has the advantage of imprecision, since one can’t tell where the ‘Cuban’ ends and the ‘Anglo’ begins. Having two cultures, you belong wholly to neither one. You are both, you are neither: *Cuba-no / America-no*. What is more, you can actually choose the language you want to work, live, love and pun in. For myself, there have been many times I wish I didn’t have this option, for choosing can be painful and complicated [...] nonetheless, the equipment that comes with the options create the conditions for distinctive cultural achievement

Thus, once again, language is perceived as something fundamental for one’s identity, and the possibility or obligation to choose which one to use may be a painful decision. Yet, he recognizes that this option paves the way for the possibility of something new and different to arise.

In his book, he mentions José Kozer, a Cuban writer who lived most of his life in the United States; his poems mingle idioms and vocabulary from all over the Spanish-speaking world, and they presuppose a speaker with several Hispanic nationalities. The language that comes out is remarkably rich but also quite artificial, because actually it is used by nobody in real life. His attempt to create a sort of ‘Esperanto Spanish’ (Pérez Firmat 1994: 160) is both a symbol of absence of rootedness and a ‘shield against it’ (*Ibid.*); it reflects his fear of losing his mother tongue while living in a world surrounded by the sounds of English, because ‘Spanish is for Kozer a way of life, the cornerstone of his identity as a writer’ (*Ibid.*). From his perspective, then, there is an antagonistic view of cultural contact, and in this case the enemy is the United States; ‘he can assert his

non-Americanness only by hedging on his Cubanness' (*Ibid.*); his refusal of English in particular and American things in general is a recurring theme of his work. Every writer cultivates language, of course, but a Hispanic writer in the United States needs to do it more deliberately: Kozer's attempt to gather up all the Spanish languages is a clear evidence of this fact. His work reflects the ethnic American's fear of deculturation (Pérez Firmat 1994: 180), of losing old-country roots; but

there is no deculturation without reculturation. There is no discoloration without recoloration. We are all people of colour, you lose one colour, one culture, but you gain another. The process is not dying but dyeing, not death but change (*Ibid.*)

Pérez Firmat – as Alarcón had done – also provides an enumeration of the stages in the adaptation of an immigrant group to a new homeland. First, the 'substitutive' stage, when the immigrants try to deny the fact of displacement and try to create a copy of their home culture; second, the 'destitution' stage, when gradually the awareness of displacement crushes the fantasy of rootedness, which involves a feeling of strangeness and disconnection; third, as time passes, immigrants begin to feel like at home. He fears that as time passes, Cuban Americans will lose more and more of their 'Cuban-ness'. Anzaldúa borders, in his opinion, are also generational borders: second generation Cuban-Americans keep the hyphen but lose the accent. What will happen to next generations?

*

What emerges from this brief analysis, is that there are several aspects that unify the vision of the various Hispanic groups with regard to their identity: first of all, they do not feel completely part of either side of the hyphen; secondly, to avoid the sense of

nothingness that may accompany life in borderlands, they feel the need to have something new binding them; something that cannot be European Spanish, because it is perceived as a distant language, whose speakers accuse them of distorting and 'killing' it. Something that will not be even dominant English, because they will never perceive it as *their* language. Something that will identify them as Spanish-speaking Americans, besides all the differences existing within the various national groups. Finally, as already mentioned, they all feel a deep belonging to their mother tongue, which means they are not likely to relinquish it, even if the circumstances of life in the United States often imply a cross-fertilization between the two languages. This fact has created a new hybrid language, which is at the centre of a heated debate, as will be analysed in the next chapter.

4. The debate about Spanglish

‘When I speak of Spanglish, I’m talking about a fertile terrain for negotiating a new identity’

(Morales 2002: 6)

It is sufficient to type ‘Spanglish’ into Google to obtain more than three million item results, a fact which provides clear evidence of the magnitude of this phenomenon. Indeed, references to Spanglish abound in the literature, newspapers and scholarly journals. However, few authors have engaged in describing or defining this phenomenon, either assuming that the reader already knows what it is or because there is no official definition other than the one we can find in a dictionary. In fact, there is no universal agreement with regard to what Spanglish is. This lack of understanding has caused much discussion and controversy. One thing is certain: everybody seems to have an opinion about it — whatever that may be.

4.1. Towards a definition: what is Spanglish?

First of all, I think it is useful to begin by mentioning the many terms used for this language. In fact, during my studies, I discovered that besides ‘Spanglish’, there are

many other labels used to refer to the linguistic blend of Spanish and English in the United States. Some of them refer more specifically to diatopic variations of this language, since, as Stavans claims, 'there is really not one Spanglish, but many' (2003: 13). The term 'Cubonics' refers to the particular blend spoken by Cuban-Americans in the United States; then there are 'Chicano English' or 'Chicano Spanish', which refer to the language spoken in the Southwestern United States, along the Mexican borders, together with the dialect called 'Pachuco' or 'Caló'. Zentella (2007: 33) argues that Mexicans use '*mocho*' ('cropped') and 'Tex-Mex' to describe this mixed language, and she claims that 'those who are *pocho* (U.S. born/raised) speak *pocho* (the Spanish of U.S. born/raised Mexicans)'. Furthermore, there are the more syntactically Spanish-rooted terms, such as 'Espanglés' and 'Espanglish'. Rose Nash (1970) even distinguishes between the different connotations of 'Spanglish' and 'Englañol', and Stavans (2003a: 4) mentions other terms, such as '*casteyanqui*', '*argot sajón*', '*español bastardo*', '*Papiamento gringo*' and finally 'Dominicanish' (2004).

In trying to define Spanglish, I found it very illuminating to look for dictionary definitions. The *Real Academia Española* remarkably defines 'Espanglish' as '*modalidad del habla de algunos grupos hispanos de los Estados Unidos, en la que se mezclan, deformándolos, elementos léxicos y gramaticales del español y del inglés*²²'. It is significant that the institution does not use the more common and anglicized term 'Spanglish', but opts for the morphologically Spanish-rooted 'Espanglish'; this definition emphasizes the negative attitude of European Spanish-speaking intellectuals toward this linguistic phenomenon. The *Oxford English Dictionary* describes Spanglish in a rather disapproving

²² 'the way of speaking of some Hispanic groups in the United States, in which lexical and grammatical elements of Spanish and English are mixed and deformed' [my translation], from the official website of *la Real Academia Española*, <http://www.rae.es>, last visited 6 May, 2013.

way, too, as ‘a type of Spanish contaminated by English words and forms of expression, spoken in Latin America’. This is not an accurate definition, as it does not mention the United States, ‘purportedly home of Spanglish’ (Montes-Alcalá 2009: 98). The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines it more neutrally as ‘Spanish characterized by numerous borrowings from English’.

The context of Spanglish is obviously that of language contact; indeed, Fairclough (2003) and others have stressed that this phenomenon is not unique but a rather natural consequence where different languages co-exist; she claims that there are other examples of mixed languages, such as ‘portuñol’ (the mix of Spanish and Portuguese in the Brazil-Argentina border), ‘franglais’ (mix of French and English in Canada) and ‘cocoliche’ (mix of Italian and Spanish in Argentina). Thus, one might wonder, what is so peculiar about Spanglish? Perhaps, as seen in chapter 1, a first answer might be that the great attention given to this phenomenon is rooted in the demographic numbers of its supposed speakers; moreover, despite the great prominence given to this topic over the last decades, Spanglish is not a recent phenomenon as it might be expected. As Stavans (2003a) suggests, the roots of this linguistic and cultural phenomenon are to be found in the past, ever since the *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, signed in 1848, which transferred two thirds of Mexico’s territory — what is nowadays the Southwest — to the Anglos. From one day to another, the people living in those territories ceased to be Mexicans, at least officially, and became ‘Gringos’ (Stavans 2004).

According to Lipski (2008), the term ‘Spanglish’ appears to have been coined by the Puerto Rican journalist Salvador Tió, who used the term in a newspaper column first published in 1952. Tió was concerned with what he felt to be ‘the deterioration of Spanish in Puerto Rico under the onslaught of English words’ (quoted in Lipski 2008: 41);

in his opinion, language mixture was a degradation and an impoverishment of the language of Cervantes. This situation led him to wage a campaign against it with a series of polemical and satirical articles over the course of more than half a century. He was convinced that Puerto Rican Spanish was suffering a far worse fate than simply absorbing foreign borrowings. Evidently not understanding that creole languages are formed under conditions far different from the bilingual borrowings found in Puerto Rico, he examined Papiamentu – an Afro-Iberian creole language spoken mainly in Aruba and Curacao – and concluded that it was a degenerate form of Spanish. He warned that the same fate could happen to Puerto Rican Spanish (*Ibid.*):

If the Spanish of Curacao and Aruba could sink to such depths, something similar could occur in Puerto Rico if stiff measures are not taken to avoid it. This could take longer for various reasons, but if it has happened to other languages in every continent, there is no reason to believe that we are exempt from this danger.

Rose Nash (1970) observes that ‘in the metropolitan area of Puerto Rico, where Newyorricans²³ play an influential role in the economic life of the island, there has arisen a hybrid variety of language, often given the slightly derogatory label of Spanglish, which co-exists with less mixed forms of standard English and standard Spanish and has at least some of the characteristics of an autonomous language: a substantial number of native speakers’ (1970: 223). She claims that the emerging language retains the phonological, morphological, and syntactic structure of Puerto Rican Spanish. However, much of its vocabulary is English-derived. Nash argues that the fact that it is an autonomous language has been recognized not only by Puerto Ricans intellectuals, most of whom strongly disapprove of it, but also by the New York School of Social Research, which once offered a course in Spanglish for doctors, nurses, and social workers.

²³ The spelling had not been fixed yet.

Despite these forms of recognition, however, in the 1970s there was already bitter disagreement about the cultural significance of Spanglish; Nash talks about a 'linguistic dilemma' of Puerto Ricans, because the generation of that time felt 'inadequate with their Spanish, uncomfortable with their English and guilty about their culturally unacceptable Spanglish' (1970: 232). Moreover, along the same lines, she remarks that the vocabulary of Spanglish is 'the vocabulary of practical everyday living and working in a two-languages world, in which not everyone commands those two languages fluently'. This supposed inability to speak either English or Spanish proficiently is one of the most common arguments, as already mentioned in the previous chapter. In this regard, the negative attitude toward Spanglish is also displayed by Acosta-Belén, who argues that 'speakers of the non-defined mixture of Spanish and/or English are judged as 'different' or 'sloppy' speakers of Spanish and/or English, and are often labelled verbally deprived a-lingual, or deficient bilinguals because supposedly they do not have the ability to speak either English or Spanish well' (1975: 151). Similarly, Xosé Castro (1996, quoted in Lipski 2004b) limits the role of Spanglish by arguing that, although it serves a clear communicative function, it can only occur when one of the dialogue partners lacks a vocabulary item. From his point of view, then, Spanglish is restricted to small speech communities, and he stresses that New York Spanglish has little to do with its Los Angeles counterpart: what is named Spanglish, in his opinion, is actually composed of a group of dialects as varied as the speech communities it represents. Guerra Avalos (2001), beside reiterating the communicative function of Spanglish, adds that since it arises when one dialogue partner lacks vocabulary, thereby necessitating the adaptation of known words to fit new ideas, it means it is considered a sign of linguistic creativity;

because of its informal nature, in her opinion, this language cannot be academically standardized.

One of the harshest critics of Spanglish comes from González Echevarría (1997, in Stavans 2008: 116), who strongly disapproves of it and laments that:

Spanglish, the language made up of Spanish and English off the streets and introduced into talk shows and advertising campaigns, represents a grave danger for Latino culture and the progress of Latinos in mainstream America. Those who tolerate and even promote Spanglish as a harmless mixture don't realize that this is not a relationship of equality. The sad truth is that Spanglish is basically the language of poor Latinos, many of whom are illiterate in both languages. They incorporate English words and constructions into their daily speech because they lack the vocabulary and training in Spanish to adapt to the culture that surrounds them. Educated Latinos who use this language have other motives: some are ashamed of their origins and try to blend in with everyone else by using English words and literally translating English idioms. They think that this will make them part of the mainstream. Politically, however, Spanglish represents a capitulation; it stands for marginalization, not liberation.

Nevertheless, not all regard Spanglish with animosity. The evolving and political identity of U.S. Latino communities have resulted in a general rebirth of the notion of Spanglish, which has been deliberately claimed to be both linguistic and cultural patrimony. Morales stands among its defenders and in his *Living in Spanglish* (2002: 3) he takes a politically grounded stance linking this language with the notion that Latinos are a mixed-race people:

There is a need for a way to say something more about this idea that the word Latino expresses. So for the moment, let us consider Spanglish. Why Spanglish? There is no better metaphor for what a mixed-race culture means than a hybrid language, an informal code; the same sort of linguistic construction that defines different classes in a society can also come to define something outside us, a social construction with different rules. Spanglish is what we speak, but it is also what we Latinos are, and how we act, and how we perceive the world. It's also a way to avoid

the sectarian nature of other labels that describe our condition, terms like Nuyorican, Chicano, Cuban American, Dominican, etc. It is an immediate declaration that translation is definition, that movement is status quo.

While acknowledging that many observers – particularly those from Spain – consider Spanglish as ‘Spanish under siege of an external invader’ (2002: 5), Morales goes on to celebrate the emerging Latino language as an affirmation of resistance and the construction of a powerful new identity. His work also deals with manifestations of the Spanish-English interface in literature, popular culture and political discourse, and it is the most eloquent manifesto showing that Spanglish, an originally derogatory term, has been turned by its former victims into a badge of pride.

4.2. Ilan Stavans and ‘the making of a new American language’

Undoubtedly, the most fervent defender, admirer, and promoter of Spanglish is Ilan Stavans, whose name is linked to the term Spanglish in numerous articles, interviews and books. The topic of Spanglish generates enormous controversy, and Stavans is well aware of being at the centre of it, of representing a ‘lightning rod for polemics’, as Lipski suggests (2008: 50). A supporter of lexicographic activism, he has released a Spanglish-English dictionary with 6000 entries – *Spanglish, The making of a new American language* (2003a) – which includes also a translation of the first chapter of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote de la Mancha*; moreover, he wrote a dramatic monologue called *Nomah* (2005), which has been staged in Boston. In 1999, while working on his dictionary, Stavans offered a course based on his studies called *The Sounds of Spanglish* at the Amherst College, Massachusetts. The central theme was the development of this form of communication, and the key concept he used was that of *mestizaje*. All this caused

dismay among purists, and he observes that the majority of the attacks came from European Spanish-speaking people – a fact which is symptomatic, in his opinion. In the Iberian peninsula, the spread of Spanglish has become a national obsession: they fear that the Hispanic civilization on the side of the Atlantic will survive in the future only in a drastically altered and almost unrecognizable form.

In the Americas, this reaction is far less palpable; Stavans (2003a) suggests that perhaps it is due to the fact that they are used to being colonized by foreign powers, and Spanglish is perceived as an attractive mixture that announces the emergence of a new self-consciousness. Among native English speakers, the debate has more to do with assimilation: ‘Spanglish, the purists suggest, is the result of a bankrupt system of *Educación Bilingüe* – when teachers and parents forget how to delineate the line between one language and the other, the outcome is verbal chaos’ (2003a: 50). He adds that other reasons are to be found in a supposed ‘laziness’ (*Ibid.*) among Hispanic immigrants to learn proper English, as already mentioned (see chapter 2 and 3), and in the endorsement of multicultural programs that encourage cultural hybridity. He claims that he decided to choose silence as a response to criticism, simply because the attacks are the manifestation of a buried emotional reaction. He emphasizes that he agrees with those arguing that Spanish and English should be spoken well, but he also warns that for many impoverished Latinos the possibility of speaking English, Spanish or Spanglish is not an option.

In the Preface to *Spanglish* (2008: IX), Stavans brilliantly sums up certain aspects of the current debate concerning this hybrid language:

Its critics use an array of arguments against it: that it bastardizes standard English and/or Spanish; it delays the process of assimilation of Hispanics into the melting-pot; it is proof of the way the American empire dismantles other competing

cultures; it confuses children in the age of language acquisition; and it segregates an ethnic minority already ghettoized by economic factors. In response, the supporters of Spanglish celebrate this hybrid form of communication for its dynamism, creativity and political savvy.

He claims we should celebrate the birth of a new language in a world where so many languages die, and he warns that 'only dead languages are static and never changing' (2003a: 65). Stavans acknowledges that Spanglish does not have a positive consideration among intellectuals; he observes that it is commonly assumed that it is a bastard jargon with 'neither *gravitas* nor a clear identity' (2003a: 64). He recalls Octavio Paz²⁴, who was asked by a reporter for his opinion about Spanglish and answered '*ni es bueno ni es malo, sino abominable*²⁵' (2003a: 4). Despite this, he claims that a language is the most democratic form of expression of the human spirit, and therefore it cannot be legislated; the fact that the majority of linguists and academics seem to denigrate this way of speaking does not mean that its speakers will stop using it, as also Zentella argues (see later on).

In the Introduction to his dictionary (2003a: 3), Stavans compares Spanglish to jazz:

Alas, the growing lower class uses it, thus procrastinating the possibility of *un futuro mejor* [my italics], a better future. Still, I've learned to admire Spanglish over time. Yes, it is the tongue of the uneducated. Yes, it's a hodgepodge... But its creativity astonished me. In many ways, I see it in the beauties and achievements of jazz, a musical style that sprung up among African Americans as a result of improvisation and lack of education. Eventually, though, it became a major force in America, a state of mind breaching out of the ghetto into the middle class and beyond. Will Spanglish follow a similar route?

²⁴ The Mexican author of *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (1950), a Nobel Prize for literature.

²⁵ 'It is neither good nor bad, but abominable' [my translation].

The first thing to be noticed when reading these pages is the language he uses, which moves from English to Spanish without showing the change of language with *italics*²⁶. Sometimes he simply adds a translation of a short phrase, while on other pages he straightforwardly switches between the two languages, even if the dominant one remains English. Stavans defines Spanglish as ‘the verbal encounter between Anglo and Hispano civilizations’ (2003a: 5); he warns the reader that he uses the word ‘civilization’ and not ‘language’ because he does not want to reduce Spanglish to a purely linguistic phenomenon, since it is much more: ‘for millions of Latinos, Spanglish is more than a tongue [...]: it’s a political stand and an I.D. card’ (Stavans 2004). Later on, he relates part of the discussion that arose during his course, showing how this salient topic can fuel a debate. The students were divided into two groups: on the one hand, there were those considering Spanglish as an obstacle to the road of assimilation; on the other, there were those supporting it, who believed that it was a positive manifestation of the Hispanic spirit.

Stavans wonders why Spanglish is so controversial, and concludes that the reason is rooted in the history of the encounter – or perhaps clash, as he suggests – between English- and Spanish-speaking people, which in his opinion ends in 1898 with the decisive Spanish-American War – a ‘blow to Spanish self-esteem’ (2003a: 19). For European Spanish-speaking academics, the contemporary presence of the Spanish language in the United States is ‘the affirmation that the seeds of Spain’s colonial quest are bearing fruits’ (*Ibid.*). Thus, it is no wonder that most of the criticism comes from Spain itself. Successively, he goes on to argue that Spanglish cuts across the economic

²⁶ In order to be clearer in the transcription of the citations, I used *italics*, even if in the original version there was no typographic feature showing the change of language.

terrain: it is not spoken only by poor and uneducated people: 'the middle class embraced it as a chic form of speech, *una manera moderna y divertida de hablar*²⁷' (2003a: 20). Stavans also recalls the already mentioned (see chapter 3) grammarian Antonio de Nebrija, who devoted himself to standardizing and cataloguing Castilian Spanish; by studying its syntax and grammar, Nebrija had legitimated a language whose speakers were only recently self-conscious of its global scope: '*le dio a la lengua una presencia psicológica y nacional*²⁸' (2003a: 27). Moreover, he stresses that the vulgar Latin of the Roman Empire had given rise to a group of tongues – the family of romance languages – with a distinct flavour. Why could this not happen to Spanglish, too?

The fact that the *Real Academia Española* is accused of elitism and pedantry, in his opinion, is a clear indication that the institution whose aim was achieving a language '*limpia, fija y de esplendor*' is old for present days. Since Spanish-speaking people were receiving a kind of rejection by their European counterpart, in 1973 the *Academia Norteamericana de la lengua Española* was created. With regard to the English language, he acknowledges that there has never been anything similar: English does not have a 'soul-protecting body' (2003a: 35). He concludes the introduction to the lexicon by saying that 'this delicious – and delirious – mishmash is what Latino identity is about: the verbal *mestizaje* that results from a transient people, *un pueblo en movimiento*' (2003a: 54).

During an interview (Marx and Escobar 2004), when asked about how Spanglish symbolizes the Latino condition in the United States, he answered:

[Los Latinos son] una rosa con muchos pétalos. Los Latinos son una compleja minoría no fácil de categorizar. Son multirraciales, transnacionales, plurilingües,

²⁷ 'A modern and funny way of speaking' [my translation].

²⁸ 'He gave the language a psychological and national presence' [my translation].

*tienen puntos de vista distintos con respecto a la política, están afiliados a todo un cúmulo de religiones institucionalizadas, etc. De hecho el spanglish sirve de puente para unirlos a todos*²⁹

Thus, Spanglish, in his opinion, might be the unifying thread of a heterogeneous population of immigrants. To conclude, Stavans (2003a: 71) argues that

the question is no longer, what is Spanglish? It is, where is it going? Will it grow into a full-blown language? Is it likely to become a threat to Spanish, or even to replace it altogether? (English our *lingua franca*, is obviously not at stake) none of that is impossible, although the transformation is likely to take hundreds of years.

And although he acknowledges that it is difficult to think of what will be of Spanglish in the future, he claims (Marx and Escobar 2004) that:

*lo que sé es que desempeña un papel de notable importancia en el presente. En vez de verlo como un paso intermedio o como una trampa, creo que es el síntoma de una nueva civilización de mestizos nacida delante de nuestras narices, parte anglosajona y parte hispánica aunque tampoco ni de una ni de otra*³⁰

As already mentioned, Stavans' works caused much controversy. Joaquín Garrido (2004) does not agree with his idea that Spanglish is becoming the new American language. He argues that there are two kinds of Spanglish; he calls the first one 'adaptive bilingualism' (2004: 1), which is spoken by Hispanics, while the second one is just a style within U.S. English, and is spoken by Anglos. The main difference between the two is that the Spanglish of Hispanics is not a choice, while it is so for Anglos, who decide to use a

²⁹ Latinos are a rose with many petals. Latinos are a complex minority group which is not easy to categorize. They are multiracial, transnational, multilingual, they have different points of view concerning politics, they are affiliated with different religions etc. Thus, Spanglish serves as a bridge to unify them all [my translation].

³⁰ What I know is that it plays a notable role in the present. Instead of seeing it as an intermediate step or a trap, I think that it is the symptom of a new civilization of *mestizos* that has born in front of us, part Anglo and part Hispanic, although neither totally the former nor totally the latter [my translation].

combination of Spanish and English to shape the relationship between speaker and hearer.

Betanzos Palacios (2001) does not agree with Stavans' enthusiasm for this hybrid language, because he thinks that Spanglish is only a temporary means of communication:

*El spanglish es un problema temporal, pasejero y todo vendrá a su cauce normal cuando nuevas generaciones de hispanohablantes es Estados Unidos reconozcan y aprecien la bendición del bilingüismo*³¹

Even Zentella, who claims to be a defender of Spanglish, criticizes Stavans for having been too enthusiastic, because she argues that the subtitle of his lexicon – the making of a new American language – contradicts the linguistic facts. She observes that Spanglish speakers follow English rules in the English part of their sentences and Spanish rules in the Spanish part, and the number of Spanglish terms is no threat to the English or Spanish lexicon. It is not a 'making'. Moreover, by translating the first chapter of *El Quixote*, he violated 'the co-constructed, contemporary, and in-group essence of Spanglish' (Zentella 2007: 33).

Lipski accuses Stavans of having invented 'his own mixture of Spanish and English instead of applying Spanglish to an already existent discourse mode or sociolinguistic register' (2008: 50). He observes that Stavans came to profess a deep admiration for code-switched discourse, which for him forms the essence of Spanglish. While Stavans appears to regard all code switching as a deliberate and conscious act of creativity, Lipski remarks that most linguists have studied code-switching in spoken language as a loosely monitored speech mode, which is circumscribed by basic syntactic restrictions and is

³¹ Spanglish is a transitory problem and things will return to normal as successive generations of Spanish speakers in the United States recognize and appreciate the blessings of being bilingual.

largely below the level of conscious awareness. In his opinion, only in written language, particularly in literature, code-switching achieves specific aesthetic goals (see next chapter). Lipski also criticizes his translation of *Don Quixote*, because the text contains numerous syntactic violations of code-switching, phonetically unlinked combinations and hints of popular or uneducated Spanish that implicitly reinforce the notion that only uneducated people speak Spanglish (2008: 53). Generally speaking, Stavans' *Don Quixote* has been widely cited, always disapprovingly, as evidence of the deplorable state of Spanish in the USA.

4.3. John Lipski: Spanglish between fluent bilinguals and transitional or vestigial speakers

Lipski has studied in depth the characteristics of the language contact between English and Spanish. When dealing specifically with Spanglish (2004a; 2004b; 2008), he acknowledges that despite the lack of empirical evidence, the idea that it constitutes a specific type of language is widespread: 'one can find dictionaries, grammar sketches, greeting cards, T-shirts, bumper stickers and an enormous number of editorial comments and references in popular culture, all suggesting that Spanglish has a life of its own' (2008: 41). He analyses the different linguistic phenomena that are referred to with the term Spanglish, and he comes to enumerate its uses as follows (2004b):

- The use of integrated Anglicism in Spanish
- The frequent and spontaneous use of non-assimilated Anglicism (with English phonetics) in Spanish
- The use of syntactic calques and loan translations from English in Spanish

- Frequent and fluid code-switching, particularly ‘intrasentential’ switches (within the same clause)
- Deviations from Standard Spanish grammar found among vestigial and transitional bilingual speakers, whose productive competence in Spanish falls below that of true native speakers, due to language shift or attrition
- Finally the humorous, disrespectful, and derogatory use of pseudo-Spanish items in what anthropologist Jane Hill (1993a, 1993b) has called junk Spanish (see next section)

Unlike many other authors, Lipski (2004a) thinks that none of these phenomena represent a threat to the integrity of the Spanish language, even if some manifestations signal the gradual and natural erosion of a language of immigrants after different generations. Nevertheless, he agrees with those arguing that Spanglish is linked to a lack of proper knowledge of both languages, and he particularly claims (2004b) that ‘this language is inversely proportional to formal instruction in Spanish and the ready availability of Spanish-language mass media’. Moreover, he does not think that Spanglish should be considered a proper language, but rather a group of nuanced regional varieties.

When analysing code-switching, Lipski claims that what comes out of fluently moving between two languages does not constitute in itself a third language; in his opinion, English and Spanish will remain two distinct and separate idioms, despite the increasing presence of borrowings and calques: if a variety of Spanish absorbs many Anglicisms, it is still Spanish, a complete natural language. Therefore, Lipski also thinks that Spanglish cannot be reduced to a jargon or a pidgin. Nor can it be considered a creole language, because with this terms linguists usually refer to a new language that arises when an idiom used as a reduced contact vernacular – such as a pidgin – is expanded in subsequent generations into a complete natural language. Indeed, Lipski argues that

there are native speakers of Spanish varieties containing a large proportion of Anglicisms, but what they speak are just dialects. Moreover, what the notion of Spanglish lacks in order to be considered a language is a stable core: in fact, he stresses that the very essence of what is meant with the term Spanglish is the spontaneous creation, which implies continuous changes.

The rapid shift to English within Latino communities in the United States has accelerated the incorporation of Anglicisms, intensified code-switching, and created a large number of 'semifluent transitional bilinguals' (2008: 55) whose incomplete active competence in Spanish – a stage which typically lasts no more than one generation – has at times been confused with the speech of stable bilingual communities. According to Lipski, the debate on Spanglish and on the general status and vitality of Spanish in the United States is complicated by the existence of thousands of individuals who consider themselves Latinos and whose passive proficiency in Spanish is considerable. Lipski claims that 'educational programs have come to refer to such individuals as heritage language speakers' (2008: 56). These speakers are also referred to by the term 'semi-speakers', and they usually experience a shift away from the minority language towards the national language within one or two generations. This shift is signalled by a 'transitional generation of vestigial speakers' (*Ibid.*) who spoke the language in question during their childhood, but who have subsequently lost much of their native ability and their standing as true transitional bilinguals (TB), a term which according to Lipski is more neutral than 'semi-speaker'. Lipski argues that the rapid displacement of Spanish in favour of English after at most two generations has created a large and ever-changing number of transitional bilinguals who represent various national varieties of Spanish and a wide range of active and passive language proficiency. Despite this displacement, as

already mentioned, the Spanish language is widespread in the United States: people have access to various form of Spanish through public media, travel opportunities, and a nationwide awareness of some aspect of this language. Lipski enumerates the main features of TB speakers as follows (2008: 57):

1. The speaker had little or no school training in Spanish; in the case of school training, classes taken were designed for English-speaking students
2. Spanish was spoken in early childhood, and either it was the only language used at home or it was spoken in conjunction with English
3. A rapid shift from Spanish to English occurred before adolescence, involving the individual in question, his or her immediate family members, and/or the surrounding speech community
4. Subsequent use of Spanish is confined to conversation with a few relatives (typically quasi-monolingual Spanish speakers of the grandparents' generation)
5. When addressed in Spanish by individuals known to be bilingual, TB speakers often respond wholly or partially in English, thus giving rise to asymmetrical conversations
6. There is no strong perception of the Spanish language as a positive component of Hispanic identity. Individuals' feelings toward the latter ethnic group range from mildly favourable (but with no strong desire to retain the Spanish language) to openly hostile and pessimistic

Lipski then remarks that vestigial or TB speakers are different from fluent bilinguals in basically three ways. First, fluent bilinguals have never totally shifted from Spanish to English; second, they routinely hold conversations in Spanish; and third, their self-concept is usually positive with regard to their Hispanic identity.

To sum up, according to Lipski, there are three principal groups of Spanish speakers living in the U.S.: monolingual Spanish speakers and fluent bilinguals whose Spanish contains virtually no structural interference from English; bilinguals exhibiting structural interference from English, who often code-switch; and vestigial or transitional Spanish speakers, who are not normally very proficient. Transitional bilinguals with greater

fluency in Spanish may regard themselves as true fluent bilinguals, but Lipski stresses that although they do not violate Spanish grammatical restrictions, they may not possess the full range of syntactic and stylistic options found among native speakers of Spanish. Furthermore, Lipski argues that transitional bilinguals are frequently used as examples of U.S. Latino Spanish speakers, and much of the criticism directed towards Spanglish as an impoverished language spoken in the United States stem from confusing the symptoms of trans-generational language attrition with stable bilingualism. To conclude, in addition to the 50 million speakers of Spanish in the United States, Lipski remarks that uncounted millions of Americans have learned Spanish as a second language – L2 Spanish speakers – through formal education or through life experience. Many of these L2 Spanish speakers use Spanish on a regular basis – job, personal life – and many of them are called for translations and interpretation in situations that frequently exceed their linguistic abilities. Over the past decades, as Spanish has quickly become a highly-demanded language, numerous official and unofficial documents, signs, instruction manuals and notices have been translated into Spanish, and they have become cultural and linguistic icons readily available to anyone visiting or traveling in the U.S.. Lipski observes that the result is a ‘torrent of broken Spanish that has greeted Spanish speakers in the U.S.’ (2008: 66). There is no data about whether these ‘travesties’ of proper Spanish have to be attributed to careless or incompetent L2 learners rather than to bilingual Spanish speakers whose command of Spanish has become slipshod through contact with English. Many first-time visitors, as well as many detractors of Spanglish, are convinced that this state of affairs is tangible proof of the deplorable state of U.S. Spanish.

4.4. Jane Hill: 'junk' or 'mock' Spanish

An interesting point of view is that of anthropologist Jane Hill, who uses the expression 'junk Spanish' (1995a) to refer to the mixture between English and Spanish. Since the language of Cervantes has widely spread throughout the United States, it often happens that many Americans who do not speak Spanish properly invent words and funny expressions in a distorted and 'simulated' language. Hill, in other works (1995b), names it 'mock Spanish' to emphasize tentativeness as the core feature of this form of hybrid language. She argues that this form of simulated Spanish is typified by the menu items at Tex-Mex restaurants, by jokes and stereotypes found in mass media, by the names of the streets, buildings, and subdivisions in all parts of America, which juxtapose real and invented Spanish words with total disregard for grammatical concord and semantic coherence. Hill claims that this language is a manifestation of cultural elitism as well as a form of covert racism, because she thinks that it stands for the affirmation of the superiority of white Anglo American culture and language. She analyses how a particular ideology about appropriate styles for public talk facilitates the persistence in this sphere of 'elite racist discourse' (1995a: 198). In her opinion, junk Spanish, and elite racist discourse in general, seem to oscillate along the boundary between 'public' and 'private' talk, making the public reproduction of racism possible even where racist discourse is supposedly excluded from public discussion. Hill argues that the use of the 'middling style' (1995a: 203) is a typical American public speech today: it is defined by informality, which includes regional and colloquial language and slangs; calculated bluntness, which includes also deliberate insult; and inflated speech, full of bombast, jargon and euphemism. Nowadays, jokes are a highly institutionalized component of public speaking, and to the degree that talk is coded as 'light', it may be relatively resistant to

proscription. Thus, joking and light talk are prototypically private, vernacular, and associated with intimacy, and Hill argues that the use of this kind of talk in public contexts constitutes a sort of 'metaphorical code switch' (1995a: 204) that should prevent those using it from being accused of political correctness and elitism.

Hill affirms that junk Spanish is a light register of American English; it is a 'set of strategies for incorporating Spanish loan words into English in order to produce a jocular or pejorative key' (1995a: 205). She argues that there are three strategies governing this borrowing: first, the semantic pejoration of Spanish expressions; second, the use of Spanish morphological material in order to make English words humorous or worsened; third, the production of ludicrous and exaggerated mispronunciations of Spanish loan material. Among the many examples she provides, she mentions Schwarzenegger's phrase '*hasta la vista, baby*', in *Terminator 2*: in Spanish, *hasta la vista* is a rather formal mode of leave-taking expressing a sincere hope to meet again, while since it was used in this film it has been exported into political talk and used by the Republican celebrity alongside George Bush in his second campaign for the presidency. Another example is that taken from the movie *The Mexican*, where Jerry, the main character, in desperate need for a ride, tries to communicate with a Mexican character by faking Spanish. Obviously, in order to achieve the humorous effect, Hill remarks that there must be a preliminary image of 'extreme trashy cheapness' (1995a: 207) associated with Spanish, and a general negative stereotypical vision of Latino speakers.

Since such usage of junk Spanish can inject authenticity into public discourse, because it would otherwise be too serious, it is often considered 'innocent'. However, Hill claims that while many of those who make use of mock or junk Spanish in their casual speech consider it harmless or even flattering, native Spanish speakers are likely to find it

insulting. She also stresses that junk Spanish moved into public discourse in the 1990s, at the very same time as when heightened concern about language policy, in the form of the Official English campaign, was growing in American life. Moreover, in Hill's opinion, junk Spanish strongly supports the purist campaign 'that foreign languages, while they may be permitted in the home, should not be allowed in public discourse' (1995a: 209). In fact, the use of junk Spanish constructs a particular place for the Spanish language in American public discourse: it can function only in light talk, in the code-switching that protects an American speaking in public from being seen as too pompous and domineering. This function seems to be well established, and it will make it increasingly difficult for any public use of Spanish to be heard as 'serious'. To conclude, Hill remarks that junk Spanish is one of the many devices through which the sphere of public discussion in the most widely-diffused media in the United States becomes profoundly and invisibly against non-Whites, and specifically against Latinos.

4.5. The debate between Ricardo Otheguy and Ana Celia Zentella

Is the term 'Spanglish' a positive one, or does it reflect and create harmful connotations? At the 22nd conference on Spanish in the United States – which took place in February 2009, in Miami – professors Ricardo Otheguy and Ana Celia Zentella were invited to publicly debate this topic. Since the debate has been filmed, I had the possibility to watch the video³², and in this section I will provide a summing up of the main arguments. The first to speak is Otheguy, who begins by pointing out that the United States is among

³² The debate is available on YouTube. Moreover, a transcription of the debate in Spanish is available at <http://potowski.org/sites/potowski.org/files/TranscripcionDebateSpanglish.pdf> (last visited 13 April, 2013).

the countries with most Spanish speakers. He rejects the term Spanglish, which has been used frequently by linguists and in everyday speech, to refer to the colloquial or popular Spanish spoken in this country. Instead, he proposes the simple use of the term ‘Popular’ or ‘Colloquial U.S. Spanish’:

lo que quiero hacer [...] es una polémica en contra de ese uso y simplemente reafirmar en el uso simple del término español, español coloquial de los Estados Unidos o español popular de los Estados Unidos y rechazo el uso de la palabra ‘espanglish’³³

The everyday Spanish spoken in the U.S. home setting – not the Spanish spoken on the news or at a linguistics conference – actually has the same relationship with other countries’ varieties as they have among themselves. In other words, popular U.S. Spanish in relation to popular Mexican Spanish is not different from popular Mexican Spanish in relation to the popular Spanish of Argentina, because they all possess characteristics of the same type: local vocabulary, local syntax and local morphology. He argues that one of the characteristics that differentiates local Spanish from standard Spanish across countries is that the local or popular varieties have often incorporated features from neighbouring languages. While in some geographical areas, words or syntax have been borrowed from Quechua or Nahuatl, in U.S. Spanish, the same process has occurred with English. What characterizes the popular Spanish of the U.S. is what characterizes the popular Spanish of any other region; Otheguy explains that in northern Latin America one says *devolver la llamada* while in southern areas one generally uses the expression *llamar de vuelta*, so it should not cause surprise that in the United States

³³ My aim is to contest the use of this word and to reaffirm the simple use of the term Spanish, colloquial Spanish of the United States or popular Spanish of the United States, and I reject the use of the word ‘Espanglish’ [my translation].

another way of expressing the same idea has emerged – *llamar para atrás*³⁴. Otheguy also remarks that another characteristic which is common to all popular varieties of Spanish is that their particular lexicon and phraseology is foreign to those who have not experienced contact with it. For example, U.S. Spanish should seem foreign to a European Spanish-speaker. The use of certain phrases that express conceptual notions of a dominant or contact culture is totally normal and happens in many places, not just in the Spanish spoken in the United States. In this regard, he mentions an advertisement seen in Spain: *Solo en Vodafone tienes e-mail en tiempo real con tarifa plana*, where the terms *tiempo real* and *tarifa plana* represent borrowed concepts. Because this is a regular occurrence in all situations of language contact, Otheguy questions the reason and necessity of isolating and discriminating the popular Spanish in the U.S. by labelling it with a loaded term such as ‘Spanglish’, which, in his opinion, seems rather pointless:

*Quiero entonces simplemente recalcar que el español en los Estados Unidos es muy diferente del de otros sitios, cierto. Pero es diferente en la misma forma que otros sitios se diferencian entre sí y por lo tanto me parece ocioso el utilizar el término spanglish para referirse a la lengua popular de los Estados Unidos*³⁵

Finally, in Otheguy’s opinion, the use of the label ‘Spanglish’ is also very dangerous to the survival of Spanish in the United States. It is important to be able to say to second and third generation speakers that they speak Spanish, and not a ‘jumbled up mix called Spanglish’. Many young speakers in the U.S. are convinced that what they speak is monumentally different from monolingual Spanish, and therefore deserves a new label,

³⁴ *Devolver la llamada*, *llamar de vuelta*, and *llamar para atrás* are all calques of the English expression ‘to call back’.

³⁵ Hence, I simply want to stress that it is true that the Spanish of the United States is different from that of other places, of course. However, it is different in the same way that other places are different within themselves, and consequently it seems to me useless to use the term Spanglish with reference to the popular language spoken in the United States [my translation].

when it actually is not so; it is exactly for this reason that he decides to stand against the use of the term Spanglish.

Zentella begins by citing an article written by Otheguy in the *Enciclopedia del Español de los Estados Unidos*, noting that the encyclopaedia does not include any articles written by U.S. born and raised Latinos, and suggests artfully that perhaps this is a consequence of the fact that U.S. Hispanics do not speak 'Spanish'. She rejects Otheguy's argument in the article, saying that she and Otheguy come from two very different perspectives regarding the use of the term Spanglish. She states that Spanglish is more than just a term; it captures a whole experience. Zentella acknowledges that she and Otheguy agree that they both have a common goal in that they do not want young U.S. Latinos to say 'I speak Spanglish', as if in this phrase it was implied a sort of rejection of Spanish, a kind of embarrassed attitude towards a language which is not perceived as theirs. However, Zentella makes it clear that Otheguy holds a very formal vision of language, desiring to combine public discourse about language with scientific knowledge of linguistics. She claims that she comes from an 'anthro-political vision of linguistics'; she cites Halliday and says that language is always used to accomplish a social function; it is shaped by social contexts, and the speakers of the language also transform these contexts. Zentella affirms that her interest is in the implications of the term Spanglish:

A mí no me interesa tanto la necesidad de imponerle una etiqueta a esta forma de hablar. Me interesa más cuál es la visión de esa etiqueta y cómo se inscriben en un contexto socio-político los discursos sobre el spanglish³⁶

³⁶ I am not interested in the necessity of imposing a label to this way of speaking. I am more interested in which is the vision of this label, and how discourses concerning Spanglish inscribe themselves in a socio-political context [my translation].

She is interested in exploring how the discourses about Spanglish either reproduce the dominant linguistic order or how they challenge it. She argues that the term can be useful for challenging an imposed normativity. Zentella emphasizes that the Spanish spoken in the United States is not the same as the popular Spanish of other Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico or Argentina. Classifying Spanglish as the same as these popular varieties ignores the role of linguistic oppression in the experience of Hispanics in the U.S. The word-borrowings and syntactic structures of Spanglish are themselves part of an oppression in a country in which Spanish is not the dominant language and holds a subordinated position in the society:

La palabra Spanglish capta ese conflicto y esa opresión. Ponernos una etiqueta como 'el español popular de los Estados Unidos' borra ese conflicto. Y yo quiero subrayar ese conflicto para que se pueda entonces, en los salones de clase y en las críticas con los maestros de español, hablar de lo que ha ocurrido a través de las experiencias de los hispanohablantes y lograr que estos jóvenes entiendan el rol, el por qué dicen 'I speak spanglish' con esa forma de menosprecio³⁷

Zentella underscores the importance of turning negative attitudes about Spanglish into something positive by highlighting this conflict and oppression so that the students can appreciate the way they speak as part of a larger linguistic repertoire. Zentella makes it clear that expanding the students' linguistic repertoire does not mean that they have to reject Spanglish; moreover, she argues that, in her opinion, young Latinos want to learn both English and Spanish. Zentella also rejects the notion that the use of Spanglish can close doors of opportunity to Latinos in the U.S. She states that these doors are closed by economic, socio-political, and cultural pressures and policies and the word Spanglish

³⁷ The word Spanglish captures this conflict and this oppression. To use a label such as 'the popular Spanish of the United States' would erase this conflict. And I want to highlight this conflict, in order for young Spanish speakers to understand this oppression as part of the experience of U.S. Latinos, in the classrooms and in the discourses with Spanish professors, so that the young can understand the role and the reason why they say 'I speak Spanglish' with that form of denigration [my translation].

emphasizes the need to combat these practices and pressures. Zentella cites the poem entitled 'Star Spanglish Banner'³⁸ in which the use of the word Spanglish in the re-written national anthem has nothing to do with language, but everything to do with undocumented immigrants; she starts singing 'José, can you see, by the dawn's early light. Cross the border we sailed, as the gringos were sleeping'. She observes:

*esto demuestra que esta palabra, Spanglish, refleja lo que ha dicho Bonnie Urcioli, that race has been re-mapped from biology onto language. Que la gente está usando una forma de hablar para menospreciar a los hablantes*³⁹

Zentella concludes by emphasizing that the simple fact of telling those who use the word Spanglish to stop using it will not ensure that the word will be longer used. Instead, a process of semantic inversion is necessary, through which the word can be rescued and given a more positive meaning. She claims that in order to eliminate Spanglish as a term, it would be necessary not to have any Spanglish-speakers and that this is at the risk of not benefitting from what they have to contribute and the alternative views that they have to share. Zentella then refers to an interview she made to a *transfronterizo*, a 22-year-old boy who lives in San Diego. For the purpose of this thesis, I think it is useful to see some of the excerpts from the handout she reads during the conference, in order to have an idea of what Spanglish is:

'Por ejemplo si yo estoy hablando ahorita y te trato de decir algo en español, pero no me sale, I would have to say it in English porque that way it'll be easier, you know what I mean? Y a veces I tend to do that all the time por ejemplo like I would talk Spanglish, I would speak Spanglish.'

'And I don't know if it's weird but it's just the way, yo pienso que es una dinámica ya de vivir aquí en la frontera de que se te sale el inglés o se te sale el español. Para

³⁸ Available on YouTube.

³⁹ It demonstrates that the word Spanglish reflects what Bonnie Urcioli has said, that race has been re-mapped from biology onto language; she mentions Urcioli, who has argued how language becomes a substitute for comments about the biological inferiority of a group [my translation].

mi no es difícil, la verdad es que yo pienso que ya te apr...you get used to it, so it's like I don't know it's not even hard for me to, you know, like I'm talking to you in English then in Spanish pummm, no sé. Y a veces cuando estoy en mi casa, mi hermana o mi hermano, they would hear my conversation they're like, 'How can you do that, how can you talk in Spanish and then change all of a sudden like to English or me talking in English and then like 'O sí luego la otra vez' este ... there was this girl you know and I couldn't [sic] know how to talk to her like así like we would do that and she was like 'Ay que.....'. Yo pienso que es como el siguiente paso es como like – you knowhow I do that right now, 'es como like' [laughters] it's something you don't even realize like you talk in English and Spanglish you know.'

'Hay mucha gente que piensa que es como una mutilación del lenguaje pero para mí no es así, para mí es como un tipo de metamorfosis que le pasa al lenguaje Rompes ya la monotonía de que solamente el americano güero este, blonde hair, blue eyes only speaks English or the Mexican dark skin, dark only speaks Spanish pero it's not like that, por ejemplo tienes, yeah, the typical American you know who is also fluent in Spanish y tienes por ejemplo a la persona de México que he looks like native he looks like como Benito Juarez, que él era moreno chaparrito, like he would be fluent in English, you know, like ya no hay, yo pienso que ya no hay división de razas, yo pienso que quedan los estereotipos pero yo pienso que la combinación de razas yaaa.. yo pienso que ya there's only gonna be one race.'

Here it is evident that one of the core features of Spanglish is the ruleless code-switching between English and Spanish. After reading these excerpts, Zentella claims that these words reveal the worldview of the people speaking Spanglish. She argues this mixed language communicates an identity that shares two worlds, and she concludes by saying that she thinks we should support the use of the term and the linguistic practices and worldview that it represents.

Otheguy does not agree with Zentella's arguments, and he replies that considering the oppression that Spanish speakers in the U.S. have faced and still go on facing, the use of the term Spanglish, which lends itself to such negative thought and confusion, should be avoided. He adds that what Zentella read from the hand-out is not really Spanglish,

but rather the alternating between two different systems, two different languages, while most people interpret Spanglish as being a hybridized language with its own set of rules, and not the switching between two languages. Moreover, he remarks that trying to change the prestige of a term is very challenging and, in his experience, it usually results in failure. Zentella remarks that the words 'queer', 'black', 'Nuyorican' have all been embraced by those that they describe, and a type of semantic inversion has taken place. In her opinion, the term Spanglish also has the potential of undergoing the same shift, but Otheguy argues that these words were able to undergo a shift in meaning because they have very little content, while Spanglish is understood by most as a hybrid of two languages – which is incorrect from his point of view; he claims that it is too difficult to drastically change the common perception of this word. Zentella concludes by saying that Spanglish is going to continue, and switching between the languages will not stop, because speakers do not do what linguists tell them to do.

4.5.1. Otheguy: *Spanglish is not a language*

Besides the debate, both Otheguy and Zentella have dealt with the topic of Spanglish. Otheguy (2010) wrote a journal article with Nancy Stern, *On so-called Spanglish*, where he substantially reiterated his position claiming that they 'reject the use of the term Spanglish because there is no objective justification for the term, and because it expresses an ideology of exceptionalism and scorn that actually deprives the North American Latino community of a major source in this globalized world: mastery of a world language' (Otheguy 2010: 85). The term Spanglish, in his opinion, is a misleading term because 'first, it conceals the fact that the features that characterize popular forms

of Spanish in the USA are, for the most part, parallel to those of popular forms of the language in Latin America and Spain; second, the term incorrectly suggests that popular Spanish in the USA is of an unusually hybrid character; third, it inaccurately implies that Spanish in the USA is centrally characterized by structural mixing with English; and fourth, it needlessly separates Spanish-speakers in the USA from those living elsewhere' (*Ibid.*). He argues that the term Spanglish refers neither to written registers nor to the language of news, interviews, and sport reports that fill Spanish language airways in the U.S., but rather it is generally reserved for speech in casual oral registers, especially when used by Latinos who seldom or never use Spanish for writing. Once again, he proposes replacing the term Spanglish with the more accurate term Spanish or, if a more specific term is required, popular Spanish.

Otheguy observes that the word Spanglish reflects a wide range of attitudes toward Spanish speakers in the United States. He acknowledges that the term is used positively as a badge of bicultural identity by some scholars in positions of leadership in the Latino community, such as Zentella (2008). Moreover, the term has found its way into the scholarly discussions of some linguists (Fairclough 2003; Zentella 1997), and it has also been actively promoted by literary scholars writing for the general public (Stavans 2003a). However, in Otheguy's opinion there can be no question that the word Spanglish is often used to disparage Latinos in the United States and to denigrate their ways of speaking. It is not unusual to hear that the term refers to 'a hodgepodge of English and Spanish, characterized by the types of errors commonly found among those who are learning a new language' (Otheguy 2010: 86). Even the promoters of the term recognize that it has often negative implications (see Stavans, 4.2). Furthermore, Otheguy argues that linguistic discussions are generally conditioned by what scholars have called

linguistic ideology: 'as the names given to ways of speaking profoundly reflect political and ideological attitudes (witness the disputes between those who prefer to name the language Castilian or Spanish), we recognize that our own views regarding the term Spanglish may themselves be manifestations of ideological positions' (Otheguy 2010: 87). Nevertheless, he thinks that questions related to the names of speech-ways can and should be discussed, whenever possible, in the context of objective observations.

Then, he talks about the already mentioned language shift toward English which is occurring in the United States, which is, in his opinion, a consequence of the economic and political conditions experienced by Hispanics. He asserts that 'Spanish is a language with few grandchildren', since by the time the children of immigrants pass Spanish to their own children, in most cases the language has a 'greatly diminished flame' (*Ibid.*). He highlights the existence of Latinos who have mastered the Spanish language only passively and who use it infrequently, as widely discussed by Lipski (2004a). These speakers often have a keen sense of personal affiliation with the Hispanic community, but, according to Otheguy, it would not be accurate to say they speak Spanish, since they do not have productive mastery of the phonology, grammar, lexicon and phraseology of the language. He argues that these speakers are not to be included in the Spanish-speaking Latinos of the United States, or what Lipski called vestigial or transitional speakers (see 4.3).

Subsequently, he talks about the popular varieties of Spanish, providing many examples concerning morphology, phonology, vocabulary, phraseology and syntax features; he argues that the influence occurring between English and Spanish is not to be intended as a form of hybridization: it is 'a cultural, conceptual or communicative difference, but not a linguistic one' (Otheguy 2010: 92), because linguistic uses differ frequently from

one cultural setting to another, and they change rapidly when the cultural environment changes. Even in front of what apparently might seem the most clear example of linguistic hybridization – namely the reduction of paradigms – Otheguy goes on to argue that ‘it represents not a systemic mixing, but rather a reduction of systemic resources’ (*ibid.*). After having provided some examples, he asserts that the influence of English is limited to small compartments of a much larger grammar; what is referred to with the term Spanglish is ‘an enormously complex linguistic system characterized by an overall Spanish structure, where a handful of English elements exist alongside thousands of ancestral Spanish features’ (Otheguy 2010: 95). He recalls Zentella’s argument (1997), in which she accepts the term Spanglish and contends that the word is not intended as the name of a hybrid language, but rather that it refers to a way of using the languages, precisely the conversational and communicative strategies of bilingual Nuyoricans’ code-switching, and more concretely to the bilingual practise of inserting phrases and sentences in English into Spanish discourse, or vice versa. However, Otheguy stresses that the very nature of the word Spanglish is misleading, because the components of this word are obviously the names of two other languages, and hearers reasonably might conclude that Spanglish too must be the name of a language, precisely the mix of its two component parts.

Towards the end, he claims that this state of affairs does not benefit the Latino community living in the United states: ‘we believe that the idea that Spanish in the USA is qualitatively different from that of Spain or Latin America is actually harmful to the community of its speakers’ (Otheguy 2010: 96), because in his opinion it is hard to see what advantages can have a person to think of himself as a speaker of Spanglish rather

than as a speaker of Spanish. In a globalized world, no one can benefit by repudiating their own knowledge of a major world language.

To conclude, Otheguy argues that Latino leaders who refer to popular Spanish in the USA as Spanglish, with the clear implication that it is not Spanish, are connecting, sadly, to an old North American tradition of denigrating immigrants from the Spanish-speaking world. He explains that a strategy of scorn and contempt of Spanish speakers was established in the U.S. in the 1940s and 1950s, in the wake of the early waves of Latin American immigration. Many academics and commentators of the time demeaned the Spanish of these immigrants because it was not Castilian Spanish. This attitude is a 'U.S.-made product' (*Ibid.*), and it held sway for many years as a form of dismissal of the language of hundreds of thousands of Spanish speakers. Many of them accepted this criticism and decided that the language they had brought from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or elsewhere, was of little value. Otheguy concludes by asserting that 'yesterday's strategy of depriving immigrants of their Spanish language because it was not Castilian has been transmuted, today, into the attempt to take it from them by labelling it as Spanglish' (*Ibid.*), and that the use of this word is an unfortunate way of depriving the Latin American community of an important path to advancement.

Thus, to sum up, Otheguy argues that Spanglish is actually only a more popular variety of Spanish, which is marked by local lexical items that are often of non-Hispanic origin, and whose morphologies and meanings are often little known outside the local area. Consequently, he rejects the term Spanglish and thinks that it is against Spanish speakers' interests.

4.5.2. Zentella: code-switching as the very essence of Spanglish

Although now – as she argues in the debate with Otheguy – she is a defender of the term Spanglish, in the already mentioned work *Growing up bilingual* (1997), she claims that at first she supported Milán's avoidance of this term: he preferred 'New York City Spanish', because it was less misleading and had a more scientific sound (1997: 82); it was only when she realized that Nuyoricans began to refer to Spanglish as something to be proud of, a positive way of identifying their identity and their switching, that she became a supporter of the term. Zentella thinks that it is the ability to switch between English and Spanish by the same speaker in the same utterance, that constitutes the very essence of Spanglish. She asserts that many Nuyoricans refer to this hybrid language as 'a positive way of identifying their switching' (1997: 82), and she describes the Spanglish speaker as 'two monolinguals stuck at the neck' (*Ibid.*).

Zentella has widely dealt with the topic of Spanglish with particular reference to the relationship between bilingualism and identity (1997; 2008). She observes (2008) that Spanish-English bilinguals who mix their languages – and she includes herself – are seen as 'incompetent Spanglish speakers' or 'dangerous border crossers'. Moreover, despite what many authors think, she claims that it is unwise to assume that a bilingual's choice of, or switch to, the dominant language is necessarily an invocation of and identification with its power, and the choice of, or switch to, the ancestral language a sign of solidarity; in her opinion, this dichotomy ignores the generational shift that can take place. She recalls Valdés' contention that the direction of the language switch in the conversation of bilinguals can be less significant than the fact of the switch itself, which signals membership in a bilingual community; this does not negate the symbolic domination of

the language that rules, but it 'cautions against mechanistic link between linguistic codes and social roles or identities' (Zentella 2008: 5).

Zentella argues that, above all, distinct ways of being Latino are shaped by the dominant language ideology that equates working-class Spanish speakers with poverty and academic failure, and defines their bilingual children as linguistically deficient and cognitively confused. In this regard, she talks about 'linguistic insecurity' (2007: 27) when talking about the feelings of U.S. Latinos about their language: they are told that the language they speak is inferior to the Spanish of Spain, and that it has a lower status. This state of affairs contributes to the diminishment and disparagement of Latino languages and identities (see also chapter 3). Zentella adds that the great majority of Latinos want to raise bilingual children, and that the need to accomplish this goal is becoming more pressing every day, but Latino families everywhere 'are battling the reluctance of children to speak a low-status language, and children who are criticized for their weak Spanish may in turn be ashamed of their parents' English' (Zentella 2007: 35). Zentella also argues that bilingualism cannot be considered a guaranteed remedy, because for instance those with advanced degrees who speak both languages with ease can do more damage than good by prescribing the right way to speak, drawing boundaries between themselves and lower working class Spanish-speaking immigrants, and also between their English dominant second generation children. Thus, on the one hand, Hispanics who use too much English are criticized by Spanish-speaking people who 'accuse' them of assimilation, while on the other, those speaking Spanish are criticized by European Spaniards because they do not speak proper – meaning Castilian – Spanish. Just as the English of Hispanic immigrants can be cause for ridicule, the Spanish of those born and/or raised in the U.S. is attacked by insiders and outsiders. Zentella claims that

second generation bilinguals are accused of not knowing either English or Spanish, of being 'semi-lingual or even a-lingual' (2007: 33), and of contaminating the Spanish language by adapting or inserting words from English. However, in her opinion, Spanglish is a 'creative and rule-governed way of speaking bilingually that is generated by and reflects living in two cultures' (*Ibid.*), and she definitely stands among its defenders. According to Zentella, the acts of bilingual identity that Spanglish speakers perform with each other by switching between Spanish and English accomplish more than two dozen discourse strategies, including topic and role shifting. Some bilinguals acknowledge their formidable skills despite widespread condemnation, and they admit to being Spanglish speakers with pride, even if Spanish is losing ground rapidly to English in every Hispanic community.

Zentella (1997) analyses how Spanish-speaking peoples alternate languages, and she argues that there are three main sets of factors constituting their code-switching. She calls the first one 'on the spot', and it refers to 'the physical setting as well as the linguistic and social identity of the participants' (1997: 82); the most important variables in this regard are the linguistic proficiency of the addressee, the determining of the interlocutor's dominant language and the adoption of the 'follow the reader' (1997: 86) alternation – that is to say, switching when adults switch. The second ones are 'in the head' factors, which include 'the shared knowledge of how to manage conversations, how to achieve intentions in verbal interactions, and how to show respect for the social values of the community, the status of the interactants and the symbolic values of the languages' (1997: 82-83); this social and linguistic knowledge is built up over years of participation in interactional activities in children's cultural setting, and it enables them to employ language for greater communicative power and social bonding. 'In the head'

variables accomplish conversational strategies such as footing⁴⁰, and clarification and/or emphasis. Zentella also acknowledges that actually not every switch is always clear in its communicative intent: some might be involuntary, and she calls them 'crutch-like code mixing' (1997: 97): 'they were precipitated by the need for a word or expression in the other language, by a momentary loss for words, by a previous speaker's switch, by the desire to repair a poor syntactic break, by taboo words' (*Ibid.*). Unlike the other switches, these are usually short departures from the language being spoken at the moment. The third set of factors is more linguistic, more anchored in the structures of the languages involved and in the individual's knowledge of these languages: Zentella calls it 'out of the mouth', referring to 'the rubric for what influences a speaker to produce a particular word or expression in one language or the other, including lexical limitations and syntactic constraints' (1997: 83). The analysis of this third category leads Zentella to elaborate the grammar of Spanglish, a fact that concurs in giving Spanglish some form of 'legitimacy'. With the aim of showing that Spanglish is neither a chaotic jumble nor a sign of linguistic incompetence, she devotes the whole sixth chapter of *Growing up bilingual* to the analysis of the grammatical constraints of Spanglish code-switching. She argues that what looked so effortless actually requires the complex coordination of both social and linguistic rules, and a shared knowledge about appropriate boundaries for Spanish-English linkages that distinguishes their code-switching from that of L2 learners. Nuyorican children's code-switching, in her opinion, proves that they are not 'semi- or a-lingual hodge-podgers, but adept bilingual jugglers' (1997: 134); indeed, she shows how Spanglish honours the syntactic hierarchy and constraints outlined by Sankoff and

⁴⁰ 'A term coined by sociologist Ervin Goffman to denote the stance we take up to the others present in the way we manage the production or reception of utterances' (Kramsch 1998: 128).

Poplack⁴¹, and she adds that the rules for what and where to switch are shared by several Latino communities, despite the diatopic variation of Spanish and the fact that every individual provides something unique to the language he or she speaks.

From her analysis⁴², code-switching emerges as a complex social and interactive process that stems from the children's multiple relationships in *el Bloque's* networks, which requires multiple re-negotiations of their verbal behaviour. Zentella stresses that there is no mechanistic linking of 'on the spot', 'in the head' and 'out of the mouth' variables, but 'a creative and cooperative meshing with other speakers in ways that simultaneously took into account the communicative demands of the immediate situation and the subordinated position of children in a subordinated community' (1997: 83). Contrary to those who labelled Puerto Rican code-switching 'Spanglish' in the belief that a chaotic mixture was being invented, Zentella stresses that English-Spanish switching is a creative style of bilingual communication that accomplishes important cultural and conversational goals. From her point of view, then, code-switching is, fundamentally, 'a conversational activity via which speakers negotiate meaning with each other, like *salsa* dancers responding smoothly to each other's intricate steps and turns' (1997: 113). She remarks that Nuyorican children's code-switching is a way of saying that they belong to both worlds, and she suggests that they should not be forced to give up one for the other: 'Spanglish moved them to the centre of their bilingual world, which they continued to create and define in every interaction [...] it was an act of identity' (1997: 114).

⁴¹ 'The order of the sentence constituents immediately adjacent to and on both sides of the switch point must be grammatical with respect to both languages involved simultaneously' (quoted in Zentella 1997: 122).

⁴² In *Growing up bilingual* (1997), Zentella analyses 1.685 code switches produced by the five principal children in 103 hours of tape recording during the first 18 months of her study.

To conclude, Zentella argues that *el Bloque*'s Spanglish symbolizes 'community members' attempts to construct a positive self within a broader political economy and historical context that defines them categorically as a negative other' (1997: 272); the reference to Said's thought indicates the difficulty of constructing a positive identity out of this environment. She wonders if the use of Spanglish displays an 'oppositional identity' (*Ibid.*), meaning Spanish-speaking people who try to define themselves as 'other' (different) from Native Americans, for instance, or 'multiple identity', intending a person who feel the belonging to different worlds at the same time, as already discussed in chapter 3.

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To sum up, it is clear that there is no agreement on what the essence of Spanglish actually is, which might in part explain the disparate attitudes existing towards this speech mode. In fact, this brief panorama shows that this term refers to a wide range of different phenomena concerning the language contact between English and Spanish in the United States. Stavans admires it, and thinks it represents the birth of a new American language, while Otheguy claims it is only one of the forms of popular Spanish; Zentella analyses the bilingual attitudes of Spanish speakers, and concludes that code-switching constitutes a kind of language in itself, which accomplishes an act of hybrid identity, while Lipski warns about the difference between fluent bilinguals and transitional or vestigial bilinguals, who are not to be considered proper Spanish-speakers. In this regard, Hill offers another peculiar point of view concerning non-proper

Spanish, and she argues that the use of this mock or junk language is a subtle way of displaying Anglo racism towards Spanish and its speakers in the United States.

Languages slowly evolve and change, and it is a perfectly natural phenomenon. Hence, as Montes Alcalá (2009) suggests, perhaps rather than the supposed birth of a new language (Spanglish), it would be better to talk of the evolution of another (Spanish) in the situation of contact with English.

5. The vitality of Spanglish

The previous chapters have shown how Spanglish is fuelling a heated debate, especially in the academic context; the increasing numbers of the Hispanic population, the many consequences of language policy, the fears of language corrosion expressed by the *Real Academia Española*, and the absence of a general consensus on the nature of this linguistic blend – all these factors concur in giving prominence to the topic.

Another important factor contributing to the great attention that this hybrid language is receiving is the fact that Spanglish – whatever it is – is a vital and dynamic phenomenon. Indeed, leaving aside the debate, which is perhaps more concerned with academics and intellectuals trying to define its nature and conjecturing about what will be of its future, Spanglish is many things for its speakers. Besides being the language that gives voice to their bicultural world, it is also a feeling, an attitude, a worldview and the expression of a hybrid identity; a ‘frame of mind’, as Stavans suggests (2008: X). To understand what Spanglish is about, one should live it as an everyday experience, listen to it in the streets, and talk to the people who use it, because Spanglish is something that is happening now; it is a mixed language spoken in daily life by the millions of Latinos living in the United States, and others besides.

This final chapter aims to analyse Spanglish from a more concrete point of view. In fact, Spanglish is not only a ‘broken’ and distorted oral language, a street jargon; on the contrary, this phenomenon is gaining power and importance through literature, the mass media, the business world and music, which all concur in spreading Spanglish

faster. Thanks to radio, television, newspapers, and particularly the Internet, Spanglish words are understood from coast to coast and even beyond U.S. borders.

Furthermore, at present, the Hispanic group is too large for media organisations and advertisers to ignore it; new ways of broadcasting and marketing products are being developed so as to target them specifically, because Latino things are becoming a matter of fashion, too. Dancing *salsa* and eating Mexican food are ever more common activities among American peoples. In an interview (Marx and Escobar 2004), Stavans observes that:

El spanglish también se deja sentir en la llamada 'nueva cocina latina', que es una fusión de sabores y extracciones diversos. Los nombres e ingredientes de los platillos que lanzan los restaurantes en Miami o Los Angeles o las recetas que se promueven en revistas están en spanglish. Además, la moda muestra estrategias similares. Estamos en un momento de "pan-latinización", una época en la que la identidad hispánica es presentada ya no como una serie de herencias nacionales divergentes sino como una aglomeración de partes. El spanglish mediático, obviamente, es el ejemplo perfecto de esa aglomeración⁴³.

This state of affairs recalls the concept of the 'commercialization of cultures' (Colombo 2002), which sees cultures and everything which is related to them as something good for business, something which is to be sold and from which to gain profit. From this point of view, Spanglish is also something stylish in music. In the already mentioned interview (*Ibid.*), Stavans claims that:

La música latina en EE UU, ni que decirlo, es el ámbito donde esta aglomeración se deja sentir más claramente. Cada grupo de inmigrantes en el país halla su vehículo de expresión favorito, que si bien no es exclusivo, se convierte en una dimensión con

⁴³ Spanglish is to be noticed also in the so-called 'new Latin cuisine', which is a fusion of different tastes. The names and ingredients of the dishes in the restaurants of Miami and Los Angeles, or the cooking recipes one find in the magazines are in Spanglish. Moreover, fashion is showing similar strategies. We are living a moment of 'pan-Latinization', an age in which Hispanic identity is not presented as a group of different national ancestries, but rather as an agglomeration of different parts. Media Spanglish, obviously, is the perfect example of this agglomeration.

*propiedades únicas: para los judíos fue la literatura y el cine, para los africanos la danza y la música, para los irlandeses la política. En el caso de los hispanos ese "aceite social" es la música y el spanglish es su expresión*⁴⁴.

Lizette Alvarez (1997) argues that Jellybean Benitez, a New York-based record producer and the founder of HOLA, a recording company whose name stands for 'Home of Latino Artists', said a new wave of popular artists, most of them young rappers, are using Spanglish in their lyrics. In this regard, Stavans (2003: 17) mentions the rapper groups Ganga Spanglish and KMX Assault. However, it is not only rap music which is being influenced by Spanglish. Indeed, Ricky Martin, Madonna, Santana, Jennifer Lopez, Shakira, Pit bull – to name but a few among the most well-known artists – obtained great success by routinely switching between English and Spanish in many of their songs, sometimes simply alternating between the two languages, sometimes also inserting hybrid terms. For instance, Beyoncé, in 'Beautiful Liar' (featuring Shakira), switches between English and Spanish and sings:

Beautiful Liar
¿Cómo tu toleras eso sabiendo todo?
¿Por qué?, no sé
Why are we the ones who suffer
Have to let go
He won't be the one to cry

One of Ricky Martin's most famous songs is 'livin' *la vida loca*', and Madonna also alternates between the two languages in 'la isla bonita':

Como puede ser verdad
Last night I dreamt of San Pedro

⁴⁴ Latin music in the U.S., needless to say, is the 'space' where this agglomeration is felt most clearly. Each immigrant group in the country has his favourite vehicle of expression, which, even if not unique, becomes a dimension with unique properties: for the Jews it was literature and cinema, for Africans dance and music, for Irish people politics. For Hispanics that 'social oil' is music and Spanglish is its expression [my translation].

Just like I'd never gone, I knew the song
[...]
I fell in love with San Pedro
Warm wind carried on the sea, he called to me
Te dijo te amo

These singers have climbed the charts, and their millions of fans are becoming used to singing phrases that alternate between English and Spanish, and most of the time they do not even realize they are singing in two languages simultaneously.

Hence, the cultural hybridity and the cross-cultural experience which was typical of working-class peoples and emigrant life, have now become high fashion in different fields, and this state of affairs has prompted corporations and advertising firms to obtain as much benefit as possible from this situation. As already mentioned, Hispanics are becoming a new important segment for marketing planning, and Stavans (2004) remarks that, not long ago, Hallmark inaugurated a new line of greeting cards that used Spanglish phrases and expressions (such as 'today you are the reason for the *fiesta*', or 'happy *cumple* to you'⁴⁵), and Colgate launched a campaign of commercials in the same language. Besides advertisements, Spanglish is also present on billboards, television and the radio. For instance, the billboard of a soft drink called 'Dr Pepper' recites: '23 *sabores* blended into one extraordinary taste – *inconfundible*'. With regard to the radio, Cotroneo (2008) provides the example of Rocío Trujillo, a disc jockey who has been encouraged by her boss to speak in Spanglish to attract young people like herself, who speak English on the street and Spanish at home.

⁴⁵ From <http://www.hallmark.com>. [last visited 24 July, 2013].

In this chapter, we will see how Spanglish is finding its space in a globalized and multicultural world, despite all the criticism that surrounds this language and its speakers; in particular, I will refer to its presence in literature and in the mass media.

5.1. Spanglish in literature

Before entering the contemporary scenario of where Spanglish is to be found, I feel it is useful to start by observing its presence in literature, since a language used in a literary context is always given some form of legitimacy, despite all the criticism that can exist towards it. As Anzaldúa observes: ‘when I saw poetry written in Tex-Mex [Spanglish] for the first time, a feeling of pure joy flashed through me; I felt like we really existed as a people’ (1987: 82). Indeed, literature has always helped in giving prestige to language, and Spanglish, too, has been employed in literary works.

The first thing to be said is that every language has its own peculiarities; Spanish, in general, is believed to be a more descriptive, emotional language than English, with ‘flavour and *sabrosura*’ (Pérez Firmat 1995), and it is often referred to as the language of sensations and emotions. English, on the other hand, may appear more technical, it is ‘very concise and efficient’ (*Ibid.*), and we will see that this feature has important consequences for the technical jargon used with computers (see later on, ‘cyber Spanglish’). Thus, a switch between the two languages can often be explained as an attempt to achieve an emphatic result, since some words do not always have a satisfactory equivalent in another language, and by translating them something might be lost. In fact, another important aspect that must be considered when dealing with Spanglish literature is, on the one hand, the untranslatability of some texts – which is a

result of their internal bilingualism – and, on the other, the presence of multiple works that are all considered original versions. This state of affairs provides Spanglish with a particular precondition: the fact that it cannot be translated implies that, in order to fully appreciate its flavour, the reader must be sufficiently proficient in both languages. Given these premises, we can now move to see where and how Spanglish has been adopted in literary contexts.

5.1.1. Spanglish in the novels

It could be claimed that it is in novels where one is likely to find a language which is closer to the way people actually speak in daily life. Indeed, Spanglish – which is intended, most of all, as the frequent switch between English and Spanish in this context – has often been used in novels. Stavans recalls *Pollito chicken* (published in 1982), written by Puerto Rican Ana Lydia Vega, and claims that ‘it was, to the best of my knowledge then, the first full-fledged Spanglish story’ (2003: 11). One of the most representative authors of Spanglish literature is Sandra Cisneros (1954, Chicago), who belongs to the so-called ‘Latin boom’ of the North American literature (Prieto Osorno 2004). Among her works, there is *The house on Mango Street* (1984), where Chicana Esmeralda – the main character – struggles to fit together the puzzle pieces of her identity, which is shaped by ethnicity, gender, cultural inheritance and economic status. Esperanza's major challenge in this novel is to overcome isolation and to experience a sense of belonging: she needs to feel at home in the harsh neighbourhood of the Chicago Latino community where she lives; even the way English-speaking people pronounce her name makes her feel an outsider:

at school they say my name is funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver (11)

In the end, she acknowledges that she cannot simply escape and find a place for herself in society by forgetting ‘the ones who cannot leave as easily as you’ (105); one must always be aware of one’s origins:

when you leave you must remember to come back for the others. A circle, understand? You will always be Esperanza. You will always be Mango Street. You can’t erase what you know. You can’t forget who you are (*Ibid.*)

This novel deals with Spanglish more as a topic – meaning the encounter between two cultures – rather than employing it as a literary device. Her most recent works are *Woman Hollering Creek and other stories* (1991), and *Caramelo, or, puro cuento* (2002), in which Cisneros goes on displaying the exploration of life between two languages and two cultures, often through the employment of English-Spanish code-switching as the medium to express the bilingual and bicultural existence of her characters. To name but a few, Prieto Osorno also recalls Alma Gómez, Luz Garzón, Cherrie Moraga, Sylvia Lizárraga, Roberta Fernández, Alice Gaspar, Helena Viramontes, Gloria Velásquez, Rosario Ferré y Luz Selenia Vásquez.

Among the most celebrated authors of the last decade, he mentions Esmeralda Santiago with the auto-biographical novel *When I Was Puerto Rican* (1993), where the author deals with immigration, Puerto Rican identity and self-discovery, the shift to a new culture, assimilation and the acceptance of a bicultural, multi-ethnic and bilingual way of being. When Santiago is young, she has to leave Puerto Rico and move to New York, where she finds herself trapped between two cultures; as she explains in the novel:

There are two kinds of Puerto Ricans in school: the newly arrive, like myself, and the ones born in Brooklyn of Puerto Rican parents. The two types didn’t mix. The

Brooklyn Puerto Rican spoke English, and often no Spanish at all. To them, Puerto Rico was the place where their grandparents live, a place they visited on school and summer vacations, a place which they complained was backward and mosquito-ridden. Those of us from whom Puerto Rico was still a recent memory were also split into two groups: the ones who longed for the island, and the ones who wanted to forget it as soon as possible. I felt disloyal for wanting to learn English, for liking pizza, for studying the girls with big hair and trying out their styles at home, locked in the bathroom where no one could watch. I practised walking with the peculiar little hop of the *morenas*, but felt as I were limping (230).

The difficulty of coping with her Hispanic origins and the world that now surrounds her in New York produces conflicting feelings in young Santiago, who lives her 'hyphenated' situation with pain, struggling to assimilate into American culture without giving up her traditions and language. Although the novel is basically written in English, it is significant that at the beginning of each chapter the reader can find a Spanish proverb with an English translation. Moreover, at the end of the book there is a glossary of the many Spanish words and expressions that are to be found in the text, clear evidence of the importance of the Spanish language used in the novel, which is not to be intended as a simple dropping of foreign words, but as the addition of something which would have been otherwise less satisfactory; for instance, just to give an example, one of the words Santiago keeps in Spanish is *sinvergüenza* (250), which literally means 'shameless, scoundrel', but whose English translation would definitely lose some 'flavour'. Alvarez (1997) adds to the list of the authors using some form of Spanglish Roberto Fernandez, who also routinely drops Spanglish into his novels and poetry, believing it to be a legitimate and creative form of communication.

Prieto Osorno argues that the female authors he mentions, who have become symbols for the new Latin woman, are now subjects of many courses at the American universities. Many of them tell of the situation of the Hispanic woman when faced with

discrimination, poverty, loneliness, loss of identity, violence, unemployment and marginalization. Finally, he observes that the younger authors use Spanglish in a more vigorous way, sometimes even humorously, a fact which is perhaps a consequence of the expansion of the Spanish language in the last decades. In fact, the new generation of writers who employ Spanglish are more emphatic in stressing their double cultural and linguistic heritage; they use the code-switching between English and Spanish more frequently, because they are proud of their biculturalism, while at the beginning bilingual authors were more hesitant in using different languages at the same time. In this regard, he mentions Giannina Braschi with *El imperio de los sueños* and *Yo-yo boing*, and Silvana Paternostro with *En la tierra de Dios* and *Del hombre y sus cuentos*.

Stavans (Marx and Escobar 2004) stresses that, while at the beginning Spanglish was associated with a literary movement of the 1970s – which basically included Nuyorican and Chicano authors – at present, it is employed by a wider and more heterogeneous group that includes essayists, short-story writers and novelists of different ancestral origins.

5.1.1.1. Julia Alvarez's *How the García girls lost their accents*

Prieto Osorno also mentions Julia Alvarez with *How the García girls lost their accents* (1991), which is one of the novels that best fits with the topic of this thesis, because it deals with the process of Americanization and cultural displacement.

Julia Alvarez was born in New York in 1950. When she was three months old, her family moved to the Dominican Republic, where she spent the first ten years of her life. Her family enjoyed a relatively affluent lifestyle there, but was forced to return to the United

States in 1960, after her father participated in a failed coup against the Dominican military dictatorship. This experience inspired her first novel, which is widely regarded as the first major novel in English by a Dominican writer. The book received many awards, including the 1991 Pen Oakland/Josephine Miles Award and selection by both the New York Times and the American Library Association (Luis 2000).

When the father of the García sisters is discovered in an attempt to overthrow a tyrannical dictator, the whole family has to leave the Dominican Republic and moves to New York. The novel is structured in reversed chronological order and begins – or ends – with Yolanda’s (the main protagonist’s) return to the Dominican Republic: she has forgotten her language, and, since she cannot speak Spanish fluently, she relies on English to express herself. Yolanda and her sisters’ retrospective voyages represent a desire to find the original language and accent, which are lost in the present: ‘her return to the island after a twenty-nine year absence shows that she is as much or more North American than Dominican’ (Luis 2000: 843). Yolanda finds herself between two worlds; she belongs to both and to neither one of them. She returns to the Dominican Republic in search of her own Latino identity, but North American culture has changed her forever: she does not arrive as a Hispanic, but rather as a North American. Yolanda is a ‘multiple being’ (*Ibid.*), an idea that is also reflected by the many names used to refer to her: she is Yolanda, Yolinda, Yoyo, Yosita, and the English Joe. And, above all, ‘she is ‘Yo’, the Spanish first person pronoun, the ‘I’ of the narrator’ (Luis 2000: 847), since Alvarez drops much autobiographical material into her novel. Yolanda’s return to the island represents her desire to displace herself from the North American Joe to the Yolanda of her family and youth. Yoyo – one of her nicknames – recalls the toy in constant motion, going up and down, moving from one extreme to the other, from one culture to the

other, 'touching upon but not remaining a part of either one of them' (*Ibid.*). The protagonist's displacement will be continuous; it characterizes the complexity of her search for identity, since she will always be Yolanda and someone else.

For the most part, it is through Yolanda that the reader experiences the joys and the disappointments involved in becoming American, an experience that is inextricably linked to learning the English language. The sisters, to varying degrees, all suffer from cultural displacement, and the bulk of their displacement revolves around the issue of language. Yolanda gleefully states that during her first year in college English had become like a 'party favour': 'English was still a party favour for me – crack open the dictionary, find out if I'd just been insulted, praised, admonished, criticized' (87). Indeed, she often feels as a foreigner; in conversing quietly with others, she considers what betrays her foreignness: 'I don't have an extra pen', I whispered, complete sentences for whispers, that's what tells you I was still a greenhorn in this culture' (90). Moreover, when she writes verses with Rudy later on in the text, the words, phrases and images he inserts into the poem are full of double meanings. He has to explain them to her because she is unable to grasp the alternate meanings since she grew up in another culture and another language. Furthermore, the way in which her classmates laugh upon her reading the verses accentuates her sense of alienation. These experiences solidify her sense of being an outsider, thus reinforcing her feeling of inadequacy.

The García girls are caught between two languages and two cultures – Spanish and English, Hispanic and American. The title of the first chapter of the novel – *Antojos* – alerts the reader that he or she will find bilingual words and expressions. In *Antojos*, Yolanda is a thirty-nine year old woman who feels awkward in speaking Spanish when she returns to the Dominican Republic, because she has lost the language of her

childhood: she has mastered English at the cost of losing her ability in what once was her mother tongue, and while speaking with her aunts she realizes she does not even understand some Spanish words:

‘if you don’t have plans, believe me, you’ll end up with a lot of invitations you can’t turn down.’

‘Any little *antojo*, you must tell us!’ Tía Carmen agrees.

‘What’s an *antojo*?’ Yolanda asks.

See! Her aunts are right. After so many years away, she is losing her Spanish.

‘Actually it’s not an easy word to explain.’ Tía Carmen exchanges a quizzical look with the other aunts. How to put it? ‘An *antojo* is like a craving for something you have to eat.’

Gabriela blows out her cheeks. ‘Calories.’

An *antojo*, one of the older aunts continues, is a very old Spanish word ‘from before your United States was even thought of,’ she adds tartly. ‘In fact, in the countryside, you’ll still find some *campesinos* [farm workers] using the word in the old sense⁴⁶’

In this novel, Alvarez masterly renders the immigrant experience and the cultural and linguistic duality of ‘living on the hyphen’, of being a Dominican-American. The García girls are able to assimilate into North American culture with little difficulty; in fact, thanks to their father, they receive the best and most expensive education money can buy, and they soon lose their Spanish accent when speaking in English. Although they are Hispanic, the García girls have neglected their Dominican traditions and accepted North American culture while living in the United States. On the contrary, their parents have not adapted to the changing culture of the 1960s, and treat their daughters as if they were still in the Dominican Republic. Since the daughters also respond to the North American culture in which they live, which is more liberal and permissive than the

⁴⁶ According to the RAE, one of the meaning of *antojo* – the older one – is ‘*lunar, mancha o tumor eréctil que suelen presentar en la piel algunas personas, y que el vulgo atribuye a caprichos no satisfechos de sus madres durante el embarazo*’ (in short, physical defects that people attribute to vagaries that have not been satisfied during pregnancy).

traditional one known by their parents, there are often quarrels within the family caused by this cultural divide.

It is only at the end that they become aware of the cost of this assimilation. While on the island, Yolanda recalls a conversation with a Spanish-speaking poet, who has made her doubt if Spanish was still her native language, because sometimes she does not know in what languages she thinks (13). Later on in the same chapter, when Yolanda's car gets a flat tire while she is far from the main road, she switches back to English after two *campesinos* (farm workers) approach her offering for help: 'in fear, Spanish fails her; English, then, comes to represent safety, her way out of the predicament' (Sirias 2001: 32).

Language, or in the case of the García girls, the gap that exists between Spanish and English, also affects their relationship with men: in large part, Yolanda's relationship with John ('Joe') is destined to fail because of their linguistic differences. As Yolanda plays the rhyme game with him, he cannot catch her poetic sensibilities; the reader observes how the distance between them grows when he is unable to overcome the gap separating English from Spanish. John's monolingualism convinces Yolanda that he will never be able to fully penetrate her world. Language is the gap their relationship cannot bridge:

'What happened, Yo?' her mother asked, the hand she was patting a little later. 'We thought you and John were so happy'

'We just didn't speak the same language', Yo said, simplifying (81)

Furthermore, according to Sirias, another important aspect regarding Alvarez's employment of the interplay of languages as a literary device is 'her use of the gap between Spanish and English for a humorous effect' (2001: 34). This is basically achieved through Laura, the mother of the girls, who uses – or rather misuses – proverbs and

English-language sayings. Since Laura lived her adolescence in the Spanish-speaking world, 'she is not able to grasp the significance of the subtle yet hilarious variations she performs on these English-language expressions' (*Ibid.*). Sometimes she combines two different sayings that to her foreign ear sound perfectly fine, but do not quite reflect their proper usage. For instance, while describing a crowded bus, Laura states: 'it was more sardines in a can than you could shake sticks at' (49). The novel also contains a significant amount of toying with the translation of proverbs from Spanish to English (Sirias 2001). The inclusion of these proverbs represents Alvarez's nod to her bilingual readers, who constitute a large portion of her audience. Dominican sayings such as *mi casa es tu casa* and *en boca cerrada no entran moscas* are translated respectively as 'my house, your house' (203) and 'no flies fly into a closed mouth' (209), to the delight of those who fully understand the Hispanic language and culture.

In the novel, the García family encounters a reality vastly different than the one they were used to in the Dominican Republic. The cultural and linguistic differences oblige the Garcías, individually, to confront their sense of self, to question who they have been their entire lives and to consider carefully who they are going to become. It is only at the end that the García sisters come to realize that while living in the United States they have been losing their native language.

5.1.2. Nuyorican poetry: Tato Laviera

It is in poetry that the poignancy of all the themes concerned with Spanglish, and the very essence of it, can be best observed and appreciated. Poetry can escape the homogenized norms of language through poetic licenses, and therefore this literary

genre can take advantage of this 'slippery language' (Esterreich 1998: 54) without being considered a-lingual, as many authors have criticized (see the previous chapter). In particular, Nuyorican writing can stand as representative of the whole Hispanic spectrum in the United States, considering the fact that Nuyoricans live in the melting pot *par excellence* and that they are often considered outsiders even by their near neighbours (island Puerto Ricans). In fact, Nuyorican poetry has always been caught in the critical crossfire between two national spaces – Puerto Rico and the United States – and between their literary and linguistic borders (*Ibid.*). Because of this conflict, Nuyorican authors apparently display an instability in their own writing, 'trying either to carve out a space for their writing or to create a new space' (Esterreich 1998: 43). In this regard, Acosta-Belén talks of 'the myth of a Puerto Rican poverty of culture' (1992: 980), to refer to the fact that, especially in the 1970s, the importance of the literary works by Puerto Rican writers born or raised in the United States was underestimated or overlooked by island writers and critics. In her opinion, literature provides Nuyoricans with a 'means of cultural validation and affirmation of a collective sense of identity that serves to counteract the detrimental effects of the socioeconomic and racial marginalization that Puerto Ricans have experienced in the metropolis' (*Ibid.*). She argues that many island intellectuals frequently tend to underrate the work of Nuyorican writers, who persist in identifying themselves as 'Puerto Ricans' even if they often do not speak or write Spanish fluently, a sign that island intellectuals view as indication of assimilation into U.S. society and as a kind of 'betrayal'; furthermore, this rejection is compounded by the prejudice and marginalization that they already face in U.S. society. Island scholars view these authors as a mere extension of American literature, and they are generally reluctant to acknowledge any substantial relationship

of this literary experience to the island's cultural patrimony. In this regard, Acosta-Belén argues that there is a 'necessity to reevaluate the Puerto Rican literary canon which so far has refused entry to Nuyorican literature' (1992: 984). This state of affairs recalls what has been said with regard to how Hispanics view their identity (see 3.3), and particularly the difficulty of living in this hyphenated situation. Indeed, Nuyoricans could be seen as providing the perfect example of living on the hyphen, because they actually live between two worlds: they are too Hispanic to be fully considered American, and too American to be recognized as Hispanics by Puerto Ricans. Unlike Chicanos, even when they go back to their place of origin – the island – they are unable to feel that they are really at home. Somehow, they are always outsiders: they have no place, and the only 'space' they can find is the hyphen.

Tato Laviera is a Nuyorican poet who is quoted or mentioned very often with regard to Spanglish. He was born in Puerto Rico in 1951, and moved to New York in 1960. His work includes four collections of poetry: *La carreta made a U-turn* (1979); *ENCLAVE* (1981); *AmeRícan* (1985) and *Mainstream Ethics (ética corriente)* (1988). The common thread of the four collections is the linguistic variety he uses: 'moving from English to Spanish, to urban English, to Spanglish, to Puerto Rican *'que corta'* vernacular, he creates a linguistic *cosmovisión* that reflects all of his values and hopes for the future' (Álvarez Martínez, in Stavans 2008: 91). Between the English poems and the Spanish poems, bilingual switching and blending are employed with consistent dexterity. His poems are a conglomeration of voices, songs, dialects and cultures that produce a unique synthesis. The overall impression, despite the strategic shift from one language to the other, is one of 'almost undetectably fluid transition, and from a standpoint of either language tradition, of a qualitative expansion of idiomatic resources' (Flores 1993: 174-175). As

Flores argue, in Latino writings code-switching corresponds directly to the linguistic practises of Hispanic peoples and, moreover, it also represents a matter of thematic concern, and not merely a device.

Some of his poems could be considered to act as a perfect summing up of what has been said until now: they are evidence of the mixed nature of the Spanish people (see the poem 'Spanish'); of the needed presence of Spanglish ('my graduation speech'), and generally of all the themes dealt with in this thesis. Although they date back to the 1980s, Laviera's poems provide an insight into the problems of Puerto Ricans identity and assimilation that still exists in contemporary American society.

Laviera's choice not to use either Jesus (his Spanish name) or Abraham (the English name he was given by a teacher at his first arrival in New York), but the nickname Tato, reflects his attitude towards his choice of language: indeed, he does not choose between Spanish or English, but he opts for a mixture of the two, and displays a vast range of vernaculars in between the two languages. As he claims in an interview (Luis 1992: 1029):

politically speaking, I would never write a book of poems in one language or the other; it doesn't work with the balance of the way my people as a whole refer to themselves. I always say I'm a Puerto Rican poet, I want to be able to recite where my people are, which is not only in Spanish or English but both

According to Álvarez Martínez, his poetic collection includes at least seven different linguistic varieties: Puerto Rican Spanish vernacular; urban/African-American English vernacular; formal/standard Spanish; formal/standard English; Afro-Spanish vocabulary and grammatical constructions; Nuyorican Spanglish; other Latino Spanglish vernaculars' (in Stavans 2008: 89). His community speak Spanglish and he, as the voice of his community, writes in Spanglish. A peculiar aspect of his writing is that there are

no typographic features showing the language changes, a fact that has already been mentioned in the previous chapters with regard to other authors. In Laviera's poems, there are no translations, no glossaries at the end of the book, no italics or quotation marks to indicate a foreign word, because actually 'no words are foreign for Laviera, and he makes no apologies for his Spanglish' (*Ibid.*). Laviera's Spanglish constructions legitimize the language and therefore the people who use it. As Flores aptly notes, Laviera 'is not claiming to have 'ushered' in a new language [...] rather, his intention is to illustrate and assess the intricate language contact experienced by Puerto Ricans in New York and to combat the kind of facile and defeatist conclusions that stem so often from a static, purist understanding of linguistic change' (Flores 1993: 176).

His poems often begin in English and end in Spanish, or vice versa, and in between sometimes Laviera fills the pages with Spanglish, moving between the two languages and mixing them with great ease.

As follows, I will report his poem 'my graduation speech'⁴⁷:

⁴⁷ 'My graduation Speech' comes from *La carreta made a U-turn* (1979: 17).

i think in spanish
i write in english
i want to go back to puerto rico,
but i wonder if my kink could live
in ponce, maygüez and carolina
tengo las venas aculturadas
escribo en spanglish
abraham in español
abraham in english
tato in spanish
“taro” in english
tonto in both languages
how are you?
¿cómo estás?
i don't know if i'm coming
or si me fui ya
si me dicen barranquitas, yo reply,
“¿con qué se come eso?”
si me dicen caviar, i digo,
“a new pair of converse sneakers.”
ahí supe que estoy jodío
ahí supe que estamos jodíos
english or spanish
spanish or english
spanenglish
now, dig this:
hablo lo inglés matao
hablo lo español matao
no sé leer ninguno bien
So it is, spanglish to matao
What I digo
iay virgen, yo no sé hablar!

At first glance, it seems that the poet is caught in a world of confusion, a world in which Spanish and English clash, leaving the poet and the community without any language.

This poem apparently points to the brutal reality of the loss of language and the failure of the educational system. The reference to his name, Abraham, reflects that defining moment in Laviera's life upon his arrival in New York, when a teacher changed his name – 'the very moment that made Laviera a poet out of his need to reclaim his name' (Alvarez-Martinez, in Stavans 2008: 92). However, just as Laviera comes to realize that neither his Spanish name – Jesus – nor his adopted English name – Abraham – will suffice, the same is true for his language choice. Neither English nor Spanish will do. Nevertheless, a solution exists: the acceptance of Spanglish as his language. The very title, 'my graduation speech', is indicative of this: his graduation may be read as the realization and acceptance of Spanglish as his language. *Mata'o* ('killed') or not, Spanglish is his language and he will not make any excuses about it. Álvarez-Martínez argues that this poem seems to reveal the survival skills and creativity of the Nuyoricans who, surrounded by despair and poverty, are able not only to survive, but also to create, among other things, an entirely new language of their own; 'that language, Spanglish, the result of the Nuyoricans resistance to hegemonic acculturation forces, proves that transculturation can be a resistance strategy' (*Ibid.*) In fact, as Flores argues, 'the entire poem, rather than degenerating into sheer nonsense or incoherent rambling is a carefully structured argument that demonstrates a wealth of expressive potential and a rigorous logical ability' (1993: 175); in his opinion, the poem is 'at once an enactment of the linguistic dilemma of Puerto Ricans in the United States and a telling commentary about it' (*Ibid.*). The final verse is to be read ironically: the reader is by now aware that the speaker knows what he is saying and that he can say what he thinks, in both languages and in a wide array of the two. The poem also represents a meta-reflection: Laviera uses language as a device to speak about language, he employs Spanglish to

reflect on the nature and implications of this mixed idiom. He continuously switches between English and Spanish in an apparently ruleless way, even if there may be a reason for the majority of his linguistic choices; for instance, it is significant that he says *'hablo lo inglés matao, hablo lo español matao'* in Spanish and not in English, since it is mostly from Spanish-speaking people that there comes the criticism towards this language.

Álvarez-Martínez remarks that although Laviera enthusiastically embraces Spanglish, it does not mean that he is likely to abandon Spanish for it: 'quite the opposite, Laviera sees in Spanish the strength to endure, and he is determined to preserve the language' (Alvarez Martinez in Stavans 2008: 91). In his poem 'Spanish'⁴⁸, Laviera writes:

your language outlives your world power.
but the english could not force you to change
the folkloric flavourings of all your former colonies
makes your language a major north and south american
tongue.
the atoms could not eradicate your pride,
it was not your armada stubbornness
that ultimately preserved your language.
It was the nativeness of the spanish,
mixing with the indians and the blacks,
who joined hands together, to maintain your precious
tongue,
just like the arabs, who visited you for
eight hundred years, leaving the black
skin flowers of Andalucía,
the flamenco still making beauty with your tongue.
It was the stubbornness of the elders,
refusing the gnp national economic language,
not learning English at the expense of

⁴⁸ Published in *American* (1985: 33).

much poverty and suffering, yet we maintained
your presence, without your maternal support.
Spain, you must speak on behalf of your language,
we wait your affirmation of what we have fought to preserve.
ESPAÑOL, one of my lenguas, part of my tongue,
i'm gonna fight for you, I love you, Spanish
i'm your humble son

In this poem, all the feelings of Spanish-speaking people living in the United States are conveyed masterly by Laviera. The poet expresses frustration over the fact that Spain does not want to recognize the particular Spanish of the United States; ironically, he chooses to express his ideas on Spanish in English, thus further emphasizing the hybridity of his culture. According to Álvarez-Martínez, a reason for this choice might be that if Spain does not speak on behalf of their language, it could ultimately disappear. Moreover, so as to stress that he is capable of writing in formal or standard Spanish, Laviera follows this poem with 'mundo-world', which is written in perfect Spanish. Although he loves his native tongue, in an interview (Luis 1992: 1028) Laviera acknowledges:

I have published 198 poems: 60% of the poems are totally in English, 20% of them are totally in Spanglish, and the remaining 20% I write in total Spanish. I knew politically I had to do that. I like the Spanish language, but I have to look for a balance

And this balance is achieved through the alternating use of both Spanish and English, and Spanglish as well. To conclude, as follows I will report the poem Laviera dedicates to this language – 'Spanglish'⁴⁹:

pues estoy creando Spanglish
bi-cultural systems

⁴⁹ 'Spanglish' was published by William Luis in the Afro-Hispanic Review, Vol. 24, No. 2 (FALL 2005), p. 208.

scientific lexicographical
inter-textual integrations
two expressions
existentially wired
two dominant languages
continental abrazandose
en colloquial combate
en las aceras del soil
imperio spanglish emerges
control pandillaje
sobre territorio bi-lingual
las novelas mejicanas
mixing with radiatorocknroll
condimented cocina lore
immigrant/migrant
nasal mispronouncements
barajas chismeteos social club
hip-hop prieto street salsa
corner soul enmixturado
spanish pop farándula
standard English classroom
with computer technicalities
spanglish is literally perfect
spanglish is ethnically snobbish
spanglish is cara-holy inteligencia
which u.s. slang do you speak?

From Laviera's point of view, Spanglish represents an *abrazo* between English and Spanish, a concept which recalls Stavans' encounter between two civilizations. This language is the unifying thread joining two different cultures, ('existentially wired'), and even if sometimes these two entities clash, it is a homely confrontation that paves the way for a new era to come ('imperio Spanglish emerges').

5.2. Spanglish in the mass media

After showing that, despite the negative opinion of some scholars, Spanglish can be given some form of legitimacy thanks to its use in literature, in this section I will analyse its presence in everyday life. As the number of Hispanic peoples living in the United States is growing, and they enter business, media and the arts, Spanglish is traveling along with them. When asked by a reporter what were his thoughts about the situation of Spanglish in the United States, Stavans (Marx and Escobar 2004) answered:

*Su diversificación es asombrosa: de una jerga callejera de escasa estimación, ha pasado a convertirse en la última década en un fenómeno cultural decisivo. Las variantes nacionales empiezan a confluír en el spanglish mediático que apunta a una especie de estandarización verbal. Hay programas de TV que emplean spanglish, anuncios publicitarios, estaciones radiales, revistas femeninas...*⁵⁰

In his opinion, it is precisely 'in the media where Spanglish travels faster and the creation of a common ground becomes tangible' (2003: 14). He argues that the many differences existing within the various forms of Spanglish – which is one of the main arguments of those who do not think it should be considered a language – can be overcome thanks to its spread in the media, where Spanglish is likely to achieve some form of standardization.

⁵⁰ Its diversification is astonishing: from a street jargon with low estimation, during the last decade it has turned into a poignant cultural phenomenon. National varieties are beginning to join Spanglish in the media into a kind of verbal standardization. There are TV programs that employ Spanglish, advertisements, radio stations, female magazines... [my translation].

5.2.1. Spanglish in the Net: cyber Spanglish and the blogs

In this regard, a pertinent example is what is usually referred to as ‘cyber Spanglish’. Yolanda Rivas⁵¹ compiled a catalogue of more than 800 technical terms concerning the hybrid language between English and Spanish used in the information and communications technology (ICT) context, which is continuously being enriched. Basically, these terms are calques of English words, such as *deletear*, *printear* and *surfear*, where an English root is given a Spanish ending. As the world grows more computer-connected, and the Hispanic population is always more immersed in the English language, Hispanics have started to find inventive ways to explain what they do: ‘*voy a emailarlo ahorita; zoomea más para verlo más grande; necesito rebutear la computadora otra vez*’⁵² (Rivas 1996). The speed of change in the high-tech world often leaves language behind, and, as a result, Spanish-speakers have adopted English terminology, slightly modified from a morphological point of view to sound and look more Spanish, even when there are acceptable Spanish words to say the same thing. In these cases, people are familiar with *emailear* (to e-mail) instead of *enviar por correo electrónico*, *linkear* (to link) instead of *enlazar*, *el Web* (the Web) instead of *la Telaraña*, and *deletear* (to delete) instead of *borrar*. Thus, the linguistic transculturation is to be observed also in the ICT jargon; cyber Spanglish is further evidence of the fact that language is changing and evolving to meet its speakers’ needs, this time at the pace of technology.

⁵¹ Peruvian Yolanda Rivas is an expert of language who works at the Department of Radio, Television and Cinema of the University of Texas.

⁵² ‘I’ll send an email right now’; ‘zoom to see it bigger’; ‘I need to restart the computer’ [my translation].

Besides being the language used to refer to the activities connected with the Web, Spanglish is also the subject of many webpages. In particular, while surfing – or perhaps one could say *surfeando* – the internet, I found many blogs concerning this topic; one of particular interest is *Life in Spanglish*⁵³, where the author welcomes the reader by explaining why she has devoted a webpage to this topic:

‘Life in Spanglish’ is just a little experiment to see if I can get away with publishing the weird word combos that pop up in my mind, *en inglés y en español y todo* mixed together... Is there anything more frustrating than not having the correct translation of a thought or word and needing it immediately? Few things annoy me as much. My high school (prepa) Spanish teacher would not be proud, *pero como dijo Obama cuando entró a la presidencia el 20 de enero del 2009*, ‘It’s a different world and we must change with it’ So if you feel inclined to read and leave a comment, please be my guest. Spanglishers unite! *Dejemos de tener miedo de que nos digan ‘pochos’* and let’s embrace the possibilities of this new lingo

The language Cristina Burgos uses represents continuous code-switching, a dance between English and Spanish, where it is difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins. Sometimes she emphasizes the switch with *italics*, while at other times she does not. The many comments that the readers have left on the page are evidence of the great impact that Spanglish is having, and not only within the United States. The majority are from Spanish-speaking people, who all congratulate her on her idea and express agreement with her ‘experiment’, as Cristina calls it. Since I have begun this chapter by saying that, in order to understand Spanglish, it is important to listen to the people who use it, I feel it is useful for the purpose of this thesis to report some of these comments⁵⁴:

⁵³ <http://lifeinspanglish.wordpress.com/>.

⁵⁴ Once again, as I have done in the previous chapters, I rearranged the typographic features of the text in order to make the language switch more evident.

[1] '*Qué buena idea Cristy!!! (No sé cómo poner el signo de admiración al principio porque ésta compu es gringa). Es un buen experimento al que le debemos dar difusión. Este tipo de temas son dignos de ser estudiados por los sociólogos, antropólogos, lingüistas y demás*'⁵⁵ (Jimena, 8 May 2009)

[2] 'In Miami, everyone is always speaking Spanglish. *Es el idioma* of choice for many of us here. I'm always surprised how much people use it. Professionally and casually' (Catherine, 28 October 2009)

[3] '¿Spanglish? It's a *concepto muy* close to my *corazón*; for *soy* English, and *entonces* have never quite been able to *aprenderme* the *idioma*. *Encima*, having *el parkinson* means that *constantamente* I discover big *agujeros* in the 'Spanish' I have learned. Idiomatic *frases y cosas* I have just 'picked up' *parecen un* bit more durable. (Says something *muy importante* about how *el cerebro* works) *Por supuesto*, I *entiendo nada* about the subjunctive, and consequently, wilfully *lo ignoro*. *Igual* with accents. *Para* me, Spanglish is *un sito perfecto*. The language of the 21st *siglo*. With *amistad* and a (seriously) great love of Spanish' (Andy, 9 June 2010)

[4] '*Tengo padre inglés y madre española y en casa* we all talk Spanglish. I was born *cerca de Londres pero me vine aquí a los siete años y desde entonces hasta* my current 14 I've been living here in Barcelona. *Leyendo esto me siento* at home :) *jaja*' (Francesca, 9 June 2010)

[5] '*Me encanta el espanglish [...] Tenemos que hacerle embrace y no tener vergüenza de usarlo*'. (El Güilson, 15 June 2010)

[6] Good Idea. It is popular. Though I believe language integrity needs to be preserved, Spanglish (combo of 2) creates a segment of people that might communicate effectively between Spanglish speakers, but struggle with others, leaving people out, and leaving one out is some scenarios. Another thought... average of spoken languages per person is increasing, imagine trilingual people making up their own language because they get confused... human's own way of making things more complex than they already are and somehow create a small group to feel they belong. I identify with this, I find myself aaahm... '*constantemente*' searching the right word for the right time/occasion. And I mess

⁵⁵ What a great idea Cristy!!! I don't know how to put the initial exclamation mark [in Spanish, when using question and exclamation marks, a reversed one must be put at the beginning of the phrase or sentence] because this is a gringo computer). It is a good experiment that must be spread. These kind of themes are worth being studied by sociologists, anthropologists, linguists and others [my translation].

it up constantly (see! I had it in English too). Luck with the Blog! (Norberto, 29 June 2011)

While some enthusiastically assert that it should be the subject of study in different fields [1], others are more critical towards this language and fear that Spanglish-speakers might come to represent a niche that excludes those who do not understand both languages [6]. I found it very significant that the writer in [2] refers to Spanglish as ‘the language of *choice*’, stressing that it is not a matter of not knowing how to speak in English or Spanish, nor is it the related consequence of their supposed laziness (see the previous chapter) to learn them properly. The writer in [3] humorously claims that he has big ‘holes’ regarding the Spanish subjunctive and accents (which could be considered the more thorny linguistic aspects in studying Spanish), and that he is not willing to learn them because Spanglish is the language of the 21st century, ‘a perfect place’, in his opinion; he ends by stressing that, joking aside, he loves Spanish. At a first sight, this might nourish the arguments of those who fear language corrosion, but since at the beginning he claims to be English, I would argue that it is an example of what Lipski (2008) calls heritage speakers – people who have learned some Spanish because of their experiences. Thus, Spanglish is not only something concerned with native Spanish-speakers. Finally, the writer in [4] praises Spanglish as a kind of place where one can feel like at home, even when one is abroad, and that of [5] thinks that its speakers should not be ashamed of using it, but that rather they should embrace it.

While reading some of her posts, I discovered that Cristina is a fan of Saint Antonio of Padua, and I decided to write her an e-mail, to find out something more about why she prefers to use Spanglish. I told her that I came from Padua, and that she could either

write in English or in Spanish, as she pleased. As follows, I will report part⁵⁶ of her answer:

Respecto a tus preguntas y tu tesis, la respuesta mas honesta que tengo de por que hablo y uso el Spanglish es porque asi realmente piensa mi cerebro o escucho mi voz interna. Asi salen las combinaciones de las palabras y la verdad no me he disciplinado para cambiarlo. No es que lo prefiera, es algo automático. Debo aclarar que solo lo uso cuando se que la otra persona es bilingue en ingles y español, y generalmente es una persona de confianza (amigo o familia cercana.) No uso el Spanglish con alguien que acabo de conocer. En la oficina hablo en ingles porque estoy en Estados Unidos y es lo profesional. Pero tambien hago publicidad en español para el mercado latino de USA asi que se requiere hablarlo pero de manera profesional, siempre cuidando acentos, puntuación, ortografía⁵⁷

I kept the original text as it was, although there are some mistakes with regard to accents (can it be a sign of loss of language proficiency?). What emerges is once more that Spanglish is something that does not necessarily imply a choice, but rather it is an automatic mechanism that comes out when a bilingual person feels at ease with somebody – who must be a friend or a family member – and knows that that person, too, is bilingual. Thus, Spanglish is actually a niche language from this point view, because it excludes all the people who do not understand one of the languages involved. She also stresses that ‘nothing has forced her to change’, further evidence of the fact that language use – of any language, even the one which is not given such a status – cannot be imposed.

⁵⁶ The rest is not pertinent in this context.

⁵⁷ With regard to the questions about your thesis, the most honest answer I can give you about the reasons why I speak and use Spanglish is because that is exactly how my brain works, or that I listen to my internal voice. That is how the combination of words come out, and nothing really has forced me to change. It is not that I prefer to use it, it is something automatic. I must clarify that I use it only when I know that the other person is bilingual in English and Spanish, and when I am familiar with him or her (friends or close family members). I do not use with somebody I have just met. In the office I speak English because I am in the United States and it is the professional language. But I also create advertisements in Spanish for the USA Latin market, as actually what is required is a language at a professional level, but one must always be careful of accents, punctuation and orthography [my translation].

In her e-mail, I was also suggested to look for Bill Santiago, a friend of hers who is deeply involved in Spanglish, too, and she gave me the link to his website⁵⁸. A comedian and TV commentator, he is the author of the show *Spanglish 101*:

I wanted to do a show about Spanglish because I grew up speaking it and didn't even know it [...] The show is not just about how much I love Spanglish – twice the vocabulary and half the grammar – but how we are what we speak. So it's about our shared sense of, yes, Spanglishness, being of and living in two worlds at the same time. *Cómo se dice...* simultaneously

He has also written the book *Pardon my Spanglish* (2008); on his website, there are some excerpts from it. I found a very humoristic and deeply felt defence of Spanglish where Santiago touches on many of the issues raised by scholars, which I have discussed in chapter 4, in an irreverent and sometimes hilarious Spanglish. Now that we have become more confident with this mixed language, and in order not to damage the peculiar flavour of the text, I will report part of the excerpt⁵⁹ as follows, without any rearrangement of the original typographic features.

Why wouldn't you consider it a language? Because it's made up of other languages? Pero, si no hay ningún idioma natural que se haya creado desde scratch. Resultan siempre from intimate contact entre otros idiomas. There's no such thing as immaculate vocabulary. Coinage is messy and carnal. Y de hecho most words nacen out of wedlock. What else are you going to call it? Wait, please don't say "code switch-ing." Ese término flojo makes me cringe. ¿Cómo qué code ni qué code? First of all, cuando escucho la palabra "code," I think of top-secret military messages, not Spanglish. Suena medio silly, like lingo from a bad submarine movie. [...] No se trata de codes, sino de idiomas and everything they embody: culture, heritage, emotional frequencies, ways of thinking and feeling. El swichteo is actually between co-dependent realities. Así que code-switching is obviously code for: Estos chingados académicos have no idea de lo que están talking about. Don't you dare call it a dialect, either. I mean, a dialect of what? English (gringo-lect)? Or Spanish

⁵⁸ <http://www.billsantiago.com>, last visited 5 July, 2013.

⁵⁹ From Excerpt 1: *Is Spanglish a language?* (*Ibid.*).

(vida-loca-lect)? What about slang? Dissing the habla as un puro slang is really el colmo del descaró. Say it to my face y se va a formar un tremendo revolú! Slang is a set of informal words and phrases, perteneciente a un subculture, incorporated into an existing language. Spanglish es un fenómeno mucho más abarcador. In fact, the word “Spanglish” can also be used as a slang term for the slang incorporated into the Spanish language. [...] Spanglish is, de una vez por todas, a language. Although many people who speak this language ni siquiera saben that they’re doing it

To conclude, the Internet provides many other examples of uses, comments, blogs and generally much information about Spanglish; its wide presence on the Net cannot but be evidence of the fact that no matter what scholars say, but this *jerga loca* (Stavans 2003a) is spreading enormously and cannot be ignored.

5.2.2. Spanglish on television

Spanglish is something which can be noticed even on television, especially in talk shows, where people are more likely to feel at ease with their language. According to Stavans (2003), *Univisión* and *Telemundo* are the fastest-growing television networks in the United States. He mentions *el Show de Cristina*, *Sábado Gigante* and *Noticiero univisión*, which are watched by millions of people, as clear examples of the spread of Spanglish on television. The first two programs include guests, who are average people invited to talk about their own lives. Their expressions are full of ‘Spanglishismos [...] terms like *parquear* (to park), *grincar* (green card), and *la migra* (the staff of the Immigration and Naturalization Service) have already become part of the lore’ (Stavans 2003: 14).

In an article published by the New York Times, Chozick (2011) argues that *Telemundo* has long trailed its rival *Univisión* in the competition for Hispanic television viewers in

the United States. She claims that as the number of Hispanics is growing, the perennial runner-up is embracing a new strategy – namely the use of English subtitles and Spanglish – to attract ‘deep-pocketed viewers and the advertisers who covet them’ (Chozick 2011). As Stavans, she also mentions Cristina Saralegui, the Cuban-American journalist, actress and host of the Spanish-language show of the same name; in her opinion, her Sunday variety show displays the new approach, reflecting the changing dynamics of Hispanics across the country, and the use of Spanglish is one of its most peculiar features. Moreover, Chozick argues that, according to the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies, Hispanics watch more television as a family, with Spanish-speaking grandparents often gathered around the television with their predominantly English-speaking grandchildren, and claims that incorporating both languages and cultures can ‘hook multiple generations’ (*Ibid.*).

In another newspaper article, Lizette Alvarez speaks about ‘the talk of Nueva York’ (1997) with regard to the language used in a talk show by Nely Galan (president of Galan Entertainment, a Los Angeles television and film production company that focuses on the Latino market) and the television actress Liz Torres. Alvarez claims that they ‘slip into the language that comes most naturally to both of them’. After reporting some of the examples of code-switching they use while talking to each other, she recalls Ms Galan’s thought about this new hybrid language:

I think Spanglish is the future [...] it's a phenomenon of being from two cultures. It's perfectly wonderful. I speak English perfectly. I speak Spanish perfectly, and I choose to speak both simultaneously. How cool is that? (quoted in Alvarez 1997)

Alvarez describes Spanglish as a ‘verbal patchwork’, and she argues that it has ‘few rules and many variations, but at its most vivid and exuberant, it is an effortless dance

between English and Spanish, with the two languages clutched so closely together that at times they actually converge' (*Ibid.*).

Furthermore, Spanglish has also become the topic of a film; in 2004, Columbia Pictures released a comedy-drama film written and directed by James L. Brooks – *Spanglish* – starring Adam Sandler, Paz Vega, and Téa Leoni. The story is basically about cross-cultural understanding. Flor Moreno is a poor, Mexican single mother who is hired as the housekeeper for John and Deborah Clasky, and their kids Bernice and Georgie – a rich American family of Los Angeles. She does not speak English at the beginning, so communication is quite difficult. Successively, she decides to start learning it, and when her daughter Cristina goes to live with them all she realizes she is attracted by their rich American lifestyle; she is worried because she wants Cristina to keep in touch with her Mexican roots and working-class values. Thus, from this point of view, also the film to some extents touches on the problems concerning the co-existence of different worldviews caused by cultural and linguistic diversity.

5.2.3. Spanglish magazines

With Chozick and Alvarez (see above), we saw that even the more formal form of media – the newspaper – has not escaped the topic of Spanglish. Besides being the subject of many newspapers articles, Spanglish is also the vehicle of communication, especially when used in more popular formats. In particular, Silvia Betti (2012) analyses how Spanglish has entered into the magazines; she argues that besides monolingual Spanish or English reviews speaking about Latin culture, there are also bilingual formats such as *Imagen* or *Estylo*. Moreover, there are also some magazines that actually employ code-

switching, such as *Latina* (New York) and *Generación Ñ* (Miami), where the reader can find ‘*cócteles lingüísticos*’ (‘linguistic cocktails’, Betti 2012).

Christy Haubegger, a Mexican-American lawyer, began Spanglish's most successful foray into the magazine world when she founded *Latina* magazine, a New York bilingual format for young Hispanic women.

The publisher of *Latina* saw good business in Spanglish, and claims:

If we were an English magazine, we would just be general market [...] If we were a Spanish-language magazine, we would be Latin American. We are the intersection of the two, and we reflect a life between two languages and two cultures that our readers live in (quoted in Betti 2012)

In Betti's opinion, *Latina* is a clear example of the written use of Spanglish; it is a glossy monthly magazine which is basically addressed to a female Latin audience of the high-middle class. It first appeared in 1996, and at the beginning it was published only six times a year, but success has come immediately. It has been the first publication to use code-switching, which is the typical feature of Spanglish. Betti provides some titles as instances of the use of Spanglish in the magazine: ‘Glam up *pronto*’; ‘Hot *fiesta* fashion for every *figura*’; ‘how to connect your roots *ahora mismo*’. Indeed, it would be too much to say that *Latina* is written in Spanglish: the main language is English, and then there are Spanish – and Spanglish – words or phrases inserted into the text; moreover, there are also loanwords, calques, hybrid terms – all characteristic features of Spanglish. However, whether written in Spanglish or not, *Latina* represents an important means of communication relevant to our topic: not only does it employ two universal languages, sometimes mixing them, but it also makes a comparison between the two cultures, and therefore gives its (female) readers a feeling of belonging to American society, without forgetting about their own language, tradition and culture.

Betti remarks that Spanglish is not only used by poor Latinos who are not sufficiently proficient in either language; in her opinion, educated Latinos also use it. Furthermore, she argues that with the boom of Latin culture all over the world, it seems that many North Americans are catching up with curiosity of and interest in to the culture and language of the largest minority group of the nation, and she thinks the success of *Latina* reflects this state of affairs. Thus, even if *Latina* is not completely written in Spanglish, it is the first magazine to use code-switching in its articles.

Furthermore, during my research I also found a Spanglish magazine in Nashville, which is surprising because Tennessee is not among the countries with a large Hispanic population (see chapter 1, table 7). The presence of *jeSpanglish!* is evidence of the fast spread of this phenomenon. The website of this magazine explains that it is a 'bilingual lifestyle magazine that incorporates facts and information about the Latinos in Middle Tennessee', and that the aim of this refreshing and innovative publication is 'to bring together the Spanish and English residents of Nashville'. Their mission, as the staff of the website claims, is 'to entertain and offer useful information to the Spanish and English communities while at the same time allowing them to achieve better understanding of their cultures and enabling them to practice each other's language'. Their ultimate goal is to bring together American businesses and the Latino consumers. In spite of these noble purposes, the website was only updated until 2008, so perhaps it did not obtain great success.

To sum up, then, every medium of mass communication, from comedy shows and talk shows, to serious news, from magazines and newspapers to films 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. Thus, while scholars

go on discussing and making conjectures about its nature and its future, Spanglish is spreading quickly, and more and more people are coming into contact with this reality, phenomenon, language, or whatever people might call it.

Conclusions

In dealing with Spanglish, my aim was that of investigating the relationship existing between this often criticized mixed language and the search for a Hispanic identity in a context shaped by dominant Anglo-American ideology. While developing my thesis, I came to realize that, indeed, this topic would require a much deeper study in order to understand it fully. However, I hope this dissertation can serve as a first insight into the cultural importance of this phenomenon.

What emerges from this thesis is, first of all, that language is a key to defining one's identity. The number of Hispanic peoples is growing, and Spanish is becoming a highly-demanded language in many sectors. Many Spanish-speaking people feel a deep belonging to their mother tongue, but at the same time they need and want to learn English in order to become part of American society. Indeed, at present, the majority of them speak both English and Spanish with sufficient proficiency. Thus, they are provided with two languages, two cultures and therefore two worldviews – a fact which makes them the inhabitants of a borderland, because they cannot be considered as belonging fully to either side. This 'hyphenated' situation implies a continuous crossing between the two worlds – the English one and the Spanish one – and the consequence is a linguistic transculturation that reflects also the transculturation of the people. From this point of view, then, Spanglish is like a statement of identity: Hispanics living in the United States are neither tending towards assimilation nor uncritical cultural preservation; they are neither becoming Americans nor continuing to be Puerto Ricans, Chicanos,

Dominicans or whatever. However, what is left is not simply confusion, or cultural anomaly, or a sort of subculture of poverty, as some intellectuals have argued. It is a delicate balance, a 'tight touch' (Flores 1993: 176), as Laviera entitles one of his short poems. Hence, Spanglish can be seen to be like a statement of a new, mixed, hyphenated, blended, dynamic, bicultural identity, which reflects the people trying to adapt to a society which is permeated by a white dominant Anglo-American ideology. Thus, I think we can say that Hispanics are not assimilating, but rather acculturating, adapting, and shaping a new and more coloured culture and language. As Tato Laviera poignantly wrote in one of his poems: 'qué assimilated? Brother, yo soy asimilao' (AmerRícan 54).

The Spanglish phenomenon is also a key to understanding or at least re-evaluating the increasing debate over race-mixing. The black and white dichotomy and the alleged supremacy of the white man is becoming meaningless with the increase in interracial marriages: which shade of white could be considered white enough to belong to the 'pure' dominant society? The kaleidoscope of the present world has too many colours, and it would be too difficult to decide where to categorize mixed-race peoples in a hypothetical chromatic scale. This state of affairs recalls the topic discussed in a famous essay of 1925 by José Vasconcelos, who had theorized the coming of a *raza cósmica* (a cosmic race): he argued that all races would disappear in one massive race, created by a 'flurry of race-mixing' (Morales 2002:13). Many intellectuals concerned with the topic of Spanglish (see for example Morales 2002; Stavans 2003a) often question whether Spanglish represents the first step towards the coming of this cosmic race. From Vasconcelos' perspective, this concept did not represent a race *per se*, but it was just the idea of a large group of miscegenated people with a more or less shared culture that

had been in development for a very long time. From this point of view, according to Morales (*Ibid.*) the cosmic race also represents the end of race, because race becomes a multiple factor, not a defining category. Thus, Spanglish might be considered as the first step towards the very end of race, from a universalistic perspective.

However, in spite of this multicultural framework, Anglo-Americans still fear diversity. Colombo (2002) argues that this state of affairs is due to the loss of security that globalization implies. Indeed, with globalization, the world is changing; it is becoming more multicultural day by day. Despite the fact that different races are in ever-increasing contact, the attitude of the dominant culture is always that of defence, sometimes even of fear. In a world that is evolving constantly, people need to find fixed points, something that will always be the same to feel a sort of stability in an ever-changing world. Language can stand as one of those fixed points. Besides the fear of language corrosion expressed by the *Real Academia Española* with regard to the Spanish spoken in the United States, it is most of all with the thorny issue concerning language policy that we have seen how language can become a politically contentious topic. In the debates referring to bilingual ballots and bilingual education, language represents the people who use it, and a devaluation or limitation of use of a language directly affects its speaker. In this regard, Americans are prone to draw parallels with what happened in the nearby Québec, where French obtained the status of official language (Bourhis and Marshal 1999); in fact, at present the official languages of Canada are both English and French, which 'have equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada', according to the Canadian constitution. Why could this not happen also in the United States for Spanish?

Furthermore, Spanglish is not the sole mixed language that is causing controversy within the United States; in this regard, it could be useful also to make a comparison with what is usually referred to as Ebonics. This language is the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) spoken by black peoples in the U.S. (Johnson 2000); it is a pattern of communication with its own grammar and syntax, and its origins date back to the age of slavery. Like Spanglish, it is an intra-ethnic language used by members of a minority group to establish empathy and a 'bridge of identity' (Stavans 2003a: 42). Ebonics went even further than Spanglish in fuelling the controversy in 1996, when in California the Oakland School Board passed a resolution the effect of which would be to educate speakers of AAVE in a manner similar to students in bilingual educational programs. This action was the outcome of a local school district's struggle with how best to face the poor academic performance of its African American students. This fact was mentioned in the national headline news, and Oakland's action was immediately denounced, often in a manner that denigrated and poked fun at this language. According to Johnson, 'it demonstrates just how deeply intolerant (and perhaps fearful) many Americans are of language diversity' (2000: 316). Thus, it is not only Spanglish as the mix of precisely English and Spanish that Anglos criticize – because Ebonics also undergoes the same negative judgements – but the very fact that it is a blend, a mixed language.

Despite the criticism, Spanglish is spreading quickly; indeed, language does not behave according to what academics say; on the contrary, language simply meets the needs of the people, and if two cultures become one, it adapts to give voice to a new kind of speaker, who would not be satisfied with using only one of the two. Thus, Spanglish is how many Hispanics in the United States think, how their brains work; it is how they perceive the world, how they communicate within each other, how they manage to

make their two worlds co-exist. It stands as the acceptance of living on the hyphen, of welcoming both sides of their identity, without being ashamed of it. In fact, in the last chapter, we have seen that many people – especially those belonging to the third generation – think this language acts as a perfect ‘place’ where they can feel at ease, like being at home. It is what they are, a mixed-race people. The celebration of this language that many Spanglish-speakers are promoting stands as the formation of a shared consciousness among the various Latino groups that transcends the specific national and cultural borders in favour of embracing a broader collective identity.

I do not know if one day Spanglish will be taught in schools, or if it will achieve some form of standardization. Those who try to question what will be of its future are perhaps only making conjectures, because language is an unpredictable entity that keeps changing as its speakers change. The only thing which is certain is that it is gaining ground through the increase in bilingual English-Spanish speakers, and through its spread in the media – a fact which suggests that it is not likely to stop, no matter what scholars say and all the criticism it continues to receive.

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