Language and Culture among Hispanics in the United States

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Introduction

The present work concentrates on the three major ethnic groups in the United States: Mexican Americans (or Chicanos), Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans, for which the native language is Spanish. Hispanics in the United States use language, both Spanish and English, often in combination, to express and interpret cultural symbolism. Spanish in these communities is very significant both as a cultural symbol of identity and as a means of preserving Hispanic cultures in the context of pressures to assimilate to mainstream, English-speaking American society. Included here are discussions of historical context; language varieties; language use according to context, person, topic; language maintenance; ethnic terminology; language in cultural forms of expression such as folklore, literature and songs; and language policy.

The language situation among Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans is very complex. Their communities are bilingual, that is, both Spanish and English are spoken; but different versions of Spanish and English characteristic of each group are also used. Furthermore, new ways of speaking and dialects using both Spanish and English have been created, and these forms will differ depending on region of the country and other factors. Characteristic language configurations of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans are respectively found in the Southwest, Northeast and Southeast where these populations have been historically concentrated.

Language use varies in a number of ways among Hispanic Americans. Some ethnic group members emphasize the use of Spanish and others the use of English. Because of widespread bilingualism among Hispanic Americans, characteristic ways of speaking Spanish and English exist in each group. Also, creative ways of mixing Spanish and English called “Spanglish” or “code-switching” have been developed. That is, Spanish and English words and phrases are used alternately in the same sentence, or Spanish and English sentences will be used alternately in the same speech act, discourse or dialogue. Among Chicanos a “slang” form of speech known as caló is a language innovation combining Spanish and English with new language forms. Finally to add to the complexity, language varieties are used alternately according to context, social status of the speaker and attitudes which the speaker has about the two languages. A particularly relevant factor in language use and attitudes is the differential power and status of Spanish and English in the United States.

Long-standing Hispanic communities in the United States have maintained Spanish through oral traditions, literature, Spanish language publications, organizations, and a strong identification with the language. Spanish in proverbs and folktales is used in a culturally relevant manner that expresses ideas and values. Cultural ideas and values were therefore preserved in these encapsulated forms that were relatively easy to maintain and transmit. Proverbs and folktales are based on oral transmission and are less popular in recent times due undoubtedly to competition from the mass media in modern American life. Another oral tradition popular among Hispanics for expressing culture is song verse. Songs have had a very significant role in the cultures of Hispanic Americans and is a tradition which, although modernized, is still very viable. A growing number of professionals from these ethnic groups are emerging in the field of literature. In their prose, poetry and critiques, they transmit traditional cultural forms, interpret them in new ways, or provide commentary on contemporary life among Hispanics.

Two major contrasting forces have affected the potential for Hispanic Americans to maintain their native language—a strong cultural identity linked to Spanish and the assimilationist language policies of the United States. Spanish language publications, radio,
television, movies and Hispanic American organizations are vehicles for language maintenance. Ongoing immigration from Latin American countries has been cited as one of the major factors in the maintenance of Spanish in the United States. The primary considerations, however, are the tensions between the basic underlying culturally symbolic motivations for continuing activities that incorporate the new immigrants and continue to promote Spanish language maintenance, and the strong national climate and actions that promote an English-only society particularly in public education.

Language in Historical Context

Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans have, within the past two decades, been grouped by the political structure under the single rubric of “Hispanics.” A Census Bureau breakdown of Hispanic subpopulations in May, 1981, estimates that by origin they are 60 percent Mexican, 14 percent Puerto Rican, 6 percent Cuban, 8 percent Central or South American and 12 percent “other Spanish” (Sanchez 1983, 33). Eighty-five percent of the Mexican origin population is concentrated in the Southwest mainly in the states of California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado (Sanchez 1983, 14). Over 80 percent of Puerto Ricans live in the Northeast, with over 70 percent residing in the state of New York (Hauberg 1974, 116). About 60 percent of all Cuban Americans live in the state of Florida, about 20 percent live in New Jersey and New York, and about 10 percent live in the states of Illinois, Texas and California (Boswell and Curtis 1984, 108).

Spanish was brought to various parts of the American continent through the Spanish Conquest. The language developed in unique ways among the different colonies and regions of Latin America, much as British English evolved in two British colonies as American English and Australian English. Speakers of Spanish from different countries or regions may have some difficulty understanding each other, principally because of differences in vocabulary and pronunciation. Some archaic vocabulary and forms of colonial Spanish remain in the Americas particularly among rural populations isolated from mainstream national cultures. Standardization of formal language is maintained in Spanish speaking countries through affiliates of La Real Academia Española established in Spain in 1714 as the “language watchdog” for the Spanish language. La Real Academia is used as the ultimate reference for correctness in the teaching of Spanish in the public school systems of Latin American countries including Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Although stemming from the common source of the Spanish Conquest, Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican Spanish are distinctive because of their incorporation of words from indigenous and African slave groups. Mexican Spanish is characterized by vocabulary from nahual, the language of the Aztecs who were the native ruling civilization in central Mexico when the Spaniards arrived in the sixteenth century (Casanova 1932, Lope Blanch 1969). Regional dialects of Mexico include vocabulary from the language of the hundreds of other local indigenous cultural groups. For example, Yucatan Spanish includes Maya words such as pibil and chilango (Lope Blanch 1969, 50). Spanish in Cuba was influenced by the indigenous language known as taino or arahuaco (Arrom 1981, 10). In Cuba and Puerto Rico, because the native populations were so quickly decimated, the influence on colonial Spanish came mostly from the languages of the different cultures represented by the slave populations brought from Africa. An article by Castellanos and Castellanos (1987) discusses the linguistic roots of Cuban Blacks, and Nazario (1961) has written about the African influence on Puerto Rican Spanish.

In the United States, the history of Spanish is directly related to the history of how Spanish-speaking populations and therefore the Spanish language came to be in this country. The initial colonization of the three groups by the United States has taken different forms and has had varying periods of duration. The ensuing major waves of migration to the United States have come at different times with Mexicans coming at the onset of industrialization in the late nineteenth century, Puerto Ricans in the early twentieth century, and the Cubans in the late twentieth century. Mexican and Puerto Rican immigration has responded to the need for labor in the United States, whereas Cuban immigrants are political refugees and have a strong, middle class component.

Spanish-speaking populations have been in the Southwest since the sixteenth century when colonizers of Spanish and Indian descent arrived from central Mexico and settled in northern New Mexico. Later Spanish colonization efforts extended into California, Texas and southeastern Arizona. Northern New Mexico has been the area which has maintained the most concentrated and continuous settlement of Spanish speakers. Spanish continued to be the principal language of the first generation of Mexicans incorporated into the United States after the war with Mexico ended in 1848. Through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo signed that year, the United States gained sovereignty over more than half of Mexico’s territory which now encompasses the present states of California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and portions of Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Kansas, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

The first large wave of Mexican immigrants at the turn of the century greatly increased the United States population of monolingual Spanish speakers. Until the
1940s, Spanish continued to be the dominant language of their descendants. A decreased use of Spanish and an increased use of English resulted from the public education of Mexican American children; another factor was the increased incorporation of Mexican Americans, particularly of war veterans, into the mainstream American system of educational and economic benefits during the post-World War II prosperity.

Puerto Rico was under Spanish rule from 1493 to 1898, when as the result of the war with Spain, the United States assumed control of Puerto Rico as a colony. The United States made English the official school language of Puerto Rico and integrated into Puerto Rican school life the American flag, national anthem, heroes, holidays and patriotic exercises (Rodríguez-Fraticelli 1986, 4). Thereafter, the language of instruction in Puerto Rico fluctuated from English to Spanish, and back again for almost fifty years. Since 1946, Spanish has been the language of instruction and English has been taught as a second language (Attinasi et al. 1988, 255).

The history of Puerto Ricans in the United States begins over a hundred years ago with traders concentrating in New York. Later in the nineteenth century, they were followed by political exiles and anti-Spanish revolutionists. The declaration of Puerto Ricans as citizens of the United States through the congressional Organic Act of 1917 rapidly increased migration which fluctuated according to the demand for labor in the United States. By 1930, Puerto Ricans were residing in every state and in the territories of Hawaii and Alaska. The first large flow of migrants to the mainland from Puerto Rico came after World War II, when an acute demand for labor existed and increased greatly during the 1950s with the advent of relatively accessible public air transportation. Since the early 1960s, mainland-island migration has fluctuated according to ease in travel (Hoffman 1971, 13) and to fluctuating labor demands (Senior 1965).

Cuba, like Puerto Rico was under Spanish rule from 1493 to 1898, when after the war with Spain the United States took over Cuba as a protectorate from 1898 until 1902 (Rodríguez-Fraticelli 1986, 4). Between 1868-1878, many in the first large influx of Cubans into the United States were escaping Spanish persecution (Ronning 1990, 19), and settled in Key West, Florida, where tobacco processing was the major industry. However, the most significant Cuban immigration to this country occurred during 1959-1980, and has been concentrated in Miami, Florida. This recent migration occurred in three “waves”:

1. First Wave: (1959-1962) Started when Fidel Castro took over Cuba and ended with the “Cuban missile crisis,” after which the Cuban government prohibited exits from the country.
2. Second Wave: (1965-1973) An airbridge between Cuba and the United States was negotiated between the two governments.
3. Third Wave: (April - September, 1980) A series of political events precipitated a large exodus of Cubans to the United States, including persons selected by the Cuban government from the “marginalized” sectors of society. (Llanes 1982, 8-9)

It should remain clear that Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans comprise three distinctive cultures with particular historical antecedents that have defined their positions within American society and affected their attitudes about adaptation of their language and culture to American society. Members of any of these Hispanic groups view members of the other groups as “foreign,” with distinctions being greater between Mexican Americans and the other two groups with similar Caribbean “island cultures.” The Caribbean Spanish of Puerto Ricans and Cubans also shows commonalities, although distinctions also exist particularly in pronunciation and vocabulary.

In spite of differences, the Spanish language along with other legacies of the Spanish conquest of the Americas, serves a basic link between the three ethnic groups. They also share the common experience of a decreasing use of Spanish and an increasing use of English from one generation to the next and the mixed use of both Spanish and English. Continued immigration from Latin America will continue to replenish the use of Spanish in the United States.

Language Use and Variation

The discussion that follows is meant to give a sense of the complexity of language use among Hispanic Americans. Ordinarily, this section would be entitled “Bilingualism” based on the assumption that Hispanic communities in the United States are bilingual, that is, that two standard languages, English and Spanish, are used. However, other ways of using the two languages have developed in these communities, including non-standard varieties of Spanish and English used in ways that are characteristic as ethnic ways of speaking.

Since the Cuban American population consists predominantly of first-generation immigrants, they may tend to use standard forms of both languages. The population has had less time than Chicanos and Puerto Ricans to develop a characteristic way of speaking as
an American ethnic group. They may, nonetheless, include in their speaking repertoire a nonstandard form of Cuban Spanish from the island (Alzola 1961), and younger Cuban Americans are just beginning to develop a distinctive “ethnic speech” (Boswell and Curtis 1984, 122).

The major “pockets” of Spanish-English bilingual communities occur among Mexican Americans in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast and Cubans in Florida. Among Mexican Americans, there is also linguistic variation within the Southwest from state to state, usually in the vocabularies of both Spanish and English. Ethnic or regional Spanish dialects vary according to the national origin of the community (e.g. Puerto Rican Spanish) and to the way in which it has developed within the regional dialects of English. The characteristic ways of speaking English are known for example as “Chicano English” or “Puerto Rican English” (González 1984; Ornstein, 1984; Wald 1984; Penfield and Ornstein 1985; Attinasi et al. 1988).

Assuming the existence of only the two standard forms of Spanish and English, proficiency and competence in both languages varies greatly within any given region, community or family. Determination of language proficiency is a very debated and complex process and in a purely linguistic sense involves not only assessment of spoken language, but also of writing, listening and reading comprehension. Sociolinguists further argue that a true evaluation of language proficiency assesses a person’s ability to use language in different contexts.

Hispanics in the United States may be proficient and monolingual in either Spanish or English, or they may be bilingual with varying proficiencies in the two languages. Figure 1 gives a general overview of Spanish-English speaking language proficiencies and demonstrates, along with Figure 2, the degree of complexity of dual language use in Hispanic communities. Proficiency in speaking does not correspond to proficiency in comprehension of a language. That is, persons often understand a language better than they speak it. Also speaking and comprehending a language may not correspond to abilities in reading and writing. By the same token, persons may have better reading abilities in a language than writing abilities.

Figure 2 is a theoretical model of variation in the possible combinations of standard Spanish and English in terms of speaking, comprehension and “accent.” In examining these figures, it should be recalled that they do not include proficiencies in non-standard Spanish or non-standard English, nor are the abilities for using languages in different contexts included.

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**FIGURE 1**

*Bilingual Language Proficiency Continuum*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish Proficient</th>
<th>Spanish Lmt</th>
<th>Spanish/English Proficient</th>
<th>English Proficient</th>
<th>English Lmt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*(Prof= Proficient, Lmt = Limited)*

**FIGURE 2**

*A Theoretical Model of Language Dominance and Comprehension in Spanish and English among Hispanics in the U.S.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Accent”</th>
<th>Languages Spoken</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Spanish Accent</td>
<td>Only English</td>
<td>No Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Spanish Accent</td>
<td>Only English</td>
<td>Some Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Accent in English</td>
<td>Spanish and English</td>
<td>Spanish and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Accent in Spanish</td>
<td>English and Spanish</td>
<td>Spanish and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No English or Spanish accent in either</td>
<td>English and Spanish</td>
<td>Spanish and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No English Accent</td>
<td>Only Spanish</td>
<td>Some English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No English Accent</td>
<td>Only Spanish</td>
<td>No English</td>
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The term “accent” as commonly used encompasses all or some linguistic phenomena which include pronunciation of sounds, stress, pitch and intonation. “Accent” is particularly significant for Hispanics because of the potential for misjudgments about their English proficiency which may affect their standing in school or at work. That is, it is often assumed that a person with a foreign “accent” does not know the language well and that a “good accent” is indicative of mastery of a language. However, having an “accent” has no relation to knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar of a language.

The carryover of Spanish intonation to English is very common among all Hispanics and gives the impression of an “accent.” For example, the particular pattern of falling intonation and lengthening characteristic of Spanish speech in the Americas was found to be used to emphasize, dramatize or highlight in Chicano English. This falling intonation pattern and the manner in which emphasis is communicated using rising intonation is essentially the opposite in English. As a result, the monolingual English listener can misinterpret the Chicano speaker’s message taking it to mean that the speaker is hesitant, uncertain, apologetic, or unfinished (Zuniga-Hill 1988). A comparison of English and Spanish intonation and lengthening is presented in schematic form on the following page.
Another common cross-cultural misinterpretation arises as the result of pitch carrying over from Spanish to English. The Spanish pattern includes a rapid, frequent rise and fall of pitch which becomes staccato-like in English and is interpreted by the English speaking listener as an excitable and highly emotional state (Zuniga-Hill 1988). However, that which distances ethnic Spanish speakers from mainstream English speakers may be the same factor that brings ethnic group members together. For example, Pedraza (1987, 53-54) has postulated that were Spanish to disappear from the Puerto Rican community, the remnants of Puerto Rican Spanish pronunciation and intonation in their English “may be all important at the symbolic level.”

The pronunciation of Spanish characteristic of Puerto Ricans and Cubans is quite distinctive from Spanish pronunciation among Mexican Americans. Some characteristics of Puerto Rican and Cuban Spanish pronunciation include:

1. The substitution of an [l] where an [r] is used at the end of a word or syllable in standard Spanish (e.g. Puelto Rico);
2. The substitution of an [h], aspiration, for an [s] (Terrell 1982:49) (e.g. ehtoh papeleh instead of estos papeles) or the deletion of the [s] (Poplack 1978a, 1978b) (e.g. cuatro flore instead of cuatro flores).
3. The substitution of [ng] for [n] or deletion of [n] at the end of a syllable or word (e.g. pang for pan, and come for komen) (Terrell 1982, 49).

Although Cuban Spanish pronunciation resembles that of Puerto Ricans, members of the respective groups can differentiate each other’s speech on the basis of intonation (Totti 1991). In a narrative about being in New York, one Puerto Rican writer says

Sometimes when meeting up with a Latino on the street or at some entertainment spot, I ask myself: Puerto Rican? Guatemalan? Cuban? Venezuelan? We all look alike physically. But all it takes is a few words to find out what country they’re from. Our pronunciation is unmistakable. (trans. from Huyke 1984:31)

When we conceive of language use beyond the two “pure” languages, that is, when non-standard forms of Spanish and English are considered, the situation becomes more complex. The generic labels “Chicano English” (Mexican American) and “Puerto Rican English” refer to a variety of English-language forms used among these two groups (González 1984). English spoken within these groups has certain general characteristics (see Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia 1985), however, distinct variations have also been identified. For example, in East Los Angeles, Chicano, monolingual English speakers have a form of speech distinctive from standard English, but it is also different from the English of bilingual Mexican Americans who learned Spanish first and English later (Wald 1984).

More research has been done on the types of Spanish than on the types of English spoken among Hispanics. “Chicano Spanish” has received the most attention, although this has only occurred since the 1970s (Trujillo 1973). Chicano Spanish has been generally classified into two dialects known as “New Mexican Spanish” and “General Southwest Spanish” (Ornstein 1981). Another analysis categorizes Spanish spoken among Chicanos as Standard, Urban Popular and Rural Popular Spanish (Sanchez 1983, 101). Specific studies of Southwest Spanish subdialects have also been done of the following regions and cities: Arizona (Post 1975), Los Angeles, (Phillips 1982), San Jose (Beltramo and de Porcel 1975), Texas (Lance 1975; Sobin 1982), San Antonio (Sawyer 1975).

The overall congruence of different dialects and subdialects of Chicano Spanish are not yet clear, nor is their relation to the dialects of Spanish in northern Mexico. Some relationship is apparent as indicated in a statement that identified “New Mexican Spanish” (including southern Colorado) as a “subdialect . . . or an extension of the northern dialect of Mexican Spanish” (Ornstein 1972, 71). Sánchez (1982, 9-46) found that elements characteristic of Chicano Spanish are also found in other parts of the Spanish speaking world. Arizona and New Mexico Spanish have in common archaic forms brought to this region in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Post 1934 cited in Barker 1972, 25). Similar archaic vocabulary and grammatical forms are also used in contiguous northern Mexican areas (Leon-Portilla 1972, 112) and in the jibaro Spanish dialect of Puerto Rico (Llorens 1981, 207).

Dual language use known as “code-switching” is a topic which has absorbed much language research among Hispanics, particularly on Mexican Americans. Early interpretations of “code-switching” implied the general, alternate use of two languages in this case, Spanish and English. Views of “code-switching” that reflected unfavorably on Hispanics particularly on children in the
public school system, used such terms as “interference,” “borrowing,” “assimilation” and “language loss.” These views led to the assumption among mainstream educators that “code-switching” meant a deficiency in Spanish and/or English and that persons who spoke in this manner were “alingual” or “semilingual.” The following are examples of “code-switching:”

1. Spanish to English: El está afuera, but I don’t know what he’s doing. (He is outside, but I don’t know what he’s doing.)
2. English to Spanish: The new car es del hombre que vive next door. (The new car belongs to the man who lives next door.)

Findings in studies of Puerto Rican “code-switching” (Poplack 1982; Urcioli 1985) support the notion that “code-switching is itself a discrete mode of speaking, possibly emanating from a single code-switching grammar composed of the overlapping sectors of the grammars of [the two languages]” (Poplack 1982, 260). An indication that some form of “code-switching” is perceived as a unified language form rather than the use of two separate languages is the increasingly used term “Spanglish” among Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and Cubans to indicate a language variety that incorporates Spanish and English (Ornstein-Galicia 1981). The results of a study also “provide strong evidence that code-switching is a verbal skill requiring a large degree of linguistic competence in more than one language, rather than a defect arising from insufficient knowledge of one or the other” (Poplack 1982, 260). The essence of these findings are applicable to code-switching among Mexican Americans. Most importantly, the results refute the characterization of bilingual code-switching Hispanics as “alingual” or “semilingual.”

It has been found that the assignment of the articles el (‘the’ masculine form) and la (‘the’ feminine form) to words of English origin is consistent among Puerto Rican speakers (Attinasi et al. 1988, 347). That means that English words are subject to grammar rules in Spanish about how to assign gender to nouns. For example, if the loan word sweater is transformed into sueter (both e’s pronounced), it becomes el sueter. However, if the word is transformed into suera, the article assigned makes it la suera because the word ends in [a]. The same transformations for sweater are used among Mexican Americans, although el sueter is more likely to be used by those with a recent immigration background and la suera by those with a longer family history in the United States.

A study of Puerto Rican language use exemplifies the effect of Spanish on English words (Attinasi et al. 1988, 368-69). Their results, which were presented in a technical manner, can be reinterpreted as indicating that there are different ways of incorporating loan words that are more or less “Puerto Rican.” For example, if the word ice cream is used with either the English pronunciation or as [ays kreem] it is little affected by Puerto Rican Spanish pronunciation. If the word is pronounced [aih kreem], then it is partially “Puerto Ricanized,” but if it is pronounced [aih kreem], then it is practically a Puerto Rican Spanish word, no longer an English word. A native English speaker would have difficulty understanding ice cream pronounced this way.

The available data on Cuban “Spanglish” is minimal to say the least. Examples which have been given of Cuban “Spanglish” among speakers of recent generations (Curtis and Boswell 1984, 122) are:

Tenga un nice day. Have a nice day.
Vamos de shopping. We are going (for) shopping.

With only these two examples a contrast with Chicano “Spanglish” can be seen. For example, the formal address form (tenga) is not usual among Chicano speakers who would tend to code-switch (second generation and beyond). The phrase “Vamos de shopping” would more probably be “Vamos shopping” among Chicanos. The use of the preposition de indicates a more recent immigration background than that of most Chicanos, because it is influenced by the Spanish phrase vamos de compras (literally ‘We are going for purchases’), developed in recent times with the emergence of the modern concept of going shopping. Since the idea of “going shopping” for most of the Chicano population occurred in the context of American society, the “Spanglish” phrase conforms more to English grammatical form without the preposition.

In addition to nonstandard varieties of Spanish, English and “Spanglish,” another more specialized language variety referred to variously as pachuco, caló, or argot is a male form of speech or “slang” among Chicanos. Chicano caló is often traced to Gypsy Spanish origins and its presence in the United States was first established in the 1920s and 1930s on the border in El Paso, Texas. Caló is more inherently based on the grammar of informal Mexican Spanish, overlaps with Southwest Spanish and creates new forms based on Spanish and English in ways that are unintelligible to the majority of Chicanos. On the other hand, key terms and phrases exist in caló that are commonly known
among Chicanos who do not speak the “language.” Within the past decade, the influence of Black English has been found in modern caló in certain urban settings (Cummings 1991b).

This language has been commonly associated with marginal criminal elements of the Chicano community and with youth gangs. The criminological view of these young male informal neighborhood groupings known as pachuchos, chuchos (1940s - 1970s) and as cholos (1970s - present) has obscured the greater social and cultural significance of this subculture and its language. Although they are the creators and habitual users of caló, other males and females know and use some caló expressions to varying degrees.

Pachuco as a lifestyle and language is essentially a counterculture which defies the status quo as perpetuated by both Mexican and American cultures. This image elicits a strong reaction, either positive or negative, from other Mexican Americans. The pachuco is often admired as a symbol of resistance to domination of the larger Mexican American community by the cultural rules and power of the middle classes in both American and Mexican society. Those committed to the status quo are more likely to revile pachucos/cholos and their language.

The movie Zoot Suit, out in the popular market in 1980 represents this view of the pachuco in the 1940s. The movie is a dramatization of true events in 1942 in the Los Angeles area, centering around Mexican American young men who wore Zoot Suits, and depicting the bias in the justice system against them. Pachuco caló pervades the movie, and viewers who are not familiar with this dialect will miss some of the subtleties. The reader can refer to an article by Martin (1984) for an analysis of the significance of language use in this movie, and its relationship to linguistic reality.

Selected examples from the movie of more common usages of caló provide a sense of this way of speaking among Chicanos. For example, in a kitchen scene at the home of Hank Reyna, the protagonist, his sister quickly exits saying, “Hay los watcho” [See you all later]. Hank’s father who has earlier delivered a lecture on speaking proper Spanish to his sons, responds in a challenging manner, “What is this, ‘hay los watcho’?”

The word watcho is based on the English verb ‘to watch’ (i.e., to see), and is conjugated according to Spanish grammar rules, for example the present tense is conjugated as follows:

- ‘yo watcho’ (first person singular)
- ‘tu watchas’ (second person singular)
- ‘ella watcha’ (third person feminine singular)
- ‘nosotros watchamos’ (first person plural)
- ‘ustedes watchan’ (second person plural)
- ‘ellos watchan’ (third person masculine plural)

In another scene, Mexican American youths are in a jail cell as the public defender arrives to talk to them. One youth says, “Pónganse trucha, huele a chota” [All of you be careful/stay alert/be on your toes/watch it, he smells like a cop]. In standard Spanish, ponganse is acceptable, but the next acceptable word would be alerta, which only covers part of the meaning of the pachuco use of the Spanish word trucha, trout, which implies a certain slyness associated with suspicion. In the following sentence, again, chota is a pachuco word for ‘police,’ and huele is “correct” standard Spanish but would not be used in this context. A standard Spanish version would be: Parece policia (‘He appears to be a policeman’).

Another commonly used pachuco word is ese, which is usually placed at the end of a sentence. In standard Spanish, the term is a masculine demonstrative pronoun, but in pachuco the term is used to emphasize the person that is being addressed and so becomes ‘you,’ or perhaps the equivalent of the slang term ‘guy.’ For example in the movie Zoot Suit, the “Spirit of the Pachuco” says to Hank Reyna, “Everybody’s looking at you, ese.”

These examples demonstrate the depth and extent of meaning that is contained in ostensibly simple pachuco terms. Additional samples of caló from four different locations in the Southwest and Mexico are presented in a work by Sanchez (1983, 128-34). Pachucos, now called cholos, place a high value on verbal dexterity and skill in the manipulation of this dialect. The extent and significance of this use of language in terms of social organization and identity was presented in some early anthropological publications on Arizona Spanish dialects (Barker 1950, 1972). The pachuco language on both sides of the United States-Mexico border from California to El Paso, Texas, has been extensively researched by another anthropologist who has produced a preliminary publication on the subject (Cummings 1991c).

The language spoken by pachucos/cholos is a continuously developing speech tradition which some have dated to the late 1920s in the United States (Cummings 1991b). Style and some vocabulary has remained constant, and the principal change has been in the incorporation of Afro-American vernacular speech.

Although a clearly defined Puerto Rican dialect for young males has not been identified, they do seem to have a characteristic way of speaking (Pedraza 1987) and the influence of Black vernacular speech on their English has been well documented (Labov 1968, Wolfram 1974, Poplack 1977, Pedraza 1987). One Puerto Rican scholar (Maldonado 1969, 217) has expressed a concern that the increasing incursion
of American language and culture into Puerto Rico will result in an identity of cultural ambiguity like that of the pachuco among Mexican Americans.

Among current day Puerto Rican youth, terms are used to distinguish between certain sub-groups with the major defining criterion being music preference. However, the derivation of the music and the composition of the subgroups are also indicative of a more or less traditionalist cultural orientation. The roqueiros have a strong preference for rock music in English. They also tend to be fair-skinned and middle-class and dress in trendy fashionable clothes. Cocolos previously known as salseros prefer Latin American music, particularly salsa music native to the Caribbean and tend to be from the working class. The term cocolos, previously used to refer to Blacks from the British and French Caribbean, has now taken on a different meaning. This transformation of meaning is analogous to the progression in the use of the term cholo, which during Spanish colonial times was translated from the Aztec word xolo to mean ‘servant, page, (servant boy), slave’ (Bierhorst 1985, 397).

Cuban American youth have been characterized as having developed an “internal sense of subculture...identity and distinctiveness” which is related to their use of “Spanglish” (Boswell and Curtis 1984, 122). Interestingly, just as was done with Puerto Ricans, the example of the Chicano pachucos has been used in pessimistic prognostications about the future of Cuban American youth. One educated, Cuban American observer has said (Llanes 1982, 133-34):

There is a Cuban subculture, americocubana [American-Cuban], with fashions vaguely like those of Cuba and the United States...the worst from both...Having access only to the lower American classes, the subculture imitates these classes and is immediately rejected by both Americans and Cubans...These marginal people are present in other cultures. For the Mexican
Americans, they are the “Pachucos” of California.

The terms coco and cholo, used to designate the “underclass” of colonial times, still carry with them in modern times the implication of marginality to the established social order. The lifestyle and language of Hispanic American youth cultures are generally associated with marginality to both Hispanic and American cultures. The Chicano phenomenon of the pachuco/cholo has become a long-standing tradition spanning three or four generations, and the lifestyle and language have become in themselves a symbol, both positive and negative, in Chicano culture.

The great variety of ways of speaking using standard Spanish and English, non-standard Spanish and English and innovative forms such as pachuco are encompassed within complex linguistic lives and cultures of Hispanics in the United States. Negative biases exist both among mainstream, monolingual English speakers and among some bilingual Spanish speakers against these dynamic and creative sociolinguistic processes, often because they are associated with other social and cultural implications about lifestyle.

In Latin America a great value has traditionally been placed on formality in speech which is associated with social standing, and in modern times with socio-economic advancement and education. Mexicans, particularly in the north, are popularly known among Latin Americans as formal speakers of Spanish. Among Hispanics, a negative attitude towards “code-switching” or “Spanglish” particularly prevails among recent immigrants, earlier generations, and the educated middle-class. The Puerto Rican middle-class tends to be more informal about speech than members of the Cuban middle class (Totti 1991).

The placement of value on language formality among some Hispanics is extended to an insistence on language propriety and assumes that languages are “pure” and should remain unchanged and untouched by other languages. However, attitudes vary as seen in a study which elicited the views and judgments of Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics on Puerto Rican Spanish and English, and on “correct” or “good” language (Attinasi et al. 1988, 187-91; 210-13; 231-34). In bilingual education circles, debates among Hispanics abound on keeping Spanish and English as separate and “pure” versus mixing the two languages in teaching. Attitudes about the purity of Spanish have also intruded in cross-national relations between native-born and American-born members of the same culture, as will be seen in a later discussion on ethnic terminology.

**Speaker Background, Context, Meaning and Language Use**

The relative use of Spanish and/or English depends on a number of social and economic factors. Use of these two languages depends on whether the speakers are middle class or working class; on whether they are first (foreign born), second (native born of foreign born parents), or third generation (native born of native born parents) (Penfield and Ornstein-Galicia 1985, 25-29); and on the context (Sánchez 1983, 62-63). For example, one analysis (Sánchez 1983, 62-63) indicates that the residence and work of any generation of middle class Chicanos are primarily English dominant; while all working class Chicanos will be more likely to live in a barrio (Hispanic urban neighborhood) and work in areas with first-generation Mexican Americans and therefore be more in touch with the Spanish language.

An important factor in the differential use of Spanish and English is the range of contexts in which the languages can be developed. English can be developed in a formal context through the public school system in reading and writing in addition to speaking and listening. English is of course present in informal contexts everywhere else including the mass media. Spanish has largely been confined to the spoken form in informal contexts, with the exception of Spanish instruction in public schools through Spanish-English bilingual education programs mostly in the 1970s and 1980s.

A recent anthropological study (Urcioli 1985) stresses the analysis of alternate language use in terms of its meaning in social interaction in addition to analyzing the purely linguistic elements. The researcher concluded that, rather than Puerto Rican Spanish and English being used alternately, these two form a language continuum from which the speakers make “culturally mediated” choices (Urcioli 1985, 383).

Language choice and language usage can vary in a bilingual, Spanish-English community according to age, family relations, context and topic. An ethnographic study of language use in a New York Puerto Rican community (Pedraza 1987) has revealed some of this variation. In adult public settings, mixed age groups use mostly Spanish if recent arrivals from Puerto Rico are present. Within the extended family, the older members spoke mostly Spanish among themselves and with the younger members. Younger members used mostly Spanish with the older members, but among themselves in separate contexts would use mostly English with minimum Spanish and “code-switching.” Study results are described as follows (Pedraza 1987, 37-38):
All adolescents would attempt to answer an adult in Spanish, no matter how difficult it might be for them. With other young people the pattern differed. They would often answer each other in English even if addressed in Spanish, assuming the interlocutor was part of the group, or at least familiar enough so that this would not be taken as an insult. . . . Spanish was also used in the verbal jousting between male members of this local network.

The issue of “verbal jousting” among Chicanos is addressed by Limón (1977) and Reyna (1980) in studies of language usage in joking contexts.

Language usage can differ according to gender. Pachuco caló is a prime example of a “male language” which some women speak or understand, but which the majority of Mexican American women would avoid because male-centered language usage can be detrimental to women’s place of respect in society. Cummings (1991a) has discussed how joking in all-male Chicano groups is often based on phraseology and meaning that demeans by analogy those traits associated with females. Trujillo has examined male-centered, Mexican Spanish usage particularly in blasphemy where, for example, the word madre (‘mother’) is used in various forms in contrast to the phrase qué padre denoting something is superior. Trujillo (1978, 40) also points out that Spanish uses the male article to include both sexes. For example, Chicanos is taken to mean both men and women whereas a counteractive usage would be to use both the masculine and feminine forms Chicanos y Chicanas.

A study of the contextualized use of Spanish and English among Miami Cubans (Castellanos 1990, 55) shows that bilingual speakers will opt for English in public transactions (with bank clerks or civil servants), but will switch to Spanish if the addressee is perceived as Hispanic based on personal appearance, Spanish surname, or Spanish accent.

In sum, the complexity of language use among Hispanics is compounded when the social context and background of the speakers is taken into consideration. That is, the question then becomes “What is said to whom, where and when?” The common assumption is generally that English is the language of the public domain (school, work, etc.) and that Spanish is the language of the private domain (home, neighborhood). However, as has been demonstrated earlier, a Hispanic American has an incredible range of possible language choices. For example, Chicanos may have a choice between: Standard English, Standard Spanish, Ethnic English dialect, Ethnic Spanish dialect, “Spanglish,” regional Spanish subdialects and caló. Language use is also complicated by the attitude that the English language, viewed as symbolizing more power and status, is dominant in relation to Spanish.

Language Maintenance

Projections for language maintenance among Hispanics have been optimistic, particularly when compared to other American ethnic groups which are quickly losing native speakers (Fishman 1966). “Spanish is clearly the most prominent ethnic language spoken in the U. S. today . . . in July, 1975, 13 percent of the U. S. population lived in households in which languages other than English were spoken, and Spanish heads the list of languages spoken in those homes” (Hudson-Edwards and Bills 1982, 135). This same source indicates that eight million, two hundred thousand Spanish speakers represent four and a half times the number of speakers of Italian, the third most widely claimed language other than English.

In addition, Spanish appears to be one of the most actively maintained ethnic languages. “Among the national Spanish heritage population, 81 percent claim Spanish as their mother tongue, almost half live in households where Spanish is the usual language, and only a slightly smaller percentage, 44 percent, claim to speak Spanish as their usual language” (Hudson-Edwards and Bills 1982, 135). In the five states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas, Spanish is the native language for 76 percent of the Hispanic population (Hudson-Edwards and Bills 1982, 135).

The dominance of English over Spanish in the United States is nonetheless overwhelming. In the school system where children spend most of their time, English for Hispanics, as for all children, has been associated with their national identity as Americans. Their formal learning is all in English for twelve years if they graduate from high school. Spanish is mostly learned informally within the Hispanic community environment particularly in the home, and is strongly associated with a Hispanic (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican) cultural identity.

Among first-generation Hispanic Americans, schooling in English within the American public school system benefited mostly the elite, many of whom developed professional careers while the majority of the working class received a few years of education or none at all. However, from the second generation onward formal schooling in English has been a major part of the socialization process with Spanish being confined to informal domains in the community, particularly within the home. The situation for Cuban Americans is similar with two significant exceptions. That is, the first genera-
tion of American-born Cubans immediately received complete schooling in English. Also, a certain segment of the Cuban population had the benefit of Spanish-English bilingual instruction shortly after migration.

It has been stated that Cuban Americans “may have been the first [American immigrant group] to have consolidated and resisted anglicization long enough to compete linguistically with the surrounding majority society” (Resnick 1988, 97). This accomplishment has been attributed to their “possession of capital and the ability to participate in and manipulate the political and legal institutions” (Resnick 1988, 97). Also significant was the positive reception of the first two waves of immigrants by the United States, including the direct provision of resources through the Cuban Refugee Act. Because they did not expect to remain in the United States, they were not strongly motivated to learn English, but were greatly concerned that their children retain Spanish for their return to Cuba (Kelman 1971). By organizing formal and informal networks of employment, mutual aid, social welfare, legal services and media communication, they were able to demand that governmental and social services be provided to them in Spanish (Resnick 1988, 95-96).

The most significant action taken in relation to the needs of the Cubans in Florida was the establishment of Spanish-English bilingual instruction in public schools (Mackey and Beebe 1977). In 1963, before the proliferation of federally funded bilingual education programs in the 1970s throughout the country, Coral Way Elementary school in Dade County, Florida provided the first bilingual program for both native Spanish-speaking (Cuban) and native English-speaking students (Mackey and Beebe, 1977, 67). By 1969 there were several indications that the program had been successful, including determinations by teachers that students at the upper grade levels were learning effectively in both Spanish and English (Mackey and Beebe, 1977, 80-81).

Strong Cuban ties to Spanish and their relative success in maintaining it in a particular region has brought to the forefront, in a very explicit manner, the obstacles in American society to the maintenance of Spanish for members of the other ethnic groups. Spanish-language maintenance in the public sphere has caused conflict with monolingual English speakers. In Dade County, Florida, with a 40 percent Hispanic population, monolingual English speakers have taken issue with the use of Spanish in the public sphere. For example, because many job advertisements require proficiency in both Spanish and English, allegations of language discrimination against non-Spanish speakers are frequent (Resnick 1988, 91). However, a study of 1983 classified employment advertisements showed that the problem was “less widespread than residents believe,” as can be seen in Table 1 below (from Dugger 1984 in Resnick 1988, 92):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Job</th>
<th>Percentage of Ads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Office Jobs</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Professional</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels/Apartments</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management (Stores/Admin.)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Industrial</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hispanics have also encountered discrimination in the workplace where employers have sometimes banned the speaking of Spanish (Resnick 1988, 92). The tension between Hispanics and non-Hispanics culminated in the reversal of Dade County as a bilingual county with the adoption of a controversial referendum in 1980 establishing English as the only county language (Resnick 1988, 94).

The impression obtained from Resnick (1988) is that monolingual English speakers in Dade County were feeling overwhelmed and engulfed by Spanish. However, this study and others also indicate that, although the language is stronger in that niche of the country, it is by no means achieving domination over English, either within or outside the ethnic community; the reaction of the non-Spanish speakers is rooted more in ethnocentric attitudes than in any real threat.

The national status of English as the power/status language and as a means for socio-economic advancement and the association of English with American national identity contrast with Spanish as the language of family heritage and personal identity, but with low status in American society. Until the 1960s and 1970s, Spanish (and other languages) were depreciated publicly, especially in the school system where children were punished for speaking Spanish. Also, in school Hispanic children learn the cultural significance of English as symbolic of an Anglo American cultural identity. A sense of their Hispanic cultural background and that of their parents, grandparents and everyone they know is only available at home and in their immediate community. Since this is the only place they can learn Spanish, the Spanish learned is usually informal, conversational and restricted to daily topics. Reactions to these contrasts in the status of Spanish and English...
vary among individual Hispanics, sometimes even within the same family. These reactions can affect the degree to which persons learn or use one language or the other (Cummins 1986). Some react by rejecting Spanish and using only English in their speech and in rearing their children. English may be preferred to the exclusion of Spanish because English is associated with socio-economic advancement and Spanish is perceived as a detriment to this advancement. For others, the apparent depreciation of their language and culture may decrease motivation for learning English (Lambert 1972). The very association of English with cultural dominance and of Spanish as an undervalued language may elicit a nativistic response, with a persistent attachment to Spanish and a disdain for English. Since formal education is not available to them in Spanish, formal or “standard” control of both languages may not be strong. These may be the persons who are more likely to develop creative ways of speaking (e.g. code-switching, Spanglish, caló). Some do not experience either Spanish or English as antithetical to socio-economic goals or to cultural identity. Perhaps these are persons secure in their cultural identities or knowledge of Spanish. Recent immigrants in particular, are more likely to learn English solely as a practical skill and without the implications of cultural dominance (Ogbu 1978). These persons may tend to have strength in some form of both languages (e.g. standard English and Spanish, standard English and Southwest Spanish, Chicano English and Chicano Spanish).

The notion of “balanced bilingualism” places Spanish and English as equal in all domains. This attitude which is current among Cubans whose strong sense of Spanish as “a proper language of high domains, as it was in Cuba” (Resnick 1988, 100), ameliorates the language-identity conflict and places the two languages in “balance.” Many Southwest Mexican American communities where the Anglo population is proportionately smaller and there is a recent, known and valued heritage of Spanish usage also view Spanish as equal to English. In the past, Spanish has been retained longer and to a greater extent among Mexican Americans in isolated rural areas where contact with English speakers has been limited (Sánchez 1983, 60). More recently, balanced bilingualism is more likely to be maintained in communities along the United States-Mexico border where both languages function in public domains (Sánchez 1983, 60).

The impact of English in terms of change and influence was found by Fishman (1987, 19) to be greater on Puerto Rican Spanish both on the mainland and in Puerto Rico, and to have least influence on Cuban Spanish. English influence has been mainly in loan words and in literal translations of terms and phrases which in Spanish do not have the same meaning. For example, the phrase ‘Take it easy’ is translated as the Anglicism Tómalo fácil rather than the standard phrase Tómalo con calma.

The influence of English among mainland Puerto Ricans does not imply that they fit the traditional immigrant model of native language loss by the third generation as has been generally suggested (Fishman et al. 1971). More recently, a study in a New York City Puerto Rican barrio [neighborhood] demonstrated that “Spanish has been maintained and English extended into new domains of use so that both languages are current in virtually all contexts” (Attinasi et al. 1988, 429). Factors reported in this study as favoring Spanish maintenance have included the “revolving door” migration pattern between the Island and the mainland, a tendency toward in-group marriage, availability of bilingual jobs in the community, dense and widespread family networks, and high unemployment rates which keep many Puerto Ricans out of English speaking work places (Attinasi et al. 1988, 429). The same study suggests that Spanish-maintenance factors among children include: “visits to Puerto Rico, Spanish-speaking caretakers, enrollment in bilingual programs, identification with Puerto Ricanness and the Spanish language and religion” (Attinasi et al. 1988, 429).

A study of language use among Cubans in Miami has found that Spanish is the preferred language of address for grandparents; that exclusive use of English occurs mainly among second-generation spouses and siblings. The general findings were that a “progressive displacement towards English” is occurring mainly in the family, but is counteracted by the widespread public use of Spanish (Castellanos 1990, 58).

Hispanics in the United States have had access to informal Spanish through the mass media to a minor extent in different forms at different periods. At the turn of the century, several Spanish language newspapers circulated in the Southwest, and in other parts of the country with high concentrations of Spanish speakers such as New York and Key West, Florida. Presently, in the Southwest, one Spanish language newspaper called El Hispano is published in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For New York, over one hundred periodicals in Spanish have been identified (Teschner, Bills and Craddock 1975, 265), with the best known being El Diario (Totti 1991). From the 1920s to the 1970s, the main source of Spanish language in the media was through the radio (Gutierrez and Schement 1979). During the 1940s and 1950s, American theaters regularly showed Spanish language movies in regions of high Hispanic concentration. Through these movies, Hispanics in the United States were able not only to keep up with language usage, but also had the visual
images to see how Spanish was being used in “the old country.”

It is important to keep this aspect of language experience in mind, particularly in view of the increasing emergence since the 1970s of Spanish language television as a significant presence in the United States. Latin Americans throughout the world, including the United States and Spain, participate in the same media and entertainment market promulgated by the music industry, radio and television. In television, the companies of Univisión and Telemundo unite all Spanish speakers in the viewing of the same celebrities, news reports, sports events, entertainment programs, talk shows and the popular telenovelas (story series). Standard Spanish is generally used, but regionalisms used in telenovelas provide the opportunity for learning across Spanish dialects in Latin America.

Promotion of Spanish language maintenance has sometimes been done through Hispanic American organizations, either by design or by the nature of organizational activities. At the turn of the century a number of voluntary organizations began to proliferate among Hispanics in the United States including social clubs, patriotic committees, mutual aid societies and literary societies. Literary societies especially promoted formal learning of Spanish and the reading and discussion of literary and other academic works.

Although mutual aid societies were basically meant for economic assistance, an equal or primary role of these societies was to promote cultural unity. One way in which this was accomplished was by encouraging the use of Spanish. The Alianza Hispano Americana, a nineteenth century mutual aid society which evolved into a national fraternal insurance society with hundreds of lodges throughout the United States was supporting Spanish-English bilingual education in 1943 (Arrieta 1991a). The Metcalf, Arizona Alianza Hispano Americana lodge sponsored after-school classes in Spanish in the early 1900s; and an Amarillo, Texas, Alianza lodge sponsored adult evening classes to learn English and improve Spanish skills (Arrieta 1989, 1991a). In the 1940s and 1950s, the Asociación Nacional México-Americana actively promoted the maintenance of Spanish (García 1989, 217-18). Most of these organizations no longer exist. Recent research reveals the continued existence of sociedades mutualistas (Rivera 1984). Two which still conduct their meetings in Spanish include the Sociedad Nuevo Mexicana de Mutua Protección of Alameda, New Mexico, and the Sociedad Mutualista de Obreros Mexicanos of Douglas, Arizona, (Arrieta 1990, 1991b, 1991c).

Activist organizations of the 1960s and 1970s in the Chicano Movement and Puerto Rican organizations such as the Young Lords Party raised consciousness of cultural heritage, and particularly encouraged a resurgence of interest in Spanish language maintenance and an identification with Spanish, especially among the politically conscious and educated members of the ethnic groups. Limón’s (1982) analysis of discussions at meetings of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in the early 1970s, demonstrates how Hispanics who do not speak Spanish or have low proficiency in Spanish may nonetheless view it as a significant aspect of their identity. MAYO was an activist, advocacy organization consisting mainly of third- and fourth-generation, middle and lower-middle class students. Limón found that although English dominated at their meetings, the periodic occurrence of “folk Spanish” had a “rhetorical-symbolic” function (1982, 315). That is, when folk Spanish was used in extended discourse, it took on meaning beyond the actual language being used. Folk Spanish was used to indicate seriousness, strength and preferred aesthetic norms all of which also translated into strong ethnic identity and personal power (Limón 1982, 320-21). One speaker explained: “It is as if people pay more attention to you because they do understand you, even if they don’t speak it much . . . and it’s as if you speak more strongly in Spanish, you get more respect” (trans. from Limón 1982, 321). The implications of this statement and of organizational actions discussed earlier is that

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A Chicano community mural depicting the passing of the counter-cultural tradition and language from the pachuco to the current cholo generation. (Photo by Olivia Arrieta.)
the relation of Spanish to ethnic identity may be the most powerful basis for support of native language maintenance.

Language and Ethnic Terminology

The terms used to refer to members of an ethnic group differ according to time period in history, to the meanings attributed to the terms and are either terms of self-identification by in-group members or terms of reference used by outsiders. The term of self-identification depends on persons addressed, context, topic of conversation and whether English, Spanish or both languages are being used. For example, when dealing with persons outside the ethnic group, the terms used by the ethnic group members to refer to themselves often tend to be the same terms used by outsiders.

Currently this type of interaction is particularly related to use of the English term “Hispanic,” which was initially used in the 1970s in the wider public sphere, that is, in the political arena and in public bureaucracies. The term is meant to encompass all of the Spanish-speaking ethnic groups in the United States, including not only Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans, but also persons of Central American and South American backgrounds. When referring to this totality of Spanish-speaking peoples principally in terms of their national background rather than as American ethnics, the terms used have been “Latins” or “Latin Americans.” In the 1920s until about the 1950s, the term used by outsiders for Spanish-speaking ethnics was “Spanish people” or “Spanish Americans.”

In the earlier periods, Mexican Americans perceived that Anglo Americans considered the term “Mexican” to be demeaning or even insulting and many acquiesced to the use of “Spanish” or “Spanish American.” In the 1940s and 1950s, the term “Mexican American” became more widely used within and outside the ethnic group, with the exception of New Mexico. The Spanish-speaking population of New Mexico has identified more strongly with their Spanish than with their Mexican antecedents and therefore have had a stronger attachment to the terms “Spanish” or “Spanish American.” The Spanish equivalent “Hispana” or “Hispano” is also used in New Mexico. However, New Mexicans, along with the rest of the population of Mexican descent in the United States, have used the term “Mexicana” or “Mexicano” to refer to themselves when speaking in Spanish. It is interesting to note however, that New Mexican “Mexicanos” also use the term “Mexicano” to refer to the Spanish language, rather than the term “Español” used by the rest of Hispanics in the United States.

The term “Chicano” has been used in the United States since at least the early 1900s (Baldenegro, Guer- rero, Saldate 1990). It is widely agreed that the term “Chicano” comes from shortening the Aztec term for themselves “Mechicano.” This term was changed into the Spanish pronunciation “Mejicano” and was used to refer to all the inhabitants of the Spanish conquered land named “Mexico.” Within the American ethnic group, “Chicano” was basically used as a slang term until the 1960s and 1970s. At this time of social change and Civil Rights movements in the United States, Mexican American youth began the “Chicano Movement” which, in addition to addressing social and political issues, sought to develop and reinforce an identity which was integral and not a simple juxtaposition of two separate cultures as implied by the term “Mexican American” (See the chapter by Vigil in this book). The terms “Chicano” and “Chicana” were brought out of the realm of “private” use within the group, and into the public realm of the outsider. The term usually elicits controversy within the ethnic group, but has gained more acceptance particularly among the politically conscious and in higher education circles.

Among Puerto Ricans, the English term “Puerto Rican” is more commonly used among those on the mainland, while on the Island, the terms “puerto-riqueno” and “boricua” are used (Totti 1991). The term boricua means “a person from Borinquen,” which is the native term for the Island before the Spanish conquest. The term “jibaro” is not generally used for self-identification, but carries the strongest sense of Puerto Rican identity. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Young Lords Party used the term to express a strong, nationalistic identity, and in the rallying cry, “Jibaro Sí, Yankee No!” (Bergman et al. 1977, 123).

The term jibaro was otherwise used to refer to small, independent farmers in the interior of the island. The jibaro has been described as follows:

Traditionally, the jibaro is said to be shy and reticent in his dealings with strangers (muy jibaro) laconic, skeptical, humorous, pessimistic and hospitable. He is said to be dignified and independent, yet capable of a calculating deference where it is to his advantage. He is said to be hard working where his subsistence is concerned, but unwilling to exert himself when he believes he is being exploited. He is supposed to be very shrewd (muy aguzao). And “the only match for one jibaro is another jibaro; the only match for two jibaros is the devil.” He is also characterized by certain peculiarities of speech. His social ethics are supposed to express a deep wisdom nourished by his daily struggle for survival (Steward et al. 1956, 498).
Among the populations of both Puerto Rican and Mexican background, terms are also known that are depreciatory of native-born members. The term used to distinguish Puerto Ricans born in New York is “nuyorican” and generally mainland Puerto Ricans do not like this designation (Totti 1991). The term can be used in a derogatory sense to indicate that the person is “less Puerto Rican” mainly because they supposedly do not speak Spanish or frequently mix English with Spanish (Totti 1991). A similar relationship occurs between Mexicans and Chicanos (Mexican Americans). The derogatory terms used by Mexicans for Chicanas and Chicanos respectively are “pocha” and “pocho.” Again, the chief criticism is that Chicanos do not speak Spanish or do not speak it “properly.” This view is partly due to a lack of understanding by “old country” persons of the linguistic experience in the United States. It is not understood, for example, that, after spending the major part of life from the age of five or six in public schools where English is the only language of instruction and the only source of Spanish is the informal speech used in the family, a person cannot be expected to have an extensive vocabulary in, nor know the “correct” grammar of Spanish.

Language Use in Expressive Cultural Genres
Folklore

Language and culture are most clearly linked in the expressive forms of folklore and other oral traditions. Americo Paredes (1982, 1), the leading Chicano folklorist, has stated that “folklore is of particular importance to minority groups such as the Mexican Americans because their basic sense of identity is expressed in a language with an “unofficial” status, different from the one used by the official culture.” He points out that although folklore can provide clues about the way members of a given culture think and feel, the interpretation of folklore requires more than a surface knowledge of the people and culture (Paredes 1982, 3). He recommends the use of folklore for understanding “lo mexicano” (Paredes 1982, 11). A proverb known by most members of Cuban and Puerto Rican cultures—“Cuba y Puerto Rico de un pajar dos alas son” [Cuba and Puerto Rico are the two wings of a single bird] (Totti 1991; trans. mine) demonstrates how folklore can express the strong commonality of these groups.

Proverbs, known as dichos in Hispanic communities, are statements that often reflect folk wisdom, express cultural values and guide behavior depending on the situation. Paredes exemplifies the need to base explanations of the meaning of folklore on knowledge of the people’s language and of the situation in which folklore is performed in a comparison of two interpretations of the same proverbs (1982, 11-13). One approach interprets the proverb out of context and the other approach is based on how the proverb is used in Mexican culture. The example given by Paredes (1982, 7,10) contrasts an interpretation of a proverb which portrays Mexicans as fatalistic, non-futuristic and not interested in change, with his contextualized interpretation which produces the opposite result. By extension one can assume that this same consideration applies to the interpretation of Puerto Rican and Cuban proverbs and folklore.

Proverbs such as “Dime con quien andas y te diré quien eres” [Tell me who your friends are and I’ll tell you who you are] can express views on friendship and also be a mechanism of social control among Mexican Americans. Along with the literal meaning is the culturally learned interpretation. In its most common usage, the reference is to bad company someone is keeping and constitutes a social judgment implying that persons cannot remain untouched or immune to the influences of their associates.

The folktale is a more elaborated medium for cultural expression. The most widespread and commonly known folktale among Mexican Americans is that of “La Llorona” (Wailing Woman), of which a number of versions exist. The basic legend consists of a woman wailing in search of her lost children, usually along waterways. The story of how and why these children died varies. The tale is used to frighten children and dissuade them from being out after dark and from going near waterways. The popularity of the tale attests to the mystical and metaphysical tendencies in Mexican culture, particularly where death is concerned. “La Llorona” has been the subject of a number of published works, among them one by Arora (1981) compares versions from Mexico with Mexican American versions in the United States. McKenna (1982) and Nájera Ramírez (1987) discuss other Mexican folktales in the United States.

Hispanic-American Literature

Hispanic-American literature is another means of cultural expression that not only perpetuates aspects of cultural heritage, but also embodies social and cultural transformations. Hispanics in the United States have been producing literature since their earliest presence in this country. Knowledge of literature and poetry in Spanish was promoted by literary societies and Mexican and Cuban patriotic organizations in the United States starting in the nineteenth century. During the
nineteenth century, publication was mostly in Spanish-language periodicals in the forms of poetry, non-fictional narratives and fictional short stories. However, a truly "ethnic" literature of Americans of Hispanic descent, frequently including themes of cross-cultural contact and language experience, did not emerge as a genre until much later.

The initiation of the modern era of a Chicano literature is often traced to the poem, "I Am Joaquin," written in 1965 by Rodolfo "Corky" González, a prominent political activist. Not long after, academic activist-anthropologist Octavio Romano, established a Chicano publishing house, Quinto Sol Publications, in 1967 at the University of California at Berkeley, and began publishing the Chicano Studies journal El Crítico. Chicano writings appear in De Colores, Bilingual Review/Revista and Aztlán; Chicano and Puerto Rican writers are included in Revista Chicano-Riqueña (since 1986, The Americas Review). The field has expanded greatly so that today critical essays (Sanchez 1983) and anthologies of modern Chicana (Herrera Sobek 1985) and Chicano (Anaya 1980; Logel and Urioste 1989; Tatsum 1989) literature abound.

Puerto Rican writers, focusing on the theme of alienation and nostalgia for the Island, developed fictional representations of the migration and resettlement experience in novels, stories and plays during the large immigration of the 1950s (Flores 1982, xiv). In Puerto Rican in New York, Jesús Colón, in contrast to the theme of his peers, wrote about Puerto Ricans in terms of "their individual and collective interaction with North American society and the workers of diverse cultures with whom they were coming into increasing contact" (Flores 1982, xv). This made him the precursor of such Puerto Rican writers of the 1960s as Piri Thomas, Nicholasa Mohr, Tato Laviera and Sandra María Esteves, who elaborated his themes "in striking tones and increasingly complex linguistic and psychological dimensions" (Flores 1982, xvii). Laviera (1979) responded directly to La Carreta, an early work by Márqués (1963), known as "the classic literary rendition of recent Puerto Rican history" (Flores et al. 1981:203). In La Carreta Made a U-Turn Laviera (1979) expressed a "Nuyorican" perspective and embodied the "dialectic of everyday language" among present-day Puerto Ricans in the United States (Flores et al. 1981, 209).

Cuban American literature has been contrasted with modern Mexican American and Puerto Rican literature (Burunat and García 1988, 12-16). Mexican American and Puerto Rican American literature developed since 1960 has been mostly produced by writers born in the United States and represents the experience of groups which have been in constant contact with English and with American culture for at least one hundred years.

This literature explores the encounter of predominantly working-class Chicano and Puerto Rican communities with the dominant Anglo American culture and also serves as a vehicle for maintaining their ethnic culture. In contrast, since the majority of Cuban American writers are recent immigrants from the Cuban middle and professional classes, Cuban American literature, like early Puerto Rican literature, deals with the native country, the past and nostalgia for that which has been lost. It is mostly written in Spanish, and follows upon the "cultured" literary traditions of the island.

One of the few Cuban Americans who uses both Spanish and English in his work, José Corrales, comments on the experience of being away from the homeland in the poem "A Long Distance Cry" (Burunat and García 1988, 58-59). In Mexican American and Puerto Rican literature, it is more common to find works using only English or a Spanish-English combination. An example of a Mexican American (Chicana) poem entitled "Chicano" expressing the experience of assimilation pressures from mainstream American culture, uses mostly English with a quick change into Spanish in the same manner as the change would occur in regular speech.

How to paint
on this page
the enigma
that furrows
your sensitive
brown face
a sadness,
porque te llamas [because you are called]
Juan y no John [Juan and not John]
as the laws
of assimilation
dictate.
(Angela de Hoyos cited in Keller, 1984, 185, trans. mine)

The following poem by Luis Llorens Torres expresses an aspect of the Puerto Rican jíbaro identity which demonstrates an unwillingness to change his way of life and assume the values of the dominant society (Steward et al. 1956, 498):

Llego un jíbaro a San Juan
Y unos cuantos pitianquís
Lo atajaron en el parque
Queríendole conquistar
Le hablaron del Tío Sam

De Wilson, Mr. Root,
De New York, de Sandy-Hook
De la libertad, del voto,
Del dolar, del habeas corpus
Y el jíbaro dijo: Nju.

(A jíbaro came to San Juan
And a bunch of Yankee-lovers
Came upon him in the park
Hoping to win him over
They told him about Uncle Sam,
About Wilson, and Mr. Root,
About New York, and Sandy-Hook
About liberty, and the vote,
About the dollar and habeus corpus
And the jíbaro answered: “Mmhmm.”)

Song Verse

Song verse is one of the most common forms of cultural expression in Spanish used in Hispanic American communities. Hispanics throughout the world are becoming increasingly familiar with each others’ song styles and traditions through the international music market, radio and television. Generally, this market is oriented towards songs that have a more universal appeal than being restricted by any one cultural tradition. Folk traditions of song composition and performance as social commentary although less prevalent than in the earlier part of the century, still have some influence at the local and regional levels.

Because of modern technological advances, song texts have moved from the category of folk culture to the category of popular culture. Many songs traverse national boundaries in Latin America and the United States, but others are restricted to particular cultural, regional, or social groups. For example, certain song styles and types are more typical of the Mexican view of life or of a Puerto Rican or Cuban outlook. Other songs are even more specialized, relating to those living near the United States-Mexico border or to Puerto Ricans in island-mainland “revolving door migration,” for example.

Most literature on Mexican American song genres has focused on the corrido (Peña 1982; Paredes 1983; Cortina 1984). The corrido is a narrative song which has been described as a “collective diary” expressing public values and interpreting historical process (Peña 1982, 13). A parallel can be found in the Puerto Rican decima song genre which also serves a narrative function (Yurchenco 1971, 34-35). The corrido tradition as developed in Mexico continues to serve the same function as it did there and has been the most widely persisting song style. A corrido that has gained recent acclaim both in Chicano Studies and through its depiction as a movie for public television is the “Corrido of Gregorio Cortéz.” Following are excerpts from this epic account of the experiences of a Mexican American folk hero (Peña 1982, 23):

Verse 7:

Venían los americanos
más blancos que una paloma,
de miedo que le tenían
a Cortéz y su pistola.

(The Americans were approaching
whiter than a dove,
from the fear they had
of Cortez and his revolver.)

Verse 8:

Decían los americanos,
decían con timidez:
·Vamos a seguir la huella
que el malhechor es Cortéz.

(The Americans said,
said with timidity:
·Let us follow the trail
since the outlaw is Cortez.)

Mexican Americans share past song traditions with Mexicans, but have increasingly developed their own song and music tradition stemming from and similar to the Mexican song tradition but characteristically their own. The most widespread of Mexican American music styles is known as “TexMex” and was first developed in Texas. Among Puerto Ricans and Cubans, the current most popular music style is salsa including pieces meant principally for the accompanying salsa dance style, and also pieces that stress the song verse, some of these carrying social and political messages.

According to the anthropologist, Xavier Totti, music considered the most traditional among Puerto Ricans has its roots in sixteenth century Spain and was developed on the island by the jíbaro, and is called seis. Many well-known singers of seis are women whose performances present women’s point of view; whereas contemporary salsa music is male-dominated. Seis music is popular during Christmas season, but is also accessible through concerts in public plazas and in seis music records. In the 1930s, the plena music style emerged as a combination of seis and the bomba and was revived in the 1960s. The bomba, a music style of African slaves, is currently being revived.
Yurchenco (1971, 51) describes the role of the bomba during a saint’s day celebration on the island as follows:

The bomba is one of the highlights of the fiesta. Every night, often until dawn, Media-nias resounds with the hypnotic rhythm of drums, undulating dance, and melodious song. The rhythm starts, and people of all ages appear from the dark grove to form a circle around the drummers. The drums begin—then, a solo dancer steps into the center of the ring, jumping, shaking, and twisting his body until he is thoroughly exhausted; all the while, the villagers sing traditional verses.

Sung verse was traditionally used in Cuba during feasts dedicated to the altares de cruz [altars of the cross] from the Catholic feast day of the Holy Cross on May third until the end of the month (Poncet 1961, 8). The celebrations held at individual homes involved a number of details in accompanying rituals, behavior and related customs. Although some of the religious verses used came directly out of Catholic tradition, others were popular compositions (translated from Poncet 1961, 8):

*En el medio de este altar una estrella replandece,*
*Es la santísima cruz, blanca paloma parece.*

(In the middle of this altar
A star shines,
It looks like a white dove.)

Other verses were improvised and extended into the secular realm. Some of these were directed by any one of the guests to compliment or criticize the padrinos or madrinas [godparents] of the altars, who were expected to make certain contributions to the altars and guests. For example, the following verse was composed when the host delayed in offering the guests the customary punch drink of agualoja (Poncet 1961, 9, trans. mine):

*Al amo de la fiesta le vengo a decir que me de la agualoja, Because I want to leave.*)

**Language Policy**

Much of what has happened to the use of Spanish among Hispanic Americans has been related to the language policies of this country. The national philosophy about languages other than English has generally been assimilationist, trends have varied in legislation, funding, societal attitudes and movements promoting cultural and linguistic pluralism or intensifying English monolingualism (Mackey and Beebe, 1977, 1-14; Macías, 1979; Padilla, 1979). Regarding the implementation of language policy in the United States, Macías (1979, 43) has concluded that language issues are related to discrimination and the loss of fundamental rights such as voting and due process.

Nonetheless, in this country language rights have not been addressed in any direct manner, including in the Constitution. In fact, in recent times there has been a move to specify in the Constitution that English be the official language of the United States, eliminating the use of another language in any government office and opening the potential for litigation against individuals for using another language in certain public spheres.

Legislation that has allowed for some incorporation of other languages in mainstream American public arenas was the 1968 Bilingual Education Act. This act “authorizes the expenditure of public funds for the development of model school programs for limited and non-English proficient students” (Macías 1979, 45-46), although it does not directly specify language rights or instruction through bilingual education. It mainly encouraged states to “repeal or remove school laws which prohibited the use of non-English languages, or which mandated the exclusive use of English,” and also focused national attention on the language situation of ethnic groups, particularly of Native Americans and Hispanics (Macías 1979, 46). With California taking the lead, thirteen states had mandated bilingual education by 1978, but four states still forbade instruction in a language other than English. Many federally funded bilingual education programs in schools throughout the country were active as long as funding lasted.

In 1980, the multicultural climate of the 1970s changed to a renewed push for Anglo assimilation under the Reagan administration. Studies were commissioned to show that English only programs were better than bilingual education programs. During the 1980s a number of states passed legislation that in some way supported the “English only” ideology. In 1983, the national organization “U. S. English” was founded to “defend the public interest in the growing debate on
bilingualism and biculturalism,” welcoming to membership “all who believe that English is, and ever must remain, the only official language of the people of the United States” (Up.date 1987, 6). They also promoted the “English immersion” language instruction method.

The controversy over bilingual education, or the use of two languages in instruction, can be better understood with some knowledge of the different theories of language instruction for students with a language background other than English. Four different approaches can be classified as follows:

1. Language immersion
2. English as a Second Language (ESL)
3. Transitional bilingual instruction
4. Maintenance bilingual instruction

The language immersion approach is not new in the sense that non-English speaking students have been instructed only in English for the overwhelming part of American public education. Even at the height of Title VII funding for bilingual education programs between 1968 and 1980, it has been said that only 5 percent of those eligible were receiving bilingual education (Paz 1985). The immersion approach is a “sink-or-swim method” emphasizing the learning process rather than the teaching process and placing the burden on the students to acquire or absorb English on their own. This would parallel for example, the learning of French by an English speaker with no explanations or translations in English. English as a Second Language instruction also employs only English, but in contrast to the immersion method the teaching process in direct language instruction is emphasized. The basic assumption of the teaching methodology is that the students do not understand English. This is distinct from merely placing a non-English speaking student in a classroom environment where instruction on all subjects goes on as usual in English, with no directed attempt at teaching English as a “foreign” language.

Bilingual education methodologies use the native language, in this case Spanish, to teach the other language, in this case English. Transitional bilingual education uses Spanish more when the students are beginning to learn English, and taper off the use of Spanish until it is totally eliminated. Maintenance bilingual education uses Spanish to teach English, and builds the knowledge of both languages equally with the goal being that the students will eventually speak, read and write both languages equally well. It has been found that maintenance bilingual instruction is more effective when the students’ culture is integrated into the subject matter (See Cuellar 1980 regarding Chicano culture in bilingual education).

The research and conclusions of the National Puerto Rican Task Force on Educational Policy on language issues are relevant in this context to most Hispanic Americans. The Task Force, consisting of Puerto Rican educators, social scientists, lawyers and community advocates active in education issues, initially met on their own to review the educational policy needs of Puerto Ricans in the United States. Later they were asked to advise the National Institute of Education on the educational needs of Puerto Ricans. However, after several meetings and the submission of a policy statement with specific recommendations, no action was taken by the agency. Subsequently, with some private funding and support, the group worked over an eighteen-month period to produce a report in 1977 entitled Toward a Language Policy for Puerto Ricans in the United States (National Puerto Rican Task Force on Educational Policy 1982). The policy report summarized the significance of language and language education in terms of the larger societal context as follows (National Puerto Rican Task Force 1982, 7):

Language itself is shaped by many forces, and the question of the relationship between language, education and community identity rests at the center of a complex cluster of elements that includes, but is not limited to, economic formations, demographic movements, class alignments and political organization.

Four major language goals were defined and are paraphrased below (National Puerto Rican Task Force 1982, 18):

1. The United States Puerto Rican community should become fully bilingual, meaning that as many persons as possible acquire competence in both Spanish and English and pass on both languages to their offspring.
2. Spoken and written command of standard Spanish and English should be acquired without simultaneously downgrading or rejecting other “dialects, vernaculars or linguistic combinations.”
3. Language instruction should be open to local needs and language resources, with the idea of promoting language growth for the entire community.
4. Language policy should go beyond the school into language events existent in Puerto Rican life such as in poetry, theater, and professional and organizational arenas.

The report (National Puerto Rican Task Force 1982, 8-10) further recommends research to investigate rela-
tionships between language forms and class, literacy, identity, cultural expression, attitudes and political factors (Urcioli 1991). The results should be used in selecting pedagogical, linguistic and political goals based on the community’s reality (National Puerto Rican Task Force 1982, 10). These conclusions have been widely supported by language education specialists and anthropologists (Cueiller 1980; Cummins 1983, 1986; Vogt et al. 1987).

The final conclusions of the National Puerto Rican Task Force on Language Policy (1982, 15) about the relation of language and community identity are also most apt for concluding the present overview on language and culture among Hispanics in the United States. They are stated as follows:

The prospects for bilingualism to be assured through legal means appear highly improbable given existing precedents, both legislative as well as judicial. It may be that the future of bilingualism in the United States will be decided on other grounds—political struggles, demographic changes due to immigration . . . and changes in the international sphere, which will move Congress and the English-speaking majority from its ethnocentric and at times linguistically chauvinistic posture towards a more pluralistic stance. This would imply, among other things, a clearer acceptance of other languages and cultures as an integral part of life and society in the United States.

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