On so-called Spanglish

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Two background ideas

• Terminology matters when dealing with minoritized or racialized groups.

• Basic linguistic theory matters when dealing with contact varieties.
Terminology matters

• What we call minoritized groups is important:
  cf. girls vs women,
  crazy vs mentally ill

• What we call their language is also important.
Central ideas of linguistic theory matter in these cases

• Usage is made possible by grammar, but usage is not grammar.

• Differences in usage sometimes reflect differences in grammar, but often do not.
The language spoken by many Latinos in the U.S.

- should be simply called *Spanish*

- for more precision, *Spanish as spoken in the U.S.*
The parallel is simple

- Spanish as spoken in the U.S.
- Spanish as spoken in Mexico
- Spanish as spoken in Puerto Rico
- Spanish as spoken in Spain
- Spanish as spoken in Cuba, etc.
These terms are useful oversimplifications

- There are many ways to speak Spanish in Mexico, in Spain, in Cuba
- There are many ways to speak Spanish in the U.S.
Popular Spanish

Our topic really is:

popular registers of Spanish

in Mexico, Spain, Colombia, Cuba … and in the U.S.
The parallel is a simple one:

• Local popular Spanish as spoken in Mexico
• Local popular Spanish as spoken in Puerto Rico
• Local popular Spanish as spoken in Spain
• Local popular Spanish as spoken in Cuba
• etc
• Local popular Spanish as spoken in the U.S.
Local popular varieties of Spanish differ from one another

• in local vocabulary
• in local phraseology
• In local syntax
Differences in local vocabulary

• The bus:
  *camión*, *micro*, *colectivo*, *guagua*, *bus*, *ómnibus*, *autobús*

• The sidewalk:
  *banqueta*, *bordillo*, *vereda*, *senda*, *andén*, *acera*
Two traits of local vocabulary

• It is very abundant. There are hundreds of these local words everywhere.

• It is often not understood out of context by speakers from other areas.
Local vocabulary differences: Different lexical roots

- From very popular registers in Chile: *chori, carreteado, aperrado, pulento*

- From popular registers in Spain: *cachondo, chorrrada, pijo, mamón, macarra*

- For translations, see López-Morales 2006: 40ff
Local vocabulary differences:
Different forms of the same root

- *la jueza* vs *la juez*
- *noticiario* vs *noticiero*
- *velatorio* vs *velorio*
- *competición* vs *competencia*
- *explosionar* vs *explotar*
Local vocabulary differences
Same word, different meanings

• Chile: *curado*

• South America: *coger*

• For more of these examples, cf. López-Morales 2006
Local vocabulary differences
Different words again
Why are these interesting?

- *chévere* (Caribbean, now spreading)
- *chop* (River Plate, especially Uruguay)
- *cuarte* (México)
- *guagua* (Perú)
- *gurí* (River Plate, especially Uruguay)
- *parquear* (Caribbean, especially Cuba)
- *palta* (Perú)
- *petate* (Mexico)
- *plei* (Dominican Republic)
- *quimbamba* (Caribbean)
- *zacate* (Mexico)
Differential borrowing is at the heart of local vocabulary differences

- *aguacate* (Mexico and others) vs. *palta* (Perú and others)

- *maní* (Caribbean and others) vs. *cacahuate*, *cacahuete* (Mexico and others)

- *ají* (Caribbean and others) vs. *chile* (Mexico and others)
I don’t understand

No te imaginás, ayer se sentó un gurí en el bar y pidió un chop.
Local vocabulary differences: Some generalizations

The local word:

• is often not understood outside its area, especially without context.

• is often a morphological variant.

• is often borrowed from another language.
Differences in local phraseology: *to call back*

- In the north of Latin America: *devolver la llamada*
  (the metaphor is of something you took and are now returning)

- In the south of Latin America: *llamar de vuelta*
  (the metaphor is of turning around as you call)
Differences in local phraseology to get upset

- In Spain: *enojarse* (derived verb, from the noun *enojo* ‘anger’)
- In Latin America: *ponerse bravo* (periphrastic, to put oneself in anger, cf. an angry bull)
- In even more popular registers: *cabrearse* (derived verb, presumably from *cabra* ‘goat’)

Differences in local phraseology

Why is this of interest?

From advertising in Spain:

*Sólo en Vodafone tienes email en tiempo real con tarifa plana.*

Notice:

tiempo real, tarifa plana
Differences in local phraseology
Cultural imitations

• Many local phrases are inspired in the usage of other languages.

• Note here *tiempo real* and *tarifa plana* are clearly lifted from U.S. and British usage.

• N.B.: These local phrases are not taken from English, but from U.S. British usage.
Local popular Spanish in the US shows as expected:

- Local words
- Local words that are borrowings
- Local meanings of same words
- Local forms of same word
- Local words and phrases not understood
- Local phraseology
- Local phraseology involving cultural imitations
Local words

el jaiscul, el bildin, el sobbuey, el apoinmen, el trok, el lunch, el baquito, el trabajo a pisué, la beibisiter, el counter, el mop, el tiquet, el breik, el bos, el forman, etc.

• All loanwords, cf. gurí, palta, zacate, etc.
Same word, different meaning

- La aplicación
- La carpeta
- Trabajar
- Correr

- Cf. curado, coger
Local forms of same word

- Terapista
- financiamiento

- Cf. noticiero, noticiario
  velorio, velatorio
I still don’t understand

Trabajan tanto que no se bajan del trok ni para lonchar.

Cf. Un gurí se sentó en el bar y pidió un chop.
Local phraseology: 
*llamar para atrás*

devolver la llamada 
llamar de vuelta 
llamar para atrás

• All were, at some point, new usages.
• None was ever a grammatical innovation.
• They differ only in the metaphor.
Local phraseology: Cultural imitations

- Llamar para atrás, al final del día, máquina de contestar, etc.
- Encuestas de salida (encuestas a pie de urna)
- Multa por retraso (recargo por demora)
- Condenado a vida en prisión (cadena perpetua)
- Cf. *tiempo real, tarifa plana*
Popular Spanish in the U.S.
Some generalizations

• Shares the same general features as all other varieties of local popular Spanish.

• Differs from other local varieties in the same way as they differ from one another.
What the term Spanglish implies

The popular language of U.S. Latinos:

• shows unique features, of a kind not found elsewhere.
• is not a form of Spanish.
• is generated by a hybrid grammar
• is a new, mixed language
• needs a special name reflecting the mix
Other implications of the term Spanglish

• There is no need for terms like: 
  *mexicano, cubano, nahuañol, esparaní, quechuñol.*

• But there is need for a term Spanglish.
Confusion embodied in the term Spanglish

• We see in the U.S., not with differences of usage, but differences of grammar.

• We see a grammar that combines elements of English and Spanish, a mixed grammar, a mixed language.

• This different language requires a different name that distinguishes it from Spanish and describes its mixed condition.

• The term Spanglish stems from a fundamental confusion between language and the use of language.
Spanglish as the name of language practices (like codeswitching)

• No matter what is intended by the linguist who uses the term, Spanglish is always understood by laymen as a reference to a new kind of language.


• Spanglish is always understood as the name of something different from Spanish.

• And since when do we give names to ways of using languages, anyway?
Any other justification for the term Spanglish?

- Popular Spanish in the U.S. shows local syntactic features.

- But local syntax is like local vocabulary.

- Other popular varieties of Spanish also differ from one another in terms of syntax.
Local syntax: Dative gender

Datives have no feminine in standard Spanish but do have gender in local popular Spanish in Spain.

- Local popular Spanish in Spain
  \textit{La dije que viniera} ‘I told her to come’

- Standard Spanish and popular Latin American Spanish:
  \textit{Le dije que viniera} ‘I told her to come’
Local syntax: Inversion in wh-questions

Wh-questions have overt pronouns and unmarked order in local popular Caribbean, but not elsewhere:

• Local popular Caribbean:
  ¿Qué tú buscas? ‘What are you looking for?’
• Elsewhere:
  ¿Qué buscas tú? or ¿Qué buscas?
Generalization about local popular syntax

• Local areas of Spain and Latin America have many **syntactic** peculiarities in addition to lexical ones.

• This means that they indeed show not only different usages, but different grammars.

• Despite the differences in grammar, no one has thought of giving each a different name.

• **Why do we need a different name for local popular Spanish in the U.S.?**
A second-generation informant

Después de trabajar en la conferencia y ayudando con la gente y las recepciones, y presentándome para ayudar a las personas que están allí ... encontré con mucha gente que conozco ahora ... muchos amigos ... you know I met a lot of new people. Después íbamos a salir ... vamos a los discos a beber ... (401P)
Pero que ahí también conocí mucha gente y salí con un muchacho ahí que se enamoró conmigo pero que … bueno … yo no estaba enamorada con él [Risa] pero que todavía él me llama también. Todavía me llama a ver cómo estoy, y le digo, de lo más bien y como tú estás, y bien, y quiere ir para Nueva York a visitarme, y le dije bueno, yo no sé, porque yo voy para [Risa] California … pero que allá los discos allá, ay tan tan chévere, que están allá. Que la gente tienen … they’re so free. They’re having a good time. (401P)
Local syntactic features

Non-simultaneous gerund,

despúes de ayudando en la conferencia

*cf.*的优点 elsewhere

Local categorization frames,

*enamorarse conmigo,*

*cf.* enamorarse de mí elsewhere
Elements of English syntax

• Usages like ayudando, enamorarse conmigo do show elements of English syntax

• These are a very small proportion of the speaker’s output.
Spanish syntax contra English

Null subjects
que conozco ahora, íbamos a salir, vamos a salir

Preposed objects
todavía me llama, le digo

In-situ pronouns with wh-questions
¿Cómo tú estás?
But the term is an affirmation of pride and identity!

- But this confuses ethnicity with language

- A U.S. Latino identity, distinct from a Latin American or Iberian identity, can be healthy and productive.

- But a separate, U.S. Latino mixed language does not exist, and it is a mistake to try to make one up.
According to the introduction, Spanglish does not refer to anything linguistic. The word Spanglish, and the topic of the book, have to do with ‘the encounter between two cultures.’ A large proportion of words in the dictionary are simple Spanish words.
A sample of words in Stavans' Spanglish dictionary

aficionado, adió, ándale, apartamento, archivo, arroyo, arroz, bochinche, boicotear, cuarta, corona, chico, feria, guerrilla, gringo,

• None of these words is unique to Latinos in the U.S.
• Most of them are found in all the standard Spanish dictionaries.
The name of the language and the educational enterprise

• Extending Spanish fluency and literacy in U.S. Latinos is a worthwhile goal.

• For that goal, the term Spanglish is counter-productive.

• So the term is both objectively inaccurate and educationally pernicious.
How to conceive of a minority language

There is an important difference between:

• 'I don't speak Spanish, I speak Spanglish'

• 'I speak Spanish at home and in the neighborhood. I need to learn more formal and academic registers.’
Connection between Spanish ability and social and psychological indices

connection among second generation Americans between mastery of their parents' language and:

• high educational aspirations
• high occupational aspirations
• high self-esteem
• low incidence of depression
• positive view of parents
• good relations with parents

The term Spanglish

- Incorrectly makes Spanish in the U.S. appear unique, when it in fact shares many features with local dialects of Spanish everywhere.

- As Spanish dialects everywhere, Spanish in the U.S. has peculiar words and peculiar constructions.

- As is usual, many of the peculiar words are loans from the neighboring language.

- So the term appears wholly unjustified on technical linguistic grounds, and it is counterproductive on social grounds.
References


