

din: loud noise federal workers try to work above the *din** is not only ridiculous; it will not do anything to preserve Mexican culture in the United States.

amnesty:
general pardon
by a government
body

Hispanics should be interested not just in maintaining their own, distinctive culture but in helping Latin immigrants adjust to their American environment and culture as well. Too few Hispanic organizations promote English or civics classes, although the number has increased dramatically since the federal government began dispensing funds for such programs under the provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act, which gives amnesty* to illegal aliens on the condition that they take English and civics classes. But why shouldn't the Hispanic community itself take some responsibility to help new immigrants learn the language and history of their new country, even without government assistance? The settlement houses of the early century thrived without government funds. The project by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) to encourage Latin immigrants to become U.S. citizens is the exception among Hispanic organizations; it should be the rule.

Reading for Meaning

1. How does Chavez explain the term "assimilation"? Quote it. Paraphrase it as you understand it.
2. How does Chavez define "the worst features of the Americanization era"? Quote it and explain it in your own words.
3. Chavez asserts that "Hispanics will be obliged to make some adjustments if they are to accomplish what other ethnic groups have." What "adjustments" does she suggest Hispanics have to make in culture and language?

Reading Deeper

1. Whose responsibility is it to maintain a group's native language? Explain what Chavez says about this question.
2. What is NALEO and what is their project? How does Chavez feel about this? Explain.

Reading for Writing

1. Investigate English-only legislation. List points that favor English-only and points that oppose it. Take a position and write a letter to your congressman attempting to persuade him or her to support or not to support English-only legislation the next time it comes up for a vote.

2. Investigate the term "Hispanic." Chavez indicates that "It is only in the United States that 'Hispanics' exist." Research when the term was introduced into our vocabulary and why it came into existence. Interview at least three individuals of different generations and ask them how they feel about the term. Also, look at other terms used to identify Spanish-speaking individuals, what the terms mean literally and figuratively, and which one they prefer and why. Write an essay describing your findings. Be sure to use proper documentation.

SPANGLISH IS HERE TO STAY

Isis Artze

Do you know what "Spanglish" is? If you do, do you approve of it? In addition to the debate about English being the official language of the United States, another debate ensues about the legitimacy of "Spanglish." In the following article, taken from Education Digest, Sept. 2001. Isis Artze looks at Spanglish, its proponents and its opponents. In academic circles, Spanglish is often referred to as code switching and is recognized as having rules of its own that usually conform to both English and Spanish rules and are used correctly when the speaker is using a mixture of English and Spanish. On the one hand, it is looked at as "degenerate" Spanish by some, but on the other, speakers have been praised in that they are at least knowledgeable of some Spanish and/or English. The fact that they have to switch to Spanish while speaking English, some feel, has many positive elements even though it also indicates an incomplete familiarity with English.

Prereading: Have you ever been around individuals speaking Spanglish? How do you feel about it?

Prewriting: Have you ever tried to learn a foreign language in school? Did you ever have to substitute English words while you were trying to speak the other language? Write a descriptive paragraph explaining how you felt about having to return to English or combine English with the foreign language to help you communicate and whether doing so was disrespectful to either language.

Vocabulary: Looking up and understanding the following words prior to reading should prepare you for the author's message. Other words will be defined in the margin.

etymologically *idioma* *casas* anthropological Anglicisms

Whether you know it or not, speak it or not, or like it or not, Spanglish is everywhere. Etymologically, the term combines the words Spanish and English. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines it as “Spanish characterized by numerous borrowings from English.” Nearly 35 million U.S. Hispanics know it as their idioma, their language on the streets, and in their casas. It is on national magazine covers, on advertisements, and is heard in popular song lyrics.

To Ilan Stavans, the foremost scholar of this linguistic phenomenon, it is an anthropological journey. But to its opponents, Spanglish is a threat that must be defused.

In one way or another, Spanglish has been around for nearly 150 years, says Stavans, professor of Spanish at Amherst College in Massachusetts. Asked its future, he says “The future is here,” asserting that Spanglish “has already played a dramatic role, not only in the way words are shaped, but also in grammar and construction.” If you trace the development of dictionaries in the Spanish-speaking world, it becomes clear that Spanglish has been silently evolving for quite some time, he says.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, and in the beginning of the twentieth, he adds, the frequency with which dictionaries of Anglicisms were published was accelerated: “Words like lasso, rodeo, amigo, mañana, and tortilla made it into English; mister and money, into Spanish.” So why all the recent fuss? For starters, Spanglish has a new status.

“Once viewed as degenerate Spanish, Spanglish suddenly has cachet*,” says Jennifer Bingham Hull. She points to the tremendous success of *Latina* magazine, whose cover headlines, nearly always in Spanglish, have attracted 200,000 subscribers.

Again, look to Stavans for the answer, for his two latest endeavors on the part of Spanglish made it such a hot topic. First, he is teaching a three-credit undergraduate course at Amherst, tracing the development of Spanglish from a literary and anthropological perspective*, “to try to understand what is happening with our language.” First offered in fall 2000, it attracted nearly 60 students—noteworthy for a small liberal arts college.

Second, and perhaps more important—Stavans recently completed *The Sounds of Spanglish: An Illustrated Lexicon*, an extensive dictionary of Spanglish, being published by Basic Books. “The buzz the course and the dictionary have created on National Public Radio and in newspapers around the globe has brought home to me just how much interest Spanglish arouses these days,” he says. “But it also generates anxiety and even xenophobia*. In the U.S., it announces to some people an

cachet: mark of distinction and quality

perspective: point of view

xenophobia: fear of strangers or foreigners

hispanizacion: making into Hispanic

specter: something that haunts or perturbs the mind.

imperialism: power, domination or control of a nation over another nation or area

dissident: a person who disagrees with an established belief

sanction: approve

intraethnic: between different cultural groups

empathy: understanding of another’s feelings, situation, or motives

overall hispanizacion* of society; abroad, it raises the specter* of U.S. cultural imperialism* and the creation of a ‘McLengua.’”

GRAVE DANGER?

An outspoken Spanglish dissident* is Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria, professor of comparative literature at Yale University, who says, “Spanglish, the composite language of Spanish and English that has crossed over from the street to Hispanic talk shows and advertising campaigns, poses a grave danger to Hispanic culture and to the advancement of Hispanics in mainstream America.

“The sad reality is that Spanglish is primarily the language of poor Hispanics, many barely literate in either language. They incorporate English words and constructions into their daily speech because they lack the vocabulary and education in Spanish to adapt to the changing culture around them. Educated Hispanics who do likewise have a different motivation: Some are embarrassed by their background and feel empowered by using English words and directly translated English idioms.”

Miami Herald columnist Ana Veciana-Suarez partially echoes this concern: “if we formally sanction* Spanglish, are we allowing proper grammar to take a back seat to convenience? Are we giving the nod of approval to linguistic laziness and ignorance? Will the next step be to excuse our children’s lack of verbal achievement? Teach them Spanglish, and teach them to settle for substandard English and menial jobs.”

Stavans responds that, to a certain extent, he agrees: “I don’t think the classroom should be used to teach it,” explaining that, for now, the only course on Spanglish he advocates is one similar to his own, that is, taught from an anthropological standpoint.

LIKE EBONICS?

Veciana-Suarez also compares the recent Spanglish debate to California’s Ebonics debate four years ago. And she has a valid point, given Stavans has dedicated considerable time, in his study of Spanglish, to an analysis of Ebonics.

Both are “intraethnic* vehicle[s] of communication, used in the United States . . . to establish empathy* among [groups],” he says. “But the differences with Ebonics [sic] are sharp. For one thing, Ebonics is

not a product of *mestizaje*, the cross-fertilization of two perfectly discernible codes; Spanglish is. Spanglish is also not defined by class, as people in all social strata, from migrant workers to politicians, academics, and TV anchors, regularly use it, both in the United States and south of the Rio Grande.”

In many ways, Stavans says, Yiddish is closer to Spanglish than Ebonics is: “Like Spanglish, Yiddish was never a unified tongue, but a series of regional varieties. Moreover, while both Yiddish and Spanglish started as intraethnic minority languages, both quickly became transnational verbal codes.” The presence of Yiddish in Stavans’ own upbringing in Mexico, in a small Jewish enclave*, was crucial to his later fascination with Spanglish he says.

Hull also addresses the role of Spanglish in Miami, where it is a predominant language. She says that, on the one hand, the prevalence of Spanglish demonstrates the dexterity* of its users: “For those truly bilingual*, Spanglish can reflect impressive verbal skills as speakers choose from two languages for just the right expression. Switching back and forth between Spanish and English, or ‘code switching’ as linguists call it, these people will often use Spanish to express emotions and English for analytical thoughts. They also use Spanglish as a shortcut, replacing long Spanish words and phrases with shorter English ones.”

On the other hand, she says, the popularity of Spanglish in Miami can reflect a lack of fluency in Spanish: “Though more than half of Miami-Dade County’s population is Hispanic, only 3% of its public school students graduate from high school fluent in Spanish. Miami business leaders complain that the prevalence of Spanglish in South Florida is symptomatic of a larger problem they face finding employees who are truly bilingual.”

Might Spanglish hinder social advancement? Stavans says the opposite is true: “For Latinos to succeed in the U.S., English has to be learned, but you are worse off if you don’t speak Spanglish.”

Another common critique is the “purist” view that the Spanish language must be protected. Echevarria says, “Spanish is our strongest bond, and it is vital that we preserve it.” He anticipates some will challenge him, comparing development of Spanglish, from Spanish and English, to that of Spanish as a branch of Latin: “I suppose my medievalist* colleagues will say that without the contamination of Latin by local languages, there would be no Spanish (or French or Italian).

“We are no longer in the Middle Ages, however, and it is naïve* to think that we could create a new language that would be functional* and culturally rich. Literature in Spanglish can only aspire to a sort of wit*

enclave: group living together within a much larger society

dexterity: skillfulness

bilingual: able to speak two languages

medievalist: someone who studies the Middle Ages—600–1500

naïve: innocent

functional: working

wit: humor, satire

based on a rebellious gesture, which wears thin quickly,” he adds, concluding that “those who practice it are doomed to writing not a minority literature but a minor literature.”

“Languages are living things,” Stavans replies; “they are constantly changing and evolving.” It is spoken by everybody, even by those who reject it, he adds, “and if we’re using it, it’s proof that it’s needed.” . . .

Reading for Meaning

1. Quote and explain two definitions of Spanglish offered in this essay.
2. List two reasons to use Spanglish that will help keep it in use.
3. What evidence does Stavans give that indicates that Spanglish is needed?

Reading Deeper

1. In serious writing, authors refer to individuals who have credibility to help lend credence to the work. Explain who Ilan Stavans and Roberto Gonzalez Echevarria are and why Artze used their comments.
2. Explain the point Artze is trying to make when she uses the term “McLengua.” What does it mean exactly? What does it come from?
3. Echevarria contrasts “poor Hispanics, many barely literate in either language” with “educated Hispanics” who also use Spanglish. Explain how he differentiates between them.

Reading for Writing

1. Although Artze writes a detailed article about Spanglish as a spoken language, there is only minimal information about it as a written language. Find several novels that are written primarily in English but that also have Spanish in them. You might look for novels by Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Denise Chavez, Rudolfo Anaya, Rolando Hinojosa, or others. Read passages from them and decide whether the use of Spanish in the novel hinders your understanding of the part you read. Write a paragraph about whether Spanish should be used in works that are written for primarily English-reading audiences.
2. In the past, the use of Latin, French, or German was perfectly acceptable in written works because the authors were writing to an “educated” audience who were expected to know the language or how to look up the words to understand them. It also displayed the author’s knowledge of foreign works. Today, many individuals who might have