

The impact of the Mexican Revolution on Spanish in the United States\*

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My charge today is to speak of the impact of the Mexican Revolution on Spanish in the United States. While I have spent more than forty years listening to, studying, and analyzing the Spanish language as used in the United States, I readily confess that the Mexican Revolution was not foremost in my thoughts for many of those years. My life has not been totally without revolutionary influence, however, since in my previous job, at the University of New Mexico, our department had revised its bylaws to reflect the principles of *sufragio universal y no reelección*. When I began to reflect on the full impact of the Mexican Revolution on U. S. Spanish, I immediately thought of the shelf-worn but not totally irrelevant joke about the student who prepared for his biology test by learning everything there was to know about frogs, one of the major topics of the chapter. When the day of the exam arrived, he discovered to his chagrin that the essay topic was about sharks. Deftly turning lemons into lemonade, he began his response: “Sharks are curious and important aquatic creatures bearing many resemblances to frogs, which have the following characteristics ...”, which he then proceeded to name. The joke doesn’t mention what grade he received for his effort. For the next few minutes I will attempt a similar maneuver, making abundant use of what I think I already know, hoping that you don’t notice what I know that I don’t know, and trying to get a passing grade at the end of the day.

When I first moved to Texas in 1968 to attend college I was surprised to hear many Texans refer—and not often kindly—to the Spanish language as “Mexican,” as in “I don’t speak Mexican” or “How do you say that in Mexican?” Real hard-core Hispanophobes called it “Mes-

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kin,” symbolically equating loss of a syllable with lack of respect for a language and the people who speak it. In retrospect I shouldn’t have been so surprised, since I subsequently discovered books to teach Northerners like me how to speak “Texan,” instead of the “English” that I thought I already spoke. Calling the Spanish language “Mexican,” although well on its way to becoming an ethnic slur if it hasn’t attained that status already, is grounded in an inescapable fact: in the United States, Mexican Spanish is BIG, VERY big, so big that for many people Mexican Spanish IS Spanish—y se acabó.

So how big is big? Let’s walk through some extrapolations, then use our knowledge of the way things are to come up with even larger numbers. The last official United States census, of 2000, reported the presence of 35.3 million self-identified “Hispanic” residents, out of a total population of 281.4 million, of whom some 28.1 million (79.6%) indicated use of Spanish in the home (without information on level of fluency). The last official census estimate of the U. S. population of Hispanic origin comes from mid-2008, with a figure of 46.9 million out of a total population of 304.1 million. This represents a 32.9% increase in the Latino population between 2000 and 2008; during the same period the total national population grew at a rate of 8.1%, which means that the estimated Latino population grew 4.1 times as fast as the national average. As of March 2010 the estimated U. S. population is around 308.6 million, an increase of 1.5% since mid-2008. If we extrapolate a 6.4% increase in the Latino population for the same time period, we arrive at a total figure of 49.9 million Latinos currently living in the United States, around 16% of the total population (this is close to the census bureau’s 2000 projection of 47.8 million for the then distant year 2010). If we assume that the same proportion speaks Spanish now as in 2000, then the United States is home to at least **39.7 million native Spanish speakers**. Obviously the real numbers are much higher, well over **40 million**, due to the underreporting that

is endemic to minority populations as well as the reluctance on the part of many respondents to place themselves in ethnic pigeonholes, and further exacerbated when unauthorized immigration status is thrown into the mix. Moreover the census data on language use only take into account individuals five years of age or older, and we all know that language doesn't begin at age five. In practical terms, and not even taking into account the uncounted millions of Americans of non-Latino origin who also speak Spanish (por ejemplo un humilde servidor), the United States is effectively tied with Spain, Argentina, and Colombia for second place among the world's Spanish-speaking nations, with only Mexico indisputably taking the gold medal.

The 2008 estimate of the Latino population in the United States indicated the presence of some 30.7 million people of Mexican origin, a 49% increase from the 20.6 million figure in the 2000 census, and six times the rate of increase of the national average. In 2008 the population of Mexican origin represented 66% of the Latino population, also up from the 58.5% figure for Mexican-origin in 2000. Once again extrapolating from the 1.5% national population growth between mid-2008 and the present, we estimate a corresponding increase of 9% among the population of Mexican origin, or some **33.5 million**. This means that the population of Mexican origin is in turn growing almost 15% faster than the Latino population as a whole. Using the 79.6% figure for Spanish speakers derived from the 2000 census, there are at least **26.7 million** speakers of Mexican Spanish over the age of five in the United States; in reality the figure is probably at least 25% higher, say around **30 million**. This means that roughly one quarter of the world's speakers of Mexican Spanish live in the United States, with most of the remainder living in Mexico. In everyday terms, there are currently more speakers of Mexican Spanish in the United States than speakers of ANY kind of Spanish in Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua (in fact all of

Central America combined), Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Only Mexico itself, Spain, Colombia, and Argentina (the latter three countries just barely) have more Spanish speakers than the number of speakers of ONLY Mexican Spanish in the United States. Put yet another way, the number of speakers of Mexican Spanish in the United States is at least as large as the total COMBINED populations of New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Phoenix, San Diego, Dallas, and a few other cities thrown in for good measure. There are about as many speakers of Mexican Spanish in the United States as there are people in all of Canada. Once again, Mexican Spanish in the United States is BIG.

So how did this enormous and rapidly growing Mexican Spanish population come about? Obviously the fact that the United States and Mexico are geographical neighbors is relevant, but while the large and highly permeable international border is a necessary condition for attaining the sorts of numbers just described, it is far from sufficient. The U. S.-Canadian border is much longer, and at least until September 2001 easier to cross, but even after NAFTA the number of Canadians living in the United States is proportionately very small. Nor is the retention of the Spanish language among at least 30 million speakers of Mexican origin simply the result of moving next door, especially given the English-language juggernaut that is mainstream U. S. society, and the often active and virulent campaigns aimed at eradicating all use of Spanish within the U. S. borders. Since I am here to discuss the impact of the Mexican Revolution on Spanish in the United States, it is useful to situate the demographic upheavals of the Revolution in a broader perspective of Mexican-U. S. migration.

Within the Mexican-American community one common mantra is “We didn’t cross the border; the border crossed us.” This statement indisputably reflects the roughly 80,000 Mexican citizens who without moving from their homes found themselves living in the United States after

1848 (Corwin 1973); they are for all practical purposes the founding presence of Mexican-American Spanish, following the expansionist wars of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century that wrested from Mexico first Texas and then nearly half of the remaining territory, with the captured lands being pasted into the evolving scrapbook entitled “Manifest Destiny.” Despite the massive disregard for treaty provisions that guaranteed land and cultural rights to Mexicans living in the newly annexed territories, these founders of Mexican-America, these *cruzados por la frontera* never abandoned their language, and most of New Mexico, Arizona, southern Texas, and southern California were de facto Spanish speech communities at least until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite massive immigration of English-speaking settlers and the accompanying land-grabs that displaced many Mexicans in the Southwest, Mexicans were not regarded as foreigners, but simply as obstacles to territorial expansion, and Spanish was not considered to be the language of foreigners nor as inherently undesirable, but only as the language of an essentially indigenous population being pushed out of the way, much as had occurred with Native Americans. Many English-speaking immigrants to former Mexican territories learned and used Spanish as naturally as they learned the customs and lifestyles of lands far different from their communities of origin. In the Spanish-speaking world, to the extent that there was any awareness of a Spanish-speaking population that had been engulfed by the United States, their language was not emblazoned with a hyphen—no “Mexican-American” Spanish—but was just another corner of Spanish American speech. It is noteworthy that the first monographic studies of any variety of Spanish in the United States, the analyses of New Mexico Spanish written by Aurelio Espinosa (1909, 1911, 1911-12) in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were eventually translated into Spanish and published in the collection *Biblioteca de Dialectología Hispanoamericana*, alongside monographs on the Spanish of Argentina, Chile, the Dominican Republic, and the Central American nations (Espinosa 1930,

1946). Espinosa's studies were written in English and initially directed at a non Spanish-speaking readership; at no point is Spanish referred to as anything but the natural and inevitable language of New Mexico. In 1912, the year of New Mexico statehood, the president of the University of New Mexico, Edward Gray, published an article in the *University of New Mexico Bulletin* entitled "The Spanish language in New Mexico: a national resource." However, the seeds of discontent had already been sown, as exemplified by the title of by an article in another New Mexico journal just a few years later, and perhaps not coincidentally, during the exodus provoked by the Mexican Revolution (Morrill 1918): "The Spanish language problem in New Mexico." How had a "national resource" become a "problem" in so short a time? There are no simple answers, and in fact resentment against the Spanish language probably began with the first arrival of English-speaking settlers to formerly Mexican lands, but starting around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—just before the Mexican Revolution—the demographic profile of Mexicans and Mexican Spanish in the United States began to shift in the direction of alterity.

The changing status of Mexicans and Mexican Spanish in the United States is closely tied to the voluntary arrival of Mexican immigrants, i.e. people who HAD in fact crossed a border to enter a country that no longer considered them as its own. Immigration from Mexico began in a concerted fashion around 1900, when railroads financed by the United States connected the U. S.-Mexican border with interior Mexican states such as Jalisco, Michoacán and Guanajuato, which were more heavily populated than the northern states close to the U. S. border. Mexican workers in search of employment rode the rails to destinations far removed from the border region, and wherever there was a railroad terminus, Mexican communities arose—in Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Kansas City, and other midwestern and northern cities. The increasing purchase of automobiles by Mexicans further added to the mobility of potential emigrants.

Mexicans who were hired by the railroads were frequently offered funds for repatriation, while those that simply used the trains to reach the United States were left to their own devices. This immigration coincided with the arrival of tens of thousands of southern and eastern European immigrants to the eastern United States, many of whom moved westward and settled in the same areas as Mexican arrivals. All these non English-speaking immigrants aroused resentment and xenophobia, and in regions where Mexicans resided, Spanish was no longer equated with Cervantes, but rather with yet another struggling immigrant population, which despite the welcoming words on the Statue of Liberty, was quite often not welcome at all. The U. S. government responded with a series of anti-immigrant laws, including the Alien Contract Labor Act of 1885, and prospective immigrants were halted with measures ranging from forced hot baths and medical exams, head taxes, and obligatory literacy tests in English to outright physical intimidation. To give some sense of this first wave of Mexican immigration, U. S. census figures for 1880 documented some 68,000 Mexican-born residents in the U. S. as opposed to some 213,000 U. S.-born people of Mexican descent (Gutmann et al. 1999), while by 1910, just before the onset of the Mexican Revolution, there were more than 232,000 Mexican-born residents and 406,000 U. S.-born people of Mexican descent, out of a total national population of around 92 million in 1910. Actual figures are undoubtedly much higher, since historians estimate that around 75% of Mexican immigration was unauthorized and undocumented at the time. Most Mexican-born residents lived in Texas, Arizona, and California, but the Midwestern Mexican communities were also growing apace. While representing less than 1% of the national population, Mexicans and Mexican Spanish had a profile in the Southwest and in many Midwestern communities as well, and the notion that a long and virtually unprotected border could result in an avalanche of unwanted immigration began to gather momentum. The U. S.

Border Patrol was founded in 1924 largely as a result of anti-Mexican sentiments. The presence of Mexican-born immigrants who showed no signs of willingness to return to Mexico after a stipulated period of contract labor was also instrumental in raising the profile of Mexicans as true immigrants rather than temporary laborers. While regarded with alarm, Mexicans were ironically seen as less threatening than Asians in the racist pantheon of early 20<sup>th</sup> century United States. A minister in San Francisco wrote during the 1920's that "the Mexican is the preferred of all the cheap labor available to the Southwest. On Oriental labor, Chinese and Japanese and Hindu, the verdict has already been cast. California has swung our national jury to an almost unanimous vote" (Romo 1975: 175). Even Aurelio Espinosa, the scholar who had so enthusiastically described the Spanish of New Mexico, acknowledged that "with the introduction of the railroads and the very rapid commercial progress of the last thirty years [...] there has come a check in the race fusion and the mutual contact and good feeling between the two peoples ... in the new cities ... where the English speaking people are numerically superior, the Spanish people are looked upon as an inferior race ..."

It was at this juncture, when attitudes toward Mexican immigration were swinging negative, that the Mexican Revolution provoked a new and highly visible wave of Mexican exodus to the United States. Between 1910 and 1930 about 1/10 of the Mexican population relocated to the U. S. (De Genova 2004), with the percentage of some central and western Mexican states reaching over 20%. During the period 1910-1920, roughly spanning the diaspora directly attributable to the Revolution, an estimated 890,000-1.5 million (Martin: 1998: 879) Mexicans moved to the U. S. García (1985: 197) observes that "At no other time in Mexican American history, as during the thirty years between 1900 and 1930, have Mexican immigrants and refugees so totally dominated the Spanish-speaking Mexican condition in the Southwest and

elsewhere.” Although many eventually returned, during the 1920’s some 460,000 Mexicans obtained legal residence in the U.S., more than 3% of the total population of Mexico. Many returned during the depression of the 1930’s (Verduzco and Unger 1998). The 1910 Mexican census reported 15.2 million residents. The 1910 U. S. census showed 92 million, with some 798,000 or 0.87% Hispanic. The 1920 U. S. census showed 105.7 million, with 1.3 million (1.22%) (estimated 1.4 million) Hispanic. Obviously refugees from the Mexican Revolution were not always included. 80% of Hispanics in 1910 were Mexican, and 77% in 1920. 1920 census showed 556,000 native Spanish speakers. (Gratton and Gutmann 2000). Other extrapolated census figures indicate that the number of Mexican-born people in the United States more doubled between 1910 and 1920, and increased by a full order of magnitude by a decade later. According to Romo (1975), “In 1900, perhaps 100,000 persons of Mexican descent or birth lived in the United States; by 1930 the figure had reached 1.5 million.” The rapid increase in the number of Mexican immigrants, together with the high profile accorded the Mexican Revolution in the United States press, inevitably brought Mexican issues before the entire American public, and not just in border regions. The sociodemographic profile of Mexicans arriving in the United States as a result of the Revolution differed from the cross-section of Mexicans who traveled northward in search of employment. Beginning in 1910, Mexicans of all social classes poured into Texas and Arizona (Pace 1974); some moved to established Mexican communities. These refugees included students at the University of Arizona as well as shopkeepers and other middle-class citizens. Many of the exiles planned and executed revolutionary forays into Mexico, and projected the image of refugees intent upon return to their homeland. Romo (1975: 179) notes that “During the years that many Mexicans fled to the United States as war refugees, thousands of others left because of social and economic disruptions. Unlike the seasonal laborers recruited

by industry and agriculture, these refugees came from the middle and upper classes of Mexico and intended to remain in the United States for a longer period.” Estrada et al. (1981: 114) observe that “Included in the large wave of Mexican immigrants were a number of merchants, landowners, and intellectuals, many of whom had been displaced by the Revolution of 1910. Many settled in Texas; others established themselves in the Midwest, in cities like Kansas City; some went as far north as Milwaukee. Many, continuing with activities they had pursued in Mexico, became entrepreneurs in the United States. A greater number of Spanish-language newspapers, pamphlets, books, and articles appeared; analysis of the political effects of the Mexican Revolution became a staple item of such publications. Many Mexicans who crossed the border at this time, including this group of entrepreneurs, saw themselves as temporary expatriates who would one day return to Mexico when conditions there were more settled.”

That many of these displaced persons ultimately remained in the United States can be deduced not only from border-crossing and census figures, in themselves notoriously inaccurate, but also in the significant upsurge in the appearance of Spanish-language newspapers in the southwestern states in the time period 1910-1930. One of the most influential of these papers was *La Opinión*, founded in Los Angeles in 1926. Oppenheimer (1985) observes that “Unlike those in Mexico who viewed the immigrants and refugees as traitors for leaving their homeland, *La Opinión* regarded them as true patriots. Rather than taking something away from Mexico, Mexican immigrants contributed much value to *la patria*.” The newspaper accepted “the reality of a political division between Mexico and the United States. Mexican immigrants temporarily inhabited a foreign land. Cognizant of the historic Mexican tradition in the Southwest, *La Opinión* did not consider this region, as later some Chicanos would, as an extension of Mexico or

as 'Occupied Mexico.' Mexicans were not strangers in their own land, but strangers in another land.”

Reactions on the part of other Americans to Mexican arrivals during the Revolution differed from attitudes towards itinerant laborers. A large proportion of the refugees came from the middle and upper classes of Mexico, and many intended to resettle in the United States in similar social milieux. A Red Cross official, J. B. Gwin, stated that: “The Mexican refugees have surprised all beholders with their healthy conditions, their quiet polite manners and especially with their failure to appear as half-starved, poverty-stricken people from a desolate land. . . . They probably represent the best element there is in Mexico today, the farmers and small businessmen who have taken no part in the wars.” However, elsewhere (Gwin 1921: 126) was not so encouraging: “At the beginning of the Mexican Revolution, in 1910, the rush of Aliens to cross over into America constituted a real menace to the health and standards of living for the border communities.” The Mexican Revolution represented the first of many instances in which refugees displaced by war as well as revolutionary groups from another nation entered the United States in large numbers. The United States, still a relatively young nation being continually reshaped by immigration, was confronted with a Mexican presence more complex and nuanced than in previous experience. González and Fernández (2002: 24-5) challenge the view that the Mexican Revolution was the big “push factor” that began massive Mexican migration to the United States. They claim instead that United States capitalist interests were intimately involved in shaping the course of the revolution and that U. S. economic empire-building lies at the root of Mexican labor flow to the United States. Regardless of pushes and pulls, by the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century awareness of Mexicans in the United States and their language was no longer confined to the Southwest.

Although by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there were already many thousand U. S.-born descendents of Mexican immigrants—to say nothing of descendents of those Mexicans who had “never crossed the border,” it is arguably at the juncture of the Mexican Revolution that the distinctions between “Mexican” and “Mexican-American” began to coalesce both in the United States and in Mexico. Words like *pocho* and *Chicano* gained momentum within Mexico, while *Tex-Mex* and similar names suggesting illegitimate parentage became commonplace on the U. S. side of the border, and talk of an “alien invasion” began to sweep the country, even though the number of Mexicans arriving in the U. S. was tiny compared to eastern and southern European arrivals. Pérez-Torres (1997) suggests that the return to indigenous roots embodied by the Aztlán movement in the United States is a direct consequence of post-revolutionary Mexican ideology; I believe that the Revolution actually resulted in diverse social currents moving in opposite directions. It was during this time period, ironically enough, that the Spanish of Mexican political emigrés was regarded positively, while the language of migrant laborers on either side of the border was implicitly racialized as belonging to a poor non-white population, was viewed with scorn, and was assumed to be a pastiche of non-standard Spanish variants combined with a hopeless jumble of English. Such viewpoints, for example, made their way even into serious print venues such as the *American Mercury*, where in 1930 H. E. McKinstry offered the following linguistic commentary on the U. S.-Mexican border:

While the Mexican of the border appropriates the words of his neighbor in a truly wholesale manner, there is neither hope no danger that he will ever become English-speaking. It is only the bare words that are adopted. They are woven ingeniously into a fabric of grammar and pronunciation which remains forever Mexican. Although every other word your Nogales or Juárez peon uses may be English, he could not, to save his

sombrero, put them together into a sentence intelligible to an American, that is, beyond such simple household phrases as *all right* and *goddam*. When, then, a border-Mexican goes out *chopeando* (shopping) and meets a friend on the street, he cordially shouts:

“*Como le* how do you *dea?*”, to be assured by the reply: “Oh, very-well-*eando*, *gracias a diós.*” [...] This mongrel jargon of the border is naturally shocking to the ears of the well-bred Mexican of the interior

McKinstry’s examples were later quoted uncritically by H. L. Mencken in his otherwise authoritative monograph *The American Language*. Although McKinstry recited several anecdotes that place him frequently on both sides of the U. S.-Mexican border, where according to him, he communicated in Spanish all the while, there is no earthly chance that he ever heard a Mexican of any linguistic background blurt out “very-well-*eando*” or similar nonsense.

McKinstry did indeed register actually occurring Anglicisms in Mexican Spanish, both assimilated (*troca*, *lonche*, *póquer*) and spontaneously introduced (*Grape Nuts*, *Puffed Wheat*), but in one of the first published instances of what social psychologists call willing suspension of disbelief, he jumped seamlessly from legitimate bilingual borrowings to metalinguistic fantasy, leaving unwary readers with the impression that Mexicans on both sides of the border really did speak a “mongrel jargon.” This cruelly mocking bilingual-bashing, creating false divisions that served the powerful elites and further marginalized already dispossessed immigrants, has become a literary stock in trade, used shortly thereafter by the Puerto Rican journalist Salvador Tió, who claimed for himself the dubious honor of having invented the word *espanGLISH*, in his own version of what he felt was becoming a “mongrel jargon” in Puerto Rico:

Tree—árbol. To climb—trepar. To climb a tree—trepar un árbol. ¿Por qué no formar una palabra que exprese en ambos idiomas el mismo sentimiento? Para nosotros que

somos bilingües la cosa es clara. Se acuña una palabra nueva y se atacuña bien. Y ha nacido un nuevo idioma [...] *Treepar*. He aquí una palabra llena de movimiento. Es una especie de taquigrafía lingüística cuya única dificultad consiste en que es más rápida que el pensamiento. Es una palabra que puede expresar, en dos idiomas a un tiempo, no ya dos palabras, dos oraciones completas. Y lo grande de esta idea, lo original, es que se pueden conjugar a un tiempo, no dos verbos, sino dos pensamientos completos en dos lenguas distintas. La lengua queda recogida en el verbo, y paradoja, se acaba la verborrea [...] Para decir “Me subí a un árbol” (I climbed a tree), basta decir: *treepé*.

or again:

Rocking chair—sillón. De ahí formamos el sustantivo: *rollón* y el verbo: *rollar* (to rock—mecerse) [...] y para decir: “I get up from the rocking-chair” (Yo me levanto del sillón), basta decir: “Yo me desenrollo.”

Tiό—perhaps inspired by McKinstry’s grotesque parody—then illustrates what a dialogue in such *spanglish* might sound like (Tiό 1954:65):

¿Espiblas Espanglish? --Yi, Minor.

*Yi* is a blend of *yes* and *sí*; *espiblar* combines *speak* and *hablar*, and *Minor* is derived from *Mister* and *Señor*. Tiό echoes the affirmation that “anyone” can speak *spanglish* by just making things up as one goes along. More recently, the expatriot Mexican writer and professor Ilán Stavans (2000, 2002, 2003) has offered a similarly surreal “mongrel jargon,” which he affirms to be true *Spanglish*, for example in his translation of the beginning of Cervantes *Quijote*: “In un placete de La Mancha of which nombre no quiero remembrearme, vivía, not so long ago, uno de esos gentlemen who always tienen una lanza in the rack, una buckler antigua, a skinny caballo y un grayhound para el chase”.

. Within the United States the designation *spanglish* is most commonly used by non-Latinos (or by Latinos who are openly critical of non-standard language usage), in reference to the speech patterns of resident Latino communities. The most frequent targets are the nation's two oldest Hispanophone communities, those of Mexican and Puerto Rican origin; rarely if ever does one hear *Spanglish* used in conjunction with expatriates from Spain or Southern Cone nations perceived as "white," thus suggesting an element of racism coupled with the xenophobia that deplores any sort of linguistic and cultural hybridity. Despite the lack of empirical evidence, the view that *spanglish* constitutes a specific type of language is widespread; one can find dictionaries, grammar sketches, greeting cards, t-shirts, bumper stickers, and an enormous number of editorial comments and references in popular culture, all suggesting that *spanglish* has a life of its own. One common thread that runs through most accounts of Spanglish is the idea that Latinos in the United States as well as in northern Mexico and Puerto Rico speak this "language" rather than "real" Spanish. That this view is not confined to the producers of whimsical souvenirs is illustrated by the definition of *Spanglish* found in the prestigious and usually well-etymologized *Oxford English Dictionary* (v. XVI, p. 105): "A type of Spanish contaminated by English words and forms of expression, spoken in Latin America." *Spanglish* has even made its way into children's literature, for example in a humorously didactic novel by Montes (2003) in which a Latina girl is teased by her English-only classmates. The cover blurb sets the stage:

Maritza Gabriela Morales Mercado (Gabí for short) has big *problemas*. Her worst enemy, Johnny Wiley, is driving her crazy ... Gabí is so mad she can't even talk straight. Her English words keep getting jumbled up with her Spanish words. Now she's speaking a

crazy mix of both, and no one knows what she's saying! Will Gabí ever make sense again? Or will she be tongue-tied forever?

The book provides a touching lesson in cultural sensitivity and a few examples of realistic code-switching, although the idea that bilingual speakers “jumble up” their languages when they become angry is unlikely to score any points in the bilingual education arena. In the court of public opinion in the United States, *Spanglish* has already been tried, convicted, and is serving consecutive life sentences.

The advent of World War I, which coincided with the Mexican Revolution, brought about a need for additional laborers in the American Southwest. During World War I the flow of immigrant labor from southern and eastern Europe was largely cut off, and Mexican workers were in greater demand in the U. S., a trend that continued with the post-WW I immigration laws that further restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe (Durand et al. 2001). The 1917 Immigration Act, as amended to include temporary entry of contracted farm workers, facilitated the legal entry of Mexican workers into the United States, marking the first guest worker program. Mexican immigrants worked in California, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and other states where sugar beets were grown (Martin 1998). The program continued officially until 1922, but in reality only the economic collapse of the Great Depression temporarily slowed what by then was an irreversible migratory pattern. The Bracero Program was initiated in 1942, to offset the labor shortage resulting from World War II overseas assignments of many farm workers; the program ran officially until 1964 but with many interruptions and setbacks, including the “Operation Wetback” campaign of 1954-1955 which resulted in the forced expulsion of nearly 3 million Mexicans. Officially, some 4.6 million Mexicans were reported to have entered the United States during the Bracero program, but the real numbers were probably at least double

this figure, since some 5 million Mexican workers not officially recruited through the Bracero mechanisms were also deported from the U. S. during the same time period (also Scruggs 1961). Most of the workers employed by the Bracero program came from central and southwestern Mexican states (Durand and Massey 1992). The numbers peaked in 1959, when 439,000 *braceros* officially entered the U. S. The braceros were concentrated in Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, but also Arkansas, Nebraska, Oregon, Mississippi, Florida, Illinois, and other non-border states (Jones 1982).

By the end of the Mexican Revolution, the once unquestionable hegemony of Spanish along the U. S.-Mexican border was being quickly eroded by Anglo-American neocolonialism (Cervantes-Rodríguez and Lutz 2003), and scholarship on Mexican Spanish in the United States took on a definitely pessimistic tone, focusing on low educational achievement of putatively bilingual children as well as on non-standard features of Spanish and what was claimed to be indiscriminate mixing with English. The 1930's and early 1940's saw a number of articles, theses, and dissertations dealing with southwest Spanish, centered on New Mexico; these almost inevitably dealt with perceived deficiencies of Spanish speakers, in school achievement, in learning English, and when taking intelligence tests. Bilingualism was often hopelessly entangled with ethnocentric views of mental disabilities, and the entire discourse was permeated with the notion that knowledge of Spanish is a cognitive liability. A 1950's study (Marx 1953) referred to the “problem” of bilingualism among Spanish-speaking Americans, and a 1960's thesis addressed the “handicaps of bi-lingual Mexican children” (Marcoux 1961). By the 1950's educators were engaged in “straightening out” the presumably jumbled Spanish of Mexican-Americans. In 1953 Paulline Baker published *Español para los hispanos* (1953), perhaps the first commercially available textbook for heritage language speakers of Spanish in the United States. Baker, teaching in rural

New Mexico, offered the book as a supplement to traditional Spanish courses; speaking of U. S. Spanish speakers she notes that “estamos presenciando una decadencia lamentable del español de los Estados Unidos”, and “Cada día se hace sentir más la necesidad de corregir los errores del mal español que se deben evitar y desarrollarse el buen uso del español que se debe emplear” The book, in her words, “trata de los equívocos gramaticales o las faltas en el vocabulario de la gente de habla española de los Estados Unidos”, and chapter headings include ‘barbarismos’ ‘pachuquismos’, and ‘faltas gramaticales’.

The study of social registers of Spanish made its first appearance in the 1950's, invariably choosing socially marked underclass speech for individual attention. Paulline Baker's textbook for native Spanish speakers in the U. S. (Baker 1953:49) uncompromisingly refers to Pachuco language as “the slang of the dead-end kids.” Barker (1950) described Pachuco in Tucson as “an American-Spanish argot”, a term which Barker extracts from Webster's dictionary as “a secret language or conventional slang peculiar to a group of thieves, tramps or vagabonds; or, more broadly, a cant or class jargon.” Barker cites informants' accounts that Pachuco originated among “‘grifos’ or marijuana smokers and dope peddlers, in the El Paso underworld.” Although describing Pachucos as in effect youth gangs, Barker is judicious in describing the Sleepy Lagoon fights and the Los Angeles Zoot Suit riots and the kangaroo court justice that befell many of the participants. He also acknowledges that many young Chicano World War II veterans became disillusioned by the shabby treatment afforded by a society whose freedom they had risked their lives to protect. There remains an undercurrent of disapproval: “the habitual use of the argot, then, may be taken to indicate that the speaker is not interested in raising his social status above that of the laboring group. Such usage may also indicate his rejection of some of the conventional values of Mexican and American culture.” Barker concludes—not without some justification—that “... only when the goals of American

society can be demonstrated as obtainable to him—perhaps then through such means as vocational education—will the pachuco as a linguistic and social type disappear ...” Braddy (1953, 1956, 1965) wrote of “Pachucos and their argot” together with “smugglers argot” and “narcotic argot” in Texas. R. J. González (1967) believed that Pachuco was becoming a creole (taking this term to entail language degeneration). Griffith (1947) referred to the “Pachuco patois,” while May (1966) wrote of “tex-mex” and Ranson (1954) wrote of viles pochismos” [terrible *poch* expressions].

By the early 1970’s, United States varieties of Spanish became more widely acknowledged in academic circles, but still fraught with qualifications of non-standardness or interference from English. A seminal article which did much to place the linguistic characteristics of Mexican-American Spanish before linguists and sociologists was Rosaura Sánchez (1972) “Nuestra circunstancia lingüística.” She asserts (p. 47) that “podría hablarse del dialecto méxico-americano del sudoeste de EEUU. Conviene considerar que no sólo es un habla regional sino también una variedad social que identifica a una minoría étnica vista por los anglos y los otros hispanos en nuestro ambiente como un pueblo sin líderes, sin ambiciones, de escasos recursos, de poca educación y de un bajo nivel socio-económico.” Sánchez then goes on to describe possible variation within the Mexican-American community, in sociopolitical terms (p. 49). based on the notion of diglossia. e.g. as found in Arabic-speaking countries, where classical Arabic and local vernaculars stand in complementary distribution across speech acts. She asserts that there is a standard Mexican dialect found in the media and in some churches, while vernacular speech was more varied. At the low end of the spectrum of variation are speakers who possess a limited lexical repertoire and a simplified syntax. As an illustration of her points, Sánchez presents a compendium of features found among 30 Mexican-American students from various parts of Texas. Despite the obvious attempt to create an objective description of Mexican-American Spanish in its true variety, many of Sánchez’

examples dwell on rustic (i.e. rural, not just informal, popular, or uneducated) variants. The phonetic examples are all typical of rustic Spanish worldwide, with none of the examples being uniquely or even predominantly Mexican (e.g. *suidad* for *ciudad* `city,' *pior* for *peor* `worse,' *juimos* for *fuimos* `we went,' *usté* for *usted* `you.'). Similarly, Sánchez gives many examples of verb forms created by analogy, extending diphthongs (*perdemos*), regularizing accents (*cómamos*), etc. Coming as one of the first comprehensive descriptions of Mexican-American speech considered as “Chicano Spanish” (i.e. the language of a socially disadvantaged group, subject to linguistic persecution), and written by an “insider,” Sánchez (1972) set the stage for much subsequent research.

Advancing significantly beyond her earlier article, Sánchez (1983) *Chicano discourse* represents an eloquent sociolinguistic and sociopolitical portrayal of Chicano language, viewed from the inside. Sánchez takes the stance that Chicano language and culture are under assault, and views with pessimism the possibilities for significant linguistic and cultural retention in view of the heavy pressure to assimilate to Anglo-American society. Cast in a neo-Marxist framework, Sánchez (1983) examines the root causes for Chicano language behavior, rather than confining herself to simply describing the end product. Her description of Chicano Spanish is considerably more mature than Sánchez (1972), both in terms of descriptive detail and in encompassing the entirety of Mexican-American language usage. She distinguishes among “standard Spanish,” “popular urban Spanish,” and “popular rural Spanish” in describing Mexican-American speech, and treats all Chicano language usage from a discourse perspective. Linguistic behavior is set in terms of domains of usage, integration into distinct strata of United States society, linguistic and cultural attitudes, and rural/urban origin. Sánchez definitely demonstrates that not all Mexican-American Spanish is “archaic” nor even “non-standard” that despite chronic socioeconomic disadvantages

with respect to the Anglo-American population, the Mexican-American community contains a variety of styles and registers comparable to those used by monolingual native speakers of English.

In 1975 Roberto Galván and Richard Teschner published their *Diccionario del español tejano*, the first commercially published dictionary of an explicitly U. S. variety of Spanish, not a dictionary of Mexicanisms published in Mexico. In the second edition (1977), the authors included data from California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and even Florida, thus making the dictionary into the *Diccionario del español chicano*. Although compiled by two scholars deeply committed to the cause of Latino justice, the dictionary contains many items which are either common to vernacular Spanish over a much wider area, or occasional oddities which are not truly representative of Mexican-American Spanish taken as a whole. The authors include in their dictionary phonetic variants which typify (predominantly northern) Mexican Spanish, or colloquial Spanish in general. This includes *pa* < *para* 'for,' *calzoncío* < *calzoncillo* 'underpants,' *toavía* < *todavía* 'yet,' *tualla* < *toalla* 'towel,' etc. Such rapid-speech and regional phonetic variants are not found in provincial or national dictionaries of other varieties of Spanish, and their inclusion in the Chicano Spanish dictionary gives the impression that rather unremarkable phonetic reductions found throughout the Spanish-speaking world are somehow more exaggerated in this dialect. Another potential difficulty is the lack of indication of frequency of usage. The authors do acknowledge certain items as obsolete, but include items such as *vide* for *vi* 'I saw,' *traiba* for *traía* 'I/he/she used to bring,' *truje* 'I brought,' which are typical only of the most isolated or rustic speakers of Texas and other Mexican-American varieties of Spanish. The issue of archaisms in Mexican-American Spanish lies at the heart of the debate on the "standardness" or "correctness" of these varieties. Objectively, many truly archaic forms can be found in communities whose speakers label themselves Mexican-American or Chicano. In a few cases (northern New Mexico, southern Colorado, the Sabine River

isolate), the archaisms represent non-immigrant varieties of Spanish which developed in what is now United States territory several centuries ago, and were subsequently isolated from more recent innovations of Mexican Spanish. In other cases, such as along the U. S.-Mexican border, archaic forms derive in large measure from uneducated rural speakers, especially from areas of Mexico where public education is precarious at best, and contact with more prestigious sociolects is limited. Although the average socioeconomic level of Mexican immigrants to the United States is quite low by American standards, it is by no means the case that all or even most Mexican immigrants speak rural or uneducated varieties of Spanish. There are hundreds of thousands of Mexican-Americans modest means who never use such items as *asina* `thus,' *vide* `I saw,' *truje* `I brought,' *muncho* `much,' *traiba* `was bringing,' *mesmo* `same,' or *agora* `now.'

By the end of the 1970's the academic study of Mexican and other varieties of Spanish in the United States finally emerged once and for all from the nether regions, together with a flourishing literary and cultural production by U. S. Latinos that left no doubt that the Spanish language truly is a "national resource." Sadly, "outside the hedges" as we used to say when I was a student at Rice University, or "in the real world" as critics of academic life would put it, not all of our fellow citizens share this viewpoint. It is axiomatically assumed that upon entering the United States biosphere, Spanish becomes denatured, weakened, contaminated, and ultimately assimilated. "Resistance is futile" as the Borg informed the denizens of *Stark Trek: the Next Generation*, and adopting such a fatalistic viewpoint with respect to U. S. Spanish effectively forecloses any appreciation of the true nature of Spanish-English bilingualism.

For a full century after half of Mexico was swallowed up by the United States, that is until the massive Puerto Rican immigration to the Northeast beginning in the late 1940's, followed by the Cuban exodus of the 1960's, to speak "Spanish" in the United States really WAS

to speak “Mexican.” The Mexican Revolution, although only a chronological mile-post on the long road of Mexican immigration to the United States, represents a watershed in terms of attitudes towards Spanish. It was, I would argue, not until the unprecedented arrival of tens of thousands of socio-political refugees during the Mexican Revolution that “Mexican” came to be clearly differentiated from “Mexican-American” both in the United States and in Mexico. For the first (and last) time in United States history, citizens of Mexico seeking supposedly temporary haven in the U. S. were juxtaposed with Mexican immigrants who—it was already clear—would remain in this country indefinitely. Moreover, although all social classes were represented among the diaspora of the Mexican Revolution, the popular imagination idealized this group as consisting solely of revolutionary intellectuals, landowners, and middle-class professionals, implicitly regarded as “Spaniards,” as opposed to the unmistakably working-class immigrants seeking employment in industry and agriculture. Together with this questionable and divisive dichotomy of perception came the downgrading of Mexican immigrant Spanish into “border Spanish,” “español mocho,” “Tex-Mex,” and “Spanglish,” all regarded ultimately as “mongrel jargons.” Just as early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Americans could admire the architectural monuments and literary masterpieces of Italy and Greece while scorning working-class Italian and Greek immigrants, so could Mexico and its citizens who chose to remain there (*en el otro cachete*) be relegated to a never-never land that need not be mentioned in the context of Mexican-Americans. The struggle to reclaim the legitimacy of Spanish in the United States was catalyzed by the Mexican Revolution, and while many battles have been won in the ensuing century, we have still not won the war. I recently participated in a program review of a major Texas university that includes satellite campuses in the Rio Grande Valley. The administration of that university is struggling with a mandate to give as many language students as possible a study-abroad

immersion experience within a limited resource environment. The review team pointed out that students could obtain a complete Spanish immersion experience without ever leaving South Texas; the reaction on the part of the administration, which in other respects has taken a very pro-active stance toward serving its Latino communities, was one of amazement. Whereas colleges and universities in this country send students to very costly language immersion programs in Mexico and Spain, as well as in more exotic venues such as Costa Rica and Argentina, virtually no one has capitalized on the existence of de facto Spanish speech communities in the Rio Grande Valley and elsewhere in the United States. This massive blind spot is all the more surprising in view of the fact that Mexican-American Spanish (as well as all other varieties) is not a regional vernacular masquerading as a national language, but is perfectly acceptable among the world's Spanish speakers. Students exposed to Mexican-American Spanish would not be learning "Spanglish," "Tex-Mex," *español mocho*, or any other off-brand substitute for the real thing. They would learn Spanish, naturally nuanced by bilingual encounters in the United States in the same way that Spanish has always been enriched by contact with other cultures and languages. The fact that Mexican-Americans may use more English loan-words than their counterparts in Tierra del Fuego is no more detrimental to the language than the introduction of Catalan words by Spanish speakers in Barcelona (a popular study-abroad venue), Maya words in the Yucatan (another top spot), or *Lunfardo* words in Buenos Aires (Spanish by Tango). Where would the Spanish language be without *ojalá* and *si Dios quiere* (from Arabic), *izquierda* (from Basque), *no hay de que* (from French), *maíz* (from Arawak), or *chocolate* (from Nahuatl)? And as for borrowings from English, people in Argentina drink *güisqui* and eat *biftec*, elect *líderes* and attend a *mitin*, and a Costa Rican discotheque with standing room only *está ful*. And stop signs in Spain say *STOP* just like here in Texas. In the

case of language-immersion programs, however, beauty is in the ear of the beholder, and American Spanish teachers' and students' ears have been stuffed shut with negative attitudes towards U. S. varieties of Spanish. Spanish in the southwestern United States has not yet reclaimed the status of "national resource" proclaimed by the president of the University of New Mexico nearly a century ago.

I have spoken more about Spanish in the United States than about the Mexican Revolution. Frogs instead of sharks, just as promised. But the Mexican Revolution and Mexican-American Spanish are inseparable; one cannot be conceived without the other. The United States is in a dead heat with Spain, Argentina, and Colombia as the world's second largest Spanish-speaking nation, and Mexican-American Spanish alone is probably the third-place winner among the world's Spanish speech communities. The Mexican Revolution both energized the growth of Spanish in the United States and unwittingly inserted a hyphen, that bigots and xenophobes turned into a wedge and a weapon, but that also provided Latino community leaders and activists with a rallying point around which new communities could be formed. A hundred years later, events such as this one show us which side won the battle, and is winning the war.

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