

Abstract

The main purpose of the present dissertation is to describe the two linguistic-cultural phenomena arising from mass emigration of Mexicans to Los Angeles. These phenomena are as follows: (1) Spanish-English bilingualism of the youngest Mexican migration, (2) Spanglish, also known as mixed language code that is gaining an increasing number of users in the area of Los Angeles.

In the study some linguistic and socio-cultural issues connected to bilingualism and Spanglish were selected and analysed. The first, theoretical part of the dissertation brings reflections on the popular phenomenon in modern times, that is bilingualism, which in spite of its appearances is not an easy process to describe. The next, research and study part is devoted to bilingualism of Mexican-American immigrants residing in Los Angeles.

In America, immigrants of Mexican-originate subject to influence from the English language which results in the creation of a specific dialect to unite the members of the immigrant diaspora. Among people living in this multilingual environment, the emergence of such a language mixture as Spanglish seems almost unavoidable: young immigrants living in the English-speaking environment are eager to use the new linguistic code, a blend of Spanish and English lexemes. In fact, this linguistic construct includes numerous words, phrases, and even syntactic constructions taken from English language.

The main thesis of the present research conducted within the Los Angeles immigrant group is the correlation between Spanish-English bilingualism and Spanglish. As public opinion deemed Spanglish as a blocker for linguistic advancement or degraded Spanish, it is actually a method of enhancing the linguistic system. That is why, not only does the research contest the use of such terms, but it also argues that bilingualism is a much more compound and adequate term as well as an analytic framework for the study of bilingual productions. Spanglish should be understood as a form of bilingualism; a hybrid enriching the linguistic system.

Despite the fact that the above-mentioned topics create the core of my research study, I also embrace the contemporary cultural research focus accepting the idea of text as cultural practice. Thus, created by Spanglish speakers linguistic and identity ideologies in cultural productions are also analysed in the present analysis.

What is more, Spanglish definitions such as degraded, border language or mongrel does not suffice the complexity of linguistic process and ideologies that are at once conflictive and similar within Mexican immigrants and their US national setting. The research on the speakers' development of Spanglish also mirrors the necessity of taking the languages into account while creating the list of factors used to examine Mexican-American identity creation since Spanglish should be seen as a form of bilingual identity.

Unquestionably, the present dissertation led to the basic belief that linguistic system is a cultural phenomenon which consists both of systemic research such as phonetics, morphology, semantics, as well as the cultural approach forming the foundation of language change together with communication models. Furthermore, the linguistic character of the present analysis includes social and cultural arguments subordinated to the presented and analysed language material.

The study consists of five parts. The first chapter focuses on bilingualism and at the same time it reflects the underlying conceptual framework prompting my dissertation. It foregrounds the study of bilingualism in order to display the core argument for the use of bilingual to address Mexican-American linguistic productions and identities they represent. In addition, this part brings together the various fields of study that create the basis for my theoretical and methodological approach to the study of bilingualism from a sociolinguistic standpoint. What is more, this introductory part evaluates the study of bilingualism organized by core inquiries of bilingualism research. Starting from an overview of the difficulty in defining the term bilingualism the conceptual terms used to identify and describe bilinguals are assessed. This leads to an outlining of the processes of bilingual development at the individual and community level, that is, when and how bilingualism develops, is enacted, and studied.

After the confirmation of bilingualism as the critical basis for the conceptual framework of this research, I also posit the importance of Linguistic Worldview together with cultural studies. The main aim is to approach the often ignored yet significant relation between language and identity in cultural analysis. I assert that bilingualism should be incorporated into critical study of the representational work of Mexican-American cultural productions, which requires an intimate understanding of the ideologies at play in analysing relations between language and identity, a focus all too often ignored by current scholarly trends in the study of historically multilingual individuals and communities.

In chapter two a survey of the most important features of bilingual speech is presented. Within this part, three core elements are examined: interference, borrowing, and code-switching. These bilingual processes are analysed on the basis of vivid examples either from literature or, as far as possible, from individual speakers' experience.

The third part focuses mainly on Spanglish development within the Mexican immigrant community in Los Angeles. This chapter begins with a discussion on the definition and description of Spanglish phenomenon and its speakers in order to situate the linguistic assumptions and expectations directed at Mexican-Americans as heritage speakers of Spanglish. Further, a review of the linguistic characteristics of Spanglish is presented, its hybrid nature and the resultant cultural ostracism as described by many authors. By analysing how Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles choose to enact their identities as bilinguals, I investigate the social views on Spanglish in order to elucidate the multifarious quality of bilingual identity. Chapter three is finalized by a review of Spanglish contextualisation within American mainstream culture.

Part four focuses mainly on the historical panorama of Mexican immigration flow to America and its influence on ethnocultural identity creation in the area of Los Angeles. The guiding inquiry for this chapter is: What is demographic distribution of Mexican immigrants in the United States? By adopting the conceptual framework presented in chapter one, the diversity of Mexican-American identity outcomes is highlighted by investigating the linguistic situation of Spanglish speakers in Los Angeles. Furthermore, by focusing on the process of bilingual Mexican-American identity development within a group of 128 interviewees of Mexican origin, the variety of bilingual identity outcomes is revealed. In fact, this diversity is prompted by, and not in spite of, shared linguistic and cultural contexts. The investigation into speakers' development displays the need of taking into consideration language as one of the factors that are used to analyse Mexican-American identity development.

The final chapter of the present dissertation includes data analysis on the Spanglish-speaking diaspora living in the area of Los Angeles. This part begins with a review of the factors which contribute to language choice and language use at the community level. The research further takes speakers' perspective on how patterns of choice and use develop and maintain language. For bilingual individuals and communities, they live in, the choices available for use within and between languages enhance their linguistic repertoires. As a result, their abilities to represent identities are increased. Each subsection employs various modes of expressing and being bilingual that reveal the unequivocal importance of language choice and use in the maintenance of Mexican-American identities. Thus, I argue for critical recognition of the intricate work through which Mexican immigrants develop their identities by mining their rich linguistic repertoires as bilinguals. Furthering, I continue with my analysis of the immigrants' speech characteristics.

The present dissertation is completed with a summary including generalizations and conclusions drawn from the analysis of the linguistic and cultural situation of Mexican immigrants. The final pages consist of a bibliography and an appendix containing the questionnaires.

