

From Mock Spanish to Inverted Spanglish

*Language Ideologies and the Racialization of Mexican and
Puerto Rican Youth in the United States*

JONATHAN ROSA

In April 2012, Linda Chavez, a widely recognized Latina conservative political figure,¹ penned a column titled “Why So Few Latinos ID Themselves as ‘American’.” Chavez cites a 2012 Pew Hispanic Research Center report based on a nationwide survey of Hispanic adults, and ponders why “only 8 percent of immigrant [Hispanics], 35 percent of second-generation Hispanics, and 48 percent of third-generation Hispanics” identify themselves first and foremost as American. She constructs a historical narrative in which the predominantly European immigration cohort in the early twentieth century was “encouraged to ‘Americanize’” and “public schools saw it as their primary responsibility to help form the children of these immigrants into new Americans.” Chavez distinguishes between the assimilationist ethos surrounding European immigration and “the advent of multiculturalism and ethnic solidarity, beginning in the 1960s,” which coincided with dramatic increases in immigration from Latin America.

For Chavez, “if the children and grandchildren of Hispanic immigrants still see themselves as a group apart, it’s because we’ve encouraged them to do so.” As examples of how racial and ethnic identities are continually promoted, she points to affirmative action policies that require ethnoracial self-identification on government forms, educational entrance exams, and applications for colleges, jobs, and mortgages or bank loans. Shifting gears, Chavez assures readers that “the news on the assimilation front in the Pew Hispanic Center’s study is not all bad.” She explains that “Hispanics overwhelmingly believe in the importance of learning English; 90 percent think English fluency is crucial to succeeding in the United States.” Doubling-down on this point, Chavez repeats the study’s finding

that “nearly all U.S.-born Hispanics say they speak, read and write English well.” Thus, for Chavez, ideas about language—namely, proficiency in English—figure centrally in determining whether U.S. Latinas/os will join an unmarked, assimilated American “melting pot” or remain a racialized group, separate and apart from white Americans.

Chavez’s views are characteristic of popular discourses surrounding U.S. Latinas/os. Such discourses are often anchored in the powerful relationships among ideologies of language, race, and nation. These linked ideologies are reflected in longstanding and contemporary debates about immigration, citizenship, English-only legislation, and ethnoracial categories and classifications. In this chapter, I analyze the ways that language ideologies shape the racialization of U.S. Latinas/os. I focus specifically on raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores and Rosa, 2015) and practices in the context of a predominantly Latina/o Chicago public high school and its surrounding communities. In particular, I analyze the relationship between linguistic practices that Jane H. Hill describes as “Mock Spanish” (1998, 2005, 2008) and what I call “Inverted Spanglish.” I draw on theories of language ideologies and processes of racialization to complicate Hill’s claim that Mock Spanish stigmatizes “historically Spanish-speaking populations” (2008). In contrast, I suggest that Mock Spanish stigmatizes populations *racialized* as U.S. Latinas/os regardless of their linguistic practices. I conclude by showing how U.S. Latinas/os appropriate the meaningfulness of Mock Spanish through the use of Inverted Spanglish by inverting both pronunciation patterns associated with Spanish lexical items and the ethnolinguistic identities associated with these linguistic forms. I will demonstrate how U.S. Latinas/os not only navigate but also transform linguistic boundaries. In order to frame this analysis of the relationship between Mock Spanish and Inverted Spanglish, the following section provides an overview of language ideologies and the racialization of U.S. Latinas/os.

Racing Language and Linguaging Race in the Context of U.S. Latinas/os

One of the primary ways in which U.S. Latinas/os are imagined as a recognizable ethnoracial group, from in-group and out-group perspectives alike, is through language ideologies that position Spanish-English hybridity as the clearest sign of Latina/o identity. The 2002 book by Ed Morales, *Living in Spanglish*, provides an illustration of this ideology:

Why Spanglish? There is no better metaphor for what a mixed-race culture means than a hybrid language, an informal code. . . . Spanglish is what we speak, but it is also who we Latinos are, and how we act,

and how we perceive the world. It's also a way to avoid the sectarian nature of other labels that define our condition, terms like Nuyorican, Chicano, Cuban American, Dominican, etc. (Morales 2002, 3)

In Morales's take on what many autobiographers have described as a fractured Latina/o identity (Rodriguez 1982; Anzaldúa 1987), *Spanglish* is proposed as a unifying force among Latinas/os. Mobilizing prevailing language beliefs that "a culture" must speak "a language," Morales equates Latinas/os as members of a "mixed-race culture" with *Spanglish*, "a hybrid language." Note here the fascinating play on the ideology of "one people, one language," in that the "one language" of Latinas/os is a Spanish-English hybrid.

While Morales voices his position from an in-group perspective, his views align with what Ana Celia Zentella has described as "*chiquita*-fication" (2003; emphasis in original), the process whereby U.S. Latinas/os are simultaneously romanticized and otherized. Zentella has suggested that this process "is central to Hispanophobia because it reduces Hispanics to an undifferentiated and uncomplicated but huge and threatening mass" (2003, 52). Zentella complicates romanticized images of unity by questioning their simplicity and pointing to the stigmatization of Latina/o ethnolinguistic difference. She asserts that the negotiation of ambiguity and mixedness is neither a particularly Latina/o phenomenon nor a specifically contemporary emergence. Stigmatization occurs through the policing of English-language use by U.S. Latinas/os. Signs of accents and Spanish-language use are regarded as reflections of abject foreignness, regardless of the long history of Spanish-language use across the Americas.

Within the context of a U.S. regime of English-language standardization, the Spanish language is positioned as an emblem of identity (Silverstein 2003) that signals ethnolinguistic and ethnoracial difference. The act of speaking Spanish publicly is a subtle marker of this difference. As the political stakes of codes, registers, and styles associated with U.S. Latinas/os become heightened, the public display of linguistic difference is alternately celebrated or stigmatized depending on the speaker's social position. Language use and race come to be constructed and interpreted in relation to one another.

In the U.S. context, Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "strategies of condescension" (Bourdieu 1991, 19) is interesting to consider in relation to race. Think of many American political candidates' common practice of speaking a phrase or two of stilted Spanish in front of Spanish-speaking audiences. Their legitimate public use of the Spanish language is secured in relation to their racial positions and/or the subordination of Spanish to English in White public space (Hill 1998). For many U.S. Latinas/os, public usage of Spanish or "accented" English is prohibited and/or understood as an index of primordial inferiority (i.e., racial difference). This policing of Spanish vis-à-vis English is evident in the requirement of English-language "proficiency" in order to qualify for permanent legal

status and U.S. citizenship as part of proposed immigration reform legislation. Thus, in line with other chapters in this volume, ideologies of race and language work together to structure our ideas (and our laws) regarding who counts as a U.S. citizen.

For U.S. Latinas/os, the racialization of language results in the stigmatization and differentiation of their Spanish and English linguistic practices. In their analysis of “Latino crossings” between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago, De Genova and Ramos-Zayas explain that while “the apparent commonality of the Spanish language . . . is presupposed as a basis for unification among Latino groups. . . Mexican migrants’ and Puerto Ricans’ shared language was instead an especially salient object around which to produce their difference” (2003, 145). Language ideologies alternately position the Spanish language as an emblem of imagined unity across, and difference among, U.S. Latina/o national subgroups. De Genova and Ramos-Zayas point out that “Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago not only drew distinctions between themselves based on the identifiable type and ‘quality’ of Spanish spoken by each group . . . but also evaluated and hierarchically ranked each other’s English” (2003, 173). U.S. Latinas/os are faced with *and* participate in the double-stigmatization of their English and Spanish linguistic practices. The interplay between ideologies surrounding Spanish and English, on the one hand, and the differentiation of Latina/o national subgroups, on the other, links language practices such as “Mock Spanish” to the racialization of U.S. Latinas/os.

Rethinking Mock Spanish

Jane Hill’s analysis of Mock Spanish focuses on the everyday ways that White racial hegemony is reproduced through syncretic Spanish and English language use (2008). She defines Mock Spanish as a set of discursive practices involving the incorporation of “Spanish-language materials into English in order to create a jocular or pejorative ‘key’” (Hill 1998, 682), such as Arnold Schwarzenegger’s famous “Hasta la vista, baby” from the film *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. Hill cites several examples to demonstrate how the same “language mixing” that is heavily policed for U.S. Latinas/os is received as legitimate (and even prized) for Whites. Such analyses of Mock Spanish characteristically link these linguistic practices to existing ethnoracial categories (i.e., “White”) rather than analyzing the role that language use plays in constructing ethnoracial categories. However, can only non-Latina/o White people effectively use Mock Spanish? What about non-Latinas/os in general, such as African Americans? What about Spaniards? These questions require a reanalysis of the ways Mock Spanish participates in the dynamic, joint construction of categories of language, race, and ethnicity.

Hill describes the “major functions” of Mock Spanish as “the elevation of Whiteness and the pejorative racialization of members of historically Spanish-speaking populations” (1998, 682). This description raises several important questions: How might a range of ethnoracial groups participate in “the elevation of Whiteness,” and how might different usages of Mock Spanish potentially elevate a range of ethnoracial groups? Can only the practices of White people (whom Hill sometimes glosses as Anglos) contribute to the elevation of whiteness? If Mock Spanish is to be understood in terms of processes of racialization, then who exactly are the “members of historically Spanish-speaking populations”? Does Mock Spanish necessarily participate in the racialization of *all* Spanish speakers? Can one be positioned simultaneously as a member of a historically Spanish-speaking population *and* White?

In different treatments of Mock Spanish, Hill seems to equate “historically Spanish-speaking populations” with non-whiteness in straightforward ways. Citing examples of Mock Spanish in several texts, Hill (2005) analyzes the functions of Mock Spanish; yet, Hill’s analysis of “Spanish persons” as the racialized and stigmatized targets of Mock Spanish overlooks the different positions of Spain-oriented Spanish speakers and U.S. Latina/o Spanish-speakers. If racialization is a central function of Mock Spanish, then it is important to develop a more precise explanation of the nature of “Latina/o” as a racialized category and its connections to language ideologies in general and to the Spanish language specifically.

Hill argues that Mock Spanish is a “covert racist discourse” that “accomplishes racialization of its subordinate-group targets through indirect indexicality, messages that must be available for comprehension but are never acknowledged by speakers” (Hill 1998, 683). In other words, Mock Spanish invokes stigmatizing stereotypes about Latinas/os without making such stereotypes explicit. The most profound aspect of this process, however, is not that it frames “Spanish speakers” (regardless of national background and ethnoracial identity) in particular ways, but that it specifically produces “Latina/o” as a U.S. racial category. Thus, Mock Spanish must be analyzed specifically in relation to U.S. Latinas/os rather than all Spanish speakers or “members of historically Spanish-speaking populations” in any national context.

These language ideologies need not correspond to actual linguistic practices. People who are racially stigmatized in this process may speak little to no Spanish; recognizing this fact, Hill describes stigmatized targets as “historically Spanish-speaking populations.” Yet, the racializing effects of Mock Spanish do not apply to a large number of the individuals who would seem to fit into this category, namely many Spaniards and other “historically Spanish-speaking populations” that are not racialized as non-White in the ways that millions of U.S. Latinas/os are. The complex nature of the relationship between ideologies of language and

race makes linguistic practices such as Mock Spanish difficult to parse in relation to broader questions about the (re)production of ethnoracial and ethnolinguistic categories in specific contexts.

In comparing Mock Spanish to African American English (AAE) “crossover” (Smitherman 1994), Hill points out that “while the ‘Black’ indexicality of ‘What’s happening’ is easily suppressed, it is virtually impossible to suppress the ‘Spanish’ indexicality of ‘Nada,’ which has in ‘Mock Spanish’ the semantically pejorative sense of ‘absolutely nothing, less than zero’” (Hill 1998, 685). For Hill, the common difference between AAE and Spanish is the frequent indeterminacy of AAE (i.e., the suppression of “Black” indexicality) as opposed to the explicit Spanish indexicality of Mock Spanish usages. Note the way in which AAE and Spanish are made comparable here (even if differentially so). While African American English seems to point toward particular speech communities within the United States, does Spanish do the same? Hill positions “Black” and “Spanish” as analogous racial categories, thereby confining the practice of Mock Spanish as a racializing project to U.S. Latinas/os only—rather than generalizable to all Spanish-speakers.

Through an ethnographic case study of language ideologies and linguistic practices within a predominantly Latina/o Chicago public high school and its surrounding communities, I take up these issues and analyze the specific ways that typifications of whiteness and “Latina/o-ness” are enacted in Mock Spanish and related language use.

Mexican and Puerto Rican Language Ideologies and Practices in Chicago

New Northwest High School (henceforth NNHS)² is a Chicago public high school located near the borders of several predominantly Latina/o communities and a predominantly African American community. Because it is a neighborhood high school and not an application-based selective enrollment school, it draws its students from these nearby communities. More than 90 percent of NNHS’s roughly 1,000 students are Latina/o; the vast majority of the remaining students are African American. The school’s Latina/o student population consists of almost equal numbers of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans; some of these students are of mixed-Latina/o parentage, such as those with one Mexican parent and one Puerto Rican parent.

I conducted ethnographic and sociolinguistic research in NNHS and its surrounding communities between 2007 and 2010. When Dr. Baez, the Puerto Rican principal of NNHS, initially introduced me to the school, she explained her goal of transforming the students from “at risk youth” into “young Latino professionals.” I was interested not only in Dr. Baez’s critical awareness of her

students' shared experiences of spatial, racial, and class exclusion but also in the question of what a Young Latino Professional might sound like. Dr. Baez's project of youth socialization sought to drive a wedge into the raciolinguistic binary of assimilation and multiculturalism. That is, the category Young Latino Professional combines mainstream notions of professionalism with Latina/o identity maintenance. Still, this effort was situated within a neighborhood public high school; the school was required to uphold English language hegemony mandated at the district, state, and national levels. This meant that while Spanish was spoken regularly by NNHS students and employees, students officially designated as "English Language Learners" (about 10% of the student population) were required to participate in a transitional bilingual education program that framed the Spanish language as a handicap to overcome rather than a resource to develop.

Mainstream students (i.e., those not classified as "English Language Learners") alternately reproduced this stigmatization of the Spanish language and embraced it as an object of cultural pride. The following student identity portraits include self-identified English-dominant and/or bilingual students, and focus on their raciolinguistic ideologies and practices:

1. Jimmy (PR, Gen. 3, Gr. 12),³ a 17-year-old senior, self-identified as a monolingual English speaker, yet demonstrated both speaking and comprehension skills in Spanish. For example, while wondering aloud about the sexuality of another male student at NNHS, Jimmy questioned whether the student preferred "pincho," a Puerto Rican-style shish kebab that in this instance euphemistically referred to the male genitalia. Additionally, Jimmy's standard phone greeting is "bueno," which is stereotyped in the Chicago context as the telephone greeting for Spanish-speaking Mexicans. Still, Jimmy was frustrated by situations in which he was unable to communicate effectively in Spanish. He joked that this was especially troublesome during the summer months at the home improvement and construction store where he worked. He said that as the weather warmed up his skin tanned to a darker color and this prompted more customers to speak to him in Spanish. Jimmy's White bosses also continually asked him to help Spanish-dominant customers. Latinas/os and non-Latinas/os alike expected Jimmy to speak Spanish. In one of our tutoring sessions, I asked Jimmy to choose a written character that we could use as a variable when writing out algebraic equations. Jimmy chose "ñ." When I asked him how he could choose a Spanish orthographic character despite his self-proclaimed English monolingualism, he jokingly replied, "Spanish lives in my soul, bro."
2. Victor (Mex/PR, Gen. 3, Gr. 11), a 16-year-old "MexiRican" junior, was born to a bilingual Mexican mother and a bilingual Puerto Rican father, but was

taken in by a Spanish-dominant Puerto Rican foster family at the age of 10. He had not seen his birth father since he was a baby, but he visited his biological mother (a Chicago-born Mexican) regularly. Victor described himself as an English-dominant bilingual; he claimed that he could speak both Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish, but that he spoke more Puerto Rican Spanish because this was the dominant variety spoken in his foster home. Victor told me that Puerto Rican Spanish is better than Mexican Spanish because Puerto Rican Spanish is “what’s up” (i.e., cool), but that Mexican Spanish is more correct. Despite his strong valorization of Puerto Rican Spanish and his self-identification as a bilingual English-Spanish speaker, I rarely heard Victor speak Spanish with other students. In one interaction, Victor responded to a Mexican friend’s Spanish-language greeting, “¿Que pasó, güey?” (What’s up, man?), by telling him, “speak to me in English, I don’t mess with that Spanish.” He later clarified that he didn’t like to be called “güey,” an intimate, masculine term of address in Mexican Spanish (Bucholtz 2009). Victor told me that his friend should “take that güey and go on his way,” playfully utilizing the homophony of Spanish “güey” and English “way.”

3. Carlos (Mex, Gen. 2, Gr. 9), a 15-year-old Mexican freshman, was born in Chicago; both his parents were born in Mexico. A self-described bilingual, Carlos said he spoke Spanish with his parents and mostly English with his younger siblings (he is the oldest). He was Spanish-dominant until he entered elementary school and began learning English. In the classroom in which I observed him most closely, he sat with a boisterous group of Mexican students (three boys and three girls); he spoke English, Spanish, and Spanglish with these students, codeswitching intersententially and intrasententially, but also pronouncing Spanish words with English phonology and vice versa. When I asked Carlos about Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish, he initially voiced an egalitarian perspective, simply claiming that every Latino national subgroup has its own variety of Spanish. He pointed to my paleta-velar pronunciation of /r/ as /l/ in the word /*verdad*/ (really) as an example of how Puerto Rican and Mexican Spanish differ. Upon further questioning, Carlos went on to say that Mexican Spanish is probably a little bit better than Puerto Rican Spanish because it is more correct. He also joked with me about the fact that he had only recently learned from friends at NNHS that some of his favorite Spanish words, such as “*chévere*” (cool/awesome) and “*bochinche*” (gossip), were in fact Puerto Rican, *not* Mexican Spanish terms.
4. Mayra (Mex, Gen. 1.5, Gr. 11), a 16-year-old junior, was born in Mexico City and came to the United States with her parents and baby brother at the age of 8. She described herself as bilingual, but said that Spanish is her main language. She worried that she still had a “Mexican” accent when speaking English. Her parents were monolingual Spanish speakers and her brother,

now 11, was bilingual. During an interview, Mayra joked about how it is not fair that her younger brother can speak English “without an accent.” In contrast to Mayra’s anxieties about her English-language skills, she spoke confidently about her Spanish-language abilities and about the Spanish language in general. She said that one of the main differences between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans is “the language.” She provided examples such as the Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish words for “sidewalk,” *banqueta* and *concreto*, respectively⁴. Mayra also talked about her appreciation of Spanish slang, such as *cuaderno* (notebook) for “friend,” and idiomatic phrases such as *de bolón pin pon* (of a Ping-Pong ball) to tell someone to hurry up. She said that she used to think that the best Spanish is spoken in Spain, but that changed when she heard that the best Spanish is actually spoken in Mexico. She also said that she definitely would not go to Puerto Rico to hear good Spanish because Puerto Ricans “don’t say the words right . . . they miss some words . . . like sometimes they lose the ‘r,’ sometimes they lose the ‘s,’ and it’s really weird . . . and with Mexicans . . . they know how to talk!” Mayra explicitly articulated the stereotype that Puerto Rican Spanish is nonstandard. Similar to Carlos above, she highlighted the alternates of /r/ and /s/ in Puerto Rican Spanish. Mayra also described the shift from Spain (Castilian as spoken in Madrid) to Mexico (Mexico City) in the standard Spanish variety spoken and taught in the United States.

These students differ in age, gender, Latino national subgroup, and self-described language proficiency. Yet, their language ideologies and linguistic practices demonstrate a shared investment in the ability to speak unmarked or “unaccented” English, as well as intimate familiarity with and affinity for Puerto Rican and Mexican varieties of Spanish. Specifically, the students draw on local language ideologies that emphasize the “correctness” of Mexican Spanish and the “coolness” of Puerto Rican Spanish (Rosa 2014a, 2014b). These ideologies challenge the notion that the Spanish language unifies U.S. Latinas/os in straightforward ways. A simultaneous commitment to demonstrating “unaccented” English ability and intimate Spanish familiarity would seem to present these students with competing linguistic demands. In the following section I show how Latina/o NNHS students reconfigure Mock Spanish usages in order to reconcile this contradiction.

From Mock Spanish to Inverted Spanglish

In dialogue with Hill’s work on Mock Spanish, Zentella (2003) and Mason Carris (2011) provide evidence of U.S. Latinas/os drawing on mock-language practices

to parody the speech of Whites. I build upon this work to suggest that in addition to the mocking quality of the voicing involved here, U.S. Latinas/os use these language practices to meet the demand that they speak Spanish *in* English without being heard to possess an accent. These usages transform Mock Spanish into what I call “Inverted Spanglish,” a set of language practices that function as a unifying component of the ethnoracial experiences of many U.S. Latinas/os (1.5 generation and beyond). I refer to these practices as “Inverted Spanglish” because they invert both pronunciation patterns associated with Spanish lexical items and the ethnolinguistic identities associated with these linguistic forms. Whereas Mock Spanish involves the production of whiteness through the combination of Spanish linguistic forms and English pronunciation, Inverted Spanglish appropriates similar linguistic patterns to produce U.S. Latina/o ethnolinguistic identities that signal intimate familiarity with both English and Spanish.

In one private classroom exchange, two sophomore boys—one Puerto Rican, Pedro (PR, Gen. 3, Gr. 10), the other MexiRican, Miguel (PR[m]/Mex[f], Gen. 2, Gr. 10)—traded Inverted Spanglish insults⁵:

Excerpt 1: Inverted Spanglish insults

Pedro: What’s up, cuhbron? /kabɹoun/ (Spanish, /kaβron/,”cabrón,” “bastard”)

Miguel: Not much, pendaýho! /pɛndeihoʊ/ (Spanish, /pendexo/,”pendejo,” “dumbass/asshole”)

In this instance, Inverted Spanglish transformed Spanish vulgarities that might otherwise operate as serious provocations into jovial play.⁶ By pronouncing these words with conventional English phonology, the would-be offenses took shape as jocular exchanges. The voicings involved here are more complicated, however, as *cabrón* and *pendejo* index Latina/o in-group knowledge of Spanish insults. These items are not available to most non-Latina/o Mock Spanish users. Inverted Spanglish, as opposed to Mock Spanish, allowed Pedro and Miguel to accomplish multiple goals simultaneously: (1) highlight a shared Latina/o identity that involves critical distance from whiteness, (2) lay claim to a “cool” Americanness through English-language dexterity, and (3) display their insider knowledge of Spanish.

Inverted Spanglish was ubiquitous at NNHS; it was used in interactions among Latina/o teachers, Latina/o students, and between Latina/o teachers and students. This U.S. Latina/o-based linguistic register consists of Spanish lexical items pronounced with English phonology; what might be described as “saying Spanish words in English.” The particular type of English phonology varies. In some cases, the Spanish word is pronounced with the same phonology

that speakers conventionally use in their English speech. These usages generally take place in predominantly U.S. Latina/o settings and involve in-group Spanish tokens (i.e., usages that are not familiar to most non-Latinas/os and/or are not part of Mock Spanish repertoires).

Other Inverted Spanglish usages consisted of hyper-anglicized pronunciation of widely understood Spanish words in the course of English-dominant interactions. These tokens of Inverted Spanglish involved neither intimate Spanish vulgarities nor private conversations. In one case, a teacher began the day in a sophomore study skills classroom by asking students to remind her of the date. One student yelled out, “November **quatro**” [/kwɒt.ɪ.ɔʊ/] (Spanish, /kwatro/, *cuatro*, “four”). Later in the class, another student responded to the teacher’s request for a volunteer to answer a question on a worksheet: “I’ve got the answer to **numerow trace**” [/numɜː.ɪ.ɔʊ/ /treɪs/] (Spanish, [/numero/ /treɪs/], *numero tres*, number three). These cases differ from the previous examples because they appear to be similar to standard Mock Spanish usages. That is, they do not index intimate knowledge of Spanish. Instead, these usages more directly parodied the speech of Whites and others who might know and use basic Spanish words such as the numbers in this example. I commonly heard students draw on these usages outside of school, particularly in contexts that involved interactions between White people and Latinas/os.

One such context was a Mexican restaurant near NNHS. The NNHS students who went to eat at this restaurant with me were annoyed by the way that White customers addressed Latina/o employees. In a familiar scene in U.S. restaurant settings (Barrett 2006), these customers were dismissive of waiters and waitresses and loudly expressed their annoyance at being forced to communicate in Spanish. Diana (Mex, Gen. 2, Gr. 12) and Walter (PR, Gen. 2, Gr. 12) drew on hyper-anglicized Inverted Spanglish usages to parody these customers’ behavior:

Excerpt 2: Hyperanglicized inverted Spanglish

Diana: **Donday esta el banyo?** /dɒndeɪ ɛstə ɛl bənjɔʊ/ (Spanish, /dondei esta el bapo/, “¿Dónde está el baño?”, “Where is the bathroom?”)

(Walter points in the direction of the bathroom.)

Diana: **Moochus Gracias.** /mʊtʃʌs ɡrɑːsiəs/ (Spanish, /mutʃas grasjas/, “Muchas gracias,” “Thank you.”)

Walter: **Di nada.** /di nədɑ/ (Spanish, /dei naða/, “De nada,” “It’s nothing.”)

Diana and Walter ostentatiously staged an impromptu performance that they intended to be overheard by the White people whose behavior they were parodying and the employees with whom they empathized. Unlike the examples of Inverted Spanglish above, Diana and Walter did not use their normative English

phonology when pronouncing Spanish words. Instead, they drew on the hyper-anglicized “Whitey voice” (Alim 2004). These students actively sought to make the disgruntled customers feel uncomfortable about their behavior by turning the linguistic tables and marking their language practices. In order to do so, it was crucial that the Spanish words referenced by Diana’s and Walter’s hyper-anglicized Inverted Spanglish usages were widely recognizable by non-Latinas/os and were even commonly part of Mock Spanish usages.

Restaurants and other contexts in which Spanish-dominant Latinas/os provide services to non-Latinas/os are prime sites for the production of these tokens of Inverted Spanglish. This is similar to Mason Carris’s (2011) analysis of what she calls “La Voz Gringa,” in which Latina/o employees use “Valley-Girl-esque” phonology to perform in-group impersonations of the Spanish language use of a White employee in a Southern California Mexican restaurant. An important distinction here is that Diana and Walter staged their performance in relation to White customers and Latina/o restaurant employees, and their ability to speak “unaccented English” was central to their performance and ongoing presentation of self.

Inverted Spanglish becomes a way for U.S.-based Latinas/os to claim Spanish and English as their own, and to call into question negative in-group views of their Spanish proficiency and out-group views of their English proficiency. Importantly, the use of English phonology in Inverted Spanglish usages downplays the indexical significance of Mexican–Puerto Rican Spanish phonological difference, thereby contributing to the creation of shared U.S. Latina/o ethno-linguistic identities. In the context of NNHS, Inverted Spanglish takes on additional indexical meanings. If the school principal’s category of Young Latino Professional corresponds to English-dominant speech that somehow acknowledges Latina/o identity, then Dr. Baez and her students would seem to be on the same linguistic page. However, Young Latino Professional is not only a category that lives in this particular school. In fact, categories such as Young Latino Professional are often promoted by aspirationally middle-class and/or upwardly mobile Latinas/os, as well as those who embrace hegemonic assimilationist perspectives more broadly. Inverted Spanglish, which parodies speech associated with professionals, represents students’ satirical response to this range of viewpoints. Inasmuch as a category such as Young Latino Professional attempts to balance assimilation and cultural identity maintenance by inflecting mainstream notions of professionalism with “Latina/o-ness,” Inverted Spanglish is students’ playful way of saying, “we get it.”

Inverted Spanglish simultaneously voices these Latina/o students’ ethnolinguistic and ethnoracial experiences, playfully responds to the principal’s project of socialization within NNHS, and pushes back against broader assimilationist perspectives that circulate in popular discourses surrounding U.S. Latinas/os. These assimilationist perspectives are evident in the views of Linda Chavez

discussed at the beginning of this chapter, which promote assimilation to hegemonic Americanness through the embrace of the English language. U.S. Latinas'/os' transformation of Mock Spanish into Inverted Spanglish reflects an awareness of the racializing forces that position them on the margins of Americanness. These language practices represent a complex set of interrelations among U.S. Latinas/os that must be carefully analyzed in specific ethnographic contexts and the broader scales to which they are linked.

Conclusion

Inverted Spanglish language practices, which in many ways seem strikingly similar to Mock Spanish usages, present neither a straightforward critique of hegemonic whiteness and monolingual English dominance nor a straightforward embrace of these hegemonies. Instead, Latinas/os transform Mock Spanish into Inverted Spanglish in order to meet competing institutional demands that require them to speak Spanish *in* English without being heard to possess an accent. Inverted Spanglish allows Latina/o students to make “the linguistic statement that they have acquired a practical insight or a linguistic mastery of their socio-linguistic environment” (Jaspers 2005, 296). In order to gain insight into these interactional dynamics, both Mock Spanish and Inverted Spanglish usages must be analyzed in context, with a specific focus on the racialization of U.S. Latinas/os. The failure to do so leads to the conflation of U.S. Latinas/os with categories such as “historically Spanish-speaking populations” and “Spanish persons.”

My analysis of Inverted Spanglish is not intended to provide a general model of English-Spanish bilingualism among students at NNHS. There were many other ways in which students moved within and between varieties of English and Spanish, many of which mirrored existing accounts of monolingual style-shifting and bilingual codeswitching. My research highlights the ways that NNHS students not only navigated but also transformed linguistic boundaries. This perspective presents an analytical framework that can be used to understand the translingual practices of students who might otherwise be approached separately as monolingual or bilingual. The categories of monolingual and bilingual were crucial inside NNHS. Depending on the variety, language ideologies in this context positioned monolingual English speech as a sign of deviance (i.e., monolingual nonstandard English) or selling out (i.e., monolingual standard English). Meanwhile, monolingual Spanish speech was often viewed as uncool and a barrier to full participation in everyday school life. Inverted Spanglish resolves this bind by voicing in-group knowledge of Spanish and English, while simultaneously parodying the category of Young Latino Professional.

It is important to locate the category Young Latino Professional in relation to Linda Chavez's discussion of assimilation, language, and Hispanic/American identity with which this chapter began. For Chavez, assimilation is a straightforward matter of self-identification as American or Hispanic, and English is a straightforward sign of assimilation to normative Americanness. The comparison that Chavez draws between Latinas/os and earlier waves of predominantly European immigrants overlooks the ways that European immigrants came to be racialized as White and included in hegemonic constructions of Americanness. Thus, assimilation is not simply a matter of self-identification, but instead a reflection of structural inequalities that position populations as more or less ideally American regardless of their self-identification. For U.S. Latinas/os, these inequalities are reflected in housing, employment, health care, education, and criminal justice. An embrace of the English language has done little to guarantee equal access to these institutional settings for the millions of U.S. Latinas/os, any more than other racialized peoples who identify as monolingual English speakers yet still face profound experiences of exclusion. Thus, we must pay close attention to the racialization of U.S. Latinas/os' Spanish- and English-language use. This involves a critique of the promotion of English-language learning as the magic bullet that will eradicate Latina/o societal marginalization, as well as a critique of assimilation more broadly as a racializing process that ranks groups as more and less worthy of full citizenship.

This chapter demonstrates the complex relationship between language ideologies, linguistic forms, and power-laden cultural contexts of usage. It also questions racialized assumptions about U.S. Latina/o ethnolinguistic authenticity and stigmatization. U.S. Latinas/os' naturalized relationship to the Spanish language highlights ways that "authenticity" can simultaneously valorize and stigmatize languages and their speakers in specific cultural contexts. Inverted Spanglish, despite all its sociolinguistic complexity and savvy, is by no means a straightforward signal of one's institutionally sanctioned Latina/o personhood. The language ideologies and linguistic practices analyzed in this chapter raise new questions about relationships between ethnolinguistic and ethnoracial categories. Future research focused on these issues must track the ways that minute linguistic forms are aligned with ethnoracial categories across contexts and scales. Such an approach will make it possible to analyze the ways in which large-scale processes of racialization are made visible—indeed audible—in everyday interactions.

Notes

1. Throughout this chapter, I use the terms "Latina/o," "Latinas/os," and "Hispanic" interchangeably to refer to U.S.-based persons of Latin American descent. This is how these terms were conventionally used in the ethnographic context that is the focus of this chapter.

Chavez has served as part of various Republican presidential administrations and currently authors a weekly syndicated column that circulates nationally. Her column can be accessed here: <http://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/latest-columns/20120405-linda-chavez-why-so-few-latinos-id-themselves-first-as-american.ece>.

2. The names of the school and individuals associated with it are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.
3. Students are coded using abbreviations of self-ascribed Latina/o national subgroup categories such as “Mexican” (Mex) and “Puerto Rican” (PR), as well as generation cohort with respect to (im)migration and grade year in school. For example:

Pedro (PR, Gen. 3, Gr. 10)

Name (self-ascribed identity, immigration cohort, grade year)

Generation 1: born and raised outside of the U.S. mainland until the age of 12 or older

Generation 1.5: born outside of the U.S. mainland, but raised within the U.S. mainland before the age of 12

Generation 2: born and raised within the U.S. mainland by parents who were born and raised outside of the U.S. mainland

Generation 3: born and raised within the U.S. mainland by parents who were born and raised within the U.S. mainland

I use the phrase “U.S. mainland” to distinguish between the continental United States and its territories and possessions; Puerto Rico is a U.S. Commonwealth. Thus, someone born in Puerto Rico is born “outside of the U.S. mainland.” This allows for a unified designation for people born in Puerto Rico or anywhere else in Latin America.

4. Mayra provided other examples such as *pato*, which is Puerto Rican slang for “gay,” but simply means “duck” in Mexican Spanish; she also pointed out the counterexample of *puñal*, which means “gay” in Mexican slang, but simply means “knife” in Puerto Rican Spanish.
5. Inverted Spanglish usages are bolded, italicized, and transcribed informally in English for nonlinguists, followed by phonetic transcriptions in brackets. The corresponding Spanish versions of these usages are also presented with Spanish phonology, written with Spanish orthography, and translated into English. For example:

numerow trace [num3:10U treis] (Spanish, [numero treis], *numero tres*, number three).

6. One student told me about an uncle of his from Puerto Rico who got into a fight with his Mexican employer who called him a *cabrón* (bastard). The inversion of *cabrón* from an insult to a compliment was not communicated in the shift from Mexican Spanish to Puerto Rican Spanish. The use of *cabrón* in unaccented Spanglish avoids these conflicts.

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