

What is Spanglish according to the speakers and what they think about the inclusion of it on
literacy materials?

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Abstract

This paper is a research about the perspectives about Spanglish according to the users. The research was divided in two parts. A total of 50 individuals participated in the first part of the research and a total of 35 in the second part (same participants from the first part) between 15 to 30 years of age, living in Shelbyville, Tennessee. In the first part they answered a questionnaire and in the second one they viewed a prezi presentation about facts of Spanglish and answered another questionnaire according to what they had viewed. They answered questions like what is the meaning of Spanglish, it should be include on literacy materials, do you think Spanglish is a language, etc. The results in general showed that the participants agree that they use Spanglish in their everyday life but they do not agree that it should be included in literacy materials.

Key words: Spanglish, code-mixing, code-borrowing, code-switching.

Code-mixing: is the use of one language and another on in a conversation or writing situation; you can start your conversation in English and then finished in Spanish or the other way around; e.g. Yesterday I was eating some enchiladas that mi mama cocinó después de llegar del trabajo/ Ayer comí enchiladas que my mom cooked after coming back from work.

Code-borrowing: occurs when a person is speaking I one language and then says a words from another language, e.g. I want to eat manzanas / Quiero comer apples.

Personal Experience

When I was twelve years old I went to live to a town called Shelbyville in the state of Tennessee on the US. I remembered that when I arrived to my new school there were many Latinos students. When I gathered with some of them I was in shock to hear words such as parkear, skipear, chequear, la teacher, lunchea, just to mention some, and also how my Hispanic classmates were switching from one language to another and mixing them too. I asked one of them why they were doing that, and they told me that the way in which they were communicating was called Spanglish. My first thought, was “this is an aberration and a barbarism”, and if they called themselves “Spanish speakers” how was it possible that they were doing that to their mother tongue. As the time passed by I got used to it and I started to speak it too, because I felt that it was part of my identity and a way of communicating between my peers. I think that Spanglish is part of my identity because somehow I did not feel that I belonged to any country even though I knew I was Mexican and spoke Spanish but at the same time I knew another language and I was being part of another society, so for me Spanglish was a way of showing off the way I felt about these two languages. It was a way of speaking with my peers because they felt the same and it was like our code of communication because we spoke two languages and it was a fun way to speak between each other, shorter words, and going back and forth in any of the two languages.

Introduction

The term Spanglish has become very popular between the Latinos that live in the United States. For them the meaning of Spanglish is words that are mixed between English and Spanglish. Recently the phenomenon of Spanglish is considered the apogee of the last decade because of the increase of immigration of Latinos in the States and the US citizens that had a Latin heritage. Since Latinos are using Spanglish more often in their daily communication in

the States, even the media has become aware of this phenomenon and now they are trying to call the attention of this public by using the same type of “language” (Spanglish). Now there are more advertisements using this concept to attract the Latinos and even if you have not thought about it but some think that it should be include on literacy materials. In fact it is already include in some literacy material for children and popular gossip magazines for women.

From this research I expect to get the following results. First of all I want to know what is the meaning of Spanglish for this group of participants and then give a definition according to one of the authors that I am going to use on my literature review; secondly, what are the real reasons behind the use of Spanglish for the participants, thirdly; what the participants think about the use of Spanglish on literacy materials for people of all ages; and finally, did this participants think that the use of Spanglish is considered part of their identity and if it is correct to used it.

The purpose of the study is to make a comparison of the answers of the first part of the study were the participants answered according to what they knew about Spanglish; and in the second part of the study; they first watched the prezi presentation in order to answer the second questionnaire. In the second questionnaire, the participants were asked some similar questions from the first one, but now they have to answer according to the new information that was provided for them. We are going to look if there were any difference between the similar questions and see if we changed the point of view of the participants on including Spanglish on literacy materials.

Spanglish as a way of communication and identity

Spanglish is a form of communication and identity into the young Latinos community. The inclusion of this form of language on literacy materials should be accepted and not be criticized because as Artze (2001) states “whether you know it or not, speak it or not, or like it

or not, Spanglish is everywhere (p. 50).” Stavans (2000) declares that Spanglish “is spoken (or better, broker) by millions of people of Hispanic descent in the United States-to be precise, around 35 millions, according to the Year 2000 report by the U.S. Census Bureau (p. 555).” And according to Chappell and Faltis (2007) there is been “an increasing number of children’s book authors are publishing literature that addresses issues of Spanglish, bilingualism and culture identify [...] that Latino bilingual children have as they grow in the United States (p. 253).”

Reasons of the research

I mentioned I decided to do this research on Spanglish because Latinos nowadays are using it even more and it is interesting how this way of communication, code or new form of language or whatever you want to call this phenomenon is being used on the media, books and in everyday communication of Latinos in the US. I think it is important to study this because by doing so we can understand the reasons of why speakers use it, how they feel when they used it, do they think it is part of their identity and what they think about the idea of including Spanglish in literacy materials.

Claim

I claim that Spanglish is part of the identity of the speakers because they only use it with speakers of English and Spanish. Spanglish is not a sign of ignorance or lack of knowledge of both languages and since millions of people use it why should it no be include on literacy materials and not be criticized.

On the other side of my position we have Stern who is against Spanglish. He (2010) states that Spanglish is “a misleading term that sows confusion about the Spanish language and its speakers (p.85).” And that for him there are four reasons of why Spanglish is not a correct way of communication and the reasons are: first, “Spanish in the USA” is similar to

the popular language used in most Latin America countries and Spain, second the term Spanglish in the USA sounds as an abnormally hybrid language, third the term gives the impression that its construction is structural mixing with English, and fourth, Spanglish separates speakers from those who speak Spanish in other countries (p. 85-86). According to his statements I disagree with him because the Spanish that is spoke in the US does not have anything to do with popular Spanish spoken in some parts of Latin America is completely different if we ask a Spanish speaker from the US he will be very disappointed by the first statement because they just as good standard Spanish as any Spanish speaker that lives in a Spanish country. The second and third reasons where he states that Spanglish is an abnormally hybrid language is completely false because according to Rothman, J. & Rell, A. (2005) Spanglish is a form by mixing the two languages and by using “the phenomenon of code-switching or a rule governed amalgamation of the two languages at the level of syntax (p. 521).” This means that the lexicon that is used from English and Spanish words to form the Spanglish word is pronounced “with the phonological rules of the other (p. 521).” And in the last statement where he mentions that Spanglish separates the speakers from those who speak Spanglish is not true because Spanglish speakers only use Spanglish with those who also speak it and if they meet someone who speaks only Spanish they would not use Spanglish.

The study and the participants

The present study is divided in two different parts. The first part was made in order to see how a small group of Hispanics give their own definitions about Spanglish, how they feel when they use it, why they use it and what is their opinion if it is include on literacy materials for all ages. The second part of the study was made in order to change the point of view of the participants about Spanglish in a positive way.

The participants were a group of 50 Latinos that are living in the United States in the state of Tennessee in a town called Shelbyville. The ages of the students are from 16 to 25 years old, some of the students are in high school to college students. In the first part of the study there were 50 participants but in the second part not all the participants participated on the second part of the study so I only have 35 participants.

Methods and instruments

The following research was made in order to help you as a reader to understand about this new form of language, what it is, who the users are, and why they used it. The participants were a small group of people who live in the United States in a town called Shelbyville in the state of Tennessee. On the first part of the study the instrument that I used was a questionnaire of nineteen questions. It was sent to the participants via Facebook. The participants are speakers of English and Spanish. The background of these participants is their time living in the United States, their nationality, their age and their level of education.

The participants were chosen at random from my Facebook friend list according to the already mentioned background information. I sent the questionnaire exactly to eight of my friends that had the requirements and out of those eighty participants I got fifty back. The questionnaire included nineteen questions. Some were multiple choice and the others were open answers so they could have the opportunity to give their reasons of their answer.

The instruments that I used in the second part of the study were a prezi presentation and a questionnaire. In the prezi presentation I gathered information about Spanglish, what I did was to put together positive facts about Spanglish, defined the term, used authors that use Spanglish in their literacy works and why they do it. I had to mention that the participants had to watch the presentation first in order to answer the questionnaire because the questions were

about the presentation that they had previously watched. In the second part of the study only 30 out of 50 participants completed and responded to this part.

Review literature

Research by Rothman & Rell (2005) mentions that Spanglish is part of the identity of the speakers because it is a way in which they “represent their bicultural existence (p. 527).” In their research called a linguistic analysis of Spanglish; they relating language of identity and concluded that Spanglish occurs when the languages English and Spanish are in contact and the speakers adapt the languages into one.

This article mentions Spanglish scrabble which is mainly a piece of poetry in Spanglish. The author in this poem expresses how he feels about speaking Spanglish, English and Spanish. According to Pérez (2011) he wrote that “ que yo no soy legitimate porque I don’t speak español or English or any other stardard lengua?” to this statement I can infer that he feels that he doesn’t feel identify with any of this languages and for that reason he speaks Spanglish (p.187).”

Osorio on the article role of Spanglish in the social and academic lives of second generation Latino students: Student’s parent’s perspective is mainly about how the author sees Spanglish as a way of “motivations and perspectives regarding the use of Spanglish in social and academic settings (2010, p. 3).” The purpose of her study was to study and explore “the motivations and applications that encourage linguistic connections between English and Spanish” (p. 3). She concluded that students perceive Spanglish as a natural and necessary medium of communication in their daily lives in the United States (p. 4). She insists that the use of Spanglish does not make them ignorant on both languages because they know how to use each language.

Sayer (2008) did a research in which he concluded that Spanglish is present in the everyday life in the children that are bilingual, and that sometimes they used it in an implicit way. According to the author Spanglish should be allow it to be use in schools because this is a way in which teacher can understand the background of the students and they can learn from each other.

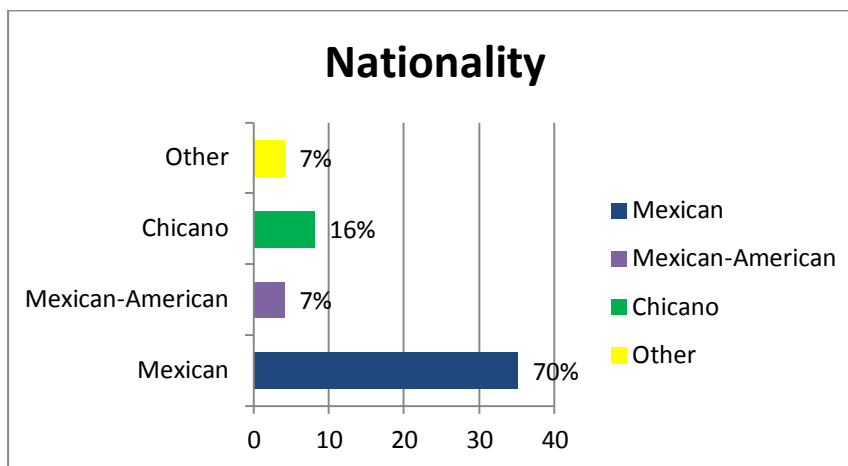
According to Chappell & Faltis (2007), they mention that “an increasing number of children’s book authors are publishing literature that addresses issues of Spanglish, bilingualism and cultural identity affiliations that Latino bilingual children have as they grow in the United States (p. 253).” They mention that this past decade there are been authors that have widely publish books about this topic and they interviewed two experts in this field in order to choose literature books that teachers use in schools (p.255). After choosing the books they analyzed that “the literature that is in the hand of young people and making an immediate impact on educational practice (p. 255).” Stavans (2003) described Spanglish as a “hybrid form of Spanish that has been infused and combined with English at the lexical and syntactical levels of speech (as cited in Chappell & Faltis, 2007).” They conclude that Spanglish is not just as a language of Latino children but is a language used in literacy, and mention how it can help the students in their bicultural environment where they live.

According with Álvarez-Martínez (2006), Laviera’s work “displays a unique transcultural cosmology through language (p. 25).” This means that throughout his literary works he transmits the way he uses his language and how it affects his identity. It also mentions that “transculturation Nuyoricans and Latinos transform their language to reflect their biculturalism, and create and entirely new code (p. 25).” According to her, Lavaró recognizes Spanglish as a legitimized language and for him is a true language.

All the previous studies are related to the present research because the participants have Mexican heritage or are completely Mexicans that have lived in the US since they were very young and they speak English, Spanish and Spanglish.

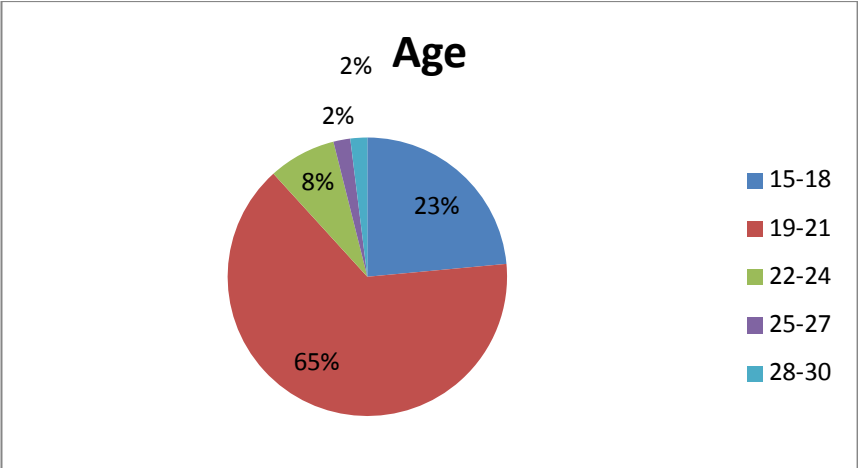
Results

In the graphs below the reader will see the results of the background information of the participants that includes their nationality, age, years living in the United States and their educational level.



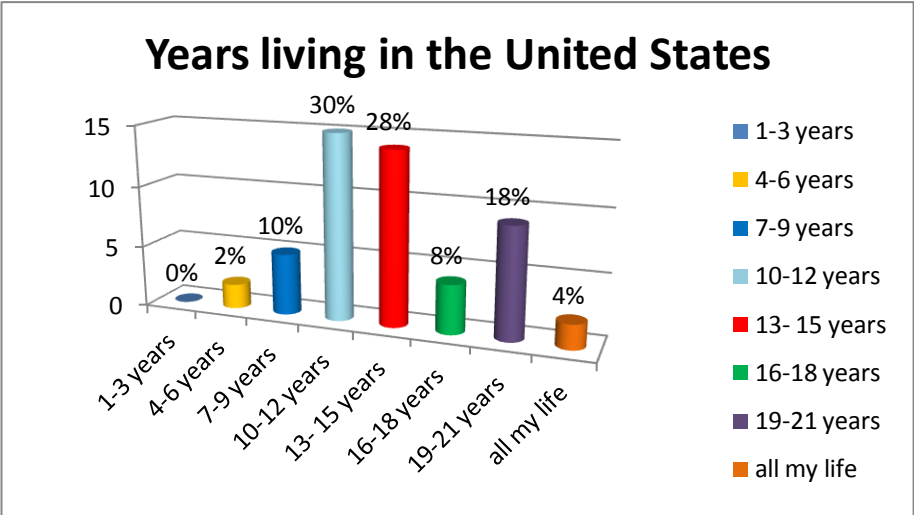
GRAPH 1

As we can see in graph 1 70% of the participants are Mexicans, 16% Chicanos. Chicanos are US citizens who had Mexican heritage that means that his/her parents are from Mexican. They are given this term by Mexicans in order to identify them as US citizens that have Mexican heritage from his/her parents. Mexican-Americans form 7% of the participants, they are considered to be Mexicans-Americans because one of his/her parents is Mexican or American. And the other 7% are others that represent a minority of Latinos that are from Ecuador, Colombia, Guatemala and Honduras.



GRAPH 2

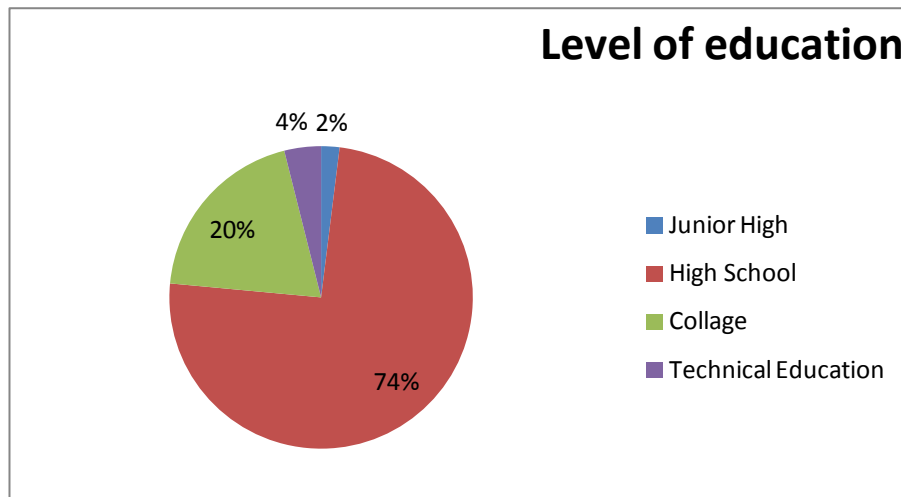
In graph 2 we can see the age of the participants. The majority of them (65%) are between nineteen and twenty one, 23% are between fifteen and eighteen, 8% are between twenty two and twenty four, and 4% are between twenty five and thirty years old. With this information we can see that most of our participants are teenagers and young adults.



GRAPH 3

Graph 3 is one of the most important of the graphs. It is important because we can see the years living in the United States of the participants. We can see that the majority of the students have lived on the US from ten to twelve years with a 30% and from thirteen to fifteen

with a 28% there is a small difference between these two groups. 2% between four and six years; 10% seven to nine years, 8% between sixteen and eighteen years, 18% between nineteen and twenty years, and 4% all their live in this last one means that the participants are Chicanos or Mexican-American.

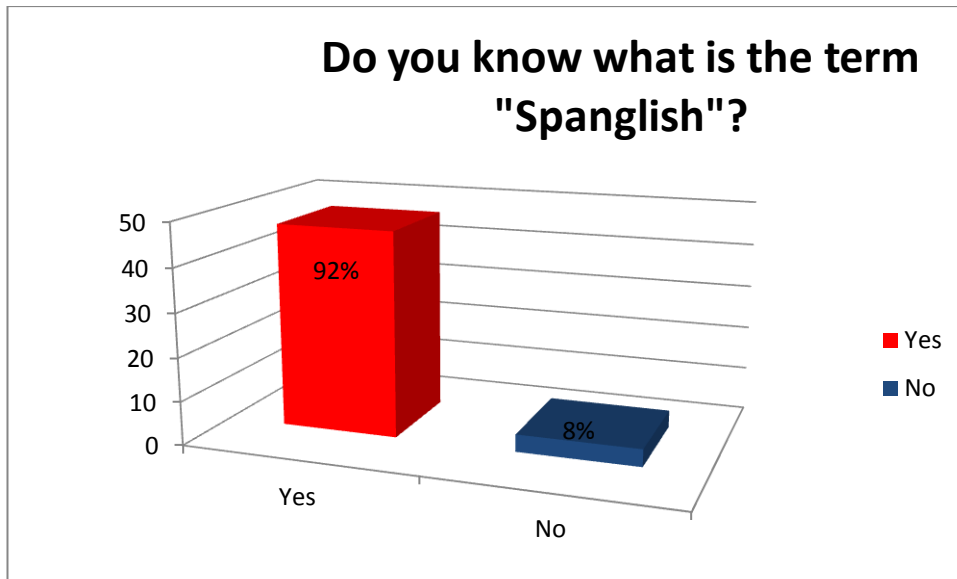


GRAPH 4

Graph 4 depicts the educational level of the students. Seventy-four percent of the participants are in high school, 20% are in collage, 4% are in a technical education institute and 2% are in junior high.

What is “SPANGLISH”?

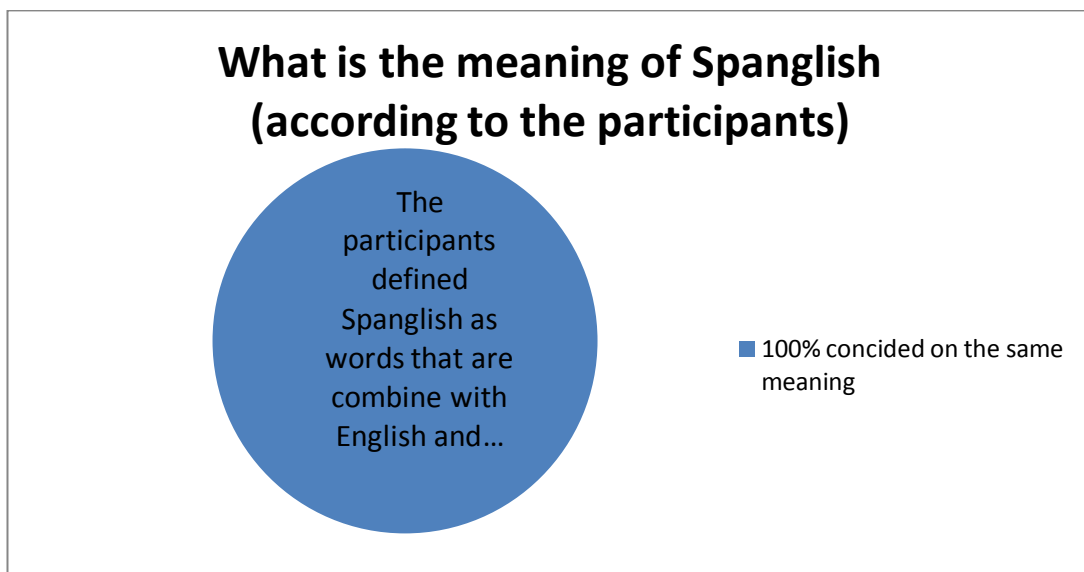
According to Stern & Otheguy (2010) the word ‘Spanglish’ used most often to describe the casual oral registers of the speech of Hispanics in the USA (p.85).” Latinos that speak English and Spanish are the speakers and users of this new form of language and it has become a very popular way of communication between young Latinos with their peers.



GRAPH 5

One of the questions that were asked to the participants was, do you know what is the term “Spanglish”? On graph 5 shows that 92% of the participants answered that they knew what this word mean and 8% do not know the meaning of this word.

The previous question was asked in order to know if the participants knew this term so they could be able to be participate in this study.



GRAPH 6

Another question and considered to be very important in the study was, what is the meaning of Spanglish (according to the participants)? In the first part of the study 100% of the participants agree that the meaning of Spanglish is the combination between English and Spanish. As show on graph 6

Here are some of the answers of the participants:

Participant # 2: “it’s when you are talking con una persona y mixeas las palabras en español e inglés.”

Participant #9: “Words that are mix up with English”

Participants #7: “It's the mix usage of English and Spanish.”

As we can see Spanglish is defined by the participants as the mixture of English and Spanish and according to Guerra-Avalos (2001) states that Spanglish “puede consistir en la combinación de palabras correctas ya sea en español o en inglés (as cited in Montez-Álcala, 2009, p. 99). We can conclude with this statement that the participants have an idea of what is Spanglish but Alvarez (1997) claims that there are two basics approaches to Spanglish: switching and borrowing (as cited in Montez-Álcala, 2009, p. 99). This means that not only the combination of English and Spanish form Spanglish it goes farther than switching because borrowing is also included. Some participants of the research also mention this but they don’t mention the terms of borrowing and switching. They mainly said that Spanglish is just the combinations of both languages.

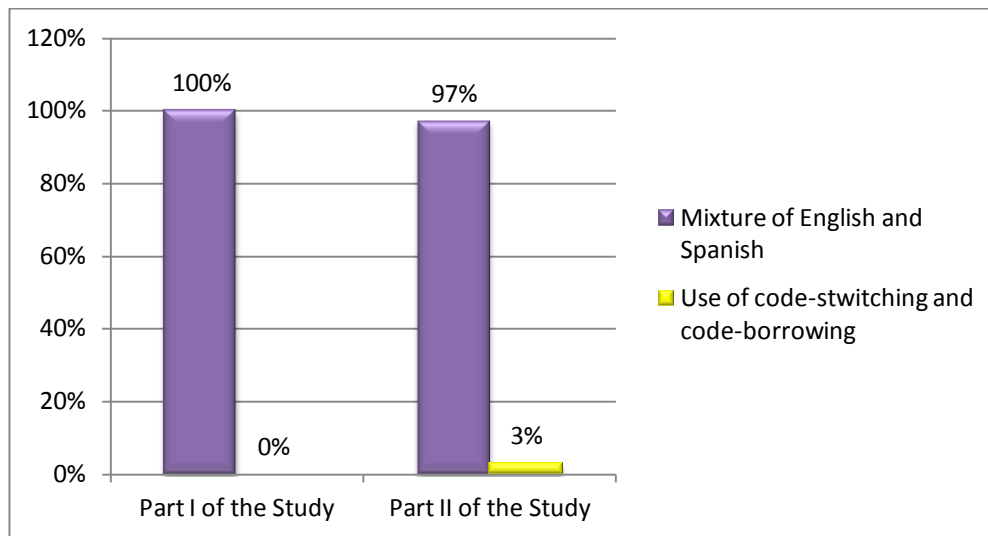
Participant # 6: “The use of the languages English and Spanish at the same time or making up words that are half Spanish or half English”

Ex: 1 “oh my gosh estas loca ósea for real como crees que eso es cool.”

Ex: 2 “vamos a lonche...o...me lo puedes fixiar porfavor.”

Participant #9: Spanglish is the version of Spanish and English put together you might start your sentence in Spanish and end it in English or a word in English

With these two definitions of the participants we can see that they include switching and borrowing words but they do not know that they included these terms.



GRAPH 7

In the second part of the study, in the prezi presentation, the words code-switching and code-mixing were introduced to the participants; the words included the definition and examples of each one. In the second part of the questionnaire the participants were asked to define their new definition of Spanglish. Ninety-seven percent of the participants conclude with the same definition from the first part and only 3% of the participants mentioned the use of code-switching and code-borrowing.

What is “Spanglish” according to the speakers?

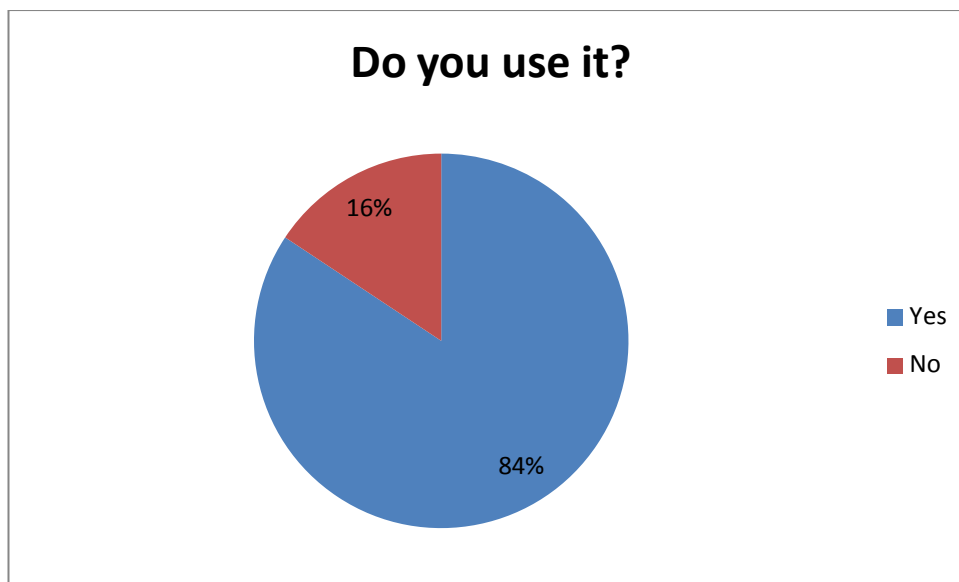
Now we are ready to answer the first question of the research, what is Spanglish according to the Speakers? As we have seen on the graphs and the examples that the participants provided, I can conclude that for them Spanglish is the combination of English and Spanish. In the second part of the study, I included in the prezi presentation that Spanglish is more than just mixing up two languages. It goes farther because code-switching

and code-mixing also takes place. I tried to change the point of view of the participants showing them facts about Spanglish and telling them that Spanglish is more than mixing both languages and that it includes switching and borrowing of both languages, but the participants could only see the combinations of words. Even though they use switching and borrowing in some of their examples, they do not mention them because I think that they have grown with the fact that Spanglish is only the combination of English and Spanish.

Who uses Spanglish?

Stavans (2000) declares that Spanglish “is spoken (or better, broker) by millions of people of Hispanic descent in the United States-to be precise, around 35 millions, according to the Year 2000 report by the U.S. Census Bureau (p. 555).”

Spanglish is mainly spoke by Latinos in the United States who use it with those who speak English and Spanglish. They also use it with their peers, friends and family members and it has become part of their daily life.



GRAPH 8

In graph 8 we can see that 84% of the participants use it and 16% not. The participants that mentioned that they use it commented that they do so because is easier to

speak when you are with a friend that knows Spanglish too, when you do not know a word in either language, or just because it is fun to do.

Here are some explanations from the participants:

Participant #3: “sometimes it is easier to go back and forth to another language because one word may be easier in the other language. Sometimes you don’t know the word in the other language and you combine it to make the word.”

Participant # 19: “One of the reasons I use it its because all my friends do and it sounds cool.”

Participant # 25: “Because it’s easier to me. Because I know both languages.”

The other 16% of the participants answered that they do not use it because for them Spanglish is not the correct way to speak.

Here is an answer of one of the participants who answered that he does not use it and but he knows what is Spanglish.

Participant #3: “If I speak English I stick to it and if I speak Spanish I stick to that.”

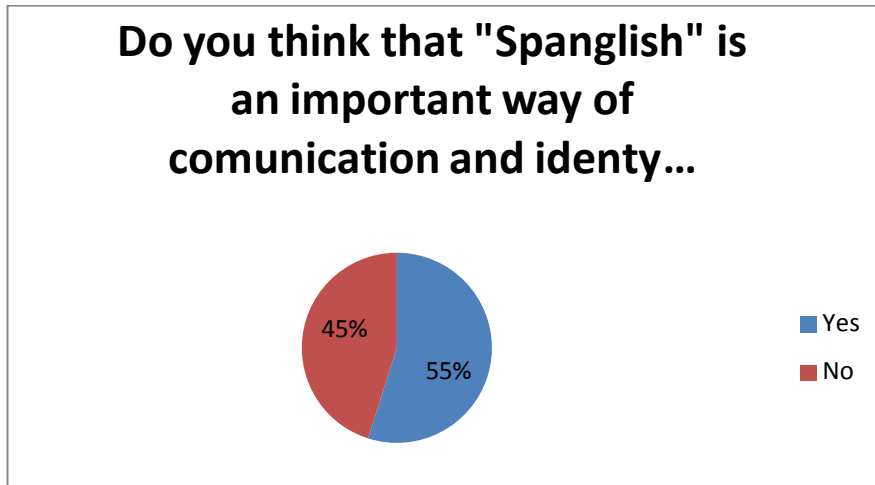
The rest of the participants answered that they do not use it but they did not give an explanation of why they did not use it.

Participant #	With who?	Why?	Where?
29	friends and family	its easier to communicate	Home in the streets
26	Family and friends	Because it’s easier to me. Because I know both languages.	Home everywhere
31	Friends	"Because I can speak both languages. - I feel good doing it. - Because people I talk to can understand me and don't have a problem with it.	home

TABLE 1

In table 1 we can see some of the reasons why they used it, with whom and where?

Do you think that Spanglish is an important way of communication and identity between your peers?



GRAPH 9

According to the graph 45% of the participants answered no and 55% answered yes.

Here are some reasons according to his/her answer:

Yes: Participant # 35: Yes I think so, because we're use to talking to each other this way and we understand each other better as well.

Yes: Participant #34: because it's a way to express their thoughts and feeling without been too formal. It lets them be free.

Yes: Participant # 27: It defines who we are, Mexicans that have been Americanized.

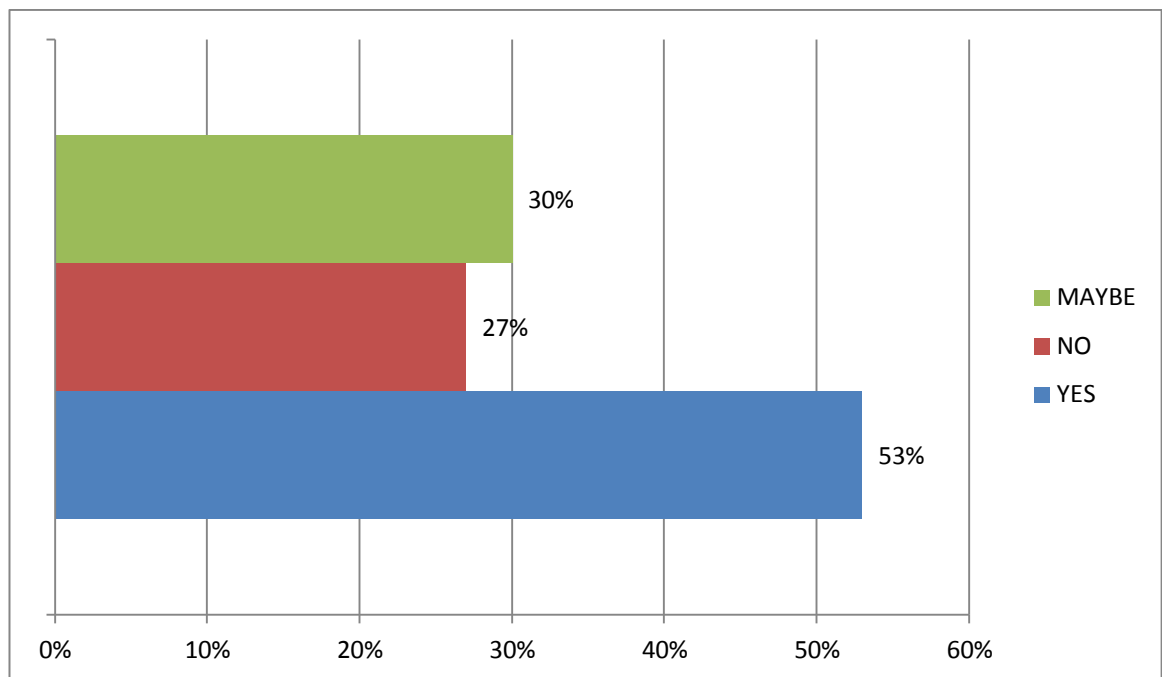
No: Participant #20: "It's an incorrect way to communicate"

No: Participant # 24: "No because some can only speak Spanish or others just English."

According with Rothman & Rell (2005) mention that Spanglish is part of the identity of the speakers because is a way in which they "represent their bicultural existence (Rothman & Rell, 2005, p. 527)" and occurs when the language of English and Spanish are in contact

and the speakers adapt the language into one. As we saw on the graphs, this statement agrees with the information presented it.

In the second part of the research the participant were asked if they thought that Spanglish is a way of showing off their bicultural identity?



GRAPH 9

According to the graph 53% of the participants answered yes, 27% answered no, and 30% answered maybe.

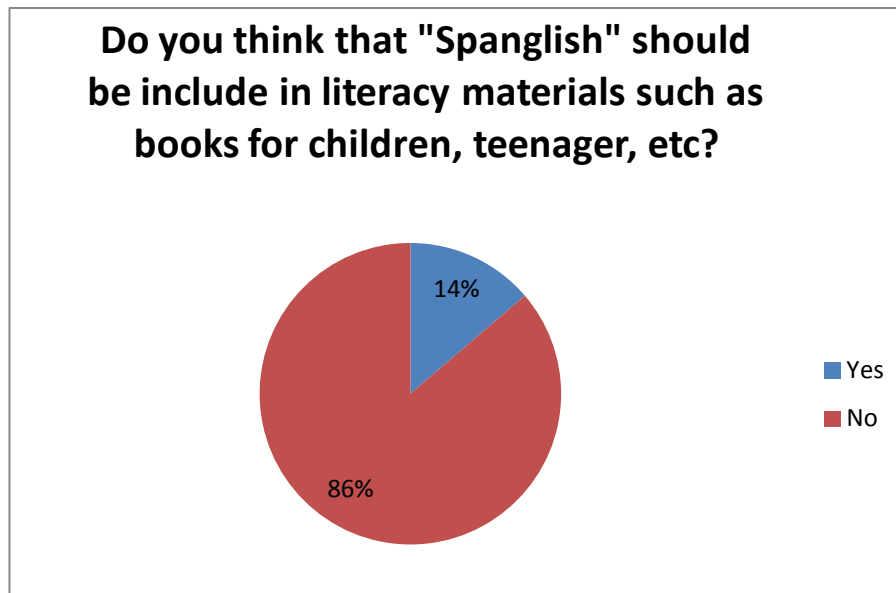
Here are some reasons for the answers of the participants.

YES: Participant #1: “You are showing that Spanish was your first learned language, meaning that you have a different background and possibly a different culture. Because not everyone that speaks Spanish comes from the same place. And then if English is a second learned language, which was learned in a whole different culture and people, well of course you will more likely be bicultural. Showing of what you already know and what you now know.”

NO: Participant # 6 “It just means you don't fully know English or Spanish to me”

MAYBE: Participant # 14 “it can be done on purpose or it just happens”

Spanglish should be included on literacy materials?



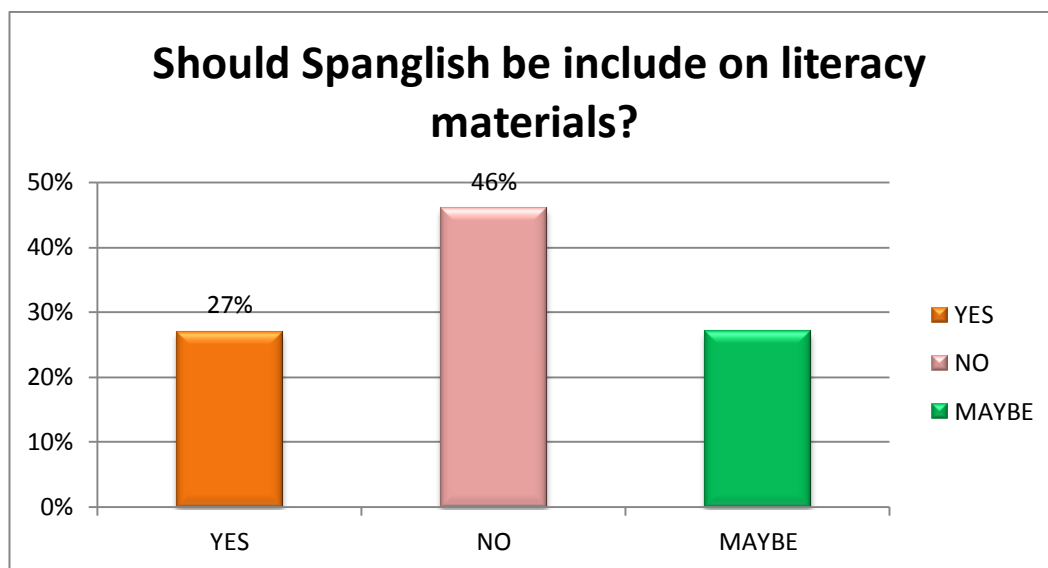
GRAPH 10

On graph 10 we can see that 14% of the participants agree that it should be included and the 86% agrees that it should not be included it. Some of the reasons are because they think Spanish is slang, is not a formal language or is not a language at all.

Some authors such as Pérez (2011) states “yo tengo mi poesía it sparks to me and to millions of others who do not live on un lado of the border ni la otra. We live on the frontera. Manejando dos mundos cada día (p.188).” and Alvarez-Martinez (2006) mentions that Lavarro Tavera recognizes Spanglish as a legitimized language and for him is a true language.

According to Chappell & Faltis (2007) there has been “an increasing number of children’s book authors are publishing literature that addresses issues of Spanglish,

bilingualism and cultural identity affiliations that Latino bilingual children have as they grow in the United States (p. 253).” This is because the young Latinos that live in the United States have grown up in a bicultural and bilingual environment. Even though this group of participants does not think that Spanglish should be included in literacy materials, I think that it should because maybe they have not noticed that there are many materials that include Spanglish. For example the Latina magazine, that is a “bilingual glossy magazine in New York for young Hispanic women (Álvarez, n.d., p, 484)” in which you can find headlines such as “Me voy” is “I’m living.” It possibly because they have not read materials that are in Spanglish but there are many materials out sold and the speakers only need to pay attention to it.



GRAPH 11

In the second part of the research in the prezi presentation, some author and examples that use Spanglish on literacy materials were included. After watching the presentation, 27% of the participants answered “yes.” And 46% said “no” should be included on literacy materials.

Here are some explanations to their answers:

YES: participant # 11 “yes because it would help the children to learn both languages. Also because it's something that's becoming very popular.”

NO: participant # 9 “because they will never learn to speak the right that way”

MAYBE: participant # 1 “The more we know the better we can communicate.”

I consider that Spanglish should be included in more literacy materials, especially in academic materials for children. Sayer (2008) agrees that it should be allowed to be used in schools because this is a way in which teachers can understand the background of the students and they can learn from each other. In this way teachers can learn more about their bilingual students and understand about their culture and how growing up in another culture affects their identities. Even though I provided important writers that use Spanglish, some participants still do not agreeing in the use of this new type of language on literacy materials.

Discussion and Conclusions

This research answered the research questions concerning whom they used it, what the participants thought about including Spanglish on literacy materials and if after watching the prezi presentations with facts about Spanglish I had changed their opinion. First, I concluded that for this group of participants they consider that Spanglish is the combination of English and Spanish but they do not know that it is also formed by code-switching and mixing. Even though they used those terms in their answers, still answered that Spanglish is using both languages together.

Secondly, they reported using Spanglish all the time especially with their friends, family members, with those who speak Spanglish, and they used it at home. Thirdly, some of them think that is part of their identity because they have grow-up in a bilingual and bicultural environment. Fourthly, not all agree that is should be included in literacy materials

because they think is slang and not a formal language. And finally, I asked the participants if the information that I provided was convincing. T they answered that it was very convincing but even though they still have the same point of view of not including Spanglish in literacy material.

Spanglish is a new language phenomenon that is occurring in the United States. Speakers of this language think that it is just the combination of English and Spanish but we have seen that it includes two more that is code-switching and code-borrowing. However, speakers do not know these terms and they only classified it as a combination of both languages. It is part of their identity because they only used it with people who used Spanglish and this does not make them ignorant in either language. For them, it is just a fun and easy way to communicate. Speakers of this new form of language are not aware of the many literacy materials that exist or probably they know it but they do not recognize them as literacy materials.

I think that something that I would have done differently would have been to gather the participants and showed them the prezi presentation to their reactions about the topic and probably made a debate and see what how they would have defended their position about this interesting topic.

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