

5-2019

The Influence of Spanish within the Identity of Chicano Children: Discourse analysis in Rudolfo Anaya, Sandra Cisneros, Mario Alberto Zambrano, and Erika Sanchez

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The Influence of Spanish within the Identity of Chicano Children: Discourse analysis in

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An Honors College Project Thesis

Presented to

The Department of Language and Literature

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for

Honors Scholar
[or: Honors Associate]

by

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May 2019

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This Project Thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee,
has been accepted by the Honors College of Abilene Christian University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the distinction

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Abstract

The field of Mexican-American literature, also known as Chicano literature, is known for the usage of Spanish within the texts as this makes the text feel more authentic to the Hispanic life. Established authors, Rudolfo Anaya and Sandra Cisneros, have influenced new recent award-winning Chicano voices, Erika Sánchez and Mario Alberto Zambrano. Thus, the representation of the Chicano world that these authors are providing needs to be examined as they are and will be influencing the voice of future Chicano works. Their usage of Spanish within the texts is crucial to the telling of the story and the development of the protagonist within the novel. The variety of Spanish that is presented in these texts can take different forms: standard Spanish, slang, code-switching between English and Spanish, and translation for the reader. These different forms can reveal the characters' relationship with Spanish and how it impacts the way that they see the world. In this paper, I focus on the dialogue between elders and children from selected works to reveal how the children's use of Spanish reflects on their relationship with their Hispanic identity. These conversations will be the focus since it is through their elders that they have this relationship with Spanish. These conversations will reveal if the child considers Spanish to be a part of their being and what form of Spanish they have taken in as their own. The outcome of this research is to find if, and if so, how Spanish has influenced the identity of Chicanos in the United States.

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Mexican-Americans in the United States have a great cultural challenge. This challenge is rooted in the attempt to balance two very distinct cultures and the inherent punishment that comes from them for giving preference to one culture over the other. This balance of cultures can be seen through the usage or lack of usage of Spanish in first-generation Mexican-Americans. Growing up in the borderlands of the Rio Grande Valley, I have seen many second-generation and third-generation Mexican-Americans stray away from the usage of Spanish through their own refusal or the decisions of their parents. As a first-generation Mexican-American, I have personally struggled with the combination of cultures in the formation of my identity due to the strong influence of both my parents and my surroundings outside of the home. As a Mexican-American, I have tried to have the most perfect form of both languages to validate my inclusion in both cultures, yet I know that is not how all Mexican-Americans have faced the challenge. Mexican-Americans receive criticism by Mexicans as Mexican-Americans are seen only as Americans trying to get rid of their Mexican heritage, while Americans generally view them as immigrants. To see the bigger picture of the formation of identities of Mexican-Americans within the United States, this project will focus on four different depictions of the Mexican-American culture.

The term *Chicano* is synonymous with Mexican-American. The first creation of this subculture developed when the official separation between Texas and Mexico occurred in February 2, 1848 (Eysturoy and Gurpegui 48). Through this division, a new minority was created in the United States. Although the term *Chicano* was originally created as a

derogatory one, the term developed “ideological meanings and became [one] of cultural self-affirmation, celebrating the Spanish, Indian, and Mexican cultural heritage of the people of Mexican ancestry residing within the United States” as the Mexican-Americans began to use it to refer to themselves (Eysturoy and Gurpegui 49). The term *Chicano* has become increasingly popular among modern Mexican-Americans, and a new form of the name has developed in recent years but is spelt differently- xichano. The identity of Chicanos has retained the beauty of the Hispanic culture that values family and a hard-work ethic. The latter is seen through “the most important social unit is the nuclear family, which consists of parents and their children...Overlaying this set of important social relationships is respect for one's elders” (Berk-Seligson 72). Thus, the Chicano culture should not be looked down upon, because it has good values influenced by both cultures and has retained important Mexican values. As Peñalosa stated about his studies of Chicano culture in the 1970s, the culture though is made of a “group [that] is fragmentized socially, culturally, ideologically, and organizationally [and] characterized by extremely important social-class, regional, and rural-urban differences” (qt. in Berk-Seligson 69). Through this disunity, the Mexican-American culture is different depending on the area, even though there are also similarities. Through this accepted variety, there are many correct ways of depicting the culture. Although Chicano literature might contradict itself in the representation of Chicano culture, the different representations are valid examples of what the people are and what they live through. The new positive meaning that *Chicano* has adopted is reflected in the literature that Chicano authors are producing, since their literature explores the different cultural elements of being Chicano such as within the group and communing with surrounding cultures. To pick up a

Chicano book is to pick up a break in the silence of this minority and gain insight into the uncensored everyday elements of life. These texts not only use Spanish, but also demonstrate different elements of how family life works, the importance of religion, and the struggles of the minority.

For this paper, the primary focus will be on the usage of Spanish within the Chicano texts. The use of Spanish within mostly English texts is a form of codeswitching, that is, “the alternation of two languages in a verbal or written text” (Torres 76). This alternation allows for a clearer presentation of the Chicano culture to be made. Through Chicano literature, the “movement is dedicated to the preservation of Mexican-American ethnic identity, a large part of which rests on the maintenance of Spanish” (Berk-Seligson 78). The preservation through literature creates a pure representation of Chicano culture; studies of the Chicano community are then relevant to the literature and can be derived from it as well. The result of these studies is proven true in the literature, which further validates the accuracy of the cultural depiction. Thus, to study the presented culture in the literature is to have an uninfluenced sample group.

The Chicanos of today are still impacted by the troubles of past Chicanos, especially those related to their relationship with Spanish. Before Chicanos took control of their representation, “the attitude of Mexican-Americans toward their own varieties of Spanish has been a negative one [as] they consider Spanish to be their second language and feel incompetent to use it with Latin American Spanish speakers,” and they even look down at their own code-switching (Berk-Seligson 81-82). The lack of confidence among Chicanos regarding Spanish is a consistent theme in Chicano literature. This lack of confidence stemmed from the critiques by the monolinguals of English and Spanish,

since they spoke “Spanglish” (Casielles-Suarez 149). The criticisms toward Spanglish are unique, considering that other mixtures of languages are not looked down upon as much in comparison, but this difference could be derived from the fact that Spanish has never been the official language of the United States and English implies accommodation to the majority (Callahan 19). Chicanos are under pressure to perfectly speak in both languages and never mix them, all of which is an unfair burden for them. In recent years, however, Chicanos have taken control of their language through letting it become a major part of their literature. This reclaiming of their language can be seen through the untranslated Spanish due to either the commonality of the words or intentionally of the author. Spanish is used within these texts in a variety of forms: visually italicized, used in standard form or colloquially, and Spanish can be influenced by English or Spanish influences English such as calques that are English translations of Spanish phrases (Torres 78). The treatment of Spanish, then, within a literary work has intentional variety on the part of the author. This conscious, or even subconscious, decision about the treatment of Spanish reveals the relationship between the character and the language. For this reason, the usage of Spanish within the texts is crucial not only to the narration of the story but also to the development of the protagonist within the novel.

Introduction of texts

In Chicano literature, there are famous authors that have greatly influenced the perception of Chicano literature and established what elements the works must have to classify it as such. Rudolfo Anaya is one of the first well-known Chicano authors. His most renowned work is *Bless Me, Ultima*. Although this book does not have a lot of Spanish in it, it is significant to show the usage of Spanish within Chicano texts because

Anaya conceives the story in Spanish, but he translates it into English while writing it down for the reader. The narration itself creates a Chicano way to tell the story. The focus on language interplays with reality and the intended audience, as he still chose to have untranslated Spanish within the novel to be associated with the characters. His protagonist is a representation of first-generation Chicanos. More recently, Sandra Cisneros is a popular Chicana figure within the younger Chicano communities. Although *The House on Mango Street* is her most well-known work of fiction, *Caramelo* will be used in this paper as a representation of her work since there is a whole section that is framed by Celaya's conversation with her grandmother with Spanish to add credibility to the narration of the grandmother's story. This framed section is relevant enough to the paper to make *Caramelo* the representation of Cisneros' work, because it is depicting how a Chicana ingested her native culture through the retention of her grandmother's personality. Through these two Chicano depictions, Anaya and Cisneros have inspired others to continue positively representing the Chicano culture.

These great voices influenced recent Chicano voices while they have expanded the audience for such works. Recently, two Chicano works have been recognized and have received a lot of attention. Published in 2013, Mario Alberto Zambrano's *Lotería* is told via the Mexican lotería game, which gained the book a lot of attention. The framework of the lotería cards and her parents' story creates the foundation of Luz's story to be in Spanish. It will be included in the paper due to the dependency on Spanish to tell the story. Although he has not won any awards for this book, Zambrano has become a part of the list of Chicano authors to read. On the other hand, Emily Sánchez wrote *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, a 2017 National Award Book Finalist. This book is

one that uses Spanish mostly within the context of when Julia is interacting with her mother. This book is included to have a different perspective in how Spanish can relate to the person. As a result, these authorial voices whether old or new are and will be shaping the ways that Chicano identities are being expressed and revealed in the future. Their depictions are then very important as a drawing of what a Chicano voice is being more clearly defined. These works are examined for their impending impact upon this minority and those who are closely observing this minority.

These texts are filled with Spanish in similar and different ways. But the most consistent element is that the children protagonists use their Spanish with their surrounding older family members. Due to this consistency, the usage of Spanish analyzed later in the paper will be focused on Spanish found in these conversations, because these conversations reveal how the protagonist interacts with the Spanish since this is typically when the most Spanish will be used in Chicano texts as these family members are the ones who might not know English and were the ones who taught Spanish to the protagonists. This relationship of how these families interact with the languages is revealed in studies of Mexican-American families, which found that the first-generation preferred Spanish, while the second was bilingual (Berk-Seligson 78-80). The Chicano literature produces accurate depictions of the culture. With this natural way to incorporate Spanish, there are a lot of small identity factors revealed about the protagonist. During these conversations, the type of Spanish present within the household will be revealed. Although there is more Spanish present within the texts, these conversations with the adults are the ones that will be the most helpful to give the overview of how Spanish relates to the children through this connection to their heritage.

Introduction of protagonists

The four chosen texts have children protagonists that depict different Chicano identities. The children in these novels depict their questions regarding their identity, whether that depends a lot on their family and what they are going to do with their lives. Through these obvious and open questions of identity, these texts reveal how Spanish is incorporated into their final form of identity. Three of the protagonists remain as children within the story which leaves a lot of questions about their identity, unlike Celaya who writes the book as an adult. As the characters ask who they are going to be, there is never a question as to how Spanish will be a part of their identity. Their identity regarding Spanish is either fairly established or they are very insecure over their language. These representations of identity will be taken into consideration as the representation of the culture is being examined on an individual basis.

Based off their family background, the characters have a different sense of comfort with the language. Antonio from *Bless Me, Ultima* is a young boy growing up with Mexican parents in New Mexico. Due to this, he is confident in his Spanish as that is his first language and does not learn English until about a fourth into the book. The last three protagonists are more similar in their relationship to their Chicano culture. Celaya from *Caramelo* is the daughter of a Mexican-American mother and a Mexican father. Due to this difference in relation to their English and Spanish, she has a lot of interactions where she willingly plays with the languages like her father who is still not a “fluent” English speaker, so he frequently code-switches to his advantage and to make jokes. Due to his influence, Celaya presents Spanglish to be her most comfortable language after English. As for *Lotería*, Luz is the daughter of illegal Mexican parents. Growing up on

the American side of the border though caused for Luz to be significantly more confident in her English than her Spanish although she uses it with her father and her aunt Trenchia. As for Julia from *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, she has the same background as Luz, but Julia interacts more with her mother in Spanish than her father, as her father is mostly silent in the novel. Although Julia is unsure of her Spanish, she becomes more comfortable with it after she is sent to live in Mexico for a short while to improve her mental health. With their different backgrounds and relationships, the four children protagonists depict different Chicano associations with Spanish.

Italics

The usage of italics casts the Spanish to be a foreign entity within the surrounding English text. Thus, the lack of use of italics for political reasons today can be seen in Junot Díaz's statement "For me allowing the Spanish to exist in my text without the benefit of italics or quotations marks a very important political move. Spanish is not a minority language" (qtd. in Casielles-Suárez 475). This foreignness signifies to the reader that Spanish is a break from the norm and brings attention to how different it is from the rest. In two of the books, *Lotería* and *Caramelo*, Spanish is italicized. In *Lotería*, Spanish, although mostly limited to dialogue, is treated as a foreign identity. Since Luz, who is writing in her diary, limits most of the Spanish to dialogue, the italicized Spanish is appropriate, because Luz is ashamed of her past that occurred in Mexico and what she believes started the downfall of her family as her mother would use her to fight with her father (Zambrano 145-147). The foreign element is elevated since there is not a lot of Spanish within the text. *Caramelo*, on the other hand, has italicized Spanish in almost every page of the book. Even though a lot of attention is given to Spanish, italics become

almost natural to the page. *Caramelo* does not only italicize Spanish, because English is also italicized for emphasis which leaves the italicization of Spanish to not have such an impactful foreign image since italics in English is used for emphasis. Therefore, italics used in this book have a different function. Neither works translate the Spanish that is used even when it does not always hint what the words mean.

The other two books do not use italics to distinguish Spanish from the surrounding English text. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, Spanish does not have a heavy presence within the novel, yet when it is present, Spanish is not italicized. This technique is reminiscent of the fact that the language of the characters is Spanish and not English. The absence of italics reminds the reader that the events are occurring in a Spanish speaking world. The lack of italics is not a political move by Anaya as Díaz used italics, since italics is used as a reminder. As for *Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, it does not have its Spanish italicized, because the words that it uses are mostly interjections and common knowledge words such as *tortilla* and *quinceañera*. Italics are then not needed by English monolinguals reading the novel, since it is assumed that they are familiar with such the words. The lack of italics in this novel is shows how certain words have become a part of the list of adopted words in the English language. As a result, the usage or lack of usage of italics regarding Spanish can have an impact on the surrounding text.

Standard Spanish

Standard Spanish refers to the prestige variety that follows the grammatical structures and usage as prescribed by the Real Academia Española. This Spanish is not one that is commonly used as expected within the Chicano texts. The representations of standard Spanish are typically through the first generation of mothers, fathers, or

grandmothers if the Chicano representation is not first generation. However, standard Spanish words have been adopted by English; these words allow for a variety of different Spanish to be included in the text without translation. These words are easily used by Chicanos without reflecting the Spanish that Chicanos use. Adopted terms include familiar terms—such as tío, tía, mamá, and papá—and greetings—such as hola and adios. Through the incorporation of Spanish in more of the dialogue which such words, the authors are creating “a culturally specific Latinidad...to reference their particular histories, experiences, demographic realities, and ways of being Latino/a” (Torres 79). However, for the sake of the project, the Spanish that represents these different elements of culture within the dialogue will be analyzed below.

Standard Spanish within Mother-figures

Due to standard Spanish being used by the immigrant generation and the first generation, the group that presents the greater amount of standard Spanish is the mother-figure in the protagonists' lives. The contexts when this Spanish is used by the mother-figures is usually between two different topics: daily conversation and religion. The mother-figures within the text are typically the ones who are overall most vocal with the usage of Spanish in comparison to the rest of the characters. The daily conversations depicted below by the mother-figures are ones that are typically related to commands and/or scolding.

The one that has the least amount of Spanish in this usage is *Bless Me, Ultima* as the greater amount of Spanish is used in the context of religion. Yet there is an intentional inclusion of Spanish in relation to behavioral commands within this novel. Although Antonio is close to his mother, he is closer to Ultima, who is his spiritual guide. Through

this closeness, Ultima has the authority and care to incorporate commands in her speech towards him. Although Ultima is speaking in Spanish to Antonio (which is translated for the reader), Anaya, the author, depicts Ultima's commands to Antonio in Spanish: Mira (Anaya 37) and Come (Anaya 96). This decision to use Spanish for these specific interactions between them is significant, because the Spanish commands depict a connection of the command to the "heart" language. These interactions reveal the connection between Ultima and Antonio to be one of care and importance, even though she is not a family member.

The next book that has a bit higher presence of interactions in Spanish between the mother-figure and the child protagonist is *Loteria*. For Luz, Trencha, her aunt, functions as a motherly guide and advisor for Luz as Ultima for Antonio, especially after Luz's mother abandons them. Through this acquisition of responsibility, Trencha then becomes Luz's adult supporter in addition to her father. Trencha's words to Luz are loving as depicted in her commands: "Echale ganas" (2 and 115), "Andale" (3), and "Mira quien es" (Zambrano 69). The first two commands are told to encourage Luz to have the strength to share her story about what happened with her family since she is the only one who can help her father get out of prison. The last command reveals the greatest amount of love since it is used to show happiness over the presence of the person. When she would tell Luz that she loved her, she would always make sure that Luz knew by asking if she knew: "Lo sabes, verdad?" (121 and 265). The question is not only to see if Luz knows how Trencha feels, because it also ensures that Luz knows that she is loved. The relationship with Trencha, however, was not always perfect. When Luz was a little girl, she would act out against Trencha. Naturally, Trencha would get mad, curse, and

scold Luz when she would intentionally cause Trencha pain like when Luz poked her with a needle. But at the end of the angry interactions, Trencha allowed love to win over and reconcile with Luz (Zambrano 154 and 193-196). The interactions with Trencha demonstrate how, although it is not always perfect, there is genuine care for each other. Trencha's use of Spanish with Luz shows Luz she is cared for; she provides a connection of Spanish with love in Luz's mind.

There is a significant increase in Spanish as *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* explores the relationship between Julia and her mother, which is somewhat similar to Trencha's and Luz's relationship. For Julia, her relationship with her mother is not perfect or healthy most of the time. Most of their interactions are tense, and the conflict is built on the differences to their adaptations on to the surrounding American culture. Julia feels that her mother is not proud as "she is always apologizing to white people, which makes [Julia] feel embarrassed" (Sánchez 12). Because she sees her mother who works as a maid make herself less, Julia struggles to accept her mother's view of herself and strives to make herself as successful as can be, which does not align with her mother's idea of success and causes the strife between them. The tension of the relationship can be seen in the Spanish her mother uses while scolding. The used Spanish is mostly name-calling such as her mother and her aunt tell Julia "que malcriada," which is an insult to the mother as it indicates that she did a bad job in raising her daughter (Sánchez 12 and 117). Henceforth, Julia's mother insults herself through this, which reveals that she holds herself responsible for what Julia does. Julia's mother also calls her a "disrespectful huerca" (23), "huevoa" (29), and "volada" (81). Huerca is not a positive term and has connotations of misbehaved and/or rude children as revealed when Julia's

mother also used it to call Olga's friend Jazmyn, who "was always at [their] house, never wanted to go home" (79). The last two terms, *hueva* and *volada*, are insults that are based on the principles that being lazy and a flirt is bad. These are significant as they reveal how the work Julia is doing is not taken into consideration as it is school work and how she is considered a flirt for dressing in a more "American" style. As a result, the name-calling does not help them understand each other or have a positive relationship. This difficulty in their relationship is highlighted by the fact that the mother always talks about her other daughter, Olga, in positive terms in Spanish such as "mi niña" (70). The mother using Spanish to remind Julia of how she is not her sister ties the idealized values back to Spanish and the Mexican culture as Olga appeared to be all that a perfect Mexican daughter would be. The difficulty in the dynamic between Julia and her mother is highlighted further when her mother says, "Ay, como nos haces sufrir. No se si maldecirte o por ti rezar" (231). Through this prayer, she reveals that she doesn't know what to do with Julia, but she has not given up on her. Through this statement, she signifies that she cares even though she does not understand her daughter. This relationship demonstrates through Spanish how difficult it can be for a Mexican parent to understand the Chicano culture of their children and how Spanish can become a symbol for division between them.

The book that contains the most amount of influential Spanish between a mother-figure and the protagonist is *Caramelo*. Although Celaya was close to her mother, the mother-figure Celaya interacts with the most within the novel is her grandmother, who is affectionately called Awful Grandmother. They do not have a great relationship based on the conflict between the grandmother not understanding the culture that Celaya has. The

culture Celaya has is a mixture of her Chicana mother and Mexican father, which leaves Celaya to have a mixed relationship with the culture of both countries and both languages. The conflict increased since the Awful Grandmother disliked English, “the horrible language,” as it lends to rude answers to questions like “Guat” or a simple sí rather than the proper and polite “¿Mande usted?” or “Sí, Abuela” (Cisneros 28 and 47). The lack of polish then bothered Awful Grandmother. As a result, when she would scold Celaya, she would call her names like “hocicona” and “necia” (Cisneros 34 and 74). After her Little Grandfather dies, Awful Grandmother moves in with the family. Through this increase of presence in her life, the dynamic between them is further developed, which is why she becomes so important to Celaya and her story.

This importance in Celaya’s life is revealed in the middle of *Caramelo* where Celaya recounts Awful Grandmother’s story, especially the love story with Little Grandfather. Although Awful Grandmother had passed away by the time she was writing the story, Celaya incorporates what her grandmother would have said to her if she could have been there to see the story being told. Through this, Celaya honestly resurrects the relationship between the two. Most of the time she talks in English to Celaya, but when she speaks in Spanish she scolds— “Que exagerada eres!,” “Celaya, why are you so cruel to me?...You were telling *cochinadas*,” “*Me maaataas*... That’s what comes from being raised in the United States. *Sin memoria y sin verguenza*” (Cisneros 92, 172, and 205)— or she would make comments to add to the story— “So this part of the story if it were a *fotonovela* or *telenovela* could be called *Solamente Soledad* or *Sola en el mundo*, or *I’m Not to Blame*, or *What an Historia I’ve Lived*,” “the capital was like the natives themselves, *chaparita*,” “*sin madre, sin padre, sin perro que me ladre*” (Cisneros 95, 99,

and 118). These segments with the grandmother reveal Celaya has taken in her Awful Grandmother's form of expression and allowed it to become a part of her. Celaya even lets her Awful Grandmother take over for all of chapter 25, where she recounts almost all of her story with her own father there. Through this continuation, Celaya does not deny the influence of her grandmother, who becomes a voice in her head. This relationship proves that even if there are dilemmas between the Mexican and the Chicano, the Chicanos will keep what their elders have said and take it seriously.

These four mother-figures reveal how they impact the child protagonists. The four relationships presented in these Chicano works are not all positive or all negative as there are elements of both in all of them, except for Antonio's and Ultima's which stayed good throughout the book. Thus, the standard Spanish used within the books with the mother-figures had a variety of forms that reflected different cultural dilemmas for Chicanos as they decide on what aspects they would or would not take from the Mexican culture and the American culture. If not always, the three girl protagonists present how uncomfortable they feel with their Spanish, be it their feeling that they do not use it well or feels unnatural when spoken or the cultural connotations that come with the language. Regardless though of their discomfort and disagreements with those who were passing on the native culture, the girls were not influenced by these relationships in their decision to implement or not implement their native culture into their identity.

Standard Spanish in Religious Phrases

Religion has an important connection to the heritage that Chicanos have with the Mexican culture. Religion can be incorporated in the form of reverence as in *Bless Me*, *Ultima* or as an interjection. Of the four books, *Bless Me*, *Ultima* lends itself the most to

have reverential religious Spanish, because Antonio's journey to decide to be either a priest or a cowboy presents opportunities for prayer to be present through his mother or the church as he takes his first communion. Through these settings, there are expressions referring to the Virgin de Guadalupe and the Trinity through prayers such as "Ave Madre Purisima" (Anaya 84, 172, and 246) and "En el nombre del Padre, del Hijo, y el Espíritu Santo" (Anaya 51 and 234). This language reveals how devoutly Catholic his mother is and wants him to be. Antonio learns of the god who became a fish, but he is influenced so much by his mother that he feels guilt for believing in such a god and always returns to the Catholic church to be his main form of receiving religion. The prayers, however, are not always positive as seen when Julia's mother prays "Ay, Dios, dame paciencia" while she is scolding her daughter (Sánchez 165). Therefore, prayers are used in multiple ways by the mothers in these texts.

Moreover, not all of the religious language is found in the form of a prayer, as Spanish has many religious greetings that are integrated into the daily language. *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Lotería* present these greetings, which are the following: "Buenos dias le de Dios" (Anaya 11 and 77), "Que dios te bendiga" (Anaya 142; variation in Zambrano 196), "gracias a Dios" (Anaya 172). There are also farewells as depicted when Celaya's father tells her "*Que duermas con los angelitos panzones*, sleep with the little fat angels" (Cisneros 53). These greetings and farewells reveal how strongly connected religious beliefs are in Spanish since these phrases are used in casual conversations. Thus, these texts emphasize how tied the Catholic religion is to the Mexicans and used to influence the Chicano, all of which helps form the Chicano's religious experience.

The religious interjections are usually used by the Mexican mothers. These interjections are used by the most devout religious mothers. Antonio's mother, who wanted him to be a priest, uses the expressions— “¡Ay Dios mio!” (Anaya 7 and 164), “Madre de Dios” (Anaya 10 and 52), “Madre mia” (Anaya 141), and “Ay, Jesus, Maria, y Jose” (Anaya 163 and 172). Her usage of these is in response to the tragic and surprising events that occur around Ultima. Julia's mother who was very devout used religious interjections as well but not as frequently as Antonio's mother— “Dios mio” and “Ay, Dios” (Sánchez 83 and 206). This usage is different as they are used as a form of a sigh during a scolding. The usage of religious interjections suggests that religion is important, it has become a part of the daily life, which removes some of the importance for the children they are used against, as Antonio doubts and Julia does not take her mother's religiousness seriously.

The incorporation of standard Spanish through religion demonstrates how the characters interact with religion not only through the native cultural Catholic history but also through everyday language not associated to positive interactions. These interactions reveal the interplay between religion and these characters' lives. Chicanos then do not deny the presence of the Catholic Mexican tradition and incorporate it in the different aspects it presents itself in Spanish.

Colloquialisms

The depiction of “not standard” Spanish is a representation of adaptations of Spanish within the United States. This form of Spanish is a mixture of the languages, which is most present in topics where people are most comfortable. The most commonly used Spanish mixture word is “mija/o” which is a combination of the words *mi hija/o*.

This term is used normally with connotations of endearment, and it is found in all of the books except *Bless Me, Ultima*. Mija/o is predominately used by the parents or parent-figures of the child protagonist. This usage is proven true as Luz's aunt Trencha and Julia's parents (Zambrano 210 and 242; Sánchez 79, 204, 207, 230, and 240). The term is used while the adults are trying to connect with the children and reveal that they care for them. The term can be used by people who are not the parents and display the same type of emotion such as when Julia is called mija by her uncle, her sister's friend's mother, and even a stranger walking down the street (Sánchez 64, 45, and 111). As a result, mija/o reveals to be flexible to use regardless of the relationship or lack of relationship with the younger person.

This word proves to have reached Mexico as seen in Julia's aunts from Reynosa call her mija, and the Awful Grandmother from Mexico City calls her son mijo (Sánchez 176; Cisneros 47). The word mija/o has transcended just being used by Chicanos, which helps to prove that just because a person grew up in Mexico it does not imply that they only use standard Spanish. Using mija/o in Mexico, the Spanish used by Chicanos is then validated.

Spanish has been influenced by the English linguistic code, which resulted in direct loan translations (Berk-Seligson 92). Although Berk-Seligson specifically called attention of direct loan translations from English to Spanish, *Caramelo* only presents this tendency in reverse, which is called calques, "creative English renditions of Spanish words and phrases translates literally or figuratively" (Torres 79). Ceyala uses these calques to represent her Mexican and Chicano world in her English mind. The ones that are most predominate are the translations of the nicknames for her family. Through the

calques, she calls her grandparents Awful Grandmother and Little Grandfather and her aunts and uncles: Aunty Light-Skin, Uncle Fact-Face and Uncle Baby, all of which are simple translations of the nicknames and develop awkward English nicknames. Her father also does this as he calls Celaya “my heaven” and “my heart,” both of which are not commonly used English nicknames (Cisneros 52 and 53). The usage of her Mexican father’s English proves to influence Celaya’s linguistic codes as she frequently produces calques without any sort of hesitancy. Celaya does not only do this creation of calques with names as she calls Las mañanitas, the birthday song, the “Little Mornings” (Cisneros 55). Through this translation, Celaya reveals that she uses the calques in more than the names, because she uses them to interact with her world and gain control over the words and situations by controlling how she refers to them. The calques seem to suggest interaction with both languages and cause a gain of authority over both.

The colloquialisms included within these texts are ones that reveal the complexities in the Spanish language and in relation to English. As a result, Chicanos depict the evolution of the language within their culture and themselves without making any sort of attempt to prove the perfection of their language. The language choices incorporated within these texts are accurate depictions of the linguistic evolution and should be taken into consideration for future linguistic studies.

Protagonists’ Use of Spanish

The protagonists themselves have an interesting relationship with their Spanish. Although at least one parent is fully fluent, the relationship that the parents have with their Spanish does not seem to indicate the type of relationship the child will have with their Spanish, rather the importance Spanish is given with usage within the household

does seem to have an impact on how the child will use Spanish on their own. Of the four protagonists, Antonio is the most confident in his Spanish, which respectably leaves Celaya, Julia, and Luz to follow. Their relationship with their Spanish is different and had different influencing factors.

Antonio

Standard Spanish words are used frequently by Antonio, whose first language is Spanish. These words function differently for Antonio as these are where he is the most comfortable. Antonio depicts the standard Spanish since he only understood Spanish like the older people in the town, and he would not learn English until he went to school (Anaya 9). His Spanish identity is established before he begins to learn English. Thus, Antonio's relation with English is one of fascination. He enjoys copying the new words and expanding his knowledge although he was bullied by the children who brought sandwiches for lunch rather than tacos like him (Anaya 54-55). Antonio, then, presents the joy that can occur when learning the other language. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio is surrounded by first generation Mexican-Americans who have refused to learn English (Anaya 171). However, although the adults refused to learn English, Antonio's mother was supportive of him learning both as she thought this would make him more successful (Anaya 171). This positive reinforcement from his mother suggests how English is seen as a way to advance. Through this interaction with the languages, Antonio demonstrates how languages can have a positive interaction within the person and how the surrounding ideas regarding languages cannot be conducive to trying to use language to advance in the world.

Celaya

Celaya has an interesting and more complicated dynamic with her Spanish and English than Antonio. This relationship with her languages could be derived from her father's correct Spanish and "gothic" English and her mother's inability to "even speak a proper Spanish" from Awful Grandmother's standards (Cisneros 16 and 85). Celaya is different from the rest of the chosen protagonists as she plays with her Spanish regarding how it sounds. She learned to play with the languages through her father as he would frequently code-switch, which was his "old joke...changing a Spanish word into English, or the other way round"— "*Que tienes? Sueno o sleepy?*" and "*Estas 'deprimed'?*" (Cisneros 52 and 238). The playful nature with the languages gives her a greater confidence regarding her relationship with both languages. This confidence leads her to sometimes she plays with the words in relation to the event that occurred describe them in a unique way such as Querétaro— "Querétaro. A chill like scissors against the neck. Querétaro. Querétaro. The sound of scissors talking"—and her Little Grandfather's laugh, which is like the letter "k" (Cisneros 24 and 56). The playfulness with the production of the noises created for Celaya to be more confident in her production of both languages as there was not a shame associated with pronouncing something incorrectly.

Celaya would not just play with the sounds, since she would translate the ideas that were present only in Spanish. As she is talking to her Awful Grandmother about her mole, she describes it as "*Pica*. It makes little needles on my tongue," which confirms how well she could understand the connotations of the Spanish words and is comfortable in explaining it in English (Cisneros 55). The explanation in English reveals how closely she used both languages in her world as she would switch between them without

hesitation or shame. She replicates this play with both languages when she wonders if her father meant “destiny” or “destination” or maybe both when he said, “Because it wasn’t my *destino*” (246). This wondering connotes how Celaya thinks a lot about the language she is processing; she also notes that the words “ceiling” and “cielo” are similar but have different usages and that *te hablo* “sounds like the Spanish word for *Devil*” (61 and 235). This attention to detail shows how she cares about both languages and has incorporated both linguistic codes. Even though her influence was from a Chicana and a Mexican, Celaya seems to be the best linguistically adapted out of the four since she handles both languages with confidence and demonstrates understanding of both equally.

Celaya is a depiction of how both languages can be important for a Chicano and how a Chicano can succeed with both. Although she is not a common linguistic representation of all Chicanos, she does depict a forgotten representation of a Chicano as American Spanish heritage speakers can sometimes be thought to be incompetent in at least one language. Yet Celaya proves that Chicanos can be fully component in both languages and can have the ability to interchange between both without much difficulty. Ceyala’s representation is a very important one as it demonstrates the ideal.

Julia

Throughout the novel, Julia depicts a conflicting relationship with her Spanish. She is neither confident in her Spanish nor denies using it. The importance of her Spanish is seen in the pronunciation of her name. Julia makes sure to pronounce her name the Spanish way as revealed when she comments that Mr. Ingman would pronounce it like her, “the Spanish way” (Sánchez 28). This importance of her name depicts how tied her identity is to her Spanish, all of which is furthered when she would get upset whenever

Mr. Simmons would say her name incorrectly “(Jewlia), even though [she] already told him how to pronounce it” (Sánchez 32). With this, Julia reveals how important the correct pronunciation and resulting confirmation of her Spanish part of herself is to her.

Moreover, the influence of her English language is revealed in how what she said in Spanish is translated into English originally or immediately after for the reader: “‘But I want to finish my book, tio.’ I stumble over my Spanish and feel my face get hot” and “‘Para si se te antoja algo,’ she says, in case I crave something” (Sánchez 65 and 241). The dynamic between both languages is dependent upon the other to give her intended meaning. Although she struggled with her Spanish, she was still troubled by the “horrible high school Spanish” used when white people would assume she did not speak English, so she “play[ed] along and pretend [she] no espeak English” (76). On the opposite side of the problem, Julia was also troubled when Julia’s mother’s boss would use words like *propitious* with “a Mexican cleaning lady” yet thanked her in Spanish (77 and 80). Thus, Julia’s main concern with language was based on knowing her audience and connecting with them in the best way possible. Even though Julia grew up in the United States, she has the mindset of her parents. This mindset presents with how she calls undocumented residents *ilegales* or *mojados* since “they [Hispanics] don’t know about being politically correct” (123). Julia sees nothing wrong with the terms, which further supports her identity is formed and dependent upon both languages and cultures.

Through Julia’s portrayal, it reveals how important it can be for a Chicano to have their Hispanic side to be validated. She was concerned in making sure that aspect of herself was not ignored by her surrounding whites and still thought as a Hispanic even though she had grown up in the United States. Julia demonstrates why some Chicanos try

so much to interact with Hispanic ideas and forms of expression as it is a way to claim what a part of who they are. The linguistic choices Chicanos make is not just a form to bring out their ethnic side, rather it is a way to confirm and reclaim the rich culture that is still a part of themselves.

Luz

Luz is a Chicano daughter of immigrants. Luz never lived in Mexico like her older sister Estrella; as a result, she did not feel as if the Mexican culture was a part of her. Luz has a limited Spanish vocabulary, which is constructed around the lotería cards and the words her parents frequent, which happen to be curse words and insults. Through this, Luz uses standard Spanish, but she is not comfortable with the language. Whenever they had to visit Reynosa, Luz had to speak Spanish, but she could only “speak comfortably...in [her] head” (Zambrano 62). Luz would never answer her grandfather in Spanish, which caused him to tell her to never forget where she came from (62). Even though Luz was disconnected from her Spanish, she would call out her sister, Estrella, for saying she was from Spain rather than Mexico (61). This defense demonstrates how Luz still claimed it as a part of her identity although she felt separated from the Spanish. Luz does not have perfect Spanish, and she grows frustrated when everyone laughs at her during a lotería game, and her father corrects her for saying la arpa rather than el arpa (Zambrano 86). She is frustrated, because they all know what she is saying: “La luna. El luna. The moon!” (Zambrano 87). To her, correctness does not matter as long as she is understood, which is Luz’s form of validating her language regardless of the state it is in. As a result, the words that Luz seems the most comfortable saying though are the words

of the loteria cards such as “el Corazon” (150) and curse words since those were the ones she heard the most often.

Moreover, Luz demonstrates a more confident use of Spanish when she would only call her father papi while her mother was only known as mom and only called her mami once at the beginning of the novel. By calling her mom, she had removed her mother’s connection to Spanish even though that’s how she would tell them she loved them, “Estrella y Luz, cuanto las quiero” (Zambrano 20). Overall though, her mother’s Spanish around Luz was used to scold or to curse out their father when they argued. Thus, Luz did not have many positive correlations with her mother and Spanish. The division with her parents is furthered, because Luz’s papi was the one who would defend her from her sister and her mother even though he did severely hurt her hand as a punishment for a shameful sexual act she had done naively (Zambrano 72-73). Through this inclusion of this event and Luz still calling him papi, it reveals that Luz was capable of forgiveness and demonstrated it through her intentional usage of her Spanish. Luz was the most like her father, and she consequently understood him the most. She understood why he had forced her to hit the wall and why he did it himself later as punishment for slapping Estrella who accused him of murdering their mother (Zambrano 158); Luz didn’t care he was cabezon as her mother frequently called him (100 and 157-159). He protected her from her sister and mother as he would try to get to her first to punish her which meant he would himself in the hand with the belt while Luz would scream (Zambrano 173). So even though her father messed up, Luz showed how she loved him the most by calling him papi and calling her mother mom since she abandoned them.

Luz, then, depicts even though she is not confident in her Spanish, it is still an important part of her. Luz did take it as a part of her identity as she used it to identify what was good in her world even though she sometimes would not use it correctly. To assume that her Spanish was not important to her since it was not perfect would be a misjudgment. Luz becomes a representation that the Chicano interaction with Spanish is more complicated than what meets the eye. As a result, Luz's relationship with the language should make Mexicans who judge Chicanos harshly for not having perfect Spanish to take a step back before insulting a person for not being great at something very meaningful to them.

Conclusion

Through this research, I discovered that these four books, although different in representations and time periods, have an important role in Chicano culture. These depictions are important as they confirm the different forms that the Chicano culture can present itself. Within media, the representations of Mexican-Americans are very limited to either surface level exploration of gangsters or maids of some sort. Thus, these books expand exploration of Chicano representation. These books with the protagonists confirm with Antonio, for whom language learning can be contrary to the ideals surrounding them; Celaya, who has both cultures as equally important for her Chicano identity; Julia, who wants more out of life by her desires to go to college in New York and deals with mental problems, and, finally, Luz, who is coping with the surrounding tragedy in her life and is still supporting her father through it all. These different conformations of the Chicano experience are why they are significant inclusions in literature overall and in the lives they are representing. This literature has gained popularity among the Chicanos and

Chicanas in the United States as they were at least able to see aspects of their identity and their struggles in books. Jessica Vasquez demonstrates this as she gave Chicano books to children who responded positively to Chicano books and were excited to find themselves within the books (907-913). Thus, these confirmations are not just expanding and breaking the stereotypes, as they are providing a place for Chicanos to be reaffirmed in their identities.

Due to the Chicano's negative experience with their language as it is critiqued by English and Spanish monolinguals, these texts provide a validation of using both languages to communicate. Julia and Luz provide the complicated relationship and anxiety that comes with trying to navigate both languages. These representations are not done in a condescending manner nor do they magically disappear from the characters, rather these simply reflect the issues that present in a Chicano experience. Hence, the language that they use whether it fall within the established grammatical guidelines or not is proven to be a valid form of communication through the inclusion of it within the text. Celaya furthers the revelation by demonstrating the beauty of the combination of English and Spanish through her continuous interchange between them to communicate in her code-switching or her calques. These protagonists return the authority to the Chicano voice and form of expression through the preservation of their linguistic codes.

The authors expand on what it means to be a Chicano by the incorporation of the strong influence of the Mexican culture. The mother-figures within these works have demonstrated the native influence and the maternal influence on the development of the language. The mother-figures' emphasis on Spanish enlightens the audience of the cultural struggle Chicanos have in their own homes as sometimes Mexican parents do not

understand their Chicano children. Therefore, the complexity of the cultural balance begins in the Chicanos' homes through the language usage and the inherit values that come with the language. The difficulty in the relationships is showcased in the name-calling by the Julia's mother and Awful Grandmother, all of which reveal the implicit social differences between the immigrant generation and the first-generation.

Furthermore, the incorporation of the religious Spanish by the mother-figures demonstrates how important the teaching of the religious beliefs is for the continuing family line. The use of Spanish shows the more implicit cultural elements of the Chicano community that are not revealed in other manners.

The stories of these protagonists and the reactions of the children in Vasquez's study demonstrate that there is more to be done. More explorations of what this culture looks like should be done to expand the knowledge of the positive aspects of this community and slowly break the stereotypes from by the surrounding monolinguals. As a result, more studies should be done to see how this culture is being represented as the Chicano voice grows in power and volume. If the representation is not examined, the silence of the Chicanos would not be broken and cause the community to continue to fight for their much-deserved respect. The use of Spanish within the Chicano texts has evolved throughout the years as seen how it is used within the text and visually. Further research tracing the progression of the change would also be beneficial to the understanding and appreciation of the Chicano community. Thus, there is still a lot of research needed for this field of literature.

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