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Bilingual Elements in Latino Slam Poetry

Thomas Robins
Brigham Young University

Introduction

One powerful aspect of great poetry is its ability to convey the vivid tone desired by its author. This tone is important because it can be used to enhance the message of the poem. This could not be more the case than in the genre of poetry known as slam poetry. Slam poetry is "a form of performance poetry that combines the elements of performance, writing, competition, and audience participation" and is known for involving various aspects of modern culture and cultural struggles such as race and identity.[1] For this reason, many minority groups use this genre as a vehicle for self-expression and reflection on common issues experienced by the poet, as well as issues shared by many members of the same minority group as the poet. This is especially the case with Latino[2] slam poetry through which we are able to observe many struggles experienced by the Latino community such as racism and identity. One method used in Latino slam poetry to enhance the message of finding one's place is the use of bilingual elements. The *mestizaje* of both languages not only strengthens the idea of the search for one's identity in a place with a majority monolingual population, but it also serves to create a more authentic atmosphere for the message of the poem to reside, thus augmenting the strength of the message.

Latino literature is a fairly recent genre,[3] and the use of bilingual elements in this literary style dates back to the time of the genre's conception. Though the earliest works of Spanish-English bilingual writings date back to the Mexican-American War, the widely accepted literary genesis and propagation of Latino literature dates back to the late 1960s as a response to the Civil Rights Movement (Montes-Alcalá, 2015). According to Montes-Alcalá (2015), this turning point for Latino literature in the United States is marked by different Latino writers forging their own literary voice. This literary voice varied among different Latino populations, but they were united in the way they sought to reflect their realities through bilingual prose. For example, according to Montes-Alcalá (2015), Chicano literature "sought to create a literary voice for illiterate migrant workers by replicating their speech" while Nuyorican literature sought to depict the bilingual and bicultural

[1] Banales, M. (2018). Slam poetry. In *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/art/slam-poetry
[2] As a Latino myself, and after consulting with various style manuals, I have decided to use the term Latino for this article. I use the word Latino in an all-encompassing way to include people of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexes, and sexual orientations.
[3] Though some believe this genre dates back much further, many writers such as Muñoz (1984) and Román (2017) claim that the genre of Latino literature is of much more recent origin (the late 1960s).

reality and struggles of living in New York City. Thus, even in early Latino writing, the use of bilingualism was an attempt at bringing authenticity to the genre. It was also a way of bringing to light the reality of a much underrepresented minority group that, only after the Civil Rights Movement, was able to create a literary voice tolerable to the general public of the United States.

Within the genre of Latino literature, bilingual poetry also plays an important role in the expression of the struggles of biculturalism as well as the richness of bilingualism. Referring specifically to early Chicano poetry, Valdés-Fallis (1976a) discusses that publications of anthologies and collections of poems in this genre all brought "before the public the voices of young Chicanos ardently concerned with the problems of their people, their self-image, and the world which they call *Aztlán*" (p.877). As a vehicle to express the topics of this new genre, a new strategy was created: the use of both Spanish and English in poetry.

Though Latino novels also make use of bilingual elements, bilingualism is used to a much greater extent in Latino poetry. In poetry, we find not only occasional uses of borrowed words from one language to the other nor just a brief dialogue in Spanish, but rather a more influential usage of both languages in the work (Valdés-Fallis 1977). Torres (2007) reaffirms this position by recognizing that most Latino "literature written in English in the US incorporates Spanish at some level" (p.76), but then claims that the alternation between the two languages is more often present in poetry, drama, and the performing arts. Keller (1984) is also under the same impression and explains that there are two reasons why bilingual elements are more common, or at least are perceived as more common, in poetry than in prose: 1) code-switching is much more apparent in Latino poetry, and 2) pragmatically, "since poetry is more concise, more examples can be included" (p.171).

Latino slam poetry is a modern manifestation of the subgenre of Latino bilingual poetry. This poetic style goes back to the same fundamentals discussed in the early works of the subgenre such as bilingual identity and cultural richness and mixing. However, this literary style has also expanded into the discussion of more struggles faced by many members of Latino communities in the United States. Many of these slam poems discuss subjects such as *machismo*, gender identity, mental illness, ethnic versus racial identity, decolonization, and language attitudes which are less prevalent in earlier examples of the subgenre. The concept of *mestizaje*, or mixing, is also present in this poetic style not only linguistically and culturally but also a *mestizaje* of identity. This discussion of *mestizaje* of identity is most apparent in the discussion of "what is a latino/a?" in which the poets discuss the fact that most Latinos do not fit in a box and that it is not necessary to prove one's "hispanicness" to others.

One of the most important literary tools used in Latino slam poetry to convey the idea of linguistic and cultural *mestizaje* is the use of bilingualism. All of the Latino slam poems studied in this article and many Latino slam poems in general use elements of both Spanish and English to a certain degree. In this article, I analyze different bilingual elements used in Latino slam poetry by way of a corpus study of nearly twenty bilingual Latino slam poems. Through linguistic and literary theory, I identify first what different bilingual linguistic elements are used by these slam-poets[4] followed by a literary examination of why these bilingual elements are used and what effect they have on the poems.

[4] This includes a survey of bilingual tendencies followed by the poets examined.

Previous Studies

In the simplest terms, bilingualism is the alternating use of at least two languages. Thus, the study of bilingualism is the study of the usage of two languages. However, if we want to characterize this term to see how a person uses two languages, we must define what a bilingual is. A bilingual person, according to Grosjean (2010), is someone who uses "two or more languages in their everyday lives" (xiii). Though this definition may be a little more specific and limiting than others, it serves perfectly for the topic of this article because the poems analyzed are written by people that have been exposed to both English and Spanish from an early age by way of their family members.

In order to best understand the analysis I conduct in this article, it is important to define the terms and describe my usage of the terms in this study. First, the term source language and target language are important for most bilingualism studies. These terms are used to describe the two languages involved whenever a feature from one language is adopted into the other. A source language (also known as a donor language) refers to the language from which the feature in the target language comes. On the other hand, a target language (also known as a recipient language) refers to the language that takes a feature from the source language (Crystal, 2011). For example, in the phrase "yo estudio en la *jáiscul*" the English word "high school" is borrowed into Spanish. In this case, English is the source/donor language of the word "high school" while Spanish is the target/recipient language of the word. L1 and L2 are also important terms used in linguistics to refer to someone's first language (L1) and their second language (L2).

In this study, I examine four different areas within the field of bilingualism, namely, calques, loanwords, code-switching, and a miscellaneous category I define as lesser-used bilingual elements.

Calques are a type of linguistic borrowing in which a meaning of a word in the source language is borrowed into a word already in the target language (Martínez, 2006; Crystal, 2011). For example, the verb "*aplicar*" in standard Spanish does not mean "to apply" as in "to apply for a job." Prescriptively, the correct verb for applying to a job in Spanish is "*solicitor*." Nevertheless, for many Spanish speakers in the Americas, especially in the United States, the verb "*aplicar*" (by the influence of English) has gained the meaning of "to apply for a job." In this case, the word "*aplicar*" already existed in the target language (Spanish) but its meaning was expanded due to the influence from a similar looking word, "to apply," in the source language (English). Calques can be separated into two categories: phrasal calques and lexical calques. Lexical calques are calques that affect just one word (just like the previous example), while phrasal calques include more than one word. For example, the expression "*escuela alta*" for high school would be considered a phrasal calque because it is borrowing the form and meaning present in the source language (English) and importing it into the target language (Spanish).

Loanwords are cases in which form and meaning are borrowed or assimilated from the source language to the target language usually with phonological adaptation (Crystal, 2011). For example, some Spanish speakers in the United States would say the sentence "yo estudio en la *jáiscul*" instead of "yo estudio en la escuela secundaria (la prepa)." As we can see, the form/structure of the world "high school" has been assimilated into Spanish, and it also kept the same meaning. We can also understand by the spelling that there is a phonological shift in this word from English to Spanish. Phonology refers to the systems of sounds in a given language, and we can see here that the English word is being produced using the Spanish sounds and rules of Spanish sounds (phonotactics).

Code-switching is the alternate use of two languages in an utterance. This means that, during discourse, "the speaker makes a complete shift to another language for a word, phrase, or sentence and then reverts back to the base language" (Grosjean, 2010, pp.51-52). There are two

major types of code-switching: intrasentential and intersentential code-switching. Intrasentential code-switching refers to the complete shift from one language to another within the confines of a sentence while intersentential code-switching refers to the complete shift of one language to another between sentences.

Lesser-used bilingual elements is an umbrella term I coined for other bilingual features that are not very widespread throughout the corpus poems but deserve some attention. The most frequent of these lesser-used features in the corpus is the use of interlanguage phonology. Interlanguage phonology refers to the L1 transfer[5] in the L2 speech of a speaker. In simpler terms, pronouncing and speaking an L2 with L1 sounds. This strategy is used at times in the corpus poems when speakers would imitate the way their parents speak their L2 English with L1 Spanish transfer.

The field of bilingualism and language contact, especially between English and Spanish, has been extensively studied in recent years within the field of linguistics. Prominent researchers such as Lipski, Hoffmann, and Grosjean have published many great works in the field studying various aspects of bilingualism with some intriguing findings. Lipski (2005), for example, noted some interesting trends among bilinguals when it came to loanwords and intrasentential code-switching. Lipski (2005) claims that the original choice to borrow a word from the source language into the target language is a deliberate conscious effort by the speaker. However, through the constant use of the word by a speaker or by a speech community, the knowledge of the foreign origin of the word disappears and the word eventually is used by even monolinguals of the target language with no knowledge of the source language (Lipski, 2005). Lipski (2005) also determined, in regard to intrasentential code-switching, that 1) code-switches are produced by bilinguals who were raised bilingually, 2) the decision to code-switch may be conscious and deliberate or unconscious, 3) code-switching does not usually break any grammatical rules in either language, and 4) code-switching usually occurs in contexts where both Spanish and English are both used, such as among bilingual family and friends.

On the topic of literary analysis of bilingual texts, there is a plethora of sources analyzing the literary effects of bilingual elements in literary works. Keller (1976; 1979; 1984) has pioneered much of the early analysis of early bilingual Latino literature, and many of his claims are still poignant today and are helpful for the analysis of my corpus of bilingual slam poems. Many of Keller's (1984) literary theories deal with the idea of mimetic fiction which he defines as a type of fiction "where literature aspires to become a microcosm and mirror of the social macrocosm" (p.172). Keller (1984) describes bilingualism in literature as a tool that portrays the aesthetics of realism or naturalism; this tool is fashioned to reflect the problems facing Latino people. Another important early literary theorist that worked with bilingual Latino literature is Valdés-Fallis (1976a; 1976b; 1977). The work of Valdés-Fallis is characterized by a fine balance between linguistics and literature in her analysis. One of her more prominent literary theories on bilingualism in literature deals with the idea of bilingual authors using code-switching to highlight a theme or message desired by the author (Valdés-Fallis 1977). In other words, code-switching is a linguistic strategy for pointing out or calling out a certain portion of the text. Moving on to more recent literary analyses of Latino bilingual texts, we find the works of scholars such as Callahan (2003), Martin (2005), Torres (2007), and Casielles-Súarez (2013). The works published by Montes-Alcalá (2000; 2009; 2015; 2016) also deserve special attention for their impressive contribution to the field. I will now briefly mention some of the main claims of these scholars on the subject of Latino bilingual literature.

[5] Due to the negative connotation associated with the word "interference," I have opted to use the word "transfer" to describe this process of L1 elements appearing in the production of one's L2.

Callahan (2003) provides an excellent corpus analysis of how register, or the "the variety of language defined according to its use" (p.14), affects the presence of code-switching in prose.[6] What Callahan (2003) found is that, presently, Spanish/English code-switching in prose "is not available for use in more formal registers" (p. 20). Specifically, Spanish/English code-switching is confined to the realm of lower register entertainment, humoristic, and stylistic writing. This style of code-switching is not yet present in higher register writing such as informational newspaper columns and articles in which Latino culture is not the subject (Callahan, 2003). In other words, though the use of Spanish/English code-switching is increasing, it is still restricted to the realm of entertainment and is almost completely absent from nonfiction referential material.

Martin (2005) also provided a thought-provoking analysis of code-switching in US ethnic literature containing various poignant claims that were essential to this work. After providing numerous great examples from both code-switching between English and Spanish as well as between English and languages other than Spanish, Martin (2005) concludes that the use of these code-switches serve the purpose of "drawing the reader into a closer understanding of the character's multifaceted culture" (p. 414). She also concludes that bilingual works of literature allow authors to reclaim their language and provide readers with the feeling of finding one's self-identity which is a central message of bilingual literature.

Torres (2007), for the most part, rejects the claims of some critics that minority writers are trying to exclude some readers through their use of languages. She counters in her article expressing that "very few Latino/a writers choose to write a text that will potentially limit their readership to a bilingual audience only" (Torres, 2007, p. 91). She goes on to provide her own interpretation saying that using Spanish overtly or covertly in literature is simply a writing technique in a similar way that chiasmus or alliteration are used as writing techniques. Torres (2007) supports the claims of Keller and Lipski that code-switching is an "artistic choice with political ramifications" (p.76) but also adds that after considering both the large and small Latino communities, "code-switching in literature is not only metaphorical" (p.76) but a representation of the comfortable or uncomfortable reality lived by many people of these bilingual/bicultural communities in the United States.

As previously mentioned, Montes-Alcalá (2000; 2009; 2015; 2016) deserves special attention for her work in the field of bilingual elements of Latino literature. Though this brief review of the academic literature will not do proper justice to her work, I will try and summarize some of her most salient findings related to the topic of my article. In her 2000 work, Montes-Alcalá completed an influential study on attitudes towards oral and written code-switching among Spanish-English bilingual youth. What she found is that neither written nor spoken code-switching is seen in a negative light. In fact, she found that many college-educated bilinguals see oral code-switching as a manifestation of their identity and written code-switching as a way to engage and relate to the author of the text (Montes-Alcalá, 2000). This is further supported by the findings of Montes-Alcalá's 2009 article that demonstrates the complexity and naturalness of Spanglish and criticizes the derogatory usage of this language mixing as if it was not a natural linguistic process when languages are in contact. Moving on to her 2015 work, Montes-Alcalá rejects the ideas of many earlier Latino literature scholars who claim code-switching is purely rhetorical and not a proper representation of bilingual speech communities. On the other hand, she provides and supports her counterargument that though code-switching does serve a rhetorical purpose, the

[6] Callahan points out that formality is not equivalent to register though they are correlated. While formality exists on the axes of the genre of the text (writing a text message versus writing a university professor), register exists on the axes of syntactic complexity or lack thereof. Thus, a formal email written to a university can be written with a higher register with more syntactically complex structures; however, it can also be written in a lower register, being clearer and more direct, but maintaining the formality (Callahan, 2003).

majority of code-switches studied in her corpus are also linguistically accurate (Montes-Alcalá, 2015). Lastly, she confirms the findings of linguists who claim that cultural elements such as the anticipation of family vocabulary can trigger a code-switch into Spanish. These same findings were also shared in her 2016 article along with a corpus-based comparative analysis showing that Nuyorican (mainland Puerto Rican) literature and Cuban American literature code-switch at different frequencies with the Puerto Rican literature code-switching more often. Though the focus of my article is not a study of the correlation between ethnicity and code-switching frequency, this study will be important in my examination of why bilingual elements may be more common in one poem over another.

Methodology

As previously mentioned, for this study I created a corpus of approximately twenty bilingual slam poems.[7] In order to examine the topic at hand, I choose poems based on various factors including the usage of at least five tokens of any combination of the bilingual elements previously defined,[8] the topic of the poem,[9] and the represented identity of the poets.[10] I then transcribed (since these poems are unpublished and recited orally) and coded these poems for different tokens of bilingual elements and compiled lists of examples for each of the four bilingual categories being analyzed in this study (calques, loanwords, code-switching, and lesser-used bilingual elements). Finally, I examined these occurrences both through a linguistic and a literary lens backed by the background literature to test the claims provided by these sources and to best analyze the usage of bilingual elements in these poems.

Analysis

For my analysis, I have decided to divide up this section by topic rather than by poet or by poem. I will go through each of the four bilingualism topics coded in my corpus discussing some of the most salient examples followed by a linguistic and a literary analysis of my findings.

The first feature I looked for in my corpus was the use of calques (both phrasal and lexical). None of the poems in my corpus made use of any apparent calques of either sort. There are two possible explanations for the lack of calques in my corpus: 1) by chance none of the poems in my sampling make use of this strategy either unconsciously or deliberately, or 2) the deliberate use of Spanish in Latino slam poetry is limited to more popular terms and expressions that have not been calqued due to the emotional connection and popular frequency of these words and expressions. The second explanation seems more likely at the word, sentential, and multi-sentential levels. At the word level, in my corpus, the most popular words used in Spanish had to do with either food, such as *arroz* and *sancocho*, or music and dance, such as *cumbia* and *salsa*. Since these words hold strong cultural weight behind them and are frequently used, they are very unlikely to be calqued. At the sentential and multi-sentential levels, the two most common categories of phrases used in

[7] These poems are primarily written in English.
[8] Tokens here refers to four cases of bilingual elements within any of the previously mentioned bilingual categories (phrasal/lexical calques, loanwords, code-switching, lesser bilingual elements [as previously defined]) in the poem.
[9] Though most bilingual slam poems discuss the topic of identity (as my corpus also reflects), my corpus tries to give an ample view of different topics possible within the realm of identity.
[10] Representation in the selection of poems in my corpus was very important. I selected poets of different gender identities, cultural identity (Chicano, Dominican, Colombian, etc.), racial identities, and sexual orientations to give a more complete image of the subgenre.

Spanish include the use of expletive phrases, such as "*vete pa' carajo*" (Quiñones, 2015, 1:04-1:05) and the use of common set expressions and sayings such as "*mi vida loca*" (González, 2012b, 1:54-1:55). Both these categories are unlikely to be replaced by calques due to the emotionally charged nature of expletive expressions and because of the cemented nature of the set expressions. As a result, Latino slam poets are less likely to use calques in their work, as demonstrated by the lack of calques in my corpus.

The second bilingual feature coded for in my corpus are individual loanwords. This feature was the most frequent feature coded in my corpus, and this linguistic technique was utilized by all of the poems in my corpus. What follows are some of the most salient examples of loanwords:

- "…I rejected *habichuelas* and *mangú*…" (Acevedo, 2015, 0:29-0:31)
- "Quicker than the smell of *arroz y frijoles* down the hallway to my bedroom door" (Bella, 2017, 0:43-0:47)
- "Bless all of its *cumbia* and washing-machine hips" (Bella, 2018, 0:51-0:53)
- "…but even my 87-year-old non-English speaking *abuelita* will tell you…" (Chapa, 2017, 0:31-0:34)
- "…we are still *bomba,* still *plena*…" (Frohman, 2013, 1:37-1:39)
- "Those *rancheras* and *cumbias* and *boleros*…" (González, 2012a, 2:08-2:11)
- "Dance *cumbia* like the horizon is on fire…" (Gómez, 2010, 2:54-2:56)
- "…across a passage as stoic and sacred as *abuela*'s hard-edged love" (Gómez, 2019, 2:10-2:14)
- "…because *lesbiana* burns my tongue like freshly made *arroz con leche*…" (Guzmán, 2017a, 1:22-1:26)
- "…like *mi mamá* moved through the house…" (Guzmán, 2017b, 0:23-0:25)
- "…I'm finding empowerment in *chicana* and *chingona*…" (Guzmán, 2017b, 2:33-2:36)
- "…goodie bags filled with *cacahuates,* chilli lollipops, *duvalines*, and *mandarinas*" (Rodríguez, 2016, 0:57-1:05)
- "The family gathers around to sing *las mañanitas*…" (Rodríguez, 2016, 1:06-1:10)
- "Sometimes you go to the *fiestas* and dance *la marcha* at weddings…" (Rodríguez, 2016, 1:23-1:27)
- "…sadly, can't speak to great *abuela* Fernanda" (Rodríguez, 2016, 3:00-3:03)

The usage and implementation of these loanwords follow the usual patterns discovered by linguistic research. Though previous studies mention in broader terms that cultural elements are likely to be borrowed into English literature, I separate the major cases of loanwords from my corpus into three categories: emotionally charged words, familial words, and food and music related words.

First, one of the most common types of loanwords used in the corpus relates to emotionally charged words, or words that usually have a strong positive or negative connotation. Many of the bilingual slam poems in my corpus discuss the topic of mixed identity and finding oneself at the crossroads between two cultures and feeling alienated by both extremes. For this reason, charged words usually historically (or, at times, currently) considered to be pejorative in either the Spanish language or in Latino culture are frequently used to express a newfound pride in being Latino. For example, *chingona, chicano/a, pocha,* and *cabrona* (words that still hold negative connotations in some Spanish-speaking countries) are common loanwords used among most of the poems in my corpus with some of these terms present in the name of the poems.

Familial words, or words used to refer to family members, are also commonly used in most of the poems in the corpus. Though *mamá/mami* and *papá/papi* are frequent loanwords, the most frequent and most consistent loanword in the category is *abuela/abuelita*. These words are some of the most common loanwords used among Spanish-English bilinguals, since these words reflect some of the first words learned by children being taught how to speak by listening to their Spanish-dominant parents. These familial terms also evoke the idea of a Hispanic upbringing different from that of most people in the United States. These terms are used as foregrounding for the idea that the authors grew up in a Hispanic household where culture and languages mixed daily. This is also supported by the case that *abuela/abuelita* being an even more frequent borrowing is tied to the idea that the Hispanic migrant grandparents are even less likely to have significant English ability, thus children and grandchildren would more frequently need to speak to *abuela* in Spanish.

Lastly, food and music related words are the two most frequent loanword groups found in the corpus. Though previous bilingual literary and linguistic analyses have studied food as being a very common type of loanword between Spanish and English, not much has been said in previous studies on the frequent use of music and dance terms in Latino literature. The reason these two groups of food and music are frequently borrowed into English from Spanish as loanwords is as a result of the strong cultural concept portrayed by these words. They are words that cannot be easily nor accurately described in the target language, and they are some of the commonest words in a given culture. These words also have extralinguistic connotations attached to them such as family and/or friend gatherings full of food and music. For this reason, very common dishes for some Latino groups such as *arroz con leche* and *arroz con gandules* and music/dance terms such as *salsa*, *bachata*, *bomba*, *plena*, and *cumbia* are frequently borrowed as loanwords in the poems in my corpus.

The penultimate feature examined was the use of code-switching (both intrasentential and intersentential). Most of the poems in my corpus made use of at least one of these types of code-switching. What follows is a list of some of the noteworthy examples of intersentential code-switching:

- "We are the sons and daughters. *El destino de mi gente.* Black, brown, beautiful. *Viviremos para siempre. Afro-latinos hasta la muerte*" (Acevedo, 2015, 2:22-2:31)
- "We speak American in America.' *Escúchame bien pendeja*" (Chapa, 2017, 0:21-0:23)
- "But they will never take away our voice or our drive to succeed. *Esta voz, es mi espada, facilitando que mis palabras lleguen directo a tu corazón*" (Chapa, 2017, 2:10-2:18)
- "I mean, 'Where are you really from?' I say, uh, New York. *Bueno, yo soy latino. Mi padre es colombiano, mi madre es estadounidense. Nací en* New York City. I lived in four countries. Moved 12 times" (Gómez, 2019, 0:23-0:41)

Listed are notable examples of intrasentential code-switching:

- "…cause it's like my mom always says, '*nunca es tarde para bien hacer, haz hoy lo que no hiciste ayer*'" (Chapa, 2017, 2:38-2:44)
- "Like *ay Ricky* don't you know that's the way they see us, unworthy of the most basic protections, *pero Ricky esto no es un beach*" (Febo, 2017, 1:06-1:15)
- "…and my mother lights a candle to *la Virgen de Guadalupe*" (González, 2012a, 1:05-1:08)[11]

[11] Though "*la Virgen de Guadalupe*" and "*mi vida loca*" may also be considered loanwords, I counted them here as code-switches under what Valdés-Fallis (1977) would consider as a specific word or phrase that carries a meaning in the source language that cannot be easily transferred to the target language. These are known as fossilized words and phrases within the domain of code-switching. It should also be noted that loanwords and code-switches are not mutually exclusive categories; a loanword is simply a one word code-switch.

- "I never got '*mi vida loca*' tattooed between my thumb and my finger" (González, 2012b, 1:53-1:57)
- "*Chicano* is the love for *mi familia*. *Chicano* is the love for *mi cultura*. *Chicano* is the love for *mi raza*. It's about having *respeto*" (González, 2012, 2:14-2:26)
- "God threatens to kick all the Mexicans out of heaven *si no paran con las pendejadas*" (Olivares, 2018, 0:56-1:01)
- "*Pueh mi papi* says 'don't tell me something I already know' and *mi mami* with one hand says '*no me digah*' and with the other calls *los tioh y las tias* and I told *loh primoh* and we screamed '*wepa*'" (Quiñones, 2015, 0:16-0:30)
- "…but I don't say that, I say '*vete pa' carajo'* cause that's how we said we were perfect…" (Quiñones, 2015, 1:02-1:08)
- "I am listening to *Los Lobos*. *Guitarrón* and *acordión* spinning out generations of dignified grief" (Solís, 2012, 0:29-0:37)

After coding my corpus, I notice that there are three significant places where most of the Latino slam poets analyzed in this study use either intersentential and/or intrasentential code-switching: 1) with set phrases and expressions, 2) when the poet narrates something said by a Spanish speaking family member, and 3) when the poet refers to an aspect of Hispanic culture, religion, and/or identity.

As I have alluded in my section on the lack of calques in poems, set phrases and expressions are unlikely to change or vary. This includes commonly used pejoratives as well as sayings and expressions. From the slam poems, we find examples such as "*vete pa' carajo*" (Quiñones, 2015, 1:04-1:05) and "*si no paran con las pendejadas*" (Olivarez, 2018, 0:59-1:01) for pejoratives, "*mi vida loca*" (González, 2012b, 1:54-1:55) for an expression, and "*nunca es tarde para bien hacer, haz hoy lo que no hiciste ayer*" (Chapa, 2017, 2:40-2:44) as a saying. Because of the cemented nature of these three types of expressions, these multi-word constructions are frequently borrowed as a whole into English creating a need for code-switching in order to mix these Spanish phrases into an English text.

Another common place for code-switching among these corpus poems is whenever the poet is narrating the voice of a Hispanic family member. For example, when Febo (2017) is quoting his aunt exclaiming "*pero* Ricky *esto no es un beach*" (1:06-1:15), we see the poet switch from English to Spanish to express some of his aunt's thoughts. This is a common tool used among various slam poems in my corpus, and it is used deliberately. The use of this type of code-switching when narrating for family members creates the atmosphere of an authentic Hispanic household with family members who are only dominant in Spanish and not in English.

The last common place for code-switching in my corpus poems is in the portions of the text when the author refers to aspects of Hispanic culture, religion, and identity. Though these aspects seem broad, they are important triggers for switching into Spanish. The strongest example of these triggers is González (2012b) when he orates "*Chicano* is the love for *mi familia*. *Chicano* is the love for *mi cultura*. *Chicano* is the love for *mi raza*. It's about having *respeto"* (2:14-2:26) which shows the poet switching codes in different cultural and identity triggers. We see a similar case for religious triggers in the frequent mention of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* among many of the poets such as the line by Olivares (2018) "Jesus has a tattoo of *la Virgen de Guadalupe* covering his back" (1:21-1:25). All these aspects serve as triggers enticing code-switching by the poet.

As demonstrated by the samples provided, intersentential code-switching is much more common in my corpus poems than intrasentential code-switching. This most likely is tied to the idea of the artist having liberty when they work with smaller poetic units. Keller (1984) remarks that poems are more likely to contain bilingual elements because they are shorter and work with

smaller units. This also affects why intersentential code-switching (at the sentence level) is more common in these works of poetry that work with smaller chunks of phrases than intrasentential code-switching which works at the multi-sentential level.

These examples are linguistically accurate and follow many of the linguistic tendencies of Spanish/English bilinguals. It is very apparent from these examples that the poets took great care in their treatment and usage of both types of code-switching. Previous studies in the field of code-switching in literature seem to be directly applicable to bilingual slam poetry's use of code-switching since it follows many of the same patterns set forth by early studies. They work together to create an authentic atmosphere of cultural identity and cultural mixing. However, though former literary critics mention that the highest priority of Latino bilingual works is not to provide a linguistic treatise of how code-switching works in the real world, bilingual Latino slam poets in their work show a great deal of care in the implementation of code-switching in their art.

The final feature coded was the miscellaneous category I labeled as lesser-used bilingual elements. These features were not very frequent, but they did serve a special tactical purpose in the poems that used them. I include examples of this category:

Interlanguage Phonology:

- "…and my mother's eh *broken English* [bɾóki íngli]…" (Acevedo, 2015, 0:38-0:40)
- *"...pero Ricky esto no es un beach* [bítʃ]" (Febo, 2017, 1:12-1:15)
- "English sits in her mouth remixed so that strawberry becomes *strawberry* [estróberi] and cookie becomes *el cookie* [kukí]…" (Frohman, 2013, 0:40-0:49)

Interlanguage Morphology

- "…not down at your bare feets [sic]" (Febo, 2017, 1:18-1:20)

Within the slam poems analyzed that had these lesser-used bilingual elements, there is a clear understanding of the intentional nature behind these literary tools. For example, three poems used interlingual phonology to portray the reality of having non-English speaking family members. This creates a feeling of authenticity and realism in the poem recognizing a common struggle for English learners and a shared experience by children of non-English speakers living in the United States. When learning a second language, it is very difficult to surpass the roadblocks provided by our first language. This is most apparent in the field of phonology (as seen in foreign accents) but it also extends to all the other major fields of linguistics including morphology.

From the corpus, there are three cases of the intentional use of Spanish phonology when speaking English (or in other words, speaking English with a strong Spanish accent). These three cases were all used to highlight the speech patterns of a family member. In each of these cases, English words were pronounced using Spanish sounds.

I also found one case of interlanguage morphology that was also used to reflect the speech of a non-native English-speaking family member in a poem. Here we see the language learner, or interlanguage, use of the plural for "foot" as "feets." This is a common mistake among Spanish speakers learning English. Since "feet" is an irregular plural and does not follow the standard rule of adding an "-s" at the end of the word, many English learners will add the "-s" to the end of the already plural form "feet." This is only reinforced by the fact that, in Spanish, "*pie*" and "*pies*" follows a regular pluralization pattern, thus causing further difficulties for Spanish speakers learning English.

The poets use these lesser-used bilingual elements as a tactical tool in their oral performance. The poets do not use these interlanguage tendencies as a way of demeaning the Spanish-speaking family members mentioned in their poems. Rather, these common mistakes made

by language learners are used to create the aura of authenticity in these poems of life in a bilingual household. This, in turn, further supports the overall theme of cultural *mestizaje* desired by the poets.

Conclusion

The results of this study follow largely what was expected based on the background literature. Though this study is innovative in the fact that it studied a newer, lesser studied form of poetry, I conclude that earlier studies on bilingual Latino literature and, more specifically, bilingual Latino poetry are very much applicable in the analysis of modern bilingual slam poetry. Just as previous studies have shown that bilingual elements such as loanwords and code-switching are used as literary tools in order to create an authentic atmosphere of *mestizaje* and biculturalism desired by the writers, the slam poets studied also used the same strategies to relay the same effect. This study also shows that the use of bilingualism elements is not limited to haphazard uses used only for literary effect, but rather most cases reflect the proper expected usage of bilingual elements (this is especially true for code-switching). It can be easily assumed that the slam poets planned their use of bilingual elements with utmost care.

Some objects of further study that became apparent throughout the course of this study include an analysis of how frequency of bilingualism in Latino slam poetry fluctuates based on the ethnicity of the poet (similar to Montes-Alcalá [2016] but among all the different groups [Chicanos, Nuyoricans, Dominicans, etc.] represented in Latino slam poetry). Though no apparent trends were obvious during my corpus research, a greater sample size may yield interesting results. Another topic in this field that requires further study is an analysis of what other sociolinguistic factors (such as age, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) are correlated with higher and lower frequency of bilingual elements. Though the focus of my research was not these aspects of analysis, I do think these can be fruitful outlets for further study.

As seen in this study of Latino slam poetry, bilingual elements are used, for the most part, in linguistically accurate ways; however, this is merely a means to an end. These Latino slam poets are not trying to write treatises on the use of Spanish-English bilingualism, but rather, as artists, they are using these bilingual elements to create an atmosphere for the contents of their poems to reside. It is used as a literary tool in the same way metaphors and alliteration are used to enhance a poetic message. The intentional use of bilingualism by these authors also brings an aura of authenticity that strengthens their spoken ideas of the balance and, at times, struggles between English and Spanish and the cultures that espouse these languages. This grapple between two cultures is, as a result, portrayed by the flush transition between the two languages in the performance of this poetry. The use of bilingualism itself in Latino slam poetry is a metaphor for finding one's place between two extremes.

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