



The Use of Spanglish in Latin Rap Music: An Analysis of Inter- and Intraclausal Code-Switching

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Abstract

The present study sheds light on the linguistic nature of Spanish/English code-switching – one of the multiple manifestations of Spanglish – in music. In contrast to previous work that examines this phenomenon in tracks released within the last two decades, this paper focuses on Latin rap from the 1990s, an era when several U.S. Latino rappers employed Spanglish to assert and show pride in their bilingual linguistic identity and ability to mix their languages. More specifically, we analyzed the grammatical structure of Spanish/English code-switching in Latin rap songs characterized by the productive use of code-switching. To this end, we analyzed 316 switches from 12 songs in order to elucidate the structure and variety of these inter- and intraclausal switches. Results show that whereas interclausal switches favor switching from Spanish to English, intraclausal switches are characterized by unidirectional mixing patterns from English to Spanish. While the matrix language of the dataset was predominantly English, the majority of nouns, adjectives, prepositions, relative pronouns, and coordinate/subordinate conjunctions were realized in Spanish. We discuss the implications of these findings in relation to our current understanding of the diverse language practices that characterize Spanish/English code-switching varieties.

Keywords: code-switching in music, Spanglish in music, Spanish/English code-switching, Latin rap music, interclausal and intraclausal code-switching

Introduction

Spanglish is an emotionally and politically charged term that has long been divisive among scholars who perceive it as a misnomer with negative connotations (e.g., Otheguy, 2009; Otheguy & Stern, 2010) versus those who view it more positively as a marker of bicultural U.S. Latino identity (e.g., Betti & Enghels, 2018; Casielles-Suárez, 2017; Chappell & Faltis, 2007; Monteagudo, 2020; Ohlson, 2008; Rosa, 2016; Rothman & Rell, 2005; Zentella, 1997, 2016). Even though there is no consensus on how to best describe the language practices of U.S. Latinos, it is important to highlight that Spanglish is a contact variety that belongs not to linguists but to the people who have embraced it and called it their own (Betti & Enghels, 2018). Spanglish is first and foremost *el habla del pueblo* or the people's way of speaking (Zentella, 2016), which is one of the key signifiers of *Latinidad* within the U.S. Hispanophone context (Rivera, 2003).

The word 'Spanglish' was officially recognized by the Real Academia Española (RAE) until 2012 (Betti & Enghels, 2018). Its vibrant presence, however, can be traced back to the innovative work of U.S. Latino poets and writers in the 1960s and 1970s (Del Barco, 1996; Lipski, 2003), an era that was characterized not only by civil rights movements but by a creative art renaissance among minoritized communities in the U.S. In her famous semi-autobiographical book, *The Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, written in Spanglish, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) reminisces about the profound validating effect that bilingual 'Tex-Mex' poetry had in her perception of her community's existence. These early works undoubtedly influenced Anzaldúa's own writing, which later became a powerful channel through which she asserted her bilingual linguistic identity as a speaker of a variety that is "neither *español ni inglés*, but both" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 55). Three decades later, in the 1990s, it was the use of Spanglish in Latin rap¹ music that thrived as an empowering source of both inspiration and resistance among younger generations of U.S. Latinos.

Thus far, scholars have examined different sociolinguistic and structural aspects of Spanglish. There is scant research, however, on the use of this contact variety in American music. This is rather surprising given the increasing employment of Spanglish as a lucrative tool for commercial success in the music industry (Monteagudo, 2020). In the mid-2000s, Rothman and Rell (2005) observed that media tycoons were acutely aware of two things regarding Latinos in Los Angeles, California: that they were "a crucial consumer group whose collective buying power rivals that of any other minority group [and that] a key part of reaching and identifying with this community [was] through Spanglish" (p. 532). Today, this realization regarding the buying power of Latinos in the U.S. and the crucial role of embracing Spanglish has become especially evident in the realm of music. A simple Google search on Spanglish in music yields entertainment or newspaper articles such as "How 2017 became the biggest year for Spanglish collaborations" (Calvario, 2017) and "*La música en 'spanglish' conquista los oídos estadounidenses*" (Aguilera, 2019). These examples illustrate how Spanglish has captured the attention not only of academic scholars, but newspaper journalists, entertainment bloggers, and music listeners as well.

Crucially, while this phenomenon has become popular in the Youtube, iTunes, and Spotify era, it is not new within the U.S. context (for a sociocultural and historical overview of hip hop and Latin rap, see Del Barco, 1996; Rivera, 2001, 2003; for relevant discussion on the history of rap, see McFarland, 2006). In 1981, the Mean Machine recorded "Disco Dream," which is credited as the first rap song on vinyl that incorporated the use of Spanglish, for Sugar Hill Records (Del Barco, 1996; Rivera, 2003). In 1989, the Spanglish rap "Mentirosa" by Cuban-American Mellow

¹ Latin rap is associated with the West Coast. Rivera (2001) describes Latin rap as "rap music done by Latinos, often code-switching, with topics and references particular to inner-city Latino communities" (p. 246). The label is also inclusive of Latin America-based artists, whose rhymes were fully or mainly in Spanish (e.g., Vico C and El General).

Man Ace (Ulpino Sergio Reyes) was released. This song about a cheating Hispanic woman became so popular yet controversial that it elicited Spanglish reply raps from underground female rappers such as Laura Segura, who challenged the song's negative portrayal of Latinas. While Mellow Man Ace was instrumental in helping to create the market for Spanish and Spanglish raps, there were other Chicano rappers whose key contribution was their production of music infused with messages of linguistic, ethnic, and political consciousness (Del Barco, 1996). During the 1990s, the employment of Spanish and Spanglish as a means to foster ethnolinguistic consciousness was a distinctive feature of Latin rap in California, precisely the context where Rothman and Rell (2007) once made their observations.

In 1990, Kid Frost (Arturo Molina Jr.) released "La raza," a Spanglish rap song that became a Chicano anthem and a symbol of ethnic pride among younger generations of Mexican Americans. Del Barco (1996) underscores that Frost's raps gave voice to the modern-day *pachucos* from the streets of East Los Angeles, California (for further discussion on *pachucos* and *Caló*, see García, 2009). Through their songs, Latino rappers tried to counter the 'Latin lover' stereotype with powerful messages about identity. Importantly, Latin rap songs, music videos, and albums from California often incorporated symbols of Aztec culture, which were meant to instill pride among youths about their Chicano and Mexican heritage. On stage, Del Barco (1996) points out, Kid Frost often made references "to Aztlán, the mythical lands of the southwest United States said to have been stolen from the *indios*, lands that came to embody the Chicano spirit" (p. 72). Thus, during the 1990s, Latin rap songs often had elements of political consciousness and even explored issues such as illegal immigration (e.g., songs by Latin Alliance and Aztlan Nation).

Noteworthy is that Chicano rappers in California also made overt references to Spanglish and "a particular point of pride [was] the ability to engage in 'code-switching'" (Stephens, 1992, p. 76). In "Brown and Proud," released in 1990, for instance, the hip hop duo A Lighter Shade of Brown's DJ Fabe Love raps:

Take a listen
To an invention that caught your attention
We call it Spanglish
A bit of Spanish combined with English

As it relates to the New York rap scene, Rivera (2003) adds that in the latter half of the 1990s, there was "a noticeable expansion in the acceptability of Spanish, Spanglish and code-switching in [rap] rhymes" (p. 156). The commercial trend among popular African American and Latino artists at the time was to incorporate Spanish words or phrases into English lyrics and to sample Caribbean Latino music. One of the main reasons why Spanglish was embraced by both Caribbean Latino (particularly Puerto Rican) and African American rappers is that they had shared experiences living oftentimes in the same urban ghettos of New York. Their music, therefore, reflected their intertwined realities. Even though there were differences between the themes that were predominantly explored by Chicano and Caribbean Latino rap artists in the 1990s, what was constant was the fact that rap "brought the African and Indigenous American (North, Central, South) components of Latino culture into a new fusion" (Del Barco, 1996, p. 68) that highlighted the similarities between Black and Brown communities in the U.S.

The fact that thirty years ago artists were already showcasing their "linguistic mestizaje" (in the sense of Anzaldúa, 1987) underlines that Spanglish has long been present as an important marker of U.S. Latino linguistic identity in American music (for relevant discussion on the historical presence of Spanish/English code-switching in Southwest U.S., see Moyna & Loureiro-Rodríguez, 2022). References to the cultural and sociolinguistic significance of Spanglish in the

U.S. has resurfaced in music by contemporary artists, such as Becky G, who take pride in their use of Spanglish and identify with this contact variety. In her 2015 song, “We are Mexico,” for instance, California-born artist Becky G highlights the vital role that Spanglish plays in U.S. Latino communities:

I see fifty Latinos, fifty Latinas
That’s my crib on a weekend
That’s mi familia
Talking in Spanglish
En español
I’m just here to let you know
If you don’t know, now you know
We are Mexico
It don’t matter where we go
Viva México

Within the last decade in particular, the presence of Spanglish has become noticeable in numerous bilingual songs and collaborations between L1 English-speaking and L1 Spanish/Spanglish-speaking artists. Unlike the 1990s, however, today Spanglish is transcending regional and national borders and is becoming ever more popular in mainstream American music (Monteagudo, 2020; Rokosová, 2020). Despite its increasing prominence, Spanglish in music remains largely unexamined, particularly with respect to grammatical aspects of Spanish/English code-switching. While previous studies elucidate sociopragmatic and/or sociolinguistic aspects of this phenomenon (e.g., Cepeda, 2000; Loureiro-Rodríguez, 2017; Monteagudo, 2020; Moyna & Loureiro-Rodríguez, 2022; Ohlson, 2008, 2009; but see Naranjo Hayes, 2022), the present study investigates grammatical aspects of Spanish/English code-switching in Latin rap songs mainly from the 1990s, the decade that was fundamental for the original impetus that led to the emergence and rise of Spanglish in American music.

Our goal in the present study was twofold. Drawing on 12 Spanglish songs that were released between 1989 and 2004, we analyzed a total of 316 switches in order to elucidate two concomitant aspects of Spanish/English code-switching in music: the structure and variety of inter- and intraclausal switches. This paper is divided as follows. First, we define Spanglish, and we provide an overview of previous studies on Spanish/English code-switching or Spanglish in American music. Subsequently, we describe the methodology that was employed in this study, and we present our results. Finally, we discuss the implications of our results and we offer concluding remarks.

What is Spanglish?

Although the term remains controversial, researchers concur that Spanglish is an overarching term that refers to a conglomerate of language contact phenomena (Casielles-Suárez, 2017; Fairclough, 2003; Lipski, 2003; Nash, 1970; Rodríguez-González & Parafita Couto, 2012; Rothman & Rell, 2007). It includes nominal and verbal borrowings, in which English nouns, e.g., *super-marketa* ‘supermarket’ (Rothman and Rell, 2007, p. 521), or verbs, e.g., *tochar* ‘to touch’ (Lipski, 2003, p. 237), are typically phonologically and/or morphologically adapted upon integration into Spanish. It is inclusive of lexical, e.g., *viaje redondo* ‘round trip’ (Sánchez, 2001, p. 10), or syntactic, e.g., *pagar patrás* ‘pay back’ (Lipski 2003, p. 239), calques, which are words or phrases that are literal translations of their English equivalent forms. It also comprises semantic

extensions in which a new meaning is added to existing Spanish words or phrases, e.g., *librería* ‘bookstore/library’ (Casielles-Suárez, 2017, p. 151).

Spanglish also encompasses practices that evince a high degree of bilingual competence such as code-switching or the systematic alternation between languages, which may be *interclausal* as in (1) or *intraclausal* as in (2).

- (1) *Me estaba defendiendo* and then he split
‘He was defending me and then he split’

[Data from Southwest US: Pfaff, 1979, p. 312]

- (2) *Estaba training para pelear*
‘He was training to fight’

[Data from Southwest US: Pfaff, 1979, p. 296]

Whereas the former type of switching occurs between complete clauses, the latter type occurs within clauses and typically involves the insertion of words or phrases (Deuchar, 2012).² The extensive study of code-switching, one of the most widely investigated manifestations of Spanglish (Casielles-Suárez, 2017; Lipski, 2003), has today broadened our knowledge of the grammaticality and complexity of code-switching (for a recent overview of grammatical aspects of code-switching, see Deuchar, 2020), dispelling the previously held notion that this practice is haphazard and grammarless.

Last but not least, we can surmise that the term also comprises what has been more recently theorized as *Inverted Spanglish*, which occurs when Mock Spanish³ (Hill, 1998) is appropriated and Spanish linguistic forms are skillfully combined with English pronunciation. According to Rosa (2016), bilingual speakers employ Inverted Spanglish to enact a U.S. Latino ethnolinguistic identity while also signaling linguistic dexterity in and cultural familiarity with both English and Spanish (for further discussion and examples, see Rosa, 2016).

Even though Spanglish is typically associated with Puerto Rico (where the word was originally coined) and U.S. Latino communities (Rosa, 2016; Zentella, 1997, 2016), it is not the case that this term has been adopted only in the U.S. Hispanophone context. In Belize, where Spanish (the language of the majority) has also been in prolonged contact with English (the official language), speakers also employ the term Spanglish to describe the contact Spanish variety that they speak (Balam, 2013, 2016). The term, therefore, more broadly refers to the language contact phenomena that naturally arise when Spanish and English, two historically influential global languages, are thrust into intense contact as a result of colonization, annexation, and/or immigration. While Spanglish and Spanish/English code-switching are oftentimes used as synonymous terms, our view here is that the latter phenomenon refers only to one of the manifestations of Spanglish (Casielles-Suárez, 2017; Lipski, 2003).

² Following Deuchar (2012), we use the *intraclausal/interclausal* distinction rather than the more commonly used terms *intrasentential/intersentential* (Poplack, 1980) as the term *intrasentential* is ambiguous, particularly in cases when switching involves two complete clauses within a sentence. Example (1), for instance, could be analyzed as both intersentential (i.e., between two sentences joined by a coordinating conjunction) or intrasentential (i.e., within a compound sentence containing two clauses).

³ According to Hill (1998), Mock Spanish refers to a set of discursive practices in which Spanish words or phrases are used by speakers of English for jocular or pejorative purposes. It often implicitly invokes stigmatizing stereotypes about U.S. Latinos and is thus considered discriminatory (e.g., no problema, buenos nachos [for *buenas noches* ‘good night’], etc.).

The Use of Spanglish and Spanish/English Code-Switching in Music

To date, only a handful of studies cast light on the sociolinguistic, sociopragmatic, or grammatical nature of Spanglish and/or Spanish/English code-switching in American music. Ohlson (2008) analyzed ten songs by various Latin American artists (i.e., Aventura, Mellow Man Ace, Proyecto Uno, and Molotov) to examine the different uses of code-switching according to changes in markedness, responses to contexts and interlocutors, and responses to linguistic structures. Ohlson's qualitative analysis revealed that code-switching was incorporated to fulfill many pragmatic and stylistic functions (e.g., elaboration, emphasis, creation of rhymes, to highlight a speaker's identity, etc.). It was mainly used to create different types of contrasts (e.g., a personal versus an impersonal tone), to elaborate, and to create stylistic variation (i.e., the same or similar utterance is repeated in the other language to avoid repetition).

In a subsequent analysis of Mellow Man Ace's song "Mentirosa," Ohlson (2009) examined the social indexical functions of Spanish (i.e., the marked code choice) and English (i.e., the unmarked code choice) in this densely code-switched rap song. In her analysis, she postulates that the male speaker's (i.e., Mellow Man Ace) use of Spanish or English when addressing the female interlocutor (i.e., the *mentirosa* 'the cheating woman') serves specific pragmatic functions. Mellow Man Ace, for example, uses Spanish to distance himself from the female interlocutor both socially and physically (i.e., breaks up with her at the end of the song). The use of Spanglish, on the other hand, is employed in such a way that it gives the impression that the female interlocutor does not fully understand Spanish. Spanglish, thus, is employed as a way to question and hence insult the female speaker's Hispanic linguistic identity.

Derrick's (2015) dissertation on literary and non-literary texts provides insight into the structural and functional nature of switches in Spanglish songs. Of particular relevance are her findings vis-à-vis the grammatical nature and functions of code-switching in 10 songs from different U.S. Latino artists. Derrick analyzed the base language in bilingual sentences (i.e., language that provides grammatical structure and most lexical items). She found that the majority of bilingual sentences in her song corpus had an English base (e.g., 'Once Mexico, before that, simply "*mama tierra*"' 'Once Mexico, before that, simply "mother earth"'). With respect to functions, Derrick found that contextual switches in which words or phrases were used to refer to specific topics related to speakers' experiences (e.g., My *hijo* tries hard 'My son tries hard') were the most frequent. Notably, Spanish insertions typically referred to culture, family, and food, whereas English insertions made references to night life, drinking, and dancing.

In line with the study of the sociopragmatic functions of Spanish/English code-switching in music, Loureiro-Rodríguez (2017) analyzed the functions of Spanish switches across seven English studio albums of Cuban-American rapper Pitbull. In reference to song topics, the data revealed that hegemonic masculinity was the most prevalent topic followed by success (36.5% and 23.5%, respectively). The analysis of 550 Spanish switches revealed that Spanish was primarily employed for pragmatic (77.4%) and performative (20%) functions. As it relates to the former, Spanish was used to emphasize or translate a verse or topic, to self-identify, as vocatives, or as discourse markers. With respect to the latter, Spanish switches were used to encode a Latino identity, but mainly to represent hegemonic masculinity. Loureiro-Rodríguez underscores that while the use of code-switching legitimizes this sociocultural U.S. Latino practice, it is often overshadowed by misogyny, the sexual objectification of the female body, and the employment of Spanish to express a hypersexualized identity, which conforms to heterosexual male standards in rap and reggaetón.

Other studies have cast light on the evolution of Spanglish in American music across decades. Pisarek (2012) investigated patterns in the use of Spanglish in popular American music during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. The study, which was based on songs from every Billboard

Top 100 from 1980 to 2009, sought to examine how the use of Spanglish in music evolved during these three decades. Pisarek found that from 1980 to 2009 the number of songs containing Spanglish increased from 1.2% in the 1980s to 6.2% in the 2000s, representing an increase in the use of Spanglish in Billboard Top 100 songs. According to Pisarek, the turning point in the popularity of Spanglish in music was 1997, the same year that the Latin Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences was established. Based on her findings, she concluded that Spanglish and Spanish gained considerable acceptance by U.S. society during this time period, a finding that echoes Rivera's (2003) observation. In Pisarek's (2012) view, this may have influenced the increasing numbers of people who started learning Spanish in the U.S. during this time as well.

More recently, Monteagudo (2020) analyzed 103 reggaetón songs that were in the Top 20 songs of the Billboard charts between 2015 and 2019. Monteagudo found that in contrast to 2015 and 2016, songs containing Spanish/English code-switching were significantly higher in 2017, achieving a notable peak in 2018, with 85.3% of songs containing Spanish/English code-switching. Based on her data, Monteagudo postulates that code-switching is a defining feature of reggaetón, as reggaetón songs require code-switching in order to reach the Top 20 songs on the Billboard charts. As it relates to functions, she found that English played either discursive or symbolic functions, primarily used when referring to themes of love, sex, bragging, introduction of an artist or song, for filler, or excitement building. Spanish, on the other hand, was associated with thematic references to heartbreak.

In line with Pisarek's (2012) and Monteagudo's (2020) findings, Rokosová (2020) also found that there was an increase in the number of songs containing Spanglish across time. Drawing on 90 songs from the Billboard Hot 100 charts between 2000 and 2019, Rokosová analyzed the types of Spanglish forms in popular songs and the sociopragmatic and stylistic functions of Spanglish. Rokosová found that particularly in 2018 several songs ($n = 8$) containing Spanglish made it to the Billboard Hot 100. In terms of genre, the majority of songs containing Spanglish were hip hop/rap (62%), followed by pop (23%) and reggaeton (12%). In terms of Spanglish forms (i.e., single words, phrases, or other), the majority of examples (63%, 300/475) constituted cases of code-switching in which a single lexical item was incorporated, particularly English nouns (55%), interjections (12%), and numerals (10%). Results also revealed that code-switching was incorporated in songs primarily for the purposes of direct speech, emphasis, and clarification/elaboration. In relation to stylistic functions, code-switching was employed to euphemistically talk about sexuality and used as a device to establish solidarity.

In sum, despite its historical stigmatization, Spanglish has today gained more acceptance and popularity in mainstream American music. Antecedent research suggests there have been two main peaks of prominence across time, namely, 1997 (Pisarek, 2012) and 2018 (Monteagudo, 2020; Rokosová, 2020). Although the presence of Spanglish or Spanish/English code-switching in mainstream American music has increased, it is important to highlight that it has done so within very strict confines of acceptance. This has especially been the case in rap music, which has been ethnoracialized since its inception as an African American musical form. As Rivera (2003) aptly highlights, while the sparse or limited use of Spanish or Spanglish in rap songs has been acceptable since the 1990s, its overuse may lead artists to become "statistics in the rap game," as it happened to Mellow Man Ace and Mekanik of Funk who were often criticized for overusing Spanglish (Morales, 1998, cited in Rivera, 2003, p. 156). These Latin rap artists and songs, however, that transgressed the established norms of rap, are at the core of the present study.

In our view, the more extensive use of Spanish/English code-switching in songs epitomizes U.S. Latino rap artists' efforts to showcase their bilingual realities and skills rather than restricting their use of Spanglish at the expense of not disrupting and deviating from the "African American matrix upon which rap authenticity rests" (Rivera, 2003, p. 154). Latin rap songs from the 1990s

and early 2000s are historically significant, as they ensured linguistic representation of the U.S. Latino community at a time when there was less openness towards Spanglish in music in comparison to more recent years. Although this era is often associated with the Latino music boom (Cepeda, 2000) and artists like Ricky Martin, Jennifer Lopez, and Enrique Iglesias, our work focuses on lesser-known artists and songs that nonetheless remain an important testament to the enduring vitality of Spanglish in the U.S. Endeavoring to cast light on grammatical aspects of songs from this era, we specifically examined tracks that evince productive use of code-switching practices.

Methodology

In this section, we describe the songs that were purposefully selected for the quantitative analysis of inter- and intraclausal code-switching in Latin rap songs.

Selection of Songs

In contrast to previous studies, which have been based on popularity in Billboard charts (Monteagudo, 2020; Pisarek, 2012; Rokosová, 2020) or specific artists (Loureiro-Rodríguez, 2017; Moyna & Loureiro-Rodríguez, 2022; Naranjo Hayes, 2022), songs for the present analysis were based on three main factors: (i) year of release during the 1990s or early 2000s; (ii) the sociocultural background of the music artist(s); and (iii) the frequency of code-switching. Preliminary rap songs that use Spanglish were initially gleaned after an extensive review of published and unpublished research as well as online discussions and Spanglish song lists (e.g., Spanglish songs, <https://www.genius.com>). After careful consideration, a total of 12 songs were selected for further analysis.

Table 1
Spanglish Rap Songs

Song Title	Release Date	Artist(s)	Origin
“Mentirosa”	1989	Mellow Man Ace	Born in Cuba, moved to Los Angeles, CA at age 4
“La raza”	1990	Kid Frost	Los Angeles, CA
“Mentirosa’s not my name”	1991	Laura Segura	Watsonville, CA
“Latin lingo”	1992	Cypress Hill ⁴	South Gate, CA
“Keep it flowin”	1993	Mesanzarj of Funk ⁵	New York, NY
“La familia”	1995	Kid Frost	Los Angeles, CA
“Tres delinquentes”	1996	Delinquent Habits ⁶	Norwalk, CA
“Underground connection”	1996	Delinquent Habits (ft. Hurricane G)	Norwalk, CA

⁴ Cypress Hill included three members: B-Real (born in Los Angeles, CA), Sen Dog (born in Pinar del Río, Cuba, but moved to South Gate, California at age 6), and Eric Bobo (born in Queens, New York). Sen Dog (Senen Reyes) is Mellow Man Ace’s (Ulpino Sergio Reyes) brother.

⁵ Mesanzarj of Funk included three members: D-Vell (Cuban American), Pearl Pizazz (of Puerto Rican and West Indian descent) and DJ Royal Tech (Colombian American).

⁶ Its original members were Ives Irie (Ivan S. Martin), Kemo The Blaxican (David L.K. Thomas), and DJ OG Style (Alejandro R. Martínez).

“Wallah”	1998	Delinquent Habits	Norwalk, CA
“Latin kings”	1999	Kid Frost (ft. Mad One & Shysti)	Los Angeles, CA San Diego, CA
“No me importa”	2001	Immortal Technique	Born in Peru, immigrated to Harlem, NY at age 2
“Latin thugs”	2004	Cypress Hill (ft. Tego Calderón)	South Gate, CA

As Table 1 shows, the majority of songs ($n = 9$) were released during the 1990s. Importantly, all artists were either second ($n = 2$) or third/other generation ($n = 8$) speakers of U.S. Spanish who were either from or moved to California or New York, which are two well-known contexts where the use of Spanglish has thrived for decades (Pfaff, 1979; Poplack, 1980; Zentella, 1997, 2016). These were rap artists, therefore, who likely either identified, used, or were regularly exposed to this language practice in their respective communities. In light of our interest in the linguistic nature of songs, the frequency of code-switching was relevant. It is important to note that even though Latino rappers overtly make reference to Spanglish and their bilingual linguistic identities, only some of their songs evince productive use of Spanish/English code-switching.

Thus, songs for our analysis were purposefully selected. In extant work, rap songs that have been noted for their extensive use of code-switching include Mellow Man Ace’s “Mentirosa” (Ohlson, 2008, 2009; Rivera, 2003) and Cypress Hill’s “Latin lingo” (Cepeda, 2000). These are songs that are linguistically remarkable as they are written in “a uniquely U.S. hybrid [Spanglish] whose lyrical messages literally resist the complete comprehension of all but community insiders” (Cepeda, 2000, p. 67). While it is true that these tracks vary in terms of length and number of words, a question that arises is whether there is a certain pattern of structural uniformity across these songs, or whether code-switching patterns are more idiosyncratic in nature, reflecting the individual styles of rap artists.

To our knowledge, no previous study has examined the structure and variety of switches in these unique Latin rap songs, which are distinctive because of their frequent use of code-switching. By frequent, we mean that the song evinces productive use of inter- and intraclausal code-switching at the line level rather than sporadic employment of Spanish words or phrases peppered in English discourse (or vice versa) across a limited number of lines or stanzas. In relation to Ohlson’s (2008) classification of types of switches in songs, we were specifically interested in analyzing switches within lines. The 12 songs that were ultimately selected all had at least 14 switches (range: 14 – 38 switches), which contrast more recent songs that have less switches in general.⁷

Data Analysis

Song lyrics were extracted from different websites and each song was individually cross-checked to ensure their lexical accuracy. Lyrics for the majority of songs were obtained from several websites, which included AZ Lyrics (<http://www.azlyrics.com>), Genius (<http://www.genius.com>), and The Original Hip-Hop/Rap Lyrics Archive (<http://www.ohhla.com/all.html>). All songs had either orthographic and/or lexical errors; thus, they were individually cross-checked multiple times and

⁷ For example, the songs “Bilingüe” (Snow the Product, 2019) and “Spanglish” (J.I. the Prince of N.Y. feat. Myke Towers, 2020) have 8 and 9 within-line switches, respectively. Thus, even though both rap artists are U.S. Latinos and the song titles explicitly allude to the speakers’ sociolinguistic realities, this does not translate to extensive use of code-switching in their songs.

edited accordingly. Given that the lyrics for Laura Segura's (1991) reply rap "Mentirosa's not my name" was not available online,⁸ it was orthographically transcribed and checked by three different listeners. Single words or phrases that could not be definitively determined due to rapid speech or audio quality were excluded from the analysis. Once clauses were extracted, they were individually coded for code-switching type (i.e., interclausal and intraclausal), intraclausal switch type (e.g., noun phrase, verb phrase, prepositional phrase, etc.), language directionality of switch (i.e., Spanish to English or English to Spanish), and language (Spanish or English) of grammatical category (i.e., nouns, adjectives, prepositions, relative pronouns, and coordinate/subordinate conjunctions). In line with previous work, the matrix language of the clauses was determined according to the morphology of the main verb.

Following Deuchar's (2012, 2020) conceptualization of inter- and intraclausal code-switching, the clause was employed as the unit of analysis. For the purposes of our analysis, interclausal switches only comprised cases in which there was a switch between two complete clauses optionally joined by a coordinate conjunction in the same line (e.g., *Tú no sabes nada*. Your brain is hollow). All other cases in which a switch occurred at the boundary of a subordinate or relative clause were coded as intraclausal switches (e.g., *Ella no sabía* that, yo, I knew her plan). Categories that were used to code for switch type were gleaned from previous work on oral production data (e.g., Pfaff, 1979; Poplack, 1980). Given our interest in structural variety, switches that were repeated in different parts of the song were only counted and coded once.

Research Purpose

The main goal of the present study was to elucidate the structure and variety of inter- and intraclausal switches in songs that are characterized by the productive use of Spanish/English code-switching. Also of relevance was to cast light on how inter- and intraclausal switches differed depending on language directionality and the language of grammatical categories in mixed constituents. To this end, we analyzed 316 switches extracted from the 12 songs. In the ensuing section, we present our results.

Results

We first present results with respect to the structure and variety of interclausal switches attested in the data. Subsequently, we describe our findings vis-à-vis intraclausal switches.

Interclausal Switches

The data revealed that only 13% (42/316) of the song data comprised cases of interclausal switches, characterized by a clear switch from a complete English clause to a Spanish clause or vice versa (see Table 2). Notably, switches from Spanish to English were only favored in interclausal code-switching. A chi-square test of independence, which was performed to examine the relationship between code-switching type and the language directionality of switches, showed that there was a significant relationship between these two variables, ($\chi^2 = 19.995$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, whereas

⁸ We could not find a copy of Laura Segura's reply rap. Thus, we used the video recording of her 1991 performance in San Francisco, California which is available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTHfU5Nsp0s&t=42s>

interclausal switches were more likely to be from Spanish to English, the opposite was true for intraclausal switches.

Table 2
Interclausal and Intraclausal Switches

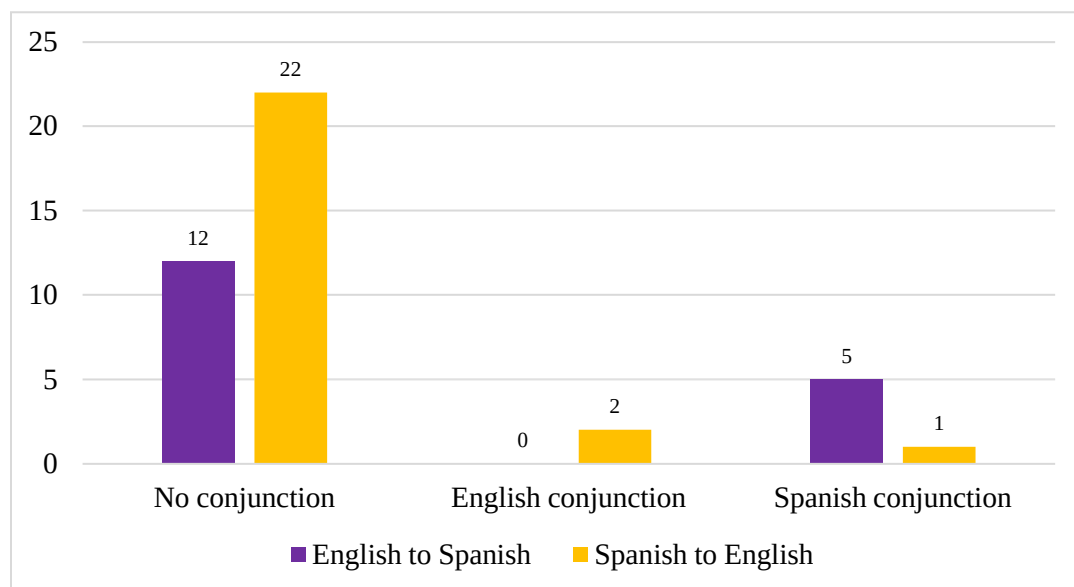
	English to Spanish	Spanish to English
Interclausal	17	25
Intraclausal	204	70

Only three songs did not have at least one interclausal switch. The song with the most interclausal switches was “Keep it flowin’” (n=10), which employed this switch type particularly when English translations were provided (n=6), as in (3). This pattern of providing translations for the pragmatic function of emphasis is one that has been previously noted (Loureiro-Rodríguez, 2017; Ohlson, 2008), and it may partly account for the language directionality preference that was evinced in interclausal switches.

(3) *Tenemos un mensaje*, yeah kid, we’ve got a message
We have a message, yeah kid, we’ve got a message

[“Keep it flowin,’” 1993, 01:58-02:01]⁹

Figure 1
Interclausal Switches According to Language Directionality and Language of Conjunction



As Figure 1 above illustrates, the majority of these switches were not joined by a coordinate conjunction, as (3) and (4) exemplify. Only seven interclausal switches were joined by a conjunction. In every case, the conjunction matched the language of the second clause.

⁹ The title of the song is followed by the year of its release and its location in the audio file (i.e., minute and second).

- (4) But we freak it in this way, *sigo siendo rey*
But we freak it in this way, I continue being the king

[“Tres delinquents,” 1996, 02:29-02:31]

Although the use of Spanish and English conjunctions was infrequent overall, whenever they were used, there was a tendency to employ Spanish coordinate conjunctions, as in (5) and (6).

- (5) Don’t act a fool *y no rompa las reglas*
Don’t act a fool and don’t break the rules

[“Latin thugs,” 2004, 00:55-00:57]

- (6) Well then it’s on *y va a estar cabrón*
Well then it’s on and it will be great

[“Wallah,” 1998, 00:54-00:55]

With respect to language directionality, it is noteworthy that the majority of switches were cases in which the switch was from Spanish to English (60%, 25/42), as in (3) and (7). In interclausal switches, therefore, Spanish played a prominent role as it mainly determined not only the directionality of switches but also the language of coordinate conjunctions whenever they were used.

- (7) *Es mi costa*, the West is reclaimed by this critical acclaimed
This is my coast, the West is reclaimed by this critical acclaimed

[“Wallah,” 1998, 01:14-01:17]

Intraclausal Switches

Intraclausal switches evinced more variety as different single lexical items, phrases, and clauses were switched from English to Spanish and vice versa. As Table 2 shows, the most frequently switched elements were single nouns (44%, 121/274), noun phrases (19%, 52/274), dependent clauses (12%, 34/274), prepositional phrases (9%, 24/274), and lone adjectives (8%, 23/274). The leastfrequently switched elements included verb and adverbial phrases and conjunctions used within noun or verb phrases. Overall, English was the predominant matrix language in the dataset, consonant with Derrick’s (2015) results for the songs she analyzed. With the exception of verb and adverbial phrases (see Table 3), all switches were from English to Spanish. A chi-square test of independence showed that there was a significant association between intraclausal switch type (single lexical items, phrases, clauses) and the language directionality of switches, ($\chi^2 = 19.681$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, when lone items, phrases, and dependent clauses were switched, it was more likely for the language directionality to be from English to Spanish rather than Spanish to English.

Table 3*Types of Intraclausal Switches*

	English to Spanish	%	Spanish to English	%	Total
noun	108	89	13	11	121
noun phrase	35	67	17	33	52
dependent clause	19	56	15	44	34
prepositional phrase	14	58	10	42	24
adjective	16	70	7	30	23
adjectival phrase	6	86	1	14	7
adverb	3	50	3	50	6
verb phrase	1	25	3	75	4
adverbial phrase	1	50	1	50	2
conjunction	1	100	0	0	1

Nouns and adjectives, as (8) and (9) illustrate, were the single lexical items most frequently switched. In intraclausal switching, noun switches overwhelmingly comprised cases in which an English article (40%, 48/121) co-occurred with a Spanish noun (e.g., the *calle* ‘the street,’ an *enemigo* ‘an enemy,’ the *baile* ‘the dance,’ etc.). English possessive adjectives also co-occurred with Spanish nouns (e.g., my *estilo* ‘my style,’ my *gente* ‘my people,’ your *reina* ‘your queen,’ etc.) in 21% of the data (25/121). It is important to note, however, that 31% (38/121) of the switched nouns were bare nouns. There was also a preference for Spanish adjectives in bilingual discourse, as Spanish adjectives (e.g., *loco* ‘crazy,’ *borracho* ‘drunk,’ *enojada* ‘angry,’ *celoso* ‘jealous,’ etc.) comprised the majority of lone adjectives that were switched (74%, 17/23).

- (8) And my *familia* is anyone whose skin is brown
And my family is anyone whose skin in brown

[“Mi familia,” 1995, 02:27-02:30]

- (9) Even on an acapella yo, yo *sueno* stellar
Even on an acapello yo, I sound stellar

[“Keep it flowin,” 1993, 01:21-01:23]

Intraclausal switched phrases, as in (10), were notable as they involved other grammatical categories, and thus, contributed to the density of code-switching in songs. When noun phrases were switched, they usually comprised article-noun (e.g., *mis amigos* ‘my friends,’ *el terreno* ‘the territory,’ *la ley* ‘the law,’ etc.) or article-noun-adjective combinations (e.g., *tu hermano latino* ‘your Latin brother,’ *revolución cubana* ‘Cuban revolution,’ *muchachito chiquito* ‘little dude,’ etc.). Importantly, nouns, pronouns, or nominalized phrases in switched noun phrases were also mainly in Spanish, as they comprised 83% (43/52) of the data.

- (10) Low profile style, I love my *jefita bonita*
Low profile style, I love my beautiful mom

[“Latin kings,” 1999, 01:16-01:20]

When prepositional phrases were switched, they typically comprised a preposition alongside an article and a noun that was sometimes modified, as in (11). In a few cases, prepositional phrases comprised two switches. As (12) shows, there is a switch from Spanish to English at the prepositional phrase boundary, followed by a single noun switch from English to Spanish. Although these intraclausal switched prepositional phrases were often idiomatic in nature (e.g., *to the bone*, *down the road*), there were several cases in which the prepositional phrases were not fixed or idiomatic expressions (e.g., *con una actitud mala* ‘with a bad attitude,’ *en las congas* ‘in the congas,’ *a la casa de tu tío* ‘to your uncle’s house’), thus suggesting that these switches are used sometimes to convey more locative and/or instrumental meaning.

- (11) *Pero solamente pasa* on a special occasion
But it only happens on a special occasion

[“No me importa,” 2001, 01:47-01:49]

- (12) *Soy travieso, latino fino* to the *hueso*
I am mischievous, a fine Latino to the bone

[“Latin kings,” 1999, 01:26-01:29]

An important aspect of these intraclausal switched phrases is that similar to nouns and adjectives, prepositions in these phrases were largely in Spanish rather than English. In 63% (15/24) of switched prepositional phrases, the language of the preposition was Spanish, which suggests that these types of intraclausal switches also favor the use of Spanish. In light of the predominant role that Spanish plays in interclausal switches, as well as intraclausal switches involving single lexical items and phrases, a question that arises is whether the same pattern is borne out when dependent clauses are taken into consideration. In the following section, we take a closer look at these intraclausal switches.

Dependent Clauses

Dependent clauses comprised 12% (34/274) of intraclausal switches in the dataset. The majority of clauses were noun clauses (n=10), as in (13), but adjective clauses as well as adverbial clauses were also attested, as in (14) and (15), respectively.

- (13) *Olvidando* that I’ll drop you like a bad habit
Forgetting that I’ll drop you like a bad habit

[“Mentiroso’s not my name,” 1991, 00:38-00:41]

- (14) I remember the day *que tú me decías*
I remember the day when you used to tell me

[“Mentiroso,” 1989, 01:40-01:44]

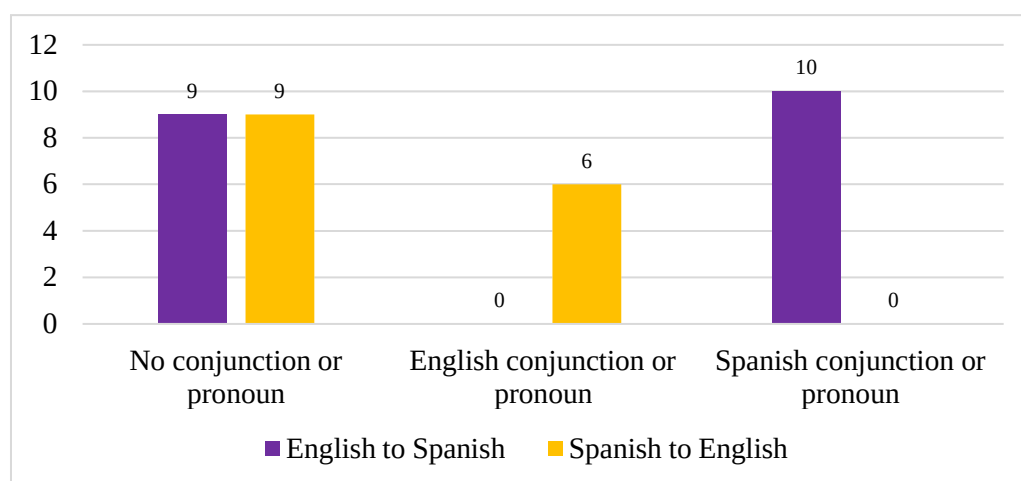
- (15) But I tell ya straight up *porque brother me di de cuenta*
But I tell you straight up because brother I realized

[“Mentiroso,” 1989, 02:14-02:18]

These intraclausal switches revealed that in most cases relative pronouns or subordinate conjunctions were not used, similar to what was observed for coordinate conjunctions in interclausal switches. Regarding language directionality, however, there was a slight tendency for dependent clauses to be switched from English to Spanish, as in (14) and (15), in contrast to what was observed in interclausal switches, where the inverse pattern was attested. Importantly, even though English was favored in terms of language directionality, this was not the case with the language of the pronoun or conjunction. As Figure 2 shows, most pronouns or conjunctions in dependent clause switches were produced in Spanish (63%) rather than English (37%).

Figure 2

Dependent Clause Switches According to Language Directionality and Language of Pronoun or Conjunction



In the following section, we explain the implications that these results have on our current understanding of Spanish/English code-switching practices in music and in naturalistic speech as well.

Discussion and Conclusion

We sought to examine the structure and variety of inter- and intraclausal switches in 12 Spanglish rap songs characterized by the productive use of within-line switches. Our analysis revealed that interclausal switches were mainly from Spanish to English. Contrariwise, intraclausal switches were distinguished by unidirectional mixing patterns from English to Spanish. While the matrix language of the dataset was predominantly English, the majority of nouns, adjectives, prepositions, relative pronouns, and coordinate/subordinate conjunctions were realized in Spanish. In line with previous findings (Rokosová, 2020), we found that the most frequently switched element were lone nouns. We also found, however, that code-switching was not restricted to single lexical items (nouns or adjectives), as noun phrases, prepositional phrases, and dependent clauses are key elements that contribute to the code-switching density in Spanglish rap songs that are characterized by frequent language mixing.

Even though English plays a predominant role in our dataset, Spanish is also vital in terms of how lexical and functional categories are realized. The systematic patterns attested in these Latin rap songs point in the direction of Spanish/English code-switching practices that are more uniform rather than idiosyncratic. The language directionality in interclausal switches could be explained by bilingual repetition (i.e., first clause in Spanish is followed by repetition of a similar or same idea in English), which appears to be a distinguishing characteristic of some Spanglish songs (Ohlson, 2008). Both our results and previous findings lend support to this idea. In her analysis of 550 switches extracted from Pitbull's seven English albums, Loureiro-Rodríguez (2017) found that most Spanish switches (43%) comprised cases in which Spanish was used to emphasize or translate an idea that had been previously expressed in English. Thus, in songs where English plays a predominant role, the use of Spanish is favored particularly in verses that comprise bilingual repetition.

Our findings in relation to intraclausal switches are more remarkable as they do not align with the majority of spoken corpora that have overwhelmingly revealed unidirectional switching patterns from Spanish to English, especially in the case of single nouns (e.g., Pfaff, 1979; Poplack, 1980). In fact, in the early 2000s, there were several scholars who argued that constructions in which an English determiner co-occurred with a Spanish noun were ungrammatical, as English determiners lack a grammatical gender feature (cf. MacSwan, 2005, and references therein). More recent work, however, has revealed that these atypical switches are well attested in Spanish/English bilingual communities.

Previous research shows that in the Spanish/English code-switching variety spoken in Miami, mixed article-noun combinations comprising an English article and a Spanish noun are employed, albeit infrequently (Blokzijl et al., 2017). Contrariwise, Spanish/English code-switching in New Mexico is characterized by a preference for mixed over unmixed noun phrases irrespective of language directionality. In their study, Torres Cacoullos et al. (2022) found that English nouns overwhelmingly occurred in mixed NPs (96%), e.g., *unos desks* 'some desks' (p. 8). Spanish nouns were also predominantly found in mixed NPs (92%), e.g., *a pollito* 'a little chick' (p. 8). Thus, mixed article-noun combinations in which the noun is drawn from Spanish rather than English are not only common but frequent in some U.S. Latino communities.

Our findings show that code-switching data from songs can align with patterns attested in conversational code-switching in U.S. Spanish/English bilingual communities (see also Derrick [2015], who found that songs by Aventura in particular reflected code-switching patterns in New York). In relation to the use of Spanglish phenomena in music, two factors need to be duly considered: (i) the music genre and (ii) the sociolinguistic profile of the U.S. Latino artist(s). We examined data from Latin rap songs, which sometimes incorporate code-switching, but not always. During our thorough perusal of songs, we came across numerous Latin rap songs that were entirely or mostly in English. This is not surprising given that second and third generation U.S. Latinos are oftentimes English-dominant bilinguals with varying degrees of proficiency in Spanish. This partly explains, therefore, why code-switching in our dataset predominantly evinced unidirectional mixing patterns from English to Spanish. Note that if another genre, such as reggaetón, were analyzed, the results would not be the same.

Reggaetón is a hybrid genre that has its origins in Jamaican reggae and dance hall, which were transported to Panama by Jamaican workers. Subsequently, when introduced to Puerto Rico, this genre was mixed with bomba, plena, and U.S. hip hop. A notable feature of reggaetón, however, is that it is deeply rooted in Hispanic culture and the Spanish language. In her research, Monteagudo (2020) concludes that although Spanglish is increasingly becoming a defining feature of reggaetón, Spanish is nonetheless "the matrix language in the overwhelming majority of songs [and] creates the semantic and syntactic structure of the songs, contributing the majority of the

lyrical meaning” (p. 79). More recently, Naranjo Hayes (2022) found that Latino artists who predominantly speak and perform in Spanish, such as Bad Bunny, Nicky Jam, and Ozuna, switch from Spanish to English in their music. By contrast, other U.S. Latino artists who are English-dominant, such as Cardi B and Selena Gomez, primarily switch from English to Spanish.

These findings strongly suggest that the individual sociolinguistic profiles of artists do influence the language directionality of their code-switching practices in their music. More importantly, the different linguistic patterns in songs by U.S. Latino artists reveal the diversity that characterizes language usage among second and third generation Spanish/English bilinguals. U.S. Latinos may not only speak predominantly Spanish or English. They may also speak code-switching varieties that are markedly different. During the 1980s and 1990s, Spanish/English code-switching was largely conceptualized as a phenomenon that was more uniform than what it really was, and this may have resulted from the dearth of cross-community comparative studies. More recent comparative research, however, shows that Spanish/English code-switching practices can evince striking similarities yet important differences across bi/multilingual contexts in the Spanish-speaking world (e.g., Balam et al., 2020; Balam et al., 2022; Beatty-Martínez & Dussias, 2019; Blokzijl et al., 2017; Vanhaverbeke et al., 2021). In light of this emerging scholarship, we can surmise that we are also bound to find code-switching patterns of uniformity and variability in the Spanglish songs of U.S. Latino artists who come from diverse sociolinguistic and sociocultural backgrounds.

Although our study sheds new light on the linguistic nature of switches in Spanglish songs, an inherent limitation is the small dataset we analyzed from one genre of music. Future work needs to be conducted to better understand how inter- and intraclausal switches have changed (or not) across time depending on the music genre, sociolinguistic profiles of the artists, and the code-switching varieties that artists are exposed to. Given the increasing transnational presence of Spanglish in music, research needs to be conducted to compare the Spanish/English code-switching practices of U.S. Latino artists and artists from other Spanish-speaking countries who also employ Spanglish. For instance, Argentinian female rapper Nicki Nicole and Spanish trap artist Kidd Keo often employ Spanglish in their music (see, for instance, “Colocao” and “Rarri,” respectively). A question that arises vis-à-vis the use and increased acceptance of Spanglish in music in different parts of the world is whether we can also see a corresponding increase in the use of innovative linguistic forms. We must take into consideration that Latin rap is a genre that emerged during the late 1980s and 1990s as a response towards the invisibility of U.S. Latinos in the mass media as well as orthodox linguistic views of *Latinidad*, which typically excluded Spanglish (for relevant discussion, see Rivera, 2001). As younger generations in the U.S. and Latin America increasingly become more open to the idea of Spanglish as a core aspect of *Latinidad*, it merits to further investigate how this is manifested linguistically in the creative realm of music.

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