SPANGLISH:

A Reflection of Culture

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## Contents

1 Introduction 3

2 Research Question(s) / Statement of the Problem 4

3 Literature Review 4

4 Methods, Delimitations and Limitations 11

5 Definitions 11

6 Findings 12

6. a. (1) Brief summary of the works. 12

6. a. (2) Background: Puerto Ricans in New York. 13

6. b. Features of Code-switching 14

6. b. (1) Respect 14

6. b. (2) Family/ Home related code-switching/mixing 15

6. b. (3) Code-switching/mixing regarding translation and single words 20

7 Conclusion 26

8 Works Cited 29
1 Introduction and Rationale or Importance of the Problem

There is a “new language” forming in the United States of America. It is called Spanglish. Spanglish stands for the mixing of the Spanish and English language. In recent years there have been quite a lot of studies done on Spanglish because so many people use it. I have earlier studied code-switching in written monolingual language (see Karlström Code-Switching in a Student Discussion Forum 2005), and I found it very interesting. So now I want to continue my code-switching research, but on bilingualism. In this analysis I want to see how switches between Spanish and English work to create the “new” language called Spanglish. The data that I am going to analyze is written. All the data comes from fiction. The researcher Mizejewski claims that “[p]opular genres are gold mines for cultural studies because they tap into our fantasies and assumptions about gender [and] power” (in Green: 2). It shows that it is a good source for a short project when I have no access to actual speakers. The works I will use are When I was Puerto Rican by Esmeralda Santiago, and Down These Mean Streets by Piri Thomas. I will also use the short story “The Kite” by Edgardo Vega Yunqué. All these authors have a Puerto Rican American background, and they all live in New York, so called Nuyricans.

Although Spanglish is a new language, it already has several different dialects, depending on where a person comes from and where he or she lives now. The fact that all my data is written by Puerto Rican Americans has made me concentrate on the Puerto Rican dialect of Spanglish, as it is represented in fiction. The Puerto Ricans make up one of the largest Hispanic groups in the United States of America. Since the Puerto Rican group is one of the largest, their dialect is more influential on the language than a smaller Hispanic group’s dialect may be. This is one of the reasons I have decided to analyze this dialect.
Another reason for conducting my analysis on the subject of Spanglish is to indicate that it is not a threat to the Standard English language. I want to demonstrate that it is not a new language that will terminate English, but rather work as a kind of variety, side by side with the English language as well as with Spanish. Hopefully, my analysis might create some kind of knowledge on the subject, a knowledge that will take away some prejudice about Spanglish. It is essential to do this, because people need to know that Spanglish is more than just a sign of “bad English”. Hopefully this analysis will give some information that can be used in further studies on the subject and can be extended to the development of other similar languages as mobility increases throughout the world.

2 Research Question(s) / Statement of the Problem

The problem that surrounds the subject of Spanglish is that it is viewed as a language that is threatening the English language and also the Spanish language as it is spoken in the U.S. But is it really so? I want to see what the code-switching and/or mixing does to the language. When do these switches appear? Are there any gender differences in the usage of code-switches/mixes? Is the common view of Spanglish as a sign of bad knowledge and usage of the language, or is it more than that? Is the switching, called Spanglish, basically just a device to emphasize one’s cultural background? Using the switch between the old language, and the new, not to create a new kind of language, but a new English dialect, a cultural dialect? My aim is to investigate the cultural role that Spanglish plays for Puerto Ricans in New York.

3 Literature Review
The Hispanic community, with about 13% of the population, is one of the largest and fastest growing ones in the United States of America, according to Donald S. MacQueen. The Puerto Ricans are the second largest group that represents about 10% of the Spanish speaking community in the United States of America (MacQueen: 79, 80). This underlines the significance of investigating Puerto Rican Spanglish.

MacQueen also takes up the dilemma of accepting bilingualism or not. There are several “English Only” groups in the States that do not want Latinos to talk Spanish, only English. The opposing group called “English Plus” views bilingualism not as a problem, but as an asset (MacQueen: 82). I argue that Spanglish is not a problem that threatens the English (and/or Spanish) language, but a positive attribute that can broaden both languages. I first present some general research on code-switching and then discuss research specifically based on Spanglish.

In Mesthrie et al. the term “register” is used to describe the different variations of a language, depending on different circumstances, what is being discussed and with whom (Mesthrie et al. 72). Halliday and Hasan say that there are three elements to the ways in which we use and choose the “register”: Field, Tenor and Mode. The term Field describes what is being discussed, hence what is going on. Tenor stands for the interaction between people, and on what conditions they are acting together. Finally the term Mode, also known as speech style, describes the type of language that’s being used, if it is written, spoken, signed and so on. What Halliday and Hasan found was that we change “register” depending on what we are talking about and with whom; it depends on the society we are in at the time. They say that we can go through our whole lives speaking only one dialect, whereas we cannot use only one “register”. We normally switch our “register” depending on what Field, Tenor and Mode we find ourselves in at the time (in Mesthrie et al. 73-74). I could relate these findings and
terms by Halliday and Hasan to understand why certain switches/mixes were used in “The Kite”, *When I was Puerto Rican*, and *Down These Mean Streets*.

Carol Myers-Scotton did some research in Africa on bilingualism, and she found that speakers used both their mother tongue and/or another language like English or French. What language they used all depended on with whom they spoke and about what, a typical pattern in code-switching. One of her studies was done in Nairobi, where most people speak their mother tongue and Swahili and/or English. Her study showed that while at work people tended to use their mother tongue with people from their own ethnic group, but they used Swahili with people from other groups. The English language was mainly used when speaking to a superior, authority and/or to demonstrate a good education (Mesthrie et al. pp.156). When people in the study carried out by Myers-Scotton changed from their mother tongue to English, for example, it depended on who they spoke to, the power relation and the topic purpose (in Mesthrie et al. pp. 156).

Blom and Gumperz did similar research. In their research on Norwegian dialects, they found two types of code-switching that they called “situational” and “metaphorical”. They say that the “metaphorical” switching is used “stylistically” to create a form of “social meaning”. It can also be used when talking about something formal, and then switching to something more personal, informal. This makes the “metaphorical” switch a very useful discussion tool. The “situational” code-switching stands for the switches that are associated with certain social codes. This means that when a discussion is taking place, in this case in the local dialect called Ranamål, and a person that does not speak it, or does not belong to the community, enters the discussion, they switch to the standard dialect of Bokmål (Cromdal pp. 64). Their research will be particularly useful looking at the switches from more formal to informal talk.
Another similar study is the one made Susan Gal in Oberwart. There the people either speak Hungarian or German. Gal says that “…in an argument conducted in Hungarian, a switch to German might give extra force: it could end the argument, serving as a last word that was not to be outdone” (in Mesthrie et al. 165). Gal also points out that a switch to German does not always indicate the ending of an argument, it can also declare knowledge, and it all depends on the situation in which the switch is conducted.

Allan Bell, another researcher on code-switching, uses the term “audience design”, a term that stands for the response a speaker gives an audience, or in my analysis characters in fiction. Bell claims that a person of a certain social group will talk in a certain way marking that he or she is from just that group. This language, Bell says, will be judged by people from the same or other groups, as an “indicator of the group’s identity” (in Mesthrie et al. 181). People who are not in/from this group will change their language either towards or away from the group depending on whether or not they want to be a part of that group and its ideals. These studies have all shown that code-switching is meaningful when it comes to getting an opinion heard and in interacting with different people. A long but very important quote from Bell will certainly show the main view on code-switching:

[S]peakers associate classes of topics or setting with classes of persons. They therefore shift style when talking on those topics or in those settings as if they were talking to addressees whom they associate with the topic or setting. Topics such as occupation or education, and settings such as office or school, cause shifts to a style suitable to address an employee or private for intimate addressees-family or friends. The basis of all style shifts according to nonpersonal factors lies then in audience-designed shift (in Mesthrie et al. 182).
In *The Hispanic Condition: reflections on culture and identity in America* Stavans discusses the significance culture has on Latinos, in the case of my research, Puerto Ricans, at both present and past time. He talks about how the Latino society has an enriching cultural trade with the American society. Former resistance against everything American has been replaced by an increased curiosity. This curiosity has created a cultural “hybrid” that Stavans compares to a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde phenomenon saying that Latinos are “a bit like the Anglos and a bit not” (Stavans 1996: 13). In my analysis I will use this to look at Spanglish as a cultural mixture, to show that both the Puerto Rican and American culture play a great role on in the usage of language switches in Spanglish.

Stavans also talks about Puerto Ricans and their usage of bilingual communication. Although they are educated in English on the mainland, at least the second generation, they still use both languages when communicating. The usage of Spanish, Stavans claims is what strengthens the Puerto Ricans “cultural identity” (Stavans 1996: 41). The bilingual ability can be beneficial when integrating into the American society (Stavans 1996: 145). I will look at how the usage of Spanish, in Spanglish, strengthens and/or puts cultural emphasis on what the characters in the fiction I have chosen are saying.

In the book *Criss-Cross Tales: Short Stories from English-speaking Cultures*, Michal Anne Moskow talks about Hispanic literature. She says that due to the fact that a lot of the Hispanics are bilingual, the new literature is written in both English and Spanish. The underprivileged area called *El Barrio* in the eastern part of Harlem in New York has produced a lot of new fiction authors. Authors like Edgardo Vega Yunqué have created stories where characters, Moskow claims, are “caught between different ways of living, leading them to struggle with identity” (Moskow: 220). With this book I have acquired background information that has made me understand “The Kite” better. The researcher Zentella also talks about *el barrio*, but she talks about the smaller part of it called *el bloque*. *El bloque* is an area
in New York where mainly Puerto Ricans live. *El bloque* is also the place where *Down These Mean Streets* by Piri Thomas take place. These researchers indicate that traditions and identity link the switching between Spanish and English depending on who is speaking and about what.

Stavans describes the term of Spanglish as being “[t]he verbal encounter between Anglo and Hispano civilizations” (Stavans 2003: 5), which portrays the situation well. He says that it is not just a “linguistic phenomenon”, but a phenomenon that includes every aspect of civilization (Stavans 2003: 6). Stavans also talks about individual code-switching between English and Spanish, a type of ideo-switching. Individual code-switches stand for how each person switches differently, and even though they are individual they are not difficult to understand. This is due to the fact that if one is Latino, one already has access to the right translation tools, namely culture as well as language (Stavans 2003: 14). I use Stavans’ findings when I am looking at how switches in the language are related to culture.

Stavans also argues against one common view of Spanglish. He does not see the English and Spanish languages as rivals. He views them as instruments that combined can produce an even greater way of communicating (Stavans 2003: 18). He claims that Spanglish is a more “democratic” language. If one looks at it as slang of English or Spanish, it crosses classes more than English or Spanish slang. It does not, for example, carry the symbol of something criminal, the way slang often is viewed. This makes it language that even the higher classes in a society can use (Stavans 2003: 20). With the support of this I will hopefully be able to show that the switches are not a sign of poor language knowledge, but increased ways of communicating.

Ana Celia Zentella, in her book *Growing up Bilingual: Puerto Rican Children in New York*, talks about her research on children’s bilingualism in *el bloque*. Her research primarily focuses on code-switching between English and Spanish; Spanglish, Puerto Rican
style. Zentella used Goffman’s model of Footing, Clarification and/or Emphasis, and Crutch-like code mixes.

By footing Zentella includes two categories: Realignment and Appeal/Control. I will mainly use the Appeal/Control category to analyse my findings. Appeal/Control serves three purposes. Aggravating stands for a switch whose purpose is to intensify a statement. Mitigating stands for a switch that is used to lessen a command, and Attention stands for a shift that is meant to get the listeners’ interest. Zentella found that these Appeal/Control switches were used to show when a person was annoyed at someone/something (Zentella: 95). This will help looking at how characters in my data use switches to show aggravation, amongst other things.

The second part is called Clarification and/or Emphasis. There are four categories called: Translations, Appositions and/or apposition bracket, Accounting for request, and Double subject (left dislocation). Amongst these, the Translation was the one mainly used in el bloque. The Translation, as the word indicates, is when a speaker shifts languages to translate what has been said, sometimes word by word, and/or sometimes somewhat changed (Zentella: 96).

The third and last part is called Crutch-like Code Mixing. Code mixing is not like switching, where a whole sentence and/or clause is used (Zentella: 122), it is simply a shift of one or two words. McClure claims that code-mixing stands for repeated cases of language change, where one puts in only one or two words from another language(Cromdal: 58). This mixing can be used in six different ways: Crutching: where a speaker cannot remember and/or know the switched word(s), Filling in, Recycling, Parallelism, and Taboos. In Zentella’s research the Crutching was the most used type of mix, (Zentella: 97). Taboos are the one thing I will mainly use in my analysis looking at the data. I can use it to provide support, to see if the characters switch language talking about a taboo topic.
In the Puerto Rican society the link between culture and language is very important. One example of that linkage is what Zentella refers to as “respeto” or respect. In the Puerto Rican society, it is very important to treat everyone respectfully. Using different speech acts and choice of language, depending on whom and/or what you are talking about, shows your respect (Zentella: 10). I have applied all of these strategies to the code-switching that takes place in the fiction works I am considering.

4 Methods, Delimitations and Limitations

I have acquired all my data from two books and a short story, all written by Puerto Rican authors. I collected them in October 2005. The works When I was Puerto Rican by Esmeralda Santiago, and Down These Mean Streets by Piri Thomas, and the short story “The Kite” by Edgardo Vega Yunqué, are all fictionalized memoirs. A limitation to my analysis is that I am only looking at the Puerto Rican dialect of Spanglish. This dialect is only one of four dialects from the Caribbean Spanish language, and only one of fifteen different dialects of the Latin American Spanish (Zentella: 42). This shows that although Puerto Ricans are one of the largest groups of one dialect in America, there are several other groups that have their own dialect. This means that I cannot say how Spanglish would work in another dialect, only in Puerto Rican. I am only analysing written fictional works, works that are meant for an English audience as well as Hispanic audience; this further limits my analysis. It creates a limitation because I cannot say how Spanglish code-switching can work in spoken language. Because the works have to be accessible to an English-speaking audience, I have to assume that they lack full passages in Spanish that would occur in real life.

5 Definitions
Code-switching: shifting between two languages and/or dialects depending on, for example, the topic and the audience.

Zentella describes these following concepts:

*Filling in*: a speaker fills in with a “catch-all” term

*Parallelism*: stands for a speaker that copies the previous speakers switch

*Recycling*: a speaker tries to fix a grammatical slip

*Taboos*: which, like the name suggests, stands for a word that has been shifted to the other

*Triggers*: a word with similar surface structure in English and Spanish triggered a switch

Hispanic: “[R]elates to people of many different origins who speak Spanish instead or, in addition to English.” (MacQueen: 79)

Latino/Latina: Carries the same meaning as the term Hispanic. Using Hispanic or Latino/Latina depends on who is speaking and what he/she prefers to use.

6 Findings

In my analysis I will discuss several different subsections of Spanglish. I will start with the background of the Puerto Ricans, why they have moved to the United States, in this case New York, and how that has affected their culture and language. From there I will move on to look at how the Puerto Rican term “respect” plays an important role in the language, what the relation to one’s family and home can do to one’s language. Further on I will look at the more specific parts of code-switching/mixing such as translation and single words, and how they work to create Spanglish.

6. a. (1) Brief summary of the works.
In *When I was Puerto Rican* written by Esmeralda Santiago, the narrator is Esmeralda herself. The plot concerns Santiago as a young child growing up in Puerto Rico with her mother and father and siblings. It describes how she learns the proper Puerto Rican way of living, and how all of that changes as she moves with her mother to New York. One follows her struggle to both keep the Puerto Rican traditions and find new American ones.

Piri Thomas’s *Down These Mean Streets* is an autobiographical story where Thomas tells the tale of being a Puerto Rican man in constant search for identity in a place surrounded by different cultures and languages. It is a story where the narrator, Thomas, let us follow his life from his childhood in New York, to a rough adulthood. Adulthood filled with different places, including jail, and the struggle to come back home to New York.

The short story “The Kite” by Edgardo Vega Yunqué also tells the story of one man’s search for identity. Here the narrator called Rick is born in New York by Puerto Rican parents. One follows his constant struggle of dealing with his Puerto Rican roots. Does he want to keep them or not? His parents have kept their island culture and they are happy with their lives. Rick’s sister Christina keeps one foot in each culture, both the Puerto Rican and the American. Lolín, a girl Rick meets, is like Rick’s parents very at ease with her Puerto Rican roots, and she applies them more easily into her life than Rick.

6. a. (2) Background: Puerto Ricans in New York.

Considering that I am analyzing the Puerto Rican dialect of Spanglish, one needs to know a bit about the Puerto Rican background to fully understand the way they use language. Looking at the connection between the U.S and Puerto Rico, one has to go back to the year of 1898, and the loss of the Spanish-American war. Due to this loss Puerto Rico became the property of the U.S (MacQueen: 80). This allowed the Puerto Ricans to immigrate to the U.S more easily than other people in the Caribbean or Latin America. However, many did not move because they disliked their country, they moved because they were poor (Zentella: 30).
The place that many went to was New York (MacQueen: 80) and there has been a great deal of movement back and forth. New York is also the setting of the works from which I have collected my data. Living in the new country required knowledge of a new language, English. Even though they needed this new language to fit in the new society, they also needed their mother tongue to reinforce, as Stavans says, their “cultural identity” (Stavans 199: 41). This brought along the mixture of English and Spanish, and the result of this mixture is Spanglish. The different methods of Spanglish usage, in these three works, are what I am now going to analyse.

6. b. Features of Code-switching

Just as people move back and forth between the islands and the mainland, they move back and forth between the two languages of English and Spanish, resulting in the variety termed “Spanglish”.

6. b. (1) Respect

Respect or “respeto” is, according to Zentella, a “behaviour central to the conduct of interpersonal relations” in Puerto Rican culture (Zentella: 10). This means that even though one might live in the U.S, one will still show respect because it is customary to do so according to the Puerto Rican culture. This is clearly shown in Esmeralda Santiago’s book *When I was Puerto Rican*, where she talks about respect in her childhood, saying “It meant adults had to be referred to as Don so-and-so, and Doña so-and-so, except for teachers, who you should call Mister or Missis so-and-so” (Santiago: 30). This brings me to the usage of code-switching/mixing.

These three works that I am analysing are all written in English. However, one way the authors, especially Santiago, show respect is by code-switching from English to Spanish for the use of personal titles. Santiago, although writing in English, switches into
Spanish, saying for example: “Doña Lola cuddled Alicia” (Santiago: 55) and “Don Berto, Juanita’s grandfather” (Santiago: 49). What these switches create is a cultural link which shows respect. She is saying “Doña Lola” and “Don Berto”, instead of just saying Lola and Berto. However she is only saying “Alicia” and “Juanita”. This is due to the expectation that one should show respect to the elderly. That she simply says “Alicia” and “Juanita” is because they are children and a child does not need to show that kind of respect to another child (Zentella: 10).

I also see the usage as a sign of Santiago’s past and present. She writes in English, her current language, but she also uses Spanish, her mother tongue. This she does, not only to show the Puerto Rican respect, but also to illustrate her childhood. She could have written Miss/Mrs. Lola and Mister Berto. However, in her childhood, Spanish was her language, and what she writes, she remembers in Spanish, not English. According to Stavans, using Spanish is “…to reclaim one’s past” (Stavans 1996: 134). Even though the rest of the text is in English, Santiago keeps some basic, habitual expressions from her past to link it to her present. The linkage of the past and present leads me on to other relations, such as family, and the switches connected with that.

6. b. (2) Family/ Home related code-switching/mixing

Speaking that focuses on different family relations is where the greatest amount of code-switches/mixes takes place. The reason, in my opinion, is that the home is a very informal place but also because of the emotional ties that encompass the language and home. Bending the “rules” of language is accepted more at home than in other, more formal, parts of the society. The need to link the past of Puerto Rico and Spanish with the present of the U.S and English is without a doubt clearly revealed in these three works. Within the family itself, the usage of Spanglish code-switch/mixing, lies for instance in the custom of “name labelling”. In
other words, whether one uses the English or Spanish terms to name, for example, parents and children and siblings.

Whether the individuals in the works call their parents, children, and grandparents by the Spanish or English term can depend on several different things. Who it is that is talking, what gender the person has, and under which circumstances the conversation takes place. What I found was that in the works the usage of the Spanish terms for mother and father were often used. However, I found some variations as to how the Spanish (and/or English) terms were used in the different works.

In *When I was Puerto Rican*, the narrator uses the Spanish terms for mother and father saying “Papi left a few boards down the center of the room and around his and Mami’s bed…” (Santiago: 9). What this switch from English to Spanish does is create a connection to the past (see Stavans 1996: 134). It shows the narrator’s past, in other words Santiago’s past. As a child, Santiago only spoke Spanish, so the only natural thing for her would be to keep her Spanish name for her mother and father. It is as Myers-Scotton, who in her study on bilingualism in Africa says, that “[t]he mother tongue is important as a means of maintaining ethnic identity…” (Mesthrie et al. 155). Even though Santiago writes for an English audience, a switch to Spanish does not create any kind of problem for the reader. One can easily see that Mami and Papi stand for Mom and Dad. Instead of being a problem it creates a sort of depth as she to some extent gives the reader a link to her roots. She keeps her link to her roots throughout the whole book, as she moves to New York; she still says Mami and Papi. However, there is a limitation to this argument.

It becomes even more interesting to see how the persons in “The Kite” use the different family terms. In “The Kite” the usage of these terms differs, to a certain degree, from Santiago’s. Here Vega Yunqué uses the different terms to indicate a difference between the Puerto Rican and American usage/view on language. It is also used as a display of gender
roles. The story surrounds a Puerto Rican family and their different relations towards the Spanish and American culture/language. The son of the family in “The Kite”, Rick, does not use the Spanish terms for parents. Instead he uses the English terms saying “Easy, Ma” (Vega Yunqué: 185), and “Where’s Pop?” (Vega Yunqué: 189). I have two ways of analyzing this. One is that Rick is born in the U.S, hence his dominant language is English, and that is what he prefers to speak (Zentella: 49). The other is that Vega Yunqué describes how it can be for a second generation American Puerto Rican, like Rick. This symbolizes that he has lost a part of his roots by accepting and becoming a part of the American society. Rick lives on his own, away from his family. He has studied, and in the schools around the U.S the common view was (and is to some extent even today) that the English language should be the official language of the U.S. According to MacQueen the so called “English Only” organisations worked against a bilingual society, and they

…tried to steer bilingual education away from “preservative” into “transitional” programs, that is, foreign-language instruction which is designed to facilitate the learning of English, not to preserve the linguistic culture of immigrants (MacQueen: 82).

I see Rick’s usage of the English family terms as an attempt by Vega Yunqué to try and show what happens if you take away the right to practice one’s bilingual skills. It is not just a loss of language, but also a loss of one’s cultural roots, something Rick struggles with throughout the work.

However, there are two instances in Vega Yunqué’s work where Rick actually uses the Spanish term Papi. One is when Rick looks back at his childhood and remembers a certain event with his father. This event takes place out on Coney Island, a place that once was famous for its amusement park. Rick remembers that he would never be afraid “…because his Papi was there with his big muscles, holding him tight…” (Vega Yunqué:
I see the term of Papi as serving two purposes. One is that it provides a tool to show that Rick is talking about his childhood, just as Santiago does in her work. Since he does not use Papi in his adulthood, it is a very good tool. It can also indicate the element of safety that Rick saw his father provide when he was a child, before the changes in family relationship that take place after he is an adult. It is also an indicator of the fact that this is before Rick goes to school and learns that English is the language you are supposed to use. Looking at it from that angle, it shows that in his childhood, Rick was still tied to his Puerto Rican roots.

The second time Rick calls his father Papi is when an accident has happened to a new friend’s family. Here Rick explains the usage of Papi on his own saying: “‘I need your help Papi’, dropping the English “Pop” for the more tender name he had used for addressing him in his childhood” (Vega Yunqué: 214). Here the Spanish term of Papi works, as in Gal’s research of switches between Hungarian and German, as a switch that can “…give extra force…” (Mesthrie et al. 165). By calling his father Papi, Rick puts emphasis on his childhood and his roots. He strengthens his need for help, and convinces his father by talking as a “child” again.

It works the same the single time he uses Mami, saying, “You and Mami take care of her [Lolín] until I’m ready.” (Vega Yunqué: 217). He calls her Mami when they help him, and that also, in my opinion, provides extra weight to his gratitude for getting help.

Rick, who does not use the Spanish family terms more than once or twice, and as a matter of fact never uses any other Spanish terms, can be contrasted with the female character who is his new friend and who uses them a lot. The female character in “The Kite” is called Lolín. Lolín, unlike Rick, uses the Spanish terms talking about her mother and grandmother saying, “Mami just works and saves her money to buy a house in P.R. for her and abuela” (Vega Yunqué: 212). I believe that Lolín’s usage of Mami and abuela (grandma) is a way of showing the Puerto Rican culture because she is raised by a Puerto Rican mother.
and grandmother, and according to Zentella the usage of the Spanish language is “gender based”. It means that boys and girls are raised to acquire certain gender roles which help to establish the quantity of Spanish and/or English a child is exposed to. Boys, in Zentella’s study in el bloque, were allowed to play outside and interact with children of different nationality backgrounds; hence they used the English language to communicate, unlike the girls who were kept in the domestic surroundings with their mothers. They played with other Puerto Rican girls, they cooked and cleaned, went to church and all these settings use Spanish as means of communication (Zentella: 51). A result of Lolín’s upbringing and gender as well as her having arrived more recently she uses Spanish more frequently than for example Rick does. Since he is a man he has probably socialized with members of other ethnic groups, especially in his school and work days. I believe that due to Lolín’s gender her usage of Mami and abuela underscores two things; one is that women and men communicate differently, and the other is that the reason they do it is because that is how they have been socialized. The Puerto Rican culture does make a difference in men and women, and that is exactly what Vega Yunqué, in my opinion, shows with this. He also shows, according to Moskow, that the characters “…are caught between different ways of living, leading them to struggle with identity” (Moskow: 220).

It also gives an explanation to Rick’s mother and father’s usage of the Spanish and American terms. When Rick’s mother calls her son she says “Si, m’ijito” (Vega Yunqué: 185) whereas his father says “I’m all right, Rick” (Vega Yunqué: 189). Like Lolín, Rick’s mother is a housewife. Whereas his father works outside the home, where he speaks English, hence he keeps on talking English at home. One can also find differences between Rick and his sister Christina in the usage of Spanish terms. Christina, like her mother, use a lot more Spanish in her speech than Rick. Something Zentella acknowledges on her research where she
claims that “…females supported the notion that Spanish was ‘indispensable to Puerto Rican identity’ more than males…” (Zentella: 53).

Looking at the female practice of code-switching one can find different usage of Spanish blessings, which all serve various purposes. In both Santiago’s and Thomas’ works the blessings are used. In Santiago’s work the mother says “Ay Bendito,” Mami said, “here’s our spotty early riser” (Santiago: 11). First one needs to know that the girl was “attacked” by termites which gave her tremendous pain. This switch is used to show sympathy towards her daughter. The word “Bendito” is “…a uniquely Puerto Rican lament that means “blessed” literally but conveys concern for another’s problems” (Zentella: 11). Using this Spanish blessing conveys even more emotional emphasis for the little girl. It can also be found in Thomas’ work where Piri’s mother gives him her blessing, saying, “Que Dios te bendiga, que Dios te bendiga, que Dios te bendiga” (Thomas pp. 91). To switch language in order to give someone the blessing clearly indicates the importance Puerto Ricans place on culture. It leads me on to code-switches/mixes and translations in other topic areas of Spanglish.

6. b. (3) Code-switching/mixing regarding translation and single words

There are several switches/mixes in Spanglish. One is the practice of translation, where a statement can be made in English or Spanish and then translated to the opposite language. Some can be related to domestic life, for example switches/mixes with food terms. Others have to do with the language switches/mixes dealing with aggravation and taboo issues, where the choice of using the opposite language can enforce or reduce a statement. Many of these words, expressions can only be said in Spanish, since there often are no comparable words to use in English. Hence it creates the switches/mixes in Spanglish.

Code-switches/mixes used as a translation method can work at several levels in a text. In Santiago’s work there are some translations, and one particular translation shows the
most common usage. Esmeralda is in N.Y. and talking to another Puerto Rican friend. She says:

> On the way home, I walked with another new ninth grader, Yolanda. She had been in New York for three years, but knew as little English as I did. We spoke in Spanglish, a combination of English and Spanish…” (Santiago: 258).

With this quote the narrator indicates that she is aware of having used the special language of Spanglish, but in order to make it easier for the reader she reports it in English. It also illustrates that Esmeralda and Yolanda want to use as much of their knowledge of English as possible when communicating, hence they use Spanglish. Stavans, says, “Spanglish…is a transitional stage of communication in the process of English-language acquisition, it is a fashion, too” (Stavans 2003: 45).

When Esmeralda talks in Spanglish, she code-switches, and as the narrator, she translates for English readers.

> “Pero, you know, a mi no me gusta mucho la gente.” When she heard me say I didn’t like people much, Yolanda looked at me from the corner of her eye, waiting to become the exception (Santiago: 258).

What I found interesting about this quote is that it is “audience design[ed]”. According to Bell speakers do this to “…accommodate primarily to the person they are addressing” (in Mesthrie et al. 181). First the girl speaks in the more informal Spanish language, since that is her dominant tongue; she also uses it because it is the dominant language for Yolanda as well. “The choice of Spanish honoured the community norm that they speak the language that their addressee knew best” (Zentella: 87). When she switches to English, the listener is not Yolanda, but the reader. Then she needs to explain her statement so that the reader, in this case an English speaking reader, can understand her statement, thus she applies a translation of it in the more formal language of English. In other words, this quote on translation works
as “…a habit which underscored the power of code-switching for purposes of clarification” (Zentella: 86).

Translation is something that Thomas also uses in his work. When Piri comes home to his mother and shows that he has injured his eyes, his mother cries out “Esta ciego!” “Momma screamed. “He is blind!” (Thomas: 33). In this quote the purpose of the translation is, in some cases, similar to the one in Santiago’s work. However, it does work a bit differently as well. What Thomas basically does with this switch is to, as I said before, translate. However, it is not a switch between two people in the conversation, but a switch between the writer and reader. Thomas uses the translation in the text as a “clarification” (Zentella: 96). The difference is that Santiago explains in the words of the narrator, while Thomas actually has his mother saying the same thing in both languages. My view is also that by translating the mother’s remark Thomas puts emphasis on her statement, making the reader aware of its importance. This translation works somewhat similarly, for example, as the usage of blessings. Thomas could just have written the expression in English. However, since it is a biography (fictionalised biography), it is probably an expression which Thomas remembers from his childhood; I say probably because I cannot be completely sure. By using the Spanish expression combined with the English, he links his past Puerto Rican/Spanish roots, with his present, that of English. Stavans supports my idea with his comment about Thomas’s usage of Spanglish, claiming that he “…regularly employ[s] it to explore emotional depth of…characters” (Stavans 2003: 46). Using code-switching/mixing to “explore emotional depth” leads me on to another practice of the code-switch/mix area, namely that of single words.

A single word switch or mix is the most commonly used method in all of these three works. I say switch and mix, because I see it as a combination of the two, because there is a switch, in these cases from English to Spanish, which serves a specific purpose. It is the
usage of one single word that makes it a mix, most often the usage of a Spanish word in an utterance that is otherwise in English. Food is the most frequent subject that requires a code-mix. It can be seen in all three works.

It is shown when the mother in “The Kite” says “He’s in the kitchen peeling the *platanos* for the *tostones*…” (Vega Yunqué: 189), when Piri in *Down These Mean Streets* thinks about what he would do as an adult saying “…I would…come back around the block and treat all the kids to *cuchifritos* and pour tons of nickels into the jukebox…” (Thomas: 70).

And finally it can be seen in Santiago’s work. When Esmeralda is out eating with her father, she says that the waiter “set[s] a hot *alcapurria* and a frosty Coca-Cola in front of me” (Santiago: 88). In these three quotes the switches/mixes are only used when the name of a certain dish is uttered. This can be a sign of two things. Firstly it can indicate that the speaker did not know its English counterpart because it “…came up infrequently outside of the home or the block…” (Zentella: 126). Which I do believe can be the point in Santiago’s work. As I have said before, I believe that she keeps her Spanish idioms when she wants to express a certain memory from her childhood. Now she probably knows the English word for *alcapurria*, but she probably did not back then, hence she keeps the Spanish word for it. It symbolises her roots. It is the same with Thomas. He probably knows the English terms now, but since he also writes about his childhood, he keeps the Spanish terms. The quote in “The Kite” also keeps the Spanish term. However, here it is the mother that says it, and she is a native Puerto Rican. She keeps her Spanish food terms just as she kept her Spanish term for her son. She is a woman, and they are, as I said before, more likely to keep the Spanish terms, since they are important for keeping the Puerto Rican identity alive (Zentella: 53).

Secondly these mixes can be used for a syntactical purpose. If the authors would use the English words there would not be a single word that would name the dish, but several
words that would describe the dish, as can be seen if I translate the four Spanish terms. The translations would be: *Platanos*; a starchy banana-type food often cooked like a potato (Moskow: 189), *Tostones*; crispy fried green plantains (Moskow: 189), *Cuchifritos*; a dish made of pigs’ ears, tongue, blood sausage, green bananas, etc (Thomas: 333), and finally *Alcapurria*; a ground plantain and green bananas stuffed with meat then fried (Santiago: 271). This indicates that by keeping the Spanish term the sentence runs smoothly, instead of containing several descriptions.

A code-switch/mix can also work to heighten a statement. Thomas employs a lot of switches/mixes that work as intensifiers to various statements on different subjects. He mainly employs mixes to Spanish when there is a statement which includes cursing. One example is when Piri argues with his father, and Piri is held by him, saying “Lemme go…Coño, let me go!” And the arm was gone” (Thomas: 147). Coño means damn, and here it works as an “aggravating request” (Zentella: 95) that intensifies what Piri truly wants, that is, being released from his father, which he evidently becomes. It is comparable to the findings made by Gal, where she claims that “…in an argument conducted in Hungarian, a switch to German might give extra force: it could end the argument, serving as a last word that was not undone” (Mesthrie et al. 165). He could have used the English word “damn”, but according to Stavans it would not “…denote the spirit as well” (Stavans 1996: 135).

Piri uses another word mixing when he is, for example, in jail to show aggravation. He argues with a couple of homosexual people about him not getting parole: “The faggots upstairs cooed, “Ah tol’ you so, honee.” “Maricones, go screw yourselves,” I shouted. “Ah wish Ah could, honee” (Thomas: 247). Like coño, “maricones” works as an aggravator. It intensifies his statement, the way a monolingual would use a higher pitch or repetition (Zentella: 96). It can also be seen, according to Bloom and Gumperz as a “metaphorical” switch, where it is used “stylistically” to create a form of “social meaning”
(Cromdal pp. 64). Piri switches from English to Spanish, which intensifies his utterance. I also believe that he strengthens his utterance for the reader as well by using Spanish. Homosexuality can also be seen as a taboo subject, especially in a culture that values machismo which those “anti-homosexuals” do not want to speak about, and by using the Spanish term he intensifies his disliking of them. He also reserves himself from their “activities”.

Piri also mixes his language for another taboo topic, that of drugs. He says “I stood there a second, listening to the music, and opened the door. I saw they were snorting tecata. I smoked marijuana, which was just like smoking cigarettes, but I was down on drugs” (Thomas: 109). Tecata is the Spanish term for heroin. What is interesting here is Piri’s usage of heroin, whereas he uses the common word for marijuana. I see this switch as a display of Piri defending his drug abuse. When he claims that he “only” smokes marijuana he makes it sound like something harmless, whereas the others’ tecata-heroin usage is something very dangerous which he would never use. He uses this to convince the reader that what he does is okay.

Santiago also uses code-mixing to deal with taboo topics. Her topic is that of “Putas”, which means whores. In a society like the Puerto Rican men and women have certain rules/codes to live by; men can look directly at women, whereas women cannot look straight at a man (Santiago: 30). However, a “puta” flirts and sleeps with men without even being married to them. Santiago writes “Chief among the sins of men was the other woman, who was always a puta…” (Santiago: 29). This is an annoying subject for many people, especially women, and it intensifies the statement, by using the Spanish word (Zentella: 97). There is an English word for puta, but it does not necessarily imply the same cultural meaning. The common view of the English word for whore, I believe, is a person that either takes money for sex, or simply “sleeps around”, whereas “puta” has a more cultural meaning/attachment to it.
Women outside the Puerto Rican community can look at men, at least in the western society, whereas in the Puerto Rican society, as I said before, they cannot. Hence, a “puta” not only sleeps around, she breaks the other cultural rules/codes. “… [P]utas…could do what they pleased since people would talk about them anyway” (Santiago: 30). This goes against the rules of treating everyone with respect, the subject that started my analysis, and the same subject that now rounds up my analysis on Spanglish code-switch/mixing in the U.S.

7 Conclusion

I have found Puerto Rican’s use of Spanglish to be a very useful tool in communication. A person is bound to carry around a certain set of rules and values deeply rooted in the Puerto Rican culture. What I found in Santiago’s work was the usage of “respeto”, respect. In her work she switches from English to Spanish calling elderly men and women the polite “Don” and “Doña”. This I saw as an indicator of Santiago keeping her roots.

I also found the usage of the Spanish terms for mother and father “Mami and Papi”, in both Santiago’s and Vega Yunqué’s works. However, the way each work used the terms varied. Santiago used “Mami and Papi” throughout the whole book, which I saw both as a sign of keeping her roots, and linking her childhood in Puerto Rico to her present in the U.S.

In “The Kite” the usage of the Spanish terms for mother and father in some ways varied from that in Santiago’s work. The son of the family in “The Kite”, called Rick, does not use “Mami and Papi” but “Ma and Pop”. Rick does not live at home. He has studied and worked in settings where the only or primary language is English. I believe that with the character of Rick, Vega Yunqué shows what can happen if the right to use one’s bilingual skills is taken away, like the “English Only” movement wants. In fact Rick only uses Papi twice and Mami once. First he uses Papi, like Santiago, to refer back to his childhood. The
other time he says Papi is when a friend has lost her family in an accident and he needs his father’s help. His uses his switch to “Papi” to convince his father and to show that he truly needs him.

Unlike Rick, the female character, Lolín, like Santiago’s character Esmeralda, employs the term “Mami” and “Abuela” (grandmother) all the time. I believe that is based on her upbringing and gender. As a female she has probably been restrained to the domestic areas of the society, where she spent most of her time socializing with other women. Whereas boys/men are out in the community and interact with several ethnic groups “forcing” them to use English. According to Zentella that is what causes her to use the Spanish terms, and Rick the English. It also explains the difference of Spanish switching/mixing between Rick’s mother and father. She was a housewife and he worked outside el bloque. Hence, I found that the mother used more Spanish than the father while. Rick, on the other hand, is struggling with identity.

Looking at gender, in particular the female gender, I also found the usage of blessings—“bendito”. In both Santiago’s and Thomas’ works, the mothers use blessings. They are mainly used to show concern for, or put emphasis on, someone’s problems. The term “Bendito” is unique for the Puerto Rican language/culture, which also indicates the cultural importance of using it. These switches not only create emphasis, they also bring in the importance of keeping expressions that symbolize the Puerto Rican culture.

Other ways of using Spanglish code-switching/mixing in the works were to translate a statement as a way of explaining what had just been said, and to switch single words as a means of showing certain emotions, ideals etc. As shown in Santiago’s work, translation can work at several levels. I saw it as a sign of honouring the Spanish community, by switching to the language the addressee, the person Esmeralda talks to in the story, knows best. It can also be the usage of formal and informal language, switching from English to
Spanish as a way of clarification. Since the reader probably is English, he/she would need a translation to understand.

Similar to Santiago’s usage of translation is Thomas’. He also uses it as a way of clarification. However, I found that he also used it to put emphasis on what was said. Translating it makes the reader aware of the importance of that certain statement/utterance. I also saw some similarities with the usage of the blessing. Thomas could just have written the English translation, however, since it is a biography Thomas probably remembers the utterance in Spanish, and like Esmeralda in When I was Puerto Rican and Rick in “The Kite” he keeps it as a link to his childhood/roots.

The single word code-switch/mix was the most common way of using Spanglish. There were two main ways of using it; one concerned the discussions of food, the other emphasizing a statement. All three works blended in the Spanish terms for certain foods/dishes. It can be a sign of not knowing the English terms, which I believed to be the case in both Thomas’ and Santiago’s work. They probably do know the English terms now, but since they are both referring to their childhoods they yet again keep the Spanish terms. However, in “The Kite” the mother also keeps the Spanish terms but that I see as a different sign. She comes from Puerto Rico and she keeps her Spanish. It also indicates what I said before about women being more likely to keep the Spanish language. These mixes can also be a sign of keeping good syntax in the text. Where the Spanish term for a certain dish is only one word, translating it into English would mean several descriptive words, which, in my opinion, would ruin the text. Instead the Spanish terms make the sentences run smoothly.

Code-switching/mixing can also be used to intensify a statement. Thomas uses a lot of mixes when it comes to cursing. I found that by applying them to a statement he could put emphasis on a statement, hence make a person understand that he really means it. He could also use them to show aggravation. By using Spanish the reader really understands that
he is angry. It becomes intensified. In my opinion, the most interesting way was Thomas’s usage of a mix when he talks about drugs, by saying that he “only” smoked marijuana, whereas the others took *tecate*-heroin, which can be seen as a taboo topic, he yet again uses the Spanish as an intensifier, saying that what he took was not as bad as what they did. Santiago also used this kind of mixing on the topic of “putas”-whores. I found that she used it to describe a taboo topic. It also worked better than the English word, since the Spanish term also indicates a certain social meaning. A meaning connected to respect, which women who are “putas” do not get.

I have found quite a lot of code-switches/mixes in these three fictional works. However there is no doubt that in real life, more code-switching/mixing would likely take place.

What conclusion can I make of this? I believe that the Spanglish language, at least in these three works, is not a sign of poor knowledge of English or Spanish. It is simply a conversational tool used to both enhance and put cultural emphasis on a statement. It connects the Puerto Ricans’ past with their present and future. Spanglish like any dialect of a language shows that a person comes from a certain background which has certain ways and values. It is significant that in the US, a country where almost everyone has an immigrant background, the use of Spanglish indicates the rise in Hispanic population growth and influence. We should not look down on it, but instead try and learn from it, so that every person will learn to appreciate a dialect/language, since it works the same no matter who you are or where you are from. The growing use and recognition of Spanglish as a language variety is evidence of the dynamism of language and the interplay between language and culture

8 Works Cited
**Primary Sources**


**Secondary Sources**


