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Language, Power, and Rhetorical Choice: Considering Spanglish

As we know the saying goes, “America is a melting pot” where all cultures and languages come together into one. While this *is* true, the meshing of cultures and languages is only acceptable to a certain extent, being an academic setting. The use of AAVE or even the expanding use of Spanglish is only accepted in communities of populations where this language is popular. Between AAVE and Spanglish, acceptance is very different. American author Stanley Fish has commented on the use of AAVE and how it could not be incorporated into a professional world, while also understanding how standard English reinforces white values onto the Black community. In its simplest form, AAVE is a different dialect of the English language, but how would Spanglish work into this? Incorporating a completely different language into an existing one is tough and using it in an academic setting requires a knowledge of both languages at the same level. Places such as Miami and certain parts of Texas have been able to successfully do this, but only because of the large population of hispanic residents in those areas. On the other hand, should people be forced to learn English? It is a struggle for many adults to learn a second language and all its grammar. Not only that, they will have a much different accent and dialect in pronunciation of words. The CCCC statement respects the meshing of two different languages in order to better understand English, so in this case, would Spanglish fit in an academic setting? In order to fully answer this question, we must analyze both sides of the argument.

By using Fish's argument in this situation, we note that standard English is important for everyday life, especially in formalities. It provides a literal "standard" that everyone can be held to as an expectation in certain situations of communication. Fish states, "It may be true that the standard language is an instrument of power and a device for protecting the status quo, but that very truth is a reason for teaching it to students who are being prepared for entry into the world as it now is rather than the world as it might be in some utopian imagination—all dialects equal, all habit of speech and writing equally rewarded," ("What Should Colleges Teach?"). So, by Fish's argument, in order to successfully communicate with others equally, there *must* be a standard way of speaking and writing. He also notes that having a standard English can be very demanding and negatively targeting minorities that may use different dialects, however that is just how the world is and since there is no current way to change it, we should all be taught this form of English. But, if we are continuously taught this standard of English, will it ever change? Will we ever accept other ways to speak and write that don't exclude certain groups in academic settings?

As we know, going from another language to learning English as a second language can be extremely challenging for many non-native speakers. The CCCC statement on teaching English as a second language outlines how to get people accustomed to the standard English. They claim to, "recognize and take responsibility for the regular presence of multilingual students in writing classes, to understand their characteristics, and to develop instructional and administrative practices that are sensitive to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds," (CCCC Statement). That being said, I agree that teachers should recognize the different ways people write/speak because they need to acknowledge that having a standard is only beneficial to white

Americans, as that is just the way they speak and write, meaning that the immigrant and black communities will always get the lower end of the stick.

My mother, an immigrant from Spain, expressed to me how much this topic hit home for her. She came to this country with my father because of a job opportunity and was curious about American culture and lifestyles. She had known English, as she had been through both highschool and college classes in Spain, however she decided to retake English classes in an American college in order to fully understand the language. This is how she tells me she developed her second language. At the American college, she learned standard English. She tells me as hard as the process of memorizing the grammar and rules was, she most likely wouldn't have been given any jobs without learning it. This is especially true because she is a teacher and she needs to send emails and interact with both parents and faculty in a very formal way. She tells me she is extremely thankful for the pressure that was put on her to write efficiently, and in an unfortunate way, this led her to be taken more seriously by American citizens. She tells me she is still mocked for her accent, as it is a permanent mark of English being her second language and obviously something she can't help. My mother also commented that dialects or accents shouldn't determine whether a person is educated or not, but she does note that "*asi es*," (Translation: That's the way it is). As I've grown I have realized that immigrants tend to be targeted and not taken as seriously because of their differing accent, solely due to the standard of English being so enforced in our education. We really cannot do anything, whether we agree this is wrong or not; this is just the way it is and will continue to be for a long time. However the stigma that different dialects have (whether it be AAVE or just an accent) should not be one of prejudice and there should be much more of an acceptance of how one speaks.

I really do believe that learning Spanglish will be beneficial to businesses and day to day life, as the population of hispanic residents is only expected to grow from here on out. It will become a way of communication in the upcoming years, forcing everyone to take up at least some vocabulary of the Spanish language. However, being able to write in Spanglish is a change that will not appear until the majority of people know Spanish fluently, so it is safe to assume that standard English will and *must* be taught. I believe that informally, spanglish is already a part of communities in the Bronx of NY, in several cities of Texas, as well as, of course, Miami. Such places have a huge majority of hispanic residents, so much so that the minority of non-spanish speakers have had to learn it to communicate with others. As mentioned earlier, this will slowly integrate itself into formal education at some point in the far future.

Work Cited

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