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The Power of Communication

Language is a really powerful tool with which we can communicate, express our feelings, raise our voice, and so many different things. We also have different ways to talk or write which are influenced depending on the situation that we are in that moment. I speak two languages, Spanish and English, so I consider myself a bilingual person, and there are so many things that I enjoy about that because it is really fun. If I want to say something, but I do not want others to understand what I am saying, I can speak whichever of the two languages depending of the kind of people who are around me. I can mix it too. In my case I use Spanglish, and I know for a fact that so many bilingual people do the same with both languages because it is easy for us to change the words that we do not know or we do not remember. Not everything is easy and happy when you are learning another language as my experience. And I think most of the people who learn another language, go through a hard time because of the pronunciation and the sounds of words and letters. They are really different to what we are used to in our first language. After that you have to deal with your accent because some of the people do not understand you. The moment and the people are an important thing when I am going to speak or write. At home here in California with my family which speaks Spanish and English, most of the time I speak Spanglish because it is comfortable and easy. While I am at Chaffey, I speak formal English to show respect and be polite with my professors, but I use slang with my friends and classmates. In

Mexico with my family I speak formal Spanish with adults and informal Spanish with members of my family that are the same age as me. With my friends I speak Spanglish too or informal Spanish just to look cool.

When I am here in California at home with my family who also speak English and Spanish we mix it, and we speak Spanglish most of the time. When we are talking about something in English and then we do not remember or we do not know the word in English, we switch it to Spanish because that allows us to continue talking without waiting too long until we find the word. For example: “Ve a la ninety- nine y trae una coliflor”. That means “Go to the ninety nine cents store and bring me a cauliflower”. We feel really comfortable and free talking like that because we do not have to worry if we are saying it right or if the word is the right for what we are trying to say. Thinking in two different languages is hard, when you do not know the whole vocabulary in English, since we learned it when we were adults. According to an article, “Another form of Spanglish involves translating phrases and words from English into Spanish or viceversa” (Melendez). That is very true, because as Mexicans most of our culture or our way of talking is expressing our feelings with sayings, adages or phrases, and sadly in English some of them do not have a meaning or they do not make sense. My mom used to say when I was lying to her “Mas sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo” which means “The devil knows more for being old than for being devil”. Another example that my aunt uses with me is when she asks me: “Estas en el Colegio?” Which means: “Are you at College?”. The funny thing here is that college means school in Spanish (Elementary School, Middle School or High School). college is university in Spanish; there is no college before University. There are so

many situations that can influence how we talk or why we talk in this way, sometimes as part of our culture or just the people who are around us.

At Chaffey I speak formal English because I have to be polite with my professors. I also use it as a way to show respect to them, but I use slang with my friends and classmates. Same place but different people; you are not going to talk to your professors as you do with your classmates or friends, because there are different levels, ages and after all you have to show respect to people who are older than you. It can be a hierarchy or just to show how well educated you are. It is part of my culture to be respectful and polite with my professors; that is why I use formal English with them. In Mexico they are almost like your parents because they are so strict with you, and they are going to show you how to succeed. Here in America teachers are different. They are more outgoing and nice, even though you have to be nice with them, and because of my culture I continue acting like that. According to an article “The United States is home to 4.1 million native Spanish speakers, with an additional 11.6 million who are bilingual” (Masci 2000). Spanish speakers like me came here most of the time to learn English, but they keep their roots, their way of thinking, the culture, and also our first language because it is the one that we speak the most with our family. Unconsciously we still read and write in Spanish because we are around our culture even though we are far from home, but we learn English because we have to use it in College, work, super markets, etc. With our friends or classmates we use slang because we want to fit with young people like us. In my case, I am always around people who have my same age at Chaffey where I can socialize. Another form of communication with people that have my same age who are native American is using slang while we are texting. For example: when I ask my friends “How r u?” Or “TMI”, which means “too much

information”, when she says something that I do not really need to know. “OMG”, which means “oh my god”, when she tells me something really shocking. I speak English just when I am at Chaffey, and when my American friends or classmates text me, other than that I use my first language all the time.

In Mexico I speak formal Spanish to old family members and adults. We speak with respect to them, and we do this as a part of our culture to develop a nice environment when we are together. If we do not do that, there are serious problems because parents and grandparents are treated with respect. If you raise the voice to them, or if you curse in front of them, you are going to have a really big problem with the whole family. They are not going to talk to you after that. As an example of this: One day my dad was a little bit drunk, and we were on a family reunion when something unconscious came out of his mouth. He said, “Ojala y se vaya a la chingada” which means “I wish he could go fuck himself”. Well after that everything was quiet and my grandparents spent a whole month not talking to him. Now my dad does not go too often to my grandparents house. The influence of our culture makes us continue with our language, customs and values. According to an article “What language people speak is not just a question of convenience. Other factors such as politics and culture also help determine whether someone will continue speaking their native language” (Gards). I agree with this because your native language is part of your culture, your country, and how you feel comfortable with people who speak your same language. And you keep interest and worry about what happen in your country such as politics, the environment, family, etc.

I speak and write informal Spanish with people who are around me like friends, cousins or people that have the same age as me. I am in touch with my friends and cousins via Facebook,

Whatsapp, Instagram and Snapchat, so we are continuously sending each other voice messages, texting, sending pictures or just making a simple phone call. These apps are the ones that I use the most with my Mexican friends and cousins, because I have been spending my whole life with them since we were little. I want to keep talking with them because they have a special place in my heart, and I miss them. For those reasons I speak informal Spanish because I feel so comfortable talking like that with them, it is more relaxing, and I rely on them so everything can flow. We started talking like that because, as we grew up we wanted to look cool, funny, and more interesting, we could have our own way of writing and talking. Now I keep texting, posting on Facebook and Instagram in the same informal way that we used to do even when I am here, and far from them. I feel more comfortable writing like that. As an example of this: I can comment on my best friend's photo "Goeey amo tu vestido" which means "Dude, I love your dress". We also use Spanglish now to look cooler than others because most of my friends speak English, even though they are in Mexico. When we are talking or texting we are used to saying or writing "OMG", "HUNN", "AF", "BABY", "BFF" a lot which means "Oh my god", "honey", "as fuck", "baby", "best friend". According to an article "The new report also found that Spanish is the third most used language on the internet, and second after English on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter" (Masci). So many times it is more comfortable to search things on Google in your own language, or write posts on Facebook because most of the people that I have on Facebook are Mexican, so it is like a community. Also most of the people who are from South America, who have come to America speak Spanish to their kids who were born here, and the number of people who speak Spanish is getting bigger by the moment.

The moment and the people are an important thing when you are going to speak or write. At home here with my family, most of the time I speak Spanglish because it is comfortable and easier, while I am at Chaffey, I speak formal English to be polite with my professors and classmates. In Mexico with my family I speak formal Spanish with adults and informal with members of my family that have the same age as me. With my friends I speak Spanglish too or informal Spanish just to look cool. As a bilingual person, there are so many ways of using your first language with your second language because it is funny and comfortable. So many times you do not have to think about it, but it depends on the situation and the people who are around you. Sometimes you have to speak formal or informal in whatever of the two languages. Truly language is a very powerful tool.

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