

Choutouts: Language contact and US-Latin hip hop on YouTube

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This paper presents a corpus-sociolinguistic analysis of lyrics and comments from videos for four US-Latin hip hop songs on YouTube. A ‘post-varieties’ (Sergeant and Tagg 2011) analysis of the diversity and hybridity of linguistic production in the YouTube comments finds the notions of codemeshing and plurilingualism (Canagarajah 2009) useful in characterizing the language practices of the Chicanx community of the Southwestern US, while a focus on the linguistic practices of commenters on Northeastern ‘core’ artists’ tracks validate the use of named language varieties in examining language attitudes and ideologies as they emerge in commenters’ discussions. Finally, this article advances the sociolinguistics of orthography (Sebba 2007) by examining the social meanings of a vast array of creative and novel orthographic forms, which often blur the supposed lines between language varieties.

Keywords: Latinx, hip hop, orthography, codemeshing, language contact, language attitudes, language ideologies, computer-mediated discourse.

Choutouts: contacto lingüístico y el hip hop latinx-estadounidense en YouTube. Este estudio presenta un análisis sociolingüístico de letras de canciones y comentarios de cuatro videos de hip hop latinx-estadounidenses en YouTube. A través de un análisis ‘post-variedades lingüísticas’ (Sergeant y Tagg 2011) se examina la diversidad y la creatividad en la producción lingüística de los comentarios en YouTube. Se demuestra la utilidad de los conceptos de *codemeshing* y plurilingüismo (Canagarajah 2009) en la caracterización de las prácticas lingüísticas de las comunidades Chicanxs del suroeste de los EEUU. Asimismo, el análisis de las prácticas lingüísticas en los comentarios de videos de algunas canciones ‘claves’ de raperos del noreste validan el uso de variedades lingüísticas denominadas en la examinación de actitudes y ideologías lingüísticas que aparecen en las discusiones de los comentaristas. Por último, este trabajo avanza la comprensión de la sociolingüística de ortografía (Sebba 2007) mediante un examen de los significados sociales de varias formas ortográficas creativas y novedosas, que difuminan con frecuencia las presuntas fronteras entre variedades lingüísticas.

Palabras claves: Latinx, hip hop, ortografía, codemeshing, contacto lingüístico, actitudes lingüísticas, ideologías lingüísticas, discursos informáticos, español estadounidense.

1. Introduction

‘Hispanic American’ and ‘Latina/o’ (henceforth Latinx¹) are designations for a diverse demographic category including people of multiple races and national backgrounds, unified by a history beginning with the contact between indigenous North, South, and Mesoamerican peoples and Spanish invaders and colonizers. Latinxs feature prominently in long-standing sociopolitical debates in the US about immigration, assimilation, and cultures. In addition to the multiple ethnic identities that Latinxs themselves construct, inhabit, or are externally assigned, Latinxs have lived, worked, and grown up alongside other ethnic minorities in the US, with a result of widespread cultural exchange, especially in densely-settled urban areas. One of the most complex products of this cultural exchange is Latin hip hop—a subculture descended from African American musical and cultural forms and adopted by many Latin youth (African American and otherwise). While Afro-Latinxs have been part of hip hop music and culture since its origins, it was around the time of Kid Frost’s seminal 1990 track ‘La Raza’ that a distinctively Latin hip hop culture began to grow and mix with American hip hop culture generally. Latin artists all over the US have brought their own interpretations of culture, subculture, and identity to the fore in their work. Latinxs are central to the present political situation in the US: The 2016 election cycle featured two major presidential primary candidates of Latino heritage, and the eventual winner of the election infamously made (and continues to make) derogatory comments about immigrants from Mexico, labeling them as ‘rapists’ and alleging that they bring drugs and crime to the US. This is perhaps the highest-profile recent instance of the larger narrative of the ‘Latino threat’ in US politics (Chavez 2013) In the preface to the second edition of his book “The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation,” Chavez (2013) characterizes the Latino Threat Narrative as:

... a number of taken-for-granted and often-repeated assumptions about Latinos, such as that Latinos do not want to speak English; that Latinos do not want to integrate socially and culturally into the larger U.S. society; that the Mexican-origin population, in particular, is part of a grand conspiracy to take over the U.S. Southwest (*the reconquista*); and that Latin women are unable to

control their reproductive capacities, that is, their fertility is out of control, which fuels both demographic changes and the alleged *reconquista*.

To this list, I would add that numerous media portrayals and the recent political discourse referenced above paint Latinxs in the US as the perpetrators of crime, and particularly violent crime, and drug trafficking/distribution. In light of this sociopolitical narrative, the violent, dangerous, and macho image that some genres of hip hop music and culture propagate make Latin hip hop an especially complex and controversial space for identity formation and uptake, and for the examination of language use and ideology.

Because of the factors outlined above —that Latin hip hop has its roots in multiple cultures, that artists and fans in the community are ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse, and that Latinxs in the US are at the center of ideological debates about language and culture, Latin hip hop is a rich and complex site for sociolinguistic analysis. This research domain provides insight into language practices which have often been treated as language contact phenomena in traditional sociolinguistic analyses: language mixing, codeswitching, and borrowing— as well as language attitudes and ideologies from within and outside the community. This study challenges the sufficiency and accuracy of the traditional language contact approaches, following Seargeant and Tagg (2011) in considering a ‘post-varieties’ approach to online multilingual (or plurilingual, cf. Canagarajah 2009) discourse, and contributing to the sociolinguistics of orthography (cf. Sebba 2007).

This paper reports on a corpus-based, sociolinguistic investigation of lyrics and discussion in online Latin hip hop culture, focusing on several YouTube videos featuring Latin hip hop artists and comments by YouTube viewers on those videos. Previous investigations of global hip hop culture have established that, like many previously-offline subcultures, fans and artists in hip hop often engage in cultural practices on the Internet, which allows for artists and fans to engage without geographic limitation. Hip hop artists today release free mixtapes for download on sites like DatPiff.com, upload tracks and videos to YouTube and stream tracks on SoundCloud, and interact with other artists and fans on social media outlets like Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Furthermore, the large volume and relative permanence of online discourse, along with the opportunity to analyze diverse and novel orthographic choices, make computer-mediated discourse an especially attractive domain for sociolinguistic research. While the four videos and their attendant comments analyzed in this paper cannot provide a complete picture of Latin hip hop in the US, I have strived to select artists and fanbases which provide a

diverse set of examples in this genre, and which may provide the basis for future work with a more representative sample.

2. Previous investigations and research questions

2.1. Latinxs in the US and the ‘post-varieties’ shift

The Latinx community in the US is popularly perceived as bilingual in Spanish and English, although the extent to which this is true, in the sense that individuals can demonstrate what is called ‘competence’ in varieties of both Standardized English and Standardized Spanish, varies widely. Codeswitching and the resulting perceived mixed language variety of ‘Spanglish’ (cf. Zentella’s 2016 anthropological linguistic analysis and defense of the term) have been considered to be characteristic of the community in both sociolinguistic and popular portrayals. Toribio (2002: 89) defines codeswitching in the US-Latinx context as “the alternating use of Spanish and English in the same conversational event.” In this analysis, I provide evidence supporting the views of a great number of authors in maintaining that the notion of codeswitching (as alternation between language varieties inter- or intra-sententially in a single discourse event) often insufficiently describes the language production of plurilingual speakers. The translanguaging approach to language contact situations and multilingualism, as seen in the work of e.g. García and Wei (2014), has been accompanied by a concurrent rethinking of the very notions of language contact and multilingualism. Translanguaging holds that “rather than possessing two or more autonomous language systems, as has been traditionally thought, bilinguals, multilinguals, and indeed, all users of language, select and deploy particular features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to make meaning and to negotiate particular communicative contexts” (Vogel & García 2017). This approach is part of a large body of work in the field of language contact which challenges and interrogates the notion of language varieties as discrete and fixed systems, both within and outside of the level of the individual speaker. Seargeant & Tagg (2011) provide a comprehensive overview of the development of this body of literature, noting that:

despite provisos about the abstracted or ‘fictional’ nature of ‘varieties’ (e.g. Algeo 1991), this framework of conceptual categorisation underpins several other sociolinguistic concepts such as *mixing*, *borrowing*, and *hybrid languages*, where the notion of discrete systems is the con-

ceptual foundation for the metaphors used to describe particular linguistic phenomena. As Blommaert (2010) argues, for the sociolinguist, the danger becomes inadvertently reifying this key conceptual category by employing it in an uncritical fashion. (499)

A related issue is that many types of linguistic production, especially in informal and liminal spaces outside the ratified order (Rampton 1999), resist categorization in the framework of rule-based varieties. Pennycook (2007: 137, quoted in Seargeant and Tagg 2011) establishes hip hop culture in its globalized instantiations as such a space:

The mixed codes of the street, the hypermixes of hip-hop, pose a threat to the linguistic, cultural and political stability urged by national language policies and wished into place by frameworks of linguistic analysis that posit separate and enumerable languages.

It is an inescapable fact that language in social contexts is subject to categorical language attitudes and standard language ideologies which name, inscribe, and reify languages like Spanish and English and which often judge linguistic performances as alternatively proper, correct, and standard, or incorrect, deficient, and broken. Because the present study engages with language in context and in particular, expressed and implied attitudes about language and their attendant language ideologies, I find it necessary to refer, at times, to varieties of English or varieties of Spanish, as such constructs are popularly perceived. However, I take two important concepts from the work of Suresh Canagarajah in negotiating and framing language use. The first is *plurilingualism*, a proposed replacement for the concept of multilingualism. Canagarajah (2009: 22) identifies issues with previous definitions of societal and individual multilingualism as multiple “separate monolingualisms” and identifies that:

Plurilingualism allows for the interaction and mutual influence of the languages in a more dynamic way. [...] in plurilingualism the directionality of influence is much more dynamic. Languages don't develop in a linear way, but could influence each other in a recursive manner. Parts of a language can influence different competencies in a different language (i.e., spoken Tamil can influence written English).

A plurilingual approach, as will be demonstrated in this paper, can more coherently explain and encompass the innate hybridity found in Latin hip hop data. The final sentence of the above quote is also of particular interest, and will be returned to in this paper's discussion. A concept related to plurilingualism that I will adapt for use here is codemeshing,

which refers to linguistic (and associated non-linguistic) practices drawing resources dynamically from a speaker's repertoire. Canagarajah (2009: 25-26) notes that Plurilingual English, which is a "highly variable and fluid form of language practice" rather than "an identifiable code or a systematized variety of English," constitutes a form of a more general process known as codemeshing, which "can involve languages other than English," and "accommodate multiple modalities of communication," including extralinguistic symbolic systems, like emoji or punctuation. Seargeant & Tagg (2011: 498) approach plurilingual data from what they call a 'post-varieties' perspective, "an analytic apparatus that is sensitive to the dynamic communicative practices which use English-related forms and connotations as one part of a wider semiotic repertoire." Using the concepts of plurilingualism and codemeshing, I follow those authors in assessing the applicability of a 'post-varieties' approach.

As Seargeant & Tagg note, while trying to be circumspect about a 'post-varieties' approach, it is often nearly impossible (and perhaps inadvisable) to analyze features of language in a sociolinguistic way without reference to named varieties. This will become particularly evident in the description of the quantitative methods, where YouTube comments are classified as belonging to different categories, essentially on the basis of 'which variety' the comments are perceived to represent, with overall categories of 'English-like', 'Spanish-like', a third category for comments which involve 'codemeshing' and a fourth 'sui generis' category for comments which do not contain features recognizable as English or Spanish. This is certainly a contestable approach, and I acknowledge here that this constitutes a top-down categorization of the data according to named varieties. However, these quantitative results are provided not as the main findings of this research, but as a way of contextualizing the proportion of repertoire features popularly associated with each language, as evidenced in the linguistic production of commenters across videos.

2.2. Hip hop as a domain of sociolinguistic examination

Linguistic practices are known to be central to the practice of hip hop culture and especially the adaptation, appropriation, and localization of hip hop beyond its African-American origins to a staggering array of multilingual majority and minority-ethnicity hip hop communities around the world through what Pennycook (2007) refers to as 'global linguistic flows'. Chapters in volumes edited by Alim et al. (2009) and Terkourafi (2010) attest to the establishment of hip hop in locales as diverse as Japan, Germany, France, Cyprus, Hungary, Norway, South Korea, Greece, Egypt, Brazil, Tanzania, Nigeria, Quebec, and Hong

Kong. In my own previous research on the German hip hop community, I identified and analyzed patterns of (then in traditional language-contact terms) English borrowing and codeswitching in an Internet hip hop forum, along with German hip hop fans' implicit and explicit attitudes toward English borrowings, concluding that the use of anglicisms and other English-derived forms is conditioned by a complex interaction of multiple linguistic systems—not only in terms of grammar and morphology, but also in terms of the correspondences between speech and writing, i.e. between phonetic realization and orthographic characters (Garley 2014; Garley 2018). Linguistic forms, e.g. the borrowed and stylized form *Peaze* ('peace'), a leave-taking, as well as the orthographic <-ed> suffix which comes to represent the German /-t/ sound for nativized verbs, play a major role in the performance of a simultaneously global and local (or 'glocal') hip hop culture through linguistic practices.

The study of Latin hip hop in the US has significant differences from the study of the global hip hop outside of the US. Taking German hip hop as an example of the latter, it is 'downstream' in terms of global linguistic flows from the mother culture of US-American hip hop, and is heavily influenced by the latter (with forms that are more easily classifiable as linguistic borrowing from English to German), while it does not significantly influence American hip hop in turn. There are no common German-origin borrowings in English which originated in German hip hop culture. By contrast, US-Latin hip hop has emerged geographically and culturally from the beginning alongside and overlapping with African-American hip hop culture (especially given the large number of Afro-Latinx practitioners in New York during hip hop's infancy), and Latinx and African-American hip hop artists share proficiency in a number of varieties of English. Finally, a number of Spanish-origin wordforms are adapted and commonly used by non-Latinx rappers (e.g. *mami/papi*, 'loc'ed' from *loco*², and potentially *guap* 'money' from *guapo/guapa*, the popular hip hop group *Migos*, from *amigos*).

Examinations of the repertoire of linguistic practices in Latin hip hop have been underrepresented in the social science literature, and existing studies of Latin hip hop culture generally examine specific national-origin populations, e.g., in MacFarland's (2008) sociological study on Chicana rap, or Flores' (2000) study of Puerto Rican culture in New York. Cutler's (2018) analysis of a Chicano hip hop video by rapper Jae P and its attendant YouTube comments examines fans' orthographic creativity from a discourse-analytic perspective, finding evidence for counter-hegemonic orientations in the use of non-standard orthography in fans' comments. The present study builds on Cutler's

work, using similar methods to examine a wider and more diverse array of videos and sociolinguistic situations surrounding the language production in Latin rap from multiple national-origin populations and configurations of ethnicity among rappers. This study also blends corpus-linguistic quantitative and discourse-analytic qualitative methods to productively examine the linguistic geography of this diverse genre.

While the research mentioned here provides a starting point, it's important that more attention be paid to linguistic practices in Latin hip hop, specifically in terms of examining the linguistic repertoires involved, what attitudes and language ideologies underlie the use and uptake of these resources, and how a post-varieties approach can address these questions. This line of investigation also promises to shed light on larger ideological concerns about the US as a multiethnic and multilingual society, as well as language shift away from the ideologized variety of Standardized Spanish in the US-Latinx community.

Finally, this study investigates and furthers the *sociolinguistics of orthography* proposed by Sebba (2007) and elaborated on by multiple authors since then. In examining YouTube comments as a primary source of data, this study concerns itself with the *zone of social meaning* Sebba identifies as “sandwiched between two extremes, one in which there is complete adherence to a set of norms (absolutely no deviation possible) and the other where there is complete license.” (2007: 32) considering a range of comment threads on YouTube videos and their position in this zone. This is particularly interesting to examine in a plurilingual space, where plurilingual language users' large and diverse repertoires come into play.

The present study engages the following research questions:

1) In what ways do the language practices found in Latin hip hop and fan responses to Latin hip hop align with or challenge the notions of Spanishes and Englishes as language varieties?

2) What do these interactions reveal about language attitudes toward ideologized varieties of English and Spanish?

2) What kinds of orthographic stylization or creative use of orthographic resources are evident in YouTube comments on Latin hip hop videos?

3) What do the types of comments that viewers leave tell us about fan engagement with cultural and linguistic identities in Latin hip hop?

4) Given the global reach of the Internet, what are the boundaries of this community (or these communities) and how might regional differences in Latinx populations in the US contribute to the language use among fans and artists?

3. Methods

This study analyzes the lyrics (and to a smaller degree, visual and musical semiotics) of, and viewers' comments on four YouTube hip hop videos featuring Latin rappers from the US. The videos chosen are not a random sample, but instead are meant to serve as individual representations of the diversity of linguistic situations in Latin hip hop, especially when artists of multiple ethnicities are involved. While the four videos discussed here cannot represent the depth and breadth of Latin hip hop, and this analysis serves more as a probative series of case studies in the wider genre, I took care to select videos featuring artists from 1) different regions of the US, with Texas, California, and the New York metropolitan area represented, and 2) of different Latinx ethnicities, including the Afro-Latino artists The Beatnuts, of Colombian and Dominican heritage, alongside Chicano artists Chingo Bling and Sick Jacken. This study uses in part the methods of discourse-centered online ethnography (Androutsopoulos 2008) and computer-mediated discourse analysis (Herring 2004), focusing on the online communities that form and dissolve sporadically around discourse sites (in this case, the YouTube videos). Three of the videos chosen are by Latino artists (one being a remix featuring a non-Latino African-American rapper), and one is a video by a white hip hop group featuring a markedly distinct rap chorus by Chicano rapper Sick Jacken, which is oriented to as unclassifiable, incomprehensible, and threatening in the narrative of the track. In the qualitative analysis presented here, I discuss the link between language and the construction of identity, and how the complex sociolinguistic situations presented in these discourse events put different aspects of this relationship into focus. It is worth noting that I am not considering the users who comment on these different videos a speech community in the traditional sociolinguistic sense, especially as the diversity/superdiversity of YouTube viewers creates a major challenge. It is evident that it is not the case that viewers of Latin hip hop videos are universally Latinx or living in the US. However, fans who interact/comment on these videos are in a real sense engaging with Latin hip hop in a meaningful way, and with few exceptions can be assumed to have an interest in hip hop music and culture. In addition to the qualitative analysis of selected comments, a quantitative analysis of comment language classification and likelihood of the commenter's status as Hispanic/Latinx (based on username and comment language) is presented in the following analysis. This was done using a relatively simple hand-coding method, where each commenter's username was coded binarily as (likely) Hispanic/Latinx if it appeared to contain a recogni-

zably Hispanic surname (e.g. Ramos, Medrano, Cortes, Aguirre, etc.), contained words in Spanish (e.g. Puro, Arte, Tejano, El), referenced indigenous cultures/languages of the Spanish-colonized Americas (e.g. Ek Balam, Aztlan), or a country or polity in that region (e.g. Mexicanz, Colombia, etc.). Second, comments were hand-identified as belonging to one of four categories based on the presence or absence of features corresponding to ideologized varieties: ‘English-like’ including varieties of youth English, African American English, Hip Hop Nation Language, and English Computer Mediated Discourse (CMD) forms, ‘Spanish-like’ including multiple Spanish varieties and CMD forms, ‘code-meshing’ for comments which drew from both of the previous categories, or ‘other/unknown’ for comments which consisted entirely of emoji, solely of the artist’s name or repetition of song lyrics (these are not original linguistic choices), or were in a non-Spanish and non-English language. For each video, the breakdown of comment language across these four categories is presented, as well as the figure representing the proportion of commenters who 1) have a Hispanic/Latinx affiliated surname, 2) write comments classified as ‘Spanish-like’ or ‘code-meshed’, or 3) both. This proportion will be referred to as ‘estimated Latinx commenters.’ The quantitative methods described here are obviously imperfect and speculative, as they necessarily misidentify e.g. commenters who are Latinx but do not have a recognizably Latinx username or surname and comment monolingually in English, or commenters who are not Latinx but use Spanish (monolingually or code-meshed). However, these figures do give us a sense of the degree to which the audience responding to the video identifies as or might be identified as Latinx in nature. The combination of these qualitative and quantitative methods provides a more complete picture of the sociolinguistic situation in Latin hip hop online.

4. Analysis

4.1. Chingo Bling - “Cerveza”

Chingo Bling is the stage name of Pedro Herrera, a rapper, producer, comedian, actor, and self-described ‘tamale mogul’ from Houston, TX. While his comic persona comes out in a number of his hip hop videos, like “Banda Makes Her Dance,” which parody and poke fun at mainstream hip hop and pop music, there are others that could be considered more straightforward or serious Latin hip hop, like “Brown and Proud”, or the video analyzed here, “Cerveza.”



Figure 1: Screenshot of Chingo Bling's video for 'Cerveza'³

Herrera's parents are both from Tamaulipas, Mexico, and in his usual public persona, his fashion emphasizes a hybridization of Mexican *vaquero* or cowboy style and US hip hop fashion. As seen in Figure 1, the video itself as well as the YouTube title and even the uploading account's avatar indicate and reinforce this hybridity. The title of the song is Spanish, but the additional information in the YouTube video title is in English. In the title, the video location is emphasized in a way that underscores the video's location as authentic to its content (and in turn supports Herrera's authenticity). The YouTube channel thumbnail is also hybrid—a pair of cowboy/*vaquero* boots with a Nike Swoosh(tm) logo, again indexing both Mexican *vaquero* culture (along with Texan cowboy culture) and hip hop fashion. Herrera's fashion practices further support the hybrid identity being performed: his T-shirt reads *FERIA PARA SIEMPRE* 'CASH FOREVER' and the rapper-style chain (a jeweled silver *vaquero* boot) and sunglasses index hip hop, while his headwear in video scenes alternates between a *vaquero* style cowboy hat as pictured in Figure 1 and a snap-back, flat-brimmed baseball cap. The visual semiotics in and surrounding the video, then, seamlessly blend a Mexican/*vaquero* identity with American hip hop fashion originating in the African-American community.

In the song, Chingo Bling continually engages in codemeshing, drawing linguistic resources from Border Spanish and African-American (or AAE-influenced) English as well as features which have been characterized as Hip Hop Nation Language, often beginning lines in

English and ending in Spanish, and the lyrical themes often highlight his US-Latino identity in lines like “Lucy I’m home, Chingo Ricardo, I get my superpowers out this lil tequila bottle / the world is my piñata, I break it with my riata, who the lil ese puttin Houston on the mapa” The chorus of the song is reproduced in (1):

- (1) America be lookin like a party y no invitan, [and they didn’t invite us]
 so we crash the party and be like we brought fajitas
 and I beat it beat it up to Sonora Dinamita [a Colombian cumbia group]
 throw a party on the torta, be like girl I brought fajitas

In the lyrics, Chingo Bling specifically draws on the linguistic resources of AAE (with the habitual *be* and copula deletion in *who the lil ese*) and hip hop slang (*beat it up* ‘penetrative sex’) as well as the generalized youth-English quotative ‘*be like*’ and features found in multiple nonstandard dialects (*lil* for ‘little’ and *-in* gerunds). In addition to the multiple English varieties, Chingo Bling’s language uses standard Spanish *mapa* and *y no invitan*, references common Spanish borrowings into English *tequila*, *piñata*, *fajitas*, and *torta*, and draws on Caló, a repertoire of slang predating hip hop originating along the US-Mexico border (the double entendres of *torta* and *fajitas* referencing genitalia, *riata* ‘lasso’ for the male member, as well as the term *ese* ‘dude’). In terms of content, the reference to the Colombian music group *Sonora Dinamita* and the classic Cuban-American TV character Ricky Ricardo from ‘I Love Lucy’ indexes a broader Latinx/Latin American identity.

For Chingo Bling, then, authenticity is found in hybridity with strong connections to both Mexican identity and a pan-Latin identity, both of which are positively oriented to. This is also reinforced by the song’s title, ‘Cerveza’. While beer isn’t mentioned in the lyrics, the title refers to the backing track, a hip hop beat built on the song ‘Cumbia de la Cerveza’ by Grupo Soñador, a Mexican cumbia group—worth noting here is that the genre of cumbia, like most Western Hemisphere Latin music, has its roots in African musical styles. In fact, Chingo Bling himself replies to a fan in the YouTube comments asking about the song’s beat by providing the artist and song name; uniquely out of the artists/videos presented here, Chingo is an active commenter in his own YouTube threads, providing 17 comments/9.2% of the total on this video. Finally, Chingo’s choice of a stage name further reinforces the ethnically and linguistically hybrid identity he constructs, by melding the taboo Spanish *chingo* ~ ‘a fuckton’ and HHNL *bling*,

‘jewelry/valuables’, a word popularized in hip hop culture and later spread throughout youth culture generally.

The degree of hybridity present in Chingo Bling’s persona may seem affected or over the top, but the comments on the YouTube video largely earnestly validate and support his practices. Even further, the viewers frequently engage in hybrid, stylized language production and extensive code-meshing, as seen in selected comments (2a-o):

- (2a) That’s what’s up chingo bling. doing it REAL GRANDE! 🤔🤔🤔🤔
- (2b) Muy chingon el video y la rola bro right away I knew que andavas en Guadalajara
- (2c) Loving it!!! U need to do a whole cd of cumbia rap!! Saludos desde minnesota homie
- (2d) ORALE!!!! CHINGO BLING FKN BOMB ASS ROLA
- (2e) Hey chingo que paso wey salu2 desde mcallen tx whats up with the rancho you had over here man te la lavas y te tomas el agua
- (2f) Bangin track! Str8 up Guanatos right here. Good shit you made the video there Chingo!! Al 100!!
- (2g) i got u chingo aqui en nyc te promo ur clothing line chingon
- (2h) Yepa yepa yepa! Arriba Valle Hermoso y La Culeca (La Nueva Independencia)! Keep representin Chingo Bling!
- (2i) te aventaste wey nice rola.....much love to all my raazaaa representando
- (2j) tiene buen ritmo y beat, esta conmadres, la voy a traear en mi troca ke suene el beiseooooo ! desde coahuila a tamaulipas ! ywest tx in the house!!!
- (2k) Chingo Bling tu eres chingon, hands down playa you’re the ONLY artist that keeps it 100 in my book. You and Baby Bash for sure!
- (2l) juan hunna mexican !100 viva guerrero ala verga 🔥🔥
- (2m) that is what I am talking about y ke viva mexico cabrones 🤘

(2a-m) provide evidence for a wide stylistic repertoire of linguistic features, which in a variety-based analysis, are associated with different Spanish and English language varieties, including a set of alternative digital non-standard orthographies associated with informal computer-mediated discourse. While something like ‘REAL GRANDE’ in (2a) might be accessible to a traditional monolingual or English-dominant speaker (given the quasi-loanword status of *grande* in formations like fast food restaurant Taco Bell’s ‘Nachos Bellgrande’), many of these comments would be at least partially opaque to the English monolingual. These comments in particular militate against a variety-based approach, as they actively resist easy classification, even at the level of individual words. Through the extensive use of non-normative ortho-

graphy, this linguistic production draws from multiple overlapping repertoires (merged in each speaker's usage into singular repertoires). For example, a number of CMD-related features are blended with what could be considered nonstandard Spanish and English features. CMD-related features in these comments include the presence of various emoji—notably syntactically integrated as <Al ¹⁰⁰> in the case of (2f). The use of <ke> for *que* in (2j) and (2m) is a feature of a broad range of informal or vernacular Spanish CMD. <troca> with the meaning '(pickup) truck' in (2j) is a 'Border Spanish' form/American English loan (cf. *camioneta*) and the form <yepa> in 2h (cf. Colloquial *epa* 'watch out!' or 'hey!') also has a colloquial spelling. The substitution of numerals for phonologically equivalent forms occurs in both Spanish and English words: <salu2> 'saludos' in (2e) and <Str8> 'straight' in 2f. Alternative/non-normative orthography is also seen in 2b <andavas> cf. *andabas*, (2c) and (2g) <u> for *you*, the alternative spelling <z> in (2f) <reprezentin>, and additional instances too numerous to fully list. Terms of address used in (2a-m) are similarly varied, including forms associated with various Englishes and Spanishes like <wey>, <bro>, <homie>, and <playa>. Repetition of graphemes, a feature also associated with CMD, are also found in the forms <raazaaa> and <beiseooo>. Perhaps the most consistent 'feature' of the discourse in (2a-m) is the use of forms indexical of (if not exclusively indexical of) Mexican and/or Chicana identity, e.g. <conmadres> '~ badass' <ala verga>, <chingon>, <rola>, <cabron>, and <vato>. Several comments additionally orient directly to the concept of Mexican(-American) identity in this space:

- (2n) I'm not Mexican but this shit goes hard to me!
 (2o) i got my family listening to this. From carpentersville Illinois down to Peoria Illinois. im half white and half Mexican but will always represent brown pride for life.

Finally, a number of comments contain orthographic and syntactic features which are particularly representative of the hybridity of fans' plurilingual repertoires.

- (2r) Holllllll up +Chingo Bling , great Lil jam, when the screwed and chopped bersion dropping. Traje fajitas
 (2s) Awesome bideo!
 (2t) +Chingo Bling bro you need to do choutouts to your fav YouTube fans one. Vid por favor
 (2u) Damn chingo u need to get this song longer and screwed. Do it me please

In (2r-2u), several different commenters use alternative, stylized orthography reflecting non-normative pronunciation (as viewed from a Standardized English perspective) and which draw on real or imagined Chicana ‘accents’ or Spanish-influenced pronunciations of English, as in <bideo> ‘video’ <choutouts> ‘shoutouts’ and <bersion> ‘version’. <ke> for *que* is a more generalized alternative orthography in the Spanish-speaking world. Cutler (2018) notes that “<k> has become enregistered as a marker of subcultural non-conformity through the visible rejection of standard orthography.” Sebba (2007:3) identifies the function of alternative <k> in Spanish graffiti as “as symbol of ‘otherness’, of resistance to convention; but in this case, arguably, not just to orthographic conventions, but to social conventions more generally.” Hybrid syntactic constructions using recognizably English words but a syntax corresponding exactly to neither Standardized English nor Standardized Spanish (2u) ‘do it me please’ and (2g) ‘aqui en nyc te promo ur clothing line’ are also evident. The comments also contain extensive codemeshing—hand-coding reveals that 25.4% (N=47) of the comments were found to include visible codemeshing (excluding common loans that perceived monolinguals would be familiar with.) Several comments orient positively to Mexico, e.g. (2b), (2d), and (2h). Caló/border slang is also evident in ‘vato, chingon’, as is hip hop slang ‘homie, fire, raw, playa, keeps it 100’. At least one comment (2i) mixes address terms from repertoires of Caló and hip hop slang, featuring ‘chingon’ and ‘playa’ in the same comment. 66% (111/168, ignoring Chingo Bling’s comments) of commenters’ surnames/usernames, when provided as part of the YouTube user profile, suggest a Latinx/Hispanic status or affiliation, but mentions of specific geographic location in the comments range from Minnesota to Mexico. Fully 80.3% (135/168) of comment/username combinations fulfill the criteria presented in the previous section for ‘estimated Latinx commenters.’

	Spanish-like	English-like	Codemeshed	Unknown	Total comments
Chingo Bling	5 / 29.4%	11 / 64.7%	1 / 0.6%	0 / 0%	17 / 100%
Fans	39 / 23.2%	80 / 47.6%	46 / 27.4%	3 / 1.7%	168 / 100%
All	44 / 23.8%	91 / 49.2%	47 / 25.4%	3 / 1.6%	185 / 100%

Table 1. *Counts and percentages of comment language used by Chingo Bling and other commenters*

Considering this video along with its comments, fan practices here reflect artist practices in terms of the vast array of linguistic resources used. These linguistic resources are not simply parroted from the song's lyrics, but rather assembled in novel ways, which suggests that Chingo Bling's practices may themselves reflect extensive code-meshing and plurilingualism among Chicaxns.

In this case, a variety-based approach fails to provide an elegant explanation for the data—it is much more sensible to posit that the fans producing these comments are drawing from a diverse but unified array of linguistic resources than to suggest that they are actively switching between numerous distinct systems aligned with multiple Spanishes, Englishes, and firmly categorized pools of CMD and youth-aligned vocabulary and linguistic features. The linguistic resources and performances by the fans point firmly to the conclusion that a distinction between discrete linguistic codes is not a primary concern for these commenters, who also engage in multimodal communication (e.g. through the use of emoji).

4.2. The Beatnuts - 'Se Acabo (It's Over)'

The Beatnuts are a hip hop group consisting of Queens, NY-based producers and rappers JuJu (Jerry Tineo), of Dominican descent, and Psycho Les (Lester Fernandez), of Colombian descent. The Beatnuts have been producing hip hop in the New York scene since 1990, and released their debut album in 1993. MacFarland (2008: 58) cites Raquel Rivera's (2002, 2003) work on Puerto Rican rappers, which divides these rappers into the categories "Boricua/Latino-centric" and "core." Artists in the latter category, rather than closely affiliating with the music of Puerto Rico, are more closely connected to a "multi-ethnic New York rap scene that is at the heart of hip hop locally and internationally." This description of "core"-affiliated rappers is also a good description of the Beatnuts' body of work: they primarily create tracks with very little use of what would be recognized as Spanish. However, on the final song of their third album, accompanied by Dominican-American merengue rap/reggaeton artist Magic Juan, the Beatnuts rap primarily in Spanish, over a beat based on the 1960s-era song 'Se Acabó' by Mexican singer Marco Antonio Muñoz. No official music video was made for the song, but it is available on YouTube as audio accompanying a still image. To assemble a comment corpus of reasonable size, comments from five different uploaders' versions of the track were combined⁴. The track was also remixed with new (largely English) verses and guest rapper Method Man of the Wu-Tang Clan⁵. (3a-b) contain excerpts from the original (primarily Spanish) lyrics of the song:

- (3a) *Ya llego el muchachon, tigeraso, ladron*
 “here comes the big boy, bad boy, thief”
- (3b) *Esta vuelta es mia, para platino, con animo, It’s a Beatnuts thing,*
yo, you know how that goes.
 “This round is mine, for platinum, with spirit, It’s a Beatnuts
 thing, yo you know how that goes.”

Overall, other than a few instances of loans, like ‘panties’, ‘shopping’, ‘steam’, and ‘toast’, (3b) represents is one of the only instances of English material found in the lyrics to the song. Besides the song being almost completely in Spanish, Latinx culture is indexed by the slang term *tigeraso*, which is of specifically Dominican origin, as well as references to the Mexican card game *loteria*, Colombian liquor *aguardiente*, and a reference to the stereotypical *chanqueta* ‘flip-flop’ as a disciplinary tool. Analysis of the 99 comments (Table X) shows that the comments for the Spanish version of ‘Se Acabo’ contain about the same proportion rated ‘English-like’, but less codemeshing, proportionally, than for the Chingo Bling video. Selected comments featuring codemeshing are in (4a-i).

- (4a) Do like JuJu said ahi tengo la meta ctm peace from Lima, Peru I bought this LP up in Chicagoo seen them perform twice and they killed it
- (4b) wuen temabase 1 taps cru!!!
- (4c) todo la manera. Tu sabes! Es mi palabra. Quien quieres chingazos con el Wedo loco
- (4d) que chimba the beatnuts con un orgulloso colombiano la rompen made in colombia mijo this real
- (4e) beatnuts first madafucka to incorporate tango(arginian n uruguyan music) into his hip hop beats mad prop fo dat shit represent argentinaaa cheee
- (4f) JAJAJA, The shit!
- (4g) policia chupa la pinga madre cons. str8 305 all day mi sangre
- (4h) paz miami ortiz bodiquas la familia. Gracias por favor. Love mi zapatos and camisa. good looking bruh. uno.

A lower ratio of the comments contain what would be recognized as Spanish or Spanish-influenced orthographic forms, and codemeshing, than for “Cerveza”. One example is the use of orthographic <j> for laughter in (4f) <JAJAJA> is a representation of laughter associated with Spanish. Many of these comments, contain geographic references either to the author’s affiliated location ‘peace from Lima,Peru’, ‘repre-

sent *argentinaaa cheee*, ‘305’ (area code for Miami) or the Beatnuts’ members countries of affiliation (‘made in colombia’). Repetition of graphemes for emphasis (e.g. <argentinaaa cheee>) and number substitution (<str8>) are also evidenced here. Alternative Spanish forms are also evident, like <wuen> ‘buen’ and <bodiquas>, an alternate spelling of ‘boricuas,’ indicating Puerto Ricans. The initialism <ctm> ‘concha (de) tu madre’ in 4a is another form representing informal/vulgar Internet Spanish, and can be compared with <policia chupa la pinga madre> in (4g) and <que chimba> in (4d), ‘pinga’ and ‘chimba’ being taboo language for body parts associated particularly with Caribbean and Colombian Spanish speaking populations, respectively. (4c) seems to use Spanish set phrases emblematically, and the author may be engaging in self-reference with the nonstandard spelling <Wedo> for *güero*, ‘~Anglo’. Finally, the ‘English’ portion of the codemeshed comments is distinctly altered as well. Alternative orthographies are found in forms like <madafucka>, which is likely influenced (like <choutouts> and <bideo> in the previous section) by nonstandard pronunciation. Forms like <bruh> ‘bro/brother’ in (4h) and <mad prop fo dat shit> (4e), as well as the zero copula in <this real> (4d) are associated with Hip Hop Nation Language and/or youth African American English, rather than Standardized English. Finally, the form <uno.> in (4h) is a likely loan-translation from HHNL ‘one’, a short form of the hip hop leavetaking ‘one love’.

Some commentary on the track discusses the difference between the original track from the album (this one) and the remix with Method Man. Language attitudes come to the fore here, with multiple commenters discussing their own Spanish proficiency (or lack thereof) comparing the two versions:

- (4i) hahaha this isnt new bro but its ill. this is the album b4 the method man remix... which personally i lke better cuz i can understand it.... but as the original track its fuckin ill
- (4j) Nah bro, Method has one of the iLLest voices over any beat but JUJU killed it mang... Dont know if you understand spanish or not but JUJU got this one Psycho Les killed it too
- (4k) Even though I don’t speak Spanish, I actually like this better than the remix version with Method Man.

In (4i) the commenter professes not to understand the track, but positively assesses it as ‘fuckin ill,’ whereas (4j) counters by suggesting that for those who understand Spanish, the track showcases the skills of both MCs, who ‘killed it’. (4j) also contains a form representing the pronunciation of ‘man’ as <mang>, which alludes to plurilinguists’ pronun-

ciation of the word, especially as a term of address or vocative form. (4k) then suggests that another commenter prefers this ‘Spanish’ version of the track to the remix. Table X presents the classification of comments from the original version of the Beatnuts’ ‘Se Acabo’:

Spanish-like	English-like	Codemeshed	Unknown	Total comments
29 / 29.3%	45 / 45.5%	13 / 13.1%	12 / 12.1%	99 (100%)

Table 2. *Counts and percentages of comment language used by Chingo Bling and other commenters*

It is interesting to note that while the song is largely in Spanish, the proportion of Spanish-like and English-like comments are comparable to those on Chingo Bling’s track—however the rate of codemeshed comments is about half of the rate in the comments for “Cerveza”, with the balance made up by a larger proportion of comments without original linguistic content recognizably Spanish or English—many comments were emoji or repetitions of lyrics from the song verbatim, which were excluded as they did not constitute original linguistic contributions in a sense relevant to this study. The proportion of ‘estimated Latinx commenters’ taking usernames and comment languages into account, was 63.6% (63/99), also lower than for “Cerveza”. This is a distinction in the pattern from the comments on the Chingo Bling song, and may reinforce the notion that the Beatnuts are recognized as part of a ‘core’ African-American/New York-based hip hop scene⁶, even when performing in what is recognized as Spanish. The Spanish version of ‘Se Acabo’ also seemed to inspire direct discussion of named language varieties and various proclamations of national identity among fans.

Shortly after the release of the song, a remix featuring (relatively more popular) non-Latino rapper Method Man was made and released on various compilations. On the remix, both JuJu and Psycho Les have new verses that are entirely in English—Psycho Les even translates the repeated sample of “Se Acabo” in his verse, perhaps indicating that the song is intended for a more monolingual audience:

- (5) (Sample: “Se Acabo”) means it’s over bro, Method Man on the remix, it’s over yo

Interestingly, while the Beatnuts avoid Spanish on this remix, back-grounding a Latino identity, Method Man begins his verse:

- (6) What kind of Beatnut am I, Spanish Fly,
P-O-P-P-I

Method Man provides an alternate spelling of *papi*, a word often used in American hip hop and originating in Spanish varieties, which is characteristic of the multi-ethnic New York scene. Method man also references the Latino identities of the Beatnuts through a double-entendre with ‘Spanish Fly’ (a legendary aphrodisiac and playing on the hip hop semantics of *fly* as ‘cool’). Later in the verse, Method Man tries his hand at codemeshing:

- (7) I fuck wit Beatnuts, Livin’ La Vida Loca!
 Callete la boca, see the Spanish Fly on the sofa

Method Man references the title of a Ricky Martin pop tune (‘Livin’ La Vida Loca’), and goes on to refer to the first line of the original version of the song, which also begins with *callete la boca* ‘be quiet/shut your mouth’. While the Latino rappers distance themselves from a (linguistic) Latino identity in the remix, perhaps to cater to a broader audience, the non-Latino rapper plays with a Latino identity, which could be construed as a form of linguistic *crossing* (Rampton 1995). This crossing, or the performance of an identity that one does not usually have access to (and which may be contested), may be successful here because all three rappers share in the marginalized African-American ethnicity. Comments on the Method Man remix suggest a widespread and diverse audience, with comments in both Spanish and English (and a few in French), and given Method Man’s high profile in the mainstream hip hop scene, it’s likely that this remix reached a more global hip hop audience.

- (8a) Temazo...ene tiempo sin escucharlo... [“Anthem...the Nth time without listening to it”]
 (8b) Exelente temita [“excellent theme”]
 (8c) that beat so sick
 (8d) shock a bull! sock a bo ..lol this was my jam. and my good friend liked too but he never knew what hey were saying,,lllol
 (8e) dios [“god”]
 (8f) LIVING LA VIDA LOCA, CALLATE LA BOCA! method!! saludos de españa
 (8g) Increíble regrese en el tiempo con esta canción, tiempos que el rap gringo estaba en su CLIMAX....Gracias por subirlo ;) [“it’s incredible to go back to the time with this song, times that ‘gringo’ [presumably American] rap was at its CLIMAX....thanks for uploading it”]

Spanish-like	English-like	Codemeshed	Unknown	Total comments
30 / 18.0%	88 / 52.7%	5 / 29.9%	44 / 26.35%	167 (100%)

Table 3. *Counts and percentages of comment languages on the YouTube videos for the remix version of ‘Se Acabo’*

Comments were generally recognizable as Spanish-like or English-like, with very little codemeshing, and language play and stylization (beyond the standard enregistered Internet features mentioned in previous analyses) not found at nearly the same level as the comments on the Chingo Bling song or the original (more recognizably Spanish) version of the song. The proportion of ‘estimated Latinx commenters’ taking usernames and comment languages into account, was 38.3% (64/167), lower than the original version. More than a quarter of the comments were monolingually in a third language (French and Greek dominated these) or were classified as ‘unknown’ based on repeating lyrics verbatim, or containing only artist names or song titles (none of which involve language choice).

An important note at this point is that it was difficult to find East Coast Latin hip hop artists who codemeshed frequently or used quite as varied linguistic resources as those used by Chingo Bling (beyond those used in non-Latin hip hop). Other popular Latinx East Coast artists like Big Pun, Fat Joe, Cuban Link, etc. typically rap with few linguistic resources that would be recognized as Spanish. This indicates some major differences between the Texas (or greater Southwestern US), disproportionately Chicano hip hop scene, and the Latin hip hop scene of the Northeast, featuring a greater number of artists of diverse ethnicity and national origins, primarily reflecting the Caribbean and South American-descent Latinx populations of the Northeast.

4.3. La Coka Nostra ft. Sick Jacken - “Brujeria” (2009)

La Coka Nostra is a white US rap group featuring rappers Ill Bill and Everlast from the early 1990s hip hop group House of Pain, along with another rapper named Slaine and DJ Lethal. On their 2009 album ‘A Brand You Can Trust’, they collaborate with Chicano rapper Sick Jacken, a member of the hip hop group Psycho Realm and an associate of LA rap collective Cypress Hill, on the song “Brujeria” (‘Witchcraft’). The track ‘Brujeria’ is in the genre of storytelling rap, with each rapper from La Coka Nostra rapping a verse, and Sick Jacken providing a chorus in Spanish as part of the story. The story in this case is that these three white rappers are headed to the *barrio* to buy cocaine from a Spanish-speaking drug dealer. An excerpt from the lyrics follows.

- (9a) [Everlast]
12th and Alvarado, pull over by the wall
I'm a jump out the cab and cop this eight ball
- (9b) [Chorus: Sick Jacken, interpolated lines from Slaine]
Le vendí polvo a los güeros, están locos los cabrónes, son los más cocodrilos del ghetto
(Slaine: What'd he say?)
Serio pedo con el clavo de yeyo, gringo periquero con el chavo primero.
(Slaine: What the fuck is he talking about?)
Dicen que se llama la Coka Nostra, saco un ocho, luego piden otra bolsa
Le pone a esa madre hasta que el vato choca. Surtiendoles es La Cosa Nostra, homie
- [Chorus: Sick Jacken (my translation)]
'I sold powder to these white boys, these bastards are crazy, they're the biggest 'coke-odiles' in the ghetto'
(Slaine: What'd he say?)
'Big problem with a key of yeyo, this cokehead gringo and the first kid.'
(Slaine: What the fuck is he talking about?)
'They say they're called La Coka Nostra, sold them an eight, then they wanted another bag'
'Get high till this dude crashes. Supplying them is La Cosa Nostra, homie'
- (9c) [Slaine]
You so fucking crazy I'm freaking, let's vanish
I don't even know if what he's speaking is Spanish
Puerto Rican, Japanese, Korean, or Haitian
We stick out like a sore thumb being Caucasian

In (9a-c), which are arranged chronologically in the song, Sick Jacken is portraying a character as a Spanish-speaking drug dealer, rapping in language that would be impenetrable to the American monolingual English speaker. This is particularly interesting given that Sick Jacken often raps in English in his own work. Slaine's reaction in (9b-c) reveals attitudes toward ideologized Spanish (and by extension its speakers) as dangerous and incomprehensible, an attitude reinforced by the song title (not appearing in the lyrics) of *Brujería* [with an unaccented <i>i</i> vs. the standard form containing ı̂] ('witchcraft'). In this story, Slaine's verse in particular characterizes Spanish as a language, and Latinxs as a people, as an alienating, dangerous Other, which reinforces societal narratives of criminality among Latinxs. The YouTube com-

ments on the the most-viewed YouTube video⁷ (audio only with La Coka Nostra's album cover as a still image throughout) include diverse reactions, both in stylization of language and in assessment of the track. First, I turn to selected comments classified as 'Spanish-like' or code-meshed:

- (10a) OrDaLe SiCk JaCkEn ,EsToDo CaMaRaDa EsTas RflaNdO
mAs ChiN
[‘arriight sick jacken ,thatsall comrade ??? ??? ???’]
- (10b) MiErDa, CuAnDo EsCuCho EsTa CaNcIoN sOIO mE qUeDa
DeCiR... I nEeD PoLvO ... he he he AyeRealm
[‘shit, when I listen to this song I can only say... I need powder
... he he he ayerealm’]

(10a-b), from two different commenters, feature orthographic stylization through the use of ‘sticky caps’ or ‘studly caps’ e.g. the (strict or random) alternation of capitalization which imparts a playful or even psychedelic effect to the comments. The alternate spelling <OrDaLe> potentially reflects pronunciation for the Mexican Spanish/Chicanx interjection ‘órale’ in (10a), and an English-associated representation of laughter <he he he> is part of the codemeshing in (10b).

- (10c) chingona la rola....cabrones a sacar la grapa y a chupar q la noche
es larga sin perikos q
platiken como dice babo jaja
[sick track....dudes to ‘remove the staple’ and to drink that the
night is long without [parakeets/cocaine] that talk like babo
[Mexican rapper] says haha]
- (10d) alguna rola de la coka nostra k ste en español completamente?
[any song from la coka nostra which is completely in spanish?]
- (10e) poor que no hay cabr asi que compongan en español [why aren’t
there dudes like this that compose in spanish]
- (10f) como lo parte en español el gringoo vato loco putos americanos
de meirda q pasa q si os meten versos en español no os mola o ke
comerme la polla mamawevosss !!!
[like the part in spanishh the gringoo crazy dude fucking shti
Americans sup if y’all make verses in English y’all don’t like it or
what eat my dick cocksuckers !!!]
- (10g) q pedo cn los gringuitos q se creen la mucha verga y se ponena
escribiir como bandalos
FOCK YOUVIVA MEXICO CABRONES!!!! [what’s up with
thise little gringos who think they’re the shit and who start writing
like vandals FOCK YOUVIVA MEXICO CABRONES!!!!]

- (10h) yeaaaa que temazooooo madafuckin <3
 [yeaaaa what an antheeeeem madafuckin <3]
- (10i) Le vendi polvo a los weros asjdkldasjkljklsd ql chistoso
 [“I sold powder to these white boys” asjdkldasjkljklsd how funny”]

In (10c, d, f, and i) we have the common substitution <q> for ‘que’, as well as <k> in <perikos> ‘pericos’ and <platiken> ‘platiquen’. We also have the substitution of <s> with its English value /es/ rather than Spanish value /ese/ in the form <ste> ‘este’ in (10d). (10e) has the playful form <poor que>, which may reference the phonology of English ‘poor’ to substitute in *por qué*, as well as the self-censorship of writing <cabr > rather than the somewhat taboo word *cabrónes* ‘~bastards/dudes’ (10f) features the use of the *os* pronoun, as well as <mamawevoss> *mamahuevos*, ‘~cocksuckers’ which has grapheme reduplication of <s> and the substitution of <w> for <hu>. The form <madafuckin> is seen again here in (10h), along with <FOCK> and <bandalos>, *vándalos* in (10g), both of which could be influenced by pronunciation, and (10i) expresses enthusiasm or debilitation through humor with the ‘keyboard gibberish’ of <asjdkldasjkljklsd>.

- (10j) thats some sick shit,,, Im mexican,, sick jacken se la rifa,,, Dukey
 deberia estar en esta jam
 [thats some sick shit,,, Im mexican,, sick jacken killed it,,, Dukey
 should have been in this jam]
- (10k) this vatos are bad on the mic,, they have a nice flow,, y con el sick
 jacken,,, si la rifan estos whiteboys,
 [these dudes are bad on the mic,, they have a nice flow, and with
 sick jacken,,, these whiteboys brought it]

(10j-k) are from the same commenter, and involve codemeshing as well as the idiosyncratic use of ‘comma ellipses’, which may form part of an individual graphic style for this commenter. In addition, <this> with the plural form ‘vatos’ is an interesting orthographic choice, as it is likely consciously or unconsciously influenced by correspondence (as in Spanish) of the <i> with /i/ rather than /i/ (as in English), yielding the felicitous reading of <this> as *these*.

A rare comment thread involving coherent (and multilingual) replies from fans to one another brings named languages into play, negotiating the distinction between *español* and *Castellano*:

- (10l) B: @[A] Claro que la parte de Sick Jacken no es español, me cago
 si lo fuera... Sick Jacken es Latino y habla Castellano, obviamente
 utiliza en la canción el Castellano y el Inglés, pues como sabes

es mexicano y residente de los E.U.A. ... Informate y si te molesta su “Spanglish” pues sólo no lo escuches. Respeto [clearly Sick Jacken’s verse isn’t Spanish, I’d hate it if it were... Sick Jacken is Latino and speaks Castilian, and they obviously use the Castilian and English in this song, so as you know he’s Mexican and a resident of the US ... inform yourself and if “Spanglish” bothers you just don’t listen to it. Respect.]

(10m) C: @[B] can you explain the difference between espanol and castellano

(10n) D: @[C] castellano is considered proper or European (Spain), espanol is latin amereican spanish (Mexico, Cuba, Columbia,etc.

A number of commenters who profess varying levels of lack of Spanish positively assess the track and particularly Sick Jacken’s verse, which is named and recognized as Spanish:

(10o) THAT SPANISH VERSE IS DOPE

(10p) That Spanish part is so tight.. “what is he sayin?”, “wtf is he talking about?” Lmao

(10q) Fantastic track. Spanish makes for a great rap language, Sick Jacken is the fucking man.

(10r) fck language the rap is dope :D who cares :D abt spanish XD

(10s) fuckin love the energy in this track, sick jacken fits this track perfectly, i got no fucking clue what he’s sayin really, but that just makes it THAT much better haha

(10t) What does it mean. It sounds sick. But I don’t understand it. =/

Here the monolingual fans follow the narrative in finding the Spanish incomprehensible, but positively assessing it, and perhaps exoticizing it, in the schema of hip hop fandom where language which is threatening, aggressive, etc. is valued for its ‘realness’.

Spanish-like	English-like	Codemeshed	Unknown	Total comments
38 / 15.1%	157 / 62.3%	24 / 9.5%	33 / 13.1%	252 (100%)

Table 4. *Counts and percentages of language varieties uses on the YouTube video for La Coka Nostra’s track ‘Brujeria’ featuring Sick Jacken*

Like the Method Man remix of ‘Se Acabo’, this song seems to have reached a diverse and worldwide audience, many of whom respond positively to Sick Jacken’s rapping abilities (and who may appreciate the novelty of non-English rap). Other comment threads (in Spanish) debate whether Mexicans know how to rap (with some strong defenders

establishing that they, in fact, do). Other comment threads in English ask for further recommendations for white rappers. The proportion of ‘estimated Latinx commenters’ taking usernames and comment languages into account, was 36.1% (91/252), comparable to that of the Method Man remix of “Se Acabo.”

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The analysis of these YouTube videos and their comments, while they are only individual examples of a much broader genre, illustrate different aspects of Latin hip hop, not only in terms of national origin or geographic affiliation of the artists, but in the way in which fans respond to the artists. The video by Chingo Bling draws comments that were unified in the use of stylistic elements of codemeshing and alternative orthography, which indicates a more thorough engagement and perhaps even a sociolinguistic community among his fans. Taken in the context of the concepts of plurilingualism and codemeshing, the case of Chingo Bling’s ‘Cerveza’ certainly suggests, based on the analysis of lyrics and fan comments, that a language variety-based approach fails to provide an elegant explanation for the diverse linguistic practices in evidence, and strongly suggests that artist and fans are engaging in the use of resources from a diverse repertoire unconstrained by the concept of language variety. This was also true of a subset of comments on La Coka Nostra’s track featuring Sick Jacken, ‘Brujeria.’ In the Beatnuts and La Coka Nostra videos, fans more directly discussed issues of language attitude and ideology by referencing and negotiating named language varieties. The discrepancy between the extensive plurilingualism and codemeshing in the comments on the Chingo Bling and La Coka Nostra videos and the more distinct treatment of language varieties and reduced codemeshing practices on the Beatnuts comments is explained by the more ethnically homogeneous but culturally hybrid Chicano community which Chingo Bling and Sick Jacken appeal to. The two videos by the Beatnuts revealed the more compartmentalized language practices of Latin rappers affiliated with the ‘core’ hip hop culture—where the boundaries of ideologized Spanish and English linguistic identities are more clearly delineated, and identification with national origin is a largely more emblematic affair. The La Coka Nostra video and its comments revealed an especially complex situation: when a Latino rapper plays a Spanish-speaking criminal in a rap drama run by white artists, English-speaking audiences seem to react positively—but this also reinforces harmful negative stereotypes of Latinxs in the US. This video also sparked debate and controversy in its comments about

named varieties of Spanish, and it is particularly in this context that a variety-based approach is still necessary. Named varieties are not useful as models of language practices, but are necessary in discussing language attitudes and ideologies. While these four videos and the commentary on them do not, in and of themselves, constitute a completely representative or generalizable sample of Latin hip hop, the analysis presented in this paper reveals examples of the complexity and multifaceted nature of Latin hip hop online, which poses major challenges to the researcher, but also provides a fertile ground for the analysis of a variety of issues in language contact and language ideology.

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Notas

- ¹ Nomenclature for the peoples originating from indigenous and Spanish contact is contested territory. 'Hispanic' has been criticized as a label imposed by US government bureaucrats, 'Latino' discounts the contributions of those other than men, and 'Latina/o' is both cumbersome and insufficiently inclusive. 'Latinx' seems to be fairly widely adopted in the academic community. I use Latino and/or Latina where appropriate to individuals and I use 'Latin' as a neutral adjectival form. MacFarland (2008: 12) discusses the concern that both 'Latino' and 'Hispanic' marginalize or erase the indigenous heritage of Latin American peoples. For work which focuses on US-Americans of Mexican descent and/or Mesoamerican heritage, 'Chicana/o' or 'Chicanx' is an appropriate label, but for the purposes of the present study, I am aware of no widely-accepted moniker which includes the diverse community I study here while privileging the indigenous heritage of those peoples.
- ² Thanks to the anonymous reviewer who pointed out that *loc'(e)d*, while derived from the Spanish *loco*, and while related to the Spanish word's meaning, does not directly mean 'crazy', but rather something like 'gangstered up/ready to do what a 'true' gangster does', derived from the term of respect *loc*, applied to gang members who are willing to commit extreme acts to represent their set. This also serves as a good example of English derivational morphology applied to a Spanish borrowing.
- ³ Chingo Bling - "CERVEZA" - Official Compound Film (SHOT 100% IN MEXICO) 10 Dec. 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fI9z2thdW3c>
- ⁴ The Beatnuts - Se Acabo (Spanish) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFstk-dz18Y> Mar. 14, 2009.
The Beatnuts - Se acabó (Spanish Version) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q2cmj5WIfRs> Jul. 8, 2011.
The Beatnuts feat. Magic Juan - Se acabo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLNvtKH2nug> Jul. 7, 2011.

- The Beatnuts – Se Acabo (It’s Over) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AMLIxWDrKt0> Aug. 6, 2012.
- The Beatnuts Se Acabo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUy6M-HgKUs> Jul 23, 2010
- ⁵ The Beatnuts feat. Method Man – Se Acabo <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyM9dal80WY> Dec 1, 2011.
- The Beatnuts Ft Method Man – Se Acabo Remix.flv https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIY_U8AJeUk Feb. 14, 2010.
- ⁶ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer who points out that the Beatnuts are often considered peripheral members of the well-respected Native Tongues collective, which includes seminal New York hip hop groups A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul, and others.
- ⁷ La Coka Nostra ft. Sick Jacken – Brujeria <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkmjVMypUOs> (Jul. 9, 2009).
- ⁸ I am very grateful to Cecelia Cutler, whose work in part inspired this research trajectory and who provided feedback and encouragement throughout, to the organizers and participants of the CUNY Faculty Fellowship Publication Program, including Bridgett Davis, Leah Anderst, Jillian Baez, Rebecca Mazumdar, Jennifer Sears, Joy Sanchez-Taylor, and Jill Strauss, who provided useful feedback on a draft of this work, and to two anonymous reviewers whose suggestions were crucial in this work. This research was supported in part by a grant from the City University of New York PSC-CUNY Research Award Program. Any remaining shortcomings or inaccuracies are, of course, my own.

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