
Writer's Statement about “‘Spanglish’ and Its Effects on L1 and L2”

CAMILA PEREZ

Putting together this research paper was definitely a challenging yet fascinating experience. I still remember the nerve-racking anxiety I felt for weeks after we were told each one of us would be writing a research paper during Spring 2012. I had no idea what I wanted to write my paper about or how I was going to be able to write a paper of such a high academic level. I knew I wanted to write about something interesting that I could relate to and that would be beneficial to me, but I had no idea about what and this uncertainty lasted for several days.

Professor Curtis started off this process by assigning us reading on research on different topics such as communication, media, family relationships, and language. As soon as I read the article about language I knew that it would be the area I would be researching on. Having Spanish as my first language and having struggled for years to learn English when I moved to the United States at the age of 13 made language the perfect research area for me. At that point, choosing my topic was simple since all I could think about was my parents and all of my friends telling me all the time to not use “Spanglish” because “it’s bad for me.”

I spent days reading through previous research that talked about “Spanglish” and surprisingly enough there was not very much. A lot of authors talked about code-switching and how it facilitates word learning or how Spanish speakers use it to their advantage, but there was not much about the negative effects this constant mixing of languages brought to English, Spanish, or both. So I had to broaden my search to code-switching.

My biggest struggle was finding a niche for my paper since not a lot had been written about “Spanglish” in previous research. It took me a while to figure it out, but I met a couple of times with my professor during her office hours and that was a lot of help. I also asked my classmates when we had to work in groups for ideas and this was very helpful. I got the majority of my ideas when we got to work in groups during class and when the professor went over an example, so I tried taking advantage of these opportunities.

Figuring out my audience was simple. I knew that, because of the topic I had chosen, most of the people interested in my research paper would be educators and, more specifically, educators working with ELL and other English learning programs and educators who teach bilingual students. Therefore, I paid a lot of attention to how researchers were writing their articles and I carefully studied each research paper. It was my first time writing a paper of such high academic level so reading other researchers’ work was my principal aid.

Being a Spanish speaker gave me a lot of insight about this topic, making it a bit easier to research on this area. It definitely made it easier to write the interview questions and it gave me an idea about what I was looking for. A lot of the questions I asked were things that I could relate to and that usually happened to me. I wanted to ask my participants these questions to see if they were particular to me or if they were common among Spanish bilinguals. I also think that having a

connection with my topic made this whole process a lot more interesting and enjoyable. Although it was definitely a lot of work, and I spent weeks working on it, I can really say that I enjoyed it and that I got something out of it.