

Between Authority and Authenticity: English Use in Spanish-Language Commercials in the United States

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The use of English in foreign-language advertising abroad has been explored in depth, as has the role English plays in globalization. However, there remains a paucity of research concerning English use in foreign-language advertising *within* English-speaking countries. This analysis of Miami-based Spanish commercials explores the roles that identity and citizenship play in *profit-motivated code-switching*, in addition to questioning the oft-held assumption that English use carries a singular social meaning regardless of context. Beginning with a look at previous advertising studies, namely those of Ingrid Piller and Tej Bhatia, this study examines how English language use within the United States both contrasts and coincides with its use in German and Indian advertising. Next, Pierre Bourdieu's concept of a *linguistic marketplace* is introduced to analyze class relations as they relate to code-switching. The study then draws from Mikhail Bakhtin to explain how advertising employs *heteroglossia* and *double-voicing* to sell products and propagate existing ideologies of language value and class dominance. This is accomplished primarily by means of *profit-motivated code-switching* between English and Spanish phonologies, which lend either authority or authenticity to products. Lastly, a discussion of Bonnie Urciuoli and Robin Lakoff aids in understanding the concepts of the *public* and the *private spheres* as they relate to linguistic hegemony and marketing tactics.

1. Introduction

The use of English in advertising is a global phenomenon. As Ingrid Piller points out, "English is the most frequently used language in advertising messages in non-English-speaking countries (besides the local language)" (2003: 175). Studies of commercialized English have shown that the language is often used to index stereotypes of Western culture or, more commonly, to index a generalized conception of modernity and progress. Piller, in her studies of German advertising, has found that English is employed to target a cosmopolitan, upper-class market. She writes, "[T]he implied reader of English-German ads is 'not a national citizen, but a transnational consumer'" (2003: 176). Also, Takashi, (as discussed in Piller, 2003) has found that English in Japan, "... does not index Americanization, or even Westernization, but rather indexes a modern, sophisticated, and cosmopolitan identity for the products" (175).

However, Tej Bhatia, (in Grant and Short, 2002) in his research on rural India, has noticed a new trend precipitated by a backlash against English in transnational advertising. Because many peoples fear that their indigenous cultures will be eradicated by globalization, a recent marketing tactic is what Bhatia terms *glocalization*. The term refers to "the integration of localization and globalization" (70), and especially the manner in which international products are adapted to local markets.

The above findings describe, and seek to understand, the prevalence of English in foreign advertising and globalization in general. However, a question that remains largely unexplored—in these and other studies—is how English is used in foreign-

language commercials in English-speaking countries, where English already enjoys a dominant position over other languages. Reasonably, one might posit that English use would be even more prevalent in such a context. In the United States, for example, English is both the official and most widely spoken language, which legitimizes it on a legal as well as practical basis.

Nonetheless, my collection of 102 for-profit Spanish television advertisements, which was amassed over a two week period in November, 2003, and broadcast from the Miami station Univision, does not conform to expectations. As I will demonstrate in this paper, English in Spanish-language commercials in the U.S. does not always, or even often, enjoy the expected linguistic hegemony. Perhaps one important reason for this is that English use in the U.S. is often complicated by questions of identity, including citizenship. In the three studies mentioned above, it is improbable that English use would have any bearing on the legal status of German, Japanese, or Indian nationals living in their respective countries. English use among U.S. Hispanics, however, may be used to index citizenship or even 'whiteness.' This, in turn, can ultimately raise the question of allegiance to Hispanic and national identities. Therefore, many U.S. advertising companies shy away from English use to avoid alienating their target consumers and to gain a more widespread acceptance for their products.

A second important difference in U.S. advertising is that, unlike the studies of Germany or Japan discussed above, U.S. Spanish commercials specifically target a less-affluent consumer base. The audience is largely lower to middle-class Hispanic immigrants, many of whom are undocumented, monolingual Spanish speakers. Preliminary evidence for class is substantiated by the lack of luxury goods in commercials. In her study, Piller found that many commercials directed at the German cosmopolitan elite consisted of ads for computers, suits, expensive jewelry and luxury automobiles (2001). However, not one commercial depicting any of these goods is to be found in my collection of Spanish commercials. The two categories that come closest are advertisements for technology and automobiles. With respect to technology, Internet commercials are becoming increasingly common, although there are still no ads for the computers themselves. Automobile advertisements, in turn, are almost exclusively for pick-up trucks—which are not considered luxury goods from a dominant class perspective.

The next demographic indicator relates to the Hispanic audience itself, which is often stereotypically addressed and depicted in many of the advertisements. The Law Offices of Frickey, for example, specifically target the working-class. They begin one ad by zooming in on a construction site that depicts Hispanic workers. The ad addresses these men saying:

You are a worker, proud, reliable. You work hard to support your family.
(*Usted es un obrero, orgulloso, confiable. Trabaja duro para sustener a su familia.*)

In a related commercial, the Law Office of Miguel Martinez begins an ad with a working-class Hispanic couple talking in the kitchen of their home:

1. a. Husband: Ever since I injured my back, I hurt a lot. Without work and without money...?
1. b. (*Marido: Desde que me lastimé la espalda, me duele mucho. ¿Sin trabajo y sin dinero...?*)

2. a. Wife: We have rights too.
2. b. (*Esposa: También tenemos derechos.*)
3. a. Husband: My boss, what will he think of me? And me without papers...
3. b. (*Marido: ¿Mi jefe, que pensará de mí? Y yo sin papeles...*)
4. a. Wife: Your boss, what does your boss know? Let's call the lawyer Miguel Martinez.
4. b. (*Esposa: Tu jefe, ¿qué sabe tu jefe? Hablamos al abogado Miguel Martinez.*)

As evidenced by these commercials, a large majority of the intended audience is specifically working class migrants, usually employed in construction or other manual labor. In addition, line three from above overtly addresses the problems of legal status in the country. ("Papers" refer to anything from work permits and temporary visas to Green Cards, any document a person can use to claim a legal right to live and work in the United States.) After the introductory skit transcribed above, the viewer is informed that, "with or without papers," Miguel Martinez can help you. These examples, among others not discussed, leave no doubt that the target audience for these commercials is the working-class, monolingual, migrant community.

Due to the demographics and situations explained above, English is often stigmatized because it is associated with domination and alienation in the larger context of social relations. English, particularly in the public sphere, asserts a hierarchy over Spanish and Spanish speakers by being the language of authority and directives. Spoken Spanish may be suppressed externally because it is undervalued, or internally because it calls into question its user's civic legality. Hill (2001) found that Spanish use is often seen as unacceptable and threatening in the public realm, and is discouraged (453). Many English speakers assume that Hispanics who speak Spanish in public do so because they do not know English. The rationale behind this being that to become a citizen one must first learn English. Thus, questions of legality become dubious when English is absent from the conversation. Unfortunately, (perceived) legal status is often another hierarchical determinant that may give rise to other forms of discrimination. This discrimination extends easily to the workplace where, although immigration laws for workers continue to be laxly enforced,¹ there is always the latent fear that if one disobeys the boss, immigration officers might be alerted in retaliation.² For these reasons, I posit that English is less predominant in Spanish commercials than might be expected given the hegemony of English in the U.S., because its continuous dominance in public realm makes it undesirable in the private (i.e., in the home.) Although English is sometimes still used to market American culture, progress or technology, its overall usage comes much closer to Bhatia's *glocalization*. That is, U.S. advertisers often choose to adapt to local culture, rather than imposing English on their consumers.

My purpose in examining the use of English in U.S.-based Spanish language commercials is two-fold. The first task is to deconstruct the idea that English use is homogenous. Many studies examine commercialized English by enumerating examples, without completely disambiguating their occurrences. In an effort to correct for this, I

¹ Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the US government has significantly increased security at its borders. However, immigrants already working in the States are largely ignored by immigration officers, unless they commit crimes.

² This is unlikely to occur since it is unlawful to hire illegal immigrants. Many immigrants, however, are unaware of this law or do not believe employers will be penalized.

begin by examining phonological differences in the pronunciation of English words (i.e. differentiating between English words spoken with an English accent and ones spoken with a Spanish accent.) I then provide a discussion of commercials that use entirely spoken Spanish and only written English. Lastly, to provide a more balanced analysis, I contrast the previous commercials with ones that are devoid of English.

After analyzing the data and offering suggestions for the findings at a micro level and within the framework of Bourdieu's (1977) *linguistic marketplace*, my second task will be to examine the role English plays on a daily basis in a bilingual, macro U.S.-context, and to contrast this with its role in commercials directed at Hispanic immigrants. This will be realized in the context of Bakhtin's (1981) *heteroglossia* as it applies to code-switching and power relations. Urciuoli (1996) and Lakoff (1990) will then be introduced into the discussion to help elucidate why advertisers favor authenticating their products, instead of imposing their authority through English use.

2. Data

2.1. English with English Phonology³

Of the seventy ads that employ spoken English, English phonology is used only 40% of the time.⁴ However, the English in many of these ads resulted solely out of the necessity of pronouncing the product's name. Haarman notes that, "The product name is the element of an ad where a switch into a foreign language occurs most frequently" (in Piller, 2003: 172). Thus, had there been less products with English names for sale, the occurrence of English would be lower still.

Although the use of English and English phonology is less common than would be expected based on past studies, a few commercials in which English phonology is found do corroborate many of the previous findings. At times, English phonology is used to index aspects of U.S. culture, technology, fashion and quality. A telling example of cultural stereotypes is a Cricket commercial advertising a cellular phone. In this ad, an English rap song plays in the background during the entire commercial. Piller notes that, "Another ethno-cultural stereotype that English is often associated with is the youth culture, hip hop rebellion, and the street credo of the Black urban U.S. ghetto" (2003: 175). In commercials for technology, usually communications, English phonology is always used. (This use is occasionally combined with Spanish phonology, but English is never absent.) Cosmetics, such as Avon and Covergirl, which are included in the category of fashion, use English for product names. Clothing stores, on the other hand, are less predictable and vary in language use. Many companies have separate commercials that fall under 1) English phonology, 2) Spanish phonology and 3) written English only. Food advertisements are also less consistent: Safeway and City Buffet seem to use

³ "Standard American English (SAE)" constitutes the English phonology observed. While this term regrettably has many shortcomings, it is used here to acknowledge a fairly homogenous use of English phonology. For a more in depth discussion, refer to Lippi-Green (1997) and her descriptions of SAE as an "abstraction" and a combination of forms of English, which are not "overly stigmatized" (62).

⁴ This does not include ads in which both English and Spanish phonology were used. A separate section will be devoted to that topic.

English phonology to index food of a higher quality, while fast-food chains often revert to phonological forms of *glocalization*.

Aside from the above usages, however, English phonology more often confirms hierarchical power relations and indexes class mobility. A prime example involves Chevy. Chevy advertises two trucks, the Chevy Avalanche and the Chevy Silverado. The Chevy Avalanche is a pick-up truck that can be converted into an SUV (and vice versa); the ad uses English phonology. The commercial begins with a well-dressed, fair-skinned young man driving his (SUV) Avalanche to meet some friends at a café. As he drives, he notices that he is heading toward the seedy part of town. He checks the address against the closest street sign and, sure enough, this is where he is supposed to meet his friends. A beefy biker in leather watches as he drives by the café. A little shaken, the young man pulls into an alley and quickly converts his SUV into a pick-up truck. He then untucks his shirt and musses his hair. As he emerges from the alley, he nods to the biker. When he arrives at the café, his friends are shocked to see him so disheveled. This commercial is aimed at someone who considers themselves to be, or aspires to be, upper-middle class. The dangerous part of town is a place our well-dressed friend has never been. He is clearly out of his element and is not associated with the lower-class.

The Chevy Silverado, on the other hand, is aimed at the working-class; the commercial uses Spanish phonology. As the Silverado speeds along a rugged mountain road, the person driving the truck is never shown. Later, the viewer sees the inside of a motionless truck and the words “power packs” repeat multiple times in Spanish phonology. The idea seems to be that the truck and, by extension, the working-class man who drives it (not shown), is tough and powerful. In these two examples it is interesting that the first advertisement (the Avalanche) focuses almost entirely on the man's appearance, while the second (the Silverado) concerns itself exclusively with the truck's appearance. Additionally, it is no coincidence that most Silverado models cost about ten-thousand dollars less, although upgraded and “fully-loaded” Silverados are comparable in price to the Avalanche. In these commercials, English and Spanish phonology correspond to advertisements for the upper-middle class and the working-class, respectively. The target consumers of the two phonologies are clearly defined.

Other examples of English phonology that index class mobility include *Inglés sin Barreras* (English without Barriers, hereafter cited as ISB), Job Corps and My First Games. The message of all three is that English skills are essential to success in the United States. ISB, a company that specializes in English instruction videos, provides the best example. One ad opens with two men talking:

Man 1 (M1): What's going on?

Hombre 1 (H1): (*¿Qué pasa?*)

Man 2 (M2): I'm ashamed, but I need to ask you for another loan.

Hombre 2 (H2): (*Me da pena, pero necesito pedir otro préstamo.*)

M1: You can't keep on like this, man.

H1: (*Usted no puede seguir así, compadre.*)

M2: Yeah, I know I need to learn English but...

H2: (*Sí, yo sé que necesito aprender inglés, pero...*)

M1: Here's your check man, and I'm going to write you another so that you can reserve your English class.

H1: (*Aquí tiene su cheque compadre, y le voy a hacer otro por separado para que reserve su curso de inglés.*)

M2: Thanks, man.

H2: (*Gracias, compadre.*)

Likewise, in all ISB commercials, similar examples of mobility and personal success through English proficiency can be found.

In addition to the idea that English is the key to success (and Spanish is just the opposite), we also find that English with English phonology often reaffirms its authoritative power over Spanish. In a related ISB commercial, God Almighty tells the Hispanic man in the commercial to learn English. English authority is also extended to a more mundane level through scenes of the workplace. As discussed earlier, most of the intended viewership for these commercials is working-class Hispanics. In a workplace setting, the language of the boss is usually English. Thus, English use often connotes domination and authority at work and in society at large. An example of this is another ISB ad, which begins with a Hispanic worker being demeaned by his Hispanic boss. The man impatiently tells his employee in English, "Go clean the bathroom! I said, go clean the bathroom!" The fact that this boss is Hispanic, but speaks English, addresses an ongoing problem of discrimination against monolingual Spanish-speakers by bilingual Hispanics. It also suggests that a mastery of the English language is the key to career advancement.

Later in the commercial, after the employee has learned English, his Caucasian boss tells him, "Pablo, now that you've learned English, you can deal directly with me." Pablo replies, "Mr. Williams, I thought you'd *never* ask!" In this case, fluency in English does not earn the man a better job, but it does give him some degree of autonomy and control at work. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, it gives the man a voice which will be heard, understood and respected. The reply, "I thought you'd *never* ask," exemplifies the (Spanish-speaking) employee's anonymity and subordination in relation to his English-speaking superiors. It also supports Pierre Bourdieu's assertion that in power relations, "some persons are *not in a position to speak*" (emphasis in the original, 1977: 386). ISB and other commercials that use English in this manner hope to promote the idea that through English, the working-class employee can overcome linguistic domination.

The need to conform to the dominant culture where English use is the norm is also observed in advertising, namely in terms of Bourdieu's (1977) *linguistic devaluation* and *self-censorship* (386). Two particularly salient examples from my data involve personal names. Many lawyers and individual entrepreneurs pronounce their names with English phonology. This is often true even when the remainder of the commercial is entirely in Spanish, and the person's name is a Hispanic one. Lawyers Yvonne Azar, Janie Castañeda, and John Gallegos all pronounce their names using English phonology. English use in this case not only indexes knowledge of English and an American identity (with Hispanic ancestry), but might also be a form of self-censorship. Many Hispanic children who grew up in the United States were (as many children continue to be) denied their language and heritage. Spanish use was punished and names were changed to

English. It is possible, then, that because Spanish is devalued in the school system at an early age, the linguistic hierarchy becomes internalized. This internalized devaluation is then manifested as (unconscious) self-censorship, even when speaking Spanish to a Hispanic audience.

The second interesting case is the pronunciation of the English “v”. Although this grapheme does exist in Spanish, the phoneme does not. Thus, in Spanish, /v/ is correctly articulated as [b]. In a used-car and a Mexican jewelry store commercial, the Hispanic announcers both pronounce the letter “v” as [v]. One would expect to find that, especially in the case of the jewelry store, no English would appear at all. Typically, stores selling Hispanic products attempt to authenticate their goods by omitting English. In fact, the jewelry store conforms to this expectation, with the exception of the [v]. The change is considerably noticeable to listeners because it introduces a foreign phoneme into the Spanish discourse. Bourdieu sees such speech acts as a sort of hypercorrectness that corroborates an internalized linguistic hierarchy. He writes, “[T]he dominated groups recognize in practice... the legitimacy of the dominant language” (1977: 389). Thus, English phonology in Spanish discourse is not arbitrary, but rather directly related to societal power relations between the two languages and their respective speakers.

2.2. English with Spanish Phonology

English words pronounced using Spanish phonology occurred in 54.28% of the commercials collected. The words are determined to have Spanish phonology if they meet any of the four basic criteria listed below:⁵

1. Dropping or softening syllable final—and especially—word final, consonants.
2. Shortened pronunciation of vowels (monophthongs are not diphthongized as is often the case in English. Also, there is no use of schwa.)
3. Substituting English consonants or vowels for Spanish ones.
4. Use of the Spanish sequential consonant structure (i.e., Spanish requires an “e” to precede complex onsets. Thus, in Spanish orthography, the language name is written *español* and not **spañol*.)

Criterion number one is exemplified when the speaker pronounces Walmart as [walmar], instead of [walmrt]. Other examples include Kmart and Lactaid; in both cases the final consonants are also dropped or considerably softened so as to conform to Spanish phonology. Criterion number two is heard in an ad for the Law Offices of Frickey. The attorney, Ms. Frickey, whose Spanish is a little rusty, nonetheless pronounces her name using Spanish phonology (compare with the Hispanic lawyers discussed earlier.) The name Frickey thus changes from [frɪki] to [friki]. Likewise, Crazy Leo, a furniture salesman, shortens and raises the “e” in his name to the extent that the name becomes homophonous with the Spanish word “*lio*” (mess, fight). Both of these advertisers seem to hope that giving their American names a Spanish sound will make them more appealing to Hispanic clients. Criterion number three is evident in

⁵ Two other criteria have been omitted because 1) they were not observed and 2) because of the difficulties of quantifying them objectively. These are: 1) the substitution of [č] for [š]. 2) Use of Spanish intonation and resyllabification to match Spanish pronunciation.

a McDonald's commercial, in which English vowels are also replaced with their Spanish counterparts. The word "chicken" thus becomes [chiken], in place of [chlkn]. With regard to consonants, Chevy is pronounced [šeby] instead of [ševy], when it is appropriated with Spanish phonology.

Criterion four is unusual in advertisements⁶ (it only occurs once in my sample) but is worth mentioning. In Burger King's commercial for its new "Smoky BBQ Chicken Sandwich," the client orders his meal saying, "*Un esmoki BBQ, por favor*" ("One smoky BBQ, please"). In this instance, instead of translating the word "smoky," it has been appropriated into Spanish by adding an "e" before the word. This word, which could have been translated or appropriated with Spanish phonology, instead becomes a new Spanish word (*esmoki*).

The above examples show how decidedly non-Hispanic people and food names are spoken with Spanish phonology in an attempt at transforming the products' images from Anglo to Hispanic ones. Ms. Frickey (attorney) and Crazy Leo (furniture salesman) are perhaps both of Hispanic ancestry, although Ms. Frickey especially, does not possess a superior command of the Spanish language. However, it is interesting to note that these people try so hard to erase English from their commercials, while Hispanics mentioned earlier used English phonology frequently. The food advertised is, similarly, mentally imbued with Hispanic flavor by articulating it in Spanish phonology or even creating a Spanish word to accommodate its imagery. "Smoky" may be an unappetizing or even unintelligible word, but "*esmoki*" conjures up images of spicy chicken breast roasted on the grill *a la mexicana*.

Separate meanings may be mapped onto the same word, depending upon pronunciation and context. While the word is the same, phonological differences create disparate connotations of the interlocutor, which will have a direct bearing on the manner in which speech acts are interpreted. In advertising then, it becomes necessary to address such differences. Although [walmart] and [walmar] both mean Walmart, each serves to connote a distinct product personality.

The act of appropriation calls into question whether or not the word can now be considered solely an English one. I suggest that phonological adaptation blurs a seemingly clear-cut distinction between the two languages, which often results in a lexicon that is more accurately described as Spanish than English. The outcome is that, through this advertising tactic, the word may acquire two or more connotations, depending on the manner in which it is pronounced. As such, the English word articulated in Spanish phonology ceases to be an English word at all. In this manner, both the word and the product are appropriated through a form of *glocalization*.

2.3. Spanish and English Phonology

Because of the paucity of ads (5.71%) which combine English and Spanish phonology, it is difficult to draw many substantial conclusions. Nonetheless, the lack of the ads themselves can offer insight into their significance. The first deduction, based on the data as a whole, is that bilingual viewers are not being targeted specifically and that the main audience is comprised of monolingual Spanish speakers. A second inference supports the claim that products that use different phonologies actually represent different

⁶ Although unusual in advertisements, this type of speech act is rather common in colloquial discourse.

products. Thus, these few ads may be targeting both Hispanic immigrants and Chicanos, who are likely to have different conceptions of the same product.

2.4. Written English Only

Although a high percentage (54.28%) of commercials that use spoken English have adapted English to Spanish phonology, many advertisements forego spoken English altogether. Of the 85 ads that use some form of English, 17.65% used spoken Spanish and English only occurred in written form.

In one instance, an ad for the phone card Telecentavos, I propose that a caricature of an English newspaper is used to index Hispanics living in the United States (see Appendix 1.1). The title of the newspaper, “USA News” effectively targets the Hispanic consumer who, because of his/her geographic location, encounters English on a daily basis. The ad does this without losing its Hispanic authenticity, because English is never spoken and an archetypal mariachi is shown on the card. The newspaper reads “USA News”, instead of the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*, because these names are less accessible to many immigrants. This same community, however, should have no trouble understanding “USA” and the word “news” will likely be comprehensible as well.

Nonetheless, the above is a solitary example; written English does not often seem to index life in the United States. More commonly, the occurrence of written English, accompanied by an absence of spoken English, constitutes erasure. With regard to written language in advertising, Piller theorizes that in Germany:

Since written discourses tend to be more authoritative... the meaning of English as authoritative is strengthened by presenting it in both the written and spoken modes, while German is only spoken (2001: 160).

However, I argue that for an audience who is not literate in English, the spoken language will take precedent over the written. Only the necessary vestige of the foreign product's logo remains to speak silently in print. English becomes erased or, at best, concealed. Many viewers are unable to understand the words written in English and, thus, these words blend into the background and do not constitute a principle source of information (see Appendix 1.2). Many of these words are shown out of necessity because they are inherent to the product (i.e. its name.) This is true for the “natural reducer cream” that is included with the La Belle corset, among others. In addition, many are presented so quickly that even native English speakers might miss them.

Aside from these examples, even stronger cases exist to corroborate the idea that written English (without spoken English) is erasure. Two JC Penny ads illustrate nicely how this works. The two ads are exactly the same, except for the last part. At the end of the first one, the ad says, “We have everything inside, JC Penny” (“*Tenemos todo dentro, JC Penny.*”) The second ad, however, leaves off the spoken “JC Penny,” thus completely eradicating any occurrence of English in the commercial—except for the written name.

An even more telling example involves Eldercare/Meals on Wheels. The product is a delivery service that provides pre-cooked meals to the disabled or the elderly; AIDS patients also commonly use it. The commercial informs us that it is becoming more difficult for Mom to care for Dad, and that there is a service that can help. However, the words “Eldercare” and “Meals on Wheels” are never spoken. Also, the words “Meals on Wheels” disappear so quickly from view that it is difficult to capture the frame, even in

slow motion and with a computer program designed to record such images (see Appendix 1.3). Use of written English in this manner disassociates a stigmatized English product from the product shown.

The fact that the commercial for the United States Air Force only employs written English, as well, fortifies this argument. The Air Force is necessarily complicated by questions of identity and loyalty. After serving in the armed forces for three years, a person can begin the process of applying for U.S. citizenship. However, citizenship is not always seen as a goal one should aspire to, nor is the military often thought of favorably. Apparently having realized this, the Air Force frames its ad in terms of upward mobility and future success, in addition to not articulating the words “Air Force.”

Thus, I argue that, while English does appear in the above commercials, its appearance is not substantial enough to be considered English use. In previous studies, however, the use of English was not thoroughly explored, and the above examples of English appropriated with Spanish phonology and instances of written English would have constituted a large part of the ‘English’ data.

2.5. Spanish Only⁷

Spanish-only commercials accounted for merely 16.66% of the corpus. (However, as I have argued above, many commercials that employ English should actually be considered principally Spanish due to appropriation and erasure.) The Spanish-only advertisements consist mainly of Hispanic products, fortune tellers, lawyers and immigration services. The lack of English authenticates the products as Hispanic ones, while simultaneously acknowledging a monolingual-Spanish audience.

3. Discussion: Authority vs. Authenticity

Advertisements are perhaps the prototypical embodiment of linguistic marketplaces where not only products, but also language and culture, are for sale. However, as I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this paper, the fact that English enjoys a dominant hierarchical position in U.S. society does not bequeath it the same legitimacy in Hispanic advertising—even within the United States. Often, a rejection of ‘proper’ English is an affirmation of Hispanic identity and an attempt to reconcile conflicting identities concerning ethnicity or citizenship.

Marketing tactics concerning English use in U.S. Spanish language commercials are perhaps best viewed in terms of Bakhtin's *heteroglossia*, which he defines as:

Another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author (emphasis in the original, 1981: 324).

The “authorial intentions” in the case of commercials are, of course, marketing strategies

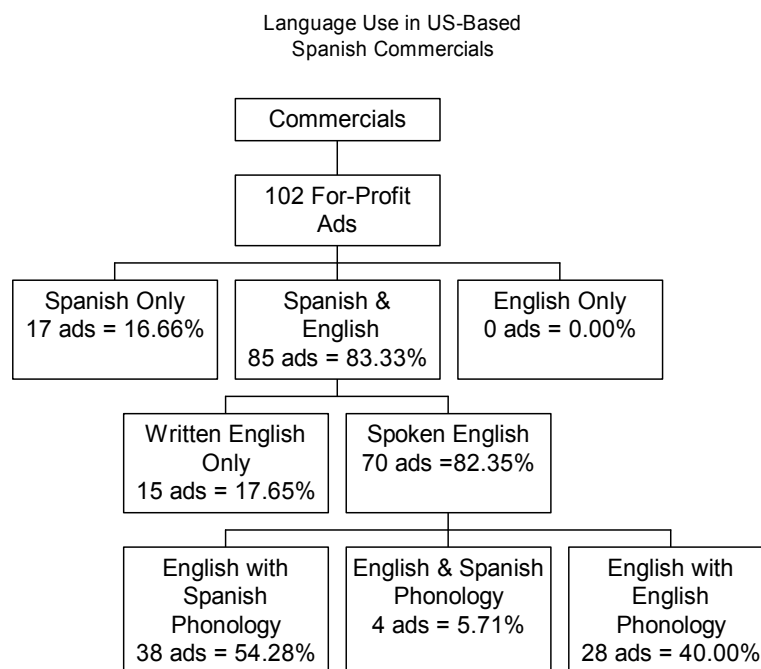
⁷ “Spanish only” does not include the use of English to list an address because no addresses were observed written in Spanish.

aimed at convincing the consumer to buy certain products. The characters, in turn, are the actors who play in the commercials. However, it is the “authors” of the commercials—and not the “characters”—who are of most interest to us here, as it is they who make decisions concerning language use.

As discussed earlier, names are a particularly rich site of language contact where code-switching and phonological change are readily observed. Product names may be pronounced in English phonology to connote—most often—the product’s ability to offer the consumer class mobility, or even technology, quality or fashion. Likewise, product names may be articulated in Spanish phonology in an attempt to authenticate them and erase their inherent ‘Americanness.’ In either case, advertisements play upon existing stereotypes and value judgments concerning class dominance and ethnicity. Whether confirming or rejecting the English language (and the class who speaks it) as dominant and more desirable, a linguistic hierarchy that places English above Spanish dictates the framework within which advertisements operate.

Thus, for the purpose of simplicity, Bakhtin’s “refracted authorial intentions” in my corpus of commercials may be reduced to two types. The first type of intention is to affirm, through English phonology, that English is authoritative, product names articulated in English and persons who consume them are superior and in control. The second half of the commercials proposes just the opposite. By articulating English with Spanish phonology, or erasing English altogether, advertisements insist that Spanish can be used to resist English domination, Spanish is the authentic language; Hispanic people and products are more desirable. Thus, it is through *heteroglossia* and *double-voicing* that marketing strategists employ what I term *profit-motivated code-switching* in order to confirm the authority or authenticity of their products, while using underlying linguistic, ethnic and class ideologies to convince consumers of the veracity of their claims.

Chart 1. Analysis of Language Use in Advertising



English

English only + English with English
phonology + English & Spanish phonology: 32 ads = 31.37%

Spanish

Spanish Only + English with
Spanish phonology + written English only
+ English & Spanish phonology: 74 ads = 72.54%

By analyzing the different methods through which English is used in Spanish commercials, one begins to see that English, although prevalent, is not dominant. Thus, although it occurs in 83.33% of the ads studied, if one does not consider instances where English is appropriated or erased, the percentage of English use drops to 31.37% (see Chart I.) This finding may seem surprising, until one considers the societal framework in which English and Spanish operate in the United States. As has been shown, English is the dominant and authoritative language of the public sphere, while Spanish is generally relegated to the home. English is often used to subjugate Spanish and Spanish speakers, whether at work or in society at large. Urciuoli (1996) in her study of Puerto Ricans in the United States describes public and private life in terms of “*spheres of interaction*.” She writes:

Spheres are sets of relations polarized by axes of social inequality. One’s inner sphere is made of relations with people most equal to one; one’s outer sphere is made of relations with people who have structural advantages over one (77).

Similarly, Lakoff (1990) recognizes a distinction between public and private discourses. She argues that private discourse is based on, “Shared allusions [and] jointly created metaphors...This privacy both creates and utilizes trust, which itself is in turn symbolically connected with intimacy.” Public discourse, on the other hand, is “concrete, since participants cannot count on shared allusions... there is no assumption of trust” (129). Because English is the language of dominance and the language of the public sphere, its use immediately precludes a relationship of trust and intimacy between the interlocutor and the monolingual Spanish-speaking listener.

Thus, I propose that one of the main reasons for a relative lack of English in Spanish commercials is that the broadcasts enter the private realm of Hispanic life. Although English dominates and controls the public sphere, Spanish rules supreme in the home. After being bombarded by English at work and in public, many Hispanics look forward to the relaxing and intimate home environment, largely or completely devoid of English. For this reason, many companies have begun to adapt English to Spanish phonology—something akin to Bhatia’s *glocalization*—or even to erase English from their advertisements completely, anticipating that this approach will create an intimacy that authenticates their products in the eyes of Hispanic consumers.

4. Conclusion

Based on previous studies, English use in advertising within the United States conforms to some expectations, while straying from others. Unlike Pillar's study of Germany, English is used less frequently in the commercials in my corpus due to class differences between the respective target consumers. In fact, English comes much closer to Bhatia's *glocalization*, as advertisers attempt to authenticate their products in the ears of Hispanic listeners. English words are, more often than not, articulated in Spanish phonology, or even erased. This finding shows why occurrences of English in advertising must be disambiguated, as different representations connote disparate meanings, and may even be considered different languages.

Although English is the dominant language of the United States, because of its very hegemony, it may be viewed as oppressive and is often relegated to a second-place status in advertising. Commercials thus operate in the framework of a *linguistic marketplace* that is based on a broader social marketplace, in which competing ideologies vie for dominance and acceptance. Advertisements play upon different stereotypes to sell products; the most common ploy in this case seems to favor a strategy of coercion that authenticates products, rather than forcefully imposing the products' authority.

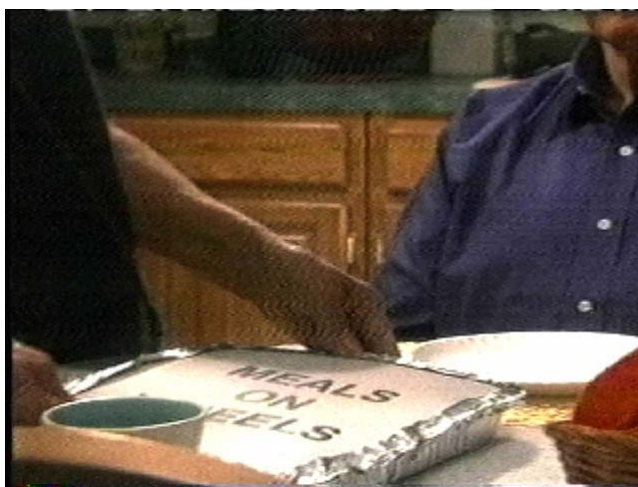
Appendix 1.1 Examples of Written English



Appendix 1.2



Appendix 1.3



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