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Linda Joyce Preciado

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WRITING INSIDE THE CAJA: CONSTRUCTING PASOS IN ENGLISH  
COMPOSITION STUDIES

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A Thesis .  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition:  
English Composition  
English Literature

---

by  
Linda Joyce Preciado

June 2004

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by  
Linda Joyce Preciado  
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Approved by:

  
Jacqueline Rhodes, Chair, English

6/4/04  
Date

  
Ellen Gil-Gomez

  
Carol Haviland

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## ABSTRACT

The demographics of our city, state, and nation grow exponentially with Spanish-speaking, or Spanish-understanding, populations, yet mixed-language writing in academia remains an inferior alternative to English-only text. Chicanas' textual identity in composition has become at best a coerced imitation of monolingual writing models taught by dominant composition cultures of the university. English composition possesses a unique opportunity to bridge curricular, cultural, and language boundaries. Indeed, composition may be the key to communication between "Hispanic cultures" and an academic society wondering why Chicanas show little interest in English studies.

In this thesis, I examine the resistance, privileges, and costs of Chicana textual identity issues in an academic arena that, by design, fragments voice and dictates choice. The scarcity in research of Chicana identity through mixed-language writing in composition depicts an existing chasm between academic demographics and university sentiments. Educational institutions that neglect to investigate, engage, and participate in textual identity expresses accepted *pensimiento*.

Therefore, insight to Chicana thought, culture, and educational experiences may assist and inform the teaching dominant culture, not to separate, but to conjoin information with experience for those seeking diversity. Society values learning, but learning can only begin when there is a willingness to acknowledge the existence of errors. An error in academic freedom exists when identity of the perceived few is sacrificed for the good of the many. Freedom to write with identity not "identical", compositions opens a world of inclusion the Chicana has never imagined.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, there are the CSUSB English department instructors whom I owe accolades: for courses that convinced me of my need to double major in both undergraduate and graduate degrees and for their encouragement in meeting those goals.

DEDICATION

To miija, Asia,

mijo, Guy

and the *luz de mi vida*,

Brian



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*Bienvenidos*. Come, take a step outside the illusion of a homogeneous composition culture, beyond the comfort zone, and enter reality where only in the past decade has mixed-language<sup>1</sup> writing been expressed with regularity. Gloria Anzaldúa and Victor Villanueva, proponents of mixed-language writing,<sup>2</sup> have noted the resistance to interspersed Spanish usage in the composition. This resistance warrants investigating *abrazando* mixed-language writing in composition so education can extend an *invitación* of English-only curricula to collaborate with and participate in the populations it serves. Such an investigation would promote, as Gail Hamilton says, "self-esteem, self-pride, tolerance and differences" (Ezarik 8). In this thesis, I will explore the borders between the academic and Chicana<sup>3</sup> voice in search of *pasos* that can bridge a new mixed-language rhetoric with existing spaces in composition.

Composition writing spaces shape our future teachers entering a mixed-language world, yet female, Hispanic<sup>4</sup> representation remains thin in a tenure track English faculty. Norma Alarcón observes that the academic system's

neglect of the Chicana voice has forced her to become a "migrant worker," traveling from one university to another, never finding a proper home (194). An atmosphere of mutual respect for textual identity can welcome Chicana voices to establish their homes in our diverse universities. The universities, in turn, must actively seek and compete for the dwindling number of female, English Studies, Chicana professors.

Thirteen years ago Mike Rose discussed the smothering embrace of education at the expense of a diverse citizenry's potential to develop their composition abilities. Rose questions "the vibrancy and purpose, the power and style, the meaning of the language that swirls around [us]" (212). The question, thirteen years later, remains a valid dilemma in composition today. Teachers generally respect other languages, but as Victor Villanueva<sup>5</sup> points out, "there's not a clear indicator that teachers by and large know how to translate that respect into action" (Ezarik 4). Acceptance and encouragement of mixed-language writing constitutes action.

Education, identity, and mixed-language writing should mirror what Anzaldúa aptly describes as "Nepant'la", or the "space in between" where students will, through research

and composition, examine traditional ideals of uniformity, investigate fears, and explore prejudices in writing to reach a new generation of majority minorities. Established authors such as Anzaldúa, Alarcón, Cherrie Moraga, Helena María Viramontes, María Herrera-Sobek, and Erlinda Gonzales-Berry continue to use mixed-language in their writing and pave the way for Chicanas, *con ganas*, but what *mordida* must students pay to enjoy this same freedom in an academic setting?

The purpose of my research is to encourage reader participation in mixed-language writing, to trace obstacles of resistance, illuminate existing prejudices, and to challenge accepted English-only writing paradigms to blend a new mixed-language writing theory into existence. It is also to show, through my own example, the ways academic genres such as the M.A. thesis can be written if we honor the multiple languages that make up the writer. Textual identity expressed in English-only style or tone does not adequately envelop the sum and substance of Chicana writers. My languages construct my essence and my mixed-language writing, an extension of my *alma*, challenges *bona fide* acceptance in a university I call home. The importance of recognizing Chicana textual identity reaches beyond the

borders of composition; it encompasses the value of a writer as a human being.

This thesis provides a connection between composition theories<sup>6</sup> and the mixed-language writer with *pasos* and footholds for change that can alter the future. Readers can actively participate in mixed-languages as I create a mix of movement among phrases and words in this thesis. *Venga*; take my hand as I canvass the options for mixed-languaged writers.

#### Privileges and Demographics

*Afuera del mundo escribo sin permiso*. Oppression becomes dependent on the custodians of the gate and scrutiny loses its way when the system mirrors its own reflection. Understanding the obstacles toward a *Mestiza*<sup>7</sup> composition world requires an ability to question established privileges. The privileges that come from centuries of decisions created to self-promote "white" ideals.

Imperative to understanding the Chicana writer in composition requires those "with power" to self-reflect on their motives, prejudices, and habits of inclusion in university studies. Recognizing the power of "whiteness" is

itself a crucial element of 'whiteness' (Keating 426). The concession that students and instructors alike can be genuinely unaware of the historical race privileges does not erase the culpability or existing established advantages.

Both the privileged and unprivileged need to examine the established paradigms in composition and come to terms with the dismissive attitudes within and without their ethnic identities. The superiority of one language ingredient over another embitters the melting pot of unity that education professes to dissolve because academic populations cannot envision themselves as conquerors.

The objective perspectives of "whitliness" adds to one's understanding of "why more dramatic change regarding dialect and other critical race issues has not taken place in English during the last thirty years" (Barnett 24). The distance between holding on to your *alma* and selling out for a college degree increasingly widens as English studies encourages the *status quo* by ignoring the Chicana identity into a tolerable difference.

## Making Our Own *Entrada*

*Aquí voy con pluma en mano* knocking on doors, *buscando entrada*. The *pasos* into composition are not likely to welcome change. Anzaldúa<sup>8</sup> discusses the exclusion of Chicanas in academia and the resulting theories that were built on occupied foundations. Occupied territories of "white men and women" stand guard at the colleges of knowledges that purposely create walls of institutionalized discourses to keep out undesirables (xxv). Creating other writing theories<sup>9</sup> to infiltrate the stale misconceptions of Chicana textual identities can tear down those walls.

The practical application of mixed-language writing in composition meets Anzaldúa's points of community connections with masses of people made up of different audiences. I am suggesting that textual lingual identity<sup>10</sup> be incorporated into academic composition writing as a theory of inclusion.

Chicanas need to "decolonize ourselves and find ways to survive personally, culturally and racially" (Anzaldúa xvii). Silence deafens the voices of Chicana college students by binding their voices, but a writing rebellion can use composition to "implement action, critical thought, change" (Sanchez 67). An integral part of this rebellion is

tenured faculty representation that teaches more than one Chicana literature class per year or *La Malinche* is reborn to serve at the discretion of her academic master.

Anzaldúa identifies the "comfortable complacency" of Whites who accept the norm and by doing so "internalize racism" (xxviii). Racism exists in society and university settings and yet, we continue to evade the fact that demographically increasing numbers of Chicanas are choosing not to enter English studies. Internal can politics drive the course of English studies because apathetic constituents fail to vote. Chicanas must join the professional ranks, form their own suffrage movement, and "speak and write not just against traditional white ways and texts but against a prevailing mode of being, against a white frame of reference" (Anzaldúa xxii).

Frame the brown face in English composition studies without touching up the picture to suit stereotypical ideals. Chicanas can begin to look<sup>11</sup> through the master's eyes and realize that we too, are capable of ownership, deserve our own space, and possess an identity. Do we dare to teach the master or do we fold into the academic snare of sameness? Do we fight for space and crowbar our way into English studies or force a false gratefulness for being



allowed a meager participation? We must make our own noise or "no one will notice our absence" (Sanchez 68). If the word "Racism" calls attention to the discriminatory practice of English-only text, then let us all give the *grito* for our writing lives. The *vox veritas* of chosen identity cannot be silenced by pedagogy for pedagogy's sake.

### *Haz La Matemáticas*

*Somos muchos y somos pocos.* Helen María Viramontes states that, "there's a big difference between having numbers and having power" (qtd in Anders 1). And nowhere is this more evident than in our institutions of higher learning where the exponential Hispanic growth in population continues to reach new mesas. The altitudes in demographics, however, continually flatten when measured against percentages of Latinos<sup>12</sup> with Associate and Bachelor degrees. The privilege of a college education slants with the greatest of ease toward non-Hispanic populations.

Dr. Elias S. Lopez<sup>13</sup> draws a line statistically in the arena by displaying an array of graphs that challenges universities and colleges to provide new generations the privilege of success. The task to increase our graduate

numbers appears daunting amongst the fifty percent of Latinos without a high school diploma. These future incoming populations that universities serve enrolled in universities at a mere twenty-four percent.

The disproportionate representation in post secondary institutions must be addressed before California can produce highly educated workers (Lopez 16). One group of researchers<sup>14</sup> stated that "high rates of dropout from high school is simply the most important factor accounting for the underrepresentation of Mexican-Americans in college" (Kavanaugh 2). Julie Martinez explained that before she went to Stanford she "had never seen a Mexican American in a position where I wanted to be in ten years" (qtd in Kavanaugh 5). Hispanics constitute a minute percentage of all faculty and an even lower percentage of tenured faculty. This statistic is appalling enough without learning that some

institutions pad their (faculty) figures shamelessly, listing retired, resigned, and temporary (minority) faculty as if they were active participants in institutional life.  
(Kavanaugh 5)

As an example, Hispanics make up less than eight percent of full-time faculty at California State University at San Bernardino<sup>15</sup> and sixty-seven percent of tenured male faculty compared to thirty-three percent tenured female Chicana English faculty at this CSU Hispanic Serving Institution. These demographically disturbing statistics, that affect the futures of Chicana students, stress the urgent need for Chicana representation in fields dominated by majority races.

Chapter two describes the resistance and contradictions a Chicana identity encounters with mixed-language usage in academic and non-academic writing. Chapter three inspects local response and exploitation of mixed-language writing. Finally, chapter four looks at the cost of dismissing and alienating mixed-language peoples.

## CHAPTER TWO

### RESISTANCE TO WRITING IDENTITY

*Quiero escribir de mi alma de mis pasos* that emulate the choices I travel between. *No me encajona* in that box that you have constructed for my own good. *Dejame escribir, dejame vivir* in this academic *mundo* I breathe.

Dominant society members<sup>16</sup> decide which cultures or languages are to be held in esteem. The power to perceive mixed-language with limited value can force the students to realign themselves with a textual culture that serves only as an end to an educational goal. The confused writer runs toward this goal of academic excellence in English Studies only to find the race wants little to do with the *raza*. *Como una cabra soy la víctima de academic benevolence* protecting me from myself, my language, my identity.

The marathon of a college degree respects the compliant student. Respect, however, is not a condition Chicanas have come to expect, even though it should be a reality Chicanas are conditioned to expect. Chicanas deserve literary authority but waiting for consensual respect only slows the process of building their own space with the tools of their own identity.

Using English-only as the glue that holds the melting pot together gained momentum when the English Only laws were passed to suppress "other" languages.<sup>17</sup> Language tied to identity is inextricably linked,<sup>18</sup> and therefore, the current standards established effectively eliminate mixed-language acceptance in a multicultural society. Marilyn Cooper<sup>19</sup> states that the United States has never been a monolingual country and languages and identities mix and blur boundaries, but

for the most part, these changes have not been reflected in the practices of the college writing classroom, which instead assumes (and according to Bruce Horner and John Trimbur, is based on a commitment to) monolingual Standard American English as the sole appropriate mode of academic communication. (Cooper 2)

"Monolingual," therefore, means to "monocultural" for all writing intents and purposes. How do you conquer a people? Take away their language, invade their culture, and enslave them.

The image of *Hernán*<sup>20</sup> y *La Malinche*,<sup>21</sup> the conqueror and the conquered, as *La Malinche* submits to the language of the dominant figure, mimics the place value home language

holds in a country they inhabit. The translator accepts the assigned role as destiny without question. In a less dramatic light, Chicana students trust educators,<sup>22</sup> as *La Malinche*<sup>23</sup> trusted Cortéz, to provide what is best without question. Standards in language "has always been less about communication and more about discriminating the worthy from the unwashed" (Cope qtd in Cooper 4). This willingness to submit to educational standards by Chicanas should not be viewed as a willingness to be conquered.

The effects of this power, as "Milroy and Milroy point out, is that 'Persons in positions of authority are often prepared to be openly critical of a speaker's language when they would not be prepared to reject publicly other aspects of his identity or culture'" (Cope qtd in Cooper 4). Ironically, institutions profit from and extol the virtues of diversity, at the same time as they suppress and dismiss language identity.<sup>24</sup>

Resisting the inevitable cannot stop the progress of the growing Hispanic demographic because "once a person has tasted the best of both worlds, it's hard to limit oneself - no matter what one's education level- to strictly one language or the other" (Leon 1). The respect and acknowledgements are slow to come. Anzaldúa states, "Until

I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, ...my tongue will be illegitimate" (qtd Bowen 2). Embracing difference will undoubtedly be a first step toward bridging the gaps in writing, but encouraging identity release through mixed-language writing in composition can reach the multitudes of Chicanas that discard English Studies as their major choice.

### *Empezar a Preguntar*

Can social realities celebrate diversity in mixed-language writing? Can composition become the difference that provides authenticity in composition writing? The complexity of individual freedom of expression, tied to language identity, enriches the classroom dynamics. Trinh T. Minh-ha states that

writing, in a way is listening to the others' language and reading with the others' eyes. The more ears I am able to hear with, the farther I see the plurality of meaning and the less I lend myself to the illusion of a single message.

(Cooper 20)

Language choice can be given a platform to reach others and include the *ojos y orejas* of "other languaged" people.

Cherrie Moraga advises Chicanas to "write what no one is prepared to hear" (291). Her hope that decades to come would create a vast production of text has yet to meet that goal and in the "face of mainstream seduction to do otherwise" the progress has met unrelenting resistance.

As Gilyard observes, "when we are contemptuous of a people, we tend to be contemptuous of their language" (Cooper 29). It seems such a small concession of expectation from a learned faculty to participate in mixed-language text after years of partaking in "other than Spanish languaged" texts. Education, the great equalizer, continues to deny its fastest growing population a voice. *Hola, soy yo. Aqui estoy. Aqui escribe.*

#### Academic Resistance

*Hablo Español, hablo Inglés, leo Español, leo Inglés, escribo Español, escribo Inglés, y pienso en Español y pienso en Inglés pero no puedo usar dos lenguas de una vez. Qué lástima* that what is written for theory<sup>25</sup> is not practiced in writing. This proclivity to submit to universal requirements continues to be neither healthy for nor respectful of the individual coerced to shun their identity for conformity's sake.



"The requirement makes clear to students [especially mixed-language writers] that they are not to write in their own voices, despite what the textbooks [and English-only laws] tell them," according to Crowley (217). Instead, "students are taught to observe without question rules of discourse that were constructed long before they [or anyone like them] entered the academy" and "submit to rules devised by a would-be elitist class" (Crowley 218). Instructors, therefore, must become the barometers for potential and measure mixed-language usage in the classroom in a world awash in Spanish. Failure to acknowledge, recognize, or encourage identity empowers the sovereignty of elitist classes, not the sovereignty of the individual.

Identity in composition, through mixed-language writing, should not be something to overcome; it is something to be explored. In today's political climates, ignoring writing in both Spanish and English may reflect personal or departmental uneasiness with students' knowledge in an area surpassing that of the instructor, or it may reflect the preferences, backgrounds, and curriculums of tradition. What could happen if students chose culturally identifiable literature, wrote to a culturally diverse audience, and wrote with individual

fragmentation, and suspicion. The *razons* vary, but the impetus of resistance produces just one more force the Chicana writer must face.

Like a nesting doll, the Chicana writer may break free from the shell of patriarchal mores, or the shell of educational repression, only to find the largest guardian, other Mexican women, stifling her voice. Mexican women find the Chicana too aggressive, too anti-men, and too American (Alarcón 190). Chicana *esperanza* in mixed-language writing fades when viewed as just another American invading the Mexican woman's space. The solidarity, the united front of cultural oppression, and the sisterhood stops abruptly at the border. "when we come in contact with Mexicans and realize they view us as '*pochos*',"<sup>26</sup> the subculture gets just a little smaller (Gonzales-Berry 123). *Pocha* Spanish sounds flawed, the accent off, and use of two languages<sup>27</sup> in the same text remains unacceptable for real *Mejicanas*.

The choice to intersperse *Español* into English text rattles the chains of purists that insist on correct English/Spanish usage or forbid Spanglish and Caló. The division *entre nosotros* creates a *lucha libre* that cannot come to a consensus. Judgement of *lengua* quality inhibits Chicana writing and becomes one more *lucha* without *libre*.

So what do we have to lose in composition? Can reprisals from professors fare any worse than from our own cultural group?

The dilemma of adapting while simultaneously growing up in a patriarchal household also creates double standard issues that cannot be answered because the questions cannot be asked. Mixed-language writing becomes a fight for *campo* in an American culture that falsely perceives education as culturally neutral and a home culture<sup>28</sup> that sees no need for education. A model of compliance, reinforced in writing class mimics home, especially if that class is taught by male authority figures--professors. Therefore, Chicanas may habitually suppress curiosity, fragment identity, and suffocate growth in exchange for the promise of educational titles and crowns.

And what picture does this paint to those outside the *caja*? It illustrates a need for proper guidance to those unfamiliar with home cultural values. A composition community that is able to define, discuss, and read about values does not necessarily equate to a community that can empathize with students' cultural identities. With too few Chicana professors to balance these perspectives, instructors strive to "fix" the broken identities with a

wave of "father knows best" rhetoric. This postcolonial rhetoric also crosses borders into composition amongst Chicanos.

In Hispanic magazine Richard Rodriguez<sup>29</sup> states that, "it's as though we don't live in the same country - and that is outrageous. I want to be on an American shelf" (qtd in Anders 2). The twist in this logic, especially in Southern California, rests on the omission that American shelves are Hispanic shelves and English speakers are capable of understanding, reading, and using Spanish as well as they uses English. This one-sided focus on language, the variant degrees of fluency, and dimensions of identity forces categorical casting of Chicanas by Chicanas. In a MELUS interview, Gloria Anzaldúa states that Chicanas are among her harshest critics which illustrate the constraints we place on each other (Reuman 1).

Only the individual can make the identity percentage choice and other Chicanas should not impose their ethnic criteria assessments on others. Anzaldúa aptly states that "we oppress each other trying to out-Chicano each other, vying to be the 'real' Chicanas to speak like Chicanos" (Cooper 26). The individual, as the sole determiner of identity, must balance percentages and Chicanas pressing

other Chicanas to assume their measure becomes just as imprisoning as the dominant society's molding of their identity. The breadth of language fluency, language choices, and the blend of both viva entre the individual. Working toward a paradigm shift in English studies to include individual choice in language becomes a solitary defense when the very Chicanas you identify with choose not to identify with you.

*La lengua Español* can bridge people, as well as generations, in a university setting. The culture of our universities, therefore, must mirror the current population. Universities must strive to include the Hispanic population in even the most traditional fields of study, such as English.

A *gigante* wave of brown faces entering college in record numbers, however, does not reflect strength. The numbers effectively mask linguistic imperialism imposed on the masses. Denial of this powerlessness risks the destruction of language, culture, and identity. A cultural writing fusion is possible in English studies with our current demographics, but we need modeling. Crowley points out that first-year courses are taught by untenured faculty since even the untrained can strip identity and language

from its students as well as the trained (4). Thus,  
Chicanas must bring their own mirrors to the written show,  
mirrors that resist writing subjugation, mirrors that  
reflect the infinite images among us.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ASISTENCIA IN THE LOCAL CONTEXT

*Ayuda por favor. La misión* of local leaders planning a bilingual city and school system spurs criticism that plagues generations of Chicanas/os in San Bernardino, the state of California, and the nation of America. Arturo Delgado, San Bernardino City Unified School District Superintendent, proposed a blueprint that calls for, "Developing steps and a timeline toward becoming the first bilingual, bilcultural school district in the United States, starting with programs at two elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school" (Bender B1). Practicality has finally met reality in a city that has exponentially grown with Spanish speaking constituents who demand Spanish translations.

Another city leader, Mayor Judith Valles, instrumental in making San Bernardino the first in the nation to adopt the "Official Bilingual City" designation, also takes the road less traveled at the price of disparaging remarks. Valles acknowledges that, "there's this current underneath that really resents this and that's a fact" (McNary B1). Animosity for languages, spoken or written, draws the ire

of our local society. The pragmatic side of this vision suggests that eventually the city will be versed in both languages and fare better in a global society, a society where Spanish is the second-most-spoken language in the world. Bilingualism, a decided asset in our community, continues to receive little respect or support.

A few brave souls stepped outside the box and placed the interest of community in the forefront. The leaders of San Bernardino City, Delgado and Valles, laid a foundation of promise for future generations. CSUSB, an integral part of the local community, needs to join the local leaders in assigning value to bilingual choices.

#### *No Hablan*

*Hablamos Español y dinero.* The business of numbers and money create an illusion of acceptance in the world of commerce and in the world of universities vying for consumer dollars. The collective Hispanic population continues to be the new local and global economic target; an economy romancing them out of their dollars by using their written and spoken home language. Pressure to infuse Spanish into commercials and marketing text illustrates that money means to power. Profits dictate that English-



only laws are exempt when it comes to *dinero*. The silencing of *nuestra lengua* takes a back seat to the American *dólar*. *Pero, así son*,<sup>30</sup> the compliant Chicana student and consumer shrugs. English-only laws were voted into existence because too many of us were *hechando así sons*. *Huelga!* If the fastest growing demographics *en el mundo* can expect mixed-language in marketing, then Chicanos can expect mixed-language usage between students, faculty, and communities.

The inevitability of mixed-language writing struggles to gain acceptance in existing communities that have never valued the people. Elsa Auerbach<sup>31</sup> states that:

the imposition of English will lead neither to fast acquisition of English nor to economic mobility (as evidenced by the fact that many native speakers of English and Hispanics who are fluent in English have been excluded from the economic mainstream). (845)

Ultimately, as Auerbach, states, it is "forcing English teachers to become accomplices in the imposition of a xenophobic perspective in which only Anglo culture and language are valued" (847). Somewhere along the line indigenous people fell from grace as intellectual potentials and the people along with their language were

robbed of their linguistic space. Their diminished value diminished until it held no value at all.

Appearing supportive of other languages and dismissing *Español* in composition writing accomplishes the goals, as Villanueva asserts, that the "English-only movement is primarily targeting one group (Hispanics), with the intent not of assimilating them to promote national unity, but of insuring their exclusion" (848). This "acceptance" consists of courting and exploiting Hispanic student dollars into universities, and it develops the illusion of inclusion and false hope.

*Inglés*, richly infused with "other" languages, waits for the next logical and generational step in composition studies. The freedom to use interspersed Spanish to correspond, converse, and collaborate with the growing Hispanic demographic audiences swelling our campuses can either promote this passive-aggressive pattern of exclusion or develop strategies that encourage inclusion. Mixed-language writing strategies have long been used with French and Latin interspersed text in composition writing. Therefore, the baby *paso* into Spanish appears relatively smooth.

In *Textual Carnivals, The Politics of Composition*, Susan Miller argues convincingly that pedagogy has changed little and that composition is stuck reproducing the sins of the past. Unfortunately, history has also proven, as Auerbach correctly predicted, that the dominant classes have continued to use people of color to prop up existing political and economic structures even though they are no longer the majority (851). Dialects of prestige<sup>32</sup> are still accorded top shelf while dialects of the masses are assigned token rungs and then, only when the wheel squeaks.

The browning of America squeaks and, against all odds, the university has become a part of their home. The potential for growth in English composition promises generations of multilingual Chicanas in monocultural classrooms a place in academia. I am optimistic that the majority of professors care about their charges and hug back in participation because *así son algunos profesores*.

#### *A Bailar Against the Grain*

*Escribo como bailo*. Chicanas dance among the myriad of obstacles facing composition instructors and their responsibility to teach students to write with fluency.

*A bailar Loca!* If the English departments do not let students express identity through writing, than why should the history or sociology departments? Composition can build new *pasos*. Inroads built on embracing cultures and encouraging identity creates an inclusive atmosphere that can bring back the *gusto* in writing.

*Imagina*, a local composition world that includes a dimension of critical thinking levels within the same personal identity. Crowley was not addressing the Chicana writing identity issue, but she aptly clinches the paradox of Chicana writing in the composition classroom when she states that:

The writing done in required writing classes is an imitation, or better, a simulacram of the motivated writing that gets done elsewhere in the academy and in the culture at large. (8)

Victor Villanueva's commentary agrees that students' exposure to "the writing of people of color tends to be decidedly thin" (160). Literary studies are "driven more by the political and economic realities of the profession than by any concern for improving teaching or increasing students' appreciation of literature" (Morgan 494). Georges Borchardt contends that a "sprinkling of foreign words

gives books a special flavor" and "you figure it out in context." That doesn't stop us from reading. After all, most readers don't know all the English words either" (qtd in Anders 2). A new majority minority trusting academia to do the right thing, hopes for change by incorporating mixed-language usage in the college setting.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LA CUENTA POR FAVOR

*Dos lenguas vale como dos personas. Ojalá que es cierto.* Countries around the world often speak more than two languages and cross borders the way we cross streets. The cost of alienation<sup>33</sup> drives away the very students education needs to recruit. Olivia Castellano describes her fear of white, male, English instructors who "were so un giving of their knowledge" that she "didn't have the nerve to major in English" (Dean 276). Pat Mora concludes that at colleges and universities, "the climate is cold" (293). In *Bootstraps*, Victor Villanueva describes the alienation at each educational rank he climbed. Dean cites Shirley Brice Heath as she points out that "classroom environments that do not value the home culture of the students lead to decreased motivation and poor academic performance" (25).

The cost of language and home culture alienation perpetuates low interest in English studies. Monocultural teachers possess a unique opportunity to respond to these Hispanic students that inhabit their world. University classrooms, built from K-12 foundations, face a new reality

of multilingual participants waiting for the collective positive response of English Studies departments.

Universities possess the ability to grow role models from within their academic ranks and encourage Chicanas to enter English Studies by creating *puentes* like mixed-language composition. Such new architecture, however, reveals old criticisms.

Benjamin Baez critiques Spanish use in academic writing as a form of "boutique multiculturalism" and he "feels uncomfortable about the use by some Latino and Latina scholars of the Spanish language in their academic discourse" (131). The assumption that academics write at the exclusion of others could be true in any language. I think Baez underestimates academics' abilities and desires to join in mixed-language discourse. The same teachers that Baez says helped him forget Spanish had the best interests of her students at heart. And so, I am optimistic that instructors and academic scholars (he writes as if these are two separate groups) acknowledge and recognize students' connection with language and culture and will respond accordingly.

## Viva Inglés Composition

*Viva la revolucion!* University writing expectations serves to deconstruct and reconstruct textual identity with each new instructor calling for participation to meet their goals. This university connection binds the writer to each instructor with a trust that designed instruction benefits the individual. The university serves its population amidst extreme prejudice of societal language expectations that treat mixed-language writing like an auto-immune disease; it only takes one exposure to contaminate an entire fraternity. This mindset changes the *abrazado* for bilingual students into a limp handshake in English Studies departments that constantly remind Chicanas of their inferior lingual skills.

The mixed-language writer must refuse to be historically dominated, controlled, and textually conquered in her own academic country. She must shake feelings of fear, inferiority, or prejudice when using mixed-language and *hacer la lucha* for inclusion. This disparity can be addressed by our field's commitment to more studies, papers, and research on mixed-language usage to attract future residents to the English Studies field.



Among the Hispanic populations on a college campus you find first, second, and third generation writers. Fluency in two languages can reach mixed audiences and give them the *horale* nod into English studies. When other brown faces in the class understand the nuances of identity in an academic setting, the *entrada* widens an academic arena that, by design, fragments voice and dictates choice. A gathering space for those choosing mixed-language writing possesses the ability to create new *pasos* in uncharted territories that overtly red-ink, demand footnoted translations, or instruct that Spanish not be used at all. Covertly, a linguistic terrorism can be the stiffened body language or bridled tolerance when Spanish appears in the classroom.

Those of us - students and teachers - who have been instructed to find voice, think critically, and write critically, within the boundaries of English-only thoughts, English-only phrases, and English-only words must continue the to battle this English-only panic. We must fight the irrelevant logic behind the idea that all of us think, speak, or write in the same linear English-only, dominant society academic patterns. Alarcón states that,

the tendency of many departments is to neocolonize rather than enable critical thinking on her part, which would mean providing the pedagogical conditions for her speaking intervention for exercising her interpretive agency. (193)

This forced lesson of compliance sends a clear message of who is in charge of textual identity in university writing. English language guardians, threatened that their supremacy is being challenged, must come to terms with the growing numbers of Chicanas in academics.

The absent presence and present absence of Chicanas in English Studies triggers a *grito* that must be heard because *así son nosotros*. The *cuenta* for mixed-language writing must be paid so generations of Chicanas, relying on our *fuerza*, can succeed in the world of Inglés composition. *¡Sí se puede*<sup>34</sup>!

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, I am referring to the Spanish/English mixture of languages.

<sup>2</sup> Anzaldúa and Villanueva represent the small minority of compositionists exploring this underresearched subject.

<sup>3</sup> The word connotes a radical female of Hispanic descent and is associated with enlightened, either socially or politically, Mexican women.

<sup>4</sup> Spanish-speaking people of any race.

<sup>5</sup> Survey of the National Council of Teachers of English, 2000.

<sup>6</sup> I refer to composition theories in large terms. Those theories that address peoples who have been excluded or underrepresented by their language or language choices.

<sup>7</sup> Literally, half-breed. In composition, the writer that writes from within two cultures.

<sup>8</sup> In her book, *Making Face, Making Soul, Haciendo Caras*.

<sup>9</sup> In a conversation in *Chicana Ways*, by Karin Rosa Ika, Anzaldúa describes her desire to change composition rules and change to anything that differs from the Euro-American traditional way of writing (7).

<sup>10</sup> Mixed-language writing in Spanish and English.

<sup>11</sup> Like Caliban in Shakespeare's "The Tempest."

<sup>12</sup> Americans of Latin American descent and those who prefer the term to Hispanic.

<sup>13</sup> Elias S. Lopez, Ph.D. presented statistics from the 2000 census on "The Changing Demographics: The New Students" at the February 2003 College Board Western Regional Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona.

<sup>14</sup> Chacon, Cohen, & Stover, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> CSUSB Faculty Profile, academic affairs website.

<sup>16</sup> I refer to those who occupy positions of control.

<sup>17</sup> Anatomy of the English-Only Movement by James Crawford provides a condensed overview of the need for legal protection of other tongues.

<sup>18</sup> I refer to conclusions of authors such as Mina Shaughnessy, David Bartholomae, and other researchers of basic writing.

<sup>19</sup> Marilyn Cooper's "Language and Identity: Producing New Cultures" is in a multiple channel format that provides multiple viewpoints on the language/identity issues.

<sup>20</sup> The Spanish conqueror of the Aztec empire in Mexico.

<sup>21</sup> La Malinche, a female archetype. Lucha Corpi in *Chicana Ways*, by Karin Rosa Ika, contends that she was a slave, so

she was given without choice. Chicanas view her as able, intelligent, and capable while Mexicans still see her as the woman who sold out.

<sup>22</sup> It common for the home culture to hold educators in the highest esteem, without question.

<sup>23</sup> Like *La Malinche*, Chicanas acquiesce, without choice, to the writing demands, both implicit and inferred.

<sup>24</sup> Students' Right to Their Own Language from College Composition and Communication, 25, Fall, 1974, has remained a contemporary issue for the past 29 years.

<sup>25</sup> I refer to composition theories that promote inclusion of those in the margins.

<sup>26</sup> American Mexicans viewed as assimilated by Mexican nationals.

<sup>27</sup> The Anglo-self wars against the Mexican-self in a quest to fit comfortably into a unified identity.

<sup>28</sup> Where an obedient, compliant, female is forbidden to question established roles.

<sup>29</sup> Strong feelings of betrayal circulate among Hispanics regarding his views of assimilation.

<sup>30</sup> Literally, "that is how they are."

<sup>31</sup> In her review of Dennis Baron's, "The English-only Question: an Official Language for Americans?" Auerbach questions the agenda of the English-only movement as a mask for larger issues of dominance. Sadly, little has changed since this review was written ten years ago.

<sup>32</sup> I refer to Latin and French most commonly used in textbooks and literature in the classroom.

<sup>33</sup> The problem, according to Terry Dean, is that teachers teach from distant mainstream cultures that do not reflect the demographic of their student populations. They also teach how Americans view the world where Hispanics live.

<sup>34</sup> "Yes, you can!" Popular phrase used in Latino leadership camps like CSUSB's Future Leaders Program.

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