

DIFFERENCES OF ENGLISH AND SPANISH GRAMMARS, AND THEIR BEARING ON AMERICAN AND MEXICAN CULTURES

ARTURO ZÁRATE RUIZ

ABSTRACT

In this article, I notice that English now is a dominant language and I highlight some features which actually make English language great. I also consider that these facts may lead a Spanish language user wrongly believe that applying English peculiar grammatical strengths to Spanish would make Spanish a better means of communication: he would rather lose the opportunity of using Spanish language in its best, and prevent him to enjoy a Hispanic culture invigorated by this best use of Spanish language. To avoid this problem, I identify and recommend some Spanish peculiar features that make it strong in its own way, and make it a very rich means of communication.

It may not be surprising that, being fair, a person acknowledges that some features of another language make it in part objectively better than his native language. Indeed, every lect or even language has features which may make it better or worse because of the features themselves, if compared the lect or language with another that is different, and if the lects or languages are assessed with specific criteria. For example, Castilians usually pronounce “z” and “s” Spanish sounds differently. Mexicans usually pronounce both as an “s” sound. Mexican Spanish is thus impoverished because of the resulting ambiguity at the time of saying, for instance, “poso” and “pozo”. Moreover, Mexicans should learn the spelling of these words, something a Castilian speaker does not need to do because it is clear for him the spelling for the differentiated sound. Also, Mexicans rarely address another person or persons using “vos” or “vosotros”. They use “usted”, or “ustedes”. Therefore, they do not use either the possessive “vuestro” or “vuestrós”. Then, they should use the possessive “su” and “sus”. To avoid ambiguity in a context of many persons, they should supply lengthy clarifications: “su de usted”, “su de ustedes”, “su de él”, “su de ella”, “su de ellos”, “su de ellas”, something that Castilian speakers do not need to do since they keep the use of “vos” and “vosotros”, and consequently the use of “vuestro” and “vuestrós”. Unless the ambiguity of these cases is aimed, we cannot speak of Mexican Spanish as a better lect than Castilian Spanish in terms of these features.

Likewise, if compared languages instead of lects, we may find that English is by no means ambiguous concerning the third person possessive (“his”, “her”, “their”), whereas Spanish keeps the ambiguity of the possessive “su”. Yet, Spanish speakers still can address a second person with an intimate “tú” or the dignified “vos” or “usted”, whereas modern English has lost the formal treatment and only keeps what is now the informal treatment, “you”. Although one may praise this loss as something favoring equality, the lack of a formal second person in English requires from speakers to use additional words to express distinct treatment, such as the words “Sir”, and “Ma’am”, something optional in Spanish because “vos” or “usted” already imply this dignified treatment.

Now, it should not be surprising that the same person who acknowledges some superior features in a foreign language nonetheless prefers his native language because of familiarity and a resultant ease in speaking, especially if he addresses people who deeply share his culture and language. Besides, a Mexican pronouncing Castilian “z” sounds would sound affected, the more so if he then loses the cultural background enriching the Mexican lect and lacks the cultural background enriching the Castilian lect.

Yet, it may be disappointing that this same person ignores the good features that make his native language great because of being dazzled with the good features of another language, or simply dazzled because the other language is a dominant one.

This may happen with some Spanish speakers on face of the dominance and success of English language in the world, the more so if Spanish is a heritage language in the speakers’ country. They may stop enjoying the virtues of Spanish because of relishing on English language accomplishments. They may even adapt Spanish to English usage, so trying to achieve the same accomplishments in their own tongue, an effort which would be lacking because Spanish is not equal to English —an effort which may rather impoverish Cervantes’s speech by, let’s forward an apparently trivial example, changing a “¡feliz año nuevo!”, for a “feliz ano nuevo!”—. At the end, these nearsighted speakers may overlook that each language differently benefits the process of communication, something that in its turn affects culture in a distinct way.

In this article, I notice that English now is a dominant language and I highlight some features which actually make English language great. I also consider that these facts may lead a Spanish language user wrongly believe that applying English peculiar grammatical strengths to Spanish would make Spanish a better means of communication: he would rather lose the opportunity of using Spanish language in its best, and prevent him to enjoy a Hispanic culture invigorated by this best use of Spanish language. To avoid this problem, I identify and recommend some Spanish peculiar features that make it strong in its own way, and make it a very rich means of communication.

ENGLISH AS A DOMINANT LANGUAGE

Today, English language plays a most important role in the world. It is the common language on earth, the international business language, the language of sciences, the language of innovation and technology, the language of mass culture and media. Some historical reasons are advanced to explain this role. One is the rise of the British Empire. Another is the English colonization of the territories which later become the United States of America. It is also said, among other causes, that after World War II, the United States became the leading country in science, technology, economy, trade, and many other fields because its competition, Europe, then was massively destroyed (Gimeno, 2001; D'Amore, 2007; Hammond, 2014). Hana Valíková explains how English became a dominant language with additional details:

In the case of English we speak of an indirect diffusion, that is, the language does not disseminate through the people but through developments and the innovations in several fields: scientific, technical, mass media, trade, films, etc. Also in the last decades the great development of the computer science, that has a close relation with English language, contributes to its enormous importance for the whole world (Valíková, 2007: pp. 10).

Alex Hammond brings up another factor which makes English attractive and popular: it is “cool”, he says, to the point of being applied to another language because of the belief that doing so makes other language messages as persuasive as in full English language, and on the belief that by doing so the message’s persuasiveness is homologized in the whole world (Hammond, 2014). In this case, English language is approached as a superior tongue, leading other language peoples apply English grammar to their own languages in order to make their language better.

At any rate, Fernando A. Navarro notices that the Anglicization of Spanish actually is underway and goes beyond “bypass”, “piercing”, “test”, “airbag”, “container”, “spa”, and other loanwords and loanblends, since it also takes place in spelling, in typography, and broadly in syntax (Navarro, 2008). Moreover, other scholars notice that it is now happening in the writing of sciences in Spanish, for example, in the fields of medicine (Rubio, 2009), economy (Russo 2008), library science (Martínez, 2002), and law (Santamaría, 2008; Borja, 2000), moreover, in film and television dubbing and making (Gómez, 2001), and generally in most businesses, mass media, news media, advertising, sports, digital media, and popular culture (Hammond 2014; Gimeno, 2001; Posteguillo, 2002; Valíková, 2007).

Although, according to Francisco Gimeno Menéndez, “the analysis of English influences obviously revealed that the impact of English was greater on written Spanish in the United States than on Spanish in the monolingual Spanish-American countries of the sample”, English dominance has been described by Rosa-Triantafilian Nginios (2011) as not endangering Spanish as a heritage language in the United States, yet. The reason, she says, is immigration:

Only if immigration is stopped, and all communication with the Hispanic countries is cut off, could we speak of the formation of a language other than Spanish and English, but that circumstance does not appear to occur in the future (Nginios, 2011).

Be it as it may, Maryann Neilson Parada warns that Spanish speakers already living in countries with a dominant language different than Spanish would gradually abandon their heritage language in favor of the dominant one:

It is well documented that the minority status of Spanish creates a context of reduced input and production for minority language youth who, although generally orally proficient, readily become dominant in the majority language. The acquisition of the societal language at the expense of the minority language has been shown to impede successful inter-generational language transmission and to generally result in a complete shift to the majority language by the third generation (Parada, 2016: pp. 2).

The rise of a Spanglish as a new language and as an alternative to the dominant language is not clear, yet, according to Marta Fairclough:

Spanglish in the United States—she says—is far from completing this process of grammaticalization. The controversial Spanglish seems to be a sporadic phenomenon, whose use is very personal and extremely difficult to quantify (Fairclough, 2003).

Without this alternative, Hispanic culture may be lost along with the loss of Spanish language in the United States, as Rosa-Triantafilian Nginios says that some people fearfully believe (Nginios 2011, pp. 125).

Now, English, as a dominant language, not only influences bilingual communities, it also affects monolingual societies who speak other tongues in a way that is described as detrimental:

The spread of English—says Francisco Gimeno—as a language of science, technology, and economics involves a displacement of the other European languages, and poses a risk of provoking situations of broad diglossia and linguistic conflict. The social media (and especially the print media) appear as one of the basic drivers of a globalization of culture and Anglophilia, which has boosted the use of a specific lingua franca within a global society. (Gimeno, 2001).

This diglossia may mean not only a dominance of English language over another language, or an English linguistic colonialism which replaces another language by English itself. It may also mean an epistemic colonialism which imposes a dominating world view, through language, over the dominated linguistic communities (Mingolo, 1992). Nations closer to the United States may be more affected by this problem. Anna Maria D'Amore says:

Although the impact of American English on Mexican Spanish is not greater than in other areas as physically close or politically linked to the United States as Puerto Rico or Panama, it is likely that the use of English language loans is more frequent in Mexico than in other parts of Latin America. (D'Amore, 2007)

ENGLISH “COOL” GRAMMAR AS A DOMINATING FACTOR

Now, there are very attractive features in English grammar—Hammond (2014) may call them “cool”—which may contribute to English dominance over other languages.

For example, English words often are impressively brief, at least, in their writing if compared with other languages, let’s say, Spanish:

bat.....	murciélago
friend.....	amigo
food.....	comida
man.....	hombre
knee.....	rodilla

English economy is revealed in news reports and editorials if compared their extension with other language versions. Then, English usually is briefer:

Spanish	English
<p>Lo que el Presidente de México debe hacer</p> <p>MEXICO CITY — El presidente Enrique Peña Nieto ha mostrado un liderazgo notable al lograr la aprobación de reformas claves destinadas a reanimar la economía e impulsar el desarrollo del país. Pero ahora debe actuar rápidamente para restablecer su credibilidad política y limitar el daño moral a su investidura. La crisis actual lo demanda. (Krauze 2014a).</p>	<p>What Mexico’s President Must Do</p> <p>MEXICO CITY — President Enrique Peña Nieto has shown remarkable leadership in passing key reforms to reanimate the economy and further the development of Mexico. But now he must act quickly to re-establish his political credibility and limit damage to his moral standing. The present crisis requires it. (Krauze 2014b).</p>

You may make similar findings when visiting archeological sites in Mexico. There you will find signboards with information about the specific sites, offered in several modern and ancient languages by the History and Anthropology National Institute. There, English wins

over other languages because of its concision. It surely requires the shortest space to explain the pyramids and other buildings you visit.

You may identify a reason for this brevity on the fact that most English words are made with only one syllable. In comparison, most Spanish words are made with three syllables. Thus, arithmetically, English is a more powerful instrument to compact written or spoken information. Although not a rule, a larger amount of news usually fits in an English newspaper or radio program than in a Spanish media. In a similar way, the larger amount of information compacted in a slow English movie segment requires a Spanish translator to speed up in order to offer the same amount of information in the same time.

An additional factor for economy may be that John Locke’s ideal of creating one word, not roundabouts, to designate every single thing apparently is coming to its accomplishment in English language (Locke 1999, 387). The gigantic features of English language dictionaries may suggest us so.

Certainly, Locke’s ideal actually is impossible because of the conceptual character of any language. Nonetheless, the more “concrete” words a language enjoys, as it seems it is the case with English, the more this language has a descriptive power. Instead of just sharing ideas or concepts, it also prompts images of what is concretely referred. Thus instead of saying “it is a plant fragrance”, a skilled speaker says “it is a rosemary fragrance”.

Moreover, the simplicity of English language morphology makes amazingly easy to create new terms or to import them from other languages. English language incorporates words from other languages as easy as they come and as they sound. English has imported the word “goulash” as it came from Hungarian. Such a novelty would be difficult to accomplish in Spanish because its morphology is not as friendly as English’s. What would be the Spanish version of “goulash”? “Gulá”? Let’s look at other imported terms:

English		Spanish	
Goulash	Goulash	Goulash	¿gulá?
			¿guisado?
carnet	carnet	carnet	carné
ratatouille	ratatouille	ratatouille	¿ratatuil?
			¿menestra?
yihad	yihad	yihad	¿yijad?
tsunami	tsunami	tsunami	¿sunami?
			¿maremoto?

Spanish is not as receptive as English is. English language is a sponge for importing foreign terms. Moreover, thanks to its world leadership in economy, science, technology, and mass culture, English language diligently produces new words every day. Its dictionaries are up-to-date, easy to check, and, most importantly, amazingly rich, perhaps the richest dictionaries on earth. They are a good substitute for heavy weights in the gym.

Some friends of mine who are poets have assured me that it is even easier to versify and to write songs in English than in Spanish. If you versify in English language, you achieve stress by accentuating long vowels or one syllable terms. If you versify in Spanish language, you usually work with three syllable terms and achieve stress by the more complicated system of accentuating tonic vowels.

English	Spanish
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One vowel words, very common. • Stress on long vowels or on one vowel words <p>It's raining, it's boring,</p> <p>The old man is snoring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three vowel words, very common. • Tonic accent <p>Recuerde el alma dormida,</p> <p>avive el seso y despierte</p> <p>contemplando...</p>

WHEN ENGLISH GRAMMAR PRAISE IS EXAGGERATED

In any case, the most common praise to English language refers to its power of speaking right to the point, without roundabouts. And even though I usually do not have any problem with believing it, I nonetheless start doubting it when professors, like Robert G. Bander (1978, 3), explain this power not with English words but with graphics. Alas!, to prove their point, they dare to speak of inexistent language families, such as the "Oriental" one, as if Japanese and Mandarin Chinese languages could be placed together in a same category:

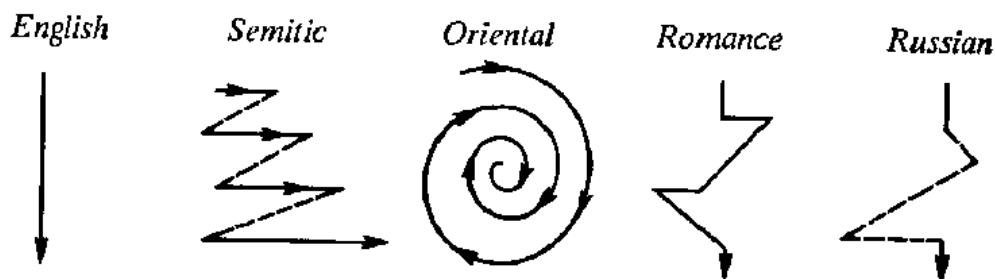


Diagram from Robert B. Kaplan, "Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Education," *Language Learning*, 16, nos. 1 and 2: 15.

And my doubts increase when friends of mine try to prove English directness by saying that English language does not require as many gestures from a speaker as other language do. The fact is that each language enjoys its own repertoire of gestures. But the unknown language always seems to suffer excessive gesticulation because, while the listener does not understand what is said, he still watches the speaker's gestures and thinks that they are exaggerated or meaningless.

Nonetheless, according to my own appreciation, English language at least requires a wider range of gestures than Spanish in order to follow the pitch of each pronounced syllable:

English

Hello! Are you feeling OK?
E, F, C. D, E, F, F, E, F, G.

Spanish

¡Hola! ¿Te sientes bien?
E, C. D, E, D, E, E.

Yet, my point here is not to prove that English language requires more gestures. In fact, although a foreigner may say that an American movie is overwhelmed by gesticulation, an American viewer may fairly disagree and say that such gesticulation is appropriate in his language. My point rather is to notice that a foreigner who is used to watch mostly American movies because of American mass media global dominion may end imitating American gestures in his own language in spite that these gestures do not correspond to his own native language. Such gesticulation would turn meaningless and pollute the native language power of communication.¹ Unwittingly applying the rules of gesticulation or any other rule of a dominant language to another language may impoverish the other language, instead of enriching it, be such rule the English easy importing of new words, its "direct" sentence structure, its brevity because of its short words, just to mention some few (Navarro, 2008; Valíková, 2007).

SPANISH LANGUAGE

But let's come back to the issue of language's directness. As said, English language is often described as superior in its capability of going right to the point. Honestly, I prefer not to question this power. Yet, there is something I would rather question: that other languages, for example Spanish, are not as capable as English in going right to the point.

In fact, not only English, but also Spanish and other languages can be direct in addressing an issue. What makes at least Spanish different is that directness is a choice, not something necessary. We can appreciate this by examining Spanish syntax. Spanish syntax is superbly rich. In English language, sentence structure requires an inevitable order: subject-verb-

¹ Concerning the influence of English on movie dubbing and making, see Gómez (2001).

complement. The only possibility is “The cat eats mice”. In Spanish language, we surely can accomplish such an order: “El gato come ratones”. Nonetheless, there are many other options for structuring that sentence: “El gato ratones come”, “Come ratones el gato”, “Come el gato ratones”, “Ratones el gato come”, and “Ratones come el gato”. Spanish can even offer contextual statements, impossible in English language, such as “Come ratones” or simply say “Los come”, or “Se los come”.

English	Spanish
<p>The cat eats mice.</p> <p>(He eats mice).</p> <p>(She eats mice).</p> <p>(It eats mice).</p> <p>(He eats them).</p> <p>(She eats them).</p> <p>(It eats them).</p>	<p>El gato come ratones.</p> <p>El gato ratones come.</p> <p>Ratones come el gato.</p> <p>Ratones el gato come.</p> <p>Come el gato ratones.</p> <p>Come ratones el gato.</p> <p>(Él come ratones).</p> <p>(Ella come ratones).</p> <p>(Él los come).</p> <p>(Ella los come).</p> <p>(Come ratones).</p> <p>(Los come).</p> <p>(Se los come).</p> <p>(Cómeselos).</p> <p>(Cómelos).²</p>

It is true that Spanish multiple possibilities of sentence structure may lead to ambiguity. For example, “Se come un gato un ratón” can be translated as “A cat eats a mouse”, and also as “A mouse eats a cat”. Yet, this ambiguity helps Spanish speakers acquire the healthy habit of

² Spanish sentence structure spans from very analytic statements to very synthetic ones.

checking a sentence meaning with its context and even with reality. Then, Spanish listeners should be more active than English listeners in discerning not only what is said but also what is referred by a statement. That helps them more often keep an eye on reality, as I will discuss later.

In any case, you also have less possibilities of phrasing in English language than in phrasing Spanish, too. If you use English language, you can only say “a great man”. If you use Spanish language, you can say “un gran hombre” and “un hombre grande”. Then, you will notice that the difference affects not only order, it also affects meaning.

Therefore, Spanish syntax many choices are not inconsequential. In fact, they allow you to express different meanings, even if they are only a nuance. A first glance may make us think that the following sentences are equal in meaning: “La paz es el respeto al derecho ajeno entre los individuos como entre las naciones” and “Entre los individuos como entre las naciones, el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz” (Juárez, 1867). However, their different sentence structure, which is possible in Spanish, makes the first statement present “peace” to the listener as something whose clear definition will follow, whereas the second statement present “peace” as a conclusion, as something discovered after comparing equity among individuals with equity among nations. Thus, the force found in Benito Juárez’s apothegm does not spring only from its sonorousness, but also from not ignoring the shades in meaning.

Neither is inconsequential Spanish language refusal of any easy introduction of new terms from innovation or from other languages. Spanish morphology is at stake, and any innovation should respect this morphology in order to make the new word, once introduced, reach its full potentiality by means of derivation. Thanks to Spanish morphology capability for derivation, the single term introduced becomes many. “Clon” was introduced in Spanish language by importing the English term “clone”. Previously, English language had imported this term from the Greek “κλων”, “a twig”, in order to mean, at least, “a plant or animal that is grown from one cell of its parent and that has exactly the same genes as its parent” (Merriam-Webster). By adapting “clone” to Spanish morphology and making the word become “clon”, we keep the new term open to many derivations, for example, “clonar”, “clonesco”, “clonez”, “clonado”, “clonante”, “clonoso”, “clonadamente”, “reclonar”, “clonillo”, “clonote”, etc. Let’s consider another example. Latin language lends “curriculum” and “curricula” to English language, one term being the singular, and the other, the plural. English language takes these terms exactly as they come from Latin. Often Spanish speakers are asked to import these terms in the same way as English speakers do. I do not agree. I think that the borrowed term should be adapted to Spanish morphology. Then, multiple derivations will follow: “currículo”, “currículos”, “extracurricular”, “curriculito”, “curriculote”, “se extracurriculeó”, etc. Spanish language multiple possibilities of derivation because of its morphology are alien to English language, in spite that, today, English language usually is the lender and Spanish language the borrower of terms. English language is not as rich in word derivation as Spanish because English morphology is poorer than Spanish one. And although English language may claim a larger amount of words than Spanish, by displaying its bulky dictionaries, such a display may be misleading: Spanish dictionaries do not include on its pages the multiple derivations from the

root terms. In fact, by just consulting a root term in a Spanish thin dictionary, Spanish speakers can create multiple derivations by adding or replacing particles. If these derivations were included in Spanish dictionaries, these dictionaries would reach no end.

Therefore, if a Spanish speaker thinks necessary to import new terms from science or from other languages, he should be careful of doing so in the correct way. So was achieved when Spanish borrowed the term “carnet” from French to refer a special identity card: it became “carné”. “Carné” plural was adequately adapted to Spanish noun structure: “carnés”. Such adequate adaptation has not happened, yet, with other new terms, for example “cassette”, a word referring a special tool for audio recording. This word ideal Spanish spelling should be “casé”, and a well-adapted plural should be “casés”, not “cassettes” or “cassettts”.

Spanish also is outstanding because of its phonetic and orthographic simplicity. A wrong pronunciation does not necessarily lead to a misunderstanding because the listener only is required to distinguish five vowels, no the many of English language. Moreover, it is easier to learn writing in Spanish than in English language. Spanish writing rules are clear and reasonable. Indeed, they are codified in what is called “orthography”. English language hardly has orthographic rules. You learn to write not by reasoning the rules but by memorizing the spelling of words.

Spanish	English
Few vowel sounds	Many vowel sounds
A.....a	A pat, pay, care, father, about.
E.....e	E pet, be
I.....i	I pit, pie, pier
O.....o	O pot, toe, paw, out, took, boot
U.....u	U cut, urge
Consonants’ sounds almost always correspond to consonants’ writing. Orthographic rules are reasonable.	Other sounds: feu, schön, tu, über There are 21 consonant letters for 24 consonant sounds. Correct writing relies on memory and spelling.

So, if new words are introduced in Spanish, let’s introduce them properly so that Spanish writing rules continue being clear and reasonable. For example, “shampoo” should be introduced into Spanish as “champú”.

In any case, let's acknowledge that English language is the richest language in word number. Samson may find huge English dictionaries very useful in the gym. Even so, Spanish language is superior than English in combining its so-said few words to render many meanings. Jorge de Montemayor (*Diana* 1561), who was someone close to a Don Juan, illustrates this power when speaking about lovesickness: "¿Qué más honra puede ser/ que morir del mal que muero?" In this expression, "morir" is certainly much more than saying "I love you!" to a girlfriend. Saint Teresa of Avila would mean something very different, her thirst of God, with almost the same phrase: "muero porque no muero". With only one phrase, Baltasar Gracián, a concision master, intentionally says both: that he was chained and that he was accused of erring: "cargándome de hierros" (*El Criticón* I, 8). He does so because, if read aloud, the word "hierros" sounds as "yerros", too. Also, Gracián illustrates how plain and well written Spanish language can be briefer than English language in reporting:

When Cicero arrived at Pompey's military camp, Pompey asked him where he had left his son-in-law Piso, the husband of Tullia. Cicero replied instantly: "He is staying in the camp of your father-in-law Caesar". Cicero found a parallel between Pompey's behavior and Pompey's very imputation to him. Cicero squeezed it as a reply.

Preguntándole Pompeyo a Cicerón, cuando llegó a su campo, que dónde dejaba a su yerno Pisón, marido de Tullia, respondió pronto: "Queda en el campo de su suegro César". Halló la paridad de lo mismo que le oponía y exprimióla por respues

To some degree, Gracián's success in concision springs from Spanish language power to suppress needless words because the few ones used imply what is the relevant information. English should rather be explicit. For example, in the cited Spanish text, Gracián suppresses the nouns because they are implied by verb conjugation. The listener is in charge of discovering what seemingly is hidden in the expression.

Now, to praise one language because of its directness and explicitness—because of this language going right to the point—may only mean to praise a language too much restricted to declarative statements.³ Moreover, underrating another language because of its roundabouts may only mean ignoring this language capability of inviting the listener to be in charge of reaching the meaning of what is said.

³ Dwight Longenecker bewails American English usage because of its common avoidance of subtlety. Longenecker thus speaks of "America the Literal" (Longenecker 2011).

One language assumes that the challenge is to transmit preexisting information to a passive listener, and ideally works as a syringe does. The other language assumes that the orator's challenge is to share with his listener the responsibility of producing meaning. Then, the orator offers words that the listener should decipher by himself in order to reach understanding.

By using one language, the speaker makes it clear that his role is separate and different to the listener's. In a patronizing fashion, he deigns to supply information and wisdom to who seems to be ignorant people listening below. By using the other language, the speaker walks together with his listeners as brothers do in the quest of enlightenment.

One language supposedly possesses one different word for each different thing. The other language combines its supposedly few words not only to unveil the universe but also to reach a friend. For a Mexican world play, not rarely profane, is not only about using filthy terms that some people South of the Border often like, it is also about exploiting Spanish rich morphology and syntax to its limits in their spicy conversation. "It is not the same thing 'El chango de Tapachula' than 'Chula, tápate el chango'", a person from Tepito notices. A driver bluffs about something different than his old truck when he posts on it "Pujando, pero llegando".

I will never deny English speakers the ability of telling gags, but it is when listening Spanish speakers that it seems that their speech is an unending jest. And it is not that Spanish speech necessarily is humorous, it is that their language often is cryptic and demands from the listener to decipher what is said as it were a joke.

So strong is this demand that we may consider Spanish language rude, not because of Mexican filthy raillery, but because the listener is to some degree forced to undress his thoughts without even pronouncing a word. By simply taking notice of sage dicta, the listener makes clear that he himself reaches a specific understanding of what has been said to him in a cryptic way. "El tiempo y yo, a otros dos", Emperor Charles V spoke defiantly, and the listener got, by himself, that victory is achieved by patience (Gracián, *Discreto* 3). "No hay cosa más fácil que el conocimiento ajeno", Baltasar Gracián pondered (*Discreto* 8), and his interlocutor guessed that achieving self-knowledge is the most difficult task. Neither the Emperor nor the writer made manifest their ideas to the listeners. Therefore, their listeners were in charge of unveiling what was said. They were the ones supplying the specific understanding, too. Thus, in doing so they silently disclosed their mind to the speakers.

Many other Spanish conversations take place in a similar way. By letting listeners grasp of what was not explicitly said, we make our listeners, even unwillingly, reveal to us their thoughts once they reach understanding. If we rather declare every bit of information, as a right to the point English speech does, we can never be sure if the listener himself reaches the same understanding of what is said. But, by wittingly using ordinary Spanish language, we can know so. For the only way that listeners can reach awareness of something not explicit is by guessing it themselves. What is more, your listener also discovers what ideas you have in your mind without having you made them overt. And he discovers that he and you share an understanding. So, both of you look at each other

eyes and smile, without needing to speak a word, as if promising not to reveal other people your little secret. Each one become an accomplice of the other, moreover, you become great friends.

Such capability is, I think, the greatest virtue of Spanish language. Well spoken, Spanish language, one with rich sentence and word structure, builds up brotherhood. Do not cripple Spanish language with restrictions imported from other languages, such as reducing its functions to declarative statements and right to the point sentences. Do not tie it with a straight jacket just because another language use is currently fashionable. For a good Spanish language use builds up political communities, and even nations. Such is the Hispanic American nation, the largest and most lively nation in the world.

Let's notice an additional virtue of Spanish language, related to its so-called roundabouts. Whereas declarative languages foster relativism, cryptic ones are the antidote. For the first let a speaker only express overtly his thoughts, and the second challenges the listener to unveil the saying by contrasting it with an alluded and objective reality, a reality that the speaker must acknowledge if he truly intends to reach communication. Jorge Negrete, a very manly Mexican actor, sang a song: "Dicen que soy hombre malo... porque me comí un durazno de corazón colorado". If this statement is deciphered literally, following only what it overtly expresses, Jorge Negrete's sin was gluttony: he ate a peach. However, if this statement is contrasted with the real context of Jorge Negrete's reputation as a Don Juan, something that can be objectively checked, then Jorge Negrete's sin was lust. Thus, when we allow our listener to check a statement's meaning with reality, our communication bet is for realism, not relativism, which would happen if we only share our thoughts.

To finish, let me refer something shared to me by an American scholar who is a fan of German language. He thinks that Spanish language has a greater virtue than building up brotherhood or being an antidote to relativism. He said that its greatest virtue is its distinction between the verb "ser" and the verb "estar". Not even Latin language has such distinction. Some languages enjoy only the verb "to be", which helps people in the task of philosophy. Some languages even lack the verb "to be". Only Spanish language, my friend said, let people do philosophy with "ser" and distinguish what is just circumstantial with "estar". For it is not the same "es dulce" than "está dulce". In English language you can only say "It's sweet", and in German "Es ist süß." "The word *is* implies eternal sameness", regret Ronald B. Adler and Neil Town (1987: pp. 169), as they prescribe English speakers to add plenty of qualifiers in order not to shock a child with a "you are a bad boy". This would never happen in Spanish thanks to the distinction between "ser" and "estar". For that reason, this German language fan said, he would give up half of German words (German language richness rest on its very abundant and precise terms) if German language imported the distinction of what is circumstantial from Spanish language, which is only possible with the verb "estar".

SOME FINAL REMARKS

Saying all this does not imply that every change in a language and every contact of languages is undesirable. In fact, because of this contact, languages often are enriched with new words and expressions (D'Amore, 2009). The United States is today the leading country in scientific and technological developments, and obstructing the importing of new words and new expressions into

Spanish because they come from English language may result into an obstruction of the new developments themselves.

Yet, this change and these loans should come without causing diglossia and without reducing the potentials of Spanish grammar itself. If Spanish grammar is crippled, English dominance will not only take place by imposing a world view to Spanish speakers, it will also take place in a more disastrous way: by replacing the wonderful lens and the lively social interaction through which a world view is acquired by Spanish speakers, Spanish language itself.

Much can be done to preserve what is good of Spanish language and to welcome true novelties. Alberto Gómez Font says:

Spanish is the most lively and dynamic of the great languages of communication... Media are increasingly adapted to globalization and becoming less local and more international. That makes the media feel necessary an international Spanish which is good for all. My proposal is to establish regulatory agreements on Spanish, in a coordinated work of institutions, style books authors, and researchers on the lexicon of the cultured norm in the different Hispanic capitals (Avendaño 2005).

Fernando Lázaro also says:

The ideal would be the development of language agreements common to all media, which would not have to hinder the differences of style between different media. With a single deck it is possible to play very different games, including the solitaire. To this end, it would be of the utmost importance the collaboration of journalists, who today have the power of language, and the Academy, which perhaps enjoys authority (and does not advocate the "academic style" to which, as a disqualifying topic, is attributed) (Lázaro, 1993).

Since 1997, the Association of Spanish Language Academies has held meetings with representatives of every Hispanic nation to reach collective agreements on a common renewal and safeguarding of Spanish language. News agencies, newspapers, and generally mass media now establish rules for properly adapting new words and expressions into Spanish (Gómez, n. d.) Some successful efforts have been accomplished on the field of sports, particularly soccer (Rojas, 2012). This effort should also be achieved by scholarly media, especially in introducing new scientific terms and expressions in Spanish (Rubio, 2009; Russo 2008; Martínez, 2002; Santamaría, 2008; Borja, 2000).

In doing this, I recommend paying special attention to Spanish language structure. Focusing on it rather than on particular words or expressions may prevent too much zeal for a common language which may endanger the diversity of Spanish lects. As I have argued, it is Spanish rich syntax and morphology which makes this language great. And this syntax and morphology can properly empower every Spanish lect without threatening their variance.

This focus on Spanish language structure should be enforced in any educational environment, either one teaching languages separately, or another doing it by translanguaging, as proposed by Ofelia García (2012). Any good educational method for languages should aim at finally mastering the language strengths.

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AUTHOR

Arturo Zárate Ruiz, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte; e-mail: azarate@colef.mx