

“The Book Needs it:” Bilingualism and Biculturalism in Latinx U.S. Novels by Zoraida Córdova and Benjamín

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¹ "The Book Needs It:" Zoraida Cordova, author of *The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina*, said this of her use of Spanish in the novel in an interview by telephone, August 16, 2022.

Bilingualism and Biculturalism in Latinx U.S. Novels by Zoraida Córdova and Benjamín Alire Sáenz

Linguistics studies both spoken and written languages, but literature is written, though it often includes dialogue. In this essay, I focus on both linguistics and literature as I analyze the quoted speech in works of fiction by select U.S. Latinx writers. Contemporary U.S. Latinx literature has a long literary history dating as far as the 1960's with the Chicano Movement, though scholarly efforts such as the Recovering the American Hispanic Heritage project based in Houston have published a large body of work going back through the 1800's in what is the present-day United States. Nowadays a lot of work by diverse writers is getting published as light continues to be shed on minorities' problems, such as racism and immigration. This essay will study the use of bilingualism and code-switching in Zoraida Cordova's novel *The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina* (2021), which narrates the story of three generations of Ecuadorian Americans, and on the novel *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012) by Benjamin Alire Sáenz, which narrates the story of two Mexican-Americans coming of age.

Code-switching is defined as the “change from one language to another in the course of (one) conversation” and “is a typical feature of bilinguals' speech and a generally accepted practice in many multilingual societies.” (Dewaele,82) Code-switching is not a new phenomenon, it has existed since medieval times, but the term was first used by linguist Einar Haugen in 1954 to describe people's abilities to move between languages and dialects. In the United States, it was used to study the acquisition of English on Spanish speakers who switched between both languages, and also to study the “Africanization” of English by African Americans, but before diving into code-switching, we must first define bilingualism, which Mackey defines and Hoffman quotes in her book *An Introduction to Bilingualism* “as the alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual.” In her book, Hoffman also debates whether this is a good definition of bilingualism, as everyone tries to define the term depending on the competence of the speaker, since there are authors, as cited by Hoffman, like Bloomfield (1933) who argue that one must be “native level,” while others

such as Mackey (1970), who is cited above in Hoffman's work, have a broader definition on what is bilingualism and who can be considered bilingual.

The reason for referencing this definition and these arguments is because code-switching is a byproduct of bilingualism, and falls under this area of study, as linguists debate on why speakers code-switch. I explore this in my essay, as I analyze both Cordova and Sáez's novels. The goal here is to see the effects of two cultures and two languages as manifested in literature, in the case of English and Spanish in the United States. This is multidisciplinary research focusing on the literary, linguistic, social, and cultural aspects of code-switching in contemporary Latinx U.S. literature.

Zoraida Cordova is an Ecuadorian American writer of young adult and romance fiction. Born in Ecuador, but raised in the United States, she became fluent in both English and Spanish. Her works reflect this, as they tend to be about U.S. characters with Latin American backgrounds. I focus on her novel *The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina*, which follows an Ecuadorian American family as they struggle to accept the passing of their matriarch grandmother and the magical inheritance that she left them. The novel was published in September 2021 by Atria Books, which is a subsidiary of Simon & Schuster, one of the top five publishing companies in the U.S. and also the publisher of *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, which we will later explore.

The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina presents the family interactions of three generations, first the grandmother and matriarch of the family, Orquídea, who came from Ecuador to the United States in her twenties and who is fluent in both English and Spanish. Then, there are her children, Pena, Parcha, Félix, Florecida, Silvia, Ernesta, Enrique, and Caleb Jr. Raised in the United States, they are portrayed as fluent in English, but their fluency in Spanish is mostly left unknown, until Chapter 7, when their mother speaks fully in Spanish, taking them by surprise and forcing them to take a while to translate her words. They also use Spanish phrases and words, but never have a full-on conversation in Spanish. Finally, the last generation, the grandchildren of Orquídea, Marimar, Reymundo, Tatinelly, Penélope, Gastón,

and Juan Luis, like their parents, have been raised in the states and are fluent in English. It is also stated throughout the novel that none of them know Spanish except for a few words and phrases.

Throughout the novel I highlighted all the conversations that used either a Spanish word, phrase, or sentence. I also noted when the words were either directly translated afterwards or given with the expectation that readers would either know some Spanish or understand it based on the context. Most of the words were translated as a form of repetition by another character or by the same character's inner thoughts. Aside from that, I noted which Spanish words were used more frequently, under which context and by whom and mapped on two separate tables for visual understanding.

While most of the conversations in the narrative are among family, others happen with members outside the family, such as neighbors, lovers, friends, and external family such as a half great aunt. Taking this all into consideration, the comfort level and the amount of Spanish that peppers the conversations varies. Because the story is mostly based in the United States with a cast of characters that are not fluent in Spanish, most of the dialogue in the novel happens in English. That being said, because of the grandma's Ecuadorian origins, a lot of Spanish does infiltrate their vocabulary, such as words of affection, names, titles and phrases or expressions.

Spanish word or phrases	Meaning	Number of times used in novel
<i>Tio, Tia</i>	Aunt and Uncle	31
<i>Abuela, Abuelita, Mama</i>	Grandma	7
<i>Bendición, Buenos Días, Bienvenidos</i>	Greetings	9
<i>bruja</i>	witch	11

<i>niño, niña</i>	young boy, young girl, or child	14
<i>Diosito Santo, Santa María, Jesucristo Amado</i>	Dear God, Virgin Mary, Oh my God, and Jesus Christ Christian phrases that can be used to express shock.	7

These were some of the most commonly used Spanish phrases in the novel. The first two entries on the table are using family titles, such as mom, grandma, and aunt in Spanish. They are used as a form of respect for family members, as not using them might cause offense, which happens in the story, when one of the main characters refers to one of his uncles by just their name to heighten the fact that they do not get along and that he does not see his uncle as a figure of authority or respect. The third entry is for greetings, especially *Bendición*,” which literally translates to blessing. Latin American culture is heavily influenced by the Catholic church since it was the main religion in Spain, and today also by other prominent Christian evangelical denominations such as Pentecostalism, so even when people do not believe in God or practice religion, they still used *Bendición* as a form of greeting since religion is heavily embedded in the culture. It works as a hello and a goodbye, and in a way functions as if the person is asking for their family blessing. The correct form to answer this greeting is by saying *Dios te bendiga*, which translates as “God bless you,” though it is not used in the novel a lot.

The next entry on the table is *bruja*, which translates to witch, a word used throughout the novel as an insult to Orquídea and some of her family members, since most of them possess some type of magical talent or oddity that differentiated them from the rest of their community. The fifth entry is *niño* and *niña*, which can be translated to little boy or little girl; in the novel it is mainly used by the grandmother or the older members in the family to address the children and grandchildren in an affectionate way. In the last entry on the table, there are religious phrases such as

Diosito Santo, which is similar to saying “Oh my God” in English, and like the word *Bendición*, it comes from the heavy Christian influence in Latin culture, as even people who do not practice or believe used it. It is mostly used to express shock, but it can also be used to represent happiness or disappointment, depending on the context of the conversation and on the tone of the speaker.

Aside from those words or phrases, other Spanish words used were to describe or name certain locations in Spanish, such as *aeropuerto* instead of airport. Words were also used for foods and drink, saying *café con leche* instead of coffee or naming typical Latin foods such as *arroz con gandules* and *camarones apanados*. Additionally, certain words of affection, insults, nicknames and just random expressions were said in Spanish, such as *mierda*, which translates to “shit,” and *mi amor*, which translates to “my love.”

Additionally, most of the common Spanish words used throughout the novel are cultural signs, as they were either titles or greetings to show respect, phrases to express an emotion, or names that could not be translated. Claire Kramsh wrote in her book *Language and Culture* (1998) about how signs create meaning through associations with other signs, and are guided by human desire for appreciation, influence, power, and the general motivation for social and cultural survival. Kramsh shows how signs and meaning are culturally encoded, which is to say that a word may have the same meaning literally but not culturally. Kramsh gives an example about the word “house,” which translates to *casa* in Spanish. English speakers, when they think about house, they associate the word with window, but Spanish speakers are more likely to associate *casa* with *madre* which means mom in Spanish. This is all to say that the Spanish words used are not random, but culturally encoded in context.

Of course, the amount of Spanish spoken in the book depended a lot on the character that the chapter was following, as *The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina* narrates four points of view, Orquídea, and three of her grandchildren, Marimar, Reymundo, and Tatinelly.

Character	Number of words or sentences uttered in Spanish

Orquídea Divina Montoya	30
Marimar	14
Reymundo	10
Tatinelly	7

Orquídea, the only depicted as fully bilingual in the novel, speaks the most Spanish compared to the other characters. Orquídea was born and raised in Ecuador where she spoke Spanish only, and later on moved to the states where she learns English by casting a spell and eating American dirt; she is a coordinate bilingual since she learned both languages in different contexts. Her grandchildren, on the other hand, stated that they do not speak Spanish fluently but know certain words or phrases because of their family. Readers can see how culture has impacted their English as Spanish words filter into their everyday conversations.

This type of alternation is called code-switching, which Rampton (1995) defines as a linguistic phenomenon in which a speaker alternates between languages or dialects depending on the social or cultural context of the conversation. Moreover, Hoffman (1991) describes three types of code-switching: There is intra-sentential switching, which is when the shift is done in the middle of a sentence without any pauses, “*Honestamente, el delivery date es muy tarde para mi*” (honestly, the delivery date is too late for me). There is also inter-sentential switching, which is when the shift is at the sentence boundaries, “Explain it to me again, *que paso?*” (Explain it to me again, what happened?). And tag switching, which is when the person uses tag phrases or a typical saying from one language in another language “*Es que ella está mala de la cabeza, you know*” (She’s mentally challenged, you know.) The one that is mostly used in Cordova’s novel thought, specially by the character

Orquídea, is inter-sentential switching, since it occurs in the end of one of their spoken sentences.

Here is another example that demonstrates code-switching patterns: “I know you have questions. I don’t have answers. I did the best I could. I knew the price y lo hice de todos modo. Ya no tengo tiempo.” (Cordova, 75) As one

can see in this dialogue, halfway through the sentence the character alternates to Spanish. This happens because the character, Orquidea, is so affected emotionally that she expressed frustration by switching to her mother tongue at the end of the sentence. This phenomenon resembles Robinson and Altarriba's interpretation for emotional processing for bilinguals. "Difference between language speakers with regards to emotion processing can be seen as a result of a cultural regulations and the relationships between a person and others as well as, the way emotions and emotion events are represented in the specific language" (Robinson & Altarriba, 2015, 247-248).

Another manifestation of language processing through the story is the way the Montoyas show affection with each other by using Spanish terms such as "*mi niño*," or saying "*te quiero*," which can be translated into "I love you" in English. Of course, when it comes to emotional processing or code-switching both ideas require for the listener-speaker to be bilingual, so how does this affect characters like Reymundo, Marimar, and Tatinelly who are monolingual? The answer is that they are bicultural, which is defined by Schwartz as "comfort and proficiency with both one's heritage culture and the culture of the country or region in which one has settled (2), which in this context would be Latinx and U.S. American cultures. In Robinson and Altarriba's essay, "Culture and Language Processing," they define culture as "as sociocultural context that may be affecting or affected by language use, form, and function." (240) Using this definition I suggest the idea that the reason for Marimar, Reymundo, and Tatinelly's code-switching is because their language has been influenced by their culture.

For example, whenever they address family members such as "*Tía Silvia*," "*Tío Félix*," or "*Mama Orquidea*," they could have used the direct English translation, which would be aunt Silvia or Uncle Felix, but the fact that they used the Spanish equivalent instead is based on their culture and their upbringing. They were taught to address them as such, so they did, and to use a different term even if it means the same would feel completely different. The same goes for "*Mama Orquidea*," *mama* translates to mother in Spanish, the fact that they addressed their grandmother as such is a sign of respect and familiarity, since they were all raised in her house. Moreover, this also seems to be a form of keeping their culture alive, in a way, as they teach these Spanish words to children to keep the tradition going and to

teach them Spanish in a more casual way. There is also the fact that even if the words translate the same, it does not hold the same sentimental value; using these words in Spanish expresses a form of affection and respect that can be lost in its translation.

Furthermore, this book is filled with a magical realism mode of writing and addresses a lot of Latino superstitions and myths. Stories about *un duende* or *el cuco* are told to the children, and even some of the family members are addressed as *bruja*. While these words can be translated into dwarfs, bigfoot, or witch, the effect would be lost, as it does not really encompass the full meaning and history behind it. In her previous works, Cordova has stated that for her, *bruja* and witch are not the same, as they both suggest different practices and are charged with different cultural meanings. This reiterates Kramsh's discussion on signs being culturally encoded, because *bruja* does mean witch in Spanish, and while both have negative connotations, in Latin American countries *bruja* has a long spiritual history that traces as far back to the Spanish colonization and is also used by U.S. Latinos to show their roots.

On the other hand, there are words that are not usually translated, expressions such as *Jesucristo Amado*, foods like *arroz con gandules* or names and nicknames like *jefita*, which is a diminutive that implies a younger and smaller version of the word *jefa*, which translates to boss, though translating it to small boss would be incorrect, as in this specific case the diminutive suffix *-ita/-ito*, is not used to express a diminutive size, but to address someone affectionately in Spanish. For example, in my family my nephew is addressed as “*gordito*,” which in English it would translate as “little fat boy,” but it is not used in the sense of addressing his weight, but in an endearing way, similar to how someone may address their loved ones as “honey” or “baby.” These words and phrases would be loosely translated and therefore lose their cultural feeling. Gladkova elaborates on this in her chapter on “Ethnosyntax,” arguing that language, specifically grammar is not “semantically arbitrary,” but its origin and meaning are “related to a broader cultural understanding” (1998, 33), which is to say that culture can influence language and practices, so that expressions such as the diminutive are hard to translate, because cultural value is lost in the translation.

Another aspect that would be hard to translate are the characters' names themselves. Some of the characters have names with special meanings, such as Marimar, which was given to her because her mother loved to swim and wanted to name her, *mar y mar*, which translates to sea and sea, not really having the same effect if she had gone with the English version, and the same goes for Reymundo, *rey del mundo*, which translates to king of the world. Using these names in English just does not hold the same way.

All these examples are to show that this family has been heavily influenced by the Ecuadorian culture even when three generations have passed, and they had already assimilated to the United States. The kids were raised in English-speaking communities with the few other Latino descendants in their small town either ostracizing them or so desensitized from their Latino side that the culture does not hold much meaning for them except to provide them with a last name.

Bringing it back to the author, Zoraida Cordova, who like the characters in the stories is an Ecuadorian American, is fluent in English and Spanish, as she is a first-generation immigrant who learned Spanish in Ecuador. A lot of the Spanish language and Ecuadorian culture in the story are part of her own vocabulary and traditions. I interviewed her for this research in August 2022, and when she was asked about her reasons and concerns for using Spanish in her books this was her answer.

“When I use another language and Spanish is going to be it, because Spanish is my first language, but when I use...that is really because something in the book needs it and so I don't worry that somebody is not going to be able to read it because as a writer I should be doing the job of making sure there's enough context in the story or in the scenes to understand what it means without having to Google it.. if that makes sense.” (Cordova, 2022, 1)

In comparison to other U.S. Latinx YA writers, the number of times that Cordova used Spanish in her novel is higher. These will be visible later, when we compare Cordova's table with Alire's as he uses fewer Spanish words in his novel than she does. Moreover, among the reviews that *The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina* received, some critics on Goodreads claim that she used “too much Spanish in her novel.” As a Spanish speaker from Puerto Rico, I have

been taught English as a second language since kindergarten, as it is part of the curriculum for being a U.S. territory; so I must admit that I have never considered the amount of Spanish in a book, as it does not affect my understanding of the novel, so it is something that I have overlooked as a reader. As quoted above, she expresses that the Spanish appears in her novel because she feels that her narrative “needs it,” yet does not detract from its accessibility. This made me look back on her novel and observe that most of her words in Spanish were either followed by the direct translation of the word or by an explanation or context. For example, “Some of the locals called her *La Flor de la Orilla*, the flower of the shore.” (Cordova, 137)

In the interview, Cordova made it clear that she never forces the Spanish while writing, it just comes naturally, which prompted the question if the usage of the Spanish in her novels reflected her use of Spanish in her daily life. She answered no, and then gave the example of her not calling her uncle *tío*, and added that not everyone uses Spanish the same way, saying: “Cause not every character, not every person calls their abuela, *abuela* or *abuelita* or something like that, sometimes they call them something else, I never call my grandmother abuela in my entire life, I call her *mami*.”

This prompted me to ask what exactly can be considered a ‘normal’ amount of Spanish in a novel, and as I read other novels by other Latinx authors, I noticed that Cordova uses more Spanish words and phrases than many other Latinx YA authors, such as Anne Marie McLemore, Nina More, Benjamin Alire Sáenz, among others. A more precise comparison can be made to Benjamin Alire Sáenz’s novel *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* (2012), which this year was adapted to film and produced by Lin-Manuel Miranda.

Benjamin Alire Sáenz is a Mexican American poet and writer of children’s books and young adult fiction. He was born and raised in the United States by Mexican immigrant parents. He has stated that his dominant language is English, but that his first language is Spanish, and that he can write and speak in both fluently, but that Spanish is a little harder for him. His works deal with being a child of immigrant children, struggling with one’s identity, and of coming to terms with one’s sexuality. His novel, *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe*, is about two teens coming to terms with their queer sexuality, their racial and ethnic identities and their family relationships.

The novel follows a main protagonist, Angel Aristotle Mendoza, also known as Ari, who is 15 years old at the start of the novel, and 17 by the end. At the start he is struggling from the fact that his older brother, Bernardo, has been in jail since Ari was four and no one in the family talks about him, which prevents him from talking to his parents as they all seem to keep things to themselves. He then meets Dante Quintana, who is his opposite, and who ends up becoming his first solid friendship, and eventually first love.

Both Ari and Dante come from Mexican American families, and both Ari's parents, Santiago 'Jaime' and Liliana 'Lilly,' speak fluent Spanish, while only Dante's mom, Soledad 'Chole' speaks fluent Spanish, while Dante's father, Sam, understands Spanish but does not speak it. One of the main themes in the story is how much each one of them is "whole Mexican," especially Dante, who struggles a lot with the idea that he does not seem or act like "most Mexicans." There is an instance where he even argues about his ethnicity:

"We're not really Mexicans, do we live in Mexico?"

"But that's where our grandparents came from."

"Okay, okay. But do we actually know anything from Mexico?"

"We speak Spanish."

"Not that good"

"Speak for yourself, Dante. You're such a pocho."

"What's a pocho?"

"A half-assed Mexican." (Sáenz, 44-45)

There are many conversations like that throughout the novel, questioning the stereotypes of Mexicans and making fun of them. But focusing back on the amount of Spanish, as the conversation signals, Ari speaks more Spanish than Dante, and while it is never specifically mentioned how fluent they are, it does indicate that each of them understands some. It can also indicate class differences between them, as Ari parents work as a postal worker and schoolteacher, while Dante's parents worked as a college professor and therapist.

Spanish words or phrases	Examples	Number of times used in the novel
<i>Pocho</i>	Spanish slang for Mexican Americans	4
<i>Vato</i>	Spanish slang for friend, similar to saying “dude”	4
<i>Amor, hijo de mi vida, hijo de mi corazón</i>	Affectionate terms similar to saying “my love” and “dear child”	5
<i>Pendejo, pinchi joto, chingao</i>	Insults, similar to saying “dumbass” or worse	3
<i>gringo</i>	Spanish slang for white Americans	3

This table, similar to the one done for *The Inheritance of Orquídea Divina*, presents the most used words throughout the novel. The first two words in the table are *pocho* and *vato* both common Chicano slang. *Pocho*, as the table says, means someone who is Mexican American, or as Ari defines, a “half-assed Mexican.” (245) The word is mostly used as a derogatory word or as an insult, especially against Chicanos who do not speak Spanish at all or “that well.” *Vato*, on the other hand, is slang for friend, similar to how Americans use terms such a “dude.” Next on the table, there are various terms of endearment in Spanish. Going in order, “*amor*” means love, *hijo de mi vida* o *hijo de mi corazón* can be translated to “my dear child,” though an exact translation for each of these terms would be “son of my life” and “son of my heart.” In the novel, these terms were used by both Ari’s and Dante’s mothers as terms of affection for their kids. Fourth on the table, are various insults in Spanish, each of them can be translated as either asshole,

dumbass or motherfucker. Lastly, there is the term gringo, which is a derogatory term for White American. It is also Mexican slang though it has expanded into other cultures, such as Puerto Rican.

Words that are not used in the table but that appear frequently, are that of Mexican food, such as *menudo*, *tamales*, and *quesadillas*, since they are terms that are also used in English to name the same foods, they are rarely translated. They also mention Latinx artists or songs such as *Los Lobos* or *La Bamba*. Spanish usage also includes places such as *Chico's Tacos* and *Good Luck Café* and Spanish names such as, Enrique, Cecilia, among others. As there are words that cannot be translated or are widely understood, they stayed the same in both Spanish and English, they were left out of the table.

Characters	Number of words or sentences uttered in Spanish
Aristotle	13
Dante	4
Lili (Aristotle's mother)	6

Aristotle, as the character through whose perspective we are seeing this story through, and as someone who has stated throughout the novel that speaks Spanish well, is the person with the most usage of Spanish words, followed by his mother, who is stated to be a fluent speaker and Dante, whose knowledge of Spanish is very limited. Now in comparison to the table for *Orquídea Divina*, where there is a higher usage of Spanish words. I believe this happens for two reasons, one being Aristotle's dominance of Spanish, because while he does state that he speaks it, he also states that his parents' full conversations in Spanish are hard for him to understand and follow. Another reason is the people he is speaking to, most of his conversations in the novel are with Dante, who describes himself as not good in Spanish.

In the case of Sáenz's novel, I noted that tag-switching, which is when the person uses tag phrases from one language to another language, and inter-sentential switching, which is when the shift is at the sentence boundaries, were the types of code-switching mostly used. I note this because the Spanish words mostly used in this novel, as presented on the table, are Mexican slang, which here usually fall under tag-switching.

Either way, this also made me look to the author himself, Benjamin Alire Saenz, who while I did not get the chance to interview him, I found a useful interview that he did with *Reforma*, an online magazine by The National Association to Promote Library & Information Services to Latinos and Spanish Speakers. So, in one segment of the interview, he is asked how he chooses in which language to write and this was his response:

“Well, you know, I write Spanish and I can write in it, with more difficulty than I write English. English is my dominant language. Spanish is my first language, but English is my dominant language because it's the language of my education... But I like to use more Spanish actually, because I use more Spanish. But, Ari and Dante wouldn't use more Spanish, for instance.... Their circumstances. But also, as a writer, even if my language is a little bit, you know, I could bring my language abilities in Spanish pretty neck-and-neck with my English ones, but... This is, in America, they published your books in English.” (Sáenz., 2019)

So similar to Cordova, Sáenz's first language is Spanish, but the language he uses the most and so is more dominant in his writing as an author is English. But he also states that part of his motive for writing in English is because in “America (U.S.) they publish your books in English.” What is interesting about this, is that the United States does not have an official language, so in theory one can write a novel in any language and still target it to everyone, yet in reality the majority of U.S. readers are English speakers. The 2019 U.S. Census states that around 78% (around 241 million) of the nation are English speakers. It also states that the second most spoken language in the states, is Spanish, with 13%. (42.5 million)

This can also clearly be seen in the works that are being published, as code-switching is common in today's literature, especially in novels. Marilyn Zeledon states in her research that “code-switching was first introduced in

Latino literature around the time of the Chicano Movement in the 1960s and has been used as a distinctive feature of Latino literary works to this day” (5). To give more context, the Chicano Movement, also known as El Movimiento, “the Chicano movement was both a civil/human rights struggle and a movement for liberation. In this realm, universities became one of the focal points of protest in the movement.”

(Rodriguez, 2) Nowadays, there has been research into this matter, such as the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project in Houston, TX, where scholars have been gathering U.S. Hispanic literary works in which code-switching can be traced back to the nineteenth century.

This suggests how common code-switching really is. Referring to the novel at hand, as a reader I expected to find the code-switching awkward, as often it is taught that in professional occasions, especially written ones, one should stick to one language (Anton, et al). So, it should not be surprising to see how easy or naturally it came to Cordova and Sáenz to code-switch in their novels, and for readers and publishers to support this. Also, worth noting in Sáenz as earlier in Cordova, is how many instances of code-switching there are, such as inter-sentential switching which is when words or phrases in another language infiltrate at the beginning or the end, and for which characters. There is intra-sentential code-switching when the alternations happen in the middle, and lastly, tag switching (extra-sentential switching), which happens when they used tag phrases from one language on another. In Cordova and Sáenz’s novels most of the code switching was mostly inter-sentential or tag-switching. Specifically for Cordova’s novel, it was mostly inter-sentential as the switching happens either at the start or end of the sentences for the character of Orquídea, as it was explained before. Cordova’s other characters, such as Marimar and Reymund, mostly used tag-switching, as the Spanish they used was mostly Spanish slang or catch phrases such as “*Salud*, motherfuckers” (Cordova, 79), which in this case. *salud* in in the form of making a toast. Additionally, most of the Spanish words and phrases that Marimar and Reymundo use, if we look at the tables again, are either to address someone or greet them.

Meanwhile, in Sáenz’s novel, the form of switch that is smoothly used is tag-switching. If we go back to the table of the Spanish words mostly used, we will see that that all the words are Mexican slang, which falls under the

category of tag-switching. I believe the reason this happens for both Cordova and Sáenz's characters is because of their fluency in Spanish, or the lack of, as both their characters, Marimar and Reymund, Ari and Dante, are not "fluent" in Spanish, so they have a more limited usage of it, unlike a character like Orquídea, who is fluent in both Spanish and English.

In conclusion, surroundings and the community can affect the listener-speaker presented in the novels. While in Cordova's novel, Orquídea learned English through magical methods, her descendants did not. At home, they learn of Ecuadorian myths, language, and culture, while in public they adapted and learned a culture different from that of their mother/grandmother. It is evident in the way the children express themselves, speaking mainly English with alternations to some Spanish words and phrases. On the other hand, there is Aristotle and Dante, both of them are third-generation immigrants, but their Spanish is different from each other. Aristotle comes from a household where both parents speak Spanish fluently, so their knowledge of Spanish is much more advanced than that of Dante, whose only source of Spanish comes from his mom, as his dad does not speak Spanish, but understands it.

This essay also traces the pros and cons of this, which comes down to their identity. Throughout Cordova's novel it is mentioned a few times by both Reymundo and Marimar, the judgement and self-doubt they feel for not being fluent in Spanish. To the point that even when they visit Ecuador, they stay constantly by their great-aunt's side for translations and interpretations. Aside from that, they never question their Ecuadorian side for their lack of Spanish, as they are still part of the culture in other ways, like practicing traditions and following alternative spiritual beliefs.

Meanwhile, Aristotle and Dante have a whole conversation about being "real Mexicans" or not, which was quoted above. Aristotle argues that they are Mexicans, even though they themselves are not from Mexico because their parents came from there and they, Dante and Ari, speak Spanish, to which Dante declares that he does not speak very well, which ends with Aristotle calling him a *pochó*. It is evident that for them speaking Spanish is part of their culture and is a part of them for being of Mexican heritage. Moreover, that conversation arose because Dante has the habit of taking off his shoes before entering a house, when Aristotle gives him a weird look, he elaborates that the Japanese also

take off their shoes before going into someone's house, which prompted Aristotle to argue that they are not Japanese, they are Mexicans and then the whole conversation above followed it. As important was what followed at the very end. "Okay, so maybe I'm a pocho. But the point I'm making here is that we can adopt other cultures." (Saenz, 45) This is crucial, because people can adopt other cultures, and they have already adopted culture, they are both part of American and Mexican cultures.

Now there is a term for this, biculturalism, which Schwartz and Unger (2008) define as comfort and proficiency with both one's heritage culture and the culture of the country or region one has settled or been born in. The term refers to people who either speak both languages, have their inner circle full of people who share the same culture, or consume media from both cultures. This shows that at first, it focuses on people's behavior, but with time it has expanded into considering people's values. (Schwartz and Unger, 3-4)

Going by this definition, biculturalism can be seen in Sáenz's novel, since the characters, Ari and Dante, are first introduced, as one of the things that connected them was that they both have Mexican heritage. Their inner circle, especially for Ari, is full of people who have Mexican heritage, such as their family members, friends, and lovers. They also practice Mexican values, as they are family oriented, respectful, and in Ari's case, proud and struggling with gender roles. Moreover, as this essay has presented, they both used code-switching, which contributed to their biculturalism.

Cordova's novel also possesses similar attributes. Ecuadorian values family and having close relationships, and while Marimar has a complicated relationship with her family, it does not change the fact, that when they were in danger or struggling, she dropped everything to be there for them. And even when Marimar tries to cut them off, she still maintains her strongest relationship with her cousin Reymundo. Also, similar to Sáenz's characters, Cordova's characters code-switch throughout the narration with words and expressions that do not hold the same value or effect if translated.

In closing, code-switching is a byproduct of bilingualism and/or biculturalism. It is a way for people to accept and embrace the two cultures that are familiar to them, without feeling that they must choose one or the other. As it was presented, code-switching came to be widespread of the Latinx U.S. culture and literature through the Chicano movement as they fought for their rights for education and so on. It has expanded to other cultures such as Ecuadorian in the United States. It is a way for authors to express and embrace their culture through their arts, it is also a form for readers with the same identity to bond better with characters and see themselves reflected in literature.

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