



A Spanglish Revolution



Introduction: Code-switching

Code-switching (CS) “is the ability on the part of bilinguals to alternate effortlessly between their two languages” (Bullock and Toribio 2009, 1). It is often seen by the public as a sign that someone is not fully competent in the two languages and may be stigmatized, but linguists perceive it as a sign of bilingual proficiency and familiarity. It is done unconsciously, but nevertheless continuing to follow grammar rules of the two languages, regardless of their level of integration.

There are several different forms of CS: the most common are **intra-sentential** (within a sentence) and **inter-sentential** (between clauses/sentences). In general, CS requires language contact coming from a diverse social environment; and may be used with the aims of “filling linguistic gaps, expressing ethnic identity, ... achieving particular discursive aims” (ibid., 2), and taking advantage of a language’s prestige (ibid., 10).

Many studies have been devoted to the study of everyday code-switching in bilingual communities, but the phenomenon has also become established in pop culture, through music and other media (Bullock and Toribio 2009). Though code-switching can involve a mixture of any two languages, Hispanic (or Latino) music in particular has gained global popularity and success, inspiring the foundation of the Latin Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences in 1997 and the Latin Grammys in 2000.

Methodology

This project investigates the trends and patterns of Spanish-English code-switching (often referred to as “**Spanglish**” [Lipski 2007]) in popular music over a period of three decades, from 1980 to 2010 inclusive. In addition, because there are many varieties of code-switching, this study examines how Spanglish has evolved qualitatively within music during this time. Songs from every “Billboard Top 100” music ranking chart from 1980 to 2009, inclusively, were searched for instances of Spanish-English language mixing. Any instances were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet, including song title, artist, chart ranking, the specific lyric(s), and type of code-switching.

The Billboard Top 100 chart was chosen because it demonstrates the popularity that a song has experienced in the United States over the course of a given year, and thus its acceptance by US society. American society was chosen because Spanglish often refers to “the language usage of Latinos born in or residing in the United States” (Lipski 2007, 198). Furthermore, 28.1 million Americans speak Spanish at home (Shin and Bruno 2003) and, in 2002, Latinos composed 12.5% of the American population, making them the largest ethnic minority in the US (Carreira 2002). Their numbers and influence are only expected to continue to increase: “Spanish speakers grew by about 60 percent [between 1990 and 2000] and Spanish continued to be the non-English language most frequently spoken at home in the United States” (Shin and Bruno 2003, 3). They have a strong buying power (\$382.2 billion in 2002) and are market often specifically targeted by businesses (Carreira 2002).

Trends in code-switching are studied in order to determine how the musical use of Spanglish has evolved over time. This project therefore demonstrates whether the use of Spanglish in music has become more accepted and less stigmatized by society (particularly consumers), and whether it may have led to increased interest in the Spanish language and culture as a whole.

The project aims at answering the following research questions:

1. Have the instances of Spanglish forms seen an increase in popular music?
2. Have Spanglish constructions undergone qualitative changes over the last three decades?

We hypothesized that there would be a clear increase in the use of Spanglish in mainstream music over time, and that this could be related to other socio-cultural domains.

Results and data analysis

Though Spanglish is often given a negative reputation (Lipski 2007), this study of popular American music has shown that it has become fairly accepted over time by US society. Figure 1 and Table 1 show an unquestionable increase in the use of Spanish-English code-switching between 1980 and 2009. The turn in Spanglish’s popularity in music seems to have occurred in the late 1990s, specifically 1997. This correlates with the creation of Latin Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (also in 1997) and is in close proximity to the establishment of the Latin Grammys in 2000.

The only years where Spanglish was not identified were 1980, 1981, and 1984.

Figure 2 reveals the average ranking of Spanglish-containing songs on the yearly Billboard Top 100, calculated per decade. It is imperative to note that a lower average means that the songs ranked ‘higher’ on the chart. Interestingly, code-switched songs ranked lower on the charts in the 1990s than in the 1980s, though they contained higher quantities of code-switching.

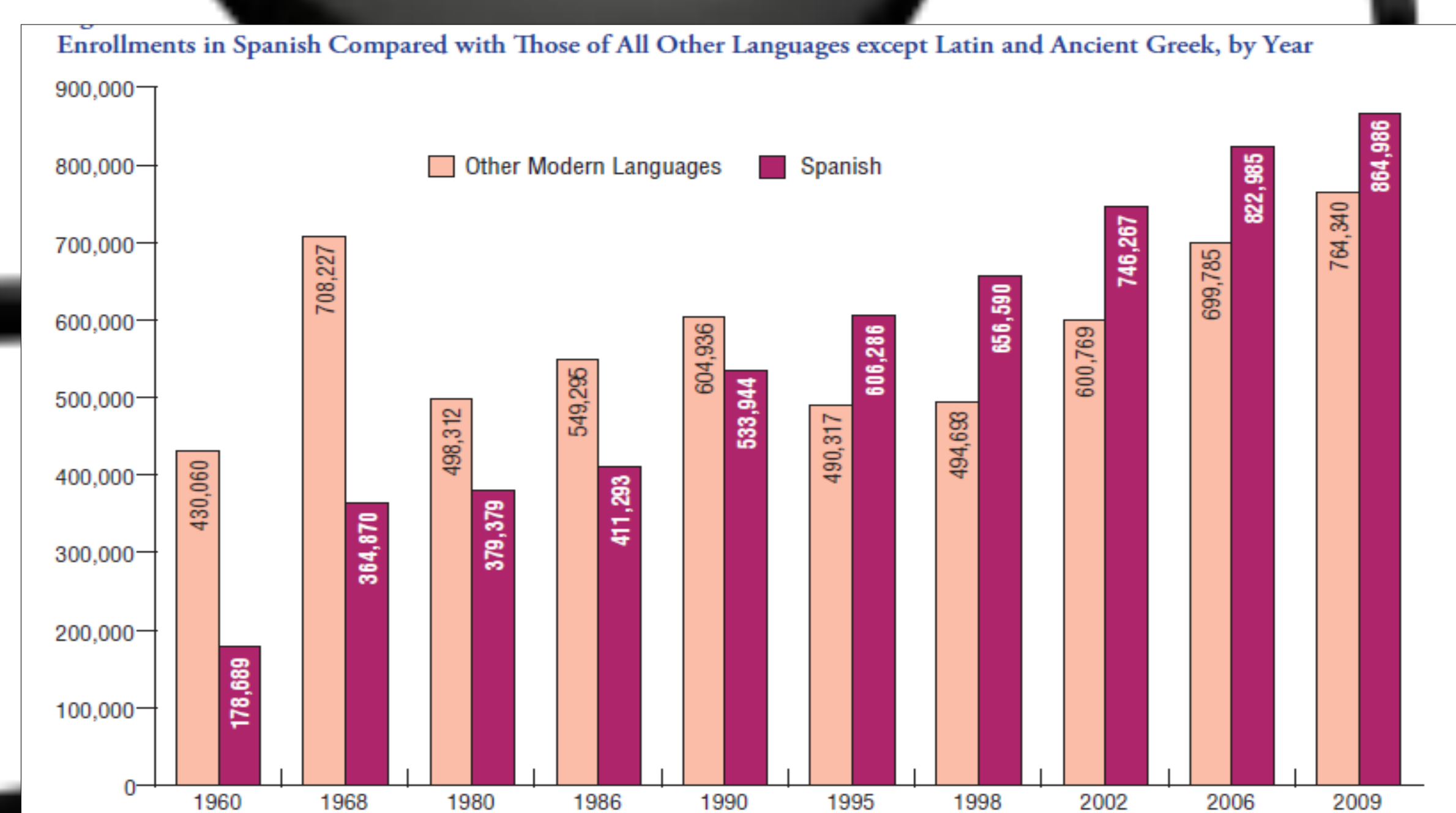


Figure 3: Language enrollments in the US, from 1960 to 2009 (Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin 2010)

Figure 1: Use of Spanglish in Billboard Top 100 songs from 1980 to 2009

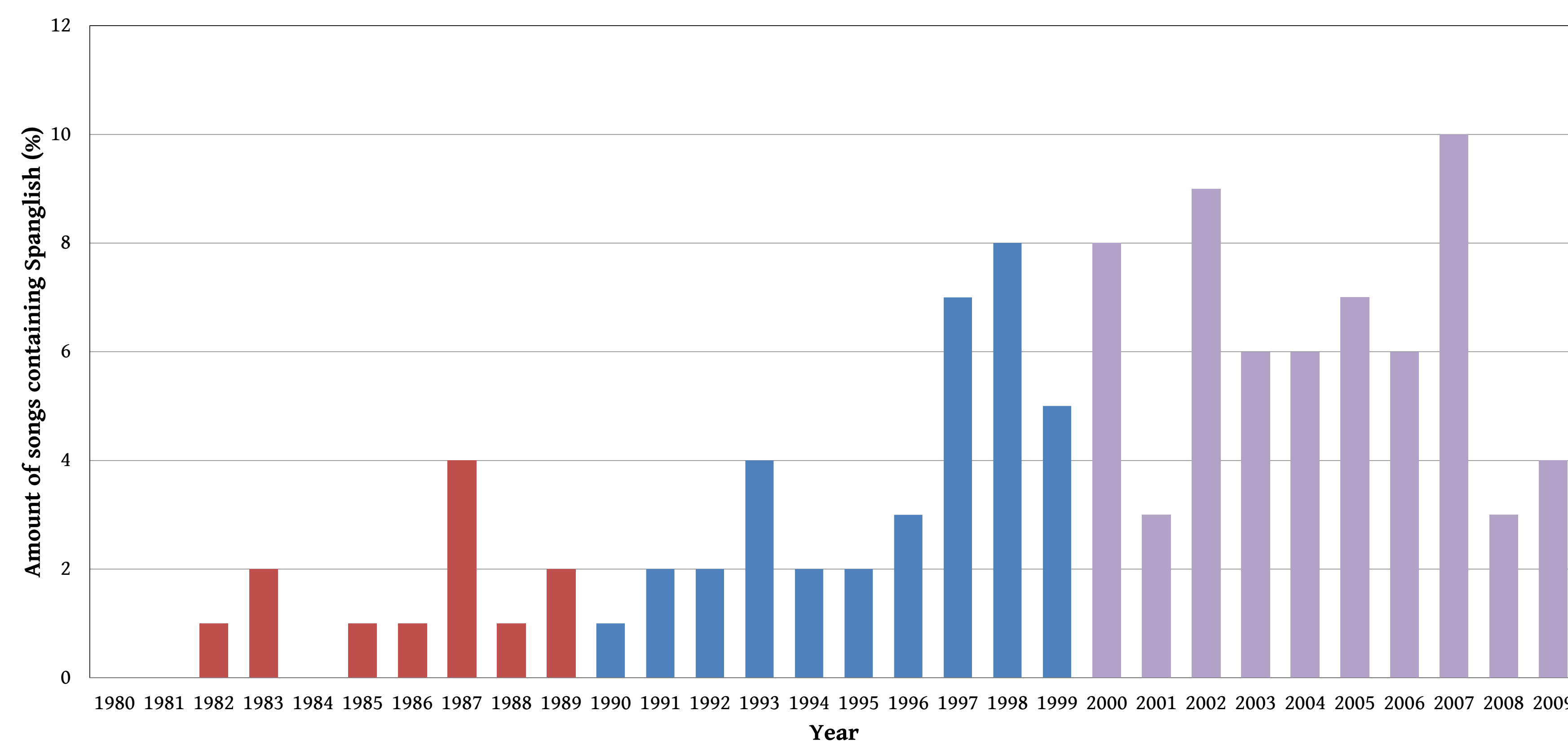


Figure 2: Average ranking of Spanglish-containing songs on Billboard Top 100 charts from 1980 to 2009, per decade (wherein the lower the average, the higher the average popularity)

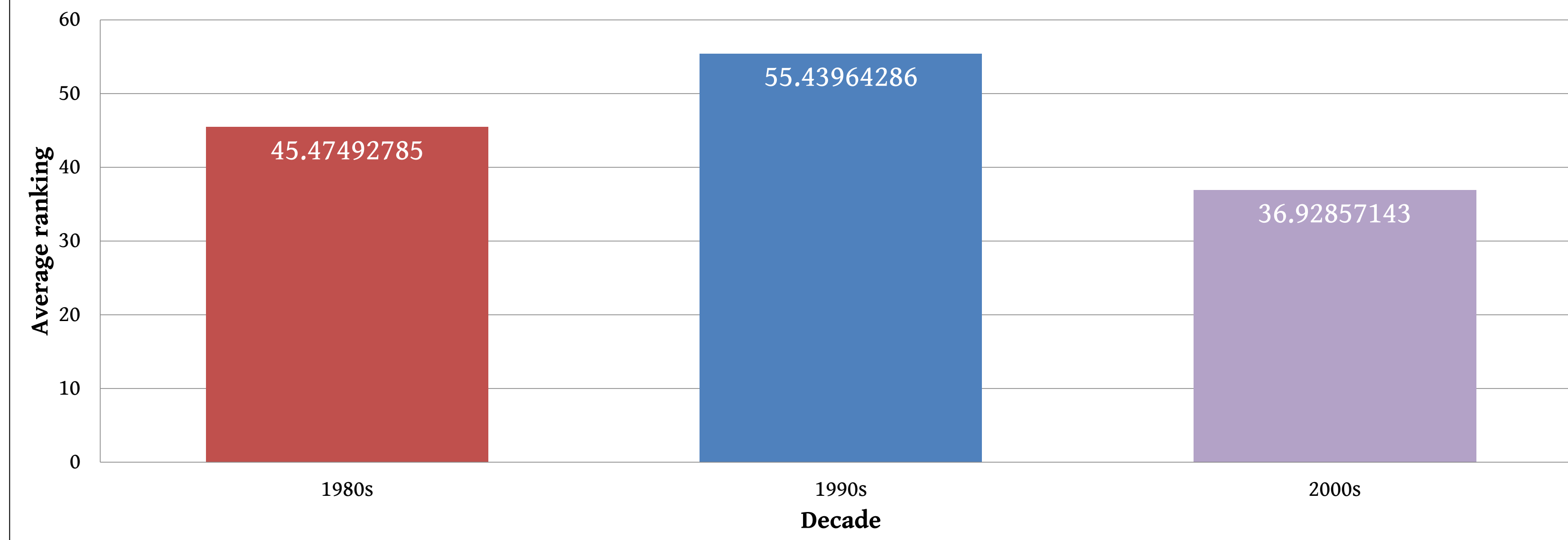


Table 1: Use of Spanglish in Billboard Top 100 songs from 1980 to 2009, by decade

Decade	Number of songs containing Spanglish	Percentage of songs containing Spanglish
1980s	12	1.2
1990s	35	3.5
2000s	62	6.2

Conclusions and relevance

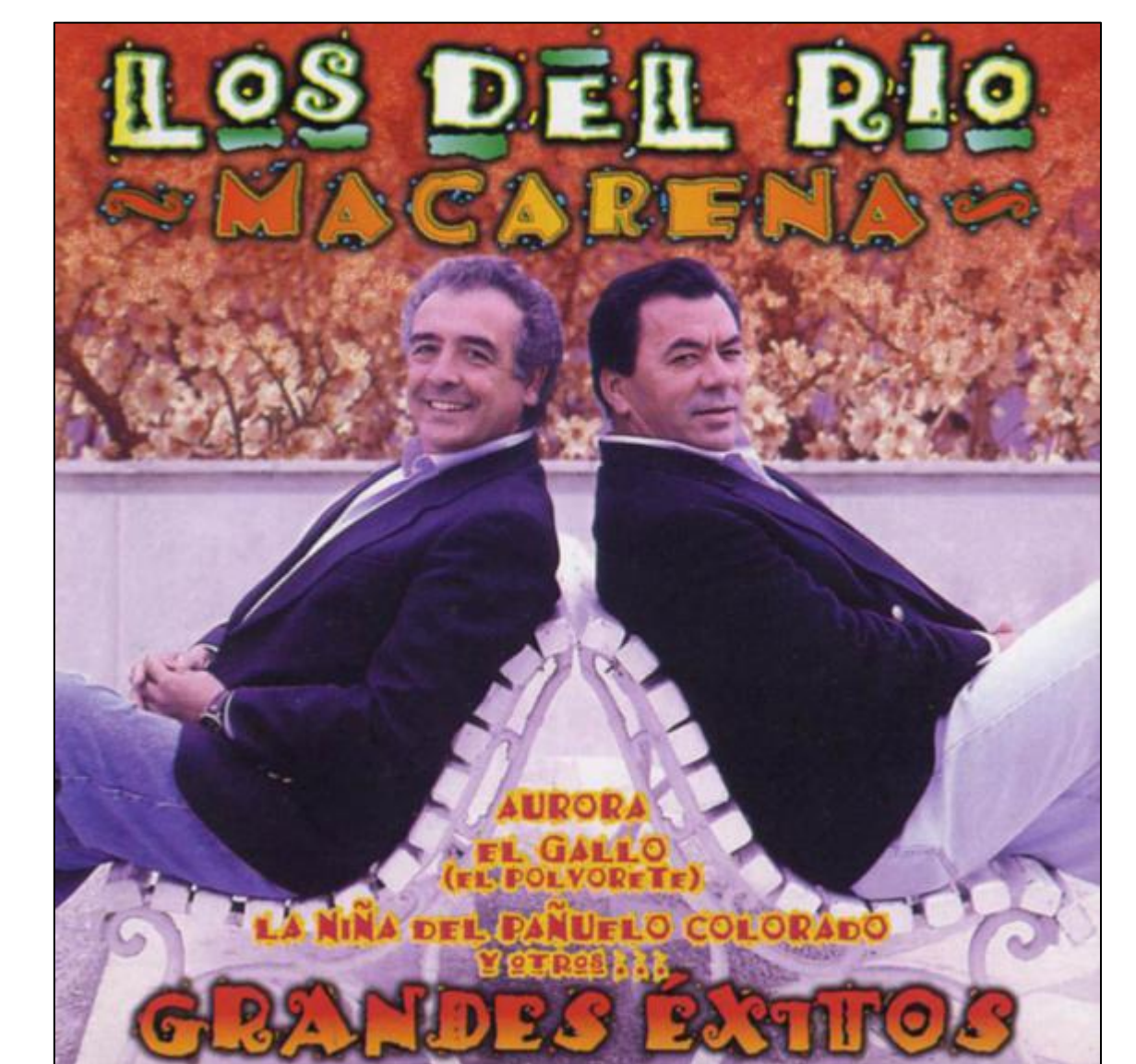
Though Spanglish is usually spoken “with other bilinguals with whom [Hispanophones] share a dual language identity” (Bullock and Toribio 2009, 10) seems that artists have become comfortable with introducing Spanglish into song, assuming that their music will reach a community of people who will understand their message and be accepting of their language use. This may partially be a result of already-present Spanish loans in the English language (e.g., “fiesta”, “siesta”, “quesadilla”). Therefore, “CS does not represent a breakdown in communication, but reflects the skillful manipulation of two language systems for various communicative functions” (ibid., 4).

Now that the Spanish language is present in mainstream, everyday music, it is clear that there has been an increased social acceptance of the Spanish language – and possibly culture – throughout this time period. Throughout the years, there has been a shift from simply including general cultural references (e.g., “Now who’s this Don Juan I’ve been hearing about” in Rick Springfield’s 1982 song, “Don’t Talk To Strangers”) and singular Spanish words in a line, to songs entirely written in code-switching (e.g., the Spanglish version of Shakira and Beyoncé’s 2007 song, “Beautiful Liar”).

Results will be beneficial to sociolinguists studying the relationship between pop culture, specifically music, and language spread or change.

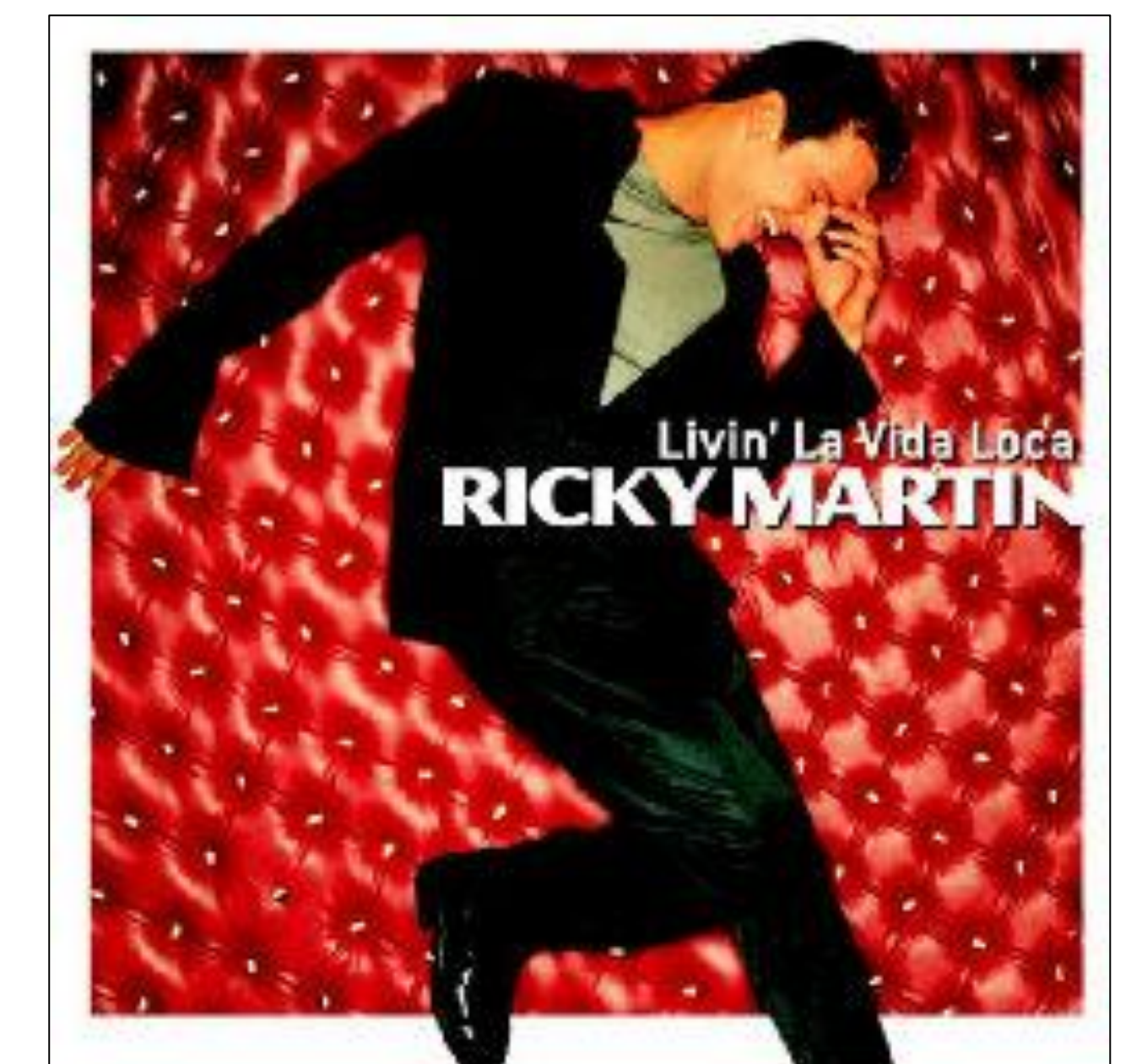
An increased use of Spanglish in the public sphere may have had an impact on:

- The cultural pride of members of the US Latino community: they are no longer ashamed of their identity
- The possibility of language change (i.e. evolution) because of the change in the social structure and perception of the Hispanophone community
- The number of people choosing to learn Spanish as an L1 or L2 language, which has increased over the same time period (Figure 3)
- The buying power of the US Latino market and the extent to which the language is seen as a commodity (Coupland 2003)
- The attitude of non-Latinos towards the Spanish language and culture (in media and otherwise)



Possible sources of error and/or bias

This study is not immune to possible sources of error. The most likely source of error or bias would be the accuracy of lyrics searched. For example, a first study of Cypress Hill’s “Insane In The Membrane” (1993) found no Spanglish, but a second search in a different lyric inventory found an instance of CS. No control can be enforced on the accuracy of lyrics as posted on the Internet.



References

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- Shin, Hyon B. and Rosalind Bruno. *Language Use and English-speaking Ability: Census 2000 Brief*. US Census Bureau, 2003. Web.

Lyric inventories consulted

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|-------------------|-----------------|
| AZ Lyrics | Metro Lyrics |
| Rap Genius | Sing365.com |
| Anysonglyrics.com | Lyrics007.com |
| Stlyrics.com | Lyrics.net |
| Anysonglyrics.com | Lyricsfreak.com |
| Oldielyrics.com | |