

Daniela Arriaga

Spanglish

I have always felt a confusion between English and Spanish, as a bilingual it should be easy to navigate through both languages but there is a limit, at some point I don't even know what I'm trying to say whether that be in English or in Spanish; yes I can read and write in both languages but they both come with a disadvantage. When I'm having a conversation with my parents there are times where it comes to some words or phrases and I get stuck trying to say them in Spanish so I use other words to try and replace that word until they know what I'm trying to say, or I simply switch to Spanglish and hope that they know what it means in English. It's even worse because they don't understand English well so I just sit there confused like them. Same goes for when I'm speaking English and I'm trying to say something I can only get out in Spanish, it's a never ending cycle. While school did help, I think those who impacted my language development were those around me, that being my family, neighborhood and friends. The first language that I learned was Spanish. I learned English when I started elementary school. After school all my cousins would be in the kitchen eating and talking and I so badly wanted to join in their conversation but I was scared of being judged because I was only limited to some words and the rest would come out in Spanglish or just plain Spanish. Being around my cousins who spoke fluent English and cracked jokes I was scared to speak to them. I was young and already thinking of being judged by the way I spoke and that stayed with me for a long time.

When I was younger my uncle sent me a book from Mexico called "Mi primera primavera" and there were a lot of stories written in Spanish and everyday during my summer break my mom

would sit me down and have me rewrite all the words in that story onto a notebook. Once I was done I had to read it to her and then wait until the next day for the next story. Those moments helped me but also confused me.

Back In 2016 when Trump was announced president of the United States I remember seeing my mom's face turn to a disappointed one when she saw the news the next morning after the election. Looking at her face I was filled with so much worry, America had elected a racist to lead them; what would become of us. Not long after the hate crime would go up against Latinos and I would worry for my family because if they encountered a racist how would they defend themselves against them. It was around that time when me and my family were coming back from the park and we went into a pizzeria for dinner and as soon as we walked in we were greeted with trump merchandise everywhere, trump bobble heads, fliers, shirts and the "Make America great again" hats on each corner I was instantly filled with fear and immediately sadness when my mom said "Mejor comemos en el carro". Along with our pizza we got stares and whispers from behind the cashier. When my dad went up to ask for napkins he was mocked on his way back "De nadaaa" and I wanted so badly to say something but I was afraid, If I can speak both languages why couldn't I say something in either one... It impacted me, all because I thought spanglish was an issue I regret not saying anything that day. The universe had given me another chance when my parents got a call saying that there was a group of boys walking around their workplace and they were never seen before. We bumped into the group in the elevator and my mom was reasoning with them telling them that they can't be in there because they don't live there and because of her not being very good at English they laughed and mocked her, I got mad and I remember saying "Don't make fun of my mom, she's asking

you nicely to leave because you don't live here" and one of the boys said "you could barely understand her" and another said "That's why trump is gonna kick ya Mexicans out" I was infuriated and I began to argue with the group of boys, insults and profanities were thrown at each as I yelled at them in both languages, my Spanglish had come out without a care in the world. When they left I turned around looking at both my parents feeling proud that I had stood up for them even with my broken English and Spanish. All my dad said was "Esa es Mija" "Aprendan Aprendan". That experience was a life changer, all the embarrassment I once felt was thrown out the window and I felt relieved. Being bilingual is confusing and to this day I have trouble with both; I can read and write in both and I can pronounce words without an accent but It will always give me trouble though this time i'm not afraid anymore. I may not be fluent in English or Spanish but I'm currently fluent in Spanglish.