

## Paper 1

Daniel Muniz's article "Ebonics And Tex-Mex - English By Any Other Name", through anecdotes of his own life and lives of others, aims to convince readers of the importance of speaking a standardized form of English if one wishes to succeed financially and professionally in the United States. Through his writing, he shows his firm belief in the idea that language and its usage are intrinsically linked to money, and that using any non-standard form of English in this country leads to low-paying jobs, living in unpleasant neighborhoods, and being "condemned to a life of poverty". He credits his own rise from the barrio to his ability to succeed in the classroom and workplace as a direct result of "my mom [being a] language cop... she assertively corrected anyone who misspoke it", which to me indicates several of his underlying beliefs about language. Firstly, that there is a "right" way and a "wrong" way to speak a language. Secondly, this metaphor creates the sense that the obedience to language "laws" and the strict correction of a language's misuse is definitely a good thing, while employing the language improperly is tantamount to a crime. He notes in his article that he believes non-standard language usage and its negative consequences apply not only to variations of English in the United States, but also applies the idea of the danger in drawing on non-standard language variations when using "broken and incorrect Spanish" in Mexico- implying that universally, for each language there is a correct, standardized variety and all the rest are incorrect.

This article and the ideas and values of language it presents include a large number of ideological erasures. For example, he tends to describe people who speak “incorrect” English or no English at all as lazy, undisciplined, and ignorant people who need to be saved from themselves. While stating that certain individuals lack the ability to speak standardized English because of these negative internal characteristics, Muniz fails to note reasons outside of the person’s direct control that might be responsible for unfamiliarity with the standardized language. Many times people are unable to learn a new language, or learn to speak it “correctly”, due to constraints on time, money, or simply opportunities available for them to learn.

Muniz’s critique of Tex-Mex as an acceptable form of English, which concludes that Tex-Mex is “bad English with some Spanish tossed in... It is also bad Spanish with some English tossed in. Not only is it speaking one language incorrectly, it is also speaking two of them badly”, also contains elements of ideological erasure. Muniz deduces that all Hispanics who speak Tex-Mex are too lazy to properly learn either language, but falls short of recognizing the reasons for which it most likely originated. It is probable that these two languages blended together into a sort of “contact language” because it was necessary for two different communities who spoke two different languages to be able to communicate with each other. In fact, it would appear that these people are actually at the opposite end of the spectrum as far as the way in which Muniz describes them; they are not too lazy to be bothered to learn each other’s language but were ambitious and motivated enough to try and creatively solve a problem to the language barrier which was holding them back (or at least nowadays, they are the ancestors of the people who were). This blending of languages also probably helped to

integrate these newcomers into the existing community, improving their lives and their ability to succeed in a new place.

The audience that is most likely to be reading Muniz's article is the same type of person that Muniz is promoting; reading this type of article seems like it would only further support opinions that they already hold. This could potentially be dangerous, as it would cause the people who are in social, economic, and political power (the readers of this article who are most likely native, educated, and financially well-off) to be further blinded to the various inequities that are in play in our society's institutions, thinking that if nothing else, intolerance towards non-standard English should be increased. Also, since non-standard speakers are not as likely to be reading this material, they will not have the chance to respond to Muniz's claims or maybe even be aware that this point of view is being held and acclaimed among some influential groups in society.