

Interpreting for Spanish-Speakers: Cultural and Linguistic Issues

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Spanish
facilitate
disagree ^{up}
Workshop
English
speak agree
interpreting
comparte
share

Interpreting for Spanish-Speakers: Cultural and Linguistic Issues

4 basic themes for discussion

- 1) Language interference & Spanglish
- 2) Issues with numbers
- 3) The “poor historian” phenomenon
- 4) Cultural expectations & medicine

Language interference & Spanglish

► False cognates Examples:

“pisar,” “estoy constipado”

“embarazada” vs. “embarrassed”

“Excited” vs. “excitado”

And use of Spanglish compounds the false cognate problem.



Pie (eng.)



Pie (sp.)

Language interference & Spanglish

English

- ▶ I have real bad heartburn.
- ▶ -----
- ▶ My kid is really blue, like down in the dumps, you know.
- ▶ -----
- ▶ -----
- ▶ She got cold feet so she won't be having surgery.

- ▶ Me siento bien intoxicado.
- ▶ -----
- ▶ Me duelen los riñones.
- ▶ -----
- ▶ -----
- ▶ Este tío tiene, de veras, un par de cojones (bolas)
- ▶ -----
- ▶ -----

Spanish

More language interference or inference

Talk to your medical provider.

My son has a real sweet tooth.

This is just over-the-counter medicine.

I feel better.

Me duelen los pulmones.

Me duelen los huesos

English

español

Language interference & Spanglish



- ▶ Groceries
- ▶ Lunch
- ▶ Library
- ▶ Yard
- ▶ Texting

- ▶ https://www.buzzfeed.com/alejandratalba/spanglish-words-your-parents-hate-hearing?utm_term=.lw9qMzJ2V&sub=3398621_3458685

- ▶ **Grocerias**
- ▶ **Lonchar**
- ▶ **Libreria**
- ▶ **Yarda**
- ▶ **Textiar**

<https://youtu.be/UB18y2ZYBiY>

English

Spanish

Some slippery terms

Drugs vs. Medicine

Drunk vs. Borracho

Joint vs. Bar, Disco, Porro o Articulación

“That’s a hip joint.” vs. “The hip is a joint.”

“Your doctor suggested (recommended) you take these drugs” And hands the patient a Rx PRN.

How will Spanglish & texting change things?

- ▶ Fui ayer ala emergencia aki en vegas me mandaron con un dr para k me de la orden para el estudio de Mray porfabor mande respuesta para enterarme k esta leyendo mis mensajes nesesito asegurarme si me pararon mi cheke si es asi nesesito trabajar en lo k sea aki en vegas no son facil las ayudas tambien k va pasar con la corte si me van a pagar yo no tengo dinero para sobrevivir tambien kien va cubrir los gastos medicos creo k necesitamos hablar hoy no me despego de mi cel
- ▶ No resibi pago esta quincena hable con el ajustador y me dijo k el no podia hablar conmigo k hablara con mi abogado yo pienso k ya me retiraron el pago el 7 de julio tengo cita con mi dr simming pero no se si todavia me va atender y mi pregunta es k si busco un dr aki en vegas kien lo va pagar si va ser de mi parte

Issues with numbers

- ▶ Our phone number is: 503-227-1234
- ▶ ¿Entonces es el: 50-32-27-12-34?

- ▶ Su fecha de nacimiento es el 6/4/76
- ▶ What month is that?

- ▶ Ciento cincuenta – o – cien cincuenta
- ▶ 7 o 2 means 702 or 7 or 2

Issues with numbers

- ▶ Me pagaron precisamente 20.685,89 Euros.
- ▶ Si el cambio es precisamente $\$1 = €1$,
¿cuántos dólares tengo?
- ▶ La receta es para 20.00 mg por día.
- ▶ Celcius vs. Fahrenheit,
Lbs vs. Kilos, etc., etc.

(Not quite) Issues with numbers



- ▶ Take two tablespoons every four hours.
¿Cuanto es?
- ▶ Debo tomar 3 gotas por día, pero ya tengo la gota...
- ▶ Gotas para la gota, ¿porqué no?
- ▶ Cucharadas en la cocina, si – ¿pero en el hospital?
- ▶ ¿Y para el té?

The “poor historian” phenomenon

- ▶ Vague body descriptions:
 - Mano – brazo,
 - pie – pierna
- ▶ Use of passive vs the active voice:
 - I forgot vs. se me olvidó
- ▶ Use of absolute expressions:
 - todo, siempre, nunca, nada, nadie
 - Nunca he tenido este dolor antes.
 - Fuí al médico y nó me hicieron nada.
 - Nadie me quiso ayudar.



Cultural expectations & medicine

- ▶ Use of ampolletas (inyección)
 - vitaminas, ¿de veras?
- ▶ Antibiotics
- ▶ Vaccinations
- ▶ Looser & stricter pharmacies.



Cultural expectations & medicine

- ▶ Attitudes towards pain & disability
- ▶ How expressive should you be?

Especially in front of
a super-gringo
ortopedista.



(Not quite) Cultural expectations & medicine

- ▶ Be careful of positive answers to negative questions?

“I’m glad to let you know your test results were (positive/negative).”

“Your MRI results were completely unremarkable.”

“No me preocupo – mi médico me dijo que mi análisis VIH es totalmente positivo!”

What else can we think about?

- ▶ Advocacy
- ▶ Patient safety
- ▶ Better health outcomes
- ▶ Customer services
- ▶ Health literacy
- ▶ Keep up with native language
- ▶ Ongoing training

Just to end on a humorous note

