

CODE MIXING AND WORD-FORMATION AS SOURCES OF HUMOUR: SOME EVIDENCE FROM ALTERNATIVE MUSIC

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Abstract:

Nowadays English is the unquestionable lingua franca of specialized fields such as computing or science, but it is also the language of music, a form of art through which human beings may manifest their identity, show criticism or support, and express wit and humour.

This paper reports on the results of the linguistic analysis of a corpus of alternative Spanish bands which include English in their names. The analysis intends to show how central and peripheral types of code mixing together with both rule-governed and deviant word-formation become sources of humour in their different manifestations: scatological, scathing, or simply witty. To this aim, the paper offers an overview of the typical and marginal varieties of code mixing registered in the corpus, from simple borrowing (Pechuga Band, Surfin' Bichos) and different types of respelling (Inthecisos, Desk'n'Sados, The FreeTangas, Japimondei) to code mixing through word-formation devices: blending (Girasoules, Swingvergüenzas, Nosotrüsh), compounding (Trujamán), initialisation (F.A.N.T.A.), reduplication (Hermanas Sister), or affixation (Los Sundayers). The analysis concludes that code mixing is a source of humour which both unites and separates. Through linguistic transgression, alternative musicians achieve a common aim: they manage to be different, to shock and surprise and this is part of their philosophy. Besides, code mixing is a form of word play which helps these artists join the international community. However, code mixing ironically becomes, at the same time, their particular form of keeping away and rebelling against the power of English, since local identity is in fact reasserted by preserving the host language.

Keywords: Code mixing; Music; Humour; Transgression; Word formation.