

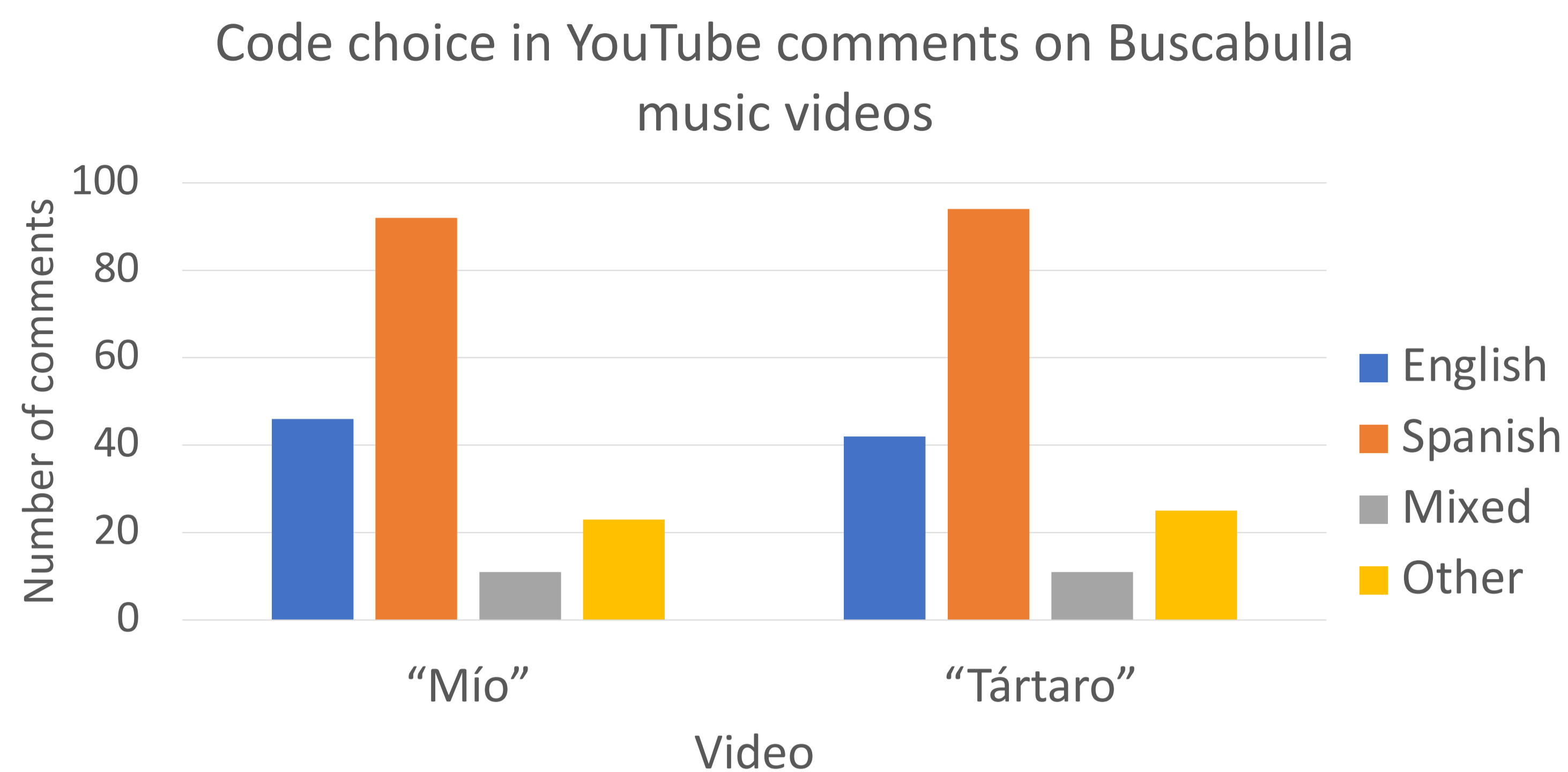
“Provocativa, cruda, bien Boricua”: Language choice in the music of Buscabulla

Aidan Malanoski

The Graduate Center, CUNY

Introduction

- This study concerns code choice by the band Buscabulla and their listeners
- Buscabulla:
 - Founded in NYC by Puerto Rican-born Raquel Berrios and Luis Alfredo del Valle
 - Returned to Puerto Rico after hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017
 - Released their debut LP *Regresa* in 2020; the album addresses issues of Puerto Rican identity

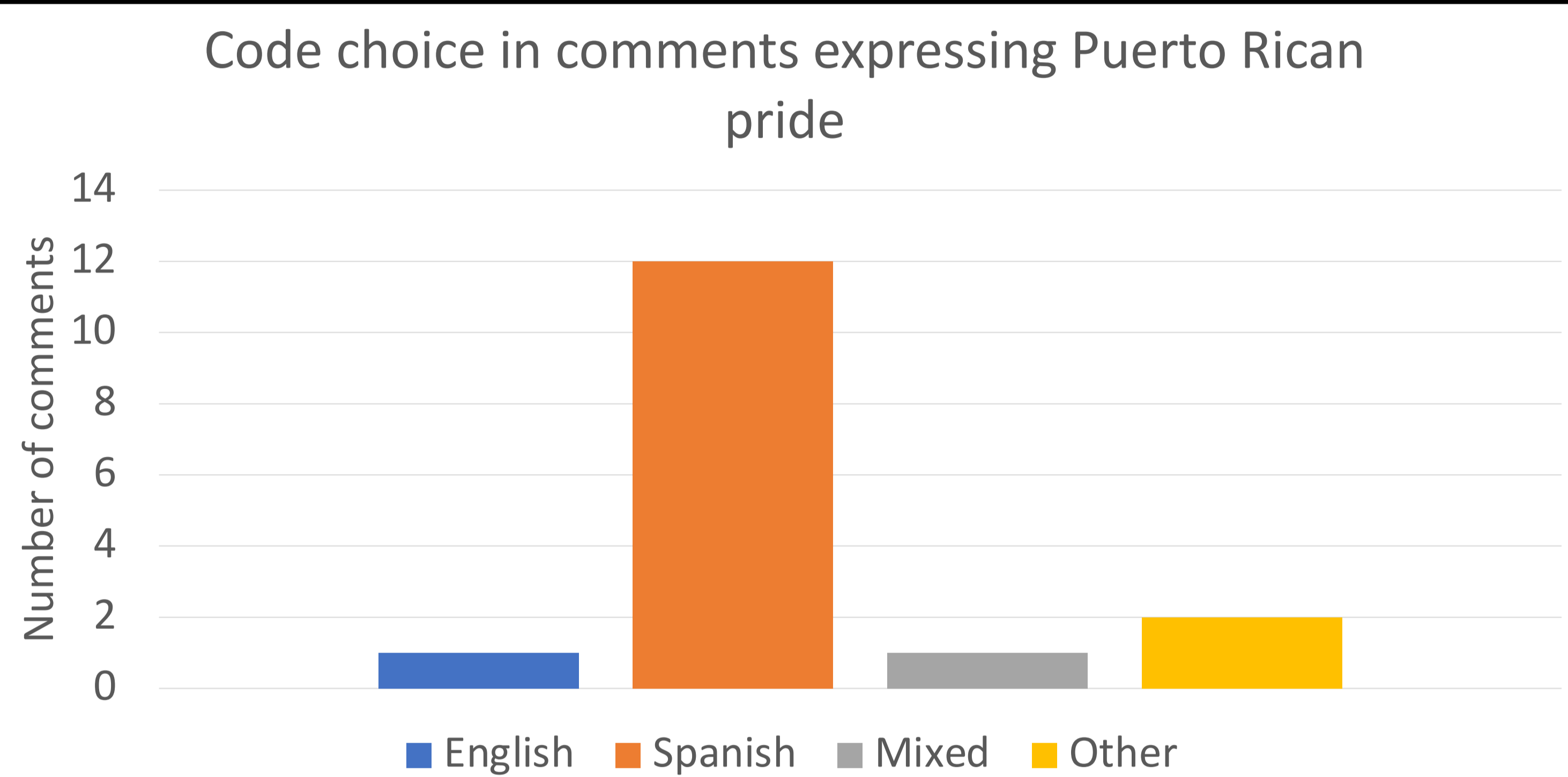


Question

What role does code choice play in identity work for Buscabulla and their listeners?

Theoretical background

- Tactics of intersubjectivity:** “contextually relevant sociopolitical relations of similarity and difference, authenticity and inauthenticity, and legitimacy and illegitimacy” (Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 382)
 - adequation** (383): construction of sameness
 - distinction** (383): construction of difference
 - authentication** (385): construction of a credible/genuine identity
 - authorization** (386): use of structural power to provide legitimacy
- Enregisterment:** “processes through which a linguistic repertoire becomes differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register of forms” (Agha 2003: 231)
- By invoking a register, speakers can position themselves relative to the persona(e) linked to that register



Discussion

- Almost all comments expressing Puerto Rican pride are in Spanish, demonstrating a link between Puerto Rican identity and monolingual Spanish
- Buscabulla’s use of Puerto Rican Spanish constructs **adequation** with an imagined Puerto Rican citizen, thereby aligning Buscabulla with a Puerto Rican identity
- Given the place of Spanish in Puerto Rican national identity (Duany 2003; Zentella 2003), Buscabulla’s “pure” Spanish **authorizes** their claims to Puerto Rican identity.
- Buscabulla’s avoidance of code-mixing creates **distinction** from the mainland Puerto Rican (Nuyorican) community, which is ideologically linked to Spanish-English bilingualism (Zentella 2003)
- Commenters’ use of Spanish constructs **adequation** with Buscabulla and **authenticates** the commenter as a “real” fan

Results

- Buscabulla overwhelmingly restrict their repertoire to Spanish-like forms, with rare loanwords and calques from English
 - les gusta mucha el flow* ‘they really like the flow’ (“La Fiebre”)
 - no sé como salir* ‘I don’t know how to leave’ (“El Aprieto”)

	sC	s#C	s#V	s##
Buscabulla	99	99	76	91
San Juan, PR (Lipski 1986)	97	96	69	54

Table: Rate of /s/-lenition by linguistic environment (%)

References at:

<https://malanoski.ws.gc.cuny.edu/files/2021/04/references-yImp-2.pdf>

Postscript: Named languages under Translanguaging

- If a speaker possesses a unified, “multilingual” repertoire, why would they deploy that repertoire in a “monolingual” way?
 - Because of external pressure (see Otheguy *et al.* 2015)
 - As a form of audience design
 - To invoke identities, stances, etc. associated with a named language
- What is a named language, really?
 - “a collection of the only partially overlapping idiolects of people *who share a common cultural identity*” (Otheguy *et al.* 2015: 294; their emphasis)
 - A register—the product of a speech chain linking certain semiotic practices to a group (often, national) identity (see Frekko 2009)