

The use of code-switching in stand-up comedy: Gabriel Iglesias

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Abstract

This article discusses the role of code-switching in Gabriel Iglesias' *Aloha Fluffy* comedy special. Iglesias is a stand-up Mexican American comedian who frequently refers to Latino identity in the United States and occasionally speaks Spanish. In this specific show, Iglesias alludes to a variety of cultures and impersonates their accents but the prevalence of the Hispanic theme in Iglesias' performance makes Spanish appear to be ubiquitous. However, an analysis of his performance shows that while the serious plot is indeed Latino identity and his use of Spanish helps to ground his persona, the code-switching functions almost anecdotally, much like the onomatopoeia Iglesias uses for comedic effect.

Keywords: code-switching, Gabriel Iglesias, humor studies, Latinness, identity

Introduction

Code-switching, switching back and forth between two languages, is natural for many bilinguals especially in private settings. As advertising, films and the media try to relate and connect to Hispanics –the largest minority in the United States– code-switching has now become commonplace in the public sphere as well. A case in point is Gabriel Iglesias: a Mexican American stand-up comedian who sprinkles his shows with varying degrees of Spanish-English code-switching. This paper explores the use Iglesias makes of code-switching in his comedy show *Aloha Fluffy* and analyzes how the Spanish-English interactions function as identity as well as comedic markers.

Theories of humor and stand-up comedy

Humor is a complex, multifaceted invariably elicits laughter and employs a variety of techniques, which range from exaggeration, ridicule, and repetition, to coincidence, or misunderstanding (Berger 1976). Age-old as it may be, until the 20th century, philosophers only wrote tangentially on humor, and then quite negatively (Morreall 2013). Interestingly, the first book-length work on humor did not appear until Henri Bergson's 1900 *Laughter*. Today the

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reverse is true: humor is mostly considered in a positive light and research on the topic is booming.

The general parameters of humor deal with: "(1) a social context, (2) a cognitive-perceptual process, (3) an emotional response, and (4) the vocal-behavioral expression of laughter" (Martin 2010, p. 5).

Responses to humor most frequently involve a smile or laughter –the latter audibly certifying the success of humor. And while not all cultures laugh at the same things nor does humor remain the same over time, it does seem that laughter is innate. For example, the first vocalization after a newborn's crying is laughter (McGhee 1979 in Martin 2007, p. 3); even babies that are born deaf and blind will laugh (Provine 2000). Given the physicality of these responses, it is not surprising that there be a genetic or biological view of humor.

Along these lines, there have been number of studies which have looked at the effects of humor and have shown that laughter is capable of relieving pain, stress, tension, and even boosting the immune system (Bennett and Lengacher 2009). There are a myriad of advantages to possessing a sense of humor, such as the ones Martin (2001) lays out in his article "Humor, Laughter, and Physical Health": humor and laughter lead to atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance, relaxation, pain reduction, even immunity. In fact, it is believed that "laughter is primarily a social vocalization that binds people together" (Provine 2000, p. 58). Other recognized positive aspects of humor are the correlation of humor with high intelligence, problem solving, and learning. Views on humor have done an about-face and, from the negative light it was first written about to today: "over the past two decades there has been an almost obsessive emphasis on the positive aspects of humour" (Goatley 2012, p. 308).

Humor is universal and simultaneously culture-specific. In the West, where the philosophers and theorists who have studied humor include Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Descartes, Kant, Freud, or Bergson, three main but complementary theories appear repeatedly: superiority theory, relief theory, and incongruity theory (e.g. Morreall 2013), which Attardo (1994, p. 47) suggests grouping into social, psychoanalytic and cognitive categories.

According to the superiority theory, when people laugh at others' misfortunes, disadvantages, or ignorance, laughter allows for a feeling of superiority (Attardo 1994, p. 20), but may be felt as aggression and can possibly give way to satire. Although 'humor' is a relatively new term (not until the 18th century does it start to refer to that which is funny or amusing), this is the oldest theory and stems from the ancient Greeks, specifically Plato who considered that laughter could be vulgar and malicious. The Greek philosopher believed that humor was an emotion too easily overindulged and uncontrolled, and that comedy was a type of scorn: "Taken generally, the ridiculous is a certain kind of evil, specifically a vice" (1978, p. 48-50). Aristotle also believed laughter expressed scorn and considered wit "educated insolence," while Hobbes (in Martinich 1999, p. 95) considered laughter "nothing else but sudden glory arising from some

sudden conception of some eminency in ourself by comparison with the infirmities of others.” It is understood that the superiority theory then deals with humor on an emotional plane. As science connected the brain to bodily functions, the modern idea of funniness began to evolve (Morreall 2013), and in the 18th century, the relief theory evolves and humor is seen as a way to alleviate tension. For Dewey, laughter “marks the ending ... of a period of suspense, or expectation” (1894, p. 558–559). In Freud’s relief theory (1928), laughter releases nervous energy; that is, the tension built up from forbidden and repressed thoughts and feelings. Relief theories of humor deal with malice, indecency and nonsense, and are physiological in nature. Also from the 18th century is the incongruity theory which argues that humor is a tool used to make sense of things that do not seem to make sense. For Kant (2010), we laugh “not because we deem ourselves cleverer than this ignorant man... but because our expectation was strained” (130). And Schopenhauer (2012) explains: “The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity.” As such, the incongruity theory is more involved in the sphere of cognition and looks to explain how laughter can stem from two ideas that are “felt to be utterly disparate” (Monro 1988, p. 352).

Given that humor, verbal and nonverbal, spontaneous or intentional, is so prevalent, it should not come as a surprise that there has been a professionalization of humor throughout history. In truth, “[a]lthough humor is playful, it serves a number of ‘serious’ social, cognitive and emotional functions” (Martin 2007). Obvious examples are the court jesters of medieval times, outspoken and bold both in the West (e.g: England or Spain) (as well as in the East (e.g.: India) (Shulman 2007, p. 3). Today’s stand-up comedians, cartoonists, comedy writers, humorous authors, and actors continue the same lack of inhibition and intentionality in their capacity as modern-day professional humorists.

Insofar as stand-up comedy is concerned, the performance of a comedian in front of a live audience has roots in “ancient Greek theatre, Native American tribal rites, Balinese clowning, carnival activities, court entertainment, and traveling performance throughout the world, past and present” (Mintz 2005, p. 575). In the United States, stand-up comedy is said to develop from “traditions of burlesque and vaudeville and featured slapstick humor, clowning, impressions, and ridicule” (Greengross and Miller 2009, p. 79).

In today’s society, comedy, and especially stand-up comedy, has become a highly codified asset and moves an inordinate amount of money. (A cursory glance at the number of How-To-Do-Stand-up-Comedy books online would seem to prove this as well.) For example, roughly 30% of the \$150 billion annually spent on advertising was already targeted for humorous advertisements in the 1990s (Spotts et al 1997, p. 1). Interestingly, a number of companies have

incorporated stand-up comedy into their training. One such firm is Peppercomm, a strategic communications company based in New York, which believes that the skills needed for stand-up comedy and improvisation are the same as those required in business settings. As the managing director of strategic development explains, “It’s about starting with ‘the core principle of truth.’” It follows that high-stake companies be interested in humor given that most stand-up comics are said to be creative, extrovert, neurotic, and often quite unique when compared to other vocational groups (Greengross and Miller 2009, p. 82). In addition, Koziski (1984) goes so far as to say that stand-up comedy should actually be considered an anthropological endeavor given that, in his opinion, its comics are “sensitive culture critics” (57) positioned to describe everyday life.

Stand-up comedy is intrinsically considered a group activity. However, although females are said to laugh more than males, the majority of stand-up comedians are male. In fact, “[m]en seem to be the main instigators of humor across cultures” (Provine 2000, p. 59).

Considering stand-up comedians from an anthropological point of view, it is possible to extrapolate that comedians actually assume the role of cultural spokesperson. This idea is strengthened when one takes into consideration that, as Mintz (2005) explains, stand-up comedians must establish agreement and develop rapport with their audience, all the while keeping “the comments within the frame of acceptability for the particular group” (7). In this light, it is not a stretch to consider Gabriel Iglesias, a bilingual Spanish-English stand-up comedian, whose family is from Mexico and who lives in California, a spokesperson. But for whom? For bilinguals, for males, for comedians, for Latinos, for just himself?

Code-switching

Code-switching is the act of switching between languages without violating the grammar of either and always according to the sociolinguistic rules of each. The switch between languages may occur at the level of the text (e.g., chapters or paragraphs in alternating languages such as in *The Brick People* by Alejandro Morales); at the level of a sentence or phrase (e.g., code-switching occurring within a phrase or sentence, even if the code-switching is just one lone word); or at the level of the word (e.g. the Spanish company called *Vueling* (Spanish *vuelo* (flight) + English *-ing*), known as intralexical code-switching. Interlingual code-switching is used to refer to the switch between distinct languages, and intralingual code-switching for the switch between varieties of languages. Code-switching may occur for a variety of reasons but interlocutors, the topic of conversation, or the context are the most common elements that influence the switch. Switching back and forth between languages is an age-old practice, usually carried about by bilinguals, although those who aren’t may also code-switch. Some well-known and often referenced examples of code-switching include Cicero’s *Letters* (Greek borrowings in Latin); the muwashshahs of Al-Andalus, the Muslim Spain of the 11th and 12th century, where

Hebrew, Spanish, and Arabic were mixed in the same poems; Arabic and French in contemporary Senegalese or Moroccan songs; the mixture of Spanish in English in US Latino literature (Aranda 2006); English and Hindi in Bollywood films (e.g. *Mitr, My Friend*, 2002); or Japanese and Korean in films around the Cold War (Kwon 2013).

Not all bilingual communities or speakers engage in code-switching or consider it favorably but, for those who do, there are a myriad of reasons behind the language switch. Among US Latino communities, the use of both English and Spanish in the same utterance is quite common, as its literature in all its genres evidences. According to Romaine (1995), ethnic consciousness comes with an increase in a group's code-switching. Ultimately, the use of dual languages is a marker of cultural identity, unity and camaraderie (Curcó 2005). Code-switching is used for accommodation and to create rapport or solidarity with other speakers. However, code-switching may also be used to exclude, which means that it can be used as a linguistic mechanism of social manipulation. Interestingly, code-switching is many times the result of interlocutors quoting and portraying others of that language. It is quite common that topics that commonly occur or are learned in one language be spoken about in that language. Similarly, switching to the 'other' language is a strategic mechanism for introducing euphemisms or taboos (Aranda 2001).

Two uses that are referenced but not studied much are code-switching as a tool in creativity and for generating humor. One interesting study has looked at how Fijians joke by code-switching into Hindi (Siegal 1995). Another has looked at how Jewish stand-up comics exploit code-switching by drawing on Hebrew, Yiddish, other languages—even pseudo ones—but deliver the punch line in English (Ervin-Tripp 2001, p. 55). In Kirschen's (2013) study on code-switching in the *I Love Lucy* television show, he explains that both Lucy and Ricky code-switch although in different ways. Ricky switches to Spanish to fill in gaps in English, but Lucy, who wants to communicate in Spanish, uses code-switching as a tool alongside repetition, higher volume and rising intonation. Perhaps what is more interesting is the placement of the laugh tracks that point to the cultural leveling (740) that was taking place on television in the 1960s. As this present study will show, Iglesias also uses code-switching to create a humorous exchange, simultaneously including and excluding sections of his audience and in the process advancing the cultural leveling even further.

Latino comedy and Gabriel Iglesias

Today it is almost impossible for a Latino comic to escape either the reference or the comparison first with Desi Arnaz (1917-1986), Lucille Ball's husband on and off the *I Love Lucy* television show, or secondly with George Lopez. Ricky Ricardo, Arnaz's screen name on *I Love Lucy*, which ran from 1951 to 1957 (and which has never stopped airing since), seems to have set the tone to a number of Latino comics both in topic reference and language use. On almost

any given day it is possible to watch Ricky Ricardo on television switch into rapid-fire Spanish—usually an outburst in Spanish, the consequence of dismay, surprise or anger. While he may act like a buffoon, the fact that he was economically successful ultimately did afford him a positive image (Avila-Saavedra 2011). Of Mexican descent, George Lopez (1961-) has had the second longest running sitcom starring a Latino. In his television series of the same name, which aired from 2007 to 2011, Lopez does not hesitate to identify as a Latino, from the music played on the show, to his speaking of Mexican American idiosyncrasies or his use of Spanish. On one of his HBO specials (65 minutes long), Lopez produced 83 code-switches, not counting solely phonetic ones (Wells 2011).

Gabriel Iglesias is an up-and-coming Latino comedian and, although he has not reached the heights of either Desi Arnaz or George Lopez, Iglesias, of Mexican descent (née Iglecias, 1976, San Jose, California) is slowly becoming a major presence. According to his website, fluffyguy.com, Iglesias is the number one comedian on youtube, with more than 100,000,000 views worldwide. The object of this present study is his show called *Aloha Fluffy* taped at Hawaii Theatre in Honolulu on December 14-15, 2012 lasting one hour and thirty-three minutes. In a recent write-up on the comedian, the University of Northern Iowa states: “Gabriel’s clean and animated comedy style has earned national crossover appeal, making him popular among fans of all ages.”

Analysis

Gabriel Iglesias is a stand-up comedian who has travelled the world over with his shows. Since his first acts in 1997, Iglesias has done voice-overs (e.g. *Family Guy*), has had roles in a number of films (e.g. *A Haunted House 2*) and appeared with certain regularity on Comedy Central. According to Iglesias, the comedians who have most influenced him are Eddie Murphy, Paul Rodriguez, Robin Williams, and Bill Cosby (King 2011).

Besides a non-descriptive, generic music used to introduce the comedian (very different from the more Latino-themed music of other performances), the first distinctive element of this, as well as previous shows, is his visual presentation: Iglesias always appears on stage wearing shorts, sneakers, and an aloha (Hawaiian) shirt. Shore (2004) explains that a stand-up comedian must commit to his/her topics because consistency is vital to a comedian’s routine. In *Aloha Fluffy*, Iglesias has the following to say on the subject:

People ask why I wear Hawaiian shirts. I’ve always worn Hawaiian shirts. Bottom line is simple: Why do I wear them? Because they fit. They’re colorful. I’m sorry, but when you wear a Hawaiian shirt and you’re living in the ghetto, people don’t think you’re up to no good. You’re not a gang member wearing a Hawaiian shirt. No one’s going to take you serious. “Where you from?” “Honolulu, eh!” You can’t be hard and colorful. No way, man.

Approximately the first five minutes of the show are spent garnering the audience's rapport. Iglesias opens his act proving to the audience that he knows what Hawai'i is about: In the first place, he lets everyone know he's spent the last ten years coming to the islands and then proceeds to speak like a local, he takes on a Pidgin (Hawai'i Creole English) accent, and mimics the recent arrival.

There is a storytelling, talk-story quality to Iglesias' comedy; his delivery is colloquial, dialog-like, with minimum word-play; and his humor is non-aggressive, even somewhat self-deprecating, with a "nice-guy veneer." In fact, Iglesias reiterates this "cleanliness" continuously during *Aloha Fluffy*, a formula with which he builds rapport with his audience:

- I want you guys to understand.*
- I'm not going to lie.*
- I don't want to offend anyone.*
- I'm sorry dude.*
- I'm a decent person.*
- I'm a nice person.*
- I don't want to offend anyone.*
- I'm not trying to be disrespectful.*
- I want to make sure I don't say the wrong thing.*
- I understand how you feel. I totally get it... I'm with you.*
- I felt terrible because I was judging them. I was prejudging.*

Iglesias' self-deprecating humor contrasts with the routines of other stand-up comedians who can appear to be more vulgar and crude, perhaps as Greengross and Miller (2009) point out because that is more the nature of shows in comedy clubs. Be it as it may, even if Iglesias' humor may differ according to the locale in which he performs, there seems to be an underlying ubiquitous desire to connect to a wide-ranging audience. For Greenbaum (1999), self-deprecating humor is a sign that a comedian is looking specifically for a connection to his audience:

By referencing images and associations which he knows his audience is familiar with [a comedian] ...bridges the distance between himself as orator and the audience as his listeners. He also positions himself as a comic authority since the audience knows the cultural references he discusses, they can recognize the cleverness of his inversions, and it is his re-visioning of the ordinary which elevates him as a comic authority. (40)

One humorous example of self-deprecation references not only him but the whole group of Mexicans as commodities, easily put on display.

That is my snake. That is my zebra. That is my Mexican. That is my tiger.

The topics Iglesias covers are, like his discourse, not overtly contrived, artificial or ornery. The comedian speaks of his personal life and centers his routine around personal anecdotes. In his routines, which can be considered of an observational nature, he touches upon topics such as his family, language, racial stereotypes, identity, and weight issues (he is somewhat overweight, hence the name “Fluffy”). One of the most interesting aspects of Iglesias’ comedy relates to the issue of identity and race: he speaks often of race relations and while, on the one hand, he embraces his Latino origin, on the other, he is advocating for an end to racial differences.

–I know where I came from.

– I’m from America.

In a 2011 interview (King 2011), Iglesias expounds on the need to transcend racial stereotyping:

The first time I got a chance to perform outside the Southwest and sold out a show was cool, too. I did a concert in Minneapolis and the only Latinos there were me and the guys on the bus, and it sold out. That basically was the first show we did that told us, “Okay, I think we can go anywhere now.”

In *Aloha Fluffy* he says forthright:

They were calling me a Southwest comedian and then they’d call me “Latino comedian.” And I hated that... Let me explain why I don’t like that title. When people say Latino comedian it makes it sound like I can only perform for Latinos... “He’s a crossover.” Really? You’re going to call a Mexican: crossover?... All I wanted was to be given the chance to go out and perform and show what I can do. Not any restrictions and titles and stuff put on. It was very, very hard.

Although the comic voices his difficulties of being labeled “Latino”, he sprinkles his performance with humorous explanations of Mexican culture, such as:

– You open a bottle of tequila, or a bottle of your choice.

– They make them [Mexican women] in that color [white], too.

In his attempt to grow the term “American” it becomes apparent that identity is, in fact, the “serious plot scattered along the vector of his routine” which Attardo (2001, p. 29) explains all comics have.

There is an ambivalent or even contradictory quality to Iglesias’ routine for although he rejects stereotypes, he makes use of them as a counterpoint or contrast to exploit differences and elicit laughter in a somewhat incongruent manner. In general, Iglesias hits upon the more commonly touted and stereotypical idiosyncrasies of Mexican Americans, African Americans, Mexicans, Arabs, and Indians, such as:

Indian people in the United States are the hardest working people I’ve ever seen. And that’s coming from a Mexican, okay?

Iglesias’ take on stereotyping and impersonation borders closely on the racist. However, he openly uses the term, offers no excuse for using it, and ultimately makes it synonymous to identity. It boils down to the delivery of the message and its intent. In the last joke on his show, he explains how he and a friend want to play a prank on a Black comedian friend. They make a “racist gift basket” with food African Americans will like. They listen at the door as their friend opens the anonymous basket: he is happy with everything until he sees the Halloween card of ghosts that Iglesias and his friend signed pretending to be the city’s Chamber of Commerce welcome. The friend begins to swear but once the friend realizes it is a prank, he tells them how much he liked all the stereotypical food. Interestingly, racist humor is somehow permissible in stand-up comedy but not in the greeting-card industry (Coupland 2010, p. 254), perhaps because of the lack of a tangible product, the community setting in which it is received, the delivery, and perhaps the intent. Clearly, Iglesias sees stereotypes as positive differences, exploitable not only for relief but to strengthen his idea of a society that celebrates its differences.

A close analysis of Iglesias’ humor sheds light on his view of race and identity and, given his far-reaching appeal, that of a wider audience. As Seirlis (2011) explains: “it is the very specificity of comedy that is powerful because it is capable of telling us wider and more profound truths about the state of things in a given place at a given time” (514-5). One can, in fact, view Iglesias’ comedy as an attempt at eliminating the “restrictions and titles” delimited by race. In Tueth’s (2005) opinion: “... it is also the function of comedy to challenge the prevailing mores in the form of the foolish and the carnivalesque, in the mockery of social standards, and in the exploration of alternatives to the status quo” (17).

As Iglesias humorously speaks of his identity, especially insofar as his profession is concerned and of the opportunities less frequently afforded to Mexicans in the United States, a resentment with labeling and discrimination surfaces after “years and years of grinding it out.”

Ultimately, he uses humor to offer suggestions. The following is a case in point:

But I believe Latinos should be shared with everyone. And that's what I'm trying to do. And the reason why I make a big deal about that is because anybody else, you just call them by their name. For example, Jerry Seinfeld. He's just Jerry Seinfeld. He's not "Jewish American, Jerry Seinfeld." Chris Rock is just Chris Rock. He's not "African American comedian, Chris Rock." But with me, I was always "Latino Comedian" or "Fat Comic." They wouldn't even call me Fluffy. Those bastards.

Iglesias keeps returning to the question of identity throughout his performance, obviously hurt with the structure of his profession in the United States. In the following, he is talking about a recent trip to Saudi Arabia, where he is told he is the second most famous comic, after Jeff Dunham:

American. American, American. Freaking ten years being called a Latino comic. I had to go all the way around the world to finally get called "American." I was excited. I said: "Say it again!" "American." "Ah..."

How Iglesias explores and offers alternatives to the status quo of an America that sidelines the Hispanic is most apparent in his use of languages, specifically in his code-switching. And, perhaps the most telling sign of his integrated identity is how he pronounces his name. He code-switches his first and last names: Gabriel (in English) and Iglesias (in Spanish). His friend Martín is always pronounced in Spanish, even when he is speaking English. Iglesias is bilingual, and it is hard to decipher if he is actually more proficient in English than in Spanish. In spite of the references Iglesias makes of not being pigeonholed merely as a Latino comedian, his comedic routine transcends race by employing English, Spanish, a combination of both, as well as extensive impersonations of other languages.

In *Aloha Fluffy*, Iglesias uses Standard American English and does impersonations in English with a variety of accents: Mexican, African American, Indian, Singaporean, Arabic, and Hawaii Creole English, popularly known as Pidgin. When Iglesias uses his Spanish it is as a bilingual, who happens to be a Latino, as he has said elsewhere:

It's hard, you guys, you know. Lo español. You speak a little Spanish and it freaks people out. Oh, my God! He's speaking Spanish.

Iglesias does not make excuses for his code-switching; he does not translate or, except for once, acknowledge that he has used Spanish.

Some of you got that. ¡Gracias!

He is obviously comfortable in this linguistic persona and even goes so far as to provide “lessons” in Spanish and the culture of Mexico:

We Mexicans have our own slang words too, ¡órale!

Unlike the Spanish comedian, Eugenio, whose “use of Catalan intonation patterns and pronunciation made it difficult for audiences to identify [his] base language” (Woolard 1987, p. 109), Iglesias’ base language is clearly English. Coupland (2010, p. 254) makes the case that where a mock language is employed by a comedian (frequently mock Spanish or mock Ebonics), this undermines the legitimacy and viability of the language for public discourse. Therefore, because Iglesias treats Spanish with the same respect as he treats English, Spanish becomes an independent viable language.

There are three main uses Iglesias makes of code-switching in his show *Aloha Fluffy*: 1) as a euphemism for taboo words, 2) to quote, and 3) to express identity or cultural appropriateness. In all three situations, the comedian is able to create humorous situations in a bilingual format. When Iglesias does not translate the Spanish, or the Spanish is not a translation, he is building on the linguistic and cultural solidarity a common language brings. The fact that Iglesias does not translate his code-switches may be due to the fact that explaining a joke can actually kill it. In fact, only roughly 1% of Iglesias’ language choice is Spanish. This selective use of Spanish occurs quickly so it is conceivable to imagine that the code-switches are interpreted by non-Spanish speakers in a fashion similar to the humorous and exaggerated onomatopoeia (doors closing, cars racing, etc.) that sprinkle his performance.

Euphemism

Although Iglesias does use swear words in English, he utilizes vulgar or taboo words in code-switching utterances as well. Into Spanish: *sucia*, *cabrona*, *chingada*, *güera*, and into Hawaiian *punani* (vagina) and *mahu* (crossdresser). None of these does he translate. Code-switching for taboo sorts of words is considered a form of euphemism.

Quoting

The lengthiest type of code-switching Iglesias engages in is to quote. One is of his mother scolding him for bringing, what she thought, was a non-Hispanic girlfriend to her house. In this case, instead of the base language being English, it is Spanish and the code-switch is into English. The audience need not understand more than the screams and the “white girl” in English to understand the gist of what his mother is feeling:

She starts cussing me out: *“Saca a esa cabrona de aquí. ¿Qué chingadas andas haciendo con esa güera. Sácame a esa güera. Get that white girl pa’ allá. Saca la white girl pa’ allá.*

And the white Mexican girlfriend answers, deadpan, with Spanish words that many people know even if they haven’t studied the language:

Hola, señora, ¿cómo estás?

When Iglesias quotes the housekeeping staff of a hotel, he has them speak in Spanish, albeit in a feminine, shrieking voice that would probably be funny in any language:

Housekeeping is freaking out. ¿Qué está pasando allá? ¿Qué andan haciendo ustedes? Muchacho. ¿Qué está pasando, gordito? ¿Qué andas haciendo?

In both these cases, Iglesias uses code-switching to reflect the reality of many Latinos: quite a few are recent immigrants and have the lowest paying jobs in society. At a macro level, the laughter that follows this outpouring in Spanish could be considered a relief mechanism: he pushes his audience to reflect on this stark reality, in a light-hearted way, impersonations included.

Identity

A few of the code-switches that express Iglesias’ identity and culture are introduced almost in a didactic manner, as if he were teaching his non-Mexican audience about Mexico:

It’s not Mexico, it’s Méjico.

In the following crossover he extends his linguistic repertoire to include modern Hawaiian culture through Portuguese:

Is that cinnamon? Sí, canela, canela. He smells like a malasadas [sic].

Different from all the previous code-switches, there is translation here. A common technique in code-switching is translation used either as an explanation or to provide some sort of ethnic touch.

Perhaps there is no greater cultural marker than the most common and colloquial. At one point, when Iglesias says *Gracias*, he addresses only the audience who understands his Spanish. He does not translate nor attract further attention to the change in linguistic code for it is a code-

switch of solidarity. The second code-switch, *¿Qué pasó, güey?*, he breathes under his breath in a similar manner and intention.

Most certainly the following code-switch is one of the most staged and less natural, although not less humorous. In this skit, he imagines the audience who has to use the restroom during the show being able to hear him there as well. He gets seemingly sidetracked and imagines announcements the bathrooms would have. First it is in Standard American English, then in Spanish, and thirdly in African American Vernacular English as a rap. While the Spanish is an accurate a translation of the English, he switches back to English and inserts a humorous but albeit political comment “Equal opportunity, right?” sarcastically alluding to the shortcomings of equal opportunity in the United States for Latinos and even more so for African Americans.

Welcome to the restroom. If you need to go pee-pee, please use stall number 1. If you need to go po-po, please use stall number 2. Thank you.

Bienvenidos al baño. Si necesitas hacer pipí, usa el cuarto número 1. Si necesitas hacer cacá, usa el cuarto número 2.

Equal opportunity, right?

Welcome to the restroom. Hell, yeah. That's what I say. If you have to pee, use stall number 1. If you have to shit, take yo nasty ass home.

This category of code-switching as a badge of identity includes Iglesias' code-switched name: *Gabriel* pronounced with an English accent and *Iglesias* pronounced with a Spanish accent, reflecting his two realities.

Conclusions

In *Aloha Fluffy*, Iglesias dips into the three main theories of humor as well as a variety of elements which help shape his humorous persona (e.g. exaggeration, onomatopoeia, and repetition). The few objects of ridicule he brings to the stage allow for a feeling of superiority from the audience, and the seemingly racist jokes allow for relief. Where Iglesias most delves into is the incongruous as he teeters between extremes. A case in point is his constant riff on cultural stereotypes (impersonations included) and the iteration of his “nice-guy veneer” (as rapport builder). Somewhat incongruous are also veiled jabs against an “America” that only sees him as a Latino comedian that run alongside his constant allusions to his Latinness, specifically his Mexicaness. Interestingly, Iglesias' references to identity, his serious plot, do not take place in Spanish but in English, and while his linguistic code-switches might be used almost anecdotally, his cultural ones are revelatory because as he says: “I know where I came from. . . I'm from America.”

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