



NO SPEAK ENGLISH: CHALLENGING THE HEGEMONY OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE¹

Ana Clarissa Nenevé²

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)

E-mail: ananeneve@gmail.com

Abstract

Standard English has long held great prestige around the world and, more emphatically, in the places in which it has an official status. Despite the multiplicity of languages that exist in the zones of cultural borders, in which manifold cultures are negotiated in the same space, English still remains an imposition. Yet, there are those who do not easily bow to such hegemony and who struggle to find a voice that speaks for their mixed experiences. Therefore, this essay analyzes the connections between “How to tame a Wild tongue”, an essay from “Borderlands/*La Frontera*” (1987) by the Chicana writer Gloria Anzaldúa and the poem “Copulation in English” from the book “Emails from Scheherazad” (2003), by the Arab-American writer Mohja Kahf regarding the ways they challenge the status of Standard English as a dominant language, showing resistance to its ruling power, and how they somehow propose the idea of a hybrid language.

Keywords: English. Cultural borders. Languages. Resistance.

Resumo

O inglês padrão tem há muito tempo mantido grande prestígio ao redor do mundo e, mais enfaticamente, nos lugares em que é língua oficial. Apesar da multiplicidade de línguas que existem nas zonas de fronteiras culturais, nas quais diversas culturas são negociadas no mesmo espaço, o inglês ainda continua sendo uma imposição. No entanto, há aqueles que não facilmente se curvam à sua hegemonia e que lutam para encontrar uma voz que fale por suas experiências mistas. Assim, este artigo analisa as conexões entre o ensaio da escritora Chicana Glória Anzaldúa, “How to tame a Wild tongue” do livro “Borderland/*La Frontera*” (1987) e o poema da escritora Árabe-Americana Mohja Kahf “Copulation in English” do livro “Emails from Scheherazad” (2003), sobre como eles desafiam o status do inglês padrão como uma língua dominante, demonstrando resistência ao seu poder prevaiente, e sobre como essas obras propõem, de certo modo, a ideia de uma língua híbrida.

Palavras-chave: Inglês. Fronteiras culturais. Línguas. Resistência.

Introduction

¹ A previous version of this work was presented as a final paper for the “Poéticas de Resistência: “From ‘Howl’ to contemporary oralities and performance”” class at the Programa de Pós Graduação em Inglês (UFSC).

² CNPq scholarship holder currently finishing her Master’s program in English at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.



It is not coincidentally that the title I have chosen for this essay is also that of one of Sandra Cisneros's short stories from *The House on Mango Street* (1984). "No Speak English" is a story, by an acclaimed writer of Chicana literature, which tells of a man who, after a long time of saving, brings his wife and child from Mexico to the United States to join him. The woman, however, does not adapt to what concerns the language of the place. She is afraid of English and refuses to speak it. Her vocabulary is very limited, and, consequently, she feels very lonely and isolated, for it restricts her contact with people in the outside world of their house. Her husband seems to start losing patience with the situation and demands that she speak English because America is now their home. The story ends with the woman having an emotional meltdown when she finds that their kid, who is just learning to talk, is singing the Pepsi song, in English, which he learned from its commercial on TV, a symbol of the American way of life, and she repeats inconsolably while sobbing, "No speak English" (p. 76-78).

Among the many ways one can approach such story, it is undeniable how it touches the issue of the sovereignty of English in the American country and the marginalization of those, whether immigrants or born of immigrant families, who do not necessarily adapt in order to fit the linguistic demands of their new home. And of those who might, because of that, feel like they do not belong in the place, of those who, having been exposed to different cultures, belong to a world of different, and sometimes overlapping, languages. Therefore, it is a starting point to think of the work of writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Mohja Kahf (2003), who, although speakers of English and in different circumstances, question and seem to resist the domination of this language over others and who, while doing so in distinct ways, seem to also be repeating their own versions of "No speak English".

The acclaimed Chicana writer Glória Anzaldúa, is known for her work as a queer feminist and, mostly, as a scholar on Chicana theory. She developed, besides many poems, writings on the *mestiza* consciousness and what it meant to live in the hybrid world of the Borderlands, which, in her words, "are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy" (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 19). Such a situation is one with which she was more than acquainted, for, growing up in the



borders of the United States and Mexico, Anzaldúa experienced a world that was not exclusive of only one culture, but multiple ones, a world of manifold voices, of contradictions. It was also, consequently, one in which she experienced a multiplicity of languages, as “at the juncture of cultures, languages cross-pollinate and are revitalized; they die and are born” (ibid., p. 20). Her linguistic situation, thus, went beyond speaking either English or Spanish, as she spoke, besides both, different and hybrid varieties of them, something for which she was reprimanded.

Mohja Kahf, despite not exactly growing up in geographical borders, shared a somewhat similar experience of hybridity in the sense that she was born in Syria and moved to America while still in her early childhood, being raised in a community that was both American and Arab. She has lived, then, within cultural borders, and has experienced the complexities of living in an ambivalent world. Kahf writes about the struggles of this hybrid world, and is, as Lisa Suair Majaj (2008) comments, a “dynamic, feisty writer who insists on critiquing as well as celebrating her own cultural contexts, whether Muslim, Arab or American” (p. 8-9). She does so in her writings (besides many poems, she has also published a novel), while exploring issues of womanhood, religion, identity and language, among others.

Despite coming from different backgrounds, both Gloria Anzaldúa and Mohja Kahf tackle – although not in entirely similar ways – the hegemony of the English language in some of their writing. One of Glória Anzaldúa’s best-known works is “*Borderlands/La Frontera*” (1987), a compilation of essays and poetry about different kinds of borders, in which she addresses matters concerning culture and identity among Chicanas and *mestizas* in America. “How to tame a wild tongue” one of her essays from “*Borderlands/La Frontera*” addresses the issue of the languages in the borders, of language as an important part of identity and stresses the significance of asserting who you are by not letting your tongue be tamed. Mohja Kahf’s “Copulation in English” is a poem from her first poetry book “*Emails from Scheherazad*” (2003), in which she, while doing so in a playful and even sensual tone, celebrates linguistic and cultural hybridity by suggesting an involvement of English and Arabic. Therefore, this essay intends to analyze the connections between Anzaldúa’s essay – while also touching “*Borderlands/La Frontera*” as a whole – and Kahf’s poem regarding the ways they challenge the status of English – and, more specifically, Standard English – as a



dominant language, how they show resistance to its ruling power and how they somehow propose the idea of a hybrid language.

Language, Culture and Hierarchy

Regarding the knowledge and use of languages, the Martinican thinker Frantz Fanon (1952) once said that “[a] man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. What we are getting at becomes plain: Mastery of language affords remarkable power” (p. 9). Indeed, if we consider that languages are intrinsically connected to cultures, those who are skilled at the language of the dominant culture have a certain level of access to it and, consequently, gain some of the power it confers. That happens because cultures have historically obeyed the hierarchy imposed on them by those in a position of power, and languages – as part of such cultures – have seconded that. As Baugh and Cable (1951) argue,

Languages become important because of events that shape the balance of power among nations. These political, economic, technological, and military events may or may not reflect favorably, in a moral sense, on the peoples and states that are the participants; and certainly different parties to the events will have different interpretations of what is admirable or not. It is clear, however, that the language of a powerful nation will acquire importance as a direct reflection of political, economic, technological, and military strength; so also will the arts and sciences expressed in that language have advantages, including the opportunities for propagation (p. 3)

The power of nations and their culture, thus, reflect on language prestige. Accordingly, the theorist Robert Young (2003) contends, “Languages, like classes and nations, exist in a hierarchy” (p. 140), with the dominant culture’s language being the superior one, as was the norm in colonial times, when the colonizers devalued the natives’ culture and, accordingly, their language, in favor of the oppressive one, for they were in power. Often, the dominant culture and language will be that of the white man. Similarly, it still happens today, in spaces where cultures clash, as in Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, the dominant culture’s language rules, and very often demands purity. In a similar manner, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (2002) comment that “Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established” (p. 7), therefore, one can understand that through the hierarchy of language, power structures can be perceived, cultures can be praised or undervalued and people can feel accepted or excluded.



Anzaldúa's essay "How to tame a wild tongue" starts by addressing these issues, telling the reader about moments of her life in which she was unnecessarily required to speak English instead of Spanish (even when she was only trying to teach the correct pronunciation of her own name), for English was the reigning language in America, and those living in America were supposed to respect its place in the hierarchy. She mentions an imposition similar to the one the woman in Cisneros's story received from her husband, as she would hear from her teacher, "if you want to be American, speak 'American.' If you don't like it, go back to Mexico where you belong" (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 75), as if speaking the language – in very specific terms – were an essential condition for being accepted in the country, here clearly depicted as something superior to Mexico. However, Anzaldúa comments that even when speaking English, she was still scolded for doing it with a Mexican accent, by her own mother and by society, to the point that at University she had to take a speech class with other Chicano students (1987, p. 76). She also addresses how Chicanos suffer some similar prejudice coming from the standard Spanish-speaking side, which devalues variations of Spanish such as those mixed with English or Indigenous languages or those that developed differently within the borders (*ibid.*, p. 77). Further, she mentions that, even when working as a high school teacher, she was reprimanded for bringing texts written by Chicano writers to the classroom, and forbidden to do it, and that later in life, during graduate school, she had to struggle hard to make Chicano literature an intended area of study (*ibid.*, p. 82).

These situations leads us to think of what the Brazilian theorist Silviano Santiago (2000) commented on the attitude of averting bilingualism during colonial times, as a way to reinforce the colonial dominance, when he says that "[a]voiding bilingualism means avoiding religious pluralism and also means imposing the colonialist power. In the algebra of the conqueror, unity is the only measure that counts. One God, one King, one Language: the true God, the true King, the true Language"³ (p.14). Indeed, although Anzaldúa's experiences happened in a postcolonial space, the colonial discourse still seemed rather strong, and in this discourse, the aversion of her non-English language points to an aversion to her non-white or non-dominant culture. The acceptance of the plurality of cultures – and, thus, of languages – would mean an

³ My translation for "Evitar o bilinguismo significa evitar o pluralismo religioso e significa também impor o poder colonialista. Na álgebra do conquistador, a unidade é a única medida que conta. Um só Deus, um só Rei, uma só Língua: o verdadeiro Deus, o verdadeiro Rei, a verdadeira Língua".



acceptance of the dismantling of a sense of unity, which would weaken the power of the colonizer's culture. Although she lived in a time in which that was – supposedly – a thing of the past, those who still fit the mold of what was once the colonizing culture still occupied a position of prestige, and allowing diversity to gain space, then, seemed to threaten their power.

Through the accounts of Anzaldúa's own experiences with prejudice over the use of languages that differed from Standard English, we can perceive the existence of borders that go beyond the geographical term. With her accounts, we can observe how ethnical borders, cultural borders, and, finally, language borders exist and are structured hierarchically as discussed above by Young and Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. In her opening essay in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Glória Anzaldúa argues that "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*" (1987, p. 25). In the context of America, which was her own context and is also that of Mohja Kahf, English is *us*, the safe place, whereas different languages and cultures are *them*, the other, the unsafe and undesirable. Thus, according to her, Chicanos, like herself, live in the borderlands, which she claims, still in her first essay, is a place "in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants" (ibid., p. 25), it is an ambivalent place where contradictions coexist. She brings that up again and connects it to the issue of language in "How to tame a wild tongue" by mentioning that "[n]osotros los Chicanos straddle the borderlands. On the one side of us, we are constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side we hear the Anglos' incessant clamoring so that we forget our language" (ibid., p. 84). Those living in the borderlands, thus, have to learn to negotiate the plural cultures in a way that allows them to still remain true to who they are.

Anzaldúa, however, rather than positioning herself passively regarding the situation of her Chicano Spanish in relation to the dominating status of English, states that her language is her identity, it is part of who she is, and therefore, she will not be silenced, regardless of what language she speaks. She states, "I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white" (ibid., 81), for she needs her language – in its many forms – to be accepted in order to feel accepted herself. Thus, it is her time to impose her voice, her culture. She has had enough of being devalued for simply letting herself sound like her true self, like who she feels she is. As she says, "Until I can take pride in my language, I cannot take



pride in myself” (ibid., 81). The Chicana writer resists the intimidating position of the English language in America by claiming her right to exist, and therefore, her right to speak the languages with which she identifies. She continues,

Until I can accept as legitimate Chicano Texas Spanish, Tex-Mex and all the other languages I speak, I cannot accept the legitimacy of myself. Until I am free to write bilingually and to switch codes without having always to translate, while I still have to speak English or Spanish when I would rather speak Spanglish, and as long as I have to accommodate the English speakers rather than having them accommodate me, my tongue will be illegitimate (ibid., 81).

The author proposes here an inversion of positions. One in which English speakers would have to open the way for other languages to pass, rather than the opposite, which has happened historically. Such inversion would allow the writer to feel in equal stand as those to whom she has had to adapt. One can also take from this an inversion of values, of English finally being the dominated rather than the dominant, of it finally being the language that bends, which is something Mohja Kahf (2003) brings in the first two stanzas of her poem “Copulation in English”. She starts,

We are going to dip English backward
by its Shakespearean tresses
arcing its spine like a crescent
We are going to rewrite English in Arabic
(Arabic script: how sweet, how sweet)

and all the languages of our blood
We are going to give English the makeover of its lifetime,
darkening the rims of its eyes with Hindi antimony,
making it blush Farsi roses
(Arabic script: the night, the night)
(p. 71)

In these verses, the author seems to suggest a disturbance of values from the start, dipping “English backward”. And with “arcing its spine” there is the idea of English bowing to other languages, which, in the case of the poem, is mostly the Arabic one (but also Hindi and Farsi, and other languages of many immigrants who arrive in America to stay), in which English will be rewritten, a language which it will have to – note that she asserts “We are going to” – incorporate. By saying English is going to receive a makeover, there is the insinuation that, meshed with other languages, it would become more beautiful and more interesting. There is also the hint that it would happen while English becomes less white, as she mentions that the makeover would occur with “darkening” and by making the language “blush”.

Language hibridity



One can also notice in both stanzas the proposal of a hybrid language, a language that, like the Tex-Mex of Chicanos, would embrace the contradictions, rather than condemn them. Such a proposal can take into account that for Kahf, as an Arab-American woman, one should not have to choose one world – or language – over the other, which is why the author

insists that Arab-American identity exists at the point of crossing: the hyphen linking cultures, the gulch between worlds. Hers is not the dream of univocal identity, feet firmly rooted on one side of the divide, but rather the messy reality of hands stained with American berries, shoulders limned with Syrian dust (MAJAJ, 2008, p.9)

Rather than electing a single pathway, she can pass through more than one, and with that keep tangling languages. She can be as Anzaldúa's *mestiza* in her little poem “*Una lucha de fronteras/A Struggle of Borders*” (p. 99), who is constantly crossing over, and, as the Chicana writers says (in verses 2 to 4), “continually walk out of one culture/ and into another,/ for I am in all cultures at the same time” (ibid.). That which Kahf called a point of crossing, or which Anzaldúa called the borders, is the in-between space Santiago (2000) stated exists with the contact of different cultures, where the sense of unity is destroyed and where one finds oneself “[b]etween the sacrifice and the game, between the prison and the transgression, between the submission to the code and the aggression, between obedience and rebellion, between the assimilation and the expression”⁴ (p. 26). The negotiation of cultures is a constant in this space, and, thus, the idea of unity is hardly possible, as well as the idea of purity – for one culture is progressively contaminated by the other.

In the following verses of Kahf's poem, she tackles the idea of English as a pure language, which is the argument of many in order to keep it free from foreign influences, as in the case mentioned by Anzaldúa about the prejudice over non-standard accents and Chicano literature, or in favor of its superiority:

We are going to make English dizzy
until English vomits its history,
Norman, Saxon, Celtic, down
to its Druid dregs
(KAHF, 2003, p. 71)

⁴ My translation for: “Entre o sacrifício e o jogo, entre a prisão e a transgressão, entre a submissão ao código e a agressão, entre a obediência e a rebelião, entre a assimilação e a expressão”.

As she mentions, English is a language that is already historically plural, a language built out of many different ones, like a patchwork quilt, and therefore, with that, she discredits the claims of purists. Indeed, according to Baugh and Cable (1951), English was not only a product of the dialects brought to England by the Jutes, Saxons and Angles, but also suffered influences of the languages of Celts, the Romans, and the Scandinavians (p. 67), and along its history, it suffered influences of many other languages. It is in itself a result of the contact of many cultures, and, thus, languages. And then Kahf follows,

We won't stop playing with English
 We are the new bullies in the schoolyard
 and we like the merry-go-round of nouns and adjectives
 and onomatopoeics and objective correlatives
 (ibid.)

By claiming to be the new bullies, who will not leave English alone, she proposes an overturn of power relations. English is not in control anymore, other languages are, Arabic is. It will have to accommodate other languages, and, therefore, their speakers, as Anzaldúa required in her essay. And by mentioning the “merry-go-round” of language classes, there is the idea of making English confused regarding its own identity, for it would have reconstruct itself taking into consideration how differently these classes work, and it would be, as what Anzaldúa (1987) says of Chicanas and their variants of more than one language, “your linguistic nightmare, your linguistic aberration, your linguistic *mestizaje*” (p. 80).

Further in Kahf's poem, we have another moment of inversion of power relations, of inversion of hierarchy, at the same time that there is an association with romance,

We are going to make English love us
 And kiss us and explore us with its tongues
 Then we will play hard-to-get
 and English will have to phone
 and leave a message after message of desire on our machines
 English will have to learn what to say to please us:
 (KAHF, 2003, p. 71)

Here, besides putting English in the place of the lover who has to chase the beloved in order to get any attention, as is classic of romantic stories, English is in a humbling position. There is a switch between the hegemonic and the marginalized, for now the latter would be the languages loved, valued and desired. Such a position



would prevent the problem Anzaldúa points in her essay from happening, that of the possibility of having foreign and hybrid languages being suppressed in multilinguals' lives in America because dominant cultures' languages are favored over them. As she explains,

By the end of this century, Spanish speakers will comprise the biggest minority group in the U.S., a country where students in high schools and colleges are encouraged to take French classes because French is considered more "cultured." But for a language to remain alive it must be used. By the end of this century English, and not Spanish, will be the mother tongue of most Chicanos and Latinos (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 81)

Only a reversal of values, like the one proposed by Kahf, one in which foreign languages like Spanish and Arabic are considered as cultured as – or more than, as in the poem – English or French, only a deposition of English from its throne, could keep the situation presented by Anzaldúa from happening. That situation could also be the case of people from different backgrounds than Latinos and Chicanos, considering America is a place of multiple cultures and, as Gounari (2006) reminds us,

different tongues are brought "illegally" to the other side through the border, 350 of them currently spoken on American soil, according to the 2000 Census—wild tongues, that talk back, that break the harmony of Standard English and generate suspicious looks to those who don't speak or don't understand them (p. 72-73)

In America, people arrive from all around the world every day – legally or not –, with their different packages, cultures and languages. These suspicious looks are a heritage of the logic that deemed the other, the different one, as inferior. A logic that does not welcome difference. The logic implies that if "we" do not understand "them", it means that "they" belong to a culture that are not "ours", and that those people do not belong to "our" group and thus, nor to "our" place, and are, consequently, deserving of suspicious looks.

Towards the end of Mohja Kahf's poem, we have, finally, the image of copulation, of English not only giving in to the enchantments of the Arabic language and making love with it, but desiring it with ardor, for it is a new experience, and one much richer than everything it has known:

English has never tasted anything this purple,
Seen mangos this bursting, trickling down its poems,
pomegranates spraying the tart red seeds
over its stories like white linen
English has never smelled the cardamom this ecstatic
or breathed rhetoric this thick with love
(KAHF, 2003, p. 72)

First, through the mentioning of specialties, such as “mangos”, “pomegranates” e “cardamom”, there is a clear allusion to the East, and, thus, to the Arabic. There is also a suggestion that English is boring, in comparison to the experience provided by the other language, which is colorful and vibrant, and, can fill poems, stories and rhetoric with more life and love that English ever has. One can also take from “the white linen” the image of English as this immaculate thing, which it will no longer be after making love with Arabic. That is, in the poem, a positive thing, for the language will be enriched, embellished, and because the making love and mixing of languages is progressive, rather than what defenders of supposedly pure, Standard English lead others to believe. And she finishes,

English will come to us hoarse with passion
 we will have taught English to have
 and English will never be the same and will never regret us
 Although, after this night of intense copulation,
 we may slaughter English in its bed and redeem our honor,
 even while pregnant with English's bastard

(Arabic script: “Here comes the dawn upon us like a fire.”)
 (KAHF, 2003, p. 72)

In these final verses we have a very sharp explanation of how much English will be seduced by Arabic, to the point of chasing it with a passion it did not have before the contact with this other language, something it was “taught”. English is now forever transformed by this language that is portrayed here as this seductress, this black widow that kills its mate and incorporates it (while the spider eats it, Arabic is carrying its child). And once again, we have the idea of the often marginalized language in a position of power and English as the lower ranked tongue.

Code-switching

From beginning to end in “Copulation in English”, with playful irony, we have the invitation to think of the possibility of English as the bullied, rather than the oppressor, and to think of a time in which it will pursuit other languages, when it will recognize their value, their beauty. A time in which it will have to make way for different tongues, for different flavors, because they are there to stay and they can devour it, as Arabic did. There is, then, a clear resistance to the hegemonic power that English represents, and an invitation to disrupt it through language immersion. And finally, besides the narration of what could happen to English, there is another tool of language resistance very obvious in Kahf's poem, which is the use of code-switching.

According to Buell (2003), “code-switching has generally been explored as a phenomenon in which speakers switch back and forth between two separate languages or dialects to include or exclude other participants, to portray a particular nuance or to establish solidarity” (p. 98), and by making use of this tool a speaker is “signaling who she is, how she relates to listeners or readers, how she understands the context and what communicative tools are available to her” (p. 97). Therefore, through the use of occasional Arabic script in her poem, besides asserting her identity as an Arab-American woman, or the identity of the lyric self, Mohja Kahf demands a consideration of her language, a language that is both English and Arabic. And she demands, as she did in the verses with Arabic being desired and imposing, that English make way for her language. At the same time, her uses of Arabic, as she claims in the poem, are also there to invigorate English with the life and color of the former language. As Majaj (2008) comments,

At times Kahf is very explicit about her intention to use Arabic influences to revitalize the English language. (...) Drawing on Arabic not just for specific images and words, but also for its sheer exuberance, Kahf celebrates Arabic language and culture and identity even as she creates a new language that can negotiate the passage between Arab and American, making space for both without apology (p. 9-10)

Although it has been provided in this essay, there is no translation for the Arabic parts in her poem, making then, as Anzaldúa required, English speakers to accommodate her, rather than the opposite. And she will, even as a speaker of a disregarded language, “no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing” (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 81).

Code-switching is definitely something present in Anzaldúa’s work as a whole. Although her poems sometimes provide translations of Spanish words for the English-speaking reader, most of her writing, especially her essays in *Borderlands/La Frontera* have variants of both languages switching back and forth without excusing themselves. In the preface to the first edition of the book, she claims that she does so because this phenomenon reflects her language, which is that of the borderlands, a hybrid one, and that although it is a language that is ostracized by society in general, its speakers, the Chicanos, “no longer feel that [they] need to beg entrance, that [they] need always to make the first overture – to translate to Anglos, Mexicans and Latinos, apology blurring out of our mouths with every step” (ibid., p.21). Through code-switching, then, she is



getting in without knocking, without asking for permission. She is letting herself exist, even in an environment that is constantly trying to remind her that she, like her language, does not have a place in the other side of the border, unless she bows to its cultural demands, which is that of the standard, white, dominant culture.

Concluding remarks

Gloria Anzaldúa ends “How to tame a wild tongue” in a hopeful – and, at some points, threatening – tone, as Mohja Kahf’s poem, believing that the time of her mixed culture will come, and that not only Chicanos but also their language – because these people are skilled in the art of surviving – will thrive, for they are patient and stubborn. The author, then, in conclusion, says,

[W]hen other races have given up their tongue, we’ve kept ours. We know what it is to live under the hammer blow of the dominant *norteamericano* culture. But more than we count the blows, we count the days the weeks the years the centuries the eons until the white laws and commerce and customs will rot in the deserts they’ve created, lie bleached (ANZALDÚA, 1987, p. 85-86)

And with that, we can finally conclude that, despite their differences in culture, language and approach, both Anzaldúa’s and Kahf’s works walk hand in hand regarding being confident that they have the right to cry “No speak English” when they deem fit, and more, that they have the right to make themselves be heard in whichever language they choose to speak, loud and clear. Both their works also lead the readers to question their own perceptions of language and culture, especially how they feel towards the status of English, and, if they are bilinguals (or even multilinguals) in a zone of multiple cultures, give them hope for the achievement of a voice that does not need to silence any of their worlds, experiences or identities.

References

- ANZALDÚA, Gloria. (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. 4th ed., San Francisco: Aunte Lute Books, 2012.
- ASHCROFT, GRIFFITHS AND TIFFIN. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.



BAUGH, Albert C. and CABLE, Thomas. (1951) *A History of the English Language*. 5th edition. London: Routledge, 2002.

BUELL, Marcia Z. Code-Switching and Second Language Writing: How Multiple Codes Are Combined In a Text. *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices*. Edited by Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior. London and New York: Routledge, 2003, pp. 97-122.

CISNEROS, Sandra. (1984) *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage Books, 2009.

FANON, Frantz. (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press, 2008.

GOUNARI, Panayota. How to Tame a Wild Tongue: Language Rights in the United States. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* Vol. 4 No. 3, 2006, pp. 71-77. Available at: <scholarworks.umb.edu/humanarchitecture/vol4/iss3/9>. Accessed on 24 November 2016.

KAHF, Mohja. Copulation in English. *Emails from Scheherazad*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003, pp. 71-72.

MAJAJ, Lisa Suhair. Arab-American Literature: Origins and Developments. *American Studies Journal* 52, 2008. Available at: <www.asjournal.org/52-2008/arab-american-literature-origins-and-developments> Accessed on 24 November 2016.

SANTIAGO, Silvano. *Uma Literatura nos Trópicos: Ensaio sobre dependência cultural*. 2ª edição. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2000.

YOUNG, Robert. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.