

Latina Lista

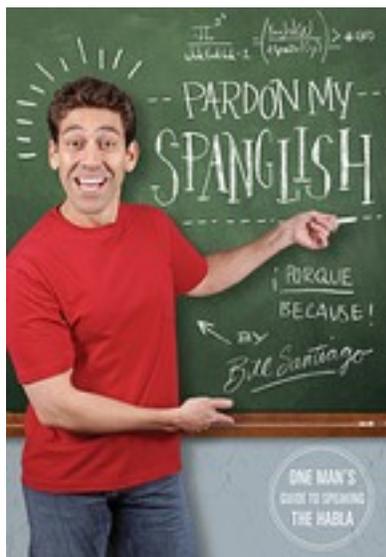
Book Reviews

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Latino comedian takes Spanglish mainstream

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Comedian [Bill Santiago](#) is well known for using language to make people laugh. Now in his new book [Pardon My Spanglish: One Man's Guide to Speaking Habla](#) (Quirk Books 2008), Santiago applies that comedic talent while serving as historian, teacher and translator as he guides readers through understanding the evolution and the unofficial do's and don'ts of speaking Spanglish.



Since Spanglish is much more than just "bastardizing" perfectly good English words into Spanish, and vice versa, Santiago explains that the key to speaking good Spanglish (Spanglish Rule #32) is to never stay in English or Spanish for too long.

In fact, Spanglish is a very generous language that, according to Santiago, observes the grammar rules of both English and Spanish -- but not too strictly. In fact, one of the major lessons of the book is that rules should not cramp the personal conversation style of the speaker.

Santiago believes that since "practice makes perfect," the only way to master Spanglish is by adopting seven bad habits that, he swears, will lead to proficiency. Among them, are the self-explanatory habits: "Fake It Hasta Que You Make It" and "Practice Random Acts of Spanglish."

Being a native born Spanish speaker, by way of his Puerto Rican parents, Santiago mixes a lot of Spanish throughout the book. For those who are Spanish-challenged, keeping a Spanish-English dictionary nearby wouldn't be a bad idea. However, the beauty of Spanglish is that if you can follow the conversation in one language, then you can *infer* the meanings of the words used in the other language.

Through his offbeat and funny analysis of how Spanglish is used in everyday conversations and in different situations, Santiago underscores the sophistication and intellect needed to seamlessly carry on a conversation in two languages, under two different sets of rules.

It's a talent that Santiago confesses is not always popular with purists of either language who see Spanglish as a threat to preserving the integrity of each. Yet, Santiago stands firm that Spanglish isn't going anywhere and can only thrive because "You don't have to speak good English or good Spanish to be completely fluent in Spanglish."

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