

Chapter 8: A Census of San Fernando Cemetery #1

Up to this point I have argued (1) that cemeteries reflect the ethnic make-up of the surrounding community, (2) that families of deceased people erect gravemarkers in order to communicate their grief to anyone who makes the effort to read the gravemarkers, (3) that the messages reflect both formal and informal language use, (4) that the rhetoric of the messages has not varied through time, (5) that this rhetoric, in fact, reflects a universal discourse of grief that cuts across languages, (6) that even mixed-code and bilingual markers reflect this universal discourse of grief as language loss and language assimilation occur, (7) and that in Texas mixed-code Spanish/English markers reflect not only the assimilation patterns of other Texas languages/English but also reflect the universal discourse of grief when Spanglish is considered to be a unique language—just as English, Spanish, German, etc. are considered to be unique languages.

I would now like to return to “a linguistic aside” that I inserted in Chapter five—the chapter that contains the arguments for the universal discourse of language. In that “aside” I explained the procedures used by most sociolinguists when they use statistics.

This present chapter, in effect, addresses those scholars who do not accept the tremendous complexity of linguistic research—the complexity that makes the use of random samples (as opposed to judgmental samples) misleading if not useless. In this chapter, instead of analyzing a sampling (either random or judgmental), I have analyzed all available data in one cemetery.

I have argued so far that the universal discourse of grief occurs on about eighty percent of all of the several thousand gravemarkers that I have documented during the last 20-25 years. A census analysis of all legible markers in San Antonio's San Fernando cemetery reveal, in fact, that I have been too cautious. The actual presence of the universal discourse of grief exists on more than eighty percent of the markers.

San Fernando Cemetery #1, San Antonio, Texas: a census¹

During the 1720s, San Antonio's, San Fernando (Catholic) Church, now known as San Fernando Cathedral, interred its deceased members within the walls of the local presidio, now known simply as The Alamo. As downtown San Antonio grew, the remains of San Fernando Cathedral's deceased members were removed from the presidio to either the Cathedral itself or to a separate cemetery in present-day Ben Milam plaza. In 1855 the Milam space proved

insufficient, so a new cemetery, now referred to as San Fernando Cemetery #1, opened on the west side of the city (Figure 8.1). The Archdiocese of San Antonio at present

Figure 8.1 Entrance to San Fernando # 1
(INSERT SLIDE SF#1.9/99.Wolf #3)

This Catholic cemetery is a holy place. It is blessed by the Church and dedicated to God as a place for worship, prayer and reflection upon divine truth and the purpose of life.

It is the resting place until the day of resurrection for the bodies of faithful departed, once temples of the holy spirit, whose souls are now with God.

It is a final and continuing profession of faith in God and membership in the Church by those who have chosen to be buried with fellow believers of "The Household of the Faith."
"Eternal Rest Grant Them O Lord."

owns and maintains San Fernando Cemetery #1—along with San Fernando Cemetery #2, San Fernando Cemetery #3, and Holy Cross Cemetery.

San Fernando cemetery has 3,324 legible gravemarkers.

Of special interest to linguists interested in the study of languages in contact, these gravemarkers contain a variety of language codes (table 8.1).

The markers present their data in seven languages. The majority of the markers 3,120 (or 94%) have all data in one language; 204 (or 6%) of the markers, however, had their data in a mixture of English and another language.

Table 8.1: Summary of a Preliminary Sociolinguistic Analysis of all legible Gravemarkers in San Fernando Cemetery #1

Monolingual	
Spanish	1,664
English	1,414
Italian	22
French	12
German	7
Polish	1
<i>SUBTOTAL</i>	<u>3,120</u>
Mixed Code	
Spanish & English	192
Arabic & English	6
Italian & English	2
French & English	2
German & English	2
<i>SUBTOTAL</i>	<u>204</u>
TOTAL	3,324

Of the total 3,324 markers, half (1,664) have had their messages carved in Spanish. The 1,414 English language markers constitute the second largest percentage (42.5%). The 22 Italian language markers, 12 French language markers, 7 German language markers, and 1 Polish language marker combine to form another 01.3%.

The remaining 6.2% (204 markers) consist of the interesting, and linguistically relevant, mixed-code language markers: 192 Spanish/English, 6 Arabic/English, and 2 each of Italian/English, German/English, and French/English.

A Sociolinguistic Census of San Fernando Cemetery #1

A statistical census analysis of the 3,324 legible gravemarkers in San Fernando cemetery #1, shows that the surname of the deceased emerges as, by far, the most consistent semantic item—appearing, in fact on all but a dozen or so markers. While that prominence of the surname may, indeed, appear as common knowledge, the relationship of that surname to the other four items in the Universal Discourse of Grief (death date, age, family relationships, and personalized epitaphs) reward close scrutiny (see Table 8.2).

**Table 8.2: Percent of monolingual markers using
The Universal Discourse of Grief**

A	name								
B	name, death date								
C	name, death date, birth date								
D	name, death date, birth date, kin								
E	name, death date, birth date, kin, creative epitaph								
F	Universal Discourse of Grief total								
G	non-Universal Discourse of Grief sequences								
H	Total Markers								
I	Percent that use Universal Discourse of Grief								

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Spanish	974	134	266	20	16	1410	254	1664	84.7
English	309	257	518	49	82	1215	199	1414	85.9
Italian	14	2	3	1	0	20	2	22	89.0
French	4	0	8	0	0	12	0	12	100.0
German	2	0	5	0	0	7	0	7	100.0
Polish	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	100.0
TOTALS	1303	393	801	70	98	2665	455	3120	

The apparent range of 84.7% to 100% for individual languages, of course, omits the importance of the actual

number of markers for each language (1,164 for Spanish and only for Polish). Nonetheless, across language differences, 2,666 of 3,120 monolingual markers express their messages in the universal discourse of grief. That amounts to eighty-five (85%) of the families unconsciously, subconsciously, expressing their grief with the same rhetoric.

Cultural differences do exist, however, in the emphasis placed upon each of the combinations. Only the Spanish and the English markers constitute an unequivocal sample size. Nonetheless, a close look at the two cultures behind those two languages reveal a basic difference (see Table 8.3) For those families using the Spanish language,

Table 8.3: percent of combinations preferred by Spanish and by English language markers

- A name, death date, birth date, kin, personal epitaph
- B name, death date, birth date, kin
- C name, death date, birth date
- D name, death date
- E name (only)
- F Universal Discourse of Grief total

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Spanish	69%	9.5%	19%	1.4%	1.1%	1410
English	25%	21%	43%	4%	7%	1215

Sixty-nine percent use the entire sequence: name, death date, age, kinship terminology, and personalized epitaph.

In contrast, the families using English use this entire sequence only twenty-five percent of the time.

On the other hand, the English language families prefer the name + death date + age sequence—using it forty-three percent of the time. In contrast, the Spanish markers use the three-part sequence on only nineteen percent of their markers.

To further complicate discovering the source of the implicational scale, one can notice its presence on the mixed-code markers. (Table 8.4)

Table 8.4: Mixed Code & Bilingual Markers Assimilating into English

Other = non-core discourse of grief (birth place, occupation, stylized epitaph, etc.)

Numbers = English

(Parenthetical Numbers) = native language

	name	death	birth	kin	epitaph	other	Total
Spanish	96	70	64	6	0		191
Arabic	5	5	5	2	0	3	5
German	2	0	2	2	2	0	2
French	2	0	2	2	0	0	2
Italian	2	2	2	1	1	1	2

While the samples of Arabic, German, French, and Italian do not suffice to give credence to the statistics, both the Arabic and French fit the pattern found in other ethnic languages (chapter six). The German and French do not have death dates in English—but they do have English on

the other core items. The Spanish/English mixture, however, do fit the pattern of movement into English. The data show 96 of 191 having the name in English. Of that 96, 70 have the name and death date in English. Of the 70, 64 also have birth date (or age) in English. And of the 64, 6 also have kinship terminology in English. None of the 6 has a personalized epitaph in English.

Disturbing, in this analysis is the low (50%) percent of mixed/code or bilingual Spanish/English markers that show assimilation into English.

The Spanglish argument, however, deserves its own analysis. I argued in the previous chapter for the existence, for more than a century, of Spanglish as a separate, unique, language code of grief. My argument rests completely upon the pervasiveness of the implicational scale (surname, death date, age, kinship, creative epitaph) as a universal language of grief.

Tables 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3, above, illustrate the actual numbers of Spanish, English, Italian, French, German, and Polish language gravemarkers, listed according to their place on the implicational scale—or according to their noncompliance with the implicational scale. Of the total 3,120 monolingual markers only 287 (or 9.2%) did NOT follow the universal language of grief. In other words, among the

monolingual gravemarkers, almost eighty-five percent follow the same, predictable, pattern of grief.

In summation, the strength of the argument for a universal language of grief on the gravemarkers in San Fernando Cemetery #1, so far, relies upon the assertion that in lamenting the deaths of 3,120 loved ones, families have chosen to follow the same implicational scale of surname, death date, age, kinship, and creative epitaph 2,827 times—or ninety-one percent (90.7%) of the time. Moreover, these families have followed this implicational scale regardless of language code: monolingual English, Spanish, Italian, French, German, or Polish OR mixed-code Spanish/English, Arabic/English, Italian/English, or German/English.

For argument purposes, let us look at the Mixed-Code Spanish/English data as Spanglish. Table 8.5 displays those results. As argued in the previous chapter, the presence of the Universal Discourse of Grief appears—and appears within range of predictable percentage, 83 percent. The emphasis upon the rhetoric of the Universal Discourse of Grief appears to be the same as the Spanish—upon the entire sequence: name, death date, birth date, kinship, and personalized epitaph.

Table 8.5 Spanglish

A name, death date, birth date, kin, personalized epitaph
 B name, death date, birth date, kin
 C name, death date, birth date
 D name, death date
 E name
 F Universal Discourse of Grief total
 G non-Universal Discourse of Grief sequences
 H Total markers
 I Percent that use Universal Discourse of Grief

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Spanglish	101	29	23	6	0	159	32	191	83%

Summary

First, data from 3,120 messages of grief on all of the monolingual gravemarkers and the non-Spanish/English, mixed-code gravemarkers follow the universal language of grief's implicational scale roughly eighty-five percent of the time. The Spanish/English gravemarkers, if left combined, only follow this universal expression of grief half of the time.

Second, none of the other minor languages found in San Fernando #1 have mixed with Spanish as a dominant language. That is, the absence of any Arabic/Spanish, German/Spanish, Italian/Spanish, Polish/Spanish, or French/Spanish gravemarkers speaks volumes in its silence.

Third, when considered as one language, the Spanglish markers adhere to the Universal Discourse of Grief 83% of the time—making it consistent with the Spanish and English language data.

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