

## And the Mexican Indian Also Goes “How”? The Use of Mock Indigenous Spanish by Lorenzo Córdova, Director of the Mexican Electoral Commission

*¿Y el indígena mexicano también dice “How”? El uso del español indígena imitado por Lorenzo Córdova, Director del INE*

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### **Abstract**

This paper describes the linguistic features used by a prominent Mexican public official to mock the Spanish of two Mexican indigenous leaders. It compares the features found in this performance of “Mock Indigenous Spanish” to the features of “Hollywood Injun English” speech, as well as to the actual speech of the indigenous leaders in question. This paper shows how features meant to characterize speakers as disfluent, unsophisticated, and unintelligent are reproduced across languages and cultures.

**Keywords:** indexicality, indigeneity, mock language, public discourse, raciolinguistics

### **Resumen**

*Este trabajo ofrece una descripción de los rasgos lingüísticos usados por un servidor público mexicano de alto rango para burlarse del español de dos líderes de las comunidades indígenas mexicanas. En el trabajo se comparan los rasgos del “español indígena imitado” a los rasgos del “inglés indio de Hollywood”; asimismo, se comparan con el habla verdadero de los líderes indígenas antes mencionados. Este trabajo demuestra cómo los rasgos lingüísticos que se usan para calificar a un hablante como no fluido, poco sofisticado e inteligente son reproducidos a través de lenguas y culturas distintas.*

**Palabras clave:** discurso público, indexicalidad, indigeneidad, lenguaje imitado, raciolingüística

### **Introduction**

There is a popular saying in Mexico that goes “Pobre México, tan lejos de Dios, pero tan cerca a los Estados Unidos.” (*Poor Mexico, so far from God, but so close*

to the United States). The original quote, which is attributed to the late-nineteenth-century Mexican dictator Porfirio Díaz, was voiced in response to the large-scale loss of territory Mexico underwent during the nineteenth century. Mexico's relationship with the United States has always been complicated and, oftentimes, painful. The dichotomous push and pull of Mexico trying to assert its cultural, economic, and political independence from its gargantuan neighbor, while at the same time looking upon American ideals and lifestyle as aspirational goals, is deeply ingrained in the Mexican psyche.

According to a 2012 CIA census, sixty-two percent of Mexico is ethnically *mestizo* (of mixed Amerindian and Spanish descent), twenty-eight percent is Amerindian, and ten percent is of European or African descent. As is the case with Native Americans in the United States, indigenous Mexicans are often viewed as provincial and uneducated, and there is a persistent culture of whitewashing in the country as a whole, despite the fact that the majority of the population is itself of mixed indigenous and European ethnicity. Whiteness is viewed as desirable and prestigious, and this fact manifests itself in the language used in the country in many ways. For example, there is a prevalent phenomenon known as *güerismo*, whereby the terms *güero* and *güera* (literally “white/blond man” and “white/blonde woman”) and the diminutive forms *güerito* and *güerita* are used as flattering terms directed at people of all ethnic backgrounds. Figure 1 shows a comic strip from the blog “El vago de farmacia” (Villasana, 2015) that humorously explains and shows examples of the use of *güerismo*. The English translation of the comic is shown on the right.

As shown in the comic, referring to someone as *güero* or *güera* is especially common in situations in which the speaker has something to gain from the person to whom they're speaking, such as in an economic exchange.

If whiteness in Mexico is seen as desirable and aspirational, indigeneity commonly falls on the other end of the spectrum; it is viewed as something that needs to be ignored, rejected, or scorned. To explore how this disdain for indigeneity is represented in Mexican public discourse, this study examines how the Spanish of indigenous Mexicans is portrayed by two Mexican politicians. It focuses on an incident in which Lorenzo Córdova, president of the Mexican Electoral Commission, and Edmundo Jacobo Molina, executive secretary of the same institution, were caught on tape (RedNoticiero, 2015) mocking the speech of two indigenous Mexican political leaders, Mauricio Mata Soria and Hipólito Arriaga Pote, as well as the televised response of these two indigenous leaders to the incident in question (Cheetoslandia, 2015). It then compares these examples



## GÜERISMO

GÜERISMO is an ocular affliction that makes you see blond/white people where there are in fact none.

Vision of a person without GÜERISMO.

Vision of a person with GÜERISMO.

Colors that Güerismo causes to change.

People who commonly suffer from Güerismo.

The taco guy: “How many tacos, blondy/whitey?”

The market guy: “What do you need, little blondy/whitey?”

The quesadilla lady: “How many, little blondy/whitey?”

The mechanic: “Your car’s ready, little blondy/whitey.”

Figure 1. Comic depicting “El güerismo”

of “Mock Indigenous Spanish” (MIS) to “Hollywood Injun English” (Meek, 2006) in order to connect these public representations of Mexican indigenous speakers to representations of Native Americans in the United States. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- **Research Question 1:** How is the speech of indigenous Mexicans represented in the data?
- **Research Question 2:** How does Mock Indigenous Spanish compare to Hollywood Injun English?
- **Research Question 3:** How does Mock Indigenous Spanish compare to an authentic example of the Spanish of the indigenous Mexicans mocked in the data?

## Literature Review

Research on mock registers and the performative aspect of racial and ethnic identities has been undertaken by authors focusing on different raciolinguistically minoritized groups in the U.S., including Latinos, Asians, and African Americans. For example, in her analysis of Mock Spanish, Hill (1998) demonstrates the many ways in which white racial hegemony is reproduced through linguistic practices. She argues that white public space is constructed through the monitor-

ing of the linguistic practices of racialized populations like the Latinx community. For example, public Spanish as used by the Latinx community in the United States indexicalizes negative frames such as impoliteness, danger, disorder, and lack of culture. On the other hand, when white Americans “pepper” their speech with Spanish, it does not carry any of these stigmas. Hill claims that Mock Spanish elevates whiteness through direct indexicality of traits like eruditeness, loyalty to certain geographic areas, and humor, and asserts that whiteness and use of English are treated as an unmarked normative order. Hill ends her article by questioning whether the use of mock dialects can actually be used to subvert racial practices, a question taken up by Chun (2004).

In her study on Korean-American comedian Margaret Cho’s use of Mock Asian, Chun (2004) explores the ideologies that may or may not legitimize Cho’s use of Mock Asian in her stand-up routines. Chun focuses in particular on the ideas of authenticity/community membership, identity, positioning, and racial othering, and argues that the Cho’s use of Mock Asian may perpetuate racial and national hierarchies (Chun, 2004, p. 277), but that her in-group status as a person of Asian descent, and one who publicly claims membership in said ethnic group, complicates claims of whether her use of Mock Asian is racist. Many of the features of Mock Asian described by Chun, such as alternating H-L intonational contour, use of phrase-final *how*, subject-object pronoun substitution, telegraphic speech, final syllable lengthening, syllable-timed rhythm, decreased tempo, past/present neutralization, simple negation with “no”, absence of articles, and repetition are not unique to Mock Asian; in fact, several of these features are also listed by Meek (2006) in her study on “Hollywood Injun English.”

Meek (2006) focuses on the linguistic features used to depict fictional American Indian English (AIE) in Hollywood, as well as how these features compare to those of perceived and authentic examples of American Indian English. Meek examines portrayals of Native American characters in American movies and television shows and, based on these sources, lists a set of features that characterize what she calls Hollywood Injun English (HIE). These include prosodic features like pause length and frequency, and speech rate; morphological features like absence of contraction, deletion, substitution, and lack of tense; and lexical features such as the use of words and phrases like “paleface,” “wampum,” and “happy hunting ground”. She then compares HIE to authentic examples of AIE. In comparing AIE to HIE, Meek shows that HIE is not systematic and does not, under close examination, reflect real American Indian English dialects. Meek

argues that HIE is used to evoke the notion of “the White Man’s Indian” and reproduce the notion of otherness. It indexicalizes features such as low intelligence, childlikeness, and foreignness. Many of the features listed by Hill are not only accessible in English, but in Spanish as well, due in part to the far reach of the American film and television industries.

Finally, Bucholtz & Lopez (2011) examine the use of linguistic minstrelsy, defined as “a form of mock language that reinscribes stereotypes about African Americans and their language while participating in a longstanding and often controversial pattern of European American appropriation of black cultural forms” (p. 681). Bucholtz & Lopez focus specifically on the use of African American English by white actors in Hollywood. Some of the features of linguistic minstrelsy they discuss are: zero copula, preposition simplification, invariant *be*, and regularization of the third-person singular. Much like Hollywood Injun English, Bucholtz & Lopez show that performances of linguistic minstrelsy draw on a limited number of salient forms that are used to index otherness (i.e. non-whiteness). And, as is the case with HIE, use of these features serves to reproduce already deeply-entrenched features of a race through use of salient and easily identifiable linguistic features. Bucholtz & Lopez make the important point that the white performers in linguistic minstrelsy are not usually attempting to accurately portray the ethnicity of the group they are mocking. Instead, linguistic performance of this type reduces the linguistic complexity of authentic language varieties, while essentializing certain language ideologies associated with certain linguistic and ethnic groups.

As shown, many studies have shown how mock registers are used to essentialize various linguistic minority groups in the United States, though none to my knowledge have examined the use of a mock indigenous register in Spanish. As such, the current paper seeks to fill a gap in the literature by exploring how an important public figure in Mexican politics uses what I call “Mock Indigenous Spanish” to belittle and distance himself from two indigenous Mexican political leaders.

## **Data**

The primary data for this study come from clips from a leaked phone call (Red-Noticiero, 2015) and subsequent CNN Mexico interview (Cheetoslandia, 2015) that both took place in May 2015. The speakers in the phone call are Lorenzo Córdova and Edmundo Jacobo Molina, who at the time of the recording were the president and executive secretary of the Mexican Electoral Commission,

respectively. In the phone call, Córdova tells Molina about a meeting he had with two indigenous leaders from the Chichimeca tribe in Guanajuato, a state in central Mexico. The phone call, which caused public uproar due to its blatant mocking of the two indigenous leaders in question<sup>1</sup>, was followed by several interviews with the indigenous leaders, including the interview used in this study. This interview, broadcast on CNN Mexico, took place between Mauricio Mata Soria and Hipólito Arriaga Pote, the two indigenous leaders who Córdova mocked after their May 2015 meeting, and reporter Mario González. I chose to use this data because the leaked phone call provides an authentic example of a prominent Mexican politician's verbal representation of indigenous leaders, while the CNN interview provides examples of the actual speech of the leaders who were mocked.

The data used to compare Mock Indigenous Spanish to Hollywood Injun English comes from Meek's (2006) data, which, as previously mentioned, comes from several Hollywood films and TV shows that depict Native Americans.

## **Methodology**

I began by broadly transcribing the phone call and CNN interview used for this study. After transcribing the data, I followed the methodology used in Chun (2004) and Meek (2006) and coded the performances of Mock Indigenous Spanish in the data according to the phonetic, phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical features used by Córdova to indexicalize indigeneity. I then compared these features to those of Hollywood Injun English described by Meek. Finally, I examined data from the actual speech of the two mocked indigenous leaders and compared these to the performances of MIS in my data. I also followed the methodology used by De Fina & King (2011) for presentation of original and translated data excerpts.

## **Findings**

### *Features of Mock Indigenous Spanish*

The features of Mock Indigenous Spanish used by Córdova in his performances to indexicalize the speech of indigenous Mexicans are summarized in Table 1. The column on the left describes the feature in question and shows in pa-

<sup>1</sup> In fact, Córdova seems to be mocking one of the leaders in particular in the interview. Which of the leaders he is mocking is unclear; the indigenous leaders themselves report not knowing to which of them Córdova was referring.

rentheses how it is transcribed in the data. The middle column shows an example in Spanish, while the column to the right gives the English translation of the example. In the section that lists morphosyntactic features, the standard Spanish form is given in parentheses after the MIS form; the same goes for the English translations on the right.

TABLE 1. FEATURES OF MOCK INDIGENOUS SPANISH.

DESCRIPTION OF MOCK INDIGENOUS SPANISH FEATURE	SPANISH (ORIGINAL)	ENGLISH (TRANSLATION)
<i>Phonetic Features</i>		
Low pitch ( <b>bold</b> )	Yo: Ø Ø jefe	I: Ø Ø chief
<i>Phonological Features</i>		
Vowel lengthening (:)	Yo:	I:
Increased pause length (...)	Yo: Ø Ø jefe...Ø Ø gra:n nación Chichimeca	I: Ø Ø chief...Ø Ø great: nation Chichimeca
<i>Morphosyntactic Features</i>		
Copula deletion (Ø)	Yo: Ø Ø jefe (Yo <i>soy</i> el jefe)	I: Ø Ø chief (I <i>am</i> the chief)
Non-copular verb deletion (Ø)	o Ø diputados para nosotros (o nos <i>das/permities tener</i> diputados)	either Ø representatives for us (either you <i>give/allow us to have</i> representatives)
Article deletion (Ø)	Yo: Ø Ø jefe (Yo <i>soy el</i> jefe)	I: Ø Ø chief (I <i>am the</i> chief)
Preposition deletion (Ø)	Ø Ø gran: nación Chichimeca ( <i>de la gran</i> nación Chichimeca)	Ø Ø great: nation Chichimeca ( <i>of the great</i> Chichimeca nation)
Lack of conjugation/tense (___)	Yo... <u>decir</u> aquí (Yo <i>digol/ vengo a decir</i> aquí)	I... <u>to say</u> here (I <i>say here/I come here to say</i> )
Use of postverbal [preposition + pronoun] structure instead of preverbal object pronoun (CAPS)	o Ø diputados PARA NOSOTROS (o <i>nos das/permities tener</i> diputados)  yo <u>decir</u> A TI (yo <i>te digo</i> OR yo <i>te digo a ti</i> )	either Ø representatives FOR US (Literal translation: either you <i>us give/allow</i> representatives)  I <u>say</u> TO YOU (Literal translation: I <i>you say</i> OR I <i>you say to you</i> )
<i>Lexical Features</i>		
Use of specialized vocabulary/ referents ( )	Yo: Ø Ø gra:n je:fe To:ro: Senta:do...Ø Ø líder Ø Ø gra:n nación chichimeca	I: Ø Ø grea:t chief: Si:tting Bu:ll...Ø Ø leader Ø Ø grea:t Chichimeca Nation.

The first feature, which occurs at the phonetic level, is a lowering of pitch. Córdova himself has a rather high, nasal tone of voice, so the lowered pitch he uses when performing indigenous Spanish is quite salient. It's interesting to note that his voice returns to its more natural pitch range toward the end of his first performance of MIS, as can be seen in (1).

(1) “I’m not going to lie”

1 LC: A ver güey, había un...no mames no, no voy a mentir eh. Te lo voy a decir como  
2 hablaba ese cabrón. Un güey que me decía **Yo: Ø Ø jefe...Ø Ø gra:n nación**  
3 **chichimeca. Vengo Ø Guanajuato. Yo:...decir...A....TI o Ø diputados...PARA**  
4 **NOSOTROS o: yo: no: permitir tus elecciones. No mames cabrón.**

1 LC: Let me see dude, there was...fucking hell I'm not, I'm not going to lie ok. I'm going  
2 to tell you how this idiot was talking. An idiot that said to me **I: Ø Ø chief...Ø Ø**  
3 **great Chichimeca Nation. I come Ø Guanajuato. I:...say...TO...YOU either Ø**  
4 **representatives FOR US o:r I: do:n't permit your elections. For fuck's sake dude.**

Turning to the phonological level, Córdova's performances of MIS show both increased pause length and lengthening of vowels. For example, “yo” (*I*) becomes “yo:” (*I:*). Again, because Córdova's normal rate of articulation is rather fast, both these phonological features are salient in his mock performance of indigenous speech.

Córdova's Mock Indigenous Spanish primarily makes use of morphosyntactic features, especially deletion, to indexicalize indigeneity. As shown in Table 1, his performance makes use of copula deletion, non-copular verb deletion, article deletion, and preposition deletion. He also makes use of unconjugated verbs in the infinitive (where these would have to be conjugated), as well as postverbal [preposition + pronoun] structures instead of a preverbal object pronoun. In Spanish, a phrase like “*I say to you*” can be constructed either as “(yo) te digo” [(optional subject pronoun) + indirect object pronoun + verb] or “(yo) te digo a ti” [(optional subject pronoun) + indirect object pronoun + verb + preposition + prepositional pronoun], but never “yo digo a ti” [(optional subject pronoun) + verb + preposition + prepositional pronoun]. Interestingly, this feature of Córdova's MIS is a common mistake made by L1-English learners of Spanish.

Finally, Córdova makes use of a historical reference he and his interlocutor share to indexicalize indigeneity: that of Toro Sentado (*Sitting Bull*). It's interesting that Córdova references a Native American from what is now the U.S. and not a famous indigenous Mexican such as Moctezuma or Benito Juárez, who was himself an indigenous political leader. One could argue that Toro Sentado is further removed, or more *othered*, for Córdova than a Mexican historical figure

or, as will be discussed further on, that Córdova is actually indexicalizing U.S. indigeneity throughout his performance. Furthermore, I think Córdova's choice of referent demonstrates that he is aware that his use of MIS "...resembles/parodies/plagiarizes/comments on/answers/..." (Hill, 2005) other performances of mock language of which he and interlocutor have shared knowledge.

### *Comparison of Mock Indigenous Spanish and Hollywood Injun English*

In order to see to what extent Córdova's Mock Indigenous Spanish is similar to Hollywood Injun English (Meek, 2006), I compared the features I found in Córdova's performance to those described by Meek. Table 2 shows the features shared by both mock styles in the left column. Both the original Spanish (ES) examples from my data and the English translations (EN) are given in the middle column. The sources for the excerpts from Mock's data are given in italics before each example in the column to the right. In this table, "corrections" based on standard Spanish or English are given in parentheses.

To begin, both styles share the phonological feature of increased pause length. As described by Meek (2006) and Chun (2004), this feature is often used to indexicalize slowness of thought or lack of intelligence. I feel that Córdova makes use of this feature in MIS to the same effect.

Mock Indigenous Spanish and Hollywood Injun English both share several morphosyntactic features. For example, verb and article deletion are found in both data sets, as are lack of/simplified verb conjugations. In both mock styles, this is used to indexicalize disfluency, non-nativeness, and childlikeness. Put another way, these features are used to show that a speaker is developmentally not at the level of a native-speaking adult of whatever language is being upheld as the standard. Meek argues that lack of tense in verbs in HIE may also be used to mark primitiveness or timelessness, and I think the same goes for MIS. In addition, both mock styles also employ misuse of pronouns. As discussed previously, the misuse of pronouns used in MIX indexicalizes foreigner or learner speech, and the same can be said of its use in HIE.

Finally, both MIS and HIE make use of culturally or historically salient lexical imagery to indexicalize indigeneity. In both samples, "chief" or "jefe" is a very common lexical feature, as are references to Indian nations. As shown in (2), in the MIS sample Córdova makes direct mention of a Native American historical figure, Toro Sentado (*Sitting Bull*), a TV show with Native American characters, "El Llanero Solitario" (*The Lone Ranger*), and a Mexican indigenous group, the Chichimeca. All are used in his performance to indexicalize indigeneity.

**TABLE 2.** FEATURES SHARED BY MOCK INDIGENOUS SPANISH & HOLLYWOOD INJUN ENGLISH

MOCK FEATURE	EXAMPLE FROM MOCK INDIGENOUS SPANISH	EXAMPLE FROM HOLLYWOOD INJUN ENGLISH
<i>Phonological Features</i>		
Increased pause length (...)	ES- Yo: Ø Ø jefe...Ø Ø gra:n nación Chichimeca EN- I: Ø Ø chief...Ø Ø grea:t nation Chichimeca)	MacGyver: My name is...Standing Wolf.
<i>Morphosyntactic Features</i>		
Copula deletion (Ø)	EN- Yo: Ø ( <i>soy</i> ) Ø jefe ES- I: Ø ( <i>am</i> ) Ø chief	Peter Pan: If Tiger Lily Ø ( <i>is</i> ) not back by sunset, burn-um at stake.
Article deletion (Ø)	EN- Yo: Ø Ø ( <i>el</i> ) jefe ES- I: Ø Ø ( <i>the</i> ) chief	Peter Pan: For many moons Ø ( <i>the</i> ) Red man fight Ø ( <i>the</i> ) paleface Lost Boys.
Lack of conjugation/tense (____)	EN- Yo... <u>decir</u> ( <i>digo/</i> <i>vengo a decir</i> ) aqui ES- I... <u>to say</u> here (I <i>say</i> here/I <i>come</i> here <i>to say</i> )	The Last of the Mohicans: “I <u>speak</u> ( <i>spoke</i> ) with Twin River Mohawk of the sixth nation.”
Pronoun substitution/ misuse (CAPS)	ES- o Ø diputados PARA NOSOTROS EN- either Ø representatives FOR US	Bugs Bunny: HIM go (went) [d]at way.
<i>Lexical Features</i>		
Use of specialized vocabulary/referents ( )	ES- Yo: Ø Ø gra:n je:fe To:ro: Senta:do...Ø Ø líder Ø Ø gra:n nación chichimeca EN- I: Ø Ø grea:t chie:f Si:tting Bu:ll...Ø Ø leader Ø Ø grea:t Chichimeca Nation.	Maverick: Injun shot by white man’s weapon not reach happy hunting ground.

(2) “He watched a lot of...Lone Ranger”

1 LC: Cabrón:n... cuando te estoy diciendo (inaudible) decir. Se ve que este güey... yo no  
 2 sé si sea cierto que hable así cabrón. Pero no mames. Vio mucho... este... Llanero  
 3 Solitario cabrón con jefe de toro cabrón. No mames cabrón. O sea no mames  
 4 nada más faltó decir. Me cae que... que le faltó decir: **Yo: Ø Ø gra:n jefe To:ro:**  
 5 **Senta:do...Ø Ø líder Ø Ø gra:n nación chichimeca.** No mames cabrón... no  
 6 mames cabrón. No no no no no... está de pánico cabrón. No mames güey. Pero...o  
 7 acabamos muy divertidos o acabamos en el psiquiatra de aquí cabrón eh.

1 LC: Du:de... when I say to you (inaudible) say. It seems like this dude...I don't know if  
 2 he really talks like that dude. But fucking hell. He watched a lot of...Lone Ranger,  
 3 dude with Sitting Bull dude. Fucking hell, dude. I mean fucking hell the only thing  
 4 missing was for him to say seriously for him to say **I: Ø Ø gra:t chief Si:tting**  
 5 **Bu:ll...Ø Ø leader Ø Ø gra:t Chichimeca Nation.** For fuck's sake dude for fuck's  
 6 sake dude. No no no no no...it's terrifying dude. Fucking hell dude. But...we'll either  
 7 end up laughing a lot or in the loony bin dude huh.

As has been shown, Mock Indigenous Spanish and Hollywood Injun English share several features, especially at the morphosyntactic level. Overall, these features are used in both styles to connect indigeneity with disfluency, slowness of thought, childlikeness, and non-nativeness. This final characteristic, non-nativeness, is especially ironic considering that both styles seek to elevate the language of the conquering cultures, Spanish in Mexico and English in the United States, over the languages of the actual “native” populations of both countries.

*Comparison of Mock Indigenous Spanish and Authentic Indigenous Spanish*

In this section, I compare Córdova’s mock performance of the speech of two indigenous leaders, Mauricio Mata Soria & Hipólito Arriaga Pote, to authentic samples of the speech of both leaders. The features of MIS Córdova uses to mock the speech of the two leaders are as follows: low pitch, increased pause length, and vowel elongation; deletion of copulas, non-copular verbs, articles, and prepositions; lack of verb conjugation and incorrect use of postverbal prepositional objects; and lexical imagery associated with references to historically or culturally salient Native Americans and/or use of terms such as “jefe” or “nation”. Put simply, the only one of these features for which I found any evidence in the data from the interview with the two indigenous leaders was a repeated reference by Hipólito Arriaga Pote to “los hermanos” (*the brothers*) or “los hermanos indígenas” (*the indigenous brothers*), as shown in (3). I feel that it is a stretch to include this as a feature that lexicalizes indigeneity, as I don’t think this use of “hermanos” is out of place in Mexican discourse in general.

(3) “The discrimination we face”

1 HAP: Por eso le este... le hemos pedido a las autoridades que tengamos gente indígena en  
2 el Senado de la República...en las diputaciones federales en las diputaciones locales y  
3 en los ayuntamientos...que tenemos ese derecho. Que no lo quieren reconocer...eso  
4 es la discriminación que vivimos. Teniendo nosotros nuestros diputados...nuestros  
5 hermanos indígenas van a cambiar la vida. Y agradecemos que el-el-el gobierno  
6 federal se preocupa pero nosotros tenemos un sentir, mis hermanos que no tenemos  
7 quien nos defiende.

1 HAP: Because of that we um...we have asked the authorities to allow us to have indigenous  
2 people in the Senate...in the federal government in local government and city  
3 councils...because we have that right. That they don't want to recognize it... is the  
4 discrimination we face. With our own representatives...our indigenous brothers will  
5 change reality. We appreciate that the-the-the federal government is concerned, but  
6 we have a feeling my brothers and I that we have no one to defend us.

## Discussion

To summarize, the findings of this study are as follows. First, that Lorenzo Córdova uses an identifiable set of phonetic, phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical features to indexalize indigeneity in his mock performance of the speech of indigenous Mexicans. Second, that Mock Indigenous Spanish and Hollywood Injun English share many of the same features, and that these features are often used to indexalize similar characteristics, including slowness of thought, disfluency, non-nativeness/foreignness, and childlikeness. These same characteristics are also indexalized in other mock registers in the literature, such as Mock Asian. Finally, as is the case with Hollywood Injun English and Authentic Indian English (Meek, 2006), Mock Indigenous Spanish does not reflect the features found in the authentic Spanish of indigenous Mexicans. Much like HIE and the linguistic minstrelsy described by white actors in Bucholtz and Lopez (2011), it draws on and recycles salient tropes about racialized speakers, reducing the linguistic complexity of the authentic speech of these groups to create essentialized caricatures of the speakers it purports to represent, ostensibly so that these caricatures are accessible to outgroup members for purposes of recognition, ridicule, and discrimination. Although Lorenzo Córdova, is like many Mexicans, mestizo, he clearly does not associate himself with any indigenous Mexican group, nor do I think that the Chichimeca community would in any way consider him to be a member of their community. As such, his performance, which is intended to be funny to his audience, another Mexican politician who identifies as non-indigenous, does not enter into the same territory in terms of arguable legitimacy as, for example, the Korean-American comedian discussed in Chun (2004).

### **Limitations.**

The biggest limitation of this study is the size of the data set. With more examples of Mock Indigenous Spanish, it's probable that more features of MIS could be identified and compared to authentic samples of the Spanish of indigenous Mexicans, and that stronger links between this mock register and the other mock registers in the literature could be established. As is, though this study takes the important step of documenting the linguistic features of Mock Indigenous Spanish as used by one prominent Mexican civil servant, it's difficult to make generalizations as to the use of this register on a larger scale.

### **Conclusion**

This study is yet another example of how mock registers are used by those in powerful positions to belittle and *other* ethnic groups in order to delegitimize their needs and rights and frame them as childlike, unintelligent beings who are unable to fluently represent themselves. The fact that Córdova's performance of MIS is closely related to and even directly mentions representations of Native American speech in Hollywood also supports the idea of a sort of power flow on the world stage. Racialized discourses circulated in the United States, which has loomed large as *the* world superpower in recent history, are reproduced in other languages and cultures. Mexico, "so far from God, but so close to the United States," is affected by its neighbor politically, economically, and linguistically. This goes to show that mock performances reproduce, as it were, in the minds of those exposed to them, and that the characteristics that they indexicalize are used over and over again to discriminate against whatever group(s) have less power in a given context. The fact that these mock registers are often couched in the guise of humor makes them even more insidious, because it is easier for those in power to brush off accusations that they are linguistic acts of discrimination. As such, continued research on mock registers is important in order to understand how people are socialized into the practice of using said registers across different languages and cultures, so that we may continue to call out these performances for what they are: inauthentic, hackneyed caricatures of *othered* racial and ethnic groups.

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## Appendix A

### Transcription of Conversation Between Lorenzo Córdova and Edmundo Jacobo Molina

#### 1. Spanish Transcript (Original)

- 1 EJM: Señor presidente a tus órdenes.
- 2 LC: Perdóname, perdóname. ¿Puedes hablar?
- 3 EJM: Sí, sí. Dime.
- 4 LC: Ah nada. Este... camino ya al hotel. Ya hice mis trámites. Ya le di asesoría a  
5 los de los pueblos indígenas, cabrón.
- 6 EJM: Eso carajo. Jajaja.
- 7 LC: No mames cabrón.
- 8 EJM: ¿Qué cosa?
- 9 LC: No. No. Hay que escribir... Te acuerdas... O sea, de veras, unas crónicas  
10 marcianas desde el INE, cabrón.
- 11 EJM: Sí, sí. Jaja
- 12 LC: No mames.
- 13 EJM: Haciéndole al (inaudible) ... israelita ... (inaudible)
- 14 LC: No, no. Exactamente. (inaudible) reloaded. No mames cabrón- Es que  
15 desde las dramáticas reuniones con los padres de Ayotzinapa hasta esto  
16 cabrón. Qué, a ver güey, había un... no mames no, no voy a mentir eh. Te  
17 lo voy a decir como hablaba ese cabrón. Un güey que me decía yo jefe gran  
18 nación chichimeca. Vengo Guanajuato. Yo decir a ti o diputados...para  
19 nosotros o yo no permitir tus elecciones. No mames cabrón.
- 20 EJM: (inaudible)
- 21 LC: Cabrón:n... cuando te estoy diciendo (inaudible) decir. Se ve que este güey...  
22 yo no sé si sea cierto que hable así, cabrón. Pero no mames. Vio mucho...  
23 este... llanero solitario, cabrón con jefe de toro, cabrón. No mames, cabrón.  
24 O sea, no mames, nada más faltó decir. Me cae que... que le faltó decir: yo  
25 gran jefe toro sentado, líder gran nación chichimeca. No mames, cabrón...  
26 no mames cabrón. No, no, no, no, no... está de pánico, cabrón. No mames,  
27 güey. Pero, o acabamos muy divertidos o acabamos en el psiquiatra de aquí  
28 cabrón, eh.
- 29 EJM: Claro, claro, claro.
- 30 LC: Pero bueno. ¿Cómo va la (inaudible)? ¿Bien?
- 31 EJM: Bien, bien. Vamos bien. Oye en cuanto llegue (inaudible), ya Miguel Ángel  
32 (inaudible) en tomar el relevo de la reunión.
- 33 LC: No, no. En cuanto llegue que entro allí y saludo, tranquilo cabrón. O sea  
aquí...
- 34 EJM: Ah, bueno. Órale. Sale, vamos a tener que salir luego, luego tú y yo.
- 35 LC: Bueno, eh.
- 36 EJM: Órale.

- 37 LC: Sale.  
38 EJM: Ándale. Gracias.  
39 LC: Abrazote.  
40 EJM: Igual. Bye.

## 2. *English Transcript (Translation)*

- 1 EJM: Mister President at your service.  
2 LC: Sorry, sorry. Can you talk?  
3 EJM: Yes, yes. What's up?  
4 LC: Oh nothing. Um...on the way back to the hotel. Done with my responsibilities.  
5 And I met with the guys from the indigenous communities, dude.  
6 EJM: That shit. Hahaha.  
7 LC: For fuck's sake dude.  
8 EJM: What?  
9 LC: No. No. We need to write...You remember...I mean, really, like Martian  
10 Chronicles from the INE, dude.  
11 EJM: Yeah, yeah. Haha.  
12 LC: Fucking hell.  
13 EJM: Doing the (inaudible) ...Israelite ... (inaudible)  
14 LC: No, no. Exactly (inaudible) reloaded. Fucking hell dude- I mean from the  
15 dramatic meetings with the Ayotzinapa parents to this dude. Let me see dude,  
16 there was...fucking hell I'm not, I'm not going to lie ok. I'm going to tell you how  
17 this idiot was talking. An idiot that said to me I chief great Chichimeca nation. I  
18 come Guanajuato. I say to you, either representatives for us or I don't permit your  
19 elections. For fuck's sake dude.  
20 EJM: (inaudible)  
21 LC: Du:de... when I say to you (inaudible) say. It seems like this dude...I don't know  
22 if he really talks like that dude. But fucking hell. He watched a lot of...Lone  
23 Ranger, dude with Sitting Bull dude. Fucking hell, dude. I mean, fucking hell,  
24 the only thing missing was for him to say, seriously for for him to say me great  
25 chief Sitting Bull leader great Chichimeca nation. For fuck's sake dude for fuck's  
26 sake dude. No, no, no, no, no...it's terrifying dude. Fucking hell dude. But, we'll  
27 either end up laughing a lot or in the loony bin dude, huh.  
28 EJM: Right, right, right...  
29 LC: But anyway... How's the (inaudible)? Good?  
30 EJM: Good, good, We're doing well. Hey when you arrive (inaudible), Miguel Angel  
31 (inaudible) taking over the hand-off at the meeting.  
32 LC: No, no. As soon as I get there and walk in and say hello, chill out dude. I mean  
here...  
33 EJM: Ah, ok. Cool. Ok then, we'll have to hang out later, later me and you.  
34 LC: Good, uh huh.

- 35 EJM: Ok.  
36 LC: Cool...  
37 EJM: Alright. Thanks.  
38 LC: Big hug.  
39 EJM: Ditto. Bye.

## Appendix B

Transcription of Interview between Mario González (CNN México), Mauricio Mata Soria and Hipólito Arriaga Pote

### 1. Spanish Transcript (Original)

- 1 MG: Hay molestia, frustración e indignación entre los pueblos originarios de México y  
2 de América Latina por lo que consideraron como una muestra de discriminación  
3 en las palabras del presidente consejero del Instituto Nacional Electoral de México  
4 Lorenzo Córdova. Quien en una conversación telefónica hacía mofa de la forma de  
5 expresión de uno de los representantes de estos pueblos. Más temprano conversé  
6 con el gobernador nacional indígena Hipólito Arriaga Pote y el secretario de la  
7 gubernatura indígena en Guanajuato Mauricio Mata Soria. Precisamente, los dos  
8 líderes indígenas con los que se reunió Córdova antes de la conversación dada a  
9 conocer el martes. Aquí parte de esta entrevista:
- 10 HAP: A la conclusión de ...del que hizo el presidente del INE, pues hemos analizado y  
11 hemos estado con los hermanos lo que se refiere como goberna...tura indígena.  
12 Estamos consensuando, estamos consensuando a donde el pueblo va a decidir la  
13 situación de la discriminación que nos han hecho.
- 14 MG: ¿Hubo una ofensa? Están ofendidos por lo que se (inaudible).
- 15 HAP: Eh... Todo ... Todo los hermanos indígenas de México y porqué no los migrantes  
16 de Estados Unidos y también en en a nivel mundial. Está... los indígenas se sintieron  
17 agre... a... discriminación, fue una discriminación que se le hizo.
- 18 MG: Eh... Se ha tratado de decir, bueno es que así hablamos todos, pero... pero creo que  
19 es peor esa explicación porque habla de una discriminación generalizada en nuestro  
20 país, Mauricio. No es solamente una llamada telefónica privada sino es es un  
21 síntoma nacional. Eh... ¿Cuál es el sentimiento Mauricio?
- 22 MMS: Bueno, el sentimiento es de ... de que captamos como es ... tenemos una especie  
23 de frustración porque vemos que en su trato hacia nosotros. Una fue de negar lo  
24 que pedíamos. Y por pedir espacios políticos y por formar parte del presupuesto  
25 para tener a nuestros compañeros indígenas. Pues ya ves lo que piensa... no. Como,  
26 que dice de nosotros. Y si dice nuestro gobernador indígena nacional...que ofendió  
27 a todo las etnias nacionales, que somos sesenta y dos. Si somos más de dieciocho  
28 millones de mexicanos, ¿por qué no nos conceden espacios para representar a los  
29 nuestros?
- 30 MG: ¿Eso es lo que pedían ustedes originalmente?
- 31 MMS: Siii...
- 32 MG: Más espacios, más representatividad en el congreso...

- 33 MMS: Es que no tenemos representatividad ni en los ayuntamientos, ni en los congresos  
34 locales ni federales. Nada, pues. Y somos más de dieciocho millones. Somos mucho  
35 más, pero eso es lo que ... este... supuestamente reconocen. Entonces tiene...  
36 ¿qué tiene de malo exigir nosotros pedir? Y eso fue pues al parecer la inconfor...  
37 incomodidad del doctor Córdova.
- 38 MG: Eh... ¿En los partidos políticos tampoco han abierto espacios para los pueblos  
39 originales?
- 40 HAP: No mire aquí la cuestión es de que nosotros por ser originarios de comunidades  
41 indígenas que la constitución dice que los indígenas tienen derecho de tener  
42 candidatos de elección popular a donde los estados, ayuntamientos tienen presencia  
43 indígena y está escrito en la Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos. Ellos...  
44 las autoridades no lo quieren entender. Aquí, este... como marca la ley. Por eso  
45 estamos... siguen con la violación de los derechos indígenas. Ellos creen que todavía  
46 seguimos como hace doscientos (inaudible). Toda la vida del indígena ha sido  
47 discriminado, pero a estas alturas ya también tenemos hijos preparados, tenemos  
48 abogados indígenas, equidad de género, mujer y hombre. Y ellos fueron los que  
49 nos empujaron a que nosotros exigiéramos por derecho nos corresponde. Por eso  
50 le este... le hemos pedido a las autoridades que tengamos gente indígena en el  
51 senado de la República, en las diputaciones federales, en las diputaciones locales y  
52 en los ayuntamientos, que tenemos ese derecho, que no lo quieren reconocer, eso  
53 es la discriminación que vivimos. Teniendo nosotros nuestros diputados, nuestros  
54 hermanos indígenas van a cambiar la vida y agradecemos que el...el...el gobierno  
55 federal se preocupa, pero nosotros tenemos un sentir, mis hermanos que no tenemos  
56 quien nos defiende...
- 57 MG: Pues Mauricio, Hipólito, muchas gracias por estar aquí con nosotros. Y...y...  
58 esperamos que avance esta agenda.
- 59 HAP: Pues...
- 60 MG: Realmente creo que es un buen momento para que la agenda de los pueblos  
61 originales avance en nuestro país.
- 62 HAP: No sé si me permite, la, mire...
- 63 MG: Sí, claro.
- 64 HAP: Pues yo aquí quiero pedirle a las autoridades, a nuestro, lo respetamos como jefe  
65 supremo al presidente de la República que volteé hacia nosotros, que volteé hacia  
66 nosotros, que él (inaudible) el 23 de septiembre estuvo en Estados Unidos y dijo que  
67 todo el derecho para los pueblos indígenas. Entonces yo le pido, y un llamado a que  
68 tenemos que trabajar de la mano indígenas o no indígenas.

## 2. English Transcript (Translation)

- 1 MG: There is anger, frustration, and indignation among the first nations of Mexico and  
2 Latin America due to what they consider an act of discrimination in the words of  
3 the president of the Mexican Electoral Commission, Lorenzo Cordova. Who in a  
4 telephone conversation mocked the way one of the representatives of these nations  
5 spoke. Earlier today I spoke with National Indigenous Governor Hipolito Arraiga  
6 Pote & the secretary of the Indigenous Government Mauricio Mata Soria, the very  
7 same indigenous leaders who met with Cordova before the conversation that was  
8 made public Tuesday. Let's take a look at a clip from that interview.

- 9 HAP: As a conclusion...about what the president of the INE did, well we've been  
10 analyzing it with the brothers what it means to be an indigenous government. We're  
11 reaching a consensus, we're reaching a consensus about what the people will decide  
12 about the situation of the discrimination they've done to us.
- 13 MG: Was offense done? Are you offended by what was (inaudible).
- 14 HAP: Uh... All ... All the indigenous brothers of Mexico and why not U.S. migrants  
15 & also at an international level. It's...indigenous people feel harrass...to...  
16 discrimination, what was done was discrimination.
- 17 MG: Uh...They've tried to say, well the thing is we've all spoken, but ..but I think that  
18 explanation is worse because it points to generalized discrimination in our country,  
19 Mauricio. It's not just one private phone call but it's a national symptom. Uh...what  
20 is the feeling, Mauricio?
- 21 MMS: Well, the feeling is one of...what we perceived is...we feel a sort of frustration...  
22 because we see that in their...treatment of us. One thing was that they denied us  
23 what we asked for. And by asking for political spaces and to have included in the  
24 budget support for fellow indigenous community members...well you see what he  
25 thinks...no. Like, what he says about us. And if...our national indigenous governor  
26 says...that he offended everyone...the national ethnic groups, and there are seventy-  
27 two of us. If there are more than eighteen million Mexicans, why don't they give us  
28 the space to represent our own people?
- 29 MG: Is that what you'd originally asked for?
- 30 MMS: Yes...
- 31 MG: More spaces, more representation in congress...
- 32 MMS: The thing is we don't have representation even in city government, nor in local or  
33 federal government. Nothing, you know. And there are more than eighteen million  
34 of us. There are many more, but that is what...um...is supposedly recognized. So  
35 what...what is wrong with us demanding asking? And that seems to have been the  
36 thing...the thing doctor Cordova disagreed with.
- 37 MG: Uh...In the political parties they also haven't opened up spaces for the first  
38 nations?
- 39 HAP: No look here the thing is that we because we come from indigenous communities  
40 that the constitution says that indigenous people have the right to have  
41 candidates for the popular vote where the states, the city councils have indigenous  
42 representation and it's written in the Constitution of the United (Mexican) States.  
43 They...the authorities don't want to understand. Here, um...as the law prescribes.  
44 That's why we're...they continue to violate the rights of indigenous peoples. They  
45 think that we're still the way we were two hundred (inaudible). All his life the  
46 indigenous person has been discriminated against, but nowadays we also have sons  
47 with education, we have indigenous lawyers, gender equality, woman and man.  
48 And they were the ones that pushed for us to demand what by law we deserve.  
49 Because of that we um...we have asked the authorities to allow us to have indigenous  
50 people in the Senate, in the federal government, in local government and city  
51 councils, because we have that right, and they don't want to recognize it, and  
52 that is the discrimination we face every day. If we have our own representatives,  
53 our indigenous brothers will change lives we appreciate that the...the...the federal  
54 government is concerned, but we have a feeling, my brothers and I that we have no  
55 one to defend us...
- 56 MG: Well Mauricio Hipolito, thank you very much for being here with us. And...and...  
57 we hope your cause moves forward.

- 58 HAP: Well...
- 59 MG: I really believe it is a good time for the cause of indigenous peoples in our country  
60 to move forward.
- 61 HAP: I don't know if you'll allow me the...look
- 62 MG: Yes, of course.
- 63 HAP: Well I want to take the chance here to ask the authorities, to our, we respect the  
64 president of the Republic as the commander in chief, may he listen to us, may he  
65 listen to us, may he (inaudible) on September 23 he was in the United States and he  
66 said all rights apply to the first nations. So I want to ask him, a for indigenous and  
67 non-indigenous hands to work together.