Gibraltarians and their language

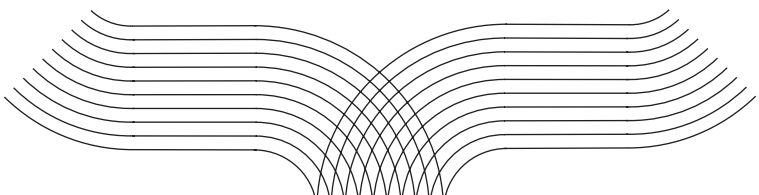
22 linguistic biographies

Elena Seoane
M. G. Sanchez
Lucía Loureiro-Porto
Cristina Suárez-Gómez

Miscelánea
Serie de textos misceláneos

M. G. Sanchez is to this day the most internationally renowned Gibraltarian writer. He holds a PhD in English from the University of Leeds and has lived in the UK since 2003. He has written over a dozen books dealing with Gibraltarian matters, the latest being the novels *Gooseman* (2020), *The Fetishist* (2021) and *Marlboro Man* (2022). His books have been reviewed in international literary journals such as *Ariel* and *Wasafiri*, and he has lectured about Gibraltar and his Gibraltarian writings at universities all over Europe (www.mgsanchez.net). M. G. Sanchez has played a pivotal role in the research project ViEW (Variation in English Worldwide), which is currently headed by Professor Elena Seoane (University of Vigo) along with Professors Cristina Suárez-Gómez and Lucía Loureiro-Porto (University of the Balearic Islands). Professors Seoane, Suárez-Gómez and Loureiro-Porto all hold PhDs from the University of Santiago de Compostela, specializing in English historical linguistics. They now combine their original research interests with the study of language change in World Englishes from a variationist perspective. In 2014, the ViEW team turned their attention to Gibraltarian English, and soon afterwards were commissioned to compile the Gibraltarian component of the International *Corpus of English* (ICE-GBR). The team's extensive array of publications and presentations on the subject has established them as preeminent experts in this field, as shown by the fact that they were commissioned to write the chapter on Gibraltar English for the seminal New *Cambridge History of the English Language* (Cambridge University Press 2024). The ViEW Team is very grateful to M. G. Sanchez for having helped them understand and negotiate the complexities of modern-day Gibraltarian culture, history and identity.

Servizo de Publicacións
Universidade Vigo



Miscelánea
Serie de textos misceláneos

Edición
Universidade de Vigo
Servizo de Publicacións
Rúa de Leonardo da Vinci, s/n
36310 Vigo

Deseño gráfico
Tania Sueiro Graña
Área de Imaxe
Vicerreitoría de Comunicación e Relacións Institucionais

Imaxe da portada
Adobe stock

Maquetación e impresión
Tórculo Comunicación Gráfica, S. A.

ISBN
978-84-1188-012-1

Depósito legal
VG 244-2024

Servizo de Publicacións
Universidade Vigo

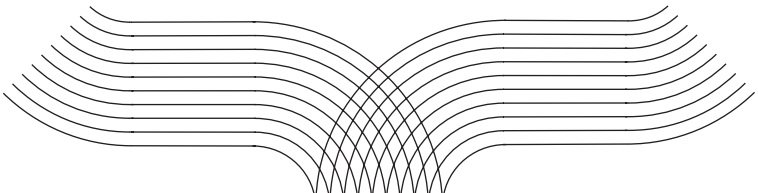
HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

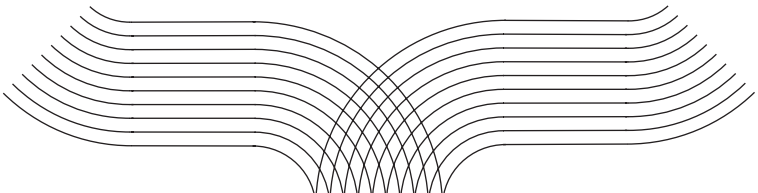

MINISTERIO
DE CIENCIA, INNOVACIÓN
Y UNIVERSIDADES
AGENCIA
ESTATAL DE
INVESTIGACIÓN

Gibraltarians and their language

22 linguistic biographies

Elena Seoane
M. G. Sanchez
Lucía Loureiro-Porto
Cristina Suárez-Gómez





Chapter 01
Gibraltarians and their language: an introduction

M. G. Sanchez and Elena Seoane[1]

1 Emerging from under the microscope

Over the last three or four decades, various international scholars have focused on the Rock's linguistic landscape.[2] Gibraltarians have featured in their articles and studies, but they have done so almost as specimens under the microscope, rarely if ever being allowed to voice their thoughts about what language means to them. This treatment mirrors the way people from Gibraltar were portrayed in nineteenth-century travelogues, where they appear almost as modern-day film extras – "glimpsed in the background for a few tantalising seconds, and then never ever seen again."[3]

This volume intends to change all that. For the very first time in academic history, Gibraltarians are being offered a platform to speak about their own language, giving them a chance to tell us about their relationship to Llanito, Spanish and English in their own words. Our role as editors is not to scrutinise their use of language or carry out attitudinal analyses. Instead we intend to sit back and listen to what they have to say. We feel this is important for two main reasons. First, to address the historical imbalance that has relegated Gibraltarians to a peripheral position in the narrative of Llanito, their own language. Second, to raise awareness of the current threat that Llanito faces from different socio-cultural forces. Although it is a unique form of linguistic communication in its own right, Llanito is losing its appeal among the Gibraltarian youth, who prefer to speak English or avoid using Llanito altogether. Why do so many young people in Gibraltar see Llanito as something alien to them? Why do parents and grandparents lament this gradual erosion of Llanito, but nonetheless continue to speak to their children and grandchildren in English? And why – despite the

1 This research was possible thanks to grant PID2020-117030GB-I00, funded by MCIN/ AEI /10.13039/501100011033.

2 We have included a short picture gallery at the end of the volume showcasing some of our own work in the field.

3 M. G. Sanchez, *The Prostitutes of Serruya's Lane and other Hidden Histories*, (2007), p. 59.

widespread concern about Llanito's decline – does the Establishment not take more proactive measures to preserve and promote Llanito? We hope that the biographies in this volume will provide answers to these complex, challenging questions and also throw up ideas that might halt and reverse this linguistic decline. More than anything else, we trust that this volume will instil feelings of pride and linguistic self-awareness among Gibraltarian readers, many of whom have been socialised into thinking that Llanito is a pidgin or a lesser, bastardised form of Spanish. By presenting the linguistic biographies of various Gibraltarians from different walks of life, we wish to challenge the negative attitudes and stereotypes that have been associated with Llanito and prove, once and for all, that it is a valuable and distinctive resource that deserves respect and recognition.

2 A very brief overview of the Gibraltarian twentieth-century linguistic landscape

The linguistic history of Gibraltar is complex and diverse. Arabic, Spanish, Ligurian, Menorcan, English, Maltese, Hebrew, Hindi and Haketia (the Judeo-Spanish of Morocco) have all been spoken by different ethnic groups across the centuries, reflecting Gibraltar's ever-shifting geopolitical alignments. The current volume, however, focuses on the contemporary linguistic situation in Gibraltar, where English and Llanito are the predominant modes of communication. Llanito is a Western Mediterranean Hispanic variety made up of an Andalusian Spanish base, much vocabulary from English, and elements of Genoese, Haketia, Menorcan Catalan and Moroccan Darija Arabic – with interesting grammatical developments of its own. Llanito is not something taught at school; it is learned at home, in the streets and in school playgrounds – though it could be argued that the push for greater proficiency in English in the 1940s eradicated the type of Spanish spoken in Gibraltar before WW2 and inadvertently ushered in the hybrid and non-standard Llanito. Before this 'push', most teaching in Gibraltar was provided by the Irish Christian Brothers, a Catholic lay order that aimed to serve and educate the poor, and the Loreto Nuns. There were sporadic efforts to promote the use of English, such as the publication of a bilingual English-Spanish *First Gibraltar Reader* by the Christian Brothers in 1904, but these had little impact on the linguistic habits of the population. In fact, a census conducted in 1931 revealed that more than half of the Rock's residents over the age of five did not speak any English.[4] This was understandable, given that Spanish was the predominant means of communication between civilians in Gibraltar. Newspapers such as *El Anunciador* and *El Calpense* catered for an essentially Spanish-speaking population; and when Hector Licudi published in 1929 his *Barbarita*, widely regarded as the first Gibraltarian novel, he chose to do so in standard Castilian Spanish. Some of the older biographees in this volume attest to the dominance of Spanish in their

4 Census Report for Gibraltar (Gibraltar: 1931), Gibraltar Government Archives.

family backgrounds. For example, Charles Durante recalls how "[w]e never spoke English at home and [how] my first encounter with English started in school when I was five years old." Humbert Hernandez likewise states that he was "brought up in a home environment where only Spanish was spoken", adding that "all my wider family" also spoke only [in] Spanish."

It was to combat the widespread prevalence of Spanish – and concurrently raise standards of spoken and written English – that at the beginning of the 1940s Governor Noel Mason-MacFarlane asked his Colonial Secretary, Miles Clifford, to look at ways of reforming Gibraltar's educational system. Clifford was an experienced bureaucrat and career diplomat who went on to become Governor of the Falkland Islands after his posting in Gibraltar was over. Like most colonial administrators, he wavered between benevolent paternalism and bouts of haughty imperialist pique. In his essay 'Borders, Language Shift, and Colonialism in Gibraltar, 1940–1985', the Gibraltarian researcher Eddie Picardo comments that "in his concern for his colonial subjects [Clifford] was a man ahead of his time"[5] – but in his private diaries the Englishman showed a less empathetic side, at one point complaining how he was "getting more than a bit tired of this wretched little rock and its queer people."[6] Known to this day as the Clifford Report, his 1944 findings had an incalculable impact on Gibraltar's linguistic situation:

> The Clifford Report lamented the "deep roots" of Spanish influence in Gibraltarian society, "continuously refreshed by intermarriage". It was not only the Spanish language that needed to be displaced by English: it was necessary to combat the "Spanish mental processes [that] still dominate the intellectual life of the community". The colonial authorities thought Gibraltar needed cultural as well as physical defensive walls to guard against Spanish infiltration: "Emphasis throughout the whole of school life should be on the English language and the Imperial connection". It would be reductive to attribute the decline of Llanito to the Clifford Report, but it was the seedbed for a major sociocultural and linguistic shake-up…. Fluency in English became a vector of intellectual and cultural respectability, while fluency in Spanish, which the authors of the report were ostensibly keen to encourage, receded in lockstep with the language's diminishing prestige.

As our biographee Jamie Trinidad eloquently argues here, Clifford's reforms had a twofold aim: to eradicate, or at least curtail, the daily use of Spanish and to concomitantly render proficiency in English as a marker of intellectual and cultural prestige. This association of English with intelligence, and Spanish with coarseness

---

5 Eddie Picardo, 'Borders, Language Shift, and Colonialism in Gibraltar, 1940–1985', in *Bordering on Britishness: National Identity in Gibraltar from the Spanish Civil War to Brexit,* edited by Andrew Canessa (2019), p. 151.

6 E. G. Archer, *Gibraltar, Identity and Empire* (2013), p.123.

and a lack of sophistication, persists to the present day, with the youngest of our contributors, Sophie Macdonald, commenting how, even in the late 2010s, "we were encouraged [at school] to speak English: it was the language of greater intelligence, of greater opportunity." A related point is made by Jonathan Teuma, who remembers with some amusement how as a three-year-old child he told his mother that when he grew up he wanted to be *un inglés* (an Englishman). "It was funny because of its impossibility," Teuma writes, "but as I look back now it highlights that the signals being sent by the Establishment were strong enough for even a three-year-old to comprehend… [that]… ENGLISH IS BETTER."

Yet despite the immense pressure that Clifford and other British administrators brought to bear on Gibraltar's educators, the majority of Gibraltarian schoolchildren in the 50s and 60s persisted in speaking Spanish among themselves both inside and outside of school, often getting scolded by their teachers for doing so. A common theme among our older writers is how they were repeatedly punished by their teachers for speaking Spanish. John Cortes, currently the Minister for Culture and Heritage in Gibraltar, recounts how he was prohibited from speaking Spanish by the Loreto Nuns and Christian Brothers, adding that "the penalty for speaking Spanish was often, from age eight on, the leather strap on the palm of your hand." Jackie Anderson remembers how she and her friends were "not allowed to speak in Spanish or Llanito to each other, not even in the playground, although we did whenever we could get away with it." Likewise, Manuel Enriles recalls how he and his classmates were constantly "get[ting] told off and even punished for speaking Spanish in school." More shockingly still, Humbert Hernandez recollects experiencing linguistic discrimination on his first day of school in September 1951, when a certain Miss Peralta was not impressed by his inability to speak any English:

> After some time that same morning I felt like going to the toilet and I went up to the teacher asking permission in Spanish to do so, but she turned on me and ordered me to ask her in English. Since I was unable to do so she told me to sit down. I was silently raging at the lack of consideration she displayed. So, what was my response? I sat down and peed on myself and that annoyed her immensely and, of course, I made myself the laughing stock of the rest of the class.

3 The persistence of old habits: Llanito as a subversive tongue

Despite the strictures of the Clifford Report, then, Gibraltarian schoolchildren continued to speak Spanish throughout the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s (and were often "punished in the playground", as Claire Trinidad remembers, "for speaking to [their] peers in what was considered a lesser language than the English in which the curriculum was delivered.") Evidently, family upbringing played a part in all this, but we must not discount the cultural proximity of Spain, which remained accessible

through television even during the closed-border years (1969-1982). Many of our biographees recall watching Spanish-language cartoons such as *Marco, Heidi, El Libro Gordo de Petete* and *La Abeja Maya.* Brian Porro, for example, remembers how he was addicted to *Los Chiripitifláuticos*, *Los Payasos* and, especially, *Vicky el Vikingo,* which he watched assiduously during his O-Level year. All this contrasts with the experiences of Spanish or British children, whose media consumption and after-school activities are generally aligned with the language of instruction at school. For Gibraltarian children, there seems to have been a clear distinction between school and home. Moreover, even within school itself, there was a space for English and a space for Llanito. Several of our writers – Felice, Teuma, Bosano, Buttigieg, Villa, the two Trinidads, Sanchez and Moreno – delineate the spatial boundaries of this divide, explaining how they spoke in one way in the playground and another in the classroom:

> Lessons were conducted in English, but the moment the kids stepped out into the playground we went straight into Llanito mode, speaking mostly in Spanish with the odd English interpolation included here and there. We even hispanicised, or more accurately *llanitified*, traditional playground games – with hide-and-seek becoming "one-two-three-*taco*", catch "catch-*en*-*alto*" or "catch-*en*-*piedra*", and leapfrog "*una*-*la*-*mula*" – although there were one or two games, like that perennial boys' favourite British Bulldog, which remained untranslated.

Here Sanchez describes what in another context he defines as 'linguistic compartmentalisation', the process by which Gibraltarians use English for formal purposes and Llanito/Spanish for informal situations. We find a classic 'work life' example of this in Davina Barbara's piece 'Discovering my Voice'**,** where the ex-broadcaster describes what it was like in the moments before, during and after a live interview on GBC TV, Gibraltar's national broadcaster:

> Picture this; in the minutes before a live interview with a Gibraltarian guest, the conversation would be in Yanito, dipping in and out of English and Spanish as we usually do in Gibraltar. The moment the live countdown began, however, they would both revert to formal English and continue speaking English for the duration of the interview. As soon as the interview was over, it would be back to Yanito instantly again, with phrases like "*qué, fue bien eso, o no?*", "*esa pregunta fue un poco* heavy, *verdá*?", and so on.

Implicit within this passage is a sense that Llanito is something quintessentially Gibraltarian, a form of communication used by Gibraltarians *by themselves for themselves*. Language, in other words, becomes a form of self-definition, a way of determining those who belong to a national collective and those who do not. According to the American sociolinguist Amanda Gerke, this is perfectly natural because "the choice a speaker makes is a conduit for identity-building, and in the case of Gibraltar, a communal identity is reflected through the language variation itself, along with

the strategic moves and choices of individual speakers."[7] This suggests that Llanito is not just a form of linguistic communication; it is an affirmation of a communal identity and even – on occasions – a vehicle for Gibraltarians to cock a snook at the more-British-than-the-British Establishment. We encounter this streak of Llanito rebelliousness in two remarkable extracts in the present volume. The first comes from the pen of Gabriel Moreno, the London-based Gibraltarian singer-songwriter and poet:

> The teachers, especially Miss Pinna, insisted we spoke English at all times. We were subjects of Her Graceful Majesty the Queen after all and we should refrain from speaking any Spanish at all. I didn't quite understand why the old woman in the faraway castle cared for our linguistic preferences but I did my absolute best to obey where possible. As soon as we set foot on the patio though, I was screaming and yelling in the language of Cervantes and Quevedo. Spanish, for me, was the language of freedom and mischief. There was a kind of fire inside my belly that could only be liberated in Andalusian phonemes. Especially swear words. Swear words in Andalusian sounded dangerous and wild: *¡Mierda! ¡Puta! ¡Hijo de perra!*

The second – more cerebral, perhaps, but infused with a similar delight in the subversive possibilities associated with bilingualism and code-switching – can be found in the linguistic biography of Giordano Durante, like Moreno a Gibraltarian poet:

> At school, Spanish was subversive – it was a secret tongue in which to plan pranks and speak about monolingual teachers. Looking back, I see that it possessed an anti-Establishment streak – the language of potential dissent. Even now, a choice word muttered under one's breath is a necessary antidote to the pomp, ceremony and sheer deference that govern so many interactions in Gibraltarian society and with those who visit from abroad. Spanish and Llanito have this ability to bring us down to earth by instantly deflating our pretensions. I've spoken to people in the world of law and politics (barely distinguishable realms over here) in English about Brexit, legislation, elections, ideological clashes and then, the moment of magic, we've gone on to utter just one phrase in Spanish that's not only summed up all we've said but also exposed it as mere intellectual posturing. To not do so, to carry on in English, would be bad form – it would show that we take ourselves too seriously. Llanito offers that opportunity to be blunt and unsparing – it loosens the shackles of the type of restrained conversation which can easily turn humourless.

What extracts like these make clear is that Llanito is much more than a simple substitute for English and/or Spanish; it is a language, a way of seeing the world and also a tool to poke fun at the established social order.

---

7 Amanda Ellen Gerke, 'Discursive Boundaries: Code-Switching as Representative of Gibraltarian Identity Construction in M. G. Sanchez's *Rock Black*,' *Miscelánea*, 2018, p. 51.

4 Discovering Gibraltarian identity in the Mother Country

One paradox brought to light in this compilation is the heightened sense of Gibraltarian identity experienced by many Gibraltarians while living or studying in the UK. For example, Michelle Rugeroni recounts how she was subjected to ethnic slurs like 'spic' and 'dago' by the native English students while studying languages at Oxford Polytechnic in the 1990s. Instead of being offended by these remarks, she laughed at her monolingual assailants and found herself internally reaffirming her Gibraltarian heritage. Julian Felice remembers how he was "constantly having to explain to people where Gibraltar was, to enlighten them about the Spanish sovereignty claim, and to justify how I could be British with a foreign-sounding surname." Jonathan Pizarro, like Felice a teacher and author, recalls how his flatmates in Cardiff told him that he "ate disgusting things like olives and garlic" and laughed at the way he pronounced *mayonnaise*. Pizarro initially "submitted" to these cruel barbs – "desperate to not be singled out like some kind of foreigner" – but later ditched his need for acceptance and took new-found pride in "[his] culture, [his] language, and [his] land." Comparable experiences are narrated by Devincenzi, Macdonald, and Claire Trinidad, who all claim that the discrimination or indifference they faced in the UK made them re-identify with their Gibraltarian roots. Perhaps the most striking illustration of this 'turning towards' Gibraltar within a UK context can be seen in Jackie Villa's piece 'In Memoriam':

> I was the only Gibraltarian on campus. Other students, curious about my accent, took turns at guessing my origin: New Zealand, Argentina, Italy?
>
> "The Rock of Gibraltar? The Pillars of Hercules? It's at the southernmost tip of Spain," I would explain.
>
> "So it's Spanish then."
>
> "No, it's a British colony."
>
> "But you're Spanish, because you speak Spanish."
>
> "No, I'm British, but I speak Spanish. I'm bilingual."
>
> "But you don't sound British."
>
> They were obsessed about accents. I couldn't understand what was so important about how I sounded. I could make myself understood, right? But I didn't sound English enough for some of my new acquaintances. They were quick to make me feel like an outsider, and their incessant comments started to irritate me, and even slightly intimidate me. Once, in the middle of a heated argument, one of them called me a "bloody foreigner". I could handle the foreigner bit, after all, this much was true. But their malice, their spitefulness, their arrogance and even ignorance, was something I was not willing to tolerate. Their words stung, making me feel inadequate and stupid. I was quick to distance myself from this group, and the

> experience made me all the more determined to hold my head high, embrace who I was, to be transparent about my culture, my language, my accent. All the things that had shaped and defined ME. It was around this time too that I stopped saying I was British. If anyone asked, I was Gibraltarian.

5 Llanito in peril: loss, institutionalised biases and the 'superiority' of English over Spanish

The current decline of Llanito is reflected in both the diminishing number of Llanito speakers among the young and its absence from playgrounds and homes. Several of our biographies draw attention to the traditional predictors of language death – speakers above a certain age, lack of prestige associated with the heritage language, a changing socio-political landscape – previously seen in other territories where languages have already died out. Aware that Llanito may disappear in a few generations, they describe such loss in terms of (i) personal identity loss: amputation, act of self-blinding (G. Durante), losing an intrinsic part of myself (Bosano), losing sense of self (C. Trinidad); (ii) cultural loss: cultural suicide (Macdonald), historical irresponsibility (Buttigieg); and even (iii) guilt at the sort of legacy they are bequeathing to future generations (Teuma and Villa). We are inevitably reminded of the well-known quote by the Tlingit language writers and scholars Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer: "Facing the loss of language or culture involves the same stages of grief that one experiences in the process of death and dying."[8]

Over time Llanito has changed and flowed in multiple directions, as all languages do. Some of our older writers recall the way the Llanito of their youth contained words from Maltese, Haketia and Italian among its mainly Spanish vocabulary, with a dash of English thrown in here and there, thus reflecting the multicultural wealth of Gibraltar. Today the opposite seems to be true: Llanito is fast becoming a variant of standard English mixed with isolated loan words.

Socio-historical factors have played an important role in creating this new dynamic. This volume highlights two historical events that had a significant impact on the language situation in Gibraltar: the evacuation of civilians during WW2 and its aftermath (1940-1951) and the closure of the border by the Spanish dictator Franco (1969). The former exposed low English proficiency among the Gibraltarians, who were then subjected to a strict language policy that enforced English as the sole medium of instruction at the expense of other languages. The latter engendered strong xenophobia and hostility to Spain among the local population, making intermarriage between Gibraltarian and Spanish citizens less frequent. Rugeroni remembers that

8 Quoted in Lenore A. Grenoble, Lindsay J. Whaley, *Endangered Languages: Language Loss and Community Response* (1998), p. 71.

elderly people would not go to Spain after the frontier re-opened in 1982 out of fear of fraternising with "the old enemy", an attitude adopted by the protagonist of M. G. Sanchez's 2021 novel *The Fetishist*.

While we take for granted the effects of the border closure, Giordano Durante's linguistic biography challenges the link between hispanophobia and the decline of Llanito. He points out that, even though hostility towards Spain was at its peak in the late 60s and mid-to-late 70s, Spanish and Llanito were widely spoken at that time. By contrast, nowadays we have a young population who are less suspicious of Spain than their parents and grandparents and yet have turned their backs on the Spanish language. This implies that hispanophobia is not a major factor in Llanito's decline. Likewise, we cannot blame the civilian evacuation of WW2 for the decline in spoken Llanito. For decades after returning home after the war, the majority of ex-evacuees continued speaking Spanish with little or no English, as anecdotes taken from Hernandez's, Macdonald's and Charles Durante's biographies make clear.

In our opinion, the main factor behind the shift from multilingualism to monolingualism is the language policy at Gibraltarian schools, which has acted and still acts as a language suppressor, imposing the exclusivity of one language over another. Spanish is being taught, yes, but for such short periods of time, and with such little conviction, that these lessons are ineffectual. Frank Devincenzi shockingly recalls how "the speaking of Spanish was derided by several teachers" at his middle school during the 2010s and how "[it] was not uncommon… [for] Spanish lessons [to be] unofficially discarded altogether in favour of another subject." This linguistic sidelining, together with the fact that students are learning more about why Gibraltar is British than their own social history as a community, has created citizens who think mainly in English and have been denied the chance to forge a Gibraltarian identity based on their unique history and culture. Manuel Enriles, who worked for many years as a teacher and witnessed all this firsthand, laments in his linguistic biography how "even to this day… students taking GCSE French in a secondary school in Gibraltar have more lessons of French than they do of Spanish." Another of our contributors, Melissa Bosano, also a teacher, confessed in a personal communication to us that she frequently overhears students swearing in English; for them, unlike for their parents and grandparents, Llanito is no longer the language of emotions.

Hand in hand with all this there is a profound institutional bias against Llanito and writers who work with the Gibraltarian vernacular. In 2007, for instance, Jackie Villa, Rebecca Calderon and Andrew Dark published a successful theatre play in Llanito, but the Department of Education at the time showed no interest in including it in the school curriculum. The same applies to novels, biographies and poetry collections written by Gibraltarians; they are not studied at Gibraltarian schools – even though some of these texts have featured and been reviewed in leading international literary journals such as *Wasafiri* and *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*.

For some reason, there seems to be a reluctance to promote and support Llanito/ Gibraltarian writing in Gibraltar's schools, thus actively killing off any chance for young people to have meaningful debates on Gibraltarian language, culture and identity.

At the other end of the spectrum, communication between grandparents and grandchildren is now difficult, if not impossible. This regrettable intergenerational gap is getting wider and wider each year, but few seem to want to bridge it. In her linguistic biography the theatre director Jackie Villa relates how she was criticised by other parents for trying to bring up her children speaking English *and* Spanish. What makes this situation especially tragic is that children are perfectly equipped to accommodate two or more languages and will benefit from it cognitively. Extensive research has shown that multilingualism prevents ailments like dementia and Alzheimer's disease, fosters tolerance and respect for other cultures and, more obviously, facilitates the learning of additional languages, an asset that would improve one's chances of success in an increasingly competitive job market. In his linguistic biography Julian Felice writes that "our young people may be speaking Spanish less, but their standard of English has increased dramatically", implying that monolingualism enhances language proficiency. However, this assertion is unsubstantiated. As the lawyer-linguist Brian Porro notes in his own linguistic biography, no evidence supports the idea that monolingual speakers are more proficient than bilingual or multilingual speakers. On the contrary, many experts agree that abandoning bilingualism for monolingualism is akin to an act of self-mutilation.

If all this isn't problematic enough, there are also internal anti-Llanito forces intent on denigrating anything connected with Llanito or 'the local'. Rebecca Calderon reminds us how "some Gibraltarians, [in their desire] to reject anything Spanish[,]… dismiss Llanito and look down on its use." Buttigieg describes these people as those "who brand the use of Llanito as negative, incorrect and ignorant", while Charles Durante condemns their linguistic and ideological pettiness. Giordano Durante goes one step further and lambasts "the cultural snobs and the gatekeepers who [make] us doubt whether we [can] be good British Gibraltarians while revelling in our linguistic *mestizaje*." The young Cambridge graduate Sophie Macdonald, for her part, rails against those "who always taught [us] to measure ourselves against England in Gibraltar, to be 'more British than the British'", thereby setting up Gibraltarian students for a severe case of culture shock when going to study at British universities.

6 Adiós Llanito, or can we turn things around?

Gibraltar may be shifting rapidly towards monolingualism, but Llanito remains a subject of significant international interest. In recent decades, a substantial body of work, including articles, books, PhD dissertations, conference talks and workshops, has been dedicated to exploring the distinctive vocabulary and structures that

define the language. This intellectual activity persists despite the presence of local gatekeeping forces that fail to recognize the value of Llanito and do not always grant full access to institutional resources.[9] Scholars are now actively contemplating the compilation of a comprehensive corpus of Llanito, something which would facilitate its codification and enable the creation of a fully-fledged dictionary. While these endeavours are laudable, they alone are not sufficient. Codification without everyday use would relegate Llanito to the status of a 'museum language':

> Efforts to revitalize some of the endangered languages have been devoted largely to developing writing systems for them and generating written literature. Noble as they are, most of these endeavors have also confused revitalization, which promotes usage of a language in its community, with preservation, which does nothing more than preserve texts in (and accounts of) a language basically as museum artifacts.[10]

Linguists know this; we know this. The only way to resuscitate Llanito is by adopting it as a badge of identity and using it in schools, at home, in the street and at work with everyone who can understand it and wants to learn it. How can Gibraltarians do this when, from an early age, they are being taught that English is superior to Spanish; when, as Dale Buttigieg points out, hardly anything has been done to "actively promote Llanito"? Well, ultimately, the power to change things has to lie with educators: for it is only by promoting the use of Llanito at schools (via readings, lessons, classroom discussions, and so on) that Gibraltarian children can become proud bilingual citizens of the world.

The prognosis is not good, but many Gibraltarians have shown their readiness to fight for the survival of Llanito. Countless letters have already been sent to local newspapers by the likes of John Cortes, Richard Cartwright, Charles Durante and Humbert Hernandez, all of whom feel distraught at the prospect of a Llanito-less Gibraltar. Among the doom and gloom, there are already signs that things may be changing. Devincenzi speaks of a sense of "resurgent Gibraltarian-ness"; Calderon talks of "a new mood"; and Sanchez believes that "a new and more confident Gibraltar is beginning to emerge." In the last few years we have seen the inclusion of a Llanito category in the annual short story competition; the arrival of Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society, an association dedicated to promoting and preserving the linguistic diversity of Gibraltar; the publication of a bilingual English-Llanito version of Sanchez's novel *Marlboro Man*; the founding of Patuka Press, a collective set up to publish and promote Llanito writing; as well as the heartening presence of Llanito

9 See, for example, Dieter Haller's *Tangier/Gibraltar: A Tale of One City*, where the author complains of how "he was denied access to crucial institutions… in Gibraltar,… [where] access to knowledge does not always follow British fair play." *Tangier/Gibraltar: A Tale of One City* (2021), p.8.

10 Salikoko S. Mufwene, 'Language Birth and Death', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2004, p. 208.

in various GBC radio and TV programmes and in the popular podcast *On the Sofa with Rouge*. Also, July 2024 will see the unveiling of the Gibraltar Digital Project (www.gibraltardigitalproject.uvigo.gal), an academic-led website devoted to the advancement of Gibraltarian culture, literature and language. Llanito may currently be flatlining, but if we all unite and work towards a common goal, it may, just may, stutter back to life again.

Chapter 02
My linguistic story

Charles Durante

Born in Northern Ireland to a half-Spanish/Gibraltarian father and a Gibraltarian mother, Charles Durante studied English Language and Literature at the University of Saint Andrews, in the UK. After completing his degree with First Class Honours, he returned to Gibraltar and started teaching at the then Girls' Comprehensive School, now Westside School, where he eventually became Head of English. Since his retirement, he has been writing and giving talks on subjects as diverse as Comparative Religion, the Bible as Literature, Joyce's Ulysses *and Dante.*

The language or languages spoken at home will always play a pivotal role in one's linguistic development. My father was born in Madrid of a Spanish father and Gibraltarian mother. When he was fourteen or fifteen the family moved to Gibraltar; my grandfather was mostly absent; my grandmother missed her own family and was financially dependent on others.

My father spoke only Spanish when he arrived here. He soon realised he needed to master English if he was to succeed with the colonial employers. He was admitted to the grammar school and soon became quite fluent in English. He always retained a Spanish accent, but his grammar and syntax were correct and on the same level as that of most Gibraltarians. He eventually became a foreman of trades in the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

My mother spoke Spanish all the time, though she had picked up a smattering of English during the evacuation to London of the civilian population during the Second World War. We never spoke English at home and my first encounter with English started in school when I was five years old.

I don't think I was aware at the time if I spoke Spanish or Yanito – I don't think I had the linguistic sophistication to tell the difference. My first experience of written Spanish came when my father bought the bullfighting magazine *El Ruedo*, which I read assiduously every week. I loved the sepia-coloured photographs of bulls and

matadors. I also listened to the radio broadcasts of bullfights and learned a new vocabulary. I became aware my Spanish was poor and limited.

My father concealed his Spanish origins until we went to Madrid when I was around fifteen and met uncles and cousins I didn't know existed. This strange behaviour reflects the ingrained anti-Spanish feeling at the time and my father's deep concern about his standing in Gibraltar society. An anecdote will show how linguistically disadvantaged we were. We visited our Madrid family one Christmas, and we were going to midnight mass. My mother said: "*Niño, no te olvide el capote*". My uncle roared with laughter, quipping: "¿Que vais a los toros?"

I don't recall a single Spanish lesson in school: either they were non-existent or considered unimportant. I was very unfortunate in my school education. The subjects taught were mainly geared to becoming a draughtsman or taking on some kind of apprenticeship in the dockyard. I loathed every minute I spent in that school. My real education started when I left school.

I studied three A-Levels on my own: English, Spanish and Biblical Studies. I think because I hadn't been prepared for any kind of academic career, I took the notion of studying for the Catholic priesthood. I had worked in a legal firm and discovered the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which made me conscious of my profound lack of knowledge and intellectual formation. A kind priest offered to teach me Latin. I took to Latin as a duck takes to water. I found Latin exhilarating and challenging. I think I owe my knowledge of grammar and syntax to my study of Latin. I also became fascinated by etymology and revelled in all the abstruse vocabulary connected with language study; for example, *oratio recta* and *oratio obliqua*; ablative absolute; gerunds. My understanding of English and Spanish grammar I owe to my knowledge of Latin.

I was sent to a seminary in Osterley, London, where my English and Latin were strengthened. I was also exposed to French for the first time and, though I love languages, I have never mastered French pronunciation and can only read some French stumblingly. We had elocution lessons, and these drove home the importance of clear diction and powerful delivery. I think the point was to prepare us for sermons and public speaking.

My fellow students found it difficult to place my accent. Some thought I was Maltese; others that I came from South Africa. But then they had a nebulous idea about Gibraltar, most of them thinking it was an island somewhere in the Mediterranean!

The English seminary was followed by two years in the Scots College in Rome, where I studied Philosophy in Latin. Of course, we were given some elementary classes in Italian. I had discovered a second Romance language which I loved. My Italian is now rusty; my main engagement with the language now is reading Dante, my god among poets. I think now if I speak or write Italian, I sound more like Dante than Durante!

We attended the Pontifical Gregorian University, where classes were taught mainly in Latin, though slowly modern languages, mainly Italian, Spanish, German and English were introduced. The Jesuits, who were in charge of the curriculum, were splendid linguists, and even allowed you to use your native language for oral examinations. The university was truly international, and languages flourished. I remember speaking Italian to a friend, turning round to a member of my college and speaking English, and then being addressed in Spanish by South American students who knew I was Gibraltarian! The Gregorian has produced many popes – alas, I was not among them!

Back in Gibraltar with a Bachelor of Philosophy degree and not much else, my employment prospects were meagre indeed. I did a stint as a supply teacher, and I realised I had found my vocation. A government grant allowed me to study for an Honours Degree in English and Spanish at Saint Andrews University. Four years later I started my teaching career, becoming Head of English after a couple of years.

People find it difficult to reconcile my advocacy of Spanish with my obvious dedication to teaching and promoting English. One day I met a pupil in the school corridor, and I was carrying a book under my arm. When she asked me what I was reading, I told her it was a Spanish novel. The reaction was revelatory: "But, Sir, you are an English teacher!" If I occasionally mentioned a Spanish word and drew an example from Spanish literature, there were raised eyebrows in class: it seemed I had committed an unpardonable solecism. You were expected to keep the two languages in separate compartments and there was a feeling that the purity of English had been besmirched! Sadly, Spanish has never enjoyed the same prestige as English, either in the curriculum or in society. Teaching Spanish in our schools is more difficult than teaching English. English is still regarded with awe; Spanish is tolerated but doesn't have the kudos of English. I spent over thirty years teaching English, mainly to GCSE and A-Level pupils. Though I had a clearly defined curriculum to follow, I never lost an opportunity to introduce examples drawn from world literature to give my class some idea how English was related to other languages and literatures. I recall writing a very short poem by Giuseppe Ungaretti on the marker board (*M'illumino/d'immenso*) and, inspired by my pupils' obvious fascination, I launched into a detailed criticism of those two magical lines. The bell rang; it was the end of the morning session. A hand shot up: "Sir, do you know you've spent a double lesson talking about two lines!" To this day, I don't know if that was a mild reprimand or a compliment!

Accents can be divisive and give rise to misunderstanding. One of my pupils had been causing trouble in class. Her mother was called in. She justified her daughter's misbehaviour by saying she couldn't follow my lesson because I had an accent. I replied we all had accents. She vehemently denied having an accent. I pointed out she had a Canadian accent. I don't think she was convinced by my argument: she claimed she spoke the way ordinary people (not me, of course!) speak.

I was doing research on James Joyce and went to Catalan Bay to find out about a certain Luigi mentioned in *Ulysses*. I spoke to some of the old fishermen who were idling the afternoon away by their boats. Suddenly, one of them asked: "¿Tú que eres de allí?" He pointed towards Spain. When I said I was Gibraltarian, they insisted I spoke like a Spaniard so I must be Spanish. I walked away and I could tell they were unconvinced: "¡Hombre, aquí nadie habla asín!"

My mother read the *¡Hola!* and *Semana* every week in Spanish. When I was away studying, she would write me a weekly letter (this was before the advent of internet and digital communication) in Spanish. I answered in Spanish, naturally. I don't think I ever used a single English word when speaking to my parents – it would have sounded false and pretentious. I still find it more fulfilling to swear (I crave your indulgence!) in Spanish. Spanish swear words are more toothsome and earthy, for me anyway. In an attempt to familiarise our children with Spanish literature, we developed a ritual whereby every evening in the summer, which we spend in our house in Spain, I would, after the meal, announce: "Now, it's time for our Spanish poetical theme." I would turn round and grab a book from the pile behind where I sit and read out some lines from Lorca, Machado or Juan Ramón Jiménez. If I forgot, my son Giordano, who is now a published poet, would remind me.

I have been judging both the Short Story and Poetry Competitions for the Gibraltar Cultural Services now for over fifteen years. In the early days of the competition, most of the entries were in English. Slowly, the number of Spanish entries increased to the extent that I suggested they should be considered as a separate category and be awarded prizes. The last four or five years, there has been an incremental rise in the number of Spanish entries; the standard has also improved. I think this is mainly due to Mark Montovio, who is an ardent advocate of Spanish and has coaxed his pupils to write in Spanish and enter the competition. This year, for the first time ever, stories written in Yanito have been accepted – a significant move which will enhance our own hybrid language and bestow on it the prestige of the written form. Though there are only five Yanito stories this year, it's early days, and some writers are still mulling over how to spell Yanito and uncertain how much freedom they have in committing what is mainly an oral means of communication to the written form, which aspires to be a type of literature. One aspect of the stories I have read which has impressed me, is that Yanito lends itself to the serious mode; in fact, the tragic, and not just the comic muse.

I have given talks on the Bible as Literature, Comparative Religion, Joyce's *Ulysses*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, all of them in English. I have, however, given a talk in Spanish on Juan José Téllez's *Profundo Sur*, a collection of short stories, in the *Instituto Cervantes*. Disappointingly, former Spanish Minister Margallo removed the *Instituto* from Gibraltar.

My wife, Barbara, is better at languages than I am. She speaks English, Spanish, French (with an impeccable French accent!) and Yanito, like a local. When she first came here, she spoke Castilian but quickly picked up the local version of Spanish and our unique Yanito. Now people find it difficult to understand how she can be Irish and speak like a Gibraltarian! From her and from frequent visits to Belfast, I've learnt some Irishisms. *Yous* (plural of *you*) and *I should have went* for *I should have gone*. As a fan of Joyce, I enjoy collecting these Irish expressions, or *Oirish*, as Ezra Pound said when speaking of Yeats.

Our son, Giordano, the poet, once said he was grateful to us for three things: we had not had him baptized, his distinctive name, and that we had spoken to him in English and Spanish from an early age. Many of his school friends spoke only English and there was an occasion when we were by the pool in Kristina, our urbanisation in the Costa, and a friend wanted to buy an ice cream, but didn't know how to go about it so he asked Giordano. This same person can't talk to his grandmother as she speaks only Spanish. And there are still people who refuse to admit how limiting it is to be monolingual!

I read *El País* every weekend – there are no Spanish newspapers in Gibraltar, so I have to cross over to La Línea to buy it. Ironically, I also buy *The Economist* and the *Financial Times* there, as, since the unmitigated disaster that was Brexit, there are no English newspapers here either. We don't have a bookshop that stocks books of general interest, but I believe GCS are in the process of remedying that. La Línea has an excellent scholarly bookshop, *Ares,* and I am well-known there!

My early morning task is to buy the *Gibraltar Chronicle* on the way to the Royal Calpe cafeteria. Once there, I settle down to my coffee. While sipping my *manchado*, I read the newspaper, take out my biro, and correct the mistakes! A wag once said, no doubt exaggerating, "the most excruciating punishment in hell would be to correct all the mistakes in the *Chronicle*." In fact, most of the errors are due to production constraints and not ignorance of the language. Anyway, I hope my stay in hell will be shortened as I will have served part of my sentence here!

I hope the above will provide you with some notion as regards the central role our languages play in our daily lives and in the formation of our character and history.

Chapter 03
Bilingualism or monolingualism?

Humbert Hernandez

Humbert Hernandez is a 77-year-old ex-schoolteacher, born and raised in Gibraltar. He spent most of his professional life in Gibraltar, except for seven years when he taught at a large mixed Comprehensive School in London. In his youth, he married a Spanish woman and has two sons and two granddaughters. Hernandez has been passionate about amateur theatre since the age of fourteen and has frequently acted in and directed plays and poetry recitals in English, Spanish, and Llanito. Since retiring from work in 2002, he has devoted himself to writing poetry, short stories, memoirs and a novel. He has published ten books to date.

I was born in Gibraltar in 1946, eleven months after the end of WW2 and shortly after my parents returned from the mass evacuation of the local civilian population during the length of the war. My parents, Rogelio Hernandez and Manuela Méndez Montes, had six children (though they lost their first child during that war in tragic circumstances); so, I grew up the middle child of a large family where there was little money to spare on the niceties and fripperies of life and even less time mollycoddling the children. My father, by profession a bricklayer, was Llanito but was born in La Línea de la Concepción and lived there until the outbreak of the Spanish coup d'état of 1936 when he was eighteen years old. He was educated in Gibraltar only sporadically as a child, so he spoke a rudimentary English only when called upon to do so officially. My mother, born and bred in the same Spanish neighbouring town, was a seamstress who spoke no English at any point in her life. She plied her trade in Gibraltar and sought refugee status in 1936. She lived with my dad, who was her cousin, until they married in 1939 and she acquired British citizenship.

I was, therefore, brought up in a home environment where only Spanish was spoken. My first steps learning English occurred when I attended primary school at the age of five and a half. I recall that my teacher, a certain Miss Peralta, sat me at the very front of her class. On my left was a girl and on my right a boy, both of whom were already somewhat versed in English. The first thing the girl asked me was, "*¿Tu madre qué es,*

española?" To which I happily responded, "*Sí.*" She then addressed the boy on my right and said, "*Este es rabúo*." (*Rabúo* was a pejorative Llanito term applied to Spaniards by Gibraltarians in those days. The word has now fallen into disuse). This was my first unpleasant brush with racism. I remember I felt put down, somehow inferior, without understanding why. After this first incident my rebellious streak emerged in the following incident. Some time later that same morning, I felt like going to the toilet and I went up to the teacher asking permission in Spanish to do so, but she turned on me and ordered me to ask her in English. Since I was unable to do so she told me to sit down. I was silently raging at the lack of consideration she displayed. So, what was my response? I sat down and peed on myself and that annoyed her immensely and, of course, I made myself the laughing stock of the rest of the class. But the ridicule of the children I minded less than my silent defiance of her. At the close of the morning session when my mother came to collect me, the teacher complained to my mum that I had wet myself and caused a mess. My mother asked me in front of her if that was true and I answered, "*Sí, y si me lo hace otra vez, me vuelvo a mear.*" I earned a fake cuff from my mum that time, indicating to me that the teacher was in the wrong.

After that I proceeded with my schooling moderately well. I was an avid learner, so I picked up the rudiments of English fairly quickly and learning to read I found fascinating. This was my introduction to the world of books, a magic world for me. I loved to be transported to another universe of wonder and though I could not yet manage to read a book on my own, I was spell-bound listening to the fairy stories of Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm. Naturally, the school where generally only English was spoken was a completely different world from home where I was immersed in all things Spanish: language, food, songs and so on. Since an early age I developed a passion for the Spanish *coplas, tangos, boleros, flamenco* and bits of *zarzuelas*. I was heavily exposed too to radio programmes in Spanish from the radio stations in La Línea, Algeciras and also Radio Tánger, which had transmissions in Spanish: *discos dedicados* and the famous *novelas radiofónicas* so popular with our stay-at-home housewives. Spanish films were for me an enormous source of entertainment. Naturally, my first heartfelt language has been Spanish. This is the language in which I expressed, and still do, my strongest emotions: anger, passion, joy, etc. So, it is easy to understand why all the fiction that I write is in Spanish. It's the language where I feel most at home when indulging in emotional situations, homely and familiar situations, not least because my own wife, Aida, is Spanish. My own children were brought up in a Spanish-speaking environment, my wife's English being very basic.

As I grew up and I quickly learned to read and write in English, Spanish became very easy for me to read and write given the fact that Spanish is spelt as it is phonetically spoken (bar a few exceptions). Since it does not present the same level of difficulty as English in its spellings, then once you've mastered a passable level of English you find

Spanish easy (at least it was so in my case). I soon developed a passion for reading starting with the simplified classics like *Robinson Crusoe, Alice in Wonderland, A Christmas Carol* and so on. As for reading in Spanish, well, I lay my hands on anything I could get at home, mainly newspapers since my parents had little time or inclination for reading, working hard as they did and having to deal with five kids. However, one thing is reading and writing and quite another the spoken word. On this score I had plenty of practice in Spanish since that is all I spoke at home and in my neighbourhood (most Llanitos in Gibraltar in the 40s, 50s and 60s conversed in Spanish and Llanito with one another – English was the preserve of officialdom only). So, even at fifteen years of age I can say that my spoken English was unsteady and faltering since among friends and family we spoke mainly in Spanish, code-switching a great deal. Going to the cinema to see an American film was always a trial. Following the dialogue in the American drawl was not easy by a long shot. However, one's ear slowly becomes attuned to different accents and intonations and progress follows surely.

If I am honest with myself, I have to say that I became more fluent in speaking English when I started teaching in 1962 at the age of sixteen. I was employed as an unqualified teacher in a secondary school where, naturally, all teaching and learning were carried out in English. With hindsight, I am horrified that a sixteen-year-old should have been placed in front of a class of fourteen-year-olds. I must have done untold damage unwittingly to those kids since I was expected to carry out all the duties of a qualified master and received little to no help in doing so. However, one clear benefit was that I improved my fluency. The other factor that helped me a great deal was the fact that since the age of fourteen I used to take part in English-spoken plays and the exposure that provided made me very conscious of the importance of clear diction and delivery. As from that age onwards my friends and I indulged in a mixture of English and Llanito Spanish with a lot of code-switching as was the norm in those years. I must add that English was ALWAYS considered the prestige language, the language of the coloniser who was always considered the superior master. Even now that situation has not changed. In my case, we spoke Spanish all the time at home – that was our first and only language in the family – and since I loved reading in Spanish as well as in English, I read voraciously in both languages and so became much more proficient and well-read than my peers, particularly in Spanish.

At eighteen I was awarded a three-year teacher-training scholarship to attend St Mary's College, University of London, Twickenham. I undertook a Junior/Secondary course whose main subjects were 1) Mathematics, and 2) English, Speech and Drama. It was in the Drama Course that after much effort and training I was made to lose my Llanito accent and intonation and adopt a standard English style of diction. In fact, the drama group was made up of students from all parts of the British Isles and the Commonwealth countries. Each of us joined the group with our own particular accent (Irish, Scottish, from the North, the Midlands, the West Country, from Gibraltar

and from Ghana) and left it three years later, after a hard slog, speaking a BBC standard English. The reason for this drive towards standardisation was simply that we were being equipped as future teachers and also, for those inclined to do so, to join a repertory theatre company professionally. In the latter case, one needed to speak standard English to take on major roles if coming one's way and also be able to reproduce regional accents. So, gone was my Llanito accent and Llanito lilt never to return in a natural way. I may with a conscious effort reproduce our local accent, though I stress that I have to make a conscious effort and so I don't bother in my everyday life to speak with a local accent. People in Gibraltar when they hear me speak have assorted reactions: some think my English is the cat's whiskers, that is, excellent; others believe it is rather posh (my own children think that); others think I speak like that through arrogance or from a pride-induced sense of all things British. All incorrect. While everyone is entitled to their opinion, and I respect that, I must say that the way I speak is simply the best way for me of communicating, full stop.

When I returned to Gibraltar in 1967 as a qualified teacher, I continued working in the amateur theatre performing in and directing plays and poetry recitals in English, Spanish and in Llanito. These last were the local full-length comedies written by our late resident playwright Elio Cruz. Precisely because my drama group made a great effort to present Spanish and Llanito plays and recitals that I view with deep dismay the present local trend towards monolingualism with English as the dominant party.

After eight years teaching and drama work in Gibraltar, my whole family moved to the UK in 1974 and I moved with them. I settled in London to a teaching job at a large Comprehensive School as a Maths teacher and my colleagues at the beginning used to ask me where I came from since they couldn't detect a clear accent. They were quite surprised that I came from an English colony with no accent since they were used to accents from the African colonies and from the Indian subcontinent. Shortly after my arrival in England I met up with a Spanish girl whom I had originally befriended in Gibraltar and within a year we were married and are still going strong. Within four years we had two sons, Ivan and Pablo, and we took great pains to ensure that they spoke Spanish from the cradle. English, they learned at the day nursery. Socially we moved within the Spanish colony of immigrants who were composed mainly of families from Andalucía and Galicia with a smattering from other regions. So, there were plenty of opportunities for my children to practice their Spanish apart from the home environment. As for my wife and me, taking into account that these were years of great political and social ferment in Spain and, by extension, within the Spanish colony in UK, we took an active part in the struggle of the opposing forces to the established regime in Spain, taking a front seat at meetings, demos and the writing of broadsheets. All this may account for a fluency in Spanish which I happily enjoy but which sadly most Llanitos lack. Though they can communicate adequately in everyday common matters in Spanish, their vocabulary is rather limited and their

ability to argue with depth and weight using the appropriate jargon to a specific subject is generally beyond their scope. Clearly, this sociological move towards monolingualism started after WW2. Before that, Spanish was in the ascendant; plenty of Spanish books, newspapers, theatre, conferences were readily available in our town and in the hinterland and the Llanito of those days was much, much more well-versed in the Spanish culture than the Llanito of today.

In 1981 Aida, the children and I returned to Gibraltar. I came to a teaching job and the boys received their schooling here, but we always made sure that we spoke to them in Spanish. Naturally since they were very young on arrival, Ivan was four and Pablo was one and a few months, they soon acquired the Llanito intonation and accent and have kept it ever since. As for myself, I continued plugging away with English and Spanish plays and recitals hoping against hope that the trend towards monolingualism would be reversed and we could once again enjoy a full-blown bilingualism and also Llanito. Not only Spanish, but also much of the code-switching has been weakened. A great pity!

Socially I make use of all three means of communication depending on whom I am conversing with. If the person speaks all the time in English, then there is a clear resistance on his/her part to speak in Spanish or Llanito. In that case I will address that person in English only. With most people, however, I use both languages code-switching as the whim takes me and interspersing it with Llanito rules (whatever they may be; I reckon we speak instinctively and subconsciously using a tacit grammar which has not been standardised or codified).

As for my own fictional writing, I have always had a deep-seated problem: writing my fiction in English poses a problem in that the characters I often deal with are not fluent in English, so I consider it rather false to place English words in their mouths. At the same time neither do they speak standard Spanish (though I write in standard Spanish since that is nearer to their emotional make-up. Yet that does not satisfy me fully.) Ideally, I would prefer to write in Llanito if it were standardised, but then my readership would be circumscribed and limited to Gibraltar only. In any of the three languages one always hits a stone wall of problems. If one hopes to extend readership in the great Spanish-speaking world, to write in Llanito one would need to include a huge glossary at the end of each publication making it tedious for those readers outside Gibraltar. The two books I wrote in English dealt specifically with very localized subjects: *Conscript or Convict…?* dealt with the issue of the local National Service and *A Time Remembered* was the biography of local drama director Cecil Gomez and of his drama group. The rest have all been books of short stories and these have gone out in Spanish with a sprinkling of Llanito words and phrases to give some local flavour and colour.

My last hope for the future, as I have hinted before, would be for a reversal of this sociological present trend towards monolingualism back to bilingualism. Needless to

say, there are enormous advantages in being completely fluent in two or even three languages. The opportunities that fan out and present themselves for future jobs are enormous, especially now that we live in a multicultural and multilingual society. Then again, I would wish that more resources were poured from the government coffers in promoting multilingualism, especially in school libraries and in the public library at the John Mackintosh Hall. We live in a society where we share our space with different cultural groups, the main ones being English, Spanish, Moroccan, Indian. Yet the libraries contain only books in English. A shame! I also believe a greater drive needs to be made with magazine publications, periodicals and other publications. Often it is a question not only of resources but also of encouragement from above and of attitude-changing towards other cultures so close to our hearts. Fundamentally it is a question of education and, while the teaching of Spanish is limited in schools to one measly hour a week, little can be achieved. Maybe the whole education and cultural edifice needs to be rethought and relaunched along different lines. That is a task for a brave and imaginative government.

Chapter 04
The strap that killed llanito – well, it tried

John Cortes

Professor John Cortes is Minister for Education, Culture, Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change, Heritage and Public Health in HM Government of Gibraltar. He was formerly Director of the Gibraltar Botanic Gardens and before that he was General Manager of the Gibraltar Health Authority. A biologist by profession, his main publications are in the Natural Sciences.

I've always assumed that my mother tongue is English. That is, until I've been posed with the question. Now I'm not so sure. My mother's tongue was Spanish, at home when I was a child we spoke largely Spanish, with a smattering of 'traditional' Llanito words. So I guess my mother tongue is, actually, Llanito Spanish. The English came later, at school. Not much later, but later.

At home I lived with my great aunt Enriqueta de Azcona (quite a name, eh?). She was my de facto grannie, as my grannie lived in Venezuela and I never met her. Enriqueta was Spanish and spoke no English. My mum spoke English well but was never confident in it, so Spanish was by and large the language most spoken at home. My dad spoke very good English with a Gibraltarian accent (whatever that is), and as we were educated in English, and my brother and one of my sisters were seven and eleven years older than me respectively, English was certainly frequent at home, as was Llanito – except that we never really thought about it. We happily and confidently switched languages without giving it a second thought.

At school, I was educated by the Loreto Nuns and Christian Brothers. They were Irish and spoke no Spanish. Spanish was forbidden at school. The penalty for speaking Spanish was often, from age eight on, the leather strap on the palm of your hand. I really do think that the education system in the 1960s and early 1970s is the main reason why Spanish was eclipsed as our main language. Probably subconsciously it made us think and speak in English in any formal setting. It brought English into the home – certainly when doing homework or studying – although never in my experience was it pervasive enough to discourage the use of Spanish. Having Spanish

older relatives – and watching exclusively Spanish TV for most of my childhood years – helped keep up the Spanish language element.

I don't really relate language to my personal identity. I'd like to say Llanito represents who I am, but that would be a contrived answer. Language doesn't define me, my languages (all three) do. Many years ago a British military man stationed in Gibraltar remarked to me that he was astonished that I spoke English so well given than I was not a "native English speaker", which of course I am! Fewer people see us like that now, but I'm pretty sure some still do. Most Spaniards hearing me speak Spanish identify it as Andalusian, although those familiar with the Canary Islands accent tell me that it's much closer to *canario.* While at Uni on a botanical field trip to Tenerife, people at all the bars and *ventas* we called on thought I was a local translator/guide and gave me all the food and drink for free. So it must be true! English speakers, by contrast, can't place my accent. Norwegian and Welsh are two guesses I've heard several times. And when we speak the Llanito switching way, they are just quite simply astonished.

I consider it a privilege to speak two major languages. I am very lucky to be able to do so. I do think that our code-switching is quirky and quaint and does reinforce our communal identity. Knowing two major languages is really helpful when travelling, especially as both are now so universal. It's fun to speak "the other" language when in the presence of locals who think you don't understand a word of what they're saying, and then you switch and see the shock on their faces. Which travelling Gibraltarian hasn't done that?!

I don't judge people by what language they speak, and so don't consider that I get any sort of prestige – or otherwise – from language. But I do try and make it a point that we can choose what we speak and that Llanito exists. I enjoy putting in Spanish, Llanito or Spanish-Llanito phrases or sentences in my speeches. I'd do it more, but more often than not there are people in the audience who don't understand. I'm doing this increasingly though, as well as introducing Llanito phrases or sentences in official emails. In WhatsApp, of course, Llanito is rife – probably reflecting the generally less formal context where we use it.

Social talk with Gibraltarians, too, is largely in Llanito, with a lot of Spanish in it. At work we speak a lot of Spanish in our Llanito, although technical jargon is always English. Meetings are predominantly in English, although when we express emotions – positive or negative – it's usually in Spanish. Although I shift a lot, I would not say that I'm equally comfortable with all my languages. I think that I'm more comfortable in English. I find it easier to speak continuous English than continuous Spanish, as I have a much larger English vocabulary. I'm therefore more comfortable in English, although, paradoxically, I'm even more comfortable speaking Llanito, which has a great deal of Spanish in it.

Probably because we were drilled into speaking exclusively English while we were at school, my wife and I spoke largely English when we spoke directly to our children, but used Spanish at home much of the time otherwise. Our children were also influenced by TV, which by then was mostly in English – often American English. My daughter Zoe, five years younger than my son Mark, spoke little Spanish at first, and her English was very American. Mark for some reason spoke more Spanish, and by their teens they were both perfectly fluent in all three languages. I've seen a very similar pattern in my grandchildren, albeit in reverse, with Ryan (twelve) not really wanting to speak Spanish while Lea (nine) is much more comfortable if still not fluent. Zoe is still studying in the UK (but totally Llanita). Mark works in Gibraltar and, as in most workplaces with a majority of Gibraltarians – including mine – Spanish and Llanito Spanish I would say are predominant in day-to-day conversation. Even those Gibraltarians who arrive at work speaking mostly English will tend to loosen up and engage in social talk in Llanito. I would say that the salvation for Spanish remaining in Llanito in the future is indeed the Gibraltarian workplace.

Chapter 05
My personal journey through language

Jackie Anderson

Jackie Anderson was born in Gibraltar in 1964 and spent her early years speaking a combination of English, Spanish and Llanito. In 1974, she moved with her family to Kent, England, where she received all her secondary and higher education. After completing her education, she worked as a property manager for a local authority, and later as an Early Years Educator. In 2009, she returned with her family to Gibraltar and has since been living there. She works as a freelance writer and runs a property and estate management business.

"*Mira qué mona*," I heard the woman at the bus stop tell my mother. I was perhaps two or three years old, my mother was holding me on her hip and I was twisting her dark hair around my fingers, something which as a very young child gave me comfort. I remember looking at the woman and noticing her grey hair, the respectful tone with which my mother muttered something at her. I also recall a wave of affront sweeping through my tiny body.

"*Mona tú!*" I retorted.

The woman gaped, not sure whether to be offended (I had genuinely meant to offend her) or whether to laugh it off. She was surprised that such a young child had backchatted her. Impulsive backchat has got me into a good deal of trouble over the years, but, luckily at that point, I was young enough to charm with it. My mother was embarrassed and tried to explain to the lady that I thought she was calling me a monkey. Living at the topmost reaches of Gibraltar's upper town that was frequented by marauding bands of Barbary macaques, I was familiar with the not so charming looks of the local apes. I was not prepared to hold back when the woman compared me to one of those.

Thankfully the woman's bus turned up quite soon and I did not have to tolerate her poorly disguised sneer. She really did not like receiving a sharp put-down from a toddler. I was happy to see the back of her which, on reflection – and because I can remember that incident as clear as day – was rather more pleasant than the front view.

That episode comes back to mind whenever I think about language which, as a writer, I do a good deal. It illustrates how much nuance there is in language; how delivery, context, emphasis, pronunciation, accent, tone and volume all add shades of meaning to just one word. The woman was telling my mother that I was rather sweet, but I understood that she thought I looked like a Barbary ape; sweet though baby apes may seem, I took it as an insult, even as a toddler: nuance, delivery and interpretation all in a few brief moments.

Of course, it took many years for me to understand the various layers that each word carries. After moving to England and learning that the English spoken in Gibraltar bore little resemblance to how it was spoken in the depths of the Medway Towns, I discovered that language is more than just the sum of words with distinct meanings wrapped in grammar and syntax. The meanings carried by language can vary even within a community bound together by one single language, let alone between communities whose main languages vary greatly. I gradually learned that words, even in the same language, have the potential to clarify meaning and aid communication or cause confusion and misunderstandings, just as they did at the bus stop some fifty or more years ago.

I grew up in the old town of Gibraltar, high up near the Moorish Castle. We lived with my mother's family, my parents, grandparents and uncles. We also had very close relationships with my father's family, his parents and sisters, and a veritable army of cousins, second cousins, distant relatives and close family friends who might as well have been part of the family. This was a very typical Gibraltarian childhood. We spoke mainly Spanish at home when we were with my grandparents. There were mainly Spanish speakers on both sides of the family. My mother's mother was from La Línea, and my father's father was from Estepona, so we all spoke a local Spanish with them, not *castellano.* Because *castellano* was spoken on the television, we were not unaccustomed to it – *Los Picapiedra* (*The Flintstones*) was one of my favourite animated programmes. It was a bit of a shock hearing Fred Flintstone's voice in the original American after a few years of only watching the Spanish version.

Local Spanish was different. My grandparents used words that we all understood but could not be found in dictionaries, much to the distress of my poor Spanish tutor during my A-Levels, who was driven to distraction by my attempt to teach him words like *posha*. I still don't know if it's a real word, but my mother still uses it to describe anyone who looks a bit pale. If there was a particularly strong levanter, of the sort that swirls around you in the street and chills you to the bone my grandfather would say: *hace un baroji*. I don't even know if I spelled that right, or if there even is a right spelling. All I can do is put letters to the sounds of the word that stand out to me. We learned our Spanish in the streets, at home, in our grandmother's kitchen, our great-aunts' laps, in the patios, on the beach and at the fair.

I grew up speaking all those languages. I cannot recall a time when I spoke just one or the other. As a child, I am not sure I ever distinguished words as being from one language or another – they were just words that communicated whatever I wanted to say. According to my mother, I was an early speaker. At home, she and my uncles spoke clear and cultured English, as did my maternal grandfather, who worked for the government. Mum had been educated at the Loreto Convent and was a teacher for a few years. She was eloquent, intelligent, an avid reader and fluent in both cultured English and Spanish. She read widely in both languages, which probably helped her grasp both – formal education in Spanish barely existed in her younger days.

Not surprising, then, that I was an early reader, but, because books were difficult to obtain in those days, my first reading language was English. To this day, although I read books in Spanish and sometimes in French and even managed to read a few in German in my younger years, it is to English that I turn for a "good read", the kind of reading that involves some escapism and relaxation. I can also read in Spanish, but I notice I have to make an effort in the early chapters before understanding starts to flow fully. And I think that is because all my formal education was conducted in English.

School during the 1950s and 1960s in Gibraltar was completely dominated by the English language. We were not even allowed to speak in Spanish or Llanito to each other in the playground, although that did not stop us from trying. With every passing year, my English reading, comprehension and expression improved. The English lessons were strict, and focused on grammar, spelling, handwriting, reading and pronunciation. It was immensely rewarding to dominate the symbols on a page and release their meaning; to draw symbols and group them together into words that conveyed their intended meaning. Eventually, I came to relish how these words could be woven together with commas and full stops and semi-colons to create greater complexity and understanding. I think this is why I enjoy reading and occasionally writing poetry.

At school, we read English books, stories and poems. We wrote stories, we read the Bible, we listened to verses from Tennyson and Lear and all in English. I loved it, and I suppose it served the purpose of enabling me to enter the worlds of education and work that were available to me at that time: a world of English, both language and culture, although this was not without its challenges.

I was at the top of my class at Gibraltar's St Mary's School and excelled at both spoken and written English. When I moved to England in 1974 and went to a Girls Grammar School brimming with confidence, I was shocked to discover that my accent was considered rather strange by the local people of the Medway Towns. I apparently spoke well and clearly enough, but in a sing-song way that made the other kids in class laugh and a few ignorant teachers ask if I was Welsh. Because of my

father's heavier Spanish-infused accent and dark olive skin, he was often asked (and sometimes accused) of being from Pakistan. What I now recognise as ignorance peppered with racism was then, at the age of eleven, just puzzling. I was just as astonished that English children had never heard of Gibraltar. "But it's of vital strategic importance to Britain," I argued, and they would stare at me blankly and call me a "spic," "wop" or "dago," and tell me I smelt of garlic and I shouted when I spoke. I recall the latter with faint amusement although, at the time, I cringed with embarrassment whenever I heard my voice ringing out across the classroom in answer to a teacher's question. I was at the top of the class in my school in England, too, but soon learned to keep my right answers to myself when the more soft-spoken girls sniggered every time I spoke. It was not just the accent, but that Gibraltarians all seem to have much louder voices – perhaps from years of yelling at each other across the patios or on the beach. The only other girl with a particularly loud voice was, oddly enough, the daughter of a Gibraltarian couple who moved to the same town shortly before she was born.

Being ridiculed because of my Gibraltarian accent was bewildering and hurtful. It was bad enough no one made the remotest effort, not even the teachers, to pronounce and spell my surname properly: Vallejo. Once I explained the basics of Spanish pronunciation, it should have been easy enough for anyone, but, no, they all shrugged and eventually opted for labelling me Jackie V. It was racism by language rather than skin colour, but racism none the less. I did experience bullying from this language difference, being excluded from the social groupings that kids form at school in the playground, but I eventually made friends and had no issues with telling some of the more vocal bullies that their problem arose from the fact that I spoke and wrote better English than they did even though there was not a drop of English blood running through my veins. I was right, and they did not like that one bit, and in the end they left me alone.

Eventually, I did away with my Gibraltarian accent not because of the negative reaction it brought me but because I genuinely liked the sound of English being spoken properly. I say this cautiously in today's world of acceptance for different regional accents, but there is a huge difference between speaking a language correctly and having a regional accent. My Gibraltarian accent eventually wore off, something that I found worked hugely to my advantage in England and in Gibraltar. However, I did make a concerted effort to avoid the Medway accent. In the 1970s, you could still hear the original Kent accent in the outskirts and the nearby villages. Much of this gentle, lilting accent – more akin to the English of the Oxfordshire countryside than what is spoken in south-eastern England – has now disappeared in favour of Estuary English. The English spoken in Medway is strongly infused with South- and East-London accents. From a young age, I decided that I would speak English how I liked to hear it spoken, regardless of where I lived. I'm not sure I entirely succeeded: when I hear my own

voice recordings, I can hear those southern English twangs in my vowels which tend towards diphthongs that should not really be there, as if the muscles of my mouth suddenly lost the strength to hold the correct shape until the very end of the vowel.

I initially struggled with deciphering English words spoken by 'real' English people from Medway. It takes time for an eleven-year-old to figure out that /lo/ (with a short /o/) meant 'lot', that 'duck' was a term of endearment, and that *wotcha* meant 'hello.' Other accents that gave me trouble were those of Newcastle and Liverpool, despite having made friends with a chap from Liverpool when I went to university in London. We were both taking French classes and eventually decided that the only way to really understand each other was by speaking in French, the only language we had in common. We laughed about it, but our conversational French improved enormously.

When my grandparents from my mother's side moved to England to live with us, I was given the chance to continue speaking Spanish or Llanito with them at home, for which I will always be grateful. My grandfather passed away in 1976 while my grandmother lived to be 98. She was never able to learn English. Unlike her, my children – who did not speak both languages fluently from birth – picked up a smattering of the language just as I did, enough for them to get by when they visit Gibraltar.

While at school in Gibraltar, I did not fully understand just how valuable it would have been to place the same emphasis on learning Spanish as on learning English. Growing up, Spanish – or rather, Llanito – was the language of our home, of family life. We did not speak *castellano*, and thus it was a struggle to understand my cousins from Madrid when we went to visit, until my ears had adjusted to the accent and to unfamiliar words. *Un bocadillo* had, until then, been *un sangwish*, for example. And *un caramelo* was *una bolilla* for me. It wasn't until I took an A-Level in Spanish years later at the end of my secondary education that I realised that the Spanish I thought I knew and could get by with perfectly well on holiday in Spain bore very little resemblance to the actual written language. When I started learning Spanish grammar and working on translations for school homework, I was flummoxed by the scattering of <s> everywhere and the lack of <h> at the ends of words. Thanks to our Andalusian roots, we missed out chunks of words, and, as Gibraltarians, used words that did not exist in the Spanish dictionary. Our intonation was different, and the lack of the /θ/ <c, z> sound in my spoken Spanish irritated my teacher (who was English and prided herself in 'speaking like a Spaniard' – clearly a self-proclaimed assessment) until the Head of Department remarked on my apparently South American manner of speaking, after which she begrudgingly accepted my Gibraltarian accent when I spoke Spanish.

The experience hurt my confidence and to this day, despite receiving advanced diplomas in the Spanish language, I do not regard myself as truly bilingual. How could I when I sound so different, or when I become a little tongue-tied when speaking with Spaniards? I do not feel that my command of Spanish comes even close to my mastery of English, and I put it down to the lack of formal education in Spanish in my

formative years. Had we been permitted to formalise our learning of Spanish in the same way that we had learned English, the benefits to my six- or seven-year-old self would certainly have been tangible, especially in the workplace. I will not easily forget the embarrassment of having rather naively described myself as bilingual in Spanish during an interview for my first job at the age of twenty. I might have even said I was a native speaker – having spoken Spanish from birth, I took the expression literally – but then found the job had gone to an English chap with a degree in Spanish. I suppose he had learned it 'properly'. When I returned to live in Gibraltar many years later, I found that speaking Spanish was essential in most lines of work. It took me several years to gain confidence in my spoken and written Spanish. My fluent Llanito, which I always spoke at home with the family, ensured that I was fine in shops and with general Spanish chatter, but it was in professional situations – talking to architects, builders, tradesmen, office managers, surveyors, lift engineers and more – that I struggled. Little by little, I built up my technical vocabulary and am now a more confident reader of Spanish, but I still feel I struggle in formal situations. I am also a little saddened that I have less knowledge of Spanish literature than I do of English. What I know I had to learn by myself without the help of others. Being busy at work and raising a family makes you appreciate that glorious expanse of time spent on learning that is available to you in your school years.

My thirty-five years away from Gibraltar and Spain did not just bring many physical changes in Gibraltar and La Línea, but it also created a language chasm that I needed to bridge. The Llanito that I spoke at home in England with my family was somewhat different to the Llanito spoken in the streets of Gibraltar. There were new words and phrases. I certainly do not remember kids calling out to each other in the street "*¿Qué pasa, bro?*" in 1971, nor do I remember the word *chorvo* (the word *boyfriend* was not in my vocabulary at age 10). The expression *ahí ehstán con tol palywaly* completely astounded me when I first heard it. Similarly, there were evolutions to Spanish that I needed to learn. *Ordenador, impresora, servidor, aerogenerador,* and many more were all new words to me on my arrival back in Gibraltar.

Speaking good English, having a good command of the language, enabled me to work, pursue further education and develop as a professional in England. What I found particularly interesting when I returned to Gibraltar in 2009 was that people often mistook me for being English, based partly on my accent and partly on my husband's surname – which I adopted when we married all those years ago. Sadly, I have encountered many fellow-Gibraltarians in all walks of life, from civil servants to shop assistants and many others in between, who treated me differently, better, when they realised that I am Llanita. This usually happened when I used some local words and adjusted the intonations in my voice. This is no different to the language-based racism that I myself faced in England during my school days, and which my children have faced in Gibraltarian schools. My children, you see, were born and raised in England for the first six or seven years of their lives. Being married to

an English man who did not speak Spanish, we spoke little Spanish at home, and their English was pure South-East England. The discrimination and name-calling they received at school was harsh and, as a Gibraltarian who had endured racism, I felt disappointed that my fellow Gibraltarians would act that way. I don't think this discrimination extended beyond the playground, but it was enough for my son to reject most friendships except a very few that he still cherishes fifteen years later, and for my daughter to switch accents depending on who she is with at any point in time, speaking London English at home for her father's benefit and sing-song Llanito when she is with school friends.

How you speak and the languages you master deeply influence what people think of you, how you are treated, and can even determine your opportunities in life – either causing people to warm up to you or alienating them entirely. This is why I believe that learning and mastering languages are so important and something to aspire to, and why preserving Gibraltar's bilingualism is vital for Gibraltar's linguistic identity. I identify with English as my dominant language because I lived and worked in England for almost forty years, only dipping into Spanish at home with the family and in some rare formal situations. When I write, I first do so in English. Writing in Spanish feels like writing in a language that is not quite my own, its subtleties and nuances just out of reach. When I have to use a more formal language in speech or a presentation, I do so in English – in those circumstances, Spanish eludes me. Yet I understand how valuable it has been for me throughout life to speak more than one language. My life has been deeply enriched simply by understanding that meaning can be conveyed in so many ways and using different words, and that it is the understanding of meaning rather than merely knowing a language that humanity needs to achieve.

Chapter 06
Àwa fàtha wòxing hèven: the life in language *de un llani*

Brian Porro

Brian Porro is a former teacher of French, Spanish and Italian and UK Government intelligence linguist-analyst. He also worked as a senior lawyer-linguist at the European Court of Justice, Luxembourg, and as principal legal translator at the European Commission.

Introduction

"Àwa fàtha wòxing hèven …"[11]

What on Earth are they getting me to say here? I ask my five-year-old self.

"… hello! Be your name …"

But if I wind back to my "year dot", the reader will gain a fairer idea of my "linguistic situation".

I was born in Plymouth to Gibraltarian parents who had headed out to the UK, probably seeking to improve their opportunities. My mum did not keep good health in general and so, probably to have greater support from the family, we headed back to Gibraltar, where my brother was born three years and seven months after me. I don't know what age I was when I got to Gibraltar, but I figure it was before my third birthday.

My earliest memory, of both Gibraltar and of anything, is of being surrounded by a sea of faces – what in photographic terms might be termed overexposure and a flood of backlighting. That would have been my aunties crowding around their nephew and the light of Gib in contrast to the diffuse quality I had left behind.

We had moved back with what I suppose was no accommodation arrangements

11 This is the Llanito orthography as found in http://www.llanitollanito.com/grama.html, but with some reservations on my part, in particular as concerns the voiceless dental fricative, which is not universally realised as a labiodental fricative in Gibraltar, and the representation of the voiced dental fricative, for which <d> is suggested.

beyond one of my paternal aunts hosting us. My home until I was about seven was in Hood House, Laguna Estate, where my aunt and uncle, the tenants, had the main bedroom, my parents and I had a second bedroom, and my granny was on a bed with a mysterious horsehair mattress which had to be punched and pummelled into shape every evening. That was *en el comedor,* the dining room, where, in addition to my granny's bed, there was a table, a set of chairs, a TV, and the credenza on which my dad's radio receiver sat.

Then there was a cousin of mine by another of my aunts who also lived with us; there were, I guess, too many of them at her house, but I don't really know why she was out of her own place. I might ask now, before it's too late. In any event, she shared that bed with my granny.

And so did another of my aunts, Luisa, known as "Witi/Witty", which made three in a bed.

Every now and then, I would come out of our room in the morning to find we had a guest: my grandmother's brother, my grand uncle, *mi tío awélo* Gerardo, who, to my young eyes, looked like the very picture of a hobo; an unshaven vagabond. I was at that age when one is shy of strangers, so I don't recall talking to him, but he would stay for a few days at a time in the living room.

Then, my brother was born, and we became like that well-known expression: *Éramos pocos y parió la abuela*. That made nine of us.

In all of this, the language around me was mostly not English. My uncle by marriage was Spanish and, indeed, a role model for me in terms of literacy and culture – he read, wrote letters with an ink pen to his siblings in Tangiers and was interested in *zarzuela*, although he felt opera to be out of his league: "*Ópera no, pixòn. Eso ya es mùxo y, claro, cantan en latín …*".

The rest of the household spoke in Llanito. I very vaguely recall that only my mother spoke to me in English. No one, it seems to me in retrospect, made any allowance for me linguistically and, I suppose, it was presumed that at that age my language formation was at an early stage. What my mum told me later was that she was bemused by the fact that I could pronounce a glottal stop in the word 'bottle', a feature I had picked up in Plymouth – from the milkman.

The maternal language context

My mother's family were anglophones and anglophiles. My maternal great grandfather had been born in Colchester, the son of a Crimea veteran who had been an Irishman in a Scottish regiment. That maternal great grandfather had been educated in the Garrison Army School on Castle Road. Although he worked as a gauger and plumbing

foreman for the army establishment in Gibraltar, his military association, his home in the South District and his use of English were all badges of social standing – the latter, especially, indicated how the family saw themselves and were seen by others. The influence of English in that home would have been further reinforced by my maternal great grandfather's mother, for she had remarried to a Scottish Crimea veteran.

That did not mean that no Spanish was spoken in the home then or in subsequent generations, but my mother recounts a clear statement being made that "in this house we speak English" (or, probably and ironically, "*en esta casa se avla inglè*").

Into that mix comes my Jewish heritage – my maternal great grandfather was Jewish (Cohen) while my maternal great grandmother was Catholic of Genoese heritage (Facio; Bottaro). That means that my mother's family's idiolect made heavy use of terms ascribed to Sephardic/Haketia origin, such as *wahalot* or *woh* ('of course') or *boàlek* ('*tokào*' or '*maharèta*', 'crazy').

The paternal language context

When my father was first courting my mother, she thought he was one of the Spanish hauliers coming to the firm she worked for. It nearly put her off him initially, but then she realised he could put on the accent and speech of "*lô Panyòlê*" with ease.

In the years before the Spanish Civil War, that is prior to July 1936, my father found himself living in La Línea in a house owned by family members, along with his mother and sisters. The reasons for that are material for another narrative, but they were in any event unfortunate.

It was there and then, I don't doubt, at a formative stage in his life, that he developed his sensibility for Spanish language and culture. In later years, he would recite passages of poetry or lyrics from *cante jondo* which also influenced me. His vocabulary and his *refranero* repertoire, as well as his stock of swearing phrases, I could find nowhere else in my circles in Gibraltar.

"*Me kago'n la sotavâto*" left me perplexed until I studied Cervantes and other Golden Age literature, when I realised he was referring to *la sota de bastos*, or the Jack of Clubs in the Spanish deck of cards.

"*No sabe hacer una <o> con un canuto.*" That was a damning reference to a lack of education and culture – not only illiterate but unable to make the letter <o> with the end of a hollow reed. But again, unfathomable for years until my own level of education caught up with his deployment of the language. Or "*hay más días que longanizas*" (in the accent, of course).

The wider family language context

As I grew up *en la Laguna*, I was surrounded by language and languages, although I did not think of them in quite that way. My uncle Johnny[12] spoke exclusively in Spanish, although he would use terms from the Gibraltar setting, such as: *inkometà* ('income tax'); *ovatái* ('overtime'); and *chiprài* ("*… venga Vraya*[13] *– no me digâ ke no save lo k'e un chiprai. Chiprai! E ingle*." No clue, but I did nod. Eventually I twigged. *Shipwright*).

There was also my Uncle Emilio. He had grown up in Spanish Morocco – probably Tangiers – and he was reputed to speak French and Moroccan Arabic as well as Spanish (but interestingly his English was referred to as "broken English"). I did not see him often and I do not recall ever hearing him speak any of those languages, but all this still made an impression on me. It was, as one might say, 'formative'.

La Radio

I also recall the radio in that household always playing Spanish, French and Italian music. That is where I first caught snatches like "*Non ho l'età… per amarti*" and "*Non, je ne regrette rien*", as well as "Dominique" by "The Singing Nun".

Beyond that, the radio at the Hood House home was always tuned to nearby radio stations. I can still do the Cadena Ser tune now for you. I used to listen to the Angelus ("*Son las doce. Hora del Angelus*"). Everyone would be 'shooshed' at the appointed time when *la novela* came on in the afternoon on the radio.

But there were programmes for children, too. My early memories of children's tales were from a storytelling programme on Spanish radio.

"Ratita, Ratita – ¿te quieres casar conmigo?"

"Enséñame la patita debajo de la puerta."

"… y el Lobo, que se había cubierto la pata de harina, les enseñó la patita blanca por debajo de la puerta y las cabritas abrieron la puerta. Entró el Lobo y se las comió."

I would also hear more serious programmes, some dealing with Spanish culture or history.

12 Juan Ocampo was known in the family as "Johnny". My aunt called him "*mi Juan*".

13 *Brian* was subjected to Gibraltarian phonetic rules and became *Vraya* and so *Vrayita* and *Vraji* (or Braja, Brajita *and* Braji).

El Televìxo(n)

Television was a different matter.[14]

At first, there was no television (*el televìxon)*. I used to be taken round next door "*pa mirà el televìxon de Felisa*." That meant sitting quietly on a hard chair like the well-brought-up kid I was and trying to make out what was going on through the snowy reception with poor contrast. Often, it was some clown in makeup and a pointed hat.

And of course, then and for many years afterwards, there were the other children's programmes, such as *Los Chiripitifláuticos, Los Payasos* and *Vicky el Vikingo* on a Tuesday evening, which I used to rush from my Italian evening classes for, in my O-Level year. There were also the long-running stalwarts, such as *La Abeja Maya, Heidi* and *Marco*, which gave rise to not a few local expressions.[15]

Along with all that, TV rattled on in the background in many homes and, since Gibraltar's television station did not commence transmission until the evening, that meant a constant hubbub of Spanish, whether it was the news, sports, weather or films. That gave me a diet of cartoons dubbed in Spanish, ranging from *The Pink Panther, Road Runner* and other Disney creations, to series and films, such as *Curro Jiménez* and, for the more discerning, *Crónicas de un Pueblo*.

There were also the very popular wildlife documentary programmes with Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente,16 the Attenborough of the Spanish-speaking world. We had never heard of Attenborough in those days.

During the summer holidays, Spanish TV transmitted *Televisión Escolar*, a form of "school of the airwaves" starting at 11:00 am.

All in all, my televisual entertainment and, indeed, my direct and indirect education came from Spanish radio and television. I thought everyone was seeing what I was seeing, but in my case, I was absorbing the cultural and linguistic message through my pores. My vocabulary and my deep understanding come from those formative years spent steeped in Spanish media.

---

14 I challenge any *Llani de mi kinta* not to recognise – even if they cannot remember the names – the various faces and programmes gathered in this blog: http://www.rafaelcastillejo.com/television.html. This was the TV of our youth, and not a word of English in it (although we could happily read titles and credits in English, of course).

15 *Mâ feo k'el mono Amedio.*

16 The better-known programme, for which Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente received several awards, was *El Hombre y la Tierra*, but I had already been watching his TV Summer School programmes such as *Vuestro Amigo Félix.*

Reading

I remember a moment.

I got the hang of writing thanks to my mother, who taught me longhand and letter forming and cursive handwriting, and also helped me with reading in general. In English. By this time, we were out of my aunt's house *en la Laguna* and had been allocated 'emergency housing' at 7/6 Hargrave's Parade. What an improvement! We had our own home! There was a room for us two children and my parents had their own room. There was a living room and a kitchen. Our front door gave onto *el patio*, where we spent endless hours playing and cycling and getting up to some (but not much) mischief.

There was no inside toilet.

There was no indoor plumbing.

There was no plumbed fresh water, although we did have *la kanija del awa salà*. The fresh water came *de la pompa*, which *el casero* would unlock at what seemed to me to be the hottest hour of the day, and the neighbours would queue with their buckets which, in our case, did not have far to be carried. Hygiene? Pepe *el Casero* would attach a muslin screen to the mouth of the pump outpipe. The water came up from the rainwater collection cistern located beneath the patio and into our buckets to the tuneless rhythm of the screeching handle, a sound that still resonates when I hear the word 'slake', I don't know why. From there, into *la tinàha* in each of our houses, the cooling clay pots lidded with a wooden top.

The 'moment' came when we had been visiting my family back at 5b Hood House on our regular Sunday visit to Granny's. I may have been demonstrating my newly acquired writing skills when, all of a sudden, it struck me that "*si pwedo hkrivi en inglè, tambien pwedo hkrivì en êpanyò!*" and proceeded to write, probably rubbish, a couple of words in Spanish. Probably to the amusement of the adults.

It was on those visits, too, that I would leaf through my aunt's collection of *¡Hola!* and the odd *Área*, the La Línea newspaper. As I concentrated on captions and headlines, I was bemused by how I found it easy enough to read and recognise many words but was totally unable to make sense of much. I now know it's because that was not really 'my' Spanish.

English

So where and when did I pick up my English?

I had 'brought it with me', and my mother would speak short phrases and words in English to me. It was simply understood that we spoke English.

I never had any difficulty in understanding English. I understood GBC television and radio in English, and it just wasn't a question of us speaking both English and Spanish.

And then I went to school.

That first day, when what felt like hundreds of us (but could not have been more than a small clutch of infants) were assembled and an adult led us:

"*Agua Father washing Heaven* – Hello be thy name…"

"*Lokè?*"

It was not the first time I had faced a linguistic challenge. When I was quite small, back at 5b Hood House, there had been something like a jingle or a catchphrase: (on the phone) "¿Está Conchita? No, nada más que está Pedrita." When I tried saying this phrase, it would always come out as "Êtà Konxita? No, namâke k'êtà Pedrita." For me the *namâke* was a self-standing unit that still required the neuter relative pronoun….

This was my first encounter with what I suppose was monolingual English. Everything until then had been drawn from a collective pool; I had tried to impose some meaning on the basis of what the words most sounded like in the mouths of Gibraltarians. Not *our* but *agua*;[17] *father* which was unmistakable; and *which art*, which given our native pronunciation which renders <ch> indistinguishable from <sh>, allowed me to make sense of the phrase by now reaching for *washing* to complement *agua*; and so on.

That has never left me.

Nor has my own change in accent and pronunciation.

Cheat

I was playing at a friend's house when I was nine or ten. They had a relative visiting from the UK.

At a crucial stage in our game, I suggested my host was cheating.

This led to a series of exchanges with my friend's relative.

I thought it went like this:

Relative: Cheat.

Me: Cheat.

Relative: Cheat.

17 In Gibraltar, the <gua/güe> cluster is generally realised as a /w/ or voiced labial–velar approximant, making *our* and *agua* near or actual homophones.

Me: Cheat.

It more likely went like this:

Relative: Cheat.

Me: *Sheet*.

Relative: Cheat.

Me: *Sheet*.

I carried that around in my head for years (indeed, ever since) and came to realise that my English, for which I was often applauded in the family (“*Ke vien avl'inglé'l ninyo*”), had inevitably but naturally adjusted to the environment I was now growing up in.

Careering through languages

The next stages can be set out simply.

My English probably hit some kind of Gibraltar/RP equilibrium by the time I went to university. In Scotland, I was told by one person I sounded as if I had a bit of a Manchester accent. No mystery – I loved watching *Coronation Street*. What else other than American films or the occasional British films and series did we have as models to follow?

University was where I first met native Spanish speakers – Colombians, Venezuelans, but mostly Chileans, as well as the native language assistant from Spain. That was the point at which, in free-wheeling conversation, I realised people had trouble understanding my accent or delivery not because they sounded like non-native forms, but because it contained, aside from very truncated or elided forms, verbs and nouns that were not in the *Diccionario de la Real Academia*, such as *mantekà* for *untar* (I knew the latter, but only in limited pharmaceutical contexts, such as applying an unguent on a wound). I also applied third person plural pronouns to second person plural verb forms, and used well-known Anglicisms or Gibraltarianisms such as *llamà patrà* or *no le veo el punto*. My use of tenses (the imperfect where Castilian might use the conditional) or the tonic stress on the penultimate syllable in the second person plural of the imperative mood (*kòhamo/cojamos*) was also not immediately understood.

I continued to acquire new languages and deepen my knowledge of French and Spanish. Italian had been an evening class effort during my A-Level years, while Portuguese was learned ‘on the hoof’ via a Linguaphone course in rapid preparation for a job as a linguist-analyst with the UK Government.

Over the course of the years, I also learned Arabic, Maltese, Greek and Swedish, mostly to understand how they worked.

However, living in a Francophone environment and working in a multilingual setting at the European Court of Justice and at the European Commission for over 25 years ensured that the languages I felt most at home with were French and Italian. In fact, in Luxembourg there were many who thought I was French – which was as good a compliment as one could get.

Chapter 07
Multilingual by nature, multilingual by nurture

John Manuel Enriles

John Manuel Enriles, 55, is a retired secondary school teacher and former Head of Modern Foreign Languages at Bayside School, Gibraltar. He is also a founding member and president of Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society.

As I stand at the top of the Rock on the viewing platform at the Cable Car Station, taking in the breathtaking views of the Mediterranean, the Straits, the North African coastline and the neighbouring Spanish hinterland I picture all those people who, across the centuries, and coming from different directions, arrived at the foot of this block of limestone which proudly dominates the surrounding area and which I call home. Phoenicians landing their ships on its beaches and offering sacrifices to their gods; Carthaginians proud to count it among their possessions; Roman conquerors claiming Mons Calpe as part of their expanding empire; Visigoth tribes invading and settling the surrounding region; Moorish troops about to take the Iberian Peninsula by storm, crossing the straits and landing on the beaches past a rock which they rename Jebel Tarik; Almohad settlers choosing this singular location to build their Medina al-Fath ('the City of Victory'); Christian troops arriving at its gates to challenge the Moorish sovereignty of the territory and integrating it in the emerging kingdom of Spain; Anglo-Dutch naval forces taking the garrison in the name of the Hapsburg pretender to the Spanish crown; British military personnel arriving from all corners of the British Isles and catching their first glimpse of this Mediterranean jewel that they are entrusted to guard; Genoese, Menorcan, Maltese, Jewish and Portuguese traders and craftsmen discovering a new location to forge a living by providing services to the garrison; Spanish workers from the surrounding area crossing over on a daily basis to provide goods and labour; Spanish brides finding love on the Rock and mothering new generations of Gibraltarians; Indian businessmen travelling from the other end of the British Empire to set up their shops in Main Street; Moroccan saviours coming to the rescue from across the straits after the closure of the frontier with Spain; and, most recently, a multinational workforce converging on this territory to fulfil the needs of

the vibrant betting industry. Every newcomer bringing their own culture and language to this major crossroads where the African and European continents come face to face and the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean join in a perpetual embrace. A proud heir to this rich cultural and linguistic heritage, I cannot help but feel that my identity as a Gibraltarian is intrinsically imbued with a multicultural and multilingual essence that ultimately characterises me.

My multicultural and multilingual journey began on the 26th October 1967, when I was born in St Bernard's Hospital in Gibraltar. The fifth and youngest child of a predominantly Spanish-speaking Gibraltarian family, I grew up in a government flat in the upper town area, under the shadow of the Moorish Castle. When I say my family was predominantly Spanish-speaking I must qualify this further. My father was born in the early 1920s to Gibraltarian parents, who, like many Gibraltarians at the time, lived in La Línea. Coming from a working class background his education was basic and undertaken exclusively in Spain. Consequently he never received any formal education in English, although occasionally I would witness in astonishment a demonstration of an elementary understanding of basic spoken English on his part. My guess is that he must have developed this over the years as an MOD employee needing to communicate with monolingual English-speaking bosses. The Spanish that my father spoke, like that of many Gibraltarians of that generation, included elements that had been passed on from other heritage languages that had previously been widely spoken in Gibraltar such as Genoese and Haketia. These included terms such as *marshapie, pahtiso, pavana, rohto, kalentita, er dehkansao de, taro, kalamita, voliya, mapa*. It was also heavily laden with Hispanic sounding words which were of English origin such as *mevli, sohpe, kwekaro, beki, keki, likirva, rolipo, konvi, toile, shinga, ravashu, fokona, dokia, pudimpe, tipa, tishe, ovataing, hersenta, paking, ehkarte*. For the most part, though, the language I grew up with at home was an Andalusian variety of Spanish. This was further reinforced by the fact that my mother was actually Andalusian, although not originally from the surrounding region. She came from a town called Puente Genil, in the province of Córdoba. They have a very distinctive accent there, different to that of the province of Cádiz and to the Gibraltarian one. However, by the time I came into this world my mother had lived in Gibraltar for almost twenty years and had not only lost her Cordoban accent, but also adopted all that Gibraltarian vocabulary which was not of Spanish origin. She never learnt English though, as she was able to get by without it. This means that the language I spoke at home was a Gibraltarian Andalusian variant which my friend Dale Buttigieg refers to as Proto-Llanito.

My first encounter with English, nonetheless, occurred very early on in my life. Due to family circumstances, my parents had to find childcare for me in the mornings as my mother had to work. There is quite a considerable age gap between my siblings and myself, so, by the time I was born, my ageing paternal grandmother, who had helped to look after them, was no longer able to help in this way. This resulted in me

attending Auntie Mary's nursery school from the age of ten months. It was in that fondly remembered institution, just a few metres away from my Spanish-speaking home, that I took the first steps on my English language learning journey. Come to think about it, I must have also taken my first actual steps at the same time. From that moment onwards I started babbling both in English and Gibraltarian Spanish and was already bilingual by the time I started forming my first words. This was not always the case for Gibraltarians from my generation who grew up in Spanish-speaking families. If they did not attend nursery, their formal English learning would not have started until the age of four when they started infant school.

Despite the fact that I spoke English and so did my siblings, who in some cases had finished their schooling by the time I started mine, we never spoke English with each other. Unless we did not want our parents to understand what we were saying, that is! English was not the language of choice either when communicating with friends. Right up to the moment when I went away to study at university in the UK, my use of English was mostly restricted to the context of education. I would never dream of speaking to a teacher in Spanish. In fact, we would get told off and even punished for speaking Spanish in school. This was still not enough to dissuade us entirely, and we would speak Spanish whenever teachers were out of earshot. Increasingly, though, we would use more and more English vocabulary within our Spanish sentences particularly if we were talking about anything school-related such as school equipment, subject names and subject matter. It would not even cross our minds to use the word *deberes* when talking about homework. Even to this day I cannot imagine anyone using any Spanish terminology relating to school or education when speaking Llanito. Most multilingual Gibraltarians would know words like *recreo, clase, cuaderno, boli, regla, pizarra, matemáticas, física, redacción, pupitre, ciencias, sumar, restar*, but they would only use them when speaking to a monolingual Spanish speaker.

My contact with English did actually extend beyond the world of education into some of my leisure activities. I went through a period between the ages of eight and thirteen when I was an avid reader. I would regularly borrow books from the library and, whenever I saved up a bit of pocket money, I would visit the local bookshop to buy the latest book in *The Famous Five, The Three Investigators* or *Hardy Boys* series. I would also read comics such as *The Beano* and *The Dandy*. Thinking about it now, the possibility of reading anything other than English was simply not available, but, to be honest, at that stage I had not yet had any formal instruction in Spanish, so the idea of reading anything in Spanish would not have even crossed my mind at that point. Apart from reading I would also watch some English programmes on GBC, but the offer was obviously very limited. Then of course there was the cinema, where once again the language was English, never Spanish. Incredible as it might seem, though, at some point they did show Bollywood films in Hindi at the Prince of

Wales cinema. This might never have been relevant to me, if it were not for the fact that at the time my mother used to work in one of the Indian shops in Main Street and was sometimes given free cinema tickets for these films. Considering the limited entertainment available locally during the closed frontier days, watching a Bollywood film, even if we did not understand a single word, seemed like an attractive option for my parents and me on a Friday night. I was very young at the time, but I guess that this experience made me open my mind to other cultures and I wonder whether this might have sparked the interest I later developed for learning other languages.

My relationship with Spanish whilst growing up was of course a very different one to the one I had with English. Communication with my parents was entirely in the Gibraltarian variant of Andalusian Spanish and with them I could not really code-switch as I would with my friends. This meant that very often I would need to know the Spanish term for words I would otherwise say in English. Of course much of the Spanish I learnt as a young boy, I acquired from my parents. This was the simple, plain language of everyday conversations. I must admit I also learnt a lot of popular proverbs and sayings from my mum, who was a never-ending fountain of knowledge when it came to these. Given the big gap in age between me and my siblings, I would spend a lot of time alone with my parents, as the others would be busy getting on with their own lives. In this way I would often find myself acting as my parents' interpreter or, in some cases, translator whenever they received any letters or other written notifications from, say, the bank or the school. In fact, my mother, who would always readily help any stranger in need, was very often all too willing to offer my interpreting or translating services to them if required. This meant I could possibly find myself, whilst travelling on the Algeciras-Madrid express with my parents, helping an elderly couple from Manchester find out from the Spanish ticket collector if the train stopped at Córdoba. I can assure you this sort of thing was not easy for the shy and reserved boy that I was at the time, but it probably made me aware of how useful speaking more than one language was and how I could help others as a result.

My contact with Spanish did extend beyond my domestic conversations with my parents. Even though, during a great part of my childhood, the frontier with Spain was shut, Spanish language and culture seeped in through our TV screens and transistor radios. Before the advent of satellite TV the only television channels available were two Spanish national channels, one regional Andalusian channel and GBC. Evidently Spanish content massively outweighed any content in English, although with the eventual arrival of the VCR the latter gained some ground. Similarly there was also a greater Spanish offering on radio. Like most Gibraltarians at the time I mostly consumed Spanish programmes and listened to Spanish radio. However, this Spanish was different to the one I spoke. Most noticeable about it was the accent: <s> was pronounced in words I did not even know had one – *dos, tres, lunes*; <d> appeared between vowels in places I least expected – *pescado, aburrido, dedo*; words had

extra syllables – *está, nada, todo, para*; <r> did not sound like <l> – *alto, el, vuelta*. The vocabulary was often also different. I used to watch a children's cartoon called *La Abeja Maya*, which told the adventures of a bee, yet the word for bee that I knew was *avispa*. In fact *avispa* is the Spanish for wasp, but for some reason in Gibraltar, even to this day, we use the same word to refer to the two insects. I guess this works fine for us and *abeja* simply does not form part of Llanito vocabulary, even though many Gibraltarians know the word and would be able to use it correctly in a conversation with a non-Gibraltarian speaker of Spanish.

Apart from TV and radio I had direct contact with Spanish whenever we went to visit my mother's side of the family in Spain. During the closed frontier days going to Spain was a complicated matter as direct travel from Gibraltar to Spain was forbidden by the Spanish state. What in effect takes a few minutes nowadays, if there is no queue, back then was a full day affair and involved crossing over to Morocco and then getting another ferry to do the same trip in reverse, but this time landing at a Spanish port. Even so we would still go across at least once a year, sometimes twice, and we would spend a few weeks over there. This meant I would spend summer or Easter holidays in my mother's hometown which in my family we refer to fondly as *er pueblo*, but we would also visit my uncle in Barcelona and my aunt in La Línea. For a few weeks a year I would be totally immersed in a completely Spanish monolingual environment where neither English nor Llanito had any role to play, yet I always felt comfortable communicating with others. I was, however, fascinated by the way my relatives spoke. To this day I will recognise a Cordoban accent whenever I hear it. Despite it being an Andalusian accent like mine, their pronunciation of certain vowels is very distinctive. I also remember an argument I had as a child with my cousin from Barcelona who was about my age. I pointed out that his pronunciation of the word *dedo* was very weird because he pronounced a /d/ in it. At this point I had not yet been introduced to written Spanish so I just could not understand where this intrusive /d/ in the word *deo* was coming from. I obviously argued that he was wrong as it just made no sense to me, so in the end we agreed to disagree. Years later, once I started learning Spanish in school, I found out that he was right about it. Well, in fact, neither of us was wrong because in the end it comes down to a question of accent. I never changed my pronunciation of *dedo* nor indeed of many other words with intervocalic <d> such as *comprado, vestido, pintada*, even after I learnt about the existence of this <d> in *pesao*. To be honest, I dislike having to write this <d> which often adds an extra syllable to words that I use everyday and which does not represent the way I, nor the vast majority of Spanish speakers, speak.

The start of secondary education for me was the beginning of a very long love affair with languages that is still going strong. Not only did I start learning Spanish in school at last, but I was introduced to French for the first time ever! I found Spanish easy and excelled in it. I soon realised Spanish spelling was so much more accessible and

logical than English spelling. Obviously there were some odd things about it such as the <ll> and the <ñ> and I will never forget a clever rhyme in Llanito that my first Spanish teacher taught me: *z-e, z-i no hay* (the letters <z>, <e> and <i> need to be pronounced in English for the rhyme to work). I made sure I passed on this little jewel to my students when I became a teacher of Spanish myself. Having spent so many years in schools where Spanish, which forms such an important part of who I am, was discouraged and looked down upon, it was so refreshing to see that now it was given some recognition and was actually part of the curriculum. However, the time allocated to it was very limited and even to this day it beggars belief that students taking GCSE French in a secondary school in Gibraltar have more lessons of French than they do of Spanish. It was not until I started my A-Level Spanish course that I started reading Spanish regularly. I would read Spanish magazines and newspapers and, as part of the course, we had to sit a literature exam that for my class included works by Galdós, Buero Vallejo and Lope de Vega. I think it must have been around this time that I started to realise that there was a huge difference between the Spanish I spoke and the standard form I was being taught at school.

I thoroughly enjoyed learning French, not from the perspective of the actual learning process itself (the necessary evil, as I have come to call it), which could often be boring with all the revision of verb tenses and grammar rules, including all the exceptions, but more as a result of the practical skills I acquired, which allowed me to understand and express myself in a language that was not my own. Inspiring teachers also contributed to the enjoyment, I hasten to add. I had the opportunity to put these new skills to the test when, at the age of seventeen, a year before sitting my A-Level French exams, I spent a number of weeks in France with three friends. We travelled to Brittany to carry out a Scouts expedition which involved spending ten days hiking, in pairs, through the region, whilst completing a series of projects that included finding out about such things as land use, local industries, cuisine and the Breton language. Needless to say, my knowledge of French came in handy. By this stage I had developed a hunger for learning foreign languages. The other foreign language that was offered in school was Italian, but unfortunately this was limited to students who were repeating their O-Level year. I was prepared to attend these classes in addition to my A-Level classes, but unfortunately they clashed. I had attended an Italian club that was run by one of the teachers in school a few years earlier, but those were soon discontinued when she left. Nonetheless, I was determined to learn Italian and when I started looking at university courses I made sure I applied for those that would allow me to combine the study of Spanish, French and Italian. I had already decided by then that I was going to become a language teacher.

It turned out that there were very few UK universities at the time that allowed the study of three foreign languages, but finally I ended up enrolling for a course in Romance Languages at the Coleg Prifysgol Cymru, Aberystwyth (nowadays Aberystwyth University). Finally I was going to study Italian, but nobody had prepared me for the

exhilarating pace at which I was going to learn it. I started as an absolute beginner in October and by January I was expected to cope with mediaeval Italian literature in the form of Dante's *La Divina Commedia*. It is hardly surprising, now that I think about it, that I never embarked on the study of Welsh whilst living in Wales. My knowledge of that Celtic language is limited to the odd word that I gleaned here and there from bilingual signs and notices. I do regret not having made more of my time over there to learn the language, but I appreciate the chance I had to experience life in a place where people make a big deal about their bilingualism. Although the first time I sat an exam there I was shocked when I ended up staring at an entire page full of Welsh writing! I soon learned that if you turned the page over you would find the English translation of it there.

My move to the UK brought about significant changes to my use of languages. For the first time ever I lived in a place where I had to communicate in English most of the time. With the exception of my first year, when I coincided with another Gibraltarian there, no one spoke Llanito in Aberystwyth. At least I did have some contact with Spanish through my studies, but I missed the contact with my variant of Spanish. This was obviously way before the Internet, mobile phones and social media, so the only way to keep in touch with my family and friends was by phone or letter. The cost of calls made it quite prohibitive and I limited them to about ten minutes a week to my parents and the occasional one to friends studying in other parts of the UK. This made me resort to letter writing, which posed a new dilemma. I usually conversed with friends in Llanito, which of course contained all those English terms and exclusively local vocabulary, but I had never written in this language of ours. The most obvious and easiest choice would have been to write in English, which was my main written language, but on the other hand it seemed odd and unnatural to use English exclusively to address them. At that juncture I resolved to write in Llanito. I tried to reproduce our pronunciation as closely as possible and the whole thing turned into an almost linguistic analysis of the language. I began to discover how this language had its own structures, grammar rules, vocabulary and sound system. It was probably then that it dawned on me that Gibraltarians were not bilingual as we traditionally consider ourselves to be, but that in fact we are multilingual because a third language has evolved as a result of our cultural and linguistic heritage. There are millions of English speakers in the world as there are millions of speakers of Spanish, but Llanito is what distinguishes Gibraltarians from any of them.

As part of my studies I undertook a number of modules in Romance Linguistics which consisted in analysing the evolution of Latin into the many Romance languages. Through this I came to understand how new languages evolve as a result of two or more languages being in contact over a period of time. This process is not very unlike that which we see happening in Gibraltar. I was particularly intrigued by the changes in pronunciation and this eventually led me to undertake a master's in Phonetics at University College London. I had always wondered why Gibraltarians sounded very

different to English speakers from the UK, so I decided to carry out a phonemic analysis of the Gibraltarian English vowel system. My research showed that our English is unique and is a result of its close contact with Spanish. My professors at UCL encouraged me to adopt the Received Pronunciation of English, which I could have easily done having studied it in depth, but I was very happy to keep my Gibraltarian accent that ultimately links me to my birthplace.

My multilingual skills have always served me very well. At a personal level they have opened the doors that have allowed me to discover many other cultures and realise that every language allows you to see the world with different eyes. I make it a point to read in English, Spanish, French and Italian and I listen to music in all these languages. I enjoy being able to watch films and TV programmes in all these languages. I lived and worked in France for almost a year as part of my degree course and I have travelled to this country many times. I have always been well-received there and I am convinced that the fact that I spoke the language helped. I have not had that many opportunities to visit Italy up till now, but in the same way when I have been there I have been made to feel welcome and I have been able to put my Italian to good use. On a professional level, I have based my career on languages having taught all four of them during my twenty-nine years as a teacher. I have always strived to transmit my passion for languages to the many students I have taught over the years. Not all of them will have shared that, but I would like to think that some of what they learned will be useful to them at some point in their lives.

Looking out over the town and harbour I wonder how different my linguistic journey would have been if I had been born elsewhere. The Gibraltar I see in front of me today is obviously not the same as the one I grew up in. It has literally grown bigger, with buildings and roads in spots where I would go swimming or fishing when I was a kid. Apart from the obvious changes in the urban landscape, there have also been changes in people's lifestyles. Modern technologies have certainly had a great part to play in bringing in those changes. With it has come a predominantly monolingual English-speaking culture, where children, from an early age, engage in all sorts of leisure activities exclusively in English and practically excluding any contact with Spanish. This has been further reinforced by the fact that Gibraltarian society has for a long time been obsessed with ensuring children achieve a satisfactory level of English and assumed they would grow up multilingual regardless. Grown-ups will almost automatically speak English to children. The present situation, where a vast majority of young Gibraltarians are practically English monolinguals proves that we have gone about it the wrong way. In fact the new generations are missing out on the advantages that being multilingual brings with it. Meanwhile the rest of the world is becoming more multilingual by the day, with over 70% of people speaking at least two languages. That multilingual culture which made me who I am is fast disappearing. Nevertheless I do believe that if everyone plays their part we are still in time to ensure a multilingual future for Gibraltarians.

Chapter 08
In memoriam

Jackie Villa

Jackie Villa started teaching in 1992. She is actively involved in producing, writing and directing plays with her theatre group.

"Memory is a way of holding onto the things you love, the things you are, the things you never want to lose."

The Wonder Years, TV Show

I am starting to forget why I walked into a room, or opened a cupboard – I searched for a dishcloth only to find it days later in the freezer drawer! I worry about these lapses… and yet, when I think of my childhood memories they rush back in waves, as vivid as a high-definition movie. I remember things which my mum claims are utterly impossible for any child to remember, like catching measles on my first birthday. Or being driven to hospital after swallowing a brooch. Aged five months. Impossible, right?

When we think of memories, we usually classify them under people, moments, key events, places, even smells, but we can't forget that language is also woven into each person's unique tapestry of memories. Historically, language and memory have been studied separately, as unique cognitive abilities. But recent evidence suggests they are heavily intertwined. We learn a language much more easily if it is reinforced by an accompanying, usually gratifying, experience. Learning a language in a vacuum – for instance, from a textbook – will prove more challenging.

I would like to boast that I know the science behind how I learned language. I don't, and I don't think it's something I will delve into anytime soon. I would rather recount the complex, colourful, frustrating, extraordinary and joyous journey of the language of my life.

I grew up in a Spanish-speaking family, with a mother from Los Barrios who – even though she had lived in Gibraltar since the age of twelve – only spoke a few words of English, and a Gibraltarian father who stuck to Spanish for his wife's sake.

All I knew up to the age of four was Spanish. I can't recall any English words when I was young, except perhaps *water, light, happy birthday*. My mum was a stay-at-home housewife, so attending nursery or pre-school was deemed unnecessary. *Eso era solo para las madres que trabajaban*. We lived in Rosia Road, in a tiny one-bedroom, one-kitchen flat which led out into a communal patio. The eleven families living in the patio were of a similar structure to mine: Gibraltarian fathers, a mixture of Gibraltarian and Spanish mothers and Gibraltarian kids. As was quite typical of the time, there was a deep-rooted sense of community and warmth. Every door was left wide open, with just the coloured strips of plastic curtains offering some degree of privacy. We would walk in without knocking, helping ourselves to Bovril sandwiches dunked in sugary tea.

One-legged Alfredo, one of the more elderly neighbours, would lean his crutches against the wall and sit on the steps of the patio, smoking his pipe. We would sit around him whilst he told us stories and jokes, gifting us his empty tins of Erinmore Flake tobacco, where we could keep our little treasures, like *meblis* and *estampitas*. Tables and chairs were brought out and birthday parties organised, and I remember quite a bit of dressing up and improvised theatre amongst the women.

In the afternoons, *las vecinas* would pull out chairs and gather in anticipation around the radio, ready for the next episode of *la radionovela Lucecita* on Cadena SER, and the dreamy voice of Manolo Otero would fill the patio. The other children would drift off and lose interest, but I listened intently, following the plot and the women's subsequent *tertulia*.

There was plenty of swearing, mostly in Spanish, with *coño* up there at number one. My mum literally swiped my mouth with the back of her hand when she overheard me reciting a few of the more popular ones. To this day, *no me sale una palabrota*.

Each one of these memories is impregnated with the sounds of the patio, the voices which made it come alive. Every one of these neighbours played a crucial role in my language acquisition, unconsciously adding their little grain of salt. I was immersed in happy chatter and conversation, gossip and stories, as well as arguments and shouting which could be heard through the walls.

At home, we watched Spanish TV, listened to Spanish radio and sang songs by Manolo Escobar and Conchita Piquer. My mum sang whilst she did chores, *poniendo el patio de punta*, and she would teach me riddles and poems that I remember to this day:

Mamá, soy cabo. Ay, que mi niño se ha hincao un clavo.

Mamá, soy sargento. Ay, que a mi niño se le ha metío pa dentro.

Mamá, soy capitán. Ay, que no se lo pueden sacar.

During the closed-frontier years, writing letters was my mum's main form of communication with her family, along with the occasional telephone *conferencia* in the City Hall. Sitting on her lap in front of the window, the warm rays of a setting sun streaming through, she would read me my grandmother's letters and the replies she had penned. It was the language of love, of affection, of anecdotes and hardships shared between a grandmother, a mother and a daughter. My dad would *smuggle* hardcover books from the Dockyard (where he worked as an explosives store officer) embossed with the Queen's crest and smelling of ammunition. I would spend hours sprawled on my tummy, pretending I was writing letters too.

I can safely say that my foundation in language was forged from my life in the patio, with its vibrant, diverse and colourful spectacle of words.

But this was not the only contributing factor. Every Friday we would visit my Aunty Maria (my mum's sister, married to my dad's brother). She was the most wonderful storyteller, and we (my cousins and I, along with some of the children from the block) would sit on the lino-tiled kitchen floor, mesmerised by her voice. One Christmas, one of my cousins was given a CinExin, and my aunty would improvise the stories as the images were projected on the kitchen ceiling.

She lived in Laguna Estate, and I looked forward to staying over on the weekends. There were dozens of children, and we invaded and claimed each territory as our own to play games: hide and seek, *el taco*, leapfrog, skipping, *el piso* and "L-O-N-D-O-N London" (possibly the only English word we used – not sure if *purish* was another). Spanish was the language of the playground, the park and the patio. It was the language of my childhood games, of our creativity, of *Pippi Longstocking* on a colour TV for the first time.

Like quite a few children of my generation, I walked into school *sin una papa de inglés*. Most of us would agree that learning English "just happened", easily and fluidly lodging itself into the languages compartment of our brain. I absorbed new vocabulary, learned to read, to write, and by the end of the first year, age five, I knew English. Just like that.

The question remains as to why my father, a Gibraltarian, didn't teach me any English. He spoke "proper" English, with a "good" accent. He would moonlight as a barman at the Frontier Club at Devil's Tower Camp, and befriended workers from the NAAFI. Being surrounded by native English speakers, my dad was quick to pick up their accents, and sounded just like them. So how come he didn't talk to me in English, as a way of preparing me for school and helping me cope a little better?

When I asked him about it, he claimed he was always working, and I'd be asleep when he got back late at night.

"What about weekends? Did you speak to me in English on the weekends?" I'd insist.

"We spoke a few words, and I helped you with your reading. You had good pronunciation."

"So you did read with me."

"A few times, but mostly you read with your mother. *Tú aprendiste muchas cosas sola.*"

During the closed-frontier years, our annual family holiday was a trip to Los Barrios for the whole month of August. We would buy a ticket for the Mons Calpe ferry and make the awful journey across the straits from Gib to Tangier and onwards to Algeciras. The vomiting was worth it because I had a zillion cousins (my mum is one of ten siblings), and I had the best time with them. Whilst some Llanito words remained – *bolillas, chinga, gaite, quequi, liquirba* – English was pushed to one side and Spanish became my language for the summer; the language of *mi abuela*, of my aunts and uncles who showered me with displays of affection, of my cousins, who taught me new playground chants and games, the language of movies at the open air theatre, where we watched *Había una vez un circo* and the language of songs from Camilo Sesto, Parchís, Triana, Mecano and Los Pecos amongst a multitude of others. Who could forget *las canciones del verano*? I recall being vaguely jealous of my friends' holidays to London, Tangier and even USA, but in retrospect I realise how enriching my time with my family had been, not just personally and socially, but culturally and linguistically.

We moved from my beloved childhood patio to a *tres cuartos y cocina* in Varyl Begg Estate, which just meant more neighbours, more playgrounds, more open spaces, plenty of sea breeze and an abundance of kids to play with. It also meant a new school.

In Bishop Fitzgerald Middle School we were grouped according to ability and I found myself in the top group. I was fascinated to see how my new peers (mostly from the Humphreys catchment area) only spoke in English. When I spoke Spanish they seemed horrified and would tell me off "You can only speak English in class." Where did this idea come from? But I followed their lead, and very quickly English became the norm in the class (only switching to Spanish when it was timetabled). The semantics and syntax of the language were drilled into us, as was reading literature like Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, with its deliberately complicated and long-winded Victorian style. I remember my brain being so frazzled I wanted to burn the book. I found the English lessons rather dull and monotonous, to be honest.

Sarah – an English girl – arrived and we instantly hit it off. We were inseparable, and every other afternoon after school she'd invite me over to her flat in King's Yard Lane where we would dance to the latest pop hits and play Sandie Shaw's *Puppet on a*

String on repeat. We would go to John Mackintosh Hall library together, borrowing Enid Blyton books which we would read on her bedroom floor. We were both voracious readers. I became one of the family, integrating with her parents and siblings and learning "the English way" of doing things, like having tea at 5pm, and discovering *Weetabix*. Sadly, she left when we were in our third year. I wish I had the chance to thank her for the tremendous impact she made on the way I spoke, wrote, understood and used English. She opened doors for me in a way she'll never know.

At age twelve girls and boys went their separate ways into the Boys' and the Girls' Comprehensive Schools (*los comprijensi*). We were introduced to Shakespeare, Hopkins, James Joyce and Henry James, complemented by the works of Spanish authors like Lope de Vega, Lorca, Benito Pérez Galdós and Carmen Laforet. The late Dr Leslie Zammitt whetted my appetite for plays and theatre when I was only thirteen. I can't think of a more wonderful concoction to influence and cement my love for language and literacy in both languages. English and Spanish became my favourite subjects, thanks to the passion of a few teachers. I continued to study them right up to A-Level.

I took a gap year, working at Hassan and Partners lawyers' firm before I left for university. At Hassan's, I worked in the Companies Department with three English and one Gibraltarian girl. It was inevitable that English became the language at work, both socially and formally. I learned phone etiquette, how to speak to clients and how to use the required formal English terms in legal documentation and correspondence. Spanish came in useful if we had Spanish clients or we had to translate a document.

Leaving Gibraltar for the very first time at the age of twenty I felt I was well-prepared to embark on a four-year BEd (Honours) degree at Greenwich University's Avery Hill Campus in Eltham, Southeast London. For the first two years we covered all the curriculum subjects, and then I specialised in English Language, Literature and Drama with Art, Craft and Design.

I was the only Gibraltarian on campus. Other students, curious about my accent, took turns at guessing my origin: New Zealand, Argentina, Italy?

"The Rock of Gibraltar? The Pillars of Hercules? It's at the southernmost tip of Spain," I would explain.

"So it's Spanish then."

"No, it's a British colony."

"But you're Spanish, because you speak Spanish."

"No, I'm British, but I speak Spanish. I'm bilingual."

"But you don't sound British."

They were obsessed about accents. I couldn't understand what was so important about how I sounded. I could make myself understood, right? But I didn't *sound* English enough for some of my new acquaintances. They were quick to make me feel like an outsider, and their incessant comments started to irritate me, and even slightly intimidate me. Once, in the middle of a heated argument, one of them called me a "bloody foreigner". I could handle the foreigner bit, after all, this much was true. But their malice, their spitefulness, their arrogance and even ignorance, was something I was not willing to tolerate. Their words stung, making me feel inadequate and stupid. I was quick to distance myself from this group, and the experience made me all the more determined to hold my head high, embrace who I was, to be transparent about my culture, my language, my accent. All the things that had shaped and defined ME. It was around this time too that I stopped saying I was British. If anyone asked, I was Gibraltarian.

Luckily, not all the people I met were like this. There was a good number who had no issue with my Gibraltarian accent, who were genuinely interested in finding out about my country, my culture, my bilingualism, my cuisine (especially my cuisine). Needless to say, we remain friends to this day.

How could I not fall in love with London? There was always something to do, something to see. Theatre, book shops, cinema, art exhibitions. I drank it all in. I was also amused to discover that, no matter where I went, Wembley Market, Oxford Street, Covent Garden, Hyde Park, Top Shop, McDonald's, M&S, I would hear a Gibraltarian accent, with its inimitable ring that made our ears perk up and sniff each other out, with a frequency only us Llanitos would know how to tune into.

Naturally, being bilingual was helpful when Spanish-speaking tourists asked for directions, but it was also brilliant to be able to secretly eavesdrop on conversations amongst Spanish and Latin American passengers on the buses or trains. It was somehow comforting to my ears.

I returned to Gibraltar (rather sad to be leaving London if I'm honest) and started my teaching career. The language in the playground was Spanish/English Llanito. Children were reprimanded when they spoke in Spanish, and teachers were given strict instructions to quell it, like a fire. Thankfully, a few of us rebelled and continued using Spanish to ease understanding. We used it when we meant business: "*Mira que se lo digo a tu madre*". For affection or praise: "*Ay, qué bonito eres*". Or simply for teachers to release pent up frustrations: "*Mira, pisha, ya no te lo explico más!*"

The time came to start a family. I was adamant that my children learn to speak Spanish first. Both their grandmothers were Spanish, and how else were they going to communicate? I couldn't allow this disservice to either party. My husband and I agreed that our home language would be Spanish as far as possible, and made a concerted effort to put on Spanish TV, play Spanish songs, and even took the children

to Cine Cité in Palmones to watch dubbed Spanish versions of movies. I was certain my children would pick up English from their educational establishments. After all, was I not proof enough? Strangely, people criticised me. "How can you be Head of English and not speak to your kids in English?" they would comment. "They will fall behind in school" and "You are a very irresponsible parent, you should know better as a teacher." Both my boys are beautifully bilingual.

I kept up theatre as a hobby, starting youth and adult drama sessions and eventually founding White Light Theatre. In 2015, Rebecca Faller (now Calderon), approached me to direct her play *The Civil Garrison* for the 75th Anniversary of the Evacuation of the Gibraltarians during WW2. Months of hard work culminated in our first historical Llanito script, which I renamed *Llévame Donde Nací*, co-written by Rebecca, Andrew Dark and myself. I had taken Rebecca's first draft and Andrew and I adapted it for the stage, tightening its structure and historical content. I was unhappy about it being written entirely in English – this was not a true reflection of the time we were trying to evoke.

"But our audiences might not know any Spanish," was the argument against this.

"And there will be many audience members who will not know any English," was my counterattack. "Our target audience is our older demographic. We have to include Llanito."

My mind was made up.

Seeing that neither Rebecca or Andrew were fluent in Spanish or Llanito, I took it upon myself to rewrite existing scenes and dialogues and create new ones in Llanito, ensuring the colloquialisms and code-switched phrases were accurate for the period.

As the play's director, I had to vocally coach some of the actors, especially the youth actors who were taking part. Teaching them how to speak Llanito Spanish, with the right accent, was not an easy task. I remember one of the boys in particular ended up sounding more Mexican than Gibraltarian, but at least it was Spanish!

During rehearsals, the actors became contributors, all spurred by an innate desire to present an authentic experience of how our people spoke at the time. "*Mira, Jackie, que he estao pensando…*" they would start as they approached me with little bits of scribbled paper, with their ideas, their suggestions for changes. It became a labour of love. We owed it to our audience, to "*nosotros, el pueblo de Gibraltar*" as Sir Joshua Hassan would address his people. *Llévame* was a resounding success, and we were presented with a Cultural Heritage Award. We subsequently published the play, a legacy for our children and our future generations. We tried to convince the Departments of Education and Culture to introduce the play into the secondary school curriculum, so it could be studied for both its historical and linguistic value. We failed.

The Winds of Change, co-written by Andrew and myself, told of events leading up to the closure of the frontier, mainly through the perspective of women. Once more, I was tasked with writing the Llanito scenes. I found it was increasingly difficult to cast children and youth who 1) spoke Spanish and 2) could do a Llanito accent. Most of them struggled with its pronunciation. We hired the ones who had a good ear, and could copy the accent. In other cases I had to adapt, reallocate or remove lines completely.

It dawned on me, with an overwhelming gloom, that soon we wouldn't be able to cast our youth in any more Llanito plays – speaking in Spanish, let alone Llanito, was as difficult as speaking a foreign language. Given a few more years, it will no longer be heard in our homes, our offices, the cafeterias, the parks or the benches which line Main Street.

I'd better hurry up with part three of this trilogy then, before our language becomes just a memory. I'm not a pessimist, far from it, and I don't want to be the levanter cloud hovering over the groups and movements which are striving to keep our language alive. But I feel it's already fading. I don't need more evidence than the pupils I teach. Only a handful speak fluent Spanish. Over the course of thirty years in education, I have noticed a huge difference in the way our children, and younger colleagues, use Spanish. Fewer and fewer of them speak it, write it or even understand it. The reasons vary and range from academic to social to political, but it saddens me to think that, unless we act immediately, our younger generation will no longer be bilingual, let alone know about Llanito. Unless we try to recuperate it, resuscitate it, defibrillate it and start to reintroduce it in our homes, in our schools and in our establishments, it most certainly will die, if not with my generation, then with the one after. We will inadvertently be closing doors to our children and grandchildren, amputating their job opportunities and truncating cultural and social exchanges. There will be a shift in our Gibraltarian identity as we filter out and extinguish the Spanish language altogether. Our cross-frontier workers will continue to make their daily commute into Gibraltar, forced to learn English as we become a monolingual society. They, in turn, will become bilingual. What a strange turn of events that would be.

My language, the language of my childhood, my family, my friends, my plays, which brings me such joy, such a kaleidoscopic way of communicating, will become a thing of the past. Let us not mourn the loss of a language which has defined us for decades… let us not become complacent and wait for others to act… let me not have to write a play titled *In Memoriam*, brimming with nostalgia for the language we once knew.

Chapter 09
Speak and be damned: a personal linguistic journey

M. G. Sanchez

Mark Sanchez is a Gibraltarian writer based in the UK. He has a PhD in English from the University of Leeds and has written various novels with a Gibraltarian theme. His personal website can be found at www.mgsanchez.net.

I was ten years old when I realised that accent was something that could be held against you. I was queuing with my English classmates by the entrance to the school gym, waiting to troop in with the others for morning assembly. Until that moment nobody outside my class had spoken to me, but that day a girl asked me where I was from. She had hazel eyes and a warm smile, and within seconds I was telling her about Gibraltar and how, wherever you go in our little town, you are never more than a few minutes from the sea. As I continued gushing in this way, a boy barged in between us and, turning his back on me, spreading his arms like a barrier, cried, "Why are you speaking to this one? Can't even speak proper English, him!"

**

Before coming to England in 1979, I had never thought much about accent or pronunciation. These were matters for grown-ups – nothing for us children to worry about. Like most kids of my generation, I had grown up speaking mainly Spanish, while reading and referring to technical things almost entirely in English. This probably sounds quite weird to non-Gibraltarians, but this is what it was like back then – we used one language to evoke feelings and emotions and another to express ideas and abstract concepts. My father worked as a civil servant for the MOD. He was not interested in language or academic matters, but he was not entirely without intellectual self-respect either – adding four O-Levels via a correspondence course to the two O-Levels he had left school with, and owning a series of popular books – Peter Benchley's *Jaws,* William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*, Piers Paul Read's *Alive* – which he kept neatly lined up in a shelf compartment built within the headboard of the marriage bed. My mother, for her part, worked as a primary school teacher at Notre

Dame School. When we spoke as a family at our Chicardo's Passage flat, we almost always did so in Spanish, although, of course, living in the Gibraltar of the 1970s, our Spanish was peppered with phrases like *el television, el three-in-one, el weather forecast*, *el sink* and *el toilet*.

This pattern was largely replicated in the two other households where I spent most of my time as a kid – those of my maternal and my paternal grandparents. My maternal grandparents, the Whitelocks, had once owned a fleet of buses, but, thanks to a series of ill-advised financial transactions, had slid into genteel poverty and now lived in a cramped, two-bed flat on Governor's Street. I used to go to their apartment every day after school to play Rummy or Crazy Eights with them. While we played, we always spoke in Spanish – but would unfailingly refer to the cards by their English names (the Jack of Hearts instead of *la sota de corazones,* the Ace of Clubs instead of *el as de tréboles,* and so on). My grandfather had what in Spanish is known as *un mal perder* and would be constantly accusing everybody of *chitería* if he didn't get dealt the cards he wanted. In his spare time, he used to go to the John Mackintosh Library, where he borrowed novels by Frederick Forsyth, Robert Ludlum and other Anglo-American thriller writers. His spoken English was fluent – though possibly not as fluent as that of my mother and my uncles. In this way, he resembled his wife – my grandmother Juani – who could maintain a conversation in English, but preferred to speak in Gibraltarian Spanish. She didn't read novels, but subscribed to English magazines like *House and Home* and *Vogue Knitting*, from which she'd regularly cut out recipes and knitting patterns which she'd stick into scrapbooks. In 2004, when Juani died and my mother and I went to clear her flat of her possessions, we found a bundle of love letters that my grandmother had sent to my grandfather during the years they spent apart in WW2. Discovering a bunch of love-letters from my normally reserved and ladylike grandmother was quite a shock, but what surprised me even further was that they were written in simple, yet elegantly expressed English, the sort of English that wouldn't have looked amiss in the pages of *House and Home.* This from a woman who almost never spoke English in all the years I knew her!

At my paternal grandparents', the Sanchezes, the balance leaned more towards the Spanish side – but, even there, the English language still made regular encroachments. My grandfather, a burly ex-soldier who now worked as a bus driver, struggled to speak English, but from time to time spouted one-liners like "What about it?" and "Yer awright, mate?" – pitch-perfect Cockney-sounding phrases he must have learned from the years he spent in London towards the end of WW2. In many ways, he was the embodiment of Gibraltarian hybridity: born in La Línea, but baptised as an Anglican; with a grandmother from Jimena and a grandfather from Manchester; Sanchez by surname, yet as light-skinned and blue-eyed as your stereotypical Englishman. His wife, my grandmother Bertha, also struggled with her English, but – unlike my grandfather – never felt self-conscious about its use. At a certain point, she realised

that her grandkids found her pronunciations amusing, but instead of switching over to Spanish or trying to sound more English, she deliberately mangled the words even further, taking pleasure from seeing her grandchildren smile. "*Te frío un* hahmberrgarrr, Mark?" she used to say. "Or *prefiereh que te haga un* sanwee *con jamón de Jorrk*?" In looks, she was the opposite of my grandfather – dark-eyed and sallow, with split-ended curls that had been jet-black before they went yellowy-grey. When she wasn't cooking or cleaning (which wasn't all that often), she liked to listen to Spanish radio stations like *la Cope* and *la Cadena Ser,* breaking into irate monologues whenever Luis del Olmo and other Spanish radio stars said things about Gibraltar which she didn't like. By contrast, the BBC World Service's one o'clock news bulletin would be listened to with a cup of tea and in reverential silence – not on her portable set, either, but on the large Grundig receiver on the living room sideboard, *los news de la BBC* being one of the few occasions during the day that took precedence over her manic cooking and cleaning. The closest thing she had to a hobby was flicking through her copies of *True Detective,* an American magazine she bought from Blackshaw's the Newsagent's every month. She did this for twenty or thirty minutes after lunch, using a magnifying glass to assist her cataract-operated eyes, mouthing the words in her heavily accented English as she read. I always wondered how someone with such rudimentary English could read those sensationalist crime magazines. Yet read them she did … and even went as far as regaling us with anecdotes picked up from her reading. "*Ha que no sabeh lo que hizo este degraciao en* New York city?" she'd typically say, turning to you and pointing with the magnifying glass handle at some villain pictured in her magazine. "*Mató a dos policíah con un* Tommy gun *y despuéh se suicidó comiéndose un paquete de* rat poison*, ¡el hijo del mismísimo demonio!*"

These oscillations between Spanish and English even existed at Saint Mary's and Bishop Fitzgerald's, the two Gibraltarian schools I attended before coming to England in 1979. Lessons were conducted in English, but the moment the kids stepped out into the playground we went straight into Llanito mode, speaking mostly in Spanish with the odd English interpolations here and there. We even hispanicised, or more accurately *llanitified*, traditional playground games – with hide-and-seek becoming "one-two-three-*taco*", catch "catch-*en-alto*" or "catch-*en-piedra*", and leapfrog "*una-la-mula*" – although there were one or two games, like the perennial boys' favourite British Bulldog, which remained untranslated. True, there were certain kids who – either because they had an English parent or because they came from *una familia del pish* – mixed more English phrases with their Spanish than the average Llanito child, but I cannot think of one single Gibraltar-born classmate who spoke exclusively in English in the playground. A particularly strange episode for me at school came when one of the teachers at Saint Mary's fell ill and my mother covered for her for a few weeks. Knowing that Mum was in charge of a class upstairs was weird enough, but what really discombobulated me was the time I had to go to her class and speak with my mother (with whom I *always* spoke Llanito at home) entirely in English. "Excuse

me, Mrs Sanchez," I remember saying to her, blushing from ear to ear. "Miss Bezzina has asked me to tell you she needs you downstairs." Of all my early school memories, this is one of the most vivid – having to address my mother in English in front of her class at Saint Mary's!

**

Everything that I knew and took for granted about language changed in 1979, when my mother was sent by the Gibraltar Department of Education to do a ten-month training course in Doncaster, a mining town in South Yorkshire. At first, I was very excited about the prospect, relishing the thought of being a short train-ride away from Anfield Road, Liverpool Football Club's famous stadium. One afternoon, as part of an Arts and Crafts class at Bishop Fitzgerald's, I even created a poster overlaid with the phrase "Doncaster here I come!" Expectation, however, rarely aligns with reality, and almost from the day I enrolled at my new English school I found myself friendless and alone, having to fend off wave after wave of taunting child bullies. These bullies were all boys and they pounced upon everything that made me 'different' from them: my accent, my skin colour, my curly brown hair, my surname, my inability to "speak proper English". When one day I feebly protested that, coming from Gibraltar, I was British like them, they pushed me to the floor and told me that I was "a dirty foreigner" and "a greasy little wop". To make matters worse, one of the teachers rapidly took a visceral dislike to me. Her name was Mrs P_ _ _ and, as the school music teacher, she led the Wednesday morning singing assembly. This weekly event was held in the school gym, a large, wooden-tiled hall fitted with foldable climbing frames and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking a barren playground. Children from the different classrooms would gather there every Wednesday at 9:15am and sit on the floor, cross-legged and in rows, facing the music teacher and her piano. Once we all settled down, Mrs P_ _ _ would start playing on her keyboard and two hundred and twenty kids would exultantly break into song:

We come on the Sloop John B

My grandfather and me

Around Nassau town we did roam

Drinking all night

Got into a fight

Well I feel so broke up

I want to go home!

But there was a problem: I couldn't sing. I tried and tried and tried – but, knowing that my bullies would start nudging each other and pointing in my direction if I joined in

the singing, I would always clam up and stare at the parquet floor, the words choking in my throat. This behaviour occasionally made things very difficult for me. If my class – Mr Buchanan's class – hadn't been among the first classes to get to the gym that morning, then I would be sitting safely towards the back of the hall and nothing more would come of it. But if we had been the first or second class to reach the hall and I'd be sitting near the front, then Mrs P_ _ _ would waste no time in singling me out with her stinging reproofs. "Come, come, Master Sanchez!" she'd cry over her arpeggios and scales, "try and show more spirit, lad! Don't tell me that you lot in Gibraltar don't know how to sing in English! Sing, boy, or I'll have to ask you to come and keep me company right here by the piano!"

**

It was no idle threat: on five or six occasions Mrs P_ _ _ got so annoyed with me that she dragged me right to the front of the hall and sat me down beside her piano, forcing me to sing in front of the whole school. If you're wondering what effect all this had on me, then consider a simple fact: even now, at the age of fifty-four, I really have to psyche myself up to speak in public. And yet, as negative as my time in Doncaster was, as bad as my bullies and Mrs P_ _ _ made me feel about my accent and the quality of my spoken English, it was during my year at Doncaster that I fell in love with the English language. At the High Melton College campus where I resided with my mum and dad, there was a well-stocked library and it was there, in its children's section, that I began to explore children's literature, reading books by the likes of C.S. Lewis, Henry van Dyke, Robert Cormier and the two Treeces (Geoffrey and Henry). I read on the bus on the way to Sprotbrough High, I read in class during playtime, I read on the bus on the way back home. At school they started calling me "Mr. Nerdface", but I did not mind. Books provided me with an escape route from my problems; they made my life in Doncaster infinitely more bearable.

By the time I got back to the Rock in June 1980, I was a different child to the one who left nine months earlier. Pre-Doncaster, I had been a happy, confident, fairly extroverted kid who loved football and only read if his homework assignments demanded it; now I was a prickly, self-willed individualist who read voraciously and liked to write poems and stories. In theory, this transformation should have helped me with my schoolwork but, by this stage, my reading was so eclectic and random – everything from Douglas Adams to Daniel Defoe – that, if anything, my bibliophilia ended up hampering my studies. A critical moment came for me in 1982 or 1983, when, scouring the Gibraltarian bookshops for a novel about Gibraltar written by a native Gibraltarian, all I could find was an illustrated children's book entitled *Sonia and the Ape*. "This is wrong," I thought, walking out of the Gibraltar Bookshop on Main Street. "How can we pretend to be as good as everybody else when we don't even have our own poems and stories?"

Several years later, I started a degree in English and American Literature at the University of Manchester. The course was everything that I could have desired – but, coming a mere six years after the Doncaster debacle, I was very unsettled and homesick and, after struggling with my big-city surroundings for two and a half months, I quit my studies and returned to Gibraltar. Eight months later, I was back again in Manchester – this time to do a BA in Medieval Studies. I chose this rather arcane subject because I had defensively persuaded myself that it had been my choice of subject – and not my homesickness – that had upended me the previous year and that I needed to radically change direction. Alas, this self-deception turned out to be costly. Though I was very settled in Manchester this second time round, the rigours of medieval Latin proved completely beyond me and, within months, I was so behind the others in my course – and so frustrated with what I was doing – that I impulsively quit my studies and flew back to Gibraltar.

It is hard for me to describe how much turmoil I went through during this period. A year earlier, when struggling to adapt to life in Manchester, I had been desperate to return to Gibraltar – but in March 1989 I flew back with a heavy heart, conscious that I had completely messed things up. Nor did my situation improve once back home. The few friends I had made at Bayside Comprehensive were still studying in the UK and I found myself unemployed and living with my parents, unable to decide where my future lay. Right from the start, I knew that I had to either recreate myself or risk sinking into a major depression, so I did something that months earlier would have been unthinkable: I gathered all my books and took them with me to the rubbish chute at Europa Point. One by one I threw them all onto the mounds of refuse heaped up by the chute gates: my books of poetry, my Herman Hesse novels, my two Norton anthologies of English Literature, my signed copies of Anthony Burgess's *Any Old Iron* and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses.* Looking back, I am amazed that I did something like this, but I somehow needed to exorcise the weight of two consecutive academic failures, and the only way I could do this was by persuading myself that books "were not for me" and that I'd be better off without them.

The second thing I did after coming back from Manchester was to go out and make new friends. Subconsciously, I gravitated towards people who had no interest in books and reading, and who – just to make my break with the past more complete – *spoke almost exclusively in Llanito.* In this way, I went from a refined English-speaking milieu to one where it was considered *enterao* and *pish-posh* to speak in English, its only acceptable use being to woo holidaying female tourists and quote heavy metal song lyrics. With these new friends I smoked pot, I got drunk, I drove round and round the Rock in old bangers playing AC/DC and Thin Lizzy. As far as jobs were concerned, I did all sorts of things: deliveryman, tourist site caretaker, retail clerk, construction worker, barman, insurance salesman, surveyor's assistant – never staying at any position for more than six months, never taking anything too seriously.

**

This was the situation for the next five or six years. I never read, I gravitated from job to job and I hardly spoke English with my peers. But then, at the beginning of 1995, I got it into my head that I needed to study again. I am not quite sure why. Maybe I was fed up of doing lowly and demeaning jobs. Maybe I was sick and tired of driving around the Rock in cars stinking of spilled beer and cannabis smoke. Maybe I needed to get away from the thuggery and *golferío* that plagued Gibraltar in the Winston era. My friends, knowing my chequered academic history, all thought that I had gone mad and secretly began to lay bets behind my back as to how long I would stick it out this time. One said I'd be back "*en menos de un año*"; another was less charitable and only gave me "*un par de semanitas*." While they speculated about me in this way, I read through piles of prospectuses, I wrote to different British universities, I attended various interviews at the Department of Education, where, speaking formal English for the first time in years, I tried to persuade panels of serious, sober-looking people that I had matured since my last two attempts at higher education and that I was worthy of a *third* chance. At multiple steps along the way, I thought that I was chasing after a pipe dream, that I would never be able to get my academic comeback off the ground – but somehow the miracle occurred, and that Autumn I was back in the UK again, this time studying English Literature and Language at the University of Leeds. My first written assignment was on Angela Carter's *Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* – and I found it so hard that I nearly vomited with relief after handing it in. Despite this less than confident start, I settled into student life remarkably well and, by the time I entered my second year, I was among the year's top students, surprising both my tutors and myself with a series of consistently high grades. The only subjects I struggled with were the linguistic components of the course – grammar, phonetics, dialectology, and so on. This surprised those who were acquainted with my Spanish-speaking background, but it didn't surprise me. In Gibraltar, we learn Spanish at the family home and in the school playground – it is an instinctive rather than a prescriptive process.

By the time I finished at Leeds in 2004, I had a BA (with first-class honours), an MA by research and a PhD under my belt. One of my tutors tried to persuade me to enter academia –but I felt undecided about the matter, not knowing if I really wanted to spend the next two or three decades reading and rereading Spenser, Shakespeare and Marlowe. On top of that, halfway through my PhD, I had started drafting Gibraltarian prose pieces, and there was a part of me that wanted to continue writing the sorts of stories that I had searched for – but never found – as a teenager. The die was cast for me when my girlfriend at the time (now my partner of more than twenty years) asked me if I wanted to accompany her on a three-year work posting to Mumbai in India. Without a moment's hesitation, I said yes and shortly afterwards found myself living with her in the swanky Mumbai district of Chowpatty. The next three years were very rewarding, but also very challenging. During those unforgettable thirty-six months, I travelled widely through the subcontinent, saw amazing sights and met some

wonderfully interesting people – but I also fell ill on various occasions and at one point was struck down with a near-lethal cocktail of dengue fever and bacteraemia. One thing that never ceased to amaze me about India was how the moneyed classes – much like our bourgeois elite in Gibraltar – venerated all things English and saw proficiency in the English language as an indicator of social status. An unfortunate corollary of this mindset was a widespread prejudice against those who only spoke Marathi, along with a snobbish dismissal of anything homegrown and local. You saw this bias at Crosswords and other Mumbai bookshops, where Anglo-Saxon authors such as Ian McEwan, Will Self and Margaret Atwood were invariably displayed more prominently than their native Maharashtrian counterparts. I could never understand this prejudice against local writers, many of whom had devoted their creative lives to reclaiming and fleshing out the hidden, untold stories of their city. In fact, it was while reading Kiran Nagarkar's *Ravan and Eddie* – a novel said to describe Mumbai "in all its fetid glory" – that I finally resolved to start writing seriously about my own hometown. Nagarkar's humour, his caustic wit, his code-switching between English and Marathi, his determination to dig up uncomfortable truths, the way he universalised the seemingly quotidian and mundane – all of these inspired me to return to my laptop and finish *Rock Black,* my first book of Gibraltarian stories.

So far in this piece, I have talked about different language-related shocks – the shock of coming to England and being bullied on account of my accent, the shock of discovering the glories of English literature, the shock of returning to university after years speaking very little English, the shock of travelling to the subcontinent and seeing the linguistic parallels between gigantic postcolonial India and minuscule colonial Gibraltar. Arguably, though, the biggest shock of all came when I started writing and publishing stories and I was criticised in some quarters of the Gibraltarian cultural establishment. I was told that it was wrong to have my characters speaking in Llanito; that I shouldn't be writing about 'degrading' topics like racism, smuggling and military fetishism; that I needed to expand my focus and stop being so "Gibraltar-fixated". This denial of the local and the domestic took me back to what I had seen in Mumbai, but also reminded me of how defensive some Gibraltarians can be when it comes to the subject of our homeland. Because of Spanish governmental pressure/harassment on the one hand, and the machinations of the British anti-colonial lobby on the other, there are those on the Rock who feel obliged to present a 100% British version of ourselves to the world, who believe that we shouldn't put anything out there which could be used against us by our 'enemies'. Those who are mired in this perpetually self-justifying mindset are obsessed with parades and military re-enactments, with visiting aircraft carriers and twenty-one-gun salutes, with Colonel Drinkwater and the Great Siege of Gibraltar, with Churchill, Admiral Rooke and the Rock's role during the Falklands War, with Nelson and the laying of wreaths on Trafalgar Day – in other words, with all the rituals and commemorations which make us look British in the eyes of outsiders. Of course, we live in a democracy and everybody is entitled to their

own views. But one of the more regrettable aspects of all this performativity is that it is accompanied by a deep suspicion of anything which 'undermines' our brand of displaced Britishness. Our bilingualism, our Spanish surnames, our code-switching between languages, our tanned Mediterranean appearance, our recognisably Gibraltarian accents, our fiery Latin temperaments – all these are to be shunned or at least quietly pushed to one side, since there is nothing which undermines the image we are trying to present of ourselves as much as who we really are. But is this the kind of self-image that we want? A selective and carefully curated one, in which literature spouts self-glorifying platitudes, Llanito is regarded as a national embarrassment and our hybridity – our most precious cultural asset – is hidden under swirls of red, white and blue bunting? For a long time, I thought that this curated view of Gibraltarianness would always endure, that we were condemned to spend our time in the Rock caught in a perpetual loop of military parades, flag-flying and historical re-enactments. But finally, after years of watching our words and looking over our shoulders, after years of feeling uncomfortable in our not-quite-colonial, not-quite-postcolonial skins, a new and more confident Gibraltar is emerging: a Gibraltar where Gibraltarians no longer define themselves solely in oppositional terms ("*no somos españoles*") nor draw sustenance from worthless soundbites ("we are more British-than-the-British") but instead take pride in their language, their mixed roots and their uniquely Gibraltarian way of doing things. Not for nothing, after all, has 2023 seen the addition of Llanito and Spanish categories to the annual short-story competition. In the last twelve months, we have also seen the emergence of cultural bodies such as GFAMS (Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society) and Patuka Press (a collective of Gibraltarian authors committed to writing and publishing stories about Gibraltar). This very book you are holding in your hands bears testimony to this spirit of revival and renewal – being the first publication of any kind where Gibraltarians speak openly and analytically about their relationship to language. Clearly, there are still many battles to be fought – and there will always be one or two 'patriots' who try to stymie this Gibraltarian cultural and linguistic renaissance with their defensive colonial thinking – but for once I am optimistic about the future.

Chapter 10
What do I consider my mother tongue?

Michelle Rugeroni

Michelle is a media personality and podcaster from Gibraltar who has a keen interest in languages and culture. She pursued her linguistic studies in the UK, where she lived in Oxford for ten years. After returning to Gibraltar and starting a family, she worked as a radio and television presenter for the national broadcaster, GBC. She hosts two podcasts: StreetTalk, *where she converses in Llanito with a friend, and* On The Sofa With Rouge*, where she interviews local characters.*

I was born in September 1969, when the border with Spain had just closed and we faced an uncertain future. I remember my parents, Nita and Mike, talking about the hardships all around. My earliest memory is of Mum and Dad speaking mostly Spanish at home and switching to French when they didn't want me to understand something.

I always communicated in Spanish as a child when I was at home. My grandmother, Anita, also spoke Spanish, and we visited her every Sunday for lunch. She spoke English with a strong Gibraltar accent, as English was not her first language, but she made herself understood. Spanish was always spoken around me unless something had to be emphasized – then, it was always in English.

I don't think I ever heard my Mum swearing, but Dad always swore in Spanish. I always thought it was odd that important things were said in English, but swearing and ranting was done in Spanish.

The English spoken in my house was excellent. Harry Norton, my grandfather on my mother's side, had held an important job. He worked as an interpreter for eleven Governors between 1929 and 1947. His role was to analyse the political situation in Spain for the Governor, who would then relay back developments to the British Government. This meant that, while my mother and my uncle Reggie were growing up, British English was spoken even though my grandmother Anita had quite a strong accent.

My mother spoke to me in Spanish, but she also knew English very well. She thought that Dad had a noticeable Llanito accent when he spoke English. Dad didn't care much about this, but for my mother it was important to speak English better than anyone else.

Dad was a linguist. He worked as the General Manager of a local Travel and Tourism company, which frequently required him to travel to Tangier and other parts of Morocco. This meant that he had to speak French. Therefore, I grew up learning some French – I always wanted to know more so that I could understand what they were saying in their secret language!

From a young age, I was encouraged to speak many languages. My father would always tell me that the Moroccan community – who had settled in Gibraltar after the Spanish workers had left and the border was closed – thrived in Gibraltar because they were proficient linguists. By the age of five, I could recite *Our Father* in Latin, speak a little French and was bilingual in English and Spanish.

I loved watching TV. Being an only child, I amused myself with wonderful programmes that I still remember fondly, such as Félix Rodríguez de la Fuente and his nature shows, *el Circo, Mazinger Zeta* and *El Libro Gordo de Petete*. They were all in Spanish, so I probably improved my linguistic skills without even noticing it.

We only had local programming on our Gibraltar broadcaster from 7pm. I had to be in bed by 9pm, so growing up what I enjoyed watching most was Spanish TV. Another great passion of mine was listening to the radio. My mother had been a Radio Presenter for a time, and we always had the radio on in the house. It was always tuned to GBC, the local broadcaster, and its programmes were mostly in English. There was no Llanito at all – in fact, I knew that speaking Llanito was considered "lower class." When I trained for six weeks to be a Radio Presenter at GBC in 2007, I was specifically told "*no llanitadas.*" I had to broadcast in English and pronounce Spanish words properly!

At age five, I was sent to a private school called the Loreto Convent. The school was run by Irish nuns and of course they didn't speak Spanish, so from my first day at the Reception Class we were told "no Spanish allowed". It was actually considered an offence to speak Spanish in school because only some families could afford to send their children there, so speaking Llanito wasn't considered cool but *capullo* by the pupils.

In this context, the word *capullo* – normally 'flower bud' – means 'rough,' 'naff' or 'lower-class.' I remember being told not to hang out with certain girls and boys at school because they were "*capullos*"! I never paid attention to any of this; in fact, the more I was told not to do it, the more friends I had from all walks of life and the more interesting life became.

By the late 70s and early 80s, things started to change. GBC were now showing TV programmes like *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, and even transmitted some English films. We were glued to our TV screens whenever these special films were broadcast. Another special moment was the Eurovision Song Contest. We all loved it at home – it was multilingual, and we all relished listening to other languages, especially my father who loved to mimic accents and intonations.

That was when I discovered he spoke some German and Italian – and pretty well, too!

Another important fixture on the local social calendar was the election of Miss Gibraltar. All of Gibraltar would be glued to the screen when it was broadcast. I remember laughing at the interviews and being shocked that a lot of girls taking part couldn't speak good English – many couldn't string more than three words together without speaking in Spanish. I remember my parents gasping in horror and cringing in despair at the level of English of some of the contestants.

Things couldn't be more different now. Miss Gib is still one of the highlights of the year, but the girls that take part now speak better English than the English themselves! They are proud to be Llanitas and often say a few words in Llanito. Thank goodness things have changed.

My happy, dream-like school years at Loreto flew by until 1982, when I went to Westside school, the local comprehensive. I remember my parents being concerned that I was going to be mixing with all sorts of people and how I was going to cope. Amazingly, I did cope, and attending Westside allowed me to meet some incredible people who I'm privileged to still count as my friends.

When I first arrived from the private school, I was considered "*del pish*" – how the *capullos* described people like me. Back then, I didn't know what a lot of things I heard meant. They swore in Spanish with words I had never heard of: "*leshe*" and "*me cago en tu puta madre*" and other phrases. None of these had been used in my previous social circle, so I didn't have a clue what was going on. Consequently, I was bullied.

Some girls used to laugh at me and insult me but, as I didn't know what they were saying, I was none the wiser! One day, a girl who loved having a go at me for everything started again with the same repertoire. I confronted her and said, "Well, what do you mean? Why do you call me names? Have you looked at yourself in the mirror?" Somehow, I suddenly got a bit of respect. From that day on, Westside school was brilliant.

The border opened in 1982, but just for pedestrians. Everyone was excited to go to Spain. I think I had only ever been to Madrid because we had flown from Gib to Madrid en route to Central America. Mum and Dad used to like walking across into La Línea to buy fruit and vegetables at three or four stalls which had set up right on the other side of the border – one didn't really have to go far.

By 1985, the border had opened to traffic. This was a game changer. People had been cooped up for 15 years and were desperate to get out. At the same time, a lot of people were still annoyed with Spain and refused to set foot in the country out of principle. I knew a few oldies who never went to Spain because they felt it was traitorous to do so.

By 1987 I was 17 and started having a social life. Friends of mine had houses in Spain and would invite me over. This was like journeying to Timbuktu; going to Sotogrande for a weekend was so exciting. All the affluent people would buy a house there and go for weekends. It was the trend, but my family refused to do that. They were proud and were not going to invest their money in Spain!

I managed to pass GCSEs and A-Levels and secured a place at Oxford Polytechnic to study Languages. What else was I going to study? After all, it was in my DNA. I chose Spanish and French and *ab initio* Italian, which I absolutely loved. I remember meeting so many people from all over the world. Most didn't have a clue where Gibraltar was. I was called "dago" (a derogatory term), "Spanish", "the foreigner", "spic" (derogatory) and other names. I laughed at all of them because I felt cleverer! I could speak all these languages and found myself just ignoring them, somehow managing to sell Gibraltar to them. In fact, most of them turned up in Gib at some point to see this amazing little country for themselves.

I remember living in England and meeting up with Gib friends and always speaking Spanish – it was the cool thing to do. While the *guiris* couldn't understand us, we would understand anything they said about us in English. At parties, we were among the more interesting people to meet because we weren't English!

I remember calling my parents from a payphone once or twice a week and speaking in Spanish through the whole conversation, so no one would understand me and to look cool. This helped me meet people because other Spanish speakers would stop and ask where I was from. I ended up meeting quite a few people who spoke Spanish.

There was a grotty nightclub in St. Clements in Oxford called Club Latino – which we mockingly called Club Latrino. The owner was from Soria. We began with the usual "Gibraltar Español" nonsense that Gibraltarians often get when meeting Spaniards, but soon after we became friends and had a mutual respect. He was very pleased with me, as all my gang were loyal customers. We had many fun nights partying there over the years.

When I finished university, I eventually found a job thanks to my linguistic skills. I spent a year selling computer memory boards to companies all over the world. Most of the jobs I took over the next seven years in Oxford involved speaking languages, which proved even more that my father was right!

In 1999, I returned to Gibraltar. My father had been diagnosed with cancer and there was nothing that could be done. It was shocking news. He was a huge influence in my

life and was well respected by many. I decided to sell everything I owned and moved to a Gibraltar that was very different to the place I had left in 1988.

Most of my friends were either living away or were married. I was 30, single and living at home! By then, we had satellite TV with a wide mix of channels. There was so much to watch. Having spent 10 years in England, my spoken Spanish had deteriorated. Arriving in Gib made me realise that I was even speaking Spanish with a bit of an accent! It worried me, but I realised that other local friends who had moved back had experienced the same. Having become used to speaking more English, Spanish had become a second language. I wasn't as bilingual as I thought I was.

One of my first jobs was working for Toyota Gibraltar Stockholdings, where my language skills came into play again. Because I was working in a more Llanito environment, I felt my Spanish coming back. I made sure to watch more Spanish TV and speak more Spanish among friends. I practiced and read more Spanish out of fear of forgetting it.

Ricky and I married in 2003. He is also a linguist and studied languages at university, even obtaining a masters in translation. He shares my love for languages but has studied them in greater depth. When I first heard him speaking in Spanish to ask for something or to plan our weekends away, I noticed that his fluency in the language was quite different to mine. It struck me how it was easy for him, yet I would struggle having to think of the right Spanish word and not sound like a fool.

A big thing for me was not to embarrass myself speaking in Spanish to Spaniards. I always thought that we should speak in either one or the other – not Spanglish.

When our children were born, we both said we would speak to them in Spanish all the time, but even though we spoke Spanish amongst us, the children were brought up with British TV, computers and video games where everything is in English. English is what they speak. Sadly, the next generation is not bilingual.

Having said that, somehow both our kids managed to get A*s in school for their Spanish GCSEs. This absolutely surprised us as parents. Both Carla and Mikey understand Spanish and speak (Carla more than Mikey) enough to get by, but nowhere near mine or Ricky's level. To this day, we don't understand it. When we did exams, Spanish was the easy A grade – the easy option and also for the higher A-Level. If you weren't particularly academic, choosing Spanish as an A-Level would push up your total points to get to university, which is why most people my age chose Spanish. Nowadays, this is not the case. Both our children have chosen other subjects and didn't want to choose Spanish A-Level because of the literature component.

I studied three literature books for my Spanish A-Level: *El Camino*, *Bodas de sangre* and *Don Quijote*. Learning about these three books was challenging: you had to read them in their original language and then write essays about them in English. I found

this easier than writing about them in Spanish. I think this is why so few students choose to study Spanish nowadays: these literature essays have to be written in Spanish. It's harder for them than it was for us.

88 From my stint with them in 2007 to today, Radio Gibraltar still has a two-hour slot exclusively reserved for Spanish programming. It's very popular with listeners, but it's not in Llanito. It's purely in Spanish (*castellano*), spoken with a very "proper" Spanish accent that is very different to the way Gibraltarians speak Llanito. Thankfully, bilingualism and Llanito are definitely encouraged since the new CEO of GBC took office a year ago. More and more interviews are in Llanito, and we speak in Llanito on the two TV programmes I currently work on: *City Pulse* and *The Powder Room*.

Chapter 11
"Rebecca, don't you know Spanish?"

Rebecca Calderon

Rebecca Calderon is a British writer who has lived in Gibraltar since 1991. Her interests in social and political history led her to write the play The Civil Garrison *(2004). Her other works include* Renault 5 *(2016),* Ten Thousand Words *(2021) and* Llévame Donde Nací – The Metamorphosis of a Play *(2022). She is now working on her second novel,* Pompey & Circumstance*. Rebecca currently holds the Gibraltar Poetry Prize.*

I only speak one language fluently: English. My Spanish isn't bad, and I have dabbled in Italian, French and German due to life circumstances, but I have not been able to master a second tongue despite living away from the place where I was born. The immediate reaction I get to this statement is that I am "typically English," and that we Brits never bother to learn languages because we are either a) arrogant and expect everyone else to speak English, or b) lazy and not as educated as others. These points may have elements of truth, but they are a form of linguistic racism – many incorrect assumptions are made about linguistic ability connected to intelligence. As luck would have it, I ended up living far away from my birthplace, in Gibraltar, where the official language is English. Perhaps if I had settled in Italy, my linguistic biography would have been far different.

I was born in the south of England in 1969 and went through the generally low-standard state school system. Foreign language classes did not exist until age 13, when French was taught for a couple of hours a week for two years. Despite France being a day-trip away across the English Channel, not many people went there. Hardly anyone took foreign holidays but it was those few who did who developed an interest in French; everyone else just misbehaved in the classroom, they could not connect with the subject they were being taught and, as typical teenagers, were embarrassed to speak out loud in English, let alone attempt a foreign tongue.

I come from a mixed-race background and it's an odd hybrid, not from a language perspective but through vocabulary-accent-class-culture. My mother is English from

the area of South London/Kent. She is white, working-class with an austere Christian upbringing and she left school at 15 with no qualifications. She has a very distinct southern English accent, she uses slang, colloquialisms and mis-pronounces many words. My father was born in India to British Anglo-Indian parents who came from a long line of Anglo-Indians. They are an unusual race of people who are Indian in motherland culture, Christian, mainly middle-class and well-educated. They speak Received Pronunciation English in many cases, but with a slight Indian lilt and turn of phrase. My father was brought up in Tamil-Nadu and spoke a mix of English and Tamil. He moved to Karachi, Pakistan, at the age of 10 and picked up Urdu but he lost these language skills as his family chose to emigrate to England in 1956. They settled on the south coast in a working-class area and had difficulty fitting in as they had dark skin and wore old-fashioned clothes. Their accents were perceived as being "too posh" so the neighbourhood people thought they were being looked down on by the new "blacks". Due to racial discrimination and financial circumstance my father also left school aged 15. My parents were an odd match and frowned upon in some quarters, my mother left Kent and settled on the south coast near to my father's large family. As a child you don't realise that you come from a mixed-race background when your language and religion are the same as everyone else's. You notice it gradually through cuisine, home decoration, political attitudes, music and film. I was brought up on Indian and English food and the men in the family cooked; this was something that did not happen in the houses of my English friends. We also watched subtitled Bollywood movies; these epic Indian films were my first foray into hearing a foreign language.

My school French lessons stopped when I was 14 and that was the end of my formal linguistic education. Fast-forward to age 18 when my friends and I met some Italian boys who were doing their military service in an army camp outside our town. These boys could speak basic English so we struck up friendships and, when they returned to Italy, we all started to write to each other. My uncle gave me one of those classic, hardback, blue and yellow *Teach Yourself* books and I started to learn Italian by myself. I would compose long letters to one of the boys half in English and half in my weird Italian (which he seemed to understand!) and eventually we planned a visit. I had never been abroad, never been north of London and at the age of 19 my two friends and I flew out to Milan on a two-week holiday. I carried around a dictionary and attempted to speak Italian whenever I could. It was challenging but I enjoyed it and loved hearing the language spoken all around me. I was given the opportunity to stay in Italy but got cold feet and declined the offer opting for the safe haven of England. My parents, however, had other plans and decided to move far away to the countryside in Wales. I chose to go with them and embarked on a new personal and linguistic journey. My father bought a Welsh language book which we both read. The first thing you needed to know was how to pronounce the letters; they may be in the standard alphabet, but, depending on where they sat in a word and when

paired together in doubles, they had totally different sounds to English. We would drive around reading all the road signs which were in both languages and gradually we learnt how to pronounce things correctly. We lived in a tiny village where people spoke Welsh and I would go to the local pub and mix with the villagers. There was only one pub, so young and old would socialise and there was always vibrant Welsh singing at the end of the evening. It's a beautiful language and a delicious accent which fascinated me. The Welsh TV channel S4C would show a few programmes in the Welsh language each evening and I would watch them with interest but never grasped more than the odd word, phrase and greeting.

In the summer of 1990, I went on a cultural exchange trip to Russia and spent two weeks in Moscow. I hadn't been abroad since the Milan holiday in 1987 and when I came home, I felt sad and realised I needed to get away from Britain and go on an adventure. My two closest friends felt the same way so we decided to escape. We wanted to tour Europe by car so left England and sailed by ferry to Dieppe, France. With the aid of phrase books, dictionaries, sign language, dreadful school French and a heavy dose of charm we managed to communicate with people. We drove around France and listened to the French radio stations, in cafes we'd converse with people, we'd learn the words for food and drink when shopping at the supermarket. It was all done by ear and by practice, and eventually I worked as a waitress in a French restaurant in a small seaside town. I had to speak French with colleagues and customers every day, but it was only temporary and we soon moved on. We crossed into Spain from Andorra and my next linguistic adventure started. None of us had any clue how to pronounce Spanish, better still speak it. The bars had loud TVs which were constantly on and we soon became familiar with the tone and dynamic. We learned the basics from a phrase book, by reading signs, visiting museums and listening to the radio. We would meet people and talk with them but many our own age would want to practice their English on us so we didn't get to practice Spanish unless it was with older people: bar staff, shopkeepers and car mechanics. The desire to have spontaneous conversations with friends we'd made meant that English was spoken as they were far more proficient in our language than we were in theirs. We stopped one night in Benidorm out of curiosity and even though it was winter the bars were full of English people, mainly pensioners. Here all the televisions were tuned to Sky News and not a word of Spanish was spoken even though these people were long-time Spanish residents. We also met some Dutch people and, curiously, they did speak Spanish (as well as English and, obviously, Dutch) and those old stereotypes about Brits abroad were all confirmed. We left Benidorm vowing to learn and practice Spanish wherever we could, but it wasn't straightforward or easy.

When I crossed the Spain-Gibraltar frontier in 1990, I thought it would be a short work-stop to save up money and then embark on the next leg of our European tour. It's 2023 and I'm still here! Not long after I arrived, I met a German man and we got

married in the Gibraltar Registry Office four weeks later. He could speak English, German and Spanish. My husband left Germany with no language skills and settled in Málaga where he attended Spanish evening class, made friends with the locals and practiced daily. He then got a job on a yacht sailing around the Mediterranean Sea, the crew were English and Scottish and he was stuck in close-quarters with them for months, so he learned the language, including slang and peculiar regional sayings. My husband and I spoke to each other in English and, as Gibraltar's official language is English and everyone speaks it, life was made easy for me from a language perspective.

In the early years, I worked in bars and restaurants where the staff were either Spanish, Moroccan or English, and the owners and customers were Gibraltarian. Because I could barely speak Spanish, I would converse with my Moroccan colleagues in French and broken English but, as time went on, we spoke an odd mix of all three. This is where I began to learn the basics and speak with more confidence, but it was all skewed and grammatically wrong. In those days, we only had Gibraltar television in the evening – all the other channels were Spanish or Moroccan. Although my husband watched Spanish TV every night and it could be heard in the background like musical notes, it was too fast for me to follow or understand. I just watched and listened, hoping something might sink in. As I integrated into Gibraltar life, I would hear Llanito spoken in shops, government offices and the hospital. I soon met Gibraltarians and heard them converse with each other. It fascinated me how they would switch mid-sentence from English words to Spanish words. In time, I recognised the patterns. Gibraltarians had distinct accents when speaking English. Some emphasised certain letters, which were pronounced completely differently, just like with the Cockney, Liverpudlian, Glaswegian and Irish accents – very florid, distinct and dramatic. At the other end of the spectrum were the accents that sounded posh and English but had some words pronounced incorrectly or arranged in a wrong order. British English and Gibraltarian English differed clearly, and my ear caught it right away. In time, I learned that many odd-sounding phrases were, in fact, direct translations from Spanish into English, which had become the norm over time; for instance, "I will go there in car" rather than "I will go there by car".

I wanted my husband to speak to our children in German, but when he came home tired from work it was easier for him to speak to them in English as they couldn't fully understand German. Much like when I was travelling in France and Spain; in order for a quick and easy conversation, the default setting was always the highest common denominator. I picked up some German – these were baby-related words and German nursery rhymes. I would visit family in Germany, sometimes alone with the children, and, armed again with a trusty dual-language dictionary, I would piece together small sentences and manage to converse. My mother-in-law would talk to me non-stop even though I couldn't grasp much and we'd sit watching German

sitcoms and game shows every night on the television. As with other languages in my life, I became familiar and comfortable with their rhythm and timbre but without full comprehension. When I spoke, I was understood, but, as with all the other languages I connected with, I never stayed in the country of origin long enough to be able to fully develop language skills.

I went to a Spanish evening class at the Gibraltar College and attained a GCSE, but it didn't make any difference to my spoken language; it just looked good on my CV. It is not easy trying to learn Spanish when you are English and live permanently in Gibraltar. Every Saturday morning, I would walk my children to La Línea and buy fruit and vegetables from the market, then go and have *churros*. This is where I practiced and at the same time encouraged the children to speak it out loud. My children did not have Spanish lessons in school until they were 12; I had assumed that in Gibraltar they would be learning Spanish in class from day one but sadly that was not the case. I eventually paid for private Spanish lessons when they were older but without regular practice they couldn't progress; we never spoke it at home and we never watched Spanish television. As a parent, I felt I had failed my children linguistically; here they were, young Gibraltarians, half German, half English, living next door to Spain but yet they could only speak English.

I gradually integrated into local society and made friends and connections with Gibraltarians. Over the years I have often been chided and called-out by some people for not speaking Spanish, "Rebecca, don't you know Spanish?" I was made to feel very inadequate, in fact I could speak basic Spanish when I was in Spain with Spanish people who couldn't speak English. It was futile and unnecessary speaking Spanish to Gibraltarians as they would laugh at my accent and bad grammar, but were fluent English speakers anyway. When I am in a group of Gibraltarians, they naturally speak Llanito and I understand what they are saying as I have become familiar with it over the years and also due to the English words scattered through every sentence. I only reply in English because that is what feels natural to me, I cannot code-switch. As with other foreign languages, I am content to listen to the tunes and the rhythms. Sometimes there is no need to join in a conversation, you can be a silent spectator and still understand.

In 2004 I wrote a play to commemorate the Tercentenary, 300 years of British Gibraltar. It was called *The Civil Garrison* and followed my fictional family, the Ansaldos, through the passage of time. In creating this work, I read history books about Gibraltar and interviewed lots of different people to hear their life stories and I transposed that onto the page. Gibraltarians who read the piece remarked that I managed to capture the Llanito essence brilliantly despite the work being written in English. Ten years later I was approached by the Gibraltar chief archivist who was organising celebrations for the 75th anniversary of the evacuation of Gibraltar's civilian population during the Second World War. They wanted to use my play as part of their cultural programme. I

paired up with theatre directors Jackie Villa and Andrew Dark and we began revising the play only to focus on the Spanish Civil War and WW2 periods. I re-named the piece *Llévame Donde Nací* after the famous song which already appeared in *The Civil Garrison*. Once the directors were satisfied with my re-write, I handed over the script so it could be developed for the stage. We decided early on that the sections of the play where the local characters were conversing with each other had to be in Llanito; this was beyond my capability, so Jackie worked on an authentic translation. The play was a huge success and ran for a week in November 2015 to sell-out audiences. The production won the Gibraltar Heritage Trust Group Award in the autumn of 2016.

My life has taken many different turns. I re-married – this time to a Gibraltarian – my children grew up and moved on, but I have always lived in Gibraltar. I find the place enriching and quirky, it's easy to get involved in the community, it's full of entertaining characters with weird stories (much like any town really) and it is where I chose to lay down my own roots, so I do have a special loyalty to the place. There have been instances to this day where people enjoy pointing out that I don't speak fluent Spanish and it's said in a negative way which feels like racial/linguistic discrimination; also this: "You don't come from here, do you?" It's not a nice feeling to experience, like being excluded on purpose from a special club for Spanish speakers, only made all the worse when the person inflicting the damage speaks fluent English. Language used as a weapon can be very powerful. My Spanish has developed over the years and notably so when I returned to the workplace in the field of building construction and maintenance. In Gibraltar, contractors, cleaners and construction specialists are nearly always Spanish so I was able to practice the language each day in the workplace (there are many words I know that my husband does not as he has never had to use them). I no longer work in that area, so my daily practice has faltered but I spend a lot of leisure time in Andalucía and have a keen interest in Spanish history and culture. I enjoy socialising with large groups of Spanish speakers and even though I am not fluent I can easily interact; they tell me I have a "charming English accent", which is extremely encouraging!

My children now regret not having taken their Spanish classes seriously and blame their father for not speaking to them in German from birth. They are rectifying this themselves by taking private lessons and living in Spain and Germany. Luckily, I am exonerated as I taught them English, the only tongue I knew. Being married to a Llanito and spending more time in Spain, I am able to practice my language skills; and my very supportive husband, who loves to speak Spanish, helps me progress. If we are in a group of Spanish speakers, we will talk to each other in Spanish, which is a whole new sensation. This is never repeated at home, where we always converse in English; however, when he swears or gets angry, he automatically switches into Spanish! Language is learnt from the mother's knee; it is picked up on the street and playgrounds in your country of residence. Grandparents, nannies and carers also play

a part in setting the foundations of language as does necessity. If you need to live in a new country where the language is not your native tongue then you will quickly learn it in order to survive. I am a writer, performer and poet so language is very important to me. It is only in recent years that I have learnt to "hang up my hang-ups" and guilt about not speaking a second language fluently. It has somehow been expected of me and I am not sure why. I have never had an issue with communication and never shy away from situations where I don't know a single word (for example, in the hammams of Tangier where the washerwomen only speak Arabic). Language is our identity and I am proud of mine. I am also proud that despite leaving Portsmouth in 1988 I still have the accent of that region and use the slang words and cultural references. I didn't purposefully try and keep it and I most definitely did not try and lose it. It's me and the way I speak.

I am currently working on a new Llanito dictionary. There have been four published works over the years, some English-Llanito and some Llanito-Spanish, the most comprehensive being Tito Vallejo's *Yanito Dictionary*. All four publications are out of print so I am working on a project that brings the versions together in one book. I have noticed how some Gibraltarians reject anything Spanish while others dismiss Llanito and look down on its use; these defensive, negative attitudes are confusing. Gibraltar had an *Instituto Cervantes*, which caused much controversy; it sadly closed in 2015 – despite being hugely popular and well-used by many people. Nowadays there's a new mood in Gibraltar, a push to bring Spanish into schools from the earliest stage, a celebration of Llanito and a positive pride in local culture and idiosyncrasies. We cannot let the use of Spanish die out because if it does, then Llanito dies with it. It's up to the people to keep it alive.

Chapter 12
Chicory from Shropshire

Gabriel Moreno

Gabriel Moreno was born in Gibraltar in 1977. He graduated in Philosophy and Hispanic Studies at the University of Hull, Yorkshire, UK (1995-1999). Published works in Spanish include Londres y el susurro de las amapolas, Omicrón *(2007),* Cartas a Miranda *(2008) and* Identidad y Deseo *(2010). Works in English include* The Hollow Tortoise *(2012),* Nights in Mesogeois, Annexe *(2013),* The Moon and the Sparrow *(2015),* The Passer-by *(2019) and* Heart Mortally Wounded By Six Strings *(2023). He has been published in* Acumen Magazine*,* The Mediterranean Papers, Annexe Magazine*, and other publications in Spain and the UK. Moreno is also a singer-songwriter with five studio albums under his belt. His personal website can be found at www.gabrielmoreno.co.uk.*

-"How do you say *remolacha* in English? Not a clue!" – replied Nigel Martinez.

I was trying to list the contents of my delectable but slightly unorthodox lunch to Mr Gonzalez, who despite bearing a Castillian name spoke almost zero Spanish. The lanky blonde history teacher was struggling to follow me; he was getting confused by my persistent code-switching.

-"How the *cojones* do you say it?"

-"Language boy!"

Mr Gonzalez did not speak Spanish but we could not get a swear word past him. It was all rather confusing. At Bayside Comprehensive School we read *The Tempest* and other Shakespeare plays, but failed to identify the names of basic vegetables. There was a cosmic gap between our academic GCSE English selves and our domestic psyches. I remember being fascinated by the iambic pentameters of Prospero's enchantments and feeling proud about getting the gist of his deliberations. Yet however skilful I might have been at digesting the metric nuances of 400-year-old literary manuscripts, I still did not remember the English equivalent of *remolacha*. This made me feel awkward and unworthy of the term 'British.' Truthfully, I felt uneasy

talking about any comestibles which were not Spanish. The words did not match the experience of lunching at my *abuela*'s. I ate at hers every day during my school years. My maternal grandmother cooked dishes extracted from the Civil War Andalusian cookbook. The food was delicious. It was rustic southern Mediterranean food. Very working-class and very, very non-British; apart from the tuna and the corned beef of course. It was not a beetroot salad for me but *remolachas con ajo y aceite de oliva*.

-"A *remolacha*, yes, you know" – I insisted –"the dark red hard round thing."

-"Beetroot!" – exclaimed John Ballantine proudly.

John Ballantine did not get on with Shakespeare. For him studying Shakespeare was more foreign than studying French. He also had trouble with French and with our Andalusian slang-infused school patio exchanges which confounded his bonce. His father was a sergeant in the Forces and his whole super white, super British, super working class family had managed to live 15 years in Gibraltar without ever uttering one single word in Spanish. Even *gracias* was beyond their linguistic capabilities. But John could expertly name his greens and mocked our inept pronunciation of 'chard' and 'chicory'. So hard to get that /tʃa/ sound right. We got our own back by gunning him down with every Spanish swear word under the sun. I liked John but he made me feel I wasn't British enough. Now I realise I resented him for this.

The teachers, especially Miss Pinna, insisted we spoke English at all times. We were subjects of Her Graceful Majesty the Queen after all and we should refrain from speaking any Spanish at all. I didn't quite understand why the old woman in the faraway castle cared for our linguistic preferences but I did my absolute best to obey where possible. As soon as we set foot on the *patio* though, I was screaming and yelling in the language of Cervantes and Quevedo. Spanish, for me, was the language of freedom and mischief. There was a kind of fire inside my belly that could only be liberated in Andalusian phonemes. Especially swear words. Swear words in Andalusian sounded dangerous and wild: *¡Mierda! ¡Puta! ¡Hijo de perra!* There was a certain anger only the Spanish language could liberate. My native language for swearing and food was definitely Spanish. Literature was another story and politics, economy and all those stifling subjects they made us study at school. Anything stifling was definitely addressed in English.

My father spoke Andalusian at home when we discussed football, shopping, food and sex but if the conversation turned to politics or school, Willy Durante would instantly switch to his peculiar version of sunny Victorian English.

-"The Sloppies are far behind in matters of law and education" – he assured me.

Then he would proceed to take a bite on his *bocadillo de chorizo* and fiddle with his *huevos* like he was Curro Jiménez himself. He could not spell in Spanish nor use accents. I had the same problem. What language did we pertain to? Or more

importantly what language could we claim as our own? How could we say we were native speakers if we had never read a book in Spanish? And yet at home we embraced and fought in the Hispanic tongue. Why could we not write it? I felt alingual at times. I could spell English almost perfectly but butchered the pronunciation of words like 'Shropshire'. On the other hand, I spoke Spanish from birth but could hardly write it. Did I have a language at all?

My sister was the only member of the family who was proficient in Spanish grammar and speech. She was dating a bloke from La Línea de la Concepción (the town on the other side of the border) who was studying engineering in Madrid. They had met at a rave in Tarifa and had fallen desperately in love. I hated the guy's guts. He represented fascism and otherness in its darkest guise. The poor bloke was of liberal views, supported the Gibraltarian cause and treated my sister with respect and affection but I was not having any of it. I took pride in speaking English impeccably when he was around. I made a special effort to pronounce 'chair' properly and was pleased when he could not follow my deliberations. Ernesto never felt at ease at home, though he was always trying to fit in with us. If only he knew that it was us who fitted in with no one. Not even ourselves. I suppose that is why others enraged me. Ernesto. John Ballantine. The Spanish football team.

But impressing Ernesto did not make me feel any more British. Nor did it prevent me from feeling I was not exactly like John Ballantine. John's language was not my own and I made this quite evident with my slips of the tongue. I remember the day I complained that we always lost the bus.

John laughed – "Lost the bus? Was it yours five minutes ago, then? Missed the bus you mean?"

-"*Bastardo*." I was embarrassed and irate.

It was only after many years of putting my sister's lovely boyfriend through seasons of unnecessary miscommunications plus tormenting John Ballantine with Andalusian slang that I realised that my cultural and linguistic identity did not depend on offending foreign males. In terms of Spanish or English females I must say I never tried to offend them or cause any sort of awkwardness. On the contrary, I fell in love with them immediately. This occurred, by default, after exchanging no more than three or four lines of chit-chat. I am not sure if it was their accent or their looks but I always ended up swirling at their feet. It was an unhealthy habit, I know, as unhealthy as tormenting "foreign" males and probably part of the same process of discovery. Eventually I decided this kind of neurotic behaviour did not strengthen my language skills or my sense of self. I had to create my own particularity in other ways. I had to conceive my sense of self through my own relationship with language and culture. I had to create my own country in a way without falling out or falling for anyone else.

This happened at university, I think. I went to uni in England. In Hull. "It's never dull in Hull." This is the English idea of a bad joke, the paradigm of sarcasm. The whole of Humberside is grey and cold like cement blocks in the middle of Alaska but it had its upsides. Hull University was full of students from all over the world and they seemed to dig the idea of a place like Gibraltar. Imagine my surprise when I realised that I could create my own sense of self without alienating both my prominent Latin self and my adopted Britishness. The realisation occurred the day I met Bruno Chiavaroti from Milano. Bruno was a top bloke. Funny, interesting, cultured. All I wanted to do was befriend him but what did I have to offer? I was not born in Milano nor Montmartre. I came from a post-colonial rock in the southernmost point of the continent. A place without a real theatre or a proper bookshop. And yet Bruno seemed fascinated by the intricacies of my upbringing. He loved my use of language and the opposing aspects of my cultural identity. Years later he confessed that what had really drawn him to me was my habit of mixing Spanish tortilla with Heinz baked beans together with my tendency of trying to chat up English women with English poetry pronounced like Antonio Banderas. I now realise I exaggerated my Spanish accent when I was reading Blake. I thought it made me sound more exotic. It was during this period that I started to use my two cultural heritages and linguistic microcosms to my advantage, to chat up ladies and to connect with interesting people like Bruno. It was clear that I could relate to him via my Latin/Mediterranean side. We shared a similar sense of humour, friendship, family, food and most importantly my English accent was one of the only forms of speaking he could actually understand. The strong Yorkshire tongue-muscle movements were beyond him. I tried to help him understand the local folk and in the process realised I could also help him to adapt to 1990s student life in northern England. Two things Bruno was really struggling with were:

1. The ironic/sarcastic/dry English sense of humour.

2. The incapacity of English students to express feelings whilst sober.

Language and the nightlife in Gibraltar had taught me to relate to these aspects of the English psyche. Soon I explained to Bruno the intricacies of self-deprecation and binge-drinking and, from then on, we had the time of our lives in Hull. Helping him understand England made me realise who I was. It made me think of the benefits of having access to two languages and two post-imperial cultures. After my encounter with Bruno I studied Lorca with the same passion that I had studied Eliot and made sure that I learnt how to conjugate Spanish verbs and place the stress marks above the vowels correctly. I tried to make Spanish and English my own and, even though my pronunciation in English was always awkward and my grammar in Spanish required a hell of a lot of editing, I came to the conclusion that it did not matter any more. The two aspects of my culture and languages allowed me to be particular, singular and, most importantly, useful. I loved the feeling of being different, of being both Latin and Anglo-Saxon. Of dreaming my own Gibraltarian sense of self with the particularities

of my accent and some expressions only *Llanitos* could ever get, but what I liked most was the feeling that perhaps there was a purpose to my history. Perhaps the mistakes of the British and their Empire could be put to good use.

According to Borges every language is a way of seeing reality. If that is so, having two native languages (or none at all) will make you perceive the world in parallel, sometimes opposing ways. Especially when you have been brought up with shades of language as different as Victorian English and deep south Andalusian Spanish. I believe my identity resides in a space of longing between these two opposing languages. I feel Gibraltarian when I see myself struggling to pronounce Shropshire. How the hell am I supposed to talk about A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*? I also feel Gibraltarian when I can't remember the difference between a courgette and a cucumber. When I forget what a beetroot is. When I complain about the state of Spanish concert halls. When I say *pengüino* instead of *pingüino*. When I struggle to speak about philosophy without using English terms or fail to recognise the metric patterns in the poetry of Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. I also feel Gibraltarian when I mix Lorca with Larkin and laugh my head off at Monty Python and sing the praises of olives and Iberian ham. I feel Gibraltarian when I listen to the flamenco wailing of Camarón de la Isla, as much as when I read the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. I know my identity lies in the liminal space between two failed empires and these two centenary languages, which are probably bastardizations of the same proto-European language anyways. Perhaps being Gibraltarian is messing these languages up to get to the core of what it means to be European or (who knows) what it means to be human?

Some days I swear and I sing in Spanish, pouring my heart out like an intoxicated butterfly. Singing and vociferating about moons and olives and the Andalusian stews of my dearest *abuela*. Other times, I find myself dissecting reality like a Victorian empiricist, analysing every stem, counting every leaf and trying to decipher what the counting means. There is a dichotomy in my forms of expression and I find myself, still after 20 years away, trying to explain myself in a mixture of Machado's symbolism and Darwinian rationality. The English language represents my containment whilst the Andalusian part of my expression deals with the intuitive, expressive magical realism I struggle to define. I am both and I am also neither. I try to find a different form of expression which represents my awkwardness, my estrangement from both cultures. But there is nothing aside from a mix of both linguistic codes. I use code-switching and entanglement to try and perceive reality through the lens of my particular fusion/state. I sometimes say *mierda* instead of 'shit' because I can't complain as well in English. But *mierda* needs to be 'shit' when I am judging a bad pop song or a stale poem. Sometimes I say them both, *mierda* and 'shit'. What am I on these occasions? My passport says British and I try to hang on the legality of this statement, which brings me some occasional comfort.

-"I am British" – I insist when they ask me.

-"Don't make me laugh mate."

-"Great English for a foreigner!"

-"Never seen an English man with so much chest hair."

-"Can you say Shropshire?"

-"You are a traitor to Spain."

-"You are a traitor to England."

-"Why do others in Gibraltar have a perfect English accent?"

-"Why do others in Gibraltar pronounce Spanish in a proper way?"

-"Not bad for a second-language writer."

-"Can you play me the '*Macarena*'?"

-"You should write in English."

-"You should sing in Spanish."

-"We love your accent. It's like listening to a sunnier version of Manuel from *Fawlty Towers*."

These are some of the many comments I have been subject to in England and Spain. English people hear my accent and speak slower. They are surprised when I know poems or refer to novels by D.H. Lawrence or Rudyard Kipling. They are angry when I decide to send my poems to poetry contests. They are even angrier if I win, which luckily is a very rare occurrence. Why would I dare? I am a second-language writer! But I am not even admitted to poetry contests in Spain. I am not considered a national writer. When I speak in Spain everyone reckons I am either Canarian, Chilean or Maltese. Usually, they are not very sure what language is spoken in Malta but they know it is a strange place. England is worse. Anyone with a Spanish accent is believed to be less bright. You cannot be taken seriously in England with a Hispanic accent. Much less in the cultural sphere. A Spanish accent is ok for speaking about food, beer or erotic adventures, but when you speak about politics, philosophy or literature you will be ignored. Perfectly sensible English people won't listen because your accent does not sit right with their ears. As if they could not digest the concepts with this peculiar foreign cadence. A German accent might do, or a French one for literature. But Spanish? No, sir.

-"But my words are perfectly intelligible" – I protest.

-"Oh you just don't get it, do you? You do not place the words in your mouth like we do."

So am I a fool and a foreigner, then? I return to Gibraltar with my tail between my legs and realise that I have adopted certain cadences, certain ways of pronouncing words that are immediately going to make me sound un-Gibraltarian and weird. My friends laugh. My Spanish is too refined now, having lived in Barcelona and Chile. My English is too correct. I know the words 'beetroot' and 'artichoke' and can almost nail the pronunciation of Shropshire. Almost. I have realised it has nothing to do with how it looks and all I have to do is tie two /ʧa/ sounds with a /p/ in the middle. My friends laugh. I would be better off talking to the *pish,* which is another way of saying posh on the Rock. The *pish* pronounce properly and are more prone to know 'beetroot' and 'chicory'.

So! I am a traitor to my class for learning more about the languages that constitute my identity, though I still don't know enough to be accepted as one of "them" in the outside world. It's all so confusing! And yet so exciting and interesting. I am what I say plus so much more. I realise all I have to do is learn as much as I can and accept all the intricacies of my languages and cultures. All the poems ever written in English and Spanish. All the mistakes committed by the English and the Spanish. All the cultural peculiarities (Spanish cuisine/English pale ale). Never the other way round. All I have to do is teach my child the two wounds; the two deficiencies; the two ways of looking at the world. I speak to him in English but sing in Spanish. He lives in south London. I teach him to say 'beetroot' in Spanish. He looks at me confused. He holds the red vegetable in his hand and laughs, *remolacha* is such a strange word for him. He prefers 'beetroot'. Makes sense to him. The first time he said Shropshire he pronounced it perfectly. His mother was born there. There is no reason why it should be said any differently.

I laugh because I never want to pronounce Shropshire properly. I want my accent to continue its complex relationship with English phonemes. It has taken me forty years to understand we must accept who we are and how we talk. We must celebrate the fusion of cultures and languages. Language should not be another form of separation, labelling, ordering people into categories of nation/intelligence/success.

There is no use in judging others by the way they speak. Language is not for identifying but for communicating. Of course, words condition how you think but it's up to you to curate a series of words and sounds which celebrates and emphasises your singularity. Let's not listen to people to figure out who they are but listen to understand what they are trying to communicate and to resonate with the core under the words and sounds they use. I am Gibraltarian because of my complex relationship with English and Spanish. I am Gibraltarian because (now that I know the word 'beetroot') I can use *remolacha* or its English counterpart. I am Gibraltarian because I can recommend A. E. Housman's book *A Shropshire Lad* and pronounce the English county in the Midlands like I want (just as long as they understand what book I am pointing to). I am as British as I want to be and as Spanish as I decide

to be. My passport does not dictate the psychological idea of myself. I am not a fixed entity. The historical processes of Europe are not my problem when it comes to communicating myself with others and expressing an idea of me. The Spanish folk are our brothers and sisters. English folk are our cousins and aunts. I want to use the particularity of this liminal space to bond with both Andalusians and the housewives of Devon. I want to be more and more linked with all the versions of myself. I am sick of rifts and divisions. Sick of people thinking they need to be separate from their other selves. I am sick of conflict and separation. We do not need to be opposing forces to know where we stand.

We are who we want to be with the impediments of knowledge and experience. I want to learn more Italian and Swahili. I want to speak with others who are open like me to the idea of becoming your core self in order to have the knowledge and space to fuse with everyone else. I want to prepare a beetroot salad with loads of garlic and olives in Worcester (another word I will never be able to pronounce) under the English rain.

Chapter 13
People, events and ideas: a meditation on language in Gibraltar, por un *abogao llanito*

Jamie Trinidad

Dr Jamie Trinidad KC is a barrister and academic specialising in international law at the University of Cambridge.

"Words", a famous judge once said, "are the lawyer's tools of trade".[18] As a Gibraltarian who trained as a lawyer in the UK, the tools of my trade are *English* words. My livelihood depends on my ability to wield these tools precisely and persuasively, and the effort that this entails has slowly transformed my relationship with language.

I have settled into a style of speech and writing that could be described (over-generously, perhaps) as "functional". Two decades of immersion in legal English have also radically altered the way I read. These days I spend most of my waking hours chewing over legal texts and academic articles – a far cry from the mind-transporting works of fiction, biography and philosophy that first got me hooked on reading.

On the positive side, a professional life grappling with English words has sharpened my command of the language. This enables me to navigate a three-dimensional universe of ideas that is inaccessible to me in Llanito, the other language I grew up speaking.

By "Llanito" I mean the distinctive form of Spanish that has been spoken in Gibraltar for generations and which is now, tragically, dying out. Gibraltarian code-switching – a constant feature of my interactions with family, friends and even colleagues – is also sometimes called "Llanito", but it is really a symptom of Llanito's demise.

The proportion of English in the code-switching mix increases with every passing year. Children in my family, and those I hear on the bus and in the streets, now speak almost exclusively in English, albeit with the sing-song intonation and sprinkling of Spanish words and phrases that are unique to Gibraltarian English.

---

18 Lord Alfred Thompson Denning *The Discipline of Law* (London: Butterworths 1979), p. 5.

A few days before writing this, I listened with grim fascination to Professor Laura Wright speaking about her work on the disappearance of Norman French in England following a period of Anglo-Norman code-switching. The parallels Professor Wright draws with Llanito are chilling, and they should serve as an urgent wake-up call. While the dilution of Norman French appears to have taken place over several code-switching generations, the rapid evaporation of Llanito is almost perceptible in real time. I am forty-five years old, and my anecdotal impression is that within my lifetime, primary speakers of Llanito have gone from being a majority to a minority of Gibraltar's population.

Attempting to situate myself within this trend is an unsettling experience. As a Gibraltarian code-switcher who lapses into monolingual English whenever I need to express an abstract thought, it saddens me to think that an academic linguist of the future might hold up a graph depicting the death of Llanito, and that I might be a little data-point on it. I'm nevertheless grateful for the invitation to write this linguistic biography, as until now I haven't devoted much time to thinking about the factors that have shaped my own linguistic development.

In an immediate sense, my relationship with my two mother tongues is the product of my upbringing, schooling, personal relationships and reading habits: the kind of stuff which, I suppose, should be at the heart of a linguistic biography. However, I can't disentangle my personal experience from the structural forces that have shaped the evolution of language in Gibraltar and within successive generations of my family. What follows, therefore, is a loose collection of interconnected musings: on language in Gibraltarian society; on my family's linguistic heritage; and on my own subjective experience.

Imperialism, isolation and the Internet

Like the Royal Engineers who altered Gibraltar's topography in the service of British power, colonial educationalists have been influential in shaping Gibraltar's linguistic and cultural landscape.

Policies implemented in the wake of the 1944 Clifford Report guaranteed the primacy of English, and the marginalisation of Spanish in Gibraltar's schools (although not its eradication – it would be taught from the age of 11).[19] The catalyst for this development was the realisation among colonial officials that few Gibraltarians at the time spoke English fluently, and a third of Gibraltarians over the age of five didn't speak English at all, according to the 1931 census.

The reforms were underpinned by a concern regarding the direction of Gibraltarian culture, rather than merely language. The Clifford Report lamented the "deep roots" of

19 M. Clifford, "A new educational system for Gibraltar" (Gibraltar: Government of Gibraltar, 1944).

Spanish influence in Gibraltarian society, "continuously refreshed by intermarriage". It was not only the Spanish language that needed to be displaced by English: it was necessary to combat the "Spanish mental processes [that] still dominate the intellectual life of the community". The colonial authorities thought Gibraltar needed cultural as well as physical defensive walls to guard against Spanish infiltration: "Emphasis throughout the whole of school life should be on the English language and the Imperial connection". It would be reductive to attribute the decline of Llanito to the Clifford Report, but it was the seedbed for a major sociocultural and linguistic shake-up.

The reforms that were implemented during the mid- to late-20th century were largely successful in their own terms, although the Report's drafting committee's wish "that the young people of the Colony should become perfectly bi-lingual" reveals a staggering complacency. Instead of creating the conditions for perfect bilingualism, the reforms entrenched English as the language of the educated classes. Fluency in English became a vector of intellectual and cultural respectability, while fluency in Spanish, which the authors of the report were ostensibly keen to encourage, receded in lockstep with the language's diminishing prestige.

To the extent that it is still spoken, Llanito is a language for discussing people and events, never ideas. The fact that Gibraltarians – even primary speakers of Llanito – don't discuss ideas in Llanito says nothing about the quality of their minds.[20] It is due to the fact that, deprived of the educational and cultural value attached to English, Llanito has evolved into an inherently informal medium of communication. Indeed, its use is frequently a *marker* of informality. My work meetings in Gibraltar often begin with a couple of minutes of Llanito small-talk ("*cómo ehta la familia?*" etc), before the shift into English signals the start of the formal business of the meeting ("right, the first item on the agenda …").

Bilingualism was still the norm when I began my formal education at St Joseph's Infant School in 1982. The enforced isolation resulting from Franco's decision to close Spain's border with Gibraltar thirteen years earlier was coming to an end by that point, but it had left deep wounds. People were queasy about the idea of hybridity, and even as a young child I could perceive the anti-Spanish sentiment that hung in the air, although not in my home. My parents, whose formative years were blighted by the confinement of the closed border, never made the kind of disparaging remarks about Spain and Spaniards that I used to hear from other adults.

Another feature of 1980s Gibraltar – and a corollary of the anti-Spanish mood – was that any opportunity to perform our Britishness was embraced with great enthusiasm. One of my earliest memories was of sitting on a wall at the bottom of Scud Hill to

20 I am alluding here to the rather patrician maxim of unknown origin that is often misattributed to Eleanor Roosevelt: "Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people."

see Charles and Diana at the start of their honeymoon in 1981, and gleefully waving a miniature UK flag as the not-so-happy couple drove past. I also vividly recall the heightened sense of patriotic fervour that gripped Gibraltar during the 1982 Falklands War. Much later I came to realise that it was mixed up with the fear that if the UK lost the Falklands, Gibraltar might be next.

The gradual re-opening of the border from 1982 to 1985 unveiled new cultural vistas. It was during early trips into Spain that I first saw written Spanish, on street signs, graffiti and in the glossy special offer booklets from Continente supermarket that my dad collected assiduously. I would sound out the words in my head as if I was reading from my English schoolbooks, before machine-gunning questions at my parents: "What are *'peatones'* [pronounced 'pea tones']*?*"; "What is *'¡OTAN NO!'* and what's with the upside-down exclamation mark?"; "How come 'chocolate' is spelt the same in Spanish and English?".

The re-opened border was seen by some as a threat to the pressure-cooked and turbo-charged sense of British identity that had emerged in reaction to the Francoist threat. Primary school teachers, many of whom were Llanito speakers, would admonish children in the playground for speaking Llanito: "What if a Spaniard were to walk past and hear you speaking Spanish to each other? What would they think?".

Satellite TV and the Internet were linguistic and cultural game-changers. "*El satélite*" funnelled English-language programmes into Gibraltarian living rooms from the 1990s onwards and had a profound impact. The slim pickings of TVE1, TVE2, and GBC (the latter from 7pm onwards) were replaced by a profusion of American and British programmes. It was as if, having subsisted on a diet of potato peels my whole life, I'd suddenly been given unlimited access to the buffet of a five-star hotel. Spanish-dubbed re-runs of *Dogtanian* (*D'Artacán y los Tres Mosqueperros*), *The A-Team* (*El Equipo A*) and *Knight Rider* (*El Coche Fantástico*), were replaced by *The Simpsons, Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *MTV.* This also meant that less Spanish was heard in the home. The youngest of my three sisters was born in 1991, and reared on Disney, Sky and BBC, which may partially explain why she leans more towards English than her older siblings.

The Internet entrenched the dominance of English even further. It was fascinating in the late 1990s and early noughties to read the chat-room contributions of Gibraltarians who would normally speak to you in Llanito in the street, but who were functionally illiterate in Spanish. Some would try to render Llanito phonetically ("*ke dise man en serio ke tablando*") and some would fall back on the written English they'd acquired as schoolchildren. This rich diversity of written expression is steadily disappearing from social media, partly due to autocorrect but also because more Gibraltarians can write competently in English (although the occasional gem can still be found and admired on Gibraltarian Facebook groups).

A genealogical detour

A post-Brexit quest to reclaim my EU citizenship led me down a rabbit-hole of research into my family history. I'll spare you all the details, but I was able to infer from my findings that an important linguistic development must have occurred between the generation of my great-great-great grandparents, who were born during the first half of the 19th century, and that of my great-great grandparents, who were born during the second half.

I haven't traced all 32 of my great-great-great grandparents, but at least a dozen of them were born outside Gibraltar, in places like Malta, Genoa, Portugal, Menorca, Morocco, Spain, England and Scotland.

The next generation was less diverse in its origins. All but two of my sixteen great-great grandparents were born in Gibraltar. These individuals would almost certainly have spoken Spanish with their childhood friends, even if they spoke other languages at home. I know that none of them passed ancestral languages down to my great grandparents, who were born at the turn of the 20th century, and were all monolingual Spanish speakers (although two of my great-grandfathers, who worked in the Naval Dockyard, had enough broken English to communicate with their British supervisors).

My maternal grandmother, whose grandparents were Maltese, told me that she would occasionally hear Maltese spoken among elderly relatives in the 1930s, but none of the younger members of the family spoke it. Now that Spanish is such a weakened force in Gibraltar, it is strange to think of it as a latter-day bulldozer, obliterating the strains of Ligurian, Ladino, Maltese, Menorcan and other languages that could once be heard on our streets.

My grandparents were primary speakers of Llanito Spanish who also spoke good English, even though it wasn't spoken in their childhood homes. They didn't code-switch in the way that younger generations do, apart from the odd word, and they would speak "proper" English when interacting with monolingual English speakers. This was easier for my maternal grandparents, who emigrated to Kent in the 1970s to escape the border closure, and who – unusually for Gibraltarians of their generation – were not only fluent in English but also well attuned to UK culture.

My parents, like many other Gibraltarians of their generation, are roughly 50/50 bilingual, but their choice of language has always depended on context: Llanito with friends, English at school; Llanito for discussing people and events, English for discussing ideas. The Christian Brothers and Loreto nuns who educated them and other Grammar School children left linguistic (as well as, in some cases, physical and emotional) marks on their pupils. Apart from bequeathing traces of Irish intonation and pronunciation (e.g. *film* with a heavily accentuated *I*; *mass* pronounced with an elongated *a*), some of these teachers tried to instil a sense of the inherent superiority

of English when it came to accessing elements of the good life that Llanito could never unlock: university places, white-collar jobs, acceptance in polite society.

English, Llanito and me

My parents never bought into the idea of the inferiority of Llanito, but as teachers they understood the huge practical advantages of being fluent in English within the Gibraltarian education system, so they ensured that my sisters and I could speak and read relatively well in English by the time we started school. As a result, we spoke more English at home than most Gibraltarian families, although my parents usually spoke to each other in Llanito when discussing domestic stuff.

In 1983 we moved to Nottingham for two years, and my sister and I soon became remorselessly monolingual speakers of English, with strong Nottinghamshire accents that were the source of amusement among our extended family. Another sister, born weeks before we moved to the UK and dubbed *la inglesa* by our paternal grandmother, now lives in Spain with her Spanish husband and is the most hispanophone of all the siblings.

It didn't take long for my dormant Llanito to reactivate after we returned to Gibraltar, but I didn't feel confident or clever when I spoke it, so I only did so out of necessity, when speaking with elderly relatives and neighbours who couldn't speak much English. They would laugh at my mistakes – not maliciously, but it made me feel incompetent and less inclined to speak Llanito.

My incongruent East Midlands accent was mercifully destroyed on impact with the Gibraltarian schooling system, but I never lost my fluency in English. I was a prolific reader of English writing, and would hoover up every book I could find, including those belonging to my parents. Many of the words that I encountered on the page were never part of daily conversation in Gibraltar, and over the years I discovered to my horror that I was mispronouncing many of them (e.g. I would pronounce *albeit* as *all-bite*, and I didn't realise the *b* in *subtle* was silent, well into early adulthood).

Despite hating school intensely, I was able to coast through it thanks largely to the fact that I could read and write well in English. My subsequent academic and professional success can be traced back to this facility in the language of the Administering Power, and I have my parents (rather than my schooling) to thank for it. However, I wish I'd read more Spanish while I was growing up. When I lecture in Spanish or speak to Spanish-language media outlets, I'm frustrated by my lack of verbal dexterity, limited vocabulary and inability to access a more sophisticated register. The fact that my accent, even if it is difficult to place, makes me sound more or less like a native speaker, makes things worse, as does my Spanish surname. If I were to present as a non-native speaker, audiences would probably be impressed

by my fluency, but instead they must end up wondering how a supposedly educated Spanish speaker could have the linguistic range and sophistication of a semi-literate high-school student.

One of my goals in life is to elevate my Spanish to a decent professional standard. I read in Spanish every day, often for work, and feel it would only take a few months of immersion in a Spanish-speaking workplace for me to pass off as a competent and articulate speaker of the language.

A loftier ambition is for my half-Gibraltarian, Cambridge-born-and-bred children to inherit some Llanito and a nuanced understanding of Gibraltarian culture. Getting them to say anything in Llanito is like squeezing blood out of a stone, but at six and three they understand basic commands and their accents are quite good when they parrot words and phrases back to me, so I will persevere, even if the odds are stacked against us. I'm spurred on by the thought that they might read this when they're older and judge me for not having done enough to keep the flame alive.

Chapter 14
El Llanito festival of tongues

Jonathan Teuma

Born in 1978, Jonathan Teuma is a Gibraltarian writer, poet and cultural activist. Currently residing in Madrid, he teaches English and Translation at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos and presents Poetry Slam Madrid's monthly edition.

I began to address the world in Spanish and not just any Spanish, but *gaditano*, probably the warmest, funniest and most streamlined version of the language. And not just any *gaditano*, but *gaditano* sprinkled with some English, Genoese, Portuguese, Haketia and Moroccan Arabic. I don't remember this, but I know it. I know because I never called my mum and dad*, mama y papa,* I called (and call) them Mum and Dad. I know because my mum and dad would have never asked me to stick to the pavement or *la acera*. They would have said "*No te baje'l marchapié!*" I know because my lullabies were not lullabies but *nanas.* They were *Mambrú* se *fue a la Guerra* and *Duérmete niño, duérmete ya*, and my bedtime stories were *Los Tres Cerditos* and *Garbancito*. And this mix of roughly 90% *gaditano* and 10% multilingual sprinkles was Llanito (in the early 80s – for me)

Then came school and things took a sharp linguistic turn. Suddenly my week was divided into a bilingual shift pattern. Mondays to Fridays, 9am till breaktime it was strictly English in class. Then at 10:30am, or whenever we had our break, we'd slip back into Llanito for twenty minutes in the *patio*, followed by another round of English till lunch, when we'd go home to watch cartoons in Spanish (*castellano* in this case) and chat in Llanito to our friends and family. Back to English for a couple of hours of school in the afternoon before the final return to the mother tongue. It wasn't a problem, for me at least, but it was problematic. We'd get told off for speaking Spanish or Llanito anywhere other than the playground at school. At times someone would get stuck when speaking and would have to ask the teacher permission to say a word in Spanish – *gorrión,* perhaps, or *puerta*. The teacher would typically roll their eyes and say "Go on then, just that word". Not to mention that we were not being properly taught or instructed in a language that is by all measures our birthright to know.

The system worked in more ways than one. The primary objective of making everyone fluent in English was achieved (mostly). It also established our tongues within a strict hierarchy: English on top and Llanito at the bottom. Spanish was still in a strange limbo. Not taught at school, my and most Llanitos main sources of *castellano* were TVE1 and TVE2. Our teachers were *La Bruja Avería, David, el Gnomo* and *D'Artacán y los tres Mosqueperros* amongst others. So, naturally we enjoyed listening to and speaking in Spanish. In fact, while English lay at the top of the official hierarchy – it was the language of instruction, authority, work and education – if you want to do well you'd better speak it well, we were continually told – Spanish lay at the top of the unofficial hierarchy. It was the language of emotion, gossip, fun and jokes. Mates who started speaking too much English were mockingly referred to as *guiris* or *inglesa'os*. I also remember the phrase "*Tú, que eres listo y hablas inglés*", being ironically thrown about by my *abuelo*. It was his way of comically underlining the subtle tension between cultures.

I personally enjoyed both languages. Books, magazines and comics, in both English and Spanish, abounded in my parents' and grandparents' homes. My grandparents and many others in my family took pleasure in reciting poetry and telling stories, jokes and riddles in Spanish. Mama Ana and Mama Julia mostly took the bedtime story shifts while *abuelo* José recited anything and everything from Cervantes to Camín; everybody told jokes and riddles. This, along with the input from TV, served as a decent counterbalance to the monolingual nature of our formal education system. It wasn't enough though to counterbalance the formal hierarchy of languages so entrenched in our system to this day. One silly anecdote that illustrates this – I can't remember it but remember its telling – is how I once told my mum that what I wanted to be when I grew up was *un inglés* ('an Englishman'). How she laughed every time she told a friend. It was funny because of its impossibility, but, as I look back now, it highlights that the signals being sent by the Establishment were strong enough for even a three-year-old to comprehend and they said: "ENGLISH IS BETTER".

Soon after starting school, Llanito changed in its composition. It quickly went from a 90/10 ratio of *gaditano*/other tongues to all sorts of ratios depending on who you were talking to. Though I have to say that within my family and friends it must have stood at roughly 70% *gaditano*, 25% English and 5% other languages. This is all a very rough estimation of vocabulary use and does not take into consideration that these proportions could and would change depending on all sorts of factors, including who you were talking to and what you were talking about. Like, for example, when my own brother got all *inglesa'o*. He must have been no more than seven or eight and suddenly he was bringing all the formality of the English tongue to our dinner table! What was he thinking?! For quite a while this irritated me until I got to know Sheriff, our new neighbour, his new best friend and the reason he was suddenly speaking English all the time. Sheriff was (and is) a great dude, and so my irritation soon dissipated.

Though we did not know it, Gibraltar was on the verge of a linguistic shift that would bring English to all dinner tables. It would replace *nanas* with lullabies, *cuentitos pah dormir* with bedtime stories, *El Príncipe de Bel-Air* with *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* and almost decimate Spanish use on the Rock. There are two main causes to this shift. One was the advent of satellite TV. In the early nineties Gibraltarians suddenly went from having two Spanish TV channels and one English one, to having dozens of English-speaking TV channels and just four or five Spanish ones. Particularly influential would be the 24-hour cartoon channels which kept kids hooked for hours. Those of us raised in the eighties and earlier had enough of a basis in Spanish to remain competent at it, but those born in the nineties and beyond were now cursed to sound like lost tourists on the Costa del Sol; yes, they have some vocabulary, but their accents are all wrong and their grammar is all over the place.

The other cause behind our linguistic shift was of course our own ignorance as a community. The monolingual system of public education had been in place in Gibraltar since just after the Second World War and had been successfully producing English speakers since its inception. Three or four generations of Spanish/Llanito speakers going in and bilingual speakers coming out and suddenly (for reasons which have yet to be studied) Gibraltarians got it into their heads that their children would do better in school if they were spoken to in English all the time, just at the very moment when Spanish most needed to be reinforced! I remember noticing at the time and finding it as senseless as I do know. I had always revelled in and enjoyed the many opportunities for linguistic play that code-switching affords one, but if we lost a tongue, there'd be no code to switch to. The crazy thing is that Gibraltarians also revel in code-switching and yet we still seem to lack the courage to protect our language.

But I digress! This, after all, is MY linguistic bio, not Gibraltar's. By the time I finished my comprehensive schooling, my level of English was better than my Spanish, though I was (and still am) most comfortable when speaking in Llanito. I remember talking to myself in Llanito while walking down White Hart Lane on my way to Uni just to hear it. Unlike many of my mates, I'd chosen a Uni that wasn't jam-packed with Llanitos already. I thought the point of going to Uni was meeting new people and having new experiences. Though I eventually hooked up with other Llanis in London, I spent weeks in a purely English environment for the first time. I talked to myself just to hear Llanito and, when I discovered them, I would run up to random groups of Spanish Erasmus students and, upon confirming their nationality, cried out, "*¡Hablemos! ¡Que necesito hablar español!*"

Linguistically speaking, things stayed pretty much the same for the next three years, though I did come back home after the first year with an American accent due to spending a lot of time with New Yorkers, with whom I regularly listened to American hip-hop. Having watched Hollywood movies and U.S. TV series all my life, it was an effortless slip more than a conscious effort. Half the time, I felt I was the

goofy foreigner in an American sit-com. Other times, I would simply imitate them. I remember a gorgeous friend from "Alabama, and gosh, don't they have a cute accent down there." Her father used to call the phone in the lobby. He must have been an ex-serviceman, because he sounded like every Southern General from every war movie I ever saw. "Can I speak to Rebecca Pitts from Flat 50, please?" He'd spout it out so quickly I practically stood to attention when I heard him. Then, I'd relay it back just as he had. "Rebecca Pitts from Flat 50, your papa's on the telephone!"

Boy, did my mates laugh when they heard me though. "*Tah toh amercanizao*", they'd yell as they made their way into the homemade levanter cloud of my dorm room. "*What dudes? I'm just chillin'*", I'd tell them to the tune of Beastie Boys' 'Sabotage' or Cypress Hill's 'Insane in the Membrane'. My American flatmates left at the end of the year, though, and by the time I finished my degree I'd swapped the American twang for a bit of the old Cockney, "d'ju know woh I mean?"

There were a couple of other things I learnt about Llanito and myself during my uni years. Firstly, it was that the Gibraltarian accent in English is similar to the Welsh accent. This is not something that I perceived from listening to Welsh people or comparing our accents but rather something that was confirmed by the fact that all the Gibraltarians I knew studying in the UK came back with same comment, "Everybody thinks I'm Welsh!" It did not matter where they studied, North, South, East or West, nor the fact that most of us differ in appearance from the average Welsh person, most British people would think we were Welsh after hearing us speak. Secondly, after my American experience and later spending loads of time with many Greek friends I made there, I noticed that I would often involuntarily mimic the prosody (and even grammar) of those around me. I'd find that after spending whole weekends with my Greek friends, not only was I speaking in their accent but I'd also catch myself making the same syntactical or grammatical errors as they did! While this might seem problematic, particularly for an English Literary Studies student such as myself, I found that I could just as easily shake off the adopted accents (and errors) as I took them on and I would soon find out that this tendency to mimic prosody would come in handy when learning a new language.

Shortly after finishing my degree, I joined an NGO that carried out volunteer work in Mozambique. Being in a Portuguese-speaking country, part of our six-month training course involved learning the language. Given Spanish's vast similarities with Portuguese, I advanced at a much faster pace than my colleagues who were Hungarian, Chinese, Dutch and English. Our teacher left after a couple of months, and I was asked by management to take over. Another Mozambican volunteer helped me prepare my classes but, given that she did not like public speaking, it was down to me to deliver the classes. I was nowhere near qualified enough to be a Portuguese teacher and probably took more from the experience than my poor students, but we did our best with what we had.

Then came Angola. During the six-month training period, the management asked us if we wouldn't mind changing our destination to Cabinda, Angola. They argued that the war in Angola had deprived the area of sorely-needed volunteers. They also assured us that we'd be well away from any conflict zones. After some thought, Miriam, my Dutch colleague, and I agreed. Being completely immersed in the language, Miriam and I advanced more in the first month than we had in the previous six of study. The fact that Angolans are such direct and welcoming people also helped a lot. We spent hours upon hours talking to people, answering and asking questions and pretty quickly becoming fluent in Portuguese.

One very curious thing that happened to me was that after a couple of months, I was so habituated to speaking Portuguese, that it slowly became harder to express myself in Spanish. The two languages are so similar that I would often get tongue-tied when talking to my parents on the phone for example. "*Acabamos de tomar el almue- almo- amluo-* Lunch! Mum I've just had lunch." I would have to jump to English, which is far enough removed from Portuguese for me to speak without getting mixed up. It also happened whenever I met a doctor. Many doctors in Angola carried out their training in Cuba and so, upon meeting me would relish the opportunity to practice their Spanish. Unfortunately, the impact of hearing Cuban Spanish while Portuguese was just settling in my brain would throw all my linguistic markers into disarray. I was incapable of replying in Spanish and would fall into a sort of forced *portuñol* that I cringe to remember even now.

That was at a spoken level. However, at a written level things seemed to be more natural. Browsing through the first pages of the diary I kept at the time, I can confirm that I started writing it in English. The force of 18 years of formal monolingual instruction could not but make its mark. However, as time went on the act of keeping a journal became more familiar and thus lost its air of formality. As a result, Llanito started to creep in; as more months went by, I also incorporated Portuguese vocabulary and elements of Ibinda (the native tongue of Cabinda):

> *Después di English class y apanhe um kandongeiro prá voltar a Cacongo.*
> Jonathan Teuma. Personal Diary. 09/04/02

By the time I returned to Gibraltar in the summer of 2002, Portuguese was so engrained that whenever I got excited or annoyed I was stopped in my tracks by the confused faces of my friends or family as I inadvertently slipped back into my new-found tongue.

Some years passed and my grip on three established languages, plus one budding tongue only proved to be a bonus, a plus, an extra that would not only facilitate meeting people from all over the world, but also help me empathise with them

more readily. It also informed my subsequent academic and professional routes and decisions, which include undertaking an MA in Writing and working as both a journalist and a teacher. As you might imagine, all three languages came in handy when travelling through Latin America. Not only this, but the ability to code-switch between languages is something that also proved useful. In Belize, for example, the lingua franca I encountered was very much like Llanito, though instead of *gaditano* mixed in with British English and a sprinkle of other Mediterranean languages, it was Caribbean English, mixed with Central American Spanish and a sprinkling of Mayan vocabulary. Despite the fact that I was only there a couple of weeks and that there were some significant vocabulary differences, my ability to code-switch naturally definitely helped me integrate further with locals during my short stay. Later, I discovered there were so many Argentinian, Chilean and Peruvian travellers on the Brazilian coast, that a sort of *portuñol* and sometimes even *portuñolglish* (factoring in the UK/US/Canada travellers) had established itself among both the travelling and local communities. Stefan, my Llanito travel mate, and I were like fish in water, switching up those codes and being able "to *falar com* everybody *que nos encontrábamos*, you know?"

This linguistic whirl would take a further tightening twist when years later life took me back to Africa. You see, while I was saving for and later gallivanting thorough Latin America, my brother Andrew was shrimp farming and forming a young family in Mozambique. Mozambique of all places!!! What are the chances? So, of course, as soon as I had the chance I made my way down to Mozambique to meet my new sister-in-law and nephews. What a festival of languages that was! My brother had spent the last three years of his life in Mozambique, learning Portuguese but also surrounded by Mexican and Ecuadorian work mates, so his accent and vocab were all over the place. He was switching between Mexican, Ecuadorian, *gaditano* and Portuguese often within the same sentence and as soon as I got there English and Llanito came into the mix. My sister-in-law, Ruthie, was pretty savvy with languages, speaking Portuguese, Kimwani, Makuhwa and Swahili, so she along with my three-year-old nephew Teddy, jumped straight into the code-switching party and within a week or two, without consciously trying to, we had developed our own family creole, which we would employ for the duration of my stay. "*Nani acuambire cama ome niwanzungu!*" ('Who told you I'm white!'), I'd yell at confused locals as we walked on by speaking our curious code-switching tongue.

Time and circumstances have wiped out this crazy creole we invented. I speak in the current Anglicized form of Llanito to my nephews Jonathan and Teddy, while maintaining the more balanced form of the early nineties with my peers and older generations. I am very curious as to where things go from here. Not for me or my Llanito; I know I'll be able to practice that with friends and family till my dying day. I'm thinking now about the Llanito future generations will practice. It seems like the pendulum push towards monolingualism, first set in motion by our colonial overseers

around 80 years ago, is reaching its limit, while the forces of music, poetry, culture, nostalgia, globalism and common sense are rapidly gathering, even starting to push back towards the multilingual origins we all share. It seems to be happening all on its own. Exciting stuff! There are thriving Hebrew- and Arabic-speaking populations in Gibraltar from whom we still have a lot to learn and recover, linguistically speaking. We have already recognised in many spheres of society that Spanish needs to make a comeback in the education system. And all sorts of languages are used through our streets as the thriving port city that we are. The raw materials are there. All we need now is to take full consciousness of our heritage and our abilities and go for it.

Chapter 15
From Spanish at home to English on stage: the evolution of a Gibraltarian playwright

Julian Felice

When I was a child growing up in Gibraltar in the 1980s, Spanish was the language we spoke at home. My parents were both born and raised in Gibraltar, and we come from family branches that have been settled here since the 1800s. There is significant Spanish presence in our family line, and it was in that language that I conversed most comfortably and freely with my parents – my father an electrician at the dockyard, my mother a former teacher – and my two brothers (one older, one younger). This was the case with most of the families around us, and the sound of our Llanito reverberated around homes and patios.

In schools, however, there was a different story. The language of the classroom was very firmly English, and the use of Spanish was discouraged in the playground. Of course, our curriculum was a British one, one which would eventually lead – it was intended – to higher education in the United Kingdom. So, in order to access GCSEs and A-Levels, it was skills in English that we would have to develop. This was supported entirely by parents and the community in Gibraltar and reflected this linguistic paranoia we all had that determined English as the language of success. After all, our colonial past had taught us that English was the language spoken by the officers and managers that had always led our community, whilst Spanish was the language of the labourer, low both in pay and in status. As Gibraltarians started to take leadership roles in business and management, local families were very keen for their children to be better at English and, that way, perhaps acquire a success that had previously been denied to them. The speaking of English was therefore taken seriously, and more than once was I admonished for an inadvertent utterance in Spanish when in the playground.

Elsewhere, though, we were far more exposed to Spanish, not just within our families, but in our entertainment as well. Up until the early 1990s or so, the only television we could watch was mostly Spanish. GBC only ran English-speaking programmes as from 19:00, so most of our exposure was to TVE1 and TVE2, and later Canal Sur,

before Telecinco, Antena 3 and Canal+ were made available. Consequently, most Gibraltarians from my generation grew up watching cartoons, television programmes and films in Spanish: *David, El Gnomo, D'Artacán y los tres Mosqueperros, Willy Fog, Érase una vez... la Vida, Barrio Sésamo, El Príncipe de Bel-Air, Star Wars, Indiana Jones, Mary Poppins, Teen Wolf* and many others. Indeed, it was not until I was already in my 20s that I first heard the songs from *Mary Poppins* in English! Yes, we did watch a lot of GBC, and occasional video rentals allowed us to hear what famous actors actually sounded like in their true language, but the truth is that there was an aural bombardment in the Spanish language. This lessened when Sky TV was first introduced in the early 1990s – apart from the occasional ACB basketball match, I have not watched Spanish television in years!

One of the biggest shocks that Gibraltarians first faced when they went to the UK to study was a cultural one. All of a sudden, we found ourselves surrounded by people who were talking about television programmes we had never heard about. We could only smile as they fondly reminisced about the characters who had graced their screens as children, completely oblivious to the cultural references buzzing around us. For them, for example, Bert the chimney sweep had not danced "*al compás*" but "up and down". And discovering that *una ración* was not the same as 'a ration' is a rite of passage for many Gibraltarians. In a short film I made in my first year at university, I had to say a line about a television personality called Keith Chegwin. I delivered the line a few times, and each time the director asked me to do it differently. Even after multiple takes, he was not happy. Eventually, I had to confess that I had no idea who Keith Chegwin was so could not understand the meaning of the line. In a rehearsal for a play, I made up the tune for "Show me the way to go home" as, again, I was totally unaware of what it was. Every time I made a faux pas like this, I passed it off in the same way: "I'm foreign!"

There was one thing I always did in English though, even as a child: writing. Admittedly, most of my early attempts at creative writing were as school assignments so, naturally, I was expected to write in English. But whilst most of my television watching was in Spanish, the vast majority of the reading I did was in English. Yes, I had things that I could read in Spanish: el *Super Pop*, my brother's *Gigantes del Basket*, the entire collection of *El Mundo de la Aviación*, but I read a great deal, and it was mostly in English: *Famous Five, Hardy Boys,* Willard Price's books, etc. Thus, I was far more exposed to English as a reader, and this transposed itself to my writing too. I have always been far more skilled at reading and writing in English, and this has continued in my adult years.

But I spoke English well too. Looking back, and for some reason I still cannot pinpoint, many of my school friends at the time (particularly as a teenager) were mainly English speakers. There were always a few who, for some reason, did not speak Spanish: maybe they were from the Forces (and, in those days, there were more Forces children

than now), or they came from outside Gibraltar (mainly the UK and the occasional Americans), or, simply, children who spoke English at home much more than I did. These English speakers were a minority, but they were present, and I found myself gravitating towards them. My spoken English improved as a result. I remember once using the word physiotherapist and one of my peers expressing awe at my vocabulary! I was a member of the Air Cadets during those years, so one of my main social activities was also within an English-speaking framework. And, of course, my first girlfriend was English, her inability to roll her 'Rs' causing me much amusement.

English was my favourite subject at school. It enabled me to read, and to write. During my A-Levels, I started – quite by chance – doing Drama as an extra-curricular activity (the two teachers were English!). There were some groups at the time which performed plays in Spanish – I remember watching, for example, a production of Ariel Dorfman's *La Muerte y la Doncella* and a play called *Mujeres* – but the Spanish they spoke was not the Spanish of home. It was a more formal, more alien Spanish, more akin to what I had come across in school when studying *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* and *El Coronel No Tiene Quien Le Escriba*. Because, yes, we Gibraltarians can speak Spanish, but the vocabulary and phrasing we tend to use is far from this formality. I decided to study English and Drama, and, naturally, always intended to do so in the UK, where my English was to stretch further, while Spanish took a bit of a back seat.

As a British citizen familiar with the UK (I had travelled there many times), I thought I would fit quite easily into the university where I had landed, in Canterbury in Kent (one of the most English of places!) I was, however, mistaken. Yes, there were the cultural differences I have alluded to previously, but, as a Gibraltarian, I found myself constantly having to explain to people where Gibraltar was, to enlighten them about the Spanish sovereignty claim, and to justify how I could be British with a foreign-sounding surname. I was (a bit) darker than the others, did things a little bit differently, and told folkloric tales of having eaten both squid and olives. And, yes, I had an accent that most could not place. Never had I ever imagined that the Gibraltarian accent could ever sound Welsh, and yet this was pointed out on numerous occasions (something experienced by many Gibraltarians at university). Doing Drama, the accent was particularly problematic, and I initially struggled to find roles as my Gibraltarian accent was so strong. I worked hard to phase it out as much as I could, something I am a bit ashamed of now, but can fully understand. It was not long until I found myself veering towards the Estuary accent that is described in Gibraltar as "*muy inglés*".

In total, I spent ten years in England. I spent five years studying, and five working (two for a financial services company, and three as a schoolteacher). All in English. In fact, the only time I used Spanish on an "official" basis was when I did a module in Spanish Theatre in my first year and I teamed up with a Spanish girl to perform a short extract from *El Arquitecto y el Emperador de Asiria* by Fernando Arrabal in its original Spanish, leaving many of my peers open-mouthed as they suddenly realised

I could speak another language. Yes, I still spoke to my family in Spanish over the telephone, and, if I found a fellow Spanish speaker, I would take advantage of the opportunity to speak in a language that reminded me more of home, but, for the most part, my ability to speak Spanish was a bit of a novelty, a party trick that occasionally impressed the ladies. I remember patiently teaching friends that the song did not actually go "*Pa-ra-ra-ra-ra-ra-Bamba*" and that *Aserejé* did not really mean anything. I would obnoxiously correct their pronunciation of *paella* and *chorizo* and, of course, I taught them all the swear words. A particular friend of mine really enjoyed learning jokes translated from Spanish into English – his other friends must fail to understand that "What happens if you put an egg in the microwave? You get the other one trapped with the door!" is not as funny in English!

When I returned to Gibraltar in 2008, there were two things I could not deny: firstly, that my accent was very strongly English, and, secondly, that my Spanish was not as good as it had been. I remember on a cruise a South American passenger explaining to me what a *corredor de bolsa* was – initially, I thought he may have been some kind of postman! As a teacher, I continued to work mostly in English, although now that I had more Gibraltarians around me, I could also hear a lot of informal Spanish. Schools in Gibraltar are not so strict about students speaking in Spanish in school anymore – but more on that later. It was shortly after this time that I started writing plays. I had continued to write during my university years, but being in Gibraltar gave me more opportunities to write plays and stage them. In 2012, one of my plays was published in the United States; three others followed over the ensuing years. In 2019, I had my first short play performed in London. I have since won awards in Gibraltar in the UK, had over thirty productions of my plays in the United States, had an extended run of a full-length play performed in London, and have written over twenty plays.

All in English.

As a playwright, my aspirations have always pointed at the UK theatre industry. After all, this is the industry than I am far more familiar with, and it is one that, naturally, operates in that language. This focus has of course shaped the language in which I write. Furthermore, my aims have required me to move away from making my plays too Gibraltar-centric. Yes, I have written some plays about Gibraltarian issues – *Flavius* (about the 1988 IRA shooting), *Utrecht* (an ambitious and controversial account of the Gibraltar-Spain relationship), *La Calle Commedia* (a light-hearted story written in a *commedia dell'arte* style) – but the vast majority are set elsewhere and deal with more universal concerns. Out of the hundreds of thousands of words that I have written as part of my plays, I imagine that no more than twenty are in Spanish. Aspirations aside, the fact is that I write better in English. My vocabulary is wider, my expression flows more easily, and I find it a language in which I can develop a linguistic style more effectively.

This has perhaps come at the expense of my status within the Gibraltarian writing community. Be it because I write plays as opposed to poems or novels, or because I do not write in Llanito, I feel that, perhaps, my work is not thought of as much as part of Gibraltarian literary canon (I am also prepared to accept that this may be entirely untrue). This is despite the fact that I am one of only a few internationally published Gibraltarian writers, and have received accolades abroad as well as locally. But recent discussions and debates have focused greatly on the importance of retaining Llanito and the responsibility of local writers to use their writing as a platform to express issues that are important to Gibraltar. I am sympathetic to both causes, but I feel that these ideas do not always fit within the context of what I want to achieve as a playwright. And the focus on these priorities does occasionally make one feel as if the work that I continue to do has little literary merit from the perspective of Gibraltarian writing, even though I know it does. I consider myself to be a Gibraltarian writer; I am not, however, a Llanito writer.

And why not? Because I am not that good at it. There are many writers who write in Llanito much better than I do: Humbert Hernandez, Jonathan Teuma, Christian Santos. As stated earlier, I write much better in English because I have been far more exposed to English writing. Also, writing in Llanito is difficult, and these difficulties must not be underestimated. Many times I have come across a Llanito that I simply do not recognise and, in my view, does not reflect the Llanito many Gibraltarians speak. I can find these examples contrived and clumsy, and it often makes a caricature – sometimes an unkind one – of our people. The average Gibraltarian is actually quite articulate and capable of expressing themselves very skilfully in English, Spanish, and our native tongue (for the record, no one actually says *jivrolta*, unless, bizarrely, they are referring to the former football club).

Much has been said about the disappearance of Llanito, and even of Spanish, in Gibraltar. As a teacher, I cannot deny that most of our young people rarely speak Spanish socially. The Spanish that I would (furtively) speak in the playground barely makes an appearance now in similar spaces. The reasons for this have been greatly discussed: the influence of Sky television, the cultural paranoia that I spoke about earlier, etc. But I think that most of this change has been impacted by the shifting dynamics of our society. More Gibraltarians are marrying non-Gibraltarians and, in most of these cases, the common language is English. Therefore, English tends to be the language spoken at home. I am such a Gibraltarian, having married someone with whom I can only communicate in English. However well she might go on to learn Spanish (and she has found this difficult) it is only natural that we would choose the easier route and simply speak in English. Sadly – and entirely through my fault – this has passed on to our children, who do not speak the language that I spoke at their age. This, in turn, shifts to the playground. If you have a group of ten friends, and one of them speaks only English, then the whole group will speak in that language.

It is sad, it is unfortunate, but I am not sure whether this linguistic tide could ever be halted.

Instead, among the many drawbacks, and looking beyond the "nostalgib" gaze (a word I have coined to describe this popular reminiscing of a Gibraltar of yesteryear), we could perhaps appreciate some of the advantages. Yes, our young people may be speaking Spanish less, but their standard of English has increased dramatically. Students are expressing themselves in English with a confidence and an articulacy that was rare in my generation. Also, we must not make the mistake of thinking that many of them do not understand Spanish – they do understand it, they simply struggle to speak it. And if it is true that this is as a result of Gibraltar becoming a more diverse place, that can hardly be seen as a bad thing.

As a teacher, a writer, and a Gibraltarian, my bilingualism is an important part of my identity. I am proud that I can speak two languages (in fact, I am also competent in French, and I can speak some Esperanto!). From a party piece with English friends, to a vital communication tool in Spain and in Gibraltar, my Spanish defines me. And while I am far more comfortable writing in English, there is no doubt that my cultural capital has benefited greatly from this bilingualism, and I am confident that this has filtered into my writing, regardless of the language. If nothing else, it has given me the ability to sing the theme song to *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* in two languages, and that is nothing less than a superpower.

Chapter 16
Discovering my voice

Davina Barbara

Davina Barbara heads the Cultural Development Unit at Gibraltar Cultural Services where she helps to foster culture and the arts through exchanges, residencies and exhibitions. Davina's background is in TV and radio, having worked as a broadcast journalist for eighteen years at GBC.

I look back with great fondness on my early years. I had everything a young child could possibly want – a secure family setting, a loving extended family, a close bond with my younger sister and lots and lots of school and patio-related adventures. Those early formative years were peppered with influences from my parents, teachers and especially my grandparents, who played a big role in my upbringing and influenced me greatly. Our culture in Gibraltar is essentially a hybrid one, fusing Mediterranean and British influences and built on the back of wars, evacuations, a closed frontier, struggles to emerge from a colonial mindset and hostility from Spain. Our language has been shaped by these different events and is also a reflection of the multicultural society we live in today.

I was fortunate enough to have been brought up bilingual *y en mi casa se hablaba mayormente Yanito* – that is to say, Spanish and English combined with a good dose of Gibraltarian words and phrases expressed in our own intonation and style. My mum is probably better versed in the Spanish/Yanito language and feels more comfortable expressing herself this way. She enjoys her Spanish TV programmes – *las novelas* are regular viewing *en su casa* – and I would venture to say she is probably more inclined towards the Mediterranean sense of storytelling and expression. In comparison, my dad had a great command of the English language and was more inclined towards the British sense of humour and wit, watching programmes like *Porridge* and *Only Fools and Horses*, as well as being an avid reader who enjoyed history books and watching documentaries. Although he too expressed himself in Yanito, his formal language of choice, especially in the written word, was English.

Music at home was also a mixed bag, from Abba and The Beatles to Johnny Cash and Boney M. My granny on my mother's side exposed me to *la copla* and other Spanish musical genres, with Manolo Escobar and Julio Iglesias firm favourites, so the influences on me from a young age were very varied. As a teenager I grew up listening to MTV and *Los Cuarenta Principales*, so my exposure to music was diverse. My generation enjoyed Spanish rumba and flamenco rock, music which I identify with to this day and which brings back a lot of fun memories. By contrast, these days *los jóvenes en Gibraltar mayormente conocen el reguetón* and turn their noses up at Spanish music in general; I'd venture to say that most of them don't fully understand Spanish lyrics. I also have vivid memories of Sunday family lunches, where we would all gather together to watch Spanish cartoons like *La Abeja Maya* and *David, el Gnomo*, followed by an adult drama, or, as it was known back then, *la película de las tres*. Satellite channels weren't available and we had limited channels, just GBC, our local broadcaster, and the Spanish TVE1 and TVE2. This is why the introduction of satellite TV had a massive impact on younger generations. Listening to other languages helps you pick them up and, in our case, enabled us to become more fluent and natural in our ways.

So how do I usually express myself? Well, there is a distinction here between the spoken and the written. Even though I am more at ease and more fluent writing in English – which is no surprise, having been schooled almost exclusively in English – Yanito/Spanish is my natural conversational language, what I speak at home, with family and friends. I will usually turn to my Yanito/Spanish when I'm arguing a specific point or making a passionate observation, this is my everyday spoken language, my social language, how I communicate feelings and expression. At work it is a mixed bag – formal presentations will be exclusively in English, but conversations with colleagues and meetings will be conducted in Yanito and we will adapt the English/Spanish ratio depending on who we are addressing and their understanding and command of the language. This is usually a generation-dependent thing; some young people these days struggle with the Spanish language and their blank faces when you code-switch introducing Yanito really say it all. Saying that, some conscious efforts are being made at community level for this to be tackled and remedied. The awareness that is being created and the conversations that have started are making people take note, with many accepting that our language needs to be preserved or it will be lost. So even though I am fluent in Yanito, I can't say I write it much. We have not been taught or conditioned to express ourselves in this way, and I prefer to use the more formal English for writing.

As a parent myself, I understand that there are different factors at play here, but I also feel strongly that this is something that we need to work on before we lose Yanito. Our bilingualism and Yanito code-switching identify us as a people, and being fluent in two languages is not just a vital commodity, it is an intrinsic component

of our culture and who we are. All the same, I appreciate that young people have to work harder at it these days. Many understand the language but choose not to communicate in it. It is interesting to note that grandparents these days will prefer to answer in English, even if they find it hard to do so and they speak among themselves in Spanish. "*Es que me contesta en inglés", dicen.* Children don't watch Spanish TV or listen to Spanish music; they don't even speak it with friends and only speak it among themselves when their parents have made it their mission to keep the language alive. It's a sad reality, but I really think we can turn it around. *Creando interés, curiosidad y necesidad*, and highlighting just how vital this is at so many different levels – that's the best way to go about it. It has to be a multi-pronged campaign. Young people need to feel comfortable to communicate in this way with their peers.

We have a unique way of talking; our code-switching is formidable, or so I am told. Our brains are programmed in a way that allow us to make these linguistic choices without it feeling like a conscious decision. Our Yanito has certain rules, though – there are ways in which you wouldn't phrase sentences, and words similarly that would not be used. Moreover, how you speak it is to a certain extent linked to your upbringing and what exposure you have had growing up – for instance, whether you have a grandparent / parent who speaks / spoke exclusively in Spanish.

At school, you wouldn't have heard us say "*tenemos recreo*"; it was always 'breaktime' for us. But it would be a common thing to say "*vamo a jugar a rescatar al patio.*" *Aquí en Gibraltar it's la pelota y no el balón, y también jugábamos al* hopscotch y *al* British Bulldog *y con los mebli y al elástico*. Yanito was not encouraged at school, though, and it was tricky for us not to fall into our natural ways during breaktime! Other generations before mine were subjected to the strap for this linguistic offence!

Going back to my early formative years, I was very blessed to have had a great teacher in one of my grandparents, my granny Mama Hilda. We had a special bond and, looking back, I probably didn't fully appreciate her wisdom and talent as I do now. She was a natural storyteller and I spent countless hours listening to her recollections from the postwar years. A woman *que estaba llena de vida*, she was always happy and content with her lot. My granny is the perfect example of the cultural exposure Gibraltarians have grown up with – born, as she was, to an Irish father and a Spanish mother. Her command of English was brilliant for someone of her generation, and this facility with words enriched her character and her *manera de ser*.

I owe my granny a lot, as she instilled in me a desire to learn and listen and helped me develop an inquisitive nature which has served me well in life. On reflection, I can confidently say that I attribute my love of storytelling and interest in people to her. Hilda was part of the generation that appreciated the simple things in life. Music and the radio were important to her and it was she who taught me how to appreciate songs and lyrics, especially songs dating back to her own childhood and youth. My

mother recalls surprised reactions from people *cuando la niña cantaba canciones de la Guerra*. Bus rides were interesting too, as I would sit and pose different questions to strangers, who were amused by *la confianza de la niña* aged three or four at the time.

At school, Spanish was learnt as a foreign language, so at GCSE level it was an almost guaranteed A for most children of my generation, even the less academic students. Although Spanish at A-Level was more advanced and covered topics such as literature, textual analysis and close reading, students would still perform well. I am now very grateful to my Spanish teacher for making us read Spanish books outside the syllabus and for going out of her way to introduce us to interesting anecdotes and stories. As a result of this, my writing and creative expression improved dramatically and I was able to start writing more fluently, without trying to translate directly from English as I had previously been doing. Nevertheless, this is something I still struggle with slightly when working on more formal texts.

On occasions it is almost impossible to find a suitable word or phrase to mean the same or have the same impact in both languages. It was during this time, too, that I learnt to appreciate the richness and beauty of the Spanish language, its melodic and expressive nature which is so different to the more formal and more scientific-sounding cadences of the English language. Having said that, most Gibraltarians prefer "I love you" to "*te amo*", and other everyday expressions are usually English-based. "See you later" is more common than "*hasta luego*," and "I'm going for lunch / *a comer*" is heard much more often than "*Me voy a merendar*." Although, needless to say, when it comes to expletives, we tend to favour the more colourful Spanish variants!

I need to speak about food too, which I would say is as colourful and varied as our language. In Gibraltar *comemos paella y* Sunday roast, *nos gusta el tapeo y también el piquislavi*. *Nuestras tradiciones* are varied y *muchos de los platos preferidos tienen un* Italian heritage. *El rosto*, for example, a pasta dish with meat, tomatoes and potatoes, is a firm favourite on the Rock, as is *la torta de acelga,* spinach (chard) pie, *pero* we also serve *un* meat pie *o un guisado, y un potaje y* chicken *empanao*.

Yanito is unique in its usage and intonation; when abroad, you can always recognise those snippets of conversation that are so uniquely Gibraltarian. I recall being in a shop in central London years ago and hearing something along the lines of, "mum, *te gusta esto* for the dance, *el viernes*". I instantly knew that a Gibraltarian was speaking those words! Both the phraseology and the placing of words within sentences are very different to other Spanglish languages. Our accents too, are varied, and we can dip in and out of both languages in a way that really baffles anyone trying to geographically place us.

Communication is at the heart of a lot of what I do, and language was also very important for me in my previous role as a broadcast journalist and TV and radio presenter. Transmitting the news and current affairs and working on community programming was the main focus of the job and scripting reports and preparing content a daily responsibility. GBC News, though, was always relayed in English, both in the written and spoken context, with Yanito only used in less formal contexts, such as certain chat shows, some community events, and on adverts. There was a reduced Spanish service on Radio Gibraltar which appealed mainly to our older listeners.

During my eighteen years with GBC we sometimes had the opportunity to travel to Spain to cover stories relating to the Rock. Here, we would interview people in Spanish and then translate the speech, adding subtitles in English for the benefit of our monolingual viewers. Yes, this was something that most of us could manage, but any technical words or phrases would no doubt need to be looked up and checked. Court stories were challenging to translate as many of the terms and titles are frequently used in English.

There has been a new-found interest in this subject, and discussing it with a former colleague recently, he highlighted a typical occurrence from his Broadcasting House days which always struck him. Picture this; in the minutes before a live interview with a Gibraltarian guest, the conversation would be in Yanito, dipping in and out of English and Spanish as we usually do in Gibraltar. The moment the live countdown began, however, they would both revert to formal English and continue speaking English for the duration of the interview. As soon as the interview was over, it would be back to Yanito instantly again, with phrases like "*qué, fue bien eso, o no*?", "*esa pregunta fue un poco* heavy*, verdad?*", and so on.

I would say that over the last year we have witnessed a new understanding and appreciation of our bilingualism, with many people being of the view that it would be a tragedy if Yanito disappears from the scene. As a mother to a teenager, I am aware that this is no easy task. Some kids flatly refuse to speak Spanish; others even take offence at being spoken to in the language. "Am I doing an okay job?" I ask myself. "*Está claro que puedo ser aún más." El mío es de los más sueltos*, inasmuch as he understands Spanish almost perfectly and can speak it relatively well, although he still struggles with some of the grammar. I make a conscious effort to speak Yanito and use Spanish in the evenings when conversing with him, although his responses will generally be in English with the odd Spanish word thrown in. Still, we have many conversations on the subject, and he has already realized the value of being bilingual. A recent example came when he went to a Spanish restaurant staffed by Spanish waiters, and he had to order food for some of his friends who are not so confident in Spanish.

From a work perspective, we recently introduced Spanish books to the John Mackintosh Hall Library, and are in the process of updating our children's books section with popular titles offered in dual language format. We explore this duality during storytelling and also use some Yanito/Spanish words and phrases when we organise tours for schoolchildren at our local art galleries; this ensures that we are equipping the children with at least some Spanish and normalizing the use of the language, before they return to the monolingual atmosphere of the family home. Last but not least, we have introduced a Yanito section to the annual short story competition. It is still too early to gauge the impact these new developments will have on Gibraltar's linguistic landscape, but we are confident that, with effort, goodwill and sheer perseverance, Yanito will be spoken in Gibraltar for many years to come.

From a personal perspective, the scholarly attention our language has received over the last few months has really made me appreciate how much language is a part of who I am and a part of my cultural identity and history. English may be my formal language of choice, proof of the pudding, *aquí estoy escribiendo el* biography primarily in English, but the Yanito/Spanish is the language of the heart, of familiarity, of expression. Having given this plenty of thought, I can say it is my first language and definitely the one I converse in most. Yanito allows me to express myself freely and better, more fluently. This new-found validation for Yanito is sure to make us Gibraltarians appreciate further our unique language, which is intrinsically linked to who we are, an almost symbolic expression of our Gibraltarianness.

Chapter 17
In search of my mother tongue

Claire Trinidad

Claire Trinidad is an English teacher and post-16 coordinator at Westside School, Gibraltar.

Llanito is my mother tongue and yet I spoke mostly English in my early years, using more Spanish in later childhood and adolescence. Although I understood Spanish and code-switched from a young age, it wasn't until late adolescence that I felt fully confident speaking Spanish.

I lived in England between the ages of three and five and I think this influenced my language development to a large extent. There is an audio cassette from this period, kicking about my parents' house somewhere, with a recording of my older brother and I chatting away to my grandmother, who was at home in Gibraltar. Our Nottingham accents are quite remarkable, considering we lived a low-key life of school and lots of nuclear family time.

"Graa-nee we loov ya."

I would have expected us to keep our Gibraltarian accents, much as I see my pupils retain their home accents until at least teenagehood but, for some reason, we didn't. We must have sounded totally foreign to my grandmother. Although she spoke (and wrote) English and Spanish very well, her Gibraltarian accent was strong and her cultural references were more Mediterranean than Midlands. Naturally, my memory of actual conversations or communication at home from this time is limited but I think my parents must have both spoken to me mainly in English, despite coming from homes where Llanito (with a lot of Spanish) was spoken.

My return to Gibraltar at the age of five was something of a culture shock. My recollections of the time are few, but many involve being in situations where I didn't quite understand the cacophony of dialogue around me. A seemingly insignificant episode of that time has remained a strong memory: my cousin and I were walking along a ledge and she would say, "*Ay, que me caigo!*" every time she fell off. I had

no idea what it meant at first but picked it up soon enough, allowing these strange and protracted vowel sounds to roll around my mouth, feeling like I was discovering something groundbreaking. Out there was another language that I had access to, that I could express myself in, that might allow for the expression of ideas and emotions in a different way.

If I think logically, there was no way this would have been my first exposure to Spanish. I come from a large extended family, most of whom speak Llanito. However, it is my first memory of actually speaking it and, as a lover of language, it sparked something in me.

I am, by nature, language-curious. I love learning about language, its etymology, grammar and phonology. I love talking about language and learning new languages. And I love to read. Among my favourite authors are Virginia Woolf and Toni Morrison, writers who relished and experimented in the language that they used, their lyrical prose often bordering on the poetic. I would love to say that I am as widely read in Spanish as I am in English but sadly, this is not the case. While I have read some novels in Spanish, the number is nothing to rival the scores of novels that I have devoured in the English language. Poetry is a different story, perhaps because it doesn't matter that I don't understand all the vocabulary, or maybe because poetry speaks to us on a different level; a more emotional and instinctive level. I suppose it makes sense, therefore, that I have enjoyed Spanish and English poetry in equal measure.

It is this love of language that propelled me not only to learn more Spanish but to be perfectly confident speaking it. My parents and extended family spoke it and there was no reason why I shouldn't be able to pick it up, in my mind. Moreover, it was spoken widely at school in the 80s and 90s, and, while you were punished in the playground for speaking to your peers in what was considered a lesser language than the English in which the curriculum was delivered, this was one punishment that my painfully rule-abiding middle school self was not willing to take. I felt deeply that speaking Llanito was an intrinsic part of my identity and yet at age 10 and 11, it still did not roll off my tongue in the same way that English did. When I hear my youngest son (11) now punctuating his English with phrases like *en plan, por la cara, en verdad* and *en la vida*, I think this is him pursuing his own, similar language goals, trying to fit in culturally even though he still doesn't have the confidence to say more in Spanish.

As a young person, I hated getting things wrong, but I loathed not being fluent in this language that felt so intrinsically linked to my identity even more. I persisted and made mistakes. I listened attentively in Spanish lessons and learnt all the grammar rules so that I could fall back on them when I wasn't sure in my gut how to say something. As a former teacher of languages, my father was happy to correct and guide me and I had a clear goal in mind. In the meantime, I was also learning French at school and had decided that I wanted to be fluent in that too.

At 18, I took a gap year and worked various different jobs in Bordeaux in a very hippy phase of my life. I was fluent in French by the time I finished but my Spanish felt a little rusty. I suppose this was unsurprising as my brain was taken up with French. I was reading novels in French, spoke no English whatsoever except in my weekly phone calls home and even dreamt in French. My language brain was on a mission and *mission accomplie!* it was by June 1999.

Once I started my degree, I fell much more naturally into a pattern of speaking English within my university life and Llanito when I came home for the holidays or met with local friends while in the UK. Being away from home is a sure way of cementing your identity and it became increasingly important to me to speak Llanito with my fellow Gibraltarians, listen to Spanish music and read in Spanish. However, it still irked me that I made mistakes in the language and was not as fluent as I was in English. My vocabulary was far more limited and I struggled to hold entire conversations in Spanish. Many Gibraltarians of my generation are like me. They avoid speaking Spanish in formal or technical situations because they worry that they will run out of words and switch to English.

At university, I signed up for elective modules in the Spanish faculty (after dabbling in and loving Italian). These electives were assessed by extended essays at the end of the unit and I had the choice of writing them in Spanish or in English. I opted for Spanish, knowing full well that my academic writing would be far inferior to what I was writing for my English Literature assignments, while also knowing that putting myself in this position would be an opportunity for learning.

As a young adult, my language of choice socially and in family situations, therefore, was Llanito. My language of work was, and still is, English. Twenty-something years on, things are much the same, although my Spanish has improved to the point that I am also confident using it in a work environment. I'll use it in parent meetings or with some members of staff, although English is usually expected in more formal scenarios, probably because it is often the language in common.

As well as being an English teacher, I have a pastoral role in a large comprehensive school. It is with sadness that I note that most students no longer speak Llanito. In part, perhaps, it is due to the hierarchy of languages that was impressed upon my generation that led individuals to bring up their children speaking (poor) English rather than grow up with their mother tongue being different to the language of the curriculum. We might also attribute it to the widespread introduction of satellite TV in the early 90s that led to people having an array of English channels and meant that they watched less Spanish TV. And then there is the small issue of the internet. Children today spend hours of their days browsing texts in English. This, along with the fact that they are having much less face-to-face communication with family and members of the community, has clearly impacted their language acquisition. Naturally,

my English lessons are taught in English but there are times in my classroom when I use Llanito for more relaxed chats or to give instructions to students.

Me (pointing at the slide on the TV): Take a look at the first stanza; what does the opening metaphor suggest?

Pupil: I can't see the screen with the glare.

Me: *Cierra el* blind. Louis, *para de pegarle a Ian con el libro*. Now look up. Copy the metaphor into your exercise books.

Within my pastoral responsibilities, I often speak to students in a more informal situation than the classroom and I feel it is important, where possible, to use Llanito, especially if they come from a family where I know that it is spoken at home. Exposure to the language is important and to speak to them exclusively in English would not only feel unnatural but would be somewhat denying our identity and cultural heritage.

Me: Come in. How can I help you? *No te veo bien. Quiere' un* cup of tea?

(Pupil nearly always answers in English. But that's OK.)

As a parent, keeping Llanito alive at home has been a challenge to a degree. While I try to speak it as much as possible, my children resist replying in Llanito as the language of their peers is English, and we all know how much young people push against anything and everything that their parents represent. My children understand most things but are more comfortable receiving instructions in Llanito and having simple exchanges about their immediate needs than fully developed conversations about topics or ideas.

Me: *Hici'te el homework?* (not *los*, as in *los deberes*, of course)

Child: Yes.

Me: *Que quieres pa'l* packed lunch *mañana*?

Child: Can I have a cheese *bollo*? (NB not *bocadillo*)

Their lack of fluency in Spanish, naturally, is regrettable but I haven't given up hope. I myself became increasingly fluent during my teenage years and I am confident that they can, too.

I speak Llanito with my family and friends, unless they are English or Spanish, of course, in which case I do my best not to code-switch. My Spanish friends have come to expect me to drop in the odd noun in English, usually with the masculine article, of course, in true Llanito fashion.

Me: *¿Cuándo es el* talk *de* Llanito?

Friend: *Pues no sé. Creo que es este jueves.*

My English friends, on the other hand, are more accustomed to me occasionally swearing in Spanish, or tagging on the odd *no*?

Have I ever experienced any discrimination in terms of the language I have used? I think so, but not when speaking Llanito. I know that there is a commonly accepted belief that to code-switch you have to be fluent in both languages but I don't entirely agree with this. For years, I dropped Spanish words and phrases into my English (in keeping with the code-switching rules of Llanito) without being fluent in Spanish. The way that we code-switch allows for reverting to one language or another when we lack the vocabulary or fluency to say what we want in the other language. Never in a Spanish conversation has anyone looked down upon me for using *una llanitá* but rather they have seen it as something quirky or of interest. I have to say that people overhearing Llanito usually respond with interest; it is something quirky and unique for them rather than something to scorn. The Llanito accent, though, is often looked down upon, especially by those with colonialist attitudes. They cannot conceive that an accent that is unfamiliar to them as a British accent might be employed by someone for whom English is their mother tongue.

I'm proud to speak Llanito. It is an intrinsic element of my identity. Just like learning new languages opens up the possibility of new relationships, conversations and cultures, code-switching allows for a broader expression of emotions and communication. When I lose my rag with my kids, I erupt in a Llanito that's much heavier in Spanish than English. When I'm explaining to them where I'm meeting them after school and what they need to remember, it's English. When I talk about politics, the arts or human behaviour, my Llanito can lean either way, depending on how technical the discussion is. When I talk about finances and housekeeping with my partner, it's heavy on the English; when we're having a laugh or we're out and about, it's *puro* Llanito. With my family and friends, again, it depends on the topic of conversation. Being able to do this makes for richer, broader, more expressive communication. It is, without a doubt, regrettable that fewer Gibraltarians speak Llanito and that many of them have no desire to tap into this aspect of their heritage.

For obvious reasons, it makes sense to bring up future generations as bilingual. They will be more employable, their cultural capital will be richer, they will be able to communicate with millions more people, their brains will find learning other languages easier… the list goes on and it's no accident that it is becoming common practice in many other countries. That it is eroding in Gibraltar is deeply regrettable. Not only have I reaped these benefits, I feel that my identity, my culture and my sense of self are deeply rooted in the language that I use. I feel privileged that I can draw on two languages to express myself and I wouldn't have it any other way.

Chapter 18
Claveles and candle wax

Melissa Bosano

Melissa Bosano was born in England to Gibraltarian parents and has lived in Gibraltar since the age of five. She is an English teacher and Head of English at Westside School, where she has been working for several years. Melissa trained as a PGCE mentor with the University of Gibraltar and is a qualified Transformational and Group Coach; she has a special interest in supporting young people via her coaching. In 2022, Melissa was one of the writing mentors for Gibraltar Cultural Service's Young Writers' Mentorship programme. She also published an anthology of Westside students' writing in 2019. In 2021, her department worked with leaders at St Paul's School on an outreach programme which saw Westside pupils writing story books for St Paul's Reception children. Both the anthology and the outreach programme were nominated for Cultural Awards in 2021 and 2022 respectively.

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart."

Nelson Mandela

My childhood memories are filled with the scent of carnations and melted candle wax and the sounds of many different voices. I was raised in a Gibraltarian home with my mother and father, my two sisters, my brother and my Spanish great-grandmother. Our home, as you can imagine, was full of conversation – in Spanish, in English and in Llanito. Our extended family is large; I'm one of twenty-five cousins on my father's side and another twelve on the other. I was also lucky enough to have three great-grandparents and four grandparents who formed an active part of my life as I was growing up; everyone spoke Spanish and most of us, apart from the very eldest generation, spoke English too. The beauty of belonging to this huge bilingual family meant that I experienced many different forms of language, colloquialisms and turns of phrase at many different levels of interaction.

I was born in England where my parents lived for nine years. Naturally, my main language from birth to the age of five when we returned to Gibraltar was English. My parents would speak English to the customers who frequented their coffee shop, and my friends at school were English speakers. We were lucky to live close to some of my parents' siblings in the UK and these cousins, having been born in England, spoke only English too. I do remember however, that my parents would speak Spanish, or Llanito, amongst themselves and my sister and I picked this up. My mother told me of a time when, having started school, I came home saying that I was hungry as I hadn't eaten lunch. When questioned I said they had given me *potaje* and I didn't like it. Obviously no British lunch lady was doling out this traditional Spanish stew, but I had used the word I knew when presented (I imagine) with the British equivalent. Even whilst living in England, I remember that amongst my family I was *la niña* or *la mayor* as I was the eldest of my siblings. The fact that we were in a different country where Spanish was not the native tongue did not affect the language(s) we spoke at home. In the 80s many families from Gibraltar moved away for socioeconomic reasons and, in conversation with others who grew up in a similar situation, I discovered that this was true for them too: Spanish, or Llanito, was always the language spoken by the family, a deep connection to the homeland.

As I look back on my childhood now I can see that both of the languages we used as a family carried the same significance. We spoke English at home, even upon our return to Gibraltar, possibly more than other families due to having lived in England for the first part of my and my sister's lives. We were, however, plunged into a Spanish speaking environment with our great-grandmother who, although having lived in Gibraltar for many, many years, spoke Spanish. My Mama was from Los Barrios and she was a typical Spanish grandmother. She was a devout Catholic whose daily prayer rituals and *rosario* were sacrosanct, and who regularly adorned the various statues of saints and the Virgin Mary with flowers with calls of "*voy a ponerle claveles a la virgen,*" or "*perejil*" for "*San Pancracio.*" We knew the 'Our Father' and the 'Hail Mary' as well as we knew the *Padre Nuestro* and the *Ave María*. She watched the afternoon *novelas* (if you grew up in Gibraltar you will remember *Topacio*) and cooked traditional Spanish meals. The children's stories she told us were direct translations of well-known tales like *Caperucita Roja* ("Little Red Riding Hood") or the Spanish *Garbancito* who was terrifyingly lost "*en la barriguita del buey.*" As children we were petrified at the thought of a child who was so small he could be eaten up by a cow, and yet relieved that he lived to call out to his mother so she could rescue him! I have a photo taken of me when I was about nine years old with a carnation in my hair and *un mantón de Manila*, the traditional shawl used by flamenco dancers, draped over my shoulders.

It is safe to say that my siblings and I were fully immersed in Spanish language and culture throughout our childhood, but this was certainly not unique to our family: in most Gibraltarian households at the time, to a greater or lesser degree, there was

a strong Spanish influence that existed alongside our very British nationality. Both formed a part of our heritage and culture. The beauty of growing up in a bilingual household meant that we were fluent in both languages. To my memory, there was a sense of English being the more formal language of the workplace and of school, and Spanish, or Llanito was the language of the family and home. In hindsight we probably spoke more English than other families as my sister and I had some catching up to do on our arrival in Gibraltar! All of our friends, however, spoke both languages and we caught on quickly.

This has shifted with my children's generation. The advent of digital TV, as opposed to our one sole hour a day of children's programmes in English in the 80s, meant that children in the 90s began to be much more exposed to English-speaking British and American TV than we had ever been. Over the next couple of decades, the spread of social media has ensured that the main language our children are exposed to is English. Whereas we watched *Espinete* and *Barrio Sésamo*, my children have all watched *In the Night Garden* and *Sesame Street*; my friends and I spoke Llanito in the school playground or on the patio after school, whereas my children speak English with their friends, regardless of context.

As a parent and a teacher, I can see that children's conversations are still carried out predominantly in English. In hindsight, I can trace the start of the shift back to specific moments in my own children's development. When my eldest son, now twenty-five, was two, he started attending nursery. He was a particularly articulate child and spoke easily in both English and Spanish. After a few months, my father pointed out that he wasn't using Spanish as much. I reassured my father that this wasn't true, why would it be? And yet I started to listen out for myself. My father was right. Although I spoke to my son in Spanish, he would only reply in English; all of the conversations he initiated were never in Spanish. Slowly I realised that he had taken the language spoken in his nursery playgroup – English, because it was, and still remains, the language of education in Gibraltar – and prioritised this over Spanish. This, coupled with the predominance of English over Spanish in children's entertainment created a real struggle in trying to ensure that my children were fluent over the years. Even with a conscious intention to speak Spanish at home, it wasn't until my son began playing football in neighbouring Spain as an older teenager and into adulthood that he began to speak the language with any confidence. This short anecdote really encapsulates what linguists have always known – if you don't use it, you lose it. Immersion is key, and the Llanito language is in danger of being eroded from living memory within a few generations if it is not used by the younger people in our society.

My younger children are more exposed to Spanish as we spend time in Spain quite frequently. We also ensure that we speak instructions or requests in Spanish first and then in English in an effort to keep both languages alive at home. Having said this, I'm fully aware that our second language is Llanito and not traditional Spanish. I've had

many moments, when speaking to native Spanish speakers where I have been stuck for a particular word or been unable to understand exactly what the Spanish speaker means. As a child I played *Guess Who?* with my cousin and her Spanish neighbour and asked if her character had *un gorro*, a hat. She looked at me blankly until my cousin clarified that I was asking if he had *un sombrero*. This has happened on many occasions; I'm a fluent Spanish speaker… until I need to hold a full conversation with a native Spanish speaker! Context is key.

Even now when I analyse my own use of language, I can see that there are unspoken rules about which language we use and when we use it:

A visit to the doctor? English.

Getting on the bus? A quick *Hola* and enquiries in Llanito.

Dinner table conversation with my children? English.

At the end of my tether with my children? Llanito!

An appointment with my hairdresser, grocery shopping or dinner conversation with friends are all carried out in Llanito. My work as a teacher in class and in meetings with teachers or parents, a phone call to elicit information from any local business or government department and my own choice of reading material, be it fiction or nonfiction, will all be carried out in English. Such are the subconscious lines I, and I believe many others, have drawn: English is formal, controlled and accurate; Llanito is linked to leisure and emotional connection.

I'm well within my comfort zone in both languages and both represent an intrinsic part of my identity: if the opportunity to use one of these languages was missing from my life I would struggle. Why else, as students heading off to the UK for our undergraduate degrees, do we seek out our fellow Llanitos? Why else would we pack our luggage with *jamón serrano, tomate frito* and *Ruffles*? Why else would our mothers and grandmothers make sure we take frozen packs of *pollo empana'o, croquetas* and *torta de patata pa'l avión*? The identity of the Gibraltarian is rooted in many things, but our language is an important part of it. Even if a young Gibraltarian lacks fluency and confidence in talking Spanish, they will definitely have a grasp of the most traditional words and phrases in Llanito.

Friends in the UK have said that when they first met me they thought I was Welsh because to their ear Gibraltarians have a 'sing-song' lilt to our voices. Others have said they thought I was Portuguese because of my colouring and accent. There have also been some who knew I wasn't from the UK, but couldn't quite identify my accent with any place that they had ever been to. Funnily enough, I can't hear my own accent (can anyone?) but I can identify a Gibraltarian abroad within the first few minutes of an overheard conversation. The mix of both English and Spanish, specific words and phrases in Llanito and, yes, the accent all give it away.

In my own experience I've never met anyone who had anything derogatory or negative to say about my language and accent; my UK friends were always amazed at my side of telephone conversations with family back home. They always remarked on the mix of English and Spanish, the rapid-fire code-switching and the speed at which the conversation took place. None of these were negative points, rather something they were in awe of, and some told me they were envious that we had the ability to speak in this way. They were amazed that even children could speak in a way that switched from one language to another, picking and choosing at a subconscious level the word or phrase that was best suited to that particular conversation, at that particular moment in time, with that particular person.

Having more than one language to draw from has been a great advantage in life. The ability to choose a word that fits a particular situation from either English, Spanish or Llanito widens the range and potential expression in any conversation. I feel somewhat limited, especially socially, when a situation dictates that I must only speak in one language. Even though I consider myself highly articulate and able to express myself clearly in any situation, it feels almost disingenuous, as if there will be some element of truth missing in a monolingual exchange. To be fair, this happens mostly when I'm limited to speaking in Spanish only. My bilingualism has enabled me to engage with a wider range of people than would have been possible had I only spoken either English or Spanish. Both languages have also been of value when travelling: as a way of communicating in a foreign country, and as a private means of communicating with my family. Speaking a high level of English and Spanish also enabled me to gain a top mark in my GCSE and A-Level exams in both these subjects. I cannot think of any drawbacks that I have encountered due to speaking both languages separately, or a mix of both together. On the contrary, I feel privileged to speak fluently in both English and Spanish, and I feel grateful that this is something that I can pass on to my children.

As a native speaker of both, and having learned both languages organically as I grew up, I feel that there is a strong emotional link to both English and Spanish, and to the resulting Llanito. I dream in both languages; very often I will journey through my dreams 'talking' in English, but I will hold dream conversations with family members, especially with those who have passed away, in Llanito. There is an intrinsic subconscious and emotional link to this language that, to me, cannot be replicated solely with English.

I am an avid reader and have been since childhood, but some of the most beautiful literature I have ever read has been in Spanish; this would not have been available to me had I not been a native speaker of Spanish, because to understand the nuances present in literature, you have to have lived the experience that creates those important connections with an author. Some of the funniest jokes I've heard are in Spanish, as are some of the most creative swear words, many of which do not translate well into English!

My language is something that I work with every day. As an English teacher at a secondary school I teach in the English language, and I aim to cultivate an accurate and scholarly approach to my students' reading, writing and speaking skills. But when a student is having a particularly hard time and struggling with behaviour or with their class work, a quick "*qué pasa*?" will often create a more effective emotional connection and get to the heart of the issue much more efficiently than "what's wrong?" Similarly, whenever I use a *refrán* or saying, especially in Spanish, I will have an immediate connection to, and memory of, my mother and grandmother who had a bank of these Spanish sayings that they would use to highlight and validate the points they were making.

Both of my languages form part of my identity; I wouldn't be the same person if I could only speak in English, or if I didn't know how to speak in Spanish. The unique blend of both that has created Llanito is a fundamental part of who I am, and I think many other Gibraltarians feel the same way. If we didn't have Llanito, then we wouldn't have the shared experience and vernacular that binds us. For me, Llanito is the language of my home. If I lost the use of Spanish, and subsequently Llanito, I would lose an intrinsic part of my own self.

Chapter 19
Against linguistic snobbery

Giordano Durante

Giordano Durante is a poet born in 1981 in Gibraltar. He released his first collection of poems, West, *in 2017; this was followed by* Machotes *in 2020 and* Nostalgia Elsewhere *in 2022.*

We do it all in words. We are mired in language.

Even when we are quiet, the words carry on inside us – that little voice accompanying our day-to-day tasks, sentences in inner speech reminding, admonishing, dreaming, versifying, arguing; a dozen misremembered quotes echoing within.

Cut us anywhere and words spill out.

**

I grew up in rented accommodation with my parents and grandparents in the early 1980s in Gibraltar's Upper Town. It was primarily a working class neighbourhood, and I recall clearly the wide range of unsavoury characters who used to keep my grandfather entertained from his spot by the window: the two aging bachelors opposite, one of whom would emerge from the convenience store up the road with a green plastic bag full of Foster's lager cans; the half-mad drunk who would walk down the hill to throw his week's bag of excrement in the bin, shouting at nobody about the war and the "bloody Germans."

At the confluence of three roads, it was a lively part of town, served by a small convenience store which is still there today called Carter's which everyone pronounced "*Carta,*" like a letter in Spanish.

My grandfather, born in Madrid to a Llanita mother and an absent Spanish father, mainly spoke Spanish (really, a kind of *andaluz gaditano*) at home although his job at the Ministry of Defence meant that he was able to speak a proficient, if slightly antiquated, English. My grandmother, having received no formal schooling beyond her early teens, also spoke in Spanish unless she was forced to converse with my other,

Belfast-born, grandmother in what was a laboured, uncomfortable but ultimately comical dialogue across cultures.

My grandmother was a great cook – her repertoire included Spanish *potajes* and local dishes like *rosto*. From her I must have picked up a whole host of earthy, domestic words like *chorizo, tocino, garbanzo* – words that leave a taste of what is named in one's mouth.

My grandfather, despite his Spanish background, was staunchly British. He rejected Franco's Spain with every fibre of his small frame and would enthusiastically cheer whenever any team – and I mean *any team whatsoever* – scored a goal against the Spanish football team. I can still see him now, in the kitchen, smoking away and gazing up at the small TV set, shouting as the Spanish striker Emilio Butragueño missed a penalty: "¡*Toma, cabrón, a tomar por el culo!*" Although I totally rejected his Hispanophobia and never adopted his football madness and colonial worship of the Queen, I owe him a linguistic debt for introducing me to the visceral joy of swearing in Spanish, a language which excels in the expletive.

The *garbanzos* and *'jo putas* were balanced by the relative refinements of the English spoken by my parents. They were both university graduates and language teachers – my dad was an English teacher and my Northern Irish mother taught Spanish and French. They would speak to my sister and me in Llanito too, our code-switching mix of English and Spanish.

One of the great mistakes we have made in Gibraltar is that education is conducted solely in English. As a bilingual society, the opportunity was there from the very beginning to embrace both languages in a school environment. Unfortunately, for practical and political / ideological reasons, this has never happened. What is worse, the Spanish language has been ignored, mildly suppressed and starved of the necessary support by the authorities and Establishment figures for several generations but a recent drive to promote our linguistic diversity is promising, if a little tardy.

In the mid-1980s, when I started school, every lesson was in English although I would generally speak to my friends in Spanish or code-switch. Some misguided teachers would even tell you off for speaking the language in the playground – the very language that they themselves spoke with their spouses and families.

At school, Spanish was subversive – it was a secret tongue in which to plan pranks and speak about monolingual teachers. Looking back, I see that it possessed an anti-Establishment streak – the language of potential dissent. Even now, a choice word muttered under one's breath is a necessary antidote to the pomp, ceremony and sheer deference that govern so many interactions in Gibraltarian society and with those who visit from abroad. Spanish and Llanito have this ability to bring us down to earth by instantly deflating our pretensions. I've spoken to people in the world of

law and politics (barely distinguishable realms over here) in English about Brexit, legislation, elections, ideological clashes and then, the moment of magic, we've gone on to utter just one phrase in Spanish that's not only summed up all we've said but also exposed it as mere intellectual posturing. To not do so, to carry on in English, would be bad form – it would show that we take ourselves too seriously. Llanito offers that opportunity to be blunt and unsparing – it loosens the shackles of the type of restrained conversation which can easily turn humourless.

Once I went to comprehensive school, from the ages of twelve to eighteen, things improved. More hours in the timetable were dedicated to Spanish and, when we were 16, we started reading Lorca, Cela and Machado. This literature spoke to us on a different level – we felt it deep within. I remember how we memorised the macho threats made by Pascual Duarte in Cela's novel and would recite them during our Friday night drinking sessions. We must have been an unusual sight: ten teenagers drinking Vat 69 whisky (from Scotland), sat next to a British military bastion from the 18th Century, declaiming lines from a 1942 novel written by *un gallego*.

While we were legally British, many of my contemporaries comfortably inhabited two worlds: the Anglo-Saxon world of officialdom, Liverpool football club and trips to London and a more profound, elemental world of flamenco, *huevos rotos* and blood-red suns setting over fields. Some moved seamlessly between these two sets of influences, picking and choosing like gluttons at a banquet. Bilingualism, and the code-switching it enabled, was as unquestioned and as natural as the oxygen we breathed – it was only some politicians, the cultural snobs and the gatekeepers who later made us doubt whether we could be good British Gibraltarians while revelling in this linguistic *mestizaje*.

I remember having two sets of friends who exemplified the class divisions associated with language use in Gibraltar. One set was from a working class background. They mainly lived in rented accommodation in the Upper Town and many dabbled in criminal activity during the smuggling years. This set would speak in Spanish / Llanito.

The other set included boys whose parents were in broadcasting, banking, etc. They did well at school, were members of the Yacht Club and spoke in English. I enjoyed my time with both groups but never felt comfortable belonging to just one camp and this "citizen of nowhere" freedom (*como un transeúnte*) was only possible because I was bilingual.

At university in London I was, like other Llanitos, a bit of a linguistic anomaly. Although our English was as good as that of the UK-born students, our accents and odd surnames immediately marked us out as foreign or suspect. Llanitos are often mistaken for South Africans because of their abbreviated vowels. We're also misidentified as Welsh due to the slight and (to us) barely detectable sing-song in our English.

Speaking Spanish, although conferring no real advantage for my Philosophy degree, was a curiosity for the mainly monolingual Brits but I do remember coming across some students from the U.S. who had a decent grasp of the language and I also made friends with Argentinians and Mexicans. There's always a bond that forms when you come across someone who speaks Spanish, something that never happens with English speakers, given their ubiquity: immediately, there's a knowing nod, a sly laugh at the *guiris* and their terrible food and weather and lack of joy.

Once I became a father in 2014, the battle against the decline of Spanish drew its front line in my sitting room. At home, we spoke to my daughter almost exclusively in Spanish, in a bid to counter the influence of an increasingly English-speaking environment. This went well at first but, the moment she entered the nursery, we found that almost all her peers only spoke in English. Even the women who cared for her – women in their 60s who could speak fluent Spanish – spoke to their charges in heavily accented English. Still, now aged eight, my daughter has a good understanding of Spanish but is reticent about speaking the language as she rarely gets the chance to use it in public.

I now use Llanito depending on context. If I walk into a certain type of shop and see what the attendant looks like, in a split second I know which language is appropriate. If I'm at the doctor's and need to speak about a specific part of my anatomy or medication, I'll automatically go for English. These subtle shifts of context register beneath our conscious awareness; it is only sustained reflection that can bring out how the age, occupation and appearance of our interlocutors and the subject matter of the conversation all conspire to fix which language a Llanito chooses.

What's fascinating is how rapidly trends shift. I had assumed, until recently, that Llanitos would use Spanish to speak to their pet dogs. After all, I reasoned, the dog is like another member of the family and unlikely to require abstract or jargon-laden language. I was wrong; dogs are being spoken to in English even by their mainly Spanish-speaking owners! I can only guess that the language games associated with dog ownership, including the giving of commands like "Stop," "Sit," "Come here" are exploiting the association that exists between English and authority. It is historically the language of power, of the army and the navy, of official complaints and parliamentary exchanges. Little wonder then that, when we want somebody (or some disobedient terrier) to sit up and listen, we'll switch to English.

Recently, Llanito has emerged as a means of expression fit for literary works. Humbert Hernandez, M.G. Sanchez and Jonathan Teuma have all recently published works using Llanito. In my own work, I have adapted Edward Thomas's 'Adlestrop' in a version that includes slang Llanito words like *vratha* ('a wide boy') and *shorvo* ('girlfriend or sexually available woman').

Last year, I rendered Lewis Carroll's seemingly untranslatable nonsense poem 'Jabberwocky' into Llanito. In doing this, I like to think we're elevating Llanito – we're demonstrating that you can exploit the language of the kitchen, the bar and (pre-2000s) playground within the strictures of traditional literary forms, something vernacular poets elsewhere have been doing for years.

Languages are not just a list of rules but fields sown with possibility. The stock of Llanito is our larder – it is up to us to craft something beautiful out of these ingredients and show that our tongue is not a degraded form of communication or, as one pundit put it, mere "gibberish."

**

I am grateful that bilingualism has allowed me to be, in a sense, two different people: a more academic, rational being engaged in writing and thinking about poetry and history and a more laid-back persona, an atheist who is nevertheless swayed by *Semana Santa* processions. However, more recently, I've come to regard this dichotomy as somewhat artificial or facile – we are more complex than this, less amenable to simple divisions along linguistic lines when we have grown up immersed, from the very start, in two languages. Rather than see my two main languages as cutting me up into two distinct selves, I now see different aspects as informing and feeding each other. Nothing is fixed either – I was undoubtedly "more English" when I lived in the UK and barely spoke or read any Spanish.

The question of identity poses a puzzle for me. I've never clung to a flag or a tribe – I don't even support a football team. At times, I've worn my identity lightly, almost like a weightless or invisible cloak, blending into the diversity and anonymity of a London life. At other points, I've affirmed my convoluted linguistic and cultural identity (British, bilingual, Llanito, emotionally attached *andaluz*) more forcefully as external threats sharpened my sense of its vulnerability.

Some will continue to push their perverse wish that Gibraltar become a monoglot society whose members will only be able to access the thronging world of art, cathedrals and grilled sardines just across the border via translation. They would have us explore Andalucía and beyond as tourists, a sacrifice in the name of embracing the (to them) inevitable supremacy of global English. But this desire is motivated by the bizarre idea that this will make us more British or secure our Britishness "in perpetuity." Britishness is already a multinational concept – it covers people separated by religion, culture, geography and history. Most importantly, the British comity is, and always has been, linguistically plural. It speaks volumes about our insecurities that this drive for linguistic erasure is still in evidence in small pockets within the Rock's academic circles.

Many have allowed a rejection of Spain's sovereignty claim to morph into a wider rejection of all things related to Spain, including its language and culture. This shutting out of our neighbouring culture runs contrary to the Gibraltar we hope to create for our children – a place no doubt justifiably wary of Spanish political machinations but culturally and linguistically open to Spain. Some paint a picture of Gibraltarians as closed off from our nearest neighbour; a people allergic to any taint or influence from across the border. But how exactly do we reject any association with Spain? Are we to change our surnames, diet, TV-watching habits and travel plans in a senseless drive for purity and homogeneity?

It is also a mistake to infer an increase in anti-Spanish sentiment from the unarguable decline in the use of the Spanish language. In fact, in the late 1960s, when Spanish was widely spoken by all generations, anti-Spanish feeling reached a fervid and ignominious climax in the Doves / *Palomos* riots of 1968. And now, in 2023, when the under-30s speak less Spanish than previous generations, openly anti-Spanish views would be considered inappropriate in mainstream political circles and the current government is, at the time of writing, still optimistic about securing a post-Brexit deal that would see an arc of "shared prosperity" extending from the Rock to the neighbouring Campo de Gibraltar. There is, it seems, no firm historical link between language use and the political mood on the Rock and it puzzles me that the wishful thinking of some would treat the recent dominance of English as proof of a complete rejection of all things Spanish. What has happened is, instead, a complex sociolinguistic shift driven by education, generational differences and modern media trends.

**

Today, as I write this, a linguistic snapshot of my life would show me reading Spanish, English and some French – speaking predominantly Llanito but switching to *andaluz* in Spain and English in more formal, academic contexts. Although most of my education was in English, and my Spanish vocabulary has huge gaps in some specialised areas, every day I make the effort to improve, to watch the *Telediario*, to buy a philosophy book in Spanish.

Bilingualism from birth is a gift. To read a poem of Lorca's and then open a book by Larkin and drink in those lines directly from the source, in an idiom that is familiar and immediate, is to connect with a source of wonder. I feel that to lose Spanish would amount a form of amputation or an act of self-blinding. It would result in a diminishing of what the Gibraltarian is. That is why the snobs should never win.

Chapter 20
Er llanito me vio nasè

Dale Buttigieg

Dale Buttigieg, 30, is a secondary Modern Languages teacher at Westside School in Gibraltar. He is currently the secretary and one of the founding members of Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society. He also manages two websites: Llanito Llanito *and* Languages and You.

When I delve into the different roots of my family tree, I am always fascinated by the variety of languages which have enriched my genes throughout the last three centuries: Maltese, Ligurian, Spanish, Portuguese, Balearic Catalan, Asturian, Croatian, Greek and maybe even Veneto. If I go even further back, a few other languages would most certainly join the list. They all form part of me, part of my linguistic heritage. I have always stated that I have three native languages: Llanito, English and Spanish. But only one language I identify with, one mother tongue: Llanito. Llanito is the language of my mind and heart; its words remind me of Gibraltar's history and its sounds comfort me and make me smile. I treasure its importance, significance and value. When I was a young child, I was not aware the language(s) I spoke had a name. However, I remember that the words I would process in my head and then roll out my tongue differed from those spoken by my teachers or what I watched on television. The language of the school system was English. The language of entertainment was Spanish and English. The language of the home was Llanito.

I am from a generation where Llanito was still more or less the common language of the playground, even though it was starting to face fierce competition from English. I always spoke Llanito with my friends and family. My use of English and Spanish was mostly restricted to addressing teachers and people who did not speak Llanito. With this in mind, I do not have enough fingers on my hand or toes on my feet to count how many times I was discouraged from speaking Llanito or Spanish during my time in first and middle school – an experience which ultimately served to illuminate my linguistic conscience and awaken my will to protect Gibraltar's languages.

Things started to change in 2004. When I first arrived at Bayside Comprehensive School as a student, I was excited to learn French; I absorbed everything like a sponge. Then, a year later, we had an Italian taster session, further piquing my interest in learning the language. Simultaneously, I started learning Catalan, Galician and Portuguese in my free time. So, when I chose my options, I had no doubts; French and Italian were on my list. I also carried them through to my A-Levels, along with Spanish and English literature. It is a great shame and, to a certain extent, embarrassing that the enriching language provision I had as a teenager is no longer available to young Gibraltarians as Italian is not on the curriculum and the amount of time given to French has been cut in half.

My teenage years also cemented my conviction to provide Llanito with a writing system that would develop it as a written language. I learnt the Greek, Arabic and Hebrew alphabet and experimented with several different orthographies until I settled on one after a lengthy social media debate in the early 2010s. In 2009, I launched the *Llanito Làngwij* blog, which eventually became the *Llanito Llanito* website; over the years, I have documented Llanito words and grammar, published e-magazines, recorded podcasts and introduced the Llanito language on social media for the whole world to see.

Going to university in 2010 at the age of eighteen to embark on a degree in Modern Languages (Spanish, Italian, French and Portuguese) opened various opportunities for me to work on my language skills. In 2012, for my first Erasmus placement, I went to the small picturesque town of Corte in Northern Corsica. One of the main reasons I chose to go to Corsica was the possibility of learning a bit of Corsican. So, as soon as I arrived, I selected my courses and before I could settle down, I had already signed up for a two-hour weekly lesson in basic Corsican every Thursday afternoon. Moreover, having a high level of fluency in Italian helped me develop the skills to communicate effectively in Corsican, a skill which I still hold very dear to my heart. Also, without a doubt, being exposed to French at university quickly boosted my confidence in the language, which I had the chance to showcase in a two-part interview on Corsican radio.

The months I spent in Corsica went by quickly and I soon arrived in my second destination, Forlì, Emilia-Romagna, Italy. In Forlì, I fully immersed myself in the wonders of the Italian language, even adopting the characteristic Romagnolo accent. I remember it even reached a point where I dreamt and thought in Italian. The only regret from my Italian experience was that I did not get the chance to learn the Romagnolo language. Still, I enrolled in a Modern Standard Arabic course which helped me master the basics of the language. Unfortunately, all good things end and in June of 2013, I had to leave Italy but Italy never left me.

In 2015, after completing my degree and master's at Portsmouth, I was lucky to be selected to go to the Washington Center in the heart of the political capital of the United States. This experience would forever change my life. In Washington D.C. I worked in a language school near Farragut Square, a few streets from the White House. At first, I was part of the admin staff and was then given the opportunity to teach Italian, my first experience in the field of teaching. Although I did not learn a new language while in the United States, I did come in contact with American English and different varieties of Spanish. I became friends with a few students from Mexico, which exposed me to Mexican Spanish. I also met an energetic, bubbly and intelligent woman from Puerto Rico who spoke perfect Western Puerto Rican Spanish, a woman who would years later become my wife.

My teaching experience in North America proved helpful when I landed my first job as a self-employed Spanish and English language teacher in Gibraltar in early 2016 after obtaining my TEFL qualification. After a few months, I left my job and embarked on a journey to study in Warsaw, Poland, which was cut short due to health reasons. But not all was negative; I did not miss out on learning the basics of a new language, Polish, which is still on my bucket list. This bittersweet experience was followed by a year and a bit of teaching Italian, French, Portuguese, Spanish and English to adults at the University of Gibraltar. Many of my students later became my friends and I am immensely proud that they still remember and use the languages I helped them learn.

In late 2018, I shifted from adults to teenagers in preparation for my PostGraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). I spent an academic year as a French, Spanish and Italian student teacher in two secondary schools. In 2019, I returned to Portsmouth for a stressful few months of teacher training which abruptly ended with the advent of COVID-19. Soon after that, in September 2020, I found myself teaching 25 language lessons a week to students of all ages at Westside School in Gibraltar, where I currently work.

Speaking of young people, I do not have children, but I would like to in the future. Ideally, I want to expose my future children to as many languages as possible and instil in them the value of multilingualism. I intend to speak to my children mostly in Llanito but, living in Gibraltar, they will also be exposed to English. My wife Alexandra, a proud Puerto Rican, will probably speak to them in Spanish. I would also love to pass on some of the languages I have learnt throughout my life, for knowledge is the most valuable inheritance. Some may feel it is overambitious, but I have met too many multilingual children to believe it is impossible.

At times, I feel slightly jealous that other countries so near us value their languages so highly, whilst Gibraltar is just allowing its own to wilt away without any sense of shame and in the minds of some, it is even a matter of pride. It is cultural suicide for Gibraltar to sacrifice Llanito, Spanish or any other language. Progress is not only

measured by how many zeros you can count on the right-hand side of a number at the end of a financial year but also by how prepared people are to thrive in the globalised world we live in.

154 Unfortunately, for decades Gibraltar has slowly been deskilling its population. We have slowly amputated Llanito, a language unique to Gibraltarians that encapsulates our history and development as a people, an intangible link to the past which we have willingly allowed to be severed.

Secondly, we have extirpated Spanish from our linguistic equation, the world's second most spoken mother tongue after Mandarin, with over 450 million speakers around the world, restricting future generations from the privilege of accessing a cultural capital which spans across the globe and is directly detrimental to the growth of our economy.

Gibraltar has historically had a problem with protecting languages. As a result, we have lost an array of languages since the 1700s and the culmination of Gibraltar's laissez-faire attitude towards any language other than English is occurring before our eyes. Gibraltarians have gone from an envied multilingual people to slowly become a monolingual population surrounded by a world going in the opposite direction.

We do not need to look far for inspiration; Luxembourg proudly values its multilingualism, boasting a multilingual schooling system and three official languages: Luxembourgish, French and German. Malta has two official languages: Maltese and English. Wales has recently published a law which aims for all students to become competent speakers of Welsh before the first half of this century is over. In the Vall d'Aran in the Pyrenees, a population of less than 10,000 has a successful trilingual school system where students leave school knowing at least Aranese, Catalan and Spanish. This list could go on forever. The poor excuses need to stop; the head-in-the-sand mentality has to disappear. The time has come for us to take stock of our historical irresponsibility and give our languages, all of our languages, the rightful position they deserve in Gibraltarian society. If we do not protect our languages, who on earth will?

I have been promoting Llanito online since 2009. Over the years I have come across people with positive and negative attitudes towards Llanito. There are those who brand the use of Llanito as negative, incorrect and ignorant and yet insist with vehemence on what correct Llanito is. More importantly, others enthusiastically value and recognise the cultural importance of Llanito and its significance to Gibraltar and the Gibraltarian identity.

I started my website with a strong sense of apprehension; I feared people's reactions. But my conviction to etch out a space on the internet for Llanito overrode any sense of unease I might have felt then. Promoting Llanito and Gibraltar for everyone to

see has given me the privilege of appearing on the local media; I have spoken for German and French radio, I have helped BA, MA and PhD students from around the world, I have been interviewed for online and paper newspapers in Hong Kong and Catalonia. Creating awareness worldwide about Gibraltar's culture and, in particular, the wonders of its languages is a mission I take very seriously. Llanito generates a lot of interest internationally and many people are often surprised that Gibraltar does not actively promote multilingualism, considering our rich linguistic history and geographical location.

Unfortunately, until recently, Llanito has not been deemed worthy of recognition and has often been wrongly labelled. Llanito is not badly spoken Spanish. Llanito is not badly spoken English. Llanito is not lazy. Llanito is not a random mix of Spanish and English. Llanito is Llanito and that should suffice. Llanito is a language with a rich history; its linguistic base lies in Western Andalusian Spanish, which, over the 18th and 19th centuries, was mainly influenced by two of Gibraltar's main heritage languages: Ligurian, the language of the Genoese and Haketia, the Judaeo-Spanish spoken by the Sephardic Jews of Morocco. Then, in the 20th century, British English began to influence Llanito resulting in the Llanito many Gibraltarians still speak today.

A historical book published in Italian in the late 1800s has always motivated my mission to document Llanito. A particular chapter in the book vividly describes the linguistic landscape of La Kaleta (Catalan Bay). The author explains that the whole population – young and old – spoke Genoese fluently, even those not born in Liguria. Yet in less than 100 years the Genoese language of Gibraltar had disappeared. An extremely vibrant language that was never protected, promoted or recorded, lost to history, part of our linguistic tapestry that we allowed to fade away and disappear into the thick levanter fog. Llanito is awaiting the same fate, but at least, if Llanito does cease to be spoken on the Rock, a written record of our language will be there for future generations of Gibraltarians to rediscover. A sad and overwhelming sensation of frustration always looms over me when I realise that my language is dying and nothing significant is being done to remedy it.

All this pent-up frustration fueled by the will to positively contribute to the continued development of Gibraltar and Gibraltarians ultimately found an outlet. In early 2020, John Manuel Enriles and I set out to establish an association to ensure that Gibraltar's languages have a voice. Over two years of hard work led to the establishment of Gibraltarians for a Multilingual Society (GFAMS) in late 2022. At present, I combine my role as the secretary for the association with the daily running of *Llanito Llanito* and *Languages and You*, a website about languages I launched in 2018. I still have not given up on learning; I frequently try to boost my knowledge of Ligurian, Hebrew, Maltese and Egyptian Arabic, which I have been studying since I was a teenager. I also recently mastered the Cyrillic alphabet and every once in a while I try to learn Greek.

My language journey is an infinite path of sounds that has only just begun. Languages transport cultures through time; they record our experiences and engrain them in their words. I never lose hope that Gibraltar will one day become the true multilingual paradise it deserves to be. Our job as Gibraltarians is to ensure that future generations are not deprived of their rich multicultural and multilingual heritage. So, speak your languages with pride; you own a link to the past that only you can pass on to the future.

Chapter 21
Border boy: a memoir

Jonathan Pizarro

Jonathan Pizarro is a Gibraltarian writer and teacher based in London. His fiction has been included in several literary journals and anthologies, and in 2022 he was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. His column, 'Chasing Nelson', has been featured in the Gibraltar Chronicle *since 2021. He regularly facilitates writing workshops where he encourages the use of cultural identity and diversity of language in literature. He is busy writing his first novel.*

I didn't understand the significance of the location of my birth until recently. I was born in Greys, Essex and spent the first two weeks of my life there. My family then moved to Spain. Algeciras, and then La Línea de la Concepción. We did not live in Gibraltar until I was about four years old.

When I was younger, I thought this all felt special. I would tell my classmates I'd been born in England. My family, as a joke, would say I wasn't Gibraltarian. That I was a *guiri*. My father called me an Essex Boy. It was the mid-90s and the world was rushing in through the television screen. I couldn't think of anything better than not being from Gibraltar. What I wanted was the world. What I wanted was adventure.

And where was Gibraltar, when I watched shows and films on the new satellite channels? Nowhere. I was obsessed with *The Simpsons*, and all the pop culture references that were decidedly American. My mother watched *Eastenders* every Sunday on the BBC. Even Spanish TV had Japanese cartoons on in the afternoon. There was nothing of value in the part of the world where I lived. And the people being beamed into our living room didn't talk like we talked. Neither the words nor the accent, nor our ability to switch between English and Spanish. All I wanted when I was young was to sound like Bart Simpson.

It's only now, with the benefit of having read the history of my people, and listened to their stories, that I fully appreciate that what felt like an exotic origin for me was a result of economic necessity and struggle. Franco closed the border between Spain

and Gibraltar in 1969. Spain lived under that dictatorship until 1975, and the South suffered the worst. My parents moved to the UK seeking a better life. Two weeks after I was born, the border fully re-opened. Except there was a shortage of housing in Gibraltar, hence living in Spain.

And what felt mundane then are things that now preoccupy my work as a writer. Our next-door neighbour who lived through the Civil War. The market in La Línea. The *churros* for breakfast. The trips up the coast where the world expanded into the horizon of the Mediterranean. And a sky so blue and a sun so brilliant in those summer months that I can only hope Heaven will look something like my memory.

In around 1990 we moved to an apartment in John Mackintosh Square, just behind Gibraltar's Main Street. All the things that seem strange and unique about Gibraltar are not a particular highlight in my childhood recollections. They're just there. The giant limestone Rock. The siege tunnels. Seeing Africa from the house. The monkeys. And our language. It's just who we were. Everyone around me was the same. And these things, I saw them every day.

It's only when we go camping to Spain in the summer that I start to feel different. We bring things like tobacco, whiskey and Sudocreme to our Spanish caravan neighbours. They marvel at British chocolate, butter, condensed milk, and sugar. The border queues are long in those days. Hours spent in the car listening to the radio and cultivating patience. The queue length is political, but the people who come to visit and are not here just for tourism. They come for gasoline and cigarettes too. Big groups in town flood the shops that sell the sugar, chocolate, and butter. They also take large wheels of cheese with them. I'm amused by all this. To me, these people are the strange ones. One day in the camping, a woman takes my mother to one sound and proudly pulls out a tube out of a drawer.

"*Mira*," she says, and shows off this new invention that keeps food fresh.

"But Mum," I tell my mother afterwards, "it was just cling film."

I think to these Spanish families we looked like we were in a huge position of privilege. Gibraltar with its financial security and duty-free goods. The only currency they often had against us was language.

We'd be accused, jokingly, of being English. But the barb was always there, hiding behind the smile. It said "you don't belong here, not really." And when it came to the way we spoke, we were the object of ridicule.

The border is a fence in its physicality, but it keeps things out as much as it keeps them in. There's something of a Stockholm syndrome, where people become pleased with the border. And within it, they set their own up. There was a North/South divide in Spain that lingers to this day. Andalucians had been kept purposefully poor. They

had received the worst treatment during the Civil War. Genocide they were now not able to speak about. They were openly ridiculed in the media for the way they spoke. They were stereotyped as superstitious peasants and farmers.

And here we came, these strange people from the other side of the gate with their funny accent and their different food and all these words that didn't make sense. So it was pointed out, persistently, that *ir pa'tra* is not proper Spanish. And that breaking into English when you don't know the word in Spanish means you just don't know Spanish very well. We retaliated. At the way they said *Maria Caray* instead of Mariah Carey. Or *Yorsigh* for Yorkshire Terrier. Little moments of linguistic conflict wrapped up in jokes. But if you're told enough times that you don't speak Spanish properly, you start to internalise it. And then you believe it. And if you can avoid doing it, you do. I did.

Not that Gibraltar made it difficult. School followed the British system. You were punished for speaking Spanish anywhere expect in Spanish class, which was taught as a foreign language. We read Shakespeare and Austen, Edith Wharton and Geoffrey Chaucer. But never Cervantes, Neruda, Lorca or Rosalía de Castro. A highlight of the curriculum was reading *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. It struck me that it was a story from the perspective of the native person, with all the complexity of a society and with a regard for customs and language. And then the colonisers arrive. I wasn't sure why I felt so taken with the novel. It would take years for it to unravel within me.

My parents watched late-night Spanish shows, but they considered Spanish films to be crude and full of sex, so we didn't watch them. After school it was *Oprah Winfrey* and *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* for me and my sister. When our satellite TV channels expanded from three to thirty, we no longer had to watch the Spanish dubbed versions of American programmes. We had the originals, which were superior.

My saving linguistic grace came from necessity. At the age of nine, I became completely obsessed with superheroes and comic books. I watched *Batman* and *X-Men* on television every morning before school, and then I came home and watched the same episodes again. And I wanted to read them too. Except Gibraltar, which still relied on whatever the plane chose to bring in from the UK, did not stock comics. But I found out Spanish newsagents did. So, whenever my parents went for their monthly food shopping to Pryca in Los Barrios, I went with them and picked up *Patrulla-X* and *El Asombroso Hombre-Araña*. My standard Spanish skills improved to the point that during my A-Levels, my teacher told me I was going to be fine and told me to stop attending classes. I received an A*. Not everyone did.

In 2003 I travelled to Cardiff for university. I was desperate to leave Gibraltar, which I found suffocating and small. Arriving in the UK felt like a dream come true. I could go and watch films at the cinema with screens double the size of the one in Gibraltar. I didn't have to wait three to six months to watch a film, they were available on the

release date. I revelled in all the different restaurants and clothes shops. I could get whatever I wanted when I wanted it. And I left Gibraltar behind, practically fully. I didn't feel like I had a need for it. I stopped speaking Spanish, who needed it? I could disappear into a larger culture, reading books in English and no longer feeling like I was missing out.

And yet, it creeped up in places. My flatmates told me I made funny food. That I ate disgusting things like olives and garlic. That I used too much sauce. They made fun of me for the way I said *mayonnaise*. I practised saying it the "right" way in private, desperate to not be singled out like some kind of foreigner. I remember the shock to the system when I found out not everyone called them *rubber shoes*. They were called *trainers*. I stopped saying *rubber shoes*. I bent and submitted and conceded for the acceptance of strangers. Or for them to feel more comfortable.

And then in 2006 I fell apart a little bit and moved back to Gibraltar, to live with my parents. I think I'd probably had too much freedom too quickly and had no idea what to do with my life. So I ended up in the one place I had run away from, and in many ways I started from scratch. Which turned out to be my greatest blessing for understanding who I truly was.

I took a job in a gambling firm and then a supermarket. It was in these places, working in the night with people from both sides of the border, that I got to navigate and understand my culture, my language, and my land as an adult.

Which is not to say there weren't jibes and tensions from time to time, but for the most part it was a pleasant experience. Nobody was telling me how to speak or eat or go through life. I met people who lived in Gibraltar but also people from La Línea and Algeciras. Gibraltarians, Spanish, English, Portuguese, Polish, Filipino. A great big mix of cultures and languages and customs, everyone with their own story of how they had come to stack shelves in a supermarket at night.

I went out in La Línea a lot at night. I travelled to Madrid and Málaga and Barcelona. I spent time in Algeciras and Tangier. In people's homes. Eating their food. Talking late into the night with wine. Dancing until the morning. Going to the fair and *Domingo Rociero*. I felt the land deeply, free from the constraint of a border fence. And I didn't have the tools yet to understand how this affected me. I just lived it. But it also meant that when I returned to the UK after a couple of years, I was no longer willing to concede any aspect of myself.

Angry is what they'll call you. Sensitive. Dramatic. Wrong. That's what happens when you refuse to concede on language. And the more I experienced it, the more I realised how much language matters. Not just in the way I speak but how words are formed.

It was at a party, for example, that it was pointed out to me that I said the word

aubergine wrong. I pointed out that it was my accent. The person, who was English, kept insisting that I should learn how to say it properly.

"Say *jalapeño*," I replied. He said something that sounded closer to *jelly*.

"That's different," he pointed out. "That's just the English translation."

There's always an exception, when it's them.

And so it wasn't that I was picking arguments. I was just going through my life more myself, and pointing things out to people. I worked in a restaurant for a while and I was asked to help out a group of young Spanish people who wanted to order breakfast.

"*Quieres pan blanco o moreno?*" I asked them.

They all started to laugh. I asked what the problem was.

"*No se dice moreno*," they said. "*Es pan integral.*"

I switched back to English. "Would you like white or brown bread? Fried or scrambled eggs?"

The gatekeepers of language suddenly looked lost. I was beginning to understand the importance of who gets to say that language is right or wrong, and who it is imposed upon.

I still didn't feel, however, that I had anything of importance to say about myself and my background. In 2015 I went back to university to study English Literature and Creative Writing, with an eye on becoming an English teacher. I didn't want to be waiting tables or stacking shelves or serving customers for the rest of my life.

The stories I wrote were horror, and science-fiction. Mostly set in London or somewhere in America. It's not that I actively avoided writing about Gibraltar or about myself or using Spanish or Llanito in my work, I just didn't think it held any value. That was a feeling I had absorbed, that had been reinforced through my life. While I was happy being myself in my daily life, I just couldn't see how it would translate into my work. And my work was fine, nothing extraordinary. Good work. Solid work. Forgettable work.

Then everything came together.

My tutor set a piece of work with one word: Home. I had been visiting Gibraltar during holidays and seeing my grandparents decline in health. I put it into a short story about a recipe for *calentita* and a grandmother who starts to experience dementia. I added sprinkles of Llanito to the dialogue. It was met with overwhelming praise. And who doesn't love overwhelming praise?

Meanwhile, I took a module on Lesbian Literature for English, which I figured would be all Sarah Waters and Jeanette Winterson. I mostly took modules that didn't have final

exams and weren't about Shakespeare. Instead, I was surprised to study with a focus on intersectionality and identity. I read the work of Willa Cather, Audre Lorde and Gertrude Stein. Their ideas on their culture, their lived experiences and their relation to language. It was everything I had been feeling about my own self. I could do this. This could translate into my own work.

And then came the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. How can a Gibraltarian not react to a book entitled *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*! It dealt so eloquently with ideas of bilingualism, of existing in a third space, of being unashamed to write for yourself and for your people. It affected me deeply.

This empowerment didn't just help me in my writing. During one of several enquiries into teacher training, someone told me that if I spoke Spanish, it would be best to train as a Spanish teacher. I could teach English anyway, but I would learn how to teach languages. Not to mention, the bursary for language teacher training was much larger, seeing as there was a desperate need for language teachers in the UK.

You wouldn't have known this from my experience. If there's something the UK needs, it might be an understanding of language as something not static. My first stumbling block came in my application to study. I was asked what my mother tongue was. I said it was English and Spanish. I was told there was no space for both on the form. I would have to decide. I asked about the consequences of each. If I picked Spanish as my main language, I would have to undergo a series of exams to prove my English proficiency. I would be labelled as an EAL (English as an Additional Language) student. I later came to find out that students in school can be labelled EAL if their parents are not native English speakers, even if the child was born and raised in the UK. I didn't want to have to prove my English proficiency. I asked about picking English. I was told that it would mean making sure I had sufficient qualifications in Spanish. It seemed like my A-Level would be enough. I chose English.

I would later find out many schools don't think just an A-Level in Spanish is enough. Not even if you're natively bilingual. They want a degree in Spanish if you're British, which they seem to think is shorthand for English. Spanish from Spain is what they're hoping for. Despite the benefits of a native bilingual speaker.

Even during my applications for my course, one of the teacher training course providers refused to even grant me an interview because they said I wasn't sufficiently qualified. I replied in Spanish. They said they'd changed their minds, and I could come in. I declined.

I learned so much during my teacher training, about my own language. Grammar points I had taken for granted. The origin of words. That my Spanish is perfectly fine, even desirable. That there's nothing wrong with my accent. Now I write stories infused with my Gibraltarianness that are published and well-received. Now I teach Spanish in

a London school. I have taught thousands of schoolchildren.
They've all walked away with a little bit of a Llanito accent.
The border has widened.

Chapter 22
The new millennia: negotiating identity in 21st century gibraltar

Francis Devincenzi

Francis Devincenzi graduated from the University of Cambridge in 2022, having read History. He worked at a bank in Gibraltar during his gap year and will be undertaking graduate study at the London School of Economics and Political Science in 2023.

My experience growing up in Gibraltar has been both atypical and perhaps increasingly common among the other twenty-somethings that grew up on the Rock. I primarily speak English. I've been exposed to Spanish and Llanito my entire life and can understand them quite well. My speaking skills have never really been up to par, however, nor were they spoken among my family in the house when I was growing up.

My mum, Sarah, is English. She was born on the South coast near Portsmouth, and lived there and in the surrounding area until her early twenties, when she moved to Gibraltar. Accordingly, she's lived in Gibraltar longer than she did in the United Kingdom. As far as legal-political criteria go, she has a Gibraltarian-British passport, a Gibraltarian ID card, three Gibraltarian children, and a Gibraltarian husband: perhaps as Gibraltarian as one can get despite not having been born or schooled here.

My dad is Gibraltarian, though he left in the late 1970s and spent a large portion of his childhood and early adulthood in Canada, where he and his family emigrated as a latent consequence of the closure of the frontier. He returned in the latter half of the 1990s to a very different Gibraltar, following his parents who had left Alberta for their homeland earlier the same decade. Very few members of my extended family on my dad's side remain in Gibraltar as permanent residents – they've been spread across the globe, to the UK, Italy, and Australia. Many of those who did remain have passed away or we only maintained tentative connections to.

In that sense, growing up in Gibraltar perhaps predisposed one to an Anglocentric worldview. Unlike many of my friends in primary and middle school, I had few *primos* I bumped into in the playground or playing football – my extended family locally comprised effectively of my grandmother, my grandpa having passed away before

my first birthday. My immediate family was small, family gatherings were intimate (unless we travelled to the UK, when they became slightly larger affairs), and English was the language almost exclusively spoken at home. What constituted "home" has not always been Gibraltar for me – I lived in La Línea de la Concepción for a handful of years as a toddler. Although more or less beyond living memory, I have been regaled with tales of my flirting with waitresses in Spanish and greeting random passers-by in the street as a brazen four-year-old with a more carefree attitude and confident grasp of the language than I've probably had since.

That was perhaps my golden opportunity to consolidate an understanding of Spanish that is beyond the rudimentary or "restaurant" variety. Despite living in Spain, I travelled across the border into Gibraltar for my pre-school education at Loreto Convent, where I attended nursery. We're taught in English in Gibraltarian schools, which perhaps has also played a role in eroding the influence of Spanish among younger generations. Other bilingual regions of certain countries have been able to incorporate bilingual teaching to reflect bilingual landscapes – in Quebec, which I visited in 2015, I was surprised to learn that it is compulsory for children and teenagers to take lessons in both English and French. To my understanding, implementing that level of bilingual teaching has never held much currency in Gibraltar. Although I probably would have been opposed to the introduction of this system as a student myself, I think it could reverse some of the drift that's occurred among the younger generation, and perhaps rehabilitate bilingualism in the long-term.

Attempts to cultivate my spoken Spanish came through several sources. The first was Spanish as my dad sought to inculcate it in my siblings and me. Beyond regular trips to Spain and exposure to the spoken language, an array of DVDs and courses were purchased to try and encourage our then-fledgling understanding of the language. Watching *Muzzy* on repeat hard-wired the understanding of certain phrases and words into my brain without any real coherence or everyday reinforcement: *llévenselo, ciruela*, or letters of the alphabet conveyed in sing-song fashion accompanied by dodgy '80s animation. Alongside this were books I remember the name of, the imprint they left having decayed long ago: *Martes terrible*, copies of *Don Quixote* with the original Spanish and translated English on the opposite page, copies of *Harry Potter* translated into Spanish. For whatever reason, I do remember a reluctance (perhaps a simple childish rebelliousness) to engage properly with the language or put in any real effort to develop my understanding of it – these books languished while I immersed myself almost exclusively in English-language media. A product of the times, perhaps – not only did I grow up on primarily British and American television, I have also matured alongside social media platforms that exposed me to much the same (although I think this has potential to work the opposite way and help nurture second languages).

I've always believed that my reflexive reticence to learn Spanish was in part due to the way it was taught at school. It became a regular (and compulsory) fixture of

my education from middle school through to my GCSEs, roughly corresponding to the ages of eight to sixteen. This formal element of my teaching was particularly inconsistent, especially when it came to the varying levels of enthusiasm with which the subject was taught. In middle school, the speaking of Spanish was derided by several teachers of mine. We mechanically worked our way through a textbook and the classic verb tables, alongside some limited role-playing activities, but there was an underlying lack of enthusiasm for the language that I think perhaps translated across to me. It was not uncommon, particularly in middle school, that Spanish lessons were unofficially discarded altogether in favour of another subject. Underlying all this was a palpable sense of xenophobia – one of my teachers later openly admitted to me in casual conversation that his open hostility to the Spanish as a people translated into a reluctance to teach the language. I suppose this is not entirely discordant with the speaking of Llanito insofar as the latter is defined as something uniquely Gibraltarian, and Spanish is only a component of it rather than the defining feature, but the fact that such an attitude even existed was bizarre to me even then because of the fact so many people will happily hold these views and then holiday in Spain or do their shopping there.

By this point, I was already a reluctant speaker, particularly because my accent cleaves closer to an English rather than a Gibraltarian one. Fear of mockery (not unfounded) and shyness made me intentionally inhibit my part in role-playing scenes in school, the only real time I had to practise speaking the language conversationally, and I would never volunteer to speak Spanish or answer questions without some form of coercion from a teacher. Consequently, part of me often dreaded the speaking of Spanish, as silly as that sounds to me now. This carried over into my secondary education, and though the quality of my teaching did markedly improve, the relative ease with which I could memorise things off by heart without a true grasp of what I was saying (perhaps an indictment of the way languages were taught and examined more broadly) meant I achieved an A* in Spanish at GCSE level with only surface-level understanding – and there my formal education ended.

My parents did try their utmost to expose us to Spanish through cultural forms, including television, and more formal extracurricular activities. My brother and I attended the short-lived *Instituto Cervantes*, going to after school lessons to try and shore up and revitalise our understanding. This became an exercise for me in brotherly encouragement as much as anything else, as the lessons often devolved into me trying to comfort him as he became increasingly upset with his inability to understand or respond effectively. Either way, this was curtailed by the closure of the *Instituto*. For obvious reasons, there always needs to be a delicate balance between how political and cultural symbols associated with Spain are displayed in Gibraltar. However, while some level of vigilance is clearly still needed, the closure of language centres like the *Instituto* does seem lamentable insofar as it represented a concrete attempt to reverse the erosion of Spanish in Gibraltar.

Parallel to attempts at formally taught Spanish was my absorption of Llanito phrases and other Spanish-isms that I garnered from my friends through school and extracurricular activities. Across my life thus far, I believe my friendship and social circle has inevitably impacted my ability and confidence to engage in speaking languages other than English. Before I entered secondary school, most friends I made through school and football were Gibraltarian. Particularly through football, where I played with boys older than me for two years, I began to use Spanish words in the context of competitive matches and my accent was probably the most Llanito it has ever been. Looking up to those around me and being immersed in a more exclusively Gibraltarian milieu had me mimicking people by screaming "*falta!*" or "*penalti!*" during games. This never really translated over into casual conversation, and as I entered secondary school and stopped playing football, my social circle became increasingly diverse. Many of my closest friends from secondary school were half-Gibraltarian or were the children of expats from England. They considered themselves Gibraltarian, but neither they nor their parents could speak Spanish or Llanito, which ultimately corresponded to my own linguistic capabilities and proclivities.

Amidst all this angst about my personal identity and why it possibly dissuaded my speaking of Spanish, it would also be remiss of me not to admit that perhaps a subconscious reluctance on my behalf to engage too closely with Spanish is the fact that English (at least in my mind) currently serves as a sort of global *lingua franca*. Knowing that in most places I visit as a tourist some level of English is understood possibly reduces the need in my mind to engage in languages too deeply – this was maybe a mental escape route for me when I felt my Spanish was underdeveloped or hopelessly inflected by my hybrid accent. I visited Vienna in the summer of 2022, travelling alone to a new country for the first time. I did make some effort to learn some German words and phrases – I owe it to my parents and a general sense of common decency that it's "polite" to make an effort to speak to someone in their own language in their country. I have always sought to make this effort as far as possible. Equally, the fact that so many Austrians would respond to my efforts to speak in broken German in English eventually dissuaded me from my *kann ich bitte einen Tisch für einen haben*'s and whittled my vocabulary down to *Danke schoen*. I make more of an effort when I'm in Spain – I think it would be unforgivably lazy of me not to try considering my conversational Spanish isn't totally abysmal – but historically I've also relied on my parents or more fluent friends to speak on my behalf.

Attending university in the United Kingdom also paradoxically limited my ability to speak Spanish and posed concomitant questions that have led me to re-evaluate my identity and its position relative to other Gibraltarians. Initially, part of me felt that living and studying in the UK would feel more natural, that I'd somehow feel more at ease amongst people with whom I believed I had more in common (pale skin and a conventional English accent). This was disproved in my first few weeks, where the culture "jolt" (shock is perhaps an exaggeration) was doubly unexpected

as I adapted to England and attempted to navigate the menagerie of private school types that inhabited the University of Cambridge and the fact it got dark before four o'clock in winter. My Director of Studies initially posed that it would be possible for me to develop my Spanish language skills with the Language Centre if I found the time alongside my degree in History, where having fluency (or at least competency) in a second language could be hugely beneficial. Although this initially appealed, the breakneck speed of the work and adaptation to university life meant that the proposal was not taken up on. My time at university consolidated my Gibraltarian-ness – hardly uncommon for those who spend time away. Coming back home for the holidays provided an opportunity for me to be at ease in more familiar and digestible surroundings, and my perhaps wrongly inflated view of kinship with the English was reshaped into a more realistic appreciation of both my similarity to them and our differences.

Indeed, this sense of resurgent Gibraltarian-ness has been given impetus from various sources – the impact of the Brexit vote in 2016 which clouded our political and social existence in doubt and reignited talks of joint sovereignty with Spain; a keener intellectual perception of the Gibraltarian nation as it exists; a deeper sense of connection to the place in which I was born and raised. Returning to Gibraltar after graduating from university has also rekindled my appreciation for Llanito and Spanish. Working at the local branch of a Swiss bank, which is largely manned by Gibraltarians, has immersed me in an environment where Spanish is regularly spoken. I've discovered and re-learned words through osmosis, listening to my co-workers switch between English, Spanish, and Llanito with regularity (even instinctively to stern sounding Swiss-German people across the phone). Although I've enjoyed being in such a singularly Gibraltarian environment again, I didn't really emulate them by speaking Llanito to them. It does feel like a generational gulf to some extent – in my experience people my age might use Llanito words or phrases in isolation but won't speak in whole sentences, and cognitively I automatically associate it with my parents' generation.

Parallel to my returning to Gibraltar is the fact my girlfriend of almost a year is also Gibraltarian. Being around her extended family and friends has both provided an opportunity for me to be close to a language other than English. As a spoken language and means of communication, I think this is truly the only way to learn or speak Llanito. Knowing and understanding Spanish is critical to this endeavour, as is a social and familial circle which speaks it regularly. Though I'm grateful to have been re-immersed in the past year, I'm also wary that returning to the UK for a post-graduate degree and broader plans to spend my young adult life there or elsewhere means that this development will likely be undone in time – a dilemma facing many young Gibraltarians, and a broader challenge to address locally in an increasingly multilingual world.

Chapter 23
Between cultures: a 21-year-old girl's Gibraltarian experience

Sophie Macdonald

Sophie Macdonald has recently graduated from a degree in English at Cambridge University, where she wrote her dissertation about Llanito in Gibraltarian Literature. In September she will be starting an MA in Intercultural Communication at UCL.

Llanito is my mother tongue, but, through the years, my speech has progressed to mostly English. Apart from Llanito conversations with my grandparents, family, and casual conversations with friends, I think, speak, and work in English. Llanito, for me, has become more of an intimate language; one of nostalgia, childhood, and family.

Growing up, I spent a lot of time with my mostly Spanish/Llanito speaking grandparents whilst my parents were at work. My mama would always have *Telecinco* on in the background, or would chat to her sisters on the phone in Spanish. My mama, Emily, is fluent in English, but she usually opts for Llanito: to this day, even if my mama asks me something in English, I'm inclined to reply in Spanish/Llanito. She would sing songs like "*sana, sana, colita de rana*" to us when we were ill, and we played "*zapatito sabana*" with her regularly. My Grampita, Sergio, on the other hand, despite being evacuated and schooled in English, is a majority-Spanish speaker. He sprinkles a few English words here and there, but these words usually correspond with something my sister and I had spoken about around him — telling us he would call the primary school teachers we had mentioned so we would behave, for example. Having such a close relationship with my grandparents definitely accentuated the level of Llanito I used as a child, and it also became the language in which my sister, Anna, and I communicated. My mama loves to recount a story from when I was a toddler and our pizza was taking a while to arrive: apparently two-year-old me thought the appropriate response was *coñ***. Additionally, in the summer, we would also go to the beach with my mama, her sisters and their children. Together we all spoke in Llanito, and code-switching between English and Spanish was a subconscious exchange.

Childhood videos of my sister and I show us switching between English and strong Llanito between the ages of two and seven, but after that there's a noticeable change to

mostly English. Anna's go-to phrase was *a ver* whenever she wanted to see anything, and mine was *por qué* when I wanted to know why. We also used to play games with our neighbours in our estate — they mostly spoke Gibraltar Spanish, which informed my language choices. However, my sister and I only read English children's books, only watched American television on Disney Channel, and only listened to English songs. Despite my mum rushing us home after school so she could catch *Bea la Fea* on Spanish television, English started to become the language we associated with our interests, the language the world outside of our families was in.

My mum, Romina (Sergio and Emily's daughter), communicates with my sister and me in Llanito: she made sure we never lost it by naturally incorporating it into our conversations. My dad, Alex, also speaks to us in Llanito/English — but, having moved to Plymouth for a short while in his early years, and his father coming from Scotland, my dad only picked up his Spanish when he returned to Gibraltar aged ten. Conversation is predominantly in Llanito on my dad's side, but it leans more towards English than it does on my mum's side. I'd say the Llanito on my dad's side is more of a balance between English and Gibraltar Spanish, whereas on my mum's side Llanito will normally descend into what is more recognisable as Gibraltar Spanish. Jokes told by my aunts and uncles on my dad's side are always in Llanito, and I've definitely picked up some *llanitadas* from them. My sister and I spent a lot of time making up dances and putting on shows with our cousins Kristel, Katie and Emma. While the songs we sang were all in English, our conversations during our rehearsals would have been in Llanito — we definitely would have all called each other *kia*. Subconsciously, however, I always considered my granny Annette as the granny I spoke English to and Emily as the granny I spoke Spanish to — Annette's nickname for all of us was "pudding," whereas Emily's is *reina*. I certainly had a balance between English, Gibraltar Spanish and Llanito on both sides of my family.

At school we were encouraged to speak English: it was the language of greater intelligence, of greater opportunity. As I grew older and progressed to Sacred Heart Middle School, I wanted to speak less Llanito and focus on excelling in English: I especially grew enamoured with English literature in year 7, thanks to the encouragement of my teacher, and wanted to emulate the Jane Austen and Emily Brontë characters I read about. I wanted to read the classics, and Llanito literature was scarce and I didn't value it as much as I did English literature. In the playground, we conversed in Llanito. In the classroom, we conversed and were taught in English. After middle school my Llanito decreased — I associated English with the classroom, education and prestige and Llanito with slang and humour. I didn't think I needed Spanish as much as I did English: I always had to translate Spanish to English in my mind, whereas thinking in English was less noisy to me. There are still, however, some Llanito phrases that express emotion in a way that cannot be compared with their English equivalents: *la pobre* and *qué shuni* are among these.

At Westside Comprehensive, my friends and I conversed mainly in English interspersed with Llanito. Interestingly, my friends and I are more likely to begin and end sentences with a Llanito word. We will start a sentence with *eke, pero, tú sabe* — or give short Llanito answers to questions, like *qué va, qué dise', por dio* or *no sé*. When we're having a laugh together, we definitely use Llanito — Llanito lets us access a culturally specific humour that is funnier than all else. We all speak Llanito to our grandparents, but definitely latch onto English in a way our parents do not. We've had conversations about the rates of spoken Llanito among our generation, and we've all observed a decline from that of our parents' generation, and more so of generations after us. We've all also noted being made fun of, usually endearingly, when speaking Spanish for not speaking it perfectly — which is something that has made us all self-conscious about our use of the language. I've also had conversations with my aunts and uncles about Llanito, all of whom are incredibly passionate about it being our national language.

Literature is my passion — I love English and American literature, and, in addition to my schooling and friendships, it's meant that I naturally think in English. If I'm thinking in Spanish I'm aware of it in a way I'm not when naturally thinking. I'll find it much harder, for example, to read *Don Quixote* than I would F. Scott Fitzgerald. For the past three years, I've studied English Literature at Cambridge University, which has been an insightful, enriching, and surprisingly revelatory experience. I arrived at Cambridge wanting to try my best to fit in with my English friends, to sound as English as I could and draw the least attention as I could to my Gibraltarian accent. Perhaps this was because we were always taught to measure ourselves against England in Gibraltar, to be "more British than the British". Luckily, I had Frank and Anna, two fellow Gibraltarians at Cambridge who provided a fun escape from all the seriousness. Unexpectedly, I was also encouraged by one of my supervisors to investigate Llanito literature for an essay — an essay which became a dissertation.

After my uncle Shane gifted me the works of M. G. Sanchez, I found there was a lot more Gibraltarian literature than I expected — and it was literature that articulated the linguistic liminality I had always felt between Gibraltar Spanish, Llanito and English. I decided I wanted to focus on Gibraltarian literature for my dissertation, to place it on an equal footing with my other dissertation on American Literature. Therefore, I set out to read more M. G. Sanchez, as well as Jonathan Teuma. I also read Rebecca Calderon, Jackie Villa and Andrew Dark's play about the Gibraltar evacuation, *Llévame Donde Nací*. This play was inspired by my boyfriend's grandmother and her mother's experiences during the evacuation — Frank invaluably alerted me to this play, it was one that reflected his own Llanito roots and the experiences of many Gibraltarians. I decided I wanted to explore the origins of Llanito: I found that the evacuation and the closure of the frontier were seminal components for our code-switched language. This made me want to find some literature that reflected Gibraltar's contemporary

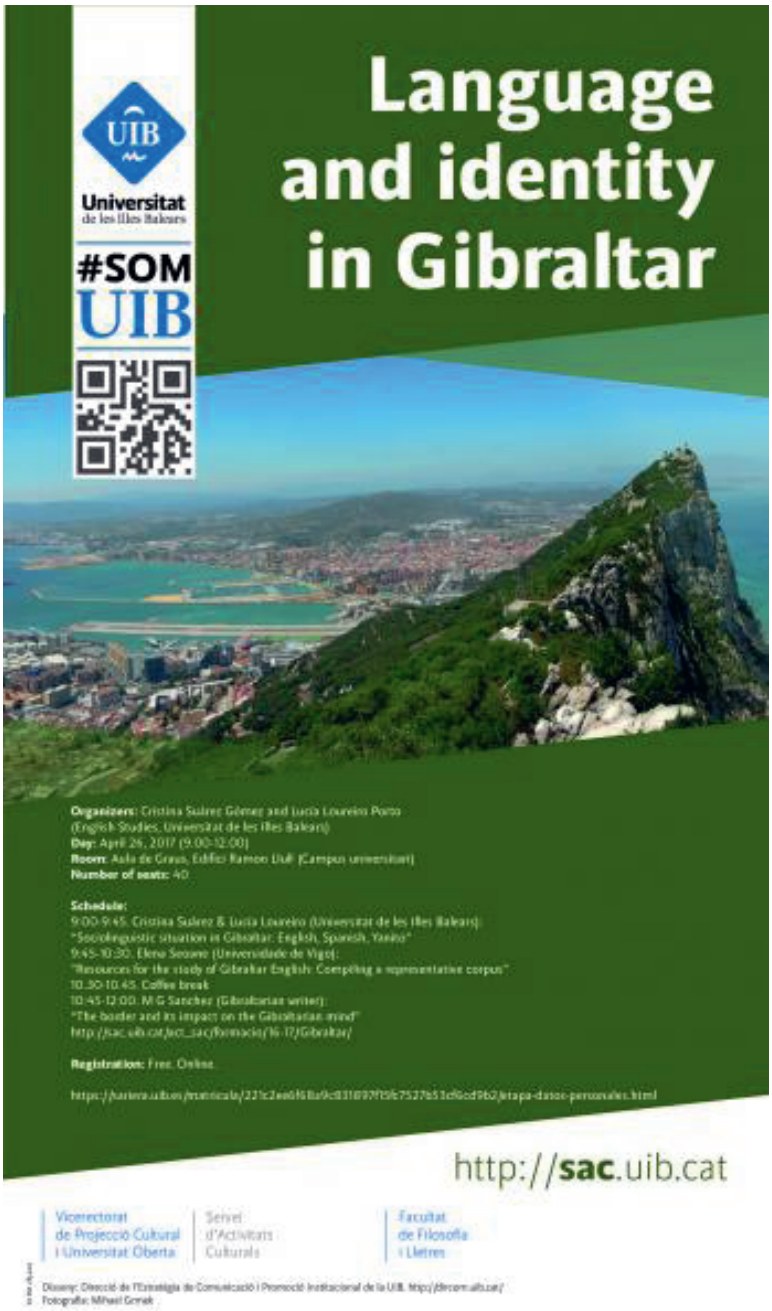
soundscapes, but I found that most of its literature nostalgically turned to the past. To circumvent this, I endeavoured to interview Gibraltar's politicians, authors, academics, and grandparents. Among my interviewees were Fabian Picardo, Joseph Garcia and Joe Bossano — all of whom were very enthusiastic about Llanito. Other interviewees did not seem to agree that Llanito was invaluable to Gibraltarian society, but they did admit to using Llanito to converse. I interviewed my grandparents, and a few others from their generation. This was a heartwarming experience, and I loved learning about their experiences with their Llanito identity. In the process of writing my dissertation, I noticed how many people truly cared about Llanito: how passionate people were about its status as an independent identity, separate to that of England and Spain. Many did not feel the need to caveat their identity as both English and Spanish, just simply Gibraltarian. I also carried out a survey about the declining use of Llanito among younger generations. My research showed that Llanito is in decline, and that the loss of Llanito would be something Gibraltarians of today would mourn irrevocably. It reflected older generations' fear and guilt at this decline, and emphasised they would try their best to reinvigorate Llanito among younger generations.

Whereas before university I was averse to embracing my Llanito, I have completed university more passionate and confident about my Llanito identity than ever. I want to continue to advocate for the preservation of Llanito and continue to elevate its academic status. I'm grateful to my family for keeping Llanito within my linguistic reach, and to my boyfriend, who reminds me that Gibraltar is home. I hope everyone considers Llanito literature as equal to English literature one day — it was pleasant to learn that Cambridge University, an academic institution I always revered, certainly does. My dissertation supervisor, Laura Wright, encouraged me to interview Gibraltarians and has begun to undertake her own work to help safeguard Llanito. She emphasised that Llanito is worthy of academic study, and that there is great value in our native language. Consequently, there was a Gibraltarian Literature symposium at Cambridge University in September 2023, at which I presented my dissertation findings. Llanito should be respected and valued: it is ours. Researching Llanito literature and Llanito identity has been such a formative experience that I have decided to continue to investigate the relationship between Llanito and Gibraltarian identity at postgraduate level. It has even made me consider American literature in a new light: reading Chicanx texts, notably Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, alerted me to the similarities between Tejanos and Llanitos. It showed me that literature of the borderlands provides verisimilitude for anyone in Gibraltar, for anyone straddling two cultures. The 1960/70s saw a Chicanx Literature Renaissance, and I'm glad to see the beginnings of a Llanito Literature Renaissance, to which I hope to contribute, in Gibraltar now.

I think the complete loss of Llanito among younger generations would be a tragedy. It would mean a total shift for the Gibraltarian identity: it would be unrecognisable.

I love the uniqueness of having *croquetas* and *jamón* alongside an English roast at the Christmas table, it is a mixture of cultures that is reflected by our code-switched soundscape. I used to shy away from being different to my friends at university, but after reclaiming my Gibraltarian identity I welcome this difference.

Picture gallery


UIB
Universitat de les Illes Balears
#SOM UIB
Language and identity in Gibraltar
Organizers: Cristina Suárez Gómez and Lucía Loureiro Porto (English Studies, Universitat de les Illes Balears)
Day: April 26, 2017 (9.00-12.00)
Room: Aula de Graus, Edifici Ramon Llull (Campus universitari)
Number of seats: 40
Schedule:
9.00-9.45: Cristina Suárez & Lucía Loureiro (Universitat de les Illes Balears):
"Sociolinguistic situation in Gibraltar: English, Spanish, Yanito"
9.45-10.30: Elena Seoane (Universidade de Vigo):
"Resources for the study of Gibraltar English: Compiling a representative corpus"
10.30-10.45: Coffee break
10.45-12.00: M G Sanchez (Gibraltarian writer):
"The border and its impact on the Gibraltarian mind"
http://sac.uib.cat/lect_sac/Bonnacio/16-17/Gibraltar/
Registration: Free. Online
https://aurora.uib.es/matricula/221c2ea6fd8a9c031897f15fc7527b51cf6cd9b2/etapa-datos-personales.html
http://sac.uib.cat
Vicerectorat de Projecció Cultural i Universitat Oberta
Servei d'Activitats Culturals
Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres
Disseny: Direcció de l'Estratègia de Comunicació i Promoció Institucional de la UIB. http://dircom.uib.cat/
Fotografia: Mihael Grmek


MASTER LANGUAGE
JORNADA DE ESTUDIOS INTERDISCIPLINARIOS
Tejiendo vínculos:
Mujeres entre lenguas y culturas
Instituto Cervantes
PROGRAMA MATUTINO
09:30-10:00 h: Ingreso.
10:00-10:15 h: Palabras de bienvenida del Instituto Cervantes.
10:15-10:30 h: Introducción.
10:35-11:05 h: Ponencia de Elena Seoane Posse: El desarrollo sociohistórico de las lenguas de Gibraltar.
11:10-11:40 h: Ponencia de Antje Muntendam: El multilingüismo en los Andes: Fenómenos del contacto lingüístico entre el quechua y el español.
11:45-12:15 h: Ponencia de Renzo Aguirre Santa Cruz: El multilingüismo en Belice: situación de las lenguas y de sus hablantes.
12:15-12:45 h: Panel de discusión.
12:45-13:30 h: Almuerzo.
PROGRAMA VESPERTINO
13:35-14:05 h: Presentación de Elena Prado: Todo empezó con la idea de emigrar. Las mujeres españolas migrantes en Países Bajos.
14:10-14:40 h: Ponencia de Laura Durante: La generación de frontera. Reflexiones sobre la lengua en Margaryta Yakovenko y Najat El Hachmi.
14:40-14:50 h: Descanso.
14:55-15:25 h: Ponencia de María Carrillo: La aventura literaria de Rosa Nissán entre México y la tradición sefardita.
15:30-16:00 h: Ponencia de Carol Pertuz: Niños descendientes de migrantes y su representación en la literatura de migrantes.
16:00-16:30 h: Panel de discusión.
16:30-17:00 h: Agradecimientos.
17:00 h : Brindis.


Areas temáticas
Lingüística
Literatura
Cultura
JORNADA DE ESTUDIOS INTERDISCIPLINARIOS
Tejiendo vínculos:
Mujeres entre lenguas y culturas
Organizado por
Estudiantes del curso "Español en contacto" de la plataforma MasterLanguage.
Con la colaboración de
Instituto Cervantes
8 de marzo del 2024
De 10:00 a 17:00 h.
Las puertas abren a partir de las 9:30
Instituto Cervantes, Domplein 3, Utrecht
Inscripción gratuita por medio de este código QR
MasterLanguage

Zoom ID: 936 0998 2574

MG Sanchez in Conversation with Robert Patrick Newcomb

Marlboro Man is Gibraltar writer MG Sanchez's new novel, about drug and tobacco smuggling in the Western Mediterranean in the 1990s. It is written in two versions - for Anglophone and for bilingual (English/Spanish) readers.

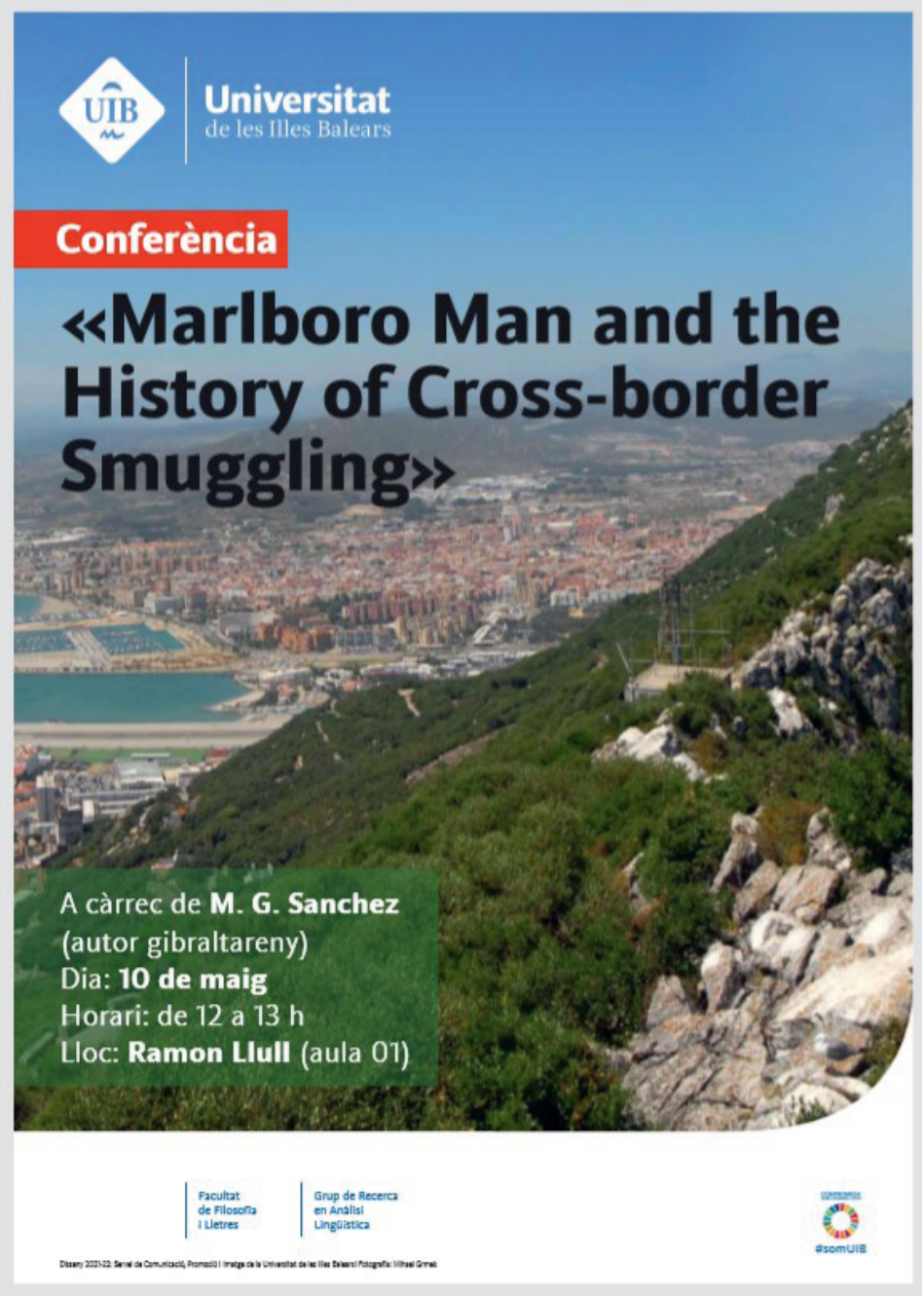
Tuesday, 7 June, 2022

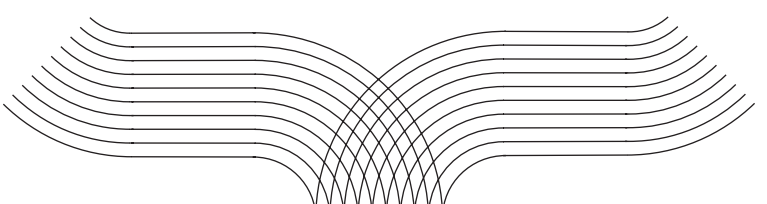
6-7:30 pm (Gib/Spain)
5-6:30 pm (UK)
9-10:30 am (California)

Department of Spanish and Portuguese

University of California, Davis


SCHOOL OF LITERATURE AND LANGUAGES
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY
Marlboro Man
The Story of a
Mediterannean Cigarette Smuggler
MEET THE AUTHOR / DISCUSSION
WITH M G SANCHEZ
13 OCTOBER, 4-6PM, TB06
SCAN THE QR CODE TO BOOK FREE TICKETS


UIB
Universitat
de les Illes Balears
Conferència
«Marlboro Man and the History of Cross-border Smuggling»
A càrrec de M. G. Sanchez
(autor gibraltareny)
Dia: 10 de maig
Horari: de 12 a 13 h
Lloc: Ramon Llull (aula 01)
Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres
Grup de Recerca en Anàlisi Lingüística
#somUIB



Miscelánea

Serie de textos misceláneos

Últimas publicacións na colección

As fugas de recursos, mito ou realidade colonialista en Galicia? Análise a través das políticas europeas de innovación empresarial (2024)
Diego Sande Veiga

El sistema político español. Historia, instituciones, dinámicas. Crítica de la gran abducción neoliberal (2023)
Álvaro Xosé López Mira

¿Sociedad de mercado o sociedad decente? Crítica de la gran abducción neoliberal (2023)
Albino Prada Blanco

Narrativas do Brexit: Escribir a fronteira británica en tempos de crise (2023)
María Alonso Alonso

Poética del Rock. Imaginario lírico de la cultura popular. (2023)
Susana Rodríguez Barcia & Bosco Gil de Gárate-Hernández

9 788411 880121

Gibraltarians and their language

22 linguistic biographies

Over the past four decades, scholars worldwide have delved into Gibraltar's linguistic landscape. Gibraltarians have featured in their articles and studies, but they have done so almost as specimens under the microscope, rarely if ever being allowed to voice their thoughts about what language means to them. *Gibraltarians and their Language: 22 Linguistic Biographies* provides Gibraltarians with a platform to share their thoughts on Llanito, Spanish, and English—the three languages that shape their daily lives. In this way, the book addresses the historical imbalance that has relegated Gibraltarians to a peripheral position in the narrative of Llanito, their own language.

Although it is a unique form of linguistic communication in its own right, Llanito is losing its appeal among the Gibraltarian youth, who prefer to speak English or avoid using Llanito altogether. Why do so many young people in Gibraltar see Llanito as something alien to them? Why do parents lament this gradual erosion of Llanito, but nonetheless continue to speak to their children in English? And why – despite the widespread concern about Llanito's decline – does the Establishment not take more proactive measures to preserve and promote Llanito? The biographies in this volume provide answers to these challenging questions and throw up ideas that might halt and reverse this linguistic decline. Also, by challenging the negative attitudes and stereotypes associated with Llanito, the book proves that Llanito is a valuable and distinctive resource that deserves respect and recognition.

Servizo de Publicacións
Universidade Vigo