

A Comprehensive Analysis of Pachuco

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Table of Contents

- I. Objective of study
- II. Definition of Pachuco
- III. Pachuco as identity
 - A. Image of the Pachuco
 - B. Image of the Pachuca
- IV. History of Pachuco
- V. Etymology of the word “Pachuco”
- VI. Linguistic elements of Pachuco
- VII. Sociolinguistic periods of Pachuco

Objective of Study

- To provide a comprehensive overview of Pachuco, making reference to its history, and discussing how it became important among different Hispanic groups in the 20th century;
- To present some of the linguistic features that distinguish Pachuco from Standard Spanish;
- To describe the sociolinguistic aspects that characterized Pachuco in three different historical periods.

What is Pachuco?

- Lipski (2008) defines Pachuco as “the most legitimate ‘Chicano’ form of expression, rooted in Mexican Spanish but uniquely formed in the United States... A widely held view is that this was once the jargon of thieves and prisoners,[but] was gradually adopted by youth as an in-group slang, and eventually penetrated the speech of the middle class” (Kindle location 1288).
- “In the 1920s and 1930s, [it] became associated with cultural patterns that at one time included zoot-suits and slick hair styles, and whose contemporary reincarnation is the low rider” (Lipski, Kindle location 1292).

The Pachuco

- Zoot Suits: suits with broad shoulders and tapered-leg pants
- Long gold chains and tattoos
- Image of powerful and strong personality
- Image associate with crime and gangs



Cummings (2009)

The Pachuca

- The female companion of the pachuco
- Similar wardrobe of that of the pachuco:
 - Suit with a long jacket and tapered-leg pants
 - Dark makeup and hair in coiffs
- Did not fit the stereotype of the typical woman in the 1940s



Cummings (2009)

History of Pachuco

- Migration from different cities and regions of the United States:
 - El Paso, Texas
 - Tucson, Arizona
 - Los Ángeles, California
- Germán “Tin Tan” Valdés (1915-1973)
 - Mexican actor, singer, and comedian
 - He is believed to have been the first to introduce Pachuco to the Mexican and Mexican American audience

99
nació de

TIN TAN

El “Pachuco de Oro”

Este 19 de septiembre recordamos el nacimiento de uno de los grandes comediantes de la época de oro del cine mexicano. Aquí un poco de la trayectoria del famoso actor y cantante.

MOMENTOS MEMORABLES

- 1934** Trabajó en radio XEJ, en el que mostró por primera vez su capacidad histriónica al imitar a Agustín Lara al aire.
- 1938** Interpretó por primera vez el papel de “pachuco”, el personaje se llamó “Topillo Tapas” y fue creado por el dueño de la emisora donde trabajaba.
- 1940** Tin Tan y su carnal Marcelo iniciaron su carrera en el cortometraje “El que lo hace la paga”. Trabajaron como pareja hasta 1970, año en que Marcelo murió.
- 1943** Luego de una gira surgió la necesidad de cambiar de nombre por ser similar al comediante “Planillas y Topillos”. Así adopta el nombre de Tin Tan.
- 1945** Realizó su primer papel estelar en cine con “El hijo desobediente” de Humberto Gómez Landero. Fue el comienzo de su éxito en la pantalla grande.

Germán Genaro Cipriano Gómez Valdes Castillo

Nace
13 de septiembre de 1915
Ciudad de México

Muere
29 de junio de 1973
Ciudad de México

CANCIONES MÁS RECORDADAS

- Bonita
- Contigo
- Cantando en el baño
- Personalidad
- Los agachados
- De las tobilleras a las medias
- Piel Canela

ALGUNAS PELÍCULAS FAMOSAS

El hijo desobediente	(1945)
El Rey del Barrio	(1949)
Calabacitas Tiernas	(1949)
La Marca del Zorrillo	(1950)
El Centenario	(1952)
El Bello Durmiente	(1952)
Las aventuras de Pito Pérez	(1957)

SABÍAS QUE...
“Tin Tan” prestó su voz para doblajes de Disney, como el oso Balú de “El libro de la selva”, el gato O’Malley de “Los Aristogatos” y el Pequeño Juan en “Robin Hood”

Fuentes: Comisión Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (Cancun), supermexicano.com, cinemexicano.mx, itera.mx, Investigapin, Ana Juchitl Martínez Díaz, Edición México y Famosos Peliculas, Google, arte digital, Alberto Raza Consultora

Durán (2002)

Etymology of the Word “Pachuco”

- Three theories:
 - Derived from the capital city Pachuca in Hidalgo, Mexico.
 - Derived from the word “pocho” (“An American of Mexican parentage, especially one who has adopted U.S. customs and attitudes; an Americanized Mexican”^{*}).
 - Connection with El Paso, Texas: “Oral tradition posits...the deliberate distortion of *[El] Paso* with a resident of the city being known as *vato del Pachuco*” (Lipski, 2008, Kindle location 1290).

* <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/pocho>

L.A. in the Zoot Suit Era :: Zoot Suit Discovery Guide. (n.d.). Retrieved May 12, 2016, from <http://research.pomona.edu/zootsuit/en/zoot-suit-la/>

Linguistic Elements of Pachuco

- Singsong intonation
- Deliberate distortion or clipping of words: meaning not easy to elucidate
- Numerous slang terms: In constant evolution—new words are formed and old ones disappear
- Heavy usage of word and verb borrowing from English

(Barker, 1979; Lipski, 2008)

Linguistic Elements of Pachuco (Cont.)

- “Traditional” Pachuco vocabulary:
 - “Simón” and “sirol” for “sí” (*yes*)
 - “Los” for “Los Angeles” (e.g., “Me tiro pa Los” for *I’m going to Los Angeles*)
 - “Califa” for California
 - And the famous term “La Migra” for *U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service*
 - “Ruca” (*girlfriend*), “carnal/carnala” (*close [Mexican American] friend, soul brother*), “vato” (*guy, dude*), “chale” (*no, shut up*), birlotear (*to dance*)

(Lipski, 2008, Kindle location 1299)

Linguistic Elements of Pachuco (Cont.)

- Borrowings from English adapted to Spanish orthography, phonology, morphology, and syntax:
 - “Ahí te huacho/nos huachamos” (“huachar” from *watch*; *See you later*)
- Changes in the gender of nouns
 - “La problema” instead of “el problema”
 - “La panorama” instead of “el panorama”
- Due to vocabulary changes it is difficult sometimes to elucidate what is meant:

“Decir ‘**voy a dormir, luego te veo**’
ninguna ciencia en el lenguaje entraña;
ellos [los pachucos] dicen:
‘Por fin te barvoleo,
Voy a tirar una poca pestaña’”

(Cárdenas, 2008, p. 85)

Fragment from the poem “Los pachucos” where we can see the difference between **Pachuco** and **Standard Spanish** when saying “I’ll see you later. I’m going to sleep now.”

(Lipski, 2008, Kindle location 1299)

Sociolinguistic Periods of Pachuco

- Divided into three periods:
 - The 1940s and 1950s
 - The 1960s and 1970s
 - The 1980s to present day.
- Common to all:
Associations of Pachuco with crime and underground/subversive cultural movements/ideas, and lack of education.



1940s: The Zoot Suit Riots

- The riots took place during World War II (June 3, 1943);
- Predominantly consisted of conflicts between Pachuco youth and members of the U. S. navy;
- The conflict started in Los Angeles;
- Exacerbated by reports in the *Los Angeles Times*.

(Chiodo, 2013)

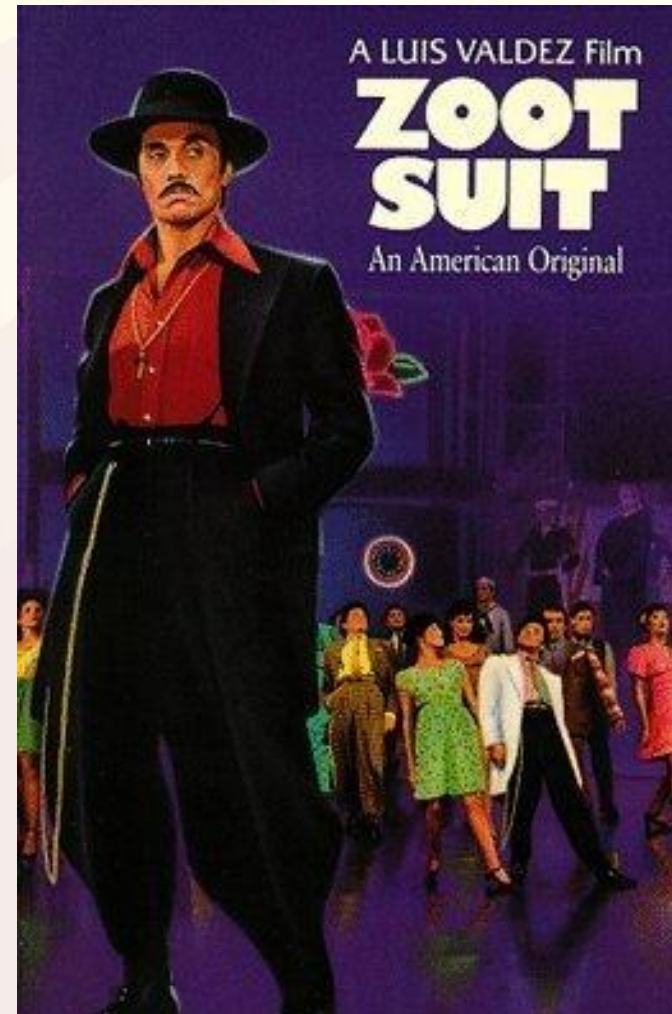


1960s and 1970s

- Resurgence of interest in Pachuco (language and culture)
- Symbol of the Chicano resistance and fight against racism and the establishment
- This is seen in literature:
 1. “El Louie” (1969)
 - Author: José Montoya
 - Synopsis: A pachuco who died in San Jose, California.
 2. “To a Dead Lowrider” (1969)
 - Author: J. L. Navarro
 - Synopsis: The poem is about a pachuco who was killed by police brutality

1980s and 1990s

- “Zoot Suit” (1981): Play and movie directed by Luis Valdez.
- “American Me” (1992): The first scene of the movie depicts the Zoot Suit riots.



Pachuco-Speaking Communities

Current Studies

- Cummings (2009) conducted a sociolinguistic study of Pachuco speakers in Tucson, Arizona.
- Participants: 10 females and nine males. Four were born in the 1920s, 5 in the 1930s, and seven in the 1940s. Also 4 teenagers and young adults were interviewed.
- She asked about their Spanish use in different time periods: e.g., pre WWII and post WWII and current practices.

Pachuco-Speaking Communities (Cont.)

- Through her investigation, Cummings found that:
 - Even though the participants consider themselves Pachucos, they “participate strongly in mainstream United States culture and hold many of its values;
 - Education is esteemed,
 - Monocultural Anglos will recognize and identify with many of the activities, experiences, and values of the older and younger individuals that participated in [Cummings’s] study” (p. 204)
- Cummings also posits that Pachuco culture “has persisted in Tucson for more than seventy-five years, [and] many people are conversant with its forms, appreciate its roots, and [more importantly] do not participate in or subscribe to dynamics introduced by contemporary hardcore gangs” (p. 204)

Conclusion

- Pachuco is a legitimate variety of the Spanish spoken by Mexican Americans in the United States.
- It is not only linguistically sophisticated, but is also linked to a rich historical and cultural background that should be recognized and celebrated.
- Much of its negative connotations can be blamed on the negative ways in which Pachuco culture has been depicted in the media and even literary works (even if unintentionally).
- As Cummings's study shows, most of its speakers have no ties to crime or gang activity, they are law abiding members of American mainstream society, and they are not uneducated.

Suggestions for Further Research

- Continue with Cummings's work, but now focus on a younger generation;
- Examine Spanish-speaking Mexican American communities in regions traditionally associated with Pachuco, such as Los Angeles and El Paso, Texas;
- Make an effort to continue documenting Pachuco's past and present to restore its prestige and to change the common view of this variety and its association with crime.

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