**Creative Multilingualism Programme: Session 2**

**Reading: Spanish**

**Timings**

1. Mad for mush: 20 minutes, including intro, reading aloud, discussion in pairs/ groups, and reporting back.
2. Son poems: 25 minutes: listen to son music and watch dance; read poems aloud; discussion in pairs/ groups and report back.
3. Hemingway: 30 minutes: introduce author and say something about the novel and his techniques; read passage aloud; discuss and report back. (There are no instructions for this in the plan)
4. If time at the end, look at Alurista poem (10-15 mins to introduce him, then to read and discuss poem without guided questions).

**Introduction**

**Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Bilingual Blues* (1995)**

**Introduce the Cuban-American poet and talk about the context of Spanish-English bilingualism in the USA.**

Born in Havana, Cuba and grew up in Miami, Florida. Professor of literature at Columbia University in New York; writes poetry in both Spanish and English, a process he calls “interlingualism.” He once said that, “What I like best… in prose or poetry, is interlingualism, where I can take advantage of the happy accidents that occur when my two languages bump into each other” [quote on slide].

[show map] The US now has more Spanish speakers than Spain – only Mexico has more; US has 41 million native speakers plus 11 million who are bilingual; New Mexico, California, Texas and Arizona have highest concentrations; effect of migration though also the case that many of these southern areas were part of Mexico until Mexican-American war of 1840s. Florida, in the south-east, also has a high concentration of Spanish speakers, many of them from the Caribbean, including Cuba, where Pérez Firmat was born.

1. **Poem: ‘Mad for mush’, by Gustavo Pérez Firmat**
* Teacher to insert poem here. Can be found at <https://www.coursehero.com/file/p5u8jmf/Where-can-Spanglish-be-found-Literary-works-films-TV-series-and-commercials/>

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**In pairs or small groups, think about the following questions:**

* How does the poet play with sound in this poem?

[alliteration on m; visual and aural similarity of much, mush, mash, mucho, más, emphasising similar appearance of words with different meanings in two languages but also highlighting pronunciation of vowel and consonant sounds in English and Spanish].

* How does the poet play on the meaning of words within one language?

[too much: more than enough/ more than I can handle; mi vida: my life/ my darling]

* How does he play on the meaning of words between two languages?

[by bringing together más/ much with mash/mush he associates mixture and confusion with plenty and excess, ie he depicts bilingual experience as rich and full]

1. **‘Son’ poems**

Read the next two poems together. They are both based on the word ‘son,’ which refers to a style of music that originated in Cuba in the 1930s and has been very influential throughout Latin America. They also mention *cha cha cha*, *danzón,* and *guaracha*, also forms of traditional, popular and often fusion music and dance in Cuba.

Couldn’t find this anywhere: it might be from Bilingual Blues

Poem: SON/ SONG

Sometimes I get

the fee

ling that eve

ry word I writ

e deserves a lin

ne to itself.

So cha, so cha, so cha

cha

cha

rged with me

aning, with son

g, do they see

m.

**Poem: ‘Son-sequence’, by Gustav Pérez-Firmat.**

Teacher to insert poem here. Can be found in *Bilingual Blues,* Gustav Pérez-Firmat.

Published by Bilingual Press / Editorial Bilingue (1 Jan. 1995)

**ISBN-13:** 978-0927534475

**Glossary:**

progeny – offspring, child]

danzón, guaracha – genres of popular music in Cuba

**Questions for discussion:**

* How does the poet play on the word ‘son’ in the two poems?

[association with ‘song’ in the first, and with the English word ‘son,’ among other meanings, in the second. What do you think is significant about these associations?]

* What do you think of the way the poet positions and organises words in these poems?

[splitting of words in the first poem, particularly highlighting son/g and cha-cha-charged, literally bringing the sound or music of Cuban Spanish into English]

* Why do you think the poet asks the question, ‘Is he?’ at the end of the second poem?

[his bilingualism makes him feels different from his father]

1. **Alurista (born 1947)**

Alberto Baltazar Urista Heredia, known as Alurista, is a Chicano (Mexican-American) poet and activist. He was born in Mexico City and moved to San Diego with his family at the age of 13. Alurista is one of the first poets to blend English and Spanish in his writing, as well as various slangs of both. He has written extensively on the Chicano Movement and on Chicano culture.

**Ink (Pa' Ixel), by Alurista**

Teacher to insert poem here. Can be found at: <http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/alur3.html>

NB *Pa’ ixel* is in Nahautl, an indigenous language spoken in Mexico; the language of the Aztecs.

**Questions for discussion:**

* How many languages do you think Alurista is using in this poem?

[note unconventional lang/s like naught/ knot/ not]

* What is spillthink? [think freely].
* What is tiesink? [not wear a tie, ie not give in to convention?]
* What do you think he is saying in the first two lines?

[you should be willing to think and write freely]

* What is the link between the words arranged in diagonal lines?

[assoc of sound/ meaning].

* Can we read the words in other directions too?
* no te creas – créate – creer/ crear (believing, creating)
* que esperas – are you waiting/ what are you waiting for? (que, qué)