Beyond “Livin’ la vida loca”:
The status of Spanglish in the U.S.

Wednesday, February 20
12:30 PM - 1:30PM
2339 Faculty/Administration Building
Free and Open to the Public

In this presentation we consider the nature and significance of the phenomenon referred to as “Spanglish,” with particular regard to its status in the United States. We start by examining the different linguistic phenomena covered by this term, which include the use of borrowings, nonce borrowings, calques, semantic extensions, code-switching and code-mixing. We then consider the attitudes towards this phenomenon, which go from an absolute rejection of what some consider to be a sign of semilingualism or lack of proficiency in both languages, to a proud defense of what others consider to be their hybrid native language and symbol of their identity as Latinos in the U.S. Finally, we show some examples of recent oral and written texts, which employ both languages, and offer a preliminary analysis of their nature and significance as expressions of a dual and fluid linguistic and cultural identity.

Eugenia Casielles is an Associate Professor of Spanish and Linguistics at Wayne State. Her research interests include the syntax-pragmatics interface, child language and bilingualism. She is the author of twenty articles and a book entitled The Syntax-Information Structure Interface: Evidence from Spanish and English published by Routledge, and co-editor of The Syntax of Nonsententials published by John Benjamins. She is currently working on bilingual development and code-switching.

Roshawnda Derrick is a Ph.D candidate in Spanish at Wayne State. She is interested in Spanish-English code-switching and Border theories and is currently working on her dissertation. She has presented her work at various conferences and is the author of Understanding Identity and Bilingualism in Sandra Cisneros’ Caramelo published in the Selected Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Foreign Language Conference.