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Spanish in the US

A Sociolinguistic Approach

Edited by
Alberto Pastor

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Spanish in the US: A Sociolinguistic Approach

Spanish in the US: A Sociolinguistic Approach

Guest Editor

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About the Editor

Alberto Pastor

Alberto Pastor (PhD in Spanish Linguistics, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid) is an Associate Professor of Spanish and General Linguistics at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. His research spans two primary areas: Spanish syntax and Spanish sociolinguistics. In the field of syntax, his work examines the syntax–semantics interface, with a particular focus on degree constructions in adjectival and nominal domains. His sociolinguistic research explores various aspects of Spanish in the United States, including bilingual education, language contact, language maintenance and loss, language ideologies and attitudes, and linguistic landscapes. His research has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, *Probus*, *Studies in Hispanic and Lusophone Linguistics*, *Bilingual Research Journal*, and *Language and Education*. He serves as an Associate Editor for the *International Journal of the Linguistic Association of the Southwest* (IJLASSO) and was a Conference Co-Organizer for the *28th Spanish in the US Conference and the 13th Conference on Spanish in Contact with Other Languages* (2023) at SMU, Dallas, TX.

Preface

Multilingualism is a defining feature of the United States, and Spanish stands at its heart, shaping identities, communities, and cultural landscapes. “Spanish in the US: A Sociolinguistic Approach” celebrates the resilience and adaptability of Spanish, exploring its vital role in a society where language is both a bridge and a battleground. This volume highlights the voices of bilingual speakers, the challenges of language maintenance, and the dynamic interplay between Spanish, identity, and power. By embracing linguistic diversity, we move toward a more inclusive and enriched future where every language and speaker matter.

Alberto Pastor

Guest Editor

Editorial

Introduction to the Special Issue Spanish in the US: A Sociolinguistic Approach

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This Special Issue highlights the pivotal role of Spanish as a linguistic and cultural force in the United States, emphasizing its relevance in shaping identities, fostering community connections, and navigating complex sociopolitical landscapes. Spanish, as the second-most spoken language in the country, holds a central position in both private and public spheres, reflecting the dynamic interplay between language and societal factors. The studies presented in this collection address a wide range of sociolinguistic topics, including the challenges of language maintenance and intergenerational transmission, the visibility and representation of Spanish in public and digital spaces, the experiences and contributions of heritage speakers, the complexities of bilingualism and code-switching, and the intersection of language with race, identity, and power. Collectively, the contributions in this volume illuminate the multifaceted ways in which Spanish adapts to and thrives within diverse contexts across the U.S., offering fresh insights into its evolving role in a multilingual society.

Devin L. Jenkins' analysis of language shift in the Western U.S. sheds light on the persistent challenges of intergenerational transmission of Spanish in a region marked by significant demographic changes. His findings illustrate how immigration sustains Spanish-speaking populations in areas like the Pacific Northwest, even as longstanding bilingual communities in New Mexico and Colorado face linguistic erosion. Similarly, Eva Mendieta's exploration of Spanish in Northwest Indiana underscores the importance of community attitudes in language maintenance. Her study reveals a complex relationship between local Spanish varieties and broader sociolinguistic ideologies, highlighting the need for educational and institutional support to foster linguistic security and pride. These studies emphasize the critical role of community and demographic dynamics in sustaining Spanish across generations. Future directions might include examining the intersection of language maintenance and socioeconomic mobility or assessing the role of family and community dynamics in intergenerational language transmission across different regional contexts.

Public representation of Spanish plays a central role in shaping societal attitudes and linguistic visibility. Daniel Guarín's analysis of linguistic landscapes in Philadelphia demonstrates how Spanish signage fosters inclusion and identity in diverse neighborhoods, such as the Golden Block and South Philadelphia's Italian Market. Alicia Cipria and Erin O'Rourke's study extends this discussion to a semi-rural context, documenting how Spanish signage in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, reflects the adaptability of Spanish in emerging Hispanic communities. Both studies highlight the symbolic and functional roles of Spanish in public spaces, illustrating how linguistic landscapes can reflect and reinforce cultural belonging. These insights are complemented by Grace Parker, Maia Botek, and Diego Pascual y Cabo, who trace the evolution of Latinx characters in U.S. television. While recent



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portrayals show progress, covert biases persist, shaping public attitudes about Spanish speakers. These studies call for more nuanced and equitable representations of Spanish in both the public and popular culture spheres, aligning with broader efforts to challenge raciolinguistic ideologies.

Complementing the studies of portrayals of Spanish and Spanish speakers in public discourse, Jazmine Exford’s examination of racialized sociolinguistic processes among non-Latinx Spanish learners draws attention to the intersection of language, race, and power. Her findings highlight how racial ideologies shape access to and perceptions of Spanish, aligning with broader discussions about the role of race in shaping linguistic experiences. Future research could expand on the intersection of language and race by exploring how raciolinguistic ideologies influence public policy, bilingual education, and workplace dynamics.

Heritage speakers are fundamental to the vitality of Spanish in the U.S., and their experiences offer valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities of bilingualism. Marina Cuartero Marco’s analysis reveals how social networks influence heritage speakers’ attitudes and motivations, emphasizing the importance of fostering supportive environments to combat linguistic insecurities. This study resonates with the work of the SEC Spanish Consortium, led by Stephen Fafulas, which models how community-based research and educational initiatives can empower heritage speakers and address systemic inequities. By integrating sociolinguistic research with practical initiatives, the Consortium exemplifies how linguists can drive meaningful social change. These efforts highlight the potential for collaborative approaches to support heritage speakers and promote linguistic equity. By connecting heritage language education to broader social contexts, these studies contribute to ongoing discussions about how best to support heritage speakers.

Bilingualism and code-switching also emerge as central themes in this collection. Cecilia Montes-Alcalá’s study of bilingual texting practices demonstrates how young bilinguals in New York creatively navigate linguistic boundaries, using digital platforms to express their bicultural and bilingual identities. Roshawnda Derrick’s analysis of Spanish-English code-switching in radio advertisements highlights how bilingualism operates as both a communicative strategy and a cultural marker in commercial contexts. These studies challenge deficit-based perspectives on bilingualism, framing code-switching as a sophisticated and contextually rich practice that reflects the dynamic interplay of language and identity. They also open pathways for exploring how bilingualism intersects with emerging technologies and media platforms. The evolving role of Spanish in digital spaces and media platforms, particularly with the rise in artificial intelligence and algorithm-driven content, calls for deeper exploration to understand its implications for representation and accessibility. Representation and accessibility ensure that Spanish-speaking users are not only visible but also empowered in the evolving digital landscape.

Lastly, the studies by Stephen Fafulas et al. and by Christian Puma Ninacuri and Patricia Gubitosi show how Spanish-speaking communities adapt and thrive in diverse U.S. contexts, from emerging Latinx populations in the South to established diasporas in New York City. Both works emphasize the role of Spanish in fostering cultural identity and resilience while navigating linguistic diversity and sociopolitical challenges. They contribute to understanding Spanish’s adaptability across regions, highlighting its role in cultural preservation and adaptation, and advancing discussions on its evolution in a multilingual U.S. society. Community-engaged research, like that of the SEC Spanish Consortium, offers a promising model for studying Spanish in underserved regions while creating tangible benefits for local populations.

This Special Issue highlights the enduring value of Spanish as a linguistic and cultural pillar in the United States, revealing its dynamic interplay with identity, community,

and societal structures. The studies presented in this volume emphasize the challenges and opportunities inherent in maintaining Spanish across generations, particularly as demographic shifts, institutional frameworks, and sociopolitical factors continue to shape its trajectory. Through analyses of intergenerational transmission, public representation, digital and media presence, and the lived experiences of heritage speakers and bilingual communities, the contributors provide a detailed and multifaceted perspective on the evolving role of Spanish in a multilingual society.

Summary of studies:

Devin L. Jenkins' paper, "Shift Still Happens: Spanish Language Maintenance in the Face of Growth and Change in the Western United States", examines Spanish language maintenance and shift over four decades using U.S. Census and American Community Survey data. The study highlights regional disparities: Southwestern states like New Mexico and Colorado face declines in Spanish language density and loyalty due to limited immigration and the erosion of heritage Spanish, while Northwestern states like Oregon and Washington see growth driven by recent immigration. The study revisits the "linguistic cost" of Spanish, previously tied to lower income and education, noting that these negative correlations have weakened over time. Jenkins emphasizes the critical role of immigration in sustaining Spanish use, particularly in emerging Hispanic communities. The findings underscore the complexity of Spanish language maintenance, where demographic growth bolsters its presence, but intergenerational shift poses ongoing challenges.

The paper "Language Attitudes in a Historic Latino Community: The Case of Spanish in Northwest Indiana" by Eva Mendieta examines how Latinos in one of the Midwest's oldest immigration gateways perceive and evaluate their local Spanish variety. Based on 236 survey responses, the study reveals that while some label their Spanish as "improper" or "broken", 78% view it positively as a tool for communication and cultural identity. A significant portion (36%) describe it as a "new dialect" shaped by local influences, with 35% highlighting English's impact. The study also explores broader sociolinguistic ideologies, noting that many participants associate "correct" Spanish with national varieties like those of Spain and Mexico, though some reject a single standard, emphasizing linguistic diversity. Perceptions of Spanish vary by context, with non-Latino attitudes often more negative in areas with fewer Latinos compared to more positive evaluations in Latino enclaves. Mendieta's findings emphasize the resilience of Spanish in Northwest Indiana while highlighting challenges like linguistic shift and stigmatization. The study calls for educational and institutional efforts to foster linguistic security and celebrate Spanish's diverse forms within U.S. Latino communities.

Daniel Guarín's paper "From Bilingualism to Multilingualism: Mapping Language Dynamics in the Linguistic Landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia" explores the role of Spanish in Philadelphia's Hispanic neighborhoods through an analysis of 3437 signs from 2021 to 2023. English dominates (61.65%), followed by Spanish (24.16%) and bilingual signs (13.31%), with a notable increase in monolingual Spanish and bilingual signage over time, signaling greater linguistic diversity. Each neighborhood reflects unique linguistic patterns shaped by its demographics. The Golden Block features a high prevalence of bilingual signs, as it is a historical Latino hub; Olney showcases a mix of languages reflecting its diverse immigrant population; and South Philadelphia's Italian Market highlights Spanish's growing presence in a multicultural setting with a significant Mexican community. The study underscores the symbolic and informational importance of Spanish signage in reinforcing community identity and cohesion, particularly in religious institutions, ethnic businesses, and cultural events. Guarín's work provides valuable insights into urban multilingualism, showing how language shapes identity and community in dynamic sociocultural contexts.

The paper “Multimodal Analysis of the Spanish Linguistic Landscape in Alabama” by Alicia Cipria and Erin O’Rourke examines Spanish signage in Tuscaloosa County, a semi-rural area with a growing Hispanic population. Using a multimodal framework, the study explores how language interacts with visual elements like colors, fonts, and symbols to reflect community identity. Restaurants use multimodal resources to convey authenticity, employing Mexican imagery to appeal to diverse audiences. Stores showcase broader Latino identities through elements like Guatemalan symbols and bilingual text, while churches focus on community connection, using primarily linguistic resources. The study highlights how Spanish signage adapts to sociolinguistic shifts, fostering identity and cohesion even in small communities. Cipria and O’Rourke contribute to understanding Spanish’s resilience in less-studied contexts, emphasizing its role in shaping public spaces and cultural belonging.

The paper “The Evolving Landscape of Spanish Language Representation in U.S. Media: From Overt to Covert Discrimination” by Grace A. Parker, Maia Botek, and Diego Pascual y Cabo examines how portrayals of Spanish and Latinx characters in television have shifted from overt to covert discrimination. Analyzing six shows from the 1990s to today, the study highlights how earlier programs like *That ’70s Show* and *Family Guy* often ridiculed linguistic practices and perpetuated stereotypes, while contemporary series such as *One Day at a Time* and *Gentefied* present greater linguistic and cultural authenticity. Despite progress, covert biases persist, subtly reinforcing stereotypes tied to race, gender, and class. For instance, Spanish-dominant characters are still linked to lower socioeconomic status, and Latina women are hypersexualized. The study calls for ongoing critical examination of media to dismantle raciolinguistic ideologies and foster authentic, diverse portrayals that reflect the richness of Latinx experiences.

Jazmine Exford’s paper, “Racialized Sociolinguistic Processes in the Spanish Learning Journeys of Non-Latinxs in the U.S.”, explores how race, identity, and power shape Spanish acquisition among non-Latinx learners. Based on ethnographic interviews, the study identifies three processes: racialized positionality, where learners’ racial identities affect their engagement with Spanish-speaking communities; racialized embodiment, where physical traits influence interactions with Spanish speakers, sometimes leading to exoticizing or gendered perceptions; and indexical fields of racialization, where learners interpret racialized terms like *negra* through cultural and historical lenses. The study highlights the need for Critical Language Awareness (CLA) in Spanish education to address these dynamics, fostering discussions on race and identity to better support diverse learners. Exford’s findings advance raciolinguistics by showing how race mediates language learning in multilingual settings.

The paper by Marina Cuartero Marco, titled “Dime con Quién Andas y te Diré Qué Piensas Sobre el Español de los US”, examines how social networks shape the attitudes and motivations of 26 Spanish heritage speakers (HSs) in a Spanish Heritage Language program. Using Personal Social Network Analysis (PSNA), the study shows that close relationships, particularly with family, play a dual role: providing support and encouragement but also inducing language shame or high expectations that affect confidence and motivation. The study identifies intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, with family expectations and cultural identity strongly influencing the latter. Attitudes within networks, such as beliefs about language correctness, significantly impact HSs’ willingness to maintain or improve their Spanish. Cuartero Marco underscores the need for supportive educational and community environments to foster positive attitudes, address linguistic insecurities, and combat negative ideologies about bilingualism. This research highlights the complex

interplay between language, identity, and community dynamics shaping HSs' experiences in the U.S.

Cecilia Montes-Alcalá's paper, "Bilingual Texting in the Age of Emoji", examines Spanish–English code-switching in text messages among bilingual youth in New York City. Analyzing 44,597 messages from the Bilingual Youth Texts (BYTs) Corpus, the study identifies key patterns, including tag switching (e.g., "baby", "bro"), textisms like "LOL", cultural references (e.g., "sancocho"), and shifts for emphasis or clarification. Although code-switching appears in only 6.4% of messages, it reflects strategies found in oral discourse, serving as a tool for identity expression, bicultural creativity, and stylistic nuance. Montes-Alcalá highlights that texting code-switching is a sophisticated adaptation to bilingual realities, providing valuable insights into how technology shapes language use and cultural belonging in multilingual communities.

The paper by Roshawnda A. Derrick titled "Radio-Lect: Spanish/English Code-Switching in On-Air Advertisements" examines Spanish-English code-switching (CS) in advertisements on Los Angeles' bilingual radio station 96.3 La Mega. Analyzing 72 h of recordings and 143 ads, the study reveals that national ads favor monolingual Spanish (74.8%), while DJ-endorsed ads show greater linguistic flexibility, with 15.8% featuring hybrid sentences that blend Spanish and English. DJ-endorsed ads align with the station's bilingual ethos, mirroring the linguistic practices of its DJs and younger Latinx audiences. Derrick highlights CS as a strategic tool for engaging bilingual communities, emphasizing its cultural relevance and adaptability in diverse linguistic contexts. This study contributes to discussions on bilingualism in media and marketing, showing how CS reflects both cultural identity and audience connection.

The paper "Ecuadorians in NYC: Language and Cultural Practices of a Community in the Diaspora" by Christian Puma Ninacuri and Patricia Gubitosi examines how Ecuadorian migrants in Queens and Brooklyn maintain their cultural heritage while adapting to NYC's superdiverse environment. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, the study highlights Ecuadorian Andean Spanish as a marker of in-group solidarity, despite linguistic insecurities stemming from ideologies favoring "standard" Spanish. Features like the discourse marker *ve* and terms like *ñañño* (brother/friend) remain central to community identity. Cultural practices such as festivals, Ecuavolley games, and food-related events foster a sense of belonging and intergenerational dialog, enriched by newer Kichwa-speaking migrants. The study stresses the importance of linguistic and cultural spaces in maintaining diaspora cohesion and resilience, offering insights into the balance between cultural preservation and adaptation in multilingual urban settings.

The paper "The SEC Spanish Consortium: Foundations for Linguistic Gratuity and Language Documentation Among Latinx Populations in New Destination Communities of the U.S. South" by Stephen Fafulas, Chad Howe, Rafael Orozco, Alicia Cipria, Erin O'Rourke, Nina Moreno, and Matthew J. Van Hoose introduces an initiative focused on documenting and supporting Latinx communities in the rapidly growing and diverse U.S. South. These "new destination" communities provide unique insights into language contact and bilingual identity development. The Consortium combines sociolinguistic research, community engagement, and advocacy with initiatives like documenting linguistic landscapes, conducting interviews, and fostering "linguistic gratuity" through bilingual health fairs and heritage language programs. The findings reveal that while Spanish strengthens community cohesion, its use is influenced by regional context, migration histories, and sociopolitical challenges. The Consortium addresses barriers like linguistic discrimination through partnerships with local stakeholders, promoting appreciation for Latinx linguistic and cultural contributions. This work highlights how Spanish adapts in

nontraditional Hispanic regions, offering a model for collaborative, community-driven research in multilingual settings.

In conclusion, while this Special Issue thoroughly explores Spanish as a linguistic and cultural force in the United States, it also identifies opportunities for further research. For example, the vitality of Spanish in smaller, nontraditional Hispanic communities, where population density and institutional support may differ from larger urban centers, remains underexplored. This collection also leaves room for more nationwide comprehensive analyses of generational language shifts among newer immigrant groups and long-standing Hispanic populations and the impact of socioeconomic mobility on language practices. Additionally, while this collection sheds light on heritage speakers and bilingualism, it highlights the need for deeper analysis of the generational dynamics within their families and communities, particularly how changing social networks influence language retention and shift over time.

Another critical area for future research involves the informal standardization of U.S. Spanish varieties. As Spanish gains prominence in media, education, and public life, certain structural features and bilingual practices are becoming widely recognized. Questions surrounding the potential need for official standards, their legitimacy, and their implications for education, society, and policy are yet to be resolved. Who should participate in these standardization discussions, and what would be the broader societal impacts of institutionalized norms? Addressing these questions could provide valuable insights into the future trajectory of Spanish in the U.S.

Lastly, the intersection of language and systemic inequities, including the influence of raciolinguistic ideologies on bilingual education, workplace dynamics, and public policy, continues to be a vital area for future inquiry. These efforts could further illuminate how structural barriers can be dismantled to promote linguistic equity. Future research could also address the sociolinguistic implications of emerging technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence, which increasingly shape the representation and accessibility of Spanish in digital spaces. By addressing these gaps, future research can build on the foundation laid by this Special Issue, contributing to a richer and more inclusive understanding of Spanish's evolving role in the multilingual U.S. context. This ongoing work underscores the importance of interdisciplinary, community-engaged approaches that both celebrate and support the diversity of Spanish speakers and their linguistic practices.

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Article

Shift Still Happens: Spanish Language Maintenance in the Face of Growth and Change in the Western United States

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Abstract: The recent release of 2020 U.S. Census data reflects the continued growth of the Hispanic/Latino population over the last four decades. The Hispanic/Latino population has increased by a factor of 3.25 since 1980, with nearly one in five inhabitants of the United States identifying as Hispanic or Latino. With these demographic changes, language maintenance figures have shown significant change as well. In every state, a language shift is evident, as all of the western states have lower measures of Spanish language maintenance among the Hispanic population than they did a generation ago. So, while Spanish language use is growing with regard to overall numbers in most of the Western United States, language shift is still a reality among the Latino population. Social variables such as education, income, and employment also show a different relationship with the Spanish language than they did 40 years ago. While there were strong negative correlations between Spanish language use and these variables in the previous generation, many (but not all) of these correlations have weakened, many to the point of no statistical significance in the data from 2020.

Keywords: Spanish; Southwest; United States; language shift; language maintenance; social factors; census



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1. Introduction

Over the last 40 years, the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States has increased significantly, both in overall numbers and as a percentage of the total United States population. A population that measured a total of 14.6 million in 1980 has effectively increased by that amount every decade since, now more than 62 million strong as of the 2020 Census, jumping from 6.4% (in 1980) to 18.7% (in 2020) of the nation's population. Hispanics as a whole comprise the largest minority group in the United States, and the proportion relative to the total population continues to grow.

The Spanish language community in the United States has long felt the effects of intergenerational language shift, wherein the language shifts from Spanish to English over the course of three generations. Additionally, Hudson et al. (1995) found that speaking Spanish in the southwest United States has historically come at a cost, wherein “educational and economic success in the Spanish-origin population are purchased at the expense of Spanish language maintenance in the home” (p. 179). Their data for such a conclusion came from the 1980 United States Census. Since then, the rapid and sizeable growth of the Spanish-speaking population has encouraged further studies on Spanish language maintenance and the relationship between Spanish as a home language and socioeconomic variables such as income, education, and professional experience. McCullough and Jenkins (2005) found that, in Colorado, those relationships were not as strong in 2000 as they had been in 1980 and 1990. They also identified recent immigration in a community as a strong predictor of language maintenance. Jenkins (2009b) examined the same southwestern states as Hudson et al. (1995) and found that the relationships between Spanish language use and social variables had weakened almost categorically. Then, 2010 data showed that those relationships had weakened even further, with zero significance in the relationship in categories like employment and poverty (Jenkins 2013).

What was once a geographically discrete language community in the Southwestern United States has expanded not only numerically but also geographically. Spanish-speaking communities that were once predominantly confined to areas close to the Mexican border have expanded outward such that the Mexican community has strong representation throughout the United States. Every contiguous state outside of the Eastern Time Zone (and 40 total states) counts Mexicans as their largest Latino population, and the percentage of Hispanics in each state has increased at a corresponding pace. In 1980, five states west of the Mississippi (the four border states plus Colorado) had Spanish-speaking (or even Hispanic) counts greater than 10%, which merited a relatively closed focus on that area. That figure has doubled, with more states, like Kansas, approaching that benchmark. Illinois could also make a strong case for inclusion in studies on Southwest Spanish, even though it is nowhere near the Southwest. It boasts the fourth-largest population of Mexicans in the country; the Midwest as a whole merits further sociolinguistic study as it relates to Mexican-origin populations (cf. Potowski 2020). The current study will focus on the 10 contiguous western states with Hispanic populations greater than 10% as of 2020, serving as a comparison of “old” versus “new” as well as a contrast between “south” and “north”. We will collectively refer to Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas as the “Southwest”, and Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington as the “Northwest”. We recognize that Nevada and Utah are not Northwestern states as traditionally recognized (i.e., the “Pacific Northwest”), but we use the term here out of convenience to distinguish those five states from the traditional, Spanish-speaking Southwest.

Rivera-Mills (2010) noted a certain mystique among policymakers once round figures, like 10%, are achieved in a minority population. Ballot initiatives regarding language and educational policy are more common in those states that have reached that threshold. Kusnet (1992) also points out that “the five percent level is an important political and social threshold because a 1975 Voting Rights Act amendment states that jurisdictions must provide bilingual ballots and bilingual election materials when 5 percent of its voting age population belongs to a single-language minority” (p. 15). Five percent has also been used in previous population studies to delimit the Spanish-speaking Southwest (Nostrand 1970; Haverluk 1997).

The current study engages two questions as they relate to Spanish language use in the Western United States. First, has the large population growth and increased density of the Spanish-speaking population impacted rates of Spanish-language maintenance among Hispanics in the Western United States? Second, what is the current relationship between the use of Spanish as a home language and socioeconomic indicators? What is the cost of Spanish language loyalty in 2020?

This study will employ data from the United States Census for the last five decennial census periods, from 1980 through 2020. It bears mentioning that, due to the pandemic, the 2020 Census faced challenges of both practicality and policymaking. As a result, the census post-enumeration survey showed that “the Hispanic or Latino population had a statistically significant undercount rate of 4.99%. This is statistically different from a 1.54% undercount in 2010” (U.S. Census Bureau 2022b). This undercount is important, yet the scope of the Census is such that, even with this challenge, general trends can still be observed with the available data. Additionally, the annual American Community Survey helps to offset some of the Census limitations to provide a more accurate picture of the Hispanic and Spanish-speaking communities in the country. We will employ data from both of these surveys, with the American Community Survey featuring more prominently in more recent data.

2. Demographic Trends

Both the number of Hispanics and the proportion of Hispanics within the U.S. population have steadily increased since 1980, with the count increasing by 325% and the proportion of the population more than tripling in that time period. Though the proportions grew the most in the Hispanic immigrant boom between 1990 and 2000, the most

recent decade from 2010 to 2020 showed the greatest total growth, increasing by 14.3 million in that ten-year period alone (Table 1).

Table 1. Hispanic or Latino population, by total count and percentage of total population (U.S. Census Bureau 1983, 1992, 2000, 2010, 2020e).

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Δ 1980–2020
USA	14,608,673 6.4%	22,354,059 9.0%	35,305,818 12.5%	47,727,533 15.7%	62,080,044 18.7%	325%

Growth rates have been greater in areas that have historically not had large Hispanic populations, which is true at both the county level and the state level. States with the largest percentage growth in the Hispanic population generally can be found outside of the Southwestern United States. Conversely, areas with negative growth in the Hispanic population are generally those where Hispanic densities are highest, in areas like New Mexico, Southern Colorado, and West Texas, as seen in Figure 1, which shows growth rates from 2010 to 2020. Note that, while high growth and negative growth areas are easily discernible, the map is incomplete in proportional reporting, as areas with fewer than 1000 Hispanics are left unshaded.

Hispanic population growth rates from 2010 to 2020 highest in states that historically did not have large Hispanic populations

% growth of Hispanics

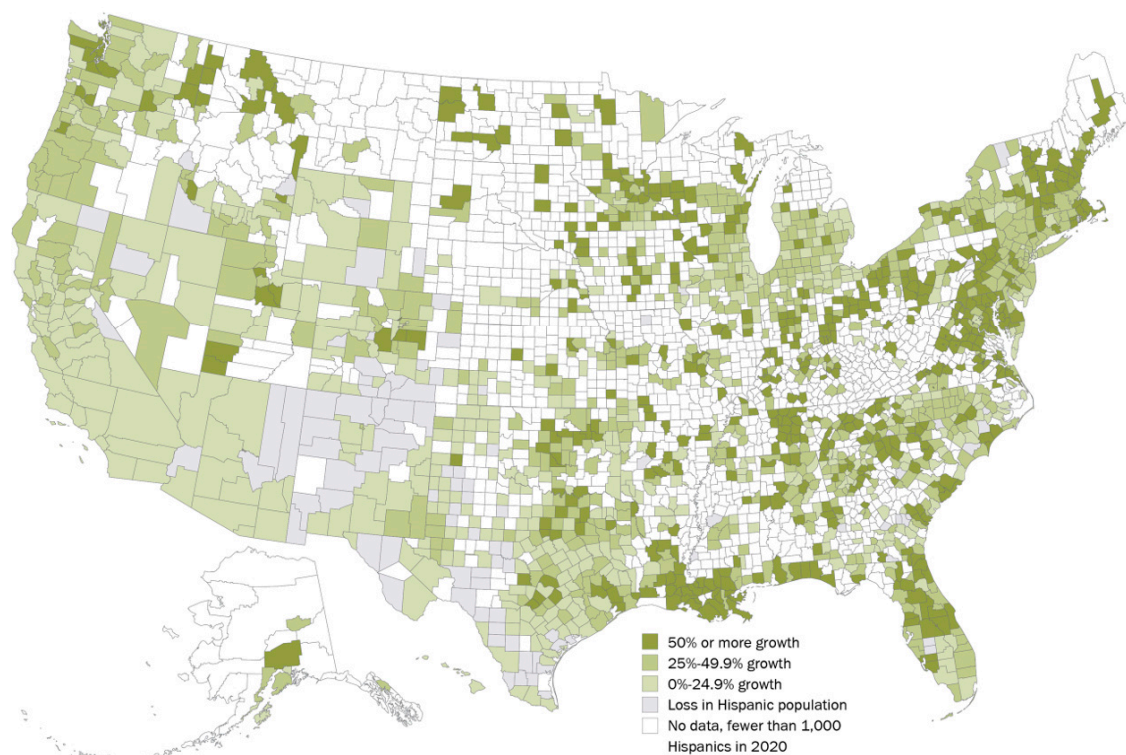


Figure 1. Percent growth of Hispanic population in United States from 2010 to 2020, by county (image from Passel et al. 2022).

Among western states, we see a wide range of growth, as reflected in Table 2. At the high end of the growth spectrum, Nevada experienced 1552% growth in the Hispanic population in the 40-year period. Northwestern states with newer Hispanic populations, like Oregon, Utah, and Washington, saw growth rates greater than 700% in that period.

States with more established Hispanic populations, like California, Colorado, and Texas, while seeing significant total growth, experienced more modest growth rates as a percentage of the total population, each ranging between 200 and 300% in that time period. By virtue of the size of their total populations, California and Texas account for a large percentage of the total growth in the West, and that same enormity of their total populations explains the less drastic growth percentages. New Mexico is the outlier on the low end of the spectrum, with little more than a doubling of the Hispanic population in the four-decade term.

Table 2. Hispanic or Latino population (raw count and percentage of the state total) for 10 western states, 1980–2020 (U.S. Census Bureau 1982, 1992, 2000, 2010, 2020e).

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Δ 1980–2020
California	4,544,331 19.2%	7,687,938 25.8%	10,966,556 32.4%	14,013,719 37.6%	15,579,652 39.4%	243%
Texas	2,985,824 21.0%	4,339,905 25.5%	6,669,666 32.0%	9,460,921 37.6%	11,441,717 39.3%	283%
Arizona	440,701 16.2%	688,338 18.8%	1,295,617 25.3%	1,895,149 29.6%	2,192,253 30.7%	397%
Colorado	339,717 11.8%	424,302 12.9%	735,601 17.1%	1,038,687 20.7%	1,263,390 21.9%	272%
Washington	120,016 2.9%	214,570 4.4%	441,509 7.5%	755,790 11.2%	1,059,213 13.7%	783%
New Mexico	477,222 36.6%	579,224 38.2%	765,386 42.1%	953,403 46.3%	1,010,811 47.7%	112%
Nevada	53,879 6.7%	124,419 10.4%	393,970 19.7%	716,501 26.5%	890,257 28.7%	1552%
Oregon	65,847 2.5%	112,707 4.0%	275,314 8.0%	450,062 11.7%	588,757 13.9%	794%
Utah	60,302 4.1%	83,097 4.8%	201,559 9.0%	358,340 13.0%	492,912 15.1%	717%
Idaho	36,615 3.9%	52,927 5.3%	101,690 7.9%	175,901 11.2%	239,407 13.0%	554%
Total	9,124,454				34,758,369	281%

3. Spanish Language Use

Spanish language growth in the West has effectively paralleled the growth of the Hispanic population, with a few notable differences in the data. In Table 3, we can see the general upward trend in Spanish language density for the Southwest. The 10-state region as a whole grew by a factor of 2.37 in the 40-year period, which is slightly lower than the 265% growth rate for the country as a whole. We can see four different groupings in these data, as reflected in Figure 2. First, we see a clear clustering among the newer Spanish-speaking states of Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington, which all increased from relatively small densities in 1980 (1.7–3.2%) to much more sizeable densities in 2020 (8.0–10.3%). The total growth rate of these four states is remarkable, with a growth range of 667% to 736% in Oregon, Utah, and Washington and a more modest, but still noteworthy, rate of 384% in Idaho. Each of these states achieved its highest density to date in the 2020 Census.

Table 3. Spanish-speaking population (raw count and percentage of the state total) for 10 western states, 1980–2020 (Highest percentage for each state is in bold).

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	Δ 1980–2020
California	3,132,690 14.3%	5,475,367 20.0%	8,105,505 25.8%	9,706,949 28.5%	10,462,968 28.3%	234%
Texas	2,484,188 19.0%	3,442,418 22.1%	5,195,182 27.0%	6,547,178 29.2%	7,666,020 28.8%	209%
Arizona	331,038 13.2%	478,157 14.2%	927,395 19.5%	1,199,689 20.7%	1,358,980 20.2%	311%
Colorado	179,607 6.7%	203,877 6.7%	421,670 10.5%	542,257 11.9%	602,273 11.2%	235%
Washington	78,489 2.1%	143,594 3.2%	321,490 5.8%	477,752 7.8%	602,058 8.5%	667%
Nevada	34,813 4.7%	85,474 7.7%	299,947 16.2%	480,267 19.6%	593,610 20.9%	1605%
New Mexico	352,488 29.7%	388,123 27.9%	485,681 28.7%	532,568 28.5%	514,071 26.0%	46%
Oregon	41,806 1.7%	83,072 3.1%	217,614 6.8%	302,701 8.6%	349,549 8.9%	736%
Utah	36,056 2.8%	51,945 3.3%	150,244 7.4%	225,418 9.4%	297,926 10.3%	726%
Idaho	27,118 3.2%	37,078 4.0%	80,241 6.7%	106,792 7.6%	131,145 8.0%	384%
Total	6,698,293				22,578,600	237%

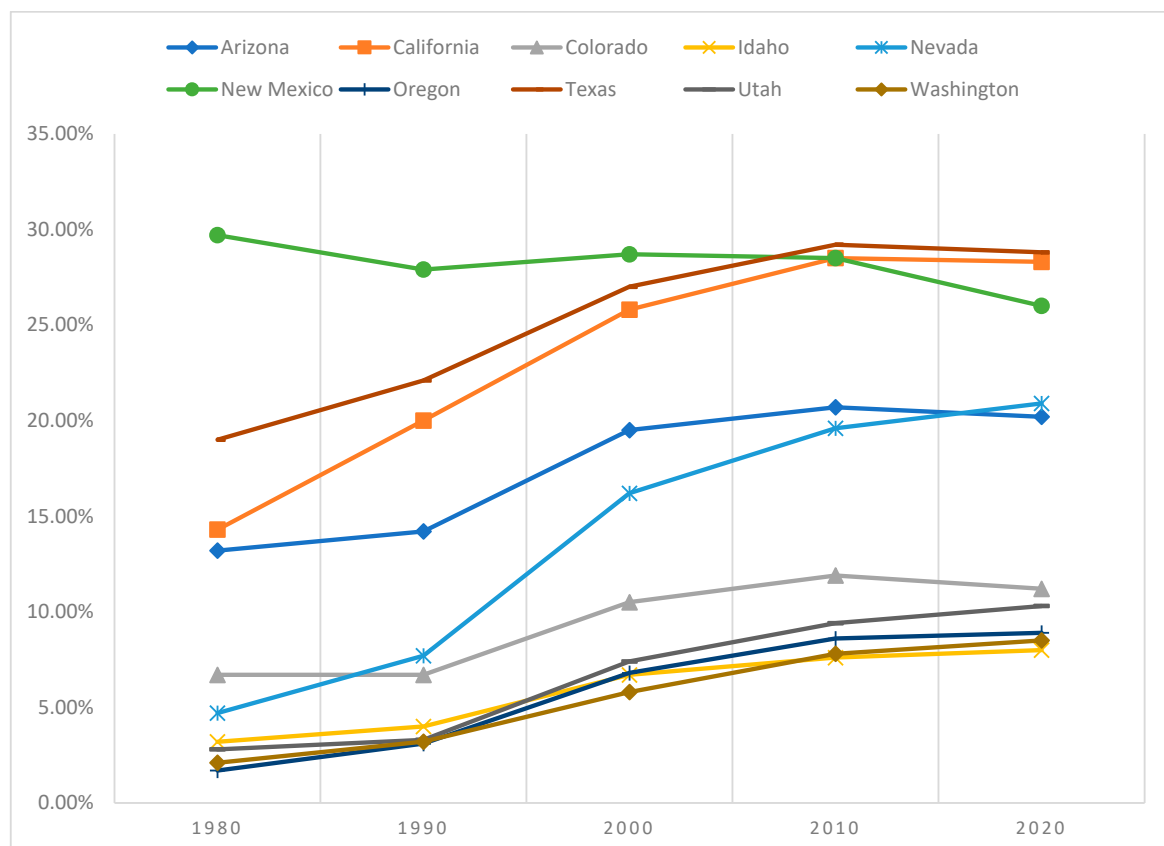


Figure 2. Spanish language density by state, 1980–2020.

Second, we see the traditional Spanish-speaking areas of Arizona, California, Colorado, and Texas growing rather significantly since 1980, peaking in 2010, then declining in density slightly in the 2020 data. While California and Texas started with much larger populations than any of the other states, and their gross numerical gains far outstrip the total growth for all of the other states combined, their relative growth is lower, with 234% and 209% growth, respectively. Arizona's 311% growth rate is comparable to these, and Colorado's growth rate, at 235%, is almost identical to that of California.

The two outliers in the data reflect their own unique trends. First, Nevada's Spanish-speaking population grew by an astounding 1605% in the 40-year period. In 1980, Nevada counted fewer Spanish speakers than any western state outside of Idaho. By 1990, it had outgained Oregon and Utah, and by 2020, it had surpassed New Mexico in the total number of Spanish speakers and now rivals Colorado and Washington in its count, even though those two states have total populations that are nearly or more than double that of Nevada. It ranks fourth behind only California, Texas, and New Mexico in Spanish language density, with better than one in five inhabitants of the state claiming Spanish as a home language.

New Mexico represents the final trend, and certainly the least optimistic for Spanish language maintenance. Even though the total count of Hispanics in the state has risen every decade since 1980, for a total growth rate of 112%—considerably lower than that of any other state in the region—the language density growth rate is a relatively paltry 46%. In 1980, New Mexico had the 3rd-largest Spanish-language count of the 10 states; now, it ranks 7th. By comparing the Hispanic and Spanish-language growth figures, the conclusion is that Spanish language density in New Mexico has steadily declined since 1980. Bills and Vigil (2008, p. 240), using data from a generation ago, pointed out that “the Traditional New Mexican Spanish dialect [in the northern half of the state] is dying out,” due to contact with both English and Mexican Spanish, and the present data bear that assertion out. In Figure 3, we can see that, while the Hispanic/Latino population has increased as a percentage of the total population every decade, the density of Spanish speakers in the state has steadily declined, showing an expanding language maintenance gap among Latinos.

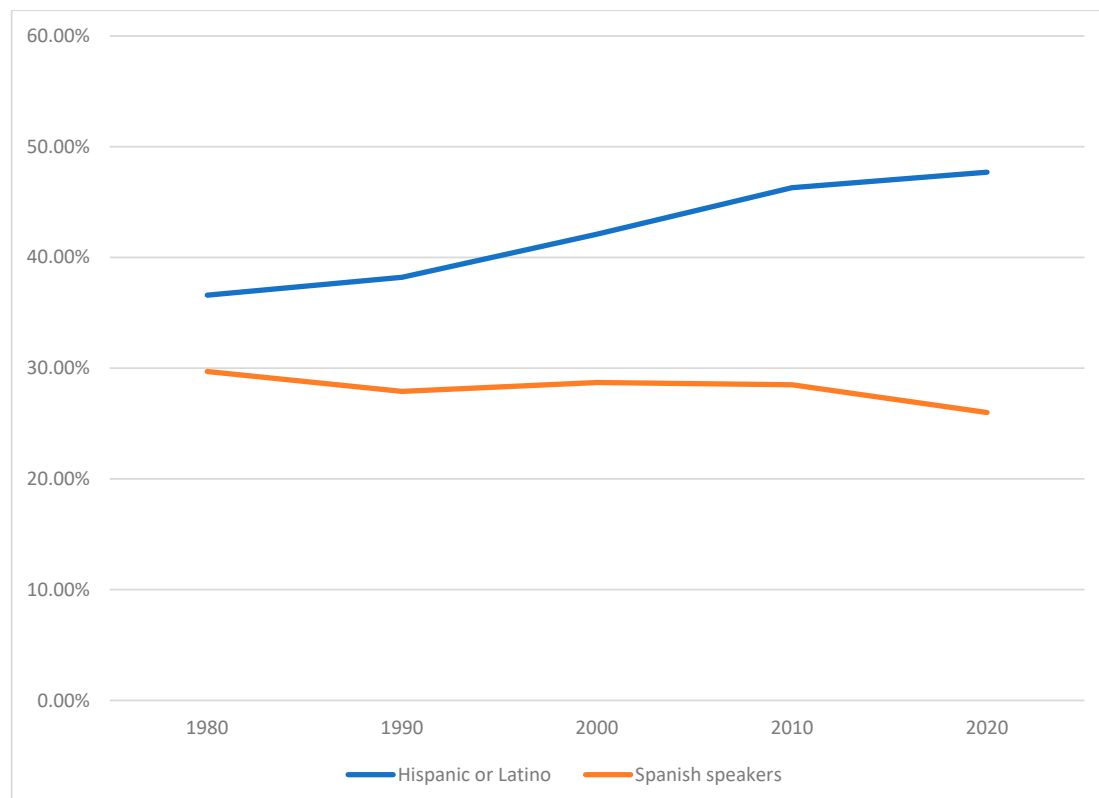


Figure 3. Hispanic population density vs. Spanish language density in New Mexico, 1980–2020.

4. Language Maintenance and Shift

As Spanish language densities and counts change, an obvious question arises as to how such changes impact Spanish language maintenance across generations. Additionally, these changes call to question whether Spanish language use continues to have the same negative impact on socioeconomic variables as first reported by Hudson et al. (1995) and Bills et al. (1995). Using data from 1980, they demonstrated a “linguistic cost of social, political and economic integration into mainstream society” (Hudson et al. 1995, p. 182). Subsequent studies (McCullough and Jenkins 2005; Jenkins 2009a, 2009b) showed a weakening of those correlations that corresponded with the immigrant population boom of the 1990s and 2000s. As growth has slowed since then, the question comes up as to whether correlations between language use and social variables have had a corresponding shift or whether they have continued to weaken with the progression of time.

Hudson et al. (1995) used various quantifiable demographic measures to identify extralinguistic variables that affect, and are affected by, language maintenance and shift in the Southwest. We will employ their measures of “Count”, “Density”, and “Language Loyalty” on a per-county basis in the ten-state region.

Count refers to the raw, absolute number of Spanish language claimants in a county. This census measurement applies to the total population five years of age and older. This measurement does not take into account the proportion of the Spanish-speaking population relative to the total population but rather gives an indication of community size as a whole.

Density, on the other hand, is the percentage of the total population (five years of age or older) who claim Spanish as a home language. This relative frequency contrasts markedly with the absolute frequency of Count, often providing a better picture of those communities that are regarded as “Spanish speaking”, irrespective of their total size. Density can be high in small counties and likewise low in large counties. Density tends to be highest where Hispanic populations are more heavily concentrated.

Language Loyalty is the percentage of persons claiming to be Hispanic or Latino (ages 5+) who speak Spanish as a home language. Loyalty differs from Density in its denominator, with the latter being a percentage of the total population, while Loyalty measures its percentage relative to the population claiming Hispanic or Latino ethnicity. This term was first used by Weinreich (1953) with a decidedly different definition, “as a principle...in the name of which people will rally themselves and their fellow speakers consciously and explicitly to resist changes in either the functions of their language (as a result of a language shift) or in the structure or vocabulary (as a consequence of interference)” (99). By the time Hudson et al. (1995) employed this term, it was effectively stripped of any intentionality among Spanish speakers and rather was used as an objective indicator of Spanish language maintenance in the Latino population. Wilson and Jenkins (2020, p. 34) alternatively label the measurement “language maintenance among Hispanics” (LMH). We continue the wording of “Language Loyalty” with the definition provided by Hudson et al. for the sake of continuity, with an acknowledgment of the potentially problematic nature of the term.

As a predictor, Count corresponds to larger overall populations. The darkly shaded counties in Figure 4, as metropolitan areas and large population centers, can be discerned clearly. The heavy population counts along Interstate 5 from Seattle to Portland, Interstate 15 along the Wasatch Front in Utah, Interstate 25 along Colorado’s Front Range, and Interstate 35 between Dallas/Fort Worth and San Antonio are all readily identifiable on the map. Other metropolitan centers such as Houston, Phoenix, Las Vegas, Reno, Boise, Amarillo, and Lubbock are likewise easy to spot. California, for its part, boasts large total populations in every county between the Bay Area and the Mexican border. Each of these stands out on the map. Perhaps more notable are counties with considerably smaller overall populations (such as Southern Arizona or Northern and Southeastern New Mexico), but whose Spanish-language counts still place them in the top quintiles.

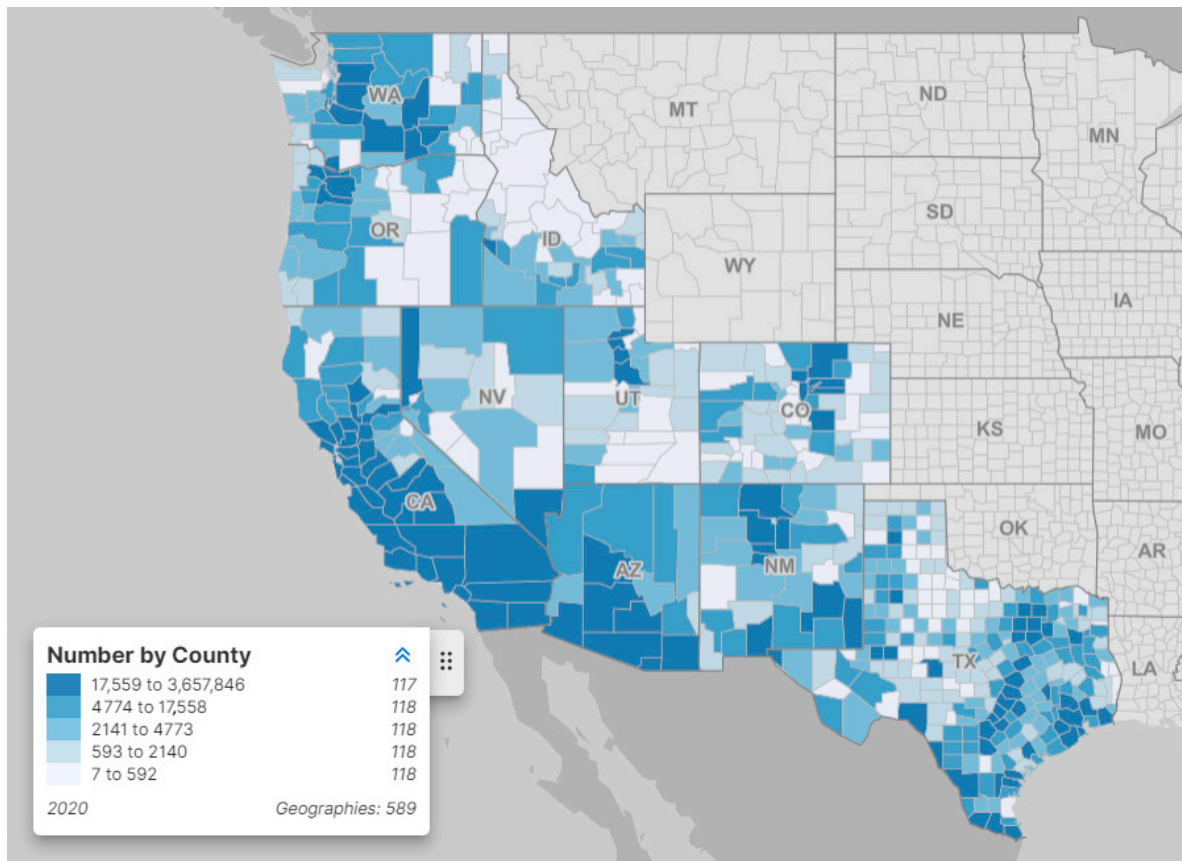


Figure 4. Spanish language count, by county, in the Western United States, 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020e).

Count does not give a clear indication of those counties with high concentrations of Hispanics or Spanish speakers. The San Luis Valley of Southern Colorado, for example, has high Hispanic densities but does not stand out on a map depicting Count, given the fact that the total populations of these counties would not place them above the third quintile, even with a 100% Hispanic concentration. A much better indicator of Spanish-speaking communities is the Density measure. Figure 5 paints a much different picture than that of Count, as the size of the county is irrelevant to the concentration of Spanish speakers. This map clearly shows the traditional Spanish-speaking communities of the Southwest, especially along the Mexican border, as well as the entirety of New Mexico and Southern Colorado. These are the areas where most studies on Spanish in the Southwest originate. Perhaps the most noteworthy areas of high Density on this map can be seen in Central Washington, Southern Idaho, and even Northern California, as these areas are relatively newer among Spanish-speaking communities. An interesting visual comparison can be seen between Figure 5 and the 10 corresponding states in Figure 1, as they appear to be almost negative images of one another. That is, areas of greatest Spanish-language density are inverse to areas of Hispanic growth. Negative growth areas on map 1 are the areas of highest concentrations of Spanish speakers on 3. This holds true not only for the West but for the country as a whole. The Spanish-speaking population, especially that of Mexican and Central American origins, is expanding throughout the country; states like North Carolina and Georgia, whose Spanish language communities are relative newcomers to the region, lead the way nationally in Spanish-language growth rates. Florida, which has long been a center of Cuban and Puerto Rican populations, now boasts the sixth-largest Mexican-origin population in the country.

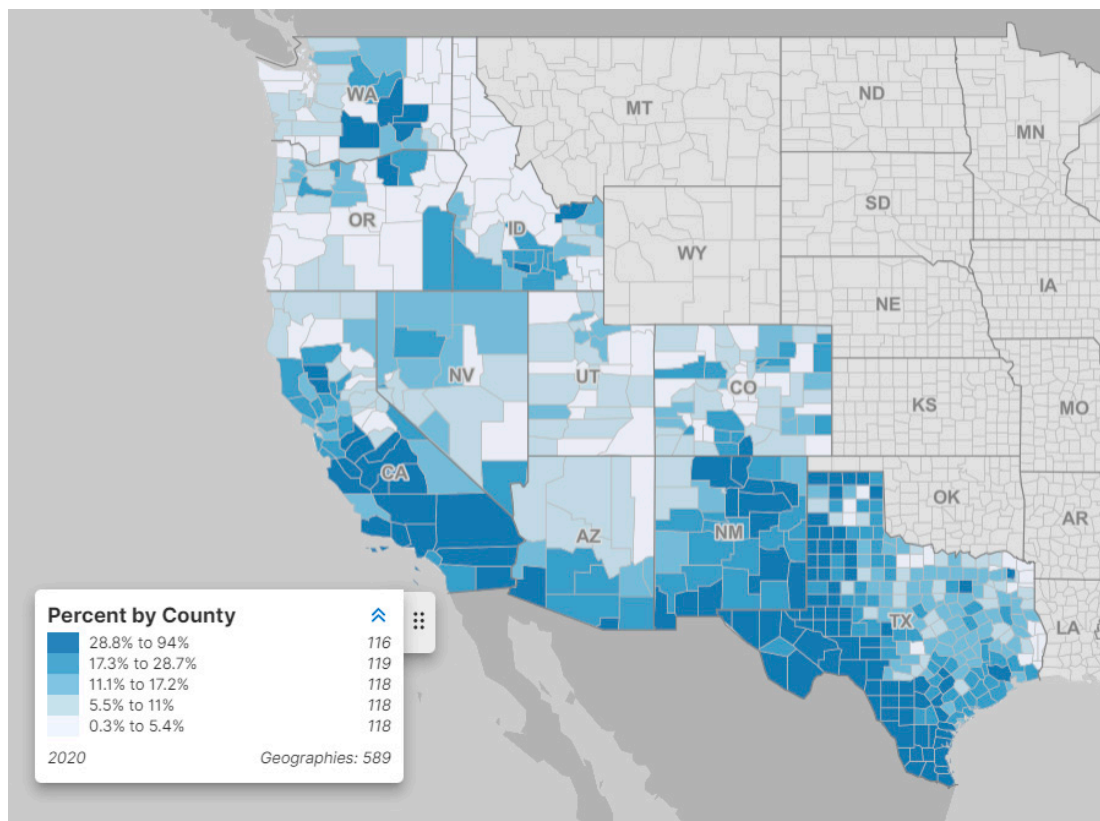


Figure 5. Spanish language density, by county, in the Western United States, 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020d).

Language Loyalty, as a measure, shows what percentage of the Hispanic/Latino population claims Spanish as a home language. The United States as a whole has a Loyalty rate of 69.8%. For the ten-state West, that figure is similar, if slightly lower: 68.7%. These figures have declined for at least the past 20 years, as in 2000, the national Loyalty rate was 78.0%, followed by 76.1% in 2010. If we observe current Loyalty rates for each of the ten western states, then certain patterns emerge (Table 4). Leading the way are Texas and California, which both count Loyalty at 71%. These are the two largest Spanish-speaking states in the United States, accounting collectively for nearly half of the nation's Spanish speakers. They not only have high counts but also the highest densities (~28%) of any western state. Nevada's Loyalty rate also nears 71%. This is likely due to the continual and recent flow of immigrants into the state, which also plays an important role in California and Texas. McCullough and Jenkins (2005) found a strong correlation between Language Loyalty and recent immigration in Colorado, and various scholars (Fishman 1972; Silva-Corvalán 1994, among many others) have identified continuous immigration as the most significant indicator of language maintenance in a community.

After the top three states, Loyalty rates drop off dramatically, with a four-state cluster in the 62–63% range. Three of these four are the northwestern states of Washington, Oregon, and Utah, which have similar density trends. Idaho, in that same trend group and the smallest and least dense of any of the ten states, counts Loyalty at 58%. New Mexico (51%) and Colorado (49%) merit special attention in any discussion on language maintenance. Each of these latter states can identify two separate Spanish-speaking populations with very different histories, with recent Mexican immigrants forming the Latino majority in Southern New Mexico and Northern/Central Colorado, and the traditional Spanish-speaking communities in Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado, which have roots in the area that date back for more than three centuries. The New Mexico territory was a majority Spanish-speaking area until the 1910 Census, with statehood coming two

years thereafter. Southern Colorado draws much of its Hispanic heritage from northern New Mexico, with land grant settlers populating the area beginning in 1851. The San Luis Valley in that part of the state has been a majority Hispanic community since then. However, these areas have both seen precipitous declines in Spanish language density and loyalty over the past four decades. As a representative example, in 1980, the Loyalty rate for the San Luis Valley was 91.4%, and 77% of the population self-identified as “Spanish Origin” (the U.S. Census began using “Hispanic or Latino” in 1990). By 2020, that figure had dropped to 50% (Table 5). The Denver metropolitan area, in the northern half of the state, showed an opposite trend between 1980 and 2000, plateauing for the next decade, then dropping at roughly the same rate as the San Luis Valley in the last 10 years, to pre-2000 levels. What was a once a high-density Spanish-language area has declined in its language maintenance to levels lower than those of the Denver metropolitan area. As suggested above, immigration appears to play a major role in this, as the San Luis Valley is an isolated region that attracts virtually no immigration, while Denver is a major Western city with a continual influx of both immigrants (from other countries) and in-migrants (from other states). The state as a whole does not have as high a density as the border states, the recent immigration rates are lower, and the result is a lower level of Language Loyalty than any other state in the West. While New Mexico has relatively high density rates, those numbers are declining more rapidly than in any other state and are not being replaced by immigration at a commensurate rate, and intergenerational language shift is the result.

Table 4. Count, Density, and Language Loyalty in 10 Western States, 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020c, 2020d, 2020e).

	Count	Density	Loyalty
Texas	7,666,020	28.8%	71.4%
California	10,462,968	28.3%	71.3%
Nevada	593,610	20.9%	70.9%
Washington	602,058	8.5%	63.4%
Oregon	349,549	8.9%	62.8%
Utah	297,926	10.3%	62.4%
Arizona	1,358,980	20.2%	62.2%
Idaho	131,145	8.0%	57.6%
New Mexico	514,071	26.0%	51.3%
Colorado	602,273	11.2%	49.0%
10-state total	6,689,293	23.5%	68.7%

Table 5. Language Loyalty comparison of San Luis Valley and Denver metropolitan area, Colorado (Wilson and Jenkins 2020; U.S. Census Bureau 2020d).

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
San Luis Valley	91.4%	72.7%	70.8%	65.0%	50.0%
Denver Metro	53.9%	50.8%	66.3%	65.3%	53.0%

5. Social Factors

One of the main research questions for this paper is whether population growth and change have impacted the relationship between Spanish language use and the social factors that surround language use. Considering the assertion by Hudson et al. (1995) that Spanish language use comes at a price in the Southwest, we revisited their original social variables with data from the 2020 Census, 40 years after that of the original analysis. Hudson et al. found strong or moderate negative correlations between language loyalty and virtually every socioeconomic variable within the Spanish origin population. Education ($r = -0.68$), per capita income (-0.59), poverty level (0.50), managerial and professional occupation (-0.45), and persons per household (0.56) all showed significant Pearson’s correlations greater than 0.40. They also found that Density correlated somewhat pessimistically

with socioeconomic variables in the total population, with the conclusion that “these correlations. . . demonstrate only indirectly the effects of social factors on density. Instead, what they appear to reflect is the asymmetric distribution of the Spanish origin population across the various socioeconomic strata of U.S. society” (p. 177).

In order for valid comparisons across time, only the original five states from Hudson et al. (1995) were included in the 2020 correlations (see below for comparative data on the other five western states). The current data show some notable comparisons and contrasts with the 1980 data. Looking at the correlations in Table 6 between Density and socioeconomic variables, we see significant correlations for per capita income, poverty, household size, and managerial and professional positions. Keeping in mind that these data reflect the total, and not just Hispanic, population, Hudson et al.’s (1995) assertion that these correlations are reflective of the “asymmetric distribution of the Spanish origin population” appears to continue to be reflected in these relationships. The fact that a negative correlation exists between Density and managerial or professional positions for the total population appears to show a scarcity of availability of such positions for any inhabitant of those counties where Density is higher.

When comparing the 2020 Language Loyalty data with the 1980 data, we see a somewhat different outcome. We still see a weak correlation with managerial/professional positions, a moderate correlation with persons per household, and a strong correlation with levels of education. The educational variable is likely one that will not change in the face of continued immigration, as a significant percentage of Spanish speakers in the United States are working-class products of a foreign educational system from which they did not graduate, a fact that will not be altered by social changes in the United States. The other variables show a departure from the relationships reflected in the 1980 data, as the relationship between Loyalty and per capita income is considerably weaker in the current data (−0.25 in 2020 vs. −0.59 in 1980), and no significant correlation exists between Loyalty and either poverty or unemployment.

Table 6. Measures of Spanish language maintenance in five Southwestern states, correlated with social variables, by county, 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020f, 2020g, 2020h, 2022a).

		Count	Density	Loyalty
Total Population	Count		0.15	0.15
	Density	0.15		0.59 *
	Loyalty	0.15	0.59 *	
	Total population, N	0.96 *	0.08	0.12
	Hispanic/Latino population, N	0.996 *	0.15	0.14
	High School graduate or higher	−0.21	0.00	0.02
	Bachelor’s degree or higher	0.15	−0.33 *	−0.21
	Per capita income	0.11	− 0.41 *	−0.18
	Poverty level	−0.01	0.40 *	0.16
	Unemployment rate	0.06	0.15	0.11
	Household size	0.18	0.56 *	0.38 *
	Managerial/professional %	0.11	− 0.44 *	−0.33 *
	Persons per household	0.13	0.14	0.40 *
	High School graduate or higher	0.00	−0.25 *	− 0.63 *
Hispanic or Latino	Bachelor’s degree or higher	0.09	−0.19	−0.34 *
	Per Capita income	0.04	−0.14	−0.25 *
	Poverty level	−0.04	0.12	0.08
	Unemployment rate	0.03	0.12	0.01
	Managerial/professional %	0.04	−0.08	−0.30 *

Boldface = 0.40 or greater * $p < 0.005$.

Jenkins (2009b) conducted a similar comparison between the same variables for 1980 and 2000, which serves here as a midpoint in the data. That study also showed a weakening of the relationships between these variables. In fact, in that study, there were even fewer

significant relationships between Linguistic Loyalty and socioeconomic variables, with significance only showing weak correlations with educational attainment and per capita income. The cases of persistent weakening are generally positive as they relate to language use within a community, but the reversing trend lines between 2000 and 2020 may be suggestive of a demographic blip that corresponded with the surge in immigration between 1990 and 2006. We know that Loyalty in the region decreased from 74% in 2000 to 69% in 2020. Data from 1980 are more difficult to obtain, but there is no indication of a large jump in Language Loyalty between 1980 and 2000. More study is needed to track these trend lines and determine if an up-and-down relationship between Loyalty and social variables corresponds to ebbs and flows in immigration over time.

Finally, as we look at sociodemographic data exclusively from the five Northwestern states not included in the data from Tables 7 and 8, some important distinctions can be made with the southwestern states. While the population consists of individuals of the same national origins in roughly the same distributions, the Northwest as a Spanish-speaking region is newer and considerably smaller than the Southwest. The Count in the Southwest numbers 20.6 million speakers, compared to just under 2 million speakers in the Northwest. Density is also more than double in the Southwest (26.5%) what it is in the Northwest (10.7%). Language Loyalty also favors the Southwest, at 69%, contrasted with 65% in the Northwest.

Table 7. Correlations across three census periods between Linguistic Loyalty and socioeconomic variables within the Hispanic/Latino population in five Southwestern states (U.S. Census Bureau 2020a, 2020b, 2020d, 2020f, 2020g, 2020h).

	1980	2000	2020
Persons per household	0.43 *	0.13	0.40 *
% High School Diploma [†]	−0.68 *	−0.26 *	−0.63 *
% Bachelor’s or Higher [†]	−0.68 *	−0.17	−0.34 *
Per capita income	−0.59 *	−0.25 *	−0.25 *
%Poverty level	0.45 *	0.04	0.08
Unemployment rate	−0.22	−0.05	0.01
% Managerial/professional	−0.45 *	−0.09	−0.30 *

Boldface correlations > 0.40; * $p < 0.005$; [†] 1980 figures are for “Median years of education”.

Table 8. Correlations across three census periods between Linguistic Loyalty and socioeconomic variables **within the Hispanic/Latino population** in five Northwestern states (U.S. Census Bureau 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e, 2020f, 2020g, 2020h).

	Count	Density	Loyalty
Count		0.23 *	0.17
Density	0.23		0.69 *
Loyalty	0.17	0.69 *	
Persons per household	0.08	0.33 *	0.44 *
High School graduate or higher	0.00	−0.49 *	−0.55 *
Bachelor’s degree or higher	0.04	−0.34 *	−0.26 *
Per capita income	0.10	−0.19	−0.18
Poverty level	−0.04	0.09	−0.01
Unemployment rate	0.03	0.01	−0.07
Managerial/professional %	0.08	−0.24 *	−0.19

Boldface correlations > 0.40; * $p < 0.005$.

Remarkably, the correlations between Language Loyalty and socioeconomic factors in the Northwest are essentially the same as those same comparisons in the Southwest. Persons per household shows a moderate correlation with Loyalty, and educational attainment continues to correlate negatively with Spanish language maintenance. No other social variable correlates with Language Loyalty in the Northwest, suggesting that Spanish

language use and maintenance in a social context is subject to the same social processes in each of the two regions, in spite of the differences in Count, Density, and Loyalty.

6. Conclusions

The Spanish-speaking population in the Western United States continues to grow at impressive rates, strengthening its position as the largest minority population in the country. Growth is happening in areas that are not traditionally Spanish-speaking but in regions where the Spanish language is relatively new, both in the West as well as throughout the country. Among western states, northwestern states are growing at a much higher rate than southwestern states, though Hispanics in the Southwest still outnumber those in the Northwest by a more than 10:1 ratio. Density in the Southwest peaked with the 2010 Census, and rates are declining slightly, whereas in the Northwest, densities continue to increase. Community language loss is highest in areas like New Mexico and Southern Colorado, where language maintenance figures among Hispanics are around 50%. The Southwest United States, and especially New Mexico and Southern Colorado, have traditional Spanish-language communities that pre-date English, sometimes by centuries, but the shift to English in those areas over the last century has mirrored the language shift in immigrant communities. Additionally, New Mexico and Southern Colorado do not benefit from large measures of continued immigration as a maintenance factor. No community is immune to the Spanish language shift, but positive population growth and continuous immigration correlate strongly with areas where Language Density and Loyalty continue to increase.

The cost of Language Loyalty appears to be less than it was a generation ago, as correlations between Spanish language use and social variables have decreased in significance and in strength with each successive decade. While there is certainly no indication of an economic benefit to Spanish language use, the price of Spanish as a home language has decreased. Educational variables continue to show a strong negative correlation with language use, but that appears to be more a product of the educational status of immigrants than that of native U.S. Spanish speakers.

In spite of the indications of language loss in the area, the continued growth and strength of the Spanish-speaking population in the Western United States will continue to be a vital and fertile source of inquiry for those who study the language in its social context in the West.

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Article

Language Attitudes in a Historic Latino Community: The Case of Spanish in Northwest Indiana

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Abstract: Despite the burgeoning Latino population in the Midwest, research on language attitudes in this region remains sparse. This study addresses this gap by examining language attitudes and beliefs towards Spanish in the Northwest Indiana region, one of the oldest Latino immigration gateways in the Midwest. Data collected from a 2018–2019 sociolinguistic survey, involving 236 participants representative of the local Latino community, form the basis of the analysis. The study aims to elucidate attitudes towards various Spanish dialects, particularly the local variety. Findings indicate widespread acceptance of the local Spanish variety, with participants viewing its divergence from Mexican or Puerto Rican Spanish as normal and inevitable. Despite perceptions of linguistic mixing with English, the community's Spanish is valued as an effective communication tool and cultural asset, including in educational settings. This positive attitude towards a stigmatized linguistic variety suggests a preference for any form of Spanish over none, particularly in situations of low Spanish language maintenance. The study of language attitudes shows that speakers will tend to reproduce in their speech new ways of speaking that they find acceptable. This generalized behavior, in turn, leads toward linguistic change.

Keywords: language attitudes; Spanish in the US; language identity; linguistic contact; Latino Midwest; language ideology; Codeswitching; Spanish language maintenance; Spanish dialects



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1. Introduction

The study of language attitudes and beliefs can reveal significant insights for understanding the dynamics of a speech community. Attitudes are the focal point of research examining the future of minority languages in bilingual contexts and the symbolic status they hold for certain societal groups. The attitudes of speakers towards different varieties and functions of Spanish, particularly towards the Spanish spoken in their community, also provide an opportunity to study the social significance of various linguistic varieties and the consolidation of norms within the community. Overall, the study of language attitudes is essential for gaining a comprehensive understanding of language use, language maintenance, social dynamics, and intergroup relations within diverse communities. Research on attitudes is particularly important in contemporary life, when rapidly increasing globalization and migration have normalized regular contact with different linguistic groups for more and more individuals and communities (Kircher and Zipp 2022).

Little research has been conducted on language attitudes in the Latino Midwest (Rosa 2016; Ramos Pellicia 2014; Potowski 2007; Medina-Rivera 2014; Potowski and Torres 2023; Mendieta 1997), considering the exponential growth of the Latino population in the last decades. The present study is a contribution in that direction as it focuses on language attitudes and beliefs towards Spanish in the Indiana Rust Belt and the wider Northwest Indiana region, a historic Latino immigration gateway in the Midwest. The 2020 Decennial Census counted 554,191 “Hispanic or Latino” individuals in the state of Indiana; of those, 130,655, or 23.5%, of the total reside in the northwest corner of the state, just twenty miles east of Chicago.

Since their early arrival in the 1920s, the Latino community in this region has woven a rich tapestry of cultural, activist, social, and civic contributions, establishing a profound sense of belonging and home in Northwest Indiana that continues to this day. This region appears as a good case study to analyze what language attitudes may develop in such a social and historical setting and how they might differ from the situation in the rapidly growing new Latino destinations in the South and rural Midwest. This is also a particularly interesting target of research because, although Latinas/os have a long and well documented history in the industrial areas of the Indiana Rust Belt, since the collapse of the steel industry, they have increasingly moved to towns and cities where they are small minorities, a situation that is representative of the many recently formed communities in the US: “As the number of Spanish speakers grows in the U.S., so does the number of communities with small percentages of Spanish speakers, therefore making this research very important” (Barbosa 2015). The coexistence of both old and new Latino settlement patterns makes this territory particularly interesting for research.

The data analyzed was collected in 2018 and 2019 as part of a Sociolinguistic survey created by the author. Two hundred and thirty-six (236) Latinas/os from the region participated in the study, a sample largely representative of the wider Latino community. The purpose of the study is to better understand the linguistic beliefs and attitudes of Latinas/os towards different varieties of Spanish, particularly the Spanish spoken in the communities where they live. Some questions asked participants if they perceived differences between the Spanish spoken in Indiana and the Spanish spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico and about their emotional or evaluative response to those differences. Other questions were designed to explore the relationship between language attitudes and notions of correctness and to elicit an evaluation of local varieties in terms of their level of prestige and their role as representations of ethnic identity. This method of direct measurement has been used successfully in studies that questioned the subjects about their attitudes towards different varieties of speech (Brennan et al. 1980; Cooper and Fishman 1977; Labov 1966; Garrett et al. 2006).

Finally, the survey elicits information on attitudes towards the use of Spanish in public settings. Language is a salient marker of ethnic affiliation, and how other people may respond to or feel about that symbol can provide an indication of how the manifestation of an ethnic Latino identity is received in different settings. In this respect, preliminary findings equate different experiences to different areas, contrasting the Indiana Rust Belt to the rest of the region and the state.

1.1. The Definition and Study of Language Attitudes

Since the early work on social psychology in the 1970s, there has been much discussion about the role of attitudes and beliefs in linguistic theory. Attitudes are, according to many definitions, intrinsically evaluative. That is, they imply a positive or negative feeling about what is believed. Although some researchers limit the attitude to that evaluative or affective response, traditionally the concept of attitude includes two additional components: belief, the cognitive basis of the evaluation, i.e., the beliefs held about the attitude object; and behavior, the behavioral intentions as well as the observable reflection of the evaluation directed towards the attitude object (Kircher and Zipp 2022; Garrett 2010; Baker 1992; Ryan and Giles 1982). If the three elements correlate well, we are dealing with an attitude, but if they do not correlate, we may have to conclude that we are facing three different entities.

The lack of correlation in numerous studies led Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) to propose a theory that does not require a necessary connection between these elements. According to this theory, people form attitudes toward an object or action based on their beliefs about the object and their evaluation of those beliefs. In turn, these attitudes influence the likelihood of a person carrying out a particular behavior related to the object or action. However, not all beliefs that a person holds about an object influence their attitude towards it in the same way, as some may be more relevant than others. Therefore, the Theory of Reasoned Action

posits that people consider both the beliefs and the affective evaluations of those beliefs when forming an attitude, and these attitudes, in turn, influence their behavior.

Starting from this multiple componential structure of attitudes in general, language attitudes are traditionally defined as “any affective, cognitive, or behavioral index of evaluative reactions towards different varieties and their speakers” (Ryan and Giles 1982, p. 7). The symbolic nature of language naturally finds expression in the attitudes that people hold towards different linguistic varieties and their users: “If language has social meaning, people will evaluate it in relation to the social status of its users. Their language attitudes will be social attitudes” (Appel and Muysken 1987, p. 12). Attitudes towards particular varieties therefore reflect the attitudes that people hold towards their users (Ryan and Giles 1982; Dragojevic et al. 2021; Kircher and Zipp 2022).

More recently, Moreno Fernández (2016) advances a model for the study of language attitudes from the framework of cognitive sociolinguistics, a model particularly concerned with the study of the cognitive resources involved in processing and contextualizing language use. Using cognition as a basis, the sociolinguistic process goes from perception and meaningful understanding of societal language use to the manifestation of sociolinguistic attitudes and beliefs.

In the present study, survey questions were designed to gather linguistic beliefs and speakers’ evaluative judgments, following the basic distinction established between the cognitive component and the affective response to those beliefs, which will be more or less positive or negative (López Morales 1989). The behavioral or instrumental component of the survey is also addressed in some specific questions and in some of the participants’ comments. On several occasions, due to the format of the survey, the explicit evaluative component is missing, and then we speak more properly of beliefs. In other cases, participants provide the attitude along with the cognitive basis or belief.

1.2. Community Background

The arrival of Mexican migrants to Chicago and the Calumet Region of Northwest Indiana dates to 1916, when Mexicans were recruited from the southwest to work as track workers for the railroads and in the region’s meatpacking plants (Taylor [1932] 1987). Northwest Indiana was also the site of steel foundries and oil tank works, which by the late nineteenth century gave way to the steel industries that would become the main source of employment (García 1996; Moore 1959). The foundation of the two main cities, East Chicago and Gary, was closely linked to the expansion of the steel industry from Chicago to the east, along the shore of Lake Michigan (Figure 1).

Steel production transformed the Chicago-Northwest Indiana region into a mecca for Mexicans migrating to the Midwest. East Chicago was home to the *Inland Steel Company*, the world’s largest steel plant at the time. In a decade (1914–1924), its workforce grew from 3900 to 7000 workers, and thirty percent were of Mexican descent (Moore 1959, p. 236).

Gary was founded in 1906 by the U.S. Steel Corporation as the home for its new giant plant, *Gary Works*, becoming the largest company town ever built. The Gary Mills also employed large numbers of Mexicans, with 2000 at work in 1923 at its various plants (Taylor [1932] 1987; García 1996).

Despite endemic discrimination and an urban and highly industrial setting foreign to them, Mexicans developed a clear connection to the Calumet Region and a sense of place. In 1932, Taylor observed that hardly a decade after the first Mexicans arrived in the region, “here, in an urban-industrial environment in the heart of America, Mexicans have won a recognized place” (Taylor [1932] 1987, p. 78).

Following World War II, the steel industry enjoyed another period of prosperity that revived Mexican communities after the Great Depression. The growing neighborhoods now included not only Mexicans but also a significant number of Puerto Ricans and southwestern Chicanos recruited to address the labor shortage. But the end of the “steel boom” was just around the corner, and, squarely located in the middle of the Rust Belt, Northwest Indiana would suffer the social and economic decline that has come to be

associated with the once manufacturing heartland of the nation. Until the 1970s, the great bulk of the Latino population appeared to have succeeded in reaching economic security, in large part due to the abundance of well-paying blue-collar jobs.

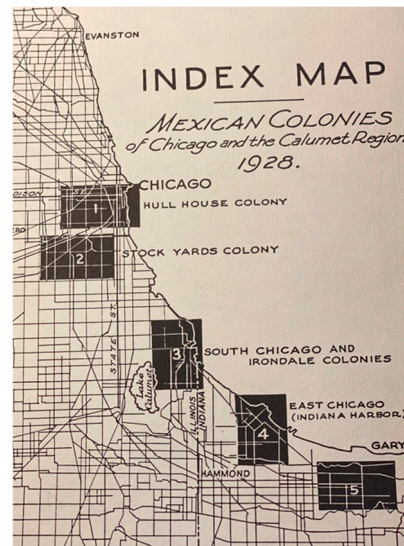


Figure 1. Mexican Colonies of Chicago and the Calumet Region (1928). Source: Taylor ([1932] 1987, p. 32).

The vibrant Latino life that had developed in Lake County in the 1920s continued through the following decades, reflecting the needs of changing historical circumstances. Today, as much as a century ago, Latinos in this region of the Midwest continue to thrive and struggle, combining new ways of life with a century-old sense of place (Mendieta 2024).

In order to interpret how geography matters in the development of positive or negative immigrant experiences, “attention must also be paid to the history of social/power relations (broadly conceived) in particular places, which in turn help to construct and reconstruct belief systems such as race thinking as well as conceptions of nation and place” Maldonado (2014, p. 1930). In this region of Northwest Indiana, Mexicans constructed in the early decades a conception of place that included them as builders and shareholders. This early self-representation set the base for the role Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and other Latinos would play in the future.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. The Survey

The sociolinguistic survey employed in this study included a set of open-ended questions that elicited information on language attitudes (see Appendix A). The advantage of open-ended questions is that they give complete freedom to the participant about how to respond and what to mention. The responses present the point of view of the participant in all its complexity, with a minimum distortion of words, while reducing the probability of overlooking important aspects that may not have been included in the preselected options (Oskamp and Schultz 2005; Shuy 1983; Solé 1982; Wölck 1985; Singleton and Straits 2018; Zipp 2022).

Open-ended questions also present their own challenges. Since there are no preestablished choices of response, the researcher needs to develop a system of classification of the data that will be based on whatever repeated patterns may emerge from the responses. While this approach is more laborious—and it may end up with some cases that do not perfectly “fit” in any of the categories proposed—the system of classification is completely data-driven, so it arguably reflects the attitudes of the speech community more faithfully. This was the process followed in this study for the classification of the responses to each of the questions included in the survey.

One drawback that we encountered in this study is that, when given the freedom to respond as they see fit, some less responsive participants provided very simple and unelaborated answers, while others responded with comments that did not produce the evaluative judgment requested in the question. These issues could be addressed with follow-up questions when the interviewer is present, but in this case, the great majority of the participants filled out the survey by themselves, so prodding for a more complete response was not possible.

The survey questions analyzed in this study are organized around three different sociolinguistic topics. The first one is concerned with speakers' attitudes when they compare the local variety of Spanish with the Spanish spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico. The second line of inquiry concentrates on the attitudes and beliefs held about the local Spanish, when considered on its own, not in contrast with a different dialectal variety of Spanish. A last set of questions seeks to uncover the ideas about correctness and the linguistic ideology that may play a significant part in the language attitudes of these speakers.

2.2. Description of the Sample

The data collection took place in 2018 and 2019. To participate in the study, the respondent was to self-identify as Latina/o, be 18 years of age or older, and had to have lived at least 10 years in the Northwest Indiana region. Initially, the interviews were conducted by a group of bilingual Latina/o college students acting as research assistants. They were all born and raised in the region and could be perceived as "insiders" by members of the local Latino community. They met at homes, churches, and public libraries. Some of the interviews were conducted in Spanish, others in English, always accommodating the participant's language preference. Early on, it became clear that, in order to gather a high volume of responses, the survey would have to be made available to individuals who would answer it independently, without the presence of an interviewer. Spanish and English versions of the survey were distributed in printed and electronic form. Participants responded in the language of their choice and returned the completed surveys. Thanks to the collaboration of individuals from the community, the survey circulated through different schools and businesses where parents, students, and workers agreed to participate.

Two hundred and twenty people (236) participated in the study: 79 men (33.4%) and 157 (66.5%) women. The gender disparity was evident from the beginning of the data collection. We tried to correct it by including additional male research assistants and by targeting specific groups and individuals. The two groups came closer, but the gender ratio of the sample still shows an overrepresentation of women. The age of the participants ranges from 18 to 85 years old. The median age in our sample is 33, which corresponds closely to the median age in 2020 (ACS 5-Year Estimates) for the Latino population in Lake County (30) and Porter County (29), the two main counties of Northwest Indiana.

One question asked about the place of residence. Because it was an open question, some of the responses did not name a particular city or town and gave a more general response, such as "Indiana" or "Northwest Indiana". From the 205 total responses, 152 (82%) participants lived in Lake County and 34 (18%) in Porter County. These figures are very close to the overall distribution of Latinas/os in the region, according to the 2020 US Decennial Census: 76.4% of Northwest Indiana Latinos lived in Lake County, and 14.4% in Porter County. Lake County continues to be, by a very large margin, the enclave for Spanish language claimants in the region. The city with the highest number of participants in our sample is Hammond (39: 21%), as is the city with the largest Latino population in Lake County (29,370: 32%).

Another question asked about the birthplace, and the results are presented in Table 1 and Figure 2. Three-quarters of the sample, or 75% (174), were born in the United States, most of them locally: 78 in Northwest Indiana, 55 in Chicago, 9 in Indiana, and 8 in Illinois. The percentage of foreign-born people in the sample (25%) is a little higher than what the 2020 US Census shows for foreign-born Latino population in Lake County (19%). Among those who were born abroad, 41% arrived before they were 6 years old and 66% before they

were 12, so most of the people who were born abroad have spent most or a significant part of their lives in the United States.

Table 1. Place of Birth of Survey Participants.

UNITED STATES	174	75%	FOREIGN BORN	57	25%
Northwest Indiana	78		Mexico	41	
Chicago	55		Puerto Rico	7	
Indiana	9		Colombia	3	
Illinois	8		El Salvador	2	
			Bolivia (1),		
Texas	8		Nicaragua (1), Spain	4	
			(1), Venezuela (1)		
United States	7				
California	3				
New Jersey	2				
Arizona (1), New					
York (1), Kentucky	1				
(1), New Orleans (1)					

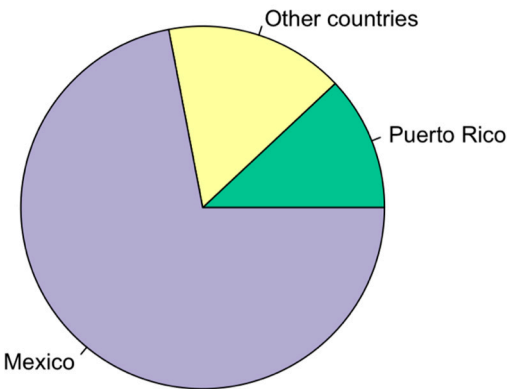


Figure 2. Place of Birth of Foreign-born Population.

Eighty-six percent (86%) of native Latinas/os were born in Northwest Indiana or the greater Chicago area; therefore, the sample shows a clear affiliation to the Midwest.

The majority of the Latinas/os interviewed (159: 67%) are of Mexican ancestry, followed by the group of Puerto Ricans (21: 9%).¹ These figures approximate the distribution of both groups in the region (2020 ACS-5 Year Estimates), where Mexicans comprise 76% of Latinas/os in Lake County and 72% in Porter County. Similarly, Puerto Ricans make up 16% of the total Latinas/os in Lake County and 18% in Porter County.

In terms of both place of birth and residence, the sample can be considered representative of the total Latino population in the region.

The sample is also representative of the Latino population in the region in terms of income (Figure 3). Twenty-one percent (45: 21%) of participants reported a household yearly income under USD 25,000, the same percentage reported in the 2020 ACS-5 Year Estimates for Latinos in Lake County (20%). The percentage earning between USD 25,000 and USD 49,999 is 33% (71) in the sample vs. 27% in Lake County Latino population. As the scale moves towards higher income levels, the general Latino population shows higher percentages than the ones of the participants in the study. In the interval of USD 50,000–99,999, the sample’s percentage is 28% (60) vs. 31% in Lake County, and those earning more than USD 100,000 are 22% in Lake County and 17% (37) in the population of the study. The principal discrepancy seems to be a slight overrepresentation of people in the range of USD 25,000–50,000 when compared with the numbers for the Latino population in Lake County.

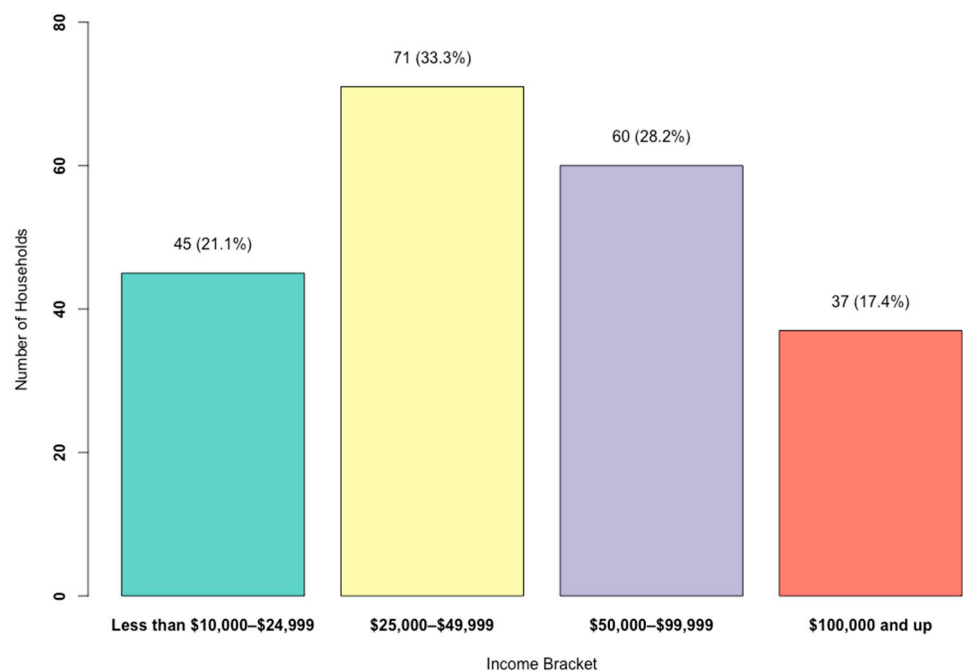


Figure 3. Distribution of Households by Income in the Sample.

Figure 4 shows the educational attainment of the participants. Eleven participants (5%) have less than a high school diploma, and 23 (11%) are high school graduates, numbers that align well with the ratios for Latinos in the region. There seems to be an overrepresentation of higher education achievement in our sample. Ninety-six persons (94: 44%) have some college, and 80 (37%) hold a bachelor’s degree or higher. The figures for Latinas/os in Lake County Latinas/os are 27% and 14%, respectively.

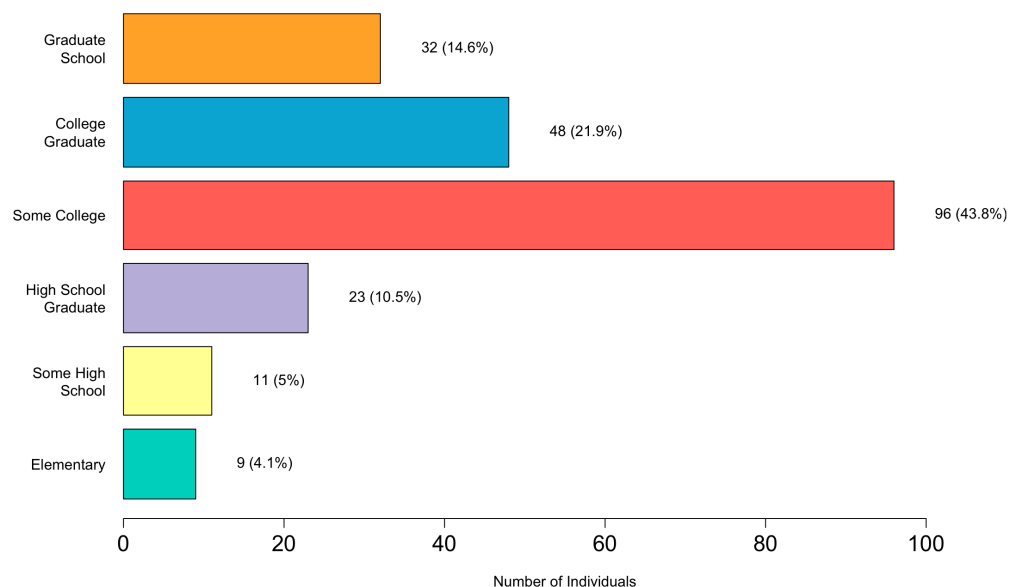


Figure 4. Educational achievement of participants.

This overrepresentation can be partially explained because the research assistants who helped with the collection of data were themselves college students who reached out to some of their peers for participation in the study. Additionally, some of the data was gathered in several high schools, so the responses by teachers may have contributed to overpopulation in those higher education categories.

As far as current occupation, the group includes 17 students, 4 stay-at-home parents, and 2 retired individuals. For those active in the workforce, the most common occupations are sales and office jobs² (49), management, business, and science occupations (41), and service occupations (38). The rest are employed in jobs in education (22), production and transportation (13), and construction and maintenance occupations (11). The only category that shows a significant difference with the data for Lake County Latinas/os is production and transportation, which is underrepresented in the sample. Again, it is likely that this discrepancy, as well as the high number of education-related jobs, is linked to the groups contacted for the purpose of finding participants in the study. The rest of the categories, however, are representative of the Latino population of the region at large.

Finally, one question asked what language they learned first. A little over half of the group (116: 53%) learned Spanish first, 21% (50) learned English first, and the remaining 22% (51) learned Spanish and English at the same time. Within the group of those who learned Spanish first, 74% state that they learned English as children, between 3 and 8 years old. What emerges in terms of language proficiency is a population that has had a native or near-native command of English since childhood. Only 13% of the sample learned English after the age of 12. In this respect, the sample is also representative of the larger Latino population of the region: in Lake County, only 7% of Latinas/os claimed to speak English “not well” or “not at all”.

3. Results

As it was stated earlier, the questions included in the survey followed an open-ended format. Participants were not provided with a preestablished set of possible answers; instead, they responded freely, including anything they considered relevant. Once all the responses to the question were gathered, the analysis proceeded, looking for concepts that could group the responses into different categories. This process was relatively easy to conduct, as the answers repeated common patterns of linguistic perception and evaluation.

The study is divided into three parts. The first one elicits the participants’ beliefs and affective responses towards the local variety as it compares with Spanish spoken in the homeland, which in this community refers mainly to Mexican Spanish and Puerto Rican Spanish. The second part concentrates on speakers’ attitudes towards the local Spanish, this time considered without a term of comparison. The last part is devoted to the linguistic ideology underlying the attitudes of these speakers and includes some questions that target the behavioral or instrumental components of attitudes.

3.1. Local Spanish vs. Homeland Spanish

Two questions asked participants to compare the local variety of Spanish to the Spanish spoken in Mexico and Puerto Rico (*Is the Spanish spoken by Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans in your community different from the Spanish spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico?*) and then to express their affective response to that difference.³

All the responses were organized into the three categories presented in Table 2. As would be expected, the great majority of participants (163: 84%) do find noticeable differences between the Spanish spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico and the Spanish spoken in the Indiana communities where they live. Only 18 participants (9%) state that they do not perceive significant differences (Table 2). In some of these cases, the similarity is explained because people speak the kind of Spanish they learned from relatives who were born in Mexico or Puerto Rico.

Of the 163 people who respond that the local Spanish is different, 149 (91%) provide some kind of explanation that substantiates their response. The reasons given by the participants were organized around five major ideas (Table 3).

Table 2. Responses to Question: “Would you say that the Spanish spoken by Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans in your community is different from the Spanish spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico?”.

Categories of Classification	N	%
<i>Yes, they are different</i>	163	84
<i>No, they are the same</i>	18	9
<i>I do not know</i>	13	7
TOTAL	194	100

Table 3. Characterization of Local Spanish Variety in Responses.

Categories of Classification	N	%	Sample Responses
1. <i>It is a new Spanish dialect</i>	53	36	“Yes, because as Americans we have cultivated the language differently from the motherland”
2. <i>It is influenced by English</i>	52	35	“Yes, because we are bilingual therefore speak Spanglish which is a mix of both”
3. <i>It is improper Spanish</i>	26	18	“Yes, the Spanish spoken in the NWI area is more ‘improper’ than the Spanish spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico. It is considered slang”
4. <i>It is a mix of Mexican/Puerto Rican dialects</i>	14	9	“Mexico has many regions with different dialects accents and regionalisms” “Yes, we tend to adapt each other’s lingo”
5. <i>It is characterized by limited exposure to Spanish language/culture</i>	3	2	“Yes. There’s not enough exposure to Hispanic culture”
TOTAL	148	100	

Most of the explanations given are descriptive in nature and only incorporate an evaluative attitude or value judgment in the 26 (18%) responses that characterized the local variety as *Improper* (Group 3). The groups with the largest number of responses characterize the local variety either as a *New Spanish Dialect* (53: 36%) or as *Influenced by English* (52: 35%). Together, those two categories make up almost two-thirds (71%) of the explanations given for the difference with homeland Spanish.

When describing the local Spanish as a *New Spanish dialect*, participants point to the existence of different words and accents, of the same words with different meanings, and to a wider use of slang, or “street” in the Spanish spoken in Indiana. Some comments refer to variations in Spanish as it is spoken in particular geographical areas, not unlike the differences in the English spoken in different areas of the United States: “Creo que sí porque es un diferente lugar y en lugares diferentes hay diferentes acentos o palabras o cosas así. Como una persona de Chicago y una persona de Alabama tenían aspectos diferentes en su inglés creo que es la misma situación”.

Local Spanish is repeatedly characterized as “informal”, with frequent use of slang and idiomatic expressions, while Mexican Spanish is more formal and uses a more complex vocabulary. The term “slang” seems to lump together the informality of the variety, but also the use of idiomatic expressions and “sayings” that were coined in US communities. It is safe to assume that many of these new “sayings” have their origin in English expressions, but speakers do not make mention of the influence of English in the shaping of this *New Spanish Dialect*. One way to interpret this fact is to consider that for some second and third

generation speakers who were born and raised in the United States, this new “slang” or dialect is, in fact, their native Spanish variety, which they do not contrast with an “ideal” or “pure” Spanish, devoid of English influences. Just as loanwords adapt and no longer feel foreign, the new “slang or sayings” may evolve into Spanish in the US “dialectalisms”, “It is regional slang that becomes regular vocabulary. Yes. They do not use idiomatic expressions in the same way”.

A second group of responses (52: 35%) characterizes the differences as *Influenced by English*. It is most often called “Spanglish” and is described as a “mix” of Spanish and English. In an illustrative rendition of the process described, one person explains that Spanish is “mixteado” with English: “Sí, porque utilizan [sic] español moderno mixtiado con inglés. Spanglish”.

Some speakers mention that they incorporate English words when they do not remember the Spanish counterpart: “I mostly speak Spanglish because sometimes I forget certain words, and of course in Mexico they are fluent”. For others, it is a natural linguistic development when speakers are bilingual and live in constant contact with English: “Yes, because we are bilingual, therefore speak Spanglish which is a mix of both”.

The responses included in this group do not incorporate an evaluative component, which was elicited in the question that followed. One Puerto Rican participant describes “Spanglish” as the US dialect spoken by both Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans who otherwise “speak Spanish very well”. These dialectal differences are obviously more salient when communicating with speakers from other Spanish-speaking countries.

I feel like Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in my community speak Spanish very well, but at times it differs from Spanish in their perspective countries. A lot of the time, “Spanglish” is used in the States rather than authentic, straight-up Spanish. I just got back from Mexico and struggled a bit with the Spanish spoken out there. And to top it all off, Spanish in the States is different from Spanish in Spanish-speaking countries.

Group 3 (*It is improper Spanish*) comprises 26 responses (18%) that characterize the differences in terms of correctness and evaluate the variety negatively (Table 3). The Spanish spoken in the local communities is “broken”, less correct, fluent, and proper than the Spanish spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico. Some problems mentioned are a limited lexical inventory, which leads to making up “Spanglish” words, as well as errors in pronunciation. There are also remarks on the abundance of “slang”, but unlike in the responses collected in Groups 1 and 2, for these speakers, the use of slang is stigmatized as “not proper” Spanish: “The Spanish I hear here includes more slang and is improper”.

For a few participants (14: 9%), the differences are the result of contact between people from Mexico and Puerto Rico (Group 4: *It is a mix of Mexican and Puerto Rican dialects*) or from the coexistence of different Mexican regional dialects: “Mexico has many regions with different dialects, accents, and regionalisms”; “Yes. Not every word means the same to a Mexican as to a Puerto Rican”. If before speakers expressed their linguistic awareness about the influence of English in the local Spanish, now they turn to their awareness of the presence of different Spanish dialects and how that contact may impact the Spanish spoken locally. “Yes, we tend to adapt each other’s lingo”.

In their responses to the previous question, most of the participants simply described the nature of the differences without conveying how they valued them. A second question was included in the survey to elicit an evaluative or affective response: *If you think that there is a difference, how do you feel or what do you think about that difference?*

The answers obtained were organized into the five points of a continuum (Table 4) that moves from a clearly negative evaluation (37: 31%) (Group 1: *I do not like it/I feel bad/It is incorrect*) to the positive appreciation of the local Spanish variety (14: 12%) (Group 5: *I like it/I feel comfortable/It is cool*). Between those two poles, 13 (11%) participants report a neutral or indifferent attitude (Group 2: *I am indifferent/Neutral/No feelings*). The most common response (56: 46%) is that speakers “do not mind”, stating that the differences from Mexican/Puerto Rican Spanish are “ok”, “normal”, “to be expected” under such

sociolinguistic conditions (Group 3: *I do not mind/It is normal*). Finally, a minority of speakers (14: 12%) provide a clearly positive evaluation (*I like it/I feel comfortable/It is cool*).

Table 4. Classification of Responses to the Question: “If you think that there is a difference, how do you feel or what do you think about that difference”?

Categories of Classification	N	%	Sample Responses
1. <i>I do not like it/I feel bad/It is incorrect</i>	37	31	“I do not like the difference. I wish we didn’t have Spanglish words”
2. <i>I am indifferent</i>	13	11	“I have no feeling towards it you speak it how you learned it”
3. <i>I do not mind/It is normal</i>	56	46	“As long as they understand me, I don’t have a problem”
4. <i>I like it/I feel comfortable/It is cool</i>	14	12	“I actually don’t mind the Spanglish and kind of enjoy it”
TOTAL	120	100	

In this continuum, a clear break can be established between “negative” (37: 31%) and “not negative” attitudes (83: 69%). The results presented in Table 4 and Figure 5 leave little doubt about the prevalence of attitudes that range from neutrality (13: 11%) and acceptance (46: 56%) to positive appreciation (14: 12%). It is also true that clearly negative attitudes are far more common (31%) than clearly positive ones (12%).

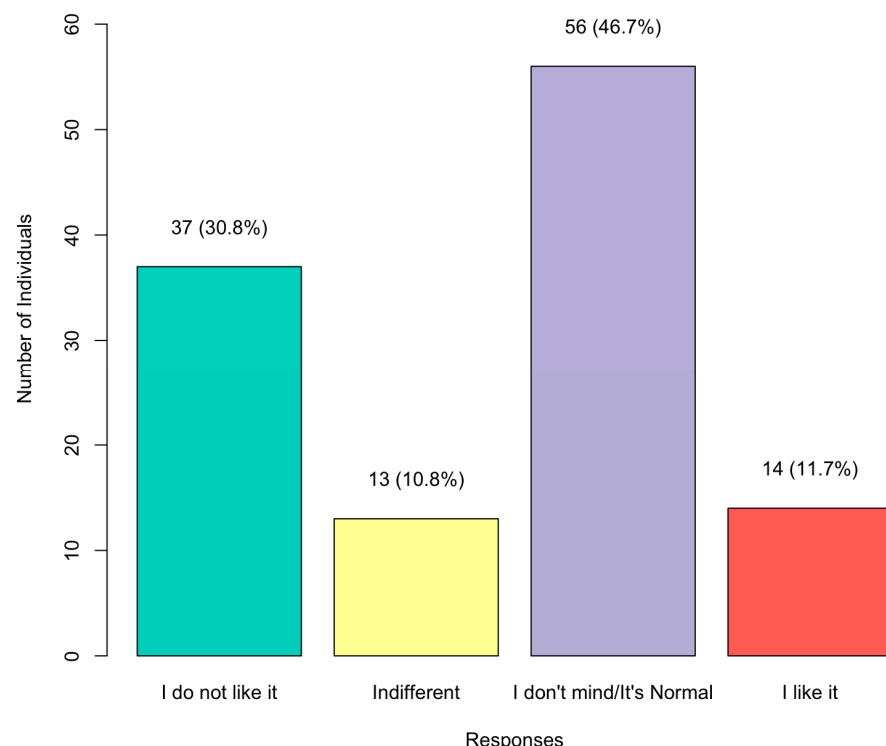


Figure 5. Classification of Responses to the Question: “If you think that there is a difference, how do you feel or what do you think about that difference?”.

While only a minority of Latinas/os in these communities endorse the local dialect unequivocally, most of the evaluations (69%) point to the unavoidable acceptance of a US Spanish variety that is different from Mexican, and Puerto Rican Spanish and whose natural

development is beyond their control. Faced with that realization, attitudes can range from neutral to positive, but the majority of people do not reject or stigmatize the local variety. The differences are considered “normal”, “expected”, “inevitable”, “understandable”, and are sometimes explained in purely dialectological terms as “due to geography”, similar to the difference between British and American English: “I think the difference is normal and to be expected. People speak English in England, but it is obviously different from the English we speak”. In other cases, people go a step further from “not minding” to harboring a positive evaluation and to express a sense of pride or attachment to the local variety: “I think it makes us unique in a sense. The fact that we have to navigate between two languages is pretty impressive. It definitely shows our culture”.

Another idea that appears repeatedly when participants explain their feelings about the novelty of the local variety is that any kind of Spanish that allows speakers to communicate effectively is good Spanish. If Spanish can function as an effective means of communication, other considerations (such as correctness or prestige) do not come into play: “As long as they understand me, I don’t have a problem”. The validation of the local dialect seems to rest on a linguistic ideology that values communication over prestige.

A negative attitude towards the type of Spanish that is spoken in the region is found in 31% of the responses. This negative evaluation is anchored on many of the same parameters that appeared in the responses to the previous question. The local Spanish is “incorrect”, “not proper”, and “inauthentic”. It is a variety that “takes away” from the true language and is altogether worse than Mexican Spanish.

The affective component of language attitudes appears very clearly in some of these responses. Speakers report feeling “sad”, “disheartened” and “frustrated” in the face of the Spanish commonly used around them. The affective and behavioral dimensions of speakers’ attitudes appear in the responses of participants who reject and dislike the dialect and also encourage people to be proactive in trying to improve it: “Siento que debemos de mejorar nuestro español y practicar más”.

This part of the study includes a final question that asks people about their feelings if they were to be identified as a Mexican or a Puerto Rican speaker (*If someone told you that you speak Spanish like a Mexican—or like a Puerto Rican if you are Puerto Rican, etc.—, would you take it as a compliment? Why?*). The responses to this question can attest to the level of prestige these dialects may hold for the speakers and how much they identify with that dialect (Table 5).

Table 5. Responses to Question: “If someone told you that you speak Spanish like a Mexican (or a Puerto Rican if you are Puerto Rican, etc.), would you take it as a compliment? Why?”.

Categories of Classification	N	%	Sample Responses
<i>Yes, I would take it as a compliment</i>	80	52	“Yes, because I take pride in my culture and who I am”
<i>No, I would not take it as a compliment</i>	33	22	“Probably not, because they are stereotyping me”
<i>Neutra/Indifferent response</i>	23	15	“I wouldn’t be offended, it’s just how we speak”
<i>It depends</i>	12	8	“It would depend on the connotation and intention behind the comment”
<i>I do not know</i>	5	3	
TOTAL	153	100	

Table 5 and Figure 6 show that a little over half of the participants (80: 52%) would consider it a compliment to be told that they speak “like a Mexican” or “like a Puerto Rican”. Some participants explain their response by referring to feelings of Mexican pride, evidencing the clear connection between ethnic pride and linguistic identity. Zentella (2007)

finds similar results in New York City, where most of the speakers interviewed “were pleased to be identified as speakers of their country’s dialect” (p. 27).

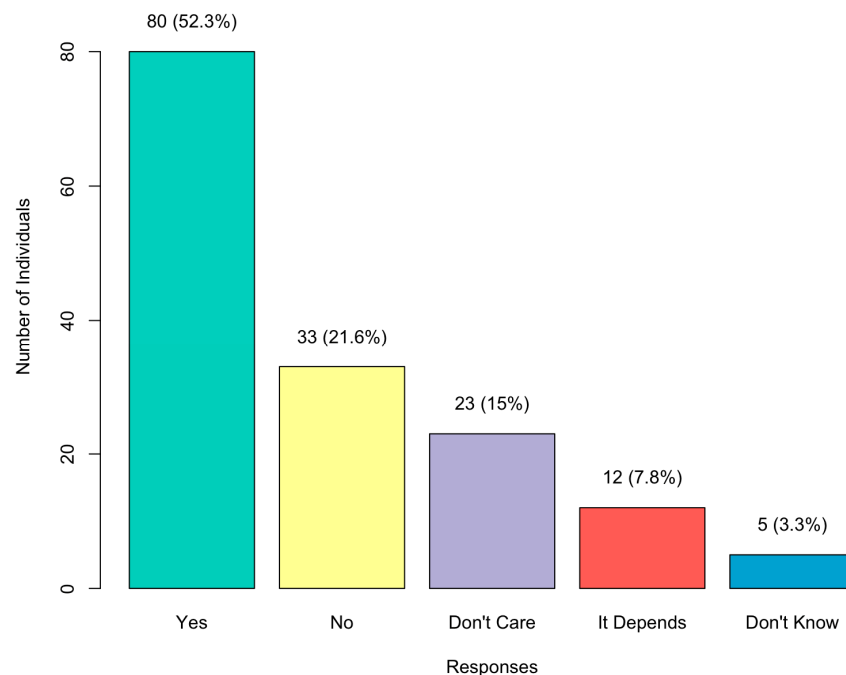


Figure 6. Responses to Question: “If someone told you that you speak Spanish like a Mexican (or like a Puerto Rican if you are Puerto Rican, etc.), would you take it as a compliment? Why?”.

In other cases, the reasons are linguistic in nature. Some people praise the Mexican Spanish variety itself, while others say they would be flattered because being identified as a Mexican implies superior Spanish language skills and fluency.

The percentage of people who responded that they would not take it as a compliment is small (33: 22%). In a few cases, it seems that participants want to distance themselves from a linguistic variety that they consider incorrect: “I would probably feel like I wasn’t speaking it right”. Others explain that they would not take the comment as a compliment because they are in fact Mexican/Puerto Rican, so to be recognized as such when they speak would just be something normal and expected, not particularly deserving of a compliment: “No, I am Mexican, I’m supposed to”. Such responses imply a positive affirmation of their linguistic and dialectal background.

A completely different explanation is offered by those who would not interpret such a comment (“You speak like a Mexican/Puerto Rican”) as a compliment, but as an offensive and racist remark: “I am sure that they say it condescendingly”, “No. I wouldn’t take that as a compliment. I think that would be a bit racist”, “Probably not, because they are stereotyping me”. In doing so, they are assuming for this question a social context that discredits and stigmatizes Mexican/Puerto Rican Spanish speakers.

The presumed social context of the interaction is also behind the responses of 12 (8%) individuals who did not give a *Yes, I would take it as a compliment*, or *No, I would not take it as a compliment* response because, for them, the choice hinges on who would be making the comment. If the comment was made by in-group members of the “same race”, they would take it as a compliment, but if the person is perceived as an outsider, “a person from Spain or from a school” or “a bigot”, it would not be taken as a compliment.

All these responses are based on the presupposition for this interaction of a social context that is hostile to Latinas/os. It is interesting to notice that such misgivings originate on different grounds. One would be the racist stigmatization of Latinas/os, and another would be the stigmatization of Latino speech by a person perceived as upholding an ideal of correctness (“a person from Spain”), or by a person associated with a setting where their

speech would be stigmatized (from a school’”). These comments evidence social tensions in the incorporation of Latinas/os in the region, particularly in areas where they represent small minority populations.

The number of participants that provided a *Neutral/Indifferent response* (23: 15%) seemed somewhat surprising. These speakers interpret the question from a remarkably different perspective. Some feel an unquestionable legitimacy to the way they speak Spanish, making the importance of outside endorsements of the way they speak a moot point or irrelevant: “Neither as a compliment nor insult, aside from region and accent, Spanish is the same language”, “I wouldn’t take it as a compliment, but I wouldn’t get offended if they told me I sound like a Puerto Rican”. In feeling this way, they demonstrate a level of linguistic security and confidence in the way they speak.

3.2. Attitudes and Beliefs about the Local Variety of Spanish

The second concentration of the study involves the speakers’ beliefs and attitudes about their local variety, but this time considered on its own, without another dialect as a point of reference or comparison (*How would you describe the Spanish spoken in your community?*).

Table 6 and Figure 7 show that the largest number of responses (62: 30%) make reference to the low level of Spanish language use in the places where they live. Perhaps the question was interpreted by participants as assuming that Spanish was regularly spoken in their communities, which, as they make clear, in many cases is not the case. As one person puts it, “it is hard to describe because very few people speak Spanish”. The low frequency of use is associated with living in mostly “rural” or “Caucasian” areas: “I moved to a rural white community, so it isn’t”.

Table 6. Responses to Question: “How would you describe the Spanish spoken in your community?”⁴.

Categories of Classification	N	%	Sample Responses
<i>Few people speak Spanish</i>	62	30	“Well, there is not much Spanish spoken in my community”
<i>It is good</i>	39	19	“Proper/good Spanish for the most part”
<i>It is Mexican/Puerto Rican Spanish</i>	24	12	“All over it is mixed between Mexican and Puerto Rican”/“Average Mexicano/Puerto Rican”
<i>It is a mix of Spanish and English</i>	20	10	“Half Spanish/half English”
<i>It is normal</i>	15	7	“It is common, basic, spoken Spanish. It is not really much different”
<i>It is slang/informal</i>	16	8	“I feel like the Spanish spoken in NWI is informal”
<i>It is not proper/“broken”</i>	21	10	“Very watered down or more street than formal Spanish and greatly influenced by English”
<i>I do not know—Other</i>	8	4	
TOTAL	205	100	

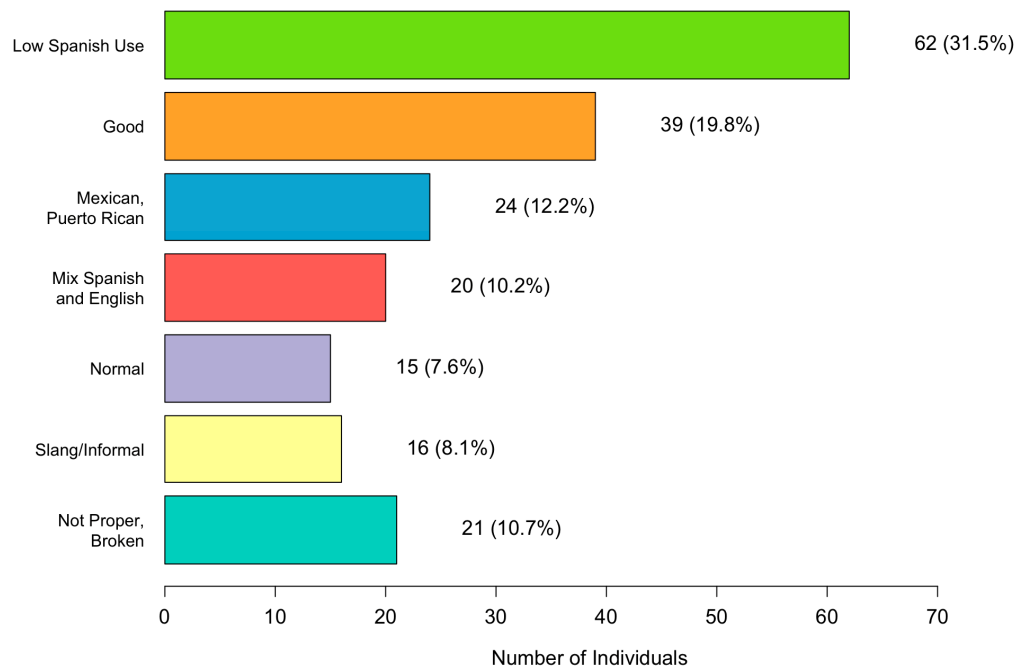


Figure 7. Responses to the Question: “How would you describe the Spanish spoken in your community?”.

Some people who moved to Northwest Indiana from Chicago comment on how much more widely Spanish is spoken in the city. One person points to the fact that in suburban towns where Latinas/os are small minorities, people may shy away from speaking Spanish in public: “Ahora vivo en Munster y hay pocas familias que hablan español y si lo hablan no hablan en público. Antes cuando you viví en Chicago fue muy diferente. Muchas personas de todas las edades hablan español todavía”.

In another 24 cases (12%), participants mention the dialectal affiliation of the local Spanish to the Spanish spoken in Mexico and Puerto Rico. It is “Mexican Spanish” or “Puerto Rican Spanish”, depending on who the majority population is.

Responses also point to a blend of Mexican and Puerto Rican features in the Spanish spoken locally: “All over it is mixed between Mexican and Puerto Rican”. The perception of a blend of dialects as a defining feature of the Spanish spoken in the community suggests a metalinguistic awareness that can be attributed to the fact that in Northwest Indiana, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans have a long history of living side by side. It also shows a positive attitude towards the accommodation of features of the other dialect.

This linguistic situation, which allows for the incorporation of lexical items from the other dialect, is very different from the one described by Ramos Pellicia (2014, p. 39) for the midwestern town of Lorain, OH. In Lorain, Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans had also coexisted for over six decades, but these groups “have separate and different language ideologies and have decided against converging their linguistic varieties. There is no evidence of superficial borrowing, or influence of lexical items”. The linguistic divergence in this case is linked to a history of tensions and segregation of Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans.

The *Mix of English and Spanish* appears, once again, as a salient characteristic of the local Spanish (20: 10%), as does the description of the variety as *Slang/Informal* (16: 8%) “learned at home, not school”. It is also called *Normal* (15: 8%), implying that this variety of Spanish is what they consider habitual, natural, or ordinary Spanish and does not need further specifications; it is just “Spanish”.

Finally, in 31% (60) of the cases, the responses provide a clearly positive or negative evaluation. In 39 (20%) responses the Spanish variety is considered “proper”, “good” or “very Good” Spanish. Negative evaluations (21) make up 11% and seem to be largely based on the influence of English.

As it was done earlier when speakers compared local and homeland Spanish, the survey included a follow-up question destined to elicit the affective connection participants may feel towards the Spanish spoken in the region (*How do you feel or what do you think about the Spanish spoken in your community?*) (Table 7).

Table 7. Affective/Evaluative and Non-Affective/Non-Evaluative Responses to the Question: “How do you feel or what do you think about the Spanish spoken in your community?”.

Affective/Evaluative	N	%	Non-Affective/Evaluative	N	%
Very good	16	16	Little Spanish Spoken	51	61
Good	41	42	Other Linguistic comment	20	24
OK	23	24	Indifferent	8	10
Could be better	11	11	Do not know	4	5
Bad	6	6			
Total	97	100		83	100

The subgroup of evaluative responses (97: 54%) conveys feelings that range from “very good” to “bad” (Figure 8). Feelings about the local Spanish are overwhelmingly positive (58%), “I feel like it’s great”, “I think it’s good, should be spoken more”. In the middle of this continuum, other responses express more neutral feelings, but still with a clear acceptance of the variety (“I’m ok with it”, “Language is used to communicate thoughts and ideas, so as long as people understand one another, I don’t mind”). From there, the scale moves to a small number of responses that convey negative feelings and judgments (17: 17%): “It is not very proper because of the lack of education in the language” and “It is poor”.

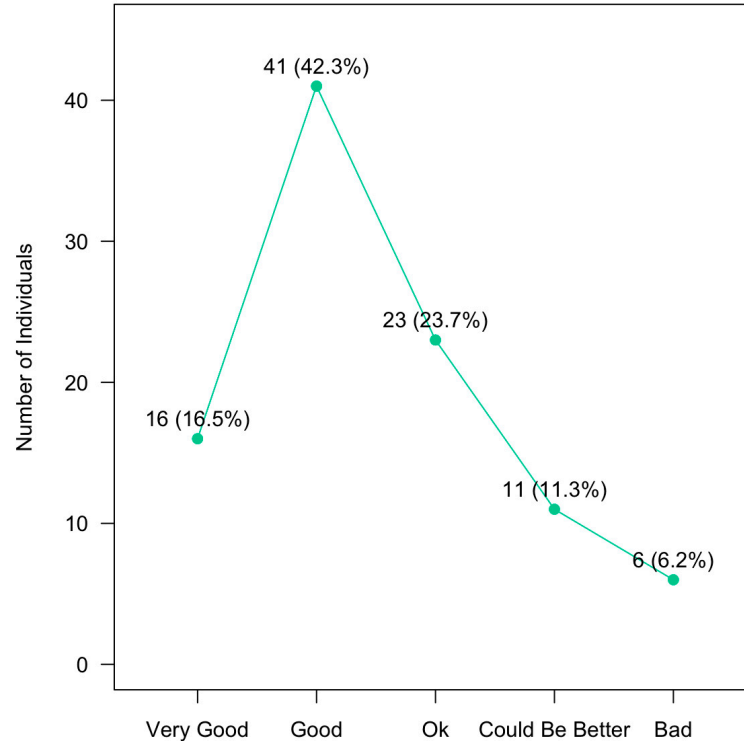


Figure 8. Group of Responses that provided an evaluative response to the question “How do you feel or what do you think about the Spanish spoken in your community?”.

Despite the phrasing of the question, which clearly asked speakers to express “how they felt”, close to half of the responses (83: 46%) did not provide an affective or evaluative response. This is an issue that clearly should be addressed in further studies.

A large group of participants (51: 61%) responds to the question, (*How do you feel or what do you think about the Spanish spoken in your community?*) again with remarks about the low level of Spanish language use in their communities, or by making non-affective and non-evaluative linguistic comments (20: 24%). In 8 cases (10%), people respond that they do not have any emotional response and are “indifferent” (Table 7).

One factor that can play a role in Spanish language use is the attitude of non-Latinas/os towards the use of Spanish in public settings. Language is a salient marker of ethnic affiliation, and how people outside the ethnic group may respond to or feel about that symbol can be an indication of how the manifestation of an ethnic Latino identity is judged in different settings. These issues are addressed in one question of the study that questioned participants about their experience in Northwest Indiana: *In your opinion, what is the attitude of non-Latinas/os towards the use of Spanish in Northwest Indiana?*

The responses obtained often equated different experiences with different areas, contrasting the Northwest Indiana Rust Belt with the rest of the region and the state. Outside of the East Chicago and Hammond Metropolitan area, where Latinas/os are present in significant numbers, perceptions change; “Some people feel it is a positive thing worth promoting, and some think it should not happen publicly. The former tends to be from northern Lake County and the latter from the rest of the region”, “Most do not like it, in the majority of Caucasian towns”, “Depends on the area. Racism is alive and well in NWI”.

Answers were classified into five groups in a scale from negative to positive attitudes as follows: “Negative”/“Somewhat negative”/“Mixed”/“Neutral”/“Positive” (Table 8 and Figure 9).

Table 8. Reported attitudes (N) of “Non-Latinas/os” towards the use of Spanish on Northwest Indiana.

Negative	Somewhat Negative	Mixed	Neutral	Positive	Do Not Know
63	27	39	18	31	11

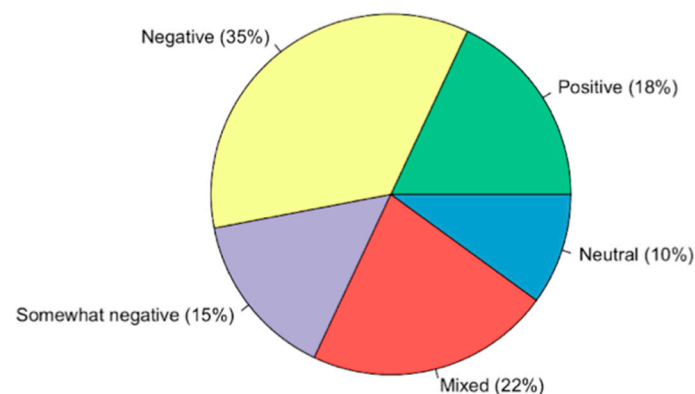


Figure 9. Reported attitudes towards the use of Spanish in Northwest Indiana.

Results in Figure 9 show half of the responses (50%) report negative or somewhat negative attitudes toward the public use of Spanish. Sixty-three (35%) of the participants feel non-Latinos have a *Negative* response towards the use of Spanish in public settings: “Negative. I live near a lot of conservatives”, “I feel now with politics, a lot of people are being so racist and prejudiced against Spanish speakers. As soon as they hear someone speaking Spanish, they immediately think that they are illegal. It makes my blood boil”, “People get very mad due to the fact this is an English-speaking country”.

Another 15% gave a response that was classified as *Somewhat negative* because the negativity appears qualified, as in “They don’t appreciate it because they might feel awkward”.

The other half of the participants (50%) perceive *Mixed* (22%), *Neutral* (10%), or *Positive* attitudes (18%): “Aquí en Indiana, hay gente que se molesta cuando hablas español y gente que le gusta para aprender o practicar a la vez”, “Indiferente. For the most part, I

don't think non-Latinos care about the use of Spanish", "Most of them are fine with it. No problem", "Muy buena".

These subjective appreciations provide a glimpse into how the performance of a Latino ethnic identity is perceived to be valued by "out-group" people in real-life contexts. Overall, the perception that seems to prevail is the acceptance of bilingualism as a reality in the region, with a stronghold of the population that does not appreciate this situation.

The location where participants live appears to be a significant factor, whether they live inside (Figures 10 and 11) or outside an ethnic enclave. The responses obtained from people who live inside a Latino enclave show a lower percentage of genuinely *Negative* attitudes, fewer *Neutral* attitudes, and a higher percentage of *Positive* attitudes. These results point to "place of residence" and the demographics associated with it as a factor affecting how the performance of a Latino identity is judged and valued in the region.

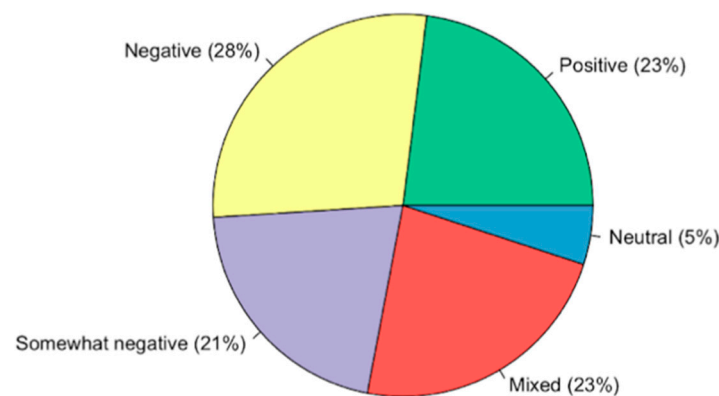


Figure 10. Reported attitudes towards the use of Spanish in a Latino enclave.

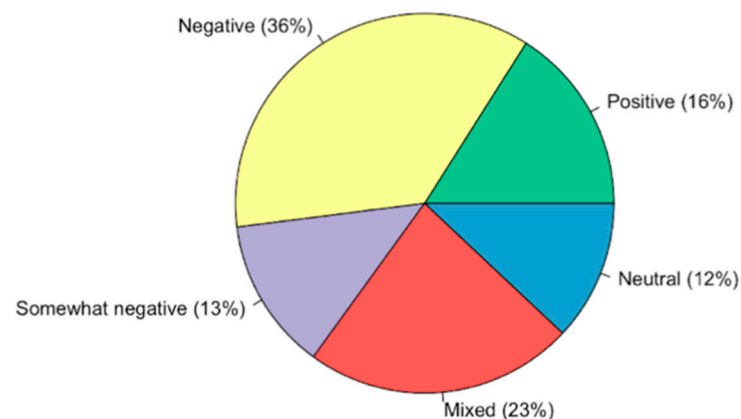


Figure 11. Reported attitudes towards the use of Spanish outside a Latino enclave.

As Latinas/os increasingly live in suburban settings, where they are a small minority, their exposure to a negative evaluation of their use of Spanish in public increases. At the same time, as non-Latino residents have a wider exposure to the public use of Spanish, their attitudes may also change. What seems to be clear is that Indiana Latinas/os have left the old residential patterns for good, and this will have consequences for their incorporation experiences in the region.

3.3. Ideologies of Prestige and Linguistic Correctness

The last part of the study delved into the ideologies of prestige and linguistic correctness of the speakers, as they can have a significant impact on the present and future Spanish language use in the region. Ideologies shape people's identities and bring with them certain forms of behavior, including linguistic habits. They are essential knowledge

for an approach to linguistics through the lens of societal and interactional contexts (Preston 1989; Moreno Fernández 2016).

Ideology is also crucial for following norms of correctness and appropriateness in language use. Variants may be labeled as incorrect due to their divergence from prescribed norms or their association with speech from less prestigious regions, countries, or social groups. The use of “correct” or “incorrect” in this context stems from subjective attitudes rooted in social norms rather than from objective linguistic evaluation (Silva-Corvalán and Enrique-Arias 2017, p. 38).

The study included a question that asked about what country or countries speakers identified as prototypes of “correct” Spanish: *In what country or countries do you think people speak “correct” Spanish? Why?* The main prototypes within an “international language” category usually have varieties directly associated with countries (“Spanish from Spain,” “British English”). The notion of choosing an ideal linguistic variety that differs from one’s own is not an uncommon phenomenon. The classification of language varieties is influenced by cultural, political, and economic prestige, resulting in certain languages being deemed more prestigious than others.

Table 9 shows that the countries mentioned more often are Spain (68: 31%) and Mexico (51: 23%), followed closely by “Every Country” (44: 20%). Often, speakers believe that the best variety of a language is tied to a particular territory, which features prominently in history: “Spain is the birthplace of Spanish, and that is said to be correct Spanish”, “Spain, the Spanish language originates there”.

Table 9. Responses to: “In what country or countries do you think people speak “correct” Spanish? Why?”⁵.

Country	N	%
Spain	68	31
Mexico	51	23
<i>Every Country</i>	44	20
<i>Education</i>	13	6
Colombia	8	4
<i>No Country</i>	7	3
South America	7	3
U.S.	6	3
Puerto Rico	4	2
Peru	4	2
Argentina	2	1
Venezuela	2	1
Other countries (Bolivia (1), Chile (1), El Salvador (1), Guatemala (1), Nicaragua (1), Uruguay (1))	6	3
TOTAL	222	100

In her work in New York City, Zentella (2007) explains that many immigrants come to the United States with Latin American ideas of good and bad language, including the belief in “the superiority of the Spanish of Spain and the local ‘norma culta’, particularly of highland Sound American dialects” (p. 28). The strength of this linguistic alignment seems to be in part affected by the level of linguistic security. In her New York City study, she found that the more linguistically secure Latino groups agreed more strongly with the notion that “we should not learn to speak like Spaniards”. Peninsular Spanish was also selected as the most correct variety in a study that targeted the perceptions of Cubans in Miami (Alfaraz 2002).

After Spain, Mexico is, by a very long margin, the country identified as the model for correct Spanish. This is not surprising, as most of the participants are of Mexican ancestry.

In 20% of the responses (44), speakers challenge the notion of correctness that underlies the question itself, stating that “good Spanish” is not confined to a specific place but is spoken across all Spanish-speaking countries (*Every Country*). They reject the notion that

correctness is associated with any country, stating that there is no such thing as one “correct” way to speak Spanish: “Every Hispanic race has different ways of speaking Spanish. There is no correct or perfect way”, “This is an irrelevant question. There is no such thing as “correct” Spanish when comparing the way different Spanish-speaking countries use the language differently. Each is valid”.

Others (7: 3%) convey a similar idea by saying that “correct” Spanish is not spoken anywhere, as every dialect develops its own “slang” and “street talk”: “None. Does anyone truly speak any language “correctly” across the board? I feel it is human nature to develop short cuts and slang”.

Sometimes linguistic prestige is not associated with a place but with a context. Among those who think that correct Spanish can be found irrespective of geographical location, there are people (13: 6%) who base their notions of correctness on educational attainment and social status: “Throughout Spain and Latin America, where there is a higher social-economic status”, “In my opinion, higher education level Spanish from any Spanish speaking country is correct Spanish”. Rivera-Mills (2000, p. 27) study of Latinas/os living in Fortuna, California, records similar results. She finds that speakers felt that their variety was not the best but rather perceived as better the Spanish spoken by persons with more education, no matter their country of origin.

A significant finding in the results of this study is the low prestige of the Puerto Rican variety, named only four times, although there were at least 20 Puerto Rican participants in the sample. The stigmatization of Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States has been amply documented and is also illustrated in some of the comments made by participants in this survey. Similar results are reported by Medina-Rivera (2014) in his study of language attitudes in Cleveland, OH. He finds that, although Puerto Ricans are the largest group of Latinas/os in the city and the largest group in his sample, Puerto Rican Spanish was the variety less favorably evaluated. Puerto Rican Spanish was also considered to be the least appropriate variety to be taught at schools. Spanish from Spain was the most common choice as the best Spanish variety to be taught in an educational setting (33.3%), followed by Mexican Spanish (15.3%), with only 6.3% choosing Puerto Rican Spanish.

The previous question was paired with another that asked about what country or countries speakers associated with “incorrect” Spanish (Table 10). The United States is the country that most people identify with “incorrect” Spanish, but the low percentage (44: 26%) confirms previous findings, in regard to the general acceptance and validation of the local Spanish variety. The second country most often identified with “incorrect Spanish” is Puerto Rico (20: 12%), which confirms the lack of prestige of this particular variety of Spanish. In contrast, Mexican Spanish is only mentioned five times as a prototype of “incorrect Spanish”.

Table 10. Responses to: “In what country or countries. Do you think people speak “incorrect” Spanish? Why?”.

COUNTRIES	N	%
United States	44	26
No Country	30	17
Puerto Rico	20	12
Every Country	17	10
Education/Place	17	10
Dominican Republic	9	5
Cuba	6	3
Mexico	5	3
Argentina (3), Spain (3), Venezuela (3)	9	5
Caribe (2), China (2), Japan (2), South America (2)	10	6
Canada (1), Central America (1), Chile (1), Colombia (1), Guatemala (1)	5	3
TOTAL	172	100

Thirty people (17%) explain that no country speaks “incorrect” Spanish because there is not such a thing as “incorrect” Spanish: “None, all have a proper way of using it”, “I do not. Every Spanish speaking country has its own dialect. It is not necessarily ‘incorrect’”.

The opposite idea, that “incorrect” Spanish is found in “all or most of the countries” appears 17 (10%) times. Incorrectness is related in some examples to the use of slang, “All of them. They all use slang”.

Some speakers (17: 10%) link the notion of “incorrectness” to social factors such as low socio-economic status and poor educational achievement: “People speak incorrect Spanish in low education areas of every Spanish speaking country”, “Within Spain and Latin America, where there is a lower social-economic status”.

A third question asked participants about the importance of speaking Spanish correctly: *How important is it to speak Spanish “correctly”? Why?* This is the only question included in the study that provided a set of preestablished options for the response. Participants had to choose between the four categories presented in Figure 12 and were later asked to explain their answer in a free response format.

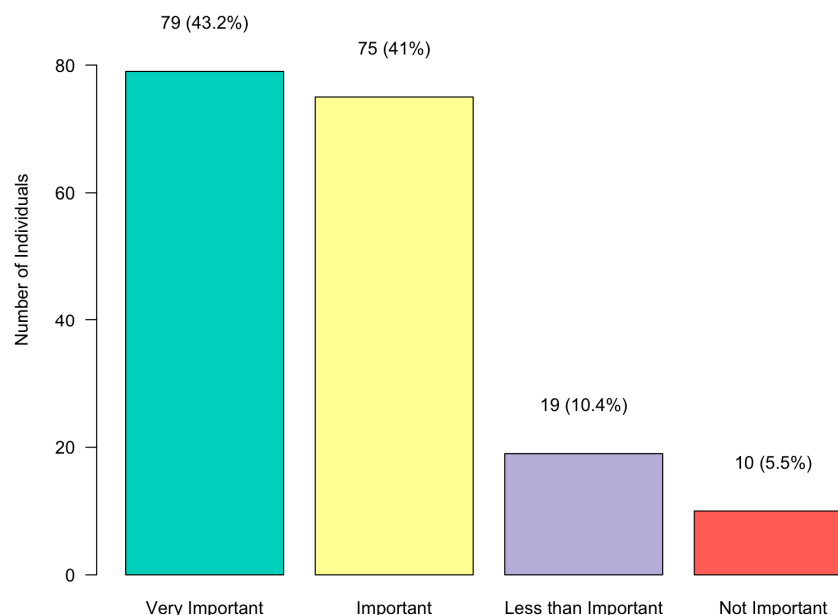


Figure 12. Responses to: “How important is it to speak Spanish “correctly”? Why?”.

The overwhelming response (84%) is that speaking Spanish correctly is important or very important. They state that speaking correct Spanish is important to communicate effectively, to improve job opportunities, and because correct Spanish is part of the cultural heritage they would want to transmit to their children. It is also part of the image one portrays publicly and, as such, can be used to pass judgment on a person: “Do not want to seem uneducated”, “Again, in the Latina/o community, being able to speak Spanish fluently is important; otherwise, you are stigmatized as being ‘too American’ or ‘white’”.

This part of the study ends with a question that asks whether speakers consider the variety of Spanish spoken in Northwest Indiana to be a suitable variety of Spanish to be taught at schools: *Should We Teach in the Schools the Kind of Spanish Spoken in Your Community? Why?* The endorsement or not endorsement of this variety represents the choice of a course of action on the part of the speaker, so it provides an example of the behavioral component of attitudes.

Table 11 shows that more people are in favor (48%) than against (42%) of using the local variety of Spanish as the Spanish dialect to be taught at local schools.

Table 11. Responses to: “Should We Teach in the Schools the Kind of Spanish. Spoken in Your Community? Why?”.

Responses	N	%
Yes	59	48
No	51	42
Do not know/Other	12	10
TOTAL	122	51

Some of the responses that are in favor of teaching the local Spanish in schools offer linguistic reasons: this variety is as grammatically correct or viable as any other. Moreover, “if students learn at school about Spanish dialects from other regions of the Spanish speaking world, why not learn their own regional variety as well? It is also important to learn the Spanish they will hear most often at home and in the community so that they can communicate effectively”.

In her study of Latinas/os in New York City, Zentella’s (2007) finds that of all the Latino groups included, Colombians were the only ones who were mostly (56%) in favor of teaching their own dialect in US schools. In this and other measures, Colombians were the group which displayed the most linguistic security. In our data, if the 12 *Do not know* cases are not counted, the results of our survey show that 54% of the participants respond in favor of teaching the local Spanish variety in the schools. This finding can be interpreted as another measure of the relative linguistic security of these speakers.

Many times, the reasons adduced to favor the local variety are community oriented. Speaking the same Spanish will help people communicate better, build bridges, and tend to each other’s needs. This group of responses seems to value communication over correctness. The main thing is to know Spanish, and the local variety of Spanish will guarantee that individuals communicate effectively in their communities. Although for some people this may entail teaching a Spanish that is not formal, it is nevertheless considered preferable. “Yes, absolutely. It would benefit others so much more and even those that don’t understand much English”, “All kinds should be taught”, “Yes because in school we learn Spanish from South America, Europe, etc., which is not wrong, but focus on Spanish in our community”, “Si porque es el español que oyen en sus casas y su comunidad”. These speakers advocate for the teaching and preservation of local Spanish.

Another set of responses (42%) reject the notion of teaching in schools, a variety that they consider improper and incorrect. The school is seen as the context in which students should learn formal and standard Spanish, just as they learn standard English. The standard norm is also the “universal” form, which increases the capacity of communication. The local Spanish is considered “slang” that may hinder the chances to advance socially. Several participants believe that schools should teach the correct Spanish, and then students will “figure out little details”.

4. Discussion

Recent proposals (Silva-Corvalán and Enrique-Arias 2017) point to the crucial information language attitudes provide about speakers, their social position, linguistic values, and prejudices. Language attitudes can influence the acceptance of certain linguistic variants and are indicators of the possible future of variable phenomena, such as the adoption of a categorical linguistic norm. In addition, attitudes are essential for understanding and defining a speech community, which is characterized not only by the use of common linguistic forms but also by shared evaluative norms about the language.

The results of this study, as presented above, reveal what participants think and how they feel about the Spanish spoken in Northwest Indiana. In the first part of the study, they responded by comparing the local Spanish to the homeland Spanish of Mexico or Puerto Rico, while in the second part, they were asked to consider the local Spanish on its own. The findings show that there was significant overlap in the way participants responded

to both sets of questions, but there are some important differences in terms of frequencies (Figure 13).

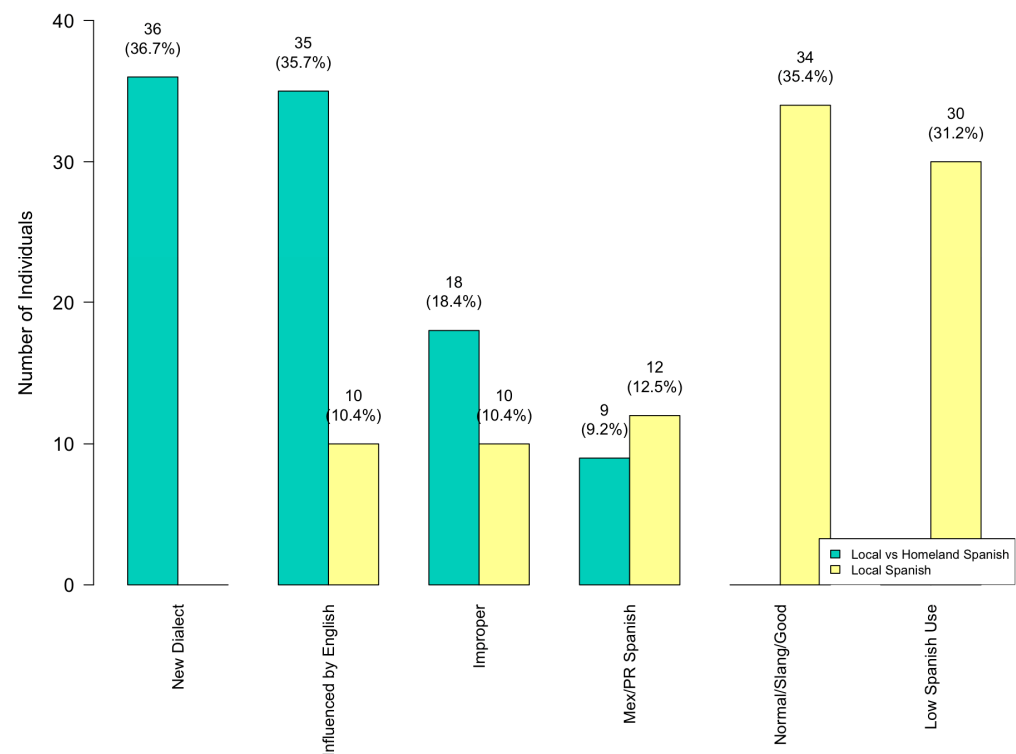


Figure 13. Characterization of the local Spanish when compared to homeland Spanish and when described on its own (%).

The negative evaluation (*Improper*) of the variety is more prominent when it is compared with the homeland Spanish than when it is evaluated on its own (18% vs. 10%), as is the *Influence from English* in the variety (35% vs. 10%). On the other hand, the percentage of responses that described Spanish as a *New Dialect* when compared with the homeland Spanish (34%), is very similar to the percentage that described it as *Normal/Slang/Good* when considered on its own (34%). In all, positive evaluations are more clearly present when the variety is considered independently.

These results are not surprising, as the survey question asked the speaker to think of the local variety as compared to a “standard” variety. Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish carry the cultural, political, and historical prestige of a “normative model” (Moreno Fernández 2016, p. 193). This model represents the idealized set of rules that defines how the language should be used and serves as a benchmark for evaluating language use. It typically includes prescribed grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and usage conventions that are considered correct or acceptable by a community of speakers or linguistic authorities and employed in educational contexts, official communications, and the media.

When evaluated according to this ideology of standardization, varieties that deviate are more likely to be deemed “incorrect” or “not pure”. Such deviations are often vocally denounced by people in positions of power and influence, reinforcing the ideology of what is “good” and “bad” language.

The stigmatization of the Spanish spoken in the US is often based on the influence of English. Ramos Pellicia (2014) reviews the linguistic ideology promoted by Latino individuals of influence (writers, politicians, reporters, etc.) and illustrates how the influence of English over Spanish has a long history of stigmatization, leading to the definition of a variety with English influence and borrowings as defective or deteriorated. This ideology of language standardization has sometimes been used to racialize the linguistic stigmatization of Latinas/os (Rosa 2016). Urciuoli (1996, p. 35) explains how the speech of Puerto Ricans

in New York City is, in fact, racialized “whenever an accent, ‘bad’ grammar, or ‘mixing’ are equated with bad habits, laziness, and speech that is somehow not language.” A group’s language variety can be characterized as an invaluable resource or as a permanent deficit, even as a state of “languageness” that questions the group’s linguistic capacity altogether (Rosa 2016, p. 163).

The study of language attitudes and beliefs about language varieties has shown that the perceptions of nonlinguists are often widespread and extend to teachers and language students. These perceptions can be so strong that they influence behavior even when theoretical knowledge contradicts them. Such beliefs and attitudes significantly impact social behavior and institutions, thereby shaping speech communities internally (Preston 1989; Moreno Fernández 2016). School is one of those institutions that disseminate linguistic ideologies, some of them fostering a sense of linguistic insecurity among speakers, as illustrated by the following comment made by a participant of the study: “una de los maestras de español en mi escuela dijo a muchos de mis amigos que saben hablar español que su español es ‘street’ y ‘improper and incorrect’”.

In her study of the Puerto Rican community of Brentwood, Long Island, Torres (1997) finds that 82% of the adults claimed to code-mix English and Spanish. When asked about their attitudes towards mixing, 24% chose the response “it is good”, 39% chose “it is bad”, and 36% said they “do not know”. Most of those who considered it a problem portray the influence of English as a sign of linguistic deficiency, but others recognize its usefulness, and some voice very positive feelings about it. Torres concludes that, although most Puerto Rican parents and students code-mix, they are critical of this linguistic behavior. For many, it is a sign of linguistic deficiency, and “they understand that is one of the reasons that their speech is stigmatized” (p. 27). The percentage of negative evaluations of English influence in the present study is very similar (35%) when the question involves the comparison with homeland Spanish. Again, positive attitudes towards the usefulness of this “mixed” variety are more prominent when the variety is evaluated on its own.

In descriptions of the local Spanish, 30% of the responses refer to the low use of Spanish within the community. These results describe a situation where positive attitudes towards the language are not associated with Spanish maintenance and use on the part of the speakers. Research shows that positive attitudes towards Spanish and Spanish language maintenance do not necessarily go hand in hand. In a study of attitudes across multiple generations of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles, Silva-Corvalán (1994) observed that commitment to language maintenance, including participation in activities promoting Spanish and Mexican culture, significantly decreased with longer family residence in the United States, despite consistently positive attitudes toward the Spanish language and Mexican culture across all generational groups. Similar results were obtained by Lamboy (2011) in his study of the attitudes of Puerto Ricans in Central Florida and New York City: “language is adopted as a symbol, but its maintenance is not necessarily adopted as a behavior of practice” (p. 78).

As speakers distance their Latino identity from the use of Spanish, issues of correctness lose relevancy. Potowski and Torres (2023) find that in Chicago, Puerto Ricans’ and Mexicans’ negative linguistic evaluations of the other group peaked among second-generation participants and were almost nonexistent among third-generation participants. They explain that the criticisms were based on an ideology of language standardization, which “seems to be losing ground in G3, very likely due, in part, to a loosening of the bond between the Spanish language and Latino identity. This decoupling of language from ethnic identity permits a wider variety of individuals to claim *latinidad* but also reflects and sustains ideologies that permit Spanish loss” (p. 30).

The comparative analyses of the responses obtained in *Local* vs. *Homeland Spanish* and *Local Spanish* were also conducted for the question that elicited an affective or evaluative response (Figure 14). In this case, there is also an overlap in the responses collected.

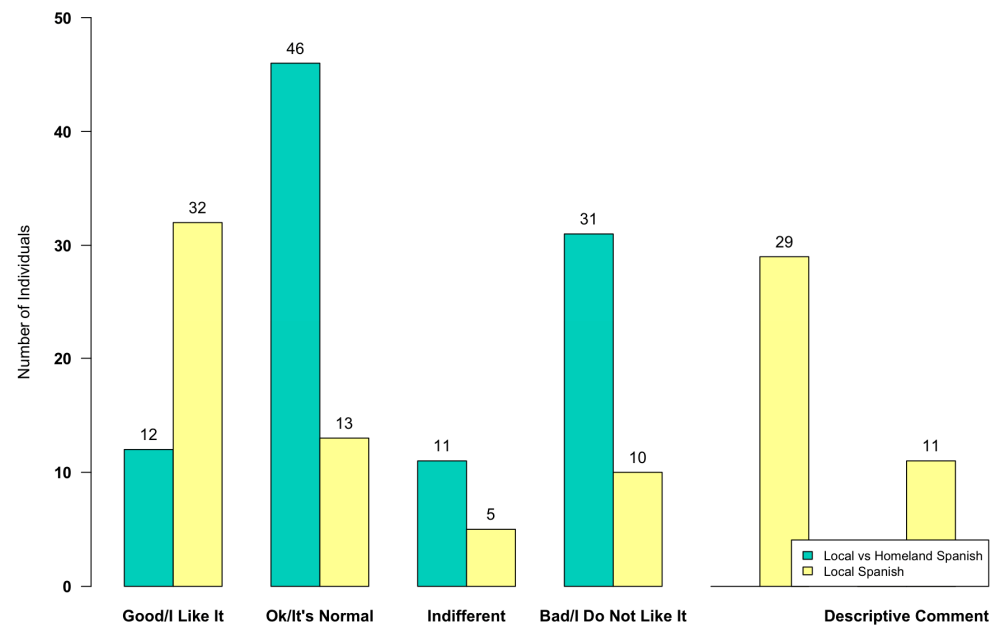


Figure 14. Evaluation of the local Spanish when compared to Mexican/Puerto Rican Spanish and when described on its own (%).

Silva-Corvalán and Enrique-Arias (2017, p. 94) explain that linguistic variables have multidimensional connotations and evaluative judgments are not necessarily uniform across different dimensions. In their research, they find that, in an objective and impersonal dimension, a standard variant is evaluated positively, but in a subjective and personal dimension, the same variant does not receive a uniformly positive evaluation. This same principle can be applied to the evaluation of linguistic varieties in this study. When participants compare the local variety with “normative models” like the Spanish spoken in Mexico/Puerto Rico, the percentage of negative evaluations (31%) is much larger than when they assess local Spanish on its own (10%). The first case involves an objective dimension with connotations of power and prestige, while the other is a subjective and community-oriented dimension where ethnic solidarity connotations prevail. Positive evaluations of the local variety show the same relationship: 32% think the local Spanish is good when evaluated on its own, compared to 12% when contrasted with homeland Spanish.

The stigmatization of the local speech arises primarily when compared with normative varieties. However, when the local variety is compared to Mexican or Puerto Rican Spanish, what prevails (46%) is a qualified positive attitude that views the differences as simply “normal”. Moreno Fernández (2016) indicates that in popular language theory, language is viewed as a concrete reality existing outside the individual. Those closely associated with this concept of language, such as academics, politicians, and teachers, use it in a “perfectly correct” or “model” manner. On the other hand, those who do not have this direct connection use the language in a more “normal” manner. “In fact, when people are asked about their way of speaking, the vast majority of people respond that they speak ‘normally’” (p. 196). Once the way of speaking departs from that “normal language”, the variety is perceived to be “deviant” or contain “errors”.

The study of attitudes has been the focus of many investigations aimed at predicting the future of minority languages within bilingual contexts. In these situations, it is not uncommon for a monolingual majority group to develop negative attitudes toward the minority language. In regards to Spanish in the US, Silva-Corvalán and Enrique-Arias (2017) state that “en la actualidad los hispanos aseguran que, cuando hablan español frente a un anglohablante, la reacción no es hostil. Cuando lo es, los hispanos parecen sentirse seguros y reafirman su derecho a comunicarse en español” (p. 95). While this may be true in areas with a high concentration of Latinas/os, the results from this study

show clear differences in the experiences of Latinas/os, with a reported perception of a hostile environment towards the public use of Spanish in places where they represent small minorities.

5. Conclusions

The findings of this study show that the vast majority of speakers (84%) perceive a clear difference between the Spanish spoken in their community and that spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico. For some (36%), the difference is explained in terms of the emergence of a new Spanish dialect. The results leave little doubt about the acceptance of the local variety by most participants. One idea that emerges is that the development of a US Spanish variety that is different from Mexican or Puerto Rican Spanish is, in the words of the participants, “normal”, “unavoidable”, or “to be expected”, “not something we can control.” The differences are “inevitable unless one constantly travels to Mexico or Puerto Rico,” and are sometimes explained in purely dialectological terms as “due to geography” and likened to the distinction between the English spoken in the United Kingdom and American English. Another 35% state that the main reason for this difference is the interference with English, which in itself does not imply a negative evaluation.

Languages and their speakers are influenced by the cultural, communal, group, and situational environment. These environments set the stage for language use by the speaker who dwells in them and perceives them in different ways. From this perspective, it could be argued that speakers living in a situation of language contact with English value positively a “non-standard” variety of Spanish because this is the variety that prevails in their community. Awareness and knowledge of language varieties different from our own are gained through education and increased interaction with speakers from diverse backgrounds. Those speakers who have not studied Spanish in an educational setting and are not regularly exposed to the normative variety in their daily linguistic interactions do not feel under a strong pressure to conform to a normative ideal.

By valuing this variety positively, speakers contribute to the survival of the language and, with it, to the affirmation of their Latino identity. In the framework of network sociolinguistics, it could be said that in this Latino community “small world networks” prevail over “big world networks”. The former are the “personal networks of a speech community’s members, and within them occurs a dynamic of identity, variation, and change”, while the latter are networks that unify language and communication patterns and “would include media networks, created by major media consortiums, able to reach all members of a community and even to penetrate different natural and sociocultural environments” (Moreno Fernández 2016, p. 49). The conflict between the values attributed to each of these networks is expressed in the different attitudes toward the Spanish spoken in the community.

The findings of this study show that when the local Spanish variety is compared with that of Mexico or Puerto Rico, 31% of people consider it bad or incorrect. However, when evaluated on its own, the community speech receives a largely positive assessment (78%), with only 10% of participants expressing negative attitudes. Several studies on reactions to different varieties of Spanish indicate that Mexican Americans in the Southwest (Ryan and Carranza 1977) and Puerto Ricans in New York (García et al. 1988), especially the younger generation, appreciate their local varieties, at least in certain situations. In these states, the total number of Latinas/os, the percentage they represent in the total population, and the degree of linguistic loyalty is much higher than in Northwest Indiana. However, despite these demographic differences and the lower degree of Spanish language use in Northwest Indiana, the community’s dialectal variety of Spanish receives a clear positive evaluation.

This positive endorsement is connected to the symbolic value attached to heritage languages and to the history of the Latino community in Northwest Indiana. In addition to being a means of communication, language is also a symbol around which a social group articulates, thereby acquiring symbolic value for a collective of individuals. A positive attitude towards any type of Spanish represents the affirmation of the heritage language

as a symbol of a Latino ethnic identity. Additionally, Latino communities that have been anchored in a well-defined geography over a long period of time go through many changes, but through them they preserve a sense of belonging to the place that is enacted in many social, cultural, economic, political and linguistic experiences. Thus, the concept of "place" and a strong sense of belonging, rooted in historic Latino settlements, can play a crucial role in validating the local Spanish as an integral part of Latino identity in the region (Mendieta 2024).

It is important to note that this positive attitude represents the acceptance of a variety that speakers characterize as "mixed with English" and where elements of Mexican and Puerto Rican Spanish "are blended", that is, a variety largely stigmatized in the United States. It seems that the low level of Spanish language use and, in some cases, the limited knowledge or interaction with the standard varieties acquired through formal schooling have contributed to the prevalence of an attitude that values the prevalent variety and considers 'any' Spanish better than 'no' Spanish at all.

Half of the participants (50%) believe that non-Latinas/os in the region are somewhat "bothered" or "do not like" Spanish being spoken in public settings. Only 18% of the responses report a positive attitude towards Spanish. The rest perceive the attitudes of non-Latinas/os as "neutral" (10%) or "mixed" (22%). When bilingualism and the use of vernacular languages are stigmatized nationally and locally, an effective defense of the language may be the acceptance and positive evaluation of the only Spanish that the community can guarantee, the one that is spoken daily among community members. According to Silva-Corvalán (1994), although linguistic change appears to conflict with linguistic loyalty to Spanish, in reality, these changes represent a successful strategy for maintaining Spanish among second- and third-generation speakers.

For 31% of the speakers, the prototype of "correct Spanish" is found in the Spanish spoken in Spain, while Mexican Spanish is chosen in 23% of the cases. Another 20% state that a specific place cannot be mentioned, or that "good Spanish" is spoken in any Spanish-speaking country. The findings of this study corroborate the stigmatization of Puerto Rican Spanish in the United States. Only 2% of speakers chose this variety as "correct Spanish", while 12% considered it a prototype of "incorrect" Spanish.

Most of the participants identify largely with the Spanish spoken in their community and also with the Spanish of their particular ethno-linguistic group: 52% consider it a compliment to be identified as a Mexican/Puerto Rican speaker, and those who do not adduce reasons that are not based on a negative evaluation of the dialect.

The Spanish of the community is considered an efficient means of communication and, for 48% of the participants, a suitable variety to be taught at schools. The variety of Spanish actually spoken in the community should be taught because the main goal is to ensure successful communication. On the other hand, those who believe that this variety should not be part of the curriculum (42%) state that the schools' mission is to teach "correct" Spanish, meaning the standard variety. The remaining 10% either do not know or believe that the school should provide the development of both varieties, the standard and the popular.

A different conclusion drawn from this study concerns the methodology employed, in particular the effectiveness of including only open-ended questions in the survey. The results show that, in a significant number of cases, participants explained their beliefs to questions that were designed to elicit their affective response to those beliefs. This obstacle could be ameliorated with the inclusion of a set of closed-ended questions that would accompany the open-ended ones. This combination of open and closed questions was used when asking about the teaching of local Spanish in the schools, and the responses were able to successfully gather information on both the instrumental and cognitive components of the attitude for most participants. Additionally, the wording of the open-ended questions should be refined to clearly communicate to participants the type of information being sought.

Linguistic changes that are the result of linguistic contact are a way to accommodate our speech to the reality of the communities where we live, and, in this way, they can be seen as mechanisms for the construction of an identity through language. In this process, and depending on many social and linguistic factors, linguistic change takes place (Pesqueira 2010). While some eagerly embrace the new linguistic varieties developed in the United States, for others there is a battle of identities, and the new dialect is perceived as a loss. The study of language attitudes and beliefs shows that speakers will tend to reproduce in their speech new words, expressions, and ways of speaking that they find acceptable. This generalized behavior, in turn, may lead toward linguistic change.

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Informed Consent Statement: The study was exempt. There were no requirements to receive written consent.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Survey Questions Analyzed in the Study

1. Would you say that the Spanish spoken by Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in your community is different from the Spanish spoken in Mexico or Puerto Rico? Please explain.
2. If you think that there is a difference, how do you feel or what do you think about that difference?
3. If someone told you that you speak Spanish like a Mexican (or a Puerto Rican if you are Puerto Rican, etc.) would you take it as a compliment? Why?
4. How would you describe the Spanish spoken in your community?
5. How do you feel or what do you think about the Spanish spoken in your community?
6. In your opinion, what is the attitude of non-Latinas/os towards the use of Spanish in Northwest Indiana?
7. In what country or countries do you think people speak “correct” Spanish? Why?
8. In what country or countries do you think people speak “incorrect” Spanish? Why?
9. Should we teach in the schools the kind of Spanish spoken in your community? Please explain your answer.
10. How important is it to you to speak Spanish “correctly”? Why?

Notes

- ¹ In 31 cases the filiation of participants in terms of ancestry could not be established clearly. It is safe to assume that a large part of them is of Mexican origin.
- ² I follow the 2020 US Census Bureau classification of types of occupations.

- 3 One response to this question highlighted the need for more inclusive questioning to avoid alienating participants of different origins (“I am neither Mexican nor Puerto Rican”).
- 4 Some answers involved more than one explanation, and each explanation was catalogued independently.
- 5 Some participants mentioned more than one country. Each of the countries mentioned was computed.

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Article

From Bilingualism to Multilingualism: Mapping Language Dynamics in the Linguistic Landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia

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Abstract: This study explores the linguistic landscape (LL) of three Hispanic neighborhoods in Philadelphia, PA, aiming to document and measure the presence of the Spanish language in public spaces and understand the influence of *time*, *location*, and *establishment type* on *language use*. Based on 3437 signs analyzed from 2021 to 2023, our findings reveal that English dominates the LL at 61.65%, while Spanish constitutes 24.16%. The study employs chi-squared tests to confirm the impact of *time* and *location* on *language use*, highlighting a rise in bilingual and monolingual Spanish signs over time. Additionally, variables were combined into clusters using a heatmap to explore language use across different establishments. Bilingualism emerges as a sustained trend, underscoring inclusivity and linguistic diversity within these contexts. *Location* analysis exposes unique linguistic characteristics in each neighborhood, reflecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of their communities. The Golden Block exhibits bilingual prevalence, indicative of evolving demographics. Olney showcases language mixtures due to diverse ethnic and sociolinguistic influences, while South Philadelphia's Italian Market area features prevalent Spanish and multilingual signage. The study underscores the growing presence of Spanish and minority languages, emphasizing the need to recognize and revitalize linguistic diversity in urban spaces. As cities evolve, continued exploration of the LL is crucial to understanding language dynamics in relation to identity, culture, and power.

Keywords: linguistic landscape; Hispanic communities; Philadelphia; Spanish in the US; superdiversity; multilingualism; language diversity



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1. Introduction

Language is a complex system that reflects patterns of social change and adaptation, emerging through interactions between speakers. The convergence of different speech communities as a result of migration and gentrification has created a constant and dynamic flow of languages. According to Blommaert and Rampton (2015), “Migration makes communicative resources such as language varieties and scripts globally mobile, and this affects neighborhoods in very different corners of the world” (23). At the same time, neighborhoods and cities are complex systems (Bettencourt 2021; Portugali 2021) that are open to feedback from external sources, becoming more complex due to a fluctuating and divergent combination of nationalities, ethnicities, and languages, a diversification of diversity, which Vertovec (2022) described as *superdiversity*. This study, thus, explores three neighborhoods of Philadelphia (United States) to measure how languages are displayed and coexisting in the public spaces of areas in which different Hispanic immigrant communities have settled.

A way to explore the use of language(s) within communities is through a linguistic landscape (LL) analysis, which focuses on how written signs in public spaces construct the environment. The study of signs is not a recent development in linguistics, but it gained special interest in the early 2000s after the seminal paper published by Landry and Bourhis (1997) in which the linguistic landscape (LL) was defined as “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings” (25). This first definition of the LL was the seed for a series

of different studies, new methodological approaches, and new implications for the study of language in society (Gorter 2013). Linguistic landscape studies (LLSs) have become an asset in obtaining a holistic understanding of communities, as they allow researchers to go beyond spoken language and make space a central object of study (Blommaert 2013).

The LL is a broad and evolving field that encompasses various approaches and domains. While originally defined as the language of public signs and advertising billboards, the LL now covers a wider range of linguistic artifacts, and its studies have expanded beyond simply counting signs to include investigations of people's interactions with these signs and what they represent to different communities (Van Mensel et al. 2020; Kallen 2023). Researchers have also explored the virtual linguistic landscape (VLL), analyzing computer-mediated communication (CMC) in virtual spaces (Biró 2018; Hiippala et al. 2019; Guarín and Oliveiro-Cardoso 2023). When exploring language in society, LLSs are crucial to understanding social identity and bilingual practices, and the way communities are shaped through language use. From a sociolinguistic perspective, LLSs turn common spaces into ethnographic objects worthy of examination.

When analyzing signs, it is important to categorize them into *top-down* and *bottom-up* signs, since this difference is significant for contemplating power dynamics and language planning. *Top-down* signs, also known as *official signs*, are those created and placed by the government or other related institutions, while *bottom-up* signs (non-official signs) are placed by commercial enterprises, private organizations, or members of a community (Gorter 2006). This categorization is significant, as it has been demonstrated (Cenoz and Gorter 2006; Ben-Rafael et al. 2006) that the different types of signs—official/non-official—carry different meanings and are used in different ways.

LLSs have made significant contributions to variationist perspectives on language and society. Specifically, LL researchers have created accurate and detailed inventories of urban multilingualism in public spaces, which sheds light on how languages encode people's sociolinguistic identity (Blommaert 2017; Blommaert and Maly 2015). When a city is understood as a complex system or a "geography of possibilities instead of a static physical environment" (Wang and Lamb 2024, p. 7), dialectal pursuits within the LL framework have the potential to help researchers reconceptualize the dialect continuum in terms of autonomy and heteronomy and obtain a broader view of the communities who make the space dynamic.

The "Hispanic or Latino" population in Philadelphia, according to The United States Census data from 2022, was reported to be 15.7%. As documented by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (2014), Philadelphia accommodates various Latino communities dispersed across the city. Following World War II, Puerto Ricans, enticed by diverse employment prospects in Philadelphia and Camden, NJ, relocated to the city. Despite grappling with a range of sociopolitical challenges (i.e., gentrification and demolitions), they eventually established roots in North Philadelphia's Fairhill neighborhood, forming what is now recognized as *El bloque de oro* [the Golden Block] along 5th Street, where the Hispanic population represents 81.5% (Wherry 2011; Wilson 2003). Subsequently, during the 1990s—a pivotal era for globalization (Eriksen and Schober 2016; Blommaert 2010; Eriksen 2014)—there was a surge in migration, leading to the settlement of Colombian and Mexican communities in Upper North Philadelphia's Olney, where the Hispanic or Latino population represents 26.3%, and South Philadelphia along the Italian Market corridor, respectively.

This article presents a linguistic landscape study conducted in Philadelphia, PA, in the three mentioned Hispanic areas (see Figure 1). The study measures how Spanish is displayed in public spaces and how its presence changes regarding its location (neighborhood) and through time. Since language is the most immediate and direct identifier of social change (Blommaert and Maly 2015), this research aims to achieve four main objectives: (i) measure the use of Spanish *language* in public spaces, (ii) assess the impact of *time* on the linguistic landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia, (iii) identify how different locations influence *language* usage within this landscape, and (iv) identify which languages are used

in different establishments. The results aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of Hispanic communities in the city by documenting the distribution of languages in Hispanic neighborhoods and shedding light on the enduring linguistic vitality of Spanish in the United States.

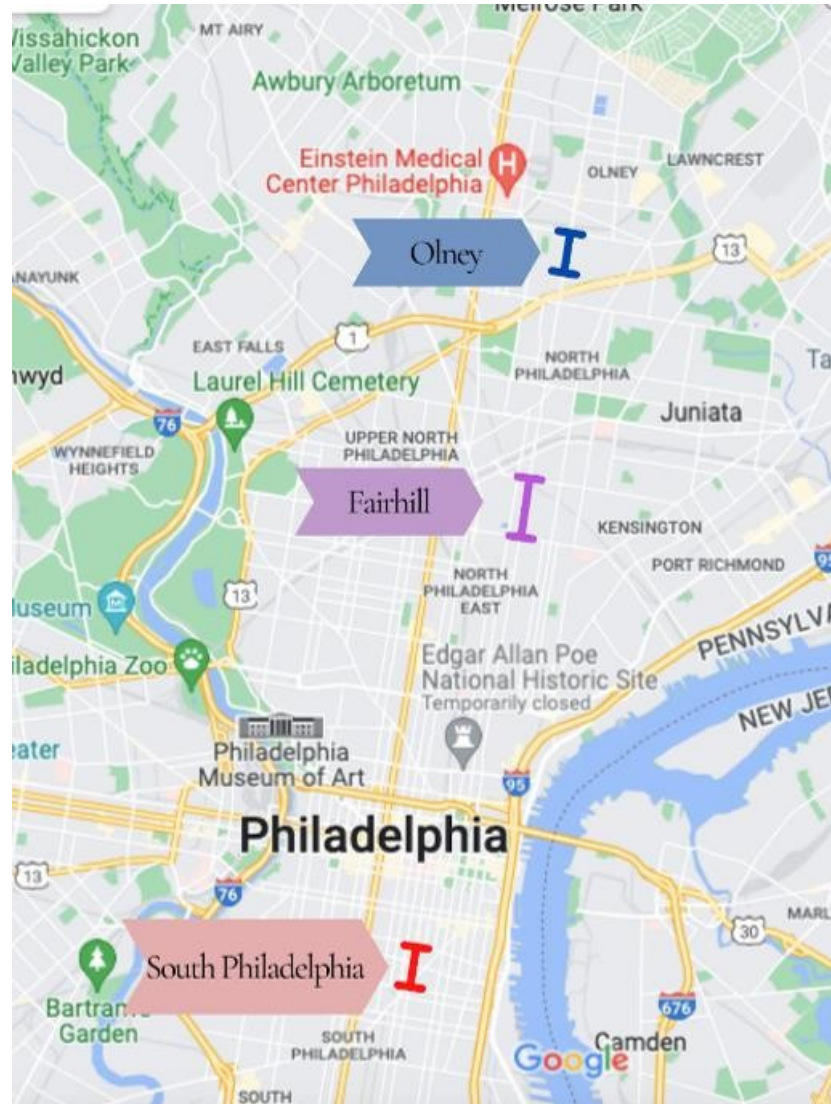


Figure 1. Hispanic areas of Philadelphia.

2. Method

The ethnographic study was conducted between March 2021 and December 2023 and involved meticulous and iterative visits to targeted regions within Philadelphia, PA (those areas which have been labeled as “Hispanic”). The primary objective was to understand the demographic makeup, explore the linguistic diversity, and grasp any geographical nuances for detailed analysis and data collection. Thus, the initial stages of this investigation centered on immersion within various neighborhoods in order to obtain a general idea of the communities residing there, identify prevalent languages, observe social interactions, and discern the cultural landscape. Subsequent visits were then strategically conducted to capture photographic evidence and gather data relevant to the study’s objectives.

The focus of the study was directed towards the Golden Block, a significant section nestled within the Fairhill neighborhood. Specifically, attention was drawn to the stretch along North 5th Street, bounded by West Lehigh Avenue and West Allegheny Avenue. This corridor emerged as a prime locus for examination due to its dynamic array of

establishments, including service offices, auto repair shops, and restaurants, offering a rich tapestry of written language for meticulous analysis within the study.

Similarly, in Upper North Philadelphia, exploration began along the Olney neighborhood, followed by an investigation of North 5th Street between W Rockland Street and W Fisher Avenue. This section revealed a robust and vibrant presence of the Latino community, fostering a diverse array of Hispanic-owned businesses, such as beauty salons, bakeries, restaurants, tattoo studios, convenience stores, and churches. While extending further north, the landscape transitioned to accommodate establishments catering predominantly to the Korean diaspora, delineating shifts in cultural and linguistic dynamics within the locality, so it was decided not to extend the study further than Fisher Avenue.

Contrastingly, despite its renowned Italian heritage, the Italian Market in South Philadelphia, specifically 9th Street between Federal Street and Christian Street, was included in the study. This bustling commercial hub provides a unique blend of establishments, comprising predominantly restaurants while also featuring a diverse mix of service offices, stores, technology outlets, beauty salons, and laundromats, contributing distinct linguistic elements to the study's purview. As has been observed before, this Italian market is going through a semiotic transformation in which the Italian culture is being mixed with the Mexican and Central American cultures (Niedt 2020; Vitiello 2014), making this a valuable area for an LLS.

All signs were collected using a mobile phone's camera and stored on a portable hard drive. The signs were photographed from shops, stores, walls, and poles within the mentioned areas. Adhering to the methodological framework of variationist studies, which consider the exploration of social variables like *age*, *gender*, *sex*, and *economic class* to decipher patterns in *language* usage (Silva Corvalán and Enrique-Arias 2017), this study took *language* as the dependent variable, while *location*, *year* and *establishment* were regarded as independent variables, essential for a comprehensive understanding of linguistic trends across different periods and diverse geographical settings. In strict adherence to the principle of accountability (Labov 1972), the data collection process encompassed all languages encountered in *bottom-up signs* within the linguistic landscape, recognizing each instance (sign) as a valid token (data point).

The first categorization of *language* was into six distinct groups—spanning from singular languages like Spanish and English to various forms of bilingual and multilingual usage—and was employed to facilitate a granular analysis of linguistic phenomena. Concurrently, the classification of *location* into three distinct categories—Golden Block, Olney, and South Philadelphia—allowed for a meticulous examination of linguistic variations across these specific geographical settings. The temporal aspect was encapsulated within the year classification, delineating the study into three distinct temporal epochs: 2021, 2022, and 2023. Finally, following previous research on Hispanic LLs in the US (Hassa and Krajcik 2016; Pastor 2021), signs were also classified by their type of establishment.

This thorough classification framework was carefully developed to allow for a nuanced and detailed examination of language dynamics within specific areas. Its goal was to document the linguistic distribution and evolution of the LL during a span of 3 years (2021–2023) in the Hispanic neighborhoods and cultural enclaves of Philadelphia.

The dataset compiled for this study encompassed a total of 3437 tokens ($n = 3437$), distributed across different years, with 1125 tokens collected in 2021, 1073 in 2022, and 1239 in 2023, as shown in Table 1. Employing descriptive statistics facilitated a comprehensive understanding of language display patterns across various locations, as well as fluctuations and constancies in language choices throughout the data collection periods.

Table 1. Tokens collected.

Year	Location			Total
	The Golden Block	South Philadelphia	Olney	
2021	180	636	309	1125
2022	277	478	318	1073
2023	314	469	456	1239
Total	771	1583	1083	3437

To streamline the analysis and ensure accuracy (reducing the degree of freedom), modifications were made to the language variable. Specifically, the chi-squared test was executed focusing solely on tokens featuring signs written in Spanish and English, as well as bilingual (English and Spanish) and multilingual signs. Hence, certain signs were omitted from the study. These predominantly consisted of instances of different languages such as Italian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Mandarin, as well as bilingual signs in English and any other language. Since the number of tokens for these omitted signs was minimal, it was decided not to include them in the analysis, as they would not yield statistically significant results. Moreover, the primary focus of the research was to examine the use of Spanish.

The tokens that were discarded included the following: bilingual signs in English and a language other than Spanish, with 3 instances in the Golden Block, 36 in South Philadelphia, and 34 in Olney ($n = 73$); signs in Italian, with 2 instances in South Philadelphia ($n = 2$); signs in Korean, with 1 instance in Olney ($n = 1$); signs in Mandarin, with 2 instances in South Philadelphia ($n = 2$); and signs in Vietnamese, with 3 instances in South Philadelphia ($n = 3$).

Within this subset, the total number of tokens accounted for 3356 instances ($n = 3356$). This tailored approach aimed to enhance the precision of the analysis by isolating and scrutinizing a more specific subset of language representations—namely, those expressed in English, Spanish, or a bilingual or multilingual amalgamation—thus offering a focused lens through which to evaluate language dynamics within the study’s scope.

For the data analysis, since variables were all categorical, contingency tables were created and chi-squared tests were run to measure the impact and statistical significance of *location* and *time* in regard to *language* use. To explore language use across different establishments, due to the high degree of freedom, it was decided to combine variables into clusters using a heatmap instead of running a chi-squared test. This helped us visually represent the data using colors to capture variable values across categories based on their patterns or correlations, that is, which language would be more likely to be found in each establishment.

To run the tests, we first set up our null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis:

- Null hypothesis: There is no association between the choice of *language* and the location, the year, or the type of establishment in which the signs were posted.
- Alternative hypothesis: There is an association between the choice of *language* and location, year, or establishment in which the signs were posted.

We used a significance level of 0.05, which means that if the p -value was less than 0.05, we could reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was a significant association between the choice of language and the independent variables.

3. Results

The primary objectives of this study were to measure the use of Spanish language in public spaces and to investigate the influence of *location*, *time*, and *establishment* on the linguistic landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia. Data were systematically gathered across the years 2021 to 2023 within three distinct Hispanic neighborhoods: Golden Block, South Philadelphia’s Italian Market, and Olney. The dataset, encompassing a total of 3437 tokens, underwent refinement, focusing exclusively on signs written in Spanish, signs written

in English, bilingual (English and Spanish) signs, and multilingual signs. Subsequently, 3356 tokens were subjected to detailed analysis.

A visual representation of the linguistic distribution is presented in Figure 2, where descriptive statistics underscore the prevailing prominence of English within the linguistic landscape. Specifically, our findings reveal that English comprises the largest share, with a total of 2069 signs, constituting 61.65% of the linguistic landscape. Following closely, Spanish exhibits a presence with 811 tokens (24.16%); bilingual signs, incorporating both English and Spanish, account for 447 tokens, corresponding to 13.31%; and multilingual signs exhibit a notably lower prevalence, with only 29 occurrences, constituting a mere 0.86% of the linguistic landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia.

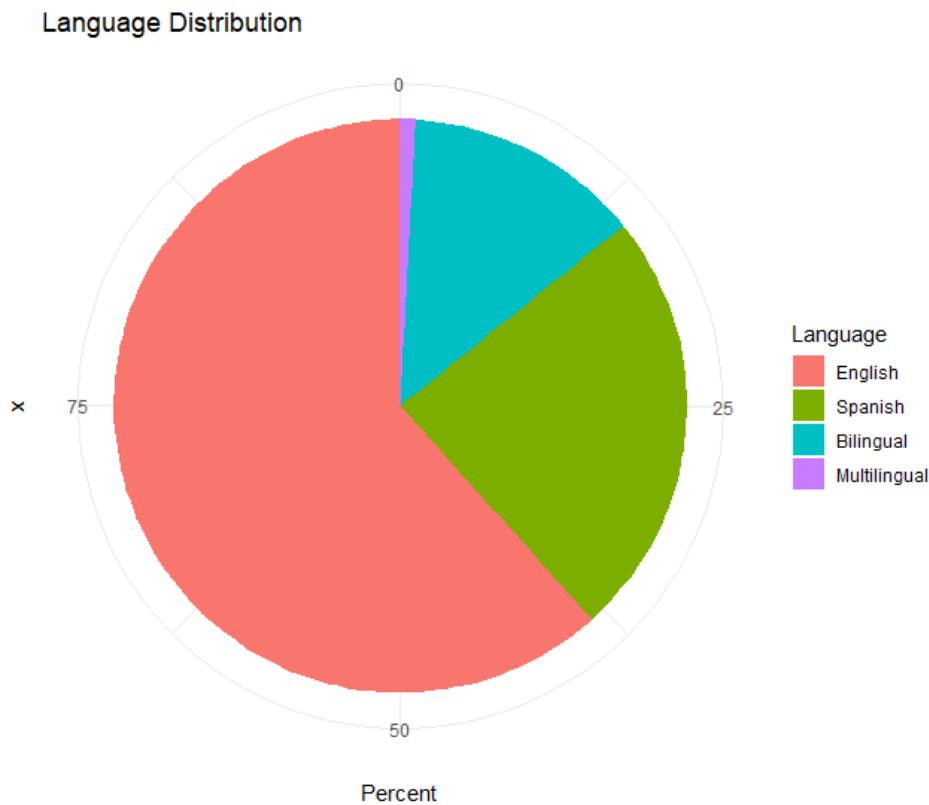


Figure 2. Languages in Hispanic Philadelphia.

3.1. Results for Time

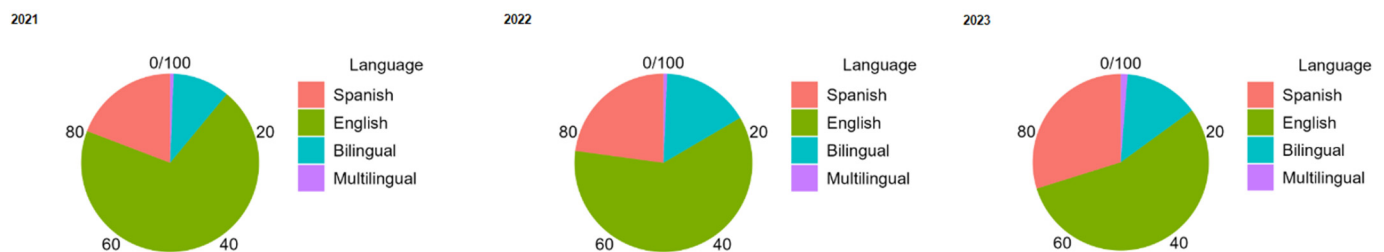
To address the second objective of this research, which focuses on assessing the temporal impact on the linguistic landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia, contingency tables were constructed, with the independent variable being the year in which the data was collected. Subsequently, a chi-squared test was conducted to gauge the influence of *time* on language use. As detailed in the methodology section, the null hypothesis posited that there would be no discernible association between the choice of language and the respective collection year of the signs.

The obtained result—presented in Table 2—reveals a statistically significant impact of *time* on *language* use ($\chi^2(6, n = 3356) = 63.911, p < 0.001, \varphi = 0.098$), thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and indicating that the linguistic landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia undergoes changes over time. Delving into the data, it is evident that signs in English experienced a decrease from 767 to 636 in 2022, followed by an increase to 666 in 2023. Concurrently, signs in Spanish exhibited an upward trend, rising from 211 in 2021 to 240 in 2022 and further escalating to 360 in 2023. This observation underscores an expanding presence of monolingual signs in Spanish.

Table 2. Contingency tables and chi-squared test for year.

	Year			
Language	2021	2022	2023	Total
Spanish	211	240	360	811
English	767	636	666	2069
Bilingual	114	167	166	447
Multilingual	7	7	15	29
Total	1099	1050	1207	3356
Chi-Squared Tests				
	Value	df	p	
X ²	63.911	6	<0.001	
N	3356			

Moreover, bilingual signs demonstrated growth, ascending from 114 in 2021 to 167 in 2022 and maintaining stability in 2023. In contrast, multilingual signs remained consistent in 2021 and 2022, each registering 7 occurrences, but witnessed an increase to 15 in 2023. To offer a comprehensive visual representation, Figure 3 combines three distinct pie charts, providing an insightful analysis of how these languages are distributed across the years. This nuanced exploration enhances our understanding of the evolving linguistic dynamics within the Hispanic neighborhoods of Philadelphia.

**Figure 3.** Languages in the LL over time.

The chi-squared test, with a calculated value of 63.911, further supports the conclusion that the observed changes in language use across years are not mere chance variations but reflect systematic shifts.

3.2. Results for Location

To fulfill the third objective of this research a frequency table (Table 3) was created by combining the variables *language* and *location*, and a chi-squared test was applied to determine any significant relationships between them. Again, the null hypothesis posited that there would be no discernible association between the choice of language and the location in which the tokens were gathered: the Golden Block, which is widely recognized as the main Hispanic neighborhood in Philadelphia (Wherry 2011; Wilson 2003); the Italian Market area of South Philadelphia, where the Mexican community has been established since the 1990s (Benitez 2009); and Olney, a neighborhood known for its diverse culinary offerings, including Colombian cafes, Jamaican bakeries, and Korean restaurants (Blumgart 2020).

Table 3. Frequencies for location and chi-squared test.

Language	Location	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Spanish	Golden Block	133	16.400	16.400	16.400
	Italian Market	422	52.035	52.035	68.434
	Olney	256	31.566	31.566	100.000
	Missing	0	0.000		
	Total	811	100.000		
English	Golden Block	467	22.571	22.571	22.571
	Italian Market	938	45.336	45.336	67.907
	Olney	664	32.093	32.093	100.000
	Missing	0	0.000		
	Total	2069	100.000		
Bilingual	Golden Block	168	37.584	37.584	37.584
	Italian Market	152	34.004	34.004	71.588
	Olney	127	28.412	28.412	100.000
	Missing	0	0.000		
	Total	447	100.000		
Multilingual	Golden Block	0	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Italian Market	28	96.552	96.552	96.552
	Olney	1	3.448	3.448	100.000
	Missing	0	0.000		
	Total	29	100.000		
Chi-Squared Tests					
	Value	df	p		
χ²	109.454	6	<0.001		
N	3356				

The results of the chi-squared test indicate that *location* significantly impacts language use in the linguistic landscape of Philadelphia ($\chi^2 (6, n = 3356) = 109.454, p < 0.001, \phi = 0.128$). The Italian Market in South Philadelphia presents a big impact for language choice. This area is the most predominant neighborhood for Spanish, English, and multilingual signs. In this area, 52.03% of monolingual Spanish signs were collected; 45.33% of the monolingual English signs and 96.55% of multilingual signs were also found here. Bilingual signs, on the other hand, were more prevalent in the Golden Block, where 37.58% of the bilingual signs were gathered.

3.3. Results for Time and Location

The variables *time* and *location* were combined to analyze which languages were used in these locations from 2021 to 2023. Results are presented in the following clustered bar charts.

Figure 4 provides a concise and clear overview of the language dynamics within the linguistic landscape of the Golden Block between 2021 and 2023. The use of a chronological sequence helps in understanding the temporal changes in language presence. The data regarding monolingual signs in English show a decrease from 2021 to 2022 but remain stable in 2023, conveying a specific trend and providing a snapshot of language usage over the mentioned years. Similarly, the fluctuations in the presence of Spanish, with a decrease in 2022 followed by an increase in 2023, and bilingual signs going up in 2022 and then decreasing again in 2023 add another layer to the narrative, illustrating the variability in language use within the Golden Block during the specified time frame.

Figure 5 offers a comprehensive overview of tokens identified in South Philadelphia, revealing distinct trends in language distribution. Monolingual English signs exhibit a consistent linear decrease from 71.72% in 2021 to 56.00% in 2022 and further to 51.20% in 2023. In contrast, signs in Spanish demonstrate a clear upward trajectory, maintaining a steady increase throughout the specified period (17.77% in 2021, 32.18% in 2022, and 35.60% in 2023). Interestingly, the prevalence of bilingual signs remains stable over the course

of the study, showing minimal fluctuations; the percentages for bilingual signs indicate a consistent presence, with 9.36% in 2021, 10.30% in 2022, and 10.10% in 2023.

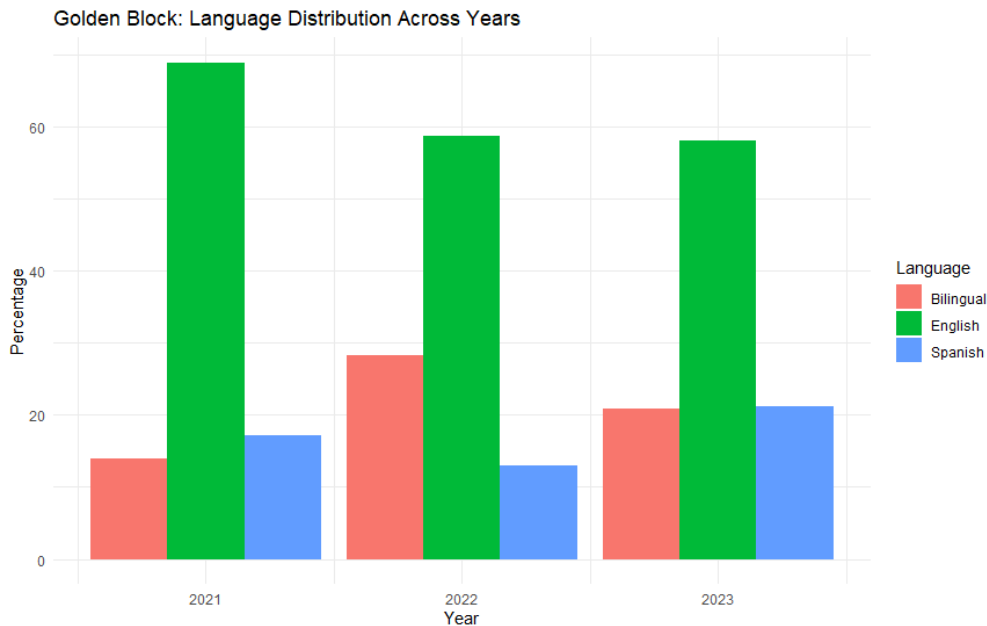


Figure 4. Language distribution across years in Golden Block.

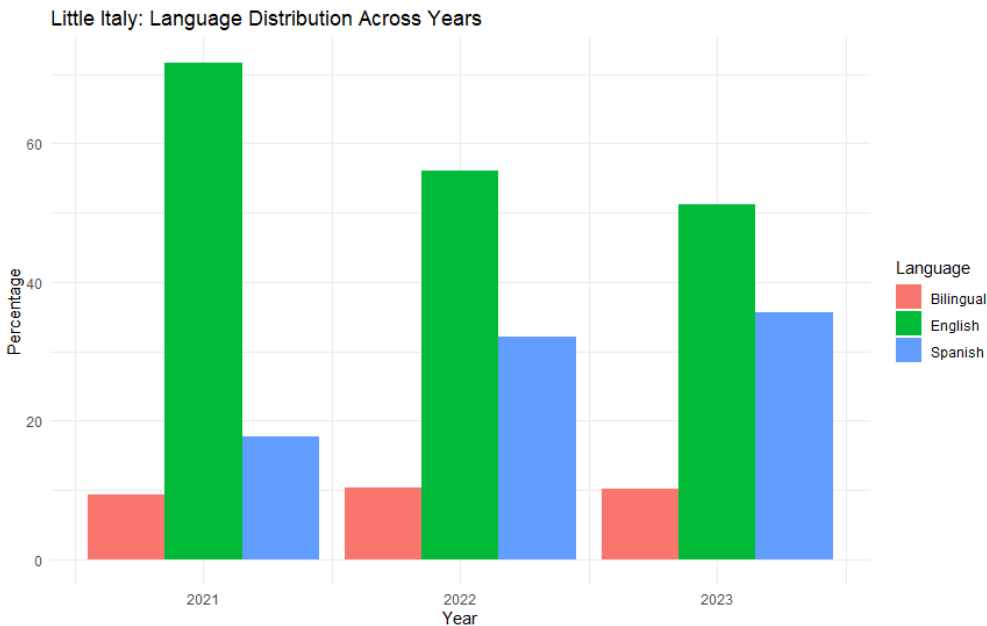


Figure 5. Language distribution across years in South Philadelphia’s Italian Market.

Finally, Figure 6 illustrates the linguistic dynamics in Olney. The prevalence of English signs exhibited a temporal progression, starting at 66.33% in 2021, escalating to 69.15% in 2022, and subsequently declining to 57.27% in 2023. Conversely, Spanish signs demonstrated a discernible trend, initiating at 23.33% in 2021, decreasing to 17.53% in 2022, and resurging to 30% in 2023. Bilingual signs, akin to the observations in South Philadelphia, demonstrated relative stability with marginal fluctuations. Specifically, bilingual signs transitioned from 10.33% in 2021 to 13.31% in 2022 and eventually settled at 12.50% in 2023.

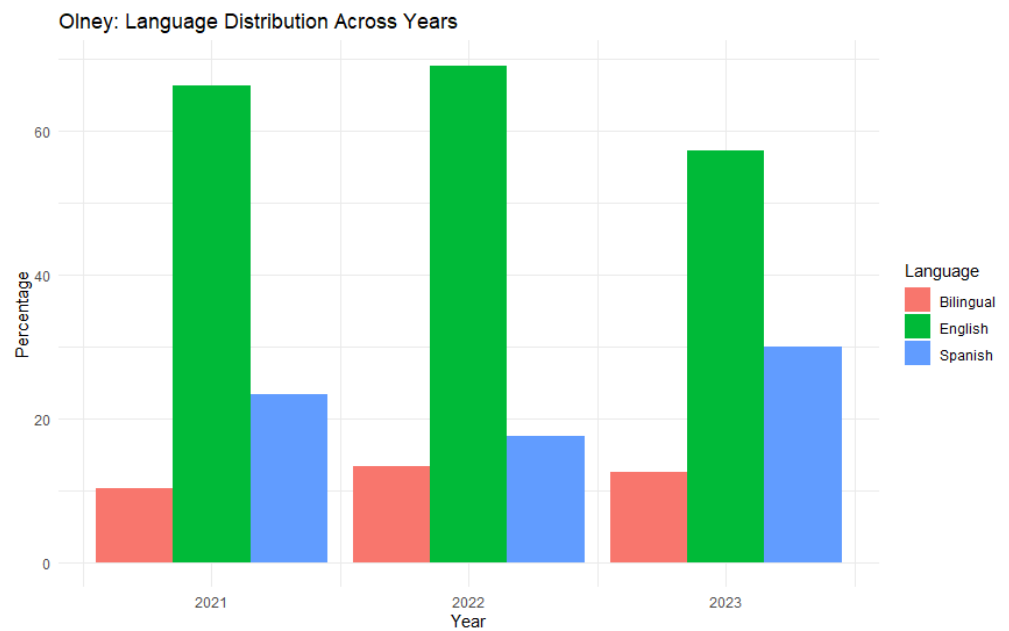


Figure 6. Language distribution across years in Olney.

3.4. Results for Establishment

Inspired by previous research on Hispanic LLSs in the United States (Hassa and Krajcik 2016; Pastor 2021), signs were also categorized based on the type of establishment in which they were displayed. Hence, the categories were Beauty, encompassing hair salons and barber shops; Education; Furniture; Grocery or Convenience Stores; Health, in which all health-related institutions were combined (i.e., clinics, therapy, mental health, etc.); Mobile Signs (food trucks and vans); Pharmacies; Poles; Religious Temples; Restaurants; Services, combining different kind of offices such as lawyers, bills payments, taxes, and auto tags; Store, combining shoes and clothes stores; Technology; and Wall.

Due to the high degree of freedom (df) when running the chi-squared test (39), we did not consider the category to be statistically significant despite the low p -value (<0.001). Instead, it was decided to aggregate variables into clusters using a heatmap. This involved plotting the *location* on the horizontal axis and the type of establishment on the vertical axis, aiming to discern prevalent languages within these clusters.

The heatmap presented in Figure 7 reveals that, while English remains the most utilized language overall, Spanish asserts its presence in specific establishments. Notably, the Golden Block signifies a prevalence of Spanish in signs displayed in religious temples. In South Philadelphia, Spanish is prominent in signs across stores, service offices, religious temples, poles, pharmacies, and food trucks. Conversely, in Olney, Spanish is more likely in signs on walls, on poles, or in pharmacies. Bilingual signs are notably prevalent in health institutions in South Philadelphia.



Figure 7. Heatmap for location and establishment.

4. Discussion

Overall, the results of this linguistic landscape study provide important insights into the impact of *time* and *location* on *language* use in Hispanic Philadelphia. Even though Spanish speakers in the United States constitute one of the largest Spanish-speaking agglomerations in the world (Otheguy 2019, p. 9), in Philadelphia, Spanish is still considered a minority language and, as any other minority language, it tends to play a secondary role in the public domain (Matras 2009, p. 45). This is reflected in the high percentage of monolingual English signs in the LL (61.65%). However, the study also shows that Spanish and other minority languages are becoming more present over time, as is shown in the pie chart comparison in Figure 3. The following is a sample of this rising multilingualism.

The multilingualism present in the city (see Figure 8) provides support for Gorter's (2006) notion that the use of multiple languages serves as a representation of linguistic identities and cultural globalization, while also serving as a tool for the revitalization of minority languages. It is worth noting that this multilingualism extends to *top-down* signs. Picture *H* in Figure 8 displays a multilingual sign created by the Philadelphia Government to inform people about the use of face masks during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the increase in multilingual signs, the findings suggest that *location* plays a significant role in *language* use in the LL, indicating that Spanish and the Hispanic communities are increasingly moving throughout the city. The first wave of Latinos arrived in Philadelphia during the 1890s, drawn by various employment opportunities in the city or nearby factories in Camden, NJ (Vázquez-Hernández 2005). However, the largest wave of Latino migration to Philadelphia occurred after World War II (Jensen et al. 2020; Whalen 2001). Despite facing resistance and, at times, violence from predominantly white residents (Wilson 2003, p. 19), the Hispanic population, mostly Puerto Rican (Ribeiro 2013), settled in North Philadelphia on what is now known as the Golden Block.

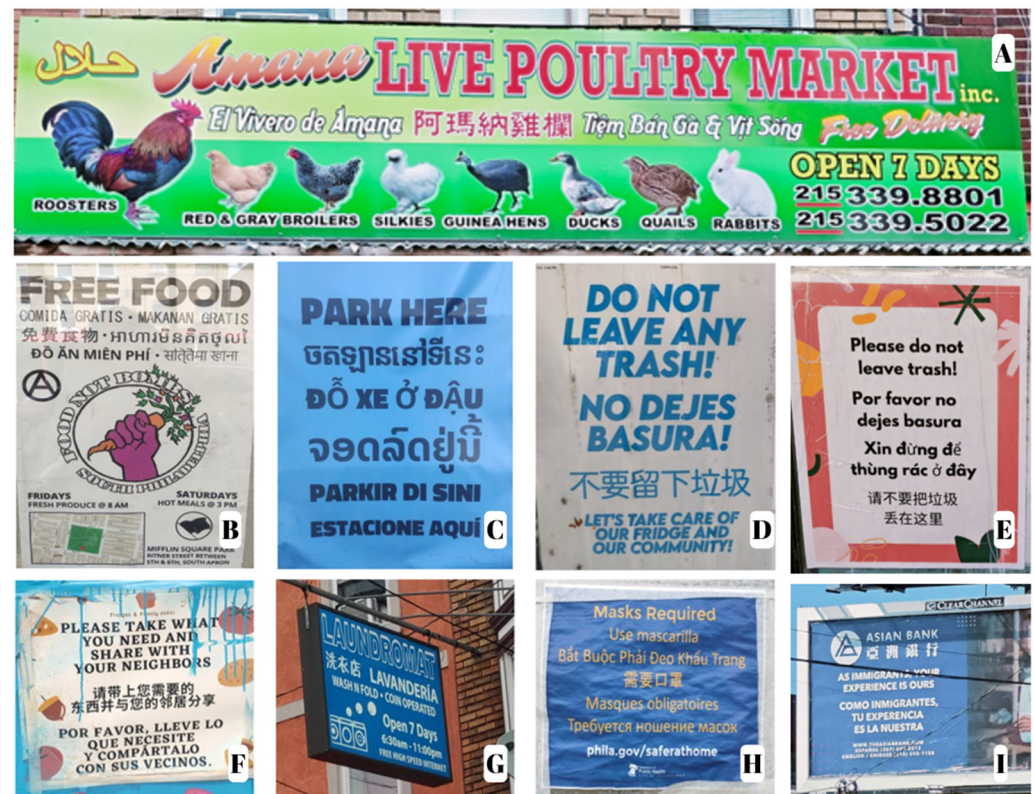


Figure 8. Multilingual signs.

Over time, the Golden Block has transitioned into a neighborhood of primarily first- and second-generation residents. While there are still Hispanic families and businesses, this does not guarantee that Spanish is the dominant language of communication. As Carr (2021, p. 262) mentions, the LL will never provide a perfect mirror image of the linguistic population due to changes in the population over time, language loss, and the dynamic nature of signs affected by factors such as aging, weather, graffiti, and other environmental elements. According to Escobar and Potowski (2015), the use of Spanish in the United States decreases with each generation, with English becoming the favored language. This language shift, along with changes in migration patterns, has impacted the linguistic landscape of the city. As Geldof (2018) observes, increasing ethnic diversity in our societies is part of a demographic transition resulting from accelerated migration, leading to the emergence of majority-minority neighborhoods with commonplace diversity.

The decrease in monolingual Spanish signs in the Golden Block, as shown in Figure 4, reflects the emergence of new communities spreading across the city, breaking down the divisive “us vs. them” mentality promoted by movements like *English-Only* (see Baran 2017 for an overview of the term). These ideologies have manifested in the city’s linguistic landscape, as exemplified in Figure 9, where a sign at a renowned cheesesteak shop in South Philadelphia encouraged patrons to use English when ordering, asserting that “this is America”, and only English must be used. The sign was posted when the Mexican community started to grow in what is known as the “Italian Market”—where this research was conducted; it was taken down in 2016. Despite these influences and ideologies, communities in Philadelphia have forged their linguistic identities through written signs in public spaces, enriching the city’s landscape while building their community through the usage of different multilingual practices.

Besides the Golden Block, Olney and South Philadelphia’s linguistic landscapes have been impacted by these new patterns of mobility. Olney, located in Upper North Philadelphia, presents a mix of cultures and languages that are visible in the LL. Along with English, signs in Spanish and bilingual signs written in English and Spanish and English and Ko-

rean are all over the place. Culturally speaking, Olney represents the highest number of the Colombian diaspora whose first substantial wave of migrants arrived in Philadelphia between the late 1970s and the mid-1980s, and “by the late 1980s, Colombiana/o/xs were the second largest foreign-born group in Philadelphia and the second largest Latina/o/x group after Puerto Ricans” (Garbow 2020, p. 370). Although demographics have changed and Colombians no longer represent the second-largest Hispanic community in the city, Olney still reflects their legacy as it is illustrated in Figure 10.



Figure 9. Press 1 for English (Taken from <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cdn2.winknews.com/wp-content/uploads/20161015125911/genos-steaks-philly-wink-news.jpg>, accessed on 21 December 2023).



Figure 10. Colombian stores in Olney.

Similarly, the LL of South Philadelphia, an area that “is thought of as the city’s Little Italy” (Saverino 2010, p. 57) reflects a linguistic change. The data presented in Figure 5 illustrate the increase in Spanish-language signs and the decline in monolingual English signs. Furthermore, the data show a rise in bilingual and multilingual signs. This shift can be attributed to the settlement of new communities in South Philadelphia, such as Cambodians (Skilton-Sylvester and Chea-Young 2010) and Mexicans, whose population in Philadelphia has increased rapidly over the past two decades and is now considered “the second largest Latino immigrant group after Puerto Ricans” (Atlas 2010, p. 178).

The increase in monolingual signs in Spanish, as well as Mexican-owned businesses, illustrates how South Philadelphia has experienced a “semiotic convergence of the neighborhood” (Niedt 2020, p. 81), where Spanish replaced Italian and, as shown in Figure 5, is slowly replacing English. Figure 11 provides an illustrative example of these signs.



Figure 11. Mexican business in South Philadelphia.

Something important to mention is the impact of COVID-19 on the LL. Besides the increase in multilingual *top-down* signs informing people about the importance of proper mask wearing, more monolingual signs in Spanish appeared with the resumption of public events in late 2022 and 2023. In South Philadelphia, poles were prominently adorned with flyers promoting Latino concerts and coelo shows, akin to a rodeo (e.g., picture H in Figure 11). Given their targeted appeal to Hispanic communities, these promotional materials were predominantly monolingually in Spanish.

Figures 10 and 11 are examples of how different communities are using public space to create a linguistic identity and symbolic construction of their community. In addition to tracking linguistic vitality, linguistic accommodation, and language behavior and change, signs serve two primary functions: informational and symbolic (Landry and Bourhis 1997; Spolsky 2009). Signs in public spaces serve as informational markers that communicate the symbolic power—or “the power to construct reality” (Kramsch 2021, p. 45)—and the status of linguistic communities in a given area. According to Spolsky (2009), informative signs communicate information through street names and traffic signs, while symbolic signs declare property and power. The symbolic function of signs represents the way in which someone, as a sign owner, wants to be perceived, either culturally, linguistically, or both. Therefore, when a new sign is created, its symbolic function plays a crucial role in representing the agency of the sign owner. Bilingual signs in Hispanic stores exemplify this dichotomy by naming stores in Spanish (symbolic representation of the Hispanic identity) while offering goods and services (information) in English, as illustrated in Figure 12.



Figure 12. Informative and symbolic values in Bilingual signs.

The Ethiopian community's stores in Washington DC showed similar patterns, where English was primarily used for providing information while Amharic text was used to signify Ethiopian Habasha identity (Woldemariam and Lanza 2015). This demonstrates how language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for identity formation and community building. Similarly, the LL of Hispanic Philadelphia plays a crucial role in shaping its identity and sense of belonging. By examining the linguistic practices of diverse communities, we gain a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which language intersects with culture, identity, and social structures. But, as Carr (2021) mentions, the presence of minority languages in the informative section of signs suggests their utility in local communication. This means that the more a language is used in a sign with informative value, the stronger the community is. The use of language in everyday life is not simply a matter of communication, but also a reflection of historical, political, and cultural factors that shape the lived experiences of communities.

Previous studies regarding the Hispanic linguistic landscape of the United States have presented similar results. Yanguas (2009), in Washington DC, observed that signs exclusively in English persist irrespective of social or practical considerations. Conversely, bilingual signs indicate an adaptability to the immediate context of the Hispanic communities, being used in certain places such as libraries that are popular among the Latino community, reflecting a more responsive and situational approach to language. In a similar study conducted in New York City, Hassa and Krajcik (2016) concluded that the LL of Washington Heights mirrors power relations, social inequalities, and the prevalence of the English monolingual ideology in American cities. Moreover, Pastor (2021) concluded that in Oak Cliff (Dallas, TX, USA), Spanish is presented as a language of high prestige and utility for the Hispanic community, reflecting its high vitality and taking into account aspects such as local expressions and vernacular vocabulary.

Besides factors such as *time* and *location*, another important finding of the present research was the importance of the different establishments in determining language choice. The establishments where Spanish is likely to be found, according to the data presented in the heatmap (Figure 7), are religious temples, pharmacies, service offices, and food trucks. These results are similar to the ones found by Hassa and Krajcik (2016) in New York, where Spanish is prevalent in low-cost services and ethnic food establishments, serving as a symbol of "authenticity". Following the findings of the authors, advertisements emphasizing exclusivity and status tend to be presented in English, whereas Spanish (and other minority languages) are more commonly used in community businesses.

At the same time, findings from the present ethnographic fieldwork reveal the significant role of churches and religious organizations in Hispanic communities. Churches have not only been a place of worship but also of engagement for the Hispanic communities in Philadelphia. As early as the 1920s, the Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal "La Milagrosa" played an essential role in the development of the Puerto Rican community in the city (Aponte 1998; Whalen 2001). Nowadays, when exploring the linguistic landscape of these communities, bilingual and monolingual signs in Spanish are more visible in churches or religious organizations, which are "significant in conditioning immigrants' identities, patterns of interaction, and their access to jobs, housing, services, and more" (Vertovec 2022, p. 28).

Similar findings were reported by Blommaert (2013), who concluded that although the presence of churches may not drastically change the appearance of a neighborhood, it does have a profound impact on "the neighborhood's functions and sociolinguistic landscape" (97). Religious organizations in Hispanic areas still provide services for new immigrants and function as spaces for community engagement, as can be observed in Figure 13.

This highlights the important role that religious organizations play in the lives of Hispanic communities, serving not only as places of worship but also as key community hubs. The linguistic landscape of the Hispanic communities of Philadelphia, thus, provides an insightful glimpse into how language shapes the lived experiences of individuals and

communities and the importance of considering these factors when examining the socio-cultural dynamics of a given area.



Figure 13. Religious establishments.

5. Conclusions and Limitations

This study explored the linguistic landscape of three Hispanic areas of Philadelphia, PA. Its main objectives were to measure the presence of Spanish in public spaces and to investigate the impact of *time*, *location*, and type of *establishment* on *language* use. Specifically, this research studied how language choice varied from 2021 to 2023 and identified how different *locations* as well as different *establishments* affect *language* use in the linguistic landscape in the Hispanic neighborhoods in Philadelphia, including the Golden Block in North Philadelphia, Olney in Upper North Philadelphia, and the Italian Market corridor in South Philadelphia. The results of the research shed light on the linguistic vitality of Spanish in the United States and provide valuable insights into the dynamics of Hispanic communities of the city by documenting the distribution of languages used in the public space.

The study collected a total of 3437 signs from the designated *locations* in the city, 1125 tokens collected in 2021, 1073 in 2022, and 1239 in 2023, as shown in Table 1. In order to enhance the efficiency of the analysis and maintain precision (by minimizing degrees of freedom), adjustments were applied to the *language* variable. More specifically, the chi-squared test was conducted exclusively on tokens that included signs written in English, Spanish, a combination of both (bilingual), or multilingual content. Within this specified subset, the total count of tokens amounted to 3356 instances. The omitted signs primarily included various languages such as Italian, Korean, Vietnamese, and Mandarin, as well as bilingual signs in English and other languages. Due to their infrequent occurrence, they were not included in the analysis as they would not yield statistically significant results.

The use of contingency tables and chi-squared tests allowed for a robust analysis of the impact of *time* and *location* on *language* use. To analyze the use of *languages* in different *establishments*, variables were combined into clusters in a heatmap. In general, this research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia and to bring important implications for the study of language use in urban contexts as well as for the status of Spanish in the United States.

Regarding *language* use, it was observed that English is the predominant language, being displayed in 61.65% of the linguistic landscape, while Spanish is second, being displayed in 24.16% of the LL. Regarding *time*, the chi-squared test ($\chi^2(6, n = 3356) = 63.911, p < 0.001, \phi = 0.098$) conducted in this study confirms that it impacts language use in the LL. Bilingual signs were statistically significant in 2022 and 2023, and monolingual Spanish signs were more prevalent than expected in 2023. This suggests that over time, bilingual and monolingual

Spanish signs are increasing, while monolingual English signs are decreasing. This fluctuation in monolingual English signs suggests a potential adaptive response to changing sociocultural dynamics. Despite English being the most prevalent language in the linguistic landscape of Hispanic Philadelphia, its usage lacks stability, and it does not exhibit a continuous growth or decline in these three locations. Conversely, the rise of monolingual signs in Spanish suggests a reinforcement of cultural identity or demographic transformations within the Hispanic community, potentially reflective of a community's concerted effort to assert its linguistic and cultural distinctiveness.

The growth of bilingual signs, on the other hand, suggests a sustained bilingual communication trend within the Hispanic neighborhoods, bringing implications for inclusivity and linguistic diversity, while showcasing a community that embraces bilingualism in its public spaces, as a manifestation of its language as symbolic power. Similarly, multilingualism in the LL raises questions about the evolving nature of multilingual communication within the community. This increase may signify a greater recognition and representation of linguistic diversity, fostering a multilingual ethos in public spaces and a sense of linguistic welcoming to new immigrant communities, in addition to Latinos, in Hispanic areas.

As language is a powerful tool for shaping people's perceptions of themselves and the world (Kramsch 2021), analyzing the LL can provide insight into the superdiversity of a complex contemporary society that is constantly fluctuating and accommodating. Following Matras (2024), language is "a dynamic, emerging pattern of practices" (336), so when analyzing the written language of a community in the public space, the linguistic landscape serves as an indicator of a city's dialect continuum, demonstrating the vitality and coexistence of different languages within a given territory.

This study also highlights the significant role of *location* in shaping the linguistic landscape and reflecting the emergence of superdiverse neighborhoods, where multiple languages and cultures coexist. The linguistic shifts and changes in the linguistic landscape reflect the dynamism and complexity of urban spaces, where language is both a tool for communication and a means of expressing identity and belonging. The results of the chi-squared test ($\chi^2(6, n = 3356) = 109.454, p < 0.001, \phi = 0.128$) indicate that *location* significantly impacts language use in the linguistic landscape of Philadelphia.

The Golden Block, widely recognized as the primary Hispanic neighborhood in the city, shows a prevalence of bilingual signs. This is likely due to the area being settled by Latino immigrants who have now moved on to other neighborhoods, resulting in English becoming the predominant language for second- and third-generation Spanish-speaking communities (Escobar and Potowski 2015; Otheguy 2019). While this area remains important in terms of sociocultural aspects, it does not necessarily represent the linguistic vitality of Hispanic communities. Spanish is a mobile language in the city, as Hispanic communities move and bring along their cultures and linguistic variations.

In Olney, a neighborhood renowned for its diverse culinary offerings, particularly Colombian-owned goods, signs tend to mix English with other languages such as Spanish and Korean. In contrast, in South Philadelphia's Italian Market area, where the Mexican community has been established since the 1990s, signs in Spanish are more common. This area shows a prevalence of bilingual signs mixing English with other languages such as Vietnamese, and multilingual signs featuring English, Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Khmer. These findings suggest that language use in the linguistic landscape of Philadelphia is heavily influenced by the cultural and linguistic diversity of the communities residing in specific locations within the city.

By identifying the specific locations where certain languages are more prevalent, policymakers and community leaders can better understand the linguistic diversity of the city and develop strategies to support and celebrate this diversity. Understanding the impact of location on the linguistic landscape of Philadelphia is crucial for fostering an inclusive and respectful city that values and honors the linguistic and cultural diversity of its communities.

Finally, it is important to note some limitations of this study. Firstly, while this study focused on the language use of the Hispanic community in Philadelphia, there are other areas in the city where different communities have recently settled, such as North-east Philadelphia along Castor Avenue. A future study could focus on language use in other Hispanic communities in the city, expanding the scope of this research.

Additionally, there are other variables and criteria for sign analysis that should be considered when studying linguistic landscapes, which were not included in this study. For example, factors such as signs' size, authorship, mobile versus static signs, and sign materiality can all impact *language* use in public spaces (Amos and Soukup 2020; Franco Rodríguez 2018; Carr 2021). Furthermore, the visible salience and visual hierarchy of signs are criteria for analyzing *language* choice in signs (Carr 2021). While this study focused solely on language function as a criterion of analysis and examined only three variables (*time*, *location*, and *establishment*) that were found to impact *language* use in Hispanic Philadelphia's linguistic landscape, future studies could consider these additional factors.

Another limitation of this study is that it only counted *bottom-up* signs, meaning signs created by individuals and businesses rather than official signs put up by the city. According to Kramsch (2021, p. 52), an individual's symbolic authority is essentially borrowed from institutions and often operates behind the scenes, despite the individual (in this case the Hispanic community) appearing to possess it independently. This means that, despite the significant number of Spanish-monolingual and multilingual signs, it is important to remember this limitation, since *bottom-up* signs might give us an idea of local communities, but not of the current status of the city's linguistic policies. While this made sense for the focus of this study, an exploration of *top-down* signs in the city (such as street names and official signs in parks, hospitals, and other state buildings) could provide further insights into multilingualism, language planning, and linguistic policies in Philadelphia.

Despite these limitations, the study highlights the increasing presence of Spanish and other minority languages in the city's LL, reflecting the growing diversity of the population and the impact of migration patterns over time. The findings of this research also have practical implications for policymakers and educators, highlighting the need to recognize the value of multilingualism and to support the revitalization of minority languages. In conclusion, this study demonstrates the richness and diversity of language use in urban spaces and the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and social factors that shape the linguistic landscape. As cities continue to grow and change, it is essential to continue exploring and documenting the LL to better understand the dynamics of language use and its relationship with identity, culture, and power in urban spaces.

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Article

Multimodal Analysis of the Spanish Linguistic Landscape in Alabama

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Abstract: The study of linguistic landscapes (LL) examines the use of signage in public spaces, often with a focus on the use of non-majority languages. The main goals of this project are to map, quantify, and analyze signage in Spanish within Tuscaloosa County, AL, an emerging site of Spanish language use which differs from the large urban places often studied in the LL literature. Photographs of public signage in Spanish were taken and uploaded to an ArcGIS Field Maps app to allow for both geolocation of the image and tagging of the image for specific linguistic and visual characteristics, which are subsumed under multimodality. Multimodality refers to the interaction of the linguistic code with other modes of communication such as images, colors, flags, and other cultural objects to make meaning in a given LL text. Within the multimodality framework, we examine the use of Spanish by itself or with English, location of the signage, communicative functions (symbolic, informative), and the combination of multimodal resources to index the actors originating the text and their intended audience.

Keywords: linguistic landscape; multimodality; semiotic; Spanish; US Southeast



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1. Introduction and Literature Review

The study of linguistic landscapes (LLs) is a field of research within sociolinguistics which has developed in the past few decades (Landry and Bourhis 1997; Gorter 2006; Sebba 2013; Gorter and Cenoz 2023; Shohamy 2018, among others). Fairly recently, a linguistic landscape journal has also been established (Shohamy and Ben-Rafael 2015), and periodic international conferences on the LL are also taking place. Gubitosi and Pellicia (2021) offer a panorama of research on the Spanish LL in areas of the world where Spanish is spoken (see also a review of this volume by Gorter 2023). This volume includes contributions on locations in Europe (Italy, Spain—Salamanca and Valencia), Latin America (Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico) and the United States (California, Florida, Illinois, Puerto Rico, Texas). Of specific interest for the current study is the section on Spanish LLs in the USA, which includes research in Dallas (Pastor 2021), Los Angeles (Carr 2021), Orlando (Amgott 2021), and San Diego (Ramos Pellicia 2021); see below for more discussion. Franco-Rodríguez (2018) also reviews Spanish LL research in the USA. Other settings for research on the US Spanish LL in areas with dense Hispanic or Latino population include Martínez' (2003) study along the Mexico–USA border, and Guarín's (2024) study of neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

Bilingual signage of a particular city or town has often been regarded in the research as an indicator of the ethnolinguistic vitality (cf. Giles et al. 1977) of a minority community (cf. Gorter and Cenoz 2023, among many others). That is, the more signage in the minority language, the more vital the community is in terms of language use and maintenance. We want to underscore two points: first, while it may seem obvious, the LL in a community is not the only indicator of ethnolinguistic vitality (cf. discussion in Hualde et al. 2020, pp. 481–84); second, the linguistic landscape goes beyond the correlation of signage with ethnolinguistic vitality, that is, one sign is not equivalent to one person (Kallen 2023).

Importantly as well, often ethnolinguistic vitality has been studied in urban areas about large minority groups engaging with the surrounding environment of the majority language (cf. Pastor 2021). In our study, for example, we are not able to ascertain ethnolinguistic vitality yet, since we document an emerging Spanish linguistic landscape in small-town urban and semi-rural locations. We thus add a different dimension to the research on Spanish in the US which has focused mostly on urban areas with large Spanish-speaking communities. Further, Franco-Rodríguez (2018, p. 75) points out that “[s]tudies on Spanish in the LLs of the US reveal a discrepancy between the high concentration of Hispanics and the low visibility of Spanish in the LL, especially in texts”. The paper by Troyer et al. (2015), in particular, shows a low percentage of signage in a small town in Oregon with a high-density Hispanic population. The present study attempts to address the other end of that spectrum, where a low concentration of Hispanics still results in a relatively high visibility of Spanish in the LL. Another discrepancy is brought to light by Carr (2021) in her discussion of Koreatown in Los Angeles, where Koreans are an ethnic minority within a Hispanic majority community. The Korean language, however, is strongly present in the LL of Koreatown, contrasting with the scarcity of Spanish signage.

While there are many definitions of LLs, we follow the simple description of a linguistic landscape as “any display of texts” by Franco-Rodríguez (2018), within a “spatially definable frame” (Backhaus 2006; Lyons and Rodríguez-Ordóñez 2017). In the LL literature, the term ‘semiotic landscapes’, as in Jaworski and Thurlow (2010), has been used to refer to the different linguistic and non-linguistic ways with which one “makes meaning” to communicate a message. A definition of linguistic landscape which includes elements beyond the text’s linguistic features looks to discourse as a larger context in which the text appears. Such is the definition by Kramsch (2014, p. 242), who refers to the linguistic landscape as “discourse in action, multimodal discourse, shaping our environment through signs that cry out in different languages”.

The unit of analysis in our research is the text, which serves two functions, the symbolic and the informative (Landry and Bourhis 1997). Drawing on this distinction, Franco-Rodríguez (2007, 2008) identifies a symbolic section and an informative section in a text. The main or symbolic section (hereafter symbolic), which is the more salient part of the text, is associated with the prestige of the language, and the informative section generally adds information, or provides an explanation or a definition, usually illustrating the diversity or usefulness of languages (e.g., <CORAZON LATINO | GROCERY>¹). In addition, Franco-Rodríguez (2013, p. 113) mentions the emblematic use of a storefront text, which could allude to “business authenticity”, signal the oral use of the displayed language inside the business (or establishment), or for “avant-gardism” messaging. Each of the sections may appear in any order or combination, that is, they are not defined by where exactly they appear in the text. Other authors who have incorporated the symbolic/informative framework to Spanish and bilingual texts in the United States are Pastor (2021), Carr (2021), Amgott (2021), and Ramos Pellicia (2021). Our study diverges from those works in that our data are not from a historically Hispanic area nor from a densely populated Hispanic area. In the methodology section below, we discuss this distinction in relation to the present study.

The “discourse in action” description by Kramsch (2014) above evokes dynamicity and change. To capture this idea, we frame our analysis within the discursive context in which the text occurs, modelled after the “spatial frameworks” in Kallen (2010, p. 43), who follows a geosemiotic approach, drawing from Scollon and Scollon (2003). Amgott (2021) is an excellent application of a geosemiotic approach to commercial plazas in the Spanish linguistic landscape of Orlando, Florida. The study by Amgott (2021) inspired us to consider geosemiotics for our study, to which we add geolocation of texts through the use of ArcGIS Enterprise software (version 10.9.1) (Esri 2024) and the Field Maps Designer app (version 24.2.0) (Field Maps Designer 2024).

In the location where we have conducted our research, we have identified two discursive contexts so far, viz., the marketplace (restaurants and stores) and community

(churches). Thus, we understand the discursive context for a text as including the following minimum elements: time associations, since a text does not appear in a vacuum but, instead, is a reminder of change in the linguistic landscape of the area; space associations, given that a text is “emplaced” somewhere (cf. Scollon and Scollon 2003), which, in turn, is part of the surrounding physical space; and, lastly, indexicality, as in the identification of which resources point to the creator/originator/source of the text and intended audience. For a given text, time, space, and indexicality are conveyed via multimodal meaning-making (semiotic) resources which include linguistic and other modes of making meaning: fonts, colors, and text (em)placement (the choice of the space it occupies, e.g., on a major commercial road). All of the above-mentioned elements in the discursive contexts interact to create a public space which is “symbolically constructed”, as in Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), resulting in a LL which reflects the identities and lived experiences of a community in which the texts are emplaced. As Ben-Rafael et al. (2006, p. 10) put it, “community identity markers should imprint themselves quite strongly on LL”.

Indexicality refers to “the property of the context-dependency of signs, especially language; hence the study of those aspects of meaning which depend on the placement of the sign in the material world” (Scollon and Scollon 2003, p. 3). With this in mind, in examining how multimodal resources combine to make meaning (Kress 2010) in this study, we need to look into the context for the indicators of the ‘what’ (e.g., a bilingual text or a text in a foreign language), the ‘where’ (a restaurant, store, or church and its interaction with the surrounding landscape, or monolingual vs. bi/multi-lingual space, for example), and the ‘who’ (e.g., the actors who originated the text and the intended audience). The indicators can be the languages used, buildings, colors, special fonts, cultural objects, persons, organizations or regional groups, and the place of emplacement (e.g., if it is on a busy thoroughfare or on a downtown main street). We take the term ‘actor’ (cf. Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, among others) to refer to anyone involved in the creation and/or emplacement of a text: creators, establishment owners, designers, commissioned contractors, governmental entities, regional groups, and so on.

Among the factors involved in the emplacement and presentation of the text are selection criteria, choices, intentions, decisions, “presentation of self” (Goffman 1963, 1981, as cited by Ben-Rafael et al. 2006), and “rational considerations focusing on the signs’ expected attractiveness to the public and clients; aspirations of actors to give expression to their identity through their choice of patterns that, in one way or another, represent their presentation of self to the public; and power relations that eventually exist behind choices of patterns” (Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, p. 7). The “presentation of self” concept is very useful in trying to elucidate from our data how actors apply multimodal strategies in their choice of terms such as Mexican, Latin, and Latina, related cultural objects and colors to represent themselves, the region or country of origin, and the nature of the products or services they offer. We will discuss this point further as we discuss group identifiers in the Results section below.

Regarding the connection of actors with the text, Malinowski (2008, p. 124) suggests distinguishing between authorship, which involves complex processes that are “multi-faceted and distributed” on the one hand, and individual actors in the LL on the other. As to the intended audience of LL actors, we consider how they are signaled in the texts via multimodal resources. Relatedly, we also consider the viewer’s or reader’s potential interpretation when arguing for the Dynamic language label below. Also, with respect to the general interpretation of a text, it is worth noting that one of the findings in interviews to store owners by Malinowski (2008) was that there was a discrepancy between what the store owner intended to convey in a particular text and the actual interpretation of the text that one of the readers of the text had.

As to the linguistic features of a text, we focus on the use of Spanish, whether it appears alone or along with English, and identify the language use according to language labels: Spanish, English, or ‘Dynamic’. In the category of Dynamic, we include words that cannot be designated as belonging exclusively to one language or the other, so that they

are underspecified, in some sense, for language and/or culture (cf. “language-neutral” in Sebba 2013, pp. 107–8). Kallen (2023) offers an in-depth discussion of the assigning of text to one language code or another, and the difficulties and considerations involved. Including the category of Dynamic is helpful since the viewers of the text may assign a word to one language or another from a processing standpoint, depending on what language mode they are in. That is, a word may be read as belonging to one language before morphology from another language is viewed (e.g., <Margarita’s Grill>). While it is possible to conduct a morphological analysis of <Margarita’s Grill> and assign the first word to English due to the possessive, this does not fully account for how the word itself may be processed by the viewers in real time (see Grosjean 2007; Schwartz and Kroll 2006 for discussion of bilingual mode and language processing; see also, e.g., Vingron et al. 2017 for eye fixation on LL texts in L1 and L2, and Mantel and Kellaris 2023 for attitudes to bilingual signs which may affect a reader’s disposition to employing one or more language codes when viewing a text). Our proposed Dynamic category, which is highly important to isolate in contexts of multilingualism and language contact, has not been discussed in much of the LL literature in relation to the Spanish LL (in the USA or other countries). This broad Dynamic category encompasses some of the more detailed coding in Pastor (2021, p. 87), for example, loans, simple calques, etc. Our approach acknowledges that there may be fuzzy boundaries of interpretation by different viewers/readers for a given word in language contact situations. The term Dynamic, then, captures this range of possibilities, which would need to be corroborated by processing research. Further examples for Dynamic are provided in the methodology section.

In the general use of linguistic resources, we recognize (but do not discuss in this paper) a variety of translingual practices (as in, for example, Gorter and Cenoz 2015) including: L1 language attrition, language contact phenomena such as code-switching, borrowings and calques, and the use of orthographic accent and other orthographic features like spelling errors (e.g., <Iglecia> [sic]), capitalization, spelling which reproduces oral speech, dialectal features, and so on. As to non-linguistic semiotic resources, in this paper we focus on the use of special fonts, colors, flags, and the space that has been chosen for the text’s emplacement.

In our analysis for this paper, we seek to address the following research questions regarding the linguistic landscape in Tuscaloosa County:

- RQ1: How does Spanish appear in texts according to location (e.g., alone or in combination with English), and what is the relative weight of the language (combinations)?
- RQ2: Does the presentation of symbolic and informative text sections differ by location and language?
- RQ3: How do multimodal resources combine to index the type of location (restaurant, store, church), emplacement, actors, and intended audience?

By addressing these research questions, we hope to be able to observe and characterize Spanish language use in public spaces in small urban (and semi-rural) settings in Tuscaloosa County. This data will contribute to what is known about the Spanish linguistic landscape in the United States in areas that have small but emerging Hispanic and Latino populations. In this way, the present study can serve to complement research on studies of larger urban areas with more established Hispanic or Latino populations.

In the subsequent sections, the term ‘signage’ is used somewhat interchangeably with ‘text’, although in a less specific sense. Before turning to our methodology section, we provide a profile for the area of research. This is followed by a presentation and analysis of the results. The last section is dedicated to the discussion of our findings and a summary.

Profile of the Research Area—Tuscaloosa County

Alabama has been multilingual and multidialectal throughout the history of the region (Picone 2018). In Jenkins (2018), US Hispanic populations are divided into four macro-regions, grouped according to both social history and historical factors related to Hispanics or Latinos in the region and their corresponding demographics. Of these regions, the

Southeast is considered to be the newest area where the majority of growth has occurred from 2000 onward. North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Georgia are the states listed that correspond to this area, with the majority of growth from Mexican immigration (Jenkins 2018, p. 62). Also, Florida is excluded from this grouping for other sociohistorical and demographic reasons. The other identified regions include the Southwest, Northwest, and Northeast. Of these four areas, Jenkins reports the highest rates of Spanish language maintenance and intergenerational transmission within the Southeast compared to the other regions, explained in part by the recency of the arrival of this population. Alabama was listed among nine states that more than doubled the population of Hispanics or Latinos between 2000–2010 (p. 62). Growth rates for Alabama are further discussed below. As of the 2020 Census, the Hispanic or Latino population was still relatively low at 5.3% in the state (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.d).

The composition of Tuscaloosa County is as follows: there are nine named municipalities within the county. The cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport are adjacent and comprise the majority of the population, with 111,338 and 31,111 residents, respectively, out of a county total of 237,373 (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.e). The remaining municipalities are much smaller in size, ranging from 900–3500, and several are semi-rural (TCEDA, Tuscaloosa County Economic Development Authority 2024). The location of all municipalities within the county is shown in more detail along with data in the results section. Tuscaloosa County is part of a larger combined metropolitan statistical area named Tuscaloosa, AL, which also includes Pickens County, Hale County, and Green County (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.a). Of the 67 Alabama counties, 15 were between 5–10% Hispanic or Latino, while 3 were above 10% Hispanic or Latino (ranging from 16–19.5%); see Figure 1.

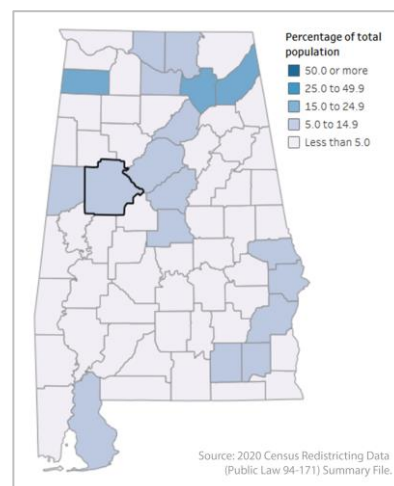


Figure 1. Hispanic or Latino Population in Alabama by county, 2020 Census; Tuscaloosa County outlined in black (Generated map; U.S. Census Bureau n.d.f).

Tuscaloosa is the second largest county in Alabama by square footage (after Baldwin Co. on the coast), while most recent population estimates for 2024 place Tuscaloosa as the fifth most populous county in the state after Jefferson Co. (Birmingham), Madison Co. (Huntsville), Mobile Co. (Mobile), and Baldwin Co. (Bay Minette) (World Population Review n.d.). In the 2020 Census, the Hispanic or Latino population in Tuscaloosa County was 5.4% of the total population of 227,036 (U.S. Census Bureau n.d.e). This was an increase from the 2010 Census which showed that 3.1% of a total population 194,656 in Tuscaloosa County was Hispanic or Latino. Jenkins (2018, p. 58) notes that a population density of 10% Hispanics is a threshold discussed in the literature at which point population growth may be observed (Ennis et al. 2011; Hobbs and Stoops 2002; Rivera-Mills 2010; cited in Jenkins 2018), and may result in legislative reaction to changing demographics, as described in Rivera-Mills (2010, p. 16).

Within Tuscaloosa County, the Hispanic or Latino population ranges between 5–10% in ten census tracts, 10–15% in seven census tracts, and 15–25% in one census tract (specifically 21.9%, which corresponds to the local university area); see Figure 2. The remainder are below 5%. In general terms, most of the higher percentage tracts are found outside of the central area of Tuscaloosa and Northport, with some exceptions.

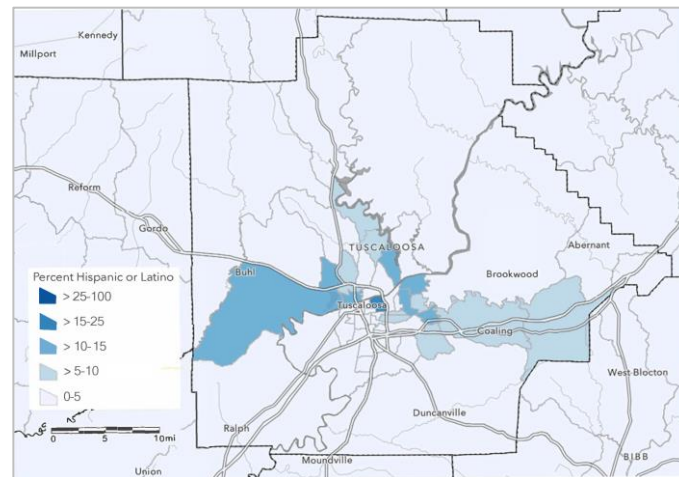


Figure 2. Percent of population who are Hispanic or Latino, 2020 Census by census tract (Produced map; Esri).

Between 2010 and 2020, the Hispanic or Latino population (of any race) increased in Tuscaloosa County from 5214 to 12,298 (a difference of 6349) or a growth rate of 107%²; prior growth rates were also over 100%: 2000–2010, 179% and 1990–2000, 125% (Pew Research Center 2022). This places Tuscaloosa County among one of the fastest growing areas within the US for Hispanics or Latinos and the third fastest in Alabama; neighboring Pickens County is ranked in the top ten fastest growing counties in the USA at 236% out of over 3100 counties in the country (Pew Research Center 2022).

For both the 2010 and 2020 census periods, the largest group was of Mexican origin or heritage, followed by Central American, Other Hispanic or Latino (including Spaniard and Spanish American), Caribbean, and then South American; see Figure 3. While the relative percentages are still in the same order a decade later, the Central American group has increased the most by 4%, two other groups have also increased by 3% (Other and Caribbean), while one group did not change (South American). The Mexican group, which is a lower percentage of the whole by 8% between decades (moving from 70% in 2010 to 62% in 2020), still increased in overall 5-year number estimates from 3648 to 4906. Similar relative changes can be observed within the Central American group. For example, in Figure 4, the Guatemalan group reduced in population share (from 81% in 2010 to 53% in 2020), even though the group itself increased in absolute size from 447 to 619³.

Taken as a whole, in Figure 3, nearly 40% of Hispanics or Latinos are from groups other than the largest (Mexican) group; in Figure 4, 47% of Central Americans are from groups other than the largest (Guatemalan) group. In the same way that the presence of a group may begin to be more salient after meeting a minimum percentage threshold (as discussed in Jenkins 2018), the same type of trend may be observed among subgroups of different Hispanic or Latino origin or regional subgroupings within the Hispanic or Latino population. That is, within the community, a notable presence of signage geared toward a particular group (e.g., Central Americans, or specifically Guatemalans) may become more visible as the relative size of the population increases. Based on Figures 3 and 4, we can see the heterogeneity of the Hispanic or Latino population in Tuscaloosa County, at least in the two most recent censuses. What remains to be determined, and what the present study will address, is how the presence of these groups appears within the linguistic landscape. This

heterogeneity, and its manifestation in the community through the public display of texts in Spanish, will be discussed further following the presentation of results.

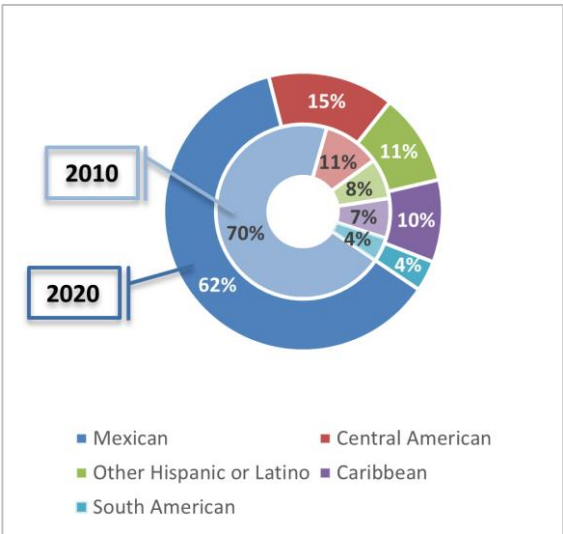


Figure 3. Hispanic or Latino Population in Tuscaloosa County. Percentages may not total to 100 because of rounding. *Source:* American Community Survey (B03001 5-year estimate 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau n.d.b, n.d.c).

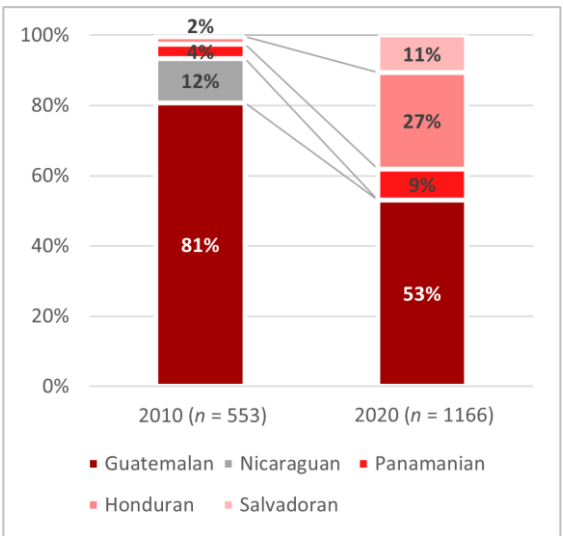


Figure 4. Hispanic or Latino Population in Tuscaloosa County of Caribbean origin or heritage. Percentages may not total to 100 because of rounding. *Source:* American Community Survey (B03001 5-year estimate 2010, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau n.d.b, n.d.c).

2. Materials and Methods

Pictures were taken of external signage of businesses and other buildings within Tuscaloosa County which included use of Spanish in the text, broadly defined. We report on data we collected from January 2022 until May 2024. The analysis of signage described here is based on more than 125 photographs taken at over 85 locations, which are summarized at the end of this section. We have limited our analysis currently to those texts which are either affixed to the storefront as the name of the business or display the business name as part of a plaza marquee or independently emplaced text. These criteria exclude roadside banners placed at ground-level height. Pictures have been taken via cell phone and uploaded to an ArcGIS Field Maps app which has been configured to include specific criteria for

description of the image according to its location, text, and image features. We note the recommendations on using photography in research in Kallen (2023) and Gorter and Cenoz (2023) regarding the need for high quality images and thoughtful framing of a picture which can change the interpretation of the text when its emplacement is included or excluded. Below, in some cases, we include two versions of an image for these reasons, that is, to give a view of the signage but also the context. As an additional methodological consideration, we generally attempt to include some element in the photograph as evidence of the outside nature of the signage, with inclusion of a roof, building surface, sky, surrounding greenery, or even a reflection of the former in a business window.

Multiple pictures at a given location have been taken when there was more than one text related to the business, such as in the marquee sign of a plaza, a text on a solitary post, or a storefront text (see Figure 5). In this way, we limit our analysis to ‘unique’ texts related to a given location. For example, if a marquee has the same text on both sides, the marquee text is only analyzed once. However, if the same or similar text appears in both the storefront signage and the marquee, both are analyzed as distinct texts since their emplacement is different.



Figure 5. Text placement examples: (a) Marquee sign, (b) Single post sign, and (c) Storefront; (Tuscaloosa—2022)⁴.

The main criterion for inclusion in the database is the public display of signage in Spanish within Tuscaloosa County, regardless of the current status of the location. That is, businesses which are no longer functioning, but where the signage still appears in the community are included (see Figure 6). Signage which appears in the same location for a different business is also included (see Figure 7). In this way, we observe the change in signage over time, but only enter a new data point when there is a unique text. A business is considered to be no longer functioning if there is another business in its place or if there is some other visual evidence, such as a ‘for rent’ sign, or if the inside of the location is emptied and the storefront is cleared (see Figure 8). However, as long as the location continues to display the signage, the text is included in the database. Examination of the full storefront is another analysis that could be conducted. For the present study, only the signage related to the business itself is analyzed (i.e., we exclude texts in the store windows, including any banners, community flyers or postings). With the use of the app, the image is attached to its specific location on a map of Tuscaloosa County and assigned a date stamp. This geolocation of the image can then be used to observe the distribution of signs in Spanish within the county; also, although not the focus of the current analysis, the database of images can also be used to examine changes in signage over time.



Figure 6. Change in status: (a) Restaurant in business, (b) To reopen, (c) Out-of-business; (Northport—2022, 2023, 2024).

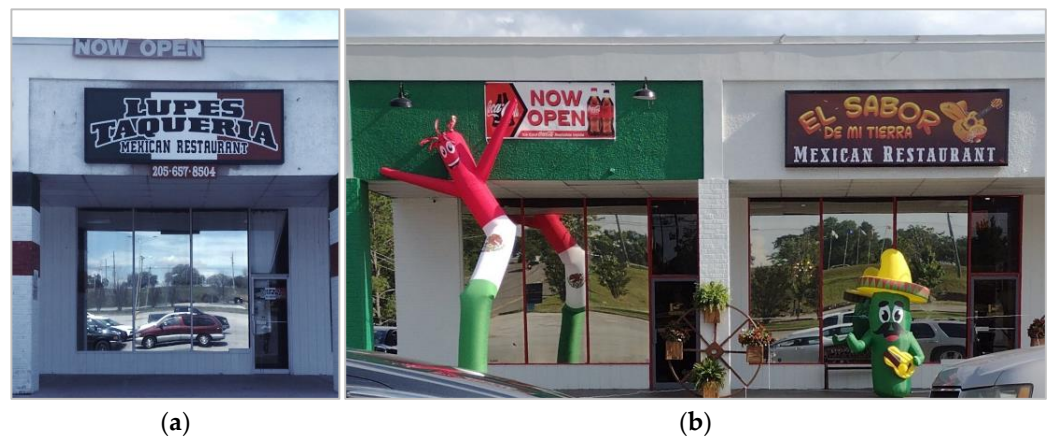


Figure 7. Change in business: (a) Restaurant in business, (b) New restaurant in same location; (Tuscaloosa—2022, 2023).



Figure 8. Business status comparison: (a) Store in business with full storefront; (b) Out-of-business with emptied storefront; (Tuscaloosa—2022, 2024).

From this database of images, we have identified location types which are part of two different discursive contexts—those pertaining to the marketplace and those pertaining to the community. For the purposes of the current analysis, we focus on two scenarios that emerge within the marketplace discursive context: the first location type is restaurants, as establishments where people spend a certain amount of time eating and also experiencing the venue itself; the second location type is a broader grouping of stores, including shops and *tiendas* (convenience stores), all of which specialize in the sale of a particular set of goods (and accompanying services), such as a bakery or ice cream shop. The term *tienda* is used to describe a multifaceted store that allows for the purchase of grocery items often found in other Spanish-speaking countries, household goods, fresh produce, and may even offer additional services such as money orders or package mailing. The specialty shops and *tiendas* are sometimes combined, as in <TIENDA LOS TRES HERMANOS | MEAT MARKET & GROCERY>. The second discursive context, community, is found in

the location type of the churches or *iglesias*, where the main purpose of the interaction is not commerce but rather the establishment of connections through worship. Other location types may also fall into this category either wholly or in part, such as community centers and other organizations that interact with the Spanish-speaking community (e.g., the local library). However, we limit our current analysis to community signage associated with churches. Also, it is important to note that the semiotic landscape is dynamic in that some signs are more temporary, as in printed banners, while others are more permanent in nature (e.g., as shown in Figure 6).

Regarding inclusion or exclusion from the data set, some additional considerations are noted. That is, a local restaurant chain “Taco Casa” was included in the current data set, in particular because of the use of the word *casa* (house), whereas “Taco Bell” was not, since the word “Bell” is in English. For those words that could be pronounced and/or read and understood by monolingual English speakers (or those with low proficiency in Spanish), these words were considered to be underspecified for language, since the use of the lexical item itself does not trigger identification in one language over another. As described in the introduction, these words are classified within the category of Dynamic.

In all, there are currently six locations of Taco Casa in Tuscaloosa County (cf. eight locations of Taco Bell). The other reason to exclude Taco Bell is related to its corporate nature as a nationwide chain. In particular, decisions regarding the use of Spanish are made outside of the community where the signage appears, and do not necessarily reflect local Spanish language use. Along these same lines, Chipotle Mexican Grill was not included in this data set, nor were any Mexican restaurants with only English in the name, such as <The Little Grand | Mexican Restaurant> in Moundville (at the southern border of the Tuscaloosa County) or <Moe’s Southwest Grill>, another nationwide chain.

The data are presented in a quantitative manner to see how language is used to index authors and intended audience, and in order to observe patterns in language use. The analysis of our data is as follows. First, for RQ1, we consider language use according to location type. To do so, we have assigned language labels to different portions of the signage text as either Spanish (S), English (E), or Dynamic (D) for those words which may be understood by monolingual speakers of each language, and by bilinguals who could assign the term to either language, as described in the previous section. Within the category of Dynamic, we include proper names, toponyms, brand names, and cultural loans (borrowings) which can be pronounced and/or read in either language, according to who views it; shown in (1):

- (1) Examples of words assigned to Dynamic category from data set
 - a. Proper names: <FRIDA’S>, <LUPES>, <IZCALLI>
 - b. Toponyms: <VERACRUZ>, <CANCUN>, <CANCÚN>, <EL PASO>
 - c. Brand names: <pepsi>, <Coca-Cola>
 - d. Cultural loans (borrowings): <MESA>, <TACO>, <TEQUILA>, <QUETZAL>, <Jalapeños>

Each text is labelled according to these abbreviations, such that one text may appear in all Spanish (S), Spanish with English (SE), Spanish and Dynamic (SD), all three (SDE), and so on; see examples in (2). Note that word order is not taken into consideration for this initial coding. For example, in (2c), <TIENDA> is coded as Spanish and <QUETZAL> is coded as Dynamic because it could be read as a loan into Spanish (or English) from an indigenous language, or as (part of) the original indigenous word.

- (2) Examples of coding of texts by language
 - a. Spanish (S) <Iglesia Vida Cristiana>
 - b. Spanish + English (SE) <EL GRAN PATRÓN | MEXICAN GRILL>
 - c. Spanish + Dynamic (SD) <TIENDA QUETZAL>
 - d. Dynamic + English (DE) <VERACRUZ | MEXICAN GRILL>
 - e. Spanish + Dynamic + English (SDE) <AZUL TEQUILA | MEXICAN RESTAURANT>

Some words are still categorized as Spanish if the preceding word, often a determiner, was also in Spanish, as in <DOS AMIGOS> in <DOS AMIGOS | MEXICAN GRILL>. However, we recognize that a number of the words that are categorized as Spanish may have a long-standing history of use in English, and/or may also change in their designation to a borrowing over time as words become incorporated into English. Other examples categorized as Spanish include: <LA GRAN FIESTA> in <LA GRAN FIESTA | MEXICAN GRILL RESTAURANT> and <LA TORTILLA> in <LA TORTILLA | MEXICAN GRILL>. Also, addresses were excluded from the analysis, which appeared mostly in church texts and some store texts, and often included abbreviations.

Next, for RQ2 we compare the sections in the text in terms of the symbolic and informative distinction described earlier in the introduction; see examples in (3). That is, we first analyze the presence of symbolic and informative sections of the text according to location. As shown in these examples, the informative section often includes a descriptor for the location type (e.g., grocery vs. restaurant). We also examine the use of language for these sections by location. We then view both factors together as the combination of language use in the symbolic and informative sections divided by location.

(3) Examples of coding of texts by section

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a. Symbolic: | <CORAZÓN LATINO> |
| b. Informative: | <TAQUERIA MEXICAN RESTAURANT> |
| c. Symbolic, Informative: | <CORAZON LATINO GROCERY> |
| d. Informative, Symbolic: | <TAQUERIA EL RINCON LATINO> |

Finally, for RQ3 we observe multimodal resources (i.e., linguistic and visual) used in the marketplace and community discursive contexts. The linguistic resources are categorized according to the presence of different components within the text. First, the term ‘descriptor’ is used for the description of a location type. Next, the term ‘identifier’ is used for cases in which a term or reference indexes a group via naming of the group and/or other cultural references which may connect the location to a particular type of business or intended audience; see examples in (4).

(4) Examples of coding of texts by linguistic resources

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| a. Descriptor of location type | <Grill>, <Tienda>, <Iglesia> |
| b. Identifier of group | |
| b1. Origin term (demonym) | <Mexican>, <El Mexicano> |
| b2. Placename (toponym) | <VERACRUZ> |
| b3. Given name and/or surname | <LUPES> |
| b4. Cultural reference | <IZCALLI>, last month in the Aztec calendar |

The visual resources are categorized according to the following: special font, presence of flags, use of flag colors, or other cultural icons or artifacts; see Figure 9. We first analyze the linguistic and visual resources by location separately. We then analyze the combined use of these resources (e.g., <Mexican> in combination with a map of Mexico). In this way, we can observe which combination of resources is most often used to identify LL actors and intended audience.



Figure 9. Examples of visual resources: (a) Special font, (b) Guatemalan flag, (c) Mexican flag colors—green, red (and white background), yellow sombrero as cultural artifact; (a) (Tuscaloosa—2024), (b,c) (Northport—2022).

In all, for this analysis, we examine 137 unique texts from 89 locations within Tuscaloosa County. In Figure 10, the datapoints are shown in relation to the city and town limits for the county. A summary of the distribution of texts by municipality and location type is shown in Table 1. The vast majority are within the cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport, with a small percentage either in other municipalities or in Tuscaloosa County. Also, over half of the texts pertain to restaurants. The seven tokens outside the Tuscaloosa and Northport city limits all correspond to restaurants.

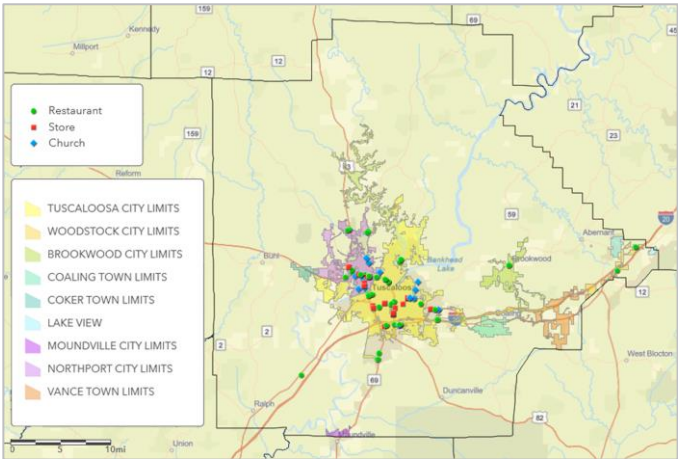


Figure 10. Texts in Tuscaloosa County shown according to municipality and location type. Numbers on the map correspond to interstate, state, and county roads (Produced map; Esri).

Table 1. Distribution of texts according to municipality and location type.

Location	Restaurants		Stores		Churches		Total	
Municipality	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	% Municipality
Tuscaloosa, City	47	(63%)	23	(61%)	5	(21%)	75	(55%)
Northport	21	(28%)	15	(39%)	15	(63%)	51	(37%)
Woodstock	3	(4%)					3	(2%)
Brookwood	2	(3%)					2	(1%)
Tuscaloosa, County	2	(3%)			4	(17%)	6	(4%)
Total, % Location	75	(55%)	38	(28%)	24	(18%)	137	

A closer view of most of the data set appears in Figure 11, which shows the cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport, along with the major thoroughfares: US-82 (McFarland Boulevard), US-359 / AL-69 (Lurleen B. Wallace Boulevard), and US-11 (Skyland Boulevard). Additional local thoroughfares include AL-215/University Boulevard, Veterans Memorial Parkway/15th Street, and Greensboro Avenue. Note that the data points shown may correspond to more than one text, depending on the scaling of the map.

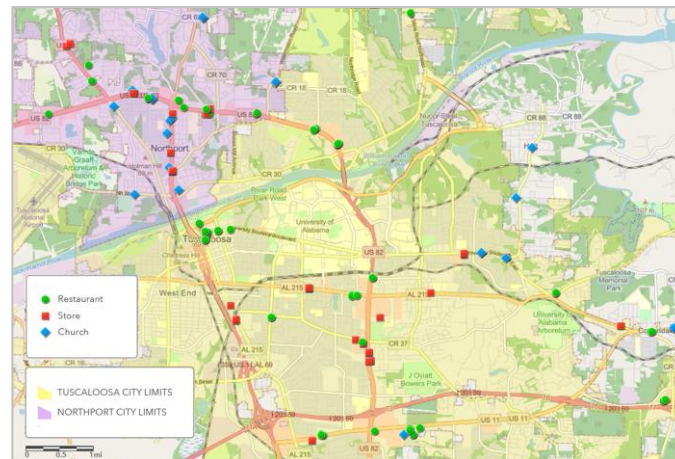


Figure 11. Texts in the cities of Northport and Tuscaloosa along thoroughfares (Produced map; Esri).

From these maps, two additional points to note are the following. First, the signage in Spanish occurs in a variety of locations, such that there is no one area where Spanish texts are located (see Figure 10). Second, the majority of these texts appear along major commercial thoroughfares (see Figure 11). That is, these texts are emplaced in a multilingual landscape where texts from English and other languages also appear.

3. Results

The findings in this section are presented in the order of the research questions posed. In particular, we first offer a global analysis of the language used according to location type (i.e., restaurants, stores, and churches). This is followed by a more specific examination of language use within the sections of the text. Finally, we report on the use of multimodal resources which are found in the text.

3.1. Language Use by Location

To address RQ1, the results for how language is used by location type are shown in Figure 12. These are calculated based on the presence of one or more language labels (S = Spanish, E = English, D = Dynamic) in any part of the text. This analysis is a continuation of a previous phase of the project in which we tabulated the total number of words in each language for a given location type. For the present study, the unit of analysis is the text itself. Whereas restaurants show the use of more than one language and/or Dynamic, the most predominant is the combination of Dynamic with English (34%) followed by Spanish and English together (29%), then Spanish in combination with Dynamic (11%), and Spanish with Dynamic and English (11%). The least frequent language configuration for restaurants is Spanish alone (8%) or Dynamic (7%). In comparison, Spanish is the predominant language for stores (53%) and even more so for churches (83%). Spanish in combination with English is also used frequently in stores (26%), whereas Spanish with Dynamic appears almost as frequently in stores (21%) and to a lesser extent with churches (13%). One instance of all three language labels (SDE) is found with churches (4%). Therefore, while churches make the greatest use of Spanish in their texts, stores show increased use of other combinations with either English or Dynamic, and restaurants show the greatest use of either Spanish or Dynamic in combination with English. We will return to this difference in language use in texts by location in the discussion section.

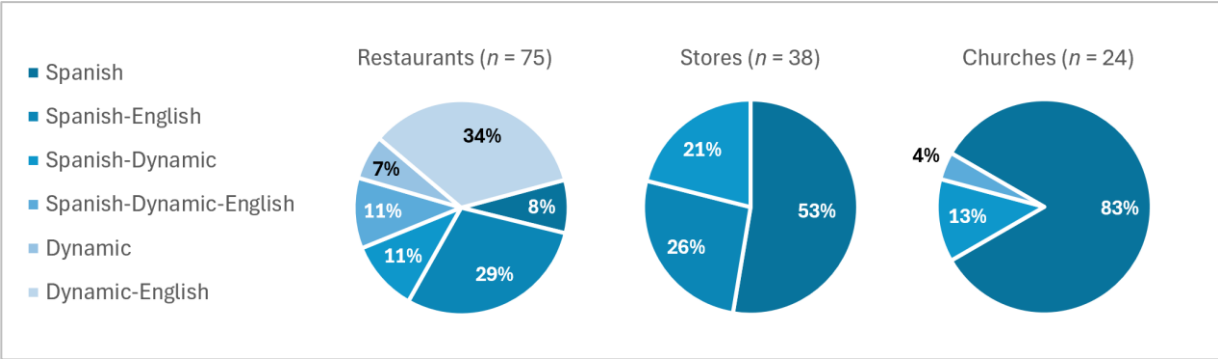


Figure 12. Language use in texts by location type.

3.2. Language Use by Section of Text

Turning to RQ2, we examine the use of language in the symbolic and informative sections of the text. In Table 2, language use in each of these sections is summarized, separated by location. The combination of section and language use is shown per location type in Figure 13.

Table 2. Overview of language use in sections of text by location type.

	Restaurants		Stores		Churches	
	Symbolic	Inform.	Symbolic	Inform.	Symbolic	Inform.
Total N	74	63	38	37	24	23
Spanish	25 (34%)	5 (8%)	31 (82%)	31 (84%)	20 (88%)	22 (96%)
English	1 (1%)	51 (81%)		6 (16%)		
Dynamic	26 (35%)	5 (8%)	3 (8%)		3 (13%)	
SE	2 (3%)	1 (2%)	1 (3%)			1 (4%)
SD	13 (18%)		3 (8%)		1 (4%)	
DE	7 (9%)					
SDE		1 (2%)				

Note: Column values may not total to 100 percent due to rounding (S = Spanish, E = English, D = Dynamic, Inform. = Informative).

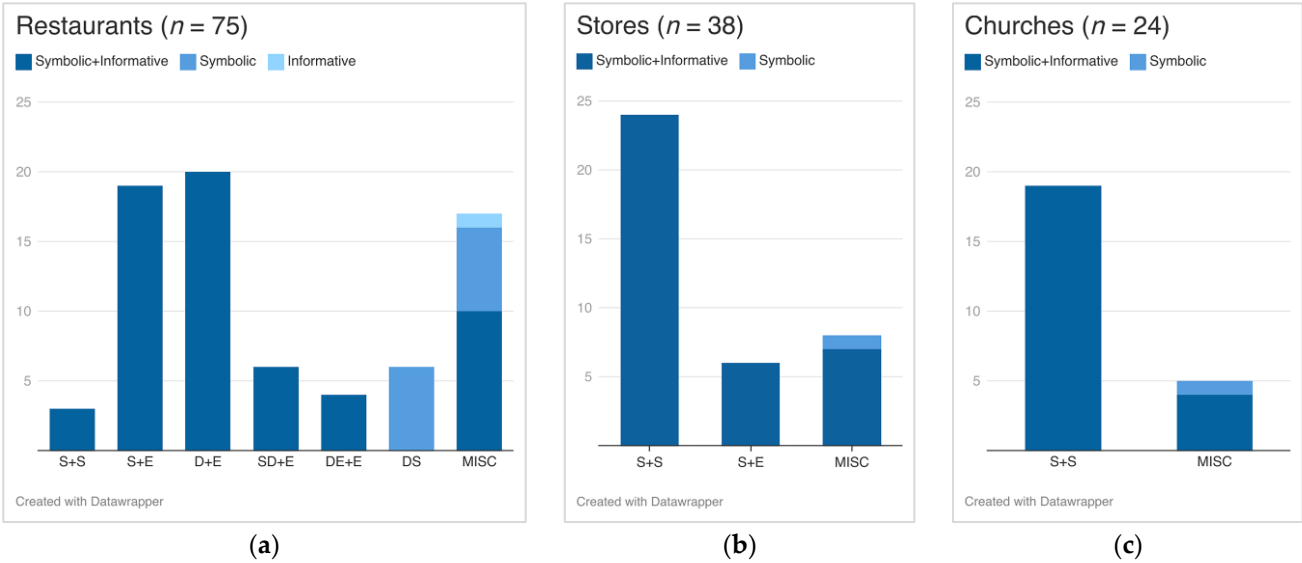


Figure 13. Language use by section placement in the text: (a) Restaurants, (b) stores, (c) churches; (S = Spanish, E = English, D = Dynamic; MISC = Additional miscellaneous language use combinations).

The highest percentage of Spanish use in restaurants occurs in the symbolic section, either alone or in combination as Spanish with Dynamic (SD) (55% in all), while English is most used in the informative section (English, SE, SDE; 85% in all); in both stores and churches, Spanish is used in both the symbolic and informative sections (at 82% and above); some use of English appears in the informative section in stores (16%). The words in the Dynamic category also appear with frequency in the symbolic section for restaurants (Dynamic, SD, DE; 62% in all).

An overview of the use of Spanish in the symbolic and informative portions of the text is shown in Figure 13, with the most frequent combinations shown for each location. Any other low frequency language use combinations of 1–3 tokens were listed together in the last column under Miscellaneous (Misc). Note that the figure shows the use of language for both the symbolic and informative sections. For example, for the label Symbolic+Informative, language use S+E means that the Symbolic portion was in Spanish while the Informative portion was in English (e.g., <La morenita | LATIN STORE>). Additional examples are shown in (5), where S = Spanish, E = English, D = Dynamic. As a reminder, the vertical line represents a line break in the text, and there is not a direct correspondence between this break and the symbolic and informative sections of the text. In example (5f), the example shows a text with only a symbolic section.

- (5) Examples of texts by language use in Symbolic+Informative sections of text
- | | |
|------------------|---|
| a. S + S | <SABOR LATINO TIENDA Y CARNICERIA> |
| b. S + E | <La morenita LATIN STORE> |
| c. D + E | <CANCUN BAR & GRILL> |
| d. SD + E | <AZUL TEQUILA MEXICAN RESTAURANT> |
| e. DE + E | <Pastor's Kitchen Authentic Mexican Food> |
| f. DS (Symbolic) | <TACO CASA> |

In sum, whereas restaurants show a combination of Spanish and English, the stores and churches show a much greater use of Spanish in their signage texts. Spanish and Dynamic appear in the symbolic portion of the text in restaurants, whereas English is used predominantly in the informative part. Stores also show the S + E pattern to a lesser extent (compared to restaurants), such that some instances of English are found in the informative section of store texts.

3.3. Multimodal Resources by Location

The third research question, RQ3, is related to the multimodal resources found in texts. The presentation of results is organized according to location type, and then further by resource type—linguistic and visual, and the combination of the two. Some of the visual resources discussed will include the use of colors, flags, images, fonts, and cultural artifacts. Examples are shown in Figure 9 in the methodology section above. Additional examples for each location type appear in Figure 14. For example, in the restaurant in Figure 14a, there is a sombrero and the term Mexican in the same sign; in the store in Figure 14b, there is a picture of a quetzal with the store name <Puerto Quetzal>; and in the church in Figure 14c, there is a cross image which supports the symbolic portion of the text <Cristiana> (see also examples in Figure 15). In this way, we can observe how semiotic resources interact to index or identify individual actor(s), regional groups (including presentation of self), and intended audience. The tables presented in this section include the frequency of items found in texts, divided by category (e.g., types of descriptors and identifiers). In the analysis of combined multimodal resources in each location type, an overall frequency number is given for each set of resources. Select examples are also included in each of the tables to demonstrate the occurrence or co-occurrence of the resource described.



Figure 14. Examples of multimodal resources in combination: (a) restaurant, (b) store, (c) church; (a) (Lake View—2022), (b) (Tuscaloosa—2022), (c) (Northport—2022).



Figure 15. Additional multimodal resource examples: (a) restaurant, (b) store; (Tuscaloosa—2022).

3.3.1. Multimodal Resources: Restaurants

The multimodal resources used in the texts of restaurants are analyzed in this section, starting with the linguistic resources, followed by the visual resources, and then the combination of both types of resources for those cases in which one reinforced the other. In Table 3, the linguistic resources are presented for restaurants. First, the term ‘descriptor’ is used as a category label for the word used to describe the type of location or restaurant. Next, the terms used to modify the restaurant type, or ‘identifiers’ are noted. Included in this category are origin terms for a person (i.e., a demonym), placenames which may be related to a specific country or Spanish-speaking area (i.e., a toponym), and other references to a particular group or culture. An example of a descriptor is <Grill>; examples of an identifier are <Mexican>, as in <Mexican Grill>, the demonym <EL MEXICANO> (the Mexican, i.e., person from Mexico), or the toponym in <made in México>.

The most frequent terms for restaurant type are *grill* and *restaurant*, while the most frequent identifier is *Mexican* ($n = 45$), as in <VERACRUZ | MEXICAN GRILL>; see Table 3. The location type *taquería* (taco restaurant) appears in multiple instances ($n = 7$) but is often used in conjunction with an English restaurant type, such as <LUPES TAQUERIA | MEXICAN RESTAURANT>. In the analysis of identifiers, nearly all references are to the Mexican group, including two demonyms, several placenames (e.g., <CANCÚN | BAR & GRILL>), and other references to Mexican culture (e.g., <FRIDA’S> in reference to Frida Kahlo); only two areas of the United States are seen in the symbolic portion of the text: <SoCal | CANTINA> (for Southern California) and <TAQUERÍA INT’L. EL PASO>, in reference to Texas. Aside from Mexican, no explicit identification of other groups was found for restaurants other than one instance of the more general term *Latino* in <TAQUERIA

EL RINCON LATINO>. In addition, the word <Authentic> ($n = 6$) was used to further describe the identifier <MEXICAN> as in <AUTHENTIC MEXICAN FOOD>.

Table 3. Linguistic resources, Restaurants—Descriptors and Identifiers.

N	Descriptors	Sample Tokens
22	Grill	<Grill>, <GRILL RESTAURANT>, <GRILL & CANTINA>
21	Restaurant	<Restaurant>, <Restaurante>, <RESTAURANT & CANTINA>
7	Taquería	<Taqueria>
5	Bar	<BAR & GRILL>, <a taco bar>
4	Other	<CANTINA>, <HACIENDA>, <COCINA & TEQUILA BAR>
4	Product	<FOOD>, <Cuisine>
N	Identifiers	Sample Tokens
53	Mexican	<Mexican>, <EL MEXICANO>, <Los Tarascos>
11	Place—Mexico	<Veracruz>, <CANCUN>, <CANCÚN>, <FLOR DE GUERRERO>, <made in México>
3	Place—US	<SoCal>, <EL PASO>
6	Other	<Authentic>, <FRIDA’S>, <LA BAMBA>, <LATINO>, <ANTOJITOS IZCALLI>

To summarize Table 4, the use of images in texts is more than twice as frequent as texts without images ($n = 54$ with images versus $n = 21$ without). Within the category of images, the use of group colors is as frequent as no use of color ($n = 27$ each). The analysis of color is limited to those colors found in country flags. For example, from the national flag of Mexico, the colors green, white, and red (or green and red together) are considered group colors in reference to Mexico. There are also some texts which appear with group colors but no image ($n = 9$, 12% of the total, or 25% of the 36 texts with group colors, has no accompanying image). Regarding the use of special fonts, there were two recurrent fonts that appeared in the texts, one with a jagged line within the letter or beside it, and sometimes with other adjacent dots, which can be considered either a festive font (see Figure 9a) or may be reminiscent of pre-Columbian writing (see Figure 15a). The other is a Western-style font with a characteristic point in the middle of the letter (see Figure 14a). These fonts give an additional enhancement of a locale by invoking a festive or Western aesthetic and may make a generalized (if not abstract) connection to Mexican culture from the US Southwest. Overall, these fonts appeared with the colors and images combination the most often ($n = 14$ or 52% of the 27 tokens), with images alone ($n = 7$ or 26% of the 27 tokens), and in two cases where there was no group color or image ($n = 2$ or 17% of 12 tokens).

Table 4. Visual resources, Restaurants—Colors ¹ and Images.

Visual Resource	Images (Font)	No Image (Font)	Total N
Colors	27 (14) ²	9 (0)	36
No color	27 (7)	12 (2)	39
Total N	54	21	75

Note: ¹ Only use of flag colors is included, as in flag images with text, and flag colors in letters and background.
² Values in parentheses correspond to the co-occurrence of special fonts.

A further examination of the use of color to signify a special group reveals the following. The most frequent use of colors was that of the Mexican flag colors, green–white–red, often appearing in combination with yellow (total $n = 22$); see Table 5. There was also a recurrent use of green and red together, which most often appeared with yellow (total $n = 13$). Finally, there are two flags appearing in the background of one sign and constitute the only instance of a Guatemalan flag, with colors light blue and white, which appears along with an image of the Mexican flag. On the one hand, the use of green and red with

either white and/or yellow constitutes a large portion of the data ($n = 36$) or nearly half of the overall number of texts. However, the exclusive use of green–white–red was limited to just 13 texts, which is less than 20% of the 75 texts found for restaurants. In addition, one restaurant building was painted in green–white–red. After the use of images is presented separately below, the use of colors in combination with images will be examined.

Table 5. Visual resources, Restaurants—Colors.

N	Visual: Color	Tokens ¹
22	Flag colors ²	Green–white–red (13), Green–white–red with yellow (9)
13	Partial colors	Green–red (3), Green–red with yellow (10)
1	Flag images	Mexican and Guatemalan flags (2 images in one text)
1	Building	Green–white–red (1 location) (Figure 7b)

Note: ¹ Token count is per text, unless otherwise indicated; ² Flag colors in letters and background are counted separately from colors within the flag images.

The images in Table 6, which include cultural objects (e.g., maracas) and cultural icons (e.g., Izcalli figure from the Aztec calendar; see Figure 15a), can be divided between those that are related to the location type—restaurant, and those that are related to a group or culture. In the category of plants, the image of the cactus is most frequent ($n = 13$), followed by the image of a palm tree ($n = 5$). There are caricatures ($n = 14$) which often combine multiple images such as figures wearing a sombrero. Food- and drink-related images (aside from the Pepsi logo advertising) appear in 16 texts (food, $n = 12$; drink, $n = 4$), in addition to those items which may appear in combination with figures. These support the restaurant type, which is generally indicated in the informative portion of the text. Regarding signaling of a group, there are just two references that are specific to Mexican culture, with the figure of Frida Kahlo in two texts and the use of the Izcalli stone figure from the Aztec calendar in one. The remaining images are grouped into the categories of clothing, music, and other. In some cases, the images are connected with the symbolic portion of the text. For example, the use of a cactus does invoke a connection to areas where Spanish is spoken, as does the palm tree to some extent (e.g., in <SoCal | CANTINA> or <CANCÚN | BAR & GRILL>). Similarly, the use of a sombrero, guitar, and/or maracas also suggests a Latino (or Mexican) culture, albeit somewhat generically.

Table 6. Visual resources, Restaurants—Images.

N	Visual: Images	Tokens
18	Plant	Cactus, palm tree
14	Figures	Caricatures with multiple images, Frida Kahlo
12	Food	Red chili pepper, tacos, food plate photos
10	Drink	Drink with lime, Pepsi logo
9	Clothing	Sombrero
7	Music	Guitar, maracas
3	Other	Aztec calendar figure Izcalli, elephant, waterfront

The combination of multimodal resources is summarized in Table 7, with usage of both Mexican flag colors and images which may be combined to support the linguistic resources specifically or in a more general sense. The most frequent combination of resources is an image and a linguistic reference to the Mexican group. The next most frequent is using three resources of green–white–red flag colors (or green–red partial flag colors), along with an image and linguistic references. The least frequent combination is the use of color alone with a linguistic reference. This supports the previous finding (Table 5), in which there were more instances of images ($n = 54$) than of use of group colors ($n = 36$). In the remaining cases, a resource may be used but supports the informative portion of the text, as in the image of tacos with the text <TAQUERIA DOLORES>.

Table 7. Multimodal resources, Restaurants—Mexican: Visual and linguistic resources together.

N	Visual	Linguistic—Sample Tokens
13	Colors + image Green–white–red with sombrero	<PASTOR’S KITCHEN AUTHENTIC MEXICAN FOOD> (Figure 9a); <LA TORTILLA MEXICAN GRILL> (Figure 14a)
9	Colors alone Green–white–red	<LUPES TAQUERIA MEXICAN RESTAURANT> (Figure 7a)
17	Image alone Tarascan figures with map of Mexico	<Los Tarascos Mexican Restaurant>

3.3.2. Multimodal Resources: Stores

In this section, we review the multimodal resources used with texts related to stores. As before, we first examine the linguistic resources, then the visual resources, and finally the combination of the two. To begin, the word most often used to describe the store type is *tienda*, either alone as <Tienda> ($n = 20$) or in combination with <Carniceria> or <Meat Market> ($n = 9$); see Table 8. The English word <Grocery> appears twice, once as the only descriptor and once in combination with the other descriptors <Tienda> and <Meat Market>. The term <Super> also appeared as a type of grocery store; this use is classified for language as Dynamic. There were four instances in which the store type was not directly given. However, in three of these, the product being sold was named in the signage in the informational portion of the text, including two ice cream shops, or in combination with a store type, as in <Mi Casita | Bakery & Coffee>.

Table 8. Linguistic resources, Stores—Descriptors and Identifiers.

N	Descriptors	Sample Tokens
21	Convenience store	<Tienda>, <La morenita LATIN STORE>
9	Store + Meat market	<Tienda Y Carniceria La Mexicana>
2	Grocery, Super	<Super Quetzal>
3	Bakery	<Mi Casita Bakery & Coffee>
1	Other: No type	<CORAZÓN LATINO>
N	Identifier	Sample Tokens
13	Latina/Latino/Latin	<TIENDA LATINA>
7	Mexican	<La Mexicana>, <TIENDA GUATEMEX>, <PRODUCTOS CENTROAMERICANOS Y MEXICANOS>
4	Guatemalan	<Tienda Guatelinda>, <Abarrotes Mexicanos y Guatemaltecos>
4	Place—Mexico	<LA IXTAPITA>, <La Real Michoacana Homemade Ice Cream>
4	Place—Guatemala	<Tienda Puerto Quetzal>
5	Other	<TIENDA CRISTIANA EL REY DAVID>, <Tienda Típica La Bendición>

As was the case with restaurants, aside from store type, another linguistic resource was seen in the identification of groups, either with identifiers of the store type, or through variations of placenames (toponyms) and origin names (demonyms). The term *latina* appeared most often as an identifier to modify the type of store ($n = 7$), as in <Tienda Latina>, while other variants <Latino> and <Latin> were also found. The next most frequent group represented was Mexican, with terms used in the symbolic portion of the text, such as the demonyms <La Mexicana>, <La Real Michoacana>, and a diminutive of a toponym <LA IXTAPITA>. Identifiers also appeared in the informational portion of the text along with other groups, as in <PRODUCTOS CENTROAMERICANOS Y MEXICANOS>. The Guatemalan group was the only other group referred to specifically, either in combination with another group or with another word (or portion of a word), as in <Tienda Guatelinda> and <Tienda Guatemex>.

Also, the toponym for the Guatemalan port city appears in <Tienda Puerto Quetzal>. As with the Mexican examples, the reference to Guatemala appears in both the symbolic portion of the text, as in the last three examples, or in the informational part, in reference to types of goods sold (e.g., *abarrotos* or groceries in <Abarrotos Mexicanos y Guatemaltecos>). Importantly, there is some juxtaposition of groups that can be seen linguistically which will also be examined in the use of visual resources discussed below.

The visual resources for stores include both the use of group colors and images; see Table 9. No special fonts as described previously were noted in the signage for stores. While images are employed more than colors ($n = 28$ for images and $n = 17$ for colors), the use of colors in cases where there is already an image is equally as frequent as not ($n = 14$ in both cases). However, if a color is used, it is more likely for an image to be used as well, rather than not ($n = 14$ vs. $n = 3$).

Table 9. Visuals resources, Stores—Colors ¹ and Images.

Visual Resource	Images	No Image	Total N
Colors	14	3	17
No color	14	7	21
Total N	28	10	38

Note: ¹ Only use of flag colors is included, as in flag images with text, and flag colors in letters and background.

Next, stores show flag colors from both the Mexican flag, green–white–red, and the Guatemalan flag, light blue–white, or the combination of the two; see Table 10 and Figures 16 and 17. In addition, flag images appeared with texts, including multiple instances of the Guatemalan flag and one instance each of the Mexican and US American flag. This use of flag colors was reinforced by the green–white–red building paint color at one location (Figure 15b; shown above), and the flying of several flags at two different locations (Figure 17b; shown below).

Table 10. Visual resources, Stores—Colors.

N	Visual: Color	Tokens ¹
14	Flag colors ²	Green–white–red (8), light blue–white (3), both (3)
6	Flag images	Guatemalan flag (3 images with 3 texts) Guatemalan, Mexican, US American flags (3 images with one text)
1	Building	Green–white–red (1 location)
2	Adjacent Flags	Mexican, Guatemalan, El Salvadoran flags (1 location); Mexican, Guatemalan, Honduran, US American flags (1 location)

Note: ¹ Token count is per text, unless otherwise indicated; ² Flag colors in letters and background are counted separately from colors within the flag images.



Figure 16. Examples from stores of multimodal resources in combination for both Mexican and Guatemalan groups: (a) flags, images, and colors, (b) images and colors, (c) colors and orthography; (a,b) (Northport—2024), (c) (Tuscaloosa—2023).



Figure 17. Additional multicultural example for multiple groups: (a) store, (b) store with flags; (Tuscaloosa—2023, 2024).

With respect to images with texts in stores, there are images that can be considered to belong to several broader categories, such as food, clothing, animal, etc. The majority of the images listed for food in Table 11 support the basic concept of a convenience store or multipurpose market and appear with stores with the name <Tienda>. In the case of the meat market <Carniceria y Tienda Latina | “La Morenita”>, a cattle head, a steak, and a sack of groceries were shown along with the text. While most of these examples show that the image supports the informational portion of the text (e.g., showing pictures of ice cream for <La Real Michoacana | Homemade Ice Cream>), some of the images support the symbolic portion with an image, for example, of a star for <Tienda La Estrellita>. The use of the quetzal image ($n = 6$) is specifically linked to Guatemala, and the image of an eagle standing on a cactus with a snake in its mouth is linked to Mexico, specifically the Mexican flag.

Table 11. Visual resources, Stores—Images.

N	Visual: Images	Tokens ¹
11	Food	Fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, breads, dairy items, packaged goods and brand names, ice cream, grocery sack, cattle head, tacos, cakes
8	Clothing	Sombrero
7	Animal: Bird	Quetzal, eagle with snake on cactus
6	People, cartoons	Drawings of girls, men with mustaches and sombreros, men sleeping with sombreros, cartoon house, pineapple with sunglasses
3	Plant	Palm tree
3	Money	Wire transfer image, US \$100 bills, checks
2	Other	Mailing boxes, star

Note: ¹ Tokens are counted per text, unless otherwise indicated.

In the following tables we see the combination of flag colors, images, and linguistic resources in the signaling of groups: Green–white–red colors in reference to the Mexican flag (Table 12); sky blue or light blue–white in reference to the Guatemalan flag (Table 13); and both sets of flag colors in the same text (Figure 16). Last, additional examples of resources employed with the more general group term Latina/Latino/Latin are described.

In Table 12, we see that the combination of Mexican flag colors green–white–red with an image is the most common resource combination ($n = 4$), often supported by an additional linguistic reference in the symbolic portion of the text. Both colors alone and images alone also support the symbolic portion of the text in signaling the Mexican group ($n = 2$ each).

In comparison to the multimodal resources in reference to Mexico, the Guatemalan references use the image of the quetzal, the national bird of Guatemala, most frequently ($n = 3$), or the sky blue/light blue and white flag colors in the signage alone ($n = 2$), or in combination with an image of the quetzal ($n = 2$); see Table 13. Except for the more general reference to Central American products in the informational section of one text, the use of

colors and images supports the symbolic portion of the text in reference to the Guatemalan group. Another use of the Guatemalan flag alone in the signage of one store is described earlier in Table 10.

Table 12. Multimodal resources, Stores—Mexican: Visual and linguistic resources together.

N	Visual	Linguistic—Sample Tokens
4	Colors + image Green–white–red Sombrero	<Carniceria Y Tienda La Mexicana> ¹
2	Colors alone Green–white–red	<TIENDA LATINA LA IXTAPITA> (Figure 15b)
2	Image alone Two cartoon men with sombreros; <i>papel picado</i> (cut paper banner)	<Tienda Los Dos Carnales> ¹ (Figure 17a)

Note: ¹ This location also displays large Guatemalan and Mexican flags painted in the two storefront windows (Figure 17b).

Table 13. Multimodal resources, Stores—Guatemalan: Visual and linguistic resources together.

N	Visual	Linguistic—Sample Tokens
2	Colors + image Light blue–white Quetzal (bird)	<Tienda Latina Puerto Quetzal> ¹ (Figure 5b)
2	Colors alone Light blue–white	<TIENDA GUATELINDA>
3	Image alone Quetzal (bird)	<Tienda Latina Puerto Quetzal> (Figure 14b)

Note: ¹ This location also displays images in connection with the products and services found at a convenience store.

When both sets of flag colors are used in the signage, for example, to highlight different letters in the text, an image such as a flag is sometimes used to accompany this use of color; see Figure 16a. Both groups may be reinforced symbolically in the name, as in <TIENDA GUATEMEX>. While the symbolic portion of <TIENDA | MI PREFERIDA> does not signal a specific group, the positioning of the quetzal next to the Guatemalan flag colors in the letters for <TIENDA> and the eagle–snake–cactus image from the Mexican flag next to the Mexican flag colors in the letters for <MI PREFERIDA> reinforce each of the groups; see Figure 16b. With the text for <TIENDA LATINA | XOYITA>, vertical stripe flag colors from both Mexico and Guatemala appear, while Mexico is reinforced linguistically via the use of an alternate spelling tradition from Mexico, as in <XOYITA> (for *joyita*, little jewel); see Figure 16c.

Last, the use of the term Latina/Latino/Latin is more general than the specific groups previously described. In <TIENDA LATINA LA IXTAPITA> (Figure 15b), the more general term <LATINA> appears, even though the colors used in the lettering and the building are the Mexican flag colors green–white–red, and the symbolic portion <LA IXTAPITA> is in reference to a placename in Mexico. Another example, <La morenita | LATIN STORE>, uses the more specific Mexican flag colors green–white–red in the text along with a sombrero. Similarly, the term appears when only Guatemalan flag colors, light blue–white, and/or quetzal image is used, as in <Tienda Latina | Puerto Quetzal>, which is also reinforced linguistically by referring to a Guatemalan toponym. In some cases, as in <TIENDA LATINA | XOYITA>, colors from the Mexican and Guatemalan flags appear, but the word <LATINA> is used in the informational part of the text. The remaining examples show the use of more general images: in <SABOR LATINO | TIENDA Y CARNICERIA>, a sombrero is used, whereas in <Tienda Latina | El Puerto> there is a palm tree with two men in sombreros wearing ponchos. Overall, the term Latina/Latino/Latin appears in texts of

stores which make use of multimodal resources in reference to Mexican and Guatemalan groups individually and in texts with groups combined.

3.3.3. Multimodal Resources: Churches

Most texts for churches in this data set included information about the worship or services schedule, the names and contact information of pastors, and the location address. In this section, we examine as linguistic semiotic resources specifically the use of words to identify location type and other visual resources. The majority of the churches had the word *iglesia* somewhere in the text ($n = 14$), most often as a descriptor to indicate the type of location. A few also appear to have <Iglesia> in the name itself (e.g., <Iglesia de Dios>, $n = 3$). Of the churches, only one appeared without a named type of location; see Table 14. For the identifier words used to modify the church type, the most frequent designated the denomination (<Evangélica>, <Pentecostal>, <Cristiana>) or the type of service (<Evangelio Completo>)⁵. There were no identifier designations by origin. A few other recurrent written elements include a statement of welcome (<Bienvenidos>) within the text, citation of Bible verses and quotations, and other sayings to invite potential worship participants. In the two instances in which <español> was used in the text, there was other language use present (either English or Dynamic).

Table 14. Linguistic resources, Churches—Descriptors and Identifiers.

N	Descriptor	Tokens
20	Church	<Iglesia>, <Iglecia>, <Iglesia de Dios>, <Iglesia de Cristo>
3	Other	<Misión>, <Ministerio>, <Church>
N	Identifiers	Tokens
9	Evangelical	<Evangélica>, <Evangelio Completo>, <Evangelístico>
9	Pentecostal	<Pentecostés>, <Pentecostal>
4	Christian	<Cristiana>
3	Other	<español>, <Familiar>, <Misionera>, <Tuscaloosa, Alabama>

Aside from linguistic resources, there were other multimodal resources used with churches, including the use of color and/or images to reinforce information in the text. Half of the churches used some shade of blue in their signage which was either a sky blue or light blue, or a darker blue. Since we discovered that some of the churches had connections with Guatemala (e.g., <Evangelio Completo>), we have also noted the use of blue colors in the signage, which may allude to Guatemala or other Central American groups in the area (e.g., Honduras and El Salvador). Whether or not this use of color is intentional for the purpose of group identification needs to be determined in further research. For some signs, this use of color was the only visual resource used with the text, while for others, the color appeared in combination with a religious image; see Table 15. The use of colors was mostly within the signage itself, although there are two instances in which the building also appeared with the sky blue or dark blue colors; see Table 16.

Table 15. Visual resources, Churches—Colors and Images.

Visual Resource	Images	No Image	Total N
Colors	6	6	12
No color	6	6	12
Total N	12	12	24

Table 16. Visual resources, Churches—Colors.

N	Visual: Color	Tokens
12	Flag colors	Dark blue–white (8), light blue–white (4)
2	Building	Dark blue–white (1), light blue–white (1)

To examine the combination of multimodal resources, the images are explored further in reference to the text. Of the signage with images ($n = 12$), half showed the use of an image which supported or reinforced the text itself, including five cases which supported the symbolic portion of the text (e.g., a dove for <PAZ>) and one that supported the informative portion (e.g., flames for <PENTECOSTAL>). The remaining images were generally religious in nature but did not show this direct enhancement of the text; see Table 17. In this way, the remaining images supported the church location type in a more general sense.

Table 17. Visual resources, Churches—Visual and linguistic resources together.

N	Visual: Image	Sample Tokens
5	Cross on rocky mountaintop	<IGLESIA EVANGÉLICA ROCA DE SALVACIÓN CA>
	Dove with reaching hands	<IGLESIA PRINCIPE DE PAZ>
	Waterfall	<Iglesia Pentecostal Fuente de Vida>
1	Flame with open book, open Bible with verse	<IGLESIA PENTECOSTAL FUENTE DE VIDA TUSCALOOSA>

To summarize these findings on churches, linguistic resources were used to signal the location type in nearly all cases (e.g., <Iglesia> for church was the most common), or to provide an identifier for the church (e.g., <Evangélica>, <Pentecostés>, sometimes used in combination). Visual resources included both the use of blue colors and that of images, which in some cases reinforced the symbolic portion of the text. While all churches employed linguistic resources, only half also employed visual resources (either color and/or an image), and half of these (i.e., a quarter of the total) employed both (color and an image). For churches, then, the religious nature of the location (i.e., the location’s purpose as a place of worship) was signaled linguistically by naming the location type and sometimes with additional use of images; the combined use of multimodal resources was seen with the use of images to reinforce the symbolic portion of the text.

To compare these findings across location types, there are some similarities and differences regarding the use of linguistic and visual resources. The term <Mexican> was the most frequent identifier for restaurants, whereas <Latina> appeared more with stores, while churches were designated according to denomination type, for example <Evangélica> or <Pentecostés>. Nearly all references in restaurant texts were to Mexican culture via the use of flag colors, images, and other cultural references, whereas in stores, references to Guatemalan culture were also found, mostly through the use of the quetzal image, the partial word <Guate->, and the Guatemalan flag. Churches did not show the use of Mexican flag colors or any naming of Mexican or Guatemalan groups. While Mexican flag colors and cultural elements may be widely recognized by non-Hispanic or non-Latino audiences, the same cannot be said for Guatemalan flag colors and related images. Because of this, we tend to see more variety in the use of visual resources for stores that are geared towards a Hispanic or Latino audience who would be able to assign meaning to the elements used. However, the resources found in restaurants are more limited to either Mexican references or more general Latino terms. On the other hand, the display of languages for restaurants is more varied, given that the intended audience includes both Spanish bilinguals and monolingual English speakers.

In church signage, there was some use of blue colors (dark blue–white, and light blue–white) which may coincide with different Central American flags. However, the

intentional use of these colors to make that connection needs to be established by further research. The use of special fonts appeared only with restaurants, which offered a more general connection to Hispanic or Latino culture, as did the use of several images in both restaurants and stores.

Regarding images, some imagery is specific to a particular location type, while other images appear across contexts. For example, a guitar only appears with restaurants whereas the sombrero is found with restaurants, but also appears frequently with stores. The image of a palm tree also appears in both the restaurant and store locations. As expected, the churches' imagery (e.g., a cross or dove) does not appear in other location types. Images related to either goods sold (e.g., tacos at a restaurant or groceries at a store) or the representation of figures (including caricatures of people and cartoon figures) appeared in both restaurants and stores. The product images often reinforced the location type in the informative portion of the text, while the figures often supported the symbolic portion of the text. Churches in general made less use of images compared to the other two location types, and the signage was more information-based with less direct signaling of cultural groups. Overall, the texts can be seen along a spectrum: on the one end, there is a simple text with no image, while on the other end there is the combination of color and image (and even a special font in the case of restaurants), which all combine to express different meanings with respect to identity and self-identity.

4. Discussion and Summary

The focus of this study was to determine how Spanish language use in signage in Tuscaloosa County differs according to location type (RQ1), how Spanish appears within the symbolic and informative portions of the text across locations (RQ2), and how multimodal (linguistic and visual) resources are used to create meaning within the text (RQ3) via indexing of location type, emplacement, actors, and intended audience.

The first analysis of Spanish use in texts by location (RQ1) shows that the marketplace discursive context, under which we have subsumed both restaurants and the stores grouping (shops, stores, tiendas), is quite heterogeneous (see Figure 12 above). That is, while the restaurant location type shows a wide variety of combinations of language use (categorized as Spanish, English, and Dynamic), the stores do not, and rather show a predominant use of Spanish. Moving to the community discursive context, the churches mirror the language use patterns in the stores in that Spanish is used predominantly, with only a small portion of combinations with English or Dynamic. Importantly, the use of Spanish alone in restaurant texts reaches just 8%, while it is 53% and 83% in stores and churches, respectively. The lack of the use of English in church texts suggests that English is not the preferred language code in these locations, and it is not needed to form community. In contrast, in restaurants, Spanish is used in combination with English 29% of the time, while Dynamic with English is at the highest rate at 34%. These numbers suggest that actors want to employ all the linguistic resources available to them in restaurant texts to appeal to the widest audience possible, that is, Spanish–English bilinguals, non-Spanish speakers, and Spanish language learners. Stores also make a notable use of Spanish with English at 26%, while for churches, this is lower at 13%. The use of English in store texts seems to also recognize the bilingual and multicultural nature of the Hispanic or Latino audience, in addition to making texts accessible to non-Spanish speakers.

As to the use of Spanish within the portions of the text (RQ2), we see a distinction across location types between the use of Spanish in the symbolic section compared to the informative section. As shown in Figure 13, the choice of language for each of the sections of the text is revealing. In restaurants, there is a preference for Spanish for the symbolic portion, whereas English is used for the informative portion. In comparison, Spanish is frequent for both portions in stores and churches, with some interspersing of English and Dynamic. Restaurants make greater use of Dynamic in the symbolic portion of the text, possibly as a way to index (and engage with) a wider audience. Most of the restaurants limit the use of Spanish to the symbolic section. We associate this practice with

the emblematic use of Spanish to signal the authenticity of the business in the restaurant texts as a marketing strategy with the intention to appeal to a wider audience.

Finally, with the multimodal resources present in the signage, both linguistic and visual features suggest the intended audience of a text (RQ3). First, the most frequent linguistic identifiers of each of the locations are a reflection of the community. As appears in Table 3, for restaurants, references to the Mexican group, through the direct use of <Mexican> or other group references were the most frequent identifiers ($n = 53$ in all), while the most frequent descriptor was <Grill> followed by <Restaurant>; in all cases, both the descriptor and identifier were in English. Given the reported predominance of the Mexican community in the census data, this result is not surprising, although not necessarily directly indicative of either restaurant ownership or patronage. Note that the “Mexican restaurant” as an entity is a staple in many areas across the United States, even in areas of low presence of a Hispanic or Latino population. Restaurants have used <Authentic> to modify <Mexican> to emphasize a connection to Mexican culture, whereas some other restaurants use Spanish to name the location type, as in <Taquería> (taco restaurant), <Hacienda>, and <Cantina>.

Moving to the stores location type, the term <Tienda> is the most frequent descriptor, while the identifiers <Latina>, <Latino>, and <Latin> are used with the most frequency. In this way, we can see the tienda as a prominent fixture within the Latino community as a location where Spanish is used and promoted, and the intended audience is broader than any one group via the more general term ‘latina’ or ‘latino’ (even when the Tuscaloosa County community consists of only some of the groups that would be considered Hispanic or Latino). Similarly, the churches employ the descriptor term <Iglesia> the most, while <Evangélica> and <Pentecostés> are common identifiers. The two instances of an alternate spelling ‘iglesia’ shows some distance from normative spelling practices with the use of ‘c’ in this context. Whether this is an example of a spelling error or a result of translanguaging practices is another aspect to be explored further.

Regarding visual resources in discursive contexts, images are used the most in restaurants and stores (72% and 74%, respectively), and in half of the signage for churches (50%). To compare the marketplace context with the community, we see use of flags and colors in the marketplace, while the use of group colors in church texts needs to be studied in more detail. More specifically in the marketplace, only the Mexican flag (colors and stripes) is used in restaurants, whereas multiple flags and colors appear with stores. In addition, the references to Mexican culture are most frequent in the use of images in restaurants (e.g., Tarascans, from a specific region in Mexico; Frida Kahlo; or the Izcalli stone image from the Aztec calendar) while images related to other Central American groups (Guatemalan in particular) are more frequent in stores (e.g., use of the quetzal bird image); churches do not make specific reference to either Mexican or Central American groups in the use of images, but rather employ more religious-themed images (e.g., a cross, dove, book, etc.). Overall, the most variety in the use of visual resources for an intended audience is found with stores, where either one group is indexed or another, or more than one group is indexed through the use of multiple resources (e.g., colors specific to one group but a more general term ‘latina’ used to describe the store, as in <TIENDA LATINA LA IXTAPITA> with green–red letters and green–white–red building colors; see Figure 15b). In stores, we also notice that group identifiers and group colors may be used to make a distinction from other store locations competing for customers. Also, there are some service needs which are specific to the Hispanic or Latino community, such as wire transfers and purchase of certain brands that may not be available at large supermarket locations. As previously noted, although visual resources may be more varied in stores with the intended audience of Hispanics or Latinos belonging to different groups (see overview of Tuscaloosa County demographics in Figures 3 and 4), it is the linguistic resources which are more varied in the case of restaurants. That is, we expect that use of Spanish and English in combination with Dynamic is greater in restaurants given that the intended audience includes both Spanish bilinguals and English monolinguals.

As mentioned above, the connection of restaurants with Mexico is very frequent, and there are multiple modes that reinforce the linguistic code of Mexican restaurants with flags, flag colors, images, drawings, cultural objects (eagle and serpent), and so on. Thus, restaurants are self-presenting as Mexican (even though ownership may not be associated to any one Mexican owner/manager) because Mexican food and cultural references (as appearing in restaurants) are some of the most recognizable elements of the Hispanic or Latino group by non-Hispanics or non-Latinos in the United States. This intended appeal to a wide audience is based on a history of successful restaurants which, in addition, serve alcohol and promote a celebratory (fiesta) environment. Restaurant actors know that potential patrons not only want to consume Mexican food, but they also want to experience the festive and colorful environment associated with those establishments. As was previously mentioned, actors will use Spanish as an emblem in the symbolic part of the text (*vis à vis* authenticity) and will also use Dynamic words that could be considered English or Spanish. At the same time, some of the restaurants are using the term Latino to appeal to yet a wider audience.

For our data, the indexing of authorship and identification of the type of location is achieved through a complex process of combining language, color, font, cultural objects, and emplacement of the text, which can yield different results. As shown in the analysis of combined multimodal resources (see Table 7, Table 12, Table 13, and Table 17), visual resources reinforce the linguistic mode when there is the use of group colors and/or images and fonts. For example, the store text for <TIENDA GUATEMEX> was originally yellow with red letters. The only resource for group identification was the name <GUATEMEX>, while the only resource for location type was the descriptor <TIENDA>. However, when a new sign was created, both colors and images were used to signal the group, while images were also used to signal location type (see Figure 16a).

Regarding the connection of actors with the text, we refer back to Malinowski's (2008, p. 124) distinction between authorship, involving complex processes and individual actors in the LL, and, as some of our data show, there is often more than one way of indexing group identity, intended audience, and type of location. Malinowski points out (following Huebner 2006) that multimodal resources (including language) combine to create meanings that can be interpreted "along multiple paths at once" (Malinowski 2008, p. 119). At the same time, echoing Jewitt and Kress (2003), Malinowski states that one single meaning may be conveyed by different modes all at once, with each mode contributing to the overall meaning in their own way (Malinowski 2008, pp. 120–21).

We illustrate this discussion with the store location in Figure 17. The storefront text in Figure 17a is composed of: <Tienda Los Dos | Carnales>, along with *papel picado* (cut paper banners) and two men with sombreros. These identifiers all point to Mexico because of the dialectal word *carnales* (brothers/friends), a cultural object like a cut paper banner, and Mexican-like sombreros; in this way, Mexican indexing (of actors and intended audience) is conveyed by three modes all at once. At the same time, in Figure 17b we see surrounding semiotic resources like painted store windows with Mexican and Guatemalan flags and, on the store roof, multiple flags are flown, including the US flag. The overall composition of the storefront signals multiculturalism, including Hispanics or Latinos in the US. This is how the store actors appear to present themselves and index the intended audience. Additionally, we may interpret the inclusion of the US flag as a way to appeal to a wider audience and/or indicate translocality in the sense that the tienda could have been established by Hispanics or Latinos (US and foreign-born) who have resided in other areas of the USA prior to arriving in Tuscaloosa County. This combination of resources provides different meanings "along multiple paths at once".

In sum, in this paper, we have shown how Spanish language use differs in the discursive contexts of marketplace and community. We have identified three location types that map onto these contexts which show the heterogeneity of the marketplace in the use of Spanish in signage text by comparing restaurants and stores, where restaurants use Spanish in combination with English and Dynamic, and stores employ mostly Spanish. We have

also shown the tendency to employ Spanish predominantly in the community context of churches. We have demonstrated differences in the use of Spanish in the different portions of the text (symbolic and informative) according to location type. In addition, we have observed the recruitment of linguistic and visual resources to create meaning within a text. In our analysis of the location types within marketplace and community discursive contexts, we demonstrate multiple connections to the communities and the intended audiences of interest. In this way, we observe the change in the linguistic landscape of a new destination community which comprises small urban and semi-rural spaces. In doing so, we document the growth of the Latino community in the region, showing both a new place within the national landscape and a variety of spaces in which Spanish public language is in use.

Our findings corroborate much of what the LL literature has found and concluded; that is, that a LL results from the symbolic construction of the public space. We have shown how symbolic functions interact with the indexing of the text (the what), the emplacement of it (the where), and the actors and intended audience (the who). The “constructing” of the public space alludes to the constant change in the linguistic landscape in LL actors and intended audiences, and in viewers’/readers’ perceptions, creating overlapping or distinct channels of meaning-making via multimodality. As we continue to use the geolocation app, we can find new or closing establishments, thus capturing and logging the changes in the landscape. Thus far, the app has helped track the patterns of text emplacement across Tuscaloosa County. The symbolic constructing of space entails dynamicity at all levels of the discursive context.

Dynamicity in spaces is at work in complex processes which are involved in the development of authorship (Malinowski 2008) and is thus neither straightforward nor static. Dynamic processes also are at play when the intended message conveyed by the text is not necessarily interpreted by the viewer/reader as intended by the actor(s). Multimodality also entails dynamicity in that messages can be conveyed through different modes, and sometimes can be interpreted all at once and play different roles in the construction of meaning (Jewitt and Kress 2003), as illustrated above in the discussion of Figure 17. At the more granular level, our Dynamic language category captures the fact that words can have more than one potential read since it is dependent upon the language processing mode of individual viewers/readers which, of course, is in constant flux.

The present study highlights the emerging Spanish linguistic landscape in small-town urban and semi-rural locations and shows the growth of the Latino community in the region. We thus add a different dimension to the research on Spanish in the US which has focused mostly on urban areas with large minority communities. Further research in the form of interviews with actors and readers/viewers who are bilingual with English (at different levels), as well as with monolingual English speakers, will help triangulate our analysis of the Spanish linguistic landscape in Tuscaloosa County.

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Notes

- ¹ The angle brackets < > indicate that the cited example is taken from a text in the data set; capitalization is used as it appears within the text (cf. Kallen 2023). The use of the acute diacritic accent mark (or lack thereof) is reproduced as shown in the signage. Also, a vertical line | is used as a convention to designate a visual break in the text, for example, when it continues on another line.
- ² The growth rate is calculated as the difference between current and past population, which is then divided by the past population and multiplied by 100.
- ³ Direct comparisons are not made to prior census data since there was a change in the survey question related to origin (Cohn 2010). Nonetheless, a review of prior census data from 2000 at the state level shows Hispanics or Latinos of Mexican origin to comprise the largest group in Alabama at 58.7%, whereas those of Central American origin were 6.3% of the population, half of which were Guatemalan at 3.2%; the second largest group reported to belong to the All Other Hispanic or Latino origin group at 20.1% due, in part, to issues described by Pew Research in the reference above (U.S. Census Bureau 2001).
- ⁴ The municipality where the image was taken and the corresponding year are shown in parentheses.
- ⁵ This name is also considered an identifier since the church has a denomination and connection as being established in Guatemala (<https://www.soyidec.com/historia>; accessed 17 June 2024).

Maps

- Esri. *Hispanic or Latino Population in Tuscaloosa County by 2020 Census Tract* [map]. Produced by Erin O'Rourke; with "Percent of Population who are Hispanic or Latino—2020 Census" <<https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=7b98749eb4d2473db0eb5c1b3ed3ed2c>> (accessed on 25 May 2024).
- Esri. *LL Texts in the Cities of Tuscaloosa and Northport* [map]. Produced by Erin O'Rourke; Basemap: Open Street Map. With "City and Town Limits" <https://services.arcgis.com/AWzSDaKZ41uuVges/arcgis/rest/services/City_and_Town_Limits/FeatureServer> (accessed on 25 May 2024).
- Esri. *LL Texts in Tuscaloosa County* [map]. Produced by Erin O'Rourke; Basemap: Streets. With "City and Town Limits" <https://services.arcgis.com/AWzSDaKZ41uuVges/arcgis/rest/services/City_and_Town_Limits/FeatureServer> (accessed on 25 May 2024).
- U.S. Census Bureau. *Hispanic or Latino Population in Alabama by County, 2020 Census* [map]. Generated by Erin O'Rourke; using "Race and Ethnicity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census" <<https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/race-and-ethnicity-in-the-united-state-2010-and-2020-census.html>> (accessed on 25 May 2024).

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Article

The Evolving Landscape of Spanish Language Representation in U.S. Media: From Overt to Covert Discrimination

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Abstract: Despite the continuously expanding presence of Spanish-speaking communities in the United States, media representation of the Spanish language and that of its speakers has remained relatively scarce. At present, however, a growing interest in reaching and cashing in on this influential consumer group is forcing significant changes in the mass media communication landscape. Not only are an increasing number of movies and TV shows working with more diverse casts (ethnically, culturally, linguistically, etc.), but there also seems to be a heightened presence of Latinx characters in leading or supporting roles. This tendency, however, does not necessarily mean that mainstream media is becoming more inclusive and less anglocentric. In fact, a careful look at the storylines of individuals who are perceived to be Spanish speakers will reveal that they mostly portray stereotypical roles and behaviors. When their stories *are* told, they are all too often infused with unwarranted messages that portray Latinxs as lazy, unskilled, unintelligible in speech, hypersexual, or simply too ‘foreign’ to fit in. Whether overtly or covertly expressed, the negative impact of these persistent transgressions has the potential to shape real-world ideologies, attitudes, and prejudices. This paper adopts a critical raciolinguistic perspective, which underscores the co-naturalization of language and race, to highlight the role of media in reinforcing discrimination against the Spanish language and its speakers. In our analysis of six recently popularized TV shows (i.e., *East Los High*, *Family Guy*, *Gente-fied*, *Jane the Virgin*, *One Day at a Time*, and *That ‘70s Show*), we examine the perpetuation of racialized stereotypes toward Latinx characters’ linguistic practices with regard to (i) the environment in which they exist, (ii) their mannerisms, (iii) speech patterns, and (iv) interactions with other characters. We demonstrate how these shows’ blending of seemingly harmless linguistic ideologies with stereotypical and sensationalized representations grounded in colonial hierarchies reproduces hegemonic interests, perpetuates social inequalities, and places racialized Spanish speakers at a disadvantage.

Keywords: Spanish in the US; language and media; Latinx representation

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1. Introduction

Despite the continuously expanding presence of Spanish-speaking communities in the United States, media representation of the Spanish language and its speakers has remained relatively scarce and, when present, often reinforced negative stereotypes¹ (e.g., Negrón-Muntaner 2014; Sánchez-Muñoz and Retis 2022). When their stories *were* told, they were all too often infused with unwarranted messages that painted an unjust view of Latinxs as lazy, unskilled, unintelligible in speech, hypersexual, or simply too ‘foreign’ to fit in (e.g., Aldama and González 2019; Scharrer et al. 2022; Sowa 2021; and references therein). Currently, however, a growing interest in reaching and cashing in on this influential consumer group is sparking significant changes in the mass media communication landscape. Since the 1990s, the field of regional and national Spanish-speaking radio stations and TV networks has grown exponentially to levels never seen before (e.g., Castañeda 2008). Within the national mainstream media sector (i.e., English-based), the number of networks and organizations that are featuring content in Spanish (or a combination of

English and Spanish) has also grown significantly (e.g., Castañeda 2008). Recent estimates of Spanish-language TV consumption in the U.S. suggest that 72% of Latinxs endorse watching Spanish-language content at least occasionally (Stoll 2023). Not surprisingly, therefore, more and more movies, commercials, and TV shows are featuring increasingly diverse casts (ethnically, culturally, linguistically, etc.), with a heightened presence of Latinx characters in leading or supporting roles. Although this tendency may be interpreted as a positive development, it does not necessarily mean that it is becoming less anglocentric. In light of this observation, we consider it important to reflect on the role of mainstream U.S. media in shaping public perceptions of and attitudes toward the Spanish language and its speakers. As part of this reflection, we ask ourselves the following guiding questions: How are the Spanish language and its speakers represented in mainstream media, and how has this representation evolved over time? In what ways do Spanish language and Latinx media representation reflect power dynamics that reinforce cultural, racial, and linguistic stereotypes toward the Latinx communities? How do language and race intersect in the media, and what are the implications of such practices? In seeking answers to these questions, we will examine the perpetuation of racialized stereotypes toward Latinx characters' and their linguistic practices in six sitcoms through a critical evaluation of (i) the environments in which they exist, (ii) their mannerisms, (iii) their linguistic practices and speech patterns, and (iv) their interactions with other characters. To be sure, these answers may not be straightforward or easily found, but they are crucial to increasing our understanding of how media shapes the way we hear and see the Spanish language and Spanish-speaking communities in the US.

In our analysis, we follow in the footsteps of previous efforts dedicated to sparking dialogue around media representation of Latinx voices and bodies (e.g., Sánchez-Muñoz and Retis 2022). We adopt a critical raciolinguistic approach (e.g., Alim et al. 2016; Hill 1998, 2001, 2008; Flores and Rosa 2015) to a comparative analysis of contemporary American² shows (*East Los High*, *Jane the Virgin*, and *One Day at a Time*) with popular sitcoms from the 1990s (*That '70s Show* and *Family Guy*). The 1990s represent a time of increased Latinx media representation across a variety of genres, with the emergence of familiar titles such as *El Mariachi*, *Mi vida loca*, and *Selena*. This decade also marked an increase in broadcasting companies (e.g., *Univision* and *Telemundo*) that were streaming TV shows and movies in Spanish, giving many U.S. Latinxs access to Spanish-language programs right from their homes. Despite these strides, however, U.S. media continued to be saturated with stories of white protagonists, and the dearth of Latinxs in Hollywood remained a prominent issue (Aldama and González 2019). To be sure, although *That '70s Show*, *Family Guy*, and the newer-age series we examine may differ considerably from each other in terms of style, tone, and thematic content, we posit that the comparison is far from irrelevant, as they all explore universal themes including cultural values, stereotypes, and social issues affecting Latinx communities. As such, examining and comparing the cultural and social contexts in which these shows were produced can provide valuable insights into the prevailing attitudes towards Latinidad in their respective time periods. We also seek to examine how these discriminatory ideologies are reproduced in order to expose and challenge the mechanisms of structural racism that serve to maintain the Spanish language and its speakers in a subordinate position (e.g., Leeman 2023).

Of course, we are not the first ones to point out that, at its core, U.S. entertainment media is culturally and racially centered in whiteness and white-dominant practices (e.g., Bernardi 2007; Nygaard and Lagerwey 2020; Vera and Gordon 2003). We are also not the first ones to suggest that media representation is shaped by and intertwined with linguistic ideologies that align with the interests of the dominant social group while simultaneously to the detriment of minoritized groups (e.g., Kircher and Kutlu 2023; Rosa 2016; Sánchez-Muñoz and Retis 2022). While overt discrimination and anti-Latinx biases that were common to U.S. sitcoms in the 1990s have diminished in contemporary media, we will argue that well-disguised attitudes, beliefs, and practices that function to devalue Latinxs and the Spanish language still persist. We will show how, by invoking and blending together

what a priori may be considered harmless and unbiased ideologies with stereotypical and sensationalized representations grounded in colonial hierarchies, mainstream media still reproduces hegemonic interests that place racialized Spanish speakers at a disadvantage. In other words, a careful look at the storylines of individuals who are perceived to be Spanish speakers will reveal that, despite significant progress, stereotypical roles and behaviors remain. What has changed, however, is the subtlety with which these biases are reproduced.

2. Language as a Boundary: *Othering* Spanish Speakers

While the U.S. is a multicultural and multilingual nation, not all languages share the same social status, nor do they occupy the same spaces (e.g., Pavlenko 2002). English, the de facto official language, dominates all areas of life. It is the language of prestige and power and is considered to be an intrinsic part of the American national identity (e.g., Pavlenko 2002). In fact, English monolingualism is not only tolerated; it is considered an acceptable and welcome outcome (e.g., Ellis 2008; Flores and Schissel 2014). Spanish, the second most frequently spoken language, continues to gain ground and strength, mostly due to the rapid growth of the Hispanic population³. For some within the dominant group, this changing landscape has resulted in increased awareness and acceptance of other cultures. One would have difficulty arguing against the idea that being bilingual in today's day and age is an asset in most contexts. Evidence of this is the large number of traditional second language learners who, semester after semester, decide to enroll in Spanish courses (e.g., Parma and Bustin 2021). As a result of their academic efforts, they are often celebrated for their emerging bilingualism, even if they cannot always communicate efficiently using that language. Meanwhile, many Latinx bilinguals who have been speaking English and Spanish fluently since childhood are penalized for their lack of literacy skills and for how "informally", "incorrectly" or "inappropriately" they speak⁴ (e.g., Flores and Rosa 2015). While it is popularly believed that this disparity simply points out an objective truth about the "inadequacy" of their linguistic practices, the underlying attitudes and motivations of such behavior are neither simple nor linguistic in nature. Rather, they are obscured and driven by misconceptions and stereotypes that highlight the central role that language plays in all domains of our lives, including race (e.g., Flores and Rosa 2015).

The transdisciplinary and intersectional work that examines linguistic and racial considerations falls under the scope of Raciolinguistics (e.g., Alim et al. 2016; Flores and Rosa 2015; Deckard et al. 2020; Lewey 2023). The main premise of this framework is that language and race, which have been argued to be entirely distinct, separate, and independent constructs, are in fact not only interrelated and co-constructed but also intersect with other social markers such as class, gender, sexuality, etc. (e.g., Alim et al. 2016; Flores and Rosa 2015; Rosa 2016).

Although we do not attempt to theorize the nature of this relationship, adopting a raciolinguistic approach can help us examine and highlight the ways language representation shapes our perception of race and vice versa (e.g., Alim et al. 2016). Chief among its concerns is deconstructing the intersection and co-naturalization of colonial history, racial identity, and the perpetuation of linguistic stereotypes in terms of their underlying assumptions and impact on racialized individuals, all of which permeate our everyday practices and behaviors. While these processes of raciolinguistic categorization often go unnoticed in comparison to overt racial bias, their consequences can be equally negative, equally oppressive, and equally unjust.

Drawing on this view, we are particularly interested in understanding how representations of the Spanish language relate to dominant social structures and ideologies. One such example of how covert racism makes its way into everyday discourse practices is through the appropriation and subsequent mockery of the language (e.g., Mock Spanish (Hill 2008)). Though humor may not be considered the most obvious vehicle through which racism is perpetuated, it may in fact be a prime setting for discrimination. Often considered harmless based on the supposedly innocent nature of the interactions, Mock

Spanish relies on stereotypes and generalizations that align with (and are embraced by) a collective's discriminating perception of others (e.g., Hill 2008). As Pascual y Cabo and Rivera-Marín (2021, p. 11) indicated, this practice can take many forms: "sometimes it is simply the addition of the Spanish suffix '-o' to an English word, such as 'no problem-o', or the exaggerated over-pronunciation of Spanish words to inspire mockery or entertainment". Because they conceal their true meaning, these jokes tend to be easily dismissed or framed as irrelevant. Their underlying message, however, evokes the sort of imagery that (re)produces negative attitudes towards those who are perceived as different (i.e., *othering*), which in turn contributes to social tension, inequality, and conflict, regardless of whether this was the intended outcome.

In the context of the U.S., the English language embodies the principles and values assumed to be a core part of the so-called American psyche (e.g., Schildkraut 2003), which has been shaped by and modeled after European colonialism and white Anglo-speakers' attributes (i.e., Europeanness). Because the experiences and perspectives of the dominant group become normalized and expected, individuals who do not speak English (or speak a non-native version of English) often run the risk of being assigned undesirable attributes, behaviors, and identities. This focus on English (monolingualism) is also deeply rooted in raciolinguistic ideologies, which have been created, among other reasons, to preserve boundaries (e.g., Milroy 1999). These boundaries function to separate *us* from *them*, or those who are *in*, from those who are *out*, safeguarding a *status quo* that benefits those at the top of social and linguistic hierarchies. Some of these boundaries are easily identifiable. Others, however, are relatively difficult to detect. This resonates with what Leeman (2023) refers to with the idea that,

"[...] the construction of Spanish as an essentialized element of Latinx identity, together with dominant ideologies that imagine English (and more specifically, English monolingualism) as a defining characteristic of U.S. national identity, as well as portrayals of "non-standard" and multilingual varieties of English and/or Spanish as deficient, allow for language to function as an under-the-radar tool of racialization". (Leeman 2023, p. xix)

With this under-the-radar tool (Leeman 2023), the language practices of minoritized communities can acquire racial meanings, which in turn are extended to a social group and their cultural practices (e.g., Omi and Winant 2011). This perspective may explain, for example, the pervasive nature of deficit ideologies with regards to black and brown children in the U.S. educational environment (e.g., Holtz et al. 2023). Moreover, the narratives that are often applied to individuals who are perceived to speak Spanish will still frame them as not belonging to the American identity, regardless of whether they actually speak Spanish/English or not. In other words, language is used as a justification to degrade or diminish minority groups—marking them as *others* (e.g., Bucholtz 2019). This disembodiment of language is convenient in that it fits into hegemonic narratives that supposedly construe value based solely on discursive practices (e.g., language appropriateness). In reality, it is a mechanism that serves to justify engaging in color-neutral racism (e.g., Bonilla-Silva 2017). To show how dominant linguistic and cultural attitudes towards the Spanish language and its speakers are perpetuated by mainstream U.S. media, we next examine several popular American sitcoms from the 1990s.

3. An Analysis of Popular U.S. Sitcoms from the Late 1990s

In order to critically examine the intersection of language and race in mainstream media and to establish a baseline for exploring how the co-naturalization of the two constructs has evolved over time, we begin with an examination of two popular sitcoms from the late 1990s. While the 1990s saw a relative increase in TV shows and movies featuring Latinx characters, as well as improved access to Spanish-language media, Latinx-centric stories were still few and far-between in U.S. media during this decade (Aldama and González 2019; Gerbner 1993). However, two highly popular series of this time period, *That '70s Show* and *Family Guy*, both feature Latinx characters that are well-known in U.S.

popular culture. As such, their depictions serve as an informative starting point for making raciolinguistic evaluations of Latinx character portrayals with regard to the environments in which they exist, their mannerisms, their speech patterns, and their interactions with other characters. Specifically, we examine inappropriate naming practices of Latinx characters, the *othering* of Latinxs, the white gaze, educational/occupational stereotypes, and linguistic microaggressions (e.g., Mock Spanish).

3.1. *That '70s Show*

That '70s Show is a fictional American sitcom centered around the lives of 6 teenagers living in the fictional suburb of Point Place, Wisconsin (*That '70s Show* (TV Series 1998–2006), n.d.). The show famously features staples of American popular culture throughout the late 70s and early 80s⁵, including the rise of video game technology (e.g., “pong”) and not-so-subtle nods to ‘flower child’ and hippie lifestyles. The 1970s in the U.S. were a time of political turmoil, with war raging in Vietnam and internal distrust of the government growing among Americans in the post-Watergate era. The 1970s were also a period of civil unrest, fueled by the mourning of Martin Luther King Jr. and anti-immigrant sentiment building as a result of heated international conflicts (e.g., Schulman 2002). The ideas reflected in this sitcom represent more than a few dated viewpoints that were commonplace in the 1970s. Among others, they represent the continued promotion of racist and ethnocentric ideas that continued to present themselves in American media throughout the turn of the millennia.

Within this show, there is a single Latinx character among a cast of all-white American-born characters. He is referred to as Fez and is portrayed as a foreign exchange student with ambiguous cultural origins. From the start, the environment in which Fez exists predisposes his character to being perceived as ‘different’ by his white peers. His mysterious ‘home country’ is one of the longest-running jokes throughout the series, and his true origin is never revealed within the show. Several episodes provide viewers with a glimpse into what his home country might be like, and unsurprisingly, these vague descriptions of Fez’s birthplace are riddled with tales of colonization, unsanitary and dangerous living conditions for indigenous people, rampant marijuana usage, and even the suggestion that Fez’s community lives in the jungle, eating spiders for sustenance. He embodies many stereotypes assigned to Latinx individuals in English-language media and Western society alike, including a pronounced, sometimes unintelligible accent (and likewise, an artificially reduced capacity for speaking and understanding English). Fez is also characterized by an insatiable sexual appetite, reminiscent of the notorious ‘Latin Lover’ trope and the hypersexualization of Latinxs in the media (e.g., Mandl 2019; Popelková 2015).

The characterization of Fez is a prime example of how media may reflect real-world power dynamics that reinforce stereotypes towards Latinx communities. For example, although Fez is never officially confirmed to be of Latin American origin, his actor, Wilmer Valderrama (originally from Venezuela), reported using a combination of various Latin accents to produce Fez’s speech (Kubota 2021). It should be noted, however, that Fez is never featured speaking Spanish in the series. Nonetheless, through his mannerisms, Fez exhibits characteristics associated with numerous Latinx stereotypes in American popular culture; he is often portrayed as uncivilized, primitive, unmotivated, and lazy (e.g., Mandl 2019; Popelková 2015). His perceived “non-conformance” as a non-native English speaker is represented with a caricatured strong accent, which in turn subjects him to treatment that insinuates a reduced value of the English he speaks. The jokes, insults, and transgressions he faces from interacting with other main characters are a key theme throughout the series. For example, consider the following example from season 8, episode 21 (2006), in which one of Fez’s friends, Jackie, finds out that one of Fez’s hometown friends will be visiting Wisconsin: “Oh great, another mocha-skinned weirdo in tight pants who can make any word sound like boogadaboogadaboogada” (Trainer 2006). This type of comment is frequent throughout the series, serving to ‘otherize’ Fez from multiple angles, such as his complexion, his ‘foreign’ sense of style, and his accent.

Even Fez's name deserves a discussion of its own. According to the show's producers, the nickname 'Fez' is actually an acronym for 'foreign exchange student' (F.E.S.), later changed to 'Fez' for stylistic purposes. The moment in which the gang meets Fez for the first time (season 4, episode 20; 2002) is a startling caricature of the indexical bleaching that Latinxs have faced for years (e.g., Squires 2014, 2020; Bucholtz 2016). The scene opens with the other three young white men in the friend group discovering Fez hung by his collar on the hook of the janitor's closet—a result of bullying by some peers. After freeing him, the men introduce themselves. When it is time for Fez to say his name, the school bell rings for an extended period of time, effectively preventing the audience from learning Fez's real name but confirming that it is significantly long. The rest of the group stares at him blankly, and one character remarks, "Yeah, I'm not gonna remember that" (Trainer 2002a). For the remainder of the series, everyone simply refers to him as Fez.

This scene propagates the stereotype that Latinxs tend to have long, complicated, and difficult-to-pronounce names⁶ and illustrates how and why Fez is renamed against his will. His supposed-to-be friends refuse to even attempt pronouncing his actual name, and in its place, they assign him an anglicized and reductionist acronym. For Fez, this renaming strips him of any relation to a specific cultural, racial, or ethnic group, which is only furthered by the resistance of the show's creative directors to assign Fez a specific nationality. In the renaming process, Fez's friends propagate the notion that nonconformity to the standardized language ideology is justification for burdening marginalized linguistic groups in order to benefit white speaking subjects (e.g., Bucholtz 2016). Whether it be through mispronunciation, purposeful anglicization, or the deliberate imposition of a new name onto a racialized body, the process of calling someone out of their name severs their ties to the ethnoracial specificity of their identity and, in a way, denies their legitimacy (e.g., Bucholtz 2016).

For someone who has never personally experienced ethnoracial renaming, it may be difficult to understand why this issue is so problematic. However, we must consider that names, rather than merely serving to arbitrarily identify an individual, are indexical forms with significant social and cultural meanings (Bucholtz 2016). In fact, previous research indicates that unconscious bias against non-white-sounding names can have significant and grave implications for individuals in terms of their economic and labor-market prospects, as well as their self-esteem (e.g., Cotton et al. 2008). While this phenomenon has been well studied with regard to typically 'Black-sounding' names, Latinxs individuals are not exempt from similar prejudice (Cotton et al. 2008). For example, the results of a study examining participants' names in the workplace showed those individuals with names that are perceived as Hispanic were more likely to be rated as suitable for low-status occupations when compared to applicants with white-sounding names of the same credentials (King et al. 2006).

The discussion of *white gaze* (e.g., Flores and Rosa 2015) is necessary in evaluating the race relations and harmful raciolinguistic attitudes directed towards ethnic minorities in *That '70s Show*. According to Flores and Rosa (2015), the *white gaze* can be described as the privileged white majority's view of the cultural and linguistic practices of racialized groups. In other words, the *white gaze* represents the hegemonic white standards through which all actions, individuals, and groups are interpreted, especially those stemming from minoritized communities. From a raciolinguistic perspective, we can identify the relationship of the *white gaze* to the white listening subject—those who interpret non-white and non-conforming linguistic practices as deviant based solely on arbitrary racialized positions in society (Flores and Rosa 2015). In the case of *That '70s Show*, Fez acts as the racialized subject whose speech and cultural practices are under constant scrutiny by the white listening subjects with whom he associates. In one scene, an older character, Red, is trying to teach Fez how to pronounce the word "America", but becomes increasingly frustrated as Fez repeats back "A-me-ōi-ca". When he tests Fez's pronunciations of similar words, such as "Eric", Fez repeats them back in a way that Red, as the white listening subject, interprets as 'correct'. However, Fez's persisting inability to pronounce "America", like Red, frustrates

him to the point that he begins screaming the word in Fez's face. This scene is a pivotal example of the tendency of the white listening subject to interpret racialized speech as deviant or wrong, despite the lack of concrete suggestions for improvements or the identification of what was actually said 'incorrectly'. Likewise, it further propagates racialized stereotyping towards Latinx characters through criticisms of his linguistic tendencies and speech patterns.

We draw our attention now to the propagation of occupational stereotypes against Latinxs in *That '70s Show*. Let us first consider the stereotyping of Fez as someone suited for low-skill work. For example, in season 5, episode 6 (2002), in which Fez carries a white character (Red's) bag to his car, Red remarks that Fez appears to possess a "natural talent for handling luggage" (Trainer 2002b). In another episode, the character of Jackie tells Fez she has created a new character in *The Wizard of Oz* to represent him since there are no foreigners in the movie (Trainer 2002c). She then reveals that Fez's character is the butler. Both of these examples are indications of the existence of stereotypes surrounding Latinxs as unskilled laborers unworthy of meaningful work or education. Likewise, in season 1, episode 5 (1998), Eric, a white character, beats out Fez for a job at a local fast-food joint after he and the other characters all interview for the position. While Fez's answers suggest that he has no idea how to be successful in a job interview, Eric gives the interviewer all the 'right answers' in an articulate and educated manner (Trainer 1998). This contrast between Eric's achievement and Fez's follies suggests that Fez is merely not destined for occupational success.

3.2. *Family Guy*

The show *Family Guy* centers around the Griffins, an American family living in the fictional New England town of Quahog, Rhode Island (MacFarlane and Zuckerman 1999–Present). The Griffins are comprised of parents Peter and Lois Griffin, their three children Meg, Chris, and Stewie, and a talking pet dog named Brian. The show has aired since the late 1990s and has endured multiple cultural shifts, including recent efforts to expand the rights and representation of marginalized communities. As we see it, the show's popularity and role as a staple in popular culture important in the context of how stereotypes apply to and affect various characters. This is especially salient when considering that, to date, 22 seasons and more than 400 episodes have been produced. Notably, there are no Latinx main characters in the series, and the Spanish language is not prominently featured in the show's dialogue.

Herein, we focus on the relationship between the Griffins and Consuela De La Morrela, a supporting female Latinx character⁷, and how their interactions serve to reinforce harmful cultural, racial, and linguistic stereotypes. Consuela, who serves as the Griffin family's housekeeper, is introduced to the audience in season 6, episode 3. She represents numerous intersecting identities, including being a woman, Mexican, an immigrant, and a domestic worker (Wu et al. 2007). Though specific details are not revealed throughout the series, there are clear references to undocumented migrations across the U.S.-Mexico border. For instance, in season 11, episode 12 (2013), Consuela traverses the southern border, dodging armed border security agents and leaping over a reinforced wall into Mexico to reunite with her husband, Juan (Bowen et al. 2013).

While some of Consuela's identities are depicted by her physical appearance, other aspects, many of which are stereotypical in nature, are presented through her behavior and attributes, which index raciolinguistic ideologies. We see this through her portrayal as a housekeeper who wears a pink dress and yellow cleaning gloves, morphing her identity into a job that is generally viewed as low-level and low-salary. Her dialogue and physical comedy often involve the items she uses for cleaning (e.g., requesting Lemon Pledge for Christmas and cleaning the glass at the prison in which her son is incarcerated). These depictions function to perpetuate the inaccurate stereotype that all Latinxs are uneducated immigrants suited for manual labor.

As was the case with Fez, Consuela's linguistic skills are consistently depicted in ways that hinder her. Through instances of mispronunciation and miscommunication, this portrayal of her speech patterns evokes raciolinguistic critiques of how society views the (bilingual) linguistic practices of racialized individuals. Even when she engages in linguistic practices that are considered normative or innovative when otherwise produced by privileged, non-racialized subjects, they are perceived as linguistically deviant (Flores and Rosa 2015).

Consuela's attributes are consistently (ab)used throughout the show to make a caricature of her. For example, in a clip from season 7, episode 7 (2009), Consuela appears on a game TV show entitled "Are You Smarter Than a Hispanic Maid?". The show features Consuela and a white man standing on either side of the host. The host asks the man, "Ok, Larry, how does a Hispanic maid address her employer if his name is John Sullivan? Is it a) John or b) Mr. Sullivan?" to which the man replies, "uhh, I'm going to go with Mr. Sullivan." The host informs the man that this was a trick question before turning to Consuela and asking for her opinion. Consuela replies, "Umm, Mr. John?" with a pronunciation that creates a sound similar to "meester" in place of "mister". The host asks Consuela a "bonus question", "Is Mr. John home?", to which she appears confused before answering, "Uh, no, mister, no Mr. John no home", (Holmquist et al. 2009).

Another form of bias represented in *Family Guy* is the consistent mockery of the Spanish language through linguistic microaggressions, including Mock Spanish (e.g., Schwartz 2019; Hill 2008). In season 15, episode 19 (2016), Consuela engages in a conversation with Lois and Peter Griffin. The scene unfolds with Lois answering the door to greet Consuela, presuming she's there to pick up the children under Christopher Griffin's care. Christopher, Lois's son, is watching over the children of Consuela's niece, Isabella. Isabella is another supporting Latinx character who has been deported back to Mexico. Consuela brings "good news" and "ay ay ay news" to Lois, prompting Lois to inquire about the latter first. Consuela reveals that Isabella is stuck in Mexico, leaving the babies in their care (Langford et al. 2017). This interaction between Lois and Consuela is but one example of how the Spanish language is consistently ridiculed for comedic effect. By extension, this acts as a way to demean and discredit Spanish speakers, effectively writing them off from the dominant U.S. culture. This form of language manipulation relies on indirect indexicality to convey humor, tapping into existing perceptions of Latinx stereotypes. As Hill (1998, 2001, 2008) suggests, such linguistic devices operate through what can be considered racist discourse, as they are clearly used to reinforce prejudices against Spanish speakers. The phrase "ay ay ay", for instance, is employed by Consuela, not as a genuine expression but as a parody of the language, suggesting undesirable traits associated with Spanish speakers. This kind of behavior (i.e., mock Spanish), as Hill (2001) elucidates, disparages the Spanish language (and, by extension, its speakers), underscoring a perceived superiority of Anglo speakers, which serves to perpetuate the subordinate social position of Latinxs relative to the white dominant group.

Much like Fez in *That '70s Show*, Consuela's name represents another area in which raciolinguistic evaluations can be made. "Consuela" is a modified version of the traditional Spanish name, Consuelo. The alteration of the last letter from "o" to "a" could be perceived as a form of Mock Spanish in that it meets the white listening subject's expectations or misconceptions that since this name is used to refer to a female, it must end in "a" (e.g., Hill 2001, 2008). Additionally, the traditional name "Consuelo", which translates to "consolation" or "comfort", can be thought to tie directly to the character's supporting role as a housekeeper. Within the context of the show, her name is also used as a form of humor, as most interactions with the Griffin family consist of her questioning orders, engaging in counterproductive behavior, or serving as a general nuisance, juxtaposing her role as a "comforter", indicated by her character's name. Given these examples, Consuela's name can be interpreted as another vehicle through which racial and cultural stereotypes and misrepresentations are disseminated.

4. A Raciolinguistically Informed Analysis of the Spanish Language and Latinx Representation in Modern U.S Media

As a central element of our analysis, we seek to answer the question of how media representation of the Spanish language and its speakers has evolved over time. In doing so, we reflect on the intersection of language and race and how Latinx and Spanish language representation in newer series may still reinforce cultural, racial, and linguistic stereotypes towards Latinx communities. In comparison to the 90s sitcoms discussed previously, in which negative ideologies were overt, we argue that in contemporary media, the perpetuation of stereotypes and stigma against Latinxs has become more covert. In the older sitcoms from the 1990s, there is sense that Latinx characters never truly ‘fit in’ with the rest of the group. Through emphasizing their cultural and linguistic differences from the Anglo homogeneity that surrounds them, they always end up being viewed as foreigners, trying again and again to blend in with little success. They are consistently penalized for their lack of assimilation and are often devalued due to another character’s inability (or refusal) to understand their speech. In modern series, that negative and parodic image has given way to what appears to be a more inclusive and equitable representation of Spanish speakers. Although this observation may be true to some extent, upon further examination, we believe that the environments in which Latinx characters exist, along with their mannerisms, speech patterns, and interactions with other characters, still contribute to the distribution of prejudicial discourse within social structures, albeit less obviously. Next, we examine behavior and linguistic practices, depictions of social, cultural, and linguistic dynamics, depictions of stereotypical gender behavior, and occupational stereotypes of four recent television shows that feature Latinx stories: *One Day at a Time* (ODAAT), *Jane the Virgin*, *East Los High* (ELH), and *Gentefied*.

4.1. Behavior and Linguistic Practices

We continue our analysis by examining the ways Latinx characters’ behavior and linguistic practices are represented in the series *One Day at a Time* (ODAAT), which aired from 2017 to 2020. This show, a reboot of a program by the same name, which ran for nine seasons from 1975 to 1984, focuses on a multigenerational Cuban-American family living in Los Angeles (Cooper 1975; Fryman 2017). The 1975 version of ODAAT follows a Caucasian family, the Coopers, as they navigate a parallel storyline to the 2017 remake. The remake centers on Penélope Alvarez, a recently divorced single mother and Army veteran, her two children, Elena and Alex, and her mother, Lydia. The plot follows Penélope and the Alvarez family as they navigate dating, jobs, mental health, and family as Cuban-Americans living in a multigenerational household. Despite the fact that the 1975 version was relatively progressive for the time (i.e., featuring a single mother as the central protagonist), the issues presented in the modern version, including topics such as mental health difficulties, discussions of race and ethnicity, and multi-generational family dynamics, represent a clear attempt to ‘modernize’ the series.

Unlike *That ‘70s Show* and *Family Guy*, which did not centralize the Spanish language in their portrayals of Latinx characters, ODAAT prominently features Spanish dialogue. Rather than resorting to overtly degrading representations of the Spanish language and its speakers, there is a clear attempt to depict how different generations of Spanish speakers within a family unit navigate their everyday bilingual practices. For example, Lydia, the grandmother figure and a Cuban-born immigrant, retains Spanish as her dominant language but uses both languages with her daughter and grandchildren. Meanwhile, second-generation Latinxs (Elena, Alex) are portrayed with mixed bilingual abilities in English and Spanish. These varied linguistic practices may be interpreted as an effort to portray Latinx characters and Spanish speakers with greater authenticity. Additionally, certain linguistic practices in ODAAT (e.g., verbalized cultural references to Latinx music, artists, and traditions, as well as the use of monolingual English to reach bicultural Latinxs in the U.S.) contribute to the establishment of a ‘Latino Ethnic Consciousness’ (Attig and Derrick 2021). In other words, these practices communicate a sense of solidarity and

allegiance to the Latinx culture, which stands in stark contrast to the ridiculing portrayals in *That '70s Show* and *Family Guy*.

Another modern television series with nuanced depictions of the behavior and linguistic practices of Spanish-speaking communities is *Jane the Virgin*⁸. This show, which aired from 2014 to 2019, tells the story of Jane Villanueva, a young Venezuelan-American woman living in Miami (Silberling 2014). The series centers on Jane's relationships with her family and friends, including her mother, Xiomara, and maternal grandmother, Alba, who are English-dominant and Spanish-dominant, respectively. As was the case in *ODAAT*, the Spanish language is featured prominently in a manner that does not ridicule the language or place it in a subordinate position. That said, although all Latinx characters are portrayed as bilingual, their bilingualism seems to be simplified or controlled to better fit a traditional understanding of what "real" or "true" bilingualism (e.g., no mixing languages) is supposed to be like (e.g., Melgarejo and Bucholtz 2020). In a way, this highlights what linguistic sacrifices are made in order to promote more realistic and positive representations of Latinx characters that still fall within the realm of what is socially acceptable or deemed "successful".

Earlier, we underscored how some 90s sitcoms depicted forced renaming of Latinx characters as an appeal to white audiences or created inauthentic Spanish-sounding names for Latinx characters. In our review of contemporary shows, we have noticed a significant normalization of traditional Latinx names, such as Rogelio, Xiomara, and Mateo in *Jane the Virgin* and Elena, Carmen, and Victor in *ODAAT*, to name a few. This offers a clear contrast from the Latinx characters presented in *Family Guy* and *That '70s Show*, whose non-traditional names derived from their Latinx identity may represent another way of *othering* these minority characters from their white-sounding named counterparts. Perhaps this constitutes a point of progress in the authentic representation of Latinxs in modern media. However, there are still several areas of growth in which contemporary television shows might improve their depictions of Latinx and Spanish-speaking communities.

4.2. Depictions of Social, Cultural, and Linguistic Dynamics

Evaluations of modern television shows featuring Latinxs and Spanish speakers should also be evaluated with regard to the social, cultural, and linguistic dynamics they establish. In the aforementioned series, *ODAAT*, the dynamic between the main character's two children, Alex and Elena, serves as a prime example of how language and race intersect. Elena and Alex are both second-generation Cuban-American immigrants who communicate using both Spanish and English in their daily lives. Elena, who is of a lighter complexion, is portrayed as being less comfortable speaking Spanish compared to her younger brother, Alex. Alex has a darker complexion and speaks Spanish more proficiently, despite being the younger sibling. We cannot help but notice a potential underlying message here—that Latinxs who speak Spanish and appear closer to the stereotypical 'look' of a Latinx person (i.e., brown hair, brown eyes, and a darker complexion) are more highly racialized.

Another contemporary series showcasing realistic and complex social and linguistic dynamics within Latinx communities is *Gentefied*. The show, which premiered in 2020, focuses on three cousins trying to save their grandfather's taqueria amidst the gentrification of their Los Angeles neighborhood. Regarding its creation, it is apparent that writers and producers have given consideration to the literal and symbolic meaning of language. For instance, instead of serving as mere parodic entertainment for the white dominant group, as was the case in the 1990s sitcoms, Spanish-speaking characters and their use of the Spanish language are presented as a means of adding cultural significance to the show, including an appreciation of the dynamic complexities that surround bilingualism and bilinguals. For example, *Gentefied* often relies on the use of English, Spanish, and Spanglish. Words like "*abuelita, taqueria, mosca, comadres*", can be heard throughout the show in what otherwise are English conversations. Interestingly, the use of these Spanish words is untranslated in the captions, maintaining their Spanish significance and pronunciation. The fluid nature

of these interactions contributes to the legitimacy of the portrayed Latinx experiences and provides a more realistic depiction of bilingualism.

The Anglo characters in this show, however, do employ some linguistic practices that can be perceived as subtle forms of resistance to such a process of legitimation or normalization. This is evident in season 1, episode 5 (2020), in which an English-dominant and a Spanish-dominant speaker are arguing with one another. The English-dominant character makes remarks such as, “Why are not you speaking in English, Ofelia?” and “I cannot understand you” (Cunningham 2020; DuBord 2022). With these statements, the Anglo character seeks to reinforce their position of power, establishing English as the only legitimate language and demanding linguistic accommodation (DuBord 2022).

The series *East Los High* (ELH), which ran from 2013 to 2017, is another example of linguistic representation in media that boasts both real-world authenticity and subtle linguistic microaggressions. The series follows a young group of Latinx students as they navigate their experiences at a fictional local high school in Los Angeles (Portugal 2013). According to Giménez-Eguíbar and de los Heros (2016), the dialogue and mixed linguistic practices featured in this show demonstrate high linguistic realism when compared to the actual linguistic tendencies of Latinx youth. The frequent use of Spanish-English code-switching in the series has a two-fold positive effect in the sense that it creates a sense of connectedness and social identity among the fictional characters themselves and promotes a feeling of solidarity with its intended audience: the actual Latinx community of East LA (Giménez-Eguíbar and de los Heros 2016). With that said, throughout our review of *ELH*, we noticed a relation between linguistic tendencies and socioeconomic status among the characters; those who spoke Spanish at higher frequencies seemed to be portrayed as having a lower socioeconomic status, working as unskilled laborers, or being depicted as being involved in criminal activities (e.g., gang involvement, substance use, and delinquency). This pattern may inadvertently function to reproduce stereotypical beliefs of Spanish-speakers as poor, lazy, and even dangerous.

4.3. Depictions of Stereotypical Gender Behavior

Despite the significant steps that have been taken towards modernizing portrayals of Latinx characters in contemporary television shows, examples of mannerisms and interactions that perpetuate racialized gender stereotypes towards Latinx individuals can still be found. For instance, in the series *ODAAT*, Lydia (the grandmother character) is portrayed with a high degree of sexuality, perhaps inadvertently reinforcing the stereotype of Latinas as hypersexual beings (Molina-Guzmán 2010). She is often seen wearing a full face of makeup to bed and even states (in season 1, episode 8) “I came out of the womb wearing stilettos.” (Del Rosario Rodriguez 2021). This strategic use of word choice and tonal inflection to hypersexualize Lydia is not isolated to *ODAAT*. It can also be evidenced in other recent sitcoms like *Modern Family*, which aired on ABC from 2009 to 2020 (Casillas et al. 2018). Within the show, which focuses on three blended American families, Gloria Delgado-Pritchett, played by Sofia Vergara, is a Colombian woman who also employs similar linguistic tendencies. The authors note that Gloria’s entire vocal body, which encompasses “all aspects of a person’s speech, such as perceived accent(s), intonation, speaking volume, and word choice”, is used as a means of hypersexualizing her Latinx character rather than vocabulary alone (Casillas et al. 2018). Moreover, the opposition between Jane and her mother, Xiomara, in the show *Jane the Virgin* highlights a deeply entrenched notion about the false dichotomy of Latina womanhood. Xiomara’s character is depicted as promiscuous, flirtatious, and typically favoring tight and revealing clothing, drawing a sharp contrast to that of Jane, who fiercely upholds her purity. This contrast is portrayed in a manner reminiscent of the virgin/whore dichotomy; that is, the stereotypical portrayal of Latina women as either completely innocent and pure or over-the-top hypersexual tempests (Molina-Guzmán 2010; Galarza and Leon-Boys 2023).

In a similar vein, the female Latinx characters of *ELH* are highly sexualized through the use of costumes, makeup, and two separate storylines of unplanned teenage pregnancy

involving the main female characters (Coleman and Campbell 2019). Interestingly, after one of the female characters, Ceci, had her baby, her style of dress became notably more conservative and modest. This costuming choice strongly evokes the aforementioned cultural value of Latina women as either sexually alluring and promiscuous, or self-sacrificing, virginal mothers (e.g., Molina-Guzmán 2010; Galarza and Leon-Boys 2023). Once again, while it should be noted that *ELH* has been highly endorsed for its challenge to the hegemony of Latinx representation in Hollywood, and that audience reviews demonstrated positive reactions to its representation of Latinx culture and language (Wang et al. 2019) there still exist questionable stereotypes in the series that maintain conventional views of Latina women as either sexually promiscuous or pure and virtuous. The stereotype reinforcement in *ELH*, however, seems to exhibit a greater subtlety when compared to the conspicuous stereotyping in the sitcoms analyzed previously.

4.4. Occupational Stereotypes

In contrast to the occupational stereotypes perpetuated by the 1990s sitcoms analyzed earlier, contemporary television series would seem to have made significant strides in portraying Latinx characters in a diverse array of career roles. This does not mean, however, that modern shows are devoid of stereotypic representations of Latinx careers. This is exemplified in shows like the aforementioned *ELH*, in which the adult characters occupy myriad professional roles, including restaurant owners, fashion designers, and television show hosts. Yet, a careful look at these otherwise favorable depictions reveals a number of subtle but potentially harmful cues (i.e., stereotypes and generalizations). For example, although the father of one of the main characters, Jacob, owns a taqueria, an arguably impressive accomplishment, a central theme throughout the first season involves Jacob and his friend Maya's efforts to rescue his struggling restaurant. Although the representation of Latinxs as business owners marks a powerful shift from reductionist occupational stereotypes present in older television shows, Jacob's father's status as a struggling entrepreneur unduly maintains the assertion that Latinxs encounter more difficulties finding success in the workforce, almost as if there were a need to establish the limits or conditions of their success.

The series *Jane the Virgin* further exemplifies these positive representational shifts, with the main character, Jane, actively pursuing a career as a fiction writer throughout the series while simultaneously working a part-time job in hospitality. Although we interpret this as a testament to Jane's ability to thrive in society, her dual occupational roles also serve as a stirring representation of how, like Jane, many Latinx individuals must often juggle multiple roles and responsibilities to make ends meet. On one hand, this showcases Latinxs' accomplishments, diverse skill sets, and resilience. On the other hand, however, it hints at the stereotypical notion that Latinx individuals are not capable of success in highly lucrative careers without some caveat or shortcoming that undercuts their achievements. For example, in *Jane the Virgin*, one of the main characters, Luisa, initially appears as a successful gynecologist. However, her storyline takes a turn when she later loses her medical license due to her committing a grave medical mistake, perhaps inadvertently propagating deleterious stereotypes about the outcomes of Latinxs in high-status occupations. Undoubtedly, these modern representations of Latinxs in the workforce highlight major changes in Latinx representation in media, standing in contrast to outdated and reductionist portrayals of Latinx career opportunities in U.S. media. However, more work is needed to produce dignified representations of Latinxs individuals as who are able to both obtain high-level careers and perform well in their industries.

5. Conclusions

In this essay, we have set out to examine how evolving⁹ Latinx and Spanish language representation in mainstream U.S. media contributes to shaping public perceptions of the Spanish language and its speakers. The stereotypes embodied by portraits of Latinx and Spanish-speaking characters in the 1990s sitcoms we analyzed (i.e., *That '70s Show* and

Family Guy) are compelling examples of overt anti-Latinx cultural, racial, and linguistic attitudes in action. Undoubtedly, the modernization of these media depictions has made significant strides in terms of portraying Latinxs with greater dignity, cultural sensitivity, and linguistic authenticity. However, informed by a critical raciolinguistic lens, we find evidence of power dynamics that fuel stigma and reinforce stereotypes against Latinx communities, reflected in even modernized portrayals of Latinidad. We ultimately argue that the continued propagation of biased representations of Latinxs in U.S. media perpetuates racial and ethnic injustice, which in turn can negatively impact the self-worth and self-esteem of Latinxs (e.g., Tukachinsky et al. 2017).

In the 1990s sitcoms we initially examined, Latinx representation was scarce, often placing Latinx characters on the receiving end of jokes about their speech patterns, names, and behavior (often depicted to be aligned with reductionist cultural stereotypes). The environments in which they existed were often white-dominated, their mannerisms and linguistic practices exaggerated, and their interactions with others fraught with ridicule. This ridiculing of Latinx characters was inflated by exaggerated accents, endorsements of potentially harmful stereotypes (e.g., Fozzie's insatiable sex drive), and parodic attempts to 'fit in' with white society, all of which contributed to the creation of a safe space for whiteness. By centering the perceived social and cultural differences between Latinx characters and their white counterparts, whiteness is established as the acceptable norm from which non-conformers are considered anomalous. As a result, their alienation as a social punishment for their non-conformity to white standards may be interpreted by viewers as justifiable (e.g., Chandler and Wiborg 2021).

In contemporary television series such as *ODAAAT*, *Jane the Virgin*, *ELH*, and *Gentefied*, the portrayals of Latinx characters and Spanish speakers showed marked improvements. Common themes we observed in the newer series included (i) a significant increase in the number of Latinx characters in the fictional environments; (ii) mannerisms that less explicitly promoted anti-Latinx stigma and stereotypes; (iii) linguistic practices and speech patterns that were depicted with greater authenticity; and (iv) more dignified and affirming interactions between Latinx characters and others. These noteworthy developments, however, do not imply that anti-Latinx biases and raciolinguistic ideologies (e.g., the racializing of Latinxs who prefer speaking Spanish) are not reproduced in other ways. In fact, we have shown how a number of contemporary television shows still reflect power dynamics that fuel anti-Latinx stigma and stereotyping (e.g., negative occupational and gender stereotypes, racializing Latinxs who are darker-skinned and have greater proximity to Spanish). In the examples discussed, explicit discrimination tends to be substituted with more subtle, covert practices that still embody hegemonic interests and perpetuate social inequalities.

Of course, we must acknowledge the advances that have been made in Latinx and Spanish-language media representation over the last few decades. It is difficult to argue that changes in public attitudes towards Spanish and Spanish speakers have not been reflected by US media. From the modern media examples in our analysis, greater conscientiousness towards racial and ethnic justice is certainly apparent. Yet, even as overt discriminatory practices are becoming less acceptable in today's public discourse, deep-rooted covert prejudice still contributes to shaping our relationships and everyday interactions. The reproduction of subtle raciolinguistic ideologies in various aspects of our lives (e.g., linguistic interactions, employment, education, etc.), is just one example of covert discriminatory practices (e.g., Flores and Rosa 2015). Because this kind of bias often goes unnoticed, it is less likely to be challenged, and may therefore continue to be inadvertently reinforced. Without recognizing and critically reflecting on these biases, we run the risk of reifying the racialization and devaluation of marginalized racial and ethnic groups in the US. Hence, in this paper, we have sought to identify, deconstruct, and challenge some of the mechanisms through which US media may propagate raciolinguistic ideologies and allow structural racism to become more deeply entrenched in society. This, we believe, is a critical and significant step in redefining and transforming the lens through which racialized communities are perceived. Whether overtly or covertly expressed, the negative impact of

prejudicial attitudes towards the Spanish language and its speakers in the media demands public attention.

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Notes

- ¹ Early on, Latinx characters in Hollywood films were often depicted as criminals or gang members. “West Side Story” (1961) and “Scarface” (1983) are two representative examples of this trend that portrayed Puerto Rican and Cuban characters in a negative light.
- ² Herein we use the term “America” and “American” to refer to the United States of America.
- ³ According to recent reports, Hispanic and Latinx people accounted for 19.1% of the total US population in 2022.
- ⁴ Similar observations are often made with regard to African Americans’ linguistic practices (e.g., Alim et al. 2016).
- ⁵ Despite its name and the show’s fictional timeline—running from 1976 to 1979—it is important to recognize that the show actually ran from 1998 to 2006 (*That ‘70s Show* 1998).
- ⁶ This convention is nothing unique to *That ‘70s Show*; in actuality, this Latinx stereotype is one of many that have existed in American media for decades (Mandl 2019; Popelková 2015).
- ⁷ Another aspect of note is that the character is voiced by Michael Henry, a white man, rather than a woman—let alone a woman of Mexican descent. This choice by the show’s creative directors, among others, is indicative of the lack of motivation to represent this character in an authentic or dignified manner.
- ⁸ This show was influenced by a 2002 Venezuelan telenovela titled “Juana la Virgen”.
- ⁹ To be sure, while it can be argued that American sitcoms from the 1990s cannot be reasonably compared with the multi-genre contemporary series outlined in this analysis, we maintain that both television eras offer insights into societal attitudes and beliefs towards the Latinx community, providing valuable lenses through which to analyze the evolution of media portrayals of Latinxs.

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Article

Racialized Sociolinguistic Processes in the Spanish Learning Journeys of Non-Latinxs in the U.S.

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Abstract: Sociolinguistic frameworks of race have not been widely applied to non-Latinx Spanish learners in the United States. Consequently, there is limited insight into the impact of race on different learners' use of Spanish in their communities, including the local or national raciolinguistic dynamics between Latinxs and non-Latinxs that inform these outcomes. This article examines ethnographic interviews of women recounting interactions and experiences of using Spanish in different U.S. contexts. In their accounts, I identify three racialized sociolinguistic processes central to their Spanish learning journeys, which I title *racialized positionality*, *racialized embodiment*, and *indexical fields of racialization*. These processes highlight, respectively, (1) the raciolinguistic dynamics enacted by Spanish language usage in the U.S. by non-Latinxs, (2) the sociolinguistic input a learner comes across as raciogendered subjects, and (3) the social meaning they ascribe to racialized terms and discourses in Spanish. As critical approaches to Spanish language learning and pedagogy continue to emerge, more research is warranted on these three processes to trace the impact of race on Spanish language learning and use.

Keywords: raciolinguistics; sociolinguistics; Spanish learners; Spanish in the U.S.; positionality; embodiment; indexical fields; critical pedagogy



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1. Introduction

Race as a category, racialization as a process, and racism as a system of inequality are central to critical frameworks in sociolinguistics (Alim et al. 2016), and these topics have been widely applied to research examining how Latinx bilingualism is evaluated in U.S. education and society. For instance, significant attention has been paid to the social and institutional discourses that frame Spanish/English bilingualism in ways that Clemons (2022) calls the “benefit versus burden paradox”. That is, Spanish/English bilingualism becomes a burden to U.S. institutions when it is framed as a tool for Latinx identity formation and communal solidarity. Yet, it becomes a benefit when detached from localized Latinidad and framed as a commodifiable resource in a neoliberal language learning marketplace (Flores 2016; Subtirelu 2017; Mena and García 2021). Central to the discourses that these works examine is the prevalence of raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores and Rosa 2015; Rosa and Flores 2017) or beliefs of the co-naturalization of language and race. These ideologies are used to form an inextricable link between Spanish and Latinidad (Davis and Moore 2014; Rosa 2018); between Latinidad and non-white racialization (Maldonado 2009; Ramirez and Peterson 2020; Baca Zinn and Wells 2023); and between anti-Latinx racism and Spanish language attitudes, planning, and policy (García 2009; García and Otheguy 2014; Flores and Rosa 2015; Licata 2021).

Clearly, issues of race are deeply rooted in the usage of Spanish and the social perception of Spanish speakers in the United States. Yet, few studies examine the impact of this raciolinguistic context on the Spanish learning journeys of non-Latinxs in the U.S. (Exford 2023) despite Spanish being the most studied language across racial groups in the nation (Goldberg et al. 2015). Filling this gap through sociolinguistic approaches will illuminate non-Latinx experiences of acquiring and using Spanish in a nation where the language is

racialized distinctly from their own identities. This includes understanding how localized racial dynamics impact their engagement with Latinx cultures, how their non-Latinx identities impact their social interactions with Spanish speakers, and even how their linguistic repertoires as racialized people clash with notions of race in Spanish-speaking contexts (e.g., racial terminology, discourses of racism, etc.).

In this article, I examine ethnographic interviews I collected of Spanish learners from different racial backgrounds who are at different stages in their Spanish learning journeys. Following Anya (2016), these learners recall interactions, discourses, and participation within communities of practice. Through a discursive analysis, I focus on three learners whose stories I use to capture three racialized sociolinguistic processes of Spanish learning that I call *racialized positionality*, *racialized embodiment*, and *indexical fields of racialization*. I define and exemplify my analysis of each process below. I close with a discussion on the theoretical and pedagogical benefits of garnering more research on these three processes.

2. Sociolinguistic Approaches to Race in Spanish Language Learning and Education

At present, there is substantial research that documents a range of variables that condition the sociolinguistic variation that L2 Spanish learners acquire and use. Some of these variables include the roles of identity, agency, social interaction, context of acquisition, and linguistic variation (see Lynch 2015 for a synthesis of this work). However, in most of these studies, Spanish learners are imagined as monolingual and non-racialized subjects, or the participants' linguistic and ethnoracial backgrounds are omitted. These decisions (in)advertently homogenize L2 learners, conflate English speakers with whiteness and monolingualism, and construct fixed notions about how these learners' identities and linguistic experiences are positioned in relation to Spanish and Spanish speakers.

Yet, many scholars have demonstrated the extensive theoretical benefits of second language acquisition (SLA) when the homogenization of U.S. English speakers is deliberately avoided, and issues of race are explicitly engaged (Flores and Rosa 2019; Austin 2022; Licata et al. 2023). For example, Calhoun (2012) examines Black learners acquiring additive languages and finds that in some of their L2 contexts, these learners use different tools to embody Blackness, and in others, they abandon those tools to foreground other parts of their identities. She concludes that race is a complex and malleable aspect of one's identity that even learners enact and perform contextually through linguistic and other semiotic forms. Anya's (2016) groundbreaking project on Black students' study abroad experiences found that their acquisition of Portuguese was heavily mediated by their Blackness. That is, their identities influenced the experiences that they needed language to convey as well as the spaces that they frequented to acquire and use their Portuguese (e.g., Black barbershops/hair salons or certain nightclubs). As such, when social identities like race are theorized beyond a variable or demographic category, new pathways open to understanding the complexity of SLA phenomena.

Centering localized and global issues of race in Spanish language learning and use also has applied benefits. Specifically, revelations about the impact of race have created more opportunities to examine unchallenged raciolinguistic ideologies in the curriculum, pedagogy, and policy of different language programs, including L2 Spanish (Padilla and Vana 2022; Licata et al. 2023), Spanish as a heritage language (Leeman 2005, 2012, 2015; Lacorte and Magro 2022), and bilingual education or dual immersion (Flores and García 2017; Cioè-Peña 2021; Frieson 2022). As a result of these contributions, many researchers and educators have championed critical sociolinguistic approaches in Spanish education (Leeman 2014; Leeman and Serafini 2016; Licata et al. 2023) to highlight the co-construction of language, identity, and power in all aspects of "linguaging" or a multimodal discursive activity through which speakers can signify their identities in relation to others (García 2010).

As an example, one prominent approach is Critical Language Awareness (CLA), a pedagogical framework that foregrounds how power is imbued in languages, linguistic varieties, and speakers (Fairclough 1992). Proponents of CLA in Spanish language education have predominately focused on engaging heritage speakers to challenge linguis-

tic hierarchies in Spanish-speaking communities and the stigmatization of U.S. Latinxs' translinguistic practices (Holguín Mendoza 2018; Leeman 2018; Loza and Beaudrie 2021; Beaudrie et al. 2021; Beaudrie and Wilson 2022; Gómez García 2022). Other scholars are optimistic that CLA and similar approaches can raise L2 learners' awareness of language variation, language ideologies, and linguistic discrimination that impact Spanish speakers locally and globally (Quan 2020, 2021), albeit the framework has predominantly assumed white, monolingual learners. Accordingly, we have limited knowledge of how Spanish learners of color, for instance, see their role in the marginalization of Spanish and Spanish speakers in some U.S. contexts.

Moving forward, researchers and educators must continue to restructure and reconceptualize Spanish language education in ways that help learners understand and navigate the shifting raciolinguistic contexts of Spanish and Spanish speakers in different parts of the United States (Baralt et al. 2020, 2022; Exford 2023). In *Spanish So White*, Schwartz (2023) calls for a "radical rethinking" of what it means for non-Latinx white people to learn, teach, and speak Spanish in this country (p. 9). He encourages students and educators to have "inconvenient discussions of race" through critical linguistic autoethnographies or an analysis of one's language practices as a social, cultural, and political being. Following suit, I encourage an expansion of this endeavor to all non-Latinxs. This effort must involve an intentional and explicit engagement with discourses, experiences, and perceptions of race that learners (1) bring to their Spanish learning journeys and (2) encounter in the Spanish-speaking contexts they navigate. Doing so can inform critical research analyses and pedagogy that center the multitude of raciolinguistic identities and experiences that influence how learners across racial groups navigate learning and using Spanish across the U.S. and beyond.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data used in this article are part of a larger dataset I began collecting in 2021 for a series of projects on non-Latinxs navigating different aspects of identity in their Spanish learning journeys.¹ As a Black American woman who acquired Spanish as an additive language, I notice that my comfort with speaking Spanish in the U.S. shifts based on location and the demographics of Latinxs in the area. For instance, I typically feel more comfortable using Spanish in parts of New York or Florida where there are large amounts of AfroLatinxs. In these places, I can use Spanish when necessary for functional purposes without having to explain how I know Spanish. In places where AfroLatinxs are fewer like California, using Spanish as a Black person is typically met with shock and curiosity in almost every interaction, which at times I prefer to avoid.

Moreover, I have noticed that I prefer Caribbean or coastal varieties of Spanish over Peninsular Spanish or varieties in the Southern Cone. While I enjoy interacting with all, the former varieties have more speakers of African descent. For me, this gives me a greater connection to those varieties. Specifically, Caribbean and coastal varieties of Spanish often experience similar forms of ridicule as Black languages in the Americas. By connecting with those varieties, I can establish solidarity against the related raciolinguistic ideologies that stigmatize my language practices as a Black person in the United States. Upon reflection, I have come to see the significant impact of race in my interactions with Latinx communities and in my sociolinguistic choices of when, how, and why I used Spanish. To that end, I came to this project looking to theorize the impact of race on the Spanish learning journeys of other U.S. learners.

My requirements for participation were that learners lived in the United States, were 18 years or older, did not identify as Latinx or Hispanic, and were learning Spanish to become fluent or proficient. At the time this article was prepared, I had collected 18 interviews with learners who identified as Asian, Black, or white. All learners were personal contacts of mine or undergraduate students at either my graduate institution in southern California or a Historically Black University in South Florida where I worked with Spanish educators. Learners' level of proficiency and experiences with Spanish speakers varied widely—from

beginners to advanced and from not growing up around Spanish speakers to hearing and seeing Spanish regularly in their hometowns. The diverse representation of these learners permits an analysis that can uncover the range of real-life ways that race, racialization, and racism impact non-Latinx Spanish learners in the U.S. regardless of ethnoracial background or stage of acquisition.

For this article, I focus on three learners—Emerson, Jada, and Andrea—who I discuss further in the following section. I chose to highlight these three because they shared experiences that are emblematic of the three racialized sociolinguistic processes. I engaged each participant in a semi-structured, one-on-one, ethnographic interview. An ethnographic interview collects information about a respondent's perspective or perception of a topic (e.g., concept, phenomenon, event, or experience). The discourses and linguistic features that respondents use in their narratives are examined and connected to macro-sociocultural ideologies (De Fina 2019). Each interview was recorded through Zoom and lasted from 1 h to 1 h and 45 min. During this time, we discussed a range of topics regarding their Spanish learning journeys including their experiences of studying Spanish formally or informally, their experiences of using Spanish outside of the classroom, and how they understand their racial identity in relation to Latinxs, among other topics.

When collecting learners' accounts to examine language learning processes and experiences, Pavlenko (2007) encourages going beyond a "content analysis" that solely identifies themes or patterns based on what the participants mention. Alongside content, the analysis should examine *context* such as unique information about the speakers and macro-social ideologies that inform the topics being discussed. The analysis should also include *form* such as the linguistic features and structures used by participants to construct their responses. My approach to content was first to identify emerging themes surrounding the impact of race, racialization, or racism on any experiences that learners shared with me during the interviews. The themes that emerged were positionality, embodiment, and indexicality, all of which became the focus of my analysis and informed the names of the racialized sociolinguistic processes that I define below.

I approached context by considering the details that my participants forefronted. For instance, some learners referenced their geographic context such as the demographics of their neighborhood or the city in which they lived. Additionally, I considered context by identifying macro-social discourses that inform the experiences learners shared. As an example, one learner in the larger dataset shared that at their high school, non-Latinxs and Latinxs who spoke Spanish regularly did not socialize with each other. These dynamics can be framed by several macro-social discourses or studies on intercultural tensions informed by language and race.

Lastly, as a sociocultural linguist, my approach to form included critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995) to consider the linguistic, embodied, and discursive tools that participants used to shape the meaning of the content in their narratives. Some examples include how they took epistemic stances such as what they know or believe to be true (Du Bois 2007), how they embodied their narratives through facial expressions, gaze, and other gestures (Müller et al. 2013), and how they expressed their narratives through deixis, pauses/silence, laughter, shifts in clauses, hedges, discourse markers, shifts in phonation (e.g., whisper, falsetto, creaky voice), and more (Morgan 1991; van Dijk 1993, 2006; Fraser 2010). Table 1 is an overview of my analytical approach.

Table 1. Analytical approach to content, context, and form in learners’ narratives.

Analytical Approach	Description	Examples
Content Analysis	Emerging themes in the narratives surrounding the impact of race, racialization, or racism	Emerging themes including—but not limited to—positionality, embodiment, and indexicality
Contextual Analysis	Details about the participant/their experiences or macro-social discourses that inform the conversation	References to place and space (learners’ geographic context), discourses of linguistic appropriation, dynamics between Latinxs and non-Latinxs, discourses of race in the U.S. and Latin America, etc.
Structural Analysis of Linguistic and Embodied Forms	How participants convey their narratives through embodied and linguistic features	Epistemic and affective stances; facial expressions, gaze, and other gestures; deixis, pauses/silence, laughter, truncation, hedges, voice modality, and discourse markers

I reviewed each interview, and I coded extracts by the themes that emerged (positionality, embodiment, and indexicality). Afterward, I transcribed extracts using a basic-level transcription method to capture elements of discourse that are described in Table 1. The conventions I followed for this interpretive process are outlined in Table 2, which is immediately followed by the analysis.

Table 2. Transcript conventions *.

Line Break	Boundaries based on pause length
.	Falling intonation
,	Brief pause in continued speech
?	Rising intonation at end of clause (may or may not be a question)
↑	Shifting modality (e.g., creaky voice, slowed speech, falsetto, other inflections) of a specific word within a line break
-	Self-interruption or truncation
:	Elongated vowel
@	Pulses of laughter
Text in italics	Spanish words
Text in bold	For emphasis by researcher
[TEXT]	Overlap between interlocutors
/TEXT /	Smiley language
((TEXT))	Researcher notes or descriptions of non-verbal actions

* These conventions were adapted from Du Bois et al. (1993) and Du Bois (2022).

4. Racialized Sociolinguistic Processes in Learners’ Narratives

As a result of my analysis, I found that all three learners navigated three racialized sociolinguistic practices: racialized positionality, racialized embodiment, and indexical fields of racialization. While all learners provided accounts that highlight each process, for analytical convenience and demonstration, I use the accounts of one learner per process—a point to which I return in the discussion.

4.1. Emerson and Racialized Positionality: Navigating the Sociopolitical Landscape of Using Spanish as a White Learner

I define racialized positionality as a process by which learners describe how racial identity impacts their engagement with Latinx communities. To identify this process, I specifically underscore learners’ perceptions of how issues of race and power arise when

using Spanish as non-Latinx people. Positionality has roots in feminist theory (Alcoff 2005), and it is now a principal topic in anthropology and qualitative research across disciplines, including STEM fields and medical training programs (Rushton 2022; Songin-Mokrzan 2023; Folkes 2023; Strimel et al. 2023). Fundamental to the inception and current explorations of positionality is the role of context and power in understanding the relationship between social identities.

Over time, the exploration of positionality has become a standard practice for scholars who carry out ethnographic or community-engaged research. For instance, some journals encourage a “positionality statement” in published articles in which the researcher critically examines the impact of their identity and power in their work, such as the researcher’s cultural biases, nation-specific ethical values, or their relationship to the communities they study.² Some scholars assert that centering researcher positionality as a site of inquiry has theoretical and empirical benefits (Muhammad et al. 2015; Muwwakkil 2023). Per these scholars, positionality impacts the entire research process, allowing scholars to theorize the affordances and limitations of their identities in their research contexts.

For L2 learning in the U.S., the Douglas Fir Group states that learners experience either difficulty or ease when practicing the language in a natural community context due to “how their ascribed race, ethnicity, gender, or social class” are positioned toward native speakers (The Douglas Fir Group 2016, p. 32). This means that different learners are uniquely positioned in relation to community members of the language they study, and these unique positionings will impact their community engagement, social interaction, and linguistic input. Yet, more empirical research is needed to capture these dynamics. In this study, this reality is exemplified in the narrative of a learner I call Emerson. Specifically, she confronts racialized positionality to navigate issues of power in her sociolinguistic engagement with Spanish speakers.

Emerson is a white woman who was in her early 20s during the time of the interview. At this time, she was an undergraduate student at my graduate institution who heard about my study from her Spanish professor. I had not met Emerson prior to her interview, but she was very interactive, making the interview style conversational. She described her ethnoracial background as Anglo-Saxon and indicated completing intermediate-level Spanish courses. She grew up in an affluent neighborhood in Northern California where Latinx communities were scarce, but they were larger in neighboring cities. Like many of the white learners I interviewed, Emerson expressed wanting to become fluent in Spanish because it is especially useful in the U.S. where there are many Spanish speakers. Yet, when we discussed her experiences of speaking Spanish outside of the classroom, she (like many other learners) expressed having various opportunities but seldom taking them. That is, even though one of their goals of learning Spanish is to communicate with America’s large Spanish-speaking population, they consistently made little use of it in the United States. For Emerson, most of her opportunities to use Spanish were with co-workers or during encounters with service workers. In Excerpt 1, she explains why she avoided using Spanish during these opportunities.

Excerpt 1: *It feels like crossing a boundary.*

1. I don’t want to assume that they don’t-
2. or I don’t want to give the implication that I assume they don’t speak English.
3. or:
4. like.
5. That.
6. I think they’re not understanding me to the extent that I need to speak to them in **their** language for them to get what I’m saying.
7. Cuz I feel like that could be an implication that comes with me switching to Spanish.
(4 lines omitted))
8. And I guess like,
9. by like using **their** language,
10. it feels maybe kind of,

11. I don't know if appropriative↑ is the right word.
12. But I guess it just feels like crossing a boundary in terms of like,
13. this is **their** thing.
14. I don't know if they just want this random person to like assume that they can be in on it.

In this response, Emerson frames Latinxs in her context (California) as having “linguistic ownership” (Bucholtz and Zimman 2019) over Spanish. That is, despite acquiring Spanish to use it with native speakers, she describes it as an exclusive community-internal practice. For instance, she consistently refers to Spanish as “their [Latinxs] language” (lines 6, 9, and 13) and “their thing”. Moreover, she calls herself “a random person” (line 14) or someone with no connection to those communities, and therefore she runs the risk of “crossing a boundary” (line 12) by trying to “be in on it” (line 14). This conundrum underscores the issues with the aforementioned paradox described by Clemons (2022). That is, although Spanish can be considered a social and economic resource for non-Latinxs, deploying this resource requires tact because the social meaning and cultural functions of Spanish in the U.S. usually cannot be separated from Latinidad. In California where Emerson lives, the social and political histories of racializing Latinxs have formed a clear ideological distinction and unequal power dynamic between Latinidad and whiteness (Ramirez and Peterson 2020). Seemingly, Emerson alludes to these localized histories and unequal dynamics as she begins to carefully consider how her race might position her to Latinxs, which may include appropriation (line 11) or racist assumptions about Latinxs’ linguistic capabilities (line 2 “I don’t want to give the implication that I assume they don’t speak English”). Turning to Excerpt 2, Emerson indicates the sociolinguistic identity of her interlocutor as a factor in deciding when to engage in Spanish.

Excerpt 2: *That would be the weirdest thing.*

1. but I’ve been told by other people like,
2. oh no people would really appreciate it if you spoke to them in Spanish like,
3. They like it when foreigners try to like demonstrate @like
4. @proficiency or that they practice Spanish.
5. So like I feel like,
6. that when people say that they’re usually gearing it towards people,
7. who speak Spanish who are **older** than me.
8. But I can’t imagine doing that to a **peer** like somebody **my age**.
9. I can’t like @ima-
10. /like that would be the **weirdest** thing ever/
11. And to someone who’s **younger than me** I feel like that would be just as **weird**.
12. But maybe like just **confusing** for the younger person.
13. Like what i-
14. what is going @on @@

Alongside being a community-internal practice, Emerson observes Spanish as a language that cannot be used particularly among peers if one is not Latinx. Moreover, she describes using Spanish with someone significantly younger than her as “weird” (lines 10 and 11) and potentially “confusing for the younger person” (line 12). Put differently, she predicts that using Spanish as a non-Latina could adopt a similar function as *Mock Spanish*—a hyper-anglicized register that draws upon humor and racist tropes of Latinxs to reinforce white hegemony and Latinx othering (Hill 1998, 2008, 2009; Barrett 2006). To that end, using Spanish would be offensive and would impede—as opposed to facilitate—communication.

Emerson’s discomfort with how using Spanish may position her can also be seen in the transcript through her quick and sporadic laughter such as on line 5 when she mentions Spanish “proficiency” by non-Latinxs and again on lines 9 and 14 when she thinks about using Spanish with a peer or someone younger than her. To avoid positioning herself as demeaning or appropriative, Emerson expresses feeling more comfortable speaking Spanish to people who are older than her and who likely prefer Spanish due to limited

English proficiency. Presumably, age balances the unequal social dynamic, and language proficiency warrants or legitimizes her use of Spanish over English. In the final excerpt, I analyze for Emerson, she explains how these social dynamics subsided when she was in Spain.

Excerpt 3: *That's not a thing in Spain.*

1. When we were talking about like opportunities for me to speak Spanish in the United States.
2. And like the weirdness around it.
3. /I guess is like definitely not a thing @in @Spain./
4. Just because um.
5. It's a mostly **white country** and also like because we're in a country where its-
6. Where the **dominant language** is Spanish.
7. It would make sense to speak Spanish.

In Excerpt 3, Emerson states that the “weirdness” she experiences using Spanish in the U.S.” is definitely not a thing in Spain” (line 3). This shift in feeling can be explained by the different social meanings, cultural functions, and political power of Spanish and Spanish speakers in each place. Primarily, by transitioning from the U.S. to Spain, Spanish ceases to have a racialized association with brown Latinidad. Instead, it becomes associated with white/European Hispanidad. Moreover, Spanish is no longer a minoritized, community-internal practice but a national or “dominant language” (line 6). As such, transitioning between the two nations comes with a difference in Emerson’s positionality with Spanish-speaking communities that are informed by different raciolinguistic logics and histories. To that end, her use of Spanish becomes neutralized and will no longer evoke appropriation or reinforce existing sociopolitical tensions related to language and identity in the United States.

4.2. *Jada and Racialized Embodiment: Navigating the Racialized Exotification of Generic Asian Vocatives*

Another process that emerged from the data is racialized embodiment, which I define as a process by which learners recall how their forms of embodiment—particularly physical and contextually symbolic indicators of ethnoracial identity—are drawn upon during social interaction with Spanish speakers. Embodiment is a prominent site of inquiry in linguistic anthropology, and it is emerging in qualitative approaches to sociolinguistics research. For instance, Bucholtz and Hall (2016) call for an “embodied sociolinguistics”, asserting that “bodies and embodiment are central to the production, perception, and social interpretation of language”. That is, bodies not only physically produce language, but bodies enter the semiotic realm through language. Sociolinguistics research that centralizes embodiment may identify how gendered, racialized, or classed bodies and personas (among others) are indexed through voice, dialect, or discourse (Podesva 2007; Mendoza-Denton 2008, 2011; Zimman 2013). Other research may examine the social meaning of linguistic forms when they are produced by certain bodies (Calder and King 2022) or how the body becomes a site of context that informs the presence of linguistic variation (Exford 2023). Such themes were apparent in the data and will be demonstrated by the experience of a learner I call Jada.

Jada is a Korean American woman who was in her early 30s during the time of the interview. She is from Southern California and indicated having an advanced level of Spanish proficiency. During the interview, she shared that she began learning Spanish in high school to become fluent because she was fascinated by languages, and Mexican culture was prominent in her area. She practiced Spanish occasionally with friends and people in her community, including with people during service encounters. Like Emerson, Jada was sometimes reluctant to use Spanish outside of the classroom. However, Jada’s hesitancy resembled foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al. 1986; Horwitz and Young 1991) because she feared making an error while Emerson feared evoking racialized tensions. Jada recalled that her Spanish-speaking interlocutors would be impressed by her Spanish. Moreover, she could not recall instances where she perceived them taking offense.

Jada mentioned traveling to Latin America—namely Argentina and Mexico—for study abroad, work, and leisure. On many occasions, she left these trips with vivid memories of how her race was evoked in ways that were much less typical during her Spanish interactions in her California context. Specifically, as a woman with an East Asian background, she has been addressed with the generic vocative, *china* or *chinita* (Chinese [fem.], Chinese [fem.; diminutive]; henceforth, *chin(it)a*). *Chino/a/x* has a few different referential meanings in Spanish, which have emerged from different sociohistorical contexts.³ However, in the interview, we attended to the following meanings: a person of Chinese descent and a generic term to refer to all Asian people (see Stephens 1989). In the excerpts analyzed below, Jada describes how common it is to be addressed as generic *chin(it)a* due to her racialized embodiment, and how she has interpreted this practice as an Asian American woman.

Excerpt 4: *It feels gendered and lowkey sexualized.*

1. When I have studied abroad for instance.
2. Like it's not uncommon for me to be called like *china* or even worse *chinita*.
3. And like I remember having really overt conversations with people who are native Spanish speakers about this,
4. Right.
5. And I've gotten different um.
6. Uh explanations.
(6 lines omitted)
7. Like it always feels gendered and like lowkey like also sexualized when people say like *china* or *chinita*.
8. Right.
9. And tha- that's the part that has actually felt belittling to me?
10. And I definitely gaslit myself be- being,
11. Like oh I'm being too sensitive as like someone with an American @politics sensibility,
12. /Like political sensibility./
(3 lines omitted)
13. But like I would say like most of the time it's always been like.
14. Very on the low very kind of creepy @
15. And always- usually from men.

In Excerpt 4, Jada discusses experiences being called *chin(it)a*, which happened predominantly during instances of catcalling or street harassment (cf. Twombly 1995 on piropos in a study abroad context). She mentions having “overt conversations” with Spanish speakers to better understand generic *chin(it)a* as a practice (line 3), and she received mixed receptions (lines 5 and 6). Although not included, I asked her to clarify with whom she had these overt conversations, and she stated with acquaintances, friends, and colleagues in the U.S. and in Mexico. In some of the responses, people stated that generic *chino/a/x* is solely a term of endearment rooted in a larger Latinx cultural practice in which people can be addressed by their hair/skin color or another salient physical characteristic (e.g., *morena* [brown girl, brunette], *flaco* [skinny, masc.]). In other responses, some native speakers problematized generic *chino/a/x*, calling it an ignorant, insensitive, and anti-Asian practice. Relying on her own experiences, Jada describes feeling “belittled” (line 9) by generic *chin(it)a*. Despite this feeling, she becomes critical of her own interpretation of these vocatives. She positions herself as an outsider who might be interpreting the vocative through an “American political sensibility” (line 11) as a comparable practice would be socially unacceptable in the United States. Jada's stance shows a concern with enacting a form of linguistic imperialism, (Phillipson 1992, 2013) or an exertion of linguistic power over another group. That is, she shows hesitance to impose U.S. or English-speaking norms onto social interactions in Latin America or in Spanish. Yet, by indicating the gender and the voice modality of her interlocutors (“on the low”, “creepy”, and “from men” lines 14

and 15), it was revealed that her experiences have taught her to interpret this practice as a form of exotified sexualization and not just an endearing vocative.

In Excerpt 3 below, Jada talks about correcting those who have addressed her with generic *chin(it)a* by sharing that her ethnic background is Korean American and not Chinese in hopes they will discontinue addressing her as such.

Excerpt 5: *That's all the same to me.*

1. I think what **blew my mind** a little bit was when I would um correct people one on one.
2. Like oh um.
3. Like I am actually Korean or Korean American,
4. and they would still refuse to call me Korean you know.
5. And they were like oh that's all-
6. That's all the same to me. ((deepens voice, enregistering a jock))
7. And I'm like OK well then **that just feels really icky.**
8. **That feels gross.**

Jada shares the surprise she felt when people continued to evoke her racialized embodiment in inaccurate ways ("what blew my mind" line 1). She describes people's dismissal of distinguishing between Asian ethnicities as "icky" and "gross" (lines 7 and 8). Therefore, in addition to experiencing this practice as a form of sexualization and exotification, this practice also appeared to disregard the heterogeneity of Asian ethnicities. Regardless of the social meanings and cultural functions of generic *chin(it)a* in the U.S. or Latin America, Jada is subjected to these vocatives because of how her racialized embodiment as a woman of East Asian descent has been socially evaluated and linguistically defined in some of the Spanish-speaking contexts she has occupied.

4.3. *Andrea and Indexical Fields of Racialization: Navigating the Social Meaning of Black Identity Labels*

The final process that emerged from the data is indexical fields of racialization, which I define as a process by which learners use their indexical fields of racial terms/concepts in English or the U.S. to develop the social meanings of comparable Spanish terms or discourses. The indexical field (Eckert 2008) is a prominent theory of social meaning in sociolinguistics. It examines linguistic variation via its stylistic function in a situated context. Some studies examine sociolinguistic variation by identifying a one-to-one correlation between linguistic form and social category. For example, the pronominal *tú* is used in informal/solidarity contexts and *usted* is used in formal/power contexts. The indexical field, on the other hand, is a framework in which linguistic forms have a multitude of potential meanings or a "field of indexes" that derive from context and are ideologically linked to social categories such as regionality, gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, degrees of formality, and more. Through this framework, the distributions of pronominal *tú* and *usted*, for example, are not inherently bound to informal and formal contexts, respectively. Rather, these forms might index, point to, or signify informality/formality and can therefore be used creatively by speakers in any context to establish different degrees of formality. As an example, Moyna and Rivera-Mills (2016) mentions that *usted* can be used in many Spanish varieties to console a hurt or sad child, which is a demographic that is not typically the recipient of a formal pronoun due to age. However, the use of *usted* in this context has an indexical meaning of strength or maturity that may reassure the young child in a vulnerable state, revealing the creative and fluid functions of linguistic forms and their potential social meanings.

For linguistic anthropologists, any linguistic or semiotic form can have an indexical field, which includes everything from phonemes and words to hairstyles and clothing. For instance, the racial labels Black and African American have different indexical fields in U.S. discourses (Hall 2014). In Hall et al.'s (2015) study of white American biases towards the terms Black and African American, they find that white people are more likely to think favorably of a person identified as African American over one described as Black. Therefore,

while both terms may have the same referential meaning in certain contexts, their repeated usage in certain discourses over time has created different indexical meanings for each term. These indexes, though, are not the same in Black communities where people have positive and neutral meanings attached to Black. As such, the indexical field of a form can vary across individuals and communities (Calder 2021; Beaton and Washington 2015).

Indexical fields also change with time, place, and space (Washington 2023). For instance, if a Black American travels outside of the U.S., they may face challenges navigating the indexical meanings of racialized terms in another country. For example, Simmons (2008) examines the experiences of Black students studying abroad in the Dominican Republic. She finds that students were tasked with navigating what she calls the “racial terrain”, or the complex processes of racialization through terms, discourses, and other forms of embodiment. She details how Black students were more likely to experience social and institutional discrimination if they had a deeper skin complexion or hairstyles that were braided, short, or not chemically processed. This is because these features and semiotic forms were associated with people of specifically Haitian heritage, and therefore, they indexed pejorative social meanings due to the pervasive anti-Haitian xenophobia in the Dominican Republic (Mazzaglia and Marcelino 2014; Arraiza et al. 2020). In a similar vein, Spanish learners are tasked with merging their indexical fields of racial terms/discourses in English with that of Spanish, which may be a contentious process, as I will show below in the narratives of the learner I call Andrea.

Andrea is a Black Caribbean woman from South Florida who was in her early 20s during the time of the interview. She had beginner-level Spanish proficiency, although she expressed having better Spanish comprehension due to her extensive contact with ethnically diverse Spanish speakers in her schools, jobs, and broader communities. Andrea mentioned that she is pursuing Spanish fluency because as an aspiring healthcare professional in Florida, she wants to communicate directly with her patients who prefer Spanish. At the time of the interview, Andrea was taking Spanish courses at a Historically Black University where the curriculum centers Blackness and AfroLatinidad.⁴ While discussing her experiences with race and Spanish learning, she shared with me that she refuses to identify herself with the Spanish term *negra* [Black, fem.] because its resemblance to the English label, “Negro”. In this article, when *negro* is written in lowercase and italicized, it refers to the term in Spanish. When “Negro” is unitalicized and spelled with the capital “N”, it refers to the term in English.

In Spanish, *negro/a/x* translates primarily to “black”, which can refer to both the color and Black racial groups. The latter has widespread modern usage throughout Latin America by Latinxs with and without African ancestry, and it has a range of meanings that are positive, neutral, and pejorative. For instance, in translated works, *negro/a/x* may be used as a translation for “Black”, “Negro”, and variations of the “n-word” (Wheeler 2020). Below, Andrea explains to me why she does not like the term *negra* for an identity label as a Black Bahamian woman who grew up in the U.S. and the Bahamas.

Excerpt 6: *People already called us “Negroes”.*

1. Negr-
2. that’s kinda,
3. That’s saying,
4. to me I feel like it’s saying Negro?
- ((4 lines omitted))
5. People already called us Negroes,
6. So it’s like that just doesn’t sit with me.
7. I know I wasn’t born in slavery time?
8. But I’m sure my ancestors they been through that.

Andrea consistently correlates *negra* with the English label “Negro” (lines 5, 7, and 8), which is considered outdated for standardized usage in both the U.S. and the Anglophone Caribbean. While older Blacks may continue to use “Negro” in socially neutral contexts

(e.g., people born in “the Silent Generation” between 1925 and 1945), Andrea’s indexical field of “Negro” is inextricably linked to the sociohistorical contexts in which the term was standard. For instance, in lines 8–12, Andrea explains how *negro/a* evokes overtly racist and oppressive eras such as African enslavement in the Americas. By transferring her indexical field of “Negro” onto *negra*, she builds the social meaning of *negra* as both pejorative (“that doesn’t sit with me” line 10) and regressive (“my ancestors. . .been through that” lines 12 and 13).

During the interview, Andrea made it clear to me that she knows *negro* primarily translates to “Black”, and not necessarily to the outdated label “Negro”. For instance, we discussed the terms that she has used (or would use) to identify herself racially in both English and Spanish. Like many Black people with heritage outside of the U.S., Andrea indicated that she uses the labels “Black”, “African American”, and her ethnic heritage “Bahamian” depending on the social and institutional context (Asante et al. 2016). Presumably, if one identifies with these labels, the term *negro/a/x* might be a suitable identity label in Spanish. However, Andrea expressed preferring a translation for the label “person of color”, which has more neutral and politically correct social meanings. This shows that Andrea is not solely concerned with using a racial label based on its referential meaning. Rather, she is also concerned with—and arguably to a greater extent—the label’s indexical meaning. In Excerpt 7 below, Andrea responds to the question I asked her earlier in the conversation about other labels that Black learners may use, like *afroamericana* [Afro- or African American] and *afrodescendiente* [person of African descent], and she responds in favor to both.

Excerpt 7: *I wouldn’t mind Afroamericana.*

1. A: Looking at- like just saying *negro* or whatever.
2. Or just looking at that even the Spanish way,
i- i- it just d-
3. Like I said it doesn’t it doesn’t sit with me.
4. So that’s why I had to end up saying a person of color.
((6 lines omitted))
5. Honestly,
6. A- Afr- *Afroamericana* and the other one (*afrodescendiente*) I wouldn’t mind.
7. Why?
8. Because it’s not saying @*negro*,
9. J: @@@[@@]
10. [It’s not saying that]

In lines 1–3, Andrea proclaims that using *negro/a*—even in Spanish—would make her uncomfortable, suggesting that she is not able to leave her indexical field of racialization behind when engaging in Spanish. Her feelings are directly responsible for her choice to choose other Spanish terms—i.e., *persona de color*, *afroamericana*, and *afrodescendiente*—all of which resemble English labels with socially neutral indexical fields. These choices show an element of linguistic transfer, or the use of one’s first language—usually phonological, morphosyntactic, and semantic features—during the acquisition of their second. However, the process of linguistic transfer cannot account for the sociocultural context that drives her linguistic decisions. Importantly, her preference towards these other options is a strategy to control how her Blackness is positioned in social interactions in Spanish. Again, this shows a concern with indexical meaning and not just referential meaning when choosing to adopt a racial label. I became interested in how Andrea would evaluate the decision of Black Latinxs calling themselves *negro/a/x*, and she gives her response in Excerpt 8 below.

Excerpt 8: *We could cling to it more than them.*

1. J: Would you be surprised if they ((Black Latinxs)) use the term *negro negra* to identify themselves?
2. A: ((exhales; long pause))
3. Honestly, ((long pause))

4. Yes. ((long pause; Interviewer, J, nods))
5. Mmm I would say yes.
((7 lines omitted))
6. The people who live in Cuba ↑**there** are Bla:ck.
7. But if Cubans come ↑**here** they will be considered white, or Hispanics or whatever.
8. They're Black and they- they're Hispanic,
9. Whereas we ((long pause))
10. I just feel like that word is more:
11. I wouldn't say that word is more a part of us but it's,
12. We could cling to it more than them.

Andrea's response underscores her perception of how Black people with and without Latinx heritage experience racialization in the U.S., and consequently why she may perceive the terms negro and "Negro" differently from Black Latinxs. From her experience and perspective, Black or AfroLatinxs are racialized differently from Black people without Latinx heritage. Correspondingly, she assumes AfroLatinxs have a different relationship to Blackness, and consequently, a different indexical field of negro. For instance, after my question in line 1, Andrea begins her response with an audible exhale (line 2), a discourse marker of divulgence ("honestly", line 3), and several pauses, suggesting disappointment and a challenge with explaining her stance. She affirms that she would be surprised by Black Latinxs self-identifying as negro/a ("yes", lines 4 and 5), which was followed by another long pause. During this time, I nod my head slowly to affirm hearing her response, but I remain quiet with my gaze towards the screen so she will elaborate. Once her thoughts surfaced, she brought up the different racial ideologies in the U.S. and Cuba, and she likely drew on Cuba because Cubans make up the largest Latinx demographic in her area. Her emphasis on adverbs of place (here, there in lines 6 and 7) draws attention to how she perceives processes of racialization shifting based on nation/geographical space. Andrea asserts that the racialization of AfroLatinxs as Black can be eradicated in the U.S. because of how Latinidad and Hispanidad are racialized. She states, "The people who live in Cuba ↑there are Black. But if Cubans come ↑here, they will be considered white or Hispanics or whatever" (line 07–11). Therefore, she appears to argue that Black Latinxs can disassociate from Blackness while in the U.S., and by extension, the sociohistorical impact of the English label "Negro". To that end, Andrea justifies using her indexical fields of racialization to build the social meaning of comparable terminology in Spanish, even if they differ from the norms of native speakers.

5. Discussion

The analyses presented here demonstrate that race, racialization, and racism play a unique and intricate role in the acquisition journeys of non-Latinx learners acquiring Spanish. Moreover, the experiences of each learner are informed by the shifting raciolinguistic context of Spanish in different parts of the United States. Table 3 summarizes each process in the experiences of learners presented here. In the remainder of this section, I discuss the impact of the U.S. context on learners in this dataset, the potential role of proficiency, and the implications of these racialized sociolinguistic processes for Spanish learning and education.

Table 3. Summary of racialized sociolinguistic processes.

Process	Description	Embodied/Linguistic Examples in Narrative	Exemplified by Learner
Racialized Positionality	References to power relations or dynamics between Latinxs and non-Latinxs	Constructing discourse via epistemic and affective stances such as what they know or believe to be true	Emerson navigating the sociopolitical landscape of using Spanish as a white learner
Racialized Embodiment	References to bodily features or other physical indicators of race	Embodying discourse via facial expressions, gaze, and other gestures	Jada navigating the racialized exotification of generic Asian vocatives
Indexical Fields of Racialization	References to learning or navigating social meaning of linguistic forms	Shaping discourse via deixis, pauses/silence, laughter, truncation, hedges, voice modality, and discourse markers	Andrea navigating the social meaning of Black identity labels

Primarily, Emerson believes that using Spanish as a white person could reinforce hierarchical raciolinguistic dynamics between white Anglo Americans and U.S. Latinxs. She did not identify these dynamics in Spain where Spanish is hegemonic. These preoccupations are rooted in social and economic disparities that are tangible. For instance, the Spanish/English bilingualism of white L2 learners is privileged over heritage speakers for higher-paying jobs in the U.S. (Subtirelu 2017). More ethnographic and perceptual studies on white speakers using Spanish in different U.S. cities and states are necessary. They would shed light on how localized raciolinguistic dynamics impact if, when, and how white Anglo learners use Spanish in their communities.

Jada navigated generic *chin(it)a* in ways that were shaped by her American background. Primarily, she rejects these terms because her heritage is Korean, not Chinese. Yet, as a person from the U.S., she is reluctant to take an adverse stance toward them because some native speakers view them as harmless or endearing. Her dilemma raises questions about how non-Latinx Spanish learners can balance agency and issues of linguistic imperialism. More studies on Asian American Spanish learners are necessary as this demographic is particularly underserved in SLA and Spanish language education. Specifically, ethnographic studies can illuminate their interactions with Spanish-speaking communities as learners.

Andrea evaluated the suitability of Spanish racial labels in ways that drew upon her Anglophone background in the U.S. and Bahamas. She rejected identifying with the racial label *negra* as it reminded her of the outdated label “Negro”. Therefore, she constructed a meaning of *negra* that was exclusively pejorative and socially regressive. Despite learning that some Black Latinxs favor the term, she could not connect to their view of *negra* due to the distinct ways that Black people with and without Latinx heritage are racialized in her Florida communities. In the larger dataset, Black learners were more likely to reference intercultural tensions between Latinx and Black communities at the local level. More studies should examine these dynamics and their impact on Black learners’ acquisition of Spanish.

Although I use the experience of one learner to demonstrate each racialized sociolinguistic process, all learners I interviewed had a unique encounter with each process. Alongside white learners like Emerson, racialized positionality emerged in the narratives of learners of color but in very different ways. Like Emerson, most white learners expressed a degree of hesitancy to use Spanish outside of the classroom to avoid potentially offending native speakers. Learners of color, however, did not express these preoccupations. For Jada, her Spanish-speaking interlocutors often encouraged her to practice Spanish even if they spoke English. For other learners in the larger dataset—especially Black learners—they expressed the likelihood of them not being competitive in the local job market without speaking Spanish. These distinct experiences inform their fears—or lack thereof—about using Spanish outside of the classroom. As such, it is important not to homogenize English

speakers in research by assuming how their sociolinguistic identities will be positioned in relation to Spanish and Spanish speakers. It is also important not to homogenize learners of the same race as a more expansive study can find intricate differences among them as well.

In addition to Jada, embodied racialization was prevalent across the larger dataset. For instance, many white Anglo women, in particular, recalled being called “barbie”, *gringa* (white, foreigner, American [fem.]), *chela*, or *güera* (white or fair skin [fem.]) in different parts of Latin America. They also mentioned being called *blanca* or *blanquita* (white [fem.]) by friends or co-workers in the United States. Learners of color were not called any of these terms. Embodied racialization can also be identified in the experiences of Emerson and Andrea. As a white woman, Emerson’s embodied racialization is the source from which her preoccupation about positionality emerges. For Andrea, if she was not perceived as a Black woman, she would not need to consider whether *negra* is suitable for her or the implications of identifying with it. Accordingly, it is important to consider how learners’ intersectional forms of embodiment impact the linguistic forms they encounter or do not encounter.

Lastly, indexical fields of racialization emerged in the experiences of all learners, and not just Andrea. However, in the larger dataset, learners of color expressed more concern than white learners about the indexical meanings of racialized terminology, especially those that applied to them. White learners were more likely to speak only about the referential meaning of terms that apply to them. For instance, a learner mentioned being called *gringa* often, which she defined as “white girl”, but she had no commentary about whether it was positive or negative. This outcome can be attributed to different factors. On one hand, white people are rarely expected to explicitly engage with their racialized identities (Bucholtz 2011). On the other hand, these learners were being interviewed by a Black woman, which could impact their comfort in speaking with any authority about the language of a minoritized group. As such, it is important to continue examining the lived experiences learners bring as racialized subjects and their impact on social meaning-making in Spanish.

These stories raise questions about the role of proficiency. Although proficiency is not a focal point of this project, it is clear that learners will encounter each of these processes in some capacity regardless of their level of Spanish proficiency. What is not clear is whether proficiency impacts the social and linguistic strategies learners use to navigate these processes. For instance, Emerson is an intermediate learner and her strategies to navigate her racialized positionality consist of avoiding Spanish, especially during service encounters or with peers. Instead, she opts to speak Spanish with interlocutors who are older or who have limited English proficiency. Jada navigates racialized embodiment by having overt conversations with native Spanish speakers, correcting interlocutors, and although not shown in the data, she tries to ignore feeling offended when someone calls her *chin(it)a*. Lastly, Andrea rejects identifying with *negra* and opts for other terms like *persona de color*, *afroamericana*, and *afrodescendiente*. Future work should address whether learners’ strategies are connected to proficiency levels. These studies should also consider how any of these processes impede or aid a learner’s development of proficiency.

Examining proficiency alongside these racialized sociolinguistic processes requires us to carefully consider the measurements of proficiency that are being used. Are we referring to proficiency in the Spanish language as a whole or proficiency in a given linguistic form? How are we considering social and cultural knowledge alongside linguistic knowledge? For instance, one might assume that Andrea’s understanding of *negra* is due to her limited Spanish proficiency. However, the data presented here and the larger dataset of Black learners I interviewed do not support such a claim. This is because, despite Andrea’s low Spanish proficiency, her lived experiences and intercultural contact at the community level inform her meaning-making process of *negra* and not just how the word translates. Within the larger dataset, most Black learners I interviewed had strong opinions toward the meaning of *negro/a/x*. A few Black learners with low proficiency expressed an initial dislike for the term until they realized it “just means *black*” and not the “n-word”. Two Black learners with intermediate and advanced proficiency developed an indifference or

preference toward the label. However, this did not appear to be related to their proficiency in Spanish as a whole, but rather their proficiency in and alignment toward the discourses of race that shape the social meaning of this specific term—all of which can be achieved without developing proficiency in Spanish.

For instance, those with higher proficiency also shared experiences of traveling in Latin America where they met AfroLatinxs who expressed pride toward their Blackness and the term *negro/a/x*. They encountered *negro/a/x* in different social, cultural, and political discourses across national contexts, which revealed its positive, negative, and neutral meanings much like their experience with the term “Black” in the United States. It was these experiences with cultural exchange that offered a more robust understanding of the term. Correspondingly, Jada expressed challenges with navigating the meaning of generic *chin(it)a* despite being an advanced speaker. In both cases, neither Andrea nor Jada had challenges understanding the referential meaning of *negra* and *chin(it)a*, respectively. Rather, they were tasked with navigating the social meaning and cultural functions of these terms, which may exist across proficiency levels.

Implications for Spanish Language Learning and Education

What are the theoretical and pedagogical benefits of exploring these three racialized sociolinguistic processes further in L2 Spanish learning, use, and education in the U.S.? Primarily, these processes provide the opportunity to expand “uncomfortable” (Schwartz 2023) yet cathartic and stimulating conversations on race in Spanish learning. Primarily, these processes help learners challenge binary logics of language, identity, and power, which includes tensions/alliances between ethnoracial groups and issues of racism, sexism, or xenophobia within and among communities of color. Although some frameworks are well equipped to engage learners on power relations between English/Spanish and Latinidad/whiteness broadly, there are fewer frameworks to engage non-white and linguistically minoritized learners in critical discussions on the sociolinguistic dynamics between them and Latinx communities. For that reason, I focus the rest of the discussion on the major takeaways from Andrea’s and Jada’s experiences.

For Jada, her experiences with vocatives were not only racialized but gendered and sexualized. It is well-documented that Asian women and femmes are subjected to unique forms of sexualization and exotification in the U.S. (Azhar et al. 2021; Chou 2012), but this practice occurs in many places and is enacted by men across ethnoracial groups. Media and academic discourses have critically examined the fetishization of Asian womanhood and femininity around the world, identifying it as an extension of Western colonialism in Asia. Celine Parreñas Shimizu (2007) argues that the hypersexual, yet docile Asian woman trope was ignited through films, artwork, and other media representations during U.S.-led wars in Asian nations, although it is not clear whether U.S. media is responsible for the presence of these discourses in Latin America. Nevertheless, these tropes can impact many Asian learners to different degrees based on ethnicity, nationality, color/phenotype, gender identity, linguistic background, and more. As learners acquire vocabulary for social interaction like vocatives, critical pedagogies can contextualize these terms with the racial, gendered, and classed dynamics to which they are connected. While all learners will encounter Spanish vocatives, their unique forms of embodiment will subject them to specific terms and even types of “othering”. Integrating this process into Spanish language learning can help learners uncover how their intersectional forms of embodiment are socially interpreted and linguistically defined in Spanish and how they influence the sociolinguistic variation they come across.

Beyond embodied racialization, Jada’s experiences show a need for Spanish language education to engage historical and contemporary experiences of Asian diasporas in Latin America. Like some of Jada’s friends and colleagues, generic *chino/a/x* is problematized by many Latinxs, although the discourse appears to be spearheaded by Latinxs in the U.S. or by Latin Americans who follow progressive politics. For example, *Remezcla*, an influential media brand for “Latino Millennials” headquartered in Brooklyn, New York City, published

a video⁵ on their Twitter and YouTube accounts in 2018 arguing that generic *chino/a/x* is racist if used as a “catch-all” for anyone of Asian descent. They draw a parallel between calling all Latinx people “Mexicans” in the U.S. which typically appears in racist, anti-immigration discourses that disregard the diversity of Latinx identities and experiences.⁶ Aiko Hilking (2021), a Colombian screenwriter of Asian descent, published an op-ed in which she reprimanded the practice as a form of othering that erases Asian diversity and Asian diasporas in Latin America. Including these voices, alongside contemporary stories on Asian communities in Latin America, opens up opportunities for learners to challenge the homogenization of Latinidad.

Andrea’s story demonstrates that labels and identity terminology cannot be taught as a vocabulary list. Andrea’s understanding of *negra* was extensively connected to her indexical field of the English term “Negro”. Because of this, she showed limited awareness of the range of ways that Latinxs, especially AfroLatinxs, orient to *negro/a/x* and the range of experiences that AfroLatinxs have with racialization in the United States. Instead, she seemed to engage solely with the (hyper)localized ways that some Latinxs in her Florida communities orient to Blackness and Black identity labels. Accordingly, her label choice considers how her Bahamian Blackness is juxtaposed with the Blackness of Spanish speakers in her communities. If provided the space, she could determine how her context of race in South Florida informs her experience with acquiring racial vocabulary. Her localized experiences are valuable as well as her sentiments toward the label. They should be leveraged and bridged with global perspectives. One example is the 1978 poem *Me gritaron negra* [They shouted *negra* at me] by AfroPeruvian poet, choreographer, and activist Victoria Santa Cruz (1922–2014). In this renowned poem, Cruz uses a first-person narrative, recalling the disgust in the voices and intentions of non-Blacks shouting *negra* at her. Ultimately, the poem reclaims *negra* via an unapologetic and blatant refusal to adopt a colonial gaze toward herself. This poem was mentioned by another Black learner in the dataset who expressed adopting a positive view of the label after learning about how Black Latin Americans have reclaimed it. Thus, teaching labels must be accompanied by cultural artifacts that highlight their use in discourses that are local and global, social and institutional, contemporary and historical. Ultimately, there should not be an expectation for learners to adopt the terminology that corresponds to their racialization or develop the same meanings as native speakers.

Ultimately, issues of race, racialization, and racism must continue to be explored in Spanish language learning and use in the U.S. by non-Latinxs. As we continue to move toward critical sociolinguistic frameworks in Spanish education, they must be informed by empirical research on learners’ experiences. The processes I have introduced in this article—racialized positionality, racialized embodiment, and indexical fields of racialization—can serve as a framework for future ethnographic and perceptual studies. Specifically, they are intended to continue a conversation that answers the following questions: What does it mean for non-Latinxs to learn Spanish in the United States or use Spanish with Latinxs in the United States? How do localized racial dynamics impact their engagement with Latinx cultures? How do their non-Latinx identities impact their social interactions with Spanish speakers? How do their linguistic repertoires as racialized people clash with notions of race in Spanish-speaking contexts? How can answering these questions inform critical research analyses and pedagogy that center the multitude of raciolinguistic identities and experiences that inform how learners across racial groups and proficiency levels navigate learning and using Spanish in the U.S. and beyond?

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Notes

- ¹ Participants provided written consent to complete an audiovisual recording of their interviews. To participate, each learner had to allow their audio data (without visuals) and/or the transcripts of their data to be presented in academic contexts like lectures, conferences, and publications. They also had the option to anonymize their identities by choosing a pseudonym.
- ² While some scholars have critiqued positionality statements (Oswald 2024), others argue that they increase scholars' awareness of power dynamics in academic research and allow readers to place a study in a greater context (Boveda and Ancy Annamma 2023; Zamzow 2023).
- ³ In Mexico, *chino/a/x* and *chinito/a/x* also refer to 'curly hair', which can be used as an adjective (e.g., *cabello chino*, 'curly hair') or a noun (*un chino*, 'a curly haired man' or *chinos/chinitos*, 'curls'). This usage dates back to the caste system of colonial Mexico (New Spain), which used *chino/a* to refer to mixtures between Black and indigenous people or "curly haired African–First Nations offspring" (Cuevas 2012). Another meaning of *china/o* in Mexico refers to getting 'goosebumps' (verb *ponerse chino/a*) from being cold, in which one could say (*piel china* or *chinitos*). Across Latin America, *chino/a/x* can be used as a nickname for people with physical features associated with Asian and/or indigenous communities, although like generic *chino/a/x*, this practice has become more scrutinized.
- ⁴ The construction of this course was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (#AC-264174-19). Dr. Melissa Baralt is the PI of the grant and I serve on the expert committee board, where I provide expertise on sociolinguistics, anthropology, and race/ethnicity. I also conduct research as a committee member to inform the coursework. Materials and resources from the introductory course can be found here: <https://laccmibridge.fiu.edu/editors-toolkit/tasks-lesson-plans-and-materials/> (accessed on 23 March 2023).
- ⁵ <https://twitter.com/remezcla/status/1001571133005512710> (accessed on 12 December 2019).
- ⁶ FOX News broadcasted on the show *Fox and Friends* in 2019 that U.S. President Donald Trump had "cut aid to three Mexican countries" in reference to El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The conglomerate has since issued an apology, but the mistake is a clear sign of indignation about Latinxs in immigration policy discourse.

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Article

“Dime con Quién Andas y te Diré Qué Piensas Sobre el Español de los US”: Language Attitudes and Motivation to Learn Spanish as a Heritage Language through the Lens of Social Networks

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Abstract: This study explores the motivation and attitudes of heritage speakers (HSs) of Spanish, focusing on the influence of their social networks. Previous research highlighted variations in HS motivation, attributed to social, cultural, and contextual factors. The study investigates how HS communities shape motivation and attitudes towards learning the heritage language (HL). Employing personal network analysis, the research surveyed 26 Spanish HSs in a Spanish heritage language program. Results revealed that HS networks primarily consisted of emotionally close family members. Positive and negative factors within these networks, such as language support, confidence, shame, and expectations, significantly influenced HS motivation and attitudes. Language attitudes within the network positively impacted individual attitudes, indicating a process of internalizing shared values. The study emphasizes the importance of considering the context surrounding HSs and suggests that addressing language expectations and fostering language support in communities may positively transform perceptions of Spanish in the United States. The findings underscore the effectiveness of a personal network approach in recreating the external environment beyond the language classroom.

Keywords: heritage speakers; Spanish; language learning; motivation; attitudes; social network analysis



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1. Introduction

We all belong to communities of connected individuals who influence our behaviors, inform our thoughts, and shape our attitudes (e.g., Stoessel 2002). Although these communities surely have a significant impact in the ways we use and experience language, our knowledge of and insight into them is limited by the research methods we use and the questions we ask. Differently from more traditional bilingualism research approaches that have examined isolated instances of language structures or linguistic behavior (e.g., Montrul 2004; Rothman 2007), in this study I seek to understand more holistically how our communities influence our linguistic experiences.

As an analytical tool, social network analysis (SNA) makes this possible. With SNA, the focus is on ecologically understanding the relationship(s) that exist(s) among the members of our community of interest, such as school groups, work colleagues, and families, and their dynamics, such as who you go to for advice or help during an emergency. Within the field of bilingualism, SNA is currently receiving increased attention, given its methodological and theoretical implications (e.g., Cuartero et al. 2023; Navarro et al. 2022; Tiv et al. 2020).

The goal of this study is to apply this perspective to investigate Spanish heritage speakers’ (HSs) attitudes and motivation to study Spanish in the context of the US. Within the field of heritage language (HL) studies, HSs are individuals who are raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who may speak or understand the HL and be, to some extent, bilingual in English and the HL (Valdés 2005). The acquisition of the HL is

often associated with a strong family connection, and the language is an important part of the individual's cultural identity. That said, because of its minoritized status, it is not uncommon for members of the family and of the community to discourage HSs from learning the language beyond what is acquired at home (e.g., Noels 2005; Noels et al. 2019). In Noels' studies, some parents controlled their children's autonomy by requiring them to study a language different to the HL because it was "more useful". Considering this, an important question to ask, and one that is often posed by Spanish HL instructors is, why do some HSs enroll in language classes and others do not? In this study, I aim to shed some light on this issue by examining two interrelated areas: the students' motivation to register in courses in which the HL is taught, as well as their attitudes towards the HL. Importantly, the tight relationship between these two constructs has long been recognized. Gardner and Lambert (1959), for example, proposed that, in order to have a predisposition to nourish language learning motivation, it is necessary to have a positive attitude towards that language. Additionally, motivation influences language learning. Conversely, when learning takes place, it tends to positively impact learners' attitudes towards the target language, towards its speakers, and ultimately it encourages the students to continue learning the language (e.g., Ortega 2009).

Motivation is a human behavior guided by the drive to self-determine our actions and activities (Ortega 2009). As framed in the self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan 1985; Ryan and Deci 2017), the framework employed in this study, motivation is categorized as ranging from being initiated by choice and inherent enjoyment (intrinsic motivation) to being imposed by outside sources (extrinsic motivation). This framework proposes that external values and behaviors may be progressively adopted into one's own, thus allowing individuals to function more successfully (Ortega 2009). As part of these external values, we find attitudes, which are a fundamental part of what is learnt through human socialization (Garrett et al. 2003) that index group status and membership and lead inter-group relations (Achugar and Pessoa 2009). Particularly, language attitudes refer to subjective evaluations of social varieties, and given their nature, language attitudes are socially defined, related to language ideologies, and often, implicit beliefs about language practices or varieties.

Previous research on HL motivation borrowed frameworks from the L2 field, which has been widely criticized (e.g., Ducar 2012; Oxford and Shearin 1994). Although Oxford and Shearin argue about the different learning circumstances found in second language settings versus foreign language settings, they importantly highlight that integration in the community may be more important for the students in the former classroom than the latter. Later, Ducar (2012) proposed that any model that aims to account for HSs' motivation and attitudes must frame them from a socially informed perspective in order to understand HSs in the larger context. In other words, examining motivations and attitudes at the individual level is not enough: HSs must be examined together with their social networks (i.e., family, friends, and peers). To the best of my knowledge, to date, no motivational framework has incorporated HSs and their communities in the way that SNA does. Considering this, the overarching goal of this study is to explore and demonstrate the potential of SNA as a tool to deepen our understanding of HL learning, HL attitudes, and HL motivations. Specifically, I seek to investigate how the network measures and characteristics of a learner's community can shed light on various aspects of HL motivation and attitudes.

Among other important advances, this study will further our understanding of HL communities and the impact they may have on college-aged HSs. Because the students who participated in this study are representative of subjects analyzed in related HL research, by using SNA to examine the relationships and interactions within their social circles, this study can create a social picture of our HSs' communities and even provide insights into how social factors influence HL learning, HL maintenance, and HL loss outcomes. In turn, this increased understanding of the HL networks will have pedagogical implications, as educators will be informed as to the benefits of having the students engage with their own communities. For example, by identifying the relevant community factors that drive motivation to study the HL, SNA can also help to answer questions about the

relevance of class content outside of the classroom, especially with the introduction of critical language awareness in Spanish HL programs. SNA can isolate which elements in the community promote positive or negative attitudes towards the heritage language and which can inform efforts to promote positive language attitudes and increase HL maintenance among speakers.

2. Social Personal Network Analysis

Simply put, SNA measures the composition of personal communities; that is, the connections between people and the settings to which these people belong. As a research instrument, it has been previously used in a number of fields, which include, but are not limited to, sociology and anthropology. Within SNA, personal social network analysis (PSNA)¹ focuses on a person and their relationship to a set of people, which suits my purpose of studying the relationship between one person (here, HSs) and their community. PSNA “explores[s] the social environment and isolate[s] its effect on people, using the variation from one person to another to explain the variation in what we think the social environment predicts or affects” (McCarty et al. 2019, p. 2). PSNA focuses on the individual and their close and distant relationships, in order to operationalize social contexts and look at the direct and indirect effects of such contexts on the individual (McCarty et al. 2019). Due to this, I am able to isolate certain contexts (represented in network members) in HSs’ networks and operationalize them. For example, PSNA has been used to describe the role of social networks for support (both emotional and tangible), influence or contagion (knowledge, rumors, behaviors, and innovations), major life stressors, and daily life challenges. This research has also shown that social interactions can be both positive or negative, or helpful or harmful, and just as they can integrate individuals into a community, they can reject them (McCarty et al. 2019). To understand how members in the personal network interact, I review primary components of PSNA with definitions extracted from Perry et al. (2018).

2.1. Components of Personal Social Network Analysis

PSNA seeks to explain the connections between any set of individuals and the relationships among them. When creating a personal network, the respondent and central component of the personal network (“ego”) informs the researcher about the other members (“alters”), who may be family members, friends, or colleagues. Then, we ask the ego about their ties with alters, in order to extract information about frequency of contact, language of interaction, and duration of the relationship, among other things. From this information, we can extract compositional (demographics, function, and content) and structural data (network density and core-periphery measures) to explain the network. Visually, this is represented in an “ego network”, a “social network”, or a “personal network”, consisting of alters connected to an ego and ties among alters. The information that we elicit from the ego allows researchers to “embed individuals [egos] and their decisions, outcomes, and life chances in the larger social context of relationships, group membership, and community [alters]” (Perry et al. 2018, p. 3). These data can be used to explain or predict behaviors, trends, and other conducts. That is, PSNA lets us obtain information about how someone’s group membership explains certain actions (e.g., socialization), revealing distinct structural and compositional features that can be used as predictors for behavioral outcomes. In order to construct a PSNA study like the previous study described above, we would have to go through the following steps:

1. Demographic information regarding gender, age, education, and so on, is collected from the ego.
2. The ego lists a number of alters who perform a type of exchange, provide services, or provide emotional support or appraisal, depending on the research interest.
3. The ego responds about each individual listed in the previous step; questions may regard their attitudes, opinions, and beliefs, as well as more tangible experiences (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994). During the analysis, measures from this step and the

first become compositional data that can be used as independent variables to predict other variables.

4. The ego answers whether an alter knows another, and more questions about the relationship between them (e.g., closeness between them and language of interaction), which creates the structure of the ego community that will allow us to grasp measures of the network.

When we refer to the network structure and composition, we are talking about the patterns of connections between the nodes or units in a network. These patterns can be represented in different ways, such as adjacency matrix tables or network graphics. Once we have a clear understanding of the network's structure and composition, we can use various measures or metrics to quantify different aspects of the network's behavior and dynamics. A set of powerful measurements from the network are as follows (McCarty et al. 2019):

- Homophily is the tendency to have social relationships with people like oneself. Similarity is a powerful predictor of socialization, because personal networks tend to be homogeneous with regard to many sociodemographic, behavioral, and intrapersonal characteristics (McPherson et al. 2001). Homophily may be a consequence of social influence (i.e., a person is impacted by existing contacts), but also a result from social selection, choosing contacts who are already similar to oneself, as this similarity is preexistent to the connection to the other person (Kandel 1996).
- Network density represents the existing ties out of all the potential ties, given the number of alters. It is a measure of overall network cohesion based on alter connectedness: a percentage of ties that exists out of all possible ties, ranging from zero (no actor is connected) to one (every actor is connected to each other).
- Core–periphery differentiates a core, a central and dense group of alters with whom the ego has the strongest ties and highest frequency of interaction (e.g., friends and family), and a periphery, referring to sparsely linked alters with fewer connections to core alters that are less strong and frequent.

These measures can be used for research purposes, such as to understand the network's resilience in unexpected events, the spread of information, or the role of specific groups in the ego's life. For example, Figure 1 provides an illustrative example from Strawbridge (2020) of a personal network and the main elements used in its analysis, as follows:

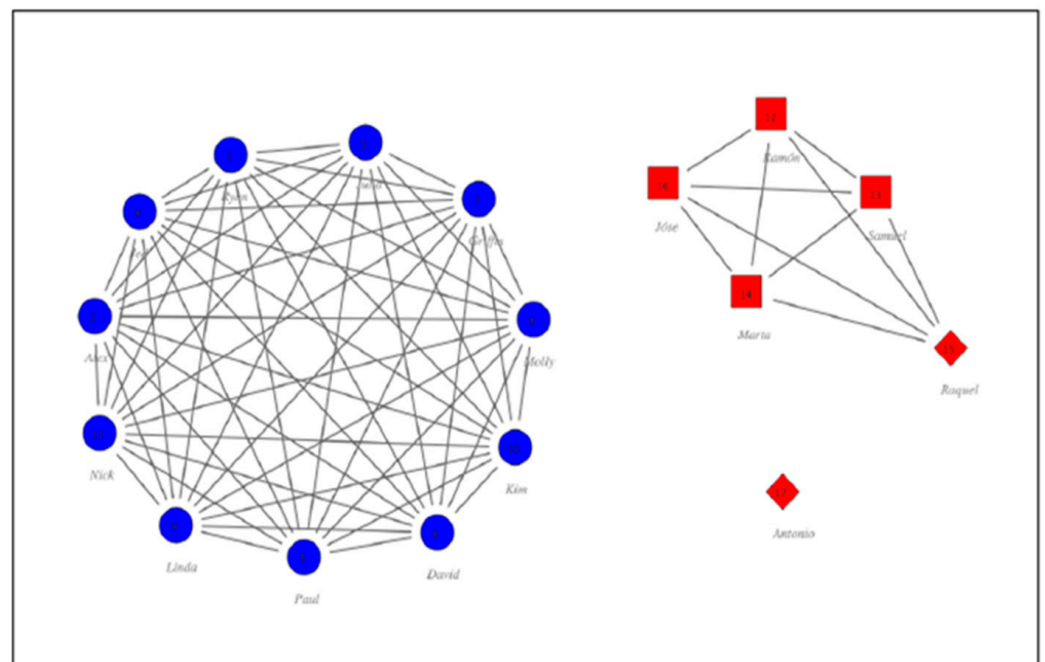


Figure 1. Strawbridge's (2020) social network graph from study abroad socialization: Anita. Graph key: circle = English native speaker; square = Spanish host family; diamond = Spanish peer.

In his doctoral dissertation, Strawbridge (2020) investigated how learning about network structure may inform bilingual development in study abroad programs. This work expands on Isabelli-García's network research on study abroad students in Argentina (Isabelli-García 2006). Figure 1 shows Anita's network, an American student in Spain. She reported the 17 alters with whom she contacted regularly in the host country. Two clusters are visible: one is a dense cluster in which every alter knows each other, because they are English native speakers in Anita's Spanish class. The other cluster is the host family ($n = 4$), with the addition of a person who does not belong to the family but who may have friends in common with them, as well as with Anita. There is an isolated diamond representing a Spanish native speaker from her internship. Based on her responses about language use with each alter, roughly 75% of her communication was in English, despite being in a study abroad situation. Strawbridge gathered scores from Spanish proficiency tests (DELE, *Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera*) and elicited imitation tasks throughout the semester, and these tests showed that this participant did not improve her Spanish skills. Strawbridge's study and, particularly this example, evidences the relevance of looking at structural and relational properties of personal networks in order to inform researchers about L2 proficiency development. For this participant, it seems that she did not take advantage of the study abroad context to improve her Spanish, since she mainly used English and contacted English speakers.

As presented, this research instrument uses the variation from one person's social environment to another to explain its effect on them. Hence, PSNA is an adequate instrument to account for HL experiences, record societal values, and capture the linguistic, cultural, and societal implications of what it means to be a heritage speaker. So far, PSNA has been employed to examine a variety of issues in applied linguistics. For example, previous research in linguistics has explained the spread of dialectal features (Milroy and Milroy 1985), L1 shift by looking at personal networks from the home and the host country (Stoessel 2002; Wei 1995), second language identity development (Doucercain et al. 2015), and, as aforementioned, the progress of L2 proficiency in a study abroad context (Strawbridge 2020). These studies looked at how the strength of ties facilitated or impeded linguistic changes (Milroy and Milroy 1985), how secondary (periphery, less close) alters promoted home language maintenance (Stoessel 2002), and how high levels of interconnected alters predicted lower acculturative anxiety (Doucercain et al. 2015). This previous research was fruitful in explaining the relationship between network properties and language and language-related outcomes; this methodology could become key in providing answers to HL acquisition- and language-related issues (e.g., attitudes and insecurity).

2.2. Network Science and Heritage Languages

Stoessel's (1998, 2002) work stands as an example of how network characteristics may inform L1 maintenance. Her purpose was to predict language maintenance and shift among migrants in the US. In order to achieve this, Stoessel gathered two networks: L1 networks in participants' home countries (e.g., Greece, China and Peru) and L1 networks of 10 first-generation migrants in the USA. The network questionnaire included questions about alters' relational characteristics (e.g., kin, friend, or neighbor), the type of support (e.g., borrowing money, advice, or childcare) between network alters and the ego, and the importance of alters to the ego (e.g., closeness). The questionnaire also included questions about the structure of the networks, such as size (alter number), density (connection among alters), and multiplexity (alters' shared contexts). Stoessel divided participants into weak maintainers, for those who were prone to language shift, and strong maintainers, for those who would maintain the L1. Then, the home country network was categorized as primary, and the host country as secondary. Stoessel found that being in touch with L1 speakers (i.e., frequency of contact with alters in the home country network) in the home country (primary network) was a key factor for language maintenance. However, some participants relied on their L1 contacts in the host country for personal needs, which enabled them to speak their L1 in more contexts and made them "strong" maintainers. The approach in

this study revealed the importance of looking at the structural and relational properties of bilinguals' networks to learn about language maintenance. For HL bilingualism, this implies that it is possible to portray how HSs employ both languages in different situations, how often they do so, and with whom, among other issues.

Within this framework, previous related research on Spanish HL speakers in the US is very limited (see Gonzalez 2011; Velazquez 2013; Zalbidea et al. 2023). Gonzalez (2011) looked at Spanish HL maintenance in Arizona, to analyze how Spanish speakers use their language resources in oral interaction and the linguistic insecurity that may emerge from it. The application of PSNA allowed her to investigate the language maintenance tendencies of HSs of Spanish residents in a predominantly English community. Twenty-five participants from a Spanish HL (SHL) classroom filled out a linguistic insecurity questionnaire adapted from a foreign language anxiety scale (Horwitz et al. 1986), an oral proficiency assessment (from the same institution), a language use questionnaire (Rasi Gregorutti 2002, based on Kenji and D'andrea 1992), a network questionnaire (Stoessel 1998), and an interview. This last SN questionnaire included questions such as when alters would be contacted, language use with them, and self-confidence. Additionally, Gonzalez carried out an interview with some of the participants. She split participants in three groups depending on proficiency (lower, intermediate, and high), and categorized alters' relations according to domain (neighborhood or family home), contact frequency ("stay-in-touch" questions), relationship, and language use (in each domain). After analyzing her data, she found that there was more linguistic self-confidence as the oral proficiency of the participants improved and as alters' age in the family home increased (e.g., grandparents were present). Along the same lines, linguistic self-confidence increased as English use decreased. Similarly, linguistic insecurity decreased but Spanish proficiency increased when students reported having more Spanish-speaking contacts in the family and school domains. In sum, the author concluded that the networks of her participants correlated with HL use (speaking and listening) in relation to the levels of reported HL insecurity. Additionally, interview data revealed that participants in the study were not only evaluating their language abilities but also considering the abilities of others with whom they were interacting and the context in which the interaction was taking place. This finding highlights the fact that language abilities are not static but are influenced by various factors, including the communicative context, the speaker's level of proficiency, and the perceived expectations of the interlocutors.

Relatedly, Velazquez (2013) focused on parental motivations, attitudes, and linguistic practices related to the intergenerational language transmission in a Spanish-speaking community. Her goal was to examine HL transmission to children depending on community linguistic ecology, given the centrality of family linguistic policies for the loss or maintenance of Spanish (Silva-Corvalán 1994; Tse 2001; Arriagada 2005; Worthy and Rodríguez-Galindo 2006). Velazquez quantified language attitudes (Karan 2000; Karan and Stalder 2000), ethnolinguistic vitality (Bourhis et al. 1981; Yagmur et al. 1999), family language use (Tse 2001), and the mother's network of social interaction (L. Milroy 1987). Velazquez looked at multiplexity (actors bound by more than one tie to each other), cohesion of network structure (interconnectedness between network actors), strength of ties, and density (total ties divided by all possible ties). Her study showed that, in cases where the mother perceived that Spanish was an important component of their children's identity and economic opportunities, there were more opportunities to develop oral and written competence. This analysis yielded potential opportunities for HL interaction and demonstrated attitudes toward Spanish use and maintenance in the family.

2.3. Heritage Language Motivations and Heritage Language Attitudes

In this study, I am mainly interested in the extrinsic motivations that guide HL learning and the language attitudes towards the HL, which have been often explained as being linked together (Gardner and Lambert 1972). In this last section, I will review how I analyzed HL learning motivations, HL attitudes, and an exemplary study researching the connections between HL motivation and attitudes through a network lens.

The self-determination theory emphasizes the influence of cultural and social factors on an individual's sense of volition and initiative, ultimately affecting their well-being and performance (Ryan and Deci 2017). These factors contribute to a spectrum of motivation types, ranging from intrinsic motivation, stemming from personal desires, to external pressures to conform. Deci and Ryan (1985) define intrinsic motivation as the internal drive that leads individuals to engage in an activity solely for their interest and enjoyment, without any external rewards or control. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, encompasses various subtypes that differ in the extent to which the activity is controlled by external factors. External regulation is a subtype characterized by performing an activity to obtain rewards or avoid punishments. Introjected regulation involves carrying out an activity to alleviate internal pressures like guilt or to boost one's ego. Identified regulation refers to engaging in an activity for personally relevant reasons, where the regulation is embraced as one's own. Integrated regulation is the final form of extrinsic motivation, where the learner feels that the learning process has become integrated into their identity and aligns with their broader life goals.

This continuum reflects how behaviors are internalized or integrated into one's own sense of self (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011). Internalization is described as a psychological process corresponding to the socialization process, where external behaviors become a part of oneself by adopting practices and values from the social context. Society, through this internalization, transmits behavioral regulations, attitudes, and values, both positive and negative, enabling individuals to maintain their connection to groups.

As mentioned above, an aspect that is socially distributed are language attitudes, which are reflections of locally constructed language ideologies and subjective evaluations of different social varieties (L. Milroy 2004; Leeman and Serafini 2016). Like attitudes towards other aspects, language attitudes are learned through socialization and are socially structured and structuring phenomena (Garrett et al. 2003, p. 5). Furthermore, they serve as indicators of group status and membership, influencing inter-group relations (Achugar and Pessoa 2009). Because of this, we can say that language attitudes are socially defined and connected to language ideologies, which are often implicit beliefs about language practices or varieties.

Language attitudes serve as ideological stances. These ideologies are often rooted in the belief that there is but one standard language that is built on the principles of correctness, authority, prestige, and legitimacy (J. Milroy 2007). All other versions of that same language (and consequently its speakers) are considered to be inferior. It is no coincidence that the standard variety is often the one spoken by the socially dominant and economically affluent group. And so, because in the context of the US (Spanish) HSs are minoritized and racialized subjects (e.g., Flores and Rosa 2015), their linguistic practices are also considered inferior and/or illegitimate (e.g., Beaudrie et al. 2021).

Zalbidea et al. (2023) conducted a study on the interconnections among psycho-affective variables for Spanish HL learning in higher education. They created a psychological network model, contrasting the association of language learning motivation and several variables: possible L2 selves² (Dörnyei 2009) adapted for HSs, family influence (Taguchi et al. 2009), intended HL learning effort (Taguchi et al. 2009), HL achievement goal orientations (Papi and Khajavy 2021), HL enjoyment and anxiety (Dewaele et al. 2019), perceived classroom environment (Peng and Woodrow 2010), and critical language awareness (Beaudrie et al. 2019). The psychological network modeling (based on Costantini et al. 2015) helped to conceptualize variables as part of a complex system of interconnected elements that are associated between them and then used to establish predictions and multicollinearities among all of them (Epskamp et al. 2018). Participants (n = 209) filled out questionnaires for each variable, which were later correlated to each other. The most salient variables were the possible HL selves (ideal and ought-to), HL enjoyment, and intended HL learning effort. Of particular interest to my focus is the strong salient relationship found between the ought-to HL self and family influence, since it is likely that participants include family members in their alter list for my study. The results found that HSs who

have a stronger sense of duty towards their heritage language and feel external pressure to study it in formal settings are more likely to have a performance-oriented goal, which seeks to demonstrate their ability in Spanish and outperforming their peers. In other words, these learners are more focused on achieving better results compared to others and demonstrating their language proficiency to gain recognition.

This is informative for my study because the ought-to L2 (here, HL) self is strongly correlated with introjected motivation (Takahashi and Im 2020), and this may inform my network analysis, even if I am only looking at alter connections and not psychological constructs. Secondly, critical language awareness seemed to be accompanied by a positive perception of the HL classroom, but also with lower familial pressure to study the HL in the formal context. According to their hypothesis, the pressure from family to prioritize studies in the HL contributed to the negative perceptions and beliefs about HL speech. This further reinforces the process of socialization of conventional language models. However, by fostering critical language awareness, HL learners can gain valuable resources to address linguistic discrimination and develop a better understanding of the legitimacy of language practices among bilingual individuals born in the US.

3. The Present Study

With this study I seek to further our understanding of the influence that HSs' social networks may have on their attitudes and motivations towards their HL. To achieve this, I have formulated the following exploratory question:

To what extent are the language learning motivations and attitudes of HSs influenced by their social networks?

3.1. Setting

This study took place at a southeastern university in spring 2022. This public university is located in Florida, in a midsize city with a population of 134,661. This city is below the state level of percentage of Hispanic population (11.9% vs. 25.8%, US Census, 2019), and it is not comparable in population to other urban regions of the state, such as Miami or Florida. However, this university has experienced an increase in enrolment from students of Hispanic background, from 13.68% (6855) in 2010 to 20.8% (12,743) in 2021 (Student Information File, 2010–2021).

3.2. Participants

At the beginning of the semester, I recruited students from the SHL program by asking their instructors to distribute an email with information about the survey and visiting their classes. Twenty-six HSs agreed to participate in my study; six identified as men and twenty as women. Before completing the social network questionnaire, they filled out the Bilingual Language Profile (BLP; Birdsong et al. 2012). This language dominance instrument has been widely used in bilingualism studies because of its reliability and it has also been previously used in the SHL field (e.g., Amengual 2018; Calandruccio et al. 2021; Olson 2020). Although the BLP is not a background questionnaire per se, it was ultimately selected because it included questions about previous language use, self-measured proficiency, background history (i.e., education in Spanish, life abroad), and language attitude items, which could be useful in interpreting results. This initial survey showed that HSs acquired English and Spanish sequentially or simultaneously (e.g., Montrul 2016, 2018). Since their average age of acquisition of English was 1.65 (SD = 1.68) and 2.23 (SD = 4.42) for Spanish, they had fewer years of schooling or literacy in Spanish (e.g., Mancilla-Martínez 2018); they therefore felt less comfortable speaking in the HL than in the dominant language (e.g., Prada et al. 2020), and, in most cases, Spanish was spoken at home.

On average, participants had received 15 years (SD = 2) of education in English and 5.1 (SD = 4.1) in Spanish. Looking specifically at the question regarding the language spoken with family, participants reported having lived 17.8 (SD = 4.8) years speaking English with their families, and 17.4 (SD = 5.43) years speaking Spanish with their families, which can be

taken as evidence of their bilingual upbringing before coming to the University of Florida. Looking at the percentages of language use, English was chosen with a frequency over 80% of the time as the language in the domains of friendship, school, and talking to oneself. Regarding the preferred language to communicate with family members, English was used 59.9% (SD = 30.43) and Spanish 40.5% (SD = 33.42); the high standard deviations may suggest some of these participants come from households which range from using Spanish only to English only, and both to differing degrees. It is possible that they use English to talk to their siblings and Spanish to talk to their parents and grandparents.

Additionally, participants were asked if they had taken SHL classes before: fifteen reported having no previous experience in the HL classroom, six reported having registered in one course before, and five reported having taken two courses. I also asked them about their family origin, which allowed me to extract the sociolinguistic generation³, heritage origin, and hometown.

3.3. Research Instruments

In addition to the BLP data, I collected information about the participants and their networks using a language motivation questionnaire (Noels 2005), and a language attitude questionnaire (Beaudrie et al. 2019), which lasted from 13 to 48 min⁴. Noels' (2005) and Beaudrie et al.'s (2019) questionnaires were completed by students in their own time, but then they met me on a different day for an in-person session. During this session, participants completed a network survey based on Krenz and Losee (2022), which lasted from 21 to 39 min. In total, participants completed 385 questions.

Language Motivation Questionnaire

To measure HSs' language learning motivations, participants completed Noels' (2005) questionnaire, adapted to Spanish HSs. This questionnaire included a total of 24 items: 3 items were rated as student amotivation (a lack of motivation), 12 items were rated as extrinsic motivations (a motivation source as external to oneself), and 9 items were rated as intrinsic motivations (motivation source as internal); I present a sample below. Importantly, although Noels et al.'s (2000) survey was originally designed with L2 learners in mind, a few years later, Noels (2005) modified it for German HSs in Canada. For the context of this study, the items were reworded for addressing the Hispanic community in Florida. This questionnaire was composed of questions with five-point Likert scales (one = completely disagree; five = completely agree).

- Amotivation: I can't come to see why I study Spanish, and frankly, I don't care.
- Extrinsic regulation: I study Spanish because it will help me get a better salary later on.
- Intrinsic regulation: I study Spanish for the pleasure I experience when surpassing myself in my heritage language.

Language Attitude Questionnaire

- To measure language attitudes, I utilized Beaudrie et al.'s (2019) survey. As indicated in the literature section, in using this questionnaire (19 items), a higher index of critical language awareness (CLA) would represent more positive attitudes towards US Spanish (and dialectal variation), bilingualism (e.g., code switching), and language maintenance. Similar to the previous questionnaire, participants used a five-point Likert scale. I provide examples below.
- Dialectal variation: In my opinion, people should use standard Spanish to communicate all the time.
- Bilingualism: I would not code-switch in front of my teachers because they may think I am less intelligent.
- Language maintenance: After college, I would commit to reading, writing, speaking, and listening in Spanish every day to continue developing my language.

Personal Network Survey

After participants completed the previous questionnaires, they continued with the PN survey, based on Krenz and Losee's (2022) customizable personal network survey. Amounting to a total of 166 questions, this survey was organized in the following four sections:

1. Ego attribute questions (four questions): participants answered about their age, gender, course, and previous course experience in the Spanish and Portuguese department.
2. Alter naming list (one question): participants listed the names of 10 people to whom they were close, and preferably, with whom they spoke Spanish. The question read "Please write down the names or initials of people close to you. For instance, it can be five relatives and five friends (in UF, or not), four relatives and six friends, and so on. Preferably, these are people that speak Spanish to you, but if you can't think of anybody else, please complete the other slots with English-speaking people that are close to you". The number of alters per network was not random. Previous studies with HSs and PSNA elicited 10 alters to allow for concise answers and avoid cognitive exhaustion (e.g., Perry et al. 2018). Furthermore, 10 alters may give a representative approximation of the people who belong to the most intimate layers of participant networks. However, it should be noted that network size itself is not a relevant variable here, but rather closeness, density, and alter characteristics, which were elicited in the following step.
3. Alter attribute questions (18 questions): First, participants were asked to provide information about individual alters in their social network (six questions: gender, age group, based on Krenz and Losee 2022). Some of these questions were adapted to fit my participants; for example, for *domain*, where alter and ego have met, it mentioned "University of Florida". Secondly, to look at motivation, four items elicited information about the linguistic rapport between the participant (ego) and their social connections (alters). Participants considered a specific alter and their relationship when answering each item. These items were based on Noels et al. (2019): expectations and shame of language use, support to learn the HL, and ease to speak the HL.
 - Language expectation: "This person" (alter's name) expects me to speak Spanish.
 - Language shame: I would feel ashamed if I could not speak Spanish to "this person" (alter's name).
 - Language support: "This person" (alter's name) supports and encourages me to learn Spanish.
 - Language confidence: I feel comfortable in my use of Spanish with "this person" (alter's name).

Finally, five items from the attitude questionnaire (Beaudrie et al. 2019) were selected, based on their representation of each aspect of the questionnaire (language variation, language ideologies, Spanish in the US, bilingualism). In this last section, the ego responded in lieu of the alter; that is, they speculated what the alter would answer (prompt: "Do you think ALTER'S NAME agrees or disagrees with the following statements?")

- Language variation: I believe certain Spanish varieties are better than other.
 - Language ideologies: People should use standard Spanish to communicate all the time.
 - Spanish in the US: I believe Spanish-speaking Hispanics in the US don't speak correct Spanish.
 - Bilingualism: I believe growing up with both Spanish and English confuses children.
 - Code-switching: I would try to avoid mixing Spanish and English in the same conversation as much as I can because it is not a proper way of speaking a language.
4. Alter–alter connections (up to 135 questions): the last section inquired about alter–alter connections. It elicited the ties or connections between alters in order to see the participant's network structure and density. Once participants confirmed the existence of an alter–alter connection, they were prompted with a question about alters' closeness and language use among themselves. Depending on whether there

was a connection between one alter and another, participants were prompted to answer another question about language use and emotional closeness between them.

All surveys were administered via Qualtrics. Reports were downloaded and read into RStudio, an instrument used for analyzing and visualizing quantitative data. In RStudio, I utilized the package *tidyverse* (Wickham et al. 2019) for the processing of data from the BLP questionnaire and the motivation and attitudes questionnaire. Then, the packages *egor* (Krenz et al. 2023) and *igraph* (Csárdi and Nepusz 2022) were used for the descriptive statistics and visualization of the social network survey.

4. Results

From the loaded data, I extracted informative measures that have been useful in previous research, such as compositional data, homophily, density, core–periphery division, and alters’ context (McCarty et al. 2019). First, for the compositional data (e.g., gender, age, and relation), I presented descriptive statistics in relative frequencies. Then, I presented the graphical visualization of participants’ networks. Subsequently, I compared alters after dividing them into groups, dependent on whether they were the same age and gender as the majority of egos (for homophily), emotional closeness (core–periphery), and depending on the context assigned by the ego (family, school, other). I carried out *t*-tests and analyses of variance (ANOVAs), looking for statistical differences between groups. Lastly, with multiple regression analyses, I explained which and how network variables contributed to ego’s language motivation and attitudes. Multiple regression analyses were successfully used in Doucerain et al. (2015) to investigate communication-related acculturative stress and general acculturative stress. Lastly, I implemented a simpler version of the psycho-affective model, based on Zalbidea et al. (2023), to understand the connections in alters’ subjective variables.

4.1. Composition

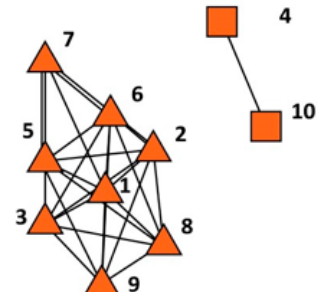
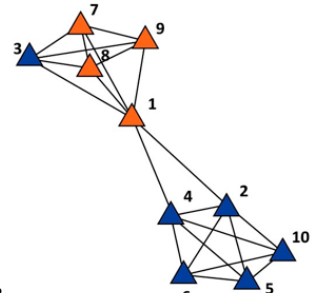
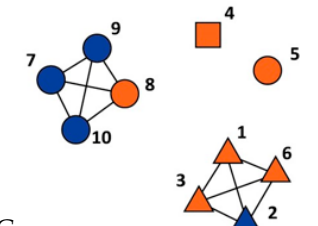
My participants were a sample of predominantly college age female⁵ students ($n = 20$, male $n = 6$) which may have predisposed the alter sample to be mainly female, as a 61% of alters ($n = 159$) were female. The most numerous alter age group was 19–30, at 42% ($n = 109$). The majority of alters were part of the family (59%) or school (30%). The participants’ frequency of speaking to these alters had a more diverse set of answers: about 49% of alters were spoken to every day or several times per week, 31% were spoken to once a week or every two weeks, and 20% were spoken to only once a month. Lastly, not all alters held the same intimacy/proximity to alters; 32% were not close, and 68% were very close to participants.

4.2. Density

Density, one of the most basic and widely used structural metrics for social networks (McCarty et al. 2019), measures overall network cohesion or connectedness. In other words, it calculates how many alters know each other (existing ties). Density values are obtained calculating the percentage of ties that exist out of all possible ties. It ranges from zero to one: a lower density number represents a network in which only a few alters know each other, whereas a higher density number represents a network where more alters know each other. Each of my participants ($n = 26$) named 10 alters with whom they spoke Spanish (for a total of 260 alters) and the average density was 0.388 ($SD = 0.116$), with some networks presenting a 60% of alters connected (density = 0.6) and other presenting only 20% (density = 0.2). I present below three social networks, representing the densest network, the sparsest network, and the average network. The symbols represent whether an alter was family (triangle), school (square) or other (circle), and the colors represent the emotional core (orange) and periphery (blue). In the following networks, the only person that ties the four alters together is the ego; it is therefore not represented because it is visually uninformative, as it is connected to every alter (see more in McCarty et al. 2019).

As presented in Table 1, these examples represent different social pictures of my participants and the people with whom they spoke Spanish. The networks above portray one dense network in which nearly everybody knew each other (A), one with two connected clusters (B), and a sparse one (C). Looking at network density may help researchers understand how the structure is fostering alter subjective variables or egos’ motivation and attitudes. That said, correlation analyses between network density and alter variables did not yield any significant results. This may imply that, for certain affective variables such as expectations, shame, support, or confidence, density does not seem to be a determinant measure, although it can be useful to visualize the ego’s networks and provide an initial understanding of network analysis.

Table 1. Network structures. Orange dots are core alters; blue dots are peripheric. The triangle is a symbol for family, the square for school, and the circle for others.

Network	Density	Description
 A	0.60	LM ⁶ ’s network presents an interconnected and dense cluster of alters who know each other (family) and an isolated dyad (school friends). In the cluster, everybody knows each other; the dyad comprises friends from school who do not know LM’s family. All alters are colored orange, which means that they were all considered emotionally close to the ego (core).
 B	0.42	GC ⁷ ’s network is made of two components of relatives connected to each other, with five alters in each one. Only one alter (no. 1) connects the two networks (nos. 2 and 4). This network could represent the nuclear family (nos. 7, 8, and 9) and the extended family (nos. 2, 4, 5, 6, and 10).
 C	0.22	AR ⁸ presents a sparse network composed of four components: two clusters of four alters, and two isolates. The cluster shaded in orange (the core, emotionally close to the ego) belongs to the family, although an alter from school and two alters from a different context are also emotionally close.

4.3. Homophily

As explained earlier, homophily is the tendency to have social relationships with people like oneself, based on similar ages, genders, and interests, among other factors, and it is a powerful predictor of socialization (McCarty et al. 2019). Because most of my participants were college female students, I selected the female alters of the 19–30 age group, which yielded a group of 71 alters (28% of all alters). Then, I compared the variables between the homophily sample and the remaining alters, using *t*-tests and Cohen D’s effect sizes.

Table 2 shows that this alter division yielded three factors that were significantly different between these groups, as confirmed by both moderate effect sizes and *p*-values. As can be seen, *language expectation* (*t* = 4.29, *df* = 138.07, *p*-value = 3.227×10^{-5} ; *d* = 0.56, CI = [0.288; 0.847]) and *language shame* (*t* = 4.56, *df* = 132.16, *p*-value = 1.143×10^{-5} ; *d* = 0.61,

CI = [0.335; 0.895]) were lower in the homophily group than in the remaining alter group. Because of the lower language expectations, egos may have felt less compelled to use Spanish with people who were in the same age group, and fewer negative emotions if they used English or Spanglish⁹. Interestingly, *language confidence* ($t = 2.813$, $df = 106.66$, $p\text{-value} = 0.0058$; $d = 0.42$, $CI = [0.149; 0.704]$) was higher for the remaining alters than for those of the same age as my participants. Though apparently a contradiction when contrasted with the other two variables, it is likely that egos do not use Spanish with their peers as often as they do with their family. If they speak to their peers in Spanish, it may mostly be in an educational setting, which may heighten unease. Egos may be reporting here that they are expected to use Spanish likely with their family. Although Spanish may not be their preferred or dominant language, if they did not speak it with their close relatives, that could be taken as breaking an implicit family language policy.

Table 2. Alter subjective variable means and standard deviation divided by homophily group. Average score and standard deviation for variables in each group over a scale of five (one = lowest; five = highest). Cohen D's and p -values are provided. Statistical signification is boldened and moderate to large effect sizes are in italics.

Alter Subjective Variable	Homophily Sample (n = 71)	Remaining Alters (n = 189)	Cohen's D	p -Values
Language attitudes	3.8 (0.894)	3.6 (0.971)	0.26	0.06
Language expectation	2.64 (0.289)	3.45 (0.783)	<i>0.56</i>	>0.001
Language shame	2.5 (0.564)	3.4 (1.026)	<i>0.61</i>	>0.001
Language support	4.2 (1.240)	4.3 (0.634)	0.14	0.27
Language confidence	3.6 (0.733)	4.07 (0.744)	<i>0.42</i>	0.006

4.4. Core and Periphery

Core-periphery refers to a network structure that examines the density and interconnectedness of alters. In this structure, certain alters create a densely connected core, while others, situated in the periphery, have fewer connections with both the core and among themselves. Generally, the core represents the group of contacts with whom the ego has the strongest emotional ties and, usually, the highest frequency of interaction, such as intimate friends. A way to visualize core and periphery is by splitting alters according to the ego's given score of closeness¹⁰; in this case, alters evaluated as "extremely close" and "very close" were assigned to the core.

In Table 3, I present the means of alter variables as a general group, average network core ($n = 178$), and periphery ($n = 82$). Table 2 shows that only *language support* was significantly different between these groups, as confirmed by both moderate effect sizes and low p -values: $t = 4.685$, $df = 121.67$, $p\text{-value} = 7.336 \times 10^{-6}$; $d = 0.70$, $CI = [0.432; 0.972]$. Since the core group scored higher in language support, we can interpret this as the core providing more encouragement towards egos' effort to learn and speak Spanish than the alters in the periphery. The remaining variables had high p -values and negligible effect sizes.

Table 3. Alter subjective variable means and standard deviation divided by core and periphery. Average score and standard deviation for variables in each group over a scale of five (one = lowest; five = highest). Cohen D's and *p*-values are provided. Statistical signification is boldened and moderate to large effect sizes are in italics.

Alter Subjective Variable	All Alters (n = 260)	Core (n = 178)	Periphery (n = 82)	Cohen's D	<i>p</i> -Values
Language attitudes	3.644 (0.791)	3.695 (0.791)	3.534 (0.676)	0.20	0.131
Language expectation	3.238 (1.477)	3.235 (1.499)	3.243 (1.436)	−0.005	0.9674
Language shame	3.196 (1.535)	3.179 (1.555)	3.231 (1.50)	−0.03	0.7981
Language support	4.292 (0.878)	4.477 (0.738)	3.890 (1.018)	0.70	>0.001
Language confidence	3.946 (1.127)	3.926 (1.159)	3.987 (1.059)	−0.05	0.677

4.5. Alters' Context

Lastly, I looked at the division of participants per context. Although participants provided information about nine different contexts (family, significant other, college friends, non-college friends, neighbors, work, through someone else, common interests, and other), I grouped these categories into three: family (family and significant ones), school (college and non-college) and other (the remaining categories). Dividing participants in this way revealed which settings fostered or hindered language motivation and attitudes towards Spanish in the US, as reflected by critical language awareness.

As can be seen in Table 4, ANOVAs were performed to compare the effect of the context on each dependent variable (alter subjective variables). This revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in *language expectation* ($F(2, 257) = 15.77, p = 3.48 \times 10^{-7}$), *language shame* ($F(2, 257) = 14.97, p = 7.06 \times 10^{-7}$), and *language support* ($F(2, 257) = 9.079, p = 0.0001$). *Language expectation* and *shame* were higher in the family context, compared to the school and other contexts. The interpretation may be similar to the results in the homophily group division: the egos may be assumed to speak Spanish to their families and corrected if they do not do so, especially given the fact that family is encouraging them to speak Spanish.

Table 4. Alter subjective variable means and standard deviation divided by context. Average score for variables and standard deviation in each group over a scale of five (one = lowest; five = highest). Statistical signification is boldened.

Alter Subjective Variable	Family (n = 184)	Other (n = 26)	School (n = 80)	<i>p</i> -Values
Language attitudes	3.596 (0.731)	3.592 (0.791)	3.755 (0.786)	0.326
Language expectation	3.642 (1.398)	2.653 (1.598)	2.650 (1.332)	>0.001
Language shame	3.590 (1.457)	3.000 (1.549)	2.650 (1.432)	>0.001
Language support	4.474 (0.833)	3.884 (0.711)	4.075 (0.924)	>0.001
Language confidence	4.012 (1.06)	4.153 (1.155)	3.75 (1.227)	0.146

4.6. Multiple Regression Analyses

After these first observations, I created linear models in order to describe language attitudes and motivation as a function of alter predictor variables. The dependent variables were the ego's CLA scores and the ego's motivation regulation scores. I provide independent/predictor variables below in Table 5.

Table 5. List of alter and ego variables utilized in the multiple regression analyses. The levels of categorical variables are in brackets.

Alter Predictor Variables			Ego's Variables
Demographic Variables	Alter Grouping Variables	Subjective Variables	
Gender (female, male)	Context (Family, School, Other)	Language expectation	External regulation
Age (19–30, 31–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60–69, 70–79, 80–100)	Closeness (Core, Periphery)	Language shame	Introjected regulation
	Frequency	Language support	Identified regulation
	Homophily	Language confidence	Integrated regulation
	Density	Language attitudes	Language attitudes

All the demographic and alter-grouping variables were utilized in the multiple regression analysis, and, then, only those that stood out were isolated into a second, and sometimes third, regression. Per each ego variable, a definition is provided for motivation (Noels et al. 2019; Ryan and Deci 2017) and language attitudes (L. Milroy 2004; Garrett et al. 2003).

4.6.1. External Regulation

External regulation is a type of motivation directly controlled by outside forces: one performs an activity because of a demand or contingency, which results in a reward or a punishment (e.g., better pay at a job or language requirement). In my results, the following two variables stood out: *alters' age*, especially those who were older than 50 (24% of sample¹¹) and *language support* ($b = 0.168$, $t = 3.048$, $p = 0.0025$). *Alters' age* negatively predicted *external regulation*. In having aged alters in their networks, egos may consider Spanish as a hand-me-down past-oriented language. *Language support* also seemed to contribute to external regulation, possibly due to network encouragement to learn or speak Spanish for their academic requirements or future careers. Although the overall model was close to significance ($R^2 = 0.056$, $F(9, 250) = 2.729$, $p = 0.056$), it was not statistically significant at the conventional threshold of 0.05.

4.6.2. Introjected Regulation

Introjected regulation is a motivation that is partially controlled by one who is holding up to others' evaluations (e.g., community demands) creating a controlling internal force, which may lead either to anxiety or self-pride. In my results, the following three variables stood out: *alters' age*, especially those who were in two age groups (31–39 and 60–69; 11% of sample¹²), *language shame* ($b = 0.146$, $t = 3.128$, $p = 0.001$), and *language confidence* ($b = -0.194$, $t = -3.404$, $p = 0.0007$). As it could be expected, it was likely that having more *language shame* would contribute to introjected regulation because of the emotional load depends on alters' judgments. Alternatively, it is reasonable to hypothesize that having more *language confidence* would negatively influence introjection. Overall, the model was significant ($R^2 = 0.08$, $F(9, 250) = 3.625$, $p = 0.0002$).

4.6.3. Identified Regulation

Identified regulation is a conscious engagement in a behavior because it is personally meaningful. It endorses already existent values and beliefs. In other words, one "identifies" with the new value and sees it as personally important. *Language support* ($b = 0.0822$, $t = 2.450$, $p = 0.015$) and *language confidence* ($b = 0.05$, $t = 2.381$, $p = 0.018$) were positive predictors of this regulation. Alter variables, such as encouragement and comfort in speaking,

provided by a majority of alters (no distinguishment in terms of context or emotional closeness), were positive towards a regulation that does not depend on community demands or requirements. These two variables foster relatedness to identity; that is, the ego's network provides the elements that benefit and satisfy relationships with other individuals and the larger social whole (Noels et al. 2019). The model was statistically significant ($R^2 = 0.05$, $F(6, 253) = 3.668$, $p = 0.001$).

4.6.4. Integrated Regulation

Integrated regulation is the most autonomous and volitional type of motivation and does not conflict with other abiding identifications (Ryan and Deci 2004, 2006). In my results, the following four variables stood out: *alters' age* (only six people, 80–100; $b = -0.452$, $t = -2.427$, $p = 0.011$), *language expectation* ($b = -0.060$, $t = -2.276$, $p = 0.020$), *language support* ($b = 0.124$, $t = 3.645$, $p = 0.0009$), and *language attitudes* ($b = -0.141$, $t = -3.753$, $p = 0.0002$). Having an integrated behavior may imply that the motivation is internalized to oneself. Alters' low expectations may signify that the ego has internalized the behavior and considers him/her as a genuine community member. Feeling alters' *language support* in speaking Spanish is congruent with their identity and belonging to the community, similar to the identity regulation above. Lastly, there was a negative influence of language attitudes on integrated orientation; that is, the lower the score of the alter on the CLA items, the higher the integration. This may be due to the items in the questionnaire measuring particularly US Spanish. Egos may have hypothesized alters' attitudes based on their own heritage varieties and standard language ideologies, but not necessarily US Spanish phenomena. In the case of linguistically conservative networks; egos may display less CLA in order to integrate in their individual language communities and perpetuate them as part of socialization in their community. This model was significant ($R^2 = 0.074$, $F(11, 248) = 2.892$, $p = 0.001$).

4.6.5. Language Attitudes

Language attitudes are “manifestations of locally constructed language ideologies” (L. Milroy 2004, p. 16) that signal group membership (Achugar and Pessoa 2009; Garrett et al. 2003). Positive attitudes towards US Spanish challenge standard language ideologies¹³ and may be represented in heightened critical language awareness, which is the questioning and the understanding of the relationship between language variation, language status, sociopolitical ideologies, and the repercussions of this relationship (Leeman 2005, 2012; Correa 2011). The variables that stood out were *alters' age* (31–39; 70–79; 7% of the sample¹⁴) and *alters' language attitudes* ($b = 0.206$, $t = 6.495$, $p = 4.44 \times 10^{-10}$). This means that, if alters had high scores of *language attitudes* (i.e., critical language awareness of US Spanish), the egos had high scores too, which is relevant, because having the same attitudes as the community is key in becoming part of a social group (Ryan and Deci 2017). The model was significant ($R^2 = 0.198$, $F(9, 250) = 8.116$, $p = 1.48 \times 10^{-10}$).

4.7. Alter Variable Correlations

To comprehend the impact of each subjective variable on other variables, I conducted correlations to determine item associations. This is a simpler version of the psychological network analysis presented by Zalbidea et al. (2023) in which they contrasted their motivation and socio-affective variables.

In Figure 2, I am drawing correlations between alters' subjective variables. That is, the ego answers in lieu of the alter (*language attitudes*) or the ego reports her feelings towards that alter when speaking Spanish (*language expectation, shame, support, confidence*). There were small positive but significant correlations between most variables ($\text{cor} < \pm 0.30$; $p < 0.001$). *Language shame, expectation, support, and confidence* showed small correlations, but a strong correlation occurred between *language shame* and *language expectation* ($\text{cor} = 0.678$, $\text{CI} = [0.607; 0.739]$, $t = 14.843$, $\text{df} = 258$, $p\text{-value} = 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$). This association can be interpreted as having an expectation, which is accompanied by disappointment if the

expectation is not met; in this case, if the ego did not use Spanish with the alter (as per their expectation), the alter would be ashamed of the ego. For the smaller positive correlations, if alters support ego's language endeavor, they may expect more use of Spanish with them. Lastly, as the nominated alters were close and frequently visited, language confidence may be added to the expectation–shame–support association, because the ego is accustomed to using Spanish with them.

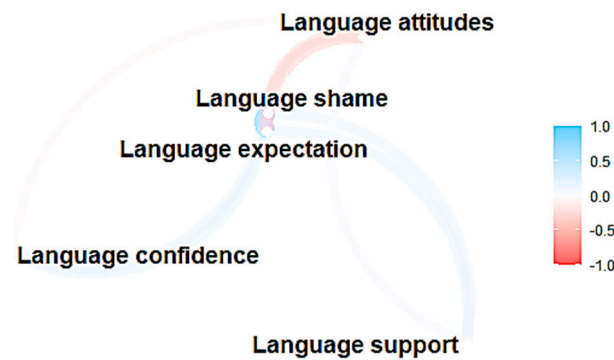


Figure 2. Network showing the correlation between alter subjective variables. Blue indicates a positive correlation, white indicates an absence of correlation, and red indicates a negative correlation.

Language attitudes, however, were negatively correlated with expectation ($\text{cor} = -0.365$, $\text{CI} = [-0.466; -0.254]$, $t = -6.3005$, $\text{df} = 258$, $p\text{-value} = 1.274 \times 10^{-9}$) and shame ($\text{cor} = -0.316$, $\text{CI} = [-0.422; -0.202]$, $t = -5.3615$, $\text{df} = 258$, $p\text{-value} = 1.833 \times 10^{-7}$). That is, alters with more positive language attitudes were associated with fewer language expectations and shame than alters with negative attitudes towards HL Spanish.

4.8. Summary of Results

In the previous section, I investigated my participants' Spanish-speaking networks, which may be representative of most informants who participate in HL studies, since most of the previously researched populations are college-aged HSs: most alters were family members, emotionally close, and frequently contacted. After dividing alters by homophily, I found that alters with the same age and gender as the ego provided fewer *language expectations* and *language shame* than the rest of alters, but these alters provided more *language confidence*. After the emotional closeness division, I could see that alters in the core provided more *language support* than alters in the periphery. Lastly, those alters in the context of family provided more *language expectation* and *language shame*, but also more *language confidence*, than alters in school. After these group divisions, multiple regression analyses utilizing the alter variables to explain motivational regulations revealed further interactions, as follows: introjected regulation was positively affected by *language shame*, but negatively by *language confidence*; *language confidence* and *language support* contributed to identified regulation; integrated regulation was negatively affected by language expectations and language attitudes, but positively associated with language support. Lastly, alters' *language attitudes* contributed significantly to the egos' own. The results from the multiple regressions above, besides being reliable, yielded an R-squared value congruent with the previous literature on language attitudes, which give a range from 3% to 16% of explanatory power to psychosocial factors (e.g., Masgoret and Gardner 2003; Serafini 2013; Torres et al. 2019). Lastly, the association among alter variables showed that *language expectation*, *language shame*, and *language support* may be representative of HSs, who have, in the same context, people that praise their efforts to learn Spanish and people that are disappointed in their bilingual English-influenced skills.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which social network analysis can contribute to the understanding of HL learning attitudes and motivations; in other

words, how network measures, or characteristics of one's community, can contribute to HL motivation and attitudes. To this end, I recruited 26 HSs to complete questionnaires gauging language learning motivation (based on Noels 2005), language attitudes as reflected by critical language awareness (based on Beaudrie et al. 2019), and a SN survey (based on Krenz and Losee 2022). The following exploratory research question guided this research:

- To what extent are the language learning motivations and attitudes of HSs influenced by their social networks?

Answering the first part of the question, learning about HSs' network composition and the subsequent group divisions (homophily, core-periphery, and context) was helpful in two ways. First, it helped me in visualizing the social picture of my egos/participants. This social picture may portray the typical Spanish-speaking college-aged community of HSs in Florida, especially of people who live in long-established and dense Hispanic areas (most of my participants were from Miami). The social situation may help to keep families and communities closer than newer migratory destinations (e.g., North Dakota) because business and culture have already prospered, and the community can be extended beyond the household. I propose that the location and setting also influence motivational regulations. For instance, my results showed that a predictor of external regulation, which not only deals with language requirements but also pragmatic/instrumental value of Spanish, was *language support*. Given the Florida context, the fact that my participants felt supported to speak Spanish and that they had external motivations to do so may indicate that their networks consider the HL relevant for their bilingual careers (but see Lynch 2022).

Secondly, although not statistically significant, I was able to isolate which alters may play an important role in *language expectations*, *shame*, and *support* (e.g., family), and those who did not (e.g., same-age alters). Additionally, in the multiple regression analyses, a predictor of introjected regulations emerged: *language shame* and *language confidence*, which both contributed negatively to this regulation. This finding is relevant because it may illustrate heritage speakers' preference for standard varieties of Spanish (e.g., Gasca Jiménez and Adrada-Rafael 2021), due to the support they receive from alters who may be monolingual Spanish speakers (e.g., older family members). Simultaneously, HSs may have disdain for their own bilingual features (e.g., Beaudrie et al. 2021) because of the shame and disappointment they also experience from their same network community.

Since this study utilizes the self-determination theory framework for the analysis of language learning motivation, it presupposes four types of motivation regulations that depend on extrinsic forces: external, introjected, identified, and integrated (Ryan and Deci 2017; Deci and Ryan 1985). In the previous multiple regression analyses, I found that the alter subjective variables that would yield negative emotions, i.e., *language shame*, were related to introjected regulation. This type of regulation involves approval from others and creates a controlling internal force, a sense that one "should" or "must" do something (Ryan and Deci 2017). Earlier studies have revealed the pressure students experience within their families to uphold their heritage language. Consequently, they enroll in courses as a means to fulfill this obligation, even if it may not be personally fulfilling for them (Comanaru and Noels 2009). Alternatively, *language support* and *language confidence* were present at different levels playing different roles. Above, I interpreted that support to study the language may influence instrumental motivations (external regulation) to learn Spanish, but also identity (identified regulation) and integration (integrated regulation) of behaviors, which are explained by the fulfillment of relatedness¹⁵.

Answering the second part of the research question, a predictor of egos' attitudes was alters' attitudes. That is, if the participant was part of a network with positive language attitudes towards US Spanish, theirs would be positive too. My research confirms what others have found, that individuals' mindsets often align with those of the community due to the absorption of external principles and convictions, regardless of their positivity or negativity, in other words, the phenomena of interiorization (Deci and Ryan 1985; Ryan and Deci 2017). Sharing these values is a result of socialization, and they gradually become

part of oneself as they develop into being more congruent with one's identity (Ryan and Deci 2017).

However, I also found that language attitudes, more particularly challenges to standard language ideologies, were negatively predicting integrated regulation. In order to tap into the deepest source of motivation for HSs to speak Spanish, they needed to assimilate the prevailing language ideologies within their community. As I previously mentioned, having the same values towards language may be part of socialization, even if these attitudes are somewhat linguistically conservative. The results from Zalbidea et al. (2023) support this idea, as they found, in their network model, tentative evidence of less critical language awareness being associated with more familial pressure to study the HL in formal contexts. In other words, formally studying the HL was promoted in contexts with lower critical language awareness, probably due to the belief that education institutions are central in internalizing dominant ideologies about language appropriateness and standardness (Leeman 2012). It may be possible that the negative schemas surrounding the HL may be present in HSs' social context and subsequently interiorized. Despite being linguistically conservative, language attitudes such as these index integration in their communities (Achugar and Pessoa 2009).

This finding is particularly relevant and, in connection with a critical language awareness approach, has great potential for pedagogical implications. It was shown that students' perceptions of *language expectations* could lead to feelings of *language shame*. To combat these expectations, instructors ought to help HSs become conscious of the social nature of linguistic ideologies so that students can become agents of change (e.g., Freire 1976). Instructors ought to help students to advocate for their HL and for other HL speakers who have not had the opportunity to engage with critical thinking about language. In other words, once HSs take our SHL courses, they can become HL ambassadors in their communities emblazoning bilingual varieties, honoring all dialects, and representing a future for the HL. This can be achieved by empowering students with knowledge, letting them research their relationship to Spanish and their families, community-based projects, and so on (e.g., Parra 2021).

In sum, this study has ultimately depicted language motivation and attitudes through a socially informed perspective, aligning with the recommendations put forth by previous research (Beaudrie and Loza 2022; Ducar 2012; Ortega 2021). It has allowed me to analyze more in depth the roles that language shame, support, and confidence play with motivation, especially with introjected, identified, and integrated regulations. These results align with the range of previous literature on explanatory power to psychosocial factors (e.g., Masgoret and Gardner 2003; Serafini 2013; Torres et al. 2019).

6. Conclusions

This study has provided novel insights into the understanding of the influence of social networks on HSs' motivation and attitudes towards learning Spanish. It has shown evidence of alters being a source of both negative (e.g., *language shame*) and positive (e.g., *language support*) influence to learn and maintain the HL. The findings offer methodological and pedagogical implications on how we need to consider the context beyond HSs. In this sense, this SN survey has been efficient for recreating the environment outside of the classroom and showing how language shame, support, and confidence shape students. However, these findings should be interpreted considering their own limitations.

To begin with, the network size was not large enough to capture a clear emotional core and periphery. In the case of HSs, it is probable that only 10 specific alters would be the most relevant people in their social circles, but not enough to represent the complex relationships in the network; 15 may provide a more complex analysis (Burt 2000). Furthermore, most alters provided were mainly Spanish speakers, but there may be English-speaking alters who may also influence students' decision regarding learning Spanish. This is a shortcoming that must be addressed in future research. Lastly, an important factor to take into account when drawing the alter list is the current age and situation of my participants,

since the college years may be, for many students, the moment in which they choose, with freedom, their own social circles and in which they start developing their own communities. PSNA literature has acknowledged the impact of the college years on cultural minority students (e.g., Lukács and Dávid 2019; Rios Aguilar and Deil-Amen 2012).

Beyond the sample size, answers depended on egos' subjectivity, and they may not be fully reliable, especially in questions in which HSs' guessed alters' opinion—alters may have never explicitly expressed their opinion on the same items that egos were asked about. Similarly, egos reported how they felt about their alters and the repercussion of speaking (or not) Spanish with them but alters may not have voiced their concern or support. Egos may have adjusted alters' answers to the supposed role of those people in their lives (e.g., "how is my father not going to support my decision to learn Spanish?"). Lastly, further research would benefit from including a sample of alters and egos who belong to different backgrounds (e.g., not registered in a Spanish HL program or not enrolled in college) because we would be able to capture heritage speakers' network configurations in more diverse life situations.

I conclude with pedagogical suggestions to improve HL learners' outcomes. Considering the alters' role in generating language expectations, language shame, and language support, I propose that students should know about their networks. That is, they should be aware of the people in their respective networks and how they influence their learning. For instance, by utilizing a user-friendly app like Network Canvas Architect (Janulis et al. 2023), students can visualize with whom they speak Spanish and set goals to broaden their language usage beyond those limited interactions. By helping students acknowledge the context in which they use Spanish, they may be inclined to actively expand their Spanish-speaking networks. Future studies should investigate the implementation of social network-based activities in the classroom to promote language use and student retention. Similarly, students can work on lowering language shame and fostering language support by talking about Spanglish with members of their network and research about misperceptions of it in order to dismantle language ideologies. This can be achieved with oral histories and/or family cultural projects. In theory, the network effect should work both ways. If students can effectively engage with their communities to address language expectations and cultivate language support, we may observe a positive transformation in their networks regarding the perception of Spanish in the United States.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ SNA is divided into sociocentric network analysis and personal social network analysis. Sociocentric or whole networks investigate the pattern of relationships between actors in a defined and limited community in a context (McCarty et al. 2019). For instance, with sociocentric network analysis, we could research the relationships between the employees of a company or students in a classroom.
- ² This term is borrowed from the theory of possible L2 selves (Dörnyei 1994, 2009), which posits that learners perceive an association between their current and future self-concepts, and they desire to move from one's actual to future L2 selves, which drives their motivated learning behavior.
- ³ Here, "generation" refers to Silva-Corvalán's (1994) definition of sociolinguistic generation, which labels individuals depending on an individual's age or their predecessors' when they arrived or were born in the United States.
- ⁴ Students were able to stop and resume with the questionnaire later.

- 5 In the SHL program, the majority of students are female; hence, there were more female participants.
- 6 LM was a 3rd generation Cuban student taking her first class in the SHL program (intermediate proficiency level). She spoke regularly in Spanish with her grandparents and relatives.
- 7 GC was a 3rd generation speaker from a Puerto Rican background taking her first SHL class (intermediate proficiency level). She would speak Spanish regularly with her mom and her girlfriend.
- 8 AR was a 2nd generation speaker from Nicaragua. She was raised by her parents exclusively in Spanish and was regularly in touch with family in Nicaragua.
- 9 Spanglish refers to the linguistic phenomenon resulting from the contact between Spanish and English in the United States (Fairclough 2003).
- 10 On a scale of one to five, how close are you to this person? one = not close at all; two = less close; three = somewhat close; four = very close, five = extremely close.
- 11 Age group: 50–59 ($b = -0.326$, $t = -1.969$, $p = 0.05$); age group: 60–69 ($b = -0.373$, $t = -2.013$, $p = 0.045$); age group: 80–100 ($b = -0.662$, $t = -2.280$, $p = 0.023$).
- 12 Age group: 31–39 ($b = -1.061$, $t = -2.375$, $p = 0.018$); age group: 60–69 ($b = -0.777$, $t = -2866$, $p = 0.004$).
- 13 Standard language ideologies assume that there is a variety that holds correctness, authority, prestige, and legitimacy over others (J. Milroy 2007).
- 14 Age group: 31–39 ($b = -0.514$, $t = -3.124$, $p = 0.001$); age group: 70–79 ($b = 0.269$, $t = 2.235$, $p = 0.026$).
- 15 Relatedness refers to a sense of warmth, security, and connection between the learner and other people in that social context (Comanaru and Noels 2009).

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Article

Bilingual Texting in the Age of Emoji: Spanish–English Code-Switching in SMS

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Abstract: Technology and computer-mediated communication (CMC) have quickly transformed the means of interaction among monolingual and bilingual individuals alike, especially in the younger generations. While e-mail once replaced traditional “snail mail”, today’s youth networks mainly via social media and short message services (SMS). Digital communication has thus become a fertile ground for sociolinguistic research. The present study aims to contribute to the field of “electronic” code-switching, specifically in the emerging area of text messaging. To this end, I analyze The Bilingual Youth Texts Corpus, a collection of text messages among urban emergent Spanish–English bilinguals in New York City. The main findings indicate that (1) although it is not the most common practice, participants do engage in code-switching when texting each other; (2) their language mixing obeys most of the socio-pragmatic and communicative patterns attested in oral production (such as emphasis, elaboration, lexical need and, especially, tag switches) along with other functions (textisms) which are idiosyncratic to CMC; and (3) the language choices made by these bilinguals reveal a linguistic and a cultural belonging to two worlds where they may and must use both languages to fully express themselves online just like in real life.

Keywords: Spanish–English code-switching; text messages; textisms; computer-mediated communication; bilingualism; biculturalism



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1. Introduction

Technology and, more specifically, computer-mediated communication (CMC) have rapidly altered how monolingual and bilingual individuals interrelate. This impact is particularly pronounced among the younger generations, who have experienced a paradigm shift in their interaction patterns within the last couple of decades. The late 20th century witnessed the advent of the Internet, bringing with it a faster and more convenient alternative to traditional postal, or “snail”, mail—e-mail. This form of communication not only expedited the exchange of information but, in some instances, entirely supplanted the conventional postal system. As we stepped into the 21st century, however, the dynamics of interpersonal relationships among youths underwent a revolutionary transformation. The rise of social media platforms, direct messaging, chats, and short message services (SMS) has played a pivotal role in reshaping how young individuals engage with one another. These digital avenues not only facilitate instant communication but also foster new modes of expression and connection.

According to CTIA (the wireless industry association previously known as the Cellular Telephone Industries Association), US wireless customers exchanged more than 2.1 trillion text messages in 2022.¹ Furthermore, a 2023 study on teen smartphone usage reported that over half of their participants received 237 or more notifications per day, including social media apps and text messages.² These numbers prompt reflection on the profound impact technology has on shaping the communication landscape and its implications for sociolinguistic studies. Digital communication platforms serve as virtual laboratories where language choices, linguistic innovations, and communicative styles can be observed in real time. Moreover, the abbreviated and informal nature of interaction used in such platforms

often leads to the emergence of new linguistic features, including emojis, acronyms, and abbreviations. This phenomenon becomes particularly fascinating when two or more languages come into play. For instance, Verheijen et al. (2018) found that adolescents use more English in CMC “to distinguish themselves from older Dutch speakers and boost their youthful expressivity” (p. 66).

Understanding how these linguistic elements evolve in the younger generations adds another layer to studies on bi- and multilingualism. Consequentially, research on language choice and/or language mixing in CMC has experienced exponential growth since the late 1990s. Numerous works have delved into online language use among bilingual and multilingual communities—see, for instance, (Danet and Herring 2007; Dorleijn and Nortier 2009; Androutsopoulos 2013; Lee 2017; Verheijen et al. 2018; Leppänen and Peuronen 2020; or Verheijen and van Hout 2022; among others).

Some scholars have observed differences in code-switching patterns across CMC platforms. For instance, Paolillo (2011) noted a tendency for synchronous modes to favor this practice, while asynchronous modes tended to disfavor it. Moreover, Verheijen et al. (2018) found that MSN chats had the highest frequency of code-mixing, closely followed by WhatsApp, then Twitter (now known as X), and finally SMS.³ On the other hand, research has unanimously highlighted the role that code-switching plays in fulfilling specific discourse functions and expressing identity online, including “creative and playful uses of linguistic resources, which exploit available planning opportunities and are reflexively mobilized in discourses of cultural diversity or hybridity” (Androutsopoulos 2015, p. 187). Relevant contributions to the field over the last three decades encompassing a broad range of CMC formats—both synchronous and asynchronous—and involving different language pairs are briefly summarized hereafter.

One of the earliest studies on bilingual online forums was Paolillo’s (1996), who found that Punjabi was used for marked discourse functions. Swiss–German code-switching in Internet Relay Chats (IRC) was explored by Siebenhaar (2006), while Androutsopoulos (2007) examined language choice and code-switching in German-based web forums and concluded that its discourse functions were comparable to those attested in conversational code-switching. Related works include Kytölä’s (2013) research on multilingual web discussion forums and Leppänen’s (2012) on Finnish–English fan fiction.

Language mixing in e-mail was first investigated by Georgakopoulou (1997) with Greek–English messages. Dascalu (1999) compared e-mail messages in three groups of bilinguals (Belarusian–English, Korean–English, and Romanian–English), while Warschauer et al. (2002) explored Egyptian Arabic–English code-switching in young professionals. Montes-Alcalá (2005) established that Spanish–English code-switching in e-mail served similar purposes to those observed in oral discourse. In his monograph, Hinrichs (2006) examined the discourse functions of English–Jamaican Creole code-switching and how they relate to identity issues. Similarly, Tsiplakou (2009) claimed that Greek–English code-switching in e-mail was an established and accepted practice with specific discourse functions. Finally, Negrón Goldbarg’s study (Negrón Goldbarg 2009) on e-mail exchanges among Spanish–English bilinguals concluded that Spanish was used for intimate, informal exchanges, while English usage was mainly motivated by technical terms or to draw on American frames of reference.

Regarding social media, X (formerly known as Twitter) has been the object of numerous studies about bilingual or multilingual practices, such as Lanz Vallejo’s (2011) on Spanish–English tweets, Novianti’s (2013) exploring different language combinations, Jurgens et al.’s (2014) on multilingual hashtags, and Lavender’s (2017) on Valencian Catalan and Spanish tweets. Likewise, different combinations of language mixing on Facebook have been examined by scholars such as (Halim and Maros 2014 (Malay–English), Androutsopoulos 2015 (German–Greek), Hinrichs 2016 (German–English), Ting and Yeo 2019 (English, Malay, and Chinese) and Fernández-Mallat 2020 (Spanish–English), among others).

Code-switching in blogs has been investigated by (Montes-Alcalá 2007) (Spanish–English blogging) and by Lienard and Penloup (2011), who argued that switching from French to English serves as an identity marker among youngsters. Additional research on

bilingualism and language mixing across different CMC genres (including social networks such as MySpace, e-mail, chats, and instant messages) was undertaken by (Magaña 2013 and Montes-Alcalá 2015 (both focusing on Spanish–English) and Barasa 2016 (on English, Swahili, and vernacular languages in Kenya)).

However, a limited number of studies have specifically delved into bilingual texting. Lin (2005) conducted a pilot survey among Chinese–English bilingual college students in Hong Kong, revealing that a majority of them chose to write bilingual messages, especially the younger students. Despite the added complexity of inputting characters from both Chinese and English, mixing languages in text messages suggested an emerging pattern of bicultural identity among young Hongkongers. Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) explored language choice among Arabic–English university students in Jordan. Their findings indicated that code-switching served specific sociolinguistic functions, such as lexical gaps, greetings, euphemisms, and quotes. In a related domain, some scholars have investigated code-switching in WhatsApp groups. Wentker (2018) studied group identity and social meaning in English–German bilinguals, while Pérez-Sabater (2022) examined language choice in a trilingual (Catalan, English, and Spanish) community and concluded that code-switching served to construct in-group solidarity and identity.

As outlined, there exists a considerable and ever-growing body of research carried out on bi- and multilingual online practices. Yet, it appears that there is a noticeable lack of studies specifically focusing on code-switching in text messages, particularly involving Spanish and English. This is a surprising fact considering that Spanish boasts near 500 million native speakers. Furthermore, its presence online has surged by 1500% in the last 20 years, and, according to the Internet Society Foundation, it currently stands as the second most common language used on the Internet after English.⁴

In an attempt to address such a gap and better understand the nature of Spanish–English texting in young generations, the present study analyzes a corpus of SMS from emergent urban bilinguals in New York City. The research aims to investigate to what extent these young individuals engage in the practice of mixing Spanish and English in their text messages, whether their code-switching patterns adhere to those socio-pragmatic and communicative strategies typically attested in oral production, and whether there are any functions that seem to be idiosyncratic to bilingual texting among this demographic group.

The findings suggest that, although it is not the most frequent linguistic practice in this cohort, participants employ code-switching in their text messages. While most of their switching patterns closely mirror those observed in natural oral production, some others appear to be unique to this mode of digital communication. Additionally, their language choices align with a linguistic and cultural belonging to two worlds, where the use of both languages is not only optional but often necessary for full self-expression online, just like in real-life communication.

2. Materials and Methods

The material used for this study is the Spanish/English Bilingual Youth Texts (BYTs) Corpus. The corpus, collected as part of a project entitled “Literacies of Bilingual Youth: A profile of bilingual academic, social, and txt literacy”, was compiled and developed in 2016 by Michelle A. McSweeney (2016) (Johnson) and the Second Language Acquisition Lab at the CUNY Graduate Center, who generously made it available and free to researchers interested in text messaging from any perspective or discipline.⁵

As described on their website (<https://byts.commonsc.gc.cuny.edu/> accessed on 15 January 2024), the corpus consists of 44,597 text messages sent and received by young bilinguals in New York City. Participants signed two consent forms in order to allow their messages to be downloaded directly from their phones and to include fully intact conversations as well as metadata about their phones and messages. The SMS in the corpus included spam, automated messages, and mass messages from participants’ cellphone carriers. Messages were categorized as Spanish, English, bilingual, or other (referring to messages such as emojis, proper nouns, or acronyms). Conversations were kept intact and

identified with a conversation number, the relationship type between the texters, and the gender of the receiver. When the timestamp was available, it was also included.

Out of the fifty participants who were enrolled in the broader project, fifteen donated their messages to the corpus (six females and nine males, self-reported). They shared many social and cultural norms, came from similar backgrounds, and most knew each other in a face-to-face setting. All were emergent Spanish–English bilinguals living in New York City and born in Latin America. The vast majority (nine) were born in the Dominican Republic, three were born in Ecuador, one in Costa Rica, one in Guatemala, and one in El Salvador. All but three of them arrived in the United States as teenagers. They spoke Spanish at home and English at school and/or work. At the time of the project, they were enrolled in Pathways to Graduation (a high school equivalency program) and were developing literacy skills in both languages. The ages for eight of them ranged from 17 to 19 years old while the remaining seven ranged from ages 20 to 22. Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the participants as presented in the BYTs corpus.

Table 1. Demographics of the BYTs corpus participants.

User ID	Gender	Age Range	Birthplace	Age of Arrival to the US
U01	F	17–19	Ecuador	17
U02	F	20–22	Dominican Republic	18
U03	F	20–22	Dominican Republic	9
U04	M	17–19	Ecuador	18
U05	F	20–22	Costa Rica	18
U06	F	20–22	Dominican Republic	12
U07	M	20–22	Dominican Republic	5
U08	M	20–22	Dominican Republic	15
U09	F	17–19	Dominican Republic	16
U10	M	17–19	Dominican Republic	19
U11	M	17–19	Guatemala	17
U12	M	17–19	Dominican Republic	14
U13	M	17–19	Dominican Republic	8
U14	M	20–22	El Salvador	18
U15	M	17–19	Ecuador	17

For the present study, 2855 bilingual SMS were manually extracted from the BYTs corpus, which represented 6.4% of the total. This bilingual subset yielded 3167 code-switching tokens. Each token was then classified according to the primary communicative function it appeared to fulfill. Given the absence of a methodology specifically designed to analyze SMS data, I followed the traditional sociolinguistic framework established by researchers in the field of Spanish–English code-switching (among others, Valdés-Fallis 1976; Jacobson 1977; Poplack 1980, 1981; McClure 1981; Gumperz 1982a; and Zentella 1997). These scholars have consistently identified a number of socio-pragmatic and communicative strategies accomplished by code-switching in natural production, such as quotations, emphasis, repetition, clarification, elaboration, topic shift, lexical gaps, and linguistic routines or crutches just to name a few.

Notwithstanding, assigning a specific function to each switch can prove challenging, and, as Zentella (1997, p. 99) once hinted, “pinpointing the purpose of each code switch is a task as fraught with difficulty as imputing the reasons for a monolingual’s choice of one synonym over another, and no complete accounting may ever be possible”. The implication, however, should not be that code-switching is haphazard but rather that a language switch may serve multiple functions at a given time, or, conversely, it may not appear to fulfill a specific function. For this reason, a small number of switches in the corpus were classified as “miscellaneous”.

To ensure consistency and simplicity, functions that served a similar purpose were grouped together. For example, clarification and elaboration were combined into a single category, repetitions intended for emphasis were categorized as emphatic, while tags,

vocatives, discourse markers, and linguistic crutches were all grouped under tag switching following Poplack's (1980) typology. This categorization approach aimed to streamline the analysis and enhance clarity in understanding the diverse functions observed in the text messages.

The hypothesis suggests that most of the communicative strategies traditionally associated with oral code-switching will manifest in the BYTs corpus. This assumption stems from the fact that, despite being a written mode of communication, texting shares numerous similarities with face-to-face interaction due to its rather informal and semi-synchronous nature (Dorleijn and Nortier 2009, p. 130; Androutsopoulos 2013, p. 676). As pointed out by McSweeney (2018, p. 162), "many of the communicative functions that code switching and language choice have in a spoken context are transferred to a texted context". Additionally, I speculate that bilingual texting reveals unique and idiosyncratic patterns not previously substantiated in oral or written communication.

3. Results

As explained, the bilingual subset of the BYTs corpus contained 3167 instances of code-switching, and each one was categorized according to the socio-pragmatic and communicative functions attested in natural bilingual discourse. Within these traditional functions, the most prevalent type, constituting more than a third of the switches, fell into the category of tag switching, encompassing linguistic routines, fillers, discourse markers, and vocatives. Approximately a quarter of the switches served emphatic, elaboration or clarification purposes, and culturally bound items, which included isolated lexical switches and idiomatic expressions.

However, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the largest number of switches overall were for what is commonly referred to as textisms, specifically abbreviations and acronyms. Textisms are exclusive to digital communication and not typically observed in oral (or other written) production. Figure 1 provides a summary of the overall results, indicating the percentage of switches for each category, while Figure 2 summarizes the results based on the number of tokens for each type. The subsequent discussion will delve into each communicative function individually, supported by relevant examples from the corpus.⁶

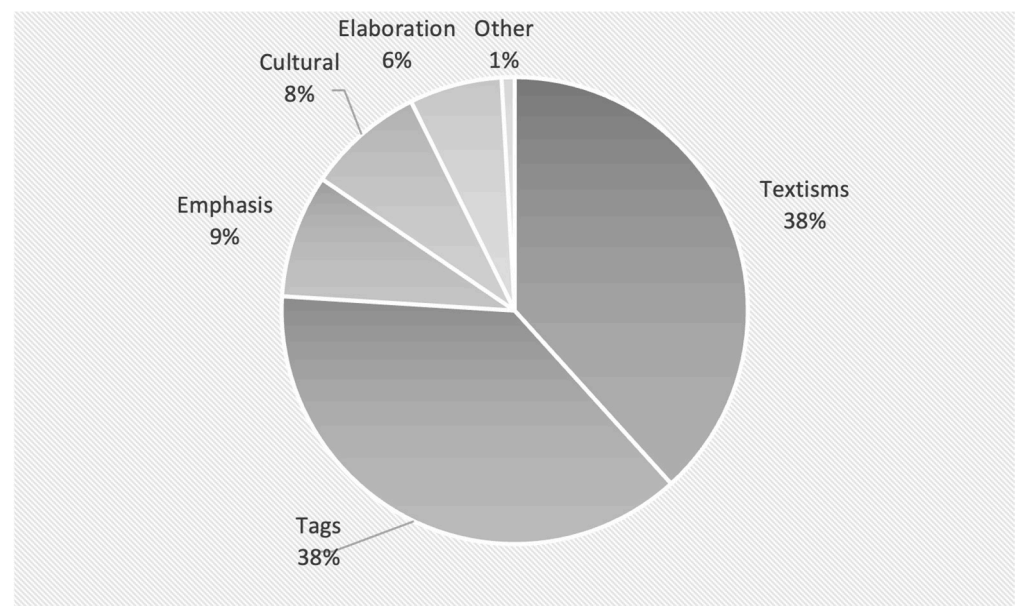


Figure 1. Summary of results by percentage for each function.

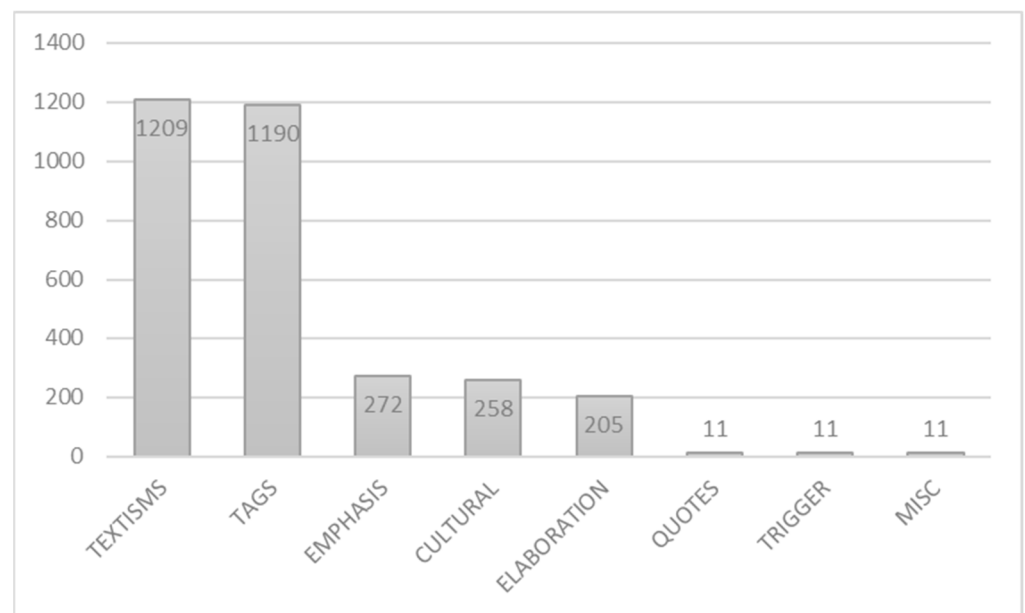


Figure 2. Summary of results by number of tokens for each function.

3.1. Textisms

Textism (also known as *textese* or *digitalk*) has been defined as “a digitally written language variant that is especially used by youths in informal communication via new media and is characterized, to a greater or lesser extent, by deviations from the standard language norms at different levels of writing, such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation” (Verheijen 2018, p. 144). This type of shorthand includes the use of abbreviations, acronyms, misspellings, emoticons, contractions, and other techniques employed to compose SMS and instant messages. Textism plays an important creative role in constructing meaning, relationship building, and identity performance (McSweeney 2018). It became popular because it saves time and space, particularly when text messages were originally limited to 160 characters and X (formerly known as Twitter) had an even stricter limit (140 characters).

Even though those character limits no longer apply, given its idiosyncrasy to CMC (especially text messages), textisms not surprisingly emerged as the most prolific category in the bilingual SMS corpus amounting for 1209 (or 38.1%) of the switches.⁷ While it could be argued that textisms are outliers in the analysis due to their extremely frequent occurrence, they were included in the discussion because, interestingly, all the switches were from Spanish to English. For instance, using LOL (*laughing out loud*) within a Spanish sentence was exceptionally common, but no examples of Spanish textisms (such as TQM for *te quiero mucho* “I love you very much” or XQ for *porque* “because”) were found in the corpus despite being frequently used when texting in Spanish.

This finding is consistent with previous research in bilingual CMC. For example, in Verheijen and van Hout’s (2022) study on Dutch–English code-mixing in informal online writing, LOL was by far the most frequent English textism, followed by OMG and WTF. They argue that “young CMC users regard these expressive resources as playful, informal, and cool stylistic strategies to profile a young identity” (p. 5). Some examples (1–7) from the bilingual SMS corpus follow, with the meaning of the abbreviations explained in parenthesis:

1. Wyd *ancianita* 🙄
“Wyd (What are you doing?) little old lady?”
2. Omg *si que stas loco y te dolía?*
“Omg (oh, my God) you’re crazy, and did it hurt?”

3. Babe *mi telef esta en 2%. Lo voy a poner a cargar ttyl* 😊
“Babe my cell is at 2%. I am going to charge it ttyl” (Talk to you later)
4. Idk! *Dime tu*
“Idk! (I don’t know) You tell me”
5. *Asiendo brownies hbu*
“Making brownies hbu” (how about you?)
6. Nooo baby *no ahora plz*
“Nooo baby not now plz” (please)
7. *Toy muy busy ahora bby* 😊
“I’m very busy now bby” (bye bye)

3.2. Tag Switches

Aligning with previous findings of socio-pragmatic functions in CMC (Lavender 2017), the second most productive type comprising 1,190 tokens (37.5% of the corpus) involved tag switching—following Poplack’s (1980) classification and similar to what Zentella (1997) describes as “crutch-like” switches. This category included discourse markers, tags, fillers, vocatives, and other types of discourse-pragmatic elements that are highly borrowable and typically attested in language contact situations at the oral level. Within this group, there was an unusually high number of terms of endearment (such as *babe*). These could arguably be outliers since two of the participants in the BYTs study were a romantic couple in the first three months of their relationship, and, therefore, most, if not all, of their SMS included expressions of affection. However, plenty of instances of other linguistic routines, discourse, and identity markers were identified in the corpus, such as *so* (example 13), *bro* (example 10), *man/men* (example 12), or *bueno* “well” (example 14).

8. *Voy para la casa ahora baby*
“I’m going to the house now baby”
9. *Babe estas mirando las noticias?*
“Babe, are you watching the news?”
10. *No hay dinero bro*
“There is no money bro”
11. *Donde andas brother*
“Where are you brother?”
12. *Nada men ya boy a comer y vos*
“Nothing man, I’m going to eat and you?”
13. *Ohh so tu sigues molesto conmigo???* 😊
“Oh, so are you still upset with me?”
14. *Bueno, yeah by myself*
“Well, yeah by myself”

3.3. Emphasis

Code-switching for emphatic purposes, a function typically observed in bilingual oral production, was also present in the bilingual SMS corpus, recurring at a rate of 8.5% (272 tokens). While in writing emphasis can be achieved by simply capitalizing, underlining, or using bold font, bilinguals also have the option of switching languages to underscore a word or idea. As seen in (15), both capitalizing and code-switching are used in order to emphasize what is being said:

15. That’s why I don’t like cold cuz I’m always *SOLITA* lol
‘That’s why I don’t like cold cuz I’m always *ALONE* lol’

This finding is consistent with Fernández-Mallat’s (2020) study on Facebook posts, whose results indicated that emphasis accounted for up to 73% of language switches. Additionally, code-switching can be employed to highlight dismissive expressions, insults, expletives, or slurs in both languages, as illustrated in examples 16–19:

16. Whatever!!! *Cambiamos de tema por favor*
“Whatever!!! Let’s change the topic, please”
17. *Que fucking novia yo tengo??*
“What fucking girlfriend do I have?”
18. *Pendejo, we not togetherrr*
“Idiot, we not together”
19. *Diablo no he’s my twin* 🤔🙏🙏
“Damn, no he’s my twin”

3.4. Cultural Switches

The phenomenon known as a lexical gap is frequently cited as a key factor in understanding oral code-switching, particularly when shifts occur at the word level, predominantly nouns. This also occurs in digital platforms. For example, in Novianti’s (2013) study on Twitter (now called X), 60% of the switches were due to a lexical need. However, the issue of a lexical necessity has sparked controversy. Misinterpretations often arise, wrongly associating such gaps with a lack of proficiency in one language or, worse yet, attributing it to the speaker’s laziness. It is crucial to note that, from a technical standpoint, every switch—whether involving a noun or an idiomatic expression—serves a specific need. However, it is important not to misconstrue this as a deficiency. Switching may happen due to the absence of an exact equivalent in the other language, a momentary lapse in the individual’s lexicon, or simply a higher frequency of exposure to a particular item in a specific language or culture. (Magaña 2013) refers to these as “contextual switches”, and, in her study, they comprised over a third of the switches of the MySpace messages analyzed.

In the bilingual SMS corpus, this category accounted for 8.1% of the switches (with a total of 252) aligning with previous research on CMC, such as Al-Khatib and Sabbah’s (2008) and Verheijen et al.’s (2018). I define these types of switches as culturally bound since they are closely related to the bicultural environment of these individuals. As McSweeney (2018, p. 63) notes, “when texters use culturally marked expressions, they are confirming and asserting their membership in a group or speech community and expecting that the other person will understand both the message and the connotations”. The ensuing examples show how most of the concepts are culturally specific to either the Spanish or the Anglo worlds and pose a need to switch languages. For example, English is the language used at work and school, so terms related to those environments (such as *homework* or *printer* in examples 21 and 24) are more likely appear in English, while food items (*sancocho* “stew” or *habichuelas* “beans” in examples 27 and 26) and family members (*abuelita* “grandma” in example 25) related to Hispanic culture are more easily expressed in Spanish.

20. *Hijita preciosa. Esta en after school?*
“Pretty daughter. Is she in after school?”
21. *Estas haciendo tu homework?*
“Are you doing your homework?”
22. *Yo no sabia que mi average era de 86.59 lol*
“I didn’t know my average was 86.59 lol”
23. *Hable con ella y me dijo que necesita a alguien para full time*
“I talked to her and she told me that she needs someone full time”
24. *Ese printer es el que mas se daña lol*
“That printer is the one that breaks the most lol”
25. *Yeah lol!!! Hopefully I’ll see mi abuelita tomorrow* 😊
“Yeah lol!!! Hopefully I’ll see my grandma tomorrow”
26. *I’m going to TRY to do las habichuelas today*
“I’m going to TRY to do the beans today”
27. *Eat breakfast then babe it’ll probably be a while until the sancocho is ready*
“Eat breakfast then babe it’ll probably be a while until the stew is ready”

Some authors propose the concept of “least effort” or linguistic economy to explain such lone switches, both in oral and written production (see, for instance, Gumperz 1982b; Halim and Maros 2014; or Lavender 2017). While it is true that typing a shorter word requires fewer characters, as Barasa (2016, p. 65) points out, considering the prevalence of automatic correctors on most phones nowadays, this does not seem to be the most plausible justification for switching languages. In fact, some of the examples presented above show that the English equivalent (*stew*, *grandma* or *beans*) would actually have fewer syllables than the Spanish word, but the texter chooses to use Spanish regardless, once again highlighting the cultural aspect behind this type of switching.

3.5. Elaboration and Clarification

Switching languages to further explain, clarify, or elaborate on previous statements is another prevalent communicative function commonly attested in bilingual oral production. In the SMS corpus, there were 205 instances of this category, constituting 6.4% of all switches. This indicates that bilingual individuals frequently employ code-switching for the purpose of providing additional explanation or clarification within the context of text messages. Below are a few examples (28–35):

28. That's ok, *pero quería que ella hablara contigo como sea*
“That's ok, but I wanted her to talk to you anyhow”
29. I like night clubs *porque me gusta bailar lol* 🕺
“I like night clubs because I like to dance lol”
30. *Aquí estoy!* I was cleaning the bathroom
“I'm here! I was cleaning the bathroom”
31. *Le tengo miedo a las alturas!* That's why I don't like planes lol
“I'm scared of heights! That's why I don't like planes lol”
32. Not good! *Peor que ayer* 😞
“Not good! Worse than yesterday”
33. I can't watch tv now lol. . . *Hay mucha bulla aquí*
“I can't watch tv now lol. . . There is a lot of noise here”
34. I woke up to drink water! *Tenia una sed*
“I woke up to drink water! I was so thirsty”
35. *No voy a decir nada* cuz I don't wanna fight 😞 😞
“I am not going to say anything because I don't wanna fight”

3.6. Other Findings

The bilingual SMS corpus also displayed a handful of other patterns that have typically been observed in oral code-switching, such as quoting someone else and triggering, as well as miscellaneous switches. However, all these categories had a much lower occurrence in the corpus with only 11 instances (or 0.3% of the total) for each type.

3.6.1. Quotes

Using the original language to reference someone else's words, whether in the form of a direct quotation or paraphrasing, has proved to be a primary function observed in oral code-switching. While not as widely used in the SMS corpus (and consistent with Al-Khatib and Sabbah 2008), various instances of both direct and indirect quotations were identified. In some cases (examples 38 and 39), Spanish served as the base language with the quotation in English, while in others (examples 36 and 37) English was the base language with the quoted words in Spanish.

36. But then I was like: . . . *No el no se acuerda* 🤔
“But then I was like: No, he does not remember”
37. And I ask her why she think that & *dijo*. . . *Porque te estas riendo* 😂
“And I ask her why she think that and she said. . . because you are laughing”

38. *Es que tu me dijiste que tu talk to another boy*
"It's that you told me that you talk to another boy"
39. *Estoy de mal humor. Y no me digas "my love"*
"I'm in a bad mood. And don't tell me "my love""

3.6.2. Triggered

An intriguing psycholinguistic (rather than sociolinguistic) phenomenon frequently observed in bilingual oral production happens when the utterance of a particular word in the other language unconsciously triggers a switch in what follows (or, in the case of anticipatory triggering, immediately precedes it). In fact, it is not uncommon for a proper name or a lexical switch to act as a catalyst for a subsequent switch (see, for instance, Valdés-Fallis 1976). This process was not overtly recurrent in the bilingual SMS corpus but several instances were found. In the examples shown, the triggering item(s) that induce switching the following words are underlined. Sometimes they are in English (example 41), and other times the trigger is in Spanish (examples 40 and 42).

40. Watching Nuestra Belleza Latina con mi pai
"Watching Nuestra Belleza Latina with my dad"
41. *Voy en el train* going down
"I'm on the train going down"
42. Ohhh I thought you were in universita o algo.
"Oh I thought you were in college or something"

3.6.3. Miscellaneous

A small number of unclassifiable switches were included in this category, namely those that, as described by Zentella's (1997, p. 99) disclaimer quoted earlier, did not seem to align with any of the traditional functions established in the field. Examples of this sort of free switching are shown in 43–45:

43. How much *valen* ☹☹
"How much are they"
44. *Le puedes tomar de new la foto a la 6 7 y 8*
"Can you take the picture again for 6, 7 and 8"
45. Lol *estoy* something then
"Lol I'm something then"

4. Discussion

The findings presented here provide valuable insights into the realm of digital code-switching, particularly within the context of Spanish–English texting patterns. The initial research question aimed to explore the frequency of Spanish and English mixing among this cohort of young bilinguals in their text messages. It can be affirmed that, while it is not the predominant practice (only 6.4% of the BYTs corpus involved bilingual texts), participants indeed engage in code-switching when exchanging text messages. The mix of Spanish and English in oral communication may still be stigmatized in certain communities and social contexts, but it appears to be an accepted practice in CMC. This fact can be attributed to the democratic nature of texting (widely accessible and available to people from various backgrounds and social status) and the freedom it grants users to disregard established conventions, whether grammatical, orthographic, or otherwise. Regardless of their linguistic background or the type of bilingualism they exhibit, these emerging bilinguals seem to embrace a sense of freedom in expressing themselves when engaging in text conversations, and code-switching enables them to navigate the subtleties of both Spanish and English effectively.

The second question intended to examine the patterns of code-switching in SMS and whether they align with those socio-pragmatic and communicative strategies commonly observed in bilingual oral production. The bilingual texting patterns obtained in the corpus demonstrate adherence to many of the traditional functions, particularly switching

for linguistic routines, emphasis, elaboration, and to convey culturally loaded concepts. Consequently, biculturalism, beyond mere bilingualism, lies at the core of language mixing in SMS, just like in natural speech production. To a lesser extent, code-switching in the bilingual SMS corpus was employed as a technique to quote someone else's words. Additionally, the triggering phenomenon frequently attested in bilingual oral production wherein a switched item prompts another switch in the preceding or succeeding words was also evident in the corpus, albeit to a slighter degree.

The final research question sought to identify any functions that might be unique to bilingual texting. The analysis corroborates McSweeney's (2018, p. 166) conclusion that while bilingual texters move between languages for many of the same reasons that bilingual speakers do, technology has an influence on their code-switching patterns. Consequently, the chief reason for switching from Spanish to English (but not the other way around) was the use of textisms, particularly acronyms—a pattern not commonly seen in oral production. This is a predictable outcome within CMC, a relatively informal and spontaneous mode of interaction that has often been placed at the middle of the continuum between spoken and written communication. In fact, consistent with Barasa's (2016) findings, it can be asserted that code-switching in CMC warrants recognition as a distinct entity, separate from spoken (or written) code-switching, in order to fully grasp its inherent characteristics.

Therefore, language mixing in SMS, akin to real-life scenarios, emerges as a nuanced strategy that can be perceived not as a limitation or lack of language skills but rather as a sophisticated expressive repertoire. It is crucial to note that the spontaneous data presented here predominantly represent an informal or colloquial register. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the quantity and quality of code-switching produced by the participants would differ in a more formal context, both online and offline. Switching languages in text messages, then, is not a random occurrence but rather serves specific socio-pragmatic and communicative functions, aligning with those found in bilingual oral production.

Moreover, code-switching operates as a tool to express not only one's languages but also one's cultures. As Magaña (2013, p. 61) argues, "along with strategic communicative effects, a predominant reason for code-switching is rooted in the desire of bilinguals to identify as multicultural and not fully assimilated Americans". In this particular group of texters, McSweeney (2018, p. 156) points out that bilingual identity performance is a key aspect of their linguistic decisions, to the extent that one participant "had turned off his autocorrect completely because he felt he was unable to truly express himself if he had it on" (p. 120). Hence, while bilingualism is a prerequisite to code-switch, the role of biculturalism is evident behind the language choices of these emergent young bilinguals. Such choices manifest a dual linguistic and cultural belonging to both Hispanic and Anglo worlds where the use of Spanish and English is equally an option and a necessity to fully express themselves online, just like in real life.

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Notes

¹ See, <https://www.ctia.org/the-wireless-industry/infographics-library#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20Americans%20spent%20nearly,they%20exchanged%20the%20previous%20year> (accessed on 15 January 2024).

² See, <https://www.commonssensemedia.org/press-releases/teens-are-bombarded-with-hundreds-of-notifications-a-day> (accessed on 15 January 2024).

- 3 These authors, as many others across diverse disciplines such as translation, bilingual education, and sociolinguistics, use the term code-mixing to refer to elements from one language used in another language, when mainly the grammar of the L1 is at work, while in code-switching both grammars would be active simultaneously. Other common terms used to describe language alternation are code-meshing and translanguaging. For the sake of simplicity, I henceforth use code-switching, language switching, and language mixing interchangeably to refer to the alternative use of two or more languages in bilingual or multilingual discourse. For further discussion on terminology, see Mabule (2015).
- 4 See, <https://www.isocfoundation.org/2023/05/what-are-the-most-used-languages-on-the-internet/> (accessed on 15 January 2024).
- 5 Most of the information about the corpus and participants presented here is summarized from the BYTs corpus website, with some additional details extracted from McSweeney (2018). One anonymous reviewer points out that not having enough background information about the texters poses limitations to the analysis of the data. I acknowledge such limitations and refer the reader to McSweeney (2018) for more detailed background about her project's participants, data collection, methods, and message processing.
- 6 Messages are here transcribed as they originally appear in the BYTs corpus, including typos, spelling errors and emojis. I use regular font for English and italics for Spanish. All translations are my own.
- 7 For an in-depth discussion of textisms and the pragmatics of text messaging, see McSweeney (2018).

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Article

Radio-Lect: Spanish/English Code-Switching in On-Air Advertisements

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Abstract: The 2020 census reports that 61.2 million Latinxs live in the US, totaling around 19% of all residents, forming the country's largest minority population. With the growing number of Latinxs, there has been a higher level of contact between Spanish and English leading to language mixing or code-switching (CS) in mainstream American culture. This paper examines the Spanish/English CS in radio advertisements on Los Angeles's 96.3 La Mega, a bilingual radio station geared towards today's youth. Using Derrick's 2015 sentential framework for the linguistic analysis of multilingual sentences, I carry out a sentence-by-sentence analysis of the linguistic nature of the on-air bilingual advertisements. I explore both national advertisements, as well as DJ-endorsed advertisements, to discern whether they follow the patterns previously pointed out in the literature for positive consumer evaluations of Spanish/English bilingual advertisements. Furthermore, I am interested in if these advertisements are in line with the ethos of 96.3 La Mega, which prides itself on being fully bilingual. This research will shed light on the linguistic nature of contemporary strategies being used in bilingual advertisements for the US Latinx community and marketing tactics designed to encourage their consumerism.

Keywords: code-switching; bilingualism; Spanish in the USA; radio; advertisements



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1. Introduction

Many recent analyses have studied code-switching (CS), the use of two or more languages in the same utterance or conversation, from a variety of perspectives including structural (Wardhana et al. 2023; Cruz 2023), sociolinguistic (Sapar et al. 2023; Zhong et al. 2023), and psycholinguistic (Hofweber et al. 2023; Sheun et al. 2023). Contemporary CS has also been examined in an array of language pairs like Turkish/German (Çetinoğlu and Çöltekin 2023), French/Arabic (Nesrine and Zoubida 2023), and Spanish/Guarani (Agüero-Torales et al. 2023), among others. Bilinguals often use CS in multiple discourses to communicate with others who share the same linguistic repertoire (Derrick 2015).

Specific to the US context, the Census Bureau in 2020 reports that US Latinxs make up 61.2 million residents or 18.7 percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2020). Due to this group being one of the largest minority communities in the country, the use of Spanish/English CS or Spanglish, the more popular term, is used as a symbol of linguistic and cultural identity amongst bilingual US Latinxs. Indeed, as noted by Parra (2011), "Spanglish is a language, lifestyle and culture that has one foot in each set of traditions. It is a mix of Spanish and English language that is informal and focuses on trends in fashion, music, news and art that appeals to a person who enjoys aspects of their American and Latino culture" (pp. 4–5)¹. This expression of US Latinx identity is visible in many mainstream mediums including television (Attig and Derrick 2021, forthcoming), music (Derrick 2015), magazines (Mahootian 2006; Derrick 2015), social media (Derrick and Huizar 2019) and literature (Casielles-Suárez 2013; Derrick 2015, 2016, 2019; Pawelek and Derrick 2018), among others. As a result, advertisers often target the bilingual US Latinx population. Well-known companies like AT&T, McDonalds, Dunkin' Donuts, Honda, and Taco Bell have

all featured advertisements which include Spanish/English CS. Furthermore, Hoffman and Jurado (2023) have pointed out that US Latinxs have a \$3.4 trillion collective spending power, which would rank as the fifth largest in the world. Thus, the use of Spanish and English in recent marketing campaigns may be a creative and lucrative way to give cultural relevancy and value to this audience. Since the Latinx community is representative of the largest minority group in the US, an examination of CS in radio advertisements would shed light on the contemporary practices employed to attract bilingual consumers. In this vein, the present study will analyze the linguistic nature of bilingual radio advertisements aired on 96.3 La Mega, located in the city with the largest Latinx population in the country: Los Angeles, California (Passel et al. 2020).

2. 96.3 La Mega—LA's Party Station

To provide some background information on 96.3 La Mega, it began broadcasting in a bilingual Spanish/English format in 2005 airing Spanish (h)urban (Hispanic urban) contemporary music. The station's slogan, "LA's party station" is aimed at attracting young Latinx bilinguals in metropolitan Los Angeles. Regarding bilingual listeners, Victor Caballero, former brand manager of the station, notes that "the listeners take a lot of pride in being Latino. The radio station is most concerned with figuring out how to serve the community and how to speak specifically to the needs of our listeners. This includes addressing issues that directly affect the community including immigration laws, among other issues. For the administration, it is important to be able to do this in a way that is comfortable for the DJs and for the callers that call in to the radio, in whichever language they prefer" (Derrick 2017).

Moreover, Spanish-language radio is also becoming more widely recognized, as this population is rapidly expanding in the US. Casillas (2014, p. 248) comments about Spanish-language radio that it "represents the fastest growing format on all U.S. radio, garners top ratings in all radio markets, and caters to minority audiences that are into radio at higher rates than the average (read: white, English-dominant speaking) US radio listener". As for language use on the radio station, there is no preference for English or Spanish. Chase Wesley (2020, p. 423) says about linguistic identity on 96.3 La Mega that, "Hosts design their opening turns so as to offer up both languages as options, without prejudice or interactional bias, thereby allowing callers to select one or both languages as the medium of the exchange. This particular institution as a whole thus "does being" bilingual—that is, it *embodies* bilingualism—through this discursive practice that effectively renders Spanish, English, and code-switched Spanish–English normatively available to members of the listening community". Therefore, in considering the large population of US Latinxs and their frequency in radio participation, I turn my attention to 96.3 La Mega and the linguistic nature of its bilingual on-air advertisements. I am particularly interested in the ways that national and DJ-endorsed advertisements reflect (or not) the ethos of the Spanglish/English bilingualism used on-air by the DJs, artist interviews, and listener call-ins.

To carry out this study, I analyze the linguistic nature of bilingual Spanish/English on-air radio advertisements, examining national advertisements, or those that could be aired on another radio station and DJ-endorsed advertisements, voiced-over by radio hosts to advertise local products and services. I examine 72 hours of radio stream from 96.3 La Mega recorded in 2017, which includes 82 national advertisements and 61 DJ-endorsed advertisements. To organize this study, I first give an overview of the research that has analyzed Spanish/English CS on the radio and in advertisements. After, I discuss the linguistic frameworks I utilize in this article, followed by the analysis which will point out the different types of sentences used in on-air advertisements on 96.3 La Mega. This study will conclude by offering some general discussion about the radio station's advertising practices.

3. Previous Studies on Spanish/English CS in Radio and Advertisements

3.1. Spanish/English CS on the Radio

As mentioned above, many studies have examined CS from an array of perspectives in a variety of language pairs. Here, I focus this literature review on studies that have examined Spanish/English CS in radio and advertisements. Specific to the radio context, scholars have analyzed DJ language use and identity expression on the air. For example, Tseng (2011) studied DJ identity work related to station ethnic branding in bilingual radio and found that DJs employ topic-oriented evaluative stances to illuminate their on-air identity. They use a variety of stylistic devices to do so including code-switching, circulating discourses of in-group solidarity, and engaging listeners in fictive bonds of intimacy. Tseng (2018) also examines bilingual DJ speech, focusing their research on genre specific closing structure. The author concludes that CS serves to maintain institutional identity inside the constraints of genre norms and structures. CS also serves to enhance audience appeal and to elicit participatory audience response by building in-group identity and solidarity.

Furthermore, De Fina (2013) assesses DJ language use with an interest in language ideologies, analyzing *El Zol*, in the Washington D.C. area, which brands itself as catering to first-generation Latino transnational immigrants. The author concludes that the radio station identifies as Spanish-speaking rather than bilingual, though CS reflects a part of the daily experiences of DJ hosts and audience members. Also investigating *El Zol*, De Fina (2014) analyzed on-air identity construction. This research finds that Spanish-dominant radio hosts show a preference for Spanish and use hyper-corrective behavior towards English-dominant hosts. Spanish-dominant hosts also reject the insertion of English terms in primarily Spanish utterances in radio discourse.

Chase Wesley (2020) examines LA's 96.3 of Los Angeles with an interest in the linguistic practices involved in radio call-ins. The analysis points out that language selection should be seen as interactional achievement that is collaboratively constructed amongst participants. Moreover, the author notes that Spanish and English are on a level playing field on the radio station, showing no preference for one language over the other in on-air radio banter.

Other noteworthy scholarship has assessed the US radio industry and the bilingual Latinx community. For example, Casillas (2014), researching the disparity in revenue between English and Spanish radio, finds that it is due to racial and linguistic bias. The author suggests that this devaluation of Spanish language radio will continue until Arbitron's audience measurement policies consider more linguistically and racially diverse audiences. Moreover, Castañeda (2014) points out that the political economic framework of the US radio industry has historically emphasized commercialism and a White Anglo power structure, placing pressure on Latinx commercial radio to follow market forces instead of service to the community.

In sum, we note that some radio stations that cater to US Latinxs embrace the use of Spanish, English, and Spanish/English CS, choosing to reflect a bilingual radio station identity, whereas others reinforce a Spanish-dominant preference through their on-air discourses and DJ interactions. Additionally, Spanish language radio in the US, though representative of the largest minority group in the country, is still undervalued related to genre perception and radio station revenues in comparison to English language radio.

3.2. Spanish/English CS in Print Advertisements

Outside of research on Spanish language radio, DJ speech and identity construction, there has also been scholarship on the use of Spanish/English CS in print advertisements. Pioneering research on bilingual advertising, such as Levitt (1983), suggests that advertisers are most successful if they utilize a single language to target a bilingual audience and encourages marketers to ignore regional differences and instead advocate for advertising to a global marketplace. Also examining the language use and the grammaticality of CS in bilingual advertisements, Luna and Peracchio (2005) analyze which direction of

Spanish/English mixing would interest consumers most. They conclude that bilingual advertisements should switch from Spanish to English, so that English, associated with a higher status and power in the US context, stands out. Building on the conclusions of Luna and Peracchio (2005) related to the impact of CS on persuasion amongst consumers, Luna et al. (2005) analyze CS found in advertisements for their grammaticality in order to assess persuasion. They find that breaking linguistic rules for CS only affects consumer persuasion when consumers process advertisements in data-driven modes. Otherwise, the preservation of linguistic constraints does not necessarily influence persuasion.

With an interest in consumer attitudes and the direction of language alternation (English to Spanish or Spanish to English) in bilingual magazine advertisements, Bishop and Peterson (2011) assess the medium (mainly Spanish or English) in which advertisements are located, considering Mexican-American participants' perceptions of the advertisements. The study points out that the main language of the medium does play a part in the linguistic content that appears in the advertisements. Furthermore, they conclude, regardless of the medium, there are fewer advertisements that employ bilingualism in comparison to solely Spanish or English.

Callow and McDonald (2005) similarly examine medium selection in magazines analyzing advertiser's decisions regarding language choice by comparing advertisements in Spanish-only and Spanish/English dual language magazines in the U.S. Latinx market. They note that advertisers use a customizable approach to advertisements in Spanish-only mediums by choosing mostly Spanish-only advertisements. However, in the dual language medium, advertisers use a standardized approach, which can include monolingual Spanish or English advertisements, as well as those that include CS. Similarly, Bishop and Peterson (2010) analyze the medium of advertisements that include CS. They find that the US Latinx bilingual audience had the most positive reaction to advertisements that display a matrix or base language that uses the most salient language of the medium. In other words, if the medium is mostly Spanish, the bilingual advertisements should present Spanish more than English. Their findings suggest that maintaining the medium and the advertisements in the same base language improved ad recall, perceived advertiser cultural sensitivity, and has a direct positive influence on persuasion and cognitive ad involvement, which positively influences the persuasiveness of the ad.

Specific to print advertisements, Hagan (2009) assesses a variety of Spanish/English advertisements collected in Miami. The qualitative analysis researches the motivations for presenting advertisements that use Spanish/English CS, and the author additionally examines other patterns of language alternation like the use of language in specific domains, age and gender of speakers of the target language, as well as the position of the first English word in an ad. The study points out that English words appear in predominantly Spanish advertisements to supplement the Spanish lexicon. This is not because these words are lacking a Spanish counterpart, but because the vocabulary words in English may be exercised differently in Spanish, although the translation is the same. Thus, the previous research on the use of Spanish/English CS in print advertisements has shown the following: (1) consumers find advertisements that switch from Spanish to English most attractive, (2) bilingual advertisements should closely reflect the medium they are placed within, (3) advertisements designed for US Latinx bilingual consumers are most appealing if they use Spanish or English instead of CS, and (4) code-switched advertisements which alternate from Spanish to English use English to supplement the Spanish lexicon representing terms specific to the US context.

Considering these conclusions, I examine the linguistic nature of the bilingual national and DJ-endorsed advertisements on 96.3 La Mega with an interest in the language distribution and use of CS. I also examine if the CS is representative of the linguistic patterns used in the bilingual format of the radio station. As Spanish/English CS appears to reflect part of the linguistic repertoire of US Latinxs of Los Angeles (Attig and Derrick 2021), these advertisements provide a means for fruitful inquiry into the ways this linguistic variety is seeping into the advertisements of local and national goods and services being marketed to

the US Latinx community. A linguistic analysis of these advertisements will expand the current literature on Spanish in the US and the contemporary language practices used in bilingual marketing and broadcasting.

4. Methodology and Frameworks

To examine the CS present in the bilingual advertisements on 96.3 La Mega, it is important to note the different types of CS patterns that bilinguals utilize. As pointed out by Poplack (1980, p. 583), CS is “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent”. Poplack’s research distinguishes three types of CS: Tag, Inter-sentential, and Intra-sentential. Tag-switching is seen when a tag phrase is taken from one language and inserted into another. Some English tags include ‘so’, ‘you know’, ‘I mean’, right, etc., as cited below from Poplack’s corpus:

1. I could understand QUE (that) you don’t know how to speak Spanish, ¿VERDAD? (right). (Poplack 1980, p. 596)

Another type of switching is inter-sentential (also known as extra-sentential), where CS takes place between sentences.

2. A: I had a dream yesterday, last night.
B: ¿DE QUÉ NÚMERO? ‘What number?’
A: EL CERO SETENTA Y CINCO. ‘Zero seventy-five’. (Poplack 1980, p. 598)

The last and most complex switching, intra-sentential CS, happens when the switch occurs within the sentence. Poplack notes that only the most competent bilinguals use intra-sentential CS because it requires the most skill to produce. In (3), we have an example:

3. He was sitting down EN LA CAMA, MIRÁNDONOS PELEANDO, Y
(‘in bed, watching us fighting and’) really, I don’t remember SI ÉL
NOS SEPARÓ (‘if he separated us’) or whatever, you know. (Poplack 1980, p. 589)

Considering the different types of CS that bilinguals employ in their linguistic practices, in this study, I examine the linguistic nature of the Spanish/English CS in 96.3 La Mega’s on-air advertisements.

As mentioned previously, I collected 72 hours of radio stream for this project. I eliminated the music and DJ talk/audience interactions, leaving me with the advertisements. Since this study analyzes bilingual advertisements, I discarded monolingual English and Spanish advertisements. Furthermore, there are many advertisements that repeat during the broadcast; therefore, I counted each bilingual advertisement only once. In terms of analyzing the linguistic nature of the bilingual advertisements on 96.3 La Mega, I examine the distribution of language use sentence by sentence, using Derrick’s (2015) sentential framework for the analysis of multilingual sentences. The use of this framework will allow for an examination of the linguistic nature of the radio advertisements to assess if they are reflective of the linguistic norms used on-air.

Derrick’s (2015) framework is particularly noteworthy, as it considers bilingual intra-sentential sentences that do not have a matrix or base language. This framework categorizes bilingual sentences as follows: English-base bilingual sentences, Spanish-base bilingual sentences, and hybrid sentences. In this typology, the base language provides the grammatical structure for the sentences and most of its lexical items. Thus, sentences like (4) will be analyzed as an English-base bilingual sentence, which can include one or more insertions of Spanish words or phrases. Examples below from well-known US Latinx authors show English as the base language in their bilingual texts:

4. I met papi’s *sucia* (Drown: 43)
‘I met papi’s whore’

A sentence such as that in (5) will be considered a Spanish-base bilingual sentence:

5. *En una de esas, los 4 muestran sus mejores “dance moves” y una coreografía para una de sus canciones más intensas, la de “Déjate Caer”, y bailan bastante bien, por cierto.* (Life in Spanglish: 6 September 2013)
‘In one of those, the 4 of them show their best dance moves and a choreography for one of their most intense songs, “Déjate Caer”, and they dance really well, of course’.

A sentence such as (6), on the other hand, will be considered a hybrid sentence with no base language:

6.
- This city I love *está toda* spread out, *es enorme, llena de tráfico y luces, y* freeways *y* mini-malls. (Life in Spanglish: 13 January 2012)
'This city I love is all spread out, it's enormous, full of traffic and lights and freeways and mini-malls'.

Since the radio advertisements also include English and Spanish monolingual sentences, Derrick's (2015) framework proposes the following sentential categorization:

- (1)
- Monolingual English Sentences: sentences that include only English.
- (2)
- English-base Bilingual Sentences: sentences that have English as the base language and 1+ Spanish insertions.
- (3)
- Monolingual Spanish Sentences: sentences that include only Spanish.
- (4)
- Spanish-base Bilingual Sentences: sentences which have Spanish as the base language and 1+ English insertions.
- (5)
- Hybrid Sentences: sentences with no base language.

Thus, English-base bilingual sentences and Spanish-base bilingual sentences involve insertion, while hybrid sentences show no clear base language. The use of Derrick's (2015) classification will allow me to determine the degree of bilingualism in the advertisements and the type of CS used and to point out the linguistic nature of national and DJ-endorsed advertisements on 96.3 La Mega.

5. Analysis

5.1. National Advertisements

In the corpus composed of 143 national and DJ-endorsed bilingual advertisements, I have established a base language for each sentence by dividing them into Monolingual English, English-base bilingual sentences, Monolingual Spanish, Spanish-base bilingual sentences, and hybrid sentences. Below, Figures 1 and 2 show the linguistic structures found in the 82 national advertisements.

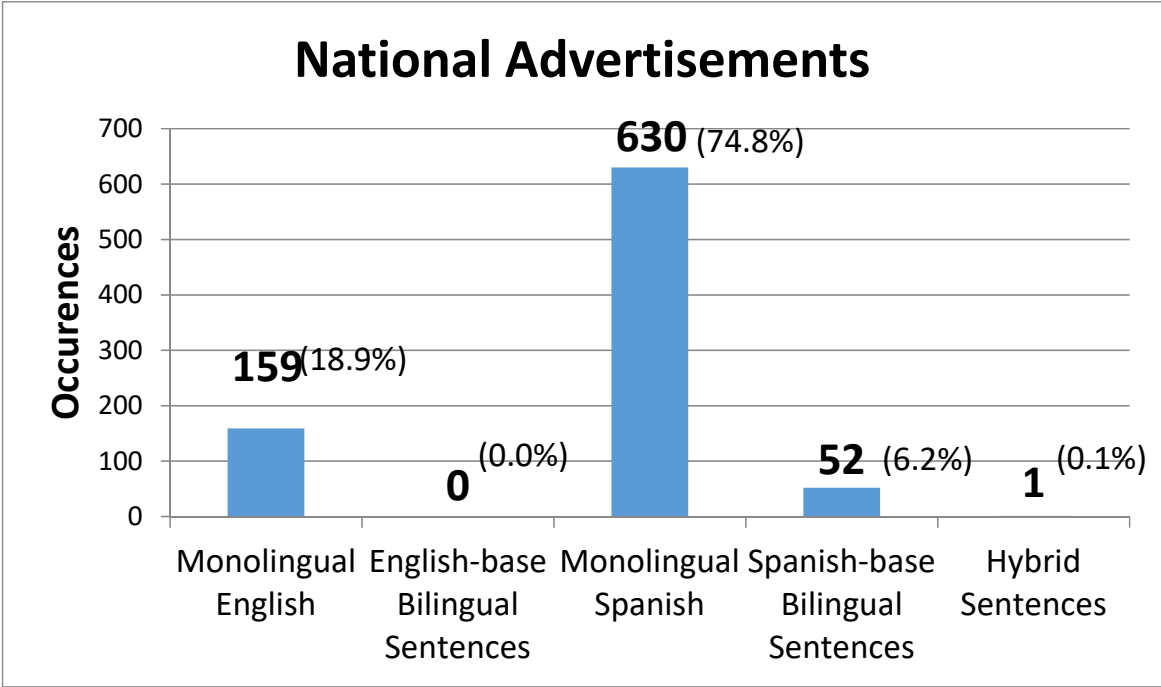


Figure 1. Sentence types for bilingual national advertisements on 96.3 La Mega.

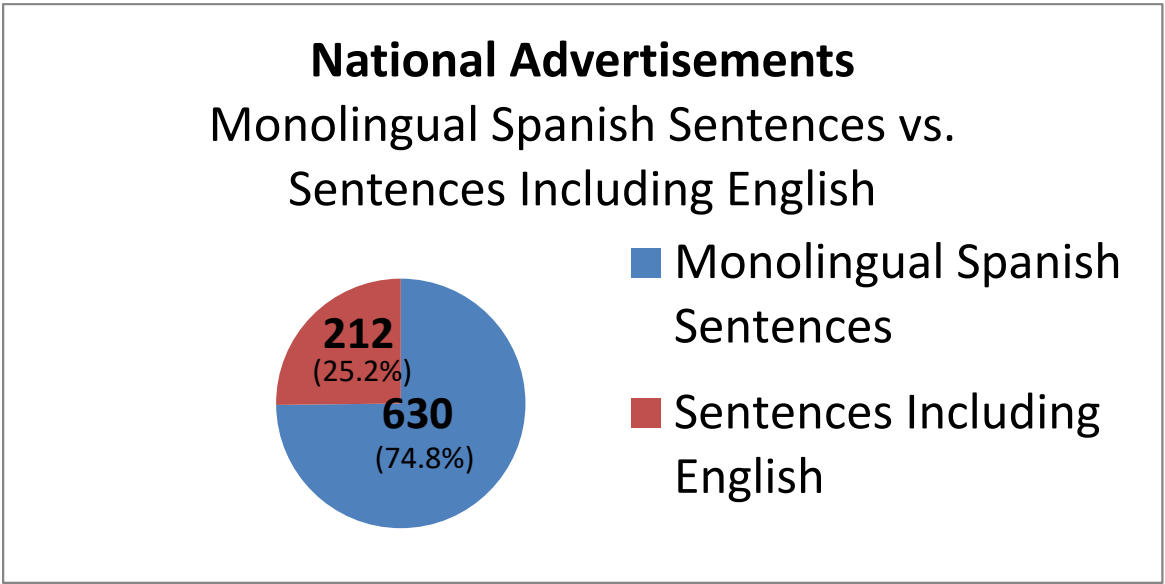


Figure 2. Monolingual Spanish sentences vs. sentences including English in national advertisements.

5.1.1. Monolingual Spanish

As seen in Figures 1 and 2, the most common type of sentence in the national advertisements is monolingual Spanish (74.8%). Examples of monolingual Spanish sentences from the corpus are presented below:

7.

Mejor protégete, y habla con un agente de Allstate, alguien que te conoce y se preocupa por ti. (Allstate Insurance)

‘It is better to protect yourself and talk to an Allstate agent, someone who knows and cares about you’.
8.

Rosetta Stone es un programa efectivo, el cual te brinda todas las herramientas necesarias para aprender con su método que está garantizado. (Rosetta Stone)

‘Rosetta Stone is an effective program, which provides all of the necessary tools and methods guaranteed for you to learn’.
9.

Con mil hojas, Scott 1000 es el rollo más duradero del país. (Scott Toilet Paper)

‘With a thousand sheets, Scott 1000 is the most durable roll in the country’.

The strong tendency in this corpus for monolingual Spanish sentences seems to counter Bishop and Peterson’s (2010) claim that bilingual advertisements geared towards the US Latinx community should match the medium in which they appear to result in higher evaluations of the products or services being advertised. In contrast, in the national advertisements on 96.3 La Mega, totaling all of the sentences which have Spanish as the base language (monolingual Spanish and Spanish-base sentences) it is reflective of 81 percent of the national advertisements corpus. This would seem to highlight that contemporary national advertising agencies show a preference for Spanish and believe that Los Angeles’ bilingual Latinx community has this same linguistic inclination.

5.1.2. Monolingual English Sentences

Outside of monolingual Spanish, monolingual English represents 18.9 percent of the corpus, as noted below:

10.

Every plant is carefully selected, every batch is gently matured, every drop is double distilled. Never forget where you come from, born in the highlands of Jalisco, Tequila Cazadores. (Tequila Cazadores)
11.

Progressive presents mindfulness, with Flow. (Progressive Auto Insurance)
12.

Your floors are under attack from overwatered plants to overflowing dog bowls, but the Home Depot has new water-resistant Pergo Outlast Plus laminate flooring starting at just \$2.79 a square foot. (The Home Depot)

This second largest category represents 159 sentences of the national advertisements corpus. In examining the bilingual nature of 96.3 La Mega, in addition to including primarily monolingual Spanish advertisements, it would seem appropriate that monolingual English sentences would also appear frequently. The inclusion of this strategy would also appeal to bilingual Latinxs who are English-dominant, reaching the entirety of the diverse listenership in their linguistic preference. As Caballero notes, “I’ve always worked with the Hispanic audience, with advertisers or with content. And it’s always been a struggle with, ‘what’s the right mix?’ ‘How do we speak to all Hispanics?’ And, I mean, this debate continues today. My personal views are ‘engagement over everything’” (Derrick 2017). Below, I examine the use of bilingual sentences, which include intra-sentential CS.

5.1.3. Spanish-Base Bilingual Sentences

Specific to bilingualism in on-air advertisements on 96.3 La Mega, Caballero points out that, “it used to be that the agencies would only send Spanish-only advertisements, but now we are starting to see the awareness of the lifestyle and culture of Latinos in the US” (Derrick 2017). It appears, then, that there has been a shift to include more bilingualism in advertisements geared towards the US Latinx community. In the corpus, Spanish-base bilingual sentences represent 6.2 percent or 52 of the total sentences analyzed. This follows the pattern of most of the sentences having a Spanish-base as monolingual Spanish is the most salient sentence type, as shown below:

13. *Elijas como elijas, siempre ganas con el McPick Two de McDonald’s* for only five dollars.
‘Choose however you like, you always will with the McPick Two from McDonalds for only five dollars’. (McDonalds)
14. *Eso es hacer valer tus pennies*. (JcPenny)
‘This is making your pennies count’.
15. *A las rockeras que cantan sobre el wish wash de la lavadera*. (Tide)
‘To the rockers that sing about the wish wash of the laundry room’.

As noted in examples (13)–(15), the on-air advertisements are inserting terms that are specific to US culture that perhaps would not translate the same way or with the same effectiveness if they were to be presented in monolingual Spanish, like fast food menu items, ‘pennies’, and ‘wish wash’. This is on par with the findings of Hagan (2009), who comments that most advertisements, which included Spanish/English CS tend to use English when referring to the US context, as certain terms do not translate word-for-word, though there may be a Spanish equivalent. In other words, CS in these types of advertisements does not necessarily highlight linguistic hybridity and the preference of US Latinxs, but rather the American way of life, which would not easily translate in the same way within a Latin American context.

5.1.4. English-Base Bilingual Sentences

Interestingly, the corpus of national advertisements showed no occurrences of English-base bilingual sentences. This illuminates additional evidence that contemporary national advertising agencies believe Spanish should remain dominant in bilingual advertisements. This is more on par with the findings of Levitt (1983), who points out that advertisements geared towards bilingual US Latinx consumers are most successful if they use one language over the other. This might furthermore indicate as noted by Caballero that advertising agencies are not quite sure how to intermix CS into their advertisements to portray the ‘right mix’ of Spanish and English (Derrick 2017).

5.1.5. Hybrid Sentences

Finally, hybrid sentences, or those sentences for which a base language cannot be determined, also have a low occurrence in the national advertisements corpus. The analysis identified 0.1 percent or one sentence:

16. *Mi nombre es April, and I love my Ford Focus*. (Ford)
‘My name is April, and I love my Ford Focus’.

Although few instances of hybrid sentences are represented, based on the previous literature related to bilingual advertisements and comments by Caballero (Derrick 2017), it appears that advertisement agencies are beginning to see the value of including more CS in their advertisements to reach the bilingual US Latinx community of Los Angeles. In (16), we see that there is no preference for one language over the other, rather a fusion of both languages, which requires the audience to have fluency in Spanish and English. Examining Figures 1 and 2, it is also apparent that national advertising agencies are not yet fully on board with the idea of using Spanish/English CS as the primary mode of communication for marketing products to US Latinx bilinguals. To this point, Caballero comments that, “I often have to push back on advertising agencies that think they know what they want to do with our audience and tactfully explain why they need to do things a different way. It’s often around language use and about ways they can make their vision make more sense to our Hispanic listeners and sound more organic to the way they actually speak. Advertising agencies push ad copies they feel are going to engage the audience best, but sometimes I have to school them on how to best communicate with my community. We do our best at 96.3 to select clients that we know the agency they are working with, what their brand is doing, who their target demo is and we like to be aware of the brands that are using bilingual endorsements, like Pitbull with AT&T a few years ago” (Derrick 2017). In examining the 82 national advertisements on LA’s 96.3 La Mega, it stands out that marketing agencies are appealing to bilingual Latinx consumers in primarily monolingual Spanish, similar to the findings of Callow and McDonald (2005) who pointed out that bilingual Spanish/English formats should include advertisements that are mostly Spanish only.

Though national advertisements show a low representation of hybrid sentences and intra-sentential CS, there is evidence that national on-air advertisements are beginning to use more inter-sentential CS, as monolingual English and hybrid sentences make up almost 20 percent of the corpus. In the next section, I look at the types of sentences present in the DJ-endorsed advertisements to see if they are using CS that is more representative of the ethos of 96.3 La Mega, which brands itself as a bilingual radio station that takes pride in using both Spanish and English.

5.2. DJ-Endorsed Advertisements

Since 96.3 La Mega also uses DJ-endorsed advertisements to appeal to US Latinx consumers in Los Angeles, it is worth examining these advertisements with an interest in the ways the language use is similar or dissimilar from the national advertisements reviewed above. As noted by Bishop and Peterson (2010, p. 63), Spanish/English bilingual advertisements are most effective if the language use is reflective of the medium they are used within; so, in this vein, I examine here if there is a more balanced use of Spanish/English CS in DJ-endorsed advertisements. Figure 3 notes the types of base sentences found in the corpus composed of 61 DJ-endorsed advertisements.

As seen in Figure 4, 48.1 percent of the DJ-endorsed advertisements are composed of sentences with monolingual Spanish as the base language. These findings contrast significantly with the corpus of national advertisements, where 74.8 percent of the advertisements utilized monolingual Spanish. Below, following the same organization as the previous section, I examine the different types of sentences, which show a more even distribution across categories in comparison to the national advertisements.

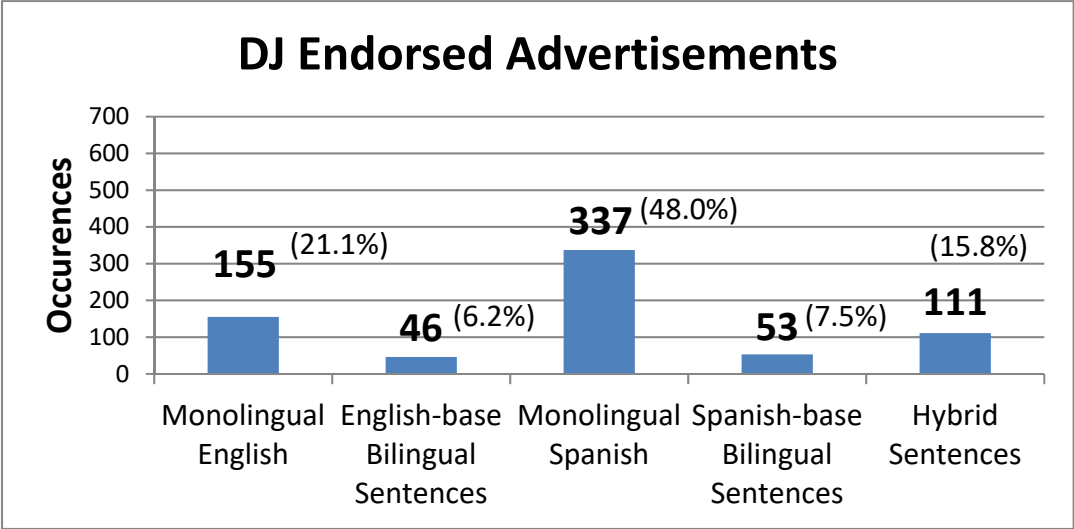


Figure 3. Sentence types for bilingual DJ-endorsed advertisements on 96.3 La Mega.

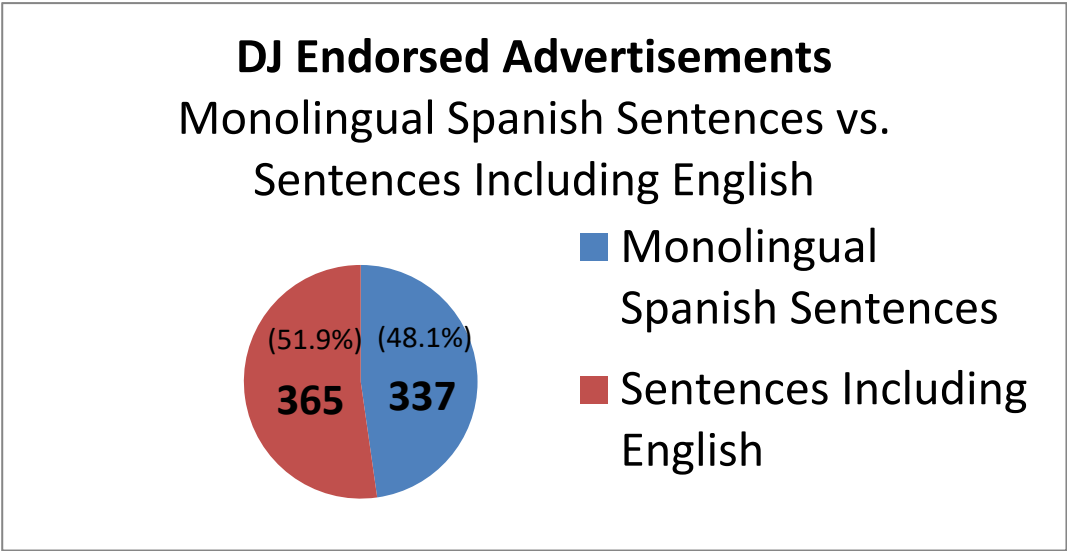


Figure 4. Monolingual Spanish sentences vs. sentences including English in DJ-endorsed advertisements.

5.2.1. Monolingual Spanish

As noted above, there is a stark difference in the use of monolingual Spanish amongst national and DJ-endorsed advertisements. DJ-endorsed advertisements use monolingual Spanish significantly less. Examples of this sentences type are given below:

17. *Si no puede dejar de comer carne roja, elija cortes con poca o sin grasa y límite el tamaño de porciones. Mensaje de la Universidad de California. (University of California Health)*
'If you can't stop eating red meat, choose small cuts without or with a small amount of fat, and limit the size of your portions'.
18. *Este lunes llega a mega TV un nuevo programa. Este lunes, cuatro p.m. Te estaré esperando. (Mega TV)*
'This Monday a new program arrives to mega TV. This Monday at 4 p.m., I'll be waiting for you'.
19. *Fernando, ¿qué mensaje tiene para mi gente? Que tengan cuidado cuando compren su auto porque mucha gente está pagando intereses altos y por eso, recomiendo a Nissan de Duarte. (Nissan of Duarte)*
'Fernando, what message do you have for my people? They should be careful when they buy their car because a lot of people are paying high interest rates and for this reason, I recommend Nissan of Duarte'.

As 96.3 La Mega prides itself on not prioritizing one language over the other, it is curious that 50 percent of the sentences in the DJ-endorsed advertisements utilize monolingual Spanish. In this case, we also note Spanish as the primary base language DJs use to advertise products and services to US Latinx bilinguals.

5.2.2. Monolingual English Sentences

The second largest category is monolingual English, which represents 21.1 percent of the corpus or 155 sentences. This is on par with the findings for the national advertisements, where around 19 percent of the sentences were monolingual English. Below are some examples of these types of sentences:

20. Closet G is coming to the Promenade at Downey. Join me, Carolina Marquez, for the grand opening this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon to three. (Closet G Downey)
21. DJ Eddie One. Ladies, Fellas, I'm here to remind you that now is your chance to have the body of your dreams the summer is around the corner and Pacific Med is offering super special prices on breast augmentation, tummy tucks, liposculpture, and Brazilian butt lift. (Pacific Med Health Group)
22. Your music this hour is being brought to you by Beverly Hills Physicians. (Beverly Hills Physicians)

In national and DJ-endorsed advertisements, both types of advertisements use monolingual English as a vehicle to engage bilingual US Latinxs. Caballero (Derrick 2017) comments on the importance of choosing advertisement campaigns that speak to all of their listeners noting, "It is important to create bonds amongst Hispanic listeners regardless of their competence in Spanish or English". In this vein, it is valuable to market products and services in both monolingual English and Spanish for listeners.

5.2.3. Spanish-Base Bilingual Sentences

Examining the sentences, which utilize intra-sentential CS, similar to the national advertisements, Spanish-base bilingual sentences were the third most prominent category in the corpus of DJ-endorsed advertisements, representing 7.5 percent or 53 sentences of the corpus, as exemplified below:

23. *Pregunta para todos mis radioescuchas, ¿han ido a algún car dealer este fin de semana pasada? (Nissan of Duarte)*
'A question for all of my listeners, have you gone to a car dealer this past weekend?'
24. *¿Necesitas a fast auto loan? Llama al 1 800 514 CASH, o visita fastauto.com para saber más. (Fast Auto)*
'Do you need a fast auto loan? Call 1 800 514 CASH, or visit fastauto.com to learn more'.
25. *Se compraron su carrito, salieron bien contentos, se fueron para la casa y les señalaron el carro a todo el mundo, y ahora el dealer les está llamando y diciendo que necesitan un co-signer, que el pago no va a ser de \$400, que va a ser de \$600. (Villa Ford of Orange)*
'You bought yourselves a car, you were very happy, you went home and showed everyone your car, and now the dealer is calling you and telling you that you need a co-signer, and that the payment isn't going to be \$400, rather \$600?'

Comparable to the national advertisements, (23)–(25) illustrate Spanish-base bilingual sentences, which use US specific terminology like ‘car dealer’ and ‘fast auto loan’ to code-switch. Specific to the auto industry, it is common to see different local dealerships utilize the same terms in English within their advertisements to US bilingual consumers. Hagan (2009, p. 13) mentions about the insertion of English terms in Spanish sentences within advertisements that, “Not surprisingly, however, regional variations in words ranging from the more common “bathroom” to the more specialized “layaway” complicate the goal of the American advertisers aiming for a Latino audience; for better or for worse, such advertisers are looking to access a large group of people, with little or no discrimination between consumers from Puerto Rico, and those from Mexico or Argentina. Faced with copious choices and little consensus, some advertisers likely choose to employ a different common denominator: English”. In other words, marketers that employ CS in their advertisements choose to insert English terms in Spanish-base sentences to ensure inclusiveness in key words for US Latinx consumers.

5.2.4. English-Base Bilingual Sentences

Within this category, we begin to see more contrast between the national advertisements in comparison to the DJ-endorsed advertisements. In this case, there are English-base bilingual sentences, where there were none reflected in the national advertisements. Here, these sentences represent 6.2 percent or 46 occurrences within the corpus, as pointed out below:

26. I mean are you looking forward to putting on a bikini, *un traje de baño*, and strutting your stuff in front of everybody at the *playa*? (Beverly Hills Physicians)
‘I mean are you looking forward to putting on a bikini, a bathing suit, and strutting your stuff in front of everybody at the beach?’
27. *Oye, sin duda* it’s just going to get more beautiful which means it’s time for the beach. (LA Center for Cosmetic Surgery)
‘Listen, without a doubt it’s just going to get more beautiful which means it’s time for the beach’.
28. That’s right and also J Balvin and his record release party, exclusive *boletos* only *aquí* in the morning Mega show *y en las calles con promociones*. (J. Balvin record release party)
‘That’s right and also J Balvin and his record release party, exclusive tickets only here in the morning Mega show and in the streets with promotions’.

As opposed to Spanish-base bilingual sentences, in this case, in (26)–(28), the Spanish insertions appear as a stylistic device to incorporate a Latinx flavor into the advertisement. In fact, Caballero points out about on-air host practices that, “the DJs use a lot of accommodation to adapt to the audience in whichever language to make them feel as comfortable as possible . . . at some point, we have to realize and consider that Spanglish is ‘just the way they talk’ (Derrick 2017). As highlighted above, none of the terms here are representative of a specific Latinx context and instead seem to be a strategy to attract Latinx consumers by appealing to them in both languages.

5.2.5. Hybrid Sentences

Lastly, hybrid sentences represent 15.8 percent or 115 sentences of the corpus. This category differs drastically from the national advertisements in terms of occurrence and is reflective of the bilingual ethos of 96.3 La Mega. Thus, we note here that the DJs are using CS as a mode of interaction to advertise a variety of services and products. In this case, the language use is similar to that which is used on-air in news updates, caller/DJ interactions, artist interviews, and DJ banter. Below, I point out examples of hybrid sentences from the corpus:

29. Hey it's Sandra Peña de Mega 96.3 *y me has escuchado hablar de cómo mis doctores, los doctores certificados de Boards Cosmetic* and how they get down, right? (Boards Cosmetic Surgery)
'Hey it's Sandra Peña from 96.3 and you have heard me talk about how my doctors, the certified doctors from Boards Cosmetic, and how they get down, right?
30. I mean, *nadie quiere enfrentar la necesidad de un abogado*, but hey, it's good to know that you can count on somebody. (Parker Law Group)
'I mean, no one wants to confront the reality of needed a lawyer . . .'
31. Call today for your free consultation, *hasta hay cita los sábados, so no hay excusa*. (California Dental Group)
'Call today for your free consultation, there are even appointments on Saturdays so there is no excuse'.

As mentioned previously, hybrid sentences are those for which a base cannot be established. The examples above reflect a mixture of Spanish and English, and there is no primary language being used; rather, Spanish/English CS is the mode. In (29)–(31), we notice the use of tags like hey, I mean, and so as switch points. Regarding tags, Poplack notes that they “are freely moveable constituents which may be inserted anywhere in the sentence” (Poplack 1980, p. 589). Furthermore, Caballero points out about 96.3 La Mega's DJ language use and station ethos that he does not tell the DJs how much to mix each language because, “I think that gets in the way of actually engaging with an audience. I think, letting the host feel comfortable with however they want to mix in the English and the Spanish is the most effective way at trying to communicate a message, this authenticity is what is going to connect the most with our listeners” (Derrick 2017). Thus, it appears that DJ-endorsed advertisements on 96.3 La Mega are showing a more innovative use of Spanish/English CS which includes intra-sentential CS, in comparison to national advertisements that seek to attract bilingual US Latinx consumers in mostly monolingual Spanish.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

In an examination of the linguistic nature of bilingual advertisements on 96.3 La Mega and comments from previous brand manager Victor Caballero, there is evidence that Spanish/English CS is becoming more widespread in radio advertisements geared towards Los Angeles's bilingual Latinx consumers. Specific to the speech of bilingual US Latinxs in Los Angeles, Caballero comments that, “I became a Lyft driver for six months in LA and I wanted to understand how people communicate in Los Angeles. How are they speaking to each other? I learned that contrary to the beliefs at a lot of the research companies that we're working with who are showing us data that says “Spanish dominant”. Like, bilingual doesn't work. You can't communicate to the masses using a bilingual approach, because they're going to tune out. So, my personal experience driving young Hispanics in LA around is that using Spanglish is just the way they talk. So, it's been a battle. These are research companies that we're paying a lot of money to that are giving us data that I feel in my heart is not truly representative of the audience that we're trying to target” (Derrick 2017).

Here, Caballero points out his professional and personal experiences related to the use of Spanish/English CS in Los Angeles as a necessary strategy to encourage the consumerism of the US Latinx community. His observations of the tendency to present Spanish-dominant advertisements are on par with the findings of this research in both national and DJ-endorsed on-air advertisements. However, there does seem to be some innovation in DJ-endorsed advertisements under the direction of Caballero at 96.3 La Mega.

Thus, it appears that 96.3 La Mega is pushing the boundaries related to best practices in Spanish/English bilingual advertisements. Though studies like Bishop and Peterson (2010) have pointed out that advertisements should match the medium context, in this case, Spanish/English CS as the primary mode of communication, national advertisement agencies still favor a Spanish-dominant advertising strategy. Currently, 96.3 La Mega ranks within the top 2 Latinx radio stations geared towards contemporary music and within the top 20 of Los Angeles overall (Nielsen Audio PPM Monthly Ratings 2023). As their on-air

DJ-endorsed advertisements include a more sustained mixture of Spanish/English CS, this highlights that the use of this practice is indicative of the way that young US Latinxs identify linguistically. This strategy furthermore emphasizes the importance of Spanish/English CS as an ongoing practice that continues to evolve and become legitimized in diverse types of US Latinx contexts and discourses.

Further research into bilingual advertisements and radio host banter could assess the language distribution of monolingual English, Spanish, and Spanish/English CS for further investigation into on-air language use practices. Query into on-air language use could provide further insight into contemporary linguistic practices within the US Latinx community. Moreover, other research on Spanish/English CS could examine its use in emerging audiovisual texts to assess language ideologies related to the motivations for using CS in texts geared towards diverse mainstream audiences.

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Note

- ¹ The term Spanglish has caused much debate amongst linguists regarding an exact definition and its relation to the US Latinx community, see (Casielles-Suárez 2017) for more discussion on the terms Spanglish and Spanish/English CS. In this research, I use Spanglish and Spanish/English CS interchangeably.

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Article

Ecuadorians in NYC: Language and Cultural Practices of a Community in the Diaspora

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Abstract: Given that Ecuadorians are one of the largest groups of Hispanics living in New York, they have become a tight community that they now call *little Ecuador*. Although Ecuadorians living in the diaspora in NYC come from different parts of the country (mostly from the Andean region), they share the same cultural practices they performed in Ecuador that give them the sense of being in their country without bearing the instability and turmoil their country experiences. This shows how the group has fostered a sense of a multifaceted, multidimensional simultaneity between the host country and the motherland. The goal of this paper is to analyze the strategies Ecuadorian migrants use to validate their language and cultural practices to negotiate their identity as a group. Data for this paper come from ethnographic observations, semi-spontaneous conversations, oral interviews with members of the group, along with pictures taken while walking the community and participating in some of their events. Our study reveals that participants hold varying perceptions regarding their linguistic and cultural practices. However, it is noteworthy that they recognize these practices as a manifestation of Ecuadorianness, signifying a sense of solidarity among community members.

Keywords: Ecuadorians in NYC; diaspora linguistics; cultural practices; identity negotiation



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1. Introduction

The city of New York can be characterized by its superdiversity, a condition that is distinguished by “a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade” (Vertovec 2007, p. 1024). Indeed, New York city (NYC) is the largest city by population in the United States and, according to the Racial and Diversity Report of the 2020 US Census, the boroughs where our data were collected have the highest diversity index in the state of New York: Queens County, 76.9% (Queens) and Kings County, 74.8% (Brooklyn). Moreover, Ecuadorians are the fourth largest group of Hispanics living in New York City from more than fifteen Hispanic nationalities (Bergad 2022). According to Ramírez (2021), Ecuadorians have been living in the United States for almost a century. Furthermore, their numbers have increased in the last decades because of political and economic crisis in Ecuador. Data from the US Customs and Border Protection show a change in the migration pattern of 2021 and 2023 where not only single individuals, but more families have crossed the US borders than before. All this explains why Ecuadorians have become a tight community in New York city, which nowadays is called “little Ecuador”.

In a context of superdiversity such as it occurs in New York city, with a rich history of migration and a high index of diversity, understanding how collective identities are formed is important to identify the strategies that diasporic communities use to construct symbolically and discursively their new home in the host country (Alexander 2017). As previously established by researchers, diasporic groups are not homogeneous communities

but contain multiple identities (Buttler 2001; Canagarajah and Silberstein 2012; Tseng and Hinrich 2021); in other words, these groups' identities are "frequently based on the homogenization of difference" (Gubitosi and De Oliveira 2020) since "a diaspora community is not a homogeneous group of people who share the same country of origin, but instead is a group of people who frequently have different backgrounds, culture and traditions" (Gubitosi et al. 2020, p. 215). This is critical when studying diasporic groups since, as this paper will show, Ecuadorians in New York may not come from the same neighborhood, or the same city, but they know they are fellow countrymen sharing the same linguistic and cultural practices even when they are not in the motherland anymore, and any empathy and fellow feeling among people must be accomplished situationally through language (Canagarajah and Silberstein 2012; Gubitosi et al. 2020).

The notion of community in the diaspora, then, must be reconceptualized, since the idea of homeland is no longer the goal of a long return journey but rather a newly imagined society where people recreate their home away from home. Language has a crucial role in this task because it is the main instrument to "mediate how communities are imagined, constructed, and maintained on all dimensions" (Tseng and Hinrich 2021, p. 652). Language has the power to build new discourses and negotiate new identities that are essential for diasporas to survive.

In this new context, migrants need to rebuild their sense of belonging and establish a new purpose for them and their families. In this process "practices and traditions from home affect migrants' adaptation by providing them with a sense of familiarity, comfort and stability" (Marino 2018, p. 264). For that reason, when studying diasporic communities, it is important to examine not only the language but also the cultural practices that a group uses as strategies to negotiate their identities, resist assimilation, and construct conviviality (Márquez Reiter and Patiño 2021) with other diasporas with whom they share the new territorialized space.

Following Blommaert's (2010) seminal work on sociolinguistic of globalization, this paper analyzes language and cultural practices of a diasporic group of Ecuadorians living in New York City in the hope that this investigation will shed light on how diaspora groups accommodate themselves to the new place and negotiate their new identities in a new reimagined home away from home. We understand that language in diasporic contexts should be studied as a "practice", as migrant people "may (re)localize, (re)negotiate and (re)make certain available linguistic and cultural resources to achieve their communicative aims." (Barret and Dovchin 2019, p. xiii). In that regard, we try to answer the following questions: what linguistic and cultural practices are used by Ecuadorian migrants living in NYC to (re)negotiate their identity, and how they reinforce their Ecuadorianness in this multilingual and multidiverse environment.

Our paper is organized as follows: in the next section, we discuss our methodology and present our data; then, we offer the discussion of our results, and, finally, we present our conclusions.

2. Materials and Methods

For the present study, a multimodal methodology was implemented to gather data, which consisted of ethnographic fieldwork and sociolinguistic interviews (Canagarajah 2017; Zimmermann and Morgenthaler García 2007).

As a first step, ethnographic fieldwork was conducted between 2022 and 2023 in Brooklyn and Queens. Fieldwork revolved around Ecuadorian community gatherings and actively participated in different events such as Ecuavolley, soccer games, and cultural festivities (e.g., the Ecuadorian Parade, Inti Raymi celebration, concerts), as one of the researchers is a member of the community. These events illustrate how the Ecuadorian community desires to recreate their cultural practices and to connect in a way with their motherland while living in a new home. Additionally, the semiotic landscapes of these events were documented. Finally, informal conversations with different members of the community were carried out while participating in different celebrations. All participants

were from the Ecuadorian Highlands, whose variety of Spanish is known as Ecuadorian Andean Spanish¹ (EAS) (Toscano 1953; Haboud 1998; Haboud and de la Vega 2008; Muysken 2019). These conversations were not recorded, and they were documented as fieldwork notes. We took part in these celebrations so we could understand their significance to members of the community. Participation in these events allowed us a first-hand overview of the languages used in this community, with Spanish being predominant.

As the research unfolded, the second step consisted of collecting sociolinguistic interviews that were designed based on the work performed during the fieldwork. The interviews were designed following conversational modules that included hobbies and special memories of the participants, city description, city traditions, and culture. However, the order of the questions and modules was adapted depending on the participants' main interests. The interviews have two versions, one in Spanish and one in English. Participants were asked their preferred language for the interview, and all of them picked Spanish as their preferred option. The researcher conducting the interviews belongs to the Ecuadorian community and shares the same Spanish variety (i.e., Ecuadorian Andean Spanish).

In the present study, we only include data in which participants talked about the linguistic and cultural practices of Ecuadorians in New York City in order to answer the research questions stated above. We followed a reflexivity approach when collecting and analyzing our data. This approach included two connected steps of prospective and retrospective reflexivity (Attia and Edge 2017; Edge 2011). The first moment, the interview with the participants, was conducted by one of the researchers, who is a member of the community; a second moment, the analysis and discussion of the data, also included a second researcher from another Latin American country.

Regarding language practices, participants were asked about (i) how they perceived the way Ecuadorians speak Spanish in New York City, (ii) if they perceived any difference among members of the Ecuadorian community, (iii) if they perceived any difference between the speech of Ecuadorians and members of other Latinx/Hispanic communities, and (iv) how they perceived the Spanish spoken in their homeland and New York City. Regarding cultural practices, participants reflected on (i) which cultural practices are performed in the city; (ii) how authentic those practices are in New York City; and (iii) if they had perceived any changes over the years regarding the cultural practices performed by Ecuadorians in New York City. The sociolinguistic interviews allowed for us to analyze migrant narratives of the Ecuadorian diaspora community in New York City.

A total of thirty participants (sixteen women and fourteen men) were interviewed after obtaining consent from them. Participants were recorded in places they felt comfortable (houses, public spaces, etc.) and time varied in length from 15 to 40 min. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 63 years old (median = 34 years old), and they had lived in the city from 5 months to 28 years with a median of 18 years. All participants came from the highlands of Ecuador, one was originally from the city of Biblián, and the rest of the participants came from the city of Ambato. They were recruited through researchers' acquaintances and from fieldwork in which some members of the community were willing to take part in this study. Later, participants were divided into three groups: newcomers, Ecuadorians who had lived less than 5 years in NYC (Group 1, $n = 10$); long-standing migrants, participants who had lived more than five years in the city (Group 2, $n = 15$); and participants who were born and raised in NYC (Group 3, $n = 5$). Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants who partook in the sociolinguistic interview. Participants who only partook in the fieldwork events remain anonymous.

The division of participants was considered due to the current immigrant situation in NYC. While conducting fieldwork, long-standing Ecuadorian migrants mentioned that there are new linguistic and cultural practices that have not been seen previously in the city. This also contrasts with the knowledge of one of the researchers, who has been conducting research in the city since 2018. We considered it important to explore how Ecuadorians with different lengths of time spent in the city perceived each other and to

explore how Ecuadorian identity is constructed as a whole despite some differences that can be attributed to the performance of certain linguistic and cultural practices.

Table 1. Participant demographics.

Participant	Age	Gender	City of Origin	Group
007_HP_NY	27	M	Ambato	Group 1
010_KC_NY	25	F	Ambato	Group 1
011_FP_NY	45	M	Ambato	Group 1
012_AC_NY	45	F	Ambato	Group 1
013_GA_NY	38	F	Ambato	Group 1
014_RP_NY	41	F	Ambato	Group 1
015_AL_NY	47	M	Ambato	Group 1
017_KS_NY	21	M	Ambato	Group 1
018_AS_NY	37	F	Ambato	Group 1
030_AD_NY	30	M	Ambato	Group 1
001_JM_NY	31	F	Biblián	Group 2
009_AC_NY	26	M	Ambato	Group 2
024_KT_NY	22	M	Ambato	Group 2
025_NT_NY	32	F	Ambato	Group 2
033_MS_NY	33	F	Ambato	Group 2
002_SC_NY	37	M	Ambato	Group 2
003_MC_NY	30	F	Ambato	Group 2
004_MT_NY	63	F	Ambato	Group 2
005_GP_NY	38	F	Ambato	Group 2
006_JP_NY	40	M	Ambato	Group 2
008_LC_NY	47	F	Ambato	Group 2
016_JP_NY	32	M	Ambato	Group 2
019_FC_NY	44	M	Ambato	Group 2
021_DT_NY	39	M	Ambato	Group 2
022_SM_NY	39	F	Ambato	Group 2
020_JR_NY	23	M	New York	Group 3
023_CT_NY	18	M	New York	Group 3
026_YJ_NY	18	F	New York	Group 3
027_LS_NY	24	F	New York	Group 3
032_KC_NY	19	F	New York	Group 3

This multimodal approach gives us a more accurate understanding of the complex and multidimensional lives of people in the diaspora. In the case of Ecuadorians in New York City, the use of different data allows for us to better understand how they manage to collectively build their Ecuadorian identity while at the same time negotiating it with the Hispanic/Latinx identity they need to live with in the new country.

3. Results

In this section, we will present the language and cultural practices found in our data. Culture is not a fixed but flexible and variable construct (Gutiérrez 2002), and practices can be understood as individual habits or collective routines that allow for investigators to analyze the “unconscious or automatic activities embedded in taken-for-granted routines” (Swidler 2001, p. 84). Therefore, cultural practices are common perceptions of how people routinely behave within a community (Frese 2015); they are multidimensional and involve sociohistorical considerations about people’s experiences (Gubitosi et al. 2023).

Several researchers have pointed out that people in the diaspora utilize their languages as one of the most important mechanisms of their semiotic system, emphasizing fluid repertoire use, including polylingualism and translanguaging practices (García and Li 2015; MacSwan 2017; Pennycook 2010; Tseng and Hinrich 2021). In other words, any competent language speaker has at their disposal a series of linguistic resources for highlighting different aspects of their identities according to the situation (Arias Álvarez and Gubitosi 2020; Joseph 2011; Llamas and Watt 2010; Beswick 2014). As stated above, diasporic

communities need to negotiate new identities that reflect their new realities. However, while doing so, the sense of the homeland needs to be preserved and re-signified. Indeed, as Tseng and Hinrich (2021) point out, diasporas comprise awareness and recollection of the past as well as evolving practices. As the following participant from Group 1 attests, everything in the community looks like Ecuador:

Excerpt 1:

Interviewer: *¿Y cuando llegó acá, cómo le vio a la comunidad ecuatoriana? ¿Ve que se ha mantenido la cultura, las tradiciones, o que han perdido?*

“And when you arrived here, what did you think about the Ecuadorian community? Do you think that culture, traditions are maintained, or they were lost?”

Interviewee: *No, lo mismo, lo mismo que Ecuador. Aquí la gente se porta así como somos ecuatorianos y hace la misma tradición, lo mismo de allá de Ecuador.*

“No, it is the same than in Ecuador. Here people behave like we are Ecuadorians and have the same traditions, the same than those there in Ecuador.”

[015_AL_NY]

However, this perception of this newcomer participant is not the same as other members of the community, as the following excerpt shows:

Excerpt 2:

Interviewee: *Siguen llegando, ah ah, llegaron y siguen llegando.*

“They keep arriving. They arrived and continue arriving.”

Interviewer: *¿Y eso ha afectado como se ve el barrio, los negocios que hay en el barrio?*

“And that has affected how the neighborhood looks, the business that exist in the neighborhood?”

Interviewee: *Sí, sí afectó porque nosotros, como decir, estábamos acostumbrados como decir al al al estilo de aquí, que no no se veía así como decir en las calles gente exponiéndose a los peligros de la calle o vendedores ambulantes en la calle.*

“Yes, yes, it affected it because we were, how I would say it, used to, how I would say it, used to the style of our life here, we haven’t seen like people on the street open to street dangers or street vendors.”

[002_SC_NY]

What the previous paragraphs demonstrate is that people need to continuously negotiate their Ecuadorianness in the big city: What does it mean to live and adapt to the new home in a superdiverse, global city such as New York without assimilating? What does it mean to be an Ecuadorian living away from Ecuador? The newcomers bring back what the long-standing migrants were able to forget, such as the street food vendors. Nevertheless, because people share the same space, newcomers and long-standing migrants need to negotiate their cohabitation (Márquez Reiter and Patiño 2021) in a peaceful manner that Rampton (2015) describes as conviviality. As the following excerpt shows, the participant acknowledges the arrival of new people helps the group to “reinforce” its Ecuadorian identity:

Excerpt 3

Interviewee: *Y creo que ehm de verdad eh, es mejor es se está reinforcing the cultura aquí, y está, ah ah... porque también ha venido mucha gente de Ecuador. Entonces como que, eh, hay más gente de Ecuador. Entonces maybe cuando hacen los festivales y todo eso se llena más la gente, entonces I think it's been more reinforce right now. Yeah*

“And I think uhm truly uhm it is better, it is reinforcing culture here and is... Uhm... because so many people have arrived from Ecuador. Then, it is like there are more people from Ecuador. Then, maybe when they celebrate festivals and

everything there are a lot of people, then, I think it's been more reinforcement right now. Yeah."

[032_KC_NY]

As Ecuadorian community members face their reality of being one of the many Latinos in the superdiverse city, they need to close ranks and strengthen their in-group solidarity. For this reason, and despite any differences they may have, the long-standing members of the community value what the newcomers have brought to the community, and how their own lives have also improved through the new market opportunities the newcomers have brought with them. Indeed, as these participants express, having more Ecuadorian people relocate to live in the community encourages supermarkets to bring more Ecuadorian products to satisfy their increased demand:

Excerpt 4

Interviewer: *¿qué es algo que no había antes y que ahora les llamó la atención?*

"Is there anything that was not here before and you notice you can have it now?"

Interviewee 1: *Bueno, puedo decir cuando ya empecé yo a comprar cosas. Yo no veía el higo, no lo veía en cada supermercado. Pero ahora es en todo lado.*

"Well, I can say that when I started to buy things, I did not see figs in the supermarkets. But now they are everywhere."

Interviewee 2: *o los chochos.*

"Or lupini beans"

Interviewee 1: *los chochos no lo veíamos, ahora los ponen en bolsitas como en Ecuador.*

"We did not see lupini beans, now they put them in small bags like in Ecuador."

Interviewer: *¿eso lo ven como algo bueno?*

"Do you think it is a good thing?"

Interviewee 2: *yo creo que es algo bueno para el país de uno también porque está representando lo que nosotros somos de la cultura que nosotros venimos y no se pierde*

"I think it is something good for our country; also, because it represents what we are, the culture we are from, so it does not get lost."

Interviewee 1—[025_NT_NY]

Interviewee 2—[006_JP_NY]

In parallel with cultural practices, community members must confront how their linguistic variety has changed and now it is different from the one spoken in their homeland. In our study, participants' remarks during interviews unveiled patterns concerning the linguistic practices of Ecuadorian community members in New York City. All participants consistently observed that the Spanish spoken in NYC differs significantly from the Spanish spoken in Ecuador, the "accent" being the main distinction. When further examining the concept of "accent", participants highlighted variations in the pronunciation of sounds like <r> and <ll>, as exemplified by words such as "ca[ɾ]o" or "[ʒ]uvia" (see Haboud and de la Vega 2008 for further details on consonant variation in EAS). Additionally, they noted the usage of distinctive words such as "ñaño" (referring brother or friend), "mijin" (meaning friend), or "achachay" (a Kichwa loan word signifying "it is cold"). Furthermore, participants recognized discourse markers like "ve" (see Zambrano Ojeda 2023 for an overview), and grammatical constructions emphasizing politeness such as "dame limpiando la mesa" (lit. give-me cleaning the table) (see Haboud and de la Vega 2008). Beyond these features specific to Ecuadorian Andean Spanish, participants also observed the recent presence of the Kichwa language in various parts of the city. These observations have been meticulously categorized and are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Ecuadorian linguistic practices in NYC.

Linguistic Practices	% of Mentions by Participant
Pronunciation	100
Ecuadorian lexicon	100
Presence of Kichwa in the city	80
Ecuadorian discourse markers	73
Politeness constructions	27

As we can observe in Table 2, all participants consistently highlighted the significance of the pronunciation and the lexicon. Notably, 80% of participants acknowledge the presence of the Kichwa language in diverse settings, including parks, schools, trains, among others. Additionally, 73% of respondents referenced the use of discourse markers, while 27% noted the employment of politeness structures. These linguistic practices serve as a dual purpose within the Ecuadorian community. Firstly, they facilitate the recognition of community membership, effectively distinguishing Ecuadorians from other Hispanic/Latinx communities. Secondly, these linguistic features play a crucial role in differentiating between newcomers and long-standing Ecuadorian community members.

A participant from Group 2 exemplifies how she perceived the way Ecuadorians spoke when she arrived, and the processes through which her variety has changed over the years: Excerpt 5:

Interviewee: *porque uno, como uno bueno apenas llega ¿no? Y sí habla, se habla diferente se habla como decir la manera de allá, pues y aquí sí sí cambia un poquito por lo que a veces te pega aquí como decir ‘oh’, ‘oh my god’ ‘sorry’, y pues allá es como decir se viene con ‘espera ve’, o sea el ‘espera ve’ ‘¿dónde estás ve?’ ‘ya ya, simón, simón’, o sea ya, y bueno, aquí dices ‘¿dónde estás? ¿En qué parte estás?’, o sea ya, o sea ya no el ‘ve’, [o] sea ya le... aquí le perdiste al ‘ve’.*

“Because, when one recently arrives... we speak differently, we speak the same way as there, and here yes, yes, it changes a little bit because sometimes we incorporate ‘oh’, ‘oh my god’, ‘sorry’, and there, we come with ‘wait ve’, it is like the ‘wait ve’, where are you ve?’ ‘ya ya, ok, ok’, it is like... and well, here you say ‘where are you?’ ‘where are you?’, it is like, here you lose ‘ve’.”

[003_MC_NY]

The participant reflects on how her speech has changed, which involves a process of incorporating new words and phrases while losing features of her Spanish variety, such as the use of “ve”, or the word “simón”, which means “yes”. The discourse marker “ve” has also been mentioned as a feature that characterizes the speech of the Ecuadorian community in general, but it is mostly linked to newcomers or Ecuadorians in the homeland. Even though participants in this study mentioned that one of the reasons to modify their speech is their perception of certain features that are considered “wrong” or “incorrect”, participants still use them, and in some cases, they have reincorporated them in their speech:

Excerpt 6:

Interviewee: *[...] Y bueno últimamente he comenzado a usar otra vez, bueno por textos ‘¿dónde estás ve?’ Ya, o sea pero por texto, pero eso digo, no no sé porque otra vez volvió, pero yo digo cuando apenas llegué, sí era eso ‘¿qué más ve? ¿y dónde estás ve? ¿y qué haces ve?’*

“[...] Well, recently I have been using ‘ve’ again, in text messages ‘where are you ve?’ But in text messages. I do not know why it came back, but as I mentioned when I arrived, it was always ‘what’s up ve?’ ‘where are you ve?’ ‘what are you doing ve?’”

[003_MC_NY]

Several researchers have pointed out that Ecuadorian Andean Spanish has several features that are not considered standard and prestigious (see Haboud 1998; Flores Mejía 2014 for an overview). Language ideologies have an important role in informing people's decisions about which linguistic variety should be spoken, when, and how frequently (Arias Álvarez and Gubitosi 2020). As a group that needs to negotiate their language with other Hispanic groups living in the city, Ecuadorian migrants tend to hide some features they are aware of, and they consider are not respected as an educated and standard variety. As observed in Table 2, all participants mentioned that most of the features are related to "la pronunciación" (the pronunciation) and "las palabras" (the words). In this regard, Zentella (2017) mentions that Latin American immigrants arrive to the U.S. with notions of "good" and "bad" Spanish that, on one hand, reproduce ideologies towards "standard language" and, on the other hand, reinforce linguistic insecurities causing speakers to consider their varieties inferior compared to others. In the case of Ecuadorians, we found that these ideologies were present in all participants, including participants in Group 3, which shows how the perception towards Ecuadorian Andean Spanish is reproduced and transmitted in New York City. One of the participants in Group 3 comments that such features are considered "broken-up Spanish":

Excerpt 7:

Interviewee: *O sea, Broken up Spanish es. . . como una frase 'apúrate ve'. O sea, ese tipo no es español, so es broken up Spanish, porque es como. . . corto el español. O la palabra 'mijín', eso en español español no hay, pero todos lo usamos. Ese es el broken up Spanish.*

"Broken up Spanish is. . . like a phrase 'hurry up ve'. That phrase is not Spanish, so it is broken-up Spanish because it is like. . . Spanish is short. Or the word 'cause it is like. . . Spanish is short. Or the word 'mijín', which does not exist in Spanish, but everyone uses it. That is broken-up Spanish."

[014_KT_NY]

The participant reflects that some of the phrases or lexical words used by Ecuadorians, such as "apúrate ve" or "mijín", are not part of the Spanish language. However, it should be noted that these features were registered during the interview and the fieldwork. Later in the conversation, the same participant recognizes that these features are used, but in specific contexts:

Excerpt 8:

Ah, es dependiendo de la. . . del nivel que estás, entre con amigos, con confianza. Uno recién conociéndole no le vas a decir 'hola mijín', So, solo es como cuando ya te conoces un cierto tiempo, ahí es donde ya es la confianza más. . . eh, pero más que yo. . . o sea yo uso. . . eh, hacemos un ejemplo, un chiste, cuando está frío decimos 'oh, está achachay'. So, algo así que solo los dos entendemos que nadie más lo entiende, ese es un tipo de frase que usamos.

"Ah, it depends on the. . . level of relationship you have, among friends. When you meet someone new, you are not going to tell them 'hi mijín'. So, it is only used when you already know someone, when you have a certain degree of trust. . . eh, but I. . . I use. . . eh, this is an example, a joke, when it is cold, we say 'oh, it is achachay'. So, something like we are the only ones that understand, nobody else understands it, that is the type of phrases we use."

[014_KT_NY]

Language, as an important semiotic resource, allows for our participants to exhibit their in-group solidarity and membership (Arias Álvarez and Gubitosi 2020) while negotiating their Ecuadorian identity with other Hispanic groups by using their linguistic resources as their own agency.

4. Discussion

As we have previously discussed, cultural and language practices are crucial elements for people in the diaspora to negotiate their identities and express their in-group solidarity, even when Ecuadorian Spanish speakers feel their variety does not have the same prestige as other Spanish varieties. The following excerpt shows how these participants will consciously change the form they use depending on who they are talking to:

Excerpt 9:

Interviewer: *para pedir cosas, si necesitas sal, ¿cómo pides?*

“To ask for anything, how do ask it?”

Interviewee 1: *cuando ya compartimos con gente diferente que no somos los cuatro. “Sí, mira, por favor, puedes pasar”*

“When we already shared [something] with different people we [would say] ‘well, look, please, could you give [me some salt]’”

Interviewee 2: *deme pasado la sal por favor, gracias.*

“Would you please give the salt, thanks” [lit. “**give-me passing** some salt”]

Interviewee

1—[025_NT_NY]

Interviewee 2—[006_JP_NY]

This particular use of the verb dar+gerund to express politeness is a special feature of Ecuadorian Andean Spanish (Haboud and de la Vega 2008; Haboud and Puma Ninacuri Forthcoming) that its speakers only use when among people of the same origin. This is also something that people value about the newcomers, as they bring to the long-standing community a fresh wave of language use among the children, as this participant asserts:

Excerpt 10:

Interviewee: *voy a dar el ejemplo de mis hijos. Los dos, como los dos han estado aquí en la escuela desde los tres años y solo han... ellos hablan español, entienden español, pero no querían, o sea no querían hablar aquí en la casa. So, ellas iban a la escuela, aprendieron inglés [...]. Pero cuando ya llegaron niños de Ecuador, como hace tres años y la abuelita empezó a cuidar a los otros niños recién llegados más mis hijos, ya se juntaron que los dos agarraron al español, les hablaban en inglés, pero luego se daban en cuenta que no les entendían y nosotros decía ‘no hablan inglés, ellos hablan español’. So, ahí se dieron en cuenta que como no hablan inglés y que tenían que hablar español.*

“I am going to give you my kids’ example. Both of them, since they have been here at school when they were three years old and they only... they speak Spanish, understand Spanish but they did not want like did not want to speak here at home. So, they went to school and learned English [...]. But when the kids from Ecuador came here, like three years ago and the grandmother started taking care of them, my kids started to catch Spanish; they spoke in English but then they realized nobody understood them and we told them: ‘They do not speak English, they speak Spanish,’ so then they started to speak Spanish.”

[001_JM_NY]

Regarding how the community has changed, many of our participants noticed how the community has been growing these past years with the arrival of newcomers from Ecuador. They are now a visible group not only in the neighborhood but also in schools as the following participant expresses:

Excerpt 11:

Interviewee: *Eso ha pasado en el últ- los últimos tres años se podría decir. Especialmente porque, por ejemplo, cuando yo empecé... usemos dos años, tres, porque cuando yo llegué a trabajar en una escuela que yo trabaja- trabajaba en una escuela que está a diez minutos*

de acá. Yo cuando llegué el primer año a trabajar, era la escuela casi la mayormente era boricuas y dominicanos, no, dominicanos. . . todos los niños casi eran dominicanos; ecuatorianos, colombianos, era bien poquito. La escuela es como de 100 niños 103, pero ya estos dos últimos años la escuela se llenó vuelta solo de ecuatorianos, solo de ecuatorianos y ya los dominicanos ya eran solamente unos que, cuatro o cinco contados por salón, el resto era puro ecuatoriano

“That has happened in the last. . . the last three years one can say. Especially, because, for instance, when I started, let’s say, two, three years. . . because when I started to work at a school –I worked in a school that is 10 min away. When I arrived the first year, the school was mostly Boricuas and Dominicans, no, Dominicans. . . all the children were mostly Dominicans; Ecuadorians, Colombians there were a few. The school is like 100, 103 children; but now these two years, the school was filled up only with Ecuadorians, only Ecuadorians and now the Dominican kids were only four, five kids in each classroom, the remaining students were Ecuadorians.”

[001_JM_NY]

This last wave of migration also included people from indigenous communities, which was one of the significant changes that long-standing migrants noticed in the Ecuadorian community, as the next participant comments:

Excerpt 12:

Interviewer: *¿Y a los niños ecuatorianos?*

“And Ecuadorian kids?”

Interviewee: *La mayoría hablan, también hablan español y. . . y quechua.*

“Most of them speak, also speak Spanihs and. . . and Quechua.”

Interviewer: *Ah ya, ¿también?*

“Ah, also?”

Inteerviewee: *Sí, hablan aquí en la mayo-, en la escuelita de mi niño está mucha gente de Ambato que es de de de Quisapincha, que son indígenas. Y lo hablan Kichwa. Y Entonces, pero yo no entiendo eso y siempre les escucho que juegan ahí entre ellos, sí.*

“Yes, they speak here in most of. . . in my kid’s school there are a lot of people from Ambato who are from Quisapincha, they are indigenous. And they speak Kichwa. But I do not understand it, and I always hear them when they play among themselves.”

Interviewer: *Ah, ¿pero eso es reciente o siempre ha habido eso?*

“Is that recent or has it always been like that?”

Interviewee: *Este año ha sido. . . Mmm, hace dos años ha sido bien frecuente que están muchos niños llegando de Ecuador y solo se comunican en en quechua y muchos padres no hablan español.*

“This year has been. . . Mmm, since two years ago it has been frequent that many kids are coming from Ecuador and they only speak Quechua, and most of their parents do not speak Spanish.”

[008_LC_NY]

The presence of Kichwa in schools, as well as other public spaces such as parks, streets, restaurants, or train stations, was highlighted by long-standing Ecuadorians and corroborated by one of the researchers while conducting fieldwork. At first, this stirred up some controversies between long-standing and newcomer migrants. For example, 80% of participants mentioned that children were speaking Spanish with an Ecuadorian accent, which was not considered “correct” due to the ideologies towards this variety mentioned

earlier. However, because they needed to forge a new identity of what it means to be an Ecuadorian in NYC, people accepted the new group and integrated them into a new, large community. This has changed the cultural and linguistic practices of Ecuadorians, and our participants now recognize being part of one big Ecuadorian community in which they feel represented, as one of our participants explains, “we are all Ecuadorians”.

Previous images taken during fieldwork show two of the cultural events with which the Ecuadorian community celebrates its heritage. Figures 1 and 2 show the Ecuadorian Parade, and Figures 3 and 4 show the Inti Raymi celebration. Both celebrations took place in Queens in 2022. During these events, food, music, and traditional dances from Ecuador were highlighted by participants. They mentioned that they felt proud of being Ecuadorian, and these festivities let them feel like they were back home. Additionally, participants pointed out that regardless of being from different cultural and geographical backgrounds (e.g., Coast, Highlands, or Amazon region), all Ecuadorians are represented there.



Figure 1. Parade floats. Photo taken by one of the authors during the Ecuadorian Parade 2022.



Figure 2. Ecuadorian flag. Photo taken by one of the authors during the Ecuadorian Parade 2022.



Figure 3. Stage set up at the Inti Raymi—iesta del Sol: NY. Photo taken by one of the authors.



Figure 4. Participants at the *Inti Raymi—Fiesta del Sol*: NY. Photo taken by one of the authors.

Similarly, participants in the interviews indicate the importance of maintaining cultural practices in the diaspora:

Excerpt 13

Bueno, como somos. . . [o] sea del mismo país yo creo que la cultura de nosotros transportamos ¿no? a cualquier lado. O sea, no nos contagiamos de la cultura de aquí. . . Nosotros somos nosotros mismos y ya. Creo que. . . porque igual en el idioma, en la comida, en las costumbres siempre tratamos de ser los mismos, tanto aquí como allá

“Well, we are. . . we are from the same country, I believe that we move our culture with us, anywhere. We do not assimilate to the culture from here. . . we are who we are, and that is it. I believe. . . the same in the language, food, traditions, we always try to be the same, here and there.”

[011_FP_NY]

Excerpt 14

[. . .] antes no habían, como un- hacían como una vez al año [desfiles de ecuatorianos], festejaban la cualquier cosa, pero ahora ya están más ecuatorianos que hacen más, tratan de tener como la la cultura más, o traer la cultura de allá para acá.

“[. . .] Before, there were no. . . they organize once per year [Ecuadorian parades], they celebrate anything, but now there are more Ecuadorians who organize more activities, they try to keep more the culture. . . or bring the culture from there to here.”

[009_AC_NY]

Cultural practices have been present in the Ecuadorian community for many years; however, long-standing participants mentioned that those practices are becoming stronger nowadays. Participants highlight that cultural events are becoming more frequent in the city and that many Ecuadorians are getting involved in those celebrations. Similarly, other events such as Ecuavolley games are now played in different parts of the city, as mentioned by participants in the following excerpts:

Excerpt 15

Yo me acuerdo cuando yo vine a vivir aquí en Queens, era poco [el Ecuavolley]. Cuando íbamos a Flushing no había mucho, muchas canchas de [Ecuavolley] no habían. . . eran, eran limitadas. So, ahorita usted va por todo el parque Flushing, en cada espacio que hay, está puesto canchas de [Ecuavolley].

“I remember when I came to live here in Queens, it was. . . When we went to Flushing there was not, there were not enough [Ecuavolley] fields. . . it was scarce. So, now you go to Flushing Park, there is a [Ecuavolley] field in every space.”

[006_JP_NY]

Excerpt 16

Aquí en Brooklyn, en las [canchas] de Madison, ahí era la primera cancha como decir que nosotros jugábamos. Te estoy hablando del 2000. Era la única cancha porque ni siquiera había campeonatos ni nada, a veces ni gente pa' jugar había. [...] fue aumentando con los años, con los años fue aumentando más y más, hasta que ya se abrieron campeonatos y todo.

“Here in Brooklyn, in the Madison courts, there was the first court where we used to play. That was around 2000. That was the only court, there were no tournaments or anything similar, and sometimes there were not enough people to play with. [...] Over the years it has increased more and more, and now there are tournaments.”

[002_SC_NY]

Participants consider these spaces as a good opportunity to preserve, transmit to future generations, and promote their heritage in the diaspora. Additionally, these spaces, while promoting their culture, also serve as spaces to promote Spanish use.

5. Conclusions

As we observed through this paper, Ecuadorians living in New York City have different perceptions of their linguistic and cultural practices present in the community. This research has shown different patterns of linguistic and cultural practices. However, all of them recognized that they contribute to reinforce their Ecuadorianness. Regarding linguistic practices, Ecuadorians are aware that they have changed the way they used to speak, and one of the reasons for doing so is the negative ideologies towards their Spanish variety. Zentella (2017) mentions that in-group distinctions and tensions among members of diaspora communities do not start in the United States, but these begin in their home countries. Notions such as “we speak wrong”, “our Spanish is bad”, and “other varieties are better” were frequently mentioned among participants. In fact, one of the participants created a new label called “broken-up Spanish”, referring to particular features of Ecuadorian Spanish. Even though participants expressed overt negative attitudes, Ecuadorians continue using those linguistic features as a key component of their identity as a group, as all participants mentioned that they keep some of the linguistic characteristics to differentiate themselves from other Hispanic/Latinx communities in New York City. Moreover, newcomer members bring linguistic repertoires that long-standing members do not have any longer. While some long-standing Ecuadorians argued that newcomers should adapt their Spanish variety, other participants praised that newcomers have recovered linguistic features of their Ecuadorian Spanish that they had lost over the years. Similarly, cultural practices have been strengthened in the community, in which newcomers have also influenced this (re)construction of Ecuadorian identity in the diaspora. Ecuadorian linguistic and cultural components serve as an expression of Ecuadorianness; showing solidarity among members of the community and constructing conviviality with newcomers with whom they now share a new home shows the important role that language and culture have in diaspora communities.

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Notes

- ¹ Ecuadorian Andean Spanish differs from others due to the intense and sustained contact between Kichwa and Spanish in Ecuador. See Toscano (1953), Haboud (1998), Haboud and de la Vega (2008), and Muysken (2019) for an overview.

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Article

The SEC Spanish Consortium: Foundations for Linguistic Gratuity and Language Documentation Among Latinx Populations in New Destination Communities of the U.S. South

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Abstract: Latinx populations in the USA have grown steadily in recent decades, with significant increases taking place in “new destination communities” of the U.S. South. The focus of our paper is to highlight opportunities for working with these populations, including traditional sociolinguistic ethnographies and community-engaged research. We highlight an initiative named “The SEC Spanish Consortium” which is an interinstitutional collaboration centered on scholarship and service involving Latinx populations in new destination communities of the U.S. South. We show that ongoing and future scholarly work in the U.S. South can act as a mechanism for documenting these emerging Latinx communities while simultaneously serving the underrepresented and minority speakers of these linguistic varieties.

Keywords: Latinx; new destination communities; U.S. South; linguistic gratuity



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1. Introduction

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), the Latinx population is 62.1 million, having grown 23% since 2010 and accounting for 19% of the current total population in the U.S. This increase has been more noticeable in geographic areas that, up until recently, had not been traditionally considered destination states. Many of these new destination sites are located in the U.S. South, offering a wealth of opportunities for applied linguists, which is the focus of this paper.

Latinx populations in the U.S. South have grown in recent decades. Lipski (2015, p. 672) notes that “as Spanish speakers in southern states grow in numbers and prominence, the nuanced English and Spanish that result from this cross-fertilization will further enrich the linguistic profile of our communities”. However, relatively little work has been carried out in this area (some recent exceptions include Limerick 2019; Michnowicz et al. 2018, 2023a, 2023b; Ronquest et al. 2020; Wolfram et al. 2011). Wolfram et al. (2011, p. 6) compare an emerging variety of Hispanicized English in North Carolina with a long-term Latinx community from southern Texas to show that “there are current contact situations in which we can observe emerging socio ethnic varieties undergoing adaptation in process so that the application of the uniformitarian principle (Christy 1983; Labov 1994) allows us to understand the dynamics of language contact from the past based on our observation of

language contact in the present”. Studying fast-growing Latinx cohorts across the U.S. South offers the opportunity to test these theoretical assumptions and answer the following broad research question: how do these communities compare ideologically, linguistically, and culturally to more established U.S. Latinx communities?

As a means of documenting the sociolinguistic landscape and building ties with emerging Latinx communities in the U.S. South, “The SEC Spanish Consortium” (<https://secspanish.org/> accessed on 7 November 2024) brings together scholars and key stakeholders, particularly at SEC (Southeastern Conference¹) universities, to work on various issues from interdisciplinary perspectives. These include the following: (1) educational achievements and opportunities for Latinxs; (2) migration and population studies related to these cohorts; (3) issues related to language choices, linguistic landscapes, and bilingualism; and (4) identity, ideology, and cultural aspects of Latinx cohorts across the U.S. South.

The scholarly output of this collaborative effort has been situated within a discipline focused largely on more established U.S. Latinx communities. A deeper understanding of Spanish speakers and Latinx bilinguals throughout the U.S. South might allow for better integration and greater success of this population in local schools and universities. In this way, our project aligns with the principle of linguistic gratuity advocated for by Wolfram, Reaser and Vaughn (Wolfram et al. 2008, p. 1110), which encourages linguists to implement positive ways to return linguistic favors to the community. We aim to work with representative community agents and agencies while advancing the scientific study of language and demonstrating the real-world significance of conducting sociolinguistic research in emerging bilingual Latinx communities of the U.S. South. In this paper, we present an overview of our work to date, including a forthcoming edited volume with papers from the inaugural SEC Spanish Consortium conference hosted at the University of Mississippi in spring 2023 (https://egrove.olemiss.edu/secspanish_conference/2023/ accessed on 7 November 2024).

2. Spanish in the U.S. and the South

As mentioned already, the U.S. is home to nearly 62 million Latinxs², constituting almost 20% of the country’s total population. Projections hold that this number will continue to increase, with one in every four U.S. citizens claiming Latinx identity/background by 2060 (Fernández Vítóres 2023). In fact, “the concentration of Spanish speakers in the United States constitutes the second largest Spanish-speaking population in the world” (Orozco 2018, p. 13). The impacts of this growth are significant for the educational, healthcare, social, political, and economic sectors of the country. This is particularly true because 60% of Latinxs in the U.S. are 35 or younger, with a mean age of 28 and a median age of 20, making it one of the nation’s largest youth populations and major racial or ethnic groups (Lopez et al. 2018). Given that U.S.-born Latinxs are particularly young, the major sectors of the nation will be increasingly shaped by this demographic. Yet, while there is a good understanding of the history and developments of the major Latinx communities up to the 21st century, an understudied constituency is Latinx communities in new destination zones of the U.S. South, the area that has accounted for much of the country’s recent growth.

The U.S. Census Bureau divides the U.S. Southern states as follows: (i) South Atlantic, including Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia; (ii) East South Central, including Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee; and (iii) West South Central, including Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas. Census reporting for 2000, 2010, and 2020 indicate significant growth among Latinx populations in the U.S. South. In all U.S. Southern states, the percentage of people recorded by the census increased from 2000 to 2010 and again from 2010 to 2020. What is most remarkable is that in most of the states, the Latinx population increased by 95% or more from 2000 to 2010 (see Section 4). Florida and Texas are exceptions, as they were already home to large Latinx communities prior to 2000. Still, these states also experienced tremendous growth in the same periods, and there are smaller regions in those states that constitute new destination communities. The more established communities in Florida and

Texas may serve as comparisons for the new destination communities in other states of the U.S. South.

The available work on U.S. Latinx education (e.g., Potowski 2018), U.S. Spanish dialects (e.g., Escobar and Potowski 2015; Lipski 2008), linguistic variation in the U.S. South (e.g., Reaser et al. 2018), attitudes and identities by U.S. Spanish-speaking populations (Alvord and Thompson 2020), and Spanish in U.S. social media and public spaces (Robles and Lamboy 2020) does not include ample coverage on new destination communities in the U.S. South. This trend is changing, at least for more anthropological work (e.g., Brown 2019; Stuesse 2016), but it still lags far behind what is known about other Spanish-speaking and Latinx communities in Los Angeles (e.g., Silva-Corvalán 1994), Chicago (Potowski and Torres 2023; Rosa 2019), Miami (Lynch 2022), and New York (Otheguy and Zentella 2012; Orozco 2018). The only exceptions concern the documentation in the two states with historically prominent Latinx communities (i.e., Florida and Texas). Previous studies have shown that in areas with long-standing Latinx communities, such as Los Angeles, new dialects or ethnolinguistic varieties have emerged over time. For example, Parodi (2014) documents a koine of Mexican rural dialects, termed Los Angeles Vernacular Spanish (LAVS), that formed there in the early 20th century as a result of mass migrations of working-class Mexican speakers. More recently, Asch and Brogan (2023) document patterns of intonation in Chicano southern California English that are partially traceable to the amount of Spanish spoken in childhood and the academic environment of the colleges attended by their participants. To offer one further example, Potowski (2016) and Potowski and Torres (2023) document intrafamilial dialect contact among speakers raised in Chicago, Illinois, who have one Mexican parent and one Puerto Rican parent and self-identify as “MexiRicans”. Thus, we see that both the Spanish and English spoken in Los Angeles, and the different varieties of Spanish spoken in Chicago, show patterns traceable to the long-standing bilingual and language contact situation of these cities. Will similar trends emerge in the U.S. South where unprecedented numbers of Latinxs have been settling over the past twenty years? While our paper does not offer a definitive answer to this question, we document ongoing efforts along these lines that have coalesced around a larger initiative termed the SEC Spanish Consortium.

3. New Destination Communities in the U.S. South

The new destinations paradigm, originally proposed by Zúñiga and Hernández-León (2005), provides a useful perspective in understanding evolving patterns of language use, particularly in areas with prominent demographic shifts. Kohn (2019) notes that “[n]ew destination communities allow linguists to observe new dialect formation as it happens” (Kohn 2019, p. 268), further explaining that studying these contexts informs questions of regionality and provides insight into the development of indexical meaning related to regional variation. It should be noted that Michnowicz et al. (2023a, 2023b) refer to these communities as “newly-forming”, which is compatible with, though distinct from, the notion of “new destination communities” that we are evoking here. This aside, part of understanding how language practices in U.S. Latinx communities respond to local norms requires that sociolinguists have a more general or at least better understanding of how linguistic variables map onto social meanings in different varieties of English.

Work along these lines is also being carried out in regions with Latinx communities outside the U.S. South, such as in the Midwest (Barbosa 2020; Mendieta 2024; Velázquez et al. 2015). Velázquez et al. (2015) collected data with college-aged heritage speakers of Spanish in Lincoln, Nebraska; Macomb, Illinois; and Ypsilanti, Michigan. The authors describe these Midwestern communities as having a low vitality for Spanish, given the following factors: (i) low demographic density and recent history of settlement, (ii) diglossia with English serving as the dominant societal language, (iii) reduced public presence and reduced institutional support for Spanish, (iv) community-wide socialization to a monolingual ideology, (v) disconnect between in-group and institutional language ideologies and goals, (vi) decoupling of language/ethnic identity, (vii) tension between in-group/out-group

identity at local, national, and transnational levels, and (viii) few opportunities available for the development of literacy in Spanish. Within this context, the authors found that the relevance of Spanish for the second-generation speakers in their study depended largely on their continued use of Spanish with members of their nuclear and extended families. The work being carried out by the SEC Spanish Consortium will also allow us to understand how newly formed Latinx communities in the U.S. South compare to those in the Midwest around these kinds of social and pragmatic phenomena.

This effort, still largely ongoing in the work on English varieties but especially in the study of dialects of the Southeastern U.S., provides the social backdrop against which Latinx, and certainly other immigrant and ethnic communities, establish local and regional points of reference in the process of forming community language expectations. In areas with large populations of L1 Spanish speakers, some of whom may be recent immigrants, norms of multilingual exchange are negotiated as a reflection of numerous social factors, such as work on expectations, community engagement, and family connections. For the Southeastern U.S., the sociolinguistic work of determining what constitutes, for example, a context in which Spanish is the expected or accepted language of exchange is still very much emergent, reflecting, we argue, the region's status as a new destination community.

The question of regionality manifests explicitly in the ethnolectal varieties of English spoken by Latinx communities in the Southeast. Rodríguez (2022) takes up the question of "Southern" Latino linguistic identities using survey data with speakers from Georgia. In her analysis of the BIDE (i.e., glide weakening) and BOAT (i.e., backing) vowels, widely studied phonetic variables that characterize Southeastern varieties of English, Rodríguez notes that there is variation in the social features associated with these vowel realizations. Specifically, she finds that "BIDE glide weakening does not always index *Southernness* or the South and BOAT backing does not always index *Latinidad*" (Rodríguez 2022, p. 138). As may be expected, members of the Latinx community do indeed acquire the indexical values of local/regional linguistic features, such as glide weakening with BIDE, but these features often represent a different constellation of social meanings than is observed with established communities. With the participants in Rodríguez' study, the negotiation of different identities is apparent in their answers to questions about how they view themselves as members of the Latinx community in Georgia, with one speaker offering the following comment:

I think I could be considered your typical Latino, but not really because I was pretty much raised in Georgia. So I'm more of a "Southern Belle" I would say than a Hispanic. Um but don't get me wrong—I still embrace my Hispanic culture. My roots are also um being Mexican. (Rodríguez 2022, p. 145)

Embedded in this approach is an understanding that Latinx communities are, in many ways, diasporic communities in which language constitutes a primary means by which identities are created and shaped (Tseng and Hinrichs 2021). Beyond Spanish, there are other Latinx-adjacent populations whose language practices have evolved in tandem with or in parallel to those of the Latinx community. For instance, the influx of immigration from Central America into the Southeast over the last 30 years has given rise not only to increasingly large populations of Spanish speakers but has also witnessed groups of L1 speakers of Indigenous languages such as Mam, Chuj, K'iché, and Konjobal spoken in Southern Mexico and Guatemala (Medina 2019). Speakers in these communities are often L2 speakers of Spanish with little to no access to suitable language support. Exacerbating the situation is a lack of resources targeted at providing immigrant populations with cultural support, which, in addition to a perspective that tends to obscure important regional distinctions between different Latin American groups, offers almost no guidance on working with Indigenous groups. Similarly, though importantly distinct, is the immigrant population from Brazil, a group comprising L1 speakers of Portuguese. According to the U.S. Census Bureau pooled 2015–19 American Community Survey, there were four metropolitan areas in the Southeastern U.S. listed among the top ten areas with concentrations of Brazilian immigrants, including Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford, FL (20,000, 0.8%), Washington,

D.C./Arlington/Alexandria (12,000, 0.2%), and Atlanta, GA (11,000, 0.2%). Although Brazilians are not traditionally included in references to Latinx populations, they are often perceived by locals as part of or at least related to Spanish speaking communities (Carvalho 2010). Again, there is no doubt that Portuguese and Indigenous languages like Mam constitute a primary vehicle for the expression of identity among these diasporic communities in the Southeastern U.S. What is yet to be explored are varied and complex interconnections between these groups and other populations, namely Latinx and non-Latinx communities.

4. The SEC Spanish Consortium

The SEC Spanish Consortium (<https://secspanish.org/> accessed on 7 November 2024) was founded at the University of Mississippi in 2019 as a way of building a network of scholars who can collaborate on documenting the diverse origins and complex socio-cultural situation of Latinx communities in new destination communities of the U.S. South(east). The current SEC schools are (1) the University of Alabama, (2) the University of Arkansas (Fayetteville), (3) Auburn University, (4) the University of Florida, (5) the University of Georgia, (6) the University of Kentucky, (7) Louisiana State University, (8) the University of Mississippi, (9) Mississippi State University, (10) the University of South Carolina, (11) the University of Tennessee, (12) Vanderbilt University, (13) the University of Missouri, (14) Texas A&M University, (15) the University of Oklahoma, and the (16) University of Texas (Austin).

In Table 1, we provide greater detail about the SEC universities and locations, emphasizing the demographics and Latinx populations. Universities are listed in alphabetical order, not by region.

Table 1. SEC universities and populations³.

SEC School	Main Campus	City/County Population	Population per sq. mile	Population % Latinx	University Population	University % Latinx
University of Alabama	Tuscaloosa County, AL	236,690	171.9	4.1	38,316	5
University of Arkansas	Washington County, AR	256,682	261.2	17.6	29,068	10
Auburn University	Lee County, AL	180,698	286.8	4	31,526	4
University of Florida	Alachua County, FL	285,994	318	11.4	55,781	21
University of Georgia	Athens-Clarke County, GA	128,711	1094.40	11.1	40,118	6
University of Kentucky	Fayette County, KY	320,154	1137.30	7.6	30,390	6
Louisiana State University	East Baton Rouge Parish, LA	450,091	1002.80	4.8	35,912	8
University of Mississippi	Lafayette County, MS	57,730	88.4	2.7	21,203	4
Mississippi State University	Oktibbeha County, MS	51,384	113	1.8	23,086	4
University of Missouri	Boone County, MO	187,721	267.8	3.8	31,401	5
Oklahoma University	Cleveland County, OK	301,193	548.4	11.3	28,308	12
University of South Carolina	Richland County, SC	421,526	549.5	5.7	35,471	5
University of Tennessee	Knox County, TN	500,669	942.2	5.2	31,701	5
University of Texas-Austin	Travis County, TX	1,334,961	1297.90	32.4	52,384	25
Texas A&M University	Brazos County, TX	241,931	399	26.8	72,530	23
Vanderbilt University	Davidson County, TN	707,351	1421.30	10.9	13,796	9
Average		353,968	619	10.1%	35,687	10%

In Table 2, we present a closer look at the Latinx population and the percent growth in the SEC university regions over the past two decades, as reported in the U.S. Census.

Table 2. Latinx population and percent growth, 2000–2020, in SEC School regions.

SEC School Region	Latinx Population 2000	Latinx Population 2010	Latinx Population 2020	% Latinx Growth 2000–2010	% Latinx Growth 2010–2020
Tuscaloosa County, AL	2130	5949	12,298	179	107
Washington County, AR	12,932	31,458	44,755	143	42
Lee County, AL	1645	4571	9135	178	100
Alachua County, FL	12,493	20,752	33,614	66	62
Athens-Clarke County, GA	6436	12,192	14,336	89	18
Fayette County, KY	8561	20,474	29,750	139	45
East Baton Rouge Parish, LA	7363	16,274	30,551	121	88
Lafayette County, MS	427	1073	2142	151	100
Oktibbeha County, MS	461	683	1268	48	86
Boone County, MO	2413	4895	8052	103	64
Cleveland County, OK	8396	17,892	30,312	113	69
Richland County, SC	8713	18,637	26,095	114	40
Knox County, TN	4803	15,012	28,568	213	90
Travis County, TX	229,048	342,766	421,110	50	23
Brazos County, TX	27,253	45,405	63,067	67	39
Davidson County, TN	26,091	61,117	98,119	134	61
Average	22,448	38,697	53,323	119%	65%

This information makes it clear that most SEC universities are in regions with fast-growing, incipient Latinx communities. On average, from 2000 to 2010, the Latinx population in the SEC university regions grew at a rate of 119%. This growth slowed but remained strong from 2010 to 2020 at an average Latinx growth rate of 65%. At the same time, the overall average population in these regions is relatively small- to mid-sized at 353,968, with the overall average Latinx population constituting 10.1% of the total population. The SEC universities have an average Latinx enrollment that is roughly equivalent to that of the Latinx population in their region at 10%. The SEC Spanish Consortium's efforts are, in part, aimed at preparing for the ever-increasing Latinx presence in our communities as well as in local schools, which will continue to result in more heritage speakers, bilinguals, and bicultural citizens in K-16 classrooms. Most of the SEC universities are in non-metro areas, in some cases semi-rural regions, with an average population per square mile of 619. This makes questions of language use, language transmission, and overall visibility of Latinx cohorts and minority languages in the community distinct from larger hubs across the U.S.

As a means of comparison, Table 3 offers data on a handful of large, flagship/well-known universities in regions outside of the SEC university zone. Again, the non-SEC universities are listed alphabetically, not by region. This comparison brings to the forefront numbers from communities with long-standing and comparatively much more well-researched Latinx populations, such as those in California, South Florida, New Mexico, and New York.

We can immediately appreciate the urban nature and sheer size of the cities where the non-SEC universities are located: 3,046,421 people on average with an average population per square mile of 14,475. The average Latinx population in these regions was 38.37%, while the University Latinx enrollments' average was smaller at 28%. Recall that the SEC universities' regions had an overall Latinx population average of 10.1% out of 353,968 residents on average.

As a means of comparison, Table 4 offers the Latinx population and the percent growth in the non-SEC universities' regions over the past two decades, as reported in the U.S. Census. We observe a much more modest growth rate across the decades for the sample of non-SEC university regions. This is largely because these regions already boasted a large population of Latinx members; hence, they are the 'established Latinx communities' against which our comparison of 'new destination Latinx communities' is positioned. For example, on average, in 2000, the Latinx population in non-SEC regions was 1,066,577, while in the

SEC regions in that same period, the average number was 22,448. In 2010 (and 2020), a similar trend emerges with non-SEC regions averaging 1,224,229 Latinx members and the SEC regions 38,697. Consider Los Angeles County which showed only 2% growth in its Latinx population from 2010 to 2020. However, the total number of Latinxs there in 2020 was 4,804,763, which is significantly larger than all the SEC university regions combined at 853,172.

Table 3. Non-SEC universities and populations (sample; not an exhaustive list).

Non-SEC School	Main Campus	City/County Population	Population per sq. mile	Population % Latinx	University Population	University % Latinx
Boston University	Suffolk County, MA	768,812	13,697.5	23.9%	36,104	10%
University of California	Los Angeles County, CA	9,663,345	2466.9	49%	46,116	20%
Florida International University	Miami-Dade County, FL	2,673,056	1422.1	69.1%	56,664	65%
University of Illinois-Chicago	Cook County, Illinois	5,087,072	5583.0	26.3%	34,199	28%
University of New Mexico	Bernalillo County, NM	671,586	582.5	50.9%	22,139	45%
New York University	New York County, NY	1,597,451	74,781.6	26.2%	58,226	14%
Rutgers University	Middlesex County, NJ	863,623	2791.4	23.2%	50,804	13%
Average		3,046,421	14,475.00	38.37%	43,465	28%

Table 4. Latinx population and percent growth, 2000–2020, in non-SEC university regions.

Non-SEC School Region	Latinx Population 2000	Latinx Population 2010	Latinx Population 2020	% Latinx Growth 2000–2010	% Latinx Growth 2010–2020
Suffolk County, MA	107,031	143,455	178,527	34%	24%
Los Angeles County, CA	4,242,213	4,687,889	4,804,763	11%	2%
Miami-Dade County, FL	1,291,737	1,623,859	1,856,938	26%	14%
Cook County, Illinois	1,071,740	1,244,762	1,382,778	16%	11%
Bernalillo County, NM	233,565	317,089	329,481	36%	4%
New York County, NY	417,816	403,577	402,640	−3%	0%
Middlesex County, NJ	101,940	148,975	193,687	46%	30%
Average	1,066,577	1,224,229	1,306,973	24%	12%

5. Linguistic Gratuity and Opportunities for Community-Engaged Scholarship

5.1. Collecting Data and Including Students

The SEC Spanish Consortium intends to collect various types of data (including ethnographic information, attitudinal and perceptual reactions, sociolinguistic interviews, linguistic landscape images, and artifacts) to fulfill multiple research goals toward ongoing interdisciplinary study of the emerging new destination communities in the Southeast. These efforts involve interinstitutional collaboration across SEC universities, and the participation of researchers at various professional stages. The more seasoned scholars will

recruit, train, and mentor students from the communities under study who will be employed as research assistants and (hopefully, at later stages) researchers. These student community members will be trained to follow IRB protocols and perform various data collection and analysis tasks, including the collection and transcription of sociolinguistic interviews, data extraction, coding, and statistical analysis (cf. Tagliamonte Forthcoming). With this, we aim to contribute to providing educational and professional opportunities for many individuals beyond those directly participating either as student researchers or data providers. Concurrently, our involvement of community members as part of our research teams will constitute a way to give back and empower these individuals as well as their communities while implementing the principle of linguistic gratuity (Wolfram 1993, p. 227). Thus, our project's multiple direct and indirect broader impacts are intended to last indefinitely. Members of a minority community often possess a deep understanding of their own cultural norms, practices, and beliefs. This insider perspective allows them to navigate complex cultural contexts more effectively than outsiders. They are more likely to recognize subtle cultural and linguistic nuances, and hidden meanings in interactions, leading to richer and more reliable data collection. Overall, such efforts constitute a powerful way to ensure that research is conducted ethically, respectfully, and with a deep understanding of the cultural context. It enriches the research process and outcomes, benefiting both researchers and the communities being studied (Wolfram et al. 2008).

5.2. Working with Local Community Partners

Coordination with local community partners constitutes an important part of the Consortium's work. One ongoing project from Consortium members (Bryant et al. 2023) "Breaking the language barrier: Promoting community health through community-campus partnerships" brings together mission-aligned organizations through community engagement. This team discovered that language barriers were preventing the Spanish-speaking community from accessing primary and preventive care in the local Mississippi area. The team then engaged collaborators on the University campus and in the community to offer a free bilingual health fair that provided health screenings, COVID vaccines, referrals to dental and mental health providers, and legal services. Over 250 people attended this event.

As described above, we aim at developing researchers from among student local community members to establish relationships, build trust, and engage in meaningful dialog. We closely follow procedures implemented in the North Carolina Language and Life Project, established at North Carolina State University in the 1990s. Specifically, guided by Wolfram (2007, p. 159) and Wolfram et al. (2008, p. 1112), we aim at working with local community partners as we engage in the following:

- Gathering basic research information about the varieties of Spanish (and other languages spoken by Latinxs) present in the new destinations of the South to better understand the nature of language variation and change in their speakers' repertoires;
- Documenting the varieties of Spanish (and other languages spoken by Latinxs) in the new destinations of the South as they reflect the different cultural traditions of their speakers;
- Using research materials for the improvement of educational programs about language and culture.

5.3. Grant Opportunities

The Consortium hopes to capitalize on the multiple grant opportunities for linguists and social scientists in the Southeastern new destination communities. Some agencies that could fund research in these communities include the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the U.S. Department of Education, private foundations, professional associations, and state and local agencies. The Consortium stands to make original contributions to the study of language variation and change, in general, and specifically in this understudied region and in some of its underprivileged

communities. Such research initiatives fill voids in our collective knowledge of Spanish in the United States by documenting an important but unexplored sociolinguistic situation. Our focus on the southern Latinx community is unique. As Lipski (2008, p. 28) indicates, the legitimization of the Spanish language through our research, teaching, and public presentations stands to constitute a robust antidote to xenophobia and ignorance.

The long-standing consequences of linguistic contact are well known. However, despite a recent surge of research, linguistics still lacks definite answers to what happens in the incipient stages of simultaneous language and dialect contact situations such as those of the newly formed Latinx enclaves. The sociolinguistic situation of the emerging 21st-century Southeastern new destination Latinx communities has barely been explored. We are in a unique position to shed light on what happens during the initial stages of a language contact situation and help answer questions about Spanish in the U.S. that remain unanswered. Our research will contribute to forming a baseline of data on the growing Latinx community that would serve as a foundation for future research. Further, as Thomason and Kaufman (1988, p. 213) assert, research on emerging contact situations continues to be needed to obtain a more thorough understanding of the role played by the sociolinguistic context in contact-based linguistic variation and change. The recently invigorated Spanish–English contact in the U.S. South, an interesting sociolinguistic development, provides unique opportunities for short-term diachronic research. Studies of this sort, as Weinreich indicates, “make it possible to clarify basic problems involving longer time spans as well” (Weinreich [1953] 1967, p. 104). Unlike such cities as Miami, New York, and Los Angeles with large Latinx populations, given current demographic trends, the smaller Southern Latinx communities constitute ideal settings to find answers to numerous research questions regarding Spanish in the U.S., language contact, bilingualism and other interrelated phenomena. For example, is the variety of English in the South and the regions from which Central Americans arrive shaping the spoken Spanish and English of speakers in the U.S. South differently than in other more established regions?

5.4. Documentation Efforts

The Consortium seeks to implement various documentation efforts. For example, Louisiana State University (LSU) is soon to open a Hispanic Studies Center. We look forward to establishing similar centers throughout the Consortium partner institutions. These centers will house repositories of linguistic data including an ongoing corpus under the auspices of PRESEEA (*Proyecto para el Estudio Sociolingüístico del Español en España y América*). Our documentation efforts intend to benefit numerous other researchers. We also seek to implement the Linguistic Society of America (LSA)’s public outreach best practices by showcasing regions’ and communities’ dialect variation and linguistic diversity. In addition, we plan to implement the principle of linguistic gratuity (Wolfram 1993), which will fulfill our responsibility as researchers to respond to misguided public perceptions that negatively affect immigrant communities. For instance, there is the rampant misconception among the general population that all Latinxs are Mexican. The Latinx population in the U.S. currently faces numerous threats, given the policies and ideologies in the political arena, and this is a unique opportunity to use facts to eradicate misconceptions. Besides seeking to bring scholarly attention to a thriving language and dialect contact situation, this project will help bring public attention to the communities under study, as we will place our corpora on an electronic portal to be shared with interested parties. We will also share our audio recordings with several archives including LSU’s Center for Oral History, the Baton Rouge Center for Cultural Resources, and Storycorps (<https://storycorps.org> accessed on 8 November 2024). Also, in terms of outreach and the promotion of social change, the Consortium will facilitate the implementation of partnerships between the participating institutions and several Latinx groups throughout the Southeastern U.S. and beyond.

6. Overview of Existing Projects

In this section, we present a few recent initiatives and projects that, while not exclusive to the SEC Spanish Consortium, include authors who are SEC Spanish Consortium members and consider their work an important aspect of our general aims in the Consortium. The majority of this work is ongoing and will eventually lead us to a better understanding of how Latinx communities in the U.S. South compare to the more established communities in other regions of the USA. We are building towards larger interinstitutional projects as well. More of this work will be featured in a forthcoming edited volume on “Latinx identities, experiences, and languages in New Destination Communities of the U.S. South” (Fafulas and Howe Forthcoming).

6.1. Linguistic Landscapes (Alicia Cipria and Erin O’Rourke, University of Alabama)

As part of the SEC Consortium, our research initiative examines the public use of Spanish in the linguistic landscape (LL) of Alabama, specifically in Tuscaloosa County. To provide context for our study, we briefly refer to the growth of the Spanish-speaking population in the South and mention research studies on the Spanish LL in the region. We have two goals for this section: first, to describe our case study, and second, to compare the present study to similar Spanish LL research in two locations in the South with larger Spanish-speaking populations.

6.1.1. LL in the South

There is a growing amount of research on Spanish LL in the South. In addition to Florida and Texas (further discussed below), LL research on Spanish (and other languages) in the South includes Georgia (Howe 2023; Languages Across Metro Atlanta (LAMA) (n.d.)) and, less centrally, (Rodríguez 2022), Kentucky (Alvarez 2020), Louisiana (Sluyter et al. 2015; Carmichael 2015), Mississippi (conference presentations), North Carolina (Roeder and Walden 2016; Edmond 2017), and Tennessee (Garvin 2010). To this, we add our study in Alabama.

In terms of Latinx growth in the U.S., 5 of the 10 highest ranked counties are located in the South (for 2010–2020; Pew Research Center 2022, 3 February); these include three counties in Louisiana, one in Georgia, and one in Alabama (Pickens County). Tuscaloosa County showed a 107% increase in the Latinx population in the last census. In the larger context, Franco Rodríguez (2018) offers a panoramic view of Spanish LL research in the USA, including studies in Florida and Texas. Similarly, Gubitosi and Ramos Pellicia (2021) provide a collection of Spanish LL studies which includes two locations in the South, viz. Orlando, Florida (Amgott 2021) and Dallas, Texas (Pastor 2021).

6.1.2. A Case Study of the Spanish LL in Alabama

For this project, we took photographs of external signage (texts) in Tuscaloosa County, including restaurants, shops, and churches. We then uploaded the images to a geolocation app (Field Maps Designer 2023) and tagged them for specific linguistic and visual characteristics using a multimodal approach. The results from the first stage of our project are reported in Cipria and O’Rourke (2024). To expand the project, we plan to add other contexts (e.g., governmental and commercial services, healthcare settings, and community organizations) and interviews of business owners and sign creators.

6.1.3. Comparison with Larger Spanish-Speaking Communities

In this section, we compare the present study with two other studies of Spanish LL from which we have drawn some of our methodology. Specifically, we observe differences between the present study and the LL works by Amgott (2021) on Orlando and Pastor (2021) on Dallas. This comparison illustrates how examination of LL in smaller urban and semi-rural settings complements research regarding larger urban centers. Whereas our study focuses on a county, the Orlando study takes commercial plazas as the setting for

the LL texts, and the Dallas study examines Oak Cliff, a Hispanic neighborhood. For our research area, there is no one single neighborhood or *barrio* where the Spanish texts appear.

Regarding demographics, while Tuscaloosa County has a 5.4% Hispanic or Latinx population (of 227,036 total population) (see Cipria and O'Rourke 2024), the Orlando area was 29.5% Latinx (of 2.7 million) (Amgott 2021) and the city of Dallas was 42% Latinx (of 1.3 million) in 2017 (Pastor 2021). In addition, the demographic mixtures in these three locations are distinct in terms of relative percentages of Latinx groups: in Tuscaloosa County, the largest group is Mexican, followed by Guatemalan and other Central American groups. In contrast, in the Orlando metropolitan area, the largest groups are Puerto Rican, followed by Mexican and then Cuban; in Dallas, the largest group is Mexican, followed by smaller percentages of other groups (Puerto Rican, Cuban, and other Hispanic or Latinx).

As noted in Landry and Bourhis (1997), the LL of a city or town may represent the ethnolinguistic vitality of a community, among other vitality predictors. Based on Pastor (2021), Tuscaloosa County can be considered to have relatively low vitality given its "Disconnected neighborhoods, short historical presence, relatively low institutional support", etc. (Pastor 2021, p. 75). On the other hand, Oak Cliff in Dallas shows high ethnolinguistic vitality due to constant population growth, with a regular influx of new Spanish speakers, a highly dense Hispanic population, a majority being of Mexican origin, and cultural, media, and business representation of Spanish, among other parameters presented in Pastor (2021). The same can be said of Orlando's metro area, albeit with a different mix of Latinx groups (Amgott 2021). The research on Spanish LL in the South is still developing. Given that the new destination communities have relatively smaller Latinx populations, it is important to document the public display of Spanish in these regions, which are often qualitatively different from larger Spanish-speaking areas in the U.S.

6.2. Spanish as a Heritage Language (Nina Moreno, University of South Carolina)

South Carolina is one of the 'new destination' states we described earlier. The growth rate of its Latinx population reached 255.5% from 2000 to 2020 (in contrast, the growth rate of Latinxs in the U.S. was 70.9% for the same period).

With such an influx of this portion of the population, the expectation would be to see a similar increase reflected in the number of heritage speakers on our college campuses and, therefore, in the demand for Spanish as a Heritage Language (SHL) courses. The reality, however, is that the state's demographic composition is not mirrored in the student population of the state's flagship university. While the Latinx population constitutes 6.9% of the total population in South Carolina, the university's official statistics indicate that Latinx make up only 4% of the student population. Moreover, the SHL track was interrupted for almost two decades. The Fall semester of 2021 was the first time an SHL course was offered in over 18 years.

The SEC Spanish Consortium has been the ideal venue to engage in scholarly pursuits that will not only inform the general public on the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the Latinx population in South Carolina but also contribute to the field of instructed SLA on best teaching practices for heritage speakers of Spanish in the U.S.

Two studies have emerged from this initiative. The first one addressed language ideologies in the context of higher education in the South. Recent research (Malovrh and Moreno 2023) has found harmful and conservative language ideologies regarding Spanish among students, teachers, and administrative staff in modern language departments worldwide. To isolate confounding variables that could arise from collecting data from various universities around the world, we collected data from participants from only one institution—the flagship university of South Carolina. The results were analyzed from a survey distributed among students and professors in the Spanish program in the Fall of 2022. The responses came from 503 university students and 24 instructors. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis confirmed the results from recent studies: the prevailing and dominant language ideologies about Spanish, its speakers, and the dialectal varieties of Spanish that coexist in the USA reflect colonialist views. Moreover, most

participants adhered to the belief that certain dialectal varieties were “better” than others and agreed with the statement that Spanish was not as prestigious a language as other modern languages, such as French.

These findings on language ideologies within a Spanish department are consistent with those reported by Valdés et al. (2003) in their study conducted in California. However, our results contrast with those from a similar study conducted in Florida high schools by Carreira (2011). This discrepancy may stem from differences in the demographic composition of the participant pools. The former study included an equal number of participants categorized as ‘native Spanish speakers,’ while the latter study featured a higher proportion of U.S. Latinos compared to native Spanish speakers. Our participant pool closely mirrored that of Valdés et al., where U.S. Latinos represented a minority. These observations suggest that the variation in language ideologies may not be attributed to the geographical location of data collection within the U.S., but rather to the origins of the participants. This variable will be further examined as we continue to collect data from various colleges across South Carolina.

The second initiative addressed pedagogical issues in the Heritage Language (HL) classroom. Adhering to a socio-cognitive approach (cf. Ortega 2019), we examined perceptions, linguistic attitudes, and expectations that instructors and students from higher education institutions in South Carolina have about heritage language learners (HLLs) of Spanish. We set out to collect data from various universities and colleges in the state. The first phase of data collection began in 2021 when we gathered data from one large, 4-year university. Mixed methods analyses of responses collected from a survey shed light on sociolinguistic attitudes that dominate this higher education institution in South Carolina regarding HLLs. The outcomes show that heritage speakers are visible to students and instructors to a limited extent. While their needs in the academic setting are acknowledged, the general opinion about the variety of Spanish spoken by HLLs is negative. The data also show a high level of prescriptivism among instructors. The results of the survey led to suggested curricular changes for both Spanish as L2 and Spanish as a heritage language (SHL) classrooms, such as the inclusion of elements of critical language awareness (CLA) (Quan 2020; Leeman and Serafini 2021), which would create a more socially and linguistically just environment for HLLs. The second phase of this study includes data collection from other public and private higher education institutions in the state, including HBCUs.

Our findings regarding instructors’ perceptions of Spanish spoken in the U.S. align with those of Valdés et al. (2003) and Achugar and Pessoa (2009), particularly in how the Spanish spoken by heritage speakers is devalued, with the notion that U.S. Latinx do not speak ‘correctly’ prevailing. Valdés et al.’s study was conducted in California, while Achugar and Pessoa’s research took place in Southwest Texas. Once again, we observe that language ideologies in an emerging Hispanic state reflect those reported in more densely populated regions. Studying these phenomena in the Southeast, an area that remains a relatively new destination for U.S. Latinos, is crucial for clarifying the types of ideologies our language instructors hold. Since the region has yet to see a significant influx of U.S. Latinos, we can expect to observe ideologies similar to those found in studies with a predominantly non-U.S. Latino participant pool. Therefore, adding results from the Southeast is essential in providing a fuller picture of language ideologies across the U.S., enabling us to better understand how these ideologies develop and impact educational contexts.

Finally, the opportunity arose to develop a project that began as a pedagogical intervention in a class of heritage speakers of Spanish. A steady increase in Spanish Heritage Language (SHL) programs across the U.S. has been matched with an increase in the use of varied teaching approaches to efficiently meet the unique needs of HLLs (Beaudrie 2020). The literature shows that macro-based approaches lend themselves well to the context of HLLs and increase their motivation as they validate the learners’ knowledge and experiences. We focused on one of these approaches—project-based language learning (PBLL)—because it allows HLLs to engage in unscripted communication, engages students with authentic materials and tasks, focuses on the linguistic items that the learners need,

and welcomes their cultural and linguistic contributions (Kagan and Dillon 2001). The project corresponding to a unit called ‘Latin@s en South Carolina’ involved collecting oral histories from interviews that the students in this class scripted and carried out. They chose to interview their family members and two Latinx professors. The collaborative design and building of the unit as a wiki took six weeks to complete. The final product of this unit’s project was posted on the course’s learning management system (Blackboard Original). The wiki unit included audio files of the interviewees’ oral histories, a text and comprehension questions based on the interviews, a data infographic on Latinxs in SC, and an interactive map with information on businesses owned by Latinxs.

We want to grow this initiative to create a digital repository of oral histories of Latinxs in SC and other SEC states. This collection would be an added and valuable resource to existing oral histories projects in South Carolina that have been created with non-linguistic goals. Such is the case for the Colombian textile workers in Greenville (Furman University) and the *Aqui Estamos* collection at the Citadel in Charleston.

6.3. Spanish Voces in North Carolina and Mississippi (Matthew J. Van Hoose, Goucher College, and Stephen Fafulas, University of Mississippi)

Our project examines the shifting linguistic and socio-cultural landscapes of the U.S. South from the vantage point of Spanish speakers in two regions: eastern North Carolina and northern Mississippi. Drawing on sociolinguistic interviews and Bilingual Language Profiles (Birdsong et al. 2014) completed by approximately 60 participants across the two study locations, we work to discern the primary pragmatic domains of English versus Spanish use and to identify the patterning of multiple linguistic phenomena, including lexical choices, pronominal usage, code-switching, and discourse markers. Following prior theorizations of language ideology (e.g., Irvine and Gal 2000), our goal is to understand the connections between these linguistic practices and speakers’ reflexive understandings of the socio-cultural contexts that they inhabit.

The comparison between eastern North Carolina and northern Mississippi gives our study its primary analytical purchase. While both regions may be fairly described as “new destination” communities within the U.S. South (Vásquez et al. 2008), the Latinx presence in eastern North Carolina is, on the whole, larger and more established than that of northern Mississippi. Given this fact, our initial expectation was that Spanish speakers in the North Carolina corpus would exhibit more of the linguistic hybridization that has been documented in other areas of intense contact between English and Spanish (Lipski 2015; Rosa 2019).

While this hypothesis was confirmed by some of the individual speakers who participated in our study, our corpus as a whole yielded a more complex picture of these two regions. Phenomena such as “so” insertion (Lipski 2005; Torres and Potowski 2008) were limited among speakers of all generations in both regions, and we attribute the relative absence of this kind of linguistic hybridization, especially among the North Carolina speakers, to the frequency with which speakers reported that Spanish was culturally proscribed from use in public settings. This strict regimentation of the domains of use of Spanish and English appears, from our corpus, to be a common characteristic of communities in the U.S. South, and its implications for language use and shift merit further examination. A more granular examination of our North Carolina data further reveals that, for the purposes of language ideology and use, context must be evaluated at a highly local level. The eastern North Carolina study participants hailed from both small, rural communities in the region as well as some of the region and state’s larger urban centers. Not surprisingly, we observed significant differences across these locales in relation to both language ideology and practice. Broadly speaking, speakers in the state’s more rural areas reported a much stronger proscription of Spanish in the public domain and a concomitant adjustment of their linguistic choices and patterns of use as compared to speakers in more urban areas.

We have situated our project within the paradigm of linguistic gratuity in two primary ways. First, data collection at both sites involved significant participation of undergraduate

students from East Carolina University and the University of Mississippi. This approach made sociolinguistic interviews an opportunity for dialog across sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds and lived experiences, and it helped to sensitize students who did not hail from Spanish-speaking backgrounds to the challenges faced and overcome daily by Spanish-speaking members of their local communities (Wanjema et al. 2013).

Second, following the observation by Wolfram, Reaser, and Vaughn (Wolfram et al. 2008) that curiosity about linguistic and dialectal differences extends well beyond the academy, we have endeavored to present the preliminary results of our work to multiple public-facing audiences. In July of 2021, we presented to graduate students in a seminar at Mississippi State University titled *Latinx Narrative and Cultural Production in the South*, whose students included multiple educators and practitioners from the Starkville, Mississippi area. In March of 2022, we presented to the *SouthTalks* series of the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture (eGROVE 2022, <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/southtalks/1/> accessed on 8 November 2024). In both instances, members of the Spanish-speaking community expressed a strong sense of identification with experiences reported by participants in our study, along with a desire for greater public attention to the cultural and linguistic dimensions of the local Latinx experience. As our work with these communities continues, we plan to create avenues for broader public commentary and input, especially from members of the two Latinx communities whose experiences our project foregrounds.

Comparison with Established Communities

The communities featured in *Spanish Voces in North Carolina and Mississippi*, for example, share multiple similarities with those examined by Velázquez et al. (2015) in the Midwest. The speakers in our study reported the dominance of English and the proscription of Spanish in a number of social domains in their daily lives. They also, however, expressed a strong ideological affinity with the Spanish language and patterns of use that affirmed the central role of family members in language transmission and maintenance. At the same time, many speakers in North Carolina and Mississippi noted the growing Spanish-speaking presence in their communities, affirming these communities' status as new and growing destinations for Spanish speakers. As these trends continue and lead to potentially higher levels of vitality for Spanish, it will be of interest to examine whether Spanish speakers' networks of interlocutors expand beyond those noted by Velázquez et al. (2015).

7. Outreach and Grants

We have presented our work at several conferences to date, including "The Southeastern Conference on Linguistics", "New Waves of Analyzing Variation", "Workshop on Immigrant Languages in the Americas", and "Spanish in the United States". We recently hosted the inaugural conference for this Consortium "Working Towards Equity for and Documenting Diversity among Latinx Populations in New Destination Communities of the South" which was a two-day hybrid conference, including participants from the community, educators, anthropologists, sociologists, and sociolinguists, among others, with the recorded talks digitally available to the public (https://egrove.olemiss.edu/secspanish_conference/2023/ accessed on 8 November 2024). Our conference was supported by departments and centers across the University of Mississippi as well as the Southeastern Conference on Linguistics (SECOL) who allowed us to share their meeting space and infrastructure. Their support as well as that of our colleagues across the SEC universities highlights the collaborative nature of our initiative.

Our initiative has gained some local attention through press releases:

- "Partnership Prepares SEC Universities for Increase in Spanish Speakers: Conference Spanish Consortium launched by two UM faculty members". 8 December 2021. By Shea Stewart. University of Mississippi News. <https://news.olemiss.edu/partnership-prepares-sec-universities-for-increase-in-spanish-speakers/> accessed on 8 November 2024.

- “Ole Miss leads SEC Spanish Consortium initiative”. 13 December 2021. WTVB 9 News. <https://youtu.be/ZXKwXxyqVY8> accessed on 8 November 2024.

We are actively pursuing grants and have been successful to date in securing one of the Achieving Equity grants listed here:

- “Ole Miss Awards Achieving Equity Grants: More than \$56,000 awarded for seven proposals aimed at advancing diversity and inclusion”. 23 August 2022. By Edwin B. Smith. University of Mississippi News. <https://news.olemiss.edu/ole-miss-awards-achieving-equity-grants/> accessed on 8 November 2024.

We plan to release a yearly newsletter to track our progress and spread the word about our work. Again, this is also an effort to gain more collaborators and community members. Here is the link to our first newsletter:

- <https://mailchi.mp/d5133d1d6442/sec-spanish-consortium-1> accessed on 8 November 2024.

To learn more about our work and to watch videos from recent conferences, please visit our two websites, with one of them available on the eGrove platform curated by Michelle Emanuel, Head of Metadata and Digital Initiatives and Professor at the University of Mississippi’s J. D. Williams Library:

- <https://secspanish.org/> accessed on 8 November 2024.
- <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/secspanish/> accessed on 8 November 2024.

8. Conclusions and Future Directions

The SEC Spanish Consortium currently has members from the majority of SEC universities, and we invite any faculty member, student, or interested community member to contact us to be included in our emails, meetings, and updates/newsletter. We have also sought input, consultation, and support from colleagues outside of the U.S. South, including well-known experts on documentary linguistics, U.S. Spanish, and heritage language education. Our collaborative group has been working to document and address the immediate and long-term social, linguistic, and cultural impacts of Latinx communities in the U.S. South, as well as their needs and challenges, for scholars, policymakers, and local schools. We are addressing diverse topics such as the following: the teaching of heritage languages and the incorporation of minority students in the classroom; documentation of Latinx English; the socio-economic potential of these new communities; and their barriers to education and society more broadly. These themes are represented in a forthcoming edited volume which is currently under contract with Routledge (Fafulas and Howe Forthcoming).

We note that calling this a “Spanish” Consortium is somewhat of a misnomer. Firstly, we acknowledge and include as part of the Consortium speakers of other languages who identify as Latinx, for example, Brazilian Portuguese, or many Central Americans who speak one of the Indigenous Languages spoken in Mexico, Guatemala, or Honduras. Secondly, we realize that not all Latinxs speak Spanish. Thus, we are hoping to include the millions of second- and third-generation Latinxs who claim cultural heritage, though their levels of Spanish proficiency vary greatly. We also aim to serve the local community and students interested in learning more about the Latinx community and those simply wanting to study Spanish as a second language in the U.S. while keeping in mind that the Latinx speakers with whom they are likely to interact do not represent what is commonly portrayed in their Spanish-based textbooks and classrooms.

Moving forward, through documentary approaches, including oral histories, we intend to ask how Spanish in the U.S. South differs from other regions in the USA. We know that new destination communities have different make-ups of newer generations of Central Americans than in past decades and further that the socio-historical context of the U.S. South as well as the political composition of the region are distinct. Finally, the English varieties spoken there (e.g., Wolfram et al. 2011) have their own characteristics which will potentially play a role in contact-induced language change.

Along these lines, we are keenly aware of the potential for Spanish to influence the English spoken in the U.S. South. We also hope to lead initiatives that work with and for local Latinx communities, maximizing their benefit, especially in overcoming barriers to receiving equitable jobs, medical care, and education. For those of us working as faculty at SEC universities, how can we prepare for the rising number of Latinx students in the classroom and help them achieve academic success? What is our vision for collaborating with local K-12 schools on initiatives of bilingual education, such as dual language immersion and the seal of biliteracy to sustain the home language of Latinx households while simultaneously benefiting those students from non-Latinx households who desire bilingualism and biculturalism? More generally, what can we do to increase public appreciation and understanding of bilingualism, biculturalism, and diversity in the U.S. South? The SEC Spanish Consortium joins researchers, students, and community members from the regions in which SEC universities are located to answer these questions.

As this paper has indicated, there are multiple opportunities for faculty, students, and the general public to engage with, learn from, and assist members of the newly formed Latinx communities in the U.S. South. Circling back to the notion of linguistic gratuity, we have highlighted several ongoing projects within the Consortium that seek to bolster educational opportunities for Latinx students in the U.S. South as well as non-Latinx students living in the region. One project centers on offering heritage language classes and preparing SEC Schools for the increasing presence of Latinxs in their classrooms. An extension of this idea is to launch a Spanish–English dual-language immersion program in states such as Mississippi (<https://olemiss.edu/news/2024/04/fafulas-fac-laureate/index.html> accessed on 8 November 2024) where no such program currently exists. Further, we have set out the preliminary stages of our plans to collect sociolinguistic data that can educate the public through digital repositories that store, from the Latinx speakers’ vantage point, the barriers that they face in society, such as in accessing legal, medical, or educational opportunities due to their language practices or minority status. In addition, we plan to educate our local communities on the advantages of bilingualism while debunking myths, such as the false ideology that U.S. Latinxs who speak Spanish cannot speak English or that they are less “American” than their peers.

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Notes

- ¹ The Southeastern Conference (SEC) is an American college athletic conference whose member institutions are located primarily in the South Central and Southeastern United States. Its 16 members include the flagship public universities of 12 states, three additional public land-grant universities, and one private research university (taken from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southeastern_Conference accessed on 8 November 2024).
- ² We use the term Latinx to include Hispanic as well as Latino/a populations and non-binary members of the community. While we acknowledge that this is not the preferred term for some, our intention is to be as inclusive as possible, without also excluding those speakers of Indigenous languages and Portuguese in the U. S. South.
- ³ The information for each SEC and non-SEC university (location, student population, and percent Latinx) was taken from <https://datausa.io> accessed on 8 November 2024. Most data are listed as being from 2021. The information for each university's location (population, population per square mile, and percent Latinx) was taken from <https://www.census.gov> accessed on 8 November 2024. Most data regarding population size and percent Latinx are from 2022–2023, depending on available updates. The numbers related to population per square mile appear to be from 2020.

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